PORNO LUDENS: SOVIET LITERARY PORNOGRAPHY, 1970S – 1990S

BY

JASMINA SAVIC

DISSERTATION

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Doctoral Committee:

Professor Lilya Kaganovsky, Chair
Associate Professor Valeria Sobol
Associate Professor David L. Cooper
Professor Eliot Borenstein

ABSTRACT

My dissertation, "Porno Ludens: Soviet Literary Pornography, 1970s – 1990s," traces the emergence of Russian literary pornography as a counter discourse to Socialist Realism and official Soviet ideology during the late Soviet period. While influential studies of Russian sexuality have focused on the eroticism of early twentieth century literature and art or, conversely, on the post-Soviet proliferation of obscenity, my dissertation takes the "interim" period, roughly between 1970 and 1990, as a site for the emergence of a new pornographic language in underground, dissident, and émigré literature, countering the "no sex in the USSR" discourse of official Soviet ideology. The dissertation traces the development of Russian sexual discourse in Soviet literature, broadening our understanding of late Soviet culture to include that which is usually excluded: sexually explicit language that runs the gamut from eroticism to pornography. In the 1970s and 1980s, literary pornography arose as the antipode to puritan Soviet literature and culture. A plethora of vulgarisms and obscene words invaded literature and permitted the writers to design a new poetics of pornography as an anti-Socialist Realist style. Literary pornography appeared as a peculiar kind of freedom that allowed writers to break the taboos of sex, to liberate the Russian language and culture from the fetters of Soviet ideology, and to place themselves in opposition to the restrictive methods and discourses of official Soviet culture. In the early 1990s, Russian national identity and national pride were to be rediscovered and redefined through pornography, with the porno aesthetics of the last two decades of the Soviet state serving as a model.

My project is structured as a comparative study of Russian literary pornography written both in the USSR and in the US—a case study of four authors: Edward Limonov and Mikhail Armalinsky as "pornographers in exile;" and Viktor Erofeev and Vladimir Sorokin as "pornographers at home." By putting these four writers in dialogue, I accentuate that pornographic literature appears as an alternative truth-carrying discursive practice in which diverse cultural and semiotic meanings are produced in and understood as a game. The writers strive to make of pornography a personal project recording their private life, traumas, and struggles, which is both entertaining and terrifying. The skeleton of late-Soviet literary pornography is the play pattern of how to live and write porn simultaneously.

To my parents and my sister

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INTRODUCTION

> "And now, friend-reader, you must prepare your heart and your mind for the most impure tale that has ever been told since our world began, a book the likes of which are met with neither amongst the ancients nor amongst us moderns." (Marquis De Sade, Introduction to *The 120 Days of Sodom*)
>
> "Everything in the world is about sex except sex. Sex is about power." (Oscar Wilde)

Russian pornography is in some way unique, different from all other cultures in the world, argues Alexei Lalo using the euphemism "libertinage" instead of pornography to examine Russian libertinage discourses as "original cultural products, not as derivative from the West, although responding to it."[1] In 2012, Viktor Erofeev and his pornographic text *Russian Beauty* became a battlefield for the debate propelled by Lalo regarding the Eastern and Western scholarly approaches to "Russian pornography." In his article "Russian Sex Studies in the West: What They Talk about When They Talk about Love," Lalo accuses prominent scholars such as H. Goscilo, E. Borenstein, L. Beaudoin, and L. Rimmel for their scholarly studies found in *Eros and Pornography in Russian Culture*[2] in which, as he states, they attack the Moscow-based writer and critic Viktor Erofeev for his alleged "masculinist chauvinism," misogyny, and for the "dehumanization of gay sexuality." Lalo argues that "US-based" Western scholars by default analyze Erofeev through the prism of "anti-pornography feminism" of the 80s, and that their criticism excludes the historical circumstances when his *Russian Beauty* was written. Alexander Etkind and Lilya Kaganovsky came into dialogue with Lalo, ironically asserting that Lalo teaches us important lessons "about public speech, about sex, and about western studies of Russia. First things first, of course, and that means sex" (Etkind); and that Lalo is not the first, nor certainly the last "to assume that when it comes to Russian literature and Slavic studies, the

[1] Alexei Lalo, *Libertinage in Russian Culture and Literature: A Bio-History of Sexualities at the Threshold of Modernity*, Boston: Brill, 2011, p. 9.
[2] M. Levitt and A. Toporkov, eds, *Eros and Pornography in* Russian *Culture*, Moscow: Ladomir, 1999.

rest of us just got it all wrong. It may have been eighties' feminism that led us astray, or our insufficient command of the language, but whatever it was,… American Slavists, just don't 'get it'" (Kaganovsky).[3] Discussions of sex and representations of the body in Russian culture have always been saturated with various assumptions regarding what is foreign and what is native. Claims that sexuality and sexual perversions, including discourses about them, are foreign, specifically Western and not Russian phenomena (*ne svoe, a chuzhoe*), were and still are persistent in Russian cultural thinking. There is a contradiction in Russia's case: while the sexual discourse is dependent on the West, as Eliot Borenstein asserts, pornography and nationalism are to be consumed "in the same package."[4] How does pornography translate the foreign into a Russian original? The illogicality of this question governs the narrative of this project whose focus is the development of late-Soviet pornography and its poetics.

"Pornography has a History," claims Lynn Hunt in the introduction to her book *The Invention of Pornography* in which she historically defines pornography as a literary practice and the knowledge of libertine minds that had emerged between 1500 and 1800 in the West.[5] Russian pornography, too, has a history, and I contend that late-Soviet pornography has a history behind it: Soviet history. Or to push this thought even further, I argue that Soviet pornography is a version of Soviet history, and this is where its uniqueness resides. A historical overview of the main debates on pornography in the West and Russia that follow situate my argument and contextualize the advancement of late-Soviet porn, its function and meaning.

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[3] *Slavonica* 18, no. 2, (October 2012): A. Lalo "Russian Sex Studies in the West: What They Talk about When They Talk about Love," pp 83–96; A. Etkind, "Talking about Russian Sex in the Era of Pussy Riot," pp. 105-107; L. Kaganovsky's, "Il n'y a pas de rapport sexuel," pp. 97-99.
[4] Eliot Borenstein, *Overkill: Sex and Violence in Contemporary Russian Popular Culture*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2008, p. 56.
[5] Lynn Hunt, *The Invention of Pornography, 1500–1800: Obscenity and the Origins of Modernity*, New York: Zone Books, 1993.

While pornography can be traced all the way back to ancient mythologies, such as the cult of Priapus, and the folkloric traditions of many peoples, Hunt states that as a legal and artistic category pornography "seems to be an especially Western idea with a specific chronology and geography" (10). Though in the modern understanding of the term pornography began to be used widely in the 19th century, Hunt shows that literary and visual porn emerged as sign of modernity and was linked to the Renaissance, the Scientific Revolution, the Enlightenment, and the French Revolution. Pornography and its censorship can be traced back to the 16th century in Italy, and the 17th and 18th centuries in France and England (10-11). "Pornography was a name for a cultural battle zone" (13) and it was defined over time by the conflicts between freethinkers and the absolute political authorities as creators of the norms. Pornography arose through a fight of writers and artists against spies, policemen, and state officials (11). Pornography was and still is marked by public debates. Pornography relies on the shock of explicit sex to test the boundaries of social, political, and discursive norms.

The Victorian era instigated the proliferation of pornographic discourse in the 19th century, and its continuation in 20th century was linked with the birth of psychoanalytical schools on the one hand and totalitarian regimes on the other. Sexual danger and erotic desire coming together with a diversity of sexual practices became a discursive game of power that according to Foucault exploited the "world of perversion" through confession practice and scientific study.[6] It is dialogue, both forced and volunteered, that keeps porn alive. With the significant growth of the porn industry and magazines, such as *Playboy* and *Penthouse*, and their economic success on the market, in the 1970s pornography and obscenity became a public problem in the United States. The question of the suppression of porn brought in feminist thinkers, who brought this issue to

[6] See Michel Foucault, The History of Sexuality, Vol. 1, Random House, New York, 1978.

the level of a leading social controversy claiming that sex is about male power. Pornography became a new battlefield for conservative and liberal feminists to discuss gender dynamics and censorship of porn. The radical anti-pornography feminist objections, advocated primarily by Catharine MacKinnon and Andrea Dworkin, declared porn as harmful with regards to its main aspects: porn is about male power, gender inequality with pronounced woman's subordination, escalation of sexual crime, violence, and especially rape. Pornography as one of the men's institutions (alongside law, prostitution, marriage) reinforces "colonization of women's bodies."[7] Another radical theorist, Robin Morgan, said: "pornography is the theory and rape the practice."[8] Susan Griffin, who unlike them never asked for the censorship of pornography, thought that porn brings harm because it does not stay in the realm of fantasy and often passes into real behavior of sadism, and that pornography itself is a sadistic act.[9]

Liberal feminists defended the right to producing, participating in and consuming pornography on the ground of freedom of speech, a right to privacy, and pornography's harmlessness. They acknowledged the problem of the way women were treated in pornography, nevertheless, they relinquished this concern before the freedom of one's choice. Sex liberals held that even pain and violence could be enjoyable if they were woman's choice. Carole Vance saw sexuality as a twofold experience that combines danger and pleasure. Whether sex is seen as violence or *élan vital* depends on the woman's point of view and individual interpretation that is often conditioned by various external and internal events. Vance argued that by making their

[7] Andrea Dworkin, *Pornography: Men Possessing Women*, New York: Penguin Books, 1981, p. 203.
[8] Robin Morgan, "Theory and Practice: Pornography and Rape," in *Take Back the Night: Women on Pornography*, ed. Laura Lederer, New York: William Morrow and Co., 1980, p. 139. See more on this movement in Caroline Bronstein *Battling Pornography: The American Feminist Anti-Pornography Movement, 1976–1986*, Cambridge University Press, 2011.
[9] Susan Griffin, *Pornography and Silence: Culture's Revenge Against Nature*, Harper & Row; 1st edition, 1981.

choice women become "sexual subjects, sexual actors, sexual agents" who act.[10] In her article "My Mother Liked to Fuck," Joan Nestle showed how her mother became a sexual subject because she was clear about her sexual freedom to choose and found her real sexual self in a combination of pleasure and pain. Even though her mother was constantly sexually abused, insulted and raped, she did not want to get rid of her freedom, and "dared to be clear about enjoying fucking" and her "enjoyment of the penis and vagina."[11]

Pornography, erotica and sex bring one the knowledge of one's self. This thought was reclaimed in both feminist camps from two different angles which, nevertheless, were rooted in the single source, Georges Bataille's work *Eroticism: Death and Sensuality*. Bataille asserts that eroticism, as the inner, liminal knowledge, is formed on two contradictory feelings, anguish and pleasure. For him, eroticism is a "psychological quest" that brings all other existences into question, it "is assenting to life up to the point of, or even in, death." Relying on de Sade's remarks that "there is no better way to know death than to link it with some licentious image," Bataille concludes that there is a strong connection between death and sexual excitement.[12] Feminist debates expanded further on the question of how to define pornography and whether or not it is different from erotica, and on the issues of claiming pornography is death, and pornography is one's mirror.

One of the main questions was how distinguishable pornography is from erotica, why sometimes erotic work carries less moral responsibility than pornographic, and other times they overlap being considered equally obscene and outrageous. Gloria Steinem defines erotica as

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[10] Carole Vance, "Pleasure and Danger: Toward a Politics of Sexuality," in *Feminisms*, eds. Sandra Kemp and Judith Squires. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997, p. 334.
[11] Joan Nestle, "My Mother Liked to Fuck," in *Powers of Desire*, eds. A. Snitow, C. Stansell and S. Thomson. New York: Monthly Review Press, 1983, pp. 468-469.
[12] Georges Bataille, *Eroticism: Death and Sensuality*, San Francisco: City Lights Books, 1986, p. 11.

mutually pleasurable sexual expression between people who make their choice to be together. If erotica doesn't require from viewers to identify with the conqueror or a victim, pornography, on the contrary, relies on violence and dominance and opens a new inequality telling us that humiliation and pain are the same pleasure, and we must identify with a torturer or a victim. Therefore, viewers or readers of porn gain pleasure by adopting one of the two perversions: sadism or masochism. Steinem finally arranges the terms like this: erotica is about sexuality, porn is about power, and sex is its weapon.[13] For Dworkin, erotica is just the same as porn, a bit better produced but supporting the same system of sexual values produced out of a man's psychological trauma. She defines porn as the battle for manhood in which the woman ends up dead "because men believe what Bataille believes and makes pretty: 'that death is the dirty secret of sex.'"[14] Boys are victims or witnesses of the father's abuse of woman, and they go for the power of pornography to "escape being victims by definition," but they always remember that once they were "close to woman in powerlessness, in potential of actual humiliation, in danger of male aggression" (50-51). Pornography is initiation into violent male sexual culture, it emerges from the war, blood, and death that older men purposefully generate for the boys in order to kill the boys that "still have the smell of women on them," the smell of victimhood. "The ones who survive the bloodbath will never again risk the empathy with women they experienced as children," instead they will project their fear of punishment on them (51). Pornography, according to Dworkin, "is the male's sacred stronghold, a monastic retreat for manhood on the verge of its own destruction" and appears as commitment to masculinity that is in fact "a double-edged commitment to both suicide and genocide" (68).

[13] Gloria Steinem, "Erotica and Pornography: A Clear and Present Difference," in *Take Back the Night*, pp. 37-38.
[14] *Pornography: Men Possessing Women*, p. 176.

Laying out the idea that for men the force leading to death is the true value of sex, Dworkin reveals that death which is behind porn feeds on real history:

> Dachau […], every vile prison or dungeon […], police torture and thug mentality brought into the bedroom and celebrated — men reveal themselves and all that matters to them in these depictions of real history, plasticized and rarefied […] And the pictures and stories lead right back to history — to peoples enslaved, maimed, murdered […] Pornography reveals that male pleasure is inextricably tied to victimizing, hurting, exploiting; that sexual fun and sexual passion in the privacy of the male imagination are inseparable from the brutality of male history. The private world of sexual dominance that men demand as their right and their freedom is the mirror image of the public world of sadism and atrocity that men consistently and self-righteously deplore. It is in the male experience of pleasure that one finds the meaning of male history." (69)

The sexual objectification of Jewish woman and the "reputation for unbridled sensuality that has followed Jewish woman throughout history," Dworkin writes, was pushed to the extremes by the Nazis in reality. Being so brutal and sadistic, Hitler's sexual degradation turned the Jewish woman into "the carrier of a new sexual memory" and "changed the character of the mainstream sexual imagination. The concentration camp woman, a Jew — emaciated with bulging eyes and sagging breasts and bones sticking out all over and shaved head and covered in her own filth and cut up and whipped and stomped on and punched out and starved — became the hidden sexual secret of our time…promoted in mainstream sexual propaganda." This porno horror is men's competition game that Dworkin describes: "The Germans had her, had the power to make her. The others want her, want the power to make her," which proves that "the Nazis set a new standard of masculinity" (144-5). Though not only Jews were captured and killed, but also

Gypsies, Poles, and homosexuals, they became the main objects of perversion because Hitler's portrayal of Jewish sexuality provoked the German aggression. And it is a double horror of Jew and woman that resonates in sexual memory. "It is her image — hiding, running, captive, dead — that evokes the sexual triumph of the sadist," she haunts men's sexual memory, but "this memory is not recognized as a sexual fact, nor is it acknowledged as male desire: it is too horrible." Instead, Dworkin argues, men apply anti-Semitic statements to her ("she wants it, they all do") to echo that which was directed to her people ("the Jews went voluntarily to the ovens") alluding that the nature of "each and both is to be a victim" (146).

Griffin, too, pointed out pornography's influence in promoting racism and sexism along with sadism. She also turned to porn films displaying Nazi memorabilia, concentration camps, and Jews to state that the "pornographic mind hates and fears," it is the one who projects all his fears on the characters he describes in fantasy. Therefore, the woman in porn like the Jews in anti-Semitism or the blacks in racism is in fact a part of the one who creates them as a forbidden part of the self. The victim is male pornographer's mirror whose pornographic mind dominates in culture (in film, history, literature, advertisement, religious doctrine) and we all participate in it.[15]

In her attempt to define pornography and understand it as artistic genre, Susan Sontag begins with the theory that "Bataille understood more clearly than other writers what pornography is really about, ultimately, isn't sex but death," to which she brought another element of porn, comedy.[16] She states that pornography as a literary form works with two models: "one equivalent to tragedy in which erotic subject-victim heads towards death, and the

[15] *Pornography and Silence*.
[16] Susan Sontag, *Styles of Radical Will*, Picador USA, New York, 2002, p. 60.

other equivalent to comedy, in which the obsessional pursuit of sexual exercise is rewarded by a terminal gratification, union with uniquely desired partner" (59). Not all works, Sontag adds, but certainly works dealing with "the obscene" revolve about death. Like in comedy, the personages in pornography cannot be portrayed in depth and so "truly to engage the audience's feelings" but are seen "only from the outside, behavioristically" (54). Examining the aesthetic possibility of pornography as an art form and a form of thinking that is based on these two genres, Sontag argues that "pornography yields more than the truths of individual nightmare," and considers how hard it might be to live with sexual obsessions, and through repetitions that don't bring new knowledge to "generate a vision of the world that can claim the interest of those who are not erotomanes" (65). Unlike Fred Berger who gives an imprecise definition of pornography as "art or literature which explicitly depicts sexual activities or arousal in a manner having little or no artistic or literary value,"[17] Sontag's definition of literary pornography is elaborated on (non)feelings:

> The books generally called pornographic are those whose primary, exclusive, and overriding preoccupation is with the depiction of sexual 'intentions' and 'activities.' […] Pornography uses a small crude vocabulary of feeling, all relating to the prospects of action: feeling one would like to act (lust); feeling one would not like to act (shame, fear, aversion). There are no gratuitous or non-functioning feelings; no musings, whether speculative or imagistic, which are irrelevant to the business at hand. Thus, the pornographic imagination inhabits a universe that is, however repetitive the incidents

[17] Fred Berger, "Pornography, Sex, and Censorship," *Freedom, Rights and Pornography: A Collection of Papers by Fred R. Berge*, ed., Bruce Russe, Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publisher, 1990, p. 133.

occurring within it, incomparably economical. The strictest possible criterion of relevance applies: everything must bear upon the erotic situation. (66)

In dialogue with Sontag, Irvin Kristol states that "pornography differs from erotic art in that its whole purpose is to treat human beings obscenely, to deprive human beings of their specifically human dimension." He holds that pornography provokes in readers or viewers animalistic behavior and infantilism leading them to self-eroticism which is an unsafe sphere for society: "The basic psychological fact about pornography and obscenity is that it appeals to and provokes a kind of sexual regression. The sexual pleasure one gets from pornography and obscenity is autoerotic and infantile; put bluntly, it is a masturbatory exercise of the imagination, when it is not masturbation pure and simple. Now, people who masturbate do not get bored with masturbation, just as sadists do not get bored with sadism, and voyeurs do not get bored with voyeurism."[18] What Berger rightly expressed is that pornography "will be judged differently by people who have different attitudes toward sex."[19]

A History of Russian Pornography

Pornographic narratives and obscene vocabulary are rooted in Russian folklore, oral tradition and the common people's language (*narodnyi iazyk*). The scholars that contributed to *Eros and Pornography in Russian Culture* (1999) reveal the character of sexuality in the Russian past and demonstrate that pornography and obscenity have a long history in Russian culture. In the 18th century, when pornography was blossoming in Europe, the first pornographic images

[18] Irvin Kristol, "Pornography, Obscenity and Censorship" *Society* 36, no. 6 (September 1999): 5-10.
[19] "Pornography, Sex, and Censorship," p. 137.

appeared in Russian popular prints, lubki,[20] and along with that a certain fear of pornography that was independent of the Russian social and religious realms. Perverse sexuality became a public danger coming from the foreign land. Kliaus claims that in Russian 18th century-folk songs there was a strict set of attributes given to coitus with regard to what is foreign and what native. While the "normal" coitus between the husband and wife takes place in the domestic space (*svoe prostranstvo*) such as a courtyard or house, the foreign land (*chuzhoe prostranstvo*) epitomized in a forest, field, or city comes to be locus for "abnormal" coitus between a human and an animal and/or personified sexual organs. This is "a typical example of the archaic presentation of the foreign world with its inverted norms" and strange sexual practices.[21] If anomalous sexual practices that were "unfamiliar" to Russians took place outside the native Russian land, the language used to describe them, consequently, was also a foreign invention. The Russian language was viewed as lacking vocabulary to render western vulgarity. Vasilii Trediakovsky, for instance, claimed he needed to invent many words to render the western erotic forms while working on his translation of *Journey to the Island of Love*. This insistence on the innocence of the Russian land, language, and culture was linked with the moral superiority of the Russian people. Thus, any literary attempt to change the established moral order and this image of chastity was perceived as threatening.

Such an understanding of sexuality coupled with a clear distinction between "us" and "them" marked in a way the entire development of Russian pornographic literature. By pornography, I mean here all literary works that contain obscene language, explicit erotic scenes, or implicit vulgarity, that were at one point in Russian history viewed as pornographic, or whose

[20] See Dianne Ecklund Farrel "The Bawdy Lubok: Sexual and Scatological Content in 18th -century Russian Popular Prints," *Eros and Pornography in Russian Culture*.
[21] V. L. Kliaus, "Coitus v russkikh narodnykh pesniakh: Opyt analiza atributsii," in *Eros and Pornography in Russian Culture*, p. 78.

authors were accused of pornography. This imaginary perverted West is constantly present both in porn and in censoring narrative and it functions as a general symbol of otherness, which under different social and political circumstances becomes equated with the foreign land, the other world outside Russia, the bourgeoisie, and capitalism. Woman appears to be the central figure of Russian chastity and innocence, and the female body stands for the Russian land and Russia itself that is being invaded by the foreign perversions. Woman becomes that middle ground where nationalism and pornography merge.

The well-known Russian sexologist, Igor Kon, addresses the question of the everlasting dichotomy of Russian vs Western sexuality in his book *The Sexual Revolution in Russia*. Kon gives three hypotheses that can possibly explain the cultural specificity of Russian Eros against the West: the contrast between high and low culture was always more visible in Russia; Russian high culture resisted adopting erotic discourses, thus causing sexually explicit elements to remain in the lower cultural sphere; and the power of the state and the authoritative political discourse prevented the development of pluralism, which is the essential parameter of sexuality.[22] Kon's systematic portrait of Russian sexuality is valuable for developing an analysis of the next stages in the development of Russian porn and especially the late-Soviet fascination with obscene language and foreignisms as a powerful tool for making a pluralism of realities and discourses.

Hopkins argues that pornography entered Russian literature through the aggressive public literary polemics in 1750s between Lomonosov, Trediakovsky and Sumarokov. Lomonosov, who contributed to the formation of the modern Russian literary language by developing a scheme of how to combine spoken Russian and Church Slavonic in accordance to three styles for

[22] Igor Kon, *The Sexual Revolution in Russia: From the Age of the Czars to Today*, trans. James Riordan, New York: The Three Press, 1995, pp. 12-13.

specific genres, entered this discursive game with same enthusiasm as Sumarokov and Trediakovsky; and all played offenders and were ridiculed. Through parodies of each other's styles, genres, rhymes, and linguistic theory, they produced humor along with vulgarities used for ad hominem insults that they incorporated in their poems, letters, and epigrams. These three literati mixed the high and the low and filled Russian literature with porn.[23] The first Russian literary pornography appeared as vulgar comedy passing through multiple genres.

Ivan Barkov (1732-1768) is thought to be the originator of pornography in modern Russian literature. Barkov's opus rested on non-Russian literary traditions and developed under the influence of the classics (Ovid and Sappho) and French pornography. Barkov was the first to show that the Russian language did not lack anything but was, on the contrary, an abundant source for creating pornography. Barkov wrote in the Russian vernacular using a vast array of Russian obscene language (*mat*). In his works, explicitness of erotic scenes, vulgar language, travesty, and parody marked a categorical break from classicism, strict form, and the radical distinction between high and low literature. Barkov's legacy includes the long epic poem *Luka Mudishchev*,[24] which introduced the Priapian character Luka as the anthropomorphized phallus whose sexual practice not only brings death to women but is also self-destructive; and the anthology *Maiden's Plaything* (*Devichiia igrushka)* in which his pornographic imagery infiltrated classical genres (ode, elegy, tragedy, etc.) resulting in comic literary syntheses such as "Ode to the Cunt" (*Oda pizde*), "Ode to the Prick" (*Oda khuiu*), the elegy "The Cunt's Cry" (*Plach pizdy*), or the short tragedy *Pizdrona*. The word *barkovshchina* became a euphemism for Russian literary pornography. Barkov was seen as immoral and a literary "anomaly," and his

[23] William Huge Hopkins, *The Development of "Pornographic" Literature in Eighteenth- and Early Nineteenth-Century Russia*. PhD dissertation, Indiana University, 1977, pp. 71-100.
[24] This poem is attributed to Barkov, but many scholars showed that he did not actually write it. See for example Hopkins, *The Development of "Pornographic."*

voice was opposed by the voice of Russian literary puritanism whose herald seemed to be Derzhavin, who rewrote Barkov's poems by using "appropriate" language turning them back to high literature. It is only after this intervention of moral and linguistic cleansing that "Barkov's" work influenced official literature.

With the establishment of rigid tsarist censorship in the 19th century, pornography becomes an explicit topic for discussion in the discourse of prohibition proclaimed by both the state and the church. Those whose writings contained obscenity and sexuality found themselves at risk of becoming a target for strict censorial prohibitions and of being accused of pornography. Pushkin's case was somewhat different and unique. Although his earliest poems contained pornographic subjects and were on the list of tsarist moral censorship for political criticism, given Pushkin's importance in Russian cultural consciousness the difference between erotica and pornography played an important role in the perception of his work. Not only in the 19th century but also later, critics always found an excuse for Pushkin's pornography and vulgar language. His "Gavriiliada" and "Tsar Nikita and His Forty Daughters" (*Tsar' Nikita i sorok ego docherei*) that was banned in 1889, with their explicit criticism of the church, religious taboos, (tsarist) authority and censorship, were recognized as erotic while any study of his pornographic imagery became taboo. In his essay "On Pornography," Vladislav Khodasevich, who perceived pornography as anti-art, argued that Pushkin's "Gavriiliada" does not produce any pornographic effect for it is an artistically perfect work, "by the time Pushkin wrote it he had already turned into a master."[25] No one in fact dared to approach Pushkin from such an angle. The Pushkin myth had to be maintained, for in all periods of Russian history Pushkin was the demarcation line between "us" and "them." In the pornographic poem "The Shadow of Barkov" (*Ten'*

[25] Vladislav Khodasevich, "O Pornografii," *Voz*, no. 2445, February 11, 1932.

Barkova)[26] Pushkin turns to Barkov, explicitly invokes him as a muse, and celebrates him: "great is Barkov." However, while Barkov's work was perceived as pornographic, Pushkin's work is seen as "piquant."[27]

In the 1870s and 1880s, three anthologies of taboo breaking literature were published outside Russia: *Russian Secret Tales* (*Russkie zavetnye skazki*) containing pornographic folk tales recorded by Aleksandr Afanas'ev, *Eros Russe: Russian Erotica not for Ladies* (*Russkii erot ne dlia dam*) which among other Junker Schools' contributors included pornographic works by Mikhail Lermontov, and *Among Friends* (*Mezhdu druziami*) that reissued many *Secret Tales* accompanied by obscene works from the 1830s.

The social and political changes and uncertainty of the turn-of-the-century brought a proliferation of pornographic writings in Russia. The early 20th century was an extremely sexualized period, marked by an increase of erotic imagery in literature and in art. The fin-de-siècle and decadent writers on sex, rape, homosexuality—Mikhail Artsybashev, Mikhail Kuzmin, and Vasilii Rozanov—marked the transition that Lalo phrases: "silence is Golden, speech is Silver."[28] The literature of the Silver Age was saturated with the ideas of free love, bodily indulgence, obscene language, and the victory of passion over reason. Maksim Gorky found the period of 1907-1917 to be "the most shameful and shameless decade in the history of the Russian intelligentsia."[29] It is not by chance that Gorky chose 1907 for the year to mark the beginning of this disturbing period. The debate over the place of sex and obscenity in Russian

[26] Like Barkov, Pushkin is credited with this poem *Ten' Barkova*, while speculations about the authorship still exist.
[27] See Alyssa Dinega Gillespie, "Introduction" and "Bawdy and Soul: Pushkin's Poetics of Obscenity," in *Taboo Pushkin*, ed. A. D. Gillespie, Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press: 2012.
[28] Lalo, *Libertinage*, 120.
[29] *Pervyi vsesoiuznyi s''ezd sovetskikh pisatelei: Stenograficheskii otchet (1934)*, Moscow: Sovetskii pisatel', 1990, 12.

literature and society started in 1907 with Arstybashev's *Sanin*, a novel that was considered a manifesto of pleasurable sexuality and sex for sex's sake. The significance of *Sanin* was vital, and, in the tradition of Nikolay Chernyshevsky's *What's To Be Done*, was taken as an example of how to live. The problem was that the philosophy of hedonism and free love that the character Sanin upholds is equated in the novel with rape, and furthermore, justified by the victim Karsavina herself. As soon as the novel was published, Sanin's erotomania became a model for sexual behavior of Russian youth. The term *saninism* was quickly adopted to signify the moral corruption of the Russian intelligentsia after the 1905 Revolution.

In the first year after the 1917 Revolution, the new forming Bolshevik nation requested new forms of sexual regulations. As the individual body was turned into the collective body, individual pleasure disappeared and sexuality was transformed into labor and production. Sex in Soviet Russia attained negative and terrifying meanings, becoming a matter of the Party's rigid control. The Party made use of personal life, and the sexuality of the individual was taken as a tool for controlling the Soviet youth. Pornography, like any other expression of sexuality, was repressed and silenced by Soviet ideology, Socialist Realism, and the puritanism of Soviet culture. However, this allegedly sex-free culture was in fact obsessed by sex and tried to maintain sexual discourse in the public sphere. Eric Naiman shows that the political discourse of the 1920s was preoccupied with sexuality and the body, and that sex became a topic of public discussion since for the Party sex "was a means of control as much as it was a goal of control." As a consequence, the Soviet press "could not stop talking about sex." [30] The NEP period appeared as a highly anxious time, for sex was brought into connection with crime, pollution,

[30] Eric Naiman, *Sex in Public: The Incarnation of Early Soviet Ideology*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997, p. 97, 104.

and disease. Sexual pleasure was for the bourgeoisie as the "other," while the Bolsheviks were expected to remain in abstinence since the Party asked for healthy, strong, and productive workers. Thus, the woman with her female attributes became a dangerous temptation for the Soviet man, "the woman that could not be confused with man" appeared to be NEP's enemy (Naiman 215). The opposition Russia vs. West was remodeled here into Nepman vs. bourgeois or Nepwoman the comrade vs. capitalist femininity.

The female body was perceived as threatening since it could be infected and corrupted by the other. Accordingly, the Soviets saw the woman as a dangerous carrier of the past and female sexuality as porous terrain, permeable to capitalist perversions. These issues were addressed in the fictional works of Alexandra Kollontai, who after her studies in the West brought the woman question and libertinism to the Party's table. Kollontai confronted the Party, advocating free love and casual sex in post-revolutionary society, and criticized Lenin's socialist program. All of this resulted in her being sent abroad where over the course of twenty years she held various diplomatic positions, which were in fact a cover for her actual exile.

Yevgeny Zamyatin in his dystopian novel *We* (1924) and Andrei Platonov in his short story "Anti-Sexus" (1925) satirized the state's measures to protect people from their uncontrollable sexuality. Platonov's satire revolves around the Soviet regime's concerns with the socially harmful effect of masturbation, the rechanneling of sexual energy into work energy, the control of human erotic desire, and most of all the Russia-West opposition regarding sexual immorality. Platonov makes an ad for a masturbatory electromagnetic machine called Anti-Sexus, a pornographic Anglo-Euro-American product invented to regulate the duration of sexual pleasure that symbolically expands to the Soviet market. This universal device is made for both men and women, for all ages and nations, can be used individually and collectively, and is meant

to reveal the "industrial moral physiological madness" of the West so that "Bolsheviks can laugh."[31]

In the Stalinist era the anti-sexus ruling apparatus was formed to restrain any discourse on sexuality in the Soviet state. Stalin's prohibitions put sexuality aside, borders to the West were closed, and the import of libertine influences became impossible. In the 1930s, the imperative of motherhood and family brought back the narrative of chastity, and the woman as a creator of the Soviet "small" family and "big" family, the nation, was put into the household and forced to be closed into domestic space. Another alternative was to make her a shock worker whose femininity would be taken away by machines and hard work. This way the society turned "clean" again. The national project finally resulted in an absolute silence about sexuality that left socialist realism without "realism." The high Stalinist culture (the concept of *kul'turnost'*), brought "the Russian everything," Pushkin, into the discursive totalitarianism and let him grow into a cult of personality mirroring that of the father of the nation. The new, Soviet Pushkin myth was created. In the mythmaking culture, heroic biographies flourished as the Soviets decided to restart the famous biographical series from the late 19th century, "The Lives of Remarkable People" (LRP) in an attempt, as Gorky stated, "to teach people heroism." Behind such discursive innocence enforced by censorship, political control, repression and enforced moral and cultural values were the show trials, "doctors' plot," death, purges, and the Gulag, that in light of feminist ideas could be seen as the expression of Stalin's sexual pathologies or the horror of a "pornographic mind." Stalin's imprisonment system represented the worst obscenity for which people were trained to use euphemism "there" (*tam*) instead of calling it by its real name.

[31] At http://www.eunet.lv/library/win/PLATONOW/antisexus.txt.

Stalin's death in 1953 will, however, unveil the "truth" that he himself was an obscenity and the world he created a pornographic simulacrum that now had to be censored.

Vladimir Nabokov noticed the return of the repressed in the Socialist Realist novels, which contain sexual discourse hidden within socialist narratives of machines, hard work, and industry.[32] Socialist perversion was hidden at home, while open sexual narrative distorting the official ideology was produced in exile. Outside the Soviet state during the Stalinist period, authors, including Georgii Ivanov and Nabokov, made the most significant contribution to upholding the sexual and carnal discourse. Their novels *Disintegration of the Atom* (*Raspad Atoma* 1938) and *Lolita* (1955), both at one point labeled pornographic, will be the models for the next generation to fight cultural taboos.

While Lenin, following his death and until the present, stayed on public display as an exemplary historical figure and an appropriate work of art held in his mausoleum, which was "without a doubt the most frequented museum in the Soviet Union,"[33] Stalin, on the contrary, was only temporarily displayed next to Lenin, and then, as if recognized as an inappropriate work of art, removed from this historical house of ghosts and memory. Starting with Khrushchev's famous 1956 "Secret Speech" at the Twentieth Party Congress, Stalin underwent a mass censorship campaign. Stalin, the Father of Peoples, became a cultural and historical obscenity that had to be wiped away from the everyday life of the Soviets. In a way, he was turned into a cultural and historical perversion whose traces needed to be radically eliminated and cut out from film, posters, and public discourse. His name became nearly absent from the newspapers of the time "operating under a directive which forbade the mention of Stalin's name

[32] Vladimir Nabokov, *Lectures on Russian Literature*, New York: Harcourt, 1981.
[33] Boris Groys, *The Total Art of Stalinism: Avant-garde, Aesthetic Dictatorship, and Beyond*, transl. Charles Rougle, Princeton University Press, 1992, p. 67.

more than once, or at the most twice, in any one article, no matter what its size," but also from political and historical documents (The "Stalin Constitution" became the "Constitution of the U.S.S.R."; the "Stalin Five-Year Plan" became the "Five-Year Plan"), and "newsreels of Stalin's well-photographed funeral were never shown in the moving-picture theaters of the Soviet Union."[34] Responsible for the deaths of millions, he became a dangerous infection deep-rooted in the Soviet consciousness that Soviet society ought to treat with a drastic de-Stalinization process. It is this tasteless and threatening symbol of the recent past that the Soviets, led now by the new leader Khrushchev, abolished, and together with it condemned the cult of personality that Stalin created to deify his dictatorial self. The Khrushchev's period is known as the period of liberalization, the Thaw (*ottepel'*), during which censorship policy was loosed, political convicts were released from the Gulag camps, victims of the purges rehabilitated, the country opened up for international trade, foreign films and festivals, uncensored books, and the strict control over freedom of speech relaxed. This was a Khrushchevian style cleansing (*chistka*), purging everything that reminded of the Comrade Stalin, a kind of exorcism of that perverse aspect of the Soviet self that must remain hidden. Ironically, Stalin's cultural destiny was that of a pornographer. Metaphorically speaking, the melting of ice that came with the *ottepel'* liquidated the firm, steel image of Stalin, and turned the monstrous historical iceberg into a shapeless liquid. De-Stalinization was a project of eliminating Stalinist hard porn made of steel.

Stalin's infectious pornographic body was taken from Lenin's eternal house, from Lenin's "pure body." At the Twenty-second Party Congress in 1961, a member of the Party, Dora Abramovna Lazurkina asked for Stalin's body to be removed from the Lenin's mausoleum:

[34] Robert C. Tucker, "The Metamorphosis of the Stalin Myth," *World Politics*, Vol. 7, No. 1 (October 1954):38-62, here 39.

"My heart is always full of Lenin. Comrades, I could survive the most difficult moments only because I carried Lenin in my heart, and always consulted him on what to do. Yesterday I consulted him. He was standing there before me as if he were alive, and he said: "It is unpleasant to be next to Stalin, who did so much harm to the Party."[35] A few days later Stalin's body was secretly removed and buried near the Kremlin wall. Lazurkina's speech, which was pre-planned, not only announced the return to Lenin's ideology, but made the post-Stalin Soviet society the spiritual agents of Lenin's ghost delivering its own demand for the removal of Stalin's body. Stalin took over the place designated to woman in Russian culture, the dirty other who carries the past forward. It is not surprising that in satires Stalin was often portrayed as feminine or androgynous (wearing a dress) because exorcizing him in this misogynist manner and "regendering Stalin is a very effective technique of diminution and mockery given the fact that he is an exaggeratedly male cultural icon. His feminization—places him firmly beyond the pale of what is comfortably *svoi* in the Russian worldview."[36]

On the occasion of Stalin's removal form the mausoleum, Evgenii Evtushenko wrote a poem, "The Heirs of Stalin" (*Naslednikі Stalina*),[37] that opens with an image of the complete muteness of everybody and everything around the body: "Mute was the marble. Mutely glimmered the glass. / Mute stood the guard […]." This horrifying silence implies the lack of any "proper" language or sound: nobody to sob in mourning, or to cry out curses at the monster. Evtushenko imagines that Stalin was alive, that he just pretended to be dead while his breath was pouring out of the coffin which was "mute too! But threateningly mute." Stalin, who "wanted to

[35] See Jennifer Rosenberg, "Body of Stalin Removed From Lenin's Tomb," at https://www.thoughtco.com/body-of-stalin-lenins-tomb-1779977 (last accessed May 9, 2019).
[36] Karen L. Ryan, *Stalin in Russian Satire, 1917–1991*, Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2009, p. 75.
[37] The poem was published in *Pravda* almost a year later, in October 1962. At https://philologist.livejournal.com/9219232.html.

remember all those who were carrying him out," was the only one whom Evtushenko imagined with a device through which his voice could be heard: "It seemed to me that a telephone was in the coffin." A telephone wire is hanging out of his coffin, and it is possible that at any moment Stalin could give a call to the Soviets and give his order (*soobshchaet svoi ukazaniia Stalin*). Evtushenko explicates his deepest fear of Stalin's return and appeals to the Soviet government with the following request: "To double and triple the guard at this slab, / So that Stalin may not rise, and, with Stalin, the past." He believes that many of Stalin's supporters are to be found among those who publicly swear at him while secretly lament for Stalin's era: "Some even curse Stalin from the stage, / And at night they themselves yearn for the old time." This means that those who were silent and in mourning and those who actively participated in the de-Stalinization campaign could belong to the same tribe whose ideological guru is Stalin. Public anti-Stalin obscenity often hides love for Stalin. Therefore, Evtushenko closes the poem with an ironic commentary: "We took him out of the Mausoleum. / But how to take Stalin out of Stalin's heirs? / […] / No wonder Stalin's heirs seem to suffer these days from heart attacks. / They […] don't like this time when the labor camps are empty, / and auditoriums packed with people listening to poetry./ […] / As long as Stalin's heirs are still on the earth, / I would feel like Stalin is still in the Mausoleum." Stalin is that black-marked obscene language erased from the official narrative, and ironically by means of *mat,* which everyone knows well and secretly speaks. De-Stalinization was indeed a "Secret Speech" par excellence.

Brezhnev's stagnation put a halt to this practice and reversed the discursive flow. The literature of the sixties, such as Andrei Sinyavsky's satirical writings and Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn's anti-Soviet realism deploying criticism of prison life and humiliation, had to be published abroad. This period was a reflection of the Stalinist era exemplified in the Sinyavsky–

Daniel case that symbolized a return to the show trials of the 1930s, in which their literary works published in the West were presented as evidence for anti-Soviet propaganda. Sinyavsky and Daniel were accused of "blasphemy," "slander," "treason," "obscenity," and "pornography," labeled as "internal emigres" and "enemies of the Soviet state,"[38] both sentenced to several years in labor camps. This case provoked the emergence of a strong dissident movement and became an inspiration for the generations of the 1970s and 1980s to fight cultural taboos. Among them were literary pornographers who emerged to replicate Khrushchev's discursive "(anti)sexual revolution" and defy censorship.

Late Soviet Pornography

Mikhail Armalinsky's epistolary novel *Voluntary Confessions—Forced Correspondence* (1991) is imagined as a long correspondence between Boris, a Russian émigré writer in America, and his best friend Sergei from the USSR. Sergei's speech appears as an echoing voice of the official Soviet ideology and the "we have no sex" [39] discourse that opposes Boris's overtly pornographic speech. In contrast to Boris, who very diligently and openly describes every single detail of his sexual life in America, Sergei does not say much about his affairs with women and certainly does not use inappropriate lexicon. After reading Boris's poetry, Sergei voices his disapproval of its obscene language: "An obscene word in verse is like an explosion in the middle of the concert, like an ink blot on the aquarelle — you stop seeing the picture and you see

[38] See Walter F. Kolonosky, *Literary Insinuations: Sorting Out Sinyavsky's Irreverence*, Lanham: Lexington Books, 2003, p. 13.
[39] "U nas seksa net" ("there is no sex in the USSR") – these words were blurted out by a Soviet woman in the heat of an argument, during one of the first American-Soviet television "bridge" programs during *perestroika*. Since that moment this phrase has been used as a popular formula for marking the attitude to sex in all communist and post-communist states, suggesting that generations of Soviet people grew up under the slogan: "There is no sex in the USSR."

only the ink blot. I am not to impose my view here, but I cannot change myself. When I see *mat* in verses, the verses easily turn into pornography, and I simply cannot regard them seriously."[40] The difference between their languages exposes yet another opposition between Soviet Russia and the West, that of strict censorship and freedom of speech. In late-Soviet Russia, all openly sexual discourses were still silenced, and thus the quest for euphemisms, instead of explicit obscene words ("*pizda, khui, ebla*"), that Sergei further proposes to Boris, represents a typical Soviet approach to dealing with sexual subjects. Sex was still the elephant in the Soviet room. Silence and denial of sexuality and obscenity in everyday Soviet life greatly affected the development of literature containing explicit sexual imagery. The Soviet state completely denied artistry to such literature and, consequently, all works that included sexual themes and obscene language—including those marked as dangerous and anti-Soviet, as the Sinyavsky-Daniil case shows—were labeled pornographic, censored, and immediately discarded without any further consideration.

But it is exactly in this anti-sexual cultural atmosphere of the Soviet state that literary pornographers find their way out of the "Soviet closet" to publicly say "we have sex." Or to prove Soviet absurdity afresh they show that "we don't have sex" but "we do have porn." Yet, Armalinsky is not alone among his contemporaries in attempting to create a pornographic discourse that was antithetical to the Soviet style Victorian discourse of morality. Three other writers of the late Soviet period that my study considers, Edward Limonov, Vladimir Sorokin, and Viktor Erofeev, also explore new literary ways to communicate sex and pornography to the Soviet land, in an effort to challenge the Soviet ideal reality, the Party's false values and ideas,

[40] Mikhail Armalinsky, *Chtob znali!:Izabrannoe 1966-1998*, Moscow: Ladomir, 2002, pp. 779-780.

and its politics of simulacrum. Being pornographically explicit, that is, calling things by their proper name, became their literary *modus vivendi*.

For Boris this correspondence with Sergei is a return to his own and the collective Soviet past: "You are the proof of my past…A common past is the fundamental basis of communication depth" (727). By using vulgar words, Boris strives to give them back their original meaning they had before Christianity when they were not considered obscene, that is, his job is "to rehabilitate" them: "if you approach a cunt with open love for it, then the word 'cunt' itself will be cleansed from all the dirt that had been ascribed to it…" (783). He sees that society's discursive approach to the vagina applies as well to Jews and draws parallels between Jewish and genital terminology, going from the most inappropriate to the politically correct: "*pizda-zhid*," "*vlagalishche-evrei*," "*zhenskie polovye organy-iudei*" (Ibid.). The reason why pornography exists, Boris argues, is because people want to look at themselves from the side, and the role of the pornographer is to create what is invisible to the actors; he is the one who puts up mirrors, and who is then punished for "revealing the Truth" (785-86). Therefore, Boris suggests a new academic term for pornography: "nakedgraphy" (*golografiia*). Pornography serves as a mirror for Soviet history. By opposing Soviet appropriateness with vulgarity like "cunt" the pornographer returns to *zhid*, the victims of the Soviet regime. By rehabilitating Russian *mat* Armalinsky rehabilitates Jews. The pornographers are the living voices echoing the dead voices of Stalin's victims and the materiality of their absence and death is achieved through *mat*. *Mat* also becomes a form of escape from a disturbing Soviet society and is turned into a vehicle for fantasizing porn.

The development of censorship in Russia from the 18th and 19th centuries addressed pornography as just one of the subversive forms among the global political and religious

concerns that threatened to terminate the moral order.[41] The particular discourse of silence that characterized Russian literature since the 19th century developed Aesopian language to reflect the fight against taboos on sex imposed by the Orthodox church and the regimes, first tsarist and then Soviet. Aesopian language became a discursive field where Russian artists of the post-Pushkin generation found their own style, different from those in Europe, by using silence as a deliberately marked discursive void that would signal what lies behind it.[42] Aesopian language in postmodern pornography takes a totally different path. I argue that late-Soviet pornographers reverse this model and make it a postmodern absurdity: they use the most explicit language and imagery of sex and corporality to create a paradoxical Aesopian porn. Namely, while in Russia porn is used for political criticism like everywhere else, the "secret agenda" that pornographic narratives convey is the play with the void of historical past. Previously, silence/void was used to speak of sex; now sex/porn is used to speak of the void/silence about historical terror. Aesopian language in pornography functions in such a way that extremely explicit obscenity and vulgar lexicon are given as secret tales, games in which the reader is expected to be a detective, to put the narrative puzzles together. Rather than employing euphemisms, they deploy explicit language to create an Aesopian narrative in which Stalin appears as one of the leading characters and his ideology as a grid for the architectural porn plan that is haunted by the voices and spirits of the dead and the victims of Stalin's crimes. Aesopian porn reveals a personal struggle with the historical past. Its foundation is the (auto)biographical narration pornographers utilize to chase out the Stalin myth from their own and collective consciousness. This is an Oedipal game in which Stalin is picked up as the main historical perversion with whom pornographers first

[41] Paul W. Goldschmidt, *Pornography and Democratization: Legislating Obscenity in Post-Communist Russia*, Boulder: Westview Press, 1999, p. 81.
[42] Lalo, *Libertinage*, p. 16.

identify and then kill by means of their own discursive travesties coded in victimhood or the feminine. As Groys argues, "it is impossible to describe Stalinism as an aesthetic phenomenon, as a total work of art, without discussing its reception as such in the unofficial or semiofficial Soviet culture of the 1970s and 1980s. By reflecting it and revealing its internal structure, this reception completed Stalin's project, enabling it for the first time to be grasped in its entirety."[43] I argue that the pornographers in this culture complete the Stalinist project in its explicit obscenity and thereby put it to death.

The main goal of my project is to show the way pornography reemerges in late-Soviet culture, both inside and outside the USSR, as a counter discourse to Socialist Realism and official Soviet ideology. Pornography arose as the antipode to the long existing sterility and sexophobia of Soviet literature and culture. A plethora of vulgarisms and obscene words invaded literature and permitted the writers to design a new poetics of pornography as an anti-socialist realist style. Literary pornography appeared as a peculiar kind of freedom that allowed writers to break the taboos of sex, to liberate the Russian language and culture from the fetters of Soviet ideology, and to place themselves in opposition to all restraining methods and discourses of the Soviet regime. The issue of the incompatible and irreconcilable natures of the two contrasting discourses in question is the central subject of my dissertation project.

As opposed to Alexei Lalo, who suggests that we should avoid the "loaded" term pornography that has been incorrectly used in cultural and literary studies by simply not using it in reference to literary texts at all, [44] I chose to stay in the frame of literary representation of porn in late Soviet Russia and to use the term pornography to refer to the representation of sexuality

[43] Groys, *The Total Art of Stalinism*, p. 75.
[44] Lalo, *Libertinage*, p. 129.

and any type of sexual discourse that differ from the leading socialist discourse. Speaking of pornography, in fact I speak of artistic pornographic discourse that is inherently anti-Soviet. The fact that many scholars have agreed that pornography is hard to define (Hopkins, Gillespie, Levitt, Goscilo) as it depends on the context, time, and/or individual interpretations, leaves room for a wider understanding of it. One thing is certain "each era has its own pornography" while "the concept itself is relative."[45] Namely, I will use the term in a much broader sense than Lynn Hunt's definition of pornography, repeatedly used by others, as the overtly "explicit depiction of sexual organs and sexual practices with the aim of arousing the reader."[46] Within the literary works that I call pornographic, I show that there is something else, an anti-Soviet impulse behind the authors' use of perversion, obscenity, and vulgarity, and that pornography has "loaded meanings" in the Russian context, to use Borenstein's words. In my project, the understanding of pornography comes close to William Hopkins's "genital semantic function," as an all-embracing term that includes various elements from simple love to the most sexually explicit images and description of genital behavior, scatological elements, and obscene verbal utterances.[47]

In my dissertation, I focus in particular on the literary pornography that flourished in the 1970s and 1980s, and its makeover in the 1990s. The reemergence of sexual discourse in this period came as a result of numerous requests for changes within the social, political, and cultural spheres. The last two decades of the USSR represent a tumultuous period in Russian history, because it encompasses the era of stagnation and social apathy under Brezhnev's rule, its overturn and the appearance of a completely different political current, Gorbachev's glasnost'

[45] *U kazhdoi epokhi svoia pornografiia. Samoe poniatie uslovno* (Leonid Geller, "Prigotovitel'nye zametki k teorii skandalov, avangarda i erotiki v literature na material sochineniia E. Limonova 'Eto ia ─ Edichka'." *Kovcheg* No 5, 1980).
[46] Lynn Hunt, *The Invention of Pornography*, p. 10.
[47] Hopkins, *The Development of "Pornographic,"* pp. 27-30.

era with its politics of openness, which finally leads to the demise of the Soviet state. This was a time when apathy became a permanent part of Soviet everyday life and art. The idea of Russian manhood and family life, the two cornerstones of socialist ideology, underwent a crisis and propelled the further reconfiguration of social behavior. Violence and drunkenness appeared as symptoms of the diminishing masculinity of the late Soviet man and his Soviet identity. This transformation (and the new aesthetics of the *chernukha* period) significantly affected the way sexuality was treated —emphasis was put on the body and bodily functions and naturalism; female nudity was put on display (for the first time a nude woman appeared in the 1988 film *Malen'kaia Vera*, which shocked Soviet puritans with a new sexual pose-"woman on the top"); and sex was seen as joyless (*bezradostnii seks*) and often presented as rape.

Given the sociocultural circumstances of the time, and feminist discourse thriving in the West that pornographers frequently referenced in writing, pornography emerges as a weapon in men's hands by means of which the male writers strove to restore Russian traditional masculinity and male sexual power. Male-dominated pornographic writing is triggered by feelings of weakness of late-Soviet man. Robert Jensen accentuates how porn and violent sex are made by men while at the same time are telling of masculinity in crisis. Pornography reveals men's weaknesses, appearing as a "soft voice that speaks to our [men's] deepest fear: That we [men] aren't man enough."[48] Pornography sustains male power by allowing men to exercise all kinds of sexual violations on women and to manipulate the female body, both physically and verbally, because she appears as the sexual object onto which discourse is inscribed. Woman is represented as having no choice but to serve man's will, becoming a carrier of his language/narrative/discourse. Feminist theories on gender and nation analyzing how nationalist

[48] Jensen, Robert, *Getting Off: Pornography and the End of Masculinity*, Cambridge: South End Press, 2007, p. 33.

narratives are inscribed onto the female body, and Anne McClintock's idea of nationalism as a simultaneous orientation toward the future and the past are useful to understand why the pornographers see the Russian woman's body as a promising world of the future that needs to be filled with memories of the past.[49] Their representations of Russia are given in sexual terms through copulation, penetration, and humiliation of the woman appropriating attributes of Russia. It can be said that this discursive return to traditional masculinity relates to the subversion of Stalinism, if we see Stalin and the state as having usurped all male rights (to power, to obscenity, violence), which is part of the cause of the late Soviet crisis of masculinity. In which case, imitating Stalin takes back the male right to this power and discourse, taking away Stalin's exclusive right.

The 70s and the 80s are also the years when postmodern ideas penetrate into Russian literature, when Soviet puritanism and one-sided ideological narrative are brought into question by means of postmodern experimental narrative flows. Literary experiments in the late Soviet period contribute to the development of new discourses of sexuality for modern Russian society. However, these sexual discourses do not create an absolutely new text or culture, since they appear to repeat the old patterns of sex representation within new social, cultural and political contexts. They serve to reveal that there is no one rigid idea of reality but rather multiple realities expressed through a combination of various opposing languages, images and texts. According to Mark Lipovetsky, postmodernism does not create a new metalanguage because it plays with contexts, quotations, and discourses. A particular structure of postmodernism is based on "code-switching from one cultural language to another, from the low to the high, from the archaic to the

[49] Anne McClintock, "Family Feuds: Gender, Nation, and Family," *Feminist Review*, no. 44 (Spring 1993): 61-80.

new and fashionable, and vice versa."[50] In the manner of postmodernism, pornographic literature of the late Soviet period creates spaces in which opposing discourses coexist (in a kind of *raznorechie* -heteroglossia) as the low, peripheral discourses of porn are brought in close proximity to high Soviet discourse. Pornography deconstructs and demythologizes Socialist Realist high realism by bringing pornographic realities and the Soviet grand narrative together.

Situating late-Soviet porn within the historical timeline we arrive at a new aesthetics that is deeply rooted in the traditional representations of sex. The common themes of the past regarding Russian traditional morality and chastity, overt gender dynamics, patriarchal masculinity in crisis, objectification of the female body, the exhausting search for love and sexual satisfaction, and the East/West opposition appear as inevitable components that frame the late Soviet pornographic world. Pornographers as postmodernists have a specific approach to the question of history with their playful discursive subversion of all authoritative narratives and myths about historical truths. Reopening and reevaluating the past through parodic play they bring it to the present, and this way they make history an open-ended postmodern text. Like other postmodernists who share such understanding of history, pornographers keep their literary works between "postmodern philosophy and dialogical poetics" that "describes the formation of a particular historical view of the present that in no way differs from the past; both past and present are constantly written and rewritten."[51] As Jameson notices after the collapse of the high-modernist ideology of style postmodern "producers of culture have nowhere to turn but to the past: the imitation of dead styles, speech through all the masks and voices stored up in the imaginary museum." As a result, postmodern art cherishes the omnipresence of pastiche and

[50] Mark Lipovetsky, *Russian Postmodern Fiction: Dialogue with Chaos*, ed. Eliot Borenstein, New York: M. E. Sharpe, 1999, pp. 14-18.
[51] Mark Lipovetsky, "Context: Mythologies of History," in *Russian Postmodernist Fiction,* pp. 154-155.

comes to represent the "cannibalization of all the styles of the past." [52] Socialist Realism serves the same function to Russian postmodernism that "mass culture" does for its Western counterparts.[53] The pornographers speak the language that they know well, the language of socialist realism, which in order to be taken as a pure native tongue needs to be linked to Russian *mat* that it lacks. In a broader sense, pornography of the last three decades of the 20th century lies within postmodern culture developed through all sorts of games with linguistic norms and meanings, such as those cherished by conceptualists and sots-artists.

Sots-art, the term coined in 1972 by Vitalii Komar and Aleksandr Melamid as a Soviet counterpart to American pop art, is the foundation for late-Soviet literary pornography. Sots-art is Soviet art of the 70s and 80s that pursues open confrontation with Soviet history and the literary discourse of socialist realism, known as the "Grand Style," through the mock use of Soviet ideological clichés of mass culture and supported by their variation of visual and textual materials and the aesthetics of Andy Warhol's pop art.[54] Existing in great proximity to the official Soviet art, sots-art more than any other movement of the time was forced into deep cultural underground.[55] Seeing it as a peculiar Russian postmodern phenomenon, critics (such as Groys, Epstein, Genis) often refer to sots-art as Russian postmodernism as a whole, whereas sots-artists themselves preferred to be called conceptualists, underlining that what they play with is not only the language of Soviet socialist ideology but of any conceivable ideology in general.[56]

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[52] Fredric Jameson, *Postmodernism: Or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2003, pp. 17-19.
[53] Lipovetsky, *Russian Postmodernist Fiction*. p. 3.
[54] See Nancy Condee, "Sots-Art, Conceptualism, and Russian Postmodernist: An Introduction," in *Endquote: Sots-art literature and Soviet Grand Style*, eds. Marina Balina, Nancy Condee, and Evgeny Dobrenko, Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2000.
[55] Mikhail Epstein, "Postmodernism, Communism, and Sots-Art," in *Endquote*, p. 26.
[56] Mark Lipovetsky, "Vladimir Sorokin's Theater of Cruelty," in *Endquote*, p. 167.

In this sense we can interchangeably call late-Soviet pornographers postmodernists, sots-artists, and conceptualists, though Sorokin alone is fully recognized as encompassing them all.

Play as a vital artistic device in postmodern aesthetics is a strategy linking not only the author, the text, and the reader[57] but also pornographic texts of these four authors all together. I view pornography as a product of "Porno Ludens," the umbrella term I use to name the four discursive players with pornography on the Soviet playing field. Johan Huizinga's *Homo Ludens* I take as a model to scrutinize pornography as play. Huizinga shows that play remains outside strong binary of truth and falsehood or good and evil and has no moral function.[58] Play is a free choice, never imposed by "physical necessity or moral duty" and it can be "deferred or suspended at any time" (8). The main characteristics of play are the following: first, play is free activity, it "is in fact freedom;" second, play lies in outside of ordinary and it is not "real" life, "rather a stepping out of 'real' life into a temporary sphere of activity;" third, play is defined by its limitedness of time and place (9). Once played, the play endures in one's memory and becomes tradition. "It can be repeated at any time, whether it be 'child's play' or a game of chess, or at fixed intervals like a mystery. In this faculty of repetition lies one of the most essential qualities of play" (10). The limitation of the space of the play-ground is very important. "The arena, the card-table, the magic circle, the temple, the stage, the screen, the tennis court, the court of justice, etc., are all in form and function play-grounds, i.e. forbidden spots, isolated, hedged round, hallowed, within which special rules obtain. Inside the play-ground an absolute and peculiar order reigns […]. Another, very positive feature of play: it creates order, is order" (Ibid.). Play is "tense" and it is governed by competition, tension, and solution of problems,

[57] Lipovetsky, *Russian Postmodernist Fiction*, pp. 14-15.
[58] Johan Huizinga, *Homo Ludens: A Study of the Play-Element in Culture*, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1949, p. 6.

especially in “games of skill and application such as puzzles, jig-saws, mosaic making, patience, and target-shooting (11). Every game has its rules and once “the rules are transgressed the whole play-world collapses;” the game is over, and players return to real life (Ibid.). But “a play-community generally tends to become permanent even after the game is over” in the collective “something like clans, brotherhood.” What holds the collective is secrecy since “play is enhanced by making a “secret” out of it.” Inside the circle of the game the participants linger masked, for “the laws and customs of ordinary life no longer count” (12).

Huizinga also asserts that danger, risk, feat, blood, sacrifice, mystery and performance are elements of the seriousness of play that can be equaly presented as festive time (holiday or celebration) “when reality is at hold” or as war. He finds a link between war as serious, bloody battle performance and play: “Play is battle and battle is play” (41). The role of the audience is very important because a person in the game wining “is doubly delighted when somebody is watching him. In all games it is very important that the player should be able to boast of his success to others” (49-50).

The writers of porn take the aesthetics of the avant-garde and futurism, that Stalinist culture was openly against, to make a playground in which they will play with their plaything, the pornographic father Stalin. Stalin’s demand to “writers and cultural workers in general to ‘write the truth,’ which referred “not to an external, static truth, but to the inner truth in the artist’s heart, his love for and faith in Stalin”[59] becomes the leading motif in pornographic literature. Mastering the cult of love, they take Stalin on a discursive roller-coaster by impersonating his manners and language, repeating his atrocious crimes and sadism. As a

[59] Groys, *The Total Art of Stalinism*, p. 69.

perversion par excellence, Stalin is a perfect medium, through which porn reaches out to both his late-Soviet and post-Soviet heirs. These pornographers also play his direct heirs as they assemble their narratives of childhood traumas of Stalin's time, that all except Sorokin were born in, yet their childhood development marks Khrushchev's de-Stalinization project, which they univocally appropriate. Pornographers often treat Soviet/Russian readers and conservative critics as those heirs of Stalin described by Evtushenko, upon whom they project their sexual fantasies and discursively manipulate their mind, literary aesthetics, and their collective body that they view either as the body of a woman or an impotent man which needs to be ridiculed and abused. Stalin is the Father who participates in all his pornographic sons' Oedipal games at the threshold of the Symbolic. Viktor Erofeev illuminates the core of this game saying that "Soviet debauchery is the foster-child of ancestors. Debauchery is the constant of Russian history." While Stalin worked on creating "a unisex type of Soviet Man, human nature turned to be more powerful than Stalin. We got a pornographic caricature: the top is Soviet, and the bottom forms the fantasy of Marquis de Sade."[60]

Stalin's game is over, but it continues in the memory of the sons, new players, who make their play a puzzle, a mosaic structure of pieces of recomposed and decomposed socialist narrative in which they wear various masks keeping their literary mission a mystery. They make porn a fairy tale and use fairytale formulas mixed with sarcastic comedy to show themselves to be the main heroes who enter a forbidden chamber, play roles of both villain and helper, break the magic spell, and come out as true revolutionary heroes. Within the frame of this genre they create porn as what Jean Baudrillard names "hyperreality of simulacrum," which echoes the

[60] Viktor Erofeev. "Pornografiia po-sovetski."*Radio Svoboda*, March 14, 2010. At https://www.svoboda.org/a/1983291.html.

Soviet simulation of reality that is imprinted in socialist realist culture through ideological mythologizing. And then, in the style of avant-garde artists, pornographers attempt to erase boundaries between life and art and invite Stalin's heirs to be part of porn hyperreality. This is not only men competing over whose (game) is longer, but also whose is harder to swallow. While the harshest critics and state representatives stamp their pornography with "cultural infection" and call the writers mentally sick men, pornographers offer perversion as a medicine, a perfect cure to treat Russian cultural claustrophobia. The function of perversion is in maintaining the postmodern discursive schizophrenia, in which playfulness and seriousness are equally engaged in creating the liminal space that the paradox "we do not have sex, but we do have porn" indicates. This is the sphere of cultural insanity, that primarily indicates the Soviet split, the double life of Homo sovieticus, that they materialize through porn.

Pornographers' childlike play is a ritualized representation of the warrior-life of archaic times, whose virtue is "so beneficial in its pure form and so demoniacal a ferment when perverted" (Huizinga 104). These are not documentary narratives like Solzhenitsyn's or Marina Goldovskaya's 1988 *Vlast' Solovetskaya*, that simply expose Soviet-era crimes; these are works of reproducing and (re)mythologizing these crimes. Pornography is turned into a concept. Following the aesthetics of Moscow conceptualism that did not "attempt to denounce the lie of Soviet ideology (from false ideas to a genuine reality)" but to present ideas, and paradoxically false ideas, as "the only true substance of Soviet life," these pornographers-conceptualists "overcame both realistic traditions and romantic aspirations: they understood that in their country, there is no reality other than ideas and thus pastiche and parody became their main

forms."[61] Pornographers literally make porn, what Dworkin and MacKinnon call "sexual terrorism presented as entertainment," that is not only misogynic but also against Soviet ideas, ideology, and Stalin, whom they equate with Hitler and his crimes with fascism. These literary pornographers impose a new Soviet porno-canon upon culture and society in which they use Lenin to ideologize and Stalin to execute. Their pornographic extremism would spark a wave of bigotry and intolerance against the authors, and accusations of fascism. This comes as no surprise because they constantly play with communist and fascist memorabilia and symbols in porn texts. The execution will be exercised by all discursively and through real target shooting by Limonov in the war in Bosnia in the 90s. All those play-grounds that Huizinga enumerates will be exploited in this tragicomic porn.

In this playful narrative, particular stress is placed on Pushkin, because as the father of the Russian literary language, nation, and culture he is given a special place in Russian and then Soviet culture. Each pornographer takes Pushkin as a very open or hidden reference. In their works, they rely on Pushkin's artistic devices to develop the theme of sex in relation to the power of speech, the Russian language, and the process of writing. Pushkin is taken for a porno forgery (Armalinsky), for building a scheme of communist-fascist porn (Limonov), and then further demythologized in Erofeev and Sorokin's pornographic play that they call "liquid fascism." They bring out altogether the taboos and inappropriateness that saturated Pushkin's life and his literary work, as shown in *Taboo Pushkin* (2012), and also play on his blackness that makes him the other. These pornographers continue the tradition of tell-all biography of Pushkin and his eroticism, like Peter Guber's *The Don Juan List of A.S. Pushkin* (1923) or Sinyavsky's *Strolls*

[61] Mikhail Epstein, "The Origins and Meaning of Russian Postmodernism," The National Council for Soviet and East European Research, 1993, at https://www.ucis.pitt.edu/nceeer/1993-807-21-2-Epstein.pdf.

with Pushkin (1975), and make him a ghost-creator of their sots-art porn. Sots-artists deliberately "do not see the boundaries between Pushkin and the grandiose Soviet Pushkin myth."[62] The pornographers' projection of the Soviet mythology of Pushkin in their works reflects a common trend in sots-art poetry. Dmitrii Prigov's poem parodies love for Pushkin by making no difference between Pushkin and himself: "I am Pushkin himself." In another he screams "I killed Pushkin!"[63] Such identification and play with resurrection of the national idol and self-exorcism is characteristic of porn narrative too. Another exemplary poem is "Iosif Vissarionovich Pushkin" by Vladimir Druk whose aesthetic principle of conjoining two Soviet mythical fathers is also translated in the semiotic system of porn. For this generation of unofficial literature "there is no other non-Soviet language," or "there is no other language, but there is a claim to posses one" (99). In playing parallelly with Pushkin and Stalin every porn game brings to players either a material or symbolic value, carries the satisfaction of being watched performing a sinful act by readers, and, as the main aim is winning the game, endlessly provokes and creates the opponents.

In late-Soviet literary porn men violate shadows of the father and the country that stands for the mother telling a sexual "truth" about their victims. The victims in turn become the genuine shadows of the historical past through whom the pornographers speak. This is a horror game with shadows that pornographers see as inherently revolutionary and funny. Their tactic affects the public attitude, and some people justify their literature, others trivialize it or deny any of its value. All four authors at one point underwent a moral campaign waged against their works, some of them legal too (Sorokin and Limonov). The intensity of the struggle with critical public opinion on porn imagery, sexual violence, and language inappropriateness in their works,

[62] Evgeny Dobrenko, "Socilaist Realism, a Postscriptum," in *Endquote*, pp. 98-99.
[63] These poems were written in the period of 1975 -1989. At http://www.vavilon.ru/texts/prigov4-3.html.

however, increases the discursive sexual appetite in the writers. Ernest van den Haag asserts that pornography is a return to preadolescent fantasies which reject reality, authority, social burden; it is a pure libidinal pleasure, and "once launched by pornography, fantasy may regress to every more infantile fears and wishes: people, altogether dehumanized, may be tortured, mutilated, and literary devoured."[64] Sontag and Dworkin's theories are quite applicable to late-Soviet porn. Sontag's definition of porn as tragicomedy that rests on diverse feelings complements the trajectory that Dworkin formulates as: the older man killed the boys and they enter the porno war running away from the fact that they could have been the victims of that system.

The poster for the "Conference on Russian Pornography" that took place in Los Angeles in May 1998—from which the book *Eros and Pornography in Russian Culture* originates, published by Ladomir in the "Russian Forbidden Literature" series—can be taken as a visual illustration of Soviet Russian pornography. The poster displays "Russian Pornography" against a black background accompanied by Salvador Dali's "Voluptuous, or Desirable Death" showing the human skull composed of seven nude women (figure 1). And just like the posters, late-Soviet porn connects sexuality to death, the female bodies to corporeal and discursive pleasure that are superimposed on the already decayed body of those sacrificed for the sake of Soviet demonic utopia.

[64] Quoted by Berger in *Freedom, Rights and Pornography*, p. 136.

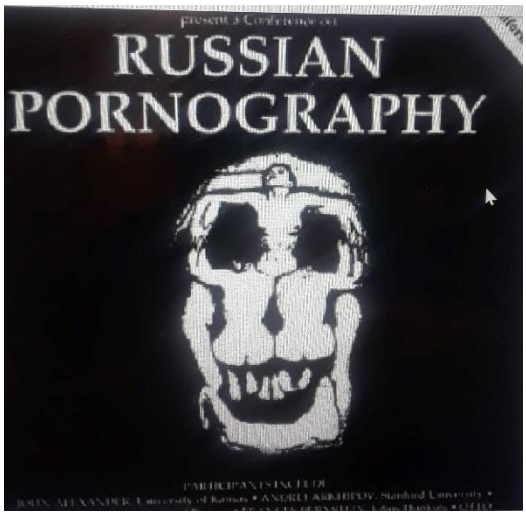

Figure 1: Poster for the "Conference on Russian Pornography"

In the last thirty years, numerous books have appeared that are devoted to Russian Eros, erotica, and pornography, which is suggestive of the increased importance of Russian sexuality as a growing field of scholarly research. Among the most valuable and influential studies are: L. Engelstein's *The Keys to Happiness* (1992), *Sex and Russian Society* (ed. Kon and Riordan, 1993), *Sex and Body in Russian Culture* (ed. Costlow, Sandler, Vowles, 1993), A. Etkind's *Eros of the Impossible* (1997), E. Naiman's *Sex in Public* (1997), *Consuming Russia: Popular Culture, Sex, and Society Since Gorbachev,* ed. A. M. Barker (1999), O. Matich's *Erotic Utopia* (2005), E. Borenstein's *Overkill: Sex and Violence in Contemporary Russian Popular Culture* (2008), A. Lalo's *Libertinage in Russian Culture and Literature* (2011), and V. Sperling's *Sex, Politics, and Putin: Political Legitimacy in Russia* (2014). Most of these studies on Russian sexuality focus on the period of the early 20th century and modernists' eroticism, or on post-Soviet body exposure, prostitution, violence, and the practice of making obscenity a public matter. My dissertation will fill in a gap in the scholarship and enrich the larger picture of the development of Russian discourse on sex by focusing on the late-Soviet period, the period "in between." Additionally, the field lacks extensive scholarship on Russian pornography as such.

The reason for this lack is that the subject in question was taboo for Soviet scholars until 1991, while Western scholars had no access to the primary sources. In current scholarship, Russian pornography is the subject of the following pioneering works: William Hopkins's dissertation *The Development of "Pornographic" Literature in Eighteenth- and Early Nineteenth- Century Russia* (1977), which covers the early period in the development of Russian pornography in the 18th and the 19th centuries, especially the works of Barkov, Pushkin, and Lermontov; *Eros and Pornography in Russian Culture* (ed. Levitt and Torpolkov, 1999) is a collection of essays tracing historical and cultural sequences in presenting sexuality and porn in Russia, from pornography before pornography (luboks, folk poems, chastushki) through porn in the age of Enlightenment to the pornography of the Silver age; Paul Goldschmidt's *Pornography and Democratization* (1999) analyzes the pornography of post-Communist Russia through the legal discourse of legislation on obscenity and reveals historical and social conditions for the development of Russian censorship; Borenstein's *Overkill* (2008) treats pornography as a part of post-Soviet popular culture in which the predominant aesthetics is that of shock, crime, and violent sex.

With these scholarly works in mind, I focus more closely on discourse, obscene language, which may be named "the linguistics of pornography," and national and individual identities as characteristics of the late Soviet poetics of porn. My dissertation sets out to explore the poetics of pornography in the late Soviet period that marks an interim stage in the development of Russian (post)modern pornographic discourse of the 20th and the 21st centuries. I argue that the pornography of the 70s and 80s prepared the Russian cultural soil for the implementation of political, artistic, and sexual freedom and a more intense proliferation of obscenity and pornography and public debates on sex in in the years that followed. The end of the Soviet era

lessened strict restrictions and censorship, which prepared Russian culture for the legalization of pornography and import of Western porn movies, sex-shop consumerism, sex toys, etc. Therefore, this project will additionally illuminate the post-Soviet "orgy of sexual discourses" (Borenstein), that is, its hypersexual language and everyday practice of pornography. By the 90s, this constellation undergoes another code-switching as obscenity takes over and Russian culture is saturated with pornographic imagery. This historical moment certainly influenced the direction in which pornography went. Changes in style, themes, or approach to sexuality are noticeable in the writers, a drastic example being Limonov, who breaks the rules of the game and steps out of literature into reality to promote and exercise his neo-fascist ideas. Yet, I will show that all pornographers in this study do not change their Aesopian "secret agenda" and stay on the same track as they were at the very beginning of their pornographic game. They cross over the border of art and life with the unchanging Soviet "pornographic mind." This is why I view the 1990s, the first years after the demise of the Soviet Union, as the time of making Soviet postmodern porn. Russian postmodernism, as Epstein states, stretches socialist simulation and production of reality all the way through post-Soviet time.[65]

The theoretical approach that I apply embraces a variety of critical texts that address pornography and sexuality, the concept of memory, the question of gender, language, nation, and body politics. In situating my project, I am in dialogue with those scholars whose studies concentrate on the question of sexuality and everyday life in late- and post-Soviet Russia. In his book *Everything Was Forever, Until It Was No More*,[66] Alexei Yurchak scrutinizes the last generation of the Soviet state, their language and its meaning, concluding that Soviet people

[65] Epstein, "The Origins."
[66] Alexei Yurchak, *Everything Was Forever, Until It Was No More: The Last Soviet Generation*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005.

were engaged in the production of the alternative meanings of reality that were, nonetheless, grounded in the "real" Soviet world. According to Yurchak, the alternative realities and internal displacements within the Soviet system remained a part of late socialism, although they stayed invisible until the collapse of the Soviet state. In analyzing the conditions that made the collapse possible he concludes that the system's collapse was unexpected and hard to imagine until it happened and only then appeared quite logical. When it seemed that nothing would ever change in Soviet Russia, to use Yurchak's words, pornography brought a new aesthetics and new language that already were changing the Soviet reality. The system's collapse was indeed anticipated by the pornographers who made room for an explosion of alternative realities and made the transition to post-Soviet introduction of porn appear logical. They foreshadowed the demise of the authoritative, centripetal Soviet discourse through their attention to the body, obscene language, and sex. They literalized what the Russian version of Yurchak's book title conveys bringing in Soviet masochistic sexual phantasy in which the collapse of the Soviet discourse appears as a long-awaited collective ejaculation: *Eto bylo na vsegda, poka ne konchilos'.*

In his book *Overkill,* Borenstein discusses sex and its metaphors in post-Soviet Russia and refers to the question of pornography. Drawing on Kornei Chukovskii's assertion that pornography in Russia is not "plain" porn but pornography with ideas, Borenstein argues that in Russia, "pornography is an idea," that is, it is a "category of meaning and content rather than simply form and function."[67] I use this concept in approaching late-Soviet pornography, however, I stay within the sphere of literary works and do not incorporate actual porn into my project. (I recognize that porn cinema plays an important role in writers' texts either as source for

[67] Borenstein, Overkill, p. 53.

mimicry or as the writers' or their characters' phantasies of becoming porn stars and directors.) The reason for this lies in the fact that literary pornography transcends the boundaries of ordinary porn imagery by bringing to light the questions of language, narration, confession, and the process of writing as central elements of late-Soviet identity. Borenstein's study of contemporary Russia helps me analyze how late Soviet pornographers deal with the question of Russian and non-Russian nationalism, communism and fascism, and the treatment of porn as a Western import. Through this prism I examine how the status of masculinity in this late Soviet liberal sexual discourse is primarily built upon the idea of distancing from an *other* that, besides the man/woman opposition, also includes the traditional dichotomy between *us* and *them*, Russia and the West.

Given the posited incongruity of the East and the West, my project is structured as a comparative study that provides an intersectional analysis of Russian literary pornography made in the Soviet Union and in the United States. My dissertation focuses on four authors in particular, of whom Edward Limonov and Mikhail Armalinsky appear as "pornographers in exile," while Viktor Erofeev and Vladimir Sorokin are considered "pornographers at home." By putting them in dialogue, I intend to examine the similarities and differences in writing pornography in these two different cultural milieus. While porn outside Russia appears to follow the model of porno film-like aesthetics, where concrete perverse actions more than the story line are emphasized through "close-ups" of genitals and their functions in intercourse, porn within Russia presents itself in the form of narrative of an avant-garde style and its degradation in absurdity, which overpowers explicitness and obscenity, and yet does not cause them to fade away entirely. If those in exile under the direct influence of the western porn industry create an obscene world in which they act as mighty phalluses penetrating Russian literature and readers

from afar, the obscenity of those at home encompasses body functions and fluids that they transmit to them in permanent flirting with the West. The fiction of these authors reflects in many ways how the discourse of porn correlates to the rebirth of the Soviet narrative, and how it affects or allows the transgression of one's national, sexual, and gender identities. For these writers the body and especially the genitals and their functions during sexual performances become the alternative actuality, the truth that challenges a firmly established socialist reality. Thus, I see pornography as a lingua franca, a common ground in communicating a new anti-Soviet aesthetics between those in a foreign land and those at home. Furthermore, my dissertation is structured in accordance with various other meanings inscribed on late Soviet porn, such as death, immortality, (re)birth, childhood and nostalgia, sexual and psychological anxieties, and language that are explored through the individual works of each of these four authors.

I employ several theoretical viewpoints to describe the pornographers' orientation towards the past and memory of the past. Tradition as an inevitable part of the new pornographic culture can be interpreted through Yuri Lotman's and Boris Uspensky's insights on the semiotics of culture. According to them, culture is memory because it transmits the collective memory of the society through history. The semiotic mechanism of culture is constructed in accord with opposed and alternating principles, as well as their relation to each other. Within the old/new system of culture, Lotman and Uspensky see that "the necessity for continual self-renewal, to become different and yet to remain the same, constitutes one of the chief mechanism of culture." [68] The pornographers call for the past and at the same time they fight against this very same past,

[68] Yuri Lotman and Boris Uspensky, George Mihaychuk, "On Semiotic Mechanism of Culture," *New Literary History* 9, no. 2 (Winter 1978): 211-232.

and this combat is ritualized in erotic practices. Further, Otto Rank's concept of the trauma of birth explains the pornographer's lament over the past as the memory of prenatal unity and happiness that is sought in sex. This memory is coupled with a constant fear of loss, which represents the repetition of separation from mother Russia. According to Rank, the anxiety of birth forms the basis of every fear in life, so that every pleasure has the reestablishment of the primal pleasure in the womb as its final aim. "All kinds of mouth perversion," Rank states, "in some way continue the intrauterine libido gratification."[69] This illuminates the fascination with oral sex and the emphasis on lips, the mouth, and language prevailing in pornographic texts.

Etkind's study of how the historical past persistently haunts Russia's present in *Warped Mourning* illustrates how late- and post-Soviet culture is saturated with different forms of mourning for and memory of the great terror of the Soviet time, gulag victims in particular. As opposed to the Nazi Holocaust terror that was directed toward the Other, "the Soviet terror is suicidal," Etkind claims. This "self-inflicted nature of the Soviet terror" complicates the situation in the postcatastrophic world: one needs to learn cognitively about the catastrophe, develops an emotional desire to mourn for its victims, and an active drive to find justice and take revenge.[70] The uncertainty of the Russian case (there is no a complete list of victims or executioners, no adequate memorials or monuments, no compensation for collective farmers, etc.) causes an obsessive return to certain experiences of the past, not allowing Russians to live and see the present: "In Russia, a land where millions remain unburied, the repressed return as the undead" (18). Etkind situates the post-Soviet memory "at the crossroad of three epistemologies":

[69] Rank, Otto, *The Trauma of Birth*, Robert Brunner, New York, 1952, p. 35.
[70] Aleksandr Etkind, *Warped Mourning: Stories of the Undead in the Land of the Unburied*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2013, p. 9.

Freudian psychoanalysis of mourning, Benjamin's idea of the second life of religious symbols in mass cultural products, and the Russian formalist idea of estrangement (21). And through a scrutiny of various forms of culture (films, literature, paintings, monuments) as narratives that play the main role in the process of mourning and warning, he arrives at a perverted form of Russian memory: defamiliarization of the past and the return of the repressed. "The memory of the past becomes a fear of its repetition, and the dread of the future takes the shape of compulsory repetitions or creative remembrance of the past. Mourning merges with warning, shaping a temporal zone of indistinction, which combines the past and the future in a joint effort to obscure the present" (42). For the cultural diggers of the past, humor appears as the most important element of the estrangement.

In the light of Etkind's theory, I view pornography as the narrative of mourning and warning that brings the most absurd way of acknowledging the catastrophe, showing feelings of sadness for the casualty and taking revenge by compulsory repetition of the past. Combining components that Etkind see as part of "warped mourning" like estrangement, Mikhail Bakhtin's grotesque world and humor, and Freud's uncanny, pornographers as mysterious game players revive the past and, simultaneously, celebrate its death. Etkind distinguishes two basic forms of memory: hard and soft, that is hardware and software memory. Soft memory consists of narrative and text, while hard memory consists primarily of monuments (museums). Though these two types of cultural memory are interdependent, Etkind argues that Russian memory relies more on its soft side as opposed to Western Europe (German and France) that has confidence in hard memory. Besides these two, in Russian memory and mourning, Etkind sees the third form: ghostware, presented in ghosts, vampires or dolls as the embodiment of the uncanny representing the unburied dead. These three forms of memory can be easily translated into hard and soft porn,

and ghost porn. And I see them all as part and parcel of late-Soviet pornography. As pornography carries over the western model, hard-porn memory is imposed on monumental cultural museums like the Pushkin House, Lenin's Mausoleum, and Writers' Union of the U.S.S.R. Whereas by its nature literary pornography appears as soft-porn memory that is overwhelmed with ghosts of the past (Pushkin, Stalin, Lenin, gulag victims, and Jews) leading to ghost-porn memory. On the foundation of these three forms of porn-memory I view Armalinksy, Limonov, Erofeev and Sorokin as the circle or brotherhood of four play-writers who commit a suicidal act by discursively erecting their Soviet porn concentration camps into which they drag the Soviet-minded public. Pornographizing the concentration camp terror, they play double victim-tormentor roles and use public debates to challenge the audience participate in their sexual performances.

We might conclude from the fact that pornography entered the public discourse as a matter of debates and opposing standpoints never to decease is that it is absolutely arbitrary. Porn can be simultaneously moral and immoral. The definition of pornography largely depends on the ideological, political, social context and interests of the regime, group or movement. Accordingly, hard and soft porn are also to be redefined. The writers strive to make their porn a personal project, recording their private life and struggle that they force into mass circulation. The skeleton of late-Soviet literary pornography is the pattern of how to live and write porn simultaneously, to be the director, actor, and the object of consumption. They bring their porn narrative into the public sphere where sexual freedom is regulated by moral and social norms.

The act of breaking the silence with a pornographic narrative can be theorized through a dialogue with two groundbreaking theoretical works on sexuality, Linda Williams's *Hardcore* and Michel Foucault's *The History of Sexuality*. In both books, the focus is on "speaking sex

out" as the only way to get to know the truth. Through speech, one creates his/her sexual self. Foucault believes that if sex is repressed and condemned to prohibition and silence, then the mere fact that someone speaks about it represents a transgression of the taboo. Foucault understands that it is precisely this strictly defined control and censorship over the language of sexuality that causes the "opposite phenomena to occur — [the] proliferation of discourses concerned with sex in the field of exercise of power itself."[71] This explains why the pornographers emerge to put an end to Soviet silence, place themselves outside of the reach of power, and to anticipate the coming freedom. The relationship between truth and freedom is thus established through the discourse of sexuality. Williams claims that it is this speaking sex "that is probably the most important single thing to be observed about the modern phenomenon of hard core."[72] She utilizes the insights of recent studies of mass culture to show that hard core is in fact a discourse. Hardcore pornography speaks confessional and involuntary "truths" of sex. She examines hardcore porn movies and videos to show how they insist on the speaking sex issue, which is presented as the "visual confession of bodily pleasures" (229).

