Dedicated to the Memory of Vasily Aksenov

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Acknowledgments

This collection of work on Evgenia Ginzburg would never have been written without the generous support of her son, Vasily Aksenov. It first began in his apartment in Moscow in 2004 when, along with his wife, Maya, Aksenov generously devoted three or four hours to dialogue about his mother in honor of the centennial of her birth. As he recalls, the interview was so intense that the tape recorder couldn't bear it and broke down![1] Yet, instead of turning us away, he graciously offered to spend four more hours with us the very next day so that we could rerecord the entire interview. This time we double-checked the device to make sure it worked.

Aksenov's unwavering love for his mother seeps into virtually every conversation. He is not shy about claiming that his reunion with her in Magadan, after a twelve-year separation, was the most important event in his life. The interview that is republished and translated here reveals a son who shares with his mother not only the legacy of her experience in the Gulag, but, even more importantly, her love of literature. As he attests, Evgenia Ginzburg was endowed with an extraordinary ability to transcend her century's cruelty and injustice. Whether she attributed her survival to miracles or luck or the intercession of Dr. Anton Walter, her third husband, as Aksenov suggests, one thing is certain: her voice could never be extinguished. At one point in Aksenov's memoir he recalls his surprise when a group of twelve-to-thirteen-year-old American students from a prep school sought to meet him to discuss his mother's memoir:

> It turned out that *Journey into the Whirlwind* was their main reading text of the year. They wanted to show me photographs taken during a special exhibit organized on the contents of my mother's book. One of the photographs showed a huge map of the Soviet Union with particular emphasis on the Magadan area, tracing the "route" described by my mother. I was overcome with emotion thinking about what would compel this group of upper middle-class privileged kids, what would compel them to take to heart the fate of a single Soviet woman and her family,

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1 Vasily Aksenov, "Po motivam Ginzburg," in "*Evgenia Ginzburg: A Centennial Celebration 1904*-2004," ed. Olga M. Cooke, special issue, *Canadian-American Slavic Studies* 39, no. 1 (Spring 2005): 7.

> caught in the midst of Stalinist repressions. Nonetheless, they burned with curiosity and genuine compassion. They wanted to hear all kinds of details from me: how did the camp look, who were the guards, how were survivors able to survive? It became quite clear to me that Evgenia Ginzburg became, perhaps for the rest of their lives, a "cult figure," the very embodiment of the author and hero who experienced this "road to Calvary."[2]

A project of this nature involves many individuals, and every writer in this volume feels a deep connection to their contribution. Many of our contributors have published essays and studies on Ginzburg in other venues; there was a strong wish, then, to see this project come to fruition. I thank everyone for participating in this project, especially Rimma Volynska, with whom I've shared various "Ginzburg projects" over the years, such as co-conducting the interview with Aksenov and co-editing *Gulag Studies.* A special note of thanks also goes to Dariusz Tolczyk, author of *See No Evil* and other works on the Gulag, and Natasha Kolchevska, author of many studies on Ginzburg. Both Dariusz and Natasha have offered encouragement over the years. A person to whom we all owe a debt of gratitude as the inspiration, not only for Ginzburg studies, but for women's studies as a whole, is Barbara Heldt. Finally, the most generous of all my advocates is Brett Cooke, my husband, who has been the best source of support throughout this project, which began as a roundtable on Ginzburg's memoirs, then a special issue, and finally found its culmination in this collection.

Anna Artwinska's article was originally published in Anna Artwinska and Anja Tippner, eds., *Narratives of Annihilation, Confinement and Survival: Camp Literature in a Transnational Perspective*, (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2019). It is republished here with the permission of the publisher. I would also like to thank the Melbern G. Glasscock Center for Humanities Research for granting me a Glasscock Publication Support Grant for this collection.

I would like to give special thanks to all the devoted individuals at Academic Studies Press. Many years ago, Igor Nemirovsky agreed to publish the Ginzburg collection I'd long dreamed about, and it is to his credit that this volume is now a reality. Thomas Seifrid, editor of the series, The Real Twentieth Century, encouraged this project at every turn. The anonymous reviewers provided our contributors with great suggestions for improving their essays. Finally, a heartfelt note of thanks goes to Kate Yanduganova, Kira Nemirovsky, and Stuart Allen at ASP.

