

Alternative Voices in an Acquiescent Society: Translating The New Wave of Russian Playwrights (2000-2014)

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Submitted in accordance with requirement for the Ph.D. degree at Queen Mary, University of London, Department of Russian, School of Languages, Linguistics and Film, in association with the Department of Drama, School of English and Drama.

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ABSTRACT

This doctoral project proposes a new paradigm of dramatic translation, through a practice-based investigation into non-conformist contemporary Russian playwriting, between 2000 and 2014, as produced in Russia and in the UK. In Chapter One, I depict how a Russian 'fringe' was developed from the mid-1990s in Russia to challenge predominant theatrical conventions and offer alternative ideologies to mainstream thinking. In Chapter Two, I investigate the hyper-naturalist aesthetic, which informed many works of contemporary playwriting and offered a radical departure from the mimetic realism prevailing in Russian theatre at that time. In Chapter Three, I distinguish between two 'schools' of writing – New Drama (in Moscow) and the Urals School of Playwriting (in Ekaterinburg). I also undertake a detailed analysis of four case study theatres: the Moscow Arts, the Sovremennik and Teatr.doc (in Moscow) and the Kolyada-Theatre (in Ekaterinburg), in order to document how contemporary playwriting fares at repertory theatres as well as on the 'fringe'. In Chapter Four, I examine how contemporary Russian plays have been incorporated into the British theatre landscape between 2000 and 2014. Chapter Five provides my four annotated translations of Russian plays by a post-Soviet generation of playwrights: *Dr.* by Elena Isaeva, *Joan* by Iaroslava Pulinovich, *Grandchildren. The Second Act* by Mikhail Kaluzhskii and Aleksandra Polivanova and *The War Hasn't Yet Started* by Mikhail Durnenkov. This project's non-academic partner Theatre Royal Plymouth, in association with my theatre company Sputnik, produced these plays as rehearsed readings in English at the Frontline Club (London) in January 2016. Overall, I argue that dramatic translation should respond creatively to the 'material' theatre, from which the playtext originated, rather than limiting its focus to the linguistic text. This broader act of translation can circumvent the rigid approaches to programming, directing and translating contemporary foreign-language texts, which are currently practiced at most British theatres.

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LEXICON OF CULTURALLY-SPECIFIC TERMS

Chernukha: a derogatory term emerging during *perestroika* to denote a form of gritty realist playwriting.

Direktor: the position in a theatre's management responsible for the administrative and budgetary aspects of the running of a theatre; it is approximately equivalent to 'executive director' or 'producer' in British theatres.

Mat: swearing which belongs to a specific linguistic register, equating approximately to obscenities and profanities (as opposed to inoffensive swear words).

New Drama: a term coined for the New Drama Festival (2002-8); in general terms, it denotes experimental contemporary playwriting by a post-Soviet generation.

New writing theatre: a venue dedicated to producing contemporary playwriting; among British theatre-makers professionals, this term has strong associations with the Royal Court Theatre as the perceived birth place of new writing in Britain after 1956.

Perestroika: this term, which literally means 'rebuilding', is most commonly used to denote the final period in Soviet history between 1985-91, when the leadership of the USSR enacted a series of liberalising political and economic reforms.

Season: Russian theatres delineate their repertoires in terms of 'seasons' which typically run from September until the following June. Repertoires are generally revised once a year, announcing their revised repertoire prior to the opening of each new season. Theatres tend to advertise the number of each particular season on marketing posters and their websites, to remind the public about the 'age' of their theatre.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ATC: Actors' Touring Company

CDR: Centre for Playwriting and Directing named after Aleksei Kazantsev and Nikolai Roshchin

RSC: Royal Shakespeare Company

GITIS: Russian Institute of Theatre Arts

DRAMATIS PERSONAE

A cast list of the main protagonists in this doctoral project

Sof'ia Apfel'baum: worked at the Federal Ministry of Culture from 2008 to 2014 – as Head of the Department for the Support of the Arts and National Creativity. Since 2015 (and ongoing), she is *Direktor* at the Russian Academic Youth Theatre in Moscow.

Rodion Beletskii: playwright and Deputy Editor of the Moscow-based playwriting journal *Sovremennaiia dramaturgiia* from 2010 (ongoing).

Oleg Bogaev: playwright and Editor of the Ekaterinburg-based playwriting journal *Ural* from 2011 (ongoing).

Evgenii Chistiakov: actor at the Kolyada-Theatre in Ekaterinburg from 2003 (ongoing).

Marina Davydova: theatre critic and co-artistic director of the Moscow-based festival *New European Theatre* from its inception in 1998 (ongoing).

Elyse Dodgson: founding Head of the International Department at the London-based Royal Court Theatre from 1996 (ongoing).

Sasha Dugdale: poet and play translator; she was Acting Head of Arts at the British Council in Moscow from 1995 to 2000.

Mikhail Durnenkov: playwright and Artistic Director of the Lyubimovka Festival from 2013 (ongoing).

Viacheslav Durnenkov: playwright (and brother of Mikhail).

Varvara Faer: playwright and director at the Moscow-based Teatr.doc.

John Freedman: theatre critic for the Moscow Times between 1992 and 2015; he ran the TheatrePlus blog between 2009 and 2014; since 2015, he is Assistant to the Artistic Director at the Stanislavsky ElectroTheatre (ongoing).

Elena Getsevich: Project Co-ordinator at the Ekaterinburg-based Kolyada-Theatre from 2008 (ongoing).

Elena Isaeva: playwright.

Mikhail Kaluzhskii: playwright, founded the Theatre Programme at the Sakharov Centre in 2012; the Programme closed in 2014 when he emigrated to Tel Aviv; he currently lives in Berlin.

Viktoriiia Kholodova: Deputy Direktor at Teatr.doc from 2010 (ongoing).

Maia Kobakhidze: worked at the Federal Ministry of Culture from 2000 to 2008 – as Head of the Department for the Support of the Arts and National Creativity. She has been the General Direktor of TEFI – the national television awards (the Russian equivalent of BAFTA) – since 2015 (ongoing).

Nikolai Kolyada: founder, Artistic Director and Direktor of the Ekaterinburg-based Kolyada-Theatre from 2001 (ongoing).

Evgeniia Kuznetsova: Literary Manager of the Moscow-based Sovremennik Theatre from 1996 (ongoing)

Kristina Matvienko: theatre critic; Artistic Director of the New Drama Festival between 2005 and 2008; Curator of the 'School of the Contemporary Viewer and Listener' programme at the Stanislavsky ElectroTheatre from 2015 (ongoing).

Igor' Popov: Deputy *Direktor* at the Moscow Arts from 2004 to 2014; *Direktor* at the Sovremennik Theatre from 2014 (ongoing).

Presnyakov Brothers: the co-authoring playwrights, who are real-life brothers, Oleg and Vladimir.

Vasilii Sigarev: playwright and director.

Natal'ia Shcherbakova: Ekaterinburg-based theatre critic; she was a lecturer in theatre history at the Ekaterinburg Theatre Institute from 1998 to 2011.

Mikhail Shvydkoi: the Minister at the Federal Ministry of Russian Culture from 2000 to 2008; he became the Artistic Director of the Moscow-based Theatre of Musicals in 2011 (ongoing); he is the Chair of the Board of Trustees of TEFI – the national television awards (the Russian equivalent of BAFTA) – since 2015 (ongoing).

Anatoly Smeliansky: theatre historian and First Deputy to the Artistic Director at the Chekhov Moscow Arts since the mid-1980s (ongoing).

Simon Stokes: Artistic Director of Theatre Royal Plymouth from 1998 (ongoing).

Oleg Tabakov: stage and screen actor; he was one of the founding-actors of the Sovremennik Theatre in 1956; he became the *Direktor* of the Sovremennik in 1971 until 1976 (he left the Sovremennik's troupe in 1976 and stopped acting in any productions in 1983); he was founding Artistic Director of the Studio-Theatre of O. Tabakov, popularly known as 'the Tabakerka' in 1977 (ongoing); he became an actor at the Moscow Arts in 1983 (ongoing); he served as Dean of the Moscow Arts School-Studio between 1986 and 2000; he became Artistic Director of the Moscow Arts from 2000 (ongoing) and he also became this theatre's *Direktor* in 2004 (ongoing).

Mikhail Ugarov: playwright and director; co-founder of Teatr.doc where he has been Artistic Director from 2002 (ongoing).

Eka Vashakidze: Administrator and Company Manager at the Ekaterinburg-based Kolyada-Theatre from 2007 (ongoing).

Galina Volchek: one of the founding-actors at the Sovremennik in 1956 until 1972; in 1972, she became Artistic Director of the Sovremennik (ongoing).

Ivan Vyrypaev: playwright; Artistic Director of Praktika, the Moscow-based theatre, since 2013 (ongoing).

Grigorii Zaslavskii: theatre critic; he became Dean of GITIS in 2016 (ongoing).

MY FOUR PLAY TRANSLATIONS

An inventory of four new Russian plays in search of British directors

Grandchildren. The Second Act by Mikhail Kaluzhskii and Aleksandra Polivanova

This documentary play is composed from edited interviews conducted by the playwrights in 2011-2 with descendants of the Soviet *nomenklatura*. The characters in the play are – to various extents and in different ways – unable to discuss the immoral actions or crimes of their relatives. Rather than using a non-fictional form to present facts as a testament to objective ‘truths’, the play focuses on what cannot be articulated – and must be repressed – by the characters.

Dr by Elena Isaeva

This verbatim text is based on the testimony of a single doctor in Russia, documenting his trajectory from medical intern to respected surgeon. The play retains the idiosyncracies of the protagonist’s speech patterns, including hesitations and casualisms, in keeping with the verbatim tradition. The protagonist describes the worsening conditions of public health care as privatization is implemented as public policy – and its detrimental effect on the staff and patients.

Joan by Iaroslava Pulinovich

The eponymous protagonist of this fictional drama is a middle-aged businesswoman who takes revenge on her lover and employee, Andrei, when he leaves her for a younger woman, a student called Katia. After Joan dismisses Andrei, he descends into abject poverty and is evicted from his flat. Katia gives birth. After her discharge from the maternity ward late at night, in desperation, the couple spend one night at Joan’s flat before leaving Moscow. The protagonist resolves to use her political leverage as a businesswoman to fabricate a legal case against Andrei and Katia – in order for Joan to gain custody of their child, a cynical and cruel act of revenge.

The War Hasn’t Yet Started by Mikhail Durnenkov

The twelve ‘novellas’ – as the dramatist refers to the scenes in the opening stage directions – depict a range of personal-existential crises, such as domestic abuse, nicotine addiction and emigration. The action occurs against the backdrop of a society on the brink of an unspecified war. The play appears to question whether the prevalent state of anxiety in the western world is a by-product – or cause – of the war which hasn’t yet started (but which seems inevitable).

A 'PROPS LIST' OF RUSSIAN PLAYS

Russians plays which I refer to frequently in this doctoral thesis¹

Oxygen by Ivan Vyrypaev (2002)

In ten scenes described as musical 'compositions' ['композиции'], two narrators – 'He' and 'She' – offer lyrical reflections on the Biblical ten commandments. As the central narrative thread through the play, He and She recount a tragic love story between two characters: Sasha from the Small Provincial Town (male) and Sasha from the City (female); Sasha murders his wife after falling in love with Sasha from the City. The metaphor of 'oxygen' runs throughout the work: an elusive inner impulsive which motivates characters to transgress social norms. The play ends with the line:

This is the generation [born in the 1970s] – towards whose heads is hurtling, from somewhere in the cold cosmos with terrifying speed, a huge meteorite.

[Это поколение на головы, которого, где-то в холодном космосе со стремительной скоростью летит огромный метеорит.]²

Plasticine by Vasilii Sigarev (2002)

In thirty-three short scenes, many of which consist of extensive stage directions describing physical 'actions', Sigarev depicts the story of the schoolboy Maksim. After being expelled from school for poor behaviour, which may be motivated by repressed grief for his recently bereaved friend, Maksim has a series of brutal encounters – culminating in the rape of both Maksim himself and his friend Alekha, by two men. At the end of the play, Maksim attempts to take revenge on the men, returning to their flat with a knuckle-duster. Instead, he is recaptured and the play ends at the point in the narrative when the rapists are about to throw the protagonist out of the window – to his death.

Playing the Victim by the Presniakov Brothers (2003)

The young man Valia works as an assistant for a local police department – helping them to reconstruct crimes in order to assess the criminality of the defendant. The narrative unfolds in a series of absurdist and darkly comedic scenes. The fragmented structure of this work frames Valia's story within a narrative trope reminiscent of *Hamlet*. The play opens when Valia's poisoned, late father appears to him in a dream. The final reconstruction documents Valia's murder of his mother and father-in-law.

Russian National Mail by Oleg Bogaev (1998)

This play is epistolary in form. Ivan Zhukov, a solitary pensioner, writes letters to (and from an increasingly improbable list of correspondents, including the head of a national

¹ I have substantiated my arguments by referring (most frequently) to contemporary Russian plays which already exist in an English-language translation. This approach enabled me to use research materials – scholarly articles and reviews – from both countries, in assessing the productions of these dramas.

² I cite from the 2003 version of the play due to its online availability. Source: <http://modernlib.ru/books/viripaev_ivan_aleksandrovich/kislorod/read> [6 August 2017].

television station, the Russian President, bedbugs and Martians. When the protagonist sleeps, Lenin and the Queen – as well as a cast list of minor characters – squabble over who will inherit Ivan's flat, suggesting ideological bankruptcy by individuals symbolising socialism and capitalism. *Russian National Mail* is written in the style of a grotesque, dark comedy: the play ends when Ivan discovers and reads a letter from Death.

Terrorism by the Presniakov Brothers (2002)

In a fragmented structure of seven scenes, this play recounts a series of events unfolding in the wake of an attempted act of terrorism at an airport. A man returns home from his disrupted work trip; in the final scene, it emerges that a gas explosion in a building was set by this man when he discovered his wife asleep in bed with another man; the emergency services take photos of this tragedy to create a photography exhibition; an employee hangs herself in the office's recreation room, driven to despair by her abusive employer. These – and other – forms of psychological, social and sexual abuse run throughout the play in contrast to the "false alert" of the terrorist attack at the airport.

The Drunks by Mikhail and Viacheslav Durnenkov (2009)

A war veteran called Il'ia returns from the war in Chechnya to his (unspecified) regional home town in Russia. It becomes clear that 'the locals' – including the mayor, police chief and a local journalist – are trying to appropriate Il'ia's story for their own political ends. The war hero falls to drink when it becomes clear that he will find no place in his home town.

One Hour Eighteen by Elena Gremina (2010)

This play mixes verbatim testimony with semi-fictionalised scenes, documenting the real-life story of Sergei Magnitsky, a whistleblower who revealed government corruption and fraud in Russia. This drama is presented as direct address to the audience in order to theatrically evoke the public accountability of a courtroom. This play does not provide any information about Magnitsky himself, but instead provides semi-fictionalised accounts of the individuals who were complicit in his death in police custody in 2009.

Slow Sword by Iurii Klavdiev (2006)

The latter depicts the narrative of Vlad, a middle-class office-worker in his twenties, who goes on an itinerant journey around Moscow's underclass, to pacify his existential angst. *Slow Sword* begins with a dream-like scene, in which voices are not allocated to specific characters, presumably in order to suggest the inhumane nature of capitalist production even for educationally privileged sections of society. Most of the scenes in the play are realist, although the extremity of their depictions of violence and sex afford them a sense of the grotesque and the sublime, respectively. While mostly in the genre of heightened realism, the final scene of the play ruptures its own form with the simultaneous co-existence of disparate geographical and temporal locations. It appears to offer contradictory ideas, bound by certain themes, suggesting that Vlad has embarked on a subversive journey, although it is unclear whether his resistance is literal or spiritual, solitary or communal, peaceful or violent – only that he has resolved to resist the world which he formerly inhabited.

INTRODUCTION

Foreword

In 2005, I sat in a community venue called Golosova-20 – converted into a black-box studio theatre – in Togliatti, an industrial city in the south of Russia. I was attending a rehearsed reading of a recently-written play called *Slow Sword* by Iurii Klavdiev. It was part of the May Readings Festival (1999-2007), an annual event which gave opportunities to first-time, ‘emerging’ playwrights from the local area to test their work in front of an audience. Like many significant institutions supporting contemporary playwriting, it was propelled into being by one determined individual, in this case a local playwright Vadim Levanov. *Slow Sword* was poetic in its use of language and confrontational in its depiction of violent and sexually explicit narratives. The reading contained humour and tenderness: a sense of idealism pervaded the dark aesthetic of the work. The cast consisted of Klavdiev, his girlfriend, his mother, and several fellow dramatists and residents of Togliatti at that time, including Mikhail and Viacheslav Durnenkov,¹ who went on to become famous playwrights in their own right. The atmosphere at this venue, and in the aesthetic of this particular play, evoked a shared mission – of personal, socio-political, generational and philosophical intent. Yet, violent and pornographic scenes of *Slow Sword* were described in stage directions of such painstakingly minute detail² that they would be impossible to embody on stage. This experience made me reflect on the performative mode of this play: why write a play which is apparently ‘unstageable’? The play won second prize at the New Drama Festival in 2006 – although Eduard Boyakov stood up in a public discussion and said (approximately, from memory), that it was a powerful drama but an unstageable play. Could the affective value of this theatrical event – which seemed to me to have overtones of a spiritual communion, a protest meeting and an art-house film – be recreated on British stages? I resolved to direct it to answer some of these questions, which came to fruition when Sputnik produced its world premiere in 2007 at the Old

¹ These real-life brothers frequently co-author works as well as writing sole-authored plays. Throughout this thesis, I refer to them as ‘the Durnenkov Brothers’, ‘Durnenkov’ to indicate Mikhail Durnenkov and ‘V. Durnenkov’ to denote Viacheslav Durnenkov.

² The love-making scene between Vlad and Alla provides copious detail about the contact between their sexual organs. The intention is clearly not for it to be staged literally – which would involve hiring actors who have worked in the sex industry – but rather to take a ‘lateral’ approach to create a stage language which captures the unsettling, hyper-naturalistic depiction of intimacy in that scene.

Red Lion Theatre in London.³ I resorted to ‘devising’ with the ensemble of actors – using visually ‘fragmented’ scenes and direct address by the performers, in order to disrupt mimetic representation and recapture at least some of the play’s affective value – its attempt to communicate vividly and meta-theatrically to the audience. This adaptation, drawing upon the creativity of the actors as well as my dual role as director-translator, accommodated the drama’s properties as ‘performative object’ – an invitation to create a stage language based on the text, rather than conventional paradigms of realism. *Slow Sword* was the beginning of my personal and professional journey into drama which challenges a realist paradigm of spectatorship – and my interest in formally inventive plays with non-conformist ideologies. This doctoral project – started five years after that production – explores many of these same phenomena and conundrums.

Rationale

Above all else, this doctoral project is an investigation into dramatic translation. My research addresses the question: how can British theatres transpose contemporary Russian plays onto British stages? My interest is in the ‘total’ experience of the foreign play in relation to its ‘original’ audiences, beyond the text itself, such as the makeshift properties, and collective ethos, of many studio theatres in post-1998 Russia or the voluntary labour involved in staging the work – conducive to a critical perspective on normative conventions of theatrical production. In particular, I focus on two major factors: cultural context and the material conditions which frame the theatrical event. These are precisely the aspects of cultural transfer afforded least importance by most British theatres, which tend to conceive of translation solely – or at least primarily – as linguistic transposition. Throughout this thesis, I consider translation in its broadest sense. In particular, as a theatre-maker, I have observed three stages which serve as filters through which British theatres view contemporary Russian playwriting: firstly the programming (or selection) of the plays, secondly their staging, and thirdly their linguistic transposition. So, I enquire: how can translation accommodate a broader perspective, to incorporate not only what is ‘between the lines’ of the text, but also what was vital to forming a meaningful and affective experience in the ‘original’ setting?

Theoretical basis of this Ph.D.

³ In 2012, *Slow Sword* was staged in Moscow at the Centre for Playwriting and Directing (CDR).

The primary debate in translation theory centres around the notion of cultural difference as embodied in language. The key question which has generally concerned scholarship is: to what extent can, and should, foreignness be replicated as ‘otherness’ in the translated text – or conversely normalized for domestic audiences? The dominant body of scholarship proposes a methodological approach to translation, whereby domestication and foreignisation co-exist within the work of any translator and even within a single text.⁴ Theatre-makers (directors, translators) also tend to perceive a fluidity between these impulses – according to a roundtable hosted by the scholar Margherita Laera, who summarised the consensus by four prominent directors, translators and a critic, in this way:

Translation practice, and especially theatre translation, involves the constant negotiation and renegotiation of choices which always end up in the blending of target- and source-oriented strategies within the same text. (Laera 2010: 214)

Yet, some prominent scholars have argued for ‘foreignisation’ as a more pressing ideal – at the expense of ‘domestication’. In his iconic text ‘The Art of the Translator’ (originally 1923, in Venuti 2000), Walter Benjamin makes an impassioned case for retaining as much ‘otherness’ as possible. He cites Rudolph Pannwitz’s conception of how difference should be privileged by the translator – in this citation, German is referred to as the native, or ‘target’, language:

Our translations, even the best ones, proceed from a wrong premise. They want to turn Hindi, Greek, English into German instead of turning German into Hindi, Greek, English. [...] The basic error of the translator is that he preserves the state in which his own language happens to be instead of allowing his language to be powerfully affected by the foreign tongue. (Benjamin in Venuti 2000: 22)

There is an ideological dimension to this ethos of retaining foreignness (or ‘foreignisation’). It proposes resistance to the colonial appropriation of other cultures in favour of a more egalitarian encounter with the foreign ‘other’. However, in spite of its allure as an ideal, working translators testify to the difficulty of implementing a purely

⁴ By way of example, Eirlys Davies’ argues that, according to her survey of translations of Harry Potter books across European and non-European cultures, there was no consensus on how to deal with culture-specific terms, either leaning towards foreignisation or domestication. Instead, she argues that each decision ‘may best be assessed, not in isolation, but for its contribution to an overall textual effect’ (2003: 97). Javier Aixelá posits that historicity explains the extent to which the target audience is tolerant, or not, towards foreignness in translated texts (1996: 52, 77). Julio-César Santoyo has argued for further research into the freedom enjoyed by self-translators (authors who translate their own work), in order to better understand the limitations – and presumably opportunities – for all translators (2010: 22-30).

‘foreignising’ strategy. Mark O’Thomas has argued that capturing cultural ‘otherness’ through linguistic difference is not possible in British theatre because of rigid professional conventions. By his view, mainstream theatre practice in Britain perceives foreign plays, with their correspondingly unfamiliar performance cultures, as erroneous and in need of correction:

Translated texts that do not read naturally or come off the page in a thoroughly speakable way are often denounced as simply poor translations and any translator who is willing to risk his or her professional standing by openly acknowledging apparent fault lines within an Anglo-American conceptualization of sound playwriting might be thought of as more foolhardy than diligent. (O’Thomas 2014: 127)

The scholar Lawrence Venuti has theorised this same point, articulating the inevitability of a ‘domesticating process’ (Venuti 2000: 468), whereby the ‘translator involves the foreign text in an asymmetrical act of communication, weighted ideologically towards the translating culture’ (Ibid.: 484-5). The consequence, according to Venuti, is that translation is a ‘utopian project [...] [which offers] the hope that linguistic and cultural differences will not result in the exclusion of foreign constituencies from the domestic scene’ (Ibid.: 485, 8). In order to address this fault line between theory and practice, the University of Kent is currently running a project entitled ‘Translation, Adaptation, Otherness: “Foreignisation” in theatre practice’ (2016-7). Among the key research aims are these questions:

What constitutes a “foreignising” approach to theatre translation/adaptation? [...] What are the effects of “foreignisation” on performance and *mise en scène*? How is “foreignising” translation negotiated by theatre-makers in the rehearsal room?⁵

This doctoral project aims to speak to this relatively new direction in scholarship about dramatic translation, which aims to recognise and address an inherent bias towards domestication in British theatre. I propose to add another dimension to the ongoing theoretical debate. In this thesis, I argue that British theatre-makers would benefit from perceiving translation through the lens of cultural materialism. I draw significantly on Ric Knowles’ *Reading the Material Theatre* (2004) in order to inform my thinking on how the material conditions of performances shape the meaning of the productions themselves. Broadly, I focus on two institutional factors. Firstly, I consider how a rigorous study of

⁵ Source: <<http://translatingcultures.org.uk/awards/related-awards/translation-adaptation-otherness-foreignisation-in-theatre-practice>> [accessed 6 December 2016].

the institutional realities of contemporary Russian theatre-making can offer new potentialities to dramatic translators, directors and producers. Material realities, such as the 'site of performance', inform the aesthetic of new dramatic works – and can facilitate new practices, if taken into account in the process of cultural transfer. Secondly, I engage with the overly rigid conceptualisation of translation in British theatres – ossified by inflexible institutional factors, such as short rehearsal periods. By a thorough examination of institutional realities, I hope to enrich the discourse around the act of translation as practiced, with a view to offering new avenues for exploration to others as well as for my own practice.

Methodology

This doctoral project is practice-based. As part of this Ph.D., I translated four contemporary Russian plays in consultation with a non-academic partner Theatre Royal Plymouth. As a consequence, my perspective in this doctoral project is that of a participant-observer. I have conducted research while testing at least some of the findings – in particular, about the purpose and scope of translation – through practice. This project departs from the methodology of practice-as-research, as outlined by Robin Nelson, whereby practice is used to challenge a dominant 'academic' epistemology in favour of processual learning, 'lived' experience, experiential and performative knowing (2013: 34-47). While half of my doctoral project – the process of translating four new plays – embodies a 'lived' experience of translation, I have placed equal emphasis on a traditional scholarly outcome, namely the written thesis. Needless to say, I have sought a way of bringing these two halves of my project together, to form my own model of practice-as-research. In particular, I envisage my research as a work of ethnography – through my immersion as scholar-practitioner in theatrical cultures,⁶ in three ways. Firstly, I have placed significant emphasis on exploring contemporary Russian playwriting through field trips, which allowed me to experience the artistic output of selected Russian theatres alongside their material conditions. Secondly, I have privileged the agency of theatre-makers, whose work I am researching. During two field trips to Russia

⁶ The scholar Karen O'Reilly defines ethnography as 'iterative-inductive research [...] [which] evolves in design through the study[...] [...] Ethnography draws on a family of methods, involving direct and sustained contact with human agents, within the context of their daily lives (and cultures), watching what happens, listening to what is said, and asking questions [...] [...] It results in richly written accounts that respect the irreducibility of human experience [...], acknowledges the role of theory[,] [...] as well as the researcher's own role [...] [...] and views humans as part object/part subject' (O'Reilly 2009: 3).

in April 2014 and November 2015, I conducted an aggregate of approximately thirty interviews with playwrights, directors, critics, theatre scholars, and current or former state officials, as well as a further dozen with British theatre-makers in January and February 2017. Thirdly, I have translated four plays from Russian in order to submit their work to a process of linguistic and cultural translation for British audiences. The translations serve an ethnographic function in relation to British theatre, which is to say recording the nuanced negotiations involved in my role as an intermediary between theatrical cultures.

Selection of four case study Russian theatres

One of the key areas of my research was to investigate the practice of Russian theatres between 2000 and 2014: to document the interface between aesthetic practice and institutional realities. The selection of case studies was guided, in part, by practical considerations, namely taking advantage of my existing professional networks to identify theatres willing to participate in this research project. My knowledge of post-Soviet culture led me to believe that existing personal relationships would be key to gaining the trust of theatre managements, in order to elicit the ‘nuts and bolts’ information about their organisation which is not routinely available on the public record in Russia. While most key decisions in British theatre are taken behind closed doors, there is an additional level of obscurity in Russian theatrical culture. In the UK, the Charity Commission requires theatres to make public their annual Trustees’ report as well as declaring their sources of income and expenditure. At the time of writing (September 2017), there is no comparable requirement for theatres to provide management reports or to reveal their annual budgets to the public. State-run theatres account to the cultural authorities, while private theatres account to their Trustees; accountability exists – but without detailed public oversight.

My contact with Russian theatres dates back to 2005, when I began to take an active interest in contemporary Russian playwriting, after attending the May Readings in Togliatti (where I saw the rehearsed reading of *Slow Sword*, as described above). I travelled at least once a year to theatre festivals, funded by organisations dedicated to international cultural exchange such as the Centre for International Theatre Development (an American NGO), the British Council and the European Cultural Foundation (a Dutch NGO). That year I founded Sputnik Theatre Company, pairing my

language skills from a BA in Modern Languages at Oxford University from 1995 to 1999, with my practice as a theatre director of new British plays in the Oxford fringe since 1996 and in the London fringe since 2000. Sputnik's first production was the absurdist drama *Russian National Mail* by Oleg Bogaev at the Old Red Lion Theatre in 2005, followed by Natal'ia Moshina's *Techniques of Breathing in an Airlocked Space* in 2006 and Klavdiev's *Slow Sword* in 2007, also at the 'Old Red' as it is known to its management. A couple of years after founding my company, the Kolyada-Theatre invited me – at the suggestion of playwright Oleg Bogaev – to tour Sputnik's production of *Russian National Mail* to the Kolyada-Plays festival. The latter is dedicated to showcasing work by international companies of plays by dramatists from the 'Urals School of Playwriting' (see p. 196). When the tour was confirmed for June 2008, I contacted Teatr.doc in Moscow – and they agreed to let the company perform twice at their venue, while we were in Russia. Subsequently, I continued to visit the Kolyada-Theatre and Teatr.doc over the following decade, coming to perceive them as among the most prolific and significant venues of non-conformist contemporary dramatic writing in Russia. It was not difficult to resume contact with these two companies to request their participation in my research.

Given this project's focus on cultural materialism, I decided to approach two state-run theatres, in order to investigate different institutional 'types', and their comparative role in shaping aesthetic developments compared to the playwright-run studios. I had maintained an email correspondence over some years with the critic Pavel Rudnev. By the time I began my Ph.D. in December 2012, he had joined the artistic management of the Moscow Arts, as Assistant on Special Projects [*Помощник по спецпроектам*]. I approached Rudnev to request this repertory company's participation. While the Moscow Arts is not dedicated solely to contemporary playwriting, it nevertheless has the explicit aim of producing new dramas (see p. 122). My contact with the *Sovremennik*, my other case study which is also a Moscow-based repertory theatre, arose through an international collaboration. In 2010, Sputnik in association with Soho Theatre were organising a cultural exchange, designed to identify, and subsequently, premiere one new British play in its first Russian-language translation at the Lyubimovka Festival in Moscow, funded by the British Council. From a shortlist of plays provided to

me by Soho, I selected Mike Packer's play *the dYsFUNCKshOnalZ!*⁷ to propose to the Russian partners. Elena Koval'skaia, then the festival's Artistic Director, accepted Packer's drama for a rehearsed reading and, subsequently, she sent this play to the Sovremennik's Literary Manager Evgeniia Kuznetsova, where – in spite of the management's concerns over its extensive use of swear words (see pp. 149-50) – the play was programmed as a full production (it remains as part of the repertoire at the time of writing). I met Kuznetsova in London in 2011 when the Sovremennik was on tour in the West End. Even though this theatre does not exclusively produce new plays, this theatre company has a long history of working with living dramatists, making it fit my primary criterion for selection.

The dominant institutional 'type' in Russia is the state-run repertory theatre. This prevalent form is a legacy of the Soviet period when the state used theatres as an ideological-educational institution. Private theatres emerged in Soviet Russia during *perestroika* (Solntseva 2014: para. 1 of 9) and came to represent around a third of theatre organisations by the mid-2010s.⁸ By selecting two theatres from the state sector and two from the private sector, I hope to capture differences as well as commonalities between these institutional forms. I have not included any commercially-oriented ensembles – *antreprizy* ['антрепризы'] or musical-theatre troupes. The former do not stage non-conformist contemporary Russian playwrights because of their dependence upon box office receipts (requiring a populist-oriented aesthetics by those companies to attract generalist audiences). The latter's repertoires consist predominantly of 'blockbuster' musicals including many franchises from Broadway and the West End.⁹ Given St. Petersburg's status as Russia's 'cultural capital' in popular discourse, it may

⁷ Source: <<https://www.bushtheatre.co.uk/event/the-dysfunkshonalz>> [accessed 1 August 2017].

⁸ This figure is very approximate. The critic Alena Solntseva points out the methodological difficulty of obtaining precise figures, based on the fact that 'statistics [on private companies] are not recorded' ['статистика не ведется'] (2014: para. 1 of 9) by any state agency. By statistics proposed by Freedman, there were approximately 170 theatres in Moscow, of which 116 were state-funded (2017b). By deduction, around a third were private.

⁹ Blockbuster musicals appeared in Russia after 2001. In the 1990s, theatres considered that there was a lack of tourist infrastructure as well as no appetite by audiences to pay for expensive tickets, which prohibited the staging of large-scale franchises, including Broadway and West End blockbusters (Shimadina 2002: para. 2 of 14). The pioneering production came in 2001 with *Nord-Ost* based on the novel *Two Captains* by Veniamin Kaverin. The success of that large-scale musical, in terms of critical reception and audience attendance, sparked the revival of other musicals – in spite of an attack by Chechen insurgents on the production in 2002 which led to over a hundred deaths of audience members and actors. *Nord-Ost* resumed in 2003 – but even before that, three other musicals, including the Broadway blockbuster *Chicago*, had opened in Moscow (Ibid.).

appear surprising not to have included a case study from Russia's 'other' capital city. There have been sporadic attempts to stage non-conformist contemporary works in St. Petersburg, such as the Aleksandrinskii's staging of Vadim Levanov's *Kseniia. A Love Story*, which premiered in 2009 (still in the repertory at the time of writing). Yet, no playwright-run studio theatres were founded in this northern capital in post-Soviet Russia, as they were in Moscow and Ekaterinburg. The only venture dedicated to contemporary dramatists which I considered for inclusion was the producing company On.Teatr: however it began operating in 2009, which was problematic in terms of creating a comparative study through the years 2000 to 2014. The local authorities in Russia's 'cultural capital' were not supportive of the post-Soviet generation of experimental dramatists: On.Teatr lost financial support from the municipality for its premise in 2014.¹⁰

Even with my existing criteria of researching building-based theatres which produce contemporary dramatists and also represent different institutional types, there would have been compelling reasons to select other venues as my case studies. The Debut-Centre at the House of the Actor, created in 1996, and the Centre for Playwriting and Directing named after Aleksei Kazantsev and Nikolai Roshchin (henceforth CDR), founded in 1998, were the first two professional theatre companies in modern-day Russia to dedicate their repertoires solely to contemporary dramatic works. Praktika Theatre, founded in 2005, produces only new dramas and has made important contributions to that field. A small number of medium and large-scale theatres have also shifted the perceptions of contemporary dramatic writing in the second millennium decade, such as the Gogol Centre under the leadership of Serebrennikov and the Theatre of Nations under Evgenii Mironov. These theatres (all based in Moscow) merit scholarly attention. However, my selection of case studies is designed as a conceptual, rather than a historicising, approach to this subject. My intention is to avoid a binary representation of Russian theatre – pitting new-play venues against the repertory theatres – which might lose sight of the relationship between larger and smaller

¹⁰ Ekaterinburg's authorities were no less supportive, yet there were two key differences in that city. Firstly, Kolyada managed to create a larger infrastructure to support the younger generation including a playwriting course and secondly he has a forceful personality – creating national scandals whenever his company faced a financial crisis (see p. 187). While Moscow's municipal authorities were ambivalent about the studio theatres until Kapkov's tenure, the economic opportunities of the capital afforded some alternative methods for small theatres to raise capital, by subsidising their theatre work through other employment.

institutions. By researching dissimilar institutional types, my thesis has examined the ideology embedded in theatrical practice.

Literature Review

Scholarship on dramatic translation is a relatively 'niche' field within translation theory studies, albeit one which is burgeoning.¹¹ Writing about the theoretical basis of this Ph.D. above (in 'The Theoretical Basis of this Ph.D.'), I mentioned the key texts which have influenced my thinking on translation. Here, I would like to reference one further scholarly work: Geraldine Brodie's article on Mike Poulton's translation of Schiller's *Don Carlos* (2013). As a theatre-maker, I have adhered to the notion that translation practice of contemporary foreign-language texts is a distinctive typology – unrelated to the adaptations by named playwrights. Brodie's writing has shifted my perspective – as I describe in Chapter Four (see pp. 257-8) – so that I now perceive translation and adaptation as a continuum. In fact, even before encountering Brodie's work, I had already been practising a 'hybrid' process – part-translation, part-adaptation – with my production of *Slow Sword* in 2007, as described above. I embarked on another translation-adaptation process when I directed Elena Gremina's *One Hour Eighteen* at the New Diorama in 2012. I co-authored the play's English version with the dramatist's permission, in order to frame the 'original' drama in a way which would 'read' to British audiences – who would not be aware of the contemporary Russian political subtext. Yet, interestingly, I had felt that these were idiosyncratic processes – perhaps in some way 'illegitimate' – rather than perceiving them as useful stages on a journey towards understanding the need for innovative approaches towards contemporary foreign-language texts. This doctoral project has also consisted in a process of overcoming – in my own mind and practice – a false binary between professional theatre practice and academia, which is the prevalent attitude among directors and playwrights in the UK.

