

# PUTIN ON PANTIES: SEXING RUSSIA IN LATE SOVIET AND POST-SOVIET CULTURE

Ellen Rutten

“As usual, Russia remains totalitarianism’s faithful mistress.”  
Vladimir Sorokin, 2005<sup>1</sup>

## 1 Introduction

Who will ever be able to count the number of songs, poems, paintings, statues, and films that hail Russia as a maternal figure? Alongside endless amounts of Russian references, odes to the mythical *matjuška* include songs by such icons of international pop culture as Iron Maiden and Sisters of Mercy. Understandably, when scholars began exploring how national gender mythologies take shape in Russia, they focused on the image of the nation as a maternal force (Barker 1986; Hubbs 1988 and Rjabov 2001). As recent as 2004, gender expert Christa Ebert asserted that it is this image which dominates Russian nation-building; by contrast, “wives [...] do not occupy a constitutive part in national symbolics” (Ebert 2004: 150).

However, this view of the Russian national myth as cloaked in a maternal mantle sits uneasily with modern Russian culture. Indeed, within twentieth-century intellectual thought the manifold representations of Russia as a mother strike the eye. But so do alternatively gendered visions, such as the more politically motivated metaphor of the nation as a bride. Blok’s “My Russia! My wife!”, the equation of Russia with Lara in *Doctor Živago*: when depicting their native land, many modern Russian writers, artists, and philosophers opt for metaphors of a bride or beloved woman over maternal imagery. The same metaphors flourish outside of Russia: a 2009 Toronto-based photo festival displayed a photoseries of the country by a Canadian photographer titled “The Drunken Bride, Russia Unveiled”.<sup>2</sup>

In the following pages, I expand and update – especially in sections 5 and 6 – a project that I introduced elsewhere:<sup>3</sup> a revision of existing thought on feminized

views of Russia, favoring conceptualizations of the nation as a bride-to-be rather than a mother figure. Bridal motifs permeate Russian nationalist and political discourse, which all too often couch the relationships between the Russian intellectual elite, state, and people as a gendered triangle. Stemming from ancient roots,<sup>4</sup> the ingredients of this “triad motif” meet in twentieth-century thought to form a popular political metaphor with a set of more or less stable features. The metaphor at issue renders the triangle consisting of intelligentsia–state–Russia as an amorous rivalry of two masculine forces competing for the same feminine entity. If Russia appears as the feminine component, then the state is presented as its symbolic captor or (older) husband, and the intelligentsia as its true (young) lover. Their amorous interaction is problematic: the symbolic “true bridegroom” is always an ineffectual bridegroom, for whom the feminized Russia invariably remains unattainable.

### **1 History: Half-Europeans and Sleeping Beauties**

The bride Russia, her husband the state, and the intelligentsia as ineffective suitor: these are the slightly schematic outlines of what I call the “bride-Russia” metaphor. If scholars have repeatedly acknowledged its persistent presence in Russian rhetorical culture, thus far, analyses of the metaphor tend to tackle limited historical periods without acknowledging its status of *continuo basso* in modern Russian culture.<sup>5</sup>

In practice, however, the trend to conceive of political interrelationships in terms of a problematic gendered triad runs through modern-day Russian culture as precisely such a continuous thread. It can be traced to the rise of nationalism no less than to a crisis of identity within the Russian intellectual elite — “that damaged class of half-Europeans”, to cite a frustrated Aleksandr Griboedov in 1826 (1999: 276-77). In the course of the nineteenth century, when feelings of alienation from both the state and common people increasingly tormented Russian intellectuals, Griboedov’s “damaged half-Europeans” became stock characters of the nineteenth-century Russian novel – a genre which relied on a highly formulaic plot scheme. Westernized-intellectual-falls-for-but-fails-to-conquer-genuinely-Russian-girl: that simplistic summary covers a surprisingly

large amount of nineteenth-century prose plots, including such canonical texts as Pushkin's *Eugene Onegin*, most of Turgenev's novels, and Herzen's *Who is to Blame*.

Nationalist concepts interlock with gender stereotypes when within this fixed plot, a westernized, urban, intellectual male hero is consistently opposed to a native, pastoral, spontaneous female heroine.<sup>6</sup> Exactly how this fusion of gender and nationalist paradigms came about is hard to determine, but it was a likely match at a time when national debates were conducted by predominantly male groups who identified with the role of (masculine) protector of the (feminized) nation (see Mayer 2000: 10); when, in addition, new theories on sexual difference were introduced (see Sluga 1998: 101); and when romantic thought enhanced the envisioning of abstract categories in concrete objects. To the romantic consciousness, to cite George Mosse, "a beautiful woman [...] exemplified the romantic utopia just as she represented the national ideal" (Mosse 1985: 99).<sup>7</sup>

But if gender loomed large in the nineteenth century, it was the early twentieth century that provided the conditions for morphing sociopolitical emotion into gendered metaphor. At a time when political tumult dovetailed with a growing cultural interest in femininity, gender takes on political relations became more commonplace, and nationalist rhetoric merged with what Zara Minc calls "one of the most widespread Symbolist myths: the symbolized folkloric plot of 'disenchantment' and liberation of the Sleeping Princess, captured by evil forces" (Minc 2004: 254). In contemporary revisions of that myth, Russia is a sleeping beauty – enchanted by the state – which cannot be awakened by the artist. Such was the case in Blok's *Russia (Rossija, 1908)*, for example, where the poet meekly yields the feminized nation to a "sorcerer"; and in his *Retribution (Vozmezdje, 1910-21)*, which portrays the influential statesman Konstantin Pobedonoscev as a magician who lulls a feminized Russia to sleep (Blok 1960-63/3:254, 3:328). And Blok was not alone: around the turn of the century, similar symbolic plots crowded literary texts, as well as newspaper articles, cartoons, paintings, and political posters.<sup>8</sup>

Why the myth of Russia as an unattainable bride waned — without completely disappearing — in Soviet Russia is a question I analyzed elsewhere

(Rutten 2010). What matters here is its revival in late Soviet and post-Soviet culture, when gendered takes on the Russia–intelligentsia–state triangle surface on every proverbial street corner. Despite an international desire to grasp postSoviet views of history and national identity, the contemporary prominence of gendered political imagery has sparked meager scholarly regard.<sup>9</sup> To incite a more integral discussion on the bridal metaphor, this article scrutinizes, first, two late Soviet novels, and, second, political rhetoric in (post-)perestrojka pop culture, with special emphasis on their roots in historical “bride-Russia” myths. Mere tips of a discursive iceberg, these sources suggest that “mother Russia” today shares her throne with a very un-motherlike symbolic sibling.

### 3 Sorokin & Erofeev

#### 3.1 National Beauties

In an essay on Vladimir Sorokin’s *Marina’s Thirtieth Love* (*Tridcataja ljubov’ Mariny*, 1983), David Gillespie highlights the kinship between this novel’s heroine and that of Viktor Erofeev’s *Russian Beauty* (*Russkaja krasavica*, 1982): “For both Ir[in]a and Marina, the body is a text on which, in which, is decided in parodic terms the destiny of Russia” (Gillespie 1999: 165).

The two novels indeed share markedly Russian heroines. Although both authors assured me they were written independently,<sup>10</sup> they coincide in more than one respect: in each, “our” gendered metaphor is implied in a triangular relationship between

- (1) a group of Soviet dissidents;
- (2) a sexually promiscuous, hyper-Russian heroine; and
- (3) a hero who represents the Soviet state. Furthermore, both teem with similarly sexualized allusions to earlier versions of the metaphor.

That Sorokin and Erofeev represent Russia as an attractive young woman will not surprise ardent followers of contemporary Russian literature. Between the 1980s and today, Russia arises as a beautiful bride in a plethora of poems, stories, novels, and essays by writers varying from Timur Kibirov to Viktor Pelevin, and from Eduard Limonov to Tat’jana Tolstaja.

Within the oeuvre of Sorokin and Erofeev the “bride-Russia” myth enjoys a particular prominence. In Erofeev’s *Men* (*Mužčiny*, 1995), the author calls Russia feminine, claiming to have fallen in love with its national symbol — a birch tree; in *Encyclopedia of the Russian Soul* (*Enciklopedija ruskoj duši*, 1999), he both praises the nation for its “womanish appearance,” and angrily compares it to a “whore” who “gives herself” to French culture; in *The Good Stalin* (*Xorošij Stalin*, 2004), Russia is portrayed as “a beauty dressed in snow and furs” (Erofeev 2005: 96 and 37; 1999: 35 and 67-69 and 2004: 140).

Sorokin’s interest in feminized Russia motifs is even more persistent. Invoking pagan notions of man as impregnator of the land, in *The Norm* (*Norma*, 1994) he depicts a stereotypical *intelligent* literally penetrating the Russian earth (Sorokin 2002/1:166). He recycles the same motif in *Blue Lard* (*Goluboe salo*, 1999), in his novel *23.000* (2006), and in the album *Deep into Russia* (*V glub’ Rossii*, 1994), a joint project with Oleg Kulik (see, for instance, Sorokin 2006: 625-27 and Sorokin and Kulik 1994). More recently, Sorokin painted a scene of erotic tension between people and regime in *Sugar Kremlin* (*Saxarnyj Kreml’*, 2008); this collection’s title story ends with the eleven-year-old heroine kissing and licking a Kremlin made entirely out of sugar: “and she dreamt of a sugar Ruler on a white horse” (Sorokin 2008: 44-45).<sup>11</sup>

However, if both authors keenly feminize Russia throughout their oeuvre, they do so nowhere as extensively as in *Russian Beauty* and *Marina’s Thirtieth Love*. Both novels follow sexually promiscuous women who grow up in provincial Russia and move to Moscow. Erofeev’s heroine, Irina Vladimirovna Tarakanova, is a prostitute with lesbian inclinations who has several sexual escapades with dissidents. In her search for true love, Tarakanova becomes involved with a fictional éminence grise of 1980s Moscow: Vladimir Sergeevič, a.k.a. Leonardik. In purposely hermetic terms, Erofeev crafts visions of a mystical marriage between the two and their possible conception of a son. Interwoven within their story is Irina’s attempt to have a mystical “enemy” of Russia penetrate her in order to save her country. The mystical marriage appears to be realized through an equally mystical act of coitus between Irina and the then-deceased Leonardik — “appears to be”, since the plot leaves ample room for other interpretations.