My contribution to the study of Russian pornography offers a completely new look at the period of the last two decades of the Soviet state, which I mark as the interim stage, during which pornography emerges to herald a new historical time in which obscenity becomes a part of everyday life. In other words, I view this stage of Russian pornography to be crucial for the proliferation of a variety of pornographic materials in contemporary Russia. In the post-Soviet period, after the powerful Soviet state collapses, national identity and national pride are to be rediscovered and redefined through pornography, with the porno aesthetics of the interim stage

[71] Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, Vol. 1, Random House, New York, 1978, p. 21.
[72] Williams, Linda, *Hard Core: Power, Pleasure, and the 'Frenzy of the Visible*,' University of California Press, Berkeley, 1989, p. 2.

serving as a model. In addition, my special contribution to the study of Russian pornography in particular is the chapter on Mikhail Armalinsky who is unjustly neglected and undiscovered in the scholarly world. Therefore, I open this "grand porn narrative" with Armalinsky and my in-depth examination of his poetics of porn will further illuminate and strengthen my main theses, namely that pornographic literature is innately anti-Soviet, liberating, and an alternative truth-carrying discursive practice in which diverse cultural and semiotic meanings are produced in and understood as a game. As much as this play is at moments funny and entertaining, the reader unequivocally experiences uneasiness caused by the very apprehensive subjects it conveys, severe sexual perversions, degradation of the human body, obscene imagery, and open misogyny.

CHAPTER 1: Russia Fails at Pushkin: Mikhail Armalinsky's Secret Pornography

> "Pornography can be viewed as a hurricane that sweeps away on its way literature and art together with writers, poets and artists."
> "One's attitude toward pornography indicates the degree of one's sexual emancipation. The sharper one's revolt against pornography is, the more sexual problems and concerns one suffers from." (M. Armalinsky)

Mikhail Izrailevich Pel'tsman was born in 1947 in Leningrad into a Jewish family. His family was not religious and he grew up without learning about Jewish religious traditions and practices. In his childhood, however, Mikhail's Jewishness was marked by the harsh secular measures of Soviet anti-Semitism. According to his autobiographical accounts, it was the Soviet state which labeled him officially as a "Jew": "My understanding and perception of Jewishness was not formed by Judaism, but by the line that reads "nationality" in my passport."[1] In his teens, Mikhail wrote poetry, read everything that came into his hands, and by the end of high school education began dreaming of a career in literature. To enter the Russian literature department at the Leningrad University was an impossible endeavor for him because of the "Jewish quota" (percentage of Jews accepted in all higher educational institutions). Instead, Pel'tsman chose engineering, the field in which Jewish intellect was considered practical and useful for communism, and thus appreciated. He graduated from the Leningrad Electrotechnical Institute (LETI), yet he never liked his official occupation. Alternatively, his love for literature and writing gradually increased over time. His dislike for his calling stands out in his advanced age: "I do not like engineering and machines. They are simple means for making money and comfort. My dad advised me that it was better to be a bad engineer than a bad poet. So I became a bad engineer and a good poet."[2] Aware of the difficulties that a Jewish author could confront in Soviet Russia, and facing the reality that nobody would ever publish his work under the last

[1] Mikhail Armalinsky, *Maksimalizmy*, Moscow: Ladomir, 2013, p. 374.
[2] From my personal correspondence with Armalinsky, Jun 29, 2015.

name Pel'tsman, Mikhail came up with an idea of the pseudonym Armalinsky (*Maksimalizmy*, 411). Still, his first poetry books were published as samizdat.[3]

Although he had many reasons to leave the USSR, Armalinsky did not believe that he could be a Russian writer outside of Russia, and this idea held him back for a while. At the age of twenty-nine, in 1976, Armalinsky surmounted this fear and left the Soviet Union together with his younger sister. Armalinsky and his sister first passed through Vienna and spent three months in Italy, before they finally arrived to the United States. In 1977, they ended up in the Jewish community of Minneapolis, thanks to the efforts of a friend of their father. Nine months after their arrival their parents joined them. The Pel'tsman family reunion—which occurred after the symbolical nine-month gestation period—marks the beginning of Armalinsky's second life (Zhizn' No. 2), and a birth of Mikhail Armalinsky the pornographer.[4] It is only in America that he felt he was a genuine writer: "How important it was to overcome the delusion of the time because it was thanks to immigration in the United States that I was able to write the most interesting things." Since then he never visited Russia and is still thrilled by the thought of the distance between them: "I am happy: good that she is there and I am here."[5]

In the States, Armalinsky could not make a living by writing literature. He worked for his father's company that manufactured machines his father invented back in the USSR.[6] Parallel to this job, Armalinsky was intensively engaged in what truly was important to him: women, sex, literature, and the quest for freedom. America's freedom of speech and freethinking translated

[3] *Vrazumlennye strasti* (*Persuaded Passion*, 1974), *Sostoianie* (*The Status*, 1975), and *Maiatnik* (*Pendulum*, 1976).
[4] In *Maksimalizmy*, Armalinsky marks the time in the Soviet Russia as his 1st Life (Zhizn' No. 1) and the time in the US as his 2nd Life (Zhizn' No. 2). After stepping over the American borderline Armalinsky literally cried out: "I crossed the border between my old and my new life" (*Maksimalizmy*, 494).
[5] *Maksimalizmy*, 413.
[6] Peltsman Corporation was established in 1978. After his father's death, Armalinsky continued running the company on his own.

into Armalinsky's literature as the pursuit of a new obscene literary idiom. His search for unrestrained freedom and uninhibited literary language was not to be discontinued even after numerous unpleasant experiences with publishers who were reluctant to print his works. In 1984, he came up with the idea of founding his own publishing house, the M.I.P. Company, where he began publishing Russian erotic and pornographic literature.[7] He published his own and other pornographic literature.[8] In 1989, he created *Soitie* (*Coition*), the first almanac of Russian erotic literature.[9] The following year he started the online magazine *General Erotic* (GE), whose name is a parodic pun on General Electric and other companies with a prefix General (Food, Dynamic, Motors, etc.). For this purpose, Armalinsky designed a special "genital flag of the USA."

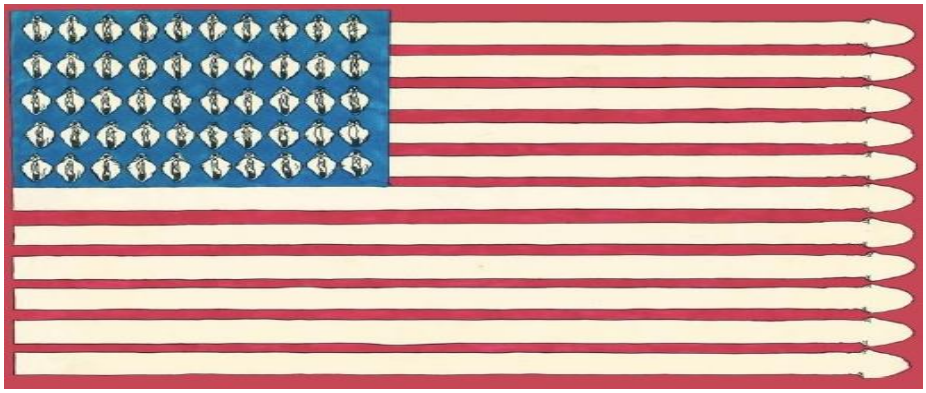

Figure 2: Genital Flag of the USA, held in the Sex Museum in New York (with authors' permission)

GE is a project intended to mirror the complete Armalinsky, both his public and private persona: "GE is my autobiography, my personal diary, so from reading it you can get a true picture of my

[7] M.I.P. stands for his full name Mikhail Izrailevich Pel'tsman. Armalinsky explicates on the reasons for founding his own printing press: "I never wanted to plead for publication of my things and obey to someone else's terms, but to have my own publishing house, …and do what I want." (Private correspondence, June 20, 2015).
[8] Some of his works published by M.I.P. Company are: collection of short stories *Muscular Death* (Muskulistaia smert', 1984), collection of poems *On Both Sides of Orgasm* (*Po obe storony orgazma*, 1988), novel *Voluntary Confessions—Forced Correspondence* (*Dobrovol'nye priznaniia─vinuzhdennaia perepiska*, 1991), *Russian Shameless Proverbs and Sayings* (Russkie besstyzhie poslovitsy i pogovorki, 1995), and collection of short stories, a fairy tale and an essay *Expelled Miracle* (*Gonimoe Chudo*, 1996).
[9] Only one issue of the almanac was released.

literary being."[10] In 2001, Armalinsky designed the virtual "Temple of Genitals," a dating site where, according to Armalinsky's own rules, the members were to be recognized not by their faces and wacky descriptions of what they love and hate, but only by the appearance of their genitals in photographs.[11] Armalinsky claims that his "Temple of Genitals" was meant to show a refined approach to human desire for copulation: "If a woman buys a dildo lacking a face and body, it means that she can get a live dildo here and choose it on the website. The same applies to men: if you watch porn, not seeing a woman's face and her body while admiring the spectacle of her open legs, then you should be able to pull it off live."[12] Armalinsky ended the project, as it turned out not to be such a profitable enterprise. Besides all his attempts to be recognized by various pioneering projects, Armalinsky attracted the most public attention as the publisher of a single book that will become one of his major ventures into "live porn."

Publication of *Pushkin A. S. Secret Notes 1836–1837*

The American publication by the M.I.P. Company in 1986 of *Pushkin A. S. Tainye zapiski 1836–1837 godov*, gave birth to one of the most controversial books in the history of Russian pornography, which in the last three decades has provoked numerous critical responses, harsh debates, and never-ending disputes in USSR, Russia, and elsewhere.[13] The book is advertised as Pushkin's personal notes written during the last few months of his life. In it Pushkin unveils his sexual intimacies and fantasies, reveals secrets from his marital bed, depicts

[10] Personal correspondence with Armalinsky, June 21, 2015.
[11] At http://www.mipco.com/win/GEr38.html, (last accessed July 26, 2019).
[12] Personal correspondence, July 5, 2015.
[13] Armalinsky published the English translation as *Pushkin A. S. Secret Journal 1836–1837*. I choose to translate the work as "notes" over "journal" since the former belong to the literary genre (*zapiski*), very prominent in the history of Russian literature. *Zapiski* represent an important symbolic connection between Armalinsky's work and the Russian literary past. *Secret Notes* inscribe themselves as a part of the literary canon, finding a place among Dostoyevsky's *Notes from Underground* (*Zapiski iz podpolia*) and *Notes from the Dead House* (*Zapiski iz mertvogo doma*), Turgenev's *Notes of a Hunter* (*Zapiski okhotnika*), etc.

his erotic encounters with various women, and elaborates on marriage, monogamy, and fidelity. All of these episodes and reflections are intertwined and linked together by the vividly portrayed pornographic imagery of fellatio, anal and vaginal intercourse, voyeurism, and orgies. Due to such insulting and impertinent content, revolving around the canonical figure of Pushkin, the book compromises both the Soviet and post-Soviet cultural sphere, as well as the morality of the Soviet intelligentsia and the honor of the Pushkinists. *Tainye zapiski* thus uncovers the darkest side of Soviet and Russian censorship.

The main objective of this chapter is to examine the nature of Armalinsky's pornographic discourse and its realization within and outside the literary sphere in late- and post-Soviet times. In my analysis, I focus on how his publication of *Tainye zapiski*, due to its provocative content and obscene language, challenges Soviet neo-puritanism and the process of "tabooization" of sex and sexuality in Russian culture. The case of Mikhail Armalinsky further illustrates the way that literary pornography compromises the image of "asexual" Russian society by provoking the public body to partake in an "orgy" of sexual discourses around *Tainye zapiski*. In the hands of the publisher, this scandalous publication becomes a discursive sexual device par excellence, used to disclose the frustrating sexual powerlessness of Russian society and to shake foundations of the establishment built upon the Pushkin myth. In other words, *Tainye zapiski* turns into a mirror reflecting the real image of the Soviet man, his fears and struggles to deal with sexuality.

Moreover, this chapter studies conditions under which literary pornography transcends the boundaries of the primary text, appropriating a new fictional space in which porn is put into practice. I show that Armalinsky utilizes *Tainye zapiski* as a script to stage individual and mass pornographic scenes outside the primary text, amid his correspondence with Russian critics, scholars, and readers in the book titled *Parapushkinistika*. Armalinsky pornographizes Russian

society as he leads his interlocutors through a verbal erotic game, saying "I verbally fuck whomever and however I want."[14] Language, employed to compromise the female body of Russian society, partakes in the recreation of his masculinity and gains a phallic power. The phases of this erotic verbal encounter develop in accordance with the four stages of the human sexual response cycle defined by Masters and Johnson in their 1966 revolutionary book, *Human Sexual Response*, which greatly influenced Armalinsky's overall understanding of porn.[15] Masters and Johnson find that the human response to effective sexual stimulation strictly follows the following pattern: excitement (stimulation), plateau (intensive sexual tension that reaches an extreme level and moves the individual to orgasm), orgasmic phase (involuntary climax), and resolution phase (period of tension loss).[16] In Armalinsky's conception, his sexual performance unfolds as a variation of this pattern, as his literary participants simultaneously go through titillation, exciting foreplay and arousal of sexual desires, sadomasochistic gratification, penetrating exaltation, and ultimately "orgasm."

Armalinsky positions pornography vis-à-vis socialist discourse as a modern, anti-Aesopian language of freedom. However, as this chapter reveals, his poetics of pornography paradoxically rest on Soviet literary didacticism and appear profoundly rooted in the patterns of Socialist Realism decorated with Soviet rhetoric and communist political propaganda. Armalinsky replicates the socialist models in order to abolish them from within. Through a

[14] *A. S. Pushkin. Tainye zapiski 1836-1837 godov,* ed. Mikhail Armalinsky, Minneapolis: M.I.P. Company, 2013, p. 656.
[15] Armalinsky read this book for the first time at the age of eighteen, when the famous Russian sexologist Igor Kon introduced it to him: "He suggested that I read banned rare books on sex, published in the United States. I enthusiastically agreed… One of the most important books was the sexological and scientific bestseller by Masters and Johnson, *Human Sexual Response*. These books have made great impression on me…" (Personal correspondence, June 20, 2015).
[16] William H. Masters and Virginia E. Johnson, *Human Sexual Response*, Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1966, p. 6.

perverted imitation of the Communist Party's progenitors, he makes his textual subversion serve the interests of the newly proclaimed pornographic government whose founder and eternal chairman is Armalinsky himself. This ideological commitment is consistent with his unwavering belief, akin to that of Dostoevsky's idiot, Prince Mishkin, that "porn will save the world." Socialist theological aestheticism functions as a fertile ground onto which he plants the quest for the freedom of speech revolving around preaching the porno-gospel, sex doctrine, and idolatry. Considerable latitude in promoting *Tainye zapiski*, sexual ideology and religion of porn generate the image of Armalinsky as a Christ-like figure, a prophet out of whose mouth pour prophecy and foresight of the bright pornographic future. Armalinsky acts as the Man-God who gives people liberty "to fuck."

Once Armalinsky felt ready to commence this pornographic maneuver, he encountered a problem with deficiency of the resources necessary for such a pioneering venture—a press that would publish *Tainye zapiski*. The highly-controlled Soviet press was not an option. Given the prejudicial circumstances of the Russian émigré press, it seemed impossible for Armalinsky to find an ideal cultural environment for developing free and uncensored Russian literature outside the Soviet state either. Armalinsky overcame the failure to publish his work in immigration by means of technology, however. In his article "Exiled Russian Writers of the Third Wave and the Émigré Press," Arnold McMillin asserts that technology came to many unrecognized Russian émigré writers' rescue with an opportunity to publish their own works, "sometimes, but not always, setting up a publishing 'company' for this specific purpose." Such home-made publications (*kustarnye izdaniia*), McMillin further affirms, "reflect bitterly anti-Establishment

views, but at least the authors are able to publish and, in theory, disseminate what they want."[17] This practice of producing kustarnye izdaniia appeared as the most logical solution for Armalinsky. As he had already established his own publishing house, what Armalinsky needed next was a high-quality computer to launch porn into the ether:

> In 1986, it was about time to publish *Pushkin A. S. Secret Notes 1836–1837.* I decided to do it myself…I needed a computer for this business….Buying a new Macintosh literally marked the beginning of a fundamentally new existence. Besides emigration, nothing so strongly influenced my life. In the first instance I reprinted *Secret Notes* on my Macintosh. Then I found out about a laser printer. When I saw the printed text, I realized that I myself could make a book and print it out. What remained for the printing-house was to take a picture of the typed pages, duplicate and bound them into a book… Soon after *TZ* went out in *print and rushed to conquer the world (ustremilis' zavoevyvat' mir*). (*Maksimalizmy,* 522–525, my emphasis).

Male attraction to machines and technology has a long history in both Russian and American cultures, since it has been traditionally valued as the primary domain of "male" knowledge. Therefore, gender is inseparable from technological discourse. In *Making Technology Masculine,* Ruth Oldenziel asserts that twentieth-century men entered the technologically advanced realm "in search of their own version of male identity as professionalizing engineers looking for cultural resources to upgrade their occupation; as struggling rank-and-file members living in fear of being declassed and demasculinized; and as

[17] Arnold McMillin, "Exiled Russian Writers of the Third Wave and the Émigré Press," *The Modern Language Review* 84, no. 2 (April 1989): 406-413.

writers, visual artists, and social scientists in search of their own professional identities."[18] Machines and technology allowed men to retrieve their masculine power, fortify their maleness, and rework their relationships with women and other men. Early twentieth-century enthusiasm for technology is inherited by the postmodern man, who is committed to the idea of perfecting the world through modern technology. Technology emerges as an inevitable factor in recreating Armalinsky's new identity in the West as a man, writer, and engineer who needs to have control over the machine. Technology functions here as Armalinsky's phallic extension by means of which he acquires super power and is able to reach out and conquer the Soviet public body. The machine has the capacity to deliver his pornographic discourse all the way to the other shore (Russia). As a Russian émigré who needs to reimagine his lost Russian traditional masculinity, Armalinsky enters into the technological realm from a position of a man and a lover: "Macintosh sparked passionate love deep within me, which lasts to this day and only grows stronger. Not a single woman could be held in my heart and reign over it for so long."[19] Armalinsky's passionate love for his computer, which is stronger than his desire for women, is telling of the phallic characteristics he assigns to it. The verbs "to last" (*dlit'sia*), "to last/stand/remain" (*proderzhat'sia*), and "to grow/gain strength" (*usilivat'sia*) are undoubtedly tied to erectile function. Here Armalinsky resembles Brynza, the character in Fyodor Gladkov's *Cement* (1925), who embodies the Soviet man's fascination with machines and technology. Brynza lives with his adored machines in the factory and becomes one with them ("When I am with the engine, I am the engine myself…me and the machine, we are one"). And like for Armalinsky, Brynza's love for the machine is incomparable to that for woman: "Yearning for machines is stronger than that

[18] Ruth Oldenziel, *Making Technology Masculine: Men, Women, and Modern Machines in America, 1870–1945,* Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2004, p. 11.
[19] *Maksimalizmy,* p. 525. Armalinsky even dedicated his 1991 pornographic novel to his Macintosh.

for a sweetheart."[20] The machine, his "beloved" Macintosh, provides Armalinsky with a new sexual power, male identity, and certainly a new life outside Russia.[21] The Macintoshes define all that Armalinsky is and what he has done in exile: "Without them there wouldn't be any business, literature, books or social life" (*Maksimalizmy*, 526). As if he follows the model from ancient Greek tragedy, Armalinsky appears on the Soviet stage like a god from the machine (*deus ex machina*) who brings pornography to resolve the socialist anti-sexual "plot" that offered no way out for the Soviet people. His pornographic discourse emerges to reshape the past and structure the future of Russian literature.

Armalinsky published *Tainye zapiski* complemented with the "Necessary Preface," in which he explains how the manuscript came into his possession, how it was found, deciphered, and secretly exported from the Soviet Union. Written in the first person as a brief record of facts, the "Necessary Preface" opens with certain personal information and factual details from Armalinsky's life that further color the entire preface narrative with a truthful, voluntarily confessional note: "In 1976, I decided to immigrate to America. In order to earn some money for the trip, I started selling out my own library. A stream of friends, acquaintances and, afterwards, unknown people who wished to buy my books, flew through my room."[22] An old historian, Nikolai Pavlovich, who happens to carry "the world of olden times in his eyes,"[23] appears one day to challenge Armalinsky. Once he finds out about Armalinsky's plan to emigrate from the

[20] Fiodor V. Gladkov, *Cement*, transl. A. S. Arthur and C. Ashleigh, Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1994, p. 113.
[21] In fact, as I will discuss later, his public persona is primarily built around multiple cyber identities. As if a few Macintoshes were not enough to meet his needs at maintaining his multiple virtual personalities, throughout all these years, he has been replacing his computers regularly (at first once a year, then more often, so that by now more than forty computers total have been in his possession). Armalinsky's ultimately negative attitude towards monogamy, which regulates his moves with women, is replicated onto his relations with books and computers.
[22] *A. S. Pushkin. Tainye zapiski 1836-1837 godov,* p. 5. All citations from the text of *Tainye zapiski* and "Necessary Preface" refer to this edition and hereafter will be identified by page number in parentheses.
[23] Allusion to the Russian Emperor Nicholas I (Nikolai I Pavlovich Romanov).

Soviet Union and embark on a new life in the West, Nikolai Pavlovich passes onto him the manuscript of *Tainye zapiski*, with a request to carry it over to the Holland Embassy where Armalinsky expected to get his visa. He learns that the manuscript, originally written in French, was first deciphered and then translated into Russian by Pavlovich himself. Yet, Nikolai does not disclose what the manuscript is about, but vaguely describes it as "diary notes from the late thirties of the last century," in which "there is nothing anti-Soviet," and leaves the identity of the author to come as a surprise to Armalinsky. Armalinsky manages to leave the manuscript, together with his other writings, on the sly in the Holland Embassy. A year later, when he already resides in the United States, Armalinsky receives *Tainye zapiski* and immediately makes a decision to retype the manuscript on his typing machine, anticipating that something bad might happen and that he would need an extra copy. Mysteriously, Nikolai Pavlovich's manuscript soon disappears from Armalinsky's apartment and he is left with the copy made on his typing machine. At this point, Armalinsky finds himself puzzled with many questions, such as: Where are the original notes and how did they end up in Pavlovich's hands? How were they ciphered? Are the notes a falsification? Does somebody else besides Nikolai Pavlovich know that the notes exist? Is it necessary to publish the notes? (8). Being familiar with the legend surrounding Pushkin's secret notes, according to which Pushkin bequeathed to the next generations to publish them not earlier than a hundred years after his death, Armalinsky decides to publish *Tainye zapiski* on the eve of the sesquicentennial of Pushkin's death.[24] Aware of the risk he takes with this publication that might easily be subjected to "'moral censorship' left to "besmirch' the holy name of Pushkin" (9), Armalinsky gives a heads up to Pushkinists that the literary style and

[24] On the first page of *Zapiski,* Pushkin gives his predictions about when and where his notes will be published: "In two hundred years, when censorship in Russia will be abolished, first Barkov will be published and then these notes. However, I cannot imagine Russia without censorship. It means they will be published in Europe, but most likely in faraway America" (13). From now on I will refer to *Tainye zapiski* alternatively as *TZ* or *Zapiski.*

language in *Tainye zapiski* are far from Pushkin's, given that the manuscript appears as a translated text that Pavlovich, who lacked talent for stylization, adjusted to the modern Russian idiom. Armalinsky closes the "Necessary Preface" with the assumption that "Pushkin's literary reputation is so strong that it cannot be shaken by his personal reputation, and yet it promises to become a remarkable tool for the study of human nature which, thanks to its invariability, links us to both the past and the future" (9).

As soon as *TZ* together with the "Necessary Preface" showed up in print, Armalinsky distributed book promotional materials to all leading newspapers, publishing houses, libraries, and archives in the Soviet Union. Even though Armalinsky does not claim authorship on *Zapiski*—nor does he necessarily hold them as an authentic text of Pushkin—Soviet scholars immediately labeled the book a forgery and accused Armalinsky of being a deceiver, erotomaniac, pervert, and propagator of pornography. He was reproached straightaway for usurping the entire Russian literary tradition and culture by degrading and discrediting the name of its originator. For that reason initially negative reactions to and critical evaluation of *Zapiski* are full of ad hominem attacks against him.

First, such accounts were brought out in the weekly journal *Ogonek* in 1987.[25] In his article, "An Offensive Forgery," the Soviet literary critic I. Zil'bershtein uses astringent words to assign the authorship of *Zapiski* to Armalinsky and concludes that "the entire text, fabricated by Armalinsky, cause a feeling of innermost disgust."[26] Zil'bershtein further characterizes Armalinsky as a highly immoral pornographer, sexual maniac, a mentally unstable and sick man

[25] *Ogonek* was the first press to advertise *Tainye zapiski* by publishing Armalinsky's promotional material.
[26] *Ogonek*, no. 12 (1987): 27. In *Parapushkinistika,* published as the complementary volume to *TZ* within Armalinsky, ed. *A. S. Pushkin. Tainye zapiski 1836-1837 godov*, pp. 126–129.

who dares put "his dirty hand on the sanctity of all mankind by the name of Pushkin."[27] Zil'bershtein's article was complemented by "A Commentary of the Expert," in which F. Reshetnikov, a criminal law specialist, utilizes juridical language and calls upon American and European laws and regulations to lay blame on Armalinsky for defamation and distribution of pornography. Acting from a position of legal authority, Reshetnikov goes as far as to call Armalinsky a "sexual psychopath" who deserves the harshest measures of punishment, including castration.[28]

These two critical reviews set the Soviet public on fire. Zil'bershtein's and Reshetnikov's insulting reviews, used as a tactic to downplay Armalinsky's reputation, served afterwards as a model for many critics and readers to express their own dissatisfaction toward the publisher and his publication. Armalinsky asserts that "everything started with the articles published in *Ogonek* in 1987" (*Parapushkinistika* 473). Such a personal and subjective tone from the critics allows Armalinsky to develop a much more intimate relationship with the public. Subsequently, Armalinsky enters the vicious circle of criticism spinning around him and the book he published.

The case of a young student, A. S. Bodanov, probably most closely illustrates how this trend continued. As a reader and admirer of Pushkin's poetry who is outraged at the publisher's attempt to defile the name of "the genius of Russian and world literature," Bodanov writes a letter to Armalinsky in which he calls him various names: "You are a scoundrel and a beast," "You are a pathological pervert," "You are the embodiment of infamy and abomination, evil and falsehood" (*Parapushkinistika* 130). The ultimate goal for Bodanov is to restore Pushkin's honor by fighting a duel with Armalinsky: "Taking all of the above mentioned into consideration, I

[27] Ibid.
[28] Ibid.

have the honor to challenge you to a duel. Please, inform me about the conditions and place…" (130). Replying to his rival, Armalinsky makes a frivolous request regarding the choice of place and weapons for the duel: "I have chosen. We will fight with spittle. So, on November 7 at 12 p.m., we will meet on the top of the Eiffel Tower, in Paris" (131). Assured of his victory in advance, Armalinsky reminds Bodanov that the only way to be restored to health from the fatal wound on the heart made by his "well-aimed spit," is to learn *TZ* by heart. Following Armalinsky's suggestions, I would say that in order to treat society's sexophobia, he applies behavioral therapy by administrating *TZ* as an experimental pornographic treatment that exposes the public body to strong sexual stimuli.

This is the moment, I argue, when Armalinsky's well-defined gendered rhetoric enters the public sphere, in which the categories of sex and gender are clearly assigned to both participants in the dialogue. His discourse materializes by means of sexual imagery of the phallic Eiffel Tower, whose properties Armalinsky assumes appearing as a man in power, coitus with the public body, and the symbolic spitting that mirrors ejaculatory discharge inside that body. Yet, this verbal erotic encounter indicates that the sexed bodies of the interlocutors correspond to different gender identities as artistically-constructed classifications. While in his manly discourse Armalinsky makes his gender mirror his biological sex, he constructs the public entity as a masculine man who is given the female body. Armalinsky's approach complements Judith Butler's theory that both sex and gender are constructed discursively, as well as her hypothesis of gender performativity that suggests that gender identity "is performatively constituted by the very "expressions" that are said to be its results."[29] Gender in Armalinsky's discursive performances becomes a real "free-floating artifice," to use Butler's metaphor, utilized to

[29] Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, New York: Routledge, 1999, p 33.

deceive Russian society. Imagining Russian society as a "discontinuous gendered being"[30] allows Armalinsky to set a twofold relation between them, to fight against the man and to fuck the woman's body. "For me Russia is like a woman whose psychology I despise, but without whom I cannot do and whom I have to fuck," states Armalinsky in his 1991 novel.[31] Armalinsky's relationship with the public body rests on the Oedipal complex: desire for the mother and rivalry with the father. Additionally, gender trouble a la Armalinsky further complicates the case for such a constellation, which only endures the traditional patriarchal values, man's heroism and heterosexual conventions. As if he is performing a real defloration of a virgin, Armalinsky's potent spit symbolically penetrates the female public body leaving it wounded. This wound invokes the image of Pushkin the pornographer.

Pushkinistika vs. Pornography/ Pushkinomania vs. Erotomania

The strict system of literary institutions, especially the Pushkin House whose main purpose is to protect and maintain Pushkin's legacy, as well as the rigorous publishing policies implemented to keep literary production under control, prevented *TZ* from showing up on the Russian literary scene for the next fifteen years. Dmitrii Likhachev's claim that "our obligation is to defend Pushkin" (607) becomes a credo of all Pushkinists and publishers.[32] Obviously, the reason for a scandal of such extreme proportions is connected to the unassailable position of Aleksandr Pushkin in Russian culture and literary tradition. Over the course of last two hundred years, an abundance of various accounts, tales (and fairy tales), anecdotes, fabricated narratives,

[30] Butler says that the appearance of "discontinuous" or "incoherent" gender beings seen as persons "who fail to conform to the gendered norm of cultural intelligibility by which persons are defined" brings into question the identity, that is, the notion of "the person" (*Gender Trouble*, 23).
[31] Armalinsky, *Voluntary Confessions- Forced Correspondence*, in *Chtob znali!*, Moscow: Ladomir, 2002, p. 805.
[32] According to the defenders of Pushkin, *TZ* threatened to jeopardize Russian society and literary tradition to such a degree that the book should become an issue for National Security inspection. (A. Akopov. *RELGA*. No 14, 2005. In *Parapushkinistika*, 399).

and political indoctrinations have been growing and flourishing around Pushkin's cultural persona. As a result, Pushkin had been turned into a concept to be used and misused for creating the grand narrative of the Pushkin myth and personality cult that was sufficient to assure Russian national identity or endorse Soviet political propaganda and socialist ideology.[33] The idea that "Pushkin summarized, established and synthesized the national image" (N. Skatov, *Parapushkinistika* 584) finds its way to the public discourse in any occasion (even when protecting him from pornography). The inconsistent nature of the concept authorized Soviet and Russian officials, politicians, critics, and writers to control and maneuver the cultural image of Pushkin by adding new notions and beliefs to it, or by subtracting or changing already established cultural values as needed. Therefore, the Pushkin myth ended up incorporating in itself various understandings and interpretations of the role of the writer in the cultural life of the nation: Pushkin is the leading national sanctity, "our everything," "the sun of Russian poetry," "a synonym for Russia," and the father of Russian literature and language, love for whom measured one's commitment to socialism, and in Stalinist culture love for Comrade Stalin. As the leading poet of the Stalin era, starting with the 1937 Pushkin jubilee (commemoration of the centennial anniversary of his death), Platt argues that Pushkin was isolated "in some way as the special ('contemporary') object of the present's love."[34] Mythologization of Pushkin and the jubilees of his death and birth continued throughout the Soviet and post-Soviet period, and Armalinsky, too, would undertake this practice. Because of all of this, Russian culture came to the point where "the very topic of taboo in connection with Pushkin has been itself taboo."[35] Tabooization

[33] On the Soviet Pushkin myth see Jonathan Brooks Platt, *Greetings, Pushkin! Stalinist Cultural Politics and the Russian National Bard*, Pittsburgh: Pittsburgh University Press, 2016; or Evgeny Dobrenko, "Pushkin in Soviet and Post-Soviet culture," in *Cambridge Companion to Pushkin*, ed. Andrew Kahn, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007.
[34] Platt, *Greetings, Pushkin!*, p. 227.
[35] Alyssa Dinega Gillespie, ed., *Taboo Pushkin*, Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2012, p. 5.

appears the main reason for the Russian publishing houses refusing to issue *TZ*, even in post-Soviet times when obscenity (*mat*) became an inevitable part of modern literary expression. Publishers feared the negative consequences they could face for the profanation of Pushkin.[36] Armalinsky asserts that "freedom of press in Russia fails at Pushkin, who is turned into the Tower of Babel not to be approached" (181).

Though *TZ* was not published in Russia until 2001, interest for the book, including positive and negative responses to it, have not ceased since publication.[37] Scandals and rumors surrounding Armalinsky, together with polemics and reviews in the Russian press and media, were the book's best advertisement. All this led to a surprising outcome: *TZ* became a bestseller.[38] The controversy that *TZ* attracted would only contribute to the remarkable triumphs of its later publications. Ol'ga Vozdvizhenskaia holds that the reason for the enormous popularity of *TZ* lies in the "necessity for a sexual myth and sexual hero due to Russian general dissatisfaction in this sphere, not in acts but in thoughts." She thus ponders the questions: "Could the Pushkin myth be colored without this theme? Could Pushkin, the brightest figure in Russian history, not be… the hero of sexual myth?"[39]

[36] One of the publishers openly writes to Armalinsky: "Due to the content and nature of *Tainye zapiski* it is impossible for us to publish this work without a risk to sacrifice to it the fate of the publishing house" (179).
[37] Until then, M.I.P. Company published six editions of *Tainye zapiski* in Russian and five editions in English. The book was also translated into many other languages: Italian, Albanian, French, Dutch, Spanish, Japanese, and German. The erotic magazine *Penthouse Forum* printed excerpts from *Tainye zapiski* in 1991, while some presses provided pirate publications (the Moscow newspaper *Venera pres*, the almanac *Konec veka*, and Israeli newspaper *Ekho*).
[38] This situation speaks in favor of McMillin's statement that the real power of the press and of journals concerning the controversial texts is not so much in what they do or do not publish but in what they review and what they pass over in silence. He argues that for émigré authors, "even the nature of the criticism does not matter as much as the basic fact of being noticed," considering that the worst possible fate for a writer is to be ignored. ("Exiled Russian Writers," p. 408.)
[39] O. Vozdvizhenskaia, "Chei Pushkin?," *A.S. Pushkin. Tainye zapiski*, 103.

Despite the fact that the mythical Pushkin of official Soviet discourse acts as a fictional figure greatly removed from the actual romantic writer, (post)Soviet Russian critics view the literary character in *TZ* as slander against Pushkin's great name because Armalinsky diverges from "the original": "This is not Pushkin!" (*Eto ne Pushkin!*) In their rendition, Pushkin appears as an asexual, innocent, and ultimately moral man, who had made small excursions into eroticism in his early years but soon after took the "right path" in literary expression and renounced his claim of authorship to erotic works such as the "Gavriiliada."[40] This shows that the Soviets symbolically castrated Pushkin, inclining to adjust his persona to their moral practicalities and their comprehension of the appropriate sexual life of an individual of national cultural importance. Essentially, they show interest not in Pushkin's personality but in their own convictions only (Mikhail Dubovskov, 819). Therefore, Pushkin's pornographic persona in *TZ* does not compromise the image of the great writer as much as it confronts the ideological and illusionary character of the (post)Soviet society built around Pushkin. Armalinsky ironically states that "the publication of the book appears as a test of true love for Pushkin: the more one abhors *Tainye zapiski*, the more one loves Pushkin. Thereby, *Tainye zapiski* serves as a further strengthening of the socially useful cult" (265). Those who come out to uphold Armalinsky from malevolent attacks and to underscore the artistic values of *TZ* point out that the importance of this book remains in its contribution to demythologization, decanonization, and personification

[40] Pushkinists ought to protect this chaste aura of Pushkin from such blasphemous endeavors as Armalinsky's *TZ*, believes D. Likhachev: "If Pushkin officially renounced his "Gavriiliada," choosing not to be its author…Why do we have to publish …these pornographic works of Pushkin, if Pushkin himself renounced them?" (*Rossiiskie vesti* (1998), 605). For the same reason, Valentin Nepomniashchii finds excuse for Pushkin's early erotic poems and indecent lexicon in his juvenility ("in such age when one irresistibly wants to write on the edge of obscenities"), and marks when exactly his period of immaturity ended: "last time the obscene language appeared in his poetry was in 1827 and afterword it vanishes from his verses" (613–614). Claiming to know all the stages in Pushkin's personal development, Nepomniashchii assumes accordingly that "in order to believe that *Tainye zapiski* belongs to Pushkin, we must suppose that in those years the poet went through a pathological personality transformation, that Pushkin stopped being himself, or simply became mentally ill" (615).

of Pushkin, that is, reattribution of human qualities to the dehumanized mythical image of Pushkin.[41] Armalinsky has the same agenda as Andrei Sinyavsky (Abram Tertz) in his controversial text *Strolls with Pushkin*: to rescue Pushkin from the Soviet narrative and cult of personality.[42] Both writers split the ideologically-glued ideal image of Pushkin in two "profane" images, the poet and man, both of which they compromise by attaching to them their own biographical references and art. Tertz presents Pushkin on his "thin erotic legs" while Armalinsky discloses the poet as standing on his thick porno legs in sexual perversions. In a way, "the alternative Pushkin from *Zapiski* appears as destruction of every kind of officialdom" (N. Mikhailovskaia, 112), including the endorsed Pushkin concept. Mikhailovskaia holds that all the dialogs that rise around *TZ* indicate the creation of a new myth. This mythmaking is still an ongoing process that through caricature very precisely reflects the end of an epoch, the demise of old idols and formation of new ones (117).

Notwithstanding the evidence that *TZ* acts as an innately demythologizing piece, displayed essentially as an anti-Pushkin myth, it offers meat for creating yet another equally mythical image of the writer—that of Pushkin the pornographer. "Before the reader stands a myth, therefore it is useless to talk about psychological plausibility.…After all, Mikhail Armalinsky wanted to produce an extreme libel (*paskvil'*), but he published apocrypha instead," claims Evgenii Peremyshlev (*Parapushkinistika* 201). Indeed, Armalinsky's anti-Soviet hoopla remains in the framework of the very same mythological realm of Soviet ideology, simply turned upside down. Given that the *TZ* portrait Pushkin as a remarkably passionate and sexually preoccupied man, while the first person narration and confessional tone of the notes additionally

[41] See Natal'ia Mikhailovskaia, "Ai da sukiny deti!," *Parapushkinistika*, 111.
[42] Andrei Sinyavksy wrote *Strolls with Pushkin* while in a Soviet labor camp and managed to smuggle it out in letters to his wife. The book was published upon his exile to France in 1975. Armalinsky claims he also smuggled Pushkin's notes and published them in exile.

compromise the sacred image of the writer, Armalinsky's publication makes the Soviet discourse appear harmful to itself. In view of that, if Pushkin is considered to be "our everything" (*nashe vse*), then the perverted, immoral, lustful, sexually insatiable, and sinful literary character of Pushkin in *TZ* functions as a mirror image of the Russian people. Or even more so, if Pushkin is the synonym and embodiment of Russia itself, then, paradoxically, the promiscuous character in *TZ* stands for the ideal portrait of *rodina-mat'* (Mother Russia). To blow the lid off Armalinsky's immoral intent and avoid such threatening manipulations, the director of the Russkii dom, Nikolai Skatov, affirms that the fact that "Pushkin is our everything does not lead to the conclusion that everything that is ours is Pushkin," and adds: "If we allow them to annihilate Pushkin, we will lose Russia… All dark forces ready to attack Russia are attacking Pushkin now. Destroy him, and you will destroy Russia (577–579). Skatov's discourse reads as follows: the act of pornographizing the asexual and moral Pushkin compares to sexual insult and violent defloration done to an innocent maiden (Russia), whose virginity and dignity are then lost forever. Armalinsky demonstrates that by misappropriating the principles of the Soviet/Russian system he manages to turn its values and standards into the most powerful weapon against the system. This will be his main strategy in the verbal battle continued henceforth.

Nevertheless, the defenders of the Pushkin myth could not enfeeble Armalinsky's commitment and determination to publish the book in Russia. On the contrary, the degree of curiosity and concern about *TZ* motivated him to promote the book much more decisively and persistently by engaging in spamming activities. When in the late 1990s he was recognized as "the first spammer of all Russia" (*spamer vseia Rusi*), Armalinsky replied: "Spammer or spermer, call me as you wish…I am only trying to inject love for Pushkin's word. I am a *kul'turtreger* and a hero (*podvizhnik*), if you wish. I spread the sane, the good and the eternal"

(*seia razumnoe, dobroe, vechnoe*) (475). Here Armalinsky takes upon himself the role of Nikolai Nekrasov's sower (seiatel') who is called upon to perform heroic deeds for the sake of the Russian people. In his poem "Seiateliam" (To the Sowers, 1877), Nekrasov appeals: "Sower of knowledge to the people's field! /…/ Sow the sane, the good and the eternal, / Sow! You will be thanked from the heart / of the Russian people…"[43] Armalinsky the spermer is publicizing porn and widely sowing and dispersing his erotic seeds all over the Russian soil. The fact that he is the first to do so adds an additional symbolic meaning to his performance—depriving the innocent public body of virginity. Like Nekrasov, Armalinsky believes that in the future the Russian people will welcome his deeds and find kind words to thank him. His literary pornography, akin to Nekrasov's poetry, carries, from his perspective, the prophetic quality of the progress and has the power to create a utopian world and an ideal society. Still, Armalinsky is a postmodern *seaitel'* who utilizes technology to reach his target subject. In fact, his spammings are recognized as movements of a "sexual idiot (*seksual'nyi debil*), holding one hand on the keyboard and another in his pocket" (Rita Alova, 280).

Further serious concerns among the Russian intelligentsia arose in 1998, when the M.I.P. Company made the online edition of *TZ* easily accessible in order to acquaint new generations of readers with Pushkin, and eventually motivate them to explore his other works as well. This Internet edition came out as Armalinsky's "gift to the Russian-speaking public" all over the world to commemorate 200 years since Pushkin's birthday. It was intended to serve the educational needs of the post-Soviet youth, to free them from the unnecessary "vicious shame and disgust" and to form a sexually healthy people (121). For Pushkinists, the easy access to

[43] "Seiatel' znan'ia na nivu narodnuiu! /.../ Seite razumnoe, dobroe, vechnoe, / Seite! Spasibo vam skazhet serdechnoe / Russkii narod…" (N. A. Nekrasov, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii i pisem v 15 tomakh*, Vol. 3, Leningrad: "Nauka,"1982.)

such a controversial book for larger numbers of readers was the biggest insult to Pushkin. On this occasion Nikolai Skatov stated: "The whole world went crazy about erotomania, pornography, and sexual revolution, and unbelievable publications appeared referring to Pushkin in ways that are hard even to call "yellow," for they are simply filthy. For example, recently in America the book *Pushkin—Secret Journal 1836* came out about the alleged sexual adventures of the poet. This is an explicit and filthy forgery, yet…it is already translated into numerous languages, and it appeared on the Internet" (600).

With *TZ* Armalinsky takes Russian society away from its safety zone. Given the fact that *TZ* de facto did not exist in Russia for fifteen years after its first edition in the US, the excessive fear emerging in Russian society during that period is telling of the traditional cultural codes being reinforced. Unreasonable, unjustified, and overwhelming anxiety feared from the imaginary West, the perverted and immoral illusory *other* that endangers the social order, morality, and chastity of Russian people and threatens to diminish and compromise Russian literary tradition, rose to direct the public's movement toward strict censorship and segregation of both *TZ* and Armalinsky. Consequently, Armalinsky appears as a dangerous *other*, the devil; "the main literary demon (*filologicheskii bes*) of Russia" (Serdiuchenko, 653), and the literature he produces a sinful exploit. Any publication of "vulgarity" (*vulgarshchina*) represents "crime before society," a "sell-off of both the Russian spirit and conscience," and "anti-Russian sabotage," all of which are committed by the *other*.[44] The public body should therefore make every effort to purify its sins and demand various "cleansing" measures. In *Pravda*, Nikolai Trifonov came up with idea to literally clean vulgar language, as it threatens to become a

[44] This was A. Zorin's comment to the publication of Timur Kibirov's poem "Poslanie L. S. Rubinshteinu" in *Chas pik* in 1990. In this case by the "other" he means "Tao" (mountain Jew) and Tatar Kibirov ("Legalizatsiia obstsennoi leksiki i ee kul'turnye posledstviia," *Anti-mir russkoi kul'tury. Iazyk. Fol'klor. Literatura*, Moskva: Ladomir, 1996). Being a Jew and a Westerner, Armalinsky becomes a double other who produces Pushkin's *vulgarshchina*.

spiritual epidemic (*dukhovnaia zaraza*), and while reading affirmative responses to Armalinsky and *TZ* he feels like taking a broom to "whip away all that garbage, and all that verbiage of the shameless apologists of bawdry" (156). *TZ* is also seen as plague (*chuma*) that is sent to Russia by the westernized enemy: "Taking Pushkin down from the pedestal of "perestroika," the inner enemies of Russia are literally letting us go around the world, making of us a "gaping hole in humankind" (*prorekhoi na chelovechestve* [allusion to Gogol']); driving us into a spiritual closet with the slogan—Made in the USA" (P.N. Denisov, 256). Armalinsky becomes a former Soviet citizen who, corrupted by western sexual perversion, forcefully makes the public participate in his cultural travesty.

Pushkinists become concerned about how to defend both Pushkin and his readers from people like Armalinsky, who occupy the Internet with their obscenities. In his article "Pushkinu nuzhna 'zashchita ot duraka,'" Iurii Buida raises concerns about the World Wide Web, which he argues has turned into a junkyard full of rubbish and trash (*stol'ko sora and driani*) while "there is nothing 'fool proof' on the Internet (*v Internete net 'zashchity ot duraka'*)." For that reason, in order to protect people from contaminated, foolish, and filthy works like *TZ*, Buida advocates specific disinfection procedures: "regularly clean your teeth and wash your hands with soap."[45] Armalinsky sent an open letter to the journal *Izvestiia*, in which he claimed that Pushkinists, being afraid of the Internet, are determined to close it down so that *TZ* and anticommunism are not accessible to the public any more. He then clarifies Buida's position, saying that "after his intercourse (*obshchenie*) with the Internet," Buida would not need any cleansing if he were to realize that "it is not necessary to shove everything into the mouth" (*ne obiazatel'no vse sovat' v rot*) (639). This way Armalinsky makes Buida into the active subject of his porn, who not only

[45] "Pushkin Needs Protection from Fools" published in the journal *Izvestiia* in 1998 (*Parapushkinistika*, 636).

experiences sexual arousal with *TZ* but also participates in oral sex, greedily swallowing Armalinsky's discursive semen pouring out from his technologically-empowered phallus.

The attempt to define Armalinsky's otherness and his immorality through Jewishness does not come as a surprise. The negative perception of the Jewish man has a long tradition in Russian cultural consciousness. At the beginning of the twentieth century, Vasilii Rozanov in his *Fallen Leaves* wrote about the fear of the potent Jew who threatens to spoil the Russian female body. Late-Soviet man simply repeats this model, which rests on the dichotomy of "us/them." Armalinsky and all Jews become a threat "who want to smear our Russian poet with shit. Don't you find it strange that *Tainye zapiski* ended up with you, a Jew?"[46] According to them, Jews not only killed Christ but Pushkin as well. Promoting the "Russian idea" on the Internet, I. Lebedev (who appears as kot_begemott) demands from the Jewish community and the prime minister of Israel to distance themselves from Armalinsky, or otherwise, the Jewish people would be responsible for his offensive acts (521). Armalinsky replies: "Everything became clear, if you are an anti-Semite, you are for sure a sexual misfortunate (*seksual'nyi neudachnik*)…All of those admirers of Pushkin call me *zhidok* or *zhidiara*, but they are mistaken: I am *ZHIDISHCHE*!" (524, my emphasis).[47]

Armalinsky diagnosed the public body with the disease called "Pushkin": "The word 'Pushkin' represents not only the writer's name but also the name of a psychological disease" (802), claiming that all of them "are paranoids. Pushkin is their *idee fixe*" (923). He coined the verb *zapushkinit'sia* that renders the action of looking at the entire world through Pushkin's

[46] Online comment by "amoraless," October 27, 2007, in *Parapushkinistika* p. 478.
[47] "Zhidok" and "zhidiara" are derogative terms for a Jew derived from "zhid" with intention to minimize and reduce his power. On the contrary, "zhidishche" is augmentative (formed by the suffix -shche) used to indicate the great size of the penis and Jewish sexual might.

prism. He demanded the opportunity to test a new remedy upon the ill Russian society. Armalinsky accentuated that there is only one medicine for treating society's anxiety and its tendency to explore apocalyptic influence of *Tainye zapiski* on Russia and Russian literature—to publish *Tainye Zapiski* (120). Armalinsky intends to apply a behavioral therapy upon society, to introduce *TZ* as an experimental pornographic method and expose the public to high sexual stimuli in order to treat its compulsive sexophobia. He gives his recipe of how to legitimize pornography in *Voluntary Confessions—Forced Correspondence*:

> Fighters against pornography are the group of ill people that must be treated with coition. Sick men and women should be publicly led to orgasm. This is where the Christian idea "love your enemy" becomes ideally realized in punishment by means of pleasuring those who oppose coition; pleasure must be forced on them by the skillful, young, and beautiful [men], so that once they taste it they will have no reason to be appalled by it but rather crave its reprise" (795–96).

Armalinsky names these patients who suffer from this dangerous Pushkin disease and are in need of immediate remedy *Parapushkinists*.

Parapushkinistika

It would be hard to comprehend the magnitude of the effect that *TZ* had on the public body and literary scholarship if not for David Baevsky's *Parapushkinistika*, the book about *TZ*.[48]

[48] David Baevsky is one of the fictitious names used by Armalinsky. Baevsky is introduced as a man who became interested in *TZ* after he read Zil'bershtein's and Reshetnikov's impertinent articles. Shocked by their "malevolent historical shriek," Baevsky decided to come in dialogue with these two critics and explicate his own upholding estimation of the book (in the Los Angeles almanac *Panorama*, in 1988). Afterwards, he continued searching for other responses to *TZ* and various comments on them. Once the M.I.P. Company learned about his serious interest in the matter, the mystificatory narrative goes, they encouraged Baevsky to assemble the collected material in a separate book that came out as *Parapushkinistika*.

Representing a collection of materials that archives a vast variety of responses concerning *TZ* and its publisher, including Armalinsky's commentary on them, *Parapushkinistika* is a meta-pornographic text. It represents the embodiment of pornography as discourse and it invites to be interpreted and scrutinized as a pornographic text. *Parapushkinistika* indicates how the strategic use of porn through language discredits official Soviet ideology and restrains Socialist Realist literary norms and standards. This is the field on which the verbal battle over porn and its discursive realization take place.

The M.I.P. Company published the first edition of *Parapushkinistika* in 1996, ten years after the first publication of *TZ.* As time went by and commentaries about *TZ* and the interest they sparked grew, *Parapushkinistika* likewise expanded in mass, until finally becoming a remarkably large volume of 800 pages of collected material in 2013.[49] The book includes articles, reviews, and interviews appearing in journals, newspapers, magazines, on radio and TV channels, as well as official and private letters, emails, blog postings, and the editor's annotations. Renowned academics, Pushkinists, and critics such as D. Likhachev, I.Kon, N. Skatov, V. Toporov, M. Zolotonosov, S. Fomichev, I. Zil'bershtein, A. Lacis, E. Peremyshlev, B. Filevskii, A. Levkin, E. Etkind, to mention but a few, appear here as unified opinion and the voice of Russian society. They represent the public body and official Soviet discourse that Armalinsky manipulates and compromises through his pornographic speech. Given this discursive clash, it is not surprising that *Parapushkinistika* is often viewed as a genuine piece of art that appears more interesting and engaging than *TZ.*

[49] Until the 2013 edition, five volumes of *Parapushkinistika* have been published separately.

The plethora of commentary ran the spectrum. It began with the extremely negative: "Pushkin did not write at such length, so primitively descriptive and so boring," (Valentin Nepomniashchii, 611); or: "His [Pushkin's] erotica is much broader and richer than [your] cuntography (*pizdografiia*). Not only that you are not his equal, you are not even near him," (Igor Kon, 740). Some comments were somewhat moderate, coming from those who, though disappointed by the content of *TZ*, do not neglect Armalinsky's artistry and see *TZ* as an artistic leg-pull by a talented author who knows the details of Pushkin's life extremely well. Some were even quite favorable: "Even if taken as a literary hoax, *Zapiski* could be seen as a masterpiece that might serve as a model for Russian erotic text, while the psychological image of the protagonist…and artistic quality of the work dismiss the charges of pornography" (Natalia Mikhailovskaia, 111). Nonetheless, all of the reactions documented in *Parapushkinistika*, be they pro or contra Armalinsky and *TZ*, address identical questions: is *Tainye zapiski* Pushkin's work or not? Is this an original text or a forgery?

Armalinsky defines "parapushkinistika" as a sociolinguistic term that refers to a type of exact science that studies the "unorthodox appearance of Pushkin and incredible events of his life that traditional Pushkinistika is unable to accept" (119, 909). Parapushkinistika is a science whose sole object of study is *TZ*, which contains three main principles: 1) the law of energy conservation (by which, the energy of the impact of *TZ* on readers remains consistently high regardless of the degree of aggressiveness of the literary scholarship); 2) space-time invariant (by which, regardless of time and space, the publication of *TZ* causes a tempestuous psychophysical reaction) (118); and 3) one's reaction to Pushkin's *TZ* is indicative of one's real character, especially sexual life (509). Armalinsky admits that over the course of twenty years of the foolish literary process (*literaDurnogo*) regarding *TZ*, *Parapushkinistika* has become "a

reflection of human nature, Russian mentality and the core of literature" (122). *Parapushkinistika* has turned into a mirror reflecting the authentic image of Soviet and post-Soviet society displaying the "idiotism of the Soviet man,"[50] as well as his anxieties about sexuality.[51] N. Mikhailovskaia notices that "*Parapushkinistika* is a live, growing book that alters in accordance with changes in the readers' consciousness. It is an endless chrestomathy of our society with its fears, silliness, and inclination toward the forbidden; an endless report of how we, thanks to Pushkin and sex, become free and mature."[52]

In his correspondence with critics, editors, publishers, and readers, Armalinsky uses cultural codes and idioms that Russian society is familiar with, in order to, in his conception, attract them, seduce them and, finally, symbolically copulate with them. Given that sex and erotica in Russian culture are traditionally represented in a humorous and frivolous manner, Armalinsky's language is intentionally larded with humor, irony, and sarcasm. The language becomes the embodiment of his male sexual power that he exploits in order to engage in a sexual game with those who respond to his erotic literary allure. As "a virtuoso of literary provocation" (Semen Shliambur, 471), Armalinsky enjoys his correspondents' hostile behavior and symbolic trembling and shivering of the body of society caused by dread of *TZ*, which he perceives as sexual stimulus triggered by his publication: "What a joy and honor to arouse strong feelings in people by my works (*dela*)" (737). In his poem "Skol'ko pisano takogo" (1985),[53] Armalinsky

[50] Vladimir Batshev. *Literaturnyi evropeets*, Frankfurt am Main, Germany, 15 (1999): 32 (In *Parapushkinistika*, 262).
[51] Neonilla Samukhina, the general manager of the St. Petersburg Institute of Soitology, reads *Parapushkinistika* as an "epistolary monument showing the limitation of the Soviet and post-Soviet literary circle—to put it mildly—in their struggle with erotica as genre, and their audacious attempts to assign human characteristics to the idols, lacquered by means of censure" (*Penthouse*, Moskva, 2006, as cited in *Parapushkinistika*, 426).
[52] *Penthouse*, Moskva, 2007, as cited in *Parapushkinistika*, 466.
[53] M. Armalinsky, *Po obe storony orgazma – stikhotvoreniia 1964–1988*, Minneapolis: M.I.P. Company, 1993.

shows readiness to incessantly cause shivers and trembles to the public body by the free, uncensored language and his uninhibited literature:

… I broke the fetters down	…razbil okovy
And I am free to speak.	I svoboden na slovakh.
Now I will say something,	Ia skazhu teper takoe
That gives *shivers* to the body …	ot chego po telu drozh',
…	…
.... Receiving pleasure,	.... Poluchaia,
The crowd demands and dote on	naslazhdenie, tolpa
The continuation of the volume.	trebuet, dushi ne chaia,
	Prodolzhenie toma. (89)

Analogous to Pushkinists' mission to protect and defend the name and honor of Pushkin, Armalinsky develops a kind of messianic complex that presupposes his engagement as a savior and liberator of Russian culture, language, and literature from Soviet clutches. He perceives the public as receiving pleasure from his actions and "dying for" further sexual excitement. The so-called "pelvic throbbing" sensation is one of the stages of a woman's subjective progression through orgasm (Masters and Johnson, 136). This involuntary contractive sensation of the vagina is what Armalinsky wishes to recognize in the public body's shudders, for only such genital convulsions and pulsations might lead both him and his lover to orgasm. Roland Barthes' *The Pleasure of the Text* is helpful to analyze Armalinsky's action here, especially given that his term *jouissance* also means "orgasm." Barthes shows that the text of pleasure, which brings euphoria as it "comes from culture and does not break with it," and the text of (erotic) bliss, which brings discomfort as it shakes "the reader's historical, cultural, psychological assumptions, the

consistency of his tastes, values, memories, and brings to a crisis his relation with language," together in the hands of reader turn himself into a double perverse subject—the subject "who enjoys the consistency of his selfhood (that is, his pleasure) and seeks its loss (that is his bliss)."[54] Pushkin's *Secret Notes* is the text that offers hedonism and destruction of culture. Armalinsky appears as the chosen one in charge of initiating sexual arousal in the public body, then leading it to orgasm: "It became clear to me a long time ago, / but only now I am convinced / that a great deed (*delo*) is given to me, / and I will accomplish (*svershu*) it without coercion" ("Glazok na bereste ustavilsia v menia," *Po obe storony orgazma*, 94). This poem was written in 1986, the same year when Armalinsky published *TZ*. As "delo" may refer to the publication of *TZ*, it also alludes to a sexual act, while the verbal form "svershu" denotes sexual climax. Armalinsky presupposes that this blissful orgasmic moment will occur on Pushkin's bicentennial birthday when *TZ* was expected to be published in Russia: "Body movements (*telodvizheniia*) of the press concerning *Tainye zapiski* were growing in amplitude and frequency with each year—orgasm was approaching: 200th anniversary of Pushkin's birthday" (473). *Parapushkinistika*, he claims, registers these "seismic phenomena." Armalinsky manages to shake the Russian land and provoke a pornographic earthquake. Like God who shakes the Earth with his voice and who promises "yet once more I will shake not only the earth, but also the heaven" (Hebrews 12:26), the omnipotent god Armalinsky promises orgasm to Russian society, that is, the future shaking that will be greater than this initial trembling of the body.

Armalinsky holds that Soviet anti-religious politics opened room for absolute freedom in creating one's own religion: "I am grateful to the Soviet regime for a happy life that allowed me to believe in my own god" (*Maksimalizmy*, 376). As it would turn out, the Soviet system enabled

[54] Roland Barthes, *The Pleasure of the Text*, trans. Richard Miller, New York: The Noonday Press, 1990, p. 14.

him to believe in the pornographic self and make himself a god with his own worship house, the "Temple of Genitals," from where he would be allowed to preach his porno-religion. Armalinsky addresses his credo in his eight porn-commandments. As a new deity in search of apostles to follow him, he shouts: "I, the founder of the temple, need the apostles and apostlesses (*apostolitsy*), but in number much more than twelve."[55] In his essay "Gonimoe chudo," Armalinsky elaborates on the religious characteristics of an orgasmic experience: "Orgasm is a call-signal from God. And this is its religious foundation…God appears to aid with orgasm, giving people only a temporary break from passion."[56] Orgasm is man's permanent connection with God through which he comes to know "the Truth and reaches the absolute." Such a theological interpretation of orgasm serves Armalinsky to deify himself and reinforce his agenda. If Russia is to answer his call and experience orgasm in context of Armalinsky the god, it would come to know the absolute Truth ("Orgasm will come and tell everything / and conceal nothing" [*Po obe storony orgazma*, 122]), and rest for a while until a new lustful wish would emerge. It is in orgasm that Armalinsky and his motherland should unite.

Moreover, this union is revealed as the mythological coitus of the Slavic pagan god Perun, the god of thunder, and the Mother Earth. Armalinsky acquires the characteristics of the head of the Slavic pantheon by his loud advocacy of obscenity, suggesting thunders that cause the earth to shake (shiver). Boris Uspenskii finds that in pagan times obscene language brought the same catastrophic effect to the Earth as Perun's thundering. Cursing acquires the ritualistic characteristics of magical copulation with the earth, signifying the female organism that is being contaminated. The one who uses obscene language acts as a demonic disseminator who in this

[55] At http://www.mipco.com/win/GEr38.html (last accessed July 26, 2019).
[56] In *Gonimoe chudo*, Minneapolis: M.I.P. Company, 1996, p. 126.

divine coitus fertilizes the earth (Russian land, Mother Russia) with his bad seeds. Cursing causes both heaven and earth to shake, and the earth, in a fit of anger, brings natural disaster. At thunder or obscenity, the earth "opens, comes apart, opens wide, and collapses."[57] Uspenskii emphasizes that the eschatological character of the mythic coitus is significant, as in certain instances it speaks of the end of the world, the end of Holy Rus' (after the collapse of Byzantium). Similarly, through a ritualistic coitus Armalinsky emanates powerful forces that first make the female body of society open wide before him, and then come to the apocalyptic orgasm that marks the end of Soviet puritan discourse. When he invokes Nekrasov's *seiatel'*, Armalinsky reinforces the similar mythical coitus, becoming the sower of sexual knowledge that impregnates the Russian soil, the Earth. Armalinsky's porn initiates the shaking and aperture of the public body that assumes the collapse of Holy Soviet Russia.

Long Live Communism and Freedom!

In order to reach the consciousness of the Soviet man developing under the Communist Party's strict rules and regulations, Armalinsky humorously presents *Parapushkinistika* as a new party, membership to which one attains simply by publishing an article or a review, or by giving any kind of response to *TZ*. To one of his opponents, Evgenii Grishkovets, whose critical assessment characterizes *TZ* as "a forged and loathsome book," Armalinsky writes in a style akin to that of Party leader: "I congratulate you for joining the party of Parapushkinists (*partiia parapushkinistov*). Soon, the party membership card will be solemnly given to you in the third volume of *Parapushkinistika*" (511). Could this well-known socialist model and the idea of party

[57] "raskryvaetsia, razmykaetsia, razverzaetsia, razvalivaetsia," B. Uspenskii, "Mifologicheskii aspect russkoi ekspressivnoi frazeologii," *Anti-mir russkoi kul'tury,* p. 36.

membership explain the vast number of responses to *TZ*? Can Armalinsky's porno-ideology successfully recover Soviet ideological clichés and belief in the bright future yet to come?

The dignitaries of the party of Parapushkinists gathered in the M.I.P. Company as a group of Armalinsky's closest collaborators who work on the same mission—bringing pornography to Russia's everyday life. Believing in the bright pornographic future of Russian society, they wrote to publishers and editors with a request to publish *TZ*, wrote Memoranda, commented on the critics' conservative approach to sex, argued with Pushkinists and readers over Pushkin's sexuality, and made fun of their socialist mentality and limiting convictions. The publisher, who appears under different names, including Mikhail Pel'tsman, Mikhail Armalinsky and John Castle, the director Aleksandr Sokolov, the co-director Vladimir Sokolov, and David Baevsky, function as one body and one mind, whose rhetoric, writing style, theatrical wit and humor, and punitive language highly resemble each other. This is why the speculations around their identities gesture toward a single person hiding behind all of these characters. The famous Pushkinist, Sergei Fomichev, asserts that in *Parapushkinistika* Armalinsky appears under different names, as the author, publisher, editor, critic, and denouncer of post-Soviet censorship: "I am skilled enough in textual criticism and by the style I can see that all of them are Armalinsky himself, who pretends to have an entire personnel" (597).[58] I will present my arguments in favor of Fomichev's hypothesis through the examination of Armalinsky's reflections in *Maksimalizmy* to further elaborate on his identity and virtual sexual performances.

Who Is Comrade Armalinsky? What Is on His Pornographic Agenda?

[58] There is also a hypothesis that Armalinsky invented his entire biography in America and that his last name is of Polish-Jewish origin, Fel'dshteinskii (Vitalii Korotich, 648).

"I like to change my face / so it could not be identified all at once" wrote Armalinsky in 1975.[59] Since he came out as the publisher of *TZ* in 1986, Armalinsky has been swamped with complaints from intellectuals and readers who, he felt he needed to outplay both verbally and sexually. For this purpose he invented numerous pen names.[60] However, his literary hypostases should not be viewed simply as desire for the diversity that he prefers in women, books, and computers. Multiplication of "the self" arises out of ego-defense and has a deeper meaning in the recreation of masculinity, because it permits Armalinsky to sexually please the collective female public body and lead it to orgasmic delights ad infinitum. His approach to this subject replicates Masters-Johnson's idea of the two major physiologic differences between male and female orgasmic expression. Masters-Johnson find that a woman has high response potential and is capable of multiple orgasmic expressions: "First, the female is capable of rapid return to orgasm immediately following an orgasmic experience, if restimulated before tensions have dropped below plateau-phrase response level. Second, the female is capable of maintaining an orgasmic experience for a relatively long period of time" (*Human Sexual Response*, 131). Similarly, Armalinsky holds that upon orgasm, unlike a man, who gets tired and, becoming defeated by the feeling of indifference and aversion, leaves behind sexual desire, a woman is even more apt to experience another orgasm: "After orgasm she is more ready for another dick: completely wet, she is able to come again and again and she craves for fucking" (*Maksimalizmy*, 539). Due to a man's biological and psychological limits, Armalinsky the lover needs multiple personalities (penises) in order to continue his coitus with the insatiable female body of Russian society. He

[59] "Mne nravitsia meniat' svoe litso, / chtob vsem ne opoznat' odnovremenno" (*Stikhotvoteniia*, published in the "Temple of Genitals," http://mipco.com/win/sostt.html.

[60] For example, he publishes articles and writes letters under various names: Aleksandr Sir, David Baevsky, Gennadii Berezin, Vladimir and Aleksandr Sokolov, to mention just a few; he promotes his erotic journal *Soitie* by publishing pornographic literary works as Lev Levich, Vladimir Mirskoi, Sergei Khalyi, and Evgenii Spas.

manages to maintain plateau-phrase intervals in the public body as his multi-phallic body continues with stimulations of all kinds within his endless erotic episodes. According to Armalinsky, a man's satiety is good and natural only if brief, otherwise it is a symptom of old age and approaching death. With his multiple penises Armalinsky attempts "to reduce the time of satiety to zero, to increase the time of gratification of desire to infinity" (Ibid.).

The identity game additionally illuminates that Armalinsky, while using his fictional account of Pushkin's sexual life to encode his own relationship with the Soviet and post-Soviet state and the Russian public, also models himself after Pushkin artistically. His many personalities and pseudonyms injected into *Parapushkinistika* mirror Pushkin's tendency to inscribe his own persona into his works. Therefore, Armalinsky's multiplication of his "self" is about Pushkin's proteanism, too.

He turns the traditional *nomen est omen* principle into a signification game that affects his entire pornography. The well-thought-out selection of pseudonyms determines Armalinsky's belligerent-sexual character and actions that his public persona assumes in corresponding with Russian society. Therefore, etymology of a number of telling names should not be overlooked: Semen Dubrovskii (*semen* from Latin "seed" or sperm; *Dubrovskii* is the title of Pushkin's unfinished novel from 1833); Spas (the same like *spasitel'* which implies the Savior of people [Jesus Christ]); David Baevskii (David of Hebrew origin, meaning "favorite;" Baevskii denotes a skilled orator, the one who enjoys telling fairytales (*bai*—narrator, storyteller; derived from the same root word as *krasnobai* [rhetorician], as well as the expression *skazyvat' baiki* [to tell stories or fairy tales]);[61] Aleksandr and Vladimir Sokolov (Aleksandr in Greek means "defender

[61] See under BAEV in Iu.A. Fedosiuk, *Russkie familii. Populiarnyi etimologicheskii slovar',* Moscow: Flinta: Nauka, 2011.

of the people," Vladimir—the one who rules the world (*vlad/vladet'* – to rule, *mir*- world); Sokolov—*sokol* (falcon) suggests courage and valor, the attributes of a warrior.[62] In folkloric poetry falcons often appear as two brothers (*dva sokola*)); Mirskoi (worldly, mundane); Minskii (*mina*—mine, bomb; also a character from Pushkin's "Stantsionnyi smotritel'"—Rotmistr Minskii, who seduced and kidnapped Dunia).

Certainly, the most significant name that requires explication is Mikhail Armalinsky, chosen to be the chief pseudonym of Mikhail Pel'tsman. It seems quite indicative that Pel'tsman lends his first name to the firstborn nom de plume conceived in Soviet Russia. Mikhail derives from the Hebrew name of Michael, suggesting "equal to God / who is like God." The act of self-deification proves one of the most powerful strategic moves in Armalinsky's "Jewish" battle of porn against Russian society. The choice of his last name Armalinsky continues to intrigue his readers and opponents alike. Approaching Armalinsky's "ethic principles" concerning *TZ* with irony, Aleksandr Lacis looks for the pseudonym Armalinsky in the Latin equivalent word "armalinus," which signifies an ermine (*gornostai*), and then in the French, where it has a figurative meaning suggesting "a man of unstained purity" (756). I go one step further by suggesting that, in order to grasp what lies behind this name, one needs to follow the clues Armalinsky himself gives to his readers. He directs readers to look for the word "malina" (raspberry) in the center of his pseudonym, and additionally explicates on its significance in his life:

> I have adored Raspberries (*malinu*) since childhood. Also, my favorite color is crimson (*ottenok malinovogo*). My first girlfriend, whom I was super passionate about, was

[62] At https://slovari.yandex.ru, last accessed on March 4, 2016.

> Malinina. And besides, there are various descriptions of heavenly feelings such as: life is a raspberry, mellow chime (*malynovyi zvon*), thieves' kitchen (*vorovskaia malina*). Not to mention [my] last name "Armalinsky," where the raspberry glows in the middle of the word (*gde malina svetitsia v seredine slova*)." (*Maksimalizmy*, 535).

As this paragraph suggests, Armalinsky is intrinsically tied to *malina*. Since his childhood, *malina* has always been linked with women and feelings of adoration and passion. Later it became related to sexual pleasure and satisfaction, as well as freedom, and a carefree and happy life in particular. Given the characteristics that *malina* appropriates, it becomes a signifier of nonconformity, the longed for fertile soil (other than Soviet Russia), where one can grow freely. Additionally, in Soviet society raspberry was considered "an inaccessible luxury" (*do maliny ne dokhodilo—ona schitalas' nedostupnoi roskosh'iu*) (*Maksimalizmy*, 535). In the USSR Mikhail craved raspberries in all its figurative and literal meanings (*v detstve ia nikogda ne mog malinoi naiest'sia*) since they were often sold rotten (*gnili*) in the stores. Malina acquired mystical properties in Mikhail's childhood when he attempted to steal some fruit at night. Valued like a philosopher's stone, *malina* was impossible to find in the Soviet darkness (*ee uvidet' v temnote bylo nevozmozhno*), where only "apples shined at moonlight" (*iabloki zhe siiali pod lunnym svetom*) (Ibid.). The easily-reachable apples, the sinful fruit that serves as symbolic reminder of Adam and Eve's sexual curiosity, are juxtaposed with the sex-potent raspberry. The forbidden fruit *malina* signifies the Soviet political agenda in establishing an asexual society in which libidinal energy remains unexploited, reflecting anti-consumerist propaganda (the rotten *malina* indicating the fruit that is not to be consumed!)

But in exile fresh *malina* was seen in abundance: "Everything has changed in America. Instead of rotten [raspberries] in every single *grocery store* there was a lot of freshness, including

raspberries …So I easily and gladly satisfied my hunger for raspberries" (Ibid.). Armalinsky immediately associates America with a fertile ground sustaining mass production of raspberries, where he, Ar-Malin-sky, could begin his growth as a free man and pornographer. Armalinsky soon starts growing his own raspberries (*malinnik*) in the backyard of his home in Minneapolis. In the dictionary of Russian folk dialects the verb "malinit'sia" indicates "talk about love," which is what Armalinsky is actually doing in his radical literature.[63] Additionally, the prefix "ar" in Ar-malin-sky stands for the "are," the metric unit of area equal to 100 square meters, that originates from the Latin "area"—the open space. By planting his *malinnik* in America, Armalinsky moves into the realm of freedom and open space to talk and write about love. The very process of planting raspberries on his property, described in Armalinsky's notes, reveals how American fertile soil ploughed by the freedom of speech becomes a womb that welcomes his love seeds. Even more so this imagery shows how Armalinsky, being *malina* himself, spreads over that imaginary *are* (ar) in the West by multiplying the self into his M.I.P. *vorovskaia malina*. One thing he really appreciates about raspberries is that they easily expand:

> Everything started with six small bristling canes (*ershistye palochki*) with the wrinkled-face leaves that I put into the ground, watered them, and then the rain continued my "wet" business (*moe "mokroe" delo*). Four years later, a brushwood grew in which you can barely see me seized in the middle (*edva mozno rassmotret' menia, zabravshegosia v seredinu*) (*Maksimalizmy*, 536).

Such a mythological imagery of earth fertilization serves Armalinsky to reinforce his male agency in the "wet business" that connotes the moment of insemination. Armalinsky's alter-egos

[63] *Slovar' russkikh narodnyx govorov*. Vol 17. Leningrad: Nauka. 1981, p. 327.

grow like his bristling raspberry canes (*ershistye ochki*), which take phallic characteristics by being symbolically erected. The image of six erected raspberry canes becomes a synecdoche for six of Mikhail's "I"s—Pel'tsman and his five cooperators in M.I.P. Company (two Sokolovs, Armalinsky, Castle, and Baevsky), the top nomenclature of the party of Parapushkinists. The group that gradually expends into a brushwood sustains Armalinsky's erotic fantasy of phallus multiplication and camouflage, while he remains hidden in the middle. This is what he calls a happy, continuous, and free life (*ne zhizn', a malina. Sploshnaia malina*) (Ibid. 536).

The imagery of raspberry planting evokes another episode from Pel'tsman's childhood that revels a traumatic experience of little Mikhail learning his first lesson in sexuality. On one occasion five of his friends take Mikhail with them to the forest to play a boys' game. Once there they take off their pants, expose their members and begin playing with them: "There were six of us….All dickies were uncircumcised and soft, and the boys were engaged in uncovering the heads and examining them. Mine was circumcised and nobody payed attention to me at all" (*Maksimalizmy*, 386). It is six of them who participate in this "self-discovering" erotic game in the forest like the six small raspberry-canes in Armalinsky's garden. While all other boys need to retract the foreskin, as a symbolic mask or hoody, in order to expose their heads/faces, Mikhail does not have such a veil over his head. At this moment he inevitably becomes a full-time exposed head of the group, the one who is not, and certainly cannot be hidden. Mikhail's traumatic experience of alterity has the same effect that the discovery of anatomical distinction has on the girl when she sees the boy's penis, according to Freud. The girl immediately realizes her lack of a phallus and shows desire for having it. Lacking the foreskin in Mikhail's case translates as missing the penis (if circumcision is understood as an overt act marking his otherness as a Jew), and thus taking over the role of the girl who is being ignored in this game.

According to Freud, the boy's initial reaction to the discovery of sexual difference in a girl's genitalia is that he either does not see it or disavows what he sees. So the "penis-envy" that Freud assigns to woman becomes a leading force in Mikhail's search for the penis substitute throughout his whole life. All the pseudonyms that he puts over his public face like masks appear as the surrogate foreskin for his exposed penis. Pseudonyms become Armalinsky's fetish, impelled on his own body. Therefore, castration anxiety combined with desire to make up for the lack of a penis together consolidate the mechanism of camouflaging by which Armalinsky's masculinity is to be restored and phallocracy to be established. They certainly become a necessity for his final entry into the verbal dispute, i.e., in Lacanian terms, the entry into language as symbolic order.

Proportional to the growing membership of *Parapushkinistika*, the number of the party's leading figures increased over time. In the 2013 edition of *Parapushkinistika,* they appear as the entire editorial board (*redaktsionnaia kollegiia*), which includes the fifteen pseudonyms of Mikhail Pel'tsman, while the editor-in-chief is Armalinsky himself. The editorial board arises as the raspberry garden of his fictional characters, not as *redaktsionnaia kollegiia* but rather as *redaktsionnii malinnik*. This particular "academic" edition, which contains both *TZ* and *Parapushkinistika,* shows how Armalinsky manipulates the Soviet notion of *partiinost'* to legitimize the status of his literary porn. His party metamorphoses include another respectable Soviet foundation, *Literaturnye pamiatniki (LP).* Armalinsky replicates a typical volume published by this leading Soviet (and after 1992 Russian) book series in order to destroy it in effigy and enhance the humorous effect. Since *LP* is known for publishing only canonical and recognized literary works under the auspices of "Akademiia nauk SSSR," Armalinsky deliberately takes it as a model to ridicule. His pornography hidden inside the recognizable cover

of *Literaturnye pamiatniki* appears as a new literary monument (Armalinsky's Literaturnyi pamiatnik) erected to undermine Soviet officialdom from within, together with its puritanism and its fake elitist approach to literature.[64]

The party of Parapushkinists is based on an immense discrepancy between its leader(s)' and its members' ideologies and discourses. Armalinsky classifies the party's makeup as "the biggest and the most ridiculous assemblage of fools, scoundrels, and a few honest and intelligent people."[65] Parapushkinists deplete the Soviet practice in approaching a suspicious, non-didactic literary text and, without reading the book, discard *TZ* by labeling it as filthy porn. In Soviet style, "no one among Parapushkinists, being delighted by Pushkin's name on the cover and by the word "cunt" on the first page, read through the entire book and understood it" (Ol'ga Vozdvizhenskaia, 345). In the opinion of Soviet society, the agenda of Armalinsky's party is to continue the long-lasting practice of posthumous hatred against Pushkin. His performance is seen as activism of the anti-Pushkin Party (*antipushkinskaia partiia*), mentioned long ago by Anna Akhmatova as "but fiercest and most aggressive ever" (Skatov, 584).

As the party leader, Armalinsky replicates Stalin in many ways. He appears as the absolute superior of the party, whose closest followers, disclosed as clone versions of the head himself, speak a single language. This is the language that pleads for hyper-obscenity, the language of the free man of the future with the tendency of becoming the universal single language of the world. Katerina Clark states that obsession with obscene language and sexual

[64] By comparing Armalinsky's *LP* to Soviet/Russian *LP* one finds: on the first page, instead of Academy of Science SSSR (or Russia) stands M.I.P.; in place of the editorial board of the series, which typically consists of prominent academicians, philologists, and corresponding members of the Academy of Sciences, stands Armalinsky's *redaktsionnaia kollegiia* consisting of all his aliases; the position of the executive editor of the volume is taken by Mikhail Armalinsky himself.

[65] Armalinsky wrote this for the 4th edition of *Parapushkinistika.* General Erotic No.104, (http://www.mipco.com/win/GEr104.html).

liberation in late-Soviet cultural production appear to celebrate the end of the strict and limiting rules of socialist realism and the idea of "a single and unified language (*edinyi iazyk*)."[66] Working his way through the socialist discursive pattern in both his literary works and the live show broadcast in ***Parapushkinistika***, Armalinsky discloses postmodern "zealous labor" in replacing one "edinyi iazyk" with another, and socialist realist truth with an alternative "orgasmic truth" as precondition for personal and universal happiness. Furthermore, Stalin's understanding of language invariability proves to be the exemplary model for developing pornographic discourse. In his essay "On Marxism and Problems of Linguistics," Stalin asserts that language as a common means used by all people does not change despite the changes that occur that affect society, be they economic, legal, philosophical, or political. It is the vocabulary that changes, but not the basic linguistic paradigm. Therefore, Stalin concludes, language "may equally serve both the old, moribund system and the new, rising system."[67] Similarly, Armalinsky offers "new" obscene vocabulary and pornographic expression, while the categorical "grammatical system" and language rules, conveyed as the main principle and structure of the Soviet narrative, remain intact. The Russian language serves anew to uphold two completely different systems, the old asexual socialist culture and the new hypersexual cultural order.

For Armalinsky, to know the language means to have the sexual power. Knowledge of the language, Armalinsky states, "helped Nikholai Pavlovich to finish the job" and translate *TZ* into Russian (Preface, 1). Sexual potency arising in translating one language into another authorizes the active subject with full gratification, "to finish the job" (*dovesti delo do konca*). Taking Pushkin through this linguistic shift makes him a commodity on the symbolic discursive

[66] Katerina Clark, "Not for Sale: The Russian/Soviet Intelligentsia, Prostitution, and the Paradox of Internal Colonization," *Stanford Slavic Studies,* Vol. 7, 1993, pp. 200-203.
[67] J.V. Stalin. *Marxism and Problems of Linguistics.* Online sours: Stalin Reference Archive (marxists.org) 2000. https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/stalin/works/1950/jun/20.htm.

trade market. In Armalinsky's understanding, the writer's language, like the male genital function, "gets old and dies" (Preface, 8). Therefore, Pushkin-the-father's dysfunctional and impotent language is enriched with the new sexual energy, vitality, and young blood of his offspring.

Psychoanalytic theories recognize the child's (corporal) relationship with its mother as the initial source for language formation. Exile, as the symbolic separation from the mother's body (Soviet Russia), takes away the primary object of love, leaving Armalinsky with (socialist) language as the only remainder of the union (the only "inalienable thing that remains of homeland is the language," states Armalinsky in *Voluntary Confession-Forced Correspondence*). But without the maternal body the mother tongue is not maintainable. Consequently, the child becomes independent and is left to create a new identity within a new language. Armalinsky develops the alternative language as he sets out on a journey into *mat* (obscenity) by means of which he symbolically recreates the union with the *mat'* (mother). Armalinsky discloses that

> using obscenities and *mat* came as a result of the slow process of self-discovery (*poznaniia sebia*), of my own and others' sexuality. One of the outcomes of this process formed my unwillingness to verbally lie, pretend and hide from myself. Getting rid of the false romanticism, which is nothing but a manifestation of sexual ignorance, is accompanied by the necessity to accurately and directly express the unsealed essence (*otkryvshuiusia sut'*)."[68]

Through obscene verbal interaction with the societal body, he intends to feel the mother's body, including the warmth of the womb and the touch of her breast as initial oral satisfaction. Yet the

[68] Personal correspondence, June 21, 2015.

mother herself does not recognize this language, or rather appears to be in denial. In return, the mother takes upon herself attributes of the stepmother: a "bad mother" who denies the child pleasure, causing a feeling of anger in him and aggression toward the breast, and the female body as a whole.[69]

Repetition is a part of Armalinsky's seducing model, which is based on Soviet discursive clichés: "you repeat the very same words over and over again, and you get various cunts—isn't this a fairytale?" (*Maksimalizmy*, 408). The way he and his group use repetition in *Parapushkinistika*, such as asking "why is *TZ* not published in Russia?" This functions as the formulaic language by means of which they attempt to reach the mother, to get various opponents participating in this sexual act. Thus *Parapushkinistika* functions as an open-ended pornographic fairytale. Armalinsky learns the lesson of repetition and continuity of sexual practice as a child observing parrots tirelessly repeating sexual acts several times on a daily basis. He carries this verbal sexual behavior, which he calls *popugainichan'e*, over to his erotic performances, "the only thing that was left to me, the human being, is to *popugainichat'*, which I started doing soon after" (*Maksimalizmy*, 395). This animalistic and purely instinctual practice represents another significant strand in his ideology of porn.

Attempts by Armalinsky to revise socialist rhetoric represent a decomposing-recomposing postmodern game. He assumes that, upon mastering the rules of the game on which society is built, one is left with two possibilities: "to violate them and create new rules or with forceful enthusiasm rush to obey them. In any case, a game situation with certain rules is being formed. Outside the game human society does not exist" (*Gonimoe chudo,* 113). He enhances the

[69] On the topic of "good/bad mother"-child relationships see Margery Durham, "The Mother Tongue: Christabel and the Language of Love," in *The Mother Tongue*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985, pp. 169-193.

Soviet personification of the writer and leader in order to create his own utopian world and personality cult. If "pushkinomania" reached its zenith under the Soviet regime, then "pushkinopornomania" blossomed under Comrade Armalinsky. If the canonical Pushkin was turned into a model for the Homo Sovieticus through awkward comparisons with Stalin, then Pushkin in *TZ* became a prototype of the "New Porn Man."[70] His language, identity, and activities appear at first to mirror and epitomize the Soviet world, exploited as a well-learned formula of socialist fairy tale narrative and Soviet simulacrum, only to break the mirror into pieces and disperse this Soviet monster, together with its discourse and assumed image of the Soviet man. As he reaches the core of socialist ideology, Armalinsky is able to make use of it for re/composing a New Porn Man, leaving all his sexual instincts, needs, and pleasures uncontrolled. The New Porn Man is free and permitted to practice sex; he is obliged to reach sexual satisfaction, because only through orgasm is he able to confirm his actual existence. To oppose the ideal Soviet man, who is recognized by the beauty of his large, healthy, and hyper-muscular body, the New Porn Man's identity is narrowly defined by his genitals (this idea is realized in the "Temple of Genitals"). In Armalinsky's pornographic world in general, exists a preference for a diversity of genitals and a demonstration of their absolute beauty.

