THE BIRCH

Journal of Eastern European, Slavic, and Eurasian Studies



Paintings of Central Asia by Effie Gao, Columbia University.
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ABOUT *THE BIRCH*

Founded in 2004, *THE BIRCH* is the first national undergraduate publication devoted exclusively to Slavic, East European, and Eurasian studies. Any undergraduate student at any college or university is welcome to submit work to be published in our issues, featured both online and in print. We accept essays on the culture, history, and politics of the Slavic region, literary criticism, photography, translations, and creative writing.

THE BIRCH editorial board is composed of current undergraduate students at Columbia University. More information about *THE BIRCH* is available online, our Instagram account (@thebirchjournal), our website (thebirchjournal.com), and by emailing us at thebirchjournal@gmail.com.

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LETTER FROM THE EDITORS

In this edition of *THE BIRCH*, we continue a 20-year legacy of empowering undergraduate voices in their study of issues seldom covered by global media, fostering discourse that goes beyond mainstream narratives of Russia, Eurasia, and Eastern Europe.

The articles in this journal cover under-discussed topics that exist in the underbelly of our societies. From youth gangs in Georgia to HIV in Russia, from narratives of alcoholism to the realities of prostitution, our edition seeks to critically reject fixed thought processes and expectations. We hope that writers and readers alike will begin to question beyond the obvious and to interrogate the underlying assumptions that constitute this political and cultural moment.

Since *THE BIRCH* 2025 issue, Russia's unprovoked war of aggression in Ukraine has only intensified, enabled by the United States' increasingly passive role on the international stage. Beyond Ukraine, conflict and its consequences loom over the region, with unresolved tensions in Nagorno-Karabakh and Russian-occupied Georgia just two stark examples.

However, 2026 has also been marked with moments of hope. Peter Magyar's electoral victory ended the 16-year autocratic rule of Victor Orban that eroded democratic institutions in Hungary and undermined critical legislation in the European Union. While it's impossible to know the immediate implications of Orban's defeat, it nonetheless demonstrates the importance of a core tenet of this journal's mission: to reject complacency, and to challenge unjust realities with critical inquiry and scholarship.

We are proud to share that interest in *THE BIRCH* continues to grow, and with it, the remarkable amount and quality of submissions. Here is a selection of only a few standout pieces from the diverse group of articles we received, all of which pushed the envelope beyond previous editions. As the oldest undergraduate Slavic journal in the United States, we won't stop encouraging, strengthening, and growing alongside the voices of long-overlooked perspectives and underrepresented ideas.

We are beyond grateful to our writers, without whom *THE BIRCH* would not be possible, our team of passionate editors, the Columbia University Department of Slavic Languages, and the Harriman Institute for their unwavering commitment to our mission. And, most of all, we would like to thank you, our reader, for allowing us to share undergraduate voices, the next generation of scholars, thinkers, and changemakers within the Russian, Eurasian, and Eastern European spaces. We are honored to present you with the 2026 edition of *THE BIRCH*.

LORA TSEYTLIN & ALAINA PARENT
EDITORS–IN–CHIEF OF *THE BIRCH*

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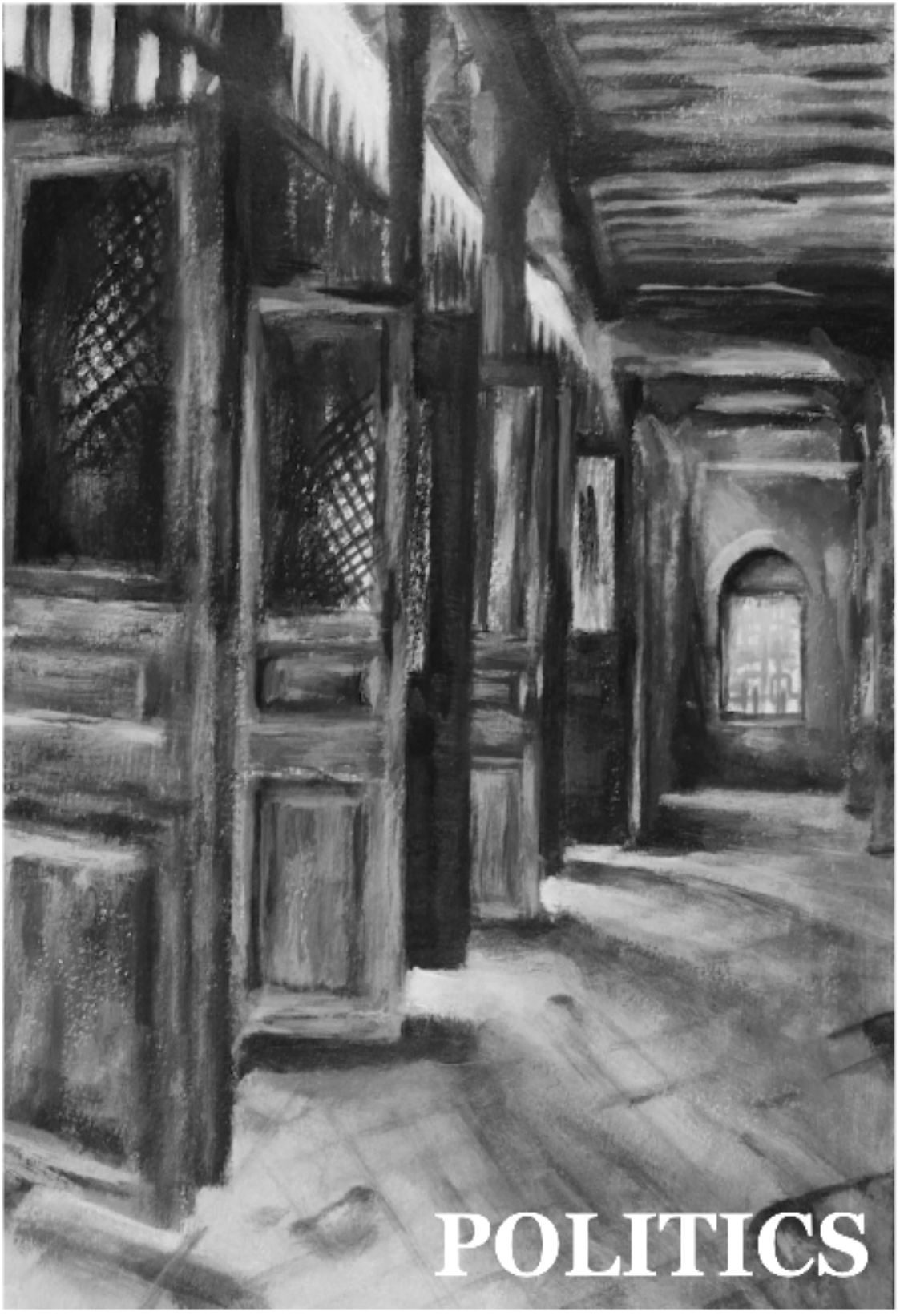
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POLITICS

Abstraction, Erasure, and Queer Lives: HIV Policy MSM, and Russian Biopolitics

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BEYOND NUMBERS TO HUMAN LIVES

When Russian public health reports attribute only a small proportion of HIV cases to "homosexual contact," it can obscure the real burden among men who have sex with men (MSM).[1] However, behind that number are real people. Spanning nearly five decades of scholarship and policy, from Foucault's foundational theory of biopower in 1978 to Russia's 2025 ban on the Elton John AIDS Foundation, this paper examines how the treatment of queer lives in Russian HIV policy has remained persistently marginalizing. Many gay men in Russia face both health risks and societal stigma, and official statistics often classify them only as epidemiological risk groups rather than as full social beings.[2,3] Getting treatment, discussing HIV status, or even finding accurate information can be difficult because of strict laws, stigma, and social pressure.[3] Behind the numbers are lives full of fear, silence, rejection, hidden love, and serious health risks.[1]

Official HIV categories are often treated as neutral tools for measuring disease and allocating public health resources.[1] However, drawing on Michel Foucault's 1978 The History of Sexuality, this paper argues that such classifications are not just descriptive, but also political. Foucault's central thesis is that modern power operates through the production of knowledge about populations, what he calls "biopower," where institutions classify and regulate individuals in ways that shape social norms and identities. Rather than simply repressing sexuality, power produces categories (such as "risk groups") that define and control how people are understood and governed.

This paper examines how Russian HIV policies and statistics frame gay men as "risk groups," using official reports and research alongside theories of population control from Foucault and queer visibility from Judith Butler to analyze what this framing reveals about the government's treatment of

queer people. These ideas help explain that numbers are not just numbers, as they affect who is seen, who gets care, and who is treated like a real person.[2]

STATISTICAL ABSTRATION: MSM & HIV IN RUSSIA

Russia's HIV public health data surveillance system classifies transmission routes of the disease into categories such as heterosexual contact, injection drug use, and "homosexual contact."[1] While official reports often cite a low proportion of cases as transmitted through same-sex contact, this likely underestimates the true prevalence due to underreporting and stigma, and independent studies tell a different story.[2,3] In Moscow and St. Petersburg, independent cross-sectional studies have estimated HIV prevalence among MSM at around 6%, a rate significantly higher than what official statistics suggest. Awareness of HIV status and engagement in treatment remain limited among MSM in these urban centers.[2] This misalignment occurs for several reasons. First of all, the legal environment makes homosexuality socially taboo, discouraging disclosure of same-sex behavior during medical consultations and reporting.[3] Additionally, laws banning so-called "gay propaganda" effectively limit health information and outreach tailored to queer communities.[4] Lastly, Russian HIV surveillance records broad modes of transmission (heterosexual, homosexual, or injection drug use) but does not systematically collect detailed data on sexual orientation, limiting the granularity of official statistics.[1]

Independent research helps fill these gaps. A 2012 study examining changes in HIV testing and medical care among MSM found that HIV prevalence among MSM in Moscow and St. Petersburg was about 6%, far higher than official estimates suggest, and reported significant levels of unprotected sex and exchange sex, behaviors that elevate HIV transmission risk.[2] A 2014 Moscow study referenced in the European MSM Internet Survey analysis, a study of a large-scale online survey of men who have sex with men across Europe, found that among HIV-positive MSM, approximately 23% reported being previously diagnosed, about 9% were on antiretroviral therapy (ART), and a smaller proportion had achieved viral suppression.[5] Overall, while larger nationally representative surveys like the European MSM Internet Survey show increases over time in testing and treatment, they still indicate substantial unmet treatment needs.[2] These realities show that public health data in Russia often treat MSM not as a community with specific epidemiological experiences but primarily as statistical anomalies or risks to be managed. This framing can contribute to gaps in care, as public health responses may focus on controlling risk rather than addressing the social and structural factors that shape MSM's access to testing, treatment, and prevention.[2] At the same time, this statistical abstraction strips individuals of their social identities as partners, workers, sons, and friends, reducing complex human lives to parameters such as "unprotected intercourse" and other epidemiological risk factors.[2]

FOUCAULT'S BIOPOLITICS: REGULATING LIFE THROUGH RISK

Foucault's concept of biopolitics shows that states do much more than enforce laws; they actively shape life by classifying and managing populations. As Foucault explains, modern power is characterized by "a biopolitics of the population," in which authorities regulate "births and mortality, the level of health, life expectancy and longevity" through various interventions and controls.[6] In other words, power within an institution operates by collecting data, defining norms, and guiding how people live and understand their own health, rather than simply punishing wrongdoing. In this sense, the power of a government isn't necessarily dictated by force, but by organizing and managing life itself. One way this occurs is through the creation of categories such as "risk groups," which allow governments and institutions to monitor, control, and intervene in populations deemed vulnerable or threatening.

In public health, these categories become instruments of power that decide who is counted, who gets care, and whose lives are visible.[1] Power works not just through law or force but through knowledge itself: As Foucault explains, modern power takes hold of life through "an explosion of numerous and diverse techniques for achieving the subjugations of bodies and the control of populations."[6] This shows how classification, measurement, and surveillance in public health actively develop norms around health and behavior rather than simply describing them. At the same time, Butler's insight that subjects are only recognizable within existing normative frameworks helps explain how these categories determine whose identities are seen as legitimate and whose are marked as deviant.[7] Together, these perspectives show how naming and reporting on bodies and behaviors do not simply reflect reality but actively construct norms around health, sexuality, and acceptable social conduct.

In Russia, MSM are statistically categorized by transmission risk rather than by social or community contexts, meaning official data primarily reflects epidemiological patterns rather than lived experiences.[2] This abstraction hides the social and structural factors driving HIV vulnerability, including stigma, limited access to culturally competent care, and laws that marginalize queer lives.[8] Culturally competent HIV care means healthcare providers who can talk about sexual health with MSM respectfully, confidential testing and treatment that protects patients' privacy, and prevention programs that reflect realities of queer communities rather than assuming heterosexual norms. Rising HIV rates among MSM reflect a combination of individual behaviors, limited access to services, stigma, and legal restrictions that shape risk and access to care.[2,3] Biopolitics decides whose life is counted, whose health is protected, and whose suffering is invisible, leaving some populations effectively expendable, as Foucault puts it, modern power works to "make live and let die."[6] The consequences are real, shaping the daily lives of men who must navigate a system that often sees them as numbers before people.[2]

QUEER THEORY & THE POLITICS OF VISIBILITY

Queer theory adds another dimension to this analysis by questioning visibility and erasure. Rather than assuming that "visibility is always liberatory," Judith Butler, in Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity, argues that subjects only become recognizable within existing norms, writing that "gender is the repeated stylization of the body... within a highly rigid regulatory frame."[7] In other words, what can be seen and recognized is already shaped by social rules that define which identities are intelligible and which are not. When applied to public health, this perspective shows that making certain populations more visible, such as labeling them as "at-risk" groups, does not necessarily lead to recognition or empowerment. Instead, public health institutions may use visibility as a way to classify and manage populations, rendering some individuals hyper-visible in ways that mark them as deviant or problematic. In this context, visibility becomes not simply a tool of recognition but also a regulatory mechanism that reinforces stigmatizing stereotypes rather than alleviating them.

In Russia, the small visibility MSM have in HIV statistics comes at a high cost because it frames them only as carriers of risk or disease rather than as people with full lives, families, and relationships. In public health data, MSM are primarily counted by risk category rather than as members of specific social networks, which may obscure the social dimensions of HIV vulnerability.[2] This narrow framing affects how public health communicates with them: programs rarely consider the ways queer communities organize or support one another, clinics and health systems often lack culturally sensitive services, and many men avoid seeking care altogether, fearing judgment, exposure, or even legal consequences.[3]

This erasure in public health mirrors broader legal pressures in Russia.[4] Laws banning "gay propaganda," first passed in 2013 and later expanded to target broader LGBTQ+ expression, severely limit what information can be shared about same-sex relationships.[4] These restrictions make it illegal to provide educational or prevention materials tailored to gay audiences, effectively blocking access to targeted HIV information in the communities that need it most.[8,4]

LIVED EXPERIENCE: STIGMA, SILENCE, & COPING

Behind every statistical and epidemiological category are real people living with the consequences of being made invisible in public health and society. For many MSM in Russia living with HIV and not fully engaged in treatment, stigma shapes nearly every part of their daily lives, from tense family relationships to encounters with medical providers that can be dismissive, judgmental, or hostile.[2] In interviews and qualitative studies, these men describe the ways they navigate a world that often sees them as risks or numbers rather than human beings, sharing experiences such as selective disclosure, coping strategies, and social isolation. Selective disclosure refers to the practice whereby MSM choose

to share their HIV status only with trusted friends or supportive female relatives, while avoiding health workers or acquaintances who might stigmatize them. Many adopt coping mechanisms like avoiding potentially stigmatizing people, seeking out peers who share similar experiences, or attempting to educate others about HIV to counter myths. Lastly, social isolation refers to the fear of being socially ostracized or rejected by family and community, intensifying the burden of living with HIV and complicating access to support networks.[2]

These experiences demonstrate how the abstraction of people into "risk statistics" translates into social isolation and psychological distress.[2] In public health data, numbers do not cry, struggle with disclosure, or wonder whether seeking care might expose them to a hostile society, but these are the lived realities that shape HIV outcomes.[2]

STRUCTURAL BARRIERS: LEGAL REPRESSION & CRUSHING CIVIL SOCIETY

The broader political environment in Russia amplifies the consequences of statistical abstraction and social stigma.[4] In 2025, Russia banned the Elton John AIDS Foundation, designating it an "undesirable organization" primarily for its support of LGBTQ+ communities and framing its work as promoting "non-traditional sexual relationships."[4] This move did not just cut funding; it showed that HIV care connected to queer communities is considered politically unacceptable.[4]

This ban is part of a wider trend of restricting civic space and labeling LGBTQ+ activism and health outreach as threats to "traditional values."[8] When organizations that offered testing, treatment resources, or peer support are shut down, MSM who once relied on them for safe services find themselves with even fewer care options.[4]

THE HUMAN TOLL: ACCESS TO CARE & SURVIVAL IMPERATIVES

The reduction of MSM to risk categories and the crackdown on supportive community organizations have real consequences for health and well-being.[2] While some data suggest measurable improvements in HIV outcomes, these gains exist alongside persistent structural barriers that complicate this picture. Research shows that over time, more men in Russia have been getting tested for HIV and engaging in treatment.[5] Between 2010 and 2017, the number of MSM who had ever been tested and those on ART increased, and more men achieved undetectable viral loads, which is a hopeful sign[4].

Yet, these improvements exist alongside a harsh reality. Many MSM still do not know their HIV status or are not connected to care.[5] These gaps appear larger than what official statistics indicate, suggesting that national reports may underrepresent inequities faced by queer communities.[1]

In this context, the effects of stigma and restrictive laws are not just abstract problems but matters of life and death. For many men, going to a clinic is not only about scheduling appointments or arranging transport; it is a complicated decision weighed

against potential social rejection, legal consequences, and the emotional burden of internalized shame.[3]

TOWARD RECOGNITION & HEALTH EQUITY

Russia's HIV policy system shows how public health can be deeply political.[2] Categories such as risk groups may look technical on paper, but they reveal and reinforce power structures that marginalize queer lives.[2] Treating gay men as abstract risk categories is more than a statistical detail. It erases their humanity and intersects with stigma, social exclusion, and limited access to healthcare.[3]

Looking through the lens of Foucault's biopolitics helps us see how the state manages life through its collection and use of data.[6] Queer theory on visibility adds another perspective, showing that being visible in a society that stigmatizes you can be just as erasing as being invisible.[7] To respond to Russia's HIV epidemic in an ethical and effective way, public health must move away from treating people as numbers and focus on policies that respect dignity, protect rights, and involve communities.[3] This means creating spaces where men can safely disclose their status, supporting local community services, and removing laws that make living as a queer person dangerous instead of recognizing it as part of human reality.

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Efficacy of Skill-Biased Immigration Laws: Evidence from the Baltics

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Referred to as "Baltic tigers," Latvia, Lithuania, and Estonia are often considered the European Union's (EU) fastest growing economies.[1] The Baltic States have historically shared similar economic growth patterns: simultaneously joining the EU in 2004, experiencing consistently high year-on-year GDP growth, as well as facing high emigration and low immigration. Nevertheless, the Baltic States have recently diverged in their economic growth and migration trends. Lithuania maintained higher economic growth after the Covid-19 pandemic, while Estonia and Latvia entered a recession in 2023 and 2024 respectively. This has been paralleled with Lithuania drastically increasing immigration from non-EU countries since 2019 as well as introducing a skill-biased immigration system, while Latvia and Estonia saw little change in immigration during this period. Skill-biased immigration policies of Lithuania favor immigrants with university-level education (defined as high-skilled) and immigrants with undersupplied vocational professions, such as truck drivers, plumbers, or electricians (defined as medium-skilled). This article considers a skill-biased immigration system, under which high-skilled and medium-skilled third country nationals have a better chance to immigrate than those who lack university education or vocational training.

Lithuania's new government pulled back skill-biased immigration reforms in 2024 with quotas on non-EU immigrants, while Latvia and Estonia continue to maintain more restrictive immigration policies.[2] Such shifts towards anti-immigration sentiment in the Baltics reflect an unfortunate pattern of many European countries introducing more restrictive immigration policies. Right-wing populist parties argue that immigration from outside of the EU harms the European countries' economies by limiting native residents' access to housing, welfare, and employment.

My findings suggest the opposite story: There is a strong positive correlation between skill-biased immigration from outside of the EU and GDP

growth. The positive impact of immigration is further corroborated by the negative relationship between high-skilled immigration and unemployment rate. This finding refutes the anti-immigration argument that immigration increases unemployment by replacing domestic workers with immigrant workers. Evidence from Lithuania indicates that the positive rate of growth means greater job creation that benefits all residents of immigrant-receiving countries.

In my research paper, I aim to explore whether skill-biased immigration laws have a positive effect on economic growth. While prior studies have examined the relationship between skill-biased immigration and economic growth, most authors either investigate individual countries or study the overall effects of migration on growth in a large subset of countries. Very few sources compare the effects of one country's introduction of skill-biased immigration laws to countries without such laws, but with otherwise similar economic conditions. My research aims to address this gap by presenting a cross-country study for countries underrepresented in scholarship—the Baltics—that investigates the relationship between skilled immigration and economic growth. By shedding light on how dynamic migration patterns are impacting the economic growth of the Baltic States, this study can be used to inform immigration policy of these and other EU countries.

SCOPE OF RESEARCH TOPIC & PROJECT OBJECTIVES

Using Eurostat data on the educational attainment of immigrating non-EU citizens and residence permit issuance for non-EU citizens, and annual unemployment rate as well as World Bank data on GDP and GDP per capita growth, I will focus on the immigration of non-EU citizens to the Baltic States. I created a dataset using this data from 2015 to 2023 with the proportion of immigrants whose education level is high (bachelor's degree or more) as well as GDP and GDP per capita growth and unemployment rate for all three countries.[3] I further compiled this dataset with the change in overall immigration in terms of issuance of new residence permits, the size of the overall immigrant base, the proportion of the overall population that is highly skilled (bachelor's degree or more), and the size of overall population for each country.

I chose 2015-2023 to accommodate parallel trends analysis research design. Parallel trends analysis allows me to simultaneously track diverging economic growth trajectories of two studied groups of countries: Lithuania and Latvia+Estonia. More broadly, parallel trends analysis is a key part of the difference-in-differences (DiD) models, which economists use to compare a group (in this case Lithuania), which experiences a certain change, with the groups, which do not experience the same change (Latvia and Estonia). In 2019 Lithuania completed significant immigration reforms, which included creating a single online platform "MIGRIS" to allow high-skilled workers apply for residence permits and initiated "Digital Explorers" project, focused on recruiting information and technology experts from African countries, particularly Nigeria.[4] These reforms were not matched with similar policies in Latvia and Estonia and, thus, constitute a key change that can be studied through parallel trends analysis. The 2015-2023 period is suitable for this model because it includes 2015-2018, when all three countries had similar immigration policies, and 2019-2023, when Lithuania adopted a skill-bi-

ased immigration system but Latvia and Estonia did not.

I focused my research specifically on the immigration of non-EU citizens because immigration of EU citizens into the Baltic States remained proportionally negligible during the selected period. As indicated above, the case selection is strongly motivated by the fact that all three Baltic States experienced similar economic growth and migration patterns from 2004 to 2015, which allows me to control for external factors affecting economic growth. The main dependent variables are economic growth, defined as annual (%) GDP growth, and per capita economic growth, defined as annual (%) GDP per capita growth, and unemployment rate.

My article has two key objectives. First, I empirically compare and quantify the effects of skill-biased immigration in Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia. I achieve this by conducting DiD regression analysis of annual (%) GDP growth in all three countries. I test whether GDP growth in Lithuania diverged from GDP growth in Latvia and Estonia since 2019, when a policy shift towards greater skill-biased immigration was made in Lithuania. Moreover, I utilize time-series OLS regression analysis of annual (%) GDP growth, annual (%) GDP per capita growth, and unemployment rate on the proportion of high-skilled immigrants. This allows me to further investigate how enabling more high-skilled immigrants to come to Lithuania as a result of policy change positively contributed to economic growth. Second, I seek to apply the theoretical Romer endogenous growth model to immigration patterns in the Baltic States. I achieve this goal by visually illustrating how an increase in human capital due to a skill-biased immigration policy led to greater economic growth in Lithuania compared to Latvia and Estonia.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Although traditional scholarship on the effect of migration on economic growth investigates the effects of the scale of the migration, more recent literature addresses the impact of immigrants' actual skill composition. In "Taking the Skill Bias out of Global Migration" published in *Journal of Development Economics* in 2020, Biavaschi and their co-authors underscore the significant positive impact on global welfare of skill-biased global migration—particularly in OECD countries.[5] Biavaschi et al. developed a simulated model of the 2010 world economy, connecting countries through trade and remittances (payments sent by emigrants back to their home countries) in order to observe changes to market size, trade, and wage ratios as a consequence of changing the percentage of skilled workers. However, in contrast to other papers referred to in this paper, Biavaschi et al. defines the skill bias clearly as proportion of high-skilled immigrants relative to proportion of high-skilled workers in the overall population. This influenced the empirical part of this paper as I included the overall proportion of high-skilled workers as a control variable.

Şerban et al. more narrowly study skill-biased immigration in "The Impact of EU Immigration on Economic Growth Through the Skill Composition Channel."[6] To focus on the effects on economic growth rather than overall welfare effects, Şerban et al. use panel data for the 2007-2017 period with percentage of degree-holding immigrants from other EU countries to analyze how skill-biased intra-European immigration impacts economic growth. Şerban et al. conclude that skilled immigration had a positive impact on economic

growth and unemployment rate. They also underscore that immigrants in the EU have a higher level of education relative to the population. This leaves open the question of how immigrants from non-EU countries impact economic growth. Immigrants from non-EU countries often face discrimination which could offset the benefit of a higher educational background in the job market. In completing a similar regression analysis using panel data from Eurostat, I analyze the effects of non-EU immigration to understand whether highly skilled immigrants from non-EU countries are positively contributing to economic growth.

Projection-based reports offer valuable contextual insights as to the distinct legal pathways that promote skill-biased immigration and in turn promote economic growth. An ODI Europe report written by Claire Kumar analyzes existing pathways for immigration for each skill level and acknowledges that skill-biased immigration leads to greater economic growth in the EU. In contrast to other studies, Kumar notes that there is a mismatch between pathways for medium-skill immigration, e.g. truck drivers, and demand for such occupations. This report suggests that the EU should increase medium-skilled immigrants from outside the EU to generate more growth. Kumar's report is highly relevant as it analyzes Lithuania as a leading country in attracting medium and high-skilled immigrants from outside the EU. In my own analysis, I explain how Lithuania gained an economic growth advantage over other countries in the region due to attracting more medium and high-skilled immigrants.

Overall, prior literature presents a consistent argument that a skill-biased immigration system positively affects economic growth, which I test in the context of the Baltic States. Some of the literature establishes the benefits of skill-biased immigration beyond the metrics of economic growth. For instance, Biavaschi et al. point out to the broad positive economic welfare effects in immigrant-receiving countries. A key disagreement in prior literature is on the definition of "high skill." While Mazin and Reichling define "high-skill" as workers with STEM degrees, Biavaschi et al. define "high-skill" as a relatively higher skill level to the overall skill level in an economy.[7] This paper adopts a mixed approach, where high skill will be defined as workers with university degrees (not only STEM) and skill level of countries overall will be a confounding variable to isolate the effects of changes in skill level of immigrants.

RESEARCH METHODS & DATA ANALYSIS

To investigate the relationship between the proportion of high-skilled non-EU immigrants living in the Baltic States and economic growth, I first quantitatively assess the effects of the 2019 skill-biased immigration reform in Lithuanian and then explain these results qualitatively within the Romer endogenous growth model.[8] The quantitative part of the paper is divided into the DiD regression analysis of all Baltic States and OLS regression analysis of economic growth indicators on the proportion of high-skilled immigrants in Lithuania. I first used the DiD regression to demonstrate that Lithuania experienced a statistically significantly higher level of economic growth than Latvia or Estonia after implementing a skill-biased immigration reform. I then use the OLS regression analysis to show the causal effects of high-skilled immigration on economic growth in Lithuania.

