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Contemporary Women's Writing in Siberia:
Writing Russia's Peripheries

by

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Abstract

Nina Gorlanova and Natalia Smirnova are contemporary Siberian women writers. This dissertation examines four short works of fiction from the authors' collections: *Вся Пермь/All of Perm'* by Gorlanova and *Женщины и сапожники /The Women and the Shoemakers* by Smirnova. I examine their comparable but divergent textual responses to the peripherality of Siberia and the peripheral status of women writers by combining the study of both poetics and ideologies.

Siberian space is examined via center-periphery studies. The division between the Urals, Siberia and the periphery is explored via the works of Aleksandr Ianushkevich, Ol'ga Slavnikova and Vladimir Abashev. The myths that help to define Siberia are explored. I introduce broad studies of space by Iurii Lotman and Michel Foucault.

Using comparative textual analysis, my study argues that Gorlanova writes about Perm' and develops a network of interacting spaces around it. She positions peripheral and carceral space prominently. Smirnova uses Siberian peripherality as a backdrop and her focus on domestic spaces negotiates a correlation between generic spaces and the peripheral settings of her stories.

Both authors' treatment of space and status is filtered through the lens of women's writing. "Women's writing" as a category and as a "style" is given Russian context. It is established as a second periphery from which these two authors write, but *without* an effort to produce a

programmatic hypothesis regarding the authors' orientations vis-à-vis feminism.

With her use of lifewriting and metafiction, Gorlanova emphasizes the relationship between literary innovation and women's writing. Works by Helena Goscilo, Rosalind Marsh, Barbara Heldt and Hilda Hoogenboom support my analysis of her texts. Smirnova focuses on female characters living in the periphery, their gendered labour and the language describing this experience. Her writing style and interest in cyclic time and quotidian labour are analyzed (especially sewing and cooking). The importance of *byt*/everyday life in contemporary women's writing is studied. The French critical tradition of the 1970's provides a framework for this reading (Helene Cixous and Luce Irigaray), as does an extended conception of Judith Butler's theory of performativity and Ann Romines' study of domestic codes.

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“Contemporary Women’s Writing in Siberia:
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INTRODUCTION

The struggle between the center and the periphery is a constant push and pull for dominance and self determination. The dominance of the center often feels threatened by the desire for self determination by the peripheral. As a reaction, the center further ostracizes the periphery, allowing it only marginal self determination as the center rewrites the history of the periphery, and inscribes onto it markers of importance and qualitative value. In Russia, this relationship of inequality is present in Siberia and in her works of literature. The contemporary works of Siberian authors Nina Gorlanova (1947-) and Natalia Smirnova (1962-) are the focus of my dissertation. I wish to map the ways in which textual responses to Siberia and peripherality, as well as the authors’ mediations on space and women’s writing have functioned to shape these women’s work. This will be accomplished using selected works of their short fiction, most notably the short story collections *Вся Пермь/All of Perm’* (1996) by Gorlanova and *Женщины и сапожники /The Women and the Shoemakers* (2001) by Smirnova. Two sets of stories will be focused on: the two stories *Народный роман/A Folk Story* and *Женщины и сапожники/The Women and the Shoemakers* (the collection’s eponymous short story) by Smirnova; and Gorlanova’s short introductory *Автобиография /Autobiography* and the longer *Любовь в резонных*

перчатках /Love in Rubber Gloves. I have compiled a large amount of research and a number of theoretical sources, but have consciously restricted myself to a small corpus (four texts) in order to facilitate in-depth textual analysis of each, and to allow myself to make cogent comparisons.

FORMAT OF THE DISSERTATION

As evidenced by any search, there is a dearth of academic treatment on Gorlanova or Smirnova, as well as on contemporary Siberian authoresses. As such, some preparatory remarks are needed and context must be provided. This dissertation will take the following form, predicated on the presence of a broadly comparative structure that seeks to compare and contrast Smirnova with Gorlanova throughout the work:

The Introduction: The Introduction contains short informational biographies of Gorlanova and Smirnova and a review of the corpus. Comparisons of the two authors will appear throughout the dissertation to facilitate understanding of their connected but divergent paths and spatial practices. The Introduction will contain preparatory remarks regarding Siberia, its regions, status, literature and theoretical literary framework. Concerns regarding space will be discussed and defined as they are used in this work. I will address the expansive concept of peripherality from three different points of view which, I believe, define Gorlanova and

Smirnova's writing: first, I will address the question of center and periphery that becomes apparent in discussions of Urals and Siberian regionalism ("Siberian Context and Peripheral Space"). After that, the question of literary myths that persist in describing Siberia will be addressed; these myths include the contradictory myths of Siberia as a paradise or as Hell, and the tenacious branding of Siberia as provincial ("Siberia as Myth in Russian Culture"). Finally, I address Russian women's writing as being placed on the periphery of the mainstream Russian literary canon, and briefly trace the historical and contemporary realms of women's writing ("Russian Women's Literature"). It is important to note that this is not an explicitly feminist critique.

Part One: Part One, which focuses on Nina Gorlanova's writing, introduces several characteristic elements of her work while providing a close reading of two stories: *Любовь в резиновых перчатках/Love in Rubber Gloves* and *Автобиография/Autobiography*. The importance of Perm' to Gorlanova's prose will be addressed. Gorlanova's style will be explored, along with her treatment of space ("Controlling Textual Space and Engaging with Metafiction"). In addition, engagement with the genre of metafiction will be explored and applied to Gorlanova's texts ("Analyzing Metafictional Elements: Authorship Concerns and Unstable Space"). The gendered stereotypes of women's writing and the space made for this writing in Russian literature will be explored. Gorlanova's texts will be presented in relation to women's writing ("The Influence of Women's

Writing”). In addition, Gorlanova’s engagement with the tradition of lifewriting and autobiography will be analyzed (“Autobiography vs Memoir: Contemporary Views on Lifewriting in Russia and Abroad”).

Part Two: In Part Two the focus is on Natalia Smirnova. I will often draw on the theoretical frameworks and notions introduced in Part One in order to compare and contrast the two writers. Close readings of *Женщины и сапожники/The Women and the Shoemakers* and *Народный роман/A Folk Story* will be provided. The text’s repetitive acts of gendered domestic labour will be discussed (“Analyzing Nina: Cooking and the Performativity of Gendered Labour”). There will be an emphasis on domestic themes and space to her female characters, as well as the hallmarks of gendered writing (“The Impact of Feminine Themes and Space for a Woman’s Sentence”). I will highlight the metafictional elements present in her writing (“Analyzing Metafictional Elements: Unusual Heroines and Framebreaks”). Analysis will display an increased focus on the concept and influence of *быт*/everyday life to Smirnova’s work and the significance of women’s ritual domestic labour (“*Быт* and Sewing: Manipulating the Concept of the Ritual ‘Everyday’”). I will explore the relation of these all of these concepts to the perception of writing as gendered. I will discuss the specific themes made obvious in her work and the theoretical approaches one might apply to analyze those themes, such as *l’écriture féminine*, female subjectivity, and the lens of

northern provincialism (“Domestic Space Encroached Upon: Blustery Provincialism and ‘Additional Space’”).

BIOGRAPHIES AND THE CORPUS

At this juncture, I will introduce these little-known writers and this dissertation’s review of the literature. Few academic works treat either of these authors. Both wrote throughout the late Soviet and perestroika period, without much noticeable change in their output. Each continues to write fiction to the current day.

Nina Viktorovna Gorlanova, born in 1947, grew up in the city of Perm’ where she still lives and where most of her stories and novels are set. She graduated from Perm’ University with a degree in philology. She is a member of the Union of Russian Writers (1991) and the author of eight books in Russian¹, and of numerous articles and short stories published in journals such as *Урал/Ural*, *Новый мир/New World*, *Знамя/Banner*, *Октябрь/October*, *Пермской обл./Perm’ region*². Her major works include *Вся Пермь/All of Perm’*, as well as a story short-listed for the 1996 Russian Booker Prize, *Роман воспитания/Bildungsroman*. Works by Gorlanova have been popular in the country and *Любовь в резиновых перчатках /Love in Rubber Gloves* was also awarded first in an

¹ *Радуга каждый день* (1987); *Молодая гвардия* (1990); *Родные люди* (1990); *Вся Пермь* (1997 - предисл. М.Абашевой); *Любовь в резиновых перчатках* (1999); *Дом со всеми неудобствами* (2000); *Светлая проза* (2005); *Его горький крепкий мед* (N.D.); *Роман воспитания* Соавт. В.Букур.

² Please see this more exhaustive list from *Журнальный зал в РЖ* (2001) <<http://magazines.russ.ru/authors/g/gorlanova/>>

International competition for the best women's story from Columbia University (1992) and translated into several European languages. In 2002, *Знамя/Banner* awarded Gorlanova their prize for best novel, and in 2003 Gorlanova received an award named after P. Bazhov for the book *Подсолнухи на балконе/Sunflowers on the balcony* in Ekaterinburg. Gorlanova also co-writes with her husband, Viacheslav Bukur; in 1995 the magazine *Новый мир* announced that their collaborative novel was nominated for the Booker Prize³. Furthermore, she was the subject of a Russian documentary film entitled *Gorlanova, or the House with all Inconveniences* by director A. Romanov, in 2002. It was quite successful, which speaks to the existence of a real interest in her life and her works. Gorlanova has also acknowledged how important her hometown is for her in the short popular article, "Nina Gorlanova, They Don't Wear Checkered in the City of Perm' Anymore", and in the interviews she posts on her blog⁴. In addition, she self-publishes many of her short stories on her personal blog.

Perhaps the only non-dissertation academic work on Gorlanova's writing is the philological monograph by Marina Abasheva, *Literature in search of a face: Russian prose in the late XX century*, in 2001. It analyzes the writer's identity and dynamics of style through the main factors of sex,

³ Абашева, Марина "Биография свободы. Свобода биографии" *Новый мир* vol 11, 2003 N.Pag. and see Gorlanova's namepage at the *Журнал стороны света авторские страницы* <<http://www.stosvet.net/union/Gorlanova/>>.

⁴ Gorlanova, Nina *Живой Журнал/LiveJournal* <<http://ngorlanova.livejournal.com/>>

life, territorial identity⁵. This shares some subject-matter with the dissertation written by Iulia Iur'evna Danilenko on Gorlanova's prose, poetics, genesis and status⁶.

In English sources, Gorlanova has been more commonly mentioned in passing than Smirnova. Though these sources overwhelmingly treat only a single work of Gorlanova's, especially as an example of writing about motherhood, and fail to properly contextualize this within a feminist or Russian framework they do speak to her burgeoning popularity. The focus is primarily on her depiction of Soviet and post-Soviet childbirth and maternity concerns. This is the case with "Manifestos and Maternity: The New Amazons as Writers and Mothers", authored by Elizabeth Skomp, though she is also treated here as a part of a literary group⁷. There are digital references to two of her most known works, *Вся Пермь/All of Perm'* and the translated *История озера Веселое/Story of Lake Jolly* (1982)⁸. Very short descriptions of her stories have appeared in online publications such as *The Dalkey Archive Press* where it was reviewed by Michael Pinker⁹, in a dissertation by Benjamin Sutcliffe on women's

⁵ Абашева М, *Литература в поисках лица. Русская проза в конце XX века* (Perm': Perm' University, 2001). Also see: Abasheva 1996, 1999, 2001, 2003.

⁶ Danilenko, Iulia, *Проза Нины Горлановой: поэтика, генезис, статус/Nina Gorlanova's Prose: poetics, genesis, status* (Perm': Perm' University, 2006).

⁷ That paper was a part of a conference presentation: please see Skomp, Elisabeth, "Russian Women's Publishing at the Beginning of the 1990's" (*Soviet and Post-Soviet Review* 33.1 2006) 85-98.

⁸ Gorlanova, Nina, trans. Jane Chamberlain, GLAS 30 *NINE of Russia's Foremost Women Writers*: Glas 30, ed. Natalia Perova (Moscow: Glas, 2003).

⁹ Pinker, Michael. Review "Nine of Russia's Foremost Women Writers" trans. Joanne Turnbull" (*Dalkey Archive Press* Vol XXIII.3, 2012) N.Pag.

literature¹⁰, and in University of Toronto's electronic journal's article, "Contemporary Prose in Post-Soviet Russia" by Norman Shneidman¹¹. She has been mentioned in terms of her use of the motif of self-sacrifice in classes taught in Russia at Smolny College, as well as at a conference chaired by Helena Goscilo held by AATSEEL. Short mentions of her which serve to use her as an example of a female prose writer abound; for example, she is referenced in passing in Helena Goscilo's women's-studies cum Russian literature book entitled *Dehexing Sex*¹². A mention of her also appears as a memoirist in *The Russian Memoir*¹³. Indeed, much of her work seems to collapse the distinction between memoirist, autobiographer and fiction writer. Much more often, she is included in anthologies of Russian women writers, for example in: *Women in Russian Literature after Glasnost: Female Alternatives*¹⁴; *Shamara and Other Stories*¹⁵; GLAS publications, as noted above; *MPT 20: Contemporary Russian Women Poets*¹⁶, and *Half a Revolution: Contemporary Fiction by Russian Women*¹⁷.

¹⁰ *Engendering Byt: Russian Women Writers and Narratives of Everyday Life, 1962-2001* (University of Pittsburg, 2004). Online.

¹¹ Scheidman, Norman. "Contemporary Prose in Post-Soviet Russia" *University of Toronto Academic Electronic Journal in Slavic Studies* (2008) N. Pag.

¹² Goscilo, Helena *Dehexing Sex* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1996).

¹³ Holmgren, Beth ed. *The Russian Memoir: History and Literature* (London: Northwestern University Press, 2003).

¹⁴ Adlam, Carol, *Women in Russian literature after glasnost: female alternatives* (NY: Legenda, 2005).

¹⁵ Vasilenko, Svetlana Vladimirovna and Helena Goscilo eds. *Shamara and Other Stories* (NY: Northwestern: 2000).

¹⁶ Polukhina, Valentina and Daniel Weissbort. "Contemporary Russian Women Poets", *Modern Poetry in Translation 20* (London: INpress, nd).

¹⁷ Gessen, Masha ed. *Half a Revolution: Contemporary Fiction by Russian Women* (NY: Cleis Press, 1995).

Natalia Veniaminovna Smirnova is a contemporary writer who was born in Yakutsk in the Sakha region of the Russian Far East, in 1962. She soon moved and attended university in Ekaterinburg in the Urals, before later settling there as a professional writer and teacher. Smirnova now lives and works in Moscow but is still “our native, Sverdlovsk-Ekaterinburg resident, author, scholar [and] philologist”, in the words of her northern brethren¹⁸. In 1978, Smirnova graduated from the Philological Faculty of the Ural State University at Gorkii (Ekaterinburg), later working at the USU, first in the Department of Russian and foreign literature and then overseas. She is the author of five novels and several short story collections or co-edited anthologies¹⁹; two are lyrical detective novels under pseudonym²⁰. She has also published in many journals, numerous times, such as *Урал/Ural*, *Новый мир/New World*, *Знамя/Banner*, *Октябрь/October*, *Уральская новь/The Soil of the Urals*, *Огонек/Little Flame* (1999-2005) and *Топос/Topos*²¹. She received an award from the journal *Новый мир/New World* in 2005, and Smirnova’s short story collection *Женщины и сапожники/The Women and the Shoemakers* won Smirnova a Fellowship from the Hawthornden International Writers’ Retreat in 2001.

¹⁸ “Наталья Вениаминовна Смирнова живет и работает в Москве, но исконно она наш, свердловско-екатеринбургский, житель, автор, филолог...” Sozina, Elena. № 41(2006) Гуманитарные науки. Выпуск 11. N. Pag

¹⁹ *Фабрикантша : роман, рассказы* (2001); *Любовные истории цветов и овощей*, (1999); *Женская азбука* (2003).

²⁰ *Умный, наглый, самоуверенный* (2004); *Сукин сын* (2005): под псевдонимом Вера Коркина/under the pseudonym Vera Korkina.

²¹ Please see a detailed list at *Журнальный зал в РЖ*, <http://magazines.russ.ru/authors/s/smirnova/> and please see: <http://proceedings.usu.ru/?base=rubrica&xsl=author.xslt&id=a1248> and http://magazines.russ.ru:81/novyi_mi/redkol/smirnova/index.html

Smirnova has been the subject of few Russian articles, most strictly publicity-oriented. Academically, she has been examined as an element within the modern Russian women's literary scene in E.K. Sozina's work "Екатеринбургский текст" Натальи Смирновой/*The Ekaterinburg Texts of Natalia Smirnova*²². In this, her choice of setting is analyzed as alternately mythological provincial cities or actual ones that beg comparison to their prototypes; for example, Ekaterinburg. This connection to the provincial is explicitly made by Sozina. The study offers an overview of Smirnova's corpus and a typology of the settings she uses and argues that her works qualify as "городской текст/city-text", literature that put the focus distinctly on cities in the Urals. She is seldom included in any translated work, though lone examples of her work do appear in several English anthologies, most notably in the GLAS anthology *NINE of Russia's Foremost Women Writers*²³, which is used in several Russian literature courses including those at Reed and Northeast Universities. Examples of her work also appear in: *Half a Revolution: Contemporary Fiction by Russian Women; Russian Literature 1995-2002: On the Threshold of the New Millennium*²⁴, and in online sources, such as the e-publication *PEN International*²⁵. *Literature Northeast*²⁶ has

²² Sozina, Elena. "Екатеринбургский текст Натальи Смирновой [The Ekaterinburg Texts of Natalia Smirnova]". 2005. N.Pag.

²³ Smirnova, Natal'ia, "Женщины и сапожники/The Woman and the Shoemakers", *GLAS 30 NINE of Russia's Foremost Women Writers*: Glas 30, ed. Natalia Perova (Moscow: Glas, 2003).

²⁴ Schiedman, Norman ed. *Russian literature, 1995-2002: on the threshold of the new millennium*. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004).

²⁵ Gessen, Masha ed. *Half a Revolution: Contemporary Fiction by Russian Women* (NY: Cleis Press, 1995); Schiedman, Norman ed. *Russian literature, 1995-2002: on the threshold of the new millennium* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004); *Pen International* Vol.59.1 (Spring/Summer 2009): 1-57).

had her as an invited speaker in their series on fiction. A story of Smirnova's also appeared in English, in the 1996 collection *So, What Kept You?*²⁷, an anthology of thematic stories inspired by Raymond Carver's impression that he and Chekhov were somehow linked.

SIBERIAN CONTEXT AND PERIPHERAL SPACE

Peripherality is explicitly connected with concerns of space. Stemming from its roots in sociological and political-historical and political-geographical studies, the concerns of the center-periphery schema (sometimes known as core-periphery) and some of its underpinnings provide background for this study. This model developed as a spatial metaphor that attempts to explain the structural relationship between the advanced or metropolitan 'center' and the less-developed 'periphery' of a region or the relationship between capitalist and developing societies. As an explicit scholarly notion, it was given credence in the article simply titled "Centre and Periphery" (1961) by sociologist Edward Shils (1910 – 1995). Shils thought of centrality and peripherality in a broad sense; for him, centrality involved the order of symbols, values and beliefs which administer society as well as the networks and activities of citizens that preside over tradition with their authority while conferring (or denying) legitimacy. In turn, peripherality was formulated as

²⁶ This website seems to be no longer in existence, but as of Jan. 2011, the site was <www.literaturenortheast.co.uk/writertowriter_1>

²⁷ Smirnova, Natalia, "Untitled Chapter" *So What Kept You?* (Malcolm, Claire and Margaret Wilkinson eds. Inpress. August 2011).

possessing both “vertical (sociostructural) and horizontal (geographical) dimensions”²⁸ that reflect both physical distance from the center and the fading attachment to the center’s authority that characterize the hinterland. Others (Immanuel Wallerstein *The Modern World-System* 1974-1989, notably) have shifted and reorganized these definitions over time to allow for even more “shades of grey” in demarcating the boundaries and definitions of the center and periphery²⁹.

Even more abstractly, issues of space have been studied by theorists such as Michel Foucault (1926 – 1984)³⁰. Foucault works with a very broad definition of space, one that allows for reality and representation to exist alongside the more straightforward concepts of space practiced by sociologists or students of economy and politics. To see an example of this more wide-reaching approach to space, we can examine his contention that

[Gaston] Bachelard’s monumental work³¹ and the descriptions of phenomenologists have taught us that we do not live in a homogeneous and empty space, but on the contrary in a space thoroughly imbued with quantities and perhaps thoroughly fantasmatic as well. The space of our primary perception, the space of our dreams and that of our passions hold within themselves...there is a light, ethereal, transparent space, or again a dark, rough, encumbered space...or again a space that can be flowing like sparkling water, or a space that is fixed, congealed, like stone or crystal³².

²⁸ Bushnell and Greene 3

²⁹ Borgattia, Stephen P and Martin G Everett, "Models of core/periphery structures". *Social Networks*. Volume 21, Issue 4 (2000): 375–395, 1.

³⁰ For example, please see: “Of Other Spaces”, Trans: Jay Miskowiec, *Diacritics*, Vol. 16, No. 1. (Spring, 1986), pp. 22-27.

³¹ Most likely referring to the work: *La Poétique de l'Espace* (1958)

³² “Of Other Spaces”, Trans: Jay Miskowiec, *Diacritics*, Vol. 16, No. 1. (Spring, 1986), pp. 22-27.

In addition to these varied “internal” spaces he envisions external space as well: “the space in which we live, which draws us out of ourselves, in which the erosion of our lives, our time and our history occurs, the space that claws and gnaws at us, is also, in itself, a heterogeneous space”³³, he notes, seemingly drawing on Bachelard’s interest in space that is impermanent and shifting. Foucault’s work also treats sites with no real “place”, like utopias and places that are outside of all place even though they are real (i.e. mirror images - “heterotopias”), to give a truly enriching sense of how expansive and reaching this term can be outside of its more literal interpretations.

Foucault’s treatment of space is merely one of thousands, one man’s work on a topic that “is of universal social interest and the topic of some of the most historic knowledge projects and texts produced by human cultures”³⁴. Rob Shields (1961 -) has studied the breadth of definitions and understanding of space in articles such as “Knowing Space” (2006), and his works speak to the full connotative and denotative richness of the concept. Space, for the purposes of this study, can be understood as: the “unlimited or incalculably great three-dimensional realm or expanse in which all material objects are located and all events occur, or the portion or extent of this in a given instance” and the extent or room in three dimensions (the interpretation of oneself and the place one occupies; a problem of self-definition within a space defined by others), i.e. the space

³³ “Of Other Spaces”, 24

³⁴ Shields, Rob, “Knowing Space”(Theory, Culture & Society 23, 2006) 147.

occupied by a body³⁵. Broadly, space is both a physical and symbolic entity, allowing for both its presence and absence to become meaningful, not least when manifested in opposing spheres of influence. Centrality and peripherality can be understood in the sense that Shils imparted, as complex sociointellectual constructs that work in symbiotic unease with each other.

The importance of space and one's placement within it is stridently evident in this study's examples of Siberian women's prose. The ways in which Gorlanova and Smirnova's texts represent and interact with space and peripheral status is a chief focus of this work. This study concerns itself with the representation of spaces and periphery within literature, and with the particular tradition that Siberian and other Russian northern peripheral regions that might inform Gorlanova and Smirnova's writing context. Vital to both Nina Gorlanova and Natalia Smirnova is the specter of peripheral space that influences them. This is most literally interpreted by this study as Siberian space.

By existing on the periphery of Russia, Siberia has come to embody many aspects of the "other" in mainstream Russian culture. The Russian critical tradition has focused on the Local Text and conventions of St. Petersburg, though over time this has slowly shifted focus from Petersburg to Moscow and now extends further into outlying urban centers. These foci draw on the long heritage of urban and literary Petersburg texts in

³⁵Definitions taken from: Oct 1/09 <<http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/space>> . Notes in parentheses mine.

Russian as well as the cultural study of space, a lineage represented by Russian theorists such as Iurii Mikhailovich Lotman (1922-1993) and Vladimir Nikolaievich Toporov (1928-2005), and a preoccupation with “new, visual vocabulary [allowing] the Russian landscape to bear on central issues for the literate, urban elite”³⁶. Positioned by the center to exist on the geo-political and the cultural edge of Russia, the Siberian cities Ekaterinburg³⁷ and Perm’ –located in the Urals—have become peripheral counterpoints to the Moscow/Petersburg center(s)³⁸. They are also the native cities of Natalia Smirnova and Nina Gorlanova, respectively.

Few Russian approaches are available to the scholar of specifically Siberian literature, in part due to this historical interest in major literary centers. The approaches available lean heavily on the conception of Siberian space. I choose to consciously focus on the works of Russians or those that are specifically written about Russia; I limit my discussion of Siberian space and peripherality in part to these Russian-specific accounts in order to provide a region-specific point of view and context from which Gorlanova and Smirnova could conceivably be working out of, as well as to highlight those whose work might be overlooked in English-language

³⁶ Hoogenboom, Hilde, “The Importance of being Provincial”, *Gender and Landscape*, ed.s Lorraine Dowler, Josephine Carubia, Bonj Szczygiel (NY: Routledge, 2005) 242.

³⁷ Spelling of this city is not set (for eg, see: <http://www.ekaterinburg.com/misc/ekaterinburg-or-Ekaterinburg.html>), but I choose this version to be consistent with Library of Congress transliteration. This will be my choice of transliteration throughout my dissertation. Natalia Smirnova also lived in Yakutsk.

³⁸ In Russia, these two cities represent the “center”, despite being two. They are two “centers” that corroborate each other and each other’s mythologies of prominence.

study. Three Russians' works on space are of particular note herein: the work of Aleksandr Sergeevich Ianushkevich (1944-) on Siberian literature, Ol'ga Aleksandrovna Slavnikova's (1957 -) work on Ekaterinburg, and Vladimir Vasilevich Abashev (1954-) regarding Perm'. The tradition of Siberian literature is long, but my study will focus on contemporary views, best represented by the aforementioned. Western approaches to literary space and women's writing will also be explored, as they are useful and applicable to my arguments: Helena Goscilo's long-running studies of carceral and hospital space in women's literature, Julie Buckler's work on "mapping" in Russian literature³⁹, and Hilde Hoogenboom's interest in provincial Russian women's writing of the 19th century are prime examples.

A.S. Ianushkevich outlines in his article, "Siberia as a Part of European Cultural Space"⁴⁰, a historical study of Siberian space and literature. This culminates with his interpretation of expansive space, the memory of Siberian exile, penitentiary legacy, and provincialism morphing into a Siberian "Local Text". Ianushkevich argues that phenomenon of Siberian text is the result of two opposing cultures, Russian and Siberian, their reciprocal interaction and its synthesis. Two views of Siberia, the one from inside and from without, have been synthesized into a whole Siberian text which he would call a clear example of "Local Text". In order to justify this finding, Ianushkevich argues that change came to Siberian texts as

³⁹ Buckler, Julie, *Mapping St. Petersburg: Imperial Text and Cityscape* (Princeton: Princeton, 2005).

⁴⁰ Ianushkevich, A.S, *Siberia as a Part of European Cultural Space* (Томск [Tomsk]: University of Irkutsk, 2005) N.pag.

they began to become more personalized, and dealt with the fate of man and his movement through liminal space on the scale of history-philosophy⁴¹. Ianushkevich contends that emergent texts in the 19th C were still polysemantic, and argues change came to fruition in the 20th C, after the heroic-patriotic rhetoric of the revolution and wars passed, and the journalistic approach that had dominated the preceding years had shifted into a broader interest in Siberian lives, stories and voices than pure ethnographical writing. This process is linked by Ianushkevich to the symbolic renaissance that followed writings of Chernysheskii (1828 – 1889), Dostoevskii (1821 – 1881), Leskov (1831 – 1895) and Chekhov (1860 – 1904) that allowed contemporary Siberian texts to emerge⁴². On one hand, a semiosphere was forming an original historical, spatial model, subject, and ethnographic and linguistic specialties. On the other hand, the vestiges of pan-Russian traditions for literature and models continued to run parallel to this emergent literature—a dialectical “them” as versus “us”. This interior “us” and versus “them” dialectic informs Ianushkevich’s entire organization of Siberian text. These traditions are of continuing influence, though Ianushkevich argues that this is somewhat diminished under the contemporary influence of Local Text, recognizable as a synthesis rather than a dialectical relationship between the inside-outside.

Ianushkevich’s work is appealing and applicable to the study of Gorlanova insofar as it acknowledges continuous interaction of the center

⁴¹ Ianushkevich 6

⁴² Ianushkevich 5

with the periphery and the creation of a synthesis that allows for an exchange of ideas from the center to the periphery. However, he focuses overly on a dialectic that always, by its existence, privileges the more powerful and free-standing “center” by whose lack the periphery is judged. His period of interest also well predates that of my study. On the whole, however, his conception of center-periphery literary parallelism helps to elevate the status of peripheral literature, while acknowledging the rift that often forms between it and the central canon. The use of Lotman’s influence is an interesting element of Ianushkevich’s work, and it hints at a rather homogenous “original” northern community/semiosphere. This proposal that Siberia is both a community that is established as well as an area that performs established signs is both useful for my study insofar as it implies peripherality and performativity, and is simultaneously of little consequence as it overemphasizes the influence of the center on Siberia.

At this junction, an important distinction must be demarcated clearly. In Russian culture there is an established, though murky, distinction between what would generally be called “Siberia” and the “Urals”, an area bordering Siberia and which contains both of the authors in this study. This is normally collapsed into the same cultural arena by the Western world. The Urals are, in Russia, defined somewhat autonomously, if interrelatedly, from Siberia. This subtle differing is an accepted idea that is sometimes supported by the bureaucratic lodging of geographical boundaries and politics, though it is often qualitative

othering. The official information pages for Perm' *область/region*, technically within the Urals, state that:

Siberia (*Сибирь*), is the vast region constituting almost all of Northern Asia and for the most part currently serving as the massive central and eastern portion of the Russian Federation... Perm' Region is located in the east of the East European Plain and the western slope of the Middle Ural Mountains⁴³.

Significantly, this definition notes the importance of Asia to the region, though it stresses the “Europeanness” of the area. It also shows the requisite vagueness in describing “Siberia”, noting the existence of the Urals region whilst technically including it within this northern expanse.

The Urals have been long regarded as the gateway to Siberia, if not Siberia itself.⁴⁴ Despite changing definitions and deviation in those existent, there is a commonly held belief that *some* sort of division exists between the Urals and Siberia. The problem with this distinction is one of general understanding versus scholarship. There exists very little research which discusses this division in literature; indeed, more often than not, one reads of Siberian literature as a vague and general definition of everything “northern” (the Urals included). This can be seen easily in reading about northern literatures, and it will become obvious as one continues to read this study. This leaves the “Siberian versus Urals” scholar with a large gap in research, and little beyond generally-held beliefs upon which to draw. Much work is required on a symbolic level, to

⁴³ Perm' Regional Server, *Perm' Regional Administration*, 2011, N.pag.

⁴⁴ Slovari Yandex, Online entries on *Уральский экономический район* and *Урал* (географич.) passim, and passim in *All-Russia Population Census of 2002* nt: Federal State Statistics Service, 2010, N.pag.

explain and explore this concept, though it is outside the reach of the current study. In part, beyond providing context for these northern literatures and studies of the periphery, the reliance on this division provides the clearest demarcation between prominent critics in the area. This review will show this as it now presents the critics whose works focus on the Urals with centers variously described as Ekaterinburg (Slavnikova) and Perm' (Abashev).

The divide between the Urals and Siberia, as well as the lack of scholarship on Siberian space is partially remedied by the work of Ol'ga Slavnikova (1957 -), a resident and writer in Ekaterinburg, and winner of the 2006 Russian Booker Prize. Her article in *Соверменная русская литература с Вячеславом Курицыным/Contemporary Russian Literature with Viacheslav Kuritzyn* (1965 -) entitled “ ‘Я’ в Екатеринбургe / ‘I’ in Ekaterinburg”, investigates the character of this city in the Urals and its writing. Her argument centers primarily on the inability for a typical traveler to understand a city, except via a documentary type of shorthand by which the city is described and understood. To the uninitiated, the mysterious subtext of a city will never become obvious, whilst the truthful mapping of space is required by the authorial “I” to find “canonocity” – authorial authenticity – in a city⁴⁵. The traveler performs his/her role, as does the city that is visited, in a reciprocal and symbiotic relationship that disallows anything but a

⁴⁵ Slavnikova, Ol'ga, “ ‘Я’ в Екатеринбургe”, *Соверменная русская литература*, (2011) 1

“superficial”⁴⁶ and “exoticising”⁴⁷ understanding of either. Harriet Murav has also argued that Siberia in general has served “as a blank slate for European Russians, who inscribe it with many different visions of themselves and their culture”⁴⁸. Slavnikova’s interest lays in the interfacing of writers and their city in the form of the authorial “I”, and the function of literary representation of a city as a method of memory, not unlike a traveler’s snapshot⁴⁹. Ekaterinburg, she argues, is an unappealing city for both. Despite the activity of the intelligentsia there (the journal *Урал/Ural*, the universities, the literary heritage etc.), there has been little attention paid to the attempts of writers to convey the relationship between themselves and their city. She marks the city in opposition to St. Petersburg and Moscow as centers (Ekaterinburg is variably referred to as the third or fourth largest city in Russia), and places Ekaterinburg as the center of the Urals⁵⁰. She also notes that its relegation to the lower tiers of literary status is probably due to the inaccessibility of Ekaterinburg, a fate that is shared with other peripheral cities; it is simply seen as “далеко/a distant place”⁵¹.

There are elements of her study that are possibly applicable to Gorlanova and Smirnova. One is that she mentions Gorlanova by name, citing her agenda to create a mythology around Perm’ that seeks to both

⁴⁶ Slavnikova 1

⁴⁷ Slavnikova 4

⁴⁸ Murav, Harriet, “Vo Glubine Sibirskie Rud’: Siberia and the Myth of Exile”, Galya Diment and Yuri Slezkine Eds, *Between Heaven and Hell: the Myth of Siberia in Russian Culture* (NY: St. Martin's Press, 1993) 95.

⁴⁹ Slavnikova 4

⁵⁰ Slavnikova 5

⁵¹ Slavnikova 6

represent and to make heard the voice of a peripheral city while simultaneously establishing it (unsuccessfully, according to Slavnikova) as a literary capital.⁵² Second, Slavnikova highlights the requirement of the writer to be close to the city which they write about, as the symbiotic process of the writer writing about Ekaterinburg in turn fabricates the city. This concept weaves into what I will argue is Gorlanova's creation of a "literary Perm" – a fictionalized but highly recognizable representation of the real peripheral city in which she lives. In turn, Slavnikova notes that the prose writer should not stay only in his/her own city, to use it as a "single context" for their writing which is once again stressed as a process⁵³. This would be an example applicable to Smirnova, and her mid-life move into the Moscow region from the Urals and one that criticizes the dogged and politicized approach of the staunch and entrenched Gorlanova. In addition to this, Slavnikova's belief that Ekaterinburg's blank urban face does not facilitate the communication of historical and mythological memories to an onlooker adds credence to Smirnova's insistence on "whitewashing" and obfuscating any distinguishing feature of her stories' settings (presumably, her hometown Ekaterinburg). Slavnikova's work does not inform my own particularly, as its corpus is quite narrow and too old to be applied well to my study, and also my work does not focus on the city of Ekaterinburg principally because Smirnova herself does not. As such, her thesis that insists Ekaterinburg provides a

⁵² Slavnikova 6

⁵³ Slavnikova 6

specific opposition to the center in word and literary hero is of little consequence to my analysis. Instead of being location-specific, as will be explained in detail, Smirnova chooses to highlight the life of unspecified provincial Siberians towns and avoid explicit landmarks or named geographical referents. Her focus is peripheral and Siberian, but implicit.

The lack of scholarship regarding Russia's periphery in literature is allayed further by the work of Abashev, a northern scholar based at the University of Perm' who writes scholarly analysis. Due to his work, and the labors of the AGRAF publication house (Perm'), there exists another approach toward Urals literature that defines it against Russian (if not against Siberian) literature. His work is one of the few in which the tension between geographical and symbolic areas in the Russian north is theoretically tackled. This work is also very contemporary, allowing the framework to be considered for the contemporary literature this study treats. Ianushkevich's terms and concept of synthesis exist in opposition to prominent arguments about the dialectical center-periphery relationship in Russia. Ianushkevich's concept of Local Text as a "synthesis" of Siberian and Russian traditions and influences runs parallel in several ways to Abashev's approach of polysemantic literature, but it is pertinent to note that Ianushkevich does not acknowledge any division between the literature of the "Urals" and "Siberia" so hotly espoused by Abashev.

What differentiates Abashev from some other researchers, such as Ianushkevich, is his desire to create a northern geopoetics (in his case, via

Pasternak's literature), and in his attempts to write Perm' as a text (in his article *Пермь как текст/ Perm as Text*). In this, he follows the footsteps of Toporov and Lotman in their works on St. Petersburg, though with a much smaller corpus. Abashev proceeds to claim stakes in two different roles: he attempts to establish himself (1) as a prominent northern scholar in the broad area of urban studies and (2) as a leader of a myth-making venture centered on Perm' as the axis of an independent Urals. He arguably put Perm' "on the map", so to speak, in literary studies circles, launching the Iuratin Project⁵⁴ that defines in some ways the literary scene in Perm'. The project is one by which the Urals is proclaimed a specially symbolic and poetic body, disassociated from the rest of the north and Siberia. This has obvious features of a postmodern cultural project - an artificially created cultural simulacrum, a purposefully invented conceptual "cultural movement". Notwithstanding any pretensions, his work represents the context and some of the mythology that is contemporaneous and also locally influential to Gorlanova's writing.

Abashev's views are succinctly laid out in an article *Урал как предчувствие/The Urals as Presentiment*⁵⁵, decoding the "geopoetics" of Pasternak. This appeared in a 2009 publication *Россия: воображение пространства/пространство воображения - Russia: Imagining*

⁵⁴ This is a foundation (est. 1994) which supports culture and literature in Perm'. It is named for the fictional town of "Юрятин/Iuratin" that represented Perm' in Pasternak's novel *Доктор Живаго/Doctor Zhivago* (1955). Please see: Фонд «Юрятин», общественный фонд культуры. *Permskaia Kraevaia Entziklopediia*. Permskaia Kraevaia Biblioteka im. M. Gor'kogo. PGOYB, 2008 <<http://enc.permkultura.ru/showObject.do?object=1803701076>>

⁵⁵ *Urals* for short

Space/ Spaces of Imagination ⁵⁶, a collection of essays. His paper generally traces some of the domestic, Russian-written literature on the question of northern space. The historical view of Siberia and the Urals stands as one of the major themes (“vectors” as Abashev calls them) in literature. This meant that in Russian culture the Urals were strangely prominent and ushered in a new model of geographical space that domineered works such as Nobel Laureate Boris Leonidovich Pasternak’s (1890-1960), and established a model of the “north” that Abashev sees represented by the Urals. Abashev argues that Siberia, and the Urals in particular, became a famous literary space/topos that requires a “geo” (geographically-specific)-“poetics” to understand⁵⁷. In his discussion of Pasternak, Abashev notes that Pasternak relied on heavy use of spatial symbolism based in a realistic and geographically recognizable localized space; to this extent, his work can be applied loosely to Gorlanova’s writing, most of which evokes a clearly and realistically formed image of Perm’. In addition, this study outlines the symbolic weight of “locality” in peripheral space, and supports any analysis of provincial representation in literature. This also supports the presupposition that most of Siberian literature focuses on space. Pasternak’s poetics or “geopoetics”—symbolic geography—are the poetics of space that combine spaces with destinies, both real and imaginary. However, Abashev argues that the *Urals* particularly became conceptualized as both anti-Moscow (the center) and

⁵⁶ “Урал как предчувствие. Заметки о геопоэтике Бориса Пастернака/Urals As Presentiment”, *Россия: воображение пространства/ пространство воображения*, (АГРАФ: Москва, 2009).

⁵⁷ Abashev *Urals* 219

as home, as well as linked to the theme of travel⁵⁸. Via this understanding of northern space, the Urals *specifically* come to represent the “north” as a broad symbol, as well as a border between the space of Russia and the rest of the world⁵⁹. Abashev believes that Pasternak created a space in which the Urals are not “Russia” (as represented by Moscow) and instead become their own unified space. The Urals thus become particularly significant *because* of their border-ness, their “betweenness”⁶⁰.

The spaces of the Urals have been represented in Russian literature as feminized, gendered space⁶¹. This is tied with what Abashev terms the “любовь пространства/eros of space”⁶², the intensity with which man (sic) interacts with space, and vice versa. Abashev’s gendered approach to the north as a concept is masculinist, and in this he continues traditions inherited from his literary forefathers. For example, Abashev’s work excludes every woman writer (including Gorlanova, for example, with whom he is very familiar) from either Siberian or Urals literature as a primary or secondary source. This was, of course, also the case with the Village Prose movement; the literature featured matriarchies and female workers often, but did not acknowledge the work of any women writers or theorists averring, “the village writers...are all, incidentally, male.”⁶³

⁵⁸ Abashev *Urals* 222

⁵⁹ Abashev *Urals* 223

⁶⁰ Abashev *Urals* 223

⁶¹ Abashev *Urals* 97

⁶² Abashev *Urals* 220

⁶³ Gillespie, David, “Ironies and Legacies, Village Prose and Glasnost”, *Forum for Modern Language Studies*, Vol xxvii:1 (1991) 7-84. 84. See also: “A Paradise Lost? Siberia and its Writers, 1960 to 1990”. *Between heaven and hell: the myth of Siberia in Russian culture*, eds Diment, Galya and Yuri Slezkine (NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 1993) 255-274.

Further—and this can be applied to both Ianushkevich and Abashev—it is Abashev’s reliance (in his acceptance and formation of a “geopoetics” for Pasternak) on feminized northern space, and the fraught interaction of man (and he only seems to consult men) and feminized (not feminine) space (“eros” of space) that delegitimizes his theory for our use. His theorizing on Perm’ and his conception of a freestanding “geopoetics” of the Urals is a frame into which neither Smirnova nor Gorlanova fit, and within which neither function. The rejection of its exclusionary and outdated approach will pave the way for Smirnova and Gorlanova to be viewed via broader theories of “Siberia”, provinciality, and peripherality.

It can be argued that if diverse literary theories share common ground, it is in the spatial figurations that supply the contours for their discourse: closure and theoretical gaps, symbolic unities and differential intervals. Yet, if theory is, as so many theorists continually remind us, steeped in spatial concepts, then these concepts are inevitably related to the different ways in which men and women experience space and, in so doing, write about space in theory. The largely traditional concern with strictly delineated spaces and totalizing structures, for instance, might well be regarded as “masculine” when contrasted to the postmodern preoccupation with dispersive space that Alice Jardine⁶⁴ describes as

⁶⁴ See works such as: *Gynesis: Configurations of woman and Modernity* (1986)

“coded as feminine”⁶⁵. This coding is not defined on a case-by-case basis, wherein individual spaces are “feminine” and others “masculine”, it is applied discriminately to the region because of the periphery’s association with a “lack” of what the center possesses. This gendering is also highly binary, quite obviously linking ‘Siberia as feminine’ with ‘Siberia as eroticized, objectified, and secondary’. Strongly defined borders are rarely found in Smirnova or Gorlanova, who are interested in spaces which are interpretive and symbolic, and are also more personally defined:

While theories produced by men take on certain gendered spatial contours, theories written by women—especially those generating from the last decade and a half—bring women’s actual experience of space to discourse. Instead of shaping masculine space into something feminine, these women bring feminine space to life by writing from, through, and about the spaces women themselves have occupied.⁶⁶

It is in this type of strategy that I see in Smirnova and Gorlanova engaging, not in the reformation of existent spaces but the creation of their own space(s) that interacts with both history and geography, in a new way that is also not served by Slavnikova’s authorial canonicity theory. Further, these acts of creation are not defined under the Abashev-ian category “Urals” or the synthesis argued by Ianushkevich. There are elements of crossover, for example in Gorlanova’s focus on realistic and recognizable space and in Smirnova’s use of traditional female roles, but, as Toril Moi (1953-) has noted: “the fact that women often enact the roles patriarchy

⁶⁵ Salvaggio, Ruth, “Theory and Space, Space and Woman” (Studies in Women's Literature Vol. 7.2, 1988) 261.

⁶⁶ Salvaggio 262

has prescribed for them does not mean that the patriarchal analysis is right”⁶⁷.

Ianushkevich, Slavnikova and Abashev offer possible contemporary reflections of the concept of periphery, ones that often pre-date my work or are highly charged with masculinist thought, and Gorlanova and Smirnova provide others. As I intend to show in my study, in her advanced and nuanced interpretation Gorlanova provides a framework divested of the desire to create a movement for prominence within northern literature and, thus, one less biased and more widely applicable than Abashev’s. Gorlanova constantly focuses on the network of interconnected Russian cities and different public spaces, without an emphasis on othering diverse Siberian regions. Smirnova employs an interior view that consciously rejects regionalism in her broadly “provincial” stories, and completely ignores eroticizing and elaboration on theories of Siberian space, deliberately restricting the action in her stories to within the domestic space. A notable disinterest in rewriting historically important spaces in the Urals, such as the penal system or the metallurgical business Abashev is so taken with, underline Smirnova’s commitment to general concerns of the periphery. Neither author divides their stories along northern-southern lines, and any interaction with the relationship of the center and periphery is nuanced and personalized. For both, the authorial “I” is not connected with Urals-space, but instead with

⁶⁷ Moi, Toril, *Sexual/Textual Politics : Feminist Literary Theory (New Accents)* (NY: Routledge, 2001) 92.

innovative literary techniques and a melding of traditional modes of storytelling such as autobiography, incursion into the narrative by an authorial voice, and a focus on the personal –all set in the peripheral north. It is not revealing of this dissertations’s focus that both authors hail from the Urals specifically, and the conception of the “north as the Urals” or Local Text will not do for this study. In fact, I wish to hypothesize that both women write spaces that struggle against the constraints of these boundaries, and in so doing write as much broader, north-inclusive writers. While establishing my distance from “Urals versus Siberian” divisive frameworks, I will refer to both writers as “Siberian”, despite their geographical position that are arguably within the Urals. This is both because neither focuses clearly on this division (indeed, both have written for and, in some cases helped to found and edit, journals that focus on their status as provincial, female writers, or simply “Russian”⁶⁸), and also because of the paucity of names that the English speaker has at her disposal to discuss Russia’s northern periphery.

⁶⁸ Please note: These were perestroika-era women’s prose and “other” prose (*женская проза* and *другая проза*) anthologies, specifically (see: Sutcliffe, Benjamin “Publishing the Russian Soul? Women’s Provincial Literary Anthologies, 1990-1995”). Smirnova has published books in both Ekaterinburg (1999) and Moscow (2000, 2001, 2005...), as well as published in centrally published journals (i.e. *Новый мир /New World*, 2005; *Знамя/ The Banner*, 2003) and several times in provincially-located journals that draw on their location in the Urals (i.e. in *Уральская новь/Ural’s Soil*, 2000 and in *Урал/Ural* several times in the 2000’s). Vagrius Press published Gorlanova in their series *Женский почерк: Настоящая женская проза/Women’s Handwriting: Real Women’s Prose* (1990’s), and she was published in the Moscow-based specifically women’s anthology *Новые амазонки/The New Amazons* (1991). Gorlanova was featured in provincial women’s writing journal published abroad, *Русская душа/ Russian Soul* (1995) and *Мария/ Mariia* (1990 + 1995), etc.

SIBERIA AS MYTH IN RUSSIAN CULTURE

As noted, Siberian literature in general has been pushed to the edges of the canon of Russian literature. In their extremely useful, recent, and informative book, Yuri Slezkine and Galya Diment intend to map the canon of Siberian literature by sub-dividing it. Following their main division of the Siberian canon, the compilation traces the genesis of early Siberian literature, from Archpriest Avvakum (~1620 – 1682) and mythology through the settlement of the Tsarist period. Their collection, *Between Heaven and Hell: the Myth of Siberia in Russian Culture*, has broadly encompassing chapters written by various prominent scholars, on topics that range from those that are applicable to my dissertation and those that are not, sadly, within its scope. This Introduction will analyze certain chapters that trace the canon as it is relevant to Gorlanova and Smirnova, and address those most valuable to my study as well as a general overview of the canon.

The supporting structure of the canon is embedded in early Siberian literature. Bruce Holl studies “Avvakum and the Genesis of Siberian Literature” in his essay, seeking to define Siberian literature as “a distinct phenomenon in Russian letters...marked by a specificity of thematic concerns and literary images that serve to define it as a special category within Russian literature”⁶⁹. His example of literature comes from the Avvakum’s autobiographical work of the 17th C. It is important to

⁶⁹ Holl, Bruce, *Between heaven and hell: the myth of Siberia in Russian culture*, eds Diment, Galya and Yuri Slezkine (NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 1993) 33.

note that, to Holl, Avvakum's description of resident exile in Siberia marks his work as "Siberian". In fact, this is related directly to what Holl identifies as one of the most striking features marking the Siberian canon, the "dichotomous and at times paradoxical way in which Siberian writers represent their native or adopted region". They view it as simultaneously "heaven" and "hell". In its early canonical works, the concept of Siberia as a heaven is "embryonic", but visible. This was understood not as a heaven of "life-sustaining abundance" that was difficult to find in this peripheral land, but the belief that the autonomy and purity of this far-off land was its own reward from the (negative) changes afoot in the center⁷⁰. Diment finds examples of this in early- 19th C writers from Irkutsk, who felt the natural beauty and quiet quality of life in Siberia more than warranted its heavenly status⁷¹. She traces the ubiquity of three heavenly Siberian myths: Siberia seen as a land of innocence and childhood bliss; the idea of Siberia as a prisoner of the uncaring center; and the image of Siberia as an ecological paradise⁷². This positivity, Holl notes, is visible in contemporary writing about Siberia; he uses the example of Valentin Rasputin (1937-), though Gorlanova also utilizes a superior Siberian image, which will be explored at length in analysis of her work *Вся Пермь/All of Perm'*.

⁷⁰ Holl 35/ 36

⁷¹ Diment, Galya, "Exiled from Siberia: the Construction of Siberian Experience by Early 19th C Irkutsk Writers", *Between heaven and hell: the myth of Siberia in Russian culture*, eds Diment, Galya and Yuri Slezkine (NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 1993) 47.

⁷² Diment 47

The case to be made for a Siberian “hell” is much stronger; Alan Wood, as quoted in Holl, notes that “if one were to look for a prototype in the long, dismal repertoire of Siberian prison and exile literature, one would surely turn to the autobiography of...Avvakum”⁷³. The import of this imagery –Siberia as exile or hell—is understood in the canon as a move away from *жизнь*/lives of saints, epics and fairytales, wherein the dominant image of a wild Siberia that reigned throughout Romanticism and Realism became tempered by the image of Tsarist exile and the Soviet image of carceral and primitive-Communist Siberian space of the mid-1900’s⁷⁴. The carceral and exile authorship of the Tsarist and Soviet periods that is more influential to Gorlanova and Smirnova’s work is explored in the chapters by Harriet Murav (“*Vo Glubine Sibirskie Rud’: Siberia and the Myth of Exile*”) and Leona Toker (“Varlam Shalamov’s Kolyma”), especially. Murav argues two parallel typographies of literary imagination ran through the 19th C regarding Siberia as a theme: the secular and the sacred, as represented in Romanticism and Realism, culminated in the idea of (penitentiary) “Hell” or the alternatively transformative “Heaven”⁷⁵. Characterizing Decembrist writing as a combination of civic themes and literary Romanticism, Murav argues that this writing conformed to the typical pattern of 19th C Romantic revolutionary heroism in portraying Siberia as an unwelcoming, harsh and remote setting that unmistakably links the suffering it inflicts with the

⁷³ Holl 33

⁷⁴ Diment 9

⁷⁵ Murav, *passim*

hero's (wished-for) freedom and (displayed) loyalty⁷⁶. In this conception, Siberia becomes almost an abstraction, a "stage on which...heroic deeds are enacted"⁷⁷. The harsh reality of the Decembrist's forced labour in Siberian mines is less abstract, though it helped to shape the literary image of Siberia as "hell". Despite this, there is still a duality which links indissolubly this hell with the image of Siberia as a sacred representation of unbreakably-held ideals and also as "a site of possible salvation"⁷⁸.

Toker illuminates the hell of the Gulag, as described by author Varlam Shalamov (1907 – 1982), who wrote about his time spent in Siberian concentration camps near the river Kolyma. This hell is one that has no, or extremely few, examples of transformative landscape or transcendental primeval beauty that would afford a prisoner any relief or hope while living in the camps⁷⁹. Shalamov's work was based on his idea that modern literature should be written by people with a deep understanding of their subjects, and with no conceits toward defamiliarization or distancing techniques. The topic that fulfilled these requirements for him was said concentration camp. Toker is interested in the extent to which Siberia was implicated in these tales, and examines the literary relationship between images of the camps (characterized as the "hell" Shalamov intimately knows) and Siberia. Toker feels that the "conspiracy" of Siberia lay in her harsh climate and aversive isolation,

⁷⁶ Murav 96/97

⁷⁷ Murav 98

⁷⁸ Murav 101

⁷⁹ Toker, Leona, "Varlam Shalamov's Kolyma", *Between heaven and hell: the myth of Siberia in Russian culture*, eds Diment, Galya and Yuri Slezkine (NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 1993) 152.

though a contradictory parallel image (infrequently) allowed by Shalamov characterizes Siberian summers' fecundity. The redemptive gifts found in Siberian nature are disallowed from prisoners, however, so Shalamov restricts depicting this image of Siberia in his writing, symbolically disallowing it from his corpus as well. The singular interest in Shalamov's corpus renders tangential Toker's research to mine, but the study of another image of Siberia's carceral legacy is a welcome foundation for Gorlanova's writing concerning carceral space(s).

The Thaw of the 1960's, which followed the release of imprisoned writers like Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn and Shalamov to freedom, began to change the dominance of Socialist Realism and to usher in the Village Prose movements that were the forbearers to later Siberia-positive, environmental writers (such as Rasputin). John Givens studies Vasilii Shukshin (1929- 1974), erroneously labelled a Village Prose writer, he argues. The themes that are identified in his corpus are not new to the reader of Siberian canon, but they identify broadly with the traditional goal of Village Prose writers to show Siberia as a repository of unspoilt traditional values and culture: Siberia as an uncorrupted landscape; Siberia as the setting for childhood innocence; and Siberia as a place of unrestricted space⁸⁰. What makes Shukshin distinct from writers like Rasputin is his lack of ecological message; his image of struggling Siberian

⁸⁰ Givens, John, "Siberia as Volia: Vasilii Shukshin's Search for Freedom", *Between heaven and hell: the myth of Siberia in Russian culture*, eds Diment, Galya and Yuri Slezkine (NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 1993) 171.

pastoral myths is one of moral erosion, and not the erosion of ecology⁸¹. Village Prose's concept of endless space and open space differ sharply from the highly delineated network of spaces and shifting centers that Gorlanova utilizes and the tenacious imagery of enclosed domestic spaces that is unmistakable in Smirnova's works. The applicability of the writing of Rasputin and Shukshin, and subsequent scholarship on this topic, to my analysis is their study of what has become a characteristic theme in the Siberian canon, the idyllic and "romantic" Siberia.

These chapters, while informative and impressively far-ranging in scope, are beyond the reach of my study. As it informs many of this paper's assumptions, I will explore Slezkine and Diment's "Introduction" and the final chapter, David Gillespie's "A Paradise Lost?"⁸², dealing with contemporary (circa 1993) Siberian writing. In his chapter, Gillespie writes that the inclination towards regionalism and away from the center post-perestroika is the most important feature of post-Stalinist Siberian literature⁸³. This move towards individualization and toward writers' rural pasts represented a move in literature away from the center, and supported the myth of the past's correctness and order in a time of chaotic change. Eventually dipping into Rasputin's "Siberian patriotism" which aimed to preserve Siberia's resources and unique environment, this shift attempted to "identify and characterize Siberia not as a colony, a mere adjunct of European Russia, but as a...cultural entity set apart" dealing

⁸¹ Givens 175

⁸² Gillespie, David. "A Paradise Lost? Siberia and its Writers, 1960 to 1990" in Diment 255-274.

⁸³ Gillespie 255

with the psychological and practical ramifications of history within literature⁸⁴. This writing was strongly regional, distrustful of outsiders and focused on the maintenance and superiority of the native land and residents. These predilections continue in the work of Viktor Astaf'ev (1924 - 2001), who moved around within and beyond Siberia's borders, but focused on similar themes of man and nature's relationship, the connection of the anthropomorphized natural world and the delusion of man's superiority in its overwhelming presence⁸⁵. However, the sad otherness felt by Rasputin with Astaf'ev became xenophobia and bitter authorial conceit⁸⁶. This bend differentiates him from post-glasnost' era literature about casual relationships and sexuality, like that by Evgenii Popov (1946 -), and those samizdat publications that focus on Siberia as a repository of innocence and purity by Leonid Borodin (1938 -)⁸⁷. This analysis, though without themes easily recognizable in Gorlanova and Smirnova's work, is important to my dissertation for its survey of the most recent historical entries into the Siberian canon, those works that would have been most likely to influence contemporary writers. It is intriguing to note the lack of influence these literary works seem to have had on the literature of Gorlanova or Smirnova, underlying how unique their work is to the contemporary Siberian canon.

Importantly, Diment and Slezkine's anthology seeks to trace the changes observed in Siberian literature while arguing that it is has a

⁸⁴ Gillespie 257-258

⁸⁵ Gillespie 264

⁸⁶ Gillespie 266

⁸⁷ Gillespie 268-269

recognizable identity: “only Siberia”, Slezkine states, “has remained part of Russia while retaining a separate past and a separate present”⁸⁸ and that, “Siberia’s literary development has never been truly ‘independent’, yet it is rather distinct”⁸⁹. One element that stands out is Siberian literature’s connection with provincialism. Indeed, the connection between the peripheral and the “provincial” is an interesting one. The periphery is not defined by the solid boundaries that enclose and delineate a province. The periphery is instead an elastic concept that requires a centre to push against and interact with, in order to exist. Both the centre and the periphery are locked in an interactive symbiotic relationship, through which they identify as oppositional; that is, they are defined loosely in relation to each other, and each is characterized by their differences. This is unlike a “province”, which exists as a structural construct with rigorous and closed boundaries.

Despite this, the idea of “provinciality” in literature has often been linked with peripheral areas. For the sake of my study, I maintain that the *periphery* is always defined dynamically and in relation to a centre, while a *province* is a structural descriptor that delinates between social or geographical areas. I contend that both are important, but their differences require the separate study of each. The structural concept of the *province* has been explored in Russian in the following sources: Abashev and his colleagues’ study of local texts from the

⁸⁸ Diment (and Slezkine) 1

⁸⁹ Diment 7

provinces, *Геопанорама русской культуры. Провинция и ее локальные тексты*; A.F. Belousov and T.V. Tsiv'ian's study of the myths, texts and realities of the Russian provinces, *Русская провинция: миф, текст, реальность*; and the recent issue of *Лабуринт [Labyrinth]: Журнал социально-гуманитарных исследований* that focused on social issues of the "Центр-периферия/Centre-Periphery"⁹⁰. The article by Irina Savkina, "Провинциалки русской литературы", focuses on provincial women positioning their work as doubly marginal, within the context of the 19th C. This difference in date, cultural context and the *conscious* self-positioning of the authors as marginal separates Savkina's work and my own. Indeed, all of these Russian sources are too focused on the social structure of the provinces (as well as interested in describing small, specific local cultures) for their vision of the Russian "province" to intersect with my use and understanding of the term "peripheral".

Characters labelled "provincial" in my study are those described as folksy, rural, "simple" or (via dictionary definition) as: "having or showing the manners, viewpoints, etc., considered characteristic of unsophisticated inhabitants of a province; rustic; narrow or illiberal; parochial: a provincial point of view"⁹¹.

Though, "like Siberia itself, Siberian literature appears to have no clear borders"⁹², it was been most often represented as a "backwater" to

⁹⁰ These are all approaching the texts from a historical or social/humanitarian context.

⁹¹ See Dictionary results such as < <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/provincial>>

⁹² Diment "Introduction" 7

the “civilized” centers of Russia (St. Petersburg and Moscow)⁹³. “Artistic life was being simultaneously attracted both to St. Petersburg and to Moscow, two centers which differed so widely in their character”⁹⁴, despite the rich potential of Siberia. Russians, even exiled ones, often identified with only the literary centers of St. Petersburg or Moscow; the “cultured” life of the centers was overtly privileged over the tedious domestic *бѣим* /daily life (“daily bread and a nightly hug”, in Brodsky’s words⁹⁵), as the centers became synonymous with culture, quality, and meaningful production. Existing in opposition to the “cultural centers” of St. Petersburg and Moscow, Siberia has come to represent a different type of literature, one away from the center. Given its harshness of climate and its dubious legacy of the GULAG and forced migration, Siberia has suffered from its stereotypes and the effects of regionalism. Often treated as a provincial element in Russian literature, stories and mythologies which focus on the wild natural world and a naive native style of writing have come to dominate the discourse on Siberia in greater Russia. The attempted establishment of prominent Siberian urban centers, such as Perm’⁹⁶ and Ekaterinburg, have functionally created disempowered and tertiary literary “third” centers which exist as poor relations to

⁹³ Slekin, Yuri, “From Savages to Citizens: The Cultural Revolution in the Soviet Far North, 1928-1938”, *Slavic Review*, Vol. 51. 1 (N.Pag).