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2 Ibid.

Foreword

Barbara Heldt

Landmark books written by women have not only deeply affected their own times, but have made their mark on the future of both their own countries and the larger world. I have only to mention two other examples: Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin; or Life Among the Lowly* (1852) and, in Evgenia Ginzburg's own decade, Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* (1962).

Only the Bible sold more copies worldwide during the nineteenth century than *Uncle Tom's Cabin.* The novel's message of redemption through Christian love makes it perhaps unfashionable today, but one has only to reread the novel to see that the horrific treatment meted out to slaves by the entire chain of masters, traders, and other exploiters—and especially the breaking up of families otherwise living peacefully organized lives and then crowded into cabins on one plantation bound together in recognized family units—was an evil supported by the dark side of a creed which divided people by race. The separation of mothers and children is the most poignant of these realities in both Stowe and Ginzburg. In the present collection, one of those children—himself later becoming a famous writer—tells the story from his point of view.

Rachel Carson's research in environmental science documented the damage caused by pesticides, and their regulation has yet to catch up with her vision. Nor will we ever catch up with the damage caused by the evil that was—and which still persists today—the enslavement of humans by other humans. Genocide, most efficiently unleashed by the Nazis, is currently practiced by the nation that, more than any other, won the war against Nazism, even as it was pursuing its own policy of killing according to class or the rearrest, in alphabetical order, that Ginzburg experienced.

Russia's constructs of class and its punishment of disloyalty to state nationalism are again threatening the country's neighbors and the world. War without reason has erupted once more. The weaponization of environmental degradation is proceeding apace in Ukraine. As for the entire world's diminishing ability to breathe, there is little mention of human overpopulation as the chief cause, because the privileging of humanity is sacred to believers and unbelievers alike.

Lest we think that these issues are not historically entwined, consider the fact that in 1929 Stalin joined up with Ford to cooperate on building and supervising a car plant in Gorky to produce Model T autos. Ford made thirty million dollars on the deal. In the 1930s, one hundred thousand cars a year were built in Gorky under a different name. Ignoring Ford's argument that prosperity would follow individual ownership, the Soviets used the cars mainly for official transport. One of them picked up Ginzburg's four-year-old son, Vasily Aksenov, to take him from his home to the orphanage where he spent the beginning of the long years separated from his mother—a "child of the arrested."

Life on a plantation in Kentucky and life in the Gulag—who can describe such horrors and to what human good can they be contrasted? In the writings of these great women—Stowe, Carson, Ginzburg—moments of human decency emerge, secular miracles. Reading their work and, in the case of some of my generation of Russianists, meeting the survivors and their adult children, has been an unexpected privilege. All the contributors to this volume are generously sharing their research on Eugenia Ginzburg to open the window further onto her life and work.

The importance of Ginzburg, what makes her work stand out from other memoirs of the Soviet Gulag, lies in the fact that her recollections have been untempered by time or by any change in the character of the author after her ordeal. Her view undistorted by bitterness, she is able to see clearly, even in volume two when hope of publication in her lifetime seems impossible. Her youthful ideals remain untouched by any hope for the future of her country and, even more, from any loss of faith in its peculiarly hypocritical and lethal ideology. She understands, and remains true to, her own self. And, unexpectedly, in her work she was able to be a writer of the unwritable.

Introduction

Olga M. Cooke

The twentieth century is more homeless still,
It's gloomy life more terrible;
(And even blacker and with vaster reach
Than Lucifer's wing).
—Alexander Blok, "Retribution"[3]

Evgenia Ginzburg begins her memoir *Journey into the Whirlwind* with what is now considered a classic first sentence: "The year 1937 really began, for all intents and purposes, in 1934."[4] Emphasizing Sergei Kirov's assassination, the calamitous event which anticipated the purges of 1936-1937, Ginzburg catapults the reader into what would become a two-year journey from the moment she was warned of impending arrest to the actual day on which it took place. When she was finally arrested on February 15, 1937, she was thirty-two, the wife of Pavel Aksenov—a senior member of the Kazan Regional Party Committee, soon to be arrested himself—the mother of two boys, stepmother of Aksenov's daughter, and an active university lecturer and journalist. Ginzburg would eventually spend a total of eighteen years in the Gulag and exile.

