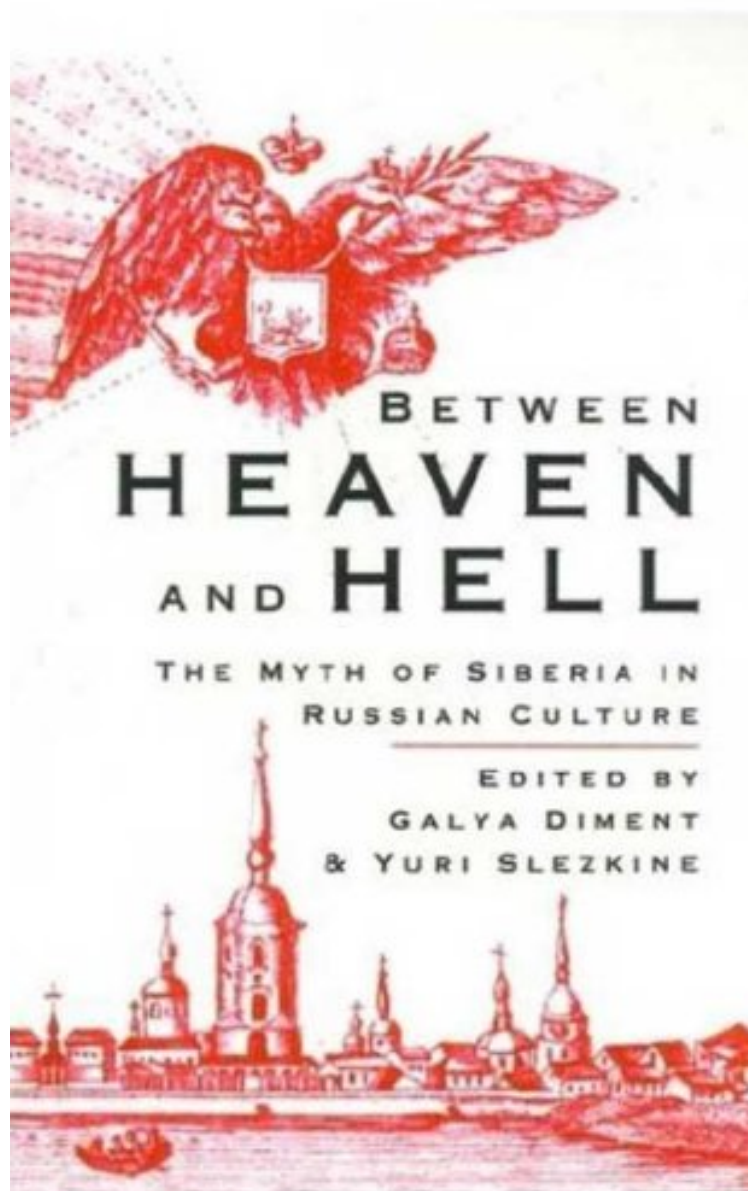


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Between Heaven and Hell: The Myth of Siberia in Russian Culture

Galya Diment, Yuri Slezkine

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Siberia has no history of independent political existence, no claim to a separate ethnic identity, and no clear borders. Yet, it could be said that the elusive country 'behind the Urals' is the most real and the most durable part of the Russian landscape. For centuries, Siberia has been represented as Russia's alter ego, as the heavenly or infernal antithesis to the perceived complexity or shallowness of Russian life. It has been both the frightening heart of darkness and a fabulous land of plenty; the 'House of the Dead' and the realm of utter freedom; a frozen wasteland and a colourful frontier; a dumping ground for Russia's rejects and the last refuge of its lost innocence. The contributors to *Between Heaven and Hell* examine the origin, nature, and implications of these images from historical, literary, geographical, anthropological, and linguistic perspectives. They create a striking, fascinating picture of this enormous and mysterious land.

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Siberia has no history of independent political existence, no claim to a separate ethnic identity, and no clear borders. And yet, in some very important sense, the elusive country "behind the Urals" is the most real and the most durable part of the Russian landscape. For centuries, Siberia has been represented as Russia's alter ego, as the heavenly or infernal antithesis to the perceived complexity or shallowness of Russian life. It has been both the frightening heart of darkness and a fabulous land of plenty; the "House of the Dead" and the realm of utter freedom; a frozen wasteland and a colorful frontier; a dumping ground for Russia's rejects and the last refuge of its lost innocence. The contributors to *Between Heaven and Hell* examine the origin, nature, and implications of these images from historical, literary, geographical, anthropological, and linguistic perspectives. They create a fascinating picture of this enormous and mysterious land.

About the Author
Galya Diment is professor of Slavic Languages and Literatures at the University of Washington. She is the author, among others, of *Pniniad* (1997) and *A Russian Jew of Bloomsbury* (2011). Yuri Slezkine is professor of History at the University of California, Berkeley. He is the author, among others, of *Arctic Mirrors* (1996) and *The Jewish Century* (2006).