Sorokin's novel tells the comparable story of Marina Ivanovna Alekseeva, a piano teacher who leads a licentious life in 1980s Moscow, indulging in sexual excesses both with lesbian lovers and famous male dissidents. Like Erofeev's story, Sorokin's revolves around a mystical union between the heroine and her Mr. Right. Envisioned by Marina as a messianic saviour, this groom-to-be eventually turns up in the form of the Communist Party Member Sergej Nikolaevič Rumjancev. Through him, Marina experiences her first orgasm with a man, a climax that marks her transformation from a flesh-and-blood individual to a flatcharactered, model Soviet citizen. Ending even more inconclusively than Erofeev's novel, Marina's story mutates into pages full of random Soviet propaganda.

Re-enacting a classic feature of the "bride Russia" in Silver-Age discourse — that of the exalted saint and profane sinner united in one body — the two heroines deserve the label "Russian Beauty" in several respects.<sup>12</sup> Irina's story culminates when she wants to stage her attempt to mystically save Russia on Kulikovo field — a burdened setting in national history, against which Blok famously set his evocation of Russia as a wife in the 1900s. References to that poet swarm the depiction of Irina's struggle to liberate Russia, from which she arises as not merely its savior, but as its very incarnation.<sup>13</sup> Tagged a "patriot" of "very Russian" "national" beauty, Irina openly identifies with Russia when saying that on Kulikovo field "two fates require resolution: that of Russia and my own" (Erofeev 2002: 131, 224, 256, 339, 309).<sup>14</sup>

Erofeev is laying it on thick: his Irina is Russia's easily recognizable symbolic stand-in. Not unexpectedly, her status as such was noted by more than one reader (See Dark 1992: 177-87; Goscilo 1995: 78; Porter 1994: 151 and Dalton-Brown 1997: 224). Less discussed by critics — but no less obvious — is the identification with Russia of Sorokin's heroine, who conceptually blends with "the nation" in several scenes that highlight her wish to alter her life. First, she muses of a man who will be both Russia's savior and her own true love (Sorokin 2002/2:83–84, 120–22, 149, 182–83). Alluding to the dreams of another emphatically Russian heroine — Černyševskij's Vera Pavlovna — the dream hero juxtaposes Marina and Russia when he shows her a map of the country, exclaiming: "NOT YOU

LOVE ME, BUT SHE!” (Sorokin 2002/2: 121).<sup>15</sup> Later, when Marina happens upon a copy of Daniil Andreev’s esoteric treatise — and cult hit in 1980s Moscow — *Rose of the World* (*Roza mira*, 1950-58), Andreev’s vision of Russia as a symbolic bride-to-be feels to her “dear, like [...] a first love, a first kiss” (Sorokin 2002/2: 149).

The Marina-Russia parallel culminates at the turning point of the tale: Marina’s meeting with the Communist Rumjancev. He merges with the long-awaited lover of her dreams when he gives Marina a legendary orgasm — one in which the personal and national levels merge: while reaching a climax, Marina envisions herself enclosed by a million-strong crowd singing the Soviet anthem (Sorokin 2002/2: 171–74). From this point on, she loses all desire to distance herself from society.

Marina’s orgasm mirrors Irina’s sexual confrontation with “Russia’s enemy” at Kulikovo field — a meeting adorned by a mystical choir of “entirely Russian voices” which brings Irina to (religious) ecstasy (Erofeev 2002: 352–54). If the Soviet anthem makes Marina cry (Sorokin 2002/2: 172), Irina equally “melts into tears” upon hearing her choir (Erofeev 2002: 352). Right after her return, Irina experiences a physical orgasm with Leonardik, after which she claims to dissolve as a physical presence (Erofeev 2002: 395, 461).

The fusions of Marina and Irina with their surroundings and with the collective conjure up earlier instances of wholehearted identification with “the people”: those of the hyper-Russian heroines of the nineteenth-century novel. Puškin’s Tat’jana is notorious, with her famous “Russian soul” and love for the Russian winter; and Turgenev’s Asja — to mention another famous example from a lengthy list — is an “entirely Russian girl”. The shadows of these and many other female national icons haunt both Erofeev’s and Sorokin’s stories. They loom when Marina muses of dispersing in a “sea” of people (Sorokin 2002/2: 84); when Rumjancev implores her to “unite” with the people (Sorokin 2002/2: 166–67); and when Irina, a “thoroughbred Russian girl” who “love[s] winter,” claims to “love my people” (Erofeev 2002: 57–58, 164, 319-20).

Their heightened identification with the common people is motivated in part by the heroines’ origins: like their nineteenth-century prototypes, both grow up in

the provinces. Their move to Moscow reenacts another classic trope, popular in Soviet film, literature, and painting, in which “the capital turned out to be the metaphoric embodiment of a new feminine fate” (Fomenko 1999: 176).<sup>16</sup> Both authors may well have recycled that topos intentionally: Sorokin adores the Soviet comedies of Grigorij Aleksandrov and Ivan Pyr’ev, in which country-girl heroines find a vocation and true love in Moscow;<sup>17</sup> Erofeev’s novel was initially titled not *Russian*, but *Moscow Beauty*.<sup>18</sup>

Sorokin’s and Erofeev’s “Moscow beauties” embody Russia in yet another respect: both recycle the Russia-as-sleeping-beauty plot. The turning point in Marina’s life — the orgasm scene — is a literal awakening: when her Communist lover penetrates her in her sleep, the sound of the national anthem wakes her. Where in Silver-Age rhetorics the revolution was supposed to “awaken” a feminized Russia, Marina feels “born anew” after the love-making scene (Sorokin 2002/2: 175). Irina similarly experiences her efforts to save Russia through sex as a “resurrection” (Erofeev 2002: 354) — one whose depiction teems with references to the ultimate herald of the “sleeping-beauty Russia” myth, Blok. As if that weren’t explicit enough, Erofeev’s prose invokes Andrej Belyj’s *Green Meadow* (*Lug zelenyj*, 1905). If in this essay, Belyj represented Russia as a sleeping beauty “covered with a shroud [...]” whose “soul” is stolen by a “sorcerer”, Irina seeks to end an “everlasting sorcery” of Russia, so that “the shroud will fall” (Erofeev 2002: 296, 321, 340; Belyj 1994: 329).

### 3.2 Moaning Dissidents

Feminist historians of Russian literature have demonstrated that its heroines all too often function as mere projections of male desire. Sorokin’s and Erofeev’s “national beauties” are no exception: in Helena Goscilo’s words, *Russian Beauty*, “while parodying a host of Russian myths, nonetheless enthusiastically resorts to the malestream rhetoric that tropes nationhood as mother and, more recently, prostitute” (Goscilo 1996: 43). The parodistic dimension which Goscilo points out strongly modifies Erofeev’s — and Sorokin’s — male projections of femininity onto the nation, however: rather than identifying with them, these authors mock the writer-*intelligent* who idealizes and feminizes Russia.



Sorokin couples his heroine with such prominent real-life dissidents as Vladimir Vojnovič and Andrej Saxarov, and lets her devour all the cult *samizdat* reads.<sup>19</sup> Irina mingles with an equally stereotypical, if not strictly underground, cross section of the Soviet intelligentsia. She hangs out with “all of intellectual Moscow”, including real-life celebrity Vladimir Vysockij (Erofeev 2002: 25, 36). Her erudite admirers avidly follow the Soviet-dissident trend to identify with the historical intelligentsia its all talk-no action mentality. “You moan”, Irina upbraids them, “and don’t understand why it all just goes on with no sign of it coming to an end, [...] but if someone asks you: what is to be done? You’re silent” (Erofeev 2002: 290–91). The hint to Černyševskij couldn’t be clearer: Irina’s dissidents are faced with the same question that always pestered the intelligentsia. What Is To Be Done?

Sorokin’s *dissidenty* are no different from Irina’s “moaners”. The very opening of *Tridcataja ljubov’ Mariny* leads readers to Valentin, a pianist and self-proclaimed “ageing aristocratic offspring”. A contemporary heir to Russia’s most famous sluggard, Oblomov, Valentin enters the scene wearing a dressing gown in his apartment. He has sex with Marina and launches into a critique of society, which he blames for his inability to love or feel genuine emotion (Sorokin 2002/2: 10-20). Marina initially empathizes with Valentin and her other lovers, but ultimately, Rumjancev changes her mind. “That whole silly dissident movement of yours”, he fulminates, “What good is it? [...] You see, it’s easy to criticize. It’s harder to do something [...] Instead of just guessing how to save Russia” (Sorokin 2002/2: 161).

To summarize, the dissidents, as they emerge from Rumjancev’s and Irina’s assaults, are more than obvious offspring of the historical intelligentsia. Sorokin and Erofeev intensify this kinship by dusting off another foible of the classic *intelligent*: his infatuation with Western culture. Irina meets with friends at the home of an Oxford-educated foreign ambassador (Erofeev 2002: 36-37, 23); and Rumjancev brands Marina’s bohème friends parasites, whose wish to emigrate equals “hating your own people. And gaping open-mouthed at the West” (Sorokin 2002/2: 167).

