Political Subjectivities in Russia and Ukraine through the

Lens of Post-Soviet Literature

BY

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THESIS

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To my parents

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SUMMARY

This dissertation examines the relationship between political subjectivity and cultural production in post-Soviet Russia and Ukraine. Chapter One, "The Promise of an Early Post-Time: *The Moscoviad* (1992) by Yuri Andrukhovych and *Generation P* (1999) by Victor Pelevin," explores the early post-Soviet period through a discussion of creative anti-realism (or nominalism) in the works of Yuri Andrukhovych and Victor Pelevin.

Similarly, Chapter Three, "Answers Are Rooted in the Past: Oksana Zabuzhko's *The Museum of Abandoned Secrets* (2009) and Lyudmila Ulitskaya's *Jacob's Ladder* (2015)," looks at the significance of realism in the novels; it shows how both authors (writing in the later, second post-Soviet decade) blur the line between models of literary realism and epistemological realism. Chapter Two, "Does Wounded Dignity Drive Anarchy? Zhadan's *Anarchy in the UKR* (2005) and Prilepin's *Sankya* (2006)," offers an account of post-Soviet resentment and nostalgia. It proposes that the experience of wounded dignity is the basic, affective cause of resentment and nostalgia. The dissertation articulates the significance of these emotions and explains their relevance to understanding political subjectivity.

Chapter Four, "Language and Space as Tools for Shaping Political Community: Contemporary Ukrainian and Russian Cases," shows how Ukrainian sloganeering influenced analogous protest language in Russia. This chapter explains how experimental forms can irritate and annoy not only the objects of the criticism (established Putin's power), but also ordinary people (as in the actionism of Petr Pavlensky or Pussy Riot). It shows how popular political protest art can express the *vox populi* and how it can be an effective tool for awakening political consciousness and mobilizing the People to action.

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INTRODUCTION

It is not unusual to hear popular opinion expressed that Russians and Ukrainians share a common bond of brotherhood. Likewise, until recently at least, it has also not been unusual to hear chatter about the essential, even inviolable fellowship of two "fraternal peoples."[1] Surely, we should realize how closely intertwined are these two nations whose history, culture, and political affairs have overlapped for centuries. In this common view both nations shared the cradle of the Soviet Union, and both eventually passed together into the late-Soviet period of *perestroika* and *glasnost.* However, despite popular opinion, significant differences should not be overlooked. It is important not to over-simplify.

The differences become especially visible when we consider the different paths chosen after the collapse of the Soviet Union. How should we explain the clearly divergent paths for two nations with such a common heritage? What might the respective national literatures of the last two decades reveal about the two cultures, and about their respective social and political mentalities? These questions maybe sharpened to a single point when we ask: *How can we account for the radically divergent political subjectivities in post-Soviet Russia and Ukraine?*

The dramatic political crises in Ukraine between 2013 and 2014, and events which followed the Revolution of Dignity (such as the annexation of the Crimean Peninsula and hybrid warfare on the Ukrainian south-eastern border) have compelled fundamental questions about power dynamics in Eastern Europe. They have posed questions about the complex history and present nature of the Russian-Ukrainian relationship. Most emphatically, the events have raised fundamental existential questions concerning the meaning of the Ukrainian position in Eastern

[1] Here is one of the representative examples of using this idiom: Maria Chilich, *Ukraine and Russia: Two Countries, Two Fraternal Peoples* (News coop, January 9, 2018), https://newscoop.com/ukraine-russia-two-countries-two-fraternal-peoples/

Europe — questions that are at once cultural and radically geo-political. Surprisingly or not, Eastern European scholarship has been unprepared to comprehend the complexity of the post-revolutionary situation; it has been inadequate to the task of understanding the radical sweeping changes in the region, whether already-accomplished or still-ongoing. The present challenge for Eastern European and Slavic scholars is to find an adequate analytic vocabulary to describe the current status of Russo–Ukrainian relations, and to account for emergent forms of new Ukrainian subjectivity. A discussion published in the winter 2015 issue of *Slavic Review*[2] illustrated the urgent need for a paradigm shift in Eastern European studies, which for a long time had appeared clear-cut, stable, solid, and Russo-centric.[3]

According to the *Sage Dictionary of Cultural Studies*, subjectivity may be defined as "the condition of being a person and/or the processes by which we become persons, that is, how we are constituted as subjects and come to experience ourselves."[4] Based on this definition, the term "political subjectivity" may be used to refer to political consciousness and/or to the process of shaping or reshaping political awareness and identity. It foregrounds the necessary relationship between the personal and the collective; and it offers a contemporary framework through which to examine such related phenomena as personal agency, social freedom, power, institutional arrangements, legitimate and illegitimate forms of violence, as well as the nature of personal and collective responsibility.

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[2] *Slavic Review* is only one example among many others.

[3] See: Timothy Snyder, *Integration and* Disintegration*: Europe, Ukraine, and the World* (Slavic Review, Volume 74, # 4), 695 – 707; Maria Todorova, *On Public Intellectual and Their Conceptual Frameworks* (Ibid), 708 – 714; Ilya Gerasimov and Marina Mogilner*, Deconstructing Integration: Ukraine's Postcolonial Subjectivity* (Ibid), pp. 715 – 722; Andrii Portnov, *Post-Maidan Europe and New Ukrainian Studies* (Ibid), 723 – 731; Yaroslav Hrycak, *The Postcolonial Is Not Enough* (Ibid), 732 – 737.

[4] "Subjectivity." In *The Sage* Dictionary *of Cultural Studies*, by Chris Barker. Sage UK, 2004. https://dominican.idm.oclc.org/login?url=https://search.credoreference.com/content/entry/sageukcult/subjectivity/0?institutionId=834

Understandings of and attitudes toward the past are naturally influenced by a person's particular position within a larger socio-political arrangement. To get at the theme of political subjectivity as articulated in a literary text, many scholars have turned to the work of Fredric Jameson.[5] According to Jameson, a writer's embeddedness in the political is an inescapable datum that affects the meaning of her narrative. This is perhaps especially true when, as in the work examined here, the writer employs historical material. What is true of the writer holds true also of the reader. As Jameson shows, the critic herself is inextricably embedded in a socio-political context. Consequently, her own political subjectivity will necessarily influence interpretation of the literary text.[6] Jameson claims that "[…] our readings of the past are vitally dependent on our experience of the present."[7] As a Marxist, Jameson focuses his own attention largely on the political and economic structures as they are reflected in the literary text. Nevertheless, we need not be limited to seeing the political through the lens of Marxist economic critique, or through the analysis of consumerism in "Late Capitalism." I contend that a text's political significance is, in fact, much broader. This is especially true if interpretation is concerned with broader changes in twentieth-century political arrangements. The novelists considered here do not expressly focus on economic issues, class struggle,[8] the means of production, etc.; however, all authors, whose works I analyze in my dissertation, are profoundly political and make manifest their authors' responses to the current political moment.

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[5] See: Terry Eagleton, "Fredric Jameson: the Politics of Style" in *Against the Grain: Selected Essays 1975-1985* (London: Verso, 1986), 65-78; Samuel Weber, "Capitalizing History: Notes on The Political Unconscious," *in The Politics of Theory*, Francis Barker, Peter Hulme, Margaret Iversen, and Diana Loxley (Colchester: University of Essex Press, 1983), 248-264; Hayden White "Getting Out of History: Jameson's Redemption of Narrative" in *The Content of the Form: Narrative Discourse and Historical Representation* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press. 1987), 142-168.

[6] See: Frederic Jameson, "On Interpretation: Literature as a Socially Symbolic Act." In *The Political Unconscious. Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1981).

[7] Ibid, 11.

[8] However, all the writers I discuss have written about the class differentiation in the USSR. They also address the transition to a liberal capitalist economy in the post-Soviet period.

The theme of political subjectivity may also be explored by using the social-psychological notion of *identity work process,* which is "the range of activities individuals engage in to create, present, and sustain personal identities, that are congruent with and supportive of the self-concept" [9] (discussed in Chapter 4). By means of such conceptual tools I shall seek to make sense of the transition from *homo privatus* to *homo publicus* not from the standpoint of Soviet collectivism, but from the standpoint of an emergent liberal democracy. Finally, in accounting for divergent Russian and Ukrainian political subjectivities, it will be necessary to ask some epistemological questions concerning the role that knowledge and truth play in defining the political consciousness of individuals and groups.

I am looking to confirm *two major working hypotheses*, which should help me to understand the mechanics of political subjectivity as it has developed in Russia and Ukraine, and to account for the essential difference between the two. My first hypothesis is that the two countries faced the new post-Soviet situation in different ways due to antecedent historical conditions. This statement assumes that, although *de jure* the situation in Russia and Ukraine in the early 1990s appeared to be similar, the *de facto* differences were *already* vast. I thus contend it is an erroneous presupposition to exaggerate pre-existing historical similarities. *Perestroika* was a time of unbridled enthusiasm about possible change for the better. United by optimism, people eagerly anticipated the arrival of new social, democratic freedoms; and they yearned to break away from their totalitarian past.[10] Russian society, following the years of *perestroika* enthusiasm, met not only with deep economic crises attending political and economic

[9] David Snow and Doug McAdam, "Identity Work Process in the Context of Social Movements: Clarifying the Identity | Movement Nexus," in *Self, Identity, and Social Movements*, eds. Sheldon Stryker, Timothy J. Owens, Robert W. White (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000), 47.
[10]Alec Nove, *Glasnost in Action: Cultural Renaissance in Russia* (Boston: Unwin Hyman Inc., 1989).

transition,[11] but also with a series of disappointments related to the transitional period, which left an inevitable mark on people's sense of solidarity. First the shelling of the Russian White House, then the Chechen wars heralded a breaking point for the civil society movement as the nation failed a pivotal exam on postcolonial tolerance. Ukraine faced the same economic difficulties, but also received a chance to ameliorate its "growing pains" with the renewed promise of nation-building. Both Russia and Ukraine began to create national states. This is perhaps especially true for the Russian Federation which is larger and more heterogeneous than Ukraine. Thus, historical and political conditions were already very different prior to the collapse of the Soviet Union. The popular view alluded to above fails to recognize these differences.

My second hypothesis is that the two cultures differ in the levels of elitism and hermeticism. Whereas Russian society exhibits a more vertical hierarchy (with strict divisions into high and low, elite and popular), Ukraine tends toward a more horizontal arrangement, thus affording productive intersections between various forms of interpersonal connections and brandishing great aptitude for the carnivalesque[12]. As I will argue, the horizontal mode tends to mobilze citizens to achieve a common good. While, in contrast, the vertical mode promotes a central State power that tends to progressively disenfranchise citizens of their rights. One thinks here the ways in which the State may act to restrict speech, disrupt public assemblies, eliminate access to or make diffiuct the right to vote, etc.

This dissertation analyzes the appearance and development of political subjectivities in post-Soviet Russia and Ukraine by examining both literature and protest-art actions. I focus on

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[11]Roy Medvedev, *Post-Soviet Russia: A Journey Through the Yeltsin Era* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002).

[12] Vitaly Chernetsky, "The (Post)colonial (Post)carnivalesque, or The Poetics and Politics of Bu-Ba-Bu," in *Mapping Postcommunist Cultures: Russia and Ukraine in the Context of Globalization*, (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2007), 206 – 227.

the post-Soviet epistemological crisis as it faces writers and inhabitants wanting to know the truth about the past and the present. Through literary analysis of several early post-Soviet period novels (Yuri Andrukhovych's *The Moscoviad* (1992) and Victor Pelevin's *Generation P* (1999)) and two later novels (Oksana Zabuzhko's 2009 *The Museum of Abandoned Secrets* and Lyudmila Ulitskaya's 2015 *Jacob's Ladder*) I demonstrate a development in epistemological attitudes toward knowledge and truth.

This dissertation also raises an important question about the connection between dignity and the political subjectivity of post-Soviet people. I argue that the history of the twentieth century, which dealt several deep wounds to personal and collective dignity, conditions and helps to define the political subjectivity of Ukrainian and Russian people in the first decade of twenty-first century.

To get at these issues and these questions I have used conceptual tools from the field of cultural studies, most notably Pierre Bourdieu.[13] His work is useful in thinking about cultural production in Russia and Ukraine as part of a larger sociopolitical field. His work provides a set of concepts for describing how culture molds the *habitus* of citizens and provides means for accumulation of cultural and social capital.[14] Building on the work of such scholars as Rosalind Marsh who used Bourdieu's theory "to explore the relation between the 'cultural field' and the social-political context in Post-Soviet Russia,"[15] I extend the analysis to explore how literature and social activism reflect and shape the development of post-Soviet political subjects in the last three decades after the collapse of the USSR. I argue for the mutual determination of art and

[13] Pierre Bourdieu, *Language and Symbolic* Power (New Jersey: Blackwell Publishers, 1992).
[14] Pierre Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural* Production (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993).
[15] Rosalind Marsh, Literature, *History and Identity in Post-Soviet Russia, 1991–2006* (Bern: Peter Lang, 2007).

politics by charting the developments in literature in particular as a kind of barometer of political activity in the post-Soviet space(s) of Russia and Ukraine.

The present dissertation describes the relationship between literary production and sociopolitical processes in order to illuminate their roles in forging civic consciousness and shaping new political subjectivities. I focus not only on the literary texts themselves, but also on mass actions, protest performances, and the dynamics between *auteurs* (intellectuals, writers, artists) and *demos* (masses, ordinary people, majority of society). The post-Soviet writers I study here are politically engaged as activists who contribute significantly to contemporary political debate. Theses authors all participated in, and reflected upon, the important political events described below in Chapter 4 (on the language of political protest). Novelists like Yuri Andrukhovych, Oksana Zabuzhko, and Serhii Zhadan also actively participated in all the major Ukrainian mass protests. In Russia, Zahar Prilepin, a card-carrying member of the National Bolshevik Party, complements his literary career with a political one; Ludmila Ulitskaya, with her Soviet dissident past, participates and supports political protests, for a long time she has led Russian PEN Center. Victor Pelevin, who refuses to appear in public as a part of his *authorial persona*, reflected on the Russian protest movement in the novel *Batman Apollo* (2013)[16] depicting in the novel the Russian mass protests of 2011–12 on Bolotnaya Street in Moscow.

The events of the post-Soviet transition influenced not only the content of literary production in Russia and Ukraine, but also led to the development of new forms of literary poetics and aesthetic sensibilities. Postmodernism opened new artistic horizons for writers who had been released from the strict rules of Soviet socialist realism. If for Russian language writers it was a transition from one semiotic system of Soviet Russia to post-Soviet Russian, carrying

[16] Victor Pelevin, *Betman Apollo* (Moscow: EKSMO, 2013).

old burdens, then Ukrainian writers had unique opportunity to create a national literature on an unprecendented scale without dependence on the conventional models of high Russian culture. They could aslo do so without approval from State authorities in the Union of the Soviet Writers located in Moscow. Timothy Brenan's trenchant article speaks of "the national longing for form"[17] as a longing that found reflections in many aspects of cultural and social life in Ukraine as there emerged a new cohort of capable writers willing to write in Ukrainian and to embrace unorthodox novelistic forms.

Chapter 1, “The Promise of an Early Post-Time,” compares and contrasts Yuri Andrukhovych's *The Moscoviad* (1992) and Victor Pelevin's *Generation P* (1999) and discusses the dominant features of the authors’ styles and their epistemological approaches to post-Soviet reality. This comparison aims to sketch out divergent conceptions of political subjectivity from post-Soviet *Ukrainian* and post-Soviet *Russian* positions. My reading of the two novels is organized to bring out their perspectives on an interrelated set of themes including: truth/post-truth, reality/pseudo-reality, and freedom/un-freedom as markers of the early post-Soviet period in Russia and Ukraine. The analysis seeks to set Anrukhovych’s and Pelevin’s texts within a larger framework of epistemic changes and transformations of political subjectivity. Both novels demonstrate a certain nominalism in which ‘the real’ exists only in and through language. The main distinction between the novels concerns their different attitudes to the question of nationhood. Andrukhovych - despite all his postmodern irony- maintains a basically romantic attitude toward the project of Ukrainian nation-building; while Pelevin considers the very concept of a “national idea” to be a manipulative tool used to subjugate the masses. This chapter also contributes to broader, global discussions about the meaning of the “post-truth” idea in

[17] Timothy Brenan, “The National Longing for Form”, in: Homi Bhabha (ed), *Nation and Narration* (London: Routledge 1990), 44 – 54.

contemporary culture. It engages with the work of various writers on this subject including Michel Foucault[18], Ralph Keyes[19], Alexei Yurchak.[20] I situate my work into the ongoing discussion about postmodernism and postcolonialism in the field of Slavic studies and enter into dialog with Mark Lipovetsky[21], Vitaly Chernetsky,[22] Mark Andreyczyk,[23] and Natalia Roudakova.[24] To get at questions about (post)-truth in Post-Soviet Russia I appeal to Peter Pomerantsev's book *Nothing is True and Everything is Possibl*e (2014).[25]

Chapter 2, "Does Wounded Dignity Drive Anarchy?" compares Sehiy Zhadan's *Anarchy in the UKR* (2005*)* and Zakhar Prilepin's *Sankya* (2006). The chapter addresses existential dilemmas faced by a younger generation of post-Soviet writers in the mid-2000s. I claim that their work reflects the formation of political subjectivity as it may be seen in the last Soviet generation (those who were born in the late USSR and came of age in post-Soviet Russia and Ukraine). Both novels paint portraits of a 'political subject in the making' during the rocky, post-Soviet transitional period. Both novels show frustrated youngsters living in a chaotic world where the old infrastructure was ruined but the new one is hostile to them. The characters' respond to this situation of alienation and indignity differently. Zhadan-narrator's sense of political agency, a key component of political subjectivity, declines over the course of the novel as he retreats into himself,

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[18] Michel Foucault, *Subjectivity and Truth, About the Beginning of the Hermeneutics of the Self. Lectures at Dartmouth College 1980* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2016), 19 – 52.
[19] Ralph Keyes, *The Post-Truth Era. Dishonesty and Deception in Contemporary Life* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2004).
[20] Alexei Yurchak, *Fake,* Unreal*, and Absurd*, in *Fake: Anthropological Keywords* (Chicago: Hau Books, The University Chicago Press, 2018), 91 – 108.
[21] Mark Lipovetsky*, Charms of the Cynical Reason: The Trickster's Transformation in Soviet and Post-Soviet Culture* (Boston: Academic Studies Press, 2011).
[22] Vitaly Chernetsky, *Mapping Postcommunist Cultures: Russia and Ukraine in the Context of Globalization* (Montreal: McGill University Press, 2007).
[23] Mark Andryczyk, *The Intellectual as Hero in 1990s Ukrainian Fiction* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2012).
[24] Natalia Roudakova, Losing *Pravda: Ethics and The Press in Post-Truth Russia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017).
[25] Petr Pomerantsev, *Nothing is True and Everything is Possible* (New York: Public Affairs, 2014).

substituting the pleasures of personal freedom—symbolized by his love for western music—for the satisfaction of civic participation. He chooses to ignore the institutions of power because they ignore him. He adopts a philosophy of anarchy which he rejects the institutions of the state power and chooses not to recognize municipal or federal authorities or any other controlling systems. In contrast to Zhadan, Prilepin depicts the process of an active political subject emerging. His character, Sankya, develops from an apolitical, frustrated teenager to the leader of a real violent rebellion under the red and black flags. His dignity is wounded so deeply that he chooses the anarchic violence of revolt despite the clear understanding of all possible aftermaths. Prilepin's novel shows the volatile scenario that becomes possible when socio-political institutions ignore the ordinary people who are longing to realize themselves as political agents within them.

Philosophical works by Hannah Arendt[26], Erich Fromm[27], and Giorgio Agamben[28] influenced my approach in the chapter; and scholars like Svetlana Boym,[29] Serguiei Oushakine,[30]and Lyudmila Parts,[31]helped situate my enquiry in the post-Soviet context. I came to my own independent understanding of the subject through dialogue with the work of literary critics

[26] Hannah Arendt, "The Great Tradition and the Nature of Totalitarianism," in *The New School for Social Research*, March 18, 1953 (Washington, DC: The Hannah Arendt Papers at the Library of Congress, 2001).
[27] Erich Fromm, *Escape from* Freedom (New York: Holt Paperbacks, 1994).
[28] Giorgio Agamben, *Remnants of Auschwitz. The Witness and the Archive* (New York: Zone books, 1999).
[29] Svetlana Boym, *The Future* of *Nostalgia* (New York: Basic Books, 2001).
[30] Serguiei Oushakine, Patriotism *of Despair. Nation, War, and Loss in Russia* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2009).
[31] Lyudmila Parts, *In Search of the True Russia. The Provinces in Contemporary Nationalist Discourse* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2018),

like Maxim Tarnawsky,[32] Tetyana Zakharchenko,[33] Tatiana Prokhorova,[34] and Elisabeth Morgan.[35]

Chapter 3, "Answers Rooted in the Past," looks at the developing post-Soviet political subjectivity in the perspective of the *longue durée* of the troubled twentieth century. I offer a reading of Oksana Zabuzhko's *The Museum of Abandoned Secrets* (2009) and Lyudmila Ulitskaya*'s Jacob's Ladder* (2015). Traumatic experiences always leave their indelible imprints on individual and collective memory, so it is only natural that writers like Oksana Zabuzhko and Lyudmila Ulitskaya should try to make sense of the present through reflection on the difficult histories of their respective societies. The two writers offer fascinating perspectives on a range of issues including history, women's agency, and of course, our fundamental interest here: political subjectivity. As in Chapter 1 we will return to addressing epistemological issues. While truth and knowledge are interesting philosophical topics in their own right, our focus will be on the relationship between epistemology (in a very loose sense) and political subjectivity as represented in post-Soviet literature. The Russian and Ukrainian authors under consideration select different actual historical events to include in their historical novels, and I consider how these events, in turn, provide insight into the perspectives of each author. The narrative in Ulitskaya's novel is set in two discrete periods: 1905–1955 and 1975– 2011. Zabuzhko's novel has a similarly complicated timeline. It begins in 1940s during WWII, includes references to the Holodomor of 1932-33. She narrates events from the late Soviet stagnation of the1970s, the

[32] Maxim Tarnawsky, "Images of bonding and social decay in contemporary Ukrainian prose: Reading Serhii Zhadan and Anatolii Dnistrovy." In: *Contemporary Ukraine on the Cultural Map of Europe*, ed. by L. M. L. Zaleska Onyshkevych, M. G. Rewakowicz (New York: Armonk, 2009).
[33] Tetyana Zakharchenko, "While the Ox Is Still Alive: Memory and Emptiness in Serhiy Zhadan's "Voroshylovhrad" (Canadian Slavonic Papers, Vol. LV, N. 1–2, March-June 2013), 45 – 69.
[34] Tatiana Prohorova, "Formy Proiavleniia Natsionalnoi Identichnosti v Romanie Zakhara Prilepina San'kia" (Philology and Culture. 2013. № 2 (32), 196-199; Parts, *In Search of the True Russia…,* 97 – 103.
[35] Elizabeth Morgan, *Nation versus Soul: Questioning Pre-revolutionary Cultural Myths and Memory in Post-Soviet Russian Literature* (Montreal: McGill University Libraries, 2018).

Chernobyl disaster of 1986, and the Revolution on Granite of the 1990s. Both novels are essentially realistic in style; both are exceptional achievements of Slavic historical fiction; and both paint reflectively against the broad canvas of the twentieth century. Thus, they are excellent sources for our interests in the relation between literature and the political questions in post-Soviet space. The particular notion(s) of political subjectivity that emerge from a close reading will be seen to be deeply historical, with all the complexities of the past, and memory of the past. Rooted in the dramatic experiences of the twentieth century, both novelists reflect seriously and at length on their longing to discover, to know the truth about the past in order to act responsibly in contemporary post-Soviet political space. Their long novels reward the reader's work with the perspective they provide on the question of political subjectivity in Russia and Ukraine.

I have learned a good deal from philosophers and theorists such as Wolfgang Iser,[36] Robin Collingwood,[37] Hayden White,[38] Frederic Jameson,[39] and have formulated my approach through dialog with their writings. The chapter is the result of a dialog with contemporary scholarly literature on the subject, and I have come to my positions in dialog with such literary critics as Elizabeth Skomp and Benjamin Sutcliffe,[40] Szabo Tünde,[41] Natalie Paoli,[42] Mark Andryczyk.[43]

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[36] Wolfgang Iser, *The Fictive and the Imaginary. Charting Literary Anthropology* (Baltimore and London: The John Hopkins University Press, 1993).
[37] Robin George Collingwood, *The Idea of History* (London: Endeavour Media Ltd, 2018).
[38] Hayden White, "The Fiction of Factual Representation," in: *Tropics of Discourse. Essays in Cultural Criticism* (Baltimore and London: The John Hopkins University Press,1985).
[39] Frederic Jameson, "On Interpretation: Literature as a Socially Symbolic Act," in: The Political Unconscious. Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1981).
[40] Elizabeth A. Skomp, Benjamin M. Sutcliffe, *Ludmila* Ulitskaya *and the Art of Tolerance* (Madison: The University Wisconsin Press, 2015).
[41] Szabo Tünde, *Historicism and realism in the* works *of Lyudmila Ulitskaya* (Slavica TerStina: The Great Story, Vol 14, 2012), 99 – 118.
[42] Natalie Paoli, 'Let My People Go': Post-Colonial Trauma in Oksana Zabuzhko's *The Museum of Abandoned Secrets*, in: Dobrota Gocherova, Robert Gafrik (Ed), *Postcolonial Europe? Essays on Post-Communist Literatures and Cultures* (Leiden-Boston: Brill Rodopi, 2015), 161 – 172.
[43] Mark Andryczyk, *The Intellectual as Hero in 1990s Ukrainian Fiction* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2012).

Chapter 4, “Language and Space as Tools for Shaping Political Community: Contemporary Ukrainian and Russian Cases,” is somewhat different from the other chapters. Here, the object of analysis is no longer fictional literature, but the political slogan and the civic space during the most significant political protests actions in the recent Ukrainian and Russian history. Analyzing the political discourse of such Ukrainian protests like *Kuchmageit* (1999–2000), *Orange Revolution* (2004–2005), *Revolution of Dignity* (2013–2014), and the political protests in Russia in 2011–2012 (protests on Bolotnaya Street in Moscow, *Occupy Abay, White Revolution)* as well as art performances of individual artists like Peter Pavlensky or groups like *Pussy Riot,* I compare and contrast the language of political slogans and the use of public space in political protest movements.

The chapter, of course, somewhat extends the scope beyond an analysis of novels. Instead, I collected data using the methods of active and passive observation; I have conducted discursive qualitative analyses following models from the discourses of sociology, sociolinguistics, and anthropology. I frame my analysis by comparing post-Soviet protests with the 2010 *Arab Spring.* This reference to events in the Muslim world allowed me to identify a few common patterns and suggested to me how to approach the study of slogans, the tactics and strategies of political messaging. It is perhaps not surprising for the reader to learn that my personal participation in the political events described constituted perhaps the main impetus to my dissertation research reflected here.

While I am perhaps the only scholar from literary studies, or at least one of the first to be in this particular topic of symbolic actions in Ukraine and Russia, I have been fortunate to

develop my ideas in dialog with scholars like Colleen McQuillen,[44] Woodyard Kerith,[45] Olga Nikolayenko, and Maria DeCasper[46]. My theoretical concepts have been drawn from Robert Porter[47], Helena Flam and Debra King,[48] among others.

[44] Colleen McQuillen, "Deviantnoie povedenie: The Graffiti Zachem's Social and Artistic Practices" (*Russian Literature* (Special Issue): Russia – Culture of (Non-)Conformity: From the Last Soviet Time to the Present, Volumes 96-98, February – May, 2018), 330.
[45] Kerith Woodyard, "Pussy Riot and Holy Foolishness of Punk," (*Rock Music Studies* 1, no. 3 (2014)268-286.
[46] Olga Nikolayenko, Maria DeCasper, "Why Women Protest: Insights from Ukraine's Euromaidan" (*Slavic Review*, Volume 77, Issue 3, Fall 2018), 726-751.
[47] Robert Porter, "From Clichés to Slogans: toward a Deleuze-Guattarian critique of ideology," *Social Semiotics*, 20, no. 3, (June 2010): 233 – 234.
[48] Helena Flam and Debra King, *Emotions and Social Movements* (New York: Routledge, 2005).

CHAPTER I THE PROMISE OF AN EARLY POST-TIME

THE MOSCOVIAD BY YURI ANDRUKHOVYCH AND GENERATION P BY VICTOR PELEVIN

Following the collapse of the USSR, both Russian and Ukrainian artists experienced a new kind of freedom as those working in various domains of art and culture found themselves released from the strict norms of socialist realism. Liberated from the ideological restraints of Soviet ideology, the artists of different media were afforded new opportunities for creative work unimaginable under the older strictures.[49] The dramatic political transition from Soviet to post-Soviet space was matched by equally dramatic developments in the field of cultural production, and the changed political and cultural circumstances revived the well-known literary trope of the trickster.[50] The resurrection of this playful and subversive figure, with its deep mythological resonance, may stand as an illustration of the liberated artists' desire to reject the long-established repressive rules and conventions of socialist realism.

Mark Lipovetsky sees a clear example of the revivified trickster in Pelevin's various "shape-shifting" characters. Lipovetsky distinguishes two different forms of the trickster: the "cynical" and the "kynikal." He claims that in the new post-Soviet rearrangement, cynical reason leads to a new interpretation of the trickster that may occupy two related but antagonistic positions. There are both the "violent trickster-in-power," and the postmodern "deconstructor" who resurrects the kynical impulse only to break out from another quasi-ideological self-

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[49] See for instance, Mikhail Epstein, "After the Future: On the New Consciousness in Literature," in *Late Soviet Culture from Perestroika to Novostroika* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1993), 257 – 287; Mikhail Epstein, Alexander Genis, Slobodanka Vladiv-Glover (ed), *Russian Postmodernism. New Perspectives on Post-Soviet Culture* (New York-Oxford: Berghahn Books, 1999); Alexander Prokhorov and Elena Prokhorova, *Film and Television Genres in Post-Soviet Era* (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2017).

[50] Mark Lipovetsky, *Charms of the Cynical Reason: The Trickster's Transformation in Soviet and Post-Soviet Culture* (Boston: Academic Studies Press, 2011).

mystification.[51]" Further, Lipovetsky asserts that the "cynical subject at first emerges as the manifestation of the revolution, then as the force—secretly undermining the regime, and eventually as the manifestation of the regime itself, yet at the same time, continuing to function as the force deconstructing the social order."[52] The use of 'shape-shifting' characters may be seen not only in Victor Pelevin, who so significantly altered the landscape of Russian literature; it appears also in the work of Yuri Andrukhovych, whose writing has exercised similar influence within Ukrainian literature by introducing new post-modernist elements.[53] In the novels I consider here, the new multivalent figure of the trickster represents the appearance of a new political subjectivity within the post-Soviet cultural field. The figures of Otto von F. from Andrukhovych's *The Moscoviad* and Babylen Tatarski from Pelevin's *Generation P/ Homo Zapiens* are examples of tricksters pretending to be someone, hiding even their true names but purporting to be a part of some ambiguous and obscure big story.

In 2016, the *Oxford English Dictionary* selected "post-truth" as their Word of the Year, a word or expression chosen to reflect the passing year in language. The *OED's* team typically reviews candidates for word of the year, debates the merits, and then chooses one that captures "the ethos, mood, or preoccupations of that particular year."[54] Language research conducted by their editors revealed that use of the word "post-truth" had increased by approximately 2,000% over its usage in 2015. Russian and Ukrainian languages Internet segments were sensitive to the post-truth issue as well, worthy noted, that the *OED* was also a start point to initiate the

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[51] Lipovetsky, *Charms of the Cynical Reason,* 231.
[52] Lipovetsky, *Charms of Cynical Reason,* 60.
[53] It is important to note that the innovation of both writers extends beyond themes or content to creative new examples of *form.* While there is a large body of literature on the subject, I will discuss only those aspects most relevant to my particular subject.
[54] "Post-Truth," In *Oxford English Dictionary*. Retrieved from: https://www.oxforddictionaries.com/press/news/2016/12/11/WOTY-16.

reflection about post-truth in post-Soviet domain[55]. What does this mean? What does the word itself signify? And what might this dramatic increase in usage indicate about changes in contemporary cultural mentalities? And—for our purposes here—how is this mentality represented in post-Soviet literature?

The *OED*'s definition of post-truth reads as follows, "Relating to or denoting circumstances in which objective facts are less influential in shaping public opinion than appeals to emotion and personal belief."[56] Fundamentally, the term points to a situation in which rhetorical appeals to emotion (or to factional interests) have become more common, more socially accepted, and more effective than reasoned methods of persuasion in which assertions are justified by appeals to evidence. Or, more simply, it designates a discourse situation in which the social value of truth has been radically diminished. Born of a certain skepticism, disappointment, or lack of confidence in the ideals of Enlightenment reason (and perhaps it modern political arrangements), "post-truth" may be seen as resulting in some form of contemporary *sophism*.[57] This is not to say that the general situation and cultural mentality named by "post-truth" need be fully theorized or even conscious by all members of the culture. Obviously, a full cultural and intellectual history of the development is beyond the scope of this dissertation; and it is certainly not my intent here to enter at any depth into the complicated epistemological questions disputed within contemporary philosophy. Rather, I aim to describe

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[55] See: Kirill Martynov, *Chto Takoe Post-Pravda?*, (The Question, Vmeste s Yandexom, Noiabr', 2016), https://thequestion.ru/questions/186322/chto-takoe-postpravda; Alexander Genis, Postpravda. *Filosofia Informatsionnoi Voiny* (Novaya Gazeta, # 11, 2 Fevralia, 2018), https://www.novayagazeta.ru/articles/2018/02/02/75363-postpravda; Olexandr Piddubny, *Shcho Take Postpravda?*, (piddubny.com, 12,05,2017), http://piddubny.com/scho-take-postpravda/.

[56] "Post-Truth," *Oxford English Dictionary Online*, accessed April 20, 2019, https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/post-truth.

[57] "The Sophists," *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, accessed April 20, 2019, https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/sophists/.

the phenomenon sufficiently to provide a frame for understanding a few concerns and themes within post-Soviet literature.

Naturally, a post-truth culture did not emerge overnight, or even over the course of one year; neither can it be located exclusively in one region. Due to worldwide electronic media networks, it is in some sense now a global phenomenon. This is true despite relevant regional geopolitical and cultural nuances or particular local features. Still, we are justified in taking the emergence of post-truth discourse as a sign of important changes in cultural mentality. Indeed, we might justifiably see last year's US Presidential campaign—in which a complex information war was waged employing hacked emails and social media propaganda, as well as inventing "fake news" stories (the whole range, that is, of Russian intervention into the US elections)—as a pivotal turning point toward wide-spread recognition of a "post-truth era." In short, the *OED's* selection of "post-truth" as Word of the Year may be interpreted as a sort of culminating sign of changes in society, culture, and epistemology.

More than a decade ago, Ralph Keyes published *The Post-Truth Era. Dishonesty and Deception in Contemporary Life*.[58] Keyes examined various aspects of dishonesty, lying, and duplicity, which have only grown more socially accepted in recent years. He discusses the nature of dishonesty and deception in various domains of contemporary life including public/political discourse, journalism, advertising, media, and academia. Keyes claims that contemporary culture is now situated beyond truth, and that there is little requirement for truth anymore. He emphasizes that contemporary societies have begun to value comfort, security, confirmation of already-held beliefs, belonging, social status, and success more highly than the social virtues of truthfulness or accuracy.

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[58] Ralph Keyes, *The Post-Truth Era. Dishonesty and Deception in Contemporary Life* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2004).

This decline of truth's social value was not instantaneous. Keyes provides an example from American history and emphasizes, "Decades of the official lies about Vietnam, Watergate, Iran-gate, and Iraq (to name just a few such events) have left us morally numb."[59] In this regard, I am most interested in the statement that the lowering of the threshold of sensitivity (*порог чувствительности*) to lies starts from the highest political authority and leads to a general moral diminution of the whole community. It develops together with the decline in trusted moral authorities, a loosening of self-discipline, and a lessening of the internal demand for honesty among citizens on a daily basis.

As Giovani da Col describes contemporary global enchantment with post-truth he notes that terms like "fakery, forgery, fiction," like the verb "to feign," come from Latin verbs referring to "the productive, creative, and inventive activity of shaping and molding, *facere, fabricare*, and *fingere*," and asserts that they cannot be clearly distinguished from poetic and poietic activity.[60] Giavani da Col's preface cited here may be found in a booklet that emerged from the proceedings of a panel co-organized by the American Ethnological Society (AES), Hau, and L'Homme at the 2016 Meeting of the American Anthropological Association in Minneapolis. The panel convened to discuss and to comprehend what had happened to the global perceptions of the real and the fake. In a similar vein, anthropologist Alexei Yurchak has situated post-Soviet and post-Cold War discourse within the larger global process of movement toward post-truth, fabricated realities, and absurdity.[61] Yurchak's work not only usefully shows how these changes impact political subjects of contemporary Russia and Ukraine, it also traces the etiology of these attitudes toward pseudo-realities that, in many aspects, is rooted in the early

[59] Keyes, *The Post-Truth Era*, 11.
[60] Giovani da Col, "Preface," *in Fake: Anthropological Keywords* (Chicago: Hau Books, The University Chicago Press, 2018), X.
[61] Yurchak, *Fake, Unreal, and Absurd*, Ibid, 91 – 108.

post-Soviet/post-Cold war period. He describes a development from certainty about the falsehoods and fabrications of the previous ideology, to the current relativistic *nominalism*. In this light it becomes easy to see how these changes in social epistemology sit conformably with the poetics of postmodernism.

It is against this broader political, cultural, and epistemological background that I would like to now examine in more detail Yuri Andrukhovych's *The Moscoviad* (1992) and Victor Pelevin's *Generation P* (1999). The two novels are symptomatic of their respective national literatures; they afford a window through which to compare differing perspectives on the collapse of the Soviet Union. My comparison aims to sketch out divergent conceptions of political subjectivity from a post-Soviet *Ukrainian* and post-Soviet *Russian* position. My reading of the two novelists' work aims to reflect on their perspectives on an interrelated set of themes including: truth/post-truth, reality/pseudo-reality, and freedom/un-freedom. While the value of my analysis is that it seeks to set them within a larger framework of epistemic changes and transformations of political subjectivity, it will be useful to briefly consider other related scholarly work.

For instance, Roman Ivashkiv has compared Andrukhovych's novel *Perversion* (1997) with Pelevin's *Omon Ra* (1992). Ivashkiv is interested largely in poetics. He describes the novel postmodern aesthetics of both writers. Situating both in a contemporary cultural context of European postmodernism, he draws attention to the operations of irony, playfulness and shifting registers of narration which might be used intentionally to disorient the reader.[62] Naturally, there is an intimate relationship between literary form and social change; and we may reasonably

[62] Roman Ivashkiv, "Postmodern Approaches to Representation of Reality in Ukrainian and Russian literatures: The Prose of Yuri Andrukhovych and Victor Pelevin," (*Journal of Ukrainian Studies* 32, no. 1 (2007 Summer): 37-61.

suggest that the postmodern poetic devices identified by Ivashkiv do, in fact, also register larger changes in cultural consciousness and altered conceptions of political subjectivity.

Yulia Ilchuk compares Victor Erofeev's and Yuri Andrukhovych's ways of deconstructing the Empire through re-mapping the post-Soviet identity and emphasizing the hybridity of both protagonists' identity and their existential homelessness.[63] By contrasting the approaches to the travelogue genre in post-Soviet Russian and Ukrainian novels, Ilchuk proves that their respective differences follow from different dispositions toward the Empire.

Likewise, there is abundant critical literature on *The Moscoviad*'s postcolonial background. While I do not wish to argue with previous commentators like Vitaly Chernetsky,[64] Mark Andryczyk,[65] or Marko Pavlyshyn,[66] I would like to emphasize how Andrukhovych marshals the wealth of his artistic resources to prove that Moscow is still a scene of relentless alienation. He depicts the city as a place where his protagonist can never feel comfortable, and therefore refuses to adapt to the hostile surroundings. This is why the proverbial "end of history" does not double as the end of his personal history, even in a world destabilized and devastated by the putsch. The world of the novel is a carnival immersed in another carnival—a fruitful upheaval that brings about a new reality and announces a fresh start after the collapse of the USSR, and raises up the questions of truth and freedom—and the nature, definition, and limit of both.

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[63] Yulia Ilchuk, "Deconstructing the Empire, Remapping the Post-Soviet Identity: Contemporary Russian and Ukrainian Travelogue," in (Neo-Anti-Colonialism vs Neo-Imperialism: The Relevance of the Post-Colonial Discourse in the Post-Soviet Space. East/West Journal. The Scholarly Journal for History and Culture, Vol. 16-17 (2013): 460 – 474.

[64] Vitaly Chernetsky, *Mapping Postcommunist Cultures: Russia and Ukraine in the Context of Globalization* (Montreal: McGill University Press, 2007).

[65] Mark Andryczyk, *The Intellectual as Hero in 1990s Ukrainian Fiction* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2012).

[66] Marko Pavlyshyn, "Andrukhovych's Secret: The return of colonial resignation" (*Journal of Postcolonial* Writing, 48, no. 2 (2012): 188-199.

To bring some threads together then, and to resume the main theme, I see my own analysis as complementing the research of other scholars, and as broadening the perspective to embrace larger questions concerning transformations in cultural consciousness and redefinitions of political positions in a rapidly changing world. Comparative criticism of *The Moscoviad* and *Generation P*[67] thus discloses insights about the complex dynamics visible in the development of post-Soviet political subjectivities in the first years after the collapse of the USSR. Specifically, I ask how the two authors depict the end of the USSR. The collapse of the USSR has changed the geo-political balance in the whole world and, by many, has been thought *the end of history*, since then seemed that liberal democracy had won, and that there was no need for confrontation with the Soviet totalitarian regime.[68] What is the role of a writer in interpreting (or creating) political subjectivity in the post-Soviet cultural space? And, how does the end of the Soviet Union relate to the rise of a 'post-truth' mentality in which, to quote Pomerantsev, "nothing is true and everything is possible?"

