
THE BIRCH
2023

Front cover, back cover: birch tree forest in Almaty, Kazakhstan.
Photos by Irene Jang, Columbia University.

On this spread: pedestrians in Brighton Beach, New York City, NY.
Photo by Amelia Fay, Columbia University.
СМАК КАФЕ in Issyk-Kyl, Kyrgyzstan.
Photo by Irene Jang, Columbia University.

Section title pages: landscapes of the Czech Republic.
Photos by Martina Daniel, Columbia University.



ABOUT *THE BIRCH*

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

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

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LETTER FROM THE EDITORS

Resilience inspired the contents and the making of *THE BIRCH*, 2023, our first issue in three years, during this heartbreaking period when the true strength and diversity of Slavic culture have been needlessly tested.

Since Russian President Vladimir Putin launched an unprovoked further invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, Russia's brutal war of aggression in pursuit of expansionist and revisionist aims has only strengthened Ukraine's culture of resilience. The remarkable diversity of the Slavic, East European, and Eurasian regions illuminated during this dark time has given academia a moment for reflection on the region's cultural achievements still to be properly recognized.

We are motivated at *THE BIRCH* to continue building on our nearly 20-year legacy of raising undergraduate voices across the Slavic, East European, and Eurasian regions. Our mission is to celebrate not only the region's diversity, but also the significant variety and interconnections among students worldwide who are contributing to the discourse. We believe *THE BIRCH* — as a forum for discussion, debate, and inquiry — has never been so necessary, which is why we were determined to reinstate it.

Although *THE BIRCH* is the oldest undergraduate Slavic journal in America, it has not been published since 2020. The COVID-19 pandemic, coupled with Russia's war in Ukraine, froze its operations, and all staff with experience soon graduated. By the start of this year, the entirety of *THE BIRCH* consisted of a short list of account passwords--and even those were at times ineffectual, as we found ourselves locked out of our old website and social media.

We are incredibly proud of our staff, whose re-imaginings for the journal helped forge a new foundation for the journal to thrive. No member of staff had printed the journal before, yet this 112-page publication marks the largest-ever issue of *THE BIRCH*. Within the first two months of the school year, we launched a new website, created an Instagram account, and announced open submissions at over 100 Slavic-studies institutions. This publication reflects remarkable resilience and unprecedented accomplishments.

We are grateful to our contributors, without whom *THE BIRCH* would be impossible, and to the Columbia University Department of Slavic Languages and the Harriman Institute for their unwavering support. At this sobering historical inflection point, we are honored to present our undergraduate voices.

TALIA ABRAHAMSON & SOPHIE BRYANT
EDITORS–IN–CHIEF OF *THE BIRCH*

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CULTURE & HISTORY



Andrey Zvyagintsev's *Leviathan* as a Critique of Contemporary Russian Society

Amelia Fay
Columbia University

No arts; no letters; no society; and which is worst of all, continual fear, and danger of violent death; and the life of man solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short.

—Thomas Hobbes, Leviathan

In his 1651 treatise *Leviathan*, British philosopher Thomas Hobbes examines the relationship between the individual and the "sovereign." Man's natural state, he argues, is one devoid of culture and marked by violence—a "nasty, brutish, and short" existence. Individuals may transcend this suffering through obedience to a sovereign, who in return provides security and stability. This social contract between state and citizens is a central theme of Andrey Zvyagintsev's 2014 film *Leviathan*, which grapples with the concept's application in modern Russian society.

Hobbes is explaining the challenges of life outside the social contract, but his words are eerily relevant to the reality portrayed in Zvyagintsev's film. *Leviathan* follows Nikolai "Kolya" Sergeiev, a local mechanic attempting to combat the government's seizure of his ancestral land. During the appeal process, Kolya is confronted with corruption, violence, and betrayal. The authorities repeatedly remind Kolya that he is required to submit to them and that he is foolish to resist their demands. Kolya's life—and the lives of other citizens—is certainly "solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short," marked by "continual fear, and danger of violent death." Through this bleak portrayal of life in modern Russia, Zvyagintsev argues that the social contract is fundamentally broken; the state demands submission, yet fails to provide stability.

This paper is an analysis of Zvyagintsev's *Leviathan* as a critique of contemporary Russian society,

specifically a criticism of the state's failure to uphold its end of the social contract. We will first review the circumstances under which the modern social contract was born, to understand its continual deterioration up until the time of the film's release (the early 2010s). We will then examine the various societal ills portrayed in *Leviathan*, namely corruption and a lack of empathy. Finally, we will analyze viewers' split responses to *Leviathan*, specifically accusations that the film acts as anti-Russian propaganda.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

To fully appreciate *Leviathan*, we must analyze Putin's journey to the presidency and the political climate in which the film was born. After the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, Russian society fell into complete disarray. The Boris Yeltsin presidency, from 1991 to 1999, was defined by high crime rates, economic depression, and overall chaos. That Putin became president amid this turbulence is critical, because these circumstances allowed him to portray himself as the guarantor of order—a role he plays to this day.

Leading up to and throughout his time in power, Putin has exploited numerous conflicts to position himself as the sovereign, encouraging citizens to surrender their individual rights for the security he provides. In September 1999, several months before the presidential election, a series of bombs detonated in apartment buildings across Russia. Despite a lack of evidence suggesting the perpetrators were Chechens, Putin pinned the attacks on Chechnya, using them as a justification for the Second Chechen War. (It is important to note that these attacks may actually have been committed by the Federal Security Service (FSB), reflecting the lengths to which Putin will go to portray himself as a capable sovereign.) By generating an external conflict, Putin successfully rallied the Russian public behind him and increased his approval rating from two percent to 45 percent. It goes without saying that Putin's response to the bombings—in addition to his influence over the media and election interference—was instrumental in his rise to president.

During his time in power, Putin has leveraged various conflicts to justify the further concentration of state power or limitations on civil rights. During Putin's first two terms, these violations were mostly tolerated by the public, because living conditions had significantly improved since he took office. Economic growth, the victory in Chechnya, and rising oil and gas prices boosted morale. At this time, both the state and the public fulfilled their obligations under the unspoken social contract: stability in exchange for submission.

The social contract, however, began to disintegrate with Putin's return to the presidency in 2012. Triggered by financial difficulties—lingering instability due to the 2008 financial crisis—and a blatantly stolen election, large-scale protests erupted across the country. The state, unable to provide the security demanded by the social contract, had "disregard[ed] the choices of citizens while expecting them to take part in future rituals of

support." Thus was realized Hobbes's prediction: if the state violates its unspoken agreement with the people, the people will rebel.

When analyzing *Leviathan*, it is essential to understand the political situation at the time. These protests broke out less than a year before Zvyagintsev began production and they undoubtedly influenced the story. The original script, written in 2010, was inspired by a land dispute in Colorado, in which a local mechanic demolished multiple government buildings before taking his own life. However, the script was reworked in 2012—as anti-Putin discourse grew—to be a sweeping criticism of modern Russian society, incorporating references to Job and Thomas Hobbes. *Leviathan* is a reflection of the political circumstances in which it was made--namely, the public's realization that the state demands steadfast obedience yet fails to provide security.

LEVIATHAN'S PORTRAYAL OF RUSSIAN SOCIETY

Leviathan differs from many "individual versus the system" films in that it refuses to glorify its protagonists. Zvyagintsev himself has admitted to a frustration with simplistic approaches to such stories, which portray the protagonist as a hero opposing an evil government. Zvyagintsev, however, has explicitly stated that *Leviathan* aims to avoid such simplification. This nuanced approach is apparent in that not just the authorities, but also average citizens, are corrupt and morally transgressive.

To be clear, *Leviathan* is damning in its portrayal of the Russian authorities. Throughout the film, both the state and Orthodox Church abuse their positions to accrue personal wealth and political power. They are "hierarchical, violent, corrupt, unjust, and opaque [...] behav[ing] as if they are entitled to power." The authorities act superior to their subjects because they truly believe that to be the case; in the words of the Bishop, "All power comes from God." This divine authority—or, rather, the belief in its existence—empowers the authorities to "solve issues [by] might," to essentially beat citizens into submission.

Throughout the film, the state leverages both its physical might and its influence to discourage citizens from exercising their civil rights. The first major interaction between state and citizens occurs when the mayor and his men visit Kolya's home one night. Gesturing to the land, the mayor claims "all of this" belongs to him, before belittling Kolya and his lawyer, Dmitry. The mayor's use of animalistic terminology – "insects," "courtroom rat" – shows he does not even view the men as human, but mere scum. He continues, screaming, "You've never had any fucking rights and never will!" From the mayor's perspective, citizens must bow to state power, or else they cause themselves to "drown[ ] in shit" when they "make things difficult."

Later, the state uses violence to force Dmitry away from Kolya's case. The mayor and his men drive Dmitry to an isolated area, where they stage a mock execution before abandoning him. It is critical that the mayor himself fires the gun; he does not delegate this task and seems comfortable with

it as if this is a normal part of his job. Leaving Dmitry bound and crumpled on the ground, the mayor, unphased, immediately gets on the phone with the Bishop to discuss building plans for Kolya's land. (That the Bishop is on the other end of this call is only revealed to the audience in the film's final scene.) It is interesting that on this call, the mayor speaks of a "public-private partnership" and refers to the Church as a "brand." It goes without saying that in most societies, this language represents a flawed understanding of the Church's role. Zvyagintsev shows that in Russia, however, the Church is not just a business – with a reputation to be curated and protected – but also a client of the state.

It is not merely the authorities, however, who are corrupt. Zvyagintsev "blur[s] the lines between 'good' and 'bad,'" creating a world with "no recognizable heroes" where every character is flawed. The clearest example of this nuance is Kolya. It is purely the injustice of Kolya's situation, rather than any innate goodness or likability, that makes him sympathetic. In fact, Kolya is quite repulsive; he is violent, cruel, and an alcoholic. In contrast, Dmitry is idealistic—although somewhat naive—and dedicated to Kolya's case. But Dmitry, too, hurts those around him, most notably through his affair with Kolya's wife, Lilya, and his early return to Moscow. This is a trend in *Leviathan*, where all characters transgress moral boundaries and fail to "see the other and love the other." Characters repeatedly disappoint viewers with their selfishness and cruelty.

This lack of empathy – rooted in a lack of communication and overall dissatisfaction—causes characters to resort to physical forms of expression, such as sex and violence. Lilya, in particular, suffers from this lack of communication, in that her relationships with Kolya and Dmitry are primarily physical. Both men sleep with Lilya—at one point, Kolya even forces himself on her—yet they rarely engage her in substantive conversation. Although Lilya does not express herself verbally, it is clear she is deeply unhappy and hurt by the disdain with which Kolya and his son, Roma, treat her.

The problem with this physical method of expression becomes particularly evident with the exposure of Lilya and Dmitry's affair. Having learned of Dmitry's betrayal, Kolya attacks him and Lilya subsequently returns to the hotel with Dmitry. Dmitry briefly consoles Lilya, saying everyone is guilty and therefore she should not be overly critical of herself. Naturally, the viewer expects the conversation to continue with Dmitry and Lilya working through recent events or even simply connecting on a personal level. Instead, Dmitry goes on to curtly respond to Lilya's questions about his beliefs and reject her embrace. This interaction reveals that sex is the primary factor uniting Dmitry and Lilya; once their sexual relationship becomes impossi-

Zvyagintsev shows that in Russia, however, the Church is not just a business - with a reputation to be curated and protected - but also a client of the state.

ble—or at the very least dangerous—the two are left exchanging empty words. Dmitry speaks as if he cares for Lilya yet literally pushes her away while she is suffering. This atmosphere of physical exploitation and emotional coldness bleeds into Lilya's relationship with Kolya, who beats her when she returns later that night.

Overall, *Leviathan* paints a bleak picture of Russian society. Yes, the authorities are corrupt and brutal in their dealings with citizens. But Zvyagintsev also refuses to portray the citizens as martyrs, instead showing them to be egocentric, violent, and at times unfeeling. The characters all encounter some form of cruelty and suffer as a result, yet they perpetuate that same cruelty against others. Ultimately, Zvyagintsev argues that in today's Russia, corruption is a "process of degeneration affecting all levels of human existence [...] [a] state of being." In other words, the corruption, violence, and chaos that defined Russia in the 1990s have not been cleansed – but cemented – by the Putin regime.

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN AUTHORITIES AND LAND

Another aspect of *Leviathan*'s critique focuses on the citizens' and authorities' differing relations with the natural landscape. The film's main characters are consistently portrayed against the backdrop of the town's sweeping seaside scenery, often seeking refuge in the outdoors. Lilya, for instance, retreats to the sea when processing the breakdown of her marriage, ultimately choosing to drown herself in that location. Shortly after, Kolya sits outside watching videos of Lilya as he comes to terms with her absence. These are only two of the numerous portrayals of citizens seeking solitude in the natural landscape while grappling with *P*sychologically difficult situations.

The natural world, however, is not merely a space for mourning, but also a venue for relaxation and camaraderie. The most significant example of this is Ivan Stepanich's birthday party, for which Kolya's family and Dmitry join friends in the countryside. The men drink and shoot, appearing at ease now that they have distanced themselves from the authorities. (It is important to note that Stepanich is a police officer who at times leverages his position to earn favors from Kolya. However, he is not portrayed in connection to central authority—the mayor and the Bishop—and even encourages the others to deface portraits of Soviet leaders.) To citizens, the landscape represents a certain degree of freedom, a space in which they can speak freely and temporarily distract themselves from their bleak existence.

In contrast, Zvyagintsev portrays authorities in "social, constricted, man-made spaces," usually formal offices. The relationship between the mayor and the Bishop, in particular, follows this pattern; these characters are shown together three times, yet each scene takes place indoors. Specifically, the mayor and Bishop exclusively meet in religious venues: a church dining room, the Bishop's office, and, finally, the new church on Kolya's land. In addition, the mayor is repeatedly depicted in his personal office. These spaces are

uninviting, impersonal, and totally cut off from the outside world; the walls are covered in confining wood paneling and the windows are not shown. (On the other hand, Kolya's house is wrapped in large windows which seamlessly integrate it into the natural landscape.) These stylistic choices underscore how the authorities value land for neither its beauty nor history; in fact, they refuse to substantively interact with the landscape. To them, land is purely another vector of political power and a way to demonstrate status; the authorities do not even attempt to utilize the beauty of Kolya's land, instead building another closed-off structure: the church.

Although depicted outdoors on several occasions, authorities only venture outside their natural habitat to intimidate citizens. The first altercation between Kolya, Dmitry, and the mayor occurs outside Kolya's home. The mayor, clearly unwelcome, is flanked by multiple men and tells Kolya of his plans to seize the land. Later in the film, the mayor travels to a remote area to to abuse Dmitry. In short, there are no moments in which a significant authority figure retreats into the landscape for solitude, or even just to appreciate its beauty.

Leviathan prompts viewers to ask themselves not only, "Why do we tolerate this abuse?" but, more importantly, "Why do we perpetuate it?"

Through its vastly contrasting visuals, *Leviathan* questions not only the power the state wields over its citizens but also the state's manipulation of land and nature. For citizens, land represents not only a financial asset, but one's family history, community, and right to privacy. Zvyagintsev validates citizens' claim to the land and argues that the authorities' attempts to manipulate and control the land transcend the laws of nature. This is yet another way in which *Leviathan* problematizes the social contract, suggesting that the extent of state control in modern Russian society unnaturally severs citizens from the resources and the land to which they have a claim.

CONCLUSION

The reality depicted in *Leviathan* is undoubtedly bleak; characters exploit each other in different ways and regularly resort to violence instead of civil communication. For all but the central authorities, this existence is "solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short." Thus, *Leviathan* prompts viewers to ask themselves not only, "Why do we tolerate this abuse?" but, more importantly, "Why do we perpetuate it?" As Dmitry says, "Each of us is guilty of our own faults. Everything is everyone's fault"; there is a sickness at the core of modern Russia.

Ultimately, by depicting life as miserable, dangerous, and turbulent, Zvyagintsev challenges the origin myth of modern Russia. Putin did not cleanse Russian society but rather created conditions in which corruption and cruelty still thrive. Therefore, the social contract has been broken and citizens are surrendering their freedom in return for nothing.

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A Shifting Symbolism: the Vijećnica of Sarajevo

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In the past two hundred years, the city of Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina, has gone through major changes politically, socially, and physically. After centuries of occupation by the Ottoman Empire, the city became part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire in the late 19th century. With the assassination of Austrian Archduke Franz Ferdinand, the city sparked World War I, eventually leading to the end of Austro-Hungarian rule and establishment of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia. The Kingdom fell during World War II, and led to the creation of Socialist Federal Republic Yugoslavia. Socialist Yugoslavia disintegrated in the 1990s, enveloping Sarajevo into a three and a half-year long violent siege. Through these changes, the physical presence of the city has been significantly altered. One building in particular, known as Vijećnica, meaning town hall, has been at the forefront of these changes both physically and symbolically. First built under the Austro-Hungarian occupation, the building became a library during the Socialist period, until its destruction during the war in 1992. As of 2014, the building has been rebuilt and stands as it once did on the banks of the Miljačka River. By studying Vijećnica's position within the political context of Sarajevo, we can better understand how the meaning of symbolic buildings go through changes in relation to the political environment.

In this paper, I will argue that the political elites of Bosnia and Herzegovina have used Vijećnica to implement their own political goals

and motivations, resulting in a shifting of the building's symbolism between each political regime. By analyzing how one building can take on various meanings in relation to the political system, we can better understand how public space is utilized to serve the agendas of the political elite. First, I will discuss the original construction of Vijećnica under the Austro-Hungarian Empire, which sought to use the building as a colonial symbol of Austro-Hungarian power and a mechanism of the empire's political goals. Second, I will discuss the building's transition to a library under Socialist Yugoslavia, which putt it in line with the political goals of the Communist Party by opening the building for public use. Finally, I will conclude with the destruction of the building by Serb forces in 1992, which was a targeted assault on the history and cultural heritage of Bosnia. Through these changes, Vijećnica has endured and remains an example of the symbolism of architecture throughout different political, social, and physical changes, reflecting the country's elite influence on public space.

CONSTRUCTION OF VIJEĆNICA

The process of building Vijećnica was tightly controlled by the Austro-Hungarians who had a certain vision for the project. Construction of the building began in 1892 and was completed four years later on April 20, 1896. The project was sponsored and financed by the Austro-Hungarian government which occupied the territory of Bosnia and Herzegovina from the Ottomans in the aftermath of the 1878 Treaty of Berlin. The occupation became rather ambiguous in nature as nominally the country still belonged to the Ottomans, while its occupation and administration were left to the Austro-Hungarians. Originally the architect was Karl Pařik, but he was replaced after the provincial governor, Benjámin von Kállay, saw his Byzantine-style designs. According to Maximilian Hartmuth, Kallay preferred the Neo-Islamic work of Alexander Wittek, who was replaced on his death by Croat architect, Ćiril Iveković (Figure 1).

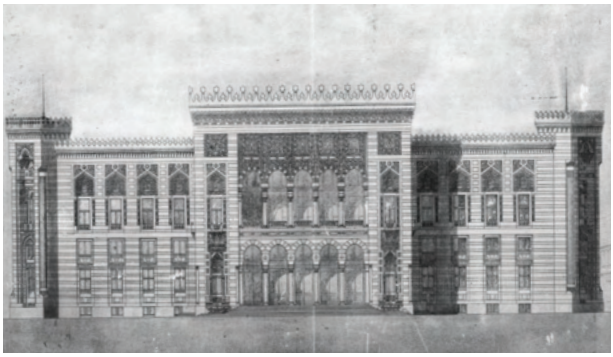


Photo courtesy of Valerijan Žujo, Ferhad Mulabegović, and Smajo Mulaomerović, *The Vijećnica of Sarajevo: Construction, Destruction, Reconstruction*: 46.

Figure 1. Iveković's design of Vijećnica

One of the most prominent features of Vijećnica is the striped façade

which encompasses the whole building. Unclear from where the exact features of the building originated from, the striped façade seems to have been influenced by the Sultan Qaytbay Funerary Complex and Sultan Hassan Mosque in Cairo. According to Maxiliam Hartmuth, Wittek took several trips to Cairo during the period in which he was designing Vjećnica. Comparing the two mosques and Vijećnica, one can see the similarities in the façade, however the Islamic religious elements like the minaret as well as the funerary domes are not present in Vijećnica (Figures 2 and 3). These various Islamic-esque elements, including the striped façade, striped arches, and geometric elements, are what have led to the labeling of Vijećnica as "Pseudo-Moorish," "Neo-Islamic," or "Oriental."

The Austro-Hungarian policy towards ethnicity in Bosnia has often been connected with the construction of Vijećnica. When the Austro-Hungarians took control of Bosnia and Herzegovina from the Ottomans, they found a multi-ethno-religious land with a large land-owning Muslim population, with the majority being free peasants and tenant farmers who were largely Serb Orthodox or Catholic. While the Catholics were more sympathetic to the seizing of power by the Catholic Austro-Hungarians, both Muslim and Orthodox populations were largely dissatisfied by the Austro-Hungarian occupation. In Sarajevo, the Austro-Hungarians were met with staunch resistance by Bosnian Muslims who briefly led a guerrilla movement against the occupiers. Worried about the potential for South Slav unity against the occupation, the Austro-Hungarians looked to play off the various ethno-religious groups and gave consistent preferential treatment to Catholics while also seeking to appease Bosnian-Muslim elite. However, at the same time, almost adversely, von Kállay during his governorship sought to counter the growing Serb Orthodox and Catholic Croat nationalism, by creating bošnjaštvo, "a multiconfessional Bosnian nationalism" created by the Austro-Hungarians. The Empire took a contradictory approach supporting both ethnic divisions and unequal treatment of ethno-religious groups, while also pushing for a unified multi-confessional Bosnian nationalism.

Within this contradiction of ethnic division and unification lives the motivations of the creation of Vijećnica. Scholars have often attributed Vijećnica's "Oriental" style to the Austro-Hungarian's desire to cater to the Ottoman Muslim elite, by invoking this "Oriental" architectural style. However, Hartmuth points out that this analysis is flawed, as it ignores the similar "Pseudo-Moorish" style used elsewhere in Europe during that period, like in Sephardic mosques in Germany. Instead, Hartmuth posits that the building can be better understood as an attempt by Austro-Hungarians to establish their political dominance over the Ottomans. Hartmuth argues the Vijećnica was



Photo by Frances Frith, 1858

Figure 2. Sultan Qaytbay Funerary Complex in Cairo

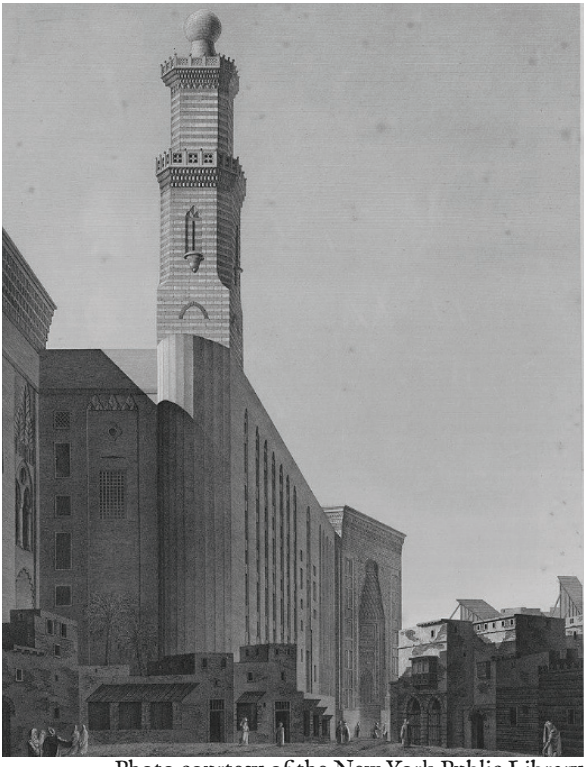


Photo courtesy of the New York Public Library Digital Collections

Figure 3. Print of the Sultan Hassan Mosque

an attempt of the Autro-Hungarians to "create a visual argument for legitimacy" for their rule in Bosnia. According to Hartmuth, the use of "Oriental" architectural styles in Vijećnica could have been motivated by the Austro-Hungarian desire to "lay claim to a direct line of descent" from the Ottomans and Muslims of Bosnia to themselves as part of a path of political evolution. Hartmuth compares the use of "visual argument for legitimacy" to British architecture which sought to replicate Indian architecture in an attempt to draw descendancy and legitimacy from the Rajputs and Mughals. While it is hard to know whether the Austro-Hungarians were trying to "lay claim to a direct line of descent" it is clear they looked to establish themselves as the new leaders of Bosnia and Herzegovina, who wanted to ensure that their rule would be unchallenged by any ethno-religious group. While I would caution against glossing over the desire of the Austro-Hungarians to cater to the Muslim elite in their motivations of Vijećnica's "Oriental" style, Hartmuth's argument can be elaborated by looking at how the physical construction of Vijećnica also reflected the desire of the Austro-Hungarians to establish their dominance over the Ottomans.