The DiD regression analysis tests for significant changes in GDP growth in Lithuania compared to Latvia and Estonia before and after the 2019 reform. As I investigate time-varying data across multiple entities, my regression analysis uses panel data with panel correct standard errors. I also use the first order autoregressive correlation. Lithuania is designated as the treatment group due to implementing the aforementioned immigration policy change, while Latvia and Estonia combined are the control group due to maintaining consistent immigration policies during the studied period. Here I test whether the dummy variable (defined as a variable that only takes binary values of 1 or 0) *treat_post*, which denotes the control group since 2019, is significantly positively correlated with GDP growth. The control variables for DiD regression analysis are treatment (Lithuania, all years), *post2019* (all countries, post-2019), *high_skilled_imm* (proportion of high-skilled immigrants), *temp_permits_pc* (temporary permits adjusted to population), *population* (population), and dummy variables for time fixed-effects of individual years 2016-2023. The DiD equation is:

$$gdp_growth_{it} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 treatmentit + \beta post2019_{it} + \beta_2 high_skilled_immit + \beta_3 treat_post_{it} + \beta_4 temp_permits_pc_{it} + \beta_5 population_{it} + \beta_6 2016_{it} + \beta_7 2017_{it} + \beta_8 2018_{it} + \beta_9 2019_{it} + \beta_{10} 2020_{it} + \beta_{11} 2021_{it} + \beta_{12} 2022_{it} + \beta_{13} 2023_{it} + e_{it}$$

For the second part of the quantitative method, I perform a regression analysis on Lithuania across all years for the dependent variables *gdp_pc_growth* (GDP per capita growth rate), *gdp_growth* (GDP growth rate), and *unemp_rate* (unemployment rate). The key independent variable is *high_skilled_imm* (proportion of high skilled immigrants). These variables are justified as Şerban et al. used similar variables to capture a positive impact of the skill composition of intra-European migration on economic growth. I control for *total_imm_base* (total immigrant base), *pop_univ_degrees* (proportion of overall population with university degrees), and *temp_permits_pc*. The resulting regressions are:

$$gdp_growth_{it} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 high_skilled_imm_{it} + \beta_2 total_imm_base + \beta_3 pop_univ_degrees + \beta_4 temp_permits_pc_{it} + e_{it}$$

$$gdp_pc_growth_{it} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 high_skilled_imm_{it} + \beta_2 total_imm_base + \beta_3 pop_univ_degrees + \beta_4 temp_permits_pcit + e_{it}$$

$$unemployment = \beta_0 + \beta_1 high_skilled_imm_{it} + \beta_2 total_imm_base + \beta_3 pop_univ_degrees + \beta_4 temp_permits_pc_{it} + e_{it}$$

Since the proportion of educated non-EU citizens in Lithuania has changed over time and consistently increased after the 2019 skill-biased migration reform, the Lithuanian case can better isolate how different skill-biased immigration policies directly contribute to economic growth. I evaluate this model by comparing the signs of coefficients of key variables (*gdp_pc_growth*, *gdp_growth*, *unemp_rate*), and by verifying that they align with theoretical predictions of the Romer endogenous growth model, explained in the following section I demonstrate the position of each country on the model's graph to indicate how increases in human capital per worker have led to increased GDP growth.

THEORY BEHIND THE ROMER ENDOGENOUS GROWTH MODEL

The Romer endogenous growth model adds to other macroeconomic growth models, particularly the Solow growth model, by claiming that economic growth (in terms of GDP per capita) is not only a function of savings rate s and capital depreciation (δ+n+g)K/L (expressed by depreciation of physical capital, population change, and technological change) but also

needs to include human capital. According to Romer, the level of economic growth is not only determined by how workers use physical machinery but also how they utilize their knowledge, i.e. human capital. Therefore, unlike under Solow, economic growth per capita GDP/L can be endogenously generated for any level of capital per worker because Romer's definition of capital includes human capital. I use the Romer endogenous growth model because high-skilled immigration primarily relates to changes in human capital due to immigrants' skill-level, instead of the net increase in labor force size. While both Solow and Romer models consider changes in the total size of the labor force, only the Romer model takes into account changes in labor force's skill level. The Romer endogenous growth model includes the s(GDP/L) and (δ+n+g)K/L curves, which are shown in Figure 1. Depreciation curve (δ+n+g)K/L is a linear function and does not exhibit diminishing returns for K/L. Thus, higher capital per worker continuously leads to higher GDP/L. Vertical lines beginning on K/L and crossing through s(GDP/L), and (δ+n+g)K/L curves mark all possible combinations of GDP per capita on the GDP/L = f(K/L) curve. This paper explores how increased K/L due to high-skilled immigration led to a greater increase in GDP per capita in Lithuania compared to Latvia and Estonia.

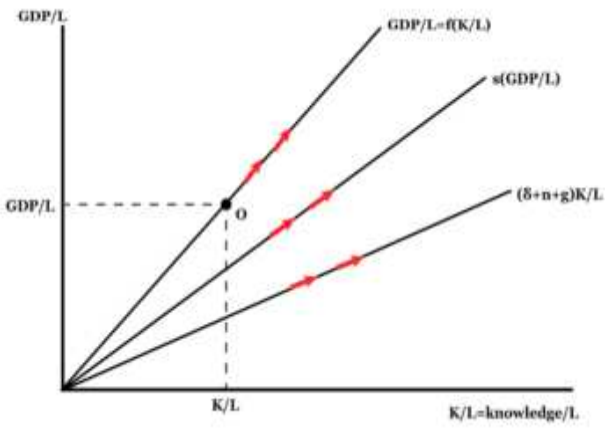


Figure 1. Romer Engrogenous Growth model

Figure 2 presents the DiD regression of economic growth in terms of annual GDP, which was performed both with control variables for high-skilled immigration, temporary permits per capita, and population as well as without them. These control variables are problematic for the DiD regression since they are collinear with the main explanatory variable of interest - Treatment x Post-2019. That is because a large portion of the variation in high-skilled immigration, temporary permits per capita, and population in Lithuania is explained by the introduction of skill-biased immigration policy in 2019, which is already denoted by the dummy variable Treatment x Post-2019. Collinearity between control variables and Treatment x Post-2019 is confirmed by the decrease in standard errors for the dummy variables for Treatment, Post-2019, and Treatment x Post-2019. Standard error for Treatment decreases from 2.874 to 0.550, standard error for Post-2019 decreases from 0.850 to 0.244, and standard error for Treatment x Post-2019 decreases from 1.092 to 0.733 when the 3 control variables are not included in the regression. Therefore, DiD regression without the control variables will be used.

VARIABLES	With controls	Without controls
Treatment	4.300 (2.874)	0.212 (0.550)
Post-2019	-2.559 (0.850)***	-3.579 (0.244)***
Treatment x Post-2019	0.807 (1.092)	1.3098 (0.733)*
High-skilled immigration	-0.133 (0.091)	
Temporary permits per capita	0.081 (0.131)	
Population	−0-6.91e-07 (9.50e-07)	
Year 2016	0.0297 (0.0579)	-0.046 (1.47e-08)
Year 2017	1.4499 (0.371)***	1.731 (1.56e-08)
Year 2018	1.557 (0.153)***	1.491 (1.56e-08)
Year 2019	2.445 (0.699)***	3.351(1.45e-08)
Year 2020	-2.423 (0.569)***	-1.779 (1.53e-08)
Year 2021	6.792 (0.462)***	7.152 (1.53e-08)
Year 2022	1.647 (0.332)***	1.795 (1.44e-08)
Year 2023	0 (Omitted due to multicollinearity)	0 (Omitted due to multicollinearity)
Observations	27	27
Adjusted R-squared	0.8829	0.8675
F Test	2041.67	1.94e+18

Note: *** p<0.01, **p<0.05, *p<0.1

R-squared of 0.8675 means that almost 87% of variation of GDP growth is explained by this regression model. Thus, this DiD model effectively explains the variation in GDP growth in Lithuania compared to the average of GDP growth in Latvia and Estonia.

Figure 2. Difference in Differences (DiD) Results

It is not possible to perform the F test on this DiD regression. Because F statistic accounts for all the coefficients of predictors, the unusually high F statistics are attributed to a double weighting of the year coefficients. The year fixed effects are important to control for individual yearly variations and the Treatment x Post-2019 and Post-2019 variables additionally investigate year patterns. Although this inflates the F statistic, it does not invalidate the results, and these variables are important in measuring changes before and after the event. Therefore, it is important to more closely analyze the significance of the individual coefficients through the Z-scores.

The dummy variable for the treatment group since 2019 is positively correlated with GDP growth, and significant at 90% confidence level (|Z-score=1.79|>Z-value=1.645). This means that we can be 90% confident that the positive relationship between treatment x Post-2019 and GDP growth is not due to chance. Lithuania had a 1.3098 percentage points higher GDP growth compared to Latvia and Estonia.

The period after 2019 is overall negatively correlated with GDP growth, as the dummy variable Post-2019 has a negative coefficient. Post-2019 has a Z-score of -14.65. Thus, given that the Z-value for 1% significance level is 2.576, Post-2019 is significant at 99% confidence level, as |-14.65|>2.576. This means that we can be 99% confident that the negative relationship between Post-2019 and GDP growth is not due to chance. The coefficient of -3.579 means all Baltic States together faced a lower GDP growth by 3.579 percentage points than before 2019.

These statistics show that Lithuania's economic growth diverged from Latvia's and Estonia's after implementing a skill-biased immigration policy in 2019. Shown

in figure 3, during 2015-2018 Lithuania's economic growth overtook Latvia's and Estonia's after 2019, having been previously nearly identical to the average of Latvia and Estonia. 2021 was an exception due to a Covid-19 shock.

The trend of Lithuania diverging from the rest of the Baltic States is also confirmed by the visual parallel trends analysis of GDP per capita growth.

As shown in Figure 4 using World Bank data, GDP per capita growth for Lithuania was higher than the average of Latvia and Estonia for all years from 2015 to 2023, except 2021. Changes in GDP per capita growth trends follow almost an opposite pattern than changes in GDP growth trends: at first (from 2018 to 2019 and from 2019 to 2020) the relative difference between Lithuanian and the average of Latvia and Estonia was increasing but after 2020it started to decrease. Nevertheless, this does not necessarily disprove the findings that skill-biased immigration policy enhances growth. It is possible that after a certain number of immigrants was reached, Lithuania's GDP per capita growth slowed because immigration was also significantly affecting population size, not only GDP growth, i.e, the population itself was growing faster than the GDP growth. Lithuania also only had lower GDP and GDP per capita growth in 2021, due to a Covid-19 shock.

Shown in Figure 5, the results from regressing GDP growth, GDP per capita growth, and unemployment rate on the proportion of high-skilled immigrants in Lithuania, high-skilled immigration is positively correlated with both GDP and GDP per capita growth and negatively correlated with unemployment rate at 10% significance level. A 1% increase in high-skilled immigration results in 0.675% increase in GDP growth rate and 0.786% increase in GDP per capita growth rate. Notably, a 1% increase in high-skilled immigration also results in a 0.315% decline in unemployment rate.

Given that critical F-value at 5 significance level for 27 observations and 3 restrictions (df1=3; df2=27-3-1=23) is 3.03, all three regressions are significant at 95% confidence level: 8.33>3.03, 36.53>3.03, and 7.52> 3.03. The R-squared was 0.6516 for GDP, 0.7921 for GDP per capita and 0.6891 for unemployment rate, meaning that about 65% of GDP, 79% of GDP per capita, and 69% of unemployment variations was explained by these models.

The Romer endogenous growth model verifies these trends (see Appendix A). Increased high-skilled immigration led

Figure 3: GDP growth trends

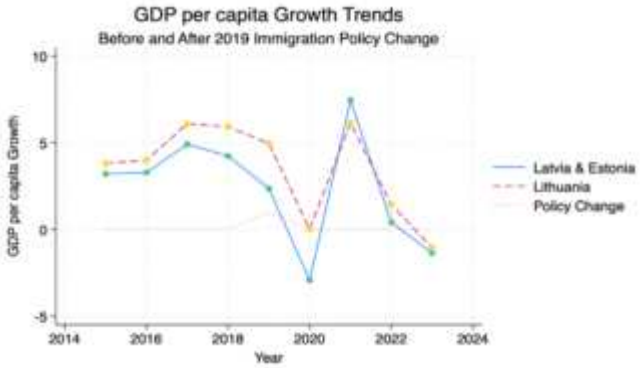
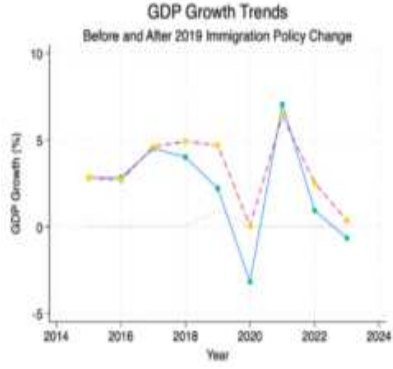


Figure 4: GDP per capita growth trends



VARIABLES	GDP	GDP per capita	Unemployment rate
Proportion of high-skilled immigration	0.675 (0.371)*	0.786 (0.372)**	-0.315 (0.118)***
University degree of overall population	-0.795 (0.506)	-1.332 (0.518)**	3.12 (0. 0000356)***
Temporary permits per capita	0.660 (0.520)	0.940 (0.497)*	1.69 (0.2957265)*
Observations	27	27	27
Adjusted R-squared	0.6516	0.7921	0.6891
F statistic	8.33	36.53	7.52

Note: *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

Figure 5. Regression Analysis (Lithuania)

to an increase in capital per worker ratio in Lithuania. In the long-run, Lithuania shifts from its original position O on the GDP/L = f(K/L) curve upwards to a position with a higher capital per worker ratio and GDP per capita. This projection reflects the simultaneous increase in GDP per capita and high-skilled immigration that was detected in regression analysis. Thus, if the policy reform of increasing high-skilled immigration is not adopted in Latvia and Estonia, these countries risk staying in position O relative to Lithuania's upward shift.

In the absence of skill-biased immigration policies European countries will face severe economic consequences of demographic decline. The Baltics are a particularly troubling case, where due to historically high emigration to Western Europe and low fertility rates these countries have already lost over a fifth of their 1990 population. Decreasing and aging population can be expected to reduce standards of living due to slower year-on-year economic growth and increased pressures on the national welfare systems. Dissatisfied with grim economic prospects, more voters may choose to turn to right-wing populist parties that, once in power, will blame immigration for economic decline and introduce even more restrictive policies.

However, this vicious political cycle can be prevented. Legislators in countries facing demographic pressures need to balance the voters' request to enact a more sustainable immigration policy and the need to support long-term economic growth. Outright prohibitions on immigration are not an option, and, as found in this paper, only worsen the potential for sustainable economic growth. Based on data from Lithuania and the Baltics during 2015-2023 period, I conclude that high-skill immigration is highly positively correlated with annual GDP and GDP per capita growth and negatively correlated with unemployment. This explains greater economic growth of Lithuania compared to Latvia and Estonia during the selected period. This investigation contributes to economics and law literature, analyzing high-skilled immigration, by studying how introduction of skill-biased immigration reform in a small sample of socio-econom-

ically similar countries creates diverging patterns of economic growth.

My project has a few limitations. Due to data availability constraints, it is not possible to extend my analysis to immigration from inside the EU as Eurostat does not track such data due to unrestricted freedom of movement between EU countries. I was also limited by the time period as Eurostat has not yet released its data for the year 2024 at the time of writing this paper. A second limitation is the difficulty in accounting for the stateless population in Latvia and Estonia, formally known as "non-citizens," which arose due to nationality laws after gaining independence from the USSR in 1991. "Non-citizens" are often grouped together with non-EU citizens and create outliers in the Eurostat data, which could be weighing down the non-EU citizen education level.

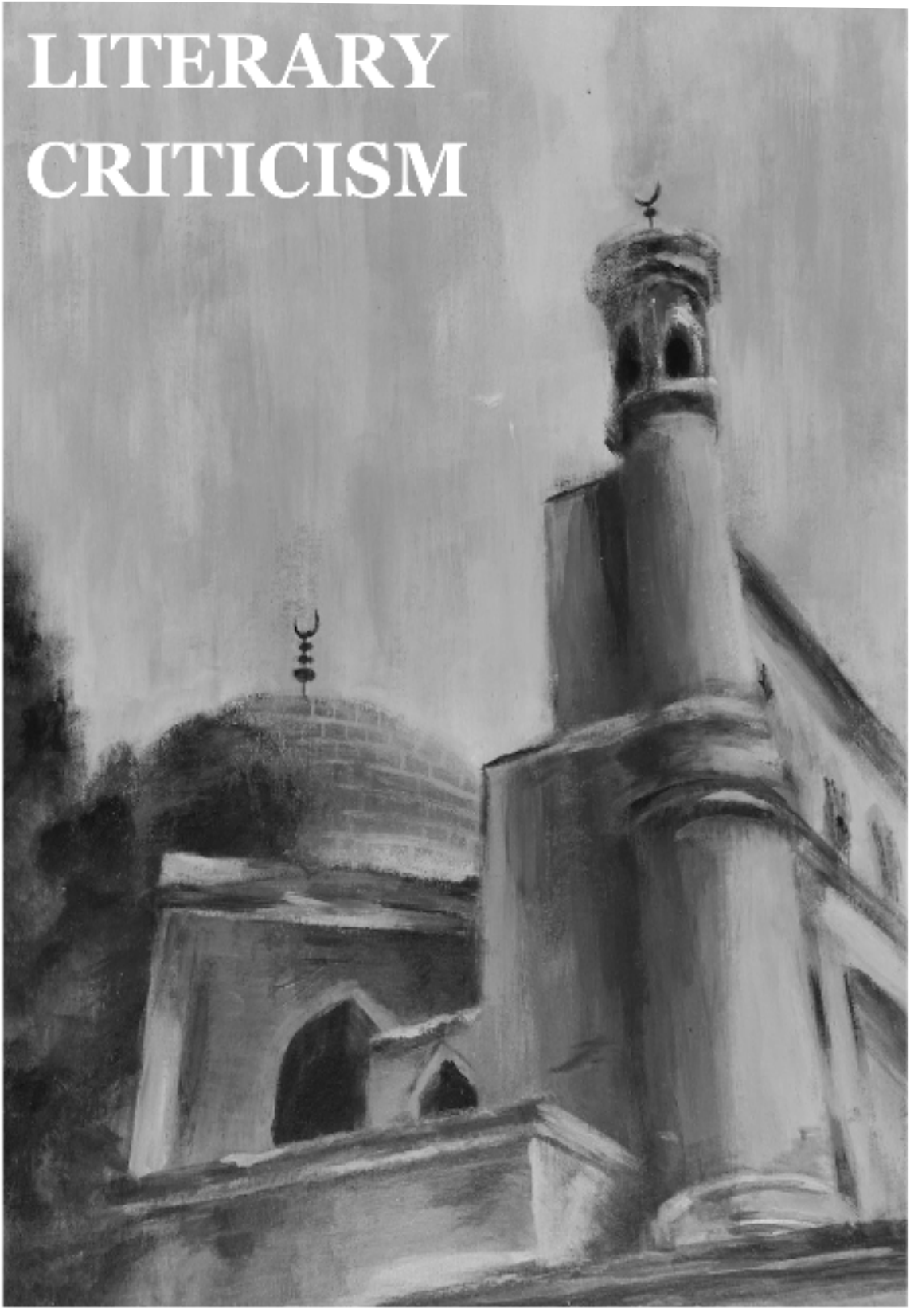
The so-called "non-citizens" in Latvia and Estonia is a somewhat unparalleled concept in migration studies. This group emerged in Latvia and Estonia due to the citizenship laws that were put in place after these countries regained independence from the USSR in 1991.[9] In Lithuania, all residents in 1990, including those who came to the country after the Soviet occupation began from other parts of the USSR and had no descendants from Lithuania, were eligible for Lithuanian citizenship as long as they held no other citizenship. In contrast, in Latvia and Estonia, only residents who were descendants of Latvian or Estonian citizens during the interwar independence period (1918-1940) were eligible for citizenship.[10] Such laws left significant groups of people originally coming from other Soviet republics (especially Russia, Ukraine, and Belarus) but residing in Latvia or Estonia by 1991 (Lithuania declared independence from the USSR in 1990, while Latvia and Estonia in 1991) ineligible for any citizenship automatically become citizens, thus, the number of "non-citizens" has been declining significantly.[11,12] The Latvian and Estonian governments argue that "non-citizens" should not be considered "stateless" under international law due to the level of protections provided to them by the Latvian and Estonian governments, while many international non-governmental organizations consider "non-citizens" to be effectively "stateless."[13]

Due to the lack of data availability on the education level statistics in the "non-citizen" category, I only directly regress economic growth variables on changes in high-skilled immigration in Lithuania.

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LITERARY CRITICISM



Measured Talents: Consciousness, Poetry, and Women's Education in A Double Life

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Karolina Pavlova's 1848 novel A Double Life provides an incisive commentary on women's education and poetry. Pavlova, a relatively unrecognized Russian female author, got her literary start translating poetry, then writing it herself. Her male peers thought Pavlova, as a woman poet, ridiculous. While many leading figures in Russian literature and poetry attended the salon she hosted, her work was regularly mocked and she died abroad, penniless and alone (Page vii). The fact that Pavlova's work has survived to the contemporary day is remarkable, particularly a novel that so directly confronts the effects of the education young women in Russia received. This 'blinding' education illustrated in A Double Life contains a strikingly contemporary message: what is taught to young women seems necessary and executed properly, but leaves them with nothing of substance and denies them opportunities for development.

To portray the complexities of this education and its effects in high society, Pavlova executes several interesting literary maneuvers. To start, she utilizes an unusual format of prose chapters ending in poetic verse. Each chapter uses prose to follow the main character through her conscious life in high society, transitioning to metered poetry for her dreams and unconscious state. The format alone is interesting, but Pavlova's didactic approach even more so; by using the exoskeleton of a society novel, she is able to express her thoughts on women being denied proper education in an easily recognizable format. A Double Life features many regular tropes of a society novel, like meddling mothers scheming to get their daughters married to wealth, a bosom companion who is

beautiful but not quite as beautiful as the main character, and a poor but romantic male love interest. These tropes are used as a recognizable hook into Pavlova's tragic realism, as she explores the effects poetry can exert upon a person's psyche, especially one who has had a blinding education.

A Double Life centers Cecily, a naïve, sheltered girl of high society Russia, who encounters a mysterious figure in her dreams. This figure—poetry personified as an individual—issues dire warnings about her curtailed agency and encourages her to pursue her heart instead of following society's expectations (this essay will thus use capitalization to indicate the personified 'figure', and the lowercase to indicate the form of verse). The unconscious affinity Cecily has for poetry is depicted as a romance with Poetry itself and is often paralleled with Cecily's conscious, waking world romance with Dmitry Ivachinsky.

When the reader first meets Cecily, she is beginning to feel twinges of discordance with her life. As she prepares for bed, she thinks about her plans for the summer with her friends, reflecting, "that they would take walks together and dance and go horseback riding. But at the same time, in the midst of these happy thoughts, a strange and inexplicable one kept breaking through— a heavy and persistent feeling, as if she were being made to guess a riddle, find a word, remember a name and was not able to..." (Page 7). Cecily's vague discontent before falling asleep prefaces her first dream, rendered in verse, which anticipates her encounter with the personified figure of Poetry: "Whom does she wait for, / Whose arrival does she sense?" (Page 8, lines 19-20). It is in this first dream that she sees a mysterious figure, with a "commanding gaze" who stands "powerful and stern" in a moonlit garden (Page 8, lines 23 and 29). Cecily walks towards the figure and stands before him; though no dialogue is exchanged, the setting for her unconscious dream world has fallen into place.

During the second chapter Cecily and her mother Vera conduct society visits, ending with Vera's friend Madame Valitskaia whose daughter Olga is Cecily's best friend. While Cecily and Olga discuss romance and attire in Olga's room, Vera and Madame Valitskaia discuss the proper methods for raising a young woman in high society. They conclude that a technique of rigid sheltering, whereby the mother intentionally curtails her daughter's intelligence and curiosity, is the most effective and appealing strategy. Later, Vera is described as "very proud" of how she raised Cecily, "because it had been accomplished not without difficulty, because it took time and skill to destroy in her soul its innate thirst for delight and enthusiasm" (Page 28). The critique of young women's education is a running motif throughout the book, with Pavlova's incisive arguments illustrated in Cecily's own actions (or lack thereof).

In Cecily's dream that night, she speaks with the mysterious figure, who says that Cecily called for him and that he will be faithful to her, beginning the overtures of a relationship that is romantic in nature. The man prods Cecily to consider real life versus her dream world: "Perhaps everything there was false, / Perhaps only here you are awake" (Page 19, lines 24-25). Reminding the reader of

the mothers' earlier discussion, he calls Cecily a "prisoner of society's world", adding, "That small-souled being isn't you. /They have fettered you from childhood, /Have swaddled your free mind," (Page 19,lines 26, 29-31). Here the reader, alongside Cecily, are given a counternarrative to the mothers': that the deliberate coddling and control over young women is a negative thing, leaving them without the tools they need to navigate the world. Poetry is portrayed as an antidote, a force who will lift Cecily out of the envelopment of ignorance.

In the middle stanzas, Poetry explains that he will only visit Cecily at night in her dreams ("I will not lift the veil /From your eyes, in that land of the blind"), and she won't consciously remember him in the real world ("The traces of my love will disappear"). These stanzas are crucial for the reader's mechanical understanding of how Cecily's dream and real worlds interact, as well as laying the foundation for a romantic parallel between Cecily and Poetry, and Cecily and Dmitry. Poetry claims that, "With the mysterious force of a kiss / I will lift the shackles from your soul," (Page 20, lines 58-61). This contrasts neatly with the final chapter, when, as Cecily is about to marry Dmitry, she receives a bracelet from him whose "lock" is "fastened" around her wrist (Page 116). Poetry's dream-world love frees her, signifying true compatibility, while Dmitry's real-world love shackles her, cementing the veil of ignorance over Cecily's eyes.

Chapter 3 covers a ball thrown by Vera, who has one of the guests, a poet, recite one of his works toward the end of the night. Crucially, this marks the first time Cecily has heard poetry being performed in the real world, with her conscious mind. She retires to bed feeling "somehow strange and awkward" and repeating some of the lines the poet had recited (Page 28). The curtailing of her imagination is described in vivid prose:

> "Now, at eighteen, she was so used to wearing her mind in a corset that she felt it no more than she did the silk undergarment that she took off only at night. She had talents, of course, but measured ones, decorous ones... She sang very nicely and sketched very nicely as well. Poetry, as we have said earlier, was known to her mostly by hearsay, as something wild and incompatible with a respectable life. She knew that there were even women poets, but this was always presented to her as the most pitiable, abnormal condition, as a disastrous and dangerous illness. But now she was thinking involuntarily about that strange ability of the soul. Unconsciously, there awakened in her a new and obscure sympathy for that harmony of verse, for those melodious thoughts, those improper delights, and this unexpected sympathy almost frightened her." (Page 29)

Poetry is a disturbance to her "respectable life", one which only occurs in her dreams, after she has taken off her physical corset and her mind is released of its mental corset. As she falls asleep, "rhyme sounded in her again; she heard poetry and...she suddenly thought that she too could speak in song." (Page 29). The "sympathy" Cecily feel represents her unrealized aptitude for poetry, a delicate narrative suggestion that it would be more than a measured talent, but something she could be truly skilled at.

The disturbances to Cecily's life

continue in Chapter 4. On a group horse riding trip, Cecily unexpectedly whips her horse to "top speed", overcome with the feeling that, "She suddenly wanted to gallop away from life's imprisonment, from all dependencies, from all obligations, all necessities. She rode with shining eyes, her hair flying loose." (Page 37). Crucially, Cecily's first expression of freedom after she hears Poetry's "improper delights" is galloping on her horse, something commonly associated with sexual licentiousness and immodesty in young women. In this moment, Cecily and her horse mirror each other: both are domesticated, docile creatures, but pierce through their trained obedience for a moment to experience freedom.

