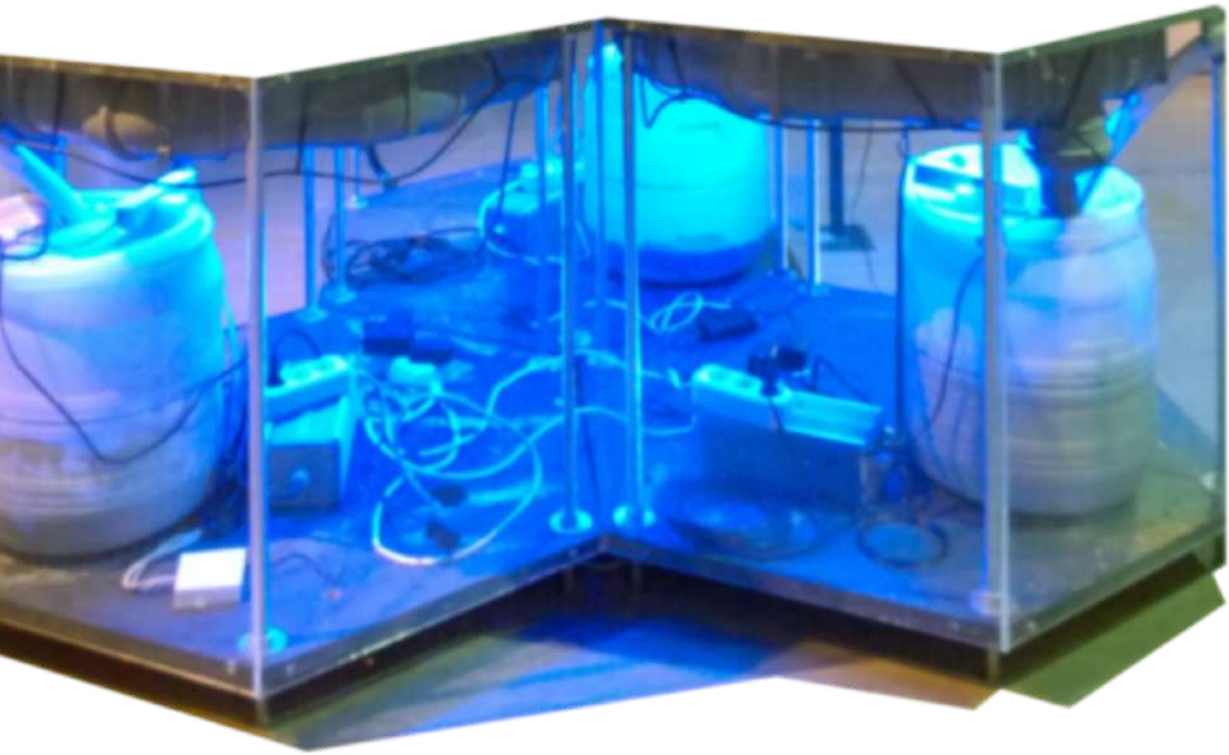


About *The Birch*

Founded in 2004, *The Birch* is the first national undergraduate publication devoted exclusively to Slavic, East European, and Eurasian studies. The journal is run by Columbia University students and annually publishes work by current undergraduates from many different colleges. We accept submissions of creative writing, art and photography, literary criticism, and essays on the culture and politics of the region.

You can find more information about *The Birch* online on our Facebook page (The Birch Journal), our website (thebirchonline.org), and by emailing us at thebirchjournal@gmail.com.

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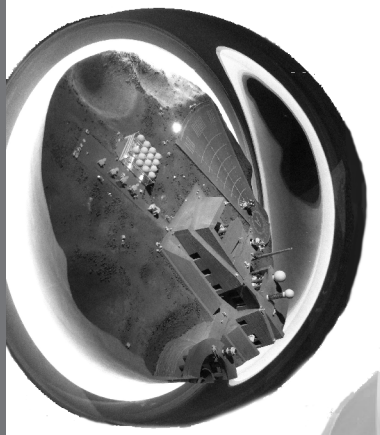
THE BIRCH

Spring 2016



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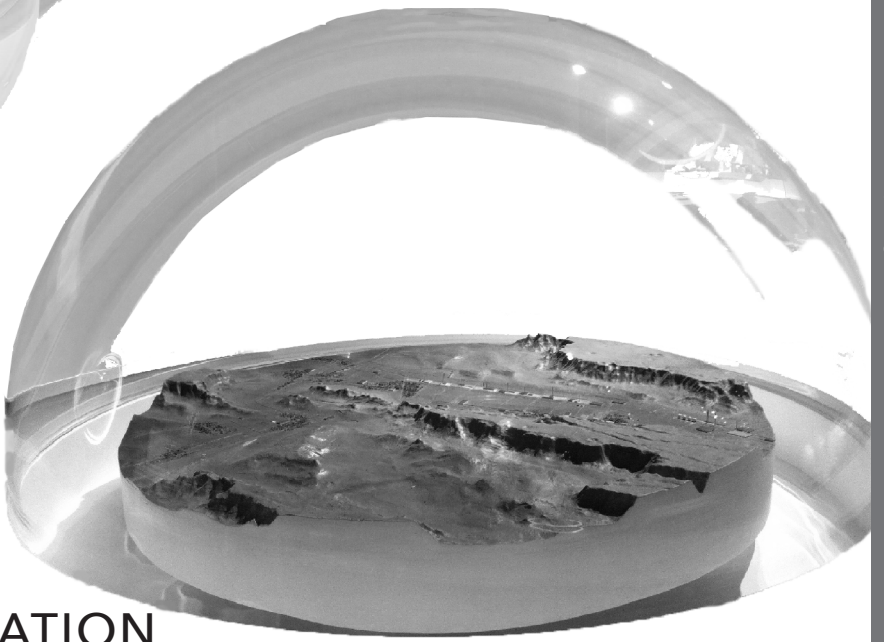
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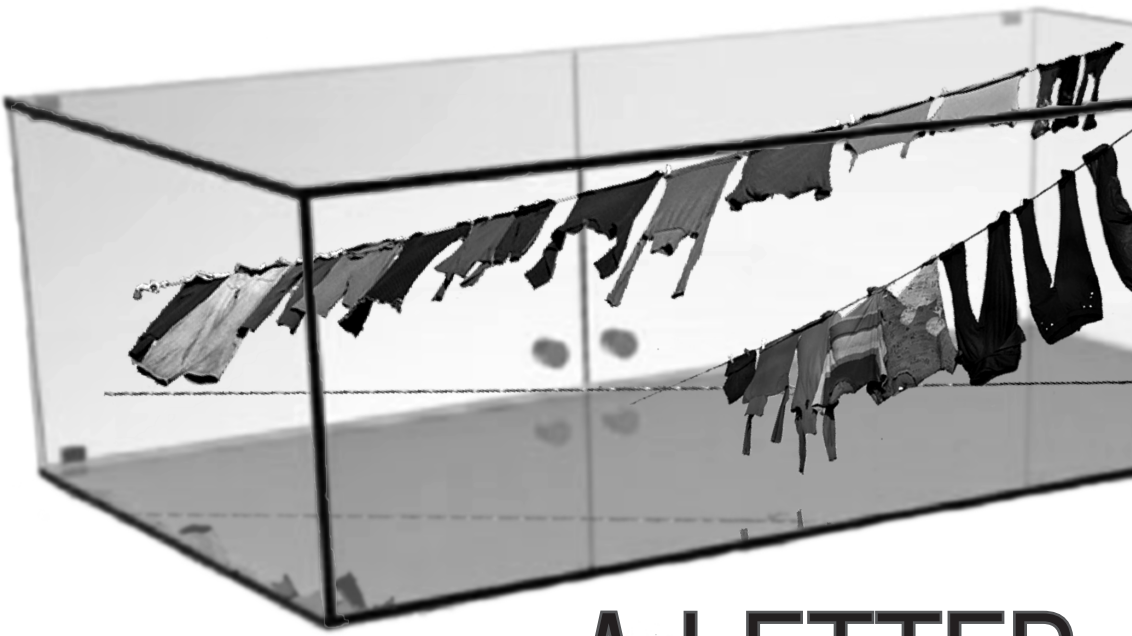
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Dear Readers of *The Birch*,

The Birch is proud to present our 2016 selection of essays, photography, creative writing, and art. In this letter, we would like to highlight some of the themes we have seen students focusing on in their studies of Eastern European and Slavic cultures, in the hope that readers can draw connections to their own areas of interest.

A lot of our contributors are engaged in studies of gender and women's experiences, whether on the level of practices and rituals (*Displacing Death*, on page 59), movements (*My Body is My Weapon*, 68), storytelling ("A Mother-Daughter Poem," 96), or poetic discourse (*Ideology and the Bolshevik Epic*, 14). This issue also features several essays concerned with the class composition of Russia and the Soviet Union: they narrate how different social groups are formed (*The Stakhanovite*, 44), addressed (*Ideology and the Bolshevik Epic*, 14), and allegorized (*Feuding with Reality*, 20), and how they at times attempt to create revolutionary coalitions (*Pre-Marxist Revolutionaries*, 52). A lot of our featured photography, which was shot in Saint Petersburg and Kazakhstan, focuses on evidence of past empires. Likewise, in this issue's essays and poetry, we see how authors navigate the ambiguities (*The Russian Dichotomy*, 26) and promise ("Hey, new Columbuses, Magellans," 100) of national identity.

This year has also been exciting for *The Birch* in terms of our engagement



A LETTER

on Columbia's campus. As a student organization, *The Birch* has had the chance to collaborate on new kinds of events, such as a film screening of *The Bolt*, with the Harriman Institute and Ballet Russes Arts Initiative, and a talk on human trafficking in Eastern Europe with the Ukrainian Students Society and Sanctuary for Families.

We also want to commemorate the life and life's work of Professor Frank Miller, who passed away earlier this year in January. Professor Miller was a beloved member of the Slavic Department faculty, and we are both personally indebted to him for the strong education in the Russian language that we have received at Columbia. We learned Russian from the textbooks that Professor Miller helped to write. He will be dearly missed.

We would like to take a moment to thank our all of our editors, contributors, collaborators, and readers. We hope you enjoy this year's issue of The Birch!

Sincerely,
Kate Seidel and Alex Braslavsky





FROM THE EDITORS

LITERARY CRITICISM





AN APOLOGIA FOR SEX: KUZMIN'S DEFENSE BY LOVE

Yang Ding

If sex is the consummation of love, then what differentiates a great love from an animal impulse? Vanya Smurov, the protagonist of *Wings*, a poetic novella written by Russian novelist and poet Mikhail Kuzmin, ruminates on this question when struggling to reconcile himself to the sexual aspect of love. Vanya's question points to the prolonged conflict between love and sex, a history of attempts by writers, philosophers, and artists to resolve the conflict between the platonic and the carnal aspects of love. While both are without dispute essential elements to the concept of love, there seems to be an inherently contradictory, or even antithetical, relationship between them. Platonic love is bestowed with uplifting qualities and canonized as a salvific power; carnal love is considered demeaning, denounced as debauchery, and seen as a fatal poison to the purity of love. The revered Russian author Leo Tolstoy portrays the protagonist Pozdnyshev in his novella *The Kreutzer Sonata*, as a man who vehemently condemns the upper-class view of sensual enjoyment as "a bodily function that [is] both legitimate and necessary for the sake of health."[1] Contending that the aristocratic tolerance for sexual gratification outside matrimony eradicates

1 Leo Tolstoy, *The Kreutzer Sonata and Other Stories*, trans. David McDuff (New York: Penguin Books, Inc., 2008), 112.

The author is a freshman at Swarthmore College.

any possibility for the development of pure love, Pozdnyshev goes further into advocating radical sexual abstinence. Seventeen years after the publishing of *The Kreutzer Sonata*, Kuzmin offers a new interpretation of love and sex in his groundbreaking novella *Wings*, a challenge to the Russian conservative literary establishment upheld by Tolstoy.

A milder version of Tolstoy's sentiment is shared by many Russian literary works prior to *The Kreutzer Sonata*. Mikhail Kuzmin's *Wings* is among the first to offer an apologia for carnal love, aestheticizing sensuality and championing the embrace of the full experience of love, the platonic aspect as well as its "scandalous" sexual twin. Vanya's reconciliation of the duality of love not only brings a refreshing voice into the discussion of love and sex in literature, but also contrasts with Pozdynshev's critique of sexual love, which, according to David Herman, "stemmed from the resentment he felt at his own inability to distinguish adultery from art."[2] Herman contends that the obsession with the purity of love in *The Kreutzer Sonata* arises from the conflict between Pozdnyshev's desire to safeguard his authenticity and his impulse to sympathize and unite with others. While Pozdynshev in *The Kreutzer Sonata* favors of the former, Vanya, once he realizes that life and youth are transient, resolves to merge himself with his lover, Larion Stroop, who leads a life of transcendental exquisiteness that aims to elevate mundane individual souls into the realm of eternal beauty. Confronting the fear of blurring the semiotic boundary between individuality and otherness as found in *The Kreuzer Sonata*, Vanya responds to this sentiment shared by the previous Russian literary circle with an ardent *cri de coeur*: with the pursuit of aestheticism as the sole objective of life, renouncing unenlightened, mundane individuality.

Pozdynshev's advocacy of sexual abstinence can be traced back to a fundamental conflict embedded in human experience—the duality of body and soul. It is the knot that tangles the ball of twine in his head, and in his frustration over his inability to untie the strings, he angrily tears them apart. Threads of rage, jealousy, and cynicism explode into the air. Bursting from the frayed and broken ends, the emotional turmoil pulls at our strings in the lines of *The Kreutzer Sonata*. Tolstoy expresses his repugnance at carnal love through his hero, Pozdynshev, who, overhearing a discussion about the nature of love among the passengers on a train, enters the conversation with bitter criticism of people's self-deceiving belief in idealistic love. Pozdynshev contends that in Russian high society, fornication, an unjustified defilement of innocence, a "fall" of the sacred human emotion, is regarded as "a diversion that [is] thoroughly natural for a young man and [is] not only pardonable, but even innocent," and therefore the relation between men and women can never

2 David Herman, "Stricken by Infection: Art and Adultery in *Anna Karenina* and *Kreutzer Sonata*," *Slavic Review* 56, no. 1 (1997): 15–36, 17.

be "simple, clear, pure, that of a brother to a sister."[3] There is no redemption after the first fall. The fornicator will always be recognized "by the intent look with which he examines a woman."[4] Pozdynshev believes not only that carnal love is essentially incompatible with platonic love, but also that the indulgence, or the mere experience of sexual pleasure will corrupt one's capability to love, a noble human emotion when in its purity. This detestation of carnal love, this call for renunciation of the body, originates from the unconscious human fear of losing individuality.

Herman further argues that Tolstoy's war against adultery is waged in the name of "semiotic purity."[5] An all-encompassing ideal hovering in the background of more ordinary kinds of human purity, "semiotic purity" denotes the idea that "people, things, concepts, and categories remain what they are, where they are, within their psychic means and their logical locations, rather than sliding about loosely wherever they choose."[6] Herman contends that Tolstoy's concept of adulterous love is in its essence an inclination to be "constantly and licentiously drawn to merge with other entities … or to try on the emotions of other people," in contrast with which morally pure love denotes that a person feels his own and only his own emotions.[7] In *The Kreutzer Sonata*, Pozdynshev firmly believes that his wife is cheating on him even though there is no evidence that any act of adultery actually takes place. This seemingly unreasonable conviction nevertheless may be justified when examined through the lens of the concept of adulterous love suggested by Herman. When Pozdynshev first introduces his wife to the violinist with whom she later allegedly has an affair, he makes the observation that "there was immediately established between them a kind of electric current which seemed to give their faces the same expression, the same gaze, the same smile" and that "whenever she blushed or smiled, so did he."[8] This "emotional 'infection'" is in itself enough to constitute an act of adultery in Pozdynshev's moral system.[9] By mirroring each other in their actions, moods, and attitudes, Pozdynshev's wife and the violinist transgress the boundary between the Self and the Other. The defilement of the "semiotic purity" does not require a physical act of infidelity. The soul can sin without the body.

Pozdynshev's condemnation of carnal love follows the same line of reasoning. When debauchery is sanctioned by society as a beneficial and healthy distraction, as he asserts in *The Kreutzer Sonata*, the consensus reached but never declared is an agreement on the interchangeability of bodies, which in turn flattens the distinc-

3 Tolstoy, *The Kreutzer Sonata,* 112.
4 Ibid.
5 Herman, "Stricken by Infection," 21.
6 Ibid.
7 Ibid.
8 Tolstoy, *The Kreutzer Sonata,* 157.
9 Herman, "Stricken by Infection," 23.

tion between souls. Although body and soul are commonly differentiated as separate entities, as distinct components of the Self, they are at the same time intimately connected. While the destruction of the body does not necessarily entail the same fate for the soul, the individuality of the body is nevertheless essential for the preservation of one's identity, since the body is the only physical platform for the manifestation of the soul. Carnal love is condemned, for it insinuates an acceptance of the sameness of one body with the others. As the interchangeability of bodies eradicates the distinctions between souls, carnal love thus blurs the sacred boundary between the Self and the Other. For a person who seeks carnal love with the sole purpose of pleasure, his or her lover is reduced to a soulless body and a replaceable instrument. Indulgence in sensual pleasure is the joyful solidarity of the soulless, which horrifies not only Pozdynshev, but also Vanya in Kuzmin's *Wings*, when he discovers that the man he loves is a frequenter of the bathhouse and the "sponsor" of one of the handsome young bathhouse attendants. The heavy symbolic significance and distinction attached to platonic love is negated by the frivolity of carnal love. The implicit notion that one body is no different from another, that there exist millions of functionally identical copies of the self outside of oneself, not only casts doubts on the sacredness of love, but also induces a deeply-ingrained existential fear of losing one's individuality, of being defined and restricted by an overarching category, and of the Self being dissolved into an indistinguishable mass of flesh.

While Tolstoy's Pozdynshev rejects carnal love entirely and endorses radical sexual abstinence even at the cost of the extinction of the human race, Vanya reconciles the duality of love for himself after going through the initial Tolstoyan experience of repulsion and rejection. In *Wings*, Kuzmin proposes a theory of love very different from Tolstoy's differentiation between love and sex: Kuzmin's lays down a foundation for the resolution of the incompatibility of love and sex. Through the words of his charming, highly educated, and worldly character Larion Stroop, Kuzmin presents the view that all love originates from the pursuit of beauty. In the sonorous resonance of the bold statement "We are Hellenes, lovers of the beautiful, bacchanals of the future life,"[10] Kuzmin not only puts forward a theory of love, but also calls for a hedonistic lifestyle, for the immersion of the self in the poetic charm of literature and art. For Larion Stroop's character, the highest pursuit of human life is that of aesthetics. Under the value system established by Kuzmin, the divergence between the body and the soul is expunged. In this system, the body is now as valued as the soul because of its beauty. As Stroop says, "there are wonders all around us at every step: there are muscles, ligaments in the human body that cannot be seen

10 Mikhail Kuzmin, *Wings*, trans. Hugh Aplin (London: Hesperus Press Limited, 2007), 29.

without a tremor!"[11] The uneasiness with carnal love as represented by Tolstoy's characters, which stems from a fear of the intrusion of Otherness upon the integrity of the Self, is brushed off by Kuzmin, since the merging of the Self with Otherness is exactly what those who devote their life to reaching the realm of abstract beauty pursue. A life of artistic elegance may vary from person to person. Yet it is governed by the same set of values, a common central ideal and a mutual vision of life shared by all "lovers of the beautiful." Individuality is not abolished, but forsaken, for distinction either of the body or of the soul loses its value if it is not deemed beautiful. The very Otherness from which Tolstoy recoils is what those "Hellenes" try to achieve. As a young apprentice of the "lovers of the beautiful," Vanya is snared by the gleaming luster of Stroop's life: "These raptures over any acute beauty of any country and any time; these walks to the islands; these disturbing, but alluring discussions … these thin, strong fingers wearing rings, shoes with an unusually thick sole—how he loved it all, not understanding, but obscurely captivated."[12] Kuzmin's depiction of an exquisite life has the characteristic of universality. Although Stroop is more fleshed out than most other characters in *Wings*, he shares his hedonistic lifestyle and his perspective on life with a community of friends. The bold statement starts with a "We," instead of an "I." The ascending path into the realm of beauty requires the guidance of a mentor, as when Vanya comes to his Greek teacher Daniil Ivanovich, baffled and agitated, and Daniil simply replies, "You're unwell, and I, like a kind doctor, like a mentor, am pointing out what you're missing—the life which for you is embodied by Stroop—and that's all."[13] For Kuzmin, the Otherness does not intrude upon the Self, but rather elevates it, pulls it out of the murk of mundane daily life, out of loneliness and isolation, as seen in Stroop's words: "And people saw that every sort of beauty, every sort of love was from the gods, and they became free and bold, and they grew wings."[14]

Vanya adores Stroop's philosophy of life, which embodies an ideal of love that obliterates the conflicts between platonic love and carnal love, or at least the necessity to resolve the conflicts. Nevertheless, Vanya's perspective on love and sex is very conventional, similar to Pozdynshev's in *The Kreutzer Sonata*, at the beginning of *Wings*. When he first becomes conscious of Stroop's indulgence in sensual pleasure, he is horrified and dejected. Unable to come to terms with the duality of love, he subsequently alienates himself from Stroop, only to find that away from Stroop "not only is there no one able to infect [him] with enthusiasm, there's no one simply able to understand and share the least movement of [his] soul."[15] Vanya's final reconcil-

11 Ibid.
12 Ibid., 28.
13 Ibid., 67.
14 Ibid., 20.
15 Ibid., 60.

iation with love and sex goes through two crucial transitional moments. The first propels him towards the realization of the transient nature of beauty while the second bestows on him the power to validate his love no matter whether it is bodily or spiritual. The first pivot happens when Vanya witnesses a drowned boy being dragged ashore. When the mother cries out the name of her son, who happens to be Vanya's namesake, in great agony, Vanya flees in horror, as the perishing of the young boy who shared his name reminds him of the fragility of his own body. Examining himself in the mirror, Vanya fumbles in his mind, looking for a resolution, "What ever will happen? What ever will happen?… But there are ligaments, muscles in the human body that cannot be seen without a tremor! Everything will pass away, perish! And I don't know anything, I've not seen anything, and I want to, I want to … I'm not unfeeling, not just some stone, and now I know my own beauty! I'm frightened! Frightened! Who will save me?"[16]

Since for Kuzmin all love is in essence an appreciation of the beauty of the body and the soul it houses, sexual love can be seen as an appreciation of the beauty of the body. The consummation of carnal love is thus mandated by the transience of beauty. Since the appeal of the physical body, unlike that of the soul, is fragile and ephemeral, the only way to validate it in Kuzmin's value system is to appreciate it while the time allows. Upon realizing his own vulnerability, Vanya is still unable to embrace bodily love. It seems to him that when the sensual aspect of love is brought onto the stage, the bodily pleasure it generates nullifies the beauty and the significance of the platonic life. Disheartened by the fact that Stroop frequents bathhouses, Vanya wonders whether love for Stroop is only a means to achieve the end—gratification of bodily desire. When he brings his doubt to Orsini, his best friend, Orsini responds with disdain for Vanya's worry. Claiming that "important in every act is the attitude to it, its aim, and also the reasons that engendered it; the acts themselves are the mechanical movements of our bodies, incapable of offending anyone, still less the Lord God,"[17] Orsini reminds Vanya of the core value around which Stroop centers his life and which Vanya wants to incorporate into his own life; that is, the pursuit of aesthetics. The enjoyment of sexual love is consistent with the noble goal of a life of ultimate beauty. While in a conventional moral system, or in Pozdynshev's more extreme version, this hedonistic lifestyle is considered debauchery, regarded as a corruption of the soul, and denounced as a sin, in Vanya's moral system it is validated with the belief in an aesthetic life as the only worthwhile existence. Ironically, we can even see a reversal of the expected moral connotations: Vanya, who in his pursuit of beauty attempts to merge with others, even if just sexually, ends up taking a more selfless course of action than Pozdynshev, who denies his presumably selfish carnal

16 Ibid., 69.
17 Ibid., 95.

impulses in an attempt to preserve his selfness.

The Kreutzer Sonata ends with Pozdynshev sobbing, begging for forgiveness from a stranger who has listened to his story, while *Wings* ends with Vanya "open[ing] the window into the street, which was bathed in bright sunlight."[18] Tolstoy's and Kuzmin's characters different views on love and sex lead to contrasting endings for their protagonists. Awaiting Pozdynshev is an uncertain journey filled with regret for certain, while nothing but the sun-lighted prospect of life with Stroop awaits Vanya. Pozdynshev's fear of the intrusion of Otherness upon the Self prompts him to denounce carnal love and endorse sexual abstinence. In contrast with the dualistic view of love in Tolstoy's *The Kreutzer Sonata*, Kuzmin's novella concludes that all love stems from the pursuit of aesthetics and sensual pleasure, through which humans transcend the humdrum of ordinary life, entering the realm of poetic beauty. By recognizing the beauty of the body and that of the soul as equally worthwhile, Kuzmin dissolves the incompatibility of love and sex, of body and soul, for all love of the individual shares the same Otherness, which is the appreciation for elegance, for splendor, for the sublime. By positing a new perspective on the relation between love and sex, Kuzmin is one among those Russian authors who succeed in liberating the human mind and Russian literature from the bondage of the traditional conservative morality exemplified by Tolstoy, offering a new possibility of life guided by the principle of sensuality.

18 Ibid., 99.

IDEOLOGY AND THE BOLSHEVIK EPIC: HOW CAPITALIST MYTHOLOGIES COMPLICATE MAYAKOVSKY'S POLEMIC IN "TO THE WORKERS OF KURSK"

Caroline Posner

The full title of Vladimir Mayakovsky's 1923 epic poem is an explicit declaration of the work's intent. "To the Workers of Kursk, Who Extracted the First Ore, a Temporary Monument by Vladimir Mayakovsky" ("*Rabochim Kurska, dobyvshim pervuyu rudu, vremennyy pamyatnik raboty Vladimira Mayakovskovo*") imagines a literal monument to the inhabitants of industrial Kursk, though it clearly serves as their memorial itself. Kursk, the site of the world's greatest iron ore reserves and the seat of the Russian iron industry, is an unsurprising thematic choice for Mayakovsky, who was an ardent Bolshevik in both his personal and literary lives. Chronologically, the work finds itself several years into Mayakovsky's flirtations with fusing political advocacy and his art.[1] "To the Workers of Kursk" adheres to the party line, and the poem first reads as an artistic synthesis of pure propaganda and a focused call to action; another look, however, reveals that subtle capitalist constructions intrude on the rhetoric of communism. Mayakovsky, for all his leftist polemic, seems to be seduced by literary tropes of class and sex that perpetuate liberal ideology, his verse colored with references to idealized masculine heroism and subjugation of the

1 Michael Holquist, "The Mayakovsky Problem," *Yale French Studies*, no. 39 (1967): 126–136, 135.

The author is a junior at Yale University studying Neuroscience.

feminine.

