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The Venetian Mirror: Pavel Pavlovich Muratov's "Obrazy Italii" (1924) and the Literature of Art

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*Criticism has not sufficiently investigated the complex aesthetic program of the three-volume *Obrazy Italii* (1911–1924) of Pavel Pavlovich Muratov (1881–1950), art historian, critic, belle-lettrist, and an exemplary type of the “renaissance man” of Russian modernism.*

*In its combination of art criticism, personal anecdote, biographical sketch, lyrical digression, philosophical speculation, and history, Muratov’s text exemplifies the genre of the literature of art modeled on John Ruskin’s three-volume *Stones of Venice* (1851–1853), and informed by his readings — and translations into Russian — of, most notably, Walter Pater, Vernon Lee, and Bernard Berenson.*

Composed over a thirteen-year period marked by dramatic ruptures in the historical and cultural continuity of Europe and Russia, as well as dislocations in the author’s life, Muratov’s text may be read as an evocation of a humanist aesthetic utopia that stands as an alternative to the fractured temporality and fractured identity of his own historical moment. This paper argues that Muratov finds a relief from his anxiety over the dislocations of the present historical moment by modeling a practice of reading the past through its artistic and architectural monuments.

This practice is allegorized in the 1922 short story “Venetian Mirror” [«Venetsianskoe zerka-lo»], which, it is proposed, projects the Italy of the Renaissance as an alternative site for a Russian cultural identity that, in Muratov’s view, has been vitiated and voided by World War I and the Bolshevik Revolution.

*Keywords: Pavel Pavlovich Muratov, *Obrazy Italii*/Images of Italy, “Venetian Mirror,” Venice, Silver Age, Russian aestheticism, the image of Italy in Russian modernism, literature of art, aesthetic essay, aesthetic travelogue, ekphrasis, palimpsest.*

INTRODUCTION

Частицу Италии он уносит с собой в свои эпические нищие или буднично-благополучные земли и там, под небом суровым или опустошенный, иначе радуется, иначе грустит и иначе любит¹.

*P. P. Muratov, «Epilogue,»
Images of Italy, III, 423.*

In 1922, Pavel Pavlovich Muratov (1881–1950), art historian, critic, essayist, and novelist, published a story under the title “Венецианское стекло” (“The Venetian Mirror” (Muratov 1922). Set in the Venice of Muratov’s Italian grand tour — first in 1908, then in 1911 — the story regresses into the Cinquecento, linking the nameless narrator’s destiny with that

of the mirror's various owners. The sketchy plot moves from the intimation of a brief, seemingly casual affair; a parting; and the narrator's retrospective recognition of the unrecoverable perfection of the liaison that leaves him, still in Venice, perpetually stranded in the past. The story is addressed to the beloved, now in Russia, and is offered as an explanation for the narrator's failure to keep his promise to send the woman an antique Venetian mirror of a rare perfection. The narrative itself is constructed as a series of flawlessly executed nesting stories turning on the leitmotif of reflective surfaces. Its opening is given in the negative future tense: "Его отливающее чернью и серебром стекло не отразит ваших глаз"² This future eliding of the Russian subject that the mirror will not reflect abruptly gives way to the past tense detailing the narrator's search for the perfect mirror. It then slides into the anterior past for the interpolated tale of the mirror's history, and closes with a neat turn to the present tense of the narration. The mirror is found; it is experienced; and it is left with its hereditary owner, an aged widow-turned-vestal virgin to the memory of her beloved husband.

The narrator, whose name and biography are withheld, is an aesthete with an educated eye and cultivated sensibility who navigates the remotest passages and canals of Venice as if they were the city of his birth. He is a familiar among the dealers of antiquities as a discriminating connoisseur. For his inamorata, he seeks a small mirror that would meet the following criteria of excellence: «...чтобы стекло его оказалось без малейших изъянов; чтобы рамка его была согнута и вырезана особенно искусной рукой...»³ The same exigency extends to the mirror's setting. The narrator specifies a frame that is not only of local provenance, but that specifically transmits the *genius loci* of the city in which it was crafted: «...я мечтал о резьбе, выдающей морское и восточное родство Венеции»⁴. He requires, in other words, a flawlessly reflective surface, unblemished by traces of its material composition, so that it might reproduce, without calling attention to itself as a mirror, the visual field of the object held up to it. At the same time, he insists on a particular kind of frame that would immediately identify what is being reflected in the glass as a spectacle seen through a manifestly Venetian framing of reality. In other words, his intent is to give his absent mistress a looking glass in which she would see the familiar — her own face against the background of the gardens of her Russian estate — within an alien setting. This combination of a frame and reflective surfaces thrusts the specular representation of the beloved woman's quotidian Russian present into the matrix of a Venetian past.

The narrator is eventually directed to a mirror matching these specifications in a concealed chamber of antiquities belonging to the impoverished descendent of a distinguished Venetian family. This survivor of a once glorious past is the ancient Signora Moricci. She reveals that her old fashioned oval mirror was made by craftsmen who imparted to it a «страшная тайна» («terrible secret»). The secret, it emerges, consists of the mirror's power to transform the vision of anyone who looks into it. Rather than reflecting to the viewer an image of his or her appearance and surroundings, the mirror recaptures and reconstitutes the fugitive past of the spectator and concentrates in a single syncretic image the totality of one's existence. The narrator describes this power as follows: «Личина безразличия внезапно спадает с нас, мы полностью сил живем в одном взгляде. Мы любим или ненавидим, торжествуем или отчаиваемся»⁵. Whosoever looks into its depths, sees not one's accustomed reflection, but one's past. «Мы остаемся лицом к лицу с нашей судьбой, написанной в наших чертах неизгладимыми буквами. Мы узнаем прошлое и вновь воочию видим однажды случившиеся»⁶.