⁹⁴ Dobujinsky, MV. The St. Petersburg Renaissance. *Russian Review*, Vol. 2.1 (1942) 46.

⁹⁵ Boym, Svetlana “Estrangement as a Lifestyle: Shklovsky and Brodsky”, *Poetics Today, Creativity and Exile: European/American Perspectives II* Vol. 17. 4 (1996): 525.

⁹⁶ In this case, Perm’ was established particularly as a center of the corrective-labour/gulag culture, in which over 1/3 of the Perm’ region inhabitants were among the incarcerated. Only later did its literary reputation become more prominent. *Gulag: Many Days Many Lives* (Center for History and New Media, OnlineExhibit 2006-2011) N.Pag.

Moscow/Petersburg. It is from literature which is associated with the “provinces”, representations of the near past, and the routine of provincial life that Siberia has inherited its most lasting stereotypes. In Chekhov,

routine, provincial life [is shown as] the very negation of beautiful illusion, Russian literary provinciality has traditionally connoted the senseless repetition of an infinity gone bad, extreme pettiness, and unceasing boredom: the hyperbolized triviality depicted in Gogol's *Dead Souls*, the stagnating rituals predominating on Oblomov's estate, the rule-bound world of Chekhov's *The Man in the Case*⁹⁷.

An associated myth which is tenacious regarding Siberia is its conception as a place of “villages”, and not urban centers. Urban centers are also traditionally privileged, as even writers who were well known for their depictions of rural life have done. Even Pasternak, one of the staunchest provincialists, wrote: “The living language of our time, born spontaneously and naturally in accord with its spirit, is the language of urbanism”, and that Blok's “style seemed to agree with the spirit of the age...the language of conspirators of which the chief character was the city and the chief event the street”⁹⁸.

Despite the mass of large cities and populations found in contemporary Siberia, it has been most commonly associated with “village prose” since the 1960's⁹⁹. Siberian writing is closely associated with provincial writing, existing primarily in the Russian mind as “simultaneously [being] ‘the outside’...and, by necessity, ‘the inside,’ a

⁹⁷ Hutchings, Stephen, “Plotting against Abstraction in Russian Literature's Provincial Hell: Fedor Sologub's Aesthetics of Embodiment”, *The Modern Language Review* Vol. 91. 3 (1996) 656.

⁹⁸ Gilbian, George, “The Urban Theme in Recent Soviet Russian Prose: Notes Towards a Typology”, *Slavic Review*, Vol. 37. 1 (1978) 41.

⁹⁹ Diment “Introduction” 9

‘home away from home’¹⁰⁰ in travel and exile accounts. Later, this it became the subject of “folksy” *деревенская проза* /Village prose accounts, which “became an influential cultural trendsetter” in the 1980’s¹⁰¹, though it is by no means a modern conception. Fedor Sologub (1863 – 1927), “quite specifically equated [*быт*/everyday life] with provinciality and provinciality with abstraction” and “says of the nexus its most negative manifestation: ‘All becomes stupid, unnecessary, formless, burdensome like a nightmare’...”¹⁰². These are connotations which have historically bound provincial and peripheral Siberian writing together as secondary/sub-par level writing. In addition, *быт*/everyday life has long been associated with women’s writing and triviality. With stereotypes drawn from Siberian literature’s expected styles, themes, mythologies and narratives, Siberian literature has gained a reputation of otherness and tertiary importance. Hutchings argues that, “best represented through a short-circuiting of representation, provincial Russian reality equates itself with the stifling subversion of its own narration”¹⁰³.

As was noted above, concepts of provincial writing and Siberian writing have also been merged with its representations in exile literature. Though literature of exile is in no way the focus of this work, it is necessary to recognize it as both an indefatigable association with Siberia, and as a tenacious mythology that informs Siberian writers:

¹⁰⁰ Diment “Introduction” 9

¹⁰¹ Diment “Introduction” 9

¹⁰² Hutchings 669

¹⁰³ Hutchings 669

The laments over the loss of a homeland are common even today in works of criticism dealing with writers in exile. In a recent deconstructionist study, Michael Seidel posits that “exile is a symptomatic metaphor for the state of the narrative imagination”. In other words, just as the ‘center’ in narrative is indefinitely postponed, so is the exile’s homeland (from which he presumably derives his ideas and his imagery) ‘postponed.’ The non-referentiality of narrative discourse parallels the absence of the sustaining strength of one’s native land. A failed Proteus, the exiled writer (or any writer at any time, as Derrida would claim) is always about to touch the earth, or the ‘center,’ but he never succeeds in doing so. The center is always already gone, deferred, beyond his reach.¹⁰⁴

In a broad sense, the essence of exile writing is of fundamental interest to this dissertation, as it would seek to show that in some ways, despite Gorlanova and Smirnova being “locals”, being born in Siberia means that one is already born into exile: an exile from the centers of Russian culture and literature, and forever implicated in the narrative of movement, relocation, and difference. Diment argues that:

In its broadest use, ‘Siberian literature’ often encompasses literature about Siberia as well as literature of Siberian exile, and literature written by Siberian ‘insiders,’ Russian and non-Russian alike. At its absolute narrowest, the term is applied only to the works of Russian ‘native sons’ (and, much more rarely, ‘daughters’) who were either born or raised in Siberia.¹⁰⁵

Diment, like Holl, holds that Siberian residency is a required element in writing Siberian literature. This focus on placement supports my confidence that Siberian writing is predominantly concerned with spatial issues, and further justifies my analysis of space and peripherality within

¹⁰⁴ Thompson, Ewa M, “The Writer in Exile: The Good Years”, *The Slavic and East European Journal*, Vol 33.4 (Np, 1989) 500.

¹⁰⁵ Diment “Introduction” 7

Gorlanova and Smirnova's corpora while establishing them as complicit in the Siberian canon. The idea of being located "on the edge", and possible strategies for negotiating this position have been borne out of this tension. Peripherality is a complex concept.

RUSSIAN WOMEN'S LITERATURE

Peripherality does not solely refer to matters of geopolitics, but also encompasses the "othering" of Siberian literature from the Soviet/Russian canon, and the belief in women's writing as a distant and secondary part of Russian literature. The canon of Russian literature has been male-oriented, closely guarded and male authored and styled for the most part. Women's writing in the periphery has experienced further othering. Gender-based discrimination is prevalent in Russian literary criticism, and charges of provinciality are layered with accusations of pejorative femininity. This interest in women's writing and this writing's status will make up the other principal focus of my work, as well as the second periphery from which these Siberian female authors write. Women authors (and especially those from the periphery) in Russia are allowed the secondary "space" of the sub-par in the literary canon. Exploring this will helpfully illuminate women's connection with "space", both within the canon and in the traditionally "feminine" domestic sphere.

Writing by women will be the focus of this discussion, though it is important to study men's visions of women as images in literature, as well. This is both because of the impact that the perception of women and

women writers has on the tastemaking public, as it influences popular perception, as well as the impact that such portraits have on women writers. The tradition of writing in a certain way about women has no doubt encouraged women writers' obedience to its stereotypes, and a desire to fit into the canon, to be published, or to seem "in step" with critical fashion has influenced women writers to tailor their stories to this dominant discourse. In Russia, in its pre-Soviet, Soviet and post-Soviet incarnations, the conception of femininity and women's writing has proven startling constant. Barbara Heldt and Rosalind Marsh have specifically studied Russian literature's preoccupation with gender¹⁰⁶. In *Terrible Perfection*, Heldt notes that, "to most readers outside of Russia, Russian literature is a totally male tradition", and that within Russia, "poetry provides [but] a few openings [for women writers], for which no more than two [Tsvetaeva and Ahkmatova] need apply"¹⁰⁷. This is not to say that women were not represented in literature; on the contrary, they were common subjects. The question remains whether they were *well* represented: "The greater part of the discussion of women's role [in life and literature] originated with men, a not disinterested group"¹⁰⁸, wryly notes Heldt. However, the "task of the literary critic is somewhat different from that of the historian" in tracing the developments of gendering

¹⁰⁶ See: her many forthcoming works specifically on women's writing, as well as books such as, *Women and Russian Culture: projections and self-perceptions* (1999) by Heldt, and Marsh, Rosalind, *Gender and Russian Literature* (NY: Cambridge, 1996), also see: *Women in Russia and Ukraine* (1991).

¹⁰⁷ Heldt TP 1

¹⁰⁸ Heldt TP 1

women and literature as “feminine”¹⁰⁹. Heldt sets out the types of influential pronouncements about women in Russian literature, and notes how these are, most often, not made by women:

The unflattering have been more than amply ‘balanced’ by the flattering. In fact, in Russian fiction the elevation of the Russian woman is matched only by the self-abasement of the Russian man...for male writers who dominate the tradition of fictions...woman is a kind of paradigm or shorthand. There is no [fiction] of gradual female development, of rebirth or transformation...the heroines of male fiction serve a purpose that ultimately has little to do with women: these heroines are used lavishly in a discourse of male self-definition.¹¹⁰

This overview synthesizes several key concepts concerning the Russian literary understanding of women, femininity and women’s writing. Among them, the presumption of “goodness” often pervades images of women (to be challenged only by her alternative, the purely “evil” woman); the connection with naturalness, and the concomitant naturalness of femininity is noted; and the repetition and the banality of many of these descriptions is commented on. The novelistic tradition heralded a Russia femininity that showcased a “natural superiority, untutored and virgin”¹¹¹ that was “a terrible perfection, frightening to men who could not match it in ‘manly’ action and inhibiting to women who were supposed to incarnate it, or else”¹¹². In opposition to this, women writers tended to not “stress the perfection of their heroines: rather, they stressed their suffering at the hands of society”, though this was never

¹⁰⁹ Heldt *TP* 2

¹¹⁰ Heldt *TP* 2

¹¹¹ Heldt *TP* 4

¹¹² Heldt *TP* 5

within any corresponding female prose tradition that challenged the norm¹¹³. The perfect Russian woman, as idealized in literature's heroines, reflected the feminization of virtue that began in earnest in the 18th C as a "compensatory ideal: as women's work grew ever more tedious and harsh outside the home, the mouth of the pure keeper of the hearth gained strength"¹¹⁴. This is not to discount some ironic interpretations of this 'perfection', for example those of Pushkin, Chekhov and Abram Tertz¹¹⁵, but to exemplify the overwhelming tradition of the opposite. Heldt notes that "the shapers of the traditions of prose fiction in Russia have always been men...this is certainly not the case in France, England or Japan"¹¹⁶ and that "redefining Russian literature as a series of texts involving gender-based values" is of "great value"¹¹⁷. She further skewers traditional "under-described" women who pop up, vague and amorphous, as examples of "strong female characters" in Russian literature¹¹⁸. These gender-based values have extended into the territory of Siberian stereotypes; the types of femininity and women in literature that have been influential are not peculiar to this region. One of the most common is the "strong" Siberian woman. Representing this clashing otherness, "backwardness" and strength, provincial women can be seen as exemplars.

In the case of Gorlanova, my approach to these works of prose will also rely on the study of autobiography and its intersection with fiction, as

¹¹³ Heldt *TP* 5

¹¹⁴ Heldt *TP* 12

¹¹⁵ Heldt *TP* 15/16

¹¹⁶ Heldt *TP* 3

¹¹⁷ Heldt *TP* 4

¹¹⁸ Heldt *TP* chpt 1 passim.

well as being grounded in western women's studies and feminist reading. Barbara Heldt has approached historical figures in Russian women's writing in a somewhat similar manner, with her range spanning from Karolina Pavlova (1807 – 1893) to Anna Akhmatova (1889 – 1966) toward Lidiia Chukovskaia (1907 – 1996) and Nadezhda Mandelstam (1909 – 1980)¹¹⁹, among others. She has also mapped the emergence of feminism in the Slavic field¹²⁰. In *Terrible Perfection*, she addressed the idealization and silencing of female characters, and the unexpected intersection of women's autobiography and lyric poetry, arguing that both genres are “self-mediated” and create/own “a female tradition of Russian writing”¹²¹. Her work in this field also discovered a surprising lack of critical interest in the autobiographical writing of women in Russian, despite their often amazing stories, and the traditional relegation of women to “writing for the drawer”, telling anecdotal personal stories, and the realm of memoir/autobiography. She insists that the gap in research into this area has led to “Russian autobiography [being] rarely considered...[while] women's writings about careers as writers face the difficulty that more often than not, their denial of ambitions toward such a career is a prerequisite for their very existence.”¹²² Heldt's, and my own, interest in the autobiographical elements of women's literature can help to create a

¹¹⁹ Heldt, Babara, *Women's Works in Stalin's Time: On Lidiia Chukovskaia and Nadezhda Mandelstam* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993).

¹²⁰ Heldt, Babara, “Feminism and the Slavic Field”. *The Harriman Review* 7.10-12 (November 1994): 11-18.

¹²¹ Heldt, Barbara, *Terrible Perfection* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997) 6. This will be cited as “TP” from now on.

¹²² Heldt TP 1

newfound tradition for these women writers. While “there is no lack of general pronouncements about how women act or feel or think in Russian literature...these, however, have been overwhelmingly made by men....for the male writers who dominate the tradition of fiction (including the novel, the cross between the novella and the short story – *повесть* as it is called in Russian—and the short story), woman is a kind of paradigm or shorthand”¹²³. Heldt continues, revealing that “there is no novel of gradual female development, of rebirth or transformation as we find in Austen or Eliot...these heroines [or female characters]...are used lavishly in a discourse of male self-definition.” Heldt searches for a tradition of female self-definition in the self-mediating forms of the lyric poem and autobiography. My analysis of this intersection of autobiography and fiction differs, and includes reading of Gorlanova’s autobiography as a form of fiction so that it might be understood as “other” than the work it is named. The historical importance of autobiographical writing to women writers in Russia, as well as to the importance of feminist writing in relation to time, space, and lifewriting (especially via the French tradition), will be addressed in relation to Gorlanova’s

Автобиография/Autobiography and *Любовь в резонных перчатках/Love in Rubber Gloves*. The works will be discussed in close connection to textual analysis in the chapter focusing on Gorlanova.

Smirnova’s works will be approached with a focus on the iteration of ritual labor, feminine domesticity and the domestic sphere which

¹²³ Heldt *TP 2*

women inhabit (both in reality as well as in Russian literature), all of which she employs in an interesting way. Additionally, she will be approached from a women's studies bend regarding the production of gender and self, (Judith) Butlerian¹²⁴ performance and importance of domestic ritual and the creation of women's space in literature. The concept of women's space and women's writing will be understood using some of the work of Hélène Cixous and Luce Irigaray¹²⁵. Briefly, the French concept of *l'écriture féminine* is understood to represent "women's writing", as identified by noticeable female difference in literary language and text that is closely linked to bodily experience. It is also closely allied to the analysis of women's writing as the place where specifically feminine subversions of the norm can be found. This was the brainchild of a group of poststructuralist theoretical feminists, such as Cixous, and is associated with their literary theory originating in the early 1970's. These are often linked to literature focusing on women's bodies and maternal experience, including literature representing the domestic sphere, and a desire to find "space" for a new type of women's literature. The particular confines of the Russian provincial domestic are analyzed in Hoogenboom¹²⁶. The concept of domestic labor and ritual will be approached with a heavy debt to the work of American feminist literary scholar Ann Romines; in *The Home Plot: Women, Writing & Domestic Ritual*, she studies representations of

¹²⁴ See: *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of "Sex"* (1993) and *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (1990)

¹²⁵ See: *The Laugh of the Medusa* (1975) by Cixous and Irigaray's *Speculum of the Other Woman* (1974)

¹²⁶ ie: Hoogenboom, Hilde, "The Importance of being Provincial", *Gender and Landscape*, ed.s Lorraine Dowler, Josephine Carubia, Bonj Szczygiel (NY: Routledge, 2005)

the home and domestic labor in texts from a feminist background, much like her Slavic “counterpart” Helena Goscilo whose life work has reflected a keen interest in these topics¹²⁷. Smirnova’s writing employs different strategies for interacting and experiencing peripherality than Gorlanova’s, and these will provide us with rich comparative material. These texts will be examined in association with textual analysis in the chapter on Smirnova’s works.

To an extent, Heldt investigates criticism and feminism while hypothesizing that (as of 1987, though the 1990’s did provide some change¹²⁸):

Russian feminist criticism is almost nonexistent [as a general rule]. But the choice of between and among the profusion of Western feminist literary criticisms whose diversity constitutes their strengths is exhilarating. Within this profusion of the last twenty years, Elaine Showalter suggests three national groupings: “English feminist criticism, essentially Marxist, stresses oppression; French feminist criticism, essentially psychoanalytic, stresses repression; American feminist criticism, essentially textual, stresses expression. All, however, become gynocentric. All are struggling to find a terminology that can rescue the feminine from its stereotypical associations with inferiority.¹²⁹

The “American” critical approach will serve me in this dissertation, as will the interesting intersections that arise between that which is considered peripheral, that which is considered marginal or secondary, and that which is labeled as feminine/not-male. In regards to both women’s studies and center-periphery studies, the primary concern is finding

¹²⁷ See: *Dehexing Sex: Russian Womanhood Before and After Glasnost* (1996) and *Russia*Women*Culture* (1996, with Beth Holmgren), and among others.

¹²⁸ This will be noted in more detail in my chapter on Russian women’s writing.

¹²⁹ Heldt TP 4

textual proof that Siberian women writers experience spatial concerns particularly vividly, and the points of intersection of the two themes in writing. The connection with spatiality is consistent with the association of women with space in both the wider Western and Russian traditions.

Understood as a response to the peripheries they share, Smirnova and Gorlanova's stories become creative acts which may subvert, supplant, comment on, or support the prevailing views of women's writing and space. Space can be, and often is linked to the "the interpretation of oneself and the place one occupies; a problem of self-definition within a space defined by others", i.e. the space occupied by a corporeality¹³⁰. This connection to the corporeality and physicality that is often linked to women's experience and gendering also strengthens the linkage of women and space –which is common—but this is not to intimate that the connection between women and spatiality is concretely accepted. Geographer Dorren Massey has deplored the tendency to privilege male-gendered time over female-gendered space, the result of the Ernesto Laclau and Frederic Jamesonian tendency to reduce space/time to a gendered binary resistant to change¹³¹. This dichotomous conceptualization has been fiercely refuted by feminists, and is opposed by prominent Slavist Helena Goscilo in addition. The dualism which privileges the first term (male temporality) has linked with it transcendence, dynamism and history, and supersedes the feminine

¹³⁰Definitions taken from: Oct 1/09 <<http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/space>> . Notes in parentheses mine.

¹³¹ Goscilo, Helena, "Women's Space and women's place in contemporary Russian fiction", *Contemporary Russian Fiction (CRF)*, Marsh, Rosalind eds (London: Cambridge, 1996) 326.

spatial characteristics of passivity, lack, stasis, cyclical repetition and immanence¹³². In fact, Goscilo argues that this binary supports “the ludicrous notion of space as an innately gendered phenomenon”, ignores contemporary understandings of space via physics and four dimensional space-time wherein “the identity of things *constituted through interactions* [that in] turn *create or define* space and time”, and ignores the co-dependency of Bakhtin’s theory of the chronotope¹³³. This refutation supports the disuse of Abashev’s theory and the different approach that Gorlanova takes, focusing on the interactions that define or create space and time, the interactions of women, everyday life, northern life, and networks that connect Perm’ with the rest of Russia.

Smirnova also rejects outdated binarism by creating self-interested interiorization and traditional arenas marked for experimentation. In part, Smirnova’s play might stem from the same line of questioning that prompts Goscilo to take issue with “the conventional gender disposition [that] has allied women with domestic space” while ignoring the role of men’s residence in homes, the role of class, and the neglected elements of women’s lives. Both Gorlanova and Smirnova’s work supersedes and provides commentary on these stereotypes, through the “chronotope of creativity (that is, storytelling)”¹³⁴. These concerns of gender, space and mitigating peripherality will contextualize Gorlanova and Smirnova in comparison.

¹³² Goscilo CRF 327

¹³³ Goscilo CRF 327-328 italics in orig.

¹³⁴ Goscilo CRF 328-329

PART ONE: GORLANOVA

Nina Gorlanova, outward-gazing, seeks to write Perm' as a network of shifting centers and into a network of spaces, and emphasizes the importance of both physical and symbolic spaces in her literature. Gorlanova's *Любовь в резонных перчатках/Love in Rubber Gloves* and *Автобиография/Autobiography*, from *Вся Пермь/All of Perm'*, show a preoccupation with peripheries. As noted, peripheral, and Siberian literature in particular, is belabored with concerns about its space, its gender and its orientation. Some preliminary statements will introduce my analysis of Gorlanova's treatment of space, and the way in which she treats provincial space, especially in her depiction of Perm'. Analysis will explore Gorlanova's manipulation of typographical and temporal space. Her interest in liminal spaces, as well as spaces marked by female or "othered" (especially carceral) experience connects her concentration on images of peripheral space and boundaries with her attentiveness to daily lives. Beyond that, Gorlanova's approach to specific women's writing's themes and symbols and her construction of an unusual autobiography will be interpreted in relation to a study of the genre of metafiction and women's studies theory. These tendencies will later be compared and related to Smirnova's strategies.

Broadly, *Любовь в резонных перчатках/Love in Rubber Gloves* and *Автобиография/Autobiography* are two related stories, the latter

quite short. Gorlanova opens her collection with this short autobiographical sketch that is more literary than informative. In it, she roughly defines major events in her life, and tells about her current situation by comparing it to those things she “could have done”, but did not. This short autobiography is followed by the longer *Любовь в резонových перчатках/Love in Rubber Gloves*, a story that describes Perm’, events in the lives of a group of situationally-related individuals, and offers general commentary on worldwide and local happenings. There is no linear “plot”, per se. The text is made up of citations and the narrator’s comments which are interspersed as quotations into the text, and which also begin and close the story. Some of these citations are attributed to recurring characters from Perm’, others are presented as things overheard, or said by outsiders, and several are quotations pulled from historical text (or imagined texts) or literature. Among the latter are those “edited” (changed) by the author. Some of these quotations are seemingly unrelated to each other or the basic story, some seem to be related by textual similarities to each other, and none are presented chronologically.

Gorlanova writes stories specifically situated in Perm’, the Siberian city which she calls home. However, this city is not her sole focus, as urban, rural, and other spaces are often invoked. This concern with the spatial is especially evident in Gorlanova’s *Любовь в резонových перчатках/Love in Rubber Gloves*. Derrida, when speaking of space, noted “the way the closure of any text can be undone by something which

appears to be ‘outside’ but is always at work within the text”¹³⁵. The push-pull of competing places that Gorlanova creates in *Любовь в резиновых перчатках/Love in Rubber Gloves* creates an alternative space for her voice and a network of relationships linking local and distant areas, from those within Russia (like the city of Golonovo, the region of Ordynski, or Moscow) to those afar like Afghanistan, Czechoslovakia, Paris, Rome, etc. The spaces she creates have no true center, and the smaller spaces are simultaneously centers and peripheries; one does not have the option of knowing what marks the boundary of center-periphery. Each space is related but individual, and borders another equally important space, repeated with variations in an expanding network. The organization of a network allows for what is “outside” and what is “inside” to remain ambiguous and to deny closure and facilitate the creation of alternative space in the Derridian sense. She utilizes liminal spaces, for example doors and train stations as well as images that represent network like letters and telegrams to emphasize this interest in building ambiguous networks of space.

Though paramount to her work, the relationship of space to concerns of representation and identity are not only Gorlanova’s concern. Women’s studies has long pondered what the space a woman occupies “means”:

¹³⁵ Derrida, Jacques, *Speech and Phenomena* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1973); see also: West-Pavlov, Russell, *Space in Theory: Kristeva, Foucault, Deleuze*, (Rodopi: NY 2009) 16.

One goes into the room-but the resources of the English language would be much put to the stretch, and whole flights of words would need to wing their way illegitimately into existence before a woman could say what happens when she goes into a room. The rooms differ so completely; they are calm or thunderous; open on to the sea, or, on the contrary, give on to a prison yard; are hung with washing; or alive with opals and silks; are hard as horsehair or soft as feathers-one has only to go into any room in any street for the whole of that extremely complex force of femininity to fly in one's face. How should it be otherwise? For women have sat indoors all these millions of years, so that by this time the very walls are permeated by their creative force, which has, indeed, so overcharged the capacity of bricks and mortar that it must needs harness itself to pens and brushes and business and politics.¹³⁶

The periphery that Perm' inhabits is related to the way women have "sat indoors all these millions of years"; Perm' sits inside its own "room" in Russian context. This periphery is delved into by one of its own, a native daughter. The interiority that is emphasized by Woolf seems to also be associated with the self-knowledge and telling of one's own autobiography that Gorlanova practices. The historically quiet voice of Perm's women has "harness[ed] itself to pens and brushes" in the telling of this volume. Thus, the feminine and the telling of Perm's *быт*/everyday life are associated, as they long have been in the Russian tradition. Lefebvre noted that "representations of space" controlled by elites in society "may be contested by subaltern space users who attempt to make out of them 'spaces of representation'"¹³⁷. Gorlanova does, indeed, create a space "of her own", by writing a version of Perm'. Via quotations and commentary, Gorlanova creates a literary, fictionalized version of the city in which she

¹³⁶Woolf, Virginia quoted in Southworth, Helen, "Rooms of Their Own: How Colette Uses Physical and Textual Space to Question a Gendered Literary Tradition", (*Tulsa Studies in Women's Literature*, Vol. 20. 2) 253/54.

¹³⁷ West-Pavlov 20

lives; this will be referred to as “literary Perm” in this study. She achieves this sense of fictionality, which helps separate her work from informational or journalistic representations of the city, by manipulating her text and playing literary games. These manipulations and games, which will be discussed at greater length, include the editing of well-known quotations from literature, like a poem of Mikhail Lermontov’s on page 61, the repetition of phrases and imagery which call to mind the constructed nature of this representation, and shifting dates and the false attribution of citations. This city is shown in snippets and vignettes that can stand alone but are also interrelated, whose settings and topics vary but all integrate into a vision of literary Perm’. The creation of this literary Perm’ can be read as a Siberian female subaltern voice creating a space for itself to inhabit in a new way, one that defies their traditional role in the canon.

Beyond these concerns on gender, Gorlanova mediates the weight of history and the world in which she writes by turning “outward” and writing a Perm’ that is no longer peripheral, one in which she can control the canon of literary conventionality and of historicity. Pushing beyond individual texts, Gorlanova stylistically rejects conventions that would allow the reader to “believe” what the author is presenting as fact, while still playing on the historical convention of “false truthfulness”. Gorlanova’s quotations sometimes reflect the conversations of, we presume, local inhabitants and their colloquial speech reflects their status and persuades us to accept these as elements of reportage or, as in

classical memoirs, memories of experienced events. This set of assumptions is challenged as the text continues, and several of these quotations are obviously re-written, edited, repeated in ways which “out” them as constructed by the compiler/author, or perhaps as purely fictional constructions. She presents her fictional Perm’ and autobiography as facts which seem true but ought to be questioned. For example, the inconsistency of dates and the attribution of citations throws into question many of the reported facts, as does the use of unstable naming conventions to represent the narrator/compiler. In an analysis of Shklovskii’s work *Art as a Device* (1917), Svetlana Boym brings up an interesting point which can be seen as parallel to Gorlanova’s vision of Perm’:

The theory of estrangement is often seen as an artistic declaration of independence, the declaration of art's autonomy from the everyday. Yet in Shklovskii’s “Art as a Device” (1917), estrangement appears more as a device of mediation between art and life. By making things strange, the artist does not simply displace them from an everyday context into an artistic framework; he also helps to “return sensation” to life itself, to reinvent the world, to experience it anew...it appears [to] harbor the romantic and avant-garde dream of a reverse mimesis: everyday life can be redeemed if it imitates, art, not the other way around.¹³⁸

Gorlanova relies on the remoteness and peripherality of Perm’ in her stories to elaborate on “estrangement”, and she moreover utilizes the concept of estrangement to represent herself as a semi-estranged editor. She represents a literary version of Perm’ from this complex vantage point, while giving a knowing wink to the reader with textual references that

¹³⁸ Boym *Estrangement as a Lifestyle* 515

confirm her acute awareness of literary criticism and technique. In unconventionally and obscurely citing parts of the literary canon by choosing surprising references that range from ancient Rome to Lewis Carroll, and by editing and altering these citations, Gorlanova acknowledges a certain complicity with the literary past but conceives of herself as differing from (and controlling) it. This is bolstered by Gorlanova confusing her role(s) as author/narrator/compiler/character by editing other people's words in citations, for example changing the words in a Pushkin poem slightly, and by using unstable naming techniques and erratic structure for her commentary.

Acknowledging the physical periphery of Siberia and Perm', Gorlanova deftly and continually comments on the physical spaces *within* Perm', as well as the relation of other physical spaces *to* Perm'. This distinction creates the illusion of borders as well as maintaining a shifting definition of peripherality. In *Любовь в резонных перчатках/Love in Rubber Gloves*, she shows a fixation with physical space that is "other" than Perm'. Characters are preoccupied with the peripheries/would-be peripheries of the Soviet Union, Afghanistan and Czechoslovakia, the use of which begins as early as page 20 and which will be explained in more detail in the coming chapter. Displaced Russians, for example those fighting in regime-shaking theatres of war such as Afghanistan and Czechoslovakia, are of interest, highlighting the centrality of "home" and the strangeness of the "other" space. Often, opposing "sides" are emphasized. Moscow and Petersburg, as well as some other Russian

cities, are routinely characterized as “other” by the inhabitants of literary Perm’, who see themselves as living in their own center. The differences are often highlighted when a character has left Perm’ and travelled to the center, for example when the character Grezka travels to Moscow—much to his eventual chagrin—on page 32.

It has been argued that “spatial practices gather up both environment and actors into a single over-determined continuum [and that] space is always already caught up in representational practices, with different groups vying for control of discourses about space, but also of the messages which are coded in spatial artefacts [sic] themselves”¹³⁹.

Gorlanova is very aware of the traditional binarism of “Russian versus Siberian” codes of space, as she focuses on both acknowledging and manipulating unusual spaces as “other” while also by playing with practices of naming and connotative association. She does this without relying on the dichotomy of the Urals-Siberian divide, as set out by Abashev. Instead of dividing these regions, she uses interactions between characters and spaces to create networks of interrelationship, and shifting codes and naming to destabilize any concrete comparisons. She unifies these codes by making them translatable, using her narrative to add structure to what could otherwise fall into Sologub’s “formless” provincial *пошлость*/banality.

The alternative spaces that Gorlanova creates are also linked with her experience as a woman writer. This is in contrast with Abashev’s

¹³⁹ West-Pavlov 19/20

approach, making Perm' as a text (*Пермь как текст/Perm' as Text*) that is historically tied, masculinist in application, and linked to traditional northern tropes. Like Abashev, Gorlanova ignores the traditional distance between the critic and the creator, and focuses her energies on the northern city of Perm'. However, unlike Abashev, Gorlanova links these forays with mediations on generalized space, as well the daily lives shaped by it. She does not rely on old divisions of the Urals and Siberia, nor does she rework old mythologies as subject matter. She truly departs from the Abashev-framework with her sustained interest in linking northern space with representations of personal identity, personal gender, fictionality, and by manipulating networks of space. Gorlanova's links with women's writing will be further explored at a later time. The "other" spaces that are most often noted are Moscow (the center), and prison (a further periphery marked most often by images and stories of Perm's camp system, used heavily in pages 50 onwards), but also extend to outside spaces and places which are marked as special by way of the actions they enclose from the outside world. This work is in many senses meditation on space(s). Gorlanova's comments lead and influence the included quotations of other contributors, and several portions attributed to her "book-end" the body-text. In representing herself thusly, she attempts to establish herself as a center which is genuine, though constantly shifting.

"Other" spaces are also often marked by nostalgia and temporal distance, representing not only the lure and escape of быт/everyday life that a trip offers, but also a sort of emotional and sensory shorthand to the

experiences of the past or the possibilities of the future. Such examples are symbolically layered, and refer or imply a long list of associative meanings. No “other” space is innocent of associations, for example:

— Кто мне обещал холодец с дрожалочкой? — спросил он громко, а в глазах у самого дрожалочка.

И напился с Людмилой, бедный! И в двери стучат: неужели деканша? Боб закричал: “Так мы едем или не едем в Ордынский район, агитбригада?”

Но это наш доцент Борис Борисыч был. Он сначала грозно посмотрел на чашу дружбы, полную вина, потом увидел Нинульку и расцвел. “Хотите чарочку?” — спросил его Боб. “Как я всех-всех люблю!”¹⁴⁰

(Из дневника Дунечки, 1968 г.)/

Who promised me jellied meat?— he asked loudly, while his eyes trembled.

He, the poor thing, got plastered with Liudmila! [Someone] knocks on the door: could it be the dean? Bob cried: “Are we going to Ordynskii raion, you agitators?”

But it was our associate professor Boris Borisovich. He first took a stern look at our cup of friendship, full of wine, then saw Ninul’ka and beamed. “Do you want a [drink]?” Bob asked him. “Oh, how I love you all!”¹⁴¹

The region mentioned might have been offered in jest, as this was the type of region to which one might be sent as a Soviet agitator or a “builder of a Socialist future”. This comment might also have been asked in fear – Bob “закричал /cried” his question. This is mimicked in the paranoia of these students, waiting for a knock on the door from the dean, as they break the rules and drink in their rooms. The fact that the male dean arrives (and not the female dean) is a matter of some relief, implying that the behavioural codes and expected actions of the men and women in this setting are different. The outside and other space of Ordynskii is offset by

¹⁴⁰ Gorlanova 36.1

¹⁴¹ Usually a team of agitators were sent to raions to promote some Soviet way of life. Emphasis added.

the hominess of the dormitory setting, references to preserves, to friends, to the creature comforts of jellied meats and liquor. The uneasy balance of the homey and the other brings a tension to the passage, as the two spaces are pegged against one another.

In fact, the physical occupied spaces of Perm' are important to the text. Space that is "sacred" and "profane" (though the traditional distinctions would not have officially existed under Socialism in the religious sense) are highlighted, churchgrounds and clinics are discussed.

For example:

Церковь новая, стены снаружи расписаны глазами: тут глаз, там глаз, как на рисунках молодого Боба, помните? Он все церкви в конспектах рисовал... Вхожу, а там двери, и на каждой написано, как на кабинетах. "Кто в сумлений". "Кто богохульствовал"... Я атеизм сдавала, значит, мне куда? Отпираю дверь к богохульствующим, а там лента Мебиуса как бы, на нее вступаешь, идешь — попадаешь к тем, кто "в сумлений". И вдруг выходишь во дворик, там курочки гуляют, бабочки порхают, батюшка сидит с книгой, молодой, светоносный... Лицо такое знакомое! И мне бы сойти с ленты Мебиуса этой, шагнуть к батюшке, но внутри кто-то говорит: иди дальше, иди, еще не все ты видела... (Сон Грезки, 1992 г.)/
 There is a new church, its outside walls are painted with eyes: here [there is] an eye like those in young Bob's pictures, you remember? He drew churches in his [lecture] notes all the time... [I come and see that] there are doors and on each door there is a sign, like at the office. "[One] who is in doubt." "[One] who has blasphemed..." I took [and passed] the atheism exam; so through which shall I go? I open the door to the blasphemers, and [see] something like a Mobius band. You can step on this band and walk around on it, and [finally] come to [those] who are in doubt. Suddenly you go out into the yard, where the chickens wander, the butterflies flutter, our Father [a priest] sits with a book, young, luminous...A face so familiar! And I am about to step off this Mobius band and step towards our Father, but something inside [me] tells me: go further; you have not seen everything yet (The Daydreamer, 1992).¹⁴²

¹⁴² Gorlanova 24.5

The “Möbius” band of life hints at repetition and endlessness (a leitmotif that is explored later in this chapter), and layered meanings hint at the indeterminacy of desire and fate. In another example, we see a cathedral and faith further discussed in relation to a transitional time and space:

- Но храм разрушенный — все храм, но Бог поверженный — все Бог... Кстати, где она была во время путча? В отпуске? Вот и хорошо, Я так бы не хотела, чтоб Римме пришлось еще раз себя скомпрометировать. Жизнь столько раз ее испытывала.
- Нет, жизнь подсовывала ей случаи возвысить себя устойчивостью.
- Ну, раз она выстояла, два, а потом сломалась... А жизнь все нагло подсовывает и подсовывает ей случаи.
- Просто жизнь оптимистичнее нас: она все верит, что человек станет лучше... (Разговор после победы над путчистами) / -So an abandoned temple is still a temple, and a dethroned God - still a God ¹⁴³...Incidentally, where was she during the time of the putsch? Absent with leave [on holiday]? Fine. I didn't want it, when Rimma came, compromising herself yet again. She tested life so many times.
- No, life shoved her into that incident, to encourage constancy in her.
- Listen, she stood up - once, twice and then she's knocked down...and life impudently hits her again.
- Life is simply more optimistic than us: it believes that mankind can improve... (Conversation after the victory over the putsch). ¹⁴⁴

A cathedral and the invocation of faith's and sacred spaces' ebbing and ultimate timelessness are paralleled with the repetitive nature of life's melees and its unwavering optimism.

The transitional image of the train station is also invoked often, viewed as a liminal space from which one starts out and in which one is

¹⁴³ This is slightly modified text from a Mikhail Lermontov (1814 – 1841) poem from 1837: “Так храм оставленный - все храм,/ Курир поверженный - все бог! / So an abandoned temple is still a temple,/ A dethroned idol - still a god”. Trans. Fennel, John, Nineteenth century Russian literature: studies of ten Russian writers (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973) 172.

¹⁴⁴ Gorlanova 61.1

neither a stranger nor at home (this will later be shown to represent an important symbol for Gorlanova):

— За нами следят. Да. Это точно... Я поймал жест убирания корочки в карман. Мне было нужно к тете ехать, в Голованово, на электричке. Купил билет в кассе, а уже народу мало. Смотрю: человек в штатском в той же кассе уже корочки убирает. Видимо, спросил, куда я взял билет... (Игорь, 1968 г.) / They're watching us. Yes. It's certain...I caught the movement of him sliding his ID back into his pocket. I had to go to my aunt's, in Golonovo, on the train. I bought a ticket at the counter, and there weren't many people around. I saw it: a man in a suit take back his ID. He had probably asked where I was headed...(Igor', 1968).¹⁴⁵

Moving in and out of prescribed places is brought up in this passage. The instability of travel and the invasion of privacy subtly underscores the differences between the place from which one is departing and the place to which one is travelling. In comparison to the passages in which Gorlanova speaks about foreign or outside space at home, this passage reads more like reportage; the sentences are short and workmanlike with no real colloquialisms. This also introduces another theme of hers: the neighbouring district of Golovono, near Perm' (микрорайон города Пермь), along with other "inner" spaces like dormitories, classrooms, hospitals and homes etc. She will later use these examples to highlight the inner-outer divide, as well as to introduce many relationships to the reader:

Закон пьяного Архимеда вызрел где? На защите Игоря, да? В Голованове! Или нет, это было на именинах Сон-Обломова, в общежитии? Когда Боб стал Евку выгонять из компании! Людмила заступилась за нее, и что? Боб раз ее гитару об стол — брим! И нет гитары. Капа сказала: вот нутро-то полезло из

¹⁴⁵ Gorlanova 36. 5

него. Сколько спиртного погрузилось внутрь человека, столько нутра вышло. Чем больше человек выпил, тем он виднее. (Царев, 1980 г) / Where was Archimedes' drunken law created? At Igor's defence? In Golonovo! Or was it on Son-Oblomov's nameday, in the dormitory? When Bob had kicked Evka out? Liudmila came to her defense, but what for? Bob smashed her guitar on the table – briim! And no more guitar. Капа said, “this is how the guts come out of a person. However much alcohol is loaded into a person, that is how much of his guts come out”. That is - the more a man drinks, the more visible he becomes.¹⁴⁶

Unease about the ability and freedom to travel is also evident in these passages, as the townspeople, seemingly obsessed with foreign destinations (i.e. Czechoslovakia [discussed at length], and Afghanistan), seems to worry about the reality of actually *getting* anywhere. The people around them are observed and identified (in this case, as a military man), and their seemingly innocuous actions are understood as a shorthand for the initiated traveler. This is, of course, no ordinary traveler, but one who would have only been allowed freedom of movement by way of his complicity with the military regime.

Tsarev notes, again from 1968:

-Рассольчику бы сейчас!.. Хорошо тебе, Игорь, ты не пьешь! Зачем я напился? И Евка, наверное, меня бросила! Кто ее провожал - Боб? А что говорил? Вечно эти гении привести женщину приведут, а увести...” Ну, это с его стороны... (Царев, 1968 г.) /
- If only I had rassolnik [a soup] right now!...It's all well for you, Igor', you don't drink! Why did I drink? Evka has probably deserted me. Who went with her, Bob? And what did he say? These geniuses always bring women upstairs, then wait for someone else to take them home...” Listen, this is totally rude of him...(Tsarev, 1968).¹⁴⁷

¹⁴⁶ Gorlanova 48.2

¹⁴⁷ Gorlanova 36.4

Regarding different spaces conjured up without travel, foreign-thinkers or celebrities from all eras are mentioned, evoking spaces which inculcate different ideas and different viewpoints. In the following passage, Gorlanova juxtaposes the home-grown and the foreign, using Krylov and Kafka as comparisons:

- В начале 69-го Боб получил из “Нового мира” рецензию на свою повесть. Аж от самого Домбровского. Ну и похвастался ею на творческом кружке. Дошло до деканши, ее муж-скотовед устроил судилище на факультетском собрании, помните? “Вас сравнивают с Кафкой! Какое пятно на честь университета! Зачем Кафка написал, как человек превращается в гнусное насекомое?” “А вы басню Крылова ‘Квартет’ читали? Зачем звери сели за инструменты?..” — ответил Боб и вышел вон. (Н.Г.) /

- In the beginning of '69 Bob received a review of his story. Literally from Dombrovskii¹⁴⁸ And he boasted to her of his creative writing-club mind. This reached the dean, her husband-cattle-herder, he accused Bob during the faulty meeting, remember? “Yours, compared with Kafka? What a blemish on this university! Why did Kafka write about how a man turns into a vile insect?” “And did you read the fable ‘Quartet’, by Krylov? Why did the beasts play instruments?...” – countered Bob, and walked out. ¹⁴⁹

Later, the writing of Solzhenitsyn is mentioned as a counterpoint to the space of Perm', and the political arena of Russia. This foreignness of thought is linked with France and another artist, Roma, who lives there:

- Ваших мальчиков не посадили, и что? Кем они стали?.. Рома отсидел, сейчас — всесоюзная знаменитость, выставка во Франции готовится, я видел уже отпечатанный каталог... Солженицын письмо прислал: как ему милы его работы. Это, конечно, ни о чем не говорит, что нравится, но что написал письмо... уже... (Посторонний, 1992 г.) / Your young men didn't succeed, did they? They aren't imprisoned?... Roma is on strike, now – All-Union fame, the exhibition in France is ready, I've already seen the printed catalogue...Solzhenitsyn sent this letter;

¹⁴⁸ A Russian writer who spent many years in the Gulag system.

¹⁴⁹ Gorlanova 45. 1

how sympathetic to Roma's work he is! Of course, it's not about anything we're talking about, but still he wrote the letter....still... (Overheard, 1992)¹⁵⁰

Foreign capitals are specified, Paris, with especial frequency (26.3, 27.2, 47). Cuba, and its revolution is also cited (46). Rome and the ancient past are evoked as places where ideas were made which continue to influence the present-day and problems that were paramount to Soviet Russia; Igor' offers:

В самом имени Риммы я вижу отсветы Древнего Рима, где Сенека впервые выступил против доноительства. (Игорь, 1968 г.) ¹⁵¹/ In Rimma's name, I saw reflections of the Rome of Antiquity, where Seneca first came out against snitching. (Igor, 1968).

Historical Russian influences on Siberia are also mentioned, Siberia still bearing their mark after so many years. The Decembrists are mentioned specifically, evoking the concept of Siberia-as-exile:

- Ваши мальчики были не готовы платить, не согласны. А взрослеть — значит платить за все. За что платить, если уже они добро сделали листовками? А за то, чтоб оставаться на уровне этого добра. Когда потребовали отказаться от него... Декабристы нашлись: всю правду, видите ли, говорили. Я их просил: меня и Орлова посадят — идите и откажитесь от показаний, напишите: оговорили из ревности или еще чего. А они: но мы же в самом деле собирались и читали... и листовки... Ну, нас и посадили. (Рома Ведунов, слиптор, 1992 г). / Your young men weren't ready to pay, they didn't agree. To become mature, it seems you have to pay for everything. Why pay, if they already made the leaflets? Why maintain this level of goodness? When they needed to refuse it...the Decembrists were asked, and they found a way to tell the truth [about their secret society], to tell it all. I said to them that Orlov and I were going to be imprisoned, but Roma asked them to change your statements — we went and refused, wrote our testimony: say that you spoke out

¹⁵⁰ Gorlanova 47.3 – 48; also 60.3 contains a Solzhenitsyn reference.

¹⁵¹ Gorlanova 32.4

with fervour and more. And they, well, in reality we *had* gatherings and read banned literature...and the leaflets...well, they were ours and we went to prison (Roma Bedunov, sculptor, 1992).¹⁵²

The legacy of the Decembrists is alluded to on page 68, in the final pages of the text. Once again, Decembrists also represent a very specific understanding of Siberian space; intentionally chosen by governments because it was peripheral and cut-off, this land was made a prison due to these characteristics. The exiles sent there then began to create spaces for their families, in this penal area. In both creating carefully constructed personalized space in Siberia (and outside of the character's learned sphere of everyday life) as well as in speaking the truth, Gorlanova's use of the Decembrists as an image intersects with Lotman's analysis of the Decembrist's highly conscious construction and performance of everyday behaviour in spheres of exile¹⁵³. This precedent is evoked when Tsarev later laments:

- А ведь Сталин подарил нам отца Боба! — вдруг подмигивает отчиму Капа. — Откуда его выселили: из Ченгема? Ну откуда-то оттуда... И спасибо ему за это!

История иногда шутит вот так: отца Боба в самом деле Сталин выгнал с родины, но здесь он женился на русской, свою половину любит до потери сознания, даже не заметил, что произошла трагедия, что он лишился родины... (Царев, 1992 г.)
/

-And then Stalin gave us Bob's father! – Капа suddenly gave a wink to her stepfather. – Where was he moved from, from Chengem? Well, from somewhere like that...and thanks to him for this!

History sometimes makes this kind of joke: Stalin drives Bob's father out of his homeland, but he married a Russian, he

¹⁵² Gorlanova 44.3

¹⁵³ See "The Decembrist in Daily Life" *The Semiotics of Russian Culture*, trans. Ann Shukman (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 1984) passim.

loves his wife beyond reason; he didn't realize the tragedy that befell him, losing his homeland...(Tsarev, 1992).

Beyond the idea of the exile-as-prison, physical prison space and camp references are also often made. Tying the physical space of Siberia with its modern historical past, for example, many of the names of characters seem like “prison names”: “Мурзик” (“Murzik” 32, 55), “Крючок”(“the hook” 20), for example. References to the inescapability of prison in the Perm’ region seem to be underlined by the casual relationship made between camp/prison life and references to life in general. This sort of oblique reference is seen in the following passage, which makes reference to the “striped” nature of life. There are seemingly “throwaway” reference to the “stripes” of prisoners and how they characterize life: “... У Боба на шее полосатый платок, и Капа сразу к отчиму на шею: жизнь - она в полоску, милый Мурзик! В полоску! И всех за стол усадила... (Н.Г. 1992 г) /...Bob had on his stripey kerchief, and Капа embraced her stepfather suddenly: life [comes] in stripes, dear Murzik! And everyone at the table was seated...(N.G., 1992)”¹⁵⁴ Stripes, in the Gulag, usually identified maximum security prisoners¹⁵⁵. The camp Perm’ 36 held all of the maximum security political prisoners in the USSR by the late 1960’s, and Perm’ 35 held a large number of other politicals from the 1960’s crackdown, onwards¹⁵⁶.

¹⁵⁴ Gorlanova 54.2

¹⁵⁵ “Gulag: Many Days Many Lives”, *Center for History and New Media*, George Mason University: 2006-2011, July 2011, N.Pag.

¹⁵⁶ “Gulag: Many Days Many Lives”, N.Pag

Prison as a space to which you are sent or from which you return is also a prevalent concept in Gorlanova's text. The idea as a camp or prison as a specially understood space within Perm' herself is a thread woven throughout the eras. The notion of prison-space continues throughout decades of life in Siberia. In 1991, it is connected in discussion to memories of it in the late '60's, for example on page 20 in a comment regarding movement in and out of prison space. This can be tied to a conception of prison as a liminal space, a trial, which must be endured in order to leave Perm'. A connection could be made with the myth of Baba Yaga's¹⁵⁷ hut here. Prevalent in Siberian tales¹⁵⁸, Baba Yaga's hut¹⁵⁹ is apt for no comparison if not that of the prison metaphor. Ensnared with a fence and sentinels, the hut has no openings or apertures into the free world. It is elevated and totally enclosed; the only way in is through interaction and via the acquiescence of the owner/jailor, who holds people within her walls against their will. Interestingly, it is also marked as a blatantly female-controlled space, not only in its closedness, or because its keeper and her daughters are often caricatures of female sexuality¹⁶⁰, but also in the stories' emphasis on domestic routine and *быт*/everyday life. Provided a regimented penitentiary routine, the jailed are held at the will of their keeper(s) (Baba Yaga often has daughters in her tales) and must fulfill certain mundane tasks under almost impossibly restrictive

¹⁵⁷ I spell "Baba Yaga" instead of the more correct "Iaga" because of its common use.

¹⁵⁸ See: Andreas, Johns, *Baba Yaga: the Ambiguous Mother and Witch of the Russian Folktale* (NY:Peter Lang, 2004).

¹⁵⁹ It is quite probable that Gorlanova would be familiar with Propp's (1895-1970) seminal works in this case.

¹⁶⁰ Andreas passim.

constraints before (and if) they are deemed free. In order to reach the other side of the forest, to “escape” the old world they are fleeing (even temporarily), these characters must become penitents or internees. In order to escape the perceived banality of Perm’, even if their central destination is less than charming upon arrival, Gorlanova’s characters seem required to endure the act of public contrition and penal sentences, enduring a profoundly new type of *быт*/everyday life under the constraints of Soviet prison environment.

Like Baba Yaga¹⁶¹, prison when viewed in this light becomes an ambiguous element. It is, of course, an ambivalent element, caring not whether it harms or helps its residents; in the same way as Baba Yaga might add trials to the lives of those she entraps, prison both allows for otherness and sameness to undergo changes, and emerged transformed (or at least marked). Abasheva notes that:

[В Перми]... судьба города сродни женской, привычно готовой к терпению и страданию: будто наивная девушка- провинциалка пошла когда-то в фабричные работницы, минули годы, и вот мается она надорванным здоровьем, и, может, прячет следы полустертой татуировка... Пермь была захолустной провинцией, промышленной колонией даже имя у нее отнимали (мужское “Молотов”, правда, продержалось недолго). И по сей день отравлена она дымом бесчисленных заводов, изранена колючками “зон”./ In Perm’...the the city’s fate is akin to a woman’s, always ready to be patient and to suffer - like a naive provincial woman who came some time ago to work in a factory, the years passed, and now she is in poor health and may conceal the tracks of faded tattoos...Perm’ was a backwater province, an industrial colony whose name was even made masculine (the male moniker “Molotov” was, admittedly, short-

¹⁶¹ Andreas 44-60

lived). Poisoned with the smoke from her countless factories, and injured by the wounds of the “zone’s” thorns.¹⁶²

Noting the marks and tattoos that blemish both the “godforsaken province” and its residents, prison space is obviously invoked. The concept of thorns that wound the “zone” most likely refers to the barbed wire that demarcated the camp-space from the rest of the Siberian landscape. The “zone” itself is a well-known name for (gulag) camp space.

In both reality and Gorlanova’s work, Siberian and Perm’s space is obviously tied to the concept of prison space, while the openness and otherness of the center is connected symbolically to foreigners and the provincial émigrés who populate it. Prison is an “other” space insofar as it changes and creates new *быт*/everyday life. As an inmate, the prison becomes your new “domestic” sphere, and *быт*/everyday life marches on, even as it is changed from normal: “Туго слетая быт и литературу, Нина [Горланова] рискованно балансирует на границе / *Быт* and literature are tightly woven together, and Nina [Gorlanova] balances riskily on the border between the two”¹⁶³. Libraries, new routines of everyday activity, and time/space “apart” are all motifs made evident in the following passage:

- В тюрьме была библиотека — одна из лучших в городе. Ну, потому что там не разворовали... Я брал по три тома Соловьева в неделю... Где б я имел еще такую возможность читать? (Рома Ведунов, скульптор, 1992 г)” / In prison there was a library – one of the best in the city. Because of where it was, no books were

¹⁶² Abasheva, M. “Parki Bab’е Lepetan’е...”, Nina Gorlanova *Вся Пермь: Рассказы [All of Perm’/ Вся Пермь/All of Perm’: Stories]* (Пермь: Фонд Юртин, 1996) 5.

¹⁶³ Abasheva 6

stolen... I would take three volumes of Solov'iev a week... Where else could I find that kind of time to read? (Roma Vedunov, sculptor, 1992).¹⁶⁴

This passage notes the ironic positivity of “time away” or a “space apart” for a prisoner. The break with everyday life, be it provincial or otherwise, allows for space for new routines. Granted, few routines in the new *быт*/daily life of prison were probably as enjoyable as reading Solov'iev, but noting the new activities that were engaged in marks this space as different, as well as highlighting the shortages that were prevalent in everyday life during this period. Notably, Gorlanova's passages never mark the prisoner as an “other” in space, but mark the space of the prison as “other”. The (once) incarcerated characters mentioned might have markers of their time (tattoos or prison-names), but they are introduced and understood through quotation and anecdote as regular people who lived in irregular space/time. Her lingering on the *быт* and everyday routine of the camp, which differed from her habits at home, normalizes the character at the same time it others and distances the prison space from normal space. It is also likely that Gorlanova's evaluation of the prison library, “one of the best in the city”, is a sharp piece of commentary concerning the spending and attention given to the penitentiary system in Perm', in comparison to that given the city at large. It is, in a sense, a “center”, apart but connected to the rest of Perm's space.

¹⁶⁴ Gorlanova 48.1

Prison references are complex insofar as the spaces are complicated. Kolyma and Vorkuta, part of the camp system, did not have libraries and were thoughtfully constructed as areas of deprivation. The prisons system (*домзак*) was slightly different, concerned as it was with the Socialist agenda of “correctional” labour and service. Despite this difference, the institutions were mostly viewed as a single (inconsistent) system by the Soviet authorities¹⁶⁵. In this vein, libraries were allowed and stocked (though often inconsistently) with older or didactic texts that were seemingly appropriate reading (read: politically correct or neutral texts) for the incarcerated in need of “cultural propaganda”¹⁶⁶. It was argued, by its proponents, that “in Soviet terminology, [libraries were] institutions of those who are deprived of their freedom (*лишенные свободы*). The book was a tool in the political education of lawbreakers, in fostering productive-technical abilities, in gaining skills in different fields of work, in raising their cultural level...”¹⁶⁷ This is refuted by those who show the inconsistency and paucity of Soviet prison/camp libraries, as well as the “strict and inhuman” control of authorities which Solzhenitsyn reported¹⁶⁸. Despite this, he also reported the quality of Liubianka’s library¹⁶⁹; often the libraries at prisons/camps were rifled through and censored less frequently than those in the union at large. Their uniqueness coupled with

¹⁶⁵ Makinen, Illka, “Libraries in Hell: Cultural Activities in Soviet Prisons and Labor Camps from the 1930s to the 1950s” *Libraries & Culture*, (Vol. 28, No. 2, 1993 University of Texas Press) 121.

¹⁶⁶ Makinen 117

¹⁶⁷ Makinen 120

¹⁶⁸ Makinen 120/121

¹⁶⁹ Makinen 123

their preciousness to the inmates, especially writers or political thinkers imprisoned for their work, made their existence all the more significant. As Illka Makinen notes: “there is life in boiling geysers, and there are libraries in hell”¹⁷⁰—and the implication of these literate hells is not slight. Nabokov wrote of “that special smell, the smell of prison libraries, which emanated from Soviet literature”¹⁷¹. Indeed, the influence that this must have had on Siberia, and Perm’ especially (recall that Perm’s penal and camp system held approximately 1/3 of its population), must have been great. It is true that Gorlanova often recalls the theme in her work (despite its post-Soviet publication date). Perhaps this is due to the function that prisons served in an area. Several themes that prisons evoke are themes which Gorlanova explores. For example, Michel Foucault (1926 – 1984) argued that prisons were

an effort to adjust the mechanisms of power that frame the everyday lives of individuals; an adaptation and a refinement of the machinery that assumes responsibility for and places under surveillance their everyday behaviour, their identity, their activity, their apparently unimportant gestures; another policy for that multiplicity of bodies and forces that constitutes a population.¹⁷²

Thus, it is a division and a control of *быт*/everyday life, and Gorlanova concerns herself with the division, citation, presentation and the control of literary Perm’ and its interaction with prison culture. This theme will be picked up once again in the segment dedicated more fully to Gorlanova and women’s writing.

¹⁷⁰ Makinen 117

¹⁷¹ Makinen 117 (from *Glory* by Nabokov)

¹⁷² Foucault, Michel, *Discipline and Punish: the birth of the prison*, trans. Alan Sheridan (NY: Pantheon, 1977) 77/78.

One obvious focus of Gorlanova's space is on the social, the use of citation and the quotation to create and delineate a space. Gorlanova is busy mapping literary Perm'; the prison, the home, Perm' and other spaces interact with the plot in a constructed way. A major part of this constructedness lies in the interactions of Perm' as a center within a periphery and with Moscow, as the center of Russia. Interestingly, despite centuries of precedent which identify it as a "second center", Gorlanova does not cite Petersburg as a counterpoint to Perm'¹⁷³. Muscovites are, however, singled out in the text for quotation, for example in the repeated phrase: "Какие тонкие люди живут в Перми! (Л. Костюков, москвич) / What thin/fine people live in Perm'! (L. Kostiukov, Muscovite)¹⁷⁴". This quotation underscores the visible and implied differences between Muscovites and residents of Perm', while hinting also at an alternate meaning. The term *тонкий* has several meanings, one group of which means: sophisticated, fine, shrewd. In this light, this man from the "center" might be commenting on the fine quality of the residents of Perm'. On the other hand, *тонкий* also means "thin", as in "slender" or "attenuate". In this case, this undated comment might reference the camps of Siberia, and thus become a much different remark. The residents are then seen through the lens of the "attenuate" – that which is weakened or reduced in force, intensity, effect, quantity, or value¹⁷⁵ - as diminished, or lacking. The comment could refer to those thinned and

¹⁷³ See c. 66; this quotation of another character is Gorlanova's only reference to Petersburg, and it occurs on the second-to-last page of the text.

¹⁷⁴ Gorlanova 20.5

¹⁷⁵ "attenuate", < www.Dictionary.com >.

weakened by their current or past stays within the penitentiary camp system that took up a large portion of the Perm' *область*/region: "It sufficed to make the prisoners work for twelve to sixteen hours a day in the Siberian frost, deny them sufficient food to replace the spent calories...an average prisoner would become dystrophic (*допывал*) and turn into a complete down-and-outer (*доходяга*), a living skeleton, within three months or even just a couple of weeks"¹⁷⁶. In this manner, the divide between the "enlightened" center and "Siberia as exile" is alluded to. In addition to this commentary, there is a less drastic allusion to be drawn. In addition to the camp system, Siberia received fewer deliveries as well as lower levels of food rations; outside of the centers, many people suffered from slight malnutrition and undernourishment. A reference to the slimness of the residents of Perm' can be read as an emphasis of the divide between the center and periphery of Russia. This comment could, of course, be a simple observation, but, like most of Gorlanova's text, there are alternate meanings available to the close reader and its repetitions (it is also noted on 39) hint at its importance. With it, the prison-space references to Perm' continue.

Shortages are further commented on, and the subtle privations (not to be confused with the severe, mortal shortages that were also experienced by many) that colored everyday life in the late 1960's:

- Помню: все читают "Гоголевец", тут же кто-то кому-то наспех пересказывает сюжет "Фауста", и вдруг все замерли. "Как говорил Фауст, чувства превыше всего..." — услышала я

¹⁷⁶ Toker 155. All Russian is from Toker.