This chapter discusses the early stages of the post-Soviet transition in Russia and Ukraine. I claim, that despite of obvious similarities of political subjectivity, both countries evolved differently. Similarly, both countries were dealing with the Soviet totalitarian heritage, but reacted to it differently. I wil argue below that Andrukhovych's novel depicts a situation, wherein a frustrated Ukrainian society tried to discover its own political voice premised on a separation from Russia and the Soviet past. He represents an emerging, post-colonial Ukrainian

[67] Here I use the direct translation of the title, but for the English language reader the novel is better known as *Homo Zapiens*, translated by Andrew Bromfield. I cite: Victor Pelevin, *Homo Zapiens* (New York: Viking, 2000).
[68] See Francis Fukuyama, *The End of the History* (New York: Free Press, 1992). Roger Kimball writes, "… liberal democracy, allowing mankind the greatest freedom possible, had triumphed because it best instantiated the ideal. In this sense, what Fukuyama envisaged was not the end of history – understood as the lower-case real of daily occasions and events – but the end of History: an evolutionary process that represented freedom's self-realization in the world"; Roger Kimball, "Francis Fukuyama and the End of History," in *Experiments Against Reality. The Fate of Culture in the Postmodern Age* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 2000), 321.

literature which, however artlessly, demands its own originality. A study Pelevin's novel reveals that in the first post-Soviet decade there was already a tendency to restore the old 'vertical' approach to governance using a new language more fit to the changing economic situation. In this chapter I interpret political subjectivity as it is reflected in the domain of language. In the Ukrainian case, political subjectivity is clearly evident in the use of Ukrainian language as a means to express independence from Russia. In the Russian case, Pelevin's work shows a new use of Russian language that mediates between an audience's habituated to old Soviet political structures and a new language of Western commercial advertising. In both cases, we may observe the critical role of language as a tool for shaping political subjectivity.

Pelevin's text sheds light on what he sees as a new transitional reality replacing the Soviet past. His fiction describes an unstable world of television, advertising, and public-relations work. He depicts a quickly-changing domain of hyper-mediated 'reality' through which media agents create and sell images, products, experiences, and 'truths' to the average consumer.[69] Within this hyper-mediated world, the advertising agents do not even cater to the existing desires of the target audiences of commercials. Rather, as Pelevin presents it, cynical PR firms *create* the consumer self and its desires through sophisticated rhetorical strategies. I contend that the ideological structures of socialist realism both prefigured and provided the necessary conditions for Pelevin's Russia by having long trained the audience uncritically to accept and habitually internalize propaganda, whether communist or the new capitalist version. Peter Pomerantsev's book addresses many of the same themes as *Generation P*.[70] What Pelevin

[69] Sofya Khagi analyzed Pelevin's novel focusing her enquiry on the consumerism of "Generation P". See Sofya Khagi, "From Homo Sovieticus to Homo Zapiens: Victor Pelevin's Consumer Dystopia," *The Russian Review* 67, No. 4 (Oct., 2008): 559-579.

[70] Pomerantsev writes, "From being ready to sell anything, they [Russians] became ready to buy anything…Only in Moscow did they make sense, a city living in fast-forward, changing so fast it breaks all sense of reality, where boys become billionaires in the blink of an eye." Peter Pomerantsev, *Nothing is True and Everything is Possible. The Surreal Heart of the New Russia* (New York: Public Affairs, 2014), 3.

represents in rollicking fiction, Pomerantsev describes directly in his soberly fact-based writing. The latter further offers an explanation to the social and cultural history of this brave new world, where "nothing is true and everything is possible," accounting for the political, economic, social, and cultural conditions that make possible the pseudo-reality of *Russia Today*, *TNT*[71], *TV Channel Russia*, and reality TV. He also shows how they use techniques like *Neurolinguistic Programming (or NLP)* and similar persuasive techniques to manipulate the perception of citizen-consumers through ideological phantasms of advertising.[72]

The novels of both Pelevin and Andrukhovych concern the human relationship to the real, and to the rapid transformations in human understanding of the real. Both novelists raise important epistemological questions; they are preoccupied with what it is true and how it may be known in the current post-Soviet period; they probe the relationship between knowledge and social freedom. Both explore what it means for a person to control and direct his or her own life in such a 'post-truth' world in which political and corporate interests seek to create, mediate, and manipulate perceptions of the real. The concerns are central to both Andrukhovych and Pelevin, even if they respond to the situation in different ways. Both think through an experience of existential *disorientation* prevailing in the early post-Soviet period. This sense of dislocation arises from a loss of taken-for-granted intellectual and moral beliefs, transformations in institutional arrangements, and from the extraordinary pace of socio-political change.

[71] Abbreviation TNT stands for "Tvoë Novoe Televidenie" (Your New Television).
[72] In his review of *Nothing is True* Mark Lipovetsky connects Peter Pomerantsev and Victor Pelevin. He demonstrates the relationship between literary representations in Pelevin's novel and the socially-constructed Russian reality described by Pomerantsev a decade later. See Mark Lipovetsky, "A Culture of Zero Gravity (Review of Pomerantsev, Nothing is True and Everything is Possible: The Surreal Heart of the New Russia)," *Boundary* 2, August 15, 2018, https://www.boundary2.org/2018/08/mark-lipovetsky-a-culture-of-zero-gravity/.

Fundamentally, both are wrestling with a disruption in their experience of the real, caused by the collapse of the USSR and the rise of a radically new order.[73]

In both novels, readers encounter characters who are students of the Literature Institute. They are writers committed to the Word: men who have devoted their lives to the work of meaning-creation through the written word. Both novels represent the period of transition from the USSR to the post-Soviet era and describe in detail the whole range of consequences from that transition. Further, both novelists examine the peaceful transition of power from totalitarianism and reflect on the meaning of the end of communist institutions. As noted above, both novels employ rhetorical strategies common to the post-modern literary genres.[74] Neither novel draws a clear line between the lucid, conscious experience of the main protagonist and his alcoholic or narcotic delirium. Otto von F. constantly increases the amount of alcohol levels inside of him; Babylen Tatarski is experimenting with different kinds of hallucinogenic drugs. Both novelists employ various techniques to blur the boundaries between the real and unreal; both use irony in a variety of ways to destabilize the meaning and problematize the reader's confidence in understanding references.[75]

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[73] I note in passing here the exceptional interest shown in Nataliia Roudakova's book *Losing Pravda.* Her book has received five awards including the 2018 Outstanding Book Award of the International Communication Association (ICA), the Journalism Studies Division Book Award of the ICA, and the Frank Luther Mott-KTA Research Award for the best research-based book on journalism/mass communication of the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication (AEJMC). The interest shown in her work shows that epistemological questions about cognition, truth, knowledge, and freedom are timely for both contemporary Russian and global studies. See Natalia Roudakova, *Losing Pravda: Ethics and The Press in Post-Truth Russia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017).

[74] Both novels illustrate examples of Slavic authors using poetic techniques examined in Linda Hutcheon's book, *A Poetic of Postmodernism.* For further discussion see Linda Hutcheon, *A Poetic of Postmodernism: History, Theory, Fiction* (New York: Routledge, 1998).

[75] See Roman Ivashkiv, "Postmodern Approaches to Representation of Reality in Ukrainian and Russian Literatures: The Prose of Yuri Andrukhovych and Viktor Pelevin*," Journal of Ukrainian Studies* 32, no. 1 (2007 Summer): 37-61. Ivashkiv focused on *Perversion* and *Omon Ra*, but *Moscoviad* and *Generation P* employ the same poetic techniques. Sofia Khagi has analyzed Pelevin's use of irony. See Sofya Khagi, "Incarnation, Alibi, Escape? Victor Pelevin's Art of Irony," *Russian Literature*, 76 no. 4 (2014):381 – 406.

The postmodernist aesthetics of both novels is a natural reaction to years of dominance by the cultural/ideological requirements of socialist realism. According to the dictates of socialist realism, novels are not supposed to describe actual life conditions, but rather how life *ought* to be in an ideal socialist state. During the period of *glasnost*, citizens received such an abundance of new information and experience, that it was easy to feel disoriented.[76] Nataliia Roudakova examines the Soviet press's entry into these new circumstances; she explains the vital importance of such issues as trust, accuracy, and truthfulness in contemporary Russian media in terms of a three-pointed "triangle" of power – media – the people.[77] The opening of glasnost was filled with promise, but many may feel it was a promise that went unfulfilled as new forms of political and corporate ideology filled the void with a manipulative new pseudo-reality.

A postmodernist literary approach seems natural in a situation of transition that is marked by uncertainly, confusion, and frustrated epistemic conditions. Such an approach aims to play with the indeterminacy of meaning and creates conditions of textual instability, which in some sense makes "nothing true and everything possible" for the reader—or at least within the limited frame of literary fiction.[78] Postmodernist poetics allows the reader to be engaged in textual play created by the author's fantasy without any requirement of realism, truthfulness, or even truth-like experience. The postmodernist writer reserves a total power and freedom to create his or her own subjective world, an alternative history lived out by an uninhibited mixture of real and imaginative characters in the text. In the contemporary post-truth cultural world, this type of literary fiction ends up serving as a useful instrument with which to reflect on and explain the

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[76] See Julie S. Berkowitz, "A Look into Glasnost's Impact on the Soviet Art World," *Loyola of Los Angeles Entertainment Law Review* 11, no. 453 (1991): 453-477. Available at: http://digitalcommons.lmu.edu/elr/vol11/iss2/6.

[77] Nataliia Roudakova, *Losing Pravda*, 98 – 124.

[78] For further discussion of the relationship between socio-historical and narrative developments see, Gary Saul Morson, *Narrative and Freedom: The Shadows of Time* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996), 267 – 282.

extra-textual world. In other words, through an ironic mimesis the instability and indeterminacy of the fictional world ultimately reflects the instabilities and indeterminacies of the cultural filed and socio-political worlds in which it has been created.

Naturally, 'anti-realist,' 'nominalist,' or 'postmodernist' epistemologies did not emerge from the void;[79] they have been articulated from within the European philosophical tradition. While nominalism may plausibly be traced back to the Medieval period or even Antiquity, it is in Friedrich Nietzsche's writing that most postmodernists identify their conceptions of truth, power, and knowledge. The acknowledged authority for most contemporary nominalist views is Nietzsche's early 1873 essay, *On Truth and Lies in a Nonmoral Sense*, along with his later assertions in *Beyond Good and Evil* (1886) and *Genealogy of Morals* (1887). Nietzsche rehabilitated the medieval philosophical concept of nominalism, and articulated theories in which truth is a "mobile army of metaphors"—a somewhat reductionist view that holds 'truth' is *nothing more* than a creation of human linguistic activity, and 'knowledge' *nothing more* than a form of discursive power embedded in institutions. This—in broad strokes—is the generally accepted stance of that family of views we call postmodern epistemology. (I note in passing that postmodernism is both a theory of truth/knowledge and a distinctive aesthetic style).[80] I will use the older term 'nominalism' to stand for this collection of postmodern beliefs about truth/power as I discuss the two novels of Andrukhovych and Pelevin.

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[79] I intentionally use the word "void" as an allusion to Pelevin's *Chapaev and the Void* (1996) where the author uses concepts from the Buddhist epistemological system. Nevertheless, as Julia Vaingurt convincingly proved, Pelevin remains rooted in the Western philosophical tradition and cannot escape it even though the "void" temptation is very strong. See Julia Vaingurt, "Freedom and the Reality of Others in *Chapaev and the Void*," *Slavic & Eastern European Journal*, 62, no. 3 (Fall 2018): 466 – 482.

[80] My interpretation here takes Michel Foucault as a model for the ways in which Nietzschean views of power, language, knowledge, and truth have been received and given a postmodern reading. His notion of the 'episteme' as the nexus of power/knowledge embedded in discourse and institutions is perhaps not the only reading of Nietzsche, but for my purposes here it may be taken as a representative strand of postmodern philosophy. See Michel Foucault, *Subjectivity and Truth, About the Beginning of the Hermeneutics of the Self. Lectures at Dartmouth College 1980* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2016): 19 – 52.

Despite their playful postmodernism, the two novels are full of small but significant details which allow readers to recognize a very concrete, real-world socio-historical context. The details provide the reader with important signs of and information about the rapidly changing environment of late Soviet and early post-Soviet history. The institutions, everyday routines, power dynamics of official bureaucracies, public rumors and slurs—all this contextual data gives real flesh and blood to the literary texts. It also makes them meaningful primary-source documents for understanding this transitional epoch, in addition to being intellectual artefacts through which we may discover how the two novelists wrestled to make sense of national/political subjectivity during this period.

Besides the significant similarities between *The Moscoviad* and *Generation P*, there are of course important differences to consider, as well. For instance, there are different slants on the national identity issue. Andrukhovych has a much more romantic approach[81] to the national question. Here, I understand the *national question* to be concerned with understanding the national identity of the USSR (and of subject/client states within it). For Andrukhovych, questions of national distinctiveness and regional sovereignty are central themes. He is deeply invested in the relationship between the various members of the USSR and Moscow. *De facto,* Andrukhovych writes about Ukrainian cultural autonomy and uniqueness. In his narration, Otto von F. stresses that he is from Ukraine, where even such seemingly trivial rituals as beer-drinking are dramatically different.

Pelevin does not have the same romantic approach to national identity. Instead, he cynically shows ways to manipulate post-Soviet subjects using the national identity issue. He

[81] Romanticism was a cradle of modern nation and almost all poets addressed the nation-building process. In my opinion, Andrukhovych keeps this pattern. He is aware of the place occupied by his writing; he is aware of his own innovative contribution to contemporary Ukrainian literature and transformative role in society, even as he mocks the traditional clichés and pomposity of official narratives.

writes about "new" subjects of the "new" socio-economic situation. As Lipovetsky explains, "Pelevin's example better than any other demonstrates that literature's engagement in politics is not a fashion, but a large-scale paradigmatic shift that took about thirty years to develop. An emerging new paradigm suggests a new deep connection between the language, or rather *the form* (in the formalist interpretation) of contemporary Russian literature – and the political."[82]

Pelevin demonstrates the range of rhetorical possibilities that may be used to influence public consensus, highlighting the utility of Russian national clichés and formal (linguistic) conventions.[83] While Pelevin seems uninterested in other non-Russian nationals, he does show how the Russian national idea might be constructed and in what circumstances, when he relates the demands of an advertising executive to Tatarski: "Write me a Russian idea about five pages long. And a short version one page long. And lay it out like real life, without any fancy gibberish."[84] Here, the construction "like real life" highlights a mimetic impulse, the need for advertising rhetoric to be 'truth-like.' However, this request for the semblance of veracity aims at no social or intellectual good beyond the possibilities of future monetization and gaining control over the media and citizens of the country.

The novels of Andrukhovych and Pelevin also appear to differ in their respective attitudes toward Soviet authorities. On this topic, it is important to recall the two novels respective place-in -time; each represents a different historical moment. Andrukhovych shows one day in the decline of an empire. The day in the life of Otto von F. is the day which in many respects seems very much like the putsch of 1991.[85] Beyond references and allusions to that

[82] Mark Lipovetsky, "The Formal is Political," *Slavic and* East *European Journal*, 60, No.2 (2016): 187.
[83] For example, the Sprite ad created by Tatarski: "Sprite. Nye-Cola for Nikola", in: Victor Pelevin, *Homo Zapiens*, (New York: Penguin Books, 2002), 22.
[84] Victor Pelevin, *Homo Zapiens*, 138.
[85] The Coup happened August 18-21, 1991, but the day described in the Ukrainian novel was in May. Apart from this tiny detail, the events in the life of Otto von F. might be considered coterminous with the 1991 August Coup.

significant event, there are also many recollections of the Soviets in this novel. Otto's (and narrator's) general attitudes toward the Soviet past is an attempt to avoid responsibility for their own actions and sidestep all personal and national agency with a clearly declared binary opposition: Ukrainian vs Soviet/Russian/Imperial.

Pelevin does not see the lack of agency in ordinary people as the result of external powers. Rather, he suggests it is simply the result of the new economic circumstances in which post-Soviet people are learning to cope with the advent of a novel liberal economic system. Pelevin writes about life after the collapse of the USSR, about a period that has been called the *dashing nineties.*[86] The site of opposition and conflict for him is a not a national one. Instead, he sees the arena of conflict as class-based, i.e. as competitive socio-economic rivalries between the old (Soviet) and new (post-Soviet) elites.

In *The Moscoviad* Andrukhovych directs his attention to the relationship between colonial subjects and the quasi-imperial metropolis represented by Moscow. To understand this theme, postcolonial criticism opens up an interesting vantage point from which to view the literary text against the background of its historical and socio-political contexts.

My analysis of Andrukhovych's text will focus on several interrelated themes. I examine *the national question* as it develops throughout the novel; consider the narrator's understanding of Ukraine's place within the Empire; discuss the relationship of his protagonist to imperial discourse; and try to articulate his vision of a complex history and the range of future possibilities for Ukrainian-Russian relations.

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[86] About the origins of this concept is here: Simonian R. Kh., "Likhiie" ili "slavnyie" dievianostyie? (*Svobodnaia mysl* 2011, № 12 (1630): 159—174.

A close reading of the novel reveals that questions of *national identity* are exceptionally important to both the author and his protagonist. The reader is provided with information about the national origins almost of all characters in the text. When the author shows us Otto von F. living among the the young-writer inhabitants of the dormitory, he carefully depicts national variety of Soviet types; he does so by drawing attention to their nationality, not to the literary domain wherein the person works. For instance, he relates that, "…when the Uzbek guy on the other side of the wall turns on at full volume spicy Oriental music of the style "one stick two strings"… the Jewish guy on the other side of another wall has already returned from a shopping expedition…"[87]

It may not be the most politically correct way to describe another person's musical taste. In the original Ukrainian, it comes off sounding even more humiliating as it imitates grammatical mistakes typically made by Central Asians (i.e. using numbers only in the masculine form and mistaken a gender form of the noun[88]). Similarly, Otto's other (Jewish) dorm neighbor is not described as possessing any really positive characteristics. We learn, for example, how he cares about his big family back in Birobidzan but hear nothing about his literary talent. In fact, the narrator mocks his talent (and his productivity) a few lines later[89]. Once given detailed background information about the character's family situation, we read: "…he will sit down to write new poems in the medieval language called Yiddish and will indeed write them, seven before lunch and three in the afternoon. And all of them will be published in the journal "Sovietish Heymand" as living testimony to the State's tireless care for the culture of small

[87] Andrukhovych, *The Moscoviad*, 5
[88] In the original: "…poky uzbek za stinoiu ne uvimkne na povnyi regulator dukhmianu oriientalnu muzyku 'adyn palka dva struna', in: Andrukhovych Yuri, Moskoviada // Rekreatsii. Romany, (Kyiv: Chas, 1997), 138.
[89] Andrukhovych, *The Moscoviad*,5-6.

peoples."[90] Similar negative judgments are pronounced on virtually all inhabitants of the dormitory. The characteristics of every person are balanced on a thin line between irony and slur based on ethnic stereotypes.

Consider also how Andrukhovych's narrator describes the Russian poet, Yasha Yezhevikin, using the stereotype of the 'Russian Intellectual' as one who exaggerates the concept of 'Spirituality'. He writes, "Yasha, that Russian poet Yezhevikin, who lives at the opposite end of the dorm yesterday spoke on TV, for the fifth time now, and used the word "spirituality" no less than nine times, wiping eight times with the back of his hand the hangoverish sweat off his brow."[91] Here, I draw my attention not to the symptoms of the character's hangover, but to the picture of a stereotypical Russian poet speaking on TV dropping the term "spirituality" more often than he wipes his forehead. What Andrukhovych alludes to here with light parody, Pelevin has made the direct object of mockery; but within twenty years it had become part of an established narrative in the contemporary Russia.[92]

I will discuss this subject of Russian spirituality and television below when commenting on Pelevin's novel. Here, it is important just to note the connection between identification of national types and the idea of a special spirituality, which was a recurrent question for patriotic Russian intelligentsia. Russian poet Yezhevikin may be seen as an iconic representative[93] of the romantic-nationalist paradigm, but he also exhibits some prescience in recognizing that the

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[90] Andrukhovych, *The Moscoviad*, 5-6.
[91] Andrukhovych, *The* Moscoviad, 7.
[92] The discussions and scandals around the movie *Matilda* (2017) directed by Alexei Uchitel may serve as a good illustration of the Russian direction toward "spirituality," as could the case of the Pussy Riot Punk Prayer. See: http://www.interfax-religion.ru/?act=news&div=65486; http://monarhist.info/news/4114; http://www.interfax-religion.ru/?act=print&div=19990; https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2012/aug/13/putin-russia-little-separation-church-state/.
[93] The concept of a Russian State based upon the triadic foundation of Nationality, Spirituality/Orthodoxy, and Autocracy was formulated in the 19th century by Count Sergei Uvarov and adopted by Emperor Nicholas I. See Nicholas Riasanovsky, *Nicholas I and Official Nationality in Russia, 1825 – 1855*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969).

ideological discourse of Russian Spirituality—"the deep Russian soul," the "Light from the East," "Traditionalism," etc.—would develop alongside, and justify, a new Russian nationalism.[94]

The novel contains another telling scene relevant to the contemporary situation. Reflecting on the national question, Andrukhovych relates the following exchange between Golitsyn and Roytman: "We are four", Golitsyn interrupts him, "and we represent at the very least four nationalities…" "Which four nationalities, why four?" interjects Roytman nervously. "Well, you, Borya. That's one. I'm a Russkie. Two. He's from Ukraine. Three. And Horobets makes four*"*[95]*...* Now, this dialogue may seem relatively unimportant to the overall plot of the novel. Here there are four persons drinking in the Fonvizin beer bar and conversing as people normally do while drinking. However, there are some important details to be discerned here (besides the fact that the bar itself is named after an 18th-century Russian playwright).[96] When the narrator introduces the characters, he mentions that Horobets comes from the South of Ukraine. Even his family name is Ukrainian; "horobets*"* means sparrow, and it is different from the Russian denomination of this bird, *"*vorobey.*"* Golitsyn, representing Russia typologically, tags Horobets with a different label than Otto von F., who had been marked as 'the Ukrainian.' He did not even want to hear Horobets' explanation of his self-identification. Such prejudices toward Southeastern Ukrainians would later be used to justify the idea of New Russia (Novorossya), marshaled in ideological support for separatism in the Donetsk region in 2014. The logic is simple: if the people in the region are not held to be true Ukrainians (who are

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[94] For a contemporary example, see Aleksandr Dugin, *Metafizika Blagoi Vesti: Pravoslavnyi Esoterism* (Moscow: Arktogeia, 1996).
[95] Andrukhovych, *The Moscoviad,* 41
[96] Denis Fonvizin was instrumental in developing Russian national theater and modern Russian language. He was famous for his satire of Russian society and aristocracy. See Gary M. Hamburg, "Denis Fonvizin and Political Art," in *Russia's Path Toward Enlightenment, 1500 – 1801* (New Haven: Yale University Press Online, 2016). DOI:10.12987/yale/9780300113136.003.0010.

defined as only those from Western Ukraine like Otto von F), then it becomes easy to impose upon them a hybrid type of ethnic identity and, thus—in the name of this notional ethnicity—to justify political annexation.[97]

I contend that Andrukhovych is here representing a multiplicity of discourses which had been developing simultaneously. He is attending to a relationship between discourses that, at first glance, might seem to be unrelated. Otto von F cites the poetry from the fellow, "Ivan Novakovsky, nicknamed Novocain, or according to another version, Vanya Cain,"[98] who distributes a magazine the "Russian Idea" series, founded in 19…by NIKOLAI PALKIN.[99] Andrukhovych draws attention to a developing Russian nationalism by citing such poetry circulated among inhabitants of the Literature Institute dorm as:

> Mother Russia bleeds all over…
>
> Tell me in the name of God,
>
> Why her Eagle is being tortured
>
> By the Judases and whores?![100]

This language imitates the style and substance of much XIX century poetry, and it calls for the imperial paradigm in a broad spectrum of nuances. This kind of literature unites military discourse with sexual violence as a political tool.

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[97] See: Herszenhorn David, "What is Putin's New Russia?" (*The New York Times*, April 18, 2014): https://www.nytimes.com/2014/04/19/world/europe/what-is-putins-new-russia.html;
Robins-Early Nick, *Here's Why Putin Calling Eastern Ukraine 'Novorossiya' Is* Important, (Huntington Post, 04/08.2014) https://www.huffingtonpost.com/2014/04/18/putin-novorossiya-ukraine_n_5173559.html.
[98] Andrukhovych, *The Moscoviad*, 16
[99] Here the author is playing with the reader by mentioning Emperor Nicholas I, nicknamed Palkin (palka – whipping stick) because of his extraordinary cruelty, and concerns about Russian national idea.
[100] Andrukhovych, *The Moscoviad*, 17.

Tell me now, oh Baltic lands,

Why you hate our Holy Rus?

Freeze, Estonia! Tremble, Lithuania,

Russia's dick is coming at you![101]

Violent sexual imagery combines with feelings of regret in reaction to independence movements in the Baltic republics, which were the first states to leave the USSR. It should be recalled that *The Baltic Way* had represented the most significant secessionist movement within the USSR.[102] The exit movement was not readily "forgiven" by many proponents of Russian Empire and Russian nationalists.[103] *The Moscoviad* was published in 1993, at a time when Serbian war crimes in Bosnia would have been fresh in recent memory, and as a sign of just how far nationalism could go.[104] It is reasonable to believe that some such awareness is in the background of a text like *The Moscoviad* as well. It is no wonder that the protagonist of Andrukhovych's novel feels a need to wash himself after reading this poetry. We read, "But for some reason the word "dick" is crossed out by hand, with the word "sword" written above it, which in turn is crossed out as well, and "tank" is written in. You return the poetry silently to Novocain. You are on your way to washing yourself."[105] This is the language of ritual bathing. One wants to wash away not only the dirt from obscene literature, but also the impurities of this kind of political thought. Otto von F. has nothing to say about it. Obviously, he does not see himself as a part of this discourse, neither on the level of literature nor in action.

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[101] Andrukhovych, *The Moscoviad*, 17.
[102] "Baltic Way. History." Accessed March 19, 2019. http://www.thebalticway.eu/en/history/
[103] See: Russkaia narodnaia liniia. Informatsionno-analiticheskaia sluzhba: Pravoslaviie. Samoderzhaviie. Narodnost', *Pribaltiiskie Respubliki Nezakonno Vyshli is Sostava SSSR.*(02.07.2015): http://ruskline.ru/news_rl/2015/07/02/pribaltijskie_respubliki_nezakonno_vyshli_iz_sostava_sssr/
[104] Valentich M., Rape revisited: sexual violence against women in the former Yugoslavia, in Canadian Journal for Human Sexuality, 1994, Spring 3(1):53-64.
[105] Andrukhovych, *The Moscoviad*, 17.

Certainly, the protagonist of *The Moscoviad* is not an innocent knight free from moral reproach. In many aspects, he is a product of the Soviet system of values, and consequently also feels a sense of superiority over others, whether it be in relation to others within the Soviet Union (like representatives of the Caucasus and Central Asia) or from countries and regions dependent on the USSR (for instance, "the dorm superintendent turned out to be a darkie, although not a bad one, a Dagestani.")[106] Obviously, dormitory residents included representatives from all corners of the USSR. Such countries depended on Soviet superpower. In the text the dorm functions as an allegory of the Soviet Union and thus amount to an embodiment of all common stereotypes and clichés.[107] In this regard, Andrukhovych's protagonist appears as a kind of "white supremacist" and he embodies white, European, colonial discourse.

This is especially evident in the scene of sexual misconduct in the dormitory shower, which allegorically depicts white conquest of the black continent. Everything here is in perfect compliance with the generic categories of Said's "orientalism."[108] Otto von F. goes to take a shower in the dorm, when he hears singing on the women's side of the shower room. He goes there and finds a Black female student taking a shower and singing. He rapes her without saying a word. The white man is enchanted by the singing of a black woman. He goes out on an exotic adventure as he trespasses the law, enters forbidden territory, and violates an unsuspecting Black woman who was innocently singing in the shower. It is interesting to see what the author intends by setting his protagonist in this scene. We read, "In these hellishly hot streams of water, under this eternal waterfall the two of you rock together in some African rhythm. You do not sense

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[106]Andukhovych, *The Moscoviad*, 9. In the original the work "darkie" is "chuchmek" – an insulting way to address to people from the Caucasian or Central Asian republics of the USSR.
[107]About different kinds of racism in the late USSR see: Jeff Sahadeo, "Soviet "Blacks" and Place Making in Leningrad and Moscow," *Slavic Review* 71, No. 2 (Summer, 2012):331-358
[108] There are many studies on this topic. See Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage, 1978); Pratima Prasad, *Colonialism, Race, and French Romantic Imagination* (New York: Routledge, 2009).

resistance, but you do not sense encouragement either. She yields to you as if she were a slave girl…"[109]

Otto von F. is obviously fascinated with a black woman from Africa. He believes her to possess some primordial knowledge unknown and inaccessible to the white continent. He also believes that he, Otto von F., can do it because of his belonging to the "white" race. Otto von F. reflects, "but she is doing something unknown there, some imperceptible internal movement, changes something there, inside her, she knows all the ancient tricks, she was a talented girl, studied well, the sophisticated priestess of love prepared her for a tall coal-black prince on a special forbidden island where they copulated on a bed of palm leaves…It penetrates you like steam – into your skin, your much lighter Central European skin."[110] By means of this obviously racist and misogynist scene, Andrukhovych connects Ukrainian literature and European colonial discourse. Here it is as if he chooses to side with the White colonizer who has sexualy exploitated an African woman.[111] This is undoubtedly one of the earliest examples (if not the earliest instance) of an interracial sexual scene in Ukrainian literature.[112] That the author characterizes his protagonist's skin as Central European, may be wholly inaccurate from a biological point of view, but it clearly makes an important ideological statement. Andrukhovych employs the discourse of Central, not Eastern Europe; and he situates his writing in the same category as Milan Kundera, who (as a Czech writer) distinguished himself from Eastern Europe

[109] Andrukhovych, *The* Moscoviad, 20.
[110] Andrukhovych, *The* Moscoviad, 21.
[111] Poles often represented Russia as raping young female Polonia in the 19th c. For more details see: Colleen McQuillen, "Animating Dostoyevsky's "Gentle Spirit": Piotr Dumala's Kinesthetic Palimpsest," in *The Effect of Palimpsest. Culture, Literature, History*, (Bern: Peterlang, 2011): 49 – 61.
[112] At least in the continental, not diasporic Ukrainian literary fiction.

a decade before Andrukhovych.[113] So, while this 'shower act' does not make the main hero more sympathetic, it does perform the symbolic function of fitting Ukrainian literature into the larger European colonial discourse, and into the larger categories of Central Europe.[114]

It is important to emphasize that Andrukhovych's character does not belong to or in Moscow, or in/to the Soviet Union. Even the name, Otto von F., has a European sound and signifies Germanic or Austrian identity rather than Slavic. Andrukhovych wants to indicate that his natural homeland is really part of a quite different cultural-geography and tradition. In this regard, his description of the beer hall is very important in providing additional cultural signification. We read, "You thought, Otto von F., following the tracks of old-time Galician notions, that a beer hall must be a cozy and dry cavern on an old cobblestone street, marked by the sign of a cute little Devil with a round indulgent belly, where the lights and music are low, and the bartender uses the unfathomable expression: "What would be the gentleman wish?"[115]

For Andrukhovych, this type of a beer hall signifies a cultural tradition to which the author sees himself as belonging, and in which he situates his protagonist. This beer culture is just one aspect of the Austro-Hungarian cultural tradition, which included his beloved Galicia. Typically (and symptomatically), whenever the word "empire" appears in the text, it refers to the Russian Empire in its various forms, whether it be pre-revolutionary Russia or the Soviet

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[113] There are many studies on the interrelation between *Mitteleuropa* and literature. See for example, Adam Kola, "Central Europe Concept in Milan Kundera, Yuri Andrukhovych and Andrzej Stasiuk Works," *Europe: Magazine of the Polish institution of the International Relations*. 2. No. 2 (2002): 131-154; Alexei Miller, "Central Europe Topic: History, Modern Discourse and Russia Place in Them," in *Regionalization post-Soviet Europe*, (Moscow, 2001), 33-65; Natasa Kovacevic, *Narrating Post/Communism. Colonial Discourse and Europe's Borderline Civilization*, (New York: Routledge, 2008).

[114] Ola Hnatiuk emphasizes the Ukrainian intellectuals' conflict of identity on the crossroad between East and West. Her analyses addresses the Ukrainian literature of 1990s in general and Andrukhovych in particular as one of the brightest and most influential writers of that time. See Ola Hnatiuk, "Nativists versus Westernizers: Problems of Cultural Identity in Ukrainian Literature of the 1990s," in *Contemporary Ukraine on the Cultural Map of Europe.* (Armonk: NY and London: M.E. Sharpe, 2009), 203-218.

[115] Andrukhovych, *The* Moscoviad, 35.

Union.[116] This Russian world possesses a distinctive material culture, too. Andrukhovych sees evidence of the difference between the Russian and Austro-Hungarian cultures in divergent styles of their beer halls when he says of the Russian variety, "Instead you have the beer hall on Fonvizin Street, an incomprehensible construct, a Lego pyramid, something like a hangar in the middle of a great Asiatic wasteland overgrown with the first May weeds. A hangar for the drunks… The beer hall on Fonvizin Street is a monster the size of a big city train station, but it is more like Moscow's Kiev Station, not the Savyolovo Station: a colossal waiting area in front of the gates of hell."[117]

This divergence, and its ugly, demonic character, is clearly important to the author. It allows him to express his feeling of superiority. Even though he is now in a position of political subjection, and even if he must drink with men who see him as a little brother ("We love you like our youngest brother," sighs Golitsyn[118]), internally he may remind himself that he has known a better world, that he does not belong to this "hell." The House of Golitsyn originates in the Dutchy of Lithuania, but is famous for service in the name of the Russian Empire glory in the 18th century when the Empire became powerful and westernized.[119] Moreover, the phraseology of the "youngest brother" is used here ironically, thus taking into account the important role of the Golitsyns precisely for the Russian Empire.

Further, in drawing the reader's attention to the vulgarity of architectural features, Andrukhovych underlines what he feels are significant cultural differences. For instance, in Soviet mentality, hangars and train stations are seen as emblems of successful industrialization,

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[116] Andrukhovych, *The Moscoviad,* 24, 29, 100, 136.
[117] Andrukhovych, *The Moscoviad,* 35 – 36.
[118] Andrukhovych, *The Moscoviad,* 34.
[119] See Isabel de Madariaga, "Portrait of an Eighteen-Century Russian Statesman: Prince Dmitry Mikhaylovich Golitsyn," *The Slavonic and East European Review* 62, No. 1 (Jan., 1984): 36-60.

signs of science, engineering, and progress. By contrast, Otto von F. reacts to such architectural designs with disgust and barely concealed contempt. His view of Muscovite-style aesthetic sensibility is not complimentary at all: "This is the city of a thousand and one torture chambers. A tall advance bastion of the East in anticipation of conquering the West. Asia's last city, from whose drunken nightmares fled the anemic Germanized monarchs. The city of syphilis and hooligans, the favorite fairytale of armed hobos."[120] Here the narrator alludes to the historical and cultural narrative of Moscow depicting it as a "city of losses,"[121] which definitely contradicts the official discourse of the great Soviet capital.

Andrukhovych draws attention to this spirit of alienation when he describes the everyday mode of life in Moscow. He is particularly sharp in his description of women. Verging on the surreal, his prose here seems to be affected by what he is trying to represent. Through hyperbole and metaphor he conveys an experience simultaneously absurd and horrific: "Thus the empire ought to take care of its drunks in a timely fashion. Not fight the windmills of liberalisms or nationalisms, not hunt down the witch of religiosity or the ghost of human rights activism, but do just one thing: take care of its faithful drunks. So that they would always have what to get plastered with. So that they would love their monstrous women. So that they would produce children that are just like themselves. And that's it."[122]

The narrator here distances himself from the empire, its culture, its inhabitants, and from its policies, although there is a bit of a tension here, as well. Perhaps predictably, he fails to mention his own habit of excessive drinking (we recall that on this one day he ended up with five essential layers of alcohol, and one of his private stories in the past started in the sobering-up

[120] Andrukhovych, *The* Moscoviad, 78.
[121] Andrukhovych, *The Moscoviad*, 78.
[122] Andrukhovych, *The* Moscoviad, 38.

station),[123] or his personal relationships with women, including Russian women. Despite his criticisms, Otto himself remains a subject of the empire and exhibits some of the characteristic Russian vices he denounces.

On the larger subject of his relations with women, Otto von F. appears as fully dominant subject only in the shower scene with the African woman. We can understand his subjectivity by examining in a little more depth his relationship to this woman. In his view, she does not belong to his world; she is *other* and subordinate. In contrast, he is assertive and filled with a readiness to dominate when he sees himself as a representative of the more powerful group. In short, he appears to be uneasy with any sexual relations between equals (i.e. with persons of his own age, social status, etc.). Here Otto von F's hybrid identity[124] embodies the complex situation in which the main character finds himself. It is obvious that Otto von F. has absorbed the colonial discourse and now retranslates it unconsciously onto other subjects without any self-reflection. Note how he refers to the different representatives of other ethnic and cultural groups as it reproduces the main Soviet/Russian stream. Andrukhovych's character seems to have totally internalized the main/colonial/white narrative and deploys these ethno-racial categories in his understanding of and relationships to other characters in the novel.

Consider the competition between Astrid and Galya.[125] Astrid was half-Polish, half-Swedish, but legally an American citizen. She is the Moscow correspondent of some unnamed information agency.[126] She obviously symbolizes the West "in toto" – the synthesis of Central and Western Europe with the American ID. Historically, Poles and Swedes were Ukrainian

[123] Andrukhovych, *The Moscoviad,* 139.
[124] Here I am referencing Homi Bhabha, who introduced the concept of hybridization, key to the field of postcolonial studies. Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 1994).
[125] Andrukhovych, *The* Moscoviad, 67.
[126] Andrukhovych, *The* Moscoviad, 65.

"frenemies." Throughout the Cold War, the United States played a leading role in the fight against the USSR, the power from which Otto von F. wants to create some distance. The most famous Astrid in the USSR was the Swedish writer, Astrid Lindgren (1907 – 2002), who wrote fairy tales for children. I contended that the name-choice is intentional, and that Astrid represents a kind of Western fairy tale to Otto von F. In fact, she represents a life he could not achieve apart from her.

In contrast to Astrid, Galya was "a typical Moscow girl, somewhat condescending towards the Ukrainians, in the way she tried to joke about the language, but it seems I was able to dispel her khokhol stereotype."[127] One might suggest that Otto von F. sought and felt he attained Gayla's *recognition* beyond any national identity stereotype. If Astrid was a total stranger to him, Galya was not. It is also interesting that Andrukhovych gave his Russian heroine a Ukrainian name very popular in traditional folk songs, as if to bring them closer in a cultural sense.

Otto met both women almost simultaneously and started to date both. Both women provided him access to goods unobtainable apart from them. Galya offered him "an elite swimming pool with restricted access!"[128] From Astrid he received access to the world of fine alcohol normally unavailable to the average Soviet citizen in currency stores: "…it turns out that one can buy anything in Moscow – any kind of booze – from Martel to Malibu."[129] Astrid brought him feelings of freedom and liberation: "Never before I had felt like such an easygoing and carefree citizen of the world. She made me discover an entire continent of the Moscow I did not know before: the hard currency Moscow, with its hotels and bars where I passed by plain-

[127] Andrukhovych, *The Moscoviad*, 65.
[128] Andrukhovych, *The* Moscoviad, 65.
[129] Andrukhovych, *The* Moscoviad, 66.

clothed policemen, proudly pretending to be a deaf-mute Belgian while she, in an unmistakable sovereign fashion, waved various IDs in front of these captains' noses – and sesame opened."[130]

However, Otto could not reveal his authentic self; or, at least, he could not do so if he also wanted to maintain access to the various goods available only through her mediation. He was compelled to become someone he had never been, someone foreign to his real self. Further, he found it necessary to feign disability as a deaf-mute, again believing access to the luxurious life would remain closed to him without this deception. His perception of the "good life" (as carefree, easygoing, and free from serious moral obligation) was typical for an average subject of the USSR.[131] In short, Otto seems to surrender his inner integrity and authentic identity in exchange for pleasure and luxury, understood as the idea of Western 'freedom.'

If we pause to assess the values the two women represent to the Ukrainian poet, we may observe some interesting differences. Astrid brings him corruption through alcoholic poison; and more fundamentally, Otto von F. appears dispossessed of his true self. Of utmost significance here is the fact that they never had sex. There was no true physical love between two of them: "As we were the subjects of His Royal Mercy Alcohol (God forbid, no hints or allusions!), we were not too successful in also being the subjects of Sex. As a rule, we fell asleep in the midst of empty bottles, half-hugging each other, but without achieving anything more substantial in this department."[132] Galya doesn't offer Otto health and well-being because she is also a heavy drinker: "She buys a bottle or two for herself and slowly sips it. But you haven't noticed at first

[130] Andrukhovych, *The Moscoviad*, 66.
[131] On Soviet imagination of the Western good life, see Gyorgy Petery (ed.*), Imagining the West in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union*, (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburg Press, 2010).
[132] Andrukhovych, *The* Moscoviad, 67.

that she is already toasted. And doesn't look her best: blue circles under her eyes […][133]", but she offers him sex.