Ginzburg's fate was to be born "under Lucifer's wing" (*pod sen'iu Lutsifera*), the title (borrowed from a line in Alexander Blok's poem "Retribution") she chose for the first draft of the memoir she wrote between 1959 and 1962. While Ginzburg's original title embraced the ravages of living under the diabolical shadow of Stalinism, Blok presciently captured the apocalyptic hue of a century

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3 Aleksandr Blok, «Двадцатый век . . . Еще бездомней, / Еще страшнее жизни мгла / (Еще чернее и огромней / Тень Люциферова крыла,» "Vozmezdie," *Sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 3 (Moscow: Gosudarstvennoe izdatel'stvo, 1960), 305—translation mine.

4 Eugenia Ginzburg, *Journey into the Whirlwind*, trans. Paul Stevenson and Max Hayward (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich Pub., 1995), 3. This is part one of Ginzburg's memoirs. Part two is *Within the Whirlwind*, trans. Ian Boland (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich Pub., 1981). Henceforth, citations will be followed by part and page numbers in parentheses, using these standard English translations of Ginzburg's *Krutoi marshrut* (Moscow: Sovetskii pisatel', 1990). Both parts will also be called the "whirlwind" memoirs.

more "terrible and gloomy" than the nineteenth. In her epilogue to the second volume of the "whirlwind" memoirs, Ginzburg explains that she never intended to publish her confessional first draft: "My own internal censor had not yet gone into action, since it did not occur to me that there could be any question of publication. I simply wrote because I had to" (2.418).

Fearing a return to a period of arrests and more Gulags, Ginzburg burned *Under Lucifer's Wing*. She wrote: "This first version, written in a state of anguished lucidity which occurs after the loss of people close to you, was full of my most secret thoughts, which I had entrusted to no one but now committed to paper" (2.418). Nevertheless, she embarked almost immediately on her "whirlwind" memoirs *Krutoi marshrut*.[5] In 1962, she felt that the "longed-for, hoped-for time had now at last come when I could speak out, when my truthful testimony would help those who genuinely wanted to avoid a repetition of our nation's shameful and dreadful past" (2.418-419).

Emboldened by the Twenty-Second Party Congress and the publication of Alexander Solzhenitsyn's *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich*, Ginzburg submitted her manuscript to the two most popular "thick" journals *Iunost'* (Youth) and *Novyi mir* (New world). Instead of using Blok's subversive lines of poetry from "Retribution," she chose a new epigraph from Evgeny Yevtushenko's "Heirs of Stalin": "And so I appeal to our government:/ double it, treble it, the guard on this grave."[6] Her "Chronicle of the Time of the Cult of the Personality," the subtitle to her memoirs which did not appear in any of the translations, was meant as a direct indictment of Stalin.[7] Although most of the editors of *Novyi mir* approved of her manuscript, Aleksandr Tvardovsky, editor in chief, rejected it. Roy Medvedev claims that the only time he argued with Tvardovsky about literature was when his friend rejected Ginzburg's manuscript.[8]

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5 The title *Krutoi marshrut* when translated literally also connotes a long and winding road, replete with pitfalls and abrupt turns. It can also be called a "Precipitous Itinerary." Leona Toker proposed either "steep route" or "tough marching" as literal translations of the title, conveying a "steep march," which leads "to a clarity of vision and a rejection of false innocence." See her *Return from the Archipelago* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2000), 52.

6 «И я обращаюсь к правительству нашему с просьбой: / удвоить, утроить и у этой плиты караул.» Evgenia Ginzburg, *Krutoi marshrut* (Moscow: Sovetskii pisatel', 1990) 4.

7 Although this subtitle does appear in the 1990 Russian edition of the memoir, it did not appear in the 1985 US edition, published by Possev.