In chapter 6, Cecily celebrates her birthday with a lavish party. During the festivities, she and Dmitry flirt--unbeknownst to either of them, this is a result of the machinations of Olga's mother--and Dmitry kisses her hand. Cecily prepares for bed, idly thinking about her love for Dmitry yet feeling "inexplicably somber" (Page 68). In her dream that night, Poetry speaks to her, imploring Cecily to "awake" into her dream world and insisting, "It is in me your soul believes, /Me that you love, not him." (Page 70, lines 7, 27-28). The waking world is an "evil dream", a "strange land" where Cecily is not her true self (Page 70, lines 5-6). From Poetry's perspective, Cecily is only truly awake and alive in her dreams, where she spends time with Poetry and rejoices in verse. The real world is only a strange and evil place, where she is shuffled along by choices of everyone but herself, and is so restricted she cannot even imagine exerting her will upon her own life. The tragedy of A Double Life is that, while the reader and Poetry understand her inner life and her unrealized love for Poetry/poetry, Cecily never does. Poetry laments that, foreshadowing the rest of the story, Cecily has begun drifting down a path where she will live an unfulfilled life, devoid of the meaning and passion she subconsciously craves.

In the next chapter, motherly machinations continue, and Cecily ends up engaged to Dmitry. She falls asleep overjoyed at the thought of marrying her true love, only arrested by the sight of a melancholy Poetry awaiting her in the dream-world garden. Suddenly she lambasts him, crying out: "Sorrowful force... You light a ray of thought in me. /Leave me alone, stern spirit! /You grow sadder and gloomier; /I fear your revelations, /Your pitiless love." (Page 88, lines 13-20). The full comprehension of how meaningless her life is, how little control she has and how much she does not know is so unbearable to Cecily that she rejects her 'suitor', thus rejecting the possibility of deeper understanding. Poetry or poetry, while an empowering and meaningful partner or art form, is also conflict-inducing. Cecily, raised with her mind bound up in a corset, would rather hide in the stability of ignorance than let "a ray of thought" penetrate her mind.

The tragedy of A Double Life is that, while the reader and Poetry understand her inner life and her unrealized love for Poetry/poetry, Cecily never does.

The mistake Cecily is making by going along with marrying Dmitry becomes increasingly apparent as the book

enters its last chapters. The preparations for the wedding are likened to, "that accidentally deafening music and beating of drums by which soldiers are led into mortal combat." (Page 92). The night before her wedding, Cecily has her last dream of Poetry. He yields Cecily to his romantic rival Dmitry and her own ignorance, telling her: "So, go as you've been sentenced, /Strong in faith only, /Not hoping for support, /Defenseless and alone." (Page 114, lines 65-68). The last vestiges of deeper meaning in her life, of connection to the 'real' world of her dreams, disappear. Cecily's unconscious but present talent for poetry is demonstrated throughout her dreams, but will no longer be something she remembers as meaningful, as an unrealized outlet of creation and expression.

Before she walks down the aisle, Cecily is given a bracelet as a gift from Dmitry. While Olga puts the bracelet on her, Cecily whispers "So, go as you've been sentenced, /Defenseless and alone..." (Page 116). Olga is surprised and asks what she is saying, and Cecily responds that she doesn't know, that "It's some song that has been going round in my head. I can't remember where I heard it." (Page 116). Olga calls it nonsense, and Cecily does not respond. Crucially, Cecily does not remember or repeat the line in the original stanza "Strong in faith only", as she no longer has faith in Poetry to rely on. Furthermore, the initial implication of "sentenced" is that of a prison sentence, a judicial order from Poetry. The connotation of Cecily's gifted bracelet being locked around her wrist like a pair of handcuffs adds to this initial metaphor. However, as Cecily is 'locked' into a life of ignorance and suffering to come, the implication is also that of a death sentence. As she stands at the altar, Cecily is "as pale as a corpse", looking melancholy and unsure, while the reader is prompted to consider whether a life lived in ignorance and suffering is not a death sentence in itself (Page 117).

In the last chapter, after the wedding, the book ends with a final poem. Since Cecily has rejected Poetry and thus her dream world, it is unclear who the speaker is. One interpretation is that the voice is Pavlova herself, especially since it is the first time one of the chapter-end poems is from a first-person perspective. The speaker decries the power of poetry, saying, "That dreams are lies, the word is useless, /Sound and verse an empty game." (Page 118). Throughout Pavlova's career, not only at time of publishing

A Double Life, ridicule of herself and her work was constant. Pavlova, unlike Cecily, does not reject poetry, but still wonders if her choice to be a female poet--a profession of "the most pitiable, abnormal condition" --was worth it (Page 29). The speaker, in the final stanzas of the book, laments: "And the heart's dreams grow thinner every day; /Let me pay a woeful price /For the bright gifts of my youth; /Though I throw treasure after treasure /Into the stormy depths of the sea of life: /Blessed the one who, arguing with the storm, /Can salvage something precious." (Pages 119-120, lines 34-40). This imagery can be interpreted as Pavlova throwing her poems ("treasure after treasure") into a sea of criticism, just so she can put them out into the world. Compare this dramatic and sorrowful visual to Cecily earlier in the story. After Cecily hears poetry in the

waking world and starts to feel "that she too could speak in song", that she could write poetry, she drifts off to sleep hearing faint verse: "harmonies and inspired words appeared more and more real to her. It seemed as if waves were lifting her...small boat...carrying her far away..." (Page 29-30). Cecily, a naïve teenage girl experiencing the beauty of poetry for the first time, has the gentle sensation of riding in a small boat, being lifted by waves taking her away. Pavlova, an experienced poet, has "the stormy depths of the sea", where she pays "a woeful price / for the bright gifts of [her] youth". A Double Life is thus not only a unique twist on a society novel, with a young heroine torn between two love interests, but a disconsolate view into Pavlova's thoughts on the rigid sheltering of young women and the power poetry can exercise on a person's psyche.

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Depictions of Alcohol Use Disorder in Soviet Literature—The Case of Moskva-Petushki

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Moskva-Petushki (1969-70) is a popular samizdat novel by Venedikt Erofeev in which the central character, Venedikt Erofeev, drunkenly explores Russian culture, literature, and philosophy with members of all elements of Soviet society as he travels by train to Petushki (henceforth, I call the author Erofeev and the character Venedikt).[1] In this essay, I examine the depictions of the development and maintenance of alcohol use disorder (AUD) in the 1970 book, as well as the implications for readers. To do so, I discuss the individual and environmental risk factors included in the novel in addition to the depiction of each of three stages of addiction, using the model conceptualized by Koob and Le Moal as presented by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) and US Office of the Surgeon General (OSG), as well as by George and Koob.[2] This model is selected because it allows observable behaviors in Moskva-Petushki to be tied to concrete elements of addiction etiology.

The "prose poem," as Erofeev calls it, follows Venedikt for two days, beginning with him waking up hungover in some unknown Moscow building entryway. Although hazy at first, he manages to make his way to the train station in search of alcohol and a ride to Petushki, the suburb where some vaguely characterized sexual partner, as well as his son, live. We learn that Venedikt has little financial stability, often moving between jobs: most recently, he had been fired for work as a telephone cable-laying foreman for having made detailed charts of each worker's alcohol consumption (including his own). Moskva-Petushki is dominated by Venedikt's train of consciousness ramblings to him-

self and others along the way to Petushki. He discusses domestic violence with an educated woman, history with a conductor, philosophy with a Decembrist, and cocktail recipes with some imagined audience. As the text progresses, Venedikt's awareness of his material surroundings erodes, culminating in a scene where he runs through the streets of Moscow, commenting on how large the buildings and streets of Petushki have become.

This article will proceed as follows: ii) a discussion of AUD risk factors (individual and environmental), iii) an analysis of the Koob and Le Moal model of addiction maintenance in Moskva-Petushki, and iv) concluding remarks.

RISK FACTORS

Several key risk factors elevate the odds of progression towards substance use disorder. Hussong et al., scholars from UNC and UT Austin, mention environmental factors, particularly access to substances, instability, and peer influences.[3] Researchers and practitioners from Yale, the University of Pennsylvania, and public health systems in Connecticut and Pennsylvania analyzed the statistical evidence for person-specific risk factors.[4] They found four key factors in predicting alcohol use disorder: low education, childhood (age < 13) exposure to alcohol use in the home, low income, and being male. Genetics are a significant factor, but with a smaller impact.

In short, environmental factors—access, peers, and instability—interact with individual characteristics—education, childhood exposure, poverty, sex, and genetics—interact to increase the odds of alcohol use disorder. To examine Erofeev's depiction of it in Moskva Petushki, I first discuss the environmental context, then the character of Venedikt, supplemented with biographical details of the author. We might speculate as to the extent to which forces similar to those in the author's own life may have influenced the character, if not least because the author may have unconsciously drawn upon them in his creative process. In tracing Erofeev's biography, I am greatly indebted to and rely heavily on the excellent work of Ilaria Remonato, who has written a brief English-language biography of him.[5] Remonato is a Research Fellow in Russian Language and Literature at the University of Padova.

THE ENVIRONMENT

Although the biographical details of Erofeev's and Venedikt's lives may diverge, the author and his protagonist share an environmental context that informs the creation of the narrative. The troubled experiences of Erofeev run parallel with the challenging environmental conditions of the post-WWII Soviet Union, including its recovery from harrowing forced relocations, resource depletion, capital destruction, and a severe death toll. Certainly, environmental instability was present in Venedikt's world.

The remaining two environmental risk factors—availability and risky peer behavior—are evidenced in the text itself. In Moskva-Petushki, Erofeev references the ubiquity of alcohol consumption in the Soviet Union at the time. Everyone in his train car consumes alcohol, including the ticket inspector, who prefers bribes of alcohol over tickets themselves.

Venedikt's primary recollections of his time as a foreman of a telephone cable-laying crew were related to his peer's alcohol consumption (and his charting of it). Not only was alcohol ubiquitous, drinking behavior at the time was deeply hazardous. As a measure of hazardous drinking, AUD researchers recommend measuring per-capita alcohol poisoning,[6] which paints a grisly picture: in 1969-70, for every 100,000 men in the Russian Soviet Socialist Republic, 28.9 would die of alcohol poisoning per year.[7] When consumption again spiked to 1970s levels after the fall of the Soviet Union, one in two working-age men would die of alcohol-related causes.[8]

THE INDIVIDUAL

The environmental risk factors present in Moskva-Petushki do not bode well for Venedikt's liver, and I am yet to discuss the person-specific risk factors that AUD researchers have found: education, childhood exposure, poverty, sex, and genetics.[9]

Education

Of the five risk factors identified, this is the only front on which Venedikt may have reduced his risk of AUD. Despite being brought up in an orphanage, labeled as a child of an enemy of the state (his father had made an anti-Soviet joke), Erofeev was able to attend university in Moscow.[10] However, due to his politics and challenges with substance use, he never earned a university degree. In addition to the author's biographical details involving a rich schooling and enrollment in, but not completion of, several degree programs, the text itself demonstrates the protagonist's incredible exposure to literature, history, and culture. For instance, Venedikt pays his fare to a corrupt ticket inspector with sordid historical tales: "I went from Roman to Christian history and came to the story of Hypatia... And in this way, three years passed, every week... The next Friday, I got up to Indira Gandhi, Moshe Dayan, and Dubcek."[11] To have such a repertoire of historical and contemporary reference points, regardless of the veracity of the tales (which we have no reason to believe are false), suggests a robust education.

Childhood Exposure

Venedikt rarely references his childhood in the book, with one notable exception: when discussing the drinking of "today's youth." He writes, "At their age I would do this: on Thursday evening I'd drink, all at one go, three and a half liters of beer and vodka mixed...I wouldn't wake up on Friday. I'd wake up on Saturday and not in Moscow either but under the railroad embankment in the Naro-Fominsk region."[12] Not only was alcohol in his household as a child, but Venedikt appears to meet the threshold for an alcohol use disorder by virtue of this quote alone. Early alcohol exposure is a predictor of alcohol addiction, and Venedikt clearly demonstrates it here.[13] Drawing from his personal life, Erofeev was exposed to alcohol consumption in the household no later than the age of 16, after his father returned from the gulags with an alcohol use disorder.[14] It is entirely possible that his earliest exposure was even earlier.

Poverty

Though we do not have precise numbers, the text provides a clear picture of Venedikt's financial situation. He reports having lost his job as a construction brigade foreman the week prior.[15] This appears to be part of a broader pattern of short periods of work prior to expulsion on various grounds. In such a case, Venedikt's meager income would be deeply inconsistent. Compounding his limited resources is his spending: he writes about a girl he had been seeing for the past 12 weeks and a child he has in Petushki. If both claims are true, we can assume that his inconsistent drip of available income is further diminished by expenditures on others.

Sex

Venedikt is, by all accounts, male. As Na et al. discuss, males are at greater risk of AUD.

Genetics

Genetics is, naturally, the most difficult element to demonstrate: one would be hard-pressed to find a DNA sample of a protagonist conveniently listed in an appendix (but one can dream). However, by using family history as a proxy for genetics and allowing the author's actual biographical details to inform our discussion, it is entirely likely that Venedikt had a genetic predisposition toward alcohol use. As previously mentioned, Erofeev's father returned from government prisons with an alcohol use disorder. Insofar as a risk of alcohol use disorder is heritable, it would appear that Erofeev's (and, by extension, Venedikt's) was elevated.

The Cycle of Addiction

With the distal and recent triggers of alcohol use discussed, the most pertinent element of Erofeev's "poem in prose" is ready to be analyzed: the depiction of the cycle of addiction. As previously explained, I selected the Koob and Le Moal model as the basis of this discussion for its connection between biological and psychological processes and observable behavior. This cycle of addiction breaks substance use disorders down into three critical, intertwining stages—binge intoxication, negative affect/withdrawal, and preoccupation/anticipation—which each roughly map onto interconnected cognitive processes. Although presented as cyclical, the delineation between phases may become blurred, especially as consumption increases.

Binge Intoxication

During binge intoxication, the user partakes in the addictive substance or behavior, creating the sensation of a high).[16] Neurologically, activation of the nucleus accumbens creates a feeling of liking the experience—many of the positive feelings associated with the high stem from activity here. At the same time, activation of the dorsal striatum reinforces the habit of the problem behavior.

Erofeev demonstrates the exuberant high associated with binge intoxication throughout the novel. In one particularly poignant moment, Venedikt directly ties alcohol consumption with exaltation of God and the awesomeness of religion: "What else am I to drink so that this exultation will not be extin-

guished... if I get to Petushki unharmed today, I'll make a cocktail which it will be possible to drink without shame in the presence of God and man, in the presence of man and in the name of God."[17] This positive feeling towards alcohol and its consumption does not provide a complete picture of binge intoxication: habit formation is the second (and potentially more significant) element of this phase of the cycle.

To this end, there are several key pieces of evidence to suggest Venedikt has a drinking habit. The first is the consistency with which he drinks. At no point in the text do we see him sober. This alone does not establish that a habit was formed and makes it particularly difficult to establish evidence of the learned relationship between a stimulus and the effects of a particular substance, known as incentive salience. Because of the constant inebriation, it is difficult to isolate any stimuli that might trigger his drinking. Instead, to evidence habit formation, I look to his alcohol consumption in adolescence. Venedikt claims, "on Thursday evening I'd drink, all at one go, three and a half liters of beer and vodka mixed...I wouldn't wake up on Friday. I'd wake up on Saturday and not in Moscow either but under the railroad embankment in the Naro-Fominsk region."[18] The original Russian uses the imperfective verb "выпивал," more explicitly indicating this was a habitual, regular behavior. Moreover, this behavior persists despite negative consequences (losing track of time, being inebriated by a railroad embankment, etc.) that might have deterred it were it an uncompelled choice.

NEGATIVE AFFECT /WITHDRAWAL

In the second stage of the cycle of addiction, as the body attempts to return to homeostasis from the high, it often overshoots and creates a "low."[19] In this stage, the pleasure response in the nucleus accumbens becomes muted. Meanwhile, feelings of fear, anxiety, and distress emerge from the extended amygdala. These negative feelings and the reduction in pleasure create the negative affect that characterizes this phase. At this time, physical withdrawal symptoms may also present themselves, such as tremors or pain. With continued drug use, as the body repeatedly overshoots the point of homeostasis, it begins to oscillate around a new, lower level of happiness, called allostasis.

As allostasis becomes more dramatic, users will increasingly feel the need to consume more and more of a particular drug to feel "normal." Both the feeling of the "low" as well as this allostatic point are discussed in the text. When describing the binges of his youth, Venedikt goes on to write, "but beginning with the sixth, ... and on through the ninth, I would go soft. I'd go so soft that on the tenth I would have to shut my eyes... I would think I must, by force of will, overcome the queasiness and drink the eleventh."[20] Keeping in mind that he is discussing habitual binge intoxication in this passage, we see evidence of the decline in nucleus accumbens activity and the onset of some negative affect, particularly in the queasiness.

Deviating from all passages previously cited, the best description of allostasis is given not by Venedikt, but

one of his travelling companions, who describes his experience of drinking himself to sleep: "He explained that the horizontal line of the normal sober condition, the everyday line. The highest point of the curve is the moment of falling asleep, the lowest point, that of awakening with a hangover... 'You see, it's a pure mirror image.'" [21] This cyclicality of experience—the drug-induced high and the body's counteracting response—is exactly the path taken to allostasis. Because the shift to allostasis occurs gradually, it may feel as though the start and end points of an oscillation are similar (hence the line is horizontal, not sloping).

PREOCCUPATION / ANTICIPATION

The preoccupation stage of the cycle of addiction is unique in that, by virtue of it occurring in the prefrontal cortex, it is in some ways the most conscious. This stage is characterized by 1) cravings for and recurring thoughts about the drug, 2) an inhibited "stop" system, and 3) an overactive "go" system.[22] Driven in part by incentive salience (see: binge intoxication), the mind is overrun with thoughts pertaining to the drug, intruding on or crowding out other thoughts. Simultaneously, the mind's ability to halt certain processes or resist urges- the "stop" system- is weakened. Lastly, impulses towards particular actions feel stronger- the overactive "go system" dominates the "stop system." In the case of Venedikt, he appears to differentiate himself from the "go system," at least at the beginning of the novel, when he is only somewhat hungover. He associates the "go system" with angels, perhaps reflecting its overactivity or greater power. In one brief dialogue, Erofeev demonstrates this interplay between the stop and go systems (angels in italics):

> "You say get moving, you'll feel better. But I don't feel like moving at all. You know yourselves what sort of shape I'm in... to get moving!"
> *You know what, drop by the restaurant at the Station. They've got something there. Yesterday, they had sherry. It couldn't have been all drunk up in one evening.*
> "Yes, yes, yes, I'll go. I'll go right now and find out."[23]

Easily, Venedikt is convinced to consume more alcohol. Indeed, he even values the future consumption of alcohol over the present discomfort of walking on Moscow streets while hungover. Although he does not seem to be discounting the reward of the alcohol, there are still cognitive biases and distortions at play. For instance, the line "get moving [implied to be toward alcohol], you'll feel better"- a quote from a previous exchange with angels- reflects minimization of long-term consequences. This preoccupation seen in his recurring thoughts also distorts his very sense of time. For instance, as he walks to the restaurant for some sherry, he asks himself: "when was it you bought your goodies yesterday? After the Hunter's? No, after the Hunter's I wasn't up to buying presents..." [24] and he goes on to list five other drinks he had had the day before.

Erofeev's writing often reflects the psychological processes of addiction, producing a deeply tangible image for readers. I chose to use citations that most cleanly reflect each phase of Koob and Le Moal's model. However, people rarely

experience SUDs as a series of consecutive steps: often several processes occur simultaneously, bleeding into one another. Reflecting this, the many uncited pages of Moskva-Petushki are filled with precisely these types of depictions.

CONCLUSION

Erofeev's tragic depiction of AUD maintenance provides a unique characterization of the cyclical and intertwined nature of addiction. Veering from binge intoxication into withdrawal, wandering into preoccupation, and stumbling back into binge intoxication once again, the audience is afforded a unique portrait of the internal experiences associated with AUD. Venedikt of the book is well-versed in religion and culture, possessing the capacity to examine the worlds of politics and art through the lens of substance use disorder. The cognitive distortions presented by an author with relevant lived experience and sufficient time to concoct complex trains of reasoning are perhaps trickier to unpack and thereby leave audiences with a more nuanced depiction of the psychology of AUD than a textbook might allow. Because this is, at best, a case study in an individual's experiences of alcohol use disorder, embellished for narrative effect, establishing any inaccuracy in the depicted experiences is somewhat outside the scope of this paper. However, the experiences shared in Moskva-Petushki might expand our repertoire of conceptualizations of AUD to draw upon. In doing so, Erofeev provides readers with an opportunity to confront their own stigmas surrounding alcoholism and practice compassion.

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Borders of Gender Expectation - A Kristevian Analysis of Chernukha literature and Lyudmila Petrushevskaya's *Our Crowd*

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Emerging from over seven decades of Socialist ideology, Russia entered a new cultural period under Mikhail Gorbachev, in which reform policies such as perestroika (restructuring) and glasnost (openness) thrust the socio-political climate into a new era. The country began separating itself from the limiting grasp of Socialist Realism—Russia's dedicated artistic style implemented by Stalin in 1932—allowing art to explore fresh territories through a relaxation in censorship. As a result, artists produced work that more openly critiqued Russian politics, exposing a public desire for media that was previously untouchable under the USSR's regime.

Under this socio-political climate, Chernukha emerged: a literary genre that translates to "overly dark" or "grossly dark," and directly engages with the horrific subject matter that was unexplored due to censorship. As the name suggests, disturbing themes of alcoholism, infidelity, suicide, and child abuse become relevant topics of interest, propelling people into a world that is shocking because of its naturalistic point of view.[1] However, what is perhaps most intriguing about Chernukha literature is its illumination of the institutional disadvantages of the female experience. The perestroika era saw a surge in female authorship, giving a platform for depictions of womanhood that were far from what was traditionally expected. Not only were women historically minimized in literature, with female-authored novels being cast to the realm of "women's prose," but themes of female frustration were underrepresented in Socialist Realism's mission to maintain passive collectivity.[2] Therefore, in

the transformative period of the 1990s, authors based their stories on female protagonists who are characteristically unsettling, making rage, trauma, and unreliability the focal point of their experiences. It is with this gendered lens that this critique is centered.

The discussion presented here applies Julia Kristeva's psychoanalytical theory of abjection, meaning the disturbing blurring of lines and expectations, to argue the chaotic disruption of women in Lyudmila Petrushevskaya's short story Our Crowd. This analysis also converses with Barbara Creed's usage of Kristeva's theory in her book Monstrous-Feminine, arguing that Petrushevskaya's writing engages with a version of femininity that is distinct from other unconventional female characters in popular media. Our Crowd's cast of female characters is portrayed as uncanny through meddling in a gray area of gender expectations. The women within her story are associated with the chaotic world of the semiotic, whilst the main protagonist balances between gender expectations. The relegation of women into psycho-social systems that are purposefully composed of grotesque and tabooed subject matter places the female literary canon in an alarming suspension. This suspension further illuminates the unpredictability of Chernukha literature in contrast to the decades of orderly Socialist Realism that preceded it. Although this aggressive moving-away from sterility frames perestroika's women as something more disturbing, there remains considerable space for radical feminist interpretation that challenges, and even wields, the horrific feminine as a cultural critique.

CHERNUKHA: A DECAYING OF THE SOCIALIST REALISM SYSTEM

In order to grasp the radical female characterizations that Our Crowd introduced into Russia's artistic culture, it is necessary to place the Chernukha literary era in contrast with Socialist Realism, revealing the degree to which this literature began eroding utopian constructions. Socialist Realism was an artistic structure that largely functioned to perpetuate the ideology of the state. Literature during this period sought to reinforce the ideological policies of the Bolshevik party through glorifying collectivization, community, morality, and unconditional support for Soviet leadership.[3] Thus, Socialist Realism was overwhelmingly sterile in that it disregarded subject matter that pointed toward any form of social corruption and eliminated plots that contained political critique. When introducing Our Crowd's backdrop of Chernukha-era literature, the distortion of this genre is indicative of an eroding political order within Russia's post-communist landscape. Literary plots that previously relied on maternal bodies as promotional tools for collectivization were changed by female characters who disobeyed these conventions.

With the introduction of perestroika in the 1990s, and the uncensored commentary of social roles that followed, Chernukha's abjected women act as a stark contrast to the controlled artistic environment of the prior six decades. The women actively rupture Socialist Realism's ideals, mocking the utopic presentation of literature

through their criminality. Here, it is useful to introduce Julia Kristeva's psychoanalytical theory of the symbolic and semiotic, thus contextualizing this shift.[4] Based on the interdependent exchange between bodily drives and systems of law, Kristeva constructs two separate realms of human development. The first realm, the semiotic, is associated with the feminine maternal body and encompasses primal bodily impulses. Existing in a pre-linguistic space, the semiotic realm engages with carnal systems of waste, bodily functions, and the physical inseparability between the maternal host and the self. This realm is inherently chaotic, representing the biological tendencies of the human condition that are often concealed in place of more structured systems. The second realm, the symbolic world, embodies the masculine structures of law, language, power, and identity. Unlike its semiotic counterpart, the symbolic differentiates the self from its biology, instilling an otherwise unstructured world with complex thought and systematic procedure. The Soviet government's Socialist Realism agenda is deeply connected to the orderly structure of the symbolic realm, as it functions entirely on the collective construction of political devotion, community participation, and familial roles. Relating this ideology back to the emergence of Chernukha literature, the introduction of illegality, abuse, and failure to adapt to maternalism challenges the ideals of what a good Socialist citizen should embody. Thus, in Kristevian terms, this literary genre complicates the deterioration of the orderly symbolic, revealing Russia's underlying semiotic order. Chernukha is merely the underbelly of Socialist Realism: a space composed of all the unclean and undesirable traits of society that Socialism desperately attempted to ignore.

Chernukha is merely the underbelly of Socialist Realism; a literary space that is composed of all the unclean and undesirable traits of society that Socialism desperately attempts to ignore.

ANALYSIS OF GENDER EXPECTATIONS IN OUR CROWD

Chernukha's literature is successful in displacing female characters who reject traditional concepts of femininity. By the very nature of interpreting feminine characters with gender non-conforming traits as residing in a gray area of gender expectation, Chernukha provides a much more encompassing critique of the post-Soviet anxiety surrounding non-traditional women. Lyudmila Petrushevskaya's Our Crowd is especially poignant in its ability to destabilize the reader through placing women liminally between gendered expectations.[5] Centering around a close-knit but disturbingly dysfunctional group of friends, Petrushevskaya's short story follows the memories of its nameless main narrator as she recounts the friend group's tribulations. The circle consists of three men and six women, including the narrator herself, and, despite a few deviations, the text initially relies on orienting the reader in strikingly predictable structures of

gender; men represent physical power, whereas women represent emotional allure.

Within Petrushevskaya's literary male canon, themes of violence, confrontation, and physicality are masculinized early within the text. From the opening page, the audience learns of an altercation between Andrei and Serge, with Andrei, seemingly unprovoked, punching Serge in the eye while intoxicated. Patterns of violence between, and from, men continue throughout the story, with Valera turning verbally aggressive during political debates, Kolya displaying acts of physical and verbal abuse towards his child, and men indulging in alcohol abuse, conflicts, and erratic behaviour. However, what is perhaps most pertinent to Petrushevskaya's use of a stereotypically polarized gender dynamic is masculine violence represented through sexual domination. This dynamic is first introduced when the narrator describes the promiscuous Zhora, a friend within the group who is frequently identified by his aggressive sexuality. Here, the narrator informs the audience of Zhora's sexual behaviour through the recollection of an incident in which he attempted rape: "Zhora managed to throw the half-crazed lady down on Sonechka's small bed, but Serge and Andrei came in and, smiling involuntarily, dragged Zhora away while the alarmed lady straightened her dress, which had ridden up in the course of events." The neutrality with which the narrator recounts Zhora's assault establishes the physical assertion of sex as something innate to masculinity. The group was amused by the events in a way that reduces sexual assault to being a reaction of masculine nature: A man is simply incapable of restraining himself from expressing his innate sexual desires. This interpretation is only reinforced by the "involuntary" reactions of Andrei and Serge, who, when walking in on the disturbing scene of a woman being assaulted, could not help but smile as if they too understood their friends' urge. In relation to Kristeva, the regulatory power of the symbolic masculine over the semiotic feminine sets a foundation in which masculine bodies are largely in positions of control.