So, metaphorically speaking, Andrukhovych seems to suggest an absence of any fulfilled unity between Ukraine and the West. The love triangle between Galya, Otto, and Astrid, and the way Astrid disappeared one day ("I suspect that Galya unleashed on her one of her lab cobras"),[134] reminds us of the competition between the West (Astrid) and Galya (Russia) for the sexy body of Ukraine (the Ukrainian poet Otto von F.).[135] One suspects it was more symbolic than practical. In any case, within this triangle, the Ukrainian corner lacks full agency. He does not disclose his genuine personal attitude. He cannot decide between the two women, and thus Galya decides everything for him. Otto von F. seems content with the situation. Otto seems to feel that it was more fun and easier with Astrid, but that the situation with Galya is more stable, and that he could be himself together with her.

Thus, he needs Galya. He visits her. He misses her when she is out of town. Nevertheless, in his private relations, Andrukhovych's protagonist demonstrates his latent agency. By latent agency I refer to a condition in which the subject just prepares to perform an action only under the right circumstances. Galya serves as a source of comfort (for example, when he needs a warm bathtub); but when it comes to physical love, it is Galya who initiates it and leads the action: "…Galya is again at your side, she is right in front of you, she unwraps you, she take you out of the towel and she blends forward, and presses your back against the wall tiles, and fixes you in the position, and presses her hands on the tiles as well, while you are slipping down, you

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[133] Andrukhovych, *The Moscoviad*, 69.
[134] Andrukhovych, *The* Moscoviad, 67.
[135] I agree with Vitaly Chernetsky when he says that Otto's personal affairs show the rotten morals of the Empire. Vitaly Chernetsky, *Cultural Globalization, the "Posts," and the Second World. In: Mapping Postcommunist Cultures*, p, 223. At the same time, I think that the allegory of Ukraine (Otto) tempting between West (Astrid) and East (Galya) works here rather well.

are almost ready, and she starts looking for something with her mouth, and does find it, making you close your eyes…and you feel the way the raped perhaps feel, you concentrate only on you sensations..."[136] He is claiming the position of a victim; the Ukrainian character is as if raped by the Russian woman, inverting the gender dynamic of masculine Russia raping Polonia.

It is also significant that the protagonist is unable to engage in mature conversation with Galya. He cannot explain to her his motivations and reasons for his actions. Together, they never quite attain adulthood. During serious quarrels they resort to physical violence. When triggered by Galya, Otto von F. cannot find a way to manage the situation peacefully and also resorts to force as if for self-liberation: "She hits you in the face with full swing of the hand, she elbows and scratches you. She has hit you in the chin, so that you even bit your tongue, and this suddenly gives you strength… Then you almost instinctively hit her under her breasts with your knee and she loses breath for a little while."[137]

It is notable that the protagonist receives more strength when he bites his tongue, as the tongue may also signify language. We remember that the language question was a subject of jokes for Galya at the beginning of their relationship. The language question is always the point of division at which Russians and Ukrainians split.

One may say that it is impossible to normalize the relations with Galya, especially if (as in this story) she represents an unpredictable Russia, with all the stereotypes about irrationality and passion in place. Nevertheless, our hero does not demonstrate mature behavior even with his fellow countrymen. Throughout the novel we know he intends to meet with Kyrylo and his friends to talk about a new independent Ukrainian newspaper in Moscow. Otto von F. repeatedly calls Kyrylo from different places, but the meeting never occurs. In his relationship with Kyrylo

[136] Andrukhovych, *The* Moscoviad, 74.
[137] Andrukhovych, *The* Moscoviad, 75.

and his girlfriend Lyuba, Otto's latent agency is again manifest. During a telephone conversation with his friend Kyrylo, Otto unaccountably and shamelessly wants to flirt with his wife Lyuba. He says, "Kyrylo," you interrupt him, "could you call Lyuba to the phone?…Lyuba, I have long wanted to tell you…that I like you very much. I have completely lost my head over your legs, the most beautiful in the world…Grant me access to them, Lyuba."[138]

One may naturally wonder about the immaturity of his behavior in the situation, but I bring it up it because this scene is another example of his impotence. He diverts his attention from serious literary matters to immature flirtations. Alongside his avoidance of Kyrylo and the editorial board meeting, this is just another sign of his inaction.[139] What I believe Andrukhovych is trying to show is the impotence of the Ukrainian narrator who is incapable of action in many spheres.

Furthermore, his immaturity and emotional dependence on others show up in his fictive conversations with his imaginary friend, "The King of Ukraine, Olelko the Second (Dovhoruky-Riurikid)."[140] The Riurikid Dynasty began in Kievan Rus', making the founder of Moscow technically a figure hailing from Ukrainian territory. This is an obvious reference to the founder of Moscow, whose actual name is Dovhoruky; he is Yuri the Long-Armed, whose embrace encompassed Muscovy. In these conversations Otto begs for money. However, his begging is disguised under the promises of promoting the Ukrainian national idea and bringing the King back to Kyiv: "You will receive from me a panegyric so glorious that I will raise You far above all other monarchs. Within another half of a year the people of Ukraine will be filled with the

[138] Andrukhovych, *The Moscoviad*, 104 – 105.
[139] The attempt to establish a Ukrainian paper in Moscow is a sign of the national revival underway. The Ukrainian subjectivity arose at that moment without any specific political aim.
[140] Andrukhovych, *The* Moscoviad, 10.

desire for Your return and following a successfully conducted referendum, You will enter Kyiv in a white Cadillac. Truly, truly I tell you: give me a stipend!"[141]

The conversations with King Olelko are significant for understanding the novel as a whole, and yet this particular passage is important because it presents a very specific set of values and priorities. The passage endorses a special role for the poet in society (cultural logocentrism). It expresses faith in the possibility of changing the fate of Ukraine through a referendum (which did happen on December 1st 1991; the issue, however, was not the King's re-installment in Ukraine but political independence). It argues for actualizing/rediscovering the role of the Baroque tradition within Ukrainian culture (the panegyric as one of the genres of it). It reflects an emerging interest in material culture, even if it is as childish as a white Cadillac status symbol. Andrukhovych ironically reproduces the rising Ukrainian self-awareness, as well as non-stop discussions about the role of culture and literature in society.

On the one hand, during the period of *glasnost,* freedom of speech became a prominent value. Consequently, writers, speakers, and others whose business is words played an important role in the formation of public opinion about the Soviet past and possibilities for a non-Soviet future. On the other hand, it soon became apparent that in the new economic conditions the role of the poet would need to evolve in important ways. Otto von F. argues, "For nothing in the whole world is as superfluous, senseless, and ridiculous as good poetry, but simultaneously nothing in this world is as necessary, meaningful, and unavoidable as it, Your All-Ukrainianness…Take a look and tell me: do poets need a king more than the king needs the poets? Are the kings worth anything without poets? Don't the kings exist by the grace of God only so that they support those who are poets by the grace of God?"[142]

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[141] Andrukhovych, *The* Moscoviad, 12.
[142] Andrukhovych, *The* Moscoviad, 13.

By formulating the subject in this way, Andrukhovych addresses issues related to the creation and function of propaganda. Poets may serve a variety of political, propagandistic, and public-relations functions. Historically, they have promoted kings; today they justify political leaders or advertise consumer goods in the marketplace—a major theme in Pelevin's novel.

At the same time, the protagonist of Andrukhovych's novel still has moral concerns about such cooperation between the power holders and the poets. He does want a stipend and is ready to serve for it. Still, he realizes that such cooperation may not be worth selling one's soul. In his dream he is begging the King Olelko for a stipend: "Grimacing and spitting, and hating yourself, you recall this dream, while forcing yourself to do exercises on the floor. To sell oneself like this! Shamelessly, insolently, cynically…Give me a stipend, Your Sovereignness, give me a sti…What a low and vile lackey spirit, the inner nature of a prostitute!"[143]

As we see, Otto von F. does (apparently) feel some moral reservations about his fundraising. Such concerns are typical (if often superficial) for the intelligentsia, and serve to distinguish it from the cynical powerholders. In Pelevin's novels we see little, if any, of these moral reservations about writers serving the propagandistic ends of business and politics.

Nevertheless, the question of agency arises when the protagonist faces the reality of the Soviet secret services. How long can one go on denying cooperation with the KGB? Andrukhovych situates his protagonist in a set of situations every Soviet citizen could have experienced: to cooperate with the secret services or not? The answer might seem deceptively easy, but then the secret service officer pulls a trump card from his sleeve and starts to press for compliance by threatening the poet with harm to people who really matter to him.

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[143] Andrukhovych, *The Moscoviad*, 14.

The author uses the archetypical device of folk tales and challenges and subjects his protagonist to them in a markedly different way. The secret KGB office, as a kind of black angel-tempter, tries to persuade his victim first by appealing to his vanity. He suggests to him the possibilities of a successful literary career, including publications, perhaps even travel abroad. Then he tries to frighten him with a ban of his forthcoming book. Otto von F. can cope with all but manipulation of his grandfather's past: "…my other grandfather, young, about thirty years old, in some uniform, perhaps of the insurgent army…So, my dear super-star, we will grab your grandpa no later than tomorrow. There is a case, there are witnesses, there will be a trial! How old is he you're saying? Seventy-four? Well, he could of course go on trampling grass for a while longer, but because of the stubborn grandson he'll get the firing squad. C'est la vie!"[144]

Andrukhovych illustrates here how the machinery of the system worked. Even if someone could withstand temptations related to one's own life and success, it was exceedingly harder to escape the trap when the life of a loved one was threatened: "Give me the paper, I tell them. They were almost dancing, even though on the outside appeared reserved. And I wrote the vilest dictation in my life. About "voluntary pledging to help."[145]

It is significant that the system needed public consent; and as a pseudo-reality in need of sustaining credibility, it needed to present complicity as "voluntary" help. In a situation in which such nominalism has become the dominant social mode, the human discursive action takes on an abnormal importance. The most consequential deeds are those enacted through words, and the novel portrays the creation of such a linguistic universe.

This belief that human reality is nothing more than the product of language, the result of discourse where "nothing is [really] true and everything is possible," represents a revival, in

[144] Andrukhovych, *The Moscoviad*, 97 – 98.
[145] Andrukhovych, *The Moscoviad*, 98.

contemporary dress, of epistemological nominalism.[146] To cite Heidegger, language becomes the "house of Being,"[147] wherein "humans dwell." This idea is often extended further to support a kind of linguistic idealism which holds that the real itself is nothing more than the product of signs, linguistic or visual. This is the world Pelevin pictures in *Generation P* and which we will examine below.

Culling insights from Robert Musil's *The Man without Qualities* (1943),[148] as well as Friedrich Nietzsche, the German-American philosopher of history Eric Voegelin offers a diagnoses of late modernity as falling victim to a kind of pseudo-reality, or as he calls it a "second reality." [149] With the collapse of Enlightenment rationalism, in the words of Musil, "pseudo-reality prevails." Vogelin extends this usage to denote the various activities of reality-creation performed by ideologues, propagandists, and advertising agents when they substitute imaginary cause and effect for normal people's empirically verifiable experience.[150]According to Voegelin, when ideological concepts displace empirical experience and practice, subjects are easily manipulated and lose their ability to assess critically what is happening. This disconnection (or disassociation) paves the way for a variety of authoritarian regimes deploying various media of disinformation and propaganda that are disconnected from ethics or empirical

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[146] "Nominalism," Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/nominalism-metaphysics/.
[147] In his "Letter on Humanism" Heidegger famously wrote, "Language is the house of being. In its home human beings dwell. Those who think and those who create with words are the guardians of this home. Their guardianship accomplishes the manifestation of being insofar as they bring this manifestation to language and preserve it in language through their saying." Martin Heidegger, *Pathmarks* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998): 239.
[148] While Musil is often classified as a "modernist" writer, the classification should not mislead interpretation of the social and epistemological changes he is describing. The signs under analysis in his novel point to the collapse of modernity (i.e. "late modernity" as in "late capitalism" or simply "early postmodernity"). See Robert Musil, *The Man Without Qualities Vol. 1: A Sort of Introduction and Pseudo Reality Prevails* (New York: Vintage, 1996). It is important to recognize here the strong influence of Nietzschean thinking through Musil's oeuvre. On the relation between Nietzsche and Musil, see for example, Emer Herity, "Robert Musil and Nietzsche," *The Modern Language Review* 86, no. 4 (1991): 911-23; and, Stijn De Cauwe "Robert Musil's Cultural Diagnostics in the Light of Nietzschean Immunology," *Neophilologous* 96, No. 3 (2012): 411-425.
[149] Eric Voegelin, *Anamnesis*, Collected *Works Vol. 6 (*Columbia: University of Missouri, 1990): 389.
[150] See: T. John Jamieson, *Robert Musil and Eric Voegelin: Literature and Spiritual Pathology*, in: https://voegelinview.com/robert-musil-and-spiritual-pathology-pt-1/.

methods of verification. In this situation, it is held, 'truth' [scare quotes intentional] is made, not found.

Pelevin's novel is preoccupied with two sets of questions. First, he seems to be troubled by these kinds of epistemological questions about the nature of the true and the real within Post-Soviet Russia; second, he is concerned with the interrelated themes of agency, freedom, and autonomy: to what extent may any subject be said to exercise agency and control of his or her own life in a situation wherein "pseudo-reality prevails?" What is the scope of this agency and how may the subject discover some basic orientation in a bewildering landscape that is quickly changing? How does one find a firm footing within this perpetually shifting pseudo-reality, whose very nature appears to result from the relentless assault of a troupe of truth-creators and advertisers?

The text dramatizes a situation in which people have lost stable references for determining what is true, what is good, and—ultimately—what is real. The world of *Generation P* delineates a post-Soviet cultural/moral space characterized by a fundamental existential disorientation. The protagonist, Babylen Tatarski, is a former student of the Literature Institute. Tatarski is a writer skilled in the use of words, who knows how to create meaning through them. Importantly—for his opportunistic employers—he is also aware of the power of the rhetorical arts. Part of Tatarski's development in the novel involves his reflection on the darker, manipulative purposes for which his rhetorical art may be put to use. The narrative world of the novel itself depicts the period of transition from the USSR to the post-Soviet stage with all the new cultural and economic developments we described above. It thus provides a valuable window into the whole complex web of that transitional period and questions the peaceful transfer of power in a totalitarian country, as well as the implications of an end to communist

leadership. With the novel's pervasive postmodern aesthetic and Tatarski's frequent hallucinogenic drug trips, the reader is never quite allowed to gain any certainty about the nature of the protagonist's experiences. Pelevin blurs the boundaries between intoxicated delirium, dream states, and literary invention. Thereby, he also manages to blur the boundaries between what is true and un-true, thus placing in doubt the very idea of a stable, determinate, knowable truth. Perhaps all is but mediated rhetorical play within a whirling, shifting, indeterminate set of signs and signifiers.

Here, postmodernist aesthetics constitutes a natural reaction to years of the dominance of socialist realism, wherein literary reality was not supposed to describe real life but only told readers, instead, how life was supposed to be. During *glasnost,* citizens were bombarded with so much new, previously classified information that it was easy to lose track of what was true, correct, or moral. Rapid change and information overload created a culture of uncertainty and doubt. Thus, a postmodernist epistemology fits perfectly a situation that makes everything possible to the reader—at least, in the limited frame of literary fiction. Pelevin has cleverly found a way to reproduce the situation of blurred identity and the ongoing conflicts of subjectification in the former objects of totalitarian power.

In writing about these conflicts Pelevin excels in capturing the sense of disorientation felt by many within the rapidly changing post-Soviet situation. Specifically, he writes about the "new" emerging subjects of a changing socio-economic situation. He emphasizes the transitions in the economic sphere, how the new economic situation depended on old political subjects, and how many were desperately seeking a new common language which would emotionally comfort the newborn capitalist class, old political elites, and the broad masses alike. At the same time, he sees that there would not be a qualitative change in the structure of post-Soviet society. We

remember that he dedicated his novel "To the Memory of the Middle Class."[151] This was a middle class never quite able to become a powerful force because the former Soviet elites did not want to make those transformations possible.

What Pelevin shows through fiction is that post-communist society has begun to discover a new medium, a new rhetoric, a new way of thinking about meaning, a new understanding of the economics of truth—all this, through the master concepts of *public relations* and *advertising*. However, as he paints the picture, the function of advertising in Russia of the 1990's appears markedly different from advertising in a more established liberal market economy of the West, which the new PR firms take as a model in a limited sense. No wonder that former propagandists like Azadovsky, or even Tatarski himself, lead the advertising industry as they dress old clichés in new apparel. We see the postmodern nominalism in a passage like the following: "There are no words to describe the degree of its unreality. It is heaping of one unreality upon another, a castle constructed of air, the foundations of which stand upon a profound abyss…There, that is Homo Zapiens'. HZ is simply the residual luminescence of a soul fallen asleep; it is a film about the shooting of another film, shown on a television in an empty house."[152] In this language, Pelevin powerfully captures the groundless, nominalist nature of the new 'post-truth' environment, but changes in epistemology are also closely connected to social stratification and to the scope of self-determination (or agency) within post-Soviet subjectivity.[153]

Since different social strata deploy different communicative codes (different competing "truths" if you will), individuals frequently find themselves tied down to their own circles

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[151] Pelevin, *Homo Zapiens.*
[152] Pelevin, *Homo* Zapiens, 80.
[153] In the early short story *Ultima Tuleev or the Dao of Elections* (1996), Pelevin already has shown that democracy and democratic elections do not make any sense since all politicians could be substituted by a computer program or a hologram, and all political programs of the candidates make no sense because there is no real meaning and deeds behind the words. I consider this story as a preliminary sketch to the novel where Pelevin has already articulated an idea of the lack of choice and qualitative changes, which later on became the novel's motto.

(classes) with little possibility for intersectional contact. Consequently, the country's unity suffers a series of disruptions—at the same time, both epistemological and social—with groups fragmenting into distinct class units, divergent vocabularies, and conflicting economic interests. In this divided situation, the sole unifying force comes from imposition of authoritarianism, as vertical power provides a means of creating social stability.[154]As a result, every group is confined to their own bubble, in unison praising the President on whom everybody, without exception, depends. Following the principle of *divide et impera*, the President then assigns a specific *parle* to each group[155]. The resultant cultural production supplies the intellectuals with literary artifacts that specifically cater to their needs, while the mass audiences partake of their own forms of entertainment.

Unlike the opposition, representatives of power have time and again proved capable of communicating a coherent, consistent ideological message. Building on Evgenii Dobrenko's argument that socialist realism forged its own, complete universe,[156]we may say now that state-controlled television (and new online media) serves to "manufacture consent" in order to create community. [157] This is the new "crystal palace" in its own right, functioning as a fictive substitute for the empirical reality, and utilizing the mechanisms of global capitalism.[158] In this world of global capitalism, the consumerist subject becomes convinced that the goal of life is little more than the satisfaction of desire, entertainment, and emotional comfort. Power is complicit in its strategies to convince political subjects of these basic truths and is more than

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[154] One thinks here of Hobbesian autocratic political theory as found in his *Leviathan.* It is the autocrat, serving as a central authority, who becomes the means of establishing and maintaining peace between socially conflicting factions.
[155] I am planning to write an article developing this argument further.
[156]Evgenii Dobrenko, *Political Economy of Socialist Realism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007).
[157] Noam Chomsky, *Manufacturing Consent: The Political Economy of the Mass Media* (New York: Pantheon, 2002).
[158]Peter Sloterdijk, *In the World Interior of Capital: Towards a Philosophical Theory of Globalization* (Oxford: Polity Press, 2013).

happy to make knowing "the truth" seem either impossible or unnecessary or—in many cases—all too easy if you trust the state media authorities. In place of inquiry or open political discussion, the new apparatus of state media authoritatively mediates "truth" through the screen saying, "Just trust us; enjoy yourself, everybody is doing it!" Huxley's Brave New World hardly describes the new pseudo-reality any better.

The corrupted media apparatus is powerfully depicted in Pelevin's novel. There he describes the tendency of the televisual—with its seductive commercial advertisements and banal political messages—to function as an authoritative "second reality" subverting any empirical or even historical experience: "Oh, that's what we call the Duma 3-Ds".[159] The transition he delineates may be seen as that from socialist-realist second reality to a new, if equally inhuman, capitalist consumerist one, endowed with as little freedom: "…The only freedom that it possesses is the freedom to say 'Wow!' when it buys another thing, which as likely as not is a new television"[160].

Pelevin uses recognizable markers of the time, as well as different stereotypes and fears. For example, Chechens (the reader should be aware of the recent Chechen wars which brought Putin to power) appear in the novel just because they were ubiquitous in the media: "Chechens have one *(national identity – TD)*, but we don't. That's why they look at us like we're shit"[161]. The same role is delegated to the global conspiracy and secret connections to the USA through a computer network. Those markers are as recognizable as the real names and brands, but the author has already made his ample irony clear to the reader by putting a mocking copyright stamp on his work.

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[159] Pelevin, *Generation P*, 165.
[160] Pelevin, *Generation P*, 90.
[161] Pelevin, *Generation P*, 137.

Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer explained the ways technologies influence the mass production of cultural goods in their groundbreaking *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (1944).[162] Their insights remain relevant as one can see in Petr Pomerantsev's text depicting the final stages of the process. In post-Soviet space, the transition to "virtual capitalism" is close to completion.[163] Thus, even the arts are reduced to their price tags: "nothing exists besides its monetary value, and this is what truly meant by 'monetaristic minimalism,"[164] as Pelevin shows us in the chapter "Golden Room" when Tatarski is introduced to the prices of collections bought by Azadovsky without seeing the exhibit *per se:* "…To tell the truth, it's the first time I've come across this kind of a collection'. 'It's the cutting edge in design,' said the secretary. 'Monetaristic minimalism. They say it was invented here. In Russia"[165].

In Pelevin's narrative world, the Soviet past is in the process of being replaced by the ubiquitous presence of the televisual, consumer advertising, and flux of 'post-truth' 'pseudo-realities.' Like Pomerantsev, he shows the reader a world that contains nothing real, nothing substantial, with an unbridgeable gap yawning between the producers of said pseudo-reality and its consumers. Within this world unto itself, even the target audiences of commercials are neglected. Or rather, the customers are not merely neglected but are cynically *created through the rhetoric of advertising:* "D'you know what the Spanish for "advertising" is? Khanin hiccupped: "Propaganda." So you and me are ideological workers, if you hadn't realized it yet. Propagandists and agitators"[166]. By having habituated citizens readily to accept propaganda disconnected from empirical experience, the transition from socialist realism to consumerist

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[162] Theodor Adorno & Max Horkheimer, *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002).
[163] Peter Pomerantsev, *Nothing is True and Everything is Possible* (New York: Public Affairs, 2014).
[164] Meghan Vicks, "Victor Pelevin and the Void," in *Russia's New Fin de Siècle. Contemporary Culture Between Past and Present* (Chicago: Intellect Bristol, 2013), 51.
[165] Pelevin, *Generation P*, 232.
[166] Pelevin, *Generation P*, 105.

capitalism is made to look natural indeed. In many respects, Peter Pomerantsev's social history complements the fictional world of *Generation P* by explaining the processes of historical and cultural development. He documents the emergence of this cheap, second reality. He shows how Russia made this transition to the phantasms produced through the state-media ecology represented by *Russia Today, TNT, TV Chanel Russia,* and now a variety of state-run websites.

Pomerantsev's book is important in several respects. First, he provides precise and accurate documentation of post-Soviet society, not only from a media studies perspective, but through an examination of everyday experience as collected from different regions and social strata. Second, he describes a situation in which the average media consumer struggles to discern truths from falsehoods, accurate reporting from fake news, and empirically verifiable claims from pure fictions. Of course, many citizens are happy to remain spectators, content in their mental subjugation to the state and corporate power. Pelevin convincingly shows that many seem to desire little more than feel-good entertainment, comforting stories, and access to luxury consumer goods; many do not desire anything that might destabilize their sense of self or draw them from their personal comfort zone. Despite the fact that the whole modernization of the post-Soviet transitional period aimed to make Russia closer or similar to the West, the result was the opposite: "It's the reverse of the situation in the West… Whenever I pitch a gangster program to TNT, they share, aghast: "We make happy things, Peter. Happy!"[167] This social desire for rosy stories even in news programs is representative of a society that has ceased either to care about truth or to believe in their own capacity to discover it. It is also, consequently, a society that has traded self-determination (agency, autonomy, freedom) in exchange for comfort, amusement, pleasure, and security.[168]

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[167] Pomerantsev, *Nothing is True*, 32.
[168] One thinks again of Aldous Huxley's dystopian vision in *Brave New World* (1932).

Nevertheless, this critique of contemporary, post-Soviet Russia provides no reason to idealize the West. This is not only because similar attitudes to truth have taken hold globally. A "post-truth" mentality shows up in similar forms in Western democracies. Pomerantsev shows that Western expectations of Russia's transition towards democracy has only a purely formal character. It is likely that few in the West are prone to combat the cultural, educational, and epistemological conditions that provide the soil in which a society abandons commitments to empirical inquiry, evidence-based decision-making, etc. Western bureaucrats are concerned instead with formal protocols, and perhaps even share a nominalist, sophistical approach to social reform themselves: "Western civilization condensed into bullet points: "Elections? Check." "Freedom of Expression? Check." "Private Property? Check."[169] In this regard, while it may ideally be a collective responsibility for the lack of real change, it would be naïve to expect that after decades of total lies in the Soviet system the post-Soviet Russia would suddenly reveal a miracle. Even those individuals who wanted to effect qualitative changes were powerless before the system, where one imitates a reform and another imitates control, and neither acquires any depth.

In summation, a shift from totalitarianism to democracy may have been expected and desired, but in fact only a substitution of one cynical reality for another has been achieved. In this chapter, I discuss how post-Soviet political subjectivity in Ukraine and Russia figured in *The Moscoviad* by Yuri Andrukhovych and *Generation P* by Victor Pelevin. Both novels show that the early post-Soviet period of the 1990s was truly a time of obscurity and befuddlement as people felt lost in the new socio-political circumstances. Postmodernist poetics allows both

[169] Pomerantsev, *Nothing is True*, 37.

writers to represent a world in which nominalist epistemology prevails with the predicable blurring of lines between fake and real, truth and fiction.

Andrukhovych's novel depicts the moment when Ukraine was ready for departure from the USSR. His frustrated main character does not know where he belongs, but he does know where he does not want to belong (the Soviet empire). His identity essentially a hybrid, he retranslates the Soviet/Russian imperial narrative, and at the same time emphasizes that he does not belong there and does not fit in. Otto von F. is immature and irresponsible, unready for mature agency and autonomy. He sometimes relies slavishly on others and does not know what freedom is and what purposes it is meant to serve. Andrukhovych also shows that Russians, deprived of a firm grounding, were in search of an identity. The Soviet narrative competed with the previous Russian imperial narrative. Andrukhovych plays with different inherited cultural narratives to show that post-Soviet Ukrainian political subjectivity is anchored rather in romantic mythology than any pragmatic approach to social reality, but in Pelevin's novel it's all about pragmatism.

In contrast to Andrukhovych, Victor Pelevin's novel sees little value in romanticism. His world is cynical and pragmatic. In a nominalist reality of holograms, truth does not matter, nor does the autonomous political subject. Everything is, in some sense, delusion, mere rhetorical effect. Thus, to the average citizen who is nothing more than a puppet of others' desires, it is of little consequence what particular 'truth' or hologram will be seen on TV, as long as it entertains and moves them to buy consumer goods or leads them to docile subservience to Presidential Authority. On the other hand, media content (or 'truth') matters in a different way to the cynical PR executives and manipulative advertising agents. It is this group who work as the real puppet-masters, pulling the strings behind the scenes for their own economic or political gain. Pelevin

plays with different stereotypes and fears to show how they might be used for the achieving of total control over masses/TV consumers. If—as Pelevin seems to suggest—people need hallucinogenic aids to see through to the epistemic nominalism surrounding them, then in Pomerantsev's view, subjects no longer even pretend that truth matters to them at all. Pomerantsev describes what has happened to the last Soviet generation as he tries to explain the complacency of contemporary subjects encapsulated in their media bubbles. He wonders why they lack motivation to explore anything beyond their tightly-controlled media experience. If Pelevin seems jaded and cynical, Pomerantsev seems alternatively amused and puzzled that the heady promises of democracy, autonomy, and freedom have not only failed to materialize, but have been dashed in such a dramatic and depressing manner.

CHAPTER II DOES WOUNDED DIGNITY DRIVE ANARCHY?

ZHADAN'S ANARCHY IN THE UKRAINE AND PRILEPIN'S SANKYA[170]

The mid-2000s marked the first point of reassessing the Soviet past and the achievements of the inaugural post-Soviet decade as yesterday's elites remained, at least partially, in power, and the new generations, who had come of age after the collapse of the USSR, began to put themselves on the map. Looking back, the time period between 1991 and 2006 seems significantly different for Russia and Ukraine, as even the most cursory glance at the lists of decade-defining events in the two countries would indicate. After the Soviet Union was dissolved, people in the Russian Federation experienced the Parliament Crisis of 1993, two Chechen wars (1994 – 1996, 1999 – 2000), the financial meltdown of 1998, the Moscow Theater siege (2002), and the Beslan school siege (2004). All of these upheavals occurred against the backdrop of a smooth transition of power from the democratic Boris Yeltsin, no longer capable of managing the country for health reasons, to a young, energetic, and virtually unknown former KGB officer Vladimir Putin (2000)[171].

Ukraine, meanwhile, enjoyed a time of relative peace, a few shocking incidents notwithstanding. In September 2000, for instance, independent journalist Georgy Gongadze was assassinated, followed by a tape scandal that provoked a few mass demonstrations on the streets of Kyiv (the so-called Tapegate or Kuchmagate)[172]. Leonid Kravchuk (1991 – 1994) was, in

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[170] I am thankful to Vitaly Chernetsky, Oleksandra Wallo, Mark von Hagen for the thoughtful comments and feedback they gave me at the Graduate Students Conference in Ukrainian Studies at KU in April 2017. A debt of gratitude is also owed to Colleen McQuillen for helping me to re-shape this chapter in a more nuanced way.

[171] Lilia Shevtsova, *Lost in Transition: The* Yeltsin *and Putin Legacies* (New York: Carnegie Endowment for Int'l Peace, 2007).

[172] See: Patrick E. Tyler, *New Tapes Appear With Threat's by Ukraine's* President (New York Times, Feb. 19, 2001): https://www.nytimes.com/2001/02/19/world/new-tapes-appear-with-threats-by-ukraine-s-president.html; Mary Mycio, *Controversy Widens Over Ukraine Tapes,* (Los Angeles Times, December 15, 2002): https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-2002-dec-15-fg-tapes15-story.html

perfectly legitimate fashion, succeeded by Leonid Kuchma (1994 – 2005)[173], whose second presidential term ended with the Orange Revolution, the most memorable peaceful mass protest in contemporary Ukrainian history[174].

All these events were accompanied by a transition from planned economy to liberal market economy, leaving vast swaths of populations struggling and out of their comfort zone[175]. Russia experienced "its loss of imperial might and prestige."[176] As Joseph Stiglitz mentions, "A transition that lasts two decades, during which poverty and inequality increase enormously as a few become wealthy, cannot be called a victory for capitalism or democracy"[177]. The Ukrainian economic situation was as tough for ordinary citizens[178], but what distinguished it from the neighbors' dire straits was that instead of developing a feeling of resentment about the relinquishment of imperial might, Ukraine adopted a kind of anticolonial discourse[179] and adhered to the idea that departing from the USSR and inching westward would bring prosperity in the near future, for an independent Ukraine long in the making. Lyudmila Parts succinctly sums up the divergences between Russian and Ukrainian post-Soviet conditions as follows:

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[173] Leonid Kuchma's tenure was not an easy one, inimical as it sometimes was to the ideals of democracy, tolerance, and liberalism. Scrutinizing his presidency here is not my goal, but I do want to mention that in the middle of his second term he published an eloquently titled monograph *Ukraine is not Russia* (2003). Significantly, the volume was first published in Moscow in Russian, followed by a Ukrainian translation next year. Kuchma Leonid, *Ukraina – ne Rossiia* (Moskva: Vremia, 2003).

[174] On this, see the fourth chapter of my dissertation.

[175] Julian Cooper, The Russian Economy Twenty Years after the End of the Socialist Economic System, (*Journal of Eurasian Studies*, Volume 4, Issue 1, January 2013): 55-64; Yuriy Gorodnichenko et al., Inequality and Volatility Moderation in Russia: Evidence from Micro-Level Panel Data on Consumption and Income, (*Review of Economic Dynamics*, 2019 13(1)): 209-237.

[176] Lyudmila Parts, *In Search of the True Russia. The Provinces in Contemporary Nationalist Discourse* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2018), 5.

[177] Joseph Stiglitz, *The Ruin of Russia* (*The Guardian*, Wed. 9 April 2003): https://www.theguardian.com/world/2003/apr/09/russia.artsandhumanities.

[178] See: Pekka Sutela, *The Underachiever. Ukraine's Economy Since 1991* (Washington DC, Moscow, Beijing, Beirut, Brussels: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, March 2012): https://carnegieendowment.org/files/ukraine_economy.pdf; Andriy Portnov, *Lost in Transition? Ukraine and Europe Since 1991* (Eurozine, 23 January, 2018): https://www.eurozine.com/lost-in-transition-ukraine-and-europe-since-1989/.

[179] Tatiana Dzyadevych, Vahtang Kebuladze, "Postkolonial'nye Issledovaniia v Sovremennoi Ukrainskoi Gumanitaristikie," in Kebuladze V. (ed) *Politiki Znaniia i Nauchnye Obshchestva* (Vilnius: EGU, 2015): 172 -191.

"While the people of Ukraine… celebrated gaining a country, Russians felt the loss of an empire."[180]

The anthropologist Serguei Oushakine made a case study of the post-Soviet city of Barnaul analyzing the phenomenon of longing for the Soviet past: "The project was originally aimed at documenting the local practices through which people tried to restore their feeling of belonging once Soviet power and the Soviet motherland were "gone." The book traces how Russians in a Siberian province filled the vacuum left behind by the collapsed socialist order and how they reconfigured, reimagined, and objectified their connections with the new nation and the new country[181]. On a less academic side of the analytical spectrum, Svetlana Alexievich's semi-fictional book *Second Hand Time. The Last of the Soviets* (2016) speaks up for those who still cannot imagine themselves beyond the Soviet paradigm: "We're paying our respects to the Soviet era. Cutting ties with our old life. I am trying honestly to hear out all the participants of the socialist drama… Seventy-plus years in the Marxist-Leninist laboratory gave rise to a new man: Homo Sovieticus[182]. Some see him as a tragic figure, others call him a sovok. I feel like I know this person; we're very familiar, we've lived side by side for a long time. I am this person…"[183] The author's self-identification with the respondents, all of them subsumed in one mythological *Homo Sovieticus* category, impedes any critical approach to the subject. A few sentences later, Alexievich claims: "… Homo Sovieticus isn't just Russian, he's Belarussian,

[180] Parts, *In Search of the True Russia,* 5.
[181] Serguiei Oushakine, *Patriotism of Despair. Nation, War, and Loss in Russia* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2009), 2.
[182] 'Homo Sovieticus' is a satirical term applied to the Soviet mentality and popularized by Alexander Zinoviev in his monograph *Homo Sovieticus* (1985). Nevertheless, Svetlana Alexievich uses this term without any satirical or even ironical connotation, being absolutely sincere in her identity construction.
[183] Svetlana Alexievich, *Secondhand Time: The Last of the Soviets* (New York: Random House Trade Paperbacks, 2017), 3.

Turkmen, Ukrainian, Kazakh. Although we now live in separated countries and speak different languages, you couldn't mistake us for anyone else. We are easy to spot!"[184]

Linguist Anna Chernenko shows, in her discursive analysis of Ukrainian media, that in the mid-2000s Ukrainian journalists used the concept "Soviet" with two opposing connotations, purely positive or purely negative[185]. Even if one can debate the selection of primary sources for this research and its lack of attention to the provincial press, which renders representation of Ukrainian regional diversity, to say the least, incomplete[186], it is obvious that the Soviet past was still actively present in Ukrainian public discourse.

As Lyudmila Parts shows in her thorough study of provincial Russian journalism, the small-town media absorbed and reproduced multiple identity discourses, at once staking claims to "true Russianness" and absorbing/valorizing Soviethood. Analyzing the magazine *The Russian Provinces* (1991 - 2002), Parts notes that the editorial board went so far as to publish Stalin's iconic "Toast to the Russian People…"[187]. A hybrid identity braiding Soviet and nationalistic strands can be seen at work here, manufacturing a kind of post-Soviet singularity.

Evidently, literary production needed to reflect upon those transitions. What kind of existential dilemmas did the post-Soviet subjects face in the mid-2000s? How does wounded dignity shape the political subjectivity captured in novelistic writing? Can the feelings of rejection, abandonment, and humiliation drive the wounded subject to armed protest? What kinds of transitional experiences inflected the last Soviet generation's selfhood? Did the Russian and Ukrainian people share the same feeling of wounded dignity? Can post-Soviet resentments,

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[184] Alexievich, *Secondhand Time*, 3.
[185] Hanna Chernenko, "Stereotypizatsiia Konceptu Radianskyi u Post-Radianskomu Dyskursi (na Materiali Ukrainskyh ZMI 2000-h rr.)," in (*Lingvistychni studii.* Volume 30, Kyiv – Vinnytsia Don NU, 2015): 93 – 99.
[186] The author analyzes mostly media outlets from Kyiv, or the Western part of Ukraine, where general discourse was always mostly pro-Western and oriented toward liberal values. She disregards all leftist media and those from the South-Eastern part of the country.
[187] Parts, *In Search of the True Russia*, 49.

nostalgic impulses, and reflections on a country no longer in existence comprise a breeding ground for literary fiction? I will offer tentative answers to these questions by comparing Serhiy Zhadan's *Anarchy in the UKR* (2005) and Zakhar Prilepin's *Sankya* (2006).

This chapter seeks to contribute to ongoing discussions on the impact the totalitarian past in the former Eastern bloc had on its citizens in the transitional period, when "people…turn to the past in their search for a refuge from the painful realities of the present[188]." Recent scholarship from Witold Szablowski[189] and Shawn Walker[190] raises important questions about the reasons and consequences of this longing, not infrequently quite intense, for an authoritarian past. Building on this kind of work, my intent here is to describe a range of affective responses to the authoritarian past within post-Soviet Russia and Ukraine of the mid-2000s. The collapse of the USSR came as a shock to the majority of citizens, ill-prepared for the political, social, and economical challenges of the interim period.

Serhiy Zhadan and Zakhar Prilepin are writers of the mid-2000s, who managed both to address the social ills and insecurities of their time, and to attract the rapt attention of regular readers and literary scholars alike. Zhadan's critics tend to read him mostly through the prisms of

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[188] Sophie Pinkham, "No Direction Home. Why Have Post-Soviet Countries Embraced Populism and Nostalgia?" in: (*The New Republic*, May 3 2019): https://newrepublic.com/article/147818/no-direction-home-post-soviet-countries-populism-nostalgia.

[189] Witold Szablowski, *Dancing Bears: True* Stories *of People Nostalgic for Life Under Tyranny* (New York: Penguin Books, 2018).

[190] Shawn Walker, *The Long Hangover: Putin's New Russia and the Ghosts from the Past* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018).

postcolonialism[191], urbanism[192], and gender studies[193]. In addition to these almost institutionalized areas of "Zhadan studies," I need to mention some other valid critical approaches to his body of work[194]: for instance, Andriy Bahtarov analyzes *Anarchy in the UKR* from the perspective of postmodernist play, in which different registers of the Soviet past are desacralized by the narration's ubiquitous ironic tone[195]. Maxim Tarnawsky focuses on the social decay apprehended by the so-called second generation (as opposed to the first generation of Yuri Andrukhovych and Oksana Zabuzhko) of contemporary Ukrainian writers, Serhii Zhadan and Anatoliy Dnistrovyi. Tarnawsky claims that "the euphoric celebration of the freedom of the individual that accompanied the collapse of the Soviet Union has given way to a somber and measured assessment of the social order"[196]. Tetyana Zakharchenko tackles the dual philosophical categories of being and not-being through the binary of memory and forgetting as articulated in the novel *Voroshylovgrad* (2010). According to her conclusions, "in

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[191] See: Vitaly Chernetsky, *Mapping Postcommunist Cultures. Russia and Ukraine in the Context of Globalization*; Mateusz Świetlicki, "(Post)totalitarni młodzi buntownicy w powieści „Depeche Mode" Serhija Żadana" (*Miscellanea Posttotalitariana Wratislaviensia*, 1, 2013): 211-223; Agnieszka Matusiak, "Postkolonialna Diisnist' iak Dzerelo Strazdan ("Anarchy in the UKR" Sergiia Zhadana)," in (*Studia Sovietica,* vyp. 2: Semiosfera Radianskoi Kultury. Znaky i Znachenia, Kyiv-Nizhyn 2011): 254-267; Tamara Hundorova, "Voroshylovgrad I Porozhnechia" (Litakcent, January 8, 2011): http://litakcent.com/2011/02/08/voroshylovhrad-i-porozhnecha/; Tamara Hundorova, *Tranzytna kultura. Symptomy Postcolonialnoi Traumy: statti ta esei,* (Kyiv: Hrani-T, 2013).

[192]Aleksandr Dmitriiev, "Mii Zhadan abo Nebo nad Kharkovom", in (*Novoie Literaturnoie Obozreniie: Teoriia i Istoriia Litertury, Kritika, i Bibiliographia*, 2007, № 3): 289-310; Andrii Proidakov, *Urbanistychna Dominanta u Prozi Yu. Andrukhovycha I S. Zhadana,* (*Visnyk Luhans'koho Natsional'noho Universytetu*, im. Tarasa Shevchenka, Fililogichni Nauky 2013, #2): 60-66; Tetyana Zaharchenko, *Thesaurus of the unspeakable: thanatopraxis in Kharkiv's tales of trauma* (Modern Language Review" 2014, nr 109.2): 462-481.