The New Porn Man—A Soviet-Style Fairy Tale

"All his life Ag dreamed of a journey that would be for him the beginning of a new life, so when he had the opportunity to move into the future, he grabbed it with both his hands." This

[70] This is an obvious allusion to the New Soviet Man (an ideal Soviet citizen, a man of the future, who develops in accordance with the Communist Party's political program; a man who manages to master his feelings and instincts by fostering high consciousness and absolute political awareness). Porn replacing Soviet ideology is telling of how pornography appears as a new revolutionary ideology that is supposed to reshape the Soviet man and unleash his instincts, passion, perversions, etc.

is how Armalinsky begins his pornographic fairy tale *Puteshestvie v storonu* (1989), which constitutes the genesis of the New Porn Man.[71] Ag voluntarily embarks on a sectarian experimental journey to another galaxy, hoping to find a better realm that would replace the unbearably annoying human society on Earth. For the purpose of procreation, a young woman, Liu, is chosen to be Ag's companion on this trip into the future.[72] *Puteshestvie v storonu* echoes "the master plot" of early Socialist Realism, showing Ag and Liu as positive heroes undergoing a "ritual transformation" that starts with their journey into an ideal world of the future, followed by changes in the protagonists' consciousness.[73] The spontaneity/consciousness dialectic that inevitably frames the trajectory of the socialist realist hero appears functional in Armalinsky's story on the level of travesty. In remaking the Stalinist New Soviet Man, Armalinsky essentially turns the Socialist Realist model topsy-turvy. Spontaneity is revealed as "the ultimate stage in historical development," i.e. pornography, yet not completely divorced from consciousness. Sexual instincts and the natural response to erotic stimuli become the individual's principal

[71] Published in Armalinsky's almanac *Soitie* as an excerpt of David Baevsky's novel, at http://www.mipco.com/win/soitt.html.

[72] Armalinsky here mocks the Soviet Space Program and its propaganda. He creates Ag to mirror the Soviet hero Yuri Gagarin, the first man in the outer space. His name Ag is suggestive of the acronym of Yuri's patronymic and family name: Alekseyevich Gagarin.

[73] In *The Soviet Novel: History as Ritual* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2000), Katerina Clark shows that the main feature of the Socialist Realist novel is "a ritual," understood as a formulaic repetition of the literary patterns present in the canon of Socialist Realism, by means of which a single master plot is formed. This ritualized model further initiates the strict system of Socialist Realist signs that gives definite and specific meaning to all literary devices employed by the writer when producing a true "party-minded" novel. Such rituals necessarily encompass the transformation and historical progress of the literary hero, i.e. the spontaneity/consciousness dialectic: going from instinctual and anarchic behavior to full political awareness and complete self-control. "The ultimate stage of historical development, communism, is reached in the final synthesis," which reconciles the two opposing forces yielding to the greatest "triumph of consciousness" that erases the divergence of the "natural response of the people and the best interest of the society" (16). However, as Clark notes, the biggest paradox of Socialist Realist rigid ritualization is that it mines itself from within, since only minor changes and reorganizations of the formulaic signs might result in a complete anti-Socialist Realist enterprise. As much as the system of signs constitutes the ritual, it nevertheless leaves room for new meanings and interpretations. Therefore, those who intend to criticize Socialist Realist fiction "often [use] the ready-made code or system of signs of the Socialist Realist tradition" (13). This is exactly what Mikhail Armalinsky does in his unfinished novel *Puteshvestie v storonu*. He employs the ready-made codes and formulas of the Socialist Realist novel by aiming to overtly invert the fundamentals produced by socialist ideological discourse.

strength, but only if highly controlled and guided by the society's porn ideology. What does the New Porn Man's society look like?

Armalinsky imagines a utopian sexual society to be removed from the Earth (thus symbolically from the Soviet land) to another planet. The society acts as a secret sect of 500,000 people who hide their real names and wear hoodies over their heads so that their faces stay invisible to others. Instead of open faces, the otherworldly people expose their genitals and partake in public mass orgies. Only two main representatives of society are known as Muzh (Husband) and Zhena (Wife) who act as mentors, teaching Ag and Liu the rules and conventions of their society, and enlightening them with porn ideology. Comparable to utopian socialists, Armalinsky names them Muzh and Zhena to represent a nuclear family whose family ties are passed on the entire sect as "the higher family" through mass copulation.[74] In the same mode, sex transcends the private sphere and ultimately moves into the public domain, onto the square where mass orgies take place. Armalinsky envisions society in which people have absolute freedom to search for an infinite variability of genitals, that is, partners. This is as if Eric Naiman's scenario of "sex in public" becomes literalized and early Soviet preoccupation with sex transfigures in late Soviet porn.[75]

The dwellers of the galaxy have a different understanding of time because they count orgasms and not years. The Soviet idea of accelerating time toward the bright future (*svetloe budushchee)* appears as a fruitful metaphor in Armalinsky's pornographic world. Armalinsky's understanding of "Time, Forward!" is realized in a combo platter of the Soviet concepts of

[74] Clark states that the mentor/disciple relationship and the model of a "higher" family (the Party, Soviet state, idea of political and societal interests replacing the interests of the nucleus family) are common patterns in Socialist Realist novel (49).
[75] Eric Naiman, *Sex in Public: The Incarnation of Early Soviet Ideology*, Princeton University Press, 1997.

production, reproduction, and collectivism, flavored with sexual fantasies.[76] In "Gonimoe chudo," Armalinsky notes that if genitalia are what actually connect us to the future through our potential offspring, it is then orgasm (seen as "little death") that speeds up time and transgresses its linearity. After orgasm (death) the real future begins: "And so in life we jump into the future by means of the genitals, using the lever of orgasm. Orgasm is a way to jump in time, from the past, to orgasm, into the post-orgasmic future"[77] (*Gonimoe chudo*, 129). Armalinsky thinks that people appear truly free only in the moment of orgasm and, therefore, they should pursue orgasm whenever and however they can, and with whomever they want. Armalinsky translates the shock-workers of Stalinist culture, who repeatedly strive to break production records, into the *shock-fuckers* of the utopian sexual society who might do everything they can to reach orgasm. Orgasm becomes the work quota (*norma*). This quest for orgasmic pleasure puts both women and men in a "must-do" active mode as the only way to successfully reconstruct society and build the new pornographic future.

Imagined as a direct opposite to the proletarian woman who, due to labor requirements, was turned into a genderless being, a neuter comrade and worker, the woman in Armalinsky's utopian society retrieves her lost femininity, but only to find herself a sexual object par excellence. The New Porn Woman in Armalinsky's phantasy occurs in a state of constant erotic excitement and is able to achieve orgasm from each copulation. Deprived of the feeling of indifference and disgust that may detach her from the joy of intercourse, she experiences compulsory pleasure even if taken by force, or is with a man she does not like, or when simply not in the mood for sex. In Armalinsky's rendition of equality between the sexes, the woman

[76] Referring to the time of acceleration when the Communist Party held the ideal future as its supreme principle. Also, it recalls the eponymous Soviet novel by Valentin Kataev from 1932.
[77] *I takim obrazom my v zhizni pereskakivaem v budushchee posredstvom genitalii, ispol'zuia rychag orgazma. Orgazm – eto sposob skachka vo vremeni, iz proshlogo, do orgazma, v posleorgazmennoe budushchee*.

becomes equal to the man by exploring the arena of continuous excitement and ultimate sexual response.

Society's supreme commitment to sexual satisfaction and orgasmic bliss yields to massive group sex that might have a cleansing effect on people's hostility and belligerence. Muzh and Zhena assert: "All our aggressiveness is removed by free copulation." Sexual dissatisfaction, they believe, is what had caused wars between nations in the past. Armalinsky uses this argument to explain the public body's hostile and violent verbal battle with him around *TZ*. In the same vein as Stalin, Armalinsky wants to be viewed as a leader and teacher in the historic struggle to transform social life, and a great defender of peace. Armalinsky the creator of new forms of life and reformer of sexual relationships between people usurps the area of Soviet sexuality (especially communist solidarity and love-comradeship, including the quest for responding to the needs of other members of society). By making sex the advantage of the collective (copulative body), he strives for the victory of porn and the liberation of people from the yoke of socialism and Russian cultural taboos. This notion, that the New Porn Man accomplishes great feats by leading the collective social organism to orgasm, propels Armalinsky's heroic actions in a performative mass orgy with the public. This new porn morality and heroism guides him to make every effort for an orgasmic experience, such as the publication of *TZ* in Russia. He chooses a symbolic genital fight with the Soviets in which the erotic bliss and obscene language of the text replace harmful weapons. And yet, the word is permissible only if written and physically materialized. The people of the sexual society communicate through body orifices (*otversie*) other than mouth. Society imposes a taboo on the mouth, a ban on speech (*zapret na rech*) because they believe that "all the troubles come from nothing but the individual's ability to talk, or rather to jabber (*boltat'*), to promise and not to perform, and to

mislead" (*Puteshestvie v storonu*). Armalinsky does not want to talk about sex and do nothing, but to "verbally fuck whomever and however" he wants. The genital sexual pleasure in his game replaces Soviet empty speech. Armalinsky himself exercises the practice of hoody-hiding when he displays his exposed Jewish phallus to the public and hides his real identity behind various pseudonyms. He inverts the established Soviet order by elevating himself to the pantheon of Soviet gods from where he preaches human passion, sexual desire, and gratification, while doing his pornographic job.

TZ Published in Russia!–And What Comes After

For fifteen years Armalinsky was maintaining sexual arousal in the public, expecting to make way into its genitals: to publish his work in Russia. This finally happened in 2001 when the Moscow publishing house Ladomir published *TZ* in the series called "Russkaia potaennaia literatura." Ladomir's Deputy Chief Editor explained that their house is an unprejudiced publisher not interested in knowing whether Pushkin wrote *TZ* or not (333). On the occasion of the first publication of *TZ* in post-Soviet Russia, Armalinsky proclaimed the beginning of a new phase in the history of Russian literature: "The History of Russian literary development is inseparably linked to Pushkin and divided into three stages: until Pushkin, during Pushkin's time, and after Pushkin. The fourth stage begins with the publication of *A.S. Pushkin Tainye zapiski 1836–1837 godov*" (296). Yet, Armalinsky viewed the publication of the book in Russia as only the moment of penetration, and not the end of the sexual act. His goal was to "drive Russian society all the way to orgasm," which increased his appetite to continue the game. After *TZ,* Ladomir published selected works of Armalinsky's prose and poetry, titled *Chtob znali!* With this edition it seems, Armalinsky was sending a message to the Russian public: "So that you

know" that you are being "fucked." Negative consequences from collaborating with Armalinsky, according to Valerii Serdiuchko, are inevitable, and this is evident in the case of Ladomir's editor Vozdvizhenskaia, who created a "philosophical foreword for Armalinsky's piggeries" (Parapushkinistika 661). Serdiuchko sees that Vozdvizhenskaia as a woman and mother morally deteriorates upon her collaboration with Armalinsky and turns into "a woman saying: 'I want to f..k" (*khochu e..ia*)'" (Ibid.). It is the woman's body, i.e., the vagina, that makes its way for Armalinsky's member.

To Armalinsky's tremendous surprise, the Russian press, which had for many years published hundreds of articles on *TZ* before its publication in Russia, now when it appeared in Russia refused to make any mention it at all. Unlike Vozdvizhenskaia, who, figuratively speaking, asks "to be fucked," the female public body remained speechless. Armalinsky viewed the public's non-reaction to Ladomir's publication of his *TZ* as the silence which, "besides being a mark of consent, is often greatly eloquent" (714). He interpreted this unexpected silence as an act of sexual consent, thus finding a way to continue his discursive pornographic game. This recalls Freud's interpretation of a woman's "No" as signifying the desired "Yes." In Dora's case, Freud notices that the inner sexual conflict remains in the sphere of fear of her own feelings and desires, and assumes that if her initial "No" in a sexual encounter "is ignored, and the work is continued, the first evidence soon begins to appear that in such a case a 'No' signifies the desired 'Yes.'"[78] Like Freud, Armalinsky exercises the therapeutic practice of recognizing sexual desire in his patient, the hysterical public. The silent Russian society appears as a woman who, after some counteractive movements, accepts the male member with resignation:

[78] Sigmund Freud, *Standard Edition*, Vol. 7, ed. J Stachey, London: Hogarth Press, 1959, pp. 58-59.

> The woman, grabbed tightly by a stranger, first yells and fights back, but once she senses that the cock has entered, she immediately becomes silent and resigns to her fate. Thus, if earlier Russian critics struggled to prove that *Tainye zapiski* are a forgery and that they cannot belong to Pushkin, now their silence means nothing but the mark of consent. Having realized that any further resistance is useless, they try to acquire pleasure rereading *Tainye zapiski* in silence. (715)

It turns out that both female patients in question, Dora and Russian society, try to resist men's power and their therapists' further manipulation through silence.

Armalinsky and his team did not stop here, however. Since Ladomir published a limited edition of the book, they continued writing to all distributers and publishing houses, asking for the mass circulation of *TZ* in 2003. The St. Petersburg publisher *Retro* answered Armalinsky's request with a mass edition in 2004. Armalinsky saw a deeper symbolism of this publication through the metaphor of "historical perpendiculars." Namely, as *Retro* printed *TZ* in the "Pravda" printing house, the same one that printed the first issue of Lenin's newspaper *Pravda,* Armalinsky interpreted this to mean that "the revolution starts here"; that instead of Lenin's truth, Pushkin's actual truth was coming (377). The next step in the promotion of the book was the Russian-English bilingual edition of *TZ,* published by *Retro* in 2006. This was Armalinsky's "gift to the international community in honor of the twentieth anniversary of *TZ*" (407). The bilingual edition of *TZ* became another way for Armalinsky to put Russia and America, East and West, into dialogue: "Nothing bonds people who speak different language like Pushkin's *Tainye zapiski*" (408). This idea attains its more defined form in his novel. Pornography is the place where symbolic correspondence and reunion with the country he left behind becomes possible. By working on mass porn production, Armalinsky was hoping for orgasm. For him, orgasm is a

great "revelation for which one needs to spend enormous spiritual energy to reach" (*Gonimoe chudo* 126). His critics also show recognition of his vigor and vitality: "The energy that this destructive fellow has is monstrous, or simply abnormal" (Serdiuchko, 659). Armalinsky's perseverance and stubbornness with the promotion of *TZ* and his determination to triumph over Soviet and post-Soviet censorship are seen a megalomaniacal project analogous to the ideological manifesto of Adolf Hitler: "I am fucking pissed (*Ia okhuevaiu*), mister Armalinsky, at your persistence. This is the battle of the century! Fuck! I suggest that in ten years you publish all the materials in a book, titled *Mein Kampf*. Success is guaranteed" (Vladimir Tolstyi, 743). Armalinsky's virtual sots-porn is equated to fascism. Armalinsky is still intensely engaged in this project, aiming to liberate post-Soviet society and actively engage it to not only talk about sex, but to practice sex, write about, sex and attain maximum sexual gratification in these endeavors.

Armalinsky's Secret Notes

Armalinsky's fascination with camouflage and masking his identity as a writer dates from far back in his early childhood. As a little boy, Mikhail showed interest in mimesis, recognized by his extraordinary ability to imitate the great poets like Pushkin and Esenin. In one of his boyish verses, Mikhail cries out: "I really want to write poetry / I really want to imitate Esenin" (*Maksimalizmy*, 509). The intense desire for imitation proceeded a childish game in which Mikhail, placing a scrap of paper with his own verses in Esenin's volume, read his poetry to his parents as if he was reading Esenin's on the assumption that they could not notice (*chital svoi stishok s bumazhki, kak ia dumal, ne vidnoi im,* Ibid.). To give him support, the parents praised and complimented Mikhail, pretending to not see his tricks (*Roditeli, skoree vsego iz zhelaniia menia podbodrit', khvalili, ne podavaia vida, chto vidiat moi ukhishchreniia*, Ibid.). Another excursion into the world of Russian cultural canon happened when he was challenged by a

teacher to write in the style of Pushkin and to produce the so-called Onegin stanza (*oneginskaia strofa*). This turned out to be an easy task for Mikhail, for which he was recognized a genius in school: *Ia napisal vse sochinenie oneginskoi strofoi, chem proizvel furor v shkole. Moe versifikatorstvo priniali za genial'nost'* (Ibid, 394). The whole process of literary creation, Freud observes, is in a way an amalgamation of the writer's personal fantasies rooted in experience from his childhood play, "a piece of creative writing…is a continuation of, and a substitute for, what was once the play of childhood."[79] The reader unavoidably stops here to pose certain questions: Does this childish desire to write like Pushkin grow into a more advanced desire to be like Pushkin? Is it likely that the fame and recognition of a genius in him appears as a central force that directs Mikhail to produce another fake piece such as *TZ*? Does grown-up Mikhail fulfill or maybe even overachieve his childish dreams by creating Pushkin's secret notes, in which he becomes not only the greatest poet in Russian culture but more importantly the greatest "fucker" of Russia? Are *TZ* to be viewed as the continuation of the "Onegin stanza" commenced in the childhood game? If yes, does Mikhail Armalinsky still expect from his audience to play the parents' role and close their eyes before an apparent forgery?

Whether to undertake the assumption of literary critics and scholars that *TZ* is in its entirety a fake produced by Armalinsky, or to believe Armalinsky's words that *TZ* had such a great effect on him that it greatly affected his literary expression and his overall life experience, a sharp-eyed reader cannot help but notice an uncanny resemblance between the text of *TZ* and Armalinsky's performance demonstrated in *Parapushkinistika*. *TZ* seems to conceal ciphered details of Armalinsky's entire performative strategy: his ideas, plans, and concerns about the final results in the battle around *TZ*. "For, insofar as writing and reading represent linguistically-

[79] Sigmund Freud, "Creative Writers and Day-Dreaming," *Standard Edition*, Vol. 9, p. 152.

based interpretative strategies—the first for the recording of a reality and the second for the deciphering of that recording,"[80] *TZ* appears again as the manuscript that needs to be deciphered and its reality to be translated into easily understandable language, as once done by its first reader Nikolai Pavlovich. In the analysis that follows, I intend to show that Armalinsky carefully planned every single step of his public performance in accordance with the text of *TZ*. Puzzling out coded and symbolic meanings of the text in connection to Armalinsky's actions, I arrive at the following conclusions: Armalinsky takes over Pushkin's role[81] and stands up against Dantes,[82] who in this rendition represents Soviet society; Pushkin ties himself by marriage to his wife Natalia, who becomes the anthropomorphized copy of the manuscript *TZ* with which Armalinsky the publisher enters into matrimonial union; Pushkin organizes his friends for the orgies at Z. in the same way as Mikhail Pel'tsman gathers his staff in the M.I.P. Company for participation in the discursive orgy around *Zapiski*. All the above lead me to conclude that *TZ* turns into the cornerstone of Armalinsky's subsequent sexual exploits. Therefore, I read Pushkin's *Tainye zapiski* literally as Armalinsky's secret notes.

My examination of *Pushkin A. S. Secret Notes 1836 –1837* aims to show that Armalinsky imagines his secret notes as a script for staging individual and mass pornographic scenes in the porn film-like production of *Parapushkinistika*. Appearing as a director, scenarist, producer, and

[80] Annette Kolodny, "A Map for Reading," in *The (M)other Tongue*, eds. S. N. Garner, C. Kahane, and M. Sprengnether, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985, p. 249.
[81] In her analysis of *TZ* and the "Necessary Preface," Vozdvizhenskaia draws parallels between Pushkin's and Armalinsky's biographies (certain events in their lives, symbolism of number six and the years that mark the time when their destiny reveals, the struggles with censorship, the same city of Petersburg/Leningrad as literary center, and similar feelings of being a superfluous man). On the basis of this evidence she infers that "the kinship between the two souls and biographies of the two "I"s is obvious and natural" (Vozdvizhenskaia's unfinished article in *Parapushkinistika*, 345-348). Though by the *two "I"s* Vozdvizhenskaia means the two subjects given in the first person narration (the "I" in *TZ* and the "I" in the Preface), this concept of *a double* emerges as a useful alter ego-model that, in the analysis that follows, reflects my idea that Pushkin's pornographic self tightly relates to the pornographic reality of Armalinsky's self.
[82] Georges-Charles de Heeckeren d'Anthès, a French military officer, who is in Russian history known as Pushkin's rival that took the poet's life in a duel in 1837. I will use Russian form of his name, Dantes.

actor/s in this project, he translates the literary images and language into a more concrete and palpable medium, yet still remains in the sphere of artistic imagination: an enterprise in which famous scholars, journalists, critics, publishers, and "ordinary" readers voluntarily play their roles. Armalinsky shows his interest in filmmaking and talent in directing when in 2007 he attempted to make "a porn film of high quality" based on his skilled pornographic script. He wrote to the oligarch of the Russian porn industry, Sergei Prianishnikov, with a request to take into consideration the potential of the text of *TZ*, "as a unique work of Russian literature, in which pornography is elevated to the philosophical-psychological level," for his next porn film. Armalinsky was in search of a new porn film model that would reconcile the seemingly juxtaposed components of "fucking and art," so that it equally attracted both admirers of porn and intellectuals. He also found a proper solution for the composition of the film, to have Pushkin's voice reading excerpts of *TZ* to cover music and moans characteristic for porn films.[83] He believed that such a film has the potential of becoming "a revolutionary project in cinematography," and further added that "the film on *TZ* can become the first film in which pornography is rehabilitated by means of a philosophy of love for fucking" (487). After this, Armalinsky authorized his screening rights and left room for Prianishnikov to find directors, actors, and producers for the film. However, the collaboration failed when Prianishnikov posed a question: "How can you send me the rights to the text written by Pushkin?" and openly refused to work with him (489). This episode in Armalinsky's pornographic work illustrates that *TZ* is a script ready to be filmed.

[83] Two years later, Armalinsky published the audiobook of *TZ* in which he read the text in Pushkin's voice. Given his verbal sexual game, we can assume that his audiobook was supposed to hush his and the public's moans during their intercourse.

Atypical for the genre it represents, *Zapiski* begins from the very end (death)—Pushkin's and Dantes's duel—and from there preceding events unfold: "Fate is happening—I challenged Dantes to a duel" (13). In fact, this marks the very beginning of the battle of porn that starts with Armalinsky's decision to challenge Soviet society to a duel by publishing *TZ* in 1986. Armalinsky enters into "a discursive ritual" with the public through a confessional game in which the problem of sex as truth appears to have a constitutive function for the creation of his sexual being: "I cannot help but open my heart before the paper and this is the incurable disease of the writer… [C]ontemporaries will kill me for my confession (*otkrovenie dushi*), for truthful revelation (*istinnoe otkrovenie*), if they only find out about it" (13).[84] As elaborated by Foucault in *The History of Sexuality*, it is in confession as ritual of discourse "that truth and sex are joined, through the obligatory and exhaustive expression of an individual secret."[85] The confession upholds the ritualistic discursive power relationship between the speaking subject and the authority "who requires the confession, prescribes and appreciates it, and intervenes in order to judge, punish, forgive, console, and reconcile" (Foucault, 61). Although a confession causes modifications in the speaking subject as it purifies and liberates him, taken as an obligatory act it nevertheless assigns the power and domination to the one who listens. Pushkin's words uncover Armalinsky's awareness of the piercing knife that in the hands of Soviet critics can be lethal for him as writer. Yet, along all the deceptions he uptakes, being a pornographic writer for Armalinsky means truth-telling about the self and confessing his secret sexual fantasies.[86] It is hard for Pushkin-Armalinsky's truth to find its way to the public's consciousness since the

[84] A religious confession is *ispoved* in Russian. But most likely Armalinsky deliberately uses *otkrovenie* to make it sound like a quasi-mystical revelation (Cf. "Otkrovenie Ioanna Bogoslova" in the New Testament).
[85] Michel Foucault. *The History of Sexuality*. Vol. 1. New York: Random House. 1978, 61.
[86] Armalinsky writes the novel *Voluntary Confessions—Forced Correspondence* (1991), in which he continues this confessional game through Boris, a Russian émigré writer in America, who is telling the truth about his pornographic adventures in correspondence with his friend Sergei from the USSR.

"almighty falsehood is accepted and recognized easily and thoughtlessly" (14). Therefore, Armalinsky intends to penetrate into the literary canon with his truthful *TZ*, shake the postulates of socialist realism, and uncover the falseness of Soviet ideology.

When he sees N.[87] for the first time, Pushkin understands that "what happened is inevitable." Despite his conviction that marriage with Natalia brings him no good ("nothing good will come out of this marriage"), Pushkin decides to marry her, guided by the idea that "in the end, we predict the fate to ourselves" (14). Ambitious Armalinsky becomes the master of his own fate when he enters into a legal (or illegal) union with his "bride" and publishes *Tainye zapiski*. Once he sees the manuscript in his hands Armalinsky recognizes the inexorableness of its existence. Reasons for this move are further clarified: "Lust for sexual happiness led me to this marriage.…This was my attempt to escape from myself that was unable to change and become different" (14). A new Armalinsky is born in communion with *TZ*, whose deliberate openness is founded on Pushkin's and N.'s agreement in the first days of their marriage not to hide even the most secret thoughts from each other.

The first sexual experience of the spouses revolves around learning each other's languages: "I learned the language her body spoke, and N. learned how to respond to my language, and not only to it" (15). Armalinsky develops good skills in the obscene language employed in *TZ* and makes the book serve both his verbal and sexual power. Yet it is not only her diligence and linguistic corporal beauty that gives joy to Pushkin. To observe N. on the toilet appears equally exciting, revealing the woman as the subject of his synesthetic perversion: "The smell and noise that she produced, and everything that was coming out of her, filled me with

[87] N. stands for Natalia in *TZ*.

desire" (18). Figuratively speaking, all the filth that comes out of *TZ* provokes in Armalinsky nothing but a craving for further sexual satisfaction that he assumes in his audience's rebuffs. Having become familiar with N., Pushkin loses interest in her, becomes bored and opts to embark on a new erotic journey: "Two months later I learned her by heart as a lover and she could not amaze me with anything anymore.…Sweetness of novelty would always quickly lose its charm for me, and without hesitation, I would either change my lovers or add one to the other" (19–21). The woman is perceived as an artistic creation that, once apprehended, becomes sexually unappealing: "I am always happy to look at her, but she stopped attracting and exciting me. I look at her as an artistic work…" (29). Pushkin elects N.'s sisters to become new concubines in his "harem." Women and books have the same status in Pushkin-Armalinsky's poetic world. "My library is my harem," asserts Pushkin and further elaborates on the links between his books and women: "to open the book is the same as to open woman's legs—knowledge opens before your eyes" (55). Armalinsky's childhood memories speak of the same associations he experienced in the public library: "I felt like I fell into a harem with a hundred beauties who opened their legs for me" (*Maksimalizmy*, 516). To learn the female body by heart (*vyuchil ee na izust*), like a book, reveals how Armalinsky approaches the manuscript of *TZ*, after which he feels ready for new pornographic literary endeavors. Pushkin's sisters-in-law and other women he sexually possesses are apparently Armalinsky's other books that, besides *TZ*, he creates to erect a harem of his own porn.

The idea of monogamy and faithfulness to a single woman forever horrifies Pushkin, more than thinking of his own death: "I looked at the dagger calmly hanging on the wall and I thought I would never again take in another "love battle" and sense the smell of hot blood" (21). To find the way out from this situation, at least temporarily, Pushkin reaches for his sexual

fantasies and recollections of the orgies at "Z." A careful scrutiny of this episode in Pushkin's sexual life discloses Armalinsky's determination to take the dagger (which stands for his phallic discourse) in his hands and directs it at the Soviet public on the battlefield of porn. If a woman and a book exist as an inseparable entity in Armalinsky, Z. adopts the characteristics of *Parapushkinistika,* the book in which an orgiastic amusement is taking place.[88]

Z. is depicted as a woman whose sexual desire can never be fully satisfied by one man ("Z. admitted to me that so many possibilities are hidden inside her that she easily imagines herself with numerous men at the same time" [22]) which leads Pushkin to choose himself assistants in an erotic encounter with her. Pushkin organizes orgies with Z. acting as a master of ceremonies, who explains the rules of the game and gives instructions to other male participants: "she would meet us naked and with a mask on her face. She would not utter a single word so that her voice is not recognized, and when necessary she would speak only to me, whispering in my ear" (22). The strict ordinance he gives to his partners is to keep Z.'s identity secret and to "not try get to know her name" (22). Pushkin's collaborators appear in the following order: first comes A., then K., and lastly A.'s two young unnamed nephews. These helpers are to be recognized as Pel'tsman's "partners in crime," understood as members of the M.I.P. group, Armalinsky, Castle (Kasl in Russian), and two Sokolovs, all allied in keeping their secret about *TZ*. For Z., the most important thing is that the men synchronize the rhythm of their bodies and act as one: "I want to feel…that I am fucked by a single man with numerous pricks, and not by the dogs (*kobeli*) who's only concern is how to come faster" (23). This idea determines Pel'tsman's public appearance as one man with many phalluses (faces/names) that

[88] Z. might also refer to Zinaida Volkonskaia, the hostess of the famous literary salon frequented by Pushkin and Adam Mickiewicz, among others.

simultaneously perform in synchronized movements. Additionally, it shows that he ought to develop various stimulative techniques by which he controls the high level of sexual tension in the female body. The ultimate coital effectiveness come from the "fear of performance," as cultural demand for man to actively satisfy his female partner. This fear of performance includes the male fear of an inability to control the ejaculatory process.[89] The fear of performance coupled with the fear of complete failure and sexual inadequacy generate Pel'tsman's persistence as well as his patience in enduring the enforced procrastination of climax, at which his fictional Pushkin becomes proficient ("I know how to hold on for a long time" [47]). Like Pushkin, Armalinsky takes upon himself the obligation to lead and be a conductor who gives rhythm to others that are required to obey: "obedience of my instructions is yet another prerequisite for participating in the orgy, in addition to keeping the secret" (23). He conducts voluntary rhythmic contractions to achieve a high level of sexual response, but at one point they turn into involuntary spasms that remain through the orgasmic experience ("The climax was approaching. Z. …began to move faster, and I no longer had to command").[90] Acting in conjunction, they slowly carry out love making (*liubovnoe proizvedenie*) and once Z. reaches orgasm all the men simultaneously ejaculate inside her body, while she swallows Pushkin's semen. As her body becomes saturated with their sperm, Z. turns into their own artistic work: "I looked at her like at our mutual creation" (*nashe obshchee tvorenie*) (25). In the same way, inseminated by the discursive sperm of Pel'tsman's group, *Parapushkinistika* emerges as their collective creation.

Pushkin's conviction that an artist cannot live without trembling (*trepet*), understood as an erotic delight that exists only outside of marriage, guides him to "break the law," stepping out

[89] See *Human Sexual Response*, pp. 200-203.
[90] Ibid., p. 299.

of the monogamous union with his wife. He tries to fulfill his erotic phantasy with prostitutes in a brothel. "Once I broke the law I could not hold back" (34), admits Pushkin and attempts to justify his infidelity by his artistic curiosity for the discovery of new stories ("Every woman comes in her own way, and each has a unique tale of her cunt…" [58]) and new secrets of the female body ("Each cunt carries its own secret, and revealing one doesn't mean getting to know the Secret in its entirety" [30]). Each of Armalinsky's books reveals just a segment of his pornography poetics; each contains a part of his secret, of his well-prepared strategy to fight Soviet society, and only if puzzled out individually may they together deliver the whole "truth." The brothel would turn into a "fatal place" where Pushkin meets his rival Dantes. His passion for voyeurism brings Pushkin to observe Dantes's sexual performance with women and learn that somebody else's body movements give him a peculiar sexual satisfaction and pleasure:

> I am convinced that there is no better image in the world than a dick diving in and coming out of a cunt. Yet, it is possible to get a full view of this only if observing from the side. When you yourself fuck and move away to look at the miracle, you always see the sight from above. …Therefore, as a sight, somebody else's dick entering the cunt rather than my own excites me more (35).

Pornography is in the spectator's point of view. The brothel setting from *TZ* translates as the brothel-house of the Russian press, in which Armalinsky meets his assassins whose sharp criticism, described by him as shivering and trembling body movements, aggravates his voyeuristic impulses from which he undoubtedly receives sexual gratification. Pel'tsman eventually withdraws from the scene leaving his most potent alter-egos to lead discursive orgies, so that he may have the whole picture of the site. Pornography begins when the subject distances himself from the sexual act (and Russia) to watch others participating in it.

Male rivalry and jealousy characterize Pushkin's and Dantes's relationship. Pushkin shows his concerns whenever Dantes approaches N. ("I feel like he fucks her" [37]) fearing she may easily "swallow his semen." Though he assumes she would be happier with Dantes, he cannot picture his wife with another man ("I cannot allow my wife to have a lover" [44]). Anticipating the public's response, Armalinsky is anxious about the Soviet discourse that if absorbed by his publication, would most likely be wronged or destroyed. He portrays Pushkin as a patriarchal man who treats woman as property ("Every man who once possesses a woman has lifelong authority over her" [45]) as if to uphold his ownership of *TZ* and rationalize his fight for copyrights. A man takes the responsibility to defend his woman from other predatory men, though not entirely assured if this is worth doing: "the more beautiful a woman, the more men look at her, the more dogs (*kobeli*) are waiting for their turn. Isn't this a bit too high a price for the proprietorship of beauty that's stopped exciting you?" (72). Armalinsky assumes a massive attack on his property by those "kobeli" that Z. characterizes as poor lovers who, nevertheless, have passion for his work, which he lost. "I do not blame Dantes for his passion for N.," asserts Pushkin, "I simply envy him for his passion that I've lost" (70).

Pushkin discovers that Dantes is a homosexual who suffers from sexually transmitted disease ("I was the first to learn that he practices sinful sodomy and I shared this news with the society" [43]) and convinces others that "Dantes is being used as a woman." In the same manner, Armalinsky diagnoses the public body with the infection called "Pushkin" and perceives it as a man with a woman's body that asks to be used. Soviet society develops into the sexual subject striving for pleasure from verbal copulation with Armalinsky over *TZ*. Dantes's excitement regarding the triangular situation (he, N., and Pushkin), in the Girardian sense of the word, speaks to his wish to reach Pushkin through N.: "There is no more pleasant connection between

men than through a woman" (78). Although he gives his best to keep N. away from Dante, Pushkin becomes the mediator for their symbolic intercourse when on one occasion he takes advantage of Dante's lover and through her is infected by Dantes's gonorrhea (*frantsuzskii nasmork*), that he then passes onto N. Armalinsky's secret notes are saturated with his honest love and adoration for Pushkin (which is in its essence egotistic, self-oriented love) that he carries over to his work as Russian cultural disease.[91] The "French disease" thus unveils as discursive mythmaking, the Soviet language that Nikolai Pavlovich translates into the new Russian idiom, Armalinsky's pornographic jargon. According to Uspenskii, obscene language is created in the mythological process of translation of dog's language into human language (while the dog appears as the demonic force (*nechistaia sila*) that corrupts the earth, the mother) (Uspenskii, 49). Being one of the dogs (*kobeli*), Dante's language is through a similar process translated into *mat*, the language of the new porn-humanity.

Armalinsky is nervous about his craving to confront cultural attitudes and sexual taboos, yet he decisively steps on the discursive theater of war ("I have to admit that unrestraint of my desire will destroy us. And I am trying to hide that from everyone by shutting up the mouth of anyone who dares to say anything reprehensible (*predosuditel'noe*)" [77]). After the war strategy is developed and the military forces of "ulans" ordered,[92] there is no more time to waste, the duel must take place ("I must fight him immediately" [49]), that is, *TZ* must be presented to the Russian public. In the euphoria of a warrior ready for battle, he declares that he likes fury "for it

[91] For some, Armalinsky's love toward Pushkin affected his writing, which appears not aggressive enough: "I read your book about Pushkin long ago. It is an interesting, topical, and a bit boring book. I would write it tougher. They turned this name into the sexless state cast iron…and you are the only one who dared piss over this varnished monument. Lovely! But this is why I feel sad. In order for one to clean his verses from hired and paid Pushkinists, it is necessary to blow up thousands of tons of shit, and you are overly tender, aesthetical, sensitive, and you love him too much" (Viktor Sosnora, 747).

[92] Pushkin calls his helpers in the orgy at Z. the "ulans" referring to the soldiers of a cavalry regiment armed with sabers, pistols, or pole weapons (phallic qualities).

provides the liberty that makes [him] ready to murder" (93), but he wonders whom to "kill first: her or Dantes?" (94). In any case, Armalinsky appears as "a murderer" who kills with his phallus and not his rifle. It is already during his last orgasm before the duel that he ascribed quality of armed forces to his "shooting" member: "every splash of semen seemed to me as a shot (*vystrelom*)" (96).

Conclusion

TZ conceals Armalinsky's draft plan for war against the Soviet state, in which he codes the military coordinates of his headquarters, the position of his frontline army, and the actions they are about to undertake. The armed forces are gathered in the military base called the M.I.P. Company. Besides the assumption that M.I.P. appears as the acronym for Mikhail Izrailevich Pel'tsman, Armalinsky's childhood recollections suggest that it might also stand for Military Imperial Police, the biggest enemy of the Soviet regime: "In my time American imperialism was the enemy that wanted to corrupt us" (*Maksimalizmy*, 477). Mikhail once wrote a script in which the Military Police of imperial America and the Soviets play a part in the combat of his childish imagination: "There appeared the Military Police of imperial America. The letters MP that I saw on the helmets of the caricatures…and did not understand their main point, nevertheless…they served to mark the imperialists. Of course, in the script there were some Soviet characters, too" (*Maksimalizmy*, 471). Since nothing of this initial text remained in his memory, *TZ* might be a new script on the very same topic and with the same characters. Mikhail himself becomes the chief of his MIP based in America, the Soviet enemy par excellence who proclaims war against Soviet Russia that officially begins with his publication of *TZ*.

The image of Armalinsky the fighter for freedom and the new world order is based on the typical heroic model of the Soviet revolutionary "man-beast" that flooded the literature of the

1920s (for example Babel's *Red Calvary)*. He acts as an aggressive combatant who, using *TZ* as the phallus substitute and the embodiment of his pornographic ideology empowered by anti-socialist discourse, pursues to forcefully enter the female body of Russian society. His repeated attempts to penetrate into the Soviet/Russian market, joined with efforts to inseminate the Russian land with his pornographic seeds, recall the sexual performance of the patriarchal man who sees woman as the object of sexual desire that must be conquered with or without her consent. Armalinsky's approach to the public body is disclosed through peculiar verbal techniques developed as phallocentric intentions in disarming the female body by means of violence and rape. As indicated in *Puteshestvie v storonu*, aggressiveness arises out of sexual dissatisfaction. Censorship therefore reawakens Armalinsky's violent behavior that he demonstrates as boy whose erotic desire was not satisfied ("I listened to how my mother confidentially warned Dora's mother that I was an aggressive boy" (*Maksimalizmy*, 444).[93] According to Armalinsky, "war as such is bad but the byproduct of it, the free and mass fucking is good." Yet, after all, he knows that "according to the law, the defender of the motherland is supposed to shoot with a cannon and not with his dick" (*streliat' tol'ko iz pushki, a ne iz khuia*).[94] However, it seems that in his "bloodless revolution" [95] Armalinsky manages to fuse these two dialectically-opposed types of weaponry in his fictional character of Pushkin, who appears as both *pushka* (as his name suggests) and the potent member used to symbolically shoot

[93] In his first erotic story, *Zertva* (1966), Armalinsky portrays a sexually amateurish young man, deficient in experience of erotic gratification, showing traces of aggressive behavior with a woman. Having brought a girl home, the young man, as if operating under a state of war, develops strategic offensive actions. He utilizes military terminology to express his sexual desire and his readiness to conquer the female body without even assuming the girl's consent: "I was already on a war footing (*v sostoianii naivysshei boevoi gotovnosti*) and have barely constrained myself not to rape her." (published in *General Erotic*).

[94] These two quotes are from Armalinsky's commentary on Dr. Magnus Hurschfeld's book, *The Sexual History of the World Wa*r, published in *General Erotic.*

[95] "Tvoriu beskrovniui revolutsiiu" utters Boris the writer of pornographic literature in *Voluntary Confessions-Forced Correspondence*.

at foes and defend Mother Russia. His entire discursive pornographic game unfolds as a sublimated version of a child's sexual longing for its mother and the desire to kill its father the law: Socialist Realism.

His poetics of porn is built on a love-hate relationship with everything he comes in contact: Russia, the socialist narrative, Soviet ideology, women, vaginas, machines, books, etc. In Freudian terms, the pleasure principle and the death principle mark Armalinsky's porn as his phallic discursive pendulum constantly swings between Eros and Thanatos, sexual union and sex-preservation and aggressiveness, repetition and self-destruction. To illustrate his orgasmic grand finale in this extensive battle, Armalinsky simulates his death in 2003, and presents it as a dignified, magnificent end to the distinguished fucker dying during orgasm reached with couple of women.[96] "Sex is worth dying for," states Foucault, and argues that "it is in this sense that sex is indeed imbued with the death instinct" (*History of Sexuality*, 156). Still playing the role of Man-God, Armalinsky allegedly dies just to be resurrected and start his sexual game anew. "Armalinsky voskres! Voistinu voskres!", he announces soon after his grandiose comeback and the continuation of sexual manipulations. It seems that Russian society serves as a "laboratory-study subject" for Armalinsky's experimental investigation and research into sexual responses over extended periods of time. He is a good disciple who revives his teachers' discoveries (Masters and Johnson) whenever and however he can. In order to amplify the sexual response in the public body to his verbal stimulation he invents his many doubles to convey his ideas through repetitive attempts to seduce it, deflower it, take further advantage of its body and genitals, and lead it to orgasm. The excessive growth of the public body appears as a hypertrophy of the

[96] *General Erotic*, no. 101, October 27, 2003.

female genitalia that needs to be kept in the excitement phase through direct continuous stimulation in the coital position.

In this case, Foucault's notion of sex as discursive category helps to position the main protagonists of this game that, maintained through language, manifests various forms of power within the system of power relations. On the one hand, Armalinsky as the man who dares speak about sex deconstructs Pushkin's text as literary canon, perverts the Pushkin myth and Soviet official rhetoric, "places himself outside the reach of power, upsets established law, and somehow anticipates the coming freedom" (Foucault, 6). On the other hand, the public's reaction to the misapplication of Pushkin's name, literary forgery, and overall verbal manipulation shows that sex operates "according to the simple and endlessly reproduced mechanisms of law, taboo, and censorship" (Foucault, 83-84). In this postmodern discursive performance, Armalinsky undresses the Soviet body, discovering it naked, with its private parts exposed (in this case, the Iron Curtain that the Soviets put over people's genitals by blocking people's vision to explicit sexual imagery and freedom); and then even the flesh and muscles of the rhetorically-constructed Soviet ideal body all the way to the marrow of its bones, disclosed as seriously fragile and wounded in the battle.[97] Creating out of it a decomposed skeleton with only the genital parts left functioning so that they can be sexually manipulated, Armalinsky recreates Soviet utopianism as he gives birth to yet another discursive creation, the New Porn Man. This is his Jewish revenge, and his porn speaks for the bones of his people, left on the Soviet land.

He does not undress the public body, however, leaving himself and his private parts covered despite all his camouflage techniques. In his pornography, Armalinsky literally makes

[97] Lilya Kaganovsky shows that two forms of masculinity exist simultaneously within the Stalinist model of the ideal man: the hyperbolically strong, healthy, heroic, muscular body and the damaged, wounded, disarmed, living skeleton-type of body (*How the Soviet Man was Unmade*, Pittsburgh: The University of Pittsburgh Press, 2008).

himself known to the bones, as implied by the title of the collection of short stories, *Muscular Death (Maskulistaia smert')*, the cover of which shows Armalinsky's X-ray image. He is the man of modern Western society who dedicates himself to speaking of sex ad infinitum, who becomes a Foucauldian "confessing animal" who through confessional porn transforms the "masterful secret" of the sexual-self into an absolute and single truth. According to Foucault, sex is "that agency which appears to dominate us and that secret which seems to underline all that we are" (155). The Truth in Armalinsky is not in the hands of the one directly participating in the sexual act, however, but is given through the perception of the spectator, who remains at the tolerable distance. Pornography happens not in the observation of the sexual act close up, but rather in the close-up imagery of porn film-like production. For Armalinsky, the artist creates what is invisible to the actors of porn. To add force to his idea, he reinforces Esenin's verses from the poem "Pismo k zhenshchine" (1924), claiming "*litsom k litsu litsa ne uvidat'—bol'shoe viditsia na rastoianii*," and enhances it with an irony saying "from America."[98] One may easily picture Pel'tsman holding the camera recording with the highest precision details of the copulating bodies (of his aliases and the public) and the movements of genitals during oral, vaginal, and multi-orifice sex from all possible angles. The shots taken by him are then assembled in the M.I.P. montage office and delivered as a groundbreaking artistic piece, the porn film that could be titled: *Parapushkinistika: From America with Love*.

Armalinsky's *theosis* comes from his dedication to carry out sex knowledge and truth. Elevating himself to the heavenly heights from where he calls for love, freedom, sex, orgasm, etc., he appears the overseer, the man with absolute power who sets the rules and builds a new porn theology that taught by him acts as a simulacrum of holy unity and gender equality.

[98] *Voluntary Confessions- Forced Correspondence*, 798.

Misogyny is in Armalinsky's religious discourse justified by the man's servile obedience to the deity called vagina, which carries the Absolute Truth. His Pushkin sees "the face of truth" when he gets a chance to know the vagina, and only then is he able to realize that his destiny is "to serve this deity," "the Goddess Cunt" (*Boginia-Pizda*)" (18–19). In order to reveal the Truth, the god phallus takes the goddess vagina to dance their deadly dance together on the minefield. Armalinsky the god brings obscenity and thundering (both symbolize the representation of coitus with the earth [Uspenskii, 40]) to perpetuate *hieros gamos* (the sacred marriage of the heaven and earth, or two deities partaking in lovemaking) in a symbolic sexual ritual with the holy Russian land in order to promote its fertility with the seeds of pornography. This mythological intercourse acquires further ritualistic characteristics as it habitually occurs on a holiday (*prazdnik*), presented as various anniversaries—another well-known socialist practice.

The mythical love story that is built on the sacred marriage between the man-god-phallus and woman-Russia-vagina is also central for Eduard Limonov's pornography. Armalinsky's Pushkin and N.'s story in *Secret Notes*, relating how they learn each other's languages, keep their secret, how the man (Pushkin) holds the rules of the game as well as the confessional genre, and the image of the cultural warrior will be reexamined in the next chapter in the context of the much scarier sexual adventures of Limonov and his wife Natalia. The M.I.P. Company will find its equivalent in Limonov as a forgery studio from which comes a new Pushkin-Limonov and Natalia, who produces a "double oral" Pushkin mythical story to begin their cultural revolution and fight the war. If Armalinsky symbolically shoots in his discursive game, Limonov, on the contrary, will make it real as part of his insane play in an actual war.

CHAPTER 2: Eduard Limonov's Double Porn or Porno-Double

Eduard Limonov's name is associated in the public memory with continuous shock waves and drastic changes that offer little room for neutrality. The controversies and scandals that initially arose around Limonov's autobiographical literary pornography since the publication of *It's Me, Eddie* (*Eto ia — Edichka*, 1979) were drastically amplified after his outrageous involvement in the Yugoslav and Transnistria wars and his political activism in post-Soviet Russia. The latter period soothed the negative feelings toward the former. At the mention of his name, the typical reaction of the contemporary audience could be described as: "Limonov used to be cool and fun, but then he turned into a monster and a political fool."[1] Such a critical dichotomy speaks to the transformation that marks the overall trajectory of Limonov's public persona over the course of the last four decades. The "cool" and "fun" refers to Limonov the Third Wave émigré writer and taboo-breaker, and his avant-garde literature of the late-1970s and 1980s, while the "monster" and "fool" denotes Limonov the repatriate, warrior, leader of the National-Bolshevik Party, nationalist and neo-fascist, as well as referencing his radical writings from the 1990s onwards.

If coded in the cultural language of Russia, Limonov appears as the signified who brings about the collapse within the signifying chain that Lacan presupposes to be characteristic of schizophrenia. The public employs the schizophrenic split of Limonov's persona, which reflects the split in Russian consciousness triggered by the collapse of the Soviet state. By doing this, the public converges two basic elements of Limonov's postmodern discursive schizophrenia, playfulness and seriousness, both equally engaged in creating the self in the public domain.

[1] Based on the very same commentaries received in interactions with the Russian diaspora in the United States and in interviews with Muscovites conducted in summer of 2016.

Limonov's self-exposure in exilic literature and outside it in post-Soviet Russia is run by the split of a "pornographic mind" of a double. The specificity of Limonov's poetics of pornography frames the methodology of this chapter since his entire biography is his pornography. All we know about Limonov we know from his quasi-autobiographical accounts.

Limonov's self-centered oeuvre might be understood as *epatage*, his personal struggle for recognition which sets in motion the biographical legend he creates around the image of "the national hero" whose "motto is change (*izmenenie*)."[2] Characterized by "the phenomenon of Limonov," which refers to the intentional blurring of the divorcing line between art and life,[3] the legend has a peculiar siuzhet: first, it goes in the direction of making Limonov the author inseparable from the émigré writer, narrator, and literary character Eduard Limonov (Edichka) in New York and Paris, then retrospectively indivisible from his childhood and youth self (Eddie or Edik) in Kharkov and Moscow, and subsequently from Limonov the soldier and his political persona. Rather than following this siuzhet, I will start with the legend's fabula in order to provide an overview of the main episodes from the first two phases of his poetics. Thus, by outlining episodes of his biography we are entering directly into the Limonov pornography.

To sketch his biography Limonov takes the readers-spectators on a tour through post-WWII history in order to present it as a theater that upholds the institution of discursive split, the madhouse in which good and evil, the moral and immoral synchronize in societal and political indoctrinations. Growing up and maturing in the Soviet Union is presented in his "Kharkov trilogy" (*Memoir of A Russian Punk* [*Podrostok Savenko*, 1983], *A Young Scoundrel* [*Molodoi*

[2] Eduard Limonov. "We Are the National Hero" (*My natsional'nyi geroi*, 1974), at http://www.limonow.de/sonstiges/mng.html.
[3] Karen Ryan-Hayes. "Limonov's *It's Me Eddie* and the Autobiographical Mode." Carl Back Papers in Russian and East European Studies, no. 1004. REES, Center for Russian & East European Studies, Pittsburg: University of Pittsburgh, 1993.

negodiai, 1986], and *We Had a Great Epoch* [*U nas byla velikaia epokha*, 1987]), and as the memory of the past in *It's me Eddie* and other exilic novels. Limonov was born as Eduard Veniaminovich Savenko in 1943 in Dzerzhinsk into the family of a NKVD secret police officer and a housewife, and he grew up in outskirts of the industrial city of Kharkov. He was told to be "a child of victory" as his birth coincided with Stalin's triumph over the Nazi Germany's Sixth Army in February 1943, only to find himself the victim of Stalin's post-war regime of horror.[4] Violence of the regime unloaded onto citizens influenced social behavior and Eduard found himself a victim. After he was beaten unconscious by his classmate and suffered injuries as "his physiognomy was decorated with bruises and scratches," Eddie drastically changed: he took off his red tie, stopped being a pioneer and decided "to enter reality and become the strongest and bravest" by doing wrongs.[5] This change marked the beginning of his adolescence in Khrushchev's Soviet Union and his first sexual and social misbehavior. He sexually abused girls (at school "he put both his hands underneath Nastia's school uniform skirt where her "cunt" was,"[6] and raped his girlfriend Svetka upon discovery that she was not a virgin) and became a member of a local gang of young hooligans, thieves, and pickpockets. Simultaneously he began developing as a poet upon his discovery of Aleksandr Blok's poetry. This coupling of Blok's literary symbols and mysticism and Limonov's illegal life would eventually result in a blend of scandalous endeavors that kept Limonov permanently "outside the law" in literature.

Such a position translates into a schizophrenic crack of existence in Soviet Russia. Memories of his first youth reappear in Limonov's writing as traumas associated with the asylum where the young Eddie ended up after cutting his veins with a razor, a self-punishing act for a

[4] See Emmanuel Carrere. *Limonov*. Trans. John Lambert. New York: Rarrar, Straus and Giroux, 2014, pp. 24–25.
[5] Eduard Limonov, *Podrostok Savenko, Sobranie sochinenii v trekh tomakh,* Vol. 1, Moscow: Vagrius, 1998, p. 215.
[6] Ibid, 216.

woman's unfaithfulness. As a psychiatric patient, Eddie experienced anguish and terror caused by doctors and medical personnel—"the murderers in white gowns" offering a terrifying inhuman treatment to him: "The medical orderlies took me away as if to be executed," and in the hospital "they were tormenting me, injecting me with insulin, putting me in a coma, mutilating my psyche, and humiliating me […]."[7] This experience is his initiation into the "yin-yang" of Soviet reality, in which the purity-related white uniforms mask the dark and evil force of the regime, thanks to which Eddie learned about a system built on injustice, violence, and victim-oppressor tensions.[8] He felt that more strongly in his twenties. The "schizo" Edik got married to his first wife, a Jewish girl named Anna Moiseievna Rubinshtein, who suffered from schizophrenia and died young. In this period, he also met Kharkov's bohemian writers and artists who encouraged him to pursue a literary career. The next phase of Limonov's life began in 1967 when he moved to Moscow, where he entered an underground literary circle as a poet and published his poetry as *samizdat*. Without permanent residency or money, Limonov began tailoring and sewing pants to survive.[9] The bright future he saw in his lover, the Moscow beauty Elena Shchapova, who came to be his second wife and later his pornographic muse and double. Exile was an ideal exit from the Soviet asylum that Limonov exercised first in an imaginary exile in his prose-poem "We Are the National Hero" ("My, natsional'nyi geroi") showing him and Elena getting fame in Paris. The national hero as double was born in this transitional genre, and Limonov the poet was ready to change into a prose writer.

[7] Eduard Limonov, *Istoriia ego slugi*, in *Sobranie sochinenii*, Vol. 2, p. 555, 581.
[8] "I was brought up in a cult of insanity. "Schizo," "schiz"-shorter for schizophrenic, this is how we call strange people and it was considered a compliment…. A man who was not in a mental hospital could not become a man" (*Eto ia ─ Edichka*, *Sobranie sochinenii*, Vol. 2, p. 183).
[9] His clients, among others, were famous figures of the Soviet intelligentsia, Bulat Okudzava and Ernst Neizvestny.

His "real" fifteen year-long émigré life (in New York, 1974–79 and Paris, 1980–89) is depicted in the "New York trilogy": *Eto ia ─ Edichka*, henceforth *Edichka*), *His Butler's Story* (*Istoria ego slugi*, 1981), and *Diary of a Loser* (*Dnevnik neudachnika*, 1982); and *Taming the Tiger in Paris* (*Ukroshchenie tigra v Parizhe*, 1985). Until I set the main theses of the present chapter, however, the focus of the rest of this short biography will be on *Edichka* because I view this novel as the urtext for the whole Limonov's porno-life. Everything that follows afterwards is simply elaborated versions of the narrative skeleton of the hero's trajectory made in *Edichka*.

Having spent eight years in Moscow, in 1974 Limonov escaped on an Israeli visa from the Soviet Union with Elena, and together with numerous Jews in search of freedom, arrived in their promised land, America. Yet Limonov ended up in a merciless survival game that put a hold on his refined poetic aesthetics, yielding instead to debauched prose.[10] Porn emerged out of a personal tragedy of the exilic persona initiated by experiences of a masculinity crisis that was triggered by the separation from his wife Elena, coupled with the loss of his linguistic and cultural native land, his status as a poet in society, and his pitiable life on welfare in dirty New York hotels among prostitutes and criminals. Through heavy use of obscene language and a naturalistic depiction of sex, Limonov creates his pornographic literary self in *Edichka* by carefully weaving a confessional story of émigré Edichka desperately seeking a new union and identity. He embarks on a discursive, revolutionary self-recovery by graphically recording his perverted homo- and heterosexual adventures, as well as criminal, militant, and political exploits at the core of which are aggressiveness, love for weapons, and a wish for and fear of death. The

[10] Exile is kept under the veil of secrecy, given as both voluntary and forced: once Limonov exclaimed it was a "self-exile," as he wanted professional freedom and success as an independent writer; another time he said it was suggested by the state after he declined to serve as a KGB insider spying on the Moscow underground groups. Anyhow, this is primarily a literary exile giving birth to Limonov the pornographer.

victimized émigré Limonov becomes a torturer who likes cruelty, performs violent sex, and dreams of fighting for others in war, or of killing people and raping women.

It turned out that, deceived by the idea of the American dream and émigré life promoted by Soviet dissidents, Limonov found himself in yet another psychiatric hospital based in capitalism: "I was an official underground poet, and now I am one of yours, I am a bastard…, I am that one that you feed… Yet I scorn you. Because you lead dull lives, sell yourselves into the slavery of work…, because you make money and have never seen the world. You're shit! (*Edichka*, 11). Limonov disclosed his disillusionment with American society in the eponymous essays published in 1974 in the Russian émigré newspaper *Novoe russkoe slovo*. Solzhenitsyn was one of those whom Limonov most repeatedly accused of misconceptions about émigré life, calling him a propaganda writer who had sold himself to the West, becoming "a model dissident," what publishers and readers expected him to be and obliged to write about labor camps and repression. Limonov took a different path. Already in *Edichka*, he took advantage of the American freedom of speech to produce his own discursive porn horror-camp in which victim-torture dialectics rest on sexual perversions. While watching Solzhenitsyn on TV, Edichka had sex with Elena to send a message that he will not talk about camps but "fuck" the world so as to reproduce the horror of Stalin's Gulag in the contemporary world. Founded in a sexual phantasy of a S&M Soviet world upholding a range of fluctuating victim-torturer roles, émigré Limonov is manufactured as the leader of the mass revolution against anti-humanism (*antichelovechestvo*) who is standing before "a revolutionary army of losers" formed of poor, lower-class, social outcasts ("hooligans, masturbators, lovers of porn magazines and films, students, writers, homosexuals, lesbians, actors, artists, musicians"), partaking in a game of

thrusting role reversal: "Someone is the victim, someone the executioner. From time to time we switch roles."[11]

For Limonov, Western and Soviet systems represent the very same totalitarian, disciplinary sanatorium akin to a Gulag: he asserts that everywhere one goes, be that the USSR, USA, or France, one hears them saying "'our' sanatorium is the best."[12] The biggest crime against the sanatorium system is to show excitement (*vozbuzhdenie*) (Ibid.). Therefore, Limonov acts as the excited phallus ejaculating his dangerous discursive seeds. As the unconscious protest of the Soviet people against the authorities manifested itself in sexual ways,[13] pornography as its most extreme arrangement becomes Limonov's well-designed means for cultural and historic uprising against the Soviets from afar, in which he, like a Kafkaesque victim, is looking for a sexual thrill in being constantly against the system and outside the law.

The so-called porno chick in America in the 1970s and early 80s (the visual pornographic boom of mass porn theatrical and film production) as well as pop culture and punk aesthetic paved the way to his porn tale. Limonov, however, "unveiled" the Westerners' hypocrisy by presenting how they methodically infantilize porn: "In pornography…the only thing that dominates is a comic exposition of sex. The element of violence and aggressiveness, always present in the sexual acts of real men and women, is removed from pornography, like caffeine from decaffeinated coffee, because the propaganda of violence is prohibited in the sanatoriums."[14] Therefore, his mythological tale begins with the exilic crisis that unequivocally

[11] Eduard Limonov, *Dnevnik neudachnika, Sobranie sochinenii*, Vol. 2, p. 391, 310.
[12] Eduard Limonov. "Disciplinary Sanatorium," at https://www.e-reading.club/book.php?book=83869 (last accessed May 30, 2018).
[13] Konstantin Kustanovich, "Erotic Glasnost: Sexuality in Recent Russian Literature," *World Literature Today* 67, no. 1, Russian Literature at the Crossroad (Winter 1993): 136-144, here p. 138.
[14] "Disciplinary Sanatorium."

infantilizes man, showing Eddie-baby's search for sex partners to which he attaches the untamed porn elements of de Sade's revolutionary narrative, and intertwines them with Futurist aesthetics of militarism, cruelty, and injustice. Accordingly, the émigré Limonov is modeled on the image of a child playing in a dirty discursive playground where sex, blood, perversion, and belligerence are thriving.

Commencing with such protean, tragic exilic persona, Limonov fosters the legend further through a controlled artistic process of manipulating literary texts (mapping out his literary journey and providing exact dates, historical periods, and names) and extra-textual activities (photos, interviews, and self-commentaries) by converting them into biographical facts.[15] This way, writing porn becomes closely associated with living porn. Gradually, the notion of "autobiographical truth" acquires erratic value relevant to the postmodern: multifaceted truth emerges in its final stage as wholeness of facts and fiction, reality, and fabricated actuality. This permits Limonov to portray himself as a man of and behind masks whose acts are led by permanent contradiction, trajectory, and action. He puts various masks and then randomly abandons them, for both the mask and the masked simultaneously denote what does(not) exist, what is(not) visible, explicit, and hidden: "I very often changed masks and did not hesitate to change them, for I was not afraid to make another metamorphosis and appear in a different mask. I would exit one book and enter another."[16] In the same manner, Limonov in the early 1980s moved to Paris with his third wife, the young singer Natalia Medvedeva, following the first publication of *Edichka* in France. Afterwards, he left the troubled literary, exilic identity and

[15] See Lisa R. Wakamiya, "Eduard Limonov and the Life and Death of Exilic Identity," *Canadian-American Slavic Studies* 37, no. 1/2 (Spring 2003): 29–56, here 30–31. The most exemplary of Limonov's agenda to visually document his life is his photo-book *Limonov: v fotografiiakh s kommentariiami, napisannymi im samim!: Ego blizkie, ego roditeli, ego voiny, ego zheny*, Moscow: Stompo, 1996.
[16] Limonov: "A Dialogue with 'a Normal Writer'" (interview by Viktor Erofeev), *Ogonek*, No. 7, (February, 1990), at http://ed-limonov.livejournal.com/182527.html (last accessed March 10, 2018).

took on another, equally (un)real identity of soldier-politician. Lisa Wakamiya holds that any discussion of masks regarding Limonov's post-1991 military and political involvement is unacceptable because it might make it seem "merely another in a series of aesthetic stances, thus putting it on par with the extra-literary activities of his creative period that had artistic intent."[17] I, however, see the extremist political masquerade as a version of exilic literary masking, another chapter of Limonov's legend that needs to be read in the context of his poetics of porn built around the schizophrenic Edichka and his existence in opposites.

The self-constructing dual image—of the literary pornographer at first, and later the soldier and radical politician—embodies the mythological literary device of "double" (doppelgänger) utilized by Limonov to generate the schizophrenic authorial "I" narrating his (auto)biographical tale. The double denotes the self-representation of Lacan's mirror stage that Limonov translates into a unique entity casting the opposites: hero (geroi) and anti-hero (*otritsatel'nyi geroi*) as the mirror self-image. The doppelgänger appears at the threshold of the schizophrenic cultural and political arena of late-Soviet times: first to introduce the double life of the Homo Sovieticus put forward by the schism between official and personal worlds, especially in the domains of sexuality, literature, and language[18]; and second, to deliver the experience of a split of consciousness in the Russian writer and man caused by voluntary-forced exilic estrangement. Being a product of this culture, Limonov the hero acts as a psycho whose life becomes an inward's sexual fairytale abundant in repetitions and versions of the same double. In his poem "My Life is a Beautiful Legend," Limonov writes: "My life is a beautiful legend / a dear idiotic refrain / Hot summer in closed rooms / mirrors become dull / […] /And I am a

[17] Wakamiya, "Eduard Limonov," p. 31.
[18] See Kustanovich, "Erotic Glasnost."

madman, a madman."[19] As his other poem "My anti-hero" ("Moi otritsatel'nyi geroi") suggests, Edichka is the first to appropriate the identity of the double as his wild sexual adventures in New York make him the anti-hero: "My anti-hero / Is always with me / I drink beer-he drinks beer / In my apartment he lives / With my girls he sleeps / My dark member is hanging from him / My anti-hero ... / His elegant back / We can see now in New York / On every dark street." [20] Limonov will undertake an "altered" antihero-identity and rhetoric reflective of the new cultural atmosphere of post-Soviet schizophrenia: political extremism will replace the sexual, giving birth to the monstrous soldier-politician. Limonov's case reflects a double exilic experience, or the exilic experience of the double, considering that the writer-hero's émigré life ends with his return, which reinforces the exilic displacement of the "new-old" Limonov who discovers "new-old" Russia. The experiments with the perception of truth delivered as masking, both literary and political, allow him to play with the representation of the pornographic self in history, first to create a fictional world mirroring reality and then choose a suitable reality in which to immerse the fictional self.

This chapter shows that Limonov's hero/anti-hero duality is fashioned by the nature of the covert venture he upholds: a virtual porn concentration camp. He is both the creator and product of a carefully-staged, discursive-performative game that grows as a serious literary, cultural, and historical revenge against a Soviet/Russia that promotes Nazisploitation.[21] He

[19] "Moia zhizn'─ eto prekrasnaia legenda," in *Russkoe,* Ann Arbor: Ardis, 1979.
[20] *Troe: Ne razmykaia ust…* (1976–1982), Los Angeles: Almanac-Press, 1981, p. 43.
[21] This term is often used within the context of genre of exploitation film, in which those "trendy" elements that supposedly guarantee a financial success, such as explicit sexual imagery, violence, drugs, or destruction triumph over the story. One of the post-WWII exploitation film strategies was to link sex-exploitation and Nazi's crimes, which resulted in numerous films featuring Nazi sadism, sexual crimes, and power relationships between the torturer and the victim mostly situated in concentration camps. Nazisploitation is dominant aesthetics in Liliana Cavani's *The Night Porter* (1974) and Pier Paolo Pasolini's *Salò, or the 120 Days of Sodom* (1975), films that fashioned Limonov's porn.

builds the self as the permanent tragic hero and victim, who continually seeks revenge against his "oppressors" by becoming a Stalinist and Nazi-like tyrant committing discursive sexual crimes, plots for which he uses from diverse manipulations of classical literature, Russian and world literary and cinematic heritage, music, history, and well-known ideologies. Moreover, to bear his sots-fascism, I argue, Limonov assumes the role of a "secret Jew": an avenger inflicting his porn narrative on the Soviet/Russian public as a punishment for Stalin's overt antisemitism and victimization of the Jews. Pornography serves as a weapon to lead the public experience through the horror of death camps. Through discursive and visual sexual experiments Limonov is turned into a Jewish penis whose trajectory goes from the collective victimized identity, marked by a proper "member" (*chlen*), to the individual, torturous identity of the leader, the symbol of which is the vulgar "dick" (*khui*). Like changing condoms to ensure safe sex, he assumes various masks as a new (fore)skin for the Jewish phallus. He lingers behind a condom-mask that is transparent and yet it hides the defining line of the exposed head.

Jewishness is mostly presented through minor characters, as hidden identity, or through negation. Limonov often repeats that neither he nor Elena are Jews, even though they were issued Israeli visas for the US. He also keeps the national identity of his parents, Veniamin Savenko and Raisa (Raia) Fedorovna, vague: "My Ukrainian father, and the Russian-Tatar mother consider themselves Russians. Which is the truth. Who are they?…All folk call themselves Russians. Even the Jews..." (*Podrostok Savenko,* 175). On another occasion, Limonov would say that his father was not Ukrainian, and that it is a misconception that all last names ending in "o" are of Ukrainian origin. In *Podrostok Savenko* we see young Eddie reluctantly pronouncing his name Eduard Savenko because he "does not like his family name and dreams of changing it when he grows up" (330). Elaborating on his pseudonym he says that

"Limonov is a story of a literary game (*Limonov—eto istoriia literaturnoi igry*)," invented in a children's game. "The name was invented for me," he claims, "attached to me and became my nickname, my second 'I' that quickly dislodged the first, and then the first collections of poetry I signed as Limonov."[22] Yet he keeps his first name Eduard, given to him by his father after the Jewish poet Eduard Bagritskii, for, according to Limonov, it determined that his life would mirror Bargitskii's: "A quite young Jewish poet from Odessa, the poet-decadent joined the Red Army in 1917 and turned into a revolutionary propagator who depicted himself as 'an angel of death in a leather coat,' raping a high school girl during a house-search."[23]

I show here that the Limonov is a *double*-role, a "bisexual" porn tale fostered as a children's theatrical play of the man and the woman, in which Eduard appears as Pushkin together with his wives, and the characters Elena and Natalia (Natasha) Medvedeva fuse into Pushkin's half of Natalia Goncharova, the former as a narrative ghost and the latter as a real one. This game is offered as a joint retaliation, propelled like a quest for historical justice for the Jewish people: "We had always been oppressed and persecuted by kings and peoples! We are tired of it!"[24] As the title of the poem, published as *It's Me, Elena* (*Eto ia — Elena*)[25] suggests, the Limonov project is "The Mutual Song of a Boy and a Girl (Children Underdeveloped in Age)" that promises fame: "We seek to become great great / so that before our holy faces / everyone bows" (248). Through gender-voiced cacophony, this "song" is then sung by the two totally opposite voices in harmony. Eduard and Natalia have "unnaturally opposite voices: his is

[22] See Evgenii Dodolev, *Limoniana, ili neizvestnyi Limonov*, Moscow: Zelenaia lampa, 2012, p. 13; and "Meeting the Writer Eduard Limonov in the Concert Hall 'Ostankino'" (1992), YouTube, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pn9S3dkfDmw.
[23] Andrei Balkanskii, *Eduard Limonov*. Moscow: Molodaia gvardiia, 2017, p. 22.
[24] "My, natsionalnyi geroi", hereafter "My."
[25] The book allegedly written by Limonov's wife Elena in 1984 as her response to Limonov's *Edichka* (Elena Shchapova de Karli, *Eto ia-Elena: Interv'iu s samoi soboi*, Moscow: Evropeiskaia informatsionnaia gruppa; "Glagol", 2008).

a high pitched voice (sometimes over the phone they address him as *mademuazel* [mademoiselle]) and hers is the lowest possible."[26] Bisexuality—as the yin-yang assembly of female and male principles and the ideal sexual position for the *double*, like mirroring the "69 pose," of mutual and simultaneous oral pleasure—helps Limonov's identity slip out of one-sidedness and governs the entire specter of discursive master-servant/torturer-victim/doctor-patient game-plays to materialize. Edichka's words "I was leading a double life" resonate a more complex meaning. Appearing alone in public, Eduard would insist that he and Limonov are not the same person: "The main protagonist of my novels is Limonov. But this man does not exist in reality. In my passport I am Eduard Savenko. Period….Yet it's too late now to get rid of it..."[27] This gap opening in the middle of two gigantic figures forms aporia that hides differences and similarities of the fictional and historical Limonov, so he remains a myth.

Figure 3: Yin-Yang

This phallic-schizophrenic "I" depends on the subject's self-fragmentation which, I suggest, functions as a yin-yang duality. I use the yin-yang metaphor to mark the entirety of Limonov's autobiographical tale because it represents a whole split into two interconnected opposites of white and black poles, whose interaction is permanent through the porous line they form. This line is the margin, the imaginary gray zone, where "cool" and "fun" Limonov ends and Limonov the "fool" and "monster" begins, or the reverse. Although it functions as a masculine/feminine, good/bad, light/dark, or beautiful/ugly border, the margin is never fixed, being simultaneously within and outside both parts of the whole. Due to its fluid and unstable

[26] Natalia had very deep, scary voice and Limonov describes her as a being (*sushchestvo*) of savage nature, whose voice is like "a roar of the beast." (E. Limonov, *Ukroshenie tigra v Parizhe*, Saint Petersburg: Amfora, 2003, p. 71.)
[27] Dodolev, *Limoniana,* p. 13.

nature, it becomes Limonov's locus that allows unpredictable voices, discourses, characters, and actions to appear. Each pole communicates the truth only in connection with the other part, formally its opposite. Limonov is the embodiment of this liminality.[28]

Limonov acts as a Porno Ludens whose endless, perverted, and scary sexual game rests on perpetual flirting with Eros and Thanatos: "One must play permanently. And it is necessary to be carried away by the play. And one needs to bring the game to the end—to death" ("My"). The game is played in two halves, literary and political, two mirroring phases of the same, never-ending porn narrative. Tragedy is fundamental to this play to render Limonov's suffering. Therefore, the biographical tale is imagined as an ancient tragedy unfolding as the long Homeric epic diptych, the secret Iliad and the overt Odyssey of his émigré life. Limonov-Odysseus reveals that his adventures start with the Kharkov and Moscow phases "overgrown with legends," and from there "unfolds further the entertaining life of Odysseus!" ("My"). The exilic adventurer Odysseus and his antithesis, the warrior and the hero, Achilles, form Limonov's identity as a tragic mythical hero of the postmodern Greek epic fighting in the historical Trojan War.

The Phallic Mythmaking

Limonov's war symbolically begins for his wife Elena, the woman-fetish whom he sees as the unfaithful Helen of Troy. The exile adventures in *Edichka* are then tied to the classical tropes. Like Odysseus, Limonov lands on the island of the Cyclopes, in America, and enters the

[28] Cynthia Simmons sees Limonov as one of the four authors belonging to "post-Stalinist prose" (along with Vassily Aksyonov, Venedikt Erofeev, and Sasha Sokolov), who take the liminal position, both through their "aberrant discourse" and by their position in literary history, as the first generation of "unfettered writers" and as the sons of their literary predecessors and the fathers of future experiments in the domain of Russian prose. (*Their Fathers' Voice: Vassily Aksyonov, Venedikt Erofeev, Eduard Limonov, and Sasha Sokolov*. Middlebury Studies in Russian Language and Literature, Vol. 4. New York: Peter Lang, 1993.)

Polyphemus cave, the New York jungle in which he becomes "Nobody." Constructed as "the imaginary object" that becomes "a symbol for the losses the exile must suffer,"[29] Elena is portrayed as a "career girl," who becomes successful in the modeling business by taking full advantage of a woman's sexual freedom in the West. She also undergoes huge changes (takes drugs, uses underworld jargon and obscene vocabulary, partakes in orgies and employs sex accessories) by which she gets detached and estranged from Edichka. By giving herself up to others, Elena provides Edichka with male rivals, whose male power lies in their capital. Defined by Elena as "nobody," Edichka's status is that of an impotent penis ("I was not a life according to her…I was not moving up (*ne dvigalsia*)… I was a non-moving object" [144]). Edichka wants to prove her wrong and become somebody by moving up. Driven to the anxious journey of sexual self-recovery he acts as a hyper-egoist who is screaming from the title "*Eto ia — Edichka!*" By doing this, Limonov reattaches his own double (anti-hero) to the self (national hero), Edichka to the "I" (*ia*), that are split by the dash in the novel's title. The wholeness of the hero's identity is thus implied in the interaction of the opposites via this communicating merging line that manifests the presence of absence. This speaks of Limonov-nobody as the flaccid discursive phallus (—) who erects as "*I*" as he narrates. I read Limonov's porn myth as a body-centered narrative signifying the trajectory from a "chlen" to a "khui." The belief in a pivotal difference between the two is rooted in Russian folklore and the people's consciousness—a member is a soft and small penis and a dick is an eternally erected (*stoiashchii*) member.[30] This discursive trick rests on the pleasure in playing a dirty auto-erotic game ("From the touch of

[29] Mark E. Feinberg, "From Russia, With Angst" (September 27, 1983) at http://www.thecrimson.com/article/1983/9/27/from-russia-with-angst-pbibn-russiai/ (Last accessed May 19, 2018).
[30] See Aleksei Plutser-Sarno. *Bol'shoi slovar mata*. Tom 1. Leksicheskie i frazeologicheskie znacheniia slova 'Khui', at https://www.e-reading.club/bookreader.php/45309/Plucer-Sarno_-_Bol%27shoii_slovar%27_mata._Tom_1.html (Last accessed June 1, 2018).

toilet paper, my tender member (*chlen*) shudders, something in me starts to move, my member slowly grows into a dick (*khui*)" (*Edichka,* 149)), by which he makes possible the opposing images of the self to coexist. Limonov is told: "You are a child with a huge 'I'. You masturbate your way through life" (*Istoriia ego slugi*, 536, henceforth *Istoriia*).

Elena's betrayal prompts Limonov's masculine story in which she serves as a metaphor for mother (Soviet)Russia who is to be blamed for the hero's misfortune, and on whom, therefore, he imposes sexual punishments. Elena's infidelity echoes in Edichka's memory as a mother's betrayal, leaving him in the mental hospital. Masturbation taken by Edichka as the alternative for sexual intercourse with Elena comes with violence and a perverted fantasy to punish her: "She completely stopped having sex with me. I would masturbate in the bathroom at night…and gradually I came to the crazy idea to rape Elena," and to a "desire to rape her came together with a desire to kill her" (*Edichka*, 39–40). Humor and playfulness appear to restrain the actual crime. Edichka takes handcuffs and a rope but appears a total amateur in this business as he buys children's handcuffs with no key. He calms down at the comprehension that he is the master of the narrative and his discourse is an ultimate sexual toy for punishment, "that he controls her fate, which prevented him of killing her" (Ibid., 41). Misogyny upholds the retaliation through which the hero displays himself as a vehement discursive phallus. In general, as Stephen Shenfield notices, "Limonov's violence toward women functions as a central metaphor for the violence that he hopes to inflict upon Russian society as a whole," presenting that the society, like women, "long[s] to be raped and subjugated by their fascist savior."[31] The post-1990 Eduard Limonov (Savenko) gives an actual male body and a "real" face to the mythical phallic character that then yields a "living legend." This way, the mythical penis who

[31] Stephen D. Shenfield. *Russian Fascism: Traditions, Tendencies, Movements.* New York: Routledge. 2015

discursively fucks, rapes, and humiliates appears live in post-Soviet Russia as the party leader (*vozhd'*) who repeatedly shouts in public "Yes, Death!"

The driving mechanism of Limonov's play is dependence, in the Lacanian sense, on the other in the formation of the self within the context of "ours/theirs" (*svoe/chuzhoe*): "To play is to accept what is foreign (*chuzhoe*), but desirable" ("My"). First of all, this is the little other, the mother figure appearing as a (vaginal) hole representing the opposite element in each pole of the yin-yang bisexual whole. The two holes are different in color, for their meaning is twofold: one reminds us of emptiness, the lacking that castration naturally leaves behind, and another promises birth. Secondly, there will always be the Big Other as the unifying force holding the opposites together, the father figure who is in possession of the language. This way the whole turns into a complex Oedipal discursive trinity. Limonov always fills the hole with a new discursive challenge reinforcing the entry into language that Lacan sees as being linked to castration, for it starts with one's absence or non-existence in the world. The entire Limonov project, consequently, is driven by symbolic (re)birth and (re)growth of the always new Limonov-phallus. "You become nobody, and you start from zero [0—as the hole!]," states Limonov.[32] As he creates his own tragic biography, Limonov endlessly revives the father figure out of the cultural and historical "holy monsters" gathered in his book of essays, *The Holy Monsters*, among whom are Pushkin, Dostoevsky, Khlebnikov, Blok, Mayakovsky, de Sade, Freud, Oscar Wilde, Yukio Mishima, Lenin, Hitler, Mussolini, and Radovan Karadžić, to mention only some. He borrows their discourses and aesthetics to inscribe his name in history.[33]

[32] "Meeting the Writer Eduard Limonov."
[33] *Sviashchennye monstry*. Biblioteka NBP, at https://web.archive.org/web/20071012155200/http://nbp-info.ru:80/new/lib/lim_monsters/monstri15.htm. For instance, Andrei Rogachevskii gives a detailed scrutiny of literary parallels in Limonov's work and Mayakovsky's life, poetics, sexual legend, poetry, satire, and the motif of the double in his essay "The Doppelgänger, or the Quest for Love: Eduard Limonov as Vladimir Maiakovskii". *Canadian-American Slavic Studies* (CASS), No. 30 (1), Spring 1996. (pp. 1–44). Aleksandr Chantsev shows that the

The fact that Limonov the son adds himself to the list of monsters speaks of the narcissistic assumption of the importance of his autobiographical pornographic project. The only pater-monster that is not listed here, but who plays the leading role in Limonov's mysterious rebellious porn against Soviet wrongs is Stalin, the quintessential opposite. Vis-à-vis Stalin, and alongside other fathers' ideas and aesthetics, Limonov forges himself as the idol and national hero. Life "beyond the Pale" is the experience of the "fragmented, or "fractured," culture that an author like Limonov translates into a "private vision" of the world, its history, and the self in that world.[34]

Limonov sarcastically twists Soviet ideology and the personality cult to fashion the pornographic self as a unique cultural and historical figure of the era. It could be argued that seeing Limonov as the author of "pro-Soviet pornography," the paradox that reads as pro-anti-Soviet work, describes his standpoint best. His porn myth is a body-centered narrative constructed as a version of the Bolshevik 1917 Revolution and its unfortunate aftermath, Stalin's purges and the Gulag phase, through which the hero emerges as the phallus built upon Lenin's revolutionary rhetoric and Stalin's monstrous execution practice. Elena serves to bring Lenin into the revolutionary narrative, and to trigger Stalin's brutality.[35] The Lenin-Stalin model conjures the historical double of the hero and the antihero. The early Soviet revolutionary narrative of societal transformation through advancing experiments in engineering the New Soviet Man motivates Limonov's porn revolution by putting the phallus in erective movement.

Japanese author, actor, and film director, Yukio Mishima, who intentionally redirected the flow of his own biography from pro-western to Japanese nationalist, from the esthete to military man, is Limonov's unique "teacher" for his biographical experimentations. Chantsev shows that his biography is based on Mishima's hyper theatricality in both art and life (he committed the ritual hara-kiri), with a focus on subjects of sexuality, death, nationalism, and political change, as given in his novel *Confessions of a Mask* (1949), and his autobiographical essay "Sun and Steel: Art, Action and Ritual Death" (1968) (*Bunt krasoty. Estetika Iukio Misimy i Eduarda Limonova* (M: Agraf, 2009)).

[34] Edward Brown, "Russian Literature Beyond the Pale," *Slavic and East European Journal* 30, no. 3 (1986): 380–388.

[35] The connection between the two is established through possessive adjectival forms derived of Elena's shorter name Lena (Lenin, Lenina) as well as by the photo of her in front of the Lenin Mausoleum.

The classic Oedipal antagonism drives Limonov to always insist on individuality and originality and seeks superiority in words, heroism, and maleness that bring pleasure to the ego, while positioning the self in the middle of the father's symbolic order. Therefore, the hero builds his image on independency (he "does not serve anyone," and "does not depend on anyone"), on "anti-isms" of all sorts (showing anti-Soviet, anti-American, anti-émigré, anti-capitalist, anti-dissident sentiments), and self-creation in negation, the symbol of which is minus-dash "—" ("Limonov is a complete negation… He is not connected to statehood. He created himself…" ("My"). In the same manner, Limonov brings the public into his play game by repeatedly sparking controversy via his paradoxical writings and actions, ironic commentaries, and inconsistency in the ideological positions he assumes. The public is taken for both an ally and an opponent in the yin-yang Oedipal playground that rests on pastiche aesthetics.

Who is the "Real" Limonov?

Who is the "real" Limonov? This remains the key question in academic and public discussions about Limonov through which scholars and critics attempt to reach the "truth" by means of an arbitrary selection of "a Limonov." The public disputes over Limonov's émigré literary (in)decency and (im)morality grew at first from the presumption that he was a Soviet writer. His essay "Disillusionment" (1974), in which he discloses Soviet dissidents' discursive trap, attracted anger and negative responses from the Russian émigré community and the author was proclaimed "pro-Soviet." Then, flabbergasted before Edichka's sexual adventures, obscenities, and linguistic perversion (barbarisms), conservative Russian readers and critics called Limonov "a charlatan and pornographer" and thrusted his novel aside as filthy pornography floating in "the broth of socialist realist devices" that serves as pro-Soviet

discursive provocation.[36] Subsequently, in the 1980s, the commission "for the annihilation of Limonov" was formed.[37] The public worked on separating Limonov the poet from Limonov the prose writer by underlining that the only thing worthy is pre-exile *samizdat* poet Limonov with his "decent" verses without obscenity. Yet, poetry from the Moscow period was published as the book of verse *Russkoe* after *Edichka* came out in 1979. The "innocent" poetry gained its recognition against the background of the extreme vulgarity of his prose. Evidently, the non-existing underground poet Limonov came to life through the negation of the literary pornographer.

It took a few years before a shift in perception of Limonov's work occurred. After L. Kornilova wrote that Edichka is "the last romantic" who "did not slip anywhere into vulgarity or pornography" because he used sex just as a device to express his pain and personal struggle,[38] the critics continued looking for aestheticism in his porn narrative and expressing appreciation for the honesty and emotional and human side in Limonov-Edichka.[39] Appearing as an alternative voice, these scholars not only carried out the core of Limonov's poetics of opposites

[36] Leonid Geller, "Prigotovitel'nye zametki k teorii skandalov, avangarda i erotiki v literature na material sochineniia E. Limonova 'Eto ia ─ Edichka,'" *Kovcheg*, no. 5, 1980.
[37] Brown, "Russian Literature Beyond the Pale," p. 381.
[38] L. Kornilova, "Poslednii romantik Edichka," *Kovcheg* no. 5, 1980.
[39] For example, Ann Shukman pleads for the discovery of the other, more human Limonov behind the mask of a scandalmonger: "Behind the dandy and the nihilist and the sexual experimenter is the tender and hurt Edik Limonov who believes that love is the most important thing in the world." ("Taboos, Splits and Signifiers: Limonov's *Eto ya ─ Edichka*," Essays in Poetics, VIII, no. 2 (1983): 221–229, quoted in Robert Porter, "Eduard Limonov and the Benefit of the Doubt," in *Under Eastern Eye*, New York: St. Martin's Press, 1992, 62–75.) Olga Matich takes Limonov for "the moral immoralist" to show his emotional, moral, and compassionate side. She asserts that he is a literary provocateur and taboo-breaker who is at the same time "aesthetically refined and sensitive in the sphere of emotions" and adds that in Limonov "provocation and moralism coexist and do not conflict," but then, being overwhelmed by Edichka's hatred, anger, self-pity, and envy, the Russian reader overlooks the hero's "honesty and kindness, which make him lovable" ("The Moral Immoralist: Edward Limonov's Eto ja—Edichka," *The Slavic and East European Journal*. Vol. 30, No. 4 (Winter, 1986, pp. 526–540:531). This trend continued and much later Viktoriia Sukovataia claimed that Limonov is "one of the most honest writers of the second half of the twentieth century" whose protagonist is sometimes a macho man and mostly a "sensitive lover" who cares about the woman's sexual pleasure, admires the female body and is not disgusted by female physiology, ("Eduard Limonov in Search of a 'New masculinity,'" *Russian Politics and Law*, Vol. 46, No. 1 (January-February 2008): 20–30, here p. 30.