Both novels also mimic classic (self-)criticisms of the intelligentsia by

representing the dissidents as unmasculine. In bed, Marina's intellectual friends are "helpless", passive "boys" or "children" (Sorokin 2002/2: 12–13, 89–90, 94). Irina's *intelligenty* are labeled "boys", "kid(die)s", or crying "children", who approach her as "their own mother" (Erofeev: 320–21, 335, 340, 346, 352, 358). Their representation as "immature" reiterates a seasoned rhetoric tradition: the nineteenth-century hero-*intelligent* was steadily pictured as childish or effeminate, and critics just as steadily translated that feature into sociopolitical complaints. In notoriously politicized reviews, the paladins of mid-nineteenth-century criticism complained that in Russia, "a child of the masculine gender [...] never becomes a man" (Černyševskij 1953: 210), and men "turn to graybeards the day after they stop being a child" (Pisarev 1982: 188).<sup>20</sup>

In the hands of Erofeev — whose 1980s and 1990s prose strongly relies on Silver-Age thinking (Rylkova 2007) — the opposition of the "weak" dissidents to Irina-cum-Russia conjures up an additional early twentieth-century rhetoric trend, of perceiving the intelligentsia's inability to "save Russia" as a matter of gender imbalance. Programmatic is Nikolaj Berdjaev's critique of the intelligentsia: rather than for concrete political misdeeds, he blamed *intelligenty* for being westernized "Russian boys" failing "to reveal an innate masculine spirit" and unite with the "feminine" Russian earth (Berdjaev 1983-/...: 4/269-274).

### 3.3 Dream Prince or Sorcerer?

Reworking classic political gender metaphors, Sorokin and Erofeev contrast the "unmasculine" Soviet intelligentsia to the third leg in the symbolic triangle: the heroine's Mr. Right. The latter simultaneously, and paradoxically, embodies the anti-establishment dissident scene and the Soviet regime itself.

Thus, one face of Leonardik is that of the independent artist. Identifying with Puškin and Tjutčev, the man owes his nickname to Leonardo da Vinci (Erofeev 2002: 58, 159, 232).<sup>21</sup> Irina, whose life he enters "from the world of art", sees their affair as a "merging" of "artist and heroine" (Erofeev 2002: 48, 385). But the other face of the *artiste* reveals an autocratic "hybrid of Tjutčev and a shaggy colonel", who "hymns heroic deeds and labor" (Erofeev 2002: 161, 132-33). Adorned with a war medal, this celebrity is *au fait* with state secrets and personally knows the

cultural and political giants of Soviet life, including Stalin himself (Erofeev 2002: 48, 51, 267).

Marina's true love also weds artistic opposition to state authority. Outwardly, he matches the messianic "HE" of her daydreams, who, as the reader soon finds out, is a prominent dissident (Sorokin 2002/2: 99).<sup>22</sup> With his "wedge-shaped face with a fringe beard and a small, barely noticeable scar on his wrinkled forehead", the dream lover is an easily recognizable fictional double of Aleksandr Solženitsyn (*ibid.*).<sup>23</sup> When entering Marina's real life though, "HE" adopts a different guise: that of the surefooted Party man Rumjancev, who identifies with "the proletariat" (Sorokin 2002/2: 176–78, 180); who rejects the world of art in favor of Soviet Russia's "new people" who "retransfer everything onto state rails" (Sorokin 2002/2: 160, 164, 166); and who speaks on behalf of the "force" of this state (Sorokin 2002/2: 167). In one character, Sorokin thus blends Russia's most famous dissident with a statesman-to-the-bone.<sup>24</sup> Upon closer inspection, the dream hero united those two roles from the start: Marina's repressed dissident is at the same time "a great man, who gave himself totally to the service of Russia" and faced a "sea of people" upon arriving there from abroad (Sorokin 2002/2: 84).<sup>25</sup>

In other words, Rumjancev assumes the same contradictory role that Leonardik fulfills. Both personify an idea that thrived in early Russian postmodernism: in their preoccupation with authority, Soviet dissidents do not differ substantially from the Soviet regime.<sup>26</sup>

Coincidences between Rumjancev and Leonardik extend beyond their characterization as dissident-cum-authoritarian icons. Both adopt the symbolic role of a sorcerer — the symbolic seducer of Russia in prerevolutionary days. Take Sorokin's orgasm scene: rendered as a symbolic awakening, it simultaneously marks a transition to the "dream level," which defines the rest of the plot (see Brougher 1998: 104, 110–11). Not only does the orgasm itself take place in a dream, but Marina's earlier visions of her savior also occur in daydreams or while sleeping (Sorokin 2002/2: 84, 99, 118–23). While reaching the climax, she experiences her merging with the choir as *obvorožitel'no*, an adjective meaning both "fascinating" and "bewitching" (Sorokin 2002/2: 173). Sorokin calls his hero

a “werewolf” (*oboroten*), the same term Belyj used for the sorcerer who bewitched a feminized Russia in his *Green Meadow*.<sup>27</sup> That, out of all real-life candidates, Sorokin picks Solženitsyn for this “werewolf” role is not surprising: like his fictional *Doppelgänger*, the real Solzhenitsyn paradoxically embodies the roles of liberal dissident and iron-clad reactionary.<sup>28</sup>

The Rumjancev–sorcerer association is reinforced when, in their posture toward the state, the dissidents are branded “children” who tease “a sleeping dragon” (Sorokin 2002/2: 94). Given Rumjancev’s status as the Soviet regime incarnate, it is *he* who is symbolically compared here to a dragon — an equivalent to the sorcerer in Russian fairy tales.<sup>29</sup> The comparison is reinforced by Rumjancev’s maturity: in the Silver Age, the *intelligent* was steadily opposed to an older, fatherlike “sorcerer.”<sup>30</sup> Rumjancev assumes a comparably paternal role toward Marina, and Sorokin maximizes its incestuous implications: in several details, the orgasm scene echoes a passage in which she is first penetrated... by her father (2002/2: 43–48, 171–74).

Marina’s story once again mirrors that of Irina, in whose portrayal of a mythical “enemy of Russia” the Silver-Age sorcerers of Blok and others resonate no less intensely. Leonardik, who claims that “sorcery actually preserves this country” (Erofeev 2002: 382), ultimately reveals himself as a potential twin of that enemy.<sup>31</sup> This “sorcerer-double” adopts a fatherly-cum-incestuous role throughout the narrative. He meets Irina at the house of his son, with whom she has just slept, and Leonardik is introduced by his son’s exclamation, “Father!” (57); and, as in Marina’s case, the heroine’s affair with him echoes the bond with her parent: in her youth, Irina’s beauty gave her father an erection (337).

Hence the novels not only revive, but reverse the prerevolutionary trend to contrast a hero and a sorcerer as a young son and an old father, respectively, who vie for one woman. Both stories recycle that plot, but present the authoritative father figure, not the “childish” dissidents, as the heroine’s symbolic savior. In Sorokin’s words, his story resembles “an inside-out version of Tolstoy’s *Resurrection*. [...] Marina is ‘released’ from individuality. [...] Hers is a monstrous salvation — but a salvation” (Sorokin 1992: 124–25).

Erofeev explains his story differently. Rather than Silver-Age or nineteenth-

century poetics, he says, it revives a later source: *The Rose of the World*, the same novel that sets Marina's heart on fire.<sup>32</sup> That intertextual link only intensifies its kinship with prerevolutionary thinking: after all, Andreev himself traces the historical roots of his feminized Russia directly to the exalted female figures of Solov'ev, Blok, and Pushkin.<sup>33</sup>

#### 4 Sexing Russia

Both novels thus de- and remythologize existing representations of Russia as a bride. Their versions of the myth unite a mishmash of Soviet and populist rhetorics, nineteenth-century literature, folkloric motifs, and, most palpably, Silver-Age symbolics.

However, in the hands of Sorokin and Erofeev, traditional "bride-Russia" rhetorics undergo a substantial change. Most relevantly, this change lies in the explicit sexual detail for which both opt. If both traditional "brides Russia" and Marina and Irina adopt the classical role of sinner-cum-saint, then in the portrayals of the latter the harlot dimension is radicalized ad nauseam. The reader's very introduction to Irina takes place through depictions of her vagina (Erofeev 2002: 5–7). In dramatic contrast to her abstract Silver-Age predecessors, this feminized Russia blithely makes love on a table, indulges in a threesome, plans to save Russia through coitus, and seals her fate with an endless orgasm (Erofeev 2002: 25, 39–43, 308–58, 393–95). Perfectly aware of her status as a sex object, Irina sexualizes the classic heroine's longing for a liberator. She simply asks Russia's "demon": "Will you fuck me or not?" (Erofeev 2002: 41, 352).

In an outright pornographic first half, Sorokin's narrative analogously treats readers to descriptions of any imaginable part of Marina's body, from toes to clitoris, and any thinkable sexual practice, from sadomasochism to group sex.<sup>34</sup> In her role as Russia's symbolic double, Marina is "saved" not through any mystical wedding, but through forthright physical penetration.

Sexual detail equally marks the depiction of the dissidents. The two novels maximize the physical, and especially erotic, implications of the intelligentsia's supposed "lack of masculinity". Erofeev, who claims to expose with *Russian Beauty* a hierarchy in dissident circles "based on a phallic principle" — "There was

no less sexuality there than in any other power”<sup>35</sup>— paints Irina’s dissidents as “men with no balls,” who are “useless at fucking” (Erofeev 2002: 291, 294). Some, the girl sighs, “have the pathetic, whipped look of men who can’t get it up, [while] others [...] are those live-wire types who twitch around convulsively if briefly” (Erofeev 2002: 294–95). The sexual behavior of Sorokin’s dissidents is no different: Valentin, for one, is a “helpless pink lump” in bed, whose hands touch Marina “convulsively” (Sorokin 2002/2: 13–14).