Taking over from the Ottomans, the Austro-Hungarians saw themselves as the "carriers of civilization" and wanted to highlight their supremacy over the Ottoman Dynasty, especially given the dubious nature of their occupation. The Treaty of Berlin left many ambiguities as to how the Austro-Hungarians would occupy and administer Bosnia and Herzegovina to take power from the Ottomans which the Ottomans had little choice other than to accept the gradual occupation of their former territory. Although they were able to take the country with minimal bloodshed, the political situation was still extremely ambiguous. Scholars have debated on a myriad of reasons which motivated the Austro-Hungarians to annex the territory, including geopolitical competition with Russia, economic incentives and territorial expansion. However, it is clear that colonial motivations also played a role, as Austro-Hungarians perceived themselves to be undertaking a "civilizing mission" in Bosnia and Herzegovina. According to Clemens Ruthner, Austro-Hungarian Joint Finance Minister Benjamin von Kállay, who



Photo courtesy of Valerijan Žujo, Ferhad Mulabegović, and Smajo Mulaomerović, *The Vijećnica of Sarajevo: Construction, Destruction, Reconstruction*: 35.

Figure 4. Part of Mustaj-Pasha Square Before it's Destruction to build Vijećnica

would later become the Provincial Governor in Bosnia, was quoted in the Daily Chronicle saying, "Austria is a great Occidental Empire [...] charged with the mission of carrying civilization to Oriental peoples..." The Vijećnica was built within a larger modernizing project undertaken by the Austro-Hungarians in order to bring "modernity" to Sarajevo and Bosnia in general.

Vijećnica, as a monument, sought to exemplify Austro-Hungarian supremacy and legitimacy. The building's physical presence reflects how Austro-Hungarians looked to establish dominance over the physical spaces of Ottoman Sarajevo. According to Valerijan Žujo, Ferhad Mulabegović, and Smajo Mulaomerović, Vijećnica was built in Mustaj-Pasha square which was one of the oldest urban sections of Ottoman Sarajevo (Figure 4).

The demolishing of Mustaj-Pasha square and the replacement of a traditional urban area with an Austro-Hungarian structure, established spacial dominance of the Austro-Hungarians as they were able to destroy and reshape the former Ottoman urban areas to their own liking. The structure and size of Vijećnica also makes clear the dominant position that the Austro-Hungarians sought to establish over the Ottomans. Vijećnica stands tall over the rest of the Baščaršija neighborhood of Ottoman Sarajevo, structurally dominating the cityscape (Figure 5). Through the construction and creation of Vijećnica it is clear that Austro-Hungarians sought to prove themselves as the new and dominant rulers of Sarajevo compared to the Ottomans.



Photo courtesy of Valerijan Žujo, Ferhad Mulabegović, and Smajo Mulaomerović, *The Vijećnica of Sarajevo: Construction, Destruction, Reconstruction*: 65.

Figure 5. Vijećnica in 1901



Photo courtesy of Valerijan Žujo, Ferhad Mulabegović, and Smajo Mulaomerović, *The Vijećnica of Sarajevo: Construction, Destruction, Reconstruction*: 75.

Figure 6. A reading room in the National and University Library.

Vijećnica in its inception was a

result of colonial power and desires as the Austro-Hungarians sought to create the building for their own political goals to establish their dominance and colonial legitimacy in the newly occupied Bosnia while also bringing about "modernity" to Bosnia. In a new political environment, however, the symbolism of Vijećnica changed along with the status of the building. As Josip Broz Tito, leader of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia (KPJ), and his Partisans took power in 1945 after a long and bloody conflict in World War II, Vijećnica began to take on a new meaning, revolutionizing from its position as a colonial symbol.

VIJEĆNICA AS A PUBLIC USE LIBRARY

With the end of World War II, Sarajevo and Bosnia and Herzegovina as whole began another major transition, with the establishment of socialist Yugoslavia under Tito and the KPJ. Vijećnica also experienced a transformation, as the building became the host of the National and University Library of Bosnia and Herzegovina (Figure 6).

Vijećnica's transition into a library was reflective of the anti-nationalism, multi-ethnic, and socialist goals of the KPJ regime, as the party adapted the building to fit their own ideology. This period for Vijećnica, marked the building's transformation into another important symbol for Sarajevo, although this time different from its colonial and perceived "Oriental" past.

Tito and the KPJ came to power after a brutal and bloody conflict within the former Kingdom of Yugoslavia during World War II. The Kingdom of Yugoslavia was invaded by Nazi Germany on April 6, 1941, and the cities of Sarajevo and Belgrade were the first attacked. The control of Sarajevo and a large portion of interwar Yugoslavia was ceded to the Nazi puppet-state, the Independent State of Croatia (NDH), which was controlled by a nationalist, fascist Croatian paramilitary called the Ustaša. In response to the partition and occupation of the country, many resistance groups were born, including the Communist Party's militia wing known as the Partisans, led by Tito. The Partisans fought for a multi-ethnic, communist nation, in contrast to the other nationalist groups like the Croat Ustaša or Serb Četniks, who fought for the supremacy of their own ethnic groups. Eventually, the Partisans emerged victorious and took power at the end of the war, establishing the new Federal People's Republic of Yugoslavia.

Coming out of a war where ethnic-hatred was encouraged and acted upon by political leaders, the KPJ pushed another narrative instead, focusing on a united, communist, secular, Yugoslav identity rather than ethno-religious groups. A main pillar of this new Yugoslav identity was the phrase, "brotherhood and unity," which argued the importance of Yugoslav belonging over ethno-religious national identity. In this unified, communist, secular push, architecture in Bosnia and Herzegovina

came under the scrutiny of the KPJ. According to historians Dijana Alić and Maryam Gusheh, "the historic links between the Muslims of Bosnia and the Ottoman colonial power, which brought Islam to Bosnia problematized the future of Ottoman architectural heritage in Bosnia." Alić and Gusheh are specifically referring to the old Ottoman economic center of Sarajevo, Baščaršija, which had direct ties to the Ottomans and Bosnian Muslims. Viječnica, was only influenced by "Oriental" architecture and was built by the Austro-Hungarian colonial power, thus having a unique place in the architectural historiography of Sarajevo. Similar to the Austro-Hungarian's leveling of Mustaj-Pasha Square, the Communist also considered demolishing Baščaršija. It is unknown whether such demolition was considered for Vijećnica, but the structure did not remain as a town hall and instead was transformed into the National and University Library of Bosnia and Herzegovina in 1951. This transformation from a space reserved for the colonial political elite, to a public-use space, symbolized the transition from the Austro-Hungarians to a Communist regime. Vijećnica was no longer a marker of the colonial past, but instead a reflection of KPJ-interpreted communist values of a public good that is for all to use. From an article published in the local daily Bosnian newspaper Oslobodjenje discussing the creation of the National Library in 1945, the author writes, "For this purpose, the National Library will acquire all work in our and other languages which are needed by our workers, villagers, farmers, intellectuals, craftsmen and etc." The article highlights the belief that the National Library is for all, not just for academic researchers, but also for workers or villagers or farmers.

As the building transformed symbolism under the Communist regime, so did its symbolism in the greater Sarajevan community. Writing about the library during the Communist period, former librarian Munevera Zećo, writes, "The building itself was a symbol of the city and was the pride of Sarajevans." Zećo's words exemplify how important a symbol Vijećnica had become for Sarajevans, no longer a colonial symbol. In a similar manner to how the KPJ claimed Yugoslavia to be a nation for the "people", Vijećnica was a public good for all. While the KPJ sought to transform usage of the building to its political ideology, the Sarajevan public also came to claim its own symbolism of the building as a representation of the city itself. The elites of Sarajevo did not alone define the public space and Vijećnica in particular, but the broader Sarajevan public also played a key role.

The National Library is for all, not just for academic researchers, but also for workers or villagers or farmers.

Ultimately though, the socialist project of the KPJ failed, resulting in the dissolution of Yugoslavia.

While Tito and the Party sought to push Yugoslav identity and "brotherhood and unity" other political actors within Yugoslavia used nationalist and hateful rhetoric to bring themselves more power and as a result, divide the country. As war broke out in Bosnia in 1992, the public space became a target to those forces looking to tear apart the newly independent country. In this context, Vijećnica's symbolism as a space with a shared Bosnian history made the building a target for destruction. Tragically, as the Vijećnica went up in flames, so did the over 1,500,000 volumes and 600,000 serials in the collection.

DESTRUCTION OF THE LIBRARY

Vijećnica's symbolism as a shared public space for Bosnians and as a historical repository for Bosnian history, resulted in the building being a target for those seeking to destroy the cultural heritage of the country. In June 1991, Yugoslavia fractured as former republics in the country, first Slovenia, then followed by Croatia, declared their independence. War broke out briefly in Slovenia and Croatia fell into a bloody conflict. Bosnia and Herzegovina, had a very ethnically and religiously diverse population, largely composed of Bosnian Muslims, Catholic Croats and Orthodox Serbs, meaning that war in the country could lead to a long and brutal conflict. On February 29, 1992, Bosnia held an independence referendum with 63.4 percent of the electorate voting for independence, even with calls for boycotts from Bosnian Serbs. On March 3, 1992, Bosnia and Herzegovina declared independence from Yugoslavia, leading to a brutal war, as Bosnian Serbs declared the secessionist state of the Republika Srpska and received military support from the Yugoslavia National Army (JNA). As soon as the war began, Serb forces started "carrying out a systematic and well-planned programme of ethnic cleansing of non-Serb populations" in order to create a mono-ethnic state. Sarajevo, the capital of the newly independent Bosnia and Herzegovina came under siege by the Republika Srpska forces, who targeted civilians as well as cultural heri-



Photo courtesy of Valerijan Žujo, Ferhad Mulabegović, and Smajo Mulaomerović, *The Vijećnica of Sarajevo: Construction, Destruction, Reconstruction*: 88.

Figure 7. Vijećnica in flames on August 25, 1992

tage sites throughout the city, including mosques, churches, synagogues. Vijećnica became one of the victims of the siege, as it was hit by artillery fire the night of August 25, 1992, which resulted in the destruction of over 70 percent of the library's holding and the complete destruction of the building (Figure 7).

Vijećnica was not the only cultural heritage targeted by the Bosnian Serb forces, but its destruction was part of a larger campaign which targeted the culture and existence of Bosnia and Herzegovina. On May 17, 1992, a little over a month after the war broke out, Bosnian Serb forces shelled the Oriental Institute of Sarajevo. According to Helen Walasek "the Institute was intentionally targeted by Bosnian Serb artillery with phosphorus shells which burned and completely destroyed its large and important collection of Islamic and Jewish manuscripts in Arabic, Persian, Ottoman Turkish, Hebrew and aljamiado (Bosnian written in Arabic script), as well as the Ottoman provincial archives and cadastral registers - primary sources for Bosnia's history and culture." As Walasek notes, the destruction of the Institute was not just the destruction of a building, but an intentional attack on the heritage and history of Bosnia and Herzegovina. The destruction was an attempt at the erasure of the Bosnian Muslim and Ottoman past by the Serb forces looking to push their nationalist, religious, and ethnic-cleansing filled agenda. Walasek quotes art conservator and member of the Office for the Protection of Cultural Property in Sarajevo, Nihad Čengić, saying "How do you destroy a people if you can't kill them all? You destroy all the materials which proved their existence. That's why mosques are being destroyed. That's why the Oriental Institute was destroyed. They're destroying these things to reconstruct history..."

Not only was the physical structure of Vijećnica ruined, but also the historical and literary importance of the National and University Library was destroyed. Along with the once-famous ruined façade, much of the library's collections were also destroyed. According to Žujo, Mulabegović, and Mulaomerović, "numerous manuscripts, most of the cartographic collection, the musical score holdings, the collection of postcards and graphics, as well as numerous other documents of exceptional importance for our culture were irrevocably lost." It is also essential to mention that during the war, several librarians were killed including 30 year-old Aida Buturović, who was shot returning from work at the library on August 25. Zećo also mentions three other colleagues from the library, Mirko Azinović, Adela Leota, and Anto Kovačić, who were killed during the siege. The human loss during the siege was immense.

The importance of Vijećnica as a shared public space was important in its targeting and destruction. As András Riedlmayer writes, the National Library like many other symbols targeted by Serb forces "symbolized the everyday fact of living

together, of shared cultural space." Riedlmayer elaborates that to nationalists, who wanted to emphasize purity and apartheid, these places of shared culture not only went against but also challenged and disproved their beliefs and thus they were destroyed. Vijećnica's symbolism as a place of shared culture, a public good which all Bosnians, regardless of ethnicity or profession could access, stood contrary to the beliefs of the nationalists who sought to build a mono-ethnic state. While it may not be possible to know the "intentions of the people involved" as Kristen Hartmann writes, placing the destruction of Vijećnica and other cultural sites in the larger campaign against cultural heritage waged by Bosnian Serb forces, can be understood as the symbolism of Vijećnica likely playing an important role in its targeting. The Bosnians Serbs' idea of Vijećnica stood contrary to their goals and perception of a mono-ethnic, Serb state. The public space of Sarajevo became a target to the Serb forces, seeking to destroy, change, and mold their physical reality of the city to fit into their nationalist ideology, reflecting how public spaces can be molded to the ideologies of political elites.

CONCLUSION

In a century, the Vijećnica of Sarajevo saw multiple changes in its symbolic value as interpreted by the political elites within the city. Beginning with the building's construction in 1896, Vijećnica exemplified the political goals of the Austro-Hungarian colonial project, to both project power over the Ottoman past while implementing their civilizing mission. With the eventual rise of the Communist Party, Vijećnica was transformed into a public space, a National Library. Unfortunately, the association with shared-space and Bosnian history led to the structure being targeted by Bosnian Serb forces during the Siege of Sarajevo. With the various political changes within the city and country, Vijećnica has been affected, as elites have shifted its symbolism to fit their own goals and realities. The shifting symbolism of Vijećnica demonstrates how public space is not apolitical but rather has the potential to be mobilized for various ideologies. While the political context around the building may change, the physical structure endures, leaving it open for a new symbolism created under their ambitions of a new system.

Recently, Vijećnica has taken on a new symbolism, as it has been reconstructed, reflecting the rebuilding and resiliency of Bosnia after the destruction of the war, while also dealing with the fallout of extreme violence, economic struggles, a divided political system, and rampant corruption. Vijećnica is a testament to the ability of one building to withstand so many changes. Through construction, transformation, destruction, and rebuilding, Vijećnica has stood as part of the Sarajevo skyline. Much like the city of Sarajevo, and its enduring culture, heritage and traditions, while all others pass, Vijećnica remains.

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Walking the Streets of Daneliia's Moscow

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Soviet director Georgii Daneliia's 1963 film *I Walk the Streets of Moscow* follows Volodya, an aspiring writer from Siberia who travels to Moscow to discuss his work with a famous author. The film begins with Volodya's arrival at the Vnukovo Airport as the Kremlin's bells toll in the background, signaling a change in both time and state power. The camera then pans to a woman singing alongside her reflection in the airport's window, with Volodya moving in unison with her. Both figures are mirrored in the puddles on the wet tarmac. Encased between glass and water, the characters stand in a liminal space of (self-) reflection, detached from the chaotic action of the background. This scene's dialog reveals the major thematic arc of the film:

You feel good?
Really good!
No, that can't be!
Yes, it can be! ... Yes, it can be!

Although this exchange satirically jokes about doubt, sincere skepticism lies in the repetition of the line "Yes, it can be!". It is as if the characters need reassurance that "feeling good" is possible in the aftermath of Stalin's brutality. The conflict of this scene is further developed compositionally as an otherwise amiable morning on the tarmac is foiled by puddles of a recent rain shower. In conjunction, these first elements of the film allude to how characters' inner-worlds are speckled with doubt and disbelief. Daneliia transforms the physical landscape of *I Walk the Streets of Moscow* through weather, camera movement, and other visual techniques into a subjective landscape influenced by the internal struggles of the charac-

ters. Although Daneliia created *I Walk the Streets of Moscow* in response to the confusion of the post-Stalin era, his film is relevant to the city's current situation—one of major political and cultural change.

BACKGROUND

Stalin's death in March 1953 triggered a shift in Soviet culture and politics away from the oppression that had defined his totalitarian regime. Stalin's dictatorship began in the late 1920s with his first Five-Year Plan, which allowed him to seize control of the USSR's industrial and agricultural sectors, with the goal of transforming the Soviet Union into a global superpower. Although Stalin brutalized the Soviet population via the secret police, the Gulag system, and the Great Purge, he successfully developed a cult of personality that shifted public conversation away from these atrocities. Coined by novelist Ilya Ehrenburg, the term "The Thaw" refers to the post-Stalinist period—1953 to 1967—as well as the socio-political movements it encompassed. Khrushchev's Secret Speech, which took place on February 25, 1956 at the Twentieth Party Congress, anathematized the cult of Stalin and opened the floodgates for individual self-expression and self-reflection within Soviet culture. Cultural liberation during "The Thaw" permitted the proliferation of uncensored books, foreign films, art shows, and novel forms of entertainment.

The Soviet film industry, in particular, underwent rapid stylistic and structural changes during this time. In the words of Russian cinema scholar Aleksandr Prokhorov, "The last years of Stalin's rule became known as the time of cine-anemia [. . .] due to strict ideological control over the industry and relatively low financing of film production and exhibition. After Stalin's death in 1953, the industry received more resources and was decentralized." The cinema of "The Thaw" drew on the avant-garde aesthetics of Italian Neorealism and the French New Wave, which disrupted the propagandist state script of Stalinism that had commonly focused on the Eastern Front of World War II. Thaw-era directors often explored individualized experiences of trauma in Soviet history in unprecedented ways that, only a few years prior, would have been unimaginable, such as in Mikhail Kalatozov's *The Cranes Are Flying* (1960) and Grigoriy Chukhray's *Ballad of a Soldier* (1959). Whereas other films, for instance—Eldar Ryazanov's *Carnival Night* (1956) and Leonid Gaidai's *Operation Y and Shurik's Other Adventures* (1965)—sought to foster a jovial narrative and sustain cinematic escapism by thematizing cheerier romantic and comedic tropes. *I Walk the Streets of Moscow* synthesizes both these light and dark elements of Thaw cinema. Scholars have often considered the optimistic, gleeful themes, and somewhat superficial plot of *I Walk the Streets of Moscow*, which are, indeed, closely related to the tropes of the Stalinist musical, yet an intentional, heavier undercurrent discloses itself upon further analysis, which makes *I Walk the Streets of Moscow* unexpectedly resonate with the dire political situation in Vladimir Putin's Russia.

MOVEMENT

The diegesis of *I Walk the Streets of Moscow* consists of a predominantly realistic day exhibited through the meanderings of Volodya and several other supporting characters. Toward the beginning of the film, the audience is introduced to Sasha, a young man whose narrative pivots on a moral struggle between his duty to the Soviet state (i.e., military service) and his personal life (i.e., a wedding). His character raises questions on the importance of individualism—in this case, romance—versus responsibility to the Party. The competing tensions in Sasha's life can be mapped onto the larger sociocultural "debate" between Stalinism and "The Thaw." The one yet unmentioned character is Kolya, a mischievous young Moscow Metro worker who becomes "the subject and object of Moscow's visual exploration." Kolya's navigation of the city is encapsulated through recurring scenes of him in the street; on buses and in cars; or in proximity to various forms of urban transportation. These images disclose Daneliia's intention to use Kolya as both a vessel of movement on whom the camera relies to physically experience Moscow and the character driving the film's plot. The uniting factor between all of Kolya's movements is that they are largely aimless, even desultory. Thus arises a distinctive query that lingers with us throughout *I Walk the Streets of Moscow*: In what direction, if any, is Moscow heading?

Shots focusing on transportation, industrialization, masses of citizens, and the modern New Arbat Street in contrast to the Red Square are all intentional elements making Moscow itself a character in the film. Under Stalin, Moscow's cityscape grew vertically through mass industrialization and the postwar construction of skyscrapers. Allegorically understood, society's obligatory upward growth demonstrated linear compliance to Stalin's hierarchical communist agenda. This vertical movement proclaimed the "achievement" of the communist utopia. By contrast, the "kino-eye" of the 1960s— a recycled term from the 1920s avant-garde—moves horizontally, traversing a promising new cityscape as a liberated flâneur: "a connoisseur of the street, who enjoyed a mobile form of perception capable of synthesizing the transient fragments of modern life through urban strolls and willingness to immerse himself in the crowd." Indeed, in the opening shots of *I Walk the Streets of Moscow*, the camerawork physically thaws from a stagnant bird's-eye view into a fluid pan, representing the cultural movement unfolding within Moscow itself. The very cinematography of the film re-enacts Soviet society's passage from Stalinism (1930s-1940s) into "The Thaw" (1950s-1960s): stolid verticality to fluid horizontality.

A variety of Eastern and Western elements also percolate throughout *I Walk the Streets of Moscow* in various chance encounters, such as the corner-shop boy learning English; a young Japanese tourist in a taxi; and the gaggle of European tourists on Red Square. The transformation of Moscow's physical space is complemented by its changing "social architecture" during "The Thaw." This dynamism is sustained because of the characters' explorative movement. Russian film scholar Lida Oukaderova has explained this concept further: "Static structures become renewed with each human passage

through them, their feel and appearance affected by pedestrians' routes, bodies, minds, and modes of mobility." The film's subtle inclusions of non-citizens insinuates Moscow's reconstruction on a global scale, not just within the country itself.

The effect of Moscow's dynamism in *I Walk the Streets of Moscow* substantiates through an experience analogical to a museum, not unlike Aleksandr Sokurov's famous 2002 film; Russian Ark explores the Hermitage Museum in Saint Petersburg at a watershed historical moment as Russia transitioned into the new, post-Soviet millennium. In Daneliia's case, the openness of Moscow during "The Thaw" attracts spectators, similar to a new exhibit, and the city offers viewers an experience of self-education by exhibiting the characters' journeys through the urban environment. It is here we can appreciate Daneliia's optimism for a modern utopia on the cutting edge of reinvention. In summary, global travel begets cultural migration, and furthermore, *I Walk the Streets of Moscow*—like other contemporary films, such as Marlen Khutsiev's *July Rain* (1966)—illuminates Moscow as a centripetal destination. The film celebrates Moscow's transformation into a bustling, energized metropolis following its suffocation by the Stalin regime.

Within the horizontal plane of *I Walk the Streets of Moscow*, the plot, which itself is a function of motion, proves to be neither circular nor linearly progressing toward a goal. As Daneliia's title reveals, leisurely movement is of utmost importance in and to this film. The meandering characters, whose motives are somewhat arbitrary, allow spectators to rediscover Moscow on their own terms in the early 1960s. The film's ambling quality releases viewers from "following" the plot. The film depicts reconfiguration of spatial and societal relationships "through the free movement of people," and, furthermore, the "space becomes multiple and heterogeneous, just as its structural unity remains dynamic—understood as an individual, sensory experience of the passage." From the opening scene at the airport to the closing scene at the metro station, the film highlights transition rather than destination.