In relation to my field research in Russia, there are two monographs on contemporary Russian playwriting to date: Anna Vislova's *Russkii teatr na slome epokh, rubezh XX-XXI vekov* and *Performing Violence* by Birgit Beumers and Mark Lipovetsky, both published

¹¹ Regrettably, the research outputs by University of Kent, referenced earlier in this chapter, have yet to be published. A significant text on translation and adaptation is Brodie, Geraldine and Emma Coles (eds), *Adapting Translation for the Stage* (London: Routledge, 2018) – regrettably it was published too recently to incorporate into this doctoral project.

in 2009. My Ph.D. aims to provide a revised account of contemporary non-conformist dramatic writing in Russia, in light of developments between 2009 and 2014. Furthermore, my thesis is the first monograph-length work to take the material conditions of theatrical production in Russia into consideration, as part of its primary narrative. My methodology is informed by a belief that a performance aesthetic does not exist independently from institutional and material realities. This approach provides a perspective on New Drama and the Urals School of Playwriting not purely as aesthetic phenomena, but in fact as artistic and socio-cultural ones. This ‘material’ reality of playwriting influences dramatic translation – since the institutional conditions were ‘co-authors’ of how audiences ‘read’ the original production. These material conditions may be overlooked, but that leads inevitably to ‘domestication’; this doctoral project argues for a study of the institutional realities which engendered the non-conformist dramatic traditions and texts – to broaden the scope of translation to encompass foreignisation of all aspects of stage language, such as the relationship to audiences and stage language.

In Anna Vislova’s *Russkii teatr na slome epokh, rubezh XX-XXI vekov*, the author assesses experimental playwriting through the lens of Soviet theatre traditions. She observes that, as a result of capitalism post-1991, contemporary theatrical practice has been transformed into a ‘market of cultural services’ [*‘рынок культурных услуг’*] (Vislova 2009: 15), leading to an ‘active commercialisation of theatre’ [*‘активная коммерциализация театра’*] (Ibid.: 17). In her view, only a small number of directors – such as Petr Fomenko, Lev Dodin, Anatolii Vasil’ev and Sergei Zhenovach (Ibid.: 18) – are seen to attain the same artistic quality as the best theatre-makers of the Soviet period, thereby upholding a modernist ideal. The new wave of contemporary playwrights – including Oleg Bogaeв, Sigarev, Vladimir and Oleg Presniakov (henceforth the Presniakov Brothers),¹² Ivan Vyrypaev and Elena Isaeva among others – are deemed to be ‘children of *stioб*’ [*‘дем[у] смёба’*] (Ibid.: 35). She defines this colloquial term *stioб*, as ‘a distinctive language and style of a youth culture, consisting of all-encompassing, radical, ironic reductionism’ [*‘отличительный язык и стиль молодежной среды, состоящий в радикально-тотальном ироническом редуционизме’*] (Ibid.). This tendency, which Vislova describes as postmodern, is explicitly criticised for its perceived lack of a moral message as well as its dependence

¹² Throughout this thesis, I refer to these real-life brothers by the moniker which is commonly used by theatres and critics (and even frequently in emails by the dramatists themselves as a sign-off).

upon Western theatrical practice (Ibid.: 36-7). Vislova's argumentation points towards the conclusion that in contemporary Russia, 'theatre has ceased to express the spirit of the nation' ['[m]еатр перестал выражать дух нации'] (Ibid.: 70), while contemporary playwriting is essentially a means of 'escapism' ['эскапизм[...]'] (Ibid.: 77). It is fascinating to notice the extent to which Vislova's views prefigure shifts in political ideology by the authorities, as I describe in Chapter One, both in the state's rejection of experimental theatre practice after 2014, as well as its conception of western drama as an undesirable influence. Vislova's monograph is saturated with a sense of nostalgia; she rejects the new aesthetics forged by Russians born in the late Soviet or post-Soviet periods, who were shaped by a range of aesthetic influences, not purely Soviet culture and thought. Her blanket rejection of the value of contemporary experimental playwriting renders this monograph into an intellectually binary work, failing to illuminate the purpose or character of the new wave of playwrights with their unconventional and innovative practice. Vislova's monograph reveals the depth of resistance among the more conservative and even mainstream sections of the intellectual elite towards New Drama, in particular. Her position serves as a reminder of how confrontational non-conformist plays can seem to those versed in conventional notions of theatre-making.

The work of formally experimental Russian playwrights is rigorously analysed in Beumers' and Lipovetsky's *Performing Violence*. The co-authors provide a rich account of the artistic output by the post-Soviet generation of dramatists. In contrast to Vislova, they identify the origins of contemporary drama, at least partly, in relation to Soviet theatre practice, noting how influential the plays of Liudmila Petrushevskaja were on the post-2000 dramatists (2009: 71, 5). In my view, the most significant insight by these scholars is their decision to place contemporary playwriting within the context of Russian theatrical production – specifically the 'director's theatre'. They provide a useful view of the development of New Drama as an artform accommodating a non-realist approach (Ibid.: 42):

The major feature of New Drama lies in the fact that its most significant texts do not represent or reflect life, but create (or aspire to create) a magic and/or ritual space of performative existence and a special kind of communication with the audience.

Beumers and Lipovetsky delineate their argumentation in theoretical terms, finding the conceptual foundations of the non-realist approach, implicit in a number of plays of New Drama, to be rooted in theorists such as Artaud (Ibid.: 39). They also provide insightful analyses of the *oeuvre* of the majority of key figures among the new wave of dramatists between the late 1990s and the end of the first millennial decade. However, these scholars adopt a reductionist approach – and their monograph exhibits a determination to categorise all innovative new Russian plays into a single genealogy. These co-authors advance a persuasive, yet incomplete, conclusion about contemporary playwriting in Russia. Their conceptual approach – whereby aesthetics are discussed in isolation from material and institutional realities – has been criticised by the critic Grigorii Zaslavskii in my interview with him (Interview with Zaslavskii 2014). In contrast to Beumers and Lipovetsky, Zaslavskii perceives New Drama as a loose branding term which was invented ‘in order to sell tickets, but it is not a precise definition’ [*для того чтобы можно было продавать билеты, а это не точное определение*] (Ibid.). The salient point is that New Drama – if one accepts the term as a loose catch-all for cutting-edge contemporary playwriting since 2000 – contains many different aesthetics because of the emphasis on experimentation by the post-Soviet playwrights. The reviewer and theatre-maker Kristina Matvienko, who was Artistic Director of the New Drama Festival between 2005 and 2008,¹³ has also addressed the difficulty of characterising New Drama as a single genealogy – as opposed to a constellation of artistic discoveries with shared semantic and aesthetic features – in her robust critique of Beumers and Lipovetsky’s monograph in its Russian translation, published by *Novoe Literaturnoe Obozrenie* in 2012. She points out questionable methodological decisions whereby the authors state their intention to consider ‘the most vivid examples’ [*самые яркие явления*] (Matvienko 2013: para. 16) of new playwriting for examination, without providing more precise criteria for selection. Matvienko identifies instances where Beumers and Lipovetsky make choices which confirm their own hypothesis – preferring lesser-known plays by prominent playwrights (such as Klavdiev’s *Anna* over his more acclaimed works), or omitting some key dramatists like Pavel Priazhko altogether (Ibid.). Matvienko objects to the identification by the scholars of ‘post-Soviet trauma’ [*постсоветск[ая] травм[а]*] (2013: para. 34) as the subtext, and unifying impulse, of all artistically

¹³ Currently, Matvienko holds the position of Curator of the ‘School of the contemporary viewer and listener’ at the Stanislavsky ElectroTheatre (2015-ongoing at the time of writing, September 2017).

successful contemporary plays. Her review is composed not around a single hypothesis, but instead highlights the erroneous conclusions which are drawn by these scholars. Zaslavskii and Matvienko both make little effort to conceal their disdain for *Performing Violence*. The latter states ironically that the ‘authors of this book seem to be suffering from their own trauma and they fear to look “reality” in the face’ [*авторы книги как будто сами переживают травму и боятся заглянуть «реальности» в лицо*] (Ibid.). While proffering itself as the definitive account of New Drama, *Performing Violence* is in fact a polemic.

I distinguish my approach from that of Beumers and Lipovetsky precisely by attempting to ‘look reality in the face’, to situate Russian playwriting within its socio-cultural environment, in order to elucidate the ideological position of the new wave of dramatists, as a divergent community of theatre-makers. In keeping with the ethos of ethnographic studies, my initial research placed significant emphasis on exploring the approach and aesthetics of post-Soviet experimental playwrights from their own point of view through the ‘in the field’ interviews. I aim to provide a timely account of contemporary Russian playwriting, not least because I am giving agency to those whose story I am relating. Naturally, I have considered those perspectives critically, by gaining dissenting views on each theatre, which has allowed me to create a composite picture – not only depicting aesthetics as a discrete set of cultural values, but also as an embodied socio-cultural dynamic.

Aside from the two existing monographs, there are a considerable number of scholarly articles on specific topics relating to New Drama and the Urals School of Playwriting, which I refer to in each chapter.¹⁴ The absence of Russian scholarship is particularly

¹⁴ Since 2010, a number of post-graduate students in Russia, Britain and America have embarked upon – and in some cases completed – doctoral theses on the subject of New Drama. I have referred to these, where possible: I make extensive reference to the work of Natal’ia Shcherbakova, in particular her *‘Teatral’nyi fenomen Nikolaia Koliady’* (2013), in my consideration of the Kolyada-Theatre in Chapter Three. Molly Flynn, who graduated from Royal Holloway University of London in 2016, has written a thesis entitled: ‘Documentary Theatre in Twenty-First Century Russia: teatr, v kotorom ne igraiat’, which has been embargoed prior to publication in 2017-8. I have encountered aspects of her research in published articles (including Flynn 2014) and at scholarly events, such as the annual conference of the British Association for Slavonic and East European Studies in 2014. Her work considers a similar thematic terrain as mine, namely the role of documentary playwriting in shaping the broader post-Soviet theatre landscape. However, her approach consists of making detailed analyses of approximately half a dozen Russian productions, in order to consider the specific aesthetic properties of non-fictional playmaking. My approach departs from hers in three ways. Firstly, I have gathered data from theatres beyond, as well as within, the New Drama movement. Secondly, my data set covers institutional as well as aesthetic properties, which have influenced contemporary playmaking. Thirdly, as a practice-based doctoral project, I have made an intervention into the British theatre landscape, by programming and translating four plays in collaboration with Theatre Royal

striking, not least because the radical intervention of post-Soviet playwriting became a topic of mainstream cultural discourse in Russia in the 2000s. There appear to be two explanations for this reluctance to critically engage with New Drama. Firstly, university drama departments in Russia have exhibited an intellectual or cultural resistance towards contemporary playwriting. Natal'ia Shcherbakova, a lecturer at the Ekaterinburg Theatre Institute from 1998 to 2011, confirmed that 'generally, very little is written [by drama departments] about contemporary playwriting [*вообще очень мало пишут [...] о современной драматургии*]' (Interview with Shcherbakova 2015). Matvienko suggests that contemporary dramatic writing is taught sporadically in drama departments, but that it depends upon the interests of individual lecturers (Interview with Matvienko 2015). She named the reviewer Pavel Rudnev as an example of a lecturer with a proclivity towards contemporary drama: he graduated from the Russian Institute of Theatre Arts (henceforth GITIS) in 1998 and continues to teach there at the time of writing. Matvienko herself graduated from the drama department at the St. Petersburg Academy of Theatre Arts in 2001, and after moving to Moscow in 2002 taught on a sporadic basis at GITIS, including topics such as Sigarev's *oeuvre* (Ibid.). It is worth noting that both Matvienko and Rudnev have worked as freelance critics and in numerous creative capacities at theatres,¹⁵ rather than as academics. According to Vislova, scholarly writing on theatre disappeared after 1991 and was replaced by theatre journalism (2009: 10). It appears that this trajectory from university drama departments to practitioner and critic became the norm in the 1990s for those with an interest in contemporary theatre-making. My research has led me to believe that, as these views suggest, critics in Russia play an important role in filling the lacuna left by Russian theatre scholarship. Rudnev's writings are particularly noteworthy – and in this thesis I cite extensively from his journalistic work, as well as from the articles and broadcast features by other theatre critics such as Zaslavskii, whose writing frequently addresses issues of cultural politics and the material conditions of theatre-making. In 2016,

Plymouth. This part of my doctoral project has allowed me to consider Russian New Drama from the perspective of British theatre-makers, with a significant degree of privileged access – through the partnership with the non-academic partner – to the process which is typically 'behind closed doors', particularly in relation to programming decisions as well as the directing of my play translations. Other post-graduate students conducting doctoral projects at present include James Rowson writing about New Drama since 2000, with an emphasis on the representation of Putin in contemporary playwriting (Royal Holloway University of London); and Valeriia Muts writing about Vyrypaev's drama of self-erasure (Yale University, USA).

¹⁵ Rudnev also holds the position of Special Projects Assistant to the Artistic Director at the Chekhov Moscow Arts (2011-ongoing) although I refer solely to his work as a theatre critic in this thesis.

Zaslavskii was appointed as the Dean of GITIS, a further indication that, whether by design or by default, theatre journalism has become a real-world outpost of drama departments. The other commentator deserving a particular mention is John Freedman, theatre critic for the *Moscow Times* (1992-2015).¹⁶ His frequent reviews over twenty-three years, complemented by daily features on his TheatrePlus blog (2009-14), explicitly advocated for non-conformist post-Soviet dramatists. He provided vital first-hand testimony, such as interviews with playwrights and critical responses to premieres of New Drama plays. Where articles by any reviewer fall short, compared to scholarly work, is their inability to provide more than a 'snapshot' perspective, documenting discrete steps in the development of new aesthetic directions.

Secondly, the paucity of scholarship on contemporary playwriting can be explained by the collapse of publishing infrastructure in Russia since 1991. Vislova characterises that institutional decline as a full-scale 'destruction in the Humanities' [*'деструкция в гуманитарной сфере'*] (2009: 10), resulting from economic crisis in the 1990s. Serebrennikov has made a similar observation, comparing Russia's publishing infrastructure with the output of French publishers, which he encountered at the Avignon Festival. In one bookshop in France, he estimated seeing 500 books and 300 journals on display, on the topic of theatre, whereas 'until recently there was not a single journal [about theatre in Russia]' [*'еще недавно не было ни одного журнала'*] (Malkina 2011). Serebrennikov's statement is hyperbolic since almost half a dozen journals have been in operation since the early 1990s including the Moscow-Based *Contemporary Playwriting* [*Современная драматургия*]¹⁷ and the *St. Petersburg Theatre Journal* [*Петербургский театральный журнал*],¹⁸ running continuously since 1982 and 1992, respectively. In this climate of academic conservatism, it is unsurprising that a number of significant pieces of research – on specific writers or aspects of contemporary dramaturgy – exist as unpublished doctoral theses. In the introduction to her Ph.D. thesis on Bogaev, Evgeniia Shleinikova states that no monograph exists on this playwright's work (2008). That continues to be accurate at the time of writing, in spite of Bogaev's iconic reputation as one of the leading Russian playwrights of the 1990s and a

¹⁶ At the time of writing, Freedman holds the position of Assistant to the Artistic Director at the Stanislavsky ElectroTheatre (2015-ongoing), although I refer solely to his work as a theatre critic in this thesis.

¹⁷ Archived copies of many editions are available online: <<http://teatr-lib.ru/Library/periodicals.html>> [accessed 9 August 2017].

¹⁸ Archived copies of all editions are available online: <<http://ptj.spb.ru/archive>> [accessed 9 August 2017].

forebear of non-conformist dramatic writing. Until 2013, there was only one monograph on the influential theatre practitioner Nikolai Kolyada,¹⁹ which focussed solely on his playwriting in the 1980s and 1990s (Shcherbakova 2013: 9). Ironically, Shcherbakova's decision to embark on a Ph.D. about Kolyada's work as founding Artistic Director of the Kolyada-Theatre (2001-ongoing) was at least partly due to historical accident. While she was teaching at the Ekaterinburg Theatre Institute, her students included numerous actors training at the Kolyada-Theatre. She explained that 'it was not an idea [which I had, as such], it was just fate. [...] It would have been stupid to let an opportunity like that go. [...] It was an unclaimed area [of scholarship]' [*это [была] не идея, это просто судьба. [...] Было бы глупо упустить такую возможность. [...] Это было неосвоенное пространство*] (Interview with Shcherbakova 2015). Her Ph.D. – which also remains unpublished to date – documents Kolyada's artistic evolution from one of Russia's most staged playwrights to renowned auteur-director, celebrated in his own country and internationally. When I interviewed Shcherbakova in 2015, she was working as a freelance critic in Ekaterinburg – unrewarded by academia for her original scholarship. Reflecting on the consequence of Russia's restricted publishing infrastructure, Serebrennikov has stated that 'there are no conversations about theatre, no theatrical philosophy, consequently, no [new] theatrical idea[s], consequently, no theatrical scholarship, etc.' [*нет говорения о театре, нет театральной философии, следовательно, нет театральной мысли, следовательно, нет театроведения и т. д....*] (Malkina 2011). Besides the detrimental impact on theatrical innovation, this institutional reality also established an environment in which it was more straightforward for the Russian authorities to control the cultural discourse. In relation to this project, it makes the role of British translators and programmers seem even more significant in offering cultural exchange between theatrical sectors and academic spheres in both countries.

Periodisation

My chosen time period, from 2000 to 2014, primarily engages with the rise of contemporary non-conformist dramatic writing as a phenomenon in Russia's mainstream cultural discourse. The production of Sigarev's *Plasticine* in 2000 is often

¹⁹ Leiderman, Naum, *Dramaturgiia Nikolaia Koliady. Kriticheskii ocherk*, 2nd ed. (Ekaterinburg: Slovesnik, 2002).

considered by Russian theatre-makers to be the founding moment in the creation of New Drama, although the term itself was inaugurated with the festival of that name in 2002 (running until 2008). As a framing device, the turn of the Millennium also speaks to the distinctive shift in Russia's socio-political realities. President Yeltsin ceremoniously handed power to Acting President Putin in a New Year's Eve speech on 31 December 1999, marking the end of the first decade (or nine years, to be accurate) in Russia's experiment with democracy. Even more significantly, Putin's leadership style and political ideologies would represent a significant departure from his predecessor's: a shift from unrestrained capitalism to a centrally-managed democracy. The decision to use 2014 as an end-date was based partly on practical considerations, in order to avoid conducting in-depth research about events occurring in 2015-6 which might be too recent to fully evaluate. However, that year is also appropriate because it witnessed a sea change in Russian cultural politics. A presidential white paper on the state's relationship to culture was released in 2014 – in which an unambiguous vision of the role of cultural production as a means to support official ideology was explicitly stated. By chance as much as by design, my thesis documents non-conformist contemporary playwriting against the backdrop of a rapidly evolving cultural politics: from the liberalising tendencies of the 2000s and early 2010s, to the resurgent authoritarianism of the post-2012 era.

Structure of this thesis

In Chapter One, I provide an overview of the Russian political landscape for non-Russian specialists. Subsequently, in the same chapter, I outline the major shifts in cultural politics in Russia since 1991 in order to depict the birth of the Russian 'fringe'. In Chapter Two, I describe the predominant innovations of contemporary dramatists in Russia since 1991 – with an emphasis on the post-2000 era, in order to depict the espousal of hyper-naturalist aesthetics by the post-Soviet generation of dramatists. Chapter Three is split into four sections, with one dedicated to each of my four case study theatres. I use these case studies to make an in-depth exploration of the interface between artistic practice, institutional factors and the financial realities of these four theatres, in order to gain a more nuanced perspective both on the dominant theatrical practice in Russia (at the repertory theatres) as well as the aesthetic and institutional divergence within the Russian 'fringe' (at the studio theatres). I use this to highlight the key commonality of

this new independent sector: innovative (hyper-naturalist and non-realist) acting practices. In Chapter Four, I examine the artistic imperatives and institutional realities of how and why contemporary Russian plays reach British stages, including a reflection on the dilemmas facing the play translator. I also use the fourth chapter to reflect upon the four dramas which I translated for this doctoral project: why were those plays chosen? How did Theatre Royal Plymouth influence the selections? How did I approach these plays as a translator and how did the translations change when the four works were presented as rehearsed readings in January 2016 at the Frontline Club in London? In Chapter Five, I provide annotated play translations, intended both to illustrate the properties of non-conformist playwriting and also as a practical resource for British theatre-makers. I provide a conclusion, to summarise my findings as well as to consider the implications of this doctoral project for British theatre and in my own practice: how a broader concept of translation might be one method of overcoming the artistic and ideological ‘crisis’ in British theatre.

Transliteration

My approach to transliteration follows the Modern Humanities Research Association guidelines in relation to Slavonic languages. So, with only one exception,²⁰ I have used the Russian Romanisation Table established by the Library of Congress (without the use of diacritics).²¹ I have made a number of exceptions to take account of well-established spellings of playwrights or directors of any era, such as Dostoevsky and Kolyada, in mainstream cultural discourse in Britain.²² The disadvantage of this approach is that disparate spelling rules may be applied in close proximity to each other. Even so, in my view, the benefit of a greater degree of flexibility outweighs the disadvantages, in terms of the potential to cater for both specialist and non-specialist readers. I have taken a looser approach to transliterating proper nouns which appear in my four play translations, because my intention is to make texts which are as accessible as possible,

²⁰ For the purpose of clarity for English-speaking readers, I have transliterated the Cyrillic letter *ë* as *io* throughout the written thesis – and as *yo* in the play translations (since the latter are intended to be suitable for British programmers and directors).

²¹ Source: <<https://www.loc.gov/catdir/cpsd/romanization/russian.pdf>> [accessed 16 April 2016].

²² The full list of exceptions is: Belovezhsky Treat, Boris Berezovsky, Bolshoi Theatre, Eduard Boyakov, Joseph Brodsky, Chechnya, Fyodor Dostoevsky, Nikolai Gogol, Maxim Gorky, Mikhail Khodorkovsky, Nikolai Kolyada, the Kolyada-Theatre, Mark Lipovetsky, Lubyanka, Lyubimovka Festival, the Maly Drama Theatre, the Maly Theatre, Vsevolod Meyerhold, Alexander Ostrovsky, Perm, Alexander Pushkin, Anatoly Smeliansky, Konstantin Stanislavsky, Leo Tolstoy, Alexander Volodin, Yaroslavl, Boris Yeltsin, Yukos.

intended for theatre-makers with no previous background in Russian studies. For example, in the four translations, 'ia' becomes 'ya' and 'Ol'ga' is rendered as 'Olga'. In other words, I have opted for anglicised alternatives, where they are available.

Referencing in online articles

I have sourced a large number of articles from online resources, such as journal or newspaper articles, and it is therefore worth explaining my referencing approach to suit the idiosyncrasy of Russian writing styles. I have adopted conventional MHRA rules, as far as possible. For instance, I have provided the website address from which the articles were obtained as well as indicating the relevant paragraph of the online articles, including the total number of paragraphs (for example: para. 4 of 10). Where an article is longer than thirty paragraphs, I do not indicate the article's full length. Yet, referencing the number of paragraphs in online articles is not straightforward because Russian theatre critics often use single-line sentences to create stylistic emphasis as well as lengthy subtitles which seem to be part of the article, rather than a simple qualifier of the title. I have not found a single approach which neatly incorporates all of these variations. Almost without exception, I treat single-line sentences as whole paragraphs, except where it appears more straightforward to consider it as part of a whole paragraph, for instance, where there is an extract from a playtext made up of many single lines. In general terms, I only include the subtitle in the paragraph count if it is more than three lines long and appears to be an integral part of the article's line of argumentation. In articles featuring an interview, I count the question and the first line(s) of the answer as one paragraph. Most webpages offer the option of conducting an online search for a phrase, which should also aid the reader who wishes to identify a particular citation. I refer to online sources with author-date where possible; in all other cases, I provide the title and date.

Databoxes

Here, I make a few observations qualifying my data collection for Chapter Three, which I have included as Appendix II (see pp. 435-466). The databoxes rely primarily on information presented publicly by the four case study theatres on their websites. Russian theatres tend to keep thorough archival records of past productions online. In addition, where possible, I have added any information I found from other reliable sources, such as the digest of theatre reviews on *Teatral'nyi smotritel'* – for instance,

where a company decided not to reference a production because it remained in the repertoire for less than a full year. My record of Teatr.doc's repertoire is incomplete because the company migrated its website in the mid-2000s, and much of the previous information was not presented on the new domain. Nevertheless, I feel that this hindrance does not alter the most significant purpose of my data collection. For example, the purpose of Teatr.doc's programming priorities emerge unambiguously in the databox, even if I have not been able to list every single production. It is also worth mentioning that the companies' websites frequently omit certain units of information, such as the names of translators, creating ambiguities, such as whether the director adapted an existing translation or whether the translator was simply not credited. It is beyond the remit of this thesis to fill all of these lacunae.

In relation to data collection for the body of Chapter Three, I experienced – what I feel justified in calling – a culture of secrecy around internal organisational decisions and financial realities, at least at the state-run theatres. In Russia at the time of writing, there is no requirement for theatres to reveal their annual budgets to the public – unlike Britain, where the Charity Commission provides the public with such disclosures online. The Chekhov Moscow Arts did not grant me permission to speak to one of their *direktors* about finances, in spite of my requests in 2014 and 2015. The Sovremennik gave me access to Igor' Popov, *Direktor* at this theatre (2015-ongoing). However, Popov did not disclose the theatre's total annual expenditure, stating ironically: 'that's a commercial secret' [*это – коммерческая тайна*] (Popov 2015). Fortuitously, Popov was Deputy *Direktor* at the Chekhov Moscow Arts prior to the Sovremennik (2004-14), and was able to provide me with some, albeit limited, information about both theatres' financial realities. More outspoken figures, such as the Moscow City Head of Culture Sergei Kapkov (2011-5), have publicly addressed the question of funding in relation to the City-funded theatres, including the Sovremennik, making it possible to piece together a relatively accurate, composite picture of one of my case study theatre's resources. By way of contrast to the state-run companies, my small-scale case studies, Teatr.doc and Kolyada-Theatre, were willing to disclose precise figures – although I have no way of verifying their figures (nor any particular reason to disbelieve them). In any case, I have restricted myself, both by design and circumstance, to writing in broad terms about finances, emphasising the patronage networks or patterns of dependence

which exist in relation to the material demands of these four professional theatre companies.

CHAPTER ONE THE BIRTH OF A RUSSIAN 'FRINGE' IN THE LATE 1990s

Introduction

In this chapter, I investigate institutional changes in contemporary Russian theatre before and after 1998. Part One of Chapter One is an overview of Russian politics, intended primarily for non-Russian specialists. Part Two of Chapter One portrays the shifting cultural policies of the Russian state for Russian and non-Russian specialists alike. Part Two also depicts the development of post-Soviet contemporary playwriting from an institutional perspective. In other words, I consider how a younger generation of Russian playwrights responded, often collectively, to shifts in cultural policy.

Sites of production affect the way in which audiences 'read' the performance itself. Ric Knowles has characterised this process of reading the materiality of theatre as the 'cultural politics of location' (2004: 2). He theorizes that 'meaning is produced (as opposed to being merely received, or interpreted) by theatre audiences' (Ibid.: 10) – contingent upon the materiality of the theatrical event. The 'sites of production' are integral to the performance: they are its authors, or at least co-authors. A cultural materialist analysis is significant for contemporary Russian drama because, after 1998, a new generation of theatre venues emerged which were materially distinctive from the dominant institutional 'type' in post-Soviet theatre, namely the state-run repertory theatre. There have been other periods of major theatrical reform in Russian history. In spite of some similarities between prior historical periods – and a particularly striking comparison may be made with the late Imperial period¹ and the *perestroika* era² – the

¹ This subject merits further research. Here, I limit myself to a few key observations. In 1882, a Tsarist-era law abolished the monopoly of Imperial theatres in Russia's 'two capitals'. The scholar Murray Frame suggests that 'within two decades, the theatrical landscape of St. Petersburg and Moscow had been transformed almost beyond recognition' (2006: 107). This flourishing cultural scene led to a burgeoning commercial sector. It also resulted in the professionalization of theatre: the founding of the Moscow Arts in 1898 has come to serve as the emblem and finest achievement of that tendency. The more politically charged repertoire at the Moscow Arts – particularly with the premieres of Gorky's plays around the time of the 1905 revolution – is not dissimilar to the post-1998 studio theatres, with their emphasis on theatrical production as a site of socio-political contention. However, the Moscow Arts in the late Imperial era had come to symbolise the 'professionalization' of theatrical production towards a 'realist' theatre. New Drama has aimed to disrupt both Russian psychological realism at the heart of normative theatrical practice in Russia as well as the institutional practice of top-down leadership – in favour of an 'open space' approach.

² The appearance of hundreds of new studios during *perestroika* offered a brief renaissance in Russian theatre, leading to the foundation of companies such as Iosif Rakhel'gaus' School of the Contemporary Play in 1989. Even so, these venues continued predominantly to place directors (or actors) in their leading position, reiterating institutional practices of theatrical production.

independent studio theatres³ were innovative, in several ways: their ‘crowd-funded’ financial model, offering independence both from the state and (often also) commercial supporters; the largely unpaid labour of the theatre-makers; and their (partial) disruption of the top-down model of governance, dominant in Russian cultural organisations. In this chapter, I explore how and why this new Russian ‘fringe’ emerged. I conclude the chapter by considering what implications these ‘alternative’ sites of production have for British theatres. Specifically, I propose that a greater understanding of the Russian sites of production offers an opportunity for British artistic directors, directors and translators to broaden normative programming practices, by considering how Russian sites of production should be ‘translated’ into, or reconceptualised within, the British theatre landscape along with the playtext itself.

Part One. Political developments in Russia, 1991-2014

I delineate this period chronologically by President, as it serves as the most effective way of portraying the top-down nature of Russian government: President Yeltsin (1991-2000); President Putin (2000-8); President Medvedev (2008-12); President Putin (2012-ongoing at the time of writing, September 2017).

The 1990s

One of the most striking aspects of the rapid shift in political systems in Russia in 1991 was that it occurred without any major civil strife. Aside from one failed coup by a small number of hardline communists in August 1991,⁴ seven decades of communism ended peacefully with the signing of the Belovezhsky Treaty on 9 December 1991. The dissolution of the Soviet Union was frequently described as a bloodless revolution, particularly by western media and news agencies (Al’bats 2002: 22). It is important to consider why the majority of the communist establishment did not resist change. The non-violent collapse of communism is less surprising when one considers the extent to which elites supported the notion of reform. One scholar has characterised the transition in the following way:

³ Most major repertory theatres have one or more studio spaces within their building. I am using the phrase independent studio theatre (or studio theatre) to denote a stand-alone building, or dedicated space, usually with a single, small-scale stage of up to a hundred-seat capacity.

⁴ The historian Geoffrey Hosking has written a compelling account of the events leading up to the dissolution of the Soviet Union (2001: 574-90).

The old bonds that had kept Soviet society in line, primarily violence and terror, were virtually disappearing. [...] The most important developments were taking place within the *nomenklatura* itself, where dissatisfaction with the old regime and its doctrinal harshness was growing. At least part of the establishment was ready for a radical change in the system – eager to become the real owners of the communal property and to get rid of the formal constraints on personal enrichment. (Shevtsova 1999: 6)

In other words, the term ‘revolution’ appears to be questionable. Two scholars have noted that the continuity of political actors in Soviet and post-Soviet Russia was so striking that, by 1992, it would appear as if ‘the reformist wing of the communist party headed by Boris Yeltsin had finally come to power’ (Kryshtanovskaya and White 1996: 711). By this account, the end of communism was ‘a revolution in which a younger generation of the *nomenklatura* ousted its older rivals’ (Ibid.: 724). As a consequence, the post-communist political landscape in Russia was not a *tabula rasa*.

The majority of Russians supported Yeltsin as a communist-era politician – attracted by his campaign for market reform and a sovereign Russia. He gained 57% of the vote to become the President of Soviet Russia in June 1991.⁵ In his rhetoric, Yeltsin ‘seemed to embody the one aspect of Communism which had remained popular, its aspiration to social justice’ (Hosking 2001: 586). In post-Soviet Russia, that image turned out to be illusory. Yeltsin did not instigate an official or judicial review of the actions, and crimes, of the Soviet government. There would be no redress for victims of the state’s crimes under communism; nor any lustration process disbarring former communists from high office. Presumably Yeltsin did not develop policies of social justice, because he himself might have fallen foul of a lustration law – he had served as a high-ranking communist official since the 1980s. In any case, political reform – such as the strengthening of democratic institutions or civil society – were not part of the President’s plan. After 1991, Yeltsin excluded actors from the democratic groupings from his entourage – those who had helped to secure his electoral victory through street-level activism (Shevtsova 1999: 15-6). The two years following his election became a watershed period in Russian history.

The defining policy of Yeltsin’s presidency was his espousal of ‘shock therapy’. Working with western advisors, the Russian government enacted radical economic policies to

⁵ Source: <<http://yeltsin.ru/news/biografiya-boris-nikolaevich-elcin-prezident-rossii-19911999/>> [accessed 5 July 2016].

transform Russia into a market economy. On 2 January 1992, Yeltsin let the rouble float freely – leading to devaluation and hyperinflation. In June 1992, the President instructed a new Prime Minister, Egor Gaidar, to implement market reform, in particular the privatisations of state assets. Advocates for this course of action considered it to be necessary, in order to ensure that Russia never returned to communist state-planning and also to resolve the Russian financial crisis in 1991. As the legal successor state to the Soviet Union, Russia's legacy included debt, which could be loosely characterised as 'tens of billions of dollars' ('A Conversation with Jeffrey Sachs' 2015). Deputies in the Supreme Soviet (Russia's Parliament) attempted to block these policies. Popular unrest ensued: around 200 unsanctioned protests erupted over these reforms in 1992 (Shevtsova 1999: 47). Yet, when deputies organised a nation-wide referendum in 1993, a slim majority, 53%, endorsed Yeltsin's policies (Hosking 2001: 591). A stand-off between the executive and legislative branches of the Supreme Soviet paralysed government and caused a constitutional crisis (Ibid.: 590-4).⁶ When Yeltsin called a state of emergency, deputies blockaded themselves into the parliamentary building, the White House. Hosking describes the resolution of this crisis:

At seven in the morning of 4 October [...] tanks rumbled onto the New Arbat bridge, opposite the White House. For the next few hours they fired high-explosive shells into the parliament building, before the cameras of CNN, which brought the spectacle straight to the world [...].(Ibid.: 592)

The deputies surrendered. Over a hundred people were killed in the clashes between the Army and protestors. Strengthened by this victory over the legislature, Yeltsin's government published a new Russian Constitution in December 1993. This founding document forged a new political structure which can be characterised as a 'superpresidential model [...]. The procedure for removing the president was practically impossible to carry out' (Shevtsova 1999: 93). That Constitution from 1993 continues to underpin Russian social and political structures at the time of writing.

