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N. Ia. Marr and the National Origins of Soviet Ethnogenetics

Yuri Slezkine

Whatever about the soundness of de Selby's theories, there is ample evidence that they were honestly held and that several attempts were made to put them into practice.

Flann O'Brian, *The Third Policeman*

The world consists of nations. Nations are communities united by a common name, state, language, territory, culture, and physical type. Nations are defined by their origins. Yet the origins of the name, state, language, territory, culture, and physical type may have nothing to do with each other. Such was the Great Ethnological Predicament, discovered and sometimes discussed by eighteenth-century scholars as they pursued Jean Le Rond D'Alembert's "art of reducing, as far as possible, a great number of phenomena to a single one which can be regarded as the principle of them."¹ *Principle* and *beginning* being "two words that originally signify the same thing" (as Condillac put it²), the pursuit of principle became mostly historical. Stubbornly and perhaps uniquely among natural phenomena, nations seemed to follow several principles at the same time.

The problem was particularly painful in Russia, where a few German scholars brought in to catalog the empire's endowments had concluded that, according to the best "primary sources," the Russian land had not been "Russian" for very long; the Russian state and the Russian name had come from Scandinavia; the Russian apostle Andrew had never been to Russia; and the Russian language had been—quite recently—imported by the tribes chased out of the Danube. It was all very fine for the Academy of Sciences historiographer G.-F. Müller to assure his readers that science implied a difference "between a historical dissertation and a panegyric" and that "the origins of peoples, mostly quite obscure; the beginnings of states, usually humble; and the

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1. Quoted in Charles Frankel, *The Faith of Reason: The Idea of Progress in the French Enlightenment* (New York, 1948), 44.

2. Quoted in Hans Aarsleff, *From Locke to Saussure: Essays on the Study of Language and Intellectual History* (Minneapolis, 1982), 158–59.

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savage ways of ancestors,” among other things, had “absolutely nothing to do with either fame or infamy.”³ M. V. Lomonosov knew better. “If the modern Russian nation is descended primarily from the ancient people who existed before the coming of the Varangians,” he argued, “then the dishonor engendered by contempt for those ancient people affects in very large measure the modern nation.”⁴ Much more to the point, the origins of peoples, the beginnings of states, and the ways of ancestors (all of them as “ancient” as one’s scientific imagination would allow) had to be closely related to each other and to the name and territory they all shared (preferably “for ever and ever” but possibly “from time immemorial”). The various components of the “modern nation” taken apart by the misguided and probably ill-intentioned academic mercenaries had to be put back together again. In Lomonosov’s own version, the ancient Russians were called Roksolans (Russians) and spoke Slavic (name equals language); the ancient Slavs were Sarmatians and hence had always inhabited the Russian land (name equals language equals territory); while the apparently alien Varangians were Slavic-speaking Prussians and hence Russians (name equals language equals territory equals state).⁵

In the wake of the romantic enthronement of folk cultures, the study of each national ingredient gave birth to a more or less autonomous academic discipline concerned, inter alia, with the delineation of national boundaries through a search for national origins. The Great Ethnological Predicament grew more dire: “cultures” were holistic, but “nations” as defined by folklorists, ethnographers, archaeologists, linguists, and geographers were not coterminous and perhaps not even cognate. The Russian land was not equal to Russian dialects, which were not equal to the distribution of Russian dwellings, weddings, songs, or scythes. Historical syntheses tended to begin according to the territorial principle, then shift to the ethnolinguistic, and finally to the state before they could proceed with a national story that claimed the unity of all meaningful elements.

The turn toward positivism in the second half of the nineteenth century transformed the study of particular ethnic traits (such as language, customs, or myths) but had very little effect on the fuzzy organic metaphors applied to nations as whole entities. The neogrammarians’ “regular sound laws” grew on the genealogical tree of romantic comparativism; A. N. Veselovskii’s “laws” of universal literary history and “mixings” of cosmopolitan plots were ultimately attached to “folk-poetic organisms” and “national essences”; the ethnologists’ evolutionary schemes were being compromised by the ethnologists’ attachment

3. See the Müller-Lomonosov debate in M. V. Lomonosov, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, 11 vols. (Moscow, 1952), 6:67–68.

4. *Ibid.*, 6:77–78.

5. *Ibid.*, 6:25–80. The preceding discussion is based on Yuri Slezkine, “Naturalists versus Nations: Eighteenth-Century Russian Scholars Confront Ethnic Diversity,” *Representations* 47 (Summer 1994): 170–95.

to the “naturalness” of the evolution’s victims; and the archaeologists’ chronologies were being complicated by the discovery that recurrent assemblages of prehistoric artifacts were “cultures” associated with well-traveled tribes and their languages.⁶ Russian positivism was populist: it undermined its *völkisch* foundation without questioning it.

Few scholars were as effective in this regard as the physical anthropologists, whose efforts to compile a racial map of the Russian empire and build a truly genetic classification of its many peoples had resulted in the taxonomic dissolution of the peoples in question. Based on their height, hair, skin color, and cephalic index, some Russians had turned out to be Finns, some Finns to be Balts, some Balts to be Slavs, and some Slavs to be Turks. According to the founder of Russian craniology, A. P. Bogdanov, the Great Russians were the only true descendants of the ancient Slavs. According to the most prominent Ukrainian anthropologist, F. Volkov, the Great Russians (and, perhaps predictably, the Poles) happened to be the only Slavic speakers who were biologically non-Slavs. And according to D. N. Anuchin’s 1892 summation of the majority opinion, half the Great Russians from the central provinces were tall, upright, fair-haired Slavs with “straight noses” and “expressive eyes,” while the other half consisted of stocky, swarthy Finns with narrow eyes and flat hairless faces with prominent cheekbones.⁷

One could avoid such discrepancies by dismissing the offending discipline altogether, as did the philologist A. I. Sobolevskii, who rejected the “Finnish admixture” thesis on the basis of linguistic, historic, and folkloric evidence.⁸ More commonly, one could question a given discipline’s choice of taxonomic indices. Archaeologists wondered what artifact combinations constituted a “culture,” linguists questioned Wilhelm von Humboldt’s morphological criteria for typological classifications, and race scientists asked which physical traits formed “true indicators of race.”⁹ No matter what the “first principle,” however, a

6. A. N. Veselovskii, *Sobranie sochinenii* (St. Petersburg, 1913–14), 1:7, 10, 44; 16:86; A. N. Veselovskii, *Izbrannnye stat'i* (Leningrad, 1939), 501–14; Yuri Slezkine, *Arctic Mirrors: Russia and the Small Peoples of the North* (Ithaca, 1994), 124–26; Bruce G. Trigger, *A History of Archaeological Thought* (Cambridge, Eng., 1989), 161–63. For excellent recent work on nineteenth-century Russian ethnography, see Robert Paul Geraci, “Window on the East: Ethnography, Orthodoxy, and Russian Nationality in Kazan’, 1870–1914” (Ph.D. diss., University of California, Berkeley, 1995); Nathaniel Knight, “Constructing the Science of Nationality: Ethnography in Mid-Nineteenth Century Russia” (Ph.D. diss., Columbia University, 1994); and Paul William Werth, “Orthodox Mission and Imperial Governance in the Volga-Kama Region, 1825–1881” (Ph.D. diss., University of Michigan, 1996).

7. D. N. Anuchin, “Velikorussy,” in *Entsiklopedicheskii slovar'* (St. Petersburg, 1892), 5A:837. On A. P. Bogdanov and F. Volkov, see M. G. Levin, *Ocherki po istorii antropologii v Rossii* (Moscow, 1960), 101, 123–25.

8. See A. Sobolevskii, Review of N. Iu. Zograf, *Antropometricheskiiia izsledovaniia muzhskago velikorusskago naseleniia Vladimirskoi, Iaroslavskoi i Kostromskoi gubernii* (Moscow, 1892) in *Zhivaia starina* 3, no. 1 (1893): 115–22. Anuchin’s summary is based on Zograf’s work.

9. Levin, *Ocherki*, 133; N. G. Zalkind, *Moskovskaia shkola antropologov v razvitii otechestvennoi nauki o cheloveke* (Moscow, 1974), 83.

perfect fit remained out of reach (even for Sobolevskii). Too many Slavic-speakers with Finnic faces were walking over Germanic graves.

Perhaps this was the way it was supposed to be. “We know,” wrote Anuchin, “that ‘ethnic group’ [*narodnost'*], ‘tribe,’ and ‘race’ are very different concepts: membership in a certain ethnic group (or people) is based on a common culture, history, and ethnic self-identification; membership in a certain tribe is based on a common language; and membership in a certain race is based on a common physical (anthropological) type. All across Europe we see that these categories do not coincide.”¹⁰ Many scholars accepted this proposition and some made the point of discussing inanimate fossil cultures or speechless dolichocephalous races, but virtually everyone—at one time or another—used the same generic ethnonyms when referring to archaeological finds, skull shapes, linguistic reconstructions, political entities, and geographic units. E. M. Chepurkovskii insisted on “the fundamental finding of anthropology that language and race do not coincide” even as he divided the peasant population of European Russia into Finnish, Great Russian, Little Russian, and Teutonic racial groups.¹¹ Anuchin’s student and later the dean of Soviet physical anthropologists V. V. Bunak populated his studies of racial types (alias “tribes” alias “peoples”) with the Spanish, Dutch, and Chinese.¹² And Anuchin, as we have seen, did not always follow his own advice. Indeed, most anthropometric studies in Russia were done on populations defined by language (“the anthropology of the Finns”) or by ethnic/administrative territory (“the craniometric survey of Georgia”). The archaeologists routinely attributed changes in material culture to migrations, thus associating them with particular ethnic groups (the Cherniakhovskii culture was found to be Gothic, that is, Germanic). The linguists, meanwhile, had little choice in the matter (only a handful being prepared to discard “Russian” or “German” as useless abstractions), so that discussions of language spreads were commonly perceived—and sometimes meant—to refer to the physical movement of peoples. The terminological disarray was exacerbated by relentless nationalist efforts on behalf of a retroactive national wholeness. If Lithuanians were defined according to a particular language, homeland, and cephalic index, then the longer these traits had been related, the better for the Lithuanians.¹³

By the mid-1920s the Great Ethnological Predicament had been

10. Quoted in Levin, *Ocherki*, 124–25.

11. E. M. Chepurkovskii, “O neobkhodimosti edinogo plana rabot po antropologicheskomu analizu naseleniia Rossii i zhelatel'nosti etnograficheskogo issledovaniia nekotorykh opredelennykh oblastei,” *Russkii antropologicheskii zhurnal* 13, nos. 1–2 (1923): 99–101.

12. See, for example, V. V. Bunak, “O smeshenii chelovecheskikh ras,” *Russkii evgenicheskii zhurnal* 3, no. 2 (1925): 121–38.

13. For interesting discussions of similar problems in other contexts, see Malcolm Chapman, *The Celts: The Construction of a Myth* (New York, 1992); and Colin Renfrew, *Archaeology and Language: The Puzzle of Indo-European Origins* (London, 1987).

partially alleviated through inattention. Nations and nationalities had been officially promoted to moral subjects and political units, but origins were quickly losing ground as scholars moved from diachrony and historicism to synchrony, function, and structure. The “ethnographic present” and the fully deethnicized future prevailed over “ethnogenesis”; “indices of racial affinity” and “racial hygiene” prevailed over race formation; the morphology and typology of archaeological artifacts prevailed over evolutionary sequencing; and Baudouin de Courtenay and Ferdinand de Saussure prevailed over Wilhelm von Humboldt and Hans Conon von der Gabelentz. Linguistics, in particular, became mostly structural, and most structural linguists became “applied” as N. F. Iakovlev, E. D. Polivanov, and friends set out to create new alphabets, formulate new standards, and codify new vocabularies in new dictionaries (this, along with an interest in the “sociology of language,” appeared to constitute Marxism in language science, although no one knew for sure). Etymologies, protolanguages, and Slavic antiquities were out; “the living word,” native vernaculars, and “eastern nationalities” were in. Polivanov had good reason to compare his work to that of Cyril and Methodius.¹⁴

There were plenty of philologists and archaeologists who continued to labor in the historicist tradition, of course, but most of them seemed uncomfortable around the modernity-bound proletarian politicians and Marxism-struck academic modernists. Most—but not all. Nikolai Iakovlevich Marr was a philologist and archaeologist in the historicist tradition who seemed as comfortable around politicians (old and new) as he appeared to be confident about the romantic seeds of avant-garde millenarianism. A full member of the Russian Academy of Sciences from 1912 on, Marr was the dean of the Department of Oriental Languages of the University of St. Petersburg from 1911 to 1918; first dean of the Department of Social Science of Petrograd University; director of the Institute of Archaeology (formerly the Archaeological Commission) from 1918 to 1919; founder and president of the State Academy for the History of Material Culture (heir to the Archaeological Institute) from 1919 until his death in 1934; founder and president of the Japhetic Institute (1921–31) and of its successor, the Institute of Language and Thought (1931–34); and head of the Section of Materialist Linguistics of the Communist Academy. Marr’s main claim to scholarly distinction lay in the field of Georgian and Armenian antiquities (both “spiritual” and “material”), but his real passion was the

14. E. D. Polivanov, *Stat'i po obshchemu iazykoznaniiu* (Moscow, 1968), 195. For very useful surveys, see Wolfgang Girke and Helmut Jachnow, *Sowjetische Soziolinguistik: Probleme und Genese* (Kronberg, 1974), 18–50; Thomas John Samuelian, “The Search for a Marxist Linguistics in the Soviet Union, 1917–1950” (Ph.D. diss., University of Pennsylvania, 1981); and Michael G. Smith, “Soviet Language Frontiers: The Structural Method in Early Language Reforms 1917–1937” (Ph.D. diss., Georgetown University, 1991). For an interesting interpretation, see Patrick Sériot, “Changements de paradigmes dans la linguistique soviétique des années 1920–1930,” *Histoire Epistémologie Langage* 17, no. 2 (1995): 236–51.

study of comparative linguistics in pursuit of remote origins—his own, his homeland's, and everybody else's.

