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# Modernist Primitivism?: The Case of Kandinsky<sup>1</sup>

CAROL MCKAY

Several recent publications have focused critical attention on the various 'primitivisms' of cultural modernity, enabling much needed discussion of modernism in its many contradictory manifestations.<sup>2</sup> Jill Lloyd, for instance, has convincingly demonstrated the immensely flexible nature of 'the primitive' as an Expressionist cultural category, focusing on Dresden and Berlin Expressionism.<sup>3</sup> The 'primitivism' of the Munich-based *Blaue Reiter* group, however, has not yet been subject to the same intensive interrogation. I hope to begin to address this, by focusing on the peculiar amalgam of the modern and non-modern in Kandinsky's work in the pre-1914 period: an amalgam diversely manifest across both his visual and verbal practice, in images such as *Song of the Volga* (1906, Fig. 1) and *Picture*

*with an Archer* (1909) and also in literary form in his 1913 essay 'Reminiscences'.

The aim of this essay, then, is to investigate the socio-historical complexities of Kandinsky's modernist aspirations. To this end, I argue that we can comprehend Kandinsky's modern 'primitivism' only by considering his earlier involvement, as a student at Moscow University, in burgeoning Russian ethnographic studies. I should make clear both the strengths and the limitations of my approach. Firstly, while Kandinsky's visual practice moves in and out of focus, it is not my central concern here. On the contrary, I have chosen to articulate the article around two pieces of written evidence: Kandinsky's autobiographical essay 'Reminiscences', published in 1913 by Herwarth



*Fig. 1. Wassily Kandinsky: 'Song of the Volga', 1906, tempera on cardboard. 49 × 66 cm. Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris.*

Walden's *Der Sturm* press,<sup>4</sup> and the scholarly article of 1889 in which he published the findings of his ethnographic field-work conducted in the late spring of that year.<sup>5</sup> This deliberately 'oblique' approach to Kandinsky's work is of considerable importance, enabling me to move beyond the art-historical moment of his practice, to consider the extent to which it can be positioned differently: within a broader, though still historically specific, cultural field. I am particularly concerned with how ethnography and art, as modernist cultural practices in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, shade into each other: their common ground is one subject of my investigation. Moreover, I have constructed this article so as to enable me to elucidate the critical socio-political meanings implicit in Kandinsky's ethnographic publication of 1889, thus also reconsidering his position as a representative of the Russian 'intelligentsia' in the late nineteenth century. In these respects, my examination of Kandinsky's university studies is distinct from that of Peg Weiss who, in recent publications, has addressed Kandinsky's ethnographic work whilst developing her account of the importance of shamanism in his art.<sup>6</sup> Despite some perceptive insights, which I acknowledge in my essay, I would argue that Weiss over-simplifies the historical coordinates of Kandinsky's 'primitivism'. Above all, she fails to locate his ethnographic training and written texts within the prevailing discourses of the discipline at the time.

This article, then, aims to expand the terms of reference for comprehending Kandinsky's modern 'primitivism'. Since he wove an account of his ethnographic work in 'Old Russia' tightly into the fabric of his 'Reminiscences', this is the starting point of my investigation.

### Modernism and 'Old Russia'

In his much publicised critique of Expressionism, Georg Lukács directed his attention to the question of narrative in literary Expressionism, suggesting that renunciation of narrative amounted to an attack on history: disavowing the objective reality of historical change.<sup>7</sup> This observation is relevant to the narrative pattern of Kandinsky's 'Reminiscences', which is deliberately non-linear; Kandinsky disrupted narrative flow through a form of literary montage. The essay is structured as a series of juxtaposed tableaux which are thematically interwoven but not chronological. Form and content are inseparable in the essay; its overarching theme — of temporal and geographical interconnectedness — is characteristically modernist and idealist.

The literary remembrances of 'Reminiscences' are enigmatic, deliberately partaking of the nature of recovered memories: even, in places, presented as an account of dreams and visions. Deliberately avoiding a straightforward, immediately accessible account of

the genesis of an artist, Kandinsky's essay is consciously stylised, a piece of literature which also declares its distance from scientific and critical prose. 'Reminiscences' purports to uncover the 'archaeological' layering of Kandinsky's own artistic persona, collaging together comforting childhood memories and remembrances of student days with experiences from the more recent past in Munich, and presenting all of these as but stages in the inexorable development of an artistic initiate. The assemblage of images continually whisks the modern reader away from the Western metropolis, back to 'Old Russia': to the old Russia of Kandinsky's childhood reminiscences, and to the old Russia which he studied at Moscow University.

Yet Kandinsky's essay is not entirely mythic. From the complex weave of fictionalised facts, we can disentangle some revealing autobiographical and historical fragments. Kandinsky consciously emphasised the ethnic diversity of his family background. His maternal aunt and grandmother were German-speaking Balts, while his father came 'from Eastern Siberia, to which his forefathers were banished from Western Siberia for political reasons'.<sup>8</sup> More precisely, Kandinsky senior was born in Kyakhta, a town on what is now the border of Russia and Mongolia, southeast of Lake Baikal.<sup>9</sup> Less personally, Kandinsky also recalled his University career in 'Reminiscences', referring repeatedly to the period between 1886 and 1895, when he pursued a broad legal and social science curriculum, studying various disciplines of economics, law and ethnography. In 1913, he particularly emphasised his study of customary law, relating this to his fascination with the burgeoning discipline of ethnography; 'which, I promised myself initially, would reveal to me the soul of the people'.<sup>10</sup> One of the most powerful images of the essay comprises an account of his ethnographic field-trip of 1889, when he left behind the city-based academic environment of Moscow to travel to the remoter reaches of Western Siberia.<sup>11</sup>

Kandinsky's persistent enthusiasm for ethnography was shared by modernist artists as diverse as Picasso and Emil Nolde. On the other hand, I will argue that it was also shaped by his distinctive academic commitments, and should be seen historically: as part of a widespread demand by academics in the old Russian Empire for a history of the 'People' (the *narod*), as distinct from the history of the Russian state.<sup>12</sup> This demand, initially informed by the German tradition of counterposing popular history to statist history, was, in turn, a catalyst in the development of Russian ethnographic studies. One such 'popular' historian, A. P. Shchapov, devoted most of his research to his native Siberia, and described the motivation for his historical studies:

Is (the) majority of our citizenry to be eternally voiceless, passive, inactive. Does not the vast majority have the right to enlightenment, historical development, to life and

significance, as much as the gentry and clergy? . . . Read the chronicles or the historical records up to the 18th Century: who built, founded and populated the Russian land, cleared the soil of forest and marshes? Who, if not the communal peasant?<sup>13</sup>

N. I. Kostomarov, a champion of Ukrainian autonomy against the centralising tendencies of the Empire, justified his interest in 'the life of the popular masses' in similar terms. In 1863, he delivered a lecture on the relation of historical studies to ethnography, taking to task those historians who ignored

the untouched life of the popular masses, their social and domestic life, their habits, customs, conceptions, upbringing, vices and aspirations.<sup>14</sup>

Kostomarov declared his own interest in 'the spirit of the people' and in his historical research turned to ethnography and folklore as sources. His work is representative of a wider, articulate Ukrainian nationalism which was created in the nineteenth century by a group of non-aristocratic intellectuals, combining the quest for social justice and political democracy with wide-ranging research in Ukrainian history and culture.<sup>15</sup> The historical work undertaken by both Kostomarov and Shchapov was linked with the developing disciplines of ethnography and statistics; the whole intellectual field in turn was provincialist, if not federalist, in orientation, and as such challenged the existing Imperialist ideology of a unified and internally homogenous state.

Kandinsky's ethnographic work at Moscow University was shaped, in part, by a similar intellectual ideal of 'the People'. This is most clearly manifest in the previously mentioned article he published in 1889. His 'Materials on the Sysol — and — Vechegda Zyrians — the National Deities (according to Contemporary Beliefs)<sup>16</sup> was based on field-work he undertook in Western Siberia, under the auspices of the *Imperial Society for the friends of the Natural Sciences, Anthropology and Ethnography*. The comparison with burgeoning 'popular' historiography can be made quite precisely, since we know that, as part of his preparatory reading for his 'on-the-spot' research, Kandinsky consulted the work of Johannes Andreas Sjögren.<sup>17</sup> Sjögren, a philologist as well as historian, focused on the early history and ethnography of the 'Finnisch-Russischen Norden', advocating detailed study of 'the People' from the point of view of customs, tradition and language, and emphasising, in his own work, the early, pre-Russian history of the Finnish peoples. Moreover, in the early years of his artistic career before the first World War, Kandinsky produced a series of works which, in iconography and ideology, are explicable at least in part by his knowledge of Sjögren's work.<sup>18</sup> These constitute his artistic myths of the 'popular life'. Two of the most significant of these works, *The Arrival of the Merchants* (1905, private collection, London) and *Das bunte*

*Leben* (1907, Fig. 2), can be linked quite precisely to Sjögren's publications. Even the title of the later painting is appropriate with respect to Sjögren's account of the early pre-Russian Finnish communities. Sjögren evoked the 'colourful life' of the People, implying that the original harmony of the *Gemeinschaften* was disrupted by invading Russians:

However, when the Russians began their relentless expansion, then the original tight bonds between these clans were ripped apart.<sup>19</sup>

When considering the modern Zyrians of Western Siberia, Sjögren argued that, despite the history of enforced Russification, the original rich diversity had survived through to the present, such that the present populace constituted a veritable *mélange*. Sjögren's cultural analysis revealed the 'People' as indeed a 'motley crowd'.