With his greater authority, Yeltsin re-ignited his economic policies. His government continued with its original plan for mass privatisations, the majority of which occurred between 1994 and 1996. The elite benefited disproportionately from these reforms. The broader Russian public felt their blunt end, in particular, mass unemployment and

⁶ The conflict revolved around Yeltsin's attempt to introduce a Russian Constitution, to replace the Soviet one in 1993 – and his inability to persuade a sufficient number of regions to support his proposed version of it (Hosking 2001: 592).

hyperinflation of over 350% (Shevtsova 1999: 44). Corruption and the absence of adequate regulations led to the enrichment of the new elite, rather than benefiting the population as a whole. According to World Bank statistics:

In 1989, before shock therapy, 2 million people in the Russian Federation were living in poverty, on less than \$4 a day. By the time the shock therapists had administered their “bitter medicine” in the mid-nineties, 74 million Russians were living below the poverty line. (cited in Naomi Klein 2008: 237-8)

The political scientist Richard Sakwa has described this period as the ‘greatest economic collapse in peacetime of any country in history’ (2008: ix). Jeffrey Sachs, the western advisor hired by Yeltsin to facilitate reforms from 1991 to 1994, provides several explanations for this deeply unequal distribution of wealth. He states:

[I advocated] for a strong social safety net [...]. This was not accomplished. The health care system, for example, fell into shocking collapse. [...] The privatizers went ahead outside of transparency and the law. Corruption and insider dealing were rampant. (Sachs 2012: para. 54, 57)

Besides ill planning and corruption,⁷ it is worth noting that Sachs also apportions blame to western governments. The IMF had responded affirmatively to Sachs’ request to provide Poland with financial aid two years earlier (when he was an advisor to the Polish government). By way of contrast, the American government and the IMF declined a comparable request in relation to Russia (Ibid.: para. 55). By Sachs’ view, this monetary input would have restructured Soviet-era debt, facilitated structural reform and simultaneously created a social safety net. Upon reflection many years later, Sachs notes that the west was displaying an enduring Cold War mentality, whereby western governments hoped that ‘Poland was going to be a bulwark for NATO [...] [but] Russia was on the other side’ (Sachs in Cowen 2015). As a consequence of both Russian and western governmental policies, a new class of super-rich tycoons emerged in Russia by the mid-1990s, referred to in popular terms as the ‘New Russians’ in the early to mid-1990s, and dubbed ‘the oligarchs’ by the late 1990s.

The second half of the 1990s witnessed a significant shift in the Russian state’s relationship to big business. By 1995, Yeltsin’s popularity in national polls did not

⁷ The journalist Paul Klebnikov has written a lively account of the first decade of post-Soviet history – depicting the street-level mafia wars of the early 1990s (2000: 1-45). He demonstrates how the mafia became inextricably linked to the commercial sector – and how businesses, and in particular the oligarch Boris Berezovsky, manoeuvred themselves into the position of ‘godfather’ to the government: ‘In other countries, powerful businessmen lobby the government to advance their interests. Berezovsky took control of the men who ran the government and forced the state to feed his business empire’ (2000: 318).

exceed single-digit figures (Belin 2002: 143). The most popular candidate for the presidential elections in 1996 was Gennadii Ziuganov, the leader of the Russian Communist Party. Yeltsin required financial support from the new business elites to mount his presidential campaign. He also relied on the new class of rich Russians to publicise his candidacy in the media. Alongside their business empires, many newly-minted oligarchs had bought or created media outlets in order to gain political clout. By 1997, the majority of Moscow-based media organisations were corporate-owned (Ibid.: 142). The ensuing partnership between state and business returned Yeltsin to the presidency – in a close-run election.⁸ One scholar has defined the resulting form of government as ‘oligarchic authoritarianism’ (Shevtsova 2005: 323). This term reflects the state’s dependence upon the new super-rich after 1996.

Through the 1990s, the corporate media had little incentive to challenge the ‘shock therapy’ policies (since the owners were beneficiaries of those policies). Even so, in broader terms, the 1990s represented a period of unprecedented freedom of expression in Russian history. Censorship had formally ended with a decree on 12 June 1990 – and, subsequently, freedom of expression was enshrined in the Russian Constitution of 1993.⁹ While the increasingly corporate-owned media had vested interests, it nevertheless contributed to a degree of plurality of opinions in public discourse around contemporary political questions. The new super-rich were vying for power which meant that ‘[n]ewspapers controlled by rival groups continued to present starkly different interpretations of major events’ (Belin 2002: 146). Freedom of expression was possible, even if the public narratives were largely forged by the elite. During the 1990s, the government described their free market economic policies as a ‘transition’. The sense of optimism implied by that term was undermined by Russia’s financial crisis in 1998, which led to a ‘default on external debt, a collapse of the banking system, and political turmoil’ (Toshniwal 2012: 206). As a result, Yeltsin’s popularity plummeted again, so that as ‘1998 ended, 97 percent of Russians polled favoured Yeltsin’s immediate retirement [from office] and many supported efforts in the Russian State Duma to impeach him’ (Horelick in Shevtsova 1999: ix). After 1998, Yeltsin appointed

⁸ In the first round of the election on 16 June 1996, Yeltsin won 35% of the vote and Ziuganov gained 32%. At the second round of voting 3 July 1996, Yeltsin was returned to the presidency with 53.8% of the vote, while Ziuganov received 40.3% (‘Kommunisticheskaia partiia Rossiiskoi Federatsii’ 2013: para. 12).

⁹ Article 29, clause 5, of the Constitution of 12 December 1993. Available online: <<http://www.rg.ru/2009/01/21/konstitucia-dok.html>> [accessed 19 July 2016].

four Prime Ministers over the course of two years, attempting to deflect public anger by offering changes of personnel in his government rather than policy changes. Sakwa has described the legacy of this period in the following way:

The 1990s have now gained almost mythical status in contemporary Russia as a period of disaster and collapse, even though the rudiments of a market economy were established and the foundations of a democratic polity created. (2008: ix)

It was against this backdrop of political instability that Yeltsin resigned on 31 December 1999, appointing his fourth and final Prime Minister, Vladimir Putin, as the Acting President. This symbolic date allowed the incumbent to make a New Year's address as his first presidential speech, imbuing his appointment with a ritualistic legitimacy. Putin's first act was a formal agreement giving Yeltsin immunity from prosecution in relation to his time as president.

The 2000s

From the outset, Putin enjoyed a broad popularity with the Russian public, even among most liberal TV anchors (Judah 2013: 33). There were many reasons for that: not least among them was his public persona. The incumbent had cultivated an image as a hard-working, judo-playing bureaucrat: in other words, reliable and efficient. Putin also appeared to be more suited to the role of statesman. By all accounts, he did not drink alcohol – a stark contrast to Yeltsin who, on occasion, made public addresses nationally and internationally in an inebriated state. Simultaneously, the new President appealed to the nationalist instincts of large parts of the Russian electorate. He had trained and served in the KGB during the Soviet era, before entering politics in the 1990s.¹⁰ In 1998, he became the Head of the Federal Security Bureau (henceforth FSB), the post-Soviet security services.¹¹ Putin did not hide this aspect of his experience. On the contrary, he deployed a 'tough guy' rhetoric to bolster his image. During a press conference in 1999, he reassured the public that he would wage war against Chechen militants, declaring: 'if we find them in the toilet, then that's where we'll wipe them out – in the shit-house'

¹⁰ 1970-5: Putin studied law at the Leningrad State University. Late 1970s/early 1980s: he then attended the KGB's High School number 1. 1985-90: he worked for the KGB in the GDR (now east Germany). 1990-1: he was assistant Rector for International Affairs at the Leningrad State University. 1991-6: he worked in various capacities for the St. Petersburg Mayor, Anatolii Sobchak. 1996-8: he was deputy chief-of-staff for President Yeltsin. 1998-9: Head of the FSB. 1999-2000: Prime Minister. Source: <<http://putin.kremlin.ru/bio>> [accessed 24 June 2016].

¹¹ Source: <<http://putin.kremlin.ru/bio>> [accessed 24 June 2016].

[‘в туалете пойдем, мы и в сортире их замочим’].¹² Putin had launched the Second Chechen War as Prime Minister in 1999, after Chechen militants allegedly detonated bombs in residential blocks in three Russian cities, killing over three hundred people.¹³ As President, his rhetoric emphasised an intention to fight terrorism and return great power status to Russia. Military campaigns became a significant feature of Putin’s foreign policy agenda after 2000. These displays of military prowess projected the image of Russia as an ascendant superpower, recovering from its post-Soviet economic collapse, as well as suggesting an intention to exert control over its ‘near-abroad’ or indeed neo-colonial aspirations. Under Putin’s leadership, Russia intervened militarily in Chechnya from 1999 to 2008, in Georgia in 2008, in Crimea and in Eastern Ukraine in 2014.

Yet, alongside his appeals to Russian nationalist sentiment, the incumbent President also cultivated an image as an economic reformer – which is why western leaders and media expressed their approval of this new leader, particularly within the first year or two of his presidency. In broad terms, Putin ‘renewed the market reforms stalled under Yeltsin’ (Shevtsova 2005: 325). In particular, he introduced ‘some big reforms, to simplify taxes and free the market in urban land’ (Economist 2001: para. 7 of 16). His stewardship also brought benefits to the broader population:

By 2004, real wages and real disposable incomes were well above their precrisis peaks. Real wages grew by twenty-five percent [between the first six months in 1998 prior to the financial crisis and 2004] [...] For the first time during the post-communist transformation, the living standards of the Russian population as a whole, not merely the better off, have improved significantly. (Shevtsova 2005: 332)

As a consequence, the 2000s witnessed the birth of a new middle class. What Putin offered to the Russian public was a sense of ‘stability’ [‘стабильность’] in society at large – which was one of the main narratives of his first two presidential terms.

¹² Source: <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KqBu0UK8bAg>> [accessed 24 June 2016].

¹³ There is compelling evidence to suggest that the FSB purposefully detonated bombs in Russia in 1999, which killed Russian citizens, and attributed them to Chechen militants in order to justify a new invasion of Chechnya. The FSB officer-turned-whistleblower Alexander Litvinenko published a book *Blowing Up Russia* (2001), which advanced significant evidence for this version (Harding 2016: 50-2).

Yet, economic modernisation was only part of the reason for the change in socio-economic dynamics after 2000. A report for the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development portrayed the situation in the following way:

Russia has made fast progress in reducing poverty and catching up with the income level of advanced OECD countries over the past decade. However[,] this progress has been largely supported by rising [global] oil prices rather than the structural transformation of the economy. ('Russia: Modernising the Economy' 2013: 2)

The increasing power of the state

Alongside economic reform, the presidential administration rapidly shifted the locus of political power, undermining the corporate-owned media and challenging the oligarchs. During his first year in office, it became evident that Putin was determined to '[c]onsolidate state influence over news content on major television networks [...] [as] a top priority' (Belin 2002: 149). A pattern emerged whereby state-owned companies purchased the largest news outlets. By 2001, the *Economist* characterised the media channel NTV as 'the country's last national television station that has stayed independent of the Kremlin' (2001: para. 1 of 8). Yet, that station's independence did not last for long under Putin's administration. In 2001, the oligarch Vladimir Gusinskii agreed to sell Media-Most (which owned NTV) to Gazprom – a state-owned company. There is significant evidence that the FSB pressured the oligarch. The state arrested Gusinskii for alleged misconduct and offered to drop the lawsuit, on condition of the sale – which he had initially resisted (Belin 2002: 149; Gavrilova and others 2011; Harding 2011: 117). One scholar characterises this period as a 'media crackdown' (Belin 2002: 155). Advocates of this policy considered it essential to avoid state policies being derailed by the opportunistic corporate media.¹⁴ Most commentators agree that censorship of the media returned to Russian public life for the first time in the post-Soviet era.¹⁵ However, small media outlets – in Moscow and in the regions – retained their independence. A commentator evaluates the situation as follows (Judah 2013: 47):

¹⁴ For instance, Aleksandr Voloshin (Head of the Presidential Administration from 1999-2003) considered that the oligarch Boris Berezovskii had aimed simply to 'gain political capital' ['заработать политический капитал'] ('A. Voloshin: Tragediia podlodki' 2014: para. 3 of 11), when his station ORT reported on Putin's slow response to the sinking of the Kursk submarine in 2000.

¹⁵ The journalist Peter Pomerantsev has written a compelling account of his time working at the national Russian television station, TNT, for almost a decade from the mid-2000s, *Nothing is True And Everything Is Possible* (2015). He depicts the main national television stations as propaganda 'mouthpieces' for the political elite: it is a means to 'direct [...] Russian society like one great reality show' (2015: 77). One of the key figures in his book is Vladislav Surkov: 'As deputy head of the [presidential] administration, he would

With less than 2 per cent of the country having either access to satellite TV or the Internet [in 2000,] the Kremlin seemed to have done the impossible: it had provided censorship for the masses and media-freedom for the intelligentsia.

This paradox persisted in other areas of Russian life, too, whereby the state permitted freedom – intellectual or otherwise – to the most privileged socio-economic groups in return for political loyalty.

Without delay, Putin shifted the state's relationship to the private sector. Western commentators described the President's approach to big business in the following way:

In 2000, the year Mr. Putin took office, he struck a deal with the country's widening circle of wealthy businessmen: stay out of politics, and the government will not revisit the highly controversial privatization deals that made the oligarchs so rich. (Mydans and Arvedlund 2003: para. 21)

The oligarch Mikhail Khodorkovsky did not abide by that rule. In 2003, the oligarch funded a number of oppositional political parties in the parliamentary elections, establishing himself as a potential rival to Putin in the following year's presidential election. The FSB stormed the plane of Russia's richest man, while it was on an airport runway – broadcasting it live to the nation. The state alleged that Khodorkovsky had committed fraud and tax evasion. Many Russians favoured the arrest, since it appeased their anger with the newly-enriched elites. A minority of scholars supported that perspective, including one western researcher who suggested that the arrest of Khodorkovsky was 'an assault on the extra-democratic privileges of the oligarchs' (Sakwa 2008: 302). Critics of Putin, and the majority of western commentators, perceived the charges as politically motivated. A Russian journalist ironically suggested that 'the "Khodorkovsky affair" indicated a symbolic and irreversible victory of the security service agent over the business man' [*«дело Ходорковского» обозначило символическую и бесповоротную победу силовика над бизнесменом*] (Rogov 2013b: para. 5 of 13). Ultimately, the courts convicted Khodorkovsky in 2005 and again in 2008; he was eventually pardoned by presidential decree in 2013 a year before his jail term ended.¹⁶ Whether or not the imprisonment of Khodorkovsky was judicially just or simply a 'show trial' orchestrated by the presidential administration, the state did not

meet once a week with the heads of television channels in his Kremlin office, instructing them on whom to attack and whom to defend, who is allowed on TV and who is banned, how the President is to be presented, and the very language and categories the country thinks and feels in' (Ibid.).

¹⁶ The Khodorkovsky affair continues at the time of writing. The former oligarch resides in Berlin, advocating for political change in Russia and speaking publicly against Putin. In 2015, Russia issued an international arrest warrant for Khodorkovsky over three alleged murders in the 1990s.

succeed in tackling income inequalities in Russia. On the contrary, there were numerous cases of Putin's close colleagues – many of whom worked in politics or in the administrative bureaucracy – becoming new oligarchs, as a result of patronage from the presidential administration (Shevtsova 2005: 365-6).

Social equality disregarded

A low regard for social reform characterised Putin's second presidential term. The President had promised to accompany his early modernising reforms with the development of a social safety net. However, 'the regime did not support [this policy platform] with resources' (Shevtsova 2005: 333). As a consequence, the general level of public health and healthcare infrastructure worsened, so much so that by 2004, 'only a third of Russians considered themselves healthy, with 40 percent being sick frequently and 30 percent chronically' (Ibid.: 333-4). Rather than using his second term to address the relationship between economic, political and social reform, Putin consolidated his authority to the detriment of democratic progress. Shevtsova has suggested that after Putin's second election to the presidency, the 'Kremlin no longer hid its plans to build a single-party state' (Ibid.: 352). She also points out that:

The increased longing for independent institutions and opposition meant that Russian society and the regime had acquired incompatible agendas and that their clash was becoming inevitable, sooner or later. (Ibid.: 353)

Putin's policies left little room for dissent. Russia did not experience a popular uprising in the 2000s comparable to so-called Colour Revolutions in several former Soviet States.¹⁷ Indeed, Putin remained popular with the majority of Russians, partly because of media censorship, but also because his leadership represented 'stability' – the main narrative of Putin's first two presidencies. The financial crisis of 1998 had turned Yeltsin's narrative of 'transition' into empty rhetoric; similarly, the global market downturn in 2008 undermined Putin's promise of 'stability'. Russia's Gross Domestic Produce, which had risen steadily since 2000, fell sharply in 2008, leading many citizens to question whether growth had resulted from the President's policies or only from global oil prices. While the space for dissent diminished in Russia since 2000, an

¹⁷ The Rose Revolution in Georgia in 2003, the Orange Revolution in Ukraine in 2004 and the Tulip Revolution in Kyrgyzstan in 2005.

educated class of Russians retained access to small independent media outlets as well as alternative sources of information.

The internet generation

Internet usage grew exponentially in Russia throughout the 2000s, alongside the global growth of new technologies. The relative freedom of the internet throughout the 2000s provided a platform for Russians, particularly younger generations who had been born in the late Soviet or post-Soviet era, to share ideas on blogging platforms and learn about diverse cultures and ideologies from Russian or global sources. In contrast to other spheres of Russian civil society, the state chose not to interfere with the development of the internet. The scholar Ben Judah has described the situation in this way:

[By 2010] Russia was [...] the largest Internet market in Europe[.] [...] [Putin] chose not to follow China and erect a “great firewall”, despite suggestions from the security services. [...] The Kremlin also felt that a small world commenting freely on the problems of Putinism could be useful [...] for dissenters to let off steam. (2013: 145, 6)

What began as a marginal phenomenon turned into a mainstream one. By 2013, 48 million Russian citizens used the internet, which approximated to a third of the population (Gainutdinov and others 2013: 1). This virtual public realm facilitated the rise of new oppositional politicians through social media, in particular, – which significantly influenced Russian politics and society during the Medvedev interregnum.

2008 to 2012

The Russian Constitution permits incumbents to occupy the presidency for two consecutive terms. Contrary to the expectations of many, Putin ruled out running for a third term by changing the Constitution. Yet, the prospect of genuine political change was tempered by the fact that the front-running candidate to succeed him was Dmitrii Medvedev. The two men had worked in some form of partnership for almost a decade: Medvedev had been a part of Putin’s inner team since November 1999.¹⁸ Nevertheless, the presumed heir to the presidency was a former lecturer of civil law at St. Petersburg University: his rhetoric as a presidential candidate emphasised his intention to tackle

¹⁸ Among other prominent posts, Medvedev was prime Minister from 2005-8. Source: <<http://government.ru/en/gov/persons/183/biography/>> [accessed 19 July 2016].

corruption. There was a period of relative political liberalization when Medvedev succeeded Putin. As President, he introduced a certain amount of progressive legislation, such as a law obliging public officials to declare their incomes (Ivanov et. al 2013: para. 2 of 10), which was introduced in 2008. The Medvedev Thaw – as it is sometimes known popularly – did not offer any major shifts in economic policy or initiatives to address social justice. The reason for this continuity is described by the journalist Ben Judah in the following way:

[Prior to the presidential election,] Medvedev [...] was introduced to the people on billboards, walking side by side with Putin. [...] The image was simple: power was not being handed over but split. It was instantly dubbed “the tandem”. (2013: 172)

Under Medvedev, Putin retained a key governmental role as Prime Minister from 2008 to 2012. Even so, this interregnum provided an opportunity for media commentators to address controversial topics such as corruption, which captured the discourse of young generations on social media. A number of opposition politicians, including Aleksei Naval’nyi, focussed their efforts on anti-corruption campaigning – frequently posting accusatory blogs on Facebook. During the run-up to the parliamentary elections of 2011, Naval’nyi coined the following phrase about the pro-Putin political base: ‘United Russia is a party of petty criminals and thieves’ [*“Единая Россия” — партия жуликов и воров*’] (Ivanov and others 2013: para. 6 of 10). This slogan spread rapidly on social media. By the end of this presidency, the Russian public considered corruption to be the second most pressing political issue,¹⁹ according to a poll (Ivanov et. al 2013: para. 6 of 10). The Medvedev Thaw contributed to the largest popular groundswell of dissent in modern-day Russia. Judah has posited that:

Navalny [...] emerge[d] as the pre-eminent opposition leader [during Medvedev’s presidency] [...] Navalny’s [...] work exposing corruption by crowd-sourcing the investigation of government contracts would have been impossible without Medvedev. It was he who had ordered that all government contracts become publicly available. (2013: 177)

2012 to 2014

Medvedev announced in September 2011 that Putin was going to run again for the presidency, while he intended to return to his former post as Prime Minister. This

¹⁹ The article – albeit obliquely – suggests that economic growth was the most pressing concern (Ibid.).

political manoeuvre angered a broad base of the Russian public, which came to perceive elections as a sham-democratic system (comparable to the purely ceremonial elections held in Soviet times). The sense of a pseudo-democracy, whereby elections are rendered meaningless, was further heightened by observations of electoral fraud, made by organisations such as Golos and the OSCE in both the parliamentary elections of December 2011 and the presidential elections in March 2012 (Iashlavskii 2012). The public discontent culminated in a rally on 6 of May 2012 on Bolotnaia Square, on the eve of Putin's third inauguration. The security services ended the demonstration through the use of force. Putin returned to the presidency on a platform of ultra-conservatism. The third-time President introduced a series of laws restricting civil society and thereby diminishing the space for public dissent yet further. By way of illustration, a draconian piece of legislation on treason was enacted in 2013 whereby an individual holding nationally sensitive material 'could be convicted for holding information even if no secret had been divulged' ('Russia at the UPR' 2013). Furthermore, after May 2012, the state required NGOs to declare themselves to be 'foreign agents' if they received foreign-sourced funding (Lokshina 2012: para. 8). A report published by Human Rights Watch explains why this change was so detrimental to civil society:

NGOs that work on controversial issues and are unlikely to receive adequate domestic funding are essentially forced to make an intolerable choice between facing criminal sanctions, debasing themselves as "foreign agents," or severely reducing their work. (Ibid.: para. 8)

These legislative changes were accompanied by state-led anti-Western rhetoric, which served the function of channelling public frustration towards external agents rather than at Russia's political elite. Before the end of 2012, Putin's administration had also reversed some of Medvedev's most progressive legislation, by re-criminalising libel, for example (Lokshina 2012: para. 5). The resurgence of the Russian Orthodox Church as a political force in Russia led to the introduction of a 'Law against Offending Religious Feeling' in 2013. The state's relationship to the internet also shifted dramatically during that year. The Russian human rights NGO Agora Association²⁰ noted in its annual assessment of freedom of expression that 'the situation in relation to freedom of the Internet in Russia has grown significantly worse' [*ситуация со свободой Интернета*

²⁰ In 2016, the state forcibly closed Agora – which had published critical accounts on some of the most controversial cases in contemporary Russian history, such as Pussy Riot. According to Agora's lawyer, Ramil' Akhmetgaliev, this was the first case of a legal closure of an NGO in post-1991 Russia. Source: <<http://www.rbc.ru/politics/10/02/2016/56bb14c89a79472433ad22c1>> [accessed 19 July 2016].

в России в прошедшем году значительно ухудшилась'] (“Agora” prognoziruet’ 2014: para. 2 of 6). The FSB controlled a blacklist of blocked websites – allegedly promoting ‘extremism’ – without judicial oversight. The Agora report suggests that instances of *de facto* censorship grew from 1197 cases in 2012 to 1832 in 2013 (Ibid.: para. 3 of 6). By 2014, the space for public dissent had diminished so severely that an anti-war activist, Dmitrii Monakhov, was arrested for making a single-person picket against the war in Ukraine, in spite of the constitutional legality of unsanctioned, individual protest (‘Aktivist Dmitrii Monakhov’ 2014). In this increasingly restricted public sphere, it became inevitable that the authorities would restrict the cultural sphere, which represented one of the few remaining public spaces where freedom of expression was still theoretically possible.

Part Two. Cultural policy in Russia and the birth of a Russian ‘fringe’

Introduction

The legislative framework regulating theatrical production: vestiges of the Soviet regime

During the *perestroika* period, the authorities dismantled many of the prevailing restrictions on freedom of artistic expression. The changes were designed to revive the stifled theatre sector. A sweeping new law in May 1991 placed all aspects of the running of state-funded theatres, both financially and artistically, into the hands of the theatre’s artistic director and *direktor* (see the Lexicon, p. 7), overseen by a Board of Trustees (Beumers 1996: 1410). Yet two effective mechanisms for controlling the theatre sector were left in place.²¹ Firstly, financing of state theatres would come directly from the Ministry of Culture or City-level authorities, as opposed to an intermediary funding body with a degree of independence from the political establishment. Secondly, the state retained its responsibility for appointing key personnel within theatre institutions, specifically, the artistic director and the *direktor*. These aspects of Soviet theatrical production were retained by the Russian government.²² In other words, the authorities

²¹ A new law – no. 3612-1 ‘Foundations of the legislation of the Russian Federation on Culture’ about the regulation of the cultural sphere – was passed on 9 October 1992, but it re-instituted the same set of relationships between the state and state-funded theatre institutions. Source: <<http://pravovrns.ru/?p=1225>> [accessed 19 July 2016].

²² By way of contrast, in Britain, funding is allocated by the Arts Council of England, which is institutionally independent from the government. Artistic directors and executive directors are appointed by the independent Board of Trustees, in Britain, so that each theatre company is institutionally independent from the Department of Culture, Media and Sport.

no longer had formalised mechanisms for interfering in the internal decision-making of theatres,²³ yet the cultural ministries continued to shape the theatre landscape in its fundamentals: selecting the artistic leaders and regulating theatres' budgets. The state only exercised these privileges over *state-funded* theatres. However, the theatre critic Alena Solntseva has evaluated the Russian theatre landscape in this way:

In Russia, the main form of theatrical production, to this day, remains state and municipal repertory theatres. Today, private theatres practically cannot exist without support from the state, which is realised in the form of subsistence or discounted rates on the leasehold [of the theatre building].

[в России основной формой театрального дела до сих пор остаются государственные и муниципальные репертуарные театры. Сегодня частный театр практически не может существовать без поддержки государства, которая осуществляется в форме субсидий или льгот по аренде.] (2014: para. 1 of 9)

In other words, the state retained its role as the leading financier, and arbitrator, of theatrical production in modern-day Russia.

Cultural policy and institutional realities in the 1990s: a lost decade

There is a broad consensus among theatre scholars and critics that the 1990s was a 'failed decade for Russian theatre [*провальн[ое] десятилетие[...] для российского театра*]' (Davydova 2016: para. 2 of 13). Soviet theatre-makers were supported by a well-developed institutional framework. The Soviet cultural ministry set a minimum quota for contemporary plays to be staged by theatres; journals were published in order to disseminate government-approved new plays around the country for artistic directors to choose from (Beletskii 2014). In Soviet times, the state also organised a series of dramaturgical seminars with established playwrights in order to support new generations of writers. According to Mikhail Shvydkoi, the Minister of Russian Culture (2000-8), the most respected playwrights with an enduring international legacy from the Soviet era all emerged through that system (Interview with Shvydkoi 2015).²⁴ The first 'decade' of Russian cultural policy, from 1991 to 1999, was characterised by a largely

²³ In the Soviet Union, there was a two-stage process in regulating, which is to say censoring, theatrical production: every new production had to 'pass a literary censor and a theatrical censor' (Smeliansky 1999a: xxi; 81). Firstly, the state took responsibility for approving or banning playtexts prior to performance. Secondly, a representative of the cultural authorities would also attend a dedicated showing of each production prior to its public opening, to determine whether it was deemed permissible ideologically.

²⁴ Shvydkoi's implication appears to be that even writers, whose work implicitly criticised the Soviet system, were dependent on that system of state support.

hands-off approach on the part of the state. Most theatre-makers welcomed this artistic freedom. Yet this liberation from state control had its disadvantages. After 1991, the institutional networks for supporting new playwriting were dismantled: no fixed quotas existed and there were significantly fewer journals to publish new plays. Shvydkoi has described this transition in the following way:

In the beginning of the 1990s, there [was] a new Ministry [of Culture] [...] [T]he main idea was to give everyone freedom, “do what you want, write what you want”, no more [dramaturgical] seminars, no more finance – freedom, but freedom from everything, from money: it [was] a market [economy].

[‘В начале 90-ых годов – новое министерство, [...] главная идея была – дать всем свободы, «делайте что хотите, пишите чего хотите», никаких семинаров, никакого финансирования, свобода, но свобода от всего, от денег: есть рынок’]. (Interview with Shvydkoi 2015)

As Shvydkoi implies, Yeltsin’s administration transformed culture in the image of its economic policies: a smaller role for the state, a larger role for private investment. In fact, the foundations for that approach had occurred in the *perestroika* period, among the broader legislative changes, as the scholar Birgit Beumers notes:

[The] Council of Ministers’ Resolution of May 1991 [...] [had] allowed the theatres to find private sponsors and open foreign currency accounts, which enabled theatres to let [out their] premises and retain the rent. (1996: 1410)

In her survey, Beumers presents the change in theatrical production under Yeltsin as a ‘transition to market structures’ (Ibid.: 1414), comparing it favourably to pre-communist Russia where theatres were ‘largely dependent on the merchant class [...] [which] enabled the theatrical arts to flourish’ (Ibid.). Anatoly Smeliansky, theatre historian and First Deputy to the Artistic Director at the Chekhov Moscow Arts since the mid-1980s, provides a less positive assessment of this transition to a market economy:

The majority of Moscow theatres, in an attempt to survive, began to surrender their premises to the “new Russians” [...]. Inside theatres casinos were opened, night clubs [and] foreign currency offices. (1999b: 385)

While a transition to market conditions appeared to guarantee intellectual freedom, it also endangered a plurality of views. Beumers partially acknowledges that point:

Most theatres in central Moscow are now letting a part of their premises to other enterprises, especially clubs and restaurants. [...] [T]his is often at the expense of the small experimental stages (eg. at the Lenin Komsomol Theatre, where the experimental group of Aleksandr Ponomarev had to leave the small stage)[.] (1996: 1410)

As both of these perspectives suggest, it was precisely experimental theatre-makers who were placed at the greatest disadvantage by the changes occurring after 1991. The critic Marina Davydova notes a further reason why new generations of playwrights fared badly. She describes the institutional rigidity of repertory theatres, in particular the permanent acting ensembles with established practices, that were resistant to innovative performance styles departing from Russian psychological realism (Davydova 2016: para. 3 of 13).

The 1990s: the birth of a movement

In that context, it seems unsurprising that playwrights decided to organise themselves independently. The first initiative of lasting significance occurred in 1990 when a group of dramatists created the Lyubimovka Festival, named after Stanislavsky's estate.²⁵ Well-known playwrights from the Soviet-era, such as Mikhail Roshchin, Aleksei Kazantsev and Viktor Slavkin, established this initiative, precisely in order to encourage a younger generation of dramatists, in the absence of support from the authorities or the repertory theatres.²⁶ By the mid-1990s, this festival had brought two major new playwrights to the attention of the broader theatre industry: Oleg Bogaev and Ol'ga Mukhina. The theatre critic John Freedman characterises the situation in the following way:

The Lyubimovka 1997 festival was a catalyzing event. [...] [I]t provides a legitimate break separating what came "before" from what came "after". From this point on, Russia's theatre community could no longer look at developments in the field of drama as a random string of disparate and isolated incidents[.] (2010: 395)

According to Koval'skaia, many plays which went on to define the landscape of contemporary playwriting in Russia because of their vivid and bleak portrayals of post-Soviet realities, such as Vasilii Sigarev's *Plasticine* and the Presniakov Brothers' *Terrorism*, were presented for the first time in Moscow at this trailblazing festival (Koval'skaia and Matvienko 2008: 7). She points out that this initiative had an additional significance, noting that 'not only did plays and partnerships surface at the Lyubimovka, whole theatres were born' [*не только пьесы и союзы вспыхивали на «Любимовке»* –

²⁵ The festival took place at the Lyubimovka – Stanislavsky's former estate, approximately 7 miles south-east of Moscow – until 2000 (Iakubova 2014: 59). The official website does not state which theatre hosted this festival in 2000-1, but from 2002, it was hosted at Teatr.doc.

²⁶ Source: <<http://lubimovka.ru/istoriya>> [accessed 9 June 2016].

рождались целые театры'] (Ibid.). By this view, the Lyubimovka provided the impetus for two of the co-founders, Kazantsev and Roshchin, to create a journal dedicated to contemporary stage writing, *The Playwright* ['Драматург'] (1993 to 1997)²⁷ and subsequently, in 1998, a theatre dedicated to new plays, the Centre for Playwriting and Directing (CDR).²⁸ In Ekaterinburg in 1993, the dramatist Nikolai Kolyada initiated a playwriting course at the Urals State University. Once again, an established playwright was providing an infrastructure for younger dramatists to develop their professional skills – it was even more significant since the pedagogue staged the best work by his students at the Sverdlovsk Theatre of Drama and later at his own company the Kolyada-Theatre (2001-ongoing).²⁹ Most of these new institutions gave playwrights (instead of directors) the decisive role, as gatekeepers of artistic taste – a shift in the traditional hierarchy. However, in the 1990s this new infrastructure remained at the margins of the theatre industry. Crossovers between the Lyubimovka, or Kolyada's playwriting course, and the repertory theatres were still a rare occurrence.

The 2000s: reinventing culture

Prompted by a sense of stagnation in the repertory theatres, the cultural authorities introduced a series of reforms after 2000. The lynchpin of this new approach was to increase capital for theatrical production. The Ministry of Culture introduced a mechanism to increase state funding to the largest theatres. To start with, only the largest organisations benefited, such as the Chekhov Moscow Arts and the Mariinskii Theatre. Shvydkoi proposed a system of presidential grants. Their purpose was specifically to raise the salaries of creative troupes:

Actors' salaries were equal to teachers' salaries [in 2000]. [...] Why were they called grants? Because to put actors in a totally privileged position, compared to doctors or teachers [...] would have been wrong. That money was meant to be channelled – like sport, which is a huge accomplishment – on large-scale artistic events.

[Зарботная плата артистов была равна зарботной плате учителей [...]. Почему это называлось грантом? [...]. Потому что ставить

²⁷ Source: <<http://theatre.ru/drama/dramaturg.html>> [accessed 9 June 2016].

²⁸ Koval'skaia suggests that several other major companies or initiatives resulted from this festival including the Debut-Centre at the House of the Actor, Teatr.doc, the New Drama Festival, and Praktika (Koval'skaia and Matvienko 2008: 7).

²⁹ By way of illustration, the Sverdlovsk Academic Theatre of Drama produced Bogaev's play, *Russian National Mail*, directed by Kolyada (Bogaev 2015). Bogaev was one of the members of Kolyada's first group of students, which also included Sigarev.

артистов в совсем привилегированном положении по отношению к врачам или учителям, () было бы неправильно. Эти деньги должны были аккумулироваться – как [...] спорт, большое достижение – на художественные события больших масштабов.] (Interview with Shvydkoi 2015)

Prioritising the largest organisations, this approach reveals a vision of culture, whereby theatre is a source of civic pride and prestige ('a huge accomplishment'; 'large-scale artistic events'). As Russia's GDP grew, the Ministry of Culture was able to extend this policy:

Then we moved this system of grants³⁰ to the whole cultural sphere. [...] It's a different matter that not all [theatres] turned out to be as commercially successful [...] as [the Moscow Arts under Oleg] Tabakov. [...]

[Потом мы систему грантов перенесли на всю сферу культуры [.] [...] Другой вопрос что не все такие коммерческие успешные оказались [...] как [у] Табаков[а.]] (Ibid.)

Shvydkoi's implication is that, in addition to artistic worth, theatre should be popular and entertaining ('commercially successful'). These notions were at odds with the prevalent sense, inherited from the Soviet era, that theatre was a place for spiritual enlightenment, which should 'express the spirit of the nation' [*'выражать дух нации'*] (Vislova 2009: 70). This new definition of theatre implied an aspiration towards quality, but it also seemed to embody the notion of commercial viability and an adherence to the values of the state as the primary purpose for the theatrical sector.

This vision of culture implied high production values, as a means of achieving popular and critical acclaim. New sources of capital were required to produce visually impressive productions, and recruit the most famous actors. The Ministry of Culture endeavoured to facilitate the conditions for corporate investment. From the outset of Putin's administration, the state intervened institutionally in several major theatres, in order to stimulate private investment into the cultural sphere. In 2001, the state created a Board of Trustees at the Bolshoi Theatre which Shvydkoi considers to be a 'radical step forward [...] – bureaucratically and socially' [*'большой прорыв [...] бюрократический и социальный'*] (Interview with Shvydkoi 2015).³¹ The aim was to create 'a mechanism for a mutual relationship between businesses and the institutions of culture'

³⁰ This 'system' meant that state-run theatres funded by the Federal Ministry of Culture could apply for additional salaries – in the form of presidential grants – for their creative troupes.

³¹ During the late Soviet years, the Bolshoi was turned into a joint enterprise company (Kryshtanovskaya and White 1996: 718).