Contrasted with the dissidents’ feebleness is the bodily strength of their opponents. Rumjancev enralls Marina with his “masculine motion” during lovemaking, and a “body that smelled strongly of [...] masculinity” (Sorokin 2002/2: 170–71, 176). Radiating male eros, he and Leonardik may adopt classic sorcerer roles, but they take these to manifestly physical spheres.

I dwell on the unrelenting focus on physicality in both novels with good reason. More than a mere taboo-breaking device or a byproduct of the authors’ desire to subvert their literary-historical legacy, explicit sexuality is a requisite aspect to their “bride-Russia” metaphors.

The shift to the sexual sphere is motivated, in part, by sociological factors: according to both authors, the stories retell a tendency among women in dissident circles in the 1980s to couple sexual promiscuity with anti-Soviet opposition.<sup>36</sup> The son of David Samojlov — one of the dissident writers parodied in *Marina’s Thirtieth Love* — points to a similar tendency when, in an interview, he observes a trend among Russian dissidents to equate “sexual laxity” to “a fight against totalitarianism and sanctimony. We thought that this lifestyle somehow had to do with ideology” (Samojlov cited in Ševelev 2004). That view is understandable: the “licentious women” who inspired Irina’s and Marina’s characters were children of an age of international sexual-liberation movements — one in which sexuality and ideology were two sides of the same coin.<sup>37</sup> In gender expert Anna Uljura’s words, the trend to blend sex and ideology foreshadows a reading in perestroika-era Russia of a “liberal attitude towards sexual issues” as a “‘litmus test’ to define a new anthropological type: a pro-western, individualistically oriented person” (Uljura 2007: 229).

Sorokin’s and Erofeev’s sexualization of the “bride-Russia” metaphor can be

explained, too, as a realization of sexual dimensions which were historically inherent to feminine personifications of Russia; I am thinking, among other examples, of the sensual “gypsy beauty” of Blok’s feminized nation (Blok 1960-63/3: 254). Indeed, in ancient agrarian civilizations men already ritually penetrated and “impregnated” the earth in order to increase the harvest (Zazykin 2002: 70).

But most importantly, the focus on sexual symbolism aligns with an increased focus on physicality in late Soviet and post-Soviet artistic culture — one that cannot be separated from the defiance of ideological or political commitment that postmodern authors profess. In an early interview, Sorokin contrasted his view of literature — “mere letters on a piece of paper” — with that of authors for whom writing “is partly an occasion for political activity” (Sorokin 1992: 121 and 125).<sup>38</sup> Whether his and Erofeev’s work indeed lack pathos or social engagement is another question,<sup>39</sup> but their purported defiance of ideological commitment relates directly to the overt sexuality of their work. How that link functions is perhaps best explained by travelling back in time.

Sorokin calls his work “a debate about [...] the problem of the flesh, of bodiliness.”<sup>40</sup> To Erofeev, too, the physical-sexual sphere is pivotal. In the words of one critic, in *Russian Beauty* “it is sex that blows up the moralizing mentality” and “reduces it to the level of parody” (Sokolov 1996: 186). In the 1910-20s, a similar physical (if less explicitly sexual) reworking of abstract metaphors marked the poetry of Vladimir Majakovskij. Characteristic of his realization of metaphors was the shift of attention from their tenor — the underlying idea — to the vehicle, or the symbolic image expressing the idea.<sup>41</sup> Majakovskij was the first to apply that transition of attention from a metaphor’s thematic meaning to its linguistic shell as a conscious literary device. Ultimately, however, Majakovskij’s metaphoric imagery does serve to express extraliterary themes (whether these be social, political, or personal) that profoundly agitate the poet. For Sorokin and Erofeev, metaphors largely lose this role: in their (early) work, metaphoric imagery does not articulate any underlying socio-political idea. It did still fulfill that role in Blok’s work — but in Marina’s and Irina’s stories, rather than referring to extraliterarily motivated themes that concern their authors, our gender metaphor

has turned into a downright literary phenomenon.

For contemporary writers in general, the “bridal-Russia” myth no longer verbalizes political ideals in which they genuinely believe. And how could it? After World War II, the very notion of preserving a native essence had acquired too much of a *Blut-und-Boden* taste to retain its previous status of a burning social issue, in Russia as elsewhere. The same applies to the concept of defending an idealized (and feminized) “people” — a notion virtually impossible to approach with candid oppositional commitment after having been persistently exploited by the Soviet regime. Not coincidentally, Russian writers who did defend populist and national ideologies in recent decades are known as artistically marginal figures (as exemplified by Solženitsyn, whom Sorokin derides so eagerly).<sup>42</sup> To most authors, the classic intelligentsia’s preoccupation with “the people” is a historical fact with which they no longer identify.

With this in mind, it bears no surprise that in postmodern revisions of the “bride-Russia” metaphor, only the vehicle remains. What we encounter is a linguistic shell (the bride’s body) without metaphysical content (ideological critique). As Aleksandr Genis has commented on Sorokin, in his hands a metaphor “materializes to such a literal extent that it stops being one” (Genis 1997: 224). In other words, in the history of the “bride-Russia” myth the level of physicality or sexuality in a work is inversely proportional to the level of its ideological pathos: the less ideologically motivated the metaphor, the more it is sexualized. This inverted link between physicality and ideology has been pointed out by Slava Kuricyn, for whom postmodernism, with its distrust of ideology, by definition has an “increased interest in problems of the body” (Kuricyn 1999: 63). Indeed, the body more or less replaces ideology for our authors. A writer like Blok, whose bridal representations of Russia expressed personal views on the nation’s fate, never so much as lifted his mystic spouse’s veil. By contrast, Sorokin and Erofeev, who seek to remain far from ideological spheres, don’t endow their “brides Russia” with an underlying political vision. Instead, they equip them with more-than-concrete physical outlines.



## 5 Sexing the Nation II: Pop Culture

Sexing the nation: in today's Russia this trend is exceptionally, but not exclusively, popular among hardcore postmodernists. In their novels, Sorokin and Erofeev anticipated a trend in late and post-Soviet pop culture to represent the interrelations between Russian nation and state — and, to a lesser extent, intellectual elite — in gendered terms. In (post-)perestrojka society, the relationship between these political parties is envisioned in no less, if not more, physically tangible terms than in Sorokin's and Erofeev's writings.

This is not surprising if one remembers that the perestrojka and early post-perestrojka years were a cultural era where blatant sexual imagery was flooding Russia. With the collapse of the Soviet Union, in the words of Paul Goldschmidt, "Russians have certainly discovered sex, and discovered it with a vengeance" (Goldschmidt 1999: 318). 1991 witnessed the first endeavors at a historical and sociological analysis of sexuality in Russia.<sup>43</sup> What is more, in keeping with what Brian McNairs labels an international "pornification of the mainstream",<sup>44</sup> from the late 1980s onwards Russia entered into a lasting cultural and commercial relationship with pornography.<sup>45</sup>

Relevant to the "bridal-Russia" myth is the political expressiveness that this prominent sexual-cum-pornographic imagery boasted. Just as pornography historically served to criticize state authorities,<sup>46</sup> thus in late 1980s and 1990s Russia the advent of regained free speech positioned explicit sexuality "as an equal alternative to 'official' symbolism", according to Anna Uljura (2007: 246). At this time, conceptualizations of the nation in bridal terms emerged in diverging cultural spheres. They were part of a focus on national themes in rock and punk music, for instance, where the feminized Russia of Blok and his contemporaries resonates in lyrics and comments by such groups as Nol', DDT, and Leningrad.<sup>47</sup>

### 5.1 A Man Like Putin

But even more emphatically than in music, metaphors of Russia as bride or virgin resound in visually oriented cultural spheres. In the 1990s, it was popular for tattoo artists to portray Russia as a woman sexually molested by the favorite whipping boys of post-Soviet Russia: Caucasians.<sup>48</sup> Between then and today,

political cartoons have repeatedly represented the country as a sleeping beauty, an attractive naked girl, a woman who is about to be sexually molested, and a modern-day Eve.<sup>49</sup>

Russian political rhetoric brims with similarly gendered constructions. Tat'jana Rjabova (2002) has demonstrated how, in contemporary political discourse, the Russian president is persistently portrayed as a masculine counterpart of a feminine Russia or Russian people. This is the case in the slogan "Jel'cin is a real man, and Russia a feminine creature," which featured in Jel'cin's electoral campaign of 1996 (cited in Rjabov 2001: 48). The actress Natal'ja Kračkovskaja adopted a similar rhetoric when likening Russia to "a bride to be given away" (cited in Rjabova: 446), and suggesting General Lebed' as the bride's perfect husband.

Political gender tropes particularly color public views of Vladimir Putin. Experts have analyzed how Putin's PR machine floods the Russian media with manifestly masculine imagery (Levinson 2004 and Wood 2008).<sup>50</sup> Complementing Putin's virile image is a feminized and distinctly eroticized "Russian people." Emblematically, in 2008 a pro-Putinist designer devised women's panties emblazoned with "Vova [short for Vladimir] — ER], I'm With You".<sup>51</sup> In 2010, a group of female journalism students went yet a step further by creating a pin-up calendar for their president's birthday with such suggestive texts as — hinting to a third presidential term: "How About a Third Time?"<sup>52</sup> In 2002, the song 'A Man Like Putin' ('Takogo kak Putin') pictured the then-president as a dream hero for, in the composer's words, "a simple Russian girl surrounded by drunkenness, filth, and meanness" (Elin cited in Ivanov and Bojarinov 2008). In the accompanying video, the female vocalists cast seductive glances and strike sensual poses in front of a Russian flag. The women eerily resemble Erofeev's and Sorokin's heroines when they compare their ideal "man like Putin, full of strength" to a good-for-nothing drunkard-boyfriend.<sup>53</sup> A young Russian male, commenting on the song's lyrics in an online chatroom, unwittingly cast himself in the familiar role of the state's failing rival when he wrote: "Girls, love 'men like Putin'! But what are we guys supposed to do?" (Vagon 2002). Meanwhile, Putin himself consistently plays up his hypermasculine reputation. In

response to rumours about an extramarital affair, the president claimed to “like all Russian women”, whom he ranks among “the most [...] beautiful in the world” (cited in MSNBC.com 2008).