Like *Arrival of the Merchants*, *Song of the Volga* (1906) is also dependent on Sjögren's detailed account of the socio-economic existence of the pre-industrialised northern peoples. Sjögren emphasised the importance of hunting, agriculture and trade, all interconnected in the economic vitality of the north Russian communities. He also continually highlighted links between the socio-economic and material existence of the people and the nature of their religious habits, customs and beliefs, stressing, for example, the close coincidence between the recent development of towns and trading centres and the existence of ancient sacred spots. Such spots, for the pre-Christian peoples, were inevitably prominent but isolated places, on high mountains or in dark woods, especially in river areas and on islands. In Christian centuries, he argued, these ancient spots continued not only as centres of economic and social growth, but also as the special religious centres of the new faith.<sup>20</sup> According to Sjögren, continuity, multiplicity and diversity were the hallmarks of 'the People'. Both *Song of the Volga* and *Arrival of the Merchants* image exactly the kind of setting Sjögren described, with settlements and market-place sited among quite untamed, inhospitable forest-land and hills, in a clearing near a river artery. *Arrival of the Merchants* also echoes Sjögren's accounts of the annual trading occasions:

Indeed, it is said that in ancient times an enormous annual market was held on the banks of the Pechora, on a large, open meadow . . . and merchants from all the northern peoples came to trade, in expensive furs above all. They travelled very long distances, even from northern Sweden, as the legends expressly state.<sup>21</sup>

International trade in fur and pelts was central to the economy of the region and, according to Sjögren, continued as such through to the modern period. He argued that the Zyrians, for example, were still extraordinarily skilful hunters; with simple weapons, bows and arrows essentially, they could shoot a squirrel through the muzzle at a distance of some



Fig. 2. Wassily Kandinsky: 'Das bunte Leben', 1907, tempera on canvas, 130 × 162.5 cm. Städtische Galerie, Munich.

twenty *Sashen*, thus effectively protecting the pelt. Equally, from boats on the river, they could shoot birds in flight.<sup>22</sup>

Recalling his ethnographic interests in the 1918 Russian version of 'Reminiscences', Kandinsky connected his initial enthusiasm for ethnography with the influence of his aunt Elizaveta Ivanova Tikheeva:

It is to her that I owe the origin of my love . . . of the profound nature of the Russian people.<sup>23</sup>

He also stressed that she was a German-speaking Balt; more precisely, in his literary representation, his aunt was a trans-cultural, bilingual intellectual with a passionate interest in the culture of 'the People'. Kandinsky's image of her becomes especially powerful, moreover, when analysed in the context of late Imperial history. By appealing to the Russian 'People', and to a representative of the German-speaking Baltic minority of Russia, Kandinsky was mobilising two images which signified anti-Imperialism. Both 'the People' and Baltic

Russia were charged notions which Kandinsky used later in his 'Reminiscences' as metaphors for individual autonomy. In both instances, however, the terms are artistic idealisations which effectively suppress complex histories. Such terms had been of the moment not in 1913 or 1918, but a generation earlier, in the last two decades of the nineteenth century, when Kandinsky was engaged in his social science studies. In the following section of my article, I pursue the 'Baltic connection' in some detail. My discussion serves two — not wholly distinct — purposes. Firstly, it enables me to open up Kandinsky's ethnographic practice for scrutiny; I argue that, through his ethnographic research and publication, Kandinsky drew analogies between the historical experience of the Zyrians of Western Siberia on the one hand, and the contemporary pattern of Russian Imperial expansion in the Baltic regions on the other: Zyrians, like the peoples of the Baltic regions, had suffered enforced Russification and cultural assimilation. In turn, this argument allows me to establish more fully the distinctive features of Kandinsky's modernist 'primitivism'.

## The Baltic Connection

The reality of Russian Imperialism entailed immense problems in the relationship between conquerors and 'natives'. In nineteenth-century Russia, the Imperial principle of one indivisible Russia, based on legal-administrative uniformity and centralised control, was continually in conflict with the reality of over one hundred ethnic groups, cultures, creeds and tongues. If language is taken as a litmus test of ethnicity and nationality, then census data from 1897 showed that Russian-speaking nationals were actually in a minority in the Empire as a whole.

The three Baltic provinces of Estland, Livland and Kurland had been annexed to Imperial Russia in the eighteenth century.<sup>24</sup> Initially, Imperialist policy in the region followed the precedent set by earlier Prussian and Swedish overlords, allowing a long-established, narrow group of German nobility to maintain its local dominance over the indigenous Estonian and Latvian population. German nobles and townsmen controlled local religion, courts, trade and commerce, as well as the land and institutions of self-government. The history of the following century is in large part the history of the growth of nationalist consciousness in the provinces. This was combined with comparatively rapid social and economic modernization, fostering increasing literacy among native speakers.<sup>25</sup> The process of such nationalist awakening was a particularly complicated one, played out against the political, social and economic fabric of rival Russian and German interests competing for dominance in the region.

Initially, nationalist awareness was encouraged by an educated, German-speaking middle-class. This so-called *Bürgerstand* comprised artisans, merchants and skilled professionals, as well as academics based, for example, in the University of Dorpat. As a developing social group, the *Bürgerstand* undermined the unified noble identity of Baltic Germans. The historian Andrejs Plakans has convincingly demonstrated the influence of German history and philosophy among educated German-speakers in the Baltic regions.<sup>26</sup> Before the middle of the nineteenth century, the upper and middle strata of Baltic society were almost exclusively German, and any Estonian or Latvian who reached these heights was essentially co-opted into the Baltic German value system. In Estonia, even early nationalist intellectuals such as Robert Faehmann and F. R. Kreutzwald were educated entirely in German.<sup>27</sup>

J. G. Herder's celebration of oral traditions was particularly influential among German-educated intellectuals in the first half of the century, as was his criticism of the 'enslavement' of the Baltic non-German *Völker*. Plakans traces the appearance, in this milieu, of a variety of well-organised and well-financed scholarly associations. Through annual meetings and publications, these associations were

investigating assiduously the cultural life of the indigenous peasantry, studying its languages and, in effect, expanding the total information available to the Baltic Germans about the *undeutsche* peasantry.<sup>28</sup> Such learned societies included the *Gelehrte Estnische Gesellschaft*, founded in Dorpat in 1838. In fine Germanic tradition, the societies pursued their historical work under the assumption that organically integrated Latvian and Estonian folk-cultures existed and could be investigated. These were cultures which, in theory, were expressive of a collective folk soul in which all *Volk* members ultimately participated, regardless of their particular historical circumstances.

Baltic German scholarly interest in peasant culture, no matter how romantically ideal, encouraged belief in the intrinsic value of native culture. This belief, in turn, was a fundamental spur in the nascent national consciousness of the Balts, initially growing among the tiny minority of native intellectuals and professionals. The Estonian Jakob Hurt was one leading nationalist publicist. A graduate of the German University of Dorpat, he was deeply impressed by Herderian ideals. In the 1870s he stressed the uniqueness of Baltic experience and the common bonds of the people who shared it. Nevertheless, he urged that the model basis for a developed Estonian future lay in Baltic German culture.<sup>29</sup> His was only one voice in an often emotional debate as to the loyalties of this strategically and symbolically powerful region. This debate was played out in different discursive arenas: in the Russian press, in burgeoning Estonian and Latvian literature, as well as in German-language publications.<sup>30</sup>

Baltic nationalist aspirations, however, can be distinguished from the German intellectual tradition. Nationalist sympathisers aimed to develop a modern and vital national identity, as opposed to creating a *volksisch* ideal around the reality of past peasant servitude. The newspaper *Petersburgas avizes*, for instance, became one focus for Latvian nationalist intellectuals in the 1860s.<sup>31</sup> A number of former students of political economy at the University of Dorpat were prominent contributors to the newspaper. As students, the nationalist leaders Krisjanis Valdemars and Juris Alunans, for example, had resented the subordinate status of the Latvian language: the languages of high culture, and therefore power, were German and Russian. To pursue an academic or professional career at Dorpat required facility in both.<sup>32</sup> *Petersburgas avizes* championed the interconnected causes of establishing universal Latvian literacy and developing a specifically Latvian literature for a native audience, with a native set of supportive institutions.

As this suggests, whilst many Baltic publicists in the last decades of the century advocated giving priority to economic self-improvement, institutional reform and local political participation, many others preferred to concentrate on 'culture-building'. An



integral aspect of the programme for developing Baltic cultural life was the systematic collection and writing-down of oral traditions. Through the 1880s, this ambitious project was pursued in Latvia by Fricis Brivzemniek and nationalist collaborators. Publication of the materials continued well into the next century. From 1872, the *Society of Estonian Literati* pursued a similar cultural programme. In practice, the intelligentsia of the Baltic region were galvanising the 'modernisation' of indigenous oral traditions, transforming them, from above, into a literary and literate culture.<sup>33</sup>

For his own research in 1889, as already noted, Kandinsky consulted work by J. A. Sjögren. Sjögren's *Gesammelte Schriften* published in 1861 included the posthumous appearance of his 'Livische Grammatik nebst Sprachproben';<sup>34</sup> this work on 'die Liven und ihre Sprache' was exemplary of such linguistic and historical studies of the Baltic peoples. Sjögren's work was of interest to Kandinsky in very particular respects, not least of all as Sjögren epitomised a powerful intellectual ideal of trans-cultural, 'universal' scholarship in his studies of 'die Völker'. Sjögren was a Finn who specialised in the diverse Finno-Ugric languages and cultures of northern Russia, including Zyrian; moreover, he was sponsored in his work by the authorities in St. Petersburg and was widely published in Finnish, Russian and German.<sup>35</sup> A Baltic Finn, Sjögren was as such not directly a subject of the Russian Empire. Nevertheless, the development of Finnish national consciousness in the nineteenth century was very much part of the wider socio-political history of the Baltic regions. Sjögren's 'Livische Grammatik' formed an integral component in his extensive studies of Finno-Ugric language and history, and this work as a whole exerted a powerful ideological force in the Finnish national movement. In particular,

the diffusion of his ideas ... gave substance to a ... growing realization that the Finns were not an isolated group wedged between Germanic and Slavic peoples in the north of Europe, but were ... related to a large proportion of mankind.<sup>36</sup>

This revaluation of Baltic languages and cultures was also achieved through revising history. By reclaiming their own past, Latvian intellectuals, for example, aimed to demonstrate that the history of 'the People' was not simply one of submissive inferiority and peasantry. Historians and writers focused their attention on Baltic pre-German culture, seeking to activate a sense of pride in early Latvian mythology and religion, in the exploits of historic and mythic heroes. Part of this effort was the attempt to establish unity between time past and present. Specifically, this historical mythmaking attempted to link nationalist struggles of the nineteenth century with the medieval period of strife between pre-Christian Balts and the invading

Teutonic orders. Such reimagined Baltic history depicted the current conflicts as part of a continuous story comprising seven centuries of Baltic resistance.