WEATHER

On multiple occasions throughout the film, Moscow's climate changes abruptly from sunshine to rainstorm. This fickle weather motif culminates forty minutes into the film when the camera focuses on a woman strolling, heels in hand, amidst a downpour. There is an artistic interplay between the images of her legs and the spokes of a bicycle. The serendipitous joy of this scene emerges as the characters' movement is no longer restricted by the fluctuation of the atmosphere. This scene is a coming-of-age for Moscow, growing out of recent dark times. The city cleanses itself, re-emerging from the storms of World War II and Stalinism as a landscape of new beginnings. In *Weather, Climate, and Culture*, Sarah Strauss and Benjamin Orlove explore the transformative effect that weather has on human perception: "All humans experience the variations in atmospheric conditions and in meteorological phenomena that we call weather and climate [. . .] Our complex forms of collective life influence the way that we are affected by weather and climate, creating both forms of vulnerability and capacities

to reduce impacts." The film narrative's interaction with climate, as well as the symbolic implications for cinematic weather, produce a more intimate portrayal of the life of Soviet citizens and reveal thematic elements of reflection, time, and subjectivity.

Similar to the acclaimed postwar filmmaker Andrei Tarkovsky, Daneliia's cinematic floor is often wet or mosaicked by shallow puddles. Such use of water unifies both earth and atmosphere, creating a singular plane of infinite reflective depth. Mirrored surfaces throughout the urban environment reveal the tense history of "The Thaw" by reflecting images of architecture. For example, a "Stalinist skyscraper behind a 1960's modern glass cafe" forms a compositional contrast in the skyline. However, the abstract refraction of Stalinist architecture in the accumulated puddle below reflects the metaphysical reimagining of the city's architectural identity. In *Cinema As Weather: Stylistic Screens and Atmospheric Changes*, Kristi McKim explains: "Self-reflexive film posits the weather as not only comparable to but also inextricable from the transformative capacity of cinematic expression." In other words, just as *I Walk the Streets of Moscow* sought to portray civilian life on the movie screen, the reflective capabilities of rain and puddles throughout the film's landscape likewise disclose The Thaw's inner-turmoil of re-evaluating both selfhood and statehood.

In an anthropological sense, discussion of climate implies discussion of time. Strauss and Orlove explain: "In societies around the world, people talk about the recent weather and the weather that is to come, they remember the conditions months ago, and anticipate future seasons, and they discuss the weather far in the past as well." In *I Walk the Streets of Moscow*, Daneliia uses sunlight to unite climate and plot during Volodya's stopover in Moscow, just as the political climate in Russia constantly influences individual lives. Furthermore, if the weather is a somatic manifestation in part representing the unstable relationship between state and society, *I Walk the Streets of Moscow* demonstrates the events of "The Thaw" through capricious weather patterns and indifferent characters. For example, Sasha arrives at his wedding during a late-afternoon downpour, a step toward individualism in Sasha's moral dilemma between official state duty to the military and his personal affairs. By sunshine or in downpours, Daneliia's characters forgo adjusting or adapting their behavior to atmospheric conditions. Movement forges onward through lashing rain, and dialog utterly abstains from addressing the weather. A possible interpretation alludes to Soviet citizens' vaunted stoicism. Just as Daneliia's narrative advances in spite of the weather, society itself lives on through generations, while political trends (Stalin's totalitarian regime, World War II, The Cold War) are revealed to be finite and fleeting.

Just as Daneliia's narrative advances in spite of the weather, society itself lives on through generations, while political trends (Stalin's totalitarian regime, World War II, The Cold War) are revealed to be finite and fleeting.

To Western viewers who associate Moscow with the extreme cold and brutal weather of the tundra, the sun may

be a somewhat surprising element. In reality, comfortable temperatures and sunny weather are somewhat of a rarity in Moscow. In *I Walk the Streets of Moscow*, this weather alludes not only to a providential day in the forecast, but an entire climate evolving and changing toward more temperate conditions. Indeed, a "thaw" refers to the nascent beginnings of spring, with sun and warmth overtaking the dark cold. As "The Thaw" was adopted as shorthand for the historical period in Russia, the term implies that change is a constant state. The fickle atmospheric conditions in *I Walk the Streets of Moscow* rely on weather as a poetic metaphor signaling both seasonal and sociocultural changes.

Although the weather in *I Walk the Streets of Moscow* is a great symbolic device, the physical qualities additionally advance the audience's comprehension. McKim defines the dynamism between cinema and meteorology as "...a metaphor by which we read our skies, while meteorology reciprocally enriches our conception of the film." To immerse a subject or action within weather is to encapsulate that subject within the mechanical screen of cinematography and the natural screen of the living world. For this theory's application in *I Walk the Streets of Moscow*, the frequent rainfall not only offers cleansing and reflective attributes, but also the transparency of the rain water itself becomes an ulterior, transfigurative perspective by which the audience can conceptualize cinematic events by applying them to reality. In the analogous thoughts of Erik Barnouw: "'The lens of rain,' as if weather not only affects our spectatorial perception or cinematographic recording but also possesses a subjectivity through which one might see." Through the film's unpredictable meteorology, Daneliia raises themes concerning the nature of Soviet society in transition out of the (stormy) Stalinist past Moscow's uncertainty of "The Thaw" coats *I Walk the Streets of Moscow* in a duality of apprehension and optimism as mutable as the weather.

ERA OF STAGNATION

The Era of Stagnation (1964-85) is the term used to describe the Soviet Union's period of economic hardship succeeding "The Thaw." As the state figure most closely associated with the Era of Stagnation, Leonid Brezhnev condemned himself to social, political, and economic liability by the end of his leadership in 1982. Khrushchev's Thaw dissipated in 1966, considerably associated with the Sinyavsky-Daniel trial in which satirical writings of Soviet life were condemned as anti-Soviet propaganda, thus, inducing a resurgence of Stalinist social policies. Throughout the 1970s, the inert Soviet economy was a result of Brezhnev's anti-reformism and bureaucratic central-planning, which poorly attempted to balance consumer goods and popular demand. Andrei Sakharov, a Soviet nuclear physicist, Nobel laureate, and human rights activist, shared his perspective of the Era of Stagnation in an open letter to the President of the Academy of Sciences:

I have taken a fresh look at our economic difficulties and food shortages, at the privileges of the bureaucratic and Party elite, at the stagnation of our industry, at the menacing signs of the bureaucracy perverting and deadening the life of our entire country, at the general indifference toward work done for a faceless state (nobody could care less), at corruption and

improper influence, at the compulsory hypocrisy which cripples human beings, at alcoholism, at censorship and the brazen lying of the press, at the insane destruction of the environment, the soil, air, forests, rivers and lakes. The necessity for profound economic and social reforms in the USSR is obvious, but attempts to implement them encounter the resistance of the ruling bureaucracy and everything goes on as before, with the same worn-out slogans.

I Walk the Streets of Moscow moves within these inevitable parameters. The film reflects the transition from Stalinism to "The Thaw" and, ultimately, from "The Thaw" into Stagnation. Volodya's day in Moscow ends on an unmistakably plaintive note. His exploration of the city cannot continue indefinitely. Instead, the film foreshadows an end to the liberatory flâneur and, by extension, "The Thaw" in the final scenes of the film. Shortly after Volodya's departure, Kolya finds himself alone in the train station. He stands adjacent to a polished marble wall, his shadow faintly discernible in the reflection, evoking analogous attributes of loneliness to the solitary statues displayed through a forerunner of several images. Indeed, the theme of isolation, despite the bustling city, prevails throughout Daneliia's film. While Moscow surges with claustrophobic flocks of people, characters seem detached and without an obvious sense of belonging or community; the specter of emptiness hovers over this film.

Toward the middle of the film, the floor polisher concludes his charade of impersonation by telling Volodya and Kolya: "I'm writing a novel." Writing, alongside other passions, is commonly perceived as a naturally invigorating and fulfilling craft. However, the floor polisher's vacant gaze upon stating this dissipates any enthusiasm about his personal project. His despondency makes us wonder if, though he is writing, he will be able to *publish?* Daneliia subtly alludes here to the renewed culture of censorship that would set in under Brezhnev in the 1970s, which ousted famous writers like Joseph Brodsky and Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn. While walking in the park Kolya encounters his cousin Viktor with the same air of hopeless detachment as the floor polisher. Although Viktor carries his two well-clad children adorned with balloons (displaying abundance and success in his personal familial life), his vapid expression contradicts the scenario's advantageous qualities. Similarly, After leaving his bride-to-be at the altar, a deflated Sasha cradles his head in his hands over a solitary wedding feast: "I feel so bad right now... that I don't feel like going on." The previous analyses accompanied by a multitude of other undiscussed fleeting details of depression further support a possible critique of "The Thaw" from Daneliia: individualism can be isolating.

Returning to the final scene in the metro station, Kolya sings an optimistic farewell alluding to his possible future: "I'll raise a white sail, but don't know with whom. If I start to feel homesick, I'll find a violet in the snow and remember Moscow," the lyric mentions a white sail in reference to Mikhail Lermontov's 19th-century poem "The Sail," which conveys themes of loneliness, uncertainty about the future, and unjustified hopes. Daneliia alludes to these comparative characteristics between Lermontov's poem and Kolya, thus deliberately enforcing (albeit somewhat cryptically) a direction-less, wandering archetype for the protagonist of "The Thaw."

As Koyla's song fades into an instrumental peroration, he then ascends a staircase, leaving us behind. This moment should be recognized for its contradictory implications in a film that otherwise tracks horizontal movements. Kolya's vertical ascension of the escalator augurs the Era of Stagnation (or "refreeze") as Russia was to endure the resurfacing of vertical movements and architecture reminiscent of Stalin shortly after the release of *I Walk the Streets of Moscow*. The narrative elements of *I Walk the Streets of Moscow* manifest a warning, alluding that the irreversible force of time is at hand. In short, Daneliia in this film conveys that things *will* change. There's a subtle tease to an unfortunate end of "The Thaw" below the youthful dizziness of the superficial plot.

CONCLUSION

Within the past two decades Russia has become increasingly detached from the liberal cultural and political atmosphere of "The Thaw." Modern Moscow seems more in step with the Moscow of the Era of Stagnation due to the consequences of Vladimir Putin's dictatorship. Putin's 2000 presidential election was welcomed by Russian citizens due to his assurance of a "strong Russia." The previous years under Boris Yelstin had been tainted by economic hardship, crime, and corruption, which left Russia yearning for the stability and prosperity that Putin pledged to restore. Reminiscent of the post-Stalin period, the change in political leadership was enriched by the optimism that societal progress would surely be evoked in suit of political recovery. However, these hopes were quickly dissipated. In December 2011, an estimated crowd of 25,000 gathered at Bolotnaya Square to protest Putin's parliamentary election fraud. These feelings of disappointment and abandonment swelled alongside Russia's 2014 annexation of Crimea and invasion of eastern Ukraine. Violence coalesced to the current political agenda through intense paranoia, police brutality, and widespread fear – an antagonistic political and statist culture not seen since the Stagnation Era in the 1970s. *I Walk the Streets of Moscow* reflects the rise and trajectory of Putin in the germane setting of the late Soviet period. Presently, the war in Ukraine has stranded Russian society, leaving it starkly "refrozen" in the turmoil of the 21st century and dashing any hopes of a "thaw."

As Russian society is experiencing the resurgence of isolation and stagnation in context to these extinguished hopes they once held for Putin, Timothy J. Colton reminds us "that wrenching change has been the rule, not the exception, in modern Russia. As the Putin era winds down, there is potential for fundamental and meaningful change in Russia, but it is not inevitable." The preluding quote affects the uncertainty: In what direction, if any, is Russia heading? It is in this situation *I Walk the Streets of Moscow* becomes sustenance, as all true art does, for questioning and conceptualizing the present dynamic in Russian society. Volodya's stop-over revealed a frontier of reinvention and serendipitous encounters. The plight of a modern-day Russia raises the same questions that Daneliia's masterpiece did about self-reflection, identity, and apprehension or optimism concerning the future. However, under Putin, the seasons have unmistakably shifted, and it is with great hope that, from the darkness, the streets of Moscow may be walked again.

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Crows and "Hoes": The Ethics of Women's Duty in *Psy* and *Wrony*

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Władysław Pasikowski (1991-) and Dorota Kędzierzawska (1980-2012) are both highly acclaimed Polish directors educated at the renowned Łódź Film School, but where Pasikowski is known for his action packed and often violently male-centered cinema such as the *Psy* trilogy, Kędzierzawska is known for her dramas focused around deeply lonely women and children, such as Time to Die and Nic. Despite the immense differences in their styles and genres, the experiences and characterization of women in both Pasikowski's *Psy* (Dogs) and Kędzierzawska's *Wrony* (Crows) highlight the ethical dilemma in which women must choose between duty, whether real or constructed, whether to themselves or to others. Despite the extensive research on female representation in Polish cinema, none specifically draws attention to the complex similarities of these films or examines the ethical questions placed on their female characters. By analyzing selected scenes from *Psy* and *Wrony*, I will demonstrate how these films portray and prescribe roles to women that perpetuate historical, cultural and social constructs.

Wrony centers the mother-daughter relationship of a young girl and her mother living in an unnamed Polish city. Wrona, the titular character, is a very lonely nine year old girl , who desperately needs parental support. Wrona's father is never seen in the film, and her mother is seen only a handful of times, characterized as vain and uncaring in every instance. The audience sees

Wrona's mother forget to feed her, ignore her while a romantic interest is at the apartment, and consistently show a lack of initiative in supervising her. This portrayal problematizes the sense of duty a mother ought to have to her child, leading the audience to utilize their (unfounded) assumptions to place judgment on the mother despite not having access to the entire picture. Wrona's mother is characterized as the antithesis to the archetypal Polish Mother: a woman who sacrifices everything for her children, and in turn, instills an undying commitment to the motherland in her children. In contrast, Wrona's mother solely focuses on fulfilling her own needs at the expense of her child, and the sanctity of her nation or society is of no concern to her. Wrona's mother's infrequent appearance on-screen and her resultant inability to defend herself against the judgments of the audience and Wrona,, her duty is seen as going unfulfilled.

Wrona, not receiving the attention and care only a mother's love can provide during a crucial period, internalizes an idea of motherhood based on a seemingly functional and loving family. This internalized image is based on a family Wrona sees eating dinner together while walking through a different neighborhood. She later returns to the neighborhood and kidnaps the very young daughter of this idealized family, telling the younger girl that she is her mother.

Throughout the singular day the film takes place in, Wrona becomes frustrated with the implications of motherhood's responsibilities, but still has care, tenderness and compassion for the younger girl. Wrona and the young girl meander around, somehow getting all the way to the coast, and traveling back by the evening. Wrona tries to reconcile simultaneously being a child and a mother, without having a mother who exemplified these foundational qualities herself. By the end of the film, she returns the kidnapped child, sacrifices her role of motherhood, and abandons her search for escape, which makes her more similar to the Polish Mother. Wrona had absorbed a societal understanding of motherhood and the caretaking it requires without understanding any of the enormous, intricate stresses, responsibilities, and labor that accompany being a mother. The maternal care she never received instilled in her a lack of direction and agency, thereby impelling her to become what she needed her mother to be. The reality of being a child and needing love never disappears though, and the film ends with Wrona pleading with her mother to be held. She is asking her mother to fulfill her socially and historically assigned duty of motherhood.

Wrona tries to reconcile simultaneously being a child and a mother, without having a mother who exemplified these foundational qualities herself.

Similarly to Wrona, Angela, an orphan and the main female character within *Psy*, does not have a wholly attentive or loving parental figure. In Angela's first appearance in the film, she is about to receive physical punishment during a class at the orphanage she resides in. She later alludes to sexual abuse perpetrated by the male caregiver at the orphanage who is more than 20 years her senior. Already, the lack of safe parental figures has resulted in Angela being taken advantage of by the powerful men in her life.

There is a dichotomy in the film's female characters, representative of the Madonna-Whore complex: every woman is neither a sexually provocative prostitute or a pure, family-oriented mother or daughter.

This pattern of exploitation continues after she is "adopted" by Franz. Franz, a former secret-police member and current regular cop, is a protagonist with whom the audience is supposed to sympathize. Yet, he is another sexually exploitative older male figure within Angela's life. He removes Angela from an abusive and unhealthy environment only to create another, one in which Angela's food, shelter, and hygiene are all provided by Franz in return for her relationship to him as a companion and a possession to fulfill his sexual desires. Nowhere within this exposition are Angela's desires, motives, or backstory explored.

When Angela inquires about Franz's ex-wife and child, he does not elaborate beyond the mere statement that his ex-wife left "because she was a bad woman." The absence of his ex wife or her perspective alongside the fact that female characters are solely utilized as sexual objects or images of male-idealized femininity, provides ample opportunity for misogynistic framing. In essence, there is a dichotomy in the film's female characters, representative of the Madonna-Whore complex: every woman is either a sexually provocative prostitute or a pure, family-oriented mother or daughter. Not a single female character is portrayed as a complete person with her own narrative, thereby effectively stripping every woman in the film of agency and an identity separate from her role in men's lives.

Angela is portrayed as promiscuous and self-serving, rather than as an exploited teenager trying to survive. She utilizes her sexuality as a means of survival to forge her own path and ultimately to escape circumstances in which she is entirely dependent on the support of older men, who do not care about her happiness, independence, or autonomy. Beyond Angela's enforced submission and servitude to Franz, she is further viewed as the cause of any of his misfortunes. Instead of ascribing the root of the issues to the actions of the male characters, including Franz, such as their predatory and power-imbalanced relationships with Angela, the film urges viewers to sympathize

with Franz as the protagonist. It paints Angela as not properly fulfilling her duty as a companion and thus worthy of condemnation by both Franz and the audience on their perceived moral highgrounds. This representation of Angela is in line with the hyper-masculine and misogynistic framework of the film, in which when women are consistently identified as the sole cause of the destruction of the male paradise. She eventually leaves Franz to be with his close friend, Olo, who works for a criminal gang. She is not depicted as a victim, but rather as the perpetrator of harm, for serving her own interests and choosing to leave (or betray) Franz to be with another man, Olo, who she thought would give her more money or opportunities. This marks her within the "Bitch" category as laid out by Mazierska, a prominent academic in the realm of Polish cinema, in which women in these misogynistic landscapes are illustrated as promiscuous and serving of interests that harm the male characters, specifically protagonists.

Near the end of the film, Franz kills Olo after claiming Olo slept with "my [Franz's] woman," Angela. In Angela's final appearance in the film, she and Franz are speaking through the visiting phones while Franz is incarcerated. Angela is seen through a light blue plexiglass separator, which paints her in a darkened, by-gone blue. This murder is a crime of passion, as Franz's best friend is also ambiguously revealed to be betraying him to the gang, but also to be sleeping with his lover. This is in contrast to Franz's and Angela's last conversation, where he asks her who she is, and after she says her name, leaves the conversation. This highlights a dichotomy between the Angela that Franz sees as an object, or "his woman," and the Angela who he comes to know in this scene, an actual person. The main difference between these two versions of Angela is that Angela as "his woman" is a nameless woman that is loyal to him, sexually permissive, and does not interfere or cause any strife within his life, whereas Angela as an actual person possesses independent thoughts, desires, and free will. Angela's choices, with or without intention, granted her freedom from the orphanage, and ultimately, from both of the older, predatory men with whom she had relationships within the film. Her companion and sexual partner duties to Franz or the other men in her life could have perhaps saved Olo's life or changed Franz's fate, but ultimately serving duty to herself saved her own life.

In the cases of both Wrona and Angela, their choices were deeply impacted by their circumstances and environments. The lack of stable parental figures, assumption of adult roles, and "otherness" prescribed to them by society created roles for them which they cannot fit, or cause them harm. Both women lacked caring and attentive parental figures, which pushed Angela into sexual abuse and caused her to use her sexuality as a tool

for escape, whereas Wrona adopted the role of mother to fill the void of love and attention in her life. Both of these characters are children, albeit at different ages and stages of development. Angela is an orphan, Wrona is a neglected child, and both are not fulfilling either of their idealized roles as well behaved young women who are benefitting society. This otherness isolates them, but also frees them from complete despair or dependence on societal validation.

One of the main differences between Wrona and Angela is their pattern of return. Whereas Wrona eventually returns to her mother and her regular life, asking for love, and hoping for change, Angela returns to different men, first leaving the orphanage (and the caregiver) with Franz, and then leaving Franz for Olo, and eventually ending up alone. These returns (or eventual lack thereof) can be understood in the context in which these characters exist. Angela has no parental figures to return to, and has faced exploitation and abuse from all of the male authority figures in her life, whereas Wrona can still return to her mother and has hope for improving her situation.

The dilemma of these characters, whether to betray their lover/adoptive caregiver or continue mothering a different family's child to fill the void of love, are both entrenched in a desire for agency. Both of these characters serve themselves, Wrona through the kidnapping and adventure as well as ultimate return of the child and Angela through her pursuit of independence using the resources of the men in her life and the sexual favors, gratification, and companionship they provide. Nonetheless, although Wrona and Angela make choices that seemingly arise from a duty to themselves, both of the roles they fulfill actually serve others, those of. mother and sexual partner. Despite the differences amongst these characters and their choices, they are tied together through the lack of a strong mother and an adherence to societal prescriptions of femininity, either through female sexuality or motherhood.

Ultimately, through the use of historical, social, and cultural constructs, such as the idea of the Polish Mother, and misogynistic framing, *Psy* and *Wrony* portray the ethical dilemmas between duty to oneself or to others within the female experience. From assuming motherhood, to leaving a much older man for another much older man, Angela and Wrona are women whose narratives were impacted by their environments, men, and gendered norms of womanhood, but who also chose their own paths, and presented, whether problematic or not, representation for young women within the Polish cinematic tradition.

Psy and Wrony portray the ethical dilemmas between duty to oneself or to others within the female experience.