последнее из Гете. Галя Гринблат щелкнула волшебным своим зонтом, и он... начал складываться в огромный алый цветок. Волшебно! На всю жизнь я запомнила это чувство зависти! К капиталистическому чуду... В тот миг я просто не могла ненавидеть мир империалистов, понимаешь!.. Галин алый зонт — подкоп под коммунизм, я чувствовала это. Комсомольский значок прямо сжигал грудь. Такое вот раздвоение личности испытала... да-да... А в Париж Галя не ездила — Царек вечно все преувеличивал. (Четверпална, 1968 г.) /

-I remember: everyone was reading “Gogolevitz”, where someone carelessly retells someone else the plot of “Faust” and everyone suddenly stops. “According to Faust, feelings are really everything...” - I heard this last bit from Gete. Galia Grinblat miraculously flicked open the umbrella and it...it began to take the shape of an enormous crimson flower. Miraculously - a huge scarlet flower! In my whole life, I can't remember such a feeling of envy. A capitalist miracle...In this moment I simply couldn't hate the imperialist world, you know?...Galia's crimson umbrella was an attempt to undermine Communism, I felt this. Comsomol badges are burnt on your heart. Such a thing split me into multiple personalities...yes, yes...Though Galia never went to Paris, Tsarek eternally exaggerates everything...(Chetverpalna, 1968)¹⁷⁷

Shifting away from theme of privation found in the USSR, and returning again other locales mentioned in Gorlanova's text, Moscow is also mentioned. It represents not only the center, but a place to which overambitious and underqualified men sometimes flock, a sort of landing-spot for those with pretensions and a desire to move:

Я, стыд головушке, я одна во всем виновата! Когда она подала к нам заявление, одновременно подал Волков, он сейчас в МГУ, знаете? Автор двух книг... И вот... он сделал две орфографические ошибки в заявлении. Ну, я решила выбрать эту... стыд головушке, парвеню... Я была ведь секретарем Ученого совета тогда! (М.В. Гемпель, 1970 г.) /

I, shame on me, I am the only guilty one! When she applied to our [department], at the same time as Volkov – he's at Moscow State University now, did you know? The author of two books... well...he made two orthographic mistakes in the application. Anyway, I decided to pick him, shame on me, the upstart...I was the secretary

¹⁷⁷ Gorlanova 29

to the academic council [that oversees dissertation defenses] by then! (M.V. Gempel', 1970).¹⁷⁸

This sense of the inept slipping through the cracks in the Moscow system is implied by the word *парвеню*, which connotes the low background of a pretentious or social-climbing person, as well as the guilty reference to the “success” of his two published books and applications complete with mistakes (and an implied whole lot of nothing-much-else). The questionable lure of the center has been linked with corruption and Gempel', one of the “academic council” who should have been safeguarding the standards of the system. Moscow is thus characterized as a place which entices and accepts the middling and aspiring, as well as a place that badly influences high morals. This can be linked to the stereotypes of the north that are maintained by Abashev, and his insistence on linking creative quality with the Urals region¹⁷⁹, as well as to the persistence of the idea that creative withdrawal into the “country” spurs inspiration.

The concept of moral erosion and the connection of “foreignness” with Moscow is underscored in a passage of “overheard” conversation (*разговор*), from 1980:

— А кто был прав? Вчера я встретила знаешь кого? Игоря! Ну да, он в Москве, но приехал на конференцию, кажется. И на полном серьезе жалуется на своих аспиранток. Значит, так: он как член парткома руководил подтиранием иностранных жоП.
— Грезка! Дети же тут.

¹⁷⁸ Gorlanova 23

¹⁷⁹ Abashev passim.

— У детей тоже жопы есть. И у иностранцев есть. Их надо подтирать. Вот на время олимпиады сформировали группу из идейных аспиранток — бумажки подавать иностранцам. В общественных туалетах. А эти девчонки сбежали на похороны Высоцкого! Иностранцы, конечно... не знаю... А вот партком Игорю выговором грозит. И он на полном серьезе жалуется на девчонок: какое легкомыслие — так науку не делают, а еще аспирантки... (Разговор 1980 г.)

-Who was right? You know who I met yesterday? Igor'! He is back in Moscow now; we came to Perm' for a conference. In all earnestness, he complained about his female grad students. It seems he, as member of the [Communist Party Committee] party went round and organized the wiping of foreign asses.

-Greška! Kids are here!

-Kids have asses, too. And foreigners have them. Have to wipe. During the Olympics, he made up a group of idealistic grad students to give tissue out to foreigners. At public toilets. And these young girls ran away to participate in Vysotskii's funeral! The foreigners, of course, didn't notice...And for this, the Party is threatening Igor' with consequences. And in all earnestness, he complains about the girls - what flippancy! They weren't doing any *real* research, those grad students! (Conversation, 1980).¹⁸⁰

What is discussed in this passage is the labour of graduate students within Moscow during the Olympics. They were there ostensibly to do their research, and most likely to have some contact with foreigners, but they were quickly put to work distributing toilet paper at the washrooms. The moral erosion experienced by Igor' in Moscow is evidenced by his feeling that grad students should stoop to being degraded with menial work in the face of other options; this, in the view of the speaker (Greška), is subtly condemned. The values of these students are, in turn, questioned by Igor' since they leave their posts working at the Olympics instead of wiping the right "asses" to get their degree "research" done. While thousands did (one million mourners were said to have assembled) attend

¹⁸⁰ Gorlanova, 41.2

bard/superstar Vladimir Vysotskii's (1938-1980) funeral¹⁸¹, Igor's condemnation and weak morals are manifested in his prioritizing the work at the stadium – literally overseeing excrement and foreign “asses”—over attending the funeral of a man who embodied a thinking-man's social commentary on the regime, lyrical truthfulness and overwhelming popularity without complicity to the regime. The fact that he lives and works in Moscow is overtly mentioned in contrast to Perm', possibly linking the shift of his values with his physical move to the center.

Moscow is often characterized as opposite to the camps, the camps of Perm'. Muscovite life is used as a counterpoint to life in the camps. The type of lifestyle, the spatial and temporal remove of decades, as well as the concept of space broached by an interloper (conducted while in the morally questionable and intellectually duller “center”) all figure in the following passage:

Помните: Мурзик с выражением ужаса на лице рассказывал, как ему не везет в командировках? Только сядет в Москве в купе, сразу вносят на руках пьяного спящего артиста Жженова! И он спит всю дорогу. И так несколько раз... Мурзик не мог найти материалистического ответа этому совпадению. А теперь “Огонек” опубликовал мемуары Жженова про то, как он в лагере мучился. Понятно уже, почему ему иногда хотелось выпить, но почему судьба его забрасывала в купе к Мурзику? Может, надо еще пожить, и это будет понятно... (Грезка, 1987 г.) / Do you understand? Murzik explained, with a horrible expression on his face, how he had no luck while on business trips. He had just sat down in the compartment of the train in Moscow when the drunken, sleeping actor Zhzhenov fell right into his arms! He slept there the whole trip. This happened a few times...Murzik couldn't find a material answer for this coincidence. “Ogonek”¹⁸²

¹⁸¹ Tokarev, George, “Vladimir Vysotsky” *VoicesNet Visions Literary Journal* V. 21 (June 20, 2004) Sept. 2010, N.pag.

¹⁸² A magazine.

published Zhzhenov's memoirs; he suffered in the camps. It's understandable that the actor might want a drink [after visiting the camps and Perm' again], but why had fate cast him into this compartment? It might be that we have more life to live, and fate understood this...(Greška, 1987).¹⁸³

The idea of having your personal experiences of liminal space made public is represented here by the idea of published camp memoirs. Published in the well-known journal *Огонёк/The Little Flame*, Zhzhenov's memoirs do not evidence a desire for privacy, but his private understanding and re-experience of liminal prison-space is still something that drives him into drinking to block out the public sphere. We are with him on his literal and figurative journey back from the periphery, on the train moving through liminal space. This intersects interestingly with Gorlanova's publication of her own fictionalized autobiography, as well as her broad project of "writing" all of "Perm'", which she constructs through poaching quotations and publicizing private speech to describe the constantly moving life of a city.

This concept overlaps with Julie Buckler's interpretation of Iurii Lotman's writing of the textual symbolism of St. Petersburg¹⁸⁴. In her work, *Mapping St. Petersburg: Imperial Text and Cityscape*, Buckler attempts to widen Lotman's interest in mapping a city. Buckler has opened her field of study beyond the inclusion of fictional literature and oral traditions in order to include both non-literary sources as well as non-fiction sources to be available as St. Petersburg "texts". She "juxtapose[s]"

¹⁸³ Gorlanova 32.5

¹⁸⁴ See: Lotman, Iurii, "The Symbolism of St. Petersburg", *The Universe of Mind* (Bloomington : Indiana University Press, 1990).

canonical texts by prominent authors with works from the margins of these well-charted oeuvres, as well as works by lesser-known figures, so that clusters of texts can be experienced in terms of interrelationship rather than intertextuality”¹⁸⁵. Beyond fictional works, she pays attention “over a wide textual field, of which fictional prose is only one component. Texts of a quasi-fictional and nonfictional nature participate no less significantly in the discursive project of constructing imperial Petersburg”¹⁸⁶. It is in this last sentence that another major difference between Buckler and Lotman’s texts can be found; it resides in the word “constructing”. Lotman focuses on the symbolic nature of St. Petersburg in terms of its centrality in Russian/Soviet literature’s mythology, its unofficial continuance as a capital city, its history replete with myth and writers’ understanding of it as an alternatively doomed or utopian space in Russian culture. Symbolism is the foundation and the coup-de-grace for Lotman. Buckler, on the other hand, attempts to “map” St. Petersburg. Generally, by “mapping”, Buckler means creating a cultural overview of the genre of writing about St. Petersburg by examining the “texts” which describe it. For Buckler, mapping is more specifically a form of rhetoric, the study of writing or speaking as a means of communication or persuasion. In several fundamental ways, this approach is not unlike Lotman’s; both rely on the fallible opinions of subjective art and its interpretation. The difference is in the goal of this analysis, in the verb

¹⁸⁵ Buckler 14.

¹⁸⁶ Buckler 14

“mapping”. Attempting a work in which semiotic models were embodied in art, architecture and geography, Lotman aims to show St. Petersburg as symbolically unique. This uniqueness is derived from the extensive mythmaking which has characterized St. Petersburg since its inception, and which has evolved organically from the artificial creation of this peripheral center. He argues, essentially, that artifice begets myth, and that myth arises from the dual mythology of St. Petersburg. This is a unique synthesis¹⁸⁷. Buckler, however, relies on rhetoric in order to create a schema—“to map”—to explain and de-mystify the myth of Petersburg as unique or primary. Indeed, she argues that the unity found within the Petersburg texts is a consciously crafted and “intentional”¹⁸⁸ unity. This forced primacy is comparable to Abashev’s intentions in arguing for the Urals’ dominance within northern space. Mapping has further implications, however. Foucault notes that, as it developed, the penal system became a “more finely tuned...penal *mapping* of the social body”¹⁸⁹. This concern with the mapping of a society, a “social body” that is identified as “other space” (as both prisons and Siberia are), intersects with wider prison-theorizing and Gorlanova’s strategy of mapping out the space of literary Perm’. Similarly “finely tuned”, concerned with “the multiplicity of bodies and forces that constitute [...] a population”, and controlled expressions of *быт*/everyday life, Gorlanova’s interest in

¹⁸⁷ This is drawn most clearly in chpt 14 of “The Symbolism of St. Petersburg”, *The Universe of Mind*.

¹⁸⁸ Buckler 23

¹⁸⁹ Foucault *Discipline*...78, emphasis mine.

prison culture overlaps with literary Perm's metaphorical similarity to a prison.

Gorlanova seems to take this “hands-on” stance in her creation and recording of Perm', one that Abashev's Urals-theorizing do not. The amount of manipulation and the constructedness of the format of *Любовь в резиновых перчатках/Love in Rubber Gloves* amounts to the creation of, not a map of Perm' itself, but a literary version of Perm'. Focusing, as Buckler did for Petersburg, on, “treat[ing] particular sites within writing about [the area]—physical areas, aspects of city life, and persistent themes”¹⁹⁰, Gorlanova shapes the Perm' which we are privy to, and which she and other characters self-reference. This dynamism and interrelation is one of the prime features that distances Gorlanova's Siberian space from the immobile and binary definitions of historical interpretations and critics like Abashev. Derrida also commented on the participatory and productive nature of “spacing”/ “espacement”. In creating space, or defining his work by its spaces, Derrida had to “underline the active participation of spaces in the production of meaning (despite the incapacity of traditional theories of meaning to include space as part of their explanation of meaning)”¹⁹¹ and to name this “espacement” [“spacing”]. Indeed, a basic trait shared by Julia Kristeva (1941-), Foucault, Giles Deleuze (1935-1995) and Felix Guattari (1930-1992) in their spatial thought is what Baudrillard identified as a “production

¹⁹⁰ Buckler 15

¹⁹¹ West-Pavlov 17

paradigm”. All three are interested in “the manner in which the spaces which we inhabit are to be understood as processes – as dynamic, ongoing series of events”; thus “we move away from notions of space as ‘the material/phenomenal rather than the abstract...[as] being rather than becoming’ towards a conceptualization which is more fluid, more dynamic”¹⁹². This way of viewing space as fluid and changing helps us to understand creating a new, fluid space that emphasizes the *process* of creating itself.

CONTROLLING TEXTUAL SPACE AND ENGAGING WITH METAFICTION

Gorlanova participates in a change of attitude from notions of space as material toward viewing it as fluid and dynamic by emphasizing her writing of literary Perm’ as a process. She lays bare her tools, making editing, revision and repetition hallmarks of this process that represents a textual space of Perm’ (as opposed to a physical Perm’). In addition to the space that the “contributors” are allotted via citation, Gorlanova makes room for both their and her own revisions. Her text includes drafts and repetitions which appear to represent “edited” or revised versions of statements or quotation. This process of revision and editing, made obvious in the work, is an obvious formal endeavour, challenging the normalized literary space as closed, final and definitive. Instead, a process made clear, demands an interest in formal change. “Comprehensive

¹⁹² West-Pavlov 22

theories of space in society such as that offered by Henri Lefebvre (1901 – 1991) have gained broad acceptance. Lefebvre posits that space is not a container, but rather, the very fabric of social existence, a medium woven of the relationships between subjects, their actions, and their environment”¹⁹³. Virginia Woolf said of Colette that her fragmented semi-autobiographical novels were “a *shape* I haven’t grasped yet”¹⁹⁴, further colluding the shifting interrelationship of space with people’s lives. Gorlanova, too, attempts to create literary Perm’ as a shape that explores new combinations, new impressions and evolving literary landscapes, testing the boundaries of spaces. In carving out new spaces, pushing the center to the periphery and establishing the peripheries as central, Gorlanova contemplates and demands a complex view of literary Perm’.

“Spacing” in Derrida’s context “denotes the active, productive character of space. Far from being a neutral void in which objects are placed and events happen, it becomes a medium with its own consistency and its own agency”¹⁹⁵. He further noted:

l’espacement est un concept qui comporte [...] une signification de force productive, positive, génératrice. Comme dissémination, comme différence, il comporte un motif génétique; ce n’est pas seulement l’intervalle, l’espace constitué entre deux (ce que veut dire aussi espacement au sens courant), mais l’espacement, l’opération ou en tout cas le mouvement de l’écartement (Derrida 1972) [spacing is a concept which [...] carries the meaning of a productive, positive, generative force. Like dissemination, like différence, it carries along with it a genetic motif: it is not only the interval, the space constituted between two things (which is the

¹⁹³ West-Pavlov 19

¹⁹⁴ Southworth 254. The novel in question was Colette’s *La Maison de Claudine* (1922). Emphasis added.

¹⁹⁵ West-Pavlov 17

usual sense of spacing), but also spacing, the operation, or in any event, the movement of setting aside.¹⁹⁶

Gorlanova seems to engage with space in a similar way, both in her use of empty and typographical space, framing the narrative, and subtly setting “aside” her words from the rest of the text, and also in her active manipulation of concepts of physical space. Her use of space is very active; she dynamically uses the concepts as well as typographical space as productive players in her work. This interest in dynamic space is growing more common. Frederic Jameson has averred that the dominant cultural mode is one defined by categories of space, that “we inhabit the synchronic”¹⁹⁷. Many examples are available in *Любовь в резиновых перчатках/ Love in Rubber Gloves*; they relate to Gorlanova’s active “editing” of her citations which is explored in more detail later. Primarily, examples are of text intentionally rendered in Capslock, and repeated in the text (for example, 54.2 and 22.3) in almost exact form. These are the only elements of the text which are presented in Capslock, setting them apart in terms of textual space and style. One of the most recognizable examples of this is found in the commentary of ‘N.G.’, repeated on pages 32.2 and 54.2: “ОНИ УЖЕ ЗНАЛИ, КАКИМИ САМИМИ СОБОЙ НУЖНО БЫТЬ! / THEY ALREADY KNEW, WHICH VERSION OF THEMSELVES THEY SHOULD BE”. This is found, in a modified form, on page 22.4 also: “ОНИ НЕ ЗНАЮТ, КАКИМИ САМИМИ СОБОЙ МОЖНО БЫТЬ!” / THEY DIDN’T KNOW, WHICH VERSION OF

¹⁹⁶ West-Pavlov passim.

¹⁹⁷ West-Pavlov 19

THEMSELVES THEY SHOULD BE”. These rare changes from regular font emphasize not only the implied importance of these phrases, but also the implied otherness of their inclusion. All but two examples (a single word – “ТЕБЕ” is rendered for Liudmila in Capslock (Людмила – Капе / Liudmila - Кара, 1968 г.) on 29.2, and a place name, “ИРОНИЧЕСКАЯ МОЗАИКА (“Гоголевец”, 1968 г.)” is mentioned on page 27) are made by ‘N.G.’ –an set of initials that most likely represents the author¹⁹⁸. Every other example of this typological space is attributed to our ambiguous ‘N.G.’ Examples of her use of Capslock, other than the repeated statements above, can be found in her ending passage on 66-68. Pages 66-68 are also ‘N.G.’s commentary and they have intermittent use of Capslocks as well.

Concepts of general space are also addressed; temporal distance (space) is highlighted. Gorlanova also experiments with typographical space, textual space: punctuation, grammatical structures, and the typographical arrangement of the text fragments, but ellipses and other syntactic elements frequently arise as well. These underscore the openness and the “deferral” of the text. Concepts of endlessness and eternity are evoked; *бесконечность* /infinity, along with the flight of the soul:

- Ты мне налей, налей еще, и я все скажу!.. Налил! От души оторвал? **Душа у тебя бесконечная? Бесконечненький ты наш!..** Эх, сегодня видела во сне: ко мне на день рождения Бродский прилетел. Не Процкий, бля, а Бродский!.. (Грезка - Бобу, 1992 г.) / You pour, pour it out to me and I'll drink

¹⁹⁸ This will be explored at length in a later chapter.

everything!...You poured! Why so little? Is the soul that you have endless? You are endless!..Oh, today I saw in a dream that Brodskii flew to me on my birthday. Not Protskii, dammit, *Brodskii!*.. (Grezka – Bob, 1992).”¹⁹⁹

— Мы уже были где-то за пушкинским перевалом, точно, мне уж 38 стукнуло... В магазине "Одежда" я услышала голос Капы:

— Мы эту куртку тебе купим, даже если мне придется ради нее пойти на панель! — Второму мужу она, кажется, говорила.

Какая-то дурная бесконечность, повторяемость. Я вспомнила: “Народу много. Бога нет”. Как там Бог был ни при чем, так и на панель она не собиралась, а приемы юмора, однажды отлитые в форму эпатажа, так и остались... (Н.Г., 1992 г.)

/We were already there, behind Pushkevskii [St.], I was 38 by then...At the clothing store, I heard Kapa’s voice:

-‘We will buy this coat, even if I have to become a prostitute!’ she said to her second husband.

This type of endlessness, repetition. I remembered: “There are many nations. No God.” God had nothing to do with this, of course, and she wasn’t really selling her body, but the devices of humour, cast once and forever in the form of shocking behavior, remain...(N.G., 1992).²⁰⁰

Both examples clearly show that Gorlanova uses editing as a device that represents real-life modality, encoding her information in terms of endlessness and repetition taking place in everyday reality. In turn, she connects this sense of boundlessness and reiteration with her representation of Perm’ in the text. This thematic implication is further underscored by her active editing. By concentrating on the existence (or lack thereof) of a soul that defies logical time, Gorlanova highlights alternate ways of experiencing or understanding time, related, perhaps, to

¹⁹⁹ Gorlanova 19.3

²⁰⁰ Gorlanova 58.3

concepts of cyclical “feminine” time. This sense of different time is also linked with the periphery, as a push has occurred recently to replace the traditional spatial difference between a center and its periphery “with a chronotope that takes into account temporal categories as well as locational ones: the center is typically associated with dynamic change in the present and the elaboration of objectives to be attained in the future, while the periphery tends to be identified with imperceptible change, atemporality, or with some past epoch”²⁰¹. The link to the past and remembrances is strong in *Любовь в резонных перчатках/ Love in Rubber Gloves*; the circular autobiographies and biography of the townspeople as well as the town are linked to memory and passed time. *Вспомнить/remembering* does not only occur in a general and overarching sense, it is also highlighted in often folksy remembrances and storytelling. Reminiscences often begin with phrases that elicit a temporal distance; the space between childhood and youth, and between youth and adulthood. This is tightly bound to the concept of generational space, which Gorlanova intimates is wide and hard to cross:

— Грезка, я вот тут думала: а может ли быть счастливо наше поколение безбожников? Видимо, **наше поколение будет навозом для других поколений**. Мы уже сами поздно пришли к вере... Что ж, **пусть гордо реет знамя навоза!** (Н.Г. 1992 г.) / Grezka, I was just thinking: Can we achieve happiness, if our generation was atheist? It’s obvious our generation is just the fertilizer [“shit”] for the next generation. We’ve already moved towards faith, too late....Let us proudly wave the banner of shit! (N.G., 1992).²⁰²

²⁰¹ Maguire, Muireann, Vanessa Rampton, Introduction, *Studies in East European Thought* (2011) 88.

²⁰² Gorlanova 25.1

For example, citations that occurred more distantly in the past than those introduced by forms such as “Вчера/yesterday” or “Во вторник/on Tuesday”, often begin with phrases such as the following:

- “Когда мы учились на третьем курсе/When we studied in third year” (25)
 “Можно вспомнить то или другое/ One can remember this or that”(26)
 “Для меня время воспринимается так / I perceived that time this way” (35)
 “Во время зимней сессии.../During summer session” (43)
 “На каникулах, перед пятым курсом/On holidays, during fifth year” (48)
 “На пятом курсе.../In fifth year” (49)

These occur, along with other examples of “personal” time, with some frequency in *Любовь в резонных перчатках/ Love in Rubber Gloves*. Many rely on knowledge of the general Russian calendar for understanding the chronology, for example, of semesters and school holidays. The usefulness of the provided dates is questionable. In some cases, thematically related entries cite the same date in brackets; for example, on pages 48/49 a series of characters mention “пятым курс/5th year”, and are dated “1980”. One might infer that the events described had taken place in the distant past, relate to the same year, and that both dates corroborate these assumptions. One might also infer that an event described as happening “недавно/recently”, such as the one on 52.2 dated “1992”, refers to something that occurred in 1992. However, this might not be the case. Perhaps the dates refer to the time the citations were recorded, or perhaps they refer to the date they were included in the text.

The dates are ambiguous, and also shift with a frequency that makes them unreliable. For an example that shows a more personal understanding of time, which would require an intimate knowledge of the individual characters and their lives, we may see the following examples as representative. The first type of example is one that relies on a particular event to date an entry, for example, the subject of an undated entry of “N.G.’s”: Наверное, букет подснежников Грезка послала. Не больше. (Н.Г.) / Grezka probably sent the bouquet of snowdrops. Nothing more. (N.G.)²⁰³. The time referred to is a mystery, with only one action as a clue. Other examples emphasize an important, but personal, event in a character’s public life, though this date is not always obvious or known to an “outsider”. For example, entries begin with statements such as: “Перед свадьбой Капы.../ At the time of Кара’s wedding...”²⁰⁴; “Когда Сон-Обломов хотел броситься под поезд.../ When Son-Oblovov wanted to fling himself under a train...”²⁰⁵; “Защиту Игоря отмечали в Головоного.../ When Igor’s PhD defense was in Golovono...”²⁰⁶; “На свадьбе невесты было слишком много, а жениха - слишком мало... / At the wedding the brides were too many and the grooms too few...[the bride was too heavy and the groom, too slim]”²⁰⁷. The dates of these activities are often obscured by the twists and turns of the text.

²⁰³ Gorlanova 52.3

²⁰⁴ Gorlanova 54.2

²⁰⁵ Gorlanova 57.2

²⁰⁶ Gorlanova 57.5

²⁰⁷ Gorlanova 58.1

In Gorlanova's autobiography, one would expect these markers of personal time and space to be more pronounced. This is not the case, however. Most reminiscences are more general in this text, and shifts in time are primarily achieved via the introduction of new motifs (for example, Gorlanova's health, which will be focused thoroughly in following section). Chronology is loose, as scattered memories are used to forward the "plot" and show the passage of time.

The majority of these stories are also focused on spaces and their transgression/containment, mirroring Gorlanova's interest in building stories defined in terms of boundaries. The inside/outside dichotomy is evidenced from the first two sentences of her *Автобиография/Autobiography* that opens *Вся Пермь/All of Perm'*, in which she gives her specific location – “в деревне Берх-Юг Пермской области (широту и долготу посмотреть) / in the forest at the far-South of Perm' province (the longitude and latitude you can find for yourself)” – as well as the categories into which she ought to fall but from which she is excluded: “Я родилась... под созвездием Стрельца, холериком и экстравертом... На счастье, Бог послал меня в жизнь со слабым здоровьем, и это спасло меня от многих и многих бед, какие преследуют стрельцов-холериков-эстравертов / I was born...under the constellation Sagittarius, a choleric subject and extrovert... Fortunately

God gave me in this life poor health, and this saved me from many, many troubles, which often attend Sagittarian-choleric-extroverts”²⁰⁸.

The major events that drive the autobiography forward involve losing something in an unreachable space, and being lost outside, also in an unknowable space. The first situates Gorlanova as a young child, unable to wrangle her emotions, nor to find her soother:

Уже первые проявления моей энергетики были безобразными. В год я потеряла соску (единственную) и кричала так, что родители разобрали по досочкам крыльцо (под которое - думали - я уронила соску) и перекопали под ним землю. Соски не нашли, но процесс меня отвлек./ The first manifestation of my energies was outrageous. When I was one, I lost the nipple of my bottle (my only one), and cried so hard that my parents took apart the porch piece by piece (they thought I'd dropped it underneath), and dug into the earth below. We never found the top, but the process of searching did distract me²⁰⁹.

In another example, Gorlanova wanders away from her home and is lost, overtly overstepping her bounds and, through nothing but luck, she is able to return from being totally lost in seemingly limitless space. Hating the confines of her *детский сад*/kindergarten so much, Gorlanova wanders off:

сбежала в поле ржи, которое простиралось до горизонта. Почему я, уже размуная девочка, рассказывающая восемь способов варки самогона, убежала не домой, а в поле ржи? Видимо, потому что- экстраверт, ибо дом свой уже не был внешним объектом?... Не знаю... Весь день колхоз не работал - искали меня. Но к счастью, рожь скосить раньше времени не пришлось, ибо бабушка меня нашла к вечеру (спящей)./ I disappeared into the field of rye, which stretched into the horizon. Why did I, already a wise young girl who could tell you eight methods of boiling homebrew, run away from home and into a field

²⁰⁸ Gorlanova 16 (both)

²⁰⁹ Gorlanova 17

of rye? Obviously because I was an extrovert; had my home become external to me?...I don't know. The commune didn't work all day, they just looked for me. Luckily, the rye didn't have to be cut to discover me, my grandmother found me by evening (asleep).²¹⁰

The boundaries of both of these situations were crossed by Gorlanova, and in neither could they be traversed or become “findable” again. Despite seeming problematic to her, the boundaries which both contain and exclude Gorlanova in her lifestory also help to define her. The same wide-ranging interest in the boundaries and borders of Siberia, and those within Perm' specifically, inform the entire structure of *Любовь в резонных перчатках/ Love in Rubber Gloves*.

This attentiveness to crossing boundaries links with her interest in the register and temporal space between the citations she uses; quoting from different times in the present elicits different temporal space (for example, citations of Pushkin 20.4, or references to Sartre, i.e. 52.4). The same effect occurs with symbolic meaning, as a reference to different temporal space reveals commonalities over time and space. Igor', during a time of repression, reflects on Antiquity: “-В самом имени Риммы я вижу отсветы Древнего Рима, где Сенека впервые выступил против доноительства. (Игорь, 1968 г.) / In Rimma, I saw a reflection of her namesake, Ancient Rome, where Seneca first came out against snitching”²¹¹. The changing pattern of Gorlanova's text is also bound with the shifting of seasons, and seasonal action. Seasons allow for a certain

²¹⁰Gorlanova 17

²¹¹ Gorlanova 32.4

type of movement and reaction, as well as a certain mood within their space. Gorlanova's use of seasons as markers of time and space will be discussed in further analysis.

In addition to her experiment in literary form, this adds a reconceptualization of literary space which challenges historical and canonical forms. She utilizes, with no obvious textual distinction, quotations ostensibly from Perm's inhabitants alongside lengthy Golden Age quotations, blurring the literary space of Perm'. If both quotations from Dunechka down the street and Pushkin, as well as Louis Carroll appear in the same text, which ostensibly is building a picture of literary Perm', then where does the space of literary Perm' end? To what distance, to what era, does it extend? By playing with literary space in this way, Gorlanova intimates that the inhabited space of literary Perm' is anything but peripheral, reaching with ease into far-flung times and places (references to Rome, Antiquity, Paris, the rest of Russia, etc. proliferate). Her manipulation of the canon and citation show the contractedness of this tradition, as well as the space it provides for possible change. Folksy and obscene language coexists alongside elevated classical quotations and this creates a charged space in which conventions are blurred or revised. This newness and changeability marks the space of literary Perm' as special, and as removed from the tradition which has long avoided it. By constructing literary Perm' via quotations and commentary, from *разговоры*/conversation or from *дневники*/diaries, Gorlanova also carves out individual spaces for each of her contributors to tell the life of their

city, as well as space(s) for their lives. In addition to these “named” spaces, those quotations that are awarded authorship, Gorlanova includes the occasional citation from people she names “Посторонний”.

Посторонний can mean “stranger”, “outsider” or “extraneous” –this could represent an unknown member of the community. The possibility that comments such as these, attributed to the anonymous speakers, were actually overheard is unlikely. Thematically matching the preceding and following text, the commentary is either linked to the conversation going on around it (and thus the speaker would likely be known to his/her conversational partners) or it is “unrelated” text, fitted in purposely by Gorlanova. There is the possibility that this is not an unknown member of the community at all, but is instead a true outsider to the area, a foreigner perhaps.

In this case, we must decipher why a stranger’s voice(s) might be added to the space of literary Perm’. This inclusion could work to underscore the polyphonic nature of Perm’, to show it as an evolving and changing landscape which people influence as they come and go. Allowing this textual space to be given to a foreigner, in a book ostensibly outlining “all of Perm’”, might also be a conscious decision to highlight the frequency of new people being exiled or released into the community. The fact that these incursions into the dialogue of Perm’ are undated speaks to their anonymity as well as to their flexibility of use for Gorlanova. Being unsigned, they are accepted with the certain amount of hesitation that foreigners’ opinions are often granted. Placed where they best fit

thematically, Gorlanova uses these quotations like stopgaps in the dialogue that she considers “insider” and “true”. Citations also work to change the type of story Gorlanova is writing, by adding to the autobiography covertly constructed elements. This construction is not limited to the inevitable arguments concerning narrative subjectivity and the subjective nature of memory, but extends toward the purposeful obfuscation of authorship of the quotations, toward the fictionalization of this autobiography. Obscured by Gorlanova’s use of initials to identify the authors of quotations is the fact that quotations are mislabeled, purposely misattributed to celebrated people or familiar quotations left anonymous. The use of “anonymous” citations is equally contrived (for example, *посторонняя* 31/ *посторонний* 43), as are those vague assignments such as undated (the majority of citations are dated) and unsigned “разговор / conversation” (ie 41) and “поговорки / proverbs” (19/26) offered as the source of obviously not generally known proverbs. As the acting narrator and compiler of “all of Perm”, no quotation included would be unknown to such an insider-biographer, nor would Gorlanova have those sorts of holes in her knowledge. These are as fictionalized and written as a novel’s characters. This is consistent with the tenets of metafiction, which will now be discussed in relation to Gorlanova’s corpus from *Вся Пермь/All of Perm’*. Examples of these and other concerns will be presented in an analysis of *Любовь в резонových перчатках/Love in Rubber Gloves* and *Автобиография/Autobiography*.

Gorlanova uses metafiction's assimilation of varying voices and variable levels of discourse within her work. She uses repetition in order to underline the fictive nature of her literary Perm', as well as a tool to destabilize the characterization and "trustworthiness" of the text (and therefore, the author). In addition to this, metalingual commentary is explicitly employed, and foregrounded as "the vehicle of enquiry"²¹² into the relationship between truth and fiction. This functions alongside the question of framebreaks, which work to expose the levels of illusion that are conventionally deployed in fictional writing. Erving Goffman notes that a character imposing himself into the texts and breaking the frame, "acquires [for himself] a peculiar reality through the same words by which he undermines the one that was just performed."²¹³ This is, of course, also achieved stylistically through the use of parody, stylization and the imitation of non-literary discourse²¹⁴. Repetition, I aver, also acts to lay bare the process of discursive editing, the building of plot and storyline that takes place in fictional works. Literary Perm' exists, fundamentally, as a manifestation of metafiction's interest in constructing a fictional illusion and the concurrent deconstruction and lying bare of this illusion. The concept of metafiction, and the arguments which surround it, is quite old despite the lack of Russian acceptance of the term. It has been argued,

²¹² Waugh, Patricia *Metafiction: The Theory and Practice of Self-Conscious Fiction* (New York: Routledge, 1994): 37.

²¹³ Goffman, Erving, *Frame Analysis: An Essay on the Organization of Experience* (New York: Harper & Row, 1974): 400.

²¹⁴ Waugh, 25, 70 italics in orig.

by Shepherd²¹⁵, for example, that Russians tend to dismiss the term out of hand. Despite this, the practical application of the theory, as well as theories which are formally similar but differently named, has a long history in Russian/Soviet literature. As a first step, the theories and the conceptions of metafiction will be explored.

The applicability of metafiction as a descriptive marker of world literature enjoys support. To some, all novelistic enterprises contain metafictional elements. For others, the corpus of metafiction begins and is most ably exemplified by the work *Tristram Shandy* (Sterne, 1759) and later *The French Lieutenant's Woman* (Fowles, 1969). Theorists have often argued that the 1960's/70's literary scene is what popularized the genre, and the recognition of metafictional aspects that preexisted their acknowledgement. There is an understood instability regarding the term and its definition, though the "term 'metafiction' might be new, the practice is as old (if not older) than the novel itself...[and] its tendency or function is inherent in *all* novels", according to Patricia Waugh²¹⁶. It has been hypothesized that metafiction is not so much relevant as a sub-genre of literature, but instead should be seen as "a tendency *within* the novel which operates through exaggeration of the tensions and oppositions inherent in all novels: of frame and frame-break, of technique and counter-technique, of construction and deconstruction of illusion"²¹⁷.

American critic and novelist William H. Gass is widely credited with

²¹⁵ Shepherd, David *Beyond Metafiction: Self-Consciousness in Soviet Literature* (Oxford &c.: Clarendon. Press, 1992), passim.

²¹⁶ Waugh 5 italics in original.

²¹⁷ Waugh 14

coining the term in 1970²¹⁸. Despite these new world roots, worldwide application of metafiction's codes and characteristics make it a common feature of world literature within the postmodern period. Linda Hutcheon has called it "fiction about fiction"²¹⁹, whilst arguing that it represents a path back into politically meaningful postmodernist practice²²⁰. What unites seemingly disparate works as examples of metafiction is the application within the literature of a "*theory* of fiction through the *practice* of writing"²²¹, as a prominent characteristic. This springs from metafiction's concern with laying bare the function and artifice of literature and the act of writing, and the "present increased awareness of 'meta' levels of discourse and experience...reflecting a greater awareness within contemporary culture of the function of language in constructing and maintaining our sense of everyday 'reality'"²²². Brian McHale argues that contradictions stemming from textuality are essentially ontological, and thus inherently postmodernist²²³. In exploring her critique of authors who self-evaluate and "their own methods of construction...writings [that] not only examine the fundamental structures of narrative fiction [but] also explore the possible fictionality of the world outside the literary fictional

²¹⁸ Waugh 2

²¹⁹ Shepherd 1. Linda Hutcheon, a Canadian scholar, is widely credited with coining the term "metafiction" in connection with Historiography and postmodernism; she is often understood in contrast to Jakobson. See: *The Politics of Postmodernism* (1989), *A Poetics of Postmodernism* (1988), and *Rethinking Literary History* (2002) for an overview.

²²⁰ Hutcheon, Linda, *The Politics of Postmodernism* (Routledge: London, 1989) 61.

²²¹ Waugh 2

²²² Waugh 3

²²³ Waugh 15

text”, Patricia Waugh completed what is still considered a seminal text concerning metafictional theory²²⁴.

The expression of the tension between the ends and the means of writing as communication is present in much contemporary writing but is the dominant feature in the texts that Waugh defines as metafictional. These include those works that implicitly and consistently presents embedded strata which rattle the expectation and presuppositions of the text: “the fictional content of the story is continually reflected by its formal existence as text, and the existence of that text within a world viewed in terms of ‘textuality’”²²⁵. Hutcheon hypothesizes that metafiction (which she often calls ‘narcissistic narrative’) is process made visible²²⁶. Waugh notes that “metafiction is thus an elastic term which covers a wide range of fictions. There are those novels at one end of the spectrum that take fictionality as a theme to be explored (and in this sense would include the self-begetting novel)...[and] at the furthest extreme (which would include fabulation) can be placed those fictions that, in rejecting modernism more thoroughly, posit the world as a fabrication of competing semiotic systems which never correspond to material conditions”²²⁷. Waugh builds on the concepts elaborated above, all of which stem from the idea of a fictional work being both self-aware and self-reflexive in a way which highlights the artificiality of language and structures of literature. Leaving behind the

²²⁴ Waugh 2

²²⁵ Waugh 15

²²⁶ Hutcheon, Linda, *Narcissistic Narrative: The Metafictional Paradox* (NN from now on). (Waterloo: Wilfred Laurier University Press, 1981).

²²⁷ Waugh 19

steadiness and understandability of modernism, this flourishes in postmodern times, as indulgently self-oriented as they are. Hutcheon notes that despite any narcissistic tendency, “auto-representation is still representation”²²⁸. Metafictions, most interestingly for the identity politics of postmodernity, explore the relationships between fictionality and reality while addressing two questions: that of the status of literary-fictional discourse (the problem of referentiality) and the construction of the identity of fictional characters²²⁹. Metafictions are seen to pursue questions of the construction and mediation experience of the world of experience, through the formal self-exploration of worlds mediated through language. This leads the metafictionalist to believe in the ultimate untenability of language and truth in representing “reality”, allowing that “in fiction it is, in fact, possible only to represent the *discourses* of that world”. In this interest, the metafictionalist intersects with the interests of theorists such as Mikhail Bakhtin (1895 – 1975)²³⁰, and his concepts of heteroglossia, the work of linguist L. Hjelmslev²³¹ concerning metalanguage (1961), and the larger concerns of construction of language, deferral of meaning, and concerns, such as Saussure’s and Derrida’s, about the instability of language and semiotic meaning. In metafictional works, the penchant for self-conscious language and Bakhtin’s role within

²²⁸ Waugh 15

²²⁹ Waugh 91

²³⁰ See his seminal works: *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*. ed. Michael Holquist, trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist (1981); *Questions of Literature and Aesthetics* (1973); *Speech Genres and Other Late Essays*, trans. by Vern W. McGee (1986).

²³¹ See: *Principes de grammaire générale* (1928); *Prolegomena to a Theory of Language* (1953).

metafiction will be understood further below, in my exploration of metafictional and Russian interactions.

Another element which is noted in metafiction is an interest in privileging diegesis, and the frames of fictional works made obvious.

Hutcheon argues:

that some [metafictional] texts are diegetically self-conscious while others demonstrate primarily an awareness of their linguistic constitution. In the first case, the text presents itself as narrative; in the second, as language. But there seem to be two possible varieties of each of these modes, and these will simply be referred to as the overt and the covert forms. Overtly narcissistic texts reveal their self-awareness in explicit thematizations or allegorizations of their diegetic or linguistic identity within the texts themselves. In the covert form, this process is internalized, actualized; such a text is self-reflective but not necessarily self-conscious²³².

Combined, these make up the four types of metafictional text that Hutcheon forwards. Analysis of the frames, essentially the organization of experience, begets the analysis of the formal conventional structure of the literary work. Focusing on the readers' relationship with the metafictional text, as a co-creator, Hutcheon delves into reader-response and philosophical implications of this theory in a way I would like to avoid (i.e. chpt. 1, *Narcissistic Narrative*). In this interest, she follows in the steps of John Barth, Ortega y Gasset, Robert Alter and Borges among others, in their focus on these extra-textual actions²³³.

In addition to this acknowledgment of traditional formal conventions, metafiction typically emphasizes and foregrounds these

²³² Hutcheon *NN* 7

²³³ Hutcheon *NN* 20

“framing activities”, emphasizing the understanding that “neither historical experience nor literary fictions are unmediated or unprocessed or non-linguistic”²³⁴. This is explicitly made clear in metafiction. Framing techniques, and those methods which make them obvious, differ within metafictional works, though two popular methods that reveal the provisional nature and the function of literary convention, are parody and inversion. The switching between framing and frame-break, or “the construction of an illusion though the imperceptibility of the frame and the shattering of the illusion through the constant exposure of the frame, provides the essential deconstructive method of metafiction”²³⁵. Noting that there are only levels of form and no true “content”, metafictional works play with convention and its upending of self-conscious fictional codes—never reinforcing the illusion of modernist unities²³⁶. The shift from and focus on modernist conventions has led metafiction towards an acknowledgment of the linguistic context of the text and an expansion of the philosophical notions offered by this ‘context’.

Metafiction resists determinism and clarity: “metafiction functions through the problematization rather than the destruction of the concept of ‘reality’ [reflected ‘truthfully’ in texts, especially]. It depends on the regular construction and subversion of rules and systems. Such novels usually set up an internally consistent ‘play’ world which ensures the reader’s absorption and then lays bare its rules in order to investigate

²³⁴ Waugh 30

²³⁵ Waugh 31

²³⁶ Waugh 32

the...concept of ‘pretence’²³⁷. However, unlike aleatory (that attempts to be entirely random) or illinx (that attempts at pure mimesis, desiring the destruction of the stability of perception) literature, metafiction very deliberately undermines the system of writing without seeking randomness²³⁸. Metafiction employs play with purposefulness, setting out to make its autonomy and value explicit, and also to flaunt its status as ‘play’. By employing techniques such as play with combination and permutation, Italo Calvino suggests that this interest suggests narratives that are “renewable”²³⁹, despite any destabilization they might endure through metafiction. Waugh continues this thought, allowing that “combinative play in metafiction is concerned with the self-consciously preformed reintroduction into the literary system of previously outworn modes and the exposure of present exhausted forms often unrecognized as such”²⁴⁰. They offer both novelty as well as familiarity through the undermining and alteration of convention; although distanced from definitive interpretation of language and convention, “the defamiliarization proceeds from an extremely familiar base”²⁴¹. The emphasis on the textuality of metafiction demands that it highlight the duelling impulses of the creation/description paradox²⁴². This allows for

²³⁷ Waugh 40/41

²³⁸ Waugh 18, 40-43

²³⁹ Calvino, Italo “Notes toward a definition of the narrative form as a combinative process” *Twentieth Century Studies* (1970) 93.

²⁴⁰ Waugh 44

²⁴¹ Waugh 13, 18

²⁴² Waugh 88

an interesting intrusion of *быт*/everyday life into the conceptual framework of metafiction.

Waugh acknowledges this intersection, through her application of metafiction with what she terms “the everyday”. Noting that the successful creation of literary context relies on the resolution of indeterminacies of context and is dependent on the conventions of the text, she notes that metafiction hinges on highlighting the relation (of indeterminacy) stemming from the act of writing between the linguistic world of fiction and the world described (the everyday). The regulation and use of “everyday” speech (through characters) and the language of the traditional novel, are opposed by metafiction’s resistance within these forms. Offering “the recognition, not that the everyday has ceased to matter, but that its formulation through social and cultural codes bring it closer to the philosophical and mythic [elements of postmodernity] that was once assumed”²⁴³. Allowing that, as Waugh suggests, that “the everyday world is merely another order of discourse”²⁴⁴, *быт*/everyday life becomes an important tool in understanding the literary world of text. Samuel Beckett avers the perception of habit and regularity form the substructure of most individual experience²⁴⁵. Practically, thematic concerns become picked up by self-reflexivity at the formal level. In addition to this, she argues that “metafictional texts explore the notion of some “alternative worlds by accepting and flaunting the creation/description paradox, and

²⁴³ Waugh 16

²⁴⁴ Waugh 89

²⁴⁵ Waugh 44

[to] thus expose how the construction of contexts is also the construction of different universes of discourse”.

Gorlanova creates a world via her “literary Perm”, which reflects a version of Perm’ she subjectively presents in lieu of an “objective” description of Perm’. It will be shown later that Smirnova focuses on creating an internal world via domestic ritual. These ‘worlds’ are created via different techniques, but one that is particularly applicable to the work of Smirnova and Gorlanova is repetition. This is, effectively, formal self-reference. Metafictional works, even those that retain substantial conventional elements, explore through textual reference the notion of reality and literature as, both, a construct. Emphasizing the constructedness of the text, for example through repetition, underlines the state of ‘absence’ (of truth or referent) which a reliance on interrelationships of signs begets. Accepting a notion of absence, “an awareness of the linguistic construction of the reality of the text”²⁴⁶, is integrated by metafiction in varying degrees. Nathalie Sarraute’s novel *The Golden Fruits* (1963), for example, uses repetition to emphasize the non-existence of itself outside of its own repetitions²⁴⁷.

On top of these techniques that destabilize, there is a tendency in metafictional works to rely on subjective time, which “continuously assimilates external events” while “historical dates have significance

²⁴⁶ Waugh 57

²⁴⁷ Waugh 59

within patterns of personal rather than world history”²⁴⁸. Repetition and the repetition of events with small shifts or changes in context also challenge themselves with their potential contradiction. Moreover, metafiction’s use of contradiction²⁴⁹ as a technique implies a different understanding of time; it implies simultaneity of actions and plots as a possibility within the text and which allows different voices to be assimilated rather than locked in conflict²⁵⁰. These tendencies in Gorlanova's work will be explored shortly. First, we must consider the Russian metafictional tradition so that we may contextualize Gorlanova’s *Любовь в резонных перчатках/Love in Rubber Gloves*. Work concerning “metafiction has been mostly confined to studies of American and western European literatures”; as David Shepherd observed in 1992, “the very term ‘metafiction’...is likely to evoke a reaction of puzzlement and/or suspicion among those in the field of Russian literary studies—probably still a healthy majority—for whom theory and its jargon are invasive presences...’ Yet as he hastens to point out, there is no lack of a tradition of metafiction in Russian literature.”²⁵¹

Despite this, certain Russian/Soviet names are routinely mentioned in discussions of metafictional theory and texts. Nabokov’s *Criticism of Evgenii Onegin* (1964), Shklovskii’s theories concerning “Shandyism/Stearneanism” (after *Tristram Shandy*), *обнажение*

²⁴⁸ Waugh 71

²⁴⁹ Waugh 137

²⁵⁰ Waugh 16

²⁵¹ Galloway, David. “Sergei Dovlatov’s *Zona* as Metatextual Memoir”, *Canadian Slavonic Papers* V 50.3/4 (Sept- Dec 2008) 325.

приема/making techniques obvious and *остранение*/defamiliarization, and Bakhtin's heteroglossia are routinely cited in metafictional theory. Metafiction and Russian writing enjoy a complicated relationship in which the one is found in the other, whilst it is routinely denied. Metafictional elements, works and theories are rife within the Russian/Soviet criticism of literature, while the name "metafiction" is rarely uttered. An important work on the matter of metafiction and Russian-language texts comes from David Shepherd, called *Beyond Metafiction: Self-consciousness in Soviet Literature*²⁵². Beyond the Americanized example of Nabokov, "few if any Russian writers have attracted the attention of non-Slavist commentators"²⁵³, a wrong which both Shepherd's and my volume wish to right. Definitively, Shepherd frames this exclusion in terms of deliberate oversight or disinterest, claiming that "there is a considerable body of writing in Russian literature since at least the early 19th C, including works accessible to and widely commented on by non-Slavist scholars, whose metafictional qualities have frequently been remarked upon, though somewhat more desultorily analyzed"²⁵⁴.

Stemming from the 1804/07 translation into Russian of *Tristram Shandy*, 'Stearneanism'/ *стеряничество* "increasingly manifested itself in the form of 'Shandyism'/ *шендеизм* ...such was the pervasiveness of *шендеизм* that this weapon of parody itself became a frequent target of parody"²⁵⁵. This perhaps lead to the retroactive application of this term to other Russian

²⁵² Shepherd passim

²⁵³ Shepherd 3

²⁵⁴ Shepherd 4

²⁵⁵ Shepherd 4

works of this era, as Shklovskii offered *Tristram Shandy* as the penultimate metafictional work²⁵⁶. Eikenbaum noted that the metafictional elements of Alexander Bestushev-Marlinskii (1797 – 1837), Vladimir Odoevskii (1803 – 1869), O.I. Senkovskii (1800 – 1856) and Alexandr Vel'tman's (1800 – 1870) writings were part “of that period of Russian literature when the question of the organization of prose was at its most acute and was the subject of theoretical debates and practical experiments”²⁵⁷. Despite this, and other examples of metafictional readings, claims toward Russian metafictionality have not been undisputed; however, Shepherd collects an impressive list of the precedents and examples of Russian metafictional writing²⁵⁸.

Theoretically, Shklovskii “presented metafictionality as essentially the practical implementation of a brand of Formalist thinking so extreme as itself to verge on parody...[to this day] strong echoes of Shklovskii's claims for the dominance of ‘form’ over ‘content’ can be found within...a formalist tradition” of suspicion about the imposition upon literature of ‘non-literary’ tasks”²⁵⁹. He argued that the success of metafictional elements allowed the “unwelcome tradition of metafiction, [to become] effectively a shorthand notation for the Jakobsonian view that the ‘poetic function’ of ‘verbal art’ is the...‘focus on the message for its own sake’”²⁶⁰. This allowed Shklovskii's form/content theory to be reintroduced into the

²⁵⁶ Mann, Yuri “К проблеме романтического повествования” *Известия* Vol 40:3 (1981) 217.

²⁵⁷ Shepherd, 5

²⁵⁸ Shepherd 6-8; Shepherd here quotes Segal, D. ‘Literatura kak okhrannaia gramota’. *Slavica Heiroslymatana* v. 5/6 (1981), 151-190.

²⁵⁹ Shepherd 9/10

²⁶⁰ Shepherd 11

discourse as more “congenial”²⁶¹ and less overtly theoretical framework within Russian literary studies, later to be enveloped in Soviet criticism of formalist/decadent prose concerns. Shepherd avers that this identification of Formalism with modernism became “entrench[ed] within most official Soviet critical discourse of this uncompromisingly hostile view...[which] has been an important contributory factor to the continuing coolness towards metafictional practice in particular” in Russia²⁶².

Hutcheon notes that “the Russian formalist concept of parody as an autonomous art, based on the discovery of ‘process’ [is] of interest”, as well as noting the importance of “defamiliarization” (*остранение*) in the Russian tradition, and to the practice of metafiction²⁶³. This interest in the laying bare of text and an awareness of the forms and function of fictional practice can be generally linked to Russia's historical interest in formalism. Some critics, such as V. Turbin, stood firm in their belief that metafictional works would “form the basis of the art of the future”²⁶⁴, while reflecting their past within the Russian tradition. It was in the 1970’s that experimentalism, in the form of metafictionality, allowed this belief to be renewed²⁶⁵. From this time on, Soviet/Russian reception and critical interest in metafiction predominantly aligned with its Western counterparts, only on a reduced level²⁶⁶.

²⁶¹ Shepherd 11

²⁶² Shepherd 12

²⁶³ Hutcheon *NN* 24

²⁶⁴ Shepherd 12

²⁶⁵ Shepherd 14

²⁶⁶ Shepherd 15

It has been noted that metafiction, insofar as it presents fictional reflexivity as a principal interest, rests on Bakhtin's theory of the novel. Making itself out of "a multi-styled, heteroglossic, multi-voiced phenomenon", the language of literature relies on "authorial narrative, stylization, [and]...individualized speech of characters" which require intertextuality to operate ceaselessly within the fictional work²⁶⁷.

Bakhtin's theory of language is paramount to Waugh's understanding of metafiction and its relationship to fictional language. Metafiction exaggerates through emphasis the instabilities between reality and its representation in fiction, whilst denying that there is any particular privileged language of fiction and arguing instead that there are various registers of language for each type of written document. These, every type of language, "compete[s] for privilege", emphasizing their constructedness within the fictional frame. Bakhtin "referred to this process of relativization as the 'dialogic' potential of the world", notes Waugh²⁶⁸.

What metafiction does which Bakhtin's, and other theories, do not, is to highlight the "essential mode of all fictional language" and make this dialogic potential explicit²⁶⁹. Beyond this, the metafictionalist shows that the "language of fiction is always, if often covertly, self-conscious"²⁷⁰, in opposition to the realist mode which attempts to reconcile through subordination the dialogic to the omniscient authorial voice. Novels which Bakhtin considered 'dialogic' resist this tendency, as metafiction "*displays*

²⁶⁷ Shepherd 53/54

²⁶⁸ Waugh 5

²⁶⁹ Waugh 5

²⁷⁰ Waugh 5

and *rejoices* in the impossibility of [realist] resolution”, and “tend to be constructed on the principle of a fundamental and sustained opposition [between] the construction of a fictional illusion (as in traditional realism) and the laying bare of this illusion”²⁷¹.

In practice, this interest in metalanguage (Hjelmslev) and the dialogic, “results in writing which consistently displays its conventionality, which explicitly and overtly lays bare its condition of artifice, and which thereby explores the problematic relationship between life and fiction”²⁷² which commonly concerns Nina Gorlanova, for example. Truth in *Вся Пермь/All of Perm*’ is similarly hidden. Between the autobiography which ought to elucidate the life of the writer, and the biography of “all of Perm”, the implication of truthfulness is easily noted. The reality of the texts *Автобиография/Autobiography* and *Любовь в резонных перчатках/Love in Rubber Gloves* offers only segments of “true” traditional memoir however, and more often cases arise which complicate Gorlanova’s picture of Perm’ as believable or even easily understandable. The veracity of the quotations Gorlanova includes in order to “explain” Perm’ is thrown into question, by the author herself. As Galloway noted in a different case, “though truth value is a precondition of memoir, the author here deliberately manipulates the reader’s expectations.”²⁷³ Galloway continues to “propose using metafiction as a means of

²⁷¹ Waugh 6

²⁷² Waugh 4

²⁷³ Galloway 328

approaching...a novel which blurs the line between fiction and memoir.”²⁷⁴

Beth Holmgren has noted that unusual Russian autobiographical works have “deliberately obscure[d] the boundaries between the ‘real’ and the ‘imagined’, creating a protean generic hybrid that fluctuates between memoir and pseudomemoir, autobiography and pseudoautobiography, lyrical diary and fiction”²⁷⁵. Some hold that, “in effect [an autobiography or memoir] is a novel written in the present with one’s life as its subject. Not all fiction is autobiographical...but on this deeper level, all autobiography is fiction”²⁷⁶. David Galloway notes that “conversant with this dual nature, the [what he terms “metatextual”] text complicates the aims of both memoir and novel through its obscuring of truth: the reader is never quite sure where factual material ends and artistic license begins.”²⁷⁷

Natalia Smirnova, in comparison, I will argue structures her fiction in a way “which merely impl[ies] the old forms” and “encourages the reader to draw on his or her knowledge of traditional literary conventions when struggling to construct a meaning for the new text” (as Waugh describes R. Brautigan’s work²⁷⁸). These two examples work to show the diversity of metafictional works in general, as well as within the Russian literary sphere, with Siberia as the collector of these sundry texts.

²⁷⁴ Galloway 326

²⁷⁵ Holmgren, ed. *The Russian Memoir: History and Literature* (London: Northwestern University Press, 2003) xxx. To be referred to as “*RM*” from now on.

²⁷⁶ Stanton, Donna, “Is Autogynography Different?” *Women, Autobiography, Theory: A Reader*, Ed.s Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson (Madison: Wisconsin Pr, 1998) 136.

²⁷⁷ Galloway 326

²⁷⁸ Waugh 4

ANALYZING METAFICTIONAL ELEMENTS: AUTHORSHIP CONCERNS
AND UNSTABLE SPACE

Gorlanova's use of editing—really just a repetition with shifts in context or incident—belies her interest in this metafictional sense of subjective time. Outpacing this curiosity is Gorlanova's metafictional interest in making this theory explicit. Like Sterne before her, she relies on episodic story-telling as well as repetition. Her text is constructed around the investigation and manipulation of authorial and narrative control over character and plot, to reflect the problem of representation through the use of edited and divergently framed episodes.

Gorlanova's exploitation of the autobiographical voice, and her deconstruction of its tenability, as well as her repeated use of the autobiographical form connects her work both to metafiction as well as *быт*/everyday life. Her manipulation of this form, despite its historical ties with feminine genre and literary constraint, enjoys links to concepts of representation and self-reflexivity, as well as to metafictional interest in authorial voice and the characters' relationships with "I". This illuminates an interest in both the disbelief of the true self—a hotly debated change from the modernist united self—and the function and possibilities of the literary first-person. Of course, Roland Barthes made clear the "death of the author", a paradoxical theory which metafiction exploits. The more an author is present in the novel, the less s/he exists; s/he might be the writer who controls the story, as well as "an 'I' who talks to the characters *in* the novel, and therefore exists at the level of story *and* at the level of

discourse”²⁷⁹. By subverting the traditional conventions separating implied authors from narrators and readers, the work makes clear its constructedness. Many metafictional novels play with the relations between story and discourse:

a common strategy is to begin a novel in the first-person and then to shift to a third-person narration and back again. The first person, ‘I’, is a member of a grammatical category of words referred to as ‘shifters’ or ‘indexical deictics’...in most [metafictional] first-person narratives the *narrating* subject is non-problematically at one with the *narrated* subject...metafictional novels which sift from the personal form ‘I’ of discourse to the impersonal ‘he’ of *story* remind the reader that the narrating ‘I’ is the subject of the *discourse*, and is a different ‘I’ from the ‘I’ who is the subject of the *story*. And, finally, there is yet another level of subjectivity, for behind the whole discourse is the *authorial* ‘I’, a subjectivity present only in terms of its real absence.²⁸⁰

In his *Roland Barthes by Roland Barthes*, his “autobiography-as-fiction or fiction-as-autobiography”, he notes this particular paradox saying, “I do not say ‘I am going to describe myself’, but, ‘I am writing a text and I call it R.B....I myself am my own symbol.”²⁸¹ Gorlanova uses this technique and also delves into the murky waters of clarity, in *Любовь в резиновых перчатках/Love in Rubber Gloves*. Commonly referring to herself through autobiographical fictions, as well as referencing and quoting people referred to as “NG”, “Nina” and the author of the unaccredited portions of text and quotation which frame the piece, Gorlanova openly plays with the conventions of the believable and clear omniscient author/narrator and consistency in the text. The paradox concerning the

²⁷⁹ Waugh, 134 italics in orig.

²⁸⁰ Waugh, 135 italics in original.

²⁸¹ Barthes, Roland. *Roland Barthes by Roland Barthes* (1977) as quoted in Waugh 135.

identity of fictional characters as well as problems of referentiality is patently metafictional.

This purposeful toying with the expectations may be the outcropping of a desire to shape and control a very particular and personal view of Perm', and herself. Of author Sergei Dovlatov, David Galloway states that:

He serves not to elucidate the text, but to construct a **hybrid** prison memoir which supports his views of the prison experience; views which are **in opposition to the pre-existing tradition**, and this leads me to describe *The Zone* as a *metatextual* camp narrative, **containing many of the attributes of the metafictional novel, though originating from the memoiristic impulse and still straddling the line between fiction and nonfiction** in a way that true metafictions do not. Only by recognizing Dovlatov's twisting of the conventional memoir forms, and his emphasis on the fluidity of the text, can we appreciate the Zone's place in literary history²⁸².

