GENDER

AND NATIONAL IDENTITY

IN TWENTIETH-CENTURY RUSSIAN CULTURE

EDITED BY

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FOR MALEN'KAIA DARIA

EIGHT Selling Russia: Prostitution, Masculinity, and Metaphors of Nationalism after Perestroika

ELIOT BORENSTEIN

As Western ships approached a port in Sevastopol, Ukraine, in late April of 1997, a group of prostitutes lined up to greet them. Given the long-standing connection between shore leave and sex-for-hire, this was hardly unusual in and of itself, but these women planned a welcome with pickets rather than open arms. The sailors were part of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization's Operation Sea Breeze, a set of practice maneuvers in the Black Sea. NATO could not have picked a worse time or a more troubled spot: the Russian government was outraged over plans for the organization's imminent expansion to include former Warsaw Pact countries, while the Crimea (the largely Russian-speaking region including Sevastopol that was given to Ukraine by Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev as a "gift" in 1954) has been the focus of a simmering territorial dispute with Ukraine since the collapse of the USSR. On Russia Day, which commemorates the incorporation of the Crimea into the Russian Empire by Catherine the Great, the local Russian-language newspaper, *The Crimean Times* [*Krymskoe vremia*], reported that a group of prostitutes declared a boycott on NATO sailors: "Let them be serviced by the wives of the officers who let NATO ships into the Black Sea," one of the prostitutes-turned-activists was quoted as saying. "We for our part will shower the uninvited guests with tomatoes and rotten eggs" (Lodge [translation adjusted for the sake of idiom]). Her words are almost too good to be true, and one suspects that the reporter might well have fabricated them to spice up his story.[1] Whether real or fabricated, they exemplify the sexualization of boundaries that so often characterizes prostitution as a metaphor for international relations: the prostitute refuses access to NATO sailors, just as the country should have refused them access to its precious and vulnerable warm water port.

For the past decade, the Russian prostitute has been routinely deployed in the symbolic battle for Russia's soul. The collapse of the Russian state, the decline of patriotism, and the absence of a workable national idea share center stage in the Russian media and culture industry with tales and im-

ages of sexually uninhibited young women offering their bodies and their services to paying clients. Just as the media and culture industry themselves are often pilloried for the boom in prostitution that began in the last years of perestroika (the assumption is that young girls and women throughout the country wanted to be just like the high-priced Russian prostitutes they saw on the silver screen), so are perestroika and the subsequent attempts at economic "shock therapy" blamed for turning the entire country into a nexus of buying and selling, where everything of value is offered cynically to the highest bidder.

At issue here is prostitution as metaphor rather than social phenomenon. Certainly, prostitution and sexual slavery are very real and serious problems in Russia today; barely a month passes without some Western news outlet reporting on the physical and psychological humiliation suffered by women in the former Soviet Union who have joined the swelling ranks of prostitutes either out of dire economic need or from the mistaken assumption that selling their bodies will give them the "good life." Newspapers are filled with reports of naïve young women in the former Soviet Union lured abroad with promises of high-paying jobs, only to find themselves sold into sexual slavery in brothels throughout Europe and the Middle East. But the real-life trials and tribulations of actual prostitutes are beyond the scope of this chapter, whose subject matter is defined in terms of representation and consumption, not daily life or individual psychology. At issue is the way in which Russia, Russian culture, and Russianness (*russkost'*) are constructed in the country's mass media and culture industry for a domestic audience. In Russia, millions of viewers and readers have a strong sense of the chaos into which their country is falling, not only because of their day-to-day experiences, but also because the media and culture industry create specific narratives for constructing and understanding that chaos, narratives that are calculated to appeal to their audience. The plight of actual post-Soviet prostitutes is horrific, but this is not their story.

Indeed, it is not a woman's story at all.[2] More often than not, the network of artistry and ideology that has created the metaphorical post-Soviet prostitute functions like the prostitute herself: its primary target is men. A brief overview of the prostitute's function in Russia's cultural mythology before perestroika will show that the prostitute has rarely been a subject in her own right; usually, she is a foil for the male hero or an important step in his moral or psychological development. The post-Soviet prostitute is no exception. Burdened with a symbolism that might seem wildly disproportionate to her status, she becomes a sign of Russian national humiliation—of the desperation of a country forced to sell off its natural and spiritual resources to unscrupulous clients from other lands. Sometimes the scenario is more optimistic, the prostitute representing the nation's enduring pride and moral superiority in the face of hostile enemies. This is in keeping with centuries-old traditions of representing Russia as feminine, as a woman who alternates between a stern and forbidding Mother Russia rallying her

sons to her defense and a helpless, innocent virgin despoiled by invaders from both East and West. Yet despite this pervasive feminization of the country on the symbolic level, and despite the fact that male prostitution is rarely raised as an issue, the Russian prostitute symbolizes national humiliation as male, rather than female, experience.[3] She represents the anxieties of a post-Soviet masculinity in crisis, where the loss of empire, the onslaught of the market, and competition with a triumphant West are construed as a kind of male sexual humiliation. Even though Russia is embodied by a female prostitute, even though her victimization unfolds within a context of specifically heterosexual violence and commerce, and even though her story fits classical patterns for the heroines of melodrama, in terms of the Russian cultural imaginary, her darkest secret is that, symbolically if not sartorially, she is a cross-dresser. This does not render her story a kind of *Crying Game à la russe.* Quite the contrary: whereas Jaye Davidson's character shocked her would-be lover when she spread her legs to reveal a penis, the post-Soviet prostitute is the perfect expression of Russian male anxiety because, powerless and alluring, she does not have a phallus at all.

The Russian Prostitute and Her Literary Pedigree

> When out of the gloom of error
> With the heated word of conviction
> I drew out your fallen soul,
> And, full of deep torture,
> Wringing your hands, you cursed
> The vice that had corrupted you.
> ....
> Believe me: I listened, not unmoved,
> I greedily caught every sound...
> I understood everything, unhappy child!
> All is forgiven and all is forgotten.
> And come into my house boldly and freely
> As its full mistress!
> —N. A. Nekrasov, "When out of the gloom of error"
> ["Kogda iz mraka zabluzhden'ia"] (Nekrasov 101–2)

All appearances to the contrary, the post-Soviet prostitute of fiction and film has an impeccable pedigree, tracing her ancestry back to classic Russian novels, short stories, and verse.[4] The Russian literary tradition is quite tolerant of the fallen woman, who is often treated less as an individual character than as the embodiment of a moral dilemma. N. A. Nekrasov's "When out of the gloom of error" (1845), cited above, establishes a pattern for the literary prostitute that resonates to this very day: the speaker inevitably hears the prostitute's tale of woe, facilitating her redemption by

asking her to marry him: "And come into my house boldly and freely / As its full mistress!" (102). In her article "A Typology of Fallen Women in Nineteenth Century Russian Literature," Olga Matich observes that the fallen woman "brings together two major themes of Russian fiction: those of moral integrity and socio-economic status" (327).