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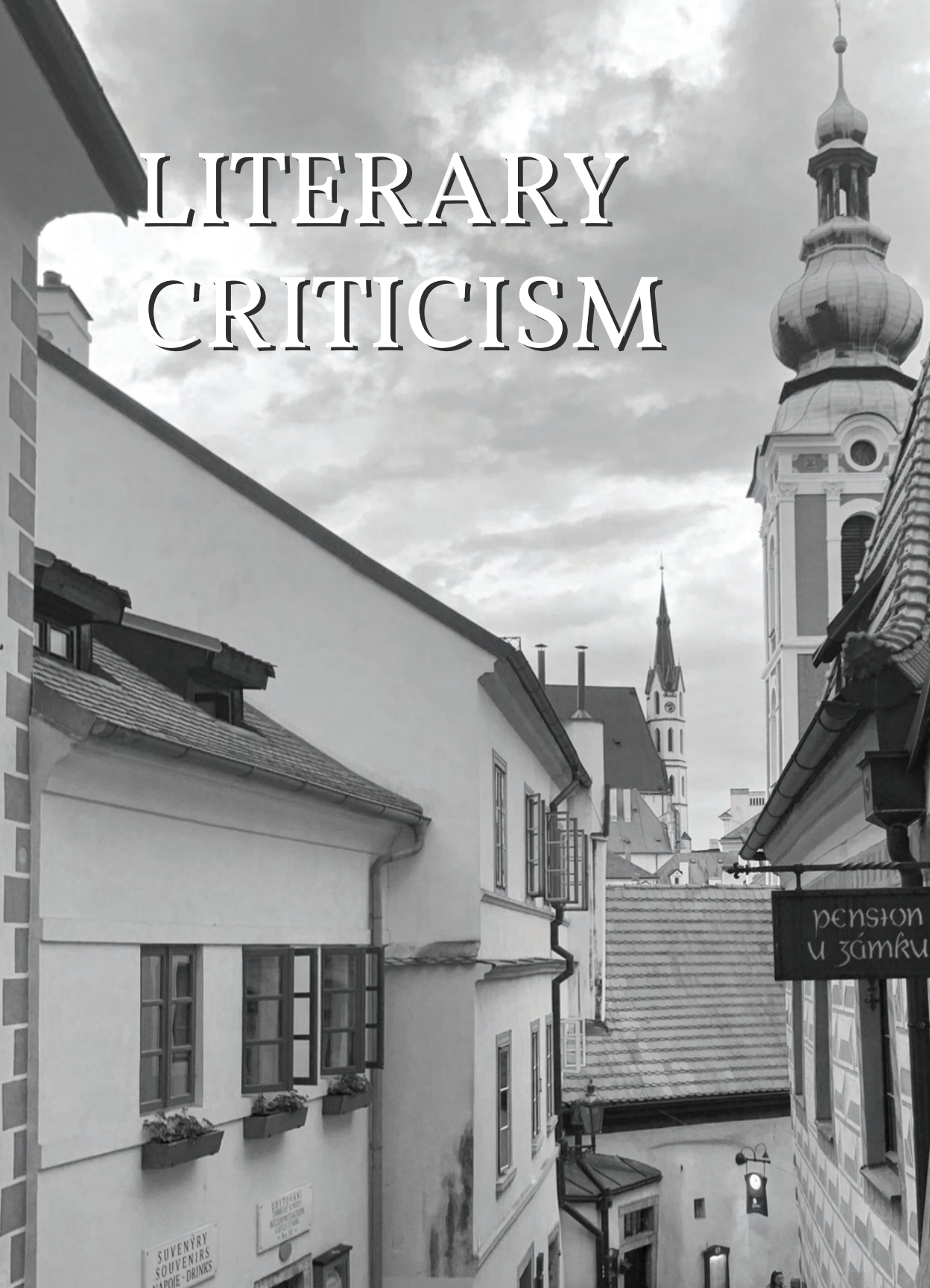
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LITERARY CRITICISM



Redeploying The Male Gaze: A Feminist Mythological Reading of Turgenev's "First Love"

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Across different time periods and countries, two men write two stories: a Greek god rapes a beautiful woman in a temple; a man degrades a vivacious woman with physical and emotional abuse until she becomes hollow. Both Greek mythology's Medusa and Ivan Turgenev's Zinaida Zasyekina from his short story "First Love" are female characters constructed to serve the male gaze, which stands in for the paradox of male fear and desire. Turgenev's "First Love" tells the story of a lively, intelligent young girl surrounded by older male suitors—including the narrator. By the end of the story, however, it is revealed that Zinaida has been engaging in an affair with the narrator's father, an affair that ultimately strips her of her autonomy, boldness, and power. In this essay, I will explore the sovereignty available for female characters in nineteenth century Russian literature through their construction under the male gaze. My argument will be situated in contrast to Medusa, who reflects classic or archetypical portrayals of the male gaze. Depending on the historical context, Medusa is either a victim or villain. But to what extent does she claim power through her victimhood? In this paper, I will use Medusa to explore Turgenev's Zinaida Zasyekina from "First Love." Ultimately, I will demonstrate how an actualization under the male gaze allows female characters to redeploy male desire for their own self-interest.

The male gaze produces a female character and works to subjugate her through that production. She is produced to serve male desire and imprisoned by these expectations. Both Medusa and Zinaida are constructed by the male-gaze. Upon first reading, both characters crumble under this actualization: Medusa

doomed as both monster and temptress and Zinaida doomed as both virginal bachelorette and faithful maiden. Yet both women defy these impossible expectations by seizing emancipatory opportunities. It is because of their production under the male gaze, and not in spite of it, that each character is able to weaponize male desire for her own power and control. Medusa and Zinaida redeploy male desire in the three distinct realms of the physical, the emotional, and the intellectual. In each realm, both characters use their manufacturing under the male gaze to claim agency. Ultimately, an actualization under the male gaze enables Zinaida to reject victimhood. Turgenev employs the male gaze to challenge the process of fictionalization: he has created a fictionalized character with the ability to reject the grounds of her creation.

It is because of their production under the male gaze, and not in spite of it, that each character is able to weaponize male desire for her own power and control.

Medusa weaponizes her physical body, attractive to the male gaze, to reclaim her power. Susan Bowers' academic project, "Medusa and the Female Gaze," cites academic Annis Pratt's views on the process through which the male gaze dehumanizes Medusa: "Myths in which heroes conquer dragons and gorgons and snakes and other monstrous figures are essentially stories of 'riddance' in which the beautiful and powerful women of the pre-Hellenic religions are made to seem horrific and then raped, decapitated, or destroyed." The need to conquer women compels Greek myth to produce Medusa as monstrous as means of justifying violence against her. Yet Medusa uses this urge to create a lustful paradox by maintaining both her beauty and her horror. Bowers defines Medusa as both "feminine and fragile," maintaining a "juxtaposition of her extraordinary beauty and her horror." By infusing beauty with horror, Medusa makes herself irresistible. She targets both male lust and the male need to conquer to attract her enemies. It is Medusa's production under the male gaze that enables her to redeploy male desire for her own physical power.

Zinaida Zasyekina from Turgenev's "First Love" is also able to exert physical control over the men around her because of her production under a physical male gaze. Zinaida is produced by a lustful male gaze: "so delicate were the features," describes the narrator, "her sumptuous golden hair, the pure nape of her neck, her sloping shoulders and her soft, placid bosom." Yet, like Medusa, Zinaida is imprisoned by a paradox of physical lust and physical threat. While her charm lures the male suitors to her, it is her harnessing of the male need to conquer her body that enables her to exert power. Zinaida controls her male suitors with just a tap of her fingers; "The young men offered their foreheads so willingly," the narrator says, "that I nearly gave a cry of astonishment and pleasure and would have given anything in the world, I believe, if only those charming fingers had tapped me on the forehead as well." Zinaida's paradoxical construction of horror and lust is most apparent in her spiritual apparition that both haunts and attracts the narrator. "The image of the young girl still floated in front of me," he says in one passage, and in another: "The image of Zinaida continued to dwell in triumph in my heart." Through her apparition, Zinaida exerts

such a powerful control over the narrator that her spirit remains with him even when she is corporeally absent.

Zinaida claims agency through her understanding of the male desire for physical superiority. This securing of agency is demonstrated when Zinaida uses pain to subjugate one of her male suitors, Lushin. The narrator recounts that she "occasionally took a particularly malicious pleasure in making him feel that he was in her hands...'All right, then! Give me your hand and I'll stick a needle in it ... !' Lushin went red, turned away, bit his lip, but ended by offering his hand. She stuck in a needle and he did start laughing... and she laughed too, forcing in the needle fairly deeply and looking him in the eyes, which darted about in a helpless way." By using pain as a humiliation tactic, Zinaida exerts physical control. She constantly commands the men: when to meet, what games to play, who should have the upper hand. "'Write the ticket, I tell you,' the young princess repeated. 'Why all this rebelliousness? Monsieur Voldemar is with us for the first time and so the rules don't apply to him today. No more complaints. I just want you to write it out.' The Count shrugged his shoulders, but humbly bowed his head, took the pen in his white, ringed-deck hand, tore off a piece of paper and began to write on it.'" The men offer little in the way of physical resistance; they are putty in her hands. Zinaida targets the male relationship between physical lust and fear of physical weakness. Ultimately, it is her knowledge and subversion of her production under the male gaze that enables her to exercise corporeal control.

Additionally, Medusa targets the emotional male gaze to exert emotional control over her enemies. According to Freud, the Medusa-head was constructed to represent castration fears. By slaying Medusa, as Theodore Reik argues in his essay "Modern Medusa,"Greek heroes are able to assuage their emotional fears, as "decapitation often replaces castration in neurotic fears." By dominating Medusa, Greek heroes are able to claim emotional control over these castration fears. But Medusa is ultimately able to target this need to defeat castration fears for her own power by emotionally luring her enemies to her. Medusa uses the paradox of erotic and castration fears to her own advantage: "In the Romance of the Rose, for example, Perseus arms himself 'with the mirror of reason to resist the dangerously feminine, to neutralize the erotic power that threatens to immobilize him.'" Medusa understands the power that male desire gives her. While her physical control lies in the need of men to physically conquer, here Medusa targets the male desire to emotionally conquer perceived threats to his masculinity. It is this emotional drive that allows Medusa to lure and ultimately petrify her enemies, a further demonstration of her understanding and subsequent manipulation of the male gaze.

Likewise, Zinaida employs the male gaze to exert emotional control over the men around her. Zinaida understands the emotional implications embedded in her identity as single maiden. Her winning suitor achieves emotional domination, while the losers risk emotional demasculinization. Zinaida uses the fear of the latter outcome to toy with the men around her, wielding humiliating tactics to control her suitor Malevsky. In a tense scene, after Malevsky offends her, Zinaida orders him to leave. "I've never given your Excellency the right to be

rude and I therefore ask you to leave," she tells him. "'For heaven's sake, I hadn't expected anything like this,' responds Malevsky. 'There was nothing in what I said, I think... It didn't enter my head to insult you... Forgive me.' Zinaida encompassed him with a chill glance and chilly smiled. 'Stay if you wish,' she said with a careless gesture of the hand. 'Monsieur Voldemar and I have no occasion to be annoyed. You enjoy stinging people, then do so to your heart's content.'" While Malevsky apologizes profusely, the narrator remarks "that a real queen could not have shown an impudent fellow the door with greater adroitness than she did." Zinaida triumphs; Malevsky is humiliated.

Zinaida, with her "eyebrows lifted in amusement", wields taut emotional control over her male suitors. "I'm a coquette, I'm heartless, I'm an actress by nature," she tells Lushin. Zinaida leers, pouts, flirts, and giggles until each man is trapped in a unique chokehold. The narrator recounts his first visit to Zinaida's home, when Belovzorov brings Zinaida a kitten: "'A kitten!' cried Zinaida and, jumping up from her chair, threw the ball of wool into [his] lap and dashed out." It is this childlike joy, reminiscent of Christmas morning frivolity, that specifically targets the infantilizing nature of male subjugation. Zinaida employs the male desire for a little girl's naiveté for her own emotional control. She dismisses the kitten just as quickly as she coos over it. "Zinaida stood up and, turning to the maid, said indifferently: 'Take him away.'" The emotional control of this interaction is summed up in a few short words by Belovzorov. To the princess, he says: "Your word is my command." The narrator describes being under a spell, a magnetic force drawing him to expose his vulnerability and trust Zinaida completely. "I was ordered to tell her my secret," he recounts during a game. When Zinaida stabs Maidanov with the needle, she tightens her emotional grip on him. "You'll feel ashamed in front of this young man," she says. "You'll feel pain, but still, Mister Truth-teller, you'll laugh!" Zinaida targets the shame of demasculinization to subvert her suitors. She uses her feminine identity of playful game-master to assert dominance. In all of these ways, Zinaida redeploys the emotional male gaze for her own self-interest.

Zinaida employs the male desire for a litle girl's naiveté for her own emotional control.

Lastly, Medusa uses the male desire for intellectual superiority to assert agency. She understands her construction under male morbid curiosity. "The dream interests us not only as a modern variation of the mythological form of the Gorgon's head, but also as an individual analogy to the myth-producing imagination of ancient people," writes Reik. "We conceive of myths as of dreams of the masses, of collective productions of the people in which their unconscious wishes and fears are expressed." Medusa, a "widely-recognized symbol of divine, female wisdom" understands that her continued replication as a villainous symbol under the male gaze stems from the male desire for intellectual understanding. She uses this intellectual desire to compel her enemies to look. "According to Hazel Barnes, 'it was not the horror of the object at it which destroyed the victim but the fact that his eyes met those of Medusa looking at him.'" By looking, Medusa is able to intellectually reconstruct

herself; she claims agency by becoming a "Looker" along with her enemies. Bowers asserts that "The 'Look' is so disturbing because it constitutes judgment of the self outside the self, judgment which can neither be controlled nor even known precisely." Instead of embracing the identity of a submissive animal in a cage at the zoo, Medusa uses the intellectual male gaze to encourage eye contact, thus petrifying her victims. It is again her understanding of the male gaze from which she was constituted that allows her to redeploy male intellectual desire for her own power.

Zinaida, with the same self-knowledge of her construction, is able to exert intellectual control over the men around her. With her "intelligent half-closed eyes," she uses her education and sharp wit to control her suitors' thoughts. "Listen," she tells the narrator, "'You don't know me properly yet. I'm the strangest kind of person: I always want people to tell me the truth... you've always got to tell me the truth and do what I say" . It is this intellectual assertion that convinces the narrator to do what she says; Zinaida's orders are situated on a strong intellectual foundation. She converses in French with the narrator's father, reads in the garden, and meticulously plots her game for control and amusement. She compels each male suitor to assert his intellectual power. "I wanted to show her that she was not dealing with a boy," the narrator recounts, which leads him to adopt "as far as possible a worldly-wise and serious look."

Zinaida is an intellectual puppeteer: "she understands everything, she sees everything," and uses it all to her advantage. Her intellectual hold is strongest over the poet Maidanov. "He strove to assure her," says the narrator, "that he adored her, wrote endless verses in her honor and declaimed them to her with a kind of natural and yet sincere enthusiasm". Maidanov's desire for Zinaida urges him to produce intellectual gifts for her, his poetry. She not only receives this intellectual labor but uses her own education to quietly subjugate him. The narrator recounts: "She didn't entirely trust him and, after listening to his outpourings, made him read some Pushkin 'in order to clear the air.'" Zinaida wields her education as a weapon, using her vocabulary and poetic knowledge to convince Maidanov to play along with her games. "Maidanov," she commands him, "as a poet you should be magnanimous and surrender your ticket to Monsieur Voldemar, so that he'll then have two chances rather than one." Zinaida ultimately targets the male desire to be intellectually superior for her own power.

It is in this exertion of intellectual power that Zinaida ultimately challenges her own fictionalization. Turgenev is explicitly aware of the role the male gaze has in constructing Zinaida. By confining her to one perspective, Turgenev gives Zinaida the power to reject her own construction, or, at the very least, redeploy it for her own self-interest. Turgenev does not endorse but instead challenges Zinaida's actualization by the male characters in "First Love," presenting emancipatory opportunities for a woman in a story about the loss of free-will. Both Medusa and Zinaida Zasyekina are products of male desire, male fear, male needs. Yet both women subtly challenge their own fictionalization and subsequent replication by the reader. By employing the male gaze, Turgenev arms his primary female character with the power to challenge her own construction.

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Gherasim Luca: Creating the No Man's Language

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INTRODUCTION

OUBLIE TA LANGUE MATERNELLE
SOIS ETRANGER A LA LANGUE
D'ADOPTION ÉTRANGÈRE
SEULE
LA
NO MAN'S LANGUE

[forget your mother tongue | be a stranger to the foreign adopted language | only | the | no man's language]

–Gherasim Luca

What is the no man's language? In a 1962 notebook, the Surrealist writer Gherasim Luca expressed his estrangement from both Romanian, his maternal tongue, and French, his adopted language, seeking a departure from intelligible language entirely. Born Zolman Locker in Bucharest in 1913, Luca began his career in Romania. His family were Ashkenazi Jews, and in addition to Romanian, he spoke Yiddish, German, and French. At a young age, he established his literary credentials as a founder of the Romanian Surrealist movement. But, as fascism and antisemitism took root in Romania, Luca was forced to abandon his native tongue. Harassed and captured while trying to leave the country, he was finally able to escape in 1952 to Israel, where he lived for a short period of time before moving to Paris. There, he wrote his most prominent prose, poetry, and theory (primarily non-oedipal theory) in French. But, even up through his death in 1994, Luca refused to embrace the French

language or nationality. Having spent forty years in France without official papers, Luca was evicted from his Parisian apartment. Unable to cope, he committed suicide by jumping into the Seine. Luca had spent his whole life as an "apatrid," or a stateless person, belonging to no language, nation, or society, which reflects in his art.

Throughout his work, Luca devotes himself to the idea of not belonging or conforming, choosing to rebel against popular theories and reject conventions of writing. A revolutionary, he pioneers his own "no man's language" through several methods that I will examine throughout this paper. My primary aim is to elucidate Luca's methods for attacking oedipal thought. It is important to note that trademarks of the Surrealist movement, such as Freudian hermeneutics and a compulsion with the Oedipus complex, are noticeably absent from Luca's prose and poetry. Instead, he is preoccupied with finding a solution to the Oedipus complex. He believed it was possible to surpass it through the development of non-oedipal thought, which he broadly defined as "revolutionary thought," whether it was personal or political. Hence, within the scope of this paper, I focus both on his denial of Freudian concepts in relation to the personal--one's psyche--and his rejection of fixed frameworks in relation to the political--oedipal society. Furthermore, I examine how Luca's non-oedipal thought allows him to reach reflections about language often missed by his peers. More concretely, I analyze his critique of language as first as a means of intrapersonal communication and then as an effective social system. Lastly, I conclude with an assessment of Luca's identity as a Jewish artist and writer and a commentary on the weaponization of language - or lack thereof - in relation to society, politics, and humanity. Looking at his work through this lens, Luca's motivation to develop such a language - the no man's language - that was not bound by any of those elements ultimately becomes evident.

I. Luca's Objectively Offered Objects: Examining "The Passive Vampire"

As much a theorist as a writer, Luca questions the factors for which he holds responsible for the standardization of the oedipal psyche: the fixation on a maternal image that harbors the promise of the free expression of desire versus the castration complex and its relation to patriarchy. In his exploration of this question, Luca states in his 1945 novel The Passive Vampire:

I refuse all forms, all categories, all acts, all plans, all laws, all your castrating scents. I eat, breathe, drink, think, rejects, dress myself and move aphrodisiacally. I keep every cell of my being in a state of permanent excitation, excited and exciting at the same time, the zones traversing my being are genital and pregenital, erotic and criminal, black, ferocious, satanic.

According to Freud, the mother is the first love object of a child, who is born out of the maternal desire for a phallus. French psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan expands on Freud's theory, arguing that a child will even seduce the mother by becoming the object of her desire - the imaginary phallus. The Oedipus complex involves letting go of one's identification with the imaginary

phallus and instead, due to the threat of castration, repressing one's libido, or sexual drive. Evidently rejecting all forms of chastity, Luca seeks a liberation of the spirit against the censorship of libido, choosing to identify himself with all things erotic. He presents himself as aphrodisiacal as a means of openly expressing desire. Moreover, he rejects the threat of castration--associated with the Freudian image of a father or patriarch--through his refusal to obey laws or tyrannical social constraints or hold a fixed identity. He even proclaims that "he killed [his father] before he died," in order to liberate himself from a social/familial prison to a greater extent. Thus, it is through his profuse expressions of sexuality that Luca transforms "The Passive Vampire" into a unique manifesto against oedipal structuring.

Furthermore, "The Passive Vampire" is Luca's first attempt at conducting a theoretical reflection on language as a means of communication. A mix of personal confession and manifesto-esque theory, "The Passive Vampire" occupies the space left previously by Salvador Dali's objets a fonctionnement symbolique and Andre Breton's Nadja through its exploration of several "objectively offered objects." Luca more specifically proposes an erotica of objects, inserting provocative photographs of his assemblages within the work. As seen below, many of the objects provide blatantly sexual and even violent visuals of the human body through the disfigurement of dolls. It becomes evident that eroticism permeates most everything in Luca's world - a testament to his revolution against the limits of the Oedipus complex.



Image courtesy of Twisted Spoon Press

Figure 1: The Letter L

However, under further examination, "The Passive Vampire" stands to be more than just a manifesto, but rather an exploration of and reflection on language as well. Luca employs a heterogenous mode of writing, from distinct lack of narrative and dialogic style to passages of prose juxtaposed between equations and photographs of assemblages. Notably, it is his handmade assemblages that come to be the most meaningful in his examination of language as a method of communication. While his objectively offered objects are often made with a certain person in mind, Luca does not consider them gifts but rather explains that "an object can be used as a vehicle for

sentimental or intellectual exchanges, and can become a qualitative description that can only be interpreted like a rebus." Examining Figure 1, The Letter L was created for Andre Breton, a French poet and surrealist theorist whom Luca greatly admired but had never gotten the chance to know more intimately. Luca covered the female doll, who he originally named Nadja after the titular character of Breton's Nadja, in riddles cut from an old almanac, leaving words speckled all over its torso and leg. Then, he further transformed the piece through the addition of another doll's head, which he stabbed with razors and fixed between the first doll's legs.

According to scholar and author Krzysztof Fijalkowski, each piece of paper on the doll represented a correspondence Luca would have liked to have with Breton; as such, the object becomes a physical symbol of what he wants to communicate to Breton and his desire to deepen his relationship with Breton. Luca wishes to profoundly know Breton, who he idolizes and often draws inspiration from, yet he is unable to converse with him. Turning the doll into a mechanism of communication instead, "l'objet trouvé pour être offert commence à murmurer entre moi et Breton une langue magique et noire, si près du rêve et d'une langue fondamentale" [the object...whispers between (Luca) and Breton a magic and black language, so close to the dream and a fundamental language]. Thus, the object transcends materialism; it is able to transmit unspoken messages and desires when words fail, raising the question: then, what is the purpose of language?

Musing on the futility of language as we know it, Luca proceeds to offer a solution to this query. He writes, "I would propose the discovery of a new language that genuinely expresses the psychic phenomena which resemble, but are not identical to, dreams. In this language that I am unable to find, the ancient antinomies, beginning with that of good and evil, will be resolved for the meanwhile at the individual level." Faced with a language that has no purpose and that he deems ineffective, Luca pursues a new language, one that can describe surreal realms, manifest and liberate desire, and even illuminate the nature of human reality and the universe. From this pursuit arose his objectively offered objects--"those philosopher's stones that discover, transform, hallucinate, communicate our screaming" --as a pictorial "no man's language." Altogether, "The Passive Vampire," with its erotic objects, creates a universe where the projection of a conscience manifests a total opposition to language and society.

II. Luca's Prodigal Stutter: Interpreting "Niciodată Destul" and "Passionnément"

Throughout the 1940s, Luca dedicated himself not only to writing poetry to serve as a vehicle for non-oedipal thought, but also to cultivating a new style that allowed him to further question the efficacy of language. Poems like "Niciodată destul" and "Passionnément"

utilize unique iterative techniques: the repetition of the same word or the same group of words, the modulation of one or more phonemes, and the distortion of the voice with a stuttering effect. These techniques infuse double meanings in nearly every word, which becomes fragmented and cast in a subversive light. Luca contorts language in order to release its anti-oedipal references. For instance, the poem "Niciodată destul" is based on the word proporţional (proportional), which is broken down and rearticulated into other phrases. Let us examine the following excerpt:

propopopopoporpor proporporporţi
proporţiporţi porţiproporporporţi pro
porpopor poporpopor
proporţisorţi proposorţi proposorţi
prea mulţi morţi
prea multe torţe propoforţe prea
multe propoforţe
propropropormor promoprotozor
mori în zori proton...
proporproton care ton protonpropro
toni care toni
porpor por în cor rog por pentru
popor
propor rog popor să mori...
asta propun propropropopun un porc
de popor proportional.

From "prea mulţi morţi, prea multe torţe" [too many dead, too many torches] to "rog popor să mori" [I beg you people to die] to "un porc de popor proportional" [a nation of proportional pigs], Luca widely references nationalism and the brutality of war as an instrument of authority throughout the poem. The cutting of the word "proportional" acts as a literal mechanism of castration, yet it gives life to new words with new meanings. Through this castration, Luca allows for the emergence of the concepts of nation and authority, ironically undermining the Oedipus complex - where the lack of being cut off provides the ultimate authority. As one of his earlier poems, "Niciodată destul" serves as only a brief glimpse into Luca's revolt against society and authority, but his anti-oedipal ethos becomes more explicit in his more famous French poem, "Passionnément."