[193] Hanna Chernenko, "Genderna Inversia v Suchasnomu Ukrains'komu Postkolonial'nomu Romani (Serhiy Zhadan „Depesh Mod"ta Irena Karpa „Freud by Plakav")," in (*Slovo i Chas, 2008*, № 12): 75-80; Mateusz Świetlicki, "Męska dominacja jako źródło mizoginii w Hymnie demokratycznej młodzieży Serhija Żadana." In *Konteksty feministyczne. Gender w życiu społecznym i kulturze*, E. Dura, P. Chudzickiej-Dudzik (ed) (Łódź: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Łodskiego, 2013): 279-294; Mateusz Świetlicki, *Kiedy chłopcy zostają mężczyznami? Męskość jako projekt w prozie Serhija Żadana* (Wrocław: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Wrocławskiego 2016).

[194] His poetry is another, independent domain of scholarship.

[195] Andriy Bakhtarov, "Receptsiia Radians'koho Mynuloho v Romani Serhiia Zhadana „Anarchy in the UKR*",* (*Literaturuznavchi Obrii. Pratsi Molodykh Uchenykh,* Kyiv: Instytut Literatury im. T.G. Shevchenka Natsionalnoii Akademii Nauk Ukrainy, 2014): 230-234.

[196] Maxim Tarnawsky, "Images of bonding and social decay in contemporary Ukrainian prose: Reading Serhii Zhadan and Anatolii Dnistrovy." In: *Contemporary Ukraine on the Cultural Map of Europe*, ed. by L. M. L. Zaleska Onyshkevych, M. G. Rewakowicz, (New York: Armonk, 2009), 274.

Voroshylovgrad , remembering is to being like forgetting is to nothingness"[197]. Zakhar Prilepin attracts mostly young literary scholars working with the issues of nationalism[198], gender studies[199], and military fiction[200]. There are also researchers analyzing the philosophical motifs in Prilepin's writing[201] as well as his poetics[202]; the latter critics, as a rule, emphasize the verisimilitude and accuracy of his writing[203]. In this regard, the recently completed dissertation "Nation versus Soul: Questioning Pre-revolutionary Cultural Myths and Memory in Post-Soviet Russian Literature" by Elisabeth Morgan, where the author traces the influences and echoes of 19th-century Russian literature in the works of Prilepin, Victor Erofeev, and Victor Pelevin, provides a neat encapsulation of the main directions taken by "Prilepin studies"[204].

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[197] Tetyana Zakharcheno, "While the Ox Is Still Alive: Memory and Emptiness in Serhiy Zhadan's Voroshylovhrad" (*Canadian Slavonic Papers*, Vol. LV, N. 1–2, March-June 2013), 46.

[198] See: Tatiana Prohorova, "Formy Proiavleniia Natsionalnoi Identichnosti v Romanie Zakhara Prilepina San'kia" (*Philology and Culture*. 2013. № 2 (32): 196-199; Parts, *In Search of the True Russia…,* 97 – 103;

[199] See: Nikolai Krizhanovskii, "Takiie Patsanskiie Rasskazy…" (Literaturnaiia Rossiia, 25.09.2009): https://litrossia.ru/item/3774-oldarchive/; Olga Tabachnikova, Natalia Vinokurova, "New Russian "Macho" Between Literature and Life" in: Ilic Melania (ed), *The Palgrave Handbook of Women and Gender in Twentieth Century Russia and Soviet Union* (Basingstoke: Palgrave McMillian, 2018): 429 – 445.

[200] See: Dmitrii Aristov, Russkaia Batal'naia Proza 2000-h Godov: Traditsii I Transformatsii (Dissertatsia Kandidata Filologichaskich Hauk, Perm', 2013); Natalia Vygovskaia, Molodaia Voiennaia Proza Vtoroi Poloviny 1990 – nachala 2000-h Godov: Imiena I Tendentsii, (Dissertatsia kandidata Filologicheskich Nauk, Moskva, 2009); Valeriia Pustovaia, Chelovek s Ruzh'iom: Smertnik, Buntar', Pisatel'. O Molodoi Voiennoi Prozie, (*Zhurnal'nyi Zal: "Novyi Mir*, 2005, №5): http://magazines.russ.ru/novyi_mi/2005/5/pu9.html.

[201] See: Anna Bogatyreva, "Kategoriia Grekha v Romanie Z. Prilepina "Grekh", (*Trudy Molodykh Uchenykh VGU*, Voronezh, 2011, №1—2): 106-112; Larisa Kalinichenko "Problema Protivopostavlenia Tsennotsnykh Sistem Avtora I Geroia v Kontekstie Transformatsii Sovremennogo Rossiiskogo Obshchestva (Na primere Romanov "San'kya", "Chernaia Obez'iana")", *(Al'manakh Sovremennoi Nauki i Obrazovania*, 2013, #12 (79): http://www.gramota.net/materials/1/2013/12/19.html; Olga Sukhikh, "Ochen' Svoievremennyie Knigi (o Traditsyiakh F.M.Dostoyevskogo i M. Gor'kogo v Romanie Z. Prilepina "San'kya", (*Vestnik Nizhegorodskogo Universiteta* im. N.I.Lobachevskogo, 2008, № 6): 290-296; Irina Popova, "Funkcyonal'nyie Vozmozhnosti Biblieiskikh Konceptov v Romanie Zakhara Prilepina "Obitel'", *(Voprosy Kognitivnoi Lingvistiki*, Tambov: Obshcherossiiskaia Organizatsia "Rossiiskaia Assotsiatsiia Lingvistov-Kognitologov", 2016, № 2 (47): 93-101.

[202] See: Elena Moskovkina, "Motiv Detstva v Romanie Zakhara Prilepina "San'kya"" (*Vestnik TGPU*, 2016, №3 (168): 145-151; Evgenia Rotai*, "Novyi Realizm" v Sovremennoi Russkoi Prozie: Khudozhestvennoie Mirrovozzrenie R. Senchina, Z. Prilepina, S. Shargunova* (Dissertatsia Kandidata Filologicheskich Nauk, Krasnodar: 2013).

[203] See: Angela Malysheva*, "Klinicheskii Realism" Zakhara Prilepina,* (Dissertatsia Kandidata Filologicheskih Nauk, Voronezh, 2016).

[204] See: Elizabeth Morgan, *Nation versus Soul: Questioning Pre-revolutionary Cultural Myths and Memory in Post-Soviet Russian Literature*, (Montral: McGill University Libraries, 2018).

In my treatment of the abovementioned novels, I claim that post-Soviet nostalgia is neither an independent nor an innocuous phenomenon, but rather one tied to wounded dignity and resentment, and by that token capable of catalyzing anarchical rebellion and bloodshed. This set of complicated, interconnected negative affects is a marker of the mid-2000s zeitgeist as registered by Zhadan and Prilepin in their timely novels.

Contemporaries born in the Soviet provinces in the mid-1970s, Zhadan and Prilepin both belong to the last generation to have come of age in the USSR. Both received degrees in literature; both have declared leftist political views; anecdotally, both even have their own punk-rock bands, Zhadan and the Dogs (2009) and Elefunk, respectively (2011).

Despite the abundant similarities in their early lives, their current political attitudes are radically divergent. As a conscientious objector, Zhadan did not serve in the army; nor has he ever been a member of any political party. He has openly declared his contempt for politicians since 2014, and refuses point-blank to support any political entity in Ukraine, maintaining his independence from all political organizations. In contrast, Prilepin is a veteran of the Chechen wars and a policeman with the Internal Troops of the Russian Federation. He was also the deputy commander of an armed formation in the so-called Donetsk People's Republic, a region in Ukraine populated largely by Russian speakers that seeks to secede from the main territory. Prilepin was also a member of the National Bolshevik Party and graduated from the political school Open Russia (2010) founded by Mikhail Khodorkovsky, but did not join the liberal movement. Since 2014, he has openly voiced his support for the current president of the Russian Federation, Vladimir Putin.

In many regards, the novels that I will discuss in this chapter reflect the authors' own political views. Zhadan wrote *Anarchy in the UKR* after the 2004-2005 Orange Revolution,

which was the first successful mass protest in Ukraine to receive substantial international exposure. Prilepin published *Sankya* one year later, in the middle of Putin's first eight-year reign. Both highly personal, the novels venture beyond the authors' own points of view to encompass their entire generation's experience, much of which is defined by the political alienation of ordinary people.[205]

While classified as a novel, *Anarchy in the Ukr* (2005) consists of four more or less independent chapters, each detailing Zhadan-narrator's quasi-autobiographical recollections from a particular period of his life and his reflections on the socio-political circumstances of each. It charts his coming of age in the 1980s; his engagement with politics in the post-Soviet 1990s; his voyage across Ukraine to the territory of a long-defunct anarcho-communist republic established by Nestor Makhno in the late 1910s; and finally, in a compendium of ten brief essays named after the narrator's favorite songs by American rock and jazz musicians, it illustrates different ways of life among young people in post-Soviet Ukraine.

Zhadan writes his novel mostly using the first-person narration, leading the reader to believe that it is a confessional narrative, even though it is clear that the writer constructs his narrator and that the plot is fictional. This profoundly personalized form of narration works to elicit more empathy from the reader, although Susanne Keen's warning should not remain

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[205] In 2014, Serhii Zhadan added a new chapter to his novel, "The Luhansk Diary." A stimulating piece in and of itself, it also changes perspective of its predecessor, deepening the characterization of the protagonist and qualifying the author's understanding of freedom, anarchy, and his own mission. Recently, Prilepin also appeared as a spokesman for the People's Luhansk Republic with his own anti-Ukrainian, pro-Soviet/Russian agenda[205]. Instead of producing a new novel based on his experience, he edited a volume of war poetry by local poets reflecting on the political events of 2014-2015 in the Crimea and Donbass. See: Zakhar Prilepin, Live Journal, https://prilepin.livejournal.com/798918.html; https://www.rbth.com//literature/2014/11/28/zakhar_prilepin_you_have_to_constantly_prove_your_worth_in_literat_41789.html; Russia Beyond, Zakhar Prilepin, https://www.rbth.com/arts/literature/2017/02/23/writer-zakhar-prilepin-donbass_708066. Anna Dolgareva, Andrey Dmitriev, and 14 others, *Ia Izranenaia Zemlia: Russkaia Poezija o Vesnie Krymskoi I Voinie Donbasskoi*, Zakhar Prilepin (sostavitel'), (Moskva: Knizhnyi Klub, Knigoviek, 2017).

unheeded, either: "… the commonplace that the first-person fiction more readily evokes feeling responsiveness than the whole variety of third person narrative situations… Empathy may be enhanced or impeded by narrative consonance or dissonance, unreliability, discordance, an excess of narrative levels with multiply narrators."206 Sometimes Zhadan switches from the first to second-person narration (as, for instance, in the subchapter "Left Forces March"), as though issuing a personal appeal to the reader. It helps to cement a special relationship of trust between him and the reader, especially when he writes about something as intimate as childhood.

Despite the novel's provocative title, Zhadan's narrator, who remains nameless—and to whom I refer as Zhadan-narrator because of Zhadan's own claim to have based the figure on himself—does not instigate his readers to anarchical protests. Instead, he all but shows off his political apathy. The chapter entitled "Live fast, die young," rather than invoke personal sacrifice to the revolution, argues for the relative merits of living one's private life unfettered by any social norms or conventions. Zhadan's narrator is skeptical about all political systems alike and seeks only personal freedom. Political indifference spells out the diagnosis of Zhadan's entire generation, stuck as it is between the death of socialism and undeveloped capitalism.

The narrator frames his childhood recollections from the 80s as if he were making an autobiographical film, thereby highlighting for his reader the primacy of visuality as a quality of memory. He describes his early-life relationship to socialism as one defined by the aesthetic of propaganda posters and "communist ornamentalism"[207]. The sudden disappearance of this visual landscape after the fall of the Soviet Union was traumatic; the narrator laments that his "first love, his true pride, his personal socialism," i.e., the public ornament of propaganda, was taken

[206] Suzanne Keen, "A Theory of Narrative Empathy," in: *Narrative*, Vol.14, No 3, (October 2006), 215.
[207] Serhiy Zhadan, *Anarchy in the UKR* (Kharkiv: Klub Simeinoho Dozvillia, 2016), 27. All translation from Ukrainian courtesy of Anton Svynarenko.

away without his consent: "My socialism was, first of all, external, street, visual".[208] The visible disrepair he encounters at the train station and the missing Soviet-era portraits that once hung on its walls provoke a similar sense of victimization as the narrator must "forgive [his] past one more betrayal"[209]. He also recalls the comfort he used to take in the regularity of Soviet-era holidays and celebrations that helped him understand "his place in this world"[210], and the disappearance of which consequently produced a metaphysical dislocation in him as he became an adult.

According to Svetlana Boym[211], nostalgia is a longing for a home that does not exist or has never existed. Comparing Zhadan's *Anarchy in UKR* and Prilepin's *Sankya* helps to determine the degree to which nostalgia and wounded dignity mold the present and the future of this lost generation, which reached adulthood in a liminal, uncertain time of in-betweenness, with the Soviet Union already gone but the nation-state not yet full-fledged. For example, Zhadan writes: "As it happened, though, it was during this embittered and sensitive time, when everything inside you usually breaks and grows back together, that something similar went on around us as we were forced to watch adult life destroy our country, trounce our parents, and expel all the unnecessary, superfluous people who failed to realize what was really going on."[212] The way the Soviet myth emerges in the texts, this huge country never quite existed to begin with, but the writers are expressly dealing with some kind of fantasy, which always surrounds nostalgia. The two novels give us different models of coping with this feeling of longing for something irretrievably forfeited.

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[208] Ibid, 68.
[209] Ibid, 69.
[210] Ibid, 68.
[211] Svetlana Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia* (New York: Basic Books, 2001), XIII.
[212] Zhadan, *Anarchy in the UKR*, 104.

If we follow the logic of Boym's work, we must embrace her assertion that nostalgia is linked to fantasies rather than real facts, places, or events. To deal with this world of make-believe, Zhadan wants to make a movie about his 1980s: his formative years, as well as the last decade of the USSR. So, a recalling of his childhood leads to a recalling of the late Soviet Union. No wonder that the author cannot talk about his childhood directly; he needs some mediation to lighten the overwhelming import of that time. In this sense, the medium of cinema looks like the best mediator between his memory and reality[213]: "My eighties are easy to film. When in this country we start making movies again I would like to shoot a movie about my eighties, for the purpose at least of reproducing on the screen one of the possible options of building your own life as a transparent and clear schema, which from the beginning has all the necessary causes and consequences"[214]. Here we see how Zhadan inserted his own life in the cultural production of a film, which allows him to situate his own life and national history in a logical, causal line. The reason why he includes his 1981 in the footage is that he was only seven years old and his memories of that time are more like some blurred visions than faithful records of actual historical events.

Besides the overarching intent to write a personal, intimate narrative, in the second chapter Zhadan tries to process a publicly available phenomenon instead of giving personal testimony. He does not want to sound pathetic and miserable: "This movie would be reasonably didactic and entertaining. It would have as little as possible of pathos and nostalgic snivel. Instead, there would be the Sun, a lot of machinery, a lot of industry, in general, everything would be okay with the social component, everything would be in its right place"[215]. What

[213] In the summer of 2017, Serhii Zhadan went into preproduction on the movie *Wild Field* based on his novel *Voroshilovgrad*, an autobiographical account of the Luhansk (former Voroshilovgrad) region. It came out in 2018.
[214] Zhadan, *Anarchy in the UKR*, 58.
[215] Ibid. 58.

Zhadan calls "nostalgic snivel" I understand as the feeling of self-pity and regret. "Everything being in its right place" is an attribute of, to revert to Boym's terminology once more, reflective nostalgia, where the narrator reminisces about the past in order to systematize the objects of his/her recollection according to some putative "order."

This order does not necessarily have to correlate with the socially accepted one, or with common sense in general: "In this movie for sure there should be crime, a lot of criminals and thieves, incorrigible violators of the socialist norms of coexistence, insane marginals with an ax in their boots, with a knife in a plastic briefcase…"[216] So, we are made to understand, aside of the developed industry and plentiful sunshine, there were also people who did not fit the rules of socialist coexistence and trespassed the law in the land of developed socialism. They were definetly longing for anarchy and kept alive the free spirit of anarchic past.

Another important feature of the 1980s, according to Zhadan, was the absence of politics. Politics would resurface in the 1990s, while the preceding decade was, to him, brimming with apolitical love and devoid of any political action whatsoever[217]. To lead a life of fulfillment, people did not need an ideology: "My main characters get married out of principles and hang themselves out of protest, have babies because they can't say no and make love because they cannot control themselves. They break the law with a sense of adventure and love their motherland without any ideological context… and only on the background do their parents appear—exhausted and experienced, they carry inside like a weak heart all their experience of their country, of their everyday struggle, which finally ends but it does not bring them any

[216] Ibid, 80.
[217] Ibid, 59.

peace"[218]. Writing about the 1980s, Zhadan emphasizes that it was a vibrant time full of life and enthusiasm, setting the decade starkly apart from the 2000s.

According to the author, the most treasured asset of the country is its people. It is the simple folk who engage in hard labor that are most interesting to him and most worthy of his admiration. Back in the 1980s, they felt valued and dignified,[219] whereas the largest tragedy of the transitional period is a lack of demand for those strapping, hard-working, honest people. As a result, devastation and havoc reign supreme in Ukraine after the collapse of the USSR, unraveling the beautiful texture of that "salt of the Earth" aesthetic.

The chapter "Leaving the Palace of Pioneers Forever" contains special markers of this vanished materiality from times gone by. On the one hand, the narrator realizes that it is necessary to leave the titular institution of ideological indoctrination forever. On the other hand, he understands that such organizations as the Young Pioneers played a very important role in the teenagers' life and right now, thousands of young people find themselves mentally displaced: "How can you replace the palaces of culture and palaces of pioneers? It is clear enough that they are not about the palaces per se, and I am not even talking about their function. I am talking about thousands of teenagers, who possess something more than simple ID data… and what will you propose instead?" [220] With the obsolete ideological system exhausted, the major problem during transitions was finding new ideological markers that did not feel empty for most of the population. Children and teenagers were in an especially difficult situation, because the adults (parents and educators) were frustrated themselves and focused primarily on survival.

[218] Ibid, 82
[219] Ibid, 94 – 95.
[220] Ibid, 140.

The Palace of Pioneers was an unlikely home for young people, but without it they were left homeless. This feeling of homelessness thus gradually became their new reality: "The pioneer palace was nearby, as a very hard objection to all our childish and naïve ideas of the world – it was exactly at that moment, that fall that I started to realize that nobody, nowhere and under no circumstances waited for me, there was no haven"[221]. The situation stands no chance of improving, and young people are doomed to cognitive and spiritual homelessness, especially when the social institutions remain as rotten as they were under the old regime.

Zhadan-narrator concludes his recollections of his maturation from child into young man with an observation about how the beginning of his adult life "coincided with strange and painful things" happening around him, i.e., the fall of the Soviet Union ('90, p.69). In short, "It so happened that exactly at that time when everything inside you rips open and grows back together, something similar was happening around us and we were forced to see how adult life destroyed our country, how it broke our parents, how it threw out of itself all the superfluous and unnecessary people, everyone who hadn't understood what exactly was happening" ('90, p.69).

Traumatized by feelings of betrayal, dislocation, and horror at the mercilessness of adult life experienced as national collapse, Zhadan-narrator incurs a wound to his dignity. I wish to suggest that this wounding, which occurs at an intersection of the personal and the historical—at that juncture of the self and the social that political philosopher Hannah Arendt identifies as the crux of human dignity——is a key factor in the formation of his political subjectivity. In *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (1951), Arendt addresses the significance of human dignity within political experience. As John Macready has observed, Arendt moved beyond "traditional essentialist accounts of human dignity" and worked out "a political ontology of human dignity—

[221] Ibid, 143.

an understanding of how human dignity is constituted in the public realm."[222] He reminds us that, "Human dignity can only have political significance if it appears in the public space between human beings; that is, it must be enacted through the assertion of dignity in world building and/or involve the recognition of this agency." Arendt affirms the following: "I come into my own by competing, measuring myself with others."[223]

Dignity, or *достоинство* in Russian—a word that lays bare its etymological meaning of being adequately valued—is essentially a social product and must therefore be asserted and recognized in the public sphere. The Ukrainian word *гідність* also takes into account the public value of a person, admitting one's validity and suitability for the community. On the social construction of a life's value, Arendt states that, "[…] respect for human dignity implies the recognition of my fellow-men or our fellow-nations as subjects, as builders of worlds or co-builders of a common world." Arendt's emphasis on the importance of participation in our interpolation as political subjects helps us understand how Zhadan-narrator's impaired political agency translates into his wounded sense of dignity.

The chapter "My Red Downtown" takes as its focus the narrator's interactions in the public sphere after the fall of the USSR, most notably his involvement in political protests and activism. While amongst the crowds of "madmen, debased, and offended" [224]people, Zhadan-narrator realizes that political revolution cannot happen because members of various parties, simply, like each other too much. Moreover, he concludes that it does not really matter which political group wins because, "it only looked from the side like there was actually a battle of

[222] John Douglas Macready, "Hannah Arendt and the Political Meaning of Human Dignity" in (*Journal of Social Philosophy*. Vol. 47, No 4, Winter 2016): 399-419.
[223] Hannah Arendt, "The Great Tradition and the Nature of Totalitarianism," *The New School for Social Research*, March 18, 1953 (Washington, DC: The Hannah Arendt Papers at the Library of Congress, 2001), 4.
[224] Zhadan, *Anarchy in the UKR*, 109.

political programs and strategies"[225], but actually there were only individuals driven by their own adrenaline rush.

His lament for Ukraine's post-Soviet political incapacitation expands further still to envelop contempt for power and those who hold it. According to Zhadan, people do not create power, but the so-called "corridors of power"—i.e., institutions and their rigid structures—discipline the people. These corridors of power "evoke in visitors an unhealthy feeling of abasement,"[226] which therefore requires one to stay away so as not to succumb to humiliation. Zhadan-narrator's rejection of institutionalized power is not, however, equivalent to resignation. It is necessary to maintain an ironic distance from power and all its attributes. Otherwise, the individual can lose himself in this everyday struggle for the clerks' mercy. For Zhadan's protagonist, it is simply necessary to steer clear of power, even if it is impossible to escape it in full. The power is rotten and deserves to be blown up.[227] One can see here a call to violence, but I think it is a fitting ending to the beautiful metaphor of "the rotten wet body of power," although it can also be connected to the metaphors formulated in the chapter "Left Powers March." One can see that the author is playing here with first- and second-person narrations as well, bemoaning the fact that university students fail to speak out and demand justice, unlike the "regular" people: "No one among us says anything, we simply stand silently and don't even protest or get upset when we are deprived of what we need"[228].

Zhadan-narrator's ruminations on power and governance are also filtered through the historical parable of Nestor Makhno's attempt to establish a republic of anarcho-communism in Ukraine in the years after the 1917 Bolshevik revolution swept Russia. The theme of anarchy is

[225] Ibid, 118-119.
[226] Ibid, 135.
[227] Ibid, 138 – 139.
[228] Ibid, 121.

first signaled in the novel's title, which itself is a reference to the Sex Pistols' song "Anarchy in The UK." The novel's epigraph is the song's first verse: "I am an anti-christ /I am an anarchist/Don't know what I want/But I know how to get it/I wanna destroy the passerby/Cause I wanna be Anarchy/No dogs body."[229] By invoking a supremely angry punk-rock band and reminding the reader of its aggressively oppositional ethos, Zhadan-narrator offers a foil for himself and his contemporaries: unlike the Sex Pistols, the citizens of post-Soviet Ukraine "don't know what they want" and don't know how to get it, either. The dysfunctional post-Soviet politics might as well be in a state of anarchy—a condition of disorder due to absence or non-recognition of authority or other controlling systems.[230] The stationmaster at the local train station is more in control and has more agency than those who walk the official corridors of power. As the narrator puts it, "It is a big mistake to think that the power can have an impact on something. The stationmaster can influence something as he sits in his office and lets the next boxcar pass from the West to the East, thirty-six red "stolypins" logged with cement and grain, fabrics, all kinds of shit, which is sometimes hidden on the sidetracks and in sinkers, written off from an invoice, they line their pockets, and no power is capable of stopping it."[231] Here the narrator contrasts an ephemeral illusion of agency with meaningful action.

At variance with the ineffectual politicians wielding so-called power is Nestor Makhno, whose Revolutionary Insurrectionary Army of Ukraine, commonly referred to as Makhnovshchina, aimed to liberate southern Ukraine from all external governance in the years 1917-22. Zhadan-narrator decides to write a book about Makhno not because he is interested in the topic, but because someone needs to do it. The author does not take his project seriously, but

[229] Ibid, 7.
[230] "Anarchy." Oxford English Dictionary. Retrieved from: https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/anarchy.
[231] Zhadan, *Anarchy in the UKR*, 28.

uses it instead as an excuse to take a journey to the land of his childhood and youth: "…Then I did not have any desire to write a book about anarchism… My aims were simple and clear – to go around the places where the Ukrainian anarchic-communists were the most active and to try to write something about it.[232] As a result, the book is far from a guide to Ukrainian anarchic-communism[233], which does not mean there is no anarchy present within it. A lack of respect for any kind of power unites narrator-Zhadan with the anarchic 1920s Wild Field. Contrary to cultural expectations, he harbors no reverence either for the idol of communism Lenin, or the idol of nationalism Taras Shevchenko, both embodied in monuments. The writer does not even capitalize the name of Vladimir Illich Lenin[234]. Nor does Zhadan explain why Illich is *хуйовий* – is it because of the monument's underlying meaning or due to its meager artistic value? It seems that *Illich* as a sign of Leninism was "fucking awful" and did not deserve any respect or special glorification. Just as Illich has lost his human qualities, so has the monument lost its previous function. For the narrator, it does not have an ideological connotation anymore: instead, it is just a part of the conventionalized city view[235].

With the credentials of a journalist, the narrator sets off to survey the territories of anarcho-communists. However, instead of insights into Makhno and his political-military activity, the narrator discovers a depressed country with a dilapidated infrastructure and a population that feels superfluous. As with any travelogue, the narrator ends up making the most important discoveries about himself; in this case more specifically, about his relationship to politics, power, country, and nation.

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[232] Zhadan, *Anarchy in the UKR*, 12.
[233] Actually, at the time a book about Ukrainian anarcho-communism and Nestor Makhno had already been written. See: Alexandre Skirda, Nestor Makhno: *Anarchy's Cossack - The struggle for Free Soviets in the Ukraine 1917-1921* (Kyiv: AK Press, 2004).
[234] Zhadan, *Anarchy in the UKR*, 111.
[235] As Zhadan accurately predicted, monuments to Vladimir Lenin were demolished in 2014 and 2015 in the wake of the Revolution of Dignity, the Crimean annexation, and the hybrid war in the Southeast of Ukraine.

Admitting that he was never interested in politics despite a sincere wish to be, Zhadan-narrator seemingly aims the following diatribe at himself: "Never become interested in politics, don't read newspapers, don't listen to the radio, smash out the kinescope of your TV, put a color portrait of Mao or Fidel in there, don't let them fuck you over, don't connect to the Network, don't vote, don't support democracy, don't go to rallies, don't become a member of any party…"[236] This incredibly long passage (over 1,000 words in total) posits the idea of protecting one's own privacy and internal freedom from the hegemony of the State. In his exhortation the author sets his own rules for a strictly apolitical existence. Like the underground Soviet artists of the 1970s and 80s who withdrew completely from the realm of politics, Zhadan-narrator wishes to remain in his personal zone of autonomy.

The narrator distinguishes between being critical of the State and being loyal to the country, the latter constituting his personal brand of patriotism. He does not give up on his country because of the political climate in the State. Indeed, it is not necessary to use lofty phrases to express his sincerity: "Actually I live in the same country with you, I love this country, I will never leave this country even if you initiate repressions, I have a radio and TV at home. I just simply watch other channels"[237]. Paradoxically, a parallel is drawn here between the Soviet era and the present. The "repressions" mentioned by the author comprise the connective tissue between the past and current reality, and it is his choice to stay in internal immigration, in an alternative reality: to stay in the country, but outside of the State.

[236] Zhadan, *Anarchy in the* UKR, 52.
[237] Zhadan, *Anarchy in the UKR*, 56 – 57.

Neither does Zhadan's narrator agree with the new generation, busy as they are fighting for power and vying to shoehorn themselves into the existing system: "I want this youth not to fight for the power. I want them to fight the power, to occupy banks and to block the buildings of local government, to control the budget and throw the clerks from their office windows, to go to subbotniks under black flags, flags of black lingerie"[238]. While the author paradoxically connects bolshevism (subbotnik) to anarchism (Nestor Makhno's army waved black flags), he immediately––and mischievously––conflates the black color not with the anarchist's flags, but with the color of women's underwear. Since the author cannot find room for his political agenda, he chooses a path of passive resistance paved with recreational drugs: "Therefore let's make a deal – everybody keeps what he's got: you keep your cash, I keep my cannabis"[239]. Here the money as a symbol of the unjust, corrupted State is opposed to marijuana as a sign of internal freedom and passive resistance. Cannabis ties the narrator to the global sixties and supports his statement of resistance to the system, as the young protesters of the second part of the 20th century did all over the globe.

Though a power agnostic, he does believe in the unity of people and in freedom as the unshakeable basis of all human needs. According to him, longing for freedom can unite people across the artificial lines drawn by financial and social segregation. Indeed, a longing for freedom and dignity united drastically different classes during the Orange revolution: people who would not have communicated with each other in another (not revolutionary) time. In this regard, one of the most powerful pieces related to street protests is the subchapter "The Southside of the North," where the plot smoothly segues

[238] Ibid, 56.
[239] Ibid, 56.

from the role of railways and train stations in the narrator's life to an episode of peaceful protest with the narrator camping among the protesters. Zhadan writes about the possibilities of uniting people in action regardless of their social status in a situation when citizens have had enough of the current power. In a totally absurd sequence (the protesters decide to play soccer around midnight in wintertime), they receive unexpected help from the cabdrivers ("Cabdrivers were on our side"[240]) and the nouveau riches: "They arrived in their pimped-up jeep, shone with dozens of headlights and lanterns and desperately honked. It was immediately obvious that they were also on our side"[241]. The capacity for consolidation in stressful moments is, generally, one of the hallmarks of the recent Ukrainian revolutions.

Despite the overall senselessness of their actions, they get involved in a game of soccer, to which their solidarity grants a semblance of meaning: "It was necessarily to have sense in our actions, we were observed by too many eyes, too many things depended on whether or not we would play – at 1 am, in negative 15, in a snow-covered square"[242]. Such shared activities collapse the distances between different social strata and form an alternative community, symbolically heralding the imminent birth of a Ukrainian civic society. In this borderline surreal scene, Zhadan conveys his message of inclusive community-building; a project to which everybody is invited as long as they have something of value to contribute.

Let us return now to the central question about the novel's narrator: what factors shape him, a citizen of post-Soviet Ukraine writing in the early 2000s, as a political subject? Recalling Hannah Arendt's entwinement of human dignity and political experience, we understand that

[240] Ibid, 151.
[241] Ibid.
[242] Ibid.

wounding one hobbles the other: Zhadan-narrator's compromised sense of dignity interferes with his ability to act as a political agent in the public sphere.

Compared to *Anarchy in the UKR,* Zakhar Prilepin's *Sankya* resembles a classical novel with a third-person narrator who relates the tragic story of a Russian teenager, Sasha Tishin (known to his friends as Sankya), without even attempting to resolve the contradictions of his struggle to define his place in society. Out of school and unemployed, Sasha is a marginalized figure searching for meaning and a sense of belonging, which he finds eventually in the Union of Creators. Ironically, this group of radical political activists lacks any cohesive vision or constructive program: relying on a mix of violent street protests and acts of "velvet terrorism" (like egging politicians), the Creators aim to "oust[…] the wicked, immoral, deceitful rulers in Russia."[243] Sasha's final action with the group is an armed rebellion against the local government in a town just outside Moscow, which he knows will yield no appreciable results except his own death.

In Russian, the group of radicals is called *Soyuz Sozidayushchikh*, literally "Union of Creators," but the translators of the 2014 English edition elected to use the name Founding Fathers, perhaps to make it more intelligible to the North American readership. In the original, however, the group Soyuz Sozidayushchikh is abbreviated as SS, which naturally recalls the Nazi German SS or "Schutzstaffel,"[244](a point that will be important to my further argument). This decision reflects the novel's central theme of fatherlessness: Sasha's father is dead, as are his two uncles—all alcohol related deaths—and in the course of the novel his grandfather dies, too. Sasha reflects on the fact that he and his cohort are "[f]atherless kids looking for someone

[243] Prilepin, *Sankya*, 147.
[244] See: The SS, (History.com.editors, Dec.18, 2009): https://www.history.com/topics/world-war-ii/ss

who wants [them] as sons"[245]. The charismatic leader of the group, Kostenko, serves as a kind of symbolic father figure until he is arrested and imprisoned, once again leaving Sasha and his fellow rebels without a role model. The nationalist-political theme of the novel invites us to read this fatherlessness metaphorically. During the Soviet era, the authoritarian State acted as father figure for all, ensuring a sense of order, structure, and security. The fall of the Soviet Union in 1991 was a failure of the fatherland, which left a whole country orphaned, stripped of identity and belonging, and thrown back into childhood.

Prilepin's narrator seems comfortable only in his home village, where he can relish sweet pre-adolescent memories: "Coming back on his life, Sasha loved only this version of himself – the one with dusty legs and scratches. Later, this kid unfurled his white swan neck and grew into a pasty, slouchy dork…"[246]. Prilepin's protagonist creates a kind of pastoral mythology around the Soviet village, where everything was full of life and people were beautiful and healthy, unlike the present day when the countryside teeters on the brink of extinction together with its inhabitants. The reader learns it from the beginning of the novel: "The village was disappearing and withering away – it was felt in everything. It departed as a dingy, dark ice floe and floated softly"[247]. The narrator is eager to express his emotions, but this laconic style of narration seems to reveal his internal pain, which a "real man" is not allowed to disclose. As the Russian proverb goes, 'real men don't cry.'

Depopulation one of the most painful sights in the dying village. The author repeats again and again that no men were left; Sankya's grandfather is the last man standing, having survived not only his peers but also his own sons: "Grandma quietly spoke about her sons – she had three

[245] Prilepin, *Sankya*, 137.
[246] Ibid, 46.
[247] Ibid, 29.

of them – Sasha's father and two of his uncles, one of which was also Sasha's godfather. All three of them died"[248]. The losses are made especially tragic by the causes of death. People die not in war, or from natural disasters; they are wiped out, trivially, by *alcoholism*. Paradoxically, young people have begun to die not because of a lack of material goods, but because of the material resources accumulated in late-Soviet times: "In the last years of the previous regime, the peasants had finally put some meat on their bones and saved up some a bit of cash. The first thing that a villager does after slaving his entire life is spoil his child, regardless of the child's age. And at that particular moment the village kids suddenly desired to abandon their bicycles and climb aboard motorcycles. Not only would you never see any traffic cops in the village, the entire local precinct was actually gone for six months at a time. So everyone rode drunk. And right away they started crashing. They crashed horrifically smashing themselves to pulps…"[249].

Besides the tragic deaths of young men, this passage also emphasizes two moments which are important to understand this anthropological catastrophe. First, it depicts the hard life and labor of the people. The late years of the previous regime are the times of *perestroika* and involve a liberal model of economics, which allowed people to accumulate some goods, very much unlike the earlier periods of Soviet history. So, *perestroika* was an improvement from a materialistic perspective. The dramatic fact of the young generation's extinction relates to the second aspect worth emphasizing: the immaturity of society that cannot live (not just by law but even in accordance with the common sense) without supervision. People need a representative of power to supervise them and prevent them from driving under the influence, a practice forbidden by law and warned against by the growing mortality rates.

[248] Ibid, 30.
[249] Ibid, 34 – 35.

This immaturity, this incapacity for responsible autonomy without the supervision of an all-powerful ruler, might explain the feelings of frustration and loss that Svetlana Alexievich catalogued in her *Secondhand Time*. If Soviet society was so adept at creating "new people," why were those people unable to direct their own lives without the confines of Soviet dogma? If the Homo Sovieticus existed and was not bad at all—simple, honest, hardworking, moral—how did it happen that people let loose and started to cheat, steal, pilfer, and kill their own neighbors? General immaturity might be the answer as people did not learn how to live independently, and do not understand now that they do not need a policeman to stop them from drunk driving.

One might reasonably surmise that common sense and personal responsibility should suffice to prevent such foolhardy actions. It is obvious that people would prefer to delegate responsibility for their own actions to somebody like a traffic cop—an agent of symbolic power who would take care of them and dutifully play the father-figure role. People simply do not know how to manage their freedom and therefore pine for an escape. Erich Fromm explains this form of escapism with a longing for authoritarianism, in which authorities take all responsibility. Fromm states: "The first mechanism to escape from freedom… is the tendency to give up the independence of one's own individual self and to fuse one's self with somebody or something outside of oneself in order to acquire the strength which the individual self is lacking. Or…to seek for new, "secondary bonds" as a substitute for the primary bonds which have been lost"[250].

For Sasha, the current administration must fall because of its failure to care for, nurture, and protect its citizens. The narrator summarizes Sasha's criticism of the government as follows: "A repulsive, dishonest, and foolish State, which slays the weak and grants freedom to the vile and vulgar – why should one put up with it? What was the point of living in it, every moment

[250] Erich Fromm, *Escape from Freedom* (New York: Holt Paperbacks, 1994), 140.

betraying itself and each of its citizens?" The narrator makes clear that a pivotal change has recently taken place within Sasha's civic consciousness, saying: "Up until now, Sasha was not angry, felt no malice, just did what he thought was necessary. He never though seriously about the acquisition of power, the government did not interest him, and he did not know what to make of it. […] And yet: What kind of person was he? Who was he—Sasha? Something was always lacking in his face, in his reflection."[251] This passage suggests that Sasha's feeling that he lacks an identity, a sense of self, flows from his indifference to government and power. Accordingly, in order to forge a self, Sasha must engage with the civic issues he previously ignored, which leads him to join the *SS.* In other words, his personal maturation and sense of self are linked to the mandate of taking part in the public sphere. Originally, he was not politically aware, as his family name suggests: Tishin is derived from the Russian word *tishina*, "silence"; he was Sankya the Silent One, invisible and imperceptible. Nevertheless, he wants to be noticed now.

This need for acknowledgment is rooted in vanity and pride, positioning him within a group of characters Rene Girard calls "underground individuals."[252] Analyzing the psychology of this type, he admits the initial masochism of Dostoyevsky's characters. They are unhappy and they do suffer, but this suffering is for effect, intended to force the reader to feel for them. Girard writes: "…Masochists are always fascinated artisans of their own unhappiness…. Why does he (Trusotsky) rush into his own humiliation? Because he is immensely vain and proud"[253]. This vanity and pride are intangibly present in many of Dostoyevsky's characters, and they have migrated into Prilepin's text as well.

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[251] Prilepin, *Sankya*, 110.
[252] Rene Girard, *Resurrection from the Underground: Feodor Dostoyevsky* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2012).
[253] Girard, *Resurrection*, 15.

Girard's perspective helps explain not only Dostoyevsky's underground/superfluous people, but also illuminate Prilepin's characters. For instance, Girard points out that, "Underground pride…is banal pride…All underground individuals believe they are more 'unique' to the extent that they are… alike. The masochist always ends up encountering a sadist and the sadist a masochist."[254] In other words, the master/slave dialectic is the ground-zero for understanding the behavioral dynamic of these characters, not limited to their love life but characteristic of their essence as a whole, which recognizes only top/bottom relationships. The one important nuance is that they are not hungry for power as a means to an end; they are longing for recognition and acceptance and, when denied, elicit empathy and compassion from the reader. Also, the longing for recognition may be a form of status-seeking, and thus a form of desire for social power.

As Lyudmila Parts has shown, the feeling of resentment was a major motivation for the development of Russian nationalism in both the 19th and 20th centuries[255]. One might reasonably claim that such psycho-social dynamics continue to motivate contemporary nationalisms as well. It is possible to specify even further that it is a resentment directed toward an essentially mythologized concept of the West that unites many Russian writers in general. Thus, a through-line may be traced from Dostoevsky to Prilepin. Parts writes: "*Ressentiment* and existential envy are not limited to an expressed antipathy toward an offending object; these feelings can also bring about a system of values that can relieve the sense of cultural inferiority. In the case of Russia, such feelings have given rise to a national model based upon the self-perception of Russia as standing apart from the West, occupying a superior position."[256]

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[254] Girard, *Resurrection*, 21.
[255] Parts, *In Search of*, 23.
[256] Parts, *In Search of*, 22.

The feeling of resentment emerges from a sense of insulted dignity, and typically provokes a reaction in which the insulted party seeks to establish his superiority on moral or spiritual grounds. Gogol's and Dostoevsky's approaches to depicting the provinces found their material embodiments in the 19th century. Parts writes, "…This is exactly the kind of sentiment (patriotic – TD) that leads to *ressentiment* and to attempts to reconsider the hierarchies: since Russia cannot compete with Europe in the European categories of advancement, modernization, or social and cultural development, the qualities of religiosity, spirituality, and the sense of a historical mission…move to the forefront, presenting themselves as unconditionally more important."[257] In this regard, Dostoevsky is especially important for Prilepin's concept of Russia, its spirituality, potential, and unrecognized (by the West) role in the global scheme of things. Through much of the 20th century, the USSR could justifiably be considered an international superpower occupying a privileged position (at least as imagined in the post-Soviet mythologeme actively developed by Prilepin). The loss of the superpower status leads, then, to the feeling of national loss and inferiority, becoming the glue that holds the conceptual workings of nostalgia and dignity together. Wounded dignity (or really, the wounded ego) often sparks resentment, and resentment may lead to nostalgia.