Her words apply equally well to the post-Soviet prostitute, as does her typology itself: examining some of the most important heroines in nineteenth-century Russian fiction, Matich develops a classification system that divides the fallen woman and her "male complement" into four groups: Female victim and Male victimizer, Female victim and Male redeemer, Female victim-redeemer and Male victim, and Female victimizer and Male victim (327). That the fallen women should be defined in terms of suffering and redemption should come as no surprise to readers of Russian fiction, since these themes are central to the entire literary tradition in general (and to the works of Dostoevsky in particular). Matich reminds us of the numerous attempts by Russian heroes to "save" the prostitute or fallen woman, who is usually depicted as a victim of harsh circumstances: Nekhliudov and Katiusha Maslova from Leo Tolstoy's *Resurrection,* the Underground Man and Liza from *Notes from Underground,* and, of course, Kirsanov's transformation of Nastia Kriukova from prostitute to utopian socialist seamstress in Chernyshevsky's *What Is to Be Done?* The impulse to "save" such women may be attributed to a variety of motives, from a combination of vanity and a misguided sense of social duty to a selfish need to dominate. Indeed, one might argue that attempts at redemption work precisely in that they sublimate the initial, sexual arousal provoked by the prostitute into a moral one: it is her plight, and not her body, that is so seductive. In 1899, Tolstoy's Katiusha Maslova, the last in a long line of the century's literary prostitutes, so clearly understands her spiritual and sexual status that one might almost suspect she was familiar with Matich's typology. She resolves not to let off so easily the man who seduced her and ruined her life: "She would not give herself to him, would not allow him to use her spiritually as he had used her bodily" (Tolstoi 10: 259). For the attempt at salvation to be made, the male protagonist must first transform the prostitute in his own mind from a sex object to a moral object.[5]

Yet, as Matich's framework suggests, the prostitute could also be the *instrument* of salvation rather than its object. All but one of Matich's models are predicated on sexual role reversal, in which the man is "socially degraded" (338). Her third model, female victim-redeemer and Male victim, is most fully pronounced in the works of Dostoevsky. Although Dostoevsky did not invent the theme of redemption through suffering, it quickly became associated with both his work and with the moral imperatives of the Russian literary tradition as a whole; his focus on female sacrifice and redemption played a decisive role in the formation of the image of the self-sacrificing Russian heroine. In the aforementioned *Notes from Underground,* the narrator's fantasy that he will "raise up" the prostitute Liza is a parody

of the utopian idealism of similar scenes in Chernyshevsky's *What is to Be Done?*; by the end of the story, Liza, aware of his degradation, "assumes the role of redeemer in a redistribution of power and an inversion of the classical redemption model" (339). Sonia from Dostoevsky's *Crime and Punishment* is certainly a victim to the extent that she turns in her passport for the prostitute's yellow ticket in order to save her family from destitution. Yet her primary role in the novel is to facilitate the hero's rejection of the path of sin, hubris, and murder. As Matich and numerous others have noted, "It is Sonja who is the Christlike savior in the novel" (340).[6]

Although the suffering woman as both victim and redeemer would stubbornly persist into the Soviet period (with Solzhenitsyn's Matryona being one of the most famous examples), after the 1920s she was only rarely a prostitute. Certainly, prostitutes would be found throughout the literature documenting the Russian Revolution and Civil War, from Kat'ka in Aleksandr Blok's "The Twelve," the prostitute who had disrupted the comradely harmony of the revolutionary soldiers (a harmony that would be restored only after her death), to the camp followers of Isaak Babel''s *Red Cavalry* stories. During the New Economic Policy, the prostitute resurged as a social and cultural phenomenon: the prevalence of prostitutes both responded to the newly restored market forces and, in literature and film, reflected them.[7] Now prostitution was treated as a social problem to be eradicated through labor and reeducation rather than romantic idealism; if anything, the role of redeemer was now co-opted by the state and by doctors who were acting in the name of "enlightened science."[8] By the 1930s, victory was declared in the war on prostitution, and the phenomenon officially ceased to exist. The prostitute vanished from the horizon, reappearing only after Gorbachev's perestroika was well under way. Of course, women continued to perform sex for hire in train stations, in hard-currency hotels for foreign visitors, and by special arrangement for the Party elite. Yet if there is ample evidence that prostitution actually persisted as a social phenomenon, it vanished as a discursive one: it was no longer a subject fit for literature and art.

Perestroika Prostitutes

> Making that film is tantamount to actually luring women into prostitution. It should be prosecuted under the law.
>
> —A Moscow policeman, 1989 (Belova 44)

The prostitute's disappearance from Soviet discourse was necessitated by the supposed eradication of prostitution as a social ill; but her loss of currency also points to more fundamental characteristics of Soviet culture before glasnost. In a society where money and market relations were not the dominant means of exchange, the metaphorical power of prostitution was diminished. Even when the country was represented as feminine, Mother

Russia's problem was not that she was selling her services to foreign customers. In World War II, clearly the Soviet Union's greatest international crisis, Mother Russia had to be protected from rape by a violent invader rather than seduction by a rich exploiter. When forbidden by law, prostitution is a classic example of a "victimless crime": no direct harm comes to anyone as a result.[9] The resolution of moral dilemmas under Stalin (and even Brezhnev) did create victims: as a metaphor, prostitution is woefully inadequate when applied to the denunciation of friends and neighbors to the authorities. The dominant metaphor for "selling out" in Soviet times was Faustian rather than whorish: avoiding the mediation of the cash nexus entirely, one sold one's *soul* rather than one's *body*. One of the challenges faced by the art of the Thaw was to address not just the victims of Stalinism, but those who actively colluded to ruin people's lives.[10]

Among the oppositional intelligentsia after Stalin, "selling out" to the authorities or to the crushing dictates of Soviet life was a matter of either submission to blackmail (denial of basic rights or privileges if one fails to go along) or invidious compromise (a series of small concessions that led one down the primrose path to total capitulation). The man who conveyed this dilemma the best, indeed, the undisputed master of the genre, was Brezhnev-era author Iurii Trifonov; his 1976 novel *House on the Embankment* [*Dom na naberezhnoi*] tells of a perfectly normal and likeable young man who betrays his teacher during the Stalin era, while his 1969 novella *The Exchange* [*Obmen*] shows the more mundane deals with the devil made during Brezhnev's "period of stagnation": step by step, a man parts with his principles in order to swap his tiny apartment for a larger one.