N. Ia. Marr was born in Georgia in 1864, the son of a Scottish father who did not speak Georgian and a Georgian mother who spoke nothing but Georgian.¹⁵ “Communication in a formally mixed language” had “some effect” on the boy's Georgian vocabulary (and possibly on the man's later theory, which, in Katerina Clark's words, enabled “mummy and daddy to speak to each other, if in some primordial past”¹⁶), but it was the orphan status of the Georgian language itself that became N. Ia. Marr's most public obsession. By the turn of the twentieth century, most languages of Eurasia had been assigned to “families” complete with ancestors (protolanguages), siblings (the progeny of the same *Muttersprache*), and offspring (dialects on their way to becoming languages). Among the relatively few exceptions was Marr's mother tongue, which appeared unrelated to any other language except for the neighboring Mingrelian, Laz, and Svan. Appearances could be false, however, and possibly falsified on purpose. Having determined, at the age of fifteen, to “promote the Georgian language and enhance its prestige in its social milieu,” and having vowed, at the age of twenty, “not to lay down his arms” until Georgia was liberated, Marr set out in search of relatives.¹⁷ As a graduate of the Kutaisi gymnasium, he attempted to link Georgian to Turkish and English, and as a student at St. Petersburg University, he was pleased to discover, proof pending, that “the Georgian language [was] related to the Semitic family in both flesh and spirit, that is, according to word roots and grammatical structure.”¹⁸

Why had no one ever noticed this before? Because Indo-Europeanist linguistics (Marr refused to notice any other kind) was willfully ignorant of the languages of the Caucasus, complacently dogmatic about its procedures, and thus guilty of complicity “in the oppression of the peoples of the east by the European peoples with their lethal colonial policies.”¹⁹ “Would you like concrete proof? Here

15. For biographical information on Marr, see “Avtobiografiia” (1927), in N. Ia. Marr, *Izbrannye raboty*, 5 vols (Leningrad, 1933), 1:6–13 (hereafter *IR*); V. A. Mikhankova, *Nikolai Iakovlevich Marr* (Moscow, 1948); and “Iz vospominanii o N. Ia. Marre,” *Problemy istorii dokapitalisticheskikh obshchestv* 3–4 (1935).

16. N. Ia. Marr, “Avtobiografiia,” *IR* 1:6; Katerina Clark, *Petersburg, Crucible of Cultural Revolution* (Cambridge, Mass., 1995), 216.

17. Mikhankova, *Nikolai Iakovlevich Marr*, 8; Marr, “Avtobiografiia,” *IR* 1:9. See also V. B. Aptekar', *N. Ia. Marr i novoe uchenie o iazyke* (Moscow, 1934), 11–13; V. M. Alpatov, *Istoriia odnogo mifa* (Moscow, 1991), 14; V. M. Zhirmunskii, “Lingvisticheskaia paleontologiya N. Ia. Marra i istoriia iazyka,” in V. V. Vinogradov and B. A. Serebrennikov, eds., *Protiv vul'garizatsii i izvrashcheniia marksizma v iazykoznanii*, 2 vols. (Moscow, 1952), 2:172–208.

18. N. Ia. Marr, “Priroda i osobennosti gruzinskogo iazyka” (1888), *IR* 1:15.

19. N. Ia. Marr, “K voprosu o zadachakh armianovedeniia” (1899), *IR* 1:17; Marr, “Vvedenie k rabote ‘Opredelenie iazyka vtoroi kategorii Akhmenidskikh klinoobraznykh nadpisei po dannym iafeticheskogo iazykoznaniiia’” (1912), *IR* 1:50–51; Marr,

it is: note how much attention the European nations have been paying to Sanskrit—because it is related to European languages, because it has a written form (a very ancient one), and because it is highly cultured and thus representative of the great cultural beginnings of European languages. Note how much has been done to study Sanskrit as compared, say, to the Dravidian languages of the same area.”²⁰

In Marr’s view, the ethnolinguistic quest for “Adam’s biblical paradise and Hesiod’s Golden Age” was designed to benefit colonial empires at the expense of everyone else (hence the insistence on a *single* protolinguistic heaven). Indo-Europeanist scholars of Indo-European backgrounds were “still looking for Elysian rivers . . . populated by their Indo-European forefathers armed with speech and high culture and ever ready to settle Europe.”²¹ The deliberate confusion of language and ethnicity that this scheme implied was based on “a contrived representation of national origins that did not take into account true genealogies” but did attach culture to race in a deliberate attempt to perpetuate western ascendancy over the “oppressed tribes and peoples.”²² All western claims to scholarly objectivity were spurious because all western research on cultural difference was inherently racist.

Marr’s own ambition was to restore genealogical justice once and for all. He was going to trace the origins of nations without causing offense to anybody except the habitual offenders from among the Indo-Europeans. He was going to prove that “progress was characteristic not only of Europeans” and that, if it came right down to it, “the European race” had “brought with it the barbarism that had destroyed a flourishing [pre-Indo-European] culture.”²³ He was going to erase the distinction between *Naturvölker* and *Kulturvölker* (“there are no primi-

“Ob iafeticheskoi teorii” (1924), *IR* 3:1. Political anticolonialism becomes a dominant theme in early 1920 (see Marr, “Iafeticheskii Kavkaz i tretii etnicheskii element v sozidanii sredizemnomorskoii kul’tury,” *IR* 1:90–93), but a vigorous dislike of the linguistic establishment and a conviction that true scholarship is guided by “the innate feeling of affection for one’s native antiquities and folktales” animates Marr’s earliest work (the quote is from Marr’s speech at his dissertation defense in May 1899, *IR* 1:18).

20. Marr, “Ob iafeticheskoi teorii,” *IR* 3:1.

21. Ibid., 3:49. See also P. S. Kuznetsov, “Oshibki N. Ia. Marra v ego vzgliadakh na rodstvo i istoricheskoe razvitie iazykov,” in Vinogradov and Serebrennikov, eds., *Protiv vull’garizatsii*, 2:210–12.

22. N. Ia. Marr, “Chem zhivet iafeticheskoe iazykoznanie?” (1921), *IR* 1:176; Marr, “Ob iafeticheskoi teorii,” *IR* 3:1.

23. Marr, “Chem zhivet,” *IR* 1:177. Cf. a recent feminist restatement of this thesis in Marija Gimbutas, *The Language of the Goddess* (San Francisco, 1989), xxi: “We are still living under the sway of that aggressive male [i.e., Indo-European] invasion and only beginning to discover our long alienation from our authentic European Heritage—gylanic, nonviolent, earth-centered culture.” The coinage “gylanic” denotes sexual equality. See also David W. Anthony, “Nazi and Eco-Feminist Prehistories: Ideology and Empiricism in Indo-European Archaeology,” in Philip L. Kohl and Clare Fawcett, eds., *Nationalism, Politics, and the Practice of Archaeology* (Cambridge, Eng., 1995), 82–96.

tive peoples in the world").²⁴ He was going to be "vitally [*organicheski*] interested in the equal consideration of the languages of all peoples irrespective of whether they had an ancient writing system, a new writing system, or no writing system at all, and whether they were fully or very weakly integrated into modern culture." He was going to be "especially interested in promoting the national consciousness of small and backward peoples whose mental structure was different from the mental structure inherent in the ruling languages, or the languages of the ruling peoples, that is to say, the ruling classes."²⁵ He was going to overthrow the dictatorship of artificial literary standards—those "enemies of the natural life of languages" that "destroy popular linguistic creativity" and corrupt the "soul of the people."²⁶ Most important, he was going to resolve the Great Ethnological Predicament by prescribing a logically consistent and morally unimpeachable method of combining race, language, culture, and class within a holistic evolutionary framework.²⁷

Marr was not alone in his struggle. In the early 1920s—when he became a minor celebrity and a powerful academic entrepreneur—official party pronouncements seemed to equate national inequality with class oppression; various nationality spokesmen tended to attach comparable value to their groups' unrelieved martyrdom and unrivaled accomplishments; and even the firmest of "formalists" paid homage to the "peoples of the Orient" and "the dependence of linguistic evolution on social and economic phenomena."²⁸ The degree of support for Marr's sentiments was great enough to worry the self-styled lone crusader: the Indo-Europeanist enemy, besieged by Franz Boas and Iakovlev alike, was almost too feeble to play its part.

It was the Vienna-based "Prague" phonologist and exiled "Eurasian" enthusiast N. S. Trubetskoi, however, who came closest to sharing Marr's concerns, if not his linguistic methods. Clearing the East Slavs and other redeemable Indo-Europeans of all suspicion of colonial complicity, he accused the aggressively acquisitive and "sinfully proud" *Romano-Germanic peoples* of "ravaging the souls of Europeanized peoples" and rendering them "spiritually barren and morally indiffer-

24. N. Ia. Marr, "Znachenie i rol' izucheniia natsmen'shinstva v kraevedenii" (1927), *IR* 1:235.

25. N. Ia. Marr, "Osnovnye dostizheniia iafeticheskoi teorii" (1924), *IR* 1:215. Marr was greatly influenced by Lucien Lévy-Bruhl's *Primitive Mentality*. For an analysis, see Lawrence L. Thomas, *The Linguistic Theories of N. Ia. Marr*, University of California Publications in Linguistics 14 (Berkeley, 1957), 78–81.

26. N. Ia. Marr, "Kavkazovedenie i abkhazskii iazyk" (1916), *IR* 1:59, 70.

27. "The Great Ethnological Predicament" is my own term, of course, but the feeling that nations and their origins were in theoretical trouble was quite widespread if not always clearly defined.

28. Girke and Jachnow, *Sowjetische Soziolinguistik*, 18–50; Smith, "Soviet Language Frontiers," 101–23. The last quote is from E. D. Polivanov, "Gde lezhat prichiny iazykovoi evoliutsii," in E. D. Polivanov, *Stat'i po obshchemu iazykoznaniiu* (Moscow, 1968), 75–89.

ent.”²⁹ The key to the west’s success was not so much its “materialist-utilitarian and rationalist foundation” as its ability to fool others with the disingenuous talk about humanity (read “Romano-Germanic peoples”), universal civilization (read “Romano-Germanic culture”), and cosmopolitanism (read “Romano-Germanic chauvinism”). Recommended resistance strategies included cultural self-knowledge and self-esteem, but also scholarly struggle on behalf of *territorial* “language unions” (*Sprachbund* or *iazykovoï soïuz*, as in “Balkan,” or—much more controversially—“Eurasian”). The gratifying, if paradoxical, result of this war on ethnic lineages was a world divided into organic, self-contained, and morally incommensurate ethnolinguistic “cultures” attached to particular histories and landscapes. Some cultures seemed markedly less “materialist-utilitarian” than others. Materialism-utilitarianism was an absolute evil.³⁰

Preaching Eurasianism in Vienna proved less profitable than pursuing ethnolinguistic equity in Petrograd. But Marr was not simply in the right place at the right time. He was the right man for the job of devising the ultimate ethnological synthesis because he was the ultimate personification of that synthesis. Not only was he simultaneously a linguist, archaeologist, historian, folklorist, and ethnographer. His whole life was a reflection of universal history as he saw it and thus an answer to the offensive yet seemingly all-pervasive question of whether the Caucasus “had a history.”³¹ All of Marr’s major theoretical statements were stories of personal and national victimization followed by personal and national vindication. “There came from the wild Caucasus a wild man who dared teach the teachers and who was bold enough to propose that the uncultured Georgian language, known by few and studied by fewer, could compete in its linguistic significance with such rich and cultured classical languages as Sanskrit, Greek, Latin, or even Old and Middle Persian.”³²

29. N. S. Trubetskoi, “Vavilonskaia bashnia i smeshenie iazykov” (first published in 1923), in L. V. Ponomareva, ed., *Evrasiia: Istoricheskie vzgliady russkikh emigrantov* (Moscow, 1992), 143.

30. See, in particular, Trubetskoi, “Vavilonskaia bashnia”; Trubetskoi, “Ob istinnom i lozhnom natsionalizme,” in *Iskhod k Vostoku* (Sofia, 1921), 71–85; and Trubetskoi, *Evropa i chelovechestvo* (Sofia, 1920). For Trubetskoi-Marr parallels, see Patrick Sériot, “Un conflit de métaphores: Eurasistes et marristes,” forthcoming in Sylvain Auroux, ed., *Histoire des idées linguistiques*, vol. 8 (Brussels, 1995), and Smith, “Soviet Language Frontiers,” 159. For implicit but highly suggestive comparisons, see Boris Gasparov, “The Ideological Principles of Prague School Phonology,” in Krystyna Pomorska et al., eds., *Language, Poetry, and Poetics: The Generation of the 1890s: Jakobson, Trubetzkoy, Majakovskij* (Berlin, 1987), 49–78; Patrick Sériot, “Aux sources du structuralisme: Une controverse biologique en Russie,” *Etudes de lettres* (January–March 1994): 89–104; and Patrick Sériot, “La double vie de Trubetzkoy, ou la clôture des systèmes,” *La gré des langues* 5 (1993): 88–115. For the English translations of Trubetskoi’s essays, see N. S. Trubetzkoy, *The Legacy of Genghis Khan and Other Essays on Russian Identity*, edited with a postscript by Anatoly Liberman (Ann Arbor, 1991).

31. N. Ia. Marr, “Predislovie k ‘Iafeticheskomu sborniku, t. V’” (1927), *IR* 1:251.

32. N. Ia. Marr, “Iafetidologiya v Leningradskom gosudarstvennom universitete” (1930), *IR* 1:255.

The man had excellent reasons to propose what he proposed, and the language had an excellent chance of winning the competition. The triumph of the theory blended into the final revolution against national oppression.

In 1908 Marr published his “proof” of the Georgian-Semitic relationship. With the help of sound laws that operated beyond time, place, and dialect, the two phonetic and morphological systems turned out to be strikingly similar, and a few dozen semantically linked roots (plus about nine hundred more that the author promises to produce but does not) turned out to be cognates.³³ The conclusion was that Georgian was “the most characteristic representative” of a “Japhetic branch” of a large “Noetic family,” which also included the Semitic languages. To be more precise, Semites and Japhetides “were related in the manner of cousins—that is, as the children of two brothers, the Proto-Semitic and Proto-Japhetic languages.”³⁴ This scheme was not just genealogical (and thus, according to Marr’s usage, “Indo-Europeanist”)—it was remarkably similar to the standard medieval Georgian family tree first outlined by Leonti Mroveli in his eleventh-century *Chronicle of Kartlian Kings* (Kartlos was the son of Targamos, “the son of Tarshis and the grandson of Noah’s son Japheth”).³⁵ Whatever did not fit the indigenous patrilineal relationship was the result of Indo-European manipulation:

The displacement of the organic development of the Japhetic languages from the path of their original racial psychology and the decay of their primordial morphophonational [*morfo-fonatsionnoi*] life is probably due to the immigration of the Aryan race, which was foreign to them at the time, into those parts of southwest Asia [*Peredniaia Aziia*], Asia Minor, and Armenia that constituted the main area of settlement of the Japhetic tribes. The fact that the autochthonous proto-Armenians were subject to particularly intense Aryanization does not mean that the Georgians and those tribes that are at present more closely related to them did not suffer a similar fate. Among other things, the Aryan invasion cut the Japhetic world off from the Semitic world, pushing the less affected representatives of the former into the basins of the Kura, Chorokh [Çoruh], and Rion.³⁶

At one stroke, the Georgians regained their distinguished biblical pedigree and acquired a solid claim to uncommon ethnic purity along with a bitter grievance against the Indo-Europeans. “Japhetidology” became the heavenly double of the ethnoracial Indo-Europeanism as

33. N. Ia. Marr, “Predvaritel’noe soobshchenie o rodstve gruzinskogo iazyka s semiticheskimi” (1908), *IR* 1:23–38; the quote is from 1:24. For a detailed critique of Marr’s methodology, see Thomas, *The Linguistic Theories of N. Ia. Marr*, 5–18. Also Girke and Jachnow, *Sowjetische Soziolinguistik*, 50–62.

