

REFUSING TO HYPHENATE:  
DOUKHOBOR AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL DISCOURSE

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## **Abstract**

My thesis, *Refusing to Hyphenate: Doukhobor Autobiographical Discourse* brings together recent theories of autobiography with a consideration of alternative autobiographical writing and speaking made by a Russian-speaking migrant group, the Doukhobors of Canada. The situation of the Doukhobors is ideal for a consideration of alternate autobiographical forms, since Doukhobors have fallen outside liberal democratic discourses of Canadian nationalism, land use and religion ever since their arrival in Canada in 1899. They have turned to alternate strategies to retell their own histories against the grain of the sensationalist image of Doukhobors propagated by government commissions and by the Canadian media. My study is the first to recover archived autobiographical material by Doukhobors for analysis. It also breaks new ground by linking new developments in autobiography theory with other developments in diaspora theory, orality and literacy and theories of performativity, as well as criticism that takes issues about identity and its relationship to power into account.

When they had to partially assimilate by the 1950s, some Doukhobors made autobiographical writings, translations and recordings that included interviews, older autobiographical accounts and oral histories about their identity as a migratory, persecuted people who resist State control. Others recorded their protests against the British Columbian government from the 1930s to the 1960s in collective prison diaries and legal documents. My selections from these writings, interviews and recordings indicate how some Doukhobors use aspects, but not immediately recognizable forms, of autobiographical discourse to engage dominant ideas about nation, property, literacy and bourgeois citizenship which have threatened to erase Doukhobor communities. These strategies combine aspects of "classic" autobiography and Doukhobor ways to remember and recollect which reclaim Doukhobor identities as plural and situated in a Canadian context, but not connected to Canadian identity by a hyphen that keeps Doukhobors forever separate.

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## Preface

Q. Is it possible for one person to save another?

A. If the other person listens, it is possible.

--Psalm 12, *The Living Book*

In Jean Bruce's *The Last Best West* there is a photograph of an English literacy class run by Frontier College for immigrant railway workers (Fig. 1), a photo in which Doukhobor workers would never appear. In the photograph, the workers sit at a table in a classroom. Their teacher stands at the head of the table. To his left, under a British flag a large sign reads: "Our motto/No hyphenated Canadians." The meaning of the motto is clear. Immigrants taking classes at Frontier College were expected to learn English in order to become Canadian. To be Canadian, as the position of the flag indicates, was to be a subject of the British empire. There were to be no Ukrainian-Canadians, no German-Canadians, no Hungarian-Canadians in this version of Canada. As quoted in J.S. Woodsworth's *Strangers Within Our Gates*, "ignorance of our language is a barrier that largely isolates those people from us and our institutions" (197). "Our" institutions were interpreted by Conservative opponents of mass migration (not by Woodsworth and his supporters) as British institutions which support the British empire. The purpose of choosing "the right" people for Canada, for these people, clearly involved an anxious desire to direct the path from Woodsworth's "gates" to assimilation through institutional acceptance--in this case, by means of language instruction. Hyphenation, the creation of



Fig. 1 Immigrants at a Frontier College literacy class  
Jean Bruce, *The Last Best West*

an “impure” national identity, would disrupt this process of identity acquisition. The Doukhobors also did not want to become hyphenated Canadians, but their reasons were quite different from those of the Frontier College slogan.

As a Russian sectarian migrant group who arrived in Canada in 1899, the Doukhobors refused all such friendly offers of assimilation, from language instruction to voting rights, at every level of the migration process. In some cases and for some groups, Doukhor resistance to institutionalized education in English, registration of births, deaths and marriages and private property ownership continued for one to two generations after the initial migration. They did not wish to be hyphenated Canadians either, but this was because they wished to remain Doukhobors, adherents of an orally-based religion which rejected all forms of institutions, individual ownership of property, military service and citizenship of any nation or empire except what they termed a mystical belonging to the Kingdom of God. These beliefs and practices, combined with a history of conflict with secular and church authorities and a conviction that they were destined to be exiles and wanderers until a prophesied return to Russia, meant that Doukhor identity was grounded in beliefs that at key points ran counter to the coalescing discourses of imperialist, and then nationalist, English-Canadian identity. Eventually Doukhor difference and refusal were considered by federal and provincial

authorities to be a serious threat to Canada's national security, and eventually to developing senses of national identity. The resulting struggle of Doukhobor groups with federal and provincial authorities about what it meant to live in Canada highlights national anxieties and convictions about national selves and immigrant others who refused discourses of liberal selfhood. Doukhobor writers and speakers have sometimes used aspects of autobiographical discourse as a way to work out the constructions of Doukhobor identity which have developed without reference to that selfhood. At times, they have used this alternative identity construction to resist assimilative discourses which anxiously seek to erase that difference. Autobiographical forms have helped them to recover alternate memories of this struggle, and aspects of autobiographical discourse have enabled them to construct specifically Doukhobor subject positions. These sometimes refuse liberal subjectivity (with its offer of hyphenated identities as a compromise between Canadian and other identities) and at other times adopt hybrid positions so that Doukhobors can negotiate their roles in the Canadian national script.

My topic, Doukhobor autobiography, may seem unusual since in fact there are no "conventional" written autobiographies by Doukhobors in existence. Most of the material I examine is not found in conventionally published books, but in archived Doukhobor magazines, legal testimony, tape recordings and diaries. Moreover, in all three of the major prevailing Doukhobor groups in Canada (the Independents, the Community

Doukhobors and the Freedomites) there do not seem to be the conditions that create autobiographical writing. Until the 1930s and in some groups much later, most Doukhobors were part of a primarily Russian language oral culture and many were not print literate in Russian or English. Therefore, until that point Doukhobors would not have had access to written autobiographies which would have provided models for them. And, Doukhobor subjectivity generally seems to operate less on an individual than on a group level, perhaps due to Doukhobor beliefs about equality and to beliefs about the sanctity of communal living. One of the ironies of my research has been that I have found autobiographical writing by almost everyone who worked with Doukhobors or who came into contact with them, from Aylmer Maude and Leopold Sulerjitskii to Stephan Sorokin and a police officer whose job it was to round up stripping Freedomite protestors and try to dress them, but such traditional autobiographical writings by Doukhobors themselves are conspicuously absent.

I say conspicuously absent, because I found that if I were willing to adjust my ideas about what autobiographical discourse is, and to look beyond the constraints of mainstream publishing, Doukhobors can and do produce autobiography. However, the autobiography they produce contests all three aspects of the definition for the genre suggested by James Olney in 1980: that autobiography is, literally, “auto-bio-graphe”--self, life, and writing, a genre where individual authors create narratives of their lives that

reflect preoccupations with self, a unique creative representation of self and their lived experience in the world. What I also have found is that the Doukhobors' position as a migrant group which has at times resisted and negotiated not only with individuals representing Canadian authority but also with the idea of secular authority and its institutions, has meant that the Doukhobors produce unconventional autobiography because they are unconventional subjects who refused to be made into hyphenated subjects and then, into citizens like any other citizens. This situation has meant that a consideration of Doukhobor autobiographical discourse (which includes writing and speaking) actually means that commonly-accepted ideas about autobiography, written representation and the self need to be revised to take Doukhobors conceptions of identity into account.

This revision of what autobiography is “supposed” to be occurs here because the Doukhobors have had, at different times, to turn to alternate strategies to retell their own histories, orally and in writing, against the grain of the sensationalist image of Doukhobors propagated by government commissions and by the Canadian media. The Doukhobors’ appropriation of some (but not all) aspects of Western autobiographical discourse blurs distinctions between autobiography as a discourse of a single subject made for mass consumption with autobiography as testament and testimony, a form of alternative memory for an entire people in the sense indicated in Hertha Dawn Wong’s



work on pre-contact and post-contact autobiographical discourses by Native Americans (1992), Genaro Padilla's study of Chicano/Chicana autobiography after the American conquest of northern Mexico (1993) and Anne Goldman's study of ethnic working-class women in America and the alternative autobiographical strategies they employ (1996). The Doukhobors engage in similar strategies which use autobiographical discourse to accomplish similar ends. In the work of these writers and speakers, autobiography, or alternative forms of autobiographical writing, has come to operate as a field where issues about ethnic identity, alternative historicity and the relationship of a minority subjectivity can be addressed. This has meant that recent criticism of autobiographical formations occurring outside of discourses of a universalist Western, white, male selfhood has turned to considerations of the alternate subjectivities that have altered the "auto" of autobiography, even as the writing subjects appropriate some aspects of that discourse of self. One of the results of this appropriation has been a hybridizing of autobiographical forms that highlights autobiography's position in these writings as a discourse where identity strategies and resistances against mainstream ideas about identity, difference and ethnicity take place. Anne Goldman's call "for a wider autobiographical field [so that] we describe a wider spectrum of the ways and means by which people in the twentieth century speak themselves into existence" (ix) recognizes how this hybridizing of autobiographical forms in minority autobiographical writings between fiction and fact,

between memoir and autobiography and between diary and memoir has resulted in new technologies of identity, and a new position for autobiographical writing as a field in which identities can be worked on, worked through, and worked out. My project links emerging scholarship about autobiography as a discourse that can be used outside the Western narratives of the subject with a recovery of Doukhobor texts produced from 1900 to the present from a variety of oral and written, singular and collaborative sources.

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The Doukhobors originally migrated to Canada as one group to avoid severe persecution in Russia. Although they were granted block settlements and developed a successful communal living system, Canadian federal and provincial governments eventually decided that they constituted a threat because Doukhobor practice resisted essential practices related to colonial citizenship regarding language, religious practice, property ownership, militarism and education. When they had to partially assimilate by the 1950s, some Doukhobors created magazines devoted in part to recovering and reconstructing life narratives, in English, of the early pioneers and activists. Other Doukhobors recorded their accounts of migration in oral interviews in Russian, or transcribed interviews--originally conducted in Russian--into English. And in an alternative act of resistance, some Freedomite Doukhobors recorded their protests against the British Columbian government from the 1930s to the 1960s in prison diaries and legal

documents. These read less like individual testaments than records of the struggle of whole communities against a secular state which wished to turn them into docile, singular subjects.

To examine how and why Doukhobors have used autobiographical discourse in this way, I suggest in Chapter One that autobiography should be rethought as a series of discursive moves rather than as a genre. This means that autobiography can be considered as a set of identity-building strategies which help to make Doukhobor resistance to the Canadian state's conceptions of identity possible. I also suggest that Doukhobor autobiographical discourse does not erase the power to refer that is inherent in the discourse of autobiography. Instead, it makes use of that very power in order to negotiate identities and gain visibility for them in a public sphere.

The alternate autobiographical strategies found in these writings and recordings indicate how some Doukhobors use aspects, but not immediately-recognizable forms, of autobiographical discourse in order to engage dominant discourses about nation, property, literacy and bourgeois citizenship that have threatened to erase Doukhobor communities. These form part of ongoing hybrid identity formations that do not come from a rhetorical "third space" proposed by Homi Bhabha, but rather as hybrid formations that occur on the level of the public utterance theorized by Mikhail Bakhtin. The use Doukhobor writers and speakers make of autobiography discourse means that autobiography can be, for

them, a way to negotiate with subject-positions inscribed in non-Doukhobor discourses of citizenship. In this sense, the "migrating" undecidability of migrant identities allows for a reclamation of Doukhobor identities as plural and situational. This view allows for a renegotiation of the economy of fiction and fact by people whose identity has been constructed as if it were a fiction by dominant discourses about migration, citizenship, politics and language.

In Chapter Two, I review key moments and places in Doukhobor history in order to provide a context for the primary source material I examine and to indicate how the developing imperialist ideas about what Canadian identity was quickly came into conflict with Doukhobor ways to imagine and use space. These conflicts appear as motifs and as identity touchstones in subsequent autobiographical writing by Doukhobors. In Chapter Three, using the figure of *vechnaya pamyat* (eternal memory/eternal consciousness), a Doukhobor phrase which conflates memory into spiritualized history, I examine identities constructed by Doukhobors found in transcribed Doukhobor psalms. I then look at the relationship between these psalms and collected memoirs and interviews from *Mir* and *Iskra* as instances of identity construction. The construction of these identities and the figures they use recover Doukhobor history as a set of reactions to the wounded ideas of home sustained in what I called the Doukhobor diasporic imaginary, a set of tropes which figures home as both Russia, and the memory of resistance to oppression in Russia.

Chapter Four deals with the construction of Doukhobor oral identities in an examination of transcribed and oral accounts of migration and life in Canada. I look at the complexities of these texts as oral and sometimes written collaborations with reference to debates about orality and literacy. Chapter Five examines Freedomite Doukhobor narratives that contain collective Doukhobor subject performatives in Bakhtin's sense, public identities inside a hybridized discourse that falls between memoir, autobiography and diary. The materials here include Freedomite Prison diaries by Mike Chernenkoff and friends and Alexander Efanow as examples of first-person plural "witness" records. In these, the writers record an alternative history of their imprisonment using the proper name of one person as a way to combine many accounts of an event in a combination of a diary and a memoir form. The autobiographical section of legal testimony by Peter Maloff is also another occurrence of autobiographical hybridity but this time between the form of a legal document and an autobiography format. I also look at the autobiographical writing produced by Fred Davidoff for Simma Holt's book *Terror in the Name of God* and evaluate its differences from the unpublished autobiography Davidoff wrote in prison as a response to the earlier autobiography.

My decision to collect Doukhobor autobiographical work and use some Doukhobor writing and history as well as contemporary theory to read and hear it means that in a thesis format, some possibilities open up for analysis of materials few people

have seen, although admittedly it does close others down. I do hope to make Doukhobor autobiographical writing and speaking in previously untranslated and archived forms more accessible, both to Doukhobors themselves as well as to non-Doukhobors. But the theoretical basis for this work in its present form may make some aspects of the analysis inaccessible to non-specialists in the field of autobiography. The question of theory's "place" in the analysis of materials which often fall outside of the assumptions made by the philosophic tradition which informs much of Western literary theory problematizes this question of access. Am I, as a non-Doukhobor, recovering narratives from what Caren Kaplan calls an "out-law genre" (115) just so that I can recoup the resistant elements of these narratives into reassuring objects of study that bolster the very Western institutions of "self" which they critique? These questions, summarized in Peter Dickinson's questioning of the commodifying of Native oral narratives by non-Native scholars (331) add a politicized layer to the reading of such narratives.

However, the debate about whether the subaltern can ever speak, or whether she or he is always made to speak by dominant discourse, only seems to be raised in absolute terms which assume that writers and speakers not operating purely within Western traditions of subject representation cannot ever occupy hybrid positions and cannot themselves theorize. This approach would seem to deny members of oppressed groups the ability to change the terms of representation while it also renders invisible the

genealogy of alternative representation used by those not immersed in dominant ways to represent subjectivity. The Doukhobors, for example, regard Leo Tolstoy as a philosopher and a cultural theorist and actively reproduce (and read) his writings as well as those of their own leadership. Comments on literacy in many of the narratives which I examine often refer to alternative Doukhobor learning practices which do not make use of literacy. These examples indicate that Doukhobor writers and speakers are aware of and use other ways of thinking about theoretical issues which, while they do not operate within the trajectories of Western metaphysics, rather than functioning as a parallel awareness of theorization. This other set of practices, which sometimes does use aspects of non-Doukhobor epistemology, should be considered valid in its own right, and should be able to interact with other types of theorizing, as alternative and at times as critique.

Therefore, Doukhobor autobiographical discourse presents a challenge to autobiography theory and some assumptions made by theories of the subject rather than functioning as a defeated discourse subsumed by these more powerful discourses. This concern for revision has been taken up by other scholars. Genaro Padilla's work on Mexican-American autobiography, for instance, makes a similar call for revision when he states that alternate ways to represent autobiographically "owned neither by Western culture nor by writing" (8) should also be studied. Ownership is not to be assumed.

While there is always a danger that my work will reify the work Doukhobors have done, I emphasize here that my work is not intended to be the last word on Doukhobor autobiographical discourse. In fact, I hope that readers of the narratives I discuss here will be encouraged to look at the primary materials and make their own decisions about what is found there, whether or not my own commentary assists that process. Therefore, readers who are interested in primary source material and who are conversant with Doukhobor history can look at chapters three to five, where readings of primary texts and recordings, integrated with theoretical commentary can be found. By striking a balance between Doukhobor materials and contemporary theory, I believe that Doukhobor material can revise contemporary theoretical ideas, while contemporary theory can describe some of the strategies Doukhobor authors have used to gain visibility inside of discourses that originally would not have been friendly or even accessible to them.

This is why I join other critics in pointing out that autobiography by minority writers and speakers is often produced by people who have not been part of the dominant narratives of subjectivity in North America. As a result, the narratives they produce hybridize their own forms and the dominant form they decide to use, which means that autobiography here can operate as a negotiating strategy. This view of autobiography as a political mark of difference does not dispense with the idea of the genre entirely; therefore, work like that produced by some Doukhobors can revise the meaning of the



term "autobiography" in the academic world. I believe that tracing the complex histories of autobiographical work by Doukhobors makes it possible to see how Doukhobors have, at different times and in different ways, attempted to write themselves into and against discourses of property, nation and individual identity that could have rendered them static, singular and silent. It is a measure of the determination by many Doukhobor writers, speakers and narrative collectors that marks these narratives as another example of what Koozma Tarasoff, quoting from the Doukhobor psalm "Tsar David Oseevich" from the Doukhobor *Living Book* has called "*plakun trava*." The *plakun trava* is a riverbed plant that thrives by growing upstream. In the psalm, *plakun trava* defines itself by the current it grows against, for "*Plakun trava* is here because/it floats against the current of the water" (*Living Book* 107-109). In autobiography discourse, *Plakun trava* can be recast as a figure that marks the work of identity negotiation and preservation in Doukhobor autobiographical discourse, defining itself by working against the prevailing discursive current.

REFUSING TO HYPHENATE: DOUKHOBOR AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL DISCOURSE

## **Chapter 1**

### **Beyond auto-bio-graphe: Alternative Autobiographical Discourse**

The dead end reached by many literary critics seeking to define the essential nature of autobiography and its proper disciplinary place results from their failure to recognize that disciplines, as well as genres, have histories, and that their boundaries are always contestable.

--Laura Marcus, "Autobiography and the Politics of Identity," 43.

#### **The Order of Things: Unpacking (my) Library**

One day while I was researching autobiography theory in my university's library, I discovered a relationship between the way autobiography has been catalogued and the critical shifts in theory and criticism of autobiography during the last twenty years. Tired of running up and down flights of stairs searching for books that seemed to be shelved all over the building, I went to the LC (Library of Congress) classification index to find out how autobiography, a "genre" that has resisted many attempts at definition, has been classified. I found that a shift in library classification mirrored a disciplinary shift in autobiography studies from autobiography as part of historical inquiry, to autobiography as part of literary studies. This can be seen in the movement of major critical texts on autobiography since the 1970s from the CT 25 section of the Library of Congress classification system, which signifies biography under the classification of history, to the HQ section under Women's Studies, to the PR section in British literature and in large

numbers to the earlier PS sections, which are where books on American literary criticism are located.

The move of texts from history to literary studies and especially American literary studies reflects a change in the way the relationship of subjectivity to text has been conceived by theorists. The epistemology that informs these changes in classification has generated a cycle of inquiry which led autobiography studies away from history, where the subject of autobiography was assumed to have value only because it was a "real" subject discussing actual events, to literary studies, where the "ordering imperative" of the subject assumed primary importance and the text of autobiography no longer seemed to be the unreflective product of its author, although the "self" of the author still seemed to some to be the subject and the object of narrative. Since the advent of politically-motivated forms of inquiry in the fields of women's studies, African-American studies and Native studies (to name very few), the study of autobiography is once again returning to historical epistemologies. But this return is not a "pure" return to the discipline of history. Informed by interdisciplinary approaches which reference developments in cultural studies and critical theory, this return questions a-historical and a-political relationships of autobiographical subjects to narrative, but also question autobiography's economy of "auto-bio-graphe" (self-life-writing) that had been suggested by James Olney as the only form which autobiographical discourse can take (Olney 1980: 19).

This last shift towards radicalizing the politics of autobiographical form coincided with autobiography's movement to certain areas of American studies and the study of subjectivity and its relationship to the making of nations. PS 366, the

designation for American autobiography also records this shift. PS 366 occupies a subsection called "American Literature--Special Topics." Other topics in the classification include: Afro-Americans, Mentally Handicapped, Sexual Perversion, Social Problems, Mexican-Americans, Swindlers and Swindling, and Wisdom. The Library of Congress' decision to classify autobiography as an Other among these "others" serves to reinscribe autobiography's status as a marginal literature about (and by) people whose work would also fall under the other designations in "Special Topics." Despite the proliferation of theory and criticism of autobiography since the mid-1980s, much of it challenging the idea that autobiographical writing can ever constitute an agreed-upon genre, autobiography theory still occupies a minor place in the general theory and criticism of literary studies as a blurry field which exceeds the boundaries of what is acceptable to studies of literature. Autobiography, as it is now studied, is neither history nor fiction. It is also both.

As Julia Watson has pointed out, it is now almost obligatory to retrace the development of autobiographical criticism as a way to situate one's own reading of the autobiographical subject (Watson 58). And as Laura Marcus has pointed out in *Auto/biographical Discourses*, it is now apparent that autobiographical theory and criticism has created a separate set of assumptions about subjectivity, in addition to reflecting the debates about the subject taking place in literary and cultural studies (8). It is important to trace these critical movements as they develop in autobiographical studies because, like autobiographical discourses themselves, they are not merely passive reflectors of larger cultural movements and moments. The debates in autobiographical

theory indicate, in microcosm, what is at stake in the development of literary and cultural theory more generally about the ways in which subjectivity works in Western cultures. They also, increasingly, contribute to these debates as autobiographical criticism assumes the character of an institutionalized discipline whose properties no longer need to be traced.

### **The Publicly Private Subject: Autobiography Criticism and Origins**

Olney's dream of autobiography as a territory which can be "secured" for literary studies and rescued from history (1980: 22) has not materialized because of the emergence of politically-grounded theories of identity. This happened because autobiography studies has shifted from a dependence on earlier, canonized models of a psychologized, internalized "self" which can represent the consciousness of an epoch to an understanding of identity as positional, political and contextual. Following initial work by feminist scholars on autobiography and gender, scholars are now examining autobiography by autobiographers who have not been part of the naturalization of Western "selfhood" constructed by conditions including (but not limited to) property ownership, masculinity, whiteness, European languages, an assumption of a shared Christian heritage, and literacy. These studies are beginning to change what has been considered legitimate autobiography, who autobiographers can be, and how what Linda Hutcheon in a postmodernist context has called "ex-centric" national subjects<sup>1</sup> use aspects of autobiographical discourse in order to write and speak themselves (often under the mark of difference) as subjects into the very discourse which excludes them.

This study of Doukhobor autobiographical discourse situates itself in the context of these developing areas of inquiry, without cancelling out the work on the subject of autobiography that the more recent approaches critique. In this way, it moves beyond Olney's figure of "auto-bio-graphe" as the pure discourse of a single author's written life, "captured" for literary study, without denying the power of that discourse in the West. This is important to do because, as Marcus has observed, the recent accommodations made in autobiographical theory to complex, politically-grounded models of identity may be able to make use of the previous debates about the ideal subject in deconstructionist and humanist critical discourse about autobiography (223). Older work on autobiography should be open to critique rather than dismissal. And in some cases, the most recent work on autobiography could benefit from some aspects of autobiography that may have been overlooked.

Autobiographical criticism has been, even in its beginnings, occupied with origins as a way to legitimate its critical discourse within the academy and to chart the disciplinary move from history to literary studies. Reviews of the critical literature usually locate Wilhelm Dilthey, a German historian writing in the early part of the twentieth century, and his son-in-law Georg Misch as the "proto-theorists" of autobiography, although their influence on contemporary writings about autobiography is indirect at best. James Olney, in his 1980 collection *Autobiography: Essays Theoretical and Critical*, was the first to link Dilthey's and Misch's contributions as influencing the work of Georges Gusdorf (8), a representation of their thinking which was repeated by other critics such as Janet Varner Gunn as evidence of a "long tradition of thought" about

autobiography as a genre in its own right (Gunn 7). In fact, although Marcus states categorically that Dilthey and Misch had a profound impact on the work of later theorists Karl Weintraub and Roy Pascal (*Auto/biographical* 135) who set the conditions for most of the subsequent study of autobiography in English, this influence is in fact muted.

What is important about this earlier work on autobiography is that the early work has been seen by later theorists as foundational because it has been represented as originary, much in the way that Augustine's *Confessions* is commonly mentioned as paradigmatic in autobiography studies simply because someone--possibly Weintraub--once said that it was the "first" real autobiography from which all others must flow. This is how Augustine's position as a medieval early Christian subject is elided and his text co-opted for humanist constructions as a confessional "form" which influences all later texts whether or not they operate within the same constructions of subjectivity. From there, an influential critic such as Northrop Frye can claim that autobiography is part of a literary category called "the confession" invented by Augustine, later merged with fiction by Rousseau and merged with the essay by Montaigne (Frye 307). Such a situating of early figures in this way means that their impact and influence occur in a formalist critical universe, without reference to other critical movements or more widely-accepted theories about subjectivity, literature and history. The same thing happened in the parallel critical discourse about autobiography. When James Olney says "in the beginning, then, was Georges Gusdorf," he imparts the authority of the Judeo-Christian creation story to a European philosopher who, Olney adds, also owes a profound debt to Dilthey and Misch



(Olney 1988: 8). Other critics accepted Olney's statements without questioning them, with the qualified exception of Sidonie Smith.<sup>2</sup>

What then, is the critical legacy of Dilthey and Misch, as Olney presents them? Olney views Dilthey and Misch as the ur-theorists of autobiography, part of a history of the individual and as part of a tendency, brought to fruition by Gusdorf, to declare autobiographical studies as central and valuable for anyone studying literature generally. What is interesting about Olney's assertions is that Dilthey and Misch operate here as harbingers of a tradition of autobiographical criticism which places autobiography at the centre of historical enquiry, while autobiography is recaptured from history in a set of formalist moves with reference to this same "tradition." Dilthey's conception of history as the unfolding of ordinary lives in what he called "the life-stream" which can form the ground for meaning in anyone's autobiography meant that, in theory, anyone could write a universal narrative grounded in historical consciousness.<sup>3</sup> Georg Misch's *A History of Autobiography in Antiquity* linked Dilthey's ideas to what Marcus calls "an ultimately conservative development of Dilthey's thought which incorporates autobiographies into a Whiggish history of the advance of the human mind" (*Auto/biographical* 148). This means that when Dilthey cites Augustine, Rousseau and Goethe as 'typical examples' of those who can convert their life-stories into exemplary structures but then focuses on Goethe as the writer who is best able to graft "meaning" onto history, he provides a way for subsequent critics to claim that autobiography is central to the grand narrative of history in the structuring of the remembered events rather than the events themselves. Such a set of conditions for autobiographical production makes autobiography readable

as the production of men "of their times," which privileges a type of liberal, bourgeois, male, white subject over other types of subjectivity, and which makes possible the recuperation of Augustine (who shared none of these characteristics except for gender) as the originator of this tradition although he had little influence on it.

In the subsequent work of Georg Misch, Dilthey's focus on unity and coherence as fundamental principles of autobiography and history becomes conservative, and the idea of historic progression serves to enshrine Dilthey's "examples" as canonical because they can access a universal discourse of the subject better than others. This is why Misch ends his study with the *Confessions* of Augustine as the ancient world's crowning achievement. Autobiography, if it is exemplary, represents the spirit of the age in which it was written, and since human history for Misch is intimately related to advancing self-reflection, autobiography becomes closely linked to public enterprise and to the only type of subject who can participate in this enterprise, a masculinist, European subject who can "reflect" on a selfhood already generated and inflected by this advancing liberal culture.

But this selfhood is *not* described as public in the way that Sidonie Smith and others have assumed. Instead, Misch assumes a radical interiority of the subject influenced by Romanticism, with its emphasis on self-discovery and self-reflection<sup>4</sup>. Memoirs, he concludes, "offer a passive relation to the world," while in autobiographies the life story is central, and active (Marcus 149), a distinction repeated often in autobiographical criticism. Most feminist critics have assumed that traditional autobiographical discourse is masculinist because it is public, the record of great men. This understanding of women's writings as irreducibly private if they do not repeat this

masculinist discourse conflicts with the conflation of autobiography, made by Misch and by Gusdorf after him, with Romantic subjectivity. Here, Smith's critique is misplaced because she assumes that the relation of author, work and public described by Misch as "normative" is to be equated with the representative status of autobiographies in the public sphere. The difficulty is that the interiority of the Romantic subject, who turns away from historical concerns in order to "reflect" on the self's uniqueness and in so doing captures through its coherence (not correspondence) the spirit of the age, is an elite subject whose being is guaranteed not by the writing of a text, but by social conditions which allow such a narrative of interiority to take place.

This is why memoir is the repressed other of autobiography, both in traditional autobiographical criticism and in critiques of that criticism. Its very publicity is held to be creatively inferior in a cultural milieu where the assertion of subjectivity is held to be paramount, while narratives of interiority are critiqued as public narratives of worthy authors whose lives guarantee the success of their writings. But when ethnic minority writers and speakers use memoir form, the publicity of memoir discourse can work to eliminate the caesura between self and other which forms the basis for gendered, racial and cultural exploitation as part of discourses about difference. Because subjectivity in a memoir is constructed in terms of the *events* a subject witnesses or affects rather than in terms of a radical interiority guaranteed by "culture" or "history," memoir forms can allow for different constructions of subjectivity than those usually authorized by dominant discourses. The memoir form can combine with "outlaw" narrative forms to create new forms which strategically construct alternative public subjects visible to non-

members of the oppressed group that do not compromise that group's difference: forms such as the Latin American *testimonio* described by John Beverly (92-93), the Holocaust survivor narrative and, in this study, the Doukhobor witness narrative.

Misch's and Dilthey's contributions are usually traced through their influence on that early essay of Gusdorf found in Olney's 1980 collection. This essay, more than any other, has served to establish a theoretical tradition in autobiographical theory while it furnishes the means to critique that tradition. Although Gusdorf's work was known by few theorists and critics of autobiography before Olney published the English translation of "Conditions and Limits of Autobiography" more than twenty years after Gusdorf first published it, its retroactive impact served to set the focus for most discussion of autobiography from 1980 to the present. As Olney claims in his introduction:

Thus, it is only with Gusdorf's essay...that all the questions and concerns--philosophical, psychological, literary, and more generally humanistic--that have preoccupied students of autobiography from 1956 to 1978 were first fully and clearly laid out and given comprehensive and brilliant, if necessarily brief, consideration. (Olney 1980: 9)

Olney underscores the importance of "Conditions and Limits of Autobiography" when he placed it first in the 1980 collection, which assured its prominence in debate out of proportion to its impact before this date. In fact, Gusdorf's essay and the importance which Olney assigned to it worked to obscure some of the more complex operations of the autobiography theorists working in the 1970s, particularly as feminist critics in the 1980s began to critique liberal humanist aspects of the discourse and used Gusdorf, the "father" of autobiographical criticism, as a focus for critique.

In "Conditions and Limits of Autobiography" particularly but also in other writings, Gusdorf combines concerns of Dilthey, Misch, psychology and aspects of Christianized existentialist philosophy to construct a humanist matrix for autobiography that places it at the centre of cultural production. Gusdorf assigns concepts of the self borrowed from Romanticism--singularity and inner consciousness--and links these to existentialist ideas about an individual's position in the world as a responsible agent (Gusdorf 31). Consciousness of self guarantees autobiographical production as cultural production, although Gusdorf departs from Misch in that he maintains that memory imposes order by means of narrative rather than reproducing a "whole" self (41-42). Instead, "the autobiographer strains toward a complete and coherent expression of his entire destiny" (35), which guarantees the uniqueness of autobiography as a discourse.

Only the autobiographer can tell this story of interiority, which makes autobiography part of a grand narrative, not of history but of the history of advancing consciousness. As Gusdorf observes, "autobiography is a second reading of experience, and it is truer than the first because it adds to experience itself consciousness of it" (38). Here, Dilthey's emphasis on experience as the guarantee of narrative has been altered to a more existentialist understanding of narrative as the ordering imperative of experience, while experience now legitimizes the central position of the ordering imperative. According to Gusdorf, this makes autobiography a unique, established genre due to this link between consciousness and experience. Autobiography is also creative because the author orders experience and therefore orders *himself* so that he reorders history. This reading of autobiography serves to lift it out of the arena of historical inquiry into the

realm of aesthetics when he says that, "Autobiography is not a simple recapitulation of the past; it is also the attempt and the drama of a man struggling to reassemble himself in his own likeness at a certain moment of his history" (43).

Gusdorf claims that this struggle is a religious one, an act of confession created as the author links inner space with outer space in a ritual of continuous becoming. The autobiographer continuously creates his<sup>5</sup> *life* as he creates its narrative, an act of creation akin to the creation of the world by the Judeo-Christian God. The unity of subject and object discussed in Misch as the aim of autobiography here becomes a spiritual quest for this series of links between public space, the space of the speaking subject, and interior space, the space of memory which authorizes the uniqueness of the subject's position, existence and message (32). This space, following Dilthey, is deliberately not public, since "merely" public writing is the territory of memoir, a non-creative genre written by "great men" in their leisure time and in their old age (28). As he claims in *auto-biographie* the autobiographer has a "higher" mission, the move from private to public:

*devient auteur, c'est-à-dire créateur. Et non pas seulement créateur de l'oeuvre littéraire, mais d'abord créateur de soi-même. Le premier mouvement de l'extériorisation par l'écriture suscite un mouvement compensateur et sens inverse.* (Gusdorf 12)

This exteriorization of the subject can occur because the subject "finds" his inner self and then finds it again in a narrative of liberal self-reflection already circulating in the culture. This is how Gusdorf can claim in "Conditions and Limits of Autobiography," in a statement now commonly contested by critics who point out its innate assumption of colonizing selfhood: "it is obvious that autobiography is not possible in a cultural

landscape where consciousness of self does not, properly speaking, exist" (30). The narrative itself occurred when the West, here characterized as humanity, moved into a history guaranteed by the written word.<sup>6</sup> For autobiography to occur, "humanity must have emerged from the mythic framework of traditional teachings and must have entered into the perilous domain of history" (30) where the individual is entirely responsible for "confessing" his actions in an act of making a history of consciousness via a "special" consciousness of his place in history, his destiny (44). Significantly, this reading of history serves to remove autobiographical discourse from a history of the subject, since it incorporates the autobiographical subject into the "discovery" of certain narratives of subjectivity in the West. The self, Gusdorf claims, makes situations happen (37). Therefore, the self has its own history which can be traced through the "great" narratives of a genre dedicated to it, in Gusdorf's case from Augustine, to Gide, to Rousseau, to Goethe, to Chateaubriand, to Cardinal Newman (28).

Olney reads the way that Gusdorf lifts autobiographical discourse out of the "perilous domain of history" into a set of mythic confessional structures. These have been set into motion by Augustine as evidence of the *Zeitgeist* of autobiographical criticism. Gusdorf's approach, he concludes, had no direct influence on autobiographical criticism in Britain and America but nonetheless could be seen as the background to an intellectual and spiritual atmosphere found everywhere at that time (Olney 1980: 11). Laura Marcus historicizes this "atmosphere" as part of two projects: the more specific activity of "rescuing" autobiography from the domain of history writing, which Olney outlines, and the more general reaction in the United States to the formalist criticisms advocated by the

New Critics of the 1940s and 1950s. This second reaction took two forms: either a post-structuralist critique of close-reading and the nature of the subject influenced by the work of Paul de Man, or a refutation of formalism in favour of a return to humanism influenced by phenomenological and psychological modes of reading, which became the reason for Gusdorf's later influence. In all cases, autobiography became the focus of these debates about the fact/fiction dichotomy, the value of genre theory, the reevaluation of Romanticism as the rhetoric of a psychologized individuality and the definition of the "literary" (Marcus 181-182).

### **The "Problem" of Genre, the Subject of Autobiography**

In autobiography theory, Roy Pascal, along with Wayne Shumaker, is credited as one of the earlier theorists of autobiography to construct a systemic view of the "genre" along with a historically-based canon of texts and an understanding of autobiography's aesthetic properties. His work *Design and Truth in Autobiography* (1960) is positivist in that it is based on a large list of texts which he arranges into rigid categories. Although Pascal has been criticized for creating a critical hierarchy of autobiography because it uses as models narratives by Western men, Pascal's most difficult legacy does not involve this set of canonical moves. What is problematic about Pascal's study is its construction of an epistemology which "admits" certain autobiographers into the charmed circle of typology while it excludes others, not on the direct basis of gender, race, nation and class, but on the *body of knowledge* a writing subject was supposed to produce as part of autobiography's formation as genre. These knowledge-structures become increasingly



ritualized after Pascal's initial work in the area. But in the work of Pascal, the struggle for an epistemology which represents dominant discourse so that autobiography can "be" a genre is evident and the subsequent difficulties critics had with the relationship between the writer of autobiography and the subject of autobiographical narrative are clearly in evidence.

Pascal begins with his concern that the "form" of autobiography needs to be defined, a clear act of genre-building in order to place autobiography on par with other forms, such as poetry or the novel (2-3). Following Misch, Pascal decides that the source of individual life is spiritual, and that this is found in the identification of "personality." Autobiography is a record of the personality rather than of verisimilitude (7-8). Like Gusdorf, Pascal is able to lift autobiography from the realm of history in this way, so that his measure of autobiographical success (truth) can be found in the structure of the narrative (design) and its evocation of "personality", which happens wherever humanist constructions of subjectivity occur. "Personality" is communicated successfully through the text when a correspondence occurs between inner and outer life in a way recognizable to the public. In a statement which encapsulates the struggle autobiography critics have had when they have tried to define (or deconstruct) autobiography as a genre, Pascal remarks on the correspondence between design and truth as a correspondence between the written subject of autobiography and the "non-textual" subject. He attempts to resolve the disjuncture as an instance of doubling when he says that "the autobiographer has in fact a double character. He exists to some degree as an object, a man recognisable from outside....but he is also the subject" (Pascal 71). Here, Pascal admits--although he does

not inquire much further--that once the historicity of a subject is questioned, the problem of autobiography becomes the unmanageability of the "inside" narrative and the "outside" subject. How can one keep the "inside" inside and the "outside" outside so that "truth" is communicated? Pascal decides that this balance is achieved by means of three things: critical judgement, "correct" publicity and the need for a narrative shape determined by publicity. Critical judgement, which also serves to enshrine the importance of the autobiography critic, depends on an awareness of inside/outside communications between text and life and an ability to "choose" what the classics are in terms of this balance and coherence, a re-reading of Dilthey in terms of critical taste. Therefore, autobiographies by mystics fail as "true" autobiography because their composition of the subject is too "interior," while memoirs fail, predictably, because they are too public and are not focussed enough on the personality (9). The best autobiographies, it seems, are by men and women "of outstanding achievement in life" (10) who communicate an understanding of the subject as formed by history, but grounded in narrative design. This opens the way for an autobiographical canon to be constructed where the texts may refer to each other and to Pascal's aesthetic categories without reference to the historic sets of authorizations which enable these autobiographers to write themselves as subjects. Pascal's canon, therefore, begins with Augustine and then moves to Benjamin Franklin, to Rousseau, to Wordsworth and culminates with Goethe, from whom Pascal borrows the title of his own study. Although Pascal leaves room for women "of achievement" in his bibliography which concludes *Design and Truth*, the requirements for a balance between reflection and public activity, on one hand, eliminate alternative autobiographical forms, while on the

other the model for public activity, "achievement," becomes conflated with a cultural memory of achievement which excludes women. Women enter this retrospective discourse of fame not as women, but as those who have negotiated this discourse successfully due to other "advantages." Therefore, after Pascal, autobiographies by Virginia Woolf, Mary MacCarthy, Gertrude Stein, Zora Neal Hurston, Saint Theresa and Maxine Hong Kingston do get discussed by autobiography critics, but not in terms of epistemological specificity (and struggle) bound up with issues faced by those who do not wholly participate in the dominant narratives of Western identity which Pascal outlined.

Finally, Pascal's requirement for coherent narrative, although it has been read as an endorsement of the untroubled liberal subject, points out the difficulties of asserting narrativity and experience as mutually determinate. As Pascal states:

what is important [in autobiography is that it] has to have a shape, an outward shape in the narrative, and this shape is the outcome of an interpenetration and collusion of inner and outer life, of the person and society. The shape interprets both. (185)

Pascal's insistence on shape as the way to heal the inner/outer split between text and life only serves to problematize the split. For in Pascal's formulation, the shape "interprets" somehow: there are no reading communities and no difficulties with the transference of "experience" into writing, difficulties which are raised by later critics concerned with psychoanalysis, textuality and the gender of autobiographical subjects. At the moment of canon-building, when the referentiality of the autobiographical subject should be the most secure, Pascal's resolution serves to undermine that referentiality since it gives the power of interpretation to form, not content, and to the text only. Subsequent movements in

critical theory would further undermine this attempt to keep inside and outside, self and community, text and life, writer and reader firmly in their places, which made impossible the creation of fixed autobiography canons and frustrated attempts to codify autobiography as a genre.

One of the results of this difficulty with the referentiality of the autobiographical text was what is now known as the work of the New Model Theorists. Although their work does not amount to that of a critical school, New Model theorists including John Sturrock, James Olney, Paul Jay, Paul John Eakin, Janet Varner Gunn and most recently Robert Folkenflik have stressed that autobiography study should not be tied to history, but to the process of memory and its written reproductions. This position stresses that the narrative of autobiography does not and should not represent historically-received models of life narrative, but should correspond ontologically with the experience of "life as lived" (Eakin, *Fictions* 5). Sturrock, in his article "The New Model Autobiographer," for example, claims that autobiography "has everything to learn" from psychoanalysis and therefore should depart from historical chronology to take on the trappings of fiction (Sturrock 54), while Paul Jay claims that autobiography is a "talking cure," a therapeutic narrative which elides the split between self and text through the act of narration (Jay 25). James Olney summarizes this move when he explains that New Model critics have shifted the focus from "bios," a reflective telling of the life story to "auto," the autobiographical self created/discovered/reflected through the telling of life as story (Olney 1980: 19).

But "graphe," the problem of writing and referral, largely remains untheorized in Olney's reading, and with good reason. The insistence of some New Model theorists that some type of autobiographical "consciousness" could be accurately communicated via narrative does not usually include a discussion of language's power to refer. This difficulty raises a series of questions about narrativity, genre and subjectivity which, with varying degrees of success, New Model theorists have attempted to resolve. Does, for example, the structure of narration "reproduce" autobiographical memory from a pre-existing subject, or does the narrative itself "produce" autobiographic identity which corresponds to an extra-textual self through patterns of experience only? And if autobiography is really about consciousness and the manipulation of quasi-fictive elements, is it a true genre separate from fiction? Here is where the critical terrain of the New Model Theorists combines with aspects of phenomenology in complex attempts to resolve the splits between narrative, self and life. Some grounded the autobiographical self in a type of "consciousness," although it became difficult to say whether consciousness was located in "experience," or narrative. Grounding consciousness in experience led to phenomenological readings that created essentialist relationships between self and form: form is ontological function (Eakin 34). Grounding consciousness in "narrative" led critics such as Janet Varner Gunn or James Olney to either affirm that consciousness *is* narrative but not in a poststructuralist sense (Olney *Metaphors* 30-34) or that narrative manifests the same "deep structures" found in consciousness, a turn towards phenomenology which attempts to mend the gap between fictional and autobiographical structures by stating that autobiography is an act of reading (Gunn 15-17).