With the advent of perestroika, the dominant metaphors changed. Not only did the state rapidly lose much of its ability to force its citizens into ethical compromises with the system, but the system itself quickly became preoccupied with issues of money and market relations. One of Russia's most prominent, and most controversial, fiction writers appeared to have anticipated this shift earlier than most: between 1980 and 1982, Viktor Erofeyev wrote a novel called *Russian Beauty* [*Russkaia krasavitsa*], which would be published in the USSR only in 1990. The novel's obscene language (which was unprintable before the late 1980s) and graphic descriptions of sexual violence did not exactly endear it to the Russian intellectual readership, while its stream-of-consciousness narration was a bit too daunting for those who were simply looking for titillation. *Russian Beauty* tells the tale of Irina Tarakanova (her last name means "cockroach"), a beautiful, high-class slut who, although not strictly speaking a prostitute, services the communist *nomenklatura*, artists, and various hangers-on. As the female embodiment of a debased and mercantile Russia on the cusp of perestroika, Tarakanova is perfect: at a time when connections and favoritism can make or break someone's life, Tarakanov implicitly sells her services without taking cash. She is not a prostitute, but she is a whore. As in so much of Erofeyev's work, underneath the modernist narrative techniques and scandalous four-letter words of *Russian Beauty*

are themes resurrected from the literary classics: in this case, the suffering, beautiful female "fallen woman" as a symbol of Russia's salvation. Erofeyev is one of Russia's most self-conscious postmodernists, and his approach to the theme is easily identifiable as parody: as Helena Goscilo has noted, Irina clearly represents the new Russia ("two fates were to be decided: Russia's and mine" [227], Goscilo 43). She is convinced that she will be Russia's spiritual savior, because "beauty will save the world" (Prince Myshkin said as much in Dostoevsky's *The Idiot,* so it must be true).

Ultimately, it would not be "high art" like *Russian Beauty* that would establish the image of the perestroika prostitute; that honor would fall to a novel and movie called *Intergirl* [*Interdevochka*]. Viktor Kunin's 1988 novel and Petr Torodorvskii's movie of the following year tell the melodramatic story of Tania, a nurse's aid by day and foreign-currency prostitute by night. Although Tania uses her ill-gotten income for luxuries and fine clothes, her main concern is the welfare of her friends and her mother, a middle-aged woman of poor health. After many trials and tribulations, Tania marries one of her clients, a Swedish businessman who takes her away from both mother and Motherland to install her in a house with all the modern conveniences of Western suburbia and all the warmth of a Scandinavian winter. Tania's relationship with her husband rapidly deteriorates as she is overcome by boredom and homesickness; her only solace is her friendship with the Soviet truck driver who is her one link to her past life. By the story's end, the truck driver has lost his job for consorting with Tania, her mother has discovered her secret life and committed suicide, and a distraught Tania dies in a car accident.

This wildly successful potboiler simply begs for a political reading. In her discussion of Todorovskii's film, Lynne Attwood argues convincingly that the prostitute is a symbol of Soviet society as a whole: "everybody is forced, metaphorically, into prostitution" (Attwood 72).[11] Katerina Clark offers a more provocative interpretation of the *perestroika* prostitute: such works as *Intergirl* highlight the intelligentsia's anxiety over the fate of culture in the era of the international marketplace (Clark). As Goscilo observes, "the dominant lexicon of *Intergirl* is that of economics (not sex)" (144). The novel itself, which was published along with a brief foreword by the prominent Russian sexologist Igor' Kon praising Kunin's work for its social utility, is remarkably chaste in its language, containing neither obscene words nor explicit descriptions of sexual acts (the American Motion Picture Association would be hard pressed to give it an "R" rating). In *Intergirl,* Goscilo discovers a prurience of a different sort: a "preoccupation with various brands and names of commodities, which relentlessly repeat themselves whenever clothes, cars, makeup, perfumes, etc., are mentioned. Needless to say, these are all Western imports, weapons with which the corrupt materialist West invades innocent Russia to tempt and degrade it" (Goscilo 144). Of course, crucial to all these readings of *Intergirl* is the fact that Tania is a *foreign-currency* prostitute, one who disdains mere rubles in her quest for dollars and

Deutschmarks. Indeed, Tania meets her death in a foreign car whose name seems to point back to the body parts with which she earned her keep: a Volvo. When we recall the frequent recourse to female symbols to represent Russia, Tania's melodramatic story becomes a transparent allegory of Russia's relationship with the West: rich in natural beauty, Russia sells herself to foreign suitors only to be overcome by nostalgia and regret.[12]

Although *Intergirl* was just a novel and movie, the work represents a turning point for the social construction of the Russian prostitute. Contemporary reviewers of the movie feared that its depiction of its star, Elena Iakovleva, decked out in foreign clothes and enjoying imported luxuries, would prompt millions of young Soviet girls to follow in her spike-heeled footsteps.[13] And although the media are too easy a target to blame for all contemporary social ills, it is true that the number of prostitutes in the former Soviet Union began to skyrocket in the years following the movie's release. Unquestionably, there are clear socioeconomic reasons for this phenomenon that have nothing to do with the corrupting power of film and fiction, but the movie did provide an easily digested narrative for becoming a prostitute that could have exacerbated it.[14] Over a decade later, *Intergirl* is still routinely blamed for Russia's prostitution problem. The May 1999 issue of *Kino-Park,* a popular movie magazine, featured an article called "How *Intergirl* Was Accused of Prostitution," in which professors, policemen, and even prostitutes themselves make the case that, despite its tragic ending, Todorovskii's film is to blame for luring girls from the path of righteousness. Curiously, the metaphor of prostitution is used to explain how a film about prostitution led real girls and women to turn tricks for a living: the movie's producers are essentially accused of pimping the Russian public.

After 1991: On the Market

> There are nations and cultures that simply *know how* to sell and buy women. . . . In theory, Russian *high* culture (*kul'tura*) couldn't stand that. Buying and selling gave it [culture] convulsions. It was uniquely un-mercenary. Without investigating the matter thoroughly, it declared woman priceless. That's why Russian culture's attitude toward prostitution was so strained.
>
> —Viktor Erofeev, "The Price of the Prostitute" ["*Tsena prostitutki*"] (Erofeev, *Muzhchiny* 108)

Intergirl appeared only two years after the paradigmatic moment when sexuality reemerged as an important part of Russian discourse, when a member of the Russian studio audience for a 1987 Soviet-American "space bridge" hosted by Phil Donahue and Vladimir Pozner declared that, in the Soviet Union, "We have no sex!" Her words were only semi-serious, and certainly their meaning was misunderstood (she was referring to sex as subject matter in the media and entertainment, not physical sexual activity), but they functioned as a call to arms: for the past fourteen years, Russia has

been doing its best to prove her wrong. Talk shows, films, novels, and how-to manuals are now impossible for the Russian consumer to ignore, while those who live in the capitals can now visit one of many sex shops and bring home a variety of plastic objects and battery-operated devices that never quite made it as categories for production targets under the old Soviet five-year plans. And despite legislators' frequent attempts to restrict or ban pornography altogether, sexually explicit magazines and videos are almost as easy to acquire as a loaf of black bread, if not as cheap. Since Russian culture can be said to have undergone both a market revolution and a sexual revolution simultaneously (although both claims are problematic), the discourse of sex has become inextricably linked with the discourse of economics.[15]