Though dedicated to Kursk in particular, Mayakovsky's ode to the industrial heart of early Soviet Russia is speckled with explicit promotion of the communist cause. The poet, not himself from Kursk, writes in the first person plural *my*, likely as much a demonstration of solidarity as it is a tool for strengthening the poem's political clout. At the time of the poem's publication, nearly four years had passed since the Red Army succeeded in seizing Kursk—a critical battle in securing the Bolsheviks' ultimate triumph over the White Army in 1921.[2] Mayakovsky recalls communism's decisive conquest over the city when he positions leftist ideology on a figurative battlefield, glorifying achievements in the spread of communism as "the victories of our days."[3] The proletariat protagonists, into whose company Mayakovsky writes himself, are described as victims of their bourgeois oppressors; he grieves, "the handle's broken off/our pan … the blockade's yoke/has strangled our chest."[4] But the workers of Kursk, while perhaps set up as worthy of sympathy or pity in these early stanzas, are ultimately hailed as heroes of the communist movement. Their names, Mayakovsky declares, will be written in the sky by a million chimneys.[5]

Perhaps more compelling than these obvious affirmations of communism, however, are their allegorical complement. In constructing the poetic image of Kursk's soil and the rich ore below it, Mayakovsky imbues each with political symbolism: the earth's crust is analogous to the empowered bourgeois, while the iron ore—almost obligatorily, given that the tools of the worker are built of iron—forms Mayakovsky's vision of the working class, poised for revolution. He writes of the ore in Marx's same rhetoric of the proletariat revolution, ascribing to it political agency:

> Shaken by the thunder of wills
> fortresses crack above the vein of iron.
> Throwing off the mountain's piled-up load,
> the deserts' steps
> which had trodden down the veins.[6]

This characterization of iron ore as the downtrodden mass is direct cooptation of Leninist language of the oppressed wage-slaves,[7] while their "thunder of wills"

2 Peter Kenez, *Civil War in South Russia, 1919-1920: The Defeat of the Whites* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977), 218.

3 Vladimir Mayakovsky, "To the Workers of Kursk, Who Extracted the First Ore, a Temporary Monument by Vladimir Mayakovsky," trans. Aleksandar Boskovic (unpublished translation, 2015), 24.

4 Ibid., 40, 64.

5 Ibid., 572.

6 Ibid., 193–200.

7 Vladimir Lenin, "A Great Beginning," trans. George Hanna, in *Collected Works*, ed. Jim Riordan (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1974), 29: 419.

describes the state of class agitation immediately preceding a Marxist revolution, as explicated in *The Communist Manifesto*. Thus the eruption of ore from the earth is Mayakovsky's prophetic vision of the ultimate achievement of classless utopia. The ore's success is arguably a more powerful monument to communism than the temporary memorials built to Kursk in letters of smoke.

Yet some of the most potent of Mayakovsky's communist rhetoric in "Workers of Kursk" is caught up in the insidious trappings of capitalist mythology, as though the monument to Kursk were built with the workers' stolen wages. One such complicated moment is Mayakovsky's conception of the communist hero:

> Romantics have made Don Quixote famous, —
> who fought the wind and other ghosts.
> Who would want to praise simply millers—
> they're fighting with a real mill
> not with wind ones.
> Listen, you proletarian daughters:
> He who's come
> to dig down in the earth
> who's plotted places on diagrams,
> He is the real knight![8]

Mayakovsky aims to supplant the romantic ideal of the knight with a leftist icon—the industrial worker—and he is ostensibly successful. But this kind of subversion is inherently problematic for communism because it relies on the popular archetype of the knight, who is metonymic for feudal society writ large. The feudal system is condemned as proto-capitalistic in the early passages of *The Communist Manifesto*, in which the authors argue that modern class oppression is the immediate outgrowth of feudal class antagonism.[9] Further, Mayakovsky's decision to shift from the Quixotic to the industrial vision of the knight-as-hero edges on irony: not only is the invocation of *Don Quixote* contradictory to his earlier argument against erudite political discourse ("Now with words so fine you cannot make fanfaronade—/ I am talking about those, who have never heard of the Greeks in their battles/who have not read about Mucius Sceavolas/who do not know why the Gracchi brothers are renowned"),[10] but also a poor choice of target. A leftist reading of *Quixote* recognizes that the protagonist "rejects capitalism too, and holds instead to a distant world,

8 Mayakovsky, "To the Workers of Kursk," 264–281.

9 Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, "Manifesto of the Communist Party," trans. Samuel Moore (Marxists Communist Archive: 2000), https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1848/communist-manifesto, Ch. 1.

10 Mayakovsky, "To the Workers of Kursk," 17–34.

temporally undefined, anachronistic and therefore utopian."[11] Mayakovsky ignores such a reading out of hand, and instead replaces one problematized leftist hero with another. Even though he attempts to manipulate the image of the feudal champion into a communist-compatible idol, Mayakovsky still elevates the proto-capitalist and classist construct of knighthood as the epitome of masculine heroism—or at least eschews offering a sufficient defense for his subversive use of the trope.

Though the invocation of the feudal hero immediately suggests hierarchies of class, the previous stanza merits equal interrogation for its treatment of the feminine gender: why does the poet choose to refer to the proletarian women as "daughters" (*dochki*), rather than sisters, or comrades? In choosing to call the women daughters, the poet bestows on himself a paternalistic ethos; in directing this message about the masculine hero at a feminine audience in particular, he implies either that women are largely behind the idolization of man as heroic or that women ought to use communism as a compass to guide their spousal discrimination. In either case, this address flags a potentially troublesome relationship with femininity. No such identifying language is used specifically for men, which suggests that men are the default audience for Mayakovsky—compromising the egalitarian visions of communist society put forth by both Marx and Lenin.[12] If the appeal to women is taken to offer the latter implication—that women ought to choose their husbands by virtue of their industrial "knighthood"—then Mayakovsky further contradicts communist opposition to the bourgeois family unit, which Lenin calls part of the "old un-communist psychology" and of which the communists advocate destruction.[13]

Attending to depictions of gender throughout the entirety of the text reveals a subtle slant towards the feminization of industry, often directed at the tools of production—the glorification of machinery hovers frequently on the border of sexualization. Mayakovsky's imagery of an iron-rich Kursk—"At once on a hundred freight and passenger lines,/planes set out brand new,/flashing their aluminum in the sun"[14]—shares its rhetoric of shiny machinery with his contemporary E.E. Cummings' 1926 poem, "she being Brand/-new," which hyperbolically draws an analogy between the experience of driving a new car and, subtextually, of a sexual encounter with a virgin.[15] Though Mayakovsky makes a less explicit suggestion in the

11 Jose Maravall, *Utopia and Counterutopia in the "Quixote"* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1991), 48.

12 Sharon Smith, "Marxism, Feminism and Women's Liberation," *Socialist Worker.* January 31, 2013, http://socialistworker.org/2013/01/31/marxism-feminism-and-womens-liberation.

13 Clara Zetkin, "Reminiscences of Lenin" (Marxists' Internet Archive: 2012), https://www.marxists.org/archive/zetkin/1924/reminiscences-of-lenin.htm.

14 Mayakovsky, "To the Workers of Kursk," 418–426.

15 E. E. Cummings, "she being Brand / -new," in *Literature: An Introduction to Reading*

lines above, his treatment of the act of mining earlier in the poem is nearly equally sexually charged. The depictions of extracting the ore from the earth are replete with figurative suggestions of penetration and ejaculation, and occasionally suggest sexual violence:

> A steel bore broke against the earth
> Go down, sharpen it, set it—
> and again the mass of earth is attacked
> and again the drill bit is jagged.
> and again—heave ho!
> and again—hurrah! —
> in the crevices of rock masses.[16]

The sexual nature of this scene is even more striking given the grammatical gender of the nouns in the original Russian: "bore" (*burav*) is masculine, while "earth" (*zemlya*) is feminine. Conceiving of the drill as phallic—and of mining as penetrative—is not novel, and Mayakovsky thus invokes the full history of industrial tropes of sex. In nineteenth century Chilean industry, for instance, "miners imagine the mine as feminine and frequently compared their work to a sexual act," and England banned women from the industry in 1840 when concerns about sexuality arose in the mines.[17] Though not uncommon, the sexualization of industry is remarkable because it is only possible through the collective reduction of femininity to the embodiment of reproductive power. Communist theory points to this sexual reductionism, like the reduction of human laborers to tools of mass production, as one of capitalism's primary evils.[18] The allegory of earth and ore as bourgeoisie and proletariat is thus replaced by a metaphor that, while similarly interested in dynamics of power, subjugates the feminized means of production according to a deeply capitalist paradigm of dehumanization. Mayakovsky's imagery of subjugated femininity and rape of the earth are sustained by the instrumentalization of female reproductive potential, rooting his language in anticommunist ideology.

This leaves the reader with a difficult challenge: how can the self-declared intent of the poem, as well as Mayakovsky's identity as a communist artist, be reconciled with the work's implicit perpetuation of conflicting capitalist ideals? It is fathomable that the poet uses popular tropes of sexuality and masculinity to make a work of heavy propaganda more palatable for the audience. This reading endorses an

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and Writing, ed. Edgar V. Roberts and Henry E. Jacobs (New York: Prentice Hall, 1989), 669.

16 Mayakovsky, "To the Workers of Kursk," 291–304.

17 Malgorzata Fidelis, *Women, Communism, and Industrialization in Postwar Poland* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 166.

18 Marx and Engels, "Manifesto of the Communist Party," Ch. 1.

assumption of political pragmatism: perhaps Mayakovsky is willing to sacrifice small ideological progress for the sake of a successful large-scale call to action. It could also be supposed that Mayakovsky indulges in romantic tropes of femininity and sexuality without assigning them real political weight; to the poet, the transcendental language and overt sexuality of romantic literary icons like Whitman may be extraliminary of leftist critique. These two readings, however, still render Mayakovsky a guilty agent in the perpetuation of anti-communist rhetoric—even if they are conceivable answers to the poem's internal conflicts, these solutions are deeply unsatisfying.

Appealing to the larger framework of Mayakovsky's politico-artistic context, however, may offer some relief. The analysis that ultimately acquits him of poetic treason can be discovered in a critical examination of the interplay between semiotics and oppression, proffered several decades later by the poststructuralist movement. Though referring in her own case to queer discourse, the feminist theorist Monique Wittig articulates the phenomenon by which Mayakovsky was bound to the capitalist vernacular. In her 1978 essay "The Straight Mind", she elucidates the quandary of subverting normative language: "These discourses of heterosexuality oppress us in the sense that they prevent us from speaking unless we speak in their terms. Everything which puts them into question is at once disregarded as elementary … These discourses deny us every possibility of creating our own categories."[19]

As a revolutionary poet, Mayakovsky is in the same predicament—the language of capitalism in pre-Soviet Europe is so rigorously psychologically enforced that attempting discourse beyond its vocabulary is often self-silencing. Return to the example of the knighthood trope: irrefutably a capitalist construction, it also belongs to the collective lexicon under a capitalist system; on the other hand, while the communist system is still in early stages of legitimacy, there is not a comparable collective image of the hero in any leftist language. When the author intends to evoke in his readers the form of the hero, he is restricted to the symbolic lingua franca of the oppressive class. In fact, the profound self-contradictions of Mayakovsky's polemic are symptomatic of the oppressive system he contests. The necessity of capitalist rhetoric in "To the Workers of Kursk" indicates a political and literary struggle that will only resolve in time with the cultural construction of a new communist discourse. The inequitable and violent language of gender, sexuality, and class in "Workers of Kursk" is no less repugnant for its inevitability, but the suggestion that these constructions are inescapable under capitalism increases the stakes for the success of the poem as propaganda.

19 Monique Wittig, "The Straight Mind," in *Out There: Marginalization and Contemporary Cultures*, ed. Russell Ferguson (Cambridge: MIT, 1999), 51–57, 53.

FEUDING WITH REALITY: GOGOL ON DEATH, HUMANITY, AND FLIES

Madeleine Steup

In his novel *Dead Souls*, Nikolai Gogol presents his contemporary nineteenth-century feudal Russia as the Inferno, implicitly criticizing its social order. As Gogol follows Chichikov, the protagonist and devil figure, in his travels around the Russian countryside to buy the rights to dead serfs, he uses animal metaphors and the idea of an alternate reality to comment on the class structure. This commentary starts off as a simple call for reform and ends up becoming a complete condemnation of the feudal system as Gogol reveals the system's fundamental irrationality and its tendency toward dehumanization. Gogol also uses the idea of a double reality to show how powerfully the feudal system influences the lives of the Russian people, and to introduce the hope that the Russian social reality will change. The consideration of multiple realities provides a backdrop for the many parallel relationships in the novel: serfs/gentry, human/animal and fantasy/reality. Through these different relationships, Gogol affirms the serfs' basic humanity and condemns the feudal system that insists on their subjugation. In addition to the multiple deliberate layers of meaning in *Dead Souls*, the unforeseen layer created by Gogol's death forces the reader to question whether the ideal reality that Gogol attempted to reach through

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literature can ever really be found in reality.

Throughout the novel, Gogol's comparison of humans to members of the animal world highlights the feudal system's essential flaw: that it dehumanizes people. While the division of living beings into humans and animals is a natural separation, grouping all lower-class humans with animals is neither natural nor just. Yet the feudal system does exactly that: it divides the upper and lower classes into "true humans" and "animalistic humans." Gogol clearly reveals this breach in logic through his animal metaphors, the most pointed of which compare all humans to insects. Describing members of the upper class at a ball, he writes, "Everywhere one looked black frock coats flitted and darted by, singly and in clusters, as flies dart over a white, gleaming loaf of refined sugar."[1] Stuck in a group mentality, the gentry engage themselves in ultimately meaningless pursuits, flitting around aimlessly. Gogol does not stop with this condemnation; he sharpens his criticism of the feudal system by using the exact same fly metaphor for the serfs as for the landowners, thus likening the two classes. In the words of his character Mikhail Sobakevich, a landowner, "[modern serfs] are so many flies, and not people."[2] By talking about the gentry and the serfs with the same type of metaphors, even when using a landowner as the mouthpiece, Gogol points out that the two groups are essentially the same, and asks the reader to question the idea that one group has the right to own the other.

Sobakevich's characterization of the serfs not only challenges the idea that there are intrinsic differences between the upper and lower classes, but it also shows how the feudal system dehumanizes the serfs, transforming them into insect-like creatures while reinforcing the gentry's conviction of their own superiority. Peasants in feudal Russia were treated as though they were sub-human: they lived in swarms, were thought to have lesser mental and emotional capacities, and worked not for their own benefit or even their descendants', but for the landowner's. *Dead Souls* was published in 1842, and by then the effort to abolish serfdom had been underway for decades, but only about half of the serfs were emancipated; the feudal system was not eradicated until 1861. In *Dead Souls,* Gogol presents the idea that, since the serfs were treated like insects, they started acting like insects, too. As they realized the futility of their lifestyle, they ceased to work productively and began flitting about like flies. Gogol tempers his criticism of the system by conceding that serfdom may have worked well in the past, before the serfs started questioning the system: Sobakevich's use of the word "modern" implies that the serf's lack of productivity is only a recent problem, and that in the past the serfs may have worked well even under debasing conditions. However, the fact that the serfs notice the pointlessness

1 Nikolai Gogol, *Dead Souls*, trans. Bernard Guilbert Guerney (London and New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996), 8.

2 Ibid., 98.

of their work and adjust their efforts accordingly shows that they do, in fact, have the ability to think critically. Their decrease in productivity demonstrates human rationality, yet convinces the landowners even more thoroughly that the serfs are no better than animals. The feudal system itself stands as an obstacle to any sort of understanding between the two classes—the gentry are so deeply entrenched in it that they are unable to consider the serf's behavior as anything other than fundamentally crude.

When Sobakevich tries to convince Chichikov to buy his serfs, Gogol presents the reader with a new animal metaphor that reaffirms the serfs' human rights and intensifies Gogol's criticism of the feudal system. Sobakevich describes his serf Mikheev, by saying that "as for those hams of shoulders he had, there was such a store of strength in them as no horse has."[3] Sobakevich reserves his praise for dead serfs like Mikheev, who flourished under the feudal system, allowing for the interpretation that the class system is not fundamentally wrong, simply in need of change. Yet when comparing specific individuals to animals, Gogol further highlights the human and animal division to present landowners and serfs as equal, and eventually does suggest that the feudal system needs to be not changed, but abolished. While Mikheev is described as stronger and generally better than a horse, the landowners Sobakevich and Nozdrev are compared to dogs: the name Sobakevich comes from the Russian word for dog, *sobaka*, and the name Nozdrev, from "nostril" (*nozdrya*). Gogol says that Nozdrev "in the midst [of his dogs] was absolutely like a father in the midst of his family."[4] Unlike Mikheev, who is openly compared to an animal, the landowners are compared only implicitly—as Russell Valentino notes, all of the landowners' names are metaphors, which associates them with animals or emptiness on an intrinsic, yet subtle level.[5] Gogol uses these contrasting explicit and implicit comparisons to show that to effectively subjugate a social class, one must keep secret the essential similarity between the upper and lower class humans: the class system can only function when the truth (that all humans are fundamentally the same) is not fully considered or articulated. Gogol also specifically describes Mikheev as better than a horse, whereas the landowners are only equal to dogs. Horses were more valuable than dogs monetarily and in terms of physical ability and practicality—since they were used as a tool for manual labor, they were the backbone of farming and essential for any nobleman. Dogs, while perhaps more creative and independent, could not pull carriages or carry riders long distances. Since a horse is a more important animal than a dog under these values, and Mikheev is explicitly described as superior to horses, it

3 Ibid.

4 Ibid., 69.

5 Russell Scott Valentino, "The Commercial Ethic in Gogol's *Dead Souls*" in *The Woman in the Window* (Columbus: The Ohio State University, 2014): 40–65.

is understood that Mikheev is actually a better human than his master. Here Gogol goes one step further than in his fly metaphor, and actually places the serf above the landowner.

Gogol's distribution of animal metaphors throughout *Dead Souls* repeatedly forces the reader to consider the problems of class division, of separating humans into groups. Through his animal imagery, Gogol marks the distinction between actual animals and humans, thus putting the gentry and the serfs together in one class: humans. The metaphors are not only vehicles presenting Gogol's complete denunciation of the feudal system, but also requests that the reader join the author in his comprehensive criticism. The comparisons push the reader to note crucial differences between animals and humans; most importantly, that humans have the critical thinking skills to differentiate between different layers of reality and question what happens after death. If humans have the capacity for such thought, surely they should be able to realize the basic indecency of the serf system. Yet in Gogol's Russia, complaints about the injustices of the reigning social system rarely had any effect: most people were unwilling, and even unable, to recognize the feudal system as faulty. Gogol's comparisons emphasize humans' logical ability, and show that the Russian people cannot be employing this ability when they support the serf system. His constant references to animals remind the Russian people that when they ignore their ability to reason, they are no better than the animals to which they compare their serfs.

In addition to the differences between humans and animals, Gogol uses the distinction (or lack thereof) between the dead and the living to show the dangerous strength of the feudal system. Because the most important serfs in the novel are dead, and traded as a commodity that exists on another plane, the serfs are aligned with fantasy. While Sobakevich and Chichikov haggle over a fair price for the dead serfs, Sobakevich enumerates the virtues of his deceased serfs as though they were still alive. When Chichikov protests that the dead are "just a dream," Sobakevich disagrees. As Valentino notes, Sobakevich "knows them all by name," but is only interested in them because he is "consciously engaged in a commercial transaction."[6] Hoping to increase their market value, he arbitrarily describes his serfs as either part of this world or of the dream world of death, depending on which is most profitable. Sobakevich is perfectly willing to change his own way of thinking in order to make the serf worth more, and the basic irrationality of the feudal system allows his greed to overrule common sense. His inconsistent mindset influences more than day-to-day transactions: it actually shifts his own perceptions of reality and fantasy, thus destabilizing his entire view of the world. Not only does the feudal system allow

6 Ibid., 49.

for the subjugation of an entire class of people, but it reveals in the favored classes a dangerous flippancy of thought; they toy with the ideas of fantasy and reality as easily as they toy with human lives. As Valentino describes it, "all considerations are subordinate to the deal."[7] This scene reminds the reader that the gentry's perception of the peasants is not realistic. While the landowners think of the peasants as objects to trade and use, the reader understands that serfs are people with intrinsic human rights. By relating the serfs to fantasy and the landowners to reality, Gogol shows that the serfs need not be bound to the land, again asserting that in a fully rational reality, an entire group of people would not be treated like animals. The peasants' place in the category of the otherworldly implicitly shows that the entire feudal system is fantastic—not as dream, but as a nightmare.

The central storyline of *Dead Souls* permits only a very small difference between the dead and the living, because it constantly blurs the boundaries between death and life. Gogol seems to ask: if the distinction between the dead and the living is so small, how can the distinction between the serfs and the gentry be so large? Russia's class structure appears to be so rigid as to transcend even death. Yet Gogol creates hope for a new reality by using the idea of parallel realities and even questioning death. He challenges the idea of reality as soon as Chichikov and Manilov (the first landowner Chichikov encounters) begin discussing the sale of dead souls. The products (the serfs) no longer exist in their world, yet the two landowners discuss and exchange the souls, so the serfs must still exist somewhere. When Gogol says that Sobakevich "comes to his senses and realizes [the serfs] [are] dead in reality,"[8] he introduces the notion of multiple realities even more clearly: saying that people are dead "in reality" implies that they are alive in non-reality. Immediately, a new concept is subtly introduced: an imaginary place that operates under neither Russia's social system, nor its rules of physics (such as dead people being dead and thus worthless). This opens up the door to entirely new ideas and concepts, and shows that Russia's reality is only one out of an infinite number. In fact, Gogol optimistically hints at a change towards a more thoughtful approach to the future in the way that Sobakevich discusses the serfs. While the scene emphasizes how effusively he praises the dead serfs, the way in which he discusses the live serfs also communicates something important. He shows doubt about their worth—"What good are the people that are now numbered among the living? What sort of people are they?"[9] Precisely because Gogol shows that Sobakevich has these doubts, we see that Sobakevich at least is thinking about his serfs, acknowledging that they are more than objects. By virtue of his questioning, he attributes worth to them, because they are worth his time (however fleeting) and

7 Ibid.
8 Gogol, *Dead Souls,* 98.
9 Ibid.

mental energy. Sobakevich's specific use of the word "now" illustrates his opinion that over time the quality of the serfs has deteriorated, yet again presenting the idea that the feudal system is anachronistic and incompatible with the belief in human dignity.

In the writing of *Dead Souls*, Gogol clearly saw himself as thinking at a higher level than the general population: he denounced the feudal system that the rest of the country depended on, and tried to write a modern *Divine Comedy* to stimulate the Russian people. The character of Chichikov, in part, acts as a stand-in for Gogol in his role as prophet: Gogol's intellectual superiority is paralleled both by Chichikov's highly developed materialism and, implicitly, his philosophy. On first reading, Chichikov operates on a materially higher level than the other landowners simply because he has a knack for efficiently manipulating others to his own gain. Yet he reveals himself to be intellectually superior when he introduces the existential notion of multiple realities by attempting to buy dead souls. Valentino corroborates this claim, describing Chichikov as a "catalyst" and noting that "without Chichikov's undertaking, the world is stagnant."[10] However, although Chichikov creates movement and energy in the book, he still works within the feudal system and his critical reasoning abilities aren't used to enact positive change, but for his own personal good. Clearly, philosophical thinking does not always lead one to happiness, or even to a more moral way of living.

Dead Souls is an optimistic book, in that it presents new ways of thinking about serfs: as shown in the short passages discussed, Gogol challenges his world in a destabilizing fashion. He succeeds in portraying the feudal structure as a dehumanizing and irrational construct, yet suggests no better structure to replace it. Gogol explores the Christian possibility of transcending death, of living in alternate realities, but these ideas exist only beyond the realm of our daily lives—they pique our interest but can only disappoint. In Gogol's condemnation of the Russia of his time, he explores the possibility of an ideal world. Unfortunately, such a world cannot exist, and one could wonder whether Gogol's eventual tragic descent into madness shows the strain of considering these difficult issues in literature. Perhaps Gogol was correct to think that humans who think solely at the animal level are squandering a gift, but perhaps there is also some beauty to be found in simply being a fly.

10 Valentino, "The Commercial Ethic in Gogol's *Dead Souls*", 59.

THE RUSSIAN DICHOTOMY IN NIKOLAI ABLEUKHOV'S SUBCONSCIOUS

Nathaniel Truman

In his novel *Petersburg*, Andrei Bely questions what exactly it means to be Russian through the changing philosophies of the protagonist, Nikolai Apollonovich Ableukhov. Over the course of the novel, Nikolai's philosophical perspective gradually shifts from Kantianism to a mixture between Kantianism and Buddhism. Bely uses the tension between Kantian philosophy and Buddhist philosophy within Nikolai to explore how Russian identity is understood with respect to both Western and Eastern cultures. In this paper, I will trace the intellectual and emotional ramifications of the philosophy with which Nikolai associates himself throughout the novel, and how those philosophies inform Bely's conception of Nikolai's character. By highlighting the intellectual and emotional disconnect in Nikolai's conscience through Kantianism and Buddhism respectively, Bely confronts the uniquely Russian dilemma of determining a clear sense of identity while positioned geographically and ideologically between Europe and Asia.

Before delving into Nikolai's relationship with Kant's philosophy, Kantianism must be broadly defined to establish a general understanding of the philosophical system. Kant was a German philosopher, active primarily in the first half of the nineteenth century. In creating his philosophy, Kant used what he considered universally

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rational and objective ideas to establish an ethical, religious, and moral framework now known as Kantianism. To borrow Susan Jones' explanation of Kant's philosophy, "Kantian philosophy … was based on a critique of dogmatic rationalism and a rejection of the sceptical conclusions of thoroughgoing empiricism … Kant raised the question of objectivity by asking for proof of the conclusions of pure reason."[1] In other words, Kantian philosophy can be thought of as a rational approach to real world experiences and events. Instead of relying on "dogmatic rationalism," Kantian rational thought allows for a philosophic, conceptual understanding of real world events. This emphasis on applied rational thought will be important to Bely as he relates Kantianism to Nikolai.

When Bely first introduces Nikolai, he describes him as a purely logical, rational thinker in order to establish Nikolai's connection to Kantian philosophy. Bely describes Nikolai's study only briefly, writing that "the furniture in the study was upholstered in dark green. There was a handsome bust of—it stands to reason—Kant."[2] The bust of Kant, featured as the only noteworthy object in the study aside from the green furniture, is especially important because it is one of the first objects Bely associates with Nikolai's character. By making Kant's bust one of only a few objects belonging to Nikolai, Bely establishes it as a reflection of Nikolai himself. Bely also makes a fun play on words when he writes "it stands to reason—Kant," as though the only *reasonable* bust of a philosopher Nikolai could have would be one of Kant, a figure intrinsically associated with rational, reasonable thinking. The positioning of the bust of Kant in the study in particular is similarly important, as it establishes an implicit intellectual connection between Kant and Nikolai. In the opening line of the passage, Bely writes "Nikolai Apollonovich's quarters consisted of a bedroom, a study, and a reception room."[3] With limited spaces to choose from (bedroom, study, reception room), the bust's position in the study is designed to be a pointed reflection of Nikolai's intellectual perspective.

Bely further reinforces Nikolai's intellectual affinity for Kantian philosophy when he describes the way Nikolai thinks in his study. Bely writes, "Here, in his own room, Nikolai Apollonovich would truly grow into a self-contained center, into a series of logical premises that flowed from the center … here he was the sole center of the universe, conceivable as well as inconceivable. This center made deductions."[4] Bely's description of Nikolai as a "self-contained center" of "logical premises" places

1 Susan Stedman Jones, "Kantian Philosophy and Sociological Methodology," *Sociology* 14, no. 1 (1980): 99–111, 101.

2 Andrei Bely, *Petersburg,* trans. Robert A. Maguire and John E. Malmstad (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1978), 27.

3 Ibid.

4 Ibid., 28.

his objective, rational way of thinking as centrally important to how he sees and interprets the world. This description of Nikolai's thought process is analogous to the Kantian methodology. Nikolai begins with logical premises, and then makes deductions about the world as a whole based on those premises. This is the thought process that Kantianism employs: emphasizing the evaluation of objective realities through a philosophically rational framework. Bely's description of Nikolai's thinking as essentially Kantian further cements the intellectual relationship between Nikolai and Kant. As Kant is a German philosopher, this intellectual allegiance to Kant can be understood as an adherence to Western philosophy, instead of Eastern or Russian philosophy.