[‘инструмент для взаимоотношения бизнеса с институтами культуры’] (Ibid.). To some extent, this tendency represented a transformation of major theatres into non-profit corporations. While theatres continued to receive generous subsidy from the state, artistic directors had to engage with corporate fundraising if their organisations were to be ‘competitive’ within the sector. Artistic value became, at least partially, equated with monetary worth, in terms of production budgets and celebrity actors and directors.³²

This modernisation of the institution of theatre was also accompanied by a liberalisation of cultural policy – at a small number of venues. The authorities employed their prerogative to appoint new artistic leaders, resulting in what the critic Grigorii Zaslavskii called a ‘revolution of personnel’ [‘кадров[ая] революци[я]’] (2002: para. 13). For the most part, this re-orientation provided opportunities for younger and more risk-inclined theatre-makers, particularly in Moscow where – by the same critic’s account – ‘anyone can see that theatre has grown younger [‘всякий заметит, что театр помолодел’] (Ibid.: para. 20). There were half a dozen appointments at prominent theatres including Roman Kozak, appointed to the Pushkin Theatre in 2001. Within the first year of his tenure, Kozak programmed Mark Ravenhill’s gritty play *Some Explicit Polaroids*. Another reviewer characterised this programming decision – as well as Kozak’s first season in general – as an attempt to ‘drag the theatre from its state of philistinism and attract a forward-looking, desirably progressive public’ [‘вытащить театр из заштатного состояния и заманить туда перспективную, желательно продвинутую публику’] (Alpatova 2002: para. 1 of 8). However, this liberalisation was restricted to fewer than a dozen theatres. This policy also tended to overlook the most progressive theatre-makers. Zaslavskii stated that one could only ‘fantasise’ [‘пофантазировать’]

³² It is worth noting that this process is comparable to one which occurred in Britain in the 1980s when theatrical production shifted from being ensemble-based to building-based, largely because of cuts to council-funding in the Thatcher era, leading to large Boards as the primary locus of oversight and control over theatre-making (Litchtenfels and Hunter 2002: 32-34). The consequence was a new ethos of ‘artistic and fiscal conservatism’ (Ibid.) in British theatre. There is an institutional difference between Russia in the 2000s and Britain in the 1980s. As mentioned previously, British theatres maintained a degree of independence in their funding mechanisms, with an autonomous Arts Council acting as intermediary between the state and artistic directors, and in appointments of key personnel. Ultimately, though, the British theatre sector was also redesigned in the 1980s to emphasise ‘national pride’ (Ibid.: 38) – by the sudden dramatic increase in Shakespeare revivals, designed to capitalise the inclusion of this unifying figure (in the narrative of national identity) in school curricula after the Second World War (Ibid.). In other words, British theatre from the 1980s and Russia from the 2000s both offered restrictive ideological parameters, manifesting an underlying neo-liberal ideology.

(2002: para. 23) about how Russian theatre could change for the better if half a dozen of the most radical directors from the new generation were to be appointed, such as Mikhail Mokeev, Vladimir Klimenko (who goes by the stage name Klim) and others. In other words, liberalisation occurred in a sporadic and seemingly unplanned fashion, with the most progressive changes in Moscow, catering to the intelligentsia – in an attempt to satisfy cultural elites without making any fundamental reform to the theatre sector.

After 2000, the state began to support experimental playwrights to a limited extent. Shvydkoi states that during his tenure as Culture Minister, he perceived the need for ‘some sort of stimulus’ [*‘некий стимул’*] (Interview with Shvydkoi 2015) so that ‘young, talented people who were writing prose would move into dramaturgy’ [*‘люди молодые, талантливые которые занимались прозой, пошли в драматургию’*] (Ibid.). By his own account, one of the key policies between 2000 and 2008 was to develop an infrastructure for contemporary playwriting. For instance, the Ministry established a playwriting competition in 2007. Once a year, an appointed ‘expert committee’ [*‘экспертный совет’*] met to evaluate submissions invited from across Russia, and subsequently, the Ministry provided a royalty and production costs to the winning plays.³³ No comparable support for contemporary playwrights existed between 1991 and 2000, according to the Union of Theatre Practitioners.³⁴ In financial terms, the scale of this intervention was relatively small – about 2.5% of the annual budget for federal theatres.³⁵ Yet, Sof’ia Apfel’baum, a Head of Department at the Ministry of Culture (2006-14),³⁶ has suggested that this contribution towards innovative theatre-making was nevertheless ‘very important’ [*‘очень существенно’*] (Interview with Apfel’baum 2015). The playwright Mikhail Durnenkov has provided an alternative view, stating that ‘in foreign countries, these projects to support playwrights are permanent [not once a year,

³³ Source: <<http://www.m24.ru/articles/39178/print>> [accessed 19 July 2016].

³⁴ Source: <<http://www.m24.ru/articles/39178/print>> [accessed 19 July 2016].

³⁵ In 2014, the majority of the annual budget for federal theatres provided by the Federal Ministry of Culture was around 8 billion roubles (approximately 112 million pounds) (Apfel’baum 2015). This figure was allocated *a priori* to the twenty-one federal theatres (i.e. excluding the Bolshoi Theatre which has its own budget line in the Russian Federal Budget). New initiatives, such as seminars, were in competition for what a former employee of the Cultural Ministry called ‘project money’ [*‘проектные деньги’*] (Apfel’baum 2015) – at an annual total of around 200 million roubles (approximately 2.79 million pounds).

³⁶ Sof’ia Apfel’baum worked as a Head of Department at the Ministry of Culture from 2006 to 2014, initially as a ‘leading specialist’ [*‘ведущий специалист’*] (Apfel’baum 2015). I have not been able to specify what year she was promoted, but by 2014, she was ‘leading the Department for the Support of the Arts and National Creativity’ [*‘возглавляла департамент государственной поддержки искусства и народного творчества’*] (‘Ushedshaia iz Minkul’ta’ 2015). In 2015, she started in her new position as *Direktor* at the Russian Academic Youth Theatre (ongoing at the time of writing) (‘Ushedshaia iz Minkul’ta’ 2015).

like the Ministry's playwriting competition]. [...] [T]he level of stipend is small, a playwright can scarcely survive on that money' [*В зарубежных странах такие проекты поддержки авторов постоянны. [...] [P]азмеры стипендий небольшие, драматургу на эти деньги выжить сложно.*'].³⁷ Either way, the Ministry's allocation of limited funds towards contemporary playwriting symbolised a new milestone. The authorities had recognised that formally experimental theatre-making was essential to revitalise theatrical production, as well as to accommodate the cultural elites into the existing social order.

The 2000s: the institutions of New Drama

Playwrights advocating contemporary playwriting in the 1990s formalised their networks by developing theatre ensembles or building-based institutions. Roshchin and Kazantsev founded the CDR in 1998, initially hiring a stage at the Vysotskii Theatre³⁸ and managing their theatre 'based on a new principle: no permanent troupe, each production became an independent undertaking' [*Это была структура, созданная по абсолютно новому принципу: без постоянной труппы, каждый спектакль становился самостоятельным предприятием*'].³⁹ This approach – designed to encourage first-time and formally experimental playwrights – led to a number of high-profile productions which shaped the subsequent non-conformist movement, including the multi-authored *Open City – Moscow* and *Plasticine*, both in 2000. There is a long tradition of studio theatres in Russia.⁴⁰ Many of Russia's most prominent theatres began as studios – and most repertory theatres have smaller stages for experimentation.⁴¹ The principal difference was that playwrights – not actors or directors – established this new wave of theatre companies, dedicating their stages to contemporary playwriting. Most

³⁷ Source: <<http://www.m24.ru/articles/39178/print>> [accessed 19 July 2016].

³⁸ From 2007, after gaining recognition for its work at the Vysotskii Theatre, the CDR was provided by the City authorities with its own building at 5 Begovaia Street. Source: <<http://teatrcdr.ru/o-teatre>> [accessed 18 July 2016].

³⁹ Source: <http://chekhoved.net/theatrepedia/theatre/123-tsentr_dramaturgii_i_rejissury#/123-tsentr_dramaturgii_i_rejissury> [accessed 18 July 2016].

⁴⁰ The scholar Bryan Brown argues that this tradition emerged from the Imperial-era *khruzhki* (social circles) – designed to share radical ideas within small, closed social groups, to avoid censure from the state (Brown 2013: 51).

⁴¹ Tabakov provides a good account of how the *Sovremennik* and the Theatre Studio named after Tabakov were founded as troupes of likeminded actors, in 1956 and 1974 respectively; initially, they worked voluntarily, before gaining recognition and funding from the authorities ('Oleg Tabakov pricipal posetitelei' 2015). Zaslavskii provides a description of the *perestroika*-era experiment orchestrated by the state which led to the creation of approximately 200 studio theatres, supported by one-time government grants: around a dozen received permanent state funding in 1990 (Zaslavskii 2002).

new studio theatres, serving this new wave of dramatists, appeared in the late 1990s and new millennium, such as the CDR in Moscow in 1998, Kolyada-Theatre in Ekaterinburg in 2001, Teatr.doc in Moscow in 2002, Praktika Theatre in Moscow in 2005, and the On.Teatr laboratory in St. Petersburg in 2009. They advocated for first-time dramatists – removing barriers to those who were not versed in theatrical convention.

The City-level cultural authorities displayed an ambivalent attitude towards the playwriting studios, which is difficult to fully comprehend because of its apparent inconsistency. Evgeniia Shermeneva, Deputy Head of Moscow City's Department of Culture (2011-3), has characterised policy-making in this way: 'in Russia, many decisions are taken on the basis of an absolutely voluntaristic method' [*в России многие решения принимаются абсолютно волюнтаристским методом*].⁴² Her term refers to the top-down, personality-based system of decision-making: a culture of informal relations which supersedes formal mechanisms. Moscow's Department of Culture accepted Praktika and CDR as Moscow City-run organisations [*организации культуры при правительстве Москвы*]⁴³ – with a dedicated theatre building and project grants – although the more 'political' and therefore controversial Teatr.doc was only offered government status in 2012 (see p. 173), during the period of relative cultural liberalisation in Moscow. The cultural authorities in St. Petersburg provided a venue for On.Teatr from the outset but no organisational costs (Freedman 2013a: para. 9 of 15). In 2013, the authorities removed its support to On.Teatr – which subsequently transformed into a project-based organisation, playing on other stages. Regional authorities were less accommodating than in the 'two capitals'. The playwright Ivan Vyrypaev, who subsequently became Artistic Director of Praktika (2013-ongoing),⁴⁴ created a studio theatre in Irkutsk in 1998 called 'The Playful Space' [*Пространство Игры*]. His public biography states that:

After the controversial premiere of *Dreams*, the [Irkutsk] authorities deprived his theatre company of a stage, accusing the director of amorality and a destructive influence on young people.

⁴² Source: private email from Evgeniia Shermeneva, 27 September 2016.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ In this thesis, I refer to Vyrypaev primarily in his capacity as a trailblazing playwright.

[‘После неоднозначной премьеры "Снов" власти лишили театр Вырыпаева сцены, обвинив режиссера в аморальности и губительном влиянии на молодежь.]⁴⁵

A comparably regressive attitude was displayed by local authorities in Belgorod, a town in southern Russia. The ‘New Stage’ Theatre, attached to the Belgorod State Institute of Drama, hired Oksana Pogrebniak in 2010-1. She staged half a dozen contemporary plays by New Drama dramatists. Subsequently, the theatre did not renew Pogrebniak’s contract; they removed her productions from the repertoire and issued a statement that these works were ‘bad, negative, unenlightened’ [‘плохие, негативные, беспросветные’] (Tagaeva and Artiomova 2011: para. 6).⁴⁶ Pogrebniak was unable to find a new venue for her troupe in Belgorod, although at the time of writing, she and her actors continue to perform in public spaces and supermarket car parks to significantly reduced audiences.

The discursive landscape shifted significantly in this decade. The invention of the term ‘New Drama’ at the start of the 2000s – embodied in the high-profile work of the New Drama Festival between 2002 and 2008 – provided a neat slogan to legitimise experimental work. Unlike in-her-face plays in Britain in the 1990s, a term which was coined by the critic Aleks Sierz,⁴⁷ New Drama was invented and applied as self-identification by the dramatists. In Russia in the 2000s, formally experimental contemporary playwriting became a distinctive phenomenon in the minds of theatre professionals and the theatre-going public. The notion of non-conformist playwrights working outside of repertory theatres polarised critical discourse. But regardless – or perhaps because – of the controversy around its cultural value, this catch-all phrase became mainstream. According to Freedman, it was as early as 2001 that ‘the term “new drama” was coming into vogue in Russia’ (2010: 400). The participation of the Chekhov Moscow Arts as one of the hosting venues for the New Drama Festival, gave the phrase a national platform. This rapid ascent into mainstream discourse led to several epithets including *novodramovsty* [‘новодрамовцы’] and *novodramovskii*

⁴⁵ Source: <http://www.alexandrinsky.ru/aboutfest/archiveparticipants/archiveparticipants_89.html> [accessed 18 July 2016].

⁴⁶ Irina Ignatova became the Drama Institute’s Rektor in 2011 – she was concurrently an elected official of the Town Council with the Pro-Putin United Russia Party. Ignatova explicitly articulated her view that spiritual belief should be an integral part of mainstream education, in a document which she co-authored with a local priest Father Andrei Khvylya-Olinter, who had previously worked in the security services (Tagaeva and Artiomova 2011: para. 23).

⁴⁷ Source: <<http://www.inyerfacetheatre.com/what.html>> [accessed 21 December 2016].

[‘новодрамовский’] – ‘the new drama writers’ and ‘new drama’ (as an adjective), respectively.

The playwrights who had organised their own initiatives have frequently described their sense of being part of a likeminded, professional community. Kristina Matvienko, Artistic Director of the New Drama Festival between 2005 and 2008, has described it this way:

I’m [speaking] as a person inside [the movement, so] [...] maybe I am idealising [it]. [...] We are all friends, as a general rule. [...] [We produced all of the festivals and productions] without a kopeck of money, because we wanted to support each other, because we liked the plays and we felt that this has some sort of future.

[Я человек изнутри и может быть я идеализирую. [...] Мы друг с другом все дружим как правило. [...] Мы делали это без копейки денег потому, что друг друга хотим поддержать потому, что нам нравятся эти пьесы, и нам казалось за этим какое-то будущее.] (Interview with Matvienko 2015)

This community accommodated new members including those from regional cities. In 2002, a few years after Vyrypaev’s theatre company was forcibly closed, he moved to Moscow. There, he collaborated with other experimental theatre-makers and eventually became one of the co-founders of Teatr.doc in 2002 and Praktika in 2005.⁴⁸ Pogrebniak remained in Belgorod but frequently staged plays which had previously premiered in Moscow at the new playwriting studios. Naturally, this community of playwrights had its boundaries. Personal relationships and subjective judgements shaped the dynamics within this informal grouping, as Freedman describes:

[The playwright Nadezhda] Ptushkina [...] was generally considered too commercial and traditional to be part of this nascent community of new Russian dramatists. Other writers were not interested in collective activity or being part of cliques, which is how some detractors viewed the burgeoning movement. (2010: 392, 395)

Active collaboration between playwrights occurred predominantly in Moscow, although it included many individuals, like Vyrypaev and Durnenkov, who had moved to the capital from regional cities.⁴⁹ Cutting-edge playwrights from regional cities felt more

⁴⁸ Source: <http://www.alexandrinsky.ru/aboutfest/archiveparticipants/archiveparticipants_89.html> [accessed 18 July 2016].

⁴⁹ It is striking how many dramatists hailed from regional cities but moved to Moscow to pursue professional opportunities, such as Vyrypaev from Irkutsk, Evgenii Grishkovets from Kemerovo, M. Durnenkov from Togliatti and many others. I have not found a comprehensive account of this phenomenon but it is worth noting that among the many playwrights whom I discuss in this thesis, a minority were born in Moscow.

ambivalent about the notion of a New Drama community. Bogaev, who lives and works in Ekaterinburg,⁵⁰ has stated:

New Drama [...] is [for] young people, teenagers, a social club, a café, [social] problems – that is not appealing to me. It's just not quite my thing.

[Новая драма [...] это – молодые люди, подростки, круг интересов, кафе, проблемы – это мне неинтересно. Это как бы не совсем мое.] (Interview with Bogaev 2015)

Many of the New Drama playwrights are contemporaries of Bogaev, so his suggestion that age is the determining factor appears questionable. The most important factor is one of aesthetics, as I discuss in Chapter Two; while in Chapter Three, I consider the regional variation – the Urals School of Playwriting, which encompasses stylistic (but less commonly formal) innovation by playwrights, was developed in Ekaterinburg, where Bogaev lives and works. In other words, a plethora of distinctions existed in the playwriting community – hierarchical, geographical and aesthetic. To summarise, this decade witnessed the emergence of a dedicated cultural sphere for contemporary playwriting outside the repertory theatres, with their own institutions and dramatists holding the key posts – even if there was a degree of variance between them in their relations to the state and private finance.⁵¹

2008 to 2012

During the Medvedev Thaw, new opportunities arose for non-conformist contemporary playwrights. Medvedev introduced a new narrative around cultural policy, advocating directly for a greater role for experiment in cultural production. On 24 March 2011, he held a public meeting with cultural leaders, where he declared that:

The modernisation of our [country's] life, of our economic foundations, and political system, [...] must be carried out by people who are open to development. It is, as a general rule, those [same] people who also value contemporary art.

[[М]одернизация нашей жизни, экономических устоев, политической системы [...] должна делаться людьми, которые открыты к развитию.

⁵⁰ As well as being a renowned playwright, Oleg Bogaev is Editor of the *Ural* journal (2011-ongoing) in Ekaterinburg.

⁵¹ Some like *Praktika* and *CDR* were City-run, while others such as *Teatr.doc* and *On.Teatr* were private. The former enjoyed greater institutional independence, while the vast majority of private theatres came to depend significantly upon project grants and heavily discounted leases on theatre buildings, provided by the state (Solntseva 2014: para. 2 of 9), as I explore further in Chapter Three.

Это, как правило, люди, которые в том числе воспринимают и современное искусство. ('Vstrecha s deiateliami kul'tury' 2011)

Subsequent to that meeting, the President issued a series of decrees to enact support for formally experimental initiatives, including resources for the Platform Project [Проект «Платформа»] founded and managed by the director Kirill Serebrennikov (who had gained notoriety for staging Sigarev's brutalist work *Plasticine* in 2000, depicting the tragic fate of a young man from the post-Soviet generation to physical and sexual violence). The aim of Platform was to 'offer directors, actors, playwrights, choreographers and composers a space and the possibility for experimentation, for work at the cross-roads of different artistic disciplines' [*предоставить режиссерам, актерам, драматургам, хореографам, композиторам площадку и возможности для поиска, для работы на пересечении разных направлений искусства*]⁵² – in other words, an experimentation of genres and artforms. It is worth noting that the presidential administration led this initiative. Apfel'baum commented that the meeting in 2011 was organised 'without the participation of the Ministry of Culture; we only found out about it from the TV [broadcast]' [*без участия министерства культуры, даже мы об этом узнали по телевизору*] (Interview with Apfel'baum 2015). By her view, this policy was flawed, not in its design *per se*, but because it was organised 'from above'⁵³ [*с самого верха*] (Ibid.), which meant that it was only 'a trend' [*тренд*] (Ibid.). Although progressive in its support of experimental theatre-makers, this policy was dependent upon the leadership's continued patronage.

At the same meeting, Medvedev stated that 'I hope that the current Moscow leadership will hear us' [*надеюсь, что нынешнее московское руководство нас услышит в этом плане*] ('Vstrecha s deiateliami kul'tury' 2011). Subsequently, and presumably because the City authorities did indeed 'hear' the President, Sergei Kapkov was appointed to lead Moscow's Department of Culture in 2011 (in position until 2015). His policies represented an apex of liberalisation – designed to co-opt the cultural elites, as I discuss below – with another wave of highly progressive appointments, at half a dozen institutions. The 'hipster-minister' (as he came to be known popularly) appointed Serebrennikov to lead the Gogol Theatre from January 2013 which was rebranded 'the

⁵² Source: website of the Vinzavod Centre for Contemporary Art which hosted *Platform* in 2013-4 <<http://www.vinzavod.ru/events/?id=407>> [accessed 17 June 2016].

⁵³ Literally, 'from the very top'.

Gogol Centre'. The name was suggestive of a multi-form arts centre – a stark contrast to the more rigid programming approach of most repertory theatres. As soon as the appointment was made public, the new artistic director articulated his position in media interviews:

[Serebrennikov] confirmed that he intends to reform the theatre in a fundamental way. The director is planning to turn it into an open stage [...] All the evidence suggests that Kirill Serebrennikov is receiving a carte-blanche from the City authorities.

[Серебренников подтвердил, что намеревается коренным образом реформировать театр. Режиссер собирается сделать его открытой площадкой.] [...] Судя по всему, Кирилл Серебренников получает от городских властей карт-бланш.] (Dolzhanskii 2012: para. 6, 7 of 7)

The significance of this appointment of a provocative, formally experimental director is also revealed in the following citation, where Serebrennikov describes his mission and target audience:

The transformation of theatre into a contemporary artform [...] [must be] connected not only with theatre, however strange that may be, but also with the “physiology of spectatorship” and with new media which has significantly changed that physiology. The current generation of young people, which actively use new technologies, gadgets, social networks, – it is totally different to the generation of their theatre-going parents.

[Трансформация театра в современное искусство — это [...] связано не только с театром, как ни странно, а еще и с «физиологией смотрения» и с новыми медиа, которые эту физиологию сильно изменили. Нынешнее поколение молодых людей, которые активно пользуются новыми технологиями, гаджетами, социальными сетями, — оно совсем иное, чем поколение их родителей-театралов.] (2013: para. 1 of 10)

For the first time, cultural policy accommodated the ‘internet generation’. Among those who supported cutting-edge theatre-making, a number of commentators suggested that this policy was an attempt by officials to co-opt intellectuals; to encourage those who objected ideologically to the country’s leadership to express themselves artistically, rather than through the burgeoning public protests in 2011 and 2012. Freedman articulated the following rhetorical question in a lecture about political theatre in Russia:

Is this [appointment] a smokescreen? Is [the Gogol Centre designed] to undermine political theatre? [During the protests in 2012] I’ve heard this comment made by Serebrennikov – “let’s get people off the street and into theatres”. (‘To Change or Not to Change’ 2013)

This conjecture is plausible, not least because it mirrors the state's policy on permitting a small number of media outlets which cater for the intelligentsia (see p. 44). Whether by design or not, this liberalisation provided a relatively limited benefit to non-conformist playwrights. The appointments tended to favour auteur-directors such as Serebrennikov, and in 2013, Boris Iukhananov at the Stanislavsky ElectroTheatre as well as Klim at the CDR. These cutting-edge directors predominantly tended towards a reiteration of the normative programming at repertory theatres, which is to say revivals and adaptations. By way of illustration, in September 2015, only two of the sixteen productions in the repertoire at the Gogol Centre were plays by living dramatists: one was specially commissioned by that theatre and one was a revival.⁵⁴ Even so, this liberalisation increased the representation of New Drama playwrights at medium-sized theatres, not least because the artistic directors were more likely to hire them for adaptations, as well as occasionally commissioning original works.

The important point is that the policy of liberalisation – which began under Putin but was expanded under Medvedev – drove a wedge between theatre-makers. Irreparable divisions emerged among some key figures of this community. The first ideological fracture occurred in 2008. Boyakov and Mikhail Ugarov, Artistic Director of Teatr.doc (2002-ongoing), announced that their companies would no longer co-produce the New Drama Festival. They announced the formal closure of this festival (Burmistrova 2009). Symbolically, this event was of enormous significance not only because it bore the name associated with non-conformist contemporary playwriting, New Drama, but also because it was the most prominent initiative to be organised across institutional boundaries. The two – and initially three – co-producers had each contributed their own distinctive aesthetic to their festival. Matvienko has suggested that the rift was caused around the level of involvement by the presidential administration in a planned joint project, the *Tekstura* Festival [*Текстура*] in Perm (Interview with Matvienko 2015). The authorities funded *Tekstura* but the objection by Ugarov was not related to the perceived risk of censorship. According to Matvienko, she and Ugarov considered *Tekstura* to represent 'Moscow expansionism, a project laid down from above'

⁵⁴ Mikhail Durnenkov's *The Lake* (original title: *Nine*) was commissioned by the Gogol Centre. Nina Belenitskaia's *Pavlik is My God* was first produced by the Joseph Beuys Theatre Company in 2009. The categories of the other productions were: three contemporary international plays; eight adaptations of Russian-language non-dramatic work (including films); two adaptations of international works; one revival of an international work.

[‘московск[ая] экспанси[я], проект[...] сверху спущенн[ый]’] (Ibid.). These disagreements did not stop the theatre-makers, on both sides of the ideological divide – ‘permitted dissidence’ versus ‘dissidence’ – from continuing to produce work. However, the impact of contemporary playwriting on the wider theatre landscape diminished. Rather than a broader community of playwrights advocating for experimental drama, initiatives were conducted project-by-project. For those who accepted state funding, this tended to be perceived as an inevitable outcome. Boyakov posited that this festival was no longer serving a useful function as an institution: “‘New Drama’ has grown, becoming a large space, firmly entering a [broader] cultural context’ [‘«Новая драма» разрослась, став большим пространством, прочно войдя в культурный контекст’] (Burmistrova 2009a: para. 17). Others suggest the opposite. The repertory theatres had adopted elements of New Drama, while marginalising the most experimental work. The critic Elena Koval’skaia has characterised the situation in the following way:

Fifteen years ago [...] I thought that it’s not long now until contemporary plays will come out onto the main stage of regional theatres and become the staple of Russian theatre. Well, that was an illusion [...] [and] at some point, I understood: to hell with it, it doesn’t matter. Well, if it’s avant-garde, then by definition it can’t be [...] [m]ainstream.

[15 лет назад [...] мне казалось, что еще немного - и современная пьеса выйдет на большую сцену региональных театров и станет хлебом русского театра. Ну, это была иллюзия [...] [] в какой-то момент я поняла: ну и бог с ним, ничего страшного. Ведь если это авангард, то он по определению не может быть [...] [м]ейнстримом[.] (Interview with Zaslavskii 2015)

It is beyond doubt that formally experimental playwrights have succeeded in receiving high-profile productions. Yet, the point seems to be precisely that the sense of a shared ideological mission has largely dissipated. However, the more significant obstacle to the progress of contemporary playwriting appeared as a result of the tide of ultra-conservatism which swept across Russia after 2012.

The sea change in cultural policy from 2012 to 2014

A watershed in cultural policy occurred two years into Putin’s return to the presidency. In 2014, the presidential administration published a document entitled ‘The Foundations of the State’s Cultural Politics’ [‘Основы государственной культурной политики’] (‘Osnovy gosudarstvennoi’ 2014). This conception of cultural policy represented a radical

departure from the modernising ethos which had preceded it. This white paper invoked culture as ‘the main instrument for transferring and reproducing Russian society’s traditional moral values’ [*главного инструмента передачи и воспроизводства традиционных нравственных ценностей российского общества*] (Ibid.). The definition of traditional values included both abstract virtues and an explicit position on the citizen’s relationship to the state:

These are, above all, honesty, truthfulness, obedience to the law, love of the Motherland, disinterestedness, a rejection of violence and theft, of slander and envy, family values, virtue, kindness, and charity, fidelity to one’s word, reverence for one’s elders, respect for hard work.

[Это, прежде всего, честность, правдивость, законопослушание, любовь к Родине, бескорыстие, неприятие насилия, воровства, клеветы и зависти, семейные ценности, целомудрие, добросердечие и милосердие, верность слову, почитание старших, уважение честного труда.] (Ibid.)

In this conception, the authorities re-imagined culture as a mechanism for reinforcing patriotism (‘love of one’s Motherland’) and discouraging dissidence (‘obedience to the law’). ‘The Foundations’ also outlined the need to ‘preserve our civic and cultural (mental) unity’ [*сохранить наше гражданское и культурное (ментальное) единство*]. In other words, the authorities no longer viewed plurality in the arts as a positive attribute.⁵⁵ Formally, ‘The Foundations’ did not come into effect immediately because it was a policy paper without legal status. By 2015, the Russian Parliament embarked on a process to draft a law based on this white paper.⁵⁶ Yet, in real terms, the new ethos was already informing funding decisions. Apfel’baum has explained that ‘the [Culture Minister] Medinskii openly says [...] that cultural figures who are openly stepping forwards with criticism [of the authorities] [...] will not receive public funding’ [*Министр говорит открыто [...] что не могут получать бюджетные деньги те деятели культуры которые [...] открыто выступают с критикой.*]’ (Interview with Apfel’baum 2015). In the same interview, she provided illustrations including Serebrennikov’s Platform Project. Apfel’baum described how the state deployed indirect methods to close this project:

⁵⁵ It is worth noting that, in 2012, an emphasis on ideological uniformity emerged in (then) Prime Minister Putin’s rhetoric in relation to Russia as a multi-ethnic state. He declared, in a speech which was reproduced in several news outlets, that the diverse nationalities living in the Russian Federation should be bound by a ‘shared culture and shared values’ [*общ[ая] культур[а] и общи[е] ценност[и]*] (Putin 2012: para: 25). In other words, within two years, a set of political imperatives translated into cultural politics.

⁵⁶ Source: <<http://council.gov.ru/activity/documents/56912/>> [accessed 20 June 2016].

The money was planned for three years. In theory, [the authorities] could have extended it, but they didn't. They did not say "we are closing [your project]" – [they said] "[...] you had money for three years but you worked [hard and achieved everything we hoped for]".

[Денги были запланированы на три года. В принципе они могли продлить, но не продлили. Не сказали «мы вас закрываем» [...] «был на три года, Вы поработали [...]».] (Ibid.)

Similarly, the previous administration had developed plans to build five high-profile centres to promote cutting-edge contemporary culture. Instead, the authorities created "traditional centres of culture" – a totally different direction [from the original plan] [*"традиционные центры культуры, совершенно другой направленностью"*] (Interview with Apfel'baum 2015). Funding decisions were not the only indicator of 'The Foundation' coming into effect. On 1 July 2014, the President enacted the 'Law on *Mat*' (as it became known colloquially), which prohibited obscenities in live performances, film and literature. This legislation represented the first legal act of censorship against the arts in post-1991 Russia. Furthermore, half a dozen other pieces of legislation were passed since 2012, whose intended target was not specifically cultural production – but which could theoretically be applied to theatres. By way of illustration, the 2012 'Law on Treason' or the 2013 'Law against Offending Religious Feeling' appear to relate solely to civil society. At the time of writing, there has been one failed attempt to prosecute a repertory theatre under this law. In 2015, a Russian Orthodox cleric Tikhon filed a complaint to the FSB, on the basis of an alleged offense to religious feeling from an erotically-suggestive production of Wagner's *Tannhäuser* at the Novosibirsk Opera House. The local judge rejected the case. However, the Ministry of Culture requested that this theatre's *Direktor* Boris Mezdrich remove the controversial production from the repertoire and apologise for programming it ('Novyi direktor snial' 2015). When he refused to do so, the authorities removed Mezdrich from his post. The *direktor's* successor, Vladimir Kekhman, cancelled the opera. This approach was more insidious, a form of post-fact censorship – a stark reminder of the far-reaching authority of the Ministry of Culture over state-funded theatres. Effectively, the Ministry acted as a proxy for the 2013 'Law against Offending Religious Feeling', in spite of the legal judgement that had dismissed the case.

The sense of division among the community of experimental playwrights increased further in tandem with these regressive developments in cultural policy. The public

protests against Putin in 2011 and 2012 had encouraged many oppositional theatre-makers, including those working in repertory theatres, to openly articulate their political position, on social media or through participation in demonstrations. Conversely, several dozen of the most prominent cultural figures made publicity videos supporting Putin's re-election campaign. According to Freedman, 'Russia's cultural community experienced [...] a schism' (2014: para. 1 of 16). He also described the state's relationship to the videos in the following way:

The videos were highly controversial. [...] Putin supporters [included] [...] popular actors Yevgeny Mironov and Chulpan Khamatova. Khamatova's participation was clouded by nagging rumors that she was forced to support Putin under a threat that, should she refuse, the former and future president would cancel funding for a children's hospital that she runs. (2016: 25)

These public displays of political affiliation further polarised playwrights and producers. By 2012, the cultural authorities had created an environment whereby theatre-makers were perceived as being either 'with' or 'against' official policy. These ideological fault lines were reiterated in 2014 when Russia invaded Crimea: artists were invited to sign a letter of support for the 'Russian President's position in Crimea and Ukraine' [*позиции Президента Российской Федерации по Украине и Крыму*] ('Bolee 80 deiatelei kul'tury' 2014). The Ministry of Culture displayed this letter on its website.⁵⁷ Apfel'baum described the role of the cultural authorities in the following terms:

I took part in the call-around to those people, in as much as it was an official order that these signatures should appear. [...] We have a public holiday on the eighth of March [...], it was on the tenth of March that we began to call around. [...] It was a really neutral text [...] Everyone thought there will be a referendum, the inhabitants of Crimea will have their say [...] That's why many [theatre-makers] willingly [signed] [...], it wasn't that anybody was forced [to sign][.]

[Я тоже участвовала в обзвон этих людей, поскольку это было указание чтобы эти подписи появились. [...] Восьмое марта у нас праздник. [...] Это было 10-ого марта [...] мы занимались обзвоном. [...] Такой нейтральный текст [...]. [...] Все думали будет когда-то референдум, жители Крыма выскажутся. [...] Поэтому очень многие искренне [...], нету того что кого-то заставили.] (Interview with Apfel'baum 2015)

⁵⁷ Source: <<http://mkrf.ru/press-tsentr/novosti/ministerstvo/deyateli-kultury-rossii-v-podderzhku-pozitsii-prezidenta-po-ukraine-i-krymu?code=deyateli-kultury-rossii-v-podderzhku-pozitsii-prezidenta-po-ukraine-i-krymu&print=Y>> [accessed 21 December 2016].

The ideological axis in Crimea and Ukraine was not domestic politics but rather geopolitics. Those supporting the government argued that Russia was defending itself against western imperial aggression. Boyakov stated publicly:

Do you really not see that Ukraine is becoming a hostage of America? Just like Belgrade or Iraq. Do you really not see that aggression is coming from the West, not Russia? I see it and so I signed [the letter]. (cited in Freedman 2014: para. 12 of 16)

Ideological opponents considered Russia to be the aggressor, embodying a neo-colonialist approach towards the former Soviet states. Many cultural leaders who did not support Russia's territorial and military interventions signed open letters to the opposite effect. Freedman has characterised this episode in 2014 as a 'war of signatures' (2016: 30). What may be stated beyond doubt is that, from 2012, the state enlisted members of the creative intelligentsia – including critics⁵⁸ – to advocate for its policies, in order to legitimise its actions in public discourse.

By 2014, state agencies began to equate the notion of 'experimental' theatre-making with subversive political activism in the public arena. The state-funded weekly newspaper *Kul'tura* conducted what it called 'research' [*изыскание*] ('Minkul't preduprezhdaet' 2014: para. 3) into the issue of contemporary playwriting (without providing any explanation about its methodology). The conclusion was unambiguous:

The results of our research are shocking. Public resources have been wasted on *chernukha* [gritty realism], *mat* [obscenities], pornography and talentless shamanism masquerading as innovation.

[*Результаты наших изысканий шокируют. Бюджетные средства тратились на чернуху, матерщину, порнографию, на бездарное шаманство под вывеской инноваций.*] (Ibid.)

This editorial (no author is named) described the detrimental moral qualities of around thirty plays and productions which had received state funding, directly or indirectly. The list included works by Klavdiev (his *Slow Sword*), Maksim Kurochkin, Kolyada, Ugarov and other key figures from the experimental playwriting movement. Around the same time, the cultural authorities made their own position on this issue clear. The deputy Minister of Culture Vladimir Aristakhov issued a decree appointing new personnel in his organisation's 'expert committees'. *Kul'tura* described the importance of these

⁵⁸ Matvienko has observed that, since 2012, there has been a 'move towards a prohibitory function of criticism' (2016: 86), reminiscent of the Soviet era when reviewers were used as 'instruments' (Ibid.: 85) of the state.

committees in the following way: ‘Who – and which projects – receive financial support depends on these experts’ [*‘От экспертов зависит, кто и на какие проекты получит финансовую поддержку’*] (‘Minkul’t preduprezhdaet’ 2014: para. 1). The most progressive figures such as Vyrypaev, Koval’skaia and Rudnev were de-selected (I have not been able to elicit which year they were appointed). To a significant extent, their replacements were cultural figures who had openly positioned themselves as ideological allies to the authorities such as film director Pavel Lungin, who had signed the state’s letter about a referendum in Crimea (Freedman 2016: 30). Revealingly, one of the appointments to the newly-constituted expert committees was Elena lampol’skaia, the editor of *Kul’tura* (2011-ongoing) who published the editorial cited above. Her inclusion strongly suggests a tacit approval for *Kul’tura*’s condemnation of the leading experimental dramatic work. Furthermore, by including lampol’skaia as an expert, the Ministry of Culture was effectively incorporating *Kul’tura*’s editorial position into its funding decisions. At the time of writing, a further development has witnessed the arrest of the director Kirill Serebrennikov – first in police detention and then within days, transmuted to a home-arrest – on the basis of alleged embezzlement of state funds. Almost thirty nationally prominent theatre-makers signed an open letter in support of this director, including Tabakov and Kolyada. Most Russian directors and dramatists interpreted this arrest as an indication that the state, having forced the media, business and civil society into subservience in the 2000s, was symbolically dictating new parameters to artists: namely, to conform to the new ethos of conservative traditionalism in the cultural sphere. Freedman characterised this development as a ‘show trial’ (2017a). The ‘Serebrennikov affair’ attracted attention in the international media – particularly in Britain, the USA and continental Europe. It may be supposed that, in the near future, an almost total ideological alignment will be enacted between state-funded theatres and the government’s cultural policy, leaving the Russian ‘fringe’ even more demarcated as a locus of dissidence.