## 5.2 Dumping Žuganov, Marrying the Leader

Putin’s excessively masculine official image was bound to generate ironic counter-responses. In 2003, Aleksei Višnia — former composer of one of the most famous rockbands of 1980s Russia, Kino — remixed comments by politicians on Putin for an album which became an instant cult hit. Titled “Viagra for Putin”, the album included the following, slightly garbled, comment by stateswoman Irina Xakamada: “I met the president, and I gave it to him!”<sup>54</sup> A satirical, and equally sexualized, take on Putin’s hypermale reputation also marks the video ‘Vova Rules’ (‘Vova rulit’), which an Ukrainian rap collective launched at the time of the 2008 Russo-Georgian war. The song exaggeratedly lauds Putin both in words and in sexually suggestive moves by female dancers as an archetypal macho who makes “women blush.”<sup>55</sup>

No less ironic, but alluding to more traditional metaphors of a marriage between ruler and nation, the satirical TV show *Puppets (Kukly)* portrayed the results of the 2000 presidential elections in marital terms.<sup>56</sup> The happy groom Putin was coupled with a passive bride, “the Federation”, while Georgij Žuganov and Grigorij Javlinskij costarred as the bride’s rejected lovers (see Rjabova 2002: 447). By this time, the metaphor had reached the State Duma, literally, in the form of an enormous canvas by Sergei Bočarev, which adorned the parliamentary hall in 1998. Art historian Marina Koldobskaja explains Bočarev’s *Uneven Marriage (Neravnyi brak)* in satirically drenched terms: “The intelligentsia, that is, all sorts of Saxarovs, Lixačevs, and Rostropovičes”, marries off a “girl in red sarafan, that is, Russia” to no one but... George Bush senior (Koldobskaja 2007: 119).<sup>57</sup>

In 2007 I encountered similar rhetoric, but, again, from the anti-Putin camp, while watching a demonstration against the Chechen wars in Moscow. Protesters dispersed verses by the writer Igor’ Guberman reading: “Russia is married to a nonexistent fiend. [...] But the piper is near.”<sup>58</sup> Envisioning the authorities as

Russia's false husband and their purported successors as a fairytale hero, the demonstrators borrowed their metaphors straight from Silver-Age rhetoric.

The Internet plays an active role in the dissemination of the metaphor in these types of mass contexts. The music videos and lyrics cited here, for example, circulate on densely trafficked websites, where visitors browse and comment on the contents free of charge. In addition, the metaphor is popular in politically oriented social media. Users brand the Russia of Jel'cin's presidency as an aging sleeping beauty vainly awaiting a prince to kiss her awake (Kuznecov 2004); or conclude a critique on contemporary politicians by labeling Russia a sleeping beauty who needs to "wake up, get rid of its assholes", and find itself a normal leader (Psaik 2004).

In pre-digital days, political discussions were not recorded and accessed on such a broad scale; now they form part of a regularly visited panoply of virtual discussion platforms.

Why the bridal metaphor is so vital in online social media, whose participants are not always familiar with the classic "bride-Russia" myth of Russian literature and philosophy, is perhaps best explained by a look at post-Soviet history text-books. Galina Zvereva has shown that these rarely present Russia as a gender-neutral entity. "Russia is the beautiful, proud, majestic, suffering heroine who is subjected to humiliation and assaults . . . 'National History' looks like the personal path followed by a personified woman — Russia" (Zvereva 1999: 174).<sup>59</sup> People who grow up with such a personified conception of history are likely, when the time comes to express their own political views, to replicate the same rhetoric device. They are likely, too, to incorporate the feminized Russia in a queer or heterosexual, rather than a maternal, context, in a virtual world brimming with erotic imagery, where they can easily mask their real-life identity with a nickname.<sup>60</sup>

## **6 Conclusion: Cherished Cliché**

The "bride-Russia myth" has taken an indisputable hold over contemporary Russian intellectual and popular culture, having become a beloved subject in literary texts as well as in artwork, history books, chat fora, political PR, cartoons,

tattoos, and music videos. Today, the status of that myth differs from what it was in its prerevolutionary culture. Although still incorporating a political power of expression for some, for many others the metaphor is first and foremost an object of playful mockery. It often occurs in examples that distort the original concept by highlighting its sexual implications. No wonder, one might add, in the sexualized media culture of contemporary Russia, where censorship of explicit material is virtually absent, sexual imagery is ubiquitous, and exalted national ideals are blemished by historical traumas. In such a cultural setting, it is all too understandable that the “bride Russia” morphs from an exalted utopian ideal into an intensely physical creature, whose body we get to know uncomfortably thoroughly.

Yet it would be wrong to conclude that the exalted feminized Russia of Blok or Pasternak has today been supplanted by a mere object of sexual parody. That the overtly physical “bride Russia” is a popular target for irony reveals rather than undermines the topical importance of the bridal metaphor in contemporary Russia. Linda Hutcheon reminds us that this paradox is not surprising, as “the authority of clichés sometimes rests precisely on the fact that there may be something in them that still speaks to us” (Hutcheon 1994: 27). By the early twenty-first century, the view of Russia, state, and intelligentsia as a tragic amorous triangle has firmly taken root as a worn-but-cherished cultural cliché. Challenging the conventional assumption that Russia is gendered mostly along maternal lines, the metaphorical “bride Russia” may be unattainable for “the writer-*intelligent*”, but she is today a highly tangible ingredient of Russian rhetoric culture.

University of Bergen (Norway)

## Notes

- 1 Vladimir Sorokin in Sokolov 2005.
- 2 For a presentation of this exhibition n by award-winning photographer Donald Weber, see the festival homepage at <http://www.contactphoto.com/view.php?eventid=1329&sec=guides>.
- 3 This article provides a theoretical and empirical expansion of ideas which I first outlined in my monograph *Unattainable Bride Russia* (Rutten 2010). In the following article, my original argument is complemented and somewhat modified by additional research into contemporary political (counter-)rhetoric, as well as into recent thinking on sexuality and contemporary Russian culture.
- 4 On the historical background of bridal representations of Russia, see Brouwer 2003 and Rutten 2010.
- 5 Oleg Rjabov has discussed gendered representations of Russia–intelligentsia–state in the Silver Age as part of a larger investigation of womanhood in Russian literature and philosophy (Rjabov 1997). Aleksej Makušinskij (2003) examines the same theme in nineteenth-century cultural history and literature. Brouwer provides a more diachronic perspective on the “bride-Russia” myth (2003), as does Jurij Lotman, when briefly considering it in Lotman 1993: 98.
- 6 For a more elaborate discussion of gender rhetoric in nineteenth-century discourse on troubled nation–state–intelligentsia relationships, see Brouwer 2003; Makušinskij 2003 and Rutten 2010. On the traditional gendered oppositions of Western thinking that the Russian novel reiterates (those of a feminized “nature” and “land” as opposed to a masculine “culture” and “people”), see Böröcz and Verdery 1994: 249.
- 7 In Russia, as linguists point out, grammatical categories reinforced a gendered nationalist discourse: not only are Rus’ and the Russian terms for Russia (*Rossija*), country (*strana*), and native land (*rodina*) feminine nouns; but by lack of a pronoun referring to inanimate objects, the Russian language forces users to opt for the personal pronoun “she” in referring to these spatial categories (see Zaitseva 2006: 31, 44; Babenko 2007; and Rjabov 1997).
- 8 For a detailed discussion of its outlines in these different genres, see Rjabov 1997; Rjabov 1999 and Rutten 2010. Lynn Sargeant reconstructs the role of the sorcerer myth in Pobedonostsev’s public image in Sargeant 2005.
- 9 Notable exceptions include discussions of a non-maternally gendered Russia in (post-)perestrojka culture in Gosילו 1995; Rjabova 2002; Desjatov 2002. In a less systematic context, Aleksandr Etkind and Mark Lipovetsky discuss the gendering of Russia along non-maternal feminine lines in contemporary literature in a recent discussion in *Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie* (Etkind and Lipovetsky 2008).
- 10 Personal conversations, August 2002. Transcripts available upon request from [contact@ellenrutten.nl](mailto:contact@ellenrutten.nl).
- 11 The list doesn’t end here. In the novel *Roman* (1995), the heroine — a blueprint of Pushkin’s hyper-Russian Tat’jana — appears after the hero-intelligent abandons his previous lover for not having “a Russian soul” (Sorokin 2002/2:357). This Tat’jana is prefigured by a namesake in the early story *Farewell* (*Proščanie*, 1977–84), whom another hero-intelligent openly compares to his “country” and “people” (Sorokin 2002/1:545-46). The classic myth of Moscow as the heart of a female Russia figures prominently in Sorokin’s essay ‘The Eros of Moscow’ (‘Eros Moskvy’, 2001) and in his screenplay for Aleksandr Zel’dovič’s film *Moscow* (*Moskva*, 2000).
- 12 On the symbolic equivalence specifically between Marina and Mary (Marija in Russian), see, apart from Rutten 2010, also Uffelmann 2003: 303-08.
- 13 Having “come to love Blok”, Irina has learned his poems by heart (Erofeev 2002: 150). Her elliptical description of the setting in which the enemy first appears — “Night. Street.” (Erofeev 2002: 281) — evokes Blok’s poem ‘Night, Street, Lantern, Drugstore . . .’ (‘Noč’, ulica, fonar’, apteka

... 1912); on her way to Kulikovo field she echoes Blok's 'Russia' when claiming that now "the impossible is possible" (Erofeev 2002: 333; Blok 1960-63/3: 254); earlier, she has called the champagne she drinks "Blok-Gamajun", referring to an early Blok poem (Erofeev 2002: 29; Blok 1960-63/1: 19); the comparison of one of her lovers to a "kite" that "fell down" on her evokes the high-flier circling above Russia in Blok's 'Kite' ('Koršun', 1916) (Erofeev 2002: 279; Blok 1960-63/3: 281).