But as in the case of phenomenological readings in other areas, this type of approach depends on a subject insulated from a contextual set which constructs it. The self always operates independently of place or time while it insists on absolute agency for the "self" through consciousness: the self knows itself, understands itself and acts independently of textual constructions which "it" also creates. And in autobiography theory generally, this type of phenomenological reading has given rise to debates about the "fictionality" of autobiography. If autobiography is really about the self constructing a narrative of its own symbolizations, what is the difference between autobiography and fictional first-person narratives? This is one of the reasons why Olney makes a case for autobiography's undecidability as a genre, a position taken up by many subsequent theorists (Olney 4-5).

One of the more rigorous ways in which the questions of narrative, subjectivity and genre have been addressed in New Model theory occurs as part of structuralism. In *Le pact autobiographique*, which recognizes with Benveniste that the writing subject and the written subject of autobiography may not entirely refer, Philippe LeJeune attempted to narrow the question of autobiographical genre to a question of the validity of the author's "signature." Although LeJeune has been criticized by humanists and poststructuralists for doing this, LeJeune remains the only theorist to deal with autobiography as a mode of identity production tied to the realm of publishing. This consideration is important, since it stresses that autobiography is not only a literary enterprise, but also a discourse which participates in capitalist enterprise. Although LeJeune did not pursue this line of inquiry, his study of the signature does indicate that

autobiographical identities have use-value which enables autobiographical narrative to circulate in the public realm. This aspect of autobiographical discourse has been useful for minority writers and speakers who can use the publicity of the discourse to gain visibility as subjects. But the use-value of autobiography can potentially work against these subjects by constructing their identities in their narratives as exotic, "other" commodities. This difficulty can be found in Doukhobor autobiographical discourse.

Like LeJeune, Elizabeth Bruss uses aspects of linguistic theory, in her case from Austin and Searle, to create a definition of autobiography as an illocutionary act in which the author and the protagonist are the same person (11). Bruss' formalist stance about genre obscures interesting observations she makes about autobiographical discourse itself as a cultural product. Her comments echo LeJeune's focus on autobiography as a cultural product. Bruss recognizes that "conceptions of individual identity are articulated, extended and developed through an institution like autobiography" (5). Her statement indicates that autobiography is an institution which has created discursive rules for identity formation at the same time as it has participated in identity constructions in Western cultures. In the same vein, Bruss observes that autobiography as a genre is produced by "implicit contextual conditions" circulating in culture, including the emergence of bourgeois subjectivity in the developing novel form during the eighteenth century in Britain and Europe (4,6). In a rare moment of cross-disciplinary thinking which anticipates the role the study of autobiography would play in the development of cultural studies, Bruss' discussion of autobiography as a cultural-linguistic act bridges the gap, articulated by the New Model theorists, between text and life by refiguring

autobiography as an instance of linguistic identity formation occurring in other discourses simultaneously.

Bruss' and LeJeune's ideas about autobiographical discourse have not gained wide currency, perhaps because the referentiality of the autobiographical subject became the battle-ground between phenomenological and humanist approaches and poststructuralist approaches to the idea of the subject. Olney opposed poststructuralism in the introduction to his 1980 collection (23-24), following Gusdorf's more blunt dismissal in a 1975 article where he says that deconstructionist critiques of autobiography conduct an autopsy of the death of liberal man (Gusdorf, 958). An important article by Paul de Man, "Autobiography as De-facement," served to focus the debate in studies of autobiography on the question of the ability of the autobiographical subject to refer. De Man dispenses with genre-construction as an impossible task, while he links deconstruction as firmly to the dissolution of the Romantic autobiographical subject as phenomenological humanisms linked it to the Romantic subject's "discovery" of identity as a creative project. Most notably, de Man's essay records the subject/object split observed by other critics of autobiography from Gusdorf to LeJeune, but unlike other theorists, he refuses to resolve the split in terms of authorial intention, the operation of generic "types" or even, in the broad sense, the activity of the reader.

De Man begins his discussion by pointing out that attempts to make autobiography into a genre to give it a place "among the canonical hierarchies of the major literary genres" (919) fail in part due to the undecidability of autobiography's



origins and to the intersection of other "laws" of genre about what constitutes poetic

language and autobiographic form:

we assume that life *produces* the autobiography as an act produces its consequences, but can we not suggest, with equal justice, that the autobiographical project may itself produce and determine the life and that whatever the writer *does* is in fact governed by the technical demands of self-portraiture and thus determined, in all its aspects, by the resources of his medium? (920)

If either aspect of the autobiographical "economy" can circulate an image of subjectivity, "autobiography, then, is not a genre or a mode, but a figure of reading or of understanding that occurs, to some degree, in all texts" which occurs as a specular moment of mutual substitution by two subjects within a network of tropes signifying subjectivity even as they signify an attempt to escape the tropes which constitute it (921-923). For de Man, this set of ceaseless tropic substitutions prevents the possibility of referral. The figure of *prosopopeia*, the address to a voiceless or dead entity which posits the possibility of the reply of what is mute, is for him the trope of autobiography, making autobiography the sign, not of life due to life "story," but of death because the ceaseless circulation of life-tropes defaces any attempt to do anything but represent the un-representable (926, 930). The moment of reading, therefore, only occurs in a recognition that one's own status in that economy is tropic because one's own figures of recognition are also tropic. Autobiography is mute. The split between subject and object, the "I" who speaks and the "eye" that sees the "speaking," cannot be surmounted.

De Man's devastating critique of attempts to codify autobiography as a genre has been alternately welcomed, vilified and also ignored as naive because it de-historicizes

subjectivity at the expense of those whose representational status cannot be disfigured because it has never been figured. However, as Marcus points out, Mary Jacobus has revised de Man's narrow paradigm of mutually displacing speculativeness to reading as a performative moment between reader and autobiographer which is also

an act of generic ascription whereby textual and epistemological instability or hybridity are neutralised, and, in the conflation of generic type and of character, the text is both given a recognisable generic home and at the same time stabilised as the utterance of a coherent subject, authorised by the proper name. (Marcus 207)

Jacobus is actually revising Le Jeune in order to revise de Man so that she links autobiography as a discourse of the proper name to the act of reading. This grounds her discussion politically. *Prosopopeia* is not the figure which operates as the abject preventing speech, but a figure of correspondence which allows historically recognizable strategies of identity-formation to take place. In this way, reading does not guarantee genre, but positions genre and subjectivity for strategic purposes within interpretive communities.

Mary Jacobus' reinterpretation of de Man's evocation of reading indicates what the legacy of deconstruction is in terms of current autobiography theory. When de Man's theory of reading is combined with Derrida's formulation of autobiography as guaranteed through the ear of the *other*--the reader, who signs and authorizes (51)--it is possible to conceive of the existence of reading communities who read the tropes of autobiographical identity *differently* than those proscribed and prescribed by the canonic figures of Romanticism. The "auto" of autobiography cannot exist, not because it talks to itself, but because it does not exist without (an)other to authorize it. This difference changes what

the relationship between subjectivity and trope is. For writers operating outside dominant identity discourses, this opens up the autobiographical subject to multiple readings and reconstructions, since identity for these writers has been situated as Other (or Others) already by the discourse of identity which de Man critiques. The legacy of deconstruction, then, is the possibility it offers of multiple subject positions constructed within autobiography rhetoric rather than its insistence on autobiographical tropism as the necessary death of all subjects. Marcus' comments on the impact of 1970s deconstruction are appropriate here:

what seems to have emerged from this process [of poststructural critique of the subject] is a stronger sense of the plurality and the social construction of subjectivities and, possibly, a shift from concepts of 'subjectivity' to those of 'identity' and 'difference', concepts less philosophically burdened and more overtly attuned to culture and history. (201)

This sense that the subject could be plural, multiple and socially-constructed has moved the study of autobiography away from attempts to bridge gaps between self, text and life and linked autobiography to other forms of cultural production. Kathleen Ashley's statements reflect this shift when she observes that the "disappearance" of the subject may herald multiple tropic identifications in autobiography:

what writings of autobiography are possible when the autonomous self is not the privileged speaker, when the mark of autobiography--the I--may designate a place from which to speak, an authority in some discourses and not others, the signature of self-representation wherever it appears? (7)

Michael M.J. Fischer, an anthropologist who refigures anthropology's long use of the "life history" through postmodern theory, affirms the importance of multi-vocality in

autobiography and its connection to other cultural forms. He refers to the use of a multiple subject as strategic:

But perhaps the most important use of life histories, increasingly so in the contemporary world, is the strategic use of a life frame that straddles major social and cultural transformations. (82)

When these observations about the possibilities of a multiple subject which can strategically occupy many discourses become combined with politically-motivated theories of autobiography, autobiographical writing and speaking by people who have not been participants in grand narratives of self in autobiography discourse can be read as a series of identity-consolidation strategies which critique grand narratives as they make use of some of their elements. These developments mark the final move in autobiography theory away from the "problem" of genre and classification, to examinations of autobiography as part of culture, a discourse situated within other cultural discourses that construct and are constructed by many conditions of subjectivity.

### **The Subject of Gender, the Gendered Subject: Women's Autobiography Theory**

In his introduction to his 1980 collection *Autobiography: Essays Theoretical and Critical*, James Olney wrote that the advent of politically-grounded interdisciplinary fields of enquiry should be linked to autobiography criticism and theory. For Olney, autobiography could even become what he calls the "focalizing literature" for these fields, which he decides need a centre to provide privileged access to a unique experience (12-13). Since Olney assumed an unproblematic relationship between the subject and language, autobiography could function metonymically as national subjectivity.

Although the difficulties with this thinking have become obvious, Olney makes a case for considering autobiography as a cultural product and a way to understand the history of oppressed people in its linkage of place and subject:

To understand the American mind in all its complexity--so goes the argument--read a variety of American autobiographies....the student who sees autobiography as the central document possesses something very like a key to all the other literature as well. (14)

This view of autobiography's usefulness presents it as inextricably linked to an Americanist ideology of bourgeois individualism, self-reliance and uniqueness, a view perpetuated in the work of many Americanists. Albert E. Stone, for example, links autobiography to American individualism when he says that:

the individualist ideal continues to inspire many twentieth-century Americans, especially when they participate in autobiographical occasions as authors and audiences. [These authors] therefore exhibit their shared belief not only in *individualism* as a common cultural value but also in *identity* as a vital personal achievement. (9)

Stone's belief that American individualism closely matches autobiographical imperatives neglects what Robert F. Sayre said earlier, that autobiography in America is a commodity within an industry of identity in which citizenship and identity become part of the same ideal, creating "the identification of autobiography *in America with America*" (Sayre 147).

But Olney's list of "likely" texts for study does indicate that there will be room for contesting narratives, even contested "Americas," within the paradigm since he includes autobiographies of Booker T. Washington, Malcolm X, Frederick Douglass, Olaudah Equiano, Richard Wright and Maya Angelou among others. And in this sense, Olney's

belief was accurate that autobiography would be pivotal, particularly within Americanist modes of inquiry in the disciplines of women's studies, American studies, African-American studies, Native-American studies and Chicano/a studies. What occurred, however, was a shift from the debates about the referentiality of the subject to politically-contextualized readings of identity as it appears in narratives by writers whose identities exclude them from dominant constructions of the subject.

In the area of women's autobiography, for instance, considerations of gendered subjectivity first meant that the autobiographical canon was revised and an alternate tradition of women's autobiography established which took into account the position of women as Other within Western traditions. Other scholars recovered non-traditional and "illegitimate" forms of autobiography or self writing: letters, diaries and memoirs, theorizing that women tend to choose the disrupted, discontinuous forms such as diaries and letters to express themselves in the private realm rather than the public form of autobiography with its (ostensibly) centred subject (Walker 278, Nussbaum "Eighteenth" 151-152). Consideration of these alternative autobiographical forms, as Celeste Schenck observes, led many critics to notice how divisions of genre are in fact gendered, since they mark off the "major" genres as the preserve of male writers, which are to be kept free of contamination by those "others" not authorized to participate in the discourse as valid subjects using the accepted forms of expression (Schenck 281-282).

Despite critiques of genre which began to appear in some work, much of the earlier feminist criticism of women's autobiography argued for the inclusion of women's autobiographical productions in the autobiography canon along with the alternative

framings of knowledge they contained. At first, these were described by paradigms of lack or failure due to the gendered split between public and private spheres, with the autobiography criticism tradition presented as that of the single male author successfully surmounting, on his own, obstacles in public life without referring to private difficulties or to others (namely, women) who helped him on his vocational way. Mary G. Mason, for example, claimed that women's life-writing "seems to acknowledge the real presence and recognition of another's consciousness, and the disclosure of female self is linked to the identification of some 'other'" (Mason 210) and Carolyn Heilbrun wrote that women who live the male "quest plot", which emphasizes public achievement alone, only "succeed" in narrative by chance or as exceptions to this--gendered--rule (Heilbrun 25).

By the latter half of the 1980s, these paradigms of failure had been revised as an alternative set of narrations which indicate how women's essential nature is defined by means of interaction with others as community which admit splits between self/other, subject/object that autobiographies by men do not feature. To this end, critics such as Susan Stanford Friedman and Shari Benstock use aspects of the psychoanalytic theory of Lacan, Chodorow and theories of community by Rowbotham to indicate how women experience split subjectivities which enable them to formulate alternatives to the Law of the Father as selves-in-community (Benstock 29; Friedman 39). The formation of these alternative "selves" went hand-in-hand with a critique of autobiography criticism which linked Gusdorf's, Pascal's and Olney's version of autobiography with patriarchal discourse, as in the introduction of Brodzki and Schenck's *Life/Lines*:

the (masculine) tradition of autobiography beginning with Augustine had taken as its first premise the mirror capacity of the autobiographer: *his* universality, *his* representativeness, *his* role as spokesman for the community. (Brodzki & Schenck, 1)

These critics make an important point: autobiographers whose subjectivities fall outside the singularity of the subject as a "self" can construct multiple identities, in community, against hegemonic (and in this case patriarchal) subject formations privileged in liberal discourses of the individual. Shari Benstock's essay, for instance, attacks Olney and Gusdorf's investment in the coherence of the autobiographical subject and assumes that the stability they assign to autobiographies by men "stabilizes" over time. Her argument collapses autobiography theory and its texts into a single rhetoric of male selfhood (19-20). Friedman also critiques Gusdorf and Olney for creating a "model of separate and unique selfhood" which "ignore the role of collective and relational identities in the individuation process of women and minorities" (Friedman 34-35).

One of the most important contributions of feminist autobiography theory after this point has been the connections in the connection theorists have made between the genealogy of the discourse of the subject and issues of gender difference. The most sustained critique of autobiography criticism as masculinist is that of Sidonie Smith, the autobiography theorist who arguably has had the most impact on autobiography studies since the publication of her first book, *A Poetics of Women's Autobiography* in 1987. Smith was the first feminist theorist to describe the poetics of autobiography theory and criticism as androcentric, not simply because the canon is incomplete, but because historical elements which constructed the androcentric subject from the European



eighteenth century to the advent of Freudianism made autobiography possible as only that type of discourse (*Poetics*, 4).

Smith's rapid overview of the making of this masculinist subject in autobiography theory traces the debates between New Model theorists, phenomenologists and poststructuralists in order to ask "where in the maze of proliferating definitions and theories, in the articulation of teleologies and epistemologies...is there any consideration of woman's *bios*, woman's *aute*, woman's *graphia*, and woman's hermeneutics?" (7). Smith uses this question as a way to determine that this question cannot be answered by autobiography theory because it both ignores and minimizes gender as an organizing category of knowledge. Like Benstock and Friedman, Smith turns to the work of Chodorow, Homans and Irigaray in order to emphasize woman's essential nature as communal, and her language as a work against silencing: as she says, "seemingly silent and repressed, woman comes to speak loudly as she intervenes in the phallic drive of masculine discourse with her alternative language of fluid, plural subjectivity" (13). Although her evocation of biological essentialism in terms of women's absolute difference is now open to critique, Smith's analysis opened the field of feminist autobiography studies to a sustained critique of the subject using contemporary critical theory. Autobiography then becomes, in its refusal of androcentric subjectivity and its formation of alternative subjectivities, a politically-motivated act which can be examined via post-structural feminisms that remain politically-grounded in a re/viewing of the discourse of subjectivity (19).

In *Subjectivity, Identity and the Body*, Smith's critique of what she called "the universal subject" became more pronounced. When combined with historic and philosophic movements such as empiricism, liberalism, the rise of the bourgeoisie, the impact of Darwinism and the consolidation of Protestant ideology, the universal subject becomes the self-regulating, exclusionary province of those who have the power to set the epistemological terms of debate about what ontology is. Women occupy the position of Other and lack. According to Smith, this is the self which Western autobiographical practices purported to represent:

a mimetic medium for self-representation that guaranteed the epistemological correspondence between narrative and lived life, a self-consciousness capable of discovering, uncovering, recapturing that hard core at the center...selfhood and autobiography mutually implied one another....and so, autobiography consolidated its status as one of the West's master discourses, a discourse that has served to power and define centers, margins, boundaries, and grounds of action in the West. (18-19)

Smith's description of the inevitable, irresistible march of the universal subject into the centre of discourse is compelling, but it leaves many questions unanswered. Although she leaves some room for the interiority of the Romantic subject, Smith does not make connections between some aspects of autobiography theory and the features of that particular discourse. She also does not sufficiently historicize autobiography theory in terms of the texts used--*The Confessions* of Augustine surely cannot exist on the same ideological plane as *The Confessions* of Rousseau as one more manifestation of the universal subject, although the fact that they do in some theories is significant in itself. And what of autobiography's status as a "master" discourse which defines centres? The relationship between the growth of subjectivity in the West and the rise of autobiography

certainly are linked, but the complexities of race, class, colonization, nationality, sexuality and religion in addition to gender mark the participation of subjects in master narratives in a variety of ways, and all of these affect the circulation of autobiography as a commodity in popular culture as well as in "high" literary culture. Although autobiography has remained a popular commodity in this regard, as a critical discourse it remained on the margins of critical inquiry precisely because it does *not* feature the objectivity and impassivity of scientific discourse which Smith says is the domain of the universal subject, nor was it seen to participate in the realm of universality as the discourses of philosophy or history (until recently) do. It is more probable that the discourse Smith describes has been and is available to writers of autobiography, but that its parameters shift constantly, allowing the people she calls "the working class and the colourful" to write themselves as alternative subjectivities into and against this "master" discourse.

Despite the difficulties associated with this aspect of Smith's work, her work opened the way for materialist feminist inquiry to access a genealogy of the subject using contemporary literary theoretical concepts. This has meant that some feminist critiques influenced by postmodernist readings of multiple identities, theories about race and power, and by postcolonial readings of autobiography are beginning to challenge some of the assumptions of the earlier feminist criticism of autobiography. These critiques, when combined with other work on autobiography by ethnic minority writers and speakers, are useful for a revision of autobiography criticism's assumptions of a de-contextualized,

singular subject whose successful life (or successful craft) always produces a self-reflective text within generic confines.

The growing concern white, feminist critics had with other marginalized subjectivities and their own possible complicity in their marginalization led to their participation in what Laura Marcus in "Autobiography and the Politics of Identity" has called "an autobiographical turn" in literary theory. Following Nancy K. Miller's call in *Getting Personal* for an autobiographical, "personal criticism" which critiques the fantasy of objectivity found in patriarchal scholarship (1), Liz Stanley in *The Auto/Biographical I* (1992), for example, grounds her readings in what she calls "accountable knowledge." Accountable knowledge calls attention to the context-dependent aspects of Stanley's own knowledge and understanding in order to critique the fantasy of objectivity and essentialism of the text as always-interpreted "other" into which feminist researchers from culturally-dominant positions can be drawn (210). Stanley's position on context has implications for autobiography theory as well as feminist epistemology, since it reflects developments in anthropology and history towards greater visibility for the conditions of knowledge production and presentation. Autobiographical subjects who have had to occupy the position of "other", could potentially be writing to (an)other, Derrida's "ear of the other" who signs but who does not authorize.

Leigh Gilmore's critique of earlier essentialist tendencies in feminist autobiography theory also opens up possibilities for thinking of autobiography not as genre, but as a discourse of identity production. In *Autobiographics* (1994), Gilmore critiques the essentialism of Jelinek and Mary G. Mason as a "psychologizing paradigm"

which obscures how gender is produced, rather than discovered, through discourses of self-representation. In autobiographical criticism, this results in writers whom they always find "somewhere on the margins, the margins being construed as a 'place' quite literally 'without history'" (xiii). Using aspects of Foucauldian theory, Gilmore suggests instead that "autobiography is positioned within discourses that construct truth, identity, and power, and these discourses produce a gendered subject" (xiv). She suggests that the genre of autobiography is actually a *techné* founded on principles of identity, a non-essentialist and regulating discursivity that depends on "a network of representational practices in which the production of truth is everywhere on trial" (19). Autobiographers whose identities cannot be inscribed within dominant identity paradigms regulating what is true and what is knowable do not drop out of this formulation, but rather their alternate discourse "broadens our notion of 'discursive fact' to include the material consequences that precede, coincide with, and follow self-representation" (19). All moves within these alternate autobiographies are discursive and are made with reference to the relations between power, identity and representation. This can include the refusal to speak within certain modes of address (20).

In this sense, the "I" of women's autobiography is not lost to historical considerations of the subject but "the autobiographical 'I' is at home in both history and narrative because it is produced by the action that draws those fields together" (86). Here, Gilmore opens a way for narrative to have political agency because of the power of reading communities who can recognize themselves in the life scripts they read about to make autobiography a potentially politically motivating form (27). She calls this

"identification," a search for correspondence that does not happen between the reader and the autobiographer, which would downplay the role of the text, but between the reader, the text and the *ideology* of the text which allows the reader to place herself "in relation to other familiar positions within cultural scripts" such as "woman" or "citizen" (23).

Gilmore's use of this term also allows for potentially non-hierarchical reading that allows autobiography to be a discourse that represents political situations, but that does not have to fully participate in universalist narratives of subjectivity and experience:

Imagine a reading practice that listens for another's voice, sees another's face even where sameness is sought, and searches not for the universal but for the specific, the unexchangeable. Identification, then, is contoured along the lines of the politics and possibilities in the cultural unfolding of self-representational writing. (24)

Gilmore's reading of the relationships between discourses of subjectivity, identity and identification provide a rich ground for considering other forms of alternate autobiography where autobiographers write themselves into and against autobiographical discourse to facilitate reader "identification."

### **African-American Autobiographical Discourse**

African-American autobiography studies, like feminist studies, also represents a major mode of inquiry in autobiography, mainly because it has developed a parallel but mostly separate set of theoretical traditions and autobiography texts. This happened, Frances Smith Foster observes, because many contemporary critics recognize autobiography to be central to African-American literary studies, from slave narratives to twentieth-century autobiographies (Foster 32). Although African-American work on

autobiography is still concerned with historic recovery, that recovery is linked to identity issues and to the problems African-American writers have had representing themselves as subjects. The field of African-American autobiography criticism, therefore, has links to other emerging fields of enquiry about autobiography by racial or cultural "others" in America. Like feminist scholarship, African-American autobiography critics began in the 1970s by recovering and theorizing about texts, most particularly conversion narratives such as Jarena Lee's, antebellum slave narratives including those by Frederick Douglass and Harriet Jacobs, postbellum narratives such as Elizabeth Keckley's *Behind the Scenes* and twentieth-century narratives.

Early work by Stephen Butterfield in 1974 constructed the African-American tradition as articulating a strong sense of an individual's political responsibilities to his or her community, a feature still articulated as central to black women's autobiography, where they function--often ambiguously as in the case of Zora Neale Hurston--as examples and models for later black women to follow (Marcus 290). Subsequent work, such as William Andrews' collection *To Tell a Free Story* (1985), describes African-American autobiography as writings which construct a set of identifiable tropes about blackness and racism in America. In a subsequent collection called *African American Autobiography*, Andrews maintains that language, rather than creating a screen between text and reality, in an African-American context consolidates reality and grounds identity as African-Americans use identity-tropes to create an alternative tradition which contests the history written for and about them in white American culture generally (5).

To date, African-American autobiography studies still seems to be operating in the arena of historic recovery and the articulation of tropic narratives of racial identity, particularly in the area of black women's autobiography, where Joanne Braxton published the first history of that part of the field in 1993. Critics are focussing particularly on African-Americans who wrote or dictated antebellum slave narratives, as they negotiate their identities with and often against the language and signs of their white oppressors/liberators (Andrews "Retrospect" 210). These negotiations are traced in similar ways by critics of other autobiographical writing by ethnic minority authors.

### **Theorizing Border Subjects: Chicano/Chicana Autobiography**

Questions of borderline representation, the power of the ethnologist and subject positioning have been considered in the recovery and theorization of Chicana/Chicano life narratives. The work of critics in this area, particularly that of Genaro Padilla, is important for the study of alternative autobiographical representations by other ethnic groups. In *Chicano Narrative*, Ramon Saldívar states that autobiography is a form of self-definition used by Mexican-Americans which can politicize them as subjects even when they cooperate with an ethnographer. However, self-definition in the case of Richard Rodriguez's *The Hunger for Memory* also involves painful negotiations with a non-Chicano audience, the "choice" to assimilate or acculturate in narrative and in life, and the spectre of America as seen from the borders by the migrant who "transgresses" the lines of geography, race, culture and language (Saldívar 161-163). Raymund Paredes, by contrast, states that *The Hunger for Memory* is a conversion narrative from a



Chicano identity to an assimilated white identity, in contrast to Oscar Zeta Acosta's narratives of ethnic "rebirth," here compared to Malcolm X's acceptance of his racial identity as the beginning of his resistance to white hegemony (Paredes 283).

The work of Genaro M. Padilla on Mexican American autobiography from the American conquest of northern Mexico in 1848 to ethnographic interviews with migrant farm workers during the 1930s is of great value to my own work on Doukhobor autobiographical discourse because Padilla makes similar arguments for a more inclusive understanding of autobiographic form within historical confines, and because he sees the autobiographic "I" as, at times, a sign of the collective pain of a culture in transition and undergoing deliberate erasure. Although Padilla does not specifically discuss identity issues, what he refers to as "autobiographical consciousness" could be construed as an identity construction that does not resolve into a-historic singularity. Significantly, Padilla indicates that autobiographical discourse can be used by those not considered to be worthy autobiography subjects when he says—as I have mentioned earlier—that "autobiographical consciousness itself is culturally divergent, socially complex, and multiple in its articulations, owned neither by Western culture nor by writing" (*My History* 8). This comment also highlights liberal-capitalist power (individuals can "own" a narrative and sell that narrative of individuality) which the discourse contains. Padilla situates his own desire to challenge autobiographical genre constraints within movements in the field of autobiography itself towards examinations of plural, communal subjectivity in cross-disciplinary formats:

More and more autobiography scholars, especially feminist and Third World practitioners [sic] are arguing, traditional genre constraints have been exclusionary and must be renegotiated, wedged open to alternate forms of self-representation--historiography, cultural ethnography, folkloristic narratives--that do not focus exclusively on the development of individual personality so much as on the formation, and transformation, of the individual within a community. (*My History* 29)

Padilla's own work traces the operation of the first-person in such "untraditional" narratives by Mexican-Americans that were not originally "meant to function as autobiography" but emerged in response to the changes Mexican Americans experienced after 1848 ("Recovery" 287). Narrative forms include unpublished "reminiscences" by upper-class Mexican Americans, a memoir by a Mexican Texas Ranger, oral accounts collected by a San Francisco bookseller, diaries and journals ("Recovery" 290-291). In other work, Padilla examines the role of the ethnologist in creating and then editing a narrative set for the (dictated) life-stories of migrant farm workers, indicating that the migrating Mexican-American subject was constructed in the terms of "scientific" discourse which places the speaker of the text under erasure, even replacing the speaker's name with an asterisk to deprive him or her of anything but typological identity as the object of study ("Mexican" 125-126).

### **Native Autobiographies, Alternative Forms**

Criticism of Native-American autobiography has also indicated that Native-American "autobiography" widens the scope of autobiography as a genre. For example, Krupat points out that Native-Americans had autobiographical traditions before and after white contact which run parallel to but do not always refer to non-Native

autobiographical forms or epistemologies. This reference to traditions has meant that non-Native ideas about Native "selves" can be seen to have been uncritically applied to Native peoples in a variety of contexts (174). However, what Krupat calls "bi-cultural" ethnographic collaborations and written accounts by Indians who had converted to Christianity (which are to a lesser extent "bi-cultural") do exhibit tropes of negotiation with non-Native culture which can be read autobiographically because the identities produced in them operate with reference to both ways to represent identity (184-185).

The work of Hertha Dawn Wong concerns the role of alternative autobiographic technologies in the pictographs of Plains Indians imprisoned at Fort Wayne, Florida. The pictographs, a pre-white contact form of representation of an individual's tribal affiliations and personal history, indicate how the artists depicted contact, the changing ways in which they named themselves and how they were named by a white art teacher at the fort as examples of alternative autobiography technologies where the "self" is not the predominating referent. The circumstances of the pictographs' production indicate that these artists were able to use non-Native requests for representation to their own ends, mixing autobiographical forms. As Wong observes, these pictographs were "not an interiorized textual reenactment of Anglo domination. [These are] pictographic self-narration, an affirmation of a traditional self, constructed from the very materials of the oppressor" (87). This shows that the construction of alternative identities need not be a doomed project always-already recouped by the colonizer. It can be an example of a set of flexible negotiations against more unitary formations of identity, using the tools of identity available. For Wong, this type of adaptation refers to the resilience of the artists,

but also to a long tradition of autobiographical representation which operated before white contact under its own, often oral, traditions and rules (4). Like Padilla and Krupat, among others, Wong calls for a revision of what the boundaries of autobiographic representation are thought to be to take into account alternate technologies: "As we consider the autobiographical activities of non-Western cultures, however, it is crucial to reexamine our approaches" (4). This includes a critique of the assumption that autobiography is always about a written tradition produced by individual subjects, and that subjects often considered "subaltern" or powerless can sometimes fashion their own narratives from the grand narratives of the oppressor. This last tendency, with its challenge to power imbalances that self/other designations are "supposed" to keep in check, marks many of the narratives examined by critics like Wong and Padilla as hybrid. These hybrid narrative forms can, at some points, work to produce hybrid identities that can allow their narrators to negotiate with dominant discourses that threaten to enclose them.

### **Revising the Autobiographic Self: Hybrid Identities**

The advent of identity politics and postcolonial theory recently have created separate but related areas of inquiry, that are now causing, as in women's studies, a shift from a discussion of essentialized selves insulated from political history, to a discussion of politically-motivated hybridized identity formations. These formations can be seen as what De Lauretis has called technologies that represent and are represented as opposed to discrete categorizations of race/class/gender that categorize but do not have real

consequences (De Lauretis 2). This idea has been combined with the work of Paul Smith, who has said that politically-constituted subjects strategize from various positions, rather than subjects which are entirely interpellated and are without agency (Smith 25).

In a feminist context, Sidonie Smith's and Julia Watson's important collection *De/Colonizing the Subject*, assesses postcolonial theory about colonization in a variety of contexts, critiques the idea of feminism as a trans-racial sisterhood based on the eternal sameness of subjects (xvii) and affirms the politicization of the sign of autobiography despite its double status as inscription of Western selfhood as well as possible space for liberation. Smith and Watson equate this with a liberation of the genre itself from the constraints of purely textual parameters:

the autobiographical occasion (whether performance or text) becomes a site on which cultural ideologies intersect and dissect one another, in contradiction, consonance, and adjacency. Thus the site is rife with diverse potentials. (xix)

This opening-up of autobiography as a politically-motivated site is similar to Caren Kaplan's assertion that "out-law genres" can critique the hegemonic qualities of autobiography discourse. According to Kaplan, they can also challenge the transnational assumptions of autobiography criticism as it constructs its object (autobiography) in order to incorporate exotic discourses into its own terms of subjective singularity, of the "I" as the privileged site of autobiographical rhetoric:

These emerging out-law genres require more collaborative procedures that are more closely attuned to the power differences among participants in the process of producing the text. Thus, instead of a discourse of individual authorship, we find a discourse of situation, a 'politics of location.' (Kaplan 119)

One way in which critique can happen without compromising the original discourse is by using the rhetorical tools of the oppressor to hybridize narrative. One example of this hybridization in autobiography is Françoise Lionnet's concept of *métissage*, or cultural braiding, which operates in autobiography as a kind of open collection of cultural and artistic forms which fall outside of "conventional" ways to remember and recollect (4-5). Hybridization in Mikhail Bakhtin's sense, however, signifies an even more radical mix of autobiographical forms than "braiding." In Bakhtin's formation, dialogized hybridization means that even at the level of an utterance, such as the use of the pronoun "I," different social languages create dialogic relationships which already contain (an)other language, such as an autobiographic utterance using "we."<sup>7</sup>

The work of Anne Goldman on ethnic working-class women's alternative autobiographic strategies brings these considerations together. The narratives of the women in her study engage in identity productions using the materials available to them, in this case, the writing of cookbooks as an autobiographical strategy which resists essentialism while it affirms collectivity. Therefore, Goldman argues for a return to historically-grounded textual agency for ethnic autobiography in which a cultural plural is not conflated with a discrete "I." Instead, she advocates collective identification as a point along a continuum in which the 'we' is metonymic of a collective at some points, but not consistently (xxiv), an application of Bakhtin's hybridized utterance. The cultural subject can be multiple and shifting, she says, which means that the articulation of identity in these non-traditional texts "takes different forms in different contexts" (xxx).

This contests the idea that any one category of knowledge, whether race, gender, class and so on, is the prime categorization for identity, while it allows for a range of subject positions (plural and singular) which an autobiographer can occupy. As Goldman says:

we [should] conceptualize race--and every other determinant of identity--not as a pure and irreducible category, but instead as formed by and informing the whole range of social, historical, political and cultural circumstances within which the subject locates herself. (xxxix)

Goldman's continuum between "I" and "we" and her avoidance of "pure" categories for knowledge means that she can discuss alternative ethnic minority autobiography as an alternate technology for identity, but not as a typology which either drains agency from the subjects who alter the discourse of autobiography and its ability to construct subjects, or which encloses subjects in the paradigms of "ethnic," "woman," or "immigrant." In this sense, Goldman represents the latest move in an effort to theorize immigrant identity not only in terms of the recovery of texts, but also in terms of the paradigms which use and are used by migrant subjects.

### **Performativity and the Publicity of Autobiography Discourse**

It has become common to refer to the performativity of the (especially gendered) subject as a way to circumvent essentialist models of identity, but without conceding the ability of a subject to choose between positions. Performativity does not necessarily have to be a trope of radical interiority of the subject where the object is language, but a trope signifying identity negotiation with others. To clarify how this happens, I will

suggest here how performativity can be re-read as a trope of visibility within difference in autobiography by non-mainstream subjects who wish to negotiate the terms of identity in a public context.

According to Sidonie Smith in “Performativity, Autobiographical Practice, Resistance”, performativity in autobiography “constitutes interiority” and that interiority is an effect of autobiographical narrative as opposed to its originating centre (18). Smith assigns agency to the act of narration and Othering to the rhetoric of singularity produced in the narration, much as Judith Butler in

assigns agency, and historicity, to the act of language performing itself rather than to a subject who speaks or uses it (Butler 7). As an effect of language, performativity for Smith also constructs dis/continuous subjects within the “space” of interiority where identity becomes identification, a flexible dialectic of temporary correspondences that can unfix attempted identifications (21).

While Smith’s and Butler’s description of performativity seeks to retain agency within linguistic acts and so restore the possibility of political activity as part of decentred subjectivities, both of these versions of performativity rely on an idea of subjectivity as linked to interiority that owes something to the primal scenes of psychoanalysis, even if the linkage is eventually shown to be hallucinatory. What if the writing subject in an autobiographical formation does not acknowledge interiority, or even his or her uniqueness as a subject? What if agency for these writers has never been assumed to be part of subjectivity, but has always resided elsewhere,

? Autobiographers who have had to construct their



positionality as other inside of another's discourses of self have not always experienced the luxury of assumed interiority and have often had to "perform" as Other for those who possessed the power to represent them this way. The question of agency in language is crucial here.

For those autobiographers whose memories and collective histories have been treated as fictional, but, perhaps, worthy of ethnographic curiosity, the "rules" of autobiography discourse do not always apply. Models of self/other and of individuation may not assume primacy for these writers and speakers, and performativity may not just be an effect of language which decentres the subject but a strategy of a subject who has never been centred. Once thought this way, performativity takes on characteristics of exteriority, as a communication of identity issues which does not tell the self to the self or heal the split between the lonely points of enunciation and utterance so much as recover the fractured memories of a community, or operate as a means of telling the community story to itself and to other communities.

### **Why Call It "Autobiography"?**

It may seem strange that after challenging every part of Olney's exegeted auto-bio-graphe that I would want to keep using the term. Many critics who wish to mount a wholesale challenge against autobiography critical discourse and who have called for a widening of its generic boundaries have coined new terms, such as lifewriting, lifestory, biotext, *testimonio* or autoethnography. Others have borrowed terms from other disciplines such as personal narrative or life history. However, I advocate using the term

generally because it marks the genealogy of a discourse about genre which has never quite operated as a master narrative, although some critics have tried to make it work like one. In fact, one of the most significant aspects of the critical work on autobiography has been the shift from trying to locate what autobiography is generically (is it non-fiction using fictional techniques, is it an act of reading, is it an unbridgeable gap between written and "actual" subjects, is it about "truth" or "history" or "memory", is it transcultural) in order to gain academic legitimacy for it to regarding autobiography as a mainstream discourse of the subject, which "bad subjects" can use to critique other discourses that construct them as powerless. Without such a genealogy, it might not be possible to understand the terms which have constructed master narratives of subjectivity in Western cultures, and so it might not be as possible to evaluate them as it is now. Hybrid discourses of autobiography still access the power inherent in these narratives, while much work remains to be done on the residual impact these narratives have in popular autobiography forms such as the ghostwritten memoir or the "tell-all" memoir that regularly appears on bestseller lists across North America. Although I am not comfortable with the term, for these reasons I think it is still best to keep using it in critical discourse.

### **Where to next? Autobiography and the Idea of Nation**

As I complete this chapter, studies of autobiography which are beginning to take new conceptions of identity proliferate, not in the least in my own country, Canada, where the rather meagre criticism on autobiography until recently comprised K.P. Stich's

1985 collection *Autobiography and Canadian Literature*, studies by Susannah Egan, Shirley Neuman and Helen Buss, and a few others. In Canada, as elsewhere, emerging theories of post-coloniality, settler cultures and identity politics are creating a dizzying array of new scholarship. These considerations are beginning to open up new possibilities for inquiry into the relationship of "citizenship," the idea that someone is a national subject belonging to an imagined community, to the discourse of autobiography. What is the relationship, hinted at by Benedict Anderson in *Imagined Communities*, of an identity in autobiography whose origins cannot be remembered and so must be narrated, and the need for national identities of origin that have become naturalized as part of "serial time" (Anderson 204-205)? How has Canada been narrated through autobiography, and, in "out-law" generic work by people like the Doukhobors whose position in the nation has always been that of other, how has the idea of nation been resisted, accepted, negotiated? Is autobiography part of Bhabha's pedagogical, a part of the narrated nation which tells the story of nation to itself institutionally, or has it been part of what Bhabha calls the performative of "the people", part of those "rags and patches" of signification that turn a population into a body of citizens (*Location* 144-145). Is it both?

As Sidonie Smith said ten years ago in *A Poetics of Women's Autobiography*, it still seems true that "suddenly everyone in the universe of literary critics and theorists seems to be talking about autobiography" (3). For evolving theoretical and critical emphases seem to have come full critical circle, from an emphasis on historicity, to a new set of subjectivities now referred to as identities which affiliate with interpretive

communities rather than selves, and engage in public acts of autobiographic formation which create hybrid forms, written and spoken by autobiographers constructing hybrid identities. Although autobiography has been known as a genre in which the "I" is central, it is now necessary to theorize these collective identifications which take place outside traditional autobiographical strategies as they critique them, places where "we" can also signify a site of identity formation alive to its context and to the conditions of its production.

### Notes

1. Here I revise Hutcheon's term "ex-centric" to mean those who have been excluded from the centre of a discourse but who still use pieces of that discourse as part of a critique or a negotiation of it. In *The Canadian Postmodern* "ex-centric" signifies any writers who occupy a margin, but who also participate in the centralities of Canadian national life *because* they critique the centre (3).
2. Sidonie Smith has mentioned in *A Poetics of Women's Autobiography* that William Spengemann traces the rising interest in autobiography to 1970 with the publication of Francis R. Hart's essay on the subject because much of the work prior to that date was generally unknown (Smith 4). However, her subsequent discussion of the New Model Theorists accepts Olney's interpretation of the field's development.
3. For detailed summary of Dilthey's thought see Marcus, *Auto/biographical Discourses* (145).
4. Here I refer to Candace Lang's rather acidic summary of Romantic subjectivity as unique, pre-cultural, pre-linguistic, communicated and preserved by feint into artistic language (Lang 4).
5. Gusdorf's translator's use of the inclusive masculine pronoun is typical of scholarship uninfluenced by feminist revisionary grammar. I have retained this practice here because Gusdorf's pronomial use reflects his epistemology of the Western, male subject as originary and dominant in autobiographical practice.
6. Although Gusdorf has been dismissed because these ideas would seem to close down the possibility of non-Western modes of consciousness, they seem echoed in the work of Walter J. Ong on orality and literacy where Ong claims that the written word produces a different type of consciousness from that of the spoken word. For a discussion of this argument's implications for autobiography, see chapter four of this study.
7. In "Discourse and the Novel," Bakhtin enumerates different types of novelistic hybrids. His category of the intentional double-voiced and internally dialogized hybrid would seem to fit autobiographical utterances which fall outside mainstream autobiographical discourse: "in it, within the boundaries of a single utterance, two potential utterances are fused, two responses are, as it were, harnessed in a potential dialogue" (361).

## Chapter 2: Doukhobor Historical Background

For the sake of Thee, Lord, I loved the narrow gate; I left the material life; I left father and mother; I left brother and sister; I left my whole race and tribe; I bear hardness and persecution; I bear scorn and slander; I am hungry and thirsty; I am walking naked; For the sake of Thee, Lord.