Here Galloway notes the presence of what he terms a "hybrid prison memoir," containing elements of metafiction and memoir, in which he notes an obvious "opposition to the pre-existing tradition". In *Любовь в резиновых перчатках/Love in Rubber Gloves* Gorlanova also utilizes a fluidity of text, chronology, style and narrative mode, as she creates a hybrid of metafiction and autobiography. Working to support her view of Perm', Gorlanova creates a narrative place that functions to locate her within a version of the canon and Russian literature as she sees it (not as it is). "...Victor Shklovskii...said that "new forms of art are created by the

²⁸² Galloway 325 bold added, italics in original.

canonization of peripheral forms”²⁸³, and Gorlanova plays with this fluid concept of the peripheral and the canonized, as she devalues the traditional kings of Russian literature and writes her own literary Perm’ as if it were central. She does this by twisting the traditional forms of literature, while writing herself into her own history (“herstory”). One technique she employs is the quotation of slightly-modified “classics” of literature. Her modifications thematically or symbolically engage the classical work with her own literary program. One example of this comes on page 27, in which a Pushkin poem is quoted/modified:

- Капа, красивая, как Свобода на баррикадах Парижа, и осознающая себя ею, понесла один конец газеты в коридор. Боб нес другой конец. Он скандировал: **“Октябрь уж наступил, уж Гринблат отряхает последние трусы с нагих своих ветвей”**... (Н.Г.) / Капа, gorgeous like Freedom on the barricades of Paris, imagining herself as it, took one end of the poster in the hallway. Bob took the other end. He bellowed out: “October has arrived/Grinblat shaken off the panties from her naked branches”...

In this modification, the original Pushkin is warped from a rumination on the arrival of autumn (“Осень - Отрывок /Autumn – an Extract”, 1833), the entirety of which contains, at most, veiled sensual references. The original reads as follows: “Октябрь уж наступил — уж роща отряхает/ Последние листы с нагих своих ветвей ; October has arrived, the grove shaken off/ The final leaves from its naked branches”²⁸⁴. Obviously, the humour is sexual and teasing, and builds on the work of classical poet with

²⁸³ High, John, “Polycontexts: Working Notes from Moscow” (*Witz: A Journal of Contemporary Poetics*. Vol. 1, Fall 1992) Nov 2005, 13.

²⁸⁴ Pushkin, Aleksandr, “Осень / Autumn”, RBV 2001-2011, January 20, 2002, http://www.rvb.ru/pushkin/01text/01versus/0423_36/1833/0590.htm - Russian Only. English is my translation.

a scandalous private life. In addition to showing her knowledge of and playfulness with the canon, Gorlanova introduces a minor theme in her works. This modification serves to introduce one of Gorlanova's most-used motifs - flowers and trees as symbols – and also twists the original words by Pushkin to reflect female sexuality (another of Gorlanova's thematic concerns). Flowers are also used as references repeatedly as a textual chain on pages 28-30, as well as on 47.2, and 52.2 and 52.3; in her short stories outside of *Вся Пермь/All of Perm'*, such as “ИВАН, ТЫ НЕ ПРАВ! / Ivan, you're not right!”²⁸⁵, the use of flowers and trees as symbolic or allegorical is a main textual strategy. General reliance on citation also relates to metafiction. Concerns with referentiality also reflect her interest in citations. Gorlanova uses references to many famous authors and public figures, spanning time frames and country boundaries. Russian references, political and literary, pepper the text. Dostoevskii (58.4), Rasholnikov (48.4), Krylov (45.1), Turgenev (25.1), Chernyshevskii's Vera Pavlova (25.3), Chernyshevskii himself (69), Tsvetaeva (54.1, 56.1), Ahkmatova (56.1), Solovi'ev (48.1), Kuznetsova (69), Sakharov (68) and others are mentioned by name, along with Solzhenitsyn and others already discussed. Pop songs are also quoted, for example on 27, 28 and 29. Beyond the slogans and songs already mentioned, there are also citations that invoke known sayings or people from Western culture, for example St. Augustine on 59.5, Freud on 63.3, Delacroix and his painting of *Liberty Leading the People* (1830) on 27.2 and Sartre on 52.4, among others.

²⁸⁵ Gorlanova. 2004, available online.

Regarding referentiality, Rudger Imhof states of the narrator's role that "metafiction's most conspicuous and salient feature, which distinguishes it from all other forms of experimental fiction, is the self-conscious narrator, who, apart from anything else, comments freely on what he is doing while he is spinning his yarn"²⁸⁶. Galloway continues to argue that "the paramount concern is the text as a work in progress and the focus on the process of writing above and beyond the narrative context"²⁸⁷. Like metafiction, *Любовь в резонных перчатках / Love in Rubber Gloves* is offered up as a type of matrix for writing and re-writing the biography of a city; it repeats and reviews and edits itself cyclically throughout the text. The picture which is developed is achieved only through iteration and this process is made clear within the text. Galloway supposes *The Zone* to be "metatextual"²⁸⁸ in that Dovlatov creates a very fluid text, parts of which are written and edited before our eyes...it documents the act of (re) writing."²⁸⁹ Imhof writes that, following the formalists, "the aim of the self-conscious narrator is chiefly to call attention, through a prodigious number of artistic strategies, to the artificiality of the text at hand."²⁹⁰ By this action, the role of the author or narrator becomes highlighted. John Barth describes his own writing...as 'novels which imitate the form of the Novel, by an author who imitates the

²⁸⁶ Galloway 329

²⁸⁷ Galloway 329

²⁸⁸ For our purposes, this can be read as "metafictional".

²⁸⁹ Galloway 329/330

²⁹⁰ Galloway 331

role of the Author”²⁹¹. We can easily associate this behavior/ strategy with *Любовь в резиновых перчатках /Love in Rubber Gloves*. Masquerading as both memoir/autobiography and “travelogue”/place description, Gorlanova manages and changes the expectations of the text by starting out with the illusion of truth grounded in life-writing traditions, and concurrent veins of obvious subjectivity. Later, by making obvious certain formal devices (for example, repetition and editing), and obvious fictional allusions and quotations, and placing them alongside very believable *быт* /everyday stories, Gorlanova obscures her approach to the text and the form of her text.

The first entry in the chapter *Любовь в резиновых перчатках /Love in Rubber Gloves* is made by a contributor (or attributed to a contributor) given the initials “N.G.”:

Я, дети, сама смеялась, грешная, когда читала письмо Капы: “Пишу тебе с вокзала. Народу много. Бога нет”. Вы думаете: повсюду мы искали Высшую Истину, в том числе — на вокзалах? Увы, мы же безбожниками росли и на вокзалах искали эту, как ее, романтику. “Народу много, Бога нет” означало примерно то же, что “в огороде бузина, а в Киеве дядька”. Быть несерьезными нам казалось важнее, чем поиск Истины... (Н.Г. 1992 г.)/-I, children, laughed, a sinner, when I read Капа’s letter: “Writing you from the train station. There are many people. No God...” . Do you think? We search everywhere for a Higher Truth, including—at the train station? Alas, we were raised atheists and at the station were looking for, I can’t remember its name, this romance. “There are many people. There is no God” signified to us nothing more than: “in the vegetable garden there are elderberries, and my uncle is in Kiev”. It was more important for us to be fun, than seek the Truth...(N.G. 1992)²⁹²

²⁹¹ Galloway 328

²⁹² Gorlanova 19

This quotation begins Gorlanova's complex relationship with authorship. It also introduces several techniques used throughout the story. One is shifting voice, heavily indebted to the quotation of various other characters in the story, as well as their letters or diaries. Second, Gorlanova introduces the use of proverbs (presaged in her epigraph) and Soviet ready-mades which are either inserted for context or manipulated for ironic effect. There are plays on religious sayings, like "Народу много. Бога нет. / There are many people. And no God", which riffs on the Christian monotheistic assertion of: "Один Бог, многие народы/ Many peoples, one God". The latter saying is also repeated later in the work, reminding one of its ubiquity and its purposeful insertion into this text (ie. 58.3). To return to the concept of authorship, we note that the quotation is authored by "N.G.", whom, especially after the introductory autobiography, one might naturally take to be Gorlanova herself. The sensibility of such an assumption is maintained by the first few entries; two more follow in quick succession which helps to support this theory:

1) - Сколько лет? Десять? Я еще вздрагивала, когда в письмах видела фразу: "Наварили малинового варенья". Для всех малиновое варенье — цвет берета пушкинской Татьяны, а для меня — клей для листовок... (Н.Г. 1992 г.) / How many years have passed? Ten? I shudder, still, when I see that phrase in the print: "Cooked a lot of raspberry jam". For everybody else, raspberry jam seems the color of Pushkin's Tatiana's beret, but for me, it's the of glue for leaflets....(N.G., 1992)²⁹³

2) - Идем мы по Карла Маркса. Весна. Солнце светит изо всех сил. Яблони цветут тоже изо всех сил. И это розовое биополе группы нас окружает, марево такое. Вдруг Боб решил сорвать

²⁹³ Gorlanova 20

одну цветущую ветку! И сразу со всех яблонь все цветы осыпались, как снег. И розовое биополе клочками-клочками... порвалось все... И ветер разгоняется, насколько хочет. Продувает... (Сон Н.Г., 1992 г.) / We're going along Karl Marx St. It's spring. The sun is shining with all its might. The apple trees are blossoming with all their strength. And the pink aura of the group gathered around was like a heat- mirage. Suddenly Bob decided to tear off one of the flowering branches! And all at once, every flower fell off of the apple tree, like snow. And the rose-coloured aura shattered...everything broke off...and the wind gathered speed, as much as it could. It blows on through...(N.G.'s dream, 1992)²⁹⁴

To begin, we examine several other aspects of the text, before relating them again to the concerns of authorship and assignation. In these two excerpts, Gorlanova introduces two more typically features of her prose. Firstly, her emphasis on time and seasonal change is introduced here in her specifically recording environmental cues and phrasing to imply times-passing. For one, she notes that Karl Marx St. is bathed in spring light, covered in flowering spring trees and heating up visibly; all this repetition merely sets the scene as spring. Verbs of motion and sudden action make this scene one rife with movement and change; as her anecdote moves through time and space, Gorlanova emphasizes these shifts. Outside of this, Gorlanova also establishes her interest in demarcating her contemporary time in Perm' from historical, canonical (and therefore central) time. Her non-acceptance of Pushkin's Tatiana as a referent opens this dismissive conversation with the canonical past.

This tendency is seen in more depth when Gorlanova employs a chain of related text-excerpts, seemingly linking portions of the text with a

²⁹⁴Gorlanova 21

chronology of seasons that seems symbolically important. References to the seasons and the passing of time marked seasonally wind throughout the full body of *Любовь в резонных перчатках/Love in Rubber Gloves*. The passing and passing recognition of the seasons seem to frame the story (though not in chronology). For example, page 21 begins the story with a reference to spring, as quoted above. Spring is also mentioned just a page later, when compared to emergent sexuality (22.5). Summer is related mainly as a concept to vacations, and love sprouting in a “holiday place” “outside” of the urban center of Perm’. This is shown, for example, on page 26, when “любовь Боба и Лариса в колхозе/Bob and Larissa’s love at the communal farm” is discussed (along with one of the three mentions of France/Paris in the work- the “city of love”²⁹⁵). Another incident which overtly takes place in summer – “В летнюю сессию/In summer term” – is peppered with endearing names like “Людмиленькая/Liudmilenskaia”, references “скинуться на букет пионов / to pitch[ing] in on a bouquet of peonies”, and ends with a kiss: “‘Нам не было такого знаменья’, - ответил Боб и поцеловал меня (Грезка, 1980 г.) / ‘And we had no such sign’, answered Bob, and kissed me”²⁹⁶. Winter is mentioned on page 43, before references to autumn, and is closely related to death, dashed hopes, and the end of love affairs. More explicitly than that general connotation, it is linked textually with the (perceived) death of a character in childbirth, and the (experiential) loss of

²⁹⁵ Gorlanova 26.3 (also on: 27.2; 47.3)

²⁹⁶ Gorlanova 47

her loved ones. One notes in it the circular thinking and the fluid interplay between inner and public thoughts and voices. The excerpt is as follows:

— Во время зимней сессии грянула новость: Галя Гринблат умирает после кесарева сечения! Царев схватил халат Четверпалны и нащупал в кармане неизменную двадцатипятирублевку. Неужели ее придется разменять на такси? Он решил побежать. Он бежал, бежал и как человек с невиданной свободой воли, борясь с кислородным голоданием и хватаясь краешком сознания за внешний мир, думал: свобода выбора у меня есть, я в любую минуту могу взять такси! Нетренированное сердце заболело. И все-таки возьму такси! Но осталось уже два дома! Ну и что: не могу больше бежать, беру машину, подумал он, и вбежал в вестибюль больницы.

К Гале, конечно, приходили то муж, то свекр со свекровью, наглаженные и помытые, когда она лежала в крови и гное. “Они думают, что радуют меня, когда приходят нашампуненные. Я не могу спустить их с лестницы, поэтому ухожу сама, отчаливаю от их чистоты.”

Когда Царев вбежал в палату, весь в поту и соплях, Галя поняла, что уйти-то она хотела — умереть. Испугалась. Это ведь не погулять выйти. Царев, угадывая невысказанный вопрос врача-женщины, закричал: “Да-да, я сын вашего любимого однокурсника! Пустите немедленно!” (Он был кудрявый блондин с крутым лбом — внешность в духе 50-х годов.) Царев рухнул на колени, потому что ноги от усталости подкосились. Он гордо подумал: и до любимой добежал, и деньги сохранил! Моя тайна — деньги. Многие думают, что деньги — это банально, но ведь это же власть! А власть — это такой Солярис...

Галя подумала: вот в мире нашелся один человек, который каким-то своим миллионным нервом почувствовал, каким ко мне нужно прийти. Она с той минуты начала выздоравливать. Потом, через несколько дней, Царев не удержался и похвастался, что бежал бегом. Галя поняла, что он сэкономил на такси, и опять захотела куда-то выйти, но уже можно было выйти в коридор. В конце концов она была тоже дочь своего времени и понимала желание Царева намотать еще одну спираль сложности (Н.Г., 1992 г.). /

During winter session, news broke out: Galia Grinblat was dying after a cesarean section. Tsarev grabbed Chetverpalna's dressing gown and felt about in his pocket for the ever-present twenty-five rubles. Did he really have to spend all this on a taxi? He decided to run. He ran, and ran - like a man with unprecedented strength of will, fighting oxygen deprivation and slipping from the edge of outside world with his consciousness -

and thought: ‘I have free will, I could take a taxi at any given minute!’ His untrained heart pounded sickly: ‘I will take a taxi! But it is only two buildings away!...Still, I can’t run any farther, I’ll take a car’, he thought as he ran into the lobby of the hospital. Her husband and father, together with mother-in-law, kept coming to see Galia; they were ironed and cleaned when she was lying in blood and pus. “They think that it gladden me, when they come, clean and shampooed. I can’t throw them down the stairs, and so I move away, escape from their cleanliness”...

When Tsarev tore into the ward, sweating and with snot everywhere, Galia understood what she’d wanted before – to die. She was frightened. It’s not as simple as leaving for a walk. Tsarev, guessing the unspoken question of the female doctor loudly said: “Yes, yes, I am the son of my lovely classmate! Just let me in, quickly!” (He was curly haired and blond, with a clear brow – a sort of 1950’s look). Tsarev crashed down against the doorframe, his legs weakened by exertion. He proudly thought: “I ran to my beloved; I saved all of my money! It’s my secret – the money. Many think that money is banal, but really it’s power! And power, that’s the real Solaris²⁹⁷”...

Galia thought: “In the whole world, you’d only find one man, who knew in his bones how to look like when coming to see me [i.e. disheveled]”. She began to feel better that very minute. Later, after a few days, Tsarev no longer held his ground and began to boast about how he had run, double-quick. Galia understood that he had economized on the taxi; she was already able to come out into the corridor. After all, she was a daughter of her times²⁹⁸, too, and understood Tsarev’s lust to add one more level of complexity to each thing (N.G., 1992).

Here, Gorlanova references two wildly different Russian cultural touchstones, the Andrei Tarkovskii (1932 – 1986) film *Солярис /Solaris* (1972), or its source material by Stanislaw Lem (1921 – 2006), and Mikhail Lermontov’s (1814 – 1841) novel *Герой нашего времени/A Hero of our Time* (1839). Both can be seen to be ironic, as the “power” of Solaris is really one of psychological destruction, and the “hero” of Lermontov’s

²⁹⁷ *Solaris* the Tarkovskii film – screenplay by the brothers Strugatskie, or the novel by Stanislaw Lem (1961).

²⁹⁸ This is a reference to Lermontov’s *A Hero of Our Time*.

story is really an anti-hero. This perhaps refers back to Tsarev, and his questionable achievement of thrift. Neither are attributed references. Speaking more of the assignation of these excerpts, we further examine these two citations. Following her autobiography, it is evident (if the writer is to be believed—or her lies to be accepted as consistent within the fiction) that Gorlanova does indeed have a son who might well have contributed to, or been recorded, for this story. However, this assumption becomes more suspect as the pattern of citation and authorship is examined. Other contributors are noted as named characters, for example “Kapa”, “Liudmilla”, “Roma Vedunov”, “L. Kostiukov, Muscovite” and “Igor’, director of the newspaper”. With varying degrees of formal specificity, they are named with titles, proper or legal names. Her character “Grezka” even tells of the genesis of his name, since the one used is not his legal one at all:

— Когда мы учились на третьем курсе, многие прозвища начинались со слова “сон”. Самый коммунистический сон Веры Павловны, четвертый, достался нашей комсоргше. Сокращенно: Четверпална. У нее была ведь та же энергетика, что у Веры Павловны, но Господь не допустил повторения! Огромная родинка на кончике носа ставила преграду между нею и мужским полом... А меня тогда называли “Греза”... (Грезка, 1992 г.) / When I was studying in my third year, many nicknames began with the word “dream”. The communist dream, Vera Pavlovna, fell in with our commsomol organizer. In abbreviated form, her name was Chetverpalna [from Chernyshevskii]. She had the same energy as Vera Pavlovna, though God doesn’t allow repetition. A huge birthmark on the tip of her nose stood as a barrier between her and the male gender...And I’ve been called “Greza” since then... (Grezka, 1992).²⁹⁹

²⁹⁹ Gorlanova 25.3

This not only makes reference to Chernyshevskii, it also illuminates the constant shifting of names (as “Греза” is still not “Грезка”) as well as the indeterminacy of assignation in this text. On top of this, “Греза” means a “reverie” or “dream”, adding another layer of inter-related symbolism to the story, commenting as it does on the dream sequences in Chernyshevskii’s 1863 novel *Что делать/What is to be Done?* In addition to this mystery, Gorlanova’s citations are attributed to foreigners or to anonymous speakers, though the date and the characters involved are all known as residents of Perm’. One such example is a long excerpt on pages 64-65 that tells of intimate legal and personal details of well-known characters (Bob, Evka, Igor’, Liudmila [called ‘Lud’ even], and so on), yet purports to have been spoken by a “посторонняя/stranger” in 1992. Gorlanova’s character, if we can assume that it is she, is graced with only initials when she “signs” her excerpts. In comparison, she may also be referred to in the diminutive, when she is a speech partner with another character; on page 23, for example, there is a character called “Нинулька/Ninulka” (a nickname diminutive of Nina). This follows several excerpts assigned to “N.G.”, one which is repeated in part throughout the text (22, 32, and in the ending cycle). Representing herself as a center which is genuine though constantly shifting, several portions which are attributed to her “book-end” the body-text while Gorlanova’s comments lead and influence the included quotations of other contributors. Acting as an editor, the literary Perm’ which Gorlanova presents exists in a space that is fragmentary but not incomplete.

This shifting signification allows for some confusion and ambiguity to set it, especially as her system of representative naming is further examined. Her autobiography does not name her. Her opening remarks and portions which close the chapter are not signed, nor are they likely to be authorially other. Many of the other citations thus recorded and given providence do so in “error”; Gorlanova attributes a version of a syllogism, used in Arthur Conan Doyle’s *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes* and also in Lewis Carroll’s *Symbolic Logic and the Game of Logic*³⁰⁰ to an “L. Carroll”, despite its slightly changed form and meaning:

-Ни одно ископаемое животное не может быть несчастно в любви.
 Устрица может быть несчастна в любви.
 Устрица — не ископаемое животное. (Л. Кэррол) /
 “No fossil can be crossed in love.
 An oyster may be crossed in love.
 Oysters are not fossils.” (L. Carroll)

This, a “caricature of reasoning of probable inference”³⁰¹, is a misattributed elementary logic puzzle. Other quotations, accounted to various people in Perm’, mention a “Nina”: is this the eponymous author? And, if she is quoting herself, why does Gorlanova not extend the same treatment to her words as to others, calling certain passages (if, as the fiction implies, these words are heard and recorded by the author) simply “разговор/conversation”? Why would one cultivate these shades of grey? In metafictional terms, this indeterminacy serves several purposes.

³⁰⁰ Carroll, Lewis, *Symbolic Logic and the Game of Logic*, (Dover Publications: NY, 1958) 108.

³⁰¹ Kasner, Edward et al, *Mathematics and the Imagination* (Dover Publications: NY, 1940) 224.

Waugh notes that metafictional writers all address themselves to the “paradox concerning the identity of fictional characters [and] the status of literary-fictional discourse (the problem of referentiality)”³⁰². Noted by John Barth, each fictional character both exists and at the same time does not; this concept is elaborated by Waugh who avers the work becomes “language which is the totality of existence; text which is reality”³⁰³. This is a similar paradox to the one previously mentioned, concerning the instability of the narrating “I”. This connection between the equivocal relationship of author and character, and the fictionality of literary work is highlighted in *Любовь в резиновых перчатках/Love in Rubber Gloves*. The changeability and uncertainty of Gorlanova’s writing and system of attribution highlights her fictional work as both self-aware and self-reflexive in a way which illuminates the structure of literature. With due regard to Bakhtin, metafiction exaggerates and exposes the instability of literature’s language, the fact that it is “constructed through a continuous assimilation of everyday historical forms of communication...the language of memoirs, journals, diaries, histories, conversational registers”. Competing, these voices “question and relativize each other to such an extent that ‘the language of fiction’ is always, often covertly, self-conscious”³⁰⁴ (what Bakhtin would refer to as dialogic potential). Gorlanova’s awareness of Bakhtin is not only logical—there is no chance that she graduated from a literary studies program in the USSR

³⁰² Waugh 90

³⁰³ Waugh 91

³⁰⁴ Waugh 5

without knowing his work—it is also textual. One of the most overt suggestions of Bakhtin’s work hints at his preoccupation with the “lower parts”³⁰⁵. On page 22 of *Любовь в резонных перчатках / Love in Rubber Gloves* we see a reference, ostensibly made by “Капа”, which references Bakhtin’s interplay between the social institution of “carnival” and the literary mode of the “grotesque”. As outlined in *Rabelais and His World*, the carnival encourages a reversal of the serious nature of authority and the loosening of hierarchies (even in dialogic speech), represented here by the character of the dean. The grotesque is related both to the grotesque body as a concept that enjoys historical immortality as well as an emphasis on measuring time via bodily functions, such as sex:

Но деревья за лето снова отращивают нижние ветки. И деканша позволяла время от времени побеждать своему низу. (Капа, 1968 г.) / But the trees grew low branches every summer. And the dean allowed her own lower parts to take over from time to time. (Капа, 1968)

The influence of Bakhtin’s dialogic language is echoed throughout Gorlanova’s story, in which the uniformity of speech and thought is disrupted via ambivalence, transgression of norms, and multiplicity. Writing on Bakhtin, Shanti Elliot noted that his theories of language spring from a “space of multiplicity” in which different voices and meanings compete against the official authoritative version of language³⁰⁶. The language used by the narrative “Nina”, who is a character in other

³⁰⁵ See: Bakhtin, Mikhail, *Rabelais and His World* (Indiana University Press: Bloomington, 1984).

³⁰⁶ Elliot, Shanti, “Carnival and Dialogue in Bakhtin’s Poetics of Folklore”, *Folklore Forum* 30.1/2 (1999) 129-139. 129.

character's anecdotes, the authorial "Nina Gorlanova", the dialogic "N.G." (the assumed voice of the author) and the author of the *Автобиография/Autobiography* all compete to be recognized as the "official" language, via the "official" creator, of the text. This competitive interaction promotes shifts in meaning and in interpretation, rebelling against realist and modernist traditions. Waugh notes that, especially in illinx or aleatory works, this becomes manifest in the problematization, rather than the destruction, of realism. Waugh calls such divergent forms and interference "combative play"³⁰⁷, and this is evident in Gorlanova's textual play. Her different Nina's/N.G.'s/Nina Gorlanova's might all represent different versions of the same character, whilst her editing and repetition of textual material hints at her amenability to overtly revising concepts during the writing process. Whether a comment on the paucity of fictional language in reflecting "reality", or combative play between facets of her personality, the employment of these voices helps to flesh out a borderless existence in literary Perm'. There are certain hints that this might be the case; 'N.G.'s commentary is often descriptive of characters private lives, slightly more confessional (ie, 65.4), and more reminiscent of a narrator or author (in terms of description offered, and manipulation of words and type, ie. N.G.'s almost-exclusive use of Capslock). As an example of 'N.G.'s seeming omniscience, we may use an example from page 62.6 (N.G. appears more and more as the text unfolds), in which N.G. narrates what happened one late night between Son-Oblomov and Bob.

³⁰⁷ Waugh 40-43

Quoting exact conversation, N.G. adds narrative flourishes, such as connecting and descriptive phrases that imply presence at the scene, or fictionality: “заплакал пьяными слезами Сон-Обломов... Показалась милицейская машина... [он] упал на занесенную скамейку и вдруг говорит.../Son-Oblomov wept drunken tears...a police car appeared...[he] fell directly onto the snow-covered bench and suddenly said...” As another example, the last three pages of the work are the words of “N.G.” and the first entry are also hers. This kind of framing seems to imply stewardship of the work, and her intermittent commentary on characters’ personal lives follows suit. Abasheva affirms:

В Любви в резиновых перчатках писательница решительно освобождает себя от обузы привычной повествовательности...Возможно, раньше такая стилистика и жила у Нины где-то золушкой-черновиком, а теперь настало время бала. Рассказ целиком состоит из кусочков, помеченных: поговорка 1968 г., пьяные разговоры 1992 г., из письма Капы 1975 г., из дневника Дунечка, среди них - и суждения Н.Г. Коллаж этот не рассыпается потому, что сцементирован внутренними сквозными мотивами, очень лиричными, и повторяющимися деталями... / In *Love in Rubber Gloves* the authoress emphatically emancipates herself from the habitual burdens of short story literary conventions... It is possible that Nina had these stylistics and lived somewhere where with Cinderella and now has come time for the ball. The story as a whole begins with a noted bite: a proverb from 1968, drunken conversation from 1992, from a letter of Капа’s in 1975, from Dunechka’s diary, between people – and the verdict of N.G. This collage doesn’t say why the illuminated, interior motives are cemented, very lyrically and with repeated details...³⁰⁸

Gorlanova’s main theorist (in Russia), Iuliia Iurevna Danilenko, has written about Gorlanova’s use of narrative voice and her use of language.

³⁰⁸³⁰⁸ Abasheva “Parki bab’e lepetan’e...” 9

In her dissertation, *Проза Нины Горлановой: поэтика, генезис, статус/Nina Gorlanova's Prose: poetics, genesis, status* (2006), she explores in some detail the narrative structure of Gorlanova's works, including *Вся Пермь/All of Perm'*. She focuses her entire thesis on the genesis and the poetics of Gorlanova's works, and proposes a theory which she names the "3 narrator theory". She notes that understanding these theories might, "могут оказаться полезными для переводчиков текстов Н. Горлановой на иностранные языки/be useful for translators of N. Gorlanova's texts into foreign languages"³⁰⁹, which subtly acknowledges the complexity of the issue.

Gorlanova's shifting voice and unclear role is an extension of the metafictional process seen in *The French Lieutenant's Woman*, in which John Fowles' (1926 – 2005) many framebreaks include a 20th C narrator suddenly appearing as a character in the *histoire* and the discourse, the effect of which Goffman discussed: "When a character comments on a whole episode of activity in frame terms, he acquires a peculiar reality through the same words by which he undermines the one that was just performed"³¹⁰. Fowles, in saying that "these characters I create never existed outside my own mind"(84-85), breaks the belief that he records what existed. He unknowingly points to what Gorlanova's framebreaks and naming oddities illuminate, that the divide between the characters points to the artificiality of traditional forms of writing, and the fictionality

³⁰⁹ Danilenko 5

³¹⁰ Goffman 400

of Perm' and herself when represented in literature. The use of names in traditional fictions disguises the fact that there "is no difference between the name and the thing names", while metafiction focuses specifically on this problem of referentiality. Often, in metafiction, "proper names are flaunted in their seeming arbitrariness or absurdity [as with Nina/N.G./Nina Gorlanova], omitted entirely [as in the assignation of разговор/conversation to quotations], or placed in an overtly metaphorical or adjectival relationship with the thing they name"³¹¹. Exposing the process of this writing, Gorlanova's metafiction is a testament to the irregular act of fiction-making.

Galloway suggests that in this mode of writing, the "authorial persona serves not to elucidate the text, but to construct a hybrid...memoir which supports his...experience; views which are in opposition to the pre-existing tradition."³¹² Making a hybrid of his "assumed true" autobiography /memoir and his novelistic/fictional/"untrue" elements, we see that this type work no longer fits a rigid description of either genre. Similarly, Gorlanova executes this weaving of fact and fiction in *Любовь в резиновых перчатках* /*Love in Rubber Gloves* and does so openly and with ludic consequences. What separates this from the normal amount of fiction/nonfiction overlap found in all autobiographies (which are part art, and part reportage, as scholars have noted) is the level, and the intent to

³¹¹ Waugh 93

³¹² Galloway 325

which these fictional elements encroach into the work, and the status afforded them. Gorlanova does not indulge the reader's desire for a "believable" memoir, for elucidation and clarity, and even purposefully makes the line between "true" (memoir) and "untrue" (novel) less clear. She also offers this falsely created fiction to affirm her self-perceived fictional place at the center or as the arbiter of a centrally important canon of literature in Perm'. By writing thusly and offering her text she supports her experiences as a Siberian woman writer, holding "views which are in opposition to the pre-existing tradition"³¹³. Gorlanova, by making herself the subject of a modified and literary autobiography, moves away from the typical constraints of women's writing in the Russian tradition. Writing her own biography and dictating the extent to which she will make public her domestic truths and lived reality, as opposed to merely the "great" things accomplished in a life, is radical within the tradition. Beyond this, she moves from an overarching interest in the center, to highlight life on the periphery and in the provinces. To complete the Russian trinity, Gorlanova also revolts against the canonization of the male literary tradition and traditional modes of writing, alternating quotations from and allusions to the "greats" of the canon with "meaningless" kitchen talk, quotations from the anonymous and the unknown, and the fictional citations, falsely attributed.

Several examples of citations evoking such *быт*/everyday life will now be presented. The first is linked to our previous discussion of hospital

³¹³ Galloway 325

and prison references. Obvious are most of the elements concerning this interest in (maternal or female) *быт*/everyday life and women's writing – an interest in time outside of the scheduled, a lack of individualism and autonomy, an emphasis on the bodily and abject, and repetition – as well as the monotony of daily life. These themes are typical of Gorlanova, in that they do not convey anything that could advance the plot, any major or key action, or even a real sense of the importance of the scene. The fact that generic-seeming citations of *быт*/everyday life are found from different years and decades underscore the sameness and inescapability of *быт*/everyday life's presence in Russian women's lives. It is, as is the whole of *Любовь в резонных перчатках /Love in Rubber Gloves*, on one hand a portrait of a town painted impressionistically (not coincidentally, perhaps, Gorlanova is an avid impressionist portraitist, often painting self-portraits³¹⁴). An example follows, one that is representative of the sort of one-off, snippet of daily life that comes to create a loose vision of life in the city. It is not important to the “plot” per se, but adds an experience into the shared coffers of literary Perm':

— Казалось, весь мир интересуется только одно: сколько раз в день дитя испражняется, а также сам цвет и консистенция. Еще в соседней палате дитя кричало: “Хочется. Хочется!” Там кто-то всегда на голодной диете. Опять мой Димочка выпустил из заднего прохода струю крови. Врач сказал: “Крови я не боюсь, я воды боюсь!” И осекся, потому что у нас вода с кровью...

Дима уже с кровати не падает: сил нет шевелиться. А сальмонелл этих тысячи, и от каждой свой антибиотик. Но у нас ничто не высеивается — колют от противного. Если три дня

³¹⁴ This is highly noticeable on her website.

колют одно — нет изменений, начинают другое, третье, девятое... Тут не до Боба!

— Подержите свое сокровище! — попросила меня медсестра и принесла капельницу. Но в вену так и не попала, вен уже не видно.

Когда мое сокровище посинело от крика, я оттолкнула капельницу и закричала: “Хочется! Хочется! Хочется!..” (Лариска, 1968 г.) /

It seemed as if the whole world was interested in only one thing: how many times a day a child defecated, and what color and consistency it was. In neighbouring bathroom stall a kid was crying: “I wanna! I wanna!” There was always someone there on a starvation diet. My Dimochka was bleeding from the anus again. The doctor just said: “I’m not afraid of blood, it’s water I fear!” He stopped short, I guess because we have water in our blood...

Dima didn't fall out of bed: he had no strength to move. There were thousands of salmonellae and for each, an antibiotic. But the results of our tests do not show anything, [though] [the doctor prescribed many] injections [anyway]. Every three days, an injection – no change, they'd begin another, a third, a ninth...[In this situation, there is no time and strength to think about Bob]! – Hold onto your precious baby! – The nurse came and brought a dropper. But she couldn't hit the vein, the vein had become invisible. By the time my precious had turned blue from shouting, I pushed the dropper away and cried: “I want it! I want! I want!” (Lariska, 1968). ³¹⁵

Certain other examples are representative of other mundane elements of *быт*/everyday life, like money, as we see discussions of tasks such as buying gifts and soliciting donations (47.2). Or, especially important given its negative connotations with women, gossip: we see many stand-alone statements that seem like run of the mill gossip: — Какое лицо у Евки? Красота стандартных форм, словно рожденная рядом пластических операций — по вкусу хирурга... (Сон-Обломов) / What kind of face does Evka have? A standard sort of beauty, as if she were born with plastic

³¹⁵ Gorlanova 33.1

surgery – a surgeon’s taste”³¹⁶, apropos of nothing contextually; “Какие тонкие люди живут в Перми! (Л. Костюков, москвич)/ “What thin people live in Perm’! (L. Kostuikov, Muscovite) 20.5 (and also again on 39.1, with the descriptor “москвич/Muscovite” missing); “— Не верится, что Капа любила Боба! С поразительной энергией она износила двух мужей, а сейчас третьего донашивает... (Царев, 1992 г.) / I don’t believe that Капа loved Bob! She wore out two husbands with her staggering energy, and now a third’s worn right out... (Tsarev, 1992)”³¹⁷ are representative.

Some of the entries discussed have come from un-overheard dialogue, for example the diaries of Perm’s citizens. Certain individuals are commonly cited and their thematic purpose becomes known through this repetition. This uncovers a level of constructedness that underlies the work, and the decisive building of thematic structure found in *Любовь в резиновых перчатках / Love in Rubber Gloves*. The flurry of citation and false attribution of quotations or Soviet readymades further serves to flatten the hierarchies of pop and canonical art and confuse attribution. As Waugh noted, in metafiction “the fictional content of the story is continually reflected by its formal existence as text, and the existence of that text within a world viewed in terms of ‘textuality’”³¹⁸. Tiny changes and text-based play demands that attention be paid to the process of writing, or at the least, to the sometimes contradictory product that it

³¹⁶ Gorlanova 46.2

³¹⁷ Gorlanova 50.3

³¹⁸ Waugh 15

begets. More than this, Gorlanova's textual play is made overt, via naming and obvious editing and repetition, as the fictionality of her 'literary Perm' –the image of Perm' and its inhabitants which she creates—is emphasized. For example, Gorlanova adds chains of text that are connected via repeated words or concept. One such chain is visible on page 36-37. This chain is linked subtly, through the repetition of single words, or related sounds and conjugations. The following excerpts follow each other directly, and the repeated terms will be rendered in bold:

— Рассольчику бы сейчас!.. Хорошо тебе, Игорь, ты не пьешь! Зачем я напился? И Евка, наверное, меня бросила! Кто ее провожал — Боб? **А что говорил?** “Вечно эти гении привести женщину **приведут**, а увести...” Ну, это с его стороны... (Царев, 1968 г.) / If only I had rassolnik [a soup] right now!...It's all well for you, Igor', you don't drink! Why did I drink? Evka probably deserted me. Who went with her, Bob? And what did he say? These geniuses always bring women upstairs, then wait for someone else to take them home...” Listen, this is totally rude of him... (Tsarev, 1968).

— **За нами следят.** Да. Это точно... Я поймал жест убирания корочки в карман. Мне было нужно к тете ехать, в Голованово, на электричке. Купил билет в кассе, а уже народу мало. Смотрю: человек в штатском в той же кассе уже корочки убирает. Видимо, спросил, куда **я взял** билет... (Игорь, 1968г.) / They are watching us. Yes. It's certain...I caught the movement of sliding his ID back into his pocket. I had to go to my aunt, in Golonovo, on the train. I bought a ticket at the counter, and there weren't many people around. I saw it: a man in a suit take back his ID. He had probably asked where I was headed...(Igor', 1968).

— Борис Борисыч **взял меня** под руку и повел провожать. Я думала: будет соблазнять, а **он говорит:** за вашими мальчиками начинается слежка, вы должны их предупредить. Это КГБ что-то узнало. (Нинулька) / Boris Borisovich took me by the arm and saw me home. I thought: this is to tempt me, but he said: behind us, some of your [class'] young men have begun being shadowed, we have to prevent this. The KGB has found something out (Ninulka).

— Капа **взяла меня** к себе ночевать. “А то мать опять будет удостоверяться в моей невинности!” Так Капа называла проверки матери: курила — не курила. Но дома все уже, видимо, спали. **Капа говорила** о Бобе, но почему-то всякую ерунду. “Ты замечала, какой у него гуманный нос?” и прочее. **А я думала: о чем он сейчас с Евкой говорит? Ну о чем с ней можно говорить!..** (Четверпална, 1968 г.) / Капа took me to spend the night at her house. “Otherwise my mother will check my ‘innocence’ again!” Капа called her mother’s check-ups this, to see whether she smoked or not. Everyone was already at home and, it seemed, asleep. Капа talked about Bob, but for some reason it was mainly nonsense: “Have you noticed that he has the most *humane* nose?” and so forth. And I thought: what is he saying to Evka right now? What can people talk to her about!?!... (Chetverpalna, 1968).

This chain is connected overtly by chronology or date (this is uncommon in the text – all of these are either undated or from 1968) and subtly by the inclusion of a chain of associated words – “take” and “speak”. Each quotation has these verbs represented, and they do not appear in the surrounding text; in the last two examples they are even invoked in the same order. This makes the repetition both noticeable, and, by form, restrained. Several other examples are slightly shorter, but repeat more obvious chains of recurring text. A short example of this, which is related to space and time both, appears on page 49. In part, it also shows Gorlanova’s technique of repeating phrases or concepts, subtly changed or edited. This marks the repetition of the Golonovo theme, as well as the introduction of themes of illness, maternity, love, and marriage. The extract is as follows:

— Игорь женился летом, тихо, перед пятым курсом. Никто ничего не знал. Даже я. В Голованово! На обиженной кем-то соседке, беременной притом. Мы встретились в трамвае за день до сентября. Игорь с кольцом. Пьяный к мальчику приставал:

как зовут? Мама сразу: познакомиться захотел — **не время и не место!** Я Игорю: слышал — **не время и не место!** А он мне показывает — у пьяного раздавили в толкучке пакет с молоком, белое капает мальчишке на ботинок, и вот так, с пьяной загибулистостью, тот хочет сказать об этом... Значит, Игорь полагал: **и время, и место.** (Царев, 1980 г.) / Igor' married in the summer, quietly, before his fifth year. No one knew anything. Even me. [He married] in Golonovo! [He married] a neighbor who had been jilted by another and was expecting a child. We met at the streetcar one day in September. Igor was wearing a ring. A drunk stuck by his side—what was his name?—harassing a boy. His mama right ther, and he wanted to pick up the boy— but it's the wrong time and place! I told Igor: haven't you heard? – it's not the right time or place! And he showed me – the drunk crushed a package of milk in the bustle of the crowd, whiteness dripped onto the boy's shoes, and this is how a drunk wants to tell about it, with a drunken suddenness ... Suddenly, Igor' believed it was the right time and the right place. (Tsarev, 1980)³¹⁹.

-Хорошее название для моей жизни: “**Не время и не место**”... (Грезка, 1992 г.) / It is a good name for my life: ‘the wrong time and the wrong place’” ... (Grezka, 1992).

The narrator is using this seemingly-random phrase from a random conversation to convey her understanding of Igor's marriage. The other implicaiton is that the “randomly chosen” phrase becomes increasingly meaningful as the drunk's behaviour comes to more closely resemble sexual harassment. This example is also an allusion to the novel, finished in 1981 after over a decade of work by Iurii Trifonov (1925 – 1981) and published only posthumously, *Время и место/Time and Place*. By 1992, when Grezka mentions it, the novel was already published and very famous (arguably the best-known work by Trifonov, and one that suffered heavy censorship). This work, like Gorlanova's, spans decades, and was criticized for its repetitions, described by the novelist as “роман

³¹⁹ This phrase is literally in Russian: “Not the time and not the place/space”.

самосознания/novel of self-consciousness/identity”³²⁰. Gorlanova here is not strictly attempting to pass off another work of literature as reliable *быт*/everyday life, however, she is destabilizing her work by including a well-known citation (and a date that hints at its discovery), multiplying the text’s polyphony during a very run-of-the-mill set of quotations, as well as adding a layer of meaning that might spur the careful reader to see a drive similar to Trifonov’s desire to discover identity and self-consciousness in Gorlanova’s text.

Several longer examples involve plays on words, as well as the recurrence of phrases or ideas. For example, right below a reference to Bakhtin’s “lower parts”, there is a reference to a man’s “lower” sociological/intellectual background that mimics the Bakhtin comment. Both are within a set of examples that link concepts of “eroticism”, orgasms and “aesthetics” with related names and words. This will also foreshadow a move from the realm of ideology to one of aesthetics in order to emphasis a subtext that explores what it meant to be “oneself” during that era. The following six elements appear on the verso-pages 22-23, after references to love and “Dona Anna” (a female “Don Juan”):

— **Наша деканша**, жена профессора-скоттоведа (впоследствии — скотоведа), ради коммунистической идеологии все... обрезала всякие проявления человечности у себя. **Кроме — эротической сферы**. Так весной в городе обрезают ветки деревьев, чтобы не мешали электрическим проводам. (Игорь, 1968 г.) / Our dean, the wife of a professor of the Scots (and later, a stock-keeper), cut short all of her human development for the sake of her Communist ideology. Except for

³²⁰ Трифонова, О.Р. and Шкловский, Е.А. “Трифонов Юрий Валентинович - ключевая фигура литературного процесса 1960-х — 1970-х” . *Biografii*. (N.Pag.)

the erotic spheres. It's similar to spring in the city, when [authorities] cut off tree branches in order for them to miss the electric wires. (Igor', 1968).

— Но деревья за лето **снова отращивают нижние ветки. И деканша позволяла время от времени побеждать своему низу.** (Капа, 1968 г.) / But the trees grew low branches every summer. And the dean allowed her own lower parts to take over from time to time (Капа, 1968).

— Собрание по культуре личности не худший повод для **оргазма! Она говорила мне: ей достаточно дотронуться рукой... Правда, обычно она сразу падала на пол и закрывала глаза,** а тут — стояла и стояла в дверях аудитории... (Борис Борисович - Никульке, 1968 г.) / A meeting about the cult of personality is not the worst place for an orgasm! She told me it was enough for her to touch it by hand... True, she often fell right to the floor and closed her eyes - but now she stood in the door of the auditorium... (Boris Borisovich, 1968).

- **В этом есть своя эстетика!** (Л. Костюков) / In this, there are some aesthetics! (L. Kostiukov).

[one omitted]

— По-моему, все было проще. В том году дочь деканши подлежала распределению. Пятый курс, что вы хотите! Поэтому мама была не прочь находиться со всем факультетом в отличных отношениях!.. Вот и совала свой пульс доверительно. **Оргазмы, возможно, ранее и были, но в то время уже климакс сидел в кустах: пиф-паф!..** (Римма Викторовна, 1985 г.) / In my opinion, everything was simpler. This year, the dean's daughter was to graduate [from the university]. Her fifth year, but what do you want from her? In situations like this, her mother did not mind having good relationships with the entire department!.. So, she thrust herself out, trustingly. Perhaps, she had had orgasms here and there, sure, but by this time [her] menopause was around the corner, ready to pounce!.. (Rimma Viktorovna, 1985).

— Нет, ребята, **слово “эротика”** нам было незнакомо на третьем курсе! Это же 68-й год, наши танки *уже в Чехословакии!* **Какая тут эротика?.. А вино “Эрети” мы назвали “Эроти” уже в 80-м году,** когда наши танки вошли *уже в Афган!* (Царев, 1985 г.) / No guys, we had never heard the word “erotica” as juniors! This was in '68, when our tanks were already in Czechoslovakia! What erotica is there in this?.. Then

again, we were calling the [Georgian] wine “Ereti”, “Eroti” by ’80, when our tanks were rolling into Afghanistan!” (Tsarev, 1985). ³²¹

The phrase “И этом есть своя эстетика! (Л. Костюков) / In this there are some aesthetics! (L. Kostiukov)”, is again repeated on page 40, amid conversation about tumours, the KGB, mysticism and idealism. On page 51, Solzhenitsyn and his legacy in Siberia is linked with these passages:

— А помните, как она **читала лекции против Солженицына?** По всему городу. Лжец он, негодяй, пишет: в лагере голодали, а у Ивана Денисовича кусок хлеба зашит в матрасе! Значит — не голод!.. Словно с жиру зашивают хлеб...
 — Господа! Лекции эти читала наша деканша, а не Маросейкина. И читала, **доходя до оргазма**, но все равно общее поле аудитории не сотворялось... (Разговор, 1980 г.) / You remember, how she had read lectures against Solzhenitsyn? All around the city. He is a liar, rascal, she wrote: “they starved in the camps, and Ivan Denisovich sewed up bread in a mattress! Understand this – *that* is not hunger!..” As if people sew up [hide] bread due to *over*-eating...
 -Ladies and gentlemen! Our dean read these lectures, and not Maroseikina. She read, moving closer to orgasm, but it was the same old to the rest of the auditorium (Conversation, 1980). ³²²

Erotics and aesthetics are blended with references to women, violence and threats from the KGB; the KGB/FSB is a theme which runs through various dated (1968-1991) and undated examples (38.2) on pages 30 through 65³²³. These threats thread through the text, and highlight concerns about Siberian and Soviet autonomy, the anxiety of Siberian identity and what Siberia as a destination and psychic concept can represent – that is, deprivation and camp-incarceration. This is expanded

³²¹ Bold indicating repeated words/themes; italics indicating military and international references.

³²² Gorlanova 51.4

³²³ Gorlanova: 8, 40, 44, 49, 60, 64, 65

into a discussion and chains of text regarding the Communist Party and Stalin. One of the first citations discussed, the last of the four below, also relates to this concept and is repeated through the text. The entire page 20 is devoted to this topic and chain of reasoning that references both domestic production (jam) and political dissidence (against militarism in Czechoslovakia):

“68-й год. **Наши танки уже в Чехословакии!**” — любимая присказка Царева. “Так, это уже 68-й год, Гринблат меня бросила — я жухну, чахну, вяну, хлорофилл иссякает (все это произносится бурно!), а **наши танки уже в Чехословакии.**” (Из дневника Дунечки). [undated] / 1968. Our tanks were already in Czechoslovakia! - this was Tsarev’s favorite phrase. “Listen, this is already 1968, and Grinblat has left me – I dry up, wither, fade; the chlorophyll runs low (all of this is articulated roughly!) and our tanks are already in Czechoslovakia! (From Duncheka’s diary).

— Слыхали? Крючок передачи получает! Другие ГКЧПисты — тоже! А мы, **когда находились под следствием в 69-м, твердо** знали: пока не закончится — никаких передач!.. (Рома Ведунов, 1991 г.) / Did you hear me? “Hook” has received parcels in prison! [prison wasn’t that bad for him] The other State Commission of Crisis-types, too! And we, when we were under investigation in 1969, and we all firmly knew - until the end of the investigation, nothing was going to be given to us! [nothing would be easy]. (Roma Vedunov, 1991³²⁴).

— В КГБ никак не могли вычислить состав клея, на котором держались **листовки про события в Чехословакии. А это было малиновое варенье** — Игорь от тети привез, из Голованова... (Капа, 1969 г.) / In the KGB, no one could guess the ingredients of the glue that we used to post the [secret protest] leaflets about events in Czechoslovakia. It was raspberry jam – Igor’ and his aunt imported it, from Golonovo...(Капа, 1969).

— Сколько лет? Десять? Я еще вздрагивала, когда в письмах видела фразу: “**Наварили малинового варенья**”. **Для всех малиновое варенье — цвет берет пушкинской Татьяны, а для меня — клей для листовок...** (Н.Г., 1992 г.)

³²⁴ This is found in an alternate form on 57, as well.

/ How many years have passed? Ten? I shudder, still, when I see that phrase in print: “Cooked a lot of raspberry jam”. For everybody else, raspberry jam seems the color of Pushkin’s Tatiana’s beret, but for me, it’s the of glue for leaflets....(N.G., 1992).

This conveys concern over the glue that held up leaflets which were secretly posted in order to communicate the activities and status of Czechoslovakia in the late 1960’s. As noted, the jam motif is also repeated, as Gorlanova colludes active political dissidence with a symbol of traditional feminine domesticity (preserves); jam takes on a secondary coded meaning of “subversion”. This is also an obviously “folksy” reference, as there are provincial and quaint overtones to canning-references. This not only sets up a contrast regarding time and referents, but in turn emphasizes the gap between the center (KGB) and the peripheral (physical and political) concerns. The theme of (predominantly) Tsarev’s obsession with tanks and Soviet militarism, opportunism and proxy wars continues with the subtle extension of Czechoslovakia into Afghanistan; for example, we see the citation on page 23, already mentioned once concerning “erotics”:

“Нет, ребята, слово “эротика” нам было незнакомо на третьем курсе! Это же 68-й год, **наши танки уже в Чехословакии!** Какая тут эротика?.. А вино “Эрети” мы назвали “Эроти” уже в 80-м году, когда **наши танки вошли уже в Афган!**” / No guys, we had never heard the word “erotica” as juniors! This was in ’68, when our tanks were already in Czechoslovakia! What erotica is there in this?.. Then again, we were calling the [Georgian] wine “Ereti”, “Eroti” by ’80, when our tanks were rolling into Afghanistan!”

On page 44, the last comment overtly concerning Czechoslovakia (though the overarching themes addressed by it continue in the text) is given by

another character, Igor'. A sense of political malaise and cynicism that has encroached with age is the major implication of this quotation:

“Один из следователей казался мне умным, и я пытался его в нашу веру обратить — убеждал, что вводить **танки в Чехословакию** не нужно было... Юношеский романтизм...” (Игорь, 1980 г.) / One of the investigators seemed intelligent to me, and I tried to convert him to our faith – tried to convince him that bringing tanks into Czechoslovakia didn't have to be... Youthful romanticism...”³²⁵

As noted, not every citation is dated. This may be so that the specific times and dates of dated entries are highlighted, leading us to assume that most dates mentioned are somehow significant. A feeling of truthfulness is also upheld via this textual specificity. Certain dates are emphasized; regarding this reference, 1968 is oft-repeated. Indeed, the era is evoked in this same quotation in many ways, for example, a reference to Leonid Brezhnev (leader from 1964-1982) coexists here with the familiar Czechoslovakia reference:

“Литературка” как юмор подавала фразу “Шли годы. Смеркалось”. А уже наступала **брежневская зима** с ее идеологическими морозами. ОНИ УЖЕ ЗНАЛИ, КАКИМИ САМИМИ СОБОЙ НУЖНО БЫТЬ! А те, кто не знал, то и дело попадали под обстрел. Режим опять искал врагов и врагов! А тут на защите дипломов Римма Викторовна спросила у студентки: “Вот вы долго занимались заговорами, написали работу. А с чем могли бы вы сравнить их в современной жизни?” Студентка руками развела, а Римма: “**С лозунгами**”. “Народ и партия — едины!” Это же типичное заклинание, заговор”. Все только восхитились Римминой мудростью. Это было весной 68-го. Ну а потом **танки в Чехословакию**, и деканша стала Римму гноить. С каждым днем смеркалось все сильнее... Н.Г., 1992 г.) / In humour, “Literaturnaia Gazeta” coined the phrase: “Years pass. It's getting dark.” But the time had already come for the Brezhnev-winter and her ideological frost.

³²⁵ Gorlanova 44. Emphasis added.

THEY ALREADY KNEW, WHICH VERSION OF THEMSELVES THEY SHOULD BE. And they, those who didn't know, they found themselves under fire. The regime found time and again, enemies upon enemies! During a defense of a female student's thesis, Rimma Viktorovna asked her: "For a long time, you've studied incantations, you've written your work. What can you compare them with, in modern life?" The student only made a helpless gesture, and Rimma continued: "With slogans. 'The Country and the Party are one and the same!' This is typical conjuring, incantation." Everyone delighted in Rimma's wisdom. This was in the spring of '68. And soon after, our tanks were in Czechoslovakia, and the dean stood Rimma out to rot. With every day the darkness was growing stronger..."³²⁶

The inclusion of references to Brezhnev's period of stagnation, long thought to be a period of backwardness and creative inactivity, mirrors the mundane nature of the Czech-tank references by this point in the story. This encourages the feeling that these topics and themes are carelessly broached in common casual conversation, and begs to have them interpreted as typical and almost habitual. Citations which refer to Czechoslovakia employ some of these references: references to the "брежневская зима/Brezhnev's winter" and concomitantly, "ее идеологическими морозами/her ideological frost" hint at the entrenched nature of the themes discussed – slogans everyone knows and no one can shake ("Народ и партия—едины! / The country and party are one!") underscore this notion; tanks in a soft-war with no end in sight (Czechoslovakia); the seemingly endless requirement of submission, punishment and intra-national enemies bred by the Soviet regime ("Режим опять искал врагов и врагов! / The regime is finding enemies

³²⁶ Gorlanova 32. Emphasis added.

again!”). The inclusion of a communist slogan, which have long typified a sort of artistically-bankrupt or monotonously mass-media orientation, serves to underscore this feeling and encourage this quotation to be understood as a piece of realia. Slogans are commonly utilized in a text, in their historical form or modified, in postmodern pastiche and in avant-garde writing; with freedom to manipulate the signs of high modernism and Soviet kitsch, these have become used as language ready-mades³²⁷. Especially with the emergence from the monolithic regime of Socialism, writers of the stagnation lost the last solid metanarrative to which they referred with confidence, the Soviet regime. In its stead, a mocking, cynical, or sarcastic frame of reference emerged, as citations and quotations of Soviet sources became ludic.

While the Czechoslovakia examples unite commentary that spans several decades (from “undated”, to 1968, all the way to 1992), some repetitions are used to link commentary together from the same year (a relative rarity in *Любовь в резонных перчатках/Love in Rubber Gloves*). Take the following example from page 31:

— **По коридору больницы ползли полчища пиявок.** Там дневной свет еще — **пиявки отливают зеленым...** Ползут, как слепые в пространстве, словно спрашивая всем своим видом: зачем мы здесь оказались? Куда дальше двинуть?.. И тут встречаю Процкого. Он мне сказал: студенты-медики закончили опыты и слили в унитаз **две огромных бутылки пиявок...** а они вот ползают **теперь по больнице...** (Боб - Сон-Обломову, 1968 г.) / A swarm of leeches was crawling in the corridor of the hospital. There was some daylight still, the leeches

³²⁷ Janecek Gerald, “The New Russian Avant-Gardes: Postmodernist Poetry and Multimedia in the Late Soviet and Early Post-Soviet Periods” (*University of Manitoba Germanic and Slavic Dept*, 2004) 1-2.

seemed a shade of green...They were crawling, like the blind through space, as if to ask: “how did we turn up here? Where shall we move?..” And I asked this of Protzkii. He told me that the students of medicine finish their experiments, and drain giant bottles of leeches down the toilet...and here they are now, at the hospital... (Bob—Son-Oblomov, 1968).

— Боб закричал: **“Ты присосалась ко мне, как пиявка! Тебя и в унитаза не утопить, как этих кровососов”**. Я вижу: с одной стороны, поносящий сын, с другой — словесно поносящий Боб... И тут я поняла: они послали его, чтоб мне показать, какой он негодяй... Чтоб меня окончательно столкнуть в яму. Я сказала себе: выстою. **Поцеловала Боба в щеку и ушла в палату.** (Лариска, 1968 г.) / Bob shouted: “You are stuck onto me like a leech! You can’t even be drowned in a toilet, like those little bloodsuckers!” I could see it: on one hand, the son with diarrhea, and on the other, Bob’s verbal diarrhea...And right there I understood that they brought him here to show me what a scoundrel he was...They had finally pushed me over the edge. I said to myself: I will survive. I kissed Bob on the cheek and walked to the ward. (Lariska, 1968).

By using an unusual word, *пиявка* /leech, Gorlanova links two textual occurrences thematically and textually (note the theme of hospitals being extended). These two comments from 1968 are bookended by citations from 1992; their lexical similarities work to underscore their connectedness. Gorlanova will also repeat one phrase or sets of words within the bulk of one character’s speech. For example, in the last portion of the book in which the narrator apparently is the author, a peculiar vocative phrase is repeated: “Дети! Философы! Помогите мне! / Children! Philosophers! Help me!”. This is repeated thrice within the 3 page bulk of her narration, in this exact form (66, 67, 69), and twice in conjunction with the secondary phrase “спазм мирового общения”. Once, on page 66: Дети! Философы! Помогите мне! Я и говорю:

спазм мирового общения. / Children! Philosophers! Help me! And I said: a spasm of world communication”; it appears once more on page 67: **“Опять спазм мирового общения?”** / Again, another spasm of world communication?”

Sometimes, the repetitions serve to link two disparate characters.

In this example on page 46, “N.G.” is linked with “Grezka” over the topic of baldness:

— Помню: **светлые пенистые волны волос — ангельский вид...** ее потом в обком быстро взяли. (Н.Г.) / I remember the light bouncy waves of hair – an angelic face...they quickly brought her onto the Regional Committee. (N.G.)

— Почему все люди, у **которых мало волос на голове, воспринимаются как ангелы,** божьи одуванчики такие? Ведь Маросейкина руку приложила... Как подумаю, что они с Риммой сделали, так начинается шевеление волос на голове! Лучше б, конечно, шевеленье мозгов начиналось... (Грезка, 1992 г.) / Why are all men, the ones with the least hair on their heads, thought to be angelic, divine little old men? Maroseikina put out her hand...When I think about it, what they did with Rimma, the hair hair stands up on my head! It would be better, of course, if my brain would start working...(Grezka, 1992).

The editing at play in these examples is also interesting. Gorlanova notes that Grezka’s commentary occurred in 1992, but that “N.G”’s statement was made at an unknown time/from an unknown source. This is highly unlikely and hints at purposeful editing for obfuscation, given the muddy relationship between the author and “N.G” the contributor, as well as the dated citation that follows and resembles it, almost verbatim. Despite repetition, the body-text and quotations seem committed to atemporality and avoiding a *clear* chronology.

Another example of this, which also repeats the interest in prisons and introduces a longer textual chain that will be covered shortly, appears on pages 63/64. It also concerns the gulag system and Siberia's strange status in the early 1990's:

— Ваши мальчики не готовы были платить **во время процесса, а теперь, в 1992 году**, они, видите ли, готовы получить денежки, награду! Слышали? **Туристический маршрут хотят сделать по зоне N 53!** Где я страдал и горлом кровь хлебал, то есть она шла, а я ее обратно глотал, чтоб сильно не пачкать все... Ты что — газет не читаешь? Уже повсюду в Москве об этом пишут. Нью-Васюки, понимаешь? Валюту они грести будут лопатой... Да-да, Царев и Боб... (Рома Ведунов, 1992 г.) / Your young men weren't ready to pay at the time of the trial, but in 1992 they wanted to. Did you hear? They want to let *tourist* cabs go to zone 53! Where I suffered and swallowed my blood...well, it was running and I was swallowing it so that I didn't dirty everything... Don't you read the papers? They write all about it in Moscow. New-Vasiuki, you understand? Money will be heaped up in spades...Yeah, yeah, Tsarev and Bob...(Roman Vedunov, 1992).

— Мы страдаем беспамятством... (у Царева даже появились на лице мышцы, которые могут изображать искренность!) **Эту зону** нужно сохранить для потомства, а на какие деньги ее сохранить? **Вот на деньги от туризма...** (Царев, 1992 г.) / We suffer from forgetfulness...(On Tsarev's face muscles appeared that show his sincerity!) This zone must be preserved for posterity, but do we have money to conserve it? There's the money from tourism...(Tsarev, 1992).

Gorlanova's text shows metafictional elements in terms of representations of time. As her experiments with repetition and shifting dates of citation show, "chronological time [often] dissolves into textual space"³²⁸ within metafictional texts, as well as the concerns of women's writing with time. Gorlanova's citations run the gamut; on one page (20/21) segments are

³²⁸ Waugh 145

quoted from three undated excerpts, 1968, 1969, 1991, and three from 1992. This is a typical example. Interest in making clear the fictionality and conventions of the characters and narrator(s) is extended to the overarching structure of literary Perm'. Waugh notes that metafictional writers show "their own methods of construction"³²⁹.