34. Marr, “Predvaritel’noe soobshchenie,” *IR* 1:23, 26.

35. Leonti Mroveli, *Zhizn’ kartliiskikh tsarei*, trans. and ed. G. B. Tsualaia (Moscow, 1979), 21. I am grateful to Sergei Arutiunov for pointing out the connection.

36. Marr, “Predvaritel’noe soobshchenie,” *IR* 1:36–37.

practiced, in particular, by the Berlin University professor Gustaf Kossinna, whose German Society for Prehistory would shortly become the Society for German Prehistory.³⁷ (Ironically enough, the world's first Indo-Europeanist treatise—James Parsons's 1767 *The Remains of Japhet*—referred to “European languages” as Japhetic and located their homeland in Armenia.³⁸)

As for Marr's Armenians, it soon turned out that their “Aryanization” was mostly a masquerade. According to one of Marr's third-person autobiographical statements, even as a university student he “had stopped being a Georgian nationalist but had not given up the nationalist platform: as a result of dealing with the various national masses of the Caucasus and learning their languages he had gradually become an internationalist in his attitude toward Caucasian society.”³⁹ In other words, he had become a pan-Caucasian patriot, arguing repeatedly, passionately, and against vehement Georgian and Armenian opposition that all the peoples of the Caucasus shared the same “autochthonous” roots, the same relationship to the mountainous landscape, and the same “cultural elements” that had emerged “from the treasury of the most ancient experiences of the people and found expression in original monuments.” There were many such monuments—literary, architectural, and ethnographic—but it was the “indigenous languages (that is, non-Indo-European and non-Turkic)” that bore witness to the true primordial unity of the Caucasian “national psychology.”⁴⁰

Accordingly, Marr devoted himself to the study of the various languages of the Caucasus and in due course found them all to be more or less Japhetic. To quote the eleventh-century chronicler again, “The Armenians and Kartlians, Rans and Movakans, Heris and Leks, Mingrelians and Kavkasians all had the same father, whose name was Targamos. This Targamos was the son of Tarshis and the grandson of Noah's son Japheth. And this Targamos was a hero.”⁴¹ In Marr's version, the Armenian language turned out to contain a Japhetic layer that represented a “survival of the language of the aboriginal inhabitants of Armenia” and was, therefore, linked to “the very depths of

37. See Trigger, *A History of Archaeological Thought*, 163–67; and Ingo Wawjorra, “German Archaeology and Its Relation to Nationalism and Racism,” in Margarita Díaz-Andreu and Timothy Champion, eds., *Nationalism and Archaeology in Europe* (London, 1996), 173–75.

38. Parsons cited in J. P. Mallory, *In Search of the Indo-Europeans: Language, Archaeology and Myth* (London, 1989), 10–11, 143.

39. Marr, “Iafetidologiia v Leningradskom gosudarstvennom universitete,” *IR* 1:271.

40. N. Ia. Marr, *Kavkaz i pamiatniki ego dukhovnoi kul'tury: Perepechatano iz Izvestii Akademii nauk za 1912 god* (Petrograd, 1919), 15–16. See also N. Ia. Marr, *Ob istokakh tvorchestva Rustaveli i ego poeme* (Tbilisi, 1964), esp. 17–42; Aptekar', *N. Ia. Marr*, 22–25, 32; Mikhankova, *Nikolai Iakovlevich Marr*, 134–35, 143, 239–45. Marr's pan-Caucasian patriotism became a substantial political asset after the formation of the Transcaucasian Federation in 1922.

41. Mroveli, *Zhizn' kartliiskikh tsarei*, 21.

the national psychology": kinship terms and numerals may be "Aryo-European," but "words for such concepts as *sky, earth, water, soul, breath*, and a significant share of the verbs expressing *spiritual effects—fear, happiness, etc.*, belong to the corpus of Japhetic elements."⁴² Indeed, the Armenian language was congenitally dualistic, or "bigenetic [*dvuprirodnyi*], the result of the mixing of two races, the Japhetic and the Aryan."⁴³ Better yet, there were two "organically distinct" Armenian languages and races: one indigenous, demotic, oral, and mostly Japhetic; the other alien, aristocratic, literary, and mostly Aryan (language equals race equals class).⁴⁴ This was not good enough, however. By 1916 Marr had established that "neither of the languages of Armenia . . . fully lived up to the theory of western European scholars: neither proved to be purely Aryo-European. Both turned out to be languages of the so-called mixed type, namely Aryo-European and Japhetic. Thus, ethnically and linguistically one-half of Armenian nature is closely related to the Japhetic peoples of the Caucasus."⁴⁵ This fission, too, proved to be a half-measure: "Even the Japhetic languages as we know them today are far from being pure. It has been shown, for example, that the Svan language is a mixture of two Japhetic branches."⁴⁶ And so on, deeper and deeper into antiquity and "national psychology." Rejecting, in effect, the concept of borrowing, Marr continued to locate mixtures within mixtures within mixtures until it appeared impossible to identify the ingredients that were being mixed.⁴⁷ Nothing, however, appeared impossible to the "madman who opened his own Pandora's box" by continuously exploring his own origins: all languages were mixed; all languages issued from the union of opposites; all languages bore a family resemblance to their parents; and no languages—in spite of the Indo-Europeans' murderous rampages—ever became extinct, surviving within other languages and ul-

42. Quoted in Thomas, *The Linguistic Theories of N. Ja. Marr*, 23, 30 (emphasis in the original). Cf. Trubetskoi: "In matters of the 'soul' Slavs were drawn toward Indo-Iranians; in matters of the 'body' . . . to the western Indo-Europeans." Proof: "Among specific coincidences of Proto-Slavic and Proto-Iranian lexicons, the terms referring, one way or another, to religious feelings, represent a very significant proportion. Specific coincidences of the Proto-Slavic and Western European [*sic*] languages are of a completely different nature. There may be more of them than between Proto-Slavic and Proto-Indo-Iranian, but . . . words to do with technology predominate decisively." N. S. Trubetskoi, "Verkhi i nizy russkoi kul'tury (Etnicheskaiia osnova russkoi kul'tury)," in *Iskhod k Vostoku*, 91–92. For an analogous (one might say, "Eurabic") construct elsewhere in Europe, see Margarita Díaz-Andreu, "Islamic Archaeology and the Origin of the Spanish Nation," in Díaz-Andreu and Champion, eds., *Nationalism and Archaeology in Europe*, 78–79.

43. Marr, *Kavkaz i pamiatniki*, 19. Also Marr, "K voprosu o zadachakh armianovedeniia," *IR* 1:20.

44. Marr, "K voprosu o zadachakh armianovedeniia," *IR* 1:20; N. Ia. Marr, "O Chanskom iazyke" (1910), *IR* 1:39; Marr, "Kavkazovedenie i abkhazskii iazyk," *IR* 1:69.

45. Marr, "Kavkazovedenie i abkhazskii iazyk," *IR* 1:69.

46. *Ibid.*

47. Thomas, *The Linguistic Theories of N. Ja. Marr*, 28–34.

timately making it possible to recover the primordial state of Japhetic purity.⁴⁸

One after another, most of the living languages of the Caucasus and the dead languages of the Mediterranean succumbed to the Japhetic epidemic. Assuming language and race to be identical, and regarding “tribal name” as the most faithful and durable indicator of origin, Marr found Caucasian sources for an ever-growing list of Eurasian ethnonyms and therefore peoples (“Etruscan,” “Pelagian,” and “Lezgian,” for example, were derived from a Georgian word for “stork” [*lak’lak’i*], which meant that the ethnic groups in question were descended from a Japhetic tribe that had had a stork as its totem).⁴⁹ By 1920, the Japhetic branch had been promoted to a family in its own right, while languages from Burushaski in the Pamir to Basque in the Pyrenees (by way of Elamite, Sumerian, and Thracian, among others) had been promoted to the status of Japhetic. The “Japhetides” turned out to have been the earliest and largest “ethnic substratum” of the Mediterranean world, “or indeed the very foundation of the Mediterranean culture, the historic source of world civilization.”⁵⁰ The great migration of peoples turned out to have been “the great spread of the Japhetic tribe” from its Caucasian homeland to the Atlantic coast and possibly to Central Asia, the Far East, and Africa. “The very beginnings of culture”—the invention of fire and the taming of metals (“as well as precious stones”)—turned out to have been a Japhetic gift to mankind.⁵¹ And Mount Ararat, upon which Noah’s ark came to rest, turned out to have been a true “Japhetic mountain”—the “prehistoric guard” of pre-Babel beatitude.

“And the whole earth was one language, and of one speech” (Genesis 11:1). “And the Lord said, Behold, the people *is* one, and they have all one language” (Genesis 11:6). “Go to, let us go down, and there confound their language, that they may not understand one another’s speech” (Genesis 11:7).

This fairy tale is the tale of Japhetic reality. Over the entire land known to the civilized world of that time, from the Caucasus to Asia Minor to the Iberian Peninsula, there was but one language, the language of the Japhetic family. . . . There may have been an earlier blow to the unity of the Japhetic world, but the last “crushing” blow—the coup de grâce—was delivered by the Indo-European invasion, which was followed by confusion, . . . hybridization, the emergence of new mixed linguistic types, and the end of mutual comprehension.⁵²

But the Indo-Europeans were not just “bandits” bent on “silencing live speech, extinguishing national psychology, laying waste to the land,

48. Marr, “Iafeticheskii Kavkaz i tretii etnicheskii element,” *IR* 1:90–91. The “madman” quote is from another one of Marr’s ironic self-characterizations; see “Iafetidologiya v Leningradskom gosudarstvennom universitete,” *IR* 1:255.

49. Thomas, *The Linguistic Theories of N. Ja. Marr*, 48–51.

50. Marr, “Iafeticheskii Kavkaz i tretii etnicheskii element,” *IR* 1:94, 116.

51. *Ibid.*, 1:118–20, 110–11.

52. *Ibid.*, 1:120–21.

and exterminating the people.”⁵³ They were also the smug proprietors of that “global European culture” that Marr—along with countless patriots elsewhere—was so anxious to both debunk and appropriate. Accordingly,

the Japhetic languages of Asia Minor and the insular and peninsular Japhetic languages of Mediterranean Europe—the languages of the peoples who created the culture that preceded the invasion of the Indo-European barbarians—only seemed to be destroyed. In fact they did not sink into oblivion, did not perish, but, through participation in the process of new ethnogony and glottogony, entered everyday life, nature-speech [*prirodu-rech'*] and, naturally, the psychology of the newborn peoples. The creators of the pre-Hellenic and pre-Roman Mediterranean culture never stopped participating in the creation of the entire global European culture.⁵⁴

Athena was Caucasian, after all, as were “the works of Homer” and “the legends of the birth of not only Moses but also Romulus and Sargon.”⁵⁵

This was not all. In the same year (1920) that he staked the Japhetides’ claim to temporal and spatial priority in “global culture-creation,” he took them on a journey that seemed to transcend time, space, and therefore culture-creation. The tripartite evolutionary sequence he had established was ethnoracial (Japhetides, Semites, Indo-Europeans) and linguistic (“amorpho-synthetic,” agglutinative, flec-tional), as well as social, psychological, artistic, and economic (not spelled out).⁵⁶ Parallelism reigned at every level: “the morphology of speech reflected the morphology of the social system”; “agglutinative psychology” corresponded to agglutinative art; and so on, very neatly—except that none of it applied to the Japhetides:

The modern Japhetic languages carry within themselves exceptionally striking relics of all three periods. Touching the skies with their head (national psychology) like the mythical hero Atlas, the Japhetides, while capable of thinking, speaking, and creating at the level of all epochs of the cultural history of mankind, including even our own modernity, are firmly attached with their trunk (the morphological structure of speech) to the soil of prehistory. In fact, they have their feet deeply rooted in that soil, preserving, through an unbroken chain of transformations spanning a number of periods, a bond with the state of the same language on the verge of the humanization of animal speech.⁵⁷

The conquest of space is usually more straightforward than the conquest of time. In May 1922 Marr listed the Dravidians as being

53. Ibid., 1:91.

54. Ibid., 1:121.

55. N. Ia. Marr, “Predislovie k nemetskemu izdaniuu raboty ‘Tafeticheskii Kavkaz i tretii etnicheskii element v sozidanii sredizemnomorskoï kul’tury’” (1923), *IR* 1:151.

56. Marr, “Tafeticheskii Kavkaz i tretii etnicheskii element,” *IR* 1:98–101, 116–17.

57. Ibid., 1:98, 116, 101.

“genetically related” to the Japhetides but pledged “silence, for the time being, on the ethnoglottogonic problem of the indigenous population of America.”⁵⁸ Several months later he commented on the “amazing typological analogies—one could even say, total identity,” between the Native American and Japhetic languages. And within the space of four years he had appropriated Chuvash, Chinese, Hottentot, and, with particular gusto, the remaining Indo-European languages.⁵⁹ The Roman plebeians were traced to the Japhetides by way of Lesbos (*ple* from *les* plus the Georgian plural suffix *b*); the great city of Paris, “illuminated by the achievements of the highest civilization,” was connected to the Caucasus by the river Seine (which means “blackbird” in Mingrelian); “German” was derived from “Megrel”; “Hun” from “Svan”; “Russian” from “Etruscan”; “Ukrainian,” also from “Etruscan.”⁶⁰ The Japhetides had always been everywhere. All humans were Japhetic. All the words of all the languages were echoes of the ancient Japhetic tribes and their totems.⁶¹

By about 1924, in other words, Marr’s Georgians had progressed from an orphaned ethnic group to a well-connected ethnic group, to a great ethnic group, to the only ethnic group, to the very essence of human evolution. One man’s nationality question and the world’s ethnological predicament were resolved simultaneously by a daring dialectical move: if everyone was the same ethnic group, then there was no such thing as ethnicity. The racist (“Indo-Europeanist”) equation of language family, culture, and race had been defeated through a much closer identification of language family, culture, and race—until there were no more language families, cultures, or races. A search for high-status ethnic kin had led to the total disaggregation of ethnicity and

58. N. Ia. Marr, “Knizhnye legendy ob osnovanii Kuara v Armenii i Kieva na Rusi” (1922), *IR* 5:65; N. Ia. Marr, “Iafetidy” (1922), *IR* 1:133.

59. Marr, “Predislovie k nemetskomu izdaniuu,” *IR* 1:151; Thomas, *The Linguistic Theories of N. Ja. Marr*, 85–86.

60. N. Ia. Marr, “Sena, Liutetsiia i pervye obitateli Gallii—etruski i pelasgi” (1922), *IR* 1:138–43, 147; Thomas, *The Linguistic Theories of N. Ja. Marr*, 55; I. K. Zborovskii, “N. Ia. Marr i ukrainskii iazyk,” *Iazyk i myshlenie* 8 (1937): 36–38; V. D. Levin, “Kritika vzgliadov N. Ia. Marra i ego posledovatelei na proiskhozhdenie russkogo iazyka,” in Vinogradov and Serebrennikov, eds., *Protiv vul’garizatsii*, 1:244–46.