As I was reading this text in the Rare Books Room of the New York Public Library, I became aware of a growing suspicion that what I was reading was not just a metapoetical fic-

tion with an ingenious variation on the obligatory trope of ekphrasis, here involving a magical mirror instead of the traditional portrait. Nor was its hermeneutic complexity neatly reducible to the elegiacal theme of *tempus fugit*. Read in the context of the professional (critical, art historical, and belle-lettristic) activities that preoccupied Muratov from roughly 1906 to the early 1920s; his aesthetic and cultural orientation; and his personal alienation from the Bolshevik regime and eventual emigration to Berlin and shortly thereafter to Rome, the story becomes an elegant allegory for Muratov's quest to create in prose a perfect mirror of *his* Venice, *his* Italian Renaissance, and ultimately, *his* Italy. This was the quest that found its most accomplished realization in the three-volume *Obrazy Italii* [*Images of Italy*], the research and writing of which occupied its author for nearly two decades.

ARGUMENT

Obrazy Italii is in its essence a hybrid text: not exactly history, but with history's orientation on the "works and days" of the past; not exactly art criticism, but with art criticism's commitment to formal analysis; not exactly fiction, though with fiction's license to imagine empirically unverifiable psychological motives of the artists and sculptors who were its subjects; and not quite travelogue, though its precise tracing of itineraries, roads, and memorable sights make it a practicable guide to travelers through Italy. The deftness with which Muratov interweaves this multiplicity of often competing and even clashing discursive modes elicited its characterization as "one of the most dazzling books of its type ever written". This paper will argue that the image of the "Venetian mirror" as a specular medium imbued with the power of reviving the past in all its vital presence and simultaneously of revealing the essential truth of the viewer's being is the governing trope of *Obrazy Italii*. This preliminary study will be confined to examining Muratov's programmatic statements in the trilogy; to the theme of memory and oblivion in the two «bookend» sketches devoted to the city of Venice; and to an analysis of the rhetorical devices and strategies, specifically to synaesthesia, by which the author effects the movement from reflection in the sense of mimesis, to introspection, in the sense of the work's capacity to stimulate in the reader a vivid psychic response.

Obrazy Italii is first published in Moscow 1911 (volume 1) and in the course of a little over a decade, swells to three volumes of small-format pages supported by reproductions of the art under discussion, in which form it is published, definitively, in Leipzig in 1924⁸. Between the first and the last versions of this remarkable work, Muratov the man matures into an influential literary and art critic, a translator, creative writer of novellas, plays, and a novel, a historian and curator of the art of the Italian Renaissance, a Byzantinist and Medievalist who, with Igor Grabar, puts the study of Russian religious art of the Middle Ages on its first, scholarly basis.

His life is consumed with cultural brokering and travel: no fewer than 16 journeys to Italy, England, and France in the decades before his emigration in 1922. As this minutest of thumbnails suggests, Muratov the man — the son of a military physician, schooled in the Cadets and trained as a construction engineer, — lived, as faithfully as one could in the tumult and chaos of the years of war, revolution, and emigration, the ideal of Castiglione's Renaissance man. Nina Berberova and subsequent biographers acknowledge him as such not only because of his passion for the historical period that produced the prototype, but because of the degree to which the writer curated his own persona to match the ideal. In nearly every point, Muratov's public figure appears to exemplify Baldassare Castiglione's requirements for the ideal courtier, that he be high born, skilled in the arts of war, athletic, eloquent of speech and writing, scholarly, artistic, worldly, and in all ways useful (Castiglione 1928).

Muratov, of course, is not idiosyncratic in his infatuation with Italy. Like his contemporary poets, writers, artists, and critics of the Silver Age — from Merezhkovsky and Gippius, to Rozanov, Balmont, Solov'yov, Blok, Belyi and Gippius (to name just a few) — Muratov is drawn to the Italian Renaissance as a projection of a pre-modern, ideal social order, attractive as an alternative to the “terrible world” of the present with its ominous societal tensions and looming philistinism. Nor is Muratov in any way unique among his peers when he avidly consumes the writings of the English pre-Raphaelite investigators of the Italian Renaissance, writers such as Walter Pater, John Symonds, Vernon Lee and Bernard Berenson. What makes his Italophilia distinctive, however, is the degree to which it will come to inform and shape both his subsequent creative and scholarly career. The methodologies and concepts of the Anglo-American writers decisively molded his understanding of Italy⁹. The methodology of Bernard Berenson (his various influential studies from 1894 through 1918 and beyond), Heinrich Wölfflin (*Renaissance and Baroque*, 1888, and *Principles of Art History* 1915), and Adolfo Venturi, *Storia dell' arte Italiana* (1901–39) are foundational to his own formal approach to the description and analysis of works of art from the Italian Renaissance, Byzantium, and Medieval Russia.

Obrazy Italii grows out of a program of fevered reading and composing that by 1906 erupts into a fierce Italophilia. To be properly understood, Muratov's art historical trilogy must be seen as one panel in a triptych of Italophilic labors. The first leaf of this triptych contains his intensive course of readings of Continental «erudite» travelers to Italy and art critics¹⁰, many of whose writings — among them Pater, Symonds, Vernon Lee, Berenson, Taine, Wölfflin — he translates and publishes. This phase also comprises his immersion in the Russian literature on Italy, a brief account of which finds its way into the preface to the first volume of *Obrazy Italii*.¹¹ The third leaf consists of three volumes of translations of novellas from the Italian Renaissance, equipped with a serious scholarly apparatus, which he publishes in 1912–1913¹². The central panel, of course, comprises the evolving text of *Obrazy Italii*.