Prilepin's *Sankya* is plainly influenced by the Russian classics in general and Dostoevsky in particular. *Sankya* could be easily called "a novel of warning," a cautionary tale (роман-предупреждение),[258] as literary critics have dubbed Dostoevsky's *Demons* (1872).[259] *Sankya* openly adopts its novelistic structure from the latter. In addition to inserting some direct quotes, Prilepin borrows the general frame of the novel—i.e., a network-like radical political

[257] Parts, *In Search of*, 23.
[258]Zakhar Prilepin, an official Website, http://zaharprilepin.ru/ru/columnistika/limonka/nichtozhnoe-goloslovie.html
[259] Lyudmila Saraskina, *Roman-preduprezhdenie* (Moskva: Sovetskii pisatel', 1990).

organization. Nevertheless, the mood and tone of *Sankya* are closer to Dostoyevsky's early work, with a strong influence of the superfluous underground. *Sankya* is populated by young people desperately searching for belonging and recognition.

Prilepin speaks on behalf of the outsiders who feel uncomfortable in the new post-Soviet circumstances. He depicts the resentment of those who cannot carve a niche for themselves in a new post-Soviet world. His characters long for order, which is to say hierarchy and political authority, and for their own special place within this order. That is why they are happy to join a semi-totalitarian political organization, where they are awarded a degree acknowledgement and a sense of purpose.

The novel depicts young people who have lost their country (in which they, it bears repeating, never lived) and received nothing in return. They feel cheated and are therefore eager to exact their revenge, driven by a toxic affective mix of self-pity, envy, bitterness, and misguided fervor. Throughout the novel, the youth act even though they are absolutely certain that they will fail: "Sasha, we don't stand a chance," he said. "But what does it matter?[260, 261] This answer comes as no surprise, for the one thing they perceive with any clarity is the senselessness and ruthlessness of their actions. This may be simply because they were educated by the heroic, exemplary deaths of the young people dedicated to the revolutionary cause. Children's deaths as an educational tool were, after all, a staple of the schooling system,[262] and to die in the name of revolution was the highest conceivable honor. In this regard, "honor" may not

260 Prilepin, *Sankya*, 291.
[261] It refers to Pushkin's famous phrase from "The Captain's Daughter" (1836): "Не дай вам бог увидеть русский бунт, бессмысленный и беспощадный" / "God save us from seeing a Russian revolt, senseless and merciless." In general, Prilepin's novel is full of references to the Russian classical literature and folklore, including, first of all, Dostoyevsky. It seems that the author wanted to create a great epic. References to classical works support his ideas on a larger cultural scale.
[262] Tetyana Dzyadevych, "Child's Death as a Tool: Pioneer-Heroes in the Soviet Education System," in *Dystopia* (Vol. 1, no 1-2, 2012): 316 - 323.

be as vapid a word as one initially, and cynically, suspects. At the end of the day, their actions were motivated by nothing short of wounded dignity. This internal feeling of dignity is something that Prilepin desperately wants his characters to possess, since these young people want to live in a country of which they could be proud (and that is why they are longing for an imaginary USSR, whose citizens allegedly took pride in the most trifling national achievements).

Yet the State of Russia, which embodies in the novel the worst qualities imaginable, causes no small amount of ambivalence. They start their useless rebellion not against the country they love; nor does it target the people, for whom they very often feel prodigious compassion; nor even against the representatives of different ethnic groups, with whom they can co-exist and share a common language (provided this language is Russian, of course), just like their parents and grandparents used to in the USSR. Their senseless riot erupts against the morally reprehensible system that has cruelly wounded their dignity.[263]

Svetlana Boym writes about Dostoyevsky's terrorists: "The display of corrupted sacrifice demanded by Russian terrorists does not result in a deliberation on the tragic ambivalence involving the human condition. In the end the writer opts out of the predicament altogether, promising to repair the gaps of estrangement with the creation of a new myth, not that of the fair prince but of a pure-hearted peasant who can become a new redeemer of people."[264] This myth can be found in *Sankya*, too, as the protagonist sets out to save his dreamed-up Russia.[265] The boys and girls in Prilepin's novel are not unlike Dostoevsky's ideal type of "pure-hearted

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[263] Recent studies of terrorism show close connections between emotions and terrorism. See: James M. Jasper and Francesca Polletta (ed.), *Passionate Politics, Emotions and Social Movements* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001); Jeff Goodwin, James M. Jasper (ed), *Rethinking Social Movements: Structure, Meanings, and Emotion* (People, Passions, and Power) (Ithaca: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2003); David Wright-Neville and Debra Smith, "Political Rage: Terrorism and the Politics of Emotion," in: *Global Change, Peace & Security* (Vol. 21, #1, February 2009): 85 – 98.

[264] Svetlana Boym, "Liberation with a Birch Rod and the Banality of Terrorism," in *Another Freedom: the Alternative History of an Idea* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2010): 103 – 152.

[265] Prilepin, *Sankya*, 185.

peasant." Uneducated and prone to alcoholism, they often do not have enough money for food and clothing. They are longing for the past because they do not see anything worth living for in the present and have no hope for the future. They are obsessed with the ideas of Russia—the Great Russia—but in fact, what they want to feel is their own personal significance.

This correlation recalls Hannah Arendt's definition of dignity as an essential part of one's subjectivity realized in the public domain. Scholar John Macready points to the fact that Arendt's socially circumscribed concept of dignity, rooted in the Western ontological tradition, is always conditional. According to him, "Conditional dignity names the state of human dignity in its dependence on political action"[266]. In this definition, dignity results from the condition of political participation and must therefore be realized in the public sphere. In other words, political subjectivity can be fully realized as long as the conditions for experiencing dignity are realized, too. Philosopher Giorgio Agamben amplifies this conclusion when he foregrounds that, "…the Latin term *dignitas* indicates the rank and authority that inhere in public duties as well as…those duties themselves" [267].

Unlike Zhadan-narrator in *Anarchy in the UKR* who resigns from the public sphere with a festering wound to his dignity, Sasha tries to restore his *dignitas* through the Union of Creators. The narrator reports that, "Sasha suddenly realized that the defining quality of [fellow activist] Negative's personality was the sense of dignity. And one more important thing – at some point in time the word motherland entered their mutual code of basic, irreducible brotherly understanding. And that determined everything. Nega[tive] did not stand out in this respect – all

[266] John Douglas Macready, "Hannah Arendt and the Political Meaning of Human Dignity" in *Journal of Social Philosophy*. (Vol. 47 No. 4, Winter 2016), 399.
[267] Giorgio Agamben, *Remnants of Auschwitz. The Witness and the Archive*, (New York: Zone books, 1999), 66.

[members] were like that, and whether they were fourteen, seventeen, or nineteen years old, they all possessed a sense of surprisingly well-defined and unaffected dignity". [268]

This shared feeling of dignity is predicated on action, rather than ideology. Sasha's conversations with two non-members, a liberal professor named Bezletov and an aging Jew named Lev, force him to confront his own muddled thinking on the central questions of nationhood and nationality. While the Creators Union counts among its members representatives of various ethnic, racial, and religious groups ("There were slant-eyed Founders, there were blacks, there were Chechens, Jews" [269]), Sasha himself is eager to recuperate a sense of Russianness. He criticizes the intellectual Bezletov's proposition that Russianness is spiritual substance, telling him, "You've sacrificed my country to your disillusionment…For you, Russia has no ethnic purpose, let alone a territorial one…"[270].

Sasha thus expresses obliquely his belief in the ethnic nation-state. In a later conversation, he directly asserts this belief when he argues that, "[…] what matters is blood and nothing else. One doesn't come to an understanding of what is happening in Russia through knowledge or intellectual sophistry, with which you can mess up anything, any question, but through a sense of commitment to your blood, which springs from deep within you, probably from childhood, and then you have to live with it, because you can't rid yourself of it"[271].

Sasha's commitment to blood and soil recalls the Nazi program of ethnic statehood, which likewise resonates with the program of the Russian National Bolshevik party, whose strong nationalistic bias is well-documented. Prilepin himself was a member of this party, which is outlawed in Russia today, and imbues in his main character a sense of national pride, which is

[268] Prilepin, *Sakya*, 222.
[269] Ibid, 145.
[270] Ibid, 138.
[271] Ibid, 181 – 182.

separate from political ideology. Sasha insists, “I am Russian. That's enough. I don’t need any idea”[272]. He further argues that the nation itself does not need ideas because, “[…] all ideology is long gone. In our time, the new ideologies are…instincts! Actions! The handing down of intellectual ideas is outdated, has disappeared forever”[273].

The actions Sasha and the Creators perform are local, violent, and destructive. In addition to senseless rampages through the streets and the assassination of a public official in Riga, Sasha and his comrades decide to incite an armed rebellion. He announces that, “Today in Russia there will be a revolution. This morning, our brothers across the country will wreak righteous havoc in their cities. And we will do it here. That’s it—let’s get to work”[274]. One of the most influential philosophers of our time Slavoj Zizek distinguishes between subjective and objective violence[275]. According to him, subjective violence is the direct result of the objective kind inflicted over the centuries. He claims that “objective violence is precisely the violence inherent to this “normal” state of things. Objective violence is invisible since it sustains the very zero-level standard against which we perceive something as subjectively violent. Systemic violence is thus something like the notorious “dark matter” of physics, the counterpart to an all-too-visible subjective violence”[276]. Sasha Tishin and his comrades-in-arms rebel against this systematic objective violence they have experienced. Evidently, they do not see that this violence was inherited from the previous regime and is by no means a recent invention.

With the goal of destruction they see as perfectly justifiable, the Creators arm themselves and invade a local administrative building. Due to some miscommunication amongst the

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[272] Ibid, 69.
[273] Ibid., 180.
[274] Ibid., 314.
[275] Slavoj Zizek, *Violence. Six Sideways Reflections* (New York: Picador, 2008).
[276] Zizek, *Violence. Six Sideways Reflections*, 14.

Creators, it becomes clear to Sasha that their "revolution" is ill-fated and, "Two competing but strangely compatible ideas occupied him: that soon, any minute any second, everything would end – and that nothing would end. It would continue going on, just like this"[277]. Over the course of the novel, Sasha the Silent One transforms into a political and paramilitary leader, recalling his historical namesake Aleksandr Nevsky (Sasha is short for Aleksandr), who saved medieval Russia from the evil West, according to contemporary Russian propaganda[278].

With his newly developed sense of agency in place, Alexander the Rebel goes on a rampage under a red-and-black banner, which inevitably recalls for the reader the Nazi flag[279]. Sasha sacrifices his life for the so-called cause, albeit one that was doomed from the beginning because it lacked a constructive ideological program.

As a political subject, Sasha evolves from apathy to desperation. He and the Creators are deeply frustrated; they wish to express themselves as political agents, but can do so only by attempting to destroy the current system of power. For them, anarchy is the sole fitting instrument of gaining agency. In the absence of any long-term plans, they just want to destroy the system which has systematically neglected them.

For Sankya, everything will be over soon, and he is well aware of that. Seeing no hope for any meaningful change in Russia, he understands that his actions, beautiful as they might be in their doomed pathos, are ultimately in vain. Throughout the novel, the previously silent and invisible people raise their voices and speak out loud for their own free agency, which, alas, will not succeed in bringing about a new Russia. Yet their longing for public recognition will remain in those who come after them and likewise do not want to go unnoticed. Prilepin wrote his novel

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[277] Prilepin, *Sankya*, 339.
[278] See: *Prominent Russians: Aleksandr Nevsky*, (Russia Today: Russapedia), https://russiapedia.rt.com/prominent-russians/history-and-mythology/aleksandr-nevsky/
[279] Prilepin, *Sankya*, 329.

in 2006, and the *zeitgeist* of that era is all-pervasive in the text. As the prominent opposition leader Alexei Navalny wrote in his foreword to the English translation, "If you want to feel the real raw nerve of modern Russian life, what you need isn't *Anna Karenina* – what you need is *Sankya.*"[280] Six months after Navalny wrote those words (in September 2013), the Crimean annexation was set in motion, followed by skirmishes in the Ukrainian Southeast. Many Russians, including Prilepin himself, supported Russia's invasion into Ukraine, in an attempt to restore their own dignity and that of their omnipotent state. Motivated by a desire to be included and recognized, seeking validation and acknowledgment, these Russian nationalists unfortunately received no such reward, erased in passing by Vladimir Putin's infamous "They are not there."

I would like to conclude by reiterating that the novels depict two distinct portraits of a "political subject in the making" during the rocky post-Soviet transitional period. Both novels show frustrated young men living in a chaotic world, where the old order lies in ruins but the new one, still in its early stages, appears hostile. The characters' responses to this situation of alienation and indignity, however, differ.

Zhadan-narrator's sense of political agency declines over the course of the novel as he retreats into his private self, substituting the pleasures of personal freedom—symbolized by his love of Western music—for the satisfaction of civic participation. He chooses to ignore the institutions because they ignore him, it is his natural reaction on the post-Orange revolution stagnation in society and revenge of Viktor Yanukovych's forces. While staying apolitical, Zhadan-narrator finds a sense of *conditional* dignity through interaction with others on a

[280] Alexey Navalny, "Foreword" in *Sankya* (New York: Dzanc Books, 2014), VI.

personal level. He chooses to live in a conceptual state of anarchy through his refusal to recognize municipal or federal authority, or other systems of control for that matter.

In contrast to Zhadan, Prilepin details the process of an active political subject's emergence. His character develops from an apolitical, frustrated teenager to the leader of a violent rebellion under the tellingly red-and-black flags. His dignity is wounded so deeply that he opts for anarchic insurgence despite his clear understanding of its futility. Prilepin's novel shows the volatile scenario that becomes possible when institutions of power ignore the ordinary people who are longing to realize themselves as political agents.

CHAPTER III ANSWERS ARE ROOTED IN THE PAST

OKSANA ZABUZHKO'S THE MUSEUM OF ABANDONED SECRETS AND LYUDMILA ULITSKAYA'S JACOB'S LADDER[281]

While the twentieth century witnessed momentous historical events the whole world over, arguably the Russian Empire and Eastern Europe faced the most painful social and political transformations of all. Such traumatic events affected virtually all families throughout the region. The twentieth century also holds truth as certain individuals amply exercised their own agency in the course of those events. Two World Wars, several revolutions, the creation of the USSR and its collapse, the Great Famine, Stalin's repressions, technogenic catastrophes, and challenges of the post-Soviet transitional period: all profoundly impacted the lives of Russian and Eastern European people. In the midst of crisis and hardship, people continued to fall in love, start families, find and lose one another, while simultaneously dealing with punishing regimes and everyday routine. In short, amidst unprecedented political turmoil people lived out their lives and transmitted their experiences of love and hatred, pain and joy, success and failure to the succeeding generation. Dramatic experiences always leave their indelible imprints on human memory, so it is only natural that writers like Oksana Zabuzhko and Lyudmila Ulitskaya should try to make sense of the present through reflection on the past and by analyzing their respective societies. The two writers examined here offer fascinating perspectives on a range of issues including history, political subjectivity, gender, and women's agency.

Both writers, for instance, grapple with the question of how post-Soviet Ukrainian and Russian societies, characterized by disjointed citizenships and weak civil societies, found

[281] The main ideas of this chapter were first presented at the AATSEEL conference in 2017. My deepest gratitude goes out to professor Colleen McQuillen for commenting on my essay. I am also thankful to the history professors Marina Mogilner and Malgorzata Fidelis for reading the conference notes through a historian's eyes and giving me thoughtful feedback.

themselves involved in the restoration of totalitarian regimes. It is telling that two post-Soviet writers like Zabuzhko and Ulitskaya both selected the genre of the family novel almost simultaneously[282] and that they both tried to elucidate the present political situation by tracing their characters' private narratives through a dramatic historical past. In this chapter I use the authors' attitudes toward the past as reconstructed and presented in the family saga genre as a way to illuminate their representations of political subjectivity.

The reading will allow us to see how political life affects family life – from one generation to another generation. Political subjectivity allows us to talk about agency, or the ability to make a decision and act independently without an order from above or relying on external support. Specifically, the analysis highlights the issue of personal/coolective responsibility – both for the political past and present. I do so by comparing and contrasting a Ukrainian with Russian author in order to better understand the the complex dynamic of political subjectivity.

The genre of the family saga in general, and the novels by Zabuzhko and Ulitskaya in particular, have afforded interested critics with a wealth of material to work with; and critics have approached the works from a variety of hermeneutic perspectives. Oksana Zabuzhko, for instance, has attracted feminist interpretations of her work since the beginning of her career. The themes of nationalism and feminism (and the relationship between the two) are evident in her work and have thus elicited a significant body of secondary literature on the topics. Her writing seems to be especially inspiring to younger researchers, and many have written about her novels

[282] From the historical perspective seven years - the time difference between two novels release is almost nothing.

as part of their MA theses and PhD dissertations.[283] Many scholars have recognized the value of Zabuzhko's work for comparative studies, and have thus set her fiction against what they believe to be its Russian, English, Jamaican, or Algerian counterparts. Mark Andryczyk has acknowledged Zabuzhko's unique contribution to the creation of a new literary character type in Ukrainian literature of the 1990s. His 2012 monograph, *The Intellectual as Hero in 1990s Ukrainian Fiction*, delves into Zabuzhko's first novel, *Field Work in Ukrainian Sex* (1996).[284] Vitaly Chernetsky discusses Zabuzhko's work in the context of post-communist cultural space of independent Ukraine. He emphasizes Zabuzhko's role in changing the cultural horizons and foregrounds the theme of sexuality in post-Soviet Ukrainian literature.[285] Natalie Paoli offers an interesting feminist-nationalist reading of Zabuzhko's work, and thoughtfully engages with *The Museum of Abandoned Secrets* to offers her insights on the literary representations of post-colonial trauma.[286]

Instead of arguing directly with existing scholarship, my aim is to offer a new interpretation of *The Museum of Abandoned Secrets* that seeks to show how Zabuzhko represents various transmutations of Ukrainian *political subjectivity* as it developed through distinct

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[283]For example, see: Inna Steshyn. *Hudozhnie vtilennya feministychnoyi ideyi v naynovishiy brytanskiy I ukrayinskiy prozi (A. Carter, O. Zabuzhko)* (Kandydat Degree Thesis, Ternopil: University Press, 2002); Oksana Lutsyshyna. Postcolonial Herstory: the Novels of Assia Djebar (Algeria) and Oksana Zabuzhko (Ukraine): a Comparative Analysis (Master's Thesis, University of South Florida, Tampa, FL, 2006); Uilleam Blacker, *Nation, Body, Home: Gender and National Identity in the Work of Oksana Zabuzhko*, in: *The Modern Language Review*, Vol. 105, No. 2 (April 2010): 487-501; Alexandra Hrycak and Maria G. Rewakowicz. *Feminism, Intellectuals and the Formation of Micro-Publics in Postcommunist Ukraine. Studies in East European Thought. Special issue Wither the Intelligentsia*, in: The End of the Moral Elite in Eastern Europe. Ed. Serguei Alex. Oushakine, (Vol. 61, #4, 2009): 309-333; Amy Elizabeth Moore. Feminism and Nationalism in the Works of Nicole Brossard and Oksana Zabuzhko (Ph.D. Dissertation. University of California, Berkeley, 2009); Oksana Faryna, 'Oksana Zabuzhko: "Hard to Be a Woman"', (*Kyiv Post*, 1 December 2011); Oleksandra Shchur (Wallo), *Post-Soviet Women Writers and the National Imaginary, 1989-2009* (Ph.D. Dissertation. University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign, 2013).
[284]Mark Andryczyk, *The Intellectual as Hero in 1990s Ukrainian Fiction*, University of Toronto Press, 2012.
[285] Vitaly Chernetsky, *Mapping Postcommunist Cultures: Russia and Ukraine in the Context of Globalization*, (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2007).
[286] Natalie Paoli, 'Let My People Go': Post-Colonial Trauma in Oksana Zabuzhko's *The Museum of Abandoned Secrets*, in: Dobrota Gocherova, Robert Gafrik (Ed), *Postcolonial Europe? Essays on Post-Communist Literatures and Cultures* (Leiden-Boston: Brill Rodopi, 2015): 161 – 172.

historical periods of crisis (i.e. WWII, Stagnation, and post-Soviet transitions). A related, secondary aim, is to examine Zabuzhko's attitudes toward women's agency with particular reference to the formation of "Ukrainianhood."

Despite being the author of fifteen major works, recipient of several prestigious literary awards, and one of the bestselling Russian writers,[287] Ludmila Ulitskaya remains an under-appreciated, and hence a somewhat under-studied writer within Western literary studies. To date, in Northern American academia the most comprehensive study of her work is the 2015 monograph, *Ludmila Ulitskaya and the Art of Tolerance*, by Elizabeth A. Skomp and Benjamin M. Sutcliffe.[288] The authors mostly tackle the ethical issues raised both by Ulitskaya's literary fiction and her appearances as a public intellectual in contemporary post-Soviet Russia. Perceiving the theme of tolerance in Ulitskaya's writing about contemporary Russia, Skomp and Sutcliffe trace it through the concepts of the body, kinship, and history. Ulitskaya's novel, *Jacob's Ladder*, appeared after their monograph, and so this major work is not addressed. Prior to *The Art of Tolerance*, Sutcliffe included a chapter on Ulitskaya's writing in his monograph on Russian women writers. The chapter focuses on Ulitskaya's significant talent for finding value in everyday routine and compares her works to Svetlana Vasilenko's.[289] Although incomplete, this literature is relevant to the topic here, and has been helpful in formulating my ideas.

I have found Tunde Shabo's work to be especially helpful in understanding Ulitskaya's approach to history and political subjectivity in post-Soviet Russian society. Her work helps to illuminate Ulitskaya's style as well as what one may call her "epistemological" approach to

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[287] See: Lyudmila Ulitskaya, Website: http://www.russianwriting.com/ludmilaulitskaya.htm; http://readrussia.org/writers/writer/ludmila-ulitskaya

[288] Elizabeth A. Skomp, Benjamin M. Sutcliffe, *Ludmila Ulitskaya and the Art of Tolerance*, (Madison: The University Wisconsin Press, 2015).

[289] Benjamin M. Sutcliffe, *The Artistry of Everyday Life: Liudmila Ulitskaya, Svetlana Vasilenko, and Post-Soviet Women's Anthologies, in: The Prose of Life: Russian Women Writers from Khrushchev to Putin*, (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2009): 99 – 129.

memory and history. She has written insightfully about historicism and realism in the novels. She points out Ulitskaya's spiritual affinity to nineteenth century Russian realism in general, and to Leo Tolstoy's work in particular.[290] In her article "Historicism and Realism in the Works of Lyudmila Ulitskaya" (2012), Shabo claims that Ulitskaya's realistic style, her description-rich narrative technique, and careful attention to historically-accurate details connects Ulitskaya to the tradition of a big realistic novel modelled after Leo Tolstoy rather than contemporary, postmodernist prose.[291] I do agree with her about the importance of these elements for understanding Ulitskaya's work. Nevertheless, it seems unnecessary and unwise to draw such a sharp distinction between the realistic novel of the nineteenth century and postmodernist writing. Her form is basically realistic, but she doesn't follow the form slavishly; she shows a freedom to employ a variety of narrative or rhetorical techniques to engage the reader.

It is probably more accurate to say simply Ulitskaya was guided by examples of the classic realistic novels. I agree with Shabo about the strong influence of Leo Tolstoy on Ulitskaya, especially when it comes to the family saga genre, but Ulitskaya is not as didactic as Tolstoy in raising difficult moral dilemmas. Unlike Tolstoy, for example, Ulitskaya never resorts to moralizing or preaching.[292]

One may also doubt Szabo's assertions about the protagonist(s) in Ulitskaya's writing(s). She claims that the main character usually is a small, unimportant, weak person (маленький

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[290] See: Szabo Tünde, *Historicism and realism in the works of Lyudmila Ulitskaya*, (Slavica TerStina: The Great Story, Vol 14, 2012): 99 – 118.
[291] Ibid, 102-103.
[292]Wayne C. Booth distinguishes two types of authors. The authors of first category "imply, that we readers are essentially their equals in the imaginative enterprise, because we are embarked on the same quest", the authors of second category "suggest we are either their inferiors or their superiors or that our path must be entirely different from theirs". See: Booth Wayne C., *The Company We Keep. An Ethics of Fiction,* (University of California Press, 1988), 184. In this regard, Ulitskaya defiantly belongs to the first category, in the same time as Leo Tolstoy is a writer from the second group.

человек), often a woman.[293] I would say the opposite is true. In fact, Ulitskaya's characters are strong and extraordinary, especially women, as I will show in my further analysis.

A distinctive feature of Ulitskaya's writing is the accuracy with which she represents the time she writes about through the material culture. Giulia Gigante notes this in her article, "The Role of a Number of Key Places and Things of Soviet Material Culture in the Works of Lyudmila Ulitskaya," where she meticulously analyzes, through Svetlana Boym's concept of "counter-memory," the materiality of Soviet everyday life.[294] Gigante says: "Retracing a historical period she lived through and trying to recreate and bring back to life the spirit of that time, the narrative eye of the writer cannot but fall upon a whole series of places and things that constitute the realia of that age, playing roles that go beyond the function of mere presence."[295] It is precisely the accuracy of her references to historic places, artefacts, and documents of all kinds that allows Ulitskaya to establish trust and build rapport with her reader. In demonstrating her concern for accuracy and her attention to detail she is able to establish an omniscient "reliable narrator" who is knowledgeable about the historical subject matter. I contend that a deep concern for veracity is fundamental to Ulitskaya's literary work. It is possible to observe this quality developing throughout her writings, and it is especially evident in *Jacob's Ladder*.

Political subjectivity as defined in my Introduction (and as I use the term here) implies some measure of freedom. It implies some capacity—however limited and contingent—for free intentional action. At the very least, belief in such free action is what makes social protest and change possible; it is what motivates political action. For instance, intentional acts of resistance

[293] Szabo, 103.
[294] Gigante Giulia, The Role of a Number of Key Places and Things of Soviet Material Culture in the Works of Lyudmila Ulitskaya, in: Graham G. Roberts (ed.), Material Culture in Russia and the USSR: Things, Values, Identities (London – New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2017): 229-240.
[295]Ibid., 230.

or revolution performed by individuals, or coordinated social acts of groups, associations, organizations, or families, are the agents of socio-political change. Likewise, in the field of cultural production—and so in the field of literary production-- this concept of political subjectivity allows for some indeterminacy, some opening, some existential space for the conscious intentionality in authors and readers. In this regard, title of Zabuzhko's novel, *The Museum of Abandoned Secrets,* likewise implies intentional consciousness in selection of represented materials, just as in the cultural institution of *a museum* where selection is necessary. From the long twentieth century, Zabuzhko and Ulitskaya intentionally chose pivotal events, the legacies of which shape and motivate their characters.

Ulitskaya's novel incorporates two main timeframes: the life and correspondence of Jacob Osetskiy and Marusia Kerns (the grandparents of the main heroine Nora) between 1905 and 1955; and the theater artist Nora's life in the late Soviet and early post-Soviet periods between 1975 and 2011. Zabuzhko's novel has a similarly complicated timeline: early 21st century, 1940s – WWII, including references to the 1930s (Holodomor), the late Soviet stagnation, the Chernobyl disaster, and the Revolution on Granite (1990s). Writing about the same time period, Ulitskaya and Zabuzhko highlight different historical aspects and see significance in different historical moments. For Russia and Ukraine, the main historical markers are different, and as such they differently impact the formation of political subjectivity in the two countries.

By choosing to begin her story in 1905 Ulitskaya wanted to show who had established Soviet power, who gave it birth, what motivated the first communists, and what were the consequences for their sincerity in the Stalinist period. He novel illustrates just how those men and women who gained political power were changed by it; she shows the impact it had on the

families and on the larger social order in which ordinary people lived out their lives. Zabuzhko focuses her narrative on the most traumatic moments in Soviet Ukrainian history which had the biggest influence on lives and in forging the collective memory of Ukrainians. However, there is some overlap, too, as they probe not only to the female characters' existence, but also women's agency construction. They show the significant role of female experience and actions within the larger traumas of the twentieth century.

Zabuzhko considers herself a Ukrainian "public intellectual." Throughout the last twenty-five years she has seen herself as speaking out on behalf of the entire country and trying to fill many gaps in postcolonial Ukrainian culture.[296] In this role, she has been repeatedly asking a fundamental question: "Why did it happen to Ukraine?" It is with this question in mind that she has written the sprawling family saga, *The Museum of Abandoned Secrets.*

Lyudmila Ulitskaya is among the more vocal social, cultural, and political commentators in contemporary Russia. Fearlessly, she has criticized and expressed her opposition to Vladimir Putin's brutal political regime. Likewise, it is worth mentioning that Ulitskaya has received attention in US literary and political institutions, who reviewed her books and broadcast her position on current political events in Russia when the country's political profile on an international scale started to change in 2014 and 2015.[297]

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[296] She wrote the first Ukrainian feminist novel *Field Work in Ukrainian Sex* (1996); a Ukrainian intellectual history through analyses of the country's most significant writers such as Ivan Franko (1992), Taras Shevchenko (1996) and Lesya Ukrainka (2007); a number of books of the essays, articles and public speeches. Vitaly Chernetsky and Mark Andryczyk have both expounded on her impact on Ukraine's intellectual and public life.

[297] Josh Billing, A Review of Daniel Stein Interpreter by Ludmila Ulitskaya, in: *The Literary Review*, Summer 2011 http://www.theliteraryreview.org/book-review/a-review-of-daniel-stein-interpreter-by-ludmila-ulitskaya; Masha Gessen, The Weight of Words, in: *The New Yorker*, October 6, 2014: https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2014/10/06/weight-words; Evelina Mendelevich, Review: 'The Big Green Tent' by Ludmila Ulitskaya, in: *Chicago Tribune*, November 19, 2015: https://www.chicagotribune.com/lifestyles/books/ct-prj-big-green-tent-ludmila-ulitskaya-20151119-story.html; Marietta Bozovic, Outside the Tent: Ludmila Ulitskaya's Latest Novel and the End of the Era, in: *Los Angeles Review of Books*, August 30, 2016: https://lareviewofbooks.org/article/outside-tent-ludmila-ulitskayas-latest-novel-end-era/#!

If Zabuzhko inscribes the Ukrainian intelligentsia in her personal program as a writer and as a citizen, Lyudmila Ulitskaya writes about the Russian intelligentsia, prioritizing what she knows first-hand and has lived through.[298] Her novel is personal insofar as it is, quite literally, based on her family archive. The story of Jakob Osetsky is the story of her grandfather, which adds a tragic note to her narrative, as if the reader is witness to an act of personal "disrobement."

The novel took Ulitskaya over a year to write. She has said that it will be her last big novel,[299] so time-consuming was this text. The novel appeared in 2015, after such dramatic events as the failure of the "white ribbons" and Bolotnaya protest, the Crimea annexation, the war in the Russian – Ukrainian borderland, the assassination of Boris Nemtsov, etc. Those events, so painful for the liberal Russian intelligentsia (and personally for Ulitskaya), furthermore became a benchmark for the Russian intelligentsia's sense of self, their sense of national identity was wounded and therefore it caused them pain.[300]

Lyudmila Ulitskaya started writing fiction only late in life. She published her first short story "Sonechka" (1992) when she was 49 years old.[301] Being from a family of Soviet intellectuals and being a member of the Soviet dissident movement, Ulitskaya writes about the issues facing the Russian intelligentsia and the consequences of totalitarian society on the human subject. In her novel *Jacob's Ladder* there are two distinct narratives full of nuance and rich in

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[298]For more see Elizabeth A. Skomp, Benjamin M. Sutcliffe, *Lyudmila Ulitskaya: the Art of Tolerance* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2015).

[299] Ulitskaya's book presentation. DeKa Media, November 13, 2015 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1hSxmtUlUks

[300] Ulitskaya did not sign the famous letter of March 13th, 2014, when 300 representatives of Russian intelligentsia supported the politics of Vladimir Putin. In many of her interviews Ulitskaya condemns current Putin's politics and her contemporaries. For example, she states: "We have different understanding of patriotism. For me it is a natural feeling of love to that place where you have been born and matured. For the regime, and majority of Russians, unfortunately it is love of the Empire", Lyudmila Ulitskaya, *Putin Ne Interesuietsia Literaturoi* , Inosmi.ru, 14.03.2018, https://inosmi.ru/social/20180314/241691352.html

[301] Before switch to the literary fiction writing Ulitskaya was a biologist worked at the field of genetics and biochemistry. More information about her at Elkost literary agency Website: http://www.elkost.com/authors/ulitskaya

meaning: the life of the main heroine Nora, a theater artist during the years 1975 – 2011 (from the best years of Brezhnev's stagnation epoch to the eve of the political protests on Bolotnaya Street); and the story of Nora's grandfather Jacob Osetsky, shared through his diary and correspondence with Maria, Nora's grandmother, between 1905 – 1955 (from the last years of the Russian empire, with their pogroms, to the eve of the revolutionary movement and the end of Stalinism). Nora has a complex family situation. She engages in a long-term and long-distance affair with a Georgian theater-director, Tengiz, while being married (the result of a youthful whim) to an autistic mathematician genius husband Vitia, who lives together with his mother, a single ordinary woman who has made a career as a union activist. Nora has a son by Vitia, Yurik, a talented musician whom Nora protects from being conscripted to the Soviet-Afghan war. Nora's parents, Henrich and Amalia, are divorced and both have new families. Jacob and Maria were born and raised in Kyiv in middle class Jewish families, became involved in the Marxist movement, and eventually moved to Moscow. Jacob started to work for the Soviet Government, was repressed basically for being loyal to the Marxist ideas, and was rejected by his family. But he maintained his love for Maria (whom he adoringly calls Marusia) throughout his life. Nora has met Jacob once in his life. Basically, Ulitskaya tells us the story of the family through the history of the twentieth century in order to reflect on how current Russian society came to be what it is now.

Oksana Zabuzhko wrote *The Museum of Abandoned Secrets* at a time after the romantic uprising of the Orange Revolution (2004-2005) when Ukraine was nearing the political stalemate of Yanukovych's era. Although the novel was published in 2009, it is obvious that an eight-hundred thirty page manuscript with such a complicated structure and wide array of historically accurate details would have been impossible to write in one year. The ethnocentric politics of the

ostensibly progressive President Victor Yushchenko (2005 - 2010) had by then failed, and the prospect of Victor Yanukovych's revenge began to threaten. Nevertheless, most historico-political topics addressed in the novel came into view during Yushchenko's presidency and were the product of his consistent cultural politics. For instance, it was Yushchenko who initiated the creation of the Holodomor Victims' Memorial in Kyiv[302] and the Ukrainian Institute of National Remembrance.[303] He also insisted on a re-assessment of the Ukrainian past and on rehabilitating people who had been consigned to oblivion in Soviet times.[304] Yushchenko and Zabuzhko had similar attitudes to the Ukrainian past and present, and they used some of the same cultural and ideological markers to advocate for a renewed Ukrainian subjectivity. On January 16, 2009 President Yushchenko awarded Oksana Zabuzhko the Order of Princess Olga for her significant personal contribution to the consolidation of Ukrainian society and for her work in helping to develop a democratic, social, and rule-of-law state.[305]

In contrast to Ulitskaya, Oksana Zabuzhko has been a person of letters her whole adult life. She is a professional philosopher. She first wrote poetry before switching to prose fiction and essays. She also wrote three studies of canonical Ukrainian writers Taras Shevchenko, Lesya Ukrainka, and Ivan Franko, each of which highlighted national issues in their work and in the reception of it.[306] Her writing is characterized, in part, by a distinctively Ukrainian nationalism. *The Museum*, like Ulitskaya's novel, contains a multi-layered narrative. The main thread is the story of an extremely successful TV journalist, Daryna Goshchynska. The story begins in the

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[302] See: Holodomor Victims Memorial http://memorialholodomor.org.ua/eng/
[303] See: Ukrainian Institute of National Memory https://uinp.gov.ua/
[304] One of his most controversial decisions in this regard was conferring the title of Hero of Ukraine on Stepan Bandera, 'Ukrainian revolutionary, politician, and the ideolog of the Ukrainian nationalist movement':http://www.encyclopediaofukraine.com/display.asp?linkpath=pages%5CB%5CA%5CBanderaStepan.htm
[305] See: President Victor Yushchenko's official webpage: https://www.president.gov.ua/documents/262009-8458
[306] More information about her work is at the Webpage: http://zabuzhko.com/en/

first years of a new millennium and ends on the eve of the Orange Revolution. There are many events or references to the Brezhnev stagnation period, to the tragic destiny of Daryna's father, and to KGB atrocities towards Ukrainians. Daryna and her deceased friend, Vlada, (an internationally recognized painter), are self-made Ukrainian women who are well aware of all the issues related to the Ukrainian past and present that they have to grapple with as they strive to make the world (Ukraine) a better place. Both women have romances with successful, rich Ukrainian men, but they keep their independence and do not count on men's money: "She [Vlada] seemed so unflappable and solid: her carrier grew like a cottonwood sap – up, up; her boyfriend shot straight from the launchpad of his shadowy business […] into elected office, and just keep going […] her Katrusia went to went to the British Council school, with the children of foreign diplomats, to the tune of ten thousand bucks in tuition per year (Vlada paid). Her life was wonderful and would only getting better – and this also gave me security, a firm foundation for the confidence I [Daryna] needed so much, as Vlada's success promised, […] that everything would be similarly wonderful in my life as well, if not today, then tomorrow for sure."[307] Vlada and Daryna are mirroring and give strength to each other. Vlada suddenly dies in an automobile accident, and the collection of her paintings disappears. Daryna tries to find them, but it is not her main investigation. She is researching the life and fight of Olena Dovhan, the young woman who served in the Ukrainian Insurgent Army and died. Daryna's life is getting extremely complicated with Vlada's death, and it seems that with Vlada's death Daryna loses her luck as well.

A second layer of the story is about the lives and struggles of Ukrainian patriots who served in the Insurgent Army. This line is mostly represented by dreams of Daryna's beloved

[307] Oksana Zabuzhko, *The Museum of Abandon Secrets*, (Las Vegas: AmazonCrossing, 2012), 63.

one, Adrian, who sees himself in his nightdreams as a soldier of the Ukrainian Insurgent Army Stodolya (who was apparently a "real" man and before WWII crashed down on Olena Dovgan). He also had a romance with a double-agent Jewish girl, Rachel, who became pregnant with his child. In some remarkable coincidence the baby boy ("Pavlo Ivanovych Boozerov") was later adopted by an NKVD officer. He then became the very KGB officer who handles the case of Daryna's parents[308]. Consequently, he now possesses files containing documentary information about Olena Dovgan that Daryna is interested in. Thus, in spite of all complications toward the end of the novel, the reader understands that all characters, main and secondary, have some relation to one other — "six degrees of separation," as it were. And, naturally, reflecting the time and place: the secret services are lurking behind all events. Zabuzhko includes a variety of elements in her novel, including light porn, but the political message of the text is obvious. The Soviets are guilty for having destroyed the personal lives and social world of Ukrainian nationals.

It is of course only natural that the twentieth century, with its many upheavals and atrocities, would be the subject of countless diverse interpretations. It is also unsurprising that the interpretations proposed served the interests of different political agendas. The relationship between the events, the interpreters, and the political is complex. The point here is that the selection done by the interpreter is a set of historically contingent elements, and that self-understanding of the present is a process of becoming conscious of historical legacies- both objective and subjective ones.

This is the guiding insight of the new historicist theory. As Jameson puts it: "Always historicize! ...the historicizing operation can follow two distinct paths, which only ultimately

[308] See: Zabuzhko, *The Museum of Abandon Secrets*, 211.

meet in the same place: the path of the object and the path of the subject, the historical origins of the things themselves and the more intangible historicity of the concept and categories by which we attempt to understand those things."[309] Here Jameson addresses the epistemological challenges of historiography, in particular the historian's inescapable subjectivity that structures her perception and treatment of the past. For instance, Zabuzhko provided her readers with a list of sources for her evidence, thus backing her political agenda[310] with historical facts. On her list are primary sources like war memoirs, secondary literature on the resistance movement in the USSR, and works of philosophy and political science devoted to power dynamics, language issues, and populism.[311]

For Zabuzhko, it is important to prove that her novel is not purely fiction, but a response to political reality. For more than sixty years the facts about the Ukrainian Insurgent Army (UIA) were not commonly known (and were not included in state school curriculum), and she thus wanted to inform her reader about this history. Honesty with one's self and the reader is Zabuzhko's personal credo as a writer. She declares: "The writer's First Commandment should be: Thou shalt not lie. This may not be as easy to accomplish as it sounds, however, as truthful adherence to this commandment turns our job into a risky and dangerous one, similar to that of a diver or of a mountain-climber."[312] What does a writer really risk in this commitment to truth-telling? Think for example of her characters, Boozerov and Daryna, who must confront the truths of his parentage, adoption, and the truth of violent political murders affecting family.