Symptomatic of this historical mythmaking was the publication in 1888 of a long poem, 'The Bear Slayer'. The epic was produced by Andrejs Pumpurs, specifically as a modern Latvian version of the Estonian 'Kalevipoeg' or the Finnish 'Kalevala'. Like the latter, the modern Latvian epic depicted heroes of 'the People' defending their cultural heritage against the dark forces of evil. Like the 'Kalevala', the epic became a powerful and popular symbol for the national cause.<sup>37</sup> The example of 'The Bear Slayer' demonstrates how nationalist intellectuals deliberately approached history and myth not so much in the hope of recovering an essential folk spirit, but in search of an effective ideology to serve the larger cause of building an autonomous and vital modern culture: as a means towards nothing less than a revolution in consciousness. A similar attitude lies behind much of Kandinsky's cavalier use of folk symbolism in his Munich work, where he constructed a myth, a wonderful illusion of the 'colourful life' of 'the People', through a variety of different forms, including paintings like *Das bunte Leben* and the essay 'Reminiscences'.<sup>38</sup>

There is no direct evidence that Kandinsky knew 'The Bear Slayer'. But he knew, for certain, of its Finnish counterpart summarising the mythology of the Finnic peoples. The fourth exhibition of the *Phalanx*, the independent exhibition organisation initiated by Kandinsky in the early years of the twentieth century in Munich, featured the work of the Finn, Akseli Gallen-Kallela.<sup>39</sup> Gallen-Kallela's paintings illustrating the 'Kalevala' had been well-received already in Paris and Munich at the turn of the century. Kandinsky personally invited the Finnish nationalist to exhibit with the *Phalanx*, and many of the works he showed were based on themes from the epic.

Kandinsky's interest in the Finnish epic is likely to have been stimulated in the course of his work on the ethnography of the Zyrian people at Moscow University. The Zyrians, like native-speaking Finns and Balts, were members of the broad linguistic category of Finno-Ugric.<sup>40</sup> Sjögren's 'Die Syrjänen, ein historisch-statistisch-philologische Versuch', which Kandinsky consulted, was printed in the two volumes of Sjögren's collected works, published simultaneously in St. Petersburg, Leipzig and Riga in 1861.<sup>41</sup> This publication was ideologically loaded; in his Zyrian study in particular Sjögren was concerned to highlight the heroic doggedness of the native *Volk* in resisting their conquering invaders, drawing analogies between the Zyrian medieval experience and the conquest of Finland by the Swedes in the twelfth century.

Finnish nationalist feeling itself grew rapidly in the 1880s and '90s in fierce resistance to Russian encroachment on treasured Finnish autonomy and

to the demands for closer control over Finnish affairs by the authorities at St Petersburg.<sup>42</sup> In the Baltics, during the same period, the rooting of nationalism entailed immense negotiation of two counter-forces. On the one hand, Baltic nationalism encountered the problems of conservative German reaction. On the other, was the increasingly difficult problem of resisting total assimilation by Imperial Russia. Alexander III had become Emperor in 1881 following the assassination of his father. During his reign, concerted measures were adopted to stem dissident voices critical of government policies for forging a modern nation state. By the mid 1880s, the Emperor was in accord with Russian nationalist ideologues. Dissatisfied with attempts merely at political and administrative integration of the Empire — a gradualist approach generally favoured by his father Alexander II — Alexander III advocated that Russia could only become a modern nation state if her borderland minorities accepted the language as well as the cultural and religious values of the Russian people. By the last decades of the century, ‘Russification’ had come to mean cultural as well as political, economic and administrative assimilation.

The pressures of enforced Russification in the Baltics became especially acute in the same decade. The new Imperialist policy effectively encroached on the long-established privileges of the Baltic German minority and simultaneously threatened the recently established drive for national liberties. One particular area of hostility concerned the Imperialist policy of converting the region to the state Orthodox church. This was entirely in accord with the significant role assigned to Russian Orthodoxy in the official ideology of the tsarist regime. Also provoking widespread hostility was the attempted imposition of the Russian language at all but the lowest levels of government and its compulsory teaching in elementary schools.

The entire education question was a hotbed of contention, and was a matter of first priority for many nationalists.<sup>43</sup> However, education, and especially the issue of language, was also a major focus for the German-Russian *Kulturkampf* played out in the Baltics. In the educational debate in particular, the interests of native Estonians and Latvians were frequently marginalised. Baltic education in the nineteenth century was widely recognised to be of high standard. Many Estonians, Latvians and Russians resented the fact that the desirable Baltic elementary and secondary schools were controlled by the German nobility and the Lutheran Church. Education was a key to preserving the societal status quo of Baltic German privilege and, until 1880, despite criticism, the autonomy of this education system remained basically intact.<sup>44</sup>

Education was brought firmly on to the political agenda in the wake of Senator N. A. Mansein’s wide-ranging inspection of the Baltic regions in 1882–3. Mansein was a prominent Russian nationalist and his report, submitted in 1884, strongly

urged immediate Russian intervention in all areas of economic, political and cultural life.<sup>45</sup> He particularly regretted that education had failed to unite the Baltic provinces with the rest of the empire by instilling in their inhabitants respect and understanding for the Russian language, history and literature.<sup>46</sup> His report thus made recommendations for bringing Baltic education firmly under the control of the Imperial Ministry of Education.<sup>47</sup> At the highest education level, Russian interference in Baltic educational autonomy is epitomised in the closing of the German University of Dorpat and its reopening, in 1894, not as the Estonian University of Tartu, but as the Russian University of Iurev. Mansein’s report had criticised the students and professors at Dorpat for living in a private world of Baltic privilege, cut off from the rest of Russia and culturally and intellectually linked with Germany. He recommended fundamental changes, not least the introduction of Russian as the language of instruction.<sup>48</sup>

The shift from instruction in German to instruction in Russian occurred in the period 1889–95. Control of knowledge effectively shifted from one non-Estonian group to another, while, among the student body, native Estonians remained in a tiny minority.<sup>49</sup> The Imperial government’s policies for controlling Dorpat University should be seen in the context of the new university policy for the empire as a whole, decided upon early in the reign of Alexander III. Student disorders following the unpopular appointment of Ivan Delianov as minister of education convinced Imperial officials of the need to strengthen control over university faculties and student bodies. The new Universities’ Statute of 1884, by revoking many gains on academic freedom established during the so-called Great Reform period, reaffirmed the government’s intent to dedicate universities to the preservation of monarchical absolutism.<sup>50</sup> In ‘Reminiscences’, moreover, Kandinsky recalled his experiences at Moscow University during precisely this period of intellectual repression. He remembered both the oppression and the various forms that resistance took, recalling ‘our new societies, the subterranean rumblings of political movements, the development of student autonomy . . .’,<sup>51</sup> this referring to the proliferation of underground student-union groups and mutual aid societies in the 1890s, such as the *zemliachestva* organizations uniting students from the same regions.

Imperial restrictions on educational autonomy at Dorpat were particularly insidious, coinciding as they did with extreme attacks on this same target in the Russian nationalist press, as for example by the leading Slavophile Ivan Aksakov in the newspaper *Rus’*.<sup>52</sup> Typically, this animosity provoked liberal reaction, notably with voices being raised in defence of Dorpat on the grounds of true academic freedom in the liberal weekly *Vestnik Evropy* [Oct 3, 1885]. (Even in his ‘Reminiscences’ Kandinsky was effectively reanimating such a liberal position, depicting



his aunt in such a way as to subvert the extremes of nationalistic posturing. Here was a Baltic German who also loved Russian culture. She was no narrow provincial separatist, according to him, but, rather, a free-thinking, educated cosmopolitan). Regardless of all objections from the Russian liberal intelligentsia, however, the real Russification of Dorpat University was imposed from 1889, beginning with the law faculty. The concerted opposition of both Russian and German law professors proved ineffective, and the entire university very quickly lost its remaining autonomy thereafter.<sup>53</sup> In the old Russian Empire of the 1890s, intellectual freedom seemed a short-lived and fast-disappearing ideal. It was only one instance of the seemingly relentless extension of Imperial power into all aspects of Russian social life during the swan-song of the Empire. Imposed Russification at Dorpat crystallised two mutually supporting Imperial policies: on the one hand, the policy of curbing academic independence; on the other, the policy of extirpating any remaining regional autonomy which could be seen to retard rational modernisation in this age of nationalism.