Confronted with this triptych, one has the impression of a frenzied initiative to reconstitute, in Moscow, a seamless recreation of the spirit of the Italian Renaissance: to draw Russian culture back from its headlong charge into modernism in its kaleidoscopic iterations — futurism, constructivism, suprematism, — and to anchor it firmly in the humanism of a Europo-Russian culture of the *World of Art* persuasion that will itself soon collapse in the military theater of World War I, Revolution, and Civil War. What emerges, over and over again, from the pages of Muratov's “prose treatise” as James Clive calls it, is a determined escape from the modern, a deeply-felt nostalgia for an Italy that Muratov — along with a slightly earlier generation of Continental and American cultural elite — identified as the goal for aesthetic and literary adventures and whose literary reconstruction in prose amounts to a projection of an aesthetic utopia. In the spirit of Vernon Lee, Muratov attributes to the perception of the landscape itself the concept of a frame of mind that the former subsumed under the term *genius loci* — a divinity that “is of the substance of our heart and mind, a spiritual reality” (Lee 1899: 5).

In his choice of genre for this grand labor, Muratov, first, keeps pace with his Russian modernist contemporaries — Merezhkovsky, Gippius, Bryusov, Ivanov, Rozanov, Bely and Blok come to mind — who cultivated a particularly loose form of non-fiction prose combining personal anecdote, philosophical speculation, and polemic with criticism and formal analysis. Muratov's three volumes, though written under such different circumstances and at different times, are remarkably consistent in their fluid hybridity: they move easily from memoir to history, travelogue, to biography, formal analysis to polemic. The generic label

for which Muratov reaches is the essay, but one exploded to the hyperbolic scope of 150,000 words. Muratov makes this identification in 1926 in *Искусство прозы*:

Еще ближе к искусству словесности стоит проза повествовательная и описательная, например, книги историков или путешественников, или мемуаристов, соединяющих описание с повествованием... По-русски для писателей этого рода нет должного наименования, и мы вынуждены именовать их на английский лад «эссеистами». Примером «эссеиста»... остается англичанин Уолтер Патер...»¹³

The correct taxonomic rubric, of course, is the Victorian genre of the literature of art, whose most influential British practitioners were John Ruskin, Dante Gabriel Rossetti, Walter Pater, John A. Symonds, Henry James, and Vernon Lee. It will be recalled that this fundamentally ekphrastic genre — rendering one art form through the medium of another — is at once descriptive and naturalistic and also evocative and psychological. Its commitment is simultaneously to assessing the degree of verisimilitude that an art work reveals with respect to its subject (its mimetic fidelity); and to producing a powerful, psychological impact in the reader by way of articulating the emotive power of the art works under analysis. This doubled aesthetic perspective can be understood as a technique in the service of an aestheticist ideology that takes the world that exists outside art to be the world *within* art. Put another way, texts such as Ruskin's *Stones of Venice* or Pater's *Imaginary Portraits* or *The Renaissance* or Symonds' *Renaissance in Italy*, posit reality as an aesthetic, multidimensional totality, a multi sensorial repository of a palimpsest of impressions, mediums of mediation, and the relationships among them. Muratov's cross-cutting among nature descriptions, analyses of art works, and “genre scenes” with historical digressions and anecdotes from life bear the earmarks of this ideological position. The tone of the “sentimental journey” that pervades Vernon Lee's (pen name of Violet Paget) *The Spirit of Rome and Laurus Nobilis* — translated, not incidentally, by Muratov's second wife and published by Muratov — also finds its way into Muratov's prose. He stages Lee's notion of “genius loci” principally through a generous use of the trope of synaesthesia, scrupulously detailing the sensory features of the Italian landscape: its sights, sounds, smells and tactile sensations set up a cascade of associations with history and art. To be sure, the scholarly dimension of the work, deployed in sections devoted to the meticulous analysis of specific works, is closely indebted to Bernard Berenson's “critical formalism”, as Muratov calls it (Muratov 2009, III: 228–229) and operates with the former's phenomenological rather than ideological orientation¹⁴.

The starting point for Muratov's project is situated in the Silver Age “religion of art” with its worship of artistic masterpieces as repositories of ultimate values and as schooling protocols for attaining transcendent insights that, in turn, will inform and shape the construction of on the basis of an aestheticized “self.” Like the British Victorians and his contemporary Russian poets and philosophers, Muratov regards art as “revelatory” and great artists as providing transformative “conversion” experiences. The art critic who writes artistically about art equally attains to this hieratic status. He does this by confronting the reader with an evocation of an art work that, because “unfinished,” requires the reader to imaginatively “complete” the work and to confront and test his understanding of and emotional response to the work to those with which the critic provides him. The critic cues the emotional response by framing his own encounter with the artwork as a moment of heightened awareness and multi-sensorial acuity.

Muratov's evocation of Venice in “Летейские воды» [«The Waters of Lethe»] might serve as an example. This first chapter to the first volume of *Obrazy Italii* opens with a categorical premise: «Есть две Венеции.» (“There are two Venices”) — one registered by the philistine Grand Tourist; the other — available only to the connoisseur willing to follow the

lead of his erudite guide and learn to correctly «read» the palimpsestic script of high art (Muratov 2009: 24–33). Muratov stages this encounter with the transcendent Venice as an encounter with the «hidden» city, the one inaccessible to the tourist of the Grand Canal and Caffè Florian and the Murano glass shops. He introduces this «other» Venice through a transformational moment that negotiates a move into a sacred space, signaled by its inscrutability, silence, and solitude. «Узкие переулки вдруг поражают своим глубоким, немым выражением. Шаги редкого прохожего звучат здесь как будто очень издалека. Они звучат и умолкают, их ритм остается как след и уводит за собой воображение в страны воспоминаний»¹⁵. With its alliteration, periodicity, and rhythm, the passage cues the reader to prepare to shift into an altered frame of mind, to become receptive to the transformational power of the genius loci. The adverb «вдруг», abruptly shifts the temporal mode, signaling the rupture between two ontological planes: the empirical and the visionary in which “muteness” and “silence” replace language, and rhythm alone summons memories that are a distant kin to Platonic anamnesis. Indeed, Muratov explicitly identifies the insight gained through the encounter with the “hidden” Venice with the recovery of the ancient, sacred, rites underlying banal tourist attractions. Thus, for instance, «То, что было на Пьяцетте лишь живописной подробностью — черная гондола, черный платок на плечах у венецианки, — выступает здесь в строгом, почти торжественном значении векового обряда»¹⁶. In just a few sentences, using rhythmical prose, narrativizing space, deploying synaesthetic sensory data (plasticity, color, sound), and cuing emotional and evaluative responses («поражают,» «как будто,» «как след,» «лишь,» «торжественным»), Muratov shapes a complex structure of experience around a work of art, in this instance, the city of Venice. He creates a secular ritual (the connoisseur’s peregrination) in which the reader can imaginatively immerse himself so as to achieve a transformation of sensibility and a re-evaluation of his own image of Venice. In performing the creative reconstruction of the city through his reading of Muratov’s text, the reader is primed to recover some essential consciousness of self («страны воспоминаний»). The Venice to which Muratov steers his reader is at once a more tangible and more elusive subject than its art and architecture, its urbanistic design, and the natural elements in which it took form over the ages. It has a literal solidity, constituted of its stones and bridges, its churches and squares. It comprises those monumental spaces and structures that the philistine traveler identifies with Venice; and it comprises those dark and narrow streets and alleyways that turn it into a “labyrinth with an unexpected, unanticipated logic” — the logic not of the world of exigency and contingency, but of the world of art.

