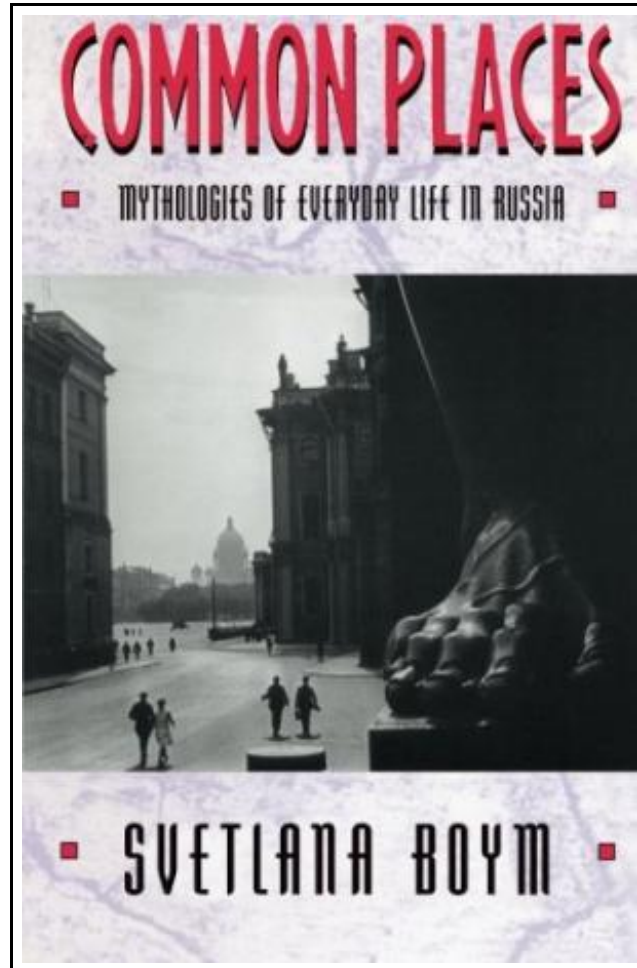


Common Places: Mythologies of Everyday Life in Russia



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Reviews

Undoubtedly, this is the greatest job by any author. It is actually filled with wisdom and knowledge I am quickly could get a pleasure of reading a written book.

(Kade Ankunding)

COMMON PLACES: MYTHOLOGIES OF EVERYDAY LIFE IN RUSSIA



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Harvard University Press. Paperback. Condition: New. 384 pages. Dimensions: 9.1in. x 6.1in. x 0.9in. What is the real Russia? What is the relationship between national dreams and kitsch, between political and artistic utopia and everyday existence? Commonplaces of daily living would be perfect clues for those seeking to understand a culture. But all who write big books on Russian life confess their failure to get properly inside Russia, to understand its doublespeak. Boym is a unique guide. A member of the last Soviet Generation, the Russian equivalent of our Generation X, she grew up in Leningrad and has lived in the West for the past thirteen years. Her book provides a view of Russia that is historically informed, replete with unexpected detail, and everywhere stamped with authority. Alternating analysis with personal accounts of Russian life, Boym conveys the foreignness of Russia and examines its peculiar conceptions of private life and common good, of Culture and Trash, of sincerity and banality. Armed with a Dictionary of Untranslatable Terms, we step around Uncle Fedia asleep in the hall, surrounded by a puddle of urine, and enter the Communal Apartment, the central exhibit of the book. It is the ruin of the communal utopia and a unique institution of Soviet daily life; a model Soviet home and a breeding ground for grassroots informants. Here, privacy is forbidden; here the inhabitants defiantly treasure their bits of domestic trash, targets of ideological campaigns for the transformation (perestroika) of everyday life. Against the Russian and Soviet myths of national destiny, the trivial, the ordinary, even the trashy, take on a utopian dimension. Boym studies Russian culture in a broad sense of the word; she ranges from nineteenth- and twentieth-century intellectual thought to art and popular culture. With her we go walking in Moscow and Leningrad, eavesdrop on...



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