The result has been a commodification of women's bodies and female sexuality that is unprecedented in Russian history. For almost a decade now, want ads casually announce secretarial vacancies for attractive young women who are *"bez kompleksov"* or "uninhibited," a none-too-subtle code for explaining the secretary's horizontal duties to her boss. And just as American and European commercials use beautiful women to sell cars and beer, Russian ads routinely feature half-naked, sexually available beauties to promote the most unlikely of products: a recent billboard for a copy machine has a sexy woman lying on top of it, with the slogan *"ona ne otkazhet"* (a play on words suggesting that the copy machine will not break down and the woman will not say no). Equally evocative is a 1999 billboard for "West" cigarettes: in it, a beautiful stewardess sits next to a handsome male passenger, smiling broadly as her breasts, barely covered in a black-lace bra, spill out of her unbuttoned uniform. Although the man is looking her in the eye, the cigarette's logo points straight to her cleavage, while the slogan above their heads proclaims: "Everything is possible."

This last ad is particularly significant, since it brings together female sexual commodification and the tortured relations between Russia and the West. The man's clothing and the women's face strongly suggest that both are Russian, but the artifact responsible for their unlimited possibilities is packaged as foreign: the color scheme is a rip-off of Marlboro's, which had been the undisputed favorite among Russia's smokers with the money to pay for them, while the product's name speaks for itself. West presents a relatively uncomplicated connection between sexuality, Russian male sexual success, and Western consumer culture. But as the 1990s drew to a close, this utopian idyll was more the exception than the rule. Here again, the figure of the prostitute plays a central role: repeatedly standing in for Russia as a whole, she sells her services, herself, and often her pride.

Post-Soviet Russia's drama of international prostitution is thus always played out on a number of levels simultaneously: on the empirical level, there is the unchecked growth of highly paid call girls serving "New Russians" and foreign businessmen, the boom in Russian "mail-order brides," and the notorious trafficking in women from the former Soviet Union

throughout the world; allegorically, the "export" of Russian women is inevitably compared with the shortsighted marketing of the country's oil reserves for Western consumption. The Russian woman has become part of a constellation of symbols for Russian anxieties over commodification. In the Russian imaginary, the prostitute who caters to Western clients serves much the same function as the baby adopted by American and European childless couples, or the victims of kidnapping in popular urban legends whose organs are harvested for the underground transplant market. In each case, something that might normally be considered intimate or even sacred is thrown to the tender mercies of the postcommunist international market, turning Russia into a depot for human spare parts. Rita Prozorova, the heroine of Sergei Pugachev's 1999 novel *You're Just a Slut, My Dear* [*Ty prosto shliukha, dorogaia!*], escapes from sexual slavery in the provinces only to be lured into a black-market organ-harvesting scheme in the capital. She escapes solely because she has heard enough news stories on TV to recognize the imminent danger: "The heart valve of some millionaire in Chicago fails him, and a man in Moscow or Petersburg disappears. She'll disappear the same way, so that her kidney can process American urine somewhere in San Francisco. To die, just to piss in San Francisco? Screw that!" (296). Rita's escape from the organ harvesters parallels her escape from prostitution: refusing to be a victim, she does not hesitate to commit murder herself.

Rita's story is unusual, however, in that she is not only the action hero but also an irredeemably unattractive character (the novel begins with her murdering her mother, a neighbor, and a policeman, all in thirty pages). Nor is she a professional prostitute. The professional prostitutes in Russian popular narrative are usually far more appealing, and their story is calculated to arouse numerous conflicting feelings in the male audience. On the sexual level, the Russian prostitute's story contributes to a growing complex of inferiority and insecurity among Russian men, one that is amply demonstrated by the numerous publications and broadcasts aimed primarily at male consumers. Indeed, the very existence of "men's magazines" and soft-core pornography in Russia inevitably points back to the threat of foreign competition: no matter how hard they may try to be unique, male heterosexual erotica and pornography in Russia betray their foreign origins. The *Playboy* clone *Andrei*, the first slick "men's magazine" in the former USSR, makes such anxieties crystal clear in a cartoon in its very first issue: two prostitutes display their wares on a Moscow street: the first, a Russian woman standing under the "M" of the metro sign, looks on in horror at a black woman leaning against the "M" of a McDonald's sign (*Andrei* 27).[16] Such publications trumpet the virtues of Russian women, repeating the male mantra that women in Russia are the most beautiful in the world; but they also reinforce the threat that these women will attract the attention of rich foreign men (through associated projects such as *Andrei*'s own Web site). Ironically, these publications, which shamelessly borrowed from Western models such as *Playboy* and *Penthouse*, eventually found

themselves retreating behind national chauvinism when *Playboy* and *Penthouse* began publishing their own Russian editions. Magazines such as *Andrei* experienced the same anxieties as their Russian male readers when faced with foreign competition.

If the media, pornography, fiction, and film are any indication, Russian masculinity is often represented as embattled by potential threats from all sides, both on the home front and in relation to the West. The 1990s have witnessed a burgeoning literature on the supposedly pathetic state of post-Soviet manhood: Lina Tarakhova's 1992 *Raising a Man* [*Vospitat' muzhchinu*], V. Z. Vladislavskii's 1991 *If You're a Man* [*Esli ty muzhchina*], and A. Nikulin's 1990 *Men's Talk* [*Muzhskoi razgovor*] all share the argument that Russian men are an endangered species. These books are largely pedagogical, focused on returning traditional male values to the younger generation; these are books for boys and for the teachers of boys. They appear to respond to a complaint more often voiced by Russian women than Russian men, the charge that the Soviet system rendered its men "infantile" and "dependent." Perhaps the most prominent exponent of this view is none other than Viktor Erofeev, the author of *Russian Beauty*, whose 1997 book of essays *Men* [*Muzhchiny*] is a collection of occasional pieces published in such magazines as *Andrei* and the Russian edition of *Playboy*. The *Andrei* articles were originally printed in a monthly rubric called "The Rights of Men" ["*Prava muzhchin*"], and the sixth issue (1995) contained an essay penned by Erofeev titled "The Flight of the 'Cloud in Trousers'" ["*Polet 'oblaka v shtanakh'*"]. After a self-satisfied diatribe on the dangers of feminism and the controversy over sexual harassment in the West, "The Flight of the 'Cloud in Trousers'" informs us that "Man's fate in Russia looks different, but is no less dramatic," since the Russian man is not merely embattled but has ceased to exist altogether. Thanks to Soviet power (which Erofeev himself admits was instituted by male Russians), the Russian man has lost the honor and freedom that are the hallmarks of true manhood. Though the Russian man is still a "human being" (*chelovek*), still a "guy" (*muzhik*), and still a "husband" (*muzh*), all of these terms represent circumscribed, ultimately unfulfilling roles for the potential "real" man.