14 Throughout this article, my translations of Erofeev's novel rely, albeit not always literally, on Andrew Reynold's English translation (Erofeev 1992).

15 Emphasis in original. The scene unmistakably harks back to the "fourth dream" in Černyševskij's *What Is to Be Done?* (*Čto delat'?* 1863): Sorokin not only mimics the latter's overabundant use of capitals and exclamation points, but in Černyševskij's dream scene a "New Russia" is similarly shown to the heroine, who is implored to look to that utopian Russia rather than to contemporary Russia. Irina Paperno argues that in his novel, Černyševskij, influenced by George Sand's feminism, links "the coming of the new world [...] with the advent of a female messiah"; in her view, that idea "also has another specifically Russian connotation: the popular symbolic image of Russia as a woman" (Paperno 1988: 209).

16 Fomenko and others have shown how Stalinist literature, paintings, films, and popular songs abound with feminine representations of Moscow as the "heart of Russia" (for representative examples, see Günther 1997; Cheauré 2002; and — for a more diachronic perspective — Nekljudov 2005).

17 Prime examples are Aleksandrov's *Volga-Volga* (1934), which Sorokin considers a "work of genius" (cited in Laird 1999: 161), and Pyr'ev's *The Pig-Herd and the Shepherd* (*Svinarka i pastuch*, 1941). I thank Professor Igor Smirnov for guiding me to *The Pig-Herd* as a prime source for Sorokin's feminization of Russia.

18 Personal conversation with Erofeev's Dutch translator, Arie van der Ent. The "Moscow variant" was preserved in Dutch and German translations of the novel as *Een Schoonheid uit Moskou* (Amsterdam, 1990) and *Die Moskauer Schönheit* (Frankfurt am Main, 1993), respectively.

19 For these and other names, see Sorokin 2002/2:82, 85, and 87-88. Marina's favorite reads include the Bible, Orwell's *1984*, Solženitsyn's *Gulag Arkhipelago*, texts by Vasilij Grossman and Lidija Čukovskaja, Sokolov's *School for Fools*, Vladimov's *Faithful Ruslan*, and poetry by Mandel'stam, Axmatova, Brodskij, Pasternak, Lisnjanskaja, and Koržavin (see Sorokin 2002/2:87 and 100-101).

20 Representations of the *intelligent* as childish, feminine, or weak heighten in the 1880s in a cult of illness among Russian intellectuals. See on this development Wessling 2005.

21 Rylkova points out his spiritual kinship to another Vladimir Sergeevič: Solov'ev (2007: 190).

22 Capitals in original. Significantly, Erofeev's Irina likewise refers to the male force which she confronts on Kulikovo field with a capitalized "HE" (Erofeev 2002: 344-45).

23 His status as such is made explicit when Marina muses on how "HE" looked "when writing Denisyč" (Sorokin 2002/2: 155), in reference to Solženitsyn's novella *A Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovič*. In our conversation Sorokin emphasized that Sergej Nikolaevič is for him, in fact, a double of Solženitsyn.

24 Capitals in original. A popular whipping-boy for Russian postmodernists, Solženitsyn fulfills an equally negative role in Erofeev's novel, where he acts as a "well-known informer" within his labor camp, and an "old blockhead" whose negative reports on Russia embarrass the nation (Erofeev 2002: 22, 33).

25 The scene, to which Marina attributes an "utterly cinematographic character" (Sorokin 2002/2: 84), varies overtly on Eisenstein's *October*. In the film, a textual intermezzo announces Lenin's arrival with the same capitalized HE. Emerging from an international train as a long-awaited savior,

the father of the revolution is greeted by a crowd similar to the “sea of people” awaiting Marina’s lover. Ironically, the scene almost literally anticipates the return of the real Solženitsyn to Russia in 1994. Arriving on a transatlantic flight, an emotional Solženitsyn expressed the wish to adopt a “social and moral role” in post-Soviet society; at Magadan Airport, he was greeted, in the words of BBC News, by a “sea” of sympathizers (“Dissident Writer Solzhenitsyn Returns”. *BBC News*, May 27, 1994.

[http://news.bbc.co.uk/onthisday/hi/dates/stories/may/27/newsid\\_2495000/2495895.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/onthisday/hi/dates/stories/may/27/newsid_2495000/2495895.stm)).

26 The authors do not hide that intention when commenting the novels: Erofeev claims to see no clashing contrast between Leonardik and the dissidents, whom he “constructed [...] as an alternative force, which theoretically takes on the power of a shadow cabinet — in other words, the power that takes over, which is what actually happened within a few years”; In discussing *Marina*, Sorokin stressed how the artistic circles that influenced him “ironized both the Soviet regime [...] and the dissidents” (both personal conversations).

27 Personal conversation, and Belyj 1994: 333.

28 For an analysis that highlights both reputations, see May 2009. The orgasm scene in which Sorokin places him was practically foretold by Solženitsyn himself: in a 1975 essay, paraphrasing Blok’s “The Twelve”, Solženitsyn quoted a popular verse from the early Soviet years: “We have shot the fat-assed baba Russia, / So that Communism could crawl across her body as a Messiah” (Solženitsyn 1995: 221). Communist par excellence Rumjancev does exactly that: “crawling,” Messiah-like, across Marina’s-alias-Russia’s body; but in the novel, Solženitsyn himself embodies the Communist regime.

29 On the interchangeable role of dragon and sorcerer in folk tales, see Meletinskij 1998: 308.

30 Belyj’s sorcerer, for one, is an “old man” “whom they call your [Russia’s — ER] father” (Belyj 1994: 329, 333). In Belyj’s politicized text, the father role unmistakably alludes to the ancient image of the tsar as a father (*tsar’-batjuška*). Joanna Hubbs claims (though without adding concrete sources) that the Russian peasant population traditionally conceived of this fatherly tsar as the husband of “mother Russia” (*matjuška-Rus*), in Hubbs 1988: xiv.

31 After the Kulikovo scene, Leonardik seems to know about the confrontation (Erofeev 2002: 376–83). When Irina asks, “If you appeared [on the field] [...] does that mean He exists?” Leonardik answers, “It means I exist” (*ibid.*: 383).

32 Personal conversation. The characterization of Russia’s “main enemy” as a “demon” echoes Andreev’s title for the alleged captivator of Russia’s feminine “Ecumenical Soul” (Erofeev 2002: 296; Andreev 2002: 134). Like Andreev, who saw Peter the Great and Stalin as two of Russia’s key “demons,” Erofeev, using a mixture of mystical and political vocabulary, presents the enemy as an “evil spirit” and a “voluptuous flesh-devouring demon, usurper and autocrat” (Erofeev 2002: 159, 296).

33 For an overview of the different phases which Andreev discerns in the history of his “Ecumenical Soul”, see Epstein 1997: 339. Andreev is a pivotal figure in the history of the “bride-Russia” metaphor: as summarized by Epstein, the history of Andreev’s mystical feminine Soul more or less coincides with the metaphor’s history in Russian literature and philosophy, travelling via Pushkin’s Tat’iana and Turgenev’s women to Silver-Age thought.

34 See, among other pages, Sorokin 2002/2:11–14, 31, 37–38, 43–48, 51–52, 65–66, 73–76, 89–90, 101–18, and 169–73. In this part of the novel, Marina’s identity — in Brougner’s words — “revolves largely around her sexual history” (Brougner 1998: 98-99).

35 Personal conversation.

36 Personal conversation with both authors.

37 The dissident association of sexuality with ideology is not surprising when one considers the dissidents’ status as a countercultural social group within Soviet society — one in which sex and



ideology were interlaced from the start. On the latter, see Naiman 1997: 16ff.

38 Erofeev likewise proposed putting an “end to the literature that was burdened with social engagement” (Erofeev 1996: 433). If in recent interviews Sorokin contradicts his own views by posing consciously as an opponent of the regime, the work at issue here dates from his years as a postmodernist-to-the-bone, when he denounced any political engagement whatsoever.

39 Aside from more recent discussions on a “post-postmodern” phase in Sorokin’s work, commentators of his and Erofeev’s oeuvre have always discerned in it a distinct “pathos” or social commitment (see, for instance, Laird 1998: 148, 160; Degot’ 1999: 225 and, on Erofeev, Menzel 2001: 343).

40 Sorokin cited in Laird 1998: 155.

41 On Mayakovsky’s “realized” metaphors, see Stieger 1980: 95-96.

42 In recent years, this situation is changing a little, as such politically engaged authors as Zaxar Prilepin and Mixail Elizarov begin to occupy centre stage in the literary scene. Sorokin has also expressed more interest in political commitment since the late 2000s.

43 On this and on the absence of a scholarly or analytical debate on sexuality before perestrojka, see, among others, Kon’ 1995. The numerous gaps and taboos that this debate kept displaying are discussed in, for instance, Štulhofer and Santfort 2005.

44 On the “sexualization of the public sphere” and the “expanding pornosphere” that mark contemporary culture, see McNair 2002.

45 Goldschmidt 1999: 324.

46 On the politicized history of pornography, see Hunt (ed.) 1993.

47 See Rutten 2010, and, for an analysis of gender metaphors in DDT’s lyrics, Friedman and Weiner 1999: 118-19.

48 See Baldaev (ed.) 2006: 224 and 225, for two examples and comments on the commonness of this motif in criminal circles.