While Bely is explicit in describing Nikolai's initial intellectual affinity for Western philosophy, as represented by his Kantian thought, Nikolai is culturally and emotionally more "Eastern." Bely is vague when he describes the more Eastern aspects of Nikolai's persona. Frequently using the generic term "Oriental" when describing his clothing, Bely does not make any precise allusions to a particular place in the East, but rather describes the clothing of various Asian ethnic groups. To differentiate Nikolai's past behavior when he was a young student from his behavior in the present narrative, Bely writes "then he did not walk around the house in a Bukhara dressing gown. A skullcap did not grace his oriental drawing room.… A dressing gown began to appear on Nikolai Apollonovich. Tartar slippers were introduced. A skullcap made its appearance. Thus was a brilliant student transformed into an Oriental."[5] All of this clothing that Nikolai wears comes from a variety of ethnic groups associated with the East. For example, the "Tartar slippers" are a direct reference to the Tartars, an ethnic group in Western Russia that was conquered by the Western Mongolian horde. Similarly, the "dressing gown" is not a part of classic Russian wear, and can be understood as some generic representation of East Asian clothing, analogous to something like a Japanese kimono. Through his choices in clothing, Bely writes that Nikolai was "transformed into an Oriental."[6] This transformation into "an Oriental" is not so much an intellectual transformation as it is a personal one, and the clothing that Nikolai wears is representative of this personal transformation. Bely's absence of allusions to a particular place or culture create a generically Eastern perspective in Nikolai, exemplified by the word "Oriental." Bely associates Nikolai's clothing most closely with the "drawing room," which is synonymous with the reception room. Just as the bust of Kant in the study was indicative of Nikolai's intellectual persona, the Eastern clothing in the reception room is representative of the Eastern image that Nikolai displays to the rest of society. As the study is a place of introspection and learning, the reception room is a place of formal interactions and occasions, serv-

5 Ibid.
6 Ibid.

ing as the place in the house where the hosts can receive their guests. By placing Nikolai's Oriental wear primarily in the reception room, Bely implies that others perceive Nikolai as Eastern in nature. Moreover, Bely's claim that "thus was a brilliant student transformed into an Oriental" implies that Nikolai is not only thought of as Eastern, but that he genuinely is so: Nikolai's clothing is not superficial, but actually effects his transformation into "an Oriental."

Already in the first page and a half of Bely's descriptions of Nikolai, the tension between the East and the West has been established in Nikolai's psyche. Bely makes Nikolai simultaneously Western in his intellectual capacity and Eastern in personality and public image. Functionally, this tension between the East and the West is an intellectual and emotional one. As explained above, the West occupies Nikolai intellectually, while he remains Eastern personally. Over the course of the book however, these philosophical and emotional allegiances begin to blur, as Nikolai becomes less dichotomous with respect to the East and the West, using both simultaneously in his intellectual and personal lives instead of keeping the two firmly separated.

Later on in the novel, the best representation of this synthesis between the East and the West in Nikolai's psyche is Nikolai's dream after he primes the bomb that he was given to kill his father, Apollon. In this dream, Bely directly addresses the subconscious tension Nikolai holds onto when he compares Kantian ideology and Buddhism, which are Western and Eastern systems of thought, respectively. Significantly, this dream takes place directly after Nikolai irrationally primes the bomb in order to "cut off all possibility of retreat" from killing his father.[7] For a man who is a Kantian philosopher by nature, priming a bomb before deciding whether or not he is going to go through with this murder is a decidedly irrational way of behaving. Bely uses this irrational behavior to signal the beginning of Nikolai's departure from Kantian philosophy, and by extension Western thought. Through this departure from rationality, Bely directly challenges Nikolai's devotion to Western philosophy, and in the following lines he begins to suggest another, more Eastern perspective.

This Eastern perspective primarily manifests itself as Buddhist philosophy, which must be broadly defined within the framework of Kantian philosophy in order to put this Eastern perspective into context. To borrow psychologist Kelly Bulkeley's description of Buddhism, "it focus[es] on the systematic analysis of mental processes, along with its experimental methods of changing and redirecting those processes."[8] In this way, Buddhism can be thought of as a philosophical approach to self-study and self-reflection. However, it is not as clear-cut as the rational, logic based philosophy of Kant. The conclusions one reaches using Buddhist philosophy are not

7 Ibid., 163.

8 Kelly Bulkeley, "Buddhism", in *Dreaming in the World's Religions: A Comparative History* (New York: New York University Press, 2008), 79–109, 79.

based on reason alone, and are at times subject to revision. David Kalupahana, a Sri Lankan Buddhist scholar, says that "according to early Buddhism, the truth or falseness of a theory with regard to its correspondence to facts cannot be judged by the consistency of its reasoning. Sometimes a well-reasoned theory may be false … and an ill-reasoned theory may be true."[9] Compared to the Kantian philosophy discussed earlier, Buddhist philosophy allows for more ambiguity in the conclusions drawn from logical premises. For the purposes of this essay, this intellectual difference is the most important distinction between these two schools of thought. For Kantian philosophy, any conclusions drawn from rational premises and logical thought lead to sound conclusions; for Buddhist philosophy, a foundation of logical thought does not necessarily correspond to an idea's validity.

In Nikolai's dream, Bely intentionally blurs the lines between what can be considered Kantian and what can be considered Buddhist in order to highlight Nikolai's confusion between the East and the West. Following the conceptual understanding of both philosophies, Kantian philosophy can be thought of as representing the ordered, the rational, and the structured within the narrative. Conversely, Buddhism represents a more ephemeral, abstract ideology. In his dream, Nikolai is approached by his ancestors: "his Kirghiz-Kaisak ancestors had maintained relations with the Tibetan lamas…. Was that not the reason why he had a tender feeling for Buddhism?"[10] In these lines, Bely establishes that Nikolai does in fact have some sympathy for Buddhism as a philosophical perspective. This acknowledgement of Buddhist philosophy starts to blur Nikolai's philosophical association with Kantianism that Bely establishes in the beginning of the book. By having "a tender feeling for Buddhism," Nikolai recognizes Buddhist philosophy as being substantial enough to merit consideration. For a character that was so staunchly Kantian in his way of thinking at the beginning of the book, this "tender feeling" for Buddhism signals Nikolai's departure from a strictly Kantian perspective. Further on in the dream, Bely reconciles the two philosophical systems, by implying that they achieve the same end:

> Thus the age-old Turanian … rushed rapidly over to the stack of notebooks, in which he had outlined the theses of a well-reasoned metaphysics. And all the notebooks together formed the immense cause to which his entire life was devoted: the Mongol cause came through everywhere in these notes under the headings, under all the paragraphs: the mission that had been entrusted to him since before he was born.[11]

Here, "the theses of a well-reasoned metaphysics" should be understood as a

9 David Kalupahana, "Epistemology," in *Buddhist Philosophy: A Historical Analysis* (University of Hawai'i Press, 1976), 16–25, 18.

10 Gogol, *Dead Souls,* 165.

11 Ibid., 166.

reference to Kantianism. Most interestingly, Bely then writes that "the Mongol cause came through everywhere in these notes." While the "Mongol cause" and Buddhist philosophy are not in any way the same thing, both represent Eastern Asia. Just as before, when Bely uses the generic term "Oriental" to refer to the East, the "Mongol cause" and the Buddhism referenced previously are both manifestations of an Eastern presence and identity. Thus, if Bely's use of the "Mongol cause" is simply a generic representation of the East, then Nikolai's discovery of the "Mongol cause" in the "theses of a well-reasoned metaphysics" can be thought of a discovery of an Eastern world within the framework of Western philosophy. Here, Bely no longer has Nikolai's identity separated into the intellectual Kantian and the "Oriental" person. Instead, the intellectual side of Nikolai's persona and the way in which he identifies himself have started to merge. Functionally, this is a merging of the East and the West.

While Bely manages to fuse both the Eastern and the Western aspects of Nikolai's identity by the middle of the book, the conception of a uniquely Russian identity is still not resolved. The inherent problem with Nikolai's identity being tied to the East and to the West is that it looks outside of Russia to understand Nikolai's character. Within this framework, Nikolai is still an amalgamation of Eastern and Western cultures and ideologies, without being distinctly Russian.

Bely finally departs from the binary relationship between East and West and gives Nikolai a uniquely Russian identity in the final pages of the book, when Nikolai goes to study in Egypt. Bely makes the final scenes in Egypt the literal and figurative conclusion that Nikolai arrives to with regard to his self-identity. During his time in Egypt, Nikolai is primarily studying ancient religious texts: "He is doing research in the museum at Bulaq. Yes, yes, the commentaries on 'The Book of the Dead.'"[12] Bely's translators to English Maguire and Malmstad explain that "'The Book of the Dead' was a series of spells that could be spoken to protect oneself in the afterlife and rise from the grave."[13] Nikolai's study of this religious text is a departure from his studies in previous parts of the book. He is no longer concerned with any kind of metaphysics or philosophy involving logic or reason that could be associated with Kant. Instead, he concerns himself with the intangible and the inexplicable. Bely makes this abandonment of Kantian philosophy even clearer just a few pages later when he writes "What about Kant? Kant is forgotten."[14] This represents a complete departure from the philosophical teachings of Kant, and similarly, from his Western philosophical perspective.

12 Ibid., 292.

13 Robert A. Maguire and John E. Malmstad, footnote in *Dead Souls* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1978), 355.

14 Gogol, *Dead Souls,* 292.

Bely uses the intellectual and religious history of ancient Egypt to craft yet another geographic perspective that manages to remain distinct from Western and Eastern philosophies. Claiming monumental scientific achievement, Egypt was home to some of the greatest mathematicians and philosophers of classical antiquity (e.g. Ptolemy and Alexandria in its heyday). Ancient Egypt was not only home to academics, but it also lays claim to several great cultural achievements like the Sphinx, the pyramids, and the multifaceted, polytheistic belief system that was central to ancient Egyptian civilization. Bely takes these two aspects of Egyptian society and melds them in Nikolai's experience when he writes "Nikolai Apollonovich is sitting before the Sphinx."[15] Nikolai's academic study of religious texts at the feet of the Sphinx is Bely's way of integrating the intellectual aspects of Egyptian society with the religious and cultural history in Egypt, as represented by the Sphinx. This integration between the intellectual and the religious that Bely establishes is, in the context of *Petersburg*, uniquely Egyptian.

As Nikolai studies in Egypt, Bely intentionally draws on this complex meld of the religious and the intellectual to better understand Nikolai's identity as a Russian. While Egypt may contain aspects of Western and Eastern culture (the structured intellectual framework found in Western academia, and the mystical aspects of Eastern culture), it is an entirely distinct and unique society, and does not have to answer to either the Eastern or Western worlds for its identity as such. By placing Nikolai in this foreign context, Bely constructs a parallel narrative with regard to Nikolai's Russian heritage.

To construct this parallel, Bely has Nikolai study the work of Skovoroda, a Russian philosopher, in the last lines of the book. As Bely writes, "of late he had been reading the philosopher Skovoroda."[16] For the entirety of the book, Nikolai has been basing his personal and intellectual identity on the aspects of Eastern and Western societies. By having Nikolai read a Russian philosopher, Bely suggests that Nikolai is subscribing to uniquely Russian ideas, instead of following the teachings of a European like Kant, or an Eastern religion like Buddhism. According to William Harkins, "[Skovoroda] criticized 'pure empiricism and developed a dualistic Platonic metaphysics with a mystical and pantheistic coloring.'"[17] Interestingly, Skovoroda's development of "metaphysics with a mystical and pantheistic coloring" is analogous to the Egyptian integration between academia and the religious world. In confronting "pure empiricism" and developing an approach that has "mystical and pantheistic coloring," Skovoroda manages to merge the purely intellectual along with the more "mystical" and ephemeral. In this way, Skovoroda's philosophy is similar to the

15 Ibid.
16 Ibid., 293.
17 Cited in Maguire and Malmstad, footnote in *Dead Souls,* 356.

Egyptian philosophy seen earlier.

Perhaps even more important than the content of Skovoroda's philosophy is the fact that Nikolai is finally reading a Russian philosopher! For the entirety of the book, Nikolai derives his intellectual inspiration from sources outside of Russia. This is the first time that Nikolai is thinking about *Russian* philosophy, rather than philosophy from somewhere else. This final philosophical return to Russia is Bely's signaling that Nikolai has finally consolidated a sense of identity, without settling for an uncomfortable mix of the East and the West. Instead, he opts for a distinctly Russian way of thinking, and while it may have similarities to the philosophy of the East and of the West, it remains entirely unique. With this final philosophical departure from the East and West, Bely manages to arrive to a singularly Russian intellectual and personal identity for Nikolai.

In the beginning, Nikolai is an awkward composite of the West and the East, with the former encapsulating his intellectual identity, and the latter his personal identity. Over the course of the book, the distinctions between the two slowly disappear, but persist. However, by the end, rather than allying Nikolai with one particular place or people, Bely concludes that he belongs to neither camp. Instead, Nikolai is a combination of specific aspects of both, which forms a unique, and fundamentally different identity. Using Egypt as a surrogate for Russia, he demonstrates how a culture can have similarities to other cultures, while remaining entirely its own. By letting Nikolai arrive to this culturally interconnected, yet distinct and separate identity, represented by the philosophy of Skovoroda, Bely finally answers the question of Russian self-identity.

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SOMETHING IS ALWAYS TRUE: THE PRINTED PAGE AND EXCESS IN HEMON'S *THE LAZARUS PROJECT*

Stephen Urchick

Over the 292 pages of *The Lazarus Project* and its ten pages of front matter, author Aleksandar Hemon intersperses twenty-three black and white photographs in both portrait and landscape orientations.[1] Of these photographs, twelve are credited to Hemon's photographer friend Velibor Božović. They were culled from over 1,200 photographs taken during a trip with Hemon to Poland, the Western Ukraine, Moldova, and Bosnia.[2] The other eleven photos pertain to the March 2, 1908 shooting of Lazarus Averbuch by Chicago police Chief George Shippy. They were first run in the *Chicago Daily News* and then reprinted in *The Lazarus Project* with the permission of the Chicago Historical Society. Hemon introduces the Božović and *Daily News* pictures alternately, switching off between chapters.

Previous criticism has already attempted to pinpoint Božović's relation to the fictional photographer Ahmed Rora Halilbašić, describe the blurriness and illegibility of the photographs, unpack the offhand leveling of archival and contemporary

1 Aleksandar Hemon, *The Lazarus Project* (New York: Riverhead Books, 2008).

2 "Archives: The Lazarus Project," Velibor Božović's artist's page, accessed February 20, 2016, veliborbozovic.com/project/the-lazarus-project.

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pictures, and account for their Barthean dimensions of punctum, rupture, and loss.[3] These arguments note how the photographs are "encased in wide, black frames"[4] or are "inserted into (or emerge from) the center of an ink-black page."[5] Nevertheless, the dark matte remains a largely inexplicable quirk of the *Lazarus Project,* and resists even the reading I attempt in this paper. It is exactly the photograph's emergence from an overprinted background that characterizes truth in Hemon's *The Lazarus Project*.

Hemon, Božović, and the book designer Amanda Dewey deploy the fully-printed page as an emblem for narratives that strain beneath too much context. Whereas the content of a book is understood to be what is printed—the type set on a page—the inversion of figure and ground in the dark-matted Božović and *Daily News* photographs ask the beholder to look away from what's printed. That which is printed, in *The Lazarus Project*, is that which is fabricated or added: an excess. This quality of the book's black-bordered pages maps onto one of Hemon's larger preoccupations, as voiced by Rora Halilbašić's sister to the narrator and surrogate author, Vladimir Brik. Probing Azra Halilbašić for details about Rora's untimely death, Brik expresses relief that she at least admits her husband's Chetnik partisanship: "Well, at least something is true, I said." Azra replies, "Something is always true."[6]

The still-unsolved Averbuch mystery, like Brik and Hemon's multivalent citizenships, is a busy, elaborate story. It is difficult in these overwritten and overdetermined realities to arrive at first principles and solid ground. Over the course of the novel, incomplete but undeniable kernels of truth come in the shape of straight-forward facts: Averbuch's death, or the one-word, proper name of a chance soccer player. The photograph as negative space, contained within an inky border, visualizes what it means to accept the truth as what endures, what is not edited, what remains intact. In the pictorial operations of the dark page, as in the novel's narratives, Azra's essential, ineradicable, but disconnected "something that is *always* true" will reveal itself against the fluctuations of multiple histories and competing claims.

Coming to the photographs through their subject matter alone is unhelpful. To identify an image forecloses it. Figuring out what each image represents in place and time upholds the evidentiary function the *Chicago Daily News* photographs, in particular, had right from the start: as police documents and front-page illustrations. These spatial and temporal coordinates are useful, but are only the bedrock for

3 See Wendy Ward, "Does Autobiography Matter? Fictions of the Self in Aleksandar Hemon's The Lazarus Project," Brno Studies in English 37, no. 2 (2011): 185–199 and also Sonia Weiner, "Double Visions and Aesthetics of the Migratory in Aleksandar Hemon's The Lazarus Project." *Studies in the Novel* 46, no. 2 (2014): 215–235.

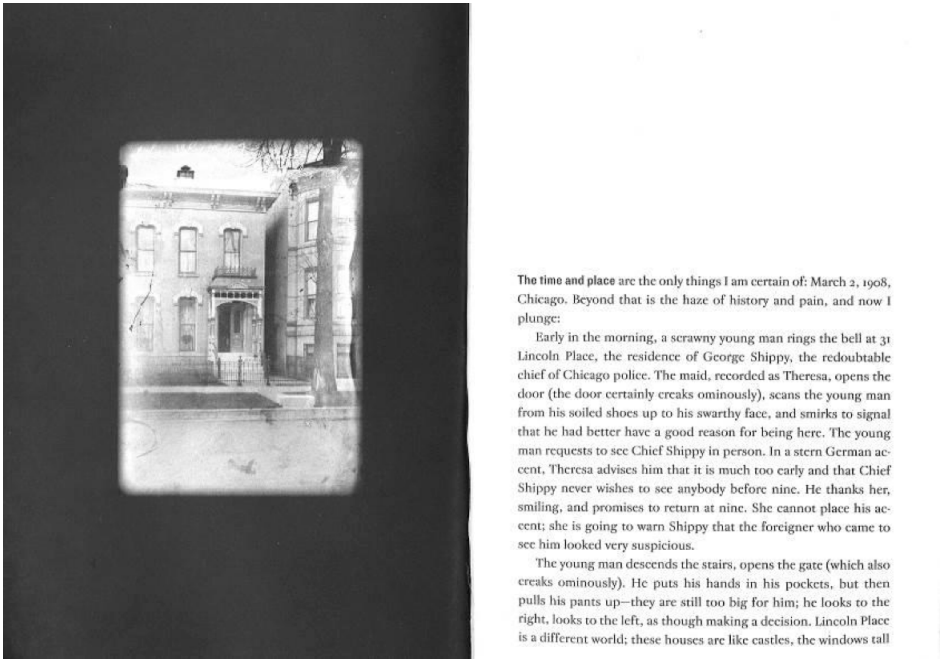
4 Ward, "Does Autobiography Matter," 196.

5 Weiner, "Double Visions and Aesthetics of the Migratory," 218.

6 Hemon, *The Lazarus Project,* 291.

exhaustive elaboration and creative storytelling. As my discussion of the dark pages will show, historical data points serve as a kind of figurative unprinted paper around which Hemon constructs a larger, more nuanced discourse.

Furthermore, the inky matte has little to do with the physical process of taking pictures. The claim that the frame somehow replicates, for example, the conditions of looking down a camera's rangefinder is a satisfactory description, based on strictly visible details: the hazy edges, the precise 90-degree orientations, the otherwise black boxes. It can stand in with larger preoccupations about recording and capturing in the genre of witness literature. However, this description of the scopic point of view is contrived. Close looking through a peephole does not dissolve the world to nothingness: it heightens peripheral vision. The edges of the rangefinder's image are lighter, and more intrusive—not darkly invisible.



The time and place are the only things I am certain of: March 2, 1908, Chicago. Beyond that is the haze of history and pain, and now I plunge:

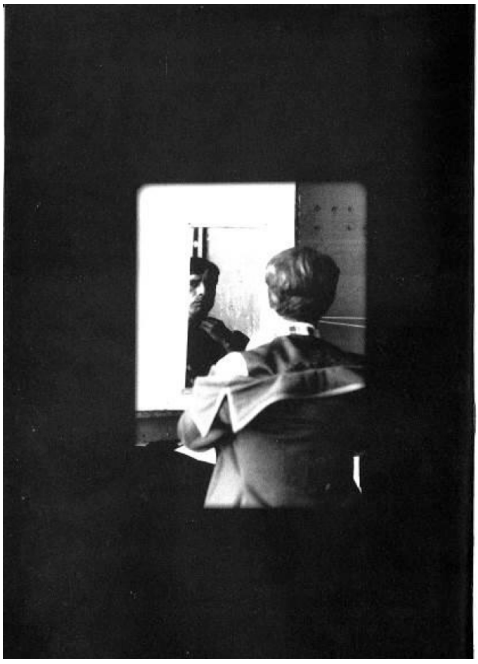
Early in the morning, a scrawny young man rings the bell at 31 Lincoln Place, the residence of George Shippy, the redoubtable chief of Chicago police. The maid, recorded as Theresa, opens the door (the door certainly creaks ominously), scans the young man from his soiled shoes up to his swarthy face, and smirks to signal that he had better have a good reason for being here. The young man requests to see Chief Shippy in person. In a stern German accent, Theresa advises him that it is much too early and that Chief Shippy never wishes to see anybody before nine. He thanks her, smiling, and promises to return at nine. She cannot place his accent; she is going to warn Shippy that the foreigner who came to see him looked very suspicious.

The young man descends the stairs, opens the gate (which also creaks ominously). He puts his hands in his pockets, but then pulls his pants up—they are still too big for him; he looks to the right, looks to the left, as though making a decision. Lincoln Place is a different world; these houses are like castles, the windows tall

Fig. 1. *Chicago Daily News* photographer, "Police Chief George M. Shippy residence," 1908. Reproduced from a black and white glass negative, 5in x 7in. Chicago Historical Society, DN-005942.

Instead of seeing these photographs as a mimetic description of the objects they represent, or the circumstances under which they were taken, we should see them as reproductive impressions. Pages iv and v help illustrate why the book itself, as an object, is strange. Assessing the conditions of production for each book is admittedly difficult, given all of its mass-market iterations: *The Lazarus Project* most likely comes from an offset lithographic press, printed on a cream-colored, acid-free paper

of medium weight. One very certain fact about the book's construction, however, is that ink eventually arrived on page v in the shapes of letters to spell out "The Lazarus Project/ALEKSANDAR HEMON." Opposite page v, ink also arrived on page iv, but in the shape of nothing that a beholder could as easily identify.



The Lazarus Project

ALEKSANDAR HEMON

WITH PHOTOGRAPHS BY VELIBOR BOŽOVIĆ
AND FROM THE CHICAGO HISTORICAL SOCIETY

RIVERHEAD BOOKS
New York

Fig. 2. Photograph by Velibor Božović in *The Lazarus Project*, iv.

Unlike the definitive, legible "T," "h," or "e," page iv received an outline, a cut-out, or a stencil-shape of a man sitting before a mirror. It did not receive the image of the man itself, but everything surrounding a figurative representation. While page v's lithographic matrix held ink globed up to look like a "T," page iv's matrix held ink everywhere the mirrored man and his postcard world is not. The image comes to the beholder as an emptiness; its perceptibility depends on elision. The photos emphasize how a positive action—the addition of ink to a page—generates form and meaning through a core of negative space. The reader sees a man looking in a mirror only around and through and past everything that has been put to the paper.

However, the negative space is itself never entirely empty. Because the digital information used to create this contemporary lithographic impression is so precise, it preserves many tonal qualities in the source image. It adds the slightest bit of light gray noise to even the blank-seeming passages. Most of the depicted man is a variegated gray field. These surfaces have been worked in a way that an early modern

printmaker, using a burin or etching needle, could not fathom. Ink is everywhere—everything about these pages has been altered. The beholder can really only assess what has been left mostly untouched.

Furthermore, the inked areas of these pages are hardly stable. Four additional formal concerns compound the already disruptive demands made by the photographs' peculiar brand of presence by absence. Firstly, the paper is not entirely printed. The ink constitutes a thin layer of molecules that doesn't penetrate wholly into the woven fibers, creating a surface effect. Secondly, the black border is not uniformly black, although it appears to be. Random white noise is still evenly legible over the printed rectangle. It reminds the beholder that this inkiness is not the original condition of the paper, and makes every single impression of the book unique. Thirdly, the layer of pigment isn't entirely fast. Dog-earing a dark page from its top-left corner to its middle will slowly create two lines as the reader handles the book, on both the preceding and succeeding pages. A blank zone will appear along the hair's-width surface of the crease itself, the origin for the transfer. But, finally, no such physical intervention is even needed to demonstrate the mobility of the dark page. On the dark pages where text has been set the side opposite the overprinting is literally what the reader reads between the lines. It peeks through, and anticipates the gesture of flipping forward.

What does it mean for the text of *The Lazarus Project* that its images are hollows, and are recognizable as mostly intact space? How do we interpret the excessiveness of the dark matte, its weight and insistence? I hypothesize that these photographs, which emerge from supersaturated fields, describe a work of fiction which itself emerges from a historiographically dynamic moment: the Lazarus Averbuch murder. The fact that Averbuch died is to the blank space what the resulting confusion over his murder is to the darkly printed matte. Hemon composes his novel as a jumble of competing counter-narratives, suspended in time. The story begins with a rich psychological encounter from Averbuch's first-person point of view—the very outlook needed to get to the bottom of his unresolved slaying. However, Hemon elides the actual moment of the murder. This break in perspective, the unwitnessed shooting, destabilizes interpretation. By drawing out several dense and ambiguous strands of narration in *The Lazarus Project,* I hope to make the case for how this struggle towards the truth defines Hemon's novel.

Narration in *The Lazarus Project* is expansive, capacious. It bleeds and overlaps. For example, even before Hemon states that Averbuch has been shot, partisan *Tribune* journalism seeps into Lazarus's last living moments. Miller's reporting will come to stand side-by-side—line-by-line—with omniscient descriptions of Averbuch's sister Olga, grieving his death: "Olga looks at her wringing hands. *Bitter tears are streaming down the Jewess's cheeks,* William P. Miller writes, and he underlines *bitter tears,*

twice."[7] Miller usurps and extends Olga's voice:

> "Did any of your anarchist comrades come by?"
>
> "Go away, Mr. Miller. Leave me."
>
> *Upon hearing the news, the Jewess wept: "Leave me alone to die with my grief. All I had in the word was my brother Lazarus and now he is lost forever—I cannot even talk to his grave. I am alone for eternity."*[8]

The juxtaposition initially produces the effect of an unwritten argument between the two characters. Nevertheless, Miller's edits often articulate a position Olga couldn't formulate alone. His sensationalism egregiously violates Olga's record. However, it's also possible to reframe Miller's violation as interpretation that contributes to an ever-ballooning discourse about the shooting of Olga's brother.

Likewise, Olga's inability to formulate produces an endless succession of "dear mother" fragments, that crop up throughout the novel.[9] Ostensibly false starts at writing the same letter of regret, they create a concatenation of different realities—ones in which Lazarus was buried intact,[10] or never died.[11] Excerpts like "*Lazarus is dead, and I am mad. We're fine otherwise and I think of you a lot*"[12] are studded with short clauses that each only partially match up to the Olga the reader has witnessed to that point. This language evokes a clamor of voices around her: it's a reflection of the public sphere, represented by Miller, telling her what she ought to feel about her brother's death. The "true" psyche of Olga remains a question mark, the resolution of which depends extensively on the reader's own intuition.