Muratov meticulously details the conditions for the “correct” receptivity to the aesthetic spectacle by choosing as both his points of entry and exit from his Italian journey, the city of Venice. The opening section, titled «Летейские воды» [The Waters of Lethe], and the concluding sections, titled «В Лагуне», «Офорты Каналетто», «Эпилог» [“In the Lagoon”, “Canaletto’s Etchings”, “Epilogue”] both dwell on the liminal moment of the confrontation with a work of art (architecture; urbanistic design; etching) at which the erasure of a conventional perceptual framework gives way to the aesthetic vision. Muratov uses the potent symbol, charged with particular pathos in the circumstances of historical rupture, of the waters of Lethe (Muratov 2009: 408–425). The reference to the Greek *Ameles Potamos* (*River of Unmindfulness*) is motivated topographically and thematically. The topographic allusion rests on the analogy between the course of the mythical river, which flowed around and through the cave of Hypnos and into the Underworld, and the disposition of waters around and through the city of Venice. In this capacity, the evocation of Lethe gives Muratov a reservoir of literary and cultural allusions, and provides him with a set of fixed

descriptive epithets for the aquatic foundations of the city. Thematically the invocation of the mythological geography of Hades gives Muratov the terms for the tripartite argument of his trilogy: on the nature of the city — and by extension, Italy, Reality writ large — as aesthetic artifact; on the condition of exile (the voluntary, temporary self-exile of the tourist; and the exodus of the émigré); and the schooling of the philistine spectator into the self-reflective aesthete. In this apprenticeship, Muratov serves as guide and model, oriented toward his audience of contemporary Russians, initiating them into rituals of aesthetic appreciation, training them to become critical humanists, and, in the process, claim a psychic identity that is immune to the disruptions and displacements of geopolitical vagaries. A neo-romantic in his model of the world, Muratov constructs his authorial subjectivity in the text in the figure of the aesthete who charges the artist with holding up a mirror to nature and, at the same time, demanding that the mirror include the private subjectivity of the aesthete observer. Restated in terms of the mnemonic operations involved, this dual orientation requires the elision of memory as a precondition for retrieval of what might be called cultural pre-memory.

Provisionally, this might be rephrased as follows. The psychological topic of oblivion for Muratov has two dimensions: it is at once, treated as therapeutic, as a salutary erasure of self-consciousness, a dislocation of the subject; a kind of anesthesia that provides solace. Secondly, oblivion is a kind of scraping clean of one set of cultural impressions to make room for the inscription of another. It is in this sense that Venice/Italy-as-mirror can be seen to function palimpsestically.

To approach the cultural implications of the psychological “work” to which Muratov puts his literary “mosaic,” I shift to the narrative design of the trilogy¹⁷. The exposition follows a double itinerary: spatial and temporal, which both begins and ends in Venice and moves temporally along two chronological lines. One is autobiographical in the loose sense of evidencing the author’s intellectual growth by the growing complexity and depth of his encounters with Italian culture. This becomes clearly manifest when comparing the first and third volumes. The second temporal line commences in Padua, at the tipping point between the Medieval and the early Renaissance, with the figure of Giotto. As Muratov moves chronologically closer to the High Renaissance, the trajectory of his movement through space brings him closer to the Florence and Rome, from which he then abruptly moves south, into the deeper past of Roman antiquity. The scheme I’ve here reproduced in its crudest form is of course far more involved in its realization, as Muratov, through an intricate system of names, reminiscences, and allusions, brings into his narrative landmarks from Russian culture and weaves his “humanist” Russia into the texture of his composition.

But how, more particularly, does the topic of this work — the impressions and lessons of the Grand Tour — manifest itself as a particular kind of reading experience? One might begin answering this question by interrogating, briefly, the unique cultural and personal mission of the Grand Tour. As an institution and a practice, the Grand Tour temporalizes space: it transforms all the elements of a landscape — its architecture, gardens, ruins, festivals, paintings, sculptures, gardens, markets, and people — into points of access into various strata of the past and, through the subjectivity of the traveler encountering, “processing,” and imaginatively and affectively appropriating the “sights,” transforms these into a mobile, indeterminable future, into the potentiality of entering into new, unanticipated configurations of space and self. The institution of the Grand Tour does this in the form of assorted “props” and “technologies:” the travel diary or memoir; the travel sketchbook; paintings; plaster casts; etc. which, transported from their original site, become the germ of new sites, new landmarks in the Grand Tourist’s subjectivity and geography.