61. Marr was not the only national chronicler bent on retroactive greatness—just the best placed and most successful. For similar scholarly efforts on behalf of the Tatars, Chuvash, Mari, and Belorussians, see Victor A. Shnirelman, “The Faces of Nationalist Archaeology in Russia,” in Díaz-Andreu and Champion, eds., *Nationalism and Archaeology in Europe*, 226–30. Outside the USSR, it was probably Heinrich Himmler’s one-time favorite Herman Wirth who came closest to Marr in both style and spirit. In his 1928 *Der Aufgang der Menschheit*, Wirth announced his discovery of a primeval “Atlanto-Nordic” race that had taken advantage of its “metaphysical-transcendental” gift in order to fulfill its “world-historical mission” of spawning all the known world cultures. (In 1938, Wirth was dropped by the Nazis in favor of the much less inclusive Hans Reinerth.) See Wawjorra, “German Archaeology,” 180–82. The term for this condition is *Goropianism* (after Goropius Becanus who traced all languages to Dutch). Another prominent victim was the founder of Indo-Europeanism, James Parsons, who derived the whole family from Irish.

kinship. No more minorities and majorities, no more privileged peoples, no more nations. "It is self-evidently absurd to identify the formation of a nation with the act of physical birth from a particular pair of known parents (sometimes with a helpful reference to noble origins)—from Mommy and Daddy living in a stable household."⁶² Indeed, "the very terms *ethnos* or *tribe* in their old meaning would have to be discarded," and the whole concept of Japhetic migrations would have to be abandoned.⁶³

What was the new meaning of "ethnos"? Who were the "Japhetides" if not a tribe, and what accounted for their ubiquity if not migrations? After 1924, the answer was obvious enough to appear inevitable. Marxists from various quarters were trying to fit scholarly disciplines into historical and dialectical materialism; scholars of various persuasions were seriously exploring the promise of Marxism; and linguists, in particular, were growing increasingly keen on the connections between "language and society."⁶⁴ At the same time, Marr was presiding over a rapidly expanding institutional realm that included the State Academy for the Study of Material Culture, the Caucasus Section of the Commission for the Study of the Tribal Composition of the USSR, the Japhetic Institute, the Central Bureau of the Society for Local Studies, the Communist Academy, Leningrad University, and the Oriental Institutes in both Leningrad and Moscow. Between 1923 and 1925, he provided a solid political cover for his domain by becoming the chairman of the Section of Scientists and a member of the Central Committee of the Educators' Union, director of the Leningrad Public Library, a member of the Central Trade Union Council, and a permanent member of the Leningrad Soviet "of all convocations." Marr probably noticed, in other words, that some theoretical formulations were better regarded and better funded than others; and even if he did not, A. V. Lunacharskii, M. N. Pokrovskii, and V. M. Friche were quite blunt about which formulations of the Japhetic Theory they found appealing.⁶⁵ All this, in addition to the apparently irresistible inner logic of the theory itself, led Marr to the discovery that Marrism was Marxist and that "'tribe' ('ethnos') was not a racial but a socioeconomic con-

62. N. Ia. Marr, "Terminy iz abkhazo-russkikh etnicheskikh sviazei 'Loshad' i 'trizna'" (1924), *IR* 5:119.

63. Marr, "Znachenie i rol' izuchenii natsmen/shinstva," *IR* 1:241; N. Ia. Marr, "Osnovnye dostizheniia iafeticheskoi teorii" (1924), *IR* 1:197.

64. For the relationship between Marxism and Soviet science, see, in particular, Loren R. Graham, *Science, Philosophy, and Human Behavior in the Soviet Union* (New York, 1987); David Joravsky, *Soviet Marxism and Natural Science 1917–1932* (New York, 1961); David Joravsky, *Russian Psychology: A Critical History* (Oxford, 1989); and Alexander Vucinich, *Empire of Knowledge: The Academy of Sciences of the USSR (1917–1970)* (Berkeley, 1984), esp. 149–70. For the rise of the "sociological method" in Soviet linguistics, see Girke and Jachnow, *Sowjetische Soziolinguistik*, 16–50; Smith, "Soviet Language Frontiers," 87–106; and Samuelian, "The Search for a Marxist Linguistics," 255–63, 278–80.

65. Clark, *Petersburg*, 218; M. V. Gorbanevskii, *V nachale bylo slovo . . . Maloizvestnye stranitsy istorii sovetskoi lingvistiki* (Moscow, 1991), 42–45; Samuelian, "The Search for a Marxist Linguistics," 272, 309; Thomas, *The Linguistic Theories of N. Ia. Marr*, 89.

cept. Starting from the earliest forms of human collectivity, these were groups based not on blood but on economic need. Not only was there no 'Daddy-the-progenitor'—one single father—there was no kinship either. Kinship terminology, like the family itself, was a later phenomenon. Kinship terminology has been found to refer to one's social position as determined by production."⁶⁶

Language and thought were superstructural phenomena whose evolution mirrored the evolution of the economic base.⁶⁷ The "kinetic" or "linear" speech of prehistoric man was immanent in manual labor and thought. The four original sound elements of the primeval oral language (sal, ber, yon, rosh) accompanied syncretic magic performances "necessary for successful production" by a pretribal collective.⁶⁸ "Embryonic" languages expressed the "diffuse nature of prelogical primitive thought, which was necessarily concrete but did not differentiate among concepts."⁶⁹ "Monosyllabic" or "polysemantic" languages, of which Chinese was a remarkable relic, "did not distinguish between basic and functional meanings" and corresponded to the stage of primitive communism.⁷⁰ Agglutinative languages were more archaic than flecational languages (which represented class society); languages with pharyngeal sounds were more archaic than languages without such sounds; nouns came before verbs; the pronouns came from totems; the plural preceded the singular; grammatical gender dated back to the matriarchate; and the word *horse* was used to refer to dogs, deer, elephants, and camels, thus reflecting the history of modes of transportation.⁷¹

Marr obviously did not know how to fit all these correspondences into a universal evolutionary chronology. Nor did he seem to worry too much about it—what mattered the most, apparently, was that all languages of the world were related without being blood relatives and that "this relationship . . . [was] based on similarities in social development and not on racial descent from common parents."⁷² "Each racial language family has turned out to be a new system representing the development of a previous system, not a genetically separate group.

66. Marr, "Znachenie i rol' izucheniia natsmen/shinstva," *IR* 1:241 and 236; N. Ia. Marr, "Pochemu tak trudno stat' lingvistom-teoretikom" (1928), *IR* 2:399; and Marr, "Terminy iz abkhazo-russkikh etnicheskikh sviazei," *IR* 5:119.

67. The unity of language and thought was a crucial revolutionary—and later Stalinist—concept. By transforming language, one transformed thought, and ultimately reality. See Clark, *Petersburg*, 201–23.

68. N. Ia. Marr, "Obshchii kurs ucheniia ob iazyke" (1927), *IR* 2:85–86.

69. N. Ia. Marr, "Lingvisticheski namechaemye epokhi razvitiia chelovechestva i ikh uviazka s istoriei material'noi kul'tury" (1926), *IR* 3:57.

70. N. Ia. Marr, "Aktual'nye problemy i ocherednye zadachi iafeticheskoi teorii" (1928), *IR* 3:71. See also Marr, "Pochemu tak trudno stat' lingvistom-teoretikom," *IR* 2:405.

71. Thomas, *The Linguistic Theories of N. Ja. Marr*, 103–7.

72. N. Ia. Marr, "Postanovka ucheniia ob iazyke v mirovom mashtabe i abkhazskii iazyk" (1928), *IR* 4:58.

The isolation of not only the Georgian language, but even of the Chinese language has disappeared.”⁷³ *Quod erat demonstrandum.*

The reason for linguistic and cultural change was “not external mass migrations . . . but revolutionary shifts that resulted from qualitatively different conditions of material life, qualitatively new technology, and a qualitatively new social system.”⁷⁴ All languages were native to their soil (“autochthonous”): the various Russian dialects, for example, were genetically unrelated remnants of the Japhetic languages that had become “Slavic” due to similar socioeconomic pressures. All languages were class languages: “Same-class languages from different countries—given an identical social structure—are more similar typologically than the languages of different classes within the same country, the same nation.”⁷⁵ “All languages great and small” were therefore “equally mortal in the face of new proletarian thought which [was] forging a classless society.”⁷⁶ To be more specific, the existing “sound languages” and “formal logical” (that is, hierarchical) thinking, created by the exploiting classes in their own interest, would be transcended by the “dialectical materialist thought of the proletariat,” which would provide the whole of mankind with not only one single thought process but also with one single language—the master of all time and all space.”⁷⁷ To be even more specific (and possibly more postmodern):

Our greatest accomplishment—an accomplishment brought about by the proletariat—is the fusion of science and its ideological technology with art and its formal technology, as well as the unity of beauty and intellect (the intellect of the dialectical materialist thought of the proletariat). This dialectical materialist thought knows neither a successor nor closure: it possesses inexhaustible possibilities of developing in width and in depth, in space and in time. This dialectical materialist thought has outgrown linear speech, no longer fits within sound speech, and, as it outgrows sound speech, it is preparing to mold—to create—a new unified language based on the final accomplishments of both manual and sound languages—a language wherein supreme beauty will merge with the highest development of the mind. Where? Only in a classless, communist society, comrades.⁷⁸

Marr’s “new theory of language” was generally ready by 1928, when the arrival of a speechless society of supreme beauty was officially prophesied for the foreseeable future.⁷⁹ The first Five-Year Plan was

73. Marr, “Avtobiografiia,” *IR* 1:11.

74. Marr, “Postanovka ucheniia ob iazyke,” *IR* 4:61.

75. Marr, “Pochemu tak trudno stat’ lingvistom-teoretikom,” *IR* 2:415.

76. N. Ia. Marr, “Iazyk i myshlenie” (1931), *IR* 3:121.

77. *Ibid.*, 3:118.

78. *Ibid.*, 3:111–12. Cf. Thomas, *The Linguistic Theories of N. Ja. Marr*, 108–11.

79. Marr’s overview of his new doctrine was delivered as a series of lectures at the State University of Azerbaijan in Baku in 1927 and published in 1928. See Marr, “Obshchii kurs,” *IR* 2:3–126, and Mikhankova, *Nikolai Iakovlevich Marr*, 341.

to be the “last and decisive battle” against all tyranny in general and the dictates of biological descent in particular. “Little families” were to be replaced by Stalin’s big one.⁸⁰ A breathlessly wordy linguistic doctrine with almost nothing between Genesis without genetics and the Apocalypse without sound seemed a perfect rhetorical match for the Great Transformation of the Soviet Union.⁸¹

There was much more to the New Theory of Language, however (the theory being much less new than it claimed). The grand obituary to “biologism” consisted of mostly biological metaphors that suggested an organic growth from “numerous mollusk-like embryo-languages” to full proletarian fruition by “mutations” of “hybridized” organisms (all of which ultimately consisted of the same four irreducible “elements”).⁸² The adamant advocacy of the base-superstructure dualism was also a spirited defense of life’s organic wholeness against the positivistic “formalism” of both structuralists and historical comparativists.⁸³ The new science designed as a proletarian weapon in the struggle for socialism was a “paleontological” descent into the “spider’s deafness” of the most distant rung of “Lamarck’s sliding ladder” (as Osip Mandel’shtam, himself intrigued by the “spirit of Japhetic philosophizing,” put it).⁸⁴ Perhaps most obviously, the final abolition of ethnicity affected different ethnic groups in different degrees. Slavic kinship might be a myth, for example, but certain Transcaucasian peoples remained “at a high stage of enlightenment” by retaining their “ancient national culture—more ancient than Russian and western European and characterized by an eastern borderland bigenic (Asian-European) humanism that was superior to the one-sided and enclosed European humanism of western countries.”⁸⁵ Some Japhetides were clearly more Japhetic than others, and so some Japhetidologists seemed

80. See Katerina Clark, *The Soviet Novel: History as Ritual* (Chicago, 1981), 114–29.

81. Marr’s prose is frequently and not always deliberately at odds with Russian grammar and “formal logical thinking”; his lectures appear to have been virtually incomprehensible (see “Iz vospominanii o N. Ia. Marre,” *Problemy istorii dokapitalisticheskikh obshchestv* 3–4 (1935): 158).

82. Marr, “Ob iafeticheskoi teorii,” *IR* 3:31; A. V. Desnitskaia, “O roli antimarksishtskoi teorii proiskhozhdeniia iazyka v obshchei sisteme vzgliadov N. Ia. Marra,” in Vinogradov and Serebrennikov, eds., *Protiv vul’garizatsii*, 1:49–51.

83. For an extremely interesting examination of Marr, Bakhtin, and Lysenko as representatives of a “neo-Romantic” strain within the late avant-garde, see Boris Gasparov, “Development or Rebuilding: Views of Academician T. D. Lysenko in the Context of the Late Avant-Garde,” in John E. Bowlt and Olga Matich, eds., *Laboratory of Dreams: The Russian Avant-Garde* (Stanford, forthcoming). Also V. V. Ivanov, *Ocherki po istorii semiotiki v SSSR* (Moscow, 1976), 12–65.

84. See his “Lamarck,” in Osip Mandel’shtam, *Sobranie sochinenii v dvukh tomakh* (Washington, 1964), 1:168–69; and “Puteshestvie v Armeniiu,” in Osip Mandel’shtam, *Sochineniia v dvukh tomakh* (Moscow, 1990), 2:100–132, esp. 105–6. For a discussion, see Gasparov, “Development or Rebuilding.” For a suggestive explication of “Lamarck,” see Gregory Freidin, *A Coat of Many Colors: Osip Mandelstam and His Mythologies of Self-Presentation* (Berkeley, 1987), 224–28.

85. Marr, “Knizhnye legendy,” *IR* 5:47; N. Ia. Marr, “Iazykovaia politika iafeticheskoi teorii i udmurtskii iazyk” (1930), *IR* 1:282.

especially sympathetic to the discovery that the existing ethnolinguistic order was an imperialist artifice; that all non-Japhetic scholarship was carried out by colonial administrators and missionaries in the service of the Indo-European bourgeoisie; and that the language of the future would supersede the “always class-bound, culture-bound, and inevitably imperialistic traditional international languages” by incorporating the speech of those regions that “until now have been stigmatized as places of exile and doomed as colonial or ‘native.’”⁸⁶

Marr claimed to be gratified, therefore, and not at all surprised, that the Japhetic writings shunned by the “Indo-Europeanists” in Leningrad, Moscow, Erevan, and Tbilisi, were being “warmly welcomed and lovingly printed in Dagestan, in Abkhazia, in Cheboksary by the Chuvash, in the young University of Azerbaijan, in the equally young scholarly community of the Azerbaijani Republic, in the fresh milieu of the still scattered new centers of scientific self-knowledge in Vladikavkaz, among the Osetians; in Ust'-Sysol'sk, among the Komi, etc.”⁸⁷ When the Cultural Revolution called for a complete fusion of scholarship and politics, it was these “promotees” from “fresh milieus” who forced “the entire army of ethnographers, archaeologists, and folklorists” (not to mention the newly prominent linguists) to abandon “biologism,” racism, “psychologism,” “creeping empiricism,” and all the other stratagems that cast doubt on the “eventual success of the Soviet policy of fostering the cultural development of the most backward national groups.”⁸⁸

Ethnographers renounced the transcendental claims of such bourgeois concepts as “culture,” “ethnos,” and “diffusion,” pledging themselves to the study of “specific societies, particularly those that still find themselves at the early stages of development.”⁸⁹ Within three years, the “dizzying” success of the first Five-Year Plan resulted in the official disappearance of such societies from the face of the USSR and in the (inconclusive) banning of ethnography for impersonating a Marxist science and perpetuating the colonial distinction between *Kulturvölker* and *Naturvölker*.⁹⁰ Many of the former ethnologists were reas-

86. Marr, “Iazykovaia politika iafeticheskoi teorii i udmurtskii iazyk,” *IR* 1:286–87; N. Ia. Marr, “K voprosu ob edinom iazyke” (1928), *IR* 2:394–95.