Hemon's Vladimir Brik metanarrative further complicates any probing into a real, historical Olga. Knowing that Brik is actively writing on the Averbuch mystery makes her interiority suspect. Her musings, perceived omnisciently, could very well just be Brik's manuscript draft. Brik's intention to pen an unabridged version of *The Lazarus Project* as historical fiction assaults the book's contract with the reader; it compromises the legitimacy of third-person perspectives in *The Lazarus Project.* The reader will trust and tolerate a hidden Hemon, but to suspect that these lines are penned by Brik renders Olga's thoughts as shaky as Miller's *Tribune* writing. Amidst all these possible sites of storytelling the attempt to locate a ground floor falters and fails. Such an attempt is ultimately beside the point. Hemon readily announces his derision for facts with claims like "reality is the fastest American commodity."[13]

7 Ibid., 56. The italics are Hemon's unless otherwise noted.
8 Ibid., 200.
9 For examples, see pages 89, 90, 95, and 148 in ibid.
10 Ibid., 148.
11 Ibid., 90.
12 Ibid., 92.
13 Ibid., 103.

Hemon's ambivalence towards objectivity proves the notional equivalent for the dark page. The novelistic reality Hemon creates and its supplementary photographs both come to the reader-beholder as silhouettes. They are defined by some unaltered (in the case of the photos) or unalterable (in the case of the novel) detail, which has been built up and passaged over. However, the figurative sheet of writing paper that Hemon confronted in creating *The Lazarus Project* was first printed and not blank. He encountered a slew of primary sources and research about the real Lazarus Averbuch. Each account competes for attention and focus, clamoring its own facts about the slain man. The writing style outlined above—where Miller, Olga, Lazarus, Brik, and Hemon all speak over one another—reflects the muddle of Lazarus's tale.

The fact of Averbuch's murder and the photo's unprinted figure are both related to Roland Barthes's idea of the *punctum*: the allegedly ineffable "mark of *something*" that allows a photograph to exist for the French theorist.[14] Barthes talks about the *punctum* as a detail "revealed only after the fact,"[15] the lone, unlocatable, and indescribable element around which a "blind field is created (is divined)."[16] It is something which he "[adds] to the photograph, and *what is nonetheless already there.*"[17] The indecision over the *punctum* pushes us to create an abundant but unsatisfying discourse around what is effectively a wound, a site of emptiness or lack—in short, *The Lazarus Project* photograph's existence as negative space at the center of a thick, dark frame. The Božović and *Daily News* pictures are literally all-*punctum*: images revealed after the fact of printing, otherwise invisible (unprinted) figures at the center of a blind, dark field.

Given this framework, it is unsurprising that what the fictional Brik requires to finish his research and start his novel is distance, time, and escape from a stiflingly thick context. The moments up to Rora's suggestion that he "needed to follow Lazarus all the way back to the pogrom in Kishinev" demonstrate the kind of overload in which both Brik and Hemon operate.[18] Brik desperately describes to Rora the historical background for Averbuch's murder: "the Haymarket Massacre," "President McKinley," "Emma Goldman," "patriotic preachers," "anarchist pestilence," "Wakaka."[19] The two friends chart the geography of Lazarus's life to no avail. "Maxwell Street," "Chicago's New Great Neighborhood," "the former 12th Street," "Lincoln Park," inspire no breakthroughs.[20] They only bring Brik closer to a soccer

14 Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography,* trans. Richard Howard (New York: Hill and Wang, 1980), 49. All italics are, again, his unless otherwise noted.
15 Ibid., 53.
16 Ibid., 57.
17 Ibid., 56.
18 Hemon, *The Lazarus Project,* 46.
19 Ibid., 42–43.
20 Ibid., 44–45.

field, at Parker High School—the scene where Hemon develops a statement of theme for the dark page.

Brik watches one player leap up and score a goal. He daydreams about how the player might one day be "able to recall all the lilting names of the huddle girls" when she grows up:

> But there would always be the one whose name she could not remember; and she would call Jennifer and Jan and Gloria and Zoe, twenty years from now, and ask them about the name of the sweet, scrawny girl with bony knees and hopeless braces who played at the fullback position. No one would remember: Jan would think that her name could be Candy.… Every once in a while, she could see someone who would remind her of the hypothetical Candy … she would never see her again, never remember her true name, but she would never forget Candy.[21]

Hemon offers a metaphor for the Averbuch crisis, and—by extension—the case of the missing Candy is a direct textual parallel for the photographs in *The Lazarus Project.* It's the perceptible gap inside of a rich, heavily-inked memory that brings on the almost monomaniacal attempt to name the girl who had once played fullback. As a result of this encounter, Brik admits to a critical shortcoming of his method in the United States. Despite the research he's done, there are elements about Averbuch's murder which are irretrievable. Brik finds himself in the same bind as the grown soccer girl—attempting to build an unsatisfying apparatus around a lacuna, an empty space, the Barthean *punctum* that carries him away into a lurid, frustrating reverie.

The black page is that very moment Brik identifies in life "when it is all turned inside out—when what is real becomes unreal, when what is unreal becomes tangible, and all your levelheaded efforts to keep a tight ontological control are rendered silly."[22] At the formal level of its composition, the photograph against the dark page is unreal and inside-out. The image does not exist as received pigment on the page, but is given seeming bulk and contour by the all-over inversion of figure-ground relations. The dark page is the signpost and marker of this inside-out philosophy, a conspicuous mantra renewed at the start of every chapter. Candy's enduring anonymity, Brik's realization of what he cannot retrieve or reimagine, and the irrecoverable particulars of Averbuch's slaying all function like Barthes' punctum: they prick everybody to endless elaboration, effectively creating the text of the novel.

In *The Lazarus Project,* memory acquires an insatiable drive to explain, find, and see meaning from out of the documentary clutter of time. Azra's "something [which] is always true" compellingly resembles Barthes's "that which has been." Both proclaim a fundamental ground zero—that a man took a photograph or that

21 Ibid., 46.
22 Ibid., 48.

Lazarus's life was taken. Yet these details are hollow and vacuous. The event itself in *The Lazarus Project* is unfruitful, like the subject matter of a photo. Events themselves can't help shape a glut of information into an intelligible story. Hemon is profoundly skeptical of the *Chicago Daily News* photograph, in its original, reporterly context. To use Barthes's example, knowing that there were—at one point in time—strapped pumps before a camera can do nothing to clarify the "great sympathy" they arouse in Barthes.[23] Reciting the abundant details about Lazarus's life and death to Rora only confirms the inadequacy of Brik's understanding—he cannot say what drives him on in the Barthean sense.

The darkly-matted photograph proclaims an attempt to organize meaning around what's missing, in spite of all that's available. It reflects and summarizes Brik's musing that "there are so many stories that could be told, but only some of them can be true."[24] Hemon's text is a construction that balloons and contracts around an initial hollow: the ambiguity of Averbuch's death. That Hemon cut *The Lazarus Project* from a thick body of research, and that his avatar—Vladimir Brik—attempts the same project both reinforce the dark page's significance. Fading and in out of this printerly thickness, growing out from inside of supersaturation lends the dark page its expressive potential. *The Lazarus Project's* photographs gesture at the indeterminacy of historiographical bloat, while symbolizing the power of one enduring fact to pierce through a blind field, reach out, and restlessly arrest the writerly imagination.

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23 Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, 43.

24 Hemon, The Lazarus Project, 100.

POLITICS AND CULTURE



THE STAKHANOVITE: THE ENGINEERED FACE OF THE STALINIST REGIME

Danielle Chorne

Although Marxism inspired the Bolsheviks and laid the ideological foundation for the October Revolution, it provided little concrete assistance for governing. Determined to industrialize, Stalin needed to incentivize workers to produce at high levels. Punishment and intimidation played a significant role, but Stalin also mixed in a few positive incentives to a work culture largely driven by fear. Some of these more favorable inducements came in the form of the Stakhanovite movement, which, in theory, provided material rewards and prestige to individual workers who had over-fulfilled their norms without direction from the state. The regime hoped that mass veneration of hero workers would inspire the citizenry, bringing the population to new heights of productivity.

However, citizens' responses to policy do not always align with government's intentions. Therefore, understanding the Stakhanovite movement's impact on Soviet citizens requires knowledge of their perceptions. The Harvard Project on the Soviet Social System, a series of 330 interviews of Soviet refugees conducted from 1950 to 1953, provides insight into Soviet citizens' impressions of Stakhanovism under Stalin. These HPSSS interviews reveal that instead of viewing Stakhanovism as a movement from below, many Soviet citizens resented Stakhanovites, seeing them as tools of the

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regime and as a representation of the contradiction, uncertainty, fear, and corruption which, in their eyes, marked the Stalinist politics that permeated their lives.

The Push Forward

Plagued by fears of attack from the West, Stalin saw industrialization as a top priority. Viewing this process as both a prerequisite for military strength and a means of escaping Russia's tsarist past of economic backwardness, Stalin implemented five-year plans in order to create a robust industrial base.[1] The First Five-Year Plan (1928-1932) led to increased industrial output, but also to protest and starvation. Unsurprisingly, motivating workers in the absence of the economic incentives inherent in a capitalist system posed a challenge for the Soviet regime, and central planning did not create an efficient production process. The government relied on a culture of fear that required *udarniki* (shock workers) to engage in exhausting periods of physical exertion as part of a movement of socialist competition directed from above.[2]

Moving into the Second Five-Year Plan (1933-1937), the regime created the Stakhanovite movement, which aimed to establish a more sustainable and inspirational work culture, ultimately leading workers to produce more. By rewarding workers who over-fulfilled their norms due to their commitment to the socialist cause, the regime attempted to create "ordinary celebrities [who] were living examples that little people mattered in the Soviet Union."[3] This aim seemed to echo Lenin, who had written that the government should "develop [the] independent initiative of the workers . . . [in order to avoid] stereotyped forms and uniformity imposed from above."[4] Therefore, the regime created the category of Stakhanovite, named for legendary hero-worker Alexey Stakhanov, in order to inspire workers to excel. The regime presented Stakhanovites as "norm-buster[s], lavishly rewarded for [their] achievements and feted by the media."[5] Presumably, individuals inspired by Stakhanovites would internalize socialist values and work tirelessly towards industrialization in hopes that they too could become heroes.

The Sham of Stakhanovism

Unfortunately for the regime, the Stakhanovite movement did not lead all

1 Shelia Fitzpatrick, *The Russian Revolution* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 130–31.

2 Lewis H. Siegelbaum, *Stakhanovism and the Politics of Productivity in the USSR, 1935-1941* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 146.

3 Shelia Fitzpatrick, *Everyday Stalinism: Ordinary Life in Extraordinary Times: Soviet Russia in the 1930s* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 74.

4 Vladimir Lenin, "How to Organize Competition," quoted in Siegelbaum, 41.

5 Fitzpatrick, *Everyday Stalinism*, 59.

Soviet citizens to internalize a socialist desire to work on behalf of the collective. Part of the problem lay in the fact that most people perceived the Stakhanovite movement as a sham; in their view, Stakhanovites did not shatter records through their own hard work, but instead because the regime provided them with assistants and optimal conditions or, in more extreme cases, simply lied about their accomplishments. HPSSS interviewees imparted numerous stories of the regime's development of Stakhanovites. A thirty-eight-year-old architectural engineer provided a fairly standard example of how the majority of HPSSS subjects perceived the rise of the Stakhanovite: "The officials would say . . . this organization must have a Stakhanovite movement in order to [over-fulfill the plan.] Then they would pick out the worker and he would become a Stakhanovite." In order to over-fulfill his norm, "the Stakhanovite [would] have many helpers. They [would] spend perhaps five days preparing the machines and everything for the work that [would] set the new record."[6] Another HPSSS respondent, a thirty-three-year-old *politruk* (military political commissioner), echoed this notion that workers achieved Stakhanovite status only with assistance from the regime. He said, "[Stakhanovites] are able to achieve their records because they are given better land, a good tractor and all the best conditions of work in order to establish a record."[7]

Worse than lying about the means used to become a Stakhanovite, some HPSSS interviewees believed that the regime allowed workers to lie about their production; that is, even with assistance, Stakhanovites did not break the norms. A middle-aged scientist claimed that once officials had selected a man to become a Stakhanovite, if "he says he has done it [over-fulfilled his norm], so he is a Stakhanovite . . . No one inspects him."[8] Therefore, based on these HPSSS interviews, it becomes apparent that many Soviet citizens saw their fellow workers' norm busting achievements as fabricated accomplishments, not impressive feats of socialist-inspired determination and hard work.

Direction from Above

In fact, not only did HPSSS interviewees not believe in the validity of Stakhanovites' achievements, they also did not believe the regime's message that Stakhanovism originated from the people. While Stalin claimed that the Stakhanovite movement "began somehow of itself, almost spontaneously, from below . . . like a hurricane," HPSSS participants viewed it as an example of government propaganda

6 Harvard Project on the Soviet Social System. Schedule A, Vol. 22, Case 446, pp. 14–16.

7 HPSSS. Schedule A, Vol. 8, Case 110, pp. 72.

8 HPSSS. Schedule A, Vol. 21, Case 421, pp. 10.

intended to exploit workers.[9] One forty-four-year-old Ukrainian engineer stated: "Stakhanovism is the worst means of exploitation. It's a big lie that Soviet workers willingly accept 200 percent norms. It is physically impossible . . . But the Soviets use Stakhanovites as examples for other workers . . . they arrange the Stakhanovite circus."[10] This theme of exploitation ran across the professions, as one interviewee after another claimed that the regime used the Stakhanovite movement to get as much as possible out of the citizenry. For instance, a lumber cutter asserted: "the Stakhanovite movement . . . is the whip of the regime, and a Ukrainian school teacher explained that "Stakhanovism [is] fake . . . [it is] the cruel exploration of labor."[11] In this view, the regime created the image of the Stakhanovite to mask its true intentions and present a more positive image of life in the Soviet Union. One locomotive engineer saw the "Stakhanovite . . . [as] created for propaganda purposes" and as intended "to squeeze more work out of the working class, to raise norms and lower pay."[12] A bookkeeper also claimed that "those high norms were set by the government for propaganda purposes," and an engineer recalled that "Soviet people [did] not read [the reports in *Pravda*] . . . because they [were] for idiots abroad."[13] The majority of HPSSS respondents believed the regime had engineered the Stakhanovite movement as a form of propaganda in order to achieve rapid industrialization, while pretending the movement had sprung up from below. Indeed, many viewed Stakhanovism as the regime's attempt to mask its exploitation of the working class—the very group socialist leaders claimed to uplift—while pushing towards industrialization.

Corruption within the Ranks

Given that most HPSSS subjects strongly disliked the regime's creation of the Stakhanovite movement, it should come as no surprise that they also resented the Stakhanovites themselves, seeing them as symbols of widespread corruption, and charging that they had used party connections or bribes to get ahead. A sixty-three-year-old night watchman believed that Stakhanovites "are secret workers, and they denounce people. No honest worker was ever a Stakhanovite. Only Communists and Komsomol members."[14] An Azerbaijani butcher and canal worker shared this view, stating, "if you see a Stakhanovite, you see also a party man."[15] Other respondents

9 V. I. Stalin, Sochineniia, quoted in Siegelbaum, 66.
10 HPSSS. Schedule A, Vol. 34, Case 90/(NY)1441, pp. 13.
11 HPSSS. Schedule B, Vol. 20, Case 491, pp. 10; HPSS. Schedule A, Vol. 34, Case 494/(NY)1434, pp. 20.
12 HPSSS. Schedule B, Vol. 20, Case 492, pp. 10.
13 HPSSS. Schedule A, Vol. 35, Case 355/(NY)1498, pp. 11; HPSSS. Schedule A, Vol. 34, Case 90, pp. 14.
14 HPSSS. Schedule A, Vol. 29, Case 630, pp. 16.
15 HPSSS. Schedule A, Vol. 6, Case 86, pp. 12.

believed that workers had bribed officials or managers to become Stakhanovites. A young mason claimed, "If you gave the brigadier or the engineer a liter of vodka, you would be listed as a Stakhanovite."[16] A Ukrainian coalminer similarly shared that in order to advance, "you brought the *desantnik* (ranking military officer) a half liter or a liter of vodka," and that women "slept with the bosses."[17] Therefore, Stakhanovites deserved no rewards. One worker discussed an incident in which a female Stakhanovite had received a copy of *The Selected Works of Lenin*. After the woman accepted her prize, a fellow worker called out, "that is what the bitch deserves."[18] Thus, for many HPSSS respondents, Stakhanovites personified the corruption of the regime.

The Regime's Pawns

However, while many HPSSS interviews resented Stakhanovites, most placed the majority of the blame for the movement's corruption on the regime. In fact, some citizens believed that Stakhanovites did not choose to engage in corrupt activities, but rather saw no other way to survive. The previously mentioned architectural engineer explained that once "the worker [was] picked out . . . [he] would not be able to object to what [was] going on, otherwise [he] would be tried in court."[19] Another citizen who served as the director of a trade trust believed that becoming a Stakhanovite was an excruciatingly painful process and that no person in their right mind would engage in the movement by choice. He noted that "the norms of the Stakhanovite [were] extremely high . . . Many workers were sent to hospitals from sheer physical fatigue."[20]

Even though workers engaged in this system, some HPSSS interviewees did not believe they should carry the blame. A mechanical engineer explained, "The workers have no desire to conscientiously struggle for the Soviet regime, but they have a strong desire to improve their material position because workers are all living in very bad conditions."[21] A bookkeeper claimed that due to these poor conditions, the regime could use "money as bait."[22] Therefore, although some citizens blamed individual Stakhanovites for their complicity in the movement, others felt that the workers merely acted as puppets for the regime.

16 HPSSS. Schedule A, Vol. 9, Case 119, pp. 5.
17 HPSSS. Schedule A, Vol. 23, Case 456, pp. 10.
18 HPSSS. Schedule B, Vol. 3, Case 65, pp. 30.
19 HPSSS. Schedule A, Vol. 22, Case 446, pp. 15.
20 HPSSS. Schedule B, Vol. 9, Case 381, pp. 9.
21 HPSSS. Schedule B, Vol. 19, Case 388, pp. 22.
22 HPSSS. Schedule A, Vol. 35, Case 355(NY)1498, pp. 10.

A Compromise in Values

Regardless of the degree of blame attributed to Stakhanovites as individuals, virtually all respondents decried the regime's corruption and orchestration of Stakhanovism. More than viewing the Stakhanovite movement as an example of regime corruption, HPSSS participants saw Stakhanovism as a state sponsored compromise of socialist values by promoting a culture of individualism and materialism. Many respondents believed that the Stakhanovite movement encouraged individuals to pursue material gain at the expense of the collective, creating two classes of workers. A forty-year-old Belarusian dispatcher claimed that Stakhanovism created a culture in which people yearned for more, and the regime did not discourage this desire. He said, "if you want more money [the officials] will tell you to work more like a Stakhanovite and you will earn two or three times more."[23] An electrical machine operator shared this view, claiming: "most workers are only interested in their pay, not being on the Stakhanovite list."[24] Another engineer stated that the government promoted "material desires [which were] self defeating [for the workers] in the end [because] . . . the regime . . . raised [the norms] for everybody."[25] Ultimately, many of the HPSSS participants believed that the Stakhanovite movement created an elite class of workers. A mechanical engineer claimed that the movement led to a "privileged group among the workers," which "damage[ed] the solidaristic aims of the workers."[26]

Thus, the government created a culture that celebrated collective accomplishments as individual achievements. As one newspaper photographer articulated: "the simplest worker . . . worked much harder . . . [but] the Stakhanovite received all the credit. All because of the necessity of propaganda and psychological warfare."[27] Therefore, HPSSS interviewees perceived Stakhanovism as an example of the regime undermining the very socialist values it claimed to uphold, creating a divisive culture, prioritizing individual material gain.

Uncertainty and Traditionalism

HPSSS respondents' belief that the Stakhanovite movement demonstrated an organized ideological backsliding on the part of the regime left them feeling deeply uncertain about the future. While *Pravda* proclaimed: "Stakhanovites are that lighthouse which clearly illuminates the way for all the masses, driving them forward,"

23 HPSSS. Schedule A, Vol. 27, Case 523, pp. 11.
24 HPSSS. Schedule B, Vol. 3, Case 46, pp. 9.
25 HPSSS. Schedule B, Vol. 20, Case 409, pp. 21.
26 HPSSS. Schedule B, Vol. 19, Case 388, pp. 18.
27 HPSSS. Schedule A, Vol. 28, Case 534, pp. 49.

many workers felt afraid and lost.[28] One former engineer believed that "there were . . . Stakhanovites who felt unsure of themselves . . . [because] they knew that they could not be Stakhanovites for long."[29] Therefore, they did not readily accept promotions or material rewards and remained stuck, waiting for their fate to change.

To cope with this uncertainty and perceived deviation from Marxist ideology, some HPSSS participants clung on to more traditional values. While the regime pushed women into the workforce, some citizens believed that this step would shatter the family, which they saw as the traditional foundation of Russian society. In particular, the development of the female Stakhanovite did not align with firmly ingrained, patriarchal norms. One female collective farm worker claimed: "Stakhanovite women were usually those who had no children."[30] Another citizen recounted the story of "Mariia Demchanko, a big Stakhanovite . . . [who] had a fiancé. Then she became well known . . . She left him at once."[31] Worse still, a twenty-six-year-old female student recalled that "propaganda" films showed "all the girls or women go into industry to work . . . [Then,] the husband is not necessary . . . This leads to divorces, and children are sent [away]. Family life is completely thrown up. They teach women not to become a mother and a wife, but . . . a Stakhanovite."[32] Indeed, some HPSSS respondents saw the Stakhanovite movement as the regime's attempt to weaken the family so that all workers would prioritize the state above personal and familial relationships.

Conclusion

While the regime may have intended Stakhanovism to provide both inspiration and clarity for workers, HPSSS interviews paint a bleak picture of citizens' views of the movement. Most respondents appeared alienated by Stakhanovism, believing that the regime had engineered "the Stakhanovite" in order to exploit workers, which, to them, represented the antithesis of Marxist values. Although the HPSSS provides a plethora of information on Soviet citizens' perceptions, one must be careful not to over-generalize. HPSSS respondents spanned a variety ages, professions, nationalities, and genders, making the database a reliable source of information about Soviet mindsets. At the same time, however, the interviewees were primarily political dissidents and émigrés from the Soviet Union. Because these individuals fled the USSR, they probably had stronger negative feelings towards the regime than those of the general populace. Nevertheless, the degree to which the Stakhanovite movement

28 Pravda, Nov. 30, 1935, quoted in Siegelbaum, 94.
29 HPSSS. Schedule B, Vol. 19, Case 388, pp. 80.
30 HPSSS. Schedule A, Vol. 20, Case 394, pp. 7.
31 HPSSS. Schedule B, Vol. 23, Case 67, pp. 10.
32 HPSSS. Schedule A, Vol. 23, Case 455, pp. 46-47.

inspired disillusion and fear in HPSSS participants indicates deep divisions within Soviet society, directly opposing the ideal of a unified collective. Instead of inspiring the citizenry to build socialism, Stakhanovism further alienated workers from both one another and the state, exposing—and at times widening—the deep rifts present in Soviet society, which would eventually lead to its downfall.

2

PRE-MARXIST REVOLUTIONARIES: MATERIALISTS AND POPULISTS IN 19TH CENTURY RUSSIA

Paloma Lin

Historians often fall prey to fallacies of the inevitability of the actual. Concerned with what in hindsight appears inevitable, we neglect to consider the contingencies —the what-ifs. Certainly this has frequently been the case in Russian history, where the emphasis on Marxism all too often blinds historians to the plurality of revolutionary intellectual activity in nineteenth-century Russian society. A more comprehensive analysis reveals that the critical social, economic, and political questions that the Marxist revolutionaries purported to answer in October 1917 had been heavily and thoughtfully debated by many previous generations of the Russian intelligentsia. In the debate over the "essential questions"[1] facing the intelligentsia, namely, that of "how to live" and, increasingly, how to live with regards to the "peasant problem," few voices exercised a louder influence than that of Nikolai Gavrilovich Chernyshevsky (1828-1889). Outstanding as the most famous spokesman of Russian materialism, Chernyshevsky's legacy has been as influential as it is contested, including such disparate ideological camps as Soviet propagandist historians, for whom he represented

1 The idea of "essential questions" is taken from Victoria Frede, who employs the term in *Doubt, Atheism and the Nineteenth-Century Russian Intelligentsia* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2011).

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the first "revolutionary democrat,"[2] high-minded Populist reformers (Petr Lavrov, Nikolai Mikhailovsky), and anarchists (Mikhail Bakunin) among its professed intellectual inheritors. For the discerning intellectual historian, the compelling question becomes, to what degree did the legacy of materialism, as articulated by Chernyshevsky and his collaborator Nikolai Dobroliubov, guide the revolutionary movements of the 1860s and 1870s? I argue that, to a large extent, the Revolutionary populist movement, in both its "Propagandist" and "Rebel"[3] elements, was the logical extension of 1860s materialism, adapted to the circumstances of the post-emancipation political situation.

I. Chernyshevsky and the Promise of Materialism

Admittedly, the basic philosophical position of materialism far predated Chernyshevsky and his fellow "Enlighteners" of the 1860s. As such, the particular doctrines of Chernyshevksian materialism were often understood as indicative of a whole host of additional, often highly radical, beliefs. Some description, then, must be given of this "Chernyshevksian" materialism in order to distinguish it from its predecessors. At its root, the strand of materialism disseminated by Chernyshevsky and his collaborator, Nikolai Dobroliubov (1836-1861), was grounded in the essential materialist belief that "reality possesses one fundamental quality, which is material,"[4] and that, therefore, the mind-body dichotomy traditionally attributed to man is false. Joined to this core premise was a great enthusiasm for the explanatory power of the natural sciences and their "rational," deductive methods. Indeed, if the problems of the "moral sciences" were only addressed in "a truly scientific way," one could, in Chernyshevsky's words, "provide material for the *exact* solution of moral problems."[5] This energetic, positivist materialism yielded four rather more concrete postulates, namely, 1) the conviction that there is no phenomenon, whether physical, spiritual-psychological, or social, which remains intrinsically "unknowable"; 2) the belief that individual moral character is a product of circumstance and experience; 3) the privileging of the "real" and the "concrete" over the abstract and ideal; and 4) what Chernyshevsky termed the "Anthropological Principle": the assertion that

2 N.G.O. Pereira, *Thought and Teachings of N. G. Černyševskij* (The Hague: Mouton, 1975), 111.

3 The designation of the Lavrov and Bakuninite factions as "Propagandist" and "Rebel," respectively, is borrowed from Andrej Walicki in his chapter on "Populist Ideologies" in *A History of Russian Thought from the Enlightenment to Marxism* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1979).

4 E. Lampert, *Sons Against Fathers: Studies in Russian Radicalism and Revolution* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1965), 144.

5 N.G. Chernyshevsky, PSS VII, 258-259, as quoted in N.G.O. Pereira, 35. Emphasis is mine.

"only the human," corporeal and undivided, "is the True and the Real."[6] In ethics as in metaphysics, it was "man" who constituted "the measure of all things."[7]

Needless to say, the philosophical program enshrined in these principles was not without its revolutionary implications. With its empowering belief in the ability of man to know and change all parts of the world, this Chernyskevskian materialism was inherently dynamic, pregnant, as Dobroliubov exclaimed, with "that mighty word 'forward!'"[8] It was a call to action, to reform ethics, religion, society, and politics, addressed to the future "new man" or "new woman," who would be characterized by his or her "critically thinking realism," concern with the concrete and mundane rather than the "ideal,"[9] and decisive action to achieve "the good life in this world."[10] Such a figure found its archetype, according to Dobroliubov, in characters like Olga in Ivan Goncharov's *Oblomov* (1859) or Katerina in Alexander Ostrovsky's *The Storm* (1860). Explicit in this materialist doctrine was a condemnation of what the "enlighteners" saw as the "inactivity and resignation"[11] of the older intelligentsia, the "men of the 1840s," Turgenev's eponymous "Fathers."