Running parallel to this gendered view of the "violent" and "powerful" masculine, Petrushevskaya balances the dynamic by similarly constructing the "physical" and "divine" feminine. Marisha, who is introduced by the protagonist as the group's feminine "divinity," becomes the figurehead for this personification. She is the object of affection for the majority of the male characters, and maintains close female friendships with the group's women. By nature, her position as hostess asserts her as the archetypal mother, which is aided by her actual maternal behaviours towards her child, Sonya. However, this characterization of the feminine is only awarded to Marisha, as Our Crowd more commonly addresses its women through the physical lens—a form of gendered recognition that prioritizes the female body materially. Tanya, who is almost always referred to as "Tanya the Valkyrie" is first introduced through her physical beauty, with the narrator remarking, "our Tanya was always there, a Valkyrie six feet tall, with long blond hair, extremely white teeth that she brushed maniacally three times a day for twenty

minutes..." In a similar vein, Lenka is characterized by being "a very pretty girl with a D-cup bust and long, light brown hair, a real luxury item, twenty years old." Petrushevskaya conforms to this pattern of female sexualization, placing a woman's body at the forefront of her character. However, this image of femininity is abjected by a deliberate inclusion of the grotesque. The literary grotesque meddles in the exaggeration of the physical, creating bodies that are uncanny by placing them between what is human and what is not.[6] Lenka disrupts her beauty by losing her four front teeth, no longer capable of being considered a "luxury piece.' Similarly, Nadya - a young and thin woman who is married to Andrei—is taunted for having a false eye. These women, who would otherwise perfectly remain within their feminine expectations, are made disturbed by the grotesque and chaotic contortion of their appearance, which, as already established, is one of Petrushevskaya's main markers of femininity.

The fear surrounding objectified women is especially topical when placing this literary decision in a socio-cultural context. The 1990s were marked by detrimental economic impacts on the stability of the country. Russia's transition out of a Soviet-based economy to Gorbachev's implementation of a free market system was a shock, with mass layoffs, wage decreases, and inflation becoming a pressing concern. Women were a particularly vulnerable demographic for economic uncertainty, with salaries dropping to a staggering 30% less than those of male workers.[7] Within this time, prostitution became an alternative source of income, with physical appearance being a clear asset in securing work. Women's bodily objectification became an abject in itself. The position of a prostitute is already liminal, as she navigates the border between an administrative, but not criminal, offence.[8] This legal undefinability is a fear-inducing line to navigate in a political climate that is already experiencing a surge in state crime, as being associated with criminality in any sense can lead to severe social and legal repercussions. The sexualized imagistic identity of women in prostitution is similarly disturbing. Russia's economic struggles meant that beauty and sexuality were of newfound importance to women, with prostitution providing money where a reliable income was unsteady.

However, the link between prostitution and vanity became a much broader symbol of female corruption. No longer viewed as the maternal Socialist, these markers of female worth were distasteful and materialistic, leaving women in a paradoxical space of needing to appear beautiful yet being condemned when doing so. Considering the criminality of sex work, the image of prostitution became a much larger archetype of Russia's corruption, being used as a scapegoat to measure how the country is unable to realize its cultural ideals of control.[9] After years of asserting a Socialist Realism rhetoric of symbolic order, prostitution under the post-Soviet period further demonstrated the degradation of Russia's utopianism. The image of the female body is political, creating fear for its semiotic carnality, yet still desired in a media landscape that loves to objectify beautiful women. Within the framework of Petrushevskaya's writing, this push and pull battle

is realized through the disfigurement of her female characters. The beauty attributed to each woman is promptly taken away, overexaggerated, or made uncanny, providing a narrative that women are punished for their sexuality in a system that still desires it.

However, Petrushevskaya's construction of gender conveniently excludes one of the most imperative characters: the narrator. Refusing to conform to either masculinity or femininity, the narrator is the story's true abject focal point, propelling Our Crowd into what is characteristically disturbing about Chernukha. She is placed on the border of the group's masculine and feminine sides, physically being a female character, yet staunchly aligning herself with masculine traits. Our Crowd begins by recognizing the narrator's incongruencies with gender, as she asserts herself as being a "hard, harsh person, always with a smile on my full rosy lips and a sneer for everyone." She meddles between the violence of masculinity—showing a clear aggression within her personality—and the femininity of her presentation—through bodily objectification. This gender confusion is even present linguistically, as the direct Russian translation asserts the narrator through masculine pronouns and declensions: "Я человек жесткий, жестокий, всегда с улыбкой на полных, румяных губах, всегда ко всем с насмешкой" ("I am a tough, cruel man always with a smile on my full, rosy lips and a sneer for everyone"). By the very nature of this introduction, the narrator herself is recognizing the masculinity in her gendered depiction, polarizing her from the other characters in the story who are addressed by their respective feminine and masculine pronouns.

This opening line also appears remarkably similar to Dostoevsky's Notes from Underground, which reads, "Я человек больной… Я злой человек. Непривлекательный я человек" ("I am a sick man... I am an evil man. I am an unattractive man."[10] Considering that Dostoevsky's novel centers around a spiteful and disillusioned protagonist who alienates himself through the consciousness of his own human condition, Petrushevskaya's narrator purposefully places herself on a similar plane. She nudges the audience, if not to immediately draw literary parallels, to at the very least interpret her character as containing a similar hostility. The narrator also demonstrates a notable lack of maternal and emotional characteristics, preferring a construction of her self-image that is, for the most part, genderless. She rarely describes herself using the physicality and maternity associated with Socialist expectations, nor does she conform to the previously established male patterns of power exertion.

Yet, her affinity for meddling between borders is perhaps even more compelling in the story's conclusion, a conclusion in which the narrator completely forgoes any feminine maternity and acts solely out of violence. In Our Crowd's final pages, the narrator brutally beats her son, Alyosha, "[striking] him across the face so that blood started flowing from the child's nose." This act is so uncharacteristic of nurturing motherhood that she no longer has the potential to abide by the feminine ar-

chetypes that the audience wants her to portray. It is important to recognize that this act of grotesque beating surpasses the abuse of her husband, Kolya, who would frequently strike and diminish the young child as well. However, because of the narrator's violence, the image of Kolya is changed: "The Kolya who took Alyosha in his arms is no longer the Kolya who'd hit a seven-year-old child flat across the face only because he'd wet himself." This reversal of character is striking. The narrator committed an act so foreign to a female lead that she surpassed her husband's violent masculinity to the extent that he recoiled into the feminine nurturer archetype. By the end of the story, gender lines are suspended in such a way that there is a complete reversal of roles. Using Kristeva's theory, this grotesque violence is what sets Our Crowd apart from other stories that similarly subvert gender norms.

In her book Monstrous-Feminine, feminist film theorist Barbara Creed applies Kristeva's theory to a series of women in film. She constructs the character of the "abject mother," which is an identity attributed to a maternal figure who unsettles the audience by means of castrating their child through enmeshment—the process of not letting the child develop separate from the natal bond. She remarks that, "In the child's attempts to break away, the mother becomes an 'abject'; thus, in this context, where the child struggles to become a separate subject, abjection becomes 'a precondition of narcissism.'"[11]

Here, literary mothers are abject through the constraint of their children, refusing to give up on the natal bond they once shared, thus ultimately leading to estrangement. Creed relies on Kristeva's application of the maternal semiotic: a pre-individualized place in which the mother is attached to the child, and human behaviour is entirely primal. Although the trope of an overbearing maternal figure is a point of unsettlement in literature, this image remains far more conforming to Socialist Realism's gendered expectations of nurturement, emotionality, and parental involvement. Petrushevskaya's narrator deviates entirely from this maternity and is thus abjected for the deliberate pushing away of her son. Instead of wielding the neglectful father trope, Petrushevskaya awards her female character with the distinctly male tendency of parental neglect. In this sense, Creed's application of the abject mother is unsuccessful in categorizing Our Crowd's narrator. Instead, it would be helpful to turn to Kristeva's placement of the symbolic father in what she calls "the abjection of the self." To become autonomous, an individual needs to undergo the process of rejecting the semiotic mother, entering the detached but systematic world of the father. She writes:

> What he has swallowed up instead of maternal love is an emptiness, or rather a maternal hatred without a word for the words of the father; that is what he tries to cleanse himself of, tirelessly. What solace does he come upon within such loathing? Perhaps a father, existing but unsettled, loving but unsteady, merely an apparition but an apparition that remains.[12]

Petrushevskaya's narrator is much more closely aligned to this symbolic force, both through her detachment from her child, and through the

limited biological safety and connection that is expected from a semiotic figure. Thus, the literary decision to include a maternal character who lies on the border of paternity is jarring. When placed against the literary backdrop of Socialist Realism, the artistic decision to portray paternally-leaning mothers contradicts the historic role of women in the USSR. Thus, when engaging with perestroika era works that naturally challenge our familiarity with cemented feminine roles, Our Crowd appears even more obscure.

Our Crowd casts men as having a general inability to truly be an abject. The fact that the reader can immediately recognize abnormalities within the text's female bodies reveals a larger cultural discussion on the fluidity of which women can be turned grotesque. Whether it is through the disturbing nature of the narrator's overt violence or the contortion of physical characteristics to be inhumanely exaggerated, Our Crowd convinces the reader that it is women who are more capable of being disturbing. The sexual abuse, aggression, and addiction portrayed by men, alongside the exaggerated nature with which each man behaves, is never perceived as disturbingly uncouth, as it perfectly falls into the trope of violence associated with their roles. However, Petrushevskaya's women intimately engage with abjection, as any small inclusion of the grotesque penetrates their image.

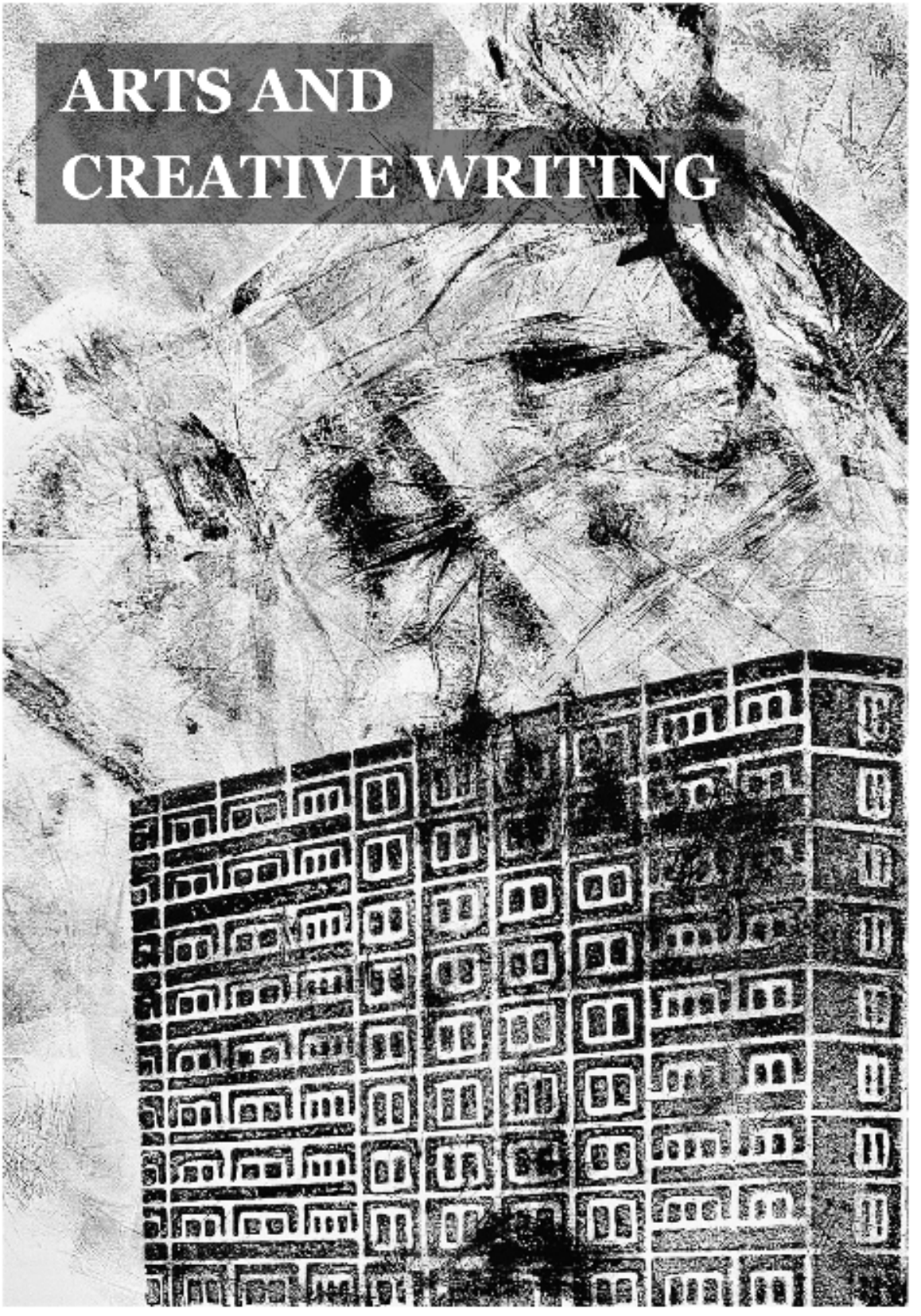
POTENTIAL FOR A FEMINIST PERSPECTIVE

This ease with which women are able to be cast as abject is where Our Crowd excels in providing a feminist perspective: The audience is challenged to question why women are so frequently thrust into uncomfortable liminality. Petrushevskaya's main literary intention was never in prompting her audience to contemplate the ambiguous outburst of her main narrator, or even to recognize our discomfort. Instead, she poses a much larger socio-cultural question: Why are women attributed with all the repulsions of the semiotic? How is it that grotesque subject matter is only turned abject when in the presence of feminine forms? When departing from years of Socialist Realism ideology and artistic movements that were intentionally designed to place women within the context of maternal responsibility, women who exist outside these predictable realms—beautiful women, sexual women, angry women—receive animosity. By challenging the gendered expectations of Soviet femininity, these women not only represent a shift in Russian culture more broadly but also mark the end of the sterile and utopian expectations cemented by Socialist Realism.

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ARTS AND CREATIVE WRITING



Два Великана
Two Giants

Translated from Russian by Alyna Martinez
Swarthmore College

Два великана над пристанью,
сгорбившись, ищут рассвет
чёрные звёзды гаснут в мокрой траве,
как будто бы память, забыв, что она — вода,
пытается сжечь наши маленькие города.

Рыбаки засыпают на отсветлевшем дне,
закутавшись в невод, полный ракушек и слов,
долгих лет уходящих, спутанных, словно трава.
Под зияющим небом почти невозможны слова.

Я зову тебя долго
эхом разбитых широт,
чтобы мы смогли перейти эту реку вброд.
Берега, берега… а над ними хохочет тайга,
и зловещее солнце зовёт и зовёт на восток.

Скоро выпадет снег,
и паромы забудут свой путь,
рыбы выйдут на берег,
начнут хороводы водить,
и, сцепившись хвостами,
в надежде заговорить
снова вымолвят слово
какое-нибудь как-нибудь,
упадут на песок,
будут слушать в стрекочущей мгле
сумасшедший ветер с запахом череды.
Только нас здесь не будет,
так скоро…и ровно в срок
ледяные волны смоют
запутанные следы.

Hunched over, two giants
on the pier search for dawn
black stars fade in the wet grass,
as if memory, having forgotten that it is — water,
trying to burn our small cities.

The fishermen fall asleep on the lightened bottom,
wrapped in a net, full of shells and words,
long, departing years, are tangled up like grass.
Under the gaping sky, words are almost impossible.

I've been calling you for a long time
with the echo of shattered latitudes,
so we can wade this river.
The shores, shores… the taiga laughs at them,
and the ominous sun calls and calls east.

Snow will soon fall,
and the ferries will forget their way,
fish come to shore,
beginning to lead round dances,
and, having interlocked their tails,
with a hope of beginning to speak
will again utter
some word, somehow,
will fall down on the sand,
will listen in the chattering darkness
to a mad wind smelling of marigolds.
But we will not be here,
so soon… and right in time
icy waves wash away
the tangled traces.

The Velvet Ribbon and the Adventure of Arkady Nekrasov

Madu Marcelino
University of California, Berkeley

Permit me, dear reader, to introduce, with all the requisite ceremony and perhaps a touch more than it is strictly necessary, a certain rat of St. Petersburg, so eternally shrouded in fog and the aroma of boiled cabbage, that one might suspect it was designed expressly for the proliferation of rats, bureaucrats, and other such essential citizens. This rat, whose whiskers if I may be permitted a digression—were of a particularly distinguished length, neither too bristly nor too limp, resided in the shadowy underbelly of Nevsky Prospekt itself, that most illustrious of avenues, where the boots of generals, the heels of shopgirls, and the paws of lesser rodents all left their mark, though not always with equal dignity. Our rat's name, for the sake of narrative convenience and because every creature, however small, deserves a moniker, was Arkady Nekrasov. Yes, not so beautiful, a surname which clung to him with the same stubbornness as the crumbs of rye bread to his whiskers, and which suited him perfectly. Nevertheless, we do not understand why such a filthyrodent should bear a first name meaning beauty and grace? Arkady- "the radiant one," "the noble one," a name fit for a poet, a prince, or at the very least a lapdog with a silk cushion, and yet here it clings to a rat whose most radiant feature is the glimmer of grease upon his tail. Perhaps Arkady's mother, a rat of sentimental disposition, glimpsed a better future for her son as she nuzzled him in their first nest beneath the bakery's warm floorboards.

Arkady had carved out a life of quiet, if somewhat threadbare, contentment. His dwelling—a crevice between two cobblestones—was furnished with all the treasures a rat of refined, if eccentric, taste might desire: a walnut shell polished to a dull sheen, a button of mother-of-pearl, and, most precious of all, a velvet ribbon, once crimson but now faded to a shade best described as mahogany. Ah, and how the velvet ribbon had haunted Arkady's dreams long before he dared to claim it as his own. For many moons, that faded strip of crimson drifted like a

ghost through the city's gutters, a mere whisper of color amidst the city's endless gray. Arkady had seen it countless times, tangled in the muck beneath a baker's cart, caught on a splintered fencepost, or fluttering forlornly in the breeze by the frozen Neva.Yet, in all those long, cold nights, he gave it no more thought than a passing shadow or a forgotten crumb.

It was only after a chance encounter—if one can call anything in this city of spectral shadows and sly, a matter of mere chance- with a mysterious denizen—a witch of the rat world, as crooked and ancient as the twisted roots beneath the apothecary—that the ribbon took on a new, almost sacred significance. Ah, but what a witch! Not the sort you find in the polite pages of foreign fairy tales, but a true Nevsky Prospekt crone. The witch, her eyes clouded but gleaming with obscure knowledge, claimed to have seen a vision: a woman crowned with stars, regal and radiant, who had once passed through the poor Nevsky Prospekt, her silken gown tailing behind her like a river of moonlight.[1] And from her hand, the witch swore, the velvet ribbon had slipped- a token lost in haste, yet touched by the very breath of nobility.

It was this velvet ribbon, more than any morsel of cheese or crust of bread that filled Arkady's heart with longing and his mind with dreams. He would sit for hours, his nose twitching in philosophical reverie, contemplating the mysteries of existence: Why did some humans toss away such splendid things, while others clung to the meanest crust? Was it possible, he wondered, to rise above one's station with nothing but a ribbon and a well-timed dash beneath a baker's cart? And most perplexing of all, did the moon-glimpsed through a sewer grate truly resemble a wheel of cheese, or was that, too, an illusion reserved for dreamers and rats named Nekrasov? And so Arkady Nekrasov wore his name as he wore his velvet ribbon, with a mixture of pride, embarrassment, and the faint hope that, in the right light, and from a generous distance, he might be mistaken for something finer than he was. But the city, in its indifference and absorbed, busy lives paid him no mind, and the boots of generals and the paws of rivals continued to thunder overhead, utterly unconcerned with poor Arkady Nekrasov.

His shoe-cleaning post, wedged between the bakery's leaky drain and a forgotten samovar, was both his curse and his opportunity, though he would have preferred neither and instead chosen a third thing, had anyone bothered to ask. Here, in this aromatic crevice of the city, Arkady toiled, hunched over the paws of the metropolis's most illustrious rodents- those rats whose whiskers quivered with the authority of titles such as Assistant Deputy Crumb Inspector, Senior Cheese Allocation Clerk, and, in one particularly mysterious case, Temporary Acting Undersecretary for Lost Buttons. Each day, he buffed away the grime of bureaucracy, which, as everyone knows, is far more persistent than ordinary dirt and twice as likely to leave a stain. He continued inhaling the intoxicating aromas of spilled kvass and pastry crumbs, all while eavesdropping on the latest gossip: who had found a crust of rye, who had been promoted, and most thrilling of all- who was rumored to possess a morsel of genuine sturgeon caviar.

Oh, caviar- how beautiful it is! I have heard whispered amongst the oldest rats in the darkest corners, that caviar glistens like the very eyes of us rodents- small and round. It is said to be the jewel of the banquet, the crown of every feast and the envy of every whisker in the alleys of St. Petersburg.

To possess it is to hold a piece of grandeur, a taste of a world far beyond the scuffed paws and crumb-strewn corners where we dwell. It was in this atmosphere of envy and aspiration that Arkady hatched his plan. He would scour the city for the most sumptuous, dazzling food treasures- proof of his sophistication and a ticket to infinite wealth and respect. He imagined himself at the next Rat Council banquet, reclining on his velvet ribbon, surrounded by admirers as he unveiled his culinary spoils: "Look, comrades, at the delicacies I have acquired! Observe, if you dare, the opulence of my table!" It is said that the Council once spent three nights arguing whether a crumb discovered beneath the Tsar's statue was, in fact, rye or simply a very ambitious oat. The matter was settled only when the Grand Fromage himself declared, with all the gravity of a rat twice his size, that "all crumbs are equal before the Council, but some are more equal than others." Arkady, of course, took notes, resolving that if all else failed, he could always defend a crumb's integrity.

His quest led him through the labyrinth of St. Petersburg's refuse: beneath the fishmonger's stall, where the air shimmered with the promise of forbidden roe; behind the pastry shop, where a careless child had dropped a sugared cherry tart (Arkady's heart fluttered at the memory); and finally, to the alley behind the city's most exclusive restaurant, where destiny awaited. There, glistening in a discarded tin, he found it- a mound of tiny, glossy eggs, red as the sunset over the Neva. "Caviar!" Arkady gasped, his voice trembling with awe. He scooped up the treasure, imagining the gasps of his peers. He snatched the tin, cradling it in his paws as if it were the Tsar's own crown, and slipped it into the inner pocket of his battered trench coat- his "treasure vault," as he liked to call it.

Word spread through the rat alleys and burrows with the speed of a runaway samovar. "Arkady Nekrasov has caviar!" they whispered, tails twitching with envy and awe. The news reached even the highest echelons of the Rat Council, whose members, notorious for their discerning palates and insatiable appetites of luxury, immediately dispatched a formal invitation: Arkady was to be guest of honor at the council's next dinner. For the first time in his life, Arkady was wearing his first name proudly, walking through the underworld with his head held up high, his velvet ribbon fluttering bravely. Rats who once ignored him bowed and scraped, offering him the choisiest crumbs and the warmest spots by the bakery vents.

At the council dinner, he was seated at the right paw of Grand Fromage himself. The banquet unfolded in a delirious symphony of gluttony, each course more decadent than the last. The rats' eyes gleamed

with anticipation as the first platter-crusts slick with golden butter- was unveiled, their surfaces glistening likewith anticipation as the first platter- crusts slick with golden butter- was unveiled, their surfaces glistening like forbidden skin in candlelight. Arkady watched as Grand Fromage himself lifted a bite, his whiskers quivering, and pressed it to his lips. As he bit down, the butter began oozing, slow and languorous, down to his chin. The room seemed to hold its breath as he tasted the morsel. All around, the other rats cast sidelong glances at Arkady, eager for the promised marvel. Yet, Arkady kept his treasure hidden, savoring the anticipation. He basked in the praise, the admiring glances, the whispered hopes that he might share even a single egg with the assembled dignitaries. At last, with a flourish worthy of an opera diva, Arkady produced the tin from his coat and placed it at the center of the table. All conversation ceased. Eyes widened; whiskers trembled.

The Grand Fromage himself learned forward, sniffed, and then recoiled. "What is this?" he sneered, his loud grumpy voice echoing. "This is not caviar, Nekrasov!" His surname was finally spat out during the dinner. "This is lumpfish roe- a garnish for the tables of the petty bourgeoisie! An impostor's delicacy!" A hush fell. The other rats started snickering, then laughing outright. Arkady's ears burned; his ribbon seemed to wilt. The mountain of respect he had so carefully climbed crumbled beneath him, leaving only the bitter taste of humiliation. But then, the laughter faded, the banquet hall dimmed, and the world seemed to tilt. The velvet ribbon slipped from his neck, the tin rolled away into darkness. The scents of butter and brine dissolved, replaced by the overpowering sweetness of cherries and sugar.