In 1896, after a distinguished graduate career at Moscow University, Kandinsky was offered and turned down an academic appointment at the 'new' University of Dorpat (Iurev): this decision to abandon a flourishing career merits some further consideration, more particularly in relation to his ethnographic studies. This is one function of my next section, where I also demonstrate that Kandinsky did not jettison his academic commitments entirely on moving to Munich to study art. I am aware, moreover, that Kandinsky's ethnographic practice has been glimpsed sideways in my discussion so far. Hence, my main aim in the following discussion is to bring it into sharper focus, by concentrating on his fieldwork-based article of 1889.

## Kandinsky's Ethnography

The nascent science of ethnography at Moscow University encouraged scholarly investigation of the whole intricate web of culturally diverse peoples comprising the Russian Empire, as witnessed through the 1880s and 1890s by publications such as *Ethnographic Review* and *Works of the Ethnographic Section of the Imperial Society for the Friends of the Natural Sciences, Anthropology and Ethnography*. Such university-based activity can be compared with the nationalist movement in the Baltic regions, which sought to develop a sense of the polyphony of indigenous culture. Similarly, Russian ethnography aimed to explore a complex Imperial society and to understand its history. The academic ethnography in which Kandinsky participated respected local cultures, particularly traditions, customs and habits. Yet, not unlike the Baltic nationalist movement, it was pursued as an integral part of a wider task self-consciously adopted by an independent 'intelli-

gentsia': the task of creating conditions for a new, modern and vital society, free of Imperialist auto-cracy.

In 1889 Kandinsky undertook his fieldwork among an ethnic group on the fringes of Western Siberia. The immediate object was to study:

the national deities of the Sysol- and Vechegda-Zyrians. When I chose this subject out of the field of general research into religious conceptions, it was with the intention of reconstructing as far as possible traces of the pagan past, insofar as these traces can be established in the chaos of present-day religious ideas, which are so strongly influenced by Christianity.<sup>54</sup>

Part of his published research essay included criticism of State and Church policies which had led to the irretrievable loss of indigenous, non-Russian, cultural heritage. He pointed specifically to a strange contradiction in present Zyrian culture. On the one hand, all previous researchers had concurred in noting how the Zyrians were consummate masters in the art of forgetting their own history, denying their ties with the past. On the other hand, he argued, they exhibited a lively interest in legends of other people's past. They listened to such tales with great interest, and supplemented their oral fare with literary texts. In Kandinsky's opinion, this seeming contradiction could be explained by the circumstances of the rapid conquest and conversion of the region in the thirteenth century, at the time of St Stephen of Perm:

The strong arm of the missionary ripped away every link with the past, the pagan forefathers were insultingly termed 'poganye' [dirty, unpalatable] and even now the word 'pagan' is a term of abuse.<sup>55</sup>

Kandinsky noted, in particular, that the present Zyrians denied all relationship with the ethnic Chuds. However, in Zyrian oral tradition and also in their literature he encountered stories about the Chuds. As an example he singled out the story of how St Stephen's plans to baptise the Chuds were thwarted when the Chuds fled from him and even took such drastic steps in defense of their own culture as to bury themselves alive with their possessions. These burial spots, he noted, became known to the Zyrians as 'Chud-trenches'. Although many of the older people claimed to know the sites of these graves, they were fearful of excavating them because they were 'impure'. The Zyrians, according to Kandinsky, were sure of one thing about their own history; they knew their ancestors had not followed the Chud example. The Zyrians saw the light and were converted.<sup>56</sup>

While recognising the Zyrian cavalier approach to history and myth-making, Kandinsky, as an investigating outsider, rationalised the possibility that the Chuds and the Zyrians were originally one and the same people and that the circumstances of their history, seen as being one of conflict with an

invading power, explained the present-day ideological confusion. If the Zyrians and the Chuds were originally one, he implied, this helped explain repeated Zyrian stories about the wealth and high culture of the early Chuds. He noted one oral tradition claiming that, at the time of the Russian encroachment, the Chuds were not nomads; they were a settled agricultural people. They were so wealthy, according to this Zyrian story, that they cultivated their land with silver ploughs.<sup>57</sup>

Kandinsky even cited the testimony of one old man who held the opinion that the Zyrians were Chuds. This venerable sage, a stereotypical informant for nineteenth-century ethnographers, claimed that in earlier times the Chuds had lived in the region now occupied by the Zyrians, and that they were then known as 'Komi' [Zyrian]. The conquering Russians, however, because they did not understand the language of the indigenous people, enforced the name 'Chud', derived from the Russian word for 'incomprehensible'. This, Kandinsky was suggesting, confirmed the conquering power's repressive religious policies.<sup>58</sup>

Reading this article on Zyrian religious customs prompts me to return to Kandinsky's artistic practice, to reiterate my argument that images such as *Das bunte Leben* and *Picture with an Archer* were shaped by his earlier ethnographic work. Kandinsky had, of course, consulted Sjögren's detailed account of the Zyrians, which also dealt with the Zyrian legends about 'Chud-trenches', and Sjögren's version informs the layered iconographies of both *Das bunte Leben* and *Picture with an Archer*. Sjögren suggested, in particular, that these burial places on sites once sacred to the Chuds were taken over in the Christian period, and that churches and Christian graveyards now stood on the same sacred spots where the Chuds battled to defend their faith.<sup>59</sup>

*Picture with an Archer* occupies a paradoxical position in Kandinsky's ethnographic artistry. On the one hand, it declares itself 'modernist' in its Expressionist style and technique, and its iconography anticipates the elaborate *Blue Rider* self-imagery of Kandinsky and Marc, as avant-garde vanquishers of contemporary philistines. Yet, on the other hand, the modernism of the image is much less coherent when seen against Sjögren's narrative of ancient Chud resistance. Sjögren described the so-called *Gorodoki* of the Chuds: these were entrenchments and defences, always on hill-tops near water, inside which the Chuds obstinately defended themselves against the encroaching Russians, firing with bows and arrows as the enemy advanced. These ruined defences, traces of which could still be identified, according to Sjögren, had probably also been pagan sacrificial spots.<sup>60</sup> Sjögren evoked this pagan cult-system in colourful language, describing how earth and water were the main objects of veneration; rivers, seas, islands, forested banks, mountains and hills were sacred to these peoples, along with all the 'marvels' associated with

them. All of these disparate elements are synthesised in Kandinsky's scene of ethnographic modernism in 1909.

The scene of *Das bunte Leben* is also set among the Vologda peoples; the skilful archer about to bag his squirrel pelt has been pointed out by Peg Weiss in an extremely pertinent examination of this painting.<sup>61</sup> From the perspective of Kandinsky's 1889 essay, however, the most relevant aspect of the painting, his ideal, visual representation of the 'colourful People', is the synthesis of pagan traditions and practices alongside later Christian customs. While all of the mythically natural elements of Sjögren's description are present (river, wooded banks, shaded groves and mountain with fortified settlement on the top), and the geographical setting on the margins of the Russian Empire is beyond doubt, the historical moment is much less certain. The churchyard and the graveyard on the right signify a Christian era, as does the presence of the hermit monk figure on the far left and the fact that the hill-top settlement hints at a prosperous christianised development, with a suggestion of Muscovite cupolas. But the 'colourful' ambiguities are manifold. Thematically and formally the composition revolves round a series of paired contrasts: life and death, old and young, peace and war. Likewise, the binaries pagan and Christian are simultaneously manipulated. The battle of the middle ground may be seen as a reference to the struggles of the native inhabitants against the encroaching Russians, while the Chud burial mounds on the left background are counterpointed against the Christian churchyard on the right.

The monk figure symbolises the role of the orthodox faith in ordering the relations of the living and the dead, while it has been suggested elsewhere that the central figure of the venerable old man with the staff refers to the role of the 'village' sage, perhaps specifically to the pagan magic-man or shaman.<sup>62</sup> Certainly, in his 1889 essay Kandinsky more than once alluded to the extraordinary powers of these figures. He referred the reader, for example, to the original fourteenth-century account of the Life of St Stephen of Perm, the missionary saint responsible for the conversion of the Zyrians.<sup>63</sup> One of the most elaborate descriptions in the 'Life' concerns the confrontation of Stephen with the venerated sorcerer and shaman Pam. In this account, Pam's defence of the old faith included an enumeration of the powers of the many old gods of the tribesmen, as far more effective than the one god of the Christians. The elaborately costumed female figure to the left of centre may be an explicit reference to the 'Golden Woman' (*Zolota Baba*) mentioned in Kandinsky's essay,<sup>64</sup> and frequently singled out by other investigators as a main idol of the northern Zyrians. As Goddess of childbirth she was frequently imaged from the seventeenth century in wood or stone, with a child in her lap, and these mother and child idols were supposedly elaborately costumed. The prominently represented cat might

also recall the fact noted by Kandinsky that, in the ancient animistic religion of the Chuds, domestic animals were especially revered.<sup>65</sup> This is confirmed, for example, in a large-scale study of the mythology of the Finno-Ugrian peoples published in 1927 by the Finnish ethnologist and sociologist Uno Holmberg, who also refers to Kandinsky's essay more than once in this study. Holmberg confirms that, among the Zyrians and other Finno-Ugrian peoples, a cat-shaped spirit was said to gather all kinds of good things from other places for its owners.<sup>66</sup>

The ethnographic essay which throws so much light on *Das bunte Leben* was published by Kandinsky, paradoxically, in 'Old Russia', almost two decades prior to the production of the 'modernist' painting; in 1889 his 'Materials on the Ethnography of the Sysol and Vechegda Zyrians — the National Deities (according to Contemporary Beliefs)' appeared in the *Ethnographic Review*, a recently established forum based at the University. It was published precisely at a time of increasing religious intolerance under Alexander III. In the last two decades of the nineteenth century, Russian governmental modernizers, striving to create a national state, increasingly turned to the ancient Muscovite ideal of a state church as one of the vehicles to unify the disparate areas of the realm. Kandinsky's ethnographic essay criticised this same Muscovite policy.