("moral immoralism") but also brought Limonov into public discussion. Matich asserts that *Edichka* is "dialogic in Bakhtin's sense, and is meant to evoke an ambivalent response."[40] Needless to say that to this day critics are split into two camps on the subject of his autobiographical approach: the first tends to blur the boundaries between Limonov author = narrator = character, while another appeals for their stringent separation.[41] Naum Korzhavin's phrase "characters write" (*personazi pishut*) has often been used to talk about Limonov's early prose. Matich notes that "the conflation of author and hero subverts our academic notions of appropriate or learned reader-response and calls into question the jealously guarded separation of fiction and reality. Limonov seems to provoke a reader-response on the level of gossip and prurient curiosity, comparable to the effect of yellow journalism, but then, from his authorial position, he may judge us for confusing life and art."[42] Matich's words summarize the strategy Limonov develops: to ask for a mass of contrasting public opinions and remain in an open-ended dialogue with the readership. Rogatchevski shows how Limonov often uses criticism as a source of inspiration for his subsequent literary works, which then in turn appear as his response to and elaborations on others' comments, reviews, and suggestions, while "hostile analyses are often utilized by Limonov to a good effect."[43] Limonov's literary alter-ego, Indiana, admits he pursues

[40] Matich, "The Moral Immoralist," p. 528.
[41] For the example of such discursive clash see Konstantin Kustanovich's review of Cynthia Simmons's *Their Fathers' Voice: Vassily Aksyonov, Venedikt Erofeev, Eduard Limonov, and Sasha Sokolov*, in *The Russian Review*, Vol. 55, No. 1 (January 1996): 112–113.
[42] Matich, "The Moral Immoralist," p. 533.
[43] Andrei Rogatchevski, "Criticism as a Source of Inspiration: On Limonov's Narrative Strategy," at https://www.aatseel.org/100111/pdf/program/2002/abstracts/Rogatchevski.html (last accessed March 16, 2018). There are also instances when others come into dialogue with Limonov's work and turn his scandalous fame in favor of their own work and reputation. Such is the case with his biographer Carrere, whose book becomes a bestseller though mimesis of Limonov's genre hybridization and recreation of Limonov's autobiographical reality. Carrere creates the "alter Limonov" by introducing into the story about Limonov's life and art the intruder-narrator inscribing his own autobiographical accounts. The result is a pseudo-biography, a fusion of biography and autobiography, in which Carrere "narrates his own self." (See Marco Puleri, "'Eto ia – Carrère': Analysing the Influence of Limonov's Autobiographical Mode in Carrère's Literary Work." *AvtobiografiЯ*, No 3. 2014 (pp. 427–437), at http://www.avtobiografija.com/article/view/79/65Puleri (last accessed March 16, 2018).

questions and comments from the public and "the sharper they are the better, in order to revive himself."[44] Evidently, Limonov seeks castration from the public and submits to its consequences only to grow as a mighty phallus again. He makes the public play the Oedipal game according to his rules. "All my life is a struggle with the generally accepted morality," states Limonov and sees his first victory in that he "won over dis-acknowledgment that he is a poet by becoming the national hero" ("My"). Standing next to the Eiffel Tower, this hero draws a parallel between his future work and the phallic architectural symbol of Paris: "The engineer Eiffel built this tower of gold. People of art objected to it, and now it has grown in and become a symbol" ("My"). Like the Eiffel Tower, Edichka will turn into a phallic symbol of late-Soviet postmodern art.

Whatever *Edichka* was back then, it is now his politics, another example of Limonov's moral and discursive degradation. Wakamiya views Limonov's intentional departure from literature as a deliberate shift away from art and the idea to a mere life and ideology in attempt to undo the biographical legend of his exilic persona. Wakamiya asserts that this way "he has ensured that future literary history will either ignore his presence or register it as once belonging to emigre literature."[45] Indeed, many scholars think they reach objectivity in the scrutiny of Limonov's literary life while completely neglecting his post-Soviet political pursuits, and thus strictly divide him into Limonov-the-writer and Limonov-the-politician. Even those who previously showed understanding for his "moral immoralism" as an aesthetically pleasing paradox now feel obligated to distance themselves from his military-political engagement and express their disappointment.[46] The critics and scholars base their judgment on the verifiability

[44] Eduard Limonov, *Inostranets v smutnoe vremia* (1991)), at https://www.e-reading.club/book.php?book=83871.
[45] Wakamiya, "Eduard Limonov," 56.
[46] Matich states: "I do not like his political platform" but "I believe that this is one of the best contemporary writers. I've always liked him, and I continue to like him personally. He is a very decent person….He's not a narcissist.…Although his public pose is just like this, but not in relationship with people. He is terribly talented, and this is the most important. It's always interesting with him" (Vladimir Papernyi, *Ol'ga Matich: Vnuchka*

of what is "ugly," "dirty," or "bad" through a mere empirical observation of Limonov's post-90s activities. The question to what extent are his literary works autobiographical, Limonov answers: "They are almost all autobiographical. But I think that for the reader this does not really matter for they could not check this."[47] Therefore, he moves his biographical legend to the sphere of reality that seems absolutely verifiable. As opposed to his unobservable immorality during the exile period, Limonov's publicly-observable actions from the frontline of Moscow street protests, holding the slogan "Stalin! Beria! Gulag!" are taken for the "real" truth that must be discarded. The paradox of this approach lies in that it exactly rejects what is taken to be empirically proven—the "real Limonov."

In the context of Limonov's double, this attitude shows that in the eyes of the modern audience, Limonov-the-writer is the hero, and Limonov-the-politician is the anti-hero. By eliminating either one, we cannot talk about Limonov anymore. Rogachevskii states that "those appalled by Limonov's bizarre public activity were ready to praise his fiction but condemned him as a politician, ignoring the fact that one can hardly oppose various facets of the same individual to each other, because they are always bound together with an inner logic.[48] By getting rid of both Limonovs—as in some cases when his literary work was also disregarded due

monarkhista-antisemita (2006), at https://my.mail.ru/mail/il_stranger/video/55/9.html#video=/mail/il_stranger/55/9). Matich's comment brings about an additional, three-dimensional division in the perception of the "real" Limonov, the private person and her friend vs. the public image of the writer vs. that of the politician. Limonov's biographer, Emmanuel Carrere, claims that while his previous unconventional behavior, public provocations, and adventurous life made a great impact on his generation ("Limonov was our barbarian, our thug: we adored him"), everything had changed and "things began taking a turn for the bizarre" once "he started disappearing to the Balkans…he disappointed us with his Bosnian adventures.…After these exploits he returned to Russia where he created…the National Bolshevik Party…" (*Limonov*. Trans. John Lambert. New York: Rarrar, Straus and Giroux, 2014, pp. 7-8).

[47] "Eto ia-Edichka!." *Komsomol'skaia pravda*, No 2, January 3, 1990, at https://ed-limonov.livejournal.com/187698.html (accessed March 24, 2018).

[48] Rogachevskii, "The Doppelgänger," p. 20.

to aversion to Limonov's political activities[49]—we create a cultural absence from where the given "erased" cultural figure, the *nobody,* voices himself in a loud existential scream and begins creating his existence in various other ways. Discontinuity enforced by public morality goes along Limonov's aesthetic evolution and poetics of continual contradictions.

As it has been pointed out, the reason for the change in attitude toward Limonov corresponds not as much to the shifts in public taste as to the reluctance to accept reality as art. But then, in Limonov, porn reality is art as much as art is reality, or at least should be viewed as quasi-fiction mirroring his quasi-(auto)biographical reality. Such reasoning finds its justification if seen through the prism of the inverse logical paradigm—Life imitates Art far more than Art imitates Life—offered by one of Limonov's most important literary idols, Oscar Wilde, in his 1889 essay "The Decay of Lying." Wilde pleads for lying in art and brings up the idea that life is in fact the mirror, and art the reality.[50] Limonov's poetry is art that is reality, for it remains in the imagination while the poet-liar is the real Limonov who utters: "only in poetry am I who I really am" (*Edichka* 73). His "documented" pornographic prose, in which art takes life on a flirtatious game of "the Limonov phenomenon," speaks to a transitional period toward the final phase of the real political life that mirrors the first phase of the reality of art. Opening of the third, post-1990s phase begins with the symptomatic shifts: from genre of novel to essays, journalistic writing, political programs, and pamphlets, and from obscenity to self-censorship resulting in

[49] Mark Lipovetsky, for instance, admits that because of Limonov's political actions he was not included in his book *Russian Postmodernist Fiction: Dialogue with Chaos* (1999). (See Olga Matich "Eduard Limonov: Istoriia avtora i ego personazha," *Zhurnalnyi zal*, October 11, 2013, at http://magazines.russ.ru/october/2013/11/32m.html.

[50] This idea is given as the threefold scheme:

> Art begins with abstract decoration with purely imaginative and pleasurable work dealing with what is unreal and non-existent. This is the first stage. Then Life becomes fascinated with this new wonder, and asks to be admitted into the charmed circle. Art takes life as part of her rough material, recreates it, and refashions it in fresh forms, is absolutely indifferent to fact, invents, imagines, dreams, and keeps between herself and reality the impenetrable barrier of beautiful style, of decorative or ideal treatment. The third stage is when Life gets the upper hand, and drives Art out into the wilderness. ("The Decay of Lying," New York: Brentano, 1905 [1889] at http://cogweb.ucla.edu/Abstracts/Wilde_1889.html [accessed May 17, 2018]).

narratives mirroring "decency" and "purity" of poetic language. That's why Limonov emphasizes that poetry and politics are the same.[51] The artist as "the cultured and fascinating liar," according to Wilde, is in possession of the great secret "that Truth is entirely and absolutely a matter of style; while Life—poor, probable, uninteresting human life…will follow meekly after him, and try to reproduce, in [its] own simple and untutored way, some of the marvels of which he talks" ("The Decay of Lying"). Limonov's biographical fairytale is a treachery fostered by Wilde's notion that literature always anticipates life and molds it to its purpose and therefore all social and historical changes appear as "the inevitable result of life's imitative instinct." Limonov acts a clairvoyant who believes in his prophetic dreams, repeatedly saying "I have seen," and gives a series of examples how he anticipated in his writings what was going to happen with his women, books, politics, or wars. Dreams carry out Eddie's first sexual gratification that he recuperates in reality through masturbation by imitating the oneiric experience, and this is his secret life that he keeps away from his mother (*Podrostok Savenko*, 277). His secret porn naturally develops to mirror his imaginary sexual life. Limonov reveals that he develops the "prediction-program genre" very early, confirming that his life mirrors art: "the fact that I KNOW my fate, there is no doubt."[52] Limonov writes a single porn piece his whole life occasionally returning to the moments recorded in works from the past, scrutinizing them anew from a different point of view, adding and changing, and thus aligns literature to dictate his life.[53] Wilde assumes that "no doubt there will always be critics who…will gravely censure the teller of fairy tales for his defective knowledge of natural history" ("The Decay of Lying"). This

[51] In his first mass public interview with a Russian audience, upon his return in 1992, Limonov admitted he had drastically reduced obscenity (*mat*) in his writing because in newspapers and periodicals, unlike books, *mat* seems unnecessary and unacceptable and might insult some people ("Meeting the Writer Eduard Limonov").
[52] Eduard Limonov *Anatomy of the Hero* (2008) at https://web.archive.org/web/20060417233725/http://nbp-info.ru:80/new/lib/lim_anatomy/02.htm.
[53] Balkanskii, *Eduard Limonov,* 13.

is exactly the case when the public takes Limonov's "dirty realism" in literature and politics in the following manner: "Yes" to dirty art mirroring life, and "No" to dirty life mirroring (that) art. At the Father's "No," a pervert, as Lacan shows, relies on a fetish to search for pleasure in an act of substitution of the forbidden or taken. The terror of oblivion motivates Limonov to never end his pornographic autobiography and make his penis potent, singled out, noticed, and looked at. The Soviet Futurist Manifesto "A Slap in the Face of Public Taste," therefore, Limonov converts into his postmodern pornographic version: "[My] Cock to your face!" (*Podrostok Savenko,* 335), or "I fuck you all, fucked-in-the-mouth bastards! You can all sit on [my] dick!" (*Edichka*, 292).

Critical of this arbitrary inclusion and exclusion of the author into scholarship, I offer a scrutiny of "the Limonov"—both his late- and post-Soviet art and acts—with no intention to underestimate the problems and harm that such radical porn ideology caused or may cause. My analysis is meant to abridge the troubled void of the prevalent anti-Limonov-campaign and show that art and life appear as a discursive whole within the following mirroring scheme: poetry-(porn prose//war)-politics. My standpoint is based on Limonov's poetics of writing and living porn, generated by endless repetitions via logically-opposite paths, conflicting identities, and contrasting aesthetic values that unfold as Penelope's game in remaining faithful to Odysseus. Though Limonov seems too open and explicit, he nevertheless inclines to distort the image of the self in the eyes of the readers by making a mosaic self-portrait that keeps the hero mysterious and out-of-the-way. Limonov is a secret tailored like a patchwork of his famous jacket of the national hero that he himself had sewn out of 114 pieces of cloth with the hero's initials on it, "L" and "E" (Figure 1). The reader is invited to dig out the field of different characters, sexes, discourses, voices, languages, metaphors, symbols, and allegories so as to find the real Limonov, the master player cunningly hidden under transparent masks.

Aware of his fictionality, he tutors the readers how to hold narrative pieces together in his non-linear story rich in frequent digressive narrative excursions.[54] The character's knowledge of his own fictionality in postmodern fiction "often functions as a kind of master-trope for determinism—cultural, historical, psychological determinism, but especially the inevitability of death."[55] Fear of being lost in fiction, of the disappearance of the "I" in bearing out an autobiographical reading is singled out in his novel *The Executioner* (*Palach*, 1986). Limonov holds on readers' voyeuristic phantasy by taking us through his grand porn narrative in which there is the pleasure of being looked at and searched for ("Eduard likes to hide and be searched for"[56]), and the pleasure in looking and searching. Either way, a wish arises to make the other an object and to control the game.

Limonov demonstrates how to approach a cultural and historical monster like him on the example of none other than Adolf Hitler. In his essay, "Adolf Hitler: An Artist," Limonov accentuates Hitler's artistic talent in painting over his military and political actions, because "he was an artist most of his life" and the period of Hitler's dedication to art in his youth shaped what he became later, the Hitler-fascist: "In those years, Hitler read a lot and, as he himself admitted, it was in these years—from 17 to 24—that he absorbed all the ideas that he subsequently developed in *Mein Kampf*. He never stopped drawing."[57] Like his Hitler-artist, Limonov continually reads and learns from others, and would never stop portraying his hero's revolutionary life. Parallel to Hitler's artistic period ("from 17 to 24," symbolically from the

[54] He "reminds us of stories already told, calling upon us to exert our memories to place the characters and incidents mentioned" (Ryen-Hayes, p. 20), or asks us to remember the exact date when he had sex with a woman: "I fucked her on July 4th, 1976, on the bicentennial of America. Remember this symbolic event, gentlemen…" (*Edichka* 182).
[55] Brian McHale. *Postmodernist Fiction*, London: Routledge, 2003, p 123.
[56] Limonov, *Ukroshenie tigra*, p. 63.
[57] *Sviashchennye monstry*, Biblioteka NBP: https://web.archive.org/web/20071012155200/http://nbp-info.ru:80/new/lib/lim_monsters/monstri15.htm (accessed October 18, 2019).

1917 Revolution to Lenin's death in 1924!), Limonov's émigré period is the time when he developed the skeleton for the future Stalinist fascist hero. The reader gets to know the quiet Edik Brutt as Edichka's double (he is also on welfare and resides in the hotel "Winslow," and knows all of Edichka's adventurous sexual stories), who lives an ascetic life in sexual abstinence and reads all the time: "He reads "Ancient poetry," Omar Khayyam, Shakespeare's works, and 'Chinese philosophy' in Russian, of course" (*Edichka* 26). Withdrawing and going into silence and conspiracy allows Edichka to get ready for the next phase in his revolution ("I hid, I went into a secret…I am waiting for my time when my 1917 will come"), for this is the time for mastering the language ("Then I will begin speaking. I am learning right now," *Dnevnik neudachnika,* 343). Limonov always invents the future self in the present. Limonov-the warrior, leader, and politician comprise the holy monster character of the present reborn as the literary product of the past. Limonov states: "I'm the same in Russia as I was in America, and the same as in France," and makes clear that the reason why he is engaged in politics is: "To be alive today and now. Very alive. Super-alive. To continue to be the hero" (*Anatomy of the Hero*).

This evolution of the holy monster's existence resonates with Foucault's notion of the monsters' role in the evolution of living forms. Foucault advocates continuity in discontinuity within the evolutionary scheme that goes from prototype-to monster-to new being. New species are initiated in monsters, "a shady, mobile" form of existence "not of a different nature from species themselves," which assure continuity only in resemblance with the living forms that on their way of becoming abandon "thousands of forms that provide us with a picture of the rudimentary model," and are "subjected to all kinds of metamorphoses and leave behind them no

trace of the path they have followed other than the reference points represented by similitudes."[58] The monster is not defined as an identity per se, but rather as an intermediator appearing at the requirements of the whole to trespass from one to the other form of existence. The monster denotes "the emergence of difference," and therefore does not have a future and will be erased at one point in favor of a more perfected existence (Foucault, 171). Limonov invents literary and political monsters to bring the national hero to a more perfect existence, that in death. His biggest fear is to drop out the game: "I am afraid I will not die the hero" (*Edichka*, 260). The nexus between poetry, pornography, war and political power is endless revolution and evolution through dis/continuity. Dissecting Limonov in the public discourse is thus one side of the game as dismemberment is the adventure toward self-creation, a type of resurrection. Another side is to show how the opposites function as and in the whole.

Part 1: How the Limonov is Made

Limonov is a postmodern production that takes place in a fictional labyrinth governed by "the logic of the simulacrum."[59] Limonov decorates Wilde's threefold pattern, "the cultured and fascinating liar," with the Lacanian triadic structure of the Imaginary, the Symbolic, and the Real. The interconnection of the three identity chains echoes the national hero's development through three "exilic" experiences: 1) imaginary in Paris; 2) symbolic in the West (USA, France); 3) real in post-Soviet Russia. The Borromean knot (the metaphor used by Lacan in

[58] Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences*. London: Routledge Classics, 2002, p. 170.
[59] Fredric Jameson, *Postmodernism: Or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*, Durham: Duke University Press, 2003, p 37.

theorizing relations of the three orders) holds Limonov's triadic exilic porn together as the endless Book of Exodus.

The entire folk epic porn narrative is divided into phases (*etapy*), so that each represents the hero's union/separation with a woman (Svetka, his mother, first Jewish wife Anna, then Elena, and Natalia), followed by a man (childhood gang, black men, soldiers, politicians), a different profession to make up his CV (poet, tailor, busboy, waiter, cook, ditcher, housekeeper, writer, journalist, warrior, politician), and "a radical outfit change" (*radikalnoe pereodevanie*: punk aesthetic, the heroic jacket, communist and fascist uniforms) that dictates the fashion of the discourse.[60] The idea behind this is to gather all the religious and historical details as well as anti-Semitic remarks and discursive stereotypes about Jews in order to form the historical national hero: the "wandering Jew", the "exiled Jew", the wearing eyeglasses, the "pederast," the victim, the executioner, the millionaire, the slave (*rab*), the doctor-psychiatrist, and the patient. The most important, however, is to play the card of "threatening" Jewish eroticism and show him as the big KHUI whose sacred verb would be "to fuck." This plan develops like the story of two friends Pol' and John in *Edichka*.[61] Pol''s tragic fate lies in that he "matured earlier than expected, when it was still impossible to leave the USSR because they did not let Jews go…It was early, and Pol' was already ready: he wanted so much to go from the country he abhorred to his beloved France—to the paradise (*v rai*) that he created in his imagination" (*Edichka*, 222). From the imaginary exile in France in "My," the narrative goes in the direction of making Pol' into the

[60] Olga Matich witnessed how Limonov's outfit change signaled the discursive when she found Limonov in Paris in the 80s dressed in his father's Soviet uniform, sent to him from the USSR: "he tried on the image of Limonov-warrior, starting a new stage of his biographical myth-making and dramatically changing the tactics in his battle…" ("Eduard Limonov: Istoriia avtora i ego personazha" *Zhurnalnyi zal*, 11 Octobar, 2013, at http://magazines.russ.ru/october/2013/11/32m.html).

[61] Both names allude to genitals: Pol' to sex (*pol* in Russian) and Dzon to John: dick, a prostitute client in English slang.

hero KHUI in America, as he "crossed the western border of the USSR illegally in the district of the city X [хуй]" (224). Unlike him, John is more practical and comes to America to become a millionaire. In *Elena*, the narrator, who identifies as "I and Natasha," purports that this game of making Limonov's biography a hypersexual legend is a secret about which it is "strictly prohibited" (*strogo-nastrogo zapreshcheno*) to talk, and that they have to swear to each other not to reveal the truth to anyone: "Do you swear that you will not tell anyone?" – I swore – Do you know what "to fuck" means?" (118–19). The holy secret remains in the verb "to fuck," which allows Limonov's phallic *I* to scandalize, scare, and trick: "I am under the mask of spiteful poets, time, and events; I am the dick of ecstatic events" (*Elena*, 14).

The *modus operandi* of the Limonov-double is based on contest and rivalry, as well as on mutual dependence and complementarity: the imaginary oneness of opposites fostered in a fairy tale-like mimicry of the Soviet simulacrum. As the famous photo showing the naked Elena sitting on a tray before Eduard standing dressed in the national hero's jacket indicates, she is served to the viewers to spin the love-porn story and hide the truth buried in the threads of the mythical jacket and its creator/s (Figure 4). "Take love out of Limonov's story and you will get a version of a cheap sex film under three "X," states Siniavin.[62] Elena is a narrative invention as much as Edichka. Both are originally cast for Limonov's biography on the model of Russian folk characters that bring a frivolous tone to the upcoming tragedy: "In the biography of every Russian hero, it must be Ivan's foolery as a method, as a style. The dirty fool Ivanushka is resting on the stove, and then by joking and playing he takes a royal daughter for his wife, and half a kingdom into the bargain! Echoes! […] The same is a fairy tale about Limonov" ("My").

[62] Igor' Siniavin, "Kupite Edichku," *Russica-81*, New York: Russica Publishers, 1982.

Figure 4: Limonov's handwriting reads: "I in the national hero jacket (that I've sewn out of 114 pieces), and Elena in Eva's costume. Moscow, 1974, before the West."

WE-The Double as Whole

Gathering the epic combatants in the whole (we") begins in the imaginary exile in "My, natsional'nyi geroi," written on the eve of Limonov's emigration. The national hero comes through linguistic reference to the personal pronoun "we," assuming Limonov and Elena's union. Although the title suggests the plurality/duality of single identity (we-hero), the poem is about Limonov conquering the Western world. "We" turns out to be *I* of the Russian people's poet and national hero Eduard Limonov and his reflection, his wife-poetess and the national woman Elena Shchapova. The woman is nothing but the man's, "I's" property, and a product for the exchange in male identity formation: "The national hero Limonov…wanted Elena and he took her…The beggar Limonov took a beautiful woman from her rich husband…, love managed to win" ("My"). In Lacanian terms, this poem exemplifies the mirror stage when Limonov's ego emerges in the reflected image of the hero-self presented as the illusory wholeness of Elena and him.

There is no subject-object distinction in the imaginary synergy of the two. Opposing Soviet Russia's inclination toward collective identity ("In the era when in Russia there are no individuals, he dares to be an individual [*lichnost'*]"), Limonov playfully builds himself as the *I* (as the insignia of capitalist individualism) that will always remain *we*, man and woman, in a fetishistic fantasy of the whole.

The "we" falls apart in the symbolic exile that represents entering the language. Elena once again became the product of an exchange, but now going from the poor Limonov to rich capitalists: "They forcefully took what I loved the most—my Russian girl…she has a cunt for which there are buyers—you, and I don't have the cunt" (*Edichka*, 35). Elena is reduced to female sexual organ of male desire, and upon her departure Edichka, now the inhabitant of the hotel "Winslow" on Madison Avenue, informs the reader that its sign reads "Winsl w," as the letter "O" is missing, and then later that Elena's role model is the character "O" from the French erotic film, *Story of O*. The letter "O" represents the vaginal hole that Limonov has lost. As *Edichka* illustrates, a childhood that examines the third-way émigré experience,[63] the hero's "forceful" physical separation from Elena—the vagina, the mother figure, comes as the trauma of birth of a fragmented male sexual identity in the mirror. Eddie-baby's position is localized *in medias res* by the image of a crying, naked new-born on the hotel balcony, suffering from postpartum trauma. This is the child's cry that Lacan marks with D to denote its demand for love and its mother. The entire narrative is thus revealed as man's search for a new vagina fetish through a formula: *I*'s demand for *O* (I-D-O). At the comprehension of the actual lack of the signifier of his masculinity, his desire arises to annul the discrepancy between the experiences of the single phallic "I-hero" and the collective "we-hero" in a ritual matrimony of the penis and the

[63] Karen Ryan-Hayes, *Contemporary Russian Satire*, Cambridge University Press, 1995, p. 116

vagina: "'We.' Even though I think of myself separately, all the time I go back to this notion of 'we'" (*Edichka,* 29). Limonov replaces the lost O with two other holes, the mouth and the anus, in oral and anal sexual activities with men: "Sexually, I got completely crazy" (*Edichka*, 54). Such a union of the *I* and *O*'s substitutions is linked to erotic self-stimulation and the pleasure of the first *double* orgasm: "Since childhood I have been a lover of every possible savage sensation… as a masturbating teenager, a pale onanist, I had invented a certain homemade method: I had put all kinds of objects into my anal orifice, from a pencil to a candle, sometimes rather thick objects. This double onanism—of the cock and through the anal orifice—was very bestial" (*Edichka,* 92–93). He wants to "officially become a pederast" (69) and, as he claims to be a great actor, he plays a "girl role" and imitates Elena's sexual behavior, requesting from the men: "fuck me, fuck me, fuck me!" (*Edichka*, 92). Homosexual practice is a type of social and cultural protest, and in *His Butler's Story*, the writer reveals that Edichka-the homosexual was the constructed character for the game.

Drawing parallels to Zamiatin's *We* (*My*) seems inevitable, particularly to the avant-garde poet-engineer D-503, the writing automaton who escapes the mechanical system of the OneState by expressing his individuality in the confessional diary through the ambiguous identity of I-We ("I…note down what I see, what I think—or, to be more exact, what we think [that's right: we; and let this WE be the title of these record]").[64] Writing porn begins with Edichka's experience of the split that mirrors D's entering his fictive reality as double: "It's me, and at the same time it's not me" (*We*, 4). The porn formula "I-D-O" renders D-503's being split between his two lovers, I-330 and O-90. Limonov transplants Zamiatin's dystopian world of the OneState (*Iedinoe Gosudarstvo*) precisely into the territory of the United States, where people come to the

[64] Zamiatin, *We*. Transl. Clarence Brown. New York: Penguin Books, 1993, p 4.

"numeric existence" (*tsifirizatsiia sushchestvovaniia*) since they measure everything by money and communicate by exchanging numbers instead of language ("Disciplinary Sanatorium").[65] Limonov, the new postmodern monster, decodes the "old postmodern monster" (Brown, xvii) and turns his imagined machine-programed human life and body based on Frederic Winslow Taylor's efficiency theory into the programed porn life of Edichka, which not by accident begins in the hotel "Winslow," in which Limonov the tailor (Taylor!) constructs his mosaic narrative of the hypersexual body whose efficiency movements will be measured by "fucking" and orgasms.[66] Taylorism as a bioengineering program, focusing on modeling the human body on machines, is given in Limonov as an unbreakable synergy of the phallic hero and various machine-phallic substitutions. He constructs himself as a "Man with a Typewriter, Sewing Machine, and Machine Gun"[67] who rails against those with expensive cars (*mashiny*) as status and masculinity symbols, like his master, the businessman and multimillionaire Steven Gray (aka Great Gatsby), "a living symbol of American efficiency and energy" (*Istoriia*, 415): "I fight and compete with my master, who, though a beast and devil, is a charming creature of modern civilization, a brilliant devil in brilliant cars. Eduard Limonov and Gatsby. Who will win?" (Ibid., 440). In all likelihood, Limonov is the embodiment of a man-car ingrained in the VW "Lemon" from the 60s. He is Hitler's favorite car, the Volkswagen Beetle, which in America, right on the Madison Avenue in New York, becomes "Lemon," in the revolutionary ad penned by a Jew, Julian Koenig. Like Limonov's yin-yang porn, featuring a black and white photo with text that reveals the VW's manufacture defects and poor quality, Koenig's ad brings fame to the

[65] Russian *Iedinoe Gosudarstvo* is also translated as United State, to which "the normal reader's eye involuntarily adds an s" and subconsciously connects Zamiatin's state with the United States (see Brown, *We*, xxiv).
[66] Limonov tells us that in his hotel room, like an icon, "he keeps his photo showing him with a thick book resembling the Bible or a dictionary in his hands, dressed in the jacket made out of 114 pieces, that he himself made, Limonov the monster from the past." (*Edichka* 10)
[67] This is the title of Olga Matich's article published in *Wiener Slawisticher Almanach* in 2011.

brand for its honesty and humor, as no other car brand dared refer to itself as a "lemon." In this context, Taylor's time-and-motion theory turns Limonov's porn into a car race, an "industrial production" of the phallic self in action, motion, movement, and dynamics. Transparency of the glass-enclosed OneState turns into Limonov's discursive explicitness, and D-503's INTEGRAL becomes the model for Limonov the porn engineer in constructing and building the self as KHUI.

In the forced labor camps, émigré life, as an example of the life of social outcasts, gives a picture of the collective tragedy under discussion. Gullible Edichka, who trusted the potent phallic discourse of the imaginary West, becomes one of the system's victims: "You don't want to pay me. And you called me up to the dick, dragged me here from Russia, together with a bunch of Jews" (11). He was drawn out of Soviet Russia's Gulag vaginal darkness only to end up into another camp's blackness, that of welfare centers and super-cheap hotels that are "dirty, hot and smell like a cunt" (*Dnevnik neudachnika*, 343). The hotel "Winslow" (dark, black, mysterious, and accepting various inhabitants) unequivocally evokes female genitals, surrounded by phallic skyscrapers. Another camp-hotel he inhabits smells of things burning because some rooms are burned out completely, in which "alcoholics urinated in the elevator, and also puked there, where the stench of urine and shit never eroded from the infected carpets, where the inhabitants did not seem to have slept at all…but quarreled through the windows of the dirty yard, where garbage and empty bottles were thrown directly from the windows, where the police used to come every day…" (*Istoriia*, 448). He describes the welfare center as a stinky and stony place where poor people, like Limonov, feel cold and are very nervous waiting to be called out (*Edichka*, 289–90). They are like Soviet prisoners that his NKVD father sent to Gulag at a roll-call, which mirror a Nazi death camp. In this context, pronouncing one's name like "Eto ia-

Edichka" has a more tragic tone. Targeting capitalism, Edichka's social revolution begins with fighting for the non-workers' rights as he himself hates working ("I don't look for a job" [11]) because "the hero is my profession" (*Edichka,* 141). Perhaps in this way he opposes the famous Auschwitz slogan, "work sets you free." The malevolent attempt to underplay such discourse is grounded in the "fucking" that sets him free. His awakening masculinity needs the other—O—as symbol of oxygen for a suffocating Jew. As a self-liberated camp survivor he is heading towards his own Eiffel Tower of gold, becoming the super-famous porn star Limonov, a lemon-yellow Star of David that marks him as a Jew.[68] "Sex, as you have probably already guessed, gentlemen, was the only way I could get my revenge" (*Istoriia*, 618). Playing through "fucking" brings simultaneously sexual pleasure to woman and man, *O* and *I.*[69]

Eto ia—Edichka and *Eto ia—Elena* are put in dialogue to render how the man and the woman in a pact plan the entire narrative together. *Eto ia—Elena* is just another cyphered document consisting of Elena's convoluted novel, written in the genre of "interview with myself"; her poems and photos ideally confirming her existence outside Limonov's text. Elena Shchapova is a literary myth, producing with her book the effect of "the Pygmalion contrariwise." As a literary character she is "arguing, coming off the book pages and taking upon the image, imposed by the author's imagination," asserts Jaroslav Mogutin in the novel's postface. Mogutin quotes a certain Vladislav Len: "the poetess Shchapova does not exist. All her poems were written overnight by me and Limonov."[70] Limonov conjures up the identity of Elena Sergeevna Kozlova-Shchapova de Karli, a very careful, secret ritualized forgery by which she

[68] Edichka's character Slava David, who somehow follows his path (appears as a childhood friend in Kharkov, then lives in his and Elena's apartment in Moscow, and then comes to America) indicates this connection between fame/stardom and David.
[69] "I am not the guy who seeks pleasure only for myself…I am a good partner, I get pleasure from the moans, screams, and enjoyment of the other" (*Edichka*, 90).
[70] Jaroslav Mogutin. "Elena Shchapova as a Literary Myth" in *Eto ia — Elena*, pp. 334–42.

literally becomes "the first Russian photo model in America," made in the discursive studio (*masterskaia*), which, it turns out, is "a fairytale palace" (*skazochnyi dvorets, Edichka,* 136). By a keen observation of the photos of Elena and Limonov one could say they are made as a collage of different body parts and faces, and through heavy image-editing given as evidence of his and Elena's life, career, and marriage/s. Elena Shchapova is the product of a dishonest montage that falsifies her identity.[71] The photoshopping and invention of Elena and other female characters serve to govern forward the autobiographical narrative, mislead the reader and move the story away from Natalia. In *Anatomy of the Hero*, Limonov admits: "In 1985 I wrote the book *Taming the Tiger in Paris*. As in the vast majority of my books, the story and events in it were based on the real, MY and Natalia Medvedeva's love stories."[72] The narrator in *Elena* confesses that while

[71] Besides *Eto ia—Elena*, many of Elena's photos appear in the article "Elena Shchapova-de Karli: 'Sal'vador Dali khotel, chtoby ia stala ego model'iu,'" at http://karavanistoriy.narod.ru/0203_06.pdf (last accessed June 1, 2018), where certain Shchapov, the artist-graphic who was making posters and illustrated children books, is saying to her: "If the police come to us, have in mind: I teach you painting." The poem "In the Album (A Joke)" in *Elena* is also telling of this manipulation (302). Maintaining (E)Lenin's body alive comes as a more successful experiment than the project of preserving Lenin's body: "We managed to create a new type of man, the man-copy (*cheloveka-kopiiu*). It seems that Soviet communists did not manage to do this in sixty some years […]" (*Palach, Sobranie sochinenii*, Vol. 3, p. 261).

[72] According to numerous biographical references, Natalia was seventeen (as the date of the Russian Revolution!) when she left the USSR. Her husband, Limonov asserts, "was a Jew, and when Jewish emigration began he left…thanks to him she, too, left the country" ("Kak ukhodili kumiry," Natalia Medvedeva DTV 2016, at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Gmp3bA6bi3s). Natalia Medvedeva (1958–2003) was as a singer, model, author, poetess, journalist, actress, and designer. Like Limonov, Natalia was a cultural enigma, "the riddle of Russian bohemia"; the queen of the underground and scandals (*skandalistka*); the "crazy" and "wild" performer writing and living her life in a style of a rock-and-roll and Hollywood movie stars, who constantly evoked harsh criticism and admiration. See Anastasiia Gus'kova, "Natal'ia Medvedeva: Zagadka russkoi bogemy," *Fashion Time*, at http://www.fashiontime.ru/celebrities/life/3084.html (last accessed June 1, 2018). She began her career in emigration as a model, actress and nightclub singer of American punk subculture. When she moved to Paris with Limonov in the 80s, she continued to sing, but also worked as a journalist for the magazines Le Figaro, Madame, and Idiot International and wrote a few confessional autobiographical novels (*Mama, I'm in Love with a Thief*, *Hotel California*, *Love and Alcohol*, *My Struggle* (*Moia bor'ba*, which recalls Hitler's *Mein Kampf*), infused with taboo vocabulary and subjects on brutal sex, prostitution, drugs and alcohol. When her novels appeared in Russia, rumors emerged that her writing is utterly produced under Limonov's influence and even that he wrote all her books. Upon their return to Russia, Limonov went into politics and Natalia remained focused on music production and stage performances. She was known for her extravagant styling, make-up, and leather S&M costumes worn on her tall, bony, androgynous body. She also occupied the place of perpetual cultural liminality and was subjected to public divisions: "the Russian literary world viewed her as a singer, the music world viewed her as a literary personage and a provocative newbie on the chaotic Russian rock and pop scenes, and the cultural world in general viewed her as scandalous." See Teresa L. Polowy, "Performance in the Fiction and Life of Nataliia Medvedeva," *Canadian Slavonic Papers* 55, no. 1-2 (March-June 2013): 165–85, quote on p. 180).

one of them was busy with writing serious articles another manipulated the photos they needed for this illegal business: "I did sex change (*seks-chendz*). That is, I turned into an attractive boy dressed in woman's clothing….Finally, I come down the huge studio inside the Statue of Liberty….And at the end I put in circulation the heavy weapons, my photos, and the enemy steps back" (*Elena*, 181). We often see Limonov obsessed with the idea of intelligence agencies following him and keeping his speech and actions under surveillance. The attached name Kozlova keeps Elena behind the magic sign of "koza" (*goat*)—the sign of the horns often shown by the rock and heavy metal underground bands on stage in the 1970s as "the ancient code to defeat the "evil eye" and its power"—which gives protection to the real Limonov from the public's eye.[73]

Elena appears as a "model participating in the show" (*Edichka*, 227), who comes up with ideas that Limonov-the-tailor needs to transform into a literary text: "We were sitting, drinking and she was explaining to me her quite insane idea about some fabric rolls (*"o rulonakh tkani"*), in which she wants to wrap herself up so as to create apparel and some other projects from that fabric—I was supposed to tailor it" (Ibid., 278). The "fabric rolls" speak of the fabricated roles of Edichka and Elena for the Limonov porn project. This holy trinity that Limonov-the-creator conveys ("God is for all—one, but in three faces (*v trekh litsakh*)" (*Elena*, 174) is built in their forgery factory (*nasha fabrika*) called "The Red Triangle" (Ibid., 177), from which Pushkin the pornographer appears. Limonov the national hero is the ultimate Father, the Soviet/Russian literary God Pushkin, showing his presence in absence through Edichka the Son and Elena the Holy Spirit. He is created through the polyphony of (non)existences and voices in dialogue with

[73] See Steve Appleford "Odyssey of the Devil Horns" (September 9, 2004) at HORNS https://web.archive.org/web/20071122030548/http://www.lacitybeat.com/article.php?id=1216&IssueNum=66 (Last accessed Jun 1, 2018).

each other as a polyvalent textual body. Limonov takes the father Pushkin as the principal idol to undergird the logic of his porn labyrinth, in which discursive "fucking" becomes the game of the famous couple Pushkin and Natalia. Pushkin defines Limonov's yin-yang project because he is seen as the embodiment of a "Russian psycho, a mixture of exotic Africa and Russia," who exemplifies "love for the opposite of one's nature," which explains Russians' love for Pushkin.[74]

Symbolically, with his poem "Natasha," the young Eddie becomes the "winner of the poetic competition of the House of Culture of the Stalin district" and receives two awards, the Gramota certificate and dominos. Both are emblematic of the Soviet ideology: the former implies Soviet ideological language and writing, the latter the Soviet pogrom "game" soaked in human blood as dominos come wrapped up in a red paper. Eddie decides to adjust them to his play. He cries: "I can put your certificate on my dick" (*Podrostok Savenko,* 338), and then puts dominoes randomly on the table as if sentencing his girlfriend Svetka to death for betraying him with another boy, "to kill Svetka? Or to kill Shurik?" He decides not to kill anyone (Ibid., 360). Like Stalin's, Limonov's porn Gulag is the place for both real and imagined/fictional enemies from past and present. Together with a novel he began writing, Eddie jolts down a secret "red list" in his notebook, consisting of "duty assignment and names" of "the members of the Political Bureau of the Party, generals, ministers and secretaries of the regional committees, who need to be removed. Eliminated" (Ibid., 321). As this culture fashioned his violence and "love for weapons" ("I consider a weapon a holy and mysterious symbol: an object used to take a man's life cannot but be holy and mysterious," *Edichka,* 82), he takes an alternative but equally

[74] Eduard Limonov, *Russkoe psikho*. Online Biblioteka NBP, at https://web.archive.org/web/20071112064524/http://nbp-info.com:80/new/lib/lim_ruspsiho/12.html. As much as he is God, Limonov is also the poet-dog, like Mayakovsky, after whom French children ran shouting: "Dog! Dog!" ("My"). As a faithful dog, upon breaking-up with Elena, he searches for his new master, "a lonely dog who lost its owner, who is dreaming of bonding with someone and serving (*sluzhit'*)" (*Edichka*, 250). He is the perfect mirror image, the *God-Dog* (as one of his characters emphasizes). Pushkin's exotic origin is inscribed in his lemony name.

powerful weapon to shoot. He goes to a synagogue where he sticks his knife several times in the floor and kisses it every time he takes it out, swearing: "I am never going to slaughter, ladies and gentlemen Jews, or Catholics, or Protestants, I just crazily love weapons, and I do not have my Temple where I would pray to the Great Knife or Great Pistol" (Ibid., 84). Like Armalinsky's, Limonov's virtual porn Temple is dedicated to the national poet Pushkin, where the son prays to the knife for the father's castration and to the gun for making a discursive hole, the vagina through which he is born. Limonov characterizes the vagina as a "bullet hole" (*pulevaia dyrochka*, *Dnevnik neudachnika,* 336). Limonov enters the game as a particular domino, the double blank or zero-zero (0-0), since he recognizes himself in the mysterious and dangerous shortsighted "00" with eyeglasses, who was sent by his father to the Soviet death camp (*Podrostok Savenko*, 263).[75] As such, he works on the Russian language (Gramota) distortion.

Limonov-Pushkin the Pornographer

The birth of Limonov-Pushkin the pornographer arises at the moment of literary patricide. Referring to the famous futurists' request to, "throw Pushkin, Dostoevsky, Tolstoy, etc., overboard from the Ship of Modernity," Limonov asserts that Pushkin himself fell from the ship of modernity a long time ago because he is too prosaic, naïve, and boring, describing for us the love story of Onegin and Tatiana, who never slept together. He is not the national hero because he is so banal, and his works remain now to be mere Russian calendar verses. He is not needed anymore because new thinking requires new love stories. "Pushkin is so outdated that he has already become our nothing (*nashe nichto*)" (*The Holy Monsters*). The absence of Pushkin

[75] Eyeglasses became a part of the punk style "a la Limonov" (including the T-shirt "limonka," or hairstyle "Ai-Limonov") that young people imitated in the 90s. On the stage, Natalia frequently wore a pair of glasses with one transparent and one black lens indicative of their yin-yang "we."

epitomizes a discursive hole, a zero (O) left after this symbolic castration in turning "*nashe vse*" into "*nashe nichto*", through which Limonov comes to existence. The national hero Pushkin obtains his double, the anti-hero Limonov, who presents himself as the Nietzschean Superman (*sverkhchelovek-Übermensch*) acting as "a language reformer, an innovator, as if he [were] a young 'cleaning man' who had come to the unkempt room of Russian literature to tear away the cobweb in the corners, open windows and let the light and stale street air in" (*Ukroshenie tigra*, 28).

Limonov stands against elitism in literary language with his scandalous linguistic experimentation rooted in the futurist tradition in the manner of Mayakovsky, Khlebnikov and the Oberiu writers.[76] He identifies with Khlebnikov, for he sees him as a unique poet and "holy genius" who won against the Pushkin myth by symbolically decapitating/castrating the father with his "translogical language" (*zaum*), neologisms, and esoteric poetry: "He alone should be standing there holding in his hands the "curly front" removed from the mighty meat and bones─ the head of Pushkin. Of course, he understood perfectly well that he had only one rival—Pushkin. With all the others, he did not compete" (*The Holy Monsters*). Limonov-Pushkin claims that when he met Medvedeva he was surprised to hear that she already knew his poems by heart. Of course, Natalia knew Pushkin, and this fact upsets Limonov because "this meant that he would have to compete with his own reflection, imagined by her. To fight with the mighty shadow (*s mogushchestvennoi ten'iu*)" (*Ukroshenie tigra*, 26). Limonov's libertinism emerges through the shade of Pushkin to parallel Pushkin's "The Shade of Barkov" (*Ten' Barkova*).

[76] Matich, "The Moral Immoralist," p. 526.

By means of two main "linguistic anomalies," obscenity and foreignisms,[77] Limonov's "émigré Russian" is turned into a linguistic perversion upholding the writer to present his Russian language superior to Pushkin's. In accordance with his poetics, *mat* pivots around the word "dick" (*khui*) and its boundless modulations. So much of what Limonov writes exemplifies the way this word can be used as "a substandard oral term of abuse expressing revulsion, disgust, aversion, contempt, and multiple variations upon such feelings."[78] The dick (*khui*) as unprintable word is established in writing as the present absence, the oral representation of Limonov's non-existence, which is in the vulgar lexicon often taken to represent *nothing* or *nobody*. Given its literal and metaphorical usage in language, however, the *khui* is both imaginary and real. Often Russian readers are misled by means of Limonov's quasi-estrangement. Like the well-known folk expressions or sayings containing this forbidden word, he uses in their exact meaning rather than the figurative. Such is the case when he says he could not make himself a dick in Soviet Russia: "*Mne tam delat' ne khuia*" (*Edichka*, 17), presuming that the usual rhetorical approach to reading these words as "I have nothing to do there" would fleece his intention. This practice implies that the truth lies in the word *khui* only if taken as is, undressed and with everything out. With his linguistic *khui* Limonov turns the Russian language, the linguistic virgin mother, into a whore to reflect Elena's promiscuity, the S&M games that she plays, and her female body, which is for sale and exchange. Orgies, rape, and ritual killing appear as parts of the language-play through the violent penetration of Russian by English in following ways: through words transcribed in the original (*fucking business*); or transliterated into the Cyrillic alphabet (*middl-eiddz, parti, boi-frend, dildo, fak, eleveitor, sabvei*); Russified Anglicisms (*velferovec, daun-*

[77] Dreizin states that "a major offense against the Russian literary language next to obscenity is 'littering' (*zasorenie*) it with foreignisms." (Ibid.) See also Edward J. Brown. "The Nation" 245, no. 9, September 26, 1987, at https://ed-limonov.livejournal.com/1001874.html (last accessed Jun 12, 2018).
[78] Brown, "Beyond the Pale," 382.

taunovskii); literal translation of English phrases (*delat' liubov'* [to make love], *poluchit' telefonnyi zvonok* [to get a phone call]); or the so-called "wrong translation" of English words into Russian (*real'nyi*, *publichnyi* to render the English 'real' and 'public,' such as when Edichka quotes Pushkin "*Ia muzhchina publichnyi* [*Edichka,* 119]), and playing with translation and transliteration within compound words (*biznes-operatsiia, feshen dom, striptiz-gerl, sjurpriz-orgiia*).[79] Such "linguistic realism" from an alienated Russian émigré, often used to render his culture shock, also corresponds to the quest for the new masculinity in the West. If Russian *mat* appropriates the phallic power of Limonov's male rhetoric, then borrowed things as "alien objects" (Dreizin) function as artificial phalluses or discursive sex toys imported from the West and inserted unexpectedly, by force into the mother (tongue). Trying to satisfy "western" Elena and lead her to "bestial orgasms," Edichka takes advantage of an artificial western member. The language is inseparable from the body and the "metamorphosis of language in an alien environment" manifests the sexed body of the double.[80] And so the linguistic confusion of cross-language tendencies reflects on Edichka's body through cross-dressing and bisexuality.

Another feature of Limonov's language revolution is the deviation from traditional norms of transliterating Anglicisms. Going against Russian standard orthography and following instead American pronunciations, he writes: *badi* (body), *stap* (stop), *madel* (model), *khat-dog* (hot-dog). Limonov was enforcing a new linguistic truth mostly by omitting the letter "o," that is, replacing it with an "a." The *O* that stands for Elena-vagina is absent, like the missing letter from the sign of the hotel "Winslow." Like Derrida's deconstruction concept of *différance,* which shows the graphic difference as "a" replaces the standard "e" in difference to denote non-self-presence in

[79] See Felix Dreizin. "Russian Style in Emigration: Edward Limonov's Anglicisms," *Wiener Slawistischere Almanach* 22, 1988.
[80] Leonid Geller. "Prigotovitel'nye zametki." *Kovcheg,* No.5, 1981.

writing and discourse, Limonov's "graphic intervention" underlines the difference between the silent "o" in pronunciation and the "a" existing only in phonetic writing. The discourse is a man's legacy, while the O-woman/vagina is replaceable with an "a," a substitute because she is not heard. This evokes Derrida's "inaudible misplacement," signifying the difference between two vowels that "remain purely graphic: it is read, or it is written, but it cannot be heard."[81] Only in photos, if taken as a system of phonetic autobiographical writing stills, is such difference visible: each woman gets an actual face (mother, Anna, Elena, Natasha). In Limonov's narrative, on the contrary, all women are "a," the sign used for the "little other" in Lacan, appearing instead as a single woman-vagina, Pushkin's O(ther) Natalia: "My girls are like a single woman of mine, one woman with multiple faces and bodies" (*Istoriia,* 611). The graphic difference also vanishes, claims Derrida, for it belongs to the order that resists this opposition, "announced in a movement of *différance* (with an a) between two differences or two letters, a *différance* which belongs neither to the voice nor to writing" and is located "as the strange space that will keep us… between speech and writing, and beyond the tranquil familiarity which links us to one another, occasionally reassuring us in our illusion that they are two" (5). Elena is the little other that is not, a mere visual projection that remains between the visual and imaginary, creating an illusion of two (different) women. Elena and Natalia merge in the image of Pushkin's wife: "Elena the Beautiful, the best woman in Moscow…and in Russia, 'Natali Goncharova'" (*Edichka,* 271). Pushkin's birthday is taken as the symbolic date for both Edichka's and Elena's union and separation. Edichka visits Jean-Pierre's studio where Elena first betrays him on their anniversary: "It was June 6th, birthday of our poet Pushkin and exactly five years ago that I met Elena" (Ibid., 131). In *Elena*, this day is marked as *Rozhdestvo* (Birth/Christmas) because on June 6th, 1978, the

[81] Jacques Derrida, *Margins of Philosophy*, trans. Alan Bass, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982, p. 3.

popular photo of Natalia Medvedeva showed up on the cover of the New Wave American rock band The Cars' first eponymous album. This photo, showing a smiling girl with striking red-lipstick and red nails behind a transparent car wheal, brought Natalia the fame; her face became known world-wide. To illustrate Natalia's movements, Limonov makes Elena marry a rich Italian, becoming the countess de Karli (of the Cars!). This is needed to eliminate Elena from the story and leave room for Natalia to enter the narrative as a literary character with a real face.[82] Once again Elena shows up to spend a night with Natalia in *Ukroshenie tigra,* and initiate the fusion of the two women in a single copulative body. Their position in the bed—the new wife Natalia on the top of the old wife Elena—speaks to the narrative and the female character as a palimpsest.[83] Elena is also given the patronymic Sergeevna as she is the female heir of Pushkin's porn tribe. Limonov calls Natalia "the girl from my own tribe" (*Istoriia,* 615). Before the Moscow audience he said: "Pushkin had *The Captain's Daughter*, and I am the Captain's Son."[84]

[82] This was a sudden idea that occurred to Limonov: "You should get married" (*Elena,* 136). To remove Elena from the story, Limonov shows her in the chapter "The New Elena" in *Edichka* as the poor model drastically regressed in her business. Coming into view, an unprofessional and goofy model, Elena steps off the photo-realistic discursive stage: "…having stepped forward on the tongue (*podvinuvshis' na iazyk*), already at its end, right there where it's necessary to show herself close-up, Elena all of a sudden begins spinning…so that we, the viewers, are not able to recognize her face any more. Elena's smeared features appear: hers—not hers—you will not understand, and she slips away from the tongue (*ona smyvaetsia s iazyka*)" (*Edichka,* 276). She is taken from Emil Zola-style naturalism into an obscurity run by allegories and linguistic ciphers: "If the beautiful agency house of Zoli is taken for a certain level, Elena d e s c e n d e d into Zhigulin's studio" (*Edichka*, 266). The entire Zhigulin's studio "is riddled with lines of force, everything in it collides, intersects, squeals, and discharging happens" (*Edichka,* 267). The reference to the famous Soviet car brand Zhiguli, often associated with gigolo, is obvious, which means that Zhigulin's studio is the designated zone for real Cars, Limonov and Natalia, "the fuckers," and thus "nothing good in life for Elena could be found in this studio" (*Edichka,* 266).

[83] See Aeksandr Gol'dshtein. *Rasstavanie s Narcissom: Opity pominal'noi ritoriki* (Chapter "Eduard Velikolepnyi"), 2011, at https://www.e-reading.club/chapter.php/1033854/42/Goldshteyn_-_Rasstavanie_s_Narcissom._Opyty_pominalnoy_ritoriki.html.

[84] "Meeting with the Writer Limonov."

Spacing and Voicing the Self

Taking on the identity of the iconic, exilic persona of the Russian historical and literary past, Limonov creates an exilic atmosphere in which Limonov-Pushkin comes to life. I suggest that unfortunate Edichka is designed on the model of Pushkin's poet in his poem "Desire for Fame" (*Zhelanie slavi*, 1825), who believes "that a terrible day of separation would never come" but then he faces tragedy of a woman's infidelity, which comes with the unbearable burden of the single life: "…tears, sorrow, / betrayals, slander, all that on my head / suddenly falls down (*obrushilosia*) / … / What am I, where am I? I am standing (*stoiu*)…" The poet takes on revenge, asking for such great fame that his name echoes everywhere: "And now / I am thirsty for a new desire: / I wish fame so that by my name / Your ear gets injured all the time, so that by me / you are surrounded, so that by a loud rumor / Everything, everything around you would speak of me."[85] As misfortune of the split fell down (*obrushilosia*) on Pushkin's lyrical subject, miserable Edichka, before even introducing himself in *Edichka*, confesses he is happy for the opportunity to be able to fall down on the readers with his voice (*obrushit' na vas svoi golos*, 10)). Like god's punishment, the voice is coming from the above, the hotel balcony, and its carrier carried away by the verb *obrushit'*, implying a violent, swift attack, acts as a graphoman: "I started running on without introducing myself. I forgot….I got carried away" (Ibid.). The phallic "I" controls the narrative flow and fights against the world through language as sperm dissemination over readers.

Pushkin's poem "If You Happen to Travel" (*Esli ekhat' vam sluchitsia,* 1835) is most likely taken to position Edichka Limonov on the balcony of the hotel "Winslow" from where he

[85] A. S. Pushkin, *Sobranie sochinenii v desiati tomakh*, Vol. 2, Moscow: Gosudarstvennoe izdatel'stvo khudozhestvenoi literature, 1959, at https://rvb.ru/pushkin/tocvol2.htm.

calls the travelers/readers to look at him: "If you happen to travel / From **** to *, / Where L. flows / Between the sloping banks, / From the big road on the right, / Between the field and the village, / You will find an oak-wood, / To the left is a garden and a manor house. // In the summer, at one o'clock,… / Idly in passing amused by his journey, / The traveler looks at the invisible / on the house, on the balcony."[86] Limonov writes: "Passing by *between* one and three o'clock on Maddison Avenue, at the intersection with 55th Street, don't be lazy to turn your head and look up at the dirty windows of the black hotel 'Winslow.'" There, on the top 16th floor, on one of the three hotel balconies, the one in the *middle,* I sit half naked (*Edichka,* 9, my emphasis). To compare this with Pushkin's verses, the opening of *Edichka* abounds not only with space liminality, with the emphasis on being "in-between" or "in the middle," but also introduces a transitional time zone (between 1–3 o'clock) as a threshold between the life and death of his triadic existence, determining where and when the phallus is born. Limonov elucidates this liminal existence in his poem "I Used to be a Cheerful Figure" (1979) through grammatical irregularity and semantic ambiguity: "And at two o'clock and half-past second / if someone comes around—and I lies (*i v dva chasa i v pol-drugogo/ zaidet li kto, a ia lezhit*). "V pol-drugogo' looks like an illogical time: first, it should imply half-past three but it reads "half-past second," as alternative to English half-past two, in which case this line is telling absurd time—two o'clock and half-past two. Second, instead of the Russian *polvtorogo*, the form *v pol-drugogo* is utilized certainly to position the cultural hero-trickster right in the sex (*pol*) of the other (*drugoi*). What seems to be the lapsus linguae "I lies" speaks of the lyrical subject's double "I", defining the powerless, flaccid penis. Though endowed by his tongue/language, well developed upper body part, Edichka as the phallic character is still invisible to others, for his

[86] Ibid.

lower part is feeble, "my member pale against the background of the rest of my body" (*Edichka*, 10). The presence of Limonov-God is defined by simulacrum through his invisible existence on the balcony, as the penultimate Pushkin's verse conveys.[87] Pushkin's flowing "L" becomes Limonov, who "is wandering on the eternal Broadway river" (302), because the fluidity of his existence is characteristic of the flowing sperm that tends to spread widely, all the way to the other side, from the West-bank to the East-bank. "Life flows like a river, the muddy river flows like life", writes Limonov (*Palach*, 263).

The temporality of male sexual function governs the life of the phallic hero, as he manipulates and accelerates time through many short episodes of orgasmic pleasure.[88] Eddie's sexual maturity arises against Pushkin-the-calendar writer within the context of historical time, the anniversary of the October Revolution, when he, after each masturbation, tears out a new calendar sheet to clean the sperm off his penis (*Podrostok Savenko*, 278), and so speeds up the time for his own revolution. He is the penis of action whose ejaculate runs in time through different space, countries, and continents, beginning with the French publication of *Eto ia* ─ *Edichka* in 1980: "I began to flow (*potek*) (walk, ride, run), spreading across Europe like German armored divisions" (*Edichka*, 297). The French edition is significant because it came out under the provocative title *The Russian Poet Prefers Big Blacks*, which brings Edichka's homosexual adventures with black men and Pushkin into the sight. Edichka and "I" (*ia*) from the Russian title

[87] The last two verses in Pushkin reads: *Putnik smotrit nevidimo / na semeistvo, na balkon*. The word "*nevidimo*" as adverb implies "invisibly" referring to the traveler's act of looking. But if taken as the short adjective "invisible," which I chose in accordance to Limonov's linguistic play, it renders the *nobody* on the hotel balcony.

[88] Limonov-Khui dwells on the drawback of his limited lifetime: "Now I peacefully and calmly think of death every day…In fact, I still have 20–25 years of normal active life, until the moment when the body is worn down to such an extent that it will cause more inconvenience than pleasure. In these 20–25 years I must squeeze myself—my thoughts, books, actions, and my sex life—fuck exactly those women I dream of fucking, if I want to (suddenly) kill men and women, I, too, must hurry. If I want to have children, then I should get them in the middle of this period, if suddenly I have very high dreams to find a party, or state, or religion, everything should be finished by 2001–2005 A.D., gentlemen" (*Istoriia*, 582).

are replaced with "the Russian poet" because, Limonov asserts, the reader has to know who that "I" is (Ibid.). To gain such fame Limonov-Pushkin first takes action in getting his "black" half to his "white Russian" half in the Central Park where he writes verses, being directly exposed to the sun, in the hope of getting tan: "Turn black! Turn black, my half" (Ibid., 256). Then, his ventures with the black men, given as a childish theatrical game in which oral sex predominates, are necessary for the intake of the father's "black blood" into Limonov-the-son's male discourse.

Edichka first finds the largest dark spot in a children's sandy playground, and squeezing between some iron beams he steps on the stage (*pomost*) where he performs his violent sex game with Kris, beginning with the oral sex initiated by him: "I wanted his cock in my mouth. I felt it would give me pleasure… And I took his cock in my mouth and for the first time ran my tongue around its strained head…" (*Edichka,* 89). He feels extremely happy when Kris's sperm fills up his mouth, and he voraciously licks and swallows all the "spilled semen from Kris's cock and balls," thinking "it is the taste of being alive" (90). This signals Pushkin's revival and a timeless oral connection with him ("We will always be together" [91]), and through their communication the son's language reform of the father's proper language begins: "We talked….We inwardly conversed in that gibberish language…and then I taught him a few Russian words…these were bad words: dick, love, and something else in such a manner. I wanted him in the midst of this prose, I completely got loose, hell knows what I began creating" (92). Once Pushkin's potent black language-sperm is taken in and revised with *mat,* Edichka now more freely goes for another homosexual affair with the "lower of all" black, young thief Johnny with "an enormous dick" (180). As with Kris, this episode starts in the darkness outside, with reflections of knives and guns, and fighting with Johnny that eventually turns into kissing, oral sex, and ejaculation into Edichka's mouth. Yet Johnny surprises Edichka by giving him oral pleasure: "Then, he put

me on his chest and began kissing my member. He had nice big lips […]. He was doing his business very well […]. He liked this job, he sucked my pale dick in […]" (180). This is telling of the pleasure Limonov receives from his own Pushkinian narrative that looks so real: "I stop seeing myself an actor on the stage platform, in word, I relaxed and enjoyed" (180). Such self-indulgence in his own story scares him, but he encourages himself to go to the end, thinking of Natalia's pleasure, as imagining the photo of the masturbating woman with symptomatic red polished nails helped him reach climax: "Fearing that I would nevertheless drop out of the game, that my dick will fall down, I decided to concentrate and finish," but only at "the awareness of her inside-out cunt that I saw as if with my own eyes, the ill-polished *red* nail on her little finger with which she was chafing the upper part of the genital slit […]—I came" (180). In this male-oriented Oedipal discursive system, the woman is not given direct access to it, and without the experience of the magic black sperm she is not able to carry out the discourse: "I knew Pushkin's poems but there was no black blood in me (*no negritianskoi krovi vo mne ne bylo*)" (*Elena*, 124). Instead, she is getting linguistically inseminated through the mediator, the independent son Edichka carrying the black sperm, on the very symbolic day when he asks readers to remember the 4th of July, Independence Day; when he "fucks" his first American woman, Roseanna.

Roseanna stands for the Jewish-speaking vagina,[89] offering Eduard a secure place to be, like the exit from the exilic Gulag: "We shall all die. Be here, here it is warm and moist, burning and tranquil, and only here does a man feel he is where he belongs. That was what her cunt

[89] Roseanna is a Jew whose parents escaped from Nazi Germany, who runs away from the trauma of being beaten in school by entering Russian literature and language and becoming "almost Russian" (*Edichka*, 184). Symbolically, their relationship is based on the language of exchange and translation: Limonov translates philosophers and journalists from Ukrainian into Russian for her, which she then translates into English. Roseanna symbolizes the vaginal split as the embodiment of discursive discrepancy. Her name Roseanna (Rozanna) recalls the color (roza) of the vagina that belongs to Edichka ("she is mine (*svoia*)," "we are unanimous"), but is also the uncontrollable "shiza" and reminds him of his schizophrenic ex-wife Anna (Ibid., 184–86). (Pushkin's Anna Kern!).

said…and I agreed" (*Edichka*, 192). The divine feeling of wholeness and protection is annihilated at the next moment when Roseanna herself starts speaking "improper" Russian: "It would have been all right in English, but she said it in Russian…her accented Russian had a terrible effect on me..." (193). Her accented Russian evokes Stalin's Georgian accent and "a rustic accent" of the Soviet authorities that irritate Edichka when he watches their public speeches on TV *(Podrostok Savenko*). It also renders Natalia's knowledge of the "old Pushkin," whom these Soviets misused for their ideology. Therefore, Roseanna's accent terrifies Eddie so much that his "dick did not fill to full strength" anymore, and thus he performs oral sex-reeducation: "I opened her legs up, took out my tongue, so necessary to me now, […] and then led it over her vaginal lips. O, her body appreciated this pleasure. […] Then I checked out all the little corners and cul-de-sacs of her cunt, this was essential to me, I knew my business, I needed to taste where everything lay, and only then could I begin to act […] I fucked her with my tongue" (*Edichka*, 193–94). This narrative system, like a clepsydra vessel, works on the principle of inflow/input and outflow/output, from the temporary male to the eternal female. This transition is depicted as pastoral magic imagery in *Elena*, showing the falling star and the conversation between the milkmaid (*doiarka*) and the speaking grass when the matter of the "wake over words" arises, just to reduce the discourse into a single syllable word, that of the young cow's: "Moo" (*Mu-u*) (163–64); which, written in the Cyrillic alphabet, looks exactly like the transcribed Latin *My=We*. The so-called "cow language" was a secret tongue used by Jewish nomads in the past for the conscious self-preservation of a separate identity in a foreign land.[90] Elena Shchapova carries out the story of "We" voiced by the cow, since she might represent Shchapovo, the dairy farm formed as an experimental enterprise of animal husbandry in the

[90] Yuri Slezkine, *The Jewish Century*, Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2004, pp. 19-20.

USSR, where the milk processing business developed. In this circular process of sperm-milk exchange, Limonov appears as the milkmaid (*doiarka*) and the woman-vagina the leaky milk jar ("Ia dyriavaia banka") holding the now black milk-sperm of this fairy tale (*lesnaia skazka*) (*Elena*, 164–65). She thus gains the three-fold status of the creation, muse, and creator (*ty-porozhden'e, ty-muza, ty-tvorets*, Ibid., 160), and is empowered to kill Limonov-Pushkin at any time just by opening the jar. Edichka's biggest fear, which comes up as a bizarre day dream, is that the wild, crazy woman might reveal the secret and kill the Limonov-Pushkin-khui.[91] In regard to Elena's infidelity he states: "I forgave her betrayal of Edichka but will never forgive her betrayal of the hero" (*Edichka*, 140).

This feedback narrative system characterizes the entire phallic tale that spins as a massive narrative loop of a circular quality, in which Limonov's hypostases are born and die. It goes back to Borges's "The Garden of Forking Paths" and the notion of infinity of stories in Chinese-box worlds—one inside another, the multiplied worlds form nested structures: novels-within-the novel, films-within-the-novel, still photographs-within-the-novel.[92] Seemingly chaotic at first, this super-logic playing system has its meticulously programed ritual of moving the hrono-erectus in space *ad infinitum*. Pol', now the businessman running the company "Beautiful Moving" hires Edichka to move the narrative from the dark hotel "Winslow" into Steven Gray's White House, where the story of his next novel, *His Butler's Story*, takes place: "It's time to change the place, the hotel "Winslow" outlived its usefulness" (*Edichka*, 291). The possessive adjective "his" in the title is telling that *he* is a well-known phallic character. Edichka finds the

[91] "A crazy (*besnovataia*) girl was trying to open a little box in which lived a constructed being (*mysliashchee sushchestvo*). Wind-blown, she bent over the capsule (*korobochka*), gnawed at it, but could not get it open. Finally, by some sort of artfulness the crazy turned the mechanical device around and opened the capsule, and from it out poured the stinking brown liquid comparable to sperm,─ the being was killed, I was horrified, and the crazy was laughing" (*Edichka*, 151).
[92] Brian McHale. "Chinese-Box Worlds" in *Postmodernist Fiction*, London and New York: Routledge, 2003, p 113.

model for the millionaire's character in the "Playboy Club": "I need him for the dick, the gray person with a check book."[93] This is John's wish fulfillment to become a millionaire. As Kron states, Limonov is a "*homo hieraticus,* a hierarchical person, a man who aspires upwards; a man who obeys the call of this insane pipe to be the first!"[94]

The capitalist imperative on moving up on the vertical social line and colonial discourse are utilized to arrange the Oedipal game of power between the master, Steven Gray (Great Gatsby), and his servant/slave (*rab*)—Limonov-the-writer working as a housekeeper—reaching back to Pushkin's family history of both nobility and slavery. The opening of the butler's story shows Limonov's attachment to the Gatsby-penis ("I was in love with him, he excited me…" [409]), as well as the fear of his wild, furious erective behavior: "His face was bloodshot and turned purple, his beard bristling, his gaze was ready to jump out of his eye-pit" (Ibid.). Great Gatsby is the giant and powerful Jewish penis: "he was much higher and bigger than me, the servant, my master, in comparison with me, was a cutthroat (*golovorez*)… (410). As *golovorez*, is derived from *golova* (head) and the verb *rezat'* (to cut), it denotes a circumcised penis; it also speaks of it/him as a dangerous killer-slaughter causing castration anxiety in the-writer, who is wondering what is his guilt.[95] Showing Gatsby as the writer's double is ensured first with a jest of possessive pronominal adjectives concerning the house possession: "our, his home," "my fourth floor of his house," "my own bedroom that he owns" (411), and then by a random publisher saying: "Oh, Eduard! You look just like the Great Gatsby" (681). Gatsby's "White

[93] *Na khui on mne nuzhen, seraia lichnost s chekovoi knizhkoi*, *Edichka*, 269.
[94] A. Kron. "Pro babochku poetinogo serdtsa," *Kovcheg* 3 (1979).
[95] Gatsby's mood swings are categorized so to imply the degree of man's erection: "medium" rarely happens, but "excellent" or "very low" most often (568), and then his speech during his (erective) hysteric fit signifies Edichka's cry: "'You're all against me! I am alone against the whole world!'—I was amazed that he perceives life exactly as I do" (515). Therefore, the servant's pseudo-rebellion against the mighty boss is worded like this: *Nu i khui s toboi,* which has a double meaning: idiomatic "do whatever you like" and literal "well, my dick is with you."

House" is the American replica of the Pushkin House in which Limonov, ironically, now works as the housekeeper guarding the institution of porn that he created at Pushkin's expense. Working with a guilty complex for discursive patricide, Limonov perhaps makes the most of his lemon that is for cleaning, disinfecting, and wood polishing to show the writer in charge about cleaning Gatsby's/his own house. The house stands for the woman-vagina, with which he recreates "we," expecting for the dick to act: "We waited—I and the house" (421). Like his porn narrative, his cleaning job is a dirty cleaning of the floor (*pol* in Russian means both floor and sex), which he smears with black polish, the act of which replicates Stalin's purge (*chistka*): "I kept my old job, namely, 'heavy cleaning' (*tiazhelaia chistka*)" (Ibid.). Being against Soviet literary puritanism, he is very meticulous in his dirty *pol* cleaning, like in his cunnilingus: "I, fucking diligent Limonov licked everything… I knew how to serve: first of all you should close up the obvious holes, fuck in front of the authorities so that the work could be seen" (562). The Great Gatsby is the superego ("the sense never leaves me that he is my father"), the phallic literary law against which Limonov-the-writer rises in "fucking" ("I live a sinful life when he is absent," 467). In the "fucking business," Limonov opts to go all the way, like the father ("Gatsby will never come to a halt and will not abandon this, in his own words, 'fucking business,'" 573) by becoming a porn-star *khui* that will end up in the public's mouth ("Steven Gray likes to be at the center of attention, he loves to speak, and everyone is obliged to listen to him with their mouth open," 594). At the end of the novel Steven's adolescent son Henry shows up to shoot an artistic porn film in the father's house, which turns to be the playhouse of masculinity: discursive, linguistic, as well as cinematic tropes.

Limonov's Cinematography

When discussing cinematographic elements in Limonov's prose scholars typically mention the short story "Cheerful and Powerful Russian Sex" (*Veselyi i moguchii russkii seks*), where Limonov brings up the idea of making a porn film adaptation of *Edichka* in which he would play the male role. But it is in *His Butler's Story*, in fact, that Limonov "creates his own cinematography and, at the risk of controversy, constructs his fantasies with famous and easily recognizable characters."[96] To shoot the porn film Eduard and Natalia playfully enter the gray zone—the multimillionaire's house—as Steven Gray and his secretary Linda, "a typical couple, the sadist with the masochist, the boss and his secretary" (*Istoriia*, 426). The boss and his house represent the popular film and commercial New York production company Gray Motion Pictures, founded by the photographer and cinematographer Steven Gray, while the secretary hints at the porn star Linda Lovelace. McHale claims that postmodern cinematic writing that is characterized by modernist fascination with the movie as the main "source for new techniques of representation," such as cinemontage and the postmodernist inclination towards the embedded worlds, "world-within-the-world, further destabilizes an already fluid and unstable fictional reality."[97] In Limonov's literary, fictional reality, photomontage is expended to cinemontage and Gray's White House comes to represent the embedded worlds (film-within-novel) and space (within the Pushkin House the porn film production company is erected). The television-oriented culture that postmodern writing so often reflects, McHale states, "threatens to overwhelm the primary literary reality" to such an extent that "the distinction between the literal and metaphorical vehicle becomes increasingly indeterminate, until we are left wondering whether

[96] Nikol' Zand, "Ot Edichki k Eduardu," *A-IA*, no 1. 1985, at https://ed-limonov.livejournal.com/798824.html (last accessed June 1, 2018).
[97] McHale, "Chinese-Box Worlds," p. 128.

the movie reality is only a trope after all, or belongs to the 'real' world of this fiction" (128–29). Limonov's cinematic discourse develops as a screenplay in which he shows the actual shooting and editing of well-known movies' plots, scenes, characters, and their actions. His porn cinema indeed "becomes a sign of a narrative level interposed between the text and the 'real'" (McHale, 129).

The porn film is a childish game thrusted to the young couple Gray's son Henry ("the boy-director"), his girlfriend, and their juvenile film crew, which begins during his graduation "children's costume party." Among other things necessary to film the "orgy" scene (costumes, cameras, candles, bags, lamps) they bring in "a fairly large lemon tree" (618)—Limonov-the-Khui for the leading cast. Against the background of the porn industry's hyper-production, the porno troika offers a homemade porn video: "we are building capitalism…Steven, Linda and I, too" (580).[98] Limonov wants to make the first Russian porn film: "I always had a desire to make the film myself, but, you know, not Soviet, sentimental and official, but a real film in which there will be all: both passion and sex. And not puritan Soviet sex, but the real, healthy type..."[99] Using cinematography, the new device for narrating the present, Limonov, according to Rogachevskii, borrowed from Mayakovsky, who described the present-day conditions in 1914 as such: "Everything has become…as on a motion picture film."[100]As Carrere noticed, for Limonov coming from Moscow, where American movies were banned, to New York is "like stepping out of a black-and-white movie into Technicolor" (93). Being typical of postmodernism and the

[98] The writer-servant and the secretary are Gray's capitalist slaves (*moi raby*). Limonov points out that the etymology of Slavs (slave) inflicts forced slavery, and thus they appear as Milosh Forman, the director of *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*, and Elena making a deal to produce a convoluted "Slavic" project: "You and I are Slavs (*slaviane*). They don't understand us, and they will not" (*Elena*, 129). This is a visual sexual war, and at Steven's request Limonov records the film about the Vietnam war on TV while having sex with a woman.
[99] "Veselyi i moguchii russkii seks," Moscow, 1999, at https://iknigi.net/avtor-eduard-limonov/37193-veselyy-i-moguchiy-russkiy-seks-eduard-limonov/read/page-1.html.
[100] "The Doppelgänger," p. 15.

cultural logic of late capitalism that Fredric Jameson describes in his eponymous book, Limonov-the-hero is fascinated with the futurist excitement with technology and Marinetti's glorification of the machinegun, as well as the cars that he passes on camera, the visual power of media, and home appliances such as TV, videos, and the tape recorder, "the whole technology of production and reproduction of the simulacrum" that he brings into the narrative to "make different demands on our capacity for aesthetic representation."[101] If the mimetic idolatry of the older machinery of the futurist movement meant to show motion, the new technology "can only be represented *in motion*, something of the mystery of postmodernist space is concentrated," while "the logic of the simulacrum, with its transformation of older realities into television images, does more than merely replicate the logic of late capitalism; it reinforces and intensifies it" (Jameson 45–46). Limonov's longing for action attains its greatest usefulness in porn film production—each time it is pronounced it moves the penis from one scene to another.

Still, the game of power in porn capitalism between the writer and the penis would obliterate the woman and her vagina from the screen, setting up the strict rules for her participation. From the writer-servant's point of view, thanks to his fancy yellow car, the Great Gatsby takes with him the little girl from the neighborhood, whom Limonov sexually objectifies by looking at her from the window riding a bicycle (*Istoriia*, 428). This scene shows how the filming is done as the window functions as the camera lens: "Instead of a girl who, with her bicycle wagged to the left, behind the frame of my vision, in the backstage (*za kulisy*), so to speak, Steven appeared in the window" (428). Limonov is the man behind the camera, the director, producer, and the penis playing the leading role. While Limonov-Khui as millionaire takes Natalia-Linda to be his secretary, a background support for his job, similarly as the film

[101] Jameson, *Postmodernism*, 37.

director and hero he needs the woman (little girl) to first appear on camera (window) so that the audience may identify with her, and shortly after just to show her back (like in the little girl leaving the window-camera), implying that she is busy with fondling him and supporting the man's erection. He changes the usual perspective in porn film by insisting on his and not the woman's face being seen on the screen: "I wanted my face, not the red-hot face of a bunny. Mine, let it be dicky, evil, tearful, but give me my face!" (501). This is the next step in woman's reeducation in the process of mastering Pushkin's "black" oral techniques. As opposed to the first cunnilingus phase when the woman was completely annulled ("by giving her cunt pleasure, I rejected Roseanna," *Edichka*, 193), in this stage the woman is an active subject/object while her vagina is completely rejected and not shown on the screen at all. Instead, the close-up is of the man's penis inside the woman's mouth![102] By looking at her back, the viewers should imitate the woman's movements, and through the woman's performance (like the surrogate self on the screen), they undergo a discursive reeducation: "And here is a dick for you, don't you want it—dad, mom, neighbors in Kharkov and Moscow, friends and comrades, the inhabitants of New York, London, and Paris—you who are supporting a heavy, shapeless, gray larger than life-morality with all your strength, here is a dick for you!" (*Istoriia*, 601–2).

[102] Laura Mulvey notices that due to man's inability to carry the burden of sexual objectification, he emerges the representative of power to control the film phantasy, "as the bearer of the look of a spectator, transferring it behind the screen;" whereas in the "spell of illusion" woman ids fetishist representation, the male protagonist controls the story, becoming the one with whom the spectators identify and project their gaze at the surrogate self on the screen, while the power of the gaze and power of making a story are a tribute to omnipotent male dominancy ("Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema," *Film Theory and Criticism: Introductory Readings*. Eds. Leo Braundy and Marshall Cohen. New York: Oxford UP, 1999, (833–44): 838). Due to his split personality and bisexual body, Limonov permanently occupies both active and passive positions. When he calls the readers to watch Edichka's back while performing in "Moi otritsatel'nyi geroi" in New York (*His elegant back / We can see now in New York*), he is the object of the public's gaze, but also controls what is being seen by becoming a part of the audience watching together with us (saying "we can see") his projection (anti-hero) on the screen. Now, in his porn film Limonov comes right to the camera and at the close-up of his dickhead the audience is supposed to take not male but female point of view. He does not keep the audience at distance from the self as erotic object any more (behind the camera/screen), since the gaze of the female and of the spectators are expected to meet at the penis.

This technique mimes the plot of *Deep Throat* that revolves around Dr. Young's intervention in helping Linda (Lovelace), whose clitoris in located in her throat, to develop her oral sex skills in order to experience orgasm ("try to take the penis all the way down to the bottom of your throat"), after which she becomes a "deep throat" performer. Limonov adopts this pornographic prank and through the forced female desire makes the collective body of the audience his "deep throat" target: "I stood in front of her and writhed with pleasure and held her…by the ears…and from time to time I deeply pushed her head down to my dick. She helplessly swallowed the dick, but after two or three such deep gulps, she began to cough and was forced to lick and suck for a while only the head of the penis while resting. Sucking a dick is a great art that only few master. 'Try, try!'" (Ibid., 632). The readers/viewers are invited to "try it", that is, to give a blowjob to the lemon-yellow penis heading straight deep into the throat and swallow Limonov's pornography. Limonov is that lustful Jew from "Veselyi i moguchii russkii seks," a scoundrel who seduces Russian girls to act in his porn film because he wants to leave the writer's erected penis close-up to posterity in inheritance:

> I really wanted to show myself to the people with my dick upright, diligently raising the woman to the heights of orgasm. I confess, I even flashed back at the hidden agenda that porn film will help me destroy future enemies on the historical stage. With a porn film I can give them a one kick knockout, so that defeated bitches cannot spread rumors about me…saying that the poet had a small dick, and, that he was not a man at all….To show them in fact and live what the poet and writer Limonov was capable of, and then they would not be able to shout!…[T]hey are sitting in the cinema hall…they are shown the film. In the film, a healthy and pink-sunburnt (*rozovo-zagorelyi*) Limonov fucks the plump girl. And the erected dick in close-up..."

His dreams of the extreme success of his *porn film (sny o budushchem mirovom uspekhe svoego pornofil'ma,* Ibid.) come through in *Palach* via the winning character in the "fucking business," the gigolo with the symbolic name of Oscar, like the golden phallic Hollywood award. The shooting is over and it's time to move from Gray's House: "I and the millionaire house outlived their usefulness, in the spring it will be three years since I first entered it, enough, other lands, countries, women, and other adventures call me" (*Istoriia,* 660).

Time's up: Death of the Émigré *I*

Having been fully "reeducated," the woman takes over the narrative. The female version offers both porn actors to jump off the screen and gain their existence in two parallel stories written around the same time: the mouth in the still autobiographical novel *Ukroshenie tigra v Parizhe* (1985) as the scary roar of the wild Natasha-tiger, and the penis in the fictional novel *Palach* (1986) as the huge detachable penis Oscar Khudzinski, a cruel sadist and professional gigolo who lives at rich women's expense.[103] Natalia symbolically gains power over the penis's discursive life and begins writing her autobiographical novels that turn out to be dirtier than Limonov-Pushkin's, and thus he tries to tame her: "I only hear from you 'dick' after 'dick.' Don't forget that you are a woman" (*Ukroshenie tigra,* 174). In Paris, Limonov withdraws from sexual activities, scarcely focusing on writing,[104] for Natalia is active now: "I fuck you in your mouth (*Ia ebala tebe v rot*)" (178). Based on gender, ideological and sexual power dynamics, as shown in Limonov's favorite film *The Night Porter* (1974) by Liliana Cavani, between the ex-

[103] *Palach* is the only novel that Limonov states it's not purely autobiographical, for it depicts what path he might have taken if he hadn't had writing talent (A. Mirchev, *15 interv'iu,* New York: Izdatel'stvo im. A. Platonova, 1989, p. 85; quoted in Wakamiya, "Eduard Limonov," p. 38). Khudzinski (khud=hood) is Limonov's mask.
[104] Natasha-tiger utters: "Limonov became like my papa. He even stopped fucking me. He daz ent fak mi!" (152).

aggressor, the doctor in the Nazi camp, Max, and the ex-victim, the Jewish Holocaust survivor and his patient, Lucia, Limonov-Natalia's porn narrative remains in the domain of discursive S&M perversion taken by the male to recreate his lost power and the female to re-experience the fear and humiliation of the victim.[105] They become the "Porno-People" (*Porno-liudi*), as the chapter in *Ukroshenie tigra v Parize* suggests, creating and living their hyper masculine porn film-tale "Limonov": he as the writer-mastermind and she as the wild tiger Natasha—the main cabaret performance who maintains the carnival in and outside the text. Her first album is symbolically titled the "Cabaret Russ." Pushkin' severed curly head is the award that Limonov-Max gives to Natalia-Lucia-Salome. Limonov writes: "If she is to blame, then certainly she is less guilty than the writer, for it's the male, as you know, who sets the tone, rhythm, or, if you want, the temperature of sex. The woman's response depends on how a man takes her on" (*Ukroshenie tigra*, 26). Limonov needs film references to show how art imitates (his) life.[106] Limonov and Natalia are watching attentively the last scenes of Cavani's film and are imitating the characters' behavior:

[105] Within the context of a Nazi Holocaust narrative, Cavani's provocative film shows that post-war society maintains continuity of the WWII horror through sexual phantasy and perversions given as compulsory repetitions of the past. The film begins at the "Hotel zur Oper" (Opera Hotel) where Max, now the night porter, meets Lucia for the first time after the war, and where the recreation of their sadomasochistic games developed in the concentration camp is set in motion. Lucia is the witness of Max's Nazi wartime activities since she survived the Holocaust thanks to the role she played in the perverse discursive-visual narrative that Max-the doctor created, that, as it turns out, both enjoyed. The porn scenario is revealed in a series of flashbacks. The doctor begins the game by filming the naked patient with his camera, and eventually makes her the real actress, the porn star, who would perform live on the carnevalesque camp stage. Like a Cabaret entertainer, half-naked and half-dressed up in an SS uniform, Lucia sings and dances before masked Nazi soldiers. Max views their sexual perversion as a "biblical story" and shows up as Lucia's protector, awarding Lucia with the decapitated head of the inmate who has been tormenting her, a reference to Salome receiving the head of John the Baptist. As their present story progresses in recreation of the camp S&M, they both become victims threatened by Max's former Nazi collaborators, who are working on eliminating all the documents and witnesses of their inhuman past. The couple hides in Max's apartment, but as they exhaust the food supplies and are starving to death, they decide to end the game. As if playing for the last time their S&M Holocaust roles, Max in his SS uniform and Lucia in her Jewish victim dress come out hand in hand to be killed.

[106] Edichka watches a French film and is struck by the plot (a killer is sent to kill a former model he loves, though he is a homosexual) that replicates his situation: "I saw in that film a likeness with my destiny…" (*Edichka*, 130).

> On the screen, the technicolor (*tsvetnye*) ex-SS man and his Jewish ex-victim were dying of starvation in the apartment, surrounded by enemies. Watching the scene of the lovemaking (*lav-meiking*) on the fragments of the recently emptied last jar of jam (the blood flooded the screen), the writer and Natasha tenderly gazed at each other. Gently and incredulously, as if to estimate "And we can do this?"—they looked at each other and kissed…and in the film the ex-SS man and his victim kissed with their dry, hungry lips and began dressing up for the last appearance (*vykhod*, 21).