--Doukhobor psalm by Tcherkov sung at  
the 1895 Burning of Arms resistance<sup>1</sup>

As the words of the psalm "For the Sake of Thee" indicate, Doukhobor identity is closely associated with pacifist resistance as a spiritual practice. And each time this psalm is sung, this key event in Doukhobor history is recalled in spiritual terms, which associates Doukhobor identity with the continuous memory of this resistance. In this way, memory helps to keep alive the identity Doukhobors have as "Spirit Wrestlers," people who consider part of their spiritual practice the obligation to work against injustice, and often against authorities who are unjust.

Doukhobor history, ironically for a pacifist group, has been marked by struggles of many types with religious authorities who disliked their refusal of institutional trappings and with nation-states who have found the Doukhobor combination of faith and political/economic practices threatening, even to the idea of nation itself. The challenge which Doukhobors have posed to various types of authorities has sometimes meant that some aspects of their history have been neglected or not understood by outsiders, while some of the activity of radical Doukhobors has become all too "familiar" but still not

fully comprehended. My consideration of Doukhobor autobiographical strategies requires this context because Doukhobor autobiographical discourse constantly refers to key events in Doukhobor history, and links them closely to ideas about Doukhobor identity. In this chapter, I will begin with some information about Doukhobor beliefs, and then move to some of the key events in Doukhobor history that Doukhobors often speak or write about in autobiographical discourse, providing some background about Doukhobor identity in the process.<sup>2</sup>

### **The Spirit-Wrestlers: Identity in (as) Resistance**

The name "Doukhobor" literally means *dukhoboretz* or "Spirit-Wrestler." This name was given to the Doukhobors in derision by the Archbishop Amvrosii Serebrennikov of Ekaterinoslav in 1785, to signify that Doukhobors in their rejection of the Russian Orthodox Church rites were wrestling against the Holy Spirit. Doukhobors adapted this term to mean that they were fighting *with* the Holy Spirit against church and secular authorities (Woodcock 19), an early instance of Doukhobor resistance to authoritarianism. Doukhobors believe that all people bear the image of God within themselves. Jesus Christ himself is not God, but a brother to humankind on equal par with other believers. Jesus is admired but not worshipped in a hierarchical sense, and each believer, because he or she bears the image of God, is not greater than another. All are equal. Instead of the trinity of Father, Son and Holy Spirit found in classic Christianity:

for Doukhobors, there was one God, but in three parts: God the father was

memory, God the son, intelligence, and the Holy Spirit, will. In that sense, *all* people were themselves the embodiment of the Trinity. (Breyfogle 28)

The Doukhobor belief in universal equality forms the foundation of their pacificism, since to kill another person would be to kill someone who bears God's image. It is also the basis for their belief that each person, because she or he bears God's image, has divine reason within him or herself, which guides and directs if one is open to this "internal light." Religious ceremonies, church buildings, icons, feasts, sacraments, priests and written liturgies are therefore held to be unnecessary. Strict reliance on the Bible is also thought to be unnecessary, although some teachings can be taken from it. Doukhobors until recently thought that the registration of births, deaths and marriages was also unnecessary because there are no ceremonies (such as baptism, nuptials or elaborate funeral liturgy) which should accompany these life passages. The only outward symbols Doukhobors use are the display of bread, salt and water--the basic elements needed to sustain life--on a table at their meetings. The only religious custom at these meetings--which are called *molenie* when they are for spiritual purposes only and *sobranie* when decisions are made in them--occurs when each participant bows to the other as a recognition of divinity within each person.

Instead of using a written text or catechism, Doukhobors sing unwritten psalms and songs composed by themselves in Russian without accompaniment or musical notation. The psalms use musical patterns found nowhere else. The sum total of these works, in addition to memorized prayers and "sayings" is called *Zhivotnaia Kniga* or the "Living Book." This "book" was not written down until the Doukhobors migrated to



Canada at the end of the nineteenth century, and the transcription was not done by a Doukhobor. Doukhobor beliefs are passed on through the singing and reciting of the Living Book: to sing these songs is to attain mystical heights which mean more than the literal meaning of many of the words and images (Breyfogle 27-28). In the same way, manual labour and life experience are thought to be spiritual and, particularly by older Doukhobors, more important than secular education. Until a few decades ago, most Doukhobors did not fully trust schools and universities, because they are secular institutions which do not teach pacifism, and stress what Doukhobors interpret as patriotism and secular world views. The slogan created by their leader Peter Lordly Verigin in the nineteenth century remains central to these ideas about Doukhobor identity today: "Toil and Peaceful Life." At the same time, the exercise of "divine reason" is not seen as incompatible with a more millenarian belief in the spiritual value of dreams, prophecies and visions, which many Doukhobors regard as part of divine reason, particularly in the more radical groups among them. This commitment to hard (often rural) work, simplicity and community combined with mystical elements of worship and interpretation proved attractive to many Russian peasants who questioned the authority of the Orthodox church during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

But the Doukhobor adherence to equality and fraternity which attracted many of the idealistic people who helped them escape from Russia and come to Canada includes another element which puzzled these outsiders: that of divine, absolute leadership. In varying degrees that indicate to what faction they belong, most Doukhobors until the leadership of John J. Verigin in the 1960s regarded their Doukhobor leaders as more

spiritually perfected than other people. Leaders have sometimes been thought to have gifts of prophecy and spiritually informed teaching. However, decisions made collectively in the "business" or practical meetings of Doukhobors, called *sobranie*, are based on the principle of the inner light, which they assume will bring all people into agreement. The leader is (usually) no exception to this process:

the collective will expressed by the people in the *sobranie*, the meeting of the village or even the whole sect, emanates from the same inner spirit as the will of the inspired living Christ, and the times of harmony and even ....material prosperity among the Doukhobors have been those in which the leaders....followed policies that found a ready response in the hearts of their followers. (Woodcock 43)

### **The Burning of Arms**

The Doukhobors had almost always had an uneasy relationship with the Russian tsars throughout their history, and had already been moved to remote areas of Russia on two occasions. While under the leadership of Lukeri'ia (Lucheckka) Kalmakova they were able to compromise with local government officials, by the end of her life Lucheckka prophesied that this would end. Her belief that the spiritual glory of the Doukhor people would return and, significantly, that they would become pilgrims again did happen less than a quarter century later when her protégé, Peter Vasileyvich Verigin,<sup>3</sup> initiated changes to Doukhor spiritual practices. From 1893 to 1894 Peter Lordly, himself in Siberian exile, urged all Doukhobors who followed his leadership<sup>4</sup> to forgive their debts in the community, pay all outside debts, and to make their land holdings common. Influenced by the writings of Tolstoy, Peter Lordly also asked

Doukhobors to become vegetarians, to stop smoking and drinking and to abstain from sexual intercourse until what he called "the time of tribulation" was over. Finally, Peter Lordly combined religious messianism with political radicalism when he began to preach against all governments, to encourage a type of anarchy and to envision a Christian communist utopic community. To this end, Peter Lordly refused to swear an oath of loyalty to the State while he told his followers not to swear oaths to the tsar, not to participate in any war and finally, to burn all of their weapons in public bonfires.

This last order, issued in strict secrecy and carried out June 29, 1895 became known as the Burning of Arms. The event took place in three villages, where the Doukhobors piled up their swords, guns and other weapons and burned them in large bonfires while they watched the flames, singing psalms. The strongest authoritarian resistance to this act took place in Goreloye, where the Small Party had warned the Russian military about what was going to happen. Soldiers on horseback attempted to trample the Doukhobors, who huddled together and shielded those who were wounded, refusing to salute the authorities or to speak of the tsar in worshipful terms. Some Doukhobors were maimed or killed by the hooves of the horses. An unnamed nobleman or official managed to stop the commander from ordering the mass execution of the resisters.

Shortly before the Burning of Arms and as part of the same resistance to tsarist authority, Doukhobors currently conscripted into the tsarist army were asked to refuse to do military service. On Easter, 1895 ten of these soldiers, led by a young man named Matvei Lebedev, began to hand back their rifles. They were imprisoned, flogged and

semi-starved in an effort to bring them into submission. These methods were not successful, even though one young Doukhobor died as the result of maltreatment.<sup>5</sup> Meanwhile, after the Burning of Arms, the greater Doukhobor community was subjected to tortures of a different sort: in an attempt to force their compliance with authoritarian directives, Cossacks were billeted in Doukhobor villages, where they plundered and beat their Doukhobor hosts. Some Doukhobor women were raped, and three-hundred Doukhobors were exiled to Siberia. Finally, the remaining 4,300 followers of Peter Lordly were exiled to Batum in Georgia, where they were split up, given no land and forbidden to work outside the region. Many fell ill, or starved to death. Approximately 350 Doukhobors died at Batum. The often-sung Doukhobor psalm, "Sleep on, you brave fighting eagles," is dedicated to these early martyrs. As Woodcock observes, the words of this psalm have inspired many contemporary Doukhobors to resist secular authority (100). They also form the basis in autobiographical discourse by Doukhobors for a construction of Doukhobor identity as pacifist and resistant to secular authority in all its forms.<sup>6</sup>

The Burning of Arms and its aftermath remains the single most important event in Doukhobor history, marking a return (for Doukhobors) to the purity of Doukhobor pacifist practices. It also catapulted them onto the world stage when their struggle against one of the most powerful empires in the world became known to Tolstoy and his followers, who publicized it. Doukhobors still commemorate this event every year at a ceremony called *Petrov Den* (Peter's Day), and treat it as central to their history. As Koozma Tarasoff writes, "whether they knew it or not, the Doukhobors [at the Burning of

Arms] were now no longer acting as a sectarian religious group. They had transformed themselves into a social movement" (*Plakun Trava* 24).

### **Migration to Canada**

By 1897 Prince Khilkov, a Russian nobleman who had been inspired to give his land to his peasants and to lead a life of political activism, found out what was happening to the Doukhobors and wrote Tolstoy for assistance. Tolstoy had already met three Doukhobor elders and had not realized that Peter Lordly had read his writings. He mistakenly believed that in Doukhoborism he had found a naive, pure form of the religious anarchism he advocated. Tolstoy's efforts to raise international awareness of the persecution were particularly successful in England. English Quakers and Russian Tolstoyans, who shared some of the Doukhobor beliefs in pacifism, equality and the indwelling of divine reason, became involved with the Doukhobor cause in 1897. They helped the Doukhobors ask the Empress Maria of Russia for permission to migrate.

In 1898, the Empress Maria granted permission for the Doukhobors to migrate on the condition that those Doukhobors who left could never return to Russia. After a failed migration attempt in Cyprus, Tolstoyan and Doukhobor representatives visited Canada. Their meeting with Clifford Sifton, the Minister of the Interior, was successful. Sifton, who wanted to encourage a type of settler he had called "the sturdy peasant in a sheepskin coat" to settle the Canadian West, agreed to three key terms that would guarantee Doukhobor migration and settlement: exemption of Doukhobors from military service, no interference with the internal organization of the sect, and block land grants so that

Doukhobors could continue to practice communal farming and living. The delegates found three separate areas of land in northern Saskatchewan, all of unbroken prairie sod far north of the railway line. The Doukhobors received approximately 400,000 acres for cultivation. On October 5, 1898 an agreement was reached between the delegates and the Canadian government: 8,000 Doukhobors would migrate to the Canadian prairies as soon as possible. This would be the largest mass migration to Canada ever planned.

The migration began shortly thereafter when *The Lake Huron*, a cargo ship, left Batum December 29, 1899 with the first group of Doukhobors from the Wet Mountains, accompanied by Tolstoyans and other people who wish to help with the migration. They landed in Halifax, were greeted warmly and with curiosity by the Canadians there and then went on to Winnipeg, where they initially stayed in large immigration halls and began their first, painful adjustments to Canadian attitudes, climate and economics before continuing to Yorkton, Saskatchewan.<sup>7</sup> This first group soon was followed by two others: a large group on December 29, 1899 from Yelizavetpol and Kars on *The Lake Superior* and, on April 27 1900, the surviving members of the Cyprus colony on another cargo ship. When these settlers were joined by five-hundred followers of Peter Lordly who had been exiled to Siberia, the total Doukhobor migration numbered approximately 8,000 people. Peter Lordly, for the time being, was not allowed to leave Russia. 12,000 Doukhobors, some from the Small Party and others who could not accept all of Peter Lordly's changes to Doukhobor practices, also stayed behind.

Even though they did not have their leader with them and were forced to winter over in Saskatchewan without basic farming tools or farm animals, the Doukhobors

persevered. Many found occasional work in Yorkton to generate cash, while the Quakers sent money, clothing and food. Tolstoy donated the proceeds of his novel *Resurrection* to pay the expenses of the migration. In the spring, the Doukhobors moved to the three settlement areas: the North Colony, the South Colony and the Prince Albert Colony north and west of Yorkton and began to build sod huts. The younger men went to work constructing the railway for wages which they donated back to the community. The women, elderly and children built villages and broke the soil, at first without the help of farm animals. Following Peter Lordly's rather vague instructions by letter to live communally, the Doukhobors started a communal subsistence farming economy and shared any equipment they had. In this way, they quickly built decentralized settlements comprised of fifty-house villages with wide streets like those they left in Russia. They made any objects they needed from wood, metal and cloth. Even before Peter Lordly's arrival in 1902, Doukhobor self-sufficiency and dedication led to significant gains for the group relatively soon after migration. But conflict with non-Doukhobors on the prairies and with government officials also began shortly after the Doukhobors settled.

### **Land and Identity: the Migration to British Columbia**

The Doukhobors were already beginning to experience discrimination and distrust in Canada due to a series of misunderstandings with non-Doukhobor farmers, attempts by non-Doukhobors to squat on Doukhobor land and pressure from non-Doukhobors for Doukhobors to pay taxes for English schools that Doukhobors did not use. All of these factors combined to sour the relationship of the Doukhobors with the Immigration

authorities so that when in 1900 officials began to survey land, ask for the registration of vital statistics and request that young men over eighteen sign individually for quarter sections of the land grant, they were met with resistance and refusal.<sup>8</sup> The struggle over land and identity had begun.

The Doukhobors saw individual ownership of land as a religious issue rather than, as the government assumed they would see it, a matter of economic necessity. The Doukhobors had begun to prosper economically whether they worked communally or not, which caused Tolstoy to reproach them for abandoning communal land ownership when he wrote that 'to acknowledge property is to acknowledge violence' (qtd. in Maude 271). The government pressure on the Doukhobors to register their quarter sections individually caused vigorous debates between them about possible connections between the communal way of living and moral purity (Tarasoff, *Plakun Trava* 59). The debate about land registration quickly became a scene of conflict about competing visions of settler identity, with immigration officials and anglo<sup>9</sup> settlers arguing that religious belief is separate from individual ownership, which must be paramount, while most Doukhobors argued that the land must be held in common because it belongs to God (Janzen 41-42). Arguments about land use helped to form the Independent Doukhobor movement, made up of Doukhobors who wanted to register their lands individually, and the millenarian Sons of God (the predecessor of the Sons of Freedom) who wanted to reject materialism and all aspects of Canadian life. To protest, more than one thousand Sons of God went on a millenarian pilgrimage to "a land nearer the sun" where they would meet Jesus Christ, and also bring their leader from Siberia to them.



The pilgrimage turned public opinion against the Doukhobors. The press had a field day debating whether the activity of the Sons of God was due to genetic abnormalities, mental aberrations or character disorders. One article, for example, linked communal living and pilgrimages as part of a regrettable psychological condition when it labelled the Doukhobors' "Slavonic" mind as a "peculiar faculty for communal aberration, and a practical devotion to what it has accepted as true which would be sublime if it were not so pitiable" (qtd. in *Spirit Wrestlers* 128). But the trek of 1902 marked a lasting division between Doukhobors and Canadians. The press accused the radicals of moral and political coercion and refused to recognize that the religious basis for the protest was sincere (Woodcock 179), while the censure of the general public, whose notions of religion and liberal control by the State did not include millenarian combinations of mysticism and wholesale protests against authority, contributed to misunderstandings of Doukhor motivation. Such misunderstandings, deeply founded in liberal democratic ideas about land use, the separation of labour and religion and the responsibility of individuals to the State, endured. Combined with their distrust of all governments and their refusal to do military service, Doukhor activity of any kind seemed to fly in the face of what most anglo-Canadians considered to be the responsibilities of Canadian identity: citizenship, patriotism and the separation of faith and political activity so intimately connected to the other two "requirements." Years later, anger and incomprehension at Doukhor approaches to these "sacred" areas of identity could still be found in numerous press articles and in books such as John Zubek's and Patricia Solberg's *Doukhobors at War* (1952) or, most notoriously, Simma Holt's spurious

account of Doukhobor protest called *Terror in the Name of God* (1964).

When Peter Lordly arrived and set up the Christian Community of Universal Brotherhood (CCUB)<sup>10</sup> as the communal administration for the Doukhobor settlements, tensions died down. But the arguments caused by the government's pressure to register land did not disappear and the Doukhobors soon split into three broad factions:

a conservative centre, intent on communal institutions as a manifestation of the spiritual life; a radical left, intent on dramatic resistance to the world and on pursuing to a logical extreme the anarchistic implications of Doukhobor doctrine; and an assimilationist right, inclined...to make its peace with authority and to revert to the individualism that characterized the laxer and more prosperous periods of Doukhobor history. (Woodcock 192)

These three broad orientations exist today as the moderate USCC or Community Doukhobor group, the remains of the factions in the Sons of Freedom group and an Independent group. To this I must add that Woodcock's description of Doukhobor internal "political" leanings often translate into different emphases in a non-Doukhobor context. The "conservative" group, for example, contains a variety of Doukhobors who often differ as to the role which institutions should play in Doukhobor life, while the Sons of Freedom--despite anarchic tendencies--are often the most conservative in religious matters. The "right-wing" Independents have been active in the peace movement as well as in Canadian left-wing political parties such as the CCF or the NDP. And members of Doukhobor groups at times have had a tendency to switch roles, as when the Independents of Saskatchewan refused to do military service during World War II, or when their members sometimes switch group affiliations. Regardless of the group to which they belong, Doukhobors usually have relatives in other groups, which can

complicate the relations between those of differing affiliations. These complex relationships are often expressed in Doukhobor autobiographical discourse, sometimes indirectly as Doukhobors describe moves from an area such as Blaine Lake, where there are many Independents, to Krestova, a Freedomite village in British Columbia.

Despite factionalism, the CCUB prospered from 1903 to 1907 under Peter Lordly's leadership. The achievements of the Community benefitted the developing Canadian West as well:

arriving at a crucial time in the history of the prairies, the Doukhobors played a considerable part...not only by breaking and cultivating large areas of land, but also by building many miles of the vital railway links, often under conditions that other workers were unwilling to accept. Though many Canadians were hostile from the beginning and others were rendered so by the eccentricities of the early Sons of Freedom, those who actually visited the Community and met Peter Lordly were more inclined to be impressed than otherwise. (Woodcock 203)

But the rising fortunes of the Doukhobors were quickly brought to an end when Clifford Sifton resigned from Laurier's cabinet and the more inflexible and conservative Frank Oliver took his place in 1904. Oliver abolished the Doukhobor reserves and, by 1906-1907, the land crisis came to a head. Oliver also began to insist that Doukhobors register marriages, births and deaths, place their children in English schools, pay taxes and--most disastrously for Doukhobors--swear an Oath of Allegiance to the Queen. Oliver insisted that the Oath, although it was not discussed in initial negotiations, was a prerequisite of Canadian citizenship, despite the fact that Doukhobors were categorically opposed to something which contracted their beliefs so openly.

Under Oliver, the federal government reinterpreted the Dominion Land Act and began to insist that individual Doukhobor homesteads had to be registered. Public

support was in Oliver's favour, particularly since a land rush in the Canadian West was fuelling English-Canadian resentment against the large land blocks in Saskatchewan held by a single, non-English-speaking group. The federal government no longer needed immigrants so badly that accommodations could be willingly made. Doukhobor territory, remote and part of an area that had not yet become a province in 1899, was highly prized by 1905, the year that Saskatchewan became a Canadian province. Already, squatters occupied some unfarmed Doukhobor reserves.

The government couched its demands in terms that directly linked questions of private property and ownership to Canadian identity discourses based on liberalism and individualism. Colonization agents sent to evaluate the Doukhobor situation reported unfavourably on Doukhobor communal values. C.W. Speers in 1905, for example, based his criticisms on his belief that individualism was lacking in Doukhobor communities, reporting to Oliver that "the individual [Doukhobor] homesteader had never been impressed with his rights as a settler nor his independence as an individual" (qtd. in Janzen 47). A Mr. McNab, a homestead inspector, recommended that Doukhobors be enticed to leave communal living since they are "rapidly absorbing Canadian sentiments" and otherwise behave as good settlers (qtd. in Janzen 48). But communalism should be gently discouraged and the Community should cease to exist:

it might here be suggested that the regulations re cultivation might be so amended as to assist in the development of individuality of action...improvements [could] then be made on each individual homestead...curiosity would then impel them to discover the possessor of each parcel. If the suggestion that upon each individual homestead some improvements be required, were acted upon it would encourage those who have the inclination to leave the Community...(qtd. in Janzen 48)

McNab's recommendations assume that all good citizens must participate in a liberal capitalist system, and that all settlers *desire this system* if they know what is "good" for them.

But the McDougall Commission, headed by a Protestant clergyman who had also negotiated for the government with Native people, had still more negative judgements to make. Oliver eventually followed this commission's recommendations. McDougall's report stated that the Doukhobor reserves were "a most serious block and impediment to the natural and righteous growth of the country" and that the government in allowing Doukhobors to have this land was committing a "serious injustice to the general public" (qtd. in Janzen 48-49). McDougall's observations about communal life equated it with pathological behaviour. He thought that communal living produced "extreme passivity and general lethargy...a childishness in the performing of all labour." He added that 'the individual having no special interest in the land or its product become extremely unstable', which equated capitalist productivity with mental health. One outcome of collectivity, McDougall concluded with obvious distaste, was that Doukhobors did not want to own land or become Canadian citizens since they stated that God alone was their king. McDougall finally recommended that the Doukhobor lands be taken from the Community and that all Doukhobors who would not register individually would have to live on small reserves held for them "during the Government's pleasure" (Janzen 49-50).

Oliver agreed with McDougall's analysis and recommendations, particularly since he assumed that many of the Doukhobor homesteads were not under cultivation. In fact, the Doukhobors were cultivating the land more quickly than the minimum rate

required, but public pressure and the land rush encouraged Oliver to take drastic measures. First, Oliver required that all Doukhobors register their homesteads individually or the land would be taken from them. Homesteads had to be located on the land the homesteaders farmed, which effectively would end village life and then spell the end of communal village labour. Sifton's more flexible agreements were annulled. The vast Doukhobor land grants were cancelled, with only a small amount of land around each village to be retained by the Community Doukhobors. Oliver presented this last move as a concession to the Doukhobors because they were such good settlers.

The Community Doukhobors protested when they heard of this plan. They summarized their objections in a letter to Frank Oliver, pointing to their productivity, their religious reasons for not taking an oath of allegiance and the previous agreements with Sifton. In a conclusion which reflected their distrust of authority, they stated:

We will ask you very earnestly as we know we cannot do anything against you. You have the power. You are the Government. We have very kind and friendly wishes to you and are asking you to take our condition before your attention and let us have the land we have entered for, and we hope that you will never be disappointed that the Doukhobors will do any harm to you. All the Doukhobors say we hope the Canadian Government will continue to protect us in our religion. (qtd. in Janzen 55)

Oliver replied that "the giving of public land is not a matter of religion but of law and fair play...I have to deal with all the people in the same way" (Janzen 55). The difference between the Doukhobors' view of identity and Oliver's is clear: for the Doukhobors, identity is collective, they have no power while "the Government," another collective, has it all, and land-holding is a religious matter which the Government should protect. They

promise to not harm the State in exchange for protection, a situation they had experienced under liberal tsars in Russia.

Oliver's use of terms such as "law" and "fair play" indicate that he and the government see individual labour on a "level" playing field which his version of collectivity ("the public") endorses, and that the proper role of the State is to encourage uniformity in practices between individuals. Difference is not tolerated or even comprehended, since it is seen as fundamentally unjust. Finally, religious matters are assumed to be part of the private sphere, while land-holding is part of the public sphere. These spheres are mutually exclusive: to combine them is to violate both of them. Oliver's statements, and the reports of those who worked for him were clearly part of a larger set of assumptions about Canadian identity accepted by popular opinion as represented by the press and by the requests of those who wanted Doukhobor land. J.S. Woodsworth's comments about migration and integration, made in the book *Strangers Within Our Gates* (1909) summarize this view, which links citizenship to this connection between liberal individuality and uniformity:

First of all, they [the new settlers] must in some way be unified. Language, nationality, race, temperament, training are all dividing walls that must be broken down...There is a very natural tendency for people of the same nationality to settle in large colonies...Such colonies are really bits of Russia or Austria or Germany transplanted to Canada. Not only are they less open to Canadian ideas, but closely united, they can control the entire community...It would seem a wise policy to scatter the foreign communities among the Canadian, in this way facilitating the process of assimilation. (Woodsworth 234)

Oliver's ultimatum caused a variety of reactions inside the Doukhobor community. When the government took half of the entered Doukhobor lands in 1907, a

land rush resulted. The rest of the land was either owned by Independent Doukhobors or was retained "in trust" by the government. One-thousand Independents began to farm individually, while the Community Doukhobors were demoralized, particularly since Peter Lordly was visiting Russia at the time and offered no advice or comment. As for the Sons of Freedom movement, protest marches increased. Seventy marchers on one trek walked east (clad in blue gowns and straw hats) denounced Peter Lordly as a "machinery man" (Woodcock 223). **When they arrived in Winnipeg and stayed at J.S. Woodsworth's** mission there, they invited him to join them in their trek eastward. Woodsworth, who would publish *Strangers Within Our Gates* two years later, declined, although he included photographs of the marchers in his book.

Once Peter Lordly came back to Canada, he realized that the situation in Saskatchewan would destroy the Community. After some unsuccessful inquiries in California, he bought land in Saskatchewan, where he established a brick factory. Then in 1908 he bought land in the Kootenay region of British Columbia. In 1909 five-thousand Doukhobors--over half of the members of the Community and Sons of Freedom--moved to British Columbia where they once again combined manual labour for cash outside the Community with labour in the Community. By 1912, eight-thousand men, women and children were part of the CCUB in British Columbia, and in 1917 the Commune was incorporated by 5,880 adults. During the height of its efficiency during World War I, the Community was the most successful communal experiment in North America. The Community prospered, its members quickly planting orchards. They built housing, barns, a brick works, a saw mill, a flour mill and eventually, a jam factory which produced the



popular "KC Products" jam until the 1930s. Although Community members endured hardships and had little independence--Doukhobors were not allowed to keep any money they made working outside, lived in "villages" consisting of two large houses for sixty people and had to get their goods from the Community storehouses--Doukhobors who were part of the Community at that time remember it in autobiographical narratives as a secure environment, free from many of the concerns of the outside world. They often equate this communal living with spiritual purity before Doukhobors began to compromise with the outside world. Although the Commune was hated by non-Doukhobors in British Columbia because it profited from the war effort although it sent no soldiers to fight for Canada and because there were ongoing problems with schooling and statistical registration, most Doukhobors remember the Community in a positive light until Peter Lordly's death in 1924 in a train explosion.

### **Chistiakov, Growing Unrest and the End of the CCUB**

After Lordly's death, general Doukhobor discontent meant that the Sons of Freedom--active on a small scale during Peter Lordly's lifetime-- increased their activities. This time, their protests included more destructive acts. On May 23, 1923 the school in Brilliant had already been burnt to the ground, the first of many Freedomite arsons. Arsonists followed this by burning Peter Lordly's house at Brilliant, a Doukhobor sawmill and poleyard in order to protest Community materialism and forced school attendance. The government ignored Peter Lordly's plea to distance the orthodox Doukhobors from the zealots and prosecute the culprits, and chose to force compliance

with the school attendance laws. They seized CCUB property in response to the burnings and nude parades (McLaren 99).

Despite the uneasy peace which resulted after this, patterns of relations between Doukhobors, non-Doukhobor residents of British Columbia and the British Columbia authorities had been determined. British Columbia, a territory colonized by loyal British subjects, remained more colonial in outlook than the rest of the country, and therefore was more intolerant of people who were not of English background, particularly people who were not enthusiastic about the British Empire. As a result, the Doukhobors encountered the same suspicion, intolerance and outright racism experienced by Native peoples and by migrants who came from Asia. They were referred to as "blacks" because it was thought that they were not Caucasian--an ironic assumption since they migrated from the Caucasus. They were called (and still are called) by the epithet "Douks" or "Dirty Douks", and were (and in many cases still are) thought by the people of the British Columbia interior to be generally unclean and ignorant. As recently as twenty-five years ago, Doukhobors were even banned from some public pools and some public buildings so as to keep these places "pure."<sup>11</sup> The Doukhobors dealt with this situation initially by turning inward to the Community, and away from the outside world, largely refusing to learn the language and customs of outsiders. Even by the 1960s, more than a generation after their arrival, all Doukhobors in British Columbia still spoke Russian as their first language, while many did not know how to speak English. As Woodcock observes, Doukhobors coped with outside pressures by hanging on to their mystic identity as sojourners:

Until the 1960s the Doukhobors in the Interior of British Columbia remained mentally unassimilated, retaining with extraordinary tenacity the sense of being transients who have paused--though it has been for sixty years--on their pilgrimage from one destination to the next. (262)

This identity regularly surfaces in Doukhobor autobiographical discourse when migration or Russia is discussed. Often repeating a prophecy by Luke'ria Kalmakova that the Doukhobors would migrate, build houses of glass and then one day return to Russia, the Doukhobors retained a separate identity from any sense of Canadian citizenship by seeing their trials in British Columbia as preparation for that mystic journey. This refuge in an alternate version of their history and their future served to insulate them from any pressure to hyphenate their identities as Doukhobor-Canadian. Even today this term is never used by them, as it is among other migrated groups. With the exception of the Independent Doukhobors, Doukhobors also generally maintained this set of identifications with mystic history and the spiritual-material impermanence of their sojourn in British Columbia as a way to resist the major institutional manifestations of assimilation into another set of identities: education in the dominant language, individualism, participation in the building of imperial empire by means of war and patriotic commitment to war, and the conditions of visibility (registry, voting) required for citizenship. While the CCUB existed under Peter Lordly, this resistance to the secular authorities remained in uneasy balance with the desire to live out the meaning of "toil and peaceful life" in isolation from the secular world. But after the events of 1924, this balance was forever disrupted.

Peter Chistiakov, Peter Lordly's son,<sup>12</sup> became the next Doukhobor leader. At

Brilliant during his introductory speech, he electrified Doukhobors with his long theological discussions, and his slogan "Sons of Freedom cannot be slaves of corruption" (Woodcock 287). Although his speech was meant to unite all three groups of Doukhobors, the Sons of Freedom interpreted his exhortation that they were the "ringing bells" who would recall the people to the true faith as his endorsement of all of their activities. Peter Chistiakov's subsequent pleas for them to stop radical protests were interpreted by them, using the Freedomite "upside-down" philosophy where the opposite of what a leader said was taken to be true, as approval. Freedomite activity increased as they opposed the orders of the government to send their children to school: burnings and nude parades became more frequent.

But Peter Chistiakov's subsequent mystical speeches also did much to further Doukhobor fusion of mystic identifications with worldly events, even as he turned Doukhobor fervour to his own ends. This has included his often-repeated migration model which made sojourning central to Doukhobor identity. Peter Chistiakov described migration as part of the Doukhobor history of resistance. It is envisioned as a process of meals: "breakfast" is the Doukhobor struggle against icons and the Russian Orthodox Church, "dinner" is the rejection of militarism symbolized by the Burning of Arms, and "supper" was something which Peter Chistiakov would not discuss, but which he hinted was migration (*Plakun Trava* 147).

Despite his strengths as a leader, Peter Chistiakov became more irrational in the years 1931 to 1938, and the Community lost large amounts of money due to the Depression, while the unsettling nature of Peter Chistiakov's leadership and his large-

scale evictions of Freedomites from Community land caused a fall in membership dues. By 1931, these evicted Sons of Freedom along with others who left voluntarily had formed their own communities on poor land at the edges of the Doukhobor domain in the villages of Krestova and Gilpin. With these areas as their base, the Freedomites began large-scale nude protests and demonstrations which resulted in prison terms for them at Piers Island when the maximum penalty in British Columbia for public nudity was raised from six months to three years.

By 1933, the Doukhobor communities were beginning to split in serious ways. The Independents became a stronger group and completely broke from the control of the Community, voting for Makaroff as a candidate for the CCF party. The Community, left without strong leadership and debt-laden in the midst of the Depression, began to founder. The Sons of Freedom, meanwhile, grew in numbers to several thousand, whose commitment to the protest against government control was only increased by the prospect of martyrdom at Piers Island:

whether [all Doukhobors] sought [a better way of life] by going on pilgrimages or by 'Toil and peaceful life', such people were led by an almost superstitious belief in the possibility of attaining the kingdom of heaven on earth, and when this vision of the Community was broken, as happened during the 1930s, many of them were to follow the chialists among the Sons of Freedom, who offered an alternative vision. (Woodcock 239)

Between 1937 and 1939, the Christian Community of Universal Brotherhood went bankrupt for reasons which still anger Doukhobors today, many of whom see the events as a second land-grab by a Canadian government.<sup>13</sup> It is clear that the government could have bailed out the CCUB, but chose not to do so, probably due to the high feelings

running against the Doukhobors in the public at large.

Peter Chistiakov died of liver and stomach cancer in 1939, the same year that the Community ended. His last act was to dissolve the CCUB and form the organization called The Union of Spiritual Communities of Christ (USCC) as a spiritual equivalent to the old economic organization of the Community. Peter Chistiakov's son, Peter Iastrebov (The Hawk) was named as leader, but he was somewhere in Stalinist Russia, which had been imprisoning and persecuting the Doukhobors for a decade. No one knew where he was. Therefore, the newly-formed USCC decided to appoint John Voikin, Peter Chistiakov's grandson, as leader. He was renamed John J. Verigin and subsequently became the "secretary" of the USCC at the age of eighteen. His position at the time was temporary, since most Doukhobors hoped that Peter Iastrebov would come from the USSR and restore the Doukhobor community to its former strength. This did not occur, since Iastrebov probably died in the late 1930s. Under John J. Verigin, the USCC did buy back land in the Kootenays, although they did not resume communal living. The Independent Doukhobors began to assimilate more quickly after Peter Chistiakov's death. The Freedomites, divided into factions headed by a number of leaders including the non-Doukhobor Stefan Sorokin, increased depredations against mostly other Doukhobors in the Kootenays as a protest against materialism and what they saw as other compromises with non-Doukhobor culture. Prejudice against all Doukhobors mounted due to Freedomite protests and measures against Freedomites, including incarcerating their children for forced schooling in New Denver, increased. Freedomite activity peaked in 1962 after a mass imprisonment of Freedomite arsonists and bombers when large

numbers of Freedomites, led by Frances (Big Fanny) Storgeoff, marched to Agassiz prison, a fireproof facility built for Freedomites serving jail terms, built a camp there and agitated for the release of the prisoners for several years.

### **Accommodation and Assimilation**

After a large public outcry following the New Denver plan, the government of British Columbia legalized Doukhobor marriages, which meant that thousands of children were no longer considered illegitimate by the state. The three-year prison term for nudity was dropped and the right of Doukhobors to vote provincially was restored. Moreover, a compromise for citizenship was reached. Keeping in mind that Doukhobors considered themselves to be "citizens of the universe" who were technically citizens of Christ alone, Doukhobors became in citizenship "Canadian, subject to the law of God and Jesus Christ" (Woodcock 347). The Community Doukhobors accepted this arrangement.

As for the Freedomites, the march to Agassiz represented the last mass protest by the Sons of Freedom. As Woodcock observes, assimilation has also impacted this community, and "where decades of police and bureaucratic action failed, a few years of exposure to the affluent society have succeeded" (356). Since that time, there have been no strong leaders of the movement, and depredations were drastically reduced, although tensions between Freedomites and other Doukhobors--especially against John J. Verigin, the USCC organization and some Freedomite radicals--were running high during the mid-1970s and 1980s, as seen in confrontations between them described in the *Joint Doukhobor Research Committee* report of the period 1974 to 1982.

The USCC, which remains the major organization of Community Doukhobors, was registered in 1954 and became a more formal organization in the 1960s. Its Russian/English magazine, *Iskra*, began as an all-Russian magazine in 1943, headed by Walter Lebedoff. By 1980, its circulation was approximately 1,500. Also in 1945, the Union of Youth, which included members from the ages of 16 to 40, began. Although they have operated as a social organization for younger Community Doukhobors, in the 1970s Doukhobors who had gone to Vancouver for education at the University of British Columbia used the organization to begin to discuss identity issues and to seek affiliations with Doukhobor youth of other groups. They started the *UYD Newsletter*, which later became *Mir*, an all-English magazine dedicated to youth issues and run by the present editor of *Iskra*, Jim Popoff. *Mir* (which in Russian means "commune", "peace" and "world") also functioned as an early place for historical recovery projects. Staff from *Mir* conducted interviews with Doukhobor elders and printed autobiographical excerpts in an effort to learn more about their history and to debate what Doukhobor identity was to mean. *Mir* became a way for younger Doukhobors, who were no longer part of the communal world remembered by their elders, to come to grips with questions of Doukhobor identity, and its survival in contemporary Canada. It was an important forum where autobiographical excerpts, interviews and other types of autobiographical expressions could make it possible for younger Doukhobors to refigure their own identities.

Many of the people who worked on *Mir* or who contributed to it returned to the Kootenays and assumed positions of leadership in the USCC and in affiliated Doukhobor



organizations in the 1970s and 1980s, a period in which Doukhobors began to attempt to recover aspects of their heritage and to attempt to reinterpret them for their present situation. As Doukhobors--particularly Community Doukhobors--assimilated into the larger Canadian cultural milieu, they also initiated ways for Doukhobor living to survive in alternative contexts, including a co-op store, social programs, youth festivals and educational initiatives. Doukhobors participate in non-Doukhobor peace movements. In 1980 the USCC contributed to building the National Doukhobor Heritage Village in Saskatchewan, while a communal Doukhobor village is run as a museum at Ootishenie, British Columbia. Doukhobor choirs have toured across Canada and have cut albums.

The youth movement now runs workshops on Doukhobor identity each year, while Doukhobor craftspeople, writers and artists are now trying to preserve and reinterpret (for Doukhobors and non-Doukhobors) the history and meaning of Doukhoborism as some Doukhobor ways of life disappear. Community Doukhobors have found that more and more of its documentation must be made in English, since fewer Doukhobors speak Russian.<sup>14</sup> For a people who have always transmitted its faith practices in terms of the Russian language, this may mean that Doukhoborism will die when the language is no longer spoken by the majority of its members, a problem discussed constantly in *Iskra*. Migration back to Russia has been posed frequently as a solution to this problem.

It is hard, as John W. Friesen and Michael Verigin observe, to say whether the efforts of Doukhobors in Canada to resist some aspects of dominant culture and language combined with an acceptance of others will forestall wholesale assimilation, since

participation in youth events is low and, in the case of youth festivals, not serious enough to facilitate serious cultural interaction (200-201). Only Doukhobors will be able to say at their upcoming celebrations of their migration centenary whether Doukhoborism will survive into the next century in its present form, given the alterations and accommodations Doukhobors have made during their first one-hundred years' sojourn in Canada. However, the efforts that Doukhobors have made to record autobiographical narratives and publicize them in Russian and English may contribute to new ways for Doukhobor identity to be figured so that Doukhoborism survives into the second century after their arrival in Canada.

*Notes*

1. Koozma Tarasoff relates this anecdote in *Plakun Trava: the Doukhobors*, 24. The translator is unknown.
2. My account of Doukhobor history is necessarily brief. For a more complete introduction to Doukhobor history, see Woodcock and Avakumovic's *The Doukhobors* (1977), Koozma Tarasoff's *Plakun Trava: the Doukhobors* (1982), William Janzen (1990). See J.C. Yerbury (1984) for information about the Sons of Freedom.
3. Doukhobors call Peter V. Verigin *Gospodii* (Lordly), or sometimes Peter the Lordly. I will refer to him as Peter Lordly in this study.
4. When Peter Lordly became a leader, the Doukhobors split into two factions. Peter Lordly's faction was called the "Large Party." Most of the Large Party followers migrated to Canada, leaving the members of the Small Party who supported elders that had worked for Lucheckha in Russia. The descendants of the Small Party followers are still living in Russian Doukhobor communities. See Woodcock & Avakumovic, 81 ff.
5. A full account of the Burning of Arms and the resistance of the Doukhobor conscripts can be found in Tarasoff, *Plakun Trava*, 21-26.
6. The psalm, from the translation in *A Celebration of Peace*, page 73 reads in English as follows:

Sleep on you brave fighting eagles,  
 Sleep in the arms of the Lord;  
 You have received from your Master  
 Peace and the promised reward.

Now on this hard earned pathway,  
 Easy for us 'tis to tread;  
 You paid the price they exacted,  
 So we could journey ahead.

Many and cruel were the tortures,  
 You took in Siberian plains;  
 In Tundrian regions you suffered,  
 Dreadful and sad were your days.

Today, as we think of your suffering,  
 And of the hardships you passed,  
 We pray to abide by your message,  
 And join the great common task.

Sleep on you brave fighting eagles,  
 Sleep in the arms of the Lord;  
 We shall o'ercome all temptation,  
 And follow Christ and His Word.

7. In his diary *To America with the Doukhobors*, which has been translated into English, the Tolstoyan Leopold Sulerzhitsky provides an eyewitness account of the voyage of *The Lake Huron* and the early settlement.

8. Although Aylmer Maude on the basis of his involvement in the initial negotiations with Canada said that there was an understanding that Doukhobors would make individual land entries for homesteads but would be allowed to cultivate land in common, there is no formal record of this agreement, and it is doubtful that the Doukhobors themselves were aware of this (Janzen 38).

9. "Anglo" in this context refers to settlers who were from the Britain or Britain's colonies. These settlers were thought to possess the cultural background that immigration officials thought all other settlers should acquire. See the Preface for details about this. Settlers from this background often complained about "other" types of settlers (Janzen 41-42).

10. All references to the Community or the Commune refer to the CCUB.

11. This is an anecdote that a Doukhobor shared with me in the Kootenays, October 1996.

12. Doukhobors have referred to Peter Petrovich Peter Lordly as Chistiakov, although use of this name seems to be decreasing. I will refer to Peter Petrovich as Peter Chistiakov in order to avoid confusing him with Peter Lordly.

13. The CCUB owed \$168,283.14 to the National Trust company, and owed an additional \$192,297.51 to Sun Life Assurance for a total of \$360,580.64. CCUB assets at this time were worth between three and four million dollars. Both companies foreclosed on the CCUB and proceeded to evict the Doukhobors from their own land in 1939. The British Columbia government did nothing to help the CCUB during the time of crisis. But after foreclosure it bought the Doukhobor land in the Kootenays for \$296,500 and allowed Doukhobors to continue to live on and pay rent.