Governmental religious policies in the last decades of the nineteenth century led, almost inevitably, to clashes with many of the empire's non-Russian peoples, including Lithuanian and Armenian Catholics and Tatar and Kazakh Moslems. The religious issue focused acutely in the Baltics. Official policy was to encourage a conversion movement to Orthodoxy, at the same time hindering the activity of the competing Lutheran faith, for example by subjecting tens of thousands of Latvian and Estonian reconverts to Lutheranism to intense pressure to rejoin the Orthodox fold, and also by persecuting the Lutheran pastors who continued to minister to them.<sup>67</sup>

It was the question of religious freedom, particularly freedom from the imposition of Orthodoxy, which provoked Alexander III in 1885 to total disavowal of any concept of Baltic autonomy:

His Majesty views the Baltic provinces exactly like the rest of Russia and will rule with the same fairness but also according to the same law, without any privileges whatsoever.<sup>68</sup>

In this context, ethnographic work could exert powerful influence on contemporary views of Russia's past, at least among a fraction of Russia's educated minority. Kandinsky's published work exemplifies a characteristic academic merging of ethnographic and historical perspectives with a topical socio-political cutting edge. Study of 'the People' ethnographically and historically was a

major field of political and cultural resistance, particularly at a moment when practical political opposition was banned.

## Conclusion: 'Reminiscences' and the Intelligentsia

I want now to come full circle, ending my article where I began: with 'Reminiscences', firstly considering Kandinsky's construction of a complex and iconographically rich verbal portrait of his father.<sup>69</sup>

By means of my analysis, I argue that Kandinsky was inspired by the ideals of Russian Populism, which, in turn, shaped his ethnographic commitment to 'the People'. Returning to 'Reminiscences' for one last time at the end of this section, I finally question Kandinsky's overtly artistic reformulation — his aestheticising — of his ethnographic practice.

Kandinsky's verbal picture of his father is resonant in its partiality, as he constructed a highly precise, model figure of the Russian intelligentsia. In the 1913 edition of 'Reminiscences', he distinguished, for instance, between what he learned as a child from his father and what he learned from his aunt. His aunt, with her 'radiant inner nature'<sup>70</sup> featured in his most intimate early memories: she participated in his games, encouraged his love of painting and, along with his maternal grandmother, recounted the German fairytales which stuck in his adult memory. His businessman father, by contrast, represented the wisdom of clear, rational thinking, and he took over the educating role when his son reached an appropriate age:

When I was ten years old, he tried to educate me into choosing between grammar school and secondary school: by explaining the difference between those two schools . . . he helped me to make the choice for myself.<sup>71</sup>

Kandinsky developed a multi-faceted male portrait of his father, alluding only indirectly to his father's business and financial success and emphasising instead his paternal generosity and his open-mindedness. In Kandinsky's artistic reminiscences, his father is simultaneously an ideal father-figure, a mentor and an artistic benefactor:

My father, with extraordinary patience, let me chase after my dreams and whims my entire life . . . With great generosity, he supported me financially for many long years. At the turning points in my life he would talk to me like an older friend, and in important matters never exerted a trace of pressure on me. His principles of upbringing were complete trust and a friendly relationship with me . . .<sup>72</sup>

In the Russian version of 'Reminiscences', Kandinsky emphasised even more strongly how his father encouraged his son's independent free spirit.<sup>73</sup> Nina Kandinsky's memoirs, on the other hand,

more clearly link this autonomous individuality with key bourgeois ideals of free agency and self-help. She notes that Kandinsky senior was in the tea trade, describing him as a pragmatic, tough and successful businessman. Kandinsky, it seems, also admired his father's practical conduct as well as his clear, bold judgements, inheriting, so she claims, his father's uncompromising strength of character.<sup>74</sup>

In 'Reminiscences', however, Kandinsky was careful to play down such characteristics. His father, in this representation, also possessed qualities disdained in the world of cut-throat capitalist competition; in his relationships — with his son at least — he operated on a basis of trust and mutual cooperation. Kandinsky even turned this into a moralising admonition. Let this, he said, be:

a lesson for those parents who often try forcibly to deflect their children . . . from their right career.<sup>75</sup>

Kandinsky was crafting an ideal male portrait in his 'Reminiscences': one that, in a number of respects, subverted conventional versions of capitalist achievement. I will consider its intricacies further at the end of this section. Firstly, however, I want to consider the image sociologically, with reference to the aims and ideals of one sector of the Russian intelligentsia in the later nineteenth century. Throughout his university career, Kandinsky was encouraged by a number of Populist-inspired academics and activists, some of whom he recalled in his 'Reminiscences'.<sup>76</sup> Moreover, in other biographical fragments of 1913, Kandinsky implied that, in the 1880s at least, father and son were actually quite typical members of the intelligentsia, father guiding son in his academic choices:

It appeared to me at that time that art was an unallowable extravagance for a Russian . . .<sup>77</sup>

At this time of chronic social crisis in Russia, he and his father were convinced, it seems, of the 'beneficial value of the social sciences',<sup>78</sup> as the only practical means toward material and social amelioration for 'the People'.

Russian Populism was a complex phenomenon in the last decades of the nineteenth century, with no single, unified ideology;<sup>79</sup> yet, we can still, at the risk of over-simplification, conceive of it as a radical attempt to combine popular forces of discontent with intellectual and scientific challenge to the tsarist order. At once critical, secular and utopian, Populism entailed an ideal vision of a new socialist society, shaped by the collectivist traditions and institutions of the Russian peasant commune. Populism is comparable in some respects with conservative Western critiques of modern society, its advocates positing a land-based harmonious society with a non-capitalist economic basis. Yet, in tsarist Russia, Populist ideology was revolutionary, not reactionary. It was a force for change and democracy and, as

elaborated by leaders like Mikhail Bakunin, Russian Populism shades easily into the utopian ideals of anarchism. In the early 1850s, the first major theorist of Populism, Alexander Herzen, had postulated an ideal social model for Russia. Like the later theories of the Russian anarchist writer Petr Kropotkin, Herzen favoured a federated society based on rural communities of free individuals, subject to no centralised authority. Herzen's ideals were provoked by disillusionment with European bourgeois society, for he had witnessed at first-hand the failure of the 1848 Revolutions. Many members of the mid-century intelligentsia were likewise galvanised by Western utopian socialism, which became gradually transformed into a uniquely Russian version. This emphasised the potential of rural traditions based on the peasant land commune (*obshchina*), combined with the principle of individuality which was a key ideal in the early utopian socialism of Saint-Simon and Fourier.<sup>80</sup>

The import of Russian Populism can be grasped only by attending to the specific historical moment. The Russian state was autocratic, with few legal or constitutional restraints on Imperial governmental power.<sup>81</sup> Even during the second half of the nineteenth century, when large parts of the empire experienced rapid industrialisation, the Imperial government's attitude towards modernisation, especially the creation of major factory centres, was nothing if not ambiguous. It could hardly be otherwise, Russia being the last European country in which feudalism was officially abolished, and industrial modernisation coinciding with a predominantly agrarian socio-economic structure. Although the country acquired the rudiments of a capitalist economy, with, for the first time in its history, a growing industrial labour force and an economically powerful middle-class of businessmen, bankers, lawyers, financiers, and factory owners, the great majority of the population, about eighty per cent, was made up of communally organised peasants (the *narod*), working and living in villages in conditions which had, in real terms, altered little since the eighteenth century.<sup>82</sup> Moreover, the Emperors and their advisors in the mid-century feared creating conditions similar to those that had led to the revolutionary upheavals of 1848 in Western Europe. On the one hand, both Nicholas I and Alexander II were preoccupied by the serious threat to the *status quo* posed by a series of peasant disorders during the Crimean War while, on the other hand, events in Western Europe had convinced partisans of the autocracy that the spectre of a large-scale, landless and restless proletariat was equally undesirable. In the government's view, industrial development alone would not strengthen the material basis of state power; improvement of Russia's agrarian economy was a crucial goal in the Imperial programme for political and economic survival after 1856. In that year, Alexander II, in a speech to the assembled land-owning class of Moscow province,

set in motion the machinery leading to the emancipation of the serfs in 1861. Whilst advocating the ending of feudalism, he yet appealed to conservative instincts:

It is better to abolish serfdom from above than to await the day when it will begin to abolish itself from below.<sup>83</sup>

The dismantling of feudalism in turn necessitated a whole series of institutional and administrative changes, part and parcel of the transition from a semi-feudal to a modern industrial society.

Despite the considerable changes of this so-called Great Reform period of the 1860s, the peasantry, technically no longer the private property of feudal masters, nevertheless remained a separate 'caste' throughout the nineteenth century, a caste with its own internal structures, procedures, laws and economic arrangements. In other words, the terms of social division in Russia in this period were not those of Western urban-based class antagonism; the countryside was the typical site of social conflict. The professional middle class was a relatively new anomaly within the autocratic system. Economically powerful, yet politically unrecognised, it did not constitute an entrenched urban ruling class struggling to retain its control of the means of production in the face of a threatening, predominantly industrial, labour force. The middle classes and the 'masses' were not, yet, irrevocably polarised; they shared a common enemy in the shape of an autocratic state supported by a land owning nobility and an authoritarian religion.