Indeed, Russian materialism must be understood as a response to the deficiencies of the preceding era, which were dramatically symbolized by Russia's defeat in the Crimean War (1853-1856). In the post-war period of reckoning, a consensus emerged amongst conservatives, liberals, and young materialist "radicals" alike that the whole Nicholaevan project—political, military, economic—had failed, and that reform of both the political and economic system (notably, the increasingly outdated institution of agricultural serfdom) was urgent. For the young "radicals" represented by Chernyshevsky and Dobroliubov, this crisis extended, as well, to the intellectual sphere. For all their sincerity, the older, doubt-ridden intelligentsia of Turgenev's generation were guilty of merely "relating with undiminished heat the same … anecdotes about bribery, acts of tyranny, and lawlessness of every kind" without taking any concrete action.[12] Their "lofty strivings, consciousness of moral duty" ultimately amounted to nothing but "words, mere words!"[13] Understood in this context, Chernyshevsky and Dobroliubov's materialism was more polemical than it

6 Pereira, *Thought and Teachings of Černyševskij*, 14.
7 Lampert, *Sons Against Fathers*, 245.
8 Nikolai Dobroliubov, "What is Oblomovism?" in *Readings in Russian Civilization, Vol. 2: Imperial Russia 1700-1917*, ed. Thomas Riha (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1969), 341.
9 "Ideal" is used here to connote "ideal" in the sense of Hegelian idealism, not, as will be discussed later, the mere belief in the existence of "values."
10 Pereira, *The Thought and Teachings of Černyševskij*, 36.
11 Frede, *Doubt, Atheism, and the Intelligentsia*, 148.
12 Dobroliubov, "What is Oblomovism?," 340.
13 Dobroliubov, "What is Oblomovism?," 340.

was rigorously epistemological—it provided an empowering moral-philosophical framework which made decisive action not only possible but necessary.

II. The Populist Response in the Post-Emancipation Era

The extent to which Chernyshevskian materialism provided an effective program of revolutionary action was to be tested shortly. For Chernyshevsky and Dobroliubov, writing in the relatively encouraging era of post-war reform, it was sufficient to answer the question of "how to live" with an affirmative proclamation that man and his political, social, and economic institutions were but material and thus could and should be changed. It was clear that the most pressing aspect of this question, that of how to address the undeniable plight of the serfs, must not be answered in words but in deeds, and this dynamic conviction, in itself, was a radical break with the status quo. The situation in the later 1860s and early 1870s was rather different. "Action," in the form of the Act of Emancipation (1861), had been taken, yet it had blatantly failed to improve the lot of the peasantry, who seemed doomed to greater impoverishment, both economic and moral, by the accelerating pace of industrialization and entrenchment of capitalism. The "essential question" thus facing the more radical intelligentsia post-emancipation was not "what" is to be done, but rather, "how" it is to be done.

The revolutionary populists responded to this call "forward" with a demand for the overthrow of autocracy in a systemic, socialist revolution in which "the people" would have pride of place. Reacting to the what they saw as the pernicious onslaught of capitalist development, and the inequitable socio-political relations it engendered, the revolutionaries of the late 1860s and 1870s turned instead to the inhabitants and values of the idealized Russian commune (*mir*) as a new "way forward that would allow Russia to embark on a separate and 'native' course."[14] Yet, revolutionary, egalitarian, and suitably "peasant-centric" as the Populist program sounded, it was, in many ways, little more concrete than that of Chernyshevsky and Dobroliubov. Like the materialists before them, the Populists, in other words, had answered the question "what" but not "how" necessary action was to be taken.

The vagueness of the early Populist program can be seen in what has been called the "Go to the People" Movement (1872-1873), a mass emigration of young revolutionaries from the cities to the countryside, in the hopes of preparing "the people" for revolution. Perhaps unsurprisingly, the movement ended in failure: the peasants remained suspicious of these "city-slicker" revolutionaries, often, in fact, denouncing them to the Tsarist police force as agitators. It was over the resulting dilemma of "how" to socialize, and thus revolutionize, the people, that the profound split between the "Propagandist" and "Rebel" elements in the populist movement

14 Walicki, *History of Russian Thought*, 202.

subsequently occurred. Both the Propagandist and the Rebel programs, however, adopted key tenets of Chernyshevskian materialism. Indeed, as will be further argued below, the Populist and Rebel responses can in many ways be best understood as applications of the Chernyshevskian materialist framework, with the key differences between the two factions attributable to contradictions inherent in 1860s materialism.

III. The Propagandist-Rebel Split

For the "propagandists," led by Pyotr Lavrov (1823-1900), the above-outlined revolutionary program was to be achieved by educating and propagandizing amongst the peasantry, for it was only "by enlightening the peasants" that the radical intelligentsia could hope to "prepare [the peasants] for socialism" and thus revolution.[15] Key in Lavrov's program was the role of the "repentant nobleman," who, conscious and remorseful that "Mankind [had] paid dearly in order that a few thinkers might sit in their studies and speak of its progress," was obligated to bring the fruits of this civilization to the people.[16] Indeed, to a certain extent, action could only originate from such a "cultivated" individual—who else could have conducted the "calm study" of history and "the laws of natural necessity" from which all rational action must spring? For Lavrov, as for Chernyshevsky, it was only insofar as the world was knowable in terms of rational, natural laws that the revolutionary individual could take effective and concrete action. "We have a certain degree of control … over the future," Lavrov declared, only because "our thoughts and our actions are the material out of which the whole content of truth and justice will in the future be fashioned."[17] Underlying the "Propagandist" agenda is the Chernyshevskian belief that "a correct understanding," i.e. one formulated by a rational, "critically-thinking" individual, "could be the key to liberating men from the shackles of the old morality and thus to changing the course of history."[18]

Striving towards a similar, though undeniably more radical, revolution for popular emancipation, the Bakuninite faction advocated a markedly different program of action. As implied by its designation as the "rebel" element, Bakunin (1814-1876) and his followers "went to the villages not to teach their inhabitants but to stir them into spontaneous and immediate revolt."[19] Bakunin contended that popular revolution was hindered by the fundamental entrenchment of the "obscuring features" of

15 Walicki, *History of Russian Thought*, 228.

16 Pyotr Lavrov, "Fourth Historical Letter: The Price of Progress," in *A Documentary History of Russian Thought: From the Enlightenment to Marxism*, ed. W. J. Leatherbarrow and D. C. Offord (Ann Arbor: Ardis, 1987), 264.

17 Ibid.

18 Pereira, *Thought and Teachings of Černyševskij* (The Hague: Mouton, 1975), 36.

19 Walicki, *History of Russian Thought*, 228.

tyranny and patriarchalism in Russian life.[20] In proper materialist fashion, the eradication of this tyranny could only be achieved by destroying the system in which it was embedded. Revolution in material terms must precede, rather than issue from, peasant enlightenment. Indeed, Bakunin exclaimed, "one would have to be an absolute idiot or an incurable doctrinaire to imagine that one might give the people anything, bestow on them any sort of … new intellectual or moral content" without first changing the circumstances of their life.[21] It was only the "incorrigible metaphysicians," Bakunin argued, in a vein reminiscent of Chernyshevksy's attack on the generation of the 1840s, who believed that "life is derived from … their own barren thought," when, in reality, "thought is derived from life, and in order to change thought one must first of all change life."[22] The role of the revolutionary populist could only be, therefore, that of the inflammatory "brigand," provoking revolution in the most concrete, material terms.

IV. A Fragmented Legacy

Different as the "propagandist" and "rebel" populists were, both held fast, in a number of essential ways, to the central premises of the materialism articulated by Chernyshevsky and Dobroliubov in the early 1860s. Both, thus, can be read as "materialist" responses to the question of "what is to be done" in the radicalized socio-political circumstances of the late 1860s and early 1870s. Indeed, the divergence between the "Propagandist" and "Rebel" programs of action can be linked to contradictions which lay at the heart of Chernyshevskian materialism. On the one hand, it rejected the abstract "Idealism" of the generation of the 1840s in favor of a "realist" understanding of the world in terms of accessible laws of matter and force. This bequeathed to the materialists an activist, human-centric worldview which suggested that concrete action rather than literary criticism was the appropriate response to the pressing political questions of the day. On the other hand, however, this "concentration on material reality" did not go "beyond the pale of human values,"[23] and Chernyshevskian materialism remained, at its core, committed to such "immaterial" concerns as "the future life of the spirit" and the triumph of sincere "belief" and "Truth" with a capital "T." It was this latter element of materialism which was borne in Lavrov's call for the "critically-thinking" individual to construct a future of "truth and justice" out of their "thoughts and … action."[24] By contrast, in Bakunin's

20 Mikhail Bakunin, "Statism and Anarchy," in Leatherbarrow and Offord, *Documentary History of Russian Thought,* 279.

21 Bakunin, "Statism and Anarchy," 278.

22 Bakunin, "Statism and Anarchy," 280.

23 Lampert, *Sons Against Fathers*, 154–155.

24 Pyotr Lavrov, "Fourth Historical Letter: The Price of Progress," in Leatherbarrow and Offord, *Documentary History of Russian Thought*, 264.

argument for the primacy of brigand-led structural revolution, one can detect the logical extension of a more classical materialist line. Indeed, insofar as the more radical, post-emancipation formulation of the question "what is to be done?" posed a litmus test of sorts, the bifurcation between the "Propagandists" and the "Rebels" represented the ultimate failure of Chernyshevskian materialism to formulate a clear answer to that second part of the "essential question": "how?"

DISPLACING DEATH: CHILDBIRTH IN EAST SLAVIC CULTURES

Ilana Lipowicz

The nearness of unwanted death during childbirth reveals the deeply human dilemma facing our worst fears in the very moment of realizing our greatest joys. Pagan-Christian East Slavic communities, existing since the introduction of Christianity to the Slavs in 988, and Mansi, a group of indigenous Siberian nomads, maintained beliefs and rituals which reveal strategies for mitigating the fear of death during childbirth, shaping the process for both mother and child. Today, East Slavs in Russia and Ukraine live predominantly in cities where hospital birth is most common and infant mortality is far lower, yet in spite of this shift to a more scientific worldview, childbirth rituals continue to reflect the centuries-old idea that spiritual and physical cleanliness are preventative forces against that which might interfere with a healthy birth.

Research conducted between 1956 and 1958 on the Mansi,[1] an indigenous people who lived in relative isolation from other communities in Western Siberia,

1 E.I. Rombandeeva, "Some Observances and Customs of the Mansi (Voguls) in Connection with Childbirth," in *Popular Beliefs and Folklore Tradition in Siberia*, ed. V Diószegi et al. (Bloomington: Indiana University, 1968), 77–83.

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detected rituals that seem to be based on the same beliefs surrounding childbirth which motivated the practices of the East Slavs, although their contact was limited by the Mansi's resistance to Russian influence.[2] This essay postulates that their shared childbirth customs rest on several core shared beliefs. Firstly, the blood of menstruation and childbirth represents death in both literal and metaphorical ways. Second, the liminal nature of this event in the life cycle creates vulnerability to unclean forces.[3] Third, the impurity of birth is contagious, and unclean forces associated with death can be transferred onto present objects, people, or the setting of the birth itself. Moreover, the beliefs and rituals analyzed in this paper reveal three strategies practiced in both Mansi and East Slavic communities to successfully navigate past this ever-present death and into new life for both mother and child: isolation, the guide (midwife), and lustration.

Isolation and Containment of the Unclean

The Bathhouse and the Birth Canal

In early East Slavic communities, a new mother's isolation served to contain the unclean forces present at birth. She typically gave birth in the bathhouse, which was a practical setting, as it was warm, isolated from the home, and located on the periphery of the village. The bathhouse's liminal location in the village also lent itself to childbirth, which takes place in the liminal space between the world of the unborn and that of the living. Such a process exposed every person and thing surrounding it to unclean forces.

A midwife, or *baba*, would usually assist in the birth, although the mother would sometimes even resist summoning a midwife until it was absolutely necessary. In Russia, any man, including the husband, would be absent for the birth, while in Ukraine, the husband was responsible for summoning the midwife. He might be present and even assist with the birth if it was particularly difficult.[4] In a folk nar-

2 Although the Mansi had been in contact with Russia since at least the 16th century, they held onto their cultural autonomy. They were subjected to mass baptism under Peter the Great, but it was largely symbolic. Russian colonizers of western Siberia traded with them beginning in the 18th century. The Soviet power formed what is now the Khanty-Mansi national district and demanded its people's recognition in 1930, and shamans and folk customs were persecuted. Rombandeeva's research was conducted right before exploitation of oil and gas deposits in Western Siberia began, bringing about new settlements, industry, and environmental pollution to the Khanty-Mansi region and bringing an end to what remained of their economic and cultural independence. (Margus Kolga, *The red book of the peoples of the Russian Empire* (eBookIt. com), 2013.)

3 These forces might refer to the Christian devil, or to forces which might manifest in pagan house spirits, or to anything potentially harmful such as the evil eye.

4 Olena Boriak, "The Midwife in Traditional Ukrainian Culture: Ritual, Folklore, and Mythology," *Slavic and East European Folklore Association Journal* no. 7 (2002): 5.

rative recorded in 1928 in this region, a father agrees to help with the birth on the condition that it is a boy. The midwife ties one end of a string to his "great wisdom" (penis) and hands the other to the wife to pull when she's experiencing labor pains. Boriak suggests this might refer to the sympathy pains a father might experience during the birth.[5] As a tangible and immediate expression of unclean forces, pain must also be transferrable unto others present in the vulnerable birth space.

The contagious quality of pain was used intentionally by the Mansi, who invited close relatives as well as girls over the age of ten to be present for the purpose of taking over part of the mother's burden.[6] The father's participation in the birth in Ukraine suggests that he might not be subject to unclean forces. Meanwhile, the father's absence in parts of Russia likely had more to do with secrecy than with fear of his contamination.

Prescribed Privacy

In the early 20th century, Russia began to switch over to hospital births, following the example of the United States. Even today, however, birth is framed as a private event in the now-prevailing medicalized system of childbirth in Russia. This prescribed privacy was even more pronounced until the end of the 20th century, as fathers were excluded from the room during birth in both western and Russian hospitals, and the baby would be taken to a nursery separate from the mother soon after the birth.[7] Professor and scholar of Russian and linguistics Jeanmarie Rouhier Willoughby points out that although doctors would offer scientific reasons for these behaviors, such as preventing infection in the infant, this does not discount the role of folk belief in the choice to isolate the mother under the rules of medicalized childbirth in Russia.[8]

Visible Impurity

For a Mansi woman, isolation spanned the length of her most extreme physical changes. Nearing the birth, a Mansi woman would go into confinement in a small hut called the *mankol*, where she also lived during menstruation. She continued to live in the *mankol* with the baby in confinement for three months following the birth, during which time she would slowly carry out all of the necessary purification rituals.[9] These three months would have approximated the amount of time it usually

5 Ibid., 35.

6 Rombandeeva, "Observances and Customs," 77.

7 Jeanmarie Rouhier-Willoughby, "Birth Customs: Ancient Traditions in Modern Guise," *The Slavic and East European Journal* 47 (2003): 232.

8 Ibid., 233.

9 Rombandeeva, "Observances and Customs," 81.

takes for a woman to return to her appearance prior to pregnancy as well as for menstruation to recommence. Mansi women wore girdles to expedite the body's return to normal shape.[10]

The ritual impurity which accompanied a woman through menstruation would be pronounced during pregnancy, when that impurity manifested itself visibly through changes in her body. The Mansi practice of wearing old or ugly clothes during and for a week following the delivery reinforces the idea that inner impurity should be externally visible. A Mansi woman was always thought to bear a degree of impurity which was usually limited to part of her foot, but during menstruation, it was believed the impurity would rise up to her neck. She lived in the *mankol* and was not allowed to enter the main house, approaching only the gate to receive food or necessities from another woman. During childbirth, a woman was considered entirely impure apart from her hair.[11]

Blood: An Uncertain Symbol

The obvious relationship between menstruation and childbirth is in the loss of blood involved in both. Blood linked life and death through its involvement in these two events which represent opposite outcomes. In Russian communities, menstruation was understood as a lack of life, and therefore was associated with death. If a woman was menstruating, it signified that she had failed to conceive because God had deemed her unworthy. According to strict canon law, a woman was not allowed to have sexual intercourse during menstruation.[12] By this logic, the birth of a child would justify sexual intercourse; it would not have been done in vain.

The Russian people idealized Mary's virgin birth, and so with childbirth always came the paradox that in order to bear a child, a necessary and worthy goal, a woman had no choice but to engage in unclean acts. Orthodox canon did not apply such strict restrictions on postpartum sexual intercourse because the woman's worthiness had already been proved by the fact that she could have a child.[13] While the fear of blood intervened in beliefs and rituals around both childbirth and menstruation, the blood associated with the former did not carry the same implication of death as the latter.

10 Ibid., 81.
11 Ibid., 78.
12 Eve Levin, "Childbirth in Pre-Petrine Russia: Canon Law and Popular Traditions" in *Russia's Women: Accomodation, Resistance, Transformation* ed. Barbara Evans Clements, Barbara Alpern Engel, and Christine D. Worobec (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), 48.
13 Ibid.

The Midwife as Guide

Birth of a Mother

In some Russian villages, the birth of the child also implied the birth of a mother, and therefore the death of the girl. The comparison helps to account for the relationship between birth and death. One birthing ritual involved the mother saying goodbye to her family as well as to certain cosmic entities such as the sun and the night,[14] mimicking funeral rituals.

The relationship in Russia between birth and death persists: in field research done in Moscow and St. Petersburg between 1995 and 2001, Ekaterina Belousova conducted interviews with both "spiritual midwives" and both women who had experience with home birth and those who had given birth in a hospital.[15] She recorded one informant's account of her priest's belief that one should prepare for birth the same way as preparing for death.[16] Rituals such as untying knots were performed by the midwife during both death and childbirth in order to open up the path between life and death or life and un-life.[17]

The midwife in Russian and Ukrainian villages was the primary guide for the mother through the birth. It was her responsibility to untie all knots and braids worn by the woman in labor and anyone else present. In Ukraine, where the birth took place in the main house, she would also open the stove door, facilitating the delivery.[18] In Russia, the midwife might recite incantations to Solomonida, who according to popular belief, was the midwife who aided in the birth of Christ, thus justifying her pagan practice with a Christian element.[19]

High rates of infant mortality and maternal death in pre-modern communities also help to explain why so many simulacra of death accompany birth. While childbirth was on the one hand a regular and sacred part of the life cycle, it also carried a great deal of fear and uncertainty. The journey of the child into this world and that of the ancestor into the other world ran parallel, both lasting 40 days. The close relationship of birth with death meant that it required ceremony to ensure that unclean forces would not penetrate the birthing process. The midwife's role was both to complete the transition of the infant into our world and to ensure that the mother

14 Ekaterina Belousova, "The Preservation of National Childbirth Traditions in the Russian Homebirth Community," *The Slavic and East European Folklore Association Journal* no. 7 (2002): 50–77.

15 Ibid., 72.

16 Ibid., 60.

17 Ibid., 65.

18 Ibid., 38.

19 T. A. Listova, "A Program for Collection of Material on the Customs and Rituals Associated with Childbirth," in *Russian Traditional Culture—Religion, Gender, and Customary Law* (M.E. Sharpe, 1992), 253–264.

was properly "born" from her metaphorical death as a girl.

Spiritual Cleansing as Modern Purification Ritual

The importance of creating a proper atmosphere during the birth persists in modern Russia. In a series of interviews conducted between 1997 and 2001, Jeanmarie Rouhier-Willoughby recorded a quote from obstetrician Evgenia Z. regarding the ideal situation in which to give birth:

> I think that when you are supervising a delivery, you absolutely must be very kind to the woman, the atmosphere must be good, there should be a very protective attitude toward the woman, attentive. When a woman goes into labor, I always tell her that she has to go into labor joyfully, you have to be happy about the fact that you are giving birth to a child. You can't give a child life if the mother is crying or upset, because from the beginning there is a feeling, when the woman's attitude is good, then labor will end well for the fetus and for the mother. It simply comes from inside, it wasn't learned anywhere…. As soon as she and her mother begin crying on the threshold and her mother too, this means that there will certainly be some complications.[20]

It seems that Evgenia's perception of her own role in the childbirth is similar to that of the Russian village midwife; it is her responsibility to create a clean atmosphere toward the mother so that the mother can succeed in a proper birth.

In the mid '90s, a new branch of the home birth movement took Russian Orthodox midwifery as its main focus. The movement deterred women from hospital birth and led to a rise in the number of professional midwives. This particular practice of childbirth held the belief that harm to the child and mother during and after childbirth could be averted through creating a proper relationship between the mother and Mary during childbirth. Professor N. Zharkin, the head of an experimental clinic in Volgograd, described to Ekaterina Belousova the main principles of Russian Orthodox homebirth:

> These traditions include a lot of elements, but the most important are the following: love and trust in God; a prayer to the Mother of God, who protects mothers in childbirth; releasing; that a child, while not yet born, belongs to God and that she or he already has a soul that is able to experience all the human feelings of joy, pain, fear and so on.… And when the mother's soul unites with the baby's in childbirth, and both are protected by the veil of the Mother of God, it is hard to imagine that any kind of medical complications might occur.[21]

20 Rouhier-Willoughby, "Birth Customs," 236.

21 Belousova, "Preservation of Childbirth Traditions," 55.

The fact that the religious and the magical merge in the beliefs of a doctor, an adherent of the scientific model of childbirth, eloquently demonstrates the tenacity of these traditional paradigms of childbirth.

Completing Birth After Delivery

The notion that the nature of the birth and of the time following the birth would determine the health and success of the child in the future played heavily into the rituals surrounding childbirth. Unlike in the Western view of a midwife, the East Slavic midwife's role was more pertinent not during but in the time after the birth. The Russian Orthodox homebirth community believes that babies have fully formed souls before they are born.

The Mansi, on the other hand, treated babies who were stillborn or died as infants differently from others in burial practices. They were buried in an separate cemetery, and their commemoration service would include no bonfire or warm food, because the child was too small to light a bonfire or to eat anything warm.[22]

Russian and Ukrainian peasants also believed that infants were not born fully formed. The midwife performed several rituals following the birth in order to aid in the child's formation: "The midwife actually shaped and molded what was perceived as the formless, amorphous mass that was the infant's body," writes Belousova.[23] She would stay with the mother for the first three days of the infant's life and was responsible for helping the mother to avoid unclean forces such as the evil eye.[24] This accompaniment was sometimes prolonged for seven or nine days until both mother and midwife had gone through ritual cleansing.[25]

The traditional East Slavic midwife tended to be an older woman, with children of her own but past childbearing age, because a younger midwife might bear the evil eye.[26] She would be approximately a generation older than the mother, and therefore something of a mother figure. In these first days of the postnatal period, the mother would still be in a transitional, and liminal phase, so the midwife acted as a temporary substitute during this time. Just as a baby was not considered fully formed until baptism, the mother was not fully formed until she was fully cleansed

22 Rombandeeva, "Observances and Customs," 83.

23 Belousova, "Preservation of Childbirth Traditions," 36.

24 In Russian village communities, the evil eye was believed to be a force created by the envy of others. An envious person might unconsciously direct unclean forces toward the object of that envy, which could be harmful in a real way. The evil eye was commonly feared among mothers; because fertility was of such high priority, young women who had not born children were of particular concern, as they would be the most envious of the new mother and her child.

25 Listova, "Program for Collection of Material."

26 Boriak, "Midwife in Ukranian Culture," 31.

after the birth.

Both the mother and midwife were required to go through ritual cleansing following the birth. In early East Slavic communities, the cleansing would be conducted within forty days of the birth: sometimes immediately after, sometimes on the ninth day, and sometimes on the fortieth day. In Ukraine, the cleansing was usually not done immediately following the birth but was usually performed as a part of a ceremony as part of the *rodyny* or childbirth party. In a ritual known as "water-pouring" (*zlyvky*) or water-bathing (*obmyvannia*), both the mother and the midwife would wash their hands and sometimes their arms up to their shoulders and feet up to their knees. At the same time, the mother and the midwife would go through a formulaic dialogue in which the mother and the midwife made apologies to each other. The new mother would say: "Excuse me grandmother," and the midwife would reply: "And you forgive me for shedding your blood."[27]

The Need for Purification

Materializing of Unclean Forces

Clothing was often involved in cleansing rituals in both the Mansi and the East Slavic cultures. In Mansi tradition, the first step in ritual cleansing was wearing her worst clothes for one week and going out into the street, exposing herself to either very cold weather in the winter or mosquitoes in the summer.[28] Russian peasant women dressed in plain clothing during birth, and sometimes wore the same clothing all week until returning to the bathhouse for cleansing. Her clothes were torn during the cleansing, and afterwards she would put on fresh clothes. The Mansi had a similar tradition with the explanation that the child dropped out through her stomach, tearing the dress.[29]

For a Mansi woman, after three months in confinement with the newborn, the final cleansing ritual involved taking this dress and all of the things that were with her in the *mankol* and jumping over steam to which incense had been added, and the smoke and the smell were supposed to wash away all of the remaining impurities. That everything in the *mankol* had to be cleansed follows the reasoning of the necessary cleansing of the bathhouse building itself after childbirth in Russia. Following this ritual, the woman and her child were allowed to reenter their home.[30]

In these variants, impurity manifested itself physically onto the woman, her place of birth, and the people and things present. The transferal of the abstract concept of impurity onto physical things, as well as its equation to the visible differences

27 Boriak, "Midwife in Ukranian Culture," 39.
28 Rombandeeva, "Observances and Customs," 81.
29 Ibid.
30 Ibid.

in a woman's body, reflects the very physical nature of conception. Birth, the miraculous phenomenon that was the end goal of so many actions of East Slavic and Mansi peoples, cannot escape its relationship with death. By concealing the physicality of the birth and transferring ritual impurity unto objects which can be visibly cleansed, fears belonging to an unseen and unknown world are transferred to a tangible space that is more readily contained.

Conclusion

A woman's foremost priority of giving birth to a child was laden with vulnerabilities to death, from the first step of conception, the failure of which resulted in menstrual blood, up to her last cleansing, when the blood was washed off of her hands. Her isolation, the guidance of a midwife, and purificatory rituals displaced childbirth to a spiritual realm, separate from the physical, visually startling experiences of pregnancy and birth. A belief in a strong, spiritual link between the mother and the child has persisted through changes in ideology over time, granting a sense of control over the childbirth process to those involved, even as infant and maternal mortality become rarer phenomena. Rituals and beliefs surrounding childbirth assume that if every measure is carried through with care, then both the mother's and the child's new life will mimic the success of their beginnings.

MY BODY IS MY WEAPON: GENDER NORMATIVITY IN POST-SOVIET FEMINISM

Caroline Posner

Among global feminist movements of the last decade, those originating in the post-Soviet sphere have gained perhaps the most notoriety in the Anglophone world. Most notable among these are the Ukrainian-born collective FEMEN and Russian punk rock group Pussy Riot, both of whom have drawn attention abroad for their provocations. Despite their radicalism and apparent Western proclivities, though, these projects diverge fundamentally from non-Russian feminist movements with regards to their treatment of traditional gender expression. Theorists and activists in the United States and Western Europe are increasingly rejecting a normative dichotomy of gender in favor of the critical interrogation of identity and performance; meanwhile, both FEMEN and Pussy Riot rely heavily on the feminine tradition endogenous to a dichotomous gendered society, and Russian feminism, for the most part, seems to reject the literature of Western gender theorists. This distinguishing characteristic of post-Soviet feminism must be understood not as a failure of the movement to progress, but as the necessary consequence of Russia's idiosyncratic evolution of gender and sex norms: in the Soviet Union and post-Soviet space, unlike most anywhere else, the gendered and sexual lives of its citizens have been heavily policed, despite political reconstruction, in the projects of nation building

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and rebuilding. The post-Soviet woman's femininity is largely inextricable from her national identity.

