The pages of Natalie Herzen's diaries are filled with passages expressing fear, despair, and insecurity over her tenuous existence as a perpetual stranger, wandering without roots, far from home. There is perhaps no better metaphor to express the strain of émigré anxiety than a dream recorded by Herzen's daughter. In her letter to Ogarev describing the dream, she first mentions the great "confusion in my brain at times," her realization of the brevity of life, and the consequent need to "make use of every minute, do something for others . . . but there is always something that prevents me." Then she tries to understand why she is unable to do what she feels she ought to do. "It's so hard for me, everything is incoherent, much is muddled and I want to put it all in order. I'm searching for a conclusion. It's a kind of madness." Following this, she begins to make sense of a fantastic image that possessed her in her dream:

Imagine that I had lost myself; I was seeking myself in all the ages, throughout all the centuries, in all the elements; in short, I was everything in the world, starting from gases and ether, I was fire, water, light, granite, chaos, all kinds of religions. . . . I know little about historical facts but all the same I saw a great deal, and dreadfully vividly. It was extremely interesting, and I do not regret being ill. There were times when I suffered greatly, first for the others; they tortured all of them, and then set upon myself; and the countless times they killed me! And guillotined me, and hanged me, and shot me, carved me to pieces and poisoned me. I felt it all; that is what it means to have an imagination, a sick one. . . . I took myself to be the personification of all phenomena—electricity, phosphorescence, au-

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topsy, harmony, stupidity, everything good and evil, and it all came out as a pot-pourri—and I was a coward of the first order. Je suis l’univers personnifié, such was my conclusion. And indeed, every man is a little world unto himself and understands the world after his own fashion. Sometimes I kept hearing: “Nichts ist drinnen nichts ist draussen, dann was innen das ist aussen!” And everything grew dark, I thought that the end of the world had come, everything vanished, the globe and the solar system and all history with it. And far, far in the distance there was a tiny star, a new world was beginning. I wanted to rescue everyone and take them there with me. But it’s impossible to tell the whole story, and then, I do not wish to think about it any more.

Although many of Natalie Herzen’s own conflicts are expressed here, these difficulties have a greater meaning because they also contain echoes of the conflicts facing many émigrés of her generation. There is the overwhelming feeling of living in an alien world, and of being lost in its utter vastness and infinitude. To cope with this fear, she imagines that she and the vastness are one, that she embodies the very elements of existence from the beginning of time. By doing this, she is attempting to eclipse time and space in order to counteract the unacceptable concrete reality of being geographically away from Russia for an undetermined period. The other important aspect of the dream is her conflict over saving and rescuing others. Those she feels obligated to save were subjected to oppression, a symbolic representation of the Russian people suffering under the yoke of the tsarist autocracy. However, she not only fails to save the oppressed others but becomes herself the victim of a violent assault until she is killed. Her death is imagined repeatedly and terrifyingly. This must refer to the enormous guilt she and so many émigrés felt about their position of relative freedom abroad while their comrades continued to suffer at home. Though few émigrés openly admitted this, we know from Sazonov, Serno-Solov’evich, and especially Blummer how pervasive this feeling was. Also by imagining herself to be “the personification of all phenomena,” especially elements of power like electricity, Natalie Herzen is seeking a source of strength to accomplish her task. But she cannot succeed. Finally, in her dream, she witnesses the end of the world and of history, signifying the futility of the émigré cause and its inevitable doom. Yet there is a renewal at the end, and a recurrence of her need to serve others, to rescue them and transport them to the new world of the future illuminated by the star she describes—the
postrevolutionary order, the society of justice in Russia which the émigrés had committed their lives to realizing and for which they had abandoned their homeland. Only this would bring an end to the exile and release the émigrés from their stressful and troubled life abroad.