Herzen's Populist ideals were retained and also reshaped under the impact of Marxian social analysis in the influential writings of such as Petr Lavrov and N. K. Mikhailovskii.<sup>84</sup> Mikhailovskii, in particular, placed autonomous individuality at the centre of his sociological theories. Writing in the last three decades of the century, as editor of the journals *Fatherland Notes* and *Russian Wealth*, he sought to distance his ideals of the total self-realization of subjectivity from bourgeois-capitalist individualism. Following Marx, he pointed to the alienating effects of the highly developed division of labour required by capitalism. According to Mikhailovskii, the necessary social conditions for the development of a complete individual were non-capitalist; they were to be recovered through communal principles founded on 'simple cooperation'. Like anarchist theories, Mikhailovskii's principles were based on a belief in the essential goodness of human nature, which is corrupted by overbearing social organization. This was a form of utopian socialism which assumed that Russian autocracy was immoral and that Western-style capitalism was no better, since state-organised central government represented the interests of the bourgeoisie at the expense of the ideal freedom of 'the People'.

As this brief discussion suggests, then, Russian Populism focused a mass of contradictory responses

in the period of nascent modernisation in Russia. Its ideology was largely the product of an upper or middle-class 'intelligentsia', metropolitan educated and with increasingly close acquaintance with Western-style educational and social currents, often through first-hand travel and study in Western cities. Yet the utopian socialism of Populism also epitomises the intense uncertainties in the experience of first or second generation city-dwellers, anxious about the metropolitan phenomenon and about burgeoning social disintegration. This modernist *Angst* was peculiarly acute given the 'catastrophic' character of Russian capitalism, which brought together previously independent groups in an urban context before it could weld them into a cohesive, city-based, modern culture. If, as I have already suggested, Kandinsky's family belongs to such a social grouping (his father moving from the eastern fringes of Siberia to live and work in Moscow), then one of his university friends and mentors, N. A. Ivanitskii, was even more an altruistic representative of the Populist intelligentsia, at least according to Kandinsky in the 1918 version of his 'Reminiscences'.

Kandinsky referred to Ivanitskii in the midst of discussing his own ethnographic work of 1889, using this friend to exemplify Populist ideals in action. Ivanitskii was a scientist and fellow activist in the *Imperial Society for the Friends of the Natural Sciences, Anthropology and Ethnography*. A botanist and zoologist as well as 'an author of serious ethnographic studies',<sup>85</sup> he had helped Kandinsky equip himself for his ethnographic field-trip that year. In his home town of Kadnikov, to the north east of Vologda, Ivanitskii had served as secretary to the local *zemstvo* (local council: a unit of local self-government introduced after the emancipation of the peasantry). In this capacity, he was also:

responsible for organising the exploitation by the 'zemstvo' of the craft products made from the local horn, which he had wrestled from the merciless hands of traders . . .<sup>86</sup>

Here indeed was a veritable representative of the Populist intelligentsia. According to Kandinsky, Ivanitskii stayed true to his ideals and to his inner rapport with the *zemstvo* community, even turning down the opportunity to take up 'an interesting and rewarding position in Moscow';<sup>87</sup> the city offered no match compared to a life with 'the People'. In this ideal version of Populist principles at work, the 'intelligentsia', represented by the scientist Ivanitskii, figures in its true role as constructor of equitable productive relations. In place of exploitation by foreign traders, local craft production and distribution were now organised by the *zemstvo* for the *zemstvo*. Ever an idealist, Kandinsky was suggesting that local trade and industry could thus be purified of the corrupt capitalist market.

These passages suggest Kandinsky's continued

sympathy for Populist ideals of socially organised labour, and this despite the predominant secularism and materialism of Populists, for whom art, literature and culture were unsustainable luxuries so long as 'the People' suffered. Indeed, Kandinsky recalled in 'Reminiscences' how he had to pursue his artistic interests in moments of furtive leisure stolen from his university studies.<sup>88</sup> As already suggested, the student Kandinsky agreed with many members of the Populist intelligentsia, believing that the diverse peoples of the Russian Empire could be comprehended scientifically through the 'human' disciplines, including economics and law as well as ethnography in his own case. This knowledge basis, in turn, would enable the development of a modern and equitable society, one which would be free of Imperialist autocracy and which would respect the autonomy of local cultures. However, Kandinsky's utopian position in 'Reminiscences' also differs fundamentally from that of the previous generation, above all in the central place he gave to artistic creativity and 'inner' aesthetic experience. I will clarify this difference by returning finally to his complex portrait of his father.

On the one hand, his father emerges as a modern man of reason and science: an enlightened, forward-looking mentor, successful in the business world, yet also caring and compassionate. At the same time, however, Kandinsky stressed his so-called 'inner' qualities. The elder Kandinsky was simultaneously modern and traditional, remaining in tune with an original spirituality associated with Old Russia:

My father comes from Eastern Siberia ... He was educated in Moscow, and came to love this town no less than his home country. His profoundly human and affectionate spirit understood the 'Moscow soul', and he knew the external visage of Moscow no less well.<sup>89</sup>

A mirror-image of Kandinsky's own intellectual aspirations in 1913, his father is presented as a free-spirited, trans-cultural individual who loved the 'essential soul' of the city, presumably still locatable under all the accretions of metropolitan modernisation. Moreover, Kandinsky detected in this an 'echo of an artistic spirit'. This echo, in the 1913 edition of 'Reminiscences', became loud and resonant in the subsequent 1918 version:

It was always a real delight for me to hear him recite ... with a special love the ancient, redolent names of the 'forty times forty' Moscow churches ... He is very fond of paintings and in his youth studied drawing, something he always recalls with affection. He often drew for me when I was a child. Even now I can remember well his delicate, tender and expressive line, which so closely matched his elegant figure and surprisingly beautiful hands. One of his greatest pleasures has always been to visit exhibitions, where he looks at the pictures long and attentively. He does not condemn what he does not comprehend, but tries to understand, questioning all those from whom he hopes to obtain some answer.<sup>90</sup>

Along with his spiritualised artistic personality, Kandinsky's father acquired in this memory decidedly non-masculine traits: traits which, throughout 'Reminiscences', Kandinsky more readily associated with his female relatives and especially his aunt. The same qualities of inwardness, openness and a sense of tradition are also those that, in the essay, he used to characterise 'the Russian people' and their flexible legal principles, which he contrasted with Western Roman law.<sup>91</sup>

Kandinsky's ideal portrait of his father thus was one which synthesised conventionally opposing 'male' and 'female' principles. The former was equated in his writings with reason, science and modernity, while the 'complementary' female principle was associated with intuition, artistic sensitivity, and an inner kinship with (as opposed to scientific knowledge of) 'the People'. Likewise, in the construction of his own artistic identity in 'Reminiscences', Kandinsky stressed that his early scientific/academic training, which helped him 'acquire the capacity for abstract thought',<sup>92</sup> was later supplemented, and even superseded, by his initiation into the mysteries of artistic creativity. As Shulamith Behr has recently argued, the referents of Kandinsky's outlook by 1913 were deeply syncretic, and 'Reminiscences' attests to his predilection for the utopian visions of such writer/philosophers as Erich Gutkind and Dimitrije Mitrinovic.<sup>93</sup> Like them, Kandinsky believed that, through such a synthesis of 'male' and 'female' creative principles, all of humanity might attain true cultural and spiritual transformation. More than that, by the time he was composing his 'Reminiscences', Kandinsky assumed that inner (*geistig*) transformation of the individual, through art and culture, was a necessary prerequisite for real social change. No longer regarding art as 'an extravagance' for a Russian, he granted artists immense moral duties, arguing that they could generate the necessary creative energies for establishing a new, spiritualised community of all humankind.

This reinstatement of art is emphatically apparent from Kandinsky's representation of his ethnographic work in 'Reminiscences'. He reworked his complex ethnographic encounter in order to exemplify his belief in the all-embracing 'universality' of liberated aesthetic experience, recalling his ethnographic field-trip as a transportation beyond present time and space. Modes of time travel took him far into the past, almost out of the world, through a primeval, surreal landscape, in which colours had free play:

I travelled initially by train, with the feeling that I was journeying to another planet, then for several days by boat along the tranquil and introverted Sukhona river, then by primitive coach through endless forests, between brightly coloured hills, over swamps and deserts.<sup>94</sup>

With no disrupting interruptions, he was able to effect a two-fold absorption 'in my surroundings and



in my own self.<sup>95</sup> Repeating a device used elsewhere in the essay, he wrote of his field-trip as if it were a mystery initiation. The journey itself was an ordeal:

It was often scorching hot during the day, but the nights, despite the almost complete absence of darkness, were so cold that even the sheepskin coat, felt boots, and Zyrian hat, which I had procured on the way . . . sometimes proved not entirely sufficient . . .<sup>96</sup>

The tribulation was well worthwhile, at least from his subsequent perspective as a modern colourist, for he journeyed to places remote enough for colours to have their own reality and force. Even 'the People' in this memory dissolve into autonomous, animated colours:

I would arrive in villages where suddenly the entire population was clad in gray from head to toe, with yellowish-green faces and hair, or suddenly displayed variegated costumes that ran about like brightly coloured, living pictures on two legs.<sup>97</sup>

In direct contrast, then, to his earlier Zyrian publication, which was shaped by the concerns of nineteenth-century Russian ethnography, Kandinsky remembered his fieldwork experientially and predominantly in visual terms, writing about it in such a way as to epitomise the 'inner' power of art and of traditional material culture. He unveiled himself as artistic-ethnographer, intuitively united with 'the People' through aesthetic experience. He apparently possessed a faculty of heightened artistic perception which enabled him to cross cultural and historical barriers, to participate in an aesthetic realm of universal oneness:

I shall never forget the great wooden houses . . . In these magical houses I experienced something I have never encountered again since. They taught me to move within the picture, to live in the picture. I still remember how I entered the living room for the first time and stood rooted to the spot before this unexpected scene. The table, the benches, the great stove (indispensable in Russian farm-houses), the cupboards, and every other object were covered with brightly coloured, elaborate ornaments. Folk pictures on the walls; a symbolic representation of a hero, a battle, a painted folk song. The 'red' corner (red is the same as beautiful in old Russian) thickly, completely covered with painted and printed pictures of the saints, burning in front of it the red flame of a small pendant lamp . . . When I finally entered the room, I felt surrounded on all sides by painting, into which I had thus penetrated.<sup>98</sup>

This encounter with the magical colouristic spaces inside old Russian peasant houses, he claimed, prophesied his future ideals of transcendent aesthetics. He stepped into these unfamiliar folk environs and found their colour and decoration so overwhelming that henceforth he wished to make his own modern spectator:

'stroll' within the picture, *forcing him to become absorbed in the picture, forgetful of himself*. [my emphasis]<sup>99</sup>

Such recollections in 'Reminiscences' are markedly idealistic, these passages offering little to suggest the full — non-aesthetic — significance of Kandinsky's original ethnographic practice. The greatest irony, as I hope to have demonstrated, is that Kandinsky had not been 'forgetful of himself', nor of his academic commitments, when he first systematised and published his ethnographic findings in 1889.<sup>100</sup>

## Notes

1. The term 'modernist' has more than chronological import in my usage. I understand the term as encompassing the wide range of cultural responses to the processes of social modernisation (industrial and technological change, urbanisation) and to the experience of living in a modernising society. These responses, which can be designated as 'cultural modernism', range, schematically, from the positively celebratory (e.g., Futurist hyperbole, glorifying all things new and modern), to the romantically negative (as in Gauguin's quest for an ideal Golden Age uncontaminated by the conflicts of modern social existence). The perception of Kandinsky's practice and theory as a 'negative' modernism has been decidedly hostile on occasions, this hostility referring to abstract art in general, as well as to Kandinsky's work in particular (see, for instance, O. K. Werckmeister's review article, 'From the Sounding Cosmos to the Fireworks of War', *Art History*, vol. 5, no. 2, June 1982, pp. 231–6). I have no aspirations to 'rethink' abstraction in this article, but I do aim to indicate a very particular, modernist frame of reference for comprehending Kandinsky's practice.

2. Despite its considerable limitations, MOMA's 1984 exhibition 'Primitivism' in *Modern Art: Affinity of the Tribal and the Modern* at least provoked much of this critical debate. For this exhibition, see the 2 volume catalogue, edited by W. Rubin, 'Primitivism' in *Modern Art: Affinity of the Tribal and the Modern* (New York, 1984). Of the subsequent critical literature, I refer the reader to: J. Clifford, 'Histories of the Tribal and the Modern', in *The Predicament of Culture: Twentieth-Century Ethnography, Literature and Art* (Cambridge, Mass., 1988); J. Clifford, V. Dominguez and T. T. Minh-Ha, 'Of Other Peoples: Beyond the "Salvage" Paradigm', in H. Foster (ed.), *Discussions in Contemporary Culture*, no. 1 (Seattle, 1987); D. Craven, 'Abstract Expressionism and Third World Art: A Post-Colonial Approach to "American Art"', *Oxford Art Journal*, vol. 14, no. 1, 1991, pp. 44–66; H. Foster, 'The Primitive Unconscious of Modern Art, or White Skin Black Masks', *Recordings: Art, Spectacle, Cultural Politics* (Seattle, 1985); S. Hiller (ed.), *The Myth of Primitivism: Perspectives on Art* (London and New York, 1991). This critical literature attests to the fraught nature of such classificatory terms as 'primitive' and 'primitivism'. I quote Susan Hiller's cautionary note: "Ethnographic", "tribal", "underdeveloped", "Third World", and "marginal" are words standing for many different, varied peoples of the world constituted by colonialism as *them* in contrast to us "Europeans" or "westerners". "Primitive" and "modern" are also constructed categories deriving from a specific history. These words should always be read as entirely problematic and as though surrounded by inverted commas/quotation marks' (op. cit., p. 4).

3. J. Lloyd, *German Expressionism: Primitivism and Modernity* (New Haven and London, 1991). Lloyd argues that Expressionist primitivism 'had a conceptual basis that went beyond questions of formal influence' (p. 86); indeed, in her opinion, 'the Expressionists' primitivism is a fluid and transforming complex of responses to contemporary issues rather than a fixed and rigid phenomenon' (p. x).

4. This essay is translated in K. Lindsay and P. Vergo (eds.), *Kandinsky: Complete Writings on Art* (2 vols., London, 1982), vol. 1, pp. 357–82.

5. Kandinsky published three essays in 1889, only two of which have been traced. My article focuses on one of these essays, namely: 'Из materialov po etnografii sysol'skikh i vyhegodskikh zyryan — natsional'nye bozhestva (po sovremennym verovaniyam)', *Etnograficheskoe obozrenie*, no. 3, 1889, pp. 102–110. ('From Materials on the Ethnog-

raphy of the Sysol- and — Vechegda Zyrians: the National Deities (According to Contemporary Beliefs)', *Ethnographic Review*, no. 3 (Moscow, 1889), pp. 102–110. [Henceforth 'Zyrian Ethnography']. The second of Kandinsky's 1889 articles is: 'O nakazaniyakh' po resheniyam' volostnykh sudov Moskovskoi Gub[ernoi]', *Trudy etnograficheskago otdela Imperatorskago, obshchestva lyubiteli estestvoznaniya, antropologii, i etnografii*, vol. 9, 1889, pp. 13–19. ('On the punishments meted out in accordance with the decisions of the district courts of the province of Moscow', *Works of the Ethnographic Section of the Imperial Society for the Friends of the Natural Sciences, Anthropology and Ethnography*, vol. 9 (Moscow, 1889), pp. 13–19). These essays are most easily available in German translation. See J. Hahl-Koch and H. K. Roethel (eds), *Kandinsky: Die Gesammelten Schriften*, Band 1 (Bern, 1980) henceforth *Schriften*. Kandinsky's special subject at Moscow University was political economy. His dissertation on the principles of industrial wages has not yet been found.

6. P. Weiss, 'Kandinsky and Old Russia: An Ethnographic Exploration', *Syracuse Scholar*, Spring 1986, pp. 43–62. Also, *idem.*, under the same title, in G. P. Weisberg and L. S. Dixon (eds), *The Documented Image: Visions in Art History* (Syracuse, 1987). Her term 'Old Russia' prompts the title of my next section.

7. The debate between Bloch and Lukács is discussed by Lloyd, *op. cit.*, pp. viii–ix and pp. 186–8. See also R. Taylor (ed.), *Aesthetics and Politics* (London, 1977).

8. 'Reminiscences', in Lindsay and Vergo (eds), *op. cit.*, vol. 1, pp. 377–8.

9. *Ibid.*, pp. 381–2.

10. *Ibid.*, p. 362.

11. *Ibid.*, pp. 368–9.

12. See M. B. Petrovich, 'The Peasant in 19th-Century Historiography', in W. Vucinich (ed.), *The Peasant in 19th-Century Russia* (Stanford, 1968), pp. 191–230.

13. *Ibid.*, p. 196.

14. *Ibid.*, p. 196.

15. For the context of Ukrainian nationalism see H. Rogger, *Russia in the Age of Modernisation and Revolution, 1881–1917* (London, 1983), pp. 182–6.

16. *op. cit.*, note 5.

17. Among the bibliographic notes in Kandinsky's 1889 travel notebook (held in the archives of the Musée national d'art moderne, Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris), I found his reference to an 1861 edition of Sjögren's work, edited and introduced by the Estonian linguist F. J. Wiedmann. *Joh. Andreas Sjögrens Gesammelte Schriften* (new facsimile edition, 2 vols in 3, Leipzig, 1969. Originally, St Petersburg, 1861).

18. Whilst stressing here Kandinsky's indebtedness to A. J. Sjögren, I do not wish to isolate his early 'ethnographic' images from their relevant artistic context. The taste for the depiction of Norse sagas and Scandinavian folk-tales was fairly prevalent among members of Diaghilev's *Mir Iskusstva* group, for instance, with which Kandinsky was in close contact during his early years in Munich. See M. Werenskiold, 'Serge Diaghilev and Erik Werenskiold', *Art Review*, published by The Society of Art History, Stockholm, vol. LX, no. 1, 1991, pp. 26–41. The Norwegian painter and illustrator Erik Werenskiold was an enthusiastic student of traditional Baltic arts and cultures and in this he anticipated the predilections of both Kandinsky and Ivan Bilibin in the circles of *Mir Iskusstva*. See M. Werenskiold, *ibid.*, for an account of Diaghilev's promotion of Werenskiold, both in the exhibition of Scandinavian art he organised in St Petersburg in 1897, and also in the pages of *Mir Iskusstva* magazine.

19. 'Allein wie die Russen ... anfangen, sich immer mehr ... auszubreiten, wurde das frühere enge Band zwischen jenen Stämmen zerrissen', Sjögren, 'Die Syrjänen, ein historisch-statistisch-philologischer Versuch', *op. cit.*, vol. 1, pp. 292.

20. *Ibid.*, see for example, p. 288.

21. 'In der That heisst es, in uralten Zeiten wäre so ein überaus grosser Jahrmarkt an der Petschora [gehalten] ... auf einem grossen offenen Wiesenfelde, das jetzt gegen 3000 Schober Heu jährlich liefern kann, und ... zwischen allen nordischen Völkern aus sehr fernen Gegenden und, wie die Sage ausdrücklich hinzusetzt, auch aus dem nördlichen Schweden, stark besonders mit kostbaren Pelzwek gehandelt worden.' (*Ibid.*, p. 404.)