14. Two examples of this are telling: the publication of a book of Doukhobor funerary practices in Russian and English, called *Vechnaya Pamyat* (Eternal Memory) indicates that these customs are being forgotten. The 700 page *Summarized Report of the Joint Doukhobor Research Committee*, a document "dedicated to all future generations, both of Doukhobor descent, and those who in their evolutionary process choose to dedicate their lives to the search for Eternal Truth" (2) has been translated entirely into English.

### Chapter 3

#### *Vechnaya Pamyat* in the Diaspora: Community Meanings of History and Migration

All of us, human beings, have a part of God within us. The earth is not our permanent homeland. We are merely pilgrims on this earth, for our real birth place is in Heaven. Our physical, earthly body is not our real being. Our real being is the soul within our body.

-Psalm 24, *The Living Book*<sup>1</sup>

In her poem “Of Other Generations” published in 1974 in the Doukhobor English-language magazine *Mir*, Elaine J. Makortoff connects issues of memory and her relationship the early Doukhobor migrants. She identifies her impulse to remember not as an unambiguous look at her past, but as a half-turning between her present and another generation’s discourse:

my head’s always half-turned  
looking at the backs of things  
listening to what dead men said  
what the dying are saying... (44)

This way to remember does not produce confident memories of migrant identity or a firm immigrant paradigm, but confused memories about people on the move. In Makortoff’s poem, a gap exists between how the migrants came to Canada and how that migration is to be remembered. Makortoff calls the undecidability of these memories “the collisions in my mind” and says that the collisions are “refugees/expatriots and exiles/migrant, outlaws/freeagents and farmers.” These collisions are between the condition of migration and how it is seen. Either migration appears as diasporic--the

migrants had to relocate somewhere else in part against their will and hope to return, or the migrants are labourers, her ancestor-farmers who make “an endless furrow/that another generation/stalks and consumes.”

Makortoff's poem expresses that dual heritage as analogous to her own process of remembering, figured as a collapse of time between her own generation and the older one, and confusion about how the earlier generation relates to her own identity. The poem concludes without resolving this ambiguity about what place means, an ambiguity that even extends to what kind and size of plants the narrator looks at, and whether the people in her vision are her farmer ancestors, or “strangers” who claim affinity through a different heritage:

I sit at the axis of a great plain  
or is it the mind's eye --  
there are decades of heaving alfalfa  
or are they the waves in this blade of grass...  
on the horizon my farmer ancestors  
plow the endless furrow  
or are they a generation of young strangers  
who call to me by name. (44)

Markortoff highlights a slippage between her own place, time and identity and the identity of a previous Doukhobor generation, between then and now, between what they are doing and what she can see. This is not Homi Bhabha's third space where hybridity operates as a political strategy to recast the terms of cultural debate or political action in a non-dialectic way,<sup>2</sup> but an attempt by the poet to *catalogue* the undecidability of hybrid origins by writing them as unresolvable pairs. Diasporic identity can be seen here in the decision to “half-turn” towards origins where even the meaning of origin is “migrating,”

unclear, open to the writer's interpretation. Who does she see? Who is hailing her, within her own discourse and in her rhetorical "half-turn?" Who or what interpellates her as a Doukhobor subject? How will she respond to the collision of meanings?

In autobiographical writing by Community and Independent Doukhobors, this half-turn to the past also surfaces as an attempt to investigate the diasporic origin and migration of Doukhobors from Russia to Canada. It also invests the current meaning of Doukhobor group identity with an understanding of origin and the migration experience that is both sacred and political, mediated by the act of autobiographical writing and speaking. The act of this "half-turn," the attempt to figure origins as both sacred and historic, individual and collective, informs non-traditional forms of autobiographical writing in magazine articles and transcribed interviews by Community and Independent Doukhobors. But it occurs in ways that call into question an understanding of autobiography as a discourse which can only occur in published books as part of a liberal-capitalist economy of identity, where identity is seen as a unique, interiorized selfhood that can be communicated, subverted, and then packaged and sold as a "narrative commodity." Homi Bhabha's comments on the work of daily life and how this becomes part of a national culture can be applied for a different purpose here. According to Bhabha in *The Location of Culture*:

the scraps, patches and rags of daily life must be repeatedly turned into the signs of a coherent national culture, while the very act of the narrative performance interpellates a growing circle of national subjects. (145)

Bhabha's connection between the incorporation of local forms into a pan-national sign of "the people" can be a way to understand the work performed by Doukhobor short

reminiscences, interviews and excerpts from committee testimony. These “scraps, patches and rags of daily life,” written or dictated for Doukhobor magazines, speeches or committees on Doukhobor identity, work autobiographically, that is, in a way that collects the split geographic experience and split historic experience of a diasporic subject under one singular life sign, to configure remembered migration and settlement experiences *into writing* within what had been an oral way to remember. Interpellation occurs, not always as a recouping of Doukhobor subjectivity as national subjectivity, but as part of a hybrid formation between writing and oral narrative, and between reminiscence and autobiographical discourse.<sup>3</sup>

The autobiographical “half-turn” in Doukhobor writing for periodicals and small publications aimed mostly at Doukhobor readers relates migration experiences in Canada to other oral histories of Doukhobor experience, but also writes that memory into the idea of a national culture as migration trauma which must be surmounted, rather than as happy interpellation into and by the official Canadian discourse of multiculturalism. It also forms an alternative to the pain caused by the heritage of absolute difference, and the suspicion of difference perpetuated by discourses of the English-Canadian centre. Doukhobors who have written or spoken autobiographically about this pain tend to talk about the pain of silencing their identity. As Vi Plotnikoff writes in “The Circle Journey”: “To be a Doukhobor was to hide your background, not flaunt it” (205). Annie Barnes’ description of a group of Doukhobor women who gathered to talk about their identity shows how the activity of speaking about identity issues brought about joy, release and healing through remembering in a safe environment:



They [the women in the group] were so eager, interrupting each other, laughing, when there could have been tears. They were anxious to share some old hurts in a safe place, with other women who understood, in an atmosphere of love and acceptance As *Verna (Berukoff) Kidd* writes, ‘In a group we still seem to find each other and ask about our ancestors. (Barnes 22) [italics are Barnes’]

In autobiographical work by Doukhobors, the act of remembering ancestors and of speaking about ethnic origins also operates as an act of healing the collective pain of dislocation and of otherness in similar ways by sharing “textual” memories with the readership of Doukhobor magazines.

Autobiographical writing that has appeared mainly in *Iskra*<sup>4</sup> and *Mir* features what Vijay Mishra calls the appearance of “home as a damaged idea” in diasporic narratives. What Mishra refers to in the same discussion as the “psychic trauma of forced migration” (7) resolves in these narratives when Doukhobor writers and speakers work through the idea of “home” and the idea of “suffering” found in Doukhobor psalms and oral history. They do this within hybrid autobiographical discourses that allow the Doukhobor speaker to remember *for others* and not just for him or herself, a use of the trope of community memory that Bakhtin discusses--and which I address later on-- in “Forms of Time and Chronotope in the Novel.”<sup>5</sup> This activity operates on a field between the visibility offered by autobiographical discourse in Western terms, and the sacred “language” for memory that connects it, in traditional Doukhobor settings such as funeral services, to the traditional Doukhobor meaning of the Russian phrase *vechnaya pamyat* that Doukhobors translate as eternal memory *and* eternal consciousness in the Kingdom of Heaven after death. Autobiographical discourse, where it is invoked, carries with it non-Doukhobor ideas about singularity and the ability of one subject to speak about

something unique. But for Doukhobors, to be, and to be eternally, is to remember and be remembered within a community. The act of memory is not carried out alone, for the work of memory is also the work of a community.

Autobiography occurs in these texts not as a “new” genre, but as, in Mary Louise Pratt’s terms, a “contact zone” (Pratt 6-7) where a number of non-Doukhobor and Doukhobor narrative strategies appear together or where, due to non-Doukhobor requests for Doukhobor articulations of identity, these contending narratives are called into being. The uncertain histories of diasporic dislocation, sometimes worked through in English, sometimes in Russian, in autobiographical fragments, speeches and interviews combine with *vechnaya pamyat* to form sacred ways to remember and recollect that are already part of Doukhobor oral tradition. This type of writing, translation and transcription appears in interviews of older Doukhobor migrants or settlers done for *Mir* in the 1970s that were meant to bring the recollections of older Doukhobors to a young Doukhobor readership whose first language was usually English, or in the short reminiscences published in *Mir* and later in *Iskra* (in English as well as in Russian) during the late 1970s. It can also be seen in the publication of Gregory Soukorev’s English language manuscript in *Iskra* in a serial format over six issues (the Russian language version had been published in *Iskra* in 1945) so that non-Russian speaking Doukhobors could learn about their heritage.

Before I begin to look at how autobiography develops in this type of contact zone of writing by and about Community and Independent Doukhobors, I will examine how the term “diaspora” operates here, and what role diasporic identity plays in *vechnaya*

*pamyat* and related ways to remember origins in Doukhobor psalms, songs and hymns.

The term “diaspora” has been growing in popularity in the areas of history, literary criticism of ethnic minority writing, post-colonial theory, and globalization studies, among others. The original meaning of diaspora, a term referring first to Jews not living in Israel and then to the original dispersion of the early Christians from Jerusalem, has been widened to include a number of groups forcibly expelled at one time from their lands of origin, such as the Armenians after World War I.. When Paul Gilroy connected diaspora with his term “the black Atlantic” in order to negotiate a postmodern homology between migration and subjectivity and an essentialist longing for pure race origins (22-23), African Americanists began to use “diaspora” to refer to the multiple, syncretic and hybrid forms of cultures, ideas and that form part of black identities, the legacy of the colonial trade systems between Europe, North/South America, Africa and the Caribbean. This connection between a non-essentialized, and yet strategic identity linked to more than one cultural form and the memory of more than one place, became quickly applied to examinations of the transnational movements of other labour forces in response to economic globalization.

The close associations of identity, origin and forced migrations with a hope of return has proven fertile in a number of migrant contexts, particularly as technological developments such as the telephone, the video tape and the aeroplane mean that mass migrations and their tie to transnational demands for cheap labour begin to challenge ideas about nationality and its fixed associations with “grounded” citizens rooted in the

native soil. As Jenny Sharpe points out, following Appadurai on transnationalism, diaspora has become related to the “flow of capital”:

*Transnationalism* denotes the permeability of national borders in the electronic transmission of capital, labor, technology, and media images. *Diaspora* designates the political and economic refugees, immigrant and exile communities that inhabit advanced industrial and newly industrializing nations and city-states. (188)

When this kind of recognition of diasporic identity is hooked to the flow of information and capital as potentially destabilizing for nation-states, some theorists link diaspora to postmodernist critiques of the nation-state as an eternal, fixed entity. Diaspora, in the thinking of some theorists, troubles the easy homologies made between nationality and ethnicity.<sup>6</sup> Diasporic identity is understood in this case to be a strategic double-functioning identity developed by migrant groups between the homeland and the host nation. Diaspora has also come to express the cultural forms from the land of origin that a migrant uses as ways deal with his or her present position. These cultural forms, particularly when theorists discuss diaspora theory and transnationalism, can include technological developments which work to dissolve previous spatial and temporal barriers between the host country and the land of origin.

When connected to fractured ideas of “home land,” the most prevalent use of the term “diaspora” in current critical use is connected to postmodernist ideas about transnationalism and the representation of homelessness. This has occurred because the idea of diaspora retains traces of cultural practice and memory of the home place deployed literally or figuratively in some type of hope for return. As Ien Ang observes, diaspora is bound up with ideas of home, both “imagined” and physical:

Diaspora is the (imagined) condition of a 'people' dispersed throughout the world, by force or by choice. Diasporas are transnational, spatially and temporally sprawling sociocultural formations of people, creating imagined communities whose blurred and fluctuating boundaries are sustained by real and/or symbolic ties to some original 'homeland.' (5)

While it is tempting to apply diaspora to an idea of permeable borders that make the modernist idea of nation open to challenge, a kind of "dia(s)poria" that changes otherness to a "lack" that changes the politics of the centre, it is also wise to heed Sau Ling Cynthia Wong's caution that the world is not borderless, and that international travel requiring passports and visas does not imply a nation-less, class-less world where diasporic migration automatically makes room for political action as if nations no longer existed (19).

But this critique of de-historicized diasporic study can also operate as the term's strength. When it is connected with a historicized geographic awareness as opposed to a rhetorical "third space" or "borderzone," "diaspora" as a term becomes a way to examine the work that "home" does in the *collective* identity of a migrated group. It can also refer to group identity, rather than an individual identity, as a group deals with ways to represent past dislocation, and present locatedness. Collective identity and locatedness is everywhere mentioned in work on diaspora although collectivity is often jettisoned in favour of talking about the subject, as in Ang's statement that "it is the myth of the (lost or idealized) homeland, the object of both collective memory and of desire and attachment, which is constitutive to diasporas, and which ultimately confines and constrains the nomadism of the diasporic subject" (5). The collective imaginary of a diasporic group and how the group decides to deploy its understanding of origins amidst

the cultural forms of a host nation not only constrains the nomadism of a given diasporic subject, it also provides a way to negotiate, to win and sometimes to lose, what *this* identity means *here* and how it relates to a *there* which must be acknowledged, longed-for, invented, argued about and remembered by pluralized subjects. The Doukhobors clearly are this type of diasporic group, particularly since they were forced to migrate to Canada at one time, and also expected for many years to return to Russia. They have even made numerous attempts to either return to Russia or to migrate from Canada to another location in order to continue the way of life which they had developed in Russia.

An important part of group memory about the place of origin and its relationship to the current “placing” of diasporic subjects is what Vijay Mishra calls the sacred. The sacred, he argues, is a narrative about the place of origin which makes intervention in the current situation possible. This has been left out of contemporary theories of diaspora (26). What the sacred does is create an alternate idea of home which, in Mishra’s formulation, does not have to become part of either a colonizer rhetoric or part of a set of moves scripted for the host nation’s migrant others that seal off migrants from the places where they came. Mishra explains that:

the ‘sacred’ is a function of narratives that the almost self-contained diasporic communities constructed out of a finite set of memories. They gave permanence to mobility...by creating a fixed point of origin when none existed. The sacred refuses to be pushed to the liminal, to the boundary. It wants to totalize by centring all boundaries: the many and the one case to be two dialectical poles. Since its narratives are transhistorical, the absurdity of the move for a disempowered diasporic community is overtaken completely by the illusory power of the act itself, from which the colonizer is excluded. This is true of all religious attitudes in the diaspora. (27)

The sacred, then, can operate in diasporic groups where religious discourse is important as a node of resistance to the bipolar confusions of “there” and “here” and the tendency of dominant discourses of nation to equate race/ethnicity with nationality and national belonging. In what Mishra calls the “diasporic imaginary,” the sacred becomes a way to heal the wounded ideas of home and homelessness and ground the identity of diasporic subjects in ways that do not reference a national memory or a national culture. Existence, rather than pure resistance, becomes imaginable and possible.

The term *vechnaya pamyat* can provide a way to understand how the Doukhobors, who clearly are a diasporic group, figure the idea of home within a discourse that allows the sacred to function wherever memory operates. In a traditional Doukhobor funerary service, for example, “*vechnaya pamyat v Tsarsvii nebyesnom*” (“everlasting consciousness in the Kingdom of Heaven”) is both said of the deceased to affirm that the body dies while the soul does not (Kootenay Men’s Group 1), while “biographies” of the deceased are both said at the grave site and, in recent years, printed in *Iskra* as a way to honour the memory of the deceased because to remember is also an act of eternal consciousness (19). The act of memory is an eternal act, recited by the whole community and not just by one person, and demonstrated in action as life stories are told. *Vechnaya pamyat* is a recitation of the community’s history in sacred terms, as in Doukhobor psalm 355 of *The Living Book*, which begins “eternal memory be to our righteous forefathers who were buried as the true Doukhobors” and which continues with an account of the 1801 migration to Milky Waters as a sacred act, because it was “for the sake of the truth” to migrate to an area called “our Promised Land.” In contrast, the Doukhobors’

subsequent migration to the region of Transcaucasis means that Transcaucasis is referred to as “our Land of Suffering.” The listener is finally exhorted to continue the community traditions, for “whoever else remains alive and hears of this history, should not desist from continuing these deeds to the end” (*Living Book* 256). *Vechnaya pamyat* is a historical recounting, a sacred interpretation of migration and an exhortation to keep the faith.

It becomes possible, then, to think of Doukhobor psalms, hymns and the stories told by elders as a type of *vechnaya pamyat*, or sacred memory of migration experiences that are enacted again and again as part of the “diasporic imaginary” when they are told, recited or sung. This oral tradition forms the sacred language of migration, resistance and suffering also found, or referred to, in written autobiographical productions by Doukhobors. The psalms of *The Living Book*, such as the part of psalm 24 quoted at the beginning of this chapter, refer to humankind as strangers who wander on the earth, a situation analogous to the multiple migrations Doukhobors have experienced, and also their willingness to undergo hardship. Psalm 15 from *The Living Book* describes how communal living not only functions as an exemplar, but how it also acts as a prophecy of the Doukhobors will enter earthly history in an apocalyptic moment:

The commune’s virtues, its exemplary life, shall triumph over the world--this earthly materialistic kingdom--whose end is nearing. Then, Doukhobors shall become known to all mankind, and Christ himself shall be the only worthy King. Around Him shall gather all nations. Only this honour shall be preceded by a time of great trials and sorrow. (56)

In more widely-sung hymns and spiritual songs, Doukhobors also remember the persecution undergone by their ancestors after the 1895 Burning of Arms, usually in light



of their subsequent migration. Doukhobor identity in all groups depends on the memory of this resistance, in part because it has at times provided the basis for pacifist resistance to government activity in Canada, but also because this memory keeps both the reason for and the fact of migration intact. The stress in many psalms, spiritual songs and hymns on Doukhobor identity as the identity of those who have migrated keeps migration part of the diasporic imaginary, particularly in light of Doukhobor leader Lukeri'ia's prophecies that the Doukhobors eventually would return to Russia after a period of wandering and suffering.<sup>7</sup> The diasporic imaginary also supports the identity of Doukhobors as a migrant group from Russia, and substantiates actual efforts made by Doukhobors in Canada to maintain connections with their original homeland. For example, the USCC Standing Committee on Migration is the latest in a series of efforts made by various Doukhobor groups to investigate the possibility of a return to Russia. *Iskra* also carries reports on Russia that describe ongoing Doukhobor efforts to maintain connections there. These include: Doukhobor student exchanges with Russia, projects to help Russia such as the fundraising efforts to help Chernobyl victims, reports on the activities of Doukhobors who live in Russia and commentary on Russian affairs generally.

In recently-composed songs performed for the Canadian Museum of Civilization's multimedia Doukhobor exhibit such as the song "Toil and Peaceful Life" that begins "We are the people who left home one day,/We were told we could no longer stay" (Canadian Museum n.p.), or in the solo "Our Tribute" where the singer cries while he relates the hardships of the young men who were imprisoned in Russia and then sings, "And to Canada, we all have migrated" (Canadian Museum n.p.), suffering after the Burning of

Arms is closely related to migration. Even a poster from that exhibit stresses both aspects of Doukhobor experience as key. The poster features a photograph of Doukhobors on one of the migration ships, a map of their migration path from Russia to Canada and the two most significant dates for Doukhobors in Canada--the 1895 Burning of Arms and the migration to Canada in 1899. Therefore, both activities--resistance to oppression and migration--form the spiritual and the material touchstone of Doukhobor identity. They have enabled Doukhobors to see their difficulties in Canada in spiritual terms not immediately comprehensible to Canadian authorities at various times, and they are the reason why Doukhobors were able to resist significant attempts to assimilate them far longer than most migrant groups in Canada. These representations of homeland, collective oppression, and migration together form a language for their experiences that provides a point of negotiation for Doukhobors as they have attempted to remember their history along spiritualist lines rather than by purely empirical means, and as they write themselves in autobiographical texts as individuals who are ultimately also responsible to a community and to communal memory.

Smaller English-language autobiographical texts appeared in *Mir* and still appear occasionally in *Iskra* as a way for Doukhobor readers to learn about Doukhobor history, identity and tradition. Many of these smaller pieces that appear in *Iskra* have been transcribed and translated into English by the speakers themselves or by their children in an effort to accommodate the disappearance of intergenerational oral learning and the declining use of the Russian language among Doukhobors. The challenges the writers of

these texts face, therefore, is not just a local historical challenge. Shorter Doukhobor speeches, reminiscences and explanatory notes function in their publications as a way to work against assimilation by reminding readers of the diasporic position of the Doukhobors as migrants from Russia, while the constant references to migration to Canada and movement within Canada indirectly refer to Doukhobor subjectivity as a migrant subjectivity related to their spiritual mission on the earth. These concerns with rootlessness are grounded in one of two ways: either in the writer's exhortation to remember one's origin as a "Spirit Wrestler" who resists injustice, or in the evocation of autobiographical discourse itself which combines with oral Doukhobor discourse to invoke a pedagogical hybrid subject that the younger generation can "learn" about and from.

An example of a narrative which an elder originally told to benefit younger people recast into a public format can be found in set of recollections by Nikolai Perepelkin. Perepelkin related his experiences to his granddaughter Hazel Samorodin who, with Tim Samorodin, wrote the narrative down in Russian, translated it and published it in *Iskra*. In the narrative, the Samorodins preface Perepelkin's remarks with conventional details about his date and place of birth usually found at the beginning of a written autobiography (Perepelkin 24). Perepelkin's reminiscence, however, features a plural subjectivity (both in the narrative and implied in his telling of the story to his granddaughter--it is for others to retell).

His story focuses on the experiences of Doukhobor men hired to work on the railway. Perepelkin interprets the events in a binary format: the hardworking men are

teased by non-Doukhobors who do not understand them. These experiences include moments of prejudice from non-Doukhobors, who cut their tent ropes or put ashes in their food. They are also refused water during the 300-mile walk home to their families. However, one non-Doukhor woman does give them milk to drink, and “this gesture of goodwill by this gentle lady stuck in the memories of all of us” (24). It is unclear in the narrative who “us” actually is: it is possible that Perepelkin was with the men, but the next sentence seems to indicate that he was not: “Finally, our workers arrived home after a nine-month absence” (24). It does not actually matter where Perepelkin is in the narrative, since the subjectivity recounted is plural: the work of the men belongs to the community.

*Iskra*’s decision to translate and print “Grandma Melanya’s Story,” a short autobiography from a contemporary Russian Doukhor elder, indicates how Canadian Doukhobors are encouraged to maintain diasporic connections to their “homeland” and their “home identity” by means of short life narratives. Grandma Melanya describes (probably to a Doukhor interviewer for *Iskra*) her two short years of school, her work as a Russian peasant which includes weaving, cooking, haying in the fields and tending cattle. She also describes square dancing, singing or talking “with the girls” and “a shot or two to celebrate” for fun (47). These activities would present a living reminder of agricultural life to Doukhobors who still endorse rural communal living in principle, but who do not practice it. But like Doukhobors in Canada, Grandma Melanya discusses the loss of Doukhor tradition and the difficulty of passing it on to the community’s youth since they have, “no songs to sing, no stories to tell, as our ancestors would say” (47).

She ends her narrative with a statement of loss because “a lot of things have gone out of the lives of us *Dukhobory*” but then invites Doukhobors in Canada to visit her community next year to see the old ways and ends with the words “come and see us” (47). Here is a life narrative which functions not in terms of nostalgia, but in terms of diasporic connections to communal living, Russian language and Doukhobor tradition. Grandma Melanya’s exhortation to come and see them (rather than to come and see her) makes her life narrative a point of connection between the groups, and an invitation to Doukhobors to renew their traditions in a direct way. Autobiography operates here as the point of contact, transcribed and translated, between groups in order to strengthen Doukhobor connections to their traditional culture and their homeland in Russia.

The article by Joe and Florence Podovnikoff for *Iskra* called “Former Saskatchewan Doukhobors Recall...” represents a different type of recollection designed to emphasize Doukhobor identity via a remembered diasporic connection. Unlike Perepelkin’s recollection, the Podovnikoffs recall a specific event, their first impressions of Peter Chistiakov upon his arrival in Canada. They do not recall this for the benefit of their grandchildren, as Perepelkin did, but for those they call “the younger Doukhobor generation of today” (18) so that they can advise the younger generation to read the letters and speeches of Peter Chistiakov for guidance. The decision to discuss a personal experience, therefore, is didactic and closely related to the act of resisting assimilation, which they call “the difficult period of spiritual confusion” that they believe Chistiakov foresaw (20). They refer to their “personal experience of our own early years” as the reason why they think that Peter Chistiakov’s writings hold value for younger

Doukhobors who want to understand Doukhobor identity issues and challenges because “eventually reality leads us back to our own unique historical roots, carrying their own unique ramifications, which the leader understood well” (20).

This remembrance of Peter Chistiakov, therefore, exists as a didactic aid which points to his writings. The function of the personal experience of the Podovnikoffs is to stimulate the desire for “eternal memory,” the memory of the sacred, in the younger Doukhobor community and to connect that memory to aspects of Doukhobor religious faith and history which link it to the diasporic imaginary. This is why their memory of Chistiakov focusses first on the impact of his arrival “from the far away ‘Rodina’ -- *Rossiya...*” *Rodina* is the Russian word for homeland and the Russian word for Russia is used, in italics for emphasis, rather than the English word. Peter Chistiakov’s arrival is not a matter of personal nostalgia--as the Podovnikoffs say, “we were 14 at the time” and so they would not remember Russia--but a living connection between the land of origin and the place where the Doukhobors had migrated. He, having just migrated himself, symbolizes the Russianness of Doukhobor identity: his clothes, for example, are Russian and he wears “Cossack boots,” and because “to us he was truly a phenomenon from another world” (18) he connects that other world to the one where the Podovnikoffs are. The Podovnikoffs see Peter Chistiakov’s arrival as a revival of the diasporic imaginary since he aimed “to make Doukhobors aware of their historic calling [and] to preserve the high principles of their forefathers” and, among other things, asked Doukhobor women to wear traditional, not “foreign” dress (18) so that the Doukhobors in Canada would remain more “Doukhobor” and not assimilate. The diasporic imaginary, through this

recollection of Peter Chistiakov's influence and importance, is filtered through the Podovnikoffs' decision to use a personal narrative format stressing their youthful experience of Peter Chistiakov so that the younger generation will understand and preserve Doukhobor identity by remembering their Russian roots.

While *Iskra* mainly features autobiographical passages and stories by USCC members, the editors of early issues of *Mir* made an effort to acquire material by Doukhobors from other groups. To this end, *Mir* asked some Doukhobors whom they considered to be members of the Independent Doukhobor community to write articles about the history and background of the Independent group. Two of these articles, one about the Independents generally by Peter J. Popoff and one by Ivan G. Bondoreff about the Named Doukhobors of Canada<sup>8</sup> have short autobiographical prefaces. These serve to introduce the authors, but they also construct an alternative history of Doukhoborism for a readership that could be unfamiliar with this type. These narratives, therefore, situate an individual Doukhobor but also serve to revise the idea of a Doukhobor subject for the benefit of other Doukhobor readers. There are subtle "clues" as to the identity and world view of the writers which serve to inscribe them as Doukhobor subjects, but also as Independents.

Peter J. Popoff's "Autobiographical Note", for example, begins his short narrative not with his date of birth but with the actions of his parents which marked them as Independents. He writes that he was born "shortly before my parents applied for an individual homestead and moved onto it, as they chose not to migrate to B.C., and the communal lands in the area were already parcelled to individual owners" (13). Like the

autobiographical writing of Fred Davidoff and Peter Maloff in chapter five and the oral narratives in chapter four, Popoff expresses his identity in terms of his location and the way his parents decided to deal with the locational changes made by the Doukhobors after the Canadian government tried to get Doukhobors to register for individual homesteads and to swear an oath to the Queen. To be an Independent, therefore, was to decide to react to spatial change differently and *not* to migrate again to British Columbia. Identity, land use and reactions to non-Doukhobor authority are connected here to signify to other Doukhobors what being an Independent Doukhobor means.

Popoff identifies himself with the Doukhobor tradition of pacifist resistance and the willingness to be jailed if necessary when he describes his participation in a 1932 demonstration to protest the assemblage of global powers for war and the mass arrests of Doukhobors in British Columbia, and mentions his arrest in 1937 in Grand Forks for not registering as required by the War Measures Act. These details come before Popoff's description of his committee involvement with Doukhobor groups and before a description of his career, present life in Grand Forks, B.C. and the names of his wife and children. This autobiography, therefore, stresses both Popoff's Independent roots and his commitment to political protest as signs which mark him as an Independent who has not compromised Doukhobor ideals. This stress prefigures Popoff's conclusion in his article about the usefulness of the Independent movement to Doukhoborism generally:

In addition they [the Independents who did not go to war] had shown that a person does not necessarily renounce his faith in God nor in the Doukhobor teaching merely by not subscribing to either of the formal groups...[there may be no future for the Independents but] their involvement in the Doukhobor cause may,



however, assist others who will rally to the call to fulfil the destiny of the Doukhobors. (42)

Ivan Bondoreff's "Autobiographical Note," like Popoff's, expresses his identity in terms of his family location, which Doukhobor readers would recognize as a sign for the shifting group affiliation of his family. For example, Bondoreff's family originally settles at Blaine Lake, Saskatchewan, "living a communal way of life for a few years" (12). This changes when the organization of space changes due to the government survey and the division of the land into homesteads: Bondoreff's most important childhood memory is connected to this event, as he was the boy selected to pull the quarter assignments out of a cap and he says "I remember I didn't even have grown up pants on yet" (12). The life of his family changes drastically after this event, since they--with the rest of the Blaine Lake community--were asked by the CCUB committee to move 200 miles to community lands in Saskatchewan due to the actions of the federal government, and then moved again to British Columbia.

But by 1919, after his marriage to Mary Kabatoff, the Bondoreff family signals their Independent affiliation by moving out of the CCUB to a farm at Blaine Lake, although it is never made overt in the narrative and the reasons for moving are not detailed. Bondoreff then lists his more significant community activities since that time which mark him as an Independent who will deal with the non-Doukhobor world. He participates in Doukhobor activities since he was active in the formation of the Named Doukhobors and worked in the organization until 1939, but he is also part of the formation of non-Doukhobor organizations such as the early Labour Party where he hears

J.S. Woodsworth talk of forming the CCF. He also mentions that he knew Mackenzie King and Diefenbaker very well, but prefaces this with his position as the trustee of the Doukhobor Prayer Home at Blaine Lake, and includes a separate paragraph about his role in trying to prevent the National War Services Board in Saskatchewan from conscripting young Doukhobor men (13). Therefore, Bondoreff's autobiographical passage is designed to indicate his twin affiliations as an "independent" (he does not call himself this but affirms his loyalty to the Named Doukhobors of Canada) Doukhobor and as a participant in non-Doukhobor life. His relatively traditional autobiographical structure begins with his birth year and location and contains other non-Doukhobor features such as the date of his marriage and stress on his public commitments, but it also contains Doukhobor signs which Doukhobors would read in order to understand the changing affiliations of his family such as his family's decision to move into the CCUB in Saskatchewan and British Columbia, but then out of the CCUB and to Blaine Lake in 1919. Bondoreff's autobiography, then, combines two ways in order to demonstrate his twin allegiances.

Although I did say that *Iskra* mainly has material by and about members of the USCC, an autobiographical testimony by a former Freedomite woman, Luba Poznikoff-Koutny, indicates how autobiographical writing can be used to begin healing in the Doukhobor communities. As part of a feature article on the first Krestova reunion in 1996, Poznikoff-Koutny responds to an article in an earlier issue of *Iskra* where Doukhobors in all communities are urged to acknowledge incidents of family abuse, religious fanatic activity that was harmful to them and difficulties with the authorities. Poznikoff-Koutny, whose parents moved to Krestova because, after being incarcerated at

Piers Island, they could not afford to live anywhere else, retells her life story from her birth in 1936 and her early life at Krestova where she experienced “the terror, confusion and fear” of home burnings and anti-educational sentiments, but where she also experienced close friendships, plentiful homegrown food and Russian schooling in the community (24).

Poznikoff-Koutny describes her difficulties with the English language and with her marriage to a dedicated Freedomite after her parents moved away from Krestova when their house was burned, but she resolves her emotional dislocation by organizing the reunion (24-25). As with other short autobiographical narratives, Poznikoff-Koutny intends her life to be a life-sign not for others to emulate, but as a *confession* that will give others the courage to confess their hurt also so that they can be healthy individuals and healthy members of the Doukhobor community. Here, autobiography functions as part of a confessional discourse that does not occur as a response to inner compulsion, but as a public narrative written so that others will also write in *Iskra* about past familial and communal problems. The author also asks for a direct response from other members of the community whom the author calls “dear friends,” which indicates that this narrative operates as hybrid form between the non-Doukhobor confessional tradition which is done now to ensure “emotionally healthy lives” (25), but also within the communal traditions that both inspire the confessional rhetoric and also are written to inspire more of it.<sup>9</sup>

Cecil Maloff’s autobiographical speech, originally presented at an event honouring Doukhobors at Cowley, Alberta in 1984, was not designed to detail shifting allegiances and negotiations between non-Doukhobor and Doukhobor ways of

representation and of political activity, but to represent general ideas from Doukhoborism to non-Doukhobors. Interestingly, the editorial note in *Iskra* which prefaces it mentions that it received “a very positive response and is printed for the benefit of readers, by request of the author” (36). Maloff, therefore, clearly intends his presentation of Doukhobor identity and its origins intended originally for non-Doukhobors to function now as a “memorial sign.”<sup>10</sup> This indicates that the function of *Iskra* as a publication intended to negotiate new parameters of Doukhobor identity through printed texts of all types, including those autobiographical texts called into being by non-Doukhobor requests for ethnic minority “visibility.”

Maloff's intention to thematize his Doukhobor identity for non-Doukhobors to gain visibility is evident from his opening paragraph which begins with emphasis on his heritage as a migrated “Spirit Wrestler,” as well as his exact date of birth and his desire to negotiate with the idea of Canada as a nation rather than repudiate it:

my heritage was instilled in me from my ancestors, from the day when I was born, August 3, 1917. It is the inheritance of 300 years of existence of a name “Spirit-Wrestler”--Doukhobor, and its ideas and aspirations, which brought us to this beautiful God-given country and its wonderful people. (36)

Maloff continues to combine features of autobiographical narrative not found in other Doukhobor autobiographical writings with some features which are common to other narratives. For example, Maloff stresses his location not in terms of continuous migration, shifting group allegiances or the government land surveys but in terms of his attachment to the land itself when he says “I have yet to see more beautiful scenery than at Cowley, Alberta....I love this little place on Earth” (36). Non-Doukhobors appear in the

narrative, not as the surveying government nor as people who misunderstand his group, but on an individual level, as friends when Maloff mentions his friendships with non-Doukhobors who differed from him, “but at heart, I still loved them, and miss them still. We parted as friends when they had their duty to do according to their heritage” (36).

But this reference to heritage forms the point of negotiation for Maloff between Doukhobor and non-Doukhobor life which allows him to remain loyal to Doukhobor traditions of resistance to earthly authority. Although he mentions only that his education is limited “because of domestic circumstances” (these probably refer to Doukhobor parents who kept their children from school in reaction to government pressures), Maloff uses this lack of formal schooling to discuss the advantages of Doukhobor alternative education rather than to either apologize for non-institutional participation or condemn secular education itself:

Although my formal schooling was very limited and was only to grade three, because of domestic circumstances, I’m thankful to my ancestors for their inspiration, enlightenment and enchantment which gave me a soul of understanding. This is an understanding of life and beauty, of what I live with, and what makes me tick, which makes me always contented and happy, with love to all living creatures on this planet Earth. (36)

In a similar way, Maloff uses the parting with his friends as an occasion to discuss his own heritage in terms of his Doukhobor identity, saying that “I also had my duty to do as a Doukhobor--what I have learned from my ancestors” (36), which probably refers to a decision to resist conscription during World War II. From this point of difference, Maloff can then insert his discourse of non-violence as originally belonging to Doukhobors, Quakers and others that is now developing into a world movement for peace and

discourses of peacekeeping that non-Doukhobors, such as Jonathan Schell, whom Maloff acknowledges, have begun to use.

Maloff's autobiographical speech operates as a way to insert himself, and then his beliefs in non-violence, into mainstream non-Doukhor discourse without abandoning his identity as a Doukhor. He does this by minimizing internal Doukhor differences in areas such as communal living, vegetarianism and Russian language use, and by his appeal to the aspect of the diasporic imaginary which is related, not to migration and absolute difference, but to the peace movement and to general Doukhor educational alternatives that are more easily understood by non-Doukhobors. Maloff's decision to print his speech for Doukhobors may reflect a more recent tendency in Doukhor groups to use life narrative to negotiate between Doukhor identity and ideas of Canadian citizenship through the discourses of peace activism. It also could, if Maloff identifies himself as an Independent Doukhor (from the speech it is impossible to tell if he would), represent another way in which Independent Doukhobors like Peter Popoff or Ivan Bondoreff negotiate between Doukhor identity positions and public life in Canada.

The early interviews done by the staff of *Mir* indicate how autobiographical discourse in an interview format provided a way for younger Doukhobors who were not confident Russian speakers to understand and debate the status of the Doukhor diasporic imaginary. In addition to articles about Doukhor identity and history, interviews with Anna Markova (Peter Chistiakov's daughter and John J. Verigin's

mother) about her life and migration, and about life in the British Columbia commune with Nick Arishenkoff and Cecil Koochin contain significant autobiographical sections which evoke the discourse of the single, liberal subject who has the ability to construct a single narrative inside of a cooperative interview format.

Autobiographical moments are called into being by the interviewer, but the parameters of what autobiography is are sometimes changed by the speaker to include others in the Doukhobor community, past and present. The result is a record of a hybrid subject that narrates between the discourses of persecution and survival in Russia, and the discourses of assimilation and misunderstanding in Canada. This hybrid subject also narrates between collective Doukhobor subjectivity and the individual subjectivity privileged in autobiography by narrating *for* others (in this case, Doukhobor youth) and *with* others (the interviewer and other people speaking). The subject here is not an internal and private self, but a public identity produced for the community's benefit at a time when young Doukhobors were trying to deal with mixed feelings of pride in their cultural heritage and the silencing of their ethnic background that occurred when they worked or studied in non-Doukhobor settings.<sup>11</sup>

Jim Popoff's interview with Anna Markova for *Mir* illustrates one way in which this hybrid subject can be represented. This interview was the first done by *Mir*, and was conducted in Russian but later translated into English. The preface to the interview makes the purpose of the interview clear. The Doukhobor history is "one of struggle and persecution for [Doukhobor] beliefs, which tended to vary radically from those of the surrounding society" and are recorded in hymns and folk-songs, but "in recent years,

however, a progressively widening gap seems to have developed between our self-sacrificing forefathers, and ourselves” (Markova 3). This gap, which is widening due to assimilation in Canada and to the shift from an oral psalm culture in Russian to an English-language print culture, is to be addressed by the interview with Anna Markova, whose life “provides a living example to inspire our generation” (Markova 3).

As the daughter of Peter Chistiakov and the mother of John J. Verigin, Markova was already revered. But she also was the single living link between the Doukhobors in the Soviet Union and Doukhobors in Canada, because she did not migrate to Canada until 1960 and spent much of her adult life in Stalinist camps. It is a measure of the respect granted her that the Community Doukhobors did not officially acknowledge the death of Markova’s brother Peter Iastrebov (the Hawk) in a camp and proclaim John J. Verigin as the Honorary Chairman of the USCC until Markova reported in 1960 that he had in fact died in 1942, although the Red Cross had told the USCC about Iastrebov’s death in 1957 (Woodcock 344). Therefore, Anna Markova’s life story provided an example of two major aspects of the Doukhobor diasporic imaginary: she had suffered for her beliefs and had been spiritually sustained by her faith during that time, and she had lived most of her life in Russia, the Doukhobor country of origin. Anna Markova’s story also forms part of the Doukhobor oral tradition where the elders teach the youth about Doukhobor traditions and beliefs, while it takes the form of a written narrative for Doukhobors who were more comfortable with English-language print culture.



The interview begins with the interviewer asking Markova to provide “a brief biographical outline” for the benefit of the magazine’s readership (3). Markova agrees, saying:

Very well, I shall do so, only with certain reservations. The biography of my life is a complex one; on the one side it is replete with human interest, on the other it is...sad. However, in spite of everything I shall attempt to relate what I can recall about myself and even touch upon certain things pertaining to my earlier life in Russia. (3)

Although much Doukhobor autobiographical writing has occurred because non-Doukhobors request that format, here is an example of a Doukhobor request that calls an autobiographical narrative into existence as a memorial sign. Markova’s response, although it seems reluctant, affirms that the narrative is “replete with human interest” and so can be told, for others’ benefit. Markova then reads or recites a lengthy autobiographical narrative that she prepared in advance (3). This narrative follows a classic autobiographical format: Markova relates details she cannot remember such as her date of birth, where she lived as a child, and how Chistiakov became the leader of one of the Doukhobor groups in Russia. Then, saying “We lived....(at this point I begin to remember about myself, about my life)....” (4), Markova relates details she can remember, such as her first marriage in Orlovka, the Doukhobor migration to the Don region, the death of her husband during the migration, the birth of her son Ivan (John) one month after her husband’s death, her father’s move to Canada to head the Doukhobor groups there in 1927, her second marriage, the birth of her second son Peter and then her son Ivan’s adoption by Chistiakov before he was taken to Canada without Markova (5-6). The tone of the narrative text until this point is strictly factual and occurs almost without

commentary, until Markova mentions the arrest and imprisonment in Siberia of her second husband, her brother and herself. Her son Peter is left behind with a family in the village of Veriginka, “left to the mercies of fate” (6).

The narrative becomes agitated as Markova relates how her son’s birth date was falsified by the family where he was staying so that he was called up for the draft during World War II, resisted the draft and then was drafted after his arrest. He was wounded and killed at the front in 1945. Markova refers to the war as “a period of human carnage (as I call it) -- a war, which required a lot of cannon fodder” and calls her son a victim of “people who secure their own wellbeing at the price of other people’s misfortune” (6). Markova gathers these facts into a comment which sums up her life as a *mother* who suffers because of her maternal position (not because of her position as a wife) and because of her pacifist principles and her position as the daughter of the Doukhobor leader:

And so, this is how it happened that I lost my two children: one I kissed goodbye at the age of six as he left for Canada, and the other, by the whims of fate, at a few months past eighteen years of age, became the victim of such circumstances as make it very, very hard to talk about....(6)

The next part of Markova’s narrative deals with her 12-year imprisonment, the deaths of her husband and brother in Siberia and her subsequent life as “a totally displaced person, bereft of home, of belongings, of everything that had meaning in my life” (7). She deals with her displacement by trying to learn more about her brother’s death when she settles near someone who had lived with her brother in the camps. She describes her state at the time in terms of a Russian saying: “..denuded, despoiled and

dispossessed” (..yako nag, yako blag, yako neyt nichevo)” although her conditions gradually improve over four years (7). From here, the narrative abruptly moves to a description of her plane landing at Vancouver, and the resolution of her isolation as she sees her second son, John J. Verigin, after 32 years.