8 Roy Medvedev, "Meetings and Conversations with Alexander Tvardovsky," *Michigan Quarterly Review* 28, no. 4 (Fall 1989), 621. Medvedev also faulted Tvardovsky for reading only the first chapters of Ginzburg's book. Ginzburg maintains that she interpreted Tvardovsky's rejection as partially motivated by his antisemitism, but Medvedev denied

It is at this point that her manuscript embarked on a five-year odyssey in samizdat. Medvedev admits to circulating the manuscript himself around Moscow and Leningrad. Applauding her testimony, as Ginzburg's epilogue attests, were Ilya Ehrenburg, Konstantin Paustovsky, Veniamin Kaverin, Kornei Chukovsky, Alexander Solzhenitsyn, Evgeny Yevtushenko, Andrei Voznesensky, and Vera Panova, to mention a few. Tvardovsky, however, was adamantly critical of her manuscript. Ginzburg was told that he said the following: "She only noticed that there was something wrong when they started jailing Communists. She thought it quite natural when they were exterminating the Russian peasantry" (2.421). As for the rejection by Boris Polevoi, the editor in chief of *Iunost'*, she was told that the manuscript was forwarded for safekeeping in the Marx-Engels-Lenin Institute, where a cover note read: "It might serve as material for the history of the Party" (2.422).[9]

While her first volume was serialized in the Russian *émigré* journal *Grani* (Facets) in 1967, Mondadori published it in Italy the same year. Translations into many languages soon followed. Ginzburg denied knowing about the samizdat copies circulating within Russia, as well as the copies smuggled abroad, upon which the foreign publications (the so-called *tamizdat*) depended.[10] The author admitted that her internal censor, her impulse to curb the urge to indict, was motivated by the desire to publish in her native land. Thus, Ginzburg ends her first volume calling herself a "rank and file Communist," one ever grateful that "the great Leninist truths have prevailed" (1.331).[11] It took another twelve years for the sequel to appear posthumously. In 1988-1989 the Latvian journal *Daugava* serialized the memoirs in their entirety. And, finally, in 1989 the memoirs appeared in the Soviet Union for the first time in book form. Volume one traces the chaos of mass arrests, mock trials, solitary confinement, and long interrogations. These consisted of the dreaded "conveyor," a form of assembly line torture in which the prisoner was forced to undergo days of grueling interrogations without sleep and food, with the interrogators working in shifts. All this was followed by the train journey through Siberia, transit camps, and arrival in Kolyma. Volume two covers the end of her "journey" in Kolyma. It

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Tvardovsky was antisemitic, even though other "offended writers" made the same observation. Ibid., 622.

9 See also Kathryn Duda's essay in this collection, which elaborates on the unpublished correspondence between Ginzburg and Polevoi.

10 Kathryn Duda discusses Ginzburg's denials in her "My Son, My Self: Reevaluating a Culture of Vulnerability" in this volume.

11 In the English translation this quote appears in the "Epilogue." In actuality, Ginzburg writes these words in her introduction.

bears few traces of self-censorship, for not only does she indict her Party, she holds every Russian guilty, including herself, especially in the often cited chapter "Mea culpa," about which more will be said below. Unlike the first volume, in which Ginzburg was willing, "for the sake of publication, [to] reach people at last" (2.419), volume two is a record of Ginzburg's "spiritual evolution, the gradual transformation of a naïve young Communist idealist into someone who has tasted the fruits of the tree of knowledge of good and evil" (2.423). As Barbara Heldt observes, Ginzburg's second volume is "fiercer, more revealing of intimate emotion, as the act of writing without hope of publication in her own country pushed each writer further into the region of the self."[12]

Born in Moscow, December 20, 1904, Ginzburg was five in 1909 when she moved to Kazan with her parents, Solomon and Rebecca Ginzburg. She graduated from the University of Kazan with a degree in history. At first she worked as a teacher, then she became an assistant researcher in the Department of Social Sciences at the Eastern-Pedagogical Institute, as well as at Tatar Communist University. As a member of the Communist Party since 1932, Ginzburg taught history and Marxism-Leninism in Kazan colleges. At the same time, she also worked as a journalist for the local newspaper *Red Tataria.*

The immediate Aksenov family consisted of five members: it included Alyosha, the son of Ginzburg's first husband, Dmitry Fedorov; Vasily Aksenov, the future famous writer, the son of Ginzburg's second husband, Pavel Aksenov; and Maya, Aksenov's daughter from his first marriage. When Ginzburg sensed that she might be arrested, Pavel Aksenov consoled her by implying that the Party would have to put everyone in jail if it were to arrest a loyal Communist like herself. Family and friends suggested avenues of escape: her mother-in-law begged her to hide in the country and her friend, Dr. Dikovitsky, recommended they both go to live "with the raggle-taggle Gypsies" (1.23). Ginzburg would later regret that she didn't heed their advice in her zealous efforts to prove her innocence: "I must honestly confess that my way of defending myself, by fervent protestations of innocence and loyalty [. . .] was the most absurd of any I could have chosen. Yes, Grandmother was right" (1.24). Ginzburg was charged and convicted for "counter-revolutionary Trotskyite terrorism," and was sentenced to ten years' imprisonment.[13]