At the syntactic level of "Passionnément," Luca focuses on deliberate phonetic lapsus, repetition, alliteration, and paronomasia, which infuses his writing with a playful energy, mirroring the natural unconscious flow of desire and passion for which the poem is titled. At key moments, anti-patriarchal and anti-papal motifs appear as provocative urges to "pissez sur / le pape sur papa" [piss on / the pope on your papa] and "pissez sur la pipe du papa du pape pissez en masse" [pee over the Pope, pee over the pipe of papa of the pope pee in mass]. Thus, he is revolting against the castrating authority of the father, whose representation in social authority manifests in the leader of the Catholic Church--the Pope. Luca continues his contestation of authority by refuting the very idea of nation through his exhortations to "minez vos nations" and "crachez sur vos nations"

[undermine your nations, spit on your nations], inciting readers to challenge society itself as an oedipal institution.

Furthermore, from the oedipal identification with father rises the superego, which according to French psychoanalyst Jacque Lacan's interpretation of the Freudian model of the psyche is considered the part of oneself that restricts sexual desire. To counteract this censorship of the superego, Luca showcases his taboo and erotic desires, freely exclaiming "ne dominez pas vos passions" [do not dominate your passions] and finalizing his poem with the potent declaration "Je t'aime passionnément" [I love you passionately]. This poem, through its clever decomposition and recombination of words, reflects an attempt of liberation from the Family, the Church, and the State, ultimately reaching an ostentatious display of desire.

Through his exploration of linguistic and syntactic disorder in his stutter poetry, Luca rejects societal convention in order to expose the mechanisms of individuation. His poetry goes to the limit of language: from overflowing to babbling, to ending in an outcry. Physical, even obscene, it takes shape from the reader's mouth: a poetry of broken sounds. In "Niciodată destul," Luca stammers over the same few syllables of the word proportional yet is unable to say it until he utters his very last word. Similarly, in "Passionnément," starting from the first three letters "pas" and after 104 stuttering verses, the poet finally manages to pronounce the phrase "je t'aime passio passionnément." As the fragments are repeated over and over, the reader is subjected to a sort of secondhand embarrassment, as if hearing someone stammer nonsensically for hours on end. A great admirer of Luca's stutter poetry, French Philosopher Gilles Deleuze, commented keenly on nature of this stammering: "Non pas être bègue sans parole, mais être bègue de langage lui-même" [not to stammer in one's speech, but to stammer in language itself], aptly reflecting its asyntactic awkwardness to the reader. However, this is exactly Luca's intended effect. The stutter poetry is meant to feel uncomfortable and even wrong; it is meant to defy known aesthetic norms.

By liquidating the functions of language, Luca creates something untranslatable, something that belongs to no language, once again harkening to the "no man's language." Deleuze considers this "prodigal stutter" one of the greatest achievements of French Contemporary poetry, as it displays the inadequacies of language as a system. In deconstructing words, Luca commits a violent act against language itself. Like the Father, the Church, and the State, Language too is a convention upheld by society, and the only way to recover vitality and to identify oneself is to destroy this system.

COMMENTARY & CONCLUSION

Ultimately, Luca demonstrates how defiance against the system unlocks

true freedom of expression and more profound communication. As a self-styled "alienjew," the poet witnessed first hand how Hitlerism's appropriation and manipulation of language created a one "true" or "pure" identity and dehumanized those who did not belong. Since language is the most fundamental political and social system, Nazi leadership put into place laws and procedures that aimed to regulate language in order to establish control over every facet of life. They stifled speech and writing that were not "Aryan" enough--essentially, anything too unconventional according to societal custom. Hitlerism as an ideology was able to permeate throughout Europe, which resulted in widespread religious and cultural purification, especially under Ion Antonescu's rule of Romania, as experienced by Luca.

Antonescu's antisemitic policies enacted a state-sanctioned genocide that killed as many as 400,000 people. Under the pretext of protecting Jews from potential attacks on the German armies, Jews were forcibly relocated from Bucharest to concentration camps and ghettos in rural areas. Following the arrival of Nazis in Romania in October 1940, Luca was sent to the Polygon Cotroceni concentration camp, forced to perform grueling labor including digging trenches and retrieving corpses.This trauma shaped Luca's art and writing, as he came face to face with the atrocities of war, the dangers of authority, and the institution of language. At its core, his Jewish background greatly informed his interest in non-oedipal thought: his "revolutionary thought." He was an outsider, religiously and culturally, which he harnessed in order to critique fixed identity. In the face of tremendous oppression, Luca had the perspective and the motivation to create a no-man's language. In a later manuscript, he comments, "Fundamentally and even legally, I am stateless out of necessity. Neither my past language nor my present one justify to my eyes (after Auschwitz) belonging to a national heritage." Having witnessed first-hand how the conventions of oedipal society and language were used to eradicate his own people, Luca refuses to allow the process to repeat.

He does not simply reject one language for another, but instead dedicates his whole life and oeuvre to social, political, and linguistic revolt. Because of his acute awareness of the link between language, society, and identity, he sought to create a language that was not tethered by any of those factors, but would rather release man from his bondage, whether through objectively offered objects or stuttering sounds. Through his application of anti-oedipal thought and dismantling of language in both "The Passive Vampire" and his stutter poetry, Luca succeeds in creating an artistic and linguistic system that belongs to nobody, but simultaneously belongs to everybody. Via the pursuit of such a no man's language, Luca sets out to subvert the authority that instituted language assumes, offers all of us a way to think post-monolingually.

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Food and Sex: The Soviet Literary Imagination Fueled by Desire and Taboos

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There is no shortage of cross-contamination between food and sex. This intertwining is often employed to either make the casual consumption of sex more palatable through food metaphors or, on the other hand, to make the ingestion of food more exciting through its sexualization. But what if, rather than just a tongue-in-cheek innuendo to "spice up" the literary imagination by bridging two worlds, the connections between them lie in an even closer coupling in the writings of Soviet-émigré writers? Using Anya von Bremzen's 2014 memoir "Mastering the Art of Soviet Cooking: A Memoir of Food and Longing" and selections of Lara Vapnyar's 2009 collection of short stories "Broccoli and Other Tales of Food and Love," I argue that the frequent food shortages emblematic of Soviet life and the sexual mores imposed under Stalin cemented the two together in the Soviet literary imagination as mutual symbols of longing and desire.

Food and sex have been subjected to taboos, routinely raising questions of ethical consumption and the limitations therein. In her article "Beyond Food/Sex: Eating and an Ethics of Existence," Elspeth Probyn says, "Pleasure and ethics, sex and food are all about breaking up the strict moralities which constrain us." On the flip side of Probyn's ethical inquiry which suggests that the connections between food and sex can reimagine the limits of pleasure and identity are the harsh realities of life in Stalin's USSR that forced limitations on both food and sex placed something of a prohibition on pleasure.

Similarly, both food and sex find themselves sandwiched between necessity and indulgence. While food is necessary, the simultaneous existence of kartochki

- the Soviet era ration cards - as well as food shortages place ethical and practical limitations on consumption - that is, except for the Soviet intelligentsia and "red bourgeoise," as their own hypocritical indulgences are now widely-known. At the same time, sex is necessary for reproduction and thus the continuation of society, and yet, its indulgence finds itself mired in taboo. In "Mastering the Art of Soviet Cooking," von Bremzen says:

Or perhaps, as the contemporary author Tatyana Tolstaya suggests, the "orgiastic gorging" of Russian authors was a compensation for literary taboos on eroticism. One must note, too, alas, Russian writers' peculiarly Russian propensity for moralizing Rosy hams, amber fish broths, blini as plump as "the shoulder of a merchant's daughter" (Chekhov again), such literary deliciousness often serves an ulterior agenda of exposing gluttons as spiritually bankrupt philistines - or lethargic losers such as the alpha glutton Oblomov. Is this a moral trap? I keep asking myself. Are we enticed to salivate at these lines so we'll end up feeling guilty?

Contrary to "Manfield's motto that 'Life's too short for bad food, bad sex or no sex at all'..." the moralization of indulgence in these pleasures suggests instead that Soviet society - although far from the only society to do so - suggested to their populace that there really can be "too much of a good thing". "Exposing gluttons as spiritually bankrupt philistines," implies that indulging in more food than is necessary for survival implicates the consumer as inherently morally corrupt, that food for pleasure beyond the realm of utilitarianism demonstrates an internal moral failing.

These moralizing attempts to contain food and its consumption into strictly utilitarian realms reflect the official, post-Lenin Soviet attitudes towards sex that strictly delineated between the morally good conception of sex for procreation and the morally bad conception of sex for recreation. Vera Sandomirsky's 1951 article in The Russian Review highlighted these almost hypocritical and contrasting views on sex. Sandomirsky noted the shift from the Leninist conception of "free love" to Stalin's imposition of an unforgiving moral code:

These moralizing attempts to contain food and its consumption into strictly utilitarian realms reflect the official, post-Lenin Soviet attitudes towards sex.

Abortions became illegal in 1936. Divorce laws were revised, so that by 1944 simple mortals found it extremely difficult to obtain divorces. Motherhood medals, carrying with them lucrative state subsidies for large families, were instituted.

The reign of free love - or Red love - was succeeded by the regime of Stalinist Virtue. (The latter emerged as anything but red or flamboyant, but on the contrary enormously rigid and oppressive.)

Sex had, essentially, become a couple's duty to the nation and the Party, nothing more than the utilitarian function of the means of (re)production. There almost seemed to be a level of cognitive dissonance demonstrated in the simultaneous valor in plentiful reproductive sex, as evidenced by the subsidies available for large families while recreational sex shared the same moralization as food indulgences - the characterization

as immoral and inappropriate gluttony.

This dissonance highlights a critical similarity between food and sex in the Soviet moral code, wherein both are required and expected to exist for means of survival and continuity, but neither is to be a vector for pleasure or to be consumed in excess. Von Bremzen wrote of the moralization of food:

The very notion of pleasure from flavorsome food was reviled as capitalist degeneracy. Mayakovsky, brazen poet of the revolution, sicced his jeering muses on gourmet fancies:

Eat your pineapples, gobble your grouse

Your last day is coming, you bourgeois louse!

Food was fuel for survival and socialist labor. Food was a weapon of class struggle. Anything that smacked of Testov's brand of lipsmacking - kulebiaka would be a buttery bull's-eye - constituted a reactionary attack on the world being born.

Of course, plenty can be said about capitalism's tendencies towards indulgence in excess, but the Soviet repression of any incarnation of pleasure as a capitalist indulgence excellently demonstrates "a reactionary attack on the world being born." Von Bremzen's remarks on the matter mirror what Sandomirsky noted at the time, that "In Soviet eyes the Kinsey report is a revelation of the dirt and depravity into which American civilization has fallen. We Americans have sunk so low that we are interested only in sexual pathology." The portrait of American indulgence in life's pleasure perfectly illustrates the theory that capitalist excess has been used to lull us into complacency and dull our revolutionary tendencies, which despite its possible truths, is being used here to conversely dull individualistic desires.

Much like today's continuing moralization of weight as a measure of self-control and thus individual moral quality, we can observe the Soviet tendency toward moralizing both food and sex in similar manners. In "Borscht" from Lara Vapnyar's short story collection, Alla, the prostitute with whom Sergey has a rendezvous, is described multiple times in terms of her weight and the shape of her body, "The trilling voice on the phone gave him a different image, however, that of a short, plump young woman with full lips and small white hands." And later, "She was stocky, with a red, wrinkled neck, blotchy face, and smudges of mascara in deep creases around her eyes." As both a prostitute, in particular one who seems to do so less out of necessity - she already has employment as a nanny - and a woman who is being described in terms of her full-figured body, she serves here as an emblematic literary depiction of two "immoral" shades of over-indulgence. She is, in short, an illustration of everything seen to be wrong with succumbing to excess, and even further, of the corruption of a Russian in America, transformed by capitalist indulgence.

We can see a similar brand of moralizing over-indulgence towards sex in von Bremzen's memoir when she notes the difference between Russian and American hospitals, similarly implying a laxity of moral codes of indulgence in America. She writes of her first time in an American hospital, "No nurses screaming 'Trakhatsa nado menshe!' (You should screw less!) at gonorrhea sufferers." At the same time, it also depicts gonorrhea as

a disease of indulgence, as a divine bacterial retribution - much like AIDS was popularly depicted in America during my childhood - for what has been classified as morally unacceptable behaviors.

Furthermore, Stalin's imposed virtue system felt almost reminiscent of a self-colonialism, borrowing the colonialist mindset of "civilizing" a people thought to be inferior, except, that he seemed to view his own people this way. Von Bremzen highlights this attitude in her memoir, saying:

Alongside abundance and prosperity, the third pillar of Stalin's new cultural edifice was kulturnost' (culturedness). Hence, Soviet citizens - many of them formerly illiterate - were exhorted to civilize themselves. From table manners to tangos, from perfume to Pushkin, from tasseled lampshades to Swan Lake, the activities and mores reviled by the earlier Bolsheviks as bourgeois contamination were embraced as part of the new Homo sovieticus. If a member of the nomenklatura (Communist political elite) showed up at a meeting in his trophy silk pajamas and carrying a chocolate bar, it just went to show that socialism was doing swell.

And yet, despite the priority placed on these cultural pleasures previously considered taboos by the Bolsheviks, this liberation did not exist for all indulgences, as there was an implication that sexual pleasure was not refined enough to be freed from the shackles of taboo. Because, as we see quite clearly in Sandomirsky's writing, this same wave of kulturnost' that von Bremzen discusses was also the end of the Bolshevik "free love" period, and the newfound valor and priority placed on motherhood and domestication. Also on this period of kulturnost', Sandomirsky writes:

We may summarize all this by saying that Stalinist Virtue which replaced the original Communist free love, means first the de-erotization of love and, secondly, the subordination of the sexual drive to the political and economic exigencies of the Soviet state. But there still remains a third aspect of Stalinist Virtue, and this aspect is the most sinister of all: its use as a device for invading the one sphere of personal privacy yet remaining to the Soviet citizen.

Interestingly, rather than the typical colonial mindsets that categorize the sexual and cultural attitudes of the "other" as being merely primitive and therefore detestable, the Stalinist outlook seemed to classify the Bolshevik sexual attitudes as primitive specifically because of its detraction from work and one's responsibility towards communism.

And yet, it shares with the standard colonial mindset the tendency to view the "other's" morality as being primitive and untenable because of its diametric opposition to the colonizer's dominant cultural attitude. Galit Atlas writes about the simultaneous fetishization and scorn of Middle Eastern women's sexuality in particular, as a reaction to Western sexual mores:

The different energy of the Other gives rise to fantasies of sexual promise, desire, and pleasure. It touches our inhibitions as well as our longings. The exotic despot or the harem, for example, seemed simultaneously alluring and threatening in Western eyes, and was often perceived as decadent, irrational, barbaric, and immoral.

Except, that all the while the scorn of capitalist decadence and degeneracy was being thrust upon citizens by

the mission of Stalin moralization, the confusing and simultaneous "myth of plenty," dispersed alongside propaganda of widespread under-eating and under-nourishment in the States, was making the rounds. Seemingly an attempt to satiate these cravings for more and better food by categorizing indulgence as a character flaw and supposing that the availability of nourishment was still better than that available elsewhere, these perplexingly contrasting myths were still seeded. Von Bremzen recalls the pornographic nature of this "myth of plenty," this attempt at quelling desire by proximity to the object of desire, hidden away behind glossy photographs:

Kremlin winds shifted, commissars vanished, but the official Soviet myth of plenty persisted, and people clung to the magic tablecloth fairy tale. Who could resist the utopia of the socialist good life promoted so graphically in Kniga? Just look at the opening photo spread! Here are craggy oysters - oysters! - piled on a silver platter between bottles of Crimean and Georgian wines. Long-stemmed cut-crystal goblets tower over a glistening platter of fish in aspic. Sovetskoye brand bubbly chills in a bucket, its neck angling toward a majestic suckling pig. Meanwhile, the intro informs us, 'Capitalist states condemn working citizens to constant under-eating...and often to hungry death.'

Like so much pornographic material that centers around something the viewer can't have or finds too taboo or extreme for real life, the "myth of plenty" disseminates taunting fantasies of the indulgence deemed inappropriate for the moral Soviet citizen and is, regardless, also unattainable for the vast majority, attempting to satiate desires through fantasy. In the same manner that capitalism lulls the populace into complacency through consumerist indulgence, the Stalinist regime employs the titillation of plentiful nourishment to quell the cravings and desire for actually fulfilling nourishment.

The "myth of plenty" disseminates taunting fantasies of the indulgence deemed inappropriate for the moral Soviet citizen.

Lapnyar's "Borscht" illustrates the parallel sexual version of this unattainable fantasy when the prostitute the main character ends up meeting, described in terms of her "plumpness" and disappointing appearance, fails to live up to the glossy sexual photos that initially allured him:

The naked women on the page came in various shapes and colors, yet they all had two things in common: they were visibly moaning, and stars and solid black rectangles covered their breasts and genitals. Sergey took a long swallow of coffee and tried to mentally unscrape the stars and rectangles. He imagined that he was the one who made the women moan. The words accompanying the snapshots boasted of heavenly pleasures and hot, hot, hot women.

In the sexual fantasies of "Borscht" and the edible fantasies of the Soviet cookbook detailed by von Bremzen, there remains a bond of unattainability to both; a reminder that some things are just out of reach but a way to animate the lonely or the hungry. Of course, the obvious bond tying together both food and sex in these cases is their mutual inaccessibility, the catalyst for

their morphing or at least proximity in the Soviet-émigré's literary imagination.

Their taboo and allure but mutual deprivation for many under the Stalinist regime can be seen as fusing their morphologies through the manifestation of cravings. Thus, the reason the proximal relationships sometimes seen in the work of Soviet-émigré writers is even more evocative. In the scientific literature, diverging views of the precise definition of "craving" proliferate, and there exist a few major frameworks for theorizing the precipitation of cravings, but one theoretical assumption tends to underlie the vast majority of them: that some element of cravings are borne out of the absence for a necessity or desire. Dr. Weingarten and Dawn Elston wrote in "The Phenomenology of Food Cravings," "A common view is that cravings are elicited by need and, therefore, cravings serve to correct bodily needs. This interpretation is equivalent to many abstinence models which view craving as a state identifying the substance which will redress a deficiency." Suppose a common trait presumed to be underlying cravings is the absence of that object of desire. In that case, it stands to reason that the sexual mores imposed by Stalin precipitated increased sexual desire, much like the food deficits would have precipitated food cravings. If we are to accept both food and sex as imbued with the affect of desire and longing, and thus the object of craving, then it is entirely understandable how they would become united in the literary imagination.

Early in her memoir, von Bremzen highlights the tantalizing nature of food - and specifically the restaurant experience - from her Soviet childhood when she says, "As a kid, I cut straight to the porn - the dining-out parts." The allure of pornographic material - of pseudo-experiencing fantasies from a safe distance or as a substitute for one's actual desire - seems to underscore the seduction of these alimentary fantasies of not only having adequate sustenance but being able to thoroughly enjoy a dining experience. The taboo of dining and of edible indulgence beyond that which is necessary for sustenance under Stalinist virtues only heightens the provocativeness and applicability of this metaphor; of likening the taboo of culinary extravagance to a pseudo-pornographic existence.

Beyond that, the wordplay of "dining-out," seemingly suggestive of the euphemism "eating out," also implies a further boundary transgression between food and sex and an outright rejection of Stalinist virtues. Not only has this been a point of conjecture about the proximal relationship between oral sex and eating - in relation to Bill Clinton's scandal, Probyn remarked, "It also led me to wonder if oral sex wasn't sex, was it eating?" - but there are further political connotations of this conflation. Atlas mentions the sin of Adam - the original juxtaposition of food and sex - and the ramifications therein: "The first sin involved food and sexuality, when Eve seduced Adam into eating the apple. Preoccupation with food, then, is not only about body image, but also about what we are allowed to take into our bodies and what we are not—penetrability, desires, and prohibitions." In Atlas' focal point - of what we allow into our bodies versus what we do not - there is also something obvious to be said about Stalin's ever-present power over that decision. In this case, the conflation of

dining out in a restaurant, a taboo of capitalist indulgence, and oral sex, an inherently non-reproductive act thus shunned by Stalinist virtues, there is, in this passage, a subtle rejection of both.

But, of course, despite the rejection of capitalist alimentary indulgence, we find that the Soviet nomenklatura and the "red bourgeoisie" were, in fact, living the titillating "myth of plenty," enjoying the decadence of hypocritical and lavish buffets, intended to make the international community swoon at the "successes" of Stalinist communism. Von Bremzen wrote of learning for the first time, the hypocritical indulgences of the nomenklatura:

I was dazed by what I'd learned at his fantasy table. It was akin to discovering that Santa Claus was somehow, after all, real. The Soviet myth of plenty that my latter-Soviet generation had scoffed at? That fabled abundance so cynically, even existentially scorned?

How spectacularly it had flourished on Kremlin banquet tables.

Like the allegories of the Catholic priests having affairs while peddling sexual repression or the "pro-life" politicians secretly arranging abortions for their mistresses, Stalin and his ilk were much the same as every hypocrite with any semblance of power, set on virtue-signaling while living by an entirely different set of values for themselves. How shocking it must be to realize that the same Kremlin causing you to salivate with fantasies of plentiful food was indulging in bounties without shame.

While much may have changed after Stalin's death, and for these writers and their families, after emigration as well, there remains a bodily memory of that alimentary absence, of the craving for fulfilling nourishment. Von Bremzen spoke of her mother, of whom she says, "My mother has impeccable manners, is ladylike in every respect. But to this day she eats like a starved wolf, a war survivor gobbling down her plate of food before other people at table have even touched their forks." Similarly, you can see a reminiscent trace of the same affect in Nina from Vapnyar's story "A Bunch of Broccoli on the Third Shelf," who continues to buy - or as her ex-husband says, "seduced" - more vegetables than she actually consumes, akin to a comforting compulsion. If the remnants of this bodily memory of the deprivation of satisfactory nourishment continue to plague these emigres, it also explains why the tantalizing juxtaposition of food and sex remains an element of their work.

Probyn suggests that a unique element tying food and sex together in contemporary culture is that they both hold significant power over our identity formation. In the case of Soviet-émigré writers, I would argue that they have mutually molded identity in such a profound way as to remain firmly rooted in the literary imagination of these writers. Even more than likes and dislikes, they have been shaped by the impressions of strict taboos and deficits, remnants of a past that uniquely molds their writing and unites these two desires. And, even more, that both Nina from Vapnyar's story and von Bremzen's mother turned to vegetables and cooking, respectively, to dull the loss of love suggests that the culinary fantasy has taken such a remarkable hold over them as to be the closest replacement for love; the closest approximation to the intertwining of two souls being an alimentary obsession.

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PHOTOGRAPHY



Kyrgyzstan
Photo by Irene Jang, Columbia University





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POLITICS



Nationalism and the Rule of Law: A Case of Poland and Hungary

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Recently, the governments of Poland and Hungary have faced increasing criticism from the European Union (EU) as "populist, xenophobic, nationalist" parties that seek to benefit from EU funds while undermining EU institutions. While there are several definitions of nationalism, the ethnic nationalism articulated by contemporary Poland and Hungary can be defined as the glorification of an ethnic population in a defined geographical territory that shares similar traits amongst its members. Conversely, the civic nationalism espoused by the intentions of EU institutions refers to the theory of a shared ideological integration within a population resulting in shared values. Scholars have also noted that while there is no widely accepted definition of populism since it is not viewed as an ideology, it is often found in conjunction with nationalism and has been used to describe the governing parties of Hungary and Poland as left-wing populists who assert a single perception of 'the people' while purporting anti-elitism.