Markova’s conclusion converts these experiences of dispossession and dislocation into the traditional Doukhobor image of suffering, particularly suffering in prison, as a type of school or university, an image which stresses Doukhobor beliefs in non-institutional learning, and in experience as its own religious education. Her “biography” becomes a Doukhobor “life sign” that can educate others:

So, now you can see that my biography, though perhaps of little interest to some people, to me was its own kind of school....a university. I was able to see human life -- the lives of people -- through the broadest of spectrums. It could be that God sent me these experiences to try me -- although I never felt a sense of guilt or blame for any wrong doing on my part. Throughout my 15 years in Siberia, nevertheless, I certainly learned a lot. (7)

Markova continues this theme with a discussion of both her suffering because she lost her second husband and her second son. She says that her decision to forgive the Soviet Union and the family who betrayed her son as a response to her “inner voice,” a reference to the Doukhobor belief that the rational inner voice is a manifestation of God in each person (8).

The interviewer says that he is “left somewhat speechless” and asks for details of Markova’s faith in God (8) and opinions on other issues, which Markova provides in the form of an appeal. Based on the construction of her life as a narrative of Doukhobor response to suffering, Markova asks Doukhobor youth to “not forget their birthright, their

purpose, their Doukhobor goal” (40) and advises them to use their education to “study Doukhobor history” while they “must rely on their own high intelligence and intuitive wisdom” to determine what Doukhoborism is (41). This appeal becomes the reason for her life narrative, which in turn provides her with the authority to link younger Doukhobors with the diasporic imaginary of suffering and passive resistance to persecution in Russia. Markova’s narrative exists, therefore, as an exemplar of a hybrid Doukhobor identity construction between oral narrative and written autobiography that combines a non-Doukhobor written tradition of a single subject’s narrative with Doukhobor oral tradition in which elders teach youth about Doukhobor ideas and pass on Doukhobor traditions. As she concludes:

It makes me very happy to know that there is something in my life that could serve a useful purpose for the cause of the young people who are trying to find themselves and their identity with their own traditions and faith. I wish them every success. (42)

Jim Popoff’s interview with Nick Arishenkoff and Cecil Koochin about communal living in British Columbia before the end of the CCUB<sup>12</sup> contains a different set of assumptions about Doukhobor identity, resistance and the value of remembering ancestral sufferings. Unlike the interview with Anna Markova, this interview was meant to provide information about what communal living was actually like, but its introduction to it admits that the request for autobiographical information from Arishenkoff and Koochin results a long outpouring of anger and resentment about the way that the dispersement of CCUB assets after bankruptcy was handled by non-Doukhobors (3). Arishenkoff and Koochin’s decision to connect their life stories with the difficulties the

commune experienced as a whole is an example of Doukhobor subjectivity which refuses to stay singular and within the confines of an orderly written format. Individual subjectivity here operates in concert with a plural subjectivity that allows Arishenkoff and Koochin to collapse communal experience into their own experiences and analyses of Doukhobor identity as migratory and separate from Canadian life, sometimes to the surprise of the interviewer, who says in the introduction to the interview that the staff of *Mir* was “somewhat overwhelmed at the degree of emotional fervour...there seemed to be no end to the outpouring of grievances which were recounted” (3). *Mir* interprets the experiences in the CCUB recounted in the interview as a life sign for the present Doukhobor generation because “at the very least, their effort [i.e., the effort of the interviewees and everyone else in the CCUB to make communal living work] provides an example, and a learning experience for the future, and their great dedication and faith....will provide an inspiration for many generations to come” (3). The introduction also makes the point that the personal recollections of both men are geared to discussing wider issues rather than simply providing biographical details since “even now, [they] inadvertently reveal a need for a confirmation of their ideas, and a degree of recognition for their individual efforts” (3). The introduction recognizes that even “inadvertently,” Koochin and Arishenkoff treat their life narratives as participating in a larger discourse about community issues, and that this feature can connect these stories with the concerns of younger Doukhobors because of the hybrid quality--sometimes singular, sometimes collective--of the subjects produced in the narratives. Therefore, the autobiographical discourse asked of Koochin and Arishenkoff at the beginning of the interview represents

a similar request for a life sign that can ground Doukhobor identity. This is similar to the request made of Anna Markova.

The interview begins with a request for “a brief personal background about each of you”, with Koochin as the first respondent (4). Koochin’s narrative begins with his birth year of 1899, which identifies him as one of the first Doukhobors born in Canada with no personal memory of Russia. He remembers his childhood in Tambovka Saskatchewan as happy, and interprets this almost immediately in terms of his positive attitude to communal living, saying that there was “a firm belief that this was the best of all possible life styles” (4). The virtue of communal living becomes the dominant theme in the rest of his narrative, since Koochin then foregrounds the large financial contributions his village made to the CCUB and how this demonstrates his village’s enthusiasm for communal living. Koochin’s recollection of his family’s move to the Verigin commune in 1910 also stresses how “all of our worldly possessions,” including a black stallion, were “submitted to the jurisdiction of the Verigin commune” (4). After his family moved to British Columbia in 1913, Koochin recounts how Peter Lordly personally gave him tasks and moved his family between Saskatchewan and Grand Forks to serve the needs of the communal organization, and then details his positions in the CCUB after the arrival of Chistiakov. His narrative ends with his resignation from the CCUB Board of Directors “when matters became unbearable for me” due to pressures from the people themselves and from Chistiakov. He stresses, however, that he paid dues to the CCUB until the very end, and has always paid dues to the USCC, which functions in the narrative as proof of his loyalty to the communal ideal (5).

In response to the interviewer's request for "a brief summary of your autobiography" (5). Nick Arishenkoff's narrative begins with a reference to the suffering of his parents during the persecutions in Russia, and with his parents' subsequent migration on the first ship (5). This comment serves to orient his narrative not as much towards the virtues of communal living, but towards the suffering Doukhobors have undergone in the past and still, as he makes clear, undergo. Migratory dislocation in the host country figures more strongly also, as Arishenkoff states that he does not remember the earlier years of Doukhobor settlement himself but that he remembers the stories the elders told about their arrival:

I do very clearly remember, however, the accounts of elders about the arrival in Canada, particularly about the friendly greetings, expressions of sympathy for the suffering the Doukhobors had endured, and promises of freedom to pursue their religion and way of life in the new country. (5)

This statement fulfills several narrative functions at once. It affirms the Doukhobor oral tradition of learning from elders and passing that knowledge down, while the content of the narrative is ironic: the initial greetings of Canadians were friendly and promises are made, but these promises will quickly be broken and will form the bases for Arishenkoff's subsequent grievances against the Canadian government and his interpretation of the Community's difficulties with non-Doukhobors. Finally, Arishenkoff's personal memory of stories told by other people means that the major focus of his "autobiography" is not the centrality of his own development or even his own life course, but the history of the Doukhobor commune's development and eventual demise. His account therefore mixes elements of memoir and autobiography, with a stress on a

collective Doukhobor subject while his own subjectivity appears in response to community events. This means that Arishenkoff recalls where he was when he heard the news of Peter Lordly's sudden death, but his description of the emotional impact is collective: "the people were thrown into a state of mourning and despair" (5).

After he describes non-Doukhobor rioting against Doukhobors that demonstrates undeserved hostility against the group and provides details about the CCUB's debt problems before the arrival of Peter Chistiakov, Arishenkoff returns to a personal description of the labouring jobs he had and then describes his personal sense of loss when the new jam factory was burned down:

Of all the many losses by fire of CCUB property the loss of the Grand Forks jam factory hurt me most in a personal sense. For many years I had worked at heavy jobs. Now I had acquired an easier and more interesting job. I enjoyed my new duties and was very disappointed when I had to sharpen my old seven pound axe and return to the woods. (6)

This personal moment in the narrative serves to demonstrate the pressures on the CCUB as the result of arson, but Arishenkoff assigns blame for the fire on non-Doukhobors rather than on the Sons of Freedom. This is in keeping with the binarisms he develops in the rest of his narrative between the CCUB and the government officials who take control of the organization and deliberately destroy it. His personal story serves to demonstrate this theme, as when he discovers that planed lumber from a communal sawmill is being sold off for less than the raw material cost, and that a sawmill fire might have been started or approved by the non-Doukhobor receiver in an attempt to impoverish the commune when it went into receivership (7).



Arishenkoff's narrative ends when the interviewer asks to take a picture of Koochin and Arishenkoff because they look very earnest--Arishenkoff says that he is angry--at this point. Arishenkoff then sums up his position by indicting the Canadian government and speaking against forces of assimilation, and he appeals to the idea of *vechnaya pamyat* as a way to thematize the events he has discussed. The event he references is the Burning of Arms and the need to remember it:

We should all think back and remember our forefathers, the pathway which they had to thread for hundreds of years. They withstood every imaginable kind of torture and persecution and that's why we are in such fortunate circumstances today, compared to many people in the world, who have suffered wars, and other disasters. That is why we sing hymns of praise to these people. Hymns such as "Sleep on, you brave fighting eagles" and "In the Struggle for Freedom", giving praise which they justly deserve. (7)

For Arishenkoff, memory of this event will keep the Doukhobors from assimilating, although he wonders if this will be enough. His life story thus ends on an ambiguous note:

I often think about my own life (I am nearly 73 years old!) and the accomplishments of my own generation. What have we accomplished for our children, for future generations? Who will sing hymns of praise to us? I remember my mother used to tell me often, how her grandmother was ashamed to bath with others because of the two badly-healed scars on her back where strips of flesh had been torn out as tortures for her beliefs. Yes, she was ashamed of the scars with which she had been earning freedom for me, her great-grandson... (7)

Here then, Arishenkoff touches on his individual life and wonders whether it is a true life sign, and whether his whole generation can function as a valid life sign for the next generation of Doukhobors. Collective identity and individual identity become symbiotic as he reflects on his own life and on his own remembered connections to the Burning of Arms events.

The interview with Koochin and Arishenkoff demonstrates how, in a format not usually thought of as autobiographical, autobiographical discourse can combine with traditionally oral ways for Doukhobors to remember and interpret events through the touchstones of their diasporic imaginary such as communal living, persecution and migration. The hybrid form that results allows for a hybrid Doukhobor subjectivity to develop for the public benefit of other Doukhobors. Furthermore, the narratives do not have the autochthonous quality of more traditional autobiography, but are created by the speakers in response to a request for autobiography made by another person. These narratives are, therefore, made for others and to some extent made by others also, if the interviewer's request for autobiography and the function of the narratives as exemplars for other Doukhobors are considered. The subject produced in them is a mostly collective public subject that exists as a life sign linking the suffering and survival of former generations to the next Doukhobor generation. The work of *vechnaya pamyat* enables the sufferings of the speakers' generation to be converted to a heritage of suffering from those who endured 1895, and for suffering to be understood as spiritual and collective.

The text called "My Renunciation of Military Service" by Gregory (Grisha) Ivanovich Soukorev<sup>13</sup> both in its initial 1946 publication in Russian in *Iskra* and its recent 1996 English-language publication in *Iskra* forms a central part of the diasporic imaginary of Doukhobors centred on the events following the 1895 Burning of Arms. It also indicates how in the collection and subsequent translation of first-person narratives such as this one,<sup>14</sup> autobiography operates as a way to inscribe an alternate history of

Doukhobor identity that connects *vechnaya pamyat* to the narrative of a single subject featured in non-Doukhobor autobiographical writing.

Although Doukhobors still do recall the suffering of their relatives who were tortured (particularly by remembering the scars on their backs) in 1895 as a hallmark of Doukhobor identity, as Nick Arishenkoff does in his interview, or as Mae Popoff does at the beginning of her article “On Doukhobor Singing” for the *Spirit Wrestlers* collection (Tarasoff & Klymasz 50), Soukorev’s manuscript is unique. He wrote the account himself instead of dictating or recording it, and he was very eager to have as many people as possible read or hear his story. According to William Rozinkin in the article “Let Us Remember...” from his regular historical column for *Iskra*, Soukorev read his written manuscript to other Doukhobors in the 1930s and “his story brought tears to many listeners in Glade [B.C.]” (28). Rozinkin also tells a story he heard from William Sheloff, a Doukhobor man, about how Soukorev wanted him to translate his story into English. In the late 1930s or early 1940s, Sheloff translated Soukorev’s narrative and then went with Soukorev to the office of the local newspaper for the area, *The Nelson Daily News*, to ask the (non-Doukhobor) editor to publish the English-language version. The editor, whom Rozinkin describes as a staunch supporter of the Royal Canadian Legion, did not believe that the story could be true due to the graphic nature of the torture descriptions until Soukorev showed him the scars on his back. Shocked, the editor believed Soukorev and published the narrative (29).

As these stories indicate, Soukorev wished to transmit his written narrative both into the oral culture of his audience and to the literature culture of non-Doukhobors who

could only read it in English in *The Nelson Daily News*. Soukorev's manuscript was to serve a dual purpose: it was a way to make permanent the memory of those who suffered for renouncing or refusing military service for the Doukhobor community, and it was an effort to inscribe an alternate history and understanding of Doukhobor identity for a non-Doukhobor community which at that time was extremely hostile to Doukhobors in that area. Soukorev's efforts to publicize the manuscript represent a series of acts of negotiation between written and oral cultures and ways to remember, between young Doukhobors and old, between Russian and English speakers and between Doukhobors and non-Doukhobors. Therefore, the subject in the written manuscript operates as a hybrid subject designed by Soukorev to "speak" to both types of interpretive communities. *Iskra's* decision to print the English-language version of the manuscript that Soukorev's grandson Alex Markin and his wife Anne gave to the editors brings this combination of listening and reading communities full-circle. Originally designed to reach multiple audiences, the manuscript now reaches an audience which combines the characteristics of the separate audiences fifty years later, since fewer Doukhobors speak or read Russian and fewer young Doukhobors learn about their cultural traditions by primarily oral means.<sup>15</sup>

Soukorev's narrative begins with a relatively short section about his family life which includes his position, at the age of sixteen, as the head of his family after the death of his father. But the narrative quickly moves to the clash between Soukorev's principles, which are related to the village resolution not to serve the Tsar and to refuse military service, and what he calls "my innate love of all living beings, born of close contact with

nature in my adolescent years” (1:60). The rest of the account is what I will call a witness narrative, that is, a narrative where the subject is constructed in terms of witnessing a specific, usually traumatic event. The subject is not presented as someone who grows and changes in response to events, but is represented as a “pure,” unchanging witness who records events. As a witness narrative, Soukorev’s account depends rhetorically on picturing the monstrosity of the guards who represent the authoritarian state, while the refusal of the prisoners to give in remains steadfast. Therefore, Soukorev says, “in keeping with my convictions I immediately declared that I would not take part in the drawing of lots” when his time comes to be called for military service, and in a pattern repeated throughout the account, the authorities ignore him and humiliate him (61). Humiliation, however, has no effect and so Soukorev is “tested” again with a medical exam, which he also refuses, explaining that he is a Christian and so he cannot kill. This the authorities also ignore and take him to prison. On the way there, Soukorev’s family and friends meet him and, in keeping with the stark binarism of the text, urge him and his friends “to be brave and strong, and not to stray from the teaching of Jesus Christ, Who died on the Cross in agonizing pain and torment which should always serve as an example for His true followers” (62). As true followers, therefore, Soukorev and his friends begin to access the discourse of Christ’s sufferings in order to console themselves.

The narrative also echoes this parallel with the life of Christ, since Soukorev is then imprisoned in a heatless cell for three days and nights, a corollary to Christ’s sojourn in the grave for that length of time, during which he consoles himself with “a mental picture of the anguish of my Lord Jesus Christ” (62). Again, when Soukorev is let out and

treated still worse, he asks Jesus Christ to help him “and patiently suffered all condemnations” by remembering Christ’s instruction to turn the other cheek (62). This is successful, and Soukorev does not give in, although when he is transferred to “the disciplinary prison,” his fellow Doukhobors report that they are downcast because of the treatment they receive there and ““in spirit we are still brave...but in the future we shall trust in our Almighty Creator, Christ the Saviour”” because they are losing strength (64).

The pattern here is repeated, where Soukorev “categorically refused” to engage in rifle practice, and so is imprisoned again for three days and nights, refuses to drill, and the cycle begins again (2:40). Then, the flogging with the thorny rods, the worst torture Soukorev receives, begins. The struggle here is elemental, with the good of an individual placed against the evil of the state. For example, “the guard with his flogging rods stood in readiness, looking at me like a beast at its prey, ready to devour at a moment’s notice” (2:40), while Soukorev, lying prone with his clothes off and soldiers holding him down, is “fully prepared for the inhuman torture of punishment which could only be evaded by abdicating the great truth of the testament of our Lord Jesus Christ” (2:41) who again operates here as an example to follow. This part of the narrative catalogues in graphic detail the punishment Soukorev receives, including descriptions of the blood freezing to his underwear so that he cannot move around or remove his pants after the beatings.

Soukorev uses this occasion to reflect on his inability to write fully about the experience:

it would require a gifted master of the writing art to describe the agony of mind and body that I endured in my harrowed state during this period. I called on the Lord God for relief and this alone seemd to ease the endless suffering. (2:41)

This occasion, when Soukorev's body reaches the apex of suffering, forms a space in the narrative for reflection on the sufferings of Jesus Christ and a lament that Christ's teachings have not yet been understood by those who beat him. This strengthens him so that eventually, he resists beatings, saying to a sargeant-major "“You have the power over my flesh, but you could not possibly force me to betray my spirit”" (2:42). It is at this point in the narrative, when he cannot describe his suffering and when he relinquishes his body completely to the authorities, that Soukorev appears to take on the characteristics of Christ beyond mere imitation. Here Soukorev puts into practice the words of the psalm I quote at the beginning of the chapter about the Doukhobor belief in the presence of God within a person so that the place where one is, and one's physical body are not "real." Soukorev's narrative dramatizes this change between merely "human" and someone who bears the image of God in his body as a sacred change. His body becomes a text where suffering can be read, just as the text about his body can be read. He can now resist temptation, the final test of the singular subject, and then be rejoined to another aspect of the sacred, in this Doukhobor formulation: the community of those who suffer.

For example, after Soukorev's final defiance, three people tempt him: a priest who comes to convince him to serve the Emperor and two fellow Doukhobors who come to convince him to give up the struggle. Soukorev replies to the priest, the symbol of religious authority that Doukhobors reject, by quoting scripture about not killing, much as Jesus quoted scripture to dispel the temptations of the devil at the beginning of the Gospels of Matthew 4:7-11 and Mark 4:8-13. The priest, like the devil in the biblical accounts, leaves (3:53). To Vaily Lebedev, the first Doukhobor who tempts him, he says

“Lebedev, go away from me...leave me and do not tempt me!” (3:54), much as Jesus says to Peter “get behind me Satan” when Peter tells him that he will not suffer and die in the Gospel of Matthew 16:23. Later, when he decides to bear arms for a short time “to give me a chance to strengthen myself” (3:54) he does so as part of a collective decision-making strategy so that all Doukhobors being tortured could survive as part of “an all-out struggle” to the death (3:55). From this point, Soukorev uses the first-person plural instead of the singular, since all Doukhobors will now suffer as a group. As he says, “I am using the word ‘we’ frequently because, all-in-all, there were over thirty persons in our party” (5:40).

When the surviving prisoners finally are exiled to Siberia, they leave with “an indelible memory, one that would remain with us for the rest of our lives, of the ruthlessness of the servants of the then reigning Romanoff generation, and the ‘kindheartedness’ of the Russian Orthodox church,” but upon leaving “we were happy in the knowledge that we had not betrayed our faith” (4:28). The binary contrast between the Doukhobors and the authorities continues in comparisons between Doukhobor behaviour and the behaviour of their Russian prisoner counterparts, who swear constantly, refuse to work (5:39-40) and complain that the Doukhobor prisoners should not be allowed to work because they are richer than the others. The non-Doukhobor prisoners also drink too much and cause problems, unlike the Doukhobors. For example, when the prisoners are to pilot a raft down river to Siberia, drunken prisoners run the raft aground. The Doukhobors, after assuring their suspicious guards that they will not run away, extricate the raft (6:9-10).



After a brief description of Siberian exile that, once they are allowed to work for food, is “not too bad” (7:96), Soukorev describes their migration to Canada in 1905 after they are set free. He does not describe life in Canada, however, since the purpose of the narrative is to prove how the Doukhobor prisoners survived. Instead, his narrative ends with a revisiting of his principles:

I have always kept strictly to all the Doukhobor principles, and I continue to do so until today. I earn my living by my own toil, and live a vegetarian way of life.

Always an opponent of war. (7:97)

This manuscript operates in *Iskra* as both a historical document and as a reminder for Doukhobors to keep the faith. It does this when it directly appeals to the Doukhobor diasporic imaginary of suffering in a Christ-like manner for pacifist ideals and enduring the punishment of evil authorities. This is why Soukhorev’s narrative privileges his position as an individual subject for much of the account, but only so that *his body* rather than his personality is foregrounded, since the endurance of his body through torture is what provides his testimony, both in the narrative itself and literally for doubters like the newspaper editor to see and then believe. Once his body survives in the narrative, collectivity resumes and the Doukhobors strive together against the cruelties and misunderstandings of non-Doukhobors, thus accessing another part of the Doukhobor diasporic imaginary that is played out in Canada also. As a witness narrative about events that are commemorated in numerous Doukhobor hymns such as “How Fortunate Were Those People” or “Sleep On, You Brave Fighting Eagles,” Soukorev’s narrative both personalizes the historic account for the benefit of non-Doukhobors and provides fresh

information to fuel the Doukhobor diasporic imaginary for Doukhobors who need encouragement in preserving their traditions developed in Russia.

Doukhobor autobiography in magazines, as it develops between the traditions of oral and collective *vechnaya pamyat* and the discourse of autobiography as a single written sign, hybridizes its subject in order to negotiate with, and at times even resist, non-Doukhobor ideas about what a subject is and how the subject (or often, subjects) relates to the idea of nationality, origin and language. This discourse of the subject, constantly is remade as the requirements for Doukhobor identity change in response to conditions in Canada and, in Mishra's sense of the "sacred," foregrounds the religious struggles Doukhobors had that prefigure migration in order to heal the pain that migration causes. To this end, autobiography can occupy the hybrid space in-between the undecidability of Doukhobor origins as always-migrating and the hallmarks of the Doukhobor diasporic imaginary that are being remembered. Sometimes, in Makortoff's "half-turn" to the past which makes memory sacred within the present moment of remembering, the diasporic imaginary can be recast in these narratives as suffering, resistance to oppression, and commitment to peace as part of Doukhobor identity that is still healing, still being given a hybrid language, still being worked out.

*Notes*

1. Bonch-Bruevich's *Zhivotnaia Kniga Dukhobortsev* [The Living Book of the Doukhobors ] has been translated as *The Book of Life of the Doukhobors*. However, the Living Book is truly the oral psalms, hymns and songs sung by Doukhobors themselves: the written version is only a guide. It is not a finished "book," but a book which is always in the process of being constructed as it is sung. Since I must use the printed version here, I use the term *Living Book* to stress the ongoing process that goes into singing and interpreting it.

2. In his interview with Jonathan Rutherford, Homi Bhabha says that "it is only by losing the sovereignty of the self that you can gain the freedom of a politics that is open to the non-assimilationist claims of cultural difference...it [politics] doesn't need to totalise in order to legitimate political action or cultural practice" (Bhabha 213). Bhabha's comments indicate that hybridity, which he names in the same interview as the "third space" (211) enables other positions to emerge because of hybridity's ability to contain the trace elements of earlier histories while setting up new structures of authority. When taken with Bhabha's statements in *The Location of Culture* about undecidability, Bhabha's hybrid third space represents an in-betweenness between fundamentalist and multicultural identity positions where the "self" disappears and is replaced by identifications and affiliations open to continuous change and flux. This flux, this refusal to take one consistent position, can be thought as a strategy against more fixed, hegemonic cultural formations that seek to locate ethnic identity as always "other" and always powerless.

3. This reading of hybridity can be found in other criticism. For instance, Peter Dickinson argues that Sally Morgan's autobiography *My Place* is a hybrid narrative because Morgan embeds Aboriginal oral stories/narratives that she has tape recorded into her written text. This narrative technique creates a "double-voice" situation and multiple histories (327-328).

4. See n. 7 and chapter two for background about the United Spiritual Communities of Christ (USCC). *Iskra* is the bilingual (Russian-English) magazine sponsored by the USCC.

5. I use Bakhtin's discussion of chronotopic autobiography as a way to rethink performativity in chapter five.

6. See the introduction by Lavie and Swedenburg about the disruption of what they call the "Eurocenter" by marginal workforces that produce hybridized cultural practices (8-9), and particularly their discussion of diasporic "double" memory on page 14 in *Displacement, Diaspora and the Politics of Identity*.

7. In a recent letter to *Iskra* about the question of intermarriage, Marie Maloff mentions how Doukhobors in previous generations thought of themselves as exiled diasporic people and as wanderers. Her description describes a traditional way to learn about and understand the role of migration in the construction of Doukhobor identity:

I remember things that the older people used to talk about, and the expectations that they had. They used to repeat, 'we're not immigrants, we are exiles in a foreign land. We will go on to another country some day.' Some said 'back to Russia'; some sayings referred to Israel (because we are a spiritual Israel)....many other people who are old and who lived in religious homes must have heard and remembered these things.

My dad used to often sing ("Krai moi krai rodnoi") ["Land, my homeland"]. Throughout all of our years in Canada most people expected to move away--there was a longing in their hearts, and ours. They used to say Lushechka prophesied this and that, and what was said, the people believed, and expected it to come to pass.

They also believed in a 40 year stay in Canada and then an exile to somewhere else. It did not work out that way, but some people are still expecting something. It is good to have hope, expecting something good. (M. Maloff 27)

8. The Named Doukhobors of Canada was an organization formed by Peter Chistiakov in 1928 in an effort to unite the Independent, Community and Freedomite Doukhobor factions into one group. Chistiakov dissolved this organization before his death in 1939 when he also dissolved the CCUB and formed the USCC, although some of its members did not recognize the USCC and continued to remain under the Named Doukhobor title.

9. To date, there have been at least two responses in *Iskra* to Poznikoff-Koutny's article, both by Doukhobor women.

10. I use this term as it appears in Susan Hagen's work on autobiography and medieval allegory. According to Hagen, the narrator in a text becomes a memorial sign when the hermeneutic burden of remembrance shifts from the narrative's figuring of memory to the interpretive community's "memory" of other, similar patterns that are not part of the narrative (5).

11. Vi Plotnikoff expresses this difficulty at that time in "The Circle Journey" when she writes that,

to be Doukhobor was to be a young adult working in Vancouver yet concealing your roots--the same roots you were so proud of when you stood on the stage of the cultural centre, singing the hymns and psalms your parents, and your grandparents before them, had sung. (205)

Elaine J. Makhortoff's poem, which I discussed at the beginning of this chapter, contains similar feelings of ambiguity.

12. CCUB is the acronym for the Christian Community of University Brotherhood. This was the public name Peter Lordly gave to the communal organization of Doukhobors in 1896 (Woodcock 96-97). Peter Chistiakov dissolved the CCUB before his death in 1938 and created the Union of Spiritual Communities of Christ (USCC) to replace it (Woodcock 307). The USCC remains the official organization representing the Community Doukhobor group.

13. In English, Soukorev's name is spelled "Soukorev" in the *Iskra* issues where his manuscript appears. But his son's name in *Iskra* 1820 is spelled "Soukoreff" and Soukorev's name appears in William Rozinkin's account with this spelling. For clarity's sake I have use the former spelling as it appears in "My Renunciation of Military Service."

14. Two other narratives about the Burning of Arms have been translated and published in *Iskra*. These are Vanya Bayoff's account called "The Execution" appearing in issue 1743 that was originally transcribed by Bodianskii and Vanya Makhortoff's account of his imprisonment transcribed by his grandson Mike G. Jmieff for *Iskra* 1648.

15. *Iskra* states that the translation is believed to have been prepared by William A. Soukoreff and that it has not been published before. However, Rozinkin's comments do indicate that the translator was probably William Petrovich Sheloff and that *The Nelson Daily News* published a version of the manuscript first.

#### Chapter Four

#### Negotiating Identity: Oral Narratives by Doukhobors

The Doukhobors say: 'Record in heart, proclaim in word'. They add: 'It is nothing unusual to write down on paper but it is important to penetrate one's heart with truth.' Therefore, he who pays enough attention to his inner self, he who learns 'the true spirit of Christ,' will not require anything that has been written down because in his heart it has been already recorded and his mouth will proclaim the truth if he deems it necessary. (*Living Book 1*)

In an *Iskra* article "The Story of One Psalm..." from 1995, Jim Popoff discusses how Hazel (Mahonin) Sookochoff was able to recall a psalm composed by her father, Vasiliy Ivanovich Mahonin. Vasiliy Mahonin taught each of his daughters a speech in 1933 for a youth meeting. Vera, Hazel's sister, died of cancer during the 1950s, and there was no written copy of her speech and Hazel forgot her own over the intervening decades. However, just before the 1995 Centennial of the Burning of Arms, "seemingly out of nowhere, words and phrases from the long-forgotten speech began coming to [Hazel's] mind" (Popoff 14) until she had pieced together the whole speech. However, the speech she had recalled was not hers, but that of her sister. She was urged to pass on a written copy of the speech to the USCC Executive Committee, where John J. Verigin recommended that she recite it as a "psalm" at a special *molenie*,<sup>1</sup> which took place 41 years to the day after her sister's death (14). Jim Popoff subsequently prepared a translation of the "psalm" and printed Russian and English versions of it in his *Iskra* article along with his description of the circumstances of its making.

In the article, the value attached to the oral composition and remembrance of the song is strong, although Popoff does not directly refer to Hazel Sookochoff's experience as miraculous, or even spiritual. What it does indicate, however, is the pervasiveness of Doukhobor oral culture (the composing of psalms and passing them on to one's children for public recital) and the links, within oral culture, between memory and spiritual versions of Doukhobor history. The content of the psalm underscores this, since its subject is the "eternal remembrance" of the Doukhobors who were tortured in Russia after the 1895 Burning of Arms. The saying of the psalm (since it was recited and not written) makes it, and its speaker, a "living monument," and a part of *vechnaya pamyat*, the eternal life desired for all Doukhobors. As it says:

Today we shall present a *living monument* to the heroic Doukhobors  
spiritual warriors of Christ.  
It shall be written not in stone, but in your hearts, and not with ink  
but with our sacrificed martyr blood! (15) [italics mine]

The rest of the psalm compares the sufferings of the early Christians in Roman arenas with the sufferings of the Doukhobors, and exhorts all Doukhobors to continue "a legacy of freedom...so that we would be peacemakers upon this Earth!" (15). The suffering Doukhobors are finally wished "Eternal consciousness," which literally in Russian is *vechnaya pamyat* (eternal memory or eternal consciousness).<sup>2</sup> The psalm, therefore, operates as a commemoration of orality and the power of memory, while it imparts a blessing to the martyred Spirit-Wrestlers. Oral memory is both the occasion of *vechnaya pamyat* and the means to connect to Doukhobor identity for the descendants of the earlier Doukhobors, since it can be enacted each time the psalm is recited or sung. History here

is not words on a page or “written...in stone” but in the hearts of those who recall the event of martyrdom. Orality and memory as found in the rhetoric of *vechnaya pamyat* are key parts of what Peter Chistiakov sometimes referred to as the “Doukhobor university,”<sup>3</sup> a non-institutional way to impart knowledge about Doukhoborism to each generation through psalms, memorized catechisms and stories about Doukhobor history that recount its events and combine these with spiritual interpretations of what has happened. These aspects of Doukhobor epistemology are honoured in the *Iskra* article, even as the orally-recalled psalm is reprinted in both Russian and English, an example of the ways in which oral composition, translation, and transcription help to fulfil the call of the psalm to remember Doukhobor identity and purpose.

Intertwined aspects of orality and literacy in the acts of questioning, oral narration and transcription comprise another aspect of autobiographical writing which provides one of the most compelling reasons to widen the critical understanding of autobiography beyond the traditional understanding of it as a single written text about singularity produced by one person. As Carol Boyce Davies points out, what she calls “lifestory” or oral transcribed narrative has the potential to call “into question the notion of standard autobiography as extended, linear narrative, and invites instead more complex approaches to text, discourse, author and narrative” (Davies 6). The uses of orality and literacy, and the circumstances of the utterance in autobiographical writing and speaking can involve other narrative interventions as well, since oral narratives are addressed *to* someone who presumably can hear and immediately respond. Collaboration and dictation are included among these interventions. As Mark Sanders observes, autobiography critics have given



little thought to collaborative texts, despite the inclusion of collaborative or dictated autobiographies such as *Black Elk Speaks*, *The Autobiography of Malcolm X* or *I, Rigoberta Menchu* in the autobiography canon as “ethnic texts.” This has created a situation “where self-created autobiographies....have ostensibly defined the field, functioning as both model and sign, [while] the dictated autobiography has remained ‘invisible’ on one account or another” (445). Since the texts I have just named all feature speakers who do not belong to the dominant racial, ethnic and cultural groups that the autobiography canon treats as paradigmatic, collaboration should be examined as a key component of life narratives made by people who are excluded from dominant autobiographical discourse. For instance, collaborative narratives should lead us to ask: who requests the life narrative and for what ends? Do “colonized” speakers have a “non-subaltern” voice or is that voice co-opted by the collaborator in the interests of “professional” information-gathering about the “object” of study? Who “owns” the text that results and how does each collaborator see ownership? And most important, what subject(s) is (are) produced and who produces collaborative discourse for public consumption?

Collaboration is also a dynamic process, particularly when different levels and understandings of orality and literacy motivate the collaborators as they work together. These can highlight inequalities in the balance of power relations between speaker and interviewer and/or transcriber. The “text” which results can be the product of an oral dialogue about the terms of identity and memory rather than hybrid tension, which relies more on a mixture of elements than conflict:

Thus they [collaborators] engage in a dynamic and often conflictive creation process, one which produces a text that does not necessarily resolve tensions or correct dissimilarities, but instead both imbibes and embodies them, often seeks to mask them, but ultimately relies upon them as essential sources of meaning. (Sanders 446)

Dialogue can occur at the level of the produced subject or subjects, as Carol Boyce Davies points out. The assumed stability of an autobiographical “I” destabilizes in collaborative narratives to a “we” who can be both the teller and recorder (12-13). Or as Roxanne Rimstead observes, the “we” a teller invokes as a subject-in-relation to others in her or his community which refuses to be inscribed as singular (162). These oral narratives by Doukhobors feature many of these concerns in addition to imagery and themes that they share with autobiographical writings. The speakers of these narratives work out identity questions in negotiation with the rhetoric of those who interview them, so that orality operates in concert with writing in ways that reframe what autobiography can be. It also recasts how autobiography can operate in a community which now collects its own life stories in ways that do not deny orality, but that treat oral traditions of life narrative and representation with dignity and respect.

Recorded autobiographical narratives by Doukhobors also share similarities with other collaborative narratives, and to some extent with the life histories that Bodianskii and Bonch-Bruevich transcribed. Since all of the narratives I discuss had not been transcribed nor translated, the interviewing processes of subject negotiation between the interviewers and the speakers is more pronounced. As in the transcribed narratives by Bonch-Bruevich and Bodianskii, the construction of a hybrid subject does not occur in these recordings at the level of the recording process. This brings me to my own role in

constructing the texts for this chapter from archived recordings of Doukhobors talking about their life stories to other Doukhobor interviewers.

Making oral narratives in Russian into transcribed English may seem to remove the narratives from any meaningful context, particularly since I worked with narratives that other people had recorded, with scant information given about the participants, in the 1960s and 1970s. Therefore, I cannot have the participants check my transcriptions themselves. At the same time, the recordings in Russian are relatively inaccessible because they are archived and because they are in Russian. In order to provide access, I transcribed these narratives with the help of a Doukhobor, Jim Kolesnikoff, who sat at his kitchen table for hours and translated the recordings as I wrote down what he said so that I would not misinterpret dialect words and phrases. In this way, I too have probably altered narratives and made them more “suitable” for public access, as my translator has. By doing this, something is lost: the timbre of a speaker’s voice, the sound of laughter, perhaps some intricacy of the wording used in the original language. My selection too, alters how the material will be understood. But the recordings themselves have already sacrificed other things for the sake of access and permanence: the expressions on the faces of the speakers, and the look of the room where the interview took place. Although the speakers are not able to assess whether I, as a non-Doukhobor, should make their words widely available or not, all speakers did agree to have their words recorded. And so, Jim Kolesnikoff and I translated and transcribed the recordings as accurately as we could, although I realize that my intervention in particular changes some of the initial meanings of the original exchange and creates the “third language” of translation (and I

would add, of transcription), what Walter Benjamin calls the “echo” which only serves to remind the reader/listener of the presence of an original which cannot ever be the translation (Benjamin 76). However, foregrounding my intervention (and to a lesser extent, Jim’s intervention) in this way makes it possible for me, as an outsider, to assess what the politics of inside and outside was during the original making of these oral narratives. Our own collaboration, where we discussed what words meant, how to represent what a speaker discussed and why I might be interested in what they speaker was saying, reflected that earlier collaboration between speakers and interviewers.

Our re-enactment of transactions of orality also enabled me to see how a recorded orality could produce a dialogue about identity that, due to the recording’s unedited qualities, refused to resolve into a “smooth” identity narrative. In this way, elder Doukhobor speakers can interact with non-Doukhobors (and younger Doukhobors) in a way which preserves something of oral discourse that constructs a self-in-relation to others that is not concerned with interiority, while the transcriber makes the narrative more permanent and, in the case of the Joint Doukhobor Research Committee text, more widely available to the Doukhobor community. In recorded and transcribed formats, the elders’ teaching potentially can be preserved and assessed as younger Doukhobors seek to recover and reinterpret the events of Doukhobor history and thought. Communal identity does not have to “anchored” in the written word, but in the recorded and transcribed narratives I examine here, the written word can combine with orality to create ongoing conversations in Doukhobor communities about what it is to be a Doukhobor.

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Although the majority of Doukhobors now have at least a high-school level of institutionalized education, oral ways to remember and recollect life experience and history are still important to the maintenance and reworking of Doukhobor identity, as the article “The Story of One Psalm...” indicates. While the amount of published material by Doukhobors about their history remains relatively low, Alexander Bodianskii’s 1908 collection of narratives by Doukhobors about their resistance to Russian authorities is a sign of the richness of Doukhobor oral tradition. The centrality of oral utterance to Doukhobors themselves can also be seen in the relatively large number of recordings, translations and (in some cases) transcriptions of recorded material that have been made by younger Doukhobors who wished to preserve and make more public the stories and teachings--in Russian--of older Doukhobors. These teachings were in danger of being lost once that generation dies. The recordings and transcriptions made of Doukhobor women are particularly important because almost no written autobiographical narratives by women survive: as the principle guardians of Doukhobor tradition and the spiritual leaders of a number of revival movements, Doukhobor women often resisted institutional schooling more strenuously than Doukhobor men, and when working in the outside world have always have had to negotiate the double barriers of xenophobia and sexism.<sup>4</sup> In a different way, the text from the Joint Doukhobor Research Committee provides a way to see how communal orality can work in a group situation. In the symposia proceedings, for example, oral recollections by Doukhobors often serve to educate other Doukhobors about the history and goals of Doukhoborism. They represent another use of autobiography that forms a rhetoric between speech and writing which contests the usual

position of writing as the best way to record and rework history as it allows subjects who do not hybridize. Instead, in the symposia, their testimony about themselves and what they remember becomes part of the public debate regarding how Doukhobor history and identity will be interpreted.

The oral narratives I examine in this chapter have some features in common with the written narratives published in *Iskra* and *Mir*. Like the interviews in chapter three, these narratives also invoke aspects of the Doukhobor diasporic imaginary of suffering and pacifism in Russia. They feature shifts between singularity and plurality, emphasize community life and stress migration to Canada and internal migrations in Canada as signs of group difference. And in the sense that they are transcribed oral narratives, the interviews with Anna Markova and with Cecil Koochin and Nick Arishenkoff do not differ much from these recordings and transcriptions. But, with the significant exception of the *Toil and Peaceful Life* oral history volume by *Sound Heritage*,<sup>5</sup> these narratives were not recorded just so that they could be translated into English. This means that the Doukhobor subjects constructed here do differ from those that appear in other written narratives because, as I have said, the transition from oral to written narrative and between the translation from Russian to English does not, in this case, produce hybridized narratives. The rhetorics of refusal, laughter and non-linear storytelling all appear as ways for the subjects of the interviews and of the symposia debates to engage in dialogue. In these cases, the intent of the utterances is important, whether it is to educate non-Doukhobors about Doukhoborism (as in the early narratives that Bodianskii and Bonch-Bruevich recorded), to pass on stories to younger Doukhobors who requested them (as in

the recordings made for the Salmo project) or to engage in dialogue about Doukhobor issues (as in Harshenin's recording and the Joint Doukhobor Research symposia text).

Therefore, the speakers in the interviews I discuss negotiate with their interviewers, whether they are Doukhobor or non-Doukhobor, about what self-narrative and Doukhobor identity will be far more than they blend elements of Doukhobor and non-Doukhobor representation. They often reframe what they wish to impart to their "insider" interviewers and draw them into dialogue where identity is constructed with an awareness of the presence of another speaker.<sup>6</sup> What does combine is the transcribed "text" that was produced after the interview. The text becomes the approximate representation of speech that operates between oracy—a term which places orality on par with the idea of literacy--and the printed word. This mixture of orality and literacy, could be considered what Bakhtin in "Discourse and the Novel" calls "two social languages within the limits of a single utterance, an encounter, within the arena of an utterance, between two different linguistic consciousness" (Bakhtin 358). Although Bakhtin was discussing novelistic discourse specifically, his assertion that the textual field could operate as a place where utterances could meet each other has parallels to the ways that the discourse of Doukhobor orality meets either non-Doukhobor narrative expectations or Doukhobor narrative expectations which come from a different context in the textual field of the recorded and transcribed interview. As identity issues manifest themselves at the level of this combined discourse, so Doukhobor identity *representation* becomes a field within these "oral/written" narratives where identity issues can be worked out.