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12 Barbara Heldt, *Terrible Perfection: Women and Russian Literature* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987), 153. The change in Ginzburg's attitude and voice between volumes 1 and 2 is touched upon in several essays in this collection—those by Kathryn Duda, Anna Artwińska, and Ann Komaromi.

13 See Aleksei Litvin, "Dva dela Evgenii Ginzburg," in *Zapret na zhizn'* (Kazan: Tatarskoe knizhnoe izdatel'stvo, 1993), 75-86.

Ironically, she wasn't charged for anything she said, but for what she didn't say: she had refused to denounce her friend and colleague, Professor Elvov, as a "purveyor of Trotskyite contraband" (1.9).

From August 1937 to July 1939, Ginzburg was held in the famous Korovniki Prison in Yaroslavl, the first year of which was spent in complete solitary confinement. The prison was soon inundated with prisoners, and Ginzburg was joined by Julia Karepova, who became her lifelong friend, even after rehabilitation. After her sentence was changed to forced labor, Ginzburg was transported to Vladivostok. In this transit camp, female prisoners laid eyes on their male counterparts for the first time in two years; Ginzburg recollects sexual encounters between prisoners as "violent cases of love at first sight" (1.346). Because love "was linked to death," she adds, "I have never in my life seen more sublimely unselfish love than that which was shown in those fleeting romances between strangers" (1.346). Ever the romantic, Ginzburg even believed the propaganda rumors spread in Vladivostok that their journey on to Kolyma would represent an improvement in their lot: "A man of initiative, even if he were a prisoner, need never go under, and [. . .] the most wretched invalid was quickly restored to health thanks to bountiful stocks of reindeer meat, red caviar, and cod-liver oil" (1.349). Within days Ginzburg was deathly ill and nearly perished on the steamship SS *Dzhurma* on the Sea of Okhotsk.[14]

The second volume begins in 1940, shortly after Ginzburg arrived in Elgen, a strict-regime women's camp in Kolyma. She describes the remainder of her sentence, her time in a children's shelter, tree-felling, poultry work, transfers from camp to camp, her love affair with Anton Walter, her eventual release, rearrest, and life in Magadan; she concludes with her rehabilitation in 1955. Throughout, Ginzburg refrains from dwelling on her misfortune; instead, she sees small miracles that conspire to keep her alive throughout her ordeal. Early in her memoir, the author underlines the role of luck in her life:

> Later, I was to learn what a lucky number I had drawn in the political lottery. My investigation was over by April, before the Veverses and Tsarevskys were authorized not only to curse and threaten their victims but to use physical torture. (1.69)

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14 It is on *Dzhurma* that Ginzburg is introduced to a new contingent of convicts: "murderers, sadists, and experts at every kind of sexual perversion" (1.357). Along with Solzhenitsyn and Shalamov, Ginzburg describes the terror of common criminals as "the law of the jungle." For Ginzburg, learning to cope with such prisoners represented "not a prison, or a camp, but a psychiatric clinic," for these criminals "delighted to find that the 'enemies of the people' were creatures more despised and outcast than they . . ." (1.354).

Being over thirty, having her own teeth, and not wearing glasses also constituted "luck" (1.150). As the years dragged on, "miracles" became more frequent.[15] In a chapter entitled "Salvation from Heaven," Dr. Petukhov, for example, declares "I'll save you!" (1.415) after recalling that he had met Ginzburg's son Alyosha in Leningrad: Petukhov promptly transfers her to a children's shelter.