87. Marr, “Predislovie k ‘Iafeticheskomu sborniku, t. V,’” *IR* 1:250. On various ethnogenetic projects by the “young scholarly communities,” see Shnirelman, “The Faces of Nationalist Archaeology in Russia,” 226–30.

88. N. M. Matorin, “Sovremennyi etap i zadachi sovetskoi etnografii,” *Sovetskaia etnografiia* 1–2 (1931): 11; S. Tokarev, Review of Franz Boas, *Um pervobytnogo cheloveka* (Moscow, 1926), translation of *The Mind of Primitive Man* (New York, 1911), in *Etnografiia* 1 (1928): 132; Sheila Fitzpatrick, “Cultural Revolution as Class War,” in Fitzpatrick, ed., *Cultural Revolution in Russia, 1928–1931* (Bloomington, 1978), 3–38.

89. “Soveshchanie etnografov Leningrada i Moskv 5/IV–11/IV 1929 g.,” *Etnografiia* 2 (1929): 118.

90. As Marr’s main spokesman in Moscow, V. B. Aptekar’, explained at the Sociology Section of the Society of Marxist Historians (7 May 1928), “If you look into the history of ethnology, you’ll see that it was created by priests, missionaries, mer-

signed as Marxist historians specializing in primitive communism and its rapidly disappearing survivals. One of their primary commissions was to engage in the study of “ethnogenesis,” or the origins of entities that did not seem to have any historical-materialist substance.⁹¹

Archaeologists denounced formalist “objectology” (*veshchevedenie*) and racist migrationism and became “historians of material culture,” dedicated to reconstructing the full range of social relations within socioeconomic formations as well as to “studying the survivals of the past in today’s society with the goal of their correct liquidation.”⁹² Having been persuaded, however, that the existence of archaeology under any name was “tantamount to the anti-Marxist and anti-Leninist attribution of a special form of [dialectical] development to mere artifacts,” they disbanded themselves altogether before settling on the role of material-source experts and hence “de facto historians of distant epochs” (more recent epochs being accessible through other sources).⁹³ The key to the correct interpretation of excavated objects was the New Theory of Language, and the guide to the correct methodology was Marr’s “genetic approach.”⁹⁴ Of the two leading archaeological revolutionaries, one discovered that the East Slavs were descended from “totemic production groups with Japhetic speech and a homogeneous totemic socioeconomic system,” while the other proved that the Black Sea Goths were “formed autochthonously and by stages” from preexisting local populations.⁹⁵

chants, slave owners, and travelers who founded colonies.” Arkhiv Rossiiskoi akademii nauk (Arkhiv RAN), f. 377, op. 2, d. 115, l. 88. See also d. 130, ll. 2–38; d. 139, ll. 7–20; and op. 4, d. 29, l. 12.

91. Cf. Sergei Tolstov, “K probleme akkul’turatsii,” *Etnografiia* 1–2 (1930); Matroin, “Sovremennyi etap,” 19–23; and “Rezoliutsiia vserossiiskogo arkheologo-etnograficheskogo soveshchaniia 7–11 maia 1932 goda,” *Sovetskaia etnografiia* 3 (1932): 14. See also Slezkine, *Arctic Mirrors*, 246–64.

92. Arkhiv RAN, f. 377, op. 2, d. 129, ll. 1–9; “Tselevaia ustanovka i novye zadachi GAIMK,” *Soobshcheniia Gosudarstvennoi akademii istorii material’noi kul’tury* 2 (1931): 2; A. N. Bernshtam, “Zhilishche Krymskogo predgor’ia: Opyt sotsiologicheskogo analiza,” *Izvestiia Gosudarstvennoi akademii istorii material’noi kul’tury* 9, nos. 6–7 (1931): 2.

93. S. N. Bykovskii, “O predmete istorii material’noi kul’tury,” *Soobshcheniia Gosudarstvennoi akademii istorii material’noi kul’tury*, 1–2 (1932): 3–4; “Rezoliutsiia vserossiiskogo arkheologo-etnograficheskogo soveshchaniia,” 4–9; V. I. Ravdonikas, “Arkheologiiia na Zapade i v SSSR v nashi dni,” *Soobshcheniia Gosudarstvennoi akademii istorii material’noi kul’tury* 9–10 (1932): 20.

94. I. I. Meshchaninov, “Piry Azerbaidzhana,” *Izvestiia Gosudarstvennoi akademii istorii material’noi kul’tury* 9, no. 4 (1931): 2; S. N. Bykovskii, “O roli izucheniia iazykovykh iavlenii v bor’be za novuiu istoriiu material’noi kul’tury,” *Soobshcheniia Gosudarstvennoi akademii istorii material’noi kul’tury* 11–12 (1931): 4–7.

95. S. N. Bykovskii, “Iafeticheskii predok vostochnykh slavian—kimmeriitsy,” *Izvestiia Gosudarstvennoi akademii istorii material’noi kul’tury* 8, nos. 8–10 (1931): 94; V. I. Ravdonikas, “Peshchernye goroda Kryma i gotskaia problema v sviazi so stadial’nym razvitiem Severnogo Prichernomor’ia,” *Izvestiia Gosudarstvennoi akademii istorii material’noi kul’tury* 12, nos. 1–8 (1932), quoted in Mikhail Miller, *Archaeology in the USSR* (New York, 1956), 81. See also A. A. Formozov, “Arkheologiiia i ideologiiia (20–30-e gody),” *Voprosy filosofii* 2 (1993): 70–82; and Victor A. Shnirelman, “From Internationalism to Nationalism: Forgotten Pages of Soviet Archaeology in the 1930s and 1940s,” in Kohl and Fawcett, eds., *Nationalism, Politics, and the Practice of Archaeology*, 126–29.

Folklorists withdrew from rump ethnography and moved into literary studies, defining their niche of “ideological superstructure” as the “oral-poetic creativity of the broad popular masses, . . . ultimately conditioned, in its formation and development, by a given mode of production and the corresponding relations of production.” Useful “for reconstructing the history of society,” folklore provided a valuable key to the understanding of popular consciousness as it evolved from “primitive thought” to “socialist content.” Marr’s “paleontological analysis,” in particular, could reveal prehistoric meanings—and hence prehistoric social realities—behind literary plots, tropes, and motifs. The reason it could do so was because literary devices did not migrate any more than did ethnic groups, surviving as semantically transfigured but physically recognizable relics of earlier cognitive-linguistic stages. Today’s metaphor was yesterday’s identity of meaning.⁹⁶

Physical anthropologists rose up resolutely against “biologism” in general and “zoologism” in particular. Races existed “objectively in nature” (not just in people’s minds), but their reality as “biological collectives” was “superseded” (*snimat’*, from the Hegelian *aufheben*) by social groups based on class and ethnicity. Human biodiversity was qualitatively different from animal biodiversity because the various human races had lost their species instinct (displaced for the most part by social calculations); become thoroughly mixed (except for a few isolated groups); abandoned natural selection in favor of social selection; and cut loose their association with particular geographic areas and their dependence on the natural environment. There was no causal connection between biological race on the one hand and particular “linguistic, cultural, and other social groups” on the other. “No cephalic indexes, no racial traits of any kind will prevent the most culturally backward peoples from advancing toward higher cultural and political forms provided the appropriate socioeconomic conditions are present.” Meanwhile, Soviet race science (*rasovedenie*) would continue to exist because, “in spite of all the above tendencies, racial distinctions will survive for a very long time as a certain biological reality that is not permanent but can still be observed with a naked eye or, in more complicated cases, through anthropological analysis.” Given that this biological reality was “contained within social entities”; that social entities of real consequence were class and nationality; and that the racial study of classes was—for reasons that were never spelled out—an absurd proposition, the task of Soviet race science was “to study the

96. A. N. Lozanova, “K blizhaishim zadacham sovetskoi fol’kloristiki,” *Sovetskaia etnografiia* 2 (1932): 4, 6. See also “Diskussiiia o sushchnosti i zadachakh fol’klora v leningradskom Institute rechevoi kul’tury,” *Sovetskaia etnografiia* 3–4 (1931): 239–42; “Diskussiiia o znachenii fol’klora i fol’kloristiki v rekonstruktivnyi period,” *Literatura i marksizm* 5 (1931): 91–114 and 6 (1931): 105–23; and O. M. Freidenberg, “Vospominaniia o Marre,” *Vostok-Zapad* 3 (1988): 181–204. For outstanding examples of Marxist literary history (“paleontology”), see I. Frank-Kamenetskii, “Pervobytnoe myshlenie v svete iafeticheskoi teorii i filosofii,” *Iazyk i literatura* 3 (1929): 70–155; *Tristan i Isol'da: Ot geroini liubvi feodal’noi Evropy do bogini matriarkhal’noi Afroevrazii* (Leningrad, 1932); and O. Freidenberg, *Poetika siuzheta i zhanra: Period antichnoi literatury* (Leningrad, 1936).

biological peculiarities of ethnic groups.” The definition of ethnic groups (and the degree of their “reality”) was not the responsibility of race scientists.⁹⁷

Linguistics was the only discipline where young Marrists had serious competition for the Marxist mantle. In February 1929 E. D. Polivanov—a ten-year party veteran as well as a Petrograd University professor of Far Eastern languages, a founding member of the Society for the Study of Poetic Language (OPOIaZ), and a leading theoretician of the alphabet reform in Central Asia—publicly accused Marr of “appalling ignorance of the most basic concepts of all branches of linguistics, from speech physiology to the comparative-historical grammar of any group of languages.”⁹⁸ Citing scores of absurd etymologies, odd transcriptions, logical non sequiturs, and all manner of other “horrors,” Polivanov concluded that the Japhetic theory had nothing to do with either Marxism or linguistics and urged his audience at the Communist Academy to work on a new theory based on “facts rather than faith.” The problem was that the audience consisted mostly of the Marrist “faithful” (as Polivanov himself put it) and that the main article of their faith was a principled refusal to distinguish between faith and facts, and hence between Marxism and linguistics. “Quixotic” to a much greater degree than he seems to have realized (“I accept this term, it was well-chosen by comrade Il’inskii”⁹⁹), Polivanov appealed to the authority of his western peers; bemoaned the propensity of minority graduate students to “speak even when they do not know the subject”; grudgingly excused Stalin for “not knowing the terminology”; compared Marr to a man who showed up at a chemistry conference claiming that water consisted of four mysterious elements rather than hy-

97. A. I. Iarkho, “Protiv idealisticheskikh techenii v rasovedenii SSSR,” *Antropologicheskii zhurnal* 1 (1932): 9–23 (all the quotations are from this article). For a very spirited discussion of whether true Marxists should preserve the concept of race (“the ultimate question being: are the Uzbeks capable of the same development as the Great Russians?”), see Arkhiv RAN, f. 377, op. 2, d. 52 (the quotation is from l. 32). See also M. A. Gremiatskii, “Problema rasy v antropologii,” *Trudy chetvertogo vsesoiuznogo s"ezda zoologov, anatomov i gistologov v Kieve, 6–12 maia, 1930* (Kiev, 1931): 298–300; A. I. Iarkho, “Osnovnye napravleniia rasovoi antropologii v SSSR,” *Trudy chetvertogo*, 330–32; M. Plisetskii, “Na antropologicheskome fronte,” *Sovetskaia etnografiia* 1 (1932): 91–101; G. I. Petrov, “N. Ia. Marr i problema rasogeneza,” *Problemy istorii material'noi kul'tury* 5–6 (1933): 37–45; and T. Trofimova and N. Cheboksarov, “Znachenie ucheniia o iazyke N. Ia. Marra v bor'be za marksistsko-leninskuiu antropologiiu,” *Antropologicheskii zhurnal* 1–2 (1934): 28–54. For the (rather less happy) fate of the other sociobiological disciplines, see Mark B. Adams, “The Soviet Nature-Nurture Debate,” in Loren R. Graham, ed., *Science and the Soviet Social Order* (Cambridge, Mass., 1990), 94–138; and Mark B. Adams, “Eugenics in Russia 1900–1940,” in Mark B. Adams, ed., *The Wellborn Science: Eugenics in Germany, France, Brazil, and Russia* (Oxford, 1990), 153–216.

98. E. D. Polivanov, “Stenogramma 4 fevralia 1929 g: ‘Problema marksistskogo iazykoznanii i iafeticheskaia teoriia,’” in E. D. Polivanov, *Trudy po vostochnomu i obshchemu iazykoznaniiu* (Moscow, 1991), 509.

99. Ibid., 546. G. A. Il’inskii was the only participant in the discussion who supported Polivanov.

drogen and oxygen; and generally made a nuisance of himself by claiming repeatedly that “facts were facts” and that scientific work by trained professionals was the only way of establishing them, whether ignorant outsiders liked it or not and whether those involved happened to be bourgeois or proletarian.¹⁰⁰

What do you want? Do you want guidelines that consist of true general statements that may be correct and acceptable from a Marxist point of view but that are not based on linguistic facts? But this is not linguistics—Marxism perhaps, or maybe the theory or history of science, but not linguistics. Only when all Marxist propositions, all propositions of dialectical materialism are based on facts—only then will I say that you have Marxist linguistics.¹⁰¹

Polivanov was banished to Samarkand, and in the fall of 1930 his pursuers turned on each other. The young members of Language Front (*Iazykfront*, a clone of the Russian Association of Proletarian Writers' [RAPP] *Litfront*) were fluent in the new idiom as well as quite sure that science was contingent on class and perhaps ethnicity, but they found Marrism's preoccupation with origins to be mechanistic, backward-looking, and hence detrimental to socialist “language construction.” The Marrists, for their part, defended the cutting-edge modernity of their paleontology and castigated their opponents for reactionary idealism and covert Indo-Europeanism. After two years of uneven struggle (the Language Front's only institutional base was the Commissariat of Enlightenment), the latecomers to linguistic Marxism were defeated, disbanded, and posthumously humiliated by being equated with Polivanov.¹⁰²

What all these Marrist revolutions had in common was their attempt to rehabilitate low-status ethnic groups by questioning, and perhaps shattering, the concepts of “ethnos,” “race,” “national history,” and “national culture.” For the first time since the eighteenth century, the Lomonosov solution to the Great Ethnological Predicament was being rejected fully and unequivocally. The fixation on origins remained (and was justified by constant references to Engels's dictum turned Soviet reality that the only real science was history—human and natural), but the idea of the common and ancient provenance of all national ingredients was declared to be a “fiction” and a “mirage” when it was not being dismissed as “indescribably foolish and trivial

100. Ibid., 509, 511, 513, 521–22, 530–33, 535. For a similar, and probably the last, public statement of this kind, see a speech by the physicist Ia. I. Frenkel' as cited in Vucinich, *Empire of Knowledge*, 156.