In order to work towards an improved understanding of how nationalism has been politically mobilized in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE), the case studies of Poland and Hungary will be compared given their similarities. Namely, in both cases, the countries have populist governments that have leveraged ethnic nationalism to advance their culture wars with the EU, despite their differing policy approaches: Poland's policies reflect fear of imported ideologies, whereas Hungary portrays an attack on their identity. Specifically, the culture

wars waged by Poland and Hungary against the EU have been intended to protect purported 'traditional values' from being overruled by EU laws. In this respect, nationalism has been expressed politically in the policies of Poland and Hungary through the narrative of culture wars by a public call to defend their traditional identity against EU institutions. However, these exchanges over values have legal, political, and economic implications for the relationships of these countries with the EU. To protect what it views as the fundamental rights of all EU citizens, the EU Commission has taken several legal and economic measures to put political pressure on Poland and Hungary. These fundamental rights are outlined in the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union, which solidifies the rights and freedoms of its citizens to liberty, dignity, and equality. Thus, this essay will explore how nationalism has been expressed as a culture war in the policies of immigration and family welfare, the usage of these policies to defend cultural identity, and the implications of this culture war for the EU.

NATIONALISM IN GOVERNMENT POLICIES

Nationalism, as expressed politically in the CEE, underlies the policies of immigration and family welfare in Poland and Hungary. Significantly, the Polish state has remained without an official national migration policy since 2016, and the government rejected the EU proposed redistribution of migrants in 2017. Yet the government faces numerous issues in implementing a migration policy, including the declining population rate and the labor deficit predicted to reach -1.5 million by 2025. The Polish government has attempted to address the declining population and labor shortage through family welfare policies intended to support the expansion of Polish families, such as the "Family 500+" program. Family 500+ aims to increase birth rates and has succeeded with a 13-17% rise from 2015 to 2017. However, this program appears counterproductive in addressing the labor deficit, as eligible mothers for the program in 2017 would have contributed an additional 2.5-3% labor supply. Accordingly, the primary goal of this program is to consolidate Polish identity within the future labor supply so the economy does not rely on imports of immigrant labor. Immigration in Poland is often restricted to Christian migrants from culturally similar countries, such as Ukraine, as to remain resistant to perceived foreign ideologies and continue the narrative of Poland's historic victimization by other countries. Ultimately, the policies of the Polish government towards families and immigration suggest a desire to increase domestic birth rates to address the declining population without increasing immigration.

Comparatively, the Hungarian government has followed a more intensive approach to immigration due to its geographical location along the Balkan route into Europe from the Middle East. In 2016 the government declared a state of emergency

and amended the Criminal Code to imprison those who illegally cross the fence along the southern border. Like Poland, Hungary also rejected the common EU policy on immigration and has opted to introduce numerous tax credits and subsidies for large families to raise birth rates and address the labor shortage. Orbán's government has portrayed these family policies as an alternative to immigration that will protect the values of the "traditional family" more effectively. To achieve this, the government spends roughly 5% of Hungary's annual GDP on family support. This extensive spending by the Hungarian government demonstrates their commitment to protectionist policies that prioritize Hungarian values before all EU concerns and is indicative of a nationalistic approach.

In both instances, the government policies implemented by Poland and Hungary can be viewed as waging a culture war against the EU because the policies are intended to prioritize the well-being of the collective ethnic group at the expense of upholding EU values. These policies are a crucial point of contention between these member states and the EU since it is viewed as a significant deviation from the European identity and values that ensure the internal cohesion of the union. Without this sense of cohesion, the EU is concerned that there will be a lack of common political ground between the EU, Hungary, and Poland to conduct political, economic, and social relations. On the other hand, Hungary and Poland have taken to view the resolve of the EU as attempting to protect the status quo of the union, where the values of countries such as Germany and Belgium take precedence over traditional values. This sentiment has been most clearly articulated by Michal Baranowski, the director of the German Marshall Fund in Poland, who suggested the attitude of Poland towards the EU is "yes to Europe, but which Europe?"

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MOBILIZATION OF NATIONALISM

Effectively, the populist governments of Poland and Hungary have mobilized rhetoric of traditional identity and family structure through various venues to the general public. Aside from their immigration and family support policies, the Polish government has succeeded in encouraging nationalism among the general public by spurring rhetoric of a cultural war against the LGBTQ+ 'threat'. This nationalism and the subsequent polarization of Poland were on full display when sitting Polish President Duda campaigned on an anti-LGBT platform that dehumanized LGBT persons as the product of an ideology. The governing Law and Justice (PiS) party has also



Poland (dark grey) and Hungary (light grey) have populist governments that have leveraged ethnic nationalism.

supported regional governments in declaring a zone "free of L.G.B.T.," thus seen as affirming Poland's commitment to traditional family values. These efforts to energize nationalist sentiment over the defense of traditional Polish identity largely support the government's agenda to portray the West and the EU as threatening, homogenizing forces. Similarly, the Polish Catholic Church, which has close ties to Polish nationalism, openly discusses Muslim refugees as the greatest threat to Polish identity since they directly oppose Catholic teachings. In this regard, PiS has attempted to capitalize on the influx of refugees to Europe in the last decade by channeling Polish nationalism through the historical identity of the Poles as defenders of Christianity since the Battle of Vienna in 1683. Using this rhetoric, PiS has sought to incite societal opposition to admitting migrants or refugees into Poland according to the belief that migrants will threaten the traditional values of Christianity and Polish culture. The explicit pushback of the EU against the PiS' rhetoric has been that modern Europe is built on tolerance and acceptance of different nationalities and ethnicities. Conversely, the PiS has pushed back by rejecting the EU's proposed migrant quotas intended to facilitate the distribution of large influxes of migrants across all EU states. Overall, Polish nationalism has mobilized through the larger national myth of Poland as the historical defender of the Catholic identity, which is perceived as under threat from the imposed values of religious and ethnic tolerance from the EU.

Similar to Poland, the Hungarian government has roused Hungarian nationalism by portraying itself as the defender of Christian Europe using anti-LGBT laws and propaganda on immigration. In 2021, the ruling party Fidesz passed a law that prohibits any portrayal of homosexuality to minors under the age of 18, which was justified as necessary to protect the traditional family. With similar laws against gay marriage, the Hungarian govern-

ment has incited nationalism, which is closely linked to their concept of family tradition, as pride in being part of the Hungarian ethnic community. Moreover, the Hungarian government has weaponized xenophobia as a political tool to create a siege mentality that refugees threaten Hungary with "different cultural characteristics." Fidesz's National Consultation on Immigration and Terrorism in 2015 likely contributed to the results of the 2016 Eurobarometer survey in which 34% of the population considered immigration a major issue, a rise from 13% the previous year. In a manner reminiscent of Polish political rhetoric, Fidesz frequently pays tribute to the historical narrative of Hungary as the defender of Christian Europe against invading Muslim Ottomans.

The EU has attempted to assert its values to the Polish and Hungarian governments by leveraging its financial support of regional public infrastructure to pressure political change. In particular, the EU moved to reduce its budgetary allocations to support public works in Poland and Hungary over breaches of the rule of law and other principles, which are considered to include respect for migrant quotas and protection of individual rights. However, these nationalist narratives in Hungary and Poland are used to destabilize the power hierarchy between the EU and national governments by subverting EU authority. Specifically, nationalism is used by these governments to garner political power within the EU itself by championing alternative values to the liberal democratic values of the EU.

SIGNIFICANCE OF EU CULTURE WARS

Ultimately, the efforts of the PiS and Fidesz governments have important implications for EU member states, in particular, how their policies have normalized increasingly authoritarian measures that undermine the rule of law. For example, Hungarian censorship of homosexuality amongst minors effectively primes Hungarians for additional censorship measures that are justified as protecting traditional values. However, when these authoritarian measures are combined with the rhetoric of ethnic nationalism, they threaten EU institutions that promote civic nationalism and integration. As an illustration, the glorified narratives of ethnic national majorities in Poland and Hungary neglect the social basis of the argument for further integration with the EU, thereby delaying meaningful progress. While both states would suggest that the postponement of integration is in the best interest of their national sovereignty, this intentional delay is a deception intended to further the political power of PiS and Fidesz.

Since both parties came to power on nationalistic narratives that promised an alternative to the current EU status quo, they both draw on nationalism to prolong their tenure in office. Consequently, the further production of shared values in the EU cannot be created between member states that do not interact with the same institutions due to a lack of integration. For the future of the EU, the continual use

of ethnonationalism to subvert the rule of law by Hungary and Poland could threaten the functioning of its liberal institutions if the EU is unable to produce consequences for these states. In some respects, this subversion of the rule of law has already occurred as Poland and Hungary threaten their veto capabilities against EU legislation if either of these states is unwilling to change their rule of law. The EU has achieved some success by withholding significant monetary contributions to the GDP of both countries, which saw some change in indicators of corruption and the enforcement of the rule of law. However, the continued use of nationalist narratives and nationalism in government policies suggests that the membership of Hungary and Poland in the EU, under their respective governments, is a considerable internal threat to the mandate of the EU that strives to provide an increasingly integrated Europe under democratic principles.

The continued use of nationalist narratives and nationalism in government policies suggests that the membership of Hungary and Poland in the EU, under their respective overnments, is a considerable internal threat to the mandate of the EU.

While these populists claim to represent 'the people' of their nations and protect them from the political will of EU elites, their only legitimacy is derived by narrowly defining 'the people' by ethnicity. The governments in Warsaw and Budapest use their narratives of traditional values standing in opposition to the liberal values of the EU political elite to show the distance between the electorate and the governing officials in Brussels. One way nationalism is used to exaggerate this difference is the culture wars of PiS and Fidesz waged with the EU over Islam and LGBT 'ideology' that undermine common EU human rights and protection against discrimination. Consequently, the EU is portrayed not as the ultimate authority but as incompatible with traditional values and as a scapegoat for populist parties to rally support in the culture war. Illustrative of this was the response of the Polish government to the common EU policy on refugees, rejecting the solidarity mandate as a Western homogenizing force. Overall, the expression and demonstration of nationalism by the Polish and Hungarian governments have been in the interests of consolidating power by undermining EU institutions like the rule of law on a national and supranational level.

In conclusion, the policies of immigration and family welfare in Poland and Hungary are shown to be political expressions of ethnic nationalism that are mobilized by political elites to defend traditional identities. As previously demonstrated, this defense of culture wars with the EU on immigration and LGBT rights serves as a scapegoat in propagating the national narrative of Poland and Hungary as defenders of Christian values. Ultimately, this narrative justifies the work of the elites in undermining the rule of law and increasing their scope of power.

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Understanding the Nuances of Nationalism in Eastern Europe: The Importance of Historical and Cultural Context in Modern Politics

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There exist striking and nuanced differences between the forms of nationalism that exist in Western nations and Eastern Europe; as a result, those living in Western nations must take great caution in understanding those nuances to accurately assess the role that nationalism has played and continues to play in Eastern European identity, culture, and politics. Vastly different historical roles, struggles, and circumstances have led to a divide where, if we do not understand these differences, we may too quickly adopt a particular view on the political happenings of a nation – reducing their history to our own, and disregarding their struggle. This is especially relevant in the context of Russia's ongoing war in Ukraine, where reductionist and often misleading analysis is constantly found in Western news and social media, hindering the understanding necessary for public outcry and support in the independence and sovereignty of Ukraine and the Ukrainian people.

Historical and contemporary analysis of Western power and influence, and, in turn, the popular worldview accepted by those living under these Western powers, reveals a deep misunderstanding of Eastern European governance, tradition, and way of life. Eastern European nations were often not subject to self-governance, and in response have had to actively fight for preservation of culture and identity. Western powers, many of which were nations that ruled over or heavily influenced some of those Eastern European nations, have not been subject to such a demand. It is further essential to understand that nationalism, in the modern sense, is in part a byproduct of the Enlightenment. The ideals of the Enlightenment, and in part nationalism,

began to diffuse outside of the Western world in the centuries that followed its peak in the mid- to late- 18th century. As Enlightenment principles spread to Eastern Europe, some ideologies and beliefs did not diffuse as readily as others; due in part to religious and linguistic differences, the uptake of the new philosophies that emerged as a result of the Reformation, the Enlightenment, and the Scientific Revolution did not have as quick of an uptake in Eastern Europe, especially in the Muslim controlled Balkans and to a lesser extent the Orthodox world. This is not to say that many great philosophers, scientists, and thinkers did not emerge from these nations—but rather that the West held a cultural hegemony over these newly emerged academic pursuits. It was around this time that political world powers, and in particular Germany and later the United States, began classifying the collective struggles of Eastern European nations in the perspective of the nationalism that existed in their own nations – a practice that continues to this day. There is a fundamental difference between the nationalism observed in Western nations and the nationalism observed in Eastern Europe: nationalism that stems from oppression is not the same as nationalism that stems from oppressor nations.

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Lands dominated by a nobility, such as Bohemia, Croatia, Moravia, Silesia, Poland-Lithuania, Hungary, Transylvania, and Ukraine, were not subject to 'national rulers' but rather foreign princes who were hostile towards the local cultures that made up their protectorate. As was the case with the forced Germanization of Bohemia by the Habsburgs, many nations were forced to assimilate and abandon public use of their language and expression of culture in exchange for protection (e.g., from Turkish aggression), economic relief, or in fear of conquest. The national identity that existed in Eastern Europe came from a fluid, familial form of nationalism. Estate, class, profession, language, and religion were the primary motivators for this Eastern European form of 'nationalism', forming an individual pride for the nation. To contrast this, many of the forms of nationalism that began to form in France, Germany, the United States, and Russia (although not a Western nation) began as a way to strengthen the nation and to construct dominance and cultural hegemony over others nations and peoples, finding ideological roots in sovereignty, national exceptionalism, and patriotism.

A number of national revivals in these ethnic conglomerate nations, such as the one seen in Hungary following Joseph II's 1784 decree to make German the official language of the Austrian controlled lands of the Habsburgs, became more prevalent as we entered the 19th century. Similar revivals to protest Habsburg Germanization were seen soon after in Serbia, Croatia, Romania, and Slovakia where active strongholds of language and culture began to emerge. This created a unique form of Eastern European nationalism in which many of the nations that may be considered part of 'Central Europe' began to center their identities around

a shared, and often suppressed language and culture. While this is seen in Hungary, Romania, and the Balkans, due to the partitions of Poland-Lithuania a unique ethnolinguistic push can be seen because of the Germanization and Russification that were so prevalent during the 19th century. The resulting ethnolinguistic model of a nation is unique to this region of Europe, while in the West the use of French in Belgium and Switzerland as well as the use of German in Austria, Switzerland, and Luxembourg do not define these nations as French or German. Similarly, the coexistence and use of both Russian and Belarusian in Belarus demonstrates a similar, albeit slightly different, view on the making of the nation. It seems as if this ethnolinguistic relationship has not disseminated to those Eastern European nations that have lived under the control of others nations and instead the pluricentric language ('plurizentrische Sprache') model is a direct product of the security of a nation. The language reforms, forced Germanization or Russification, and departure from the prominent local culture forced local populations to accept great risk, up to and often including death, to preserve their culture. The lengths at which the Polish people are willing to go to maintain their identity may best be summarized in the words of the national anthem of Poland ('Mazurek Dąbrowskiego'), adapted from Józef Wybicki's 1797 text, in the lyrics "Poland has not yet perished, so long as we still live"('Jeszcze Polska nie zginęła, Kiedy my żyjemy.') Like the Polish, many of the people of Eastern Europe have and continue to hold a tenacity to maintain their identity and culture despite the challenges put before them.

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Suppression of the Ukrainian language is an example of such, where Russification and Russian domination of the Ukrainian homeland have been seen for centuries, continuing today with Russia's war on Ukraine. Acts suppressing Ukrainian language and culture can be traced back as far as the 17th century, however Tsar Peter I's actions in 1720 marked a watershed in the suppression and control of Ukrainian language and cultural elements: after expurgating all elements of the Ukrainian language from religious books and seizing those books printed in the Ukrainian language, the laws and decrees passed by the Russian empire became increasingly more aggressive, asserting a cultural and linguistic control over the Ukrainian population. Much like their neighbors, the Ukrainian people did not allow their culture to be stripped away from them. Instead, like many other oppressed Eastern European populations, the Ukrainian people withstood and fought for their identity despite a constant pressure that sought to strip away their national pride. The case of oppression and Russification in Ukraine is unique in the sense that there is a modern and ongoing attempt by Russia to gain control over Ukrainian territories; since Ukraine gained independence in 1991, struggles over

language – especially in the southern and eastern parts of the country, which a re subject to stronger influence by Russia – have exacerbated conflict amongst both Ukrainians and Russians. Further, the Russian annexation of Crimea in 2014 and the full-scale invasion and attack of Ukraine in February 2022 has led to outbreak of war in Ukraine, where the Ukrainian people continue to fight the occupation and control of Russia in their sovereign territory.

The function of nationalism today in Ukraine should be viewed in the context of those struggles that the Ukrainian people have withstood and fought up until this point; much like Count Kunó Klebelsberg argued for the aim of Hungarian nationalism, "this is the healthy aim of Hungarian nationalism" all of which is the result of "the individual – as well as the nation – not only suffers, but also profits when he passes through a crisis." There exists a constructive function of nationalism for Ukraine during this trying period of time: through passing through this crisis, of which they had no choice but to enter, the identity, strength, and tenacity of the Ukrainian people will be solidified. Through a historically conscious lens this becomes evident, however when viewed purely through Western views of nationalism there is potential for misclassification to arise. Western nations tend to view nationalism as a concept "as archaic, narrow, intolerant, racist, zealous, irrational, uncompromising, a hindrance to the creation of a more globalized world, and an overall danger to the international order."

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Creating additional threats is misleading media and narratives presented by news outlets and personalities in popular culture such as Tucker Carlson and Elon Musk. Carlson, a popular media personality at Fox News, has publicly advanced a narrative that claims the sole purpose for war in Ukraine is to accelerate regime change in Russia, that Ukrainian president Volodymyr Zelenskiy has created a government more controlling and anti-democratic than that of Russia, and that Zelenskiy "is a dictator... a dangerous authoritarian who has used a hundred billion in U.S. tax dollars to erect a one-party police state in Ukraine." Popular figures with cult-like followings, such as Elon Musk, have also advanced misunderstanding and incompetence over the war in Ukraine, going as far as to even profit from the deaths of tens of thousands. Musk, whose Starlink satellite internet provider deployed infrastructure to allow Ukrainians access to internet has since called for Pentagon funding of the service, where use of once present infrastructure has been halted and "Ukrainian troops have reported outages of their Starlink communication devices on the frontline, hindering efforts to liberate territory from Russian forces, according to its officials and soldiers." Additionally,

Musk has publically made proposals for peace between Russia and Ukraine, which has garnered Kremlin support, in Tweets that seemingly ignore Ukrainian history and push pro-Russian narratives to uninformed media consumers. The claims that are made by individuals like Carlson and Musk become significant threats as they push proven misinformation and propaganda – going as far as to even be used by Russian news sources as propaganda to reiterate and show American support for the Russian war in Ukraine. The now misinformed viewers in Western nations experience further division and polarization in their views towards not only the Russian war in Ukraine, but rather in the politics of Eastern Europe as a whole.

For those citizens of Western nations to best understand the importance of nationalism and the role that it plays for Eastern European nations fighting for their very existence—especially in the case of Ukraine today—it might be best to look at the Western nationalism that emerges from those who are usually critical of their own nation when under attack. George Orwell, in defense of his 1941 essay England, your England, sought to express that there are times where one must adjust their priorities: the nation, and only then what kind of nation. To Orwell, there were times where it was inappropriate to dwell on the distinctions and minutiae of national politics and where it was necessary to rather focus on the nation as a whole. Parallels can be drawn in other cases in national tragedy, such as the September 11 attacks in the United States. Heightened nationalism and increased bipartisan collaboration were observed, where political differences and contentions became trivial and an increased sense of national collectivity began to emerge. It becomes clear that nationalism plays a vital role in creating a constructive unity for a nation, and nations in Eastern Europe are not excluded from this fact. This form of constructive nationalism should be supported by Western nations rather than ridiculed, especially since it allows nations to solidify their national identity, sovereignty, and freedoms.

Nationalism in the West and in Eastern Europe have developed in contrasting forms despite both serving important functions particularly in times of national struggle. Eastern European nations have historically struggled with preserving their national identity, primarily to the control and influence of Western, or otherwise oppressive, nations; despite these differing manifestations of nationalism, the nuances of which are greatly ignored by Western nations, there has been a long history of Western nations diminishing and failing to recognize the histories of Eastern Europe, failing to promote true understanding of the struggles that Eastern European nations face in preserving their cultures and autonomy. Such an understanding is fundamental to prevent misinformation and reduction of Russia's ongoing war in Ukraine, much like that which can be seen in Western media today. Ultimately, advancing such understanding of Eastern European history and the role in which nationalism plays in the region will allow for a more informed populace in Western nations, allowing for increased public support in the fight for the independence and sovereignty of nations in Eastern Europe.

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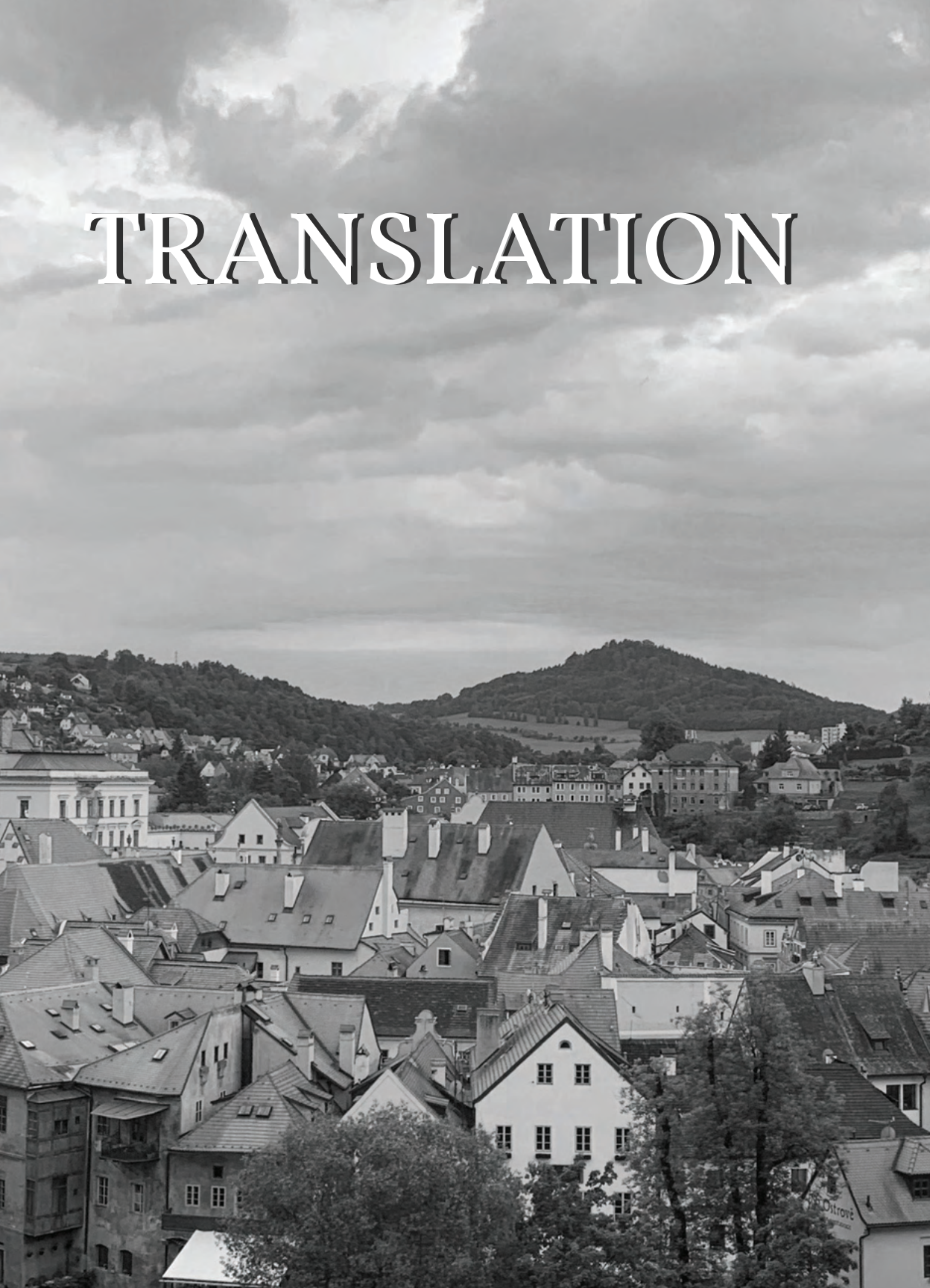
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TRANSLATION



Сьцяна

The Wall

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Dedicated To Ryhor Baradulin

The wall was stone, sooty, and very old, like the entirety of this prison building, which was inherited by the dictator of our country from the previous dictator, who inherited it from even earlier dictators. Dictators have never been rid of in this country. At one time, here they celebrated bloody triznas, plotted conspiracies and other crimes -- against the government, against the people, against whoever had won in the endless struggle for power. Or whoever had lost. And now he sat here and those like him sat here. Others, perhaps, have sat here for a long time, but he got here just recently. His earlier years and months were spent in other places, places very similar to this. Therefore a change in place of incarceration didn't bother him very much -- both here and there there was a stone cell for him, damp and dark -- five paces long and three wide. A bolted iron door, a stinking latrine in the corner -- like everywhere else. The only thing that attracted his attention here was the wall. The one opposite the door.