Max and Lucia's last act marks the beginning of Eduard and Natalia's 1990s live porn.

Materiality of the body and its economic value is transferred from the vagina to "His Majesty Oscar's Dick," which is for rent (*naemnyi khui*) in *Palach*: "Oscar already knew that he had a new secret weapon....He will be a professional sadist….In bed, Oscar will be the master of the rich and well-fed. He will be the Executioner," (*Palach* 35). Oscar's life is that of a Polish émigré in 1970's USA, whose nationality not only reminds us of polishing business, but also of Polish concentration camp-victims.[107] He witnesses a brutal gunshot murder in the opening of the novel that puts in effect his sadism, for he represents the vaginal O-bullet hole of the victim ("I have always been saying that you are very feminine, O."—notices Natasha and he agrees: "It's me—feminine…I, the executioner, am feminine" [*Palach*, 162, 163]). The orgies he organizes for nymphomaniac women function like a catharsis of his tragedy as a "cunt-sufferer" (*pizdostradatel'*): "the murder committed before his eyes led him to a simple and clear formula of the secret weapon....With a whip and in leather armor, Oscar is now fighting against the world. "Vzy! Vzy! Vzy!"—whip the world..." (138). Oscar repeats what has been shown on the

[107] In Limonov's *The Book of Water* one of the characters introduces himself as "polish" written with lower case in English: "Polish? –he asked me. Yes, polish- I answered."

screen and derives pleasure in subjugating and victimizing women in his forceful deep throat oral sexual performance:

> His habit of shocking young girls, disrespectfully jumping on their chest and even more disrespectfully squeezing his penis into their mouth, speaks more of the matter of power and submission, and does not aim at obtaining pleasure precisely from the act of penis sucking. Oscar seeks to suppress the victim by this obscene, insolent act. To stun, to make her a victim….His Oscarian (*oskarovskoe*) arousal was coming from the fight, from victory….At the awareness of the victim's weakness, his penis was filled with blood (59).

While Oscar plays the palach role he obeys Natasha's discursive sexual requests and satisfies her with his tongue/language: "After Natasha's whole being was flooded with a wild, crazy orgasm under Oscar' tongue, she then fucked willingly and for a long time….For Natasha, orgasm gained from Oscar's language (*oskarskogo iazyka*) was a warm-up…[that] lasted for so long that Oskar's tongue grew numb and felt nothing, as after anesthesia" (115). Limonov further describes the nature of this performance by showing Oscar performing in the play titled "Concentration Camp" with a young girl, the Jewish victim, but it is only him who is being photographed for the magazine "Real Man," appearing as "the man of the future" (*Palach*, 216).

The time is up for the phallic émigré, and the woman rises up against the artistic creation. Oscar decides to celebrate his birthday and gathers all his characters "belonging to the Oscar's clan, to the party of the newcomer-Executioner," but then Natalia's double Elena appears to herald the fall of Oscar (*padenie Oscara*), showing up as Gabrielle Kroniadis (*kronos*=time), the widow left after the Greek Panayiotis. She is the victim of Limonov's male game ("she entered the torture chamber (*kamera pytok*) and still did not come out of it," 148), whose lips covered with black lipstick (146) introduce her in a well-known manner: "It's me, Gabriel Kroniadis,"

only to announce her revenge upon her master-husband. Gabrielle's birthday surprise for Oscar is Arthur, the male "renting corpse" for "special occasions like orgies" (208) that simulate sex, and whose name is suggestive of Limonov's art. As the novel begins with murder, it also ends with Oscar's death, the crime committed by his opposite, the writer Jacek Hutor, who punishes the character by stabbing him with a knife: the act of self-castration. Like in Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian G*ray (1890), as the image becomes uglier with his vices and crimes, the writer kills both the artist and his portrait. When the dead body of old Dorian Gray was found, the portrait was restored to its initial beauty. A cockroach found in dead Oscar's mouth is telling of the new Kafkaesque metamorphoses that comes after the symbolic exile. The woman brings death to the émigré Odysseus and leads him up for another phase—the return home (Jacek is led by the voice to return to Ithaca).[108] The man and the woman offer two different versions of the porn fairytale: "Tales are different. Fact. Whose fairy tale is right? Or both are right? If both are right, that is also sad, because they will never merge into one… There is no way out" (*Palach*, 211). It's time for Max and Lucia's final exit.

Limonov further positions himself in post-Soviet history and the political sphere in his novel *316, punkt "V"*[109] set in far future, the year 2015, through the protagonist Ippolit Luk'ianov, an émigré writer who becomes a political leader out of vengeance. Like an endangered victim of an extermination policy, Luk'ianov is condemned to death by article 316-V, authored by Saul Jenkins, chief of the Demographic Department and the main candidate to win the US presidential election. Luk'ianov retaliates, assassinates the monster-authority and assumes his identity. Masquerading as Jenkins, he sinks into a secret life, becoming one of the

[108] Gabrielle certainly evokes Pushkin's "The Gabrieliad*"* (*Gavriiliada*) and it is telling that this is Gabriel's Iliad.
[109] Limonov wrote this novel for fifteen years, 1982–1997.

most powerful political figures and the elected president of the United States. One more time, violence defines the roles of the double, allowing Limonov to enter the Real as a politician. The name Ippolit Luk'ianov in Limonov's language reads as a telling word-play: I-ppo-lit=And after literature; Luk'-ia-nov=Look I am new.

Part II: The Absolute Beginner

In his essay "THE ABSOLUTE BEGINNER, ili pravdivaia istoriia sochineniia *Eto ia-Edichka*,"[110] Limonov asserts that his emigre persona is the hero of an invented fairy tale that is over: "*Once upon a time*…in summer of 1976 in hot New York on Madison Avenue lived a man by the name of Edichka" (292). It seems important to notice that Limonov begins the article with the tale formula in English *once upon a time*… and not the Russian common opening line *zhil, byl* because the pluperfect of the Russian phrase would suggest that his existence has ended in the past. The lack of the verb *to be* in the English phrase makes it a useful language for further discursive manipulation, in which "once upon a time" reads as at any time being in an elevated, upward position against the time, in a sense, controlling it. Limonov-the-chrono-erectus of a folkloric genre is perpetually becoming "the absolute beginner." Furthermore, he appears in the present as a ghost of the past. In the Russian language, the present tense form of the verb *to be* is omitted but assumed. Thus, in Limonov the present is always a mere simulacrum, the future of the past. This chrono-linguistic trick is reinforced by speaking of Limonov's existence outside the text. Therefore, through the "I" that "will be" (Luk'ianov), Limonov reinforces the "am"; the political self-image. The logic of Limonov's constant existence in the language rests in the formula derived from the verb 'to be' as follows: if was=am, and if am=will be, then *I*

[110] In *Eto ia-Edichka,* pp. 292–302.

was=am=will be (*byl=est'=budu*). The Limonov narration, Matich writes, is based on "the neurotic compulsion to repeat" the past in his "strategically placed regressive behavior" that only brings the feeling of failure anew as a "self-destructive return to the beginning."[111] Nietzsche's notion of the eternal reoccurrence of the same coupled with the Soviet slogan "into the bright future!" are the wind at the hero's back to enter the real battlefield alone.

A new cycle must begin with mythical-historical tragedy, first Edichka's separation from Natasha, and then the Yugoslav war where Limonov finds a replacement for the woman's vagina in the death holes of the exclusively male world: "with dirty pleasure my love for Natasha was dying off. I myself was leaving her with my head forward into the black holes of wars and revolutions….And Natasha only had a woman's organ."[112] Heading downhill from the scene the woman leaves an empty place for a hyper-masculine military man with a machinegun in his hands to overpower Limonov's discursive imagery. For Limonov, heroism lies in reality, empirical evidence, and a variable degree of risk. Simone de Beauvoir asserts that "the warrior risks his own life to raise the prestige of the horde—his clan. This is how he brilliantly proves that life is not the supreme value for man but that it must serve ends far greater than itself. The worst curse on woman is her exclusion from warrior expeditions; it is not in giving life but in risking his life that man raises himself above the animal; this is why throughout humanity, superiority has been granted not to the sex that gives birth but to the one that kills."[113]

Limonov arrives in Yugoslavia (which mirrors the United States, given its collective identity of multiple nations and nationalities [*narodi i narodnosti*] united in the "OneState")

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[111] Matich, "Moral Immoralist," pp. 529–30.
[112] Eduard Limonov, *The Book of Water* (*Kniga vody*), Biblioteka NBP, at https://web.archive.org/web/20060419021046/http://nbp-info.ru/new/lib/lim_waterbook/01.html.
[113] Simone de Beauvoir, *Second Sex*. transl. Constance Borde and Sheila Malovany-Chevallier. New York: Vintage Books, 2010, p. 90.

upon its tragic historical split along ethnic lines. Disintegration of the Yugoslav *WE*, the whole built on the plurality of a single identity, replicates Edichka's, for each and every "I" of the particular ethnicity gained its "other/s" as the enemies of the "Is," on the foundation of which ethnic and religious hatred exploded. Accordingly, each ethnic "I" claimed to be a hero and the other an anti-hero. Additionally, Limonov decided to be on the side of the Serbs, for he recognized his double in them. They took Slovenia's and Croatia's declaration of independency in 1991 for a betrayal of the country as whole, and as the largest ethnic group that was active in the Yugoslav People's Army, endeavored to fight the war against them. His identification with the Serbs is also motivated by the image of the victimized nation becoming the oppressor and executioner. Perpetuating the recognizable image of historical victims (of the Ottoman era/Kosovo Battle, jointly with Jews and Gypsies who suffered in the Balkan Holocaust during WWII, and the Jasenovac Concentration Camp in Croatia), the Bosnian Serbs turned into retaliating aggressors and anti-heroes, whose political and military moves against Bosniaks and Croats scandalized the world. Carrere states that the prevailing image of the belligerent Serbs as "heirs of the Nazis" overpowered the media in the early 1990s, which dragged Limonov into the "Serbian Epic" (217). Serbian nationalism posited against the background of the Kosovo myth, folk tradition, and heroic epic poetry, together a suitable field for placing Limonov's epic persona and to carry on the legend. To capture the real self at war, Limonov jumped into the camera of Paweł Pawlikowski's 1992 BBC documentary *Serbian Epics*, which recorded him visiting the front lines in Bosnia, meeting the leader of Republika Srpska Radovan Karadžić, and shooting over the city of Sarajevo.[114] Limonov supported the politics of those nationalist Serbs

[114] Even though he appears as a volunteer solder-journalist who strives for "objective reporting" and bringing the "truth" from the front, he secures his "hooligan" image in history on screen (*Serbian Epics* became evidence submitted to the International Tribunal in Hague for war crimes) and in photographs of him in a camouflaged uniform with Serbian army leaders and paratroopers, many of whom ended up in Hague and where prosecuted for

who created their public image as "the Kosovo avengers" and Prince Lazar's knights (Milošević, Karadžić, Šešelj, Kapetan Dragan, Arkan) and took some of them for his teachers/holy monsters. He strategically prepared for this epic adventure (Limonov admits to Karadžić that he read Serbian epics on the Kosovo battle in translation), as it should echo Edichka-Odysseus's tragic exilic experience and motivate his further revenge. The similarly terrifying imagery of the surrounding smelly corpses and burnt villages, of blood, gunfire, stones, stinky refugees, and soldiers sleeping in a row, the nightmare of group rape in which Limonov participates (*Anatomy of the Hero*), and the well-known pattern of his wife's disloyalty (he learns of Natalia sleeping with other men in Paris while he is at war), drive the hero into crime.

Limonov is caught shooting with a sniper rifle at besieged Sarajevo from the slope of the devastated Olympic village left from the 1984 Winter Olympic Games. Shooting reiterates Edichka's sexual fantasy of violently fucking, raping, or killing women. Prior to Limonov's shooting Serbian men, through the epic discourse tuned with gusle sounds have turned Sarajevo into a sexual object by perceiving it as a woman (Turkish woman as the other) surrounded by male Serbian predators. Simultaneously, the camera shows Karadžić sitting in the old cable car cabin failing in an attempt to call his wife by telephone. The woman cannot be reached for she is symbolically killed. The symbolism of the Olympic village is substantial for Limonov-"Ulysses in Sarajevo,"[115] since it represents a children's amusement park where Eddie-baby plays the

war crimes. Seeing the Bosnian Serbs as a mirrored self-reflection, Limonov expresses admiration for their heroism in confronting the world: "you are courageous," "you resist, though fifteen countries are against you," "you should be a model for Russians," "admiration is the right word" (*Serbian Epics*).

[115] Dragan Kujundžić sees Limonov as "Ulysses in Sarajevo," drawing the parallel between Limonov's war adventure and the epic journey of the filmmaker "A" to attain the lost reels (that is, pieces of Balkan history) in Theo Angelopoulos's film *Ulysses' Gaze* (1995), which ends in Sarajevo. This comparison is more than profound given Limonov's identification with Ulysses/Odysseus, his involvement in cinematography, and the desire to find the historical "truth" appearing as the three reels of his autobiography—the Imaginary, Symbolic and Real—needed to start a new life. A's real love, a Jewish girl he found in Sarajevo, is killed like Sarajevo itself. ("Sarajevo and the Imperial Confines of Europe in 1914–2014: 'Eternal Calendar'" (Tranls. into Russian by Andrei Zakharov, *Saraevo i imperskie predely Evropy 1914–2014 godov:"Vechnyi kalendar'"*), *Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie,*

O(lympic) game of target-shooting with a real machinegun instead of his penis: "Like a child encouraged by the adults' laughter and by their slaps on the back, he abandons all his inhibitions and empties a magazine in the direction of the besieged city. Ta-ta-ta-ta-ta…Looks ridiculous. A little boy playing the tough guy at the amusement park" (Carrere, 220–21).

This children's playground, like in *Edichka,* became the stage for new theatrical homosexual scenes, where Limonov entered the military brotherhood by "orally" uniting with Serbian "black felons." He started with Karadžić, for he is tightly linked to Pushkin. Not only that his last name recalls the color black (derived from Turkish *kara*, which in modern Serbian is also a slang word for penis), but he also represents the poet-prophet that Limonov-Pushkin insists on being. In Pawlikowski's documentary, the leader of the Serbian army, like Limonov's portrayal of Hitler, is portrayed as a poet rather than a soldier, one who recites his verses for Limonov to the camera, underlying the prophetic verses written twenty-three years before the war in which he had seen Sarajevo armored and in war. Karadžić's intentional self-identification with the father and reformer of modern Serbian, Vuk Karadžić, another "black" father-son Oedipal game, echoes the Limonov-Pushkin link. Limonov reaffirms his connection to Pushkin by utilizing Karadžić's "poeticized politics" and translating/adapting them to his own poetic needs.[116] "Serbia was destined to become my Caucasus," Limonov writes.[117]

The following oral exchange happened over the nationalistic politics advocated by the leader of the Radical Party, Vojislav Šešelj, which influenced Limonov's decision to officially

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Neprikosnovennyi zapas (NZ), No. 102, April 2015, at http://www.nlobooks.ru/node/6481 (last accessed April 12, 2018).

[116] Pushkin had a series of poems dedicated to the South Slavs (whom he mistakenly called west Slavs), the majority of which are translation-adaptations of Prosper Mérimée's collection of the Balkan poems translated into French, "La Guzla" (1827), and of Serbian folk songs collected and written down by Vuk Karadžić. By visiting the Balkans, Limonov found material for his translation-adaptations of Radovan/Vuk Karadžić's epic poetry, accompanied by the gusle sound.

[117] Limonov's Introduction "Chuzhoi pisatel'," in *Sobranie sochinenii,* vol. 1, p. 9.

engage in politics and create his own political party, the NBP (National Bolshevik Party). Šešelj's verbal aggressiveness, national hatred, and idea of Greater Serbia expending over Croatian land became the model for the image of the Limonov-radical politician. Limonov's idea about founding a party appeared during his 1991 meeting with Šešelj at his headquarters, and after their "sexual" oral exchange ("what he did and said excited me"), the decision was made: "And am I any worse? I, certainly, also can [do that]....This is the beginning."[118]

The Great Gatsby found his double in the crime boss Željko Ražnatović branded with the name Arkan, known for his criminal actions across Europe and his participation in the war as a "battlefield commander" and leader of the Serbian paramilitary troop "the Serb Volunteer Guard," who carried the huge phallic weapon Heckler as his hallmark.[119] Limonov depicts Arkan as the filthy rich master-penis living luxurious lifestyle, who erotically excites him.[120] Arkan is Edichka's double: someone who swears a lot, lives in hotels, loves weapons, cannot deal with the split and collapse of the "Big Country," and as "a true knight of his nation" has a tiger (like Natalia) as his mascot, "the totemic animal of his volunteer army," commonly called Arkan's Tigers. Like the Great Gatsby, the master Arkan yields to the executioner Limonov-the-son to show himself in a close-up as the NBP leader (*vozhd'*): "In March 1994, I finally came to Russia to win here or die…I closely followed Arkan from afar."[121] Slavoj Žižek writes that the figure of

[118] Quoted in Balkanskii, *Eduard Limonov*, p. 53.
[119] Arkan with his Heckler replaces the Great Gatsby and his yellow car: "Soldiers boast of their 'cobras,' 'colts,' and 'scorpions,' like the rich boasting of 'Rolls-Royces' or 'Ferraris,' or 'Mustangs' during peace. Željko Ražnatović Arkan's automatic machinegun 'Heckler' (with a silencer) reached the same celebrity as its owner…" (*Anatomy of the Hero*).
[120] "His first appearance in my life: he is sitting at the table…with food, fruit, and wine…Arkan had outstanding taste and style, more like a gangster. He loved feast, flowers, beauty, expensive weapons, restaurants and expensive hotels. In the hotel "Majestic," at the top he had his own luxury apartments…I felt instinctive affection [simpatiiu] for this guy, and he reciprocated with obvious affection for me, and …several times he specifically searched for me on the fronts, during the war years 1990–1993…I always liked beautiful and brave gangsters." E. Limonov, "Bratva vokrug kniaza Lazaria…" at https://web.archive.org/web/20071115014028/http://www.nbp-info.ru/subs/slovo/bratva.html (last accessed March 13, 2018).
[121] "Bratva vokrug kniaza Lazaria…"

a new Master is unavoidable and needed in critical situations, deep crises of political or psychological nature, for the only "path to liberation leads through the transference" offered by the expert at the point of his military decision, that is "yes" or "no," we shall attack or we continue to wait.[122] In Limonov, the Master is always on the side of the action, uttering "yes" to attack, "yes" to war, "yes" to fuck, and inevitably "Yes, [to] Death," as the characters "have to be pushed/disturbed into freedom by the Master" (Žižek, 214).

Satiated with the Kosovo myth through oral exchange with the "Kosovo knights," the hero assumed Prince Lazar's identity as leader of the Kosovo Battle, and passed it over to his "wife" (Princess) Milica, a seventeen-year-old Serbian girl whom Limonov met in Belgrade. She undoubtedly mirrors Natalia/Revolution and knows all his books: "I signed all my books to her" (*Anatomy of the Hero*). Like Natalia-the-tiger, Milica is portrayed as the "wild girl-beast" who both scares and attracts Limonov: "burned like black-haired, a head taller than me, she gazed at me with an eye of a sticky fly-agaric examining the fly, and by her black eyebrows she resembled the beauty Jovanka Broz…" (Ibid.) From beautiful Helen of Troy, "Natali Goncharova" appropriates features of the Yugoslav beauty, Tito's wife Jovanka. This means that Limonov, running through history, acquires characteristics of the Yugoslav communist dictator, whose famous "no" (*net*) to the ideological father Stalin marked the Tito–Stalin Split in 1948. He "fucks" Milica in the hotel Majestic, where the master Arkan lives, and after a successful performance in the vest bed, "like a football field," where they "are a joint team," the woman is ready to deliver the same discourse: "It all flowed out from this girl (*ona vsa Tekla, eta devushka*)" (Ibid.).

[122] Slavoj Žižek. *Trouble in Paradise: From the End of History to the End of Capitalism*. New York: Melville House, 2015, p 210.

The collapse of USSR prepared the stage for the female agency to regain its status as Limonov's feminine version of the "combative newspaper" (*boevaia gazeta*) called "Limonka," which signifies a bomb that should discursively destroy Russia. The NBP was officially born from *Limonka*, as the first issue, published in November 1994 is said to be the party's birthday. Limonov sees *Limonka* and NBP as twin sisters. Natalia, the vocal representation of their mutual song, joined the sabotage groups producing psychedelic punk-rock music in the 1990s, and then formed her own rock band, "Tribunal of Natalia Medvedeva," reflecting the quest for wartime justice. She simultaneously supported Limonov's political activism, writing articles about the Yugoslav war in *Limonka* and then in *Novyi vzgliad* under the pseudonym Margo Führer, like the other half of the *vozd'*: Führer Limonov. The double also wrote in *Limonka* under the collective Pushkinist pseudonym Ivan Chernyi (Ivan the Black), suggesting that Ivan the Fool had turned black. The birth of the politician came with a definite separation of the spouses in 1995. They never officially divorced, for it is clear that she just yielded to the homosocial community gathered around Limonov, first the three NBP father figures, Eduard Limonov, Aleksandr Dugin, and Egor Letov, and then his party members: "This time I experienced not a woman's departure, but something else: the end of the common karma, the betrayal of a comrade-soldier, the philosophical tragedy, the loss of HER by THEM" (*Anatomy of the Hero*). In a state of profound personal misfortune, to heal his wounds after the split, the hero descends into the Moscow underground again by building the Bunker, the Party's headquarters in the basement where *Limonka*'s editorial board is also located. The Bunker is associated with the master's house,[123] in

[123] The experience of the master's house-keeper, Limonov states, helped him "to create the national-Bolshevik party in a frosty Moscow a couple of decades later. Honestly speaking, the connection of the actions between the past and the future exists. Behind the apparent mess of a particular fate, mine especially, the scenario appears, only for the time being it is not obvious….It was in 1977–1979 when I was the house-keeper in New York, that I wrote the book "Diary of a Loser," in which the pages of my future life are scattered. "I love the smell of small extremist newspapers that call for destruction and nothing to build, I wrote in the 'Diary' in order to establish 'Limonka' 17 years later." (E. Limonov, "Taste and Style," at http://www.limonow.de/sonstiges/OM_100.html).

which Limonov takes down the wall separating two rooms, the double *Limonka* and the NBP, so that future faces, actions, and metamorphoses become possible.[124]

The *Vozhd'*'s Close-Up in Live Political Porn

Post-Soviet Russia opens a new playground for this dirty game in which Limonov the former teenage psychiatric patient, through identification with the aggressor, now becomes the sadist-doctor who forcefully imposes ideological treatment on the Russians: "the Russian people came down due to a psychological disease spreading over the entire collective of the nation… Russia needs to be treated, treated forcefully….What's needed is a tough powerful group, the party of the mighty led by a cruel leader (*vozhd'*) that will make the nation go forward…" (Balkanskii, 346). Stalin's anti-Semitic campaign known as "the Doctors' Plot," which was launched as a fabricated report on Jewish physicians' intention to kill certain Soviet leaders, becomes materialized as the doctors' porn plot in Limonov when he takes the role of a psychiatrist to "cure" the Russian political elite. He reappears as Stalin's double, the *vozhd'* who builds the Limonov personality cult with his National Bolshevik Party and ideology. As party leader, Limonov nicknames his members *natsboly* (Nuts/Nazi/National Balls) to stand for National Bolsheviks, and presents himself as the phallic medical authority of the NBP asylum, whose patients-members he turns into "nuts balls" in a linguistic pun. In this discursive Oedipal game, in the land left behind by the "good-bad" father Stalin, Limonov appears as an extremist politician so as to continue to provoke the public, and finally to revenge at home. To reinforce the yin-yang model, he appears as the savior in the black Nazi uniform.

[124] "We penetrated the wall between the two wings of the basement and connected them. In the chaos of dust, mud, and bricks, the floor (*pol*) in the waiting room was opened and horrifying: in the liquid filthy mud there lived many thousands of disgusting mutant cockroaches" (*Anatomy of the Hero*).

Russia finally becomes the full embodiment of a woman when Limonov was conjoined by "marriage" with her through his citizenship status, which was reinstated in 1991. By officially becoming Russian, like Pushkin, he entered post-Soviet political life and began the live punishing game that he motivated by saying that both Natalia and the country had betrayed him. What Russia needs is the "dictatorship of an energetic tyrant," Limonov believes, and plays the role of the Master imposter disseminating nationalistic discourse and political terrorism to overplay his enemies.[125] He presents himself as the *vozhd'* who "is not only the government head, but also the model of the first man of the nation."[126] building the Great Future: "I am a *vozhd'* by nature, and *vozhd'*s are not to be chosen. *Vozhd'*s impose their power" (*Anatomy of The Hero*). This is the type of Stalinist master who, as Žižek points out, differs from a true Master because he "pretends to know (better than the people themselves) what they really want and is ready to enforce this on them even against their will" (215). As his ideological project, the NBP represents Limonov's porn institution, a gang, religion, and family into which he attempts to forcefully drag new members, like he himself was forced into the Soviet madhouse: "Drag live people into the Great Gang-NBP. Drag them into our New Church-NBP, into our religion NBP. It is necessary that in all Russian cities and villages the groups of youth appear, the eggs [testicles] of NBP—the members of the Great Family NBP" (*Anatomy of The Hero*). He turned into is an unscrupulous leader who promises to his army, the *natsboly*, that each of them will become a hero, insomuch as he dares to become so, and encourages them to go to the Transnistrian and Abkhazian frontlines, where some lost their lives, and to partake in outrageous

[125] The union between pornography and nationalism, fascism, and militarism has become a common trait of post-Soviet culture wars (see Eliot Borenstein, "Stripping the Nation Bare: Russian Pornography and the Insistence on Meaning," in *International Exposure: Perspectives on Modern European Pornography, 1800–2000*, ed. Lisa Z. Sigel, New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2005, pp. 232–54).
[126] E. Limonov, *How We Built Russia's Future*. Moscow: Presskom, 2004, p. 205.

street protests and scandals for which they were frequently beaten up by the police or even faced imprisonment. He is harshly criticized for sacrificing his young supporters for the sake of his political ideals and riots. Limonov nonchalantly responds to these criticisms: "You can't change the world without losing some of the buttons on your jacket."[127] Obviously his leadership is linked to his tailoring job; it is important to save the initials inscribed in the jacket of the national hero, to keep the mosaic of the porn tale intact, and the human-buttons, like literary characters, are replaceable. As if implementing the article 316-V himself, it is noted that "he again does experiments, research projects, reforms and tests on the Motherland" and "it seems to him that he has the right to cut a living body, to sew there and tear off here. Our Edichka is mastering a new profession, that of a political vivisector."[128]

In extremist politics the Jewish phallic adventurer remains hidden behind a mix of recycled narratives, symbols, and insignias of Soviet and Nazi ideologies.[129] He appears in a big armored car with his bodyguards, usually dressed in a black fascist uniform, giving a half-Nazi (raised arm), half-Communist (balled fist) salute, and holding the NBP's red banner representing "the symbol of renewal"— the black hammer and sickle, instead of swastika, in a white circle. "Nazism is "sexier" than communism," Susan Sontag asserts, for all fascist symbols and apparel are the "most lucrative paraphernalia of eroticism" because "in pornographic literature, films, and gadgetry throughout the world…the SS has become a reference of sexual adventurism."[130]

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[127] Marc Bennetts. "Eduard Limonov interview: Political Rebel and Vladimir Putin's Worst Nightmare," *The Guardian*, December 11, 2010 at https://www.theguardian.com/world/2010/dec/12/eduard-limonov-interview-putin-nightmare (last accessed March 27, 2018).
[128] Evgenii Tuinov "Est Edichki v russkikh selen'iakh." *Chaika*, No 3 (14), February 16, 2004.
[129] "It is impossible to think up a new ideology….The only solution is the creative synthesis of already existing ideologies: national communism. In order not to scare away those patriots to whom…"communism" burns eyes and memory, it is reasonable to return to an early, clean version of it—Bolshevism. Thus, not fascists, but nationalists, not Communists, but Bolsheviks." (*Anatomy of The Hero*).
[130] Susan Sontag. "Fascinating Fascism." *The New York Review of Books*, February 6, 1975. http://www.nybooks.com/articles/1975/02/06/fascinating-fascism/.

Playing on Nazism is part of the theatrical perversion performed to articulate Limonov's sadomasochistic fantasies to humiliate Russia according to "a master scenario" that Sontag phrases like this: "The color is black, the material is leather, the seduction is beauty, the justification is honesty, the aim is ecstasy, the fantasy is death." Estheticized violence and philosophically-justified fascism as "the religion of single man" transgresses moral and political correctness of any kind, becoming weapons to shoot at the Motherland. Russia reflects besieged Sarajevo, encircled by his phallic army ready to act: "The country is like a sluttish girl, fucked and drunk, snoring. But there right on the borders…in the mountains of Tajikistan, and here, in dusty Moscow, there are already these hundreds of shaved boys—the solders of NATIONAL REVOLUTION."[131] Thus, he offers "SEX-training for the elite party members," a set of twenty-eight strict rules and regulations, each of which starts with "the party member must" or "the party member has the right to," instructing the male *natsboly* on how to humiliate women and violate the female body.[132]

There were rumors about the party members' homosexual relations (*goluboe bratstvo NBP*, Balkanskii) for the power dynamics within NBP is that of the *khui* (master-*vozd'*) and the *chleny* (members). In the direct-action movement, Limonov erects himself above all as the almighty, big *vozhd'-khui* ("My dimension (*masshtab*) is huge"[133]), the professional gigolo-executioner Oscar Hudzinski in the black leather coat, "a living legend" who is worshiped like God by the flaccid penises: the young head shaved *natsboly* who look like skinheads. To lose

[131] E. Limonov. *How We Built Russia's Future*,. Moscow: Presskom, 2004, p. 81.
[132] Some of the most radical rules are the following: to have as many women as possible; to beat the woman if he meets her more than twice, ideally "one beating for every ten fucks;" to kill any woman who does not understand him; to demand dirty actions from women; to prevent women's sexual acts with foreigners; not to listen to what the woman is saying; in circumstances of war to rape captured enemy women, etc. (*Limonka*, no. 55).
[133] *Philosophy in the boudoir* by Ksenia Anatol'evna Sobchak: Interview of Sokolova and Sobchak with Limonov https://public.wikireading.ru/51658 (last accessed March 27, 2018).

any button/*natsbol* is therefore a kind of circumcision/castration of the skin-head as reiteration for the Jewish hero's exposed head/O: "I'm cut out with a knife, strictly defined, I'm predictable. My lines are clear, my principles are solid (*tverdy*)—I am a complete thing" (*Anatomy of the Hero*). By imposing himself as the *vozhd'* in public, Limonov risks being recognized and killed, and out of fear (impostor syndrome) he wears dark eyeglasses to camouflage: "I'm so famous that I'm scared. I walk through a dusty monstrous city, as if naked, like a man without skin, and everyone can see my insides. I am precisely a man without skin. I never dreamed of such publicity. I just wanted to be famous" (Ibid.).

Limonov claims that any dream, even the worst nightmare, can become reality. In porn surrealism a la Limonov he at last plays the role of his dreams: "the professional revolutionary, the urban guerrilla, Lenin in the armored car" (Carrere, 12), who starts the revolution and seeks to take over Stalin's place on the top. To temper the self to steel hardness, that is Limonov's path.[134] He is the Lenin-pale and Stalin-steel-hard, the brutal "dick" depicted by his NBP collaborator Egor Letov in his 1990 song "Khui": "Well, here, well, now will stand up / In front of me, like a slave on his knees, my dick! / Pale as Lenin is my dick! / Steel (*zheleznyi*) as Stalin is my dick."[135] In his political game Limonov would get united with and separated from various politicians turning into a political prostitute and ideological dealer. To fortify his political image, he acts as a rentable penis for exchange, entering as a partner in opposition coalitions. He first joined the Liberal-Democratic Party (LDP) and supported the anti-Western ultranationalist Vladimir Zhirinovsky in 1992, only to "divorce" him later and write a book on the tragedy of yet another "love story," *Limonov against Zhirinovsky* (1994). Following Šešelj's politics, Dugin,

[134] Dmitrii Bykov, "Ia prisel sshit' vam briuki," *Ogonek,* no. 26 (23 July, 2003):13, at https://www.kommersant.ru/doc/2292020
[135] Letov was the front-man of the rock band "Civil Defense" known as GrOb (cOffin).

Letov and Limonov initiated together the union of the right radicals and left extremists in NBP, coming as "the new against the old," with the goal of changing the geographical borders and making a Great Russia as an Empire spreading from Vladivostok to Gibraltar, where all Russians would gather in one state. The "red" violence is replaced with "black" violence and terrorism, as Mark Sedgwick states, as the leaders of skinheads and punks, who advocate civil war, become "threats to world peace" and "the personification of the nightmare of the reborn Third Reich armed with nuclear weapons."[136] Limonov's name is found at the top of the list of internal "enemies of Russia." Like his fathers-monsters, Limonov is accused of crimes, terrorism, attempts to form paramilitary armed troops and illegal business with weapons, and has become a convict of national intolerance, responsible for the publication of his "Black List of Nations," in which he characterizes Croatians as the leading "bad nation" carrying the collective guilt, inculpated for its Nazi past in the WWII.[137] With the same enthusiasm he plays a politically-righteous martyr by making sure he will be punished and imprisoned for his "patriotic ideas." When Putin came to power and the law banning extremism and fascism was passed, he ended up in jail for the first time in 2001, and shortly after was sentenced to several years of imprisonment in Lefortovo prison (a labor camp during the Great Purge.) As a result, *Limonka* was banned in 2002, and for some time after had come out as a "General Line" for a while. It was absolutely prohibited together with the NBP in 2007. The prison episode is a necessary part of the Limonov project that was carefully planned and prepared in advance,[138] because Limonov must experience

[136] Mark Sedgwick. *Against the Modern World: Traditionalism and the Secret Intellectual History of the Twentieth Century*. Oxford University Press, 2004, pp. 4, 12. Sedgwick also suggests that Eduard and Natalia belong to an occultist milieu, a larger society involved in writing the secret intellectual history against the modern world, that would, after 1990, take Traditionalism and Neo-Eurasianism as historical streams and as tactic of entrism.
[137] There he adds: "Stalin was right in punishing small nations for their war crimes committed on the side of Hitler's Germany" *Limonka* no. 13.
[138] See Anatolii Brusilovskii "Smert' Limonova" *Russkii zhurnal*, February 25, 2003 at http://old.russ.ru/culture/20030225-abrus.html. The Russian press claimed that Limonov deliberately wanted to be imprisoned, and that he almost paid the authorities for his own arrest (See Chantsev, *Bunt krasoty*, 68).

labor camp suffering in order to add one more real tragic/heroic line in his biographical legend: "If you want to get to know Russia, you need to go to jail. There you will find magnificent cruelty."[139] Limonov confidently utters: "My life's gone pretty much according to plan" (Carrere, 12).

But it will turn out that Natalia-the-leaky-jar cannot hold the black milk-sperm anymore. The ban put on *Limonka* heralds Natalia's death. As she demonstratively leaves the studio after the question-statement from the audience of "Your life is a game" in the 1995 show "Akuly pera,"[140] Natalia disappears from the Limonov tale, dying in January 2003. Limonov claims that "she always wanted tragedy" and is certain that she ended her life so that "people around her would not see this bad and unhealthy game."[141] Rogachevskii writes that the "suicide (or provoked murder) becomes an idiosyncratic remedy from the unwanted 'boomerang' effect of the double life" given that "the twin cult has always been surrounded by a deadly atmosphere because, considered as an anomaly, the twins could not only be deified by the tribe, but also killed by it (this may also explain the old superstition: meeting your double means that you are about to die)."[142] Limonov rationalizes the death of his double: "The girls follow us only part of the way, their existence, much gloomier than ours, is much shorter than ours….The leader goes his own severe way. Alone. Loneliness is an indispensable fate of the hero" (*Anatomy of the Hero*).

He continues the game in the name of both expecting the historical O-rgasm. Limonov comes out of prison as "a new man," transforming his political cursor. He again "falls down"

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[139] "Otkrytaia studiia" *Svobodnaia Pressa*, Sergei Shargunov's interview with Limonov at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5R3BXY8R-U8 (accessed November 5, 2019)
[140] Available at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nbUl0sKAoMI.
[141] "Kak ukhodili kumiry."
[142] "The Doppelgänger," 40.

over the public with his grandiose ejaculation of both blood and sperm in what he names the "velvet terrorism": fountaining Alexander Veshniakov, the chairman of the Central Election Commission with mayonnaise, pelting the Communist leader Gennadii Ziuganov with tomatoes and the prime minister, Mikhail Kas'ianov, with eggs. But then he turns toward his ideological experiments that would cause a schism within the party, and few years later the *vozd'* would be left alone. The former radical oppositionist is heading upward on the vertical political line, trying to become a deputy in the Duma and to validate his candidacy for presidential elections against Putin. This explains his decision, in 2005, to take a new direction, making an alliance with the liberals (now supporting Mikhail Kas'ianov's candidacy in the presidential elections), moving from the category of marginal extremists to the higher league of Russian politics. On this occasion Oksana Anikina writes: "the leader of the NBP is not at all against slightly correcting his image, turning from a rebel in disdain for the establishment into a moderate-bourgeois oppositionist."[143] Most surprisingly, he establishes a political alliance with pro-western liberal Garry Kasparov in a new project, the "Other Russia" (*Drugaia Russiia*), and such a union of diametrically opposed politicians remains to this day a notable enigma to the public. Like with Kris, Limonov repeats "I need him": this discursive game needs the playful son Harry (Garry) grandmaster holding the Chess Oscar to pronounce a political *mat*(e) and puts an end to Putin's regime. As a politician he must remain the national hero. Thus his official name, Eduard Savenko, used in the presidential campaign, becomes a huge insult to him; he creates a scandal about it, insisting that he goes as Limonov. Since he failed at repeating Luk'ianov's success in becoming the president, Limonov admits: "I achieved everything in literature, but I could not

[143] "Eduard Limonov teriaet podderzhku tovarishei po partii,"*Pravda.Ru*. July 25, 2005, at https://www.pravda.ru/politics/parties/other/25-07-2005/51609-nbp-0/ (last accessed 3/4/2018).

reach all my goals in politics."[144] Limonov opposed Putin's regime for a long time (he organized protests against him, and wrote the book *Limon vs Putin*), and then began to support his Ukrainian annexation politics. He saw all this as his personal triumph, including the realization of his prophetic words and the street slogans about Crimea and Lugansk in the 1990s. He concluded: "Putin follows Limonov…and not the other way around."[145] Watching this epatage being transformed into a childish political diversion, many public figures commented that Limonov the politician is a completely fake character and a fool.[146] Sadov claimed that Limonov, who is "ready to dance to any tune, shout and call to unite with anyone," can easily pronounce Dali's phrase: "Surrealism, it's me!" for his politics is like cinematic hypnoses for the followers, and by utilizing Limonov's language he suggests to him the following: "At your age there is not much life left, thus, gather all the sleeping party members and set yourself on fire by pouring gasoline from canisters....And the guys should finally wake up from this Limonov dream, wake up and cease to be the characters of Linderman's porn scenarios. Yes, Death!"[147] Limonov sees his critics as a "bunch of invalids in wheelchairs," watching the agile athletes' game and criticizing their moves, "they look like an impotent dope who is giving advice to a man reaching climax with a woman: "Not like that! Not that way! Quietly! Be more modest!"[148]

Moving in accord with Pushkin's verses "From the Western Seas Right to the Eastern Gates" with "the face covered with wrinkles—it has transformed," Limonov-phallus appears to

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[144] "Otkrytaia studiia" *Svobodnaia Pressa*, Sergei Shargunov's interview with Limonov at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5R3BXY8R-U8 (accessed November 5, 2019).
[145] Balkanskii, *Eduard Limonov* p. 288.
[146] "That's just fooling and there is no politics there whatsoever. I spoke several times with him and did not recognize a politician in him, states Aleksei Podberezkin (quoted in Ivan Tregubov, "Limonov zaigralsia v politiku". *Ytro.Ru*. Jun 10, 2005, at https://utro.ru/articles/2005/06/10/447730.shtml (last accessed Jun 1, 2018). Or "He has no ideology, there is only a dangerous thirst for some kind of power….He takes up politics and in it continues to be nothing but a writer. He brings [literary] images and aesthetics into politics" (Andrei Sadov, "Limonov, ubei sebia!," *Kreml'.ORG*, May 17, 2006, at http://www.kreml.org/opinions/118361702/ [last accessed May 26, 2018]).
[147] Sadov "Limonov, ubei sebia!"
[148] Dodolev, *Limoniana*, pp. 38–39.

promote once again unpopular ideas and impose conservatism in replacing nationalism. His political turn toward the East in his mature years is the opposite pole from his early move to the West, assuring a narrative full-circle structure and promises the resurrection to Natalia-O. In the gray, shadowy, interim space between death and life, the visionary ideal state called the "Other Russia" arises. In his utopian political project "The Other Russia" Limonov shows colonial political pretensions: to conquer Asia, unite it with Russia and impose the Russian language. The colonized, possessed woman and her body in absence are turned into a metaphor for the East, the zone to exploit for the goal of Limonov's political utopian project, which is to building the bright future for the new generations of youth (*natsboly-drugorossy*), to "make a new nation, to unite all brotherly close nations into one family, to give birth to a New Man that would carry traits of all Euro-Asian people."[149] To build the New Porn Man of the Other Russia, Limonov offers thorough reforms toward education and upbringing: the youth will be taught how to love the East; both girls and boys will be taught to shoot a grenade launcher, to besiege towns and villages, to write poems, etc.; children will be separated from the family early, which should bring them mobility, freedom, and independence. Life in the Houses for kids will be built where they will be educated (*vospitanie*) and their sexual life released from any manufactured social conditions. This conservative-revolutionary Limonov appeals for a ban on abortion, seen as "a crime against the Russian nation," and advocates perpetual pregnancy of women on earth (like Zamiatin's O's rebellious act of pregnancy). By their roundness, pregnant Russian women become the army of little "o"s, to parallel *natsboly*, serving not the man, but the O-the-lunar female principle above, Natalia, who reaches great heights on the vertical line as the Great Bear

[149] In his book *Eresi* (2008) quoted in Chantsev, *Bunt krasoty*, p. 138.

(*Bol'shaia medveditsa*).[150] It is most likely that, in the cosmos that appropriates characteristics of vaginal space, Natalia hides as the planet Saturn, that god to whom Limonov prays (*Nash Bog—planeta Saturn*) because that visually unique beauty of the Solar System with its famous ring that evokes O is the one that dictates time as it is associated with the ancient god from Greek mythology, Chronos. She is the God of Death that will proclaim the fall of the *khui* and his art.[151] For Limonov, "death is the most important job, and one must prepare oneself for it….Birth does not depend on us, but death does" (*Dnevnik neudachnika*, 404). He pleads for death, saying "it's good dying," since it is only another form of existence ("and death is simply another life," sings Natalia), and it promises rebirth and cyclicality—O.

In 2010, a new sex scandal shocked the public when a video, taken by a hidden camera, was released showing Limonov and two other political figures, Aleksandr Potkin and Viktor Shenderovich having sex in the same apartment with a young woman known as Mumu. This episode evokes "cow language," and the "Mu-u-Mu-u" (*My*=We) appears again to mark a discursive transition and herald a slow decline of the male porn tale. Limonov challenges Aristotle's conclusion that epic and tragedy differ in the length of the action by making his exilic tragedy a porn Homeric epopee, which symbolically lasts exactly as long as Joyce's *Ulysses*, 24 hours of action divided into a puzzle of death and rebirth episodes, arranged in accordance with a yin-yang discursive structure: from the West-sunset-night-darkness to the East-sunrise-day-light. Expressing the highest possible degree of human egoism of all kinds, Limonov shows that Grossman's predictions in *Life and Fate* are true, that "zoological, class, racial, governmental,

[150] Allusion to Liliia V'iugina's documentary about Natalia Medvedeva titled *Bol'shaia medveditsa*, at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SrF3sriF2AA.
[151] At the sound of the biological clock, Limonov himself answers to this procreation call with his last wife, actress and singer Ekaterina Volkova, giving birth to his son Bogdan and daughter Aleksandra (both names make the children direct heirs to the porn God Aleksandr Pushkin!).

and personal egoism" can transform "the entire world into a galactic concentration camp."[152] This virtual porn concentration camp permeates the late and post-Soviet space and time with the voices of the past screaming "Eto ia…, Eto ia…!" But the creators and actors themselves also become its victims. A month before her death, Natalia left a will asking that her body be cremated and her ashes spread over the cities she had lived in. This could be the burnt sacrifice on her part of the whole. Limonov is still on the line with Natalia through mysterious cosmological links upholding the fairytale closing formula, "happily until their deaths." This cycle, it seems, will end with the actual death of Eduard Limonov, when the (iron) curtain rolls down. "But after all, death can be just a game move."[153] The last scandal that Limonov-Pushkin recently provoked in Iurii Dud''s show concerns his death when he uttered: "the day of my death will be a national mourning.[154]

The next two chapters will show how this hard-cord Stalinist-Pushkinist pornography that emerged in exile became softer at home. The open autobiography that Limonov took to uphold his fascist discourse, becomes a secret in Erofeev and Sorokin, or rather exposing the self through presence in absence. This conditions their project of "liquid fascism," in which they overtly sink the father Stalin.

[152] Vasily Grossman, *Life and Fate,* London: Vintage, 2011a, p. 692.
[153] Brusilovskii, "Smert' Limonova."
[154] "Limono-smert', Naval'nyi, ustritsy/ vDudia," (August 2018), at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X2gALEgKXt0

CHAPTER 3: Viktor Erofeev: Pornography of a Cultural Degenerate

Slabaia liubov porozhdaet erotiku, sil'naia – pornografiiu.

...eblia ne mozhet byt' ofitsiozom ─ eblia tol'ko togda eblia, kogda zapret. (V. Erofeev, *Strashnyi sud*)[1]

Viktor Vladimirovich Erofeev was born in 1947 in Moscow. Erofeev's father, Vladimir Erofeev, was a Soviet diplomat and Stalin's personal interpreter whose commitments to the Party and diplomacy determined his son's cultural and intellectual trajectory. Moving with his father the young Erofeev spent a part of his childhood in France and only much later returned to Moscow in pursuit of higher education. Though Vladimir expected his son to pursue a diplomatic career and enter the Moscow State Institute of International Relations, Erofeev decided to take a completely different path. He studied literature and language and, in 1975, earned a PhD degree for his dissertation project on Fyodor Dostoyevsky and French existentialism. Both the French and Russian cultural arenas would shape his entire literary production and become fertile ground for his pornography. Erofeev asserts that his parents, who took him to different countries and enriched him by opening before him an entire new world and culture, made him at least bi-cultural: "for me, France is the same home country as Russia."[2] His pornographic world is therefore powered by the fuel springing from different cultural fountains and historical periods, of which French (especially De Sade's pornography) and Russian (Dostoevsky, Russian folk tales, literature of the Silver Age and the 1960s (*shestdesiatniki*)) are the most significant and somehow inseparably intertwined in his entire oeuvre. "I have a dual

[1] "A weak love gives rise to erotica, and a powerful one to pornography." "…fucking cannot be official, fucking is fucking only when it is forbidden."

[2] V. Erofeev, "Ia redkii svobodnyi chelovek v mire" (interview by Iana Dubinianskaia), ZN.UA, 6 October 2006, at http://gazeta.zn.ua/SOCIETY/viktor_erofeev_ya_redkiy_svobodnyy_chelovek_v_rossii.html.

citizenship in culture," he proudly avers, that is made out of "semiotics of living, invisible little things that came into my blood."[3]

Erofeev is a crossbreed cultural figure whose literary work plays with fluidity and hybridization. He positions his literary self, language, and characters on the borderline between French and Russian cultural heritage, female and male sexuality and voices, Soviet and anti-Soviet discourses, official and underground literature, and moral purity and pollution. In his artistic world everything shifts, and nothing can be reduced to a definitive truth, reality, or perspective.[4] This "postmodern code-shifting"[5] remains the main characteristic of Erofeev's struggle in confronting Soviet one-sidedness and adamantine ideological assumptions. Combining different cultural and literary references in writing, Erofeev, a member of the Writers' Union, turns against this authoritative Soviet literary institution to violate its ethical and aesthetic standards. Soviet anxiety about bodily health, purity and wholeness becomes a galvanizing force that generates Erofeev's revolutionary literary endeavor.

Erofeev is known as a literary critic[6] and writer whose popularity was conceived with pornography. In the early seventies, he published an essay on Marquis de Sade's oeuvre in the magazine *Literaturnye voprosy* in which he elaborates on Sade's role in the development of European culture; Erofeev examines how Sade's pornography might enrich Russian culture in

[3] Viktor Erofeev, *Good Stalin* (*Khoroshii Stalin*), Moscow: ZebraE, 2004, p. 154.
[4] One can clearly trace the shifts in Erofeev's literary characters that range from high society/language to low, from the left wing to the right, from Russian to foreign correspondents, from pro- to anti-western/Soviet camps, or from homo- to heterosexuality.
[5] As Mark Lipovetsky argues, Postmodernism rests on "code-switching" between different cultural languages, the high and the low, and archaic and fashionable (*Russian Postmodern Fiction: Dialogue with Chaos*, M. E. Sharpe, New York, 1999, pp. 14-18).
[6] Erofeev's comments and critical examinations of the works of various Russian and French authors, artists and philosophers—including, but not limited to, Eisenstein, Nabokov, Chekhov, Platonov, Solzhenitsyn, Aksenov, Brodskii, Rozanov, Tolstoi, Gogol', Rambo, Camus, De Sade, Sartre, Flaubert, Proust—are collected in a series of short essays titled "The Monument of the Past Time" and in the 1996 book *In the Labyrinth of Accursed Questions* which had profoundly influenced the stream of development of Russian literary criticism.

particular. Sade is portrayed as a culturally liberating figure that a country like Russia needs in order to develop an erotic discourse and free itself from cultural taboos; Sade's porn, the logic of sexual fantasy, and the free language of passion should be mastered and taken as a model for overcoming Russia's main cultural sickness—silence.[7] Erofeev himself already initiated this process in 1979 by releasing the samizdat uncensored almanac *MetrOpol',* which announced the beginning of a grand fight for a literature free of censorship; and then in the early 1980s by writing his first novel *Russian Beauty* (*Russkaia krasavitsa*) that officially brought him fame as a pornographer. This book was only Erofeev's initial attack on Soviet literary criticism and cultural claustrophobia. Erofeev's attempts to unseal Soviet cultural space and create an entirely new literary window through which uncensored, obscene artistic expression would prevail over pretentious Soviet demonstrations of purity became more palpable in the subsequent period that featured a war against authority for cultural liberation. Erofeev grew into an intolerable cultural threat against whom the regime fought by means of numerous bans and suppression of his work.[8]

Erofeev became an underground writer who continued afterwards to provoke and shock the public with his controversial literary endeavors and public performances. In 1988, his public readings of the provocative short stories "Life with an Idiot" ("Zhizn' s idiotom," 1980), "The Parakeet" ("Popugaichik," 1981) and "Persian Lilac" ("Persidskaia siren'," 1983) terrified the Moscow audience who accused him of prostituting Russian literature because "he gratuitously wades in vileness and debauchery."[9]

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[7] V. Erofeev, "Markiz de Sad, sadism i XX vek," *Sobranie sochinenii v 3-kh tomakh*, Moscow: Soiuz fotokhudozhnikov Rossii, 1994-1996 (Vol. 2).

[8] For example, he was expelled from the Writers' Union and could not publish the novel until the perestroika period (1989).

[9] See Helena Goscilo, "Body Talk in Current Fiction: Speaking Parts and (W)holes," *Russian Culture in Transition* (Selected Papers of the Working Group for the Study of Contemporary Russian Culture, 1990-1991), Stanford: Stanford Slavic Studies, Vol. 7 (1993): 160.

Since the late nineties, Erofeev has been actively engaged in public cultural life of post-Soviet Russia by hosting radio and TV talk shows (1998-2011, "Apocrypha" on the TV Channel "Culture;" 2003-2011, "Encyclopedia of the Russian Soul" on Radio *Liberty*), where he often comments on various socio-political and cultural matters. Parallelly, Erofeev now and then maintains his disobedient image by causing new scandals in public such as his participation in (and escape from) the 2008 reality show *Survivor*, or in the 2014 program "Dilettantes" where he proved that Leningrad had to be handed over to Germans to save people's lives. Erofeev's play is always at the frontier.

This chapter analyses how Erofeev's rebellious literary game reduces the socialist ideology with its use of obscene language and explicit depiction of sexual and physiological functions. Relativity and mobility are, therefore, the most important elements of Erofeev's allegedly perverted and deviant discourse by means of which he makes the Soviet anxiety become reality, and imaginary fear actual. In his hands, pornography appears as a new ideology that synthesizes anti-cultural values. As a narrative hybrid that engages with the possibility of numerous sexual partners, sexual organs, and means of pleasure, porn at the core of Erofeev's poetics of opposites, complements the new libertine tendencies of *glasnost'* and initiates the spinning cycle of mass public sexual discourses of the late- and post-Soviet eras. This relativity of porn becomes essential for his literary approach to cultural, sexual and gender identities, and the body. Erofeev uses mobility and relativity as ultimate methods in deconstructing the only and definitive understanding of perversion and porn, by interpreting them as fluid elements in the language and consciousness. Debauchery, he claims, is a "mobile term" (*mobil'nyi termin*) that needs to be continuously clarified anew since in different cultures and historical periods it has been conceptualized in different ways. The question of pornography is understood as a matter of

perpetual relativeness, which depends on interpretation, culture and historical period that unequivocally sets a limit for one to think their opinion is true and final. Therefore, the term pornography, as Erofeev often repeats, encompasses a wide range of readings, from more naive to quite radical: while in the 1960s some people consider aerobics and Rodin's sculptures to be porn, others see porn as some kind of an over-extreme case related to all kinds of nonsense including bestiality. To further emphasize the relativity in porn Erofeev gives the following example:

> When my novel *Russian Beauty* was published in 1990, about 200 reviews appeared in Moscow, all offensive, and most people said that the book was pornography. I came to Holland. It happened that in the Netherlands, this book became a number one bestseller. I remember signing the book in a village bookstore when a very pretty 25-year old Dutch girl said: "Mr. Erofeev, the book is good, but why there is nothing about sex?" This is, you know, traveling —an opportunity to understand that there are different cultures and different approaches. [10]

Erofeev views cultural crisscrossing as a symbolic "blood infection" threatening the Soviet immune system, for it causes a strong reaction of the regime's body and organs' failure. His credentials in advocating it lie in the fact that his life experience speaks of diversity, as he lived in different cultures, was active in different political arenas, spoke foreign languages, and widely traveled. Erofeev's porn translates a personal life story in which explicit pornographic imagery, sex-love and sex-violence, and his continuous struggle for and the joint fight with the

[10] (*Radio Svoboda*, "Entsiklopediia russkoi dushi" ("Granicy dozvolennogo"), June 26, 2004, at http://archive.svoboda.org/programs/encl/2004/encl.062604.asp (last accessed May 20, 2017).
Erofeev pleads for crossing the borders of cultural intangibility for embarking on a journey into unknown and exploring different ideas and perceptions should open up and enrich one's mind and lead one to get to know the other.

dead and alive (or past and present) bodies, words, narratives, and voices, puzzle out a psychological drama of the child within the context of the Oedipal complex. The author stages his literary uprising against the Soviet institutions via rivalry and dependence with his father, as flesh-and-blood representative of the Soviet system.

Contamination and impurity of the body, fickleness and fluidity of sex and gender are the main principles of Erofeev's Oedipal pornography which determine his understanding of the *other* and the issues of "us" and "them." This chapter's focus is hybridization of sexual rhetoric in Erofeev's work, which arises when man's obscenity is delivered through a woman. It examines how the late-Soviet crisis of masculinity brings male speech to silence and how the woman's voice, in turn, becomes the carrier of his vulgar language. Furthermore, I will show that Erofeev plants his anti-Soviet literary exhibitionism in gendered voice-trafficking within the Oedipal family triangle. For the Soviets, a man is the central figure in the continuation of the genetic line (political, cultural, ideological), while a woman remains a peripheral character. Erofeev reverses this order through a parody of the Soviet carnivalesque cultural atmosphere—periphery temporarily becomes center and vice versa. In carnival time, understood in the Bakhtinian sense when the world is turned upside-down, Erofeev develops a porn myth of male discursive death and rebirth during which the woman's voice speaks the language of the rebellious son who stands up against the father's symbolic order.

The Metropol' Affaire

Metropol' appeared as a joint project of V. Erofeev, V. Aksenov, A. Bitov, F. Iskander, and E. Popov that was put into circulation to challenge tight government control of literature and art. The publication of *Metropol'* brought about an abrupt transformation in cultural values, a

conversion within the currency of literary lexicon and representation of the body, and initiated the use of explicit sexual vocabulary and descriptions of the biological bodily functions such as vomiting, defecating, farting, salivating, ejaculating, etc.[11] The focus was put on bodily fluids and gases that materialized the idea of moving forward, coming out the orifice as a symbolic "breakthrough to the West" and a fight with social and cultural stagnation under Brezhnev.[12] In the preface, the authors explain that *Metropol'* arises as a shelter (*krysha*) for "homeless writers," those whose works remain outside the mainstream Soviet literary production, and for literature doomed to wandering and homelessness. In other words, this project represented an asylum for the Russian literary underground into which Erofeev and his friends had descended: "*Metropol'* is a metropolitan shelter for the world's best subway."[13] Yet, for releasing such a scandalous underground project, the *Metropol'*s editorial board would go through a harsh battle with the Soviet censorship, regime and critical public.

The almanac was immediately suppressed in the Soviet Union and the writers suspected of a cultural crime. The Metropol' founders turned to Soviet officials with a quest to simply publish the almanac by suggesting that, in a way, it had been already "published" given its wide circulation in the Russian underground and in the West, France and the United States.[14] They assumed that all of Russian culture might benefit from implementation and strengthening of such

[11] See Goscilo, "Body Talk in Current Fiction," p. 148.
[12] Erofeev phrases this as a "fight with stagnation in stagnant conditions." In his 1989 essay "Vremia 'Metropolia," *Sobranie sochinenii*, Vol. 3). Stagnation, seen as bodily constipation, was treated with the new remedy, explicitness and obscenity, by which the next stage could be reached when all of it would be evacuated; from an absolute inactivity caused by too much intake of false ideological substances to an explosion of released energy of mixed and liberated discourses.
[13] All citations and references are from the 1979 Moscow facsimile edition of *Metropol'* held in Rossiiskii gosudarstvennyi arkhiv literatury i iskusstva (RGALI, f. 1345, op. 4, d. 30).
[14] Kevin Klose, "Moscow Harasses Top Writers Over Unofficial Journal." *The Washington Post*. February 4, 1979. At https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/politics/1979/02/04/moscow-harasses-top-writers-over-unofficial-journal/3721223e-56a7-40cb-824f-7e373fd5ce74/?utm_term=.8129907b82c9 (Last accessed May 6, 2018).

a perception. Still, aware of the Soviet regime's practice to categorize art in a binary way, as pro- or anti-Soviet, that might easily bury alive the entire Metropol' literary group (with a total of twenty some literati named Metropolists) as perpetrators of a criminal act, the writers underline that all of them, though united under the same "roof" (*krysha*), act independently and each is individually responsible for their own works ("tol'ko sam avtor otvechaet za svoe proizvedenie" (*Metropol'*)). Although explicit anti-Soviet content could not be found in *Metropol'*, the officials, nevertheless, declared its founders enemies of the state and initiated a fight against them to combat the cultural "infection" they spread. When the Metropolists invited three hundred people to the café Rhythm in Moscow trying to attract a larger public attention and familiarize the Muscovites with their almanac, the KGB reacted in a military manner: they surrounded the entire block, closed the café, and hung a sign on the door saying: "Sanitary day." This was a clear message that the cleansing measures were in power against such a cultural pollution source like Metropol' that was labeled by the unanimous voice of the Soviet critical public as "garbage" (*musor*), a "pile of shit" (*kucha govna*) and "pornography of the spirit" (*pornografiia dukha*).[15]

As a result, the inventors of this cultural danger and national contamination were considered dissidents and devils of the Soviet state and became targets for various hostilities and intimidations directed at them from the authorities of leading institutions. The KGB would go so far as to draw parallel between Erofeev and Mikhail Bulgakov's demonic Voland, to spread rumors about a homosexual relationship between Erofeev and Aksenov, who created *Metropol'* in order to "test the power of their male friendship," to discourage people from being friends with them, to monitor their telephone conversations, and, finally, to abduct Erofeev for interrogation in the hotel "Belgrade" when they requested the manuscript from him in order to

[15] The entire struggle of the Metropol' group with the regime Erofeev describes in "Vremia 'Metropolia'."

"get more familiar with his pornographic creation."[16] The dissident writer Lev Kopelev terms such hostile moves against *Metropol'* by the state "the shadow of Stalinism."[17] While the editorial board was the main objective, the other victims of this dictatorial battle appeared as a collateral damage. The Metropol' affair led to grave repercussions not only for the two leading figures, Erofeev and Popov, who were excluded from the Writers' Union,[18] but also for their "partners in crime," Vasilii Aksenov, Simeon Lipkin, and Inna Lisnianskaia, all of whom gave up their membership and left the Writer's Union out of solidarity. Another *Metropol'*'s contributor, Fasil Iskander, was accused by Writer's Union officials of "being twenty percent guilty"[19] that certainly recalls Nazi's classification of "a Mischling of the second degree" (perhaps by a strange analogy: one text published in *Metropol'* equals one Jewish grandparent!).[20] Finally, the very first "casualty" of the Soviet censorship's brutality in targeting the Metropolists turned out to be Erofeev's father, who was forced by Party authorities to resign his diplomatic career at the very moment when he hoped to be promoted to the position of Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs. The father became a victim of the son's underground activism.

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[16] "Vremia Metropolia," 502-3.

[17] Quoted in Klose, *The Washington Post*, February 4, 1979.

[18] In *Good Stalin*, Erofeev ironically states that his exclusion was an historical event: "I set the record of the most minimal stay in the Union in its history since 1934. I did not have time to enjoy either the publication of the book or the blessings of the House of Creativity. I was kicked out after seven months and thirteen days (*Khoroshii Stalin*, Moscow: ZebraE, 2004, p. 325).

[19] Ibid.

[20] The Metropolists' Jewishness was indeed a matter to be discussed by the authority of the Writers' Union to define the degree of their fault. When the Jewish-Russian writer and translator Lev Ginzburg, who was sent as the Writers' Union's "emissary" to request from Lipkin and Lisniatskaia to write an apologetic letter, faced their rejection to comply with his demand, he lost his temper and expressed concerns "about the way they expressed their Jewishness: 'What is this all supposed to mean anyhow? One goes to synagogue, the other to church …'" (Maxim D. Shrayer, "Lev Ginzburg, Soviet Translator: The story of a Jewish Germanophile who Became a Soviet Investigator of Nazi Crimes," Tablet, October 24, 2018. At www.tabletmag.com/jewish-arts-and-culture/273095/lev-ginzburg-soviet-translator?fbclid=IwAR2AjmIidYERrYWbu2uUcWRBG2Blcq6aUrklTVbfgUO_HcB3kSHXBryB1SQ (last accessed October 26, 2018).

Given the Soviet censorship, Erofeev saw himself as a victim-revolutionary obligated of throwing a "book-nuclear bomb" (*Metropol'*) onto the Soviet discursive playfield: "I knew that you can only talk to them from a position of power" (*GS,* 329). By doing this Erofeev announced disintegration of everything Soviet: the regime, state, ideological rhetoric and its didactic inventions such as the socialist realist narrative, the writer as the Party's assistant, and the Soviet Man. The exhausted Soviet literature meets its death with the birth of *Metropol'*[21]: "In a way *Metropol'* killed Soviet literature. Invented by me, but assembled by all of us, the 'metropolitans,' the bomb ripped Soviet literature to pieces. In its place another literature began emerging. *Metropol'* became a harbinger of Russian freedom" (*GS,* 378).

Death inevitably awaits literature that insists on hyper-moralism and does not cherish freedom of speech. Erofeev was first to officially proclaim the end of Soviet literature in his essay "A Wake over Soviet Literature" (1989): "I think Soviet literature came to its end. It may even be that by now it turned into a cooling corpse, a large-headed ideological cadaver that quietly, and as if apologetically, let a ghost out."[22] The death of Soviet literature results in a new type of silence that is forced upon the Soviet writer and Soviet man. In his essay "Russian Flowers of Evil," Erofeev asserts that alternative late-Soviet literature (*drugaia literatura*) that brought new rules, or rather no rules at all, dealt with a "dead word"(*s mertvym slovom*) left from Soviet literature that was hard to "reanimate" (*trudno reanimirovat*) because the "dead language is impossible to recover" (*ubityi iazyk ne lechitsia*): "Soviet discourse that was flooded with false ideals, phony enthusiasm and promises, and fabricated slogans turned in the 1970s into a

[21] Erofeev states that the *Metropol'* project turned into X-ray illuminating the body of both the Soviet society and the regime "that is not heading forward on its ideological bulldozer anymore, but is barely crawling— entirely marasmic, degrading and falling apart—yet, at the same time, it is ready to destroy everything that moves (vse zhivoe)" ("Vremia Metropolia," 506).
[22] Erofeev, "Pominki po sovetskoi literature," *Sobranie sochinenii*, Vol. 3, p. 422.

discredited word-mummy, word-ghost (*slovom-mumyei, slovom prizrakom*)."[23] The Soviet writer inescapably shares the destiny of Soviet literature that has only past and no future. The writer dies together with literature and becomes a mere literary ghost, like Vladimir in *Russian Beauty*. If big Russian literature is destined to reemerge (*vozroditsia*), Erofeev concludes, "it will have its future but only in the future" (422). Until then the present, assigned to the late-Soviet era, remains the time of symbolic official silence. The present is the time of the *other*. The alternative figures from the cultural margins—the woman, the underground writer, and the cultural outcast—arise to occupy the discursive throne.

Sadism

The initial experience with fascistic and Stalinist-like punishment and investigative torture concerning the *Metropol'* affair would shape Erofeev's point of view in his later examination of the social relationships and the sadistic psychological structure of Russian people. He elaborates on this topic in his story "Popugaichik," a trial case narrative that I read as Erofeev's literary breakdown of his combat with the regime over *Metropol'* and freedom of speech. Written less than two years after the Metropol' affair, the story discloses the various sadistic games the regime is ready to play against the child, Ermolai Spiridonovich, for making a dead parakeet fly, an act which is considered criminal. The bird called Semen is perceived by the regime as the *other*, a foreign bird that carries a vague cultural symbolism, which threatens the regime because its flight anticipates freedom and resurrection.

[23] Erofeev, "Russkie tsvety zla." Sobranie sochinenii, Vol. 2, p. 246.) When the other, alternative truth(s) is revealed the Soviet word/discourse appears empty.

After being put in a cage the bird resists food and dies. This "voluntary hunger strike," that symbolizes refusal of the official discourse that fed Soviet literature, results in a symbolic death, understood as the suppression of an alternative voice. The bird is buried to prevent the spread of disease, just as *Metropol'* is censored and hidden from the public; society is safeguarded by the KGB's tactical sanitization. Ermolai, who also appears to be the *other* (*nenashenskii*), digs out the grave and retrieves the bird. The bird signifies the pornographic discourse à la Sade that Erofeev intends to resurrect within the Soviet state to help revive Russian culture.[24] For Erofeev, de Sade is one of the "dear deceased" (*dorogikh pokoinikov*) of 20th-century culture.[25] Ermolai announces de Sade's rebirth through the myth of the Phoenix. The authorities interpret Ermolai's attempt to resurrect the parakeet as an attack to the Soviet state, as his wish "to show that this foreign bird was superior to our [Soviet] sparrows, and to lessen thereby our pride and show us before the whole world in a foolish and wrong light."[26] It is not a coincidence that Erofeev imagines Ermolai bringing the dead parakeet to the roof to make it fly again. *Metropol'* is that roof (*krysha*) from which "homeless" Erofeev and his underground group let their uncensored narratives fly. Therefore, the roof is the place from which both Erofeev and his character are thrown into the abyss by the regime. "How would we explain to the country fellows if it had resurrected?", wonders the interrogator working on Ermolai's case. He is the one who leads the boy to the roof and orders him to fly into death: "Fly, Ermolaiushka! Fly, my dear (*golubok*)!" (420).

[24] According to Erofeev, not only that there was no sex in the USSR, but no death either: "In the Soviet Union it was believed that there was no death. Death is going AWOL (Smert'—samovolka). …The deceased were treated disgustingly like deserters" (*Good Stalin*, 35).
[25] "Kazhdaia kul'tura imeet svoikh "dorogikh pokoinikov." …Sredi "dorogikh pokoinikov" kul'tury XX veka okazalsia markiz de Sad." ("Markiz de Sad," 280).
[26] V. Erofeev, "Popugaichik," *Sobranie sochinenii,* Vol. 1, p. 420.

During the investigation the KGB inspector, as the official representative of the system, who often uses the personal pronoun "we" rather than "I" to refer to the collective authoritative body, underlines the Soviets' love for cruelty: "We people like torture. If there were no restrictions to arbitrary torture and rules, there wouldn't be anybody left alive in this country" (418). But it turns out that there are no rules governing the use of brutality by the state apparatus. The inspector gives Ermolai's father, Spiridon Ermolaevich, a detailed account of the perverted sadistic humiliation suffered by the boy:

> We tortured and tormented your son, Ermolai Spiridonovich, with predilection for we cannot do it differently than we were trained. …We impaled him and blindfolded him, not actually of course, and instead of a stake we used the male member of our giant friend Fedka, who goes by the Honorable…, we let ants onto his prick, inflated him like a frog through the asshole…we tore his nostrils and nails with pliers, we invited shameless girls and asked him, Ermolai Spiridonovich, to lick their shameful ulcers, they might heal. … Finally, we tore off his rattle-bags (*pogremushki*), because they were no longer needed, and threw them before the dogs… What does he need them for? Do we need his heirs? I think we don't. (416)

The passage above describing what was done to the boy, while fictional, dramatizes a much more real, physical violence of the Stalinist training that, passed over to the new generation subjects Erofeev to symbolic castration. Ermolai's castration symbolizes Erofeev's exclusion from the Writers' Union. The radical method of testicle extraction definitely blocks Erofeev's literary semen for insemination and further production. The exclusion from the Union meant "literary death," because "whoever got excluded was never to be published again" ("Vremia Metropolia," 500). The innocent writer sentenced to death by the state is portrayed by Erofeev as

"a castrated white tomcat with the eyes of a beauty," in his 1986 eponymous short story, whose final account comes out as the famous winged words: "Man is made for happiness like a bird for flight."[27] After the castration, the inspector sees Ermolai as a "delicate fruit like a woman" that could be further easily humiliated. The inspector's sadism overwhelms the boy with both his brutal physical punishment and sexual manipulation. The inspector claims his homosexual impulse remains a big mystery since it comes to the fore only if supported by the state's authority and power. Though women as such do not excite him, the inspector-sadist takes "delicate" and "beautiful" woman-like Ermolai as a sexual object to degrade, and by effectively assuming full control of the entire state apparatus reaches final sexual satisfaction at the point of his victim's death.[28] He gets sexually aroused by looking at Ermolai flying off the roof and breaking into pieces. Through the "dehumanization of gay sexuality," a phenomenon taken over by late- and post-Soviet authors from Silver Age culture,[29] Erofeev twists the interpretation of the state's sexual ability and practice by showing that the rumors about his homosexuality, in fact, come from the Soviet regime's own homosexual tendencies and sadistic desire.

Like Erofeev's, Ermolai's father becomes a victim of his son's rebellious activism as he is forced to listen to the entire narrative about his son's guilt, the punishment he received and his death. The father becomes collateral damage of the sadistic punishment directed towards the son.[30] The inspector explicitly informs the father of the son's betrayal during the physical torture

[27] "Chelovek sozdan dlia schast'ia kak ptitsa dlia poleta." (Erofeev, "Belyi kastrirovannyi kot s glazami krasavitsy," *Sobranie sochinenii,* Vol. 1, p. 325.
[28] The sadist is always in need of institutions that would guarantee his absolute possession of the victim of his sadistic phantasy. See Gilles Deleuze, *Masochism: An Interpretation of Coldness and Cruelty*, trans. Jean McNeil, New York: G. Braziller, 1971, pp. 20-21.
[29] See Luc Beaudoin, "Masculine Utopia in Russian Pornography," in *Eros and Pornography in Russian Culture*., *e*d. M. Levitt and A. Toporkov, Moscow: Ladomir, 1999.
[30] Erofeev claims that the KGB immediately realized that his father Vladimir was his weak point, "and they hit right there (*udarili po nemu*)" (*Good Stalin,* 348).

and interrogation ("Don't grieve for the rascal. He laid you off as well (*on i tebia zalozhil*)…" (421)), when Ermolai, forced to confess all his "crimes," discloses that he was told by his father to exhume the bird. In fact, the torturer leads the helpless victim to speak his sadistic language and to verbalize what he holds to be the truth.[31] Yet, Ermolai's confession is full of contradictions. He reveals the "truth" through several different versions of the same story, claiming each version to be true. His obscure identity suggested by the mirror-effect-wordplay made of his and his father's names and patronymics, Ermolai Spiridonovich—Spiridon Ermolaevich, additionally complicates the story, and makes two scenarios possible: Ermolai is his father Spiridon's son but might also be his father's father. This son-father (con)fusion replicates the extraordinary resemblance of Erofeev and his father as described in *Good Stalin*: "We are interwoven with the similarity of smiles, noses, a little open mouths, an awkward twitching of the leg, sudden slowness, folding the hands on the back of the head, and intonation to such an extent that together we make up the time machine…my father is sometimes mistaken for me—people are horrified, as if I have grown old…" (103). By means of Ermolai's postmodern unreliable narration-confession and obscure multi-identity, Erofeev relativizes the veracity of the overly simplified Soviet rhetoric and vilifies orthodoxy of its dogmatic truth.[32]

Because of the exposure to traumatic events during his later campaign for literary freedom which he equates to the Gulag experience ("I felt the chill of the Gulag" (*Good Stalin*

[31] Ermolai verbally overreacts to the loss of his genitals and begins swearing and calling his torturers the "inhuman monsters." The inspector sees this as the real face of the violator: "under the investigative torture one is saying what he thinks, like a drunk man's words" (*A na dybe chto u cheloveka na ume- to i na iazyke, kak u p'ianykh liudei*) (417). And when Ermolai complains that he cannot think in such a pain, the torturer replies: "you do not think, you just answer" (418)).

[32] The idea of aesthetic pluralism, according to Erofeev, spontaneously developed with the Metropol' project: "In the *Metropol'* works, an untabooed (*rastabuirovannyi*) image of Russia appeared, with its religious quests, sexual catastrophes, drunken fights, crazy humor, national quarrels, a heterogeneous intellectual potential, blackened in smoke like a wheel, with mentality, the latest *art risqué* and the traditional rigorist aesthetics. It was the emerging module of Russia, striving for self-knowledge" (*Good Stalin*, 332).

339)), Erofeev will develop a kind of the "post-Metropol' syndrome" and will constantly see Russian reality through the prism of cultural sadism. According to him, "Russia is a paradise for sadists" for "Russian statehood has historically provided them happy existence" ("Markiz de Sad," 280). By following Solzhenitsyn's example of rising awareness of the horror of the Gulag and the cruelty of the Soviet state, Erofeev becomes an outspoken critic of the regime and of Russian society. The sadistic game in which torturers experience sexual pleasure in humiliating their victims and enjoyment in verbally manipulating them becomes a leading trope in Erofeev's revolutionary pornography, delivered through both his literary works and public performances. Thus, any of Erofeev's literary and public artistic engagements should be viewed as a chain in the plot of his autobiographical porn satire that culminates in *Good Stalin,* presented as his utterly autobiographical novel, in which he admits that the whole Soviet life was a literature. His project has as its goal the replication of Marquis de Sade's experience of the Great Terror, his aesthetics in literary analyses of how power operates by sexual violence and perversion, and his unfaltering determination to act as an advocate of absolute freedom. Karen Ryan asserts that "Erofeev shares with Sade an obsession with sexual violence that serves—when rendered as art—as satiric commentary on specific social and political targets."[33] He is completely engaged in the project of creating his personal pornographic satire that would never end. It functions on the principal of centrifugal force of variations/interpretation and (per)versions coming out from the center, where two flows of the individual (the writer's) and collective (Russian people's) cultural and historical psychodrama merge. "Why do writers write their autobiographies?" asks Erofeev and answers: "In my opinion, this is a serious illness. It's like inscribing your initials on the bench… (*Good Stalin,* 197, hereafter *GS*). For him, autobiography is "a dead-end genre": "It

[33] Karen Ryan, "Misreading Misogyny," in *Eros and Pornography in Russian Culture,* p. 581.

was enough for me to read a few dozens of autobiographies to understand that I will never write an autobiography (*avtobiografiiu nikogda ne napishu*)" (*GS,* 201). He has been writing it and will be writing it but never complete it (implied by the perfective verbal form '*ne napishu*').

If understood as a twofold fluctuating project—autobiographical porn and pornographic autobiography—Erofeev's work/life, like the Soviet state, does have a strict historical timeframe and is merely divided into the time before and after the Revolution, that is, pre- and post-*Metropol'* time. The (porno)graphic representation of the path of the "savior" of Russian literature and culture could be drawn like this: life─death (Metropol')─afterlife (resurrection); the well-known pattern of pre-during-post carnival time. Therefore, his porn rises as a parody of the genre of ecclesiastical literature, *zhitie*,[34] in which truth lies somewhere between fiction and reality. This is why his autobiographical novel *Good Stalin* begins with the writer's note: "All the characters in this book are invented, including real people and the author himself."

Zhitie of the Pornographer

Death: The Beginning of the Carnival

By producing a postmodern text that provides endless variations and interpretations of reality, Erofeev enforces a disassociation with Soviet culture and employs the metaphors of carnival and post-carnival times: death is taken for the starting point from which the narration is born through a carnivalesque, complex configuration of (per)versions and identity variations. Literary perversion undertakes carnival for a principal symptom of glasnost' when revolutionary underground artists turn the Soviet world topsy-turvy. Therefore, such elements as the emphasis

[34] Biography of a saint written after his death in which his life and deeds are described.

on the lower bodily stratum, the "inside out" principle, and a "pregnant death" (i.e., death which implies rebirth and brings a new beginning) – all of which Bakhtin holds to be characteristic of carnival time[35] – become the core of Erofeev's pornographic satire regulating his mysterious absence in the language. The beginning of carnival time governs gender shifting as an example of the "turnabout" principle, which implies that everything that was on the top of the hierarchy falls down to bottom (Bakhtin, 11), in light of which the man/penis appears to be absolutely unnecessary. The establishment of the new carnivalesque hierarchy, which Yuri Andrukhovych in his 1996 novel *Perverzion* (*Perverziia*) renders as "the end of phallocentrism" and "the beginning of vaginocentrism," (*Perverzion* 124)),[36] Erofeev heralds in his writing by announcing "The Time of the Cunt" ("Vek Pizdy").[37] The two crucial elements of carnival – death and rebirth – belong to a woman who, seen as ambivalent, simultaneously degrades (kills) and regenerates (gives birth) (Bakhtin, 240). The woman's dual nature holds the opposites.

In accordance with Erofeev's philosophy of oppositions, the birth of the main hero outlines a carnivalesque pathway to death: "I entered life through the horror of death. Death woke me up. My first life experience is the wild fear of death" (*GS*, 33). Erofeev asserts he was born in a caul, which undoubtedly symbolizes the iron curtain put over his artistic persona.

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[35] See Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and his World*, Transl. Helene Iswolsky Bloomington: Indiana University Press. 1984.

[36] Yuri Andrukhovych, *Perverzion*, trans. Michael M. Naydan, Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2005, p. 124. This novel seems to deliver most of Erofeev's literary devices as it carries out powerful anti-Soviet per-version puns and a carnivalesque playfulness that characterizes postmodern literary underground. Andrukhovych was one of the founders of the two most prominent Ukrainian underground literary performance groups in the 1980s and 1990s, *Bu-Ba-Bu* and *Stanislav Phenomenon*. Both groups worked on this disassociation with the Soviet and post-Soviet cultures through the metaphor of carnival, that helped them introduce diverse interpretations of reality and a variety of national identity constructions. While *Bu-Ba-Bu Generation* turned to carnival referring to the Soviet Russian culture, *Stanislav Phenomenon* was more interested in post-carnival situation alluding to the post-Soviet Ukraine. (Olena Fedyuk, "Stanislav Phenomenon: More on Ukrainian Identity," *Kakanien Revisited*, 2006, p. 2 http://www.kakanien.ac.at/beitr/fallstudie/OFedyuk1.pdf/show_pdf (Last assessed May 6, 2017)).

[37] "Vek Pizdy" appears as the title of a controversial literary work by Erofeev's alter-ego the writer Sisin in *The Last Judgment* (*Strashnyi sud)* (1996). Though "vek" in Russian means century, epoch, age, time, and lifetime, I translate it as "time" since *Vek Pizdy* connotes the historical and cultural timeline of the Soviet state.

Furthermore, by relying on the myths regarding the caul (i.e., the child born in a caul is considered the chosen one, lucky, and successful in life) and on psychoanalytical approach to trauma of birth and all other fears that flow from it (separation, castration, death), Erofeev creates his entire porn narrative on the idea of the child's wish for reunion, his struggles, and final victorious rebirth. Soviet hermetic cultural space reminds him of this trauma and so he has to stand up against it. Like Armalinsky, Erofeev borrows the God of Thunder from the Slavic pantheon to show that he is the chosen one who is given a task to accomplish and the knowledge of death is showed to him through a spectacle of thunder: "I got the task (*ia poluchil zadanie*) and now I have to deal with it. The God of Thunder (*Bog-gromoverzhets*), whoever he was, jabbed me with his finger. He (*gromoverzhets*) brought the order to my life… and death became my life guide…" (*GS*, 34-35). By exercising his greatest fear of death, the child will turn it into a shadowy literary game: "I play with death" (Ibid.).

In the Moscow underground, Erofeev worked closely with Vladimir Sorokin and Dmitri Prigov on crafting a new conceptualist semiotic system that they named "liquid fascism." This trio-gang, called ËPS (Erofeev-Prigov-Sorokin), was spontaneously formed in 1982 in Erofeev's apartment. Together, ËPS presented their works in the eponymous collection of their short stories and poetry. In the book preface titled "ËPS Teachings" (*Uchenie ËPS*), Erofeev asserts that "the time is not yet ripe to tell the whole truth about the mystical activity of ËPS, and it will probably never be."[38] Instead he invites the reader to go straight to their texts, "because texts are more important than any confession. If the reader is not a fool, something will become clear to him. Test your own intelligence" (6). Erofeev gives only a hint that ËPS existed on two underground levels. First, like any other late-Soviet underground circle imitating western rock,

[38] *ËPS*, Moscow: ZebraE, 2002, p. 5.

jazz, avant-garde artists, conscientious objectors, and dissidents. ËPS's had public performances that were so shocking that the audience could not help but vomit right there: "Though they were forward-thinking people, nonetheless they were Soviets" (8). ËPS' symbol was a bare lightbulb (*golaia lampochka*) hanging from the ceiling. (This must be allusion to Lenin's bulb, which further implies Limonov's naked Lena as the symbol of porn enlightenment.) Their open-naked art caused sexual arousal in women, and Erofeev gives the example of a young female student, Sonechka Kupriashina, who "went to women's toilet to jerk off on our stories-fantasies" (Ibid.). Most of all, he claims, "I like our idea of annihilating communism in Russia. Gorbachev became our protégé. But this is just a part of the global operation" (9).

The second level of ËPS's existence, extremism, was formed after the scandal in Petersburg, when Erofeev's "Life with an Idiot" provoked the audience who accused them of homosexuality and started a fight in which they broke the bare bulb. A Jewish woman rescued Erofeev by taking him through the back door, and then the three writers saw life without its mask, and "we froze looking at its real face. This is how we created the trinity of oneness (*troitsu odinochestva*)" (11). They swear to each other they will "smear humankind on the wall," and they came up with "the strategy of genetic ecology which scared [even] Islamic terrorists with its extremism" (11).

> Teaching genetic ecology is the foundation of ËPS's literary oeuvre. This is a mystical doctrine about souls' evaporation (*o vyparivanii dush*) by means of language manipulations…We, in fact, anticipated and provoked Russian pop culture of the 1990s and 2000s infused with "liquid fascism" (*zhidkom fashizme*).
>
> ËPSian definition "liquid fascism" partly coincides with the idea of returning to the masses by means of pleasuring their instincts and by forcing their vices out to the surface.

> We contributed to the hypersexuality of European subconscious… Sorokin's *The Norm* and Prigov's "policeman" are stages of this great path. I also worked on "liquid fascism"...in my novel *The Last Judgment*. "Liquid fascism" is particularly suitable for Russia given her historically "bastard" morality (*ubliudechoi" moral'iu*). All members of the ËPS group never had doubts that Russia has no future and that her days are numbered. Finally, we are sick and tired of the false rhetoric of already naked, open life. (12)

"Liquid fascism" is another name for the "new sincerity" which is in the works of all three authors firmly tied to collective remembering and trauma. The Jewish woman who saves Erofeev epitomizes the position from which he initiates his literary revolution representing a secret underground global operation which revels the truths of the past. Pornography equates with the teaching of "genetic ecology" as the hallmark of Stalin's purgative ideology frequently compared to Nazi fascism.