Waiting for Utopia

Katharina Hass
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ARTIST'S STATEMENT

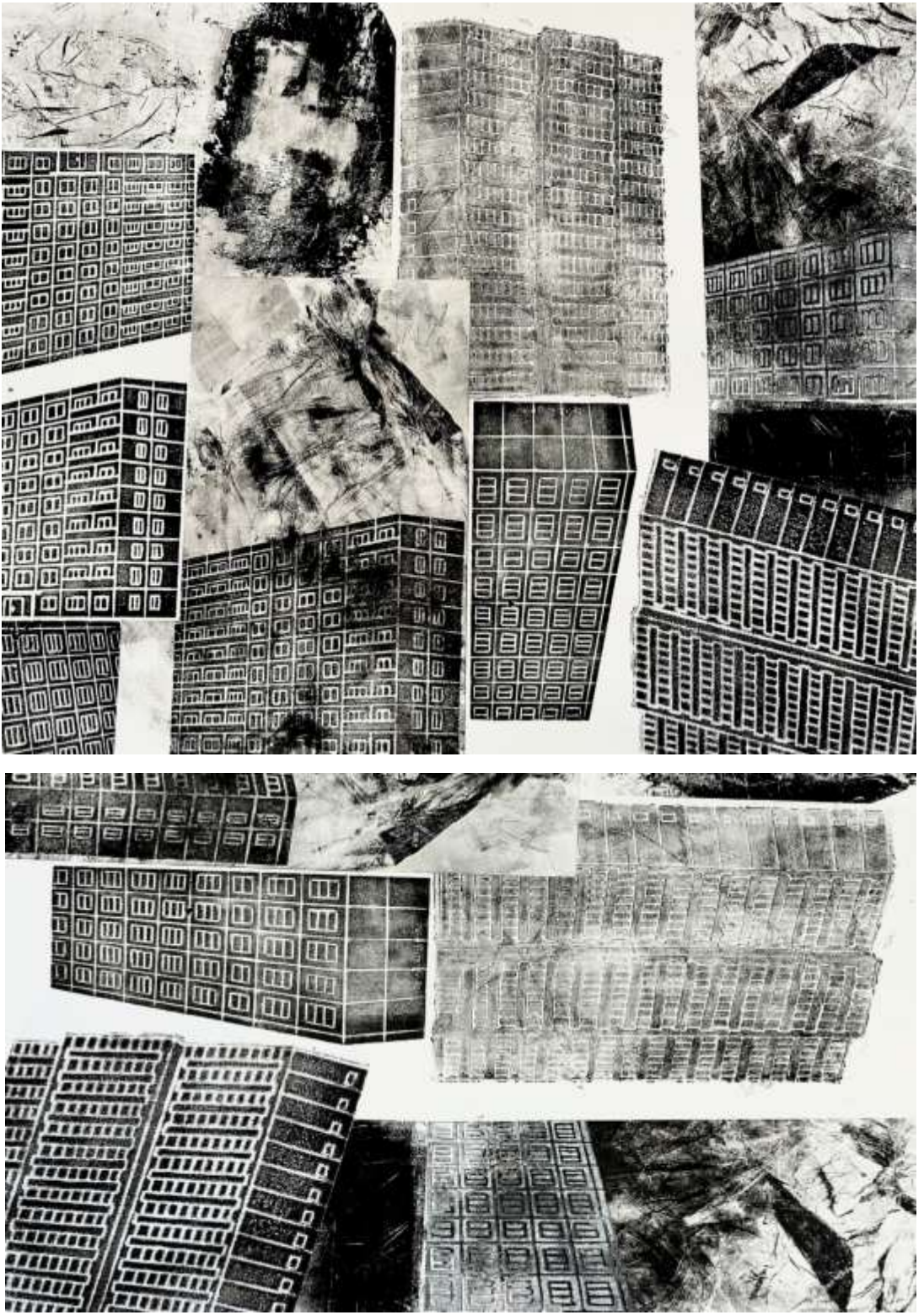
The following is a series of prints titled "Waiting for Utopia," featuring prefabricated panel houses—common visual hallmarks of Soviet modernist architecture. The Soviet apartment-building program was immensely successful: in its first five years (1957-1962), over 66 million citizens moved to new apartments.[1] Acute housing shortages had plagued the young Soviet Union, and even the period prior to its establishment. Populations were on the move; industrialization and urbanization drove existing cities to grow, and new urban-industrial centers emerged. The Second World War in Europe left widespread destruction and further compounded the housing shortage. Earlier responses to the deficit included the infamous *kommunalka* (Коммуналка, communal apartment), the communal apartment. Industrial cities, like Magnitogorsk, erected workers' barracks, which were also communal living accommodations. Stalinist apartments were designed with style and quality, but were not built at a rate that could keep up with rising demand, and were nearly inaccessible to anyone but *apparatchiki* (Аппаратчики, Soviet bureaucrat, esp. associated with the Communist Party). In 1954, the French Camus system of prefabricated construction was acquired by Soviet architects and, in the following years, adapted for use in the Soviet Union. The standardized designs spread, and nearly identical models can be found in the Soviet Socialist Republics, from Estonia to Uzbekistan. The number of newly-built housing districts would only continue to grow, and today they still house millions of residents across countries of the former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. These apartments had modern amenities and were ideally located within easy reach of public transport, schools, shops, entertainment, and leisure spaces. Despite the triumphs of Soviet mass housing, the visual monotony of the structures and now aging infrastructure and amenities make them subjects of disagreement

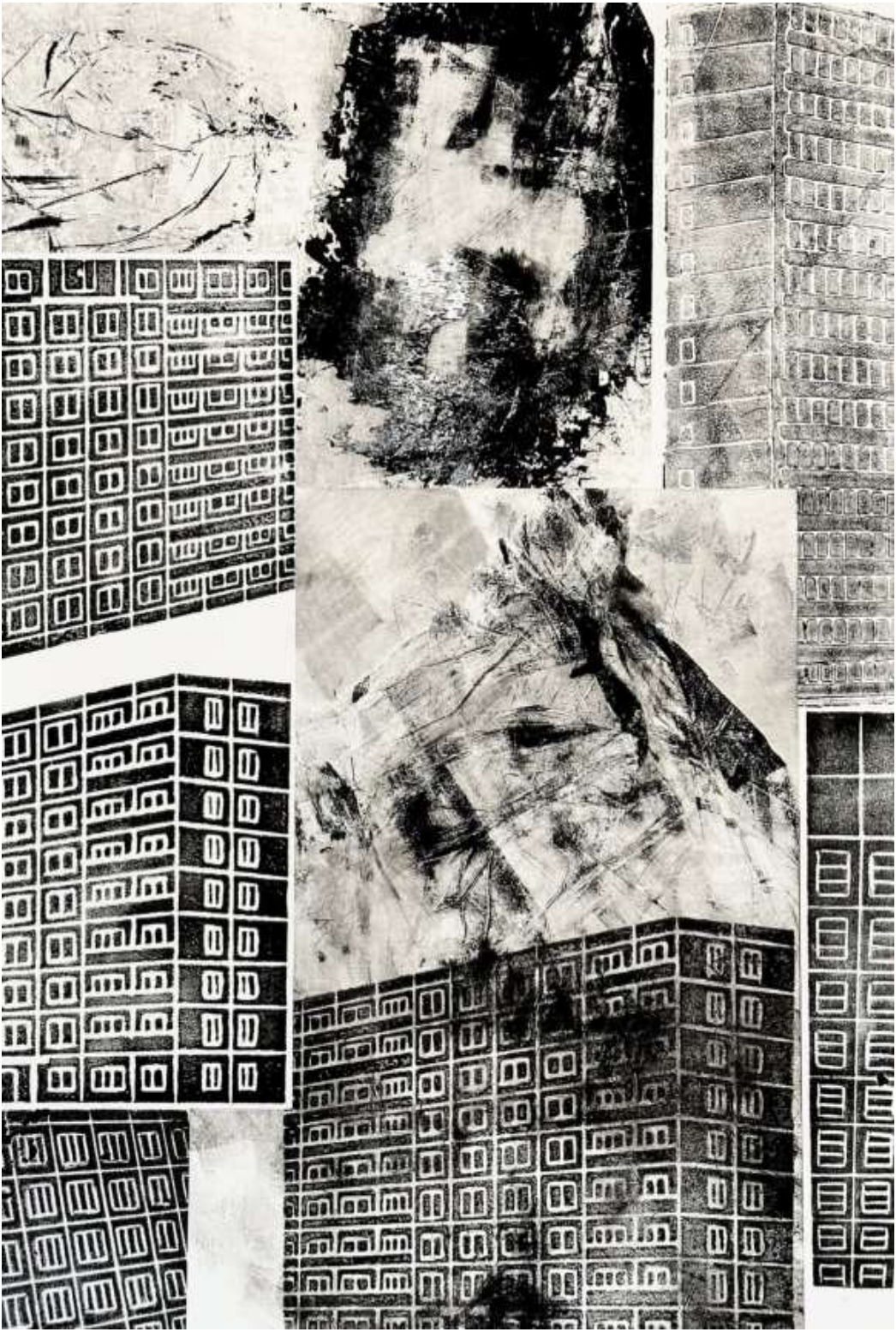
and displeasure. Renovating Soviet-era housing districts is consistently prioritized in contemporary urban plans: efforts to scrape off the Soviet face and modernize former-socialist cities are quietly demolishing cherished family homes.[2] As transitional structures suspended in permanent status, the stasis of many apartments may soon be coming to an end. The relationship between yesterday's prefabrication and tomorrow's city is emblematic of the progressive, future-oriented Soviet system: between existing socialism and future communism.

Given the similarities between printing and prefabricated construction, printmaking has consistently been central to my creative interpretation of mass housing. Images are not only reproduced in many copies, but the printing materials are also relatively inexpensive and readily available. Using styrofoam and a dulled pencil to make the plate, the prints can be produced quickly and in large quantities. Local house-building factories sprang up in cities across the Soviet Union—larger cities could have many such facilities to cast and distribute the concrete panels. The key characteristics of mass reproducibility and inexpensive construction make printmaking a suitable artistic medium for portraying prefabricated housing. As a result, many copies of the buildings were printed, emphasizing the copy-paste scale of Soviet microdistricts.

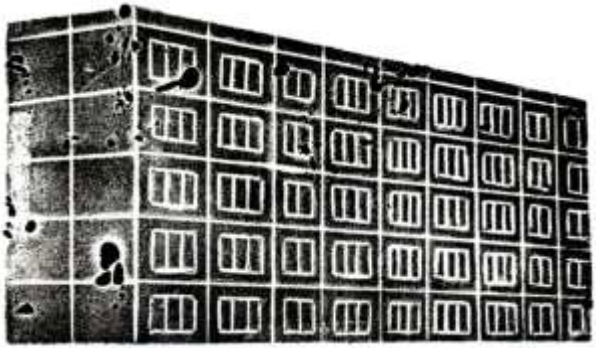
Finally, the prints vary in appearance. Some have bold and crisp lines, while others are grainy and unclear. With use, printing plates shift from fine inscriptions to distorted mutations as ink builds up and the ridges wear down. Beginning largely in 1957, new districts sprang up, with fresh construction. Over time and with use, the buildings showed signs of deterioration, as many lifetimes passed through their hallways and rooms. Printmaking captures the entire span of mass housing's existence: from construction to deterioration, and inevitable disappearance.

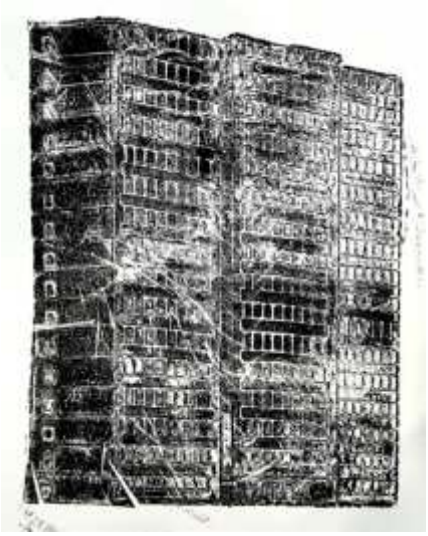
The print's display is intentionally unclear. Orientation is difficult because we may be looking up, down, or along the lengths of the identical buildings. This distortion is intended to reflect prefabricated houses as almost overwhelming in number, posing an immense challenge to contemporary renovation or replacement efforts. The figures are difficult to process and are layered and jumbled architectural manifestations of the lifespan of a Soviet prefabricated panel house. The project combines an immersive yet minimalistic aesthetic with historical reality and the legacy of mass housing. Initially, the buildings' monolithic forms feel detailed yet empty. The collection embodies the original youthful optimism of the structures, which were designed to solve a compounded housing crisis. Yet it also displays the characteristic monotonous structures that have long been criticized, including by members of the CPSU, who in 1963, found the dreariness "unacceptable."[3] Thus, the project is an aspirational, utopian blueprint distorted by use and age. As objects that have outlasted the society that built them, the panel houses are manifestations of the Soviet socialist utopia, which instead abruptly fell into a post-Soviet age. The structures can wait no longer for Utopia as Soviet mass housing disappears from the skyline.

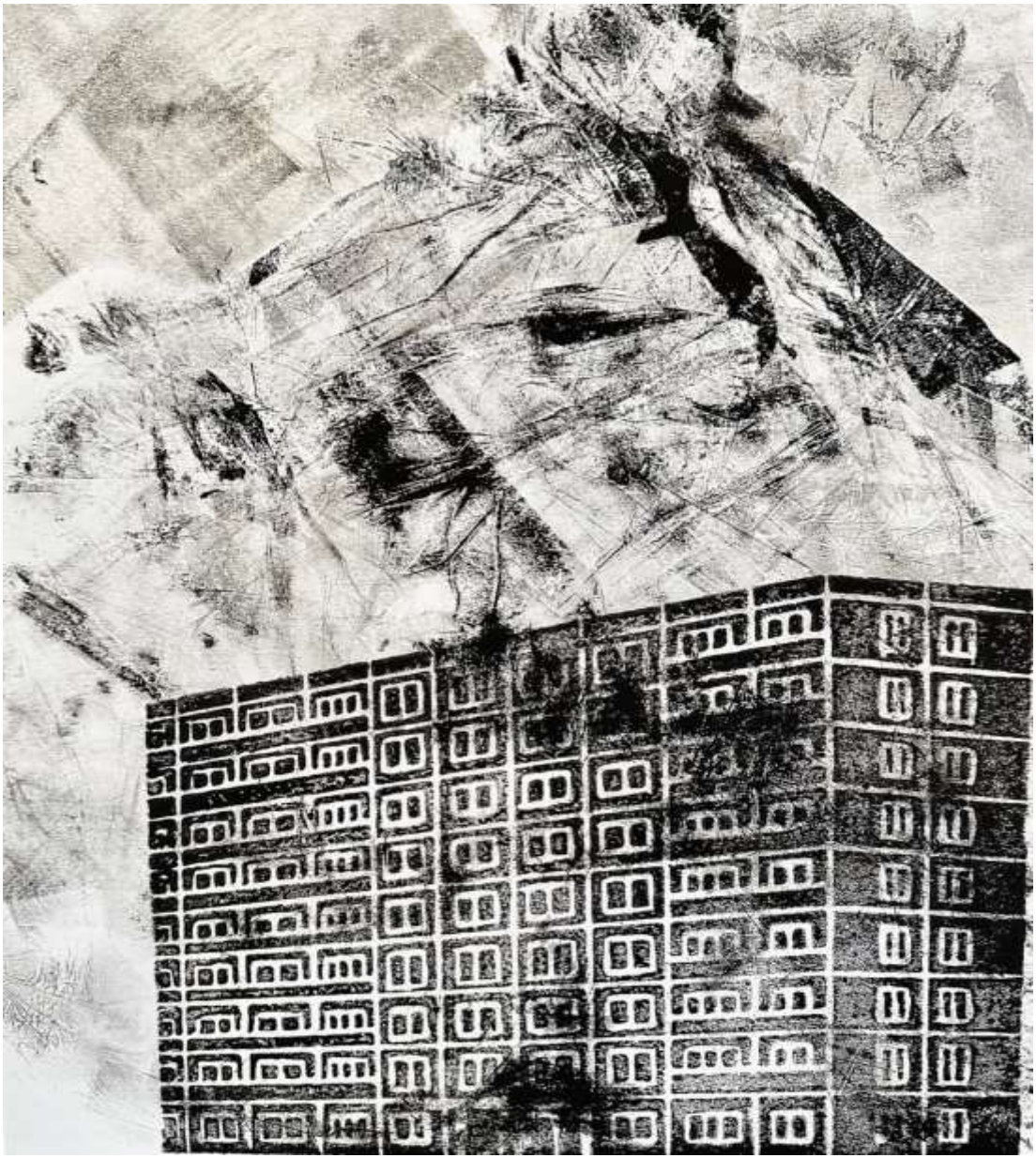












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CULTURE AND
HISTORY

Fulfilling the Soviet Project: A Paradox of Prostitution

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In 1917, the Soviet project came into being, and by 1991, it ceased to be. Very little was consistent over these 74 years. War, revolution, outer space, famine, and nuclear anxiety define the Soviet Union in popular memory, each of which elicits feelings of the international struggle for or against the specter of communism. In innumerable ways, the Soviet Union shaped the trajectory of the world, but not often do we seek to understand internal sentiment regarding purely domestic issues—both national and within the household—that shaped the epistemology governing Soviet ideology within the longest-lasting socialist state.

In this paper, I will discuss trends in prostitution across the western Soviet Union in order to interrogate how Soviet morality was formed, reformed, and transformed from 1917 to 1991. I argue that Soviet morality suggested that deviant phenomena such as prostitution could not be seen as detachable or distinct from the greater Soviet Project, the struggle towards communism, but must be analyzed within its shadow. To do this, I will show that from 1961 until the collapse of the USSR, the Communist Party positioned the Moral Code of the Builder of Communism as the touchstone against which morals were to be evaluated. The state's actions, liberal or conservative, Leninist or Trotskyite, scientific or utopian, defined the ethical standard. Any apparent deviation by the state from this ethic was in fact no deviation at all, for this code was a priori determined to be the standard.

In 1961, the Twenty-second

Communist Party Congress adopted the Moral Code of the Builder of Communism as the official ethic of the Soviet Union.[1] Amidst a campaign to stamp out religion, this code intended to provide a secular standard that people could look to for guidance or affirmation.[2] But this was more than a guideline; the code was a form of soft power to dictate the conduct of the people. After Stalin's death in 1953 and especially during the Cold War, one of Khrushchev's primary policies was to loosen the restrictions on political freedoms. Police coercion and legal punishments were reigned in. Fear of being "written up" and jailed for anti-communist behavior was almost eliminated. The Moral Code was an attempt to replace coercion as a means of ensuring political and social stability and economic growth. The greater freedom to express oneself politically was potentially dangerous for the state; the Moral Code was the solution to fill the power vacuum left by the recession of hard power.

The twelve principles enumerated in the Moral Code of the Builder of Communism dominated the state and media rhetoric for decades to come.[3] The first tenet, "devotion to the communist cause, and love toward the socialist Motherland and to socialist countries," was the base upon which the rest were built. Other tenets promoted devotion to the communist cause, intolerance towards injustices, parasitism, and money-grubbing, conscientious labor for the good of society, and mutual respect in the family.[4] It was with this formula that every Soviet citizen was supposed to understand their relationships—more than just individual to individual, but individual to state, and individual to communism itself.

Any breach of the Code would not only be an affront to oneself and one's comrades, but to Soviet society as a whole. The origins of these doctrines can be traced back to early Soviet philosophies that encouraged the unity of public and private virtues for the benefit of building socialism. In the 1920s, Soviet poet Vladimir Mayakovsky wrote, "Communism / is not only / on the land / at the plant in the sweat / it is also at home / at the table / in the relations / in the family / in everyday life."[5] Later Soviet politicians, when discussing prostitution, often invoked Mayakovsky's revolutionary fervor, which encouraged self-sacrifice in the name of the Soviet project.

The code was adopted in order to establish a broad, but strict ethic, of which the idealized "New Soviet Man" was to be modeled. As I will demonstrate, by the 1960s, the Soviet state asserted that it had achieved socialism (whether it believed this may be up for debate) and had paved the road towards communism. What was keeping society from advancing, then, was not structural faults but an assortment of flaws found in individuals: following Stalin's cult of personality, having bourgeois attitudes, engaging in parasitism, laziness, and antisocial behavior, among others. The possibility that people were corrupted or immoral because society had failed them was

entirely off the table. By definition—that the Soviet program a priori was considered the path to communism, that socialism had been achieved, and that prostitution was a product of capitalism—this couldn't be. Therefore, every citizen had the right and obligation to uphold socialist ideology, as interpreted by the state, for anything else could be considered reactionary.

A close examination of prostitution in the USSR demonstrates how this theory evolved over the 20th century. The early Soviet Union, during which the party and the state recognized that the nation was in a developmental stage, provides a baseline for this analysis. The path towards socialism was long and arduous, and the nation was still subsumed in the painful echoes of capitalism. Immoral behavior could be dismissed because a corrupt society molded people that way. This was the attitude toward prostitution in the early Soviet Union.

In this early Soviet period, the state viewed the presence of prostitution as indicative of societal under-development, not individual moral failings.

In the late 1910s and early 20s, Soviet authors and authorities claimed that prostitution had been eliminated in the Soviet Union. And generally, they were right to do so. Prostitution disappeared as a phenomenon almost entirely in the years following the revolution.[6] Spirits were high, unemployment was low, and utopian Marxist morality flourished on the streets of Moscow and Leningrad. In the first years of this burgeoning state, the social conditions from which prostitution arose had been eliminated. As Marxist theory predicted, when the base falls, so does the superstructure. The base was capitalism, and the superstructure was sex work.

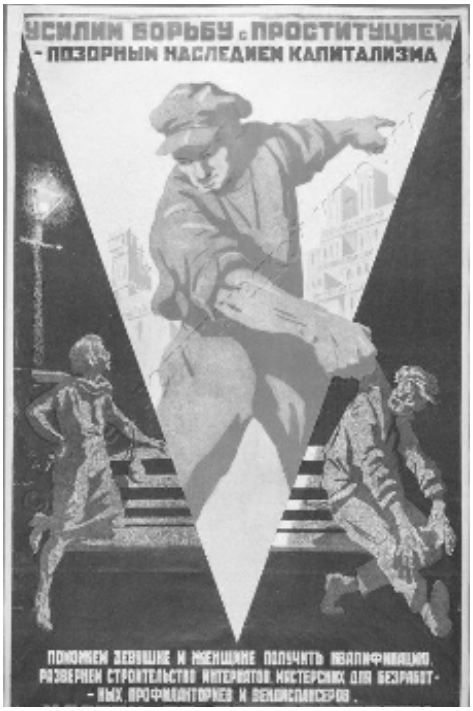
However, this utopia was ephemeral. By the mid 1920s, the high of the revolution was wearing off, and the New Economic Plan (NEP) had brought back capitalist modes of production and, with it, capitalist social ills. Prostitution soon became a significant social issue, especially in the large cities in the West. It had to be dealt with—the question was how.

Alexandra Kollontai, the feminist leader of the Zhenotdel (the women's faction of the Communist Party), argued against criminal punishment. Despite prostitution's bourgeois roots, to criminalize it would disproportionately harm women. She saw the struggle with prostitution not as a war against workers, but against the industry.[7] Kollontai's scientific Marxist approach to the Woman Question followed the writings of other Soviet leaders, such as Lenin, in its adherence to developing a moral code based on dialectical principles—when capitalism was eliminated, she argued, so would be the diseases that plagued social life under it.

In this early Soviet period, the state viewed the presence of prostitution as indicative of societal underdevelopment, not individual moral failings. One article published in 1936 in the philosophy journal, Pod Zname-

nem Marxisma ("Under the Banner of Marxism"), read, "the roots of any looseness of sex relations must consequently be sought in the existence of survivals of capitalism in family life."[8] The primary push to end prostitution was to end capitalism.

This perspective was shared by many Soviet officials. Policy towards prostitution became oriented towards transitioning away from capitalist economic systems to socialism. This would elevate all workers, including sex workers, to a more developed posture in political society, from which they could escape the antiquated grasp of prostitution. The People's Commissar of Health, Nikolai Semashko, in part directed policy towards prostitution. His conception of prostitution as a social, not an individual, disease was published in a 1922 circular, "On the Measures to be Adopted in the Struggle against Prostitution." It read, "under no circumstances must the war against prostitution degenerate into a war against prostitutes."[9] This formulation of the issue became the official stance in policy against prostitution, vagrancy, unemployment, and other similar "antisocial behavior." This was no small issue, either. As long as prostitution existed, so did capitalism. The presence of sex work was the canary in the coal mine as to whether the vestiges of capitalism were still ravaging broader society. Policing prostitutes out of existence would do nothing but kill the canary. The state distributed propaganda to encourage progressive social attitudes that followed the official narrative.



We will strentgthen the fight against prostitution! (1930)[10]

For example, one poster from 1930 explicitly delineated prostitution as a product of capitalism. The state, depicted as a larger-than-life figure, is the protector of the woman, who the corruptor, a man, has lured into a deviant lifestyle. The figure, pointing towards the future from where he comes, gives hope not only to the woman but to society as a whole. The dark-light dichotomy that separates the present from the future indicates that women who follow the Soviet state will have a future without both capitalism and social degradation.

State measures were taken against individuals as well, though primarily in the name of harm reduc-

tion. The policing of prostitutes was not intended to punish, but to reform. Prostitutes were sent to prophylactoria that popped up throughout the Union in the 1920s and 30s. "The principal function of these prophylactoria," one review from 1933 wrote, "is to change the whole habit of mind and spirit of the women inmates."[11] Prostitutes taken to prophylactoria were "treated for their diseases, given basic education, taught some skill, and most importantly, re-educated in their attitudes toward work."[12] Upon release, those who had been coerced into prostitution would no longer be susceptible to that pitfall. Soviet morality indicated that socially useful labor engenders "newly awakened human beings, creative forces" from the "prostitutes' ranks."[13] The clean-up of social spheres necessitated advancing the Soviet project and arriving at socialism. Theory indicated that this was the path to communism.

POST-STALIN SOCIALIST MORALITY

By 1960, the USSR proclaimed that it had arrived at socialism. If socialism had been achieved, as Khrushchev claimed, prostitution as a societal inevitability would have been eliminated. But, in reality, prostitution showed no signs of stopping. What had gone wrong? Theory predicted that when the social conditions that gave rise to prostitution had been eliminated, prostitution would follow. Was the theory wrong, or was Khrushchev?

Something had to give. What fell was not socialist theory, but the Soviet moral code. Socialist theory, proposed by the Soviet state, by definition could not be faulty. Therefore, the moral regime had to be flipped on its head. The state could no longer recognize moral failings as the fault of society but rather required an alternate framing of the issue: Individual faults were due to, and solely due to, individual defects. Because work was available, because housing was accessible, because capitalism was eliminated, prostitution must then be a choice. Any woman who was still a prostitute was a prostitute of her own volition. The issue was no longer *prostitution* as an unfortunate but inevitable social ill, but *prostitutes* as a diseased class of social and sexual deviants. In the early Soviet era, the goal was to eliminate the conditions that corrupted women, but by 1960, it was about eliminating the corrupted women. With these new conceptions of social deviance, the Moral Code of the Builder of Communism was published in 1961. It represented a turning point in the construction of social morality, and the framework against deviants were to be evaluated. This framework lasted for decades, as prostitution remained a part of society despite heavy policing and public shame. From 1961 to 1991, the state positioned itself as indisputably correct in the adoption of its ideological war against prostitutes. Under this schema, prostitution could never be seen as justifiable, as it necessarily prioritized the individual over the collective. It represented the antithesis of the proposed ethic and was thus

challenged.

What was the price that the country had to pay for the existence of this "occupation?" With the prostitute's work came sexually-transmitted diseases, social maladjustment, laziness, harm to the country's reputation, and myriad other maladies that not only stifled her productive power but also impeded the Soviet project. Punishing individual prostitutes was no longer seen as unusually repressive or harmful to women, as Kollontai would have argued—the inevitability of a communist future outweighed any potential contemporary damages. It was all going to be worth it in the end, the state assured. That socialism had been built meant that communism was on the horizon—individual, antisocial deviants were the primary barrier to achieving it.

Studies in Riga and Moscow found that teenagers considered hard currency prostitution one of the most desirable professions, above professor, journalist, and diplomat.

THE EXISTENCE OF PROSTITUTION - IS THE PARTY WRONG?

To combat the contradictions that arose from the presence of prostitution in a socialist society, the state simply denied its existence. As early as 1955, the state began to claim that the social conditions that give rise to prostitution had been eliminated. In a letter to the Union Republics, the Central Communist Party wrote, "In our country, as a result of the socialist revolution, public morality has risen, prostitution as a social evil has been eliminated, the family has strengthened, and respect for women has risen." Similar statements were recorded at legislative committee meetings for decades. In 1957, at the "meeting of the subcommittee of the Commissions of legislative assumptions of the Council of the Union and the Council of Nationalities of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR," authorities stated, "we do not have prostitution, but we have women of negative behavior."[14] At another hearing in 1960, officials stated, "Bearing in mind that the conditions that give rise to prostitution have been eliminated in the Soviet Union, there is no need at present to establish any special norm for cases of prostitution."[15] Any notion that prostitution still existed would indicate that either prostitution was not just a capitalist phenomenon, or, more dangerously, that socialism had not been achieved, and therefore the party line was wrong.

Despite what authorities said, data show that prostitutes were very much still a part of city life at this time. According to a report from the Ministry of Health in 1956, over 600 women were identified as prostitutes in Leningrad alone.[16] In 1961, the Komi ASSR (in northwestern Russia) reported that out of 1302 people identified as evading socially-useful labor, 149 of them were prostitutes.[17] The picture was clear: prostitution had not been eliminated.

It would be ignorant to be-

lieve that policymakers were universally convinced that the conditions that lead to prostitution had genuinely been eliminated. More likely than not, public statements that included remarks considering prostitution a shibboleth were intended to be not a representation of truth but an aspiration (of a truly socialist society). In terms of how the state outwardly discussed prostitution, it was necessary for them to uphold the party line. Any notion that they were wrong about the disappearance of prostitution would undermine their authority on not only this topic but others as well. If the theory was wrong about sex work, what else might the socialists have misjudged? Will capitalism really be eliminated? Will the oft-utopian promises of communism come to fruition? How can women be emancipated if prostitution remains a phenomenon? The fate of the Soviet project depended on the judgment of prostitution not as a societal ailment, but as an individual vice. Therefore, prostitution could be punished as if it were a crime.