49 Examples include Tat’jana Poljakova’s “Who Are You, Russia?” (“Tak kto že ty, Rossija?”) in *Sovetskaja Rossija*, August 29 and September 19, 1992; Larisa Emelina’s “Russia” (“Rossija”) in *Novaja Rossija*, no. 3-4, 1992; and the anonymous cartoons “More Socialism!” (“Bol’še socializma!”) in *Iskra*, February 18, 1990, and “This is Our Native Land, my Son” (“Eto naša rodina, synok”) in *Imperija*, 1997 (number unknown). For these and more examples, see Gusejnov 2000: 224-26 and 228. In addition, Vladimir Putin acts as Russia’s violator in a caricature that shows him forcibly penetrating a kneeling “Russian people,” symbolized by a woman in the colors of the national flag (Irina?). The cartoon in question has circulated since the early 2000s on <http://www.pridurki.org> and on <http://www.vladimirvladimirovich.com/photojoke.php>.

50 In her paper, Wood demonstrates how Putin’s manly reputation consistently opposes the more “feminine,” family-related representation of Dmitrii Medvedev.

51 See, for details and pictures, Newsru 2008.

52 On both this calendar and on a counter-calendar, designed by critical female students from the same institution, see Masslive 2010.

53 ‘Takogo kak Putin’, online video at [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=\\_OFOPd6pgI](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_OFOPd6pgI).

54 On both the song and the album, see Višnia in Elena Rotkevich, “Aleksi Vishnia: ‘Viagra dlja Putina’ prishla sverkhu,” *Izvestiia*, 16 November 2003, at <http://www.izvestia.ru/russia/article41091/> (last accessed 5 October 2009).

55 ‘Vova rulit’, online video at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nKpKzFt1Sus>.

56 See also Rjabova 2002: 447. On traditional ruler-nation metaphors, see Kantorowicz 1957: 212-27. Brouwer complements Kantorowicz’ analysis with several (old-)Russian examples (2003).

57 For a reproduction, see [http://www.botcharov.ru/galpic/neravnyj\\_brak](http://www.botcharov.ru/galpic/neravnyj_brak). The painting’s title partly echoes that of an older and rather different political gender allegory: Evdokija Rostopčina’s

1846 poem 'Forced Marriage' ('Nasil'nyj Brak'), which envisions the relationship between Russia and Poland as that between a male aggressor and his female victim, respectively.

58 Translated from the demonstration leaflet, collected on May 24, 2007, in Moscow.

59 In an earlier publication (Rutten 2007), I argued how similar personifying rhetoric marks the reception of Viktor Vasnetsov's work. Unhampered by a lack of proof that allegorical motifs underpin his Russian fairy-tale paintings, viewers read them throughout the twentieth century as political symbols. Within the discursive context of the Soviet era, his captive princesses symbolize "the people", awaiting liberation from the tsarist regime; but in post-Soviet Russia, they are interpreted just as easily as a feminized Russia in the "cruel grip" of Bolsheviks.

60 On sexuality and digital media, see McNair 1998 and Lambiase and Reichert 2005.

## References

- Andreev, D. 2002. *Roza mira*. Moskva.
- Andrew, J. and Reid, R. (eds.) 2003. *Two Hundred Years of Pushkin. Vol. 1, "Pushkin's Secret": Russian Writers Reread and Reurite Pushkin*. Amsterdam.
- Babenko, N.G. 2007. 'Moskva ženskogo roda, Peterburg mužskogo.' *Russkaja reč'*, vol. 1, 25–30.
- Baldaev, D. (ed.) 2006. *Russian Criminal Tattoo Encyclopedia. Vol. 2*. London.
- Barker, A.M. 1986. *The Mother Syndrome in the Russian Folk Imagination*. Columbus, Oh.
- Barker, A.M. (ed.) 1999. *Consuming Russia: Popular Culture, Sex, and Society since Gorbachev*. Durham, N.C.
- Belyj, A. 1994. *Simvolizm kak miroponimanie*. Moskva.
- Berdjaev, N. 1983-... *Sobranie sočinenij*. Paris.
- Blok, A. 1960-63. *Sobranie sočinenij v vos'mi tomax*. Moskva.
- Böröcz, J. and Verdery, K. 1994. 'Gender and Nation.' *East European Politics and Societies* 8, vol. 2, 223-316.
- Brougher, V. 1998. 'Demythologising Socialist Realism: Vladimir Sorokin's *Marina's Thirtieth Love*.' *Australian Slavonic & East European Studies*, vol. 1, 97–113.
- Brouwer, S. 2003. 'The Bridegroom Who Did Not Come: Social and Amorous Unproductivity from Pushkin to the Silver Age.' In: Andrew and Reid (eds.), 49-65.
- Burkhart, B. (ed.) 1999. *Poetik der Metadiskursivität: zum postmodernen Prosa-, Film- und Dramenwerk Sorokins*. München.
- Cheauré, E. "Vater Sowjet" und "Mutter Erde": Überlegungen zur Gender-Problematik in der sowjetischen Literatur (am Beispiel von Texten der "Kolchoz-" und der "Dorfliteratur").' In: Kaufmann (ed.), 133-55.
- Cheauré, E. and Haider, K. (eds.) 1999. *Pol, gender, kul'tura: Sex, Gender, Kultur*. Moscow.
- Condee, N. (ed.). 1995. *Soviet Hieroglyphics: Visual Culture in Late Twentieth-Century Russia*. Bloomington, In.
- Černyševskij, N. 1953. 'Russkij čelovek na rendez-vous.' In: *Izbrannye literaturno-kritičeskie stat'i*. Moskva.
- Dalton-Brown, S. 1997. 'Ludic Nonchalance or Ludicrous Despair? Viktor Pelevin and Russian Postmodernist Prose.' *Slavonic and East European Review*, vol. 75 (2), 216–34.
- Dark, O. 1992. 'Černovoe pis'mo.' *Strelec*, vol. 1, 177–87.
- Degot', E. 1999. 'Kinoscenarij Vladimira Sorokina "Moskva" v novoruskom i postavangardnom kontekstax.' In: Burkhart (ed.), 223–28.
- Desjatov, V. 2002. 'Arnold Schwarzenegger — Poslednij geroj ruskoj literatury.' In: Geller (ed.), 190-99.
- Ebert, C. 2004. *"Die Seele hat kein Geschlecht": Studien zum Genderdiskurs in der russischen Kultur*. Frankfurt am Main.

- Epstein, M. 1997. 'Daniil Andreev and the Mysticism of Femininity.' In: Glazer Rosenthal (ed.), 325-57.
- Erofeev, V. 1992. *Russian Beauty*. London. Transl. Andrew Reynolds.
- Erofeev, V. 1996. 'Pominki po sovetskoj literature.' In: *Strašnyj sud: Roman, rasskazy, malen'kie esse*. Moskva.
- Erofeev, V. 1999. *Enciklopedija russoj duši*. Moskva.
- Erofeev, V. 2002. *Russkaja krasavica*. Moskva.
- Erofeev, V. 2004. *Xorošij Stalin*. Moskva.
- Erofeev, V. 2005. *Mužčiny*. Moskva.
- Etkind, A. and Lipovetsky, M. 2008. 'Vozvraščenie tritona: sovetkaja katastrofa i postsovetkij roman.' *Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie*, vol. 94. <http://magazines.russ.ru/nlo/2008/94/li17.htm>
- Fomeeva, L. 1999. 'Kraski i zvuki "Ščastlivoj Moskvy".' In: Kornienko (ed.), 176-86.
- Friedman, J. and Weiner, A. 1999. 'Between a Rock and a Hard Place: Holy Rus' and Its Alternatives in Russian Rock Music.' In: Barker (ed.), 110-37.
- Gačev, G.D. and Titov, L.N. (eds.). 2002. *Nacional'nyi eros i kul'tura*. Moscow.
- Geller, L. (ed.) 2002. *Ekfrazis v russoj literature*. Moscow.
- Genis, A. 1997. 'Beseda devjataja: "Čuzn' i žido": Vladimir Sorokin.' *Vezda*, vol. 10, 222-25.
- Gillespie, A. 'Sex and Sorokin: Erotica or Pornography?' In: Burkhart (ed.), 161-66.
- Glazer-Rosenthal, B. (ed.) 1997. *The Occult in Russian and Soviet Culture*. Ithaca, N.Y.
- Goldschmidt, P.W. 'Pornography in Russia', in: Barker (ed.), 318-37.
- Goscilo, H. 1995. 'The Gendered Trinity of Russian Cultural Rhetoric Today — or The Glyph of the H[i]eroine.' In: Condee (ed.), 68-91.
- Goscilo, H. 1996. *Dehexing Sex: Russian Womanhood During and After Glasnost*. Ann Arbor, Mich.
- Goscilo, H. and Laroux, A. (eds.) 2006. *Gender and National Identity in Twentieth-Century Russian Culture*. De Kalb, Ill.
- Griboedov, A. 1999. *Polnoe sobranie sočinenij v trex tomax. Vol. 2. Dramatičeskie sočinenija: stixotvorenija: stat'i: putevye zametki*. St. Petersburg.
- Günther, H. 1997. 'Poiushchaia rodina: sovetkaia massovaia pesnia kak vyraženie arkhetaipa materi.' *Voprosy literatury*, vol. 4, 46-61.
- Gusejnov, G. 2000. *Karta našej rodiny: Ideologema meždu slovom i telom*. Helsinki.
- Hubbs, J. 1988. *Mother Russia: The Feminine Myth in Russian Culture*. Bloomington, In.
- Hunt, L. (ed.) 1993. *The Invention of Pornography: Obscenity and the Origins of Modernity, 1500-180*. New York.
- Hutcheon, L. 1994. *Irony's Edge: The Theory and Politics of Irony*. London.
- Ivanov, K. and Bojarinov, D. 2008. 'Pesni pro Putina.' *Openspace.ru*, March 14. [http://www.openspace.ru/music\\_modern/projects/112/details/593/](http://www.openspace.ru/music_modern/projects/112/details/593/)
- Kabakov, G. and Kont, F. (eds.) 2005. *Telo v russoj kul'ture*. Moscow.
- Kantorowicz, E. 1957. *The King's Two Bodies: A Study in Medieval Political Theology*. Princeton, N.J.
- Kaufmann, S. (ed.) 2002. *Ordnungen der Landschaft: Natur und Raum technisch und symbolisch entwerfen*. Würzburg.
- Kon', I. 1995. *Sexual Revolution in Russia From the Age of the Czars to Today*. New York.
- Kornienko, N. (ed.) 1999. "Strana filosofov" Andreja Platonova: *Problemy tvorčestva*, vol. 3. Moscow.
- Kuricy, V. 1999. 'TELO TEKSTA: Ob odnoj sintagme, pripisyvaemoj V. G. Sorokinu.' In: Burkhart (ed.), 61-65.
- Kuznecov, G. 2004. 'Spiashchii krasavits.' <http://www.snarky.com/Snarky/44Cols/C0000307.htm>.hyperlink
- Laird, S. 1999. *Voices of Russian Literature: Interviews with Ten Contemporary Writers*. Oxford.