Erofeev's essay hints at the spectre that haunts Russian masculinity: the spectre of Western culture and Western men. If the Russian man is a thing of the past, the Russian woman is entirely real: "Woman consists of necessity. In Russia we have necessity by the ton (*neobkhodimosti khot' valiai*). That is why Russia is feminine. And the Russian woman has no illusions: she knows there are no men in Russia. She wants out of Russia."[17] Once again, this sexual threat is inextricably caught up with an economic one: the Russian man posited by *Andrei* laments the competition with Western men, while *Andrei* itself is haunted both by Russia's competition with American pop culture and by the magazine's own attempts to maintain its market share against the threat of "men's magazines" imported from the United States, particularly the Russian-language edition of *Playboy*, whose

contents only slightly differ from the American version. "The Flight of the 'Cloud in Trousers'" brings together a popular argument about Russian male inadequacy with the perceived problem of Russian women "exporting themselves" to the West. In a few short paragraphs, the author of *Russian Beauty* links a crisis of Russian masculinity, prostitution, Russia's relations with the West, and international commerce into an overriding discourse of wounded national and male pride.

How, then, does Russian popular culture attempt to exorcise itself of the sense of humiliation and betrayal as symbolized by the prostitute, who shamelessly crosses borders and exchanges bodily fluids? By appealing to a tired cliché of prostitute narratives and adding a nationalist twist: the desirability and value of the prostitute is proven by the fact that the West is willing to pay, but her spirituality, and the ultimate superiority of Russian men, is demonstrated when she performs her services for love, rather than for money. By and large, the prostitute is mercantile only with her foreign johns, bestowing her gifts on the Russian hero for free.

Indeed, the moment when the prostitute stops taking money can be tantamount to the validation of the hero's Russian credentials. In 1993, director Ivan Shchegolev and screenwriter Lev Korsunskii produced a rather ham-handed comedy called *Amerikanskii dedushka* [*American Grandfather*], the last film starring the beloved actor Evgenii Leonov. Leonov plays an émigré who returns from Brooklyn to his native Russia in order to buy a cemetery plot, plan his funeral, and die at home surrounded by loved ones. These same loved ones, however, have far more mercantile ideas. Through the inexplicable logic of film comedy, Leonov has gotten rich in America (after all, that is what America is for), and so he is soon the target of various hangers-on who hope to squeeze as much money out of him as possible before he takes to his grave. Along the way, Leonov goes to a hotel restaurant and meets a Russian woman whom the viewer has little difficulty identifying as a prostitute (she wears the "uniform" of high heels, fishnets, miniskirt, and garish make-up). Incredibly, Leonov fails to realize she is a professional: after all, he has been away from Russia so long, he does not know that the country is now swarming with call girls. Apparently, his experience in America does not give him the street smarts to recognize a hooker; instead, prostitution is implicitly identified as a post-Soviet Russian phenomenon. This being a comedy, and one with the word "American" in its title, it has to have a happy end; and so the tragic finale of the funeral is replaced by the celebration of Leonov's wedding to the prostitute, who is now pregnant. Leonov has come home to live, not to die.

There is much to unpack here: at the very least since the Russian Revolution, emigration and exile have been symbolically linked to images of death, with the foreign countries standing in for the land of the dead.[18] Indeed, *Intergirl* itself makes use of this tradition, turning Tania's new home into a land that virtually buries her alive and ultimately kills her. Leonov's happy end is the mirror image of *Intergirl*'s tragedy: the prostitute finds

happiness by marrying a foreign john who turns out to be a Russian; she helps reconcile him with his greedy relatives, and the newlyweds remain in their native land to raise children rather than move abroad to die. Here the prostitute facilitates reintegration with Russia and a reassertion of "family values" rather than exile and the soul-crushing dominance of market relations.

The foreign-currency prostitute plays a similar function as the guide back "home" in the 1997 action film *Everything We Dreamed About for So Long* [*Vse to, o chem my tak dolgo mechtali*], although its end is tragic nonetheless. A young man is tricked by his old army buddy into running drugs from Western Europe into Russia, not realizing that he is being set up to be caught and killed. Although he is told to drive nonstop, he is lured by the bright lights of a German city and makes his way to a strip club, where he is immediately attracted to a platinum blonde exotic dancer who he is convinced is a "real German." Naturally, when he arranges to pay for her services, she turns out to be a Russian (named Natasha, no less—Russian prostitutes throughout Europe and the Middle East are routinely referred to as "Natashas"), and mayhem ensues. He finds himself in jail, and Natasha, who at first disdained him as just another raggedy Russian, soon finds herself in an all-too-familiar role for women from the ex-USSR: she brings him packages in prison. Eventually, she meets up with him after he breaks free, following a kickboxing struggle to the death with a fellow prisoner while clad in nothing but a loincloth and silver body paint. Natasha turns out to be a foreign-language graduate who was lured abroad with promises of work as a translator, only to have her passport seized and her body sold into sexual slavery. Thanks to her, the hero turns his life around. She brings him to a Russian Orthodox Church, where, overwhelmed by the power of the icons, he faints. He returns and is baptized into the faith of his fathers, as a more modestly dressed Natasha looks on, smiling beatifically. Soon she gets pregnant, and the couple starts to make plans for the future. Before she and the hero can start a new life together, however, she is shot by gangsters.

Everything We Dreamed About for So Long is a prostitute melodrama in the Dostoevskian mold, where the heroine facilitates her lover's salvation. But here these hackneyed themes are transposed to the realm of international commerce and national disenchantment. When the hero was still in the army, he and his friend dreamed of the good life, the kind available only in the West; but when he arrives in Germany, the West for him is nothing but a prison. His status in life is both typical for so many young Russian men who leave the army aimless and disillusioned, and symbolic of Russian manhood in general; where once he belonged to something, to an organization of comrades that gave some sense of purpose, now he must try to find a place for himself in a harsh and unfamiliar world. As for Natasha, she charges foreign men for her sexual favors, but gives herself to the hero for free, facilitating his reintegration into traditional Russian spiritual values.