FEMEN, Pussy Riot, and radical femininity

The commonality between these two feminist organizations is not readily apparent, and their forms of activism are primarily dissimilar. FEMEN, the 2008 brainchild of four Ukrainian activists, has spread across twelve countries in the last seven years and grown infamous for its methodology. Aptly named *sextremism*, the tactic practiced by the activist organization—now based in Paris, since at least one founder faces arrest in Ukraine—relies on the subversion of typical expectations of the sexual objectification of the nude female body. FEMEN activists protest topless, using their bare chests as the canvas on which to paint their slogans. Organizer Inna Shevchenko offers an ideological justification for this strategy: "[The] patriarchal system left [women] only sexual function. Our sexual will become our political. We say that: my body is not working for patriarchy anymore. My body is working for my own liberation."[1] Their approach is equally pragmatic and symbolic; Shevchenko explains that FEMEN found greatest publicity when topless. Painting their message on their bodies rendered journalists and tabloids unable to crop radical ideology from the photographs of naked women.

FEMEN's contemporary is the political punk rock group Pussy Riot, a recent breakaway from *Voina*, the Russian radical art collective known for their sexually explicit public demonstrations. Equally radical if more modestly clothed, Pussy Riot's major mode of activism has been the public performance and recording of anti-Putin anthems, played out in front of monuments and buildings of national significance: across from the Kremlin in the Red Square, on subway trains, and near bars frequented by government higher-ups.[2] It was their 2012 performance of "Punk Prayer" in Moscow's Cathedral of Christ the Savior, for which Nadezhda Tolokonnikova and Maria Alyokhina were arrested and imprisoned, that earned the group global celebrity and attracted the sympathy of Western personalities. The minimalist biography on their blog page, an early song lyric, captures—if hyperbolically—the essence of their mission: "Kill the sexist, wash away his blood."[3]

FEMEN's loyalty to a particular model of femininity is conspicuous. Though Shevchenko and others protest that this perception arises from the limited coverage afforded them by media, it is difficult to spot a FEMEN activist, at least in Eastern

1 Inna Shevchenko, "Worlds Apart: Sextreme FEMENism." interview by Oksana Boyko. *Russia Today,* Youtube.com, July 26, 2013.

2 Laura Barton, "Pussy Riot's Kremlin Protest Owes Much to Riot Grrrl," *The Guardian*, February 3, 2012.

3 "Pussy Riot," *Blog feministskoy pank-gruppy "PUSSY RIOT,"* accessed May 5, 2015.

Europe, that does not subscribe to an idealized aesthetic of womanhood—they are overwhelmingly white, slender, young, and blonde.[4] Even if this impression should prove the result of media bias, the organization affirms specific, traditional modes of femininity through other symbols, including their characteristic flower crowns.[5] Evaluating gender expression proves more difficult in the case of Pussy Riot, whose faces are often obscured by neon balaclavas. How, for example, would one rank the femininity of Pussy Riot against a comparable American group, like their *riot grrl* predecessors Bikini Kill? Perhaps in terms of Bikini Kill's predisposition toward androgynous and queer aesthetics; Pussy Riot members, though masked, are often outfitted in hyper-feminine costume. Still, these are uncertain metrics.

Instead, it is useful to consider "gendered-ness" as a quality of corporeality—bodies and their characteristics are more easily ascribed normative gender values than are non-human ideas and theories. Philosopher and gender theorist Judith Butler proposes that bodies are "indissociable from the regulatory norms that govern their materialization and the signification of those material effects;" these norms include constructed values of gender and sex.[6] Comparing the last decade of feminist movements in the post-Soviet versus the Western world, it is clear that the Slavic sphere has a monopoly on corporeality. Pussy Riot and FEMEN are material protest movements that depend on physical action, while their American and Western European contemporaries operate most frequently within the realms of academia and theoretical discourse—notably, bell hooks, Audre Lorde, and related authors of intersectional feminist literature. Though their writing is both from and for a feminine subjectivity, it is markedly less gendered than individual activists responsible for post-Soviet demonstration. Additionally, these writings set out to interrogate conceptions of gender and sex, where Pussy Riot and FEMEN often demonstrate little interest in the topic. Shevchenko makes this clear: "We're not based on 700 pages of doctrine," she told The *Guardian* in 2013. "The discussion was very primitive, and we became angry, and wanted to express it."[7] Western feminist movements may suggest that post-Soviet feminism's relationship to gender—in particular, to limited and normative modes of womanhood—places the movement developmentally 'behind' themselves; this is not the case. Rather, the emphasis of these movements on gender is a logical outgrowth of the complicated development of Soviet and post-Soviet gender identity.

4 Shevchenko, "Worlds Apart."
5 "About," *FEMEN*, accessed May 4, 2015.
6 Judith Butler, *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of "sex"* (New York: Routledge, 1993), 2.
7 Kira Cochrane, "Rise of the Naked Female Warriors," *The Guardian,* Mar. 20 2013.

Construction of a New Soviet Woman

The earliest Soviet models of society proposed that the full equality of men and women was necessary to the success of communism. This involved the ostensible abolition of any socialized sex differences in personality, and early Soviet psychologists suggested that all differences were, in fact, the result of social forces—differential personality development was not inevitable, and could be overcome through the conscientious re-education of children.[8] Yet underlying this principle of equality was a problematic trend in which masculine traits—as they were understood in this culture—were favored by the Soviet mentality: these same psychologists argued that typically feminine characteristics like shyness or impulsiveness were undesirable in comparison to typically masculine characteristics like emotional control, in addition to "competition, ambition, and the desire for status."[9] Thus, in trying to further the position of women, the Soviet model demanded that they sacrifice the characteristics associated with the feminine identity. This was impossible, as one psychologist at the time observed, because "although women's work activities have developed in their personalities some qualities formerly associated with men—for example, independence, initiative, and self-confidence—the continuing differences in male and female reproductive roles ensures that their personalities will never become identical."[10]

This reproductive role was definitive of Soviet womanhood. Early media bombarded women with this message: "Motherhood is the highest form of service to one's people and one's state."[11] So began the decades-long conflation of biologically essential femininity, civic duty, and human worth. World War II threw the Soviet Union into a population crisis, and the urgent need for population growth had a complicated effect on women's lives. The female body as a reproductive vessel became an asset of the state that demanded regulation and protection.[12] Where the woman's presumed role in the socialist state was previously to be the professional and productive equal of her male counterpart, she found herself expected to produce both economic and human capital. In this way, the new Soviet ideal of femininity "deliberately condemned women to dual exploitation."[13]

Further, the institution of marriage, conflated by convenience and morality with the act of childbearing, became a civic imperative; those who did not marry

8 Lynne Attwood, *The New Soviet Man and Woman: Sex-role Socialization in the USSR* (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1990), 64.

9 Ibid., 64.

10 Ibid., 122.

11 Sarah Ashwin, *Gender, State, and Society in Soviet and Post-Soviet Russia* (London: Routledge, 2000), 33.

12 Ibid., 34.

13 Tatyana Mamonova, Sarah Matilsky, Rebecca Park, and Catherine A. Fitzpatrick, *Women and Russia: Feminist Writings from the Soviet Union* (Boston: Beacon, 1984), 49.

were considered abnormal—a perilous condition under the Soviet government, in which being deemed normal by the state was the best guarantor of safety.[14] Marriage was a moral and civil standard for the Soviet citizen, and the psychological impacts of this policy were long lasting and deeply ingrained:

> One gets the impression that Soviet women are striving to get married and to hang on to their husbands much more intensely than "traditional women" can imagine, that they are capable of an absolutely furious level of activity in order to achieve this goal, and that they are willing to accept tremendous sacrifices and degradation of a sort "traditional women" have never dreamed of.[15]

Thus, the Soviet woman came to anticipate a very specific life. Motivated by the desire to perform her civic and national duty—and by the most basic survival instincts—when her reproductive capacity determined her worth, she married and reared children under domination by the state.

Revolution, and the reclamation of female sexuality

The collapse of the Soviet Union was tumultuous for the Soviet, and now the post-Soviet, woman. The absence of state support for and governance over reproduction created a vacuum that reaffirmed the patriarch in both household and professional affairs. Motherhood independent of a male wage earner was typically considered impossible.[16] The rapid transition to capitalism furthered gender disparities for financial self-sufficiency. Notable tropes of femininity arose in the era, including the archetype of the provincial immigrant to Moscow who comes in search of a husband in order to obtain residence in the city, or the young woman whose flat is paid for by a well-to-do businessman in return for sex, or the young woman who fails at the above and is relegated to other forms of sex work.[17]

This dependence was further enforced by a new set of post-socialist pressures on the woman to prove her worth by reproduction. Post-Soviet Ukraine blamed the Soviet Union for the "destruction of the traditional family."[18] Because the Soviet Union opposed Ukrainian nationalism, and the Soviet Union destroyed the family, Ukraine's syllogistic logic saw the revived success of the nuclear family unit as a top priority on the nationalist agenda. Accordingly, those factors that determined the

14 Ibid., 38.
15 Ibid., 33.
16 Ashwin, *Gender, State, and Society*, 47.
17 Hilary Pilkington, *Gender, Generation and Identity in Contemporary Russia* (London: Routledge, 1996), 206.
18 Kathleen R. Kuehnast and Carol Nechemias, *Post-Soviet Women Encountering Transition: Nation Building, Economic Survival, and Civic Activism* (Washington, D.C.: Woodrow Wilson Center, 2004), 25.

ruin of the family—in particular, the liberation of women—were also anti-nationalist. Ukrainian neofamilialism was the dominant ethos, and it necessitated the subjugation of the post-Soviet woman. Shevchenko attests to the perpetuity of this climate in a recent interview: "When you grow up they say you have to look good—because you have to find a husband—because man is the only one chance for you, in this country, to survive."[19]

This state of neofamilialism has translated concretely into understandings of sexuality in the post-Soviet world. St. Petersburg-based sociologist Elena Omelchenko conducted several studies to assess perceptions of sexuality among Russian teens and young adults in the late 1990s.[20] She reports that the most frequent concept of female sexuality among women is "a means of arousing men and experiencing desire for them."[21] This makes sense—for women under the impression that childrearing is their highest civic calling, sexuality is best oriented towards finding a husband and reproducing. The men to whom Omelchenko speaks provide a nearly identical answer, and suggest that the symbolic value of female sexuality is as "a sign of submission to men's power" and "a symbol of her weakness and derivative nature."[22] Moreover, young men and women share the understanding of the "asexual woman" as the archetype of the feminist.[23] This statement speaks less to a prevalence of misconceptions about Western feminism—typically, the sexless, masculine woman who is anti-male in both personal and sexual orientation—and more to the neofamilialist woman's incredulity at feminism's rejection of innate maternal duty.

Simone de Beauvoir writes of woman in *The Second Sex*, "her body is not enough to define her; it has a lived reality only as taken on by consciousness through actions and within a society;" thus she sums up her rejection of woman's biological destiny and the parasite that is her fertility and her uterus.[24] Yet the post-Soviet woman must reject de Beauvoir's argument in order to retain a sense of identity that has long been socialized within her, one predicated on her unique capacity for childbirth, lest she be required to entirely reconstruct her concept of self. It should come as no surprise, then, that the post-Soviet woman—and feminist—rejects a tradition of Western feminism that descends almost completely from Beauvoir's definitive text. Nadya Tolokonnikova of Pussy Riot remarks, "We had a very strong tradition [of feminism] during our revolution in 1917, and after that we had a really strong feminist movement, but it was crushed by Stalin, and after that there is no feminist

19 Shevchenko, "Worlds Apart."
20 Ashwin, *Gender, State, and Society*, 137.
21 Ibid., 148.
22 Ibid., 149.
23 Ibid., 149.
24 Ibid., 66-71.

theory in Russia."[25] The break from feminist theory, at least from Western theory, occurs at the moment when the socialist state begins to enforce maternity as the metric for the woman's worth, and just as feminists in the West began to reject their biological predetermination.

Still, the relative gender conformity of post-Soviet feminism in the Western context does not undermine the radical value of the movement in Russia or Ukraine. Despite Pussy Riot's somewhat normative expression of their womanhood, it is how and where they choose to exhibit that femininity—rather than the act of compromising or rejecting it—that make their actions subversive. In fact, many of the proposed punishments by their most vitriolic condemners aimed to defeminize the women or undermine the female body. One notable figure suggested flogging with birch rods, another that the church should "cover them with feathers and honey, shave their heads, and kick them out in the freezing cold in front of the cameras."[26] Their critics demonstrate the inability to imagine defeminization as an active choice—this is what makes the act a powerful form of violence.

The force undermining the post-Soviet feminist movements seems only to be their relative failures to gain momentum with women outside the intelligentsia. For all their divergence from the Western feminist tradition, the reception of both movements has been largely favorable abroad—Pussy Riot members Nadya and Masha give popular interviews with English and American journalists, and recently guest starred as themselves on Netflix's *House of Cards*; after exile from Ukraine, FEMEN is active today primarily in France and Germany. Likely, a number of obstacles to popular acceptance arise from the interplay of historical influence and contemporary ideology in post-Soviet culture. Without a doubt, the vitriol caused by Pussy Riot's *Punk Prayer* at the Cathedral of Christ the Savior is entangled in the post-Soviet mentality that is deeply opposed to communism's secularism, and which views the Cathedral as a symbol of the decline of communism. Deconstructing the barriers to feminism's popular acceptance in the former Soviet Union is a formidable project, one which demands the apparent reconciliation of conflicting forces in both gender politics and regional history. The formidable agents of post-Soviet feminism may well be up to the task.



25 Annie Reuter, "Pussy Riot: 'There Is No Feminist Theory in Russia,'" *Radio.com,* May 7, 2014.

26 Anya Bernstein. "An Inadvertent Sacrifice: Body Politics and Sovereign Power in the Pussy Riot Affair." *Critical Inquiry* 40, no. 1 (2013): 220–41.

DISCORDANT NOTES IN A CHURCH-STATE "SYMPHONY": ORTHODOXY AND POLITICS IN PUTIN'S RUSSIA

Hagop Toghramadjian

On May 7, 2012, two ceremonies inaugurated Vladimir Putin to his third term as Russian President. The first, in the Kremlin's Andreyevsky Hall, legally transferred power back to the returning leader; the second, immediately afterward at Annunciation Cathedral, bestowed him with the blessings of the Russian Orthodox Church.[1] These highly-publicized ceremonies seemed to illustrate deep unity between church and state. Indeed, in the minds of many Russian and Western observers, the Russian Orthodox Church (ROC)[2] has become increasingly indistinguishable from the government of Vladimir Putin. Writing for the Carnegie Council, Nicolai Petro suggests that the ROC and the state have developed a "close symphonic relationship" that mirrors Byzantine-era church-state relations.[3] Security expert Marcel Van Herpen refers to the Church as a "pillar" of Putin's rule with "unconditional support for his aggressive neoimperialist policies," arguing that Orthodoxy

1 George Soroka, "The Orthodox Church and Russian Politics," *EuropeAsia Studies* 65:7 (2013): 1486–1488.

2 Throughout this paper, the "Russian Orthodox Church" refers to the official administrative structure of the Church, centered on the Moscow Patriarchate.

3 Nicolai Petro, "Russia's Orthodox Soft Power," *Carnegie Council for Ethics in International Affairs*, March 23, 2015.

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now occupies the same ideological space as communism during the Soviet era. [4] In Russia, meanwhile, some have referred to ROC Patriarch Kirill "as a third member of the Putin-Medvedev 'tandemocracy.'"[5] These analysts are not alone; dozens of articles have appeared profiling the ROC-Putin partnership in the context of Russia's Post-Communist religious revival, thoroughly demonstrating the importance of church-state ties in the country's politics.

But is it valid to compare the Orthodoxy's role to that of communism under the Soviet Union? Is the church-state alliance founded on underlying ideological accord or has it simply developed as a result of convergent interests? To be sure, some evidence supports the first hypothesis. However, as demonstrated by Putin's past approach to the ROC, state relations with non-ROC faiths, lingering church-state conflicts and internal church dissent, this alliance is not as harmonious or ideologically-rooted as some suggest. ROC-state cooperation is accordingly not guaranteed to continue, and cannot be taken for granted as a feature of postcommunist Russia.

Underlying Ideological Accord?

Some indications do support the proposition that the ROC and the Putin-led Russian state share genuine ideological accord. Writing in 2007, post-Soviet expert John Anderson points out multiple areas of consensus between the two entities. To Anderson, these center on suspicion of "Western liberalism and democracy as ends in and of themselves."[6] From the ROC's perspective, wariness toward the West dates back to the 1054 East-West split in Christianity. It was strengthened by 19th century anti-Western thought and further ingrained during the church's Soviet-era existence, which brought the ROC under tight state control.[7] True to this heritage, church leaders have consistently criticized what they view as Western liberalism's unlimited focus on the individual and lack of concern for community or morality. Western political forms are also suspect: Patriarch Kirill has argued that Russian democracy should not be "a model of division, competition, and clash of opinions," but should rather exhibit "unity and agreement, even while taking into account different opinions and interests."[8] The church's skepticism towards Western liberalism and democracy corresponds closely with Putin's rhetoric. As Anderson reports, the Russian president focuses on national themes much more than on individualistic ones, and has utilized

4 Marcel H. Van Herpen, *Putin's Propaganda Machine* (New York: Rowman and Littlefield 2015) 129, 149.

5 Irina Papkova, "Russian Orthodox concordat? Church and state under Medvedev" *Nationalities Papers* 39:5 (2011): 677.

6 John Anderson, "Putin and the Russian Orthodox Church: Assymetric Symphonia?" *Journal of International Affairs* 61:1 (2007): 191.

7 Ibid., 189.

8 Ibid., 191.

explicitly anti-Western language to do so.[9] In terms of action, Putin's government has pursued the Orthodox priority of social stability much more closely than Western-style democratic initiatives.[10] Ultimately, Anderson argues, church and state's shared suspicion of the West leads to accord on multiple specific issues, including "the limits of pluralism, religion as a potential security threat, and … public education that embraces religious values."[11]

In addition to skepticism toward Western values, church-state ideological correspondence exists on the topic of Russian nationalism. The ROC's connection to this ideology has deep roots: the Church attempts to "create a Russian national consciousness that [builds] on the interconnectedness of dynasty, territory, and Orthodox faith."[12] Beginning in 2009, the ROC has echoed parts of this legacy by collaborating with the state in the *Russkiy Mir* ("Russian World") foundation. Though the term *Russkiy Mir* has diverse implications, it fundamentally "refers to a culture that differentiates itself from Western culture and is superior to it."[13] In recent years, the foundation has focused increasingly on "the promotion of the 'spiritual heritage' of Orthodox religion."[14] This has been especially important in the Putin government's foreign policy, which seeks to unify Orthodox parishes abroad under the authority of the Moscow Patriarchate, return tsarist-era church properties abroad to state control, and create a wide group of international supporters for Russian interests.[15] The state's embrace of Russia's "traditional values"[16] also influences its behavior in international forums, where state representatives have proposed human rights standards that compete with Western norms.[17]

Church-state relations have appeared particularly close since 2008–9, when Dmitri Medvedev became president and Kirill became patriarch. Since then, the

9 Ibid.

10 Ibid., 192.

11 Ibid., 189. "Religion as a security threat" refers to the activities of Protestant "sects," seen as agents of the United States.

12 Stella Rock, "Russian Piety and Orthodox Culture 1380-1589" in *Eastern Christianity,* ed. Angold (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2006), 275.

13 Thomas Bremer, "How the Russian Orthodox Church Views the 'Russian World'" *Occasional Papers on Religion in Eastern Europe* 35:3 (2015): 43.

14 Van Herpen, *Putin's Propaganda Machine,* 148.

15 Ibid., 150. It is important to note that Putin and the ROC have had increasingly divergent interpretations of *Russkiy Mir* since the onset of the conflict in Ukraine; more on this topic will be discussed later in the paper.

16 In a 2012 resolution passed by the UN Human Rights Council, the Kremlin defined "traditional values" as "dignity, freedom and responsibility." Western representatives objected to this and related proposals, arguing that "traditional values,'" vaguely defined, can conflict with the rights of women, minorities, and LGBT groups.

17 Ibid., 143-150.

Russian state has made noticeable changes in favor of the ROC on the church's four most important political goals. These include a modest introduction of religious education in public schools, the institution of a military chaplaincy, the return of pre-1917 properties to the church, and proposals to limit foreign missionary activity in Russia.[18] Perhaps encouraged by its improving fortunes, ROC leadership offered Putin vocal public support during the 2012 election.[19]

At least with regard to attitudes toward Western values and toward Russian identity, the ROC appears to have found real common ground with Putin's government. However, the story is much more complicated than these areas of agreement suggest.

The ROC and the State in Putin's First Two Terms

Despite Anderson's identification of multiple zones of cooperation between the ROC and Putin's government, he acknowledges a lack of evidence "that Putin's thinking is fundamentally influenced by a theological perspective."[20] Putin has demonstrated outward religiosity since assuming office, wearing a cross and regularly attending Orthodox services. These signs seem to indicate that the Russian president possesses a private faith that is on some level genuine. However, beyond the personal dimension, an analysis of Putin's political approach to religion demonstrates significant flexibility over the course of his three terms. Putin began his tenure with a noticeably less Orthodox orientation than he eventually came to espouse.

In Irina Papkova's examination of the place of Orthodoxy in pre-2008 Russian political discourse, she finds that Putin's rise to prominence corresponded with a sharp drop in the religiosity of language used in party platforms. Even though Putin appeared to be more personally religious than his predecessor Yeltsin, when he took office "Orthodoxy [disappeared] entirely from the discourse."[21] Rather than setting out a religiously-inspired agenda, the ideology of Putin's United Russia Party centered on the goals of "a strong economy, a law and order society, and renewed international prestige."[22] Meanwhile, "spiritual renaissance, along with democracy, [faded] into the background."[23] Party platforms were not the only area to see a decline in religious orientation. As Papkova notes, to a "remarkable … extent," government documents "moved away from officially leaning on Orthodoxy as a source of [their]

18 Papkova, "Russian Orthodox concordat," 675-676.
19 "Religious Leaders Back Putin for President" *Radio Free Europe*, February 9, 2012.
20 Anderson, "Putin and the Russian Orthodox Church," 188.
21 Irina Papkova, "The Russian Orthodox Church and Political Party Platforms," *Journal of Church and State* 49:1(2007), 52.
22 Ibid.
23 Ibid.

ideology."[24] As for Putin himself, "an analysis of [his] presidential addresses to the Duma … from 2000 to 2008 shows a completely secular vision of Russia's political and economic development."[25] Even when topics related to spirituality came to the fore, Putin's government "preferred to speak of Russia as a multi-confessional country … where spirituality was understood (in all the relevant official state documents) to include art, music, and literature, excluding Orthodoxy from the picture."[26] From 2000 to 2008, the Kremlin's public rhetoric remained consistently more secular than had previously been the norm in Russian politics.

During Putin's first two terms, policy decisions also proved to be essentially unrelated to ROC preferences. Although Patriarch Alexii chaired an annual Orthodox forum dedicated to making social and political proposals, "the state under Putin did no more than send [it] cordial greetings … ignoring its initiatives entirely."[27] The greatest disappointment occurred regarding religious education in public schools. Though "Orthodox culture" courses were briefly taught in some regions, "toward the end of the Putin presidency his administration took initiative to end this practice and to block federal authorization for an 'Orthodox' component in the curriculum."[28] In essence, while Putin was outwardly pro-ROC, attending religious services and visiting the Patriarch, his relationship with the church during his first two terms "was far from ideal from the church's point of view."[29]

As mentioned above, when Putin became prime minister in 2008 and was replaced by Medvedev, ROC influence with the state increased. This was no accident: as Papkova writes, "the third Russian president … [followed] a policy markedly different from that of his predecessor."[30] Whether out of deeper personal faith or out of political calculation, Medvedev took a more robustly pro-ROC stance, publicly recognizing the church as the "most authoritative social organization in the Russian Federation."[31] When Putin returned to the presidency in 2012, he chose to continue Medvedev's pro-Orthodox emphasis, incorporating increased religiosity into his broader "conservative turn."

What caused Putin's change of tone? Did this adjustment result from a sudden change in the worldview he had already espoused for two terms? According

24 Papkova, "Russian Orthodox concordat," 673.
25 Ibid.
26 Ibid.
27 Ibid.
28 Ibid., 670. It is interesting to note that Anderson (quoted above) cites religious education as a specific area of church-state concord; while this was true for a time, Putin eventually disappointed the ROC hierarchy.
29 Ibid.
30 Ibid., 677.
31 Ibid.

to French political scientist Marlene Laruelle, it did not. Putin and his top supporters, she argues, "remain marked by their pragmatic approaches to domestic issues, their realpolitik in the international sphere, and a nihilistic creed that promotes cynicism, patronism, and consumerism."[32] However, with an increasing gap between the Kremlin and some elements of Russian society—evidenced in the anti-government protests of 2011–2012—Putin has struck a tone of moral conservatism in order to consolidate his popular support. His newfound traditionalism, which makes heavy use of Orthodox values, is calculated to win over the "silent majority" of conservative Russians.[33] Yet given the newness of this orientation and lack of specific policy proposals, it is easy to doubt its sincerity. In Laruelle's estimation, Putin has "no ambition to reshape Russian society" based on Orthodox moral values.[34] As such, the substance of his improved relationship with the ROC comes into question.

The Kremlin's Relations With Other Faith Groups

The notion that ideology drives ROC-state partnership is further challenged by the Kremlin's eagerness to appeal to Russia's other established faith groups. Zoe Knox explains, "The new political elite has drawn on the [ROC] for added legitimacy at strategic moments, but this has not been Orthodoxy's sole preserve; it has similarly courted other traditional religions—most notably Islam, Buddhism, and Judaism—when a marriage of convenience seemed politically useful."[35] The "traditional values" trumpeted during Putin's conservative turn are not presented as Orthodoxy-specific, but rather seek to appeal to all of the country's faith groups. As a 2015 article in Al-Jazeera America reports, Putin's government has also sought to "embrace… [Russia's] Muslim heritage," looking to Islam as a natural ally against the West.[36] To a certain extent, these overtures have paid off: "many of the country's Muslim leaders … have taken the opportunity to position themselves as allies of the regime by defending traditional values against the decadence of the West."[37] In effect, Putin's

32 Marlene Laruelle, "Conservatism as the Kremlin's New Toolkit: an Ideology at the Lowest Cost" *Russian Analytical Digest* 138 (2013): 2.

33 Ibid. A major part of Putin's efforts on this front have included public opposition to same-sex marriage, an opinion which is in fact much more pronounced in the "silent majority" than belief in God or adherence to Orthodoxy. According to a March 2015 Levada poll, 84% of Russians oppose same-sex marriage; meanwhile, a November 2013 poll from the organization found that 68% identify as Orthodox and 75% report some form of religious belief.

34 Ibid.

35 Zoe Knox, "Church, State and Belief in Post-Soviet Russia," *The Russian Review* 71 (202): 122.

36 Joshua Kucera, "As ties with the West Suffer, Russia embraces its East," *Al-Jazeera America*, August 6, 2015.

37 Ibid. It is important to note that Islam in Russia is highly heterogenous, and that not

newfound moralism is vague enough to court Muslims and ROC believers alike.

Even before Putin's recent embrace of conservative moral values, he had increased the power of the state, raising the incentive for religious groups to ingratiate themselves to it. Evidence of this effect is present in the repeated endorsements Putin and his partner Medvedev have received from all of Russia's religious traditions. In 2008, Papkova recounts, "Muslims, the Buddhists, the Jews, and the most-important Russian Protestant denominations … rushed to endorse Medvedev's candidacy within days of its announcement, and did so in similar terms to those of the Orthodox patriarch."[38] Radio Free Europe reports that in 2012, Putin was similarly endorsed by the leaders of each major Russian religion. Ravil Gainutdin, the chairman of Russia's Council of Muftis, declared, "Muslims know you. Muslims trust you. Muslims are wishing you success."[39] Likewise, the top Muslim leader in the Caucasus criticized anti-government protesters, dismissed their importance, and "claimed Putin enjoyed the overwhelming support of Muslims in the North Caucasus."[40] Russia's chief rabbi also dissociated the Jewish community from the protests.[41] In short, religious support for Putin's government has not been limited to the ROC, but rather has been consistently expressed by leaders of each major faith community.