Upon release from camp, in 1947 Ginzburg's decided to stay in Magadan and wait for her "jolly saint," Anton Walter, who would become her third husband. Walter, an ethnic German from the Crimea region, remained a prisoner when her sentence was completed. His talent as a homeopathic doctor was valued by camp officials. Another small miracle occurred when Walter made his way across one hundred kilometers of frozen taiga to Ginzburg's room in a prison hospital. But they were discovered by the head of the camp, Dr. Volkova, ''the She-Wolf of Belichye,'' which resulted in Ginzburg's transportation to a deadly punishment camp, Izvestkovaya. Walter miraculously managed to get her ''exchanged'' for a stove repairman, and her life was saved. Whenever death felt near, "each time something intervened, something at first sight accidental, but which was really a manifestation of that Supreme Good which, in spite of everything, rules the world . . ." (1.411). Throughout, it seems to Ginzburg that luck, miracles, and the intercession of human angels of mercy accompany her trials: "You can survive anything!"

In 1947, Ginzburg managed to convince the powers-that-be to allow her son to live with her. The "Queen of Kolyma," Alexandra Gridasova, the wife of the commander of Dalstroi,[16] out of pity for Ginzburg's maternal anxieties, sought permission for Aksenov to join his mother in Magadan. Rearrested in 1949 and moved to a prison called "Vaskov's House," as described in volume 2, she was released a month later, with a sentence of perpetual exile in Kolyma.[17] As a kindergarten teacher upon release, she would soon adopt three-year-old Antonina, an orphan from Magadan.[18] After marrying Walter, and achieving rehabilitation in 1955, the family decided to live in Lvov, where Walter could

15 Although born Jewish, Ginzburg never practiced Judaism. She became religious only after her marriage to Anton Walter, a German Catholic. Many passages in her memoirs convey a pantheistic worldview. However, under the influence of Walter's zealous Christianity, Ginzburg adopted a holistic spirituality, merging Catholicism with Orthodoxy. She even received last rites from an Orthodox priest. For a detailed description of Ginzburg's funeral, see Kopelev's and Orlova's memoir in this collection.

16 Dalstroi represented the Far Northern Construction complex, which formed Kolyma.

17 See "Interview with Aksenov" for a detailed description of Ginzburg's second arrest. Ginzburg also devotes several chapters to this event in her second volume.

18 Antonina Axenova's Ginzburg archive is located at the University of Notre Dame.

practice his Catholic faith. This lasted only a short time: Walter died in 1959. Ginzburg lived ten years in Lvov before moving to Moscow. She even fell in love again in Lvov.[19] Before she died of cancer in 1977, Ginzburg composed an unpublished memoir called "A Girl from Kolyma in Paris" (Kolymchanka v Parizhe), based on her tour of France where she went for a PEN Club reception in her honor, accompanied by her son. She is buried in Kuzminsky Cemetery in Moscow.

Ginzburg's literary career began shortly after her rehabilitation. She published stories, sketches, and reviews based on her experiences as a teacher, journalist, and activist. *This Is the Way It Began* (Tak nachinalos'), a novella published in 1963, describes her life as a teacher in Kazan. The autobiographical approach continues in her subsequent stories, published in *Iunost'* between 1963 and 1965. "Unified Labor" (Edinaia trudovaia) covers the period of the 1920s and what it was like to be a child of the revolution undergoing an education in the new Soviet Union. "Students of the 1920s" (Studenty dvadtsatykh godov) chronicles the postrevolutionary "sky's the limit" thinking characteristic of the time, depicting the human pitfalls of Communist ideology based on class warfare. A hint of the type of documentary narrative present in her memoirs appears in her novella *The Youth* (Iunosha) about Aleksandr Ginzburg (no relation to the author), the commissar who was executed during the purges. As we learn in Lev Kopelev's and Raisa Orlova's memoirs included in the present volume, Ginzburg started writing her memoirs "in the beginning of the summer in 1959 in the Carpathian Mountains. In the forest, on a stump, in a school notebook. Anton, Tonya, and I were there. But already in the prison and in the camp I started to compose separate chapters. I memorized them by heart, like poems."