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[309] Fredric Jameson, *The Political Unconscious. Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1981), 9.
[310]I see political agenda of Zabuzhko's novel is to clear the name of the Ukrainian Insurgent Army from the shame of Nazism; to tell about the cruelty of NKVD and KGB, and crimes what the Soviet regime did to Ukraine through the whole Soviet period.
[311]Zabuzhko, *The Museum of Abandon Secrets*, 713-714.
[312] Oksana Zabuzhko, http://zabuzhko.com/en/index.html

Zabuzhko's purpose is evident also in the chapters describing "Adrian's Dreams."[313] On one hand, she tries to show the UIA soldiers as noble knights, aristocrats of spirit, and the national elite,[314] and on the other, she details the militants' everyday routine. Chronology plays an important role here and should be noted. The subchapter, "Black Woods, May 1947"[315] emphasizes that in May 1945, despite the fact that official capitulation of Hitler's Reich, the war was not yet complete; hostilities in Western Ukraine remained ongoing as the UIA soldiers had not surrendered to the Soviet NKVD agents. Could Zabuzhko have chosen a different year for her story? In literary fiction everything is possible, certainly; but for the author it is apparent that she wants to stress that the war was ongoing, even as the rest of the world was busy rebuilding a peaceful life.[316]

In a similar fashion, Lyudmila Ulitskaya also inserts documents into her novel. For instance, the reader encounters Jacob's diary and memoir, along with correspondence between Jacob and Marusia.[317] She employs this technique for a larger political purpose. She introduces her audience to the "true" Bolsheviks, who evince great intelligence, impressive levels of education, thirst for knowledge, as well as an abiding devotion to Marxist ideas. From Jacob's example, the reader learns that this first generation of Bolsheviks was not from the lumpen proletariat desperately struggling to improve their life-conditions. Jacob came from a wealthy

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[313] See: Zabuzhko, *The Museum of Abandon Secrets,* 99 – 113; 135 – 180; 384 – 484.
[314] For example, the reader is informed that Olena Dovgan studied physics for three years at the University of Zurich. Zabuzhko, *The Museum of Abandon Secrets,* 201. All other UIA soldiers were students of or graduated from prestigious institutions of higher learning.
[315] Zabuzhko, *The Museum of Abandon Secrets*, 135 - 180
[316] A similar situation could be observed in the Baltic republics (recently re-united with the USSR) in the case of the *Forest Brothers*. See: Juozas Luksa, *Forest Brothers: The Account of an Anti-Soviet Lithuanian Freedom Fighter, 1944-1948*, (Central European University Press, 2009). Georgian Elizabeth, *A Brief History of The Forest Brothers* (Cultural Trip, 11 May 2017), https://theculturetrip.com/europe/lithuania/articles/a-brief-history-of-the-forest-brothers/ These webpages provide accessible information about Forest Brothers for the general public: True Lithuania, http://www.truelithuania.com/tag/forest-brothers,
[317]Jacob Osetsky was the main heroine's (Nora) grandfather. She has never known him, saw once in her life and finally she has received his epistolary and discovered the whole universe of incredibly intellectual, thoughtful gifted man with a big heart.

bourgeois family, studied at the economic college for his career. He wanted to improve society, he wanted to make the world better for everybody. His whole life he was improving himself (he read voraciously in different areas, learned music and foreign languages), and is depicted as sincerely believing in "progress."

Young Jacob writes in his diary, "Jan 10th. I'm reading again. I'm craving it. I've emerged from my sickness starved for reading. Currently reading some biology. Have read everything written by Darwin... (Snyder. *Das Weltbild Der Modernen Naturwissenschaft*. Troels-Lund. *Himmelsbild und Weltanschauung im Wandel der Zeiten*.) Thoughts on Darwinism: the theory of evolution of organic life seems to me the main axis from which different offshoots ramify. … The most interesting question is finding man's place in this table. Is he a steppingstone toward something else (for example, Nietzsche's Übermensch), or the final stage of some offshoot, which explains his relatively young age as an organic species?"[318]. The author here explicitly underscores the importance of self-education through reading as formative for the first generation of Bolsheviks.

In addition to inserting Jacob's biographical documents in the text, Ulitskaya's passion to document the past also led her to insert documentary materials from the KGB archive. She also candidly discloses some documents she found in her own grandfather's file. There is, for example, a note from her father, who was ready to renounce officially his own father: "In case my father turns out to be the enemy of the people, I won't hesitate to renounce him, because the Party and Soviet power, who have brought me up, are of the utmost importance to me. 5.1.1949."[319] In this way, Ulitskaya intertwines elements of her autobiography with her narrative

[318]Lyudmila Ulitskaya, *Jacob's Ladder,* Moskva: Akt 2015), 24. Kudos to Anton Svynarenko for translation from Russian.
[319] Ulitskaya, *Jacob's Ladder*, 326.

of national history. This move is rhetorically interesting as it adds more drama to the story and demonstrates the dysfunctions of the state through the dysfunctions of the family as a social unit[320]. Therefore, if the author's political intent was to condemn the Soviet regime, the most suitable way to do so was to tell the truth about it, no matter how painful (personally and for her family) it proved to be. As if to confirm her sincerity to the reader, Ulitskaya concludes the novel with a disclaimer: "This story includes fragments of letters from my family archive and excerpts from Yakov Ulitskiy's case (KGB Archive № 2160)."[321]

Despite significant difference between the two genres, writing a complex fictional historical novel is remarkably like historiography. The historian must select documentary evidence, arrange and interpret it, and write up results in some more-or-less comprehensive narrative. It is impossible to pack all significant events into one literary text. As philosopher of history R.G. Collingwood has observed, historical narration requires the selection of material and this selection is inevitably subjective and incomplete. No historian may relate the total history of everything. Some "idea of history" is indispensable to the writing of a historical narrative.[322] According to Collingwood, in conducting historical inquiry and in communicating her results, the historian (and I would contend a historical-informed novelist as considered here) aims to increase man's *[sic]* self-knowledge: "…where knowing himself means knowing not his personal peculiarities, the things that distinguish him from other men, but his nature as man."[323] This form of human self-knowledge, however, should not be understood abstractly as if human nature were some ideal Platonic form. Rather, insight into human nature of the sort relevant here means knowledge of particular human communities, concrete social groups, countries, and

[320] Ulitskaya, *Jacob's Ladder*, 326.
[321] Ibid, 329.
[322]Robin George Collingwood, *The Idea of History*, Endeavour Media Ltd, 2018.
[323] Ibid, 10.

states. The point here is that novelists, as much as historians, can shape our self-knowledge, and that they do so in many similar ways.

Historian Hayden White also compares the work of a historian with the work of a novelist writing a novel. White states, "There are many histories that could pass for novel, and many novels that could pass for histories, considered in purely formal (or, I should say, formalist) terms. Viewed simply as verbal histories are indistinguishable from one another […] Both wish to provide a verbal image of reality."[324] Both, Zabuzhko and Ulitskaya, similarly, have selected out a set of historical facts, and used them (in fiction) to expand the understanding of more than their causes and effects within their plots. They have aimed, more broadly, to expand their reader's understanding of the whole historical development that leads to the present. In narrating their vision of the past they aim to persuade contemporary readers to adopt certain views of contemporary political reality.

As one reflects on the necessity of the selection process in novelistic composition, it may be useful to note in passing also Wolfgang Iser's claim that, "Every literary text inevitably contains a selection from a variety of social, historical, cultural, and literary systems that exist as referential fields outside the text. This selection is itself a stepping beyond the boundaries, in that the elements selected are lifted out of the systems in which they fulfill their specific function."[325] Meaningfully made selections allow the reader to imagine the depicted time, understand the determinations of characters' behavior, and rationalize their decisions.

Both Ulitskaya and Zabuzhko exemplify this general compositional process. Among the elements selected out are different women's experiences. Both authors trace the experience of

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[324] Hayden White, *The Fiction of Factual Representation,* in: Tropics *of Discourse. Essays in Cultural Criticism*, (Baltimore and London: The John Hopkins University Press, 1985): 121-122.
[325] Wolfgang Iser, *The Fictive and the Imaginary. Charting Literary Anthropology*, (Baltimore and London: The John Hopkins University Press, 1993): 4 – 5.

female experience through their characters—and through them provide perspective on the often traumatic experiences of revolutions, wars, Stalinism, stagnation, perestroika, and post-Soviet transitions. Here, we may think of experience along with de Lauretis as "a complex of habits resulting from the semiotic interaction of 'outer world' and 'inner world', the continuous engagement of a self, as a subject, in social reality."[326]

The eponymous *museum* of Zabuzhko's novel points not only to a girl's game of hiding treasures in the sand, but also to the national history of Ukraine in the 20th century. It is a history largely hidden from foreign audiences, bustling with the UIA troops, an underground Greek-Catholic Church, and dissident life in the underground. It is a largely unknown history in which women's work and experience in these various domains are under-represented. The so-called Great Patriotic War, crucial as it is to the Soviet imaginary, does not appear in her novel at all. Instead, the Second World War, rife with most dramatic and problematic episodes, is inseparable here from the Soviet repressive machine. Soviet power, according to Zabuzhko, is like a stranger barging into the house unwelcomed. References to the Ukrainian Famine *Holodomor* (an event Stalin when to great lengths to obscure and conceal) are also important to the author, even though chronologically it does not fit the main plot[327]and the logic of the novel. Once again, the famine is treated not as the result of Ukraine's own politics and policies, but as an act of deliberate aggression against the nation. The reader also learns about the Chernobyl disaster (also covered-up and another example of outside interference rather than internal strife) in her massive

[326] Teresa de Lauretis, *Alice Doesn't: Feminism, Semiotics, Cinema* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984), 184

[327] Zabuzhko addressesthe Great Famine 1932 – 1933, which did not fit the main timeframe of her novel. One of the best recently published books on this topic is Appelbaum Anne, *Red Famine: Stalin's War on Ukraine*, (New York: Doubleday, 2017).

account of Ukrainian society as an object, rather than subject, of history, despite its many active and prominent human subjects.

Zabuzhko describes the formation of a post-Soviet collective subjectivity as it pertains to the Ukrainian national uprising in the late 1980s and early 1990s. For her, as well as for her characters, it was a pivotal moment of self-education. One of the most crucial storylines in the novel concerns Zabuzhko's own generation, i.e., those people who chose to live in an independent Ukraine, who took responsibility to build a new Ukraine, and who may be said to have largely failed in the effort. According to the novel, the moral decline of society occurred because of Ukrainian people's historical inability to govern independently; it resulted from an unwillingness to be accountable for their own governance. Daryna has a conversation with Vadym (Vlada's partner, who is a politician and a new Ukrainian businessmen): "So when it comes to serious money, Daryna, only Russia is prepared to invest in us. That's reality." […] "The foreign experts you mentioned – those are Russians?" "What does that matter?"[328]. Here we see not only Russians were investing heavily in Ukraine, but also that a pragmatic Ukrainian elite accepted the fact with little obhection, which for Daryna (and for Zabuzhko as an author) was problematic. There are some reasons for such sad consequences.[329] Consequently, various survival strategies were developed, not all of them necessarily principled and moral.

The author depicts the main historical events that have formed Ukraine's collective memory of the 20th century in the early twenty-first century. *The Museum* is, first and foremost,

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[328] Zabuzhko, *The Museum of Abandon Secrets*, 516.

[329] Timothy Snyder states a lack of agency of the Ukrainians who were stuck between two superpowers, Hitler and Stalin. See: Snyder Timothy, *Bloodlands: Europe Between Hitler and Stalin*, (New York: Basic Books, 2012). In fairness, it should be noted that this book sparked an intense discussion on the topic and brought forth many counterarguments, such as: Grover Furr, *Blood Lies: The Evidence that Every Accusation against Joseph Stalin and the Soviet Union in Timothy Snyder's "Bloodlands Is False"* (New York: Red Star Publishers, 2014). Here I am not going to get in the depth of this discussion, because for me it is most important to highlight that Zabuzhko's position on the lack of Ukrainian agency under the external duress of Stalinism is supported by authoritative scholars.

a historical narrative. I claim that Zabuzhko intended to educate the new Ukrainian generation born after 1991. Zabuzhko left out honest and idealistic communists who had built the new Soviet country and participated in the Great Patriotic War: those people, that is, who are still thankful to the Soviet power for social protection and possibilities for self-realization. Instead of it, Zabuzhko explains why Bolsheviks succeeded, and there is nothing flattering for them in her analyses: "Communism was a mobilization of envy. Thus, your core constituency is the socially disenfranchised; that's the base you can count on. Everyone knows the best pogrom squads are made of those who'd grown up being pogromed themselves. Bolsheviks made good use of the Russian Jewry before they secured their power"[330]. Despite being anti-Semitic this statement is striking because it shows that Bolshevism, within Ukrainian historical consciousness is felt to be alien. Zabuzhko marks off Bolsheviks as though they were totally alien for Ukraine and there were no Bolsheviks among Ukrainians. As we remember, Jacob and Marusia Osetsky from Ulitskaya's novel were Jews from Kiev, who survived pogroms.

Both novels involve *investigation*. Zabuzhko's novel, for instance, contains multiple example of characters conducting various inquiries. Daryna investigates Olena Dovgan's life and the fate of Vlada's lost paintings. Adrian explores antique objects; and Pavlo Ivanovych Boozerov is looking for the truth about his biological mother. To establish contextual background, Zabuzhko also refers to investigations in Ukraine open at the time of the novel's setting (e.g., an inquest into Georgii Gongadze's death). I think all these inquiries reflect the authors' personal need to find the truth about the societies in which they live. In the Soviet period, many questions accumulated; thus, the writers feel it is time to investigate and find answers.

[330] Zabuzhko, *The Museum of Abandon Secrets*, 490.

Ulitskaya also employs an investigative device. Primarily, it is Nora's exploration of her own family history, but she also recounts scientific research undertaken by Vitia and Grisha (a good friend from the high school days) in an attempt to explain the universe; Yurik's examination of the language of sound; Tengiz's search for an expressive language specific to the theater; Jacob's quest for the meaning of life and love; Marusia's tireless soul-searching and, of course, Nora's non-stop self-probing as a lover, mother, daughter, friend[331].

The point in enumerating these multiple investigations is to show that they relate to a fundamentally larger pursuit. In fact, they ultimately aim at discovering some sort of cosmological harmony, some deeper meaning of life—or at the very least, some sense to the historical process lived through in the twentieth century. In pursuing this larger purpose, the novels point back to the tradition of 19th-century realism and the philosophical novel of ideas. Jonathan Gilmore calls attention to the nature of this search as designed to engage the reader in a process of "figuring out what is true in such representations."[332]

There is no doubt that current political events provoked these novelists to search for answers on vital historical questions, and to see this desire to know as somehow constituting the human subject itself. The relation between investigation, knowledge, power, and human subjectivity is complex (and ultimately beyond the scope of the present inquiry). Still, as the novelists do express perspectives on the topics, it is necessary to attend just briefly to the issues raised.

Michel Foucault is perhaps the most cited academic authority on these kinds of questions. His 1969 book, *The Archeology of Knowledge*, [333] contains a representative early statement of his

[331] See: Ulitskaya, *Jacob's Ladder*, 57, 59, 68-78, 86-89.
[332] Jonathan Gilmore, *The Epistemology of Fiction and the Question of Invariant Norms* (Royal Institute of Philosophy Supplements, Cambridge University Press, Volume 75, October 2014), 105.
[333] Michel Foucault, *The Archeology of Knowledge* (London: Routledge, 2002).

views. Throughout a series of historical studies, he developed his views on the power/knowledge relationships as follows: "… Knowledge can exist only where the power relations are suspended and that knowledge can develop only outside its institutions, its demands, and its interests."[334] This statement accurately describes what we see in the narrative world of Ulitskaya's novel wherein all her characters are busy searching for knowledge outside of any kind of state established institutions. Ulitskaya consistently demonstrates that all institutions established after 1917 worked against individuals and repressed them, so that whatever individual freedom did exist developed not thanks to, but in spite of institutional discourse. Marusia, for instance, who was among the first alumni of Froebel's School,[335] was lucky to receive the progressive training, which she tried to reproduce in the young Soviet country. However, she (and her accomplices) did not succeed, and very soon the educational system had itself been transformed into oppressive institution against Nora rebelled. Victor became a successful scientist contrary the system. Yuri could not find a suitable place for himself. Olga Markarian underlines that Ulitskaya's prose is based on ideas, not ideology.[336] This approach reflects her personal quest for the truth and fleshes out the specifics of political subjectivity in Ulitskaya's novel.

Zabuzhko also shows the interdependence between knowledge, inquiry, and various institutions of power. In the world of her novel, official institutions of all stripes invariably impede investigation. Daryna makes her inquiry despite the circumstances at her place of employment.[337] Boozerov (notwithstanding his position at the KGB) also experiences difficulties finding out the truth about his origins. Adrian faces obstacles to finding out the truth about his

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[334] Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish. The Birth of the Prison*, (New York: Vintage Books Edition, 1995), 27.
[335] In the Russian Empire (1872 - 1917) a three-year pedagogical college for elementary and middle school teachers. See: Bolshoi Entsyklopedicheskii slovar': https://dic.academic.ru/dic.nsf/enc3p/311622
[336] Olga Markarian, *Genetik ot Literatury I Sovetskaia Proza*, (ParaAvis, Otkrytaia Kritika, 14.01.2016), http://rara-rara.ru/menu-texts/lestnica_yakova_roman_o_proshlom
[337] When TV channel closed Daryna's project, she decided to make a documentary about Olena Dovgan on her own, as an independent journalist.

mother's death as well as the fate of a business transaction (some artifacts he was going to buy disappeared). Zabuzhko intentionally shows that people vested with power are not interested in truth, so the truth can only be achieved through personal contacts. At the same time, social capital plays an important role for the plot developing of Zabuzhko's novel. Personal connections and contacts allow the characters to discover the truth about Olena Dovgan, Vlada's paintings, mysterious connections between Pavlo Ivanovych, Stodola, and Rachel, and to connect all these storylines in one narrative. People are capable to build up the horizontal ties with each other and avoid the contacts with the oppressive power vertical.

Zabuzhko and Ulitskaya wrote epistemological novels in which women search for the truth. They do not oppose their writing to men's "ways of knowing," but instead prioritize their right to have a voice, in consonance with feminist scholar Susan Haack's statement: "How much better it would be if, instead of casting around for an epistemology that represents 'the feminist point of view', we tried, as feminists, finally, to get beyond the stereotypes and, as epistemologists, to develop a true account of knowledge, evidence, warrant, inquiry, etc. Then we might be ready to acknowledge that any half-way adequate epistemology will need to be at once quasi-logical, personal, and social."[338] Haack points to the importance of a common epistemological quest, and the need to recognize that women possesses a full and equal subjectivity. This perspective fits with Zabuzhko's novel, wherein Daryna leads her investigation and there is no gender distinctions in the work of inquiry. However, in Ulitskaya's novel men provide the scientific exploration of the universe, while women are presented as looking for existential truth. It is worth noting that Ulitskaya herself is a trained biologist very much at home in the "hard sciences" typically associated with male epistemology. So it is doubtful that

[338] Susan Haack, After My Own Heart: Dorothy L. Sayer's Feminism (*The New Criterion*, Volume 19, Number 9, May, 2001), 14.

she would want in any way to limit female knowing to some kind of intuition of existential truth while abandoning scientific learning to men.

Zabuzhko and Ulitskaya share a similar approach to knowledge and power. Both represent the knowledge-seeking as a kind of emancipatory practice. Discovery of historical truths serves a fundamentally political purpose in which knowledge provides a means of holding power to account (and perhaps, in some sense, providing a basis for a more just and equitable future society). One might think here about the analogy of various "truth commissions" that conducted inquiries to discover war crimes.

The complex narrative techniques in both novels consists of the same multiple types of narrative: first-person narrations coming from the male characters of Adrian and Jakob; second-person masculine narrations of Stodola, Adrian, and Jakob, who address their monologues to themselves; and of course third-person male narratives provided by the omniscient narrator. Obviously, the female writers Zabuzhko and Ulitskaya both fully represent the whole range of women's voices as fully equal and worthy of recognition as independent investigators.

In order to better understand the dynamics of the current political situation and its modes of political subjectivity, it is always prudent to look at several generations at once. As Paul Ricoeur, one of the more provocative thinkers on this theme, has said, "… the idea of a succession of generations finds its sociological projection in the anonymous relationship between contemporaries, predecessors, and successors."[339] The transference of social and political experience from one generation to another is especially accessible when dealing with the family saga genre. On one hand, the reader has a rare chance to take in the scope of several generations; on the other hand, the saga *per se* depicts less daily routine than significant historical events. The

[339] Paul Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1988), 109.

family saga genre in literature may be loosely compared to the *Annales School* in historiography that steps back in order to give an account of the longue durée.

The Communist Revolution of 1917 reshaped the political landscape of Europe and, in doing so, considerably altered the concepts of the family and family relations. Under the influence of Marxist theory, the 20th century was a hotbed for drastic changes in the understanding of women's agency in society, as well as the meaning and role of the family as a unit of the state.[340] Inspired by socialist ideas, Aleksandra Kollontai famously conceptualized a new liberated woman.[341] The newly-formed socialist state promised not only land to the peasants and factories to the workers, but also freedom and equality to the women.[342]According to the new policies, the state assumed a lot of responsibilities traditionally associated with women such as taking care of children, housework, and educating the new Soviet citizens: women were thus released from their domestic chores and into the building of a new socialist state.[343] It was an ideal which has never been achieved. In this regard, Ulitskaya's novel *Jacob's Ladder* does a splendid job of depicting the consciousness of Kollontai's followers as it tells the story of Marusia Kerns, the grandmother of the main heroine Nora, who belonged to the initial cohort of progressive, emancipation-advocating educators enchanted by the ideas of the Marxist version of scientific socialism, and Isadora Duncan (whose style of dance and dress on stage were tremendously emancipatory for women). The character Marusia suffered through all of Russia's national tragedies but remained steadfastly loyal to her ideas until the bitter end[344].

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[340] See: Friedrich Engels, *Origin of the Family, Private Property, and the State*, https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/download/pdf/origin_family.pdf
[341] See: Alexandra Kollontai, *"New Woman", From the New Morality and the Working Class*, https://www.marxists.org/archive/kollonta/1918/new-morality.htm
[342] See: Lapidus Gail Warshovsky, *Women in Soviet Society. Equality, Development, and Social Change* (Berkley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1978).
[343] Wendy Z. Goldman, Women, the State and Revolution. Soviet Family Policy and Social Life, 1917 – 1936, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993).
[344] Ulitskaya, *Jacob's Ladder*, 79-85.

The collapse of the USSR brought the 'woman question'[345] back to the fore as post-Soviet societies faced the real problems of finding a new way of dealing with public and private spheres, and new ways to balance the different branches of legislature. The weak state could not make the family stronger, but it became obvious that the dysfunctional state and dysfunctional family were closely interconnected. Oksana Zabuzhko, who is very sensitive to the issues of womanhood,[346] shows how post-Soviet women have dealt with the problems they inherited from Soviet times in articulating their own agency and political subjectivity.

The complex structure of the novels allowed both writers to examine different aspects of specific women's bonds, which are normally the focus of feminist literary criticism. Among them one may note the special attention paid to the representation of mother/daughter relations that are so integral to plot development. At some point, maternal feminist discourse became a sign of postmodern sentiment. One of the most celebrated theorists in the area of feminist and memory studies, Marianne Hirsch, remarks: "Only a probing scrutiny of what separates feminist discourse from maternal discourse can free feminist thinking to define some of the shapes of maternal subjectivity and to study the articulation of specifically maternal voices."[347]

This maternal subjectivity plays a prominent role in *The Museum* as well as in *Jacob's Ladder*. Both writers show how maternity transforms women's life and fills it with a new sense. Rachel desires to have a baby despite all challenges of life in the UIA underground and with a clear understanding that her chances to raise a child are miserable. Rachel chooses a father for

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[345] By "woman question" I mean a set of issues related to women's equality, the family, and the personal choices of females. Historically, the "woman question" refers to the Suffragist Movement of the 19 century. See: Edward Aveling and Eleanor Marx Aveling, *The Woman Question*, (Westminster Review, 1886), transcribed by Sally Ryan for marxist.org, 2000, https://www.marxists.org/archive/eleanor-marx/works/womanq.htm

[346] See: Oksana Faryna, *Oksana Zabuzhko: Hard to Be Woman*, (Kyivpost, 2011, December 1st), https://www.kyivpost.com/lifestyle/oksana-zabuzhko-hard-to-be-woman-118024.html

[347] Marianne Hirsch, Feminist Discourse/Maternal Discourse/ Speaking with Two Voices, in: The Mother/Daughter Plot. Narrative, Psychoanalysis, Feminism (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1989), 163.

her baby and conceives a child. Similarly to Zabuzhko's Rachel, Nora decides to fill the gap of parting with Tengiz by conceiving Yurik with Victor, and it transforms her into another person.

Although the novels I am analyzing here are not explicitly "feminist," they do give strong voices to mothers and daughters, thus articulating women's agency and subjectivity. As mentioned above, Hirsch does not focus specifically on the biological aspects of the female experience inasmuch as her intent is "to make space for differences among women from the perspective not of biology, but of experience."[348] It is especially evident in Zabuzhko's novel, when she writes about special, woman-only practices like only girls' game in hiding secrets, which relate to hiding icons during era of Stalinism. To the same category of female-only experience belongs moment when Vlada applies makeup on Daryna, or motherhood, or even spiritual motherhood (the special friendship among women of a distinguished age).

However, I would like to develop a thought about biology and experience. Special women's experience is growing out from women's physiology. A biologist by training, Ulitskaya is fully aware of women's natural determinants; furthermore, physiology constructs the female experience to such an extent that women sometimes even attempt to rebel against it: "The milk was coming again. A dark stain seeped through the fabric of her shirt. This physiological captivity—of course, Marusia[349]was the first to tell her that. A woman's biological tragedy… A poor, timid fighter for female dignity, for justice. A re-vo-luuu-tionary!"[350] As opposed to Marusia, Nora does not resist her nature; she is totally physiological and follows her natural instincts without advancing any statements on women's physiological burdens. At the same time, she is much more independent and takes full responsibility for her own life and the people in it.

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[348] Ibid, p.163
[349] Nora's grandmother, who was one of the first Russian new women.
[350] Ulitskaya, *Jacob's Ladder*, p. 11.

Her female experience irreducible to physiology, she is fully realized both in her love life (which is not the same as family life) and professional/social life.

Marusia declared women's equality and independence and remained staunchly devoted to the achievements of the Great October revolution, but at the end of the day could not adapt to life and deal with its everyday challenges. Her husband Jacob loved her until his death and provided for her the whole time they were married, even from Gulag. Marusia then remarried, choosing an apparatchik who also supported her and her son Henrich. At the same time, Marusia never gave up the Marxist rhetoric and remained a devout Bolshevik. Nora recalls: "A real fight erupted: Soviet power drove a wedge between them, putting an end to their intimacy and mutual trust… And then came the Czechoslovakian disaster…"[351]. In this regard, Nora, who was not any kind of communist or feminist, possessed much more independence. First of all, she was always free in her personal affairs and did not follow the indoctrinated conventions of her teenage years; she got involved in sexual relationships before she came of age and married while still in high school; lived separately from her husband and her son's father Viktor; and had a protracted love affair with the Georgian theater director Tengiz, on whom she depended emotionally but not financially and over the years learned to manage her emotional dependence, too.

Nora juggled the multiple roles in her life on her own and supported the people around her. She lives her own life and stands above the public: "Ever since her school years, Nora has been haughtily contemptuous of collectivism and disgusted by the fraudulent idea of "the social above the personal."[352] Nora did not notice the political changes following Perestroika because she always possessed her internal freedom: "The officially sanctioned freedom, or rather its shadow, made no impression on her. Nora hardly noticed it as she had too much of her own

[351] Ulitskaya, *Jacob's Ladder*, 11.
[352] Ulitskaya, *Jacob's Ladder*, 221.

willfulness that had since adolescence stood in for freedom."[353] Nora extricated herself from the political changes of Perestroika; she did not want to participate in any collective/mass actions. As I mentioned above, there is no doubt she was always a subject, but her subjectivity is not directed toward political changes in the country[354] and remains oblivious to the transformations that followed the collapse of the Soviet Union. Of course, Nora was not an ordinary Soviet woman. She was privileged because of her family, because of her profession, because of her friends and connections. For example, few Soviet mothers could transport their sons to the USA to save them from military conscription. Few women could keep a housemaid as Nora could. She lived in a bubble of her world and could allow herself to not interact with the world beyond her circle.

Besides the traditional romantic issues, both novels pan across the whole spectrum of women's ties, connections, and cooperation, which allowed them to navigate, and sometimes to survive, the trials and tribulations of the 20th century. Oksana Zabuzhko writes: "Dear sisterhood: Let us all love our mothers-in-law, for they are our future, they are women we will become in thirty years (otherwise, your beloved would never have noticed you). Let us love our rivals, past and present, for each one of those women has something of ours, something that we ourselves fail to notice and prize and that, for him, is sure to be most important"[355]. For Zabuzhko the complexity of different women's connections is as important as her heroine's interactions with different kinds of men and the Man—her Adrian. Zabuzhko also shows the multiplicity of women's roles and possible ties in "womanhood." The complexity of the

[353] Ulitskaya, *Jacob's Ladder*, 221.
[354]She did not fight against the political regime; she adopted her life according the political situation or was looking for her way. For example, she was afraid of possibility for her son to be drafted to the Afghan war (1979 - 1989) but she did not protest against this war, she just did everything possible to save her son and sent him to the USA where at that moment lived Vitya (son's biological father).
[355]Zabuzhko, *The Museum of Abandon Secrets*, 7.

mother/daughter dynamic can be seen in an extended internal dialog between Daryna and her mother. Another side of this mother/daughter complexity is rather symbolically indexed by Daryna and Veronika (the latter requests a mother-figure/role model and finds her in Daryna). There are also symbolic figures of expecting mothers, Rachel and Daryna herself. Besides the mother/daughter models of relationships, Zabuzhko creates a model of spiritual sisterhood in Daryna and Vlada who are both strong and talented women, endowed with potent agency and will to participate in the transformation of Ukraine into a new country.

The title of the novel signals a few different codes, but on the most superficial level it stands for a girls-only game, perhaps the first rite of passage into womanhood and sisterhood. Vlada (Daryna's best friend, a visual artist) explains to Daryna the title of her exhibit *Secrets:* "… the whole idea grew out of a game we played as kids: remember, back when we were little, in the sixties and seventies, all girls made 'secrets'?" "Of course, I do! And here's something – only girls did, no boys allowed, right?" "Nope, strictly no boys, not even friends, I remember that"[356]. Girls created their own secret world into which boys could not be initiated, and also forged special connections among themselves building up a special strategic sisterhood.

The main heroine of Ulitskaya's novel Nora is presented through her relations with her grandmother, mother, son and grandchildren. She is herself a daughter, granddaughter, mother and grandmother, besides the fact that she is a wife, lover, friend, colleague, disciple, and teacher with a compound experience rooted in her personal situation and different eras she has lived through and she speaks about it with reflective contentment: "Years passed. Aged mother. Grew son. Winter was replaced by summer."[357]

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[356] Zabuzhko, *The Museum of Abandon Secrets,* 48.
[357]See: Ulitskaya, *Jacob's Ladder*, 145.

In addition to the blood family ties, which play an important role in the complex narratives of both novels, spiritual affinity is even more instrumental in the tailoring of these characters. The storyline of Olena Dovgan and her influence on Daryna Goshchynska is important not only as an opportunity to relate the actions of the Ukrainian Insurgent Army and women's role in it, but also to set a moral benchmark for Daryna and her generation. Nora has Tusia, a mother-figure who is more important for Nora's professional and social maturation than Amalia (her real mother): "Her greatest find is the teacher, mentor Anastasiya Ilyinichna Pustyntseva, Tusia, a real artist of set decoration, professor and, in Nora's view, the ideal of a modern woman in the flesh."[358] At some point, Nora takes comfort in her profession and her teacher becomes the most important woman in her life, not just professionally but existentially.

Both novels have an extensive system of characters connected to each other through kinship, ideals, and spiritual inclination. In both novels, female characters (main characters as well as secondary) are active rather than ornamental, and capable of disregarding the male presence in their lives. At the same time, neither Daryna nor Nora reject their feminine nature and depend a lot on their partners; they are not feminists in the political sense. Daryna says: "I am a woman. I want to feel the butterfly stir and see God's presence in it."[359]. The author precisely and constantly underlines Daryna's physical attractiveness.

Nora depends on her odd extramarital affair with a theater director, Tengiz, from which not even her son can distract her: "The hole left by Tengiz in her existence couldn't be breached, not even by Yurik, so she patched it up with whatever material seemed suitable. Kostya "the once-a-week-guy" didn't fit the size of that hole: a tiny Band-Aid for a huge wound."[360]. The

[358] Ulitskaya, *Jacob's Ladder,* 44.
[359]Zabuzhko, *The Museum of Abandoned Secrets*, 470.
[360]Ulitskaya, *Jacob's Ladder*, 69.

wide range of different characters united in a big family allows the author to trace the destiny of one family as a model of the entire country insofar as family dysfunction somehow correlated to state dysfunction. Tolstoy's aphoristic *"All happy families resemble one another, but each unhappy family is unhappy in its own way*"[361] might serve as a motto for both texts. They are unhappy in their own ways, but in both situations, we can see the shadow of the state looming large over their unhappiness.

Both novels are polyphonic in Bakhtinian understanding of this term.[362] There is a polyphony of voices from different periods of the 20th century, different ages, different genders, and different social rankings. To tie all that multiplicity together, nothing short of a saga would have done. The *Book Genre Dictionary* says: "The family saga fiction book genre contains books about the chronicles of a family, or a number of interconnected families, over a period of time. This plot base is often used to portray historical events, changes of social circumstances, and the ebb and flow of fortunes from multiple perspectives. The family saga genre often contains elements from the drama genre."[363] A family saga accommodates the complexity of history and assesses the difficulties of historical drama from an angle of human and family values. The elements of drama naturally appear in a family saga because of the ambiguity of history on one hand and the writer's selection of material on the other hand. Zabuzhko creates a multi-tiered world and on each level, there is personal drama implemented in the dramatic course of history.

At the beginning of the novel, the author introduces the family tree of her main heroine Daryna Anatoliivna Goshchynska and Daryna's beloved, Adrian Ambrozievich Vatamaniuk. As the plot thickens the reader finds out that Olena Dovgan, who was implicated in the Ukrainian

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[361] Leo Tolstoy, *Anna Karenina*, (New York – London: W. W. Norton & Company, 1970), 1.
[362] See: Sue Vice, *Polyphony: Voices with Equal Rights*, in: *Introducing Bakhtin* (Manchester University Press, 1997), 112 – 148.
[363]Mark Malatesta, *Family Saga Genre*, in Book of Genres, https://book-genres.com/family-saga-genre/

Insurgent Army's activities, was related to Adrian: to be exact, she was the aunt of Adrian's father, who had tragically died in WWII. Of course, in the Soviet era her name was unmentionable. Coincidentally, as Daryna starts her investigation, the reader learns that Daryna's family had its own drama engendered by Soviet power: her father was bullied by the Soviets in the late phase of socialism just because he and his team had built a great concert hall that surpassed in grandeur its Moscow counterpart. Ukraine-oriented people were not the only ones to suffer dramas prompted by the Soviet totalitarian regime. Pavlo Ivanovych Boozerov, the KGB officer who supervised Olga Fedorivna Goshchynska (Daryna's mother), was another victim. He was adopted from the orphanage by an NKVD officer who served in Lviv, and his real mother was Rachel, a double agent who got pregnant by the UIA soldier Stodola, a lover of Olena Dovgan whom Adrian channels in his mystical nightmares. In Zabuzhko's convoluted family saga, all characters are related to each other and their dramatic connections are ordinarily caused by the Soviets[364].

Ulitskaya depicts a few generations of her main heroine Nora's family, and every generation owes its drama to the workings of power, even though the name of said power changes over time[365]. Back in imperial times, Nora's great-grandparents fell victim to the pogroms.[366] Then, throughout WWI and following the revolutions, her grandparents remained devoted communists, while Jacob Osetsky was imprisoned in Gulag, and his son Henrich (Nora's father) abandoned him to have a career; Nora's parents Henrich and Amalia did not have a happy marriage and subsequently divorced; Henrich's second family used him and when he got

[364]See: Zabuzhko, *The Museum of Abandoned Secrets*, chapter *Blood in Kyiv*, 600 – 708.
[365] The novel is based on materials from Lyudmila Ulitskaya's family archive. See: Lyudmila Ulitskaya, *A Forced Novel*, (Public lecture, Open Russia): https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NhLyskCVM7Q
[366] Crucially, Ulitskaya emphasizes that during the pogrom Marusia was saved by a Ukrainian woman, Pelageya Onisimovna Yakovenko. See: Ulitskaya, *Jacob's Ladder*, p. 21.

sick abandoned him as well; Nora herself was expelled from high school and had difficulties as a theater artist because of Soviet censorship; her autistic, mathematically gifted husband Viktor encountered problems at his research institute and emigrated to the USA, where he could develop his talent; in the late Soviet era, Nora tried to save her son Yurik from the war in Afghanistan, where many young Soviet men died, by sending him to his biological father in the USA. In addition to all these tragedies surrounding the main heroine, all the secondary characters also had their own dramas resulting from the political situation as their varying levels of personal loyalty to the Soviet regime were no guarantee of a safe and peaceful life. No wonder that the family saga genre becomes so sought-after in critical and transformative periods of history, since it allows us to evaluate the past and its influence on the present, and to understand the present through the lenses of the past.[367]

Coming from a generation of Soviet dissidents, Ulitskaya as a writer and as a public figure constantly emphasizes the decline of the intelligentsia's role in contemporary Russia, while mentally identifying with this disappearing class of people.[368] This vanishingly small group of bookish types are important subjects in Ulitskaya's meta-text in general and in *Jacob's Ladder* in particular. In this regard, Serguei Oushakine's introduction to a volume of *Studies in Eastern European Thought*, where the author muses on the weakening role of intelligentsia at the end of Cold War era,[369] provides an analytical frame for interpreting both novels. Zabuzhko and Ulitskaya write about the intelligentsia and the challenges they faced. Therefore, Oushakine's

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[367] See: Robert O. Stephens provides a good overview of the family saga genre against the backdrop of complex historical events in his monograph *The Family Saga in the South. Generations and Destinies,* (Baton Rouge and London: Louisiana University Press, 1995)

[368] See: Lyudmila Ulitskaya, The Role of the Public Intellectual Today, Public Talk at Keenan Institute, November 30 2018: https://www.wilsoncenter.org/event/the-role-the-public-intellectual-todays-russia; Lyudmila Ulitskaya, Reading as a Heroic Feat: the Intelligentsia and Uncensored Literature, in: Russian Journal of Communication, Vol. 10, Issue 2-3, 2018, pp. 262 – 272.

[369]Serguei Oushakine, "Introduction: Wither the intelligentsia: the end of the moral elite in Eastern Europe," in (*Studies in Eastern European Thought*, Vol. 61, #4), 243 - 248

observations on intelligentsia in the transitional period frames the situations in which the characters of both novels functioned. Oushakine states: "In various forms, the late socialist intelligentsia articulated a set of norms and models of behavior that might not have undermined state domination but have managed to increase significantly a sense of personal agency. Deprived of any serious form of control over cultural production and circulation, the intelligentsia of late socialism repositioned itself as the moral elite. Articulating a promise of morality in an immoral society became its main function."[370] For Ulitskaya the role of intelligentsia is inextricably linked to the issues of personal responsibility and being in charge of one's own country, which is not easy, especially in a transitional period when all members of society feel lost and disoriented. Therefore, the strategy was to take responsibility for the family and take care of the dearest people.

Both texts might be considered anti-colonial and therapeutic, the main difference being that Ulitskaya deals with internal colonization,[371] while Zabuzhko makes an earnest effort to show the external character of actual political colonization, which allows the author to relinquish personal responsibility for Ukraine's destiny. Thomas Sowell theorizes such situations as *intertemporal abstractions:* "Intertemporal abstractions are especially useful to those intellectuals who tend to conceive of social issues in terms which allow the intelligentsia to be on the side of the angels against the forces of evil. Intellectuals can mine the past harm inflected by some on others"[372]. It correlates with an attempt to redirect personal responsibility to the abstract others, and not exclusively one's contemporaries: this "delegation of duty" can be stretched out

[370] Ibid, p. 245.
[371] I understand internal colonization as an imperial situation when oppression and subordination take place in the the same state, and power relations are formed among subjects with the same citizenship. See: Alexander Etkind, *Internal Colonization. Russia's Imperial Experience* (Cambridge: Polity Press), 2011
[372] Thomas Sowell, *Intellectuals and Society*, (New York: Basic Books, 2011), 127.

intertemporally. Such mechanisms of shedding the burdens of being a subject of history are outlined by Oushakine in his article "Postcolonial Estrangements: Claiming a Space Between Stalin and Hitler." While the article mostly focuses on the Belarussian case,[373] the tendencies remarked on by Oushakine could be projected onto the Ukrainian situation as depicted by Zabuzhko. It also correlates with the public discourse established in Ukraine by Yushchenko's administration, where Zabuzhko played a leading role of the public intellectual.

Ulitskaya also shows social segregation and a lack of solidarity permeating society. She does not elaborate on these subjects at length, but in just a few touches, she sketches out inequality and social prejudice in the USSR. Maria Osetskaya did not belong to the circles of her neighbors in the communal apartment: she was philosophically above them, even though she had lived there many years; Henrik could not talk with those neighbors as his equals, either; Victor's mother came from "simple folk," etc. As a result, this society lacks any connective tissue, and people live in their own separated worlds. It is obvious that the Soviet system, about which Jacob was so tragically hopeful, failed to unite the people, and further divided them[374].

The system, which they had brought into existence, became the main cause of all their suffering. In such a situation it is possible to blame only themselves, or accept the situation and move on, as Jacob Osetsky was doing his whole life. If in Zabuzhko's novel one has the luxury of blaming an outside evil, in Ulitskaya's the enemy is internal and corrosions society from inside. People are separated from each other. The main reason for this separation is a split inside the families. Family as essential unity was destroyed by betrayal: wives betrayed their husbands, and sons betrayed their fathers. Lack of fidelity inside the family breeds distrust in society. There

[373] Serguei Oushakine, "Postcolonial Estrangements: Claiming a Space Between Stalin and Hitler", in Julie Buckler, Emily D. Johnson (ed.), *Rites of Place. Public Commemoration in Russia and Eastern Europe* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2013): 285 – 314.
[374] See: Ulitskaya, *Jacob's Ladder,* 320-322.

is hope that the children of Yura and Lisa will lead a different life. It is significant that both writers conclude their novels with notes to the future generation, one of hope, who probably could remedy their ancestors' mistakes.