Conflict and Disagreement

Questions about the roots and durability of ROC-state partnership do not only arise from Putin's ideological flexibility or the vagueness of his "conservative turn." In addition, multiple areas of church-Kremlin tension exist and have the potential to grow in the future.

Some of these disagreements have occurred in the relationship between Patriarch Kirill and President Putin, which is more complex than the simple alliance depicted by some observers. As Papkova reports, before his election as patriarch, "Kirill had undertaken several initiatives that, in retrospect, turned out to be at odds with the vision of Russia's future held by Putin."[42] The most noticeable of these occurred in 2000, when Kirill helped draft a document proclaiming the ROC's right to call on citizens to disobey the state if demanded by "an Orthodox conscience."[43] Putin and his associates "understood, with displeasure, the clause to be a declara-

all Russian Muslims have responded warmly to Putin's overtures. See Alexy Malashenko, "Islam in Russia," *The Carnegie Moscow Center*, September 23, 2014.

38 Papkova, "Russian Orthodox concordat," 671.

39 "Religious Leaders Back Putin for President" *Radio Free Europe*, February 9, 2012.

40 Ibid.

41 Ibid.

42 Papkova, "Russian Orthodox concordat," 673.

43 Ibid.

tion of full and complete independence from state control."[44] Once in office, Kirill often partnered with the state, but his support has not been fully consistent. When anti-government protests broke out in 2011, the patriarch initially expressed sympathy toward the demonstrators' demands. "If the government remains insensitive to the expressions of protest," he said in an interview on state television, "it is a very bad sign, it is a sign of the failure of the authorities to make adjustments."[45] Shortly afterward, the state fired back, issuing a series of stories in Kremlin-controlled media "pointedly criticizing Kirill for lavish material possessions."[46] This led the patriarch to back down, returning to more regime-friendly rhetoric.

Beyond Kirill, several areas of institutional conflict create strain between the state and the ROC.[47] The most important of these is the war in Ukraine, where the ROC occupies a particularly challenging position. According to Polish analyst Katarzyna Chawrylo, the Ukrainian Orthodox Church, under the authority of Kirill and the Moscow Patriarchate, "is institutionally the strongest and the largest Orthodox Church in Ukraine," with control over roughly 13,000 parishes and six to nine million members.[48] The church in Ukraine is split on the conflict: key hierarchs, including its leader Metropolitan Onufry, back the new leadership in Kiev. According to the Catholic Herald, Onufry called Petro Poroshenko's election a "sure victory," and praised the new president for the "deep credibility and trust" he enjoys among Ukrainians. [49] This is, of course, a very different line from that taken by the Kremlin, which calls Poroshenko's government a "fascist junta."[50]

With significant portions of his own church in direct opposition to Putin over

44 Ibid.

45 "Russian Orthodox patriarch Kirill urges Kremlin to heed protestors," *Reuters*, January 7 2012.

46 Paul Coyer, "(Un)Holy Alliance: Vladimir Putin, The Russian Orthodox Church and Russian Exceptionalism" *Georgia-Caucasus Strategic Studies Institute*, May 29 2015

47 Beyond Ukraine, an area of church-state difference is abortion policy. As reported in a January 22 article in the Russian Times, Patriarch Kirill called on the Duma to "begin a campaign against abortions, starting with canceling state sponsorship for the procedure and aiming at a total nationwide ban." Kirill argued that a 50 percent drop in abortions would stabilize Russia's declining population in addition to ending "legal infanticide." He also proposed increasing state support for young families. However, his proposal met with little support and there is no sign it will be adopted. See "Patriarch seeks abortion ban in Parliament speech," *The Russian Times*, January 22, 2015.

48 Katarzyna Chawrylo, "Patriarch Kirill's game over Ukraine," *Center for Eastern Studies*, August 14 2014. As it is under the authority of the Moscow Patriarchate, the Ukrainian Orthodox Church is sometimes also called the "Russian Orthodox Church in Ukraine."

49 Geraldine Fagan, "Putin is pushing the Patriarch to the brink," *The Catholic Herald,* February 19, 2015.

50 Ibid.

Ukraine, Kirill has elaborated on the concept of *Russkiy Mir*, arguing that the moral and spiritual bonds uniting the "Russian World" should not compromise any state's independence. With regard to states like Ukraine, Kirill has stated, "we respect their sovereignty, their readiness and desire to build their national life independently."[51] While Kirill has not officially condemned the Kremlin's policy, he has put meaningful distance between the church and Russia's actions in Ukraine. He did not attend the ceremony incorporating Crimea into the Russian Federation, a "meaningful sign," according to Chawrylo. His absence "during what the Kremlin and the Russian public saw as a solemn and very important ceremony" was striking, "especially as Kirill had participated in all major state events and had been building up an image of a mediator between the public and the government for the past five years."[52] Moreover, the ROC left Crimean parishes under Onufry's Kiev administration rather than placing them under Russia-based supervision following the annexation.[53]

Despite Kirill's moves to distance the church from the Kremlin, Putin's actions in Ukraine have damaged the ROC's standing and undermined its interests. Many Ukrainians associate the ROC's Moscow leadership with Putin, especially because of the latter's liberal use of the concept of *Russkiy Mir* to justify his actions. According to Chawrylo, this "has been thwarting the ROC's efforts to reinforce its public position in Ukraine, and is provoking anti-Russian sentiments among Orthodox Ukrainians."[54] Some Ukrainian parishes have already left Moscow's jurisdiction, and a commission of Ukrainian Orthodox leaders is investigating the possibility of becoming fully independent from the ROC.[55] This would deal a severe blow to the ROC, significantly sapping its numbers while also dramatically reducing its foreign influence.

The ROC's efforts to distance itself from the Kremlin have not provoked significant retaliation—neither church nor state has been eager to stoke the disagreement with public criticism of the other. However, the Ukraine conflict represents a significant break in church-state relations, and has the potential to develop into a more serious rift. It certainly is not emblematic of unconditional partnership or fundamental ideological unity.

Internal Church dissent

Within the ROC, there is disagreement about how to proceed regarding relations with the Kremlin. According to Papkova**,** "Kirill's ability to maintain the cur-

51 Chawrylo, "Patriarch Kirill's game"
52 Ibid.
53 Ibid.
54 Ibid.
55 Ibid.

rent pro-regime course depends largely on his ability to suppress latent but growing opposition within church ranks."[56] Zoe Knox identifies this opposition as a "movement for *perestroika*, or reconstruction," within the church.[57] This movement is composed of "liberal clergy [who] openly oppose nationalist elements in the Church and promote Orthodoxy on the basis of outreach, openness and ecumenical dialogue."[58] Centered in Moscow and St. Petersburg, these clergy operate large parishes "characterized by younger, more intellectual worshippers."[59] Although liberal forces within the church remain a minority, their youth and intellectual vigor could help them gain increased influence in the future. Especially if the Putin regime falters, liberal forces within the ROC could push the church's leadership to abandon its erstwhile partner.

Conclusion

Despite genuine areas of overlap—namely suspicion of the West and support for Russian patriotism—the ROC and Putin's government are not the harmonious partners some portray them to be. Putin came to office with a secular orientation, and his first two terms proved generally disappointing for Orthodox leaders. While he has since taken a "conservative turn," emphasizing traditional values and Russia's religious heritage, this change is clearly calculated to consolidate political support. Putin betrays no intention of changing Russian society to more closely reflect Orthodox ideals, a fact that can be gathered by his reluctance to heed proposals such as Kirill's recent request to restrict abortion. Putin has also severely damaged ROC interests through his campaign in Ukraine, demonstrating that concern for the church's health falls far below his other priorities.

The church and its patriarch remain publicly supportive of Putin for now, appreciative of the increased symbolic importance the Kremlin has afforded Orthodoxy and afraid to challenge his hegemonic control of the country. The church's preferences, however, could change moving forward, and may even be likely to do so. As mentioned above, the younger wing of the church is more liberal than its elders, and as it grows in influence it will not emphasize the same priorities as Kirill and other conservative hierarchs.[60] Indeed, Kirill himself has not always adhered to Putin's preferences, and may decide to further distance himself from the Kremlin if he decides it would advantage the church.

56 Papkova, "Russian Orthodox concordat," 672.
57 Knox, "Church, State and Belief in Post-Soviet Russia," 123.
58 Ibid.
59 Ibid.
60 As Anderson points out, the current leadership is "still largely dominated by individual hierarchs who … were appointed under communist party guidance," and are accordingly much more conditioned to support the state than their successors may be (188).

Rather than deep or durable harmony, ROC-state partnership has thus far reflected convergent interests and political calculation. Though it currently suits both the Kremlin and the church to maintain their alliance, Putin's lack of ideological commitment and the church's problems with some of his policies keep the relationship much less close than many analysts have claimed. Composed of little more than convenience, the "symphony" some observe between Putin and the church may well be approaching its final movement.

CREATIVE WRITING



FINDING JAAN POSKA

Erin Larson

I looked for my great-great-grandfather on a highway outside Vanalinn (the "old town" of Tallinn). Wading through puddles the size of the Baltic, I pulled my raincoat tighter over the machine-knit pullover I had mistaken for a handmade heirloom at the Russian market. I wiped raindrops from the screen of my phone searching for J. Poska Street and then looked up. Before me, wet and resolutely closed, was the little green house of my ancestors.

Jaan Poska celebrates his 150th birthday on January 23rd, 2016. A statue will be erected in the city center to honor the dignitary who ratified the Treaty of Tartu in 1920, granting Estonia's independence from the Russian SFSR. Yet, from the unassuming house on J. Poska Street, you would never know my great-great-grandfather was a national hero.

I took a one-day cruise from Stockholm to Tallinn in the April of my junior year abroad because my mother was paying, and I thought I might be the only student in my program to visit the Baltics on Spring Break. I was alone and underdressed and tourists could see into my bedroom from the town wall. But on my first day I set out to climb the steeple of the church I had seen from the boat.

The inside of St. Olaf's Church is a whaler's paradise: all smooth, white stone

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and high, bright ceilings. A steep stone staircase to the left degrades into little more than a crumbling ladder, rising over 300 feet and contracting steadily until your shoulders touch both walls at the same time. At the top you find only a narrow widow's walk with a grated floor and a low railing.

But from the spire of St. Olaf's, the walled city stretches before you with the Baltic Sea to the North and Russia somewhere to the East. Following the Pikk Jalg ("Long Leg"), the oldest street in Tallinn, up a steep rise, you see the crest of the Toompea, the lofty seat of Estonia's aristocracy. The lower town housed the lower classes and the small, flat mountain in the South housed the nobility. Out of the mansions and what remains of a castle on the Toompea rise five onion domes like an enormous Russian flag at topmast.

The Alexander Nevsky Cathedral is the opposite of St. Olaf's: gilded icons greet visitors above every entrance and the inside is ablaze with gold and red filigree. Worshippers make a sign of devotion to the Saint and approach the church with reverence. I walked up to the cathedral, sweaty from my climb, anticipating the best view in Estonia, only to discover that the church was impassable to the nonorthodox. I could peek through the door, but I was not allowed to enter.

That first day, in the contrast between St. Olaf and Alexander Nevsky, I saw what would become the greatest takeaway from my trip to the motherland: there are Estonians and there are Russians and they are separate. I was predisposed against the Russians, perhaps, because of my grandmother's stories of flight from the USSR. She escaped in a boat when she was twelve after the Soviets occupied Estonia. One of the most popular attractions in Tallinn is the Estonian Museum of Occupations, which catalogues the struggle for Estonian independence against Denmark, Sweden, Germany, and finally, Russia.

Yet the Russians in Tallinn are more like refugees than conquering settlers. I looked for animosity on both sides, but any hostility was either deeply buried or well hidden behind the two impenetrable languages. The divisions, however, remained.

On my odyssey from Vanalinn to J. Poska Street, I stopped inside a bakery for a snack. I expected something like the tea room at the Kalev Marzipan Museum, photogenic and warm with trays of colorful sweets named *kohupiimakreem* or *pralineekompvek*. This bakery was more like a truck stop with no place to sit but ample parking for highway travelers. The food was labeled in English and Russian, but not Estonian, and from what little I could understand, everyone inside was speaking Russian. I ate my cold pastry-wrapped sausage quickly and tried to be inconspicuous, my own prejudices rearing up unexpectedly.

From there, I continued on to find Jaan Poska's home closed to visitors and looking rather forlorn. Close by was a park, and because I had taken the trouble to

walk all the way to the far North of Tallinn, and I did not imagine that I would repeat the journey, I explored.

The park was actually the garden of Kadriorg Palace, Catherine the Great's manor home built to celebrate the siege of Tallinn at the end of the Great Northern War in 1710. The palace was evocative of the Alexander Nevsky Cathedral by its contrast to the surrounding architecture and by its cheerful pink and orange exterior. I drank a cappuccino and ate a gilded cake in the Kadriorg Café, a Russian-owned haven that erased my disappointment from the highway bakery.

Fortified, I walked back along the beach instead of the busy road. I wondered if I should pick a side, Russian or Estonian. Perhaps the strength of will developed by centuries of occupation had left the Estonians hardened against discrimination, or maybe they were used to Russian-speaking invaders, I could not be sure.

The Estonians had marzipan and picturesque cafes and white churches, but the Russians had vast gardens and ornate cathedrals and even palaces. Yet nothing about Tallinn asked me to make that choice. Even my grandmother, that brave woman who talked about fleeing in the night across the Baltic, loved the movie *The Russians are Coming*, a satire of American McCarthyism in which a Russian submarine goes aground on a small island and the townspeople rally together to protect the Russians from an airstrike. Jaan Poska wanted me to see both sides, as clearly as I could see the spire of St. Olaf's and in the very same skyline, the onion domes of Alexander Nevsky. The Estonians and Russians were historically opposed, but somehow they managed to coexist, white spire and onion domes occupying the same horizon.



LITTLE IVAN BOYAREVICH AND THE WOLF

Keanu Ross-Cabrera

By dusk I reached the manor-house. As a servant saw to my horse I was led to the great hall and left to await the return of the baron's hunting party, my only companion the ancient serf kindling the fire in the great hearth. Though years had passed, little had changed. Familiar relics of my childhood greeted me from every direction, the same the hunting trophies lined the walls, the same dusty tomes the shelves. Even Mishka, the great stuffed bear, still stood ever vigilant in his corner. Only when I sat in the armchair closest to the fire and the serf greeted me with his yellow smile did I recognize him. My sister, in our childhood, had named him Wotan. Where his right eye should have been there was a tangled mass of scar tissue and with a broad back and thick arms, a wild face of weather bitten leather, and an untamed silver beard like a tangled waterfall it had seemed fitting. He reminded me of trees, of earth, and far older things. The name had stuck.

"The Baron won't be back, Alexeevich, not for a while at least," the old serf said. "But perhaps with a story time will fly? You used to like my stories, this I remember."

My sister had liked his stories. They had given me nightmares. But with no one save my horse for company on the long road from Moscow (a poor conversationalist,

The author is a senior at Columbia University studying History, Theater, and Slavic Studies.

though well bred) another voice, even his, was welcome. I agreed and sat back in my chair to listen.

"Have you heard the one of little Ivan and his wolf?" Wotan began. "It begins, I suppose, as they always do…

"In a certain land, in a certain tsardom, there once lived an ancient Boyar with three sons. The eldest brother was named Fyodor, a great horseman and strong with a lance. The second, Vadim, was famed for his skill with bow. Like their father they accomplished many deeds of note, tales for another time, for this story is of the last brother, the littlest one, little Ivan, who was neither tall like his brothers, nor strong like his brothers. One day, when little Ivan was just a young boy (without even the hint of a beard) the ancient Boyar gathered his children together. 'My sons,' he told them, 'Kiev is besieged. The Tsar is calling his Bogatyri to free the city.'

"The brothers were eager to go with their father, but the ancient Boyar took little Ivan aside. 'My son,' said he, 'You are too young and foolish, your armor is too big, your horse too small. The Tsar calls for Bogatyri not boys. Better to stay and watch the house while we are gone.' Of course, little Ivan protested, but his father would hear no more. That very same day the ancient Boyar donned his war-helm and armor, mounted his great warhorse and set off for Kiev, followed by Vadim, mounted with his lance and Fyodor, mounted with his bow, while little Ivan watched their horses until they disappeared from view.

"A long time passed since his father and brothers had left, or maybe a little, it is hard to remember. But one stormy night there came heavy knocking at the door. Answering it, little Ivan found a grizzled Bogatyr, standing in the rain, muddy and wearied from travel. 'May I come in?' asked the grizzled Bogatyr and little Ivan Boyarevich welcomed him and sat him before the hearth, not unlike one where we sit now. Little Ivan brought the Bogatyr food and drink. The man ate like a ravenous wolf.

" 'Do you come from the Tsar?' asked little Ivan when the man had finished. 'I come from the Tsar's army,' replied the grizzled Bogatyr, 'Upon the road to Kiev we were set upon by a giant. With one swing of his great sword he slew a hundred Bogatyri. With another swing he slew a hundred more. We fought till nightfall, but even the mighty Tsar was forced to flee.' 'Do you know of my father and brothers?' asked little Ivan Boyarevich, but the grizzled Bogatyr shook his head, 'Perhaps they are dead. Perhaps they live. The giant killed some, wounded others, and took many prisoners. It is not for me to say.' Little Ivan trembled. 'Will you come and help me search for them?' he asked. The grizzled Bogatyr did not look at him unkindly. 'You are a young fool, your armor is too big, your horse too small,' the grizzled Bogatyr replied. 'What could you do? I barely escaped with my life. If you search for your father and brothers, you will surely be killed.'

Little Ivan begged and pleaded, but the grizzled Bogatyr would not yield. Though he was afraid, thinking of his father, Fyodor, and Vadim, dead, dying, or imprisoned, little Ivan said 'With or without you I will find my father and brothers.' When the grizzled Bogatyr had left, little Ivan Boyarevich found an old war-helm (too large for his head) and armor (too large for his body). He mounted his little horse and, when the storm had abated, set out into the night to seek his father and brothers, taking with him meat and bread and a bottle of vodka, all stored in a small sack.

Little Ivan Boyarevich rode till he found himself on a winding road through a dark forest. There, at the edge of the path, sat a great gray wolf, thin and starving. Little Ivan was afraid but he urged his horse forward. 'Good afternoon,' the wolf greeted him. 'Good afternoon,' little Ivan replied, 'You look very hungry. I have a little meat with me, would you like it?' Little Ivan took the meat from his sack and tossed it to the wolf who devoured it ravenously, licking his chops when he had finished. 'Where are you going?' the wolf asked. 'I am looking for my father and brothers,' little Ivan replied. 'They rode with the Tsar to Kiev.' 'Such a noble quest,' said the wolf. 'There have been many travelers on this road, but you are the first to stop. Because of your kindness I will help. I do not know where your father and brothers are. But I can take you to one who does.'

"Little Ivan Boyarevich followed the wolf through the forest, they traveled for some time till through the trees they could see a clearing where a little hut stood on chicken legs. 'I cannot enter the clearing,' the wolf told him, 'But you can. Listen carefully. You must tell the hut, "Little hut, little hut, stand with your back to the forest and your front to me!" There will be an old woman who will ask why you have come. You must not answer at first, but firmly tell her, "Who are you to ask questions of a warrior before offering him food and drink?" or she will kill you and put you in her pot for soup. Only then will she will help you find your father and brothers who rode to Kiev with the Tsar.'

"Though he was afraid, little Ivan Boyarevich entered the clearing and did as he was told saying, 'Little hut, little hut, stand with your back to the forest and your front to me!' The hut turned around and there was an old woman was sitting in her doorway smoking a large pipe. She was as thin as a twig, and her nose was so long it nearly scraped the ground. 'Greetings, little Ivan Boyarevich,' the old woman said, 'Russian blood was never before heard of nor caught sight of here, but now it has come by itself. Are you here of your own free will or by compulsion, my good youth?' Little Ivan Boyarevich remembered the wolf's words and said, 'Who are you to ask questions of a warrior before offering him food and drink?' The old woman laughed and entered the hut, returning with both food and drink, which she offered. Little

Ivan picked at his food, speaking between bites. 'I come of my own free will and perhaps by compulsion. I am seeking my father and brothers who were ambushed by a giant on the road to Kiev and the Tsar. I do not know if they are alive or dead.' The old woman puffed on her pipe silently, and little Ivan Boyarevich suddenly remembered his father, sitting and smoking by the fireplace. He began to cry. 'Do not cry, little Ivan,' the old woman said, 'Your father is alive and a prisoner of the giant. Sleep now, the morning is wiser than the evening. Tomorrow you will know where to find him.' While little Ivan slept the wolf circled the clearing, never leaving the woods.

"When morning came little Ivan Boyarevich again asked of his father and brothers. 'Are you certain you wish to know?' the old woman replied. 'The more you know the sooner you grow old. Very well, your father is a prisoner to the giant who lives in a certain castle by a certain lake whose water is so clear that an eagle flying high in the sky can see straight to the bottom. A hero's sword that lies at the bottom of the lake. Only with it will you be able to defeat the giant and save your father.'

"'Thank you, grandmother,' said little Ivan Boyarevich, and he said his goodbyes, donned his war-helm (too large for his head) and his armor (too large for his body) and mounted his little horse. Little Ivan rode to the edge of the clearing where the wolf was waiting. Little Ivan sat upon his horse, watching as the hut on chicken legs turned back around to face the forest. 'My father is being kept in a certain castle by a certain lake whose water is so clear that an eagle flying above can see straight to the bottom. Without the sword I cannot rescue my father and brothers, but I have never heard of such a place.' 'Do not worry little Ivan," said the wolf, 'I know of such a place. I know the way.'

They traveled for many days. It was raining when little Ivan Boyarevich and the wolf came to the edge of the lake so clear that they could see each fish swimming this way and that. Far away at the deep bottom little Ivan Boyarevich could see the hero's sword glittering. On the other bank he could see the giant's castle. 'If only I could swim,' said little Ivan Boyarevich, 'I could dive into the depths and retrieve the sword.' Just then, a duck paddled out from behind some reeds. 'Mr. Duck,' little Ivan Boyarevich called out, 'Can you help me retrieve the sword at the bottom of the lake?" The duck swam over to the shore. 'It is a fool who will do something for nothing,' said the duck and little Ivan Boyarevich reached into the little bag and took out the loaf of bread. 'All I have is this loaf of bread,' he replied, 'If you dive to the bottom and retrieve the sword I will give it to you.' The duck agreed and with a shake of his tail dove deep into the lake. Little Ivan Boyarevich and the wolf watched the duck dive down and grasp the sword in his bill and begin to swim back towards the surface. But when the duck was halfway there, the sword slipped and sank back towards the lake's bottom. 'The giant will be home soon,' said the wolf. 'The Devil take me,'

said the duck. 'Do not worry, little Ivan. I will dive again. On my word I said I would retrieve the sword, and it is a fool and a thief who goes back on his word.'

"Once more the duck dove deep into the lake and swam to the very bottom, grasping the sword in his bill. He began to swim with it back to the surface where little Ivan Boyarevich and the wolf waited and was almost there when the sword slipped and again sank back towards the lake's bottom. 'Without the sword how will I save my father?' lamented little Ivan. 'The Devil take me,' said the duck. 'Do not worry little Ivan Boyarevich. I will dive again. On my word I said that I would retrieve the sword.'

"And a third time the duck dove deep into the lake to the very bottom and grasped the sword in his bill. He swam with it back to the surface where little Ivan Boyarevich and the wolf waited, and it did not slip. He brought the sword all the way to the shore and little Ivan Boyarevich rejoiced. 'Here is your bread as promised,' he said, and Little Ivan gave his bread to the duck, taking the sword and placing it in his sack. They said their farewells and the wolf and little Ivan walked around the shore of the clear lake, entering the giant's castle through a small gate.

"There were ninety and nine rooms in the giant's castle, big ones and small ones, empty rooms, rooms full of treasure. Little Ivan Boyarevich and the wolf searched room after room, calling to the empty castle, 'Father, it is I, your little Ivan, come to rescue you! Vadim, Fyodor, it is your little brother!' But in room after room, big ones and small ones, empty ones and rooms full of treasure, they found no one. The wolf and little Ivan Boyarevich had searched ninety and eight rooms and were about to open the door to the last when the giant returned home.

"'Who is sneaking like a mouse in my house!' roared the giant. 'It is I,' little Ivan Boyarevich found himself replying, 'Ivan the Boyar's son, a mighty warrior!' The giant laughed, 'I have met a thousand mighty warriors and slain each one of them. In the battle with a swing of my sword I kill a hundred Russians and with the next swing I kill another hundred.' 'I have heard that you are a mighty warrior,' little Ivan Boyarevich replied, 'I have also heard you have never been defeated at chess. I am known throughout the tsardom as Ivan the Chess Player. Let us play a game and see who is better. If I win, you must grant me three wishes.' 'Very well,' the giant said, 'But if I win I will kill you and eat you.' Little Ivan was afraid, but he sat down at a table with the giant, a chess board between them and the wolf at his side. 'Because you are young and foolish,' the giant said, 'you shall go first.' Little Ivan Boyarevich thought long and hard before taking his first move.

"The giant and little Ivan Boyarevich played through the afternoon and into the night, each carefully making their moves, one losing a piece here, the other a piece there, till sometime before midnight, little Ivan Boyarevich slapped the table. 'I have

a warrior's thirst,' he declared and reached into the little sack, taking out the bottle of vodka and taking a sip before returning it to the bag. 'I would offer the bottle to you, but it is only for the bravest and the most cunning.' The giant pounded his fist on the table. "I am a great warrior. In battle a swing of my sword kills a hundred Russians and with the next I kill another hundred.' And with that he reached across the table, took the bottle from little Ivan Boyarevich, and drained it in one gulp. 'Is this how you treat a guest?' roared little Ivan Boyarevich and he drew the sword from the little sack. With one swipe he severed the giant's head from its shoulders. 'Come,' said the wolf. 'Let us find your father.' And little Ivan Boyarevich and the wolf opened the last room and found the ancient Boyar, Vadim and Fyodor, and a thousand imprisoned Bogatyri. 'My little Ivan,' exclaimed the ancient Boyar. 'How happy I am to see you.' And they hugged and kissed. 'Little brother,' Vadim said as Fyodor patted his shoulders, 'how did you come here?' 'I will tell you," said little Ivan, 'but first we must go to Kiev.'

"The wolf spoke to little Ivan Boyarevich. 'I have done as promised and helped you find your father for the kindness you showed me. But I will do one more thing, for our friendship. I will show you the way to Kiev.' The ancient Boyar, Vadim, Fyodor and the thousand Bogatyri found horses in the giant's stables and little Ivan Boyarevich mounted his little horse, wearing his war-helm (too large for his head) and his armor (too large for his body). They left the castle and rode into the night, following little Ivan Boyarevich, who followed the wolf.

They rode swiftly for a long time, or maybe a little, it is hard to say. They rode to the very walls of Kiev and little Ivan Boyarevich led his men to the Tsar's aid, breaking the siege and scattering soldiers like a gust of wind scatters the dead leaves. Some say little Ivan killed a hundred men, others a thousand. I was there and saw him riding in the fray atop his horse with a lance held high and a great wolf at his side. Men fled at the very sight of him! Many brave deeds were done, too many to recount, all stories for another time, and much blood was spilt before little Ivan Boyarevich and his men freed the city.