101. Polivanov, “Stenogramma,” 512. Polivanov's own attempt to define Marxist linguistics did not go beyond general observations on the social nature of language. See ibid., 536–43, and E. D. Polivanov, *Stat'i po obshchemu iazykoznaniiu* (Moscow, 1968), 176–77.

102. For Language Front manifestoes, see “Obrashchenie gruppy ‘Iazykovednyi front,’” *Literatura i iskusstvo* 1 (1930): back cover, and *Revoliutsiia i iazyk* 1 (1930). For surveys, see Alpatov, *Istoriia*, 87–111, and Smith, “Soviet Language Frontiers,” 170–204.

nonsense.”¹⁰³ Witness, for example, the various attempts by “bourgeois scholars” to identify the ancient Scythians with Slavs, Germans, Finns, or Iranians.

All of them without exception, whatever their point of view, base their research on the modern ethnographic—in effect political—map. No one wonders if it is scientifically appropriate or if there were any Slavs, Germans, Finns, and Iranians in the Scythian period. Everyone takes for granted the unproven fact that all of these peoples existed in remote antiquity, arbitrarily projecting some piece of the modern map onto the distant past. And amidst all the quarrels and recriminations, no one seems to realize that they find themselves within a vicious circle insofar as they assume precisely those things that need to be proven.¹⁰⁴

At the root of this delusion was the Indo-Europeanist belief in eternal ethnos (inspired, according to Aptekar', by the desire of the nineteenth-century German romantics to “weasel their way out of a despised European provincialism” into “a good noble genealogy”).¹⁰⁵

The concept of a gradual coming together of an ethnos does not exist in bourgeois science. Ethnos is assumed to be fundamentally stable, and so are, in the final analysis, races, cultures, and languages. When the notorious *Nordische Rasse* . . . first appeared in the Mesolithic period, it already possessed all the traits that characterize it now: long-headedness, tallness, a particular facial index, etc. Along with these traits, the northern proto-Indo-Germanic race had—also from the very beginning—certain cultural proclivities that became manifest in the subsequent development of its cultural area. By the same token, all the peculiarities of a given language family are contained within the protolanguage. Evolution becomes teleological.¹⁰⁶

A curious accusation coming from a Marxist, perhaps, but it was the nature of the telos that mattered. The bourgeois scholars as described by the Marrists were high priests of the nation-state, and so they “fantasized about the great ‘states’ of antiquity that had never existed”; staked national claims to particular pots, bones, and therefore lands; labored assiduously to “make cephalic indexes fit culture areas”; and generally devoted themselves to self-serving mythmaking.¹⁰⁷ The

103. V. I. Ravdonikas, “Arkheologiiia na Zapade i v SSSR v nashi dni,” *Soobshcheniia Gosudarstvennoi akademii istorii material'noi kul'tury* 9–10 (1932): 13; V. I. Ravdonikas, “Arkheologiiia na sluzhbe imperializma,” *Soobshcheniia Gosudarstvennoi akademii istorii material'noi kul'tury* 3–4 (1932): 27. For a very useful survey of “internationalism” in Soviet archaeology, see Shnirelman, “From Internationalism to Nationalism,” 123–29.

104. S. N. Bykovskii, “Plemia i natsiia v rabotakh burzhuaznykh arkheologov i istorikov i v osveshchenii marksizma-leninizma,” *Soobshcheniia Gosudarstvennoi akademii istorii material'noi kul'tury* 3–4 (1932): 5–6.

105. V. B. Aptekar', “Iafeticheskaia teoriia N. Ia. Marra i istoricheskii materializm,” *Arkhiv RAN*, f. 377, op. 2, d. 110, l. 5.

106. Ravdonikas, “Arkheologiiia na sluzhbe,” 21.

107. S. N. Bykovskii, “O klassovykh korniakh staroi arkheologii,” *Soobshcheniia Gosudarstvennoi akademii istorii material'noi kul'tury* 9–10 (1931): 4–7; Ravdonikas, “Ar-

Marrists as described by themselves, on the other hand, knew that there was “no fateful link between ethnic groups and the collections of variously shaped objects known as ‘cultures,’” ridiculed the “theory of the original connection between modern language groups and particular races,” and never tired of quoting Marr’s passionate refusal to consider “human tribes” to be “zoological types akin to horse or cow breeds, with tribal traits inherited *ab ovo*.”¹⁰⁸

Meanwhile, the political authorities were doing their part by arresting non-Russian ethnologists as bourgeois nationalists; Russian historians, as White sympathizers; “regional studies” enthusiasts, as “creeping empiricists”; and most Slavic philologists, as sentimental Slavophiles turned saboteurs.¹⁰⁹ According to one scholarly indictment with penitentiary consequences, the field of Slavic studies was devoted “to the study of ‘a single Slavic type with common physical and spiritual characteristics,’ to the defense of its unique nature, and to the promotion of its consequent messianic role, thus always representing a science deliberately and entirely saturated with zoological nationalism.” Both in the “so-called Slavic countries” and in the Soviet Union, the Herderian reification of the Volk based on the imagined connection between “blood descent and the physical conditions of existence as determined by territory” was tantamount to a “slide into fascism.”¹¹⁰ Fascism was, of course, a very real threat outside the Soviet Union—and therefore, according to the now familiar logic, a very real threat within Soviet academia.

By the end of 1934 most ethnological disciplines (but not most ethnologists) had been proclaimed to be Marrist; Marrism had been proclaimed to be a subset of Marxism; and Marr himself had been

kheologiia na sluzhbe,” 27. See also A. V. Shmidt, “O rabotakh russkikh arkheologov po finnam,” *Soobshcheniia Gosudarstvennoi akademii istorii material'noi kul'tury* 3–4 (1932): 35–43.

108. V. I. Ravdonikas, “O rabote D. N. Edinga ‘Sarskoe gorodishche,’” *Soobshcheniia Gosudarstvennoi akademii istorii material'noi kul'tury*, 4–5 (1931): 64; G. Debets, “Tak nazyvaemyi ‘vostochnyi velikoruss,’” *Antropologicheskii zhurnal* 1–2 (1933): 54; Marr, *Izbrannye raboty*, 5:314.

109. Zh. I. Alferov et al., eds., *Akademicheskoe delo 1929–1931 gg.: Dokumenty i materialy sledstvennogo dela, sfbrikovannogo OGPU* (St. Petersburg, 1993); F. D. Ashnin and V. M. Alpatov, “*Delo slavistov*”: 30-e gody (Moscow, 1994); S. B. Bernshtein, “Tragicheskaiia stranitsa iz istorii slavianskoi filologii (30-e gody XX veka),” *Sovetskoe slavianovedenie* 1 (1989): 77–82; V. S. Brachev, “‘Delo’ akademika S. F. Platonova,” *Voprosy istorii* 5 (1989): 117–29; A. N. Goriainov, “Slavianovedy—zherty repressii 1920–1940kh godov: Nekotorye neizvestnye stranitsy iz istorii sovetskoi nauki,” *Sovetskoe slavianovedenie* 2 (1990): 78–89; B. S. Kaganovich, *Eugenii Viktorovich Tarle i peterburgskaia shkola istorikov* (St. Petersburg, 1995), 38–54. For the fate of the “regional studies” (*kraevedenie*) movement, see Eileen Maniichuk’s “Observing Homeland and Hinterland: The Construction of Local Identity in Soviet Ethnography and Kraevedenie, 1917–1937” (Ph.D. diss., University of Toronto, 1996); and A. Akin’shin and O. Lasunskii, “‘Delo kraevedov’ Tsentral’nogo Chernozem’ia,” *Otechestvo* 1 (1990): 56–66.

110. D. Dimitrov, “Slavianskaia filologiia na putiakh fashizatsii (k kharakteristike ee sostoianiia na Zapade),” *Iazyk i myshlenie* 5 (1935): 125–33.

decorated with the Order of Lenin, buried beside Lomonosov, and beatified through a series of “memory immortalization” decrees.¹¹¹ Unfortunately for the victorious Marrists, however, the Great Transformation had already begun to give way to the Great Retreat, or at any rate to a quite substantial transformation in a new direction. In 1932, ethnographers and archaeologists had been told to stop questioning “historically given ethnic and national peculiarities,” and in 1934 special government decrees had denounced Marr’s historiographic counterpart M. N. Pokrovskii for serving up “abstract definitions of socioeconomic formations” instead of a “coherent,” “lively,” and “entertaining” historical narrative centered on the “peoples of the USSR.”¹¹² Soon after Marr’s death on 20 December 1934 large portions of his New Theory (including the four irreducible “elements”) disappeared from scholarly discourse; during the terror of 1937–38 some of his closest disciples (as well as opponents) disappeared into the gulag; and in 1938–39 the whole of Marrism was apparently rendered irrelevant by the party’s demand that historians, anthropologists, archaeologists, folklorists, and linguists join forces in pursuit of Lomonosov-style national origins, with special attention to the “determination of the antiquity of Russian, Ukrainian, and Belorussian settlement on the territories that they currently occupy.”¹¹³ The 1938 drafts of Soviet and world history textbooks began with “ancient tribes” that gave birth to less ancient tribes in a clearly genealogical fashion; in that same year the Slavic origins of the Russian state and the murky origins of the Germans and the Japanese became the object of special scholarly scrutiny; and in 1941 the leading Marrist deconstructor of race, N. N. Cheboksarov, took obvious pleasure in showing that Germans were more Mongoloid than eastern Europeans (those from Hanover and Baden, for example, “turned out to be clearly ‘Mongoloidized’ [*zamongolizirovanny*] as compared to the Voronezh Russians or Vycheгда Komi, and only a little less so than the North Caucasus Turk-

111. See “Ob uvekovechenii pamiati N. Ia. Marra” and other materials in *Problemy istorii dokapitalisticheskikh obshchestv* 3–4 (1935), esp. 3–6, 255–59. Also Mikhankova, *Nikolai Iakovlevich Marr*, 427–28; Alpatov, *Istoriia*, 110–11. By all accounts, Marr was buried at the Aleksandr Nevskii Necropolis, but Alpatov reports having been unable to find his grave there. See *Problemy istorii dokapitalisticheskikh obshchestv* 3–4 (1935): 258, and Alpatov, *Istoriia*, 110n.

112. N. M. Matorin, “15 let Oktiabr'skoi revoliutsii,” *Sovetskaia etnografiia* 5–6 (1932): 12–13; “Na fronte istoricheskoi nauki: V Sovnarkome Soiuzs SSR i TsK VKP(b),” *Sovetskaia etnografiia* 1 (1936): 3.

113. Alpatov, *Istoriia*, 112–42; René L’Hermitte, *Marr, marrisme, marristes: Une page de l’histoire de la linguistique soviétique* (Paris, 1987), 47–54; E. P. Aksenova and M. A. Vasil’ev, “Problemy etnogonii slaviansstva i ego vetvei v akademicheskikh diskussiiakh rubezha 1930–1940kh godov,” *Slavianovedenie* 2 (1993): 91–92; Shnirelman, “The Faces of Nationalist Archaeology in Russia,” 233–36; Shnirelman, “From Internationalism to Nationalism,” 132–38. The terror of 1937–38 seems to have had little regard for scholarly differences: E. D. Polivanov, his lone defender G. A. Il’inskii, and his chief accuser V. B. Aptekar’ were executed within weeks of each other.

men, who are half Mongoloid").¹¹⁴ Nazi race science was no longer a demon to be exorcized—it was a rival to be defeated “on its own territory.”

Marr was not formally expelled from the Marxist pantheon, however, so that Soviet ethnologists from various disciplines found themselves in a no-man’s-land between two worlds that had nothing to do with each other: the official blood-and-soil nationalism and the no less official socioeconomic Marrism. Some felt perfectly at home there: the celebration of particular ethnic groups by means of an apparent denial of ethnic continuity had been at the core of the New Theory. The historian N. S. Derzhavin, for example, toiled tirelessly in the field of “Slavic ethnogenesis” while continuing to argue that there was “no point in trying to determine at what time this or that people came into existence.”¹¹⁵ The anthropologist G. F. Debets ridiculed the Indo-European confusion of race and language while conducting his own “racial analysis of the Veps” among “those who, in their domestic environment, use the Veps language in preference to Russian or at least on an equal footing with it.”¹¹⁶ Others cited Marr, mentioned “stadialism,” and then pointedly ignored both in pursuit of a research objective that took for granted migrationism, tribal genealogy, and the longevity of the “ethnos.”¹¹⁷ Yet others appeared to reject the whole “Marrist-therefore-Marxist-therefore-valid” formula and made Polivanov-like appeals to independent scientific criteria that went unpunished and possibly not unrewarded. “They have tried hard to turn us, historians who rely on real facts, into poets,” protested the recently released but apparently unreformed V. I. Picheta at the March 1940 session of the History and Philosophy Section of the Academy of Sciences. “Instead of this hypothesis I can propose any other hypothesis, and then the battle of our hypotheses will become reminiscent of me-

114. “Skhema piatitomnika po istorii SSSR,” *Istorik-Marksist* 1 (1938): 174–204; “Proekt skhemy mnogotomnika vseмирnoi istorii,” *Istorik-Marksist* 2 (1938): 143–91; V. Parkhomenko, “K voprosu o ‘Normanskom zavoevanii’ i proiskhozhdenii Rusi,” *Istorik-Marksist* 4 (1938): 106–11; “Soveshchanie po voprosam etnogeneza,” *Istorik-Marksist* 6 (1938): 201; N. N. Cheboksarov, “Mongoloidnye elementy v naselenii Tsentral’noi Evropy,” *Uchenye zapiski MGU* 63 (1941): 238. Cf. Trofimova and Cheboksarov, “Znachenie ucheniia o iazyke,” 39. Also M. I. Artamonov, “Doklady na sessii Otdeleniia istorii i filosofii AN SSSR: Spornye voprosy drevneishei istorii slavian i Rusi,” *Kratkie soobshcheniia o dokladakh i polevykh issledovaniakh Instituta istorii material’noi kul’tury* 6 (1940): 3–14.

115. Quoted in Aksenova and Vasil’ev, “Problemy etnogonii,” 99.

116. G. F. Debets, “Vepsy,” *Uchenye zapiski MGU* 63 (1941): 139. Cf. Debets, “K probleme rasovogo tipa ‘protofinnov,’” *Uchenye zapiski MGU* 63 (1941): 11–20; and especially Debets, “Rasy, iazyki, kul’tury,” *Nauka o rasakh i rasizm*, Nauchno-issledovatel’skii institut antropologii Moskovskogo gosudarstvennogo universiteta, *Trudy*, no. 4 (Moscow, 1938), 105–22.