Ulitskaya narrates the 20th century through well-known, but unspeakable markers: the pogroms in Kyiv, which coincided with the first Russian revolution of 1905; the revolution itself and the price of professional success paid by Jacob and Maria; aviation enthusiasm and rejection of the family (Henrik and Jacob); purges among the intelligentsia; Stagnation; lack of artistic freedom (the storyline of Nora and Tengiz at the theater); intellectual escape from the USSR (the arc of Vitya, Grisha, Yurik); the Afghan war (Yurik). Add to the bargain "the apartment issue" (квартирный вопрос), lack of money, bribes small and big, envy, profiteering and manipulation, and the stupidity of the schooling system, unable to handle special-needs children.

The state's political situation painfully intersected with the life of its inhabitants, even when they tried to do everything possible to avoid this intersection. Jacob and Maria paid the full price for their revolutionary ardor. Henrik was the product of that time and also paid his share by being the executor and victim of his own parents, and with them, of his time and the system overall. Nora and Tengiz, and even more so Yurik and Liza, did not have any political enthusiasm whatsoever, but their life was determined by the political situation in the country.

The two novels end differently and similarly at the same time. Symbolically, both writers stress the importance of a new generation, accentuating one's continuity in one's children. Nora's Yurik found himself with the mother-figure Lisa, who has his baby; perhaps they will manage to change the path of history, but the author is not too optimistic about it: "All ends well: the happy ending is followed by death. Everything is accepted in the end: the death of an entire

people, and the burial of one's only child who died from leukemia…"[375] The author has no doubts about the correct order of things. Therefore, the joy of a private moment—memories of the moment when you were genuinely happy—is the one thing which does matter: "Much like his great-grandfather Yakov, Yurik is passionate about music. Not clarinet, or piano, or guitar: he's trying to hear the music coursing through the cosmos. It makes no difference at all if he has become a professional composer or remained the boy who asks, "Mom, do you remember me singing in your belly?"[376]

Zabuzhko ends her novel with a maternal subplot, as well. Daryna finds out that she is pregnant and carrying Andrian's baby "under her heart." However, the story's coda belongs not to Daryna, Andrian, or the fetus, but to Katrusia (Vlada's daughter), who was hiding a secret in the yard of her house: "Glass! This shard, right here. To cover the hole. And then you bury it, and stamp the dirt flat, smooth it over with the scoop so that no trace remains: no one must see what she was making here; God forbid, someone should find out… Not now. Not ever. The girl stands up and dusts the dirt off her knees."[377] So, the quest for the truth will continue, even though there is no chance that all secrets will be unearthed, or the whole truth will be discovered. Agency is blurred as well, as responsibility for full political subjectivity is evaded.

Both novels address epistemological topics and both emphasize the necessity of truth-searching in the post-Soviet societies of Ukraine and Russia. Both deal with the problems of clear presentation of political subjectivity; both explain it through the lens of the past and lack of trust among people, including family members. I claim that both showcase strong female agency and prove that its emergence was not the result of the Soviet Union's collapse. According to

[375] Ulitskaya, *Jacob's Ladder,* 329.
[376] Ibid., 329.
[377] Zabuzhko, *The Museum of Abandoned Secrets,* 708.

these female writers, women had their own voices throughout the twentieth century, but it did not grant them happiness.

The main difference between the two texts and two contemporary models of the long century depicted in the novels is that Ulitskaya deals with internal colonization, while Zabuzhko mounts a valiant effort to show the external character of Ukrainian problems. Ulitskaya engages with historical narratives which were a part of collective memory during Perestroika but are not part of it anymore, and thus need to return to public discourse. Zabuzhko writes about what has never been in public discourse, but now is a part of the official historical narrative and collective memory in contemporary Ukraine.

CHAPTER IV **LANGUAGE AND SPACE AS TOOLS FOR SHAPING POLITICAL COMMUNITY CONTEMPORARY UKRAINIAN AND RUSSIAN CASES**[378]

A prerequisite for the development of a viable political community, political subjectivity refers to a condition in which individuals identify themselves with some political agency, as well as to their readiness to join mass protests if it is necessary to achieve their collective political goals, in a situation when their political rights might be threatened. Among the most visible enactments of political subjectivity is the *democratic election*, assuming its citizens know their political rights will not be violated.[379] Another typical enactment of political subjectivity in collective form is the mass protest action, in which a more or less unified social group expresses its dissatisfaction with the current institutional arrangements of power. Mass protest thus signifies a transition from *homo privatus* to *homo publicus*, when political actors reformulate their identities in relation to the state power, nationhood, and local community. Collective forms of political subjectivity need not necessarily, but often do eventuate in acts of civil disobedience, as a part of civil society development.

The notion of an *identity work process*, "the range of activities individuals engage in to create, present, and sustain personal identities, that are congruent with and supportive of the self-concept," may be used to analyze this transition from private to public persona. In short, an identity process model usefully illuminates our subject, which is the larger process by which the individual political subject moves outward into more social modes of political subjectivity in collective political action. Social psychologists David Snow and Doug McAdam distinguish two types of

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[378] I express sincere appreciation to Prof. Colleen McQuillen for her inspiring UIC graduate seminar on Russian counterculture. It became the starting point for my dissertation research in 2012. Many thanks to Prof. Julia Vaingurt for thoughtful comments and recommendations.

[379] The Ukrainian Orange Revolution, for example, expressed collective opposition to election meddling. See, for instance, Harasymiv Bohdan, Ilnytzkyi Oleh (ed), *Aspects of the Orange Revolution II. Information and Manipulation Strategies in the 2004 Ukrainian Presidential Elections*, (Stuttgart: Ibidem Press, 2007).

identity work: *identity convergence* and *identity construction.*[380] Examples of each type may be seen in the collapse of the Socialist bloc as ordinary people worked out the meaning of the political dissolution for their self-concept.[381] Identity convergence work played a crucial role in the mass mobilization for protests in Ukraine during the Orange Revolution (2004 - 2005) and the Revolution of Dignity (2013-2014). Persons with divergent political commitments "converged" in mutual support of the two revolutions in direct political action. Likewise, the very same political actions provided the occasion by which the very same persons could "construct" (or deconstruct/reconstruct) a new sense of self-concept.

The *public persona* of a protester is the result of a synergy between personal and collective identities. Employing a slightly different vocabulary, the Dutch social psychologists Steklenburg and Kladermans write, "Personal identity refers to self-definition in terms of personal attribute, whereas social identity refers to self-definition in terms of social category membership. Collective identity concerns cognitions shared by members of a single group. Group identification forms the link between collective and social identity."[382] During the protest, group affect plays a fundamental role in cementing the new collective subjectivity: "Shared emotions and enhanced efficaciousness, identification with others involved generates a felt inner obligation to behave as a 'good' group member. When self-definition changes from personal to social identity, the group norm of participation becomes salient; the more one identifies with the group, the more weight this group norm will carry and more it will result in an 'inner obligation' to participate on behalf of the

[380] David Snow and Doug McAdam, "Identity Work Process in the Context of Social Movements: Clarifying the Identity | Movement Nexus," in *Self, Identity, and Social Movements*, eds. Sheldon Stryker, Timothy J. Owens, Robert W. White (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000), 47.
[381] See Abel Polese, Jeremy Morris, Emilia Pawłusz, Oleksandra Seliverstova, eds., *Identity and Nation Building in Everyday Post-Socialist Life* (New York: Routledge, 2017)
[382] Jacquelien van Stekelenburg, and Bert Klandermans. "The Social Psychology of Protest." *Current Sociology* 61, no. 5–6 (September 2013): 886–905. doi:10.1177/0011392113479314

group."[383] As recent Ukrainian history shows, intense or euphoric shared-emotion may be important in the short-term as socio-political motivation, but it may contribute less to the development of a viable, long-term political strategy.

I would like now to turn and consider in some depth the rhetorical effectiveness of political actions and discourse (slogans) as they worked to persuade actors who were initially indifferent to the movement. I will be describing the growth of a national political movement and the influence of political slogans in fostering that process. It is important to remember here that the abrupt transition from the Soviet political world into a newly post-Soviet one had resulted in the atomization of society, wherein many no longer felt that they belonged to a common political union.[384] Obviously, language—and the slogan in particular– is among the most valuable instruments of revolutionary movements. It is through use of a common political language that protest movements establish a shared emotional space to unite people and mobilize them to political action.

Through a comparison of protest slogans in early 21st-century Ukraine and Russia it becomes possible to see important similarities and differences in their respective approaches to civil rights movements. Thus, by examining the rhetorical strategies used by various Ukrainian and Russian sloganeers during an important period of post-Soviet political protest, we see significant differences in their respective approaches to the question of political subjectivity. I frame the analysis by setting it within the larger context of global 21st-century revolutionary movements, most notably the "Arab Spring", which was "a series of popular uprisings that

[383] Ibid, 5.
[384] Svetlana Alexievich's *Secondhand Time: The Last of the Soviets* (2017) comprises an impressive body of evidence on the frustrations of former Soviet citizens related to the loss of their previous unity.

occurred in the Middle East and North Africa from late 2010 into early 2011."[385] I am especially interested to show the important role of the slogan in increasing civic participation, which is an essential step toward building a political community.

An examination of two Ukrainian case studies reveals an important difference in strategy: during the spontaneous mass protests of 2000-2001 (known as Kuchmagate), slogans were largely created by grassroots participants, whereas during the mass protests of 2004-2005 (Orange revolution)[386] a professional political campaign directed the sloganeering. As I will show, the protests of 2011-2012 in Russia recall the form and organizational strategies of the first wave of protests in Ukraine. In the last section of this chapter I will address the "Revolution of Dignity" as well. I argue that the Orange Revolution influenced subsequent mass political events, and that without its experience the Ukrainians would not have been capable of confronting Victor Yanukovych's presidency as successfully as they did in 2013.[387]

The approach here incorporates personal experience, readings of contemporaneous media accounts, and the work by other scholars. I actively participated in the Ukrainian events of 1999 – 2000 and 2004. In this chapter I am using slogans which I have collected at that time. I conscientiously followed Russian events through a variety of different media, such as the television channel *Dozhd*[388], the radio station *Echo of Moscow*[389]. Various photo series and YouTube videos have been consulted as well.

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[385] Encyclopedia of Islam and Muslim World, https://search-credoreference-com.dominican.idm.oclc.org/content/entry/galeislam/arab_spring/0?institutionId=834

[386] Taras Kuzio has analyzed the connection between the Kuchmagate and Orange revolution in terms of civil society evolving toward liberalism and democracy. See: Kuzio Taras, Democratic Revolution in Ukraine: From Kuchmagate to Orange Revolution, (New York: Routledge, 2009).

[387] Linguist Nadia Trach has published a volume of essays addressing the slogans' language during the Revolution of Dignity; however, she completely ignores the slogans of the Orange Revolution. See: Nadia Trach, *Rytoryka Ukrains'koho Sprotyvu. Sotsiolingvistychni Esse,* (Kyiv: Klio 2015).

[388] Television Channel Dozhd, https://tvrain.ru/

[389] Official Webpage of Echo of Moscow, https://echo.msk.ru/

For my purposes here I will follow the proposed definition of "political slogan" as *an easily remembered and frequently repeated message that is used for political purpose.* The form of the slogan may be oral, written, or visual; it may be graphic, symbolic (as in a color), or even a semiotically significant material object. The analysis proceeds chronologically and examines different media and slogans as they are transmitted to an audience. I try to explicate the relationship between language, message, and political power. The analysis also lightly touches on the nature of urban spaces in political protest as well as the professionalization of protest activities.

Slogans are rhetorical devices used to accomplish political purposes that inform the public processes of communication.[390] Political protest slogans are considered to be an instrument of working out a collective civil consensus. Their effectiveness depends on objective and subjective factors, such as transparency, simplicity, approachability, timeliness, and topicality. They always have a practical aim, specific intent, and target group. An effective slogan has to harmonize the need to communicate an ideological message in an appealing aesthetic form. For a slogan to be successful, the physical space in which it is used and the medium in which it is displayed must be carefully considered. Some expressions might have a material form (print, graffiti, hand-written placard, hand-made poster), while others may be oral, including shouting, chants, and even musical accompaniment. As scholar Robert Porter points out, "Slogans do not simply re-present or re-produce the social-political world, they can also function to reshape it and reconstitute it in an expressly material way."[391]

A slogan is a particular genre within political language, and has its own rules established for pragmatic purposes. Scholars writing about the Arab Spring events have observed, "Protesters

[390] Previous reflection on the slogans' function see: R. Denton, "The Rhetorical Function of Slogans: classification and characteristics" in *Communication Quarterly* 28, no. 2, (1980): 10 -19.
[391] Robert Porter, "From Clichés to Slogans: toward a Deleuze-Guattarian critique of ideology," *Social Semiotics*, 20, no. 3, (June 2010): 233 – 234.

promote their ideas by using brief, clear, eye-catching and musical slogans that easily stick to minds due to their specific sound pattern. Parallelism, antimetabole, colloquialism, alliteration, assonance and antithesis are all schemata of political slogans."[392] Slogans should balance the aesthetic and practical functions of their creative efforts. For example, slogans relying on literary allusions and tropes might be attractive to a niche audience of intellectuals, but inaccessible to a broad audience unschooled in intricate literary play. It becomes clear when we conduct contextual analysis of the slogans from Moscow's Bolotnaya Square that intertextual games are sometimes privileged over the practical requirement for slogans to be clear and transparent.

The case of the 2010-11 Tunisian revolutionary movement demonstrates the significant role of linguistic slogans in mobilizing political action. Language can be immensely empowering, as Nabiha Jerad reminds us: "The Tunisian revolution is based on the linguistic event that 'killed' fear by naming it. It also rests on the power of words to mobilize, which quickly transformed the news story that was Bouzizi's suicide into a national event by verbalizing the individual act and turning it into collective social and political demand with three words: "Employment, freedom, dignity.""[393] The slogan's formula becomes a powerful message that stokes the protest action's dynamic. There are numerous examples like the Tunisian case to be found in the Ukrainian and Russian protest actions that I examine, when the power to express oneself is as important as the message being expressed. The Tunisian use of "dignity" reappeared in Ukraine, too, as an alternate name for the Euromaidan Revolution: Revolution of Dignity. The need for dignity is a marker of social movements on the global scale in the early 21st century. It is also significant that the

[392] Al-Sowaidi, Belqes, Felix Banda, and Arwa Mansour. "Doing Politics in the Recent Arab Uprisings: Towards a Political Discourse Analysis of the Arab Spring Slogans." *Journal of Asian and African Studies* 52, no. 5 (August 2017): 621–45.
[393] Nabiha Jerad, "The Tunisian Revolution: From Universal Slogans for Democracy to Power of Language," *Middle East Journal of Culture and Communication*, no. 6 (2013): 234.

Tunisian slogan echoes the most iconic motto of the French Revolution: "Liberté, égalité, fraternité." By obliquely referencing this widely known refrain, the Tunisians adapted a classic slogan with global resonance to their own contemporary demands.

In recent decades, information technology and media innovation have been important in shaping protest movements. However, the main meaning and function of the slogan in general remains the same: to captivate the audience and to deliver the main message in the most approachable way. As R. Denton states, "Slogans [...] have provided historians with topical outlines of the major concerns, frustrations, and hopes of society. As 'social symbols' they have united, divided, and even converted. In so doing, slogans have become a direct link to social or individual action." As he points out further, the importance of slogans notwithstanding, the rhetorical and persuasive nature of slogans was given little attention in scholarship prior to 1980. Denton's paper was published on the eve of the (1980) American presidential campaign, so he underlined the way that candidates' slogans functioned on posters and television, and in radio advertisements, and stressed that by using them, "each candidate hopes to tap a reservoir of support by striking a familiar theme, issue, or image." [394] Analysis of the Tunisian and American examples are suggestive for studying political activism in Ukraine and Russia today. However, Denton published his article when available media for slogans were much more limited. Denton's list must now be much expanded to include digital media formats, and his framework must be expanded to account for the enormous power of social media networks.

A successful slogan, on the one hand, must respond to public expectations; on the other hand, it should recast people's opinions according to the political platform of the organization or group using said slogan. Slogans are supposed to influence the recipients in various ways, but

[394] Denton, "The Rhetorical Function," 10.

mostly they are aim to affect the emotions and persuade hearers to act. For example, recent research on the emotional influence of slogans shows that "When political slogans contained uniquely human emotions, potential electors were more inclined to follow the opinion of a political candidate of their own rather than that of an opposing political affiliation. Instead, when the political slogans contained more basic, primary emotions, no differences in conformity to the in-group or the out-group were found."[395] In this light, consider the snappy, almost aggressively cheerful slogan "Yes!" used in the Ukrainian presidential election of 2004, which naturally elicits an unabashedly positive response. Likewise, using the color orange, with its warm, positive associations, enhanced the optimism of the general message, and the participants' certainty of being on the right side of history.

Humorous slogans have emotional appeal, too. Mocking the political enemy makes a slogan strong and powerful, and thus an effective mobilizing tool. Mohamed M. Helmy and Sabine Frerichs have shown the important role of humor in the Egyptian Revolution of 2011, when the situation grew perilous for the protesters.[396] They note that, "the extraordinary power of humor during 2011 Revolution which naturally drew on history and culture in which humor is embedded. While the mobilization of the people had been facilitated by modern means of information and communication…the protest itself resorted to old cultural forms, which were given new 'revolutionary' content. Inasmuch as the performances in the Square drew on the folkloristic and humoristic repertoire of the Egyptian culture, they could be easily shared by the people, an important factor which made them feel 'home' in the Square."[397] This shared cultural foundation

[395] Jeroen Vaes, Maria Paola Paladino, Chiara Magagnotti, "The Human Message in Politics: the Impact of Emotional Slogans on Subtle Conformity," *The Journal of Social Psychology* 151, no. 2 (2011): 174.
[396] Mohamed M. Helmy, Sabine Frerichs, "Stripping the Boss: The Powerful Role of Humor in the Egyptian Revolution 2011," *Integrative Psychological and Behavioral Science*, No. 47 (2013): 450-481.
[397] Ibid., 476.

reminds participants of their shared membership in a community, while humor domesticates, relaxes, and unites people by using familiar cultural (or semiotic) contexts. Here, humor operates as an intertextual allusion to familiar content of Egyptian folklore. One can observe in the Ukrainian and Russian contexts a similar use of humor and intertextuality.

In "Slogan and Anti-Slogan Practices: A Confrontation on Public Space and Advertising in Parisian Subway," [398] the authors analyze how different slogans were used in the Parisian protest actions of 2003–2004. The main issue raised by the protesters was the use of the subway system, a public space, for the purpose of advancing commercial interests through advertising, a related form of sloganeering. In their action, the Parisians used mostly homemade posters and chants, the amateur nature of which stands in marked opposition to the slick commercial advertising created by professionals. It is interesting that the anti-advertising protesters used slogans on hand-made posters as the main rhetorical tool against the commercial type of slogans. In this case, non-consumerist slogans "fight" commercial ones for the attention of people circulating through the important space of a public transportation station. The Parisian protesters aligned amateur form and non-commercial content as an antidote to professionally produced commercial content. Although such a conflict did not characterize the Ukrainian and Russian protests of the 2000s so visibly as in Paris, the difference between 'homemade' (grassroots) and 'professional' slogans is relevant to understanding the cases discussed below.

Space and form are key mechanisms for delivering a slogan's main message (idea) to an audience. Like graffiti, slogans should be accessible to the masses. Sonja Neef in her research on graffiti in East Germany used the work of Jean Baudrillard 'KOOL KILLER, or The Insurrection

[398] Kenza Cherkaoui, Natalie La Valle, "Slogan and Anti-slogan Practices: A Confrontation on Public Space and Advertising in Parisian Subway," in *Studies in Slang and Slogans*, eds. Babatunde S., Odebunmi A., Adetunji A., Adedimeji M. (Muchen: Lincorn Europa, 2010): 213-235.

of Signs' (1975)[399], where the French philosopher contended that graffiti was an art performance in the "nowhere" space, that it represented "no-content," and that this gave graffiti extra power: "Graffiti has no content and no message: this emptiness gives it its strength."[400] Baudrillard used the concept of binary oppositions for contrasting the space of 'high culture' and the 'official city' to the space where graffiti used to be posted. His work led Sonja Neef to argue that in the case of East Germany, the claim that graffiti had 'no message' and 'no content' was exceedingly harder to make. Graffiti containing "no content" signs became meaningful messages talking to the audience not only through the message encoded in the image itself, but also through style, location, and connections to other graffiti. I share Neef's insistence on the importance of spatial location in conditioning meaning, and want to extend her argument to cover the important symbolism of the public spaces used by the Ukrainian and Russian opposition. For instance, during the Euromaidan protests graffiti appeared throughout Kyiv with images of the Ukrainian national poets Taras Shevchenko, Lesya Ukrainka, and Ivan Franko (see figure 1). This graffiti definitely aimed to raise the national spirit of protesters. One supposes those images would not have the same effect in non-revolutionary times.

Modern political protests are a phenomenon of urban culture. Almost every significant protest relates to some particular city square or street. A toponym often becomes the signifier of the slogan. Wall Street, Taksim Square, Tahrir Square, Maidan (then Euromaidan), Bolotnaya Square, Sakharov Prospect: all of these deliver the message to the audience outside of their respective cities. The names refer to sites of dramatic conflict as they evoke the passionate fight and sacrifice of the movement's protestors. Those toponyms became not only the symbols of civil

[399] Sonja Neef, "Killing Kool: The Graffiti Museum," *Art History, Association of Art Historians* 30, no. 3 (June 2000): 418 – 431.
[400] Ibid., 418.

rights movements or uprising; they became slogans in and of themselves. In this regard, neither the common use of "Maidan" in Kyiv to refer to the events of 2013, nor of Bolotnaya in Moscow to refer to the 2011-13 protests, is original.

In addition defining the meaning of specific urban spaces, these new political protest movements also come to define some portion of virtual space. The digital era allows a movement not only to expand the potential audience for mobilization; it also alters the traditional material form of the slogan, turning it into a visual signifier such as a meme, a gif, a Facebook page, or even one's social media profile picture.[401]

In 1999, the suspicious death of Viacheslav Chornovil, the renowned nationally-oriented opposition leader in Ukraine, served as a catalyst for protest actions. He was incumbent Leonid Kuchma's rival in the presidential campaign that had started earlier that year. The following year saw another death, that of the independent journalist Georgii Gongadze (he was decapitated in the forest, and his head was never found), which fueled the protests even more. Kuchma's bodyguard, Melnychenko, recorded and made public clandestine conversations between Kuchma and his "inner circle," in which Kuchma ordered the deaths of both Chornovil and Gongadze. To add insult to injury, the President of Ukraine used obscene language unbefitting his public stature.

The shocking sensation that a crime so heinous could be perpetrated by the nation's leader, aggravated by his obscenities on the record, created the simple, sharp, and meaningful protest slogans "Ганьба!" (Shame!) and "Кучма, геть!" (Kuchma, out!). Their power in part comes from their laconic form: sentiment is focused and without dilution. Almost ten years later, when Russia was shocked by the death of lawyer Sergey Magnitsky and Moscow was teeming with

[401] Nezar Alsayad wrote about the Egyptian uprising but the patterns he described in his analysis are applicable to the global environment. Nezar Alsayyad, "The Virtual Square: Urban Space, Media, and the Egyptian Uprising," *Harvard International Review*, 24 no 1 (Summer 2012): 58 – 63.

demonstrations against the implicated officials, people took to the streets with similar slogans: “Позор!” (Shame!) and “Путин, вон!” (Putin, out!). The slogan that was the main motto of the protest actions in Ukraine up till 2005, “Україна без Кучми!” (Ukraine without Kuchma!), was repurposed by protesters in Russia in 2012-13: “Россия без Путина!” (Russia without Putin!). The slogans mentioned above were used during the demonstrations in downtown Kyiv: mostly oral, some hand-written on homemade posters. These amateurish posters created an atmosphere of authenticity. In contrast to this “jerrybuilt” sincerity, in 2004 – 2005 most of the posters were professionally printed and demonstrations looked more like an art festival or a rock concert, complete with sleek merchandise and ingeniously planned PR stunts.

Kyiv’s Independence Square, already ensconced in the public imagination as the epicenter of the 1989 Granite Revolution, was the site of the first wave of protests commemorating Georgii Gongadze. Soon afterward, the square was shut off by the city administration, under the official pretext of decorating it for New Year’s Eve festivities. Later it was announced that it would be closed for reconstruction, so people were deprived of a symbolic place wherein to fight for their civic rights. As a consequence, most demonstrations moved to locations endowed with a different kind of symbolism: the building of the Parliament, and later also to the building of the Government and the President’s Administration. Protest at these sites was more directly confrontational as the edifices represent the ruling power against which the protesters agitated.

Besides actions in the downtown area, the whole capital of Ukraine was transformed into an impromptu protest site. Gongadze’s portrait on the posters and leaflets, distributed all over the city, became the face of the Fall of 2000. In addition, graffiti with protest slogans or the silhouette of Gongadze’s head covered the walls not only of the main streets and squares, but also in the suburbs (see figures 2, 3, and 4). Those who came to Kyiv by train could see a huge graffiti

“Україна без Кучми!” (Ukraine without Kuchma!) from the windows, stenciled on a big wall by the main train station. A permanent protest campsite on Khreshchatyk St., plastered with posters against Kuchma’s regime, foreshadowed the turmoil of 2004.

By the late 1990s, Ukrainian protesters started to discover the value of virtual space for political purposes. The Internet project of the late Gongadze “Українська правда” (Ukrainian truth) http://www.pravda.com.ua/ and an independent forum “Maidan” http://maidanua.org/ became the most influential sources for enhancing and sustaining the protest mood. The “Maidan” website became the first virtual platform where people started what is referred to as an open space expressly for Ukrainians. In this forum, which was called ‘майдан’ in order to be associated with the physical place Майдан Незалежності (Independence Square), people met virtually, planned new protest actions, discussed the current situation, created and shared new protest slogans and ideas about posters. Those virtual platforms are still active today, but the most important role they played was in the past, during the Orange Revolution in 2004 – early 2005.

The presidential campaign of 2004 polarized Ukrainian society and spurred the Orange Revolution. This polarization was rendered visually by dividing Ukraine into two parts: East and West, differentiated by their corresponding leanings in the elections. The country was covered in the colors orange and blue, associated with the two major political parties. Welded into the so-called Orange Bloc, organizations like “Україна за чесні вибори” (“Ukraine for transparent elections”) and “Пора” (“It is time”) rallied behind the presidential candidate Victor Yushchenko. The official slogan of their campaign was the succinct “Tak!” (“Yes!”), an example of which can be found in figure 6.

The presidential campaign before the Orange Revolution and the Revolution itself came up with a number of creative approaches to summoning a political consensus among the masses.

The main slogan "Yes!" and optimistic orange color-scheme sent a constructive message to the audiences. Supportive slogans like "Схід і Захід разом!" (East and West Together!), "Міліція з народом!" (Police with the people!), "Україна за Ющенка!" (Ukraine for Yushchenko!), "Разом нас багато!" (Together we are many!) instilled a positive mood of hope and reconciliation. Their messages addressed the consolidation of Eastern and Western regions (see figure 7). The slogans' authors tried to avoid smear tactics, instead orienting their main message toward constructive issues. For example, to prevent the manipulation of people's votes, the movement used a message expressing positive action, "Ukraine for transparent elections!" They chose to say what they wanted instead of saying what they did not want by circumventing the word "against" and its unavoidable negative connotations: "Україна проти маніпуляцій!" (Ukraine against manipulations!), as had been done before.

In addition to using traditional posters, graffiti, leaflets, and brochures with slogans, the 2004 election campaign for Yushchenko was remarkable for its performative approach to propaganda. Orange scarves, hats, gloves, big and small flags with slogans "Yes!" and "It's time", ribbons, orange clothing and even oranges (the citrus fruit) were prominently featured in public spaces. As opposed to the 1999–2000 actions, most items of protest propaganda were made professionally. There were some spontaneous posters as well, but in comparison with the previous actions it was obvious that this time the protests were well-planned and supported by business structures invested in the outcome.[402]

Concurrently, Eastern Ukraine was inundated in blue. The "blue team" had a primetime show on TV. Though faced with more difficulties in Kyiv and the Western regions, they had the South and East firmly under control. In their slogans, they appealed to the concept of stability, and

[402] Such professionally made flags and posters convey to ordinary people that the movement is no longer amateur: http://www.wumag.kiev.ua/20051/P26_1.jpg

played the card of integration with the Russian Federation and the use of Russian as the official language of legislation in Ukraine. Their two main slogans were "Стабільність" ("Stability") and "Добробут" ("Prosperity"). The accent was also put on local politics, as in "Сильные регионы" ("Powerful regions"). Mirroring the slogan "Ющенко — наш президент!" ("Yushchenko is our president!"), the same was stated regarding the other presidential candidate, Yanukovych: "Янукович — наш президент!" ("Yanukovych is our president!"). In the "blue team's" slogans, a pronounced emphasis was laid on the regions, since Victor Yanukovych was the leader of the Party of Regions. Names of certain territories peppered their rhetoric, e.g.: "Крым за Януковича!" (The Crimea for Yanukovych!), "Одесса за Януковича!" (Odessa for Yanukovych!), "Донбасс за Януковича!" (Donbass for Yanukovych!).

However, the main events of the Orange Revolution took place in the capital. Kyiv made it clear to the authorities (namely, President Kuchma and the candidate he endorsed, Yanukovych) that they were not welcome there anymore. This message was sent visually by actively displaying the color orange, which blanketed the whole city. Revolutionary propaganda was present everywhere in the public space. People put something orange on their balconies and windows and in this way included their own private space in public discourse. Similar decorations were put on cars. Taxi drivers also voiced their support by driving people festooned in orange for free.

Virtual spaces were amply used for political purposes as well. Besides a variety of serious-minded sites, there were created many projects with expressly satirical content: cartoons, games, short videos, jokes with recognizable color markers and contextualized key words, for instance, "The Funny Eggs."[403] Those projects used laughter as a weapon of political struggle. One can

[403] Funny Eggs began to mock Victor Yanukovych when he fell down scared by an egg thrown at him during a meeting with Ivano-Frankivsk University students (September 24, 2004). This incident is still alive in the people's memory. See: Istoria Dnia: Iak Iaitse Yanukovycha zdolalo, (DepoUa, 16.09.2016): https://www.depo.ua/ukr/life/istoriya-dnya-yak-yanukovicha-yaytse-zdolalo-24092016160000.

admit that the nature of those virtual products was rooted in folk culture, as was the case with the Egyptian Revolution. In the form of this project, folk laughter came back to the 21st-century virtual space.

The events in the Russian Federation in 2011-13 were similar to the Ukrainian situation of 2000 – 2001 in the way the slogans were used as a tool for formulating the civic mass consensus. One could assume that there might be some kind of evolution parallel to that which happened in Ukraine (from grassroots activism in 2000 to professionally organized activism in 2005). One may also hope that fruitful mass protests could still happen in Russia when the opposition becomes more powerful and develops its own positive, constructive slogans to unite the majority of Russia's population. Besides the influence of the protest movements in Ukraine, Russian protest actions drew inspiration from the global movement "Occupy!" which makes them more interesting still for analysis.[404] The similarity between some Russian slogans and those used in Ukraine is rather striking. For example, one of the most memorable slogans is "Москва и Питер вместе!" ("Moscow and St. Petersburg are together!"), emphatically harkening to the Ukrainian call for unity, "East and West together!" Moscow is the city of contemporary Russian opposition; St. Petersburg is Vladimir Putin's hometown and spiritual fortress. The main message urges people from Moscow and St. Petersburg to join their efforts in building a civil society in Russia. The Ukrainian slogan "East and West together" pursued the same aim: to unite people from the country's Eastern part (where many people supported Yanukovych) with the Western part (where the majority of inhabitants supported Yushchenko). Such slogans aimed to foster the unity, cooperation, and mutual support that characterize civil societies.

[404] This topic lies outside the scope of the current chapter but warrants later investigation.

Some of the slogans in contemporary Russia were invented under the influence of the Occupy! protests. There were a number of demonstrations organized under the banner “Occupy Abay[405]!” This exhortation echoes that of the global movement and shows how actual city space becomes part of the verbal message as this space, in turn, becomes more recognizable thanks to the slogan. While not many people knew about the monument to Abay before the protest actions, afterward it enjoyed world recognition as an emblem of dissent. The monument is located in downtown Moscow, although at a distance from the main administrative buildings. Structured similarly to a happening or a festival, the action was dubbed "protest of the creative class," in which the white collars participated together with the creative intelligentsia, Russian nationalists, and anarchists (see figures 7, 8, 9,10,11). At its peak, the protest amassed about 7,000 participants, which is a drop in the bucket for a city the size of Moscow.[406] The meetings were conveniently located, too: not far from the subway, in a square suitable for camping out, which meant the protesters would not have to go home and break the continuity of their action. However, it is symbolically significant that the protest moved away from the main administrative area and situated itself near the monument to an important figure, who had nevertheless remained outside the mainstream culture. The creative minds of the protesters proved just as obscure and only marginally impactful, mirroring the lack of recognition enjoyed by Abay among the majority of Russians.

[405]Abay Qunanbayuli (1845 - 1904) was a great Kazakh poet, composer and philosopher. He was also a reformer of European and Russian cultures on the basis of enlightened Islam. It is hard to identify any clear connection to the Russian protest movement, but his name enjoys renown mostly because the actions took place near his monument. It might symbolize how far these enlightened intelligentsia and creative class were from ordinary people who did not support the action. More information is here: Qazaqstan Tarihy (History of Kazakhstan Portal), https://e-history.kz/en/biography/view/3

[406] According to the 2012 census, 11 612 943 million people lived in Moscow. Source: http://xn----7sbiew6aadnema7p.xn--p1ai/sity_id.php?id=1#name

As noted earlier, protest actions are connected to the city topography. There is a general tendency to organize political protests in the city center. However, the situation in Moscow is not typical: many of the most significant actions of opposition took place in such places as Bolotnaya Square, Chistye Prudy, Sakharov prospect, and Novyi Arbat. These places possess longstanding associations with the intelligentsia and cultural vibrancy of Moscow. It is clear why the governing power would prohibit the opposition from organizing demonstrations in the heart of the capital, for example in the Red Square: such locations are, after all, metonyms for Russian statehood and must not be compromised by any protest movement lest it send a potent symbolic message.

The names given to certain Russian actions during that wave of protest sound like slogans themselves: "Марш миллионов" (The March of Millions) has the auditory appeal of alliteration, while "Народный марш" (The People's March) boasts a distinctively and enticingly populist tone. They sound more aspirational than realistic, however, indicating a high level of optimism. These slogan-names emphasize the mass character of the events, even if it was a declaration never fulfilled ("The March of Millions" fell far short of that many participants). These slogans convey the feeling of power and the will to connect people, suggestive of mobilizing an army.

The slogans of protesters in Russia are coyly meaningful and very often refer to historical events, literary texts, and famous cultural figures. However, such allusions are addressed to the educated people instead of a broader audience. For example, the person who would understand the slogan "Чума на обе ваших палаты № 6!" ("The plague on both your wards #6") should remember not only Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*, but also the short story by Anton Chekhov "Ward #6" (referring to a mental institution), and perhaps the eponymous song by the legendary rock poet Alexander Bashlachev. Likewise, the slogan "Дума. Обыкновенный фашизм" (The

Parliament. Ordinary fascism) speaks to individuals familiar with the 1965 documentary film by Mikhail Romm *Обыкновенный фашизм* (*Ordinary Fascism*; see figure 7 for another example).

Compared to Ukrainian slogans that sidestep such cerebral intertextuality, these Russian samples are directed at a narrow group of educated insiders, rather than the whole spectrum of society. This limiting factor contradicts the foundational purpose of a political slogan: to mobilize the masses. The findings of research undertaken by a group of sociolinguists on the oppositional discourse during the protests in Russia have no surprise. They suggest that the slogans had three groups of addressees: the government, protesters (a group of people supporting the opposition), and an unspecified addressee.[407]

The protesters in Russia's two capitals are separated from their rural countrymen in their level of education and cultural sophistication. However, their strategies are still in keeping with grassroots movements in that they require very little money. Most of the protest posters are hand-made, even though the leaders of opposition belong to the upper class and possess the means to mass-produce merchandise as was the case in Ukraine in 2004-2005. Using this amateur style sends an ambiguous signal to ordinary people: it prevents the dissemination of the message to a broader audience and transmits their unwillingness to invest financially in the country's future.

A difficult political situation stimulates artists to look for new spaces and platforms for self-expression. In such circumstances, graffiti becomes a powerful tool as a medium of communicating with a mass audience. Graffiti wields a special power because any space may become communicative under its influence. The graffiti collective "Зачем?" (Why? What For?) posed the titular, deceptively simple question in various locations in Moscow. Though nominally

[407] Alexandra Arkhipova, Anton Somin, Alexandra Sheveleva, *Shershavym yazykom plakata: oppositsionnyi diskurs na protestnyh akciyah*, in: *My ne My: Antropologiya protesta v Rossii*, edited by A. Arhipova, (Tartu: Nauchnoye izdatelstvo ELM, 2014), 146.

dedicated to the Victory Day, it prompted people to ruminate on different issues, such as why the collective was doing this; why this question was being asked; and what this question was about, to begin with. People were invited to think philosophically about the purpose of life as well as this exact moment's political implications. Colleen McQuillen emphasizes: "It voices the collective's social agenda, which seeks to challenge the status quo by questioning dominant narratives and attitudes: the crewmembers challenge the official narrative of Moscow as a proxy for status quo, the perception of graffiti writing as vandalism, and prevailing ideas of what comprises normative social behavior"[408]. McQuillen thoughtfully probes the internal conflict enclosed in such artistic practices. While broaching vital social issues, they cannot mobilize the masses because of their intrinsic associative ties to vandalism.

Since 2012, when Putin began his crackdown, Russian protests have mostly migrated into the virtual space. The Russian opposition has an active presence on social media and targets people via Twitter, Facebook, and Vkontakte (the Russian social network similar to Facebook), revealing their reliance on new consumer technologies. Such virtualization has both positive and negative effects. Positive because it makes people more mobile, facilitates coordination, and helps to build a network of "comrades." Such platforms as Grani.ru or OpenSpace.ru[409] create an open space for free discussion, which is difficult to achieve in reality[410]. At the same time, they reduce the number of potential recruits, because not everybody in Russia has access to the Internet and social media. High education level, good computer literacy, and financial means to purchase expensive

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[408] McQuillen Colleen, *Deviantnoie povedenie: The Graffiti* Zachem's *Social and Artistic Practices,* (Russian Literature (Special Issue): Russia – Culture of (Non-)Conformity: From the Last Soviet Time to the Present, Volumes 96-98, February – May, 2018), 330.

[409] Grani.ru, http://grani.ru/, OpenSpace: http://www.openspace.ru/

[410] After Euromaidan in Ukraine, a Facebook group calling itself "Russian Maidan" appeared: https://www.facebook.com/rumaidan/ In addition to mass protests, the "one-person picket" phenomenon has achieved some popularity. Such actions bespeak the bravery of certain individuals, but they are not effective for mass mobilization.

electronics point to the fact that it is a white-collar movement[411]. The color white was as meaningful for the Russian opposition as orange was for the Ukrainians in 2004-2005. A white ribbon became the symbol of transparency, embodying the demand for honest political elections (see figure 12). However, white is symbolically too peaceful: it is the color of the white flag, which signals surrender to a more powerful adversary. As a message to people, the white color is not productive because it may be associated with weakness and cannot consolidate any substantial mass movement.

It was mentioned above that a successful protest action has to both reflect and inflect the public's opinion. Actions are supposed to influence the recipients in various ways, but mostly they are directed at the subconscious and appeal directly to the emotions. For example, recent research on social movements underlines the significant role of emotions in mobilizing people[412]. These emotions may range from regret, wounded dignity, and rejection to consolidation, love, and empathy. Empathy for the so-called "victim" is of indisputable importance: we remember that the most recent revolution in Ukraine started as soon as people began to empathize with the victims of state violence, i.e. students beaten by the riot squads.

Take, for instance, contemporary artist Piotr Pavlensky, who famously nailed his scrotum to the Red Square flagstones. What emotions can this performance elicit from the audience, respectful as they are of men in possession of the proverbial balls? Is it shocking? – Yes! Does it send a meaningful message? – Yes! But can this message be appreciated by the ordinary people,

[411] According to the World data in 2011 – 2012, less than 60% of the Russian Federation inhabitants had Internet access. See: World Data Atlas, https://knoema.com/atlas/Russian-Federation/Share-of-the-Internet-users
[412] Helena Flam and Debra King, *Emotions and Social Movements*, (New York: Routledge, 2005).

say, schoolteachers? Hardly, if at all[413]. In summer 2016, after his release from prison, Pavlensky gave a talk in Kyiv (Fig.13) about his run-ins with the law[414]. He said he had invited prostitutes to his trial to make a statement, comparing the government—unfavorably—to women of easy virtue. And yet, much to his consternation, the prostitutes took the side of the powers that be and refused to support him.

The 2008 action of the *Voina Collective* (Figure 14) at the museum of natural science was significant as a piece of contemporary art. The venue is aptly chosen in that it recalls Foucauldian theories of power control over knowledge, and the selections, natural or naturalized, that power structures emulate and propagate. The performance also indexed an awakening of political subjectivity and a metaphorical break with the strictures of convention and petite bourgeois taste. Interpretive possibilities may be endless here, but the fact remains that the museum as an institution is sacrosanct from the point of view of the elusive "broad audience," so integral to the success of any large-scale political action. Even those who have not been to one in ages know that the museum is traditionally a temple of high culture, down to its frustrating set of injunctions: do not touch, do not laugh, do not run. By failing to spark any feeling of empathy for the "victims of Putin's regime," *Voina* foreclosed any chance to incite people to mass protest.