Conclusion

In the late 1990s and 2000s, Russia experienced a development comparable to the UK in 1947, when the Edinburgh fringe was born as an alternative to the Edinburgh Festival. A confluence of factors – such as an awareness of the economic and social injustices of the post-Soviet era, the rigidity of normative theatrical practice at the repertory theatres

and the culturally diverse outlook of the emerging middle-classes in the 2000s – gave rise to the conditions in which theatre-makers felt the need (and had sufficient opportunity) to pioneer a Russian ‘fringe’. As with its British counterpart, a range of aesthetics, approaches and even institutional ‘types’ co-exist in this newly-founded independent sector – from the ‘open stage’ approach of Teatr.doc to the impresario-producing model of the Kolyada-Theatre. In turns, these accommodate various ideological positions ranging from overt political dissidence (Teatr.doc) to ‘permitted dissidence’ (Kolyada-Theatre). The period after 2010 has seen a further flowering of initiatives by a younger generation of theatre-makers, building upon the first wave of playwright-run venues, with touring companies such as Pop-up Theatre.⁵⁹ This affords a comparison with the aesthetically and ideologically diverse touring companies in Britain in the 1970s (Lichtenfels and Hunter 2002: 32), which developed out of the five wave of fringe companies. Just as the British independent sector came under financial pressure from Thatcherite economic policies in the 1980s, which forced theatre-makers to adopt conservative building-based models of theatrical production, the Russian independent sector has come under pressure from state policies within fifteen years of its emergence. By 2014, it was clear that the cultural authorities in Russia were ceasing to provide material support for non-conformist playwriting – by no longer offering grants to the ‘open space’ initiatives which fostered the most radical aesthetic innovations or politically-oriented experimentations, such as the Platform Project and Teatr.doc. Restrictions did not only come in the form of funding cuts. The first censorship law was introduced in 2014 – administering fines to swearing in live performance, film and literature. This restriction directly influenced what could be represented on stage and it was most likely to disadvantage ‘political’ artforms. For example, verbatim texts – depicting socio-economically marginalised groups – tend to employ extensive profanities in order to accentuate the ‘working class’ origins of their characters. Yet, the state did not limit itself to a single, prohibitive law. It embarked upon a reconceptualization of the

⁵⁹ Pop-up Theatre was initiated as a touring company in 2015 by Volkostrelov along with director Semen Aleksandrovskii (both graduated from Dodin’s directing course at the St. Petersburg State Dramatic Academy in 2007), in order to shift the locus of performance into non-traditional theatre spaces. The latter explained that the benefit of this approach was to attract audiences, who did not normally attend theatres, to his productions (Aleksandrovskii in Nigmatullin 2015: para. 18). The flagship production of the Pop-up Theatre was *Fuel* by Evgenii Kazachkov in 2015. The play consisted of a documentary monologue about David Ian, a real-life technology entrepreneur as well as an initiator of flash-mobs in Russia. This programming choice indicates an inclination towards narratives of civic engagement – flash-mobs are a subversive but usually not highly politicised approach to challenging the status quo.

cultural sphere as a force for ideological conformism, by promoting the civic values of patriotism and subservience to the state – with a presidential white paper published also in 2014. While the Russian government’s intentions to curb culture’s radical potential to address social injustice and broader political questions, was exceptional in the severity of its anti-democratic ethos, nevertheless it belonged to a global trend, as characterised by the scholars Maria Delgado and Caridad Svich in the introduction to their edited volume:

There are fewer forums for oppositional voices to be heard in a global economy that is eradicating difference in favour of a McSociety built in celebration of the common dollar[.] (Delgado and Svich 2002: 7)

With its varying levels of institutional independence and collectively-run practice, the Russian ‘fringe’ resists a global shift, being orchestrated by the ultra-right sections of the global political elites, towards ultra-conservative conformism. What remains uncertain is the extent to which a Russian ‘fringe’ will survive – and if it does survive, whether it will retain its institutional independence. The signs appear promising, at least for a reduced but resilient independent sector: post-Soviet generations have already embarked on a journey to identify and create innovative institutional ‘solutions’ to continue working, whether through financial crowd-funding at Teatr.doc (see p. 177), by creating formal association with other small-scale likeminded troupes⁶⁰ or through European touring (Solntseva 2014: para. 9 of 9). These mechanisms serve to identify and secure funding from non-state, non-commercial sources, as a guarantee of institutional independence.

Can dramas and new works from this fringe be translated? Can they offer relevant aesthetic forms and meaningful experiences to British audiences? The *de facto* position of British theatres is that new Russian plays with ‘universal’ messages – which depict socio-political realities in broadbrush strokes and avoid an abundance of culturally-specific references – will translate most effectively into another culture. This may be correct within the existing paradigms of theatrical production in the UK – but it overlooks precisely those works which are the most radical interventions in the Russian cultural context. The Russian ‘fringe’ emerged precisely to offer active resistance to normative theatrical practice by the repertory theatres and socio-political injustices under Putin’s leadership. The obstacle to their translation may not, however, be

⁶⁰ One such initiative is an association between small-scale ‘street theatre’ companies as a forum for knowledge-exchange: <<http://streettheatre.ru/index.html>> [accessed 5 August 2017]

impossible to overcome, but the culture-specific theatrical practices or textual references may require a broader act of translation. In this chapter, I am advocating for translation to take account of the ‘site of theatre-making’ – which is a significant co-author of the theatrical event. The urban positioning and venue itself can offer clues to the broader ideological position of the play, thereby ‘filling in the gaps’ which are left by a textual transfer between languages. This brings me back full circle to my initial question about whether institutional factors themselves – embedded in the dramas – can be ‘translated’ to new cultural contexts. In the conclusion of each chapter, I connect my theoretical position about translation to my own practice with one or more illustrations. I now consider how the ‘site of performance’ might be translated. As Ramin Gray, Artistic Director of ATC (2010-ongoing), has explained this aspect of cultural transfer:

When you transplant a play [between cultures], it’s like taking a plant dug into soil: you have to put it here [in the UK] into a hothouse. [ATC’s production of Vyrypaev’s *Illusions* in 2012] ended up in a corridor in Shoreditch [in the makeshift basement room of the Shoreditch Townhall]. That’s all we could find... and oddly it felt like being in Moscow in the same conditions: small, furtive, secretive. (Interview with Gray 2016)

As Gray implies, British theatres must consider translation as a process of transferring the material experience on offer as well as simply the playtexts – if they are to expand the range of foreign-language dramas reaching British stages. This process need not be restrictive: it still necessitates interpretation by the British creative team. Gray perceives Praktika Theatre in Moscow – where *Illusions* had its premiere – as ‘small, furtive, secretive’. He was responding to its subversive ideological dissidence – perhaps particularly since Vyrypaev took over as artistic director in 2013. As recounted to me by an actor in the troupe, Caz Liske, Vyrypaev emphasised that his theatre’s mission was to facilitate an anti-materialist, spiritual enlightenment through the pursuit of healthy body and mind. Spiritual workshops, influenced by the American philosopher-spiritualist Ken Wilbur,⁶¹ run alongside yoga classes and the company’s productions. Yet, Praktika is comparatively well-funded with its multiple corporate funders including Raiffeissen

⁶¹ A longer citation helps to illustrate Wilbur’s ideas. According to Caz Liske: ‘Since Vanya [Vyrypaev]’s taken over, some of his plans involve making Praktika more than just a theatre, in the traditional sense. [...] That could be realised through masterclasses, everything from his “Integral” course. [...] Vanya’s very heavily influenced by this American philosopher and writer Ken Wilbur. [Wilbur has this] idea that encompasses everything in the universe. It’s kind of a new map for human development. [...] His method is – people are changing, they’re evolving externally and internally and it’s a process we can be involved in’ (Interview with Liske 2013).

Bank⁶² – and it exudes a ‘hipster’ ethos, evidenced in its cobbled courtyard in front of the theatre and café (in stark contrast to Teatr.doc, for instance, which has no corporate funders, no architect-designed public area and no café). Liske was unambiguous about this wilful positioning of Praktika as a conduit between innovative theatre-making and a broader national cultural discourse. He referred to this venue as having a ‘brand name attached to it already’ (Interview with Liske 2013) and as being ‘almost like a consumer product’ (Ibid).⁶³ So, Praktika aims to influence mainstream Russian ‘taste’ through gentle subversion: it relies on commercial funding (being rewarded by rich financiers who also sit on the Board),⁶⁴ while also implicitly criticising the commercialisation of theatre. The same subversive stance could resonate at large-scale British theatres (not only the small-scale ensembles) which find themselves in the paradoxical position of criticising the commercialisation of public life, while relying on private funding and the oversight of the corporate sector. In other words, Vyrypaev’s plays – or works by other dramatists being produced by Praktika – could be programmed in larger venues, using scenography to remind British audiences of their ‘furtive’ urban positioning and mission in Russia, in relation to the psychological realism of the repertory theatres. Perhaps large-scale British theatres may be more willing to programme contemporary Russian dramas, if they appreciate that their ideological conundrums resemble those faced by the Russian producers and dramatists. If not, the small-scale troupes, like ATC and Sputnik, may need to consider whether contemporary foreign-language drama has ‘hit a glass ceiling’ in the UK – and seek ways of becoming more artistically resourceful. For instance, could street theatre be used to translate the ‘site’ of performance, of certain new Russian plays, in order to reach non-specialist audiences? Alternatively, could translations of artistic medium be employed to shift the conventional locus of foreign-language texts in the UK? The latter approach is one which I will be attempting after

⁶² Source: <<http://www.praktikatheatre.ru/team>> [accessed 5 August 2017].

⁶³ Liske’s citation is worth including in full for Russian studies scholars, to identify Boyakov as having played the critical role in this process, prior to Vyrypaev’s leadership: ‘It’s the only theatre where new texts, stuff that’s usually underground, off the radar, becomes not just hip but even mainstream. All of that happened because Boyakov managed to bring into his theatres all these different types of audience members from students to the regulars, babushkis, to people like Abramovich who has been to Praktika, a lot of very very wealthy businessmen come in who maybe aren’t there because they’re following the development of Russian playwriting, [but] because it’s part of the new mainstream’ (Interview with Liske 2013).

⁶⁴ The Board includes the oligarch Aleksander Mamut, whom *The Telegraph* has described as ‘probably the most famous oligarch you have never heard of’. Source: <<http://www.praktikatheatre.ru/team>> [accessed 11 August 2017]; <<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/finance/newsbysector/epic/hmv/8303237/Alexander-Mamut-profile-probably-the-most-powerful-oligarch-you-have-never-heard-of.html>> [accessed 11 August 2017].

the completion of this doctoral project, as I now describe. At a conference organised by the AHRC-funded project Creative Multilingualism on 21 January 2017, I witnessed a performance and post-show talk by three grime artists, who were invited guests.⁶⁵ As I watched them perform, it struck me that an artistic and ideological affinity exists between these musicians' performance style and Vyrypaev's playwriting aesthetic. For example, in *Oxygen* (see p. 11), the text is presented within a musical frame of reference, as a series of musical 'compositions',⁶⁶ with couplets and (sometimes repeated) choruses. Furthermore, Vyrypaev has emphasised the importance of the 'liveness' of the event: its dialogic communication with the audience. The only line of stage direction which proceeds the text of *Oxygen* reads 'This [play] is an ACT, which must be created [in the] here and now' [*Это АКТ, который нужно производить здесь и сейчас*].⁶⁷ The re-situating of *Oxygen* from a theatrical stage to a club – where most grime performances take place, may be a more evocative and perhaps even 'faithful' act of translation, than merely to render the playtext into English and produce it as conventional 'fourth wall' realist drama. A translation between artistic mediums – from 'theatre proper' to grime – would capture the underlying ideology of the text: a non-denominational spirituality. Besides Praktika's spiritual ethos or orientation, as mentioned above, *Oxygen* is replete with religious references. The play ends with a film director claiming to be Jesus Christ: a satirical depiction of the spiritual bankruptcy of artists.⁶⁸ This anti-materialist 'provocation' is echoed by the philosophical beliefs of the grime artists, whose lyrics was saturated with illusions to spirituality and religion, in particular the St. James' Bible. My impression – which I will be further investigating – was that their attitude towards organised religion was distrustful, mocking the paternalistic tone of the Bible, while maintaining individual, non-denominational spiritual beliefs. In September 2017, I will begin a part-time position as Postdoctoral Research Assistant at Oxford University. In my interview, I proposed a creative collaboration (which was accepted): I would invite these (or other) grime artists to adapt *Oxygen* into a British cultural context. The fact that this idea emerged outside of the

⁶⁵ Their names were not recorded in the programme – because (as I understand it) they were invited as 'last-minute' speakers. Grime is a British-born form of music with roots in US hip-hop; it focuses largely on narratives about urban culture and is most commonly performed by young, black men. Source: <<http://uk.complex.com/music/2016/06/hip-hop-dancehall-breaking-down-the-origins-of-grime>> [accessed 6 August 2017]

⁶⁶ Source: <http://modernlib.ru/books/viripaev_ivan_aleksandrovich/kislorod/read> [6 August 2017].

⁶⁷ Source: <http://modernlib.ru/books/viripaev_ivan_aleksandrovich/kislorod/read> [6 August 2017].

⁶⁸ Source: <http://modernlib.ru/books/viripaev_ivan_aleksandrovich/kislorod/read> [6 August 2017].

field of theatrical production, within an academic setting, also serves as a useful connection to my through-line argument. The institutional rigidity at most British theatres creates a bias towards the repetition of known conventions. Circumventing those institutions – or at least forming partnerships between universities (or other non-theatrical institutions) and theatres – is one method of disrupting normative practice. In the current homogenising sphere of cultural production, idiosyncratic institutional set-ups may be necessary to ‘translate’ new Russian plays, in a way which responds more fully to the properties of the ‘original’ work. By engaging with the original ‘sites of performance’, British theatres could begin to facilitate broader acts of translations – not only of the linguistic text but also of ‘the material theatre’ which encompasses the ‘total’ theatre experience.

CHAPTER TWO THE ADVENT OF POSTDRAMATIC PLAYWRITING IN RUSSIA

Introduction

In this chapter, I consider how the institutional fluidity of the independent studio theatres in the Russian ‘fringe’ translated into the aesthetic field. I argue that, building upon the experiments of a number of auteur-directors in the early 1990s, playwrights embarked upon a radical reconceptualization of dramatic writing in order to depart entirely from the core precepts of Soviet-era theatre-making – particularly, mimetic representation. I depict the trajectory of Russian dramatists – through cross-cultural influences such as Hollywood arthouse cinema, in-yer-face playwriting and verbatim – enabling them to forge new aesthetic practices with the dominant practice being hypernaturalism, which came to prevail in contemporary non-conformist playwriting in Russia. Through these formally innovative experiments, post-Soviet playwrights positioned themselves in opposition to the dominant conventions of Soviet-era psychological realism and its implicit ideological universalism. Hyper-naturalism ruptured the fictional ‘fourth wall’ and its attendant principles of mimetic realism. While playwrights created a diverse range of non-conformist aesthetics, different ideological positions existed among theatre-makers. I discuss how these dynamics played out in aesthetic terms – nevertheless, finding a shared ideal of the text as ‘performative object’ inviting the director to forge a postdramatic stage language. I conclude by considering the rigid normative practice of British theatres – which have tended to perceive texts as ‘literary objects’ in the text-centric British tradition. I propose a different paradigm – whereby translation is perceived in broader terms, incorporating directing practice which might respond to the postdramatic ‘invitation’ implicit in non-conformist Russian playwriting.

The birth of a post-Soviet aesthetic

The sea change in Russia’s socio-political landscape in 1991 led to a paradigm shift in all aspects of theatrical production, including the status and purpose of contemporary playwriting. Theatre had maintained a particular cultural significance in the Soviet period, which the theatre critic Kristina Matvienko has articulated in the following way:

After the abolition of the church in 1917 [at the start of the Soviet period], theatre (later joined by cinema) acquired the function of an ideological platform in keeping with Lenin’s idea of propaganda. (2016: 89)

This propagandizing value of theatre was maintained throughout the Soviet period, albeit with significant attempts to permit a greater degree of ideological diversity during *perestroika*. Theatre's ideological importance to the authorities led to a situation where, according to the critic Marina Davydova, 'Russia in the epoch of late socialism was not a literature-centric but a theatre-centric country' (2005: 14). The need to circumvent censorship led to the use of allegory by playwrights and directors. This allegorical approach was a potent method of communicating with audiences, whose role was to decode and interpret the hidden messages. As a consequence, subversive dramas existed within the broader landscape of the propagandizing theatre, contingent upon shifts in political direction as well as the culture of top-down, personality-based decision-making in the Soviet era.¹

Russia's dramatic transformation into a capitalist society after 1991 precipitated the need for new forms of theatrical expression. After censorship was dismantled in 1990, allegory came to seem outdated and lacking its subversive potential for communicating with audiences. In fact, the most daring dramatists and directors had already started to experiment with literal, non-allegorical depictions of contemporary social realities in the late Soviet period.² This tendency would continue after 1991. Yet, the country's trajectory into 'shock therapy' and economic collapse required theatre to develop 'another method of relating to the public, another type of theatre as yet unnamed' (Smeliansky 1999b: 386). In the 1990s, there was a first 'wave' of experiments by a

¹ Smeliansky depicts how *Alone with Everyone* by Alexander Gelman (born 1933) was banned by the censor in 1981, but the director Oleg Efremov rehearsed the production regardless. When the Minister of Culture Piotr Demichev attended a full run of the play, he decided to allow the production since it had, according to the theatre historian, 'penetrated [...] [the] government minister's soul' (1999a: 81). Whatever the reason, it is further evidence of the top-down nature of decision-making whereby a minister may overrule a subordinate employee (i.e. the individual censor who banned the playtext). It may also demonstrate the role of pathos and sentimentality of psychological realism – as styles of directing and acting – in mitigating against (or 'softening') political content, a further reminder of why post-Soviet dramatists were searching for innovative forms which disrupted the Soviet-era conventions.

² In the period of de-Stalinization and political Thaw (after Stalin's death in 1953), and through the late Soviet period, playwrights and directors incrementally challenged this prevailing ethos of Soviet theatre – as the theatre historian Anatoly Smeliansky depicts in his colourful account of Soviet and post-Soviet theatre-making (1999a). He provides the example of Gelman's *Alone with Everyone* which 'dispensed with the Aesopic language that had enabled his dangerous tales to get past the censor' (1999a: 81). Revealingly, in spite of Smeliansky's suggestion that Gelman's play did not use allegorical or Aesopic language, he also characterises the central action – where a worker loses a hand – as being 'a metaphor for the impending disaster [of Chernobyl nuclear meltdown in 1986]' (Ibid.), as if the dramatist had foreseen the consequences of the socio-economic decline of the Soviet Union. Later in this chapter, I draw a distinction between dramatic writing which contains a central metaphor and is correspondingly underpinned by a philosophical belief in universalism – and that which is postdramatic and proposes a non-universalist world view as its primary epistemology.

younger generation of auteur-directors who began to reconceptualize the relationship between the performers and the spectators. These theatrical pioneers created an atmosphere of intimacy between actors and spectators, by rupturing the Soviet-era convention of the 'fourth wall' (which had provided the impression of objectivity, serving the dominant state-approved genre of socialist realism throughout the Soviet period). The director Piotr Fomenko was a theatrical pioneer of these experiments, staging Ostrovsky's *Guilty without Guilt* at the Vakhtangov Theatre in 1993, which was 'mounted in the cramped space of a theatre buffet, for audiences of a few dozen' (Smeliansky 1999b: 402). The proximity between the actors and the spectators contributed to a more intimate experience: a subtly different form of spectatorship – offering a sense of complicity and shared purpose which had been lost after 1991. This approach was a novelty for Russian theatre and, according to Smeliansky, 'Fomenko's production became the long-awaited sign and symbol of the inner freedom we were finding [in the early 1990s]' (Ibid.: 406). Whether as a consequence of this production or not, the same commentator has noted that '[many] major directors deserted the big theatres for [...] small space[s] [...] to discover a new "performing culture"' (1999a: 177). Another key figure from this period was the director Kama Ginkas, who dramatized Chekhov's short stories *The Black Monk* and *Lady with Lapdog* (both in 2001), where both performers and spectators were seated in the theatre's balcony (Davydova 2005: 88-93). By taking audiences out of the auditorium and placing them into a non-conventional playing space, these productions recreated a sensation of active participation among the spectators, which was not being achieved within Soviet-era proscenium arch stages with their attendant 'realist' acting conventions. Hans-Thies Lehmann has theorized this relationship to the spectator as one aspect of 'postdramatic theatre' – whereby Aristotelian unities of action, time and place are discarded in favour of radical theatrical forms drawing on 'performance art' traditions.³ He writes about the importance of spatial configurations and comments directly on a 1994 adaptation of Dostoevsky's *Crime and Punishment*⁴ by Kama Ginkas, given the title *K.I. from Crime*:

Tendentally dangerous to [Aristotelian] drama are the huge space and the very intimate space [...] [Postdramatic] theatre becomes a moment of *shared energies* instead of transmitted signs[...] [In *K.I. from Crime*, the director] turned the space

³ The term 'postdramatic theatre' itself did not enter critical discourse fully in Russia until after the translation of Hans-Thies Lehmann's text of that name in 2013.

⁴ This production premiered at the Moscow's Theatre of the Young Spectator in 1994; Lehmann saw it in 1997 at the Avignon Theatre Festival.

that only had a few fragmentary props into real address of the present spectators. (2006: 150)

This new generation of auteur-directors pioneered postdramatic paradigms of spectatorship in the post-Soviet cultural sphere through radical theatrical presentations of cultural icons, canonical texts familiar to Russian audiences, such as Ostrovsky and Chekhov.

The majority of Russian theatres chose not to embrace these aesthetic departures by directors. The critic Alena Zlobina has noted that, in the 1990s, the repertoires of most theatres were filled with conventionally-staged revivals and adaptations of canonical texts (Zlobina 1998: para. 4). She goes on to characterise the driving ethos of programming in this period as an ‘attempt [...] to leave behind the contemporary’ [*‘стремится уйти от актуальности’*] (Zlobina 1998: para. 4) – in other words, an escapist tendency which overlooked themes of contemporary social relevance, such as the ‘greatest economic collapse in peacetime of any country in history’ (Sakwa 2008: ix) which was occurring in Russia at that time. In fact, theatrical production was not static at that point: it was evolving to take account of mass taste and box office receipts – Smeliansky points out that ‘[f]or the first time in decades artists had to think of box-office’ (1999a: 194), as state funding was being reduced. It was experiencing a crisis already familiar to western theatrical production, which the scholars Maria Delgado and Caridad Svich have characterised as ‘the sentimentality of bourgeois art’ (2002: 7), prevalent in the modern capitalist era. That perspective has been captured by the critic Pavel Rudnev, who states:

From the 1990s, theatre [in Russia] ceased to be a place for intellectual engagement, preferring [...] a position of entertainment and bourgeois leisure, nostalgia, reminiscences and a cultural game with itself.

[С начала 1990-х театр постепенно перестаёт быть местом интеллектуального напряжения, предпочтя [...] позицию развлечения и буржуазного досуга, ностальгии, воспоминаний и культурной игры с самим собой.] (2010: para. 4, 5)

This cross-cultural comparison of market-driven processes in theatre-making was noticed by another scholar, Anna Vislova, who referred to this unwelcome development as a ‘westernisation of Russian theatre’ [*‘вестернизация русского театра’*] (2009: 255), whereby theatre aims to serve a mass market (Ibid.: 254), driven by box office receipts and populist audience demand. There was no significant change of personnel in

Russian theatre, so this continuity of programming practice – privileging canonical works performed as psychological realism over innovative aesthetic directions in stage language or in dramatic writing – was made worse by the lack of opportunities in repertory theatres for the post-Soviet generations. As a consequence of the predominantly unadventurous programming, audiences ‘[lost] interest in theatre’ (Smeliansky 1999b: 384) and attendance dropped significantly at the majority of venues.⁵ There was another key reason for the difficulty of attracting audiences in this period: competition from other art forms. In 2000, one playwright posited that ‘our spectator[s] have not yet had their fill of video, home cinema, [and] computer games’ [*‘Наш зритель еще не объелся видео, домашним кинотеатром, компьютерными играми’*] (Bogaev in Bogomolov 2000: para. 18). New cultural forms, available in the post-Soviet era, competed with theatre in the leisure market: theatrical production remained stagnant because of lack of resources, rigid institutions and a lingering Soviet-era mentality among most artistic leaders. In spite of experiments by a number of auteur-directors, Russian theatre as a whole had not yet offered a vision of how it could evolve to retain its cultural importance.

Soviet-era playwrights were mostly unable to respond to the calamitous changes in the country in any meaningful way – perhaps because of the speed of the economic and political changes. John Freedman, theatre critic for the *Moscow Times* (1992-2015), has described the first few post-Soviet years in the following way:

[M]ost of the major writers of the previous era – Liudmila Petrushevskaja, Nina Sadur, Liudmila Razumovskaia, and Mikhail Roschin, to name just a few – either wrote less, stopped writing altogether, or were produced significantly less often than they had been during the 1980s. (2010: 390)

The ‘director’s theatre’ did little to accommodate the younger generation of playwrights, who might have provided new forms of theatrical innovation with contemporary relevance, since even the pioneering directors were engaged in reconceiving paradigms of spectatorship with canonical texts. The work of playwrights from a younger generation began to reach the stage occasionally. However, with the same artistic leaders serving as the gate-keepers of taste, these new plays largely

⁵ Anecdotally, I have heard on a number of occasions from Russian theatre-makers that auditoria in most large and medium-scale venues – even the most reputable ones – were filled to under a 50% capacity, more or less across the board, in contrast to the full or near-capacity houses which were the norm at the most popular venues during the Soviet era.

conformed to inherited conventions of dramatic form. Zlobina has documented a number of strategies by younger playwrights to circumvent or surpass existing conventions, including a trend towards ‘political topicality and [...] sex’ [*политическая злободневность и [...] секс*] (1998: para. 17). In spite of thematic connections to contemporary events (‘political topicality’), this critic evaluates these approaches as artistically ineffective. Ultimately, she characterises contemporary playwriting between 1991 and 1998 as a ‘snake [...] which will not bite anybody’ [*змея [которая] никого не укусит*] (Ibid.: 17). Zlobina dedicates one section in her article to the pioneering dramatist Kolyada (later Artistic Director of the Kolyada-Theatre, 2001-ongoing), whom she criticises as a playwright who ‘turned *chernukha* into light entertainment’ [*превратил чернуху в развлекаловку*] (Ibid.: para 10), presumably on the basis of his inclination for melodrama. Her assessment overlooks Kolyada’s highly significant contribution to linguistic innovation in dramatic writing.⁶ Freedman points out that Kolyada’s plays ‘helped push back taboos. His characters were among the first in Russia to use obscenities’ (2010: 395) – bringing informal and colloquial registers, as well as socio-economically ‘marginalised’ characters, to the Russian stage. Zlobina’s perspective is a reminder that institutional rigidity in repertory theatres led to significant artistic obstacles for non-conformist playwrights, such as conventional acting styles and the need to write plays with ‘star’ parts for the leading performers in the troupes. Dramatists from the late Soviet generation had internalised these stage conventions – and sought ways to disrupt them with only partial success in the 1990s, presumably because they considered repertory theatres to be the only potential producers of their work. The playwright Elena Gremina, whose work I describe in detail below (she went on to become associated with pioneering ‘political’ dramas), presented one of her first plays *Behind the Mirror* at the Lyubimovka Festival in 1993 and it earned a full production during the same year at the Chekhov Moscow Arts (Gromova 2009: 246-7). Freedman reviewed her historical drama as being ‘an old-fashioned show – a star vehicle – and, as such, it is thoroughly enjoyable’ (1997: 84). His review leaves little doubt that he witnessed no significant aesthetic departures in her early *oeuvre*.

New stages offering greater institutional fluidity – the Russian ‘fringe’ with its ‘open space’ programming disrupting Soviet-era conventions – were a necessary condition for

⁶ For a detailed description of Kolyada’s aesthetic innovations and career trajectory, see pp. 189-94.

dramatists and directors to pursue a fundamental reform of theatrical practice in post-Soviet Russia. These new festivals and studios offered performance spaces which offered a ‘clean slate’ from Soviet-era aesthetics – with playwrights, not directors serving as the arbitrators of taste, as I documented in Chapter One. These venues offered opportunities to amateur playwrights, who could draw upon their own experience as much as industry-approved conventions. The critic Pavel Rudnev elaborates this point:

As a general rule, new playwrights [in the 2000s] [...] have no professional experience in theatre and even less “experience-by-watching-theatre”, and for the most part, they write “from a blank page”, intuitively feeling the laws of drama.

[Как правило, новые драматурги [...] вообще не имеют никакого театрального опыта и тем более “насмотренности”, а чаще всего — пишут с “белого листа”, интуитивно чувствуя законы драмы]. (2007: para. 1 of 12)

The playwright-led institutions provided a forum which allowed untrained, first-time dramatists to invent and test new approaches, which would be considered ‘amateurish’ by the repertory theatres, or even ‘infantile’ or ‘teenage’, a word which was used frequently during the late 1990s and early 2000s in relation to non-conformist playwriting by critics and professional theatre-makers. As Freedman has pointed out, in the 1990s, ‘writers started writing plays like crazy’ (Interview with Freedman 2013). In other words, amateur dramatists were turning to playwriting in their hundreds because of the new opportunities of the studio theatres. Inevitably, the quality of work varied among the ‘crazy’ number of plays appearing – but ‘infantilism’ can also be read as ‘formal experimentation’, which is to say disruption of existing conventions.

While the key turning point in the development of non-conformist writing came in 1999, as I explore below, the festivals and studio theatres were contributing to an incremental shift of performance culture – in parallel with the discoveries of the auteur-directors like Fomenko and Ginkas and most likely influenced by them. The democratic relationship between stage and audience existing in these small-scale ‘fringe’ institutions also contributed to these incremental changes. Most of these new stages were not elevated and – at least at the festivals – participants and actors mingled together socially after

performances (since numerous play-readings took place each day).⁷ The scholar Natal'ia Iakubova has drawn a connection between the small theatrical stages, appearing from the late 1990s, and a “core” of mobile, open actors with an ephemeral (and often – experimental) practice’ [*“актив” мобильных, открытых, эфемерной (и часто – экспериментальной) деятельности артистов*] (2014: 59). The disruption of the fourth wall – as well as the intimacy of the small performance spaces – facilitated an unembellished performance style by the actors, designed to evoke a sensation of ‘authenticity’ and dialogic communication.

Rather than a television style of naturalist acting, this hyper-naturalism presents itself as the very opposite of naturalism. Naturalism draws attention away from the actor’s technique with the ideal of achieving mimetic verisimilitude, while hyper-naturalism emphasises the detachment of the performer from their text. This acting style has been theorised by the scholar most associated globally with postdramatic theory, Hans-Thies Lehmann, who describes hyper-naturalism as a:

tendency towards “disinvolvement” and ironic, sarcastic distance. Moral indignation does not take place where it would have been expected; likewise dramatic excitation is lacking, even though reality is depicted in ways that are obviously hard to bear. (Lehmann 2006: 118)

Hyper-naturalism became the predominant acting style on the Russian ‘fringe’, and therefore the one which most post-Soviet playwrights were influenced by, as they were making aesthetic discoveries. It was one of the key factors, shaping a new set of post-Soviet conventions of dramatic writing. The most prominent characteristic of the non-conformist plays was their explicit rebuttal of mimetic representation. I discuss some of the techniques used by playwrights to disrupt realistic theatrical paradigms, throughout this chapter. Here, I introduce the theme by pointing out the technique which I have encountered most frequently in the plays, which I have read and translated: the use of stage directions. In informal conversations with theatre-makers, I have been told that the pioneer of this convention was the dramatist Nikolai Kolyada, whose works often begin and end with lengthy, poetic stage directions providing ‘subjective’ perspectives from an often-unspecified ‘I’, rather than an ‘objective’ narrator. Where the post-Soviet

⁷ In some instances, festivals ran in geographical locations outside of the capitals, such as the Lyubimovka which ran initially at Stanislavsky’s former estate of that name. The significance is – again – the democratic ethos of participants living together and meeting socially before and after the performances, enabling further dialogue between theatre-makers and disrupting pre-existing hierarchies between playwrights and directors with different ‘cultural capital’ (social status within the industry).

generation of dramatists departed from Kolyada's innovation was the inclusion of non-linear logic, which could not be rendered as mimetic representation. Sigarev as well as the dramatist Oleg Bogaev, were among the innovators of this use of stage directions to create postdramatic texts. It is no coincidence that both were among the first cohort of students on Kolyada's playwriting course at the Ekaterinburg Theatre Institute. An archetypal example is the final set of stage directions in *Ahasverus* by Vasilii Sigarev, which includes these lines about the protagonist:

The handcuffs fall off Andrei. The walls collapse. Houses collapse. Trees collapse. The mountains collapse. Rivers and seas collapse. The sky collapses. The Earth collapses.

[*Падают наручники с рук Андрея. Падают стены. Падают дома. Падают деревья. Падают горы. Падают реки и моря. Небо падает. Земля падает.*]⁸

It is not possible to depict these lines in a literal way. At best, a symbolic representation might begin to capture some of the affective value of these lines, but not the power of the lines in their entirety. The collapse of the whole world is powerful in the imagination, when the stage directions are read on the page, but will also be a less potent imitation if a director attempts to reproduce it on stage in any overly literal way. Instead, these lines serve as an invitation to directors to co-author an expressive, non-realist stage language, which deviates from the written text, presumably with the intention of placing the spectators and performers into a single, 'subjectivized' space. The 'Earth collapses' is the disruption of the known world and correspondingly of the realist paradigm in theatrical production. Typical among non-conformist writing, this play – as exemplified in its closing stage directions – explores experimental forms which particularize the spectators' experience. The postdramatic tradition was, to a significant extent, borne out of Russian traditions – with Kolyada as the 'founding father' in the case of the first New Drama playwrights, such as Bogaev and Sigarev. Yet, non-Russian cultural traditions influenced the trajectory of non-conformist playwriting in a way which would have a most enduring impact on the sphere of theatrical production. .

Cross-cultural influences on non-conformist playwriting

⁸ Source: unpublished playtext of *Ahasverus*, available on Sigarev's website (date of play composition not provided) <<http://vsigarev.ru/text.html>> [accessed 12 September 2017].

Many playwrights embraced the mythologizing potential of identifying themselves as ‘amateurs’. Sigarev has stated that the first time he attended a theatre was to watch a production of his own play (Zaslavskii 2004: para. 14). By 2004, Sigarev had achieved critical success (as I discuss below) – so ‘amateurism’ served a convenient narrative of ‘genius’ or at least ‘natural-born talent’. The broader picture is that dramatists were, while undoubtedly drawing upon their own experiences, also seeking alternative cultural influences. The ‘open stage’ ethos of playwright-run festivals and venues allowed playwrights to veer beyond Russian traditions and acculturate non-Russian sources in their work. Sigarev’s brutalist work *Plasticine*⁹, which many see as the founding production of New Drama because of its critical success and cross-over into mainstream cultural discourse, serves as a useful illustration of this. *Plasticine* borrows from cinematic conventions: it is written in thirty-three short scenes and set in different geographical locations. Theatre professionals in Russia observed that characteristic, too. The founding Artistic Director of the School of the Contemporary Play Joseph Raikhel’gauz (1989-ongoing) suggested about *Plasticine* that ‘basically, it’s not a play, it’s a film script’ [*ну это не пьеса, это киносценарий*] (Zaslavskii 2015).¹⁰ Yet, clearly, *Plasticine* was a play – evidenced by its critical success on stages in Russia in 2000 and subsequently on international stages, including the UK: it had its British premiere at the Royal Court in 2002. While Raikhel’gauz was partly incorrect – *Plasticine* is certainly a play, albeit a formally experimental one – he had correctly noted the role of Hollywood films in shifting theatrical practice, influencing Sigarev’s approach. The scholars Vladimir Zabaluev and Aleksei Zenzinov have developed this observation further, noting that Hollywood cinema played a major role in shaping the new aesthetic directions of non-conformist playwrights. In their article on contemporary dramatic writing in Russia, including a section on politicised rap in Russia in the 2000s, Zabaluev and Zenzinov posited that ‘rappers and playwrights share a teacher – the contemporary cinematographers Scorsese and Tarantino, Danny Boyle and David Fincher’ [*у рэперов и драматургов общий учитель — современный кинематограф Скорсезе и Тарантино, Дэнни Бойла и Дэвида Финчера*] (2008). Iconic art-house films from

⁹ See the ‘Props List’ of Russian plays for a summary of this work on p. 11.