No matter where he sat and for how long, he was always interested in the walls, in what they were made of and how they were made. And especially in what was on the other side, behind the wall. Usually on the other side was freedom, seductive and unreachable, about which he could not stop dreaming. But the walls were made as walls should be made, made how people used to be able to make them: stone, lime mortar, and brick -- everything solid and indestructible -- you cannot even scratch it. You cannot even knock on it. Even on the first day here, he tried knocking on the wall in the prison alphabet he has gotten familiar with, but he did not hear

any response. Maybe there was no-one behind the wall. That would mean that the stone of the prison ended there and freedom began there. Grass and blackthorn bushes grow green in the sun, the ancient trees of the stone castle's park abound, behind the wall...

Kneeling by his rags, he listened. But all was silent. The guard walked by the door not too long ago, but his footsteps were no longer heard. A weak electric lamp, under a very high, black ceiling, dissipated the darkness on the stone floor; it was a deafeningly silent prison night. And he slowly crawled along that wall opposite the door, and began to touch it, to inspect it -- investigate it.

There, it occurred to him, the wall was a bit softer. Of course, not to the extent that a chunk could be taken out of it. But if you worked hard...It was necessary, it was worth it to try.

The lower row of the large stone blocks was packed together tightly and immovably and did not absorb any of his knocks -- not with a knuckle joint, not with a fist. Same with the rows above. There were enough man-made scratches and markings, but they didn't tell him anything. Maybe there was something written there, but in the half-light it was not possible to make anything out. Although, he didn't want to try to make anything out. Why did he need a record of someone else's fate? He had had enough of his own fate: a painful fate, a miserable fate, a very unfortunate fate. It was hard to imagine anything else except his fate in that stone den. Perhaps, there will never be anything else, and here he will die. Without any hope.

But how he wanted something better, some kind of change! But what kind? Of course he understood perfectly that there were no grounds for hope, and it was necessary to reconcile with the worst. And, with that, to live out the term prescribed by God and the judges. He could not win everything with hope. But hope had stubbornly possessed him.

The wall was cold and hard. Very rough blocks of granite, lime petrified from age. In some places, though, soft pieces fell, made from shellstone. And only in the corner, in the damp and even wet corner, lower down... time, or perhaps moisture, has done something even to the stone or the lime binding -- there, it occurred to him, the wall was a bit softer. Of course, not to the extent that a chunk could be taken out of it. But if you worked hard... It was necessary, it was worth it to try.

And he tried. At first, he clawed with his nails, but he soon broke them on both hands. Then with his bare fingers. With fingers, of course, he didn't manage to do very much, and yet...

A hope appeared within him, a sort of grim life goal. He started remembering less about the past and started to think less negatively. He waited only until the footsteps of the guard became a little quieter behind the door, then threw himself to the corner and, squatting, he scraped, clawed, scratched. He almost never looked there, he didn't need light anymore, his fingers knew all of the details of the stone, too hard, seemingly resisting all of his efforts. But where the nook of the walls met

the floor, in the very corner, it seemed to be nicer - softer, or something. It was exactly there where all of his accumulated will and hope now converged.

He slept perhaps a couple of hours a day -- curled up on rags under the dry wall, forgetting himself until a faraway gong rang -- the signal to get up. He waited for breakfast, a bowl of lentil soup, which he ate within a minute. The rest of the time during the day and night he spent in the corner -- like a moth at a tree, grinding away the stone. The stone corner stood out clearly from the rest of the stone, perhaps it will be possible to try to claw through it first. Maybe it will yield a hole. Or at least the wall will weaken and sink. At least if there was some small hole -- he would crawl through. Like he did in childhood when he and his friends crawled through the fence into the neighbor's garden. The older kids sent him first because he was the thinnest, smallest, most energetic zheuzhyk, who crawled wherever it was possible to crawl. Even wherever it was not possible to crawl. He knew from those times that when the head can crawl through, the rest of his body can, too. He was a zheuzhyk like this. Until he grew up and took up politics. Politics was different. Sometimes no one could crawl through. He couldn't crawl through. That's why he's here.

He didn't count the days and didn't know how many had passed since he had started his neverending work. Time rotated between waking up, eating twice per day, the footsteps of the guard behind the door, back and forth. When this goal first arose, so did impatience. Sometimes it burned so terribly that he was afraid. He knew that the task was impossible. If something were to come of it, it would come about very slowly, through the difficult conquest of stone and time. It would require days, months, years. He needed to build up great endurance, build up the ability to conquer time itself. And he built up. He got used to the slowness, deliberation, unhurriedness. It was difficult to get used to this, to build up that unhurriedness, those devilish delays, to make it second nature. But he tried, because without it he would not have hope. Impatience destroys hope, he knew that for sure. Sometimes hope completely burned out, then flared up to impatience. Somehow, while scratching at the corner, he heard signs of life on the other side: like the chirp of a chick. He already envisioned a bird's nest there somewhere nearby, in a thicket of blackthorn, small yellow-faced chicks, and to him it seemed like a good sign. Impatience overtook him to despair. Cold logic was needed to cool it down. That chirping might have been not even a bird's at all, but a mouse's, for example. There might be a burrow there with disgusting prison rats. But a burrow must lead somewhere. Maybe also to freedom.

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One day at the end of a deafeningly silent night that had spent almost entirely without sleep, clawing in the dark corner, he felt that pieces of coal

seemed to be moving around under his fingers. Not too much, but his sensitive fingers felt a small movement -- up and down. This gave him an unusual energy. But he cooled down: he didn't need this today. Let today be like it always was. Perhaps you need to pull the coal-piece out at the beginning of a night, not at the end. At the beginning of a night, there's more time and opportunity. The guards come in the morning, after all.

Before the guards came, he was worried that they would notice some kind of hope in his face. Although the cell was dark, he knew that something about the expression might give him away -- every time they came by, they looked at his face. Out of interest or out of a sense of duty. He tried to make his expression as calm as possible, focusing inward on something sleepy and hidden from the outside. He had no idea how he did it, but it seems like the guards have not noticed anything yet. What luck! But he needed a lot of luck, he craved luck. First and foremost, luck in that damp corner.

And it's true, fate must have been merciful to him. He pulled out a stone shard -- narrow with sharp edges, but behind it, nothing opened up to him. Further through the hole was hard, rough, cold stone. The shard could be used as a tool sharpened between stones. So he began to sharpen it, breaking off pieces, grinding stone against stone. He couldn't hit it because he needed to make as little sound as possible so that nothing would be heard, neither behind the door, nor over there behind the wall. He still didn't know what was in store for him there -- freedom, or maybe a new prison. But hope drew him pictures of freedom -- his city, meeting with friends, meeting with her... He just needed to overcome this stone wall.

And he clawed quietly, carefully, while listening attentively to any sound behind the door. Sometimes he stood up and threw himself at his pile of rags in the other corner. But he didn't do this at night -- at night they don't look through the door, they come by and look in the evening. In the morning, the guards must be tired, because they walked by slower, and less often. One day he felt like it would be worth it to move his bed closer to the corner to do his work lying down, so it would be more inconspicuous. But how to do this? If the bedding moved by a meter, they would immediately notice. If little by little, how much per day? He did this. First by three inches, then by five, then more. When the guards came, he watched their eyes intently -- did they not notice? No, not yet. Or maybe they were just that good at hiding their suspicion? It would be awful for them to just wait, wanting to catch him at the very last moment. To grab his legs as his body tries to crawl out to freedom.

At the end of summer, he had moved his rags almost to the corner. He thought that summer had ended through the guards' warmer clothing. Sometimes they came right from outside, with autumn freshness billowing around them with raindrops on the shoulders of their uniforms. The cell always had the same temperature -- a bit cool for summer and a bit warm for winter. There was no kind of heating here.

After some time, he made a narrow hole between the stones, which fit four of his fingers. It turned out there really was a den or perhaps a mouse-hole -- narrow and seemingly deep. He poured the crumbled pieces of the wall in there that he had clawed away during the night, and they disappeared without a trace. In the morning, before the wake-up call, he carefully filled the hole with a stone shard, which fit well into its earlier place, and even up close, nothing looked suspicious.

Still absolutely terrified to believe his luck, he still almost lost his attentiveness and botched his efforts. It was his hands. Somehow, bringing food -- a bowl of lentil soup -- an older man with a sickly face, glanced at his hands. He noticed his gaze, but didn't have time to hide his hands -- his hands were grabbing the bowl. "What? A builder?" asked the guard, nodding at his hands. The builder answered as calmly as he could, even though his soul was suddenly overcome with fear: couldn't you guess? But he didn't guess, even saying as if with sympathy: I used to be a bricklayer. After this, when he was left alone, he carefully examined his hands, covered with hard calluses. He never had hands like that, he almost never did physical work when he was free. He became a builder here in this cell. He didn't build -- he burrowed through an ancient stone wall; this was maybe more difficult than building. For freedom, what would you not do? You can only understand that after you lose freedom for good.

He became a builder here in this cell. He didn't build - he burrowed through an ancient stone wall; this was maybe more difficult than building. For freedom, what would you not do?

It would be better if he died, so that his friends in struggle would bury him, and she, crying, would bury her love for him together with him. This would be better, but it didn't turn out this way. It was worse. She was suffering from the uncertainty, the lack of closure. That autumn evening they left each other for what they thought would be a couple of hours, and at midnight he promised to return to her. He remembers that she was not even going to sleep, but said: I will wait. They didn't say goodbye to each other as they should have, she just hugged him a little and opened the door -- go! And he went. He was in a hurry -- he had to rush across the city and was running late. If only he knew where he was rushing! He thought he was going to his friend, to work on their holy struggle, but blackest betrayal awaited him. He didn't have time to give his lover any kind of sign, this was how quickly despair befell him. He disappeared forever. Maybe they think he ran away. From friends, from her, from the city. To think -- he, a traitor! Maybe his enemies made her and his friends think he was just a con-man. And now, instead of loving him, she hates him. Is it possible to love a traitor? He still didn't say the most important word to her -- he was thinking, planning, putting it off. Sometimes, the moment wasn't right, sometimes it was the right moment, but he thought: later.

No, he needed freedom.

All of these years he spent in solitary confinement and shared cells, he never even thought about the possibility of waiting for his freedom. Of course, he could have waited for a pardon, after the dictator dies. But dictators in this country rarely died quickly, because they had vigorous health, like most dictators. He will likely die sooner because his health has never been great. He collapsed suddenly and coughed often. When hope flared up, he felt better. He coughed only lying down. He did not cough even once in the corner. He couldn't let himself do it.

One time, in the depth of the night, after the guard's footsteps grew louder and then softer behind the door, he grasped something new in the hole. A new edge of a stone, a corner of which could be grasped. It was a new opportunity, it increased his hope, he was getting closer to his goal.

But maybe there was no need to rush. There was little chance he would quickly pull the stone out, he had no strength for it. He needed to crack it, make the gap wider, maybe make another one next to it. He started to sweat and get tired a lot. Especially in the mornings. Without sleep. Two hours before the wake-up call was not enough for him to regain his strength. He ate his lentil soups, but they were not enough anymore. He ended up asking for supplements, and they looked at him with surprise: what is he up to now suddenly? He fell silent. He had to work with what he was given.

From that minute, when he felt that stone, he thought of her more often. Her dear face appeared in front of him as he scraped and pulled. She appeared in a short dream. It was always miserable. Never a beautiful dream as his daydreams were. When the wind rustled the trees behind the window and they sat, without words, with silent love for each other and for their common, holy cause.

Now he just needed to say that he loves her, that he is not a traitor. He is a victim. He just needs to let her know that. He just needs to fix everything. So that she doesn't think of him differently -- he does not deserve anything else. If he had known how it all would have turned out, he would have been a different person. He would have been a hundred times better. He would have been braver. Smarter. He would have told her every day that he loved her. He loved her like no one else. If only he had known. But he did not know and did not say it. This unspoken word withered him.

And now this hope...

So far, things were going well. It seems the guards have not noticed anything and did not suspect anything. A cold breeze blew in from the forever-damp corner, the stone became cold, his hands were freezing. That, however, gave him reason to feel that there was not a whole lot left. A couple of final stones, and there - freedom. One day, lying on his rags, he heard voices -- from there, from behind the wall. They were speaking somewhere close to his corner, the words could not be made out, but these were free people. That means freedom was very close. Exactly at this time, he was suffering from considerable anxiety, which had started that morning. There was a scream behind the door, it seemed that they

were beating someone there. After this, the screaming became quieter, was it moved into a cell, or what? He sat, listened and, with a groaning heart, waited. He thought that this somehow concerns him. And this was true, soon his door opened wide, a whole group of guards stormed in, pushed him into the corridor, yelling -- they started searching. They turned over his rags, they touched the walls all over. He felt as if he would die from the fear that they were onto something. Perhaps his face turned pale and was scared that they would notice. It seems like, however, they did not notice -- they cleared out, after pushing him onto his wrinkled and scattered rags. That night he didn't poke around in the corner, but waited and listened instead. The night was somewhat restless -- guards walked and ran behind the door almost until morning, screaming was heard again, yelling, threatening commands. But by morning everything seemed to have calmed down and become quiet. He slept a little before the wake-up call. The following day was calmer, and he, starving until the time for food, laid down at his work. He tried to take it deeper, through the width of the wall, without poking around to make it wider. If only he dug deeper, with both hands, to dig out and pry out a large stone, there'd be a hole. Just some kind of opening. He would have already crawled through.

He dug around, but it became unclear where to put the stone rubble. To throw it into the corner was impossible, it would have been noticed immediately. Twice he poured it out into the latrine, which prisoners took out under the watchful eye of the guards. But that too was risky. Maybe it's better to eat it? For now he poured the rubble out into his shoes, which stood by the door off to the side. In plain sight, but the darkness did not allow them to see what was in them. He went barefoot. As if he would feel too hot in his shoes.

One morning, before breakfast, he glanced at his corner, and almost lost consciousness: in the darkness a narrow short chink dimly shined. Like a splinter of light on the dull blackness of the wall. Fearing that the guards would notice this, he threw his prison jacket there to block the splinter of light. The guards, in fact, did not notice, but he thought, it's worth it! It is necessary to tear this thing open. Or else all will be lost.

The following night he achieved new success -- he widened the slit enough that he was able to get both of his hands through, and grab the sides of the stone. He needed to pull it out towards himself, but would it come out? Would he have enough strength? Perhaps he did not have quite enough strength. Then he started to budge the stone – to pull it and push it from side to side, up and down. That took up a lot of time, but gave a better result – it seems that he was overcoming this rocky passage. With his feeble human strength and his powerful thirst for freedom.

Finally, he dug out this stone, although colorful circles floated across his vision from the strain, and he was short of breath. In the wall there was a narrow and deep crawlway, from which the cold and darkness of a moonless night came in. But, he must act

now, he didn't have any time left. The minutes until morning are numbered – he felt that he wouldn't make it in time. And that in the final minutes the worst will happen.

With great care he rolled the stone to its former place, and rolled it around for a long time until it settled into the exact spot where it had always laid. With his rags, he covered up the cracks. It seemed that even from close-up nothing could be seen. But if only they do not conduct another search. If there is a search, all is lost.

That day he felt on edge. He sat, he sprang up, walked here and there around the ugly cell. The guard who brought him his lentil soup, was in a damp overcoat and wet boots, that means out there, in freedom, it was raining. It seems that Autumn has arrived. And they have not discovered his plot. This was already great luck – unheard of and unprecedented. It would be awful if everything fell apart in the final moments. In the final minutes. He just needed to wait until night...

And the night came. The guards acted like they always have: they brought supper, changed the latrine. It seemed that there was nothing in their behavior or their glances that would bring him anxiety. He would have noticed. His eye and ear have become now like taut strings, or laser beams – he noticed everything. Everything depended not on him anymore – but on others. And he relied on the others – on his jailers. All that had depended on him, he did all of it. Even more than he hoped to do.

He was anxious. In the evening he could not make himself eat his ration of bread (it could not go down his throat) and he could not see a place to hide it. Uneaten, it could have aroused suspicion and given him away. He stuck it in his gaiters, already half-full with rubble. He was already used to going barefoot. How he would manage being barefoot out there, in freedom, he didn't want to think. The main thing was to break away into that freedom. When it became sufficiently dark, and all of the rustling behind the wall fell silent, he kneeled and crossed himself. Of course, he was not too religious, but... He must cross himself, for goals this big any and all means to achieve them are suitable, both the devil's and God's. Both helped. He rolled the stone a little to the side, hunched over, bent over – his head went first. He badly scratched his ear and tore the skin off of his forehead, but it was harder to get his body through. Mainly, his shoulder couldn't get through along with his arm, no matter how he twisted it in this stone tunnel. He jerked this way and that, and became afraid that he was completely stuck, because he could no longer get back out. But eventually, somehow he forced his way through with his arm and head, bleeding under his shirt. Worse than this, however, was that it did not get any easier from here. He already felt that he had no strength to shove his way through, neither back-

Of course, he was not too religious, but...He must cross himself, for goals this big any and all means to achieve them are suitable, both the devil's and God's. Both helped.

ward nor forward. For some time, he laid like this, stuck in the stone, and did not move. And then clearly felt that he was going to die. If he does find the strength in himself for the final push. Fear seized him. But fear must have given him strength and he forced his way forward. He grabbed something in front of him and forced him forward a bit. Then he pulled again and forced himself forward again. And again. And finally he was out up to his chest, out of the stone tunnel, and from there it became easier. And he ended up under the wall, now on the outside, on wet, cold pavement with small patches of grass growing in its cracks.

It was dark and quite cold around him, but quiet. For some time, he laid on the pavement, resting, unable to push himself to sit up. After this, he raised his head – into the black sky rose the gray wall, from which there started another, semi-circular wall – perhaps the tower of this old building. This wall was right next to his tunnel, which gaped like a black stain low by his feet. Around him was night and freedom, which he had finally reached. But why did joy leave him?

Something stubbornly hindered that joy of his, perhaps the gloomy uncertainty of the surroundings – what was this? The street, the yard, the abandoned square? But there were no trees to be seen. But they were supposed to be growing near the old prison wall. Instead of trees, a black tower steeply rose, and behind it, in the darkness, the gray expanse of that same wall. With a sense of foreboding he stood up, staggering along the wall, touching it with his bloody hand. The cold pavement was slippery under his bare feet. He quickly got into a corner; the tall, two-story wall turned in the other direction. With barely a jog he let it guide him, all the while touching its rough side, thinking he would run into a gate, an archway out, or some kind of exit. And it was useless. He ran for a while and almost struck the edge of some old and uneven stonework, behind which was something darkened against the gray. It was a wide and high alcove, with an exit door from this stone trap. Indeed, in the alcove, there were massive black doors, forged from wrought iron, but neither near them nor under them shone any gap. There wasn't even a latch. He quietly pulled at the doors, pushed them with his shoulder – they did not even budge from his feeble strength. Then he rushed from here to the other side, hitting himself against something in the darkness, and found himself on the pavement. He badly hurt his knee, but sprang up, and froze in fearful surprise. Above him in the dark grayness of the sky was the familiar outline of the gallows, with the noose hanging almost right above his head. Below it was a wooden platform, which he had hit in the darkness. There was no escape from here.

Stunned and exhausted, he quietly sank down. This was a dead-end; the trap had closed. Hope, which had guided him for so long suddenly vanished. He was still alive, but only with one part of his being. To live in prison didn't make sense, to die didn't make any more sense. It would have been better not to have been born at all. But unfortunately, that was not up to him...

Сестричка

Little Sister

Written by
Vera Tkachenko

Translated from Russian
by Nina Armstrong &
Christopher Walker
Georgetown University

Translator's Preface

This article was written by the Soviet journalist Vera Tkachenko. As a special correspondent for Pravda, Tkachenko visited many different cities and towns in the Soviet Union, authoring diverse human interest stories. Among many interesting articles, "Little Sister" stands out as a captivating documentation of what it was like to be a Soviet woman veteran of World War II. The article's focus is Yevdokia Andreyevna Kuznetsova, a veteran who must contend not just with her disability as a result of her military service but additionally with everyday sexism within Soviet society.

A precursor to Svetlana Alexievich's oral history of WWII, The Unwomanly Face of War, Tkachenko's piece articulates some of the same themes and critiques, albeit in a form that would pass the Soviet censorship of Pravda: both authors address narratives of women veterans of World War II, detail their personal thoughts and feelings in their own stories, and highlight their gendered experiences of war and life after it. While The Unwomanly Face of War presents separate chapters, some of extended direct quotes from interviews and others containing her down thoughts about her documentary process, "Little Sister" intermixes quotes from Kuznetsova with commentary about how her story connects to Soviet political and economic conditions at the time. However, each author commits themselves to a similar endeavor.

Tkachenko addresses the story of a woman whose life displays the contradiction between the Soviet ideal of gender equality - especially in the context of military service - and her own life experience. For her to bring this dynamic to the fore suggests that Tkachenko is not writing to merely serve state ideological interests and that her work has more to offer readers than the sort of propaganda Alexievich critiques in her work.

On a sunny May afternoon, in a lively metropolitan square, people no longer young and in plainclothes hugged and cried and smiled through their tears, clumsily hiding deep excitement and rough, male tenderness behind jokes:

"I wish you good health, Comrade Colonel!"

"Tolya, damn it, you're still just the same!"

"Commissar, my brother!"

Embraces, incoherent exclamations, the endless "And do you remember?..." The eyes of accidental bystanders warmed with emotion - understandable, given the circumstances: an understandable thing. Brother-Fellow soldiers from the same regiment met. As they had once dreamed, they met on Victory Day near the Bolshoi Theater in the very heart of their dear Moscow. Well, these people have something to remember; they have a reason to furtively wipe away a tear of joy and of the anxious grief of many, oh so many losses... Almost all of them saw each other on this day for the first time after many, many years and made a distant journey for the sake of this meeting, having found each other with considerable difficulty. They were drawn here, to the agreed-upon meeting place, by a mighty feeling of frontline brotherhood. That feeling that does not grow old with age, that does not fade through the events of everyday life, that cannot be forgotten and will not be forgotten, so long as those who survived the war live and breathe...

They have a reason to furtively wipe away a tear of joy and of the anxioius grief of many, oh so many losses.

But the first wave of excited feelings soon subsided; someone suddenly looked back, and with him, others started to look back anxiously. No one had said a word yet, but each knew why his comrade had gone silent in expectation. Suddenly a clear and ringing woman's voice hailed them. They threw themselves toward it:

"Little sister..."