TREATING PROSTITUTION

More often than not, those accused of prostitution (which was not officially a crime until 1987) were punished under other legal codes: parasitism, violation of the internal passport regime, vagrancy, or avoiding socially-useful labor.[18] Many avoided jail time, but others were shipped off to reeducation camps in Siberia, or dropped off at the 101km line, just outside the city limits.[19]

That prostitution was no longer managed through prophylactoria, but rather through expulsion, demonstrated the drastic shift in Soviet morality. As a state media outlet explained, prostitution was not "only a type of occupation, but a human character."[20] To salvage the rest of society from prostitution, it was not enough to reform women, but, just as if they were a contagious disease, it became necessary to remove them from honorable society entirely.

Whereas in many situations prostitution was lumped in with the plethora of other anti-social crimes (vagrancy, begging, etc.), in others, prostitution was seen as an especially harmful activity. For the state, prostitution wasn't just reprehensible because it contradicted the official narrative (that it didn't exist); it was also a social and sexual transgression that could tarnish the Soviet revolutionary spirit. As one source notes, "There was an approved, Communist way to have sex."[21] Prostitution was not it.

In 1955, the Central Communist Party wrote to the leaders of the various republics, "We must not forget that moral and domestic decomposition eventually necessarily lead to political decomposition, to the fact that a person ceases to be a real communist and revolutionary."[22] To allow prostitution to proliferate meant the inevitable downfall of Soviet socialism and, for all intents and purposes, the discrediting of the party line. The message was clear: "A woman who

sells her body is capable of selling her country; prostitutes sullied our honor."[23]

An analysis of state rhetoric reveals that officials and journalists often described the "degradation and the filth of prostitution ... as a 'disease,' an infection which 'spreads and ravishes the body and the soul.'"[24] In many cases, the media excluded prostitutes from the role of a Soviet citizen, a builder of communism. As early as 1961, newspapers published essays in which prostitutes were painted as "parasites," and called for the creation of an intolerant environment, encouraging hostility towards them.[25] Internal state documents praised the media for this.

"But after all, they have chosen to walk the streets not out of hunger or because they are homeless or unemployed. Chosen is exactly what they have done—leaving behind families that are economically secure, giving up their jobs."

In the Mikhailovsky District in the Far East, evening meetings were held on the dangers of parasitism. At one in 1961, they discussed the famous Lenin (and Marx) quotation, "He who does not work, also does not eat" (кто не работает, тот не ест). In reference to parasitism, the quotation became, "He who does not work, but eats" (кто не работает, тот не ест).[26] This wordplay on doctrinal Marxism-Leninism indicates how officials viewed parasites, including prostitutes, as undermining the Soviet socialist project.

In the Soviet framework, more than was the case for other nations, sex work occupied an unforgivable political space beyond its categorization as sexual or social deviancy. For so long, the state had made grand promises of a stateless, classless, moneyless future. It was under the guise of this promise that so many excesses were justified. The purges, the human sacrifices of the Great Patriotic War, and repressive measures taken against kulaks and non-conformists were all justified through an idyllic vision—the Soviet project. Any hint that it might be all for naught was no small deal. It threatened the state, and it threatened socialism. Prostitution was that hint, or at least one of them.

SEXUAL MORALITY

Not only in theory did the existence of prostitution undermine the Soviet dream, but it also actively harmed material conditions and changed the dynamics of morality, especially in the home. Prostitution was antithetical to state-sanctioned sexuality. Sex under Stalin was exclusively for procreation. In 1936, an article in Pravda read, "a woman without children merits our pity, for she does not know the full joy of life."[27] For other purposes, sex was discouraged. After 1945, sex was encouraged to replenish the population after the losses of the Great Patriotic War. Women with at least seven children were given the award "Order of Maternal Glory."[28]

Sex outside of marriage was dangerous, as it transgressed what was considered to be socially useful. It did not result in another Soviet child

who would grow into a worker; it did not satisfy erotic or romantic needs; it was a waste of creative talent.[29] If people became too distracted by sexual urges, they would not become meaningful builders of communism.

Into the 1980s, Soviet society was sexphobic.[30] In 1986, the saying, "There is no sex in the USSR," was coined on national television. The whole exchange went:

American host: Television commercials have a lot to do with sex in our country. Do you have these kinds of commercials on television?
Soviet host: We have no sex, and we are strictly opposed to it! We have love.[31]

COMMODITY SEXUALIZATION AND SEXUALIZATION AS COMMODITY

In the Soviet Union, sex was not a commodity to be bought and sold as it was in the West—at least in theory. The commodification of Soviet society during the Cold War contributed in part to the rise of prostitution.[32] Despite Brezhnev's attempt to counter this trend with the implementation of his decommodification project, the Soviet people were eager to spend their money.[33] By the 1970s, many had more cash in their pockets than they knew what to do with. Especially given the paucity of Western goods that made it into the USSR, a culture that encouraged splurging on fashion and goods previously considered to be superfluous made its way into the cities and beyond.[34] As it became chic to dress in Western style, to have a washer and a dryer, and to own a car, spending money became more ingrained in what it meant to be Soviet. Rather than live in scarcity, as was imperative during times of war throughout the lifespan of the USSR, Soviet citizens yearned for material objects. That your neighbor filled her closet with what was in vogue in Europe meant that you were falling behind the times. To fulfill this newfound obsession, many women turned to prostitution. The rise of consumerist mentality and loosening of sexual values resulted in a "fusion of promiscuity and materialism."[35] Many women who found themselves struggling financially took to the streets to supplement or supplant their legitimate salaries.

Most women who engaged in prostitution would have understood the risks associated with the deviant lifestyle, but, for one reason or another, found themselves working in bars, foreigners' hotels, and on the streets. Be it out of financial desperation or interest, prostitution was not as uncommon as the state professed, and certainly had not been eradicated. The reward outweighed the risk for many women. Or, at least, the perceived reward did.

Decades earlier, this fetishization of consumer goods would have been considered morally reprehensible. But, in the '70s and '80s, luxury became not only acceptable but mandatory in pop and counter culture. Despite what the state encouraged and discouraged, even prostitutes themselves came to be thought of as luxuries, similar to fancy cars, West-

ern goods, and fashionable clothing. They became a prized commodity to be bought and sold on the marketplace.

A LAVISH PORTRAIT OF PROSTITUTION

Throughout the 1970s and '80s, journals and newspapers printed stories that portrayed prostitutes as victors in the Soviet game of life. At the same time, authors employed deeply negative moral judgments against prostitutes, characterizing them as parasites and diseases, in alignment with state rhetoric and moral obligations to weed out anti-social elements. This seemingly contradictory view of sex workers provides an interesting study.

Many Soviet prostitutes cite the media as one reason they entered sex work. Many journalists romanticized the earnings of prostitutes and sensationalized their activities, encouraging young women who read these accounts to take these women as role models for a prosperous Soviet life. Though the mask the media put on the prostitutes was one of moral reprehensibility, it was difficult not to yearn for the luxurious lifestyle that was portrayed. It was seductive.

In one article published in *Nedelya* in 1987, the author claimed that one foreign-currency prostitute (a woman whose clients are foreigners and who gets paid in valuable foreign currency) could make the equivalent of 500 rubles in a night, though most top-shelf prostitutes would make "only" 100. Another newspaper wrote about the arrest of two prostitutes who had earned 500,000 rubles.[36] The standard salary journalists in the 80s claimed foreign currency prostitutes earned was about 30,000 rubles.[37] For context, the average worker in the USSR at the time earned about 180 rubles per month, or 2,200 rubles per year.[38] Due in part to the rise in materialist and consumerist tendencies, prostitutes and their large salaries were inevitably valorized.

Even if these numbers do not represent the earnings of the average "curb-crawler" or "train station" prostitute, who earned 15-50 rubles a night, what drove young women to prostitution was, in part, that they saw these numbers as possibilities.[39] In an effort to combat this myth, one author, citing an interview of Georgian prostitutes, wrote that only nine out of one hundred Georgian sex workers thought that they lived well, and only seven had saved any money. Most of the money they earned went towards personal and work expenses.[40] "In practice," the author summarized, "a prostitute sells herself not so much for the money, as for the possibility of holding it in her hands."[41] Dissatisfaction with her position in domestic life or career, or just boredom could all be reasons for entering prostitution that compounded on top of the effervescent cash potential.

In one letter to the editor published in the newspaper *Argumenty i Fakty* ("Arguments and Facts") in 1990, a prostitute describes her job quite positively. She writes, "To be frank, I am somewhat against being engaged in this... but I earn big money and once there is money there is also freedom."[42] That prostitutes openly described their jobs as a pretense to freedom was antithetical to the state's

message. This conception of freedom was also problematic to the Soviet ethic in that it proposed individual liberation in opposition to communal liberation.

Indeed, because of the riches that Soviet prostitutes were reported to earn from their promiscuous jobs, the life of a sex worker could easily have been enviable. The access that a sex worker could have to foreign goods (not to speak of foreigners themselves), expensive jewelry and clothes, and an opulent lifestyle was enough to entice many women to a promiscuous life. Studies in Riga and Moscow found that teenagers considered hard currency prostitution one of the most desirable professions, above professor, journalist, and diplomat.[43]

An article published in 1988 in *Studencheskii Meridian* ("Student Meridian") looked insightfully at this issue. Lyubov' Rak writes, "Condemning [prostitution, journalists] achieve the opposite results—they propagandize it... girls take the bait. They are attracted primarily by material benefits, the opportunity to decorate their lives with almost fabulous luxury."[44]

However, journalists' representations of prostitutes were not just ones of luxury and passionate free love. Newspapers took clear steps to demarcate prostitution as distinct from socially useful, state-sanctioned labor—moral labor. They were branded as materialistic, immoral, and politically suspect. Though few, if any, articles directly cited the Moral Code of the Builder of Communism, they were often steeped in the code's pseudo-religious doctrines. Taken as a whole, the media portrait of prostitution and prostitutes can be seen as the manifestation of Soviet morality: sex workers were able to get ahead in life not due to their hard, honest work, but because they cheated the system. In this view, prostitutes would suck socialist society dry and infect the population with their diseases, literally and figuratively.

Some journalists, in fact, used religious terminology to diagnose why young women who lived relatively comfortable and stable lives would turn to prostitution. In many cases, this "choice" was characterized as a "fall." Padshaya zhenshchina ("fallen woman"), the term used to describe women who "fell" into prostitution, was the same term used to describe angels who fell from heaven, padshiy angel ("fallen angel").[45] Despite the state's strict secularism, religious analogies such as these were not uncommon.

Even state "propaganda posters" followed this duality. Many reinforced the notion that sex workers were especially prosperous, while also positioning them as especially immoral. This poster from 1988 depicts two women: one a prostitute, and one from dignified society.

"You earn 150 rubles per month, but I get that in an hour," says the prostitute. "Corrupt girls aren't worth a penny even though they get paid well.... How can she look down from such heights when she's fallen so low?" thinks the honorable woman. Despite the explicit posturing that the prostitute earns more than the upstanding woman, she is still depicted as ragged. She smokes a cigarette, wears stained clothes and too much makeup

(what is she hiding?), and her hair is a mess. Money does not solve every issue and certainly does not elevate the morally corrupt to high society.

Many critiques remained secular while still attempting to shame prostitutes. For instance, the state-run newspaper *Komsomolskaya Pravda* engaged in a three-month smear campaign against a nineteen-year-old prostitute, Svetlana Tofimova. The attack articles "traced her moral dissolution, contempt for her parents and child, and intention to commit treason to both her family and her nation by marrying a foreigner."[47] She was branded as a pariah in the emerging *demimonde*—a term for those who occupied the fringes of "decent society"[48]—of black market traders and social deviants.[49]

Prostitutes weren't the only group publicly shamed for their place in society. Similar, in fact, to the contemporary myth of American individualism, anti-social elements of all types were considered to have fallen to such depths by their own doings. Prostitutes were lumped in with the uncontroversially deviant—homeless people, drug addicts, and *fartsovshchiki* ("black market traders")—to bolster the Soviet moral spirit. Communism depended on their elimination. One article, *Nochnoi Tupik* ("A Nighttime Dead End"), characterized their depraved lifestyle: "The fees are three rubles, an injection of ephedrine, or simply a bottle of cologne. The abbreviation is also changing—it's not just *ZhLP* [*Zhenshchina Legkogo Povedeniya*, "women of loose behavior"] anymore, its scourge, bums—people without a place of residence, without a certain place of work. And I can't even call them people."[50] (During Gorbachev's crackdown on



Image 2: You earn 150 rubles per month, but I get that in an hour (1988).[46]

drunkenness during the 1980s, many found eau de cologne a cheap and accessible alternative to the more-heavily regulated alcohol).

The message—adherence to the moral code—spread beyond official institutions such as the press and legislature. Individuals, too, were not averse to sharing their disdain for prostitutes. Prostitutes, or *putanki* (Путанки), as they were derogatorily called, were held in especially low regard because they were seen as evading socially useful labor, a criticism anyone could get behind. They lived in the big cities, they received government benefits, they sent their children to public schools, but they didn't engage in moral work. Their presence in public spheres escalated the disdain towards them, disdain that was compounded by the fact that many people believed that they earned ten times the average salary. The state's narrative about prostitution was shared by many, if not most, Soviet people. It is unclear whether individuals arrived at this conclusion on their own or whether they internalized the state's framing of the issue. It is perhaps telling that public opinion of prostitutes improved after the fall of the USSR and the reinventing of the now-Russian (no longer Soviet) moral code.[51]

Through examining individuals' statements, it is possible to analyze whether the average citizen's morals aligned with the proposed Soviet moral code. Often, they did. Many, or at least those whose words have been published, blamed sex workers for their choice of occupation. One 1987 account published in *Sovetskaya Kirgiziya* (Soviet Kyrgyzstan) reads, "But after all, [they] ... have chosen to walk the streets not out of hunger or because they are homeless or unemployed. Chosen is exactly what they have done – leaving behind families that are economically secure, giving up their jobs."[52]

In the 1980s, hateful letters to the editor were published in response to media coverage of prostitution. One reader wrote in, saying, "[Prostitutes] should be doused with gasoline and set on fire."[53] This sentiment was not uncommon, as people across the decades believed that the barrier between socialism and communism could be found in these anti-social individuals.

Even when discussing other groups of social deviants, people used "prostitute" as an insult. For many, they were the bottom of the barrel as far as the moral standard went. Talking about Soviet punks, one former *Stilyaga*, someone involved in '50s-'60s Soviet hipster counterculture, said:

> *I don't like girls in the* [*punk scene*] *because they are prostitutes. I will be honest. They fuck with everyone. They are very vulgar and look vulgar ... I don't like it when girls swear, get tattoos, and behave like sluts* [*po-bliadski*]*... Punk girls drive me mad because they are stupid, brainless idiots. They don't understand anything. They'll fuck with anyone. The rocker girls are at least one stage better.*[54]

DIAGNOSING THE ISSUE - A TONE SHIFT ?

The duties of a builder of communism went further than self-perfection. As the Soviet project was a national—even international—struggle,

there was a social duty to challenge others' antisocial behavior. To stop the spread of prostitution, specifically, and parasitism, generally, newspapers often gave commentary on the roots of these social diseases. They tried to diagnose its motives in an effort to paint a picture of it as a bourgeois evil. One report in 1987 found:

Prostitution is a result of the differences between women's aspirations for self-affirmation and self-fulfillment and the reality of their lives .... On our movie and television screens, they watch elegant heroines pursue brilliant careers – and even if these ideal women have problems on the domestic front, their apartments, cars, and wardrobes leave no doubt that their lives are a success.... At a time when the consumerist mentality is so widespread, it is particularly intolerant of those who can't keep up.[55]

This article stands out as an indicator of a shift in attitudes towards prostitution. It places blame not on individuals, but, at least in part, on society itself. Reminiscent of the 1920s and 30s, the narrative seen here seems to indicate that individual character is not the only factor in determining destiny—flaws in broader society contribute as well. Consumerism and luxury promoted on TV had corrupted the individual to think that she can be one of these heroines if only she earns a little more cash, or participates in consumer habits by selling her body. As people lost confidence in the state, their trust that socialism had actually been achieved in the Soviet Union dwindled. Disillusion with all that came with socialism—the universality of the Moral Code, the claim that communism was on the horizon, and most importantly, the state standards for what was morally acceptable—was broad.

Interdevochka, a Soviet film released in 1989, plays with these tropes as well. A prostitute, Tanya, accepts a marriage proposal from a foreign client. Determined to move up in the world, she forfeits love for an apartment, a fancy car, and cash. She explains to her mother that her work is no different from any other job. "Everyone sells themselves," she says. Her commentary that she was forced into prostitution by societal pressures resonated with Soviet women. According to *Komsomalaskaya Pravda,* after watching the film, many prostitutes reported that they never went back to selling themselves.[56] Interdevochka portrayed prostitution as a tragedy, not the prostitute as a parasite.
However, this new sentiment was not universal. In the same year, another newspaper, *Krokodil* (Crocodile), wrote, "Contemporary prostitution—in contrast to the pre-revolutionary type—really has no social roots. But this living vice manages without them, existing on moral roots such as dissoluteness, lack of spirituality, greed. Greed is the main driving force of contemporary prostitution. Greed and not need at all."[57] The Moral Code of the Builder of Communism, that forbids "intolerance towards injustices, parasitism, dishonesty, careerism and money-grubbing," still resonated for some.

In another report published in 1987 in *Sovetskaya Rossiya* (Soviet Russia), one sex worker confessed, "Nonetheless, I was greedy for money, although I had plenty of it. Money... There is the odd girl who is not all that

interested in money. But for most, money is the main consideration. Easy money, they think, for which they do not have to do 'labor.'"[58] Her story posed a cautionary tale. Any woman, even those with awith children, with a job, could fall into the trap.

CONCLUSION

Across the 20th century, the Soviet Union engaged in moral, political, and economic struggles with prostitutes and with prostitution. Not a single party leader could avoid the issue, for it never truly went away, despite state rhetoric that the conditions that give rise to prostitution had been eliminated with the establishment of socialism. Fundamentally, the political question boiled down to this: Were prostitutes victims or villains in the Soviet game of life? In the early Soviet period, the presence of capitalist modes of production and bourgeois social ills meant that women were forced into sex work, a niche that would inevitably survive while capitalism did. However, after the Great Patriotic War, the Soviets announced to the world that they were the first country in history to have achieved socialism. The party line was proven to be the path towards socialism. Anyone who suggested otherwise would be directly contradicting a universal truth—the state, by definition, was the Vanguard, leading the USSR to communism. The Moral Code of the Builder of Communism made compliance with the party a moral obligation—to violate it through social deviancy meant abandoning the global communist cause.

But can we consider the state to be the arbiter of the moral standard if there were people who weren't following the state's guidance? Two explanations emerge: either Soviet prostitutes accepted that they were acting immorally, or they didn't respect the state's moral delineation. The evidence suggests that the latter was more often the case. To be a builder of communism for prostitutes meant not following the proposed moral code, but sustaining one's self. Now that socialism had been achieved, it was time to enjoy life, not continue self-sacrifice.

Despite this outlook, it remained the state's role to encourage the building of communism. Official rhetoric dictated that the achievement of socialism meant that prostitutes were no longer victims of the echoes of capitalism, but that they were villains, impeding progress. Thus, the media, the state, and individuals seduced by the Soviet project took to shaming prostitutes. The war against prostitution that Kollontai had argued must under no circumstances "degenerate into a war against prostitutes" degenerated into a war against prostitutes.[59] Perceived as villains, prostitutes were no longer passive victims, but active delinquents holding back the progress towards communism. Under the rules of the game, prostitution could not be judged in any way that did not prioritize the Soviet Project: the struggle towards communism.

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Georgia's 'Good Boys': The Impact of Street Culture on Identity Formation and Social Cohesion in Contemporary Tbilisi

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Walking along the narrow streets of Tbilisi underneath the orange street lights, you may see clusters of boys gathered around in circles, crouching low to the ground, each one smoking a cigarette. Sporting Adidas tracksuits, sunglasses (even as dusk falls), and black-and-white tattoos of eight-pointed "thief stars" on their hands, shoulders, knees, and chests, these boys are known locally in Georgia as kargi bichebi (კარგი ბიჭები, meaning "Good Boys"): a term designated for young Georgian men in the urban environment of Tbilisi who are defined by certain moral and social beliefs. This paper focuses on Good Boys in Tbilisi due to the accessibility and culture there, while recognizing that similar dynamics exist across Georgia but may vary because of rural and regional influences.

From the USSR to the post-Soviet era, trust in the formal institutions of Georgia—its education system, executive government, and military—has been on a steady decline, causing many young people to adhere to the subcultural Good Boy way of life. Georgia's secession from the USSR, followed by its swift collapse, plunged it into severe instability, igniting a civil war in 1991, crippling the Georgian economy, and causing severe political turmoil. The combination of these challenges fostered the rise of crime as a way of life—not just a means of making money. Young men looked to crime for purpose, respect, and structure in their lives. This paper analyzes the role of crime in Georgian society through the resurgence of the Thief-in-Law criminal code, drawing on contemporary Georgian Good Boys. Through an analysis of other ethnographic research regarding Georgian criminal culture, as well

as semi-structured interviews featuring open-ended questions allowing for the emergence of new topics during conversations with Georgian youth who identify with Good Boy culture, this paper asks: How does Good Boy culture shape youth identity, gender dynamics, and social mobility in contemporary Tbilisi? And how does the erosion of trust in institutions accelerate the growth of this alternative social order? This paper finds that the Good Boy subculture is a response to the state's failure to provide a reliable means of economic mobility and productivity, creating an identity that allows Good Boys to transform their patriarchal views, traditional ideas of masculinity, and respect-based values into a way of life.

In Georgian society, a Good Boy is not someone who behaves nicely or follows the rules; according to unwritten criminal social codes, the term refers to a young man who commands respect among his peers through street smarts and a network of loyal friends. Among shared values of honor and protecting the weak, the most important Good Boy value is never cooperating with any authorities or the state. More often than not, a Good Boy may be a criminal or a member of a Georgian gang, though this is not always the case. Because Good Boys can adopt the gang member mentality without committing crimes or being formal mob members, they fit under the Good Boy category in Georgian culture simply for adopting the mentality and values of these organized crime networks. They acquire these values through elder thieves-in-law—elite criminal figures with years of street experience, whose ideology and criminal code trickles down to the younger Good Boys. These Good Boys adhere to the basic principles of honor, loyalty, and manhood while leaving behind the more extreme demands of being a Thief-in-Law, such as abstinence from marriage and control over prisons, finding a sustainable balance between the respect that comes with the unwritten criminal code and the freedom of contemporary life in Tbilisi.

Young men looked to crime for purpose, respect, and structure in their lives.

SOVIET TO CONTEMPORARY EVOLUTION: CRIMINAL CODE

In the early 19th century, the Russian Empire's annexation of Georgia's various kingdoms and principalities brought an end to Georgian sovereignty; following its collapse, Georgia enjoyed a brief period of independence between 1918 and 1921, ending with Soviet annexation. Georgia's declaration of independence from the USSR marked the first step toward a final breakaway from imperial Russian rule, but this newfound sovereignty brought a new array of problems. The first president of the newly independent Georgia, Eduard Shevardnadze, was faced with a heavy criminal and gang presence in the country. His accumulation of power and subsequent authoritarianism allowed him to crack down on street gangs by going after politicians collecting bribes from criminal networks, as well as restructuring internal ministry forces to reduce the threat of gangs to the po-

litical order. Dismayed by his mentor's descent into authoritarianism, Mikheil Saakashvili, a promising representative with a Western education, decided to break away from Shevardnadze's Citizens Union of Georgia coalition and form the United National Movement in 2001. Two years later, in November 2003, Saakashvili led the pro-democracy Rose Revolution, mobilizing tens of thousands of people in mostly nonviolent protests and replacing Shevardnadze as president of Georgia. Saakashvili's presidency saw the same gang and criminal infestations as Shevardnadze's, but Saakashvili's strategy relied on even harsher crackdowns and authoritarianism. Excessive arrests led to Gldani Prison brimming with inmates and prisoner abuse, leading to the Gldani Prison Scandal in 2012, which highlighted the broader abuses of power and corruption present in institutions under the United National Movement. Protesters against Saakashvili's repressive regime were met with rubber bullets in mild cases, while the worst moment of the protests involved a speeding car hitting and killing two people. Saakashvili's promise of bringing Western democracy to Georgia had descended into more authoritarian means in the name of stopping crime—nothing had changed.

Amid this shambled government was organized crime. The code of thieves-in-law, tracing back to the Soviet prison system of the 1930s, was not exclusively followed by criminals—it was a deep-rooted concept which held ideological significance even to those who did not participate in crime. This ideology, spread orally in prisons and sustained through rituals and customs, was characterized by extreme opposition to the state, as those who were institutionalized and sent to the Gulag, a system of Soviet labor camps, were among the most oppressed by the Soviet government. In a way, the code gave prisoners a source of strength and dignity amid the inhumane forced labor practices in the Gulag, with members holding "courts" in prison barracks, initiating new members, judging other prisoners, and enforcing "criminal law." This system, although bearing similarities to the state and organized government, maintained crime and established a counterculture against mainstream law and society. In its opposition to the state, the code featured symbolic and practical methods of disobedience: thief stars tattooed on knees signaled that one would "never kneel to authority," members of the code were only allowed to make a living through crime, and every member was required to completely reject all formal legal processes. By creating this system, criminals aimed to guard prisoner rights and uphold their moral dignity, establishing a code that they perceived as morally superior to the laws of the oppressive, incompetent, and illegitimate state.

The earlier disdain that these gang networks held for the Soviet government was deepened in Georgia by the crackdowns on crime and the descent into authoritarianism of Shevardnadze and Saakashvili. Ironically, by using draconian tactics to suppress crime and gangs, the state's actions inadvertently pushed more people to embrace the criminal honor code, which defined itself as a direct opposition to oppressive state authority. This creat-

ed a feedback loop: the more the state cracked down, the more its legitimacy decayed in the eyes of those drawn to street culture. The loop continues to exist in contemporary Tbilisi—from the 1930s, the negative perceptions of the state continue to persist because of ongoing allegations of corruption, heavy policing, and distrust towards the effectiveness of formal institutions. As a result, the understanding and reception of the criminal code has evolved from hands-on criminal involvement and strict adherence to lifestyle restrictions to a moral and philosophical way of life practiced for both intergroup socialization.

While thieves-in-law and traditional gangs no longer dominate the streets of Tbilisi, the criminal honor code has persisted through the early post-Soviet governments. Now, it has trickled down to younger Good Boys who have since altered this code to fit the scene of contemporary Tbilisi, conforming this ideology to fit the contemporary state distrust.

YOUTH IDENTITY CONCERNING KATSUBA

Katsoba (კაცობა), the Georgian word for manhood, is central to Good Boy ideology. The culture is heavily influenced by traditional masculinity, emphasizing respect and protection of the weak, but problems often arise in Good Boys' pursuit of manhood. Many negative traits accompany the morally virtuous concepts that underline the Good Boys. For them, masculinity's main features include explosive anger and violence in the name of gaining respect and protecting it—small quarrels often turn into bloody fistfights, making it likely that almost every Good Boy has engaged in violent confrontation at one point or another. This idea is actively reinforced by Good Boys, as outlined by the interview conducted for this paper. The interview, conducted in English, includes a close personal friend of mine who grew up in Tbilisi and is extremely well-versed in Good Boy rules and values. This individual was chosen because of his knowledge of the culture and requested to remain anonymous to protect his identity. During the interview process, the participant discussed a milder, more modest example of violence in the form of road rage.

Q: Describe a time when another person was disrespectful to you. How did you react? Do you think this reaction would fit into the Good Boy code of conduct?

A: Road rage is pretty common in Georgia, and it gets very aggressive quickly. Swearing and swinging your hands around is common, and I've encountered it several times. I reacted reciprocally, to put it shortly, aggressive remarks and responses are typical of Good Boys.

In most cases, one physical fight resolves the initial quarrel, with both Good Boys going their separate ways and rarely holding grudges. Post-fight grudges, in Good Boy culture, are often seen as feminine, as most observations of grudges involve women holding them against each other. In rarer cases, quarrels turn into deeper, more serious conflicts, resulting in two possible

outcomes: the involvement of a Thief-in-Law as the final moral judge of the conflict, or a shooting. A Good Boy uses force and violence in response to disrespect, whether directed towards themselves or others, to signal their strength and authority. By using force, a Good Boy reinforces his right to respect, with the violent acts signaling his masculinity through a display of bravery and toughness.