One of the longest and most repeated examples of this follows; it is a text chain that weaves throughout the text, and comments on a prison and trial process(s), as well as a defense (of a thesis most likely). This trial motif relates to the internal security agencies of the USSR (and early post-Soviet times), the legacy of Siberia imprisonment, and the characters Bob, Roma and Tsarev, particularly. The academic defense references deal with Igor' and Rimma, and are rendered in the same very serious manner, with long days of "trials" for the students. This chain spans the bulk of the work, first appearing on page 28 and ending on page 64. The first reference occurs 9 pages into *Любовь в резонных перчатках/Love in Rubber Gloves*:

— Из всех ваших мальчиков на процессе вел себя достойно только один Боб. На вопросы следователей он отвечал односложно. "Вы состояли в тайном обществе знатоков истории?" "Нет". "Но вы бывали в подвале детского сада?" "Да". "Что же вы там делали?" "Пили". "А о чем говорили?" "О бабах..." (Рома Ведунов, 1992 г.) / Of our friends, only Bob was dignified in court. He answered monosyllabically the detective's questions. "Did you belong to the secret group of history experts?" "No." "But you did go to the basement of the kindergarten?" "Yes." "What did you do there?" "Drank". "And what did you talk about?" "Chicks." (Roma Vedunov, 1992).³³⁰

³²⁹ Waugh 10

³³⁰ Gorlanova 28.3

Some references are certainly not as lighthearted. From Dunechka's diary we read:

“Сегодня мне Царев сказал, что он говорил на допросах то, что было, и то, чего не было! Потому что ему грозили исключением из универа. И он даже пустил слезу при мне, но ничего человеческого в лице не появилось — бывает же сыр со слезой, ну, влага, и все. Якобы Орлов, руководитель тайного общества, сказал Царю: “Ну, сука, нас посадят, но, когда мы выйдем, тебе не жить!” Царев, Царев! Зачем ты говорил то, чего не было? Как я его презираю! Еще б секунда, и я б ему все высказала...” (Из дневника Дунечки. 1968 г.) /

“Today Tsarev told me that he talked about what had happened and what had not happened! Because he was threatened with expulsion from university. He only shed one tear in front of me, but nothing human showed on his face – it was like moist cheese, just moisture and that's it. Supposedly Orlov, the leader of the clandestine organization, said to Tsarev: ‘Hey, bitch, we might go to jail but once we're out, you're a dead man!’ Tsarev, Tsarev! Why did you tell them things that hadn't happened? How I hate him! If I had more time I would tell him all that I think of him...” (From Dunechka's diary, 1968).³³¹

— А 19-го августа Игорь пошел к Белому дому! И три дня, и три ночи защищал его. Я приехал Карякина лепить, а какое тут! Пришлось пойти к Белому дому, да дождь пошел... Я бы, конечно, его не узнал, но перекусывали, слышу: рыбу кто-то не ест! (Рома Ведунов, 1992 г.) / On the 19th of August, Igor' went to the White House! And for three days, and three nights he defended. I went to sculpt a bit at Kariakin's, but with all that was going on! I had to go to the White House and the rain was falling...I didn't, of course, know him, but I'd heard a bit, while snacking: he was someone who wouldn't eat fish!...(Roma Vedunov, 1992).³³²

Gorlanova also uses this motif to explore behaviour and reactions of the surrounding characters to the defences:

— На Римму покатила волна репрессий, слагаемая из сотен претензий, внешне не связанных между собой. Одно дело: она составила сборник научных работ, где была статья в стиле Солжа (но не ее статья!). Другое дело: она являлась научным

³³¹ Gorlanova 38.1

³³² Gorlanova 41.5

руководителем мальчиков, идущих по процессу... И так далее. Но внутренне эти факты были неумолимо связаны идеей застоя. Заставить Римму замолчать, не быть собой. Яркие личности уже были опять не нужны. (Н.Г., 1992 г.) / Rimma was swept up in a wave of repressions, made from a hundred pretensions outwardly unconnected with each other. One thing was a collection of academic work, an article in the style of Solzhenitsyn (even though it wasn't her article!). As for the other thing, she served as an academic supervisor for young men, being on the panel at the defense... and so on. These facts outwardly are inexorable constraints on the idea of stagnation. They compelled Rimma to be silent, and not herself. Once again, a bright personality was not needed (N.G., 1992)³³³.

In addition to this, Gorlanova uses the symbol of a trial process to broach commentary on the KGB and other security apparatus; in this example, she uses the trope of overheard conversation:

— Наше представление о КГБ было неполным. Вот я прочла, как они избивали профессора Лихачева, старика! Они более не люди, чем мы думали, хотя куда бы уже более-то?

— Раз не люди, значит, не виноваты. Машине ведь все равно, кого бить: молодого или старого. А так нельзя их спасать — не люди, не люди! В том-то и дело, что все люди-и... И все должны за себя отвечать... так-с! (Трезвые разговоры 1991 г.) /

- Our conception of the KGB was imperfect. I've read how they beat up professor Likhachev, an old man! They are more inhuman than we thought; how much worse can it get?

- But if they are not human, they are not guilty. It is all the same to the machine, who was killed: the young, the old. They could never be saved — they weren't people, not people!... Though they *were* human...and everyone has to answer for their deeds...that's how it is! (Sober conversation, 1991).³³⁴

Several examples are slightly longer, and provide more subtle references to prisons, trials and security apparatus. Despite the lengths, the oblique references to the trial motif are important as they serve to characterize,

³³³ Gorlanova 47.1

³³⁴ Gorlanova 49.3

normalize and represent the process as it was integrated into everyday life in Siberia. It is also ironically integrated in passages that have to do with a summer wedding. It is worth noting that ‘N.G.’ tends to author these citations:

— Перед свадьбой Капы ее отчима Мурзика резко повысили. И он запретил мальчиков приглашать. У него уже брежневские подгымкивания в речи появились... ОНИ УЖЕ ТВЕРДО ЗНАЛИ, КАКИМИ САМИМИ СОБОЙ НУЖНО БЫТЬ. Значит, это было в апреле, потому что мы решили всех надуть. Обещали прийти без мальчиков, но сами ничего им вообще не говорили, все заявили — и все. Мурзик говорил фразу: “Люблю апрель: уже не надо ходить на лыжах, еще не нужно ездить на дачу”. И осекся. Он все знал про процесс. Он испугался до такой степени, что я подумала: отменит свадьбу дочери!.. Бабушка Капы вскрикнула:

— Им сказали не приходите, а они заграфляются!

Мальчики-то ничего не знали и смело проходят всех целовать. У Царева всегда написано на лице, что он — желанный гость всюду в мире. У Игоря золотенькие очонки и вид дипломата вообще... У Боба на шее полосатый платок, и Капа сразу к отчиму на шею: жизнь — она в полоску, милый Мурзик! В полоску! И всех за стол усадила...! (Н.Г., 1992 г.) /

Before Kapa’s wedding, her stepfather Murzik was abruptly promoted. He forbade us to invite young men. He was already Brezhnev-style inarticulate in his speech...THEY ALREADY DECIDEDLY KNEW, WHAT EACH OF THEM SHOULD BE. So, this was in April, and we decided to play a joke on everyone: we had promised to come without young men, but we said nothing to them at all, and everyone came – that’s it. Murzik said the phrase “I love April: you don’t need to ski anymore, but you don’t yet have to go to the dacha”, and stopped short. He knew everything about the trial. He was uncomfortably frightened; I thought he might cancel his daughter’s wedding!..Kapa’s grandmother cried out:

-They had been told not to come, but they come!

The young men didn’t know anything, of course, and had boldly come to kiss everyone. One could always tell Tsarev’s feelings by looking at his face, that [he is] a desired guest everywhere in the world. Igor’ had golden-tinged tiny glasses, and the general air of a diplomat... Bob had his stripy kerchief around his neck, and Kapa at once embraced her stepfather: “life is striped, dear Murzik! Striped!” And she seated everyone ...(N.G., 1992).³³⁵

³³⁵ Gorlanova 54.2

The references in this passage are not only the trial itself, they also stand in as a metaphor for prison uniforms; this becomes evident in Gorlanova's play on words with *полоска*/stripes. The camps of Perm', for example, used this striped uniform for prisoners. She follows that statement with an ironic name-check of the KGB's statement of a family's "worth", while they helped to break up so many with imprisonments and interrogations: "–Ну, да, это нам Горбачев сказал, что есть общечеловеческие ценности и семья не менее ценна, чем государство! А в КГБ это и тогда знали, но держали в секрете! (Н.Г., 1992 г.) / So, yes, this is what Gorbachev said, that we have a universal value and that family isn't worth less than government! And the KGB, they all know, but keep it secret! (N.G., 1992)"³³⁶.

The defence is further linked to the summer wedding in the following example, as well as the old town of Golonovo (recurring, as the origin of the jam/glue for the illegal leaflets) and Gorlanova's continued references to poor health (or stress):

— Защиту Игоря отмечали в Голованово. Шли с электрички, и Капа вдруг у Боба спрашивает: как идет подготовка к свадьбе?

— Не знаю, я сейчас здесь, а оно — там...

Капа от неожиданности сбросила вперед одну туфлю и на одной ножке поскакала к ней. Потом мне шепчет: то-то Евка начала толстеть — у них сообщающие сосуды уже. Боб вон худеет... (Грезка, 1992 г.) /

- Igor's celebration of his defence took place in Golonovo. We were walking from the train, and Капа asked Bob: how were they preparing for the wedding?

³³⁶ Gorlanova 65.1

- I don't know, I am here now, and it's there...
 Kapa tossed one of her shoes forward, out of surprise, and hopped on one leg toward it. Later she whispered to me that Evka had begun to gain weight, they are like communicating vessels. And Bob grew thin...(Grezka, 1992)³³⁷

The final stand-alone reference to the trial comes on page 64, and is quite long. It reads as part of a letter from Igor' to Liudmila, and is partially conversation. The passage is attributed to a stranger in 1992, though it names specific and well-known characters (in their diminutives, even) and contains bracketed portions and personal thoughts. This level of familiarity with Perm's residents, as well as this level of textuality – including specific references to Socialist slogans, and those made famous from other sources (like the Spanish slogan, from the civil war in the 1930's³³⁸) – makes an “unknown” source for this citation unlikely:

— Вдруг письмо от Игоря: мол, Люд, я тут совершенно случайно делал книгу видному онкологу, он во всем мире котируется. Сама знаешь, в каком мире мы живем, на всякий случай я напишу тебе адрес и номер телефона... А я вообще от рака никогда не умру. Да выключите вы этого Неврозова! Опять он про морги... За что выпьем? За капитализм, за то, что дожили, могли б и не дожить, если б не Горбачев... Социализм но пассаран!.. Мне пора вообще бросать это дело...

— Мы тебя на раскладушку в кладовке положим, Грезка...

— Вы уже многим это обещали — у вас там сколько лежит? Может, с прошлого праздника еще кто-то есть, уже фосфоресцирующий, — руку протягивает — обнять новичка... Раньше, в моргах были колокольчики — если кто оживал, мог позвонить.

— Но большей частью шутили сами покойники. А то и руки, закинутые в банки с формалином. Сторож прибежит: видит — круги расходятся. Он в бешенстве хватает провинившуюся руку — и вон ее из банки!..

³³⁷ Gorlanova 57.5

³³⁸ This may be related to the Stalinist war-slogan “Ни шагу назад! / Not one step back!”

(1 мая 1992 года, у Грезки на щеке уже царапины, словно кто-то уже начал приватизацию пространства, начал его делить на участки, но на полпути бросил.)

— Слушайте, но ведь вся редакция знала, что Боб женился на Евке, потому что ее отец — полковник КГБ в отставке! Он учил Боба отвечать на процессе “не”, “нет”, “не читал”, “не знаю”. А что делать, если покраснеешь? Это в протокол не заносится. Он обещал поговорить одновременно в КГБ с бывшими коллегами — как не помочь будущему родственнику, повторял он при этом. (Посторонняя, 1992 г.)/

Suddenly, a letter from Igor’: “Liuda, I’m making a book for a famous oncologist, known world-wide! You well know the world we live in; I am going to write you his address and telephone number just in case...And then I’ll never die from cancer. Ah, can you switch off this Nevrozov³³⁹?! They’re speaking about mortuaries, again; what shall we drink for? For capitalism, and that we survived (until it came round), and would not have, but for Gorbachev... Socialism iNo pasarán! [shall not pass!] It’s time for me to give it up...

-Grezka, we have a cot for you in the closet.

-You have already made many promises – how many people do you have lying there? You may have some phosphorescent ones from the last holiday stretching out their hands in order to embrace a newcomer... There used to be hand bells at the morgues, just in case one survived so that one could ring them...

-But mostly it was dead people who joked. Hands, jars of formaldehyde. The watchman comes running: he sees ripples spreading; he rabidly hunts down the offending hand and throws it out of the jar!..

(It’s May 1st, 1992. Grezka has abrasions on her cheek, as if someone began to privatize that space, began to divide it but gave it up halfway).

-Listen, all the editorial board knew that Bob married Evka because her father was a retired KGB colonel! He taught Bob to answer only “not”, “no”, “never read it” and “don’t know” at the trial. Nothing can be done to stop you blushing a bit... It’s not entered into the minutes. He promised he would talk to the KGB, to his ex-colleagues – how could he not help a future member of his family? he used to say... (A Stranger, 1992).

This collusion of the political and the poetic/aesthetic is an important theme to Gorlanova’s work, as she often tries to incorporate the two. In

³³⁹ A TV anchorman, with a penchant for scary stories, from perestroika-era television.

Любовь в резонных перчатках/Love in Rubber Gloves, she not only presents poetic quotation and literary citation, she often broaches political subjects ranging from the Decembrists (45, 55, 68) to intra-office affairs, sexual politics in academia to Czechoslovakia and Afghanistan. This dual nature in turn helps to explain Gorlanova's interest in representing literary Perm' in her works, and unmasks a twofold interest in highlighting the centrality of Perm' to herself and her literature, and the symbolic periphery of Perm' to the rest of Russia, which manifests itself as both contradictory and somehow coexistent. The political element here lies in exposing and creating matrices for the relationship of the center-periphery. At this juncture, this dissertation will turn its attention to the impact and existence of women's writing, its definition and hallmarks, as well as its association with metafiction and literary critical innovation.

THE INFLUENCE OF WOMEN'S WRITING

*I am a woman. I write with who I am. Why wouldn't that be valid, unless out of contempt for the value of women...? Only those who are still in a state of verbal automatism or who mimic already existing meaning can maintain such a scission or split between she who is a woman and she who writes.*³⁴⁰

In this section, the variegations of the term "women's writing" and its related assignations concerning the status of Siberian women writers, space and literary theory (metafiction) will be explored in relation to the

³⁴⁰ Irigaray, Luce, *Je, tu, nous: Toward a Culture of Difference* (Routledge: London, 1993) 53.

work *Автобиография/Autobiography* and *Любовь в резиновых перчатках /Love in Rubber Gloves* by Gorlanova. Her use and manipulation of *быт*/everyday life, autobiography and metafiction will be explored. In a later chapter, Natalia Smirnova's works will be explored in relation to women's writing and "women's themes" with special attention paid to the concept of ritual labor, domesticity and *быт*/everyday life. This flows organically out of our discussion of Gorlanova, in which we noted how theories of women's writing and explorations of space intersect theoretically in her work. Much of the initial theory will be covered at this time, and later applied to Smirnova while comparing and contrasting. I have suggested that "space" is of primary concern to Gorlanova's works. It should, however, be understood as more than the connotation of physicality. Though the physical situation of Siberia is of obvious concern to me, and these works, space should be understood as more than this narrow implication. Taking into account a more broadly defined understanding of space, it becomes of central importance to both authors. Their work addresses the physical space of Siberia and its peripherality, but also the possibility of creating a space for women's writing (feminine writing) in a Cixous-ian fashion, and the space they are allowed by their status in the Russian literary canon. Both seem aware of the othering and space-definition of women's writing in the Russian tradition, as well as the space for themselves which they are eking out with each story they pen. Each sentence and theme can then be interpreted as a response to space, or as the creation of a new self-defined space. We begin with

understanding of the Russian literary canon and Siberia's place within it. The idea of Siberia as an ill-defined cultural space is mirrored by the contradictory states of being that have long problematized understandings of Siberia. Siberia, with its contrasting wealth and extreme emptiness (and areas like Perm', with their dense, lively populations contrasted with the death and privation that they housed), falls victim to a seemingly irreconcilable gap between cultural reality and perception. This contradictory experience is echoed in the Russian canon and its understanding of women's writing and Siberian women's writing in particular. Met alternatively with paeans to its few great stars (Anna Akhmatova [1889-1966], Marina Tsvetaeva [1892-1941], Nadezhda Mandelshtam [1899-1980], Lidiia Ginzburg [1902-1990], Tat'iana Tolstaia [1951-], etc) and denigration of the rest, the reception of women's writing in the Russian canon brings a similarly confused cultural understanding.

It is onto Russia's conception of Siberia as other that gender is also laid. Beyond the lexical gender of *Сибирь*/Siberia, which is feminine, Siberia as the 'other' also exists outside of masculine space. Many major stereotypes of Siberia are reflected in those regarding Russian women's writing. The wealth and unrealized dreams of Siberia, wild and untamable, are rejected by the oppressive memories and associations with death and privation that haunt it: "numerous books were published promoting the northern periphery's beauty, and its 'frontier spirit', despite the horrors

which were concurrently occurring” there³⁴¹. Concomitantly, the greatest icons of women’s writing, Tsvetaeva or Akhmatova, were “accepted as anomalous female classics”³⁴². They were practically sainted as paragons of women’s writing, while other women writers are treated with ignorance and denigration by the canon. Considered base and second-rate, these other women writers represent one half of the classic dichotomy of the virgin-whore. Relegated to the peripheries of literature, women in Russia were typically confined to avenues of “women’s writing” which spoke of themes such as childrearing and housekeeping, or personal stories. The importance of these forms of work was ritually denied, and the attendant borders which contained women writers to these topics were strictly enforced. Women were largely denied a literary or authorial voice, as well as a subjective “I” beyond the limited options sanctioned by the (primarily male) Russian literary community. Forced to exist within phallogocentric institutions and categories, both motherhood and domesticity were routinely denied importance as subject matter and as labour, and subsumed under a male-privileging language³⁴³. In the contemporary era, female writers in Russia are still coming to terms with the terminology surrounding “woman’s prose/literature” (*женская литература*) as designations. These carry presumed judgments of worth, and both “sound pejorative in Russian, suggesting a literature devoted exclusively to love

³⁴¹ Round, John, “Rescaling Russia’s Geography: The Challenges of Depopulating the Northern Periphery” *Europe-Asia Studies* Vol. 57.5 (Jul., 2005) 707.

³⁴² Holmgren, Beth, “For the Good of the Cause: Russian Women’s Autobiography in the Twentieth Century”. *Women Writers in Russian Literature*, ed. Clyman, Toby and Diana Greene (Greenwood Press: Westport, 1994): 136.

³⁴³ Irigaray *Je, Tu, Nous...*

and trivial themes, and a preference for a simplistic, over-emotional, even hysterical style”³⁴⁴ which continue to lean on the historical misogynist portrait of women for support and justification. Traditionally, connection with *быт*/everyday life, banality and peripheral life has had strong connotative ties to women, as has the concept of second-rate or secondary literature. This concept of style will be further understood in the chapter on Smirnova and her manipulation of “women’s themes”.

Generally, there still exists a vague but very negative correlation commonly made between women’s and sub-par writing. This often led to the dismissal of any difference between the sexes by Russian women writers:

the country’s retrograde adherence to immemorial gender stereotypes...renders the woman writer a paradoxical creature. Although Soviet society proselytizes sexual distinctions in all other walks of life, it makes a unique exception for literature. Writers themselves, while participating in the entrenched habit of touting women’s inherent “femininity”, simultaneously discount the relevance of gender to creative processes. According to their untenable scenario, the instant a woman starts to write, she miraculously jettisons the “inherent” feminine traits that she unavoidably displays elsewhere³⁴⁵.

Beyond the reasons already addressed, Siberian writing has suffered spatially from its association with women’s writing. Historically disinterested with non-normative space, the Russian (and especially Soviet) canon long devalued and connotatively gendered the “other” space as female. Despite the socialist “equality” of the sexes espoused during the

³⁴⁴ Marsh *Gender and Russian Literature* 3

³⁴⁵ Goscilo, Helena, “Coming A Long Way, Baby: A Quarter-Century of Russian Women’s Fiction” *The Harriman Institute Forum* 6.1 (1992) 2.

last century, the feminine, non-traditional space was diminished and the canon of regulatory fictions was strengthened through support and repetition. In these spaces, any “other” association was controlled and identified as secondary, as the canon continually controlled their definition. This construction of meaning was not limited to the later parts of the 20thC, either. From a Russian perspective, it can be seen that this view of provincial and peripheral writing as banal “senseless repetition of an infinity gone bad, extreme pettiness, and unceasing boredom” is linked with the image of women. The “sphere of the everyday is not part of Russian culture in its heroic self-definition. *Пошлость* /banality has frequently been represented as a woman”, which has been conceived of in Russia “as opposed to the creative force of art”. From a women’s studies perspective, it is interesting to note that from the 19thC on, “‘bad taste’ became increasingly feminized”³⁴⁶, and peripheral writing is often dismissed in the same manner. It is only in the 1990’s and beyond that one might speak of Siberian women’s literature as such.

This sense of triviality is equaled by provincial banality being made essentially a woman’s burden:

So enduring are the stifling portraits of provincial existence in these and other works that they began to pass at the turn of the century from literature into common linguistic usage in the form of the term *быт*, a word whose dictionary definition...fails to do justice to the array of negative associations that it now evokes for most Russians... Chekhov offers this revealing eulogy to another of his long-suffering, provincial heroines: ‘It is a hard, tedious existence,

³⁴⁶ Boym, Svetlana, “The Poetics of Banality: Tat’iana Tolstaia, Lana Gogoberidze and Larisa Zvezdochetova”, *Fruits of her plume: essays on contemporary Russian woman’s culture*, eds Goscilo, Helena (NY: M.E.Sharpe, 1993) 63.

and only solid cart horses like Maria Vasil'evna can bear it for long...'.³⁴⁷

This is more explicitly a complaint in prose, as women writers of poetry have been more accepted than the writers in so-called “masculine” field of prose. In a more general context, the reception of women’s writing needs to be placed within the larger critical context of contemporary Russian literature. “Until very recently, most histories of Russian literature paid scant attention to woman writers, as the majority of critics who established the literary canon, masculine and feminine...were conditioned by the patriarchal Russian cultural tradition”³⁴⁸. Often the literary center was “frequently unduly harsh and dismissive in their judgments of women writers”³⁴⁹, “because for Russians feminization per se constitutes derogation: *Ladies’* or *women’s* by definition means secondary or second-rate”³⁵⁰; “*damskii*” is a damning word, used to denigrate women’s writing”³⁵¹. For many of the intelligentsia, the “reflex response to the very terms *woman writer* and *feminist* recalls Dracula recoiling from a cross”³⁵². In part, this recoiling comes from the connotations of women’s writing with *быт*/everyday life and *пошлость*/banality. There have been theoreticians who have focused their efforts on recognizing and understanding the iteration, implications, and meaning of the “everyday”, or in Russian, *быт*. *Быт* is generally understood as everyday life, life’s

³⁴⁷Hutchings 656

³⁴⁸Marsh 2

³⁴⁹Marsh 2

³⁵⁰Goscilo, Helena *Dehexing Sex*, (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Pr., 1996) 75.

³⁵¹Heldt *TP* 169.

³⁵²Goscilo *Dehexing...* 6.

quotidian element, but the Russian notion of *быт*/the everyday has complex associations and connotations.

Benjamin Sutcliffe has recently published a book length study concerning the “everyday lives” of Russian women, as reflected in the prose of Russian women writers³⁵³. His complex analysis of the two related but differing concepts of *быт*/everyday life and *бытие*/objective reality, as well as his application of these conceptions to women’s writing and themes is obviously thematically close to my work and a great resource for it. If it is nothing else, it is an example of strong scholarship in a sparse field. Sutcliffe characterizes *быт* as a typically Russian conception of the everyday, tinged with negative connotations regarding spiritual life and gendered activities. “The everyday is a problematic concept that Russian culture consistently and insistently links to women”³⁵⁴, in which *быт* does not exist as a neutral term, but instead expands in common use to “not only refer to daily life but also to a corrosive banality threatening the higher aspirations of *бытие* /objective reality.”³⁵⁵ Gender and *быт*/everyday life, he argues, “were inherited problems in late Soviet culture. Functioning as two halves of an equation, they suggested that women are inclined toward domesticity, childcare, and the endless minutiae needed to support a family, constituting a major portion of the quotidian”³⁵⁶. These “female tasks”, as Sutcliffe names

³⁵³ Benjamin Sutcliffe, *The Prose of Life: Russian Women Writers from Khrushchev to Putin* (Madison: University of Wisconsin, 2009). Short form from now on: “PoL”.

³⁵⁴ Sutcliffe *PoL* 4

³⁵⁵ Sutcliffe *PoL* 5

³⁵⁶ Sutcliffe *PoL* 4

them, “are a part of *быт*, and the negative adjectives connoting the quotidian echo the alleged attributes of women’s lives in Russian culture: petty, small-scale, mundane, exhausting, repetitive”³⁵⁷. The theoretical bounds of *быт*/everyday life will be further explored in Smirnova’s chapter, but for the time-being we will focus on the ways Gorlanova utilizes *быт*/everyday life in her works, *Автобиография Autobiography* and *Любовь в резонных перчатках /Love in Rubber Gloves*. Gorlanova’s employment of *быт* is manifest in her repetition of mundane and petty tasks and the small-scale behaviours to represent life in literary Perm’. The space in literary Perm’ might be expanding and networking, but it is alternately closed and regulated as well. In her use of prison and household imagery, Gorlanova employs her understanding and manipulation of *быт* and the norms of everyday practice, time, and space. In her iterations, she emphasizes the monotonous reality of *быт*/everyday life, while her editing hints at the possibility for subverting it.

The work of French theorist Maurice Blanchot (1907-2003) suggests a conception of the everyday that reflects elements of my analysis of Gorlanova and Smirnova’s works. He feels that the “everyday must be thought [of] as the suspect (and the oblique) that always escapes the clear decision of the law”³⁵⁸ (which can be understood as the control of male-dominated, informed and regulated behaviour), as well as his axiom that

³⁵⁷ Sutcliffe *PoL* 5

³⁵⁸ Sutcliffe *PoL* 7

the everyday invigorates through chaos³⁵⁹. Sutcliffe maintains that this lies in contradiction to Jakobson's "dire formulation [which] negates [Blanchot's] utopian rebelliousness", and reflects the "tautological reasoning of totalitarianism"³⁶⁰. This idea of the repetition and openness of the everyday will help our discussion of Gorlanova's vision of literary Perm'. In regards to Gorlanova's "circular" style and stylistically complex writing, Helene Cixous' desire for "a fluid and problematic language that will harmonize...[with the typically male] avant-garde"³⁶¹ will be explored. In the application of the aforementioned theories, feminist criticism will inform my approach: criticism which adopts such a position [to] scrutinize its texts for fissures and cracks and signs of heterogeneity, re-examining "the masculine imaginary, to interpret how it has reduced [women] to silence, to mutism" (Irigaray) and has led to a "feminine...that is repressed in a patriarchal linguistic structure" (Julia Kristeva)³⁶². Along these lines, I will focus less on the way female grammatical language is subsumed under male dominance, and instead on the male canon's attempt to relegate "women's themes" and women's writing to the second tier—specifically, Smirnova and Gorlanova's tactics and strategies of avoidance or transgression of this privileging. As Mary Jacobus writes, it is only in the context of Derrida and poststructuralist feminism that the world of "woman and artist, the feminine and the avant-garde, are elided...Writing, the production of meaning, becomes the site of challenge and Otherness;

³⁵⁹ Sutcliffe *PoL* 9

³⁶⁰ Sutcliffe *PoL* 8

³⁶¹ Fowler, Roger ed. *Modern Critical Terms* (Boston: Routledge, 1973) 93.

³⁶² Fowler 93

rather than [more traditionally] simply yielding the themes and representation of female oppression”³⁶³.

These arguments are illuminated by the theses of second-wave, primarily French, feminist theorists. One such theorist, Luce Irigaray [1932-], called for the establishment of a new space for *l'écriture féminine*, in which women could attempt to reclaim a new type of writing and understanding, allowing them to escape language steeped in male symbolic logic. Spaces for the representation of women, interpretations and enactments of femininity and oneself are carved out by each author as they move, in Barbara Heldt's words, from being “viewed as objects of male [and here we interpret this as also “the center's”] self-interest [to] become the subjects of their own scripts.”³⁶⁴ Some women writers, Gorlanova for example, use awareness of this in their literature to create space for the themes and modes of what has been termed “women's writing” – embracing a stereotypical feminine understanding of time (as cyclical, non-linear). Using this stereotype, Gorlanova avoids typicality by using this expectation as a framework for her literary experiments. As noted Slavic feminist scholar Helena Goscilo has hypothesized: “Space as a concept has historically been relegated to temporality—“time” is defined in terms of change, movement, history and dynamism, “male” categories—while space has, with typical “feminine” passivity, been defined as the

³⁶³ Fowler 93

³⁶⁴ Heldt *TP* 6

absence of these things and, with the help of Freud, as ‘female’”³⁶⁵. Julia Kristeva, the renowned French psychoanalytic feminist, writes on this historical relegation of women to the realm of space:

‘Father’s time, mother’s species,’ as Joyce put it; and, indeed, when evoking the name and destiny of women, one thinks more of the *space* generating and forming the human species than of *time*, becoming, or history. The modern sciences of subjectivity, of its genealogy and accidents, confirm in their own way this intuition, which is perhaps itself the result of sociohistorical conjecture”³⁶⁶.

Recognizing the sociohistorical influences that most likely inform this view, Kristeva continues to explore the relationship of women and space, while casting a wider net to include an understanding of “women’s time”. Noting the importance of this conception to modern psychoanalysis and women’s studies, Kristeva avers:

I could go on giving examples. But they all converge on the problematic of space, which innumerable religions of matriarchal (re)appearance attribute to ‘woman,’ and which Plato, recapitulating in his own system the atomists of antiquity, designated by the aporia of the *chora*, matrix space, nourishing, unnameable, anterior to the One, to God and, consequently, defying metaphysics³⁶⁷.

This notion of woman as “unnameable” resonates in women’s studies, as it links with the process of writing oneself as a woman, and a writing a woman’s experiences, in a language which is dominated at the grammatical and the canonical level by masculinist logic. Gorlanova’s interest in naming and editing within the texts, the focus of the last half of this chapter, intersects with women’s studies again, especially in regards to

³⁶⁵ Goscolo *Dehexing*...117

³⁶⁶ Kristeva, Julia *Women’s Time. Feminist Theory: A Critique of Ideology* (U. Chicago: Chicago, 1982) 33. italics in original.

³⁶⁷ Kristeva 34 italics in original.

Irigaray and Cixous' *l'écriture féminine* (writing informed by the female body) and the writing of experientially different lives.

This interest in female subjectivity is in line with Kristeva's larger argument concerning 'women's time'. After her discussion of women's historical association with space, Kristeva notes the seemingly unavoidable association that female subjectivity has with time, as well:

As for time, female³⁶⁸ subjectivity would seem to provide a specific measure that essentially retains *repetition* and *eternity* from among the multiple modalities of time known through the history of civilization. On the one hand, there are cycles, gestation, the eternal recurrence of a biological rhythm which conforms to that of nature and imposes a temporality whose stereotyping may shock, but whose regularity and unison with what is experienced as extrasubjective time...occasion...unnamable *jouissance*. On the other hand, and perhaps as a consequence, there is the massive presence of a monumental temporality, without cleavage or escape, which has so little to do with linear time (which passes) that the very word 'temporality' hardly fits...³⁶⁹

This is a different type of temporality than the historical, masculinist, linear time that is associated with traditional literature or chronology.

This 'women's time' is "all-encompassing and infinite like imaginary *space*"³⁷⁰ in its scope and innovation. The two types of temporality—cyclical and monumental—are "traditionally linked to female subjectivity" despite problems that arise in respect to typical conception of time³⁷¹.

Time as a masculine concept—time as a project, linear, "time as departure, progression, and arrival"³⁷²—is at odds with the anterior temporal

³⁶⁸ Here the translator knowingly uses the word "female" or "woman" to represent the French term "le féminin"; a non-pejorative term in French relating to women in general.

³⁶⁹ Kristeva 34 italics in original.

³⁷⁰ Kristeva 34 italics added.

³⁷¹ Kristeva 35

³⁷² Kristeva 35

modalities that necessarily link time and space, and which are associated with women and other marginal³⁷³ groups. A newer generation³⁷⁴ of feminist theorists have refused these paradigms, and have “undertaken a veritable exploration of the dynamic of signs”, subjective and corporeal experiences and their influence on writing, demanding recognition of their plural, fluid feminism that “situates itself outside the linear time of identities” and within “the cyclical and monumental temporality of marginal movements”³⁷⁵. Via Kristeva and Irigaray, we can see how Gorlanova’s concerns with her non-traditional “autobiography” and her interest in manipulating traditional concepts of space and time in her works, are linked to women’s studies and feminist theories.

The general response of women authors to this identification as marginal has been varied, ranging from rebellion to capitulation. The “avant-garde woman writer is doubly intolerable, seen from the center, because her writing escapes not one but two sets of expectations/categorizations; it corresponds neither to the usual ‘revolutionary point of view’ nor to the ‘woman’s point of view’”³⁷⁶. The avant-garde represents taboos, and it is in transgressing the borders of the easily accepted that the avant-garde has reacted rebelliously to the pressures that emanate from the literary centers/mainstream. Goscilo avers that “women’s prose of the 1980’s evidences a perceptible shift,

³⁷³ Kristeva 35

³⁷⁴ Post-1960’s.

³⁷⁵ Kristeva 37/38

³⁷⁶ Suleiman, Susan, *Subversive Intent; Gender, Politics and the Avant-Garde* (Boston: Harvard, 1991) 15.

whereby a fascination with language has displaced the primarily thematic preoccupations of earlier decades....[some contemporary writers' work] heightens the reader's awareness of language as mediator through the elliptical, fragmented ordering of their story materials, and [sometimes] an individualized folklore"³⁷⁷. These descriptors are all highly applicable in Gorlanova's case. Gorlanova uses literary Perm' and semi-fictionalized self-representation to create space for her literary experiments. She also explores the depth and use of non-linear temporality in her work. This textual experimentation, which consists of challenges to both genre and convention, comprises Gorlanova's textual response to her status as both a Siberian and woman writer. We will now explore some examples from Gorlanova's *Автобиография/Autobiography* and *Любовь в резонных перчатках /Love in Rubber Gloves*.

Maurice Blanchot said:

A book, even a fragmentary one, has a center which attracts it. This center is not fixed, but is displaced by the pressure of the book and circumstances of its composition. Yet it is also a fixed center which, if it is genuine, displaces itself, while remaining the same and becoming always more central, more hidden, more uncertain and more imperious³⁷⁸.

This applies well to *Вся Пермь/All of Perm'*, especially the *Автобиография/Autobiography* and *Любовь в резонных перчатках /Love in Rubber Gloves*. This chapter, essentially a small book unto itself,

³⁷⁷ Goscilo *Coming* 13

³⁷⁸ Blanchot, Maurice. *The Space of Literature* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1982) preface, N.Pag.

has “a center which attracts it” despite its fragmentary nature and its constant shifts, revisions and piecey form. There are two “centers” in *Любовь в резонных перчатках / Love in Rubber Gloves*, two types of central ideas which represent a double-nature like the one that Blanchot has noted. The emotional and orbital center of the text is Gorlanova herself. The second is the literary version of Perm’ which she creates, her version of Perm’, which she introduces in scraps that litter the body of text. Pushing her story to the peripheries and simultaneously weaving it into the center of her work, Gorlanova shapes her “literary Perm’” as a place that is co-authored, polyphonous, multiplicitous—a space that is made up of many spaces both physical and literary, and a space that is “subject to change”. In addition, Gorlanova’s *Автобиография / Autobiography* also represents a shifting of expectations, and a subversion of women’s writing traditions. Gorlanova’s literary work has strong theoretical ties to her feminism. This phrase, “subject to change” has been used by Nancy Miller in order to explain the work of feminist writers to whom “the replacement of the fixed identity of woman with the improvised mobility of a feminist subjectivity, a feminist modernist whose desires in language remain subject to change.³⁷⁹” Virginia Woolf called for creation of a “woman’s sentence” by a woman writer. Helen Southworth sees this “other sentence”, as Woolf envisions it, as shaped according to “the different physical and mental spaces occupied by women, the ‘different order and

³⁷⁹ Southworth 270

system of life within which women operate”³⁸⁰. This understanding furthers the interest in space that has already been noted, but draws this understanding farther into the realm of women’s studies. Recall that on page 56 of this study, we examined Woolf’s belief that having “sat indoors all these millions of years” has created a specific link between women’s writing and space³⁸¹. The woman’s sentence that emerges from these domestic confines mimics the structure of the novel which Blanchot described. Multiplicitous and open to change, this woman’s sentence is “broken and double, one that embraces interruption”³⁸². The focus on the interiority, the “insiderness” of women’s lives and points of view is emphasized in this passage, but not to the exclusion of their incursion into the outside world. Gorlanova’s treatment of Perm’ and outside space is analogous to this. This interest in creating a larger net of relations, instead of solely handling specific stories is prefigured by an interest in the social and productive function of space(s) and the actions that occur within them. It has been argued that “space in its traditional sense is not a pre-existing receptacle for human action, but is created by that action; space, in turn, exerts its own variety of agency, modelling the human actors who have configured it”³⁸³.

Gorlanova is less concerned with the inside space and interior lives of particular women (in *Любовь в резонных перчатках* / *Love in Rubber Gloves*) than Smirnova is, turning instead to literary Perm’s

³⁸⁰ Southworth 253

³⁸¹ Woolf in Southworth 253/54

³⁸² Southworth 271

³⁸³ West-Pavlov 20

быт/everyday life. The inside of Perm' is revealed and studied through the interactions of private lives made public via quotation and citation.

M. Abasheva notes that:

У Перми, конечно, женское лицо. Тут же интуицию поддерживает сама грамматика. А с ней - история, помнящая матриархальную мощь Перми Великой. Да и судьба города сродни женской, привычно готовой к терпению и страданию: будто наивная девушка-провинцалка пошла когда-то в фабричные работницы, минули годы, и вот мается она надорванным здоровьем, и, может, прячет следы полустертой татуировки.../ Perm' has, of course, a female face. Here, our intuition supports our grammar. And with it, history remembers the maternal might of Great Perm'. Yes, the fate of the city is in its relationship with women, intimately prepared for patience and suffering: a supposedly naïve provincial girl goes to fabrication jobs for ages, and she languishes in strained health, and, maybe hides faded tattoos...³⁸⁴

This underlines the presented femininity of the area, as well as the lasting effects of the space on the female body. We will continue to find textual proofs of Gorlanova's unorthodox women's writing, as well as the intersection of space and place and this writing.

The form of Gorlanova's *Любовь в резонных перчатках* /*Love in Rubber Gloves* influences her autobiography, which prefaces the rest of the story. The story itself is inscrutable. It consists of paragraphs and quotations from named and anonymous sources; longer dialogues are interrupted with commentary by the authorial voice and citations from famous real individuals and infamous fictional characters. One assumes that the recurrent individuals are residents of Perm', though this is not clarified for the reader. Is this the presentation of truthful events, accurate

³⁸⁴ Abasheva 5

quotations and the quantifiable history of Perm'? Is it a work of reportage? Is it pure fiction, pulling in postmodern form from a jumble of literary precedent and creating a pastiche of the old and the new? Are her characters somewhat fictionalized, lovingly woven around the framework of Gorlanova's friends and family, her town and her memories? Similarly, the autobiography itself is inscrutable. Is what is told to us the truth—the representation of her objective history—or the presentation of some hybrid autobiography /memoir, fictionalized and coerced into a new form? The following section will examine the ways in which Gorlanova's work manipulates the conventions of women's writing and lifewriting into hybrid forms she uses against the center, casting herself as a "doubly rebellious" female, peripheral writer. The rejection of this typical genre works to, in Goscilo's words concerning another contemporary Russian woman writer, "if not actually invalidating the seminal 19thC trope of literature as the mirror of life, at the very least depotentiates it by distorting the mirror's reflective properties almost beyond recognition. This "estrangement" and self-assertion of style showcase language most rewardingly"³⁸⁵.

Playing with the creation of center and periphery, Gorlanova uses her forays into lifewriting and conventions of "women's writing" to create an autobiography that mediates with a "literary Perm'" she has written into existence. Most importantly, this interest in hybrid forms, genre and genderic concerns are all interrelated in their orientation. This orientation

³⁸⁵ Goscilo *Coming...*14

is always outward; Gorlanova's lifewriting exists to mediate with the outer community of literary Perm', which exists in its mediation with the outside realms of Siberia, and, confrontationally, with the center. In remaking or fashioning a center out of Perm', Gorlanova reaches thematically outward once again, towards interaction with the traditional center. In her manipulations of women's writing and the genres associated with it in *Любовь в резонных перчатках / Love in Rubber Gloves*, Gorlanova argumentatively positions herself against a dominant external canon. This is to contrasted, later in this dissertation, to the stalwart interiority of Smirnova's works, purposefully focussed on the interior, enclosed, female-dominated space of provincial domesticity. Firstly, the connection between autobiographical writing and women's writing, more specifically in the Russian tradition and contemporary women-studies theory, must be explored. The conclusions of this portion will then be applied to Gorlanova's texts for analysis.

AUTOBIOGRAPHY vs MEMOIR: CONTEMPORARY VIEWS ON LIFEWITING IN RUSSIA AND ABROAD

The first concept to be discussed is Gorlanova's use of autobiographical writing in *Вся Пермь / All of Perm'*, and that genre's close connection with women's writing in both the world and Russian traditions, as well as her practice of employing masculinist literary experimentation within the framework of "women's writing". Autobiography and memoir are, in academic parlance, not synonyms. Despite this, they are often used

almost interchangeably, and the differences between the two are poorly hewn. There exists a narrow conventional divide between memoir and autobiography based on the latter as a subclass of the former with increased focus on interior thoughts and memories of the author. As noted in the Introduction, many view writing that focuses on the home, self, and life of a non-famous personage “trivial”. Iurii Mineralov has called Gorlanova’s work “narrowly focussed” on “trivial subject matter” of the everyday, while others have condemned her as performing mere “lifewriting”: “Вместе с тем проза Горлановой подвергалась и уничижительной критике за ‘мелкотемье’ (Юрий Минералов)...[или] ‘бытописание’ / All of Gorlanova's prose has been subjected to derogatory criticism as ‘narrow-minded’ (Iurii Mineralov)...[or] ‘everyday life-writing’³⁸⁶. The usefulness, purpose or value of a “nonentity’s” memoir or autobiography is of significant debate. Gorlanova’s personal desire to document her life as a writer and a fine artist is also a matter of some interest, as her once prolific (almost daily) blog entries on LiveJournal have been recently deleted and her account closed³⁸⁷.

We must, of course, note Russia’s inherent judgment concerning this writing as gendered. The terms employed are not innocent, nor do they lack connotations to the historical place for “women’s writing”. The term employed by Mineralov about Gorlanova, “мелкотемье”, literally means “petty themes” and not just a narrow focus of specialization; it also

³⁸⁶ Danilenko 3

³⁸⁷ Her address on LiveJournal was active, but this account was suspended by her, and then permanently deleted as of early 2010. It reappeared in early summer 2011, under <http://ngorlanova.livejournal.com/>

implies a marked triviality, and a lack of scope. For this dissertation's purposes, writing which addresses the small scale everyday lives and chores of Siberian women is useful in that it represents the perceived—and consciously rendered into print—reality of that contemporary woman writer's life, or that it provides a telling fictionalization of this life. The reasons that a story concerning everyday life might be fictitiously altered are important to the goals of this study: were these lives fictionalized and written down artistically in order to hint at some greater theme or symbol within them? What is the perception of reality, as evidenced by the fiction that is written concerning the quotidian, telling the careful reader about the themes and symbols that are important to the writer? And what are the strategies of these Siberian women writers? The level of artistry in the works hint at the value of a poetics being applied. The way that Gorlanova reaches out to the townspeople around her—reaching out though maintaining a “lack of scope”—by writing her city's biography along with her (fictionalized) own, clashes with the meditatively restrictive “lack of scope” and “narrow focus” of Smirnova's work. Both strategies intersect with other Russian genres; Gorlanova's most overtly with autobiography and memoir.

Beth Holmgren has recently published the book, *The Russian Memoir* (2003), in which she questions the role memoirs play in the history of Russian literature, what forms they take, and for which reasons. Gorlanova is specifically mentioned in this work, but let us first lay the

groundwork for a more basic understanding of the memoir³⁸⁸. Despite Russian literature's heavy reliance on the memoir,

for all its indispensability to the making and understanding of Russian culture and history, the memoir, with its generic slippage between art and document, subjective expression and dedicated record, often falls through the cracks separating the relatively recently developed academic fields of literary studies and historiography. We...rarely bother with their structural and stylistic analysis.³⁸⁹

Critics of Russian autobiographical writings have “tentatively conclude[d] that women's autobiography (most often defined in contrast to men's autobiographical writing) exposes the marginalization and erasure of female subjects; delineates a self-formed in relation to (rather than separation from) others; and explores fragmented, uncentered [sic]narratives and rhythmic, nonsense-language styles in order to liberate women's life stories from patriarchal modes of definition and relation. Such conclusions have been ...based mainly on Anglo-American examples”³⁹⁰. This work hopes to incrementally fill that gap.

The question of with whom, or with what an autobiography engages, and to what extent it comments on the “real world”, is unreliable and indefinable. Each memoir and autobiography seems to rewrite the rules of the genre, and “the veracity of the memoir's related ‘facts’ and the style of the memoirist's perception and expression differ greatly from text

³⁸⁸ Note both my belief that Gorlanova consciously collapses the boundaries between memoir and autobiography, and also refer to footnote below, Note 397.

³⁸⁹ Holmgren *RM* x

³⁹⁰ Holmgren *Women Writers in Russian Literature* 127

to text—in the main because the genre accepts all comers”³⁹¹. It has been noted that “as the number of people writing about autobiography has swelled...the boundaries of the genre have expanded proportionately until there is virtually no written form that has not either been included in some study of autobiography or else been subjected to autobiographical interpretation”³⁹². Or it could be, as Lejeune stated, that internally there is “no difference between an autobiography and an autobiographical novel”³⁹³. One of the often overlooked conventions of lifewriting is that it “can never inscribe the death of the speaking subject, the terminus of life, which theoretically [biography] can describe. Autobiography, then, was necessarily un-ended, incomplete, fragmentary, whatever form of rhetorical closure it might contain”³⁹⁴. Despite this, the Russian literary community has at many points in history attempted to define this amorphous subject. Lidiia Ginzburg (1902-1990) notes:

There is an unbroken chain connecting artistic prose to the history, the memoir, the biography, and ultimately the ‘human document of everyday life’³⁹⁵. The nature of this correlation is complex and has varied from one epoch to another....literature has either withdrawn into special, pointedly aesthetic forms, or it has moved closer to nonliterary discourse. The intermediate, documentary genres, without losing their specificity, without turning into either novel or tale, have accordingly sometimes acquired the status of verbal art³⁹⁶.

³⁹¹ Holmgren *RM* xi

³⁹² Stanton 134

³⁹³ Stanton 136

³⁹⁴ Stanton 135

³⁹⁵ Note here the phrase, “of *everyday* life”.

³⁹⁶ Holmgren *RM* xii

Ginzburg shows us what Holmgren calls “a cluster definition”³⁹⁷. The tension between highly monitored and less controlled discourse is thick in this conception of the nature of “human document of everyday life”. Mikhail Bakhtin, on the contrary, places the memoir according to “an antique view”³⁹⁸ of the genre. Despite this, he notes the place of autobiography as containing “a new type of biographical time”, with an “increasing accent on private life and interiority”, having “had a profound influence not only on the development of European biography, but also on the development of the European novel as a whole”³⁹⁹. Noting the value of autobiography and memoir, Bakhtin highly values the “material they proffer for fictional refurbishing”⁴⁰⁰. Developing within and between the document and the fictional text, “autobiography poses perhaps the greatest challenge of literary definition and categorization”⁴⁰¹. Depending on “the tension between textuality and referentiality that inheres in all documentary genres, [autobiography] seems especially to foreground the autobiographical subject and his or her play of subjective imagination”⁴⁰². Holmgren argues that from the mid-1800’s onwards into the post-Soviet

³⁹⁷ For the time being, I acknowledge the use of the word “memoir” by Holmgren et al., but maintain that for simplicity’s sake in quoting from various sources that come from different cultural and academic contexts, as well as commenting on them, both the term “autobiography” and “memoir” are to be understood as interchangeably used, and read as interchangeable in my text. This is said though I am aware of the narrow conventional divide between memoir and autobiography based on the latter as a subclass with increased focus on interior thoughts and memories of the author, as well as the assertion that a memoir typically describes events occurring during a specified period of time, and the implication that events recorded in a memoir might have more “historical” value than those found in an autobiography. The autobiography is more commonly seen as a personal testament.

³⁹⁸ Holmgren *RM* xii

³⁹⁹ Holmgren *RM* xii

⁴⁰⁰ Holmgren *RM* xii

⁴⁰¹ Holmgren *RM* xiii

⁴⁰² Holmgren *RM* xiii

state, memoirs have become increasingly popular, important and influenced by the changing popular forms of fiction and their stylistic and thematic trappings⁴⁰³. Using these as guides for emulation or rebellion, memoirists “articulated their confounding life stories in the narrative forms they knew”⁴⁰⁴. For example, the trend for both official and unofficial memoirs post-Stalin into the contemporary period, was toward collecting “a motley of high and popular genres”, and “the self-conscious embrace of lyricism and aesthetic experiment”⁴⁰⁵, in a reflection of the “deliberate aestheticization of the Russian memoir—marked by emphatically subjectivized narration, deliberately disordered plots, manipulation of time and space, incorporation of disparate imperatives”⁴⁰⁶. Helena Goscilo notes that the “early 1980’s thus witnessed a flurry of works written by women with a woman as central...principally through the first-person narrative” with an emphasis on the domestic life “clearly focus[ing] on an individual woman and on the...quality of her individual life”⁴⁰⁷. It is argued that the contemporary period (post-Soviet) shows us an interest in memoirs as “accessible formula(s) and provocative form(s)—variously manifest as a wildly popular commercial product, a corrective or confessional...historical

⁴⁰³ Holmgren *RM* xxv-xxxii

⁴⁰⁴ Holmgren *RM* xxix

⁴⁰⁵ Holmgren *RM* xxix

⁴⁰⁶ Holmgren *RM* xxx

⁴⁰⁷ Goscilo, Helena ed, *Fruits of Her Plume: Essays on Contemporary Russian Women’s Culture* (NY: M.E. Sharpe, 1993) 43.

document, or an aesthetic point of departure for new experiments in prose”⁴⁰⁸.

A cursory look at “[world] criticism published during the past fifteen years reveals a dramatic change in the discursive status of autobiography, a mode of writing traditionally considered to be marginal, generically inferior”⁴⁰⁹. Stanton argues that ES Burt is right, that “the whole project of defining autobiography generically is what needs to be abandoned. [This] radical gesture would meet with continued resistance...[from the average] of hierarchies and oppositions, in which the generic, as the French genre suggested, was inextricably linked to the generic”⁴¹⁰. Indeed, “beyond their tacit agreement to exclude women’s texts, critics disagreed about the specific substance of autobiography”⁴¹¹. The shifting definitions of autobiography as writing reflecting life, “seem to exploit difference and change over sameness and identity: their writing follows the “seam” of the conscious/unconscious where boundaries between internal and external overlap. Such writing puts into question the whole notion of “genre” as outlined by the exclusionary methods of GUSDORF’s rather narrow definition of the autobiographical. And it is not surprising that the question of “genre” often rides on the question of gender”⁴¹² in speaking about lifewriting. If women’s “self-representational writing has no category with which it is identical...that is because the

⁴⁰⁸ Holmgren *RM* xxxi

⁴⁰⁹ Stanton 131

⁴¹⁰ Stanton 135

⁴¹¹ Stanton 134

⁴¹² Benstock, Sherri “Authorizing the Autobiographical.” *Women, Autobiography, Theory: A Reader*, Eds Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson (Madison: Wisconsin Pr, 1998) 148.

organization of the history from which it seems to be excluded names it as “dis/organization”⁴¹³. The association between lifewriting and the negative stereotypes of women’s writing is well-documented and longstanding. These assumptions are alive and vigorous in the Russian tradition.

New ways of seeking and privileging these texts need to be found; “to keep from getting lost in the usual ways—frequently by overrelying [sic] on traditional theories of interpretation and history which were developed to describe the literary characteristics of texts by mostly white, male, heterosexual-identified, non-working class writers...one must follow a route of estrangement from dominant codes of meaning”⁴¹⁴. Gilmore notes that “an introduction presumes the existence of a subject, and turns upon that existence necessarily...one expects to find it properly named and placed within an interpretive framework that makes it recognizable”, and asks, “but where is the interpretive network, the proper name that confirms the identity, indeed the existence, of women’s autobiography?”⁴¹⁵. She offers that the “differing codes of masculinity woven through the discursive body of autobiography’s ‘representative man’...can be described as an *autobiographical effect*”, while:

autobiography names the repeated invocation of an ideological formation that comes to seem natural—that is, in the simplest terms, that autobiography is what men write, and what women write belongs to some “homelier” and minor traditions. While the full depth of the uncanniness (un-homelike-ness) of this home

⁴¹³ Gilmore 6

⁴¹⁴ Gilmore 6 italics added.

⁴¹⁵ Gilmore 1

writing has yet to be explored, the projection of an all-too-familiar gender hierarchy onto texts explored through the terms “major” and “minor” has extended, in discussions of autobiography, to the persons who write. This gendered version of the autobiographer affects the production and reception of women’s self-representational texts⁴¹⁶ .

This association is obviously similar to that which links the sub-par or secondary with women’s writing, and, in addition, links lifewriting with the “minor” genres. Despite this, this association is not just with lifewriting and the feminine, but also between lifewriting and the feminist. Seeing this, as well as the value of these denigrated forms, requires a new focus and a new strategy. Gilmore suggests a different focus, noting that for her project on women’s autobiography, she “need[ed] different tools, different maps, and not ones that would locate women’s self-representation in relation to prominent features on a literary map of canonized works or in the authorized “sub”-genres to which they already belonged. In short, [she] discovered that a map for finding women’s autobiography became a map for getting lost”⁴¹⁷. There are several Slavic theorists who have also undertaken being lost. Beth Holmgren agrees with Barbara Heldt’s belief that autobiography is the domain of feminist interest in Russia,⁴¹⁸ and feels “feminist scholars catalyzed the new focus on various forms of Russian autobiographical writing”⁴¹⁹. Benstock refers to this malleability as “elastic form”⁴²⁰. Holmgren’s work focuses

⁴¹⁶ Gilmore 1/2

⁴¹⁷ Gilmore 3

⁴¹⁸ Heldt *passim*.

⁴¹⁹ Holmgren *RM* x

⁴²⁰ Benstock 151

specifically on this, and also uses the term “elastic form” for the memoir (*воспоминания*), “with [its] dual (if not always balanced) agendas of individualized expression and reliable reportage”, which remains incredibly popular in modern-day Russia⁴²¹.

Concerning the “fissures of female discontinuity” that are seen, critics “ascribe certain forms of discontinuity to the female rather than to the male, assigning them as functions of gender”⁴²². The opposition that is often cited, between men’s and women’s lifewriting, states that:

men’s narratives were linear, chronological, coherent, whereas women’s were discontinuous, digressive, fragmented. This was the same narrative shape that Didier had discovered in Sand’s *My Life*, a form Anaïs Nin likened to “a crazy quilt, all in bits” [note here female labor is equated to domestic labor]...narrative discontinuity was integral to [many] conception[s] of autobiography; and fragmentariness was the matrix of Beaujour’s study of the “auto-portrait” from Augustine to Leiris. Indeed...discontinuity and fragmentation constitute particularly fitting means for inscribing the split subject, even for creating the rhetorical impression of spontaneity and truth...Turning...to the question of autogynographical content...a binary opposition recurred that associated the female with personal and intimate concerns, the male with professional achievement—a replication, it seemed, of the private/public, inner/outer dichotomies that mark generic differences in our symbolic system...[re: “personal”]...a domestic “dailiness”, to use Kate Millet’s word, often permeated autogynographies, the concept of the personal was a function of changing conventions.⁴²³

This split subject is interestingly linked to W.E.B. DuBois’ conception of women’s “lived twoness”, and Gorlanova’s duality as both a provincially and generically peripheral writer. To some, participation in this is akin

⁴²¹ Holmgren *RM* x

⁴²² Benstock 152

⁴²³ Stanton 137

to a rebellion against the object-ivity of women in traditional societies: autogynography, [Stanton's term for the study of women's autobiography] had a global and essential therapeutic purpose: "to constitute the female subject...the graphing of the auto was an act of self-assertion that denied and reversed woman's status...creating the subject, an autograph gave the female "I" substance through the inscription of an interior and an anterior"⁴²⁴. The focus of women's autobiography is also different than the average (male) one. Gilmore suggests that:

Autobiography, then, does not necessarily produce a fuller relation to the "real", to identity and authority, for women who write it. It may, as like, prompt a profound renegotiation of the terms and forms of self-representation, one result of which is that women's autobiography cannot be recognized as "autobiography" when it is written against the dominant representation of identity and authority as masculine...For all its synchronic and diachronic variety and density, gender [as female identity] persistently performs as incoherence, contradiction, and challenge within the discursive nexus named "autobiography".⁴²⁵

Approaching women's lifewriting as such, Gilmore underscores the rebellion of these women and their diverse literature. Gilmore begins "with the premise that women's self-representation describes territory that is largely unmapped, indeed unrecognizable, given traditional maps of genre and periodization. The historical communities in which women write, their choices to join different communities or to alter their given relation to a community in profound ways, and their relation to male writers whose works have come to represent 'autobiography' are little known within the bulk of autobiography studies", calling her approach

⁴²⁴ Stanton 139

⁴²⁵ Gilmore 2

“autobiographics” and its relation to the technologies of “autobiography”⁴²⁶. She think of autobiographics as “operating within texts that have not been seen as autobiographies and occurring in the margins of hegemonic discourses”⁴²⁷; an understanding which handily applies to the Siberian lifewriter. Gorlanova experiments with naming and intertexts begin with her *Автобиография/Autobiography*, and its own changing, unstable, name. “Sensitive to the variabilities [sic] and complexities of its narrative modes,” it has been noted “that autobiography might appear to privilege chronological linearity, but that it tended toward discontinuous structures...with disrupted narrative sequences and competing foci of attention”⁴²⁸. The varying discourses and intertexts can be understood, in the words of Gilmore, as “legends for a map that is still being drawn, and they should demonstrate that women’s self-representational writing is bound up in still other discourses”⁴²⁹. Stanton feels that any autobiography is “a heterogeneous mixture of *discours* and *histoire*, to use Beneviste’s terms, the personal and the historico-cultural, the elegiac and the picaresque, the illustrative and the reflective” and that, “inevitably...the specific texture of an autobiography also represents the mediation of numerous contextual factors: a particular intertext...or a set of intertexts”⁴³⁰.

⁴²⁶ Gilmore 5

⁴²⁷ Smith 184

⁴²⁸ Stanton 135

⁴²⁹ Gilmore 184

⁴³⁰ Stanton 135

Gorlanova begins the story with her self-designated *Автобиография/Autobiography*, and completes the work with an essay of sorts at the end. As soon as the first page, multiple texts and references are made. Her introduction to herself is allowed a secondary title, “или Бодливой корове Бог рогов не дал.../God does not give horns to cows that would use them”. The secondary title here does not function as a common subtitle, as a continuation of the title. This references a common Slavic *пословица/proverb*, and can be seen to function as an epigraph. The practice of using an epigraph in a work began in the 18thC, and “the epigraph partakes of the book industry’s rhetorical strategies to authorize and gentrify print...”, and in the 19thC “the choices of author became more significant than the texts of the epigraphs themselves”⁴³¹. Porter Abbot complains that: “One of the aggravating things about humanists is the way they have to begin their essays with epigraphs. Strangely privileged words that hover an inch or so above the text, they generate vague resonances but rarely settle into a definitive relation with what follows. In this, the practice of using epigraphs is simply an extension of the humanist tendency to avoid nailing down the case”⁴³². Gorlanova seems to avoid this empty “humanist” vanity, and her choice is meaningful in the context it evokes and resides:

One does not need to read either Greek or Latin to gloss the presence of an epigraph in either tongue as an elitist caste label. But while the label is recognized by all, the meaning is accessible to

⁴³¹ Barchas, Janinie *Graphic Design, Print culture, and the 18th C Novel* (University of Cambridge: London, 2003) 85, 90.