A prostitute named Natasha is also crucial for the redemption of the hero of Viktor Dotsenko's best-selling series of action novels, Savelii Govorkov, nicknamed "Mad Dog" ("Beshenyi"). The fifth novel, *Mad Dog's Revenge* [*Mest' Beshenogo*, 1998], begins at the funeral of Savelii's latest dead girlfriend, Natasha. Virtually all of Savelii's lovers quickly turn into beautiful corpses to be avenged by Mad Dog, with the exception of the underage Rozochka, whom Savelii eventually marries. Right after the ceremony, he meets a beautiful young prostitute who shares his beloved's name, and marvels at this rather unremarkable coincidence. This is Natasha's day off, but when she looks into his eyes, she realizes what he needs. She is no stranger to loss, since her small daughter was killed by a drunk driver three years before, and the sight of the other Natasha's funeral brings back memories of her own daughter's death: "In a purely womanly way, she felt that he needed help, that something tragic had happened to him" (25). She takes him home, where they have numerous shots of cognac, including a toast to the fallen Afghan veterans. Soon enough, they fall into bed together, and the experience is redemptive for both of them: the all-too-experienced Natasha is nervous and excited as though she were with a man for the first time, while Savelii reaches an epiphany that is unparalleled in modern literature: crying out her name, he enters her rectally and communes with the spirit of his departed lover, while the living Natasha experiences the first orgasm of her life (30–32, 39). Now Savelii is able to return to his mission, saving Russia from its enemies, while anal sex with Savelii has transformed Natasha entirely: "Her soul was joyous and calm: for the first time in many long years, she felt pure and immaculate" (34).

By the late 1990s, the prostitute with a heart of gold was once again such a ubiquitous feature in popular culture that she easily lent herself to satire. Viktor Pelevin's 1997 novel *Life of Insects* [*Zhizn' nasekomykh*], a postmodern animal fable in which nearly all the main characters are insects navigating the absurdities of contemporary Russian life, uses the trope of the prostitute to lampoon one of the author's favorite targets: the ultranationalist and pseudo-mystical discourse of Russia's fate. One of the novel's main characters, a visiting American businessman, Sam Sucker, is actually a mosquito who has come to Moscow to sample the local cuisine (i.e., Russian blood).[19] Soon after his arrival, he meets a young fly named Natasha, whom Sam's Russian companions immediately recognize as a prostitute. Here Pelevin manages to send up both *Intergirl* and Kornei Chukovsky's classic children's poem, *Mukha-Tsokotukha* (in which a female fly is rescued by a male mosquito). Like Tania from *Intergirl*, Natasha is a disappointment to her sick mother (in this case, a house-bound widow who consumed the remains of Natasha's father as nourishment while waiting for her eggs to hatch), choosing to sell her body in exchange for a better life. After she and Sam have sex in the pristine countryside, Natasha whispers a naive question to her foreign lover: "Sam . . . is it true that America has lots of shit?" (223). Sam nods indulgently, reassuring her that he really is from the land

of plenty. But, as with so many of her predecessors', Natasha's story ends in tragedy. She had been so certain of Sam's love that she was even practicing her English in preparation for their eventual departure ("Please cheese and pepperoni"), but Sam intends to leave her behind. Grief-stricken, Natasha commits suicide, hanging herself on a strip of flypaper (348–49).

Nymphomaniac: The Prostitute as "Spiritual Barometer"

> "I had a country I was proud of. My country was betrayed, ruined, and raped, like the cheapest of sluts. They just let it be desecrated. What's now called the Russian state can't make you proud, only ashamed. The country is a prostitute who lies down under any scum who happens by! And she even eats her young, like a pig! . . . All right, enough. Let's go on. I had ideals. They weren't subtle ideals, but, still, they were respected by any normal person. Now these ideals are mocked, slandered, smeared in shit, any cowardly bastard can publicly spit on them, where before he wouldn't even have dared make a sound! When I see this sort of thing, I want to kill! But I'd have to kill too many people. . . ."
>
> —Sever Belov, Dmitrii Shcherbakov, *Nimfomanka: besposhchadnaia strast'* (8–9)

So laments the hero of Dmitrii Shcherbakov's lurid potboiler *Nymphomaniac: Merciless Passion* [*Nimfomanka: besposhchadnaia strast'*], the second book in a trilogy describing the adventures of a sex-crazed but highly moral woman and her superpowered husband as they fight Russian and Chechen organized crime. Sever certainly knows whereof he speaks: not only has he spent the best years of his life trying to save a country that doesn't want to be saved, but his wife Mila is a career prostitute whose "disease" (her physiological need to be gang-raped and humiliated) continually drives her back to the brothel after each rescue from the clutches of the latest in a long line of pimps. He is telling his story to his best friend, the surgeon Pavel Kuzovlev, whose dedication to the Belovs led him to retrain himself as a psychoanalyst in order to try to cure Mila of her nymphomania and Sever of a "reactive psychosis" that has led him to attempt suicide. The good doctor's response to Sever's tirade? "You've been watching too much television!" (9).

All three parts of Dmitrii Shcherbakov's "Nymphomaniac" trilogy (*Nymphomaniac*, *Nymphomaniac: Merciless Passion*, and *Nymphomaniac: A Hooker's Love* [*Liubov' putany*]) date from the late '90s, and, while there is no evidence that they will ever attain the popularity of *Intergirl*, taken together they form the post-Soviet prostitute text par excellence. All of the themes discussed above are present: border crossings, a feminized Russia and the West, the prostitute as symbol of Russia's natural resources, the focus on the male hero, and, most notably, the prostitute as Christ-like redeemer. The first novel is the story of Sever Belov and Mila, both of whom have lost their memory after a car accident. When they meet again, they do not even know that they were lovers before, but they are immediately united by passion. And by something more: each of them has phenomenal powers. They can project an aura that prevents people from remembering what they look like; they possess super strength and an iron will; Belov can kill dozens of people with his bare hands, and he soon teaches Mila to do the same. But Mila has one additional ability: through her erotic dancing, she can drive men and women into a sexual frenzy.

After their accident, Sever finds work as a mechanic, and eventually is employed by the local mafia. Mila becomes the most coveted prostitute in an elite brothel, and as much as she despises herself for her work, she cannot give up prostitution. For reasons that do not become clear until the end of the first novel, she has an insatiable need to be gang-raped and abused, both verbally and physically. Belov's doctor friend even describes her nymphomania as physiological: if her brain does not receive the essential impulses it gets when she is gang-raped, it will literally self-destruct. When Sever and Mila fall in love (for what turns out to be the second time), their relationship is seriously undermined by the fact that, even though Sever's superhuman abilities extend to the bedroom (he usually has sex with Mila throughout the night), he is never enough for her.