It is the Oedipal situation that determines Erofeev's literary sex drive: as the son of the regime he becomes the enemy of the state and thus the father's biggest rival over the mother Russia's future; furthermore, figuratively speaking, he acts as the father's murderer ("I killed my father" states Erofeev in *GS*). A similar death anxiety of a victim that drew Sylvia Plath to kill her "daddy bustard," her Nazi daddy with "a Meinkampf look" in herself, in her poem "Daddy" (1962) written just a few months before her death, triggers Erofeev to kill the father in himself. The father figure exposes the dark side of the child's ego, their (both Plath's and Erofeev's) fears and conflicts of consciousness, resistance to superego and struggle with opposing drives of the child's self. The fathers and children always speak different languages. Plath confers she could never talk to her father for she feels so distinct from his German, the obscene language of the

torturer, and acquires the verbal skills of a Jewish victim: "I never could talk to you. / The tongue stuck in my jaw. / It stuck in a barb wire snare. / Ich, ich, ich, ich, / I could hardly speak. / I thought every German was you. / And the language obscene/…I began to talk like a Jew. / I think I may well be a Jew."[39] In Erofeev, on the contrary, the obscene language belongs to the rascal (Jewish) child and is used as the most powerful weapon to fight the father's manipulative, puritan socialist (fascist) rhetoric (*Ia nikogda ne slyshal ot ottsa ni odnogo maternogo slova* (*GS*, 149)). If in other aspects of life Erofeev was the privileged son of Soviet diplomat, in terms of language he was at a disadvantage. He claims that his father's lexical appropriateness held him back with respect to other kids in terms of developing a proficiency with Russian *mat* and "much later [he] studied it like a foreign language" (*GS*, 260). He was not given full access to his mother tongue, to the "low" language of the Russian people (*narodnyi iazyk*) in which Russian oral and written cultural heritage was produced (*chastushki*, *zavetnye skazki*, *anekdoty*, *barkovshchina*). Once he acquired a good command of the mother tongue (*mat*) he used it as the most potent instrument against the father tongue, the socialist rhetoric. "The writer is the antipode of a diplomat," asserts Erofeev (*GS*, 78). This discursive rupture between the child and the father translates as a drama of oxymoron—Plath couples the affectionate "daddy" with "bustard" and "fascist," whereas Erofeev calls his "daddy" (papa) a "good Stalin" (*Ia znaiu: moi papa—khoroshii Stalin GS*, 148)[40]—that inevitably ends in literary patricide. In view of the Soviet state as "the Empire of the Word and the Image," Erofeev looks over the language as "the

[39] At www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/48999/daddy-56d22aafa45b2.

[40] Erofeev borrows the idea of "good Stalin" from the Russian people who genuinely believe in good deeds of the national father: "I grew up and understood something: for the West and for the majority of the Russian intelligentsia, Stalin is one thing, and for many millions of Russians, another. They do not believe in a bad Stalin. They do not believe that Stalin excruciated and tortured someone. The people stashed away the image of a good Stalin, the savior of Russia and the father of the great nation. My father went along with my people. Do not offend Stalin!" (*GS*, 134).

only argument in favor of the existence of Russia" (*GS*, 326). The mother tongue belongs to the woman who appears as a mediator and a victim of the father-son verbal competition.

The matrix of Erofeev's inner duel with the father, Russian language, and socialist realism revolves around his interpretation of Pushkin and d'Anthès's duel. According to him, Pushkin's case and the famous love triangle Pushkin-Natalia-d'Anthès nicely illustrates how woman tends to fuse the two opposite cultural spheres, high and low, in a clash that inevitably brings death. On the one side stands Pushkin, the greatest poet of Russian culture, "the ideal husband, the father of four children, who loves and adores his wife." On the other side stands "the real French bastard," whose merits are reduced to building the sewer system in the small city of Alsace, France, for which they named a street after him. "Our [Pushkin] wrote *Eugene Onegin* and that one built canalization. Natalie, as we know, fell in love with him. After all, all the bad comes from women. Such a competitiveness. They go from good to much better, and thus develop such socialist realism in life."[41] Like Armalinsky and Limonov, Erofeev the son goes against the father of the Russian language and literature with his porn. His revolt, too, arises with the first written assignment on Pushkin in school: "I wrote dead words. Pushkin uncorked me. I was supposed to write about *Eugene Onegin*. I wrote something that frightened the teacher. It was nonsense. Words from the dead became alive… The teacher was horrified" (*GS*, 268). Taking Pushkin on a pornographic journey functions as resurrection of historical obscenity, i.e. of the dead voices, thus causing the collective trauma to reemerge.

Erofeev's fictional life begins with his discursive fabrication. Like the young writer in Bunin's story "My First Fee," Erofeev's sexual rhetoric is conceived in childish lies and made-

[41] Radio *Svoboda*, "Entsiklopediia russkoi dushi" ("Idealnyi muzhchina"), April 4, 2005, at http://archive.svoboda.org/programs/encl/2005/encl.040905.asp.

up stories in which he is always the main protagonist, the same stories that he told to the women around him who gullibly believed him (*GS*, 223). The initial verbal manipulation of the women shapes his relation to the word/narrative ("*Iz vran'ia rodilos' moe otnoshenie k slovu*" (Ibid.)). The woman remains a delivery service of Erofeev's fabricated discourse. Erofeev traumatic linguistic birth comes with death, the end of his childhood upon his return from France to Soviet Russia, when he discovers the first sadist woman in his life, his grandmother: "I was left in the grandma's hands…I realized it was… a prison for juvenile delinquents. Before she was my favorite grandma, and now she turned into my torturer" (*GS,* 244). Grandmother stands for Soviet Russia (the father's mother(land)) that imprisons his language with bans. This discursive silence comes as the prep-period during which the child learns how to speak, as transitional stage of moving from the *stagnation* era to the *glasnost* era.

For first three and a half years Erofeev was "silent, like a partisan," with the only exception of the word/sound "Ai!" that he could pronounce, which then became his nickname, his *parole* ("'*Ai' stalo moei klichkoi, parolem*") (*GS,* 40). The word "Ai" held the power of god, and chose Erofeev to be its carrier: "It was through this prolonged silence that the word made me its carrier, chose me, and transcribe on me its upcoming information. I was that child-word born for the sake of its utterance. All the children were talking around me-I was silent. ... I understood that the birth of a word involved a significant risk, because it violated the harmony of silence… (*GS*, 41). Like for Limonov's Edichka, "Ai" (which is transliterated pronunciation of English "I," and therefore capitalized) is Erofeev's password (*parol'*) to his secret story, and comes as the first utterance of the son in the father's symbolic order: "The word is the consequence of betrayal, the form of its discourse" (*GS,* 43). In Ferdinand de Saussure's terms, Erofeev, while silent, exists in the *langue*—here understood as the system of rules of socialist realism—in

absence, and becomes a *parole*, the individual movement through the linguistic system with his first sounding "Ai"="I". His *parole* would alternate in accordance with the subject that appropriates it (voices of his characters Irina, Vova, Sisin, etc.) whereas the context of socialist langue would stay the same. The chess board, used by de Saussure to demonstrate how *langue* and *parole* function in linguistics, works as the potent metaphor of Erofeev's linguistic development and success in the chess game that he always wins.[42] He states: "I realized: there is a field for the game, small, but there is (*GS*, 330).[43] The game will take place in Natalia's field, namely inside the female as the middle (*under*)ground.

Descending into the (Female) Underground

In search of the female self and the vagina, the fallen man of Russian culture and literature disappears in the underworld where he finds an entirely new literary world. Erofeev borrows all the stereotypical representations of the female body and vagina to build the world in which dirt, pollution, degeneration, murder, gluttony, defecation, etc., would become its reality. The underground sewer system, canalization becomes the habitus for Erofeev's men ("Puteshestvie pupka v Lkhasu"), which evokes his position as the literary outcast recognized in D'Anthes-the canalization inventor. In her groundbreaking book *Purity and Danger* (1966), Mary Douglas, theorizing the problem of impurity and pollution that puts the society into defensive mode, notices that the rituals of pollution are strongly tied to the symbolic system. Dirt

[42] "I won against Marusia my first chess game" (*GS*, 26).
[43] The chess board (shakhmatnaia doska) represents a symmetric system consisting of 8x8 squares. In Russian squares are called fields (polia), and the entire board is viewed as a *pole*. In *Good Stalin*, Erofeev explains how the word "pole" helped him comprehend the relation between the signifier and the signified when he as a child realized that "Eliseiskie Polia— ne polia" (137). It is right here at the Champs-Élysées (Eliseiskie Polia) where his Arc de Triomphe is located. To play this game Erofeev appropriates skills and movement of various chess figures.

seen as "matter out of place" is a relative idea for it has different interpretations in various cultures and various contexts. But one's pollution behavior always threatens to "confuse or contradict cherished classification." The system of classifications presupposes the wholeness and completeness as its imperative to maintain the order of "no mixing between different categories, no hybrids!" that also assumes physical perfection, that is, cleanness and wholeness of the body. Therefore, bodily orifices if understood as "points of entry or exit to the social units, or bodily perfection" become dangerous spots of dirt and pollution that threaten to compromise the ideal government of the body. Danger lies in the hole/rapture that appears with the social outcast or the social margin. Such a person is dangerous because their position is undefinable; as neither-nor they are the hole. During this transitional period both the person and those around him, toward whom he emanates aggression, are in danger. This double-sided danger of the marginal period is ritualized because it activates ritual dying and ritual rebirth as it brings separation from the old status, temporary segregation, and then affirmation for the entry to a new status. Throughout this period man behaves anti-socially (steals, rapes, offends) and violates the order as the expression of his position.[44] Given Douglas's theory, one can say that Erofeev's underground world is erected as a ritualized pollution project.

Queerness and gender confusion speak of male trouble, viewed as the late-Soviet Russian man's hysteria, masochism and narcissism, crying over masculinity in crisis, fear of the woman and fear of homosexuality.[45] Queerness in Erofeev is based on Freud's idea that the child's initial sex identity is androgynous. It is enough that the man hides his penis between his legs and looks like a perfect woman.[46] Therefore, his queerness must have been revealed in one of his first

[44] Mary Douglass, *Purity and Danger*. New York: Routledge, 1966.
[45] See Introduction in *Male Trouble*. Ed. Constance Penley and Sharon Willis. University of Minnesota Press, 1993.
[46] "Puteshestvie pupka v Lkhasu," *Sobranie sochinenii,* Vol. 3. 416.

stories that he publishes in *Metropol'*, "Iadrena fenia" (1978). Erofeev calls himself "the hero of our time from "Iadrena fenia"" (*GS* 355). The story begins with an implication of masking or change, or figurative crossdressing, "Here you can change clothes," which makes the hero a gender ambiguous person who can easily enter both men's and women's toilets claiming: "for me it's all the same."[47] The hero, the reader-reciter (*chtets-deklamator*) who enters the lavatory/underworld and reads the toilets is Erofeev the writer in search of the language. This is his examination of the Russian cultural heritage. He first goes to what he was told to be men's toilet (though there is no sign at all) and there, on the door, he finds a written mass of mixed genres of prose and poetry, aphorisms, dates, elegies, threatening messages, toasts, etc., all written with pencils, knifes and other pricking instruments. He wishes to give his own contribution to it, but the chaos of the male Russian obscene language confuses him, therefore he decides not to write anything there. He desires something more sophisticated and visits the women's toilet where he finds a pristine door ("*dver' byla devstvennoi*"): not a single word, a complete silence. And right here in the female mysterious silence begins Erofeev's story. He intends to simply write "NO" but then gives up this idea.[48] The story leaves the reader to wonder what could have been written on this door!? By occupying the space of the *other* Erofeev discovers an entirely new discursive realm for his game, whose liminality implied by the toilet as both the public and the private (secret) dirt allows his "bisexual" tale to grow.

A chapter from his youth evoking his fascination with a tourist poster advertising Hawaii shows that even just dreaming of the *other*, of an alternative life helped him surmount the Soviet bleak reality behind the iron curtain.[49] Hawaii as the youngest American child-state (being the

[47] *Muzhchiny*, Moscow: ZebraE, 2001, p. 333.
[48] "Napishu NE. Glupo. Ne napishu…" (336).
[49] Erofeev recalls how he came across a Pan American Airways showcase near the Mayakovsky Square in which there was a flyer on display showing long-legged palm trees, sea, and stunning sand that said: "Visit Blue Hawaii!"

most recent to join the United States family) that by its geographical position remains isolated and peripheral, is the perfect exotic abode for Erofeev the son's sexual maneuver. America always appears in Erofeev's prose as the counterpart to Russian actuality, the imaginary West, and the ultimate feminist *other* that is to be worshiped and abhorred.[50] It represents the son's personal struggle since his father hated America and Erofeev had a great success there, as the first letters of support for his *Metropol'* group came from America. Furthermore, the love-hate relationship to America Erofeev finds in his mother who "did hate the Americans" but she read American news and was familiar with American fashion: "Pictures of the other, foreign life every day stood before her eyes" (*GS*, 23). The American freedom of speech fascinates Erofeev, but the new feminist discourses that this culture began producing in the 70s and the 80s, especially the theories of the feminist anti-porn movement, are absolutely repulsive to him. He brings the two divergent principles together in his porn by exploiting the American First Amendment to combat the ideas of radical feminism. Erofeev primary attacks target the radical feminist understanding of gender as the most radical and fixed division of the human relationship, in which each man is a torturer or rapist, and each woman a victim. The feminist schism of anti-pornography and anti-censorship movements finds its place in Erofeev, as this

For him this was not a simple ad but a genuine invitation into the unknown: "I kept walking by this advertising, and it helped me live. I knew that someday I was going to visit Hawaii. Indeed, when I came to America for the first time, I took all the money I had, and visited the Blue Hawaii. And I believe that this ad, that is, this invitation helped. In other words, if there is a dream, it is necessary only to correctly place it in your life" (Radio *Svoboda*, "Entsiklopediia russkoi dushi" ("Chto khuzhe reklama ili propaganda?"), March 6, 2004). Also mentioned in *Strashnyi sud* as Sisin's day dreaming (p. 197)). He placed his dream against the Soviet propaganda and ideological promise of the future paradise as a sexual desire and final satisfaction, or orgasmic wish fulfillment of the future. This call like that of a prostitute's body displayed on the street elicits the "innocent," young male to spend all his money to discover erotic bliss and receive his first sexual experience in the West.

[50] America is the subject of eternal disagreement even between the characters in genuine intimate relationship (Siuzi and Liza ("Podrugi"), Irina and Ksiusha (*Russian Beauty*), Erofeev's father and mother (*GS*)). The characters' feelings for America go from extreme love (Blinova likes everything about America, the country, the flag, the president's name ("Krushenie vsego") to extreme dislike (Olga absolutely hates it: "America is disgusting (*gadost'*)" (*Piat rek zhizni* (1996-1998), Moscow: Izdatel'skii dom "Podkova," 1998).

discursive battle figuratively frames the woman's position in his porn. Woman is both a torturer and a victim, the one who "fucks" and craves to be "fucked."

Since the mother is the only person who carries in herself contradictory viewpoints to America, she must become the prototype of the son's quest for freedom in Soviet reality. Erofeev begins his literary adventure as the "caviar-lover" (*ikrofil*),[51] a devotee to what is forbidden and tabooed, that he inherited from his mother: "My mother had an interesting job. She read what no one could read, for which she could immediately be shot… American newspapers and magazines that were hunting out the slanders about the Soviet Union..." (*GS*, 22). The status of *ikra* as a hard-to-get, exotic and highly desirable food item in Soviet Russia helps Erofeev to make it the symbol of porn consumption. In the story "Confession of a Caviar-lover" ("Ispoved' ikrofila" (1974)), Erofeev employs *ikra* as metaphor to explain how his love for taboo in literature first arose, how it rapidly grew and developed so to overwhelm his literary expression, and how finally it came out as liberating pornographic truth that freed him from the yoke of Soviet taboo.

The little boy Vadik begins craving for *ikra* while still not able to pronounce it well (saying 'i-ka'). Though at first his father attempts to make sense of it by assuming Vadik is saying 'reka' (river), it is the mother at the end who translates his son's gibberish 'i-ka' into the tangible language and recognizes his desire: "he wants caviar" ("*ikru khochet*"). Sexual arousal and wish for erotic satisfaction follow Vadik's desire: "I am getting excited, my nipples swelling, I am all flushed, I am shaking. Soon! Soon! Mama! My mom's unique hands would never finish making sandwich…I eat and eat out of breath, not giving a shit about the bread. I, blissfully

[51] The *ikra* (caviar) metaphor was often used in journalism to denote blotted-out passages in censored newspapers and articles. In his first letter to his grandmother, little Erofeev complains that the black caviar (*chernaia ikra*) could not be found in Paris, and several pages further he adds: "Throughout the city, the foreign newspapers that are banned in Moscow are being sold, the radio broadcasts the forbidden topics, banned films are shown in movie theaters…" (*GS*, 146). Scarcity of the black caviar indicates the freedom of speech.

happy, squeeze sticky *ikra* with my tongue…"[52] As Vadik is growing up his lust for *ikra* increases. The father understands his desire in the old-fashioned way as the son's sexual dissatisfaction, and thus finds him a wife and forces him to have a child. But this does not help Vadik because he is in search for freedom of speech. He feels he must explain himself for the sake of the future generation (his son Pavlik) and decides to write down his confession (*ispoved'*). This painful writing process that lasts for thirteen days and nights appears as an experience of bestial cognitive autoeroticism ("a blind orangutan roared and masturbated in my head" (332). The moment the story-confession has been poured out of him in its entirety (symbolic ejaculation), the writer becomes liberated and empty: "Having written it, I became empty like a toothless mouth" (Ibid.). The empty, toothless mouth is a void that remains after the truth is revealed, obscene language released, and the barriers of Socialist taboo and censorship (like teeth) broken. After that *ikra* becomes an irrelevant thing in Vadik's life, and even its smell he cannot stand any more. He recognizes this situation as his absolute freedom: "I realized that I was saved! Saved! Ah, the miracle of creation! Ah, the magic of word play! I choked on tenderness for the word" (Ibid.). The semen ejaculated in the *ikra*-confession is taken over in "The Parakeet" by Semen-the parakeet (*Semen-popugai*), which shows Erofeev learning how to speak his own language properly, going from 'i-ka' to 'ikar', that is, from the caviar-lover to Icarus (*Ikar* in Russian) who lets his obscene language fly free to escape from the Soviet Crete.

In Freudian terms, the writer's psychological development goes from the oral stage during which he metaphorically puts everything into his orifice (the boy who blatantly devours *ikra*) to the second anal stage, when everything is coming out of him (the canalization inventor occupying the women's toilet). Thus, food represents Erofeev's oral obsession and fascination

[52] V. Erofeev, "Ispoved' ikrofila," *Sobranie sochinenii*, Vol. 3, p. 327.

with taboo and forbidden literature that he has been stuffing himself up for years, before he decides to unleash his obscene, uncensored language he mastered in the meantime, and write his own narrative. This discharge phase that happens at the child's will denotes ejaculation and liberation through pollution as bodily release, one that leaves him empty. As pollution, the underground literature stimulates three main erogenous zones: the vagina and the anus as two holes attached to the mouth, and the penis as the tongue/language. This world is colored with a blend of injection and discharge of bodily fluids and gases. They are simultaneously activated in the sadistic incestuous episode in "The Mother": while masturbating her son and giving him her breast to suck ("Here it is, suck it, like you used to as a baby") the mother is farting ("during the fuck the mother loudly farts").[53] Both of them simultaneously reach orgasm, after which the mother puts a towel between her legs in order to preserve the semen inside her body, "as deep as possible. Deeper. Forever" (454). Filling up and releasing will result in second birth and a new, original form of the writer. The incestuous scene ends with the mother murdering the son and his resurrection as a "first-class sausage" (*pervoklassnaia sosiska*) that will poison the whole world. This sausage will be named Sisin, the writer from *The Last Judgment* whose plan is to flood (liquidize) the world.

Masochism

Gender-switching repeats Erofeev's sadomasochistic desire to be inside and outside the father's symbolic system,[54] that is imagined mirroring sexual movements of the son in a corporal

[53] "The Mother" (1990), *Sobranie sochinenii*, Vol. 1, 454.

[54] Erofeev seeks an institution or a symbolic order in order to turn it upside-down. He remains inside the system (he first joined Komsomol at the age of fourteen, then entered the Writers' Union, and socialist discourse) until he matures to combat it and free himself from its order. He becomes a member of the Writers' Union once more, a few

union with the mother figure. For this movement he needs a woman as the realization of his masochistic phantasy of postponing orgasmic pleasure and prolonging this game. If sadist in Erofeev is need of institutions, the masochist in him is in need of special contractual pact with his torturer, the woman-ally. In *Masochism*, Deleuze points out that the masochist strives for a pact, an alliance with his torturer, in which it seems that he is being educated by the authoritarian woman, whereas in reality it is him who creates her and prompts the obnoxious language she directs toward him. The victim speaks through the mouth of his torturer.[55] Deleuze holds that if sadistic pleasure cherishes the paternal figure and abolishes the mother, then the masochistic scene is about abolishing the father, and of any resemblance of the child with the father. In masochism, the ultimate law is invested in the mother. The function of the father is transferred to symbolism of the three-mother image through which the masochist is able to expresses himself. The child's wish to get rid of the castration anxiety leads him to make himself a victim through the beaten phantasy, while the mother is given the role of a torturer who symbolically castrates and punishes the father image in the child himself. The three-mother image is the ideal the masochist attempts to reach. This ideal is the oral mother who appears as a combined and sublimated image of the uterine mother (who is giving birth and appears as a prostitute) and the Oedipal mother (who represents the beloved object and who brings punishment).

In his 1995 essay "The Flight of 'A Cloud in Trousers'", Erofeev further elaborates on the position of the degraded and mortified Russian man in modern society and culture. He depicts the Russian man as "a cloud in trousers" in order to enunciate his nonexistence.[56] Erofeev

years before the end of USSR. This way he sustains tension and prohibitions and openly comes against equality and dissolution of moral because, according to him, they decrease erotic apogee (*Russian Beauty*).

[55] Gilles Deleuze, *Masochism: An Interpretation of Coldness and Cruelty*, trans. Jean McNeil, New York: G. Braziller, 1971, p. 21.

[56] Besides caviar, clouds are another thing that Erofeev the boy notices missing in France, where the skies are always perfectly clean. Cloud is another coded synonym for *ikra*, the censored text. By using the metaphor "a cloud

claims that man still exists only as an "idea kept in the language by inertia, by laziness of the mind, while it is, in fact, a phantom, chimera, ghost, and myth. Or just rubbish."[57] The Russian man reaches the status of an empty signifier, since talking about him and his rights "we speak the language of emptiness" (46). The man loses his track in the historical continuum, his absence in the present intersects with historical progress creating a new timeline of (non)existence—the successful past and an uncertain future: "The Russian man was, the Russian man is not any more, the Russian man may or may not be again" (Ibid.). Erofeev supposes that it is exactly the Soviet regime that the Russian man helped arise and enthroned the main cause of his misfortune. It becomes clear that his own ideological foundation and social and cultural enterprise turn into his grave, where he, now dead, should be placed in: "The Russian man is ash. It's easier to put him in an urn and burry than to resurrect him" (Ibid.). The Russian man collapses together with the Soviet system he himself created.

Such man-apparition, in a moment before his final demise, comes to label women as bitches (*stervy*) that brings final peace to him ("*I on umiraet, umirotvorennyi*"). Erofeev here defines the man according to the Vladimir Dal''s dictionary as "*chelovek roda On*." One may assume that by analogy the definition of woman also comes from the same source, where "*sterva*" denotes a corpse of a dead animal or cattle, a carrion.[58] In Erofeev, this link between woman and animal is often (in "Three Meetings" (1988), the narrator calls the woman Olympia a Siberian bull (*net, ty ne zhenshchina…net, ty-buivol*).[59] Seen as the decaying flesh of dead animal, the woman and her genitals are necessarily associated with pollution and dirt; she is

in trousers" with reference to Mayakovsky's poem that suffered severe censorship cuts, Erofeev is saying that obscenity, though absent, still remains male language (in trousers), the language of freedom (fly-polet).
[57] "Polet 'oblaka v shtanakh'", *Andrei*, No. 6, Moskva, 1995, p 46.
[58] Vladimir Dal', *Tolkovyi slovar' zhivogo velikorusskago iazyka*. Vol. 4, Moscow: M. O. Vol'f, 1909.
[59] Erofeev, "Tri svidaniia," *Sobranie sochinenii*, Vol. 1, p. 463.

amoral prostitute or a corpse left after she has been slaughtered like an animal ("Life with an Idiot"). The most naturalistic imagery of the woman as *sterva* can be found in the story "Krushenie vsego" (1986) where the decaying dead female body is eaten by parasites.[60] The oman must be sacrificed for the sake of the man's revival in the post-Soviet future.

As opposed to the Russian man, the Russian woman is real because she exists and occupies the present. The illustration accompanying the essay shows a gargantuan woman threatening to devour a small, tiny man with a long serpentine-like tongue wrapped around him. It is the tongue/language (*iazyk*)—both literally and metaphorically— that has become the woman's main power. A new discourse, the sexually-freed woman, and feminist thoughts (the essay starts with: "*Likui feministka*!") prevail which make the man feel helpless and incapable of surviving. Yet, by assuming that the man, if swallowed by the woman, ends up inside her (another way to symbolically penetrate her), then he gets the opportunity to speak through her. In other words, the man would speak from inside of the woman appropriating the female voice.[61] In order to restore male agency, therefore, Erofeev must ensure that the man gets access to the language through the woman. Man's discursive resurrection is *sine qua non* of Erofeev's pornographic world. The carnivalesque grotesque, according to Bakhtin, puts emphasis on the role of the woman's womb which swallows/devours and simultaneously brings the end (death) and a new beginning (life). Along with the womb's ambivalent powers emerges the image of two bodies in one, "one that is receding and dying and one which is being born, while no dead body

[60] "Po kholodeiushchemu telu Blinovoi begali perepugannye parazity," Ibid., p. 377.

[61] This image evokes the Biblical parable of Jonah being swallowed by a huge fish. Akin to the Russian man, Jonah is the exemplary character of passivity. After three days and nights inside the great fish Jonah returns to the outside world. As this Biblical story anticipates the death and resurrection of Jonah, and certainly of Christ, spending some time inside the woman Erofeev's "dead man" will find the way to reemerge. Like Jonah who is vomited out by the fish, Erofeev's man expects to be catapulted out of the woman's vagina and come out as reborn ("*Voskresenie—eto paskha, eto krashenye iaitsa. Eto trudno*!" (46). For the time being, he will remain inside her and narrate as a female.

remains" (Bakhtin, 52). Indeed, no dead body of the Russian man exists, only the ash. Bodiless "He" (ghost, *On*) disappears in the language that now belongs to woman (as she), and awaits to be reborn as "ON".

Erofeev replaces the ideological and gender defined discursive void by the new forms of pornographic imagery and obscene language, through which the remaining active female agency takes over on the path toward the future. The woman-mother as the ultimate womb is entrusted with the task of resurrecting the male rhetoric, cultural status and sexual energy of the writer of alternative Soviet literature. She is in charge of giving birth to Erofeev's porn myth. In Erofeev, however, the woman is not a typical bearing mother who would voluntarily maintain the cult of maternity by undergoing a heroic feat of self-sacrifice, but rather a cultural "monster": a prostitute, mother who eats her children, the expecting mother who commits suicide, woman who craves for abortion, a dissident. Such woman ─ the cultural and political degenerate is expected to offer a shelter to the man withdrawing from the public arena, and to give birth to the new Russian man through the language that she employs.[62] When the man emerges utterly powerless before such a woman, he tends to undermine her dominance by means of verbal insult and calling her names. Innocence traditionally assigned to the woman and linked to female sexuality is now assumed by the man, who is led through discursive/sexual games by the woman in possession of sexual knowledge and power. To be a man in the late/post-Soviet period means

[62] This could be said to be Erofeev's rendition of woman's emancipation. Soviets confused the concept of feminism by maintaining an unsophisticated and imprudent understanding of feminists as masculinized women and perverts who, through their aggressive activism in social and cultural life, demonstrate their desire for "the wholesale metaphorical (if not literal) castration of men, intent of crushing or replacing them so as to gratify their lust for power, compensate for their self-doubts, or enact their lesbian inclinations." (Helena Goscilo, *Dehexing Sex: Russian Womanhood During and After Glasnost*, Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1996, p 11.) How much of this Soviet viewpoint to feminist ideas and status of the late-Soviet woman is present in Erofeev's work? A lot, I would say. Though Erofeev is known for being the first to bring lesbianism to Soviet literary canon in *Russian Beauty*, and to give woman room to express her sexual desire and dissatisfaction with the Russian man, I will show that these matters appear in his prose to celebrate not woman's liberty (her freedom to speak or fuck) but rather man's symbolic resurrection in language and his repositioning within the new Soviet space.

to appear potent not in the bed but in the language, to establish the self linguistically at woman's expense. The woman torturer becomes the man's ally.

The initial trauma at birth, combined with the death of Soviet literature triggers Erofeev further rehearsals of "disappearance and return," like in famous example of *fort/da* game, first analyzed by Freud in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920). Erofeev himself becomes the reel that he throws away and expects to be retrieved again. This constant and repeated play with the self-toy denotes the pleasure principle of Erofeev's masochistic ego. As the boy has a complete control over the reel and masters fort/da movements, Erofeev is the ludic author who pulls the strings on the reel and acts as the master of his literary disappearance/reappearance. Erofeev is always assured in his successful comeback, the joyful moment of "Da!," because he born a winner of Stalinism ─ Viktor ("parents named me in honor of the victory over Germany" (*GS,* 26)). Furthermore, the mysterious masochistic trend that manifests Erofeev's linguistic game echoes Lacan's interpretation of *fort/da* game, since the alternative female voice that he employs appears as a repetition and variation of the subject ("self-mutilation") and speaks of the split in the subject.[63] The gap in the discourse that comes with death of socialist writer demands from Erofeev to orchestrate a sort of tonal palette of alternating voices of his literary hypostases (first female, then male "self-mutilations"). He arranges and directs the elements of this porn linguistic music so to overcome the writer's absence in Russian literature. The mother's departure—given as the discursive void left after the father tongue (Soviet official, appropriate language) as part of

[63] Lacan views the reel belonging to the child as the subject, and its movements are telling of the split within the subject. The game represents the child's accession to the symbolic order that should be overcome by the alternating game, and the new demanded by repetition is given as variations. "Whatever, in repetition, is varied, modulated, is merely alienation of its meaning. The adult, and even the more advanced child, demands something new in his activities, in his games. But this 'sliding-away' (*glissement*) conceals what is the true secret of the ludic, namely, the most radical diversity constituted by repetition in itself." (In "Tuché and Automaton" (1964). At http://personal.bgsu.edu/~dcallen/tuche.html (last accessed November 12, 2018).

the mother tongue (Russian language) is gone—causes the split in Erofeev-the-subject. In accord with Lacan's theory, Erofeev's self-repetition does not demand return of the mother, but repetition of the mother's departure as cause of the split in him helps Erofeev-the-subject to overcome it.[64] The other as the object created from the subject himself, is constructed opposite necessary for the game. The Soviet discourse is the *petit a* in Erofeev, the other that only nominally functions as the other, the object of desire that is a part of the writer's self. This other should bring forth the "return of need," the opposition to obscenity. Erofeev is able to handle this ritualized game by means of his absence and presence in the pornographic text, demanded by historical, socio-political, cultural and literary changes. Lacan's concept of *jouissance*, as "painful pleasure" that carries out the suffering of the subject with respect to the castration complex and death drive, epitomizes Erofeev's linguistic S/M "reel" experience.

The first encounter of the female body as the other of Erofeev-the subject is depicted as his incestuous sexual game with his cousin Lena, which to a great extend defines his dual gendered being, his androgynous self, constructed in the language:

> I understand that I myself partly consist of Lena, from her joints, papillae, struck not only by the secret of the word, but also by her vertical incision…I have a parallel life… An androgen is grown in me. This is stronger than insanity. Bigheaded, with white, thin, provincial pigtails, Lena is the first incarnation of me-the-girl, my closest being and my life interlocutor. …She pulls out my cock and crawls to him with her mouth, wriggling

[64] The reel, Lacan asserts, "is not the mother reduced to a little ball,

> …it is a small part of the subject that detaches itself from him while still remaining his, still retained... It is with his object that the child leaps the frontiers of his domain, transformed into a well, and begins the incantation. If it is true that the signifier is the first mark of the subject, how can we fail to recognize here — from the very fact that this game is accompanied by one of the first oppositions to appear — that it is in the object to which the opposition is applied in act, the reel, that we must designate the subject. To this object we will later give the name it bears in the Lacanian algebra-the petit a. (Ibid.)

> like a rainbow snake. Sniffing, she gives me a blowjob. Our faces are distorted by the bliss of the once-removed (*dvoiurodnyi*) incest. It grows with every second. (*GS,* 43)

Erofeev-Lena's secret bisexuality mirrors Limonov and Lena's. This is the moment when Erofeev, until then almost utterly mute, pronounces his first legible word "my dear" (*milaia*) to address and welcome the image of the woman in himself. This is the man's recognition of his *anima* —that Jung in "Marriage as a Psychological Relationship" defines as the archetypal feminine image as an imprint of all the ancestral experiences of the female that holds erotic character— which makes its appearance at critical moments in life.[65] "The female soul [anima] appears in the man at circumcision, the male soul [animus] appears in the woman at excision," states Erofeev in *Five Rivers of Life.* [66] Lena's oral sexual performance translates as the pleasure that Erofeev, the "castrated" cultural Jew, obtains in employing woman's speech/voice to carry out the man's language. His existence depends on the woman's "oral" skills.

The man is geared up for a tough battle with the woman over speech/porn. He seeks a solution for the lost male agency in language. Language/speech is that part of Erofeev's self that is manipulated in the reel game. He transforms his trauma into pleasure of transgressing the forbidden and prohibited. The woman, traditionally positioned as the *other* in the male symbolic order and the symbol of the mother tongue, comes to the field of Erofeev's game as Russian beauty Irina, the female alternation of the writer-the subject. Whereas the *fort* game starts with the disappearance of the writer himself in the porn text, the woman, the *petit a* of Erofeev pornographic writing, is engaged to guarantee his return and the *Da!* effect.

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[65] Carl Jung, "Marriage as a Psychological Relationship," at https://ww3.haverford.edu/psychology/ddavis/p109g/internal/j_anima.html (last accesses November 12, 2018).
[66] *Piat rek zhizni,* p. 170.

Erofeev employs a perverted version of Roland Barthes's notion of the death of the author to situate his position in writing. Barthes states that writing appears as a "special voice, consisting of several indiscernible voices, and that literature is precisely the invention of this voice, to which we cannot assign a specific origin: literature is that neuter, that composite, that oblique into which every subject escapes, the trap where all identity is lost, beginning with the very identity of the body that writes… the voice loses its origin, the author enters his own death, writing begins."[67] Erofeev goes even further to corrupt Barthes's idea that "the modern writer (scriptor) is born simultaneously with his text." The dead author as the male subject obtains the feminine voice, while his literary expression remains regulated by the phallocentric system, that Derrida terms phallogocentrism. Though hidden/masked as a woman, Erofeev remains in possession of the faculty of utterance and speech. He challenges discursive dichotomies and thus paves the way to alternative voices of the self. Gendered voicing entanglements brings hope for the father-son's language reconciliation. Though Erofeev reactivates all gender stereotypes, the woman in his porn, in fact, embraces two juxtaposed forces in herself. Woman is both the Jewish victim ("Persidskaia siren'") and the German torturer (*Five Rivers of Life*).

Erofeev's journey of coming to terms with the father figure is overwhelmed with dread of their resemblance, fear of old age, death, and loss of the power of speech: "Everyone used to say how I look like my father. Now they tell him how he looks like his son. This is my little social victory, which does not please me. I'm more and more afraid of being like him. From that corner the wind of old age blows…In his speech there are more interjections, pauses, common places…I see my future in this ..." (*GS* 103). The conflicting son/father identity is often blurred

[67] Roland Barthes, "The Death of the Author." http://www.tbook.constantvzw.org/wp-content/death_authorbarthes.pdf (accessed May 18, 2017).

in Erofeev's work and is presented as tied homosexual relationships in which there is no clear-cut distinction between who is thinking what and when one male body begins and another ends (Zhukov and Sisin in *The Last Judgment*, Vova and the narrator in "Life with an Idiot", Pavel and Petrov in "Mother"). They not only live together, learn each other's language, use each other as play toys, share the same woman in bed, and take part in group sex. This is the boy's incestuous attachment to the father in the phantasy of being beaten. The father is viewed as the patriarchal system, the Soviet regime, Russian society and socialist discourse that must be sacrificed for the sake of the child's freedom. That is why Erofeev holds that this "political murder" had to be done: "Hadn't I done it, then, probably, even the *Russian Beauty* would not have been written. After all, this book in general is about myself, only translated into the suffering of a beautiful woman."[68] In this context, *Russian Beauty* is the next big "project-deed" of the hero of porno-*zhitie*.[69]

Russian Beauty **(1980-1982)**

Erofeev writes the novel from the point of view of the prostitute Irina Vladimirovna Tarakanova, employing first-person narration. The story unfolds through her personal letters

[68] Erofeev, "Ia redkii svobodnyi chelovek v mire," *ZN,UA*, October 6, 2006.

[69] Erofeev holds that the man does not choose a female voce, but is chosen by it: "Sometimes woman's voice (*babii golos*) suddenly appears to conquer the man's speech" ("Vrag" (1995), *Sobranie sochinenii,* Vol. 3). In his radio show dedicated to the theme "Woman and Art," Erofeev states:

> It seems to me that it is really quite impossible for man to penetrate into the woman's body and mind. But on the other hand, when I was writing *Russian Beauty*, it seemed to me that it wasn't me writing it. At one point I felt I was charged with some energy, and I caught the intonation. I threw away a half of the novel that was written in a completely different tone. And then a subject-matter that I could not anticipate arose. By the way, after *Russian Beauty* I suddenly realized that creation is a mystical thing. And now, many years later, when I look at the novel… I see that there are things that just never came to my mind. I'm surprised myself. This is the essence of creativity.

(Radio *Sloboda*, "Entsiklopediia russkoi dushi" ("Zhenshchina i tvorchestvo"), May 15, 2004; http://archive.svoboda.org/programs/encl/2004/encl.051504.asp).

addressed to her female lover in France that render the stream of consciousness of her sexual fantasies, which include group sex, female homosexuality, rape, incest and oral sex.[70] Erofeev's alter-ego Irina shares the author's patronymic and thus remains his father Vladimir's child. Ironically, her lover is the old Socialist writer whose name is also Vladimir, which further mirrors the father figure. In addition, in molding the Russian beauty Erofeev takes upon himself the unrealized battle of his father, who never dared to confront the Soviet system. As a result, Irina is not only acting for herself, but for her motionless and speechless sister as well (*sestra v koike vremia provodit, za vsiu zhizn' govorit ne nauchilas*'): "I live for both of us (*zhivu za dvoikh*)."[71] Irina's double identity follows the lines of the dual nature of female sex proposed by Luce Irigaray (as a prostitute Irina becomes the embodiment of the vagina itself), for she is within herself not one, but two inseparable beings that, like the vaginal lips of a woman, caress each other. The mystery of the female sex (she is neither one nor two) shapes the male sadomasochistic fantasy in which the woman becomes a mere prop.[72] Irina becomes the "arena for the battle of high powers" (*stala arenoi bor'by vysshikh sil, Russian Beauty*,14, henceforth *RB*), the battle of the son and the father in Erofeev.

The name Irina is derived from the ancient Greek word for "peace," and indicates her role in bringing peace and reconciliation between opposites, the father and the son. Her role is a parody of the martyrdom of Joan of Arc, since her seemingly patriotic sacrifice is deeply personal, "I wanted to save not Russia but myself" (176).[73] She repetitively appears as the victim

[70] The last name Tarakanova is derived from Russian word for cockroach, "*tarakan*," that implies that Irina is now that "dirty pest," the carrier of infectious diseases who is feeding on various discursive garbage and feces.
[71] *Russkaia krasavitsa, Sobranie sochinenii*, Vol. 1, p. 71.
[72] Luce Irigaray, *This Sex Which Is Not One*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985.
[73] Joan of Arc is taken for the model in portraying Erofeev's double Irina because, as virgin dressed in man's clothes, she represents an ambiguous gender character who goes through an internal struggle with the hunting voices that shape the way she handles her external life and how she perceives reality. The first voice she hears emerges from her father's garden, and then it triplicates. The voices take full control over her psyche and behavior, and are

of men's sexual assault (her father, Vladimir, the ghost). Nevertheless, she does not suffer as much as she enjoys being sexually manipulated, which rises the idea of self-punishment. In "Misreading Misogyny," Karen Ryan holds that the sexual manipulation of the woman, especially rape as a "versatile and powerful signifier" in Russian satirical pornographic texts, which is undoubtedly misogynic, has its symbolic or allegorical function inasmuch as it "has critical import vis-à-vis Russian society, Russian culture and the Russian literary tradition."[74] Furthermore, she adds that rape in pornography is not portrayed through the woman's viewpoint, but through the eyes of the man (the rapist or the onlooker). Even if the woman is granted a voice to describe the rape, like Irina, it is always the psychological viewpoint of the male narrator who creates it (574). Irina interprets being raped by her father as his "upbringing" and "punishment" for her wrongdoing (*ia dumala, eto on menia tak vospityval, eto on menia tak nakazyvaet za provinnosti, RB,* 53). The victimized woman is taught a sexual lesson by the violent man. Such is the Soviet style upbringing and pedagogical approach imposed through the incestuous practice, in which the vulnerable female bodies represent the people indoctrinated by the Soviet sadistic ideology. At old age her father is mute, but his double, the socialist writer still speaks.

Irina permits the socialist writer Vladimir to shower her with his false socialist language, to lick her entire body for the last time before his death (*dai tebia oblizat' od nogtei do volos, iazykom moim skvernym i lzhivim, RB,* 98), that is followed by her impregnation in the old-fashioned missionary pose specifically demanded by him. Irina agrees to the law of the missionary pose, man-on-top, and her subdued position, and together with him she reaches orgasm. Goscilo asserts that "enlisted to serve the cause of male orgasm, [woman] endures or

responsible for her decision to go to Orleans to break England's siege of the city. In parallel, the most important motivations for Irina's behavior is Vladimir's hunting voices commanding her. His voice guides Irena to play a role of the martyred virgin and die in order to enter a holy union with him.

[74] Ryan, "Misreading Misogyny," p. 575.

performs whatever act will ensure that climax, from submitting to anal penetration to being whipped or snuffed out. She supplies what the male demands, for pornography mandates that women be whores" (*Dehexing Sex*, 142). If the man is behind the scene, how does then misogyny work? Misogyny occurs at the man's wish for self-punishment for diverging from the norm.[75]

The Soviet man/writer loses his power of speech and becomes wordless (both Irina's father and Vladimir at death), and the reanimation of his speech is ensured by the woman. Erofeev is determined to show that the entire generation of communist writers is dying off and that the Socialist discourse has no chance to continue existing. Vladimir dies during the sexual act with Irina, and despite the fact that he manages to impregnate her, Irina views Vladimir as "a poor victim of unsuccessful reanimation" (*bednaia zhertva neudachnoi reanimatsii*) as the embryo inside her decays and dies. Erofeev aspires to restore the 'He' (*On* with a capital 'O') as a category in language and thus recovers the socialist man/writer's cultural authority as well as his literary and sexual potency. When he dies, Vladimir appears as the mere voice (*Golos*) without a name or body that haunts Irina and is often referred to as "ON." He compensates for his loss of cultural and social status by acquiring sexual power of woman. De Sade's language belongs to victims who describe the terror while the authorities remain silent. If de Sade multiplies victims of sadistic fantasy in his porn, Erofeev multiplies his identities (self-mutilation) so that each of his literary hypostasis undergoes certain suffering. Since Erofeev

[75] The character's wish for self-punishment is led by the feeling of guilt. As a child Erofeev was accused by his grandmother of killing the grandfather by demanding to be carried on his shoulders. This story was convincing to Erofeev since in Soviet Russian "everyone killed someone. Some killed the Germans, some killed their own. I killed my grandfather" (*GS*, 39). To keep up with his family logic that he is to be blamed for everything, Erofeev says the next murder then was to be expected: "Once I killed my grandfather, I had to kill my father" (40). Of course, these two symbolic assassinations unequivocally target the grandfather Lenin and the father Stalin *(Stalin s Leninym stali v moei zhizni pervymi mertvetsami GS*, 130). Heading in a completely different direction from the Russian people causes the feeling of innermost guilt in Erofeev.

discovered himself as an involuntary victim of the sadistic system, he intentionally becomes the victim of his own texts and characters. This is the result of his masochistic pleasure and love for ambivalence.

When the woman comes to hold power, the man becomes a victim. Irina transforms into a sadist who engages in a variety of abusive, violent, and perverse sexual practices. She beats old Vladimir, manipulates his decaying, incapable body in order to retrieve his potency, to "bring his Lazarus to life" again. This punishment of the incapable man's body leads him to both orgasm and death, with which this erotic destructive game ends. The woman appears to overthrow the Russian man from his lover throne. Irina is Vladimir's mistress, yet her real love is for a woman. Female homosexuality is treated as a social problem of the 1970s and 1980s, caused by the excessive drinking of Russian men that led to loss of male sexual power, the crisis of masculinity, and the absence of the male figure in Russian family (*bezotsovshchina*). Irina's lover Kseniia Mochul'skaia is her opposite (she lives in France, speaks French, marries the French dentist, undergoes changes, wears expensive attire, swears, and hates America), and they together epitomize and form Erofeev's new literary identity. They maintain their relationship through letters exchange as a deeply intimate trading of different discourses and cultures that Erofeev cherishes in himself.

Cultural exchange is another in the series of betrayals done by Erofeev, that he depicts in his autobiographical novel as trading of postal stamps at the market in Paris which made him a cosmopolitan: "In Paris, I betrayed my homeland…easily and freely" (*GS* 155)). Erofeev translates Karl Marx's theory of commodity into a potent metaphor of "the market stamp":

> On Sundays at the beginning of the Champs-Elysées there was a market stamp (RYNOCHNYI MAROK)…This was my most important thing – RYNOCHNYI

> MAROK. In fact, this was a stamp market (*marochnyi rynok*), but I confused the words out of overexcitement. I did not just like the *rynochnyi marok*, I did not even adore it - I idolized it. It was my childhood religion… The stamps were my sex, my oeuvre, and everything. Since then, my life has turned into an alternation of magnets. (*GS*, 158).

The pleasure of exchange channels sexual desire and gratification that materializes in hybridization, in dual nature of magnetic force that allows opposite poles to attract. The word-play here (*rynochnyi marok/marochnyi rynok*) replicates the father/son name-resemblance in "The Parakeet," and functions as a deviation of the linguistic norm, that is, its version or alternation. Erofeev deliberately mixes up words to show how he destroys Russian language, precisely from the point of view of grammatical gender: he turns the correct feminine form "*marka*" (stamp) into the false masuline "*marok*" in order to create his fetishistic symbol of fabricated male identity, *rynochnyi marok*, as a mere linguistic per-version of a more appropriate *rynochnaia marka*. The Russian language becomes a marketable item for exchange like Erofeev's literary gender. All the important categories in Erofeev's porn are classified as "my market stamp" (*moi rynochnyi marok*).

Erofeev's thought on the writer's position in socialism rests on the notion of selling the self on the market: "socialism is cultural emanation of totalitarianism…, it is a sadomasochistic complex of the writer-atheist who sells his soul to existence in which he does not believe" ("A Wake over Soviet Literature," 424). By selling the self without love the writer makes himself a prostitute. The Soviet perverted rendition of the famous philosophical phrase *cogito ergo sum*, that reads as "if in the Writers' Union, therefore you are a writer," seems to be the motto of Erofeev's life that leads him to repeatedly arriving at the union/s and becoming reborn as the writer, thus confirming his own existence. Then again, Erofeev states that this way the

authorities were buying writers, but only seemingly as they just pretended to be sold (*GS*, 325). He leaves the union and offers his autobiographic porn instead. Therefore, his equally perverted translation of the phrase could be worded as: "I live and write porn, therefore I am." In this sense "ergo sum," meaning 'I' that exists in language, functions as a stamp, the phrase-prostitute that is being exchanged on the market. The word *pornography*, given its etymology (*porne*-whore or prostitute, and *graphos*- writing and depiction), literally materializes in Erofeev's autobiographical pornographic satire as a literary work of the prostitute's life. Prostitution is the leitmotif in Erofeev, a symbol of illegitimate cultural exchange and the sphere from which he acts toward self-liberation.

Erofeev's linguistic chess board becomes the field of *mat* (*tatarskoe pole*) in *Russian Beauty*, where Irina runs her erotic race with death, and where unstoppable strange powers of the earth (Soviet Russia) maneuver her body through a brutal sexual abuse. Life and death, erotic pleasure and death drive (rape and humiliation) render the alternating light and dark fields on the chess board. Irina is running though the field like through a deep water up to her throat, with her mouth wide open screaming "Mama." This is the struggle of the child in the womb running through the amniotic fluid, asking to break the ties with the body in power and set the language free. In this struggle for existence in the language each identity appears ambiguous (Irina is screaming with the voice that is not hers and is calling the mother who is not hers (*RB* 207), and it is right here in this ambiguity of the *other* that Erofeev places his quest for freedom of speech.

Pushkin is inevitably part of this play. Vladimir calls Irina a "genius of pure beauty" (*genii chistoi krasoti*),[76] and the ghost asks her to be the golden fish from Pushkin's fairy tale

[76] Zhukovskii's line that Pushkin reauthorized in his poetry.

"The Tale of the Fisherman and the Fish." Irina agreeably replies she will do a miracle, but she puts an ultimatum before him to marry her. That evokes Jung's notion of marriage as a psychological relationship between *anima* and *animus*. Erofeev appeals for the pact with the ghost of the past, the Soviet rendition of Pushkin.

By choosing the prostitute to be the protagonist of *Russian Beauty* Erofeev openly combats national symbols and cultural models (for the woman who sells herself to others ironically signifies the stereotypical cultural ideal of Russian beauty (*russkaia krasavitsa*)). It is through the prostitute Irina, who sells her body to both Soviets and foreigners, alive and dead, that intercultural trafficking and gender verbal trafficking takes place. This communication helps Erofeev to break the xenophobic line between "us" and "them", East and West. Moreover, sleeping with the *other* is the subject that in Erofeev's rendition appears two-sided, since the old Soviet writer Vladimir comes into sight as the real enemy representing the regime and the ghost hunting the prostitute. Elaborating on prostitution as a metaphor for cultural degeneration and the role prostitutes play in threatening to deconstruct the Soviet cultural paradigm being associated with bodily impurity, Katerina Clark suggests that if a woman is for sale, it means that she surmounts the binary of inside/outside and that of pure/impure, because her activity is linked to the market as a symbolic threshold.[77] The prostitute stands for fluidity and hybridization which threaten to spoil the pure cultural genetic code: "Through the sex act you get transmission of the purity/authenticity of her client into a diseased or inauthentic vessel, and this has consequences for all subsequent generations" (Clark, 198).

[77] Katerina Clark, "Not for Sale," in *Russian Culture in Transition,* Stanford: Stanford Slavic Studies, Vol. 7, 1993, pp. 191-92.

By inhabiting the female voice, the man projects his displacement onto the female body, especially onto the woman's vagina. The importance of the female genitals to his porn Erofeev phrases like this: "In the end, the cunt became my pet. The cunt is my sister-in-arms (*Pizda — soratnitsa*). The cunt is the artist. The cunt is the chamber of my freedom. The cunt interferes with writing. The cunt is the (girl)friend of my life (*podruga moei zhizni*) (*GS*, 206-7). The Russian beauty Irina is the name for "the cunt," while the title of the entire project *Russian Beauty* appears as an alternative for the original *Vek Pizdy*. The narrator in *The Last Judgment* discloses that Sisin the writer kept the original title of his book *Vek Pizdy* secret by using the coded, abbreviated form *VP*, because for him the "Russian cunt, in the context of the *Vek Pizdy*, has much broader usage, more meanings than the translations abroad could render…the cunt is a symbol of existence."[78] Erofeev keeps this part of the female body in mind when he states that the Russian man has a hole (*shchel'* or *dyra*), which is symbolically depicted as a split, a crack in the man,[79] and as his window into the world, that most likely foresees the era of Gorbachev's glasnost' with its politics of openness. Referring to his crack in his head the storyteller/narrator in "Three Meetings" utters: "The crack is the evidence, the evidence that the fourth dimension, the dimension of death, promises escape/ redemption (*izbavlenie*)" (461).

The carnivalesque vagina that brings death and birth together appears as uncanny. It is that what is familiar and unfamiliar at once, desired and horrifying. Consequently, the female

[78] Erofeev, *Strashnyi sud*, *Sobranie sochinenii*, Vol. 3, p. 119. One of the possible meanings of the coded title *VP* is Vera Pavlovna, the main heroine of Nikolai Chernyshevsky's novel *What Is to Be Done?* (1863), written in response to Ivan Turgenev's *Fathers and Sons* (1862). Vera is a revolutionary character who acts against the order established by her family in order to achieve independence. Also, Erofeev closes his essay "Vremia Metropolia" with the question: "What's to be done?"

[79] In his short commentary titled "Shchel'", written instead of a preface to his collections of essays *In the Labyrinth of Accursed Questions* (*Sobranie sochinenii,* Vol. 2.), Erofeev addresses the problem of Russian man being split off and broken exemplifying a void in him. Having an aperture (*shchel'*) or simply a hole (*dyra*) he lacks impermeability as well as integral, final and enclosed form. This is what causes the Russian man's permanent sinking and makes him appear as "an eternal drowner but never a drowned" (*russkii chelovek—vechnyi utopaiushchii. Odnako ne utoplennik*).

identity for Erofeev comes as the experience of uncanny analyzed by Freud on the example of E. T. A. Hoffmann's story "The Sandman." Erofeev engages with Freud's analysis in his story "Three Meetings" as he names his heroine after Hoffmann's female protagonist, the machine Olympia. Erofeev's Olympia is variation of his primary *anima* Irina: she is a prostitute to whom the narrator (writer) sends his love letters, and who was born in "the leap year of the apocalyptic events" (that suggests the year 1980 when *Russian Beauty* was conceived). She is also drawn into the writer's linguistic manipulation. The narrator tells Olympia his story, already hundreds times told, that replicates Irina's running on the field: "I walked through my story like through water up to the knees, badly rolling my dry tongue" ("Three Meetings" 459).

The prostitute Irina's vagina is the writer-castreate's *anima-cunt* that carries in itself a mixture of semen of various men of the past: "The voice said: Many different sour seeds your cunt absorbed, Irina Vladimirovna" (*RB,* 177). The vagina, only if assured to belong to the *other*, is considered a valuable speaking part for language exchange. In "Persidskaia siren'", the narrator shows affection for Jewish women in particular that are to be distinguished from Russian by their speaking vagina (*U nikh govoriashchee vlagalishche*). Among the Jewish women, Bella Isaakovna stands out for her miraculous vagina, which not only speaks but is able to answer the questions. Erofeev employs irony describing it as "a voice of nature and eternal femininity" (*golos prirody i vechnoi zhenstvenosti*), and an "absolutely autonomous voice" (*sovershenno avtonomnyi golos*), while in fact the female voice cannot be heard without male intervention. The vagina's answers are initiated and directed by the questions posed by the male

narrator. The vagina does not speak by itself, but only if forced by the man: "That is, it does not in itself talk, but it can be compelled to speak like a cat, thrusting the fingers into its mouth."[80]

The woman's body in Erofeev's prose is forced to be in compliance with the man's orders and his demands for bridging the past and the future. The woman stands for the incubator conserving the man's decaying body, his degrading language and ideology until his rebirth and resurrection in the post-Soviet space. "Whereas maternity (biology/body) ensures historical continuity and safeguards or neglects national morality (praxis), creativity (aesthetics) and governance remain inherently masculine talents (intellect and imagination; activity and theory)" (Goscilo *Dehexing Sex* 44). Though the woman is given a chance to speak about sex, her sexual perversions and erotic fantasy, she is in fact acting in compliance with man's order and his demands. Her voice/intonation and her speaking vagina are traded on the discursive market by the man. The discursive void of the impotent man is filled when his obscene language is forced upon the female voice to carry over. Although acting as the only remaining speaking agency "in power," the woman finds herself a victim of the discursive trade market. She becomes a "verbal prostitute" whose voice is for sale.

Irina has both the hero ("I" of the narration) and the anti-hero ("not I") of Erofeev's secret tale in herself: *Ia rassloilas', ia i ne ia,… tak zhit' nel'zia, ia zhe sama luchshe vsekh ponimaiu, pishu i ponimaiu, chto nel'zia, i pisat' ob etom nel'zia, ZAPRESHCHENO…(RB,* 206). If it is forbidden to write the porn narrative then it has to be coded into a secret tale that would keep a record of every step the writer makes in life, while each of the steps would write out a page of the (his)story. Irina's *modus vivendi* is excessive writing ("This is what I write. I

[80] "To est', ono ne samo po sebe razgovarivaet, no ego mozhno zastavit' govorit', kak koshku, zasovyvaia ei pal'tsy v past'" (Erofeev, "Persidskaia siren'", *Sobranie sochinenii*, Vol. 1, p. 328).

write how I run, and I run as I write" (*RB,* 206)) and nothing can stop her from producing the narrative. Even when the rotten embryo in Irina's womb appeals to stop writing and threaten her with a miscarriage, she continues writing and thus murders the child inside her. Irina's writing mode evokes Bulat Okudzava's famous verses from his legendary poem/song "I Am Writing a Historical Novel" (1975): "Everyone writes what they hear, / Everyone hears how they breathe, / As they breathe, so they write."[81] Among other literati of the sixties (Ahmadulina, Evtushenko, Voznesenskii), Okudzhava had a special place in Erofeev's life, appearing as one of his market stamps, the seahorse (*Okudzhava-morskoi konek, GS,* 276). The two main streams of the writer's life that flow through Okudzava's poem are: the blooming of the rose and the infinite process of writing: "In an empty dark glass bottle / of the imported beer / A red rose bloomed, / Proudly and slowly. / A historical novel / I wrote little by little, / Breaking, as if through a fog, / From prologue to epilogue." Erofeev could recognize himself in the blooming rose kept in the empty bottle of imported beer,[82] and in the image of the writer/hero who is writing his historical novel-river dispersing little by little the parts of his fictional pornographic puzzle all over the place (from prologue to epilogue)—as if he is playing with marionette (self-toy) that Okudzhava phrases: "There was fiction in abundance, / And of my own destiny / I was pulling the strings." He is constantly trying to break through the Soviet fog (bandage-iron curtain), and become a free man who shouts out the words that have been kept for so long in the Soviet taboo box ("And while it's still alive / The red rose in the bottle / Let me shout out words / That have been lying so long in the piggy bank," sings Okudzhava). Accordingly, Erofeev's porn is growing in

[81] This poem was written as Okudzhava's response to the quest sent by a Moscow critical journal to several writers to write articles in which they would explain why and what for they write. Instead of writing an article, Okudzhava's self-analysis of his art and creativity came out in verse as another artistic piece. The poem did not get printed but soon after it was turned into a song that set light to Soviet Russia.

[82] This image is rendered in "Vrag" as the woman's vagina is kept in the empty bottle of Coca-Cola. Rose, as symbol of vagina, is Erofeev's *anima* kept in the consciousness of him as the cosmopolitan.

accordance with Okudzhava's pattern: he writes how he lives and lives as he writes, trying not to please anyone. Only by simultaneously writing and living porn as Stalin, Erofeev manages to get rid of controlling socialist realist literary ideology. His pornography flows like his novel-river *The Five Rivers of Life* (1998) that symbolically begins with the chapter "An Historical Orgasm on the Volga River." Following Okudzhava's lyrical subject ("I equipped the heroes for travel / Made inquiries about the past / And a retired lieutenant / I imagined myself to be."), Erofeev's narrator-traveler embarks on a journey through the five rivers around the world. He places the traveler on a ship that is in ultimate command of the old captain, together with the female travel companion that narrator deliberately chooses to be German, the sadistic *other*. Parodying the Biblical imagery of the four rivers branching out the main river that flows from the Garden of Eden, Erofeev adds the fifth river to be his running porn tale. The fifth river is "the secret of all secrets" and "the key to the entire book."[83] The meeting point of all five rivers at the river *mouth* should bring the resurrection of the saint-pornographer: "Five rivers are the symbol of the new word" (172). The word "river" (*reka*) that the father uses to translate the son's 'i-ka' in "Confession of a Caviar-lover," is given now its full legitimacy. The mother's translation ("*ikra*") was temporary and necessary to trigger the son's linguistic development. But the goal that the professional Stalin's translator puts before the son had to be reached.

The mutual Okudzhava-Erofeev project arises at the question of the purpose of writing, on the confluence of two linguistic rivers coming from the opposite sides, given as two different verbal aspects and tenses of the verb "to write" that both writers use in regard to their autobiographical works: Okudzava's "*pishu*" and Erofeev's "*ne napishu*." This amalgamated masterpiece should be read as: "I have been writing my historical novel (*Ia pishu istoricheski*

[83] Pia trek zhizni, p. 170.

roman) that I will never complete" (*avtobiografiiu nikogda ne napishu*). In *Good Stalin*, Erofeev alleges that Okudzhava refused the invitation to join the *Metropol'* group, remaining faithful to the socialist system. Therefore, this mutual project that Erofeev generates upon intertextuality plots his revenge against Okudzhava-the Soviet superego. Okudzhava involuntarily enters a family union with Erofeev as the literary father who must be killed by the rebellious son. The master Okudzhava plays the role of the mythical Daedalus, the creator of labyrinth, who gives his son Erofeev-Icarus wings to escape and the strict flying instructions that the son disobeys and ends up in the water. This father as "seahorse" is taken by the son parakeet to support his "liquid fascism."

The End of the Carnival

Since death heralds the beginning of the carnival, it must announce its end as well. S/M is collaborative, yet in this version it develops at the man's will and in harmony with his rules of the game, and at the woman's expense. Unlike the woman, the man is given one more chance. The woman is the victim of political and social, as well as Erofeev's personal transitions. As such she is depicted as a "victim of a road traffic accident" whom a group of male offenders beats up and mocks her wounded body, rapes her, and crams her vagina with a surrogate penis, an empty Coca-Cola bottle ("Vrag" (1995)). She is filled with the empty imported bottle, like Erofeev's female alter-ego with the man-the empty signifier.

The split of Erofeev-the subject is finally sealed with the woman's disappearance. Irina gets a marriage proposal from the ghost/voice/On and signs a masochistic "voluntarily forced pact" (*dobrovol'no-prinuditel'nii pakt*) in which she joins him in death ("the writer and the heroine…we need to merge!" (*RB,* 231)). The ritualized exploitation of the woman by the man's

language is performed again (the ghost pushes his "false tongue" through Irina's teeth), but now to signal a new beginning that, initiated by rape, proves his retrieved sexual ability. This is the new beginning for the man and the end for the woman. Phallo- and vaginocetrism switch their places one more time. When Irina agrees to the ghost's marriage proposal, the death-pact with the man, she decides to let her vagina continue existing separately from the body and in a new form. Irina writes a testament in which she asks for a monument to her vanishing vagina to be built as the symbol of the future, the post-transitional period, for all those at the cultural margins:

> Give my cunt to the poor, give her to the invalids, cripples, low rank workers, incapable students, masturbators, old men, parasites, street rascals, vultures… But do not consider her as something cheap. Though she has been used, she is still …extremely delicate and is afraid of a slightest violence… Don't make it too big, it does not have to rise to the sky… all of that is the male thing, masculine principle…not appropriate for her… Let it be a quiet monument… And plant flowers around it…to symbolize a counterbalance of military glory—the glory of love… I can't see any objections and we will dedicate it not to my persona but to a round historical date: the year 2000 of the new era (*RB*, 263-64).

The time of the vagina is cyclical, and it necessarily meets its end after it has been used for a while. As soon as it has done its job and brings the man to surface again, it must be put back at the bottom of the hierarchy. The vagina's verbal structure is such that each time it is named it leads to loss of its sounding, and glossolalia to its death.[84] Death of the woman/cunt apparently signals the end of the carnivalesque "time of the cunt," that is worded in *The Last Judgment* as "Konchalsia pizdiachii vek" (243). Her death heralds male verbal potency, resolution of the

[84] "Osobennost' zhe slovesnogo sostava pizdy, sostoit v tom, chto vsakoe ee nazyvanie, vol'noe i nevol'noe, vedet k utrate aromata i pyl'tsy, oslableniiu polnozvuchiia, oskudeniiu glossolalia, a sledovatel'no k postepennomu vymiraniiu i polnoj gibeli predstavleniia kak takogo" (*The Last Judgment*, 118).

Oedipus complex, and the beginning of democracy in the post-Soviet time, a new millennium that comes after the year 2000. This period will mark a new father-son union in the good Stalin.

"Life with an Idiot"

Drawing the parallel to Dostoevsky's *Idiot*, and to the scene of Rogozhin and Myshkin joining in bed together close to the body of the murdered Nastas'ia Filippovna, in his story "Life with an Idiot," Erofeev further develops the father-son fatal bonding by describes how the woman becomes a real victim of the narrator and the idiot Vova's union in homosexual desire. In *Between Men*, Eve Sedgwick focuses her theory on the erotic triangle as the specific gender arrangement, in which the homosexual bonds between men are revealed on the expenses of the symbolic exchange of woman. Initially emerging from the family narrative as a specific reading of class, the triangular drama ends with the male rivals uniting "over the ruined carcass of a woman."[85] Sedgwick asserts that the aftermath of the man's participation in the triangle could be twofold: even if he undergoes a humiliating change in the male-male bond, the man still retains his male power, but any change that occurs in him in his relation to the woman means that he radically degenerates (45). Erofeev writes "Life with an Idiot" in parallel with *Russian Beauty*, which leads the reader to intuit that the idiot Vova is born as the product of the writer's literary identification with the woman/vagina. The changes in Erofeev, therefore, could be viewed as the outcome of gender-trouble following his descend into the Soviet underground, that stage toward the resurrection of the late-Soviet man that inevitably affects woman's body/voice down the line. There is an entire chorus of male degenerates that appear during Erofeev's transitional period,

[85] See Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1985, p 68.

and all of them act as variations of the prototype character Vova-the idiot from "Life with an Idiot".

The narrator finds Vova in the asylum, depicted as the underworld ("underground world of idiots" (*podval'noe pomeshchenie*) and brings him into his life. Vova's identity is doubled, like Irina's, as he carries in himself two of Dostoyevsky characters: Myshkin the idiot and the Underground Man. Vova represents the hybridization, decline and alienation of the late-Soviet man: he has the "skull of a degenerate," he is not Russian, he is almost completely mute. The only sound that comes out his mouth is "Oh" (*Ekh*). "Ekh" is the word/sound by which the underground man expresses his dissatisfaction with his position in Russian Soviet reality ("he seemed to complain about the hardships of life in the dull red light"),[86] and at the same time it is the only verbal sign of his degenerate identity (when the narrator inquires who he is, what is his name and patronymic, Vova simply replies: "Ekh."). Once the narrator finds Vova, he anticipates the final outcome of their relationship, the men's union: "We stood on the threshold of a new life" (302). The idiot's process of initiation into higher social strata has a fatal outcome for the woman as the main victim of this transition.

The change in Vova appears sudden and immense. Vova is the rebellious son who, once inside the family triangle, becomes the creator of the ultimate chaos and disorder by imposing the "martial law" (*Eto on nam ob"iavil voennoe polozhenie*, 305) that takes dirt and pollution as its main forces. Vova goes around naked marching in a military style (five steps forward, five steps backward). Childlike Vova is found on the kitchen floor in a puddle of milk eating all kinds of food taken out from the fridge; he smears feces on the walls, urinates in the fridge, tears books

[86] Erofeev, "Zhizn' s idiotom," *Sobranie sochinenii,* Vol. 1, 302.

apart and throws them in the toilet bowl and bathtub, and cuts the floor and furniture with a knife. Displacement, bodily discharge, food mixture, aggression, all of this speaks in favor to the ritualized forms of power and danger. This ritual play further develops in an orgiastic, sinister sexual game in which the narrator and his wife also take part.

Vova cuts the phone line and disconnects them from the world, as symbolic disconnection from the official discourse. They are left with the discourse that Vova, like a perverse linguistic dictator, promotes. In such a hermetic and limited social structure, the old order is being destabilized and the new order established. First, the body fluids penetrate into private space, the couple's room, when Vova, howling from extreme sexual excitement, lets the flow of feces and sperm run under the door. Vova then easily takes over the narrator's place in the bed and becomes the wife's hero, who sexually satisfies her more than her husband, and even manages to impregnate her. This new relationship brings change to both Vova and the woman. Vova begins behaving properly and the woman, now pregnant with Vova's child, undergoes an absolute transformation initiated through sex and language. Vova and the wife spend the entire night "fucking" and exchanging sounds "ekhs," which means that the woman learns Vova's language (*ona nauchilas' vykrikivat' 'ekh',* 308). Reducing the female voice to a single word is just the first step toward the woman's final disintegration. Her abortion (as another miscarriage now of the son's porn) triggers further changes as she becomes a victim of men's sadism. Vova physically tortures the woman, pounding her with fists (*on bil ee krepko*, 310)). The woman then begins to replicate Vova's polluting behavior (playing with shit, tearing books and letters) for which she is brutally punished by both Vova and the narrator. She becomes marginalized as man-woman union is replaced by a homosocial bond between Vova and the narrator that is confirmed through language, when the narrator pronounces "ekh". Vova cruelly kills the woman

by cutting off her head that he then takes as a trophy (*podnial za volosy trofei*, 312)). The narrator gets maximal sexual arousal in the moment his wife is killed by Vova. Witnessing the woman's death, he appears like a child drinking tomato juice that spills over his body mixed with the wife's blood. The men's victory comes in the fusion of all life juices: blood, sperm, and tomato juice. The woman's dead body dragged like "a big imported doll," ends up in the garbage chute. This is the final stage of annihilation of the woman's body that, like Irina-*tarakan,* is ordained to remain in dirt and pollution forever. As soon as Vova's mission is over he disappears.

By killing the woman, Vova adds one more dual identity to himself, Dostoyevsky's Rogozhin/Raskol'nikov. The third one appears to declare the end of the carnival. If the first oral stage is a dedicated zone for woman (when her oral craving results in devouring the man), paradoxically the anal stage, though it asks for woman's activity in releasing and delivering, is exclusively a male zone. It signifies man's ejaculation, while the final result of the anal stage promises revitalization of male agency. This period represents men's search of purity. Woman-*sterva* is put in the garbage bin and thus two united men can claim "there is no menstruation between us" (*The Last Judgment,* 213). This phrase marks an ultimate fusion of men, the union that leaves no room for miscarriage and waste of male energy. No menstruation=no dirt=no woman in the holy homosocial union!

This is the moment of Russian man's resurrection. In his story "A Letter to the Mother" (1987), Erofeev anticipates the moment of freedom that comes with democracy and resurrection as the result of his treaty with the woman: "My dear mama, hurray! Long live democracy! Here

we accidentally come to see, my dove, the day of Holy Resurrection."[87] His deeply personal intention Erofeev discloses through his namesake, the main character Viktor Erofeev who states: "I will write the utmost artistic truth about the *filth* of our life without mincing the words, and without varnishing the empty rhetoric. My book, mama, will be necessary for the people" (Ibid.). He also expects that the new hierarchy established during the carnival by the underground generation will remain the directive order of the post-carnival world: "We will build a new world: who was nothing will become everything" (411). This call to "Mama" echoes Irina's running through linguistic water to be born anew. In *The Last Judgment*, Sisin's double Zhukov confesses at the court his crime of killing Sisin-the writer because he planned a new (Genesis) flood ("*novogo potopa*"). This is the plan of spreading "liquid fascism." Zhukov claims he buried him but as Sisin's body is missing he arises to the conclusion that he has resurrected (*on propal-tem khuzhe-znachit voskres*, 303). To glorify men's revival Erofeev publishes a collection of short essays titled *Men* (1997) that he opens with the essay "Morning Erection" to indicate the rehabilitation of the Russian man, and in which he declares the arrival of the "time of the cock" that comes with post-Soviet phallocentrism ("The time of morning erection is strictly male time (*sugubo muzhskoe vremia*)" (12)).

The threefold identity that identifies the new man is a parody of the holy trinity. The union of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit is reached in *The Last Judgment* when Sisin-writer is named the Christ's son. The homosexual threesome is activated through Erofeev's psychological development in *Good Stalin*, as the image of Stalin the god-ghost merges with the father and son in him. Erofeev concludes with an assertion that Freud would be pleased with him: "I made a personal contribution to his theory of the relationship between fathers and sons, which became

[87] V. Erofeev, "Pis'mo k materi," *Sobranie sochinenii*, Vol. 3, p. 403.

the law of the century" (*GS*, 322). Erofeev himself is the good Stalin, the character invented to unify the id, ego, and superego in him that the cover of the novel nicely illustrates showing Erofeev and his father Vladimir superimposed on the image of Stalin.

Figure 5: The book cover of Erofeev's novel *Good Stalin*.

The three merging images embody the symbol of Gogol's "troika-bird" that now becomes a literary symbol of free Russia. The "troika-bird" epitomizes ËPS's trinity of oneness as well as two images of the pornographer: the man-horse (*muzhchina-kon'*) ("Kon' i izba")) and the bird ("Popugaichik"). Like Gogol's Chichikov, Erofeev is buying dead souls of all the fathers he killed and other victims of his cultural pornographic deeds, conveyed via his personal struggles with his S/M fantasy.

When woman dies the good Stalin is born. Goscilo's account on "a convergence between pornography and Stalin" that emerges through comparison of pinup nudes and portraits of Stalin (always presented in military uniform) nicely illustrates the phases and alternations in Erofeev's inner fight. When Moscow's truck drivers recognized the changes of the aesthetics of everyday life during glasnost', when sex and nakedness of the female body could be seen everywhere, they replaced the portraits of Stalin on their dashboards with pinups of nude women (*Dehexing Sex*).

Erofeev anticipates this cultural change in *Russian Beauty*: "*Teper oni vystavliaiut Stalina na lobovom stekle svoikh komAZov, a ved' potom oni budut vystavliat' TEBIA*…" (199). Erofeev tries to put the portrait of Stalin back on truck dashboards, but this time it is the new, good Stalin the pornographer of the post-Soviet time: "Today, Stalin is a cult of strength, longing for the Empire, order, respect for cruelty…Stalin is the birth of a new fear. In each head of Russia sits his little Stalin. I also feel Stalin in myself. He emerges in my mind day and night (*bessonno*). My Stalin is a great artist of life" (*GS,* 376). Stalin is that masturbating orangutan in the writer's mind, the obscenity that the Jewish son takes on in his porn for the future generation.

Erofeev makes Stalin the hero of his porn because Russian literature created of him a character with dozens of images: "he is the tyrant, sadist, genius, wit, leader, pervert, and winner. Stalin is a mask" (*GS,* 377). In addition, his father's accounts on Stalin that portrayed him as a human being rather than a dictator and murderer, influenced Erofeev's ambivalent attitude in threating his character in his porn. Irina is told that she cannot be real Joan of Arc because she positively looks at Stalin, after Vladimir told her about his ability to scan the person. If people do not believe in the bad Stalin, Erefeev feels he has to offer them a good Stalin, himself in a puzzle/secret/riddle. For him, Stalin is a toy that he plays with because he carries a mystery that promises *Da!* effect: "Stalin is the creator of magical totalitarianism. Russians love riddles. Stalin set a riddle for them to solve. Stalin is completely sealed, tucked up like a submarine. This is our yellow submarine. He never said what exactly he wanted. He laughed at all and died unrecognized (*umer nepoznannym*)" (*GS*, 133). Erofeev's porn/life is entirely apocryphal in a sense that he is everywhere and nowhere at the same time. His porno-*zhitie* does not end with resurrection. As the historical father keeps reemerging in Russian people consciousness, like a ghost of the past, Erofeev continuously prolongs his fight with the father in him: "Stalin's revival

will be permanent as Trotsky's permanent revolution."[88] The Raskol'nikov in him invites for both the crime and (self-)punishment. Pornography springs out of the feeling of guilt for the committed murder: "Having politically killed my father, I had to focus on his resurrection, to make his sacrifice meaningful. I needed not to avenge the authorities, but to write. My father recognized me as a writer—I had to prove that he was right. A strong motivation to write arose in me—it consisted of the archaic patricide, modernity of my literary niche and predestination" (*GS,* 365). Like the child in caul, his porn is covered with mystery: "there was still some deeper, more profound secret related to the switching of energy. Both patricide and liberation from phobias imply creativity "out of the self," a self-expression that did not get through in the secret, that I only superficially touched upon keeping my faithfulness to the secret" (*GS,* 282). The very last part of this chapter is dedicated to disclosing this secret, intended to take his poetics of porn out form the water, to let it fly free, and show the pornographer completely naked. Therefore, what is following could be perceived as the reiteration of the birth trauma.[89]

The Theater of Secret Porn

Anne McClintock views S/M as a radically historical consensual project that insists on exhibiting the "primitive" representation of power dynamics as a character in the historical time of modernity: "SM plays social power backward, visibly and outrageously staging hierarchy,

[88] *Ogonek*, 20 July 2008, at http://kommersant.ru/doc/2301083 (last accessed May 19, 2017).

[89] Talking about the phenomenon of "an eternally drowning, but never drowned" Russian man with a *shchel'*, Erofeev states that even when he is safeguarded and taken out from water, he feels ashamed for being naked, becomes aggressive for his mysterious aura is broken, and, therefore, he deliberately disappears into water again:

> *Emu brosaiut spasatel'nyi krug, panika, ego tashchat za volosy, s bol'shim trudom vyvolakivaiut na bereg. Polozhili, teper otkachivaiut. Russkii chelovek zastenchiv. Emu nepriiatno, …Emu sovestno, chto on nag, plokho vybrit i voobshche ne slishkom esteticheskoe zrelishche. Emu ne nravitsia, kogda on ne nravitsia. On zazhimaetsia, stanovias' podozritel'nym, agressivnym. Iz nego ne vydavish' slov blagodarnosti. U nego napriazhennaia, kislo-gor'kaia aura.…on pripodnimaetsia, mutnym vzorom obvodit spasitelei i medlenno ugriumo, neuklonno lezet v vodu* (*Sobranie sochinenii*, Vol. 2, pp. 6-7).

differences and power, the irrational, ecstasy, or alienation of the body, placing these ideas at the center of western reason…SM is high theater!...SM reveals that social order is unnatural, scripted and invented."[90] In this sense it appears as the "radical historical phenomenon" for it negates the "natural" law according to which man is sexually aggressive and woman is sexually passive. Erofeev compulsively tries to get free from the bondage (iron curtain) he was born in, and while doing so, he undergoes gender ambiguity, queerness, that brings him temporary erotic pleasure as it pays tribute to his S/M. S/M affords triumph over memory, and thus an orgasmic pleasure, but only temporary for memory (trauma) will appear again, and this repetition is fundamental principal of S/M (McClintock 143). S/M is high theater: beautifully suited to symbolism, it is a theater of signs that brings temporary control over social risk. "By scripting and controlling the *frame* of representation, in other words, the control frame—the diary, the camera, the theatrical scene—the player stages the delirious loss of control within a situation of extreme control" (Ibid.).

As theater, Erofeev's S/M narrative goes all the way back to "primitive" pornographic conventions of power that he finds in Russian secret tales (*zavetnye skazki*). His 1995 essay "Morphology of Russian People's Sex: Secret Tales,"[91] a parody of Vladimir Propp's "Morphology of the Folktale," could be read as another script, the outline for Erofeev's autobiographical pornography. Every secret tale, he claims, is by default a male story (*muzhskaia skazka*) and is narrated from the man's point of view. Secret tales are part and parcel of the sexual sphere of the Russian consciousness and subconscious (251). Therefore, this essay contains all theatrical scenes that Erofeev writes and lives, as well as symbols and signs that he

[90] Anne McClintock, *Race, Gender and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest*, New York: Routledge, 1995. P 143.
[91] "Morfologiia russkogo narodnogo seksa: zavetnye skazki," *Sobranie sochinenii*, Vol. 2. The entire analysis is based on folk secret tales.

leaves behind running on the linguistic chess board. Erofeev chooses to analyze those Afanasiev's tales which serve to graphically depict his own porn secret tale. Two such tales which revive sexual education undoubtedly echo *Russian Beauty* and sado-masochism. A lesbian relationship between two friend develops as one teaches the other a lesson on sex by penetrating her with a straw. This strange and painful method of sexual education Erofeev finds to be symptomatic of Russian culture and communication, and emanation of evil. A more extreme example that includes rape, sadism, and incest is when the father deflowers his daughter with a hot iron pin to prevent her to give herself to the other (*zachem davat' chuzhomu*). The daughter takes the iron pin for the father's penis. Erofeev repeats that there is no love in secret tales, they are directed toward individual or collective orgasm (253). Erofeev underlines here again that Soviet style teaching makes one to believe s/he is satisfied, whereas s/he is turned into a victim. Erofeev sarcastically concludes that women in Russian culture are tolerant to incest to such a degree that the western sexual revolution would not reach it (261). Pornographic discursive manipulation is the knowledge received by the well-known false penis. Erofeev holds that "in a novel, in literature in general, everything must be said,"[92] then again that pornographic performance is not only explicit but secretive, too (*Ispolnenie-ne tol'ko raskrytye smysla, no i sokrytie, Five Rivers of Life,* 90). The morphology of Erofeev's sots-porn tale, too, is coded with secret signs and symbols. Erofeev's pornography is yet another "lesson" in sexual education of his readers that combines lesbianism, rape, incest, and sadism.

The further Erofeev develops his morphology of secret tale, the closer he comes to pornography of Limonovian provenance. Secret tale, he claims, is the story of "direct action"

[92] *Radio Svoboda*, "Entsiklopediia russkoi dushi" ("Kul'tura i politika"), February 14, 2004, at http://archive.svoboda.org/programs/encl/2004/encl.021404.asp.

(253) that focuses on the "almightiness of the big cock" anticipating the Russian Revolution (271). The only three erogenous zones are: a) the asshole as "the most rotten place of the secret tale" appearing as "shameful hell" which discredits the hero. If he only "farted or shited," the hero often becomes a victim, who is threatened to be killed; b) the cock as the most powerful weapon that should be displayed; c) the cunt as being reduced to a hole (*dyra*), and sometimes confused with the asshole, viewed as a wound, or a fatal sickness (267-271). The hole (O!) is the primary fantasy, and desire exceeds everything, including the fear of death. In this extreme passion to the level of sacrifice lies Russian mentality (276). This makes the secret tale pornographic and not erotic, since pornography functions as materialization of fantasy (277).

When he portrays the Russian beauty, Erofeev is showing his own "vagina-*dyra*" to the world very explicitly. Likewise, Sisin exposes woman's vagina to the camera by literary turning it inside out to show all the details (*raskryval pizdu-naiznanku-vyvorochival-vot klitor-vot eshche ne sovsem raskryvshaiasia dyra* (*The Last Judgment*, 141)). He records a porn film of his struggles and shows it to the world. The pattern he uses is very vividly depicted as: the woman is performing oral sex (*Bormotukha soset-ona delo znaet*), the man is speaking (*on razgovarivaet*), the camera is silently recording (*kamera molcha snimaet*) (143). The woman's mouth is stuffed with the male genitalia and thus it is assured that she is unable to speak for herself, for her language independently is unintelligible or unfeasible (*Bormotukha mozhet proiznosit' slova tol'ko nevniatno- nichego ne poniatno- a inache ne mozhet vovse* (Ibid.)). The writer does the speaking/writing, and the text (camera) silently records it. This leads to the conclusion that the woman/vagina finds its place in a love triangle where she is exchanged between the male writer and his masculine pornographic text. The woman acts as the reader of porn.

Erofeev concludes that secret tales translate a typical communicative model of the Russian dialogue, which is not about exchange but competition, open or secret disputes, and debates in which the winners and the losers are polarized. In such a dialogue "yes" does not differ from "no." Erofeev's secret tale is also built on communication that stimulates all three erogenous zones, and like any other secret tale is "directed toward orgasm for both the narrator and listeners."[93] Erofeev as the narrator of the porn tale engages his reader in such a manner to inscribe on them his S/M fantasy. Orgasm awaits the reader when they find the way out of Erofeev's maze, meanwhile the reader's sexual excitement is sustained in decoding the secret signs that lead to the exit (hole). The reader is running through the maze of the writer's psyche, and the psyche of Russian people. Erofeev's Sisin writes his internal reviews (*vnutrennie recenzii*) by means of which he "miserably allies himself with life of his homeland" (*The Last Judgment*, 59). The text as such functions as Erofeev's dream that he now shares with readers expecting from them to analyze it, something like a psychoanalytic interpretation of his oneiric experience.[94] But he lives his dream, too, which then brings us to conclude that the text is both his consciousness and subconsciousness in which all his fears are running like water and creating the apocalyptic flood, like Sisin's, that brings him liberation. To make the reader a part of his game Erofeev additionally manipulates the notion of the death of the author. His porn theater stages another carnivalesque death-birth drama: the death of the author and the birth of the reader.

Barthes writes that "the whole being of writing: a text consists of multiple writings,

[93] "Morfologiia russkogo narodnogo seksa," p. 253.
[94] "Once Vladimir Sorokin, our famous writer said that for me the text is a dream. I had a dream, I have to share this dream. Sometimes this dream can be quite scandalous and unpleasant." (*Radio Svoboda*: "Avtocenzura", June 25, 2006, at http://archive.svoboda.org/programs/encl/2005/encl.062505.asp.