⁴³² Abbot, Porter “Humanists, Scientists, and the Cultural Surplus” *SubStance* (2001) 203.

only a few. For even if a smidgen of Latin or Greek unlocks the literal meaning of an epigraph...only a familiarity with the fuller context of the passage from which the line is lifted...reveals to a very few the hidden joke or irony behind its selection. In other words, at every level (from the naive to elite) the novel's use of the epigraph is all about context, rather than text.⁴³³

The choice of an authorless, or author-anonymous, or community-authored proverb may be significant. The proverb is not shown with an ellipsis at the end, implying that, in its complete form, it could be expanded. It reads, as she uses it, “Бодливой корове Бог рогов не дал...” This translates to: “God does not give horns to cows that would use them”. The meaning of this is more indefinite. Horns in Christian scripture refer to the strength of men; in Psalm 75:10, God states: “I will cut off the horns of all the wicked, but the horns of the righteous will be lifted up”⁴³⁴. By this, he means that he will reward and intensify the strength of the righteous, but revoke the strength of the wicked/heathen non-believer. Admonishing the boastful and wicked, God states in Psalm 75:4: “Do not lift up your horns” — do not revel in your own strength or lord it over others out of pride⁴³⁵. Knowing this, the epigraph might be understood as “God does not give strength to those who might abuse it”. In the English tradition, we might link this to the threatening/warning proverb: “Don't

⁴³³ Barchas, Janinie, *Graphic Design, Print Culture, and the 18thC Novel* (London: University of Cambridge, 2003) 90.

⁴³⁴ <http://bible.cc/psalms/75-10.htm>

⁴³⁵ <http://bible.cc/psalms/75-4.htm>

mess with the bull, you'll get the horns”, as made famous in recent pop culture by filmmaker John Hughes⁴³⁶.

Beyond these possible references, the idea of a female (cow) disallowed the power of those around her (a lack of horns) is also thematically important to Gorlanova’s autobiography, as she repeatedly comments on the level to which her life has been reigned in and restricted by her poor health. Throughout her autobiography, she cites her lack of strength as the reason for her living a “normal” and not “extraordinary” life. She tends to note this as if it were a mercy. Examples are rife within her autobiography; on the first page, she notes: “На счастье, Бог послал меня в жизнь со слабым здоровьем, и это спасло меня от многих и многих бед, какие преследуют стрельцов-холериков-экстравертов/ Fortunately, God gave me poor health in this life, and this saved me from many, many troubles, which often attend Sagittarian-choleric-extroverts.⁴³⁷” She continues throughout the rest of the autobiography to state the possibilities that her life might have held for her, had she not been so castrated by her poor health. For example, following the aforementioned case, she notes that but for this poor health: “Так, я всего лишь один раз вышла замуж, а могла бы пять/ Because of this, I was only married once, when it could have been five times.” If we recall an earlier citation of Abasheva’s⁴³⁸, we can see Gorlanova linking her own

⁴³⁶ In the popular film *The Breakfast Club* (1985), for example; common beforehand with permutations: <http://www.english-sayings.com/mess-with-a-bull-you-get-the-horns/7162>

⁴³⁷ Gorlanova 16

⁴³⁸ У Перми, конечно, женское лицо... А с ней - история, помнящая матриархальную мощь Перми Великой. Да и судьба города сродни женской, привычно готовой к терпению и

health and fate with that of Perm's; her great potential is tempered by outside control and sad reality. Gorlanova maintains this course, enumerating her possible futures, and their tamed reality:

Родила я всего четверых детей от своего мужа, а могла бы восьмерых без мужа!.. На воспитание я взяла всего одну чужую девочку, а мечтала взять еще двух, да помешало слабое здоровье. Из дома я выгнала лишь четырех стукачей, а могла бы и десять. Жалоб я написала не более трехсот, а будь сил поболее - могла бы и тыщу! Кормила-поила-опекала я в своей жизни всего двух гениальных художников, один из которых меня потом обобрал, а будь покрепче здоровье, я бы, может, еще двух взяла... Сосватала я в своей жизни лишь три супружеские пары, все они теперь меня проклинаят. А ведь если б не мои болезни, я б еще двадцать пар сосватала. Поссорилась я (в процессе борьбы за нравственность) всего лишь с семнадцатью друзьями, а не со всеми сорока. И так далее. / I had four children with this husband, when it could have been eight with no husband in sight!... I adopted and raised someone else's daughter, and dreamt of having a second, but was prevented by my poor health. From my home I expelled only four informers, but it could have been ten. I wrote no more than three hundred complaints, it could have been more had I had more strength—it could have been a thousand! I fed-watered-and-cared for two genial artists in my life, one of these robbed me and would it were I had greater strength I could have taken two more still... I matched up only three couples in my life, and each of them has cursed me since. And had it not been for my illnesses, I'd have set up twenty couples. I've broken up (in the process of fighting over ethics) with seventeen friends, but not all forty. And so forth.⁴³⁹

Her interest in the limitations and descriptions of her health throughout *Автобиография/Autobiography* asserts itself as one of Gorlanova's main thematic concerns. The negative consequences of a life untempered are advanced: "А если б не взяли, я свободные силы бросила б на борьбу с

страданию... / Perm' has, of course, a female face. ..And with it, history remembers the maternal might of Great Perm'. Yes, the fate of the city is in its relationship with women, intimately prepared for patience and suffering... (Abasheva 5)

⁴³⁹ Gorlanova 16/17

коммунистическим режимом и села б в лагерь (по 58 статье)/ ... And if we hadn't taken her, I would have had the strength to fight against the communist regime and to sit in a camp (for the 58th statute)"⁴⁴⁰. Linked as it is with possibility (of a life) and potential (of a woman), this preoccupation with health becomes a trope by which Gorlanova mediates on the choices made available to her, and her efforts to live up to her "potential". The negation of a "normal" life here is integral to the mode of telling. Iiuri Lotman suggests that, "*быт* surrounds us like air and, like air, is only noticed when it is spoiled or in short supply"⁴⁴¹. This is, in fact, what Gorlanova seeks to accomplish here; with all of the exceptions she notes, she underlines her deviation from the "normal" quotidian. She sets herself apart by focusing on her inability to do what she might have done, had her strength not been inhibited or "in short supply".

Gorlanova further extends the weight of her epigraph into the body of her autobiography, listing her various life's accomplishments according to the possible outcomes she did not achieve. She continues, making these comparisons the bulk of her autobiography:

Слабое здоровье спасло меня от активности в пионерско-комсомольской работе (сил хватало лишь на огород, дрова и сено). Благодаря желтухе, я в три года научилась читать - в больнице девочки-школьницы выучили меня азбуке. Из-за плохой справки о здоровье я, к счастью, не могла поступать почти никуда, кроме филфака. А когда я начала писать прозу и бороться с режимом, на мое слабое здоровье наложилось плохое здоровье моей приемной дочери - мы и взяли-то ее потому, что в детдоме она бы умерла... А если б не взяли, я свободные силы бросила б на борьбу с коммунистическим

⁴⁴⁰Gorlanova 17

⁴⁴¹ Lotman in Sutcliffe *PoL* 8

режимом и села б в лагерь (по 58 статье). И мужу оттуда писала б: “Бог наказывает меня за то, что мы не взяли ту бедную девочку! Сходи на ее могилку и помолись за меня, попроси прощения!”/ My poor health rescued me from active participation in the pioneer/komsomol work (my strength would last only as long as the vegetable garden, firewood and hay). Thanks to jaundice, I could read by age three; schoolgirls taught me the alphabet in the hospital. Due to my bad bill of health I, luckily, couldn't enter anything but the philological faculty. And when I started to write prose and wrestle with the regime, my weak health was added to by the poor health of my adopted daughter whom we had taken her in (she would have died in the orphanage)... And if we hadn't taken her, I would have had the strength to fight against the communist regime and to sit in a camp (for the 58th statute). And I would have written to my husband from there: “God punishes me with this, that we wouldn't take in that poor girl! Come, pray from me in front of her grave and ask her to forgive me!”⁴⁴²

Gorlanova does not only judge her past accomplishments, or lack of them, in this way. She uses this same format to understand her recent choices, and even to explain her impetus to begin writing her autobiography:

Недавно я поняла, что здоровье ослабло настолько, что не могу бороться даже за любимую демократию! Позвали меня на конгресс интеллигенции, а я прислушалась к зову больного зуба и выбрала поход в поликлинику. Но и в поликлинику не пошла, а села за машинку и напечатала эту автобиографию / Recently I've understood that health weakens the extent to which you can fight for your beloved democracy! I was called to the congress of the intelligentsia, but I listened to the call of a sick tooth and chose the trip to the clinic. I didn't go to the clinic, and instead sat down at this typewriter to type this autobiography.⁴⁴³

With this statement, Gorlanova plays with the expectations of the reader. Combined with the previous set of statements (*Had I not been ill, I might have done more...*) Gorlanova plays with the belief that the autobiographer might be writing because they think his/her life interesting or important. In fact, she seems to go out of her way to emphasize that her

⁴⁴² Gorlanova 17

⁴⁴³ Gorlanova 18

life might have (and maybe should have) been much more than it has been. Each stage of her life or example given from her autobiography is undermined by its unfulfilled “potential”. Even her eventual choice to write it is presented as ambiguously positive or intentional. In this way, Gorlanova almost writes two biographies, one of herself as she was, and one of a mythical version of herself that represents a fuller, more accomplished and more “important” history. This parallelism can be seen as extending into the body-text of *Любовь в резонных перчатках* /*Love in Rubber Gloves*, which writes a mythical “literary Perm” as a contrast to Perm’ as it is. The mode by which she shows her otherness, and narrates her lifestory, is also of interest. It happens that health and the conscious literary mediation on it, is a typical theme in late- and post-Soviet women’s literature. This tradition, as well as its implications, will now be addressed.

There has been a historical interest in more typical “women’s literature”, by which I mean to include the pejoratively understood “*дамский*/women’s” writing, on the motif of the mother and her children. This focus on maternity, as the primary role and interest of the female author, is linked with the popularity and association of lifewriting with women writers. Most typically concerned with the workings of the family, children, and quotidian, the subject of maternal health, as well as the general health of the writer, was broached in relation to these topics. Often steeped in sentimentality, most accounts from the turn of the century until the 1960’s approached health in this manner. In the Thaw

period, and most obviously with the publication of Petrushevskaja (1938-) and the writing of Grekova (1907-2002), health became a different marker in modern Soviet prose. Women writers, such as Petrushevskaja, began to focus on the poor health of their female characters as a sociological and cultural damnation. Whether representing poor maternal health due to shortages or abominable health care, or forays into explaining and showing women's rising alcoholism, the darker side of women's health was uncovered. Though it does not appear in her *Автобиография/Autobiography*—there is a comment concerning her ability to make hooch eight ways as a schoolgirl⁴⁴⁴—alcoholism is, in fact, a theme that runs throughout *Любовь в резиновых перчатках /Love in Rubber Gloves*.

Alcoholism or consumption to excess is noted on many occasions in *Любовь в резиновых перчатках /Love in Rubber Gloves*, though predominantly in reference to male drunkenness. This is also commensurate with a new openness in women's writing; the openness to confront issues that were affecting domestic and interpersonal affairs, such as high rates of alcoholism. This drinking is often referenced as an social activity, but also is used as a descriptor of assignations; for example, conversation on 20.6-21 is called "*Пьяные разговоры/drunken conversation*", while an excerpt from 49.3 is called "*трезвые/sober*", specifically. At times, the drinking or drink is referenced explicitly, as in the following excerpt:

⁴⁴⁴ Gorlanova 17

— Нецелованный Сон-Обломов пришел на арбузник весь в звездах. Дети мелом на скамейке нарисовали, а он сел. Ну и на его широкоэкранный заднице много звезд поместилось! Боб сосчитал — не помню, уж сколько там было, но на бутылке коньяка у Боба столько же звездочек оказалось. Надо сложить, надо, говорили они, уходя в зашкафье коридора с бутылкой... (Капа, 1968 г.) / The never-been-kissed-Dream-Oblomov went to an event, covered in stars. Kids with chalk had drawn all over a bench, and he'd sat on it. And on his wide canvas many stars had found room to shine! Bob counted, I don't remember how many there were, but a cognac bottle Bob had owned showed the same number of stars. They said they have to count all the stars together, disappearing behind the wardrobe in the hall... ⁴⁴⁵

This casual type of reference is common, and also, interestingly, shows consistency throughout the years and decades (the aforementioned 'drunken conversation' from 1992 differs little from that mentioned in 1968, or beyond). Sometimes, the drinking or drunkenness moves the "plot", explaining how or why something happened, for example: "— А не слишком ли трезво Капа мстила Бобу за его пьяную забывчивость? Этот грандиозный день рождения Боба с вручением ордена Дон Жуана второй степени... Все же она расписала по минутам: на сороковой минуте Царев должен быть мертвецки пьян... (Н.Г., 1980 г.) / Was it not too soberly that Капа took revenge on Bob for his drunken oblivion? That grandiose birthday of Bob's, when she gave Bob an Order of Don Juan, of the Second Degree... Nevertheless, it was everything she predicted (and penned): by the fortieth minute Tsarev had to be dead drunk... " ⁴⁴⁶. This kind of comment is less common than the aforementioned. On other occasions, drunkenness is related to more

⁴⁴⁵ Gorlanova 25.2

⁴⁴⁶ Gorlanova 35.1

generalized statements, concerning life or the state of people in general, not unlike the “bar-room philosophy” already discussed (page 66).

Beyond the reference to alcohol found in these examples (and those found on 19, 20, 29, 41, 46, 48), an example that uses alcohol abuse as a reference might also include hints at the name of the chapter *Любовь в резонных перчатках / Love in Rubber Gloves*. In a bout of “Пьяные разговоры/drunken conversation”, the talk moves towards our familiar theme of the KGB, and also a telling discussion of contemporary society that blends the emerging prominence of sexual commentary and stories with openness about the more negative aspects of 1990’s, just post-Soviet society:

— Странные вы, ребята! Столько лет: КГБ да КГБ... А это не самое страшное. Вот когда за тобой никто не следит, не интересуется... тут взвоешь! Хоть что твори. Раньше мною хоть милиция интересовалась — работать заставляли, то-се, а сейчас, как началась перестройка... никто не спрашивает... Бывало, выйдешь на обочину дороги, предложишь свое брэнное тело кому-нибудь — и разговор на всю ночь обеспечен. Русский такой, по душам... А сейчас все СПИДа боятся. Я тут к Бобу зашла в контору — они обсуждают, куда вложить свои капиталы, бля! В портвейн, говорю, как наиболее короткий способ перекачки физического в духовное... [shortened] / - It’s a queer thing, guys! How many years of the KGB, the KGB... This is not the most horrible. When there is no one to shadow, no one interested in you... *this* is when you howl! Doesn’t matter what you do. Before that, at least the militia was interested— forced to work at this and that, and now with the start of perestroika...no one even asks... It used to be, you’d go out to the edge of the curb, offer your perishable body to someone or another, and a night of conversation would be provided. Such Russian conversation, from the soul... But then AIDS scared everyone. So I went recently to Boris’ office— there they just discuss where to invest their money, ha! It’s like

port, I say, it's the fastest method to distill the material into the spiritual.⁴⁴⁷

The mention of AIDS allows for us to understand “love in rubber gloves” as condoms. On 24.3, this seems to be somewhat corroborated, though the excerpt predates AIDS per se, as Капа links love and rubber gloves in conversation with Liudmila: “-Никогда я так его не любила, как во время арбузника, когда руки были стянуты **резиновыми перчатками!** (Капа-Людмила, 1970 г.) / -I never loved him like that, as much as I did love him at the time, when hands were sheathed in rubber gloves! (Капа to Liudmila, 1970)”. Chetverpalna also subtly maintains this connection: — Когда сняли перчатки, я спросила Капу: “Можно к тебе ночевать?” “Мамочка, ты же у нас общественный будильник, а через пять часов как общежитие встанет на медицину?” Ну, говорю, тогда, Боб, мы доверяем тебе женщин!.. Капу и Дунечку.. (Четверпална, 1968 г.)” / Everyone removed their gloves and I asked Капа, “May I spend the night?” “Oh, but mama, you are a communal alarm clock, and in five hours how will the dormitory wake up without you for the military medical class?” Well, in this case, Bob, we entrust the women to you! [He'll be the alarm clock] ... Капа and Dunechka. (Cherverpalna, 1968)”⁴⁴⁸. This reference also occurs within a cluster of 4 sexual-romantic citations, to further this inference⁴⁴⁹. Rubber gloves are also used to denote safety of another kind, safety from persecution by authorities. From Dunechka's

⁴⁴⁷ Gorlanova 20.5

⁴⁴⁸ Gorlanova 27.4

⁴⁴⁹ Gorlanova 27/28

diary, we find the following passage, connecting explicitly rubber gloves with political agitation campaigns and untraceable glue from Golovono :

“Надо ли записывать, почему мы выпускали стенгазету в резиновых перчатках? Вот у Бунина весь пол усыпан мертвыми золотыми пчелами, и ничего не разжевывается. Но Капа писала курсовую — нас замучила вопросами: почему пчелы? Так и получится: почему резиновые перчатки в 68-м году? Да потому что наша деканша дойдет до отпечатков пальцев, то есть до снятия оных с газеты.. ”(Из дневника Дунечки, 1968 г.) / “If you must write it down, why publish the newsletters in rubber gloves? There’s a Bunin’s story, a floor strewn with bees, where nothing is explained. But Капа wrote a course-project on it—she tortured us with questions: why bees? That, and why the rubber gloves in ‘68? Because our dean would go as far as to fingerprint us, that is to say, to take our fingerprints off the newspaper...” (From Dunechka’s journal, 1968)⁴⁵⁰

Beyond rubber gloves as an innuendo or a symbol, they also remind us of our theme of hospitals, women’s health, and the new tradition focusing on the medical trials of their contemporaries begun by women writers.

Sociologically, this was a reflection on the previously ignored, physical conditions to which Soviet (and early post-Soviet) women were submitted. Perestroika “opened the floodgates as female authors envisioned the state unflatteringly neglecting women or countenancing violence against them”, argues Benjamin Sutcliffe⁴⁵¹. The neglect, willful and also infrastructural, of women “in post-1985 works frequently involved the much maligned medical system. Indifference toward women within the hospital topos underscored humiliation and loss of agency in everyday life”⁴⁵².

⁴⁵⁰ Gorlanova 21.3

⁴⁵¹ Sutcliffe *PoL* 84

⁴⁵² Sutcliffe *PoL* 85

This focus on the hospital as setting and the medical crisis as subject matter was not purely sociological or reflective of the life-experiences of the writers, but also a psychological method. Though a “new” trend in Russian/Soviet literature, this is not one without precedent, though one must search the male tradition of literature to find them. In addition to fulfilling some of the requirements of typical “feminine” lifewriting, such analytical and unflinching descriptions of the medical and corporeal concerns of everyday life owe a debt (or a sisterly camaraderie?) to the documentary-style writing of survivors such as Solzhenitsyn (1918-2008). Indicating the importance of the minutiae of a day, marked by lapsed humanity and desperate want for personal needs, this type of documentary writing also privileged the importance of *быт*/everyday life (even if it also hinted at the sanctity of *бытие*/objective reality in a way contemporary women’s examples rarely do⁴⁵³). Ginzburg (1902-1990) and Mandelshtam (1899-1980) penned such works as well, though often with less focus on the details of physical burden of imprisonment or living under the weight of abysmal everyday life, and with the overarching focus on documenting and memorializing their husbands. In addition, Elisabeth Skomp argues the New Amazon’s writing presented “a feminized variant of the subgenre of hospital fiction that canonical male writer such as Chekhov and Solzhenitsyn composed, [in which] female writers delineate uncertainty and instability through their use of the hospital

⁴⁵³ In this statement, I do not include nor reference the same type of writing by Solzhenitsyn’s female contemporaries, such as Ginzburg, I refer to the contemporary women fiction writers that make up the broad subject of this dissertation.

environment”⁴⁵⁴. She gives Gorlanova’s story of childbirth, bodily pain and the slippage of maternal control, “История озера Весёлого/The Story of Lake Cheerful”, as an example. In the contemporary fiction scene, Sutcliffe suggests Petrushevskaiia as a prime example of this writing. Linking her novellas, for example *Маленькая грозная* (*Little Terrible*, 1998), with Solzhenitsyn’s writing (*В круге первом /The First Circle*, 1968 abroad), he traces the conception of both hospitals “as the nadir of degradation”/ a “tortuous realm of hell”⁴⁵⁵.

The forced communality (a well-tread trope of Soviet life) of the hospital also links the medical with the penal system. Through a metaphor suggesting that the entire USSR was a vast labor camp, Sutcliffe offers a feminized metaphor that the entire nation was a *коммуналка*/communal apartment. Drawing on these similarities, he argues “the hospital ward is another, even less pleasant feminized locus where time and space intersect through crises and forced interaction with strangers” and everything is alert to *быт*/everyday life. Goscilo continues to argue that both the camp and medical systems divest the patient/incarcerated from their individuality (I would maintain, through diagnosis and institutional practice, such as numbering patients) and “the autonomy traditionally paired with masculine roles”⁴⁵⁶. In both the prison cell and the hospital ward, space is replaced by a *быт*/everyday life defined by its lack of scope; “as in the communal apartment, scale

⁴⁵⁴ Skomp 92

⁴⁵⁵ Sutcliffe *PoL* 85

⁴⁵⁶ Sutcliffe *PoL* 85

matters”⁴⁵⁷. Beyond this, the lack of control that is central to most hospital/illness stories is underscored by the lack of control one has over their ill body. The “corporeality of control defines and limits personal autonomy”, and recalls the biased set of controls that Stalinism applied to women through the body (such as the illegality of abortion or the classification of lesbianism as a mental disorder)⁴⁵⁸. Reading Kristeva’s theories of the abject further links this experience with women’s experience. Such an interest can be seen in examples like this:

— Идеалы — это лучшее **рвотное** средство. Если надо промыть желудок — **приносят идеалы, человека рвет**. Или внутрь, внутривенно... Но может привыкание возникнуть, как к наркотику. Если к идеалам возникло привыкание, то иных отходняк бьет без идеалов... (Грезка, 1992 г.) / Ideals – they are the best emetic. If you have to bathe the stomach – emetics are brought and men vomit. Or from inside, intravenously... but dependence can originate from it, like with narcotics. If dependence develops, they really suffer; addicts without ideals.⁴⁵⁹

A repeated example of the abject is found in Gorlanova’s use of the word “навоз/manure” (or shit), as in the following example:

[...]— Грезка, у тебя это специально?
 — Что?
 — Кофта наизнанку. Помню: в детстве бабушка учила: если в лесу заблудишься, надо платье переодеть наизнанку, чтобы найти дорогу...
 — Значит, вы думаете, что я заблудилась в жизни? А вы не заблудились — подстилаясь?
 — Что?
 — **Навозом ложась под следующие поколения?** Это самое что ни на есть заблуждение, советское, опять жить ради

⁴⁵⁷ Sutcliffe *PoL* 43

⁴⁵⁸ Sutcliffe *PoL* 44. Not to imply that these problems disappeared after the legalization of these states. In fact, this is hardly the case, and the continued use of these motifs in the literature post-Krushchev reforms shows the reader that the confines of feminized *byt* still “continue to make women the victims of their own bodies”, as Sutcliffe offers (44).

⁴⁵⁹ Gorlanova 56.4

светлого будущего... У вас валокординчик есть? Дайте, я выпью... да не каплями, а все. (Разговор, 1992 г.)⁴⁶⁰
 [...] – Grezka, did you do this on purpose?

- What?

- Your blouse is on inside out. I remember what my grandmother taught me as a child: if you lose yourself in the forest, you have to turn your dress inside out to find your way back...

-You mean, I presume, that I've lost my way in life? As if you haven't gone astray? [acting promiscuously]

-What?

-Laying like the shit that lies underneath the next generation? This is the purest delusion, a soviet one, one that tells us to live for the bright future... Do you have any valerian? Give it to me, I'll drink it...not a few drops, all of it. (Conversation, 1992)

— Грезка, я вот тут думала: а может ли быть счастливо наше поколение безбожников? Видимо, **наше поколение будет навозом для других поколений**. Мы уже сами поздно пришли к вере... Что ж, **пусть гордо реет знамя навоза!** (Н.Г. 1992 г.) / -Grezka, I've been thinking recently, were we lucky to be a generation of atheists? It's obvious that our generation will be manure for the next. We were still late to come to faith...That we might proudly fly the flag of shit! (N.G., 1992)⁴⁶¹

This also interestingly links the hospital/poor health writing of Russian women writers with the peripheral camp/prison system and peripheral experience. This lack of control and negativity, linked with scatological symbolism and overt physicality, is the experience of the disempowered and peripheral.

An increased interest in the bodily and the functions of the body that were hidden from view in the past were highlighted during perestroika. Petrushevskaja and others women's prose reacted to the "new freedom of the press [that] also led to a dramatic increase in sexual

⁴⁶⁰ Gorlanova 31.1

⁴⁶¹ Gorlanova 25.1

exploitation of women's bodies in advertising and pornography", as well as increase in the physical abuse of women's sexualized bodies through sex trafficking. Sutcliffe argues that this rendered the past heroines of Baranskaia (1908-2004) and Grekova's style of prose "invisible as readers reoriented their image of women previously seen as full (if flawed) participants in society, women in the late 1980's became linked to a small number of unfulfilling roles"⁴⁶². Into this context, new writing from women emerged, and "three literary trends shaped the reinvention of women's prose"⁴⁶³. I would argue that the emergence of increasingly marginalized and restrictive roles for women was countered by the emergence of fiction whose heroines were nothing like the narrowly defined and idealized sexually objectified women of the late- and early post-Soviet period. Both physically set apart, placed within institutions, they were further othered by their total lack of artifice, sexual "desirability" and distance from typical feminine subjectivity. Their dependence on masculinist time and lack of agency were hyperinflated in these stories, monstrosly reflecting depressing realities that women were experiencing in everyday life and on everyday scale. Further, this concentration on the bodily must also be viewed in context of the rocky reemergence of *быт*/everyday life prose. For example, "while [many] female authors' main concerns derived from the topics of Trifonov (1925-1981), Baranskaia, and Grekova," provincial writers did often focus more on traditional and

⁴⁶² Sutcliffe *PoL* 92

⁴⁶³ Sutcliffe *PoL* 92

“village” ways of life. The influence of *другая проза*, “a catchall term applied to innovative fiction that distinguished itself from the legacies of socialist realism as well as *быт* and country prose”⁴⁶⁴ in the 1980’s. Petrushevskaja and Tolstaia (1951-) are notorious exemplars. This literature was marked by a “lack of pathos and [a] skeptical approach to verisimilitude...[and] refused to honor stereotypes created by previous authors, challenged the hypocritical standards of Soviet morality, and pursued stylistic innovation. Critics later applied these attributes to women’s prose through the age-old principle of guilt by association, considering it a subset of alternative prose”⁴⁶⁵.

This fixation on health and description of the female or maternal body also has roots in the branch of French feminism best understood through the works of Kristeva (emphasizing the psychological import of the body) and Cixous (emphasizing the importance of the body to literature). Undermining the western-feminist preoccupation with “sameness”, these authors explicitly dwelt on the difference(s) between men and women by privileging the physical body. This sexuate and maternal body is then extended as the defining motivation for and as a symbol of this difference⁴⁶⁶. In some ways, this is also a strategy which can be identified in the shockingly direct and gendered Russian prose that speaks of/through the female body. A similar method of boldly demarcating, instead of obfuscating, the lines defining difference between

⁴⁶⁴ Sutcliffe *PoL* 93

⁴⁶⁵ Sutcliffe *PoL* 93

⁴⁶⁶ See: Cixous, Helene *Writing Difference*, Susan Sellers, ed. (St. Martin’s: NY, 1988) *passim*.

men and women, can be read into the detailed descriptions of entirely (traditionally) desexualized bodies of women in specifically gynocentric situations: women's sexual experience, the abortion clinic, the maternity ward, the women's prison, the women's hospital. In contrast, the rampant (often coerced, unfulfilling or unwilling) sexual experience of women was no longer unnamed or unrecognized, but instead foregrounded as common subject matter. Goscilo notes that gynocentric fiction is "the site of psychological revelations, critical turning-points, and opportunities for self-knowledge"⁴⁶⁷. Women's anthologies, both those from the center and the periphery, also made clear this sense of difference; "women's anthologies added a key sense of alterity to the documentary style marking most of their content"; some "made this otherness explicit", explaining it in their frontmatter⁴⁶⁸. Indeed, unlike previous eras, "ascribing difference to women's writing was a key distinction between perestroika authors, who recognized and often asserted their otherness⁴⁶⁹". This is the logic which allows for the term *женская проза*/women's prose used, not only as the most common designation, but as what Adlam sees as a unifying term that demarcates the following shared characteristics: internal traits ("questioning realism, identity formation...textual transgression") and a difficulty being published. Sutcliffe expands this definition, seeing women's prose as "writing by women, who often (but not always) focus on

⁴⁶⁷ Skomp 92

⁴⁶⁸ Sutcliffe *PoL* 94

⁴⁶⁹ Sutcliffe *PoL* 95

female lives, which differ from men's lives"⁴⁷⁰. This alterity is a key to the definition of a women's prose movement or collective, and it is, for better or worse, emphasized by writing the experiential difference of the male and female bodies through both bodily experience or through detailing women's everyday lives.

Gorlanova has, in fact, penned several short stories which deal overtly and explicitly with the conditions and experiences of the late- and early post-Soviet female body. These focus primarily on maternity wards and hospitals for women patients. In these, Gorlanova chooses to critique the medical system, as Sutcliffe describes it, "through the sardonic lens of irony"⁴⁷¹. Beyond stand-alone stories, Gorlanova relates hospital/maternity ward experiences that focus specifically on the female characters (of herself, in *Автобиография/Autobiography*) and residents of Perm', in *Любовь в резиновых перчатках /Love in Rubber Gloves*. As previously discussed, Gorlanova sets her entire autobiography against the backdrop of poor health, creating for herself strict boundaries of what was possible and what was disallowed by her poor health, focusing as much on an alternative fictional autobiography as her 'real' life. In her discussion of health and maternal health she avoids this trope, with the notable exception of a potential/assumed maternal death on 43-44, which is discussed at length in a later portion of analysis. Typically, references

⁴⁷⁰ Sutcliffe *PoL* 95

⁴⁷¹ Sutcliffe *PoL* 85

are to hospitals as a setting, for example on pages 31.2, 33.1, or sometimes to illnesses:

— А я сегодня видела нашу курносоую, как смерть, деканшу и не узнала ее!

— Что, Грезка, она так изменилась?

— Нет. Я так изменилась. **Склероз**. Она первая поздоровалась.”[shortened] /

-“Today I saw our snub-nose dekansha [female dean] looking like death - I didn’t recognize her!

-What, Grezka, is she much changed?

-No. I changed. Scoliosis. She was the first to say hello....”⁴⁷²

— Вот видите: сын Лариски **болен сальмонеллезом** и внук Гемпель тоже. Перед сальмонеллезом все мы равны... Кислые у нас в саду нынче яблоки уродились — ими только косых править, как говорит бабушка... А то бы уж я отнесла в больницу к Лариске... (Капа, 1968 г.) / See here, Lariska’s kid is sick with salmonella and Gempel’s grandson as well. In the grip of illness we’re all equals... We have sour apples in our garden this year, and they’re really only good for treating cross-eyes my grandmother says... Otherwise I would bring some to the hospital for Lariska...(Капа, 1968).”⁴⁷³

On occasion, these references to illness form text-chains, of repeated words or motifs. For example, the following set of citations occurs on page 48, and notice the overt connection of *быт* /everyday life with the trials of the routine of ill health:

— Чуть он не упал в открытый люк и не может успокоиться: “Кто бы меня там чесал?” Зачем чесать? **Да диатез, нам в больнице** прокололи однажды за месяц **миллион разных антибиотиков**... Он теперь чешется, весь в **коростах**. Я ногами не сплю. Димочку почесываю... (Четверпална, 1980 г.) / -He almost fell into the hatch and couldn’t calm down: “Who would scratch me there? Why a scratch? Diathesis, we had a lot of injections in the hospital and a million different antibiotics in a month ... Now he scratches himself, there’s already a scab. I don’t

⁴⁷² Gorlanova 30.6

⁴⁷³ Gorlanova 34.1

sleep all night. Scratch-Dimochka does, now and then....
(Chetverpalna, 1980).

— Ты, мать, мусор какой-то собираешь! При чем тут коросты, а? Вот посмотри: **у меня тоже коросты, псориаз**. Эта похожа на Анну Шерер, а эта — маленькая — на топор Раскольникова? Ну и что?! Как бы я ни пила, как бы ни сужалось количество мыслей во мне, все равно эта часть перетягивает все **коросты**, весь этот быт голодный... (Грезка, 1992 г.) / You have collected so much garbage, mom! And what does this have to do with scabs, hmm? Look, I have some scabs too, psoriasis. This looks like Anna Shearer, and this one —the little one—like Raskolnikov’s axe? Well what do we make of that?! No matter how I drink I can’t taper off the number of thoughts I have, all of these scabs are outweighed by this hungry everyday life... (Grezka, 1992)⁴⁷⁴

Pregnancy is also mentioned in passing on several occasions, typically when summer or the exams are discussed, for example, on pages 49.4 and 50.5. The cycle of ‘N.G.’s commentary at the end of the text, from page 66-69, also ends on a note concerning maternity and health concerns (if metaphorical). The citation is too long to quote in full, but the following excerpts, in the order they appear in the text, show these tendencies:

На телеграфе всюду валяются мертвые мыши. Надо ли объяснять, что прошумела кампания с ведрами и криками: **“Дезинфекция — мать порядка”**? [...] / Dead mice lay everywhere in the telegraph. Is there any need to explain that a campaign took place, with buckets and noisy cries, “Disinfection is the mother of order”?

- ... часами лежу на **иголках** иппликатора Кузнецова!
[...] / I lay for hours on a sheet of needles⁴⁷⁵! [...]

- Я ж родинку свела!
Она свела родинку с кончика носа, но в моем-то сознании эта родинка осталась навеки — ее уже не выведешь ничем. О чем она?.. **Что прислать? Вот что: сигарет!**
-Курить становится не по карману - надо бросать!

⁴⁷⁴ Gorlanova 48. 3 and 48.4, respectively.

⁴⁷⁵ The “iplikator Kuznetsova” [a sheet of needles used for therapeutic treatment].

-Четверпална, но и жить не по карману - **тоже бросать?**
А похороны, знаешь, какие дорогие...

-Если серьезно оголодаете, ты мне пиши...звони...

-Ладно, **если голос пропадет, ослабну так, то буду ногтем царапать мембрану** - ты поймешь? [...] /

- I got rid of my birthmark!

She removed the birthmark to the tip of her nose, but to my mind that birthmark goes on forever –it can't be removed. What is she on about?..What to send her? Ah, cigarettes!

-Smoking is too expensive – you have to quit!

-Chetverpalna, should we quit life as well, if it's too much for my pocketbook? A funeral is also quite expensive...

-If you are seriously starving, you write me...call me...

-Okay, if hunger strikes, weakens me so that I can't speak, then I'll scratch the telephone with my nails, but will you understand? [...]

[last paragraph of text:]

Дети! Философы! Помогите мне! (Жди — помогут, сказала бы Грезка). Какой же выход из всего этого? Дети смотрят мультфильмы про пчелу Майю. "Прощай, маленькая личинка!" — говорит кто-то там. Прощай, наше личиночное состояние! Все не так уж плохо! Коммунистическая идеология, начиная от Чернышевского и кончая нашими днями, родила не только Рахметова, но и вот — иппликатор Кузнецова! Он не мог бы появиться, не будь Рахметова с его привычкой спать на гвоздях! На **иголках** иппликатора Кузнецова часами лежат бывшие комсомольские лидеры, но никто не запрещает не бывшим тоже лечиться... Все не так уж плохо. **Грезка вылечится от алкоголизма...** Дети наши вырастут. **Только вот на улицах совсем нет беременных женщин, а так бы все не совсем плохо...** (Н.Г.) /

Children! Philosophers! Help me! (Wait – of course they'll help Grezka.) Where is the exit from all of this? The children are watching a cartoon about Maia, the bee. "Goodbye, little maggot!" someone said, over there. Goodbye, our larval state! Everything isn't so bad! The Communist ideology that began with Cherneshevskii and ended in our day produced not only Rakhmetov but also– the ipplikator Kuznetsova! It couldn't have appeared without Rakhmetov and his habit of sleeping on nails! The ex-Comsomol leader lay for hours on the nails of that ipplikator Kuznetsova, so no one forbade the others [still active in the Comsomol]... Everything isn't so bad. Grezka will recover from alcoholism... Our kids will grow up. Only on the streets are there no pregnant women, though this isn't all bad... (N.G.)

These excerpts contain several notable elements, the first being a slogan that is slightly modified – “Дезинфекция — мать порядка / Disinfectant is the mother of order”⁴⁷⁶, instead of the famous slogan of the anarchists, “Анархия - мать порядка / Anarchy is the mother of order”. Also, there is a reference to Grezka’s alcoholism, as well as a cryptic commentary on maternity in Perm’: “Дети наши вырастут. Только вот на улицах совсем нет беременных женщин, а так бы все не совсем плохо... / Our kids will grow up. Only on the streets are there no pregnant women, but this isn’t all bad...”⁴⁷⁷ This dark commentary serves to introduce Gorlanova’s stories which focused on maternal experience⁴⁷⁸ as well *быт*/everyday life marked by shortages, privation and neglect, and which convey the hallmarks of *чернуха*/gallows humour. This word conveys a black or gallows humour, and grisly stories. Mark Lipovetskii (1964-) has argued that this type of literature stemmed from a journalistic approach to writing, “which depicts an extreme image of *быт*/everyday life that contains recognizable types (e.g. abused prostitute, impoverished mother)”, combining what Sutcliffe calls “Baranskaia’s and Grekova’s legitimation of women in Soviet prose with shocking depictions of the violence and hopelessness comprising the reality of this “typical” group”⁴⁷⁹. Here, the female body and the actions that mark the female body, I aver, are never far from this writing. Nor are the clichés of gendered experience (note the options offered, debased whore or suffering

⁴⁷⁶ Gorlanova 66

⁴⁷⁷ Gorlanova 69

⁴⁷⁸ ie. “The Story of Lake Jolly”.

⁴⁷⁹ Sutcliffe *PoL* 96

mother). The everyday life and how its shortages and pains inscribe themselves on the typical female body is highlighted in the image of the abused prostitute or the impoverished mother. Emphasis on typicality and *быт*/everyday life was linked, in the uncertainty of perestroika and the collapse of the USSR, with crisis⁴⁸⁰ and the comparative freedom of expression allowed for *быт*/everyday life to be highlighted and discussed. For Ulitskaia (1943-), who has enjoyed remarkable success post 1991, this has translated into an “engagement with history, reduced idealism, and a focus on the body as locus of trauma”⁴⁸¹. Repeated quotations that concern maternity and hospital stays highlight the artificiality of these comments, or at least their recurring inclusion in the text. Helena Goscilo observes the connections between the camp/gulag systems and the hospital structure in Soviet times. As noted, she feels that imprisonment and hospitalization both center themselves on strict dependence on measured time and small tasks. This focus on the control of time, its rigid management and institutionalization, is a grotesque form of “masculine” logical time. This form of regimented time exists in direct contrast to the cyclical, amorphous and changing that is associated with “feminine” time, as well as the scattered atemporality of both women’s lifewriting as well as Gorlanova’s *Автобиография/Autobiography* and *Любовь в резиновых перчатках /Love in Rubber Gloves*. The repetitions that thread throughout the text also provide a sense of control and domination for a

⁴⁸⁰ Sutcliffe *PoL* 98

⁴⁸¹ Sutcliffe *PoL* 134

seemingly random text. Examples of edited and repeated text, such as hospital and maternity examples, relativize temporality and challenge typical chronology whilst highlighting new motifs and themes of women's writing.

Women writers, through their new emphasis on openly discussing the body and not using *быт*/everyday life as “proxy for open discussions of women's issues”, instead used *быт*/everyday life as an end in itself and “appropriated the era's emphasis on exposure, negation and systematic critique to challenge gender roles”⁴⁸². Russian culture staunchly associates, or “binds the physical to the feminine”⁴⁸³, ensuring the preeminence of the body in all but the most esoteric of feminist literary discourse. Tat'iana Meleshko has noted that, as part of the eight common traits of Russian women's contemporary prose, a focus on the female body as a theme reflecting women's problems in society and an opposition between male and female are represented, whilst avoiding what is seen as the Western, second-wave preoccupation with “the purpose of women's prose”⁴⁸⁴. She notes, specifically, the clichés of “perestroika criticism when identifying women's prose as a similar accretion of details, characters, and patterns...suggest[ing] independent women [writers] who were aware of gendered oppression yet did not espouse the feminist rhetoric that is anathema to most [Russian] authors”⁴⁸⁵. In this variation, Russian women writers diverge theoretically from the French theorist

⁴⁸² Sutcliffe *PoL* 98

⁴⁸³ Sutcliffe *PoL* 117

⁴⁸⁴ Sutcliffe *PoL* 115

⁴⁸⁵ Sutcliffe *PoL* 116

Cixous, with her emphasis on actively creating a new way of writing for women. Devoid of (stated) feminist intention, the outcome of these changes might be different. But, in practice this difference is less explicit, as the output is, arguably, the same. Out of *чернуха*/gallows humour, *другая проза*/ “other” (dark) prose and segments of *женская литература*/women’s literature have emerged new styles of writing and innovative stories that reflect changing modes of women’s representation.

Broadly, of course, the apex of self-representation is lifewriting. Stanton argues that “every autobiography assumes and reworks literary conventions for writing and reading. And its texture is ultimately determined by the way in which meaning can be signified in a particular discursive context, an (ideo)logical boundary that always already confines the speaking subject”⁴⁸⁶. Stanton further adds that “the female “I” was thus not simply a texture woven of various selves; its threads, its lifelines, came from and extended to others. By that token, this “I” represented a denial of a notion essential to the phallogocentric order: the totalized self-contained subject present-to-itself...because of women’s different status in the symbolic order, autogynography... dramatized the fundamental alterity and non-presence of the subject, even as it asserts itself discursively and strives toward an always impossible self-possession. This gendered narrative involved a different plotting and configuration of the split subject”⁴⁸⁷. Beyond Stanton’s concerns, Kristeva’s notion of woman as

⁴⁸⁶ Gorlanova 135

⁴⁸⁷ Stanton 140

“unnameable”, previously discussed, as well as Irigaray and Cixous’ notions of gendered writing and the writing of experientially different lives, link with the process of writing oneself as a woman; this allows for writing a woman’s experiences, in a language which is dominated at the grammatical and the canonical level by masculinist logic. One way with which Gorlanova destabilizes this foreign language is via unstable naming. Her choice to format the voices of literary Perm’ as quotations allows for acceptance of what appear to be “multiple autobiographical narrators”, who dictate in small doses, their experiences of Perm’. Some narrators seem to have “no particular interest in negotiating the narrative in a helpful manner,”⁴⁸⁸ and Gorlanova seems to enjoy this caprice. The Gorlanova who writes her autobiography for us is assumedly the same authorial “N.G.” who authors comments within and whose writing frames the rest of the story. There are some concerns about this assumption. Stanton outlines her struggle with believing and analyzing the autobiographical, female “I”:

The name of the female author has consistently generated restricted and distorted readings, when her texts were not, as autogynographies had been, simply banned from consideration; in that sense, Foucault was right, although he never spoke of women, because of that gender-bound discursive situation [it is required to] privilege and promote the female signature, make it visible and prominent, or else endure and insure more of the phallogentric same...[but] a signature could always be counterfeit. Given that uncertainty, [one] could take the signature at its face value and promote, with Peggy Kamuf and Mary Jacobus, Derridean and Kristevan notions of the “feminine” as a modality open to both men and women [but this may involve] recourse to abstract and essentialist predefinitions, rather than the heuristic exploration of

⁴⁸⁸ Galloway 326

sexual/textual differences. Even less satisfactory as a solution, however, was a return to Lejeune's pact and to policing a reader who could purportedly confirm anatomical truth...[so, this] text would leave an unresolved contradiction. But why not?⁴⁸⁹

Stanton notes that, as of the time of her essay, she believed that “contradictions were emblematic of broad discursive problems [and] at the very least [she] should clearly mark the contradiction in [her] text—no less overtly than the divided female subject in the autograph—before [exposing her] illogical belief that the gender of the author did make a difference, at this discursive point in time”⁴⁹⁰.

Gorlanova's use of shifting voice intersects with her use of women's writing and biography. By prefacing the work with an ambiguous statement, Gorlanova highlights the unstable and shifting nature of narrative voice in *Любовь в резиновых перчатках / Love in Rubber Gloves*. What is attributed to a particular voice could actually be a community-created and community-accepted fiction. The entire creation of “Perm” is really the creation of “literary Perm” which is pieced together via the statements and stories its residents tell, as they are recorded and commented on by Gorlanova. Her story is also continued through this narration. This puts into doubt the strict veracity of her autobiography, with its literary conceits and its unusual form, as well as several of the quotations attributed (assumedly) to members of the Perm' community, which are laced with references, citations and literary precedent. The

⁴⁸⁹ Stanton 141

⁴⁹⁰ Stanton 141

presence of a first-person interior monologue does not, luckily, hinge on the veracity of their statements. Recent interest in the form and meaning of memoirs and autobiographies allows us more breadth of interest and access to new ways of interpreting Gorlanova's text. One of the main theories relating to voice, narration, and style that was addressed here is metafiction. In terms of autobiography, Gorlanova might well be testing metafiction's avowal that "to write of 'I' is to discover that the attempt to fix subjectivity erases that subjectivity, constructs a new subject"⁴⁹¹. That, or her lack of clarity mirrors this rebellious query, made regarding the inability to clearly describe women's autobiographies: "But does it matter if the place cannot be mapped as long as I can still describe it?"⁴⁹² What was mapped, in *Автобиография /Autobiography* and *Любовь в резиновых перчатках /Love in Rubber Gloves*, was a complex network of interaction between the center and the periphery. This was presented by focusing on the interaction the gendered Russian tradition with women's writing's treatment, especially autobiography and metafiction, and also of space, particularly unstable space. Often, this place seemed, with its repetitions, its point form disjointedness and its episodic narration, seems intended to confuse. In this work, the narrative voice of the author is not consistently problematized in the texts. We are reminded of Gorlanova's use of quotations; are they real? However, for analysis it does not matter if they are true, they are made literary by their inclusion;

⁴⁹¹ Waugh 135

⁴⁹² Gilmore 1

“It is immaterial whether they represent reality, since it is sufficient that they are presented as reality”⁴⁹³. This established Gorlanova as a writer who actively uses an interrogation and imaginative conception of space and characteristics of women’s writing to define her shifting, difficult to define, work. The presentation of a study of Siberian and peripheral space, the historical reception and contemporary view of women’s writing, and of metafiction as a genre laid the foundation for a study of Natalia Smirnova’s texts, which will provide a counterpart and foil for those written by Gorlanova. In addition to building on the comparative framework provided by the study of Gorlanova, an analysis of Smirnova’s texts will add to the theories of women’s writing a deeper understanding of the theory of *l’écriture féminine* and the coding of feminine *быт*/everyday life, peripherality, domestic ritual and the empowerment of typically “feminine” writing style.

PART TWO: SMIRNOVA

The space that must be traversed in Natalia Smirnova’s writing is much more contained, though perhaps no easier to map than Nina Gorlanova’s. The two works of Smirnova’s that will be discussed in this paper are entitled *Народный роман/A Folk Story* and *Женщины и сапожники/ The Women and the Shoemakers*, and were originally

⁴⁹³ Galloway 326

written in Russian, with English translations appearing in 2003 in *Glas*. The Russian texts I consult can be found online from the journal *Ural. Народный роман/A Folk Story*⁴⁹⁴— is translated in *Glas* volume 30 as “Nina”. The English translations that are provided by this volume are consulted in my analysis, though they make translation errors in some cases which I will point out and redress. If the *Glas* translation is referenced, it will be noted in the citation. The overarching theme I would like to address is the incursions of concerns about space(s), femininity and women’s writing and metafictional elements into stories which focus on: a preponderance of domestic symbolism, domestic ritual, the creation of a sense of self, the performativity of gender, and the “empowerment” of typically “feminine” topics and protagonists and writing style. Gorlanova’s writing also exhibits an interest in women’s lives and writing, but this tendency is more pronounced in Smirnova. Her interest in space(s) is not as stylistically straightforward as Gorlanova’s. Smirnova’s focus is on an insular type of space—provincial domestic space—and not a city, like Perm’. She interacts with ‘other’ spaces within the immediate peripheral realm, but does not create the wide-ranging networks that Gorlanova does, instead bringing together close-knit narratives and domestic relationships. This part will be divided between sections dealing with the *Народный роман/A Folk Story* and the attendant issues of cooking, *быт*/everyday life and women’s silence and language. The second part will address *The*

⁴⁹⁴ Smirnova, Natalia, Женщины и сапожники: Рассказы. *Ural* 3 (1999). Sep 2011, N.Pag. NB: this is the online version which is Russian text, and the source from which I draw all Russian quotations.

Women and the Shoemakers, and the themes of women's domestic labour via sewing, matrilineal lines of succession, and enclosed domestic space. Theories highlighting the power of feminine performativity and ritual labour are central to this chapter. In addition, this story contains images of shoemakers and other working class men, who will be included as representative of provincialism and male characters which provide "folksy" touches to Smirnova's work as well as dwell in "additional" public space. The ways in which these characters evoke historical imagery of the provinces and play off the imagery of an independent provincial home, run by women, as well as the intentionally artificial plot devices of the author point to Smirnova's dalliance in literary innovation and the applicability of metafiction as a theory to her text. This chapter hopes to bring attention to Smirnova's talent, and her unique writing voice, and not to reduce her work to commentary on women's writing or feminist concerns emergent in Russia.

To reiterate what was noted in the Introduction, much of the following analysis will rely on the understanding of periphery, space, women's writing and literary theory that was first introduced in Part One. This comment comes both to explain what might seem like an inequitable division of space between Gorlanova and Smirnova, as well as the importance of contrasting and comparing the similar basic influences that are applied to Gorlanova and Smirnova's very different texts.

In each of her stories, Smirnova focuses on the personal lives of "regular" women. Each story is set in a more or less generic Siberian town

(note my introductory comments regarding Sozina's thesis that these towns have a typology, and often represent Ekaterinburg) within a home, and the actions that drive the story are also typically ordinary. The importance of women's domestic labour as a plot device and as a theme is central to Smirnova's portrayal of this quotidian life. Despite the heavy symbolic importance of domestic work in Smirnova's texts, it is not performed as unthinking capitulation to the regime of heteronormative society. Both of her texts work to subtly debunk or challenge the historical associations linked with these spaces, as well as space in its broader interpretation. Domestic labour is performed as a means of survival, but also as a meditative action which allows for the production and fostering of a sense of self, of connectedness to others, rootedness and tradition which links each character either to her female brethren, or to an intimate male counterpart. It is simple for the dynamic mainstream tradition to dismiss literature with an attention for domestic detail, household labour, and "feminine" concerns as being regressive or dull. For, as Romines argues

when a writer turned to domestic life and its recurring rhythm as a primary subject, placing her central characters inside, not outside, this world, she found herself in a literary and psychic realm with few precedents and little terminology, a domestic realm that traditionally privileged privacy and unwritten texts. Until recently, a woman writing fiction about housekeeping was likely to find her choice...excused as cautious, diversionary 'politico-economic strategy' ...[or] the domestic aspects of her work separated from the rest and labeled as relatively trivial...or dismissed as boring... 'nice safe subjects'.⁴⁹⁵

⁴⁹⁵ Romines 8/9

Smirnova's use of these assumptions, concomitant with an exploitation and subversion of their 'boring' status, allows us to see her commentary on domestic space and women's labour, as well as the provincialism that has long interested Russian literature.

An interest in the homelife of a woman is not without precedent in Russian culture; of course the realm of "women's writing" often represented the home and the concerns of romance and family. However, this work was often reductive and over-generalized; what we might compare to the Western popularity of "chick-lit". At times the Russian intelligentsia has paradoxically become associated with well-known women writers, as well as with a return to the domestic (and somewhat fictionalized) "private" sphere:

"privacy" began to be seen as the only honorable and uncompromising response to the system of public compromise. It was not an escape, but rather a way of carving an alternative space and a way of personalizing and de-ideologizing (to use a favorite term of perestroika intellectuals) the official maps of everyday life...⁴⁹⁶

All too often, however, this type of sentiment has been withheld from literature that emphasizes the daily realities of the home, and a sense of inwardness and quotidian domesticity has been associated pejoratively with a type of feminized banality. "In the Russian tradition the figure of *...poshlost'* [*пошлость* -banality] threatens any women writer", as the use

⁴⁹⁶ Boym, Svetlana, "From the Russian Soul to Post-Communist Nostalgia" *Representations* No. 49 (1995) 133-166. 148.

of “gendered metaphors in aesthetics” has been commingled with this sense of *быт*/everyday life, banality and bad taste. The

woman writer has been conceived as...an exalted weaver who by mistake picked up the wrong materials for her knitting, someone who can excel only in textiles, not in texts. All women writers and poets, in including Tsvetaeva and Akhmatova, were accused of displaying various kinds of ‘feminine genetic deficiency’, and each responded to the threats of Madame *Poshlost’* in her own way⁴⁹⁷.

One might argue that this type of dismissive presumption has led some contemporary female writers to bask in the darker side of Russian life, such as the gloomy dystopian prose of Tatiana Tolstaia (1951 -) or the borderline grotesque of a writer like Liudmila Petrushevskiaia (1938 -). Smirnova’s rejection of such a path combined with her refusal to engage in traditional modes of feminine writing makes her work more unusual than many other contemporary options.

This type of perjorative attitude is intricately connected to conceptions of *быт*/everyday life as gendered and will be discussed further in my analysis of *Народный роман/A Folk Story* and *Женщины и сапожники/The Women and the Shoemakers*. To state broadly this chapter’s influences, the work of Ann Romines, especially *The Home Plot: Women, Writing and Domestic Ritual*, is very important to this chapter. Romines’ interesting and thoughtful study of domestic ritual in American women’s literature helps to inform this study via her theories concerning the legibility of domestic codes that are inscribed by domestic labor, as well as the importance of women’s ritual housework and domesticity.

⁴⁹⁷ Boym “Poetics of Banality” 65

Romines' study provides a framework for the synthesis of anthropological, sociological, historical and literary women's study to prove that women's literature, so often denigrated, has depth and breadth to offer the attentive reader. With close readings of several thematically connected works of American literature, Romines shows the continuation of several separate themes throughout this women's writing. She separates her work into chapters focused on individual novels, but with an overarching interest in applying the "feminist scholarship of last twenty years, work in history anthropology psychology, and women's studies, as well as the literary gynocritics...concerned with 'woman as writer...producer of textual meaning'⁴⁹⁸ in the domestic sphere". Chapters include scholarship on realism and housekeeping in Harriet Beecher Stowe and Sarah Orne Jewett; the repudiation of domestic labor and synthesis of women's culture in Willa Cather; the female lines of domesticity and aging housekeepers of Eudora Welty; and the repetitious lives of domestic caretakers that interest Mary Wilkins Freeman. In addition to the breadth of research, we can take from Romines a laudably expansive framework of one way to read women's literature. Onto this exploration of the home and women's work, this study adds the Slavic background of women's studies and particularly Siberian and provincial concerns. Barbara Heldt has researched and written extensively on Russian women's work and writing, as well as the feminine association of women with the domestic ideal and

⁴⁹⁸ Romines 9

highly gendered roles⁴⁹⁹. Her insight on the historical and modern conception of femininity will be used in this chapter to bring understanding to the repeated use of gendered terms, gendered judgments and the tired association of women with what are actually unisex descriptors. This intersects with the Russian understanding of *быт*/everyday life and *бытие*/objective reality, and the cyclic time and the maternal lines which are proffered by domestic labor in literature.

In the two stories *Народный роман/A Folk Story* and *Женщины и сапожники/The Women and the Shoemakers* female characters repeatedly perform acts which are gendering, insofar as they are traditionally “feminine” activities. This work is performed inside of these enclosed domestic spaces, and the actions help to define the boundaries and perception of provincial and peripheral space. In *Народный роман/A Folk Story*, the protagonist is abandoned by her husband, and falls into an affair with a married man, haplessly, and is forever cooking for him. In *Женщины и сапожники/The Women and the Shoemakers*, Smirnova attempts to learn if we “could possibly imagine a heroine, or simply a protagonist, to whom nothing very much has ever happened”⁵⁰⁰. This protagonist is a seamstress, who sews endlessly with her mother and daughter. Their feminine work is the major way by which they mediate the world; their gendered actions allow them entrance into society. These unceasing performances of feminine labour coincide with the causal

⁴⁹⁹ See: *Terrible Perfection: Women and Russian Literature*.

⁵⁰⁰ Smirnova, trans, 212/13

gendering of domestic labour as feminine that has maintained itself in Russia even through the banner of equality championed under socialism. The cult of motherhood (and the attendant domestic bliss) that rose out of Stalin's time enhanced and spread this same ideal of "happy domestic femininity" throughout the USSR and it has endured in many ways into modern Russia, but without inciting a "true" sense of respect for women. The author Shalamov, while incarcerated, said of motherhood in Stalin's era:

Motherhood represents a high ideal and at the same time something very real to everyone...But even this one supposed ray of life is false...This glorification of one's mother is camouflage, a means of deceit...The mother cult is a peculiar smokescreen used to conceal...The attitude towards women is the litmus test of any ethical system. Let us note here that [there] was the coexistence of the cult of motherhood with contempt for women⁵⁰¹.

This essentialist view which associated the domestic and the feminine naturally may have come from the fact that "feminism of the Western type [sic], let alone a women's liberation movement, until recently was in its infancy"⁵⁰². The unequal division of labour continued unabated into the era of new capitalism and the dual burden of working (the majority of all Soviet/Russian women worked) and domestic duties remained with women. Another method by which the mainstream

reiterated [and justified] the gender norms of consumption was by noting how men were simply unable to prepare food. Just as many of these [popular and cooking-related] texts emphasized that women will, by nature or by fate, assume the family's kitchen

⁵⁰¹ Boobbyer, Philip ed. *The Stalin Era* (Routledge: New York, 2000) 82.

⁵⁰² Dzierwanowski, M.K. *Russia in the Twentieth Century* (Prentice Hall: London, 2002) 357.

duties, they implied that men will not be playing any kind of significant role in cooking for the family.⁵⁰³

In Russia, this was underscored in culture and literature by the enduring concept of “natural” labour division based on gender (despite communism's influence), as well as the harsh concept of the “superfluous man”, who is generally incompetent and unable to finish anything of worth⁵⁰⁴.

In the 1960's, a researcher found that:

As far as help in the house is concerned, these men make a poor showing. Clearly they were not domesticated. While their wives devoted more than an hour and a quarter daily to the care of clothes and the home, they got by with 16 minutes! And when it came to cooking, the wives gave nearly two and a half hours to the husbands' 15 minutes! This fragmentary picture, thirty years old, may be far from reliable. The Soviet home has improved, prepared and packaged foods are much more readily available, and the husbands may have progressed in the direction of domestication. Yet the subjective impression which I personally gathered in the Soviet Union was that the women are still carrying the heavy end of the stick. It is important to notice, however, that the extra burden which the Soviet working mother carries appears to be not that of parenthood, but of *domesticity*.⁵⁰⁵

Indeed, this domestic work seems often unnoticed. It is a common fear that women who write about domestic lives might have their work ignored, or linked to socio-political commentary. Romines argues that

when a writer turned to domestic life and its recurring rhythm as a primary subject, placing her central characters inside, not outside, this world, she found herself in a literary and psychic realm with few precedents and little terminology, a domestic realm that

⁵⁰³ Neuhaus, Jessamyn, “Way to a Man’s Heart: Gender Roles, Domestic Ideology, and Cookbooks in the 1950s” *Journal of Social History* Vol. 3 (1999) 540/41.

⁵⁰⁴ Gheith, Jehanne M. “The Superfluous Man and the Necessary Woman: A “Re-Vision”” *Russian Review*. 55- 2 (Apr., 1996).

⁵⁰⁵ Mace, David R “The Employed Mother in the U.S.S.R”. *Marriage and Family Living*. 23- 4. (Nov., 1961): 333 italics added.

traditionally privileged privacy and unwritten texts. Until recently, a woman writing fiction about housekeeping was likely to find her choice...excused as cautious, diversionary ‘politico-economic strategy’...[or, as noted,] the domestic aspects of her work separated from the rest and labeled as relatively trivial...or dismissed as boring... ‘nice safe subjects’.⁵⁰⁶

Despite this, there has been an upsurge of women choosing domestic life as their subject matter, “to write about housekeeping in a new way, not as the unarticulated denouement of every female story but as a subject and ongoing substance, in itself”⁵⁰⁷. In *Народный роман/A Folk Story*, Smirnova’s protagonist Nina is defined in large part by and through her cooking. This domestic activity and the way in which it is gendered is not presented as natural as it has been in much of the rest of society, but its performative and repetitive nature is highlighted by the iterative nature of domestic work and the ruptures within this. Primarily in response to Judith Butler’s concept of the performativity of gender, and Helene Cixous’ and Luce Irigaray’s discussion of language, Smirnova’s story *Народный роман/A Folk Story* will be discussed.