This type of utterance that occurs between written and oral ways to remember and recollect has become part of Doukhobor historic record for other Doukhobors to read in Bodianskii's and Bonch-Bruevich's work, and in oral testimony for the Joint Doukhobor Research Committee. The initial desire of many of the speakers to relate their stories so that younger Doukhobors would understand their traditions is now being fulfilled, not in oral transmission, but in written transcription of these narratives that rework oral conventions. The identities produced in these narratives at the time of speaking and in transcription are the result of a collaborative process that stresses the interconnectedness of what has been called by Ian Adam "oracy" and literacy (Adam 97), or referred to by Peter Dickinson an "orality in literacy" which problematizes what has been called the "great divide" between them (Dickinson 319). The great divide debate has followed in the wake of Walter J. Ong's widely-influential argument in *Orality and Literacy* (prefigured by Havelock and McLuhan's work on print culture) that orality has a radically different set of practices and grammars from literacy. The forms of orality and literacy, he argued, affect the cognitive processes of the people who use them, which means that oral thinking and literate thinking profoundly differ. This is why, Ong suggested, orality prefigures literacy. Moreover, oral epistemologies are destined to be superseded by literate epistemologies:

orality needs to produce and is destined to produce writing. Literacy, as will be seen, is absolutely necessary for the development not only of science but also of history, philosophy, explicative understanding of literature and of any art, and indeed for the explication of language (including oral speech) itself. (Ong 15)



Ong suggests that hermeneutics requires self-reflexivity, and that writing, which is a more permanent memory record, is a technology which allows for self-reflexivity to take place. The grammar of orality, by contrast, can only retain and retrieve by resorting to mnemonic rhetorical patterns and the use of repetition rather than reflexivity (34).

Challenges to Ong's absolute division between orality and literacy, and to his ethnocentric view of epistemology include Ruth Finnegan's contention in *Literacy and Orality* that abstract notions of literacy and orality do not reflect how literacy and orality are actually used in any culture (161). She argues that the contexts of both orality and literacy use should be studied in any fieldwork situation (180). Ian Adam's critique of Derrida's speech/writing binary leads him to agree with Finnegan that there is no "pure" orality due to the presence of pictography that represents oral signs, and that to posit one is to romanticize oral culture in order to make writing its "dangerous" but necessary supplement (110-111), while Matei Calinescu asserts that orality is part of reading, and thus "contaminates" the supposed purity of literacy (178). Peter Dickinson's assertion of orality in literacy means that:

both orality and literacy become embodied by/in specific processes of speaking, writing and representing that encompass not only the individual text or utterance but also their place within a given discursive formation, including the persons involved in, acting upon, and/or affected by the sound-, word-, or meaning units. (321)

The critique of "great divide" theory generally advises that study of a particular group leads to more complex notions of the relationships between orality and literacy, and the use to which each is put in the cultural formations of a group. In the case of the Doukhobors, this holds true. Although the Doukhobors generally did not acquire much

formal education until the 1950s and in some cases not until the 1970s, some Doukhobors, particularly those who assisted Peter Lordly and Peter Chistiakov, were Russian-language autodidacts and, at times, self-taught in English as well. Both Peter Lordly and Peter Chistiakov were literate and wrote instructions and speeches for distribution among the Doukhobors. Peter Lordly in particular read widely while he was in Siberia in order to develop new practices for his followers. Many older Doukhobors in the Kootenay region of British Columbia recall being sent to “Russian school” when they were children. Vladimir Bonch-Bruevich, the collector of Doukhobor psalms and songs who published a text version of the *Living Book* in 1909, wrote that Doukhobor elders sometimes wrote psalms out for him (104) or showed him versions of psalms which were recorded in small notebooks (35). From the nineteenth century on, therefore, literacy has played an important, although not central role in Doukhobor culture, while orality in combination with literacy, particularly in the form of psalm-singing and the collection of life stories, continues to play an important part in maintaining the Doukhobor diasporic imaginary.

An early example of Doukhobor oral autobiography can be found in the narratives transcribed and collected by Bonch-Bruevich, the compiler of *The Living Book* and Bodianskii, a Tolstoyan who lived with the Doukhobors during their first years in Canada. Bodianskii and Bonch-Bruevich presumably recorded these stories by elder Doukhobors as a way to publicize events in Russia surrounding the Burning of Arms and the subsequent tortures endured by the Doukhobors before migration. These stories, although they do follow a recognizable outline, also contain traces of oral negotiation,

particularly when Bodianskii was the transcriber. The one narrative I include that was recorded by Bonch-Bruevich does not include these traces, but it does share narrative similarities with the others. Therefore, although Bodianskii presumably did reword what the Doukhobor elders told him because his own responses to questions are not included, the relationship between himself and the Doukhobor speakers remains, to some extent, oppositional rather than hybridized, as the speakers renegotiate with Bodianskii what Doukhobor identity and what telling a life story can mean.

Although Bonch-Bruevich and Bodianskii were not "professional" anthropologists, they were doing anthropological field work by collecting what anthropologists call life histories, accounts requested by anthropologists that previously were held in the field to be too qualitative to yield hard "data" but which, since the work of Vincent Crapanzo among others in the last twenty years, have been seen as a way to gain valuable information from people when the anthropologist and the person interviewed agree on a collaborative effort. But this collaboration should be analysed as negotiation for life narrative, where the narrative produced may not be what the anthropologist "requires." As Crapanzo argues, life histories are:

the result of a complex self-constituting negotiation. It is the product (at least, from the subject's point of view) of an arbitrary and peculiar demand from another--the anthropologist. The interplay...of demand and desire governs much of the content of the life history, and this interplay, the dynamics of the interview, must be taken into consideration in any evaluation of the material collected. (955)

And Margaret Blackman reminds scholars that "most life histories are also shaped by Western conventions of biography. That is, they are presented as retrospective accounts of a cumulative life story, related as continuous narrative...with a clear beginning and

ending, and a developmental, chronological orientation" (56). But she adds that the speakers who are requested to produce this kind of life history may not necessarily produce the intimate, confessional narrative expected within Western traditions (59) and that the motives for sharing life stories, such as the desire to pass traditions on to other group members in a more permanent format not accessible to the speakers, may not be the motivation that the person who asked for the narrative expects (61). This collecting process is further complicated by the political motivations of collectors when these recede into the narrative's background but still clearly shape the conditions for narrative utterance. As Rimstead points out:

How can transcribing a story from the oral sphere into the privileged realm of written culture constitute political or social coalition, given that it implies power dynamics between the culturally dominated and the culturally dominant?  
(Rimstead 141)

The narratives transcribed by Bodianskii and Bonch-Bruevich share many similarities with collaborative life history work produced by anthropologists and speakers, particularly in the renegotiation of narrative format and group identification produced within them as the product of a collaborative process. But they also share the characteristics of activist collaborations examined by Rimstead, since both Bodianskii and Bonch-Bruevich were activists who assisted the Doukhobors with the transition they were making as new migrants in Canada because they thought that Doukhobor beliefs were similar to their own about collective activity and, therefore, were worth publicizing. In both cases, collaboration produced narratives that clearly operate in response to the requests of their non-Doukhobor interviewers, but they also resist the implied linearity of

written narrative at key points so that the speaker's narrative goals, which do not always match the interviewers', can be achieved.

For example, Vanya Novokshyonov's narrative called "Turning Down the Post of Village Headman"<sup>7</sup> begins with a deliberate statement of agreement to tell a story presumably in response to Bodianskii, but Novokshyonov reframes the terms of hearing it in terms of Doukhobor beliefs. He negotiates with Bodianskii, agreeing to tell the story, but then changing the conditions of listening to suit his purposes:

I will tell you the story you would like to hear, but you will then make your own judgment. It is easy to tell the story; however, understanding is not given to everyone: one has to be a spiritual person to understand. If you judge by appearances only, much will remain unclear in our cause and experience.<sup>8</sup>

Novokshyonov decides to produce a type of autobiographical narrative that I have earlier called a witness narrative. This narrative is being called into being by Bodianskii, a non-Doukhobor who requires this narrative in order to publicize the Doukhobor cause.

Bodianskii, in other words, wants a public Doukhobor subject to be produced in order to retell the circumstances of torture. He wants a reliable witness narrative about what "really" happened. However, Novokshyonov stresses that the importance of the story lies not in his act of telling the story, but in that other aspect of orality, the interpretive ability of the listener. Novokshyonov, then, is telling his listener that he needs to hear the story as a sacred story which requires the reader to understand Doukhobor action as spiritual. He asks Bodianskii to respect Doukhobor difference, but to understand it in Doukhobor terms with a Doukhobor context. As autobiography, then, Novokshyonov's narrative also asks its readers to read for the Doukhobor subject *in context*, in terms of a collective

Doukhobor subject and history. Although Novokshyonov does relate his own conflicts with authority, he means them to be seen in terms of the greater struggle the Doukhobors had with Russian authority and with the idea of secular authority itself.

This is why Novokshyonov explains the sacred interpretation of the events of the Burning of Arms as a way to present Doukhobor motivations as a preface to his own story:

Our faith lies at the root of the experience we went through; so you have to look deep under the surface, and in this depth you will trace the beginning of our cause. How shall I put it for you to understand? Everything that has happened to us, happened because we do not believe in a stupid God. Our God is not a fool; our God is an All-Perfect Reason; therefore, one must use one's reason to serve him. And if one's God is a foolish God, foolishness, then, is the way to serve such a one. That is something for you to understand. (1)

This narrative is not to be understood as "mere" history or a retelling of events, but in a spiritual sense. The Burning of Arms, as Novokshyonov says later in the narrative, is to be seen as part of a spiritual revival experienced by all Doukhobors who decided to follow Verigin's direction (2). Events such as the redistribution of property that occurred before the protest are pointedly referred to as spiritual events that mark Doukhobor difference. They are also potential points of contact between Doukhobors and non-Doukhobors. Novokshyonov emphasizes both aspects of this type of discourse by addressing Bodianskii directly. This oral method of getting attention indicates that Novokshyonov is attempting to control the narrative so that the Doukhobor cause is understood:

You, Aleksasha, are a just man; you should not be surprised by our decision. How can one call himself a Christian, if one lives like a wild beast? Our God is not a fool -- I told you that already. (3)

After he relates other details about Doukhobor suffering such as the whipping the Cossacks gave to people who burned weapons, the decision not to have children and leaving home villages before migrating, Novokshyonov concludes this part of the narrative by saying "that is all that there is to be told about our common cause. If you got it right, that is good; if you did not, it is not my fault" (6). This last sentence solidifies Novokshyonov's narrative control since, as he did at the beginning, he gives hermeneutic responsibility to the listener for understanding the context of the Doukhobor resistance. Having done this, Novokshyonov can now present himself as a Doukhobor subject in the context of that struggle. As he has instructed his listener to understand Doukhobor events as events with spiritual meanings, Novokshyonov's presentation of himself as a pacifist resister against an angry government is an illustration of his earlier discussion of Doukhobor pacifist resistance to government authority. He is a "pure" subject who does not change in response to conditions, but who endures them as a subject-in-relation to other Doukhobors. This is a sign of the rightness of the Doukhobor cause. As Novokshyonov says, the events which the Doukhobors survive purify them as a group. A pure individual signifies a purity in the group since "it is very important that a man going with a spiritual sword to the sacred struggle, should be pure and shining of spirit. As we were going through our spiritual baptism, our souls purified" (2).

Therefore, when Novokshyonov describes the beginning of his resistance, he discusses it in terms of his own feelings and those of other Doukhobors: "well, I grew at some point disgusted that I serve as a headman; I felt as if I were working for the government. Serving as headman became disgusting not only for myself, but for other

Doukhobors who held the same post" (Novokshyonov 6). After all Doukhobors decide that they should not serve as headmen, Novokshyonov has a confrontation with the district police superintendent when he tries to give up his post. The confrontation quickly becomes polarized, as Novokshyonov refuses to take back his seal, the symbol of his office and is forced to have an interview with the Chief Officer, "a man of notorious reputation: a huge man of enormous strength and a very cruel one" (8). Like other Doukhobor witness narratives such as Soukorev's "My Renunciation of Military Service" which I discussed in chapter three, Novokshyonov's body is the means for resistance and testimony. After an argument, the Chief Officer threatens Novokshyonov with his fist as Novokshyonov thinks about the beating he will receive. However, the Chief Officer only hits him once since "you see, I bleed easily; and as he hit me on the nose, the blood jetted out in two fountains almost two meters high" (9). Novokshyonov's subjectivity depends on outright confrontation and resistance, and the survival of violence. His physicality (he bleeds easily) brings victory, while his willingness to bear pain indicates his spiritual strength.

"The Suffering of Vasily Ivanovich Popov for the True Way," a narrative about the Russian persecutions that resulted from the Burning of Arms that was transcribed by Bonch-Bruevich, deals with a similar oppositional subjectivity and casts it in terms of the Doukhobor belief that suffering makes pure, steadfast subjects. In this narrative, however, it is not possible to tell what Bonch-Bruevich has requested. Popov's story begins immediately in terms of opposition and emphasizes the plurality of Doukhobor subjectivity when Doukhobors resisted authority. This time, the Doukhobors will not



provide registration information: "the lieutenant-colonel came to see us about our birth certificates, -- we did not agree. I told him that we are all listed in 'The Book of Life'" (Popov 1). The rest of the narrative consists of stark oppositions between the swearing, angry officials and Popov, or the Doukhobors generally, who steadfastly resist them. As Popov says to one official who threatens to whip him, "the power is yours, but the will is God's" while the official replies, 'I will have none of your talking, shut up'" (1).

After one of these exchanges in which Popov says that God is the only tsar, his body also becomes the focus of mute, pacifist resistance. Horsemen beat him until he loses consciousness, and then he is taken to prison. He regains consciousness, notices his injuries and explains to a Cossack who asks him about the basis for his resistance that the central tenet of Doukhobor resisters is found in the Doukhobor psalms. This is the idea that the body is not as important as the soul, which is why he can endure beatings "for the truth. They can kill the flesh; however, they are unable to touch the soul of a righteous man" (3). This narrative is repeated almost word-for-word as the narrative of Popov's son, a story told to Popov by one of the newly arrived prisoners, with the same result. Popov tells this story about his son because it illustrates the common suffering of all Doukhobors. As with Novokshyonov's narrative, Popov's subjectivity is collectivized when he suffers and is tied to the necessity of representing himself as a pure subject as opposed to the corrupt subjects who serve the Tsar.

Two narratives by Vanya Bayoff about life in Russia and events in Russia surrounding the Burning of Arms recorded by Bodienskii also assert the rhetoric of orality for the recorder to hear and understand. Like the narrative by Novokshyonov, Bayoff's

stories "Babushka's Grief" and "Execution" contain lengthy preambles that are one side of a conversation with Bodianskii. And like Novokshyonov's narrative, Bodianskii has clearly requested that Bayoff tell stories and perhaps has been talking to Bayoff about the value of memory, since both preambles deal with issues connected to orality and memory. Here, Bodianskii "appears" as a non-Doukhor who requires autobiographical recollection to be produced, a situation which Bayoff is either not used to or cannot "produce" as a non-Doukhor would wish. The stories that he does tell, therefore, are responses to a request for autobiography that in some ways refuse the conditions of autobiographical narrative. For example, Bayoff does recall stories his grandmother told him about the forced migration to Milky Waters in "Babushka's Grief," although the beginning of his narrative is about his inability to remember. Bayoff discusses how he did not listen carefully to his grandmother's stories and did not grasp their spiritual meaning. He talks about this by finding some commonality between Bodianskii's thoughts about memory and his own:

You say, Aleksasha, that to possess the knowledge of the olden times is the same as to live even before one's actual birth in flesh. And you are right here. And you are also right when you say that this knowledge is useful. But I, myself, to tell you the truth, lacked this understanding formerly, and even if I heard some accounts of the times past, I was not listening carefully; I used to listen then to those stories for entertainment only, as one listens to a fairy tale, and that was why I would soon forget all I heard. And today, there is little I can remember to share with you." ("Babushka" 1)

Bayoff has been asked to provide a memory, but he cannot supply what is being requested. The resulting narrative, therefore, is about how he did *not* pay attention to the stories of his *nyanka*<sup>9</sup> and about how her own story was not possible to understand

because "she used to tell her stories in a manner that was totally incomprehensible for small children: she used to cry and lament and just repeat the same things over and over again" because her grief robbed her of the ability to express herself clearly (1-2).

Bayoff describes this grief as a story of sacrifice for Doukhobor ideals, since *nyanka* grieved because she had left her husband and children in order to be with the strongly-believing Doukhobors at Milky Waters (4). The lament Bayoff repeats for Bodianskii is a type of life-narrative. In it Bayoff's *nyanka* relives her sacrifice of years before, going to grieve in a cluster of willow bushes near a river and singing "I was taking leave, and away I went/To my God, my Lord I surrendered my life/My young children, small kids, were like berries red/On my branch, but now all my berries are gone" and wondering if her husband is well, "you, the proud one, unforgettable,/you, my dear husband, Gavriilo Ivanovich" (5:ll. 1-4, 9-10). By retelling this story, Bayoff can now spiritualise it as a sacred narrative, since he recalls that as a child he could not understand what his grandmother was singing about, although he now sees her grief as noble and spiritual, since it was shared by "the God-created birds and small animals [who] quivered from her grief" and by another older woman who had experienced tragedy and would grieve with Bayoff's grandmother. Bayoff's story, therefore, recasts what can be remembered so that it has spiritual meaning for latter day Doukhobors enduring persecution in Russia.

The beginning of Bayoff's longer narrative "Execution"<sup>10</sup> also negotiates with Bodianskii's request for autobiographical narrative. Bayoff begins with what appears to be a reply to Bodianskii's "request," but he does not tell his life story in terms of his birth,

childhood and adulthood, which he clearly understands has been asked of him. He tells

Bodianskii:

All right, if you wish, I will tell you about my life; only you are not going to enjoy the story or think much of it. How was it when I was a small boy? What is there to tell? I was growing up exactly as our little boys are growing up now. We, Doukhobors, live according to notions that are different from those of the Russians. (1)

Here is an example of a narrative where the speaker decides not to conform to the expectations of his non-Doukhobor questioner. He reframes the narrative structure so that he can tell his stories thematically rather than chronologically. Bayoff will tell his story, but it will not be the story of an individual subject's growth and maturity which Bodianskii asked for. Instead, Bayoff discusses the differences between the violence of "Russian" (meaning Orthodox Russian) child-rearing as opposed to the practices of Doukhobor parents, who do not beat their children or abuse them in other ways. He does this by telling two stories where he personally witnessed the beating of children ("Execution" 1-2). Bayoff directly addresses Bodianskii as part of his analysis of this problem and even calls him "grandfather," presumably to indicate that he considers him an elder who has wisdom and understanding. He concludes, and asks Bodianskii to conclude, that the Russians beat their children because they have not rejected priests and religious rites. As he says:

Grandfather, what do you think: where does this cruelty in them come from, why is there no God for them? I think, Grandfather, that this happens because they have wasted their God on prayers and priests, and on all sorts of piety. (3)

Bayoff moves from this discussion to general comments about Doukhobor families (4). He makes these comments as a way to introduce his major theme: his

eventual separation from his father. Bayoff mentions that his father, although he is a Doukhobor, is a heavy drinker who did not become a follower of Peter Lordly and who did not adopt the stricter dietary practices that Lordly advocated. Bayoff says that his father and mother told him to get married even though he himself did not see the point (5). This early rift develops further when Bayoff, after describing the beginning of Peter Lordly's leadership and the opposition from the Small Party of the Gubanovs, describes how his father wanted to retain the old ways,

but I, grandfather, when we started talking about Christian life and values, was absorbing these words like a dry soil absorbs the wetness of rain. I felt so much joy in those talks that I used to go by foot for many versts to our meetings to listen. And my parent [father] was irritated by this. This was how the discord started in our family too. (7)

When Bayoff's father finally embraces Bayoff's wife Tanya in jest while he is drunk and using profanities, both Bayoff and Tanya leave Bayoff's family home and begin to belong formally to the Large Party that followed Peter Lordly. This separation, and Bayoff's decision to cease smoking, eating meat and drinking alcohol, meant that "the distance between my parent and myself was growing, and we became strangers" (9).

At this point in the narrative, Bayoff talks about the Burning of Arms, but to do this he focuses on his own spiritual growth and the growth of Verigin's group which was fostered by meetings about the upcoming protest. This allows Bayoff to collapse two temporally-distinct events into a single theme: that of Doukhobor approaches to education. For this reason, he departs from his description of the meetings to a discussion of literacy and the understanding of outsiders in Canada. This discussion serves to underscore the virtues of collective group decision-making and its superiority to

institutionalized learning. Bayoff begins that “we did not have any schooling; you know that even literate people are scarce among us, but I will tell you one story” (10). This story is about a non-Doukhobor doctor who came to a newly-established Doukhobor community to treat their ill people and to discuss their faith with some of the elders. The doctor has the conversation, but then asks to speak to some uneducated people because he thought that the elders he had been speaking to are educated.

His Doukhobor translator laughs when he hears this and says to them, ““which of you is a university graduate? Tell us the truth! Well, which one at least can read and write?”” Bayoff continues:

And who was literate among us? I am illiterate, Nikolasha is illiterate too; Aldosha has some knowledge of the alphabet, he can read, but his writing is very poor, he can hardly draw the letters; Efimushka and Alyosha are illiterate too...well, I do not know how to explain it to you why this doctor thought that we were educated people, because we did not talk about anything else but human life, land, power, authorities, and morals. (10)

In what is clearly an ironic moment, Bayoff pokes fun at people who think that Doukhobors without formal education do not have alternative ways to learn and cannot discuss abstract issues. It also provides Bayoff with a gloss which explains how his spiritual development deepened the rift between his parents and himself since he then says, “now then, I told you about this just to show that we now have understanding and notions; well, I can make comparisons using my own example. What were my ideas and notions when I lived at my parent’s, and what are the ideas and notions that I got later” (11). Bayoff identifies this difference as the reason for his contentment since “after all

that has happened to me, I am calm and content; and I am calm and content only because the new notions and ideas helped me to accept life” (11).

Bayoff then returns to discussing the events of the Burning of Arms and the attempts made by Cossacks to round up Doukhobors. Before Bayoff describes his own experience which forms the title of his narrative, however, he decides to digress. He discusses his fear that he will fight back when he sees others beaten, and then breaks off to say:

Listen, grandfather, do you know what I think about the human soul and human life? I will digress here from my story to explain all this to you, because it is more important for me than anything else. (12)

Bayoff’s direct address to Bodianskii and his decision to digress indicate that he has decided not to tell what he refers to as “my story.” “My story” by this time is not a retelling of the Burning of Arms, his own experience of punishment or even a chronological story of his development from childhood (presumably this is what Bodianskii meant when he asked him to tell the “story” of his life), but a narrative about a number of different topics important to Doukhobors such as the nature of education, families and pacifist behaviour which Bayoff links together thematically. Therefore, Bayoff has so much narrative control here that he can “digress” even from his own reworking of “my story” because, like Novokshyonov, he views his narrative primarily as an education for the non-Doukhobor listener who has requested it. His life story is not to be understood merely as the narrative of someone who has survived Cossack torture, but as an outcome of a Doukhobor spiritualization of suffering. As Bayoff explains, “if our flesh acts, it does not act by itself; it is driven by the spirit embodied in the flesh” (12), an

understanding of suffering which Bayoff realizes his listener may not understand, since he says that “it is hard for me to express my opinion, grandfather” and attempts to redefine his statements several times (12). Bayoff states that a person can embody either a good or an evil spirit which was originally disembodied, and so purity is necessary for spiritual development “because the unworthy deeds leave an impure trace in one’s life, and there is no way to redeem them” (14).

This explanation is important for understanding the rest of Bayoff’s narrative, since his main point is that he “has been always afraid to succumb to the impure, to commit an unworthy deed, to tell a lie, to be crafty, to hurt someone, and to get enraged” (14) and that his greatest test in this area was enduring punishment after the Burning of Arms. The narrative then elaborates a series of tests to Bayoff’s body and in a parallel typology, to his spiritual purity. First, a mounted Cossack tries to trample him, but he resists this by banding together with other Doukhobors. Then he endures a whipping which “can drive a powerful spirit of malice and resentment into a man; but--save me, God--I resisted the impulse” and refuses what he refers to as the “lawlessness” rather than pain, being beaten into him (15).

With this context given for the last part of his narrative, Bayoff relates the details of his own torture, referred to as an “execution.”<sup>11</sup> Here, Bayoff’s earlier story of his father’s estrangement becomes part of his story of torture, since his father leads the Cossacks who are to beat Bayoff and his wife to their house, presumably to take revenge for his son’s decision to follow the Large Party (16). Bayoff then relates how he and Tanya are captured and he loses consciousness but then regains consciousness and retells



seeing Tanya naked after her beating: “even now, I can see this picture clearly, I just close my eyes and I see all this clearly in front of me” (17) and then describes in detail the effects of his own beating, which almost kills him (18). His father, he recalls, watches as he gets help pulling up his pants from his wife and mother as the Cossacks laugh at him (18).

The importance of this event for Bayoff is that his body did not betray him, and so his spirit stays pure. He endures. This makes the beating and humiliation, ordered by his own father, bearable, and although he migrated to Canada, he looks forward to his own death:

As I understand, everything that could have been taken from me, was taken; through my trials and tribulations so much malice and resentment was used up and disappeared from the earth that it is not possible to require anything else from me. As I understand it, I managed to resist all the malice that was pursuing me; I did not let it penetrate my soul, and it is now completely wasted. I am calm and content now about my whole life, and I will die a reconciled man. (19)

The point of Bayoff’s narrative is the transmission of Doukhobor beliefs about the spirit and the body which explain how he was able to endure both family separation, humiliation and physical punishment. His narrative, therefore, ends with his belief that he is prepared for death: his successful migration to Canada means little to him. In fact, the last line of Bayoff’s narrative is about the failure of his family to migrate since “my parent did not go to Canada and did not let nyanka go, and my brother was exiled to Siberia” (19).

Bayoff’s subjectivity depends on his resistance to malice in his own family and to the cruelty of the authorities, as well as his belief in group decision-making. His decision to link his life events thematically in terms of Doukhobor differences from non-Doukhobor

Russians and non-Doukhobors in Canada means that he responds to Bodianskii's request that he "produce" his life with an alternative set of stories that bring spiritual context to the events he witnesses. Autobiography in Bayoff's narrative is a negotiation between the narrative Bodianskii asks for and the one which Bayoff ultimately makes. As Bayoff's calling Bodianskii "grandfather" at key points shows, Bayoff decides to address Bodianskii directly when he reframes his narrative in terms of what he thinks is the important story that should be told.

The work of the late Alex Harshenin, a linguist of Doukhobor background who made recordings for his research on Doukhobor dialect, provides a valuable resource for the study of oral Doukhobor autobiography, although he himself did not intend to record narratives for anything other than linguistic purposes.<sup>12</sup> Harshenin's interviews clearly indicate how he and the people he interviewed engaged in a set of exchanges about Doukhobor identity and the importance of memory during the interview process. In Harshenin's interview with Fred (Fedya) Zhikarov and an unknown speaker which I discuss here, Harshenin attempts to direct the discussion with Zhikarov, perhaps in the hope of yielding Doukhobor dialect words. Zhikarov, however, decides to reframe the discussion immediately in terms of what is important to him, which is his rejection of the Verigin leadership as opposed to a discussion of his origins:

HARSHENIN. Let's start our interview. Let's deal with the earliest recollections you have, going back to your youth, what kind of work you did.

ZHIKAROV. I'll start from when I decided to leave the community.<sup>13</sup>

Harshenin asks Zhikarov why he left, and Zhikarov repeats his confrontation with Peter Lordly, even when Harshenin asks him if others left. Zhikarov, therefore, presents himself as a free-thinking Doukhobor who is able to confront Lordly:

ZHIKAROV. I just got fed up, tired. Simple as that. So I came to Lordly and told him I want to leave. He said, 'Why do you want to do that?' I want to live on my own.

HARSHENIN. You had the courage to say all that?

ZHIKAROV. Yeah.

HARSHENIN. Did others do this at the same time?

ZHIKAROV. Yes, others did it. He said 'It's up to you. You have the right, I permit you.' I thanked him and that was it. So I packed up my belongings and left.

At another point in the interview, Zhikarov challenges Harshenin's role as the interviewer who determines what information will be exchanged. When Harshenin asks Zhikarov where he moved after he left the Community, Zhikarov refuses to give this information:

H. Where was this place [where you moved]?

Z. There is a shack out there. It was just off the boundary of the communal lands.

H. Was this Ubezhishche<sup>14</sup> in Grand Forks?

Z. I think you know the place, it's not far from here.

This is an example of what Rimstead refers to as the refusal of some speakers to go along with the conventional roles of interviewee and interviewer (144). Zhikarov does this by recouping Harshenin, playing the role of an "outside" researcher conducting the

interview, as a Doukhobor “insider” who does not need to be told things for the record, and who knows (although non-Doukhobors probably will not) where “here” is.

Harshenin’s role as interviewer changes again when an unknown speaker joins Zhikarov and begins to discuss in detail how bricks were made at the CCUB brick factory where they both worked. This conversation occurs in English, despite Harshenin’s efforts to have both speakers return to Russian and to historical context by asking in Russian when the factory was burned, presumably in a Freedomite arson attack. But both speakers ignore Harshenin and continue to argue about how bricks were baked, although they do switch into Russian for the rest of the conversation.

At another point during this discussion, Harshenin becomes an “insider” and talks about whether a non-Doukhobor had the right to withhold the water supply from neighbouring Doukhobors. Although Harshenin attempts to discuss the issue in terms of the abstract concept of justice and claims solidarity with his speakers by exclaiming “Justice, justice, we need justice,” Zhikarov and the other speaker do not agree with Harshenin and say that “well, justice is on the hands of the first taker [of the rights]” since the non-Doukhobor farmer had been there before the Community. This discussion leads Zhikarov and the unknown speaker to talk about how the Doukhobors were considered to lesser status than the English-speaking settlers of British origin until after World War II. Zhikarov and the unknown speaker have now, by the end of the interview, complete control over what is represented in the conversation. They can now ask questions of Harshenin as an “insider” on their terms and the interview ends with Zhikarov’s words:

UNKNOWN. The Sons of Freedom settled in certain areas not paying a cent in taxes. The grandfather Kazakoff, is he related to you?

HARSHENIN. He's got that nice little beard. What's his name, Koozia?

ZHIKAROV. Well, he doesn't live there.

In this interview, Harshenin's initial attempt to create a narrative agenda which will develop according to a life story pattern is altered by Zhikarov himself and by the insertion of the unknown speaker, who turn the discussion to a common theme for Doukhobors, the work they did, and contemporary political events in the Doukhobor communities. Zhikarov uses the format of the interview to present himself in a way which highlights the parts of his life that he thinks are meaningful (leaving the community, working in the brick factory). By doing this, he changes Harshenin's role to that of another Doukhobor conversing with him, rather than a researcher who is disengaged from the workings of the Doukhobor communities. Zhikarov changes the way in which his subjectivity is constructed in the narrative from that of an interviewed subject, to that of a participant, with others, in a conversation. He constructs his subject *in relation* to the others who speak.

Like Harshenin's interview with Zhikarov, the interviews done with Doukhobor elders as part of the 1977 Salmo, B.C. recording project indicate a dialogue, not only with the topics for discussion, but also with the type of subject which the speakers produce.<sup>15</sup> In most cases, the interviewers ask generic questions designed to highlight Doukhobor difference, such as questions about marriage practices, clothing or housing. While the speakers often comply, there are points in the interviews when they revise the request or

decide not to respond. Bill (Vasily) Bondareff's interview, for example, starts with what he calls an autobiographical section which he constructs in response to his interviewer's request that he describe his birth and his youth. His "autobiography" shifts between the first- and second-person plural when he discusses communal living or the refusal to swear the oath of allegiance. Bondareff's use of the plural supports his endorsement of communal living in British Columbia before the death of Peter Lordly when individualism was not thought to be an ideal state of being and labour for the community was highly valued:

Life was very attractive and everyone enjoyed life. Of course I must emphasize that all these enterprises were the result of difficult labour. At this time it was simply pleasure and happiness to live in the community. Everyone was happy. We used to go to a "big bay" for swimming where a lot of young people would gather, girls and boys. Very beautiful. This good life lasted until 1924.

Bondareff's support for communal living is similar to that of other Doukhobors. His descriptions of it in the first-person plural, then, represent Doukhobor identity in what he considers to be its ideal form: communal living under the leadership of Lordly. Lordly's direction to younger Doukhobors not to work outside the community is interpreted positively by Bondareff, since it preserves "pure" Doukhobor identity because "he [Lordly] didn't want us to become 'bums.' He wanted us to be modest, of course intelligent and educated in the spirit of the Doukhobors."

Like Cecil Koochin's interview with *Mir*, Bondareff represents his identity as a Doukhobor in terms of communal living. Although he mentions that after Lordly's death one of the elders in his family went back to Blaine Lake, Saskatchewan, Bondareff stresses that his family lived in the CCUB until it ended in 1935 and that his family

bought land during the repossession with other families “but we continued the Doukhobor way of life,” which meant living and working communally. Bondareff ends this part of the interview with an affirmation of communal living as central to Doukhobor identity in the present as much as it was in the past. Bondareff links the act of communal living to a type of spiritual testimony which his interviewer should be able to see, and understand. This “challenge” to the interviewer is similar to Novokshyonov’s challenge to his interviewer to interpret physical events in a spiritual way. Bondareff says,

We continued to live our Doukhobor way of life right up to today. Today you can see what we have among us. Well, you can make your own deductions just from looking at us as we are and thank you for coming and looking at us.

At some points in the interview, Bondareff, like Zhikarov, decides either not to respond to questions or to reframe them in terms of his own ideas about representation. When he is asked about his formal education, he affirms Doukhobor principles, saying that “our parents told us that we had to first of all go through the school of God, meaning the life we lead. The emphasis was on the school of living and not on any formal education. The emphasis was on toil and peaceful life.” When he is asked about his ability to speak English, he says that he can get by, but that is all and then immediately asks if there are other questions, presumably because he does not wish to discuss this. At the end of the interview when he is asked about retaining Doukhobor ways of living, Bondareff answers the question at first in English, rather than in Russian, and then abruptly ends the interview:

INTERVIEWER. Do you still maintain your Doukhobor culture?

BONDAREFF. Oh yes [in English]. For me it's not a problem, I think I'll retain our Doukhobor culture until I die. It's our life. If you think that's enough, I'm ready to go.

The interview with a Freedomite woman from Krestova called only Mrs. Bojey is similar to Bondareff's in that it stresses communal living rather than individual subjectivity. An exception occurs in her description of psalm-singing, although she ties it directly to working on the farm as a young girl: "We didn't have to go far [to prayer meeting]. I liked prayer meeting so I used to go often. I read [recited] psalms; my parents taught me how to cook at home." Like Bondareff, Bojey sees communal living as a state of equality where "everyone looked alike. Everyone had the same food" and that her family always tried to live together communally. When she mentions her marriage, she stresses communality as its most important aspect when she says that "later on of course when I got married and lived in Alberta, we lived together with the Wishlow family for three years or so. That's not too important but we still worked together communally."

Bojey reframes the narrative structure in terms of her own interests. When she is asked directly "do you still hang onto Doukhobor culture," she replies, "of course I support it." When she is asked about the clothing she wore as a child, she replies "Doukhobor clothing" and offers no details. However, a question about whether she ate fish or meat prompts her to tell a story about her family and their devotion to Freedomite Doukhobor principles. This occurs because vegetarianism was considered a sacred practice for devout Doukhobors:



We never even ate fish. We still don't eat meat and I taught my children not to eat meat. My daughter didn't, my son. At that time we had no support from the government in terms of parental aid. When my husband died, my son Fred was sixteen.

This detail leads Bojei to describe how she supported her grandmother, while the children worked outside the community for money until the family joins the trek to support the Freedomite prisoners at Agassiz. However, Bojei recollects this trek in terms of loss and illness rather than in terms of Freedomite ideals:

Then we went on this trek. All the Sons of Freedom in our area went on this trek and so did we. Whatever money we had in savings we gave away to other people. We had given our money away; we had spent our money and we had nothing to pay taxes and we lost our property; we lost everything. My son died and everything was lost [at this point the tone of the speaker sounds very sad, many pauses.]. Whatever remained in the building was stolen and broken. We came back to bury my son. That's when I saw what happened to my house. When we came back, everything was broken; there was nothing salvageable. We lived in Agassiz maybe eight months, then we moved to Vancouver. My husband had two operations in Vancouver.

Despite the pathos of this story, the interviewer does not comment on it and continues to ask direct rather than indirect questions, asking repeatedly whether Bojei remembers “any interesting happenings.” But when the interviewer does this, Bojei either says that she has forgotten events, or that she did not keep a scrapbook about what happened to the Freedomites as others did. She finally ends this line of inquiry by saying that “maybe we tape too much unnecessary information” and refocusses the discussion on central Doukhobor ideas symbolized by the bread, salt and water at the table where the interview is taking place. Bojei uses these symbols of Doukhoborism to affirm central Doukhobor practices such as the rejection of clerical and government authority, and the erosion of communal living as an important Doukhobor practice:

On the table, that's bread and salt and water. That's our oath of allegiance. It's our Christian rules. When people got married we always have bread, salt and water on the table which means we don't need any clergy. But of course although [we follow the rules of] bread, salt and water the government still forced us to follow their rules. Of course people have stopped living the communal way. In the days of the community we lived together...

Bojey, therefore, embodies Doukhobor principles by discussing her life events in terms of tactile symbols such as the bread, salt and water on the table, or in terms of Doukhobor practices such as vegetarianism and communal living. Her refusal to discuss events which the interviewer considers "interesting" reflects her desire to be seen as a Doukhobor subject anchored in Doukhobor living practices.

Helen Popoff, another Freedomite woman from Krestova, uses the interview format to discuss spiritual issues in the tradition of Doukhobor female elders who undertook most of the spiritual instruction and formation in Doukhobor homes.<sup>16</sup> She also talks about Freedomite protest, her status as a healer and the hostility of the non-Doukhobor world, but she discusses these things on her own terms. She begins the interview, for instance, by treating a question about Doukhobor living as spiritual rather than material and about cooperation rather than competition:

We lived, we respected each other, brothers and sisters. God helped us and we relied on God more. When one forgets about God, everything seems to change. God helps us do good things. The whole world is in a huge race. This is because we have forgotten about God. This is not God's work.

When she is subsequently asked about whether she supports Doukhobor culture, like Mrs. Bojey, Popoff replies that she does, but she does so in terms of her adherence to vegetarianism. When the interviewer asks her a traditional autobiographical question--her birth place and date--Popoff answers but immediately corrects herself and highlights her

lack of formal education, saying that “I am not too well educated, I don’t remember.”

Although she ostensibly does this because she has trouble remembering the date of her birth, her decision to say that she is not well-educated indicates that birth dates represent a non-Doukhobor way of measuring time and events, which she links to non-Doukhobor, institutionalized learning. Her haziness about giving this information parallels her non-participation in the institution that creates the discourses which assume the importance of dates.

A similar refusal and reframing occurs when the interviewer asks Popoff if she knows any funny stories. Laughing, Popoff says that “I used to know a lot but now I don’t remember them. My parents would tell me interesting things in Russia but here there is nothing interesting.” Popoff’s laughter cuts off this line of inquiry. Although Popoff initially answered her interviewer with the joke that nothing interesting happens in Canada, she reframes the question as one about the problems with materialism encountered by Doukhobors on the prairies. This thematization of Doukhobor migration as a flight from materialism allows her to begin another story which is related to the migration of her family to British Columbia and the parsimony of her rich relatives along the way:

The following day, we stopped at Drumheller, we thought we would get rest with relatives/friends -- [they] wouldn’t feed us! The lady said she had not baked any bread, I haven’t got anything. Finally she made some eggs and gave us some milk. So we left our relatives and slept in the car. Because it was so cold, March, all five of us are sleeping in the car and we had all these peed-on diapers! We had nowhere to wash them so we hung them outside and dried them and used them over -- better than nothing [laughs].

Again, when Popoff mentions in an aside that she went to Piers Island and is asked why, she gives reasons, but mentions nude protest (an area of great interest to non-Doukhobors) almost as an afterthought:

People stopped paying dues, [and they] were thrown out onto the street [literally highway]. We sat on this highway for awhile and then we were thrown in jail. There was no work anywhere. We sat on the highway, oh yeah, we did take our clothes off. We just took our clothes off, everyone. Then we ended up in jail. Your mother was only ten months old. We got three years.

At this point in the interview, Popoff becomes agitated when she describes how her father was beaten and placed in solitary confinement at Piers Island. This agitation carries over into a question that she is asked about marriage which causes her to return to the subject of family upheaval during the Piers Island imprisonment. Popoff asks for the tape to be turned off, a sign that she wishes to regain emotional (and narrative) control:

I went to school for four months when I was eight years old. It was an English school....I did go to Russian school too. Things didn't seem to go into my head at that time. I was upset about domestic arrangements at that time. When you are frightened, you are upset. I can't remember so much about school. Are you taping this? [tape turns off]

When the tape is turned back on, Popoff decides to discuss home remedies, which she connects with what she interprets as both negative and positive aspects of Doukhobor non-cooperation with authority. Here, Popoff does not thematize or even explain the conflicting interpretations of the medical profession which she enumerates. Instead, she tells both stories to indicate how she is able to use common sense to give “proper” medical advice. For example, Popoff links home remedies unfavourably to a lack of formal education in a story about her mother. Her mother, whose name was

Dunia, had cataracts. She was told to put honey on her eyes and look at the sun. But, as

Popoff explains, this home remedy did not work:

That's what she did. Honey, she put some honey on her eyes and then all the bees and wasps surrounded her. But I told her Dunia, don't put that silly stuff on your eyes, eat it, it will help you. Finally Dunia went to the doctor and had her cataracts removed and then she could see. See the kind of fools we were? We had no education. If she'd had just a little bit of brains she'd eat that honey and it would do her some good. Flies flying, using the rag to ward off flies! [laughing]

However, Popoff concludes her narrative with a discussion of home remedies that can work without the assistance of doctors. She links this discussion with Doukhobor identity features by associating good health with a vegetarian diet, and by connecting her knowledge of home remedies to her own sense of independence from non-Doukhobor authority, represented here by doctors:

And you know something? I never went to a doctor and I attribute that to the food we ate. The only time I went to the doctor I got my tonsils out, that was when we were in prison. Our diet was all screwed up. But since that jail time, I am my own doctor. Do you understand that? I can actually cure people. My grandfather had a stroke. He didn't go to the doctor and I cured him on my own. Well, you have to be a doctor to do that.

Helen Popoff's story, like those by Mrs. Bojey, Bill Bondareff and Fred Zhikarov, shows how in an interview format Doukhobor subjects can reframe the interview framework which constructs identity as an essentialization of Doukhobor difference to more complex formulations of identity as something which can be negotiated, accepted or rejected in the respondent's terms. Due to the oral construction of the interview which allows for dialogue, all the speakers can draw on long-standing traditions of Doukhobor oral history and narrative in order to tell their stories, while the tendency of most speakers to discuss collective history and to construct their lives in terms of their activities within

communities means that they use the interviewer's questions as an extension of those conversations which occur in communal, rather than individual, subject formations. The speakers treat the interviewers not as authorities to whom they defer, but as others who assist them to construct their subjectivity in relation to communal identity.