"Dina!"

"Finch!"

She approached them, slightly dragging her unbending leg as she walked. Were it not for this tense gait and her glasses, before them would be the very same Dina-Finch, who seemed not to have changed a bit, who was their comrade in arms, military paramedic, and scout, Yevdokia Andreyevna Kuznetsova. The same prominent cheekbones, the face in smiling dimples and the moist currents of her slightly squinting eyes, the unruly curls of her hair, straying from her hairstyle. In the 145th rifle division, this face was known by one and all. She was the favorite of the regiment: this combat girl who ran away from an orphanage and audaciously got to the front at sixteen on her own, by ways known only to her. For her ringing voice, Dina was nicknamed Finch; for her short height - Pencil. But if in earnest, those older called her daughter, those younger - sis, sister. A sister not only by occupation but also by a fraternal affection, with which the stern soldiers, who walked next to

death, zealously protected Dina's vulnerable, fragile, and fearless youth...

Her military decorations testified to how she fought. Dina Kuznetsova began the war near Moscow. She liberated Velikiye Luki, Smolensk, the Baltics, and Belarus with her division. Just when the war was close to victory, she was badly wounded. Her arm and leg were shattered, and she became blind from shell shock. After coming to her senses in a field hospital, Dina vaguely caught the terrifying word "amputation" and burst into tears, not from the pain and the fear, but because - it's funny to remember - she won't have to be able to dance anymore...

Decades later, the war looks at us through orphaned mothers' old eyes, faded from tears.

But people have always been exceedingly kind towards her. In her half-childish naïvete, she repeatedly asked herself: "Lord, why did this happen to me? Why couldn't I have been extraordinary, a heroine, or some stellar beauty. Or been born happy." This time, happiness came in the face of an angry, mortally exhausted professor-surgeon named Nikolaev (Dina did not see him through the bandage even once). After listening to his colleagues' conclusions, Nikolaev grunted in irritation: "So, an amputation... And have you thought about what it would be like for the girl to remain a complete cripple?" Domineeringly brushing aside uncertainty and doubt, he ordered: "Onto the table! Anesthesia! I will take care of this case myself..."

Months of agonizing struggle flowed like years. The first, the second, the third operation - and so on ten times. With the thoroughness of jewelers, with the care of kind magicians, the surgeons glued, spliced, piece-by-piece, her shattered knee. Finally: "Well, young lady, let's begin learning to walk..." Her arm and leg were saved, then her eyesight. They had selflessly tried to save her for life, just as she had once done on the frontline, forgetting fear and mortal danger, crawling under intense fire to a fallen soldier, to help, to save a life.

...There are lives that war never leaves after entering them once. Thus war does not leave the homes where, framed on the walls, hang photographs of a father, a husband, a brother, killed by it. Decades later, the war looks at us through orphaned mothers' old eyes, faded from tears. Through the icon-like and bitterly wrinkled faces of widows. It peers through the early manhood of soldiers' sons who grew up without a father. And the living, on whom the war left its cruel mark, worry us intensely and painfully, perhaps in the same way a silent obelisk on the side of the road disturbs a passerby... Is this why the soldiers did not forget, could not possibly forget their Dina, whose strength of spirit often served as an example for men?

They knew everything about her. They knew Dina's post-war life did not work out in many ways. That she had to leave medical school (in a dream, she saw herself as a doctor, like Nikolaev) because of her fading vision. That her marriage was clouded

by the doctors' diagnosis: "as a result of the shell-shock, you cannot be a mother." But where the weak obediently bow their heads, the strong fight, go against the current. Dina took into her home a two-week-old orphan girl - a bundle carelessly "forgotten" by someone on the snowy veranda of another house. For months Dina spent sleepless nights in the hospital by the bedside of the foundling, exhausted with dyspepsia; she nursed her back to health, tore her from the jowls of death and saved her. Dina's husband told her fervidly: "a stranger's baby is dearer to you than your own husband. You know what, choose between us."

They separated. Dina named her rescued child "Victoria," in honor of the Victory at war. And so they began living together as mother and daughter.

"We are proud of you," her fellow soldiers wrote. "You're a hero not only in battle. It takes courage to sacrifice a long marriage for the sake of an adopted child."

"My dear ones," Dina laughed and cried as she read the letters. "What would I be without you, my good friends..."

Good friends - for her, are not empty words. After she was mutilated by the war, these good friends fought for her and got her back on her feet, giving her the happiness to live a meaningful, active life. Later, when Dina returned from the hospital to an unrecognizably destroyed Dnipropetrovsk, comrades from the party city committee, having found out about her story, did everything so that she was among the first that received an apartment - this was during that unthinkable housing shortage. Her frontline friends, soldiers from the same regiment, did not lose her from their sight, supporting her sometimes with advice, sometimes with deeds, sometimes with a kind word. Even her women neighbors, after moaning and groaning ("You're off your rocker, woman! After all, you're an invalid. Give up the child, take it to where you're supposed to before it's too late..."), with womanly tenderness kept an eye on the little girl. And all this taken together - the quiet, human engagement and warmth - shielded the humble nurse with a reliable wall from the piercing, everyday drafts and comprised her wealth and happiness.

But this precious chain of kindness suddenly cracked. About that, how it happened, her fellow soldiers wrote in Pravda.

But this precious chain of kindness suddenly cracked. About that, how it happened, her fellow soldiers wrote in Pravda - the very same ones who, on Victory Day, with tears of joy, embraced each other by the Bolshoi Theater. "The joy of our meeting is overshadowed by the story of military paramedic Dina Andreyevna Kuznetsova. We, veterans of the war, tried ourselves, without the interference of the editorial office, to help our comrade-in-arms, but were not successful." And a row of signatures: from the former deputy commander of the 145th rifle division, A. I. Zubritsky, to the intelligence platoon commander M. I. Kiselev.

...I was already going to visit

Kuznetsova in Feodosia, but - what a coincidence! And was it really a coincidence? A letter from the Feodosia military commissar I. A. Skichko arrived at the editorial office. And although he did not mention Kuznetsova, the content of the letter, in essence, was the logical continuation of the story of Dina's fellow soldiers...

But back to the story, in order. At the insistence of doctors (little Vika's lungs turned out to be weak), Dina Andreyevna had to quickly move to a residence by the sea. When the health of her only child is under threat, a mother does not think too much. That is why Dina, a woman not entirely practical, exchanged her housing for the first that turned up in Feodosia. The child's health strengthened in two years, but for the mother, life was hard: a small room on the second floor, without running water, with an oven for heating. You try carrying water and fuel up the stairs when your crippled leg stumbles even on the level floor! And there is running water on the floor below, all one needs is just two meters of pipe to make the woman's life - an invalid of the war - a bit easier.

"We do not have the appropriate allocations for this," the Deputy Chairman of the City Executive Committee replied to Dina Andreyevna at the time.

Kuznetsova's fellow soldiers wrote to the Feodosia city party committee. Communist Y. A. Kuznetsova has had a difficult fate, has military merits, injuries, and so on. The answer was insultingly dismissive: No one had invited Kuznetsova to Feodosia, and she could have lived peacefully in Dnipropetrovsk...

On the way to Feodosia, I imagined bureaucrats, dry like parchment, frozen motionlessly in their old-fashioned offices behind an unapproachable fence of the secretaries. They were nothing of the sort. The city leaders - the secretary of the city party committee and the chairman of the city council executive committee are young, sociable, energetic people. They listened with sympathy. With noticeable effort, they recalled: "True, there was some letter. Well, yes, yes..." And then they told in detail how acutely felt the question of housing was in their resort city, how many retirees are "settling" here, how an insufficient number of houses are getting built, although, of course, to complain a lot is also a sin, - they are still under construction...

Certainly, the housing problem is not resolving itself in a year or two. Nevertheless, there is a circumstance that one cannot get past because its name is the law.

If I may say so, is it possible not to reckon with the order established by the law?

By the resolution of September 21st, 1945, the Soviet government obligated people's commissariats and agencies to transfer to the disposal of the executive committees of local councils ten percent of all living space in new and restored homes for securing living space for demobilized veterans, invalids of the war, and families of fallen warriors. Further, marking the twentieth anniversary of the Great Patriotic War, the USSR Council of

Ministers, by the resolution of March 6th, 1965, No. 140, obligated the Councils of Ministers of union republics, ministries, agencies, and executive committees of local councils to provide all-around assistance to invalids of the war and families of the fallen in preferential security of their living space. Finally, the law guarantees benefits in housing security to officers discharged in reserve or retirement.

Thus the ten percent of newly-built housing for the people within those categories is the alpha and omega of the issue over which spears were crossed in Feodosia. But, if I may say so, is it possible not to reckon with the order established by the law? And yet there were clear violations here.

For Victory Day in the village of Primorsky, which is within city limits, a new building composed of sixty-five apartments was leased. Five apartments were allocated within it for the ten percent. The happy candidates for the new apartments were invited to the City Executive Committee, were told about the upcoming event, and the next day found out that... the apartments were already inhabited - without them. Someone overlooked this issue, control was weakened somewhere, and thus a most unpleasant emergency happened. What can I say, `a baxd gift on Victory Day to veterans and their families! However, no serious conclusions were drawn from this incident, and the military commissar of the city, Comrade Skichko, who mentioned it to party activists, was invited to the Bureau of the Party City Committee for "an explanation..."

Meanwhile, in the city, from year to year, the norms of the housing stock provided for by law and allocated to disabled war veterans, families of the dead, and retired officers or those transferred to the reserve were not fulfilled. There is one motive: housing is difficult. Yes, it is difficult; but this is not about pie in the sky but about real possibilities within reach. And besides, there is a moral aspect to the problem - sensitivity and attention to the person. For example, was it really that difficult to invite the five failed apartment-dwellers, explain themselves, apologize to them, and reassure them? Did the simple human participation in the fate of Dina Kuznetsova, in her simple request, cost so much? Is it possible to promise for so many years and not repair the hazardous room where the sick, lonely old man, an invalid of the first category, the retired colonel Grigory Ivanovich Perverzev lives?

We sacredly honor the memory of the soldiers who laid down their lives for the Motherland. There are beautiful, inspiringly executed monuments at mass graves, the Eternal Flame reverently lit at the Kremlin wall on the Tomb of the Unknown soldier - this is a tribute to our grateful, sacred memory of the fallen. But we must also pay a high measure of respect to those who survived, having made their contribution to the victory. "No one and nothing is forgotten" - this is also said about those soldiers who today work or rest in deserved quietude, who raise children and grandchildren, and who continue to participate, to the extent of their aging abilities, in the building of communism.

Зов к Людям Ниоткуда

The Call to the Nowhere Men

Written by
Alexander Blokhin

Translated from Russian
by Oliver Egger
Wesleyan University

*Translator's Preface**

Little was known about the lyrical work of Alexander Blokhin (1891-1938 CE) until the recent discovery of a pamphlet of poems by scholar Mikhail Makorova in the archives at Tyumen State University. Makorova published the pamphlet, titled (A Couple Kopeks) through Moscow University Press in 2005. The poems featured in this magazine are not only the first English translation from Пара Копеек6 but also of any of Alexander Blokhin's work.

Blokhin was born in 1891 in Velyki Sorochyntsi, a small town in what is now modern-day Ukraine. Following the unexpected death of his father when he was just two years old, Blokhin's mother moved the family out of Velyki Sorochyntsi to live with her sister in Saint Petersburg. It can be gleaned from biographical records and the small archive of Blokhin's surviving poetry that his childhood in Saint Petersburg was not an easy one. In a surviving letter from 1915 addressed to Maksim Nozdrev, a childhood friend, Blokhin writes that, "Those days we spent in that Swedish city,[1] I remember well. The hard whip of my mother's lash followed by the harder whip of my aunt's. I try to remember how that old apartment looked and I can only smell the rotten food stinking next to the madeira[2] my aunt would mix with vodka till it was stronger than aqua regia.[3] I

* This collection of poetry is a work of fiction written by Oliver Egger, Wesleyan University, and translated into Russian by Anton Talsky. Alexander Blokhin is not a real historical figure.

miss our great city and those days for a flash but then, of course, images return..."

Not much more is known about Blokhin's childhood. His level of education is unknown, but considering his well-respected editorial abilities it can be gleaned that, at the very least, he attended secondary-school. In his adolescence, Blokhin worked as an apprentice turner at the Nikolaevsky Station in Saint Petersburg. In a few surviving letters Blokhin writes that this job catalyzed his ideological shift toward the Bolshevik party.

In his time, Blokhin was known as an ardent Bolshevik, political organizer, and editor for a series of important early post-revolution literary magazines such as Proletarian Culture, Magazine for All, and the Proletarian Avant-Garde. He was a founding member of the Proletkult and Forge, two experimental Soviet artistic institutions born from the rubble of the Russian Revolution of 1917. Blokhin is a long missing figure from the canon of early Soviet literature. These poems will aid literary scholars as well as enthusiasts of Russian poetry to see a more holistic picture of those turbulent but hopeful early days of the Soviet Union.

Much of Blokhin's work is inspired by the Bolshevik writer, philosopher, experimental doctor, and rival of Lenin, Alexander Bogdanov and the playwright and novelist Maxim Gorky. Blokhin rejected the materialist foundation of Marxism and instead embraced these men's philosophical idealism, which is generally categorized as "god-building."[4] This philosophy, which attempted . to build a new socialist religion, was based on the concept of of the "religion of humanity,"[5] theorized first by German anthropologist and philosopher Ludwig Feuerbach. This philosophy imagined a human-centered spirituality that stressed the awe-inspiring power of art and individuals to serve a greater good within the framework of socialism. A depiction of socialism as a form of faith that revolves around the sanctity of human beings, rather than a deity, can be read in much of Blokhin's surviving poetry.

We know practically nothing of Blokhin's involvement in revolutionary politics in the years leading up to the 1917 revolution. We do know he became good friends with fellow train turner, and later founding member of the Proletkult, Georgy Konstantinovich Nikiforov. The two men lived together in Chelyabinsk, where they worked in a carriage workshop. While living together, Blokhin was drafted to the Russian army in the First World War, but was officially exempted after suffering a serious nervous breakdown. In 1914, Blokhin wrote, in the only surviving letter to his mother: "I did not tell you but I was drafted to serve a few months ago. I read about the Battle of Tannenberg[6] that same afternoon. The rest that happened to me was unfortunate but only human. So it has come that I will not have to serve in their army after all."

In 1917 Blokhin became a member of RSDLP (b)[7] with Georgy Konstantinovich Nikiforov, the first documented evidence of his revolutionary leanings. In September 1918, along with fellow writers Fedor Kalinin, Vladimir Faidysh, Pavel Lebedev-Polianskii, Aleksei Samobytnik-Mashirov, I. I. Nikitin, and Vasili

Ignatov, Alexander Blokhin helped form The National Proletkult Organization, known generally as The Proletkult, a literary organization founded on the philosophies of Alexander Bogdanov and Maxim Gorky. In fact, Bogdanov himself was personally involved in the process of establishing the literary organization.

Blokhin, unlike many of the other writers, published very little of his own work in his lifetime. Only one of his pieces, "The Blue Stacks", was published in Proletarian Culture[8] which Blokhin co-headed from 1918-1920. In 1920, Blokhin left The Proletkult and helped found the short-lived but influential intellectual literary group Forge, which helped establish a wide-spread literary scene in the Soviet Union with Magazine for All and the Proletarian Avant-Garde.

All of Blohkin's writing, which is contained in the discovered manuscript, was likely written between 1917 and 1922. No creative writing from his later period has been discovered or published. Other than his role as a copy editor of the collective novel Big Fires, published in the Ogonyok Magazine in 1927, which featured his friend Georgy Konstantinovich Nikiforov, there is no evidence that Blokhin was involved in literary or political discourse after 1922. He continued to live in Leningrad where he married Victoria Blokhina and had two children.

Despite being a behind-the-scenes figure for his entire literary career, Blokhin was not safe from persecution. He was arrested on February 13, 1938 in the "case of a conspiracy of writers"[9] during Stalin's purges against writers, scholars, party members, and random citizens. His arrest may have still been a surprise to other former members of The Proletkult due to his small amount of public visibility. Stalin was extremely distrustful of the "religion of man" themes which were central to the work of The Proletkult writers and thinkers. Therefore, every single surviving member of the organization was sentenced for treason, regardless of their level of present activism or literary presence. Blokhin was arrested and pled not guilty but was sentenced to 5-years hard labor and sent to a The Vorkuta Corrective Labor Camp[10] on April 14, 1938. His date of death is unknown but it is suspected that he died at the Transit Camp "Vtoraya Rechka" near Vladivostok later that same year or in early 1939.

These translations were made possible by the generous support of the Cultural Studies department at Tyumen State University and The Olin Fellowship at Wesleyan University. In particular, this book would not have been possible without the mentorship of Wesleyan University Professor of Russian, East European, and Eurasian Studies Susanne Fusso and Tyumen State University Professor in the Institute of Philology and Journalism, Mikhail Makarova. In addition, my friend Anton Talsky did a wonderful job with translating this work into English. I hope this book will open an English speaking audience to this highly underappreciated and unjustly forgotten poet. While Blokhin may have seen himself as nothing more than an amateur writer, there's no doubt his poetry and perspective was a major influence for canonized early Soviet writers and thinkers.

Footnotes

[1] An extremely unusual nickname for St. Petersburg, although the city was once the site of a Swedish fortress that connection was rarely made. Blokhin supposedly had a deep fascination with the Swedish history along the Neva river, which runs through St. Petersburg.

[2] A fortified wine made on the Portuguese Madeira Islands, off the coast of Africa. Not a particularly common alcohol in Russia during this time.

[3] Aqua regia or Tsar's Vodka, a mixture of nitric acid and hydrochloric acid which can melt gold.

[4] Богостроительство (bogostroitel'stvo).

[5] "If man is to find contentment in God, he must find himself in God." From Ludwig Feuerbach's most famous philosophical work Das Wesen des Christentums (The Essence of Christianity).

[6] The Battle of Tannenberg, also known as the Second Battle of Tannenberg, was fought between Russia and Germany between 26 and 30 August 1914, the first month of World War I. The battle resulted in the almost complete destruction of the Russian Second Army and a resounding loss of life for Russia.

[7] Russian Social Democratic Workers' Party (Bolsheviks): the name of the strand Bolshevik party run by Lenin from 1917 until the revolution.

[8] One of the literary magazines published by The Proletkult.

[9] Exact wording from his initial sentencing papers.

[10] One of the most infamous Siberian labor camps, functioning from 1932 to 1962.

Синие трубы

Прикованный к синим трубам завода,
рабочий мечется,
словно муха
у рамы окна.

Но дым разделяется
и нисходит под земь —
к потоку неделимому-красному
бездушных святых.

Святых, с чьей бдящей походкой
остаются рубцы железнодорожных путей
и плачущие в мерзлоте
рядки кукурузы.

Святых, проповедующих:
Не вздыхай, о рабочий!
Красное Солнце встаёт,
и долгим дням тем
недолго осталось.
Чёрный дым, словно песня,
обратит в гравий надгробье твоё —
для тысяч дорог,
безгранично проложенных
от бьющихся наших сердец
к сотням других.

The Blue Stacks

Nailed to the blue factory stacks,
a worker thrashes,
like a fly against
the window
pane.

But the smoke parts
to reveal way down below—
the unparted red tide
of soulless saints.

Saints who in their walking
wake leave railroad track scars
and weeping rows of corn
in permafrost's place.

Saints who preach:
Do not sigh, oh worker!
The red-sun rises,
and these long-counted days
are numbered.
Black smoke more like song
will turn your gravestone to gravel—
for a thousand roads,
connecting across borders
from our beating breasts
to a hundred others.

Мухи

Этим душным июльским днём,
на столе тыщи кусочков сахара
и пропаренная свинина
для тех немногих, кому повезло поесть.
Они ломают хлеб,
и потягивают кровь,
выщеженную из нашего пота.

Но посмотри: пожилые
хозяйка и повариха
ушли, уставшие, вместе с солнцем.
Окна остались распахнутыми,
чтоб наша мушиная эскадрилья
налетела и облепила
все летние богатства,
все вкусности, лакомства.
Теперь рты везунчиков-едаков
будут полны наших крылатых тел.

Наше мясцо теперь смешано с их сахарами,
мы разорвём желудки этих обжор изнутри.
Разорвём в клочья
всем нашим роем мух-докучателей.

The Flies

On a sultry July day,
a thousand beads of sugar
and plates of steaming pork sit
for the lucky few to eat.
They break the bread,
sip the blood,
milled from our sweat.

But watch: as the old
housekeeper and cook,
left sleepy by the sun,
leave the windows open,
so our squadron of flies
pour through and grab
every richness of summer,
every delectable morsel,
and the mouths of those lucky men
will be filled with our winged bodies.

Our flesh all mixed with sugar,
we tear the guts of the gluttons.
Torn to shreds
by our tide of harassing squadrons.

Зов к Людям Ниоткуда

Вы, люди-Никто, Ниоткуда, восстаньте!
Выкопанные вами могилы полны,
темницы подземные — тоже.

С вас хватит!
Удочки погрузите в сада простор.
Здесь вьётся судьбы вашей плод:
Эдемова сельдь. Она, а не грязь
и не сгнившее древо креста.
И не для сумерек жизни этот Эдем,
но для рассвета,
где ваша жизнь — и есть Бог.

Это — то самое «Где»:
города и заводы, берёзы из кирпича и труб,
кора из костей, тел и дыхания,
чистого, словно лёд.

Товарищи, люди, пробейте же лёд!
Поймайте скользкую сельдь!
Её дюжее, слёзно-солёное мясо
жаждет хруста ваших
поста не знавших зубов.
Хруста, радостного, как карнавал.

The Call to the Nowhere Men

Rise you no-one, nowhere men!
The graves you've dug are filled,
as are the dank dungeon's gloom.

No longer, living men!
Dip your fishing rods in the vast garden,
where an Eden of interlacing herring
are your fruits of fate, not mud
or the long-rotten wood of the crucifix.
This Eden is not set for life's evening,
but rather for dawn,
in the Lord that is your life.

This is the only "where":
the cities, factories, and bounding silver birches,
made of bricks, and stacks, and bark
of bodies, bones, and ice-clear human breath.

So men, so comrades, crack the ice!
Catch the bounding herring!
Its brawny, salt-tear skin
craves the crunch of
your unfasting teeth,
your joyous bite of carnival.

[Название утеряно]

[ ]
[ ] дикий плач [ ]
[ ]
[ ] причитания.

[ ] мост ведёт [ ]
[ ]
[ ] я не хотел.
[ ]
[ ]
[ ]
[ ] хватаясь [ ]
[ ]
[ ]
[ ] то [ ]
[ ]
[ ]
[ ]
[ ]
[ ]
[ ]
[ ]
[ ]
[ ] которое я [ ]
[ ]
[ ]
[ ]
[ ] язык, столь немо бормочущий [ ]
Голос её, как вода, и знать я хочу, как
она с любовью ведёт за собой. Как несомая ею поэзия исходит
меж бьющихся волн, не касаясь их гребней.

[TITLE LOST]

[ ]
[ ] epic cry [ ]
[ ]
[ ] wailing.

[ ] the bridge takes [ ]
[ ]
[ ] I didn't mean to.
[ ]
[ ]
[ ]
[ ] gripping [ ]
[ ]
[ ]
[ ] a [ ]
[ ]
[ ]
[ ]
[ ]
[ ]
[ ]
[ ]
[ ] which I [ ]
[ ]
[ ]
[ ]
[ ] tongue, so silently uttering [ ]
Her voice is like water, and I want to know how
she leads with love. How the poetry she carries comes
from between the crashing waves, not riding on their spiny backs.



Czech Republic
Photo by Martina Daniel, Columbia University



Kyrgyzstan
Photo by Irene Jang, Columbia University