ANALYZING NINA: COOKING AND THE PERFORMATIVITY OF GENDERED LABOUR

“Nina”, in Russian is entitled *Народный роман/A Folk Story*, hinting at the ubiquity of the story being told. The plot of *Народный роман/A Folk Story* is extremely straightforward: Nina is walked out on

⁵⁰⁶ Romines 8

⁵⁰⁷ Romines 9

by her husband. She continues to live in the home, with her young daughter (about whom we know nothing, and who does not figure in the story), until she meets a man who has responded to her ad selling old music. They eat together, have an affair that spans several days (and meals), and Nina finally meets both his wife (also having an affair) and attends the theatre as his guest. These three spaces are presented, with Nina's home serving as the domestic center, and the two other spaces serving as "additional". In the end, they continue dating, several days after their first encounter. Most importantly, this story couches itself in the language of food and cooking, and in questions surrounding women's speech. In fact, the entire structure of the story is created via meals and cooking, as well as the reciprocal purchase of foodstuffs. An overview follows.

On their first encounter, the first meal Nina makes is salmon with onion, oil and olives. The man buys beer to accompany it. They woo each other over this meal, with him touching her hand over the table⁵⁰⁸. Silently, for she had learned from her husband that "when you kept quiet you seemed more convincing and they [men] left you alone", she gestures for some wine, and the man goes out to buy two bottles of wine. This wine is drunk with a piece of meat which Nina cooks to accompany it, the empty bottles and plates signaling that the man "must be going"⁵⁰⁹. When this is quickly vetoed, Nina immediately "happily prepared some open

⁵⁰⁸ Smirnova *Nina* trans 223

⁵⁰⁹ Smirnova *Nina* trans 224

sandwiches with sprats...and a few more drinks”⁵¹⁰ and some fruit preserves. They fall asleep. Before he can leave in the morning, Nina reverses the pattern from the day before, and buys beer for him. He begins to drink and decides to stay for a bit. He tells smutty stories, which we will later examine more closely⁵¹¹. They consummate their affair, and afterwards buy brandy and food together, eating and realizing that: “From raw to cooked, from hard to soft, from strange to familiar. That’s the way it goes. Not only in the frying pan”⁵¹². Later, he grabs her, “rich and creaming as well-cooked soup”; they awake the next morning to a “protracted breakfast”⁵¹³. After a telephone conversation with his wife, ad-libbed by Nina to the man’s anger, she walks him to his house. As soon as they arrive, he pours them a drink of wine and leaves her to find some fruit in his kitchen; suddenly, his wife appears. Kicked out, Nina and the man have lunch – “what else can we do if we’ve been thrown out?”⁵¹⁴. When he comes back the next day, he meets his wife’s lover Felix, and after a spat, she and Felix leave to “have a bite to eat”, completely ignoring the man and his anger⁵¹⁵. The last interaction of the story occurs around the concept of fruit preserves, which will be introduced below⁵¹⁶.

In *Народный роман/A Folk Story*, Nina is left by her husband after a row instigated by her cooking and preparation of meals, which he

⁵¹⁰ Smirnova *Nina* trans 225

⁵¹¹ Smirnova *Nina* trans 227

⁵¹² Smirnova *Nina* trans 229

⁵¹³ Smirnova *Nina* trans 229

⁵¹⁴ Smirnova *Nina* trans 231

⁵¹⁵ Smirnova *Nina* trans 233

⁵¹⁶ First mentioned in Smirnova *Nina* trans 235

deemed repetitious and not nourishing. After finding out from a woman friend that he was cheating on her, Nina was “stunned. Although she did not confront him with it, he seemed to sense that she knew and deliberately got on her nerves by complaining every single day that he was fed nothing but fruit preserves”⁵¹⁷. This sweet preserves is symbolic of several things. In the Greek tradition, sweet preserves are a symbol of hospitality⁵¹⁸. In Ukrainian folklore, they were associated with the ritual cleansing and attendant food preparations that preceded childbirth⁵¹⁹. More broadly, preserves most likely represent general domestic work preformed by women. The laborious canning of these fruits, to be stored in the home for later, might also represent the ‘sickly sweet’ trappings of domestic life. The “stickiness” of the preserves might be a subtle nod to the fact that Nina’s husband felt “stuck” in her domestic routine of canning, meals, and parenthood. Nina is often referred to in terms like this; she stews like kasha, is warm like soup, and, perhaps it is implied, is as ‘sticky’ as sweet preserves. This is a refrain that Nina repeats with both men in her life, with strikingly different results that represent the two types of men with whom she is dealing. This sort of metaphor, as is typical for Smirnova, is based in the quotidian details of domestic life.

The assertion of the husband is that he is being fed (note the passive construction here; he is not “eating” or participating in this meal,

⁵¹⁷ Smirnova *Nina* trans 222

⁵¹⁸ See results on GoogleScholar and results such as http://himalaya.socanth.cam.ac.uk/collections/journals/contributions/pdf/CNAS_31_02_05.pdf 4

⁵¹⁹ Boriak, Olena, “The Midwife in Traditional Ukrainian Culture: Ritual, Folklore and Mythology” *Folklorica* Vol 7.2 (2002) 35.

he is passively “being fed” in English translation) inappropriate meals, “that she, Nina, was filling him with sticky-sweet apricot preserves”:

Нину взяла оторопь, и хотя она ему не вменила, он будто почувствовал, что она знает, и стал каждый божий день попрекать компотом, каждый божий день нарочно изводил ее компотом. Что она, Нина, опоила его липким абрикосовым компотом, а ей слышалось “отравила”⁵²⁰ / Nina was stunned. Although she did not confront him with it, he seemed to sense that she knew and deliberately got on her nerves by complaining that every single day that he was fed nothing but fruit preserves.

The repetition of this domestic act, feeding her husband with home-prepared preserves and his complaints, culminates in Nina mishearing his complaints one day and the first major twist of the story: “She [Nina] thought he had said ‘killing’ him” [instead of filling him]”. In this way, her actions are interpreted as the unacceptable performance of her gender; and “Тогда она, вознегодовав, выплеснула банку компота на стену, а он, премного довольный, удалился неведомо куда, как сгинул,.. / one day in a fury she spattered a whole jar of preserves all over the wall and he, mightily pleased with himself, went off never to be seen again”⁵²¹. The unusual and “unlady-like” act with which Nina breaks the repetition of her days (filled with feeding and being complained to) also ruptures her marriage. The un-feminine response to criticism and Nina’s perceived lack of feminine domestic skill or prowess in cooking and serving meals is grounds enough for this husband to leave her.

⁵²⁰ Smirnova *Nina* trans 222

⁵²¹ Smirnova *Nina* trans 222

Beyond this, a close look at the Russian phrasing concerning compote hints at an alternate and more nuanced translation than that provided by Glas. This feeding of preserves is interpreted as a spell of sorts, literally speaking the translation goes as follows: “Что она, Нина, опоила его липким абрикосовым компотом, а ей слышалось “отравила”/ That she, Nina, was over-feeding him with sticky apricot compote, and she heard “poisoning”. This phrase, “опоить компотом / to poison with compote” recalls another: “опоить приворотным зельем/to bewitch with love potion”. This concept of over-feeding or poisoning with potion can be commonly associated with “bewitching”. Of course, this is linked both with notions of girlish femininity – fooling with love potions— as well as with the image of the female sorceress or witch. In this reference, one again notes the close proximity the Siberian or provincial woman, when unsatisfactorily domestic, shares with the literary concept of the witch—recall here, also, the image of Baba Yaga implied by Gorlanova. Indeed, Maguire and Rampton concur that “the periphery is often seen as backward, organized according to tradition and ritual rather than reason”, and connections like this underline the implication as well as the link between women and ritual. This phrase also underlines the psychological importance of cooking to the daily *быт*/everyday of domestic life.

Instead of this rupture signaling a change in her behaviour or in her priorities, Nina seems unremittingly dedicated to cooking, and through this enacts her femininity via the repetition of her gender long after her

husband has left her. Soon a new man comes to her home, an “intellectual man” in front of whom “Нина теряла мыслительную осторожность при виде интеллигентных мужчин, хотя знала про их увертливость и непонятную уклончивость с женщинами.../ Nina lost the ability to think straight although she was well aware how equivocal and evasive they could be in their dealings with women”⁵²². He is difficult, but she acts too quickly and silently to engage herself to his service:

Нина резко немела, но немота была позывная, толкала на поступки, а какие? Чего он хочет, как угадать? Но тут она предпочитала не размышлять, здесь она слушала свое упорство, которое выводило на правильную дорогу, словно шахтерский фонарь во лбу./Her silence was actually a challenge, a call for action, but action of what sort? How could she guess what he wanted? At this point, however she preferred not to deliberate. Instead she relied on her own obstinacy to guide her onto the true path, like the torch on a miner’s forehead⁵²³.

She quickly is engaged in wanting to “grovel at his feet slavishly grateful for she knew not what”⁵²⁴, and begins to cook for this stranger: “Пока он разбирал папку с нотами, которые Нина решила продать, чтоб не валялись в кабинете, она плавно отсекла голову горбуше и заправила луком и маслом с оливками.../While he was looking through the folder of music she decided to sell because it was cluttering up the study, she deftly removed the hide from a salmon and garnished the fish with spring onions, oil and olives”⁵²⁵, and to lay the table. She was quickly reassured by his happiness that this was exactly what he had wanted, and her

⁵²² Smirnova *Nina* trans 222/3

⁵²³ Smirnova *Nina*, trans 223

⁵²⁴ Smirnova *Nina* trans 223

⁵²⁵ Smirnova *Nina* trans 223

“singular path” of domestic service for this man, is clear to her. Their relationship quickly progresses and Nina is understood via her domestic cooking and service. The feminine ideal which Nina is theoretically embodying by way of this domestic ritual is complete at the beginning of their tryst. At first, “Они ужинали долго, смакуя каждый кусок, будто ели впервые, — /they took a long time over the meal, savouring each morsel, as if they were eating for the first time” as the quality and their enjoyment of the meal paves the way for a more intimate set of actions. Nina’s good cooking and domestic skill has hooked her a new man, as he meaningfully initiates his first physical contact with her over the *table*⁵²⁶ (“Он протянул руку через стол...”). This collusion of sensual imbibing and the telling of sexually explicit stories is a motif which follows in the text, as her companion tells bawdy stories about prostitutes while drinking beer after dinner. These smutty stories are most likely stories about the man himself⁵²⁷, though he passes them off as stories of “friends”, and their telling and some drinking precedes Nina and the man’s first sexual encounter.

Nina’s action after feeling his touch is telling, as it is explained to the reader in terms of her feminine practice as a wife who wanted to avoid conflict in her domestic sphere. Nina is reluctant to respond to the man’s touch since

⁵²⁶ Smirnova *Nina* 223

⁵²⁷ Smirnova *Nina* 226-228, 232

Нина не спешила отвечать, она от мужа научилась осторожно думать о словах, потому что тот лез из кожи от строгости, если слово было не то. Из-за “локонков”, которые ей хотелось завить девочке к утреннику, вышли несоразмерные действия с выброшенной в окно энциклопедией молодой семьи и угрозами уйти из жизни через балкон. Нина эту неожиданность запомнила, потому что было смешно и ужасно вместе./ She had learnt from her husband to choose her words carefully, because he got quite exasperated if she picked the wrong one. Her idea of doing her daughter’s hair in ‘sausage –curls’⁵²⁸ for a nursery-school parade provoked a reaction out of all proportion, which included the Young Family Encyclopedia [a Russian how-to manual for young wives and families] being hurled out of the window and threats to jump off the Balcony. Nina remembered the incident because it was both funny and frightening⁵²⁹

In Glas’ translation, this word “локон” is rendered as “sausage curl”. In Russian, there is not, as far as this author is aware, a hard and fast relationship between the word for “ringlet” and “локон”, though there are many “girly” translations listed in dictionary reference which support a “feminine” sounding translation: ringelet, kiss-curl, lovelock, twirl⁵³⁰. Glas’ translation makes this reference overtly food-oriented. For the purposes of analysis, this possibility will be entertained. Nina’s use of language is highly irritating to her husband, a man initiated into the language of the phallogocentric Symbolic, to reference Cixous, Derrida and Irigaray. Cixous argued that:

The exclusion of women from writing (and speaking) is linked to the fact that the Western history of writing is synonymous with the history of reasoning and with the separation of the body from the text. The body entering the text disrupts the masculine economy of superimposed linearity and tyranny: the feminine is the “overflow”

⁵²⁸ NOTE here, the issues with this translation that was done for GLAS. Your author here does NOT concur that this is an actual or implied connotation of the word *lokonki*.

⁵²⁹ Smirnova *Nina* 224

⁵³⁰ “локон”, Abbyy Lingovo Pro, 2008-2011 version.

of “luminous torrents”, a margin of “excess” eroticism and free-play not directly attributable to the fixed hierarchies of masculinity⁵³¹.

With Nina, her exclusion has come from her inclusion of the domestic (and the corporeality of the domestic) and not directly from the body (though insofar as women are considered feminine, and domestic work is considered feminine work, her body helps to define her labour), as her understanding of the world is mediated by the domestic sphere, and typically feminine provinciality influence her language. To her, “sausage-curls” is a sensible and somewhat endearing way by which she can describe a cylindrical curl in her daughter’s hair, but to her husband the unexpected incursion of a provincial metaphor into the well-ordered language which operates by sets of unchanging rules and norms is a sizable slight. The actions which are powerful markers for Nina, such as the fruit preserves that she prepares that so irritate her ex-husband or the hole she finds in her lover’s pocket that she sees as proof he is unloved, are important to her because she interprets these domestic codes in a way that allows their influence to push far beyond the literal realm. That they are mistaken by critics as unimportant details of *быт*/everyday life, or baffle other characters in the story speaks to the privileging of masculinist codes and language. Romines contends that “domestic language may seem recessive and unimportant to readers who have not learned to read it”⁵³². Nina’s life “can’t be reduced to a series of facts or activities that can be

⁵³¹ Cixous, Helene, “Cixous, Helene”. Briganti, Chiara and Robert Con Davis. *Stanford Presidential Lectures and Symposia in the Humanities and Arts*. Npag.

⁵³² Romines 13

added up or taken away [but by] events that can be repeated without repetition: each time they happen differently”⁵³³, and this domestic reference represents what made sense to Nina at the time. It could be argued that this flexible use of a language which referred to her own experiential living is a type of Irigaray-ian reclamation of a women’s language, or the mediation of phallogocentrism with the feminine⁵³⁴: “For when a writer turned to domestic life and its recurring rhythm as a primary subject, placing her central characters inside, not outside, this world, she found herself in a literary and psychic realm with few precedents and little terminology”⁵³⁵. Throughout the work, Nina is understood as the manifestation of her domestic actions, and her domestic work is seen as a demonstration of how she feels. This displays “qualities that Rybczynski says have been associated with housework since the 17th C: enforced privacy, intimacy, and a rich, reflective interior life”⁵³⁶.

There is an absence of masculinist time in the story, and what is considered “feminine” mythic, repetitive, cyclical time takes its place. It is noted that the domestic

way of life [is] very much like the ‘housework as ritual enactment’ described by theologian Kathryn Allen Rabuzzi. Such housekeeping, weighted with significance for the woman who performs it, “makes the individual player in a scene far older and larger than her individual self. No longer does she participate in profane historical time; instead, she is participating in mythic

⁵³³ Irigaray, Luce, *Je, tu, nous: Towards a Culture of Difference*. (Routledge: New York, 1993) 115.

⁵³⁴ Irigaray *Je, tu, nous...* 67-74

⁵³⁵ Romines 8

⁵³⁶ Romines 69

time”. The time that this woman spends at her household tasks is “typically characterized by amorphousness or circularity or both, and a content frequently imperceptible within the structures of dominant male culture”in such rites, according to Mircea Eliade...the ritual maintains a continuity of belief and knowledge from one generation to the next.⁵³⁷

This also reflects a similarity to Gorlanova, and her interest in temporal shifts and circular time. This represents a different conception of both temporal space and story-telling. The openness to non-traditional modes, which could spur on the creation of a new language, has the potential to reprivilege feminine language and to empower a typically disempowered language. However this interaction, instead of happening in Irigaray’s ideal in which the female language describing women’s lives and experiences would be supported, happens in an unsupportive male-dominated sphere, and the violent reaction of her husband serves to inculcate further deference to male opinion, male language, and the patriarchal view of femininity. Through his frightening reactions to her “misuse” of language,

Еще муж научил стойко запереться на вопрос “зачем” или “почему”. Любые ответы — трамвай встал, ключ забыла, передумала — вызывали фонтан других “почему” и запутывали ее, а его побуждали кидаться на стены. Никакой ответ не годился, надо было молчать, тогда все успокаивалось. Когда молчишь, выглядишь убедительно, и никто не привяжется./ Her husband had also made her wary of questions beginning with ‘why’ and ‘what for’ [lest her answer be unsuitable, which] made him tear out his hair. No answer was ever any good. The best thing was to keep quiet and let it pass over. When you keep quiet you seemed more convincing and they left you alone.⁵³⁸

⁵³⁷ Romines 6

⁵³⁸ Smirnova *Nina* trans 224

Nina decides to remain silent. Following Nina's unsure and silent response to her gentleman guest, a nod of the head, she quickly begins to cook for and serve him once again. Drinking wine, "Nina reflected aloud that the wine would go down even better with a nice piece of meat" and immediately "the meat hissed and sizzled in the deep frying pan" as she cooked it⁵³⁹/Нина вслух подумала — нет, к вину я все-таки пожарю мясо. Мясо гнулось и пузырилось в глубокой сковороде, они покраснелись, а потом ели и пили до обморока, до того, что не могли пошевелиться и сидели неподвижные от счастья жизненных соков". Such feminine and domestic work is looked upon kindly, and the product of her labour quickly consumed for its "life giving juices". The feminine ideal of the untiring cook and nourisher of the household is upheld by her repetitive behaviour.

After this "nice piece of meat", Nina discovers that the man has a wife, to whom he should be returning. The embarrassed and easily flushed Nina prepares to bid goodbye to this visitor, and he "Гость встал, с пониманием поцеловал Нинину луковую руку и поклонился, а Нина покраснела от близкого вида его ячменных волос /stood up, kissed Nina's onion-smelling hand meaningfully and bowed, while Nina blushed at the proximity of his barleycorn hair"⁵⁴⁰. As he is leaving the feminine ideal, Nina, he hesitates and instead sits down again, obviously expecting continued service. Nina capitulates, merely repeating the things he says to

⁵³⁹ Smirnova *Nina* trans 224

⁵⁴⁰ Smirnova *Nina* trans 225

her. He decides, “Еще пару часов можно. Даже нужно. Нина радостно сделала бутерброды со шпротами, накрыв мертвых золотящихся рыбок лимонными колесами./ I can stay another hour of two. In fact I must. Nina happily prepared some open sandwiches with sprats, topping the dead gold-flecked fish with thin slices of lemon⁵⁴¹”. The dead-ness of the fish served is twice commented on (here as well as on page 223⁵⁴²), as is the careful preparation of the flesh given for consumption like it is a kind of ritual religious offering. The *labour* of cooking is highlighted, as everything from the preparation to the garnish and presentation is described to the reader. The repetition and minutia of her actions in the domestic sphere are carefully represented, as if they are the keys to understanding Nina. Indeed, it is only when she breaks from her well-performed femininity that she is described as a thinking subject by the author. At first, when she is left by her husband and her planned domestic future is interrupted, she is described in domestic and cooking terms:

Понятно, что изменения в женщине, покинутой мужем, так или иначе происходят, и изгибается ее душевный ствол. Для Нины следствиями развода стала недоверчивость, удивляющаяся самой себе, страх перемен и упорство. Кроме того, у ней образовалась привычка беречь тепло, кутаясь в тяжелые халаты, меховые куртки и шали со скатавшимися шариками шерсти. Закутавшись, она томилась, как каша в духовке, и умело любила это томление, дорожила им и опасалась сквозняков и раскрытых дверей, так как подозревала, что они приносят неладное./Being left by her husband is bound to change a woman one way or another, to produce a kind of curvature of the emotional spine. For Nina the consequences of the divorce were a lack of trust in people that

⁵⁴¹ Smirnova *Nina* trans 225

⁵⁴² “...she deftly removed the head from a salmon”...

surprised even her, a fear of change and a mulish obstinacy. What is more she developed the habit of trying to keep warm by *enveloping herself* in heavy dressing gowns, fur jackets and shawls with tangled bobbles of wool. Wrapped up like this *she would stew away like kasha in the oven*, wallowing in the slow warmth...⁵⁴³

Like “kasha”, she “stews” in her cocoon home, and layers herself in protection against change and the world outside. She is described even in sleep in feminine terms:

Нина...снился ей звенящий насекомыми пахучий луг с цветами и лимонницами...но спала она некрепко, томилаь и вставала, чтобы подставить ему под ноги удобную лавочку, накрыть пледом и просто полюбоваться...Очкарик без очков валит наповал, а спящий очкарик пронзает сердце двойной стрелой, еще и материнской.../She dreamed of a sweet-smelling meadow with flowers, fluttering butterflies and humming insects...but she slept lightly and kept getting up to put a small stool under his feet, cover him with a tartan blanket or simply to feast her eyes on him...A bespectacled man without his glasses is irresistible, but doubly so when he is asleep, for he appeals to the maternal instinct as well.⁵⁴⁴

When Smirnova provides her heroine with small rebellions against the normative feminine and domestic ideal, she seems to be pointing to the very constructedness of this concept. Judith Butler famously argued that the construction of sexual identity is based on cultural and stylized gender performance, and that society acts as a regulative and normative authority, coercing people to perform gender-specific acts or to be ostracized. The implication of this theory is that people, during the practice of these repetitions, could both a) notice and become critical of these iterations that come to define one’s gender, and b) use the awareness

⁵⁴³ Smirnova *Nina* trans 222, italics added.

⁵⁴⁴ Smirnova *Nina* trans 226

of constructed gender and regulated norms in order to see the constructedness of what is touted as “natural” or “true”⁵⁴⁵. Butler’s argument was that gender *polic*es sex, and that gender is a discourse placed by culture onto a neutral “prediscursive surface” (a person) via repeated inscription⁵⁴⁶ .

Regarding the possibility for sustained rebellion against these regulatory norms, Butler is slightly vaguer⁵⁴⁷. Amy Allen notes that “her analysis is somewhat unique among discussions of power in its attempt to theorize simultaneously both the features of cultural domination and the possibilities of resistance to and subversion of such domination”, though she meets with varying degrees of success⁵⁴⁸. Though not a total liberation, Butler’s notion that constructed gender norms are resistable relies on her staunch belief that, in repetition, acts cannot remain intact and self-identical⁵⁴⁹. Instead, by their own repetitive nature, they always exist “anew in a multiplicity of contexts, like citation”⁵⁵⁰. This leaves the “contingent and fragile possibility” for power to be redeployed upon itself

⁵⁴⁵ See Butler’s *Gender Trouble* (NY: Routledge, 1990) passim and for political impact and her *Excitable Speech: A Politics of the Performative*; as well, see: Smith, Sidonie, Smith, Sidonie. “Performativity, Autobiographical Practice, Resistance” *Women, autobiography, theory: a reader* (University of Wisconsin Press, Madison, 1998) 108-115. In this article she speaks to the ways in which autobiographical practice is both engaging in performative action.

⁵⁴⁶ Butler *Gender Trouble* 7

⁵⁴⁷ For a study of this, note: Lloyd, Moya, “Performativity, Parody, Politics” *Theory, Culture & Society* Vol 16.2 (April 1999):195-213.

⁵⁴⁸ Allen, Amy “Power Trouble: Performativity as Critical Theory” *Constellations* (Vol.5.4 December 1998): 456-471. 456

⁵⁴⁹ Butler *Bodies* 244/265

⁵⁵⁰ Disch, Lisa, “Review: Excitable Speech: A Politics of the Performative by Judith Butler; The Psychic Life of Power: Theories in Subjection by Judith Butler” *Political Theory* (August 1999):545-559. 550

in resistance⁵⁵¹. Beyond this constant “possibility”, the following idea also informs my slightly extended version of Butler’s sites of resistance: Butler insists that the repetitions required to perform gender endure “*necessary failures*”. These require the continued repetition of gendering actions and, as such, guarantee a multiplicity of acts⁵⁵². Despite any disciplinary regulation—the “process of iterability”—the fact remains that “gender” is not “natural”, opening this gender discourse to *de*-construction as performances or acts are changed and subverted⁵⁵³. Drawing on this belief in the inevitable failure and rupture of gender-performance, my paper maintains that sites of rebellion and resistance are routinely accessible in the performance of gender in life as *well* as in its representation in fiction (this goes slightly beyond Butler). These sites of resistance are not always bold, but, instead, these self-aware moments create fissures in the monolithic and dominant discourse; these fissures allow for small changes to be made in the next iteration of a gendered act.

Butler notes that this performance of gender subjectivity becomes “ritualized production”⁵⁵⁴. In Butlerian fashion, Smirnova elicits a quick flash of an openness for reinvention which is at odds with the iteration of gender (the regulatory ideal), and performativity. Performativity is a reiterative, citational practice that produces the effects that it names. Gender norms work performatively to constitute the materialization of the

⁵⁵¹ Disch 550

⁵⁵² Butler *Gender* 145 italics added.

⁵⁵³ Butler *Gender Trouble* and *Bodies that Matter: On the Discursive Limits of Sex* (NY: Routledge, 1993) passim.

⁵⁵⁴ Butler *Bodies that Matter* 95

body's sex, the idea of sexual difference, and to strengthen the heteronormative structure of society. This all means that gender is materialized and performed everyday, but is not "natural", and that small rebellions against it can have far reaching consequences. Among these consequences can be a breakdown in the heteronormative family structure, as was evidenced in *Народный роман/A Folk Story*. When Nina rejects the quiet feminine ideal, even for a moment, she is faced with a lack of surety about her role and rejection or anger by the males around her. These small rebellions against or re-inscriptions of the norm are effective in causing a shift in relational statuses, but are ultimately shown to be unwittingly engaged in. Despite her effective disruption of the normative pattern of her behaviour, Nina is ever-eager to re-engage herself in the domestic labour which engenders her, and in the quiet suppression of her own instincts. When she is criticized for her forays into the masculine world of language (pg 224 for example), she falls silent, and when she acts unexpectedly or "brashly", she does so "схулиганила Нина, не особенно беспокоясь сбить его с толку /not really expecting this to disconcert"⁵⁵⁵. When he states that he must go because of his wife, she is instantly off-balance in her home (the domestic sphere). As she asks this nosily, brashly and un-femininely, and:

Нина вдруг разволновалась до того, что встала и решительно вынула из холодильника трехлитровую банку компота и принялась искать открывашку в полном и окончательном замешательстве, напоминая себе, что ищет и как это выглядит

⁵⁵⁵ Smirnova *Nina* trans 225

— серп и молот. Серп и молот./Nina suddenly got so agitated that she took a three litre jar of fruit preserves firmly out of the fridge and started searching for the bottle opener in a state of complete and utter confusion, constantly reminding herself what she was looking for and what it looked like—a hammer and sickle, a hammer and sickle.⁵⁵⁶

He quickly asks her why she asked, clearly uncomfortable with this shift in power which has left her the (masculine) questioner and him the confessor; “Он испытал вдруг дикое облегчение...что это ловушка/ He also realized straightaway that this was a trap⁵⁵⁷”. This is a trap which he feels “feminizes” his role, much in the way that Butler insists that the man is “named”, and this naming (and accordance of a gender) is “at once the setting of a boundary and also the repeated inculcation of a norm” against the “other” of the female⁵⁵⁸. If she is occupying the role of masculine in this exchange, then he must be forced into the feminine role, which disquiets him.

Naming is an interesting feature of Smirnova’s story, as certain characters remain unnamed or confined by “role” names. For example, Nina, the protagonist is named throughout though her lover is never named. His wife is never named, though her lover “Felix”, whom we encounter once, is referred to by name five times. Nina’s ex-husband is named once, in the diminutive form “Zhenia”. In comparison, the rat who lives in Nina’s apartment is named, “Vaska”, twice. This type of fluidity in naming conventions, as well as the large number of characters who are

⁵⁵⁶ Smirnova *Nina* trans 225

⁵⁵⁷ Smirnova *Nina* trans 225

⁵⁵⁸ Butler *Gender Trouble* 8

named only by their role (“her husband”, “his wife”) or pronouns that are clarified by context, points to several possible authorial intentions.

Cooking has been closely associated with femininity and feminine virtues, and duties. The feminizing aspect of domestic labour can be taken as similar in both the West and Russia, as textual analysis reveals similar trends and foci, to which women’s desires were secondary. This obligation to perform domestic labour both stemmed from an active gendering of the ritual acts, domesticity and its correlating importance for the family, personal relationships, the proper performance of “femininity”. Especially in the case of cooking, this action betrayed a certain amount of basic necessity:

It is understood that when you hate to cook [in the West], you buy already-prepared foods as often as you can. ... But let us amend that statement. Let us say, instead, that you buy these things as often as you dare, for right here you usually run into a problem with the basic male... He wants to see you knead that bread and tote that bale before you do down cellar to make soap. This is known as Woman’s Burden.⁵⁵⁹

In Soviet Russia, given the harsh socio-economic realities of the time, cooking can be understood less as a strategy of appeasement and more one of necessity. The cooking and domestic chores tended to be left to the women of the house. This obligatory labour was often understood in terms of “femininity”, and its social and domestic trappings. Most avenues of life, in Russia and the West, have gendered the act of cooking. Even something as seemingly innocuous as “recipes themselves ...often

⁵⁵⁹ Neuhaus 545

reiterated a similar set of norms. Editors and authors linked food and gender norms in at least two ways: sexualizing the process of cooking-as in ‘the way to a man’s heart is through his stomach’ and by gendering particular cooking processes or types of food”⁵⁶⁰. The “recipes and accompanying text that sexualized food preparation asserted that food [were] a way to woo a man and the way to keep him. For example, “Betty Crocker” offered a set of cookie recipes called “Beau-Catchers and Husband Keepers”. Majorie Husted, creator of Betty Crocker, told an advertising executive in 1952 that advertisers must make women believe that “a homemaking heart gives her more appeal than cosmetics, that good things baked in the kitchen will keep romance far longer than bright lipstick”⁵⁶¹.

It becomes apparent in reading Smirnova that the provision of food is a loaded symbol, and highly bound with philological concerns and concerns regarding language use. The negation of both of these elements, via silence and withheld offerings of food, also become charged indicators of relationship-health and autonomy in *Народный роман/A Folk Story*. Further into the text, Nina asks him “what for?” when questioning his need to go to fulfill the traditional role of the returning husband to his waiting wife, and as

Нина упрекнула его думающими глазами, и он тоже задумался — зачем? На самом деле вопрос “зачем”, если не понимать его

⁵⁶⁰ Neuhaus 538

⁵⁶¹ Neuhaus 538

плоско, в бытовом смысле — вопрос беспокойный и жалящий, как оса, но думать он не хотел, хотел просто радоваться, без мутных вопросов. /Nina's thoughtful eyes reproached him...he began to wonder too—what for? In fact the question 'what for?', if not understood superficially, in its everyday meaning, is a disturbing one, with a sting like a wasp.⁵⁶²

Nina is suddenly shown as “thoughtful” in opposition to being “mindless” as she is twice characterized on the first page of the story, and the man is unexpectedly shocked by this change. This change in focus allows us to consider how Butler saw the construction of gender as producing, and domestic ritual practice as reiterating the norms of the sexes. It is by virtue of these endless repetitions that some deviations from and changes to the norm are made possible. As Nina continually reenacts her femininity for this man, she is allowed by this need for repetition to change her behavior in small ways, to effect a modification on the outcome of her performance. In the aforementioned cases, this seems to produce a shift in her reception. The instability which is fundamental in this process of repetition is the “deconstituting possibility...that undoes the very effects by which “sex” is stabilized”⁵⁶³. This deconstituting possibility could be understood as the fissure through which change could enter; every iteration wants to obscure the “fact” that there is nothing at the heart of this repetition, and that everything is performed. This constant interaction takes place at the edges of ab/normalcy. Pushing the boundaries of Butler’s concept of the performative, I argue that to deconstruct the terms of body, gender and sex while continuing the use them is to repeat them

⁵⁶² Smirnova *Nina* trans 227

⁵⁶³ Butler *Gender Trouble* 10

subversively and to displace them from the context of oppressive and normative power⁵⁶⁴. This is Foucauldian in that it attempts to challenge “prevailing configurations of power [that] are never seamless but are always spawning new forms of subjectivity, new contexts for resistance to and transformation of existing relations”⁵⁶⁵. Moreover, Nina’s foray into masculine curiosity and brashness has left her momentarily without the familiar narratives of her domestic, feminine sphere, and has unbalanced her domestically to the point that she is unable to deal with her preserves, a potent symbol of her feminine labour of service and cooking. She is no longer able to read the “codes” which demystify her kitchen for her. Nina has experienced an interruption in her regular reiteration of traditional domestic femininity, and as a result has difficulty reading the codes of her kitchen which are normally “natural” to her. Instead, Nina has to constantly repeat, and actively remind herself how to perform, her gender and domestic femininity in this specific time and space.

These codes can be understood as the ways in which the domestic sphere is made uncomplicated and understandable by those who enact domesticity:

in such a text women can read esoteric messages that are not easily accessible to men, including messages that comment on women's roles in relation to men, messages it would not be safe to express directly... women [are] active readers, reading and learning from

⁵⁶⁴ Butler, Judith, “Contingent Foundations: Feminism and the Question of 'Postmodernism'” *Feminists Theorize the Political* (New York: Routledge, 1992): 17.

⁵⁶⁵ Bordo, Susan, “Postmodern Subjects, Postmodern Bodies”, *Feminist Studies* 18- 1 (Spring, 1992): 167.

the messages encoded into women's culture. They read the text of [a] kitchen because they understand its signs, and in reading it, they learn a new message by which they can interpret their own lives.⁵⁶⁶

These codes are one way in which the masculine language is subverted, though coding need not be a conscious act⁵⁶⁷. These codes are rarely described in (male) language. Domestic clutter and confusion can be read in a larger manner as a metaphor for disruption within the domestic caretaker's life, in a manner which is difficult to understand to the uninitiated. Romines explores the requirement of initiation into these domestic codes at length in her book *The Home Plot*⁵⁶⁸. This sense of coding allows for personal changes in behaviour; a general understanding remains similar without a major rupture in the fabric of femininity or domesticity, but differing performance and understanding of these codes also seems to allow for changeable iteration. Complex and layered understandings of the domestic world hint at a postmodern notion of plurality and difference⁵⁶⁹, as the "real" meaning of an action or a misplaced jar of preserves is forever deferred as individuals experience, reinscribe, and subtly shift it:

This unnameable is the [postmodern] play which makes possible nominal effects, the relatively unitary and atomic structures that are called names, the chains of substitutions of names in which, for example, the nominal effect difference is itself enmeshed, carried off, reinscribed...⁵⁷⁰

⁵⁶⁶ Radner, Joan N. and Susan S. Lanser, "The Feminist Voice: Strategies of Coding in Folklore and Literature", *The Journal of American Folklore* Vol. 100. 398 (1987) 413.

⁵⁶⁷ Radner 414

⁵⁶⁸ in passim; especially 73-76.

⁵⁶⁹ Derrida, Jacques, "Différance", *Margins of Philosophy*, trans. Alan Bass (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1982) Online .N.pag.

⁵⁷⁰ Derrida "Différance" N.pag.

The initiation pattern of learning from elders or family members is noted by Rabuzzi, who observes that “housekeeping is the only form of work in which neophytes are still widely instructed by their parents or elders” while Romines adds that, “a woman writer...has an ambivalent relation to that whole past of instructing mother and sibylline housekeepers”⁵⁷¹. This closed cycle of learning and teaching is one way by which women maintain the structure of domestic space. Choosing a plot of domestic ritual may even allow “a possible interpretive schema for lived experience rather than the entrapment of falsifying codes”⁵⁷². Nina understands the world in these culinary codes; even her new lover is unaware:

Нине и без слов было понятно, что у них все в порядке. Из сырого в вареное, из твердого в мягкое, из чужого в свое — это всюду так, не только на сковороде. Они не торопясь, со вкусом поели и выпили./She did not need to be told that everything was right between them. From raw to cooked, from hard to soft, from strange to familiar. That’s the way it goes. Not only in the frying pan. They ate and drank leisurely and with relish.⁵⁷³

She feels justified with his affair, as she has “proof” his wife does not love him:

- Она тебя не любит. — У Нины загорелся ее упрямый шахтерский фонарь во лбу.
- Здрасьте. Вот только этого не надо.
- В кармане дыра и верхней пуговицы не хватает.
- Народные приметы, — усмехнулся он. — А зачем ты осматривала мои карманы?

⁵⁷¹ Romines, 52.

⁵⁷² Frye, Joanna (40) in Romines 49

⁵⁷³ Smirnova *Nina* trans 228/9

— Я не осматривала, — обиделась Нина. — У тебя ключ выпал, я положила./

“*She doesn’t love you.*” The obstinate miner’s torch on Nina’s forehead was switched full on.

“Oh, for heaven’s sake. Aren’t things bad enough?”

“*There’s a hole in your pocket and your top button’s missing.*”

“Bad omens,” he mocked. “Why were you looking in my pockets?”

“I wasn’t,” said Nina in an aggrieved voice. “Your key fell out and *I put it back.*”⁵⁷⁴

This behavior, the failure to perform domestic labour on the part of his wife, is interpreted by Nina as representative of her failure to love her husband. Via a clue, unknown to the uninitiated and not understood by her lover, Nina has “proven” to herself that his is a bad wife, and to her lover that she is the one who will truly labour to care for him, which she equates with love.

At the end of the story, Nina invokes loaded terms and apricot preserves again, once more, as a test of her boyfriend. Glas’ translation somewhat confusingly uses the phrase “sausage-curls”, also known as “ringlets”, for “локонки. If taken at the translator’s value, this is a meaningful choice, as it underlines the implication and power of domestic language creeping into regular speech, and its reception by men. Even if this is rejected in favor of the more ubiquitous “ringlet”, the following

⁵⁷⁴ Smirnova *Nina* trans 230, italics added.

citation powerfully shows Nina's newfound and (limited) confrontational engagement:

— А еда у нас есть?

— Нету, — продолжала бунтовать Нина. — Есть абрикосовый компот.

— Абрикосовый компот! — Он восхищенно посмотрел на нее.

— Я хочу сейчас прийти и завить себе локоны! — Нина сказала это с вызовом, потому что не могла позволить себе ошибиться.

— Как ты сказала? Что свить? — Он даже подпрыгнул от желания расслышать.

— Завить локоны! — упрямо повторила Нина.

— Ай! — он согнулся и схватился за живот. — Ай! — Он стонал, пытаясь распрямиться, его крутило на месте, словно трепал смерч. — А-а-а-й! — Новый приступ хохота едва не свалил с ног, он еле сдерживал спазмы.

— Не могу больше! В глазах темно! Не могу больше! Если не хочешь, чтобы я умер, никогда не говори этого слова. — Лицо его снова дрогнуло, грозя разъехаться улыбкой, но он напряг мышцы, опасаясь дойти до полного изнеможения. — Мне кажется, что когда человек непрерывно смеется, то он счастлив, а ты что думаешь?

Нина нехотя улыбнулась: у одного одна природа, у другого другая, один скандалит, как бешеный, другой погибает со смеху, и не установлено, что хуже, что лучше. Лучше не думать, мысли отложить, неизвестно, куда они заведут. Пусть себе хохочет, ей что, жалко для него смешного?/

“Have we got anything to eat?”

“No,” Nina continued to rebel. “Only apricot preserves.”

“Apricot preserves!” He stared at her in rapture.

“I want to go home and do my hair in sausage-curls,” Nina said challengingly. She couldn't risk making a mistake [in choosing men] this time.

“What did you say? Do your hair in what?” He jumped up and down at the prospect of hearing the word again.

“Sausage-curls,” Nina repeated obstinately.

“Ooh!” He doubled up with laughter. “Ooh!...Don’t mention that word again or I’ll die! ... A man who laughs all the time is a happy man. Don’t you think?”

Nina smiled in spite of herself. People vary. One man can become furious and tear his hair, while another will split his sides laughing, *and no one can say which is best. Better to put it out of your mind, not think about it, for there’s no knowing where it might lead. Let him have his laugh. Why should she mind?*⁵⁷⁵

This man does not react with violence at Nina’s incursion into the world of language as mediated by her experiences as a woman, but he mocks her “sausage-curls” as if they were a joke, more unthinkable than threatening. The same stimuli are reproduced as in the beginning of the story, but the outcome is slightly different, as shifts of meaning have influenced the interpretation of similar events. In this case Nina is debased in her efforts, and made the object of a joke and not the subject of her own language, in her rebellion. If these small acts of rebellion are subversive, as Butler might argue, then I argue that their effect is yet too subtle to be seen within this story perhaps due to Nina’s strong fear of change, and her commitment to continuing in the domestic ideal; *why should she mind?* Ultimately Smirnova seems to be making a case for a natural feminine role as domestic, though the picture is not entirely unambiguous. Several paragraphs before Nina’s final meditation on her lover’s laughter, it appears that she is mulling over an entirely different role model. Upon

⁵⁷⁵ Smirnova *Nina* trans 235, italics added.

hearing that her lover's now estranged wife "never changes her mind", "this almost made her cry". Nina says defiantly, "А мне она нравится. Злющая, красивая, тощая, я бы тоже хотела такой быть! /..I like her. She's so angry, and good-looking, and slim. I'd like to be like that", in a pique of rebelliousness. Her boyfriend "waved his hands like a drowning man. "Что ты! Что ты! Она, кстати, не злая, такая органика. Природа. У тебя одна, у нее другая. /For God's sake! No, it's not really anger. *She's just made like that.* It's a question of temperament. *You're one type, she's another*", he answers her. Indeed, here it is important to note the differences in the English and Russian versions of the text. Obviously arguing for a return to normativizing "natural" types of personalities and gender performances, the man in the story downplays Nina's sudden interest in emulation, and the differences between her and his wife. Undeterred, Nina retorts, "Чем хуже обращаешься с мужчиной, тем больше он тебя ценит! /the worse you treat a man, the more he values you"⁵⁷⁶, in a direct assertion of the performative enaction of gender and of personality. As Butler would assert, performative acts (discursive practices) also enact and produce that which they name, though this power of the subject is never the origin, but is always the derivative (in Derrida's terms). Every action is performed ("cited") and in turn derives power

⁵⁷⁶ Entire exchange, Smirnova *Nina* trans 234

from the performances (“citations”) which it compels⁵⁷⁷. Indeed, his wife, having taken a lover of her own (Felix) comments to this effect:

Но меня не было всего неделю! Ты скоропалительна!

— А ты и не знал? Феликс, ты что больше всего ценишь в людях?

— Скорость. Ритм.

— Вот видишь, ты недоволен, а ему нравится. Каждому свое.

— Это фашистский девиз.

— Я рада, что ты точно меня понял./

“But I’ve only been gone a week [the husband says]. You’re quick off the mark”.

“Didn’t you know? Felix, what do you value most in people?”

“Speed.”

“There you are. You’re upset, but he’s happy. It takes all sorts.”

“That’s a fascist slogan.”

“I’m glad you’ve got the message.”⁵⁷⁸

Binding her actions up in the performance of “fascism” and a different sort of femininity, she leaves her husband to Nina, “такую надежную, как хороший, наваристый суп /rich and creamy as well-cooked soup”⁵⁷⁹.

⁵⁷⁷ Butler *Bodies that Matter* 13

⁵⁷⁸ Smirnova *Nina* trans 233

⁵⁷⁹ Smirnova *Nina* trans 229

THE IMPACT OF FEMININE THEMES AND SPACE FOR A WOMAN'S SENTENCE

Using language provocatively is also a major component of *Женщины и сапожники /The Women and the Shoemakers*. Similarly concerned with the reactions that can be evoked by the use of domestic language, Natalia Smirnova creates a story in which unconventional style describe the domestic. The emphasis on internalization and introspective, intimate writing cannot escape connotative associations with ‘women’s writing’; this intersects with the creation of self-aware works of fiction. In addition to this, continued emphasis on women’s labour and domestic space further mark this story as “feminine”. Smirnova—like Gorlanova—works to create new, self-mediated and feminine literatures, spaces, times, and domesticities. The concept of a “women’s style” of writing will be addressed again, briefly, so as to better understand Smirnova’s style as she employs it.

It has been argued that “in feminist parlance, Russian women’s fiction is gynocentric. Women’s search for self-actualization (usually played out in the context of a modern urban environment) spawns many of the recurrent themes in this literature: love, marriage, familiar relations”⁵⁸⁰. Gosילו succinctly notes that:

Stylistic hallmarks of women’s fiction, which favors the short story and *povest’* (novella) over the novel, include a subordination of a plot to a preponderance of description; an exploration of levels and modes of consciousness; a style that eschews modernist techniques; and a stable perspective conveyed through quasi-direct discourse—

⁵⁸⁰ Gosילו *Coming* 4

a limited (most frequently female) viewpoint in which boundaries between author, narrator, and protagonist often dissolve.⁵⁸¹

Indeed, it has been argued that women's style and motifs have become so stereotypical as to become almost fixed. Goscilo notes of Valeriia Narbikova (1958 -), that "the invariant motifs of her novellas—a love triangle, a journey (usually to the sea), a confrontation with nature, and a circular return—yield a chronotope in which *time loses specificity* while *space receives extravagant elaboration*". Again, this conforms to women's tendency toward the spatial. Many years ago, Ellen Moers offered a study (most vividly with *Literary Women: The Great Writers*, 1976) of women's literature that argued that the metaphors of space were characteristically female, decendent in part from the "complicated topography of the female genital parts" in which Freud and his psychoanalytical lot were so interested⁵⁸². Jane Costlow succinctly maps her connection of this complex topography with women's "frequent representation as landscapes" and Moers claims that female space "knows no nationality or country" though "certain lands have been good for women...open lands, harsh and upswelling"⁵⁸³. Though Costlow interprets this as the forest, this space could easily be Siberian –rural, wild, and certainly harsh. Despite the influence of Moers' pioneering feminist work, her conception of women as linked to open, harsh and rural

⁵⁸¹ Goscilo *Coming 4*, italics added.

⁵⁸² Moers, Ellen, *Literary Women: The Great Writers* (New York: Doubleday, 1976) 254-255.

⁵⁸³ Costlow, Jane "Landscapes of Girlhood: Forest Space in A Russian Childhood and The Tragic Menagerie", *Mapping the Feminine: Russian Women and Cultural Difference*, Hoogenboom, Hilda and Catherine Theimer Nepomnyashchy, Irina Reyfman eds. (Bloomington: Slavica, 2008 113-131) 113.

spaces did not go unquestioned. Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar, Moers' contemporaries who also associate women's writing with the spatial, posited that the spaces most emblematically female were literary landscapes of confinement and enclosure⁵⁸⁴. Their unique focus was the attic, but the vein of criticism is that the female writer is possessed by such images because they are "possessed in every sense of the word"⁵⁸⁵, entrapped by the "enclosures of domestic architecture" and tenure⁵⁸⁶. They further argue that the prominence, to the point of repetitive "monotony", of images of domestic space in women's literature is truly an insurrection against expectation; their concern with domestic space is subversion "grounded in an experience of its severely debilitating effects"⁵⁸⁷.

When thematic repetitions are analyzed beyond their spatial influence, Gosciolo sees that "the extensive spatial movement reflects the genre of a utopian voyage, a search for authenticity"⁵⁸⁸—what was seemingly rote repetition obscures a deeper, more meaningful tactic. Indeed, this is the connection that Costlow seeks to make, shifting her discussion of women's focus in literature on imagery of domestic enclosure and space into an analysis of autobiographical tales of Russian girlhood. While Smirnova does not veer into the autobiographical (or fictionally-autobiographical) as Gorlanova does, she maintains this focus of domestic

⁵⁸⁴ Costlow 113

⁵⁸⁵ Gilbert, Sandra and Susan Gubar, *Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000) 84.

⁵⁸⁶ Costlow 114

⁵⁸⁷ Costlow 114

⁵⁸⁸ Gosciolo *Coming* 12

and women's space. Related to this, she varies her style but not themes much, sticking to "women's topics" while using falsely straightforward language to cover up the subtle myths, intertexts and use of language that help to define her female characters. This is a strategic movement against the (male, canonical) prose of "mirror of life" 19th C and also the "reportage" of earlier women writers (i.e. Baranskaia) who wrote about women on women's themes in stylistically bland and unimaginative ways (leaving logos to the men). The retention of classical women's themes allows for this comparison to be foregrounded, as the treatment of the language and the characters in a story can then be compared against earlier modernist/journalistic versions and also other women's versions of women's prose. The retention of classically feminine themes creates unity and comparable attributes/bases between stories, even if they are stylistically different, and allow for the treatment of characters and style to be used as obvious points of comparison through which different strategies of writing women or peripheries become apparent. This lets the author use individual [characters to] destabilize a single, unilinear interpretation, while retaining links to the past via theme, "feminine" use of impressions and shifting descriptions, as well as "contradictory"/non-theoretically "strong" masculine male logic or tropes. This essentially allows women writers to "own" their links to historical women's writing and the Russian conception of femininity. They can do this while retaining their interest in their lived experiences and proving that "women's themes" (with which they might identify) can cohabit in literature alongside the ostensibly

“male” pursuits of language games, semiotics, logos, bodily references, style, irony, postmodern feature, and self assertion among others. Cixous argued for this type of flexible and creative writing, hoping that women would claim the full resources of writing and that the woman “will put herself into the text... we are in no way obliged to deposit our lives in their banks of lack, to consider the constitution of the subject in terms of a dream manglingly restaged, to reinstate again and again the religion of the father”⁵⁸⁹.

In both Gorlanova and Smirnova, shifting layers of characterization work to remove the female characters and notions of femininity from male “reflected mirror truths” of a single, modernist, stable (male) subjectivity and identity. This also allows a foray into the feminist culture seeking nuanced identities and self-knowledge which reflect women and “women’s themes” as more than a unified, single, one-trick pony counterpoint to men’s. The style of some of Smirnova’s stories also hints at metafiction, including a rupture between the narrative and the author’s world, the interruption of the narration and critical theory into the body of the text, an elaborated “framing” of the text by the narrator, heavy irony, and the desire to “play” with the traditional subject of a story. This “play” seems to be employed as a criticism or a resistance to the Russian (and broader literary) norm of subject matter “worthy” of literature, and the self-conscious rejection of this normative plot. In a manner not dissimilar to

⁵⁸⁹ Romines 198

estrangement, the emphasis on a Derridian⁵⁹⁰ notion of *differance* allows Smirnova to textually defer strict definitions and to simultaneously apply, and rebel against, traditional notions of femininity. By focusing on and privileging domestic action, the characters that existed as peripheral subjects of literature and which exist as markers of a peripheral gender, are given new meaning. Smirnova subverts the conventions of traditional “important” literature and challenges the regulatory fictions which support and are deployed by them. This occurs alongside the tension of espacement (*differance*), and the pregnant irony of Smirnova’s choice of subject matter and loci interacts with tension: “Several studies of ritual also stress its liberating capacities to generate play, invention, and art, especially in the ‘liminal’ stage”⁵⁹¹. Her inward focus—towards relationships, quiet meditation, the home, domestic ritual—is historically feminine, though her style and the ends to which she employs them is more nuanced than might be expected.

ANALYZING METAFICITONAL ELEMENTS: UNUSUAL HEROINES AND FRAMEBREAKS

Instead of a more traditional format – for example, memoir or fluffy “women’s literature” intended for a female audience—Smirnova plays with both critical expectation as well as convention in her text *Женщины и сапожники /The Women and the Shoemakers*. She openly

⁵⁹⁰ Derrida “Différance” passim.

⁵⁹¹ Romines 13; see: Victor Turner; Mary Ellen Ross; Cheryl Lynn Ross.

favours a story about women and a heroine to whom “nothing very much happens”⁵⁹², and in so doing employs metafiction. This description of the heroine is not a critique of her writing from outside, but the voice of the narrator incurring into the story. Smirnova does not demarcate between the voice of the narrator, who provides literary critique of her story before and after the body of the text, and the rest of the story. Such annotations are playful pieces of “meta” commentary, both presaging and defusing criticism against her plot and style. This story is elaborately but obviously framed. Smirnova’s introduction notes her narrator’s desire to write an “unusual” work, in which her heroine is different from those of other literatures. She acknowledges her choice of events as intentional, and her privileging of the domestic feminine subject in this manner as out of step with the literary norm:

И можно ли представить себе героиней, пусть в самом негромком смысле, женщину, с которой за всю жизнь ничего не случилось? Она никогда не была счастлива, застыв в некоем ровном состоянии и живя в нем, точно в скорлупе, но и несчастья также обошли ее стороной. Заслуга ее, если таковая имела, могла состоять лишь в том, что она представляла собой ту самую норму, об которую, как головой об стену, безысходно бьются истинные герои, или, говоря иначе, она представляла то безвестное серое пространство, которое служит их фоном. Служить, просто служить, ничего не значить, стоять в общем ряду, ничего не утверждать, ничего не отрицать, не попадать в кадр, не выступать с трибуны, не вести в бой — это самое простое житейское дело, и вряд ли можно ставить его в заслугу кому-нибудь.

/And could we possibly imagine a heroine, or simply a protagonist, to whom nothing very much has ever happened? Caught fast in a cocoon-like quiet equanimity, she has never been truly happy, although real misfortunes have passed her by. Her service, if she can be said to have performed one, could only be that she

⁵⁹² Smirnova *The Woman and the Shoemakers* trans 222

represents the norm with which true heroes clash, a wall to bang their heads against interminably, or, you might say, the amorphous grey anonymity that provides a background for them. To serve, just serve, to have no meaning, to stand in the common ranks, to assert nothing to deny nothing to keep out of the big picture, never to speak on a platform or lead anyone into battle—the most ordinary existence, which can hardly be to anyone’s credit.⁵⁹³

A desire to “play” with the traditional subject of a story is admitted here, and this “play” seems to be employed as a criticism or a resistance to the Russian (and broader literary) norm of subject matter “worthy” of literature, and the self-conscious rejection of this normative plot in favor of a story about women and a heroine to whom “nothing very much happens”. Jane Marcus notes in *The Home Plot*, that “what seems significant is not the female struggle to enter male public discourse, which feminist scholars have documented, but the recognition of the inability of that discourse to include their voices in history, the necessity of a return to the personal”⁵⁹⁴. This is in contravention, Smirnova notes wryly, to the historical norm:

Наше понимание героя отличается от того, что подразумевали литераторы в прежние времена. Для них самым существенным являлось отклонение от нормы, враждебность ей и даже патология. Героями становились люди странные, оригинальные, одержимые маниями, неуместные в жизни действительной до полной обреченности на героизм.

Однажды сострадательная читательница упомянула в разговоре госпожу Бовари, совместив вымысел и реальность: “Бедная, лучше бы купила себе швейную машинку!”, на что искушенный человек тут же возразил: “Тогда она не стала бы героиней романа”. /

⁵⁹³ Smirnova *The Women and the Shoemakers* trans 213. All Russian from the unpaginated: http://artural.narod.ru/LITERAT/Ural/Ural_03_99_03.htm

⁵⁹⁴ Romines 78

Our idea of the literary hero is quite different today from that of earlier times. For writers then it implied above all deviation from the norm, hostility to society, even to a pathological extent. Their heroes were strange, unusual people, maniacally obsessed, out of place in real life, doomed to heroism.

“The poor creature should have bought herself a sewing machine!” a sympathetic reader once said of Madame Bovary in a mixture of real life and fantasy. To which her more sophisticated companion replied: “Then she wouldn’t have been the heroine of the novel.”⁵⁹⁵

As the narrator begins her investigation into what makes a heroine, the text is elaborately framed, especially in opposition to a canonical work, written by a man about a woman, *Madame Bovary*. Sadly, the idea that capitulation to traditional femininity—which held the possibility for happiness or peace—is anathema to the hero/ine defined herein. The idea that a “normal” woman, and her domestic work, could be the focus of a novel is rendered improbable in history.

We recall that the narrator states: a “sympathetic reader once said of Madame Bovary” that “the poor creature should have bought herself a sewing machine!”⁵⁹⁶ Indeed, “The Women and the Shoemakers” seems to be an overt answer to this challenge, Smirnova’s way of responding to the question: “И что произошло бы с романом, если бы Эмма Бовари, послушавшись автора, не встала на путь плотских страстей, а купила швейную машину?.../What would have happened to Flaubert’s novel if Emma Bovary had in fact ignored the author, refused to give herself up to

⁵⁹⁵ Smirnova *The Women and the Shoemakers* trans 212

⁵⁹⁶ Smirnova *The Women and the Shoemakers* trans 212

carnal passion, and bought a sewing machine instead?...”⁵⁹⁷ The result of this advice is presumably the author’s heroine, though it should be noted that this experiment may not be offered up as a kind of antidote to mainstream normative works which are focused on linear progression, action, progress and a “hero”, but instead enjoyed as playing with tradition. In fact, the ironic frame is completed in the last paragraph of the story, in which Smirnova notes:

Здесь, вероятно, следует сделать вывод о том, что романа из подобной жизни получиться не могло, потому что она бедна и угловато-невзрачна, что это совсем не та бледно-шафранового цвета барежевая ткань, из которой шила платье госпожа Бовари для своего единственного бала в Вобьесаре...и что, вероятнее всего, даже и рассказа из такой жизни не вышло бы, не случись по соседству сапожников с их народным героизмом, которым, как горьким перцем, была приправлена вся история./Here one should probably conclude that such a life would be no good at all as the basis for a novel, because it is so poor, so unprepossessingly awkward, and certainly not made of the delicate pale saffron silk that Madame Bovary chose for her one and only ball at La Vaubyessard. And it is most likely even this account of such a life would not have seen the light had it not taken place in the vicinity of the shoemakers with their folk heroism that spices the whole story like hot pepper.⁵⁹⁸

In these statements, the provincial stereotypes are also thrown into relief. The provincial, idealized domestic norm of the housewife and traditional “feminine” laborer is seen as hackneyed and performed, while explicitly foregrounded provincial “stock characters” like the shoemakers are given a boost in this comparison. The trick, argue narratologists like Todorov “is to find events that rupture a norm subtly and so with veracity (thus

⁵⁹⁷ Smirnova *The Women and the Shoemakers* trans 212

⁵⁹⁸ Smirnova *The Women and the Shoemakers* trans 221

maintaining ‘sameness’), yet tellingly, or ‘strikingly’, and so with significance (thus asserting ‘difference’)”⁵⁹⁹. Throughout the work, Smirnova makes ironic statements regarding the stock “folk heroism” of the shoemakers. For example, for getting drunk, taking advantage of an artist and fighting, the following traits are attributed to the shoemakers: “Глядя со стороны на эту жизнь, могло показаться, что сапожники прочитали и затвердили наизусть основоположника соцреализма и разыгрывают спектакль, точно по нотам, но вряд ли дело обстояло так, скорее основоположник ухватил горькую истину жизни, а именно утробную тягу к героическому художеству, в каком бы затрапезном костюме она ни выступала./ Watching this [shoemakers] life from the sidelines one might have thought the shoemakers had read and learnt by heart the founder of Socialist Realism and were simply acting out the script to the letter. But this was hardly the case. Most likely the founder himself had actually hit upon the bitter truth, namely the deep-seated attraction for heroic art, however shabby its attire”⁶⁰⁰. On the contrary, mindful to the power of real effort, change is not entirely dismissed as artifice: “...дни шли без горестей и радостей, меняя одеяние деревьев и цвет неба, но не меняя сути жизни, потому что она меняется, если меняется вообще, медленно, неприметно, и каждый шаг требует героических усилий. / The days passed uneventfully, without sorrow or joy, changing only in the color of the sky

⁵⁹⁹ Hutchings 661

⁶⁰⁰ Smirnova *The Women and the Shoemakers* trans 215

and the attire of the trees, but not the essence of life, which changes, if at all, slowly, imperceptibly, each change demanding a heroic effort”⁶⁰¹. The protagonist is, presumably, the type of “normal” woman, engaged in the type of “normal” domestic labour that one would ignore in typical literature. However, in *Женщины и сапожники/The Women and the Shoemakers*, she is subversively the focus and the undoing of typical subject matter. One way by which this is accomplished is in the invocation of *быт*/everyday life as a primary source of textual material.