117. Alpatov, *Istoriia*, 112–37; L’Hermitte, *Marr*, 47–54.

118. Quoted in Aksenova and Vasil’ev, “Problemy etnogonii,” 99. See also Alpatov, *Istoriia*, 136–37.

dieval scholasticism.”¹¹⁸ Beginning in 1937 western classics of “formalism” and “Indo-Europeanism” were being translated into Russian, cited generously, and reviewed on their own terms; and at the end of the war, the non-Marrist linguist V. V. Vinogradov was brought back from exile (his second after the 1934 “trial of the Slavists”), made dean of the recently resurrected Philology Department of Moscow University, awarded the Lomonosov (!) prize for his *Russian Language*, and in 1946 elected full member of the Academy of Sciences, bypassing the corresponding member stage.¹¹⁹

Not a moment too soon, as it turned out. In the late summer of 1946 Zhdanov launched his offensive on the culture front, and by late 1947 it had been revealed that Vinogradov’s *Russian Language* was not “a Russian book on the Russian language” but a lot of “vacuous and pernicious nonsense” dressed up as “pseudoscientific objectivity.”¹²⁰ The reign of Zhdanov (much of it posthumous) was a more or less self-conscious attempt to revive the flagging spirit of the Cultural Revolution: all knowledge was either Marxist or anti-Marxist; all claims to objectivity were vacuous and pernicious nonsense; all Soviet scholars had to be Marxists “in deed”; all practicing Marxists had to agree on what Marxism meant in practice; the true meaning of Marxism emerged from “lively discussions” refereed by party guardians of “party-mindedness.” More specifically (after August 1948), Marxism meant a rejection of genetic determinism and an interdisciplinary endorsement of Lysenko’s Lamarckianism.¹²¹

The Soviet nationality theorists seemed to have no choice. Marr was the officially accredited prophet of Marxism among ethnologists and an obvious double of the newly accredited prophet of Marxism among biologists. The new cultural revolution had to complete the work of the old cultural revolution. The surviving Indo-Europeanists and all other formalists and comparativists had to “disarm” before the teaching of Marr because the teaching of Marr was “an integral part of the ideology of socialist society” and thus “the only general theory and the only scientific theory for all the particular linguistic disciplines.”¹²²

It is not enough to recognize the New Theory in words alone, nor is it enough to refrain from fighting against N. Ia. Marr—it is necessary to be a consistent and uncompromising fighter for N. Ia. Marr! Either

119. Alpatov, *Istoriia*, 138–42; Ashnin and Alpatov, “*Delo slavistov*,” 162, 168; L’Hermitte, *Marr*, 47, 54. For the general situation in Soviet science during this period, see Vucinich, *Empire of Knowledge*, 179–210.

120. B. N. Agapov and K. L. Zelinskii, “Net, eto ne russkii iazyk,” *Literaturnaia gazeta*, 29 November 1947. Quoted in Alpatov, *Istoriia*, 144. See also Ashnin and Alpatov, “*Delo slavistov*,” 178–80.

121. See, in particular, David Joravsky, *The Lysenko Affair* (Chicago, 1970); and Valerii Soifer, *Vlast' i nauka: Istoriia razgroma genetiki v SSSR* (Tenaflly, N.J., 1989).

122. F. P. Filin, “O dvukh napravleniakh v iazykovedenii,” *Izvestiia Akademii nauk SSSR: Otdelenie literatury i iazyka* 7, no. 6 (November–December 1948): 488.

the triumph of materialist linguistics founded by N. Ia. Marr, or the misery of existence in the swamp of Indo-Europeanism. There is and there can be no “third way,” no “golden mean” of any kind!¹²³

After more than ten years of compromise and equivocation, all ethnic genealogies were once again proscribed—this time for the additional reason that they were analogous to the “primary and immutable agents of heredity” contrived by the bourgeois geneticists.¹²⁴ Linguists promised to continue Marr’s struggle against inheritable folk essences, ancestral protolanguages, and specious structuralisms (Sausure was a default geneticist because he divorced language from its social base).¹²⁵ Archaeologists forswore migrationism and “objectology,” ethnographers insisted on the “historicity” of ethnicity, folklorists expelled functionalists along with “traveling plots,” and physical anthropologists attacked racism by emphasizing “the influence of external conditions on man’s physical type—on the transformation of his inheritable nature” (V. V. Bunak, who suggested that eating an extra kilo of sugar “does not mean that one’s skull shape will change or any such thing,” had to apologize and admit “the unconditional correctness of the principles of Soviet Darwinism as formulated by the academician T. D. Lysenko”).¹²⁶ In late 1949 the Agitprop Department of the Central Committee reviewed the battlefield and found the degree of Marrization to be woefully inadequate.¹²⁷ The Presidium of the Academy of Sciences resolved to reissue Marr’s works and Marr’s bi-

123. Ibid., 496. See also A. G. Spirkin, “Nauchnaia sessiia, posviashchennaia 85-letiiu so dnia rozhdeniia i 15-letiiu so dnia smerti N. Ia. Marra,” *Voprosy filosofii* 3 (1949): 326–37.

124. I. I. Meshchaninov, “O polozhenii v lingvisticheskoi nauke,” *Izvestiia Akademii nauk SSSR: Otdelenie literatury i iazyka* 7, no. 6 (November–December 1948): 473.

125. Ibid., 474. For “discussions” among linguists, see Alpatov, *Istoriia*, 143–67, and L’Hermitte, *Marr*, 55–67.

126. V. Bunak, “Pis’mo v redaktsiiu,” *Sovetskaia etnografiia* 1 (1949): 2. A. L. Mongait and G. B. Fedorov, Review of A. V. Artsikhovskii, *Vvedenie v arkheologiiu* (Moscow, 1947), in *Kratkie soobshcheniia o dokladakh i polevykh issledovaniiax Instituta istorii material’noi kul’tury* 28 (1949): 123–26; S. P. Tolstov, “Sovetskaia shkola v etnografii,” *Sovetskaia etnografiia* 4 (1947): 14–19; V. K. Sokolova, “Diskussii po voprosam fol’kloristiki na zasedaniiakh Sektora fol’klora Instituta etnografii,” *Sovetskaia etnografiia* 3 (1948): 139–46; V. Kirpotin, “O nizkopoklonstve pered kapitalisticheskimi zapadom, ob Aleksandre Veselovskom, o ego posledovatel’nost’i i o samom glavnom,” *Oktiabr’* 1 (1948): 3–27; “Protiv idealizatsii ucheniia A. Veselovskogo,” *Izvestiia Akademii nauk SSSR: Otdelenie literatury i iazyka* 7, no. 4 (1948): 362–64; “Protiv burzhuaznogo liberalizma v literaturovedenii (po povodu diskussii ob A. Veselovskom),” *Kul’tura i zhizn’*, 11 March 1948 and 31 March 1948; M. Levin, Ia. Roginskii, and N. Cheboksarov, “Anglo-amerikanskii razizm,” *Sovetskaia etnografiia* 1 (1949): 18–39; “Itogi sessii VASKhNIL i sovetskaia antropologiiia,” *Sovetskaia etnografiia* 1 (1949): 182–83.

127. Rossiiskii tsentr khraneniia i izucheniia dokumentov noveishei istorii (RTsKhIDNI), f. 17, op. 132, d. 164, ll. 16–39. The Agitprop sponsored (RTsKhIDNI, f. 17, op. 132, d. 132, l. 39) two special publications on the subject: N. Bernikov and I. Braginskii, “Za peredovoe sovetskoe iazykoznanie,” *Kul’tura i zhizn’*, 11 May 1949 and 10 July 1949; and G. Serdiuchenko, “Ob odnoi vrednoi teorii v iazykovedenii,” *Kul’tura i zhizn’*, 30 June 1949.

ography; establish a special Marr Commission on the Languages and Scripts of the Peoples of the USSR; institute a Marr Medal and a Marr Prize; celebrate Marr's death as well as his birthday; and stage a Marxist-dominated discussion "aimed at concluding the evaluation of Soviet linguistics."¹²⁸ Non-Marxist professors were blackballed, demoted, and dismissed. Non-Marxist books were banned. Marr himself was proclaimed a "resolute enemy of cosmopolitanism."¹²⁹

A cultural revolution (complete with "scholar brigades" and pugnacious graduate students) in the land of socialist realism was a rather incongruous affair. A Marxist revolution amidst the postwar patriotic campaign was downright bizarre. Both the original Great Transformation and its postwar aftershock absolutized the us-against-them dichotomy (with "no third way of any kind"), but the meaning of both "us" and "them" had of course changed: "proletarian" was now "Soviet" (divided unequally by nationality), and "bourgeois" was now "foreign" (with some preference for "Anglo-Americans").¹³⁰ Foreigners masked their racism as cosmopolitanism, while Soviets openly enjoyed their patriotism because it was wholesome as well as pleasurable. "Humankind is divided into nations. Each nation has its own national culture, its own mores and customs, its own special way of life. Every nation treasures its national uniqueness, loves it, is proud of it, and does not want to trade it for a cosmopolitan gruel."¹³¹ Scholars, like everyone else, were expected to contribute to the making of the rich national soup: "Every scientific discovery belongs to a particular nation, and every new theory is put forward by a scholar belonging to a certain nation."¹³² Ethnologists, in particular, had to get back to their primary responsibility of studying national cultures, "because if each nation has certain peculiarities that are uniquely its own, then these peculiarities, or rather, each nation's national culture, need to be studied."¹³³ No more "abstract stages" diluting the "wonderful, centuries-old epic tradition of the Uzbek people"; no more "cosmopolitan-racist campaigns to dissolve the Tajiks, Persians, and other peoples of the Iranian language group in some faceless 'Iranian' ethnic element"; no more "preposterous, reactionary attempts to destroy the national

128. RTsKhIDNI, f. 17, op. 132, d. 164, ll. 17, 27–29, 33, 42–43. The quotation is from l. 42.

129. RTsKhIDNI, f. 17, op. 132, d. 164, l. 21. For an enlightening discussion of "discussion" as a genre (and a good summary of the linguistic discussion in particular), see Alexei Kojevnikov, "Games of Soviet Democracy: Ideological Discussions in Sciences around 1948 Reconsidered," *Max-Planck-Institut für Wissenschaftsgeschichte*, Preprint 37 (1996): 1–31. A revised version of this article will appear in *Russian Review*.

130. Cf. K. O. Rossiianov, "Stalin kak redaktor Lysenko: K predystorii avgustovskoi (1948) sessii VASKhNIL," *Voprosy filosofii* 2 (1993): 56–69.

131. I. I. Potekhin, "Zadachi bor'by s kosmopolitizmom v etnografii," *Sovetskaia etnografiia* 2 (1949): 17.

132. *Ibid.*, 20.

133. P. I. Kushner (Knyshev), "Uchenie I. V. Stalina o natsii i natsional'noi kul'ture i ego znachenie dlia etnografii," *Sovetskaia etnografiia* 4 (1949): 17.

uniqueness of the *Kalevala* through pointless, ridiculous comparisons.”¹³⁴ One could no longer cover one’s back with a few quotes from Marr—one had to be equally passionate about deconstructing nationality and building it up. The challenge was to be Marrist and anti-Marrist at the same time; to wear one’s Marr medal while bemoaning his “abstract stages”; to keep referring to Marr’s work without ever reading it.

Deliverance and absolution could only come from above. In the spring of 1949 the most brazen Soviet anti-Marrist, Arnold Chikobava, was asked by the first secretary of the Georgian SSR to summarize his views in a special essay. Vilified relentlessly by the new cultural revolutionaries in Moscow and Leningrad, Chikobava was one of the most prominent academics in Tbilisi—perhaps because he approved of the “Japhetic” phase of Marrism while rejecting the theory of stages on nationalist as well logical grounds.¹³⁵ “The Japhetic (or Ibero-Caucasian) languages,” he wrote in his party-commissioned paper, “do not constitute some mythical evolutionary stage, frozen in its development just to suit the far-fetched scheme of the Japhetic Theory. The Japhetic languages are living representatives of an ancient and numerous group of languages, whose speakers are known in the history of mankind as the creators of the ancient Near Asian civilization, which gave rise to the ancient Greco-Roman civilization, and consequently, to the whole of western European culture.”¹³⁶ On the evening of 10 April 1950 Chikobava and the four highest-ranking Georgian officials arrived at Stalin’s dacha for a chat about linguistic theory. The host, who had obviously read the Tbilisi essay, told Chikobava to write a larger “discussion piece” (“You go ahead and write it, and we’ll see. If we like it, we’ll print it”). Chikobava wrote it, Stalin liked it, and after two more editorial summits, Chikobava’s attack on the New Theory was printed in *Pravda* on 9 May.¹³⁷ In the following “free discussion” (the most widely publicized and, for the average *Pravda* reader, probably the most obscure in recent memory), some heartened dissidents accused Marr of being un-Marxist, unscientific, anti-Russian, and possibly insane; some prudent scholars pointed out certain errors and

134. V. Sokolova, Review of V. M. Zhirmunskii and Kh. T. Zarifov, *Uzbekskii narodnyi geroicheskii epos* (Moscow, 1947), in *Sovetskaia etnografiia* 2 (1949): 226; S. Tolstov, “Kniga po istorii tadzhikskogo naroda,” *Kul'tura i zhizn'*, 22 April 1950; “Bessmertnyi epos karelo-finskogo naroda,” *Sovetskaia etnografiia* 2 (1949): 6.

135. Chikobava was one of the first members of the new Georgian Academy of Sciences, the chair of the Department of the Languages of the Caucasus at the University of Tbilisi, the head of the Section of the Caucasus Mountain Languages at the Institute of Linguistics of the Georgian Academy, and the editor in chief of the eight-volume *Dictionary of the Georgian Language*. See Alpatov, *Istoriia*, 170.

136. A. S. Chikobava, “Stadial'naia klassifikatsiia iazykov akad. N. Marra,” *Ezhegodnik iberiisko-kavkazskogo iazykoznaniiia* 12 (1985): 19.