- Lambiase, J. and Reichert, T. 2005. *Sex and Consumer Culture: The Erotic Content of Media and Marketing*. Mahwah, N.J.
- Levinson, A. 'Kul't tela i kul't ličnosti.' *Neprikosnovennyi zapas*, vol. 35 (3).  
<http://magazines.russ.ru/nz/2004/35/lev19.html>
- Lotman, Ju. 1993. 'Sjužetnoe prostranstvo v russkom romane XIX stoletija.' In: *Izbrannye stat'i v trex tomax*, vol. 3. Tallin.
- Makušinskij, A. 2003. 'Otvergnutyj ženix, ili osnovnoj mif russkoj literatury XIX veka.' *Voprosy filosofii*, vol. 7, 35–43.
- McNair, B. 1998. *Mediated Sex: Pornography and Postmodern Culture*. Oxford.
- McNair, B. 2002. *Striptease Culture: Sex, Media and the Democratisation of Desire*. London.
- Masslive. 2010. 'Female Journalism Students Create Racy Pinup Calendar for Former Russian President Vladimir Putin.' *Masslive.com*, 8 October.  
[http://www.masslive.com/news/index.ssf/2010/10/female\\_journalistm\\_students\\_cre.html](http://www.masslive.com/news/index.ssf/2010/10/female_journalistm_students_cre.html)
- May, C. 2009. 'Solzhenitsyn's Conservatism.' *Canada's Journal of Ideas*, 19 June.  
<http://www.c2journal.ca/blog-articles/view/solzhenitsyns-conservatism#>
- Mayar, T. 2000. 'Gender Ironies of Nationalism: Setting the Stage.' In: Mayar (ed.), 1-25.
- Mayar, T. (ed.) 2000. *Gender Ironies of Nationalism: Sexing the Nation*. London.
- Meletinskij, E. 1998. 'Ženit'ba v volšebnoj skazke.' In: *Izbrannye stat'i, Vospominanija*. Moskva.
- Menzel, B. 2001. *Bürgerkrieg um Worte: Die russische Literaturkritik der Perestrojka*. Köln.
- Minc, Z. 2004. *Poetika russkogo simvolizma*. St. Petersburg.
- Mosse, G. 1985. *Nationalism and Sexuality: Respectability and Abnormal Sexuality*. New York.
- MSNBC.com. 2008. 'Ladies Man Putin: I Like All Russian Women.' *MSNBC.com*, 18 April.  
<http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/24200415/>
- Naiman, E. 1997. *Sex in Public: The Incarnation of Early Soviet Ideology*. Princeton, N.J.
- Nekljudov, S. 'Telo Moskvy: k voprosu ob obraze 'ženščiny-goroda' v russkoj literature.' In: Kabakova and Kont (eds.), 361-85.
- Newsru. 2008. 'V Moskve zaveršilas' Russian Fashion Week.' *Newsru*, 7 April.  
<http://www.newsru.com/cinema/07apr2008/rfw.html>
- Paperno, I. 1988. *Chernyshevsky and the Age of Realism: A Study in the Semiotics of Behavior*. Stanford, CA.
- Pisarev, D. 1982. 'Ženskie tipy v romanax i povestiax Pisemskogo Turgeneva i Gončarova.' In: *Literaturnaja kritika v trex tomax*, vol. 1. Leningrad.
- Porter, R. 1994. *Russia's Alternative Prose*. Oxford.
- Psaik. 2004. 'A cho za gundesh . . .' <http://www.forum.msk.ru/files/guestbook-po020406.html>
- Rjabov, O. 1997. *Ženščina i ženstvennost' v filosofii Serebrianogo veka*. Ivanovo.
- Rjabov, O. 1999. *Russkaja filosofija ženstvennosti (XI–XX veka)*. Ivanovo.
- Rjabov, O. 2001. *Matuska-Rus': Opyt gendernogo analiza poiskov nacional'noj identičnosti Rossii v otečestvennoj i zapadnoj istoriosofii*. Moskva.
- Rjabova, T. 2002. 'Maskulinnost' kak faktor.' In: Van Leeuwen-Turnovcová et al. (eds.), 441-51.
- Rosenthal (ed.), 325-57. Rosenthal, B.G. (ed.) 1997. *The Occult in Russian and Soviet Culture*. Ithaca, N.Y.
- Rutten, E. 2007. 'Kashchei Versus the People: Viktor Vasnetsov and the Political Interpretation of Folk Tales in Russian Culture.' In: Wageman (ed.), 50-62.
- Rutten, E. 2010. *Unattainable Bride Russia: Gendering Nation, Gender, State and Intelligentsia in Russian Intellectual Culture*. Evanston, Ill.
- Rylkova, G. 2007. *The Archeology of Anxiety: The Russian Silver Age and Its Legacy*. Pittsburg, Pa.
- Sargeant, L. 2005. 'Kashchei the Immortal: Liberal Politics, Cultural Memory, and the Rimsky-Korsakov Scandal of 1905.' *The Russian Review*, vol. 64, 1, 22–43.

## PUTIN ON PANTIES

- Sluga, G. 1998. 'Identity, Gender, and the History of European Nations.' *Nations and Nationalisms*, vol. 4, 1, 87-111.
- Sokolov, B. 'Russkij bog.' 1996. *Družba narodov*, vol. 12, 184-88.
- Sokolov, B. 2005. 'Vladimir Sorokin: Rossija ostaetsja liubovnicej.' *Grani.ru*, 3 March., <http://www.grani.ru/Culture/Theatre/m.86612.html>
- Solženitsyn, A. 1995. *Publicistika v trex tomax*, vol. 1. Jaroslavl'.
- Sorokin, V., Kulik, O. 1994. *V glub' Rossii*. Moskva.
- Sorokin, V. 2002. *Sobranie sočinenij v dvux tomax*. Moskva.
- Sorokin, V. 2006. *Trilogija*. Moskva.
- Sorokin, V. 2008. *Saxarnyj Kreml'*. Moskva.
- Stieger, C. 1980. *Majakovskijs "Oblako v štanach". Versuch einer sprachorientierten Interpretation*. Slavica Helvetica, Bd. 15. Bern.
- Ševelev, I. 2004. 'All of This Looks like a Parable ...: David Samoilov and His Diaries.' *New Times*. [http://www.newtimes.ru/eng/detail.asp?art\\_id=776](http://www.newtimes.ru/eng/detail.asp?art_id=776)
- Štulhofer, Th. and Santfort, Th. (eds.) 2005. *Sexuality and Gender in Postcommunist Eastern Europe and Russia*. Binghamton, N.Y.
- Uffelmann, D. 2003. 'Marina Himmelfahrt und Liquidierung. Erhöhung und Erniedrigung in Sorokins Roman *Tridcataja ljubov' Mariny*.' *Wiener Slawistischer Almanach*, vol. 51, 289-333.
- Uljura, A. 2007. 'Mit'ki ne seksual'ny, ili erotizacija "pogranič'ja" obrazca 1990 goda.' *Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie*, vol. 83, 227-252.
- Vagon. 2002. 'Kritičeskaja star'ja na pesnju takogo kak Putin gruppy pojuščie vmest [sic].' *Proza.ru*. <http://proza.ru/2002/11/07-141>
- Van Leeuwen-Turnovcová, J. et al. (eds.) 2002. *Gender-Forschung in der Slawistik. Wiener Slawistischer Almanach: Sonderband 55*.
- Wageman, P. (ed.) 2007. *Russian Fairy Tales, Folk Tales and Legends*. Rotterdam.
- Wessling, R. 2005. 'Smert' Nadsona kak gibel' Puškina: "Obrazcovaja travma" i kanonizacija poeta "bol'nogo pokolenija".' *Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie*, vol. 75. <http://magazines.russ.ru/nlo/2005/75/ba7.html>
- Wood, E. 2008. 'Anti-Feminist Overtones in the Rhetoric of Vladimir Putin.' Paper presented at the AAASS Convention in Philadelphia, 22 November 2008.
- Zaitseva, V. 2006. 'National, Cultural, and Gender Identity in the Russian Language.' In: Goscilo and Laroux (eds.), 30-54.
- Zazykin, V.I. 2002. 'Zemlja kak ženskoe načalo i erotičeskie simvoly, svjazannye s nej.' In: Gačev and Titov (eds.), 39-88.
- Zvereva, G. 1999. 'Formy reprezentacii ruskoj istorii.' In: Cheauré and Haider (eds.), 155-80.