"After the battle the Tsar himself gave his beautiful daughter as a bride to little Ivan Boyarevich. That same day the two were married, little Ivan Boyarevich still in his war-helm (which seemed now to sit upon his head properly) and his armor (which no longer seemed so loose and large). Their wedding feast lasted three nights and three days and the whole tsardom was invited. Everyone marveled at the bride's beauty and the groom's strength. Even Fyodor and Vadim saw that their youngest brother could not be called "little" anymore. Ivan Boyarevich and his wife lived happily for many years till the Tsar died and they ruled as Tsar Ivan and his Tsarina. But that is a different tale. Now the tale is told. I was there and saw it all, I drank to the

wedding toast but didn't wet my whiskers."

The fire had died low before the old serf finished his tale. It was now deep into the night and I could hear a heavy rain upon the manor's roof. For a while I stared at the embers till Wotan's mumbling brought me back to earth. Slowly he was raising himself to his feet, muttering to himself as he did;

"But one stormy night there came heavy knocking at the door," he said, more to himself than anything, "And little Ivan went and answered it…"

Just then I could hear a distant knocking. I watched, seated by the fire, as he left the room, and found myself alone. The Baron's hunting party had returned.

Ω

A MOTHER-DAUGHTER POEM

Taylor Stephens

A reimagening of the timeless relationships in Lyudmila Petrushevskaya's *The Time: Night.*
Speakers: Alyona, daughter; Anna, mother; Sima, grandmother

All Three:
My mother

Alyona:
Controlling—the first word on my mind,
Though not the first word off my tongue.
I am not my brother.
Verbal barb wire cuts those who use it too,
Hands bloodied just as easily as soft stomachs.
My mother and my brother both
Cut at any weakness.
Men, my mother says,
Men are the devil.
Yet she looks at my baby like he's an angel.

The author graduated from the University of Arizona with a major in English.

Hypocrite, old and cynical and broken—
Broken-hearted or broken-minded just like her mother,
Though she doesn't see it.
Blinded in the daylight,
Does she see at night?
She scribbles at night.
My mother, who criticizes as easily as she speaks.
My mother, the pretend writer.
My mother, my enemy.

Anna (overlapping Alyona):
My mother, my enemy.
Restraining—the first word on my mind,
But never on my tongue.
There is no point.
She understands nothing.
Has she ever?
Like Adam's Rib, who rings my bell?
She escapes and crowds the streets,
Calling out for my attention.
At least their grandmother is silent.
Silence, sounds so sweet,
Sweet like Tima.
Oh, Tima, who will grow wrinkled and ugly.
Aged and ugly men, all.
A man is good for nothing.
My mother told me that.
My mother taught me that.
My mother, my educator.

Sima (overlapping Anna):
My mother, my educator.
Gone now like every other thought
From my old, bowed head.
I remember nothing
Except the twist of my daughter's lip.
My mother once warned of this.
Of what? Of whom?

Whom do I speak of?
Speak of, think of,
Who do I love?
I loved a man once,
When I was foolish and young,
When it was forgivable to be dumb.
Dumb, like my daughter.
Does anybody love her?
I see the hate in her children's eyes.
I know that hate.
I've seen that side.
Oh, my daughter.

Anna (overlapping Sima):
Oh, my daughter,
My foolish girl.
I've read her words;
I know her,
The one who thinks she understands the world.
Foolish and young and dumb,
To trust men so freely.
She knows nothing.
She learns nothing.
Oh, my daughter.

Alyona (overlapping Anna):
Oh, my daughter,
I will be a better mother.
Better than my mother, or her mother,
Or the one before her.
I know my mother thinks it,
But I will beat it.

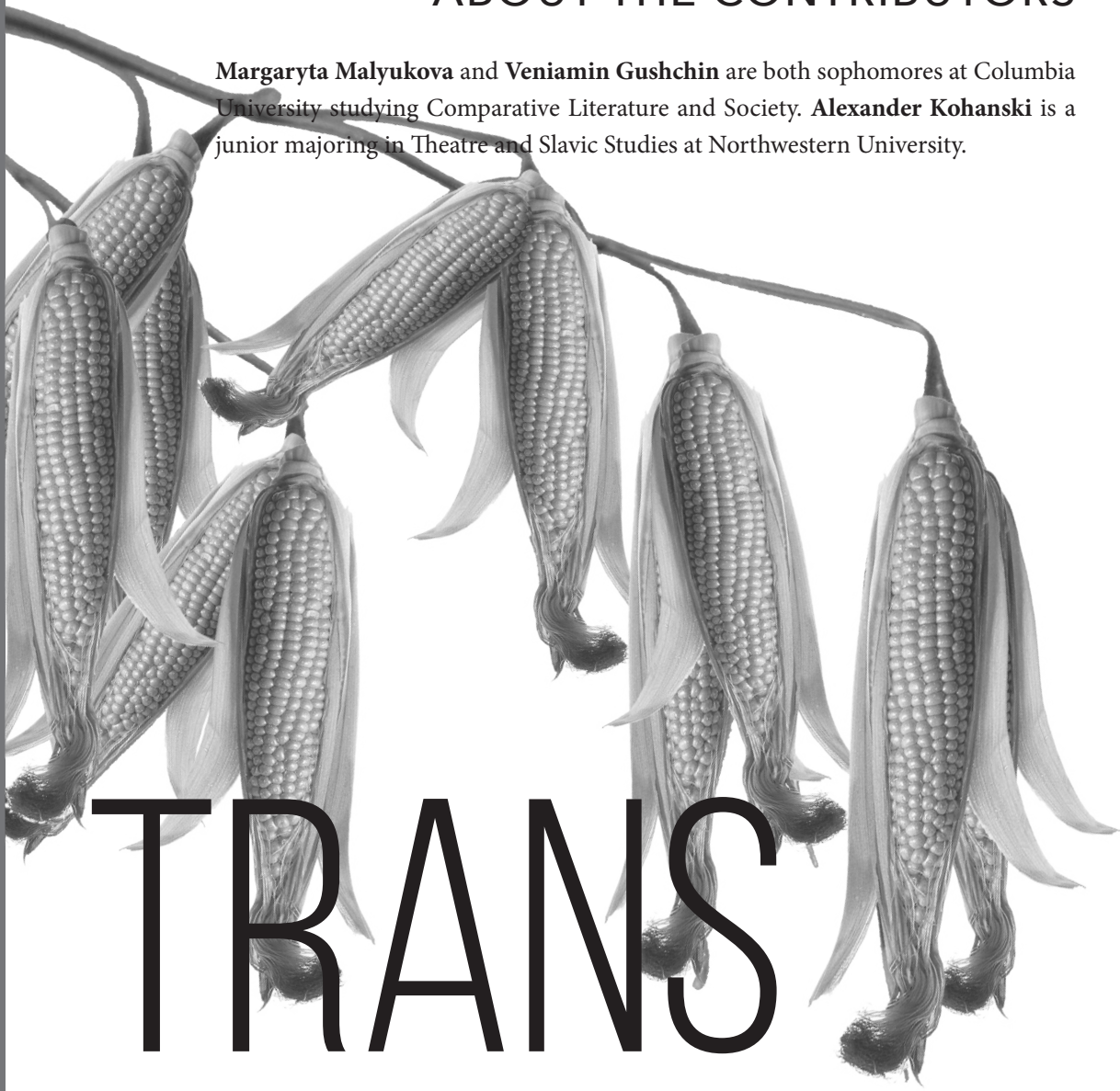
Sima (overlapping Alyona):
But I will beat it.
Or so I thought.
Thought, think, thought,
I am lost.

Crushed in the continued tread of time,
So now my mother's flaws are mine.
Still I think, she thinks, we think—

All Three:
I will never be my mother.

ABOUT THE CONTRIBUTORS

Margaryta Malyukova and **Veniamin Gushchin** are both sophomores at Columbia University studying Comparative Literature and Society. **Alexander Kohanski** is a junior majoring in Theatre and Slavic Studies at Northwestern University.



TRANS LATION

HEY, NEW COLUMBUSES, MAGELLANS

by Vasyl Symonenko // translated from the Ukrainian by Margaryta Malyukova

Hey, new Columbuses, Magellans,
Let us dress our dreams in sails!
The oceans beckon us to travel,
Breakers lick the quiet bay.

Who said that all has been discovered?
Why, then, are we ever born?
How are we to fit inside a bowl
All the hopes of our young souls?

You ships! Line up for debarkation!
Dreams, my passion! Stay alive!
Seek inside the ocean of my nation
Islands where the spirit lies!

Out of silt, you rusty anchors,
An anchored soul grows bored!…
Winds pound our chests in anger,
The carvel leaves the shore.

No single breeze can cool the sun.
A rooster won't all soils unrake!
Ukraine! I will until I die
Keep discovering you each day.

To dream, to seek—as long's we live
To fry boredom like a smore!…
And if I find what is long found,
My friends! Just let me know…

Гей, нові Колумби й Магеллани,
Напнемо вітрила наших мрій!
Кличуть нас у мандри океани,
Бухту спокою облизує прибій.

Хто сказав, що все уже відкрито?
Нащо ж ми народжені тоді?
Як нам помістити у корито
Наші сподіваная молоді?

Кораблі! Шикуйтесь до походу!
Мрійництво! Жаго моя! Живи!
В океані рідного народу
Відкривай духовні острови!

Геть із мулу якорі іржаві—
Нидіє на якорі душа!…
Б'ються груди об вітри тужаві,
Каравела в мандри вируша.

Жоден вітер сонця не остудить,
Півень землю всю не розгребе!
Україно! Доки жити буду,
Доти відкриватиму тебе.

Мріяти й шукати, доки жити,
Шкварити байдужість на вогні!…
А якщо відкрию вже відкрите,
Друзі! Ви підкажете мені…

NONE WILL BE TONIGHT AT HOME

by Boris Pasternak // translated from the Russian by Veniamin Gushchin

None will be tonight at home,
Save the twilight, so exposed
To the winter night alone
Through the curtains left unclosed.

Only snowflakes, wet and white,
In their quick and mossy swell,
Only roofs and snow on sight,
Roofs and snow and no one else.

And again the frost's trace tarries,
And again the snow is cast,
And again the cold wind carries
Memories of winters past.

And again the guilt's afoot,
Unforgiven just the same,
And the hungering for wood
Presses on the window pane.

Still will suddenly subside,
And the tremor shall begin.
Silence measured by the stride,
Like the future, you'll come in.

You'll appear there in the doorway,
Dressed in white, not overblown,
From the fabric of the cold fray,
Out of which snowflakes are sewn.

Никого не будет в доме,
Кроме сумерек. Один
Зимний день в сквозном проеме
Не задернутых гардин.

Только белых мокрых комьев
Быстрый промельк моховой,
Только крыши, снег, и, кроме
Крыш и снега, никого.

И опять зачертит иней,
И опять завертит мной
Прошлогоднее унынье
И дела зимы иной.

И опять кольнут доныне
Не отпущенной виной,
И окно по крестовине
Сдавит голод дровяной.

Но нежданно по портьере
Пробежит сомненья дрожь,-
Тишину шагами меря.
Ты, как будущность, войдешь.

Ты появишься из двери
В чем-то белом, без причуд,
В чем-то, впрямь из тех материй,
Из которых хлопья шьют.

GOODBYE, MY FRIEND, GOODBYE and LITTLE BY LITTLE NOW WE LEAVE

by Sergei Esenin // translated from the Russian by Alexander Kohanski

Goodbye, my friend, goodbye.
My dear, you're with me in my heart.
We'll meet again once time's gone by,
Though now it's destined—we must part.

No words, no handshakes, friend, goodbye.
Both pain and sorrow are undue—
In this life it isn't news to die,
But to live is also nothing new.

До свиданья, друг мой, до свиданья.
Милый мой, ты у меня в груди,
Предназначенное расставанье
Обещает встречу впереди,

До свиданья, друг мой, без руки, без слова,
Не грусти и не печаль бровей ,—
В этой жизин умирать не ново,
Но и жить, конечно, не новей.

Little by little now we leave,
Off to that land of grace and calm.
The time is coming, I believe,
When I'll pack up and journey on.

Мы теперь уходим понемногу
В ту страну, где тишь и благодать.
Может быть, и скоро мне в дорогу
Бренные пожитки собирать.

Sweet birches with your branches parting!
You, the earth! And you, the sandy plain!
Before this crowd of the departing,
I have no strength to hide my pain.

Милые березовые чащи!
Ты, земля! И вы, равнин пески!
Перед этим сонмом уходящих
Я не в силах скрыть моей тоски.

Too much I've loved while in this world
All that clothes the soul in flesh.
Peace to the aspens, leaves unfurled,
That gazed into water, pink and fresh!

Слишком я любил на этом свете
Все, что душу облекает в плоть.
Мир осинам, что, раскинув ветви,
Загляделись в розовую водь!

I have thought many thoughts in silence,
Many songs about myself have penned,
And on this, on the sullen earth
I am glad that I've had time to spend.

Много дум я в тишине продумал,
Много песен про себя сложил,
И на этой на земле угрюмой
Счастлив тем, что я дышал и жил.

I am glad that I have courted women,
Rumpled flowers and rolled in the grass;
And animals, our younger brethren,
I never struck but let them pass.

Счастлив тем, что целовал я женщин,
Мял цветы, валялся на траве
И зверье, как братьев наших меньших,
Никогда не бил по голове.

Well I know that there no birch is parting,
There no swan-necked rye has swayed.
So before the crowd of the departing
I always find myself afraid.

Знаю я, что не цветут там чащи,
Не звенит лебяжьей шеей рожь.
Оттого пред сонмом уходящих
Я всегда испытываю дрожь.

Well I know that in that land is nothing,
No cornfields golden in the haze…
So, dear to me are people, rushing,
For they live on earth and fill my days.

Знаю я, что в той стране не будет
Этих нив, златящихся во мгле…
Оттого и дороги мне люди,
Что живут со мною на земле.

PHOTO GRAPHY









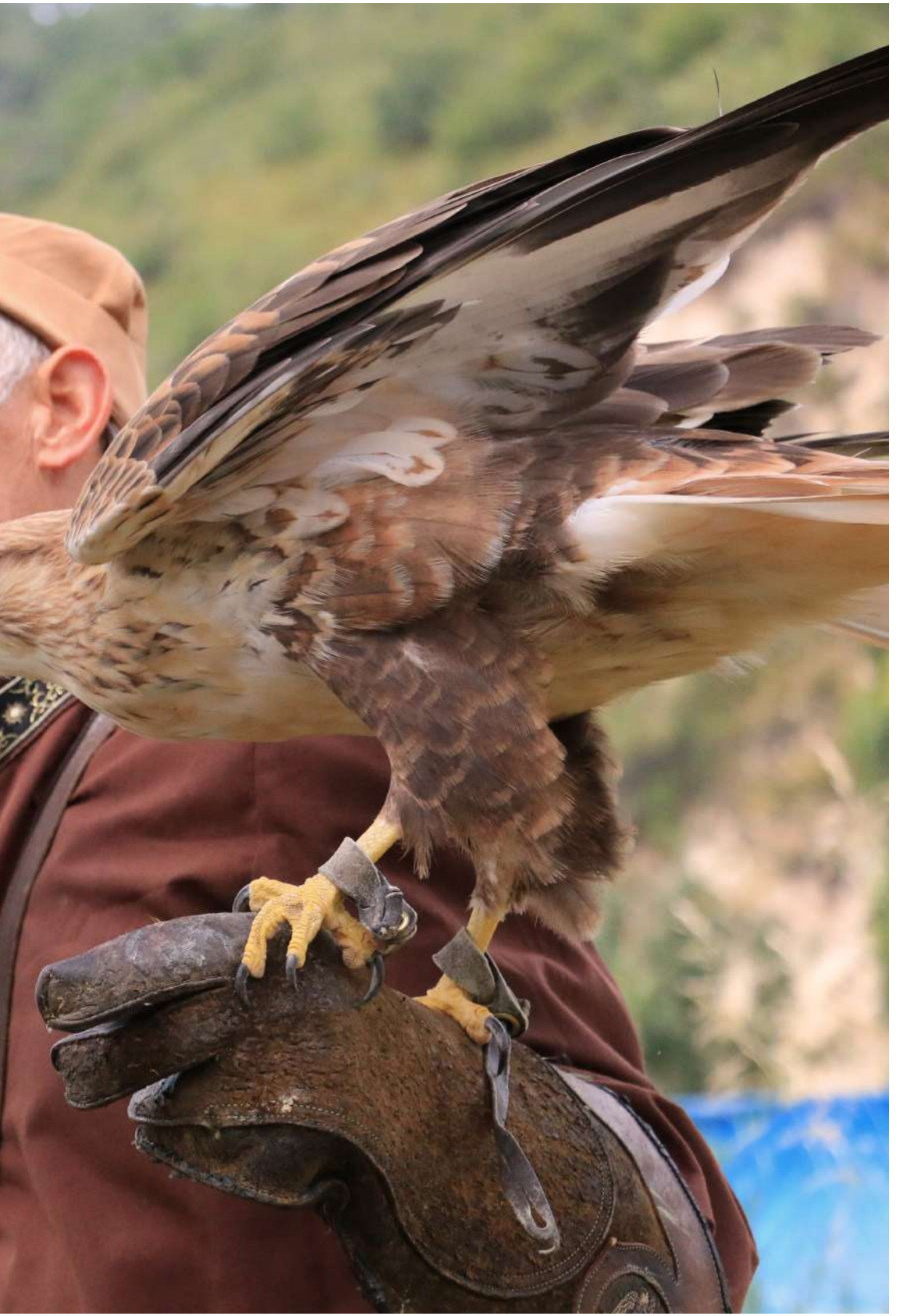
Cyrus Newlin (top left)
Alina Capanna (bottom left, right page)

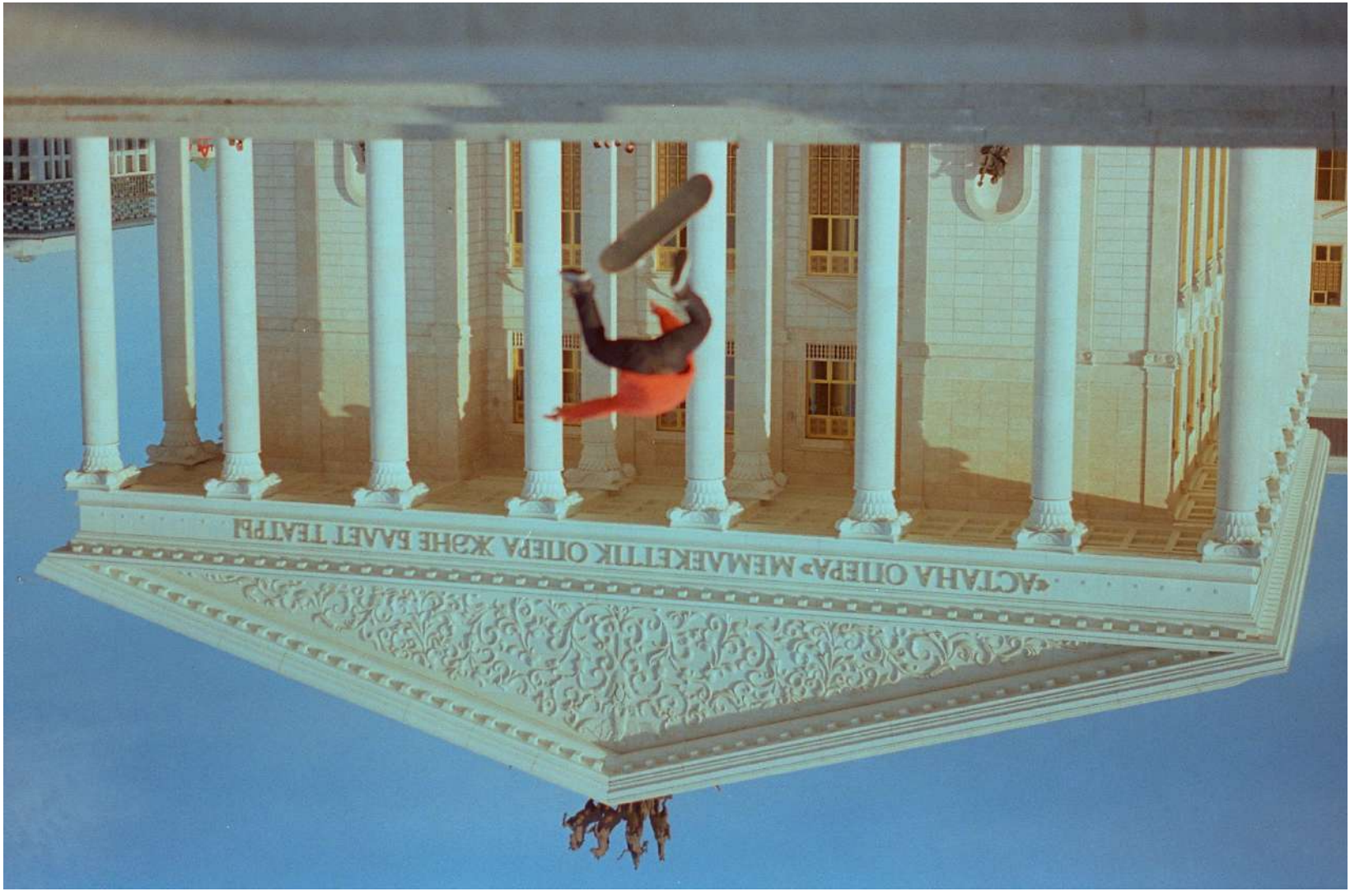



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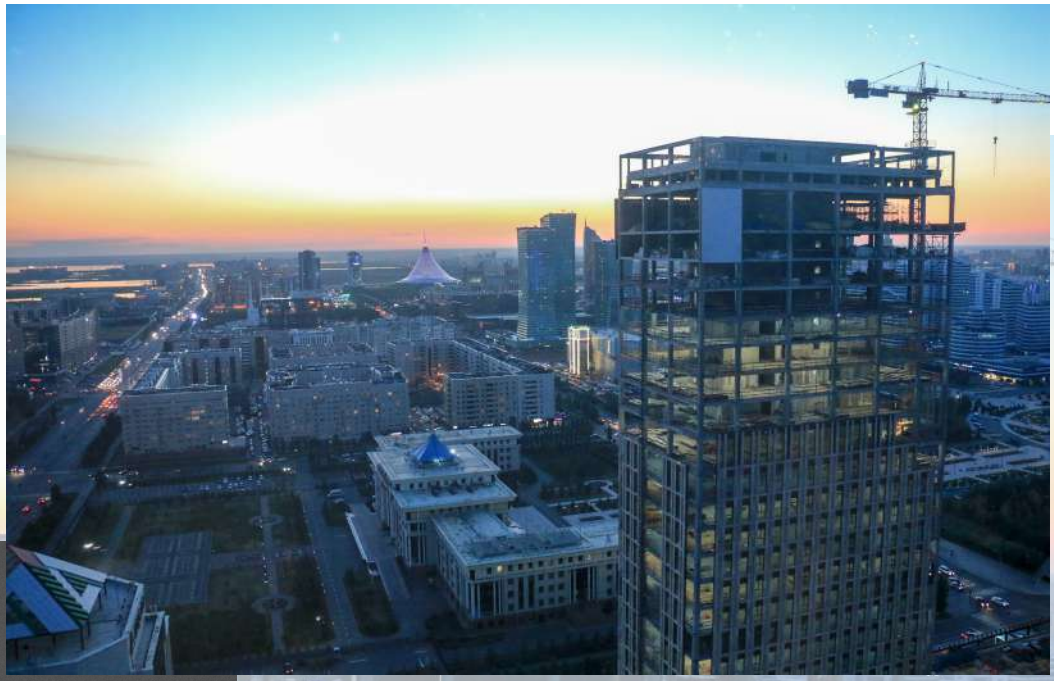


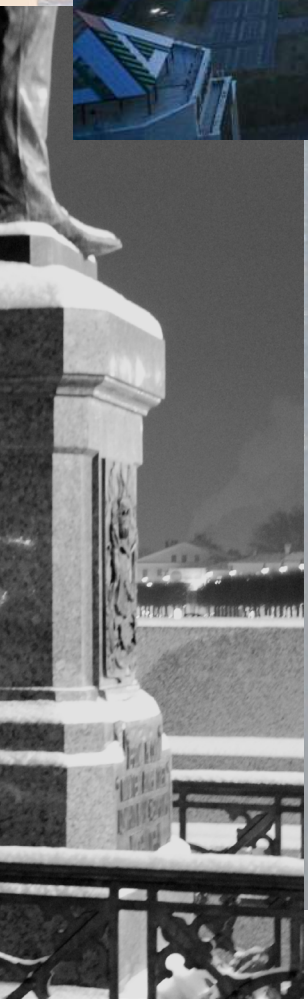


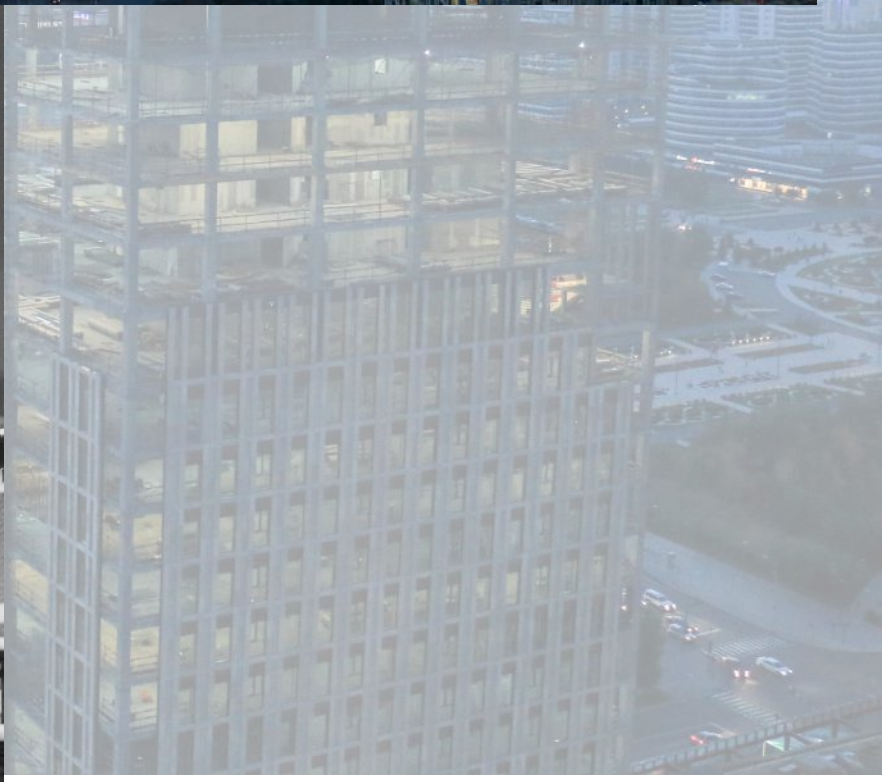

«ΑΣΤΑΗΑ ΟΠΕΡΑ» ΜΕΜΑΕΚΕΤΤΙΚ ΟΠΕΡΑ ΧΣΗΕ ΕΑΑΕΤ ΤΕΑΤΡΙ















Lance Hilderbrand

Alina Capanna

ABOUT THE CONTRIBUTORS

Yasha Hoffman is a sophomore at University of Wisconsin-Madison studying Russian Language and Civilization and Music Composition. **Alina Capanna** is a senior at the University of Wisconsin-Madison majoring in Philosophy and Russian Language and Culture. Their photographs, taken in and around Almaty, show them navigating the (metaphorical) fog of a new place, orienting the viewer in its daily life, architecture, and urban and natural geography.

Lance Hilderbrand's and **Cyrus Newlin**'s photographs here, taken in Saint Petersburg, reference history, tradition, and the decay of empire. Lance is a sophomore at Stanford, and Cyrus is a senior at Swarthmore College majoring in Political Science and Russian.

Kayla Ballesteros is a senior at the University of Arizona majoring in Visual Communications. Her illustrations of dark creatures of Slavic folklore treat them as allegories for mysterious evils and human suffering which otherwise went unexpressed in these cultures.

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