**Быт AND SEWING: MANIPULATING THE CONCEPT OF THE RITUAL
'EVERYDAY'**

As has been noted, *быт*/everyday life is overtly gendered in the Russian tradition, and this conception has continued into the modern day, despite changing norms and patterns. However, an understanding of this term – often considered untranslatable – requires a more nuanced look. Regarding the connection between women, domestic labour and negative conceptions of *быт*/everyday life, Svetlana Boym has treated this subject in interesting ways. In addition, so have Barbara Heldt in her studies of the changing face of Russian women’s femininity and ideal enacted forms, and Helena Goscilo. Ann Romines’ detailed and close readings of American literature by women uncovers themes and strategies concerned with the practice of *быт*/everyday life, the everyday practice of domesticity; “Romines helps to pioneer a new direction in feminist

⁶⁰¹ Smirnova *The Women and the Shoemakers* trans 219

criticism, one that locates women's aesthetics in their material practices particularly in the rituals of domestic labor"⁶⁰². Romines suggests that learning to read the symbols and subtle meanings which inhabit women's themes of labor and domesticity illuminate the enforced privacy, intimacy, and reflective interior lives that mark women's literature and housework itself⁶⁰³. This serves the purpose of helping to rehabilitate the concept of tedious and empty *быт*/everyday life. This can be richly applied as a type of coalescence of the material *быт*/everyday life and aesthetic/artistic *бытие*/reality, as well as a feminist reading of the traditions and iterations which have helped to shape the majority of women's writing. Benjamin Sutcliffe contends that, "almost all of the women authors discussed in [his] study, envision the everyday as a conduit to *бытие*/reality"⁶⁰⁴. Smirnova also uses images of *быт* /everyday life to reinforce feminine understanding of time (as cyclical, non-linear) and space. The post-structuralist feminist Judith Butler has focused on theories which highlight the potential significance of everyday actions and the changing beliefs and identities which come from their enaction. Her theory of gender informs my concepts of *быт*/everyday life in Smirnova's works, its iteration, and identity in literary works, especially insofar as performativity and the actions of the quotidian in literature can be seen as

⁶⁰² Donovan, Josephine. Verso cover of *The Home Plot: Women, Writing and Domestic Ritual*.

⁶⁰³Romines 69 – "qualities that Rybczynski says have been associated with housework since the 17thC: enforced privacy intimacy, and a rich, reflective interior life".

⁶⁰⁴ Sutcliffe *PoL* 6

the repetition of stylized discursive acts in time⁶⁰⁵. Of course, along with Butler, the poststructuralist feminists Luce Irigaray's work on the male-privileging of language and canons is central, and Hélène Cixous⁶⁰⁶, whose theories of phallogocentrism are employed in an analysis of the gulf separating "male" *бытие*/objective reality and "female" *быт*/everyday life. The representation of traditional women's space as concerns of domestic space and the enactment of domestic rituals are explored. The concepts of ritual work, gendered domestic space and feminine interiority, a "feminine style" of writing, and the presentation and influence of *быт*/everyday life will be explored herein.

The complex relationship between *быт* and *бытие* has been addressed in the Russian theory of Roman Jakobson, Lotman and Nabokov, among others, as well as many women writers of the stagnation and perestroika periods, as well as those on whom this dissertation is focused. Lotman noted that *быт*/everyday life occurred in a "realm of practice"; another way of understanding this is as the "realm of the symbolic". If *быт* is the tired yet unceasing world of the physical everyday, then *бытие* can be understood as "the symbolic cosmos of *бытие*/reality. The gap between *быт* and *бытие* reiterates the Eastern Orthodox separation of body and soul and their gendered equivalents... [as

⁶⁰⁵ Butler, see: *Gender Trouble; Bodies that Matter; Excitable Speech: a Politics of the Performative*.

⁶⁰⁶ See: *Sorties; Le Rire de la Méduse* (1975).

well as] the modernists distinction between masculine high and female mass culture...”⁶⁰⁷ In a similar turn, Stephen Hutchings:

posits an opposition between ‘the everyday’ (Russian ‘*быт*’) and true life (Russian ‘*жизнь*’); in order for art to mediate the transfiguration of ‘*быт*’ into ‘*жизнь*’ it has to resist the natural framing impulse of fiction, as expressed in Bakhtin’s insistence that the represented world [. . .] can never be chronotopically identical with the real world it represents.⁶⁰⁸

Jakobson contended that: “Opposed to [the] creative urge toward a transformed future is the stabilizing force of an immutable present, overlaid...by a stagnating slime, which stifles life in its tight, hard mold. The Russian name for this element is *быт*”⁶⁰⁹. Sutcliffe’s conceptions of the “quotidian”, as he often refers to it, are suitably Russian in their negativity; Western conceptions of the everyday are “more optimistic”⁶¹⁰ and simple when compared to the gendered, dual nature of the Russian everyday. Western works include the writings of de Certeau and his belief in the redeeming small scale tactics for transgressions which the everyday provides. Andreas Huyssen also supports this positive conception of the disordered everyday, while rejecting the notion of gendered distinctions of male/high and female/mass culture, as Benjamin Sutcliffe notes in his book *The Prose of Life*⁶¹¹.

As noted, Iiuri Lotman’s “key definition of *быт*”, to use Sutcliffe’s term, upholds that daily life cannot promote independence from the

⁶⁰⁷ Sutcliffe *PoL* 8

⁶⁰⁸ Elsworth, John “Russian Modernism: The Transfiguration of the Everyday by Hutchings, Steven C” *The Modern Language Review* (2000) 11-54.

⁶⁰⁹ Sutcliffe *PoL* 3

⁶¹⁰ Sutcliffe *PoL* 5

⁶¹¹ Sutcliffe *PoL* 5, 8/9

physical reality in which it is based. Its logic dictates that its corporeality keeps it grounded, and keeps the individual from the world of *бытие*/objective reality. Lotman states:

Быт is the ordinary flow of life in its real and practical forms. It is the things that surround us, our habits and everyday behavior. *Быт* surrounds us like air and, like air, is only noticed when it is spoiled or in short supply⁶¹². We notice the peculiarities of others' *быт*, but our own escape us—we are inclined to consider it 'just life,' the natural norm of practical existence [*бытие*]. *Быт* is thus always located in the realm of practice; it is above all the world of *things*.⁶¹³

In short, the “implied passivity of reaction” and the banality of female *быт*/everyday life, “exists alongside a problematic corporeality (*теленость*)”, in which “both Russians and Westerners deem women’s activity more physical than mental, unworthy owing to its reduced scale, ephemeral nature, and constricted existence within the home as marked space”⁶¹⁴. Gosciolo believes this sort of institutional bias stems from sociohistorical truths, in part:

since many real-life husbands and fathers hold aloof from household and parental duties, domestic and familial obligations in the Soviet Union became almost exclusively women’s realm. When reflected or refracted in literature, the situation yields correspondingly different emphases. these figure much more prominently in works by authors with firsthand knowledge of them (the correlation is especially notable in “literaturna byta” (“literature of everyday life”)...women tend to problematize these hackneyed formulations, which malestream [sic] fiction (above all, the village prose contingent) takes for granted and therefore

⁶¹² Here I would like to note my deviation from Lotman, in that I posit that *byt* is also noticed when it is performed very well, and/or when it is presented to us in literature or art as performed very *often*. This will be noted and explored further in the later chapters concerning Gorlanova and Smirnova’s work, with special attention paid here to Smirnova.

⁶¹³ Sutcliffe *PoL* 8, italics added.

⁶¹⁴ Sutcliffe *PoL* 5. Note here the work of Eve Sedgwick (1950 – 2009), feminist scholar and queer theorist.

relegates to the invisible status of natural givens and immutable truths sedimented in the nation's psyche.⁶¹⁵

In Russian tradition, *бытие*/objective reality is characterized in sharp contrast to *быт*/everyday life. Connected with the female element of the Russian binary, *быт* is the banal quotidian which denies access to the male dominated sphere of *бытие*/objective reality. Sutcliffe characterizes this as a typically Russian binary; “the myriad problems women confront reappear daily as a new set of crises, effectively erasing previous accomplishments. The resulting ateleological and small-scale struggle sharply differs from traditional ‘male’ activities and *бытие*. Masculine actions often involve sweeping claims to permanent change...the gender of *быт*, however, is feminine”⁶¹⁶ (this is meant ironically – the word’s gender is not actually feminine, it is just a term applied in the vast majority of cases to women, domestic chores, and the struggles of the quotidian). This can be read from a feminist bent as an analogous binary to the modernist/dominant (male):un-modernist/subordinate (female) hierarchy. *Быт*/everyday life routinely intersects with adjacent terms, such as *пошлость*/banality (with the connotative sense of “vulgarity”), *типичность*/typicality, and *личность*/subjectivity, not to mention the *дамская проза*/ladies prose, and *женская проза*/women’s prose labels. Today, despite the ubiquity of these terms,

⁶¹⁵ Goscilo *Coming* 4

⁶¹⁶ Sutcliffe *PoL* 5

Russian reviewers continue to assert vehemently that literature possesses no gender. In the same breath, however, they lambast the (non-existent) category of women's literature ("zhenskaia literatura"⁶¹⁷) for its mediocrity according to criteria that await definition. Although the bias is immemorial, the illogicality is relatively new in Russian culture and motivated by historical developments. During the early decades of the preceding century the now controversial but then largely unexamined categories of "women's literature" and "woman's talent" were invoked unproblematically.⁶¹⁸

Goscilo notes that the terms 'women's literature' and 'woman writer' acquired pejorative (or ambiguous) connotations that were intuitively grasped by everyone, if unarticulated. Rejecting all terms that seemed associated to this complex denigration of *быт*/everyday life, "female authors instinctively construing them as dismissive, thinly coded signals for inferiority"⁶¹⁹.

This important association of the domestic with *быт*/everyday life, women, women's writing and the loosely delineated boundaries and marked space of the home is at the crux of much of this work's focus on Smirnova's literary domesticity and inwardness. This mimics in a broad sense the unfixed and fluid boundaries of Siberia, as well as the ill-defined place marked for Russian women writers within the male canon. Smirnova focuses almost entirely on the (gendered) home and domestic space/space for a "woman's sentence". Here we must remind ourselves of Virginia Woolf's preoccupation with domestic spaces which have been marked as feminine for so long.

⁶¹⁷ This term means "women's literature": *женская литература*.

⁶¹⁸ Goscilo *Coming* 1

⁶¹⁹ Goscilo *Coming* 1

Homes and their inhabitants are sprinkled throughout both Gorlanova and Smirnova's texts; in Smirnova this is more concrete, while in Gorlanova there are large portions of time spent in schools and dormitories by the main school-going characters. The predominance of these enclosed domestic spaces reinforces the corporality and weight of *быт*/everyday life in Smirnova's texts. In her work on Sidonie-Gabrielle Colette (1873 – 1974), Southworth argues that “representations of physical spaces –gardens, houses, rooms—are used to illustrate not only the constraints to which women were subject, but also the confining, male nature of conventional literary form and the potential for breaking free of those confines”. In this citation, one recalls the weight of Gilbert and Gubar's scholarship, and the enduring connection of women's literature with images of enclosure and restraint. Focusing on the action that takes place within (and in turn defines) the domestic sphere, Romines interprets domestic work as a gendered language, and addresses the circular practice and repetition of *пошлость*/banality as writing tactics which must be understood via the domestic codes inscribed on them in order to be appreciated. Drawing from a breadth of feminist scholarship, her approach, which is firmly textual and focused on themes, motifs, and style, serves as a wealth of inspiration for this work. She notes that “domestic ritual offers a writer a wide range of possibilities” and that “rituals performed in a house a constructed shelter...derive meaning from the protection and confinement a house can provide”. To be considered “ritual”, “they must possess most of the qualities that, according to Orrin

E. Klapp, are common to all rituals: regular recurrence, symbolic value, emotional meaning and (usually) a ‘dramatic’ group-making quality”⁶²⁰. This group-making quality will be explored in Smirnova’s works as well. Studies of ritual also “stress its liberating capacities to generate play, invention, and art, especially in the ‘liminal’ stage”⁶²¹.

As discussed, women’s work is often connected with the banality of everyday labour. The banal, as we have explored, is often coupled with concepts of provinciality and peripherality. Interestingly, as was noted earlier, Siberia has been described as representing a place that is “simultaneously ‘the outside’...and, by necessity, ‘the inside,’ a ‘home away from home’”. These concerns not only highlight concerns regarding space, but also regarding overtly feminized space and the confining nature of this designation. This designation is not only applicable to the obvious status of women writers, but might also be usefully applied to the wider state of the periphery’s writers. The overwhelming focus on what is deemed secondary in literature, the domestic *быт*/everyday life that is repeated mundanely, seems to be used as a writing challenge by Smirnova. She states at the end of *Женщины и сапожники*/*The Women and the Shoemakers* that “such a life [as was described] would be no good at all as the basis for a novel, because it is so poor, so unprepossessingly

⁶²⁰ Romines 12

⁶²¹ Romines 13

awkward...⁶²²”, but we can see from her other works that this domestic sphere remains of a central interest to her.

Sewing, like cooking, is another element of this domestic sphere which has been actively and insidiously gendered as feminine, and which is of central importance to the story *Женщины и сапожники/The Women and the Shoemakers*. The heroine of this story is a seamstress, tailor and embroiderer. These are activities which have been actively seen as feminine labour since medieval times, and which have historically long associations with “desirable” femininity, and passivity⁶²³. The nature of sewing, as repetitive and creative, does allow for some novel reinterpretations and some potential subversion of the status quo, however⁶²⁴. Meaning and the extent to which sewing panders to the traditional feminine and domestic ideal can be deferred in a quite postmodern way as the actions are repeatedly recurring in subtle variations. The traditionally “endless” nature of sewing is well-documented, as:

records open wide a door that has been hitherto only slightly ajar, a door behind which are women, in all periods and in all places of history, faithfully recording and commenting on domestic work that was otherwise ignored. Rebecca Foard's newspaper clipping, “Women's Drudgery,” captured a good deal of what many 19thC women felt about much of what they did. There are many diaries like that of Mary Ann Morse who described her life in New York State in 1862:

⁶²² Smirnova *The Women and the Shoemakers*, trans 221.

⁶²³ Parker, Rozsika. *The Subversive Stitch: Embroidery and the Making of the Feminine*. (New York: Routledge, 1989) passim.

⁶²⁴ Parker, passim.

'January 6 All sorts of housework took most of the day
 January 7 Sewed all the time I could get
 January 10 Sewed all the time I could get.'

Litanies of such entries, month after month, year after year, a monotony of repetition and routine, culminated as a Georgia girl's diary of the 1860s: "Fannie and I sewed ourselves sick. We stitched day after day from morning until night."⁶²⁵

The repetition of these acts was often a matter of survival as well as conditioning:

In the period before the 1846 invention of the sewing machine, and until much later in areas where machines were not available or were too costly, hand-sewing remained a major domestic task. "The good wife makes breakfast, makes the beds, then sits down to sew or knit", wrote a Virginia mother to her daughter in 1873. Women sewed their own and their husbands' and children's clothes, and all towels, bed linens, and table cloths. In addition, they quilted...for innumerable 19thC women, quilting became, unlike mere clothing construction, not only necessary work but also a creative outlet, a form of personal artistic expression. Such creative activity enabled women to transcend the limiting daily routine.⁶²⁶

Steeped in a cultural set of expectations, Smirnova would have been doubtlessly influenced by them, especially given the slow speed at which the provinces and rural areas of the USSR/Russia developed and industrialized which demanded a great deal or reliance on hand-produced goods. Born in Siberia, and later living in the Urals before moving to the center later in life (at which time she began to write crime fiction), Smirnova's "prose is subtle and slightly fanciful while her cultivated

⁶²⁵ Hedges, Elaine "The Nineteenth-Century Diarist and Her Quilts". *Feminist Studies* 8.2 (Summer, 1982) 294.

⁶²⁶ Hedges 294

heroines are trapped in the crude surroundings of drab, provincial lives”⁶²⁷ and her characters tend to use these “feminine” activities as their foray into the “transcendent” element of repetition and feminized domestic work.

In both of Smirnova’s stories, the female characters seem to create a sense of “self” through the repetition of their genders, and the actions which define them do so within their gendered sphere. Characters ceaselessly sew, embroider, and cook. In *Народный роман/A Folk Story*, sewing is an example of domestic labour that sustains a strong relationship and indicates its absence, as when she notices her lover’s torn pocket as a sign that he is no longer loved by his wife. This domestic labour is a type of search for selfhood, and takes place after an abrupt shift in their lives in which they are left without a male influence in their families, and by which they are encouraged to create their own sense of tradition and rootedness through “feminine” action. Ozzie J. Mayers has suggested that sewing especially, acts as a “a resonant metaphor for rootedness”⁶²⁸. In this case, the heroine of *Женщины и сапожники/The Women and the Shoemakers* is also left by her husband, or more truly, she is kicked out of his home with his mother-in-law and daughter. He is a womanizer and devalues her with

радостная беззаботность свидетельствовала, что такое существование и есть норма, настоящий порядок жизни, как он

⁶²⁷ Perova, “Notes on Authors”, *NINE of Russia's Foremost Women Writers: Glas 30*, N.Pag.

⁶²⁸ Romines 127

его понимал. Мать и жена терпеливо ждали его из долгих отлучек, и вполне возможно, что вся жизнь прокатилась бы по этой колее беспомощных ожиданий и нерадостных встреч, но однажды, в затмении, навеянном какой-то особенной женщиной, он выгнал жену из дома и напоследок дал ей поджопник в подъезде. / Cheerful nonchalance [which] suggested that he viewed this as the existence as the norm, the natural order of things. His mother and wife would wait patiently throughout his long absences, and it is quite possible that their life would have continued in this pattern of enforced waiting and joyless meetings, had he not one day, in a blind moment induced by a rather special woman, thrown his wife out of the house and given her a parting smack on the backside to boot.⁶²⁹

Her husband is a patriarchal subject, who had been dictating her existence of “enforced waiting” and the suppression of her happiness to his whims.

However, in this story the breakdown of their union represents more than a divorce to our heroine, and instead symbolizes a rupture in the logical

modernist progression of her life replete with enforced domesticity and

feminine passivity. The possibility, indeed the need, for change and plural

opportunities is suddenly clear to her: “Он не собирался ее обижать,

просто подтолкнул, как мяч, — катись отсюда, путаешься под

ногами... /He hadn't meant to insult her, just whacked her like a ball”, an

object which he controls, and

Как ни странно, этот удар, который не был настоящим ударом, а так... стал для героини неким моментом истины, как будто перед началом спектакля разверзся занавес и показал остовы неготовых декораций, на которых стоит и держится вся красота жизни. Она не испугалась голых деревянных перекладин, с сосновым духом в глубине, механике перекрещивающихся суставов, зубцов, крючков, блоков, шпагатов, открывшихся для обозрения, но в ней вдруг и навсегда остыла мечтательность, легкая, с хрупкими крылышками, девичья, неосторожная доверчивость к жизни, ожидание сюрпризов. /yet strangely

⁶²⁹ Smirnova *The Women and the Shoemakers*, trans 213

enough, this slap, which was not a serious blow, just a token, so to say, became a “moment of truth” for our heroine, as if the curtain had been raised prematurely revealing the naked hulk of an unfinished stage-set on which the beauty of life was to be played out. She was not afraid of the bare wooden crossbeams still smelling of pine, the mechanism of the intersecting joints, cogwheels, hooks, block, ropes and pulleys suddenly exposed to view, but gone suddenly and forever was the young girls’ dreaminess with its fragile wings, the blind trust in life and expectations and surprises.⁶³⁰

This metaphorically explains the heroine’s move from a belief in the constancy of an overarching structure which would both explain the status quo and shield her from its mechanisms of power which enforce their seeming “naturalness”. This “naturalness” is suddenly shown to be merely “the mechanism of intersecting joints” of a normative framework, and this rupture allows her to regain a space solely defined and regulated by women. The rapid change of her way of life leaves the heroine with the burden of negotiating this newly confusing world. Experiencing a rupture in her old life, the heroine is suddenly exposed to the various “mechanisms” of the “naked hulk of an unfinished stage-set on which the beauty of life was to be played out”. This deconstructivist vision of the world, as assembled in an unfinished and repeated set of mechanisms that are typically hidden from view, is an examination of power and cultural construction. Suddenly the mechanisms of power that were hidden to her are made obvious, and their existence changes her life forever, as she enters the postmodern in which there is no more “inside vs. outside”. Her gender performativity can no longer be understood apart from the

⁶³⁰ Smirnova *The Women and the Shoemakers* trans 213/4

reiterative and forcible practice of sexual regimes which are heteronormative and require the materialization and normalization of sex-“norms” to enable the formation of a subjectivity⁶³¹. Though our unnamed (does she thus stand in for an “everywoman”?) heroine in this story also turned to classically feminine labour after her divorce, she did so less in relation to service and men than Nina did, and more as an empowerment of herself and her daughter. Her domestic work and its quality no longer define her without her input, but now are chosen actively as they provide solace to her. Her choice to confine herself to the domestic sphere functions to incubate her relationships with the women around her.

Our heroine reassembles from scraps of her life a sort of bifurcated sense of normality, that of the “before” and “after” (the divorce) which they have lived through, and create from this pastiche something nearing a subject. This subject is never whole or centered, however, as it is reliant on reenacting the image of a whole, gendered subject. She moves in with her mother-in-law, “они начали жить вместе с белоснежной старушкой, старавшейся загладить чужую вину, но без мужа, которого закрутила и увела женщина с необыкновенным, почти мужским голосом и редкой бородкой/She began to live with this white-haired woman who was trying to redress the wrongs of the past, but without the husband, now enamoured and lured away by a woman with an almost masculine voice

⁶³¹ Butler *Bodies that Matter* 15

and a rudimentary beard”⁶³². Within the framework of contemporary uncertainty, associated with the postmodern condition (it was published in 2003), the possibility that any sense of true identity is abolished seems to be written into the very repetition of the traditional acts and the way in which they are mediated on, repeated in endless variation and alternatively accepted or rejected until they can make a reasonable approximation of a subjectivity for those who feel “shattered” by a rupture in the “natural” progression of their lives. The framework of this new life is simply and plainly laid out, in the incurring voice of the narrator who clearly intercedes to set out the path on which her women will walk.

The women begin to stay in and sew all of the time in close company. They become almost wholly consumed with the feminine labour of sewing, and

Они мало выходили из уютной квартиры с фикусами, завели швейную машину, оверлок, манекен и шили кожаные береты, сумки, модные пальто из шерсти с длинным ворсом и даже подвенечные платья, к которым свекровь умела делать розовые и кремовые, воздушные, как пирожное, цветы и длинные атласные перчатки с острыми треугольными пальцами или пальцами овальными, как виноград./They rarely left their cosy apartment...bought a sewing machine with an overlock, and a tailor’s dummy and began to make leather berets, handbags, fashionable coats of long-haired wool, and even wedding dresses for which the mother-in-law made pink and cream flowers, light as puff-pastry, and lone satin gloves with pointed triangular finger tips or oval ones like grapes⁶³³.

They begin to skillfully produce the trappings of femininity, decorations and fine, refined clothing which is described in the vocabulary of advanced

⁶³² Smirnova *The Women and the Shoemakers* trans 214

⁶³³ Smirnova *The Women and the Shoemakers* trans 214

domesticity as “light as puff-pastry”. As Irigaray might hope, these women begin to “redress the wrongs of the past”, and by this it is obvious that these are the masculine-wrongs of the past (the husband is excluded), and to create for themselves a small and tightly bound type of women’s space. According to Irigaray we need “rites and myths” to teach us to love other women, to live with them and values that can be shared if we are to coexist. She goes on to point out that without symbolization, of words, of stories and myths, religions and philosophies which do not have representations of women as women, women lack the means of loving the same—themselves, and other women. They do not, then, have the means of knowing how to act and be with other women because there are no words, or stories, or myths that express the love of the same, of oneself as a woman, and love of other women. As she puts it, because “there are indeed almost no symbolic forms of love of the same in the feminine” and because we exist within “a language and a social organization which exile us and exclude us”, we must create, or “*invent another style of collective relations. . . . a new subjective and socio-cultural order.*”⁶³⁴

Our heroine and her mother-in-law begin to work in a specifically feminine and domestic sort of language and space which they both understand and which differentiates them from the men in their lives. In an Irigarar-ian sense, they begin to understand that “the whole framework

⁶³⁴ Oseen, Collette “Luce Irigaray, Entrustment, and Rethinking Strategic Organizing” *Integrated Studies*, N.pag.

of their identity has to be constructed, or reconstructed”⁶³⁵ and the mother-in-law actively exploits this as she initiates a change, and seeks to create a matriarchal type of genealogy. She does not discriminate against our heroine because of her non-blood relation to herself, but instead accepts her and her daughter into her home and actively forms a female genealogy, which is held together by the performance of feminine labour. It is argued that “viewed thus, housekeeping is not only the unspoken, unvalued routine by which a patriarchal regime is maintained. It is also the center and vehicle of a culture invented by women, a complex and continuing process of female, domestic art”⁶³⁶. They buy a sewing machine, and set about developing mother-daughter relationships by “once again [learning] to respect life and nourishment...[and] regaining respect for the mother”⁶³⁷. Irigaray wrote that “if we as women are to avoid the reconfiguration of hierarchical relations between and among us as women, we must create an interval—a border or a limit—to contiguous relations so that women can work together side by side, so they are neither obliterated nor erased. We do this through recognizing or creating a place for our mothers as mothers and as women”⁶³⁸. Irigaray argues that “attractive images” of “the mother-daughter couple should be displayed”⁶³⁹, and our heroine and her family were “all three of them

⁶³⁵ Irigaray *Je, tu, nous...* 47

⁶³⁶ Romines 14

⁶³⁷ Irigaray *Je, tu, nous...* 47

⁶³⁸ Oseen *passim*

⁶³⁹ Irigaray *Je, tu, nous* 47

remarkably well dressed”⁶⁴⁰, cutting a fine figure of women living together well. They are successful enough that “they were able to buy a plot of land and plant marrows and strawberries”⁶⁴¹ and renovate their apartment. This measurement of success once more repeats the domestic and the culinary as *markers* of female achievement, and maintain a continuity of the matrilineal line. The reconstruction of their lives is mimicked in the construction of lovely, feminine clothing, the constitutive act of sewing. They sewed well, autonomously and happily; “Старушка могла шить, только красуясь каждым стежком и складкой на ткани./The old woman could never sew without showing off her stitching and pleating skills”⁶⁴². This is a charming and uncommon incursion of the character’s happy feelings into the text. And, a certain sense of pride is not uncommon, “given the repetitive nature of women's everyday work...pride...is understandable. The 20th C poet Marge Piercy calls a quilt ‘the only perfect artifact a woman would ever see. Dishes washed become dirty; food cooked is consumed; a quilt *endures*’.”⁶⁴³ It is via this close and personal feminine domestic work that our heroine begins to find a new sense of self in her postmodern world, in the reiterative and ever-evolving communal sewing work: “Игольное ушко пропустило их в мир, через него они видели и осязали реальность, и через него же реальность, прищурившись и разглядев их, дарила свои скромные милости и радости./The needle’s eye had launched them into the world. Through it

⁶⁴⁰ Smirnova *The Women and the Shoemakers* trans 214

⁶⁴¹ Smirnova *The Women and the Shoemakers* trans 217

⁶⁴² Smirnova *The Women and the Shoemakers* trans 214

⁶⁴³ Hedges 296, italics added.

they saw and sensed reality. And through it, in turn, reality scrutinized them, bestowing its modest joys and blessings”⁶⁴⁴. We recall that it has been suggested that when housekeeping is seen as ritual, it is both “the center and vehicle of a culture invented by women, a complex and continuing process”⁶⁴⁵. Our heroine and her daughter and mother-in-law continue to live happily in their new space they have created, whose boundaries they control, until the old woman’s death.

This death is another blow to the heroine, but she is not without her solace. This is found both in the hope of a continued female genealogy with her daughter, and in continuing and repeating her mother-in-laws careful work:

Героиня закончила за свекровь ворот шелковой мужской сорочки, заботясь о ровности и красоте каждого самого мелкого стежка, но ее не отпускало чувство грубой утраты, как будто перед дальним путешествием обчистили на вокзале.

Бывают люди, потеря которых превосходит любое переживание, даже по-женски глубокое и долгое, и то, что не затянулось, остается зиять тревогой, словно одинокий фонарь на улице, убивающий матовым светом ночной покой.

/Our heroine finished off the collar of the man’s silk shirt that her mother-in-law had been making so that every tiny stitch was as even and near as possible. But she could not lose the sense of naked loss. It was as if she had been robbed of all her possessions at the railway station before setting off on a long journey.

When some people die the sense of loss dominates all other feelings, even long, deep feminine grief, and lingers on aching, as

⁶⁴⁴ Smirnova *The Women and the Shoemakers*, trans 214

⁶⁴⁵ Romines 14

a solitary street lamp destroys the peace of night with its dull glow.⁶⁴⁶

Important in this passage is the indication that “feminine grief” is not, unlike many other attributes ascribed to women, a shallow or superficial thing. The femininity of this emotion is tried to its importance, its depth, and its philosophical meaning. It also strengthens and deepens the bond and connection of these women to each other in a way that is specifically correlated with femininity. Despite the heavy symbolic importance of domestic work in her texts, it is not performed as unthinking capitulation to the regime of heteronormative society. It is performed as a means of survival, but also as a meditative action which allows for the production and fostering of a sense of self, of connectedness, rootedness and tradition which links each character to their female brethren. This death once again forces our heroine into the masculine world for a funeral and the attendant responsibilities, not excluding seeing her ex-husband again. The second solace which she enjoys is in continuing her domestic feminine labour with her daughter, in a continuation of a female genealogy:

Через неделю после похорон героиня усадила девочку за швейную машинку, и та жала на педаль, весело напевая, как птичка, будто с этим родилась. Девочка ни с кем не дружила, никуда не ходила, кроме школы и танцевального кружка, словно бы ее игольное ушко было совсем узким и не требовало широты впечатлений, ничего нового и неизвестного, а девичья доверчивость к жизни просто оведала все, за что она принималась, но ничего не предъявляла, довольствуясь всем, словно питалась воздухом./A week after the funeral our heroine sat her daughter down at the sewing machine, and the girl pressed the pedal, singing happily like a bird, as if she had been born to it.

⁶⁴⁶ Smirnova *The Women and the Shoemakers*, trans 217

She had no friends and seldom went out except to school and her dancing class, as if her needle eye was very narrow with no need of broader impressions, anything new or unknown, and her girlish trust in life encompassed everything she did, never demanding, always satisfied, as if it fed on air.⁶⁴⁷

This emphasis on the naturalness and simplicity of the ritual labour is tempered by the almost ironically over-the-top description of a “perfect” femininity. She is “never demanding, always satisfied” and exists as lightly in this domestic sphere “as if it fed on air” – a caricature of the quiet, subservient, naturally “feminine” and easy girlishness. One can compare this to Nina Gorlanova’s character in her *Автобиография/Autobiography*, who is born into illness, and learns to be (as little as) what her health will allow. Unlike this heroine, Gorlanova’s character rebels against her fate, and wrestles with the weight of her (non) actions. Smirnova’s girl works, born into her role and into her labour. It has been observed that in contemporary times, domestic labour

is the only form of work in which neophytes are still widely instructed by parents...to do a task precisely as you observed or were taught by your mother or grandmother is to experience a portion of what they each once did...the ritual enactment of housework thus helps provide continuity from one generation of women to another...it is one of the major ways that women (whose lives have typically been isolated from the public sphere dominated by men) have been able to share in the entire community of women.⁶⁴⁸

‘Passing the torch’ of domestic labour to her daughter from her mother-in-law is one way in which our heroine finds “validity and meaning...not by striking out, but by going in deeper, through the apparent boredom and

⁶⁴⁷ Smirnova *The Women and the Shoemakers* trans 218

⁶⁴⁸ Romines 52

triviality and repetition, toward the hidden understanding that must be approached cyclically”⁶⁴⁹. This has been described as a “distinctively female way of feeling”⁶⁵⁰. Smirnova’s description of a girl who seems naturally “feminine”—uncomplaining, skilled in domestic labour, feminine, quiet, a home-body—puts into question the effectiveness of this new “women’s space” as being liberatory. In this story this happy, seemingly natural feminine domesticity is not presented as regressive or essentializing, as one reads the conclusion of the story against its beginning. It seems, in many ways, to be an ideal sort of life, lived without the incursion of men. Indeed, Smirnova has written, in her story *Народный роман/A Folk Story*, of the poverty of men and the dangers of them asking too much of women: “ ‘Ай, бедный!’ — и увидела по лицу, что попала в точку. Мужчины все немного бедные, если уж на то пошло, она так и думала всегда, нельзя только им сильно поддаваться, а то сама будешь еще бедней./she just said “poor chap” [about him] and saw from his face that she had hit the nail on the head. All men are poor chaps if you think about it. She had always thought so at least. But you mustn’t give way to them too much or you will be even poorer”⁶⁵¹.

The daughter sews with her mother, and in lieu of payments occasionally is given entrance into the outside world in the form of marriage want-ads and promises of help in the future. Her mother sits

⁶⁴⁹ Romines 74

⁶⁵⁰ Romines 75

⁶⁵¹ Smirnova *Nina* trans 228

“every day” sewing⁶⁵². She has soon finished school and jets off to Cape Town to marry a man who answered her want-ad. Since our heroine requires the acquiescence of her ex-husband for her daughter to marry, she finds him, now living alone:

— Возьмешь меня к себе? — спросил он.
 — Возьму, — легко согласилась она, не подразумевая ничего обидного. — Сторожем на склад. /
 ‘Will you take me back?’ he asked. “Sure I will,” she agreed easily, without implying any sense of injury. ‘As a night watchman for the warehouse.’⁶⁵³

With this quip, she shows that she is empowered by her new, successful (both in the masculine-oriented world of prophets and also in her personal life) domestic activity, and is confident in herself. The actions which were historically disempowered have empowered her in the outside world in the domestic sphere became empowered as codes; symbols by which she can understand and express herself⁶⁵⁴ confidently and whereby the initiated can understand her⁶⁵⁵. Foucault argued that “power and knowledge are fused in the practices that comprise history and that discourses partake of power, not knowledge alone”⁶⁵⁶. This type of “coded” action is not only multifaceted and forever changing as the codes are interpreted/intended to be read in subtly different ways, but they:

⁶⁵² Smirnova, *The Women and the Shoemakers* trans 219 – “Каждый день женщина садилась за машинку...”

⁶⁵³ Smirnova *The Women and the Shoemakers* trans 220

⁶⁵⁴ Murphy, A. Mary, “The Theory and Practice of Counting Stitches as Stories: Material Evidences of Autobiography in Needlework” *Women’s Studies* 32 (2003) 645.

⁶⁵⁵ Radner 413

⁶⁵⁶ Hekman, Susan J. *Gender and Knowledge: Elements of a Postmodern Feminism*. (Northeastern University Press: Boston, 1990) 18.

call...attention to some important features of women's culture: that the signs common to women's experience can make up a complex text capable of many readings; that in such a text women can read esoteric messages that are not easily accessible to men, including messages that comment on women's roles in relation to men, messages it would not be safe to express directly.⁶⁵⁷

This "slippage" of meaning, or the lack of concrete interpretation of meaning prevents the domestic act from being interpreted as solely regressive (for the "women's movement") or wholly feminist:

for innumerable...women, quilting [and sewing] became, unlike mere clothing construction, not only necessary work but also a creative outlet, a form of personal artistic expression. Such creative activity enabled women to transcend the limiting daily routine.⁶⁵⁸

This very instability of meaning allows for this code to be open to interpretation, change, and strategically used. These "feminine" products and actions can be read as feminist or as merely familiar. The acts of "feminine" labor that are performed can be both "apolitical" or "un-meaningful" as well as representing encodings which act as resistance, and which privilege with power that which was ignored by the (male) canon:

Recent research has focused on those "ordinary women" whose household work comprised, defined, and often circumscribed their lives: the work of cooking, cleaning and sewing that women traditionally and perpetually performed and that has gone unheralded...⁶⁵⁹

However, in this work, they are domestic "heroines" and their domestic actions occupy the full stage. What was an ironic suggestion in the

⁶⁵⁷ Radner 413

⁶⁵⁸ Hedges 294

⁶⁵⁹ Hedges 294

introduction, for Mme. Bovary to buy a sewing machine, our heroines in “the Women and the Shoemakers” do exactly; they turn very literally to domestic ritual and action when times are rough, or circumstances unruly. Murphy argues that “stitchery has a noticeable presence in literature as a kind of supporting text within a text”⁶⁶⁰. This newfound choice and plurality is a recurrent theme within the story, and one which the heroine’s daughter also reenacts.

Following her move to Cape Town and her marriage, the daughter was overwhelmed by the masculine and unfriendly conditions in which she found herself:

Дочь вернулась через год.
 — Не могу больше, мальчишки пристают, требуют еды, пугают... Ужас, сколько там змей, все время под окнами шуршит... Нейл не хочет учить меня рисовать, хочет лежать в постели с зашторенными окнами./A year later the daughter came back. “I can’t stand it any longer. The boys drive me mad...Neil [her husband] won’t teach me to draw. He just wants to lie in bed with the shutters drawn...”⁶⁶¹

She returns happily to her mother’s home, knowing that her return will help to continue the maternal genealogy that they have begun as she divulges joyfully (“засмеялась от счастья”), “я беременна! Сказали, что будет девочка/I’m pregnant! They say it’s a girl”⁶⁶². Intent of remaining with her mother, she leaves men’s letters from Cape Town unanswered and untranslated, instead choosing to enact feminine labour with her mother, and to view this female-space as liberatory. Continuity of life and

⁶⁶⁰ Murphy 643

⁶⁶¹ Smirnova *The Women and the Shoemakers*, trans 220

⁶⁶² Smirnova *The Women and the Shoemakers* trans 220

domestic tradition, as indicted by her pregnancy, helps to feed the idea of self-perpetuation and self-creation of their own domestic continuity. This space will be treated more fully in the following pages, but for now emphasis is on the daughter's rejection of masculine language, as represented by the letters; in her home she is able to shape and interpret the domestic code that exists to suit her:

...вместо этого села за машинку шить чепчики и подгузники. Осенью она родила дочку, назвала ее именем умершей бабушки "Анна", и они стали жить вчетвером /She sat down at the sewing machine instead to make little caps and nappies. In the autumn she gave birth to a daughter, called her Anna after her dead grandmother, and all four of them began to live together.⁶⁶³

The new girl in her life is actively named, by a woman, to reflect the ideal continuation of a feminine matriarchy. The importance of naming has been explored in a chapter pertaining to Gorlanova, and all of this meaning is exercised by the daughter in autonomy from male privileged systems. This isn't a form of revolutionary or utopian existence; as Sarah Orne Jewett noted in *County of Pointed Firs* (1896): "we [women] understand our fellows of the cell to whatever age of history they may belong"⁶⁶⁴. However, it is one chosen actively by the women in it, and which allows for them to empower themselves by making small changes and subversions to the general pattern of life, as desired. This gives them a power and a freedom of expression that is unheard of outside of their community: "At its most basic level of metaphor, the practice of

⁶⁶³ Smirnova *The Women and the Shoemakers* trans 221

⁶⁶⁴ Romines 65

housekeeping is problematically associated with women's work and with female power"⁶⁶⁵. Not that this power is overstated, however; their lives are described, in closing, as quiet, feminine (submissive) normalcy:

не счастливо и не несчастливо, и умерли, как положено, каждый в свой срок, не изведав каких-либо особенно красивых и необыкновенных чувств, кроме чувства благодарности за то, что стриженных овец бог бережет и, когда может, укрывает от ветра./neither happy nor unhappy, and died as is only right and proper each in her own time without experiencing any particularly beautiful or unusual feelings, apart from a sense of gratitude that God looks after the shorn lambs and protects them from the wind, whenever he can.⁶⁶⁶

A literature which privileges the domestic by using it as its central or main metaphors and subject matter is experimenting with an interesting shift in power in which the dynamics of labor are changed: domestic work

commands low wages, or none, and is often considered trivial or demeaning, "shitwork". What these women do is essential yet impermanent and invisible; according to [Harriet Beecher] Stowe, one sign on an accomplished housekeeper is that she is never caught in the act. The culture consumes the products of the housekeeper's labor; the fact and the process of that labor are suppressed.⁶⁶⁷

In Smirnova's works, the domestic is no longer hidden beneath the surface of the text, and comes to the forefront as a privileged ritual act. The work that is powerful because it is "essential yet impermanent and invisible" is much like many postmodern concepts of power—forever subjective (in design or recipe), always moving, always invisibly shaping the world

⁶⁶⁵ Romines 5

⁶⁶⁶ Smirnova *The Women and the Shoemakers* trans 221

⁶⁶⁷ Romines 6

around it, repetitive and never formalized, a “loose, hybrid, and composite collective action”⁶⁶⁸. Despite her ludic approach to the questions of domesticity and femininity, Smirnova has offered the reader two variations on a theme. Via metafictional elements, a preponderance and meaning of domestic symbolism, activity and ritual are invoked in an effort to understand the actions of domestic protagonists who enact feminine labour. The potential offered up by these domestic spaces and this “feminine” work is explored in the emergence of new relationships and genealogies, while an ultimate judgment concerning its efficacy is deferred. The performativity of gender and the extent to which it can be subverted is explored as the “empowerment” of typically “feminine” topics and protagonists focuses the reader’s interest inwards, into the rich depths of the domestic home, once again illuminating what has been so often neglected in literature.

DOMESTIC SPACE ENCROACHED UPON: BLUSTERY
PROVINCIALISM AND ‘ADDITIONAL SPACE’

Smirnova is a woman writer who focused on writing about provincial lives, issues of space and nature, as well as moving through boundaries between center and periphery. Hoogenboom has argued that “by representing themselves as provincial, these women [writers] laid a claim to another, equally important kind of literary seriousness, not

⁶⁶⁸ Roseneil, Sasha, “Postmodern Feminist Politics: The Art of the (Im)Possible”, *European Journal of Women's Studies* 6 (1999): 174.

among men, but among women, writers”⁶⁶⁹. In this case, conceiving of a matrilineal type of system seems to be apt, as even space is primarily domestic and feminized in Smirnova’s works, as has been discussed. However, beyond these primary domiciles, “additional” spaces are added. In the case of *Женщины и сапожники/The Women and the Shoemakers* these spaces are provincial and public—the funeral home, a factory. These are the types of space that to a large extent define the daily rhythms and interactions of an isolated town. In *Народный роман/A People’s Story*, the secondary space proffered is a different home—the lover’s abandoned home, inhabited by his wife and her lover. This home, though it is characterized as a “foreign” space, still seems both recognizable to Nina, as well as logically included in the story of adultery and home. While it is additional space into which Nina moves remarkably at her own leisure, ostensibly “tricking” her lover into simultaneously introducing her to his wife and finalizing their split, it is not truly central to the text. It maintains the motifs of food, domestic space, and an interest in the language and character of women versus men. On the other hand, the spaces in *Женщины и сапожники/The Women and the Shoemakers* are more significantly different, and their inclusion in what is otherwise a story that revels in tightly bound space is an interesting anomaly. These spaces are what I term “additional” spaces, and serve a different purpose than that of the setting. They are like tiny pockets of “local flavour” and are moved

⁶⁶⁹ Hoogenboom 251

into at times by the main female characters, and remain small parts of the life of the generally domestic women.

The parallels to Smirnova's story *Женщины и сапожники/The Women and the Shoemakers* are plentiful. Her story tells of provincial flavour, the symbolism of emptiness, additional spaces that reinforce central boundaries and the motif of remaining "domestic by choice" as a woman in the provinces. By including snippets of "typical" provincial life, Smirnova attempts, winkingly, to add some excitement to her "boring" story of domestic femininity. She actively ironizes the stereotype of boring writing about domesticity by adding male characters and additional spaces that would be deemed more exciting by historical standards (the characters are lively and give folkloric or rustic touches to the text, or the locales are exotic), but which are actually seen to be just as dull. Her inclusion of African vignettes both reinforces the importance of the daughter's return to her provincial home, as well as provides metacommentary on the colonialism of critics such as Abashev toward Siberia. Smirnova includes the shoemaker-characters expressly in order to add "interest" to her experimental work about a heroine who "does nothing". She states in her introductory paragraphs that her heroine is both far from the exciting heroes of the past, and her story a bit in need of livening up⁶⁷⁰. This serves to both acknowledge the bias against women's stories, as well as to mock it, as the shoemakers are shown to be boors and thieves and not particularly entertaining. Belinskii wrote that women

⁶⁷⁰ Smirnova *Women and the Shoemakers* trans 213

were limited to writing about homelife and domesticity: “a woman is locked in her very self, in her womanly and feminine sphere, and if she steps outside it, then she becomes some kind of ambiguous being”⁶⁷¹, however, the men that are depicted are also ambiguous stock characters. Choosing “a prosaic Russian landscape that is calculated to be boring”, Smirnova implies the typicality of the shoemakers and the other men in the town, and focuses on their actions and glosses over their feelings or characterization in lieu of the women’s introspection. Gogol outlined this connection between provincial women, feelings and landscape, writing as Chichikov that: “so it is in the life of a provincial person, if his days are poor in events, they are nevertheless filled with feelings...I speak about provincial women because in provincial towns, men are busy...they have no time to occupy themselves with feelings”⁶⁷².

In this story, such a bias is exemplified in the men’s scheming and drinking, and in their lack of emotional characterization. They are explicitly “additional” and rather artificially (not)integrated into the text. The ex-husband is described in one paragraph as a lecher and casually sexist:

Отец девочки... был коренаст, блудлив и простовато-хитер, как конь партизана Морозки, и отвлекался на всех женщин сразу... Его радостная беззаботность свидетельствовала, что такое существование и есть норма, настоящий порядок жизни, как он его понимал./The girl’s father...was a thick-set lecher, who would make a pass at any woman...His cheerful nonchalance suggested

⁶⁷¹ Hoogenboom 252

that he viewed this existence as the norm, the natural order of things⁶⁷³.

This explanation represents the most that is said about him in the story. The townspeople are given a similarly impressionistic treatment, the casual domestic abuse of the women and the “tense, proud [lives]” and “brawls” that define them, and the alcoholism that defines the town artist⁶⁷⁴. The wide swath cut by these stock characters is intentional, and the authorial intent and distancing is made obvious with the following statement: “Глядя со стороны на эту жизнь, могло показаться, что сапожники прочитали и затвердили наизусть основоположника соцреализма и разыгрывают спектакль, точно по нотам.../Watching this life from the sidelines one might have thought the shoemakers had read and learnt by heart the founder of Socialist Realism and were simply acting out the script to the letter”. That this letter includes the drunkenness (passim), snideness and violence⁶⁷⁵, thievery from the women⁶⁷⁶ and ubiquity does not bode well for this comparison; she notes slyly that “основоположник соцреализма, как и многие другие литераторы, любил и по-человечески понимал их/the founder of Socialist Realism together with many other men of letters would certainly

⁶⁷³ Smirnova *The Women and the Shoemakers* trans 213

⁶⁷⁴ Smirnova *The Women and the Shoemakers* trans 214-215. Russ: “и обитателей района отличало разнообразие отеков и синяков на лицах — от табачно-желтых до фиолетово-вдовьих тонов, которыми они гордились, как знаками отличия, причем женщины даже больше, чем мужчины. Жизнь их протекала напряженно и гордо, в блаженном пении и неистовых криках, семейно-уличных, вывернутых наружу, мятежах, собиравших кружки обывателей, которые с почтительной брезгливостью разглядывали неприятно-мясистые последствия.”

⁶⁷⁵ Smirnova *The Women and the Shoemakers* trans 216

⁶⁷⁶ Smirnova *The Women and the Shoemakers* trans 215

have understood and loved them for it”⁶⁷⁷. Another man at the funeral lies and womanizes⁶⁷⁸, silently and subtly eyeing the woman’s fifteen year old daughter.

To broaden the presentation of men in the story, the daughter’s sojourn to Cape Town works to characterize, negatively, men more “globally”. Though Smirnova does not create a violent story to describe the father of the daughter’s child and his sons, they are written as tediously boring and insulting characters. The man, David, is described as a tanned foreign dilettante, “загорелый иностранец с добрым, как у породистых собак, лицом и в полотняных штанах/a suntanned foreigner with a kind face, like a pedigree dog”⁶⁷⁹. This kindness, however, does not mask his comparison to a predatory animal, reflecting the fact that he “buys” the daughter from Russia for his wife. The move, instigated by the women and as a bartering action given in lieu of payment—a female economy of scale—allows the girl to explore the world, but at the end of her trip, she realizes that each place offers the same monotony. This reinforces her “domestic” mentality, with un-nourishing tertiary spaces and goal-oriented experiences outside bringing the women back to their central domestic space and reinforcing the self-imposed boundaries of their feminine, provincial space. It begins to show the rehabilitative potential of the domestic spaces that dominate women’s writing, and the

⁶⁷⁷ Smirnova *The Women and the Shoemakers* trans 216

⁶⁷⁸ Smirnova *The Women and the Shoemakers* trans 218

⁶⁷⁹ Smirnova *The Women and the Shoemakers* trans 219

freeing subversion and protection that is achievable within such architectural enclosure.

CONCLUSION

Whilst reading the texts herein, analysis was based on understanding the strategies used by both authors as responses to periphery. These are not the same strategies, though several overlap. There is the shared interest in women's writing, women's experience and the realities and themes of Siberian women's lives. Of course, these thematically link both authors' work to the larger global history of women's writing and interest in women's themes. Their interaction with the world and Russian canons link them to both literary traditions, as well. Siberia, as a focus, is part of the textual response to periphery, one that links it with women's writing, criticism and literary space. Nina Gorlanova and Natalia Smirnova's specific interest in Siberia, its relationship with the center and the influence of the periphery on - and in relation to - women, differentiates their prose from the precedent in Russian culture while highlighting the tremors of this heritage that run through the works. The way their works parallel the bias and peripherality of gender with that of the Russian north allowed for fruitful discussion (and rejection) of old critical models, and the eventual application of hybrid analysis, bringing together the best of Western and Russian theoretical approaches.

Both Smirnova's and Gorlanova's works further mediate on broad conceptions of space and women's writing, but do so with divergent foci.

Forging onward from the historical link between women and space, both authors create space(s) for their own voices and sites of rebellion.

Gorlanova puts emphasis on new theories that accentuate the relationship of literary theory with the theoretical bases of women's writing. In addition, she draws attention to issues of carceral space, and the ways her Siberian hometown interacts with/as paradoxically peripheral and central space. The focus is on the network of shifting centers that she creates; the provincial Siberia of Perm' and feminine, inhabited spaces. Smirnova, on the other hand, works with questions of space but meditates on the interiority of provincial women's lives, the insideness of their domestic homes and lives, as well as the closed circle of their domestic and "feminine" labour. Both are concerned with the fraught peripherality of both Siberia and their connotatively marginal status as provincial women writers.

Peripherality, it was argued, does not solely refer to matters of geopolitics, but instead encompasses the "othering" of Siberian literature from the Soviet/Russian canon, and the belief in women's writing as a distant and secondary part of Russian literature. Writing by women has long been condemned as separate and secondary, in style, form, mode and importance, and the writing of the periphery, especially Siberia, has long been dismissed as mimetic or provincial. The ways in which the woman, the avant-garde writer and the marginal intersect were of interest to this analysis. The desire to place one's writing within canonical space was shown as a feature of this prose, in both its jesting and serious forms. The

peripheral or marginal qualitative view of these Siberian women authors is manifest in the dearth of attention paid to them within the Russian literary community, as well as the Western one. In regards to both women's studies and center-periphery studies, the primary concern was finding textual proof that Siberian women writers experience spatial concerns vividly and to map the intersection of the two themes in writing. The connection with spatiality is consistent with the association of women with space in both the wider Western and Russian traditions. Understood as a response to the peripheries they share, Smirnova and Gorlanova's stories become creative acts which may subvert, supplant, comment on, or support the prevailing views of women's writing and space. My analysis of these works intends to rectify the overall failure of literary criticism of Siberian women's literature on a literary, administrative and cultural level. In part, the provision of translations into English – which are, in Gorlanova's case, the only ones currently available – will hopefully spur other scholars to rectify these failures with their concerted studies.

Both authors have cultivated different ways to deal with issues of geo-political and literary peripherality, and their related but differing approaches make them particularly good examples for comparison. Indeed, they have in many ways employed the tropes and the stereotypes of peripherality in order to re-privilege the periphery. In 1892, 19th C Russia's most prominent historian Vasilii Kliuchevskii averred “В России - центр на периферии/In Russia the centre is on the periphery”. In their

“Introduction”, Muireann Maguire and Vanessa Rampton present

Kliuchevskii’s interpretation of Russia’s periphery(ies):

...his observation also highlights the persistent slippage between real, physical centres and peripheries, and metaphorical ones. Kliuchevskii’s use of the terms central and peripheral has less to do with geographical position in a place with a given size and shape, than with a metaphorical understanding of what is of fundamental value to society.... ‘Real’ centres and peripheries cannot be disentangled from a narrative that provides them with their symbolic value ⁶⁸⁰.

In fact, both note that little has improved these unities, as “the technological and communications interdependency characteristic of the post-modern era has resulted in the further fragmentation of the concepts centre and periphery”⁶⁸¹. This idea is further enhanced by the postcolonialist theories of Homi Bhabha, Gaiatri Chakravorti Spivak, and Arjun Appadurai and others, who “stress that boundaries and identities assume complex forms that go well beyond any binary centre-periphery division: encounters between a core and periphery no longer take place ‘out there’; peripheral cultures have penetrated the core and transformed it”⁶⁸². However, this is not to say that the center-periphery trope has lost its significance, but to emphasize that “the shifting notions of marginality, centrality, and borders—or their absence—have shaped the categories and concerns of contemporary Russian cultural production. In some cases, center and periphery...[as concepts] are blurred, and authors approach the terms center and periphery as part of a process of conscious and ongoing

⁶⁸⁰ Maguire, Rampton 88

⁶⁸¹ Maguire, Rampton 88

⁶⁸² Maguire, Rampton 88/89

repositioning that affects both cultural producers and their audience”⁶⁸³. Truly, these methods of describing contemporary Russian cultural production serve Gorlanova and Smirnova well, as Gorlanova tends toward highlighting shifting centers and fluid peripheries that she makes her core setting and plot, while Smirnova reprivileges the domestic, personal centers most often associated with women’s writing. While the terms ‘center’ and ‘periphery’ used by Maguire and Rampton in their edited collection “have been redefined by 21st C technologies and opportunities”, in their words, the terms “nevertheless remain firmly embedded in the constraints of Russian history and culture”⁶⁸⁴. This embedded nature, this permanence in Russian culture, helps to explain both my study’s and the authors’ interests in these “old” topics, and also the cultural relevance of writing in a contemporary way with a focus on women’s/traditional themes. There is a lag between western and Russian, as well, in some ways, a disconnect.

Upon investigation, this paper identified two different strategies for approaching our authors’ spatial concern in their literature. Gorlanova, who has remained in Perm’ with her works situated there alongside her, re-makes Perm’ as a “center” in her network of shifting centers. This geopolitical orientation has become an overt characteristic of her prose; the city of Perm’ serves as the setting for most of her novels and stories⁶⁸⁵. For her, the choice of Perm’ as the setting of her fiction underscores the

⁶⁸³ Maguire, Rampton 90

⁶⁸⁴ Maguire, Rampton 90/91

⁶⁸⁵ Perova N.pag.

importance of periphery and specific space(s) to her works. Gorlanova has chosen one strategy which I see as a response to these historical feelings of peripherality; she has decided to aggressively reclaim a subjective voice within her works, and has chosen to ironize the conventions of the “canon” by incorporating snippets of it within her works and de-“heroizing” traditionally male subjects and positions. She repeatedly asks in her writing if this history is anything other than “the manure which lies under the next generation”⁶⁸⁶, actively questioning the notion of caring for an old, or creating a new, canon. In writing her heavily fictionalized “autobiography” and her works about Perm’, she responds to her peripheral status by turning outwards and responding to masculine privileging within history and the canon by re-writing it. In her style of writing Gorlanova may again be choosing a peripheral status, as metafiction also functions “as [a] border or frontier genre which borrow[s] elements from other related genres”⁶⁸⁷. She re-makes the city and history of Perm’ in her works of fiction and, in her metafiction, writes a version of her subjectivity into this new, subversive world. She mediates with the weight of the history and the world that she lives within by turning “outward” and recreating a place in which she is no longer involved peripherally, one in which she can control the canon of literary conventionality and of historicity. She openly defies convention, and weaves her autobiography into her fiction, and displaces the canon and

⁶⁸⁶ This device is especially found in *Любовь в резиновых перчатках /Love in Rubber Gloves*.

⁶⁸⁷ Sadoux 176

literary norms in her text. Each sentence is presented as a shifting and changing thing, with citation, the use of readymades, text chains and editing, which highlights the *process* of writing. By exploring the works of Gorlanova, it was the goal of this analysis to find textual places in which her orientation on the peripheries of Russia and Russian literature intersect with the fictions she writes into her texts.

Smirnova, on the other hand, has moved into other areas of Russia, and in her stories to strategically re-creates domestic spaces that fit into their surroundings. In her works, Siberia's peripheral geographical status is less overt; references to the importance of physical geography and peripheral living are underscored by her focus on provincialism, women's lives in provincial towns, and a close, inescapable feeling in her works. Known for "her prose [which] is subtle and slightly fanciful while her cultivated heroines are trapped in the crude surroundings of drab, provincial lives"⁶⁸⁸, Smirnova writes female characters who ritually create a domestic context into which they fit. This is a more broadly "northern" Siberian context, and works to compartmentalize the women from the rest of their environment. Smirnova does not turn outward in an attempt to mediate her place in the world, or differentiate her subjectivity from her routine. This paper sought to establish that she responds to her peripheral status by turning self-consciously "inward". The overarching themes that have been addressed in her work include the preponderance and meaning of domestic symbolism, activity and ritual in the stories – all markers of

⁶⁸⁸ Perova N.Pag.

the interior lives of provincial women. She becomes preoccupied with the domestic subject and the repetition of gendered activities⁶⁸⁹. All of this establishes feminine spaces that are defined by the ritual enactment of femininity. This focus on typically devalued actions and undervalued work which is identified and gendered as “feminine” subverts the literary norm in Russia, as it does not focus on the domestic sphere as an idealized or didactic expression on femininity. In Smirnova’s work, feminine labour acts as the point of mediation between her female characters and the world in which they live. It is through their gendered actions that these characters interact with the outer world, and leave the ordinary periphery of society in which they are confined; the provincial domestic home. It is also a way by which her characters can subvert and subtly change their surroundings and the restrictions placed on them, as they both enact and destabilize the feminine roles that define them. Through the use of a “feminine” language of labour, Smirnova creates code by which her stories can be understood in domestic space, as well as criticized⁶⁹⁰. It is by their production of gendered goods that her characters attain recognition as (limited) subjects within society, and it is this which defines them to the world. By unorthodoxly privileging typically “feminine” topics and protagonists that Smirnova achieves her particular significance.

By self-consciously and openly privileging and employing domestic actions, those which exist as peripheral subjects of literature and which

⁶⁸⁹ Butler *Bodies That Matter* passim.

⁶⁹⁰ Irigaray *Je, tu, nous*, passim.

exist as markers of a peripheral gender, this research has shown that Smirnova subverts the conventions of traditional “important” literature and challenges the regulatory fictions which support and are deployed by them. This does not occur without the tension of espacement (*differance*) coming to the fore, and the pregnant irony of Smirnova’s choice of subject matter and loci interacts with the ultimate instability of meaning via her use of unusual, and perhaps metafictional, style. This style is glimpsed in moments of framing of the text, the intrusion of the narrator into the story, and the playful and wry irony of her tone. Smirnova’s literary focus— inward towards relationships, quiet meditation, the home, domestic action—is historically feminine, but her style and the ends to which she employs them is rebellious. Additionally, Western women’s studies helped to understand her work, regarding the production, Butlerian performance and importance of domestic ritual and the creation of women’s space in literature. The concept of women’s space, women’s writing and matrilineal concerns were analyzed via *l’écriture féminine* and the work of Hélène Cixous and Luce Irigaray, and Sidonie Smith in particular. The confines of the Russian provincial domestic were also analyzed in Hoogenboom, and in relation to the private/public divide. With special interest paid to Smirnova, and in a specifically Russian mode, a detailed understanding of the concept of *быт*/everyday life (as versus *бытие*/objective reality) in the tradition was explored in order to offer insight into the role that women’s experience has in contemporary literature.

Essentially, these two women have provided us with two very different strategies for coping with a very similar status on the periphery. As trained literary critics and practitioners, neither has used these techniques intuitively, and the intentions of their deployment are of great interest to this paper. Gorlanova has reacted by turning outwards. Gorlanova mediates with the outside world, and the canon of male literature (certainly one “center” to which women were peripheral) by remolding networks of interaction, and remaking her space(s) for herself. She creates her subjectivity in relation to her own subjective view of the world. In turn, she pushes the reader out toward the borderlands, to a place of uncertainty and instability. Smirnova may at first glance seem to capitulate with the typical modes of femininity, with her focus on the personal lives and repetitive domestic labour of provincial women, but this inward turn and highly aware style of prose serves as both her mediation with the outside world as an autonomous subject. She remakes herself domestically, within the world. The overly constructed nature of her prose helps to underscore this point; all of this is a construction, and not part of the “easy natural femininity” that plagues traditional Russian domestic tales. Smirnova’s ludic approach to literature links her to Gorlanova and her use of estrangement textually subverts the gendered norms of the Russian literary standard.

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