Regardless of the extent to which young men participate in Good Boy culture, almost all males interact with street communities, meaning they must demonstrate some familiarity with the Good Boy code of conduct. As a result, Good Boy culture has significantly shaped perceptions of the transition from boyhood to manhood among Georgian youth. Institutional milestones such as graduating from high school, employment, or even getting married hold minimal significance. Good Boys learn early on that these milestones are not effective routes to growing up and becoming a man. Instead, young men achieve manhood through respected actions within Good Boy culture, such as the first time they stand up for themselves by engaging in a physical fight. This narrative is often reinforced among young men, who, while talking about others, criticize their lack of action, stating things like: "How can he call himself a man? He has never hit another man."

SOCIETAL RESPECT AS A MEANS OF SOCIAL & ECONOMIC MOBILITY

Because the aforementioned formal institutions, such as education, work, and even the military, do not have much legitimacy, the Good Boy lifestyle attracts young men because it provides a scarce resource: a sense of purpose. Universities and formal education, voided by the scarce job market and low wages, repel the interest of young men. Many also rule out the military, given its weakness, lack of benefits, and inadequate state capacity to provide for those who serve. An interview participant states:

Q: Do you believe that formal institutions in Georgia—Georgian universities, corporate employment, the army, and the government—can provide a stable and reliable basis of upward social mobility? Why or why not?

A: No, I don't fully believe that formal institutions in Georgia currently provide a stable and reliable basis for upward social mobility. Nowadays, Georgian universities provide strong quality education and are increasingly recognized as valuable for a person's future, but the job market often does not value or reward degrees with stable corporate jobs. Corporate jobs are scarce, and most lack long-term security. Like most of the armies around the world, the Georgian army has low pay and limited career growth, making it an unreliable path for a successful life. As for the government, they do provide pensions and some disability benefits. The pension is commonly criticized as being low, with the benefits not being enough for those who struggle out of poverty.

The quote outlines a lack of legitimate sources of upward economic mobility in Georgia. This leaves young men to resort to street culture as their way of life, allowing them to garner a purpose:

organizing Tbilisi's society by upholding traditional Good Boy values.

Autonomy, one of the most important pillars of Good Boy manhood, causes Good Boys to view dependence on formal institutions—school, work, or the state—as infantilizing. Moreover, Good Boy culture's rejection of formal institutions ties into the pursuit of manhood. Not only must manhood be pursued through violence and protection of respect, but all non-masculine actions must be avoided altogether. In their worldview, a real man must be guided by his morals in order to carve out his own place in society, even if through extralegal methods. This heavy emphasis on self-sufficiency explains why youths who participate in Good Boy culture reject formal employment and education. Instead, they focus on accumulating respect in society while sometimes relying on small illegal "hustles" to earn a living. In this way, Good Boys maintain control of street customs and avoid submitting to any hierarchy that is not the Good Boy code. During the interview process, one participant highlighted the balance between money and societal respect:

Q: If you had to choose between social respect or monetary comfort, where one choice eliminates the existence of the other, which would you choose? Why?

A: I would probably pick monetary comfort, unless the absence of social respect means that I am looked at negatively. I don't mind not being popular. Monetary comfort is just as enjoyable without being out there.

This quote adds nuance to the relationship between Good Boys and money; the participant implied that he values money over social recognition unless the lack of social respect means that he has a negative reputation. This reveals the importance of social recognition in Good Boy culture: While desired, the potential of societal rejection outweighs the legitimacy of money.

However, the Good Boys subculture—on account of rejecting formal institutions—often does not see many opportunities for economic growth. Because of this, a phenomenon can arise in which respect functions as a currency: the currency of street capital. Street capital is an important component of an informal economy, where respect can be given and taken. Legitimized by connections, respect as capital exists through tight Dzmakatsoba (ძმაკაცობა, "brotherhood"). In Good Boy culture, a Good Boy's Dzmakatsoba refers to networks of friendships characterized by loyalty to a larger friend group. With formal institutions failing to provide means of social and economic mobility, Dzmakatsoba fills the gaps by distributing respect as capital through loyalty-based networks. This hierarchy gives Good Boys a clear path to determine whether or not they move up in the social hierarchy within their culture. Without respect, Dzmakatsoba does not exist. The presence of this street capital makes "trade" in this informal economy function by supporting members of the group during fights, using group force to intimidate individuals, and giving each other access to material support. A respected Good Boy, backed by his Dz-

makatsebi (ძმაკაცები, meaning close male friends), can use force to avoid legal consequences through social shielding (being protected from "snitches") or resolve serious conflicts without going to the authorities. Inversely, respect can be taken from a Good Boy if he engages in an action considered immoral according to the Good Boy code. For Good Boys, the loss of respect as a capital differs from that of actual money—respect is fragile, and one mistake can cost a Good Boy all the respect that he spent years building with his network of Dzmakatsebi.

GENDER DYNAMICS: WOMEN AS ORNAMENTS

Contemporary gender dynamics in Tbilisi feature heavily patriarchal themes, with men and women being expected to act in ways that fit gendered stereotypes. In Tbilisi, Good Boy culture rarely includes women. Typical actions of a Good Boy, like fighting, smoking, drinking, and swearing—considered normal and acceptable behaviors for males to practice—will attract scrutiny if a woman partakes in them. Georgian slang even features a term to describe women who partake in non-feminine actions, Qaji (ქაჯი). These ideas of how women should behave predate post-Soviet and Soviet Georgia. However, the term Qaji seems to derive from the Soviet concept of "hooliganism," referring to deviant behavior, specifically in males. Qaji has become a gendered label for deviant women in Georgia, reinforcing a societal disdain for non-feminine women by attributing their "immoral" behavior to that of males, particularly Good Boys. Based on Georgian patriarchal double standards, women must adhere to the standard of being nurturing, gentle, proper, pure, and innocent. This perception of women has the strongest prominence in Good Boy culture; rather than decision-makers or leaders, women are seen as symbols of family honor and preservation. Figures such as sisters and mothers must be protected, with this responsibility falling on the family's Good Boy. For Good Boys, possessiveness over women is a pillar of masculinity, defining relationships as dominant-submissive power dynamics rather than equal partnerships. Even female family members receive less recognition than some non-family members. One interview participant directly acknowledged this notion:

Q: What role do women—mothers, sisters, girlfriends—play in your life and the Good Boy world?

A: In a typical Good Boy lifestyle, the women in a man's life are not that influential. Mother's opinions to improve your life goals are disregarded, and sisters are not that influential when it comes to decision-making. Girlfriends are probably more influential due to being the closest in most cases.

This quote not only reinforces the passive role of women in the lives of Good Boys, but it also presents an interesting new development in the romantic relationships between Good Boys and female partners, carrying more influence than that of female family members on account of "closeness." This quote implies that women do not hold strictly

passive roles, but the significance of their involvement in Good Boys' lives depends on certain conditions. Perhaps for Good Boys, girlfriends feel "closer" because the respect a Good Boy has for his girlfriend does not come automatically from familial ties, but rather from the choice to build trust and affection over time with her.

This idea seems to be widely held across Good Boy culture, further reinforcing their emphasis on respect. The slight exception of misogynistic ideals in the form of girlfriends' involvement in decision-making can be attributed to feeling a stronger sense of mutual respect in a romantic relationship. This contrasts with relationships with female family members, whose respect may feel weaker because families feel obligated to respect each other. Similar to familial relationships, relationships with authority figures demand respect without earning it; as a result, Good Boy culture seems to emphasize relationships in which respect is mutual, earned, and built over time.

CONCLUSION

The Good Boy identity is not just a cluster of criminal networks, but an unwritten social order conceived from widespread distrust of formal institutions. The evolution of Good Boy culture, from Soviet Thief-in-Law criminal codes to its contemporary structure, shapes Georgian ideals of economic mobility, gender dynamics, and manhood. For many Georgian youths in Tbilisi, this subculture offers an alternative means of life—a purpose to uphold the city's moral standing.

Masculinity—shaped by violence, respect, and self-reliance—sidelines women and devalues them from active decision-makers to symbols of family honor. At the center of this framework lies respect, functioning as a form of currency and powering the Dzmakatsoba (brotherhoods) of the street. For many, this is not just a subculture: It is a response to the state's failure to provide sustainable and reliable means of economic mobility and productivity. With institutional trust eroding in recent years, Good Boy culture has offered the young men of Tbilisi a sense of identity, one that allows participants to transform their morals into a way of life.

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Repurposing the Past: The Tithes Church and the Establishment of a Ukrainian National Identity in the Early 19th and Mid-20th Centuries

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During the medieval period, important landmarks such as churches and palaces destroyed in the time of conquest or conflict were often never rebuilt. In the case of the Tithes Church located in present-day Kyiv, Ukraine, natural disasters and successive powers, such as the Mongols, destroyed the church on multiple separate occasions; consequently, this church experienced numerous incarnations. After its final decimation by the Soviet Union in 1935, the church's foundations remained exposed, and there is an ongoing discussion today about rebuilding the church upon its original foundations. This is due to the church's perceived cultural significance, especially during a time where Ukraine's sovereignty as a nation and culture is threatened. Historically, historians and other academics identified the Tithes Church as specifically "Russian" in identity, but in the late 19th and early 20th century, the landmark's identity began to shift towards a "Ukrainian" one. This prevailing contention of historical memory extends well beyond the church's physical existence, and to its symbolic function as an example of deep cultural heritage.

In the late nineteenth century, a Ukrainian cultural identity began to come to fruition that distinguished itself from the Russian one. This push led to a renewed interest in ancient and medieval Eastern European culture, from which Ukrainians drew upon folklore, literature, visual arts, and architecture to fashion a distinct national identity. Historical sites that bore substantial cultural significance were likewise important to this move-

ment. In creating and documenting a usable past to help construct a Ukrainian national identity, writers and scholars turned to tangible artifacts of their history in an effort to legitimize their present.[1]

An important example of documenting Ukraine's usable past is the Tithes Church in Kyiv. It was notably the first stone church built in Eastern Europe as well as the burial site of the first Christian ruler of Kyivan Rus, Princess Olga, and her grandson, Volodymyr the Great. However, beginning in the 1820s, Russian historians were already publishing histories that firmly situated the Tithes Church as part of the Russian historical memory and heritage. With the convergence of emerging historiography on the Tithes Church and the advent of the Ukrainian National Revival around the 1870s, a contest of historical memory developed between a budding Ukrainian nation and the Russian Empire. The public reception of the church transformed from being understood as an important Russian monument to its reclamation by the Ukrainians as part of their history and culture. Imperial Russian and Soviet publications of the late nineteenth through mid-twentieth centuries reveal this shift, showing the Tithes Church as an important site of contestation over historical memory. The writings of both the Imperial and Soviet intelligentsia indicate that, at least for some, the Tithes Church became a testament to the existence of a distinct, independent Ukrainian nation. This paper will first give an overview of the Ukrainian National Revival and the historiography of Ukraine that resulted from it, which ultimately inspired the reclamation of numerous culturally significant monuments as part of building a national identity and historical record. This paper will then contextualize the formation of a Ukrainian identity within the late nineteenth century Russian Empire.

In order to demonstrate the formation of a Ukrainian national identity, it will address scholarly and popular sources of the time period that illustrate the shift from the perception of the Tithes Church as 'Russian' to its acquisition of a Ukrainian identity. Additionally, it will further contextualize these print sources of the early-to-mid twentieth century within the creation of a Ukrainian republic, as well as the rise and fall of "indigenization" policy. Ultimately, as this paper argues, the emergence of historiography on the Tithes Church and the advent of the Ukrainian National Revival resulted in a contest of historical memory developed between a budding Ukrainian nation and Russia.

SECONDARY LITERATURE REVIEW

Literature that formed the foundation of Ukrainian historiography, such as the works of Volodymyr Antonovych and Mykhailo Hrushevsky, was primarily written and published in the late 19th to mid 20th century and during the peak of the Ukrainian National Revival. Hrushevsky's *History of Ukraine-Rus* (1898) in particular was remarkable, because

it was the first monographic work to claim that the modern Ukrainian nation descended from the medieval Kyivan Rus, which challenged the longstanding narrative that Kyivan Rus was the progenitor of Imperial Russia.[2] However, the bulk of secondary literature examining the Ukrainian National Revival, the formation of a Ukrainian national historiography, and its reliance on the reclamation of ancient and medieval culture did not emerge until the late 20th and early 21st centuries.

One of the most useful examples of this secondary literature addressing the reclamation of a "usable past" is Frank Sysyn's "Recovering the Ancient and Recent Past: The Shaping of Memory and Identity in Early Modern Ukraine," published in 2001.[3] Sysyn's main argument is that the new social and political order that emerged under the Zaporizhian Cossacks based in Ukraine throughout the 18th century inspired Ukrainian intellectuals to take an interest in the ancient and medieval roots of Eastern Europe. Their interest contributed to a national historiography of Ukraine that later functioned as the foundation for modern Ukrainian historical narratives. Sysyn explains that this newfound interest in Ukrainian history occurred largely because intellectuals took interest in crafting a narrative of the Khmelnytsky Uprising of 1648 - where ethnic Ukrainians rebelled against Polish rule - that was sympathetic to the Cossack rule. Despite this initial motive, over time these Cossack historians explored Ukrainian history well beyond the scope of the Khmelnytsky Uprising and compiled an extensive chronicle of late medieval and early modern Ukrainian history. Sysyn's article is highly valuable in that he expands the scope of early Ukrainian historiography by explaining the influence of Cossack intelligentsia that predated the more well-known Ukrainian historians of the late 19th century, such as Antonovych and Hrushevsky. Additionally, his inclusion of the Cossacks and their efforts to construct a Ukrainian national history ultimately explains what inspired later scholars' interest in retrieving fragments of a "usable" past, such as by reclaiming important historical monuments from the medieval and early modern period.

Similar to Frank Sysyn's scholarship, Serhiy Bilenky's "Inventing an Ancient City: How Literature, Ideology, and Archaeology Refashioned Kyiv During the 1830s and 1840s," published in 2011, also explores Ukrainian historical memory. Bilenky's main argument is that even though Kyiv has long been regarded as an "ancient metropolis," recent archaeological expeditions and further research into the city's history beginning in the mid-19th century concretely established it as a longstanding hub of cultural and religious significance.[4] In turn, this assertion that Kyiv's legacy stretches back to antiquity encouraged the denotation of the culturally and religiously significant city as part of the "Ukrainian" heritage. Subsequently, it also spurred attempts by intellectuals to remove Kyiv from what they view as a distinct, "Russian" cultural sphere. Bilenky also notes

that despite these attempts, Russian nationalists co-opted this proclamation of Orthodox heritage in Kiev to deter what they perceived as the "Polish Catholic threat." Bilenky's scholarship is valuable in that he explains the ongoing efforts in nineteenth-century Kyiv to "refashion" the city to emulate its ancient and medieval roots. In this way, his article provides useful historical context to the revived interest in the Tithes Church by Ukrainian and Russian writers at this time, even if Bilenky does not directly address the Tithes Church.

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Finally, Evgeny Khodakovsky and Ekaterina Meliukh's 2015 article "Dmitrii Mileev and the Restoration of Wooden Architectural Monuments in Early Twentieth-Century Russia" argues that Russian archaeologist and architect Dmitri Mileev's lifetime of scholarship and dedication to the preservation of Eastern European architectural landmarks has played a significant factor in the continued interest in the restoration and preservation of architectural landmarks. These landmarks include the wooden seventeenth-century Church of the Epiphany in Chelmuzhi, northwestern Russia. They elaborate upon this by noting that in a sense, Mileev propagated a style of "native Russian art" by insisting that various churches be restored in the materials they were originally built in, such as wood or stone.[5] In turn, Mileev's scholarship and advocacy continues to bolster interest in various landmarks across Eastern Europe, with one of the most significant being the excavation of the stone Tithes Church carried out between 2005 and 2011.[6] In terms of sources, Khodakovsky and Meliukh scatter images of the wooden and stone churches they discuss throughout the article, some of which were taken in the early 20th century, at the time of the restoration by Mileev himself. The authors also include other photographs taken later in the 20th century, after Mileev's death and the completion of the restoration projects he presided over. Khodakovsky and Meliukh supplement these photographs with excerpts of Mileev's writing as a primary source, in addition to secondary sources from more contemporary scholars. Khodakovsky and Meliukh's work successfully illustrates the restorationist current that originated from a broader trend of reclaiming historical landmarks. They also explain how this scholarship partly contributed to continued interest in landmarks such as the Tithes Church. Their scholarship does not address the idea of utilizing these buildings to construct a Ukrainian identity like Sysyn or Bilenky, but their claim of Mileev's influence stands true, considering his advocacy prompted the excavation of the Tithes Church in modern-day Ukraine.[7]

Fundamentally, the preexisting secondary literature provides crucial historical context regarding

the 19th and 20th century revival of ancient and medieval Eastern European culture as well as how this renewed interest spurred an interest in restoring or rebuilding medieval monuments, especially churches. Utilizing an approach to landmarks that views them as physical sites of historical memory, one can move forward to examine the example of the Tithes Church in particular.

BACKGROUND

The state of Kyivan Rus first constructed the Tithes Church between 988 and 996 CE as a testament to the Grand Prince Volodymyr's conversion to Christianity.[8] This original iteration of the Tithes Church became the first church in Kyivan Rus to be built in a traditional stone Byzantine style, serving as a stark contrast to the many buildings at the time that were made of wood.[9] With the aid of Byzantine craftsmen, the church featured ornate mosaics and frescoes, marble columns, and installations of spolia (looted stone and other goods repurposed for decoration) from Byzantium, such as bronze horse sculptures, that were acquired during the Campaign of Chersonese in the third century BCE.[10] The Grand Prince Volodymyr's burial--who was later canonized within the Eastern Orthodox Church--at the Tithes Church elevated its status to that of an important cultural and religious monument. His grandmother, Olga, who also became a saint within the Orthodox Church and was the first Kyivan Rus regent to convert to Christianity, would be reburied at the Tithes Church.[11]

The Mongols destroyed this iteration of the Tithes Church in 1240 during their conquest. However, centuries later, when Petro Mohyla ascended to the position of Metropolitan of Kyiv in 1633, he took initiative to restore and preserve numerous medieval landmarks around Kyiv.[12] According to historian Liudmila V. Charipova, Mohyla took particular interest in the "Christian heritage of Rus" and how these were linked to St. Volodymyr. As a result, he focused his attention on historical landmarks that were allegedly built during Volodymyr's time as Grand Prince, such as the Tithes Church, St. Sophia's Cathedral, and the Church of St. Basil.[13] The restoration of the Tithes Church in the 1820s, led by the Metropolitan of Kyiv Yevgeny Bolkhovitinov, continued Petro Mohyla's legacy of conserving Kyiv's medieval Christian heritage. This reconstruction of the church, overseen by Bolkhovitinov and the Russian Empire's Academy of the Arts, ultimately proved controversial—the "carefully planned" archaeological excavation of the church in 1826 ultimately resulted in the destruction of one of the original walls as well as much of the remaining foundation.[14] Although Metropolitan Bolkhovitinov held a genuine interest in restoring monuments of the past, the demolition of the church ruins resulted in the construction of a church in a modern "Russian" style.[15]

This reconstruction of the church in a principally Russian architectural style firmly situated the

structure within the Russian cultural sphere and as part of Russian history. Simultaneously, the reconstruction occurred within a temporal and geographical place where a Ukrainian national identity was coming to fruition. Although the intention behind restoring the church was not to challenge a Ukrainian identity, this event would mark the beginning of a long contest of historical memory between Russian and Ukraine.

Around the same period, the Ukrainian National Revival began finding its roots in Galicia, a region that was then part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire and bordered the western end of the Russian Empire. Galicia and its immediate surrounding areas in the Austro-Hungarian and Russian empires were "ethnolinguistic Ukrainian territory"—a smattering of peoples who called themselves Ukrainian and spoke the Ukrainian language but bore no semblance yet of a cohesive nation.[16] To many non-Ukrainians in the Russian Empire, Ukrainians were known as "Little Russians." The term connoted how Ukrainians were primarily seen as a "variant" of Russians.[17] In the mid-nineteenth century, these "Little Russians" inhabiting the left bank of the Dnipro River produced an early generation of the Ukrainian intelligentsia that became the driving force of the national revival. Many of these intellectuals were educated in newly built universities that had popped up across the Russian Empire in the early nineteenth century. Although these universities were constructed to fulfill the increasing need for educators to serve the modern Russian Empire, Ukrainian intellectuals prevailed against the Russian academic current.[18] Considering that nearly 90% of Ukrainian speakers in the Russian Empire at this time were engaged in agriculture, these intellectuals concluded that the modern Ukrainian peasantry possessed a distinct ethnic identity because of their shared social class and language.[19] These Ukrainians intellectuals took inspiration from the work of German philosopher Gottfried Herder, who asserted that the peasantry's ethnic culture formed the basis for nationhood.[20]

These Ukrainian intellectuals took inspiration from the work of German philosopher Gottfried Herder, who asserted that the peasantry's ethnic culture formed the basis for nationhood.

While a student, the future historian Volodymyr Antonovych led groups of his peers to embrace traditional Ukrainian dress and exclusively speak in Ukrainian. They eventually formed small communities, called hromadas, dedicated to promoting Ukrainian culture to the general populace. These efforts included publishing a broad range of written works in the Ukrainian language, many of which were distributed in Sunday schools. As these communities grew in size and influence, imperial authorities felt increasingly threatened by their presence. The Empire dubbed these student activists "Ukrainophiles," which was intended to be a derogatory term, but the

students embraced it with pride. In response, Imperial authorities instituted the Valuev Edict in 1863, banning the publication of educational and religious sources in the Ukrainian language.[22] This legislation proved detrimental to the *hromada* movement as it targeted their primary methods for educating the public about Ukrainian culture. By the time the movement recovered about a decade later, Antonovych was a professor of history at Kyiv University. In this new position, he oversaw the establishment of the Imperial Russian Geographic Society in 1873, which became the new outlet for Ukrainian-language publications and research into Ukrainian folklore and traditional culture.[23] However, the Geographic Society became a new target for another Imperial decree in 1876—the Ems Ukase barred the publication of all Ukrainian-language books and the usage of the language in theatrical productions. Additionally, the decree banned the importation of any Ukrainian-language materials.[24] Ultimately, Antonovych's cultural movement was demolished yet again, although he was able to keep his teaching position at Kyiv University despite many other academics associated with the Geographic Society losing their jobs.

During Antonovych's tenure as professor, he continued to instill his passion for a national revival in his students. One of these students, Mykhailo Hrushevsky, would go on to become the "father" of Ukrainian historiography.[25] His magnum opus, the ten volume *History of Ukraine-Rus,* was the first body of work to assert that the people of Kyivan Rus were the progenitors of modern Ukrainians.

This challenged the traditional interpretation in Russian historiography that the Rus were the predecessors of modern Russians, hence the demonym "Russian." Additionally, Hrushevsky believed that Russian historians had mostly treated Kyivan Rus as a footnote in their own national history, with Ukrainians and Byelorussians existing on the periphery of this history. Hrushevsky's *History of Ukraine-Rus* brought medieval Kyiv to the forefront, emphasizing the importance of the state to the development of Eastern Slavs, with a particular focus on the Ukrainian people.[26]

As the Ukrainian National Revival progressed throughout the nineteenth century, a renewed interest in medieval history and culture manifested in both popular and scholarly publications. This included publications that paid special attention to specific landmarks of perceived cultural significance, such as the Tithes Church in Ukraine. After the earlier attempted restoration of the church resulted in the structure being rebuilt in a "Russian" architectural style, the church had become firmly rooted within the Russian historical memory. However, with budding Ukrainian scholars taking particular interest in Kyivan Rus as a significant part of their own history, they began focusing their attention on landmarks like the Tithes Church and writing histories of their own. Thus began the historical contestation between Russia and Ukraine over the Tithes Church.

Around the time when the

Tithes Church was being reconstructed under the Metropolitan's and the Academy of Arts' watch, both popular and scholarly publications on the church began to appear. As the Ukrainian language was not yet widespread in published sources, nearly all of these publications were in Russian, which was the lingua franca of the Empire. In addition to efforts to stop the proliferation of the Ukrainian language in the later nineteenth century, Imperial authorities often dismissed Ukrainian and Byelorussian as regional dialects of Russian rather than distinct languages.[27] Thus, they attempted to discredit these popular and scholarly publications.

Published works during the nineteenth century were not accessible to the average inhabitant of the Russian Empire. Literacy rates and the level of education attained varied greatly across ethnic groups, but the vast majority of Ukrainians and Russians did not have an education beyond primary school, and many were not literate even in their native language (Pavlenko 2011, 340).[28] Considering this, the primary audience of these sources, regardless of whether they were popular or scholarly, was the nobility, as they had the greatest access to education. In addition, the Imperial authorities attempted to "Russify" the empire by not only creating more schools but also requiring instruction in the Russian language beginning in the nineteenth century. This "Russification" campaign was part of larger efforts by the Russian Empire to promote Russian culture and language as the dominant ones, particularly in areas populated by other ethnic groups.[29] Due to this Russification campaign, the earliest published works on the Tithes Church are in Russian; nonetheless, the shifting perception of the Tithes Church as a part of the Russian cultural memory versus a newfound Ukrainian one still manages to shine through the limits placed upon the representation of Ukrainian language and culture in printed materials.

One of Russia's earliest modern sources on the Tithes Church, titled "A Brief Description of the Church of the Tithes," was published in St. Petersburg in 1829. The booklet, as the title suggests, provided a brief history of the Tithes Church, beginning with its inception under the Grand Prince of Kiev, Volodymyr.[30] The unnamed writer claims that the church was the "first precious church in Russia," namely because of its significance as the burial site of the canonized Volodymyr and his grandmother, Olga, who was the first Christian ruler of Kyivan Rus.[31] The booklet covers the destruction of the church by the Mongols in the mid-thirteenth century, as well as the restoration efforts in the seventeenth century that resulted in the construction of a wooden church.[32] Following the botched reconstruction effort of the early 1820s, the writer describes the ongoing efforts by Aleksandr Annenkov, a wealthy Russian landowner, to rebuild the church in its original stone style.[33] The source concludes with several illustrations of the foundation and exterior of the church.[34] No author was listed for this booklet.

Considering the brevity and lack of bibliography, this source may have been published with the intention of being a source for the public, as its conciseness made it more accessible to a wider audience. Additionally, with the inclusion of multiple illustrations of the church, these may have been utilized to further engage the audience. Considering the relatively low literacy rates of the Russian Empire at this time, regardless of the booklet's concision and illustrations, its audience was most likely limited to the wealthy. Nonetheless, this source is significant as it is a short, but complete history of the church that was published around the time of the building's most recent restoration under Metropolitan Bolkhovitinov.

Given the historical context in which it was written and published, the existence of this book echoes the cultural and religious importance of the Tithes Church to the Russian Empire. The author refers to the church as a "precious" possession of the Russians and considers the modern "Russian" style in which the church was restored; this source firmly centers the Tithes Church within Russia's history and culture. Despite this, the mentions of Aleksandr Annenkov's discontents with Bolkhovitinov's restoration and his efforts to rebuild the church in its original stone Byzantine style reveals the author's awareness of contesting interpretations of the church. Considering its importance as popular source material, this contestation may have begun to spill over into the public discourse, beyond the realm of intelligentsia and nobility.

Four decades later, in 1865, the Ukrainian historian Lavrentiy Pokhilevich published "Monasteries and Churches in Kiev," a collection of terse accounts chronicling the history of local churches and other places of worship. This edited volume came only two years after Tsar Alexander II enacted the previously mentioned 1863 Valuev Edict, which severely limited Ukrainian-language publications for educational and religious purposes, as these were the institutions that the *hromada* movement primarily targeted.[35] Pokhilevich also describes the evolving function of local churches over time, with some of these buildings being utilized as shelters. The volume also includes an entry about the Tithes Church. As with the "Brief Description of the Church of the Tithes" from a few decades prior, the publication provided a short history of the church detailing its first iteration in the 10th century, the restoration efforts under Metropolitans Mohyla and Bolkhovitinov, and then the subsequent attention it received from Aleksandr Annenkov.[36] Pokhilevich concludes with a brief description of the clergy currently present at the church.[37]

The unnamed writer claims that the church was the "first precious church in Russia."