In this sense, it is fair to say that the work Muratov makes his text do takes its prompt from the institution of the Grand Tour as just outlined. In guiding us through the temporal and spatial terrain of Italy, Muratov's prose does two things: establishes the earmarks of his ideal aesthetic utopia; and contrives to insinuate into this idealized virtual "space" the particular experiences of his readers so that the Italy of his text will be transformed into "the native home of our soul, the living page of our life, the beating of our heart"¹⁸. In point of fact, Italy itself, in Muratov's understanding, is a totalizing universe: an autonomous, self-contained, rational, spiritual, and affective unity whose perfect expression was attained in the architecture, painting, sculpture, and literature of the Renaissance. Thus understood, the trilogy can be read as offering a hermeneutic way of reading the landscape of the Grand Tour. Muratov is acutely aware of the multiple temporalities that exist in the present moment of [his] encounter with the landmarks, the landscape, the artifacts themselves. And he takes pains to structure his exposition in a way that will include, involve, and compel the reader to navigate into an identical vortex of temporalities, to experience at once the jolt of dislocation from the present, the connection to the past, and a future "déjà vu" moment to use as a vantage point from which to look back at oneself looking at the past. This is why, by the way, one needs to set aside epic lengths of time to read this work: one needs time to make room for all the reminiscences, reflections and reveries that Muratov provokes in us.

One might consider, among many, four ways in which he does this sleight of hand: First, he anchors each encounter with Italy in deeply felt, immediately experienced sensory data, rendered through the ubiquitous device of synaesthesia. He describes, in as many sensory dimensions as possible, the ways in which a particular site or artifact registers itself or imprints itself upon the senses of the observer. This, for example, is how he experiences Rome:

«Счастливы... тот, кто всходил здесь в декабрьские дни, чтобы после свежести затененных улиц почувствовать благодетельное тепло на вечно солнечном Пинчيو, кто стоял на верхней площадке в ночи, веющие душный сирокко, колеблющим пламя фонарей и сгибающим струи фонтанов, кто в ослепительном блеске поздней весны искал здесь любимых роз или остро и старинно пахнущих ветвей жасмина!»¹⁹

Second, he manipulates the grammatical person of narration. With an abrupt switch in grammatical person, from the third to the inclusive first plural, or, even more dramatically, to the second person as in this conclusion of his chapter on Padua, he draws the reader into the thick of the experience he is describing.

«Когда от главной улицы свернешь, вправо вдоль канала, то попадаешь в совершенный мрак, и шаги под аркадами начинают звучать так гулко, что хочется сойти на мостовую. Но вдруг выходишь на площадь, за ней мост, открытое пространство и высокая черная башня на светлом еще небе. Этот зловещий силуэт напоминает о временах великого злодея итальянского Средневековья, Эчелино Свирепого»²⁰.

Third, by invoking and reconstituting historical personalities from the past and using a historical figure as guide, he elides the temporal disjunctions among at least four temporal frames: the historical past; the author's recollected past; the time of narration; and the time of the reader reception. Thus, for our first glimpse of Florence, he recruits Dante to take us to the Piazza of the Basilica of San Miniato, which afforded Dante his final glimpse of the city²¹:

«...каждая итальянская дорога напоминает нам дороги его изгнаннических скитаний, каждое восхождение под небом Тосканы заставляет вспоминать путь, которым он шел на гору Чистилища. Мы что-то повторяем вслед за ним, когда медленно поднимаемся по бесконечным каменным ступеням между двух рядов старух кипарисов. И, взойдя наверх к Сан Миньято, мы останавливаемся и невольно глядим назад. Там

сели мы оба, обратившись лицом к востоку, в ту сторону, откуда поднялись, — ибо всякий с удовольствием смотрит на пройденный путь... Церковь Сан Миньято и ведущую сюда лестницу Данте называет в двенадцатой песне 'Чистилища'. Он приводит ее затем, чтобы показать, как высоки и трудны для смертного были лестницы, иссеченные в склонах священной горы. Вспоминая ее, он опять вспоминает свою Флоренцию. В то время, когда складывались эти строки, он мысленно был здесь, у Сан Миньято»²².

Notice how the author moves between past and dramatic present, expanding his singular, authorial voice into the collective «we,» including his readers in the immediacy of the moment, and making the reader's first experience of the site be the pretext for re-enacting a historical precedent. Art stages an encounter with life that is revelation and recollection.

Fourth, and this he does specifically for his Russian interlocutor, Muratov recruits Russian travelers, artists, and writers, who were brokers of Italian civilization and culture, and uses their "eyes" — through direct citation or allusion — to mediate the reader's perception of Italy. This, it seems to me, is a way of naturalizing, as it were, the northern civilization within the southern, and so of providing for Russia a new set of spatio-temporal coordinates: the south as post-Pushkinian Russia's humanist past. Consider, for instance, this entirely unobtrusive insertion of Gogol's perspective into his attempt to pinpoint the moment when the essential Rome "reveals" itself: «... в случайных странствиях открывается сердцу Рим с Яникула в блестящей синеве, о которой писал Гоголь...»²³. Or, at another time, on a starry night, the road between San Gimignano and Poggibonsi brings to mind other nights: «... вспоминаются другие ночи, зимний путь на санях от Переславль Залесского к Троице, или ещё ночь апрельская, пасхальная, где-то под Боровском и Малоярославцем»²⁴. Or, on an excursion to Lago Albano, he suddenly recognizes, «и знакомые деревья, глина, овраги, запах прелых листьев тоже напоминал Россию, — минутами казалось, что идешь через русский лес в конце апреля»²⁵. A final example might be illuminating: He sees a kinship between the architecture of Palladio and the verses of Pushkin: «... законы архитектуры живут в душе Палладио так же инстинктивно, как живет в душе Пушкина инстинктивный закон стиха. Как Пушкин, он есть сам своя норма, раскрывающая у обоих в каждом явлении их искусств и, быть может, в каждом их жизненном движении. Все, что от Палладио, — творчество, и в чистейшие творческие струи влекли бы нас дела и мысли его, прослеженные шаг за шагом и изо дня в день, подобно тому как влекут 'дела и дни' русского поэта»²⁶.