In numerous critical works covering prison camp literature, Ginzburg's name is ranked with two other great talents who survived the Gulag, Alexander Solzhenitsyn and Varlam Shalamov. For some, her memoirs even outrank those mentioned above. Edward Crankshaw, for instance, claims that Solzhenitsyn "came to write as an outsider in a positive fury of alienation. Eugenia Ginzburg is the voice of humanity itself. Her character commanded a combination of qualities which stamps every detail of her story with a sort of radiance."[20] For Roy Medvedev, *Krutoi marshrut* occupied the "first place in the literature about Stalin's tyranny."[21] In her vast panorama of suffering, Ginzburg succeeded in

19 See Kopelev's and Orlova's memoir in this volume.
20 Edward Crankshaw, *Putting up with the Russians* (New York: Viking, 1984), 262.
21 Medvedev, "Meetings and Conversations with Aleksandr Tvardovsky," 620.

transforming, according to Edward J. Brown, "the rude facts of history into artistic structures."[22] Her strategies of survival entailed her need to "bear witness"[23] and traced the "continual forging of links with other human beings"[24]; her experiences "are portrayed with a vividness and a lifelike dialogue that have an artistic power above and beyond [her] historical accurate testimony"[25]—the achievement of her memoirs is the transformation of testimony into a masterpiece.

Catriona Kelly observes that the

> book is not only a record of external experience; it also depicts the prison camp as the site for a psychological transformation like that described in *Bildungsroman*: the neophyte attains political understanding, as well as a broader social experience, in the crucible of relations between women who share a prison cell or camp barracks.[26]

Yet for Heinrich Böll, who befriended her, the principal question in reading Ginzburg's "whirlwind" memoirs was "*How*, in God's name, how in the world did this woman [. . .] manage to come out alive?"[27] Scholars of Russian women's autobiographies have tended to refrain from dwelling on the aesthetic qualities of such literature, treating testimonials and memoirs like Ginzburg's in terms of "acting to name the silenced."[28] Beth Holmgren places twentieth century figures such as Ginzburg, Maria Ioffe, and others in the tradition of memoirs written by female revolutionaries; these evolved into oppositional writing.[29] She sees them as a more or less "covert platform for different philosophical,

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22 Edward J. Brown, *Russian Literature since the Revolution* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1982), 287-89.

23 Terence De Pres identifies this as one of the principal goals of survivors' writings: "To bear witness is the goal of the survivor's struggle." See his *The Survivor* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980), 32.

24 Barbara S. Heldt, "Evgeniia Ginzburg," in *Modern Encyclopedia of Russian and Soviet History*, ed. Harry B. Weber (Gulf Breeze: Academic International Press, 1977-1993), 165.

25 Wolfgang Kasack, "Evgeniia S. Ginzburg," in *Dictionary of Russian Literature since 1917* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988), 121-22.

26 Catriona Kelly, *A History of Russian Women's Writing 1820-1992* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), 368.

27 See his introduction to Ginzburg, *Within the Whirlwind* (2.viii—italics Böll's).

28 Beth Holmgren, *Women's Works in Stalin's Time* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993), 25.

29 See Beth Holmgren's "For the Good of the Cause: Russian Women's Autobiography in the Twentieth Century," in *Women Writers in Russian Literature*, ed. Toby Clyman and Diana Greene (Westport: Praeger Publishers, 1994), 127-148.

political and social agendas": autobiographies by writers such as Nadezhda Mandelshtam, Lydia Chukovskaya, and by extension Ginzburg "were produced to inform and enlighten."[30] According to Barbara Heldt, the "memoirs are a continual initiation into the deepening horrors of a changed situation for a Communist who had been accustomed to the rewards and responsibilities of what had seemed to be a position of trust."[31]

Yet more than a testament intended to "inform and enlighten," as Beth Holmgren argues, more than a "touchstone"[32] of the dissident movement, Ginzburg's chronicle represents an artistic response to the question: "[D]oes our disappearance from life mean nothing to anyone?" (1.227). While many strategies of survival were employed, such as nurturing bonds of sisterhood, establishing ways of communicating, and preserving her dignity at all costs, none of Ginzburg's strategies compare with her reliance on literature and her memory of literary classics as benchmarks of a tradition in which she was an active participant. Ginzburg traces a landscape replete with "the spirituality of the Russian intelligentsia, which my generation accepted as a secret gift from the thinkers and poets of the beginning of the century who had themselves been the target of our critical shafts" (2.100).[33] Not only did Ginzburg invest her testimony with strategies for physically surviving imprisonment, forced labor camps, and exile from 1937-1955, but she based her survival on the continuity of tradition and resurrecting cultural memory.

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30 Ibid.