¹⁰ Raikhel’gauz’s citation was paraphrased by Zaslavskii, when the latter was recalling the conversation many years after the fact. Both were jurors for the Anti-Booker Award in 2000 (a prize for literary and dramatic achievement which existed between 1995 and 2001). Sigarev’s *Plasticine* won the drama category that year.

Hollywood had arrived in Russia in the 1990s and federal cultural policy created the infrastructure which contributed to a significant increase of foreign films in Russia through the 2000s¹¹. By Soviet-era conventions, cinematic conventions (or rather innovative conventions influenced by cinema) did not belong on stage, but the non-conformist dramatists drew no such distinctions and they were at liberty to draw upon them in the studio theatres: *Plasticine* was premiered at the Centre for Playwriting and Directing named after Aleksei Kazantsev and Nikolai Roshchin (henceforth CDR) in 2001.

Another source of cross-cultural inspiration for post-Soviet playwrights was the so-called in-yer-face playwrights from Britain, such as Sarah Kane and Mark Ravenhill, who offered highly political subjects with a brutalist grittiness, yet often expressed within a poetic and lyrical aesthetic sensibility. This is how the critic Aleks Sierz – who coined the phrase ‘in-yer-face’, which subsequently went into mainstream global cultural discourse – describes this genre:

Most in-yer-face plays are not interested in showing events in a detached way and allowing audiences to speculate about them; instead, they are experiential – they want audiences to feel the extreme emotions that are being shown on stage.¹²

The influence of in-yer-face dramatists was not coincidental. It was sought out by Russian playwrights. According to Sasha Dugdale, who at that time was Acting Head of Arts at the British Council in Moscow (1995-2000),¹³ there was ‘an awareness in Russia [...] [that] British new writing was on a wave’ (Interview with Dugdale 2013) – occurring at the end of the first post-Soviet decade. This process was actively embraced in the other direction – the ‘export’ of these playwrights by the British Council – presumably as a symbol of global cultural prowess.¹⁴ Thanks to production grants from the British

¹¹ As Minister of Culture from 2000 to 2008, Mikhail Shvydkoi implemented large-scale reforms in cinematography, which he described in this way: ‘When I was minister, the amount of screens showing cinema increased tenfold. [...] That model worked because screens demanded production. The market must demand national cinematography [if Russian film-making is to grow]’ [*‘Когда я был Министром, количество экранов которые покажут кино повысилось десять раз. Эта модель стала работать потому, что экраны требовали продукции. Рынок должен требовать кино национального’*] (2015). In other words, the state did not increase subsidies for Russian film-making – only for the screens themselves. This approach led to conditions conducive to the import of foreign films (with their pre-existing infrastructure) into Russia.

¹² Source: <<http://www.inyerfacetheatre.com/what.html>> [accessed 21 December 2016].

¹³ Dugdale held various roles at the British Council and was Acting Head of Arts in the final year or two (she was not able to specify the date) of her time in Moscow.

¹⁴ The British Council is part of the British Foreign Office, which bolsters the post-colonial perspective that culture was being used as ‘soft power’ to earn the admiration of Russian cultural elites at a time when NATO, including Britain, was bombing in Yugoslavia, in 1999. Dugdale has noted that there was a significant

Council for productions of in-yer-face dramatists (Interview with Dugdale 2013), these formally experimental works started reaching Moscow stages from 1999, when the CDR produced Mark Ravenhill's seminal anti-capitalist drama *Shopping and Fucking*. An institutional continuity was forged between the British dramatists and non-conformist Russian ones, helping to legitimise the notion of aesthetic innovation. A year after staging *Shopping and Fucking*, the CDR programmed Sigarev's *Plasticine*. The same circle of theatre-makers staged in-yer-face dramas and the non-conformist Russian plays.¹⁵ In spite of these connections, scholarly perspectives differ. On the one hand, Beumers and Lipovetsky argue that:

The similarity between Russian New Drama and the relatively new (1990s) English drama should not be overstated: in effect, it is limited to thematic attention to social marginal groups, a general depressive and gloomy tone and the aspiration to shock the spectator with naturalistic details, including sexual violence. (2009: 33)

Matvienko refutes that argument, stating that the 'social orientation of "New Drama", [which was] borrowed from British in-yer-face theatre, [...] forced the New Drama authors to search for a "new vision"' [*социальность "новой драмы", заимствованную от британского In-Yer-Face [...] заставила новодраматургов искать "новое видение"*] (2008: para. 20). The post-Soviet generation of playwrights did not emphasise in-yer-face drama as a significant influence on their work in their own accounts, just as Hollywood art-house films did not appear in their accounts in any interviews, at the time or in my fieldwork. Yet, it is clear that, by 2000, the cultural landscape had shifted – dramatists were drawing on different media and on non-Russian traditions – these new 'inspirations' were simply too evident for them to mention: they were acculturating and reinventing their own theatrical forms.

The advent of verbatim to Russia: re-fashioning texts as performative object

Productions of in-yer-face playwrights and Sigarev's *Plasticine* appeared in 1999-2000 as rare attempts to disrupt the escapism across Russian theatre. In fact, a new strand of confrontational 'political' playwriting had emerged in the *perestroika* era with a small

widespread shift in attitude towards the west, due to the bombing of Serbia – historically, an ally of Russia (Interview with Dugdale 2013).

¹⁵ Serebrennikov's first theatre production in Moscow was *Plasticine*, while his second was the Russian premiere of Ravenhill's *Some Explicit Polaroids* at the Pushkin Theatre in 2001; the translator of *Shopping and Fucking* was playwright Aleksandr Rodionov, whose play *The War of the Moldovans over a Cardboard Box* (2003) was an early, iconic work at Teatr.doc.

number of dramatists – one of the most prominent was Liudmila Petrushevskaja. She composed poetic plays, laced with an absurdist humour, which contained close observations of daily life. She intended her works as a means to reflect upon the most pressing issues: the overcrowded and run-down communal flat,¹⁶ in her plays, became an allegorical cipher for society at large. As the scholar Katy Simmons has noted, Petrushevskaja used allegory in order to achieve ‘the total discreditation of the ideology on which social life [...] [was] based’ (citation is Simmons paraphrased by Beumers and Lipovetsky 2009: 178). One of the few dramatists to receive widespread critical recognition from the post-Soviet generation was Oleg Bogaev, whose play *Russian National Mail*¹⁷ was first given a rehearsed reading at the Lyubimovka in 1995 before receiving a full production in 1998.¹⁸ His play served as a rebuke to Yeltsin’s neoliberal ideology, by portraying a pensioner living on a pitifully low state pension in spite of his record as a war veteran and labourer during the Soviet period (Bogaev 2011: 50). In one scene of the play, the protagonist refers to a specific, real policy of cutting pensions, implemented by Yeltsin’s administration:

Ivan sits by a table and writes a new letter.

IVAN SIDOROVICH (*decisively*). To the department of social security. (*He thinks and writes.*) A demand! I – Ivan Sidorovich Zhukov – demand that you raise my pension... because it has become impossible to survive... I just don’t have the strength... Everything in the shop is expensive, and I’m already an old man.

[*Иван [с]адится за стол, пишет новое письмо.*

Иван Сидорович. (Решительно.) В отдел народного обеспечения. (Думает, пишет.) Требование! Я – Иван Сидорович Жуков – требую повысить мне пенсию... так как жить стало невозможно... прямо сил нет... В магазине все дорого, а я уже человек пожилой.] (Bogaev 2011: 62)

Petrushevskaja and Bogaev both anticipated – and most likely influenced – a shift towards political playwriting which would occur even more overtly in the following decade.

¹⁶ Communal flats were apartments introduced in the Soviet period, designed for more than one family to live in – sharing kitchen and bathroom spaces, in order to embody a socialist ideal of communal living.

¹⁷ See the ‘Props List’ of Russian plays for a summary of this work on p. 11.

¹⁸ This play was premiered in 1998 both at the Studio Theatre of Oleg Tabakov in Moscow directed by Kama Ginkas and at the Sverdlovsk Theatre of Drama in Ekaterinburg, the author’s home town, directed by his playwriting teacher Kolyada – Bogaev was in the first cohort of students to be taught on the playwriting course inaugurated by Kolyada at the Ekaterinburg Theatre Institute in 1993.

Yet, a broader lack of ‘political’ address across Russian theatre still persisted and has been described by Iakubova (writing on contemporary theatre-making in Poland and Hungary, as well as Russia) in the following way:

The concept of “socially engaged” theatre was so unpopular at the end of the 1990s that it was difficult to even suppose that it would return to usage and even more so that by the end of the 2000s, almost all practitioners of “the new theatre” would write in its name.

[[П]онятие «социальной ангажированности» театра было в конце 1990-х настолько непопулярным, что трудно было даже предположить, что оно вновь войдет в обиход и тем более что к концу «нулевых» годов его напишут на своем знамени практически все деятели «нового театра».] (2014: 63)

The dramatists who were ‘writing plays like crazy’ were aware of their own shortcomings in discovering methods of confronting the ‘bourgeois’ audiences. Gremina – one of the theatre-makers who had regular contact with the British Council in 1999-2000, including winning grants for productions as well as developing a professional relationship and personal friendship with Dugdale in these years – describes the feeling of powerlessness felt by herself and her husband, the playwright Mikhail Ugarov, in relation to not knowing how to write plays or make productions which would speak to the broader social realities in the late 1990s:

At that time, there was an [economic] crisis and post-crisis in 1998 [...] Mikhail Ugarov, my husband, went to work in TV, in a very popular reality show, *My Family*. [...] It was this programme [...] [where] people sent in letters with their stories, and he read the letters and it made a strong impression on him, and he said, “Well, how can it be that there’s no instrument for passing this on [in theatre]?”

*[[Т]огда был [экономический] кризис и пост-кризис в 98ом году. [...] Михаил Угаров, мой муж, пошел работать на телевидение, в очень популярное реалити шоу, *Моя Семья*. [...] Такая передача [...] люди послали письма со своими историями, и он читал эти письма, и его это очень сильно впечатлило, а он говорит “ну как это может быть что у нас нет инструмента [чтобы] это передать?”. (Interview with Gremina 2014)*

The most radical intervention arrived through the partnership between the playwrights organising the new ‘fringe’¹⁹ – such as Gremina and Ugarov – and the British Council. Through a partnership between Gremina and Dugdale, the Royal Court was invited to come to Russia to give a lecture on theatre-making. The organising body was the

¹⁹ Gremina and Ugarov, while they were managing the Lyubimovka (1995-2000; 2001-7).

Golden Mask Special Jury Prize (instituted in 1993 - ongoing) – one of the playwright-led institutions, which gained prominence through the late 1990s and 2000s, to become the Russian equivalent of the Oliviers.²⁰ This episode is well-documented in other scholarly accounts,²¹ so here I limit myself to an overview. The Royal Court participated in two events on the subject of contemporary playwriting in March and July 1999.²² The latter was a workshop run by Elyse Dodgson, founding Head of the International Department at the Royal Court (1996-ongoing). She describes how, during a discussion:

Mary [Peate, the International Associate at the Royal Court in 1999], said “Well... Elyse has a lot of experience in [the documentary form] verbatim”. Which I did, because I did my first verbatim project when I was a teacher in 1978. By that time, to be honest, I had really gone off verbatim [...] but [the Russian participants] [...] said “Oh. What’s *that*? *Verbatim*?”. (Interview with Dodgson 2014)

Documentary theatre was already familiar to Russian playwrights. Gremina states that ‘we had all carefully read [Peter] Weiss’ *The Investigation*.²³ [...] [I]t is a play which I read a hundred times in my youth’ [‘[м]ы все зачитывались пьесой Вайса Дознание [...] [Э]то пьеса, которую я читала в своей молодости раз сто’] (Interview with Gremina 2014). There were also strong documentary traditions in the 1920s in Russia organised by the state to propagandize their ideological messages to inhabitants in regional towns and villages; as well as non-fictional practices which were critical of the Soviet government during the 1970s and 1980s (Beumers and Lipovetsky 2009: 71). Yet, the use of a dictaphone to capture first-hand, oral testimony – as opposed to pre-existing, written documents – was new to Russian theatre-makers (Interview with Gremina 2014). Dugdale, who was present at the seminar in her capacity as co-organiser, has described this episode:

Elyse [...] was at the time merely describing possible approaches to [documentary] material [...] and verbatim was a good example [...]. But verbatim was seized upon by Elena Gremina and her playwright husband Mikhail Ugarov

²⁰ Source: <<http://www.goldenmask.ru/about.php>> [accessed 18 October 2016].

²¹ The most comprehensive account about the Royal Court’s International Department is the monograph by Elaine Aston and Mark O’Thomas (2015), with a section specifically on its engagement in Russia (Ibid.: 136-140).

²² Even if the intention was – as with work run by the British Council – to some extent a form of ‘soft power’ by a British theatre (and the export of British practices and work was surely intended), it is worth noting that the Court was not the organising institution, as is sometimes implied in shorter journalistic or critical accounts; furthermore, the Court was a participating organisation – rather than the event being designed solely around this British theatre. It is important to give agency to the Russian theatre-makers: a cultural elite who perceived a partnership with the British partners as an opportunity to disrupt post-Soviet theatrical convention.

²³ *The Investigation* was written in 1965. The play ‘is based almost to the letter on documentations of the Auschwitz trial in Frankfurt [between 1963 and 1965]’ (Cohen 1998: 46).

[.] [...] Elyse was invited [by Russian theatre-makers] to come to Russia [again] and hold a seminar purely on the advantages and techniques of verbatim. (Dugdale in Beumers and Lipovetsky 2009: 15)

The follow-up workshop took place in November 1999. At that time, many dramatists felt that verbatim represented an important development for Russian playwriting – rather than a single genre to add to the existing typology. The playwright Aleksandr Rodionov suggested that ‘in Moscow, in the autumn of 1999, verbatim became the symbol of the new in Russian playwriting’ [*в Москве 1999 года вербатим стал символом нового в русской драматургии*] (2002: para. 1 of 9). This form of documentary-making appeared to provide the most comprehensive response to what should succeed Soviet-era theatrical conventions: a new *technique* of theatre-making. Verbatim developed a form of spectatorship built upon the innovations of the 1990s, by further heightening the sense of unmediated contact between the on-stage world and the audience – which was already being explored through hyper-naturalist acting styles in the studio theatres. This documentary process provided the illusion of removing the playwright from the writing process, by presenting him or her as merely a scribe who documents and edits real conversations. This non-fictional form was well-suited to incorporating politicised content into plays because of its rigorous research process. By gathering first-hand testimony, dramatists were able to write persuasively about subjects beyond their personal experience, for example by speaking to undocumented migrants or the homeless. This trait contrasted to the approaches of earlier dramatists such as Sigarev and Klavdiev, whose work drew significantly upon *autobiographical* material. With verbatim, contemporary playwrights became documentarians of the most economically and socially disadvantaged strata of society in the era of ‘gangster capitalism’.

A striking illustration is the case of the playwright Elena Isaeva. She was a participant at the workshop led by Dodgson in November 1999. By her own estimation, before the seminar, she wrote ‘ordinary plays and dramas’ [*обыкновенные пьесы, драмы*] (Interview with Isaeva 2014). A critic appraised Isaeva’s *Apricot Heaven* (1997) as being ‘executed with such heart-rending, insane, inconsolable passions, that you could stick them into a Mexican soap opera’ [*исполнен таких душераздирающих, безумных, безутешных страстей, что хоть в мексиканский сериал вставляй*] (Zlobina 1998: para. 45). This critic summarised the playwright’s *oeuvre* as being ‘all about love’

[‘*сплошная любовь*’] (Ibid.: para. 44). Isaeva won awards for her writing before 1999, including the category ‘Best Play about Teenagers’ for Radio Russia in 1995.²⁴ In the first millennial decade, this playwright made a transition from writing sentimental dramas to highly ‘political’ works on socially ‘taboo’ subjects such as the privatisation of healthcare and sexual abuse. As a verbatim practitioner, Isaeva wrote one of Teatr.doc’s most acclaimed productions, *Dr*, a political polemic about the life and work of a regional doctor in adverse conditions – which is included as one of the four translations presented as part of this doctoral project – to express the social impact of the privatisation of healthcare.

The post-1998 playwright-led institutions aided the material dissemination of non-fictional forms among the post-Soviet generation of dramatists. The independent studio theatres and festivals provided the infrastructure for educating younger generation of dramatists about this approach to theatre-making, facilitating an exponential growth of verbatim as a method of theatrical production – since this documentary form was, at least partly, a transferable skill with identifiable techniques which even first-time playwrights could practice. Dugdale notes that the Artistic Director of Teatr.doc (2002-ongoing), Mikhail Ugarov, ‘recorded the [November 1999] seminar and took notes which were immediately disseminated [among the playwright-led institutions]’ (Dugdale in Beumers and Lipovetsky 2009: 15). He and Gremina began to run their own seminars on verbatim – which led to a ‘multiplier’ effect. Several playwrights, who subsequently gained critical acclaim with documentary plays, such as Mikhail Durnenkov and Varvara Faer, encountered this technique for the first time at one of the Russian-led workshops after 2000, without the participation of Royal Court (Interview with Durnenkov 2015; Interview with Faer 2015). Sporadically, new seminars were organised even a decade after the original ones, to introduce younger generations of playwrights to the radical ‘Russian’ version of this art form, such as one at Teatr.doc in February 2010, hosted by Durnenkov and Rodionov. A video recording of that 2010 forum was posted on the social media site Youtube,²⁵ making it even more widely available to other theatre-makers of the ‘internet generation’ - compared to the early methods of dissemination by handwritten or typed ‘notes’. Among post-Soviet dramatists, the hyper-naturalism of verbatim had ‘unleashed an elemental force’ (Dugdale in Beumers and Lipovetsky 2009:

²⁴ Source: <<http://www.teatrcdr.ru/artisti?person=186>> [accessed 22 December 2016].

²⁵ Source: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4SYsn-n_ZBY> [accessed 18 October 2016].

16). The salient point is that, particularly with the creation of Teatr.doc in 2002, the playwright-led institutions diminished any hierarchical division between documentary and non-documentary work. Both forms co-existed at these new venues and festivals. It represented an irreversible occurrence in the Russian theatre landscape in the 2000s.

Surprisingly from a British perspective, the incorporation of verbatim into Russian theatre represented a significant break with mimetic representation. I will coin a phrase ‘Russian verbatim’ here, as a way of distinguishing it from the British practice of verbatim. The majority of commentators agree that verbatim was applied in the Russian theatre landscape as a writing process, with the specific aim of circumventing established dramatic conventions, as opposed to being rigidly applied as is the normative British practice (by which playwrights edit, but do not add to, gathered first-hand testimonies). Dugdale has described the reaction of director Stephen Daldry, who participated in the November 1999 workshop on verbatim, to the resulting plays by Russian participants:

Daldry [...] was telling them there’s all these rules you have to observe [in verbatim]. He seemed slightly bemused by the [verbatim] text that was about beggars in the Moscow metro [Rodionov’s *The War of the Moldovans over a Cardboard Box*], [...] [which depicts] incredibly bigger than life characters, and [...] [also by the other] really crazy, imaginative pieces. (Interview with Dugdale 2013)

Beumers and Lipovetsky also opine that it was rare for the new wave of playwrights to use the verbatim technique in a rigidly applied form (2009: 215). Teatr.doc’s mission statement clearly articulates the intention to use this documentary form flexibly, suggesting that oral testimony provides initial text for theatre-makers.²⁶ Even when dramatists in the new millennium were nominally using verbatim, the plays themselves were frequently semi- or entirely fictional, as they often make clear within the body of the work.²⁷

²⁶ ‘[A]s with all of these techniques [used by Teatr.doc including verbatim], borrowed and invented – they are not enough in and of themselves, they are only instruments for theatrical work towards the writing of a play and the staging of a production’ [‘все эти техники, заимствованные и изобретенные, – не самостоятельны, это всего лишь инструменты для театральной работы написания пьесы и постановки спектакля’]. Source: <<http://www.teatrdoc.ru/stat.php?page=verbatim>>; <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4SYsn-n_ZBY> [accessed 18 October 2016].

²⁷ In the testimonial work *One Hour Eighteen* by Elena Gremina – one scene presents the character, Judge Krivoruchko, as being in a non-earthly purgatory (Gremina 2012: 39-42), a clear rupture from non-documentary conventions of depicting real-life material.

Even more than the hyper-naturalist paradigm of spectatorship at the studio theatres (embodied in acting styles), verbatim was influencing non-conformist dramatic writing towards non-realist and hyper-naturalist writing styles. Plays were disrupting conventional forms, pioneering their own postdramatic forms. The key characteristic of these performance texts was the reconfiguring of the conception of the audience's relationship to text: a direct mirroring of the shift which occurred in the reconceptualization of the spectators to the actors. Lehmann has theorized the intended 'experiential' characteristic of postdramatic texts:

The habitual hierarchies of dramatic space (the site of the face, of the meaningful gesture, of the confrontation of the antagonists) become obsolete and with them a "subjectivized" space, a space arranged by the subject-I. In the face of the playing field that is dissected into individual heterogeneous parts, the viewer has the impression of being led back and forth between parallel sequences as in a film. The procedure of *scenic montage* leads to a perception reminiscent of *cinematic montage*. (2006: 151)

This citation resonates with the aesthetic discoveries of the pioneers of New Drama, both the dramatists of verbatim writing 'crazy, imaginative pieces' as well as Sigarev, whose play was misread as being (to paraphrase slightly) 'basically a film script' – whereas in fact it was (like the verbatim scripts) a postdramatic work. The core philosophical precept underlying these aesthetic discoveries was the rejection of the Soviet-era state ideology of universalism (a modernist paradigm of human society as being in a constant state of economic and social progress and humans as being essentially the same in terms of their psychological needs) in favour of a non-universalist world view as its primary epistemology. Beumers and Lipovetsky characterise the artistic achievement of Russian verbatim as its ability to portray 'subcultural positivism' (2009: 215). Their phrase is effective in evoking the way that socially marginalised groups are represented affirmatively on stage (i.e. subcultures are validated). It also points to the broader commonality behind non-conformist playwriting: a suspicion of universalising philosophies and the desire to disrupt them through subjectivising modes of theatrical production.

Two pioneers of innovative dramatic forms in the 1990s had already laid the foundations for this development: writing plays which deconstructed stable meanings and provided subjective, 'unreliable' perspectives, in order to challenge official representations of contemporary reality. In their works, Bogaev and Ol'ga Mukhina both offered not 'a

representation but an intentionally unmediated experience of the real (time, space, body)' (Lehmann 2006: 134). In *Russian National Mail*, Bogaev shapes significant parts of the narrative using an absurdist logic, which expresses the perspective of the protagonist Ivan, as he descends into a state of madness. Ol'ga Mukhina's plays, such as *Iu*²⁸ (1996), possess a lyrical style, by largely refuting psychological exploration as the driving force of the narrative in favour of caricature.²⁹ Yet, the dramatists coming to prominence after 2000 offered an even more radical intervention – making unprecedented discoveries for the Russian stage through the smashing of socio-cultural taboos, experiments in linguistic register and their choice of protagonist.

The smashing of taboos

The post-Soviet playwrights being championed by the independent studio theatres made a point of incorporating graphic content, including acts of extreme violence and rape, into their plays as key aspects of their narratives. These authors were expressing their angry disapproval of the authoritarianism of the Yeltsin era and the increased level of social injustice and economic corruption which followed under Putin. They were attempting to unmask Putin's rhetoric of 'stability' as mere political repression. The production of *Plasticine* in 2000 was unprecedented on the Russian stage in its depictions of violence (at least in works by Russian authors); and it was followed by dozens of others including Klavdiev's *Slow Sword*³⁰ in 2006. I will now consider the socio-cultural significance of these dramas, since both serve as illustrations of how dramatists were using postdramatic forms to serve ideological ends. The former is a play about a teenager, Maksim, who is expelled from his school. There is ambiguity about whether Maksim's unruly behaviour towards his teacher is innate to his personality or a response to his personal circumstances. His impolite attitude and pranks may be motivated by grief, since the protagonist attends his friend's funeral in the second scene of the play (Sigarev 2002: 3-5), or indeed caused by the absence of a parental figure to provide

²⁸ The play's title is the Russian letter 'Iu' ['IŮ']. The letter is not a full semantic unit, but its sound resembles the English word 'you'. In his other capacity as freelance translator, John Freedman translated the title as *YoU* in Freedman, John, ed. and trans., *Two Plays by Olga Mukhina* (London: Routledge, 2004).

²⁹ As a translator of Mukhina's works, Freedman has suggested that her characters' phrases 'are like the tips of icebergs in the sea, brief references to or, perhaps, attempts to obscure, what really matters. What really motivates a character may rarely, if ever, be articulated' (2014: 48-9).

³⁰ See the 'Props List' of Russian plays for a summary of these plays on p. 11.

appropriate support at home (Ibid.: 21).³¹ Either way, his own transgressions are minimal compared to the violence and humiliations which he endures during the play, including a savage random beating in the street (Ibid.: 14-6). The play's depiction of graphic sexual abuse was unprecedented on a Russian stage when Serebrennikov directed the work in 2000 at the CDR: Maksim and his friend Alekha follow a woman to her home, hoping for sexual gratification but instead they are confronted by two men who physically abuse Maksim and rape Alekha (Sigarev 2002: 32-42). While Sigarev sets the abuse off-stage, this does not curtail the most troubling aspects of the scene, since off-stage noises and dialogue evoke every detail in the audience's imagination — in particular, Maksim's friend pleading for mercy and the rapists' sexual grunts. The existential despair suggested by *Plasticine* is also present in *Slow Sword*, albeit by reversing the tale of victimhood into one of fantastical retributive justice. With superhero-like strength, the play's protagonist Vlad intervenes in a violent robbery by two thugs, beating and killing the robbers in order to protect an elderly landlady - who is a war veteran (Klavdiev: 39). The violence is described in thirty-three lines of stage directions — each action on a new line, with a number of repetitions, creating a meditative rhythm. There is a grotesque humour to the extreme violence as Vlad throws heavy objects at one of the thugs, while tying the other up in a table cloth and stabbing him with a pencil (Ibid.: 49-50). *Plasticine* contains underlying criticisms of authority figures in the broadest sense, ranging from Maksim's unsympathetic teacher who delights in the beating the teenage boy receives from his school peers (Sigarev 2002: 23); to various negative prototypes of officials including a cadet as one of the rapists (Ibid.: 33-42). *Slow Sword* is more explicit in its criticism of authority figures. This play contains a scene of extreme violence during which a policeman hides behind a curtain, instead of intervening in a violent robbery committed against an elderly landlady. In a subsequent scene, the same officer remains inactive while Vlad — acting as a violent substitute for the police — assaults and murders the intruders. In other words, both plays use violence to depict a bleak portrait of the endemic ills of Russian society, while suggesting symbolically that the sources of the problems are connected to the state — or at least, to the contemporary social order. This critique of authority figures is characteristic of the new wave of playwriting since 2000. Oleg Loevskii, Deputy *Direktor*

³¹ Maksim lives with his grandmother who describes herself as physically ailing; his parents appear to be absent or deceased although the text never clarifies that point.

for Artistic Affairs at the Ekaterinburg Theatre of the Young Spectator,³² has provided an explanation for this ideological position, describing the leading dramatists of the post-Soviet period as ‘a young generation [...] which wanted to have its say; society had stabilised, but they were reacting to a society which they had not built’ [‘[...] *Поколение молодых драматургов которые захотели высказаться, общество устоялось, а у них реакция на то общество, которое они не строили*’] (‘New Russian Drama’ 2010). Political repression, social inequality and a lack of social justice were manifested in contemporary plays, either directly by portraying characters as victims, or indirectly by turning characters into purveyors of violence as a defence against victimhood. What is significant, however, is not solely the theme of violence in these plays, it is also the formal invention of these works: the grotesque levels of graphic content refute a realist approach by the director, or at least appear to invite the creation of a stage language which reminds audiences of the theatrical event which they are watching as an act of socio-cultural transgression. By implication, a cultural transfer of these plays will capture their affective value by considering a broad range of performance modes or ‘types’, rather than perceiving them within the paradigm of social realism, as I discuss at greater length in Chapter Four.

Experiments in linguistic register

As well as challenging the taboo around graphic content on stage, dramatists explored unprecedented approaches to the linguistic composition of their plays. The post-Soviet generation of playwrights began to include vernacular registers and profanities, which represented a radical intervention for Russian stages. This approach contravened the notion of theatre as a place for high art, by bringing the language of mass culture into theatrical production. Dramatists intended to write plays using ‘the contemporary language of the streets’ [‘*язык современной улицы*’] (Interview with Smeliansky 2014). This theatre historian has described how he initially refused to award a prize to *Life is Good* by Pavel Priazhko (Ibid.), when he sat on the jury of the Golden Mask in 2010. Other committee members persuaded him that the play should not be dismissed on the basis of its informal linguistic register – and the play was indeed awarded the Special Jury Prize that year. The introduction of a new ‘language of the streets’ by younger

³² The theatre’s website does not specify when Loevskii started in that position although it was presumably prior to 1994 – the year he initiated the first Real Theatre Festival at that venue. He continues in that post at the time of writing. Source: <<http://тюз.екатеринбург.рф/services/workers>> [accessed 18 October 2016].

dramatists through the 2000s contravened and utterly rebuffed the Soviet-era tradition whereby the theatre represented a pseudo-religious public space: a ‘theatre-church’ (Smeliansky 1999a: 144). For the most part, playwrights in the 1990s, such as Bogaev and Mukhina, had not attempted to dismantle that aspect of the Soviet legacy in any substantive way, perhaps because they had lived their formative years in the Soviet period (both were born in 1970 and were twenty one years old when the Soviet Union collapsed). The striking exception was Kolyada – whose linguistic experiments in his plays written during *perestroika* and the early 1990s were a forebear of this phenomenon. This dramatist constructed his dialogues ‘from accidentally overheard conversations [in his locality]’ [*из случайно подслушанных разговоров*] (Shcherbakova 2013: 25). Yet, his use of register, while based partly on overheard speech, was in fact fabricated to appear ‘real’ (Ibid.: 45, 46, 55) – it was ‘found text’ forged into a poetic, folkloric version of a regional dialect from the Urals (where Kolyada lived and worked most of his life). The post-Soviet generation of playwrights placed a greater emphasis on documenting exact speech patterns, rather than mythologised representations of them. These dramatists also embraced slang and *mat* as a core characteristic of their work.³³ Elena Koval’skaia – a critic who subsequently became a champion of the ‘internet generation’ of Russian playwrights as Art-Director of the Lyubimovka Festival between 2006 and 2012 – suggested the following about *Plasticine*:

Sigarev has written an impossible play. It is written in a language which people use in [his home town] Nizhnaia Salda.³⁴ [...] And it is probably being used somewhere in Moscow... but not in the theatre.

[*Сигарев написал невозможную пьесу. Написанная таким языком, каким говорят в Нижней Салде. [...] И в Москве, наверное, тоже где-то говорят - но не в театре.*] (2003: para. 3 of 4)

In the same article, Koval’skaia cites six lines from the play. The striking point is that her citation contains only one swear-word: the majority of the dialogue consists of casualisms and contractions, such as ‘wh-’ [‘ч’] to replace ‘what’ [‘что’]. This illustration underscores the most significant aspect of the linguistic innovation: it initiated the search for a richness and expressiveness of language, by incorporating vernacular forms including, but not limited to, profanities. As with other innovative artistic devices, the

³³ It is worth noting that Kolyada does not use *mat* (Interview with Shcherbakova 2015): his plays proliferate with colourful derogatory insults which are not drawn from the most obscene lexicon.

³⁴ Nizhnaia Salda is the town in the Urals where Sigarev was born.

post-1998 studio theatres took the lead in producing plays with this radically new approach to the use of language. Even so, the Moscow Arts' staging of the Presniakov Brothers' *Playing the Victim* in 2004 ensured that this new direction was not confined to 'alternative' venues. In particular, one scene in that play — when the Police Captain berates the passivity of the younger generation with an extensive speech filled with expletives³⁵ — was mentioned in six reviews by national critics³⁶ because of the subversion of cultural norms. This legitimising act by the Moscow Arts (of producing *Playing the Victim*) contributed to a gradual normalisation of this new linguistic register, particularly in regional repertory theatres – which used their smaller, second stages to programme plays by the post-Soviet generation (Koval'skaia in Zaslavskii 2015). However, in 2014, the introduction of a law regulating the use of obscene language in live performance and literature – in other words, prohibiting *mat* – led to widespread self-censorship by theatres. In one of the most high profile cases, the Moscow Arts stripped Vyrypaev's *The Drunks* (2014) of its expletives two months *prior* to the legislation's enactment. However, the same company did not remove profanities from its iconic production of *Terrorism* (Freedman 2016: 31), suggesting an unresolved ambivalence by the Artistic Director Oleg Tabakov (2000-ongoing), whose theatre I write about in greater detail in Chapter Three (see pp. 112-33). The independent studio theatres remain a locus of theatrical production where plays with *mat* may continue to be staged, at least those which do not rely on state funding³⁷ such as Teatr.doc, whose management has announced publicly that it would not observe the law (Kiselev 2014). To date, not a single theatre has received an administrative fine or other sanction from this law, suggesting that a degree of variance exists between its conception and execution. Presumably, its very intention is to encourage theatres to implement self-censorship, leading to a more extreme form of the Putin-era political paradigm whereby there is 'censorship for the masses and media-freedom for the intelligentsia'. In this case, the censorship is enacted by the majority of theatres, who act as proxy censors for

³⁵ The play does not delineate scenes by number or title. This scene begins with the stage direction 'A half-empty dining hall of a restaurant serving Japanese cuisine' and ends with 'The Captain stops chewing, becomes pensive, pours himself a drink and drinks it' ['Полупустой зал ресторана японской кухни' [...]'Капитан перестаёт жевать, задумывается, наливает, пьёт'] (18-22 of the unpublished playtext available on *Electronnaia biblioteka Royallib.com*).

³⁶ Source: the digest of reviews on the Teatral'nyi smotritel' website, <http://www.smotr.ru/2004/2004_mhat_zhertva.htm> [accessed 16 April 2016].

³⁷ While the new legislation applies to all theatres, the state has shown an unwillingness to sanction any theatres. However, state-run theatres may be penalized in other ways, such as diminished funding or removal of personnel – in other words, using the Soviet-era mechanisms that I discussed in Chapter One.

the state. Post-Soviet playwrights – at least those intent on artistic innovation and political non-conformism – continue to perceive *mat* as a creative resource. It is worth reiterating that there is a far greater richness and sheer quantity of casual and obscene lexicons in Russian than in English. A review of a Russian academic dictionary of *mat* confirmed the latter point, pointing out that the Russian language obtains ‘help from different prefixes and suffices which may create an unlimited number [of profanities]’ [*с помощью различных приставок и суффиксов можно создать неограниченное число*] (Abashev 1997: para. 2 of 5). These linguistic registers lend themselves to constant reinvention, which may also explain their popularity among the new wave of playwrights, beyond the appeal of cultural subversion. From the perspective of British theatres, the key challenge is to consider how to retain the affective value and formal inventiveness of these informal lexicons. As I discuss in Chapter Four, more flexible approaches to the notion of ‘translation’ may aid this cultural transposition – considering how staging and linguistic transfer are inseparable in this transfer of new plays to the UK.

In search of contemporary characters

After 2000, the new wave of playwrights aimed to challenge another central tenet of theatrical convention on the Russian stage. Theatre-makers who aligned themselves with experimental practice frequently criticised state-run repertory theatres on the basis that their stages did not reflect the socio-economic dynamics of contemporary society (for example, Gremina 2000: para. 2 of 14). This perspective has been well formulated by Rudnev:

The contemporary play [...] tried – from the late 1990s – to return a social theme to theatre; to return the contemporary hero, not dressed in timeless classics, but as he actually is, in contemporary terms.