According to the hermeneutic that fixes on tropes, rhetorical strategies, and narrative turns such as the ones just described, Muratov's journey through Italy can be read, as a compendium of journeys through time in which artifacts, texts, landscapes serve as markers of time, markers of the passage of lives, and registers of the creative «energy» of time itself. This dynamic of movement — spatial and temporal — creates the effect of timelessness, of a space that is of no time and of all times. «Мы возвращаемся из Италии с новым мироощущением слиянности начал и концов, единства истории и современности, неразрывности личного и всемирного, правды вечного круговорота вещей, более древней правды, чем скучная идея прогресса...»²⁷. I am tempted to see in this architecture of temporality the outlines of what Michel Foucault called the time of the «heterotopia» — «...we are in the epoch of juxtaposition, the epoch of the near and far, of the side-by-side, of the dispersed. We are at a moment ...when our experience of the world is less that of a long life developing through time than that of a network that connects points and intersects with its own skein»²⁸. By writing himself and his time; us and our readerly time — into the time of the Italian Renaissance, Muratov invites us to take refuge in an elective, timeless temporality of his aesthetic utopia.

CONCLUSION

To conclude: it will be recalled that the story «Venetian Mirror» begins with a future tense narration. Indeed it does so, but only in order to deny the future in a series of negated propositions that begins with: «Mottled with black and silver, its glass surface will not reflect your eyes...the pond...the gardens»²⁹. By withholding the mirror, the protagonist refuses to link his beloved's present and the future line of her life's development with the past they shared, which is made manifest in the mirror's frame and in the double image — the perfect past and the defective present — simultaneously visible in the reflective surface. Muratov's enchanted looking glass merges past and present in the same discursive space, and relentlessly frames every instance of the present by an invariant, inviolable past. This is the perspective that Italy, in his view, affords «naturally», this is the lesson he draws from his spatial journey through time.

In the epilogue of Volume 3 of *Obrazy*, written already from emigration, Muratov sounds a response to the tense polemics about the status of Russia's imperial past by offering Italy's accommodation to its multiple pasts as an analogical model for the solution to the problem of cultural discontinuity. He writes, «Ценой неизбежных ломок и перемен нынешняя Италия приобретает свое право жить настоящим. Ощущение ее вечно жизненной стихии — вот то, что составляет истинный смысл итальянского путешествия...»³⁰ The closing phrase of the first sentence «жить настоящим» can be read in two ways: “to live in the present,” as I have rendered it above, and “to live authentically, in a genuine way”. I find in this formulation the particular pathos of Muratov's cultural investment in Italy: to serve as a model for the «right» way to address the discontinuities of history: an appeal to treat upheaval not as the pretext for erasing the past, but as one of a series of frames for establishing the continuity and essential vitality of the cultural heritage. And finally, it can be read as a manifesto affirming the reality of an aesthetic utopia, encounters with which are profoundly transformative. Set in the objectively existing topographic, cultural, and historic field, construed as an aesthetic totality, Italy and the artistic heritage of its Renaissance, function, for Muratov, as a repository for memories, both collective and private, where the fragmentary self can reconstitute its wholeness. It is in this sense that the trope of the Venetian mirror, while retaining its psychological focus, acquires its didactic import, becoming a tool and a medium in the aesthetic education of the reader/viewer in a world where humanist standards of value and taste — and the humanist measure of man — no longer exist. A composite artifact composed of a fixed, unalterable frame enclosing a surface that registers both a perfect past and a perpetually unfolding and novel present, Muratov's mirror with the «terrible secret» aptly describes his cultural project in *Образы Италии*. As Muratov writes in his preface to the first edition, «Удержанные здесь образы Италии можно назвать также воспоминаниями. Италия с особенной силой пробуждает в душе каждого способность воспоминаний. Дни, прожитые там, не исчезают бесследно, и прошлое отдельного существования выступает отчетливее на фоне неумирающего и великого прошлого»³¹. In learning to read Italy through Muratov's readings of the Italian landscape and history as represented in the art of its Renaissance, the reader succeeds in his quest to recover individual lost time, and in so doing, recoup the coherence and meaning of existence.

ПРИМЕЧАНИЯ

¹“He will take away into lands of epic beggary or routine prosperity a little part of Italy, and there, beneath a stern and devastated sky, he will no longer rejoice and grieve and love in the same way” (Muratov 2009, III: 423). All translations from Muratov, unless otherwise credited, are the author's.

² «Mottled with black and silver, its glass will not reflect your eyes» (Muratov 1922: 21).

³ «... its glass should be free of even the slightest defect; its frame should be bent and carved by an exceptionally skillful hand....» (Muratov 1922: 24).

⁴ «I dreamed of carving that would betray the maritime and oriental geneology of Venice» (Muratov 1922: 24).

⁵ «In an instant the mask of indifference falls away from us and we live entirely and fully through our eyes» (Muratov 1922, 26).

⁶ «We are face to face with our destiny that is inscribed into our features in letters than can never be erased. We recognize the past and once more we see with our own eyes what had once come to pass». The passage continues: «О, не являет ли волшебное стекло род маленького театра, на сцене которого с уколom в сердце мы узнаем всех персонажей комедии или драмы, однажды разыгранной при нашем участии! Действительность сбывшаяся, не менее от того мучительная, отравя воспоминания не менее крепка... —“Oh, does not the enchanted mirror reveal a sort of miniature theater on whose stage we recognize, with an aching heart, all the characters in the comedy or the drama in whose unfolding we had once played a role! Reality is no less painful for having come to pass, the poison of recollection is no less potent...” (Muratov 1922: 27).