31 Heldt, *Terrible Perfection: Women and Russian Literature*, 155.

32 According to Andrey Siniavsky every prisoner of the Gulag, by virtue of the Gulag experience, participated automatically in the dissident movement. "The Soviet camps and prisons exerted the greatest influence on the dissident movement. . . . In every house these returnees appeared . . . even if they couldn't be an active ideological force, they served as a touchstone for Soviet dissidents. It is not by chance that in dissident literature memoirs about camps and prisons past and present occupy a central place." See his *Soviet Civilization: A Cultural History*, trans. Joanne Turnbull (New York: Arcade, 1988), 235. According to Vasily Aksenov, the genre of prison camp literature constitutes one of the greatest contributions to Russian letters in the twentieth century. See his interview with John Glad in *Conversations in Exile*, ed. John Glad (Durham: Duke University Press, 1993).

33 Tsvetan Todorov called this strategy of survival "the life of the mind," insofar as it allows the mind "to cast off its immediate and practical preoccupations, turns to the contemplation of beauty, and in doing so becomes beautiful itself." See his *Facing the Extreme: Moral Life in the Concentration Camps*, trans. Arthur Denner and Abigail Pollak (New York: Metropolitan Books, 1996), 92. Emphasizing simple moral virtues, such as dignity, caring, and cultivation of the life of the mind, Todorov cites Ginzburg frequently and maintains that it is possible to take the extreme experience of the camps as a basis from which to reflect on moral life, "not because moral life was superior in the camps but because it was more visible and thus more telling there." Ibid., 43.

Thus, her physical survival did not constitute her greatest triumph. Instead, Ginzburg developed her mental life for sustenance; in the process, after reciting poetry that she knew by heart, she began to compose poetry herself. The author's poetry permeates the first volume and is juxtaposed with memorized lines from Alexander Blok, Anna Akhmatova, Nikolay Gumilev, and Boris Pasternak. She states: "Poetry, at least, they could not take away from me! They had taken my dress, my shoes and stockings, and my comb, they had left me half naked and freezing, but this it was not in their power to take away, it was and remained mine. And I should survive even this dungeon" (1.221).

Ginzburg's memoirs are distinguished not only by the sheer amount of literary and other artistic allusions strewn throughout, but also by a bittersweet urge to be part of a great pantheon of literary artists. What makes her memoir all the more remarkable is that, often bereft of books, she depended on her prodigious memory to sustain her. Thus, all the immortal visitors who accompanied Ginzburg through her remarkable pilgrimage—be they Dante, Pushkin, Blok, Gumilev, Mandelshtam, Dickens, Michelangelo, Tiutchev, Tolstoy, or Pasternak—attested to her resistance to disappearing from life. She cites them to express her profound belief that she could, according to Horace's famous words, "not wholly die."[34] In "Exegi Monumentum," Pushkin prophesied that his reputation would outlast the tsars; Ginzburg erected a monument in her "whirlwind" memoirs that stands higher than any monument to Soviet leaders. Her memory works not merely to provide a method of coping, or to create an avenue of mental escape, but to resist oblivion. Some critics cite Ginzburg's many literary associations as instances of her "inner freedom."[35] As Natasha Kolchevska observes, Ginzburg's literary models, which were "rooted in a unified notion of humanistic, Russian/European culture,"[36] went beyond mere citation. Heinrich Böll insisted that for Ginzburg "poems become symbols of recognition, not in the sense of a mechanical code but in their totality" (2.ix). According to Dariusz Tołczyk, Ginzburg's "immersion in the language of literature not only ethically sensitizes her to other human beings by constantly

34 See my "'I Shall Not Wholly Die': Literary Memory in Evgenia Ginzburg's 'Whirlwind' Memoirs," in *American Contributions to the 16th International Congress of Slavists, Belgrade, 2018*, vol. 2, *Literature*, ed. Judith Deutsch Kornblatt (Bloomington: Slavica, 2018), 37-47.

35 Grigori Svirski, *A History of Post-War Soviet Writing: The Literature of Moral Opposition*, trans. and ed. Robert Dessaix and Michael Ulman (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1981), 194.

36 Natasha Kolchevska "The Art of Memory: Cultural Reverence as Political Critique in Evgeniia Ginzburg's Writing of the Gulag," in *The Russian Memoir. History and Literature*, ed. Beth Holmgren (Evanston, IL: 2003), 155.