[Современная пьеса [...] попыталась с конца 90-х вернуть в театр социальную тему, вернуть современного героя, не прикрытого одеждами осовремененной классики, а как он есть на самом деле, в терминах современности.] (2010: para. 4, 5)

One of the key innovations of the post-Soviet generation of playwrights was to incorporate recognisable and specific social prototypes into their work. In the first half of the 2000s, there was a noticeable gravitation towards characters at the extremes: marginalised and disadvantaged socio-economic groups particularly, in other words the ‘outcasts’ from the oligarchic capitalism of the late-Yeltsin and Putin eras, but also,

albeit less frequently, the new elite. Notable examples receiving much critical attention were Rodionov's *The War of the Moldovans over a Cardboard Box* (2003) and *Sober-PR* by Ol'ga Darfi and Ekaterina Narshi (2004). The former recreated the tale of undocumented migrants in Moscow, their scuffles with each other and the police; while the latter provides a platform for political technocrats of Putin's regime to narrate their perspectives on the most enigmatic aspects of contemporary Russian politics. By the late 2000s and early 2010s, theatre-makers began responding to changing class structure, including its expanding middle classes. Eduard Boyakov, Artistic Director of Praktika (2005-13), launched a new project 'Person.doc' [*Человек.doc*] at his theatre, which used verbatim to describe 'contemporary cultural heroes' [*современные культурные герои*] (Zabaluev 2010: para. 3 of 14), who were largely drawn from middle-class prototypes, including a playwright, poet and IT entrepreneur. In 2012, the playwright Sasha Denisova directed her own play *Dusty Day* at the CDR. This work depicted the generational rift between young professionals in their twenties and thirties. In particular, this play appeared to suggest that the former were idealistic and believed in political change, while the latter were materially satisfied but emotionally unfulfilled. Denisova was considering political change – or rather the absence of political change – through the lens of middle-class Russians. Between 2000 and 2014, the playwright-led institutions continued to depict marginalised socio-economic groups, who rarely featured in productions at mainstream theatres, but in order to respond to Russia's changing class structures, dramatists broadened their prototypes to include a more nuanced view of the variegated society which had emerged in the new millennium. A profound understanding of how Russian dramatists were responding to changing social structures may aid British theatres in considering how to respond to the portrayal of social prototypes in various ways: for instance, by adopting broader programming criteria which embraces – and differentiates between – plays portraying society's outcasts, elites or middle classes, in order to reflect not only on Russian political realities but also on Britain's shifting social structures during the same time period (such as the weakened 'middle ground' of politics in favour of right-wing populism or a resurgent radical left).

New Drama's aesthetic innovation: hyper-naturalism

This awareness of an alternative way of working in opposition to mainstream theatrical production created the illusion that the new wave of dramatists shared an ideological purpose. Leading figures within the group actively encouraged that sense of artistic unity in spite of a vast diversity of writing styles possessed by the new wave of dramatists – by attempting to identify a single name for the burgeoning experimental movement. By co-founding the New Drama Festival, Boyakov and Gremina provided a moniker which served as a broad catch-all for the new generation of playwrights. Reflecting on that enterprise, Gremina stated that '[Boyakov] had the idea – to cross-fertilise the energy at the margins [of the theatre industry] with status' [*У него была идея, маргинальная энергия скрестится со статусом*] (Gremina 2014). Her comment is revealing about the tensions within the movement because she attributes the idea to her co-founder, implying a tacit ambivalence about his intention. On another occasion, she explicitly articulated her suspicion of a shared artistic position:

I don't see what unites the plays of Ol'ga Mukhina and Natasha Vorozhbit, the gloomy plays by Urals authors and the cosmic fantasy of Maksim Kurochkin. These are very different playwrights.

[Я не вижу что объединяет пьесы Ольги Мухины и Наташи Ворожбит, мрачных пьес уральских авторов и космической фантазии Максима Курочкина. Это очень разные авторы.] (Smirnova 2010)

In fact, the term 'New Drama' was not the first attempt to forge a single identity. When Russian playwrights were working with the British Council and Royal Court in 1999, they had aspired to find a more direct equivalent to British terminology. Dugdale recalled the discussions in the following way:

We were looking for a title [for the project]. We needed to translate the phrase 'new writing' - and 'novoe pisanie' [lit. 'new writings']³⁸ didn't work at all. I think Lena [Gremina] came up with 'novaia p'esa' [lit. 'the new play']. (Interview with Dugdale 2013)

Dugdale's assertion illuminates the wilful intention by Russian and British collaborators to shape the discourse to mirror the notion of 'new writing' in Britain. The fundamental principle which belied this phrase had been articulated at the first seminar with the Royal Court in March 1999. Dodgson has recounted that event in the following way:

³⁸ I have added these literal translations to Dugdale's citation in square brackets. 'Novoe pisanie' is inelegant or at least inappropriate because the phrase sounds archaic, which appears to be antithetical to the notion of political contemporary playwriting – with its intended contemporaneity.

[Literary Manager (1994-2007)] Graham Whybrow [gave] [...] the keynote speech at the Golden Mask Festival, and he caused quite an upset because he said, “the writer [in theatre] should be the principal artist”. (Interview with Dodgson 2014)

Gremina has characterised his statement as a ‘revolutionary message’ [*‘революционное высказывание’*] (Interview with Gremina 2014) because ‘the Royal Court Theatre arrived in Russia when director-led theatre prevailed’ [*‘Театр Ройял Корт [...] приехал [...] тогда, когда реально господствовал режиссерский театр’*] (Ibid.). According to Gremina, Boyakov’s first initiative to formalise the playwriting movement was to adopt this term ‘novaia p’esa’, whereby he created a legal body called the ‘Association of the New Play’ [*‘ассоциация «Новая пьеса»’*] (Ibid.). His intention was partly pragmatic: a mechanism by which Russian dramatists (including Gremina and Boyakov) could ‘receive money from the state’ [*‘получить деньги от государства’*] (Ibid.). Yet, underlying these efforts was a tacit ideological dichotomy, which would be aired publicly at the end of the 2010s. The primary distinction was not whether playwright or director was the key decision-maker in the creative process, it revolved around an ideological vision of the function of theatre-making as either permitted dissidence or overtly political dissidence.

This divergence among playwright-led studio theatres became evident to the public when the New Drama Festival closed in 2008. In media interviews, opposing sides of the debate discussed conflicting notions of aesthetic intent. The two theatres which hosted this festival throughout its six-year existence – Praktika and Teatr.doc – represented this bifurcation. Boyakov expressed an ideological objection to a continued working partnership with Teatr.doc because its ‘repertoire does not inspire the way it used to. [...] The word “poor” does not work in and of itself’ [*‘сегодня репертуар Театра.doc уже не вдохновляет так, как раньше. [...] [С]лово «бедный» само по себе не работает.’*] (Burmistrova 2009: para. 29, 40). According to Ugarov, he felt unable to collaborate further with Praktika because of its commitment to ‘commercial, very fashionable art’ [*‘коммерческое, очень модное искусство’*] (Ibid.: para. 31). It is revealing that both artistic directors discuss aesthetic differences rather than ideological ones, presumably a reluctance to criticise their former partners (the statements they gave to the press were noticeably brief). The fact that Boyakov and Ugarov’s companies were able to work together for six years suggests that, between 2000 and 2014, works of permitted dissidence and overtly dissident playwriting existed on a continuum rather

than as distinctive categories. By 2014, in light of the ultra-conservative political landscape, theatre-makers were less reticent to state political allegiance publicly. As I discuss further in Chapter Three, the dissident company Teatr.doc became more firmly entrenched in its position as stand-bearer of overtly political theatre, while Kolyada-Theatre used allegorical and aesthetic strategies to pioneer its own form of ‘permitted dissidence’. Not all of the community of theatre-makers remained critical of the state’s ideology. Boyakov rejected his former position of permitted dissidence, by openly espousing a pro-governmental stance. In 2013, Boyakov left Praktika and rejected non-conformist dramatic writing altogether. By 2015, he came to define himself as a “‘new conservative’ and an Orthodox Christian’ (Jonson 2016: 664), curating two fine art exhibitions which idealised neo-classical forms – a total rejection of non-conformist art and, by implication, playwriting (Ibid.: 663, 5). After 2014, a fractured theatre landscape emerged, where playwrights and directors were forced to state their ideological position.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have depicted the advent of postdramatic forms into Russian theatre in the late 1990s and 2000s. This occurred because of a confluence of factors: the stagnant theatre sector mostly resorting to ‘bourgeois’ commercialism; a post-Soviet generation objecting ideologically to authoritarian politics and social injustice; the opportunity for Russian playwrights to work in ‘open stage’ festivals and studios, without the pressure to draw upon existing post-Soviet theatrical conventions; and the influence of Russian traditions (such as Kolyada’s dramatic innovations) as well as Hollywood art-house films, in-her-face British playwriting and verbatim, particularly around 1999-2000. In terms of cross-cultural theatre practice, Russian playwrights were ‘joining’ a broader cultural dialogue, so that by 2010 there were ‘people across the globe following carefully what is being written in Russia as they search for the “next big thing”’ (Freedman 2010: 419-20). Yet, this global cultural capital should not disguise cultural and aesthetic difference. The umbrella approach of ‘the postdramatic’ – as a non-universalising philosophy – should not reduce dramatic writing to one category, other than in historical terms, as a postmodern movement away from the belief in the inevitability of human progress and an ‘objective’ reality. In terms of translation – including programming and directing – British theatres should not assume equivalence in seemingly comparable forms. The

hyper-naturalism of Russian dramatic writing as the dominant aesthetic since 2000 proposes the text as a 'performative object', which implies hyper-naturalist acting and a non-realist stage language. So, for instance, Russian non-conformist writing envisages a stage language, created by a director who is versed in hyper-naturalist forms. Hyper-naturalism exists in British theatre in the sphere of performance art (or 'live art' as it has come to be known in the UK, particularly since the development of the London-based Live Art Development Agency in 1999)³⁹ – but it is not normative theatrical practice. However, British (and international) live art has begun incrementally to influence directors working in mainstream venues through the 2000s in the UK,⁴⁰ offering a greater opportunity to programme contemporary Russian plays in ways which will capture the most radical potential that they offer as disruptive interventions into a 'realist' theatre paradigm.

I offer some illustrations from my own practice (or rather, ideas which have occurred to me during this doctoral project as opportunities for future practice), in order to clarify the act of translation which I am proposing in relation to stage direction and linguistic translation. Firstly, hyper-naturalist productions which appear 'unstageable' to British programmers could be interpreted through 'alternative' British traditions. In one of my (usually) annual trips to Russia around 2009, I watched Vyrypaev's *July* at Praktika Theatre in Moscow, and disliked it intensely. *July* is a lyrical monologue about 'a maniac who kills everybody he encounters and who often devours his victims' (Beumers and Lipovetsky 2009: 255). Subsequently, I realised that my 'rejection' of the performance was a reiteration of normative British programming which is suspicious of non-realist plays. Nick Williams, Executive Director of ATC (2011-6), who produced Vyrypaev's *Illusions* for two national tours in 2012 and 2013, has characterised *July* as:

a belligerent play [...] it's a difficult ask [for British audiences], and I suspect it would do very badly with the critics [...] and it would be a very difficult part to cast, there are very few actresses who would be willing to take it on. (Interview with Williams 2016)

³⁹ Source: <<http://www.thisisliveart.co.uk/about>> [accessed 5 September 2017].

⁴⁰ The Royal Court exemplifies this development, incorporating 'live art'-inspired works in the late 2000s and early 2010s, such as the audience-responsive productions by Tim Crouch. For instance, Crouch's *The Author* at the Royal Court in 2009, had two banks of seating, positioning the audience so that they are facing each other. While critics and audience members questioned why the dramatist did not make use of the stage, Crouch has pointed out in an interview that 'this *is* the stage, *this* is the stage' (Crouch in LePage 2012: 21). In other words, he situates the audience within the playing space, both literally and figuratively: their vocal and facial responses become part of the production.

There is good reason to challenge this normative practice – which Williams observes and has known ‘from the inside’ as a producer, trying to circumvent it with a somewhat more conventional but still difficult text, Vyrypaev’s *Illusions*, which might be described as ‘an experimental rom-com’, not least the disruption of British theatrical convention. I am generally advocating for ‘foreignisation’ within this doctoral project – but when a specialist company such as ATC, dedicated to contemporary experimental texts, considers an artistically rich and formally innovative drama to be ‘a difficult ask’, an act of domestication seems worth considering (as part of a nuanced negotiation around cultural otherness). The production of *July* at Praktika directed by Vyrypaev in 2006 offered a rapid, hyper-naturalist delivery by actor Polina Agureeva – which seemed to be at the time to be very ‘artificial’. It strikes me that an act of translation could transfer *July* into a stage language at least partly familiar to British audiences, by evoking for example the visual style forged by Beckett’s *Not I* – where the performer’s mouth alone is lit up on stage. This presentation would not make the contemporary Russian play overly comfortable since Beckett’s work still appears experimental in the British theatre landscape, at least by the conventions of social realism. By using lighting to highlight the performer in a surreal way, for example, only her mouth and eyes, it would provide a set of visual parameters providing a feeling of continuity with known conventions. My inclination is generally towards ‘foreignisation’, but I use this as an illustration that a broader act of translation – of *stage language* and theatrical tradition rather than merely text – offers a richer set of opportunities to theatres, consequently enabling more creative programming practices.

Directing and rehearsal processes themselves could also be ‘translated’ in order to create formally innovative work. At a seminar *Playwriting Beyond Borders* on 6-7 April 2017 at Oxford University⁴¹, which I co-organised, I directed a rehearsed reading of a play called *Time of Women* by Natalia Kaliada, co-Artistic Director of Belarus Free Theatre. This drama is based on real events about three female journalists imprisoned in Belarus after public demonstrations in 2010. As is the norm in the UK, I rehearsed for one day with British actors so that they could read this play, script-in-hand, in front of an audience. A conference participant from Belarus (who I will not name since this exchange was informal) told me that the actors – although skilful and professional – had

⁴¹ The programme can be found at: <<https://www.facebook.com/playwritingwithoutborders>> [accessed 6 August 2017].

not captured the affective value of the text because they had not experienced life in Belarus (i.e. the sensation of living in a nominally democratic but *de facto* authoritarian state).⁴² However, I interpreted her statement differently – in relation to the craft of directing. I had watched the Belarussian production *of Time of Women* by Belarus Free Theatre as a video⁴³ – and noticed a comparable hyper-naturalism to that which is practiced by experimental theatre-makers in Russia.⁴⁴ Molly Flynn, the scholar and also actor who lived in Russia in 2012 and performed in productions at the Sakharov Centre,⁴⁵ experienced first-hand the rehearsal processes of hyper-naturalism and describes them in this way:

The most important direction was to read the text and not act. [...] Certainly there was no intention of the willing suspension of disbelief. There was never the idea that the audience would think we were speaking our own stories. (Interview with Flynn 2014)

As a director, I have not yet engaged with hyper-naturalist acting styles – and so I overlooked a key affective potential of these texts. I witnessed hyper-naturalist acting in Gray's production of Vyrypaev's *Illusions* for ATC in 2012 at the Shoreditch Town Hall, although, interestingly, he did not employ that style in his production of Sigarev's *Ladybird* at the Royal Court in 2004, a production for which I was assistant director. However skilful and minimal the acting in *Ladybird* was (as I recall it), it was not hyper-naturalist (i.e. inviting a dialogic communication with the specific audience which attended at each performance). In part, Gray's divergent directing approaches may reflect different properties of those texts: in *Illusions*, four actors address the audience directly – so it is more obviously suited to hyper-naturalism and dialogic communication than *Ladybird*, with its somewhat more conventional (and at times even sentimental) narrative of poverty among socio-economically 'marginalised' characters in provincial

⁴² Situated at the eastern edge of Europe, former Soviet country Belarus gained independence in 1991. The President, Aleksandr Lukashenko, was a former member of the Communist Party – and has held office since 1994, at least partly through the use of political repression.

⁴³ This video was sent to me by Natal'ia Kaliada prior to rehearsals. It is not publicly available but a review of the production, after a London showing, is available: <<https://www.theguardian.com/stage/2015/nov/10/time-of-women-review-belarus-free-theatre-staging-a-revolution-young-vic>> [accessed 11 August 2017].

⁴⁴ Cultural exchange is common between Russian and Belarussian theatre-makers – at least those who are pursuing experimental forms. I first met members of Belarus Free Theatre in 2005 in Togliatti – at the May Reading Festival where I watched *Slow Sword*.

⁴⁵ The Theatre Programme at the Sakharov Centre ran from 2012-4. It was headed up by Mikhail Kaluzhskii – who made his first productions at Teatr.doc. Kaluzhskii is also co-author of *Grandchildren. The Second Act*, which is one of my four play translations for this doctoral project.

Russia. Even so, it is worth noting that Gray's discovery of hyper-naturalism came when he was at ATC – a small-scale company with less 'weight of tradition', enabling him to experiment and respond more directly to all aspects of foreign texts. Besides the decision to programme *Illusions*, with its complete rejection of 'fourth wall' realism, Gray responded creatively to its implicit hyper-naturalist acting styles. Taking account of the 'original' directing process may offer another route for British theatres to engage in acts of translation, not only staging contemporary Russian plays but also drawing upon contemporary directing traditions by non-conformist playwright-directors.

Finally, Sasha Dugdale has noted the difficulty of the linguistic rendition of contemporary Russian plays, in relation to her practice at the Royal Court in 2002-3 as the primary translator of new Russian work at that theatre after she had moved back to the UK in 2000:

The obscenity of the language is also so extreme and heightened that in Russia's linguistically conservative theatre tradition it seems grotesque, and even stylized. Unfortunately this was not the case in my English translation. We, on the contrary, have such a long tradition of grim reality that the obscenities, to my ears, sounded like nothing more than an episode of soap opera, and the violence was also standard TV fare. All Sigarev plays have been received and reviewed as social comment in the United Kingdom. (Dugdale in Beumers and Lipovetsky 2009: 21)

Her observations capture the difficulty of rendering hyper-natural texts, and specifically the Russian-specific lexicon of obscene words – *mat*, as discussed earlier. When reflecting on this difficulty, Dugdale has noted methods which she has employed in more recent translations as an attempt to accommodate this cultural difference:

In earlier translations I felt too bound to the text to do anything other than translate the "intensity" of the lines, but in more recent translations (*Ahasverus* and *The Top/Wolfy* [*Volchok*]) I have made an attempt to stylize the dialogue, and I have even experimented with "toning down" the language to find a way of creating the same exuberant foulness in English. English reaches a plateau with "fuck" and "cunt", both of which have a flattening effect and lose their force entirely when liberally used. (Ibid.: 21-22)

While these linguistic experiments are significant – and contribute to the burgeoning field of dramatic translation scholarship – I would suggest that other 'solutions' lie, as I have attempted to suggest throughout this chapter, in reconfiguring the act of translation as part of an all-encompassing process of cultural transfer. These difficulties of linguistic translation may be partly resolved in the language but not entirely, since

Russian can never turn wholesale into English. A 'total' act of translation is required – whereby cultural 'otherness' is observed and translated through stage language and directing practices, as well as through language.

CHAPTER THREE FOUR COMPETING VISIONS OF POST-SOVIET THEATRE

Introduction

In this chapter, I extend my investigation into the interface between institutional realities and artistic practice, by considering the work of four Russian theatres between 2000 and 2014 – against the backdrop of shifting socio-political realities: the Moscow Arts (Moscow), the Sovremennik (Moscow), Teatr.doc (Moscow) and the Kolyada-Theatre (Ekaterinburg). In the Introduction to this thesis, I described how I selected these four companies, both in order to explore the similarities and differences between the two dominant institutional ‘types’ that play a role in producing work by non-conformist dramatists in Russia, and as a function of my own role as participant-observer with pre-existing professional networks.¹ In order to extend the theme of my main argument, I consider the development of aesthetic directions by my case study theatres in relation to cultural materialism. In other words, this chapter investigates *aesthetics* as a site of ideology within a multi-faceted framework which circumvents (as far as is possible) a singular and reductive narrative. In this chapter, I emphasise elements of cultural materialism which were available to me through my fieldwork interviews and archival research: the semiotics of architecture; the urban positioning of these companies; a profile of their target audiences; organisational structures in relation to artistic programming including employment practice (the use of paid/unpaid labour); significant aesthetic shifts between 2000 and 2014 by each company in relation to the programming of contemporary plays; significant institutional changes between 2000 and 2014 including institutional responses to state-led cultural policies; and organisational budgets including patterns of financial dependence. With these four case studies, I aim to provide a portrait of contemporary non-conformist playwriting in Russia – building upon and developing the work of Chapter One and Chapter Two – that circumvents the binarism of existing scholarly accounts. Specifically, I qualify the notion of ‘non-conformist playwriting’ in order to investigate two dominant movements: New Drama and the Urals School of Playwriting. So far in this thesis, I have focussed primarily – almost exclusively – on the former. New Drama consists of work produced by Moscow-based institutions and it is characterised broadly by formally and politically-charged theatrical innovation. Precisely because of its radically disruptive aesthetic strategies as

¹ Please see pp. 18-22 – for an explanation of how I selected these four theatres.

well as its dissident ideology, this variation of non-conformist dramatic writing has offered the greatest innovation in the Russian theatre landscape. Yet, this chapter aims also to address the stylistic and linguistic experiments of the Urals School of Playwriting. With its underlying ideology of ‘permitted dissidence’, this other dominant ‘type’ of non-conformist playwriting has had a significant impact on theatre-making in Russia by striking more of a compromise aesthetically and ideologically with mainstream cultural discourse. I use my four case studies to document the development of New Drama and the Urals School of Playwriting at Teatr.doc in Moscow and the Kolyada-Theatre in Ekaterinburg, respectively, while also considering how two repertory theatres in Moscow responded to those movements.

Overall, I envisage theatre as a public space where ideological conflict plays out, which I have evidenced through the prism of non-conformist playwriting. The artistic leaders of each of my case study theatres perceive their companies as being ideologically opposed to the political elites, albeit to different extents. The manner in which they embody this stance reveals a range of conceptualisations of culture: as a largely apolitical but ‘moralising’ force (the Moscow Arts), as a gently subversive mechanism within limitations prescribed by upper and middle-class notions of ‘good taste’ (the Sovremennik), as political activism (Teatr.doc) and as a catalyst for advancing a regional, anti-establishment identity among Urals-based audiences, designed to trouble the intellectual elite’s conventions of ‘good taste’ (the Kolyada-Theatre). These ‘visions’ of culture play out in all spheres of the companies’ work, not only in their artistic practice but also in the material experience that they offer to audiences. I make a detailed investigation of these diverse cultural materialist realities – both on and off stage – and I conclude this chapter by contextualising the case studies against the broader theatre ecology in Russia, as well as reflecting upon the opportunities made available to British theatres through a study of Russian artistic practice (as perceived through the lens of cultural materialism), particularly in relation to programming.

Case Study One. The Moscow Arts Theatre named after A. P. Chekhov.

Official name of Theatre	Moscow Arts Theatre named after A. P. Chekhov
Popular name(s), if relevant	MXT, MKhT, The Chekhov Moscow Arts, The Moscow Arts

Year founded	1898
Current Artistic Director	Oleg Tabakov (since 2000; and <i>direktor</i> since 2004-ongoing)
<p data-bbox="316 398 475 427">Brief history:</p> <ul data-bbox="363 506 738 701" style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="363 506 655 535">• Founding of theatre <li data-bbox="363 562 485 591">• Name <li data-bbox="363 618 738 647">• Relationship to officialdom <li data-bbox="363 674 679 703">• Geographical location 	<p data-bbox="778 398 1278 479">Founded by Konstantin Stanislavsky and Vladimir Nemirovich-Danchenko.</p> <p data-bbox="778 506 1278 535">The original name was The Moscow Arts</p> <p data-bbox="778 562 1337 642">Popularly-Accessible Theatre [<i>Московский Художественный-Общедоступный Театр</i>].</p> <p data-bbox="778 669 1353 1980">In 1901, the theatre dropped the words ‘Popularly-Accessible’ from its name after the state banned its initiatives to run ‘morning shows’ [<i>утренники</i>] for labourers (Mokul’skii 1964: 958). In 1919, the Bolshevik government endowed this company with the epithet ‘Academic’ [<i>Академический</i>] – a sign of official approval. An even greater honour was bestowed under Stalin, when this company became one of only three in Russia to have ‘USSR’ [<i>СССР</i>] following its name – along with the Bolshoi and the Maly Theatres (Interview with Smeliansky 2014). During the same period, the Moscow Arts Academic Theatre USSR was named after the writer Maxim Gorky (Ibid.). In the late Soviet period, the Moscow Arts split into two companies. From 1987, half of the troupe remained in the original building, changing its name to the Chekhov Moscow Arts (which is my case study theatre). The other members of the troupe moved to a building on Tverskoi bul’var and retained its original title – the Gorky Moscow Arts. In 2004, under the current artistic director, the Chekhov Moscow Arts ceased to use the term ‘Academic’.</p>

	<p>This theatre was established as a private enterprise taking advantage of the law of 1882, which ended the monopoly of Imperial theatres (Ushkarev 2011: 143). Its founders purposefully created their company ‘in opposition to the Imperial stage[s]’ [<i>на противостоянии императорской сцене</i>] (Interview with Smeliansky 2014). Its institutional status – and relationship to the state – changed when the Bolshevik government forcibly closed all private theatres in 1917 (UShkarev 2011: 158). The Soviet government ‘appropriated’ [<i>присвоили</i>] (Interview with Smeliansky 2014) this theatre. The Moscow Arts remained as an officially sanctioned company from 1917 until the end of the Soviet period. In the post-Soviet period, the Moscow Arts continued to be a state-run company, albeit with institutional independence in relation to artistic and financial decision-making.</p> <p>Originally, the company had a temporary base at the Hermitage Theatre on Karetnyi Row. In 1902, it found a permanent home in Kamergerskii Lane, where the Chekhov Moscow Arts continues to reside at the time of writing (September 2017).</p>
Names and sizes of auditoria	<p>Main Stage: 851. Small Stage: 260. New Stage: 140 [Opened in 2001].</p>
Mission statement	<p>‘The real birth of the Moscow Arts Theatre is connected with the playwriting of Chekhov [...] and Gorky. Working on these plays led to the</p>

	formation of a new type of actor, subtly conveying the characters' psychology; to developing directing principles which created an acting ensemble' [<i>Подлинное рождение МХТ связано с драматургией А. П. Чехова [...] и М. Горького. В работе над этими спектаклями сформировался новый тип актёра, тонко передающего особенности психологии героя, сложились принципы режиссуры, добивающейся актёрского ансамбля</i>]. ²
Number of paid employees in organisation in 2014 (excluding creative personnel)	330 ³
Number of actors in permanent ensemble in 2014	97
Number of creative personnel employed including directors and production team in 2014	15
Estimated number of volunteers in 2014	0
Modes of advertising	Paid advertising and social media. ⁴
Website	< http://www.mxat.ru >

(i) *Urban positioning and audience*

² Source: <<http://www.mxat.ru>> [accessed 22 December 2016].

³ The company's website listed only seven paid employees when I obtained these figures in 2014 – which appears to represent only the most hierarchically important posts, rather than all administrative personnel at the theatre. My interview with Igor' Popov, Deputy *Direktor* at the Moscow Arts (2004-14) revealed that there were approximately 330 employees in the company's administration (Interview with Kuznetsova and Popov 2015). However, his figure included front-of-house staff, such as ushers. This theatre was willing to provide more accurate statistics, representing solely administrative staff, responsible for organisational issues such as programming, marketing and accountancy.

⁴ This theatre was not willing to provide figures representing the level of resources allocated for paid advertising, or its relative proportion, compared to social media.

A ten-minute stroll, walking north from Red Square, there is a road branching off to the right called Kamergerskii Lane. It is a pedestrian road, lined with restaurants, and home to the Moscow Arts Theatre named after A. P. Chekhov (henceforth the Moscow Arts). The impressive Imperial-era façade is a reminder that this building, as well as the world-famous company working inside it, pre-dates communism. According to Anatoly Smeliansky, First Deputy to the Artistic Director since the mid-1980s, the first two decades of this theatre's existence, before the Bolsheviks came to power, 'those were [its] great years' [*Классические годы до революции – это были [его] великие годы!*] (Interview with Smeliansky 2014). That period has attained a mythical status in Russian and indeed western theatre history, primarily because of Konstantin Stanislavsky's canonical productions of Chekhov's plays. As a consequence, in the post-Soviet period, the Moscow Arts continued to occupy a special place in the cultural landscape. The prominent critic Marina Davydova described the company as a 'theatre with the status of a national treasure' [*театр, имеющий статус национального достояния!*] (Ushkarev 2011: 155), while another reviewer, Natal'ia Kuz'mina, suggested that the Moscow Arts is 'not just a theatre but a symbol of theatre' [*[Н]е просто театр, но символ театра!*] (Ibid.: 59). This status is enhanced by several affiliate institutions within the same building: the prestigious Moscow Arts School-Studio (established by the theatre's co-founder Vladimir Nemirovich-Danchenko in 1943) which is one of the most famous drama schools in Russia; the museum created in 1923 (and based within the theatre's premises since 1947), serving an archival as well as an educational function; and a publishing house serving an academic-pedagogical purpose.⁵

As Artistic Director since 2000 (ongoing), Oleg Tabakov has acted to revitalise the association in the public's mind between the theatre under his own tenure and its historical legacy. In 2004, he dropped the word 'Academic' [*академический*] from the company's name,⁶ thereby reinstating the legendary, Imperial-era designation 'Moscow Arts Theatre' (Ushkarev 2011: 61). Exactly a decade later, another initiative by the artistic director came to fruition. In 2014, the City authorities accepted Tabakov's

⁵ Sources: <<http://mhatschool.theatre.ru>> [accessed 14 August 2017]; <<http://www.museum.ru/M378>> [accessed 14 August 2017]; <<http://library.mxat.ru/books>> [accessed 14 August 2017].

⁶ In the Russian cultural context, 'academic' does not equate to 'scholarly' – it was a designation introduced by the Bolshevik government to offer official approval to theatres perceived as combining ideological loyalty with high artistic achievement. The implication is that 'academic' theatres maintained established theatrical traditions, influencing academic discourse (rather than serving as independent 'academic' institutions) through their work and – in some cases – with publishing houses and museums.

proposal for a new statue of the co-founders Vladimir Nemirovich-Danchenko and Stanislavsky, to be erected near the Moscow Arts. The resulting monument was established in a location which ensured maximum visibility from the thoroughfare of Tverskaia Street but within sight of the theatre's doors (Iurinskaia 2014: para.1 of 6). Tabakov was not merely concerned with historical legacy. In a media interview, he cited two key strategies for attracting audiences to his venue: the first was the 'myth of the Arts theatre' [*'миф Художественного театра'*] (Filippov 2003). The second of Tabakov's key tactics, in his own words, was to maintain an ensemble of 'actors beloved by audiences' [*'полюбившиеся зрителям актеры'*] (Ibid.). Oleg Bogaeв, the playwright and Editor of the *Ural* journal (2011-ongoing), has provided a less positive assessment of that approach:

Tabakov chose a route of commercialisation. [...] He invited famous actors from film series, perhaps not very good ones [...] The quality [of productions] suffers.

[*Табаков выбрал путь на коммерциализацию. [...] Он позвал себе в театр всех киносерийных известных актеров, может быть не очень хорошие [...] Качество страдает.*] (Interview with Bogaeв 2015)

These two key strategies, adopted by Tabakov, do not exclude experimentation and innovation but nor do they actively encourage them. The first relies on a degree of continuity with theatrical traditions. The second reiterates existing modes of cultural production: famous actors have normally trained at the established drama schools, tutored by pedagogues with experience in the leading theatres. Igor' Zolotovskii, the Rector of the Moscow Arts School-Studio since 2014 did not shy away from describing his institution as 'conservative' [*'консервативна'*] (Kvasnitskaia 2015: para. 10 of 29). The School-Studio is designed, in part, to provide new actors to join the Moscow Arts's ensemble. According to Igor' Popov, Deputy *Direktor* at the Moscow Arts (2004-14) and *Direktor* at the *Sovremennik* (2014-ongoing), each year around twenty graduating performers join a year-long, paid internship, in the so-called Trainee Group [*'Стажерская группа'*], after which a small number of them are offered full-time contracts at this theatre (Interview with Kuznetsova and Popov 2015). This mechanism represents one way to shape the tastes, or at least expectations, of a new generation of actors joining the theatre, in order to provide audiences with a continuity of tradition. Tabakov's practice of programming reveals a slightly more nuanced picture, which provides some scope for experimentation, as I discuss below. In broad terms, though,

Tabakov attempted to marry artistic achievement with commercial success. That approach allowed him to fulfil one of his primary aims, which he articulated repeatedly in interviews from the outset of his tenure (for example, Zaslavskii 2000: para. 7 of 9): to fill his theatre's auditoria to their capacity. After a decade at the helm, Tabakov boasted an average of 97%-98% attendance at every show since 2002 (Iurinskaia 2010: para. 6 of 7).

The management has identified material privilege as the overriding characteristic of audiences attending Moscow Arts productions. According to Smeliansky:

It is undoubtedly a so-called bourgeois elite [which attends the theatre] [...] the so-called New Russians because [...] tickets are very expensive.

[Это безусловно так называемые буржуазная элита, [...] так называемые "новые русские", потому что [...] очень дорогие билеты.] (Interview with Smeliansky 2014)

The term 'New Russians' is revealing because it refers to individuals within Russia's establishment who gained their privileged position after 1991, largely by benefiting from the privatisations of state assets in the mid-1990s. The theatre's self-perception, as articulated by Smeliansky (Ibid.), can be summarised as: business elites attend the Main Stage, intellectual elites attend the Small Stage and a younger generation of educated elites attends the New Stage. A sociological survey of this theatre's audiences conducted by a group of academics⁷ between 2000 and 2007, partly confirmed Smeliansky's view, at least in relation to educational privilege: over 79% of spectators had a higher education (Ushkarev 2011: 306). Yet, this statistic also indicates that a significant percentage of the audiences are not educationally privileged (21%). The varied ticket prices between 500 roubles and 5000 roubles,⁸ or approximately 7 GBP and 70 GBP,⁹

⁷ Evgeniia Sokolova, based at the Government Institute for the Study of the Arts, has described the methodology and results in the resulting publication, which documents their research (Ushkarev 2011: 265). Source: <<http://sias.ru/institute/persons/1374.html>> [accessed 16 November 2016]

⁸ Throughout this thesis, I have worked out all currency rates using <<http://www.xe.com>>, unless otherwise stated. If no date of currency conversion is indicated, I have used the currency rate as at the time of writing: 71.77 roubles to the pound. In all cases, I have attempted to round figures up or down, to the nearest unit, which makes for a simpler comparison, without overly forgoing accuracy.

⁹ It is worth noting that there was a dramatic drop in the rouble on the international currency market in 2015, partly in response to the drop in global oil prices as well as sanctions imposed by western countries in relation to Russia's military invasion of eastern Ukraine. The rouble approximately doubled its exchange rate with western currencies in relation to pre-2015 rates, without a corresponding reduction of monetary value within Russian society. By pre-2015 figures, the range of ticket prices would have been approximately 9 GBP and 95 GBP based on a historical rate of 52.89 roubles per pound, as of 11 March 2015. Subsequently, I do

also suggests that this theatre caters to a relatively broad socio-economic range.¹⁰ That picture of the Moscow Arts contrasts, at least partly, to Smeliansky's characterisation of this venue as solely the preserve of the middle classes and business elites. Furthermore, as a consequence of Tabakov's emphasis on attaining commercial success with star-name actors (and plays which serve as vehicles for those stars), his tenure witnessed a broadening of the Moscow Arts' audience base beyond traditional theatre-goers. The same survey as cited above demonstrated that non-regular theatre-goers constituted 54% of the company's spectators (Ushkarev 2011: 310).¹¹ This statistic suggests that this company attracts a majority of audiences who tend to consume 'mass entertainment' – where theatre serves as a substitute for film or other leisure activities. These non-regular theatre-goers do not fit neatly into categorisations of social class since – using the statistics above – a majority of the non-regular theatre-goers must be educationally-privileged. As I explore below, this company's programming caters to this ambivalence at the heart of this company's work – where works of 'high art' for the intelligentsia are positioned alongside populist, commercially-oriented hits. The significant point, in relation to the subject of my research, is that, between 2000 and 2014, this theatre encompassed a diverse range of spectators, which included both establishment and 'mass' audiences as well as attracting a younger generation of educated elites. The latter – which may be defined as a cultural elite (often with an ambivalent relationship towards the political and business elites) – included spectators from the post-Soviet generation with an appetite for New Drama, allowing this company to sporadically programme plays by the new wave of dramatists on its Small and New Stages.