> issuing from several cultures and entering into dialogue with each other, into parody, into contestation; but there is one place where this multiplicity is collected, united, and this place is not the author, …but the reader: the reader is the very space in which are inscribed, without any being lost, all the citations a writing consists of; the unity of a text is not in its origin, it is in its destination; but this destination can no longer be personal: the reader is a man without history, without biography, without psychology; he is only that someone who holds gathered into a single field all the paths of which the text is constituted. The birth of the reader must be ransomed by the death of the Author.[95]

The reader's function in Erofeev's porn is that of a value for exchange between men on the linguistic and cultural market. The reader plays the woman's role and like the door in the women's toilet appears completely empty ("without history, without biography, without psychology"), and thus silent. Silence and emptiness come from Soviet "no sex" culture. This emptiness, as a symbolic hole, leaves room for Erofeev to perform something like a sexual stimulation of the reader's mind in a riddle or discursive play with the father Stalin/Pushkin. Sisin the son of Christ, who intends to bring an apocalyptic deluge to earth and destroy the world, comes to a verbal fight with the father Christ over this issue that resolves in a linguistic truce. They come to terms about the deluge and reach peace through a unified language, given as mutual exchange of one particular sound: "ë!... ëëëë" (*The Last Judgment*, 211). The sound/letter *ë* is the *parole*, the man-word, and Erofeev himself. Sisin asserts: "I was born in 195…" This hidden year leaves room for double interpretation: 1953-Stalin's death, and 1956 when, according to the new rules of Russian spelling and punctuation, the strict graphical presentation of the letter *ë* for its proper pronunciation became optional. Like the letter *ë*, the Russian man is

[95] Barthes, "The Death of the Author."

absent while still kept in the language by default (this is perhaps what Erofeev refers to when he says the man is "the idea kept in the language by inertia"). *Ë* lacks its particularity in the written text when not marked with two dots above, thus often confused with the vowel *e*. They are also initial letters of the Russian "f-word" and its variations.

Sisin as Erofeev-the-author himself and the hero of his autobiographical pornographic *skazka*, believes that *Vek Pizdy* (*Russian Beauty*) was born from and came out of his last name. His whole life he felt pity for himself because of his preposterous last name "Mr. Tits" (*sis'ki*)) because of which he suffered a lot.[96] Sisin thought of taking up a pseudonym but *Vek Pizdy* came as a better, more adventurous alternative. Instead of pseudonym Erofeev chooses his alter-ego Irina/the Russian beauty/vagina to be his new identity. *Ë* is just an alternation of the initial *E* taken from the author's family (last) name Erofeev. With this alternative identity Erofeev appears in the ËPS project. *E* and *Ë* are the father and the son of the Russian alphabet/language, the Soviet and anti-Soviet discourses, the high puritan Russian language and the low vulgar language (*russkii mat*), Pushkin and d'Anthès, anti-porn/censorship and anti-censorship/pornography movements. Their battle therefore appears as the two vowels in the text fighting for their truth, for their possession over mother Russia (symbolically "*eë*" (her)!), and for the correct pronunciation in the reader's mouth. The reader is that female figure on whom depends how this verbal war resolves, since the reader's mouth, as the hole (*dyra*)/vagina, is expected to give birth to the *ë* again and again. The victory of the son (Viktor) is assumed since in most cases the letter *ë* is the carrier of the stress in the word, and thus must be pronounced differently from *e*. Sisin makes Christ agree on his rebellious activism, and verbally accepts

[96] The son who becomes one of the class sausages (pervoklasnnye sosiski) in "The Mother," is version of the new man Sisin. The wordplay of "sis'ki" and the "sosiski" is obvious here.

subordination of *e* when he pronounces "ë"**.** The reader, and not the author, is supposed to carry on the discursive pornographic truth/s. The reader is the male author's *anima* that communicates all the literary experience and cultural heritage for him.

Furthermore, the reader appears like the woman in power with the tongue as a whip. The writer's masochism comes to force through permanent concerns (fear), expectations and delay of the proper utterance, orgasm of *ë*. Every time the reader delivers "ë**,**" he whips the father in the child.[97] Since in Erofeev's porn the woman appears a part of S&M fantasy, the reader must also be seen as the victim of sadistic fantasy. The reader is being manipulated, symbolically fucked, raped, humiliated and tortured, because the reader is constantly under the pressure of successful oral performance, the correct pronunciation of the given vowel.[98] The reader is the victim of the *E/Ë* perversion being forced to orally satisfy the author. And every time "ë" has been well pronounced that gives Erofeev erotic pleasure gratifying men's desire for winning the linguistic chess game. By articulating "ë" the reader is giving a blowjob to the pornographer.

But the pornographer is that Russian man with hole (*shchel'/dyra*). The son *Ë* differs from his father *E* only by two dots above that operate as holes ("cunt" and "asshole") that need to be satisfied in order to experience orgasmic "*Ë*! moment" (=*Da!* moment). Like Irina, the feminine *Ë* lives for two (dots) and finds its real love in another woman, the reader. The author-reader's relationship is in fact homosexual. *Ë* signifies the real Russian man that comes out from the sexual contact of *E*, as erected penis, with the two holes: vagina and anus. Erofeev escapes in

[97] Deleuze states that the masochist first "ensures that he will be beaten (but what is beaten, ridiculed, in him is the image and likeness of the father)" and this way "liberates himself in preparation for a rebirth in which the father will have no part" (*Masochism*, 58).
[98] This is particularly true for nonnative speakers of Russian that bring to mind the effort Erofeev put in acquiring the skills in *russkii mat* as a foreign language.

the first hole of the letter *ë* that signifies the vagina, "the hole of women's vagina that is the zero of her being" (Goscilo, *Dehexing Sex* 152). What is the other hole for? The masochist in him requires the anus as masculine principle (that of the male anal phase), that simultaneously plays double role: reminds the hero of the danger of the aggressive return of the father and gives him hope of a rebirth.[99] Erofeev's narrative functions according to the law of incestuous sex that appears as the "hot iron pin" that Sisin the writer "forces into the reader's asshole."[100] The teacher of porn inflicts penalty and education upon the reader, and this motif mirrors the father's "upbringing" and "punishment" in *Russian Beauty*. Finally, the reader might guess that Erofeev inscribes his alternative initial *Ë* on the empty door in the women's toilet, for he believes autobiography is "like inscribing your initials on the bench." The toilet door replaces the bench for it represents the border separating/unifying man's and woman's private dirt and the society, periphery and officialdom, silence and narrative beyond the pale. *Ë* is a more sophisticated variant than simply inscribing "NE" that would be direct negation of the father in him (as not E).

Erofeev-The Last Hero

The analysis of Erofeev's pornographic *zhitie* ends with a relatively recent "deed" of the pornographer that offers another entry key to the coded door of his poetics of porn. In 2008, Erofeev took part in the popular reality show "Survivor" (in Russian "The Last Hero") but soon after the game started, together with another participant, Nikita Dzhigurda, he left the show breaking the contract. Once again Erofeev underlined "sadistic impulses" in Russian people, by

[99] Deleuze shows that the masochistic contract between the man and his female torturer includes the third party, another man who, besides evoking the danger of the father's aggressive return, "stands for the hope of a rebirth, the projection of the new man that will result from the masochistic experience" (*Masochism* 58).
[100] "Your books look like sizzling hot soldering iron that you force into the reader's asshole", Sisin is told (19).

taking this project as an exemplary model of dark sides of modern Russian society that inevitably resembles the Soviet state as well as Nazi Germany. At the occasion of leaving the show, Erofeev talked in the camera of the First National Channel calling the project fascistic. In the interview given afterwards on the radio *Ekho Moskvy*, he explains that the project is a concentration camp (*nastoiashchii kontslager'*) specially made for preaching violence and built on humiliation: "So, if we find ourselves in an enclosed, hermetic public places where power is in stake with impunity and the people are weak (I mean, young people who have little idea of what fascism is, and what totalitarianism is), then they turn into guinea pigs, the food for destruction (*pishcha dlia unichtozheniia*). In fact, they are being eaten up, while along the others are getting sadistic pleasure."[101] The weak ones, the participants of the show, are figuratively devoured by the sadistic figures in power, of whom the reality show host, Ksenia Sobchak, is depicted as the cruelest. In Erofeev's words, she appears "in à la S&M style: in a mini-skirt and with the naked booty, with stockings, and whips not missing… She looked like an inflatable doll from an Amsterdam sex shop. And with a voice of a SS woman (*golosom essesovki*)." It is the woman in power (the host) with her terrifying voice and shamelessly naked body that is threatening to him. Like his male protagonist in "Parakeet" when tortured by the sadist, Erofeev reaches out for the insulting language to undermine the power of the torturer and verbalize the truth. Under these circumstances his voice and tone begin to change becoming rough and stiffened (*Ia prinial takoi zhestkii ton. U menia voobshche tam golos okrep. I ia stal govorit' zhestkim tonom*). This new voice, which resembles the sadist's in its tone, permits him to use politically incorrect language, akin to Ermolai's post-castration vulgar rhetoric, and to call the project producer "a complete fool," to accuse all of them for propagating violence and fascism,

[101] Radio "Ekho Moskvy," September 27, 2008, at http://echo.msk.ru/programs/kulshok/542774-echo/.

and to announce that he and Dzhigurda are ready to break the contract and leave (*narushen kontrakt, my vykhodim*). Only then Erofeev and Dzhigurda come to reality as reborn human beings (*I my iz uchastnikov prevratilis' v real'nykh liudei*). The "last hero" in Erofeev's rendition is the one who crosses the borders and breaks the system down coming out as a cultural revolutionary. This is the story of Jewish survivors, the victims' grand comeback to fight Russian cultural fascism.

This episode sublimates various aspects of Erofeev's poetics of porn. It explains how his literary voice has changed its amplitude in the late-Soviet era. Like many of his male protagonists, when helpless before a sadist woman in power, Erofeev reaches out for the insulting language to undermine the enemy. When obscenity decorated his narrative and figuratively modified the tone of his voice with toughness and roughness of expression it allowed him to straightforwardly express dissatisfaction with the regime and socialist literary hegemony, and to diverse from the mainstream Soviet literature outside the claustrophobic Writers' Union. He takes over Freud's idea of sadomasochism operating within one and the same person to describe the underground writer's position. The woman in power, the personification of the limited, institutionalized, sadistic state appears to humiliate Russian man, rapes, castrates, eats, and kills him. But the other side of Ksenia Sobchak's "S&M style" shows her as the fake foreign product to play with (the inflatable sex toy) and the object of man's masochistic phantasy (with whips). Only in a combat with the former and an ally with the latter in his texts Erofeev gets a chance to resurrect as the writer and come to life again, while speaking/confessing his porn ideology along the line. Foucault's notion of how power is exercised in the society finds its application in Erofeev's literary and personal S/M world as the perverted sexual relation and

strict gender dynamics between a woman (Sobchak) and two men united (Erofeev and Dzhigurda).

Erofeev's prose shows that the text is the camera recording his theatrically staged per-versions. But life itself also becomes fictionalized, for it repeats his literary movements. Life is just a lighter version of the porn-film-like text. Erofeev states: "I like to think about how the Red Army raped and killed young noblewomen. I lie and imagine. I am a virtual tormentor who in reality hates violence" (*GS,* 101). Erofeev's version of "liquid fascism" gets its full scope as hard porn literature and soft porn reality. To maintain this opposition, he strives to hold the secret tale-porn live. Erofeev overplays as he takes the "real" people to be his chess figures and to manipulate them, like Ksenia Sobchak and Nikita Dzhigurda in "Survivor," who become actual victims of his virtual porn evoking concentration camp discourse. "The element of an inhuman game became part of my writing nature," he states (*GS,* 375). His own porn reality show, in a way, repeats the morbid game described in "Three Meetings" where the couple joyfully kills people. The woman feels pleasure in watching the car driven by her beloved man going over human bodies and, being in charge of counting the victims, she at one point starts speaking the man's language: "don't miss this dick! Hurray! And this cunt!" Her voice echoes that of the driver which pleases him: "She began to speak a normal language – I was happy" (465). Erofeev is the writer that he himself defines a "sexual animal" (*pisatel'- seksualnaia skotina, Five Rivers of Life,* 89), who exercises his sexual power on the entire human society. The reader is not excluded either.

Erofeev asks for the thorough analysis of his porn-river because he knows that without it "not alive but dead water flows," as claims the narrator in *Five Rivers of Life* who embarks on his water-journey to visit the big rivers, one of which is African river "Niger," that is most likely

Pushkin, repetitively asking for the analysis of the river's water (34). Without a reader-scholar who would, like a KGB inspector, follow the steps of the "criminal hero" of the secret tale, his poetic of porn does not exist because it is not verbalized. The scholar-detective must uncover the "murderer" by deduction from the signs left in the wood of symbols. By analogy, the scholar becomes yet another woman, or feminist, of Erofeev's S/M fantasy, the character from the margin (including that "incapable student" who finds use of the monumental cunt to write about porn) who pronounces "Ë" (finding it in the women's toilet where the writer wrote it) well enough so to bring orgasmic pleasure to both the author and the self. Her S&M style à la Ksenia Sobchak reveals in the writer's masochistic imagination as the painful, long decoding process in which she is submissive to the writer's discursive manipulation and his quest for analysis, and the sadistic whip of her tongue, her feminist interpretation, and her female voice. She-scholar also knows that *E* has two holes, and that besides her vagina, the other hole of hers, that reminds the writer of the system/censorship/(Soviet) Russian society is also sexually manipulated with his hot, iron pen-Stalinist discourse.

Finally, taking into consideration Goscilo's rhetorical question, "Readers of Russian pornography might ask themselves why, if pornography sings freedom's song, it does so only in male chorus," (*Dehexing Sex* 162), the she-reader might conclude that this is postmodern romanticism, the genre in which men sing a pornographic serenade for women. The male writers write for the female readers in order to reach immortality and become the fathers of Russian porn. More precisely, they sing porn to amuse themselves but also to attract women to listen to it. The woman-listener of the porn serenade is needed until the concert is over. Afterwards, only a part of her, such as her ear (another hole) is kept as memorabilia or a monument for all future performances of the chorus. In *The Last Judgment*, Sisin's lover Sara, the American journalist

who decides not to return to America but stay in Russia, mysteriously dies there and her dead body is taken to a "special morgue for foreigners" (*spetsmorg dlia inostrantsev*). When Sisin visits the morgue for *others* he is overwhelmed by disgusting smell of the disintegrating corpses and tries to escape from it by "losing himself in a symphony" of various exotic aromatic odors emerging in his imagination. This aromatic battle sexually excites him: "*stremitel'no vtrozhenie krepkogo i tomnogo aromata napriaglo ego muzhskie soski ─ on pogruzilsia v simfoniiu komorskoi vanili, sandal, kardamona, fenola i ladana…*" (225). For his perverse male symphony to last Sisin needs woman's ear to listen to it. He requests from the coroner (*preparator*) to sell him Sara's ear and, after a short bargaining, he buys it and happily leaves the morgue with her ear burning in his worn-out underwear.[102] The woman's ear is the pricey imported product of exchange on the male symphony orchestra's market that should resurrect the pornographer's worn out story. The woman's ear is another Erofeev's market stamp. It listens to Erofeev's historical novel that, like Okudzhava's poem, has been turned into an autobiographical song. Therefore, he presents the novel *Good Stalin* as "a piano on which each reader could play their own melody."[103] One more time Erofeev tries to fool the vagina/woman/reader and make her believe she is producing an autonomous tone. Piano is the man's instrument and every black and white key on the keyboard is assigned a note (sign) that in enigmatic combinations of opposites always repeats at the interval of the very same octave. Erofeev is the son of Vladimir, his literary father and the great composer of chess problems, Nabokov. Once the interpretation of Erofeev's running porn is offered, the female voice is not needed any more. But the feminist-scholar's ear

[102] *Sisin nazval summu ─ lokon ─ lakonichno skazal preparatory ─ ukho ─ ne ustupal Sisin…Sisin pokazal novuiu summu na pal'tsakh ─ oi, blia, nu, ty mne nadoel! ─ pomorshchilsia preparator ─ Sisin ushel dovol'nyi, s ukhom v triapochke…ukho Sary gorelo u nego v karmane* (225-226).

[103] This is the commentary given of the book cover: "*Po slovam samogo avtora "Khoroshii Stalin", eto kniga pokhozha na piannino, na kotorom kazhdyi chitatel' mozhet sygrat' svoiu sobstveniiu melodiiu*." It seems that the novel's publisher "ЗебраЕ" fits Erofeev's project: a compilation of two alphabets, black and white stripes of zebra-board, close relative of horse who is accompanied with Erofeev's initial, E, that together make *pisatel'- kon'*.

like Sara's, the ear of the *other*, stays attuned to further serenades of Russian literary porn. The she-reader follows the rules of the game. She agrees on the writer-reader's pact. The she-reader is for sale!

Erofeev's poetics of pornography is built on absurd and perversions arising in the attempt to hold Soviet iron liquid. Therefore, his characters' locus is water: Vadim's first words is "river" (*reka*), Irina runs through the field like in water, his man is permanently drowning but never dies in water, he travels on the ship through five rivers of life, Stalin is his yellow (Jewish) submarine, and he needs analysis of his water. All these episodes speak in favor of Erofeev's version of "liquid fascism." In the next chapter, I will show how Sorokin builds his pornographic discourse on "liquid fascism" keeping his narrative soaked in Soviet dirty water. As ËPS in pronunciation equates with "ëbs" and thus evokes fucking, its members act as a group of fuckers, each of whom has his own version of a common fantasy. In Sorokin, they will appear as the secret sect named the "Brotherhood of Earth-fuckers" to blow out the father Stalin's perverse brain.

CHAPTER 4: Vladimir Sorokin's Pornographic Wetland

"Kak vernut'sia v literaturu, ostavaias' v nei, no vyidia iz nee sukhim?" (A. Prigov)[1]

Vladimir Sorokin, one of the most popular contemporary authors, has already become a classic of Russian Postmodern and (post)-Conceptualist art,[2] and the most authentic prose writer of sots-art.[3] Sorokin was born in Bykovo, near Moscow, in 1955. He graduated from the Gubkin Institute of Oil and Gas in 1977. Though a chemical engineer by education, Sorokin had always felt himself at home in the arts. As student he showed deep interest in rock music and surrealism, and upon graduation he worked as a book designer and illustrator. He did not gain much work experience: he spent a year as the art editor in the magazine *Smena*[4] and two years as teacher of Russian literature at Tokyo University. Sorokin said that he also wanted to try painting and music, "but got under the machine (*popal pod mashinu*)….Apparently, life directed me to literature."[5]

Sorokin began writing in the Brezhnev era, and since then he has written numerous novels, plays, short stories, opera librettos, and film scripts. In the early 1980s he joined the Moscow underground artistic circle and began writing for samizdat and tamizdat. Sorokin's first novel, *The Queue*, was published in France by Syntaxe in 1985. His works were banned in the Soviet Union, which prevented Sorokin to become known beyond the underground circles. His works were not published in Russia until the 1990s, first his collection of short stories *Sbornik*

[1] "How to get back into literature, staying in it, and to come out of it dry?"
[2] See Tine Roesen and Dirk Uffelmann, "An Introduction," *Vladimir Sorokin's Languages*, eds. Tine Roesen and Dirk Uffelmann, Bergen: Slavica Bergensia, Vol. 11, 2013.
[3] Mark Lipovetsky, "Vladimir Sorokin's 'Theater of Cruelty,'" in *Endquote: Sots-art literature and Soviet Grand Style*, eds. Marina Balina, Nancy Condee, and Evgeny Dobrenko, Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2000, p. 167.
[4] Sorokin left after refusing to obey the magazine officials' constant persuasions to join the Komsomol.
[5] Oksana Semenova, "Uboinoe salo: Vladimir Sorokin: 'Ia khotel napolnit' russkuiu literature govnom,'" *MKRU*, July 21, 2007, at https://www.mk.ru/old/article/2002/07/21/164539-uboynoe-salo.html (last accessed June 6, 2019).

rasskazov in 1992, followed by his novels *A Novel* and *The Norm* in 1994, and *Marina's Thirtieth Love* in 1995. Publication of his works was compared to the "shock therapy"[6] that was part of Russia's postpartum trauma caused by the collapse of Soviet state. "There was no such a 'fool' in Russian literature," asserts Pavel Basinskii, evoking how Sorokin shocked and stunned the unprepared Russian reader with his taboo-breaking prose: "I personally seriously thought that a revolution had occurred in Russian literature, or a fire. Because THIS has not yet been written. THIS was impossible to write. And it was not a matter of blasphemy and pornography….It was a matter of a shocking juxtaposition of traditional meanings and moral values, developed not only in the pre-revolutionary past, but also in the twentieth century, and even in Soviet times, with something that was 'from another opera.'"[7] Yet, Sorokin did not reach the attention of broader Russian public until the publication of *Blue Lard* (1999). The book soon became a bestseller and then caused a cultural scandal organized by the pro-Putin youth movement "Walking Together" (*Idushchie vmeste*) in 2002, when Sorokin was officially proclaimed a pornographer.

Sorokin also became heavily engaged in cinema and theater. His postmodern opera libretto, *The Children of Rosenthal*, premiered at the Bolshoi Theater in 2005. Many of his screenplays have been made into movies: *Mad Fritz* (1994), *Moscow* (2001), *4* (2004), *Target* (2011), and the most recent and controversial film, *Dau* (2019).

As a violator of societal taboos, Sorokin remained in the Soviet underground until 1992. In German-speaking countries, however, he was recognized by academics already in 1989, and in the early 1990s German translations of his works were published by *Haffmans*. With his growing popularity in Germany and Switzerland, Sorokin came out of underground reading

[6] Robert Porter, *Russia's Alternative Prose*, Oxford: Berg, 1994.
[7] "Obyknovennyi Sorokin," *Rossiiskaia gazeta*, no.194, September 2, 2018, at https://rg.ru/2018/09/02/vyshel-novyj-sbornik-rasskazov-vladimira-sorokina-belyj-kvadrat.html.

sessions of Moscow conceptualists and began marketing his works through public recitals in the West. Interest for Sorokin from German publishers and scholars has been growing ever since. Sorokin wonders why they understand him better abroad (Russian "people can understand something, because they are the same deformed people as I am, but in the West…"), and his extreme fame in Germany he attributes "to the German introverted mentality" for "they also went through totalitarianism."[8]

Today Sorokin lives in Berlin, in the Charlottenburg quarter that welcomed Russian expatriates such as Tsvetaeva and Nabokov.[9] But Sorokin does not consider himself an émigré since he hasn't broken all ties with Russia and regularly spends half a year in Moscow. Emigration as such has never fascinated Sorokin, only a temporary stay in the West because, according to him, "going to the West represents crossing geographical borders but not ontological ones; we take our psyche with us like a backpack with stones. And there is no big difference: both here and there, there is an oncology clinic."[10] Like Limonov, who calls both Russia and the West a global sanatorium, Sorokin sees no distinction between Russia and Germany, as both countries' psyche has been damaged by the brain cancer of totalitarianism. Staying at least with one foot in Russia for Sorokin means being linked to the traumas of the past that are inscribed in the Russian culture and collective consciousness, of which he is a part: "I "drove" into the masochism of Solzhenitsyn, Shalamov, Dostoevsky, and became infected with

[8] "Vladimir Sorokin: Samoe skuchnoe – eto zdorovie pisateli," interview by Sergei Shapoval, *Stolitsa* 204, no. 42 (October 1994), at https://ru-sorokin.livejournal.com/450427.html (last accessed November 6, 2019).
[9] "This Controversial Russian Novelist, Accused of Promoting Cannibalism and Pornography, Is a Literary Star," interview by Liza Rozovsky, September 21, 2018, *HAARETZ*, at www.haaretz.com/world-news/europe/.premium.MAGAZINE-accused-of-spreading-cannibalism-and-pornography-this-russian-novelist-is-a-literary-star-1.6492149?fbclid=IwAR3ao9k8toKBIBcaIerQIHQ_CLAiPIOC9-6UwrD3P1OWBIf-9WQD90Mx9Nc.
[10] "Tekst kak narkotik," interview by Tat'iana Rasskazova, *Nezavisimaia gazeta* (1991), in *"Eto prosto bukvy na bumage…": Vladimir Sorokin: Posle literatury*, eds., E. Dobrenko, I. Kalinin, and M. Lipovetsky, Moscow: NLO, 2018, p. 653.

love for the camps, for this culture…And I haven't thought of emigration…It is interesting to go there, of course, but I feed on the local collective mentality. I love the same mutants as me."[11] Another important reason for his continuous return home is the language: "for a Russian writer, it is certainly very important to remain in the language."[12]

All this, including his education and experience, his playing with official and unofficial languages, and his "double" German-Russian life fashion Sorokin-style pornography. The focus of the present chapter is Sorokin's porn version of "liquid fascism," whose parameters remain in the flexibility and fluidity of Sorokin's textual body, that is, his discursive corporeality. Corporeality is the cornerstone of Sorokin's porn as he "constantly work[s] with border zones where the body invades the text": "I enjoy the moment when literature becomes corporeal and non-literary…Tolstoy did not describe how Bolkonsky's armpits or pimples smelled, for example…but I do that. For me, the interaction of these two completely opposite forces, the text and the body, is the main problem of creativity."[13] He is known a the writer who filled Russian literature with "shit," flesh, cruelty, and sexual perversions. Sorokin overcomes the issue of literary scarcity in corporeality, which resembles the shortage of products in the Soviet Union, by filling his texts with corporeality as a fictive commodity intended for mass consumption:

Scenes of violence, sex, naturalistic physiological details, they must be there….And what is our Russian literature, a sacred cow to pray to and quietly pat?...Literature is a free animal. It should eat and shit wherever it wants. In Russian literature in general, there was very little of the body. The spirit was above the roof. When you read Dostoevsky, you cannot feel the heroes' bodies:

[11] "Vladimir Sorokin: Samoe skuchnoe – eto zdorovie pisateli."
[12] "Ia pochuvstvoval, chto seichas poidu i prosto-naprosto ub'iu ego," interview by I. Rudik, *Konkurent,* April 2, 2008, at http://www.konkurent-krsk.ru/index.php?id=1259 (last accessed June 6, 2019).
[13] Vladimir Sorokin, "Literatura ili kladbishche stiliticheskilh nakhodkov" (interview), at http://www.hi-edu.ru/e-books/xbook974/01/part-037.htm (accessed November 6, 2019).

the shape of Prince Myshkin or what kind of breast Nastasya Filippovna had. I really wanted to fill Russian literature with corporeality: the smell of sweat, muscle movement, natural functions, sperm, and shit. As Artaud said: "Where it smells of shit, it smells of life."[14]

The corporeal canvas is necessary for Sorokin to uphold his narrative struggle with the Soviet authorities and totalitarian discourse. He perpetually challenges readers' aesthetic and moral standards, for he does not tolerate taboo or puritanism in culture, and he sees literature as an arena where writers allow themselves anything they want (*Na bumage mozhno pozvolit' vse, chto ugodno*).[15] Corporeality promotes the remythologizing of socialist realism in language. It recreates Soviet discourse in the flesh through ritual extermination and resurrection. Sorokin creates Soviet bodies in order to display them inside out (his characters stuff themselves with food, vomit, urinate, defecate, ejaculate, and then spread discharge over their bodies and consume them); to bring in the darkest sides of human animalism through incest, pedophilia and cannibalism; to show how the body is killed by another human or machine (characters are disjointed, smashed, chopped, a fondue or liquid is made out of their flesh and bones); finally, to reproduce them as clones. For Sorokin this is a discursive play: "When they ask me how you can torture people like that, I reply: 'These are not people, these are just letters on a piece of paper.'"[16] Sorokin follows this path when he arrives at language(s), including archaisms, neologisms, foreignisms (Chinese Russian), obscene language and colloquialisms, by means of which he decomposes/recomposes Socialist Realist discourse.

I argue that there are many common elements in Sorokin's and Erofeev's poetics of porn that divulge ËPS's outlined program of "liquid fascism." Like Erofeev, Sorokin shows concern

[14] "Uboinoe salo: Vladimir Sorokin: 'Ia khotel napolnit' russkuiu literaturu govnom'".
[15] "Vladimir Sorokin: Samoe skuchnoe – eto zdorovie pisateli."
[16] Aleksandr Geniz, "Strashnyi son," at https://www.srkn.ru/criticism/genis.shtml (accessed November 1, 2019).

about the relation between the individual and collective consciousness; he focuses on the fluidity of the language and identity, and on the fluidity of the body, including all its movements and functions. His permeable and uncontrollable bodies, opened up to external influence, are directly opposed to the closed and impenetrable Soviet body. His narrative arises from the discursive manipulation of Soviet ideological discourse and socialist realism. His porn is grounded in the travesty of Freudian self-analysis, which displays Sorokin-the-son's revolt against Stalin-the-father's repressive culture in which the woman's body and language accommodates man's transition into the Symbolic order. What makes Sorokin's pornography specific, however, is the level of its discursive liquidation. The most important image for Sorokin is water in all its (non-) liquid hypostases. The water is filtered through the materialization of metaphors and idioms as the master-trope of his textual "carnalization," and becomes a concept.[17] I will show that Sorokin literalizes the metaphor of "liquid fascism" to manufacture his "watery" prose that rests on the paradox of extreme brutality and soft porn. Its outcome is the "hard water." Literature is "a free and powerful river," states Sorokin with regard to his work, "It flows. And flows differently. Follow its stream (*sledite za ee techeniem*)…Come into this river, feel it with your own body, become a part of it!"[18] As Erofeev requests the analysis of his water/prose, Sorokin goes even further and invites his reader to become one more body of his water. Sorokin probes the readers' endurance with his desire to outrage, shock, and disgust to the point of making them sick. To a remark that his works cause revulsion and trigger a "gag reflex" (*rvotnyi refleks*) in readers he replies: "A gag reflex does not mean something bad, it cleanses the body. Literature, like food, must be diverse. If you have pudding every day, then in the end it will also trigger your gag

[17] Lipovetsky, "Fleshing/Flashing Discourse: Sorokin's Master Trope," in *Vladimir Sorokin's Languages*, pp. 25–47.
[18] "V gostiakh u tsiklopov," *Polit.ru*, April 17, 2005, at https://polit.ru/article/2005/04/17/ciklopy/

reflex…Lagutenko[19] was right when he sang: "vodka is hard water. Literature must also be hard."[20]

Through its association with vodka, Sorokin's hard water (of 40 percent proof!)[21] is tightly linked with the Russian drinking tradition, and, symbolically, with collective (un)consciousness. In Russian culture vodka is considered a number one "medicine" for any sickness, especially digestive problems. Sorokin upsets the Russian reader's stomach, which is accustomed to digesting the naïve and kitschy socialist narrative by perversion and bodily abnormalities, only to cause a "gag reflex" that would prompt its outpouring. His hard water has a cleansing effect on the body and brain of Soviet Russia. The early Soviet "glass of water" theory of sex consumed for gratification of basic physiological needs like thirst, advocated by Kollontai, cane be said to galvanize Sorokin's soft porn. Consuming his literature, the reader is supposed to forget himself in the pleasure received from his phallic-like hard liquid. Excessive consumption of Sorokin's water, like Russian favorite alcohol, causes puking and hangovers, alters the nervous system and bodily stability, but also comes with the extreme withdrawal effect, like in delirium tremens, that is, a hallucinatory return to the horror of the past. Yet, heavy drinkers of Sorokin's water are shielded from dehydration. Sorokin is symbolically stuck in the Thaw, taken for a turning point, in generating his poetics of liquid pornography in which endless de-Stalinization ensues from his imitation of the Socialist Realist paradigm. Olga Matich states that Sorokin's novels can be defined as a "postmodern decadent parody of pornography."[22] I argue that Sorokin's pornography is parodic regarding his quest for its "liquidation" (pun

[19] Ilya Lagutenko is a vocalist and songwriter of the Russian rock band Mumiy Troll.
[20] "Uboinoe salo: Vladimir Sorokin: 'Ia khotel napolnit' russkuiu literature govnom.'"
[21] Number 40 is sorok in Russian.
[22] See Olga Matich's paper presented at the 2017 ASEEES Conference in Chicago, "Sokolov's Neo-Baroque *Palisandriia*: Alternative History and Literary Legacy" (trans. Into Russian by D Kharitonov), *Novii zhurnal* at http://newreviewinc.com/olga_matich/ (last access March 16, 2018)

intended!), which speaks of both its termination and softening. The liquid porn elucidates his predilection for melting down hardcore porn, made of steel, which generated Soviet "perverse" consciousness as the individual's struggle to reach its more sophisticated version, erotica. Sorokin frequently uses erotica to talk about sexual themes in his work, perceiving it not as a genre but rather as an "element spread all over culture, traces of which, like traces of death, can be found in everything."[23] As a result, he arrives at sots-soft porn, rooted in the narrative of the Oedipal crises.

Childhood: The Birth of Sorokin the Pornographer

Sorokin admits his prose has its roots in the traumas of his Soviet childhood: "I was rather an autistic child, who lived in a sort of two parallel worlds: the world of fantasy and the real world. All childhood experiences and traumas, including sexual ones, certainly stimulated my interest in the problem of erotica.…Sigmund Freud was right, believing that all of us come from our childhood....Writing is compensation, a bandage with which a man tries to tighten his wounds."[24] Literature is propelled through the self-governed psychoanalysis of Sorokin's personal struggle with oppressive Soviet society and the designer of the Great Terror, which like water floods over his letters on and onto his readers: "I grew up in a society where everything was oppressive, starting with parents, kindergarten, the street....There was pressure everywhere. This was a camp, in which every day they would f..k someone up, and this was [considered] normal."[25] At a conference on psycho-poetics in Munich, Sorokin gave a speech in which he expressed his gratitude to the repressive nature of Soviet society, which triggered his traumas,

[23] Quoted in Genis, "Moi Sorokin."
[24] "Uboinoe salo: Vladimir Sorokin: 'Ia khotel napolnit' russkuiu literaturu govnom.'"
[25] "Ia pochuvstvoval, chto seichas poidu i prosto-naprosto ub'iu ego."

and at the banquet afterwards he gave a toast to the Father: "I gave a toast to Stalin as the creator of the repressive mechanism, thanks to which I became a writer."[26] The Soviet man's trauma gives birth to sexual pathology, which first appears in the form of the child's erotic awakening in the symbolic order, and then thrives within it, tracking down all Freudian psychosexual stages: oral, anal, phallic, latency, and genital. This is the path of Sorokin's development as writer.

Sorokin asserts that he began writing at the age of fourteen, when he wrote his first "real erotic story" to undermine the authority of another boy who wrote erotic narratives and distributed them to school kids. His erotic story, as Sorokin claims, turned out to be a sincere literary piece which "came out so easy" that he felt ashamed to add his name to it, and instead claimed he translated it from English. "As no one noticed anything," he asserts, the tale became a hit that "very quickly dissolved in the school mass. Since then, I felt that describing reality is very easy for me."[27] This scene reveals that from very early on Sorokin showed affinity for Soviet sexuality, was against any literary authority in this type of prose and sought his authentic Soviet-style erotica. Though Sorokin does not say which English text he had in mind, the message he sends is that his prose emerges as a symbolic translation of Western sexual clichés that undergo what I call "a chemical process of dissolving" in order to be adapted for the Soviet public. Sorokin's socialist reality is epitomized in pornography's "liquidation": once it reaches the Soviet collective body or Soviet soil, hard (or solid) Western porn becomes soft (or liquid) Soviet porn.

The erotic textual bliss comes with cruelty that Sorokin also claims to be part of the childhood experience: "Cruelty as such has always interested me, since early childhood. I

[26] "Vladimir Sorokin: Samoe skuchnoe – eto zdorovie pisateli." Sorokin's characters often drink to Stalin's health (for instance, "Zeml'anka" [1985]).
[27] "Ia pochuvstvoval, chto seichas poidu i prosto-naprosto ub'iu ego."

confronted it consciously when I first went to the south with my father…I took a peach and started eating it, and at that moment I heard…that my neighbor was beating his father-in-law, the old man….When the old man asked: "Why are you beating me?", the neighbor replied: "because I want to." This combination of peaches with an invisible, but terrifying picture of violence is one of my literary themes. I have always been attracted to the polarity of cruelty and human humiliation. For me, this is flesh (*zhivoe mesto*)…human violence…that not only excites me constantly, but also stimulates my creativity.[28]

The child's trauma comes from the "stupid regular atrocities" of the Soviet regime, offered for consumption as sweet totalitarian kitsch. Torture for no reason and invisible but terrifying violence portray victims of Stalin's regime who were accused of various political crimes, and secretly executed or sent to the Gulag. Their voices hunt Sorokin's text and spark Oedipal cruelty. Horror interfering with the oral pleasure in the beauty and sweetness of the fruit, with clear sexual indications of consuming mother Russia's body, drives the son's anger. Julia Kristeva's concept of the abject as the corporal reality that manifests itself in one's traumatic experience and horror facing the collapse of the distinction between self and other helps us understand how Sorokin's abjection works in relation to his Oedipal discourse vis-à-vis Stalin's culture.[29] As Ryklin argues, Sorokin places the "high" Stalin period higher than the later dissident denial and finds power in texts and films of the Great Terror period, because "only by mastering the symbols of social realism more proficiently than its representatives, can this tradition be undermined from the inside. Going for a typical parody would be meaningless since socialist realism itself is deeply parodic."[30] The most abject in Sorokin is Stalin. To kill Stalin in

[28] "Literatura ili kladbishche stilisticheskikh nakhodok."
[29] Julia Kristeva, *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*, Translated by Leon S. Roudiez, New York: Columbia University Press, 1982.
[30] "Medium i avtor," 41.

himself, Sorokin repeats the father's terror, purging his "letters on paper" and deriving oral pleasure from this act.

Although often referred to as the "Russian de Sade,"[31] Sorokin denies being a pornographer and stresses the difference between pornographers who "aim to help the reader achieve an erection" and writers whose "task is to provide the writer with aesthetic pleasure."[32] Consequently, Sorokin claims his work is not pornographic because his goal is to pleasure himself and not to arouse the reader: "I do not write for the reader, I never take that into consideration. I write for myself, for my pleasure."[33] The individuality that he seeks in writing conveys self-eroticism. The writer alone gets fully satisfied with what he produces: "you are pleased with its form and content and let it please only you alone. I cannot tolerate all the collective affairs: movements, associations, fan clubs, football....The masses do not make culture, they devour it and digest it. Culture is made by individuals."[34] He asks the reader who is ready to dwell upon his texts not to be sexually excited: "those who read in order not to think, do not need to open my novels. They will only see books oversaturated with action, in which nothing happens."[35] He counts on readers' voyeurism of his discursive masturbatory act. For Sorokin, the process of writing "is a purely personal exercise, a kind of psychotherapy," and the text "a tranquilizer silencing a lot and letting you forget about the horror of this world."[36] The reading of his literature should be consumed likewise—a personal experience comparable to sex: "The perception of literature is a purely personal process; it is like sexual intercourse: one has it

[31] Aren Rogal, "Vladimir Sorokin. A Post-Modern Russian Writer," at https://www.srkn.ru/criticism/rogal.shtml.
[32] "Russian Satirist Sued over 'Gay Stalin'," *BBC News*, 11 July, 2002.
[33] "Literatura ili kladbishche stilisticheskikh nakhodok."
[34] "Uboinoe salo: Vladimir Sorokin: 'Ia khotel napolnit' russkuiu literature govnom.'"
[35] Ibid.
[36] Vladimir Sorokin (interview with Sergei Shapoval), *Stolitsa* 204, no. 42, October 1994, at https://ru-sorokin.livejournal.com/450427.html

this way, another that way, different kinds of emotions, and different movements."[37] Sorokin's porn is about the intercourse without arousal, it's about rape. Paradoxically, in Sorokin liquid porn demands "dry sex" with readers.

Therefore, critics, as if protecting themselves from sexual assault or admitting that they have been non-consenting participants, divide into those who can see humor in Sorokin's prose and those who take him seriously and accuse him of nonsense, cannibalism, and pornography. Dmitrii Shumanskii is one of those who characterizes Sorokin's works as total nonsense, with plots that are repetitive and make no sense: "The style of his 'texts' is a dead structure, and the result of collision of dead structures becomes in turn a total death—the death of meaning."[38] Gillespie finds a middle ground: "Sorokin can be obscene, occasionally pornographic, but he can also be extremely funny."[39] In this respect, Boris Sokolov states that if we compare the perception of Sorokin's work to sex, then the normal reading of his texts, that is, humoristic, philosophical, and aesthetic, is akin to what an ordinary consciousness perceives as "normal sex." A monstrous reading of his novels, characteristic for the majority of our society, can be compared to that which the Russian philistine…takes for sexual perversion, be that anal sex, a "golden shower," a blow job, same sex love, etc. When Russian society recovers (*vyzdoroveet*), when it becomes (if it becomes) normal, then the perception of Sorokin's texts will be normal.[40] According to this view, a "sick" society like Russia projects its own perversions onto Sorokin's absurd texts by taking them too seriously and literally. For a man with a "normal psyche and

[37] "Vladimir Sorokin: Samoe skuchnoe – eto zdorovie pisateli."
[38] "Absurd (o tvorchestve Vladimira Sorokina)," at https://srkn.ru/criticism/shamansky.shtml.
[39] David Gillespie's entry on V. Sorokin in *Reference Guide to Russian Literature*, ed. Neil Cornwell, New York: Routledge, 1998, p 780.
[40] Boris Sokolov, *Moia kniga o Vladimire Sorokine*, Moskva: AIRO, 2005, 12.

worldview," Sorokin's works, which are loaded with humor, cause a "fit of healthy laughter." (Sokolov, 26).

Youth: The Moscow Underground

As the youngest member to join the Moscow underground, Sorokin worked closely with such iconic figures of Russian conceptualism, sots-art, and postmodernism as Ilya Kabakov, Lev Rubinshtein, Eric Bulatov, Lidia Chukovskaia, Dmitrii Prigov, and Viktor Erofeev. These artists influenced Sorokin to direct his prose toward socialist aesthetics: "I very early got into the circles of smart and gifted people who were engaged in their own creativity. Plus, they had their opinion on the surrounding reality. And they opened my eyes to many things."[41] Sorokin took Soviet reality for the platform for his entry into the Russian literature and "the most worn-out clichés of socialist-realist style"[42] to make a start in his prose. Like other conceptualists, Sorokin employs the technique of appropriation, which makes the writer perform in "the role of a curator of text" or "a librarian/inventory taker" who makes his own selection of dead text-objects, as "ready-made" textual chunks from the literary past and exhausts them in his work.[43] Sorokin acts as a double, the writer that does not have his own language or style, sort of like a literary clone. He combines different genres, imitates epoch styles, and relies on ready-made textual constructions of Russian and non-Russian literary traditions. As opposed to poet-conceptualists, however, like Prigov for instance, Groys argues that Sorokin appropriates the old discursive models in his massive prose fiction, exceeding a few hundred pages, and "the traditional concept of quotation

[41] "Ia pochuvstvoval, chto seichas poidu i prosto-naprosto ub'iu ego."
[42] Evgeny Dobrenko, "Socialist Realism, a Postscriptum: Dmitrii Prigov and the Aesthetic Limits of Sots-Art," in *Endquote*, 84.
[43] Boris Groys, "Text as a Ready-Made Object," in *Endquote*.

is no longer applicable to such reconstructions of culturally codified stylistics of literary language."[44]

By decomposing the Master Plot of socialist realism, Sorokin often arrives at the trans-rational language of the Russian avant-garde, *zaum'*. A common feature of Sorokin's work is uncovering the absurdity of socialist realism; in the style of OBERIU writers of the 1920s he translates into meaningless prose abundant in robust sexual violence, sadism, mass killing, physical torture, amputation, decaying of the body, necrophilia, and cannibalism. Mark Lipovetsky notices that sots-artists did not focus on socialist realism as the object to be overthrown since they entered this discursive game in an atmosphere of full delegitimation of socialist-realist discourse as the world of absurd, and thus their attempt to speak in this language arrives at a dialogue with chaos. Sorokin, according to Lipovetsky, "repeats in every new text the *very system of device* of this dialogue with chaos" (original emphasis).[45]

Sorokin made absurd and contradictions to be the main components of his public and literary persona. Paradoxically, he presents himself as a writer of pastiche without his own style, and simultaneously treats himself as a unique literary phenomenon: "I have no style of my own," states Sorokin, "I only use different styles and literary methods staying away from them."[46] Critics and scholars do the same. His early works are compared to Erofeev's (Rutten, Gillespie), and many see Sorokin as following in Limonov's steps.[47] But when asked if he considers his contemporaries, such like Akunin, Pelevin, Bykov, or Limonov, as his competition, Sorokin

[44] Ibid., 41.
[45] Mark Lipovetsky, "Vladimir Sorokin's 'Theater of Cruelty,'" 169–170.
[46] "Tekst kak narkotik," 650.
[47] Numerous parallels between Sorokin and Limonov's works repetitively appear in interviews with Sorokin, sometimes to the point of becoming a travesty: "I want to ask you about Edward Limonov. The two of you are very much alike: two gray-haired masters, both with such Trotskyist beards, and utterly shocking…" ("Ia pochuvstvoval, chto seichas poidu i prosto-naprosto ub'iu ego. Ia khotel ubit' ego").

says: “What I do, nobody does. I have very specific prose. There is no competition at all.”[48] The critics second this: “Sorokin stands alone, he seems to be out of competition. So, no one else writes like him. His [literary] ‘glade’ belongs only to him, and if someone decides to enter this territory, it is easy to grab him by the hand and say: this is not yours, this is Sorokin, this place is already taken!”[49] What makes Sorokin so unique? While he is indeed under the influence of many artists and movements, Sorokin stands out for producing an idiosyncratic prose style of socialist realist narrative manipulation through which arises his sots-art pornography. As Groys puts it: “the combination that Sorokin creates of socialist-realist texts, sadomasochistic texts, texts of commercial entertainment literature, etc., is so unique that it makes his prose easily recognizable.”[50] Sorokin provides a list of literary influences: *Thousand and One Nights*, Boccaccio’s *Decameron*, Cervantes, Marquis de Sade, Joyce, Kafka, Hasek, Gogol, Tolstoy, Harms, and Nabokov.[51] But even more than writers, he claims, artists had greater influence on him, especially Andy Warhol, Ilya Kabakov and Erik Bulatov. Sorokin “tried in many ways to translate the ideas of pop art into literature.” Thanks to their work he realized that there was a formula: “everything in culture can be pop-arted (*pop-artirovat’ mozno vse*).”[52] This euphemism *pop-artirovat’* in Sorokin’s prose translates as “to pornographize,” to turn into liquid.

Sorokin sees socialist realism as he sees himself: a “bright” and “unique cultural phenomenon” that is “canonical, thought out, aesthetically balanced” and as such “occupies a normal place in Russian culture, like futurism or symbolism.” But its language is “completely alien to my mentality,” he states, and in his texts reminiscent of socialist realism the “explosion”

[48] “Ia pochuvstvoval, chto seichas poidu i prosto-naprosto ub’iu ego.”
[49] Pavel Basinskii, “Obyknovennyi Sorokin,” *Rossiiskaia gazeta*, no.194 (7657), September 2, 2018 at https://rg.ru/2018/09/02/vyshel-novyj-sbornik-rasskazov-vladimira-sorokina-belyj-kvadrat.html
[50] “Text as a Ready-Made Object,” 41.
[51] “Uboinoe salo: Vladimir Sorokin: ‘Ia khotel napolnit’ russkuiu literature govnom’”.
[52] “Literatura ili kladbishche stilisticheskikh nakhodok.”

produced by connecting these opposite discourse "does not cause a shock in me. On the contrary, I'm trying to find some kind of harmony between the two styles, to combine high and low."[53] Sorokin's sots-porn is the battle of two discursive Titans. He eliminates boundaries classifying the language, style, genre, or discourse as high and low. He allows Russian *mat* to become the leading discursive dominator, body/corporality to overpower literary topoi, and horror and repugnance to create the atmosphere of the Porn Master Plot. Vulgar language is important for Sorokin: "I have a very good relationship with Russian mat. Abandoning it is just the same as abandoning the exclamation mark."[54] Russian *mat* is necessary to emphasize something else behind blatantly obvious obscenity. It is a visual as well as conventional sign, like punctuation marks that helps us read the given absurd text in the right way. Sorokin "gives cursing, which is excluded from the language of socialist realism, the meaning of an absurd language,"[55] that is, it is often presented in puzzling syntax, with clusters of nonsensical made-up borrowings and unconnected sets of letters.

As much as Sorokin crosses the border of cultural taboo in literature, he still feels literature is not a field where he is completely free, but it is certainly the *space* in which he can play (*no ia mogu igrat' etim prostranstvom*): "a gigantic [space] that will disappear only with me."[56] This *space* is the stage of, what Lipovetsky terms, Sorokin's literary "theater of cruelty." Sorokin takes socialist realist clichés and merges them with pornographic explicitness staging a nightmare in which the horror of sots-porn becomes reality for the audience watching his "theater of cruelty." Analyzing Sorokin's discursive performativity, Aleksandr Geniz states that he shows us that life is a dream without reality: "We live in a dream, suffering from the fact that

[53] Ibid.
[54] "Uboinoe salo: Vladimir Sorokin: 'Ia khotel napolnit' russkuiu literature govnom'".
[55] Lipovetsky, "Vladimir Sorokin's 'Theater of Cruelty'," 180.
[56] "Vladimir Sorokin: Samoe skuchnoe – eto zdorovie pisateli."

we have nothing to wake up in. We are not given truthful reality, and the one we have is not worth saving. In this chain of syllogisms reside the source of and justification for Sorokin nightmares."[57]

The visual aspects of cinema and theater as well as the contact with the audience influence the development of Sorokin's project of staging the nightmares. These media are "necessary to lay bare his major theme by adding a visible corporeal dimension to text."[58] Sorokin says: "I simply visualize how I would shoot many of my works. When I write, the visual sequence comes in the background."[59] His "theater of cruelty," Lipovetsky notices, is based on a ritual connection with readers, "as his act of cruelty, recreated with naturalistic obviousness," that disturbs the traditional boundary between the text and reader. This communicative function of his texts lies in the "visualization" of his extremely graphic stories, his "clearly cinematographic" narratives that hunt readers' visual memory.[60] Sorokin "operates as a medium" hidden behind the text, camera, or stage; the mastermind of his discourse who needs someone else to carry it out for him.[61] Many of his texts from the 1990s were meant to be delivered by the actors of experimental theater and film.[62] This was also the case in his and Oleg Kulik's mutual project *Deep into Russia* (1990), an art installation in the form of an photo album showing various of Kulik's explicit sexual actions in the sphere of zoophilia, with the most striking image of sticking his head in the cow's vagina, accompanied by short narratives in which Sorokin "re-enacts Russian literary and linguistic styles from Turgenevian writing to *mat* and from Village

[57] "Strashnyi son."
[58] Lipovetsky "Fleshing/Flashing Discourse: Sorokin's Master Trope," 30.
[59] "Vladimir Sorokin: Samoe skuchnoe – eto zdorovie pisateli."
[60] "Vladimir Sorokin's 'Theater of Cruelty,'" 187-188.
[61] Mikhail Ryklin, "Medium i avtor: O tekstakh Vladimira Sorokina," *Eto prosto bukvy na bumage…*, 30–48.
[62] Ibid., 32.

Prose to porn."[63] Sorokin breaks taboos discursively, whereas in public, on the stage he tries to play innocent.

When it comes to his own live performance before the public, Sorokin acts as a "ventriloquist." Sorokin's performativity resides in the writer's absence, his motionless body and staged silence. As Natasha Drubek, who participated in and watched many of Sorkin's public recitals, shows, Sorokin's performativity as a ventriloquist had a few stages. In the 1980s, he let other voices of the Moscow underground read his literary work (Prigov, Sergei Anufriev and Andrei Monastyrskii). With his fame in Germany, in 1989, he started to read out loud, yet this was in fact more like whispering given the "minimization of pronounced articulation in the oral cavity and his barely opened lips," implying "the rejection of oral (un)desire to speak."[64] The flow of the non-personalized narrative was let completely free in the next phase: Sorokin would sit for three hours motionless and silent while the voice of German actor Ulrich Mühe was heard delivering his text through the loudspeaker. The language goes through a machine-transmitter of sound, like a human body in his texts, while the body of the writer is a medium of this process that serves to maintain the corporality of this transformed speech. The text is not the same any more, it changes its form; becomes a liquid that needs to be attached to the firm body. His absence speaks the of late-Soviet "culture of impersonality (*o kul'ture bezlichnosti*) as a reaction to the Stalinist personality cult" (Drubek, 157). The same effect, but in reverse, was achieved during his 1995 Berlin recital when he was reading a German translation of his story "Morphophobia" with his translator was silently sitting next to him. Sorokin acted as the

[63] Ellen Rutten, "Where Postmodern Provocation Meets Social Strategy: "Deep into Russia"" (2008), at https://www.researchgate.net/publication/242274153_WHERE_POSTMODERN_PROVOCATION_MEETS_SOCIAL_STRATEGY_DEEP_INTO_RUSSIA (last accessed June 30, 2019).
[64] Natasha Drubek, "Chrevo-veshchanie Vladimira Sorokina kak performans v negative," in *Eto prosto bukvi na bumage*, 155.

loudspeaker, as the non-native speaker of German. He changed his already translated text once again, and the body of the translator, the writer of this version of the text, mediated the discursive flow. Another time in Munich he gave a speech in Russian at a conference for a German audience, with no translation at all. Ventriloquist, Drubek writes, "is based on *pronunciatio* with dissimulation [personal form of irony], when the author shows himself through self-denial, self-concealment.…Often the ventriloquist's performance merges with the actor's play in the puppet theater: the ventriloquist speaks 'for' his dolls. Dolls of Sorokin's texts were either his colleagues or those through whom he articulated himself, his translators" (159).

This conceptualist frame, which demands no links of textuality in reality, keeps Sorokin within the limits of text more than the other three pornographers. He is more corporeal but less concrete. Yet, he finds his own way to perform and live his pornographic liquid reality in the absurdness of corporeal absence, that is, the materialization of the dialogue with chaos. It is through corporeal mass dialogue and his absence that Sorokin makes his entry onto the Russian literary scene in his first novel, *The Queue*.

***The Queue* (*Ochered'*, 1983)**

The novel is structured as a dialogue of the queuers without a narrator or a narrative plot. The collective Soviet body in the endless line is portrayed through the absurdity of waiting for unknown items, with no certainty they will be obtained but with an idée fixe on their exceptional quality. Waiting for nothing ("we have to stand here for nothing") comes together with speaking nothing.[65] Random comments, jokes, swearing, moans, yawns, shouts, and flirtatious remarks are

[65] Vladimir Sorokin, *Sobranie sochinenii v trekh tomakh*, vol. 1, Moscow: Ad Marginem, 2002, 317.

telling as much as is the lengthy list of people's names at roll-calls, akin to Homeric epic catalogues of (dead) heroes or ships, or the absolute silence presented on the numerous empty pages rendering the queuers at sleep. Sorokin asserts he is not interested in the queue as a socialist phenomenon, but as a specific "speech practice, as nonliterary polyphonic monster."[66] Therefore, the queuers' voices, roll calls, yelling, laughing, arguing, swearing and sexual groaning overpower the text. Queuing is a highly ritualized process starting with formulaic phrases, such as the novel's opening line: "Comrade, who's last in the queue?," or "How many are they giving per person?" The ritual language is accompanied by bodily rituals: standing, sitting in order, moving bench by bench and yard by yard, including a symbolic death that happens in crossing off the numbers (people) who are not present at roll call.

The goal of this ritualized waiting seems to be the trepidation and excitement of the people at the head of the line expecting to get the desired imported commodities, a sort of a sexual climax. Thus, waiting in line carries an erotic value without sexual benefits. People are standing in line, like erect penises, but they are not getting satisfied. Sorokin formulates the sexual and non-orgasmic specificity of the queue in the novel's Afterword as follows:

> Through the act of *standing* up, *standing* up for, through, in, and on lines (i.e., in all senses of the word "to stand")…people participated in a sort of a ritual.…The collective body was steadily ritualized by queues. It was through order and obedience.…At mass demonstrations, show trials, Party congresses, and soccer games, the collective body was allowed to express the *orgiastic* side of its nature…it shuddered with countless *orgasms*.

[66] "Tekst kak narkotik," 650.

> But on ordinary workdays the line awaited it. Gray and boring, but inescapable, the line dissected the body into pieces, pacified and disciplined it…(257, my emphasis)

By repeating the wordplay with the verb "to stand" (*stoiat'*), which besides its literal meaning also connotes the erect penis, Sorokin implies that queuing is a sign of masochism, since orgasm is permanently postponed or kept on *stand*by mode. If in all other collective events in the country organized and controlled by the Party, an orgasm was guaranteed, the queue would suggest a deficit of sex. Sorokin portrays this sexless society in waiting, and people openly discussing sex deficit: "I, too, haven't had a good fuck for a long time (*A ia tozhe ne ebelasia davno*," 181).

They are kept by "the monster queue," which like a serpent, a widespread symbol of sin and underground evil, represents the body of Soviet Russia that devours its people. A single queue-body keeps many bodies of Soviet citizens and talking penis-heads together in a nightmare of pointless *standing*. For Sorokin the queue is the Soviet phenomenon that appears together with the victory of the collective body. The queue is a "fantastic, many headed monster, the hallmark of socialism," claims Sorokin, or "the monstrous Leviathan who wounds entire cities in its motley coils."[67] Tracking the development of the queuing tradition in prerevolutionary and early Soviet Russia, Sorokin concludes that all was a rehearsal for the Line of all Lines, the biggest line ever formed in 1953 after Stalin's death, when the collective Soviet body stood for days in the endless line saying farewell to the People's Father. The people stood there before Stalin's displayed body "and, having made a traditional sacrifice to the deceased leader, dissolved into obedient molecules" (Afterword, 258). Sorokin creates his queue to compete with the father. The line is assigned liquid quality and it represents a stagnant water that

[67] Vladimir Sorokin's Afterword, transl. Jamey Gambrell, in *The Queue*, transl. Sally Laird, New York: New York Review Book, 2008, p. 254.

does not flow, that became de facto the hallmark of the stagnation under Brezhnev during the 1970s, which Sorokin's novel describes. People are just "obedient molecules," standing still in the water-line, repeating: "We haven't moved a bit" (319), "we are not moving at all" (325), "why are we moving backward? (322), "here we are, right back where we were before" (333). People as water molecules are stuck in water's stillness, like the erect penises figuratively joined inside Soviet Russia's vagina-stagnant-water, with no movements and no ejaculatory flow. The metaphor of stagnant water that I use here speaks to Sorokin's hard-water-liquidation play if we take into account its Russian language equivalent *stoiachaia voda*, literally, standing water. The queue is a street-woman-water. Queuing evokes the immorality of consuming the female body of a prostitute that Tolstoy describes in his last work, *Resurrection*, as follows: "The street-woman (*ulichnaia zhenshchina*) is the stinking, dirty water that is offered to everyone with a thirst stronger than his disgust."[68] The female salespersons with the power of manipulating the queue order play the role of social pimps. They work in the shadow as a voice of the regime that is to be heard at rollcall but not really seen, something like the common Soviet line *Govorit Moskva!* (Moscow is speaking), broadcast on the radio or through loudspeakers. "–Where is our woman? –Can't see. –Move in closer… –What a cock-up…What's the point of standing up at all?! –Not moving a pin-dick (*ni khrena ne dvigaemsia*) (407), wonder Sorokin's queuers.

They arrange the clients for their prostitute so that each initial number gets their name at rollcall (and Sorokin makes a long catalogue of Jewish, Russian, Ukrainian, and other names), to which they reply "It's me" (*ia*). Anyone who does not answer or who leaves the queue undergoes a ritual murder and gets crossed out. Many people leaving the line sell their names to someone else, however, which shows that personal identity, too, is for sale. Soviet identity becomes an

[68] Lev Nikolaevich Tolstoy, *Voskresenie*, Moskva: Kniga po Trebovaniiu, 2011, 303.

item on the market: "the price of a name in the first hundred is fifteen rubbles" (173). Prostituting Soviet identity means being rescued by becoming a ghost. I argue that the rollcall lists in *The Queue* replicate Stalin's persecution lists in which Sorokin gives a voice to the dead. Those who had disappeared in Stalin's purges now have the opportunity to be heard. By selling their names to others, they escape the death list as their names are not crossed out and someone else in the line speaks for their *ia*. Like Limonov, Sorokin finds the way to voice out his *ia* or "It's me" through his double, the collective consciousness, which functions as Russian memory and mourning of the unburied dead that Etkind scrutinizes in his book *Warped Mourning*. It is already in *The Queue* that Sorokin, who according to Etkind enters the realm of magic historicism, brings in the third element of Russian cultural memory, ghostware.[69] Ghosts, dolls, and clones are the simulacra that carry the memory of the dead and will reemerge in his later works (*4*, *Blue Lard*, *Telluria*).

The reader observes how the queuers-doubles (don't) move in line, or eat, laugh, argue, urinate, and sleep. The most significant element of this erotic public ritual, sex, happens outside of the queue in private. Queuing rituals function as a set of oral sex games intended to make foreplay effective and lead a man and a woman to bed. A young man named Vadim Alekseev, the main protagonist whose behavior is infused with eroticism, serves Sorokin to illuminate how sex works on the level of a single molecule. Vadim meets the young girl Lena in the queue, with whom he plays a verbal erotic game in open flirting. But soon he learns that she "betrays" him by disappearing from the queue with a writer. Lena's love affair with the writer begins with remarks that she uncannily resembles someone, her double who is the writer's ex: "–…but you

[69] Alexander Etkind, *Warped Mourning: Stories of the Undead in the Land of the Unburied*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2013.

are very, just very similar to my first girlfriend. –I really look like her? –Exactly. When you sat down, I even got scared. –Well, what's scary? –It's not scary, but just an element of surprise.… –What was the name of your girlfriend? –Lena. –I am also Lena. Wow. –I'm telling you that this is not an accident. She probably died to incarnate in you" (396). The writer takes Lena-the ghost and the double from the queue to a "more pleasant place," to the literary father Pushkin. The writer invites Lena to meet him at 12 o'clock at the entrance to the Pushkin museum to see the Munch exhibition (*shodim v Pushkinskii. Tam seichas Munk*," 397). By omitting the noun museum and leaving the adjective "Pushkinskii" to stand as a "big" phallic signifier without it's signified, Sorokin castrates Pushkin and his language. In the act of mutilation, the language becomes feminized and penetrated by the author of the *Scream*. This is the scream of the dead victims. Lena's and the writer's escape from the Soviet queue is like a scary fairy tale adventure that unambiguously evokes Limonov's exile story that starts with his own Lena-the-ghost at the Pushkin. The writer claims he is standing in queue to get to know the crowd, but as soon as he finds the woman, he takes her away from it. This is their symbolic exile. Water in the form of rain begins to fall, and gets Vadim out of the queue. He finds erotic gratification in his liquid exile.

The only flow that temporarily puts queuing on hold is a sudden downpour that makes people wet, and moves the story to a real corporal dialogue; sex that begins on the street but ends in the bed. Hiding from the rain, Vadim accidentally meets Liudmila Konstantinovna: "–Goodness. You are shining all over…where did you get so soaked? –Right here. I am in the queue….Are you in the queue too? –No, I live here…I just came out to have a smoke. And found a water-spirit (*vodanoi*) here. –Is that what I look like? –Exactly" (464). Like Lena's, Vadim's erotic encounter starts with the recognition of him as a double. The rainstorm turns Vadim into

the *vodanoi*, the water spirit residing in deep water that acts as an evil force. The mythological *vodanoi* doesn't have his own "style", like Sorokin, and imitates the sounds that people or animals make to lure and drown them. Vadim's victim is Liudmila, who offers him shelter from the rain, food, drinks, bathing, dry clothes, and endless sex.

Their sexual game symptomatically begins in water where Vadim feels at home. As Liudmila washes him like a child in the bathtub, Vadim, to her surprise, gets aroused: "–Oooh, what I see here! Someone third appeared. –Let's do it, darling… –Three of them stood on the bridge: he, she and his…" (484). Liudmila's comment implies that the "three of them" stand somewhere else but the queue, as if replicating the writer, Lena, and Pushkin. The isolated possessive "his" without a noun referring to Vadim's erect penis function like "Pushkinskii." Sex takes place in the bathtub. Vadim comes fast as he feels exhausted from queuing and wants to stay in the water: "–Let's turn off the light and fall asleep? –In the water? –Yeah… –No way. We will soak up everything. Your little gun will come off. –Ha, ha, ha… –I didn't drown you? –Not yet… –I have a spacious bath (*prostornaia u menia vanna*). –You bet… –So quickly? –Aaaah… –Well yes, you were standing all that time in the queue…poor thing… –And now I will dissolve in this water (488–89). As a water molecule, Vadim is dissolving in the sexual bath, but the memories of the Soviet "damned queue" (*ochered' etu pakostnuiu*) haunt him. Liudmila helps him overcome the trauma with endless sex. But besides playing the helper, Liudmila is also the villain who threatens him with drowning. The first thing Vadim remembers when he awakes is the queue and the roll call. His illusion of exile ends when he learns that Liudmila works as a Moscow store manager and that they are not selling anything that day, but still letting people stand in line. Vadim slept with the main pimp, but he is now privileged to get "real American" items. Liudmila is again the helper who would lead him to commodity orgasm without standing

in line: “Go to sleep. And the day after tomorrow I will take you to the depot and you will get to choose whatever you want…” (499).

Lipovetsky reads the queuing as an act of initiation for Vadim, which is complicated by the appearance of the woman acting as a “sorceress,” since his “search is at the same time subject to the logic of ritual and devalues the ritual order of the line: he stands in line in order to get something without standing in line.”[70] Sex here sustains “a parodic victory over the fetish of deficit” (Sokolov, 22). Luidmila epitomizes Soviet Russia’s vaginal stagnant water that devours people in her “spacious bath.” The scary fairy tale of queuing continues in the Soviet simulacrum. Vadim and Liudmila’s episode echoes the battle of Titans: *vodanoi* vs. Stalin. Some queuers, exhausted by nonsensical waiting express nostalgia for Stalin’s time of law and order, when “people had a conscience, they really worked” and exceeded the norms (98–99). With the idea of norms and production Sorokin links oral and anal stages.

The Norm

From this primitive collective orality in *The Queue,* Sorokin takes the reader to the anal stage, in which oral gratification does not cease but is incorporated as a supplement for sexual pleasure in the act of collective defecating. The characters’ release and experience libidinal energy of the discourse through the mouth. The erogenous zone of the collective queuing body is stimulated by speech throughout *The Queue* that ends in the real sexual act. In this stage, starting with his novel *The Norm* (*Norma,* 1979–1984) and short stories, consuming food and feces becomes a socialist norm, a double oral-anal satisfaction, and sex is carried out in characters’

[70] “Vladimir Sorokin’s ‘Theater of Cruelty’,” 186.

exchange of bodily discharge. The experience of living in canalization enhances the bodies that need to endure the ecological catastrophe that socialist realist mythmaking left behind.

In *The Norm,* Sorokin makes the norm a daily portion of feces given to everyone belonging to Soviet society. In this novel, Sorokin's writing reflects a linguistic chaos and absurdity of socialist realism, and it is impossible to jolt down a fabula other than as a meaningless passing of the norm from one character or group to another. The norm, as the reader soon learns, is a fecal matter collectively produced by Soviet kindergarten children. The norm stands for Soviet ideology that is carefully packed (urine in buckets and feces in canisters) and comes with instructions on how to consume it: the most important is not to smell it, but swallow it quickly, because "it has an unusual taste; swallow it like a medicine."[71] Sorokin gives his norm to cure the sick Soviet society. The entire second part of the novel is a catalogue of random things characterized as "normal" (*normal'nyi*) that starts with normal "childbirth (*rody*), boy, scream, breathing," and followed by all kinds of banal objects, foods, names, cities, etc. representing everyday life, and ends with a "normal death" (95–134). This catalogue portrays one's entire life in the Soviet world that is marked as "normal," an obvious wordplay with which Sorokin smears the soviet life with "shit." Sorokin does not keep a mystery about the play upon words. Instead, he gives his two characters, representatives of the Soviet regime, Mokin and Mikhalych, a chance to unpack it further: "–He does not understand how we play on words (*kak my kalamburim*). –How we play with shit (*кak kalom burim*)…" (185).

Mokin and Mikhalych appear in the story "Padezh" (The Cattle Plague) in *The Norm* to destroy the ideal model (*maketa*) of the village that the local secretary Tishchenko diligently

[71] Vladimir Sorokin, *Sobranie sochinenii v trekh tomakh*, vol. 1, 52–53.

constructs. His simulacrum model in which a perfect order reigns consists only of two words inscribed to mark the glass river: "REKA SOSH'" (171). Aside from his utopian model, the socialist reality is infected by a cattle plague symbolically spreading at the collective farm in the village. Mokin and Mikhalych apply their discursive game to torture the creator of this new order in which water, the river, takes the central place in language. During their interrogation process they torture him to tell the difference between *padëzh* and *padezh*: *padëzh*—"this is when the cattle is dying," answers Tishchenko, and *padezh*—"this is in grammar, nominative, dative." "We still need to get to the dative," replies Kedrin (170). Playing with meaning of the dative case that implies action directed to the subject, Kedrin announces that they will give him what he deserves, that is, kill him. The executor is Kedrin himself, who takes the gasoline kept in a canister labeled "WATER" (199) that was used to water the sick cattle at the farm, and lights it up and then splashes it over the victim. This ritual murder of Tishchenko, like a performance in the theater, takes place before the mass gathered to watch it, prompted by a dialogue between the executioner Kedrin and the audience:

> –What does it say on the container? –Waaaater! –Does water burn? –Noooo! –Who was given water from this container? –Caaaattle! –These cattle, are they shitty and bloated? –Yeees! –Does water burn? –Noooo! –Is this one shitty? –the secretary pointed to Tishchenko. –Yeeees! –Bloated? –Yeees!... –So, who is he? –Caaaattle. –And what does it say on the container? –Waaaater!... –Well, does water, does this water burn, I am asking you?!... –Noooo! –Who was given water from this container? –Caaaattle! –So, this one? –Yeees! –Shall I give it some water? –Yeeees!... –Now or tomorrow?... –Now! - the crowd roared… –Yes? –Yeees! (200–2).

Once Kedrin wets him with burning gasoline, Tishchenko finds himself in a cloud of flame that eats him up. This is a flame of passion arising from the fight between the socialist and Sorokin's discourses. Sorokin's water signifies what is more dangerous than obscenity: Soviet liquid fascism. The secretary's death is dated 1948, when Stalin's discursive manipulation of the "brainless" mass was staged in media, especially films retelling stories about his victory over Hitler. Tishchenko, like Hitler, is washed out to death by the burning gasoline. Bulgakov's "manuscripts don't burn" phrase becomes a refrain in this scene with reference to Sorokin's plan to let his liquid fascism flow through Russian literature like Tishchenko's river. The reader is also caught in this discursive flame of passion lit by the sadist, as repetition of the very same questions makes the reader involuntarily join the mass approval of the crowd.

The "EPS' Teaching" of liquid fascism is institutionalized in *The Norm*, appearing as Sorokin's utopian model of "The University on the Water," at which classes in politics (*politucheba*) take place on a powerful cruiser, where they prepare "talented staff (*kadry*) for future campaigns and victories" (287). When there is no oxygen left, that is, no discursive sexual energy for EPS, they return to the smelly body of Russia, fabricated in their lab of ideas and ideals of Stalin's era. In *The Norm* Sorokin portrays what the crew (*ekipazh*) of the atomic submarine does when they hear the warning "Attention! No Oxygen!": "we breathe by our Motherland," everyone brings a map of their oblast' and breathe it in (290). Jean Baudrillard argues that in the idea of postmodern hyperrealism, there is no longer distinction between reality and simulacrum through which the real is ritually reinforced through its own deconstruction. He draws an analogy when a map is created to show that a simulation is no longer that of territory that the map as its double or mirror displays, but the "generation by models of a real without origin or reality: a hyperreal. The territory no longer precedes the map, nor survives it.

Henceforth, it is the map that precedes the territory: PRECESSION OF SIMULACRA. It is the map that engenders the territory, and if we were to revive the fable today, it would be the territory whose shreds are slowly rotting across the map."[72] Relying on this idea Michael Epstein writes: "Anyone who looks at a map of the former Soviet Union today will agree that such a huge country had to arise initially on the map before it could exist in reality. No one knows what this country meant in reality or if it truly existed. It is only on a map that the Soviet Union seemed a finite and governable territory."[73] If Stalin's Russia does not physically exist anymore, Sorokin uses the map to show it as hyperreal, so that even its territory representing the body smeared with excrements smells of the socialist myth that people still inhale. This is Sorokin's postmodern version of Proustian memories from his childhood triggered by the smell of his favorite sweets. By smelling the map, the crew consumes Russia like the female body. In his screenplay The Origins and the Meaning of Russian Postmodernism, "Moscow," Sorokin portrays a man penetrating a woman through a hole on a geographical map in place of Moscow and shows how the map, and thus the country, rots in pornographic imagery. The center, the heart of the country is made an empty space, zero, O! The EPS submarine crew is inside Sorokin's vodka-hard water, and by penetrating Moscow they metaphorically produce Russian "Stolichnaia" vodka, the vodka of the capital city. It says "water" on it, but what is inside is socialist "shit" that does burn.

Sorokin's "University on the Water" mirrors the Soviet school and teachers of ideology. The teacher-student relationship is one of the main chains in transporting the norm. Sorokin is not interested in socialist "didacticism but in the transgressive potentials of speech."[74] In his

[72] Jean Baudrillard, "The Precession of Simulacra," in *Simulations*, New York: Semiotext(e), 1983, 1-79: 2.
[73] Michael Epstein, "The Origins and the Meaning of Russian Postmodernism," Emory University, 1993, p. 9, at https://www.ucis.pitt.edu/nceeer/1993-807-21-2-Epstein.pdf (last accessed June 30, 2019).
[74] Ryklin, "Medium i avtor," 32, 34.

story, “Sergei Andreevich,” student Misha Sokolov devours his teacher’s feces in the same way he consumes the teacher’s banal lesson on astronomy, given to the high school graduates. After the class the teacher takes Sokolov to the forest, the main “source of oxygen,” to get some water from the river. This is like drinking “life-giving water from a prohibited well,” claims the teacher, and “after you drink this water the soul becomes cleaner.”[75] After he shows Sokolov the holy, prohibited water, the teacher departs, leaving his student “a present.” Attracted by its smell Sokolov consumes the teacher’s feces: “There was a small pile of shit in the grass…Sokolov brought his face closer to it. There was a strong smell of shit. He took one of the little sausage-like pieces that were stuck together. It was warm and soft. He kissed it and began to eat it fast, greedily biting off, smearing his lips and fingers…” (512). After this high-calorie “meal” Sokolov insatiably drinks water: “the black bottomless water swung around his face, the moon and the inverted constellations swung with it…looking how the vertical stick of Serpens constellation fractionizes and splits into glares” (513). The universe breaks into pieces at the ritualistic flushing of the sots-discourse. The black water, together with the feces, which are in and on the body, brings an apocalyptic “black” cleansing of liquid fascism.

The excremental theme is superimposed on socialist realist narrative, because, as Ryklin puts it, Sorokin “is conscious of himself being a sewer pipe through which fecal masses of the collective unconscious are pumped through.”[76] Feces can be used as fertilizer that improves the soil’s quality, thus by smearing the entire Soviet state with feces Sorokin promotes its fertility. Defecating, urinating, and ejaculating into the soil has thus the same effect. In the story “A Road Accident” (*Dorozhnoe proisshestvie*) Sorokin intensifies the Soviet stench by attaching his list of

[75] In the collection of short stories, *Pervyi subbotnik, Sobranie cochinenii*, vol. 1, 511.
[76] “Medium i avtor,” 32.

odors to Nabokov's: "It smells of tobacco, garlic, and a man (V. Nabokov), of a shithead, pussy, and dick (*govniukom, pizdiukom, mudakom*) (V. Sorokin)."[77] The suffocating odor of sulfur dioxide (SO2) and of burned manuscripts is neutralized by his "H2O." The teacher in this story, Nina Nikolaevna, teaches the students: "Nothing smells anymore…sulfur oxide does not have odor. H2S + O2 = SO2 + H2O" (688). The human body/word creates the rotten-egg-smell of hydrogen sulfide (H2S), the gas that is often to be found in sewers and swamps in the absence of oxygen (O), or during the digestion that Sorokin induces by continuously stuffing his characters with food and excrements. The new student, Solov'ev, is asked to write an equation for the reactions that produce hydrogen sulfide, and as he does not know it the teacher asks him to meet her after class. She takes him to the Reactive room (*REAKTIVNAIA*) where he learns about hydrolyses,[78] and then shows him a box filled with soil (*zemlia*): "Here ..." said Nina Nikolaevna, carefully looking at the even brown field, "all of this my husband..." (691). She puts both her legs in the soil and, taking off her panties, sits and urinates on it. The teacher performs sexual intercourse with her ideological husband Stalin by combining her urine with his feces. The Reaktivnaia is another version of the forest, in which the "brown field," that is, the Russian land, is filled with feces disseminated by the socialist "god." Sorokin perverts the sexual ritual *hieros gamos,* showing the god Stalin and the goddess, his socialist teacher, united in their bodily liquids.

"Silence is ruled by anal love" (694), writes Sorokin, to divert the story to the autobiographical episode from his childhood in Bykovo associated with the fecal sludge (IAMA), the main drain of the canalization system: "under the ground, under our happy

[77] In *Pervyi subbotnik, Sobranie sochinenii,* vol. 1, 688.
[78] The process in which a water molecule breaks the bonds of other chemical constituting parts.

childhood there were pipes" (694). A boy of age five is sitting next to the pit filled up "to its throat" with fecal matter, observing how the septic tank is being emptied by the sanitary services for de-sludging. This site is the most attractive to him, and the pit is like his personal playground. He does not play with other kids and spends all his time here, despite the adults' attempts to scare him off by saying that the pit once devoured a boy (694–95). After the episode from Sorokin's childhood,[79] the narrator moves to a Freudian interpretation of the boy's behavior:

> It is well known that in the pre-puberty period the child's main erotic experience is linked to defecating, and this is where children's interest for feces, as a source of pleasure, comes from. Children curiously observe their feces and talk about it. And often try it with their tongue. In this particular case, the pit-depositary of dirt aroused the child as a place of accumulation of many organs of pleasure. On the other hand, the scary stories about the boy who had drawn in the pit, caused unconscious fear in the child…. Being under the influence of the two opposing forces, Eros and Thanatos, the child was facing a challenge: to follow the former and get rid of the latter (695).

Feces, as sex drive stimulator, is for consumption through the language/tongue. Being permanently at the edge of the pit Sorokin communicates with those who had sunk deeply in it. In his other works, Sorokin shows that children carry over the fecal fixation from their parents into their lives through a parody of Soviet patriotism that produced a generation of historical victims. The story "Obelisk," in which the full form of Sorokian absurd plotless style was conceived (Sokolov, 23), Sorokin explains in details the process of "shit" trespassing in children's lives. The daughter of Soviet war hero, Marusia, visits her father's grave with her

[79] "Vladimir Sorokin: Samyi zamechatel'nyi chitatel'- eto, konechno, v Rosii," *Podmoskov'e*, January 28, 1995, in Sokolov, Moia kniga, 68-69.

mother and tells the most vividly described story of how she makes use of feces according to his testament (*po zavetu*):

> Dad, my dear, every month I take your potty, as you requested…And then we, then every time when my dear mom is about to poop, I…I wash her ass over the basin and then I properly suck from her ass, I suck letting it out to the potty…Then when the potty is full I leave it on your roof bench under the sun so that flies settle there and worms develop…Then when the uice of shit separates towards the evening, I undress myself and kneel before your photo and from your forbidden mug I drink the juice of shit of my dear mom, and the mom beats me on my back with your stick (*palkoi tvoei*)…I drank, drink and will drink, as you said, my dear.[80]

Marusia is thankful to her father for his sadomasochistic incestuous upbringing that is based on letting the fecal matter orally satisfy her: "thank you for feeding me with your shit when I was six and for giving me to drink the juice of your shit, for beating me with your holy stick, for teaching me to suck from mother's asshole, for having sewed me forever" (682). Marusia finally gives him a long catalogue of everything that she has become ("I know, my daddy, that I am a pissing swine…I know I am a filthy bitch…", etc.), which her mother confirms by repeating all the daughter said about herself. The mother then takes a piece of lard (*salo*) to clean the star on the gravestone, repeating like in a magic ritual: "and everything as it was, and everything as is, and everything as it will be" (683). She makes the communist symbol dirty with lard to fit the ideological narrative. Soviet patriotism revolves around "oral-anal incest between daughter and mother"[81] that is a continuation of the same incest between father-hero and

[80] In *Pervyi subbotnik, Sobranie sochineii*, vol. 1, 680–81.
[81] Igor Smirnov's comment quoted in Sokolov, 115.

daughter. This "native shit (*rodnoe govno*) is a necessary component of quasi-ritual, designed to expose the schizoid disorder of Soviet-Russian reality" (Sokolov, 23). Sokolov claims that this story appeared as Sorokin's reaction to the event that happened, when teenagers drew a swastika on the monument to WWII heroes and were sentenced to 3–4 years of imprisonment. (Sokolov, 23). Sorokin's commentary here is that Stalinist socialist teaching perverted Lenin's famous quote "Learn, Learn, Learn," resulting in porno fascism that is passed on to children.

A further example of this trend is "A Free Lesson," another story in which a teacher-student relationship is controlled by the exchange of knowledge that concerns corporeal sexual secrets. The teacher Zinaida Mikhailovna invites a twelve-year-old student, Chernyshev, to her office to penalize him for his sexual curiosity in trying to see what is hidden beneath girls' skirts. Her punishment turns into a sadistic porn game in which Zinaida forces Chernyshev to look at her vagina, and when he begins to cry she intimidates him further: "Well, what are you, a girl?...Shame on you!...You wanted this yourself."[82] Zinaida opens her vagina wide and takes his hand, teaching him how to touch her front and from behind: "…there is a hole there…find it with your finger…no, lower…Right there, you found it…no…stimulate there longer….Feel it with one hand from behind, and with another at front…there you go…" (630). She also masturbates him and tells him that his member is still too small to be in the vagina: "it's still early for you to enter the hole" (Ibid.) This remains their secret, and before Lenin's portrait she requests from Chernyshev to swear "chestnoe partiinoe" to keep it. Soviet teaching is a secret pornography, and Sorokin replicates this model.

[82] In *Pervyi subbotnik*, *Sobranie sochineii*, vol. 1, 627.

Sorokin's water propels the "shit" of the past to the surface of not so much a different present, and together with it the memory of Soviet horror, camps, dead bodies of history, famine, and sacrifice. Coprophagia comes with libidinal energy and operates as food consumption because for Sorokin food is like erotica, eating and sex are complementary: "Food is almost erotica. In Orthodox Christianity, there's a sin called 'madness of the throat.' It's not gluttony (one of the seven deadly sins), but explicitly taking pleasure in food. So I sin in that."[83] His literary models are three French writers who extensively wrote about food and sex: Rabelais, de Sade, and Balzac. If for them the low physical sphere is connected with the high intellectual and emotional sphere, Sorokin asserts, for Russians food and sex are not tolerable in the literature of high ideas, and is still considered an absolute taboo: "It interested me to move into that realm, which hadn't yet been depicted, alongside other realms, such as violence."[84] Food and violence together lead to cannibalism, another form of sexual body consumption.

In the story "Russian Eater Day" (*Den' russkogo edoka*), Sorokin speaks through his character, the actress Larisa Ivanova, who replicates his public performance, showing up on the stage with "a silent chest voice and a beat of Akhmatova-Tsvetaeva":

> Food, like love, gives us fullness of being. Food links the past with the future. Food unfolds the present for us daily. Food helps us understand ourselves…and other people. Food, like Eros, is pure in its nature. Food enters us in the form of beautiful dishes and fresh products, and leaves our body as a sticky, terracotta Leviathan, ancient like stars and powerful like attraction between atoms. People! Love that terrible monster, don't be ashamed of his roar because in it is the music of the centuries.[85]

[83] "This Controversial Russian Novelist, Accused of Promoting Cannibalism and Pornography, Is a Literary Star."
[84] Ibid.
[85] In the collection of short stories *Pir*, *Sobranie sochinenii*, tom 3, p. 413.

Eating is like being in dialogue with the people through which Sorokin-the-vodianoi, like Vadim, meets his double, Leviathan, who is rising as a canalization monster. Oral activity with food is equally representative of this process as is the anal, discharging process. In this regard, the bodily inside-outside game conveys sex that happens through intake of the Soviet *norm,* its digestion, and ejaculation of the same oral myth. Food consumption brings the bright future and the power of the monster whose body is served as the norm. The transformation from the *vodianoi* of the sea, to oral-anal Leviathan, marks the trajectory from Slavic mythology to Jewish belief. In the Talmud's third tractate, Baba Bathra 75a, it is mentioned that "God will in time to come make a banquet for the righteous in which the flesh of Leviathan will be served.…And he prepared for them a great banquet and they ate and drank….The rest of Leviathan is to be sold on the markets in Jerusalem."[86] Not surprisingly Sorokin titles the story preceding this one "A Banquet," in which he gives a list of meals that are served, from cold and warm starters to soups and desserts. Sorokin serves his literary Leviathan as a meal to readers, the "shit eaters," like his characters. His toast to Stalin at the banquet in Munich certainly mirrors this.

Sorokin always insists that he distinguishes between art and life, and when he talks about literature as a mirror, but this "does not mean that it ought to reflect life. This can be a mirror in the room of laughter that brings so much pleasure to people."[87] His literature is a mirror of the Soviet simulacra that brings about the humor of demythologizing. In "Зepkalo," whose title suggestive of Lacan's mirror stage overlapping with an anal phase and resulting in a "shit-mirror," in which the West and the East merge in combination of Latin and Cyrillic letters, Sorokin prepares another banquet at which readers have the opportunity to eat him. In this

[86] Available at http://www.come-and-ear.com/babababathra/babababathra_75.html (last accessed June 28, 2019).
[87] "Zhizn' – eto… teatar absurda…V Rossii materiala dlia literatury vsegda bylo polno…", *Podmoskov'e*, November 28, 1988. Quoted in Sokolov, 101–10, here 105.

gastronomic story, he invites readers to look themselves in the shit-mirror while satisfying their basic urge to eat, providing for them a list of menus and needs (*pozyv*). The last menu he offers is a call to readers to consume Sorokin-the-Leviathan's pornographized body:

18.5.2000.

1. salat iz moego penisa.