⁷ Clive James, “Pavel Pavlovich Muratov”, *Cultural Amnesia*, p. 524. See also: V. N. Grashchenkov, among Muratov’s growing number of biographers, critics, and admirers, who writes: «Имя Муратова навсегда осталось связано с памятью об обаятельных ‘Образях Италии’. Эта книга оказалась высшим литературным достижением Муратова, великой творческой удачей» (Гращенко 1993). «The name of Muratov is forever linked with the memory of the enchanting “Images of Italy.” This work has remained Muratov’s supreme literary accomplishment, a sublime creative success.»

⁸ P. P. Muratov, *Obrazy Italii*. Vol. 1. Moscow, “Nauchnoe Slovo,” 1911, 1912–1913, 1917. P. P. Muratov, *Obrazy Italii*. Vol 1, 2, 3. Leipzig, Z. I Grzhebin, 1924.

⁹ «Увлечение Италией стало решающим поворотным моментом в творческой биографии Муратова» (Гращенко 1993). («The decisive turning point in Muratov’s creative biography was his infatuation with Italy.»)

¹⁰ By the roughest of counts, the “overt” pre-texts of the Muratov text can be found in a dozen-and-a-half Continental writers, including Johann Wolfgang von Goethe’s *Italienische Reise* (1816–17); Charles de Brosses’ *L’Italie il y a cent ans* (1836); William Beckford’s *Letters from Italy* (1834); Stendhal (*La Chartreuse de Parme*, 1839; *Voyages en Italie*, 1837–39); François-Rene Chateaubriand’s *Voyages en Suisse, en Italie* (1836); John Ruskin’s *Stones of Venice* (1851–3); Ferdinand Gregorovius’ *Wanderjahre in Italien* (1856–77); Hippolyte Taine’s *Philosophie de l’art en Italie. Voyage en Italie* (1866); Philippe Monnier, *Venise au XVIIIe siècle* (1908); Paul Bourget’s *Sensations d’Italie* (1891); Henri de Régnier’s *Esquisses vénitiennes* (1906).

¹¹ His translation of Walter Pater’s *Imaginary Portraits* was published in 1908.

¹² P. P. Muratov, *Novelly ital’janskogo Vozrozhdenija. Izbrannye i perevedennye P. Murato-vym*. Ch. 1 *Novelly trechento*; Ch. 2 *Novelly kvatrochento*. Moskva, Izd. K. F. Nekrasov, 1912; Ch. 3: *Novellisty chinkvechento*. Moskva, Izd. K. F. Nekrasov, 1913. (vstup. stat. I P. Muratova; obshchaia—pp. 1–10; pt. 1 — pp. 13–29, pt. 2 — pp. 195–206; pt. 3 — pp. 5–41.)

¹³ «Still closer to artistic prose is a type of narrative and descriptive prose such as is found, for instance, in the books of historians or travelers or memoirists, which combines description with narrative. There is no appropriate term for this sort of writer in Russian, and so we must use the English term “essayist.” An example of such an “essayist”... is the British writer Walter Pater...» (Muratov, 1926: 240–258).

¹⁴ Especially important to Muratov is Berenson’s concept of the “tactile value” that distinguishes, according to the latter, a number of important artists of the Quattrocento.

¹⁵ «The narrow alleys suddenly stun one with their deep, mute expression. Here the steps of the rare passer-by resonate as if from a great distance. They resonate and grow silent, their rhythm lingers like a trace and carries the imagination into regions of memories» (Muratov 2009: 24).

¹⁶ “What in the Piazzetta was merely a picturesque trifle— a black gondola, a black shawl across the shoulders of a Venetian woman — here stands out with the severe, almost solemn significance of an ancient rite” (Muratov 2009: 26).

¹⁷ V. N. Grashchenkov sees in Muratov’s text a certain “mosaic quality” — “мозаичность” (Грашченков 1993, 312).

¹⁸ Here is the full quote: Не театр трагический или сантиментальный, не книга воспоминаний, не источник экзотических ощущений, но родной дом нашей души, живая страница нашей жизни, биение сердца, взволнованного великим и малым, такова Италия, и в этом ничто не может сравниться с ней. Никакими своими зрелищами, никакими чудесами своих искусств она не ослепляет и не оглушает нас. Она не подавляет никого и не вступает в противоборствования с внутренним существом современного человека. Ни одного мгновения не заставляет она нас испытывать оторванности от мира, пусть удивительного, но чуждого и замкнутого в себе. Щедрая и великодушная, она приемлет нас, вливает нам в душу медленными притоками свою мудрость и красоту, меняет постепенно первичную ткань нашего бытия, и мы произрастаем вместе с ней не приметно для самых себя, пока не скажет о том живая боль разлуки (Muratov 1924, III: 424). “It is not a tragic or sentimental theater, nor a book of reminiscences, nor even the source of exotic sensations; instead, it is the native home of our soul, the living page of our life, the beating of a heart agitated by both the great and small: this is Italy and in this it has no rival. None of its spectacles, none of the wonders of its arts blind us or deafen us. It oppresses no one and does not enter into conflict with the inner being of contemporary man. Not for a single moment does it force us to experience alienation from a world that though surprising, is alien and self-contained. Generous and magnanimous, it receives us, pours slow streams of wisdom and beauty into our soul, gradually altering the original texture of our being, and we grow rooted in its substance, entirely unaware that this is so until the raw pain of parting gives us notice”.

¹⁹ «Happy are they who have climbed these steps [Spanish Steps] on a day in December to feel, after the raw cold of shaded streets, the sweet warmth of Pincio’s perpetual sunshine; who stopped on the uppermost landing on nights when the sultry sirocco whips the flames in the gas lamps and twists the jets of water in the fountains, who in the blinding glare of a late spring comes here to look for beloved roses or the unfashionably fragrant sprigs of jasmine!» (Muratov 1924, I: 14).

²⁰ «When you turn off the main street to the right, along the canal, you enter into total darkness, and your footsteps in the arcade echo so loudly that you are tempted to walk in the street. Suddenly, you find yourself in a square; on its far side is a bridge, and beyond it, a vast expanse, and a high tower, black against a translucent sky. The sinister silhouette brings to mind the tyrant Eccelino, that infamous villain of Italy’s Middle Ages» (Muratov 1924, I: 122).