22. *Ibid.*, p. 255.

23. This observation was an addition to the 1918 Russian version of the essay. See Lindsay and Vergo (eds), *op. cit.*, vol. 2, p. 887, note 13.

24. Comprehensive history of the Baltic provinces can be found in E. C. Thaden (ed.), *Russification in the Baltic Provinces and Finland, 1855–1914* (Princeton, 1981).

25. See T. U. Raun, 'The Estonians', *ibid.*, pp. 287–354.

26. A. Plakans, 'Peasants, intellectuals and nationalism in the Russian Baltic Provinces, 1820–90', *Journal of Modern History*, vol. 46, September 1974, pp. 445–75.

27. Raun, *op. cit.*, p. 293.

28. Plakans, *op. cit.*, p. 452.

29. Raun, *op. cit.*, p. 298.

30. See M. H. Haltzel, 'The Baltic Germans', in Thaden, *op. cit.*, pp. 107–204.

31. Plakans, *op. cit.*, p. 461.

32. *Ibid.*, pp. 460–2.

33. *Ibid.*, pp. 463 ff.

34. Sjögren, *op. cit.*, vol. 2.

35. On Sjögren, see in particular, M. Branch, 'A. J. Sjögren's Studies of the North', *Mémoires de la Société Finno-Ougrienne* (Helsinki, 1973).

36. *Ibid.*, pp. 263–4.

37. Plakans, *op. cit.*, p. 472.

38. Diaghilev's *Mir Iskusstva* is of course an important artistic reference for this early work of Kandinsky. In 1902, for instance, the Norwegian painter Gerhard Munthe published an article on 'Style in the Illustration of Ancient Sagas' (*Mir Iskusstva*, 1902, no. 3, pp. 56–8). For further details on Diaghilev's enthusiasm for Scandinavian art, see Werenskiold, *op. cit.*

39. See Peg Weiss, *Kandinsky in Munich* (Princeton, 1979), pp. 66–7. Also, *idem.*, 'Kandinsky and Old Russia', in *The Documented Image: Visions in Art History*, *op. cit.*, p. 192.

40. See P. Hajdu, *Finno-Ugrian Languages and Peoples*, trans. G. F. Cushing (London, 1975). Also, Hajdu (ed.), *Ancient Cultures of the Uralian Peoples* (Budapest, 1976).

41. Sjögren, *op. cit.*, vol. 1, pp. 230–461.

42. Thaden (ed.), *op. cit.*

43. On Estonia, *ibid.*, pp. 314–326.

44. Haltzel, in Thaden (ed.), *op. cit.*, pp. 141–5.

45. For the Mansein Senatorial Inspection see Thaden, 'The Russian Government' in Thaden (ed.), *op. cit.*, pp. 56–75.

46. *Ibid.*, p. 58.

47. *Ibid.*, p. 59.

48. *Ibid.*, p. 59.

49. Thaden (ed.), *op. cit.*, p. 319.

50. For further details see A. Vucinich, *Science in Russian Culture 1861–1917*, 2 vols (Stanford, 1970), especially vol. 2, part 2, 'Science in the Age of Crisis, 1884–1917'.

51. 'Reminiscences', in Lindsay and Vergo (eds), *op. cit.*, vol. 1, p. 361.

52. Haltzel, in Thaden (ed.), *op. cit.*, p. 174.

53. *Ibid.*, pp. 174–5.

54. W. Kandinsky, 'Zyrian Ethnography', in *Schriften*, *op. cit.*, pp. 68–75. This quote from p. 68. (All English translations are my own, unless otherwise stated.)

55. 'Zyrian Ethnography', in *Schriften*, *op. cit.*, pp. 68–9.

56. *Ibid.*, p. 69.

57. *Ibid.*, p. 69.

58. *Ibid.*, p. 69.

59. Sjögren, 'Die Syrjänen', *op. cit.*, vol. 1, p. 288.

60. *Ibid.*, p. 286.

61. Weiss, 'Kandinsky and Old Russia: An Ethnographic Exploration', *Syracuse Scholar*, *op. cit.*, pp. 50–2.

62. *Ibid.*, pp. 50–1.

63. 'Zyrian Ethnography' in *Schriften*, *op. cit.*, p. 68. The reference is to the *Life of St Stephen, Bishop of Perm*, by Epiphanius the Wise. (New edition, St Petersburg, 1897.)

64. 'Zyrian Ethnography', in *Schriften*, *op. cit.*, p. 69.

65. *Ibid.*, p. 70.

66. U. Holmbeg, 'Finno-Ugria, Siberia', vol. 4 of *The Mythology of all Races* (Boston, 1927), pp. 163–4.

67. See Haltzel in Thaden (ed.), *op. cit.*, pp. 161–7.

68. *Ibid.*, p. 163.

69. In the following section I refer to both the German (1913) and the Russian (1918) editions of 'Reminiscences'. Kandinsky made a number of additions and alterations to the later text in preparation for the

Russian publication. These changes included significant elaborations on his initial verbal portrait of his father and other relatives. I indicate which editions I am using in the footnotes. References are to the translations by Lindsay and Vergo (eds), *op. cit.*

70. 'Reminiscences' 1913, in Lindsay and Vergo (eds), *op. cit.*, vol. 1, p. 358. See also the account of his aunt in 'Reminiscences', 1918, *ibid.*, vol. 2, p. 887, note 13.

71. 'Reminiscences', 1913, in Lindsay and Vergo (eds), *op. cit.*, vol. 1, p. 365.

72. *Ibid.*, p. 365.

73. 'Reminiscences' 1918, *ibid.*, vol. 2, p. 889, note 30.

74. N. Kandinsky, *Kandinsky und Ich* (Munich, 1976), p. 26.

75. 'Reminiscences', 1913, in Lindsay and Vergo (eds), *op. cit.*, vol. 1, p. 365.

76. I discuss Kandinsky's academic mentors in some detail in my thesis: *Kandinsky: The Sciences of Man and the Science of Art* (University of Cambridge, 1992), particularly the two teachers mentioned in 'Reminiscences', A. I. Chuprov and A. N. Filippov.

77. 'Autobiographical Note' (Munich, 1913), in Vergo and Lindsay (eds), *op. cit.*, vol. 1, p. 343.

78. *Ibid.*, p. 343. Kandinsky's academic curriculum included also law and political economy (his specialist subject). I discuss these dimensions of his scientific training in my Ph. D. dissertation.

79. R. Wortman, *The Crisis of Russian Populism* (Cambridge, 1967).

80. See for instance, A. Kelly, *Mikhail Bakunin: A Study in the Psychology and Politics of Utopianism* (New Haven and London, 1987). On utopian socialism and the visual arts, see D. E. Egbert, *Social Radicalism and the Arts. Western Europe: A Cultural History from the French Revolution to 1968* (New York, 1970).

81. Useful general histories are H. Rogger, *Russia in the Age of Modernisation and Revolution 1881–1917* (London and New York, 1983), and A. Wood, *The Origins of the Russian Revolution, 1861–1917* (London, 1987).

82. In the words of one historian: 'Nineteenth-Century Russia was the first great example of a peasant-dominated society being confronted head-on by the forces of change collectively subsumed under the term modernisation. It was a society seriously out of joint, a tradition bound society desperately attempting to come to terms with the forces that were steadily undermining that tradition: industrialisation, urbanisation, and

secularisation.' W. S. Vucinich (ed.), *The Peasant in Nineteenth-Century Russia* (Stanford, 1968), intro., p. xiii.

83. T. Emmons, 'The Peasant and the Emancipation', *ibid.*, p. 41.

84. A. Vucinich, *op. cit.* (1976), chapter 2, pp. 15–66.

85. 'Reminiscences' (1918), in Vergo and Lindsay (eds), *op. cit.*, vol. 2, p. 891, note 45.

86. *Ibid.*, p. 891.

87. *Ibid.*, p. 891.

88. 'Reminiscences' (1913), in Lindsay and Vergo (eds), *op. cit.*, vol. 1, p. 361.

89. *Ibid.*, pp. 381–2.

90. 'Reminiscences' (1918), *ibid.*, vol. 2, p. 897, note 108.

91. 'Reminiscences' (1913), *ibid.*, vol. 1, p. 362 and p. 379.

92. *Ibid.*, p. 362.

93. S. Behr, 'Wassily Kandinsky and Dimitrije Mitrović; Pan-Christian Universalism and the Yearbook "Towards the Mankind of the Future through Aryan Europe"', *Oxford Art Journal*, vol. 15, no. 1, 1992, pp. 81–8.

94. 'Reminiscences' (1913), in Lindsay and Vergo (eds), *op. cit.*, vol. 1, p. 368.

95. *Ibid.*, p. 368.

96. 'Reminiscences' (1918), *ibid.*, vol. 2, p. 891, note 45.

97. 'Reminiscences' (1913), *ibid.*, vol. 1, p. 368.

98. *Ibid.*, pp. 368–9.

99. *Ibid.*, p. 369.

100. My initial aim of exploring the 'common ground' of ethnography and art seems to have reached the limits of possibility at this point, in the face of such extreme 'aestheticising' of ethnography and of traditional material culture in 'Reminiscences'. Yet, on further reflection, this foreclosure may itself be premature, as is suggested, with reference to current debates in anthropology, by a number of recent studies which have attempted to redress the continued marginalisation of art and visual culture within the discipline; Sheldon and Coote have argued from this perspective in their introduction to the volume *Anthropology, Art and Aesthetics*, where they urge that the anthropological study of art and the aestheticization of non-Western art be regarded as 'indissolubly linked' through their shared subject-matter. See J. Coote and A. Shelton (eds.), *Anthropology, Art and Aesthetics* (Oxford, 1992), p. 2.