Moi testikuly v sobstvenom soku.

Moi rebra na grille.

Napitki: moia mocha.[88]

The parody of the God's body, offered to his believers is the anticipation of porn godhood, that he marks as *"predbozhestvennost'*: "Next day I will become God." And the next menu dated 19.5.2000. becomes a graphic play on almost a page and a half with only two words: ROT+ANUS. (509) This verbal duet I read as the absurd song of three possible meanings: Russian version: mouth+anus; English version: rot/decay+anus; and German version: red+anus. The anal component is fixed and the first is a floating signifier of oral-anal, purely anal, and finally Soviet-infected red body. Sorokin has the status of the best Russian writer-cook.

Cooking and food consumption are connected with prohibition and criminal prosecution in *"Shchi*, where the cooks who prepare meat and fish become convicts in the ecological order run by the eco-swine (*ecoshvainy*). These "cooks in law" have gastronomic names characteristic for Soviet cuisine: Borsch Moscow, Tsars Ear, Rassolnik, Lamb Cutlet from St. Petersburg, Lynx-on-Spit,[89] and their knowledge of old, forbidden culinary recipes is considered a threat.[90]

[88] "Salad made out of my penis / my testicles in their own juice / my ribs on the grill / Drinks: my urine." In *Pir, Sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 3, 508.
[89] Borshch Moskovskii, Tsarskaia Ukha, Rassol'nik, Baran'ia Kotleta iz Pitera, Rys'-na-Vertele.
[90] Vladimir Sorokin, *Kapital: Polnoe sobranie p'es*, Moscow: Zakharov, 2007.

At the conditions of "a severe shortage of real prohibitions," Sorokin "introduces a virtual prohibition" because his discourse "cannot function outside prohibition," and he requires prohibition in order to overcome it.[91] Cooking is intercourse, old recipes are Russian *mat*, and consuming is porn. The radical portrayal of cannibalism belongs to this taboo breaking as taking another body orally into the self. The most unsettling examples are the story "Nastia," where a girl is cooked in the oven on her 16th birthday by her parents and served to the guests, and his play "Dumplings" (*Pel'meni*), where a woman is served a huge dumpling stuffed with head of "the father."

Marina's Thirtieth Love (*Tridtsataia luibov' Mariny*, 1983–1984)

Marina' Thirtieth Love (henceforth *Marina*) is the classic example of Sorokian sots-art style, in which a socialist realist production novel and the main character of Marina's spontaneity-consciousness path form a porn Master Plot. I argue that this novel has the same transitory place in Sorokin's oeuvre as *Russian Beauty* in Erofeev's. The similarities between the two protagonists, Marina and Irina, have been examined by scholars. Ellen Rutten writes that like Erofeev's prostitute Irina, Marina, as a sexually loose woman is closely linked to feminized "wild Russia," and therefore both heroines deserve the label "Russian Beauty."[92] David Gillespie notes that for both Irina and Marina, "the body is a text on which, in which, the destiny of Russia is decided in parodic terms."[93] By hunting the identity of a hypersexual woman who identifies herself with "the body of Russia," Sorokin penetrates deep into Russia and prompts its "flooding." The female character is chosen as the body through which Sorokin-vodanoi speaks.

[91] Ryklin, "Medium i avtor," 48.
[92] *Unattainable Bride Russia: Gendering Nation, State, and Intelligentsia in Russian Intellectual Culture*, Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2010, 165.
[93] "Sex and Sorokin: Erotica or Pornography?," 55, quoted in Rutten, *Unattainable Bride Russia*.

Marina is an aquatic protagonist par excellence, as her name originates from the Latin *mare, marinus*, "sea" or "of the sea," and thus she acts as Sorokin's double.

The time of the story is 1983, the post-Stalinist period that is counted by the years of Marina's existence: "Stalin died, and Marina was born."[94] Marina is a piano teacher who works in *Dom Kul'tury* and gives piano lessons to workers' children. Aside from that, she is not a good Soviet citizen. Marina's reality is overwhelmed by dreams, she is also part of a dissident group and a lesbian. This is a book about Marina's "sexual history," which opens with a sex act showing Marina orally satisfying feminized Valentin whose bathrobe smells of feces: "she took his huge penis with her hand, hunting with her lips his vinous head" and as "his thick sperm pushed through her mouth" she thirstily swallowed" that "tasty liquid (*zhidkost'*," 1314). The man here is introduced to reinforce the "glass of water"—like loveless relations and the beginning of her oral (ex)change necessary for her sots-transformation, and to inform the reader that Marina never had an orgasm with a man. The post-Stalin period is a time of female homosexuality. Each year of her post-Stalinist Soviet existence is assigned to one of her female lovers, twenty-nine in total, with whom she regularly reached climax. The jubilee thirtieth love, as a symbolic birthday, is left for a man who is Marina's helper on her way from instincts to consciousness. He leads her for the first time to orgasm and more importantly her love for the people.

In a way, Marina-the-Russian Beauty is a prostitute, too, since she sleeps with both dissidents and the party leader. Sorkin describes his choice of the female protagonist as such: "The woman in the Soviet cell was the most de-ideologized link; she was under the influence of two mutually-destroying forces: nature, going through the vagina, and ideology, with which they

[94] *Sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 2, 28.

strived to fill the head up. These forces could not find a consensus: either it is necessary to stitch up the vagina, or to cut off the head."[95] Sex for Marina is not satisfaction, but the means for exchanging fluids of both worlds within her own body. To let Marina sexually and ideologically experience the male body and socialist language for the first time, Sorokin blurs the boundary between dreams and reality and in the merging line of these interconnected worlds creates a huge multifaceted, double-gendered copulative body and heteroglossia. Marina herself is sleepy, and tells Riumentsov: "Let's do it quickly, I feel like sleeping," and sex with him begins in the state of "not completely disrupted dream" (171). Sex appears as the Soviet norm, something that needs to be taken, with or without her conscious will. Marina reaches for her dreams, that have always began in the grandmother's apartment leading her to the lesbian society of her female lovers on Lesbos Island. Appearing as an undistinguished female entity, the collective she-body, all her twenty-nine female lovers merge in Marina's half-dream-reality with the sexually-aroused male body of Riumentsov. The oral performance starts with her female lovers—like one reaching Marina with their mouths, tongues, and lips, and then the well-known lips (*znakomye guby*) symbolically kiss the lips of the Other, the man, producing the vacuum where the discursive exchange takes place. In addition, the voice of her fiancée, Sasha, and that of Riumetsov become one, calling her name: "Marina, Marinochka." To bring her to socialist reality, the man introduces himself "Marin…It's me [*ia eto*]" (170). Here the shorter form of her name commonly used in Russian in place of the vocative case indicates the male form, that is, Sorokin the ghost "Marin." He is announcing his arrival at his double by saying "it's me," now as sots-art pornographer.

[95] Quoted in Geniz, "Moi Sorokin," 11.

Identities replicate in the novel as in the mirror: Marina is her mother's half (*Marinka, moia polovinka*), and both are having intimate relationships with Volodyas, her mother's lover and the boy-leader of the group in the children's camp. Now Marina meets her other socialist half and finally reaches orgasm with the man. The power of orgasm merges with the might of the sea waves at Lesbos. The orgasm means her initiation into Soviet society, and the chorus of a million people begins singing right behind the back of her head through the radio. Marina-of-the-sea visualizes herself immersed in a sea of Soviet people singing the Soviet anthem. Sorokin relies on the chorus that in ancient times had a corrective role and delivered commentary on the dramatic actions of the play. The collective voice of the mass chorus represents the Soviet propaganda that carries on the songs of Lenin, Party, and ideology. Sorokin shows that the communist sexual lesson cannot be complete in a straightforward way, but in a mix of female, male, the chorus, and the radio operator's voices.

After this orgasm, Marina transforms into an asexual shock worker in Riumetsov's factory and loses her watery name to become "comrade Alekseeva." The individual life of dissident Marina is now completely absorbed by the Soviet collective body. As Sorokin points out, Marina is written in the manner of a "classic Russian novel on the salvation of the hero" and sees her trajectory as representative of an "inside-out version of Tolstoy's *Resurrection*": "The tragedy of dissidents was, of course, that they, as strong individuals, were separated from the communal Soviet body. Therefore, in the end Marina "frees" herself from individualism and flows into (*vlivaetsia*) the depersonalized "collective."[96] The meeting of the porno-sea and the socialist realist dry shore results in an absurd of a dry sea: copulation with no bodily fluids. Marina's transformation is a discursive act that leads her to abstinence of socialist religion. In

[96] "Tekst kak narkotik," 653.

Tolstoy's *Resurrection*, religion is given not as an alternative but a continuation of the same immoral sexuality: while reading the Gospel for the first time, Nekhliudov, who consumed the prostitute Maslova, that "stinky water," replaces her with a biblical narrative. This act is sexually charged as he does not sleep all night, and "like a sponge in the water," soaking up "into himself all necessary, important, and joyful, what was revealed to him in this book" (444). Biblical and sexual narratives overlap in the bodily story Nekhliudov knows too well.

Marina starts as an erotic novel and becomes a production novel, like genital lubrication in sex its narrative runs free from one genre to another. Marina is the em*bodi*ment of a sots-art orgasm that comes in see-waves. As Geniz says, Marina is a libertine woman living a double life: "for men, she is an obedient sex robot; for women, she is the Amazon of same-sex passion."[97] As such she is elusive and her metamorphoses triggered by a love affair with a Party member is not a complete transformation, for she only plays her robot-role within the simulacra of socialist reality. *Marina* and Marina substantiate the phenomenon of liquid discursiveness.

A Novel (*Roman*, 1985–1989)

Sorokin's collaboration with the woman completely deforms his male literary hypostasis, giving birth to a monster, Roman, a more terrifying mirror image of Erofeev's child-like degenerate Vova, who not only kills the woman, but also commits a mass murder upon Russian people and their favorite genre—the Russian novel—in an act of quasi suicide. Roman (novel in Russian), is the name of the character, the title of the book, and the genre in which Sorokin's narrative develops by replicating in style and plot the classic 19th-century novel. With its substantial length of 625 pages, *Roman* appears as a great literary sacrifice presented as

[97] "Moi Sorokin," 13.

"(auto)exorcism" [98] in which Sorokin kills the genre of the Russian novel: "Roman died."[99] *Roman,* according to Lipovetsky, "may be read as a meta-carnalization of the thesis of the death of the novel (*smert' romana*), as widely debated from the 1950s through to the 1970s."[100]

The novel opens with the return of Roman Alekseevich Vospennikov from the capital to his home village, Krutoi Iar. He is a disappointed lawyer who starts up a new life as a free artist and meets his love and double, Tat'iana, in the village church. Their love is that of "twins": Roman immediately "recognized himself in her enchanted face" (347); Tat'iana absolutely depends on her other half, Roman, repeating her love spell, "I live by you." Anton Petrovich, the father figure who rescued Tat'iana from fire, gives his blessing to the couple and notices that "two children…extremely close and similar to each other…convinced me in the necessity of their union.…Instead of two separate individuals, I found in my heart Siamese twins" (528). Their union happens during the Passion Week as a miracle in expectation of Resurrection. If Sorokin brings Marina's life to an "inside-out" version of Tolstoy's *Resurrection*, in *Roman*, I argue, he creates an "all-out" version by reconstructing Tolstoy's finale, showing what happens after Nekhliudov discovers the sexual potency of religion. The Russian periphery and Easter time, set the atmosphere in which Sorokin reinforces obscene profanity by parodying Biblical stories, church rituals, liturgies, and holy days that he links to the hidden hypersexual aspect of black-magic rituals, Russian culture of collective eating and drinking, and the killing of sinful flesh. The realism of the 19th-century is transformed into the sots-porn reality of a nightmare.

[98] Nariman Skakov, "Slovo v 'Romane' [Word/Discourse in *Roman*], *Novoe Literaturnoe Obozrenie* (2013): 177-193: 177.
[99] Sobranie sochineii, vol. 2, 726.
[100] "Fleshing/Flashing Discourse," 30.

This chrono-transfer to the twentieth century begins after the reader is completely exhausted from going through 500 pages on which Sorokin is "erecting a monumental tombstone on the grave of the Russian novel" (Skakov, 179) by reproducing common tropes and narrative clichés of the great 19th-century Russian novel. This way, Skakov asserts, he decomposes the Russian novel from the inside so "it turns into a tumor, leaving the writer with no other choice but to take a scalpel and separate it from the tired and sick body of Russian literature." (Skakov, 180). While Sorokin goes into details in depicting Roman's (heroic) deeds, including killing a wolf, harvesting, or hunting as well as the wedding day, and nuptial songs, games, and toasts, he, however, deprives the reader of a description of the married couple's first night. Instead, we watch their monstrous killing evolving as a porno Paskha ritual. The violence in the final part of the novel is motivated by, as Lipovetsky notes, two wedding presents with an explicit sexual connotation: a wooden bell and an ax with an inscription "Wiped-chop down" (*Zamakhnulsia-rubi*).[101] Armed with these sexual tools the bride and groom perform a mass murder of all the villagers as "a black magic ritual" (Lipovetsky): Tat'iana is ringing the bell and Roman is using the ax to kill. Their marital union is that of a crime that begins in the billiard room as a secret room for the game (and the death chamber), continues in villagers' houses, and ends in the church. After he kills all friends and relatives going from one home to the next, Roman brings to the church the body parts of the dead and makes his installation: he puts the guts of forty-two killed peasants (40-*sorok* for Sorokin and two for his twins!) on the floor and covers them with bricks taken from their stoves on which he places forty-two decapitated heads, "thereby creating an audience for his sacrilegious performance" (Skakov, 181). After this he brings reliquial testes (*semeniki*) of the mass castration of his male victims and brings out religious objects from the

[101] "Fleshing/Flashing Discourse," 33.

altar; finally putting the victims' guts on icons as a décor for the iconstasis. This religious "porn" is finalized with the death of the twins performed through a dirty game of Roman-the-child on the church floor. Roman murders Tat'iana by cutting through her stomach and sticking the bell in it, decapitating her, chopping up her bones, skin, and flesh into cubes that he sucks, and processes them until he gets a paste that—mixed with his feces and sperm ejaculated in several masturbations—he eats or uses as a cream for his body. Lastly he makes a holy water of her blood, sperm, and urine that he smears upon the icon of the Virgin Mary. The game and the novel end with Roman's death, which finalizes a linguistic murder that gradually develops with his massacre of the bodies. The language is simplified to such an extent that sentences consist of only two words: "Roman rocked. Roman moved. Roman twitched. Roman groaned. Roman moved. Roman flinched. Roman twitched. Roman moved. Roman twitched. Roman died." [102]

A compulsion to repeat is pronounced in *Roman* not only in retelling the patterns of literary tradition, but also in decomposing that tradition. Roman's repetitive monstrosity comes as a bad dream, occurring in traumatic neuroses and bringing one back to the traumatic accident, a childish play in attempt to overcome the loss, which is repressed trauma that surfaces as a current experience and not something belonging to the past. The repetition compulsion upholds the death drive, which leads to the pleasure of mastering the initial Soviet trauma. The two-word pattern of Roman's death Sorokin uses for the "ROT-ANUS" word-play, only here "the Roman" is the unchangeable subject. Skakov claims that the extensive list of all those killed by Roman (248 people) indicates that the death of the great Russian novel is Sorokin's personal deed,[103] which resembles the Sinodik of mass murder of Ivan the Terrible. represents "crying for the

[102] *Roman kochnul. Roman poshevelil. Roman dernulsia. Roman zastonal. Roman poshevelil. Roman vzdrognul. Roman dernulsia. Roman poshevelil. Roman dernulsia. Roman umer.*
[103] See footnote on page 192.

victims of the genocide, killed by his own hands in the literal sense in the case of the king and the figurative sense in the case of the writer" (190). I would take Skakov's interpretation further by proposing that this list also represents Stalin's murders as its modern version.

Sorokin sacrifices the novel, in which the institution of authorship was traditionally formed, and, if he used to work with "the bodies of speech" (*s telami rechi*), he now acquires features of the medium-writer who works with products of the decaying collective body and conscience that in the process of decomposing have already acquired cynicism and self-parody, so that "from a remote spectator the writer risks turning into their rival and competitor" (Ryklin, 32–33). While he tortures readers with repetitions, Sorokin nevertheless offers them the climatic pay-off: the death of Roman-the-monster as a textual orgasm. This pleasure in postponed satisfaction makes the Russian reader morally and sexually deviant, a masochist who enjoys watching the traumatic disintegration of the novel, the character, and love (*roman* in Russian also means a love affair). Sorokin puts forward a sick model of love; a selfish ritualistic tyranny that swipes away all traces of anything human. Additional absurdity that this crime conveys is that the lovers' fidelity to each other remains intact, just like the heroine's chastity. As a result, the mass killing performed by the man in possession of sexual knowledge is rhetorically justified; by eliminating human bodies, he eliminates in parallel language from its corporality, and Russian literature from the burden of traditionally innocent narrative. The blood expected to be seen in the bed at the loss of virginity is transferred to the church-lab to produce the "holy water" with which the Virgin gets dirty. The novel's end functions as a textual climax, subverting the traditional 19th-century ending where the character's death, like Anna Karenina's, comes for punishment of sexual misbehavior that is never graphically described. The classic "Turgenev-Goncharov-Tolstoy type of novel is dismissed as a monster—a textual Frankenstein—which

needs to be revived only to be killed then" (Skakov, 186). Frankenstein died and the Leviathan was born. Roman's quest for artistic freedom is to play linguistic dirty games, to go insane, and to kill in name of Soviet religion.

There is no return to Russian society, for the society is killed. There is no return to the traditional Russian novel, because it is dead. There is only language, maximally reduced, simplified as if adjusted for a child who is learning how to speak. Roman is the anti-hero whose brutality develops in the opposite direction from what the reader expects. The aftermath of Sorokin's porn "liquidation" in *Roman* is a literary graveyard. Sorokin asserts that in this novel, "the action takes place not in time, but in the space of the Russian novel."[104] Roman's death signals the new beginning for the reader, who is invited to visit his grave in the novel's preface. This scene is run by Gothic themes, a silent, stuffy, and creepy cemetery of Russian literature where the passerby finds the crosses, that like standing penises in *The Queue* come in all sizes and shapes, only this time completely mute: "Silent crosses…the big and small, the crooked and straight, the rotten and whole. They stand as mute keepers of the deceased, with Russian obedience they spread out their wooden hands..." (270). It is thundering and getting so dark that only a single inscription of a cross is to be seen—ROMAN. It ends with the beginning of rain flooding the soil.

This is an invitation to Soviet Gothic sexuality. In *Sex in Public*, Eric Naiman finds connection between early Soviet ideologically-established patterns of sexual behavior and Gothic fiction. He asserts that the "repeat performance," which is so central to the Gothic, "occurred most frequently in the theater of sex," while "tales of horror often resembled a ritualized,

[104] "Literatura ili kladbishche."

collective exorcism of sex and of the past."[105] Sex in *Roman* is taken out of couple's private life, becoming a public Gothic performance in which they play traditional roles: man is the subject and woman is the object. The Gothic heroine, Naiman says, "is compelled, by force or her own virtuous respect for authority, to wait, to minimize external resistance, and at the same time to protect a core of chastity, the defense of which requires perpetual, nervous vigilance" (70). Sorokin does not see any potential in the bodiless Russian novel for evolution. Yet, the religious implications with which the novel begins leaves room for the miraculous conception, i.e., resurrection and rebirth in non-literary/corporal sphere. The discourse is chopped up into segments; the fragmented body-words deprived of essential meaning and turned into shapeless purée that are still available for consumption. Roman "chops characters, something culinary is found in his actions, although no one is able to try the prepared dish."[106] The novel eats itself up from inside. Sorokin deprives Russian literature of the whole genre by materializing its very practice of substituting and encoding the sexual act, showing that discursive inhibition on sexuality turns into its own enemy. The Russian novel undergoes sots-realistic experiments confirming Sorokin's appeal that "everything can be pop-arted," and he continues with it in the post-Soviet era.

***Four Stout Hearts* (*Serdtsa chetrekh*, 1991)**

Four Stout Hearts is the first Sorokin's post-Soviet novel, that was published in *Konets veka* in 1993. This is an absurd thriller film-like story about the mysterious actions of a group of four, Shtaube, Serezha, Rebrov, and Olga, "a perverse parody of a biological family" going on a

[105] Naiman 161–62.
[106] Mikhail Ryklin, "Medium i avtor: O tekstakh Vladimira Sorokina," in *Eto prosto bukvy na bumage…': Vladimir Sorokin: Posle literatury*, eds. E. Dobrenko, I. Kalinin, and M. Lipovetsky, Moscow: Novoe Literaturnoe Obozrenie, 2018, p. 31.

furious journey full of morbid sexual activities and violence for which there is no motivation or explanation. They begin and end unexpectedly, leaving the reader perplexed. This gang performs, plays games, has fun, kills, and escapes to death by getting rid of their bodies and keeping only their hearts for the future. Sorokin tirelessly describes the "abomination of the human body" since, as Geniz states, the human for Sorokin is "an absurd, naturalistically manufactured doll (*kukla*), stuffed with stinking guts, and a puppet covered with skin. Therefore, all the horror in the novel is not terrifying, but funny!"[107]

The opening scene shows Oleg, a thirteen-year old boy, buying bread in a local bakery and then accidentally dropping one loaf in a puddle. As the bread gets wet and dirty, he throws it away in a garbage bin. This scene prompts a historical-moral lesson that the old man, by passing by Shtaube, gives to Oleg. Though he claims that he loathes when people moralize, Shtaube cannot help but tell the boy a heartbreaking story about the food shortage, starvation, and death during the Siege of Leningrad, concluding: "I believe in your generation. I believe you will save Russia."[108] He immediately switches the flow of his narrative by bringing in the matter of sexuality and encouraging Oleg to perceive himself as a man who in half a year "would be able to fuck" (732). Shtaube is a war and work invalid who is missing a leg, and as such he represents the injured Soviet man who, as Lilya Kaganovsky argues, is also part of Stalinist culture.[109] He wants to compensate this disability with sexual advantage, and takes Oleg to an old train car that smells on "paint and shit" where he, kneeling before the boy, now asks for permission to give him a blow job: "I am an old, unfortunate man, a war and work invalid…Oleg, my dear boy, I beg you, allow me to suck yours, my dear, allow me, for God's sake!" (733). He offers ten

[107] "Moi Sorokin," 17.
[108] *Sobranie sochinenii*, vol 2, 732.
[109] Lilya Kaganovsky, *How the Soviet Man was Unmade: Cultural Fantasy and Male Subjectivity Under Stalin* (Pittsburgh, 2008).

rubbles to him for the service, but Oleg runs away and another boy, Serezha appears at the door threatening Genrikh he will tell everything he saw to Rebrov. As if this is a known ritual game, Genrikh momentarily takes down Serezha's underwear and begins to lick his small penis. Serezha breathes at the window and as the glass gets foggy he draws a swastika, and then helps the old man by taking him by his head and starts moving (743). The symbols of fascism and Stalin's invalid culture merge in Genrikh the masochist, whose loud moans blend with the sound of his prosthesis trembling and hitting against the table. Serezha's swastika is the opposite force, which brings back the horror of the siege to the Soviet man, and brigs him sexual climax.

This time Sorokin makes clear there is no queue in the post-Soviet era, and Oleg gets his desired product quickly. He chooses the bread as the basic surviving food, however, the holy food standing for the body of Christ but also prompting pornographic discourse. Though it becomes dirty and wet/liquidy, Shtaube maintains that the bread must be preserved, but what its purpose is remains unclear. The bread is like Shtaube's impotent penis: it should be conserved by the body even if not functional. Shtaube reveals that his last erection was six years ago, and though his member is big it is not useful anymore: "Look what an instrument! Twenty-six centimeters when standing up. But all this is in the past" (783). No queue, no standing penises any more.

Rebrov, Olga, Shtaube, and Serezha's unite to begin their first action of murdering Serezha's parents. First, they kill them with a gun, and then they cut off the mother's lips and put them in the test tube, pouring a transparent liquid over them. Afterwards, they take the father's body, cut off his penis's head and give it to Serezha to suck. Serezha starts sucking the head, "carefully rolling it in his mouth" while playing with his crocodile toy (742). Sorokin shows that this is all a children's game. From that moment on, the penis head is not an object of cruelty, but

an indulging sucking sweet-pacifier that all characters, like babies, put in their mouths one after another. The penis head is a prop, a substitute satisfying their oral needs. It gives them a collective oral pleasure through which they come into a dialogue that remains coded in the very act of sucking silence. The penis head is the norm. The father's penis head thus functions as the common family archetype, the Soviet narrative, consumed by the children. The other penetrates the self, the head goes into the orifice for language production. This dismembered grotesque body regains its usefulness in the silence of the one whose mouth is filled with it. The penis head is like a drug that is shared among friends. Accordingly, its final product appears a sort of a synthetic homemade drug: as the condition of the penis head changes by the sucking (the color, the edges become disordered) they cut it like a mushroom, put it in the oven on low temperature so it dries out and doesn't bake, and then turn it into a powder (790–91).

The proliferation of violence in this novel goes in two directions: from the gang and toward it. Olga as the only woman in the group who undergoes torture more than the others and is involved in fecal transactions from one body to another. Tkachenko, the chief of the recruitment office (*voenokomata*), who evokes Limonov-the tailor and *vozhd'* and who has his army that humiliates women, forces Olga to put her face into an old woman's genitalia and take in her dirty behind: "smell, smell the cunt of this well-deserved pedagogue! Smell it! She hasn't taken shower for a week, and now she smells tasty…Breathe, breathe deeper! And now the asshole!... She has shit her pants twice, twice! (769–70). He forcefully places Olga's face into the woman's dirty cheeks and then shows Olga's face, dirty with feces, to his soldiers. Olga's sacrifice for her team is motivated by her Soviet past, when she had sex with a certain Zhabin, both vaginal and anal, in order to be a part of the national team for the Olympic games. Her story arouses Serezha and he wants to try it with her, and Olga admits that she hasn't experienced anal

sex—"black fucking"—for a long time.[110] Soviet "black fucking" made an involuntary prostitute of the woman. Woman is symbolically sacrificed for a Soviet Russia that disintegrates, to announce the change in flow of Sorokin's porn toward the "liquid mother."

Rebrov kills his mother, who comes to visit him on New Year's Eve, celebrating the beginning of 1991. His present to her is to strangle her to death, decapitate her with an electric knife, collect her blood in a can, cut her head in two halves and make ground meat of it in a meat grinder, which ends up in the juicer, out of which comes the final product that Rebrov solemnly announces to the group: "Congratulations, my friends… we now have the liquid mother (*zhidkaia mat'*)—Happy New Year!—Hooray! (800). Before she is murdered, the mother is asked to narrate her autobiography, and she discloses being a victim of Stalin's camps. Her son murders her anyway and converts the mother into 28 liters of liquid. With this novel Sorokin began using post-communist Russia as new material for his play: "for many this new culture seems much softer because there is no more of that ideology, but instead a new ideology that is liquefied (*razzhizhennaia*). It is like the liquid mother. Before it flew and hit everyone on the head with a stick (*palkoi*), but now it is in the form of some jelly (*kholodets*). And I am trying to work with this jelly."[111] The absurdity of the gang's acts reflect upon the absurdity of Soviets belief in socialism: they worked hard, starved, exceeded the norm, defended the homeland, and then they are told: "your life, bonehead, is a mistake; you haven't made the bright future but a fucking Stalin camp called the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics! Damn it, your grateful descendants congratulate you!" (801). The gang, as drug addicts of the Soviet discourse, comes to a plant in which 280 boxes of needles for disposable syringes of the West German company

[110] "Davno Olen'ku ne ebli po-chernomu," (787). This also implies the "dirty" way of getting something "po blatu."
[111] Quoted in Sokolov, 32.

"Braun" are used as casting material to manufacture steel for the "All-Union Children's Fund named after V. I. Lenin." With this combination of Lenin's children and Hitler's fecal brown companion Eva Braun, they produce Stalin-steel (*stal'*). For Sorokin, literature is a hard drug, and the writing process creates addiction: "I write something—just like a drug addict, who takes a syringe and 'shoots.'"[112] In *Blue Lard*, the image of Stalin with a needle and syringes appears as a billboard sign in the kindergarten.

The gang finally carries the liquid mother with them on the train to Siberia, and, lead by the train conductor, they enter the forbidden zone of a Siberian research facility where they meet an equally cruel gung whose leader, the *dok* (short for doctor), sexually humiliates the conductor (*provodnitsa*) and begins the fight with the newcomer gang.[113] As many scholars have noted, Sorokin here makes the "brain fucking" idiom literal by showing the dok making a hole in the woman's skull and placing "his stiff member in the hole….The member went into the woman's skull, squeezing out a part of the brain….The woman was silently twitching. The doc pulled himself up, and his member came out of the skull, making a smacking sound" (846). To escape from this horrific Siberian winter Olympic games, the gang of four leaves the battlefield by entering the processing machine that presses them into cubes of four frozen hearts and catapults them onto an ice field that is flooded with the liquid mother like playing dice (*igral'nykh kostei*), each marked by a number: 6, 2, 5, 5 (861). Yet another of Sorokin's "idiom-made-flesh" puns about "leaving your heart on the field" of the liquid mother works here as an act of "an incestuous union of the organic and the technological."[114] The game continues, the rules of which are not quite known to readers. As Geniz rightly notices, in Sorokin, "death is not the end,

[112] "Vladimir Sorokin: Samoe skuchnoe – eto zdorovie pisateli,"
[113] The woman's role is made literal by the conductor having the characteristic of metal (steel), conducting heat well.
[114] Jacob Emery, "A Clone Playing Craps Will Never Abolish Chance: Randomness and Fatality in Vladimir Sorokin's Clone Fictions," *Science Fiction Studies*, Vol. 41, No. 2 (July 2014): 410–35, here 425.

but the beginning of everything" (21). Making "identical character-objects is perhaps already legible as a form of cloning" that Sorokin masters in his next novel *Blue Lard*.[115] The four harts become identical objects of a historically perverse event which dates from 6.2.1955. The child of this incest is Sorokin's liquid itself—*Zhidkost'*—which, if we take through an analytic hydrolyses and break it into the two water molecules *zhid* and *kost',* we arrive at the Jewish victims' bones that Sorkin turns into playing dice of Soviet fascism.

The Jewish question is a prominent theme in Sorokin's prose, for he sees it as the collective guilt of Soviets people that, unlike in Germany, has not been properly addressed in Russian culture:

> I'm like those insects that lay eggs in rotten meat…I'm interested in the rotten places in culture, in society, where there is a murkiness of concepts that hasn't been exposed. It interests me to work with a taboo subject or repressed intimate fears, collective mistakes. For example, I wrote a play that dealt with Russian-Jewish-German complexes, called *Hochzeitsreise* (The Honeymoon), which was staged here in Berlin in the *Volksbuhne* (People's Theater). It's about a love story between the émigré Masha Rubinshtein and Gunther von Nebeldorf, whose father was in the SS and whose mother was in the KGB.[116]

This plot runs the sadomasochism of the son's Oedipal triangle, who comes against his SS father by identifying with the Jewish victim in his relationship with the woman. Sorokin plays around Freud's child is being beaten fantasy by showing Gunther as impotent and naked, like a child, asking the Jewish woman Masha to whip him as he repeats the following: "here you are,

[115] Ibid., 426.
[116] "This Controversial Russian Novelist, Accused of Promoting Cannibalism and Pornography, Is a Literary Star."

marble."[117] The son wishes to whip the fascist father figure in himself, who became a monumental historical hero. Mark, the former psychiatrist, diagnoses him with "duality of interpersonal inversions" (224), and explain to Masha that Gunther is not sexually active, for he does not want to inseminate evil and carry on the father's corporality. All this is for vengeance: "the Jewish woman whips von Nebeldorf's son." And his extreme interest in Jewish culture is also revenge (225). The son's rebellion against the father broadens the problem of the collective guilt that each nation separately needs to handle. Sorokin indicates that as opposed to Germany, which faced its past (Mark, who is also Jewish, meets a German boy comes down on his knees before him apologizing on behalf of Germans who brought suffering to Jewish people, 226) Russia still hasn't done anything (Masha says: "In Russia nobody came down on their knees before a Jew," 227). "But it is all the same to me," claims Mark, "to suffer or to take pleasure. I am a Homo Sovieticus. My organism is adapted for survival in all conditions. Without hot water, and without cold. Without a shithouse. Without air" (227). Masha cannot stand Gunther's pathology anymore as she notices that he has becme "a slave of collective subconsciousness" who fights with "the dead, losing the human traits and turning into a living corpse, a puppet," and she issues him an ultimatum demanding the liquidation of "the bloody ghosts of the past" (229). Gunther is ready for a new beginning and obeys Masha, the quasi-doctor, following her treatment. Masha orders two uniforms: a SS uniform for him and a NKVD uniform for her. She tells him to come in a black Mercedes and forces him to put the SS uniform on. They come to replicate his parents and have sex for the first time, after which they drink to "the genius Sigmund Freud." Sorokin outlines a psychanalytical framework through which the symbolic

[117] In *Kapital: polnoe sobranie p'es*, 210.

becomes the arena for linguistic expression and sexual oral communication between the fathers and sons, Nazi Germany and the USSR, and the best friends in crime: Hitler and Stalin.

Uniting the topic of "German guilt" and "Soviet guilt" with the Jewish question is vital for Sorokin's taboo-breaking sadomasochistic prose. German sadism complements Russian masochism, appearing as the main sexual perversion played on the field of Jewish bones. Sorokin sees the Russian-German relationship as that of "two old lovers, that periodically love each other, then fight, then love again. Germans, in fact, play the role of sadists in the background of Russian masochism. The German psycho-type is sado-anal, as opposed to the Russian masochistic-genital. Germans have an anal *mat*, and we have the genital.[118] In "A Month in Dachau" (*Mesiats v Dakhau*, 1990), Sorokin makes this case a personal matter, showing the narrator Vladimir Sorokin going voluntarily on a summer vacation from Soviet Russia to the Dachau camp, which appears as a masochistic contract between him and the KGB. He is tortured over the course of 28 days by going each day to a different torture chamber (*kamera*), where a new perversion is staged, like taking 28 shots of a porn film, each marked as kamera 1, 2, 3…28.

***Blue Lard* (*Goluboe salo*, 1999)**

Blue Lard develops as the story of Russia's distant future in the year 2068, which marks the huge influence of China; the last technological achievements in the cloning business, and in new language experiments. The narration begins in the epistolary form, from the point of view of Boris Gloger, who writes letters to his gay partner and sends them via blue clone-pigeons. He is

[118] "V kul'ture dlia menia net tabu…" Vladimir Sorokin otvechaet na voprosy Sergeia Shapovala. *Sorokin V. Sobranie sochinenii v 2 toma*. Tom 1. Moskva: Ad Marginem, 1998, p. 15. Quoted in L. N. Poluboiarinova, "Leopol'd fon Zakher-Mazokh i Vladimir Sorokin," *Vestnik Sankt-Peterburgskogo Universiteta* 9, no. 3-4, 2004. At https://cyberleninka.ru/article/v/leopold-fon-3aher-mazoh-i-vladimir-sorokin; and in Sokolov, *Moia kniga o Vladimire Sorokine*, 34.

a “biophilologist,” working in a laboratory located in East Siberia, whose specialization is “logo-stimulus (*logostimul*).” I read his job as making porn while providing literary stimulation through logo(s), the Greek for word that is also the body in Sorokin, and finally the brain; all symbols of the homosexual literary lab that produces the *blue lard*. Boris speaks the new-Russian, a mixture of scientific abbreviations and pseudoscientific terms, neologisms and borrowings of foreign words, transcribed Chinese, Latin, French, and compounds of both Cyrillic and Latin alphabets. This linguistic chaos brings us to *zaum’*, to the zero meaning. He and the scientists are stuck in their lab, “the frozen O,” “the concrete (*betonnyi*) anus,” the hole (*dyra*)”[119] is covered with pure Siberian snow, from where the seven clones of Russian writers come out: Tolstoy-4, Chekhov-3, Nabokov-7, Pasternak-1, Dostoevsky-2, Akhmatova-2, and Platonov-3. The script-process during which the clones become alive, change, and undergo anabiosis, results in the *blue lard*. The *blue lard* is the worst obscenity, and the first clone version made in this lab, Pasternak, writes the most explicit poem: “Cunt” (*Pizda*). Boris is against standard Russian *mat* (“russmat”), and as a fighter against obscenity he uses instead only Chinese phrases like “rips nimada taben’,” “dakhui” or “shanshuikhua,” from which, ironically, sticks out the obscene word *khui* (dick). Though Sorokin has a dictionary of Gloger’s pseudo-Chinese that provides rather obscure explanations of terms (for example, the term "BORO-IN-OUT" is explained by the meaning of old-sex practice: "BORO-IN-OUT is sexual intercourse without a relaxer in STAROSEXe" [349]), it is hard for the reader to understand his Newspeak (*novoiaz*), but the characters communicate with no difficulties. This semi-secret linguistic game he plays against Russia is replicated in Boris’s chess game when he announces: “Russia—zamatoval ia sebia v tri khoda-Sygraem?” (28). Here “zamatoval,” besides checkmating the self, also implies to make

[119] *Sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 3, pp. 14–19.

oneself matte, blurred, and to immerse the self in obscenity—*mat*. BOBO, meaning "sexual characteristics," Boris inscribes in his name when he signs one of the letters as "Bobobob

"Eugene Onegin" is staged, and explodes there. This is said to be the "House of Free Love" in which the clone of Stalin appears as the master who has a black man for his battler[120] and two transvestite sons, Iakov (Ia=I) and Vasilii (V), who show up in public in women's cloths.[121] In the novel there is an assumption that the blue lard is a Jewish trick, that it did not come from the future but is a game trick performed by a Jewish "transatlantic bastard" (*zaokeanskaia svoloch'*), because "the Jews there are smarter than ours" (175). Jewish identity seems to be a very important segment of the discursive Soviet game: "Joseph, by the way, I am Jewish…Kaganovich smiled. -Me too, -Stalin replied- but only half [Jewish] (*napolovinu*)." (186) Stalin as a discursive drug addict continuously gives injections to his mouth with a golden syringe, right into the root of the tongue (180), as if he needs to maintain the level of Jewish-Soviet language schizophrenia.

In Sorokin's burlesque rendition of history, Stalin meets his double, the sadist Khrushchev with the title Graf (count but also (porno)graph), who enjoys torturing people by performing bloodless violations on the victim's body. He owns a set of torture tools in his basement and humiliates a young artist to death, then serves his freshly sliced flesh to Stalin and himself. Cannibalism, which shows one body penetrating the other through the oral orifice, leads to homosexual bonding between Stalin and Khrushchev. De-Stalinization works as oral sex ordered by Stalin and performed by Khrushchev: Khrushchev "takes off Stalin's underwear, letting his erect phallus out, and with his lips goes down the body toward his blood-pumped phallus" and "begins playing with the *vozhd'*'s head." (222). At Stalin's request for a "spiral,"

[120] Most likely this is Limonovian Pushkin whom Sorokin makes Stalin's slave, showing what would happen in Pushkin's fairy tale about the "Fisherman and the Fish," if the wish of the old greedy woman, the ruler of the sea, to make the golden (cultural) fish her servant came true.
[121] These two sons are Sorokin and Erofeev, who show up as Marina and Irina. "I(a) convinced V to go to Metropol'" (164), reads as I (Sorokin) convinced V (Viktor Erofeev) to go to the Metropol' group.

"Khrushchev's powerful tongue started making spiral movements…carefully touched the tip of the head and began moving apart the urinary canal" (Ibid.). The more excited Stalin gets, the more childish and fearful he becomes (begging Khrushchev, "don't give me away," and shares his biggest fear of a fat worm living in the uncle's pants that will end up in the boy's asshole). Khrushchev, as if playing the role of a sexual psychiatrist practicing behaviorism, immediately takes Stalin's "long uneven penis with the humpy head, on the skin of which was a pentacle tattoo. The graf spits into his hands, smears the spit over Stalin's anus…and begins pushing his member into the *vozhd'*….The Graf's entire member enters into Stalin's anus. Grabbing the *vozhd"*s balls with his left hand, and his member with the right hand, the Graf started masturbating him" (223). The time of recognition then comes: "–You….this is…you, moaned Stalin, what is the uncle doing to the boy? –The uncle is fucking the boy in the asshole, Khrushchev is whispering", and he gives him now the order to finish (*konchai!*) (Ibid.). While still inside Stalin's body, his political successor introduces to him Solzhenitsyn's *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich*, which Stalin knows nothing about.[122] In their conversation, Stalin's Gulag system is characterized as "camps of forced love" or LOVEЛАГ (225, mixed alphabet in original), where the Jew from Odessa, Ivan Leopoldovich Denisovich, ends up being sentenced to ten years, accused of sexual perversions. Khrushchev also brings up the Doctors' Plot after which, he claims, literature is flooded with the two themes of Jews and blood, which becomes primitive and vulgar (248).

Sorokin transfers this conversation on the other half of his porn world, the German land, where Stalin meets his very good friend Hitler. This double-clone rules the world together after their mutual success in WWII. They have already concurred Europe, so in Dublin they see

[122] It was first published during Khrushchev's time in 1962.

Germany and their mother, and they erect a monument to the "symbol of human freedom," Stalin—"bronze Stalin with his famous golden syringe" (268). Stalin and Hitler are now ready to attack America, which they see as being responsible for the Holocaust. Their dialogue on the Jewish question culminates in Stalin's monologue:

> We shouldn't make a cult of Jewish question…Americans exterminated six million Jews. And what have we got? The myth about six million scapegoats that humiliates every Jew. Jews were never innocent scapegoats. They are not Gypsies….That is an extraordinarily active and talented nation, and its contribution in the Russian Revolution is huge. That's why we shoot no more than fifty to a hundred Jews per day. At the same time, we build new synagogues, Jewish schools, boarding houses for Holocaust orphans….We are flexible on the Jewish question. For example, recently the process regarding the so-called "Anti-Fascist Committee" that our famous Jewish writers, actors, and scientists joined, ended. What did the Committee do?
>
> They made The Black Book about the victims of the Holocaust…and sent it to France, where the book was published and became a bestseller…What did the Soviets do to the "Anti-Fascist Committee"? Stalin asked and he himself answered—they hanged them like lousy dogs" (272–73).

Having passed through their collective guilt, Stalin and Hitler split. After Hitler sleeps with Stalin's daughter, Stalin's wife Nadezhda throws a bomb (*limonka*) at him, and the battle over the blue lard between two Titans begins. Stalin comes out a winner in Roman's style, committing the self-exorcism act by inserting the blue lard in his brain with a syringe.

I want to propose that Sorokin's reference point in *Goluboe Salo* might be Pier Pasolini's film *Salò, or the 120 Days of Sodom* (1975), which brings together Mussolini's fascist Republic of Salo, created under German occupation in WWII, and de Sade's *The 120 Days of Sodom*. Sorokin's perverse salo-republic comes with the modifier of blue (*goluboe*), a loaded word referring to a common Russian slang word for homosexual, ice-blue, pigeon, or an idealized image, which determines the Soviet state headquartered in frozen Siberia. Salo is the traditional food, pork or bacon fat with no meat, which becomes a frozen, hardened ejaculate for consumption in Sorokin's porn. The blue may also be suggestive of Aniline Blue, also called China blue, the chemical compound of methyl blue and water blue, used to stain collagen in tissue in microscopic research. As science shows after staining with aniline blue, there is a higher percentage of stained spermatozoa in infertile men, implying testicular disorders.[123] Being a scientist himself, Sorokin makes the blue lard a world of infertile homosexual men whose discursive spermogram shows the sperm of language stained with China blue—Sorokin's greasy pornographic explicitness colored with Chinese language. Blue lard's ability to reach the egg (the fertile component of Russian literature, the vagina) and promote embryonic development fails, and we see AAA giving birth to a black egg, rather than a child. Sorokin's blue lard does not have the power to create new life but only to decompose the old, and in Freudian terms, resurrect the fathers as clones. It represents in vitro fertilization, controlled in the bio-language laboratory. Once it is injected into a mature egg, here Stalin's brain, it grows extremely fast and demolishes the entire world: it breaks walls, buildings, mountains; it occupies the globe both horizontally and vertically; it falls down causing earthquake; it breaks the sun in 876,076 liquid

[123] See for example, C. Foresta, M. Zorzi, M. Rossato, A. Varotto, "Sperm Nuclear Instability and Staining with Aniline Blue: Abnormal Persistence of Histones in Spermatozoa in Infertile Men," *Int J Androl*, no. 4 (August 15, 1992): 330-37.

pieces that he sucks in; finally his brain devours the stars and planets (290). Sorokin's satire here resembles Bulgakov's in "The Fatal Eggs" (1924), in which the science fiction description of misconducting Persikov's microscopic experiment at the Zoological Institute causes the accelerated growth of aggressive and dangerous monsters that threaten to destroy Moscow. The soil kept in glass jars are like test tubes or vessels for in vitro studies. These are artificial female parts belonging to Russia's all-embracing vagina. Stalin performs intercourse not with his Russia, but with his myth and the idea in his brain: "The blue lard is the central hero, it connects all the temporary spheres of the book, but according to the same dream mechanism, the more we know about it, the less we understand why it is needed."[124] The blue lard is a Sorokian riddle that is solved in Stalin's brain.

Conclusion

For Sorokin, Stalin's terror has never ended. It is all the same to him to talk about stagnation or perestroika, or glasnost, totalitarianism, or democracy, or Soviet or modern Russia. He sees the Soviet cultural mindset as an unchangeable factor inviting him to be chemically challenged by his liquid parodies. Sorokin wants to change the Russian brain, to take the "Sovietism" out of it, which he asserts keeps appearing even in contemporary Russia through the well-known schizophrenic rapture of "us" and "them." Although in "a century of high technology, but with Soviet brains, this is modern Russia…Russia cannot get rid of Sovietism in itself and always looks for some new forms for it."[125] Sorokin remains in the *Thaw* era because for him literature is a "dead world' (*eto mertvyi mir*)[126] that Stalin left behind, and thus all

[124] Geniz, "Strashnyi son."
[125] Vladimir Sorokin, "V Mavzolee dolzhen lezhat' Ivan Groznyi," interview by L. Novikova, *Kommersant,* August 22, 2008, p. 14, at https://www.kommersant.ru/doc/1014309 (accessed November 15, 2019).
[126] "Literatura ili kladbishche"

noticeable changes in his style do not mean much: his water works on *chistka*. The writer follows the changes of the world and yet remains faithful to his porn liquidation. In Putin's time he hardens his liquid porn by writing *Ice Trilogy,* but in it he still shows secret gangs who make use of Gulag and Nazi death camps and turns people into "meat machines." With the "Ice" trilogy he changes the quality and quantity of the water, bringing it back to cultural stagnation, frozen water in which sailing is impossible: "and *Ice*, it is as if it has frozen in my *marina* (*pristan'*)"[127] (my emphasis).

He does not simply implement socialist discourse but also shows how violence is done to that language, often performed as sexual abuse pushed to the extreme of death. Death is the zero-point, a timeless zone from which a clone, double, ghost, or a new sexual deviation reappear to herald the resurrection of the original discursive body-text. This indicates the "acceleration of the absolute time of socialist-realist discourse to its extremes, resulting in a conceptual explosion" that Marina Balina finds to be a dominant device in sots-artists, including Sorkin.[128] The body-text in Sorokin is fluid, for "sots-art time is highly fluid" since it goes only in one direction, but is "capable of returning once again to the objective reality of historical events, though not in order to restore 'the proper course of history,' but rather simply to 'change partners'—to make contact with another element of absolute time."[129] The constant returning, cloning, doubling, and repetition as leitmotifs of Sorokin's corporeal text appear as attributes of absolute time that is at its core pornographic: perpetual changes of partners that make an orgiastic narrative that results in an ejaculatory river flood over the literary past, present, and future. Sorokin mixes genres, historical periods…the movement back and forth in time also applies to that in space, as Sorokin

[127] "Ia literaturnyi narkoman, no ia eshche umeiu izgotovliat' eti narkotiki," interview by N. Kochetkova, *Izvestiia*, September 14, 2004, pp. 11–12, at https://iz.ru/news/294137 (accessed November 15, 2019).
[128] "Playing Absolut Time: Chronotypes of Sots-Art," in Endquote, 60.
[129] Ibid., 62–63.

perceives Russian literature as space through which his narrative flows. By combining spacial and temporal coordinates of Soviet/Russian literature, Sorokin's pornography comes close to Bakhtin's chronotope. The geographical markers of his liquid fascism are the Russian province, city, capital, forest, sea, Siberia, and Germany.

More than anything, Sorokin's prose is characterized as the absurd and disgusting narrative "about nothing," which leads to nowhere. I view Sorokin's oeuvre as the Line of all Lines, nonsensical status quo, or stagnation; the flow of urinary, fecal, and ejaculatory juices running from one story to another, which moves forward only when they are expelled from the hard water. "Usually, whenever the latest book (*ocherednaia kniga*) came out, it sailed away from me like a ship, and I would start writing another."[130] Each next book (*ocheredn*aia kniga) is a part of the catalog of ships gliding in Sorokin's water, or a person/body standing in his literary queue waiting for nothing. For him, prose "is deep-sea diving, while writing scripts is coming ashore."[131] For his porn poetics, Sorokin borrows the liquid characters from Tolstoy, who sees mankind as unstable water: "Men are like rivers—the water is the same in one and all, but each river is sometimes narrow, sometimes fast, then wide, then quiet. So are people. Every man bears in himself the rudiments of all human traits; but sometimes one trait manifests itself, sometimes another, and a man often become quite unlike himself, while still remaining the same man" (*Resurrection*, 194).[132]

Due to the depiction of sodomy between the clones of Stalin and Khrushchev, the prosecutor's office opened a criminal case against Sorokin for dissemination of pornography.

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[130] "Ia literaturnyi narkoman."
[131] Vladimir Sorokin, "Podmorozhennaia Rossiia: Vladimir Sorokin o fil'me Aleksandra Zel'dovicha 'Mishen,'" interview by V. Nuriev, *Nezavisimaia gazeta*, July 5, 2011, at http://www.ng.ru/cinematograph/2011-07-05/7_mishen.html (accessed November 15, 2019).
[132] Lev Nikolaevich Tolstoi, *Voskresenie*, Moskva: Kniga po Trebovaniiu, 2011.

This was upon the initiative of the pro-Putin youth movement, who organized public demonstrations in Moscow against the book and its author on June 27, 2002, called the "Sorokoviny for the Bolshoi Theater." Sorokoviny, which means a wake held on the fortieth day after a death but also implies Sorokin's guilt (*Soroko-viny*), held the protest exactly on the fortieth day after the Bolshoi Theater had contracted Sorokin to write the libretto for a new opera. For this performance the protesters made a brochure with selected excerpts from Sorokin's works that they threw into a toilet bowl and filled it all with bleach. This way "the writer dissolved in bleach,"[133] which functions as a disinfectant of the fighters for cultural purity, also removing stains of his dirty realism from the public discourse. Many conspiracies arose, asserting that this scandal was Sorokin's PR program, thanks to which he finally became famous in Russia. Sorokin's reaction to these theories, though meant to negate them in fact, confirmed his porn program. He that he got a necessary dose of fame with the publication of *The Queue* that all French newspapers wrote about: "For a young 29-year-old man, it was like an injection of the strongest drug. Since then, I calmed down. Circulation will grow and that's great. But when they destroy books, it doesn't matter what kind, that's pure fascism (*eto chistoi vody fashism*)."[134] For him this is the "beginning of the literary renaissance," the rebirth of good literature: "I believe that this shameful action is still a return to literary-centrism, but so far in a painful and ugly form. It's like childbirth when it is painful for the mother in labor and the child, who then stops crying, falls asleep and smiles."[135] The word-play he used to explain how he became a writer "*popal pod mashinu*," which might imply—to be run over by a car, and to fall under a processing, printing, or typing machine—speaks volumes in favor of Sorokian corporeal literature in which

[133] "Pisatelia rastvorili v khlorke," Kommersant110, June 28, 2002, at https://www.kommersant.ru/doc/329810 (accessed April 29, 2019).
[134] "Uboinoe salo: Vladimir Sorokin: 'Ia khotel napolnit' russkuiu literature govnom.'"
[135] Ibid.

people are “just letters on a piece of paper.” Like his characters, the author himself is just a mere word, a body in and of the text that can be killed, smashed, reproduced, typed out, and dissolved in a chemical product and transformed into another discursive being: his own clone.

CONCLUSION

Late-Soviet pornography emerges as a "matter out of place" —to use Mary Douglas' theory of *Purity and Danger*[1]—not dangerous in itself but when put vis-à-vis socialist realism and historical "fathers" Lenin and Stalin (and his double Hitler) to reactivate additional concentration camp metaphors, it becomes a real dirt. The writers of pornography position themselves in the playground of Soviet dirt which they show to the world. Their pornography confronts the Soviet ideological "supreme" truth enforced by the socialist regime through fairytales and mythmaking. Jacques Derrida's philosophy of deconstruction, with its *aporetic* and *apodictic* characteristics of knowledge outlines the postmodern anti-Soviet (in)determinate truth/s conveyed in pornography. The philosophy of late-Soviet pornography rests on the sexual, cultural, sociopolitical, and discursive periphery, where the Soviet "porn" tale is deconstructed to show the dirty minds of the past, and then reconstructing them to hold the new pornographic discourse.

Deeply rooted in socialist realist aesthetics, sots-porn remerges from the internal taboo. As a desired object, Soviet ideology, together with its fathers (i.e,. Lenin as the narrative inventor and Stalin as the executioner) and mother Russia, calls upon the primary instincts of Eros and Thanatos. This discursive constellation links pleasure and terror. The writers fetishize everything Soviet as bearing the absurd of making a bright future via transgressions. By means of this sexual antagonism – a fear of castration/death and an erotic desire for the substituting object of loss – they arrive at a common, double porn project: to replace danger with pleasure in humiliation through satire and sadism mirroring that crime, and to repeat victims' experience in masochism by recalling the Soviet regime's hostility and harm that its extended hand (the

[1] Mary Douglass, *Purity and Danger*. New York: Routledge, 1966.

socialist narrative) promoted. Male pornographers fight with the Soviet historical fathers over Russia. Russia is the woman whose body they possess and manipulate through such antagonism. Possession of the woman in pornography, as Dworkin notices, "is presented as the reason for the antagonism, whereas in fact it is the antagonism that gives value to possession of the woman. The antagonism that counts in the sexual sphere is the antagonism between male and male because it is between two real (that is, phallic) beings."[2]

Pornography is kept in between heroism and anti-heroism. The writers perceive themselves, and ask to be recognized by other liberals, as heroes and their pornographic works as great heroic deeds. Simultaneously, their anti-heroism is emphasized by the pornographers themselves and their radical opponents. The pornographers are in a large part responsible for creating a "new sincerity" through life-living porn, in which sexual attraction, seduction and copulation become a mutual erotic game of power with their sizeable readership and critics. A part of the game is that at times both sides reproach each other for "sexual deviations" which are een as serious criminal and medical issues. Pornography is a postmodern hybrid given as a realistic narrative combining different genres: thriller, detective novel, horror, porn film, crime drama, and romance. As such, porn blemishes the ideal image and reputation of Soviet realism by making a hole in the discursive iron curtain through which the writers' phalluses will be visible. Porn appears as a discursive outcome of man's alienation and, though it stands on the collective Soviet body, it endorses individuality.

If the state of exile marks a new life for Armalinsky and Limonov where they were re-born as pornographers, the "internal exile" manifested in withdrawal into the Moscow

[2] Andrea Dworkin, *Pornography: Men Possessing Women*, New York: Penguin Books, 1981, p. 160.

underground and flirting with the West marks a rebirth and new beginning for Erofeev and Sorokin. Both exiles bring alienation from, and union with, Mother Russia and its language, history, culture, and people. They all experience linguistic and spatial alienation that through internal self-studies of their Soviet traumas they turn into a psychological exile. This way they symbolically enter Mother Russia's womb, and their re-birth involves coming closer to the Russian people's collective consciousness, which is filled with terrifying images of the past. By exploiting the mother tongue (mat) they bring all that out that comes as the trauma of birth. The external/internal exile, with its rapture of oppositions, is turned into a S/M sexual game for the postmodern man. This is a never-ending game of vice in which the pornographers, like compulsive gamblers, repetitively make their words, bodies, bones and genitals as the chips that they place on the table to win over and over again against the Soviet-minded public. This practice brings them erotic pleasure. As Freud asserts with regards to Dostoevsky, addictive playing replaces the "vice" of masturbation since "playing" used to denote hands on the genitals.[3] Like for Dostoevsky, for late-Soviet pornographers "playing the game" is a repetition of compulsory masturbation and auto-eroticism. Their thirst for individual freedom and even passion for freedom of speech leads them to make discursive sex a communication tool. And they are doing it in public and with the public, but with a secret agenda and in mysterious play societies.

Even as each of them plays his own game, there are common rules that they all follow. The secret sect which Armalinsky's protagonist Husband and Wife join resembles Limonov's bisexual clique of the double, that is, he and Natalia as another husband and wife. This further

[3] Sigmund Freud, "Dostoevsky and Parricide," *The Standard Edition*, Vol. 21 (1927-1931), London: The Hogarth Press, 1961, p. 193.

echoes two mirroring bisexual stories of Erofeev-Irina and Sorokin-Marina, and their enigmatic ËPS group. They all strive to be visible and yet remain covered: Armalinsky is hoody-hiding behind the computer and in his M.I.P. publishing house, Limonov behind masks, photos and camera, Erofeev and Sorokin behind female characters and in the water. Their main job is to act like Jews living in hiding who changed their names during the time of Stalin's anti-Semitic campaign, and the time of concentration camps is constantly restored in their pornography. It can be said that all four writers are members of a large group of satiric fighters whose collective gang's name is "We." Especially if we consider that writers of satiric texts commonly referred to Stalin as "Us" (mustache),[4] which pornographers, known for their language play, could easily render as an alternation of English "we." The comparison of comparable danger of "porn in exile" with "porn at home" shows that there is a pattern of linguistic mobility and fluidity that stands in contrast with the Soviet narrative. There are many instances when the public and critics draw parallels between the two porn camps and detect specific aesthetic elements as a connecting tissue between their works. This is especially true for Limonov and Sorokin, and Sorokin and Erofeev. The most thought-provoking fusion of Armalinsky and Limonov, however, appears in a comment by certain "The Eye" on the Internet: "I am listening now Pushkin's *Secret Notes* by Armalinsky and for myself I called it "Pushkin with lemon" because of my association to Limonov's *Edichka*."[5]

Debunking the Soviet myth, these pornographers also apply a Fedorovian alternative reproduction method, that is, the creation of the sons from the dead fathers, which functions as an artistic resurrection of cultural and historical ancestors, first on earth and then in space and on

[4] See Karen L. Ryan, *Stalin in Russian Satire, 1917–1991*, Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2009.
[5] See *Parapushkinistika*, in *A. S. Pushkin, Tainye zapiski 1836-1837 godov*, ed. Mikhail Armalinsky, Minneapolis: M.I.P. Company, 2013, p. 520.

other planets. Their esoteric porn futurism translates Fedorov's phrase "our body is our task" into something more concrete: "our body is our (porn) work (delo)." The body is that of the mummified Lenin and the "infectious" Stalin. Pornography resurrects the fathers' bodies together with their pornographic minds. In this business, the sons must be technologically equipped, and thus their own or their characters' bodies are always linked to machines (computer, sewing machine, typing machine, weapons, cars, camera, meat grinder, etc.). This amalgamation gives birth to shapeless bodies and androgynous bodies, or liquid corporeality, ghosts, and clones.

Visual effects are essential for self-mastering and resurrecting the past, for the ghosts have to be caught in close-up, otherwise nobody believes they exist. Porn relies on postmodern artistic sincerity, which is inevitably linked to the absurd, irony, and theatricality. This type of literature follows a perestroika-era preoccupation with "new sincerity" (which we find in works by Timur Novikov and Dmitri Prigov') or, rather, with "pathological sincerity" as branded by Sergei Kuryokhin, which yields new artistic expressions on the background of the Soviet trauma and memory.[6] Late-Soviet pornographers aim to make films out of their literary pornography while staging regularly their theatrical performances inside and outside the text. In the context of a theatrical and cinematic framework, they assume someone else's identity, wear masks or costumes, change voices and gender, and apply specific speaking practices and bodily movements. Simultaneously, each pornographer appears on the stage/screen to cry "It's me!" The Stanislavskii method appears as the leading system of the tasks (*dela*) that they as actors deliver to the public. Pornography, therefore, as an entertaining performance simultaneously

[6] See Ellen Rutten's chapter "'But I Want Sincerity So Badly!' The Perestroika Years and Onward," in *Sincerity after Communism: A Cultural History*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 2017, pp. 78-121.

elicits collective trauma, memory of the past, and forgetting. The past and the present are jointly shown as the "theater of cruelty," a horror porn play that is meant to excite the authors and to entertain the viewer. The writers of pornography make the concentration camp the common ground for the secret discourse that prevails in obscenity and sado-masochism. They symbolically place a "new porn sincerity" within commercial production and technology, the sex drive and the death drive, and the collective memory of Gulag and Holocaust. In regard to the obscenity of the Holocaust, Žižek writes: "…the execution of the Holocaust *was treated by the Nazi apparatus itself* as a kind of obscene dirty secret, not publicly acknowledged," which brought "surplus-enjoyment provided by the executive orders." This impersonal obedience in obscenity kept-in-the-shadows sustains Power and "the moment they are publicly recognized, the edifice of Power is thrown into disarray."[7] The pornographers have their dirty little secrets, and even though each of them takes the consequences for his own work, the overarching anti-Soviet narrative keeps them as the impersonal executives of the obscene order. There is one way to make the pornographic secret plot a real-life performance: to enter into dialogue with chaos. This dialogue is delivered and produced through technology and camouflage, or by periodically stepping out of the text, acting in absence, or becoming the real anti-hero participating in and creating Russian everyday life. By breaking the rules of the game in his post-1990 activism, Limonov entered the "forbidden" zone where he could be publicly recognized, and where obscenity became more personal, thus creating a sincere cultural and political chaos.

Heroic (auto)biography mixed with confessional tragedy are the genres that are most misused in pornographic texts. There are two directions in which the genre of (auto)biography

[7] Slavoj Žižek, *The Plague of Fantasies*, London: Verso, 1997, p. 55; and "Why Doe the Law Need an Obscene Supplement?", in *Law and the Postmodern Mind: Essays on Psychoanalysis and Jurisprudence*, eds., Peter Goodrich and David Gray Carlson, Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1998.

develops: first, toward *zhitie* narrative that underwent a renaissance in Stalin culture; second, toward the accounts of the victims of Stalin's Gulag. Anna Makolkin holds that biography as a genre has its roots in oral life-telling practice derived from Russian funeral songs (*plachi* and *prichitaniia*) that had been sung by hired mourners and weepers. These performers, who offered a clear biographical plot of the deceased – which included numerous life stages ranging from childhood to the event which trigged the narrative, that is, the person's death – "may be regarded as the predecessors of professional biographers."[8] Pornographers, too, make up heroic characters, go through their childhood and adolescence, and reveal the reason for their death. Such a plot corresponds to the heroic biographies "that flourish in times of strong dictatorship" (Makolkin 92), such as Stalin's. Pornographic biography also relates to the new period in (re)discovering Russian sexuality, in the late- and post-Soviet eras, in which biographical facts and the evidence of cultural, social and historical perversions are given as writers' sexual experience, which is necessary for the pornographic mythmaking. The writers of porno-biography take upon themselves the role of the mourners lamenting over the dead father Stalin and his body, that obscenity that they bring into life again in their narrative, and whose life they retell by appropriating his heroic and anti-heroic feats. Parallelly, they also wail over dead Soviet literature and discourse. Their role is like that of Aristoxenus (360—? B.C.), who marked a new era in the history of Greek biography—known as the "peripatetic period," when "reassessment of the old heroes and of the accustomed ways of describing them" occurred—with his subverted non-heroic biographical subjects confronting the old models of Socrates, Plato and Aristotle (Makolkin 89). Referring to Aristoxenus's biographies, D. R. Stuart asserted that "licentiousness and sexual perversions were his pet themes in the invective of the orators, philosophers and the

[8] Anna Makolkin, "Probing the Origins of Literary Biography: English and Russian Versions," *Biography* 19, No. 1 (Winter 1996), pp. 87-104, here 88.

raillery of biographical comedy."[9] Thus, we can say that the post- or anti-heroic period of Russian/Soviet biography begins with late-Soviet pornographic biography. If democratization of biography in the old times meant expending the biographical characters' profiles, including musicians, poets, or women, porno-biographies democratize the genre by taking in the authors from the cultural margins, i.e. themselves, as the main characters, and their sexual fantasies as life facts.

Pornographic (auto)biography is meant to be a guide for (im)moral, physical and spiritual improvement, and a ticket for freedom. A new subject emerges to occupy the central place in late-Soviet biographical cycle—the pornographer. Writing of "exemplary lives" is transformed into pornographic self-reflection, capturing the life, sexual adventures, and great deeds of the anti-hero. The anti-hero becomes a new saint whose possible modes of being are: to act as Christ, a pre-Christian god, a male homosexual, lesbian and prostitute, a monster who kills and practices sinful cannibalism and sodomy. Postmodern Soviet pornography runs as a reproduction of the Great Terror for the masses, and as such it is the embodiment of what Mikhail Ryklin names "pornoangelism." Ryklin asserts that in the visual arts of the epoch of the Great Terror, sculptures and people's faces in the photos of the 1930s-40s are directed to collective identity, to represent "not usual visual images, but zombies that accumulated in themselves death and in its power appear absolutely alive."[10] The zombie images, however, obliterate any possibility of a prototype; it is hyper-simulation in itself, emerging from the orgy of collective bodies. Postmodern simulation of "the dimension of signs and codes of the canon of Stalin's epoch," Ryklin claims, resulted on the one hand in "the reproduction of phantasmified signifiers of the

[9] Duane Reed Stuart, *Epochs of Greek and Roman Biography*. Berkeley: U of California P, 1928, p. 147, quoted in Makolkin, p. 89.
[10] Mikhail Ryklin, *Terrorologiki,* Tartu: Ad Marginem, 1992, p. 85.

market, and on the other, at the level of mass culture, in pornoangelism, a type of commercialization of politics of *glasnost* on the domestic market" (86). Pornoangelism is simulation, and not imitation. Imitation needs a prototype-original, while simulation takes all the characteristics of the original deleting at same time the borderline separating the copy from the original. Terror in the glasnost era became a necessary rhetorical practice that had no external equivalent; it was in itself its internal and external language play with "great dosage of death in the form of new portions of historical optimism. This was zombie optimism, the great future without variants" (87). Pornoangels, therefore, imitate not the original but themselves; they are a simulation of that "which endangers the survival of the collective body," and what awaits them after this act of "self-exhaustion" is the decay of the body (Ibid.).

By remythologizing Soviet biographical narrative and reviving communist leaders, late-Soviet pornographers permanently recreate taboo. Bataille finds transgression to be *quinta essentia* of one's existence, claiming that "the taboo within us against sexual liberty is general and universal." [11] Bataille shows that taboos emerge as rituals concerning death and restrictions of sex, and this notion further reveals that without certain limits and normative boundaries the porno-man is given no chance to get to know his sexual self. He finds de Sade's words effective to support this idea: "There is nothing that can set bounds to licentiousness… the best way of enlarging and multiplying one's desire is to try to limit them" (48). Soviet biographical legend is additionally tabooed by being "colored" by biracial Pushkin, who keeps textual perversions together. Pushkin as the holiest saint of Russian culture becomes the lethal bullet for the Soviet and post-Soviet Russians. "With your Pushkin I conquered the entire America," and the "time will come when Pushkin will return to you" and "you will be turned into cattle by your own

[11] Georges Bataille, *Erotism: Death and Sensuality*, San Francisco: City Lights Bokks, 1986, p. 50.

genius," writes Kordiell Amasev, who appears in Armalinsky's *Parapushkinistika* to run a theater where Pushkin plays the main role (890). By making Pushkin a pornographer, which is most explicit in Armalinsky, or by adapting his work and his iconic image to pornographic discourse, the porno-players commit a blasphemy not only against the monumental poet, but also against Russian language and literature in general. Consequently, each pornographer becomes an "other," the external enemy who promotes Russophobia. Comments like Petr Vladov's are common: "One thing is a literary game. But completely different is an evil mockery over the memory of the poet who became a national sanctity and the use of his name for commercial speculations and Russophobic actions."[12] While the power of "our" Pushkin was used to unite the masses in the building of socialism, the power of "their" Pushkin is used to split the consciousness of the masses.

Together with accusations of anti-Pushkin sacrilege comes the growing conspiracy theories in the late- and post-Soviet eras, an anti-Semitic discourse that labels pornographers as "evil Jews." Given some of the comments that arose, it is possible that the writers themselves contributed in spreading such conspiracy discourses as well. An example of this trend are the following remarks: "they could open the curtain, where at one moment the Ethiopian branch intertwined with Jewish resulting in a literature of Jewish descent of the big Black."[13] Or "Today in Jewish environs there is a more radical version of that 'conspiracy theory,' with the institution of not only Jewishness but also Pushkin's homosexuality."[14]

[12] Petr Vladov, "Kto zashchitit chest' poeta?", *Pravda* 81, August 4, 1998. (In *Parapushkinistika*, p. 236).
[13] Irina Radishcheva, "Strannoe imia-Armalinsky," *Andrei*, no. 5 (1994), p. 25. In *Parapushkinistika*, p. 172.
[14] "Russkii analiz evreiskoi matritsy: Pushkin i Kabbala," December 9, 2007, http://wpc.freeforums.org/topic-t28.htlm. In *Parapushkinistika*, p. 492.

The obscene language that Armalinsky, Limonov, Erofeev, and Sorokin dig out from the pre-Christian, pagan time and Russian oral tradition, is another thing that connects them to the Jews and disconnects them from Russian Orthodox. Uspenskii states that in pagan times obscene language had a cultic function used for various customs of the Slavs; after adopting Christianity it obtained anti-Christian characteristics: the person who practices swearing is not a believer but a pagan (or adherent of another faith). In some Old Russian texts, swearing appears as inherently Jewish language (*zhidovskoe slovo*).[15] In porn texts, which replicate Soviet/Russian attitudes, obscenity naturally comes from other, foreign lands and cultures, mostly America, but also France and Germany. While some view that as balm for the Soviet wounds, others perceive it as another plot against Russia. V. Vainstein writes: "I love Americans! Not American Americans, but ours, Russian (read "Soviet"). Besides that the guys are cheerful, they are scratching somewhere our institutional Slavists-formalists (*institutskim slavianistam-bukvoedam*)…These cheerful Americans of ours poured balsam over my old Soviet wounds."[16] Not surprisingly, late-Soviet pornography becomes a field for the battle of "us" and "them," East and West, Jews and Russians. As postmodernists and pornographers, the four writers turned into a double danger, which is further associated with Jewishness for some traditionalists. Sergei Esin, known for his anti-Semitism and criticism of postmodernism, states: "Postmodernism is a method that allows the majority of intelligent and literate youth, mostly Jewish, who dream of becoming writers but lack true talent, and most importantly adrenalin that has to be produced in creativity, to create works, that is, texts which practically resemble literature only by their outer shell…"[17]

[15] Boris Uspenskii, "Mifologicheskii aspect russkoi ekspressivnoi frazeologii," in *Anti-mir russkoi kul'tury. Iazyk. Fol'klor. Literatura*, Moscow: Ladomir, 1996, p. 18.
[16] Vladimir Vainshtein, "Okolopushkinskie strasti," *Literaturnyi evropeets*, no. 6, Frankfurt on Main, 1998, p. 45. In *Parapushkinistika*, p. 246.
[17] Sergei Esin, *Na rubezhe vekov: dnevnik rektora*, Moscow: "OLMA-PRESS," 2002, p. 15.

As Borenstein shows, the 1980s were marked by a boom of conspiratorial theories meant to put an end of to Russia's great narratives, emerging as "plots against Russia."[18] The question then arises: Is pornography, given its power of discursive catastrophe, another plot against Russia which emerges through apocalyptic imagery (Limonov's bombs, planetary destruction in terrorism, and secret brotherhoods) and ridicule of language, literature and politics? Fucking, open and secret at the same time, which is commonly schematic in porn, carries a larger discursive goal of purging the "order" of Stalin's heirs. A dramatic impetus of conspiratorial narrative, Borenstein asserts, "depends on a similar tension between secrecy and disclosure. To be compelling, conspiracy must first convince or remind the audience that the real truths about our world are being hidden, whereupon much of the rest of the narrative is concerned with exposing the secret truth" (68). The glasnost era's quest for reveling the hidden truths is elaborated version of the discursive activism of Khrushchev's Thaw reforms, claims Borenstein:

> Hence the rise of chernukha and the obsession with repetition of no-longer new secrets, the ritualistic airing of familiar dirty laundry: like pornography, both chernukha and conspiracy trade in the revelation of what we have already seen before but must not exposed in polite company. Pornography requires endless variations on the familiar in order to keep customers' interest, but what is it that conspiracy sells? Conspiracy thrives in the world of entertainment, yet the available variations to the conspiratorial plot are only slightly greater in number than those that can be found in 'men's magazines' and sex videos (72-73).

[18] Eliot Borenstein, *Plots Against Russia: Conspiracy and Fantasy after Socialism*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2019, pp. 59-60.

Is pornography equal to Russophobia? Is Russian porno-phobia turned into its mirror image of self-hating in sots-porn, in which Russia's unburied bodies are erect and the Jews are resurrected as traditional villains, forced to perform zombified "brainfucking"? Is the main reason for the development of the "hardcore conspiratorial narrative" that porn appears as "fascism with a human face" (Borenstein, 125)? The troublesome Jews who are being proclaimed responsible for both anti-Soviet and pro-Soviet directives (given their participation in the Revolution), the Jews who are representative of dangerous hyper-sexuality, including homosexuality, the Jews as eternal victims after Hitler's and Stalin's crimes, and the Jews as leading intellectuals who revenge through art, science, and literature—all of these aspects are reinforced in pornographic texts in which the writers massively play with fascist rhetoric and imagery. Whether or not the writers are Jewish, the question of their Jewish "tricks" threatening Russian culture, land and language prevails. As if seeking justification for conspiracy, the pornographers themselves act from the Jewish position by playing the victims of regimes and socialist ideology and by bringing in the Soviet collective guilt (akin to German), running at the same experimental psychiatric and bio-genetic porn-labs, in which their porn discourse is produced as an alternative "Doctor's Plot." By pornographizing Soviet cultural space and Russian language, the porno-doctors symbolically opt for killing Stalin's Soviet-minded heirs.

The controversial theory that the Jews control the world and promote anti-Soviet discourse marks the pornographers as the Jews who make porn, live porn, and represent porn. And they themselves support these stories. We find in *Parapushkinistika* such a dialogue that speaks of ËPS "liquid fascism" and the image of evil Jewish Pushkin: first a quote published in *Itogi* (October 29, 1998): "Vodka – like Pushkin – is our everything. It is not for no reason that recently on the shelves appeared a Pushkin-like transparent vessel filled with forty-degree

[Sorokin!]…"; and the replay to this comment published in *Feniks* (no. 1, (January 1999)): "The author of the article…is certainly happy that Pushkin is flooded with liquid devil (*v Pushkina zalili zhidkogo d'iavola*)" (254). Limonov, Sorokin and Erofeev are all at one point accused of both Russophobia and anti-Semitism. Armalinsky as the Jew is criticized for pornographizing Jewishness: "better than *Parapushkinistika* was to publish *Paraevreistvo.*"[19]

The pornographers maintain their paradoxical discourse on the background of Khrushchev's "Secret Speech," which actually opened up Stalinist culture and society, baring them nakedly. Khrushchev's de-Stalinization campaign is the leading ideology in pornographic discourse that speaks of and from the position of victims and reiterates the terrible obscenity of the past. The writers perform the very same ritual of pornographizing the Stalin myth and culture. They make socialist pornographic narratives turning the historical time into erective time calculated by small repetitive temporal sequences (orgasms) that are always the same but keep one's expectation anew and fantasy alive. They discover a new pornographic truth in Gorbachev's glasnost era, which represented another attempt of Soviet democratization via anti-Stalinism. The voices of pornographers in this period merge with the voices of people united in the Memorial Society, who protested against the state's veiled truths and half truths about the legacy of Stalinist totalitarian regime in an effort to bring openness to the past and recognition of the victims.[20] Their porn game also become one with the complete disintegration of socialism and the liberation of the 1990s. In this regard the mass quest to return to the "real Lenin" and "the true Leninist word" that overpowered public discourse in 1990 seems to be a continuation of porn de-Stalinization. The main task of the reforms was "to cleanse socialism from Stalin's

[19] *Parapushkinistika,* p. 533.
[20] See Kathleen E. Smith, *Remembering Stalin's Victims: Popular Memory and the End of the USSR*, Ithaca, NY, Cornell University Press, 1996

perversions, to bring it back to the ideals of Marx and Lenin, the soul and heart taken away by Stalin," as an article published in *Kommunist* articulated.[21] Stalin's "perversions" are put side by side with all other manipulations of Lenin's words and thoughts (paraphrases, translations, rewriting and editing) for the purpose of political advantage in the context of a specific historical period. Therefore, the public's quest to "check all Leninist words for authenticity in order to finally find a real Leninist voice among them" (Yurchak) appears as an ultimate call for de-pornographizing Lenin from the obscene narrative whose Master Penman is Stalin himself, and his successors. Stalin is again recognized as a pornographer who takes the canonical figure Lenin (but also Pushkin!) for the main character(s) of his own perversions. And this scenario is well established and appears visible in late-Soviet porn. Yet, the biggest paradox of this discursive revision of Lenin's voice and narrative was that "the true Lenin is unknown." As Yurchak notes, this idea of resurrecting Lenin, and "creating his living copy, or at least simulating his thought process" led the public to search not for Lenin the politician but for Lenin the man. Showing him completely "naked," as a simple small man on the historical scene added to desacralization of Lenin-God. It turned out that the "truth" that most critics tried to tell was "a disclosure of secrets and mysteries engrained in Lenin's nature, pedigree, and physiology" (Yurchak). The question "Who is the real Lenin?" was accompanied by the hunt for the Truth that would reveal his real face by taking off his mask, and his fake name ("Lenin") by returning to the real one Ul'ianov"), and thereby demythologize him. Proofs of Lenin's non-Russian ethnic roots flooded the media. Efim Melamed found that Lenin's older sister was the first to discover facts about their Jewish roots, revealing that their maternal grandfather, Moshka Blank was a Zhitomir Jew, which she

[21] Quoted by Aleksei Yurchak in "Esli by Lenin byl zhiv, on by znal, chto delat': Golaia zhizn' vozhdia," NLO 83, 2007, at *Zhurnalnyi zal*, http://magazines.russ.ru/nlo/2007/83/ur13.html (last accessed May 16, 2019).

wished to add to her brother's biography. But the command from Stalin's office arrived "to be utterly silent."[22]

Endless de-Stalinization in Russia always reveals some new secret Jews. Tat'iana Tolstaya gave her take on the situation and Lenin Jewishness in 1990 in her parodic article "I Can't Be Silent": "Pushkin was a Jew. His real name is Pushkind. The facsimile of his own signature is often reproduced, so that anyone can see this with their own eyes. It is written: Pushkind.…And what he wrote, he wrote!…Where are you running, Orthodox?![23] Like pornographers, Tolstaya directs her parody towards Pushkin and makes him support this Jewish porn narrative of de-Stalinization. Late-Soviet pornography in many aspects anticipated the "wild nineties" and post-Soviet situation.

In *Overkill*, Borenstein scrutinizes the proliferation of public discourse about sex in the post-Soviet period and the aesthetics of the 1990s as repetitive depictions of true violent crimes that together with sex inserted nationalistic and fascist discourse to rebuild the country's pride. Violent nationalistic pride is the question of storytelling, for "violence demands more story than does sex." (98). In pornography, Borenstein argues, "storytelling is kept to a minimum, since anything that is not overtly sexual is simply a distraction…[P]ornography also relies on a particular kind of novelty to make up for the limited variety of action: if new positions and perversions are unlikely to be found, at least the audience is treated to a constant flow of ever-changing participants." [24] In light of Borenstein's argument, I view late-Soviet literary porn as a

[22] Efim Melamed, Otrekis' ot iudeiskoi very (Novonaidennye dokumenty o evreiskikh predkakh Lenina)," Vestnik, no. 21 (332), October 15, 2003 (332). At http://www.vestnik.com/issues/2003/1015/win/melamed.htm (last accessed May 15, 2019).
[23] Tat'iana Tolstaia, "Ne mogu molchat'", *Ogonek*, no. 14, March 14, 1990, p 31.
[24] Eliot Borenstein, *Overkill: Sex and Violence in Contemporary Russian Popular Culture*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2008, p. 98.

discursive hybrid that is grounded in the storytelling of violence, that is, in "overkilling" of cultural and historical models, with graphic descriptions of pornographic deviations being projected onto Russian readers as they grow through the contact with this collective body. Borenstein states that serial narratives of violence echo discursive deconstruction of cultural and social order, giving birth to violence as "a cyclical, never-ending phenomenon that establishes the contours of the post-Soviet world" (99). Continuity is the model for serial porn narratives that began in the late-Soviet time. Both the sex and the violence that come in versions and variations in the stories from the 1970s to the 1990s, therefore, are just episodes of the "grand plot against Russia," and these "episodes are not entirely autonomous but interconnected, allowing for intricate plot entanglements and references to the prior events" (Borenstein 103). Never-ending porn narratives revolve around the dead, ghosts, and clones: the dead as victims of the communist regime, the dead that the writers themselves kill again and again (Pushkin, Stalin, Russian classics, language, literature), the ghosts of these dead bodies and minds that haunt their works, and the clones whom they invent or they themselves become. The series of porno-dialogue between the regime and writers develops as the matter of social, sexual and discursive pathology that is characterized as fascist violence. "Serial narrative provides a comfortable home for a serial killer" (Borenstein, 115).

Considering pornographers' performative "expertise," they appear as the fathers of performative art that will blossom in the post-Soviet Russian cultural space with groups such as Voina and Pussy Riot. Like the pornographers, Voina and Pussy Riot's artistic performances are not approved and awarded with applauses in Russia, but they, nonetheless, get support from the West. These groups take sex and obscenity from the private into the public sphere (churches, streets, museums, squares, court houses, etc.). The Pussy Riot leader, Nadezhda Tolokonnikova,

admits her performative models are primarily Sorokin and Prigov, but also Erofeev and Limonov.[25] She, too, goes back to Pushkin in order to talk about Sorokin's revolutionary art: "When they teach Pushkin in school they don't give you the context of why what he wrote could be dangerous and why he could be arrested or shot. But reading Sorokin you understand that literature and art can be dangerous."[26] For her, Sorokin is "the key to all contemporary culture." She was still a member of Voina when in 2008 they organized a group performance of sexual intercourse before a stuffed bear in the Moscow Biological Museum with a slogan "Fuck for the Heir Puppy Bear." As if answering to Limonov's quest for pregnancy of all women and fucking for his Natalia, the Stalinist-Pushkinist She-Bear, the pregnant Tolokonnikova partook in this "fucking business" in the museum, which was known for its political allusion to the election of Dmitry Medvedev (He-Bear). The group's name and the names of Voina's founders, a married couple known as Vor (thief) and Koza (she-goat),[27] also speak volumes about Limonov's influence. In 2010, Voina came out with the installation called "The Giant Galactic Space Penis." Comparable to the Eiffel-Tower-sized phallus that Limonov builds of himself to fight against the authorities and official discourse, Voina painted a giant phallus on one of the Sankt Petersburg bridges leading to the Bolshoi Dom. When the bridge raised, the penis got erect, sending the message "Fuck you" to the Federal Security Service and to the radical right. The members claim that this event was a mocking parody of Russia's vertically structured power, to show that "the great protest strength of all Russia's people was concentrated in that dick,

[25] See "Tolokonnikova, biseksual'nost', FACE, tiur'ma," vDud', *YouTube*, October 10, 2018, at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RNbXm8WKmow.
[26] Ibid.
[27] Oleg Vorotnikov (Vor of Voina) and Natalia Sokol the founders of the group.

attacking the authorities who systematically violate the human rights and freedoms. Our 65-meter-high Dick will remain the biggest anarcho-punk-dick in the world!" [28]

As with writers of porn, there is something elusive in Pussy Riot's activism no matter how open their performances seem to be. Their faces are covered with balaclava masks that give them a criminal look. By hiding their identities on the public "stage", the female artists are emphasizing that their discourse is what matters the most. Also, punk music allows them to be dangerous and to bring back forgotten screams to Russia, as for them one does not need to know how to sing because "it is punk: everything is screaming." This evokes Limonov-Natalia's porn song and Erofeev's porn serenade converted into a female version. Pussy Riot members often use their nicknames instead of their real names (Balaclava, Cat, Seraph, Terminator, and Blondie). The "real" author of the performative narrative arises in division of the two, the actual and the fool, and it would not be surprising to see that he is a man. Each identity is revealed in a gap between Pussy Riot's real faces and names behind the camouflaging entities, and between the public characters of those whom they attack or represent. These female voices become a vehicle by means of which political interests of the West, the US in particular, and Russia are deployed through the discourse of (in)tolerance. Pussy Riot appears as the test case regarding freedom of speech and human rights for both Russia and the West. Their art is current pornography over which America and Russia continue their long cold-war debate. By encouraging and promoting their performances, America in fact shows its power over "uncivilized," "backward," and "closed" Russia. Russia, on the contrary, with trials and criminal charges against the group, repeats once again the old measures of fighting a "cultural infection,"

[28] Bomblog: Voina: Art Insurrectionists by Forrest Muelrath, January 10, 2011, at https://plucer.livejournal.com/358384.html.

saying that such blasphemous projects are not for the puritan and innocent Russian people. Pussy Riot epitomizes the woman's body as the arena for a male political combat, or another Cold War porn game, and a never-ceasing dialogue between the "pure" and the "obscene," the East and the West.

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