Testimonials by male and female elders, and by Sons of Freedom members in the Joint Doukhobor Research Committee Symposia, indicate how unwritten life stories have been used in Doukhobor communities to discuss Doukhobor cultures, histories and beliefs in similar types of dialogue situations to those found in recorded interviews. The symposia, which ran from 1974 to 1982 and were well-attended by Doukhobors from all major groups, represented a unique effort by Doukhobors to work out what Doukhoborism had been and what it would be in the future. This was done because Doukhoborism had been "so poorly transmitted to our younger generation [that] many have ceased to value it at all" (Joint 6). In addition, Eli Popoff's transcription, translation and collation of symposia testimony represents a unique attempt to bridge the gap between the centrality of oral recollection in Russian found in Doukhobor tradition and the emerging stress on the use of written English to work out many of these same issues amongst younger Doukhobors at the time. The symposia summary, therefore, records and facilitates a type of "orality in literacy" by respecting oral tradition and by recording oral traditions in a more durable format.

As the 1974 circulated invitation for participation indicates, one of the principle aims of the symposia was to encourage elders to discuss their knowledge of Doukhobor history and beliefs:

those who are acknowledged among our people as having knowledge of our history and beliefs, or who have held administrative positions within the various Doukhobor organizations, are urged to share their experiences and knowledge with others by taking active part in the meetings. (Joint 3)

Elders were encouraged to discuss their memories of migration and early pioneering days in Canada so that other Doukhobors could understand aspects of Doukhobor history, such as the circumstances of the Burning of Arms, the operation of the CCUB or memories of the Doukhobor leaders Peter Lordly and Peter Chistiakov. Elders were encouraged to do this because Doukhobor beliefs, history and traditions had always been passed down orally from respected elders in Doukhobor communities. In this way, life narrative becomes related to the idea of testimony and recollections that are not offered by someone constructing a subjectivity in isolation, but as part of community activity, for others rather than for oneself.

Elders who came forward and offered recollections often linked them to primary symbolic moments the Doukhobor history, as Mike Chernoff does when he begins his account of his origins with his assertion that his grandfathers were both martyrs in Russia for the Doukhobor faith, while his parents had lived in the Community all their lives (Joint 177). But his recital of his origins also serves to guarantee his credibility as a narrator who can talk about the history of the Freedomites, since the actions of his grandfathers and parents serve to demonstrate that the speaker is a “real” Doukhobor who has not forgotten his origins and his sense of purpose. This is why he introduces this link between his origin and the Doukhobor diasporic imaginary as a way to “guarantee” that what he will say is reputable. As he says, “being a descendant of this lineage, I have

direct knowledge of the suffering for their faith that my grandfathers went through, I feel that their life's accomplishments were very great, even though they were illiterate peasants" (177). This "apology" for illiteracy actually becomes a source of the narrator's strong belief in Doukhoborism because he says that they owe their success, despite their illiteracy, to their having chosen "a right pathway of life" (177). He uses the choice of his ancestors as a way to describe his own upbringing in the Community and his subsequent experiences as Peter Chistiakov's secretary. Mike Chernoff's story of his grandparents' and parents' faithfulness establishes his own faithfulness as a community worker and as a narrator.

William Ogloff's autobiographical speech also establishes his own narrative position in terms of another important sign of Doukhobor identity: belief in the sanctity of communal living. In a passage called "My Recollections of life in the Christian Community of Universal Brotherhood," he gives his birth year and birth location and mentions that he was born "to devout Doukhobor parents, Timothy and Matryona Ogloff" (Joint 197). This mention of his parents as devout signals to his audience that Ogloff is a reliable Doukhobor narrator because of the faith of his parents. After describing the migration of his family to British Columbia, a move which would signal to his Doukhobor audience that his family endorsed communal living and followed Peter Lordly's directives, he tells a story about himself as a youth when he ate some oats that were meant for a baby because there was little food to eat. This story becomes a way to indicate that in a community one should serve others and not simply please oneself, because he calls the whipping he received for doing this "well deserved" (197). When he



describes subsequently working for the Community when his family moves back to Alberta, Ogloff develops his endorsement of communal living as a hallmark of Doukhobor identity and spiritual formation:

I developed the skills needed [to herd cattle on horseback] and really got to feel a sense of satisfaction that I was doing my bit in this large Doukhobor undertaking set up for the good of all those that were part of this commune. (199)

Ogloff ends his story with a short description of his schooling for six months in an English school and his first job. The occasion of this job also marks his passage into adulthood, which he identifies with becoming a dues-paying member of the Community, saying that “I was very satisfied with myself that I was a full fledged, responsible adult person” (200). For Ogloff, membership in the CCUB is his primary link to Doukhobor identity since it marks his passage into adulthood while it also ends his narrative.

Lucy Maloff, the wife of Peter N. Maloff, who had been an early Freedomite leader in the 1930s,<sup>17</sup> does not tell her life story for the Committee, but instead provides an account of Peter Chistiakov’s visit to her home called “Recollections of Past Life Within the Doukhobor Community.” She does this because the Joint Doukhobor Research Committee had asked people to come forward with stories about Peter Chistiakov (364, 451). Therefore, Maloff’s narrative serves two purposes: it relates details she remembers about Peter Chistiakov, while it indicates her own commitments to Doukhoborism as a Doukhobor woman. Maloff’s account stresses the strengths of Chistiakov’s leadership and his endorsement of Freedomite protests against militarism in the late 1920s while it records her husband’s own commitment to Freedomite ideals at the time that are strengthened by Peter Chistiakov’s visit. Peter Chistiakov’s actions and

speech to the assembled people convince Maloff to let her husband join a Freedomite protest despite the hardships that her family will endure because of her husband's impending absence (365-366). Maloff's story, therefore, fits into Doukhobor ideas about suffering for true causes and adhering to one's ideals while it describes Peter Chistiakov's connections to the Freedomites in that period.

The narrative begins with a short section about Maloff's husband, who became a friend of Peter Chistiakov after his arrival in Canada, and then moves to her preparations for Chistiakov's visit in 1928. The preparations become the test-case for her strong faith, manifested in her decision to make the family borsch for Chistiakov's lunch. This detail is important because it indicates the family's dedication to Sons of Freedom ideals and practices and emphasizes Lucy Maloff's own work that reflects these practices:

at this time our family was on a totally vegan-vegetarian diet. We did not use any milk or egg products whatsoever. We did not even wear leather boots or shoes. This strict vegetarianism was one of the things that my husband respected in the life-concept of the original Sons of Freedom. At this time there were many Sons of freedom who did not even use cooked food but lived mainly on raw vegetables, fruits and grains. Most used footwear of sewed cloth, but the more devout all walked around in "lapti", a sort of sandal knitted out of wool-yarn. There was absolutely nothing used that would have hint of lavishness. During this winter I had knitted 17 pairs of "lapti" from self-spun wool yarn. (365)

When Maloff's mother and sisters try to have her make borsch like non-vegan Doukhobor families, Maloff's refusal indicates the strength of her convictions, which are strengthened through the consensus of her own family (365). Although Maloff says that "at first I was very nervous and kind of worried about my decisions to serve our vegan-vegetarian meal" (365), Chistiakov approves of the borsch, which brings her relief because her choice is "correct" (366). This moment also illustrates Chistiakov's approval

of the Sons of Freedom at that time, since after the meal he remarks that the young Freedomites in the room are ““our real highest Doukhobor University output,”” although he later strikes and sharply criticizes a young Freedomite man who criticizes the materialist basis of the CCUB (366). Maloff’s account indicates the gendering of her religious convictions through food preparation and the making of “lapti.” It also implies that true Doukhobors should have to endure difficult domestic arrangements as part of suffering for what they believe.

Although the initial goal of the Joint Doukhobor Research Committee was to enquire into Doukhobor history and beliefs, comments by and about Freedomite depredations (arsons and bombings) dominated the proceedings for much of the symposia. Freedomite testimony for the symposia ranges from recollections about the initial 1902 trek that began the Freedomite movement and the mass imprisonment of Freedomites at Piers Island during the 1930s to testimony about the Sons of Freedom by some Freedomites and angry exchanges between Community Doukhobors who were targets of depredation activity and Freedomite radicals discussing their own version of events. The Freedomite life narratives (or stories about the Freedomites) tend to indicate how in oral narratives autobiographical subject representation can be used to recover past history and to open that history to question. This becomes critical in Freedomite testimony because other Doukhobors did not always understand either the history of the Freedomites or what motivated radical Freedomites to commit depredations (Joint 449-450). They did not always know about Freedomite history and beliefs because non-

Freedomite Doukhobors were not encouraged to socialize with Freedomites (Plotnikoff 209).

For example, Nikolai Koozmitch Novokshyonoff's discussion about the 1902 trek begins with his assertion that he knows about the 1902 trek because of his family background. His explanation begins with his autobiography in which he explains that he was orphaned and was adopted by his grandmother, a Freedomite who took him with her on Freedomite marches and protests for three years (107-108). This discussion guarantees his authority when he begins to talk about the Sons of Freedom more generally (108). In a similar guarantee of authenticity, Vasily P. Podmoryov's account, called "A Recollection by Vasily Petrovitch Podmoryov," begins with an explanation of narrative process which includes Podmoryov's full name and the reason for his story's veracity. He is a witness, and he learned about these events by means of oral tradition:

My name is Vasiliy Petrovitch Podmoryov and I am a live witness to all the inside recollections of the trek of 1902. In our family, these recollections were repeated probably more than a hundred times. (Joint 122)

In this text, therefore, Podmoryov appeals both to oral tradition of the past (learning from elders) and to his own status as a reputable elder in Doukhobor communities (I am a live witness). Podmoryov uses "autobiographical" details about family and origin, much as Chernoff or Ogloff do, in combination with oral tradition to guarantee his audience's attention. Here, autobiographical conventions play a rhetorical role rather than as the impetus or "plot" that drives an identity narrative because they combine with other oral traditions, such as direct addresses to listeners, psalms that are sung or recited during meaningful moments and descriptions of the "question" or issues which the narrative is

supposed to answer that are not usually part of autobiography by members of dominant discourses.

Other presentations by Freedomite radicals followed a testimonial pattern not seen in other narratives. These presentations were usually made not only as recollections for purely historic purposes, but also as a way to narrate Freedomite concerns that would be shared by all Doukhobors. For example, Peter Swetlishoff's public repentance during the symposia proceedings of burning and bombing activity adheres to some of the conventions of confessional discourse. He refuses to discuss why he committed depredations and instead offers a type of life story which centres on his concerns with Doukhobor materialist tendencies. Swetlishoff openly treats his own story as a discursive opportunity, or "answer" to other Doukhobors when he states that:

I am answering in the following printed lines, in which I am briefly going to explain about my former understanding of certain occurrences that I had lived through. In particular, what I was guided by and what it was that brought me to this idea of the whip that awakens like a loud sounding bell calling forth for spiritual re-birth. (603)

Swetlishoff's description of his "awakening" into Freedomite activity stresses his research into Doukhobor history and his rejection of materialism and private property rather than enthusiast activity. In this way, his non-Freedomite listeners can find common ground so that they can respond to his call for spiritual renewal among Doukhobors as well as his own decision to renounce violence. Swetlishoff, however, emphasizes his self-education as central to his life story in order to retain Freedomite beliefs in the enthusiast reading of Doukhobor history as spiritual typology.<sup>18</sup> The Doukhobors who heard Swetlishoff's statement received it very positively (Joint 661) indicates how aspects of written

autobiographical narrative can be used discursively in an oral environment, since he read from a document and also spoke impromptu during his confession. Here, autobiography operates as a rhetorical device which enables the speaker to defend his Freedomite beliefs as he traces its origins and then calls, from this basis, on the whole community to change its direction. Swetlishoff's "confession" is not an assurance of his identity or a sharing of his life as a memorial sign for others to imitate, but is the means for speech. Swetlishoff's portrayal of his life as an educational experience means that his recantation of bombing and burning activity is also a product of that desire to learn and change.

Taken together, the short autobiographical statements and testimonials which I have examined here combine aspects of autobiographical discourse (about origins, birth, childhood and parentage, for example) with other aspects of witness narrative and, in Swetlishoff's case, confession discourse. They also combine written conventions with oral ones as the story of each speaker works to guarantee the authority of the person speaking, to commemorate an event or to make general statements about Doukhoborism. The work of autobiography here is not the work of a narrative which commemorates the life of one person. It forms part of a larger discursive project where groups of Doukhobors use traditional oral debating and questioning techniques developed in *sobranie* in order to determine what collective Doukhobor history and identity might mean. It is narration undertaken for others, with collective purpose. The Doukhobor saying that Bonch-Bruevich repeats as "record in heart, proclaim in word" affirms the importance, even in recent years, of orality in Doukhobor communities, and of constructing a communal subjectivity that still asserts the key position the spoken word, spoken for others, has in

ongoing debates between Doukhobors about the future of Doukhoborism and its connection to life narratives about its past.

*Notes*

1. For a discussion of *molenie* and *sobranie* as examples of communal worship and decision-making, see the “Spirit-Wrestlers” section of chapter two.
2. For a more detailed look at *vechnaya pamyat*, see chapter three.
3. See Lucy Maloff’s story about Peter Chistiakov for an example in the Joint Doukhobor Research Committee, 366. Peter Chistiakov often stressed that it was important for Doukhobors to research and teach about their origins and spiritual concepts. He referred to these activities as the “Doukhobor University”, which stressed a non-institutional acquisition of this knowledge.
4. Annie Barnes’ article “Doukhobor women in the twentieth century” for *Spirit Wrestlers’ Voices* (13-39) represents the first published attempt by a Doukhobor woman to work through the complexities of gender discrimination, in addition to other challenges, which Doukhobor women have had to face.
5. *Toil and Peaceful Life* (1977) is a collection of fourteen oral narratives by Doukhobor elders that were transcribed and translated by Marjorie Maloff. Possibly because they were recorded for a British Columbia archival series, these narratives appear heavily edited and homogenized for the publication. Although with more information about the production process they could be analysed in their own right, the narratives of *Toil and Peaceful Life* fall outside the scope of this study.
6. I would like to clarify that this is *not* an example of dialogism, which refers to utterances that are always produced with the awareness of another’s “word.”
7. Novokshyonov relates events that occurred before the Burning of Arms when Doukhobors decided not to cooperate with tsarist officials. One way that the Doukhobors did this was to refuse to serve as village headmen. “Village headman” was an official post that presumably enabled the one who occupied it to exercise authority in a village on behalf of the local governing officials, and to represent the concerns of the village to officials.
8. All of the quotations from Bodianskii’s collection are from an unpublished translation. Page numbering will refer to the page numbers in the translation.
9. In “Execution,” Bayoff explains that Doukhobors do not call their parents and grandparents by their usual names because this is thought to be hierarchical. He refers to his mother as his “birth-giver” and to his maternal grandmother as his *nyanka*, or “care-giver”, rather than calling her by the common term *babushka*. He also refers to his father as “the parent” (“Execution” 4).
10. Besides Soukorev’s “My Renunciation of Military Service,” this is the only other long narrative by a Doukhobor who survived the persecutions following the Burning of Arms which was printed in Russian in *Iskra* and then translated into English. This makes Bayoff’s narrative



another important part of maintaining the Doukhobor diasporic imaginary connected to suffering and resistance, although I will not focus on this aspect of the narrative in this chapter.

11. A note in the English-language translation of “The Execution” for *Iskra* states that the word refers to a Tsarist executive order for corporal punishment such as flogging (Bayoff 16).

12. During the 1960s, Harshenin made more than fifty reel-to-reel taped interviews with Doukhobors. Since his objective was to get Doukhobors to speak in dialect for later analysis, to get them talking he asked questions about their lives, which inadvertently produced many autobiographical testimonies when the interviewees chose to speak about themselves. Harshenin’s research is valuable because he taped interviews with Doukhobors from the three major groups, and because his tapes were made earlier (and are of better quality) than other interviews. His status as a Doukhobor meant that the people he interviewed were willing to discuss many issues in a candid way. Harshenin died in an automobile accident before he could publish more than two of his monographs on Doukhobor word choice.

The translation of the interview and the Salmo interviews which follow it are approximate. However, the translator and transcriber attempted to approximate Doukhobor dialect with colloquial English wherever possible in order to impart some of the tone of the original recording.

13. All quotations from recordings of Fred Zhikarov, Bill Bondareff, Mrs. Bojey and Helen Popoff are from an unpublished translation. No page numbers are used -- readers are asked to refer to the recordings themselves for source information.

14. This literally means “refuge,” although the context indicates that it could be the name of a Doukhobor village in the area. If it is the name of the village, the spelling could vary. I thank Nina Kolesnikoff for suggesting an alternate spelling.

15. Little is known about the Salmo recording project, since the information about it is confined to the information written on the labels for the cassettes deposited in the Special Collections at the University of British Columbia Library. Since the interviews themselves are in Doukhobor dialect, the interviewers themselves sound young and some of the direct addresses to them refer to their parents, it is reasonable to assume that the project was conducted by secondary school students of Doukhobor origin. The interviewers may have been researching a project on their elders’ cultural origins, given the set questions most speakers were asked.

16. The spiritual authority of elder Doukhobor women can be seen in three commemorations by Doukhobors of the lives of their grandmothers found in Tarasoff, *Spirit Wrestlers’ Voices*.

17. Peter N. Maloff produced a response to a commission studying Freedomite agitation which contains an autobiographical section. A discussion of Maloff’s work appears in chapter five.

18. For example, Swetlishoff refers to the past history of the Doukhobors and their present ownership of land in spiritual terms:

At one time, we Doukhobors were a light for all of the world, the salt of the earth. And now, it is not sin to say that we have become the useless litter of the earth. We have looked back like Lot's wife of biblical times. She looked back and was turned to stone, no longer to be a live entity on earth. If we do not take hold of ourselves, the same thing can happen to us (605).

## **Chapter 5**

### **Witness, Negotiation, Performance: Sons of Freedom Autobiography**

It would seem unlikely that members of the Sons of Freedom would produce any autobiographical work at all, since most of these Doukhobors did not, at least until the 1970s, subscribe to discourses of the autonomous, individual self and the assumption of a place in national culture which autobiography discourse has privileged. Of the three major Doukhobor groups, the Freedomites, also known as the Sons of Freedom,<sup>1</sup> have most strenuously rejected the marks of Canadian citizenship, including the payment of taxes, private ownership of property, military service especially in times of war, registration of births, marriages and deaths, and public education in English for their children. In their more radical periods, Freedomite Doukhobors have also refused identity conventions which have proved highly threatening to non-Doukhobor Canadians and their institutional representatives. Such refusals first occurred in 1902 when more than one-thousand Sons of God (as they were known at the time) marched south across the Saskatchewan prairie hoping to reach a land “nearer the sun” while throwing away their money and any goods made from animal skins to emphasize their rejection of what they described as Canadian materialism, their refusal to exploit animal labour and their belief, supported by numerous Doukhobor psalms, that Doukhobor identity is related to wandering, exile and spiritual pilgrimage.<sup>2</sup>

Until the end of large scale resistance in the late 1960s, Freedomites continued to use forms of protest such as stripping, burning farm equipment and marching that the earlier Sons of God group had used. During times of radical activity from the 1920s onward, some Freedomites burned private property. By the 1960s, radical Freedomites had begun to burn buildings owned mostly by non-Freedomite Doukhobors as a protest against materialism. Some radicals also bombed symbols of government authority such as the court house in Nelson BC, or they bombed signs of non-Doukhobor material progress such as CPR tracks or hydroelectric pylons. At these times, many Freedomites rejected ideas about individual adherence to a secular state and the separation of religion from citizenship activity in favour of identities grounded in group affiliation and a belief, based on Doukhobor prophecies of a century before, that the Doukhobors would return to Russia after suffering at the hands of the authorities. This last belief, often misunderstood by non-Doukhobor people, meant that the measures intended to curb their behaviour -- imprisonment and removal of any privileges of citizenship -- actually encouraged mystic identification of Freedomite radicals with the sufferings of their forefathers and foremothers after the Burning of Arms in 1895. They willingly entered the prisons built for them at Piers Island and Agassiz in order to suffer and eventually--they thought--to migrate.

But Freedomite depredations represented more than vandalism to the authorities and the Canadian public, judging from the long prison sentences Freedomites received for nudity and arson (from three to twelve years), as well as the fact that in 1962 the RCMP brought against the fifty-two members of the Freedomite Fraternal Council the widely-

publicized but rather unlikely charge of “intimidating the Parliament of Canada” (Woodcock 352). Freedomites who had committed other types of arson and who had set bombs received sentences as long as twelve years. The long sentences and thorough investigations by government authorities indicate that Freedomite agitation posed a deeper threat than merely the threat to destroy selected properties or parade in the nude. Freedomite depredations appeared to strike at cherished ideas of civic pride, the ownership and care of property and state-sanctioned control of the nude body as a private, rather than a public and politicized entity.

Popular media labelled Freedomite activity as terrorist and treasonist and assumed that all Doukhobors harboured similar impulses. Commentators in British Columbia refused to entertain any of their demands for exile or migration, characterizing their behaviour as irrational, bizarre, even sick, and proof that all Doukhobors did not “belong” in British Columbia. A strong public outcry arose against all Doukhobors whether they had committed depredations or not, and whether they were members of the Sons of Freedom or not. It might be hard for non-Doukhobors to imagine how strong this anti-Doukhobor sentiment was at this time. The publicity that surrounded this outcry was so intense that today, most non-Doukhobors do not realize that the activities of the Sons of Freedom do not represent Doukhobor activities as a whole.

Anti-Doukhobor sentiment ran so high by the 1950s that the public applauded the BC provincial government’s bid to assimilate Freedomite children by rounding them up in a series of night raids beginning in 1953 and teaching them in English at the fenced-in New Denver, BC dormitory for up to six years. This last measure was intended to turn

Freedomite children into solid Canadian citizens. Some children at New Denver, for example, were photographed with hockey sticks in their hands (fig. 2) or walking happily through the snow for the benefit of the Canadian public, presumably to indicate that institutionalization had made them more “Canadian” (Holt n.p.).

But institutionalization was not a positive experience for most Freedomite children, who were separated from their parents for as long as six years. Parents were allowed to visit only once every two weeks and had to see their children through a chain-link fence, while police and other authorities told them that these measures would continue until they agreed to send their children to provincially-run schools with conventional curricula. The mothers of the children at New Denver finally agreed to do this in 1959. As late as 1964, Simma Holt’s virulent anti-Doukhobor book about the Sons of Freedom referred to these assimilation attempts with approval and recommended that the practice continue until no rebellious Freedomites were left. Others must have agreed with her, since John Friesen and Michael Verigin report that 35,000 copies of her book *Terror in the Name of God*, published by MacLelland and Stewart, were sold in the first printing alone (Friesen & Verigin xi).

Reactions like these indicate that the principle activities of extremist Freedomites were highly threatening to Canadians on a symbolic level out of all proportion to the number of depredations committed against non-Doukhobor properties in particular because Canadian citizenship, as the popular press widely promoted it, consisted of a separation of religious and state activities and a respect for others’ property that reflected the importance of individual ownership. “Decency” also demanded that people stay



Fig. 2      Freedomite boys at the New Denver Reformatory. Simma Holt wrote in *Terror in the Name of God* that Doukhobor children were introduced to Canadian customs while they were at New Denver.

clothed in public: this was connected to deportment in national affairs. Not only did Freedomites protest, but they criticized institutions such as schools, courts, prisons and the military, and to be Canadian meant that all of these institutions were essentially beyond critique. This meant that the Freedomites and then all Doukhobors were considered by the Canadian public to be “not-Canadian” (all Doukhobors had voting rights taken from them from the 1920s until the 1960s), other (emphasized by the epithet directed at them: “Dirty Douks”, meant to be a contrast to physically and morally “pure” Canadians), and irrational because they did not recognize the basis of the secular body politic. Instead, Freedomites used their bodies in political ways which disrupted ideas about the place of minority people in the rather prefabricated, cramped spaces of the Canadian mosaic.

Given the history of Freedomite protest against Western ideas, and the government acrimony and public anger which greeted this protest, it would indeed seem likely that the Sons of Freedom, of all the Doukhobor groups, would reject the Western institution of autobiography and the selves that this form privileges in the same way that they rejected Canadian institutional forms. They had no tradition of written autobiographical selves based on Western canonized models.<sup>3</sup> These models depend on discourses of identity involving a unique, pre-existing self marked off from all others, or at least on a critique of that self by a writer who knows the discourse. As a communally-oriented group with an oral mystical and historic tradition, the Freedomites’ constructions of identity did not depend on the Western, capitalist split between self and life mirrored by a subject/object split that guarantees self-reflexivity and a re-grounding of the narrated



self in configurations that allow it as identity narrative to be packaged and “sold” to a reading public. If nothing else, the orality of Freedomite culture (information can come through dreams, conversations with elders, psalm-singing and memorization, the speeches of leaders and enthusiast experiences as well as books) and the relatively low literacy levels in English of many of its members until the 1960s should have prevented autobiographical writing or an interest in this type of writing if classic models are all that autobiography discourse is about.

But these barriers did not prevent autobiographical writing. In fact, the highest number of relatively “traditional” Doukhobor autobiographical works in the form of prison diaries and autobiographies which are actually titled “diary” or “autobiography” come from members of the Sons of Freedom or from former members of its groups. To date, I have found two Freedomite prison diaries: one by Alex Efanow<sup>4</sup> from the 1930s or 1940s and the privately published Agassiz diary by Mike Chernenkoff and friends about the 1960s protests. I have also found in an archive the autobiography of Peter N. Maloff, a former Freedomite leader, produced as part of his requested statement for a 1952 commission about Freedomite activity and two autobiographies--one appearing in Holt’s *Terror in the Name of God* and one unpublished--that former Freedomite extremist Fred N. Davidoff wrote in the 1960s and 1970s.<sup>5</sup>

Why did Freedomite writers produce this much autobiographical writing? The answers lie in the performative aspects of autobiographical discourse, which some Freedomite writers, already accustomed to pamphlet writing and other forms of public awareness-raising which they appropriated so that their identity formations could be

performed in public spaces. However recognizable these performances are, however, appropriation of some but not all diary forms enabled Freedomite authors to avoid Western subjectivity's dependence on a dialectics of a singular self and other within a discourse of interiority on which readings of performativity by Butler and Sidonie Smith depend.<sup>6</sup> In this sense, they engaged in a type of *public, exterior* identity performance which alters the trope of performativity as it makes use of it.

Mikhail Bakhtin describes such a situation in what he termed the original chronotope of autobiography as a set of ritual praises in the Athenian public square. For Bakhtin, the act of the funeral oration consisted of remembering the face and deeds of the dead person, which later became the custom of telling one's life story in public meetings. These life narratives, Bakhtin writes, took place as a dialogic activity between the speaker and the listeners which constituted consciousness. As a form of rhetoric, auto/biography was never "auto" since consciousness had to be recognized and inflected by other members of the community, and consciousness itself was not abstracted into "self," but into a face, or a memory of face, which was conjured up by the orator. To Bakhtin, biography and autobiography in the Athenian square were the same thing. This "individual" consciousness, in turn, became part of the public consciousness only when it was spoken--the time of the life narrative was superseded by the space in which it occurred. The negotiation of self/other had not yet begun:

Here [in the square] the individual is open on all sides, he is all surface, there is in him nothing that exists 'for his sake alone,' nothing that could not be subject to public or state control and evaluation. Everything here, down to the last detail, is entirely public...there was as yet no internal man, no 'man for himself' (I for

myself), nor any individualized approach to one's own self...Man was completely *on the surface*, in the most literal sense of the word. (132-33)

An individual was spoken into being and indexed into the history and life of the community because someone has spoken him and others hear him. Instead of the Lacanian mirror, where the child *sees* himself or herself and recognizes the "I" at the moment s/he sees her or his reflection as "not I," the orator reflects the oration of a citizen's life into the *ears* of the community members, who hear and respond to this life as text with affirmation (133). To praise oneself was to praise the community, and to return that praise to the community whole, since Bakhtin holds that there was no inside to hold any part of "bio" away from "graphe": "to be exterior meant to be for others, for the collective, for one's own people" (135). Before the self/other split, then, there is no dialogic contestation between others, but a meeting-ground of others, where self belongs to the community and does not struggle to permeate or monologize discourses of the other.

Bakhtin's image of simultaneous praise evokes an external type of performativity that does not rely on absolute self/other constructions. Significantly, he comments later that this image of identity formed in the public square disappeared when Plutarch observed that self-reflection could include silent meditation which could not have been known to others. Plutarch's introduction of interiority into reflection spelled the end of exteriority and of communal identity construction in which everything can be known and words can permeate each other.

In this way, Freedomite performativity could be used to serve purposes other than identity commemoration and circulation. Although they renounced most contact with the non-Doukhobor world at various times, Freedomite protest activities took on the character of performances, since their earlier members had learned during the trek of 1902 that public nudity--which they discovered could shock Canadians--could be used as a protest strategy as well as a sign to other Doukhobors that all Doukhobors should renounce materialism. Later members of the Sons of Freedom remembered these earlier strategies, which involved nude protest, marches and setting farm equipment on fire, and developed them. By the 1960s, Sons of Freedom organizations such as the Brotherhood of Reformed Doukhobors wrote pamphlets in the English language to communicate their concerns to the non-Doukhobor world, sent out media press releases, and went on protest parades, including the 1962 march to Vancouver and then to the Freedomite prison in Agassiz, partially in order to get media visibility for their causes. Writing in English became part of a strategy of engagement with Canadian authorities and via the media, the Canadian public also, as other aspects of Freedomite religious activity such as nudity and singing took on the character of performances designed to heighten public awareness. In this way aspects of Freedomite identity entered a non-Doukhobor public sphere in sets of hybrid combinations that became part of strategies of visibility.

When combined with discourses of testimony in court room settings, Freedomite autobiographical forms in the two cases I discuss here hybridize. They become part of Freedomite strategies for visibility while they occupy a space between Freedomite Doukhobor traditions of history and communal subjectivity. They also have roots in the

collective *sobranie* decision-making process used by Doukhobors generally,<sup>7</sup> and make some reference to forms of truth-production that Canadian people, specifically the Canadian authorities, understand to be traditional. In this sense, autobiographical documents by Freedomites become testimonials and in this sense, become part of other performative documents required by authorities that also exceed what the authorities require of the performances.

I will begin with two examples of Freedomite prison diaries in order to illustrate how some Freedomite authors have used the trope of exterior performativity within a hybridized autobiographical discourse that blends the private form of the diary with the public form of what I refer to in chapter three as a witness narrative. For my purpose in this chapter, a witness narrative has an event--usually traumatic and often politicized--as its main focus. The author's identity as a witness becomes more important than his or her identity apart from the event. The first example of a Freedomite witness narrative is *Prison Diary: Events and Experiences in Mountain Prison, Agassiz, BC 1962-1969* by Mike E. Chernenkoff and friends (1993)<sup>8</sup>, an account of the incarceration of Freedomite radicals at Mountain Prison, Agassiz between 1962 and 1969-1970 for nudity, arson and protest bombing. The second is Alexander Efanow's unpublished diary "Journal from Agassiz," which was probably written in the 1930s.<sup>9</sup> Efanow's diary includes discussions about the first imprisonment of Freedomites in Agassiz, British Columbia and their subsequent imprisonment at the Piers Island, British Columbia prison farm.

*Prison Diary* contains many of the features of a diary as day-to-day witness record with its flexible use of subject positions that change over time and with its dated entries

that refer to the weather and to daily events in prison life. However, critical discourse usually assumes that Western diaries are by a single author who writes his or her “private” thoughts in them. But the author name on the front page of *Prison Diary* does not appear as Mike Chernenkoff, but “Mike Chernenkoff and Friends.” The assumption, originally discussed by Felicity Nussbaum in “Towards Conceptualizing Diary” that diary discourse is private and singular, and that it is produced by a private and singular subject (Nussbaum 132) does not apply here. Instead, the preface of the diary and subsequent “entries” use the diary form’s features of immediacy and location while combining this form with aspects of memoir and witness narratives in order to make hidden events, concealed inside a prison, public.

Because it is a witness narrative with multiple authors, this diary contains material not usually found in diary form. In addition to diary entries, *Prison Diary* has historical passages, copied letters, photographs of prisoners and their families, lists of prisoners’ names, a recipe for borscht made by the prisoners, psalms and poems composed in prison by various people and a variety of narratives, sometimes by other people and sometimes simply called “Dormatory 4”, “Dormatory 2” or “Dormatory 3.” These narratives describe key problems such as the force feeding of the vegetarian prisoners with boiling meat broth while they are on a hunger strike, what happened at Agassiz when prison authorities placed Chernenkoff in solitary confinement in another prison, or the death of Paul Podmoroff from pneumonia brought on by force-feeding during a Freedomite fast. Chernenkoff did not personally witness this last event because he was in another dormatory, and so he had another person record it and then tell it to him later.<sup>10</sup>

One example of collective authorship occurs when an anonymous author from Dormitory 4 says that *his* diary--it is not clear whether he means Chernenkoff's manuscript or some other one--has been seized by the authorities and he (or others) pieced the narrative together later. He writes "For me to continue further in connection with this will be more difficulty, but all the same, I will try to do everything I can" (49). Constructing the narrative at other points becomes a collective enterprise, as the first person of Chernenkoff is sometimes replaced by collective arrangers who say, for instance, that "we are placing here" (50) an account from other prisoners as a witness narrative. But at a key point in the narrative, when force-feeding begins, Mike Chernenkoff asserts an individuated identity which sounds like a legal testimonial. In order to stop the guard "Jovans"<sup>11</sup> from pushing a bloodied feeding tube down a prisoner's throat, Mike Chernenkoff turns himself into an individual actor: "so I, Mikhail Chernenkoff, walked over and overturned the box which held the tubes and the dish" (19). This moment is vital because it leads to Chernenkoff's subsequent solitary confinement and beating. Chernenkoff's decision to use his full name and the echo of legal terminology --"I do solemnly swear to tell whole truth"--is an appropriation of a singular subject from another discourse of individuated truth-telling in public, namely, that of the trial and the court room. Therefore, Mike Chernenkoff's rhetorical individuation at this important moment in the narrative appropriates a non-Doukhobor discourse of subjectivity and inserts it into a non-legal setting so that "the whole truth" is told. Since the context, but not the form, of this utterance has been altered to serve these different ends, this is an example of a hybridized confession form.

As part diary, part witness narrative and even as a “biography of Mountain Prison”, which is what Chernenkoff has called the book in a personal letter to me, this prison narrative operates as a hybrid text which straddles several life narrative forms while it produces a hybrid subject that is singular and plural at different points to fit the requirements of its message as a witness document. Therefore, Freedomite subjectivity appears fluid in this diary, operating much as Anne Goldman describes autobiographical identity formation in autobiographies of ethnic working-class women as a continuum along the trajectories of “I” and “we” rather than as a synecdoche of a culture in the first person singular or a metonym for a collective in the third person plural (xxiv).

This diary’s plurality, then, can be read as a strategy that at times stresses the collectivity of the imprisoned Freedomites as they experience hardship occurring under the sign (and power) of one name. The witness narrative form of the diary links together the identity and stories of individual prisoners or anonymous inhabitants of dormitories as displaced people who must suffer within the space of the prison. This situation links them symbolically to their nineteenth-century imprisoned forbearers in Russia. For example, although the narrative ultimately is collected under Chernenkoff’s name and a large photograph of Chernenkoff appears as the frontispiece, the preface, which was written by Joe Ogloff rather than Chernenkoff, presents the diary as a public manifesto about a collective conflict. This conflict is linked to a one-thousand year struggle against the evils of institutions of church and state. Here the diary is intended to be a witness narrative which will encapsulate the whole Freedomite struggle, as well as a collective testament



gathered under the sign of one person's proper name. Therefore, the text's collective purpose overshadows the author's writing of it. At first, authors are not even mentioned:

So this diary was written with the intention that if [it] got safely to the world, and if sometime in the future or the present people are led by fate to read it, they then will be able to appreciate fully the great trouble of the Doukhobor "Sons of Freedom" in Canada, what they were striving for, and for what they struggled and died -- they didn't spare their own acquired property, their families, children, nor themselves, in sacrificing everything for the ideal of the Brotherhood and Love of Christ -- fighting against all injustices in the only way they could and knew how...(Chernenkoff and Friends I)

In this passage, Ogloff appears to be writing about Freedomite history. But he goes on to introduce Chernenkoff as the diary's author in a moment which indicates his awareness of the power of a diary to record and witness events. Ogloff first mentions Chernenkoff as an autodidact who lacks formal education, saying that he "did not go to Russian school and he taught himself Russian reading and writing" (ii). He switches to a discussion of the location and purpose of Mountain Prison at Agassiz where the diary was written, and concludes with an apology for his own and others' illiteracy while he indicates that the diary was a collective effort and had a material existence:

As for me, I also must say that I am self-taught. And although I helped a lot to improve this diary so the reader could understand it, however, there are many shortcomings, for which I earlier asked the reader to divorce himself from our inexperience. This diary covers the time period from 1962-1972 and it was written on paper taken from jars of canned goods and on yellow paper in which they wrap things bought in stores. (ii)

Here, Ogloff discusses the "unworthiness" of the Freedomites to enter a discourse closely connected to literacy, but he recognizes that in the diary form, in the assumption of literacy, there is visibility. He accesses the power of recognition inherent in the Western diary discourse even in his discussion of his different credentials because he appeals to

the reader to forget what he causes the reader to remember: Freedomite inexperience and illiteracy, which is bracketed by the scene of writing (literally, the prison) and the materiality of writing under duress. In this way, the Freedomite writers of this diary can construct their versions of events within the parameters of a discourse of recognition while asking for the reader to “divorce himself”, that is, recognize Freedomite difference, in order to inscribe their position as writing subjects in terms of difference.

Chernenkoff’s dedication features a similar “apology” for difference in his reference to literacy level. This apology validates a narrative style which moves from a singular to a collective version of Freedomite history. It can do this because it is not “professionally” produced. Chernenkoff’s dedication, for example, moves from dedicating the diary to his own family and other Freedomites to telling the story of the sufferings of his wife, Lukeriya, while he was in prison. It turns to an account of Paul Podmoroff’s death by force feeding, a topic which occupies much of the diary. Then Chernenkoff apologizes for illiteracy on behalf of the group: “who would have thought the diary would come out in book form,” he writes, “for we were all so uneducated, illiterate...” (iv) while the first sentence of the first paragraph of the diary itself begins with his sense of his own literacy level, combined with an awareness of collectivity and mission: “although I am fully aware and conscious of my own lack of ability and illiteracy [sic] to do this business, to describe the events surrounding our experience in a prison specially built for one goal, to keep Doukhobors” (1).

The Agassiz prison diary, then, is not only a collection of historic materials commemorating a sojourn in prison but also a *performance field* where the diary’s

principal and secondary authors can negotiate collective and individual identities as Freedomite Doukhobors for others to read. In this sense, they engage in a type of identity performance which alters the trope of performativity as it makes use of it. Performativity here is not a trope of radical interiority of the subject where the object is language, but a trope signifying *exterior* identity negotiation with others.

Alexander Efanow's diary, written about thirty years before Chernenkoff's, contains many similar elements which blend diary form, witness narrative and historic document. Like Chernenkoff's diary, Efanow includes copied letters from Peter Chistiakov, speeches by Peter the Lordly, psalms written by himself and other people, copied "classic" Doukhobor psalms such as "What is a Doukhobor," accounts of important events, such as the coming of Michael the Archangel to Krestova, a brief history of Freedomite protest and general Doukhobor history.

Near the beginning of his diary, Efanow includes a dream or vision of Freedomite origins which places Freedomite history on an allegorical level.<sup>12</sup> Efanow characterizes this vision as a prophecy, which in Doukhobor culture at the time was thought to contain practical information just as a book would: "my imagination, given free reins, created by itself mental pictures of our future communal life" (1). The vision is about the waning identity of the Doukhobors, who leave Peter the Lordly and join the Anti-Christ (most likely a symbol of compromise with materialist, non-communal living), presented here as a person standing outside a house where Peter the Lordly is. Efanow presents this moment, when he turns from seeing the Anti-Christ to listen to the words of Peter the Lordly, as the reason for diary writing. Peter the Lordly says to Efanow:

The revelation you are experiencing now is sent to you by God, so that you know what will happen in the near future...remember everything you saw and put it down to paper; let our people read it and understand. He who has understanding, will understand....If you failed to understand what you have seen, I will explain this to you. (2)

The instruction to write down “everything you saw” could refer simply to the vision, but since the vision continues with Efanow as an actor rather than a spectator, who separates the “righteous” and those who decide to follow the Anti-Christ, the occurrences in the “near future” probably refer to the formation of the Freedomite group and the mystic beginnings of their protest against their situation in Canada. Here, the injunction to remember and write comes from Peter the Lordly, who divinely sanctions both Efanow’s role as a writer and Doukhobors who will later read what he writes. Reading and writing will be part of remembering both the origins and the “mission” of the Freedomites as those who will stay closest to conservative Doukhobor ideals (3-4). The move, “ordered” by God in the style of the Biblical Book of Revelation to move from oral memory and prophecy to recorded memory and interpretation will take place within the diary form but also as a witness narrative which will have spiritual connotations. These Peter the Lordly will “explain” -- and Efanow’s task will be to remember and explain events accordingly.

Other sections of Efanow’s narrative recreate that injunction to remember, record and interpret the Oakalla imprisonment of the 1930s. During a discussion of the trial, for example, Efanow writes that the courthouse scene is a “live picture...engraved on the sacred tables of our cherished memories” (2), a possible reference to the sacred nature of *vechnaya pamyat* or to a Doukhobor belief that one of the members of the Trinity is signified by “memory.” But his personal reaction to the subsequent train journey when

the prisoners were able to convince their train guards that they are not criminals, has already stressed the links for these Freedomites between religion, print culture and political action:

Being Dukhobors, we believe ourselves to be the salt of the earth and light to the world. Therefore, we could not conceal ourselves from the people, and we took steps in accordance with Christ's words: we had proclaimed our convictions to the whole world, in writings, appeals, and newspapers; and after that, we, ourselves, took action. (1)

Here, as in the diary by Chernenkoff and friends, personal experience is collapsed into collective identity, publicity and witness rhetoric. To be a Doukhobor, for Efanow, is to exist in the plural and in the public sphere without being "concealed" from others, and to enter the world of print first, and then of action as "we ourselves," plural selves.

Later in the diary, Efanow writes that "in order not to forget how we spent those days [in Oakalla prison] in late October, I will recollect them and put my recollections down on paper" (1). At this point, Efanow describes life in Oakalla much as Chernenkoff and friends do: as continuous, day-to-day conflict with the authorities which features multiple authors telling stories about similar events. Efanow's role is that of collector and transmitter of these stories. He stresses this role when he describes how he records a poem by another author:

We began spending more time alone quietly in our cells. Once, I left my cell and went along the corridor to cell #7. I see, Kaminoff writes something. I ask him, 'What are you writing?' He produces a whole pile of some notes; these were some newly composed and recorded on paper poems. We began to look them through and read; some of them proved to be very funny and they were put aside to be further worked on. But I selected some to copy for myself. The following is one of those poems. (3)

Efanow includes a poem about the death of Peter the Lordly in which the Sons of Freedom are portrayed as wanderers true to his teachings against materialism. Here, Efanow has the role of collector who includes the writing of others for the public record.