(ii) The process of artistic programming

Who is selecting the plays?

not recalculate currency figures, but it may be noted that ticket prices were relatively higher, by western standards, than they may appear when using current exchange rates.

¹⁰ The 'top end' ticket price of 70 GBP appears approximately equivalent to West End pricing of tickets (which are often between 50 and 100 GBP for popular, commercial 'hits'). However, this comparison overlooks the long-standing tradition of state subsidy in Russia – comparable to a continental European tradition, which maintains ticket prices lower than commercial rates. In other words, the Moscow Arts has aligned its Mainstage productions (which extend to the upper limit of 70GBP unlike the Small and New Stages) with western 'commercial' models of theatrical production, both in terms of pricing but also by extension in terms of audience expectation around production quality, including 'star' actors (requiring high fees) and new technologies employed on-stage.

¹¹ The survey does not contrast this figure with audience composition prior to Tabakov's tenure.

Tabakov is a flamboyant and famous actor of both the stage and the screen, with perhaps the most recognised voice in Russia. Russians who grew up on a diet of Soviet cartoons associate the artistic director with the charming but cunning ‘Sailor Cat’ [*‘Ком Матроскин’*], and like his famous alter ego, he is a savvy character who values talent and success. He is reputed to be a phenomenally hard worker: many critics commented on the high productivity of the Moscow Arts after 2000 (for example, with its newfound emphasis on the quantity, as well as quality, of productions). Concurrent to his work at this theatre, he remained the Artistic Director of the Studio-Theatre of O. Tabakov, or popularly ‘the Tabakerka’ (1978-ongoing) – which he founded and ran as an ‘underground’ venue before this smaller institution gained official recognition in 1986.¹² The latter served a useful recruiting ground for new talent: the director Konstantin Bogomolov collaborated with Tabakov at the Tabakerka on Ostrovsky’s *Wolves and Sheep* (2009), before being invited to the Moscow Arts. The artistic director joined the Moscow Arts’ acting ensemble in 1983 and continues to act regularly in Main Stage productions; he does not direct. His widespread ‘fame’ as an actor makes him one of the theatre’s biggest box office draws.

Tabakov is supported by a number of individuals. While the Moscow Arts does not have a literary manager as such, it has a first deputy, whose original job title in 1983 was, in fact, Literary Manager. As well as maintaining a prominent position at this theatre, Smeliansky is also widely considered to be one of Russia’s best and most prolific theatre historians.¹³ According to this first deputy’s account, the mechanics of play selection at the Moscow Arts can be characterised as follows:

The idea [for each production] generally appears in a narrow circle of the theatre’s management, more often than not from the suggestion of a particular director whom we have seen, more rarely from a playwright, [...] sometimes Tabakov suggests [a play], sometimes I do [...] it very rarely comes from the actors.

[Идея [для каждого спектакля] рождается прежде всего в узком кругу руководства театра, чаще всего идет от предложения какого-то режиссера, которого мы видим, реже от драматурга, [...] иногда Табаков предлагает [пьесу], [иногда] я предлагаю [...] [от] актер[ов] – очень редко.] (Interview with Smeliansky 2014)

¹² Source: <<http://www.tabakov.ru/theatre/history>> [accessed 17 November 2016].

¹³ Smeliansky is editor of the Moscow Arts’ publishing house – providing a whole ‘ecosystem’, whereby he can influence scholarly discourse around this company’s work through editorial decisions.

Tabakov has acknowledged his dependence as a programmer on directors, referring to himself humorously as an ‘anti-crisis manager’ [*‘антикризисный менеджер’*] (D’iakova 2015: para. 18 of 24). As a normative practice, Tabakov invites a specific director to work at the theatre: the latter proposes a play for production. As a consequence, the role of invited directors at the Moscow Arts is key to understanding the company’s aesthetic since 2000.

The theatre’s aesthetic

Between 2000 and 2014, the Chekhov Moscow Arts offered a diverse artistic programme which lacked a consistent vision. When invited to articulate an aesthetic during interviews, Tabakov tended towards broad definitions such as the programming of ‘works which [...] help to answer the burning [...] questions’ [*‘произведения, которые [...] помогают ответить на жгучие [...] вопросы’*] (Ushkarev 2011: 60) and ‘the combining of civic content with an intelligent troupe’ [*‘в соединении с гражданским содержанием интеллигентной труппы’*](Filippov 2001: para. 19 of 19). There was one phrase which recurred frequently in Tabakov’s description of his theatre’s productions, namely that they were ‘created here and now’ [*‘сделан[ы] здесь и сейчас’*] (Ushkarev 2011: 183). The composite picture which emerges is of an artistic director determined to programme works which spoke to contemporary audiences not thematically but *aesthetically*. Whether Tabakov was committed to a single aesthetic himself, or whether he strategically distanced himself from his own aesthetic (as he suggested in an interview: Zaslavskii 2000: para. 7 of 9) is a moot point. In a chameleon-like fashion, the Moscow Arts under Tabakov – an actor-artistic director, unlike his predecessors¹⁴ – adopted diverse theatrical styles in order to respond creatively to the ever-changing *Zeitgeist*.

¹⁴ The company’s founding artistic director Stanislavsky was an actor-turned-director; Tabakov’s predecessor Oleg Efremov (1972-2000) was also actor-turned-director. In Russia, directors train alongside actors within a single ‘workshop’ [*‘мастерская’*]. It is not remarkable that most directors started out as actors because their training lends itself precisely to that professional trajectory. What is worth observing is that Tabakov has never routinely directed plays (only on rare occasion and usually only outside of Russia), placing his artistic vision into a more dependent position in relation to the directors whom he hires. Instead, this artistic director retained his status as leading actor at the Moscow Arts – appearing in many of the most prominent productions.

Rather than imposing his own aesthetic on the theatre, Tabakov cherry-picked nationally prominent directors to shape his repertoire, both in form and content. It is worth noting that his strategy consisted of identifying collaborators among those who have already achieved critical recognition or popular renown. The critic Kuz'mina illustrated this point at a roundtable in Moscow in 2007, providing almost a dozen examples of actors, directors and playwrights invited to work at the Moscow Arts *after* receiving good reviews or popular acclaim for their work at other theatres (Ushkarev 2011:164). Critics and theatre-makers have tended to perceive this artistic director as being inclined towards intellectually-light, commercially-oriented plays (for example, Bogaev 2015; Davydova in Ushkarev 2011: 155). It is correct that Tabakov introduced the genre of light entertainment to the theatre, for the first time in its history, particularly on the Main stage, with commercially successful playwrights like Ray Cooney. However, this tendency was only ever one part of his programme, designed to fill the auditoria to maximum capacity. Kuz'mina has described how his strategy – of selecting critically acclaimed directors, playwrights and actors who would shape his aesthetic – makes 'each new season [seem like] a new toy for the public [*'каждый сезон – новая игрушка для публики'*] (Ushkarev 2011: 164). She also describes how a director hired by the theatre provided one high quality production, followed by others of a diminishing artistic quality (Ibid.: 165). Although Kuz'mina does not state the point explicitly, her implication is important and worth articulating. While Tabakov was not conservative in his tastes *per se*, he inclined towards relatively risk-averse programming. His normative practice was to promote innovation by supporting already-successful experimenters. Effectively, he out-sourced risk-taking to other venues.

An analysis of the databox¹⁵ and the Moscow Art's relationship to new plays

In his public statements, Tabakov made it clear from the outset that contemporary playwriting would have a substantial place at his theatre. He intended to draw upon texts from all eras so that while the Moscow Arts would 'continue to remain [as] the home of Chekhov, it will also become [...] the home of contemporary playwriting, without which theatre does not exist' [*'продолжая оставаться домом Чехова, станет и [...] домом современной драматургии, без которой не существует*

¹⁵ See Appendix I, pp. 433-4. The databox contains a full list of premieres between 2000 and 2014 as well as a typology of those productions.

meamp’] (Korneeva 2001: para. 7 of 8). Between 2000 and 2014, Tabakov programmed ten productions by living Russian playwrights (approx. 10% of premieres).¹⁶ The contemporary Russian plays that were selected indicate a tendency to programme stylistically innovative dramatists who had already achieved critical recognition elsewhere, such as the Presniakov Brothers, the Durnenkov Brothers and Ivan Vyrypaev. The majority of Russian playwrights whose work was produced at the theatre lived their formative years, or began their professional lives, in post-Soviet Russia. These were mostly theatre-makers from the New Drama movement.¹⁷ Their inclusion promoted individual members from the new wave of dramatists, validating their status in the theatre landscape.

A close analysis of the repertoire reveals a number of significant limitations to the Moscow Arts’ espousal of contemporary playwriting. All plays by living Russian dramatists were presented on the Small or New stages – not only smaller in size, but also lower in hierarchical status. More significantly, Tabakov’s choices reveal a tendency towards playwrights whose work is allegorical or largely apolitical, such as Ol’ga Mukhina, Grishkovets, the Presniakov Brothers and Vyrypaev. His programming emphasised a particular vision of New Drama, by overlooking some of the grittiest, most controversial playwrights who incorporated graphic content into their works, such as Priazhko, Sigarev and Iurii Klavdiev, as well as avoiding dissident dramas of the ‘political’ verbatim plays by authors like Elena Isaeva and Elena Gremina.

Almost every other category in the databox exceeds that of new Russian plays. A greater number of contemporary *international* plays were staged between 2000 and 2014: fourteen works by non-Russian dramatists as opposed to ten by their Russian counterparts. The difference between them was not only in the quantity of productions, it was also an issue of status: three international contemporary plays were produced on

¹⁶ Henceforth, I will not provide the percentage of premieres, in the section on the Moscow Arts because of the fortuitous circumstance that there were 101 productions between 2000 and 2014. The number of productions is almost identical to the percentage. Ten productions equal approximately 10% of premieres; twenty productions equal roughly 20%, and so on.

¹⁷ While many of these dramatists were born in regional cities, most of them moved to Moscow, because of the supportive role played by Moscow-based institutions towards formal experiment. The Presniakov Brothers had their premieres in Moscow, although they continued to live in Ekaterinburg; Mikhail Durnenkov moved from Togliatti to Moscow (although his brother Viacheslav remained in Togliatti); Ivan Vyrypaev moved from Irkutsk to Moscow.

the Main stage.¹⁸ This theatre also demonstrated a greater commitment to international work in its institutional initiatives. The New Drama Festival (2002-8), promoting contemporary Russian playwriting, was hosted at the Moscow Arts for two years (2002-3), although it ran elsewhere for another five. By way of contrast, *First Time in Russian*,¹⁹ a project which promotes international plays, both contemporary plays and revivals, was initiated in 2011. By 2014, this theatre perceived this initiative as an enduring area of its work (Smeliansky 2014). To some extent, the explanation for this prioritisation of new contemporary plays may relate to financial realities. Smeliansky explained the theatre's decision not to co-produce the New Drama Festival after 2003 as a consequence of the 'resource-heavy' [*затратн[ый]*] nature of that enterprise (2014). In the same interview, the first deputy stated that the foreign embassies provide resources for *First Time in Russian* – although it was unclear whether expenditure is covered in whole or in part. It seems unlikely that material factors were the sole cause for this approach as Smeliansky suggests. In that period, cultural preferences pervaded this theatre's conception of its own work. It reiterated the Russian normative practice of a 'director's theatre', which emphasises creative opportunities for the director over the playwright. This is a position reinforced by Smeliansky:

We understand that to simply commission a play is quite stupid. There needs to be a director who is standing behind it right away. If there's no director, there's nothing. It's just [like] a plug in a socket, you have to switch it on.

[Мы понимаем что просто заказывать пьесу довольно глупо. Надо иметь режиссера, который сразу за ним стоит. [...] Если нет режиссера, ничего нет.[...] Это просто plug in в розетке, надо в них включиться.] (Ibid.)

Kirill Serebrennikov's involvement at the Moscow Arts – as a director who 'prefers contemporary playwriting' [*предпочита[ет] драматургию современную*] (Solomonov 2002: para. 2 of 9) – led to the inclusion of two new plays in the repertoire: the Presniakov Brothers' *Terrorism* (2002) and their *Playing the Victim* (2004). However, the majority of directors in the repertory system – particularly those working in Moscow

¹⁸ *No. 13* by Ray Cooney (2001); *Nothings* by Pavel Cohout (2002) and *Copenhagen* by Michael Frayn (2003).

¹⁹ The *First Time in Russian* [*Впервые на русском*] is a joint enterprise between the theatre and various foreign embassies in Moscow. The initial project was with the French Embassy (2011), but the Spanish and German Embassies also became involved in subsequent years (Smeliansky 2014).

– tended (and tend) to favour revivals over contemporary plays. According to the critic Elena Koval'skaia:

Directors make their debut in New Drama but the next step is a production of a classic. It is a career ladder for the young director.

[В новой драме дебютируют режиссеры, но следующий шаг это постановка классики ... это карьерная лестница для молодого режиссера.] (Koval'skaia on the radio broadcast, Zaslavskii 2015)

Revivals foreground the director's creative interventions because regular theatre-goers can contrast each new interpretation with previous ones. Canonical texts are also more likely to be programmed on the prestigious main stage, unlike new plays, therefore making a more attractive proposition for careerist directors.²⁰ In light of these prevalent practices in Russia, it should be no surprise that the most frequently staged category of works at the country's most famous repertory theatre were revivals and adaptations from the Russian canon, which were well known to audiences through their education and upbringing: twenty-one and twenty productions, respectively. In aggregate, revivals and adaptations of Russian originals constitute close to half of the company's work (approx. 41%). The databox also demonstrates the extent to which the Moscow Arts' repertory draws upon international work, beyond contemporary plays. Revivals of international dramas received eighteen productions, while the adaptation of international works constituted eight productions between 2000 and 2014. When considered together, international revivals and adaptations accounted for over a quarter of the repertoire (approx. 26%).

It is important to note that if Russian and international new plays are counted in aggregate, almost a quarter of the premieres at the Moscow Arts were by living dramatists (approx. 24%) – arguably vindicating Tabakov's statement about his intention to make contemporary playwriting a major part of his repertoire. Simply put, between 2000 and 2014, new Russian plays fared worse than contemporary foreign ones, partly because few Russian-language contemporary playwrights enjoyed the fame of their international counterparts, such as the globally renowned dramatist Michael Frayn,

²⁰ Beyond these reasons, there are a myriad of others which privilege revivals over new plays, including the potential complexity of the hierarchical status in the collaboration between a director and living author, as well as royalties payments and at times competition between theatres to obtain rights for an existing plays (for contemporary playwrights or when the copyright is still held by an estate).

whose *Copenhagen* premiered on the Main Stage in 2003. However, the privileging of contemporary foreign-language dramas serves as a reminder of this two-way antipathy between the management and the post-Soviet generation of playwrights. On the one hand, most New Drama writers were purposefully disrupting conventional paradigms (such as writing roles for 'star' actors into their scripts, which was critical to Tabakov's Main Stage productions); while on the other hand, the Moscow Arts did not significantly shift its practice, in order to accommodate these dramatists, for instance, by initiating a process of commissioning new plays. The totality of the Moscow Arts' premieres in the period which I am researching demonstrates that, in spite of Tabakov's rhetorical stance, contemporary Russian playwriting was a low priority for this theatre.

Major shifts in the programming of contemporary playwriting between 2000 and 2014

In the first few years of Tabakov's tenure, the repertoire incorporated productions which offered spectators a sense of continuity with the 'high arts' ethos of the Efremov era, which favoured canonical classics. The first season under the former's leadership included *Cyrano de Bergerac* (2000) – which his predecessor had been rehearsing until the end of his life (Efremov died in 2000), completed by Nikolai Skorik. In the incumbent's second season, he revived Efremov's *The Seagull* (2001), in the original staging from 1980. According to the critic Dolzhanskii (2001: para. 5 of 5),²¹ these nods to the established order fulfilled two functions: demonstrating respect for his predecessor, while also guaranteeing an income at the box office.

Within his first season, Tabakov took an unprecedented step in the history of the Moscow Arts of including plays in his repertoire which were of low artistic merit, but promised commercial success – partially dismantling the notion of this theatre as a bastion of 'high arts' at odds with mainstream taste. The novelty of lighter entertainment was, as intended, popular among spectators. Smeliansky observed that from Tabakov's first season, *No. 13* by Ray Cooney (2001), became 'the main commercial hit of Moscow, even though this is not a commercial theatre' [*главный коммерческий хит Москвы, хотя это не коммерческий театр*] (Interview with Smeliansky 2014).

²¹ Roman Dolzhanskii also holds the post of Deputy Artistic Director at the Theatre of Nations (2008-ongoing), as well as being co-programmer of the New European Festival in Moscow with critic Marina Davydova (1998-ongoing), although I refer solely to his work as a theatre critic in this thesis.

This strand of programming continued beyond the first season, eliciting disapproval among critics and theatre scholars (for example, Davydova in Ushkarev 2011: 155).

In relation to contemporary playwriting, a bold programming choice by Tabakov set a second historical benchmark for the Arts Theatre. *Playing the Victim* became a significant event for the Russian theatre landscape as a whole, largely because of a monologue by one of the characters containing extensive swearing. While critics claimed not to be perturbed by this use of a non-normative register on stage, they referred almost unanimously to its socio-cultural significance. As Davydova explained it, the production had challenged linguistic orthodoxy by providing an affirmative reply to the rhetorical question: 'is it okay to swear on the country's primary stage?' ['можно ли материться на главной сцене страны?'] (2004: para. 2 of 6). This production became a reference point for other repertory theatres. Reflecting on the Sovremennik's decision to stage the expletive-filled play *Anarchy* in 2012, the company's Literary Manager Evgeniia Kuznetsova (1996-ongoing) noted that it was not the first major theatre to do so. She cited *Playing the Victim* as the first such case in Russian theatre history (Interview with Kuznetsova 2014).

Another new departure occurred in 2013. A year earlier, Tabakov started to champion Konstantin Bogomolov's productions on the Main Stage – a prominent platform for a director who purposefully courted controversy. This director launched a number of aesthetic assaults on the expectations of traditional theatre-goers, such as his mashed-up remix of Oscar Wilde's *The Ideal Husband* (2013) and Dostoevsky's *The Karamazovs* (2013). The former was particularly controversial in public discourse because of an implicit critique of the moral conservatism reaching new heights among the country's political class, after Putin's re-election as President in 2012. The gay relationship between a government official and a businessman in this Wilde adaptation was a clear riposte to the anti-LGBT legislation which was being discussed in Parliament in January 2013 – even though the '18+' rating of the show shielded the production from prosecution. The legality of the show's content did not stop religious activists from staging protests against it. On 28 November 2013, a group led by the Russian Orthodox Dmitrii Enteo jumped up onto the stage during a performance, disrupting *The Ideal Husband* for ten minutes, before being ejected by the theatre's security team (Mironova 2013: para. 4 of 12). This public intervention was unprecedented in the one hundred and

fifteen years history of the Moscow Arts (Interview with Smeliansky 2014). The same activist would create another protest on 1 April 2015, placing a pig's head outside the theatre with a note 'For Tabakov' (Rogoza 2015: para. 5 of 14). The artistic director's response was to publicly defend the production and retain it as part of the repertoire – which it remains at the time of writing. In short, the Moscow Arts pioneered a brand of socio-political satire which could fill its largest auditorium, criticise the most reactionary elements of the establishment, while simultaneously remaining popular with the majority of spectators. *The Ideal Husband* demonstrates that, on occasion, this theatre is able to provide a critical representation of the contemporary era, albeit allegorically. However, for the most part, the Moscow Arts under Tabakov, between 2000 and 2014, offered a high-quality artistic output, with a reasonable degree of experimentation, while largely restricting itself to plays with generalised moral stances. With its establishment status, this venue largely avoided work which was critical of the authorities, including the most vitriolic works by the new wave of dramatists.

(iii) *Institutional realities*

The Chekhov Moscow Arts is one of twenty-two theatres run by Russia's Federal Cultural Ministry. They constitute the country's most distinguished theatres: fourteen in Moscow, five in St. Petersburg and one in each of three regional cities – Ekaterinburg, Yaroslavl and Novosibirsk.²² The federal theatres' prestige, as well as the budget allocations, is correspondingly higher than to their Oblast' or City-funded counterparts. Before taking the reins of the Moscow Arts, Tabakov had a tried-and-tested method of working with the authorities, which pandered to their need for loyalty, while projecting a public image of untainted moral integrity. Smeliansky captured this point in the following way:

[Tabakov] tries to be sufficiently close to the source of power to be heated by its warmth, but also at some distance so as not to get burnt. [...] When the political situation intensifies and they turn to him for support, he obliges, but he does so without fuss, as if play-acting. [...] When it is simply too sickening to participate, he has a fail-safe excuse: he says "I would come with pleasure but I have a shoot

²² From 2011 to 2014, there were twenty-four federal theatres. In 2015, the number decreased to twenty-two. Source: <<http://mkrf.ru/deyatelnost/statistics/institution/theatre>> [accessed 5 November 2016].

tomorrow". He has not become a government actor, he has remained a Thespian,²³ and what can you hope for from a Thespian?!

[[Табакон] пытается быть достаточно близко к источнику власти, чтобы согреться ее теплом, но и в некотором отдалении, чтобы не обжечься. [...] Когда политическая ситуация обостряется и к нему обращаются за поддержкой, он это делает, но тоже без надрыва, а как бы играя. [...] Когда уж совсем тошно участвовать, у него есть беспроигрышная отговорка: "Мол, с удовольствием бы пришел, да у меня как раз съемка завтра". Он не стал государственным артистом, остался при звании лицедея, ну а что взять с лицедея?!] (2000: para. 16 of 27)

A few months after those words were published, Tabakov promoted Smeliansky to the position of first deputy, suggesting that the former approved of the latter's characterisation of him – as a theatre-maker reluctantly collaborating with the authorities for the sake of his art. The artistic director's support for the state culminated in his signing of the open letter by cultural figures in 2014, which explicitly endorsed the government's controversial intervention in Crimea.

With Tabakov's appointment in 2000 came a major institutional shake-up at the Moscow Arts. The incoming artistic director had a modernising agenda, with which he aimed, in his own words, to 're-establish the opportunities of the country's first dramatic stage' [*воссоздать возможности первой драматической сцены страны*] (Filippov 2001: para. 33 of 37). In his early press conferences and interviews, he repeatedly emphasised his intention to battle the poor work ethic, alcoholism and corruption at this theatre, which had been allowed to flourish by his predecessor in his later years (for example, Vandenko 2001). His most significant decision was to institute a contract-based system for the acting ensemble (D'iakova 2001: para. 3 of 12), enabling the management to enforce their desired set of professional standards. Many critics noticed an increased productivity, commenting on the impressive number of premieres per season (for example, Kuz'mina in Ushkarev 2011: 41; Dolzhanskii 2002: para. 4 of 6).

Concurrently, Tabakov oversaw a series of capital refurbishments at the Moscow Arts including the technical capacities of the Small Stage and the backstage areas (Filippov 2001: para. 3 of 37). However, the most significant improvement was the creation of the

²³ The English translation does not fully capture the sense of the original: the Russian word which Smeliansky uses is 'litsedei' which has a double meaning: actor and hypocrite.

New Stage. This third, smaller space was intended by the artistic director as a place where the ensemble could ‘engage in laboratory work’ [*‘заниматься лабораторной работой’*] (Ibid.). The first two productions in 2001 and 2002, respectively, were by a recent directing graduate from GITIS, Mindaugas Karbauskis, and a Moscow Arts School-Studio pedagogue, Marina Brusnikina – creating a positive sense of continuity between drama school training and professional work. Shakh-Azizova evaluated the New Stage’s work between 2000 and 2005 as the establishment of a ‘literary theatre’ [*‘литературный театр’*] (Ushkarev 2011: 148). The databox appears to confirm this perspective: the first two productions adapted fictional works by Gogol and Dostoevsky, with many other prose adaptations in subsequent years. While praising this approach to programming the New Stage, the same scholar nevertheless criticised the Moscow Arts for not retaining the studio for experimentation (Ibid.: 166). Of course, it would be incorrect to conclude that, as a consequence, experimentation did not occur at the Moscow Arts. A number of artistically innovative works, such as *Playing the Victim* and *The Ideal Husband*, were staged on the Small and Main Stages, respectively – providing a higher status and larger audience capacity than the New Stage. Yet, in spite of the advantages of programming experimental work within the company’s main repertoire, Shakh-Azizova’s evaluation is a useful reminder that, between 2000 and 2014, experimentation occurred sporadically, rather than being embedded institutionally into the Moscow Arts’ working processes. At the outset, Tabakov explicitly designated the New Stage as an ‘experimental [stage]’ [*‘экспериментальная’*] (Vandenko 2001: para. 10). In spite of his intentions, between 2000 and 2014, this company did not have a dedicated stage or an ongoing programme committed to contemporary playwriting or experimental theatre-making.

(iv) *Funding*

The core organisational expenditure of the Moscow Arts, including the costs of maintaining a permanent acting ensemble and a building, was supported significantly by government subsidy, at around the level of 50%, according to Smeliansky (2014), or 40% by a critic’s account (Filippov 2003). The mechanism of support was described to me by the management in this way: ‘the authorities give the budget but beyond that, everything from above, [...] [stems from] Tabakov’s direct relationship with the management of the country’s Ministry of Culture [*‘власть дает бюджет но дальше*

все что сверху, [...] это прямое отношение Табакова с руководством министерства культуры страны'] (Smeliansky 2014). The implication is that the budget was not at a fixed level but instead discretionary amounts were available for individual productions, dependent upon the artistic director's informal networking with officialdom. While this theatre did not provide detailed information about its budgets, the favourable attitude of the authorities towards the artistic director since 2000 may be judged not only by the renewal of his contract in 2005, 2010 and 2015, but also by his additional appointment (to his ongoing role as artistic director) as *direktor* in 2004. The latter bestowed both of the reins of the theatre – artistic and executive – into Tabakov's hands.

The remaining income – complementing state subsidy – was generated by box office revenue and corporate support. What is worth noting is that corporate revenue since 2000 was, to a large extent, dependent on Tabakov himself, rather than the Moscow Arts as an organisation. Smeliansky described the artistic director in these terms:

He is [...] a producer, he can provide the theatre with means. This theatre can spend money on a production which is unthinkable to other theatres but often this is the money of sponsors, his friends: he is the country's most beloved comic actor.

['Он [...] продюсер, он умеет обеспечить театр средствами, этот театр может затратить на спектакль деньги которые немислимы другим театрам, но это чаще всего деньги спонсоров, его друзей: он любимый комедийный артист страны.'] (Interview with Smeliansky 2014)

One detailed report suggests that by 2002, in contrast with the pre-2000 Moscow Arts, the theatre was receiving corporate sponsorship and donations at twice the level of other federally-funded theatres and five times higher than Moscow's City-funded theatres (Filippov 2003). The theatre's corporate supporters were among the most prestigious companies. From 2001 to 2003, the Moscow Arts' general sponsor was Yukos, owned by Mikhail Khodorkovsky²⁴ and, according to Smeliansky, 'until he was sentenced [in 2003], we kept his name on the posters: that was a source of pride for

²⁴ Mikhail Khodorkovsky was the Head and co-owner of Yukos, a Russian oil company, from 1997 to 2003 – making him the wealthiest Russian individual in the world, according to *Forbes* ('BOA's Lewis' 2003: para. 2 of 4). He was found guilty of fraud, tax evasion and embezzlement in 2003, and of embezzlement and money laundering in 2010; he served ten years in prison before receiving a presidential pardon in 2013. Opposition politicians and commentators in Russia, as well as Western journalists, view the court verdicts against Khodorkovsky as a politically motivated retaliation for financial donations to two opposition political parties, *labloko* (*Яблоко*) and the Union of Rightist Forces (*Союз правых сил*) in 2003 (Bessonov: para. 14 of 21).

Tabakov' [*'пока он не был приговорен мы держали его фамилию на афишу: это предмет гордости Табакова что мы держали'*] (2014). By 2014, the corporate sponsors were Sberbank, Henderson and VTB-24, according to the Moscow Arts' website.²⁵ While private sponsorship may theoretically afford theatres some independence from the authorities, the shift in the state's relationship to business after 2003 eliminated much of this potential leverage. Furthermore, corporate support was not allocated to core costs, but rather on a project-by-project basis 'for a new production, for some big title by some iconic director and for touring' [*'на новый спектакль, на какое-то громкое название какого-то крупного режиссера, на гастроли'*] (Interview with Smeliansky 2014). Rather than core costs, the corporate supporters played a pivotal role in realising Tabakov's policy of engaging with new artistic trends. For instance, the necessity of special effects in the theatre's production of *Master and Margarita* in 2011 required corporate support of around 'one and a half million dollars' [*'полтора миллиона долларов'*] (Ibid.). Tabakov's artistic policies, while commercially successful, necessitated a symbiotic relationship with the business sector, ensconcing the Moscow Arts' ideologically as a firm ally of Russia's business elites, as well as being an ally to the political establishment.

(v) Conclusion: an establishment theatre

Between 2000 and 2014, the Moscow Arts positioned itself as a powerhouse of artistic achievement, offering productions which ranged from intellectually-light 'box office hits' to the aesthetically innovative. The company's willingness to engage with contemporary trends allowed it to bring New Drama into the mainstream. The new wave of dramatists occupied a small but significant niche in the repertoire. However, the theatre's vision of New Drama was partial, privileging plays which were formally experimental and contained tales of political allegory, over those which contained graphic content or were explicitly dissident in their ideology. Through its selective embrace of contemporary playwrights, the Moscow Arts validated, but also contained, the potency of the playwright-led movement. The authorities rewarded this 'vision' of New Drama – by supporting Tabakov's leadership as artistic director and *direktor* over an extended period. Under the actor-artistic director's leadership, this company mostly produced 'mass' entertainment, offering a reassuring vision of society as 'stable' and on the 'right'

²⁵ Source: <<http://www.mxat.ru>> [accessed 1 July 2014].

moral path. Implicitly, this position advocates for the ‘modernising’ strand of government policies since 2000. The Moscow Arts’ espousal of some non-conformist works of New Drama catered particularly for the younger generations of the establishment, allowing the post-Soviet generation a ‘safe’ space to demonstrate disapproval with the socio-political status quo, through acts of permitted dissidence – a vital function in a state which is offering ‘censorship for the masses and freedom for the intelligentsia’.

Case Study Two. The Moscow Theatre ‘Sovremennik’

Official name of Theatre	The Moscow Theatre ‘The Sovremennik’
Popular name(s), if relevant	The Sovremennik
Year founded	1956
Current Artistic Director	Galina Volchek (since 1972)
Brief history: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Founding of theatre • Name • Relationship to officialdom • Geographical location 	<p>Founded by Oleg Efremov, a theatre director and pedagogue at the Moscow Arts School-Studio, with a group of graduating students including Galina Volchek, Oleg Tabakov, Igor’ Kvasha, Evgenii Estigneev and Liliia Tolmacheva.</p> <p>The Sovremennik’s name means ‘The Contemporary’.</p> <p>This theatre was established as a collective, without official approval. It gained recognition from the authorities in 1958 (Fomina 2015). The Sovremennik defined itself within the tradition of the Moscow Arts Theatre. However, it aimed to reinvigorate the craft of acting, and the notion of an ensemble, which had become stultified under Stalin (who died in 1953). The younger company was fighting the ‘stagnation of a theatre system which had practically mummified the legacy of the founders of MXAT’ [<i>‘косность театральной системы практически мумифицировала наследие</i></p>

	<p><i>основателей МХАТ</i>].²⁶ The Sovremennik was a quintessential theatre for the 'sixties' generation: an expression of the post-Stalin Thaw (the partial liberalisation which followed Stalin's death in 1953). As its popularity with audiences grew through the 1960s, the authorities came to perceive the company as a 'rebellious theatre' [<i>'бунтарский театр'</i>] (Iurinskaia 2014). In 1970, the founding artistic director left to run the Moscow Arts Theatre. Subsequently, the company was managed through collective decision-making for two years; but in 1972, a vote was taken to appoint Volchek as artistic director ("<i>Sovremennik</i>" <i>otmechaet 40-letie</i>' 2012), a position she continues to hold at the time of writing. In the post-Soviet period, the Sovremennik continued to be run by the Moscow City authorities, albeit with institutional independence from it in relation to artistic and financial decision-making.</p> <p>In the first couple of years, the company staged its work on a filial stage of the Moscow Arts Theatre – where the Theatre of Nations resides at the time of writing, 12/2 Strastnoi Bul'var. In 1958, it took up residence at the Svetskaia Hotel, where it remained until 1961, when the Sovremennik gained its own building on Maiakovskaia Square. The company moved to its current venue by Chistyie prudy [<i>'Чистые пруды'</i>] in 1974.</p>
Names and sizes of auditoria	<p>Main auditorium: 744 seats.</p> <p>Other Stage: 350 [Opened in autumn 2004].</p>

²⁶ Source: <<http://www.sovremennik.ru/about.php>> (para. 2 of 29) [accessed 16 July 2015].

Mission statement	'The main repertoire of the Sovremennik always consisted of works created by contemporary authors. [...] The Sovremennik was born as a protest against the sway of lies in art and in life' [<i>'Основной репертуара "Современника" всегда были произведения, созданные современными авторами. [...]"Современник" родился как протест против засилья лжи в искусстве, и в жизни</i> ']. ²⁷
Number of paid employees in organisation in 2014	195 ²⁸
Number of actors in permanent ensemble in 2014	75 ²⁹
Number of creatives employed including directors and production team in 2014	Between 60 and 100 ³⁰
Estimated number of volunteers in 2014	0
Modes of advertising	The company's website; outdoor advertising provided at no cost by Moscow City; printed advertisements in newspapers and journals. ³¹
Website	< http://www.sovremennik.ru >

(i) Urban positioning and audience

Two metro stops east of Moscow's central Theatre Square [*'Театральная площадь'*] is a residential area called Chistye prudy, which translates as Clean Ponds. It had a popular reputation as Moscow's grungy quarter in the 1990s, although gentrification turned it

²⁷ Source: <<http://www.sovremennik.ru/about.php>> (para. 4 of 29) [accessed 23 July 2015].

²⁸ This figure is approximate, based on an estimate by Igor' Popov, Deputy *Direktor* at the Moscow Arts (2004-14) (Interview with Kuznetsova and Popov 2015).

²⁹ I counted 75 actors in the permanent ensemble on the company's website in 2014; by 2015, Popov estimated that there were 60 performers hired full-time (Interview with Kuznetsova and Popov 2015).

³⁰ Popov offered these parameters, by way of an estimate (Interview with Kuznetsova and Popov 2015).

³¹ Kuznetsova suggested these three methods were the primary ones (Interview with Kuznetsova and Popov 2015).

into one of Moscow's most desirable neighbourhoods in the 2000s. According to rumour (as yet unsubstantiated in official documents), this theatre's relocation to Chistye prudy in 1974 was a deliberate attempt by the authorities to push the company into a quieter part of Moscow (Iurinskaia 2014: para. 3 of 7). The façade of this former cinema is austere, greeting visitors with grand colonnades in a neo-classical style. According to Zaslavskii, its location is far from the cluster of repertory theatres on Tverskaia Street (2001: para. 1 of 7), as if self-consciously standing apart from the crowd. As with the Moscow Arts, the audiences attending the *Sovremennik* are among the most educated and privileged members of Russian society, consisting typically of politicians, business leaders, media celebrities and the intelligentsia. One critic described the audience who were invited to the opening performance of a new production in this way:

On the evening of the fifteenth of April, only those who were out of Moscow at the time did not turn up at Chistye prudy. Artistic directors of theatres, fashionable actors, leading editors, directors of all varieties and levels converged to show off their expensive cars, young wives and nice clothes.

[Вечером пятнадцатого апреля на Чистые Пруды не явились только те, кого вообще не было в Москве. Театральные худруки, модные актеры, главные редакторы, начальники всех жанров и уровней съехались похвастаться дорогими авто, молодыми женами и хорошими костюмами.] (Iampol'skaia 2001: para. 2 of 8)

This description evokes the establishment nature of the *Sovremennik*'s audiences – yet it omits one significant characteristic. This theatre has always positioned itself as anti-establishment. On occasion, this posture has been expressed through tongue-in-cheek antics by company members. Two *enfants terribles* associated with the *Sovremennik* have played a role in image-creation, perhaps more than any others: Mikhail Efremov, a freelance actor who stars in several productions (and son of the company's founding director), and Garik Sukhachev, a rock musician and film director. In 2002, this creative duo appeared in a video pop-rock track, 'Love Me' ['Полюби меня'], authored by Sukhachev's band *The Untouchables* (created in 1994),³² where they pretend to stumble, increasingly drunk and unruly, around Chistye prudy.

The relative liberalisation of the Medvedev presidency between 2008 and 2012 allowed this theatre to explore its critical position through more