All of this unfolds in a context of virulent racism and offhand disdain for democratic reform. Sever's enemies in the first novel consist largely of Chechens and Georgians, whom he routinely dismisses as "*chernozhopaia mraz*'" ("black-assed scum") and "*chernomazy*," the closest Russian equivalent to "niggers." His solution to the Chechen problem is simple: exile all Chechens from Russian territory and close Chechnia's borders forever. His judgment of Yeltsin's government is equally uncompromising, if a bit less heated: the narrator casually refers to the year 1991 as the time when "American agents of influence" took over the Kremlin. Sever's nationalist credentials, which are established early on, are further strengthened when the reader discovers that, in his past life, Sever was a border guard who devoted all his efforts to preventing the theft of Russia's mineral resources. This detail is particularly important in light of Sever's problems with Mila: even after he rescues her from the brothel, she still has a physiological need to be abused, and by more than one person. His only solution is to form a brothel of his own, in which Mila plays the starring role, and Sever provides the protection. Of course, it is a kinder, gentler brothel, a whorehouse with a human face: Sever and Mila greatly improve the lives of the prostitutes who end up working for him.[20] But Sever, the strong Russian action hero, ends up in the position of pimping for the woman he loves.

By the end of the first novel, Sever's friend Pavel, the surgeon-turned-psychoanalyst, discovers the root cause of Mila's nymphomania. Before the accident, her love for Sever was so strong that it was like a drug; she could not do without him. While she is in the hospital following the accident, an unscrupulous doctor who was in the habit of pushing her female patients into prostitution injects her with an aphrodisiac to determine her erotic potential. Unfortunately for Mila, a group of young criminals is being treated in the hospital for minor wounds at the same time, and they gang-rape

Mila while she is under the influence of the aphrodisiac. Against her will, she is aroused by the experience, but meanwhile she hates herself, knowing that somewhere out there lives her beloved, whose name she cannot recall, and she is betraying him. Subconsciously, she decides she is not worthy of him, and that the world is a terrible place filled with evil people who do evil things. Her only possible value in life could be to let herself be raped and abused, thereby sparing other women her fate. As the doctor puts it, "Mila's system has become a kind of barometer, reacting to the spiritual atmosphere of society. If there is too much evil surrounding her, she tries to reduce its quantity . . . in the only way she can" (Shcherbakov, *Nimfomanka* 493).

Moreover, Mila is uniquely attuned to her native country. Before she and Sever meet again after the accident, Mila is taken to France to dance in a Parisian nightclub. But she has to be flown home immediately, because she nearly dies of a literal form of homesickness. She cannot leave Russia because "Russia is the land of sincerity, and evil here is also sincere, open, with no pretensions to false morality. In the West it's different. The West is hypocritical to the marrow. Evil is everywhere there, but it clothes itself in respectability. . . . The West is soulless in both good and evil. It lives only for a sense of advantage, which . . . usurps any other moral values. And Mila is too sensitive an instrument" (494). Nor can she go to the East, since people are animals there, lacking any sense of good and evil.

Mila is the lowbrow apotheosis of the prostitute as redeemer: her libido is the cross she has to bear. In these novels, it is not beauty, but nymphomania that will save the world. Her status is a source of inverted pride: she is far more moral than almost anyone around her, and her beauty is unsurpassed. Even her humiliation has a higher purpose. But her humiliation is ultimately shared by her man. Sever is in a bind, both as lover and patriot: the object of his affections is as beautiful as ever, but wallows in filth and seems unlikely to recover.

Where, then, does that leave the post-Soviet prostitute? Why should so many artists, writers, pundits, and filmmakers choose her as a vehicle for conveying their thoughts about Russia, masculinity, and the West? To a large extent, the symbolic prostitute recapitulates the allure and the functionality of the "real-life" prostitute: The customer purchases her services for pleasure but has no guarantee that he might not be getting something highly unpleasant in the bargain. The Russian audience consumes stories of fictional prostitutes for their prurient entertainment value, often unaware that they are a vehicle for conveying a specific, and not necessarily welcome, ideological message. Hence, the metaphorical prostitute disseminates ideology as a kind of "textually transmitted disease." Whether she is a source of national pride or solely a cause for humiliation, she is inordinately efficient at bringing in both ideological and financial capital. Where advertisers use the sexually available woman to sell their none-too-sexy wares, the producers of the culture industry peddle the post-Soviet prostitute in order to market their own approach to the "Russian idea" to consumers who buy it as part of the entertainment package.

Notes

1. Indeed, the term "uninvited guests" evokes an ethnic group that is never mentioned in the article but whose spectre must haunt any consideration of Crimea's status: the Tatars. Due to the Mongol Invasion and subsequent "Tatar Yoke," the Tatars serve as Russia's archetypal foreign invader and have entered the everyday linguistic consciousness with the extremely common saying, "Nezvannyi gost'—khuzhe Tatarina" ("An uninvited guest is worse than a Tatar"). The Tatars of Crimea were deported to Uzbekistan during World War II and only had their right to return to their land approved definitively in 1988. Thus, the proximity of NATO warships to Crimea could hardly have been more resonant: a Western alliance was seen to be demonstrating its strength off the coast of a region claimed by both Russia and Ukraine, home to a displaced people who are culturally identified with raping and pillaging "Holy Rus'," the birthplace of both nations.

2. Nor is it the story of male prostitutes; when prostitutes are deployed as metaphors or symbols, they are almost exclusively female. Isaak Babel''s "My First Fee" ["*Moi pervyi gonorar*," 1922–1928] is a rare exception: in this story, an aspiring young writer tells a prostitute that he used to be a "boy for the Armenians," which prompts the young woman to call him "sister" and pay him for his services (Babel', vol. 2: 253). For information about male prostitution as a social phenomenon in Russia before and after the Revolution, see Healey.

3. In her 1993 article "Sex and the Cinema," Lynne Attwood argues that "films about prostitution have one notable feature that sets them apart from the majority of recent films from the former USSR: their protagonists are, inevitably, female. To find women as the centre of attention in films which tackle other themes is increasingly uncommon" (73). While Attwood's assertion is technically correct, focus on the prostitute is neither a guarantee that a film or novel has any investment in a female point of view or in women's experience, nor does it raise the chances that a woman might actually be involved in creating the film. Only superficially do such works deal with the lives of women; their broader themes and concerns tend to concern the fate of the nation itself.

4. For a thorough historical study of prostitution before the Soviet period, see Laura Bernstein, *Sonia's Daughters*. See also Lebina and Shkvarovsii; Engel, "St. Petersburg Prostitutes" and *Between the Field and the City* 166–97; and Stites, "Prostitute and Society" and *Women's Liberation Movement* 178–90.