137. A. S. Chikobava, “Kogda i kak eto bylo,” *Ezhegodnik iberiisko-kavkazskogo iazykoznaniiia* 12 (1985): 9–14; A. Chikobava, “O nekotorykh voprosakh sovetskogo iazykoznaniiia,” *Pravda*, 9 May 1950.

contradictions in his theory; and a few puzzled but steadfast Marrists defended what they assumed to be the official orthodoxy (it was not quite two months, after all, since the Presidium of the Academy had ordered the cessation of all work on comparative grammars!).¹³⁸

On 20 June 1950, Stalin broke the suspense by publishing his own—and hence everybody else’s—views on linguistics (the piece was typographically indistinguishable from other discussion entries, so that the reader had to scan the standard boxed-in introduction or wait for the signature at the bottom to know that it was the Truth).¹³⁹ The truth, as usual, proved self-evident when revealed: language was neither superstructure, nor base, nor any “intermediate phenomenon” (one is reminded of Lenin’s equally dialectical vision of Bolshevik sexuality: “neither monk, nor Don Juan, nor the intermediate attitude of the German philistines”).¹⁴⁰ Languages could only belong to “whole societies”; “societies” were always equal to ethnic groups (from tribe to nation); and ethnic groups—inseparable as they were from languages and therefore thinking—existed “incomparably longer than any base or any superstructure.”¹⁴¹ Classes and “epochs” came and went, but nationalities remained. “History”—itself rather circular in Stalin’s conception, “tells us that national languages are not class languages but nationwide languages, common to all of the nation’s members and unified for the nation.”¹⁴² Some national languages were genetically related to each other, and some were more durable than others. “The linguistic kinship of the Slavic nations” was completely obvious, while “mixing” was a matter of one language prevailing over another: “Such was, for example, the case with the Russian language, which became mixed with languages of various other peoples over the course of its development but has always come out victorious.”¹⁴³ As for Marr, he was a hopelessly confused “simplifier and vulgarizer of Marxism of the ‘RAPPIst’ and ‘proletkultist’ variety,” who “introduced into linguistics an immodest, arrogant, and supercilious tone that is alien to Marxism.”¹⁴⁴ Marr’s “so-called students” added insult to injury by instituting a “regime alien to science,” firing “valued workers,” and making appointments “based not on merit but on the unquestioning acceptance of N. Ia. Marr’s teaching.” The result was a profound crisis in Soviet linguistics, for “it is generally known that no science can develop and

138. *Pravda*, 9 May–4 July 1950 (every Tuesday); RTsKhIDNI, f. 17, op. 132, d. 336, ll. 4–6; Alpatov, *Istoriia*, 167, 169–90.

139. *Pravda*, 20 June 1950. For comments on the formatting, see L’Hermitte, *Marr*, 69, and Alpatov, *Istoriia*, 181.

140. I. V. Stalin, *Sochineniia*, 16 vols. (Stanford, 1967), 3[16]:150 and 114–22; Klara Zetkin, *Reminiscences of Lenin* (New York, 1934), 11–12, quoted in Joravsky, *Russian Psychology*, 239.

141. Stalin, *Sochineniia*, 3[16]:122–23, 119, 134.

142. “Istoriia govorit, chto natsional’nye iazyki iavliaiutsia ne klassovymi, a obshchenarodnymi iazykami, obshchimi dlia chlenov natsii i edinyimi dlia natsii.” *Ibid.*, 123.

143. *Ibid.*, 147, 143.

144. *Ibid.*, 146–47.

flourish without a struggle of opinions, without freedom of criticism."¹⁴⁵

Thus, twenty-one years after Polivanov's last stand at the Communist Academy and twelve years after his death in the gulag, "the leader and teacher of the Soviet peoples" publicly endorsed his views on scientific autonomy in general and Marrist linguistics in particular. In a direct allusion to a paper he surely never read, Stalin called Marr's theory of class-based linguistic revolutions "quixotic" and compared it to postrevolutionary "pseudo-Marxist" projects of replacing bourgeois railroads with new, proletarian ones (Polivanov had argued—"quixotically," in his own estimation—that Marr's theory was "tantamount to a demand that at the moment of the revolution all the pistons of a locomotive start working differently from how they had worked under the tsar").¹⁴⁶ Inconsistently and inconclusively but with obvious relish, Stalin launched a public assault on two of the most sacred cows of his "revolution from above": the absolute "party-mindedness" of all knowledge and the rhetorical primacy of class over nationality. In July 1948 the leader of the peoples had deleted the statement "all sciences are class-based" from the text of Lysenko's speech to the Agricultural Academy ("Ha-ha-ha!!!" he wrote in the margin, "But what about mathematics? What about Darwinism?").¹⁴⁷ In April 1950 he had told Chikobava: "Lysenko is making life impossible for everyone. We are going to be criticizing him!"¹⁴⁸ Now he was saying that no "closed group of infallible leaders" could substitute itself for the contentious and apparently self-contained process of the scientific quest for knowledge.¹⁴⁹ He was infallible all right, but his decision-making power, he now claimed, depended on the disciplinary "struggles" waged by professional scholars.

Professional scholars in various disciplines responded to the leader's call with varying degrees of enthusiasm (hoping as many of them did to guess the final decision before engaging in disciplinary struggles).¹⁵⁰ Only the formerly Marrist fields had their tasks perfectly well

145. Ibid., 144.

146. Ibid., 130; Polivanov, "Stenogramma," 538. Cf. Alpatov, *Istoriia*, 197–98.

147. Rossiianov, "Stalin kak redaktor Lysenko," 65.

148. Chikobava, "Kogda i kak," 13.

149. Stalin, *Sochineniia*, 3:146. For a later restatement of these views, see his "The Economic Problems of Socialism in the USSR," in *Sochineniia* 3:188–245, esp. 189–91.

150. Joravsky, *The Lysenko Affair*, 150–55; Joravsky, *Russian Psychology*, 405–6; Vucinich, *Empire of Knowledge*, 247–56. The assumption that professional standards were valid in their own right was clearly shared by most, however. A special Politburo commission on Academy elections questioned its own legitimacy by distinguishing between a "political" veto (based on the existence of "compromising materials") and a "professional" one (based on an insufficient number of "serious publications"). Scholars who protested to the Central Committee about the persecution of non-Marrists emphasized the fact that the leader of the pogrom (G. P. Serdiuchenko) "did not have serious scholarly publications and was primarily engaged in administrative work and teaching." It is remarkable how many people who responded to Stalin's article seemed to take his injunctions seriously. "You write that no science can develop

defined. Linguists, reassured that languages were “ancient,” “resilient,” and inseparable from the history of the nations that “created and spoke them,” could concentrate on the genealogical connections and nation-building significance of “national languages.”¹⁵¹ Literary historians were free to rid themselves of the already marginalized plot paleontologists in order to focus on “national form” in general, and folklore as the deepest “source of national art,” in particular (the “forgotten” Russian national form was of paramount concern).¹⁵² Race scientists could proceed from the premise that their findings were “mere reflections in anthropological data of migrations and mixings of tribes, nationalities, and nations,” which meant that by studying race formation, anthropologists could contribute to the history of tribes, nationalities, and nations.¹⁵³ Ethnographers, who had had their 1932 death sentence formally suspended, could fully and unabashedly devote themselves to the study of ethnos as a generic concept that covered the evolutionary hierarchy of tribes (ethnicity of primitive communism), nationalities (ethnicity of slave-holding and feudal societies), and nations (ethnicity of capitalism and socialism).¹⁵⁴ Archaeologists, who had replaced linguists and folklorists in the limelight, could build on the “resilience”

without a struggle of opinions, without freedom of criticism,” begins the letter from a high school teacher in Tula province. “I am sure, therefore, that you will not object to criticism of your own writings. Please allow me to expound my views.” RTsKhIDNI, f. 17, op. 125, d. 445, ll. 102, 144; op. 132, d. 336, ll. 5, 141.

151. Stalin, *Sochineniia*, 3:134, 138–39, 143. For major programmatic statements, see *Izvestiia Akademii nauk SSSR: Otdelenie literatury i iazyka* 9, nos. 1 and 2 (1950); P. Ia. Chernykh, “O sviazi razvitiia iazyka s istoriei naroda v svete trudov I. V. Stalina po iazykoznaniiu,” *Izvestiia Akademii nauk SSSR: Otdelenie literatury i iazyka* 10, no. 3 (1951): 240–56; V. P. Petrus', “Slavianskaia iazykovaia obshchnost' i slavianskie iazyki,” *Izvestiia Akademii nauk SSSR: Otdelenie literatury i iazyka* 10, no. 4 (1951): 354–66; and Vinogradov and Serebrennikov, eds., *Protiv vull'garizatsii*, 1 and 2.

152. The quotes are from “V Institute mirovoi literatury,” *Izvestiia Akademii nauk SSSR: Otdelenie literatury i iazyka* 9, no. 2 (1950): 150; and V. I. Chicherov, “O porochnykh vzgliadakh N. Ia. Marra i ego posledovatelei v oblasti fol'kloristiki,” *Sovetskaia etnografiia* 3 (1952): 3–4. See also A. I. Beletskii, “Znachenie trudov I. V. Stalina po iazykoznaniiu dlia sovetskogo literaturovedeniia,” *Izvestiia Akademii nauk SSSR: Otdelenie literatury i iazyka* 10, no. 1 (1951): 21; and A. M. Astakhova, “Znachenie trudov I. V. Stalina po voprosam iazykoznaniiia dlia razvitiia nauki o narodnom poeticheskom tvorchestve,” *Izvestiia Akademii nauk SSSR: Otdelenie literatury i iazyka* 10, no. 6 (1951): 533–46.

153. G. F. Debets, M. G. Levin, and T. A. Trofimova, “Antropologicheskii material kak istochnik izucheniiia voprosov etnogeneza,” *Sovetskaia etnografiia* 1 (1952): 24–25; and N. N. Cheboksarov, “K voprosu o proiskhozhdenii narodov ugrofinskoii iazykovoi grupy,” *Sovetskaia etnografiia* 1 (1952): 36–50. See also M. F. Nesturkh, *Chelovecheskie rasy* (Moscow, 1958).

154. S. A. Tokarev and N. N. Cheboksarov, “Metodologiia etnogeneticheskikh issledovaniia na materiale etnografii v svete rabot I. V. Stalina po voprosam iazykoznaniiia,” *Sovetskaia etnografiia* 4 (1951): 76. Also S. P. Tolstov, “Znachenie trudov I. V. Stalina po voprosam iazykoznaniiia dlia razvitiia sovetskoi etnografii,” *Sovetskaia etnografiia* 4 (1950): 3–23; S. P. Tolstov, “Itogi perestroiki raboty Instituta etnografii AN SSSR v svete truda I. V. Stalina ‘Marksizm i voprosy iazykoznaniiia,’” *Sovetskaia etnografiia* 3 (1951): 3–14. See also Slezkine, *Arctic Mirrors*, 308–23.

thesis in order to trace ethnic genealogies as far back as possible (nothing seemed impossible in the case of the Slavs, who were found to have “firm local roots” in Moldavia and the Crimea, for example, but some of the other peoples were also doing well thanks to the efforts of their scholarly descendants in republican capitals).¹⁵⁵ And V. V. Vinogradov could preside over Soviet philology from his new position as the head of the Language and Literature Section of the Academy of Sciences.¹⁵⁶

It was the joint search for “ethnogenesis,” however, that emerged as the most important task of the scholars who had been cut loose from the New Theory of Language. The professedly Marxist Marrism of rootless cosmopolitanism and revolutionary leaps was finished; the explicitly nationalist Marrism of ethnoracial genealogies and national essences reigned supreme. The world consisted of ethnic groups; ethnic groups were communities sharing certain attributes; modern communities derived their status and identity from the time and circumstances of their origins; the origins of the various ethnic attributes were notoriously difficult to reconcile. It was the job of specially trained scholars to chart the progress of ethnic attributes and determine the time of their coming together, thereby providing a modern nation(ality) with a duly stamped birth certificate. Advertised in the eighteenth century and updated by the young Marr in the early twentieth, this job was now presented as a collective enterprise: if ethnogenesis was “a historical process of the formation of a given ethnic community, that is, the formation of its anthropological [racial], linguistic, and ethnographic traits,” then it could only be uncovered by anthropologists, linguists, and ethnographers working together.¹⁵⁷ Fossil skulls belonged to people who had spoken a particular language and made particular tools in particular dwellings; protolanguages were spoken by people with particular skulls who had made particular tools in particular dwellings; unearthened dwellings contained people who had spoken particular languages, and so on. All of them, if assembled and named, were someone’s more or less worthy ancestors: some Tatar and Chuvash scholars argued over the Bulgars; some Georgian and Armenian scholars argued over Urartu; some Russian scholars argued with

155. The quote is from “Itogi arkhеologicheskikh issledovaniĭ v 1946–50 godakh,” *Vestnik Akademii nauk SSSR* 8 (1951): 107. See also S. V. Kiselev, “Voprosy arkhеologii pervobytnogo obshchestva v svete trudov I. V. Stalina po iazykoznaniiu,” *Kratkie soobshcheniia o dokladakh i polevykh issledovaniiax Instituta istorii material'noi kul'tury* 36 (1951): 3–13; “Obsuzhdenie trudov I. V. Stalina po voprosam iazykoznaniiia,” *Kratkie soobshcheniia o dokladakh i polevykh issledovaniiax Instituta istorii material'noi kul'tury* 36 (1951): 203–9; “Sessiia otdeleniia istorii i filosofii,” *Vestnik Akademii nauk SSSR* 8 (1951): 42–43; E. V. Veimarn and S. F. Strzheletskii, “K voprosu o slavianakh v Krymu,” *Voprosy istorii* 4 (1952): 94–99; A. P. Smirnov, “K voprosu o slavianakh v Krymu,” *Vestnik drevnei istorii* 3 (1953): 32–45; Miller, *Archaeology in the USSR*, 132–68; and *Protiv vul'garizatsii marksizma v arkhеologii* (Moscow, 1953), 45–47.

156. Ashnin and Alpatov, “*Delo slavistov*,” 180, RTsKhIDNI, f. 17, op. 132, d. 336, ll. 77–78, 87.

157. I. S. Gurvich, ed., *Etnogenez narodov Severa* (Moscow, 1980), 4.

the uninvited Varangians, and one Uzbek scholar proved conclusively that the “primordial, indigenous, original inhabitants” of the present-day territory of Uzbekistan were nearly identical to the present-day Uzbeks in language, physical type, and horse-breeding excellence.¹⁵⁸ It seemed obvious as well as officially sanctioned that “every nationality wanted to know where it came from, and where the origins of its language, culture, and peculiar traits lay.”¹⁵⁹ It was equally obvious that not all answers were acceptable. Marr’s final solution of the Great Ethnological Predicament proved temporary.

158. M. Ermatov, *Etnogenez i formirovanie predkov uzbekskogo naroda* (Tashkent, 1968), 8–9, 15–16. For a survey of the Tatar-Chuvash controversy, see Victor A. Shnirelman, *Who Gets the Past? Competition for Ancestors among Non-Russian Intellectuals in Russia* (Washington, D.C., 1996). See also Philip L. Kohl and Gocha R. Tsetschladze, “Nationalism, Politics, and the Practice of Archaeology in the Caucasus,” in Kohl and Fawcett, eds., *Nationalism, Politics, and the Practice of Archaeology*, 149–74.

159. P. N. Tret'iakov, “K voprosu o vzniknovenii i drevnei istorii finno-ugorskikh plemen Povolzh'ia,” in *Etnogenez mordovskogo naroda* (Saransk, 1965), 7. For very thoughtful early analyses of the Soviet ethnological predicament, see G. S. Knabe, “Vopros o sootnoshenii arkheologicheskoi kul'tury i etnosa v sovremennoi zarubezhnoi literature,” *Sovetskaia arkheologiia* 3 (1959): 243–57; and A. L. Mongait, “Arkheologicheskie kul'tury i etnicheskie obshchnosti,” *Narody Azii i Afriki* 1 (1967): 53–76.