Like Chernenkoff, Efanow also employs the accounts of other authors within the diary form to illustrate the daily (and often successful) struggle against the prison authorities, an affirmation of Freedomite identity as a resistance to all authority. In one case, he does this in order to describe how the men in one cell found out how to receive written messages from the women incarcerated in a cell next to them, and then quotes what one of them wrote about the successful refusal of Freedomite women to wear prison dresses. Later, he quotes what he refers to as a humorous note from an anonymous author about how the Freedomite women humiliated one prison supervisor. This story, like others in the diary, indicates how the Freedomite women successfully resist authority by using a mechanism of protest that empowers them and makes authority figures (and their ideas) look ridiculous. Efanow's repetition of their message in the diary form also gives them a similar type of visibility that Efanow has already interpreted to be a divinely-sanctioned act of empowerment and remembrance. This reaffirms their identity as Freedomite resisters who act, remember and write. Efanow's quotation constantly stresses that these events were witnessed and written about:

‘Our female supervisor invited us,’ one sister writes, ‘and ordered us to play songs for her; we began to play, and she starts dancing. We ask her, ‘Why are you dancing?’ Says she, ‘Today is my birthday, but I do not mark it.’ -- ‘We tell her,’ writes the sister further, ‘This is not the way to celebrate one’s birthday; let us show you how one should go about it.’ Two of our sisters promptly threw off their clothes, jumped forward naked and started to dance. That is how one should observe the birthday: being completely naked, because naked you were when your mother gave you birth. The supervisor did not like the observance; she went away from us and did not come back for a long time.’

There were many other messages in which they wrote how their supervisor did not give them any bread...(3)

In one passage where he describes a visit from his father from another cell, Efanow underscores not only the interdependency and orality of Doukhobor Freedomite memory, but also uses this moment to collapse the history of the current Freedomite struggle into the struggle of the imprisoned Doukhobor martyrs of the nineteenth century. In this narrative, Efanow’s father operates as a living instance of *vechnaya pamyat* who reminds Efanow of the resistance to authority that forms the core of Doukhobor identity. To be a Doukhobor, in this formulation, is to successfully resist at all costs and to remember previous resistance. As Efanow writes:

then he [my father] started telling me stories about the lives of our forefathers, who had renounced the false church teachings and the priests, exactly as we were rejecting them in our days. He told me how they threw icons from their houses...he also told me how, after that, they were all arrested in one day and sent to exile...he told me these stories, as I thought, to raise my spirits. I had always listened to him with great attention. I was fortified and morally supported by him, rather than by his stories, because he stood in front of me like an angel hovering in the air, and he sent down so much love for me, that love of which Christ had said, ‘Pray in secret...’ (302-304)

Like the quoted letters from imprisoned Freedomite women, the inclusion of Efanow’s father in this story as the transmitter and interpreter of tradition not only validates Efanow’s own experience, but also links his own struggle to the struggle of all

Doukhobors. Although this passage stays in the first person, the oral catechism Efanow repeats to his father links his own experience with others in the first person plural, and evokes divine validation via the sufferings of Jesus Christ:

And my father was standing in front of me many times, so that I would not forget my forefathers and Jesus Christ who had been led to Golgotha. I said, 'No, we did not forget our forefathers who had made it known the way for us. They are resurrected in our heroic martyrdom, in what we suffer today. You, my father, are here in prison; you are 72-years-old, and you were beaten and thrown to prison. What do you think of this?' He answered, 'This is how it should be.' I used to go away from him in joy and high spirits. (304)

This passage indicates how Efanow, like Chernenkoff and friends, uses the diary form's immediacy and accuracy in order to bear witness to events, while the identity performed here is exterior and closely related to thematizing earlier conflicts with authority in terms of the present conflict. In this sense, Efanow enacts Bakhtin's image of the orator who perpetuates and interprets community memory via the *ears* of its members, where identity is only transacted through a response to what has been said. Here, Efanow records this as a type of living catechism, where his father interprets prison experience and he responds with the "right" answer, that he will not forget. Efanow, in turn, asks his own father a question and also receives the "right" answer -- an identity performance related to activism since Efanow's father had been beaten and imprisoned.

The two autobiographies of Fred Davidoff contain elements found in the Agassiz diary and Efanow's diary, but the circumstances of the manuscripts' production, Davidoff's decision to call both of them "autobiography" and the differences between each version make Davidoff's writings unique documents. In 1962, while he was serving time in the Nelson jail, Davidoff wrote what is the only formally published autobiography



by a Doukhobor in existence: a narrative called by Simma Holt “The Autobiography of a Fanatic” that forms chapter six of *Terror in the Name of God*. In 1966, Davidoff wrote a second autobiography based on the Holt chapter that contained much more detail. The second autobiography also included his decision to break from the Sons of Freedom and repudiate his past activities. This manuscript was written or copied into six ten-cent scribblers while Davidoff was in prison at Oakalla. It was never published, although it may have been used as part of Davidoff’s successful application for parole in 1967. The contrast between Davidoff’s first and second autobiographies raises issues about how this Freedomite identity production can be both a response to a non-Doukhobor request for a Western-traditional autobiographical form and a refusal to comply with many of the terms of visibility assumed by widely-read forms of autobiography.

For Davidoff, the discourse of resisting or circumventing what a non-Freedomite readership “wants” from him is the discourse of the courtroom confessional and the rhetoric of identity production produced there. Although the discourse of the court confessional is also institutional and non-Freedomite, Davidoff appropriates aspects of its rhetoric in order to have his narrative circulate in the public sphere and to adjust and write against that narrative later.

Davidoff’s first autobiographical narrative appears under considerable non-Doukhobor rhetorical pressure and duress. As I mentioned, Simma Holt titles it “Autobiography of a Fanatic,” a move which immediately makes Davidoff’s story that of the uncontrollable, unpredictable and exotic other who must be recuperated into a discourse of the Canadian, law-abiding centre. She introduces this narrative as something

produced *for her*, which grants her the rhetorical power to interpret it for the Canadian public. Although she mentions that she had disagreed with Davidoff about schooling when she first met him:

Four years later, in his dimly-lit cell in the Nelson jail, Davidoff sat down to write the story of his life, to explain ‘the work of the Doukhobors’ to me and to the world. When he had finished, he asked to see me and gave me the unique document. (217)

Holt does not mention in this passage why Davidoff would decide to communicate with her; however, it is clear that Davidoff knew Holt would print his autobiography in some form and that this would be a way to publicize the radical Freedomite cause. But Holt takes control of the narrative so that Davidoff’s story will remain other. For example, in chapter 14, “The Day of the Black Babushkas,” that comes before Davidoff’s narrative in chapter 15, Holt reproduces Davidoff’s court transcript where he accuses the non-Doukhobor world of conspiring to kill Peter the Lordly. In this chapter, she describes Davidoff as overweight, with a face that could sometimes be ugly and sometimes “child-like.” She also observes it could manifest “hysteria” (207). After Davidoff’s narrative, Holt reproduces a heavily-edited series of questions which she wrote to Davidoff, along with his answers. The questions are not meant to elicit information, since in most of them Holt accuses Davidoff of irrational behaviour.<sup>13</sup> Instead, the questions, other passages about Davidoff and Holt’s introduction turn Davidoff’s narrative from a confession of the motivations for Freedomite activity into an object lesson proving how dangerous Freedomite thinking is. Davidoff’s autobiography, which Holt says she

presents with only minor cutting and editing (217), tells the story which Holt asks for, although it exceeds the term “fanatic” given to it.

Davidoff begins with the words “I, Fred N. Davidoff, was born on December 14, 1923, on a farm near Pincher Creek, Alberta” (Davidoff 217). This is the language of legal testimony, a discourse of truth-production which he shares with non-Doukhobor readers. This rhetorical move validates his discourse as “sworn-in” and therefore, true. Davidoff then describes his origins as transnational and shifting: his grandparents left the Community Doukhobors, went to Oregon in 1914 and returned to Pincher Creek in 1918. In the United States, his uncles escaped the draft and joined the early Sons of Freedom movement in British Columbia. Next, Davidoff interprets as pivotal his grandfather’s words to him before his death in 1947 about the importance of not buying land. It is also a pivotal moment in the text, for his grandfather connects Doukhobor identity to a spiritual understanding of place, migration and the refusal to “own” a place by buying land as a religious calling:

[My grandfather said:] ‘It is my religious belief that we Doukhobors came to Canada only for a time, to fulfil our mission, and the day will soon be at hand when we will leave Canada. I did not accept a homestead because I could not swear an oath of allegiance to no king or queen.

We left Russia proclaiming ourselves citizens of the universe, recognizing Jesus Christ as the only King and his law as the only Law. All other laws are from the devil; throne and government are of the devil.’

I can never forget these words. I teach my children man-made laws are not for them. But since they came back from school, my children look at me when I tell them these things like I am a child and they are the adult. (218)

In a passage which sounds like Efanow’s description of his meeting with his father, the words of Davidoff’s grandfather comprise Davidoff’s education as a Doukhobor, while

they connect his position as a Doukhobor subject who resists all authority apart from that of elders to an understanding of migration as an eternal, spiritual state. But Davidoff's statement that he cannot forget this teaching is placed in opposition to institutional teaching at another place, the institution of New Denver. His children not only have forgotten their "place"; they cannot learn and so return to the "natural" Doukhobor order of parents and children. An institution, the school, has disrupted Davidoff's past and his present, Doukhobor life and non-Doukhobor life.

The rest of the narrative functions in concert with this set of absolute binarisms that Davidoff describes as a migratory dysfunction. When his parents move back to Canada and live at an English person's<sup>14</sup> farm, Davidoff equates the contrast between life on this farm and life on the Doukhobor commune in British Columbia with the greater clash between Doukhoborism and Canadian living exemplified by the difference between his words to his children and his grandfather's words to him, and between material values and memories of spiritual life. This conflict is played out in spatial terms as an unresolvable spirituality of location:

Thus my life began with conflict between the two different ways: the Doukhobor and the English. I was often a visitor at the home of my grandparents, attending meetings of our own people, many of whom were Sons of Freedom. But I lived on a farm among English-speaking people. The closest Doukhobors were twenty miles away. (219)

Davidoff describes his "true" identity as connected to place (British Columbia) but in the home of his parents his identity is literally "misplaced": with his (originally) Freedomite mother, he wants to move to British Columbia, but his more Orthodox father will not leave his prosperous farm in Alberta or the protection of Community orthodoxy.

Davidoff has to speak English at school and Russian at home, and when he is at school he is beaten because he is a pacifist. He refers to his experiences at school and on the non-Doukhobor farm in spatial terms as that of a “prisoner in no-man’s land” (219), and transfers the locational conflict he feels to an inner sense of conflict related to his mother’s sense of dislocation because she is a Freedomite:

Within me started to build up a spirit of resentment. My mother felt also as a prisoner on the farm. We had no social contact with the English people because our faith was different. My mother longed as I did to be amongst the Doukhobors of B.C. Her religion was so strong that at the time the Sons of Freedom were sent to jail in 1932 she was also tearing to go, only she had too big a family to leave. So she would undress and go nude in the garden. (219)

In this narrative Davidoff resolves this conflict by choosing one polarity and refusing another, a rhetorical “turn” found in conversion narratives when, as Peter Dorsey observes, one “sees one’s life as text” (5). He does this by equating his rejection of schooling to a rejection of all Canadian institutions, and presents this as a destination he chooses when he says that “when I was fourteen I had to decide which way I was going. The question for me was whether to continue or quit school.” Here school is figured as a place where he enjoys learning but where, nonetheless, the “game” of imperialism is literally sung as the schoolyard patriotic song “Play up, play up, play up the game” (220). Davidoff recognizes that the “game” of imperialism is about patriotic duty and military service, and he quits school.

At this point in the narrative Doukhobor identity becomes something that Davidoff can choose rather than something inevitable, a religion to which he converts rather than a set of ethnic markings. Davidoff writes, “I chose my own road in life -- to

remain a Doukhobor. To me, not to be a Doukhobor is not to live.” He believes that if he had stayed in school he “could have obtained any degree of education [he] desired. But [he] would never have remained a Doukhobor” (220). Later in the narrative, after some spiritual “wandering” when he lives in town, attends Orthodox meetings and has a racist neighbour who does not know that he is a Doukhobor and refers to Doukhobors as “black people,” this conversion to Doukhoborism becomes the lynch-pin of the narrative. It works as a conversion to and within text, improbably occurring at a Pentecostal revival meeting where Davidoff writes, “I was reborn spiritually...I had an experience of my inner voice, God speaking within me, saying to read and through this I would find the true road and Truth, which I am seeking” (224). This experience causes Davidoff to join the Sons of Freedom and to move to Krestova. Davidoff has a final “conversion” in jail, where he has the chance to learn Doukhobor songs and hymns from elders. He characterizes this experience as another birth: “Here in jail, I must say were born spiritually forty-four Doukhobors to remain Doukhobors for the rest of their lives” (225).

But by the end of the narrative, Doukhobor identity becomes less a religious choice than part of Davidoff’s destiny. This shift occurs because Davidoff discusses migration as the only option for the future of Doukhobor people, and intimates that burnings and bombings occur to ensure migration and Doukhobor survival. These activities, in this narrative, occur because all Doukhobors cannot change their reading of the future, and so the Freedomites are compelled to exist outside Canadian national life, and to commit depredations until they are allowed to leave. Here, Davidoff’s personal story becomes part of the general Freedomite struggle when he says, “At present I can

only show my personal past history. It is a story which coincides with others who are amongst us" (228). Davidoff concludes with a sense of the inevitability of Freedomite resistance, which becomes both religious and ethnic:

So ends another chapter of our of our struggles in Canada. A Jew will always remain a Jew; a Catholic a Catholic; a Protestant a Protestant. This goes the same with us Doukhobors, once born a Doukhobor always a Doukhobor, for I am afraid it is in our blood and our faith is destined before we were born...We bombed and burned because through these acts we believe we will be exiled from Canada. (229-230)

While this view of identity remains religious since the comparisons are religious, Davidoff's analogy to Judaism indicates that he sees identity as a "faith," but also something which is in one's blood before one is born, which is an understanding of identity as ethnic and rooted in the past more than it is chosen. Davidoff's decision to shuttle his identity between these poles, as he moved between Independent, Orthodox and Freedomite interpretations of Doukhoborism in this narrative, becomes a mixture which produces Doukhobor identity as a religion he can choose, and as an ethnicity he cannot escape. At the end of this narrative, Davidoff's clear choice, then, becomes his motivation for protest and depredation: his affirmation of his identity personifies and underwrites his resistance.

As I mentioned before, the material circumstances of Davidoff's second autobiographical production are different from the first since it is an unpublished manuscript hand-written in six ten-cent scribblers, but this manuscript still contains the same awareness of non-Doukhobor influences in its production. This pressure, and Davidoff's response to it autobiographically, indicates how Davidoff again used aspects

of autobiography discourse that are recognizable to non-Doukhobors while altering the form to suit his own ends. In this sense, Davidoff uses the scene of autobiographical utterance as a way to re-narrate his identity *as a performance* in order to correct an earlier version of his life which he felt had been produced under duress and, probably, to win parole. Here again, autobiographical performativity is external, rather than internal, and marks not a self-dialogue, but a dialogue between different languages, such as the language of confession, the language of legal testimony and the language of conversion. The opening paragraph, in the form of a hand-written note on the inside cover of the first volume, indicates these multiple purposes and audiences:

Basis taken from "Terror in the Name of God" by Simma Holt. Increased and Explained as Story Permits. Inter woven with parts of letter to National Parole Board, Mr. Cemetic, Vancouver, B.C. February 18th, 1966. (n.p.)

Davidoff goes on to list what the highlights of the manuscript are in the form of seven headings, including classic autobiographical "chapters" such as "My Childhood" or "Married Life", and other, less-classic headings such as "My father-in-law John Perepelkin" and "My accident of 1952".

Unlike his first autobiography with its heavily-circumscribed interventions by Holt, this manuscript tells a different story about how the first autobiography was produced. While Holt had mentioned that Davidoff told his story specifically for her, he mentions that he did so under the orders of John Lebedoff, a leader of one of the Freedomite factions. As he says in a 1969 letter to the publisher of *Terror in the Name of God* in which he asks the editors to withdraw the chapters of his autobiography from the



book, that particular autobiography was a performative gesture only, meant only to publicize the Freedomite grievances. It:

was performed by me as a command of duty....therefore, I was acting as a good salesman, constructed the so-called, or supposed, autobiography of myself, one sided, and I only revealed certain parts of my life. I was fighting by means of the artistic use of the pen. As a soldier uses a sword.<sup>15</sup>

Davidoff elaborates on the circumstances of the autobiography's production in his second autobiography. On unnumbered loose sheets inserted at the end of volume VI, Davidoff states that Lebedoff reacted to Holt's request for autobiographies:

I volunteered to give upon the recommendation of John L. Lebedoff. He John L. Lebedoff said that Simma Holt would help in the solution of our Doukhobor Problems and migration to Russia. Simma Holt ask[ed] a number of individuals to give their autobiographies with John L. Lebedoff encouraging all to do so but no one agreed except, something within compelled me to do so. Although I thought that maybe it was my strong belief and devotion she would use some place in a newspaper and [help?] migration. When she took the story and read it, I met her on Friday March 23rd, 1962, in the Nelson Court House while acting as a Crown Witness at the trial of the seven men who were tried for the burnings...of the old Community Homes of Oteshenia [sic] and Pass Creek. (n.p.)

Davidoff's statements indicate how the discourse of selfhood and truth-telling found in autobiography can be requested by a member of the interpretative community who understands it in this way, but that the marginal writer can perform as part of that discourse in order to achieve other ends, such as that of public recognition.

The circumstances of Davidoff's production are already confessional, since he wrote the autobiography at the Nelson court house where he--as he later claimed, at the request of the Fraternal Council--was to testify against other Freedomites. Davidoff's autobiography, according to the 1969 letter, is analogous to Freedomite court testimony, which occurred under duress but which also became, during the mass trials of Sons of

Freedom radicals in the late 1950s and early 1960s, a performance space. Freedomite spectators in court used it to disrobe in protest knowing that their activities would be photographed and reported in the media. In the same way, accused Freedomites or Freedomite witnesses turned the confessional discourses of legal proceedings to their own ends in order to call for migration, air grievances against other Freedomite factions or to make demands of the authorities, as Davidoff did at the Nelson court house. In the space of the courtroom, where all activities occur symbolically as the manifestation of state authority, including discourses of truth and confession, Freedomites such as Davidoff developed ways of testifying which responded to non-Doukhobor ideas about truth and confession while generating excess meanings not required, intended or even desired by the discourses which demanded them. As Davidoff's description of his initial autobiographical production makes clear, the act of writing for him was not separated in intent from the act of testifying, since both were bidden by the authorities (and in this case, Holt is also seen as an authority), and both were opportunities for Freedomite concerns to reach a non-Freedomite public in ways which the authorities did not anticipate.

Most of the rest of Davidoff's manuscript serves to problematize the polarized version of Doukhobor identity he discussed in his earlier autobiography. Instead of being represented as a singular faith choice for example, Davidoff begins the narrative by representing his Doukhobor identity as part of the Doukhobor diasporic imaginary of heroic suffering against authority as he discusses the torture and imprisonment of his ancestors in Russia, the life of his parents at Kars in the Caucasus and about his "Popoff

blood” (2). After his grandfather’s words, he adds that he does not forget his grandfather’s words because of his upbringing, which was not lax as he represents it in the earlier narrative, but strict. As he says, “my parents raised me from very infancy in a very strict religious Doukhobor culture...such up bringing made me not forget the above words of my grandfather, believing that man-made laws are not for them” (5).

This passage is followed by what becomes a familiar commentary on his past as Davidoff indicates that he now believes that the Freedomites were wrong to reject laws and education, and should not have committed depredations. His autobiography becomes a record not only of every circumstance involving the Fraternal Council, setting bombs and fires, and every name of those who ordered or did “the black work.” But it is also a document where Davidoff attempts to record, and repudiate, his struggles between Doukhobor factions by making them appear equivalent to inner struggles about his identity and his purpose in life. These struggles put pressures on the narrative itself. For example, his own account of the Freedomite refusal to do work at Agassiz ends with the words “that was the end of the greatest foolishness I have ever lived through” (117) and mentions that in prison he heard about arson and bombing, which he calls “the greatest of evil which in later years lead me to greatest sins and evil involvements” (130). But at the same time, Davidoff retains the belief that his time in prison was a time of great spiritual growth as he and other prisoners wrote Doukhobor psalms and songs on toilet paper and on the walls of the prison so that they could memorize and discuss them (122-23), developing one of the most important spiritual aspects of Doukhobor spiritual life: memory (126). Through memorization, he develops what he calls “a third I. The I of my

Soul” which can sense spiritual truths (127-28), but he comments that he did not understand what this truly meant and that he was led astray, taking on the identity of a terrorist with spiritual motives.

Davidoff records his release, but indicates that spiritual division still existed for him. The narrative does not resolve this tension. His eldest children are taken to New Denver in a raid so that he and his wife can only visit them every other week. He describes his anguish as the anguish of divided loyalties:

I was free but my children tore my heart apart, I could hear them suffer. Yet, I was a prisoner within my self, following the group and not living as I felt was right....I developed the worst kind of inner strifes and conflicts, ever inflicted upon a man....I wanted my children to attain education, which I like and never had anything against basic education, except for the spirit of militarism, yet I was clinging to the group and allowing my children to suffer. (141-145)

Later in the narrative, Davidoff writes that he begins to drift between the Freedomite factions of Stephan Sorokin, John Lebedoff and Mary Malakoff. This drift becomes part of his own inner drift which causes him to believe that everyone secretly “serves” everyone else in order to resolve the conflict. For example, he mentions that Sorokin is both a divinely-inspired leader, but also an angel of heaven who tried to tempt him and his wife to register their marriages with the government (190). He hits Lebedoff and is commended by Sorokin, but feels guilty and begins to serve Lebedoff more openly, saying that he is in turmoil between the two groups. He resolves this tension at the time by thinking that Lebedoff is secretly serving Sorokin, just as he serves Sorokin as a chauffeur and is a member of Sorokin’s Fraternal Council while he sets bombs on secret orders coming from Lebedoff’s group (199-200). At the same time, he gravitated to Mary

Malakoff's group and their extensive use of public nudity in ecstatic prayer and protest since he says "I came to debate within myself that these women were very religious and can't be that they are making a mistake" (204).

At this point, Davidoff's subjectivity splits to accommodate these divisions. When he comes to guard Sorokin against Lebedoff's followers, he mentions that Sorokin's greatest danger came from the "fanatics, within the midst of the Sons of Freedom Doukhobors, who didn't know what they were seeking or what they really wanted? I was a fanatic myself..." (207). Davidoff becomes both the threat and the guardian against the threat, while his narrating "I" says that both positions were incorrect. These multiple positions allow Davidoff to interpret statements by Community Doukhobor leader John J. Verigin to cease bombing USCC property as a call to increase bombing activity. Finally, Davidoff's split subject positions as the loyal follower of conflicting leadership ends when he denounces the Canadian government during the Nelson trials, then denounces the Fraternal Council while the other jailed Freedomites turn against him, presumably for switching allegiance, although the text is not clear on this point.

Davidoff ends this autobiography by affirming his citizenship as Canadian and by quoting a Doukhobor prophecy which for him affirms that "the Doukhobors came to Canada for the founding of a new great nation and it [Canada] is to be their homeland forever and ever. Amen" (310). This becomes the end of his testimony: his reunification as an independent Doukhobor subject depends on letting go of the radical Doukhobor belief in migration as a hallmark of Doukhobor identity and of confessing all his past

“sins” to the authorities as an act of faith in them. This last passage indicates that Davidoff used this autobiography as a testimony, not only of the complexity of his identity formation, but also of his desire to present a “Canadianized” Doukhobor gloss in order to explain his actions in the hope that the authorities would, in the form and rhetoric of an autobiographical confession, see in a familiar narrative form both a reply to Davidoff’s earlier, unrepentant confession and an attempt to domesticate his unruly subject positions with one, repentant, gloss. In this way, Davidoff’s first and second autobiographies represent negotiations for visibility with non-Doukhobor authorities by means of confession forms. “Confessions” such as these do not, as Leigh Gilmore suggests, so much reveal identity and “the truth” as produce both in response to discursive requirements:

In that discursive setting [of the confessional], where truth is known at least partially through its proximity to risk, identity emerges not as a thing in itself patiently awaiting the moment of revelation but as the space from which confession issues. (Gilmore 54)

Peter Maloff’s autobiographical testimony<sup>16</sup> represents a different set of negotiations with authorities, although it too depends on a response to the discourse of testimony’s requirements for a truth-telling subject. Like Davidoff’s autobiographies, Maloff’s autobiographical section of his report to Colonel F.J. Mead’s 1950 commission to study the “Doukhobor Problem”<sup>17</sup> occurs in response to a non-Doukhobor summons to produce testimony. As Maloff states in the preface to a collection of all three of his reports, Mead asked him to appear before the Commission because Maloff had been associated with all three Doukhobor movements. For a number of reasons, Maloff

declined and wrote a series of reports for the Commission (1). Maloff's report, then, produces his identity as a location on a border: he is a Doukhobor insider who also understands the non-Doukhobor "outside" and who can tell the truth as a Doukhobor understands truth while he responds to legitimating discursive regimes about truth required by the Commission. In order to do this, Maloff tells his life story so that he can be understood as a credible witness. In his report, autobiography is a way for Maloff to write himself into a discourse which normally would exclude him and his testimony, while he attempts to unite this discourse of the truthful subject with Doukhobor ideas about universal truth and suffering.

Maloff introduces the autobiographical section of his report with an "apology" for its inclusion which might recall the series of "apologies" for illiteracy which occur in the Agassiz diary:

But before we go into the problem itself, permit me to make an apology for this introduction of myself. My reasons for thus trespassing on your patience will, I believe, seem the more justifiable as I proceed with this brief account of the experiences that have gone towards forming my character as a man, and as a student of history; my love of truth regardless of the consequences. But of that I will say no more, since, I take it that the nature of your Commission itself is to find the truth and speak it without fear or favour. (2)

Maloff introduces the discussion of his identity as a trespass which could be potentially unjustifiable to the authorities. While Maloff's reasons for this apology are in part practical: British Columbia Doukhobors did not have some citizenship rights (such as the right to vote) in Canada at the time. This means that any Doukhobor called to testify *as a Doukhobor* before a Commission rather than at the far more common situation of a trial as a transgressive subject would be participating in discourses of citizenship and

democracy where there was no predetermined identity-position for Doukhobors to occupy. Therefore, Maloff enacts his autobiography as a strategy both of visibility and of translation: he will access commonly-understood ideas about character formation found in traditional autobiography, while combining these with Doukhobor ideas about truth and knowledge which he states should be those of the Commission itself.

In this way Maloff can construct a shared language which is still considered transgressive, since Doukhobor identity was not ever produced under these circumstances. Therefore, while Maloff's autobiography contains elements "familiar" to a non-Doukhobor readership, the circumstances of its production are not: autobiographies in the West are not usually produced as testimonials for a government commission so that the commission understands both the speaker's legitimacy and the (normally unwritten) discourses of the interpretative community from which the speaker's identity issues. This is why Maloff presents himself as a speaking subject who is qualified to speak because he occupies a space between inside and outside rather than as an early leader of the Sons of Freedom and one of Chistiakov's trusted advisors in the CCUB:

I will speak in the capacity of an individual representing no one neither defending or accusing anyone, but as an outsider with an inside view, I will present the Doukhobor problem in its true and natural setting. (2)

Maloff's narrative thematizes this sense of identity as a border occupation which can shift as circumstances require. At its beginning, Maloff positions himself as a Doukhobor with a discussion of his parents' suffering in Russia as "sincere Doukhobors" for their convictions, their migration to Canada and a sojourn (as in the case of Davidoff's parents) in Oregon, as well as their decision to leave the Community for a time to



become Independent Doukhobors so that their children could receive English Schooling (3). Maloff is therefore able to act as an expert on these aspects of Doukhobor experience while he describes also meeting in California “many outstanding men of letters, art, philosophy and religion” (3) who validate his position as a simultaneous outsider. He expresses this position in terms of his identity in this way:

Perhaps I was born an idealist, because from the very earliest days of my conscious life I knew that I had inherited a highly sensitive nature. All 49 years of my life I have been a strict vegetarian and teetotaler. This sensitive nature continuously drove me to seek, to study and to solve my very own self towards higher levels of moral development. (3)

This passage marks Maloff’s identity as hybrid: he provides psychological information about his sensitive nature, which non-Doukhobors would expect in an autobiography. At the same time he describes his sensitivity in terms of his Doukhobor practices, since Doukhobors believed at the time that spiritually advanced people did not eat meat or drink alcohol. Maloff also combines the non-Doukhobor understanding of “nature” as an essential psychological state with the Doukhobor belief that all people should seek to morally perfect themselves. He expresses the combination of these ideas with the unusual phrase “to solve my very own self,” which poses his identity as a problem requiring a solution while he moves between the non-Doukhobor and Doukhobor worlds.

In the narrative, Maloff temporarily “solves” this identity drift by joining the Sons of Freedom movement in 1928. His solution involves referring to the revivalist ideas of the movement as coming from “my own people” because he finds a match between outside movements for world peace and harmony and Freedomite beliefs (3-4). But here, the narrative changes. Due to what he calls “two big surprises, disappointments, and

terrific stunning blows” the Doukhobor faith becomes “their strange faith” rather than his own (4), a reaffirmation of Maloff’s outsider status which structures the rest of the narrative. But he maintains his insider status by affirming that he has thoroughly researched Doukhobor history and thought, and is therefore qualified to testify to Doukhobor moral decay as indicated by traditional signals of Doukhobor backsliding, which he calls eating meat, smoking, drinking alcohol and manifesting materialist values (4). He also maintains solidarity with Doukhoborism’s mistrust of secular authorities when he mentions that his other disappointment is with what he calls “British Law” since he was placed in an insane asylum when he refused to comply with the National Registration Act as a conscientious objector (5).

Maloff’s subsequent report comes from his presentation of his identity as migratory, since he moves from one Doukhobor group to another, from positions as activist and historian and between idealism and disappointment, rather than presenting his credentials as a former Community and Freedomite leader. This enables him to analyse the Doukhobor migration to Canada as a continuation of the struggle against Russian authorities, while he presents the Sons of Freedom as a movement which is part of the identity struggles of Doukhobors as they encountered non-Doukhobor values rather than as a criminalized conspiracy movement (7-8). After suggesting what each Doukhobor faction could do to end the misunderstandings between Doukhobors and Canadian authorities, Maloff apologizes in advance for blaming the government of Canada for not understanding what sort of immigrants the Doukhobors were and for trying to assimilate them. He then takes a Doukhobor position by stating that a United Nations declaration

protects the Doukhobor anti-national stance, saying that “if Doukhobors wish to remain free citizens of the world owing allegiance to no earthly government, it is their indefeasible right to do so” (11). By the end of the report, then, Maloff asks for Doukhobors to return to their spiritual roots, and for Canada to reorient its moral values “to fit the true humanitarian solution” to the Doukhobor Problem by ceasing to engage in patriotism, a larger penal system and “narrow nationalist interests” (12). Like Davidoff, Maloff delineates a construction of Doukhobor identity that cannot be hyphenated (it is not possible to be Doukhobor and Canadian) but for him the relationship could be a symbiotic one between practising Doukhobors who can participate in national life and a less nationalist government. He views this as a choice:

Whatever path we choose we must realize at once that there is no middle path, and there can be no spiritual half-breeds, which is to be neither a true Doukhobor, nor a good Canadian, one who makes not the slightest pretense to the original Doukhobor faith. (12)

In order to validate himself as one who can recommend such symbiosis, Maloff writes himself into the discourse of testimony in a hybrid form. He is both a Doukhobor who can “translate” his spiritual traditions for a non-Doukhobor audience, and an outside “expert” who can validate his position by non-Doukhobor constructions of knowledge such as historical research and a knowledge of international law. Maloff constructs a rhetorical space in which he can arbitrate not only his own story but Doukhobor history and identity as well, in order to call for change.

Although there are substantial differences between these four Freedomite narratives, it is clear that each of them represents an alternative way to produce

autobiography and autobiographical subjects. Because all of these writers were not part of dominant discourses that construct subjectivity and, in most cases, actively resisted these discourses or the institutions where they could be learned and internalized, the decisions that these writers made to use autobiographical forms were strategic ones. They were either tactical manoeuvres designed to gain visibility inside dominant discourses, such as those of Davidoff's autobiographies or Maloff's autobiographical section, or they were hybrid combinations of identities and genres which resulted in the externalized, plural performatives in the Agassiz diary or in Efanow's diary. These discourses were all produced in response to dominant non-Doukhobor institutional situations, such as the situation of incarceration, a request for confessions, or a request for an expert witness. As such all of these documents represent attempted negotiations with *the scenes* of non-Doukhobor rhetorics. These set certain conditions for identity rather than a complete refusal of these rhetorics, although the place of utterance might produce one type of autobiographical identity at one point, and not at another. They do not represent the hopeful resistance to an all-encompassing hegemony desired by so many liberal critics of minority writing, but sets of small negotiations, acceptances, resistances and combinations of myriad forms and rationales for self-presentation and self-production that differ from narrative to narrative and even from utterance to utterance. Freedomite identities in these diaries and autobiographies function as a flexible set of external performativites for readerships which, rather than seeing Freedomite identities as Other and as unknowable, could begin to see them as another way to name, another way to know, another grammar of identity.

*Notes*

1. This group is interchangeably called the *svobodniki* (Freedomites) or the *syni svobodii* (Sons of Freedom), which was a name possibly given to them by Peter Chistiakov when he invented the saying “Sons of Freedom Cannot be Slaves of Corruption” soon after his arrival in Canada. Despite the non-gender inclusive sound of the latter name in English, the Sons of Freedom groups have had many female members, and have at times had women lead them or play important leadership roles. The names are used interchangeably, although “Sons of Freedom” appears in English more often than “Freedomites”.
2. See, for example, psalm 5 in the *Book of Life* (40). This formula is found in many psalms:
  - Q. Why are you a Doukhobor?
  - A. To glorify the Lord’s name; the Lord’s gentleness is together with us.
  - Q. What does the common Doukhobor cross represent?
  - A. A narrow path, a voluntary sorrow, a life of a pilgrim, a life of poverty.
3. Although a Freedomite leader, Stefan Sorokin, published an autobiography called *Three Days and Three Nights In the Life Beyond the Grave: What I Saw, Heard, and Endured When I was Tortured to Death by the Godless Authorities of the USSR* (1950), Sorokin was not a Doukhobor and it is difficult to know how many Freedomites read the book.
4. There are wide stylistic variations in this text and in some sections, Efanow’s name is spelled “Echfanow.” This suggests that Efanow’s text, like the diary of Mike Chernenkoff and friends, actually had multiple authors and transcribers. Although this possibility invites more analysis of collective subjectivity in Freedomite diary writing, multiple authorship of Efanow’s diary cannot be conclusively proven at this time.
5. I have not found written material by Freedomite women. This does not mean that women were subjugated in Freedomite groups. As George Woodcock observes, historically Doukhobor protests have been lead or instigated by women, who traditionally have resisted schooling and other attempts at assimilation more rigorously than men. This could mean that literacy rates among Freedomite women were lower than those for men. See my chapter on oral narratives for transcribed oral accounts by Freedomite women.
6. See chapter one for a discussion of Judith Butler’s and Sidonie Smith’s development of performatives and identity construction.
7. See chapter two for a discussion of the *sobranie* meeting form.
8. Selections from this manuscript are from an unpublished translation.
9. Selections from Efanow’s manuscript are from an unpublished translation.
10. Personal correspondence with Mike Chernenkoff.

11. Although this guard's name appears in *Prison Diary* as "Jovans", he is named "Jones" in Holt's *Terror in the Name of God*.

12. The vision actually marks the beginning of the diary in its present form, although the page number is 45. Some of this manuscript has been recopied and censored. It is unclear whether Efanow made these changes himself or whether someone else made them. The original beginning of the diary is lost.

Pagination refers to an unpublished translation.

13. See Holt, 232-238. The rhetorical construction of many of Holt's questions lectures Davidoff, such as: "Don't you feel this is a hard way of life for a child?", "Can you really believe in your heart that Peter Chistiakoff was good..." or "Couldn't you see the prophecy is wrong, the tool of an evil man?"

14. Doukhobors in Canada historically differentiate themselves from other people living in Canada by referring to all outsiders as *anglikii* (the English) whether or not they spoke English and whether or not they were from England.

15. Letter to McClelland & Stewart, January 27, 1969. Davidoff papers. National Archive of Canada.

16. Strictly speaking, Peter Maloff was not a Freedomite when he wrote this report, as he makes clear. However, his former leadership position in the Sons of Freedom movement and the fact that he tells his story in response to a Commission about the Sons of Freedom depredations means that his narrative fits most readily into this chapter.

17. The Freedomite depredations were commonly known as the "Doukhobor Problem" in the media. Freedomites also called the situation the "Doukhobor Problem", but in reference to their need for migration and their difficulties with the federal and provincial governments.

### Conclusion: Future Directions

There are other modes of life story telling, both oral and written, to be recognized, other genealogies of life story telling to be chronicled, other explorations of traditions, current and past, to be factored into the making and unmaking of autobiography subjects in a global environment.

--Smith & Watson *Colonizing the Subject*, xviii.

Sidonie Smith's and Julia Watson's statement in the introduction to *Colonizing the Subject* the politics of gender in Women's autobiography remains current. As the study of autobiographical work moves away from an exclusive examination of works created with sole reference to dominant Western traditions and models of subjectivity, it has become increasingly clear that the parameters of genre that so many autobiography scholars have tried to set have been called into question at every level of "auto," "bio" and "graphe". For instance, when Germaine Greer announced in a 1986 *Southern Review* article "Autogynography" that "autobiography in the first person plural is the next to come" (223), she was referring to what she saw as the next topic for inquiry in the area of women's autobiography. Greer's statement, however, has turned out to be prophetic in the field of autobiography in ways that she did not anticipate. Recent criticism of autobiographical writing and speech that whose discourses refer to subjectivities that are not part exclusively of the Western, bourgeois, white, male selfhood outlined by Smith and Watson, has turned to considerations of the alternate ways to understand subjectivity which have altered the "auto" of autobiography even as the

writers and speakers appropriate some aspects of that discourse of self.

One of the results of this appropriation has been a blurring of autobiographical forms which highlights autobiography's position as a discourse where resistance to prevailing ways to identify a writer, a speaker or an entire group can take place. This study of Doukhobor autobiography forms part of this critique of autobiography criticism as the exclusive examination of a commodified liberal selfhood which can be bought and sold. At the same time, the wholesale challenge Doukhobor subjects make to the ideas of liberal selfhood does not refuse autobiographical discourse altogether, but harnesses its power to refer and to make issues visible for writers and speakers who have not had access to this type of discourse before.

Autobiographical discourse by Doukhobors indicates how this type of appropriation can work. Further study of the alterations Doukhobors have made to the discourse of autobiography could include the examination of other autobiographical material by Doukhobors occurring in non-traditional autobiographical forms. Most of this material is archival and it is little-known. It would include the translation, transcription and analysis of other material found in the Harshenin tapes, memoirs written about Doukhobor leaders by Doukhobors Vasya Pozdinyakoff, Ivan Bondareff and Simeon Reibin, a 1902 autobiography by Peter Lordly which is in the Museum of Religious History in St. Petersburg, Russia,<sup>1</sup> and legal testimonials translated and recorded for the 1982 Kootenay InterGroup Relations inquiry about Freedomite depredations. Another potentially rich area for investigation would be the position of biographical discourse in Doukhobor cultures, since oral tradition has included funerary



biographies as expressions of *vechnaya pamyat*, while more recently, such orations are reprinted in *Iskra*. Biographical discourse also appears in the numerous recollections of Doukhobor grandmothers and mothers which are printed in *Spirit-Wrestlers' Voices*.

Doukhobor use of autobiographical discourse is similar to the hybridizing of autobiographical forms explored in recent American studies of alternative autobiographical forms and subjects produced in autobiography. However, the high quality of Shirley Neuman's recent collection of autobiography scholarship for *essays on Canadian Writing* actually serves to highlight the fact that in the fields of Canadian literature and Canadian studies (in English, French and other languages), studies of alternative autobiography forms and subjects are still rare. Emerging post-colonial criticism that links theories about Canadian identity and the development of Canada as a nation-state to literature by migrants in Canada could politicize studies of autobiography produced by other people in Canada who were not able or willing to become docile subjects of the British empire.

Studies of alternate autobiographical production could also call into question the homology between place and ontology that has been formulated from Northrop Frye's famous statement that "where is here" is the fundamental question that can be asked about the nature of Canadian national identity. The feminist work on autobiography and collaboration also could be joined to interdisciplinary work on autobiography and oral cultures. This could make new ways to read class, religion, sexuality, language and race issues into and through autobiographical discourse, but in ways that avoid the "flattening" discourse of ethnicity in Canadian multiculturalism. Readings which take this cultural

terrain of autobiography into account can also "cross-read" or listen into the similar debates about autobiography by Native people in Canada, particularly in the areas of narrative appropriation, connections between citizenship and land-use, collectivity, collaboration and the position of oral representation in (and against) cultures that privilege written autobiographical forms.

I would like to conclude with the words of Betty Bergland, whose call for a radicalization of the autobiographical subject does not sacrifice the web of discourses that inflect how that subject produces and is produced:

it becomes imperative to develop a theory of autobiography that acknowledges the importance of marginalized voices, but avoids the essentializing of individuals and groups, that takes into account complex relationships between cultures and discourses that produce the speaking subject, but avoids viewing language as a transparent representation of the imagined real. (Bergland 130)

Bergland's comments ask for a connection to be made between the production of autobiographical rhetoric to the production of the subject. In Doukhobor autobiographical discourse, writers and speakers make this connection, and make it in ways that do not essentialize difference, but make difference a point of negotiation, critique, acceptance and refusal. As part of the rhetoric of *plakun trava*, the Russian plant that thrives by growing against the current, autobiographical discourse by Doukhobor writers and speakers indicates how this discourse becomes part on an ongoing negotiation of Doukhobors with Canadian identity and Doukhobor identity. These identities, in autobiography, can combine without ever creating a hyphen that would link them, yet keep them forever separate.

## Notes

1. Irini V. Tarasova lists this manuscript, and a diary by Peter Lordly called “Diary of an Exile” in a bibliographic article on the Museum’s collections in Tarasoff, *Spirit Wrestlers* (1995), 229.

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