5. This brief overview of the nineteenth-century fictional prostitute should by no means be considered exhaustive; a more complete discussion would have to include Aleksandr Kuprin's *Iama* [*The Pit*] (1908–1915), a novel about a brothel whose inhabitants and clients bring together every cliché and motif connected with the representation of the Russian prostitute. For more on Kuprin, see Matich; Zholkovskii.

6. For more on the attempts to "save" the literary prostitute, see Borenstein, *Men Without Women* 47–57; Matich; Siegel 81–107; and Zholkovskii.

7. Indeed, the prostitute in NEP Russia functioned as a kind of shorthand for the moral and physical diseases brought on by the partial return to a market economy. Mikhail Bulgakov's infamous stage play *Zoia's Apartment* [*Zoikina kvartira*] is only the most famous example. In their article on the evolution of the Russian procuress, Julie Cassiday and Leyla Rouhi also discuss a 1926 film by O. Frelikh called *A Prostitute/Crushed by Life* [*Prostitutka/Ubitaia zhizn'iu*], which associates prostitution with the evils of the past and provides a happy ending, thanks to the enlightened

policies of the state (413). In her study of Russian public health posters in the 1920s, Frances L. Bernstein observes that the prostitute's image serves to personify the threat of syphilis and other sexually transmitted diseases: she is both temptress and disease vector ("Envisioning Health" 205–7). For more on the Soviet fight against prostitution in the 1920s, see Elizabeth Waters, "Victim or Villain," and Wood.

8. As part of the public health campaign known as "sanitary enlightenment," Soviet doctors under NEP attempted to redeem prostitutes through labor, establishing special clinics to cure their ailments and teach them a trade (F. Bernstein, "Prostitutes and Proletarians").

9. The use of the term "victimless crime" is not meant to imply that prostitutes never suffer as a result of their work, but rather that they do not cause harm to third parties. Where prostitutes themselves are considered victims, the crime in question is pimping rather than prostitution (see Cassiday and Rouhi). Prostitutes in Russia and elsewhere have faced legal prosecution for offenses related to their profession, such as spreading venereal disease to their customers (F. Bernstein, "Envisioning Health" 205–7).

10. For example, Pavel Rusanov, the Party hack in Solzhenitsyn's *Cancer Ward* (1967–1968), is appalled at the prospect that the people he sent to the camps might return and demand their jobs and apartments back, not to mention justice and reparations. Iulii Daniel's haunting novella "Atonement" (1963) presents the Kafkaesque dilemma of a man who finds himself shunned by his circle of friends after one of them returns from the gulag; the narrator discovers that this man holds him responsible for the years spent in the prison camps, even though in actuality the returnee had been denounced by someone else entirely. By the story's end, the narrator nonetheless accepts his guilt, if not for this particular crime, then for his failure to speak out when his friend was caught up in the machinery of the Terror.

11. When Tania's mother expresses her horror at the thought that her daughter is "selling herself," Tania replies: "Correct. But how many of us do *not* sell ourselves?" Attwood 73.

12. The fact that Tania meets her demise in Sweden of all places is also worthy of note. On the level of plot, Sweden is clearly meant to embody the West at its coldest: an efficient land where any act of spontaneity is greeted with suspicion and any expenditure of money must be counted to the last decimal. Symbolically, Sweden still functions as one of Russia's oldest and weakest European enemies, the country whose army was defeated by Alexander Nevsky in 1240, by Peter the Great (most notably at Poltava in 1709), and by Alexander I in 1809.

13. Igor' Kon cites a 1989 survey of high school senior girls in Riga and Leningrad claiming that foreign-currency prostitution "had become one of the top ten most prestigious professions," as well as a survey in which prostitutes ranked higher than journalists, diplomats, and academics among prestigious and lucrative professions admired by Moscow schoolchildren (223). Survey results in the former Soviet Union are notoriously unreliable and should be viewed with a healthy dose of skepticism; nevertheless, the appearance of such survey results in the Russian mass media has been important in defining the role of the prostitute in contemporary Russian sexual discourse. At the very least, the surveys have created the *impression* that prostitution is considered a desirable profession.

14. For information about the rise in prostitution during the perestroika era, see Sanjian; Waters, "Prostitution."

15. For more on the connection between sexual and economic discourses in contemporary Russia, see Borenstein, "'About That.'"

16. The constellation of Russian and black prostitutes with Russian and foreign johns recurs throughout the popular discourse on prostitution in post-Soviet Russia. Edvard Maksimovich's 1997 *Prostitutki Moskvy*, a "handbook" on the lives of prostitutes in the capital, is largely a compendium of horror stories about the miserable lives of young women who make their living performing sex for hire. The cover shows a brazen Russian woman clad in scanty black leather fetish garb with a cigarette hanging out of her mouth, set against the backdrop of a well-known Moscow hotel for foreigners and enlarged reproductions of hundred-dollar bills. But the stories within the book concern lower-class hookers whose customers tend to be Russian, and the photo spread in the middle prominently features African women who have been picked up for soliciting and put in holding cells. In the racist hierarchy of prostitution for export, the presence of African women serving Russian men only heightens the humiliation entailed by exporting Russian women to serve European and American men: Russia exports its riches and imports lower-class commodities. The very composition of the book reflects the prostitute's symbolic importance in terms of her domestic and international role: if the cover's hard-currency hooker, whose clients are presumably foreign, has at least a modicum of glamour, the women in the interior photos (decidedly not for export) are made as repulsive as possible.

17. These last two sentences are present in the *Andrei* text but were left out of the *Muzhchiny* collection.

18. Mikhail Bulgakov's 1928 play *Flight* [*Beg*] and Iurii Olesha's 1931 melodrama *A List of Assets* [*Spisok blagodeianii*] present emigration and death as either virtually equivalent (the émigrés are the living dead) or a matter of cause and effect (even considering emigration leads to the hero's death). See Avins 79–90, 101–16. An American documentary about Soviet émigrés in Brooklyn entitled *The Russians Are Here* was broadcast in the Soviet Union in 1986 under the evocative title *Ex-* [*Byvshie*], suggesting that the émigrés are simply enduring an unpleasant afterlife.

19. Sam's encounters with ordinary Russians inevitably revert to a parody of Russian chauvinism. After getting drunk on a Russian man's vodka-infused blood, Sam attacks his Russian mosquito hosts: "Admit it, *bliad'* [whore]. . . . Don't you suck Russian blood?" (167). Later on, a driver launches into a tirade about the enemies of Russia while Sam quietly sucks the man's blood from behind: "We've been sold . . . . And all our rockets and our navy. They've drained us of our life's blood. . ." (217).

20. Sever's brothel resembles a parody of Vera Pavlovna's sewing cooperative in Nikolai Chernyshevsky's *What Is To Be Done?* Where Vera Pavlovna rescued young prostitutes from a life of shame and redeemed them through labor, Sever gives them a better life without actually changing their profession.

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