As a scholarly work, Pokhilevich's research was most likely intended for a narrow audience of peers who were acquainted with Kyiv's local history. However, the brevity of each

entry also made it accessible to a wider audience, as the text's length simplified an otherwise niche and complex subject. It is unclear whether Pokhilevich's research spilled over into the public sphere, given low literacy rates; however, his work demonstrated a juxtaposing interpretation compared to the previous booklet on the Tithes Church—he does not mention the Russian Empire whatsoever, and never designated the church as uniquely "Russian." Rather, Pokhilevich described the church as being significant to the city of Kyiv, emphasizing its local importance rather than its value to the Russian Empire. Although he never designated the church as "Ukrainian" either, not labeling the landmark "Russian" when scholars had previously described the building as an important part of Russia's history was noteworthy, especially considering Pokhilevich's Ukrainian identity. Expounding upon the Tithes Church's significance within Kyiv demonstrated an effort to rewrite its "Russian" identity.

Not long after the publication of Pokhilevich's edited volume, another brief history of the Tithes Church, described as a "brochure" by the National Library of Ukraine, was published anonymously in 1872 in Kyiv. Similar to the 1829 booklet, this source provided a concise narrative of the Tithes Church, beginning with its origins in Kyivan Rus and the dedication to the Grand Prince Volodymyr and then chronicling its various incarnations under the direction of several Metropolitans of Kyiv. Moreover, the author provided some illustrations of the church as it stood in the late nineteenth century and noted its "modern interior."[38] Just as the 1829 booklet proclaimed the Tithes Church as the "first precious church in Russia," this unnamed author similarly professed that the church was regarded as a "treasury of national prayer of the Russian land."[39] Considering the source's brevity and author's anonymity, it was perhaps written for a general audience—literacy rates in the Russian Empire improved towards the end of the century, in both urban and rural populations.[40] In addition, since the National Library of Ukraine specifically describes this book as a "brochure," this brief history of the church was written to entice visitors to the site as a tourist attraction after the renovations that took place in the decades prior.

These two publications provide an interesting contrast with Pokhilevich's scholarly work—they both assert that the Tithes Church was a part of Russia's heritage and emphasized the significance it continued to bear going into the nineteenth century. Thus, the unnamed authors situated the Tithes Church firmly within Russian history and culture. However, Pokhilevich's edited volume departed from these interpretations. Although the entry on the Tithes Church only spanned a few pages, it notably never denoted the church as Russian, nor did it reference the Russian Empire. Rather, Pokhilevich's work emphasized the church's importance within the context of Kyiv and detailed the historical and cultural value it held at the time of the volume's publication.

In examining the chronology of these publications, a contest of historical memory materializes, one between the emerging Ukrainian nationality defined by scholarly works and the Russian Empire. Although the identity of the other two authors is unknown, they clearly attested that the church was uniquely Russian by referring to it as a possession of the Empire and using "Russian" as a descriptor for it. Meanwhile, Pokhilevich never claimed the church was a Russian possession and described it as "Kyivan." Here, the identities of 'Russian' and 'Kyivan' conflict. Pokhilevich's choice insinuated that although the city of Kyiv was possessed by the Russian Empire, he saw the city as a separate entity in terms of historical memory—making it retain its own distinct culture and history.

The Emskij ukaz, translated as the Ems Decree, enacted in 1876 by Alexander II banned Ukrainian language in both written and spoken communications, as well as the importation of Ukrainian-language publications from abroad. In the decades prior to the collapse of the Russian Empire, Imperial authorities oscillated between relaxing restrictions on the Ukrainian language and tightening them once more. Although the Ems Decree dealt a massive blow to the vitality of the *hromada* movement, seeing as much of their cause relied on the proliferation of Ukrainian-language sources throughout the Empire, some *hromada* members persisted by adopting roles in academia and cultivating a new generation of activists such as Antonovych.[41]

The contestation of the Tithes Church and its place within historical memory as seen in earlier sources was further complicated by a paper published in 1913 by Vasyl Lyaskoronsky. Notably, he was a student of Volodymyr Antonovych, a figurehead of the Ukrainian National Revival, during Antonovych's tenure as a history professor at Kyiv University. As Lyaskoronsky pursued his own academic career, he frequently published research on "Russian" landmarks that are now regarded as significant within Ukrainian culture and history, such as the St. Sophia Cathedral and the Golden Gate. In his 1913 paper "The Fate of One Archaeological Find," Lyaskoronsky covered many of the "ancient" goods discovered at the site of the Tithes Church during its most recent excavation funded by the wealthy landowner Annenkov, who was similarly mentioned throughout other sources on the church in the late 19th and early 20th century.[42] Lyaskoronsky described earthenware objects and artifacts in the church that he determined to originate from as far east as India and even Primorsky Krai.[43]

Lyaskoronsky's monograph is relatively brief, its niche subject matter demonstrated that it was intended for a narrow audience that was knowledgeable of the topic. Thus, the audience was likely limited to the academic world and his work did not reach the public discourse. Nonetheless, his identity as a Ukrainian scholar and the student of Antonovych is an important element for interpreting his work. Lyaskoronsky, like Pokh-

ilevich, never designated the Tithes Church as "Russian" and instead emphasized its place within the city of Kyiv. Specifically, he introduced the church as a significant part of "ancient Kyivan" history.[44] The Russian nation was only ever mentioned when Lyaskoronsky addresses the origin of some artifacts discovered at the site of the church and briefly mentions the restoration efforts led by Metropolitan Bolkhovitinov that reconstructed the church in a modernized "Russian" style.[45] This monograph demonstrated Antonovych's persistent influence and the continued contestation of historical memory between Ukraine and Russia—Lyaskoronsky placed the Tithes Church within the ancient history of Kyiv and relegated Russia to the periphery by only mentioning artifacts discovered at the site originating from the Far East.

In 1922, less than a decade after the publication of Lyaskoronsky's paper, the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic was formally established. The Ukrainian SSR came after a series of short-lived, disorderly governments spanning the time between the October Revolution in 1917 and the Ukrainian SSR's formal admission to the Soviet Union. Despite clashes between the Communist Party of the Russian Socialist Federative Socialist Republic (RSFSR) and the Central Rada, the anti-communist governing body of the short-lived Ukrainian People's Republic, the Ukrainian SSR's admission to the Soviet Union would prove beneficial for the development of a Ukrainian national identity, at least for the time being.

In 1923, the USSR enacted *korenizatsiya*, also known as "Ukrainization" within Ukraine or "indigenization" as it applied to other non-Russian ethnic groups, where the Bolshevik government encouraged the many ethnic groups within the Soviet Union to embrace their traditional culture. Considering the preexisting national revival movement in Ukraine, *korenizatsiya* greatly advanced the aims of these activists—not only did Ukrainians fully embrace their material and visual culture, but they also took the opportunity to actively appoint Ukrainians to the government and require the knowledge of Ukrainian language for all state employees. Additionally, as the *hromada* movement attempted decades before, the Ukrainian language finally proliferated education and publishing.[46] However, after the Holodomor (translated from Ukrainian as "terror-famine") that occurred from 1932-1933, Stalin's regime cut this flourishing of Ukrainian language and culture short. Indigenization efforts formally ended in December of 1933 as Stalin attributed the rise of menacing "Ukrainian nationalism" to this policy.[47] The Russian government once again impeded the progress of the Ukrainian National Revival's goals and thus, Ukrainian-language publications after 1933 are far and few. Furthermore, Stalin ordered the demolition of numerous historical landmarks in Kyiv in the mid-1930s as part of his "modernizing reforms" for the city; one of these landmarks was the Tithes Church, which was demolished in 1935.[48]

From 1938 to 1939, the Academy of Sciences of the Ukrainian SSR carried out an archaeological study of the Tithes Church's ruins soon after its demolition.[49] The exact motivations behind this study remain unclear, mystified by the context of Stalin's crackdown on all aspects of Ukrainian culture and history during this period. The edited volume that was the fruit of the investigation, titled "Archaeological Studies of Ancient Kiev," was compiled by historian Mikhail K. Karger and published in 1950, near the end of the Stalinist regime. The second chapter is dedicated entirely to the Tithes Church, beginning with a concise history of the church and emphasizing the later efforts of Mohyla, Annenkov, and Bolkhovitinov to restore it. Unlike prior sources, Karger's history also included Dmitri Mileev's scholarship, a Russian architect and "restorer-preservationist" whose archaeological studies, albeit influential, were scarcely cited in other 20th and 21st century scholarly works because of his perceived Tsarist sympathies. This absence in historical scholarship for ideological reasons as much of his later work centered around landmarks from the Romanov dynasty.[50] Further along in Karger's study, he noted that the Tithes Church was demolished by the Stalinist regime because it lacked any "artistic value" to the Soviet Union. Despite this, he stressed its significance to Kyiv's "ancient" history before delving into the findings of the expedition.[51] By including references to Mileev's work as well as a thinly veiled criticism of the government's choice to demolish medieval landmarks, Karger presented an interesting redefinition of the Tithes Church's place within history. Similar to past works asserting the church's place within Ukrainian or local Kyivan history, Karger never denotes the church as uniquely Russian, or even mentions Russia. Karger's choice was especially significant in the context of the Stalinist regime. The government at the time not only repressed expressions of Ukrainian history and culture, but also promoted linguistic and cultural "Russification" in an attempt to consolidate a diverse Soviet Union under one universal identity.[52] By supplementing his study with references to Mileev's work, whose scholarship was largely discarded in the Soviet period, Karger subtly emphasized his criticism of the Soviet Union's choice to demolish these landmarks. In doing this, Karger appeared to recognize a distinct Ukraine that claimed the Tithes Church as its own in this debate of historical memory.

Karger's abandonment of the label "Russian" and assertion of the church's identityt as a "Kyivan" landmark was significant, as the city of Kyiv had become synonymous with the national revival during the late 19th century.

Finally, Karger is the only author highlighted in this paper to make an explicit reference to Ukrainian statehood by mentioning the Ukrainian SSR.[53] Although this may appear minor, many scholars who published on the Tithes Church

before him, even those who were Ukrainian, only made discreet references to the church's place within Ukrainian history. Karger's abandonment of the label "Russian" and assertion of the church's identity as a "Kyivan" landmark was significant, as the city of Kyiv had became synonymous with the national revival during the late 19th century. Although this book, as a scholarly work, was only intended for a narrow audience of Karger's peers, his criticism is still momentous in several regards—it asserts not only the Tithes Church's place within Ukrainian history but also its long-standing importance, even at a time where medieval history was largely disregarded. Even if his work was perhaps not intended to reach the public sphere, it demonstrates a shift in how the Soviet intelligentsia understood the Tithes Church and its place within historical memory: the Tithes Church was of special significance to the Ukrainian SSR and the city of Kyiv.

The Tithes Church became a testament to the existence of a distinct, independent Ukrainian nation.

CONCLUSION

By the early nineteenth century, Russian historians began publishing historical accounts that cemented Tithes Church as part of Russian historical memory and heritage. With the advent of the Ukrainian National Revival in the late nineteenth century, a contest of historical memory emerged between the developing Ukrainian nation and the Russian Empire. The Tithes Church is one example of the Ukrainian intelligentsia's endeavors to reclaim a tangible history as a foundation for a national identity. In both popular and scholarly sources throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries by Ukrainian authors, the Tithes Church is stripped of its Russian identifier and denoted as Kyivan instead. These two identities, "Russian" and "Kyivan," do not appear together in any of these works, implying that scholars and the public alike viewed them as signifying distinct historiographies. Although restrictions on publications related to a Ukrainian nationality and the Ukrainian language impeded the explicit designation of the church as uniquely "Ukrainian," the attempt to remove the Tithes Church from Russian history and culture is apparent.

This discourse was initially limited to the literate population of the late nineteenth century Russian Empire, which was a small group. However, with the push to increase literacy rates in the early Soviet Union, these works soon became accessible to a wider audience. Moreover, these publications precipitated the shift in both scholarly and public perception—by the mid-twentieth century, historians clearly defined the church as an important cultural monument of the Ukrainian SSR. Altogether, it is apparent that these writings on the Tithes Church, particularly those that were written by Ukrainian scholars and especially by Antonovych's

students, demonstrated the efforts to remold the mainstream view of the Tithes Church within historical memory. These publications indicate that the Tithes Church became a testament to the existence of a distinct, independent Ukrainian nation.

Contested historical memory between Russia and Ukraine persists in the post-Soviet period. The foundations of the Tithes Church remain in Kyiv today as part of a protected national heritage zone, and in 2024, became the subject of controversy when the Ukrainian government ordered the Russian Orthodox Church of Ukraine to demolish a chapel they erected on the site twelve years prior. The Russian Orthodox community allegedly delayed the clearance of the chapel for several years due to "lack of funding."[54] Eventually, the chapel was successfully removed with assistance from Ukraine's National Museum of History. Although the demolition of a small wooden chapel may seem insignificant, in the time of war it represents one successful 'battle' against Russian encroachment upon Ukraine's sovereignty as a nation and culture.

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Watching at a Distance, Dying Up Close: Bodies, Defeat, and Male Maturity in Jiří Menzel and Krzysztof Kieślowski

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Closely Watched Trains (Jiří Menzel, 1966) and *A Short Film About Love* (Krzysztof Kieślowski, 1988) both center on young men whose first encounters with women are structured around sight rather than touch. At the start of Menzel's film, Miloš Hrma is a mere observer of the people and station that comprise his surroundings—Miloš is a passive character in his own story. But if Miloš is a spectator by temperament, Tomek is one by design: In Kieślowski's film, the boy installs himself at a window with a telescope, watching a woman from above, from a position of safety.

In both works, looking is entangled with adolescence, sexual failure, and a suicide attempt. Yet, while the two films share these surprisingly similar themes and plot points, they nevertheless move in sharply different directions. In Menzel's version, the act of watching migrates from institutional surveillance down to the tactile world of "closely observed bodies" through camera movement, culminating in Miloš's coming-of-age, as embodied in a single, explosive act of heroic self-expenditure (Owen 497). Meanwhile, Kieślowski's camera captures a boy watching a woman from a higher plane, encapsulating a specifically Polish vision of distance and defeat. Here, masculinity is measured not by decisive action but by withdrawal, the acceptance of a lack, and the survival of love as only a spectral, imagined bond. Much scholarship on cinema's "male gaze," as coined by film theorist Laura Mulvey, stresses how classical film form positions the camera and the male

characters as active onlookers, casting women as the passive objects of eroticized display (Mulvey 58-69). Based on the synopses thus far, it is easy to say that *Closely Watched Trains* and *A Short Film About Love* both invite that reading. But in each case, the geometry of the gaze is more complex than Mulvey's theory suggests. Instead, the gaze is bent into something stranger and more nuanced, deserving closer examination.

In *Closely Watched Trains*, Miloš's job is, quite literally, to watch. As an apprentice dispatcher at a small rural Czech station under German occupation, he is tasked with monitoring signals, reading timetables, and keeping trains, especially Nazi troop and munitions trains, on schedule. It is noteworthy that the station's architecture organizes this vision vertically: While platforms and tracks are situated at ground level, the watchtower and signal box from which traffic is overseen offer more elevated vantage points. This architecture positions the train station as a surveillance space, where the Reich's logistical network translates scrutiny from above into control down below.

Masculinity is measured not by decisive action but by withdrawal, the acceptance of a lack, and the survival of love only as a spectral, imagined bond.

And yet, as film scholar Jonathan Owen notes, Menzel's camera is stubbornly uninterested in trains as such. Instead, the lens lingers with long takes on skin, thighs, and buttocks, on pigeons fluttering in the stationmaster's loft, on the glossy neck of the goose his wife coquettishly strokes, and on Miloš's own scarred wrists after his suicide attempt (Owen 78). The scene in which Miloš's colleague, Hubička, stamps official rubber seals onto telegraphist Zdenička's backside is, in itself, also emblematic of the characters' refusal to submit to the institutional gaze. The stamp, a bureaucratic tool intended to authenticate official documents, is debased by its usage as a toy for erotic play. Here, the ink that should guarantee the validity of reports ends up adorning a young woman's skin instead. The gaze, as portrayed through Menzel's lens, is intentionally comical and tactile rather than coldly disciplinary. The camera movement in this scene represents a perversion of the gaze itself, as if the institutional apparatus meant to watch over the war effort from above has slid sideways and downwards onto the bodily surfaces inhabiting the space below.

The stamp scene is only one example of how the camera repeatedly draws the viewer's attention away from the elevated vantage points and down into what Owen calls "closely observed bodies" throughout the film. Shots that begin by scanning the height of the watchtower, signal machines, and locomotives often, almost mindlessly and inadvertently, drift toward the station's cluttered interiors, animal life,

and the soft curve of women's bodies. What the lens finds exciting and deserving of spectatorship is therefore not the privileged, controlling view from above, but, rather, the bodily energy located closer to the ground, around desks, benches, and beds. Surveillance, in this world, is not abolished, but it is continually interrupted by a different kind of scrutiny—one that refuses to watch and dominate from above, choosing instead to immerse itself in surfaces and textures up close.

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Owen interprets the camera's sideways and downward movement through philosopher Georges Bataille's distinction between the realm of productivity and that of "unproductive expenditure"—that is, activities displayed in the film, such as erotic play, self-harm, or idleness that appear as a "waste" in traditional utilitarian terms (Owen 505). Hrabal's world of idlers and sensualists and Menzel's soft, lingering style transform the station from a rational surveillance machine into a space where human bodies refuse to be weaponized. The staff stamps buttocks instead of papers, the stationmaster breeds pigeons instead of discipline, and, in Miloš's case, a boy slashes his wrists over sexual humiliation rather than "risk[ing] [his] blood" for the Reich. The body thus becomes both the object of the 'contra-institutional' gaze and the surface upon which its values are written: Zdenička's stamped skin and Miloš's scars are parallel inscriptions, unofficial records of a war lived at the level of flesh rather than ideology.

Concluding Miloš's story, the film turns back to the symbolism of the station's vertical architecture. To enact the rebels' plan to sabotage a Nazi train, Miloš must leave the safety of the platform on the ground and climb up onto the watchtower, leading him to briefly occupy the highest point in the entire station. In a sense, he finally attains the elevated position his institutional role promised, now truly looking down with power over the train's fate.

But, of course, Miloš's achievement immediately leads to his fall. Shot by a German soldier, he tumbles into the explosion he triggered, revealing that the climb up the watchtower is ultimately inseparable from a descent into death. The scene transcends mere irony, however, as it links Miloš's personal ascent to masculinity, marked by his sexual initiation with Viktoria Freie the night before, to a literal and figurative fall. In essence, Miloš's manhood crystallizes in a single moment when the "view from above" stops being a space of institutional spectatorship and transforms

into the point from which he plunges his body in an impulsive, catastrophic burst.

Architectural organization plays a role in Kieślowski's mise-en-scène as well. The mode of watching in *A Short Film About Love* is vertically organized from the outset, when it is established that Tomek's vantage point is from a room high up in a Warsaw tower block. His key instrument is a telescope trained on Magda's window, situated at a lower level across the courtyard. Every evening, he sits in this lofty aerie and looks down at her: undressing, having sex, crying after yet another disappointing encounter.

The design of the city inhabited by the characters is equally symbolic: The landscape is marked by straight lines, glass, and the airy void of the courtyard between apartment blocks, transporting voices and gazes. Film scholar Paul Coates describes Kieślowski's characters in this era as inhabiting "enormous distances" from one another, their souls on "remote planets" despite living side by side (336). To this end, Tomek's telescope is a crucial plot device, promising safety, allowing Tomek to be "intimate" with Magda at a distance, to "know" her without contact, and to stay away from the messy world of the woman's affairs without ever descending to her level. Besides the telescope, Kieślowski relentlessly foregrounds several other mediating devices that similarly structure the act of looking. For example, the curved glass of Magda's window creates an effect of double-exposing her movements, echoing the telescope's lens. The motif of framed, circular vision is also consistent throughout the film in details such as peepholes and the round hole in the post office counter. The cumulative effect of these visual patterns is that intimacy is always mediated by circles of glass and metal, never allowing for unframed proximity. Desire, Coates suggests, becomes "spectral, resistant to embodiment, a Platonic form unable to squeeze into actuality" (338).

Vertical and optical distances therefore play different roles in *Closely Watched Trains* and *A Short Film About Love*. While Miloš leans on railings, climbs step-ladders, and presses his ear to doors, constantly moving between levels in the cramped station, Tomek is a suspended, disembodied eye looking down. Indeed, the staircase between his floor and Magda's might as well be infinite.

That disembodied eye, however, does not entirely fit the description of a perverted voyeur. As film scholar Lloyd Baugh argues, Tomek's gaze is primarily marked by feelings of embarrassment, chastity, and concern rather than by an appetite for pornography (Baugh 558). Additionally, the young Tomek never masturbates while watching Magda, even when she is undressed. In one scene, confronted with the possibility of Magda's body being sexually taken by another man, Tomek cannot bear to keep watching: He averts his gaze, closing his eyes for

a moment, and calls the fire station to make a false gas leak report to interrupt the very encounter he refuses to observe. This act is deeply ambivalent. On the one hand, Coates's notion of "remote control" comes to life in this scene: From his elevated observation point, Tomek uses the knowledge gained through covert surveillance to bureaucratically intervene in Magda's life without ever appearing at her door (335).

On the other hand, this scene diverges from the usual rules of voyeurism precisely because Tomek risks his own exposure—after all, a "true" voyeur would protect his anonymity at all costs. Thus, it is difficult to interpret the scene in a singular manner: Tomek's gas leak call is both caring and coercive, sympathetic and manipulative. This inability to parse true intentions is a struggle that underlies Tomek and Magda's entire relationship in the film. The act of watching in *A Short Film About Love* is inseparable from the tension between ethical concern and illegitimate control, and height contributes to the problem. Tomek's moral dilemma is ultimately bound up with his refusal, or perhaps inability, to descend from his higher plane into Magda's world.

The different regimes of looking in each film produce equally disparate models of masculinity. Miloš's crisis of masculinity is brutally simple: His failed attempt at sex with Máša convinces him he is not a real man. Then, humiliated and terrified, he attempts suicide in a brothel bathtub. The act is tragicomical because the film frames the attempt as a pathetic error borne out of adolescent panic. From the Reich's point of view, however, Miloš has spilled blood for nothing, squandering a resource that could have been heroically expended at the front, exemplifying what Zedníček calls Czech "wastefulness" in his subsequent tirade against the boy. From Bataille's perspective, however, it is precisely the pointlessness of this act that matters: Miloš's self-harm resists the grand narrative of productive sacrifice, insisting instead—against institutional values—on an individual and private expenditure.

Tomek's path to manhood is almost a foil of Miloš's. Tomek's desires are arguably never directly sexual throughout the film: He invests his telescope with feelings that are ultimately metaphysical, rather than tangible, tactile, or sensual. His institutional interventions, including hiding Magda's letters, sending false postal slips, and calling the gas company, are only clumsy attempts to protect the older woman. But, at the same time, we cannot deny that his actions constitute violations of Magda's privacy, his gaze treating her as an object to be managed and watched from a distance.

Tomek, physically elevated above Magda for nearly the entire film, controls the flow of money, information, utilities, and men into her flat. In contrast with *Closely Watched Trains*, when Magda discovers his spying, her

first instinct is not to reciprocate nor to educate him gently—as Viktoria Freie did with Miloš—but to weaponize the fact of being seen. She stages sex in front of the window for his benefit, then, in a different scene, invites him to her flat, guides his hand onto her body until he ejaculates, and declares flatly that "love" does not exist; there is only sex. At least temporarily, the vertical dynamic between the two characters flips: The woman downstairs summons the watcher from upstairs down to humiliate him, to show him just how fantastical his understanding of love is when forced into contact with real bodies.

A suicide attempt is the hinge between the two films. If Miloš's wrist-cutting is part of a pattern of Czech "waste," Tomek's is, in Baugh's reading, the moment when his love transforms into an act of sacrifice (559-60). Following Tomek and Magda's miserable encounter at the woman's flat, the boy behind the telescope suddenly becomes visible as someone fallible; Tomek's suicide attempt is akin to the distance once promised by the telescope dissolving in the red water of the bathtub. Crucially, the film does not show him leaping from a window or falling from a height. Tomek instead turns the violence inward, remaining physically on the same level, but breaking the illusion of safety he derived from watching from above. His final gesture of maturing into manhood thus culminates not in a heroic deed but in his refusal to watch Magda any longer, renouncing the one source of power he held: the ability to see without being seen.

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Magda's arc shifts as well; once the object of an anonymous gaze she barely registered, she now finds herself haunted by the consequences of her rebellion. Following Tomek's defeat, she looks up at his lit window, scanning it with binoculars, and climbs the stairs to his room. The asymmetry of watching reverses in perpetuity: Tomek withholds his gaze from above, while Magda cannot stop looking up. When she finally picks it up, the telescope no longer functions as a tool of erotic surveillance but as an instrument of reparative fantasy. Looking down at her own window from Tomek's room, she imagines a different version of an earlier scene: In this vision, Tomek does not merely watch Magda spill milk and cry; he comes into the kitchen and comforts her. The narrative suggests that the scene is entirely in her mind's eye, and their love is now only an imagined bond for both characters. The vertical dynamic between the two persists as Tomek is still absent, still situated in the higher tower block, but the symbolism of the height he has

over the older woman has morphed. The distance is no longer a vessel for control. It has become an unattainable love, an affection that Magda can only fantasize about.

The suicide attempts in *Closely Watched Trains* and *A Short Film About Love* thus serve different functions for the two films. Miloš's attempted suicide is anembarrassing, private waste that narratively foreshadows a later, more public form of self-expenditure. In Menzel's work, a suicide attempt evolves from a purposeless act to a productive one while retaining its Bataillean charge, with maturation into masculinity climaxing in a literal fall from a physical height. Tomek's attempted suicide, bycontrast, depicts the moment at which the fantasy of safe and unilateral watching finally collapses. Unlike *Closely Watched Trains*, *A Short Film About Love* does not enforce a vision of masculinity as an act of martyrdomor heroism. Instead, Kieślowski's film forces a restructuring and reversal ofthe gaze, leaving Tomek alive in a "spectral" relation to the woman he loves but stuck in the physical landscape that keeps them apart. The boy at the Czech station becomes a man by climbing up and falling down, but the boy in the Polish tower block becomes a man, if at all, by remaining suspended and learning to live without descending into possession.

Both of these films closely align with the socio-political contexts of their respective national cinemas, explaining their divergent narrative and ideological trajectories. Czech New Wave films, as film scholar Peter Hames notes, have traditionally foregrounded ordinary male protagonists whose modest acts of resistance and sensual enjoyment reflect a contra-totalitarian notion of young adulthood under German occupation. Miloš is, of course, exemplary in this regard. His heroism is real and epic, but it never detaches from the localized world of stamps, pigeons, and sexual anxiety that Menzel's cinematography lovingly documents.

Polish cinema in the late 1980s, by contrast, is preoccupied with questions of defeat and metaphysicality. As film scholar Marek Haltof writes, directors like Kieślowski turn away from explicit political allegories towards more interior stories in which national disillusionment is refracted through intimate, often obstructed relationships (23). Tomek's story—his acceptance of a love that can remain only spectral in lieu of a fantasy of control from an elevated locus—ultimately belongs to this national cinematic landscape.

Ultimately, *Closely Watched Trains* and *A Short Film About Love* paint radically different pictures of watching and what it means to grow up. Instead of simply punishing male spectatorship, the two films explore moral ambiguity through the dynamics of height and camera movement. In one case, scaling new heights initiates a boy into a local, tactile, heroic adulthood that ends in a fall. Inthe other, it

forces a boy and a woman alike to confront the limits of control in a world where, more often than not, desire remains at a distance, somewhere above or below.

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