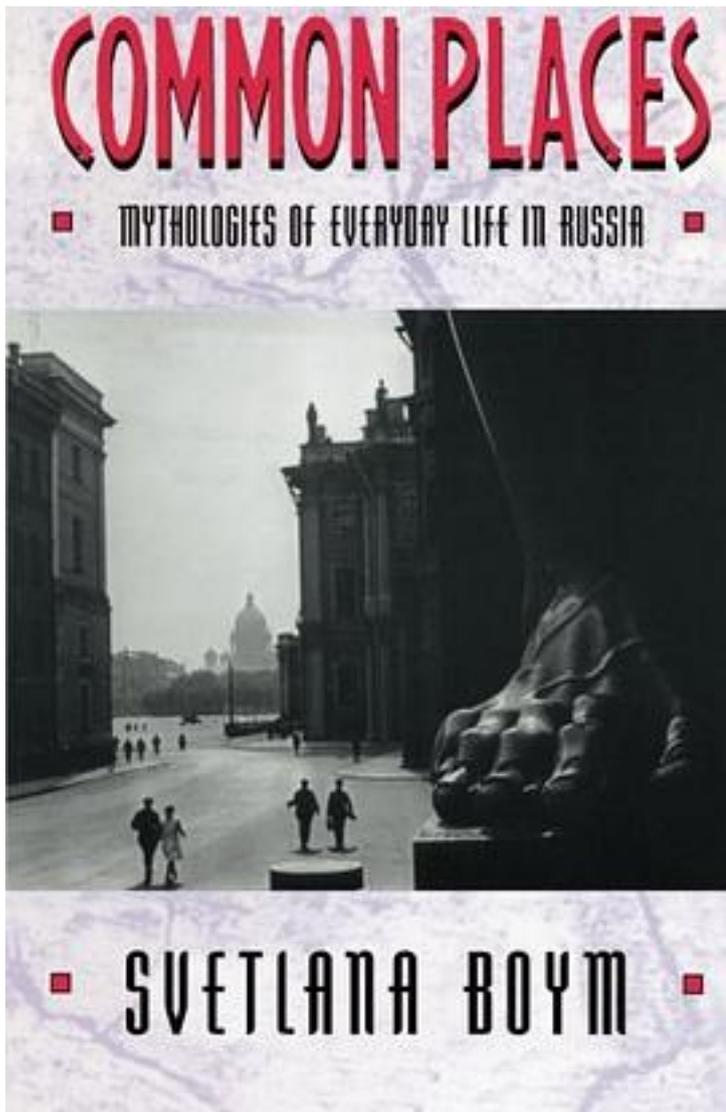


Common Places



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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 in Russia, everyday life was hidden behind political, ideological or artistic screens, deemed irrelevant or inscrutable. And all who write big books on Russian life confess their failure to get properly inside Russia, to understand its "doublespeak". This book provides a view of Russia that is historically informed and filled with unexpected detail. Alternating analysis with personal accounts of Russian life, Boym conveys the foreignness of Russia and examines 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 grass-root 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. Not even the books can be simply good reads. They must be "Great Literature" or they are junk. In Russia, a bad writer, a graphomaniac, is a threat to the national dream. Boym studies Russian culture in a broad sense of the word; she ranges from 19th- and 20th-century intellectual thought to art and popular culture. With her we go walking in Moscow and Leningrad, eavesdrop on domestic life, and discover jokes, films and TV programmes. In the final chapter, Boym reflects on the 1991 coup that marked the end of the Soviet Union and evoked fin de siècle apocalyptic visions. The book ends with a poignant reflection on the nature of communal utopia and nostalgia, on homesickness and the sickness of being home.

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标签

日常生活

苏联

history

everyday

空间景观城市

城市史

历史学

boym

评论

everyday/ banality/ ordinary /nostalgia

good to learn something about everyday life in Russia

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书评

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