The same mechanism is at work in the interplay between reception and rejection that can be observed in *Pussy Riot's* now-legendary performance *Богородица, Путина прогони!* (See figure 15). This unassailably beautiful, expertly choreographed punk-rock action drew attention to

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[413] Ingrid Nelson analyzes Pavlensky's performances in the context of the Soviet dissident movement and shows that his actions are rooted in the early tradition. Much like the Soviet dissidents, Pavlensky, I believe, is doomed to speak to a small circle of people who can comprehend and admire his complex art. See Nelson Ingrid, *Artist for a New Age: Dissident Russian Performance Art and the Work of Petr Pavlensky,* (Russian Literature (Special Issue): Russia – Culture of (Non-)Conformity: From the Last Soviet Time to the Present, Volumes 96-98, February – May, 2018): 277 – 295.

[414] Petr Pavlenskiy, *Na sude so mnoi torgovalis' kak na rynke za summu shtrafa,* (Gromadske radio, Kyiv, 20.06.2016), https://hromadske.radio/ru/podcasts/hromadska-hvylya/na-sude-so-mnoy-torgovalis-kak-na-rynke-za-summu-shtrafa-pavlenskiy

the group from international audiences, especially academics focusing on Slavic studies. As with Pavlensky, it is artistically audacious and interpretively rich, and the message they delivered was actually clear and specific; but can this action invoke sympathy and awaken the masses for protest against Putin? Indeed, their message was not even directed toward the masses; the actionists were not interested in mass mobilization. They appealed to the Mother of God, not to the people of Russia[415]. As a result, they fascinated specialists in Eastern European studies,[416] rather than their own people, the majority of whom are Russian Orthodox. Here, one might recall that the subsequent punishment was initially called for by Patriarch Kirill, an ambassador of the inherently conservative church that stands against any kind of revolution.[417] However, the Russian Orthodox community is not homogenous and has multiple voices: a telling example is deacon Andrey Kuraev[418], who is capable of staying reasonable and yet enjoying respect from different groups of Russians, not necessarily Orthodox but atheists as well. The film *Leviathan* (2014) by Andrey Zviagintsev may be an anticlerical movie**,** but it received much more support and understanding from the ordinary people than the punk prayer of *Pussy Riot*[419].

[415] Kerith Woodyard analyzes the connection between Pussy Riot's action and the concept of a holy fool, traditional for Russian culture. See Woodyard Kerith, "Pussy Riot and Holy Foolishness of Punk," *Rock Music Studies* 1, no. 3 (2014): 268-286.

[416] There are a number of scholarly articles dedicated to the Pussy Riot phenomenon and approaching it from various conceptual angles. For example: Tore Tvarno Lind, "Blasphemy Cries over Pussy Riot's *"Punk Prayer"", Danish Musicology Online*, Special Edition: Researching Music Censorship, (2015): 7-34; Katharina Wiedlack, Masha Neufeld, "Lost in Translation? Pussy Riot Solidarity Activism and the Danger of Perpetuating North/Western Hegemonies*," Religion & Gender* 4, no. 2, (2014): 145-165; Elena Gapova, "Becoming Visible in Digital Age*," Feminist Media Studies* 15, no. 1 (2015): 18-35

[417] Patriarch Kirill's comments about Pussy Riot action. Patriarch Kirill, (RIA Novosti, 24,03,2012), https://ria.ru/20120324/604695745.html

[418] For example, deacon Andrey Kuraev's Live Journal page is quite popular: Deacon Andrey Kuraev, Dnevnik, (Live journal), https://diak-kuraev.livejournal.com/. He also has plenty of followers on Facebook; his own program on the radio ("Echo of Moscow"); and appears as a reputable media pundit equally venerated by the liberal opposition as well as the Orthodox Church believers.

[419] By contrast, one might consider the significant role of the clergy during the Revolution of Dignity, when the church literally became a fortress, a shelter, and a hospital for the protesters, regardless of their religion, as it was in Poland during the Solidarity movement time. In the Ukrainian case, the messages were always directed at consolidation and the creation of horizontal, intercommunicative ties among different subjects.

The Revolution of Dignity shook the world, or at least the post-Soviet space of Eastern and Central Europe. The confrontation between unarmed citizens and fully armed governmental military forces remained in the international media focus for months. Modern digital technologies certainly played an extremely important role in the coverage of the events and made further scholarship more evidence-based. Some researchers are now focusing on the chronology of the events[420]; others on the emotional and existential values of the Revolution,[421] or its consequences for Ukrainian-Russian relations[422]. The role of Euromaidan in the development of Ukrainian civil society was analyzed by David Marples and Frederik Mills in their monograph *Ukraine's Euromaidan: Analyses of a Civil Revolution*[423]**.** Sophie Falsini and Susann Worschech also detail the influence of the Euromaidan on Ukrainian civil society, emphasizing the role of social capital and trust in post-Maidan times[424].

Although the beginning of the Euromaidan is fairly easy to pinpoint, opinions vary as to when it ended. I limit my timeframe to February 22, 2014: the date when the Ukrainian Parliament voted to remove Viktor Yanukovych from office, and Ukraine entered a new stage of civic society development. In what follows, I will demonstrate that the Ukrainian civil society draws on multiple

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[420] See: Tetyana Dzyadevych, *Ukraine in Flames*,(Platzforma, 5 Feb. 2014): http://www.platzforma.md/arhive/1169; Andrey Kurkov, *Ukraine Diaries: Dispatches from Kiev*, (London: Random House, 2015); Sonya Koshkina *Maidan, Untold Story* (CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform (1755), 2015); Mychailo Wynnyckyj, Andreas Umlaund, Serhii Plokhy, *Ukraine's Maidan, Russia's War A Chronicle and Analysis of the Revolution of Dignity*,(Stuttgart: Ibidem, 2019).

[421] See: Ol'ga Sviders'ka, Psychological Determinants of Mass Political Behavior in Ukraine (on the Basic Revolution of Dignity, 2013 - 2014), (Studium Europy Sriodkowej i Wschodniej, 2016, #5): 271-279; Marci Shore, The Ukrainian Night: An Intimate History of Revolution, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2018).

[422] Taras Kuzio, *Putin's War Against Ukraine: Revolution, Nationalism, and Crime,* (CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2017); Olga Bertelsen, Revolution and War in Contemporary Ukraine: the Challenge of Change (Stuttgart: Ibidem-Verlag, 2017); Gordon M Hahn, *Ukraine Over the Edge: Russia, the West, and the "New Cold War"* **(**Jefferson: McFarland & Company, 2018**).**

[423] David Marples, Frederik Mills, *Ukraine's Euromaidan: Analyses of a Civil Revolution, (*Stuttgart: Ibidem-Verlag, 2015).

[424] Sophie Falsini, Susann Worschech, The Euromaidan's Effect on Civil Society: Why and How Ukrainian Social Capital Increased after the Revolution of Dignity, (La Vergne: Ibidem Press, 2018).

traditions that need to be analyzed in depth: connections to the mythical medieval past; idealized Cossack symbolism; the tradition of the global sixties protest movements in the West; and the mobilization of polarized gender roles.

It is difficult to comprehend what happened in Kyiv in November 2013 – February 2014 without taking into consideration the preceding history of mass activism in Ukraine, from the early 1990s on. Each subsequent action—The Granite Revolution (1990), Kuchmagate (1999 – 2000), the Orange Revolution of 2004, and finally Euromaidan of 2013–2014—builds upon the previous one and yet adds something unprecedented. They are, one and all, vivid markers of the newborn Ukrainian subjectivity.

As is typical of Ukrainian protest movements, the Euromaidan sprang up in October 2013 (one might say the fall has become the definitive season for political unrest in Ukraine). There were several stages to the event, itself the longest protest in modern Ukrainian history. It was also the most all-encompassing. On the one hand, it consolidated all previous Ukrainian experience; on the other, it became a part of the global protest movement, similar to Occupy!, Taksim Square in Istanbul, or Bolotnaya Square in Moscow[425].

The role of social networks ought not to be underestimated as Facebook, Twitter, and Internet television became an organic part of the process and the most resonant toll of mass mobilization. The main agents were young people, and not only the students of the Kyiv Mohyla Academy and the Catholic University of Lviv, but, for the first time, from most other colleges in town, as well. Then students from other regions joined in; and finally, their parents, who had experienced the Revolution on the Granite first-hand, came out, too.

[425] With Bolotnaya Square it might be more complicated, because during that protest there were many markers of the influence of previous Ukrainian protests. This topic deserves another paper.

The whole country was engaged in the process of political protest, gradually adding new agents to the movement. The first phase was explicitly pro-European, and gave the movement its name, relying on the heavy use of EU symbols: colors of the EU flag were matched with the Ukrainian flag in order to create a strong visual effect. The main slogan was *"Україна — це Європа!" (Ukraine is Europe!).* Other slogans mostly had the same positive constructive message: *"Наш дім — Європа!" (Our home is Europe!), "Україні — європейське майбутнє" (European future for Ukraine).*

When an agreement with the European Union was not signed, and the Ukrainian state resorted to violence, the main rhetoric of the protest dramatically changed: "Down with the Criminal Power!", "Criminals for Prison!," etc. No longer only a political entity, Europe became a symbolic space of human values. This change of discourse was, of course, reflected in the language of protest. English, Polish, and Russian became the main languages for international audiences. In addition to the local historical context, the context of the 1968 European upheavals was relied upon, as well. In the main protest camp were representatives of different countries who supported the struggle. A network of *maidans* spread all over Ukraine and then the world (see figure 16). The second phase of the protest was remarkable for its expansion of the space controlled by protesters. To the traditional squares and streets were added the buildings of the Labor Union, the City Hall, the Palace of Art and Culture, etc. One's physical presence in the Maidan became a performative act of protest, aiding the quality of messaging by augmenting the quantity of participants. A ritualistic farewell to the USSR was performed in these public spaces by smashing Lenin monuments. This symbolic act of emancipation from the Soviet past provoked heated debates not only inside the country, but also abroad, especially in Russia. Likewise, occupying local city halls became an act of enlarging the space of protest, when Sumy, Dnipropetrovsk, and

Poltava joined the movement. The tipping point of the Euromaidan came with the mass killings on Hrushevsky Street on February 18th. About a hundred people died, later to be honored with the title *Nebesna Sotnia* (The Heaven Hundred). Three days later, Yanukovych fled the country.

The Euro-revolution in Ukraine heralded a new stage of civil society mobilization, carried out in multiple polylogs inside and outside the country, simultaneously delivering messages via different media, either cutting-edge (social networks, YouTube, online TV) or traditional (self-made posters, booklets, speeches and songs). It also overlapped with different forms of activities both by grass-roots movements and professional politicians. The Euromaidan united people around universal values, announcing a new episteme in civil society discourse. It reshaped the symbolical geography of the country. Temporarily, the axiological division between West and East lost all relevance; even more controversially, the division between Ukrainian and Russian speakers was dismissed, heralding a qualitatively new step in the developing of civil society in Ukraine.

The emergent culture of the Euromaidan warrants comment, as the protesters' camp was effectively a city within the city, complete with an internal structure and endemic rituals. In essence, it was a replica of the medieval European city. Several significant facts speak in favor of this metaphor[426]. First of all, it is the whole infrastructure of the Maidan with its own defense system along the perimeter. In a way, textbooks on Ukrainian medieval history came to life within these precincts. Since ancient times, people used to protect besieged cities, including Kyiv, from numerous external enemies. Amateur wooden shields and lack of present-day weaponry only reinforced the medieval cultural code. Another signpost is delegation of duties and responsibilities. Some people are responsible for defense; others work in the kitchen; others still nurse children,

[426] In terms of Ukrainian historiography, the medieval times were not a dark period. Rather, it was the time of uprising in the Kievan Rus state, as well as one of intensive European integration. Kievan Rus back then played an important role in the European geopolitical arena.

etc. I connect this to the code of a medieval city (as it appears in the contemporary pop culture[427]), rather than the Cossack Sich, because a library (see figure 17) and a free independent university were instituted, and gender roles were strictly enforced.

During the peaceful phase of the protest, activists established a beautiful internal ritual. Every hour people sang the Ukrainian national anthem and lit torches. After that, they prayed. Representatives of different religions convened and prayed together. Quite unexpectedly, the church regained its social respect and importance after the Bloody Sunday,[428] when a downtown monastery opened its doors to the students running away from the violent riot squad troops. The St. Michael monastery saved the protesters from physical violence and arrests. At that moment the Ukrainian Orthodox Church, clearly of the Kyiv Patriarchate, staked its position in the conflict between citizens and state power.[429] It should also be mentioned that almost all religious affiliations united in support of the protesters as Catholic (Rome and Greek) and Protestant churches also opened their doors for the protesters to sleep and recover. Jewish and Muslim religious leaders expressed their support and prayed together with others during the hourly ritual praying at the Maidan. Only the Orthodox Church of the Moscow Patriarchate took the side of the state.

One can notice the upsurge of religious authority in post-Soviet Ukraine[430]. It is especially

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[427] Not for nothing have the Renaissance-fair-like clubs of medieval historical reconstruction become very popular and spread all over the country. A list of clubs and information about them can be found at the Live Action Role Play (Clubs of Historical Reconstruction), https://sites.google.com/site/larprinukraine/klubi-istoricnoie-rekonstrukciie. There is even a historical amusement park *Ancient Kyiv*, https://parkkyivrus.com/en

[428] *Bloody Sunday* as an idiom coined for the events of 22 January 1905 in St Petersburg, Russia, where unarmed demonstrators marching to present a petition to Emperor Nicholas II were fired upon by the Emperor Guard soldiers. November 30 2013 became the Ukrainian Bloody Sunday when Yanukovych's regime started the most brutal crackdown of the peaceful demonstration in the entirety of Ukrainian modern history.

[429] http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZjK62_mXiHo

[430] The last few years have been tainted by a string of corruption scandals involving the Church (mostly the Orthodox Church of the Moscow Patriarchate). Natalia Shlikhta presented a thorough analysis of church discourse in contemporary Ukrainian history. See: Natalia Shlikhta, *Eastern Christian Churches Between State and Society: An Overview of the Religious Landscape in Ukraine (1989–2014)*, (Kyiv-Mohyla Humanities Journal, 2016).

significant because of the multifaith situation in Ukraine. Traditionally, Ukrainians have always prided themselves on their religious diversity constituted by three Orthodox churches, two Catholic ones, a number of protestant denominations, plus a conspicuous rise of Judaism and Islam; followers of Krishna and Buddha express their religious views freely, as well. There were some tensions between Orthodox churches and Catholics for the ownership of church property and land, especially in Western Ukrainian regions in the early 1990s. Relations between the Orthodox church and protestants were not always entirely amicable, either, but the Maidan changed everything. A viral photo distributed via the Internet showed a girl confessing to a priest out in the street, in a snowfall. While not characteristic of the 21st-century European city, such collective syncretism is also a distinct throwback to medieval cultural mythology.

It may not be unique to Ukrainian experience, but for contemporary Ukraine this religious reunion became another step toward a unified, inclusive nationhood.[431] The use of the traditional form of democratic self-governing *viche* (people's forum) also can be traced back to the medieval form of democratic ruling[432]. *Viche* became a regular meeting where the leaders of the opposition and demos (in the most flattering understanding of this word) debated current issues. By reverting to this ancient forum people declared their return to the European past, as well as a return to times predating the Russian state, which typified another form of mental separation from the current Russian pressure and domination. The code of Kyivan Rus became so powerful an ideological tool that it was followed by a proposal to replace, in contemporary Russian schoolbooks, "Kyivan Russ" with "Ancient Russ"[433].

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[431] See: Cristian Smith (ed.), Disruptive Religion. The Forth of Faith in Social Movement Activism (New York: Routledge, 1996).
[432] *Viche* (Internet Encyclopedia of Ukraine), http://www.encyclopediaofukraine.com/display.asp?linkpath=pages%5CV%5CI%5CVicheIT.htm
[433] *Kievskaia Rus' uzhe ne Kievskaia,* (Voiennoe Obozzrenie, 23 oktiabria 2013), https://topwar.ru/34902-kievskaya-rus-uzhe-ne-kievskaya.html

Besides the medieval mythology described above, the protesters utilized the myth of the Cossack Sich. The Cossack discourse is inextricably linked to the discourse of Ukrainian nation-building from the Romantic era. All Ukrainian Romantic poets appealed to Cossack mythology; all Ukrainian schoolchildren read and memorized the writings of Taras Shevchenko, Mykola Kostomarov, and Panteleimon Kulish. It is no surprise, then, that the Cossacks and the legends of their military prowess had a profound effect on the Euromaidan rebellion. They borrowed the Cossacks' military terminology, aesthetics, music and dances, even haircuts and Cossack-style nicknames. The Cossack code manifested itself in two registers simultaneously, both as a bastion of high culture and a receptacle of pop culture (e.g., three opposition leaders—Yatseniuk, Klytchko, and Tyahnybok—were frequently portrayed as the three characters in Volodymyr Dakhno's 1967 animated series *The Cossacks*, a perennial popular favorite). Proverbs like "Козацькому роду нема переводу" (*Cossack kin will never disappear)* became slogans, printed on t-shirts, bags, and posters. Witnesses testified that almost every night a *kobzar* was playing an old-timey song. These recognizable cultural markers created a *lingua franca* and united people.

December 10th marked the third phase of the protest. At night, military troops attacked the peaceful demonstration. One can observe an interesting gender dynamic on display here. Andriy Parubiy, the leader of the protest camp, commanded the men to protect the symbolic bulwark, while the women were to hide inside the fortification and to support men with songs and prayers. The symbolic medieval city went back to the traditional gender roles: men as protectors and warriors; women laboring on the "home front." The most active feminists stood together with men on the frontlines[434], but women generally stationed in the hospitals, kitchens, or lecture halls and

[434] There was created a women's military squad; self-defense paramilitary courses were also taught. See: Anastasia Moskovychova, *Zinky na Maidani: abo Kuhnia abo Barykady?,* (Radio Svoboda, Luty 4, 2014), https://www.radiosvoboda.org/a/25252319.html

in this way contributed to the common deed[435].

Drawing on aspects of Ukrainian collective memory, the Euromaidan was a multilayered, hybrid phenomenon connecting different traditions and time periods. For example, along with the old Slavic codes it appealed to the hippie movement of the global 1960s, conjuring up, in its abundance of flowers and kisses, the anti-Vietnam war demonstrations in the USA. On December 13th the protesters started a new initiative: the mobilization of a special women's guard devoted to, literally, kindness and beauty. The slogan of the action was *"Краса врятує світ!" (Beauty will save the world).* Girls were invited to make sandwiches and bring them to the starving soldiers, thus luring them to the protesters' side. Even the most radical feminists did not comment on this deeply patriarchal initiative, since femininity was marshaled for the higher purposes of national liberation.

Also, women can serve as symbols of the nation and revolution[436], their beauty representing the moral rectitude and fortitude of a national community[437]. For example, Oksana Zabuzhko

[435] I am aware that the issue of women's participation in the Revolution of Dignity is much broader and deeper. There is abundant scholarship done on this topic. See: Sarah D. Phillips, *The* "Women's Squad in Ukraine's protests: feminism, nationalism, and militarism on the Maidan," *American Ethnologist Journal of the American Ethnological Society* 41, no. 3 (2014): 414-426; Tamara Martsenyuk, Iryna Troian, *Gender Role Scenarios of Women's Participation in Euromaidan Protests in Ukraine,* in: Resende E., Budrytė D., Buhari-Gulmez D. (eds) *Crisis and Change in Post-Cold War Global Politics*, (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, Cham, 2018): 129-153; Josh Cohen, *Women of the Euromaidan: Where Were They Then and Where Are They Now,* (Atlantic Council, March 2016): https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/ukrainealert/women-of-the-euromaidan-where-were-they-then-and-where-are-they-now; Olena Nikolayenko, Maria DeCasper, Why Women Protest: Insights from Ukraine's Euromaidan, (*Slavic Review*, Volume 77, Issue 3, Fall 2018), 726-751.

[436] Joan Landes analyzed how women's images worked for national representation during the French revolution, but her analyses is applicable to another case studies. She articulated the phenomenon and provided the key of interpretation. See: Joan Landes, *Visualizing the Nation: Gender, Representation, and Revolution in Eighteenth-Century France*, (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2001).

[437] The intersection of gender and nationalism is a separate field of study. See: Jon Mulholland, Nicola Montagna, Erin Sanders-McDonagh (ed), *Gendering Nationalism. Intersections of Nation, Gender, and Sexuality*, (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018); Sita Ranchod-Nilsson, Mary Ann Tetreault (ed), *Women, States, and Nationalism. At Home in the Nation,* (London: Routledge, 2000).

mines the conceptual ramifications of this phenomenon [438] in her book on the subject, *The Chronicles of Eye-Witnesses. Nine Months of Ukrainian Resistance, whose very title quite obviously refers to the full term of pregnancy.*[439] (See figure 18).

The notion of consolidation is among the Maidan's major ones, exemplified by the slogan *"Разом і до кінця!" (Together and until the end!).* "Together" means here a union inside the country as well as with the world (all notes of support from abroad were widely publicized). "The end" does not have a single meaning, either, as it might be understood as the changing of the government and ousting of the president, or as the greater goal of European integration and resolute, irrevocable departure from the Soviet past.

Concomitant with this slogan is *"Разом до Перемоги!" (Together to Victory!)* The message of unity and solidarity is one of the most important ones for mass protests in general, but in Ukraine it receives an additional meaning as the participants pronounce the unity of Eastern and Western Ukraine. The slogan of the Orange revolution *"East and West together!"* was reborn. Another catchphrase, *"Крок за кроком до перемоги!" (Step by step to Victory!),* wisely indicates the gradual nature of change, cautioning people against expecting an immediate result. The lessons of the Orange Revolution were learned the hard way: big expectations bring about bitter disappointments. Now people are preparing for a long journey, whose final destination, alas, may not be properly articulated yet.

In a symbolically commanding redefinition of the past, the Ukrainian people soon realized

[438] The Ukrainian patriarchal cliché portraying Ukraine as a Woman/Mother was not contested at that point. Such discussions were postponed until peacetime and for academic audiences. See: Tatiana Zhurzhenko, *Feminist (De)Construction of Nationalism in the Post-Soviet Space,* in Marian Rubchak (ed.), *Mapping Difference: The Many Faces of Women in Contemporary Ukraine,* (New York - Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2011), 173-192; Marian Rubchak (ed.), *New Imaginaries, Youthful Reinventions of Ukraine's Cultural Paradigm,* (New York - Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2015).
[439] Oksana Zabuzhko, Khroniky Samovydtsiv: Dev'iat' Misiatsiv Ukrains'koho Sprotyvu, (Kyiv: Komora, 2014).

that they finally had to remove Lenin, metonymically and vigilantly present in the form of countless monuments, from their main squares and streets, because he stood for the old order of things. At this point people wanted to say goodbye to Mr. President as well as to the whole system he exemplified. The uncultured, unsophisticated Yanukovych, as a relic of the Soviet past who dashed his people's hopes for Euro-integration, had to go following Lenin. The song "Vitya, ciao!," set to the tune of the revolutionary classic "Bella, ciao!," became one of Maidan's unofficial anthems. The video of this song also summarized the most egregious infamies associated with Yanukovych's presidency.[440]

One of the most creative artistic undertakings aimed at international audiences is the video "Ukraine: The Rising of the Hobbits"[441], in which the main Ukrainian events of the last years are incorporated into the plot of Tolkien's saga. To make it approachable for the international viewers, the authors added English subtitles to their work. The metaphor of a fight between Good and Evil, Light and Dark became especially relevant after December 10th, when all through the night people stood guard along the perimeter of a peaceful demonstration.

As the "Euro" prefix makes evident, connections to the external world were of paramount importance for the accomplishment of this revolution's mission. People issued various appeals in English and other European languages, addressed both to officials and ordinary people. On the main stage, foreign representatives were always warmly welcomed. All international media were carefully monitored as articles were immediately disseminated via social networks. As a gesture of emotional support, the protesters accepted a special issue of the Polish tabloid *Fact* in the Ukrainian language.

The recent protests in Ukraine ushered in a new stage in civil society mobilization. One

[440] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=945gQpi0qTU
[441] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hIsA8KwfRHA

may say they have changed the mental paradigm of Ukrainians, previously so fond of saying, *Моя хата з краю, нічого не знаю* (*My hut is aside, I know nothing*). People realized that they were responsible for their own lives, but also had to be responsible for those nearby. Sharing everything with everybody became Maidan's routine, giving rise to a powerful volunteer movement, which helps Ukraine survive nowadays, while contemporary media created a sort of global panopticon, which allowed people to watch the Ukrainian events unfold from each corner of the globe.

In this chapter I compared the political slogans used in Ukraine and Russia during the protest actions of the 2000s. As I examined the slogans used in Russia in 2011–2012 I suggested that the opposition's strategies were similar to the Ukrainian ones employed in 2000–2001. I also pointed to the similarities between the protest slogans and strategies of these two countries and those used in the Arab Spring revolutions. They include the central importance of location and the way that names of places become rallying cries. I have emphasized the specificity of slogans as a communication tool for mass-consensus mobilization, which is essential for developing a civil society that holds dear democratic values and human rights. Political protest slogans in Ukraine and Russia reflect the transitional situation in both countries, wherein creating a free, open space for self-expression is a new challenge. While Ukrainian slogans, honed by advertising firms, initially appeared successful in effecting change in 2005, time has shown that the grassroots activism of earlier years produced more enduring transformations. In Russia the divide between the producers and receivers of oppositional messages stems from the slogans' sophisticated intertextuality that fails to resonate with ordinary people. In further research I would like to address the strategies used by Aleksei Navalny for mobilizing people, similar on the surface yet far from identical on closer inspection. As these case studies have shown, political opposition must craft a direct message accessible to all members of society and present it in equally democratic forms.

The most recent Euro-revolution in Ukraine accumulated the country's previous experience of civil unrest and tailored the stratagems of the global *'Occupy!'* movement to its needs. It became a complex phenomenon which actualized different cultural codes, both from within Ukraine and globally. The Euromaidan demonstrated the depth of Ukrainian integration into the global cultural space. It is too early to predict the results of the Euro-revolution, especially now, after the annexation of the Crimean Peninsula, with the hybrid war in the South East still raging on, and the new president Volodymyr Zelensky so recently elected, but we can acknowledge the preliminary emergence of a political nation and a civil society in post-Soviet Ukraine.

Illustrations:

Figure 1 Euromaidan graffiti, Icons of Revolution, depicting the pantheon of Ukrainian poetry (Taras Shevchenko, Lesya Ukrainka, Ivan Franko) as revolutionaries.

Figure 2 This leaflet with a silhouette of Georgy Gongadze's head asks the direct question: Who will be next?

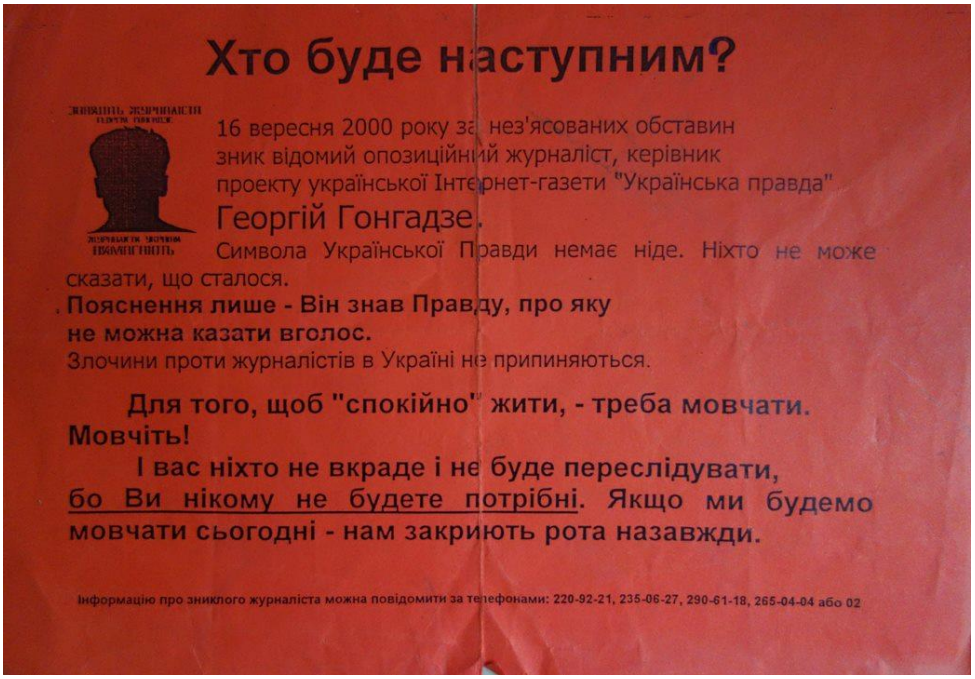

Figure 3 This ubiquitous silhouette became the visual embodiment of Ukraine without Kuchma

Figure 4 Another simple and direct question about Georgy Gongadze: Ukraine, are you not ashamed?

Figure 5 Orange Revolution: Yushchenko, Yes!

Figure 6 Orange Revolution: Regions support Yushchenko! Together we are many!

Figure 7 A pun in Bolotnaya Square in Moscow: We are not mute! It also can be interpreted as: We are not not-us! Furthermore, it alludes to the famous phrase "Мы не рабы!" (We are not slaves!)

Figure 8 An articulation of protest against the usurpation of power

Figure 9 Russian writers Lyudmila Ulitskaya and Boris Akunin at Occupy Abai

Figure 10 Writer Dmitri Bykov with a slogan: Don't rock the boat, our rat gets seasick

Figure 11 Zakhar Prilepin as a member of the National Bolshevik party participates in the action on Bolotnaya Street

Figure 12 A girl dressed in white, the symbolic color of transparency, in Russian 2011-12 protests, known as the (failed) Snow Revolution

Figure 13 Petr Pavlensky's talk in Kyiv after his release from custody, June 20, 2016

Figure 14 A photo of Voina's performance at the Natural Science Museum (March 30, 2008)

Figure 15 Pussy Riot's Punk Prayer

Figure 16 Ukrainian writer Serhii Zhadan protests on Euromaidan in Kharkiv

Figure 17 Ukrainian writer Yuri Andrukhovych at the Maidan Library

Figure 18 Oksana Zabuzko agitating people to stand up for Ukraine

INSTEAD OF CONCLUSION

To write about well-known texts is always risky. It is all-too-easy to say something unoriginal, repetitive, and redundant - a rehashing of work by earlier scholars. However, when writing about the relation of literature and the political, it frequently turns out that there is a reason why well-known writers are well-known: they deserve to be, precisely because they are a rich font of meaning, insight, wisdom, or at least of questions and perplexities. In the logo-centric cultures of post-Soviet Ukraine and Russia, the novelist still enjoys some renown. The novels I have selected and studied above represent important voices in a conversation; they represent guides to a certain spiritual human terrain; they represent landmarks of thought and feeling. As such, they repay our close reading with insight into contemporary political subjectivities at work in the post-Soviet world.

As I have expressed above, the initial impetus for the dissertation research began in my own experiences as a *participant* this very world. Being moved by the significance of the mass protests in Ukraine, I wanted to write about them (especially when I found out Ukrainian influence on the Russian political space could be seen as well). I appreciate my supervisor Prof. Colleen McQuillen, who gently directed back into the field of literary studies, and who helped me to see that my questions could be asked (and, to some extent, answered) through the critical interpretation of literature.

To pick up again the initial questions, I can affirm that Russian and Ukrainian political subjectivity developed in different directions after the collapse of the USSR. Ukrainian writers are looking for new forms, experimenting with different forms of narrations, trying to cover all gaps Ukrainian literature missed in previous times. Andrukhovych, Zabuzhko, and Zhadan obviously enjoy *being the first* in (post)modern Ukrainian literature. The checklist includes: the

first family saga (more than hundred years after *The Buddenbrooks* (1901), the first scene of interracial sex in the women's locker room – checked, and the first road novel of the freedom (almost fifty years after *On the Road* (1957). Even at the level of the narrator Ukrainian writers stay alone and write mostly the I-narration randomly switching to You-narration or He/She narration. The Soviet heritage plays an important but rather negative role, even though it is not clear what to do after the departure from the Soviet Union. For instance, Andrukhovych transmits all Soviet stereotypes, not always perceiving their discriminatory power. Zhadan claims that after the collapse of the USSR life became worse not because the USSR was good, but because new Ukrainian government was not capable to create something better. Zabuzhko attempted to redirect all responsibility for failure to the evil Soviets/Russians without taking into consideration Ukrainian agency in all atrocities which were done in Ukraine.

The Russian writers explored above have demonstrated more dependence on novelistic tradition. They hew to convention and readily play with poetic forms and content. The third person narrative immediately recalls for a reader works of Russian classical prose. The most experimental (among the three Russian writers I examine) is Pelevin, who is rooted in Russian nihilistic literature and his cynicism came from there. Prilepin is full of resentments about Russia much like Dostoyevsky. Prilepin's bitterness about unrecognized little men relates to his bitterness about Russia not being recognized on the world stage. Ulitskaya writes her novel with full awareness that the roots of good and bad are inside a person and inside a family. She does assign the responsibility for cruelty and injustice to someone else.

What I have found fascinating is that post-Soviet political subjectivity in Russia and Ukraine developed in a distinctly epistemological manner, with questions about the true and the real being front and center. Seeing truth as an instrument of economic or political power (as

Prilepin showed us in his novel), is also to see the relative, conditional quality of both knowledge and political good. Likewise, ignoring people and assaulting their dignity may ultimately motivate anarchical protest, as one can see in both Zhadan's and Pelevin's texts. Zabuzhko and Uitskaya's novels seem to issue from a place of hope – hope that the situation may improve if the next generations will investigate and learn the truth about the past. According to their model, historical inquiry is itself an important and desirable act for forming post-Soviet political subjectivity.

This dissertation has sought to respect the chronological order of events from the collapse of the USSR to the most recent mass protests. All the novelists participated in the mass protests proving that they belong to the People. In the novels they address the different mass protests from the 1990s and the Orange revolution, which means they consider those declarations of the collective political subjectivity seriously and see themselves as a part of the process.

I'm excited to I see the potential for further research. It would be interesting, for example, to compare political subjects in an early Andrukhovych novel with the "adult" one; to see how far Pelevin's prophecy goes in his recent *IPhuck 10* (2017). Prilepin's transition from advocating anarchism to supporting Putin's regime deserves its own study. It would be productive to compare the political consciousness of Zhadan-narrator in *Anarchy in the Ukr* with *Luhansk Diary,* and his engagement with the current Ukrainian politics. Interestingly enough, the two anarchists from my research grew up into "statists" but under the different flags. Likewise, it would be interesting to compare Ulitskaya's historical bio-narratives project with her novel and to see if Oksana Zabuzhko has changed the tone of her ideological writing over the course time. I look forward to undertaking these related research projects and further contributing to the study of political subjectivity in relation to the post-Soviet literatures of Russia and Ukraine.

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VITA

ESUCATION: **University of Illinois at Chicago, PhD in Slavic Studies, 2019**
Competed graduate Concentration in Gender and Women Studies, and graduate Concentration in Central and Eastern European Studies

National University of "Kyiv-Mohyla Academy" (Ukraine), MA in Cultural Studies (Honors) 1999

Ukrainian State Pedagogical University, 1997, BA Degree in Philology,
Field: *Ukrainian and Russian Languages and Literature*

WORK EXPERIENCE: ***University of Illinois at Chicago, 2012 - 2019:***

Instructor of Russian
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California State University, Northridge, 06.07.2018 – 07.14.2018; 06.15.2017 – 07.21.2017
CSUN Russian Language & Culture Immersion Program
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COURSES TAUGHT:

University of Illinois at Chicago

- Introduction to Russian Film
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SELECTED PUBLICATIONS:

Refereed Edited Volume:

Neo-anti-colonialism VS Neo-imperialism: the Relevance of the Postcolonial Discourse in the Post-Soviet Space. (in Ukrainian and English), (ed. Gelinada Grinchenko and Tetyana

Dzyadevych), *East-West: the Scholarly Journal for History and Culture*, Special Issue, #16 – 18, Kovalsky Eastern Ukrainian Institute, Kharkiv 2013, 551 pp.

Chapter in Refereed Collective monographs:

*"*Postcolonial Research in Contemporary Ukrainian Humanities" (in Russian), (in co-authorship with Vahtang Kebuladze), Politics of Knowledge and Academic Communities, (Kebuladze, ed.), Vilnius, European Humanitarian University, 2015, pp. 172 – 191.

Refereed Journal Articles and Book Chapters:

"WWII: Women's Rapes Screening in Film. Comparing Film Narrations", *Plural, Journal of the History and Geography, Department "Ion Grenga", Pedagogical State University, Chisinau,* Vol.4, no.2, History. Culture. Society. Editura ARC, 2016, pp. 81 – 94.

"Garden in Venice" by Mileta Prodanovic as Post-colonial Text*"* (in Serbian), Српска књижевност у украјинском ЛитАкценту / Уредио Дејан АјдачиЋ. – Београд: Алма: Пројекат Расткоб 2015. 61 – 67.

"Child's Death as a Tool: Pioneer-Heroes in a Soviet Educational System (in English) in: *Dystopia: Journal of Totalitarian Ideologies and Regimes*, State University of Moldova, Center for the Study of Totalitarianism, Volume I, no 1 – 2 2012, Cartier 2012, pp. 316 – 323.

Book Reviews:

The Quest for a Free Ukraine, by Olena Chekan. Edited by Bohdan Rodyk Chekan. Vienna: Der Konterfei, 2015. 94 pages. ISBN 978-3-903043-04-6, The Sarmatian Review, Vol. XXXVI, #3, September 2016

Roger D. Markwick and Euridice Charon Cardona, *Soviet Women on the Frontline in the Second World War* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), xxiv, 305 pp. Index. ISBN: 978-0-230-57952-1, Ab/Imperio # 1/2014, pp. 51 – 54.

CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS:

2019 – AATSEEL, New Orleans, LA, paper presentation: "Anarchy as Tool to Heal the Wounded Dignity: *Sankya* by Zakhar Prilepin".
2018 – ASEEES, Boston, paper presentation: *"*Superfluous People are Speaking Out Loud for Their Own Agency: Zakhar Prilepin Challenges the Paradigm*"*.
2018 – ASN (Association for the Studies of Nationalities) World Convention, Harriman Institute, Columbia University, New York, NY, paper presentation: "Protest Slogans as a Tool for Achieving Civic Consensus: Contemporary Ukrainian and Russian Cases".
2018 – AATSEEL, Washington, DC, paper presentation: Post-Truth by 3P: Pelevin, Pomerantsev, Putin.

2017 – ASEEES, Chicago, paper presentation: *Protest Art as Wake-Up Tool for Mass Mobilization.*
2016 – ASEEES, Washington, DC, paper presentation: *'The Russian Woodpecker' (2015): Polyphony of Narrations from Chornobyl to Maidan.* Discussant at the panel *Contemporary Polish Film. Languages of (Dis) Engagement.*
2016 – Chicago Linguist Symposium, paper presentation: *Gamification as a tool for the blended-learning pedagogical model.*
2016 – AATSEEL, Austin, TX, panel presentation: *Ivan Franko as a Liminal Figure on the Crossroads of Cultures and Ideologies.*
2015 – ASEEES, Philadelphia, PA, paper presentation: *Maidan: from Private to Public.*
2014 – ASEEES, San Antonio, TX, paper presentation: *Word, Space, Place on the Service Civil Society Creation.*
2014 – Association Studies of Nationalities, New York, NY, paper presentation: *WWII: Women's Rapes Screening in Film. Comparing Film Narrations*.
2014 – AATSEEL, Chicago, IL, discussant at the panel *Revisiting Russian Past in Late Soviet and Post-Soviet Fiction and Film.*
2013 – ASEEES Convention, Boston, MA, paper presentation *Internal Emigration: The Soviet Epoch from the Ukrainian Corner (Private Notes of Oles Honchar (1918 - 1995).*

CONTRIBUTION TO PROFESSION:

Current: Communication Advisory Committee at the ASEEES, 2019 – 2020.
Current Graduate Students Representative at the ASEEES Board of Directors, since January 2018.
October 25-25, 2018. Meet the Writer: literary reading by Andriy Lyubka, UIC, "Tryzub", Chicago.
March 16-17, 2016. Meet the Writer: Literary reading by Yuri Andrukhovych, UIC, Ukrainian Modern Art Institute, Chicago.
Panel Talk at the Exhibition of Photography *Waiting for Mather Russia.*, Art Works Project, Chicago, 2/11/2016.
Discussant on Sergei Oushakin's talk: Subaltern Nation: on Postcolonial Histories of Socialism, UIC, January 16, 2014.
Roundtable discussion: Ukraine Between Russia and the EU, UIC, January 31, 2014.

ADDITIONAL PROJECTS:

Master Class "The Body as a Conductor of Attention" with Maksim Didenko, Renown Russian Theater Director, October 7-8, 2018, Chicago.
Summer School "Imperial History in a Global Age, 1870 - 1920", Saint Petersburg, Russia, May 26 – June 2, 2018.
Course Design "Personal and Public through the Classical Texts Lens", Open University of Maidan 2016 – Digital Humanities in Action, volunteering project.
Coaching at the Anti-Discrimination Training "Gender Platform", Ternopil, Ukraine, July 2015.
Regional Seminar for Excellence in Teaching 'Social Mobility and Modernization in Eastern Europe in the 20th Century, "Ion Grenada" State Pedagogical University in Republic Moldova, Summer Sessions 2012 – 2014.

SCHOLARSHIPS AND AWARDS:

Travel Grant from Prokhorov Foundation, 2018
Research Award from the Lithuanian Government, 2015

PROFESSIONAL ASSOSIATIONS AND MEMBERSHIP:

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