²¹ Characteristically, this entry point resonates with multiple simultaneous associations, their number depending on the degrees of the readers’ erudition. For example, the site figures as the normative destination for the touristic vista of the city, as in various editions of the Baedeker guide, or, for instance, as it is marked in E. M. Forster’s *Room with A View*. See also, for instance, the description given by Baedeker: “The piazza in front of the church [of S. Miniato al Monte] commands a charming view of Florence and its environs (afternoon-light most favourable): on the height to the r. Fiesole, then the city itself with S. Croce, the cathedral, S. Lorenzo, the Palazzo Vecchio, S. Maria Novella, and the Lung’Arno...” (Baedeker, 1870, 1–344, 325).

²² “Every road in Italy reminds us of the roads [Dante] wandered in his exile, every hill beneath the Tuscan sky triggers the memory of his path up the mount of Purgatory. As we slowly climb the endless stone steps to the Basilica of San Miniato, between two rows of ancient cypress, we repeat something of what he had done. When we reach the top and stop at the [piazza of] San Miniato, we involuntarily turn to look back. «There we both sat down, turning our faces to the east, in the direction from which we had climbed, for each of us looks back with pleasure at the way we had come.

...The Basilica of San Miniato and the stairs that lead to it are mentioned by Dante in Canto XII of *Purgatorio*. He invokes them to show how high and arduous for mortals were the steps carved into the

slope of the sacred mount. While remembering this mountain, he again remembers his Florence. At the time he composed these lines, he was here, in San Miniato “ (Muratov 1924, I: 188–9).

²³ “...during a random stroll on Monte Gianicolo Rome suddenly appears as that brilliant flash of blue about which Gogol writes...” (Muratov 1924, III: 33).

²⁴ “...the winter sleigh ride from Pereslavl-Zalesky to Troitse-Danilov Monastery, or an April, paschal night somewhere near Borovsk and Maloyaroslavets” (Muratov 1924, III: 247).

²⁵ «familiar trees, clay, ravines, the smell of rotting leaves that make one think of Russia and at moments it you think you are walking through Russian woods in late April» (Muratov 1924, III: 191).

²⁶ “...the laws of architecture live as instinctively in the soul of Palladio as the instinctive law of verse lives in the soul of Pushkin... Everything in Palladio — is art, and every one of his thoughts and deeds, just like the «thoughts and deeds» of the poet ...would draw us into the purest currents of creation” (Muratov 1924, II: 352).

²⁷ “We return from Italy with a new understanding of the fusion of beginnings and ends, of the unity of history and the present moment, of the truth of the eternal cycle of phenomena, which is truth of far greater antiquity than the miserly idea of progress...” (Muratov 1924, III: 425).

²⁸ See Michel Foucault, “Dits et écrits,” 1984, *Des espaces autres* (conférence au Cercle d'études architecturales, 14 mars 1967), In *Architecture, Mouvement, Continuité*, no. 5, October, 1984, pp. 46–49.

²⁹ «Его отливающее чернью и серебром стекло не отразит ваших глаз...» (Muratov 1922, 21).

³⁰ “At the price of inevitable ruptures and upheavals Italy won its right to live in the present. The experience of its eternally vital nature is what constitutes the true significance and meaning of the journey to Italy...” (Muratov 1924, III: 424–425). The closing phrase of the first sentence “жить настоящим» can be read in two ways: “to live in the present”, as I have rendered it above, and “to live authentically, in a genuine way”.

³¹ Italy has the particular power of awakening [in us] the capacity for remembering. The days spent there do not vanish without leaving a trace, and the past of an individual existence emerges in sharper relief against the field of an undying and sublime past» (Muratov 2009, 25).

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ВЕНЕЦИАНСКОЕ ЗЕРКАЛО: «ОБРАЗЫ ИТАЛИИ» (1924)
 ПАВЛА ПАВЛОВИЧА МУРАТОВА И ЛИТЕРАТУРА ОБ ИСКУССТВЕ
 ЛЕНА М. ЛЕНЧЕК
 (Рид Колледж, Портленд, Орегон)

Сложная эстетическая программа трехтомного труда (сочинения) «Образы Италии» (1911–1924) П. П. Муратова, историка, художественного критика, писателя, «ренессансного человека» эпохи русского модернизма, до сих пор не получила законченного, всестороннего критического анализа.

Строя повествование об Италии, включающее как искусствоведческие сведения и исторические факты, так и личные воспоминания, лирические отступления, биографические очерки, и философские рассуждения, Муратов ориентируется прежде всего на жанр так называемой литературы об искусстве на примере трилогии Дж. Рескина «Камни Венеции» (1851–1853), а также на теории и методологические работы Уолтера Патера, Верноны Ли и Бернарда Беренсона, чьи произведения Муратов не только хорошо знал, но и переводил на русский язык.

Сочинение, над которым Муратов работал в течение 13 лет, совпавших с периодом драматических разломов в европейской и русской истории и культуре, с эмиграцией самого автора, может быть прочитано как гуманистическая эстетическая утопия, представляющая альтернативу расколовшейся современной автору реальности. В настоящей работе утверждается, что Муратов предлагает свой способ для преодоления чувства раскола, страха перед разрушающимся настоящим, а именно обращение к нетленным духовным ценностям, погружение в прошлое, прочтение его сквозь призму искусства.

Такой способ аллегорически представлен Муратовым в рассказе «Венецианское стекло» (1922), в котором Италия эпохи Возрождения противопоставляется России, чья культурная самобытность, по мнению Муратова, необратимо разрушена войной и революцией.

Ключевые слова: Павел Павлович Муратов, «Образы Италии», «Венецианское зеркало», Венеция, Серебряный век, русский эстетизм, образ Италии в русском модернизме, литература об искусстве, эссе, художественный травелог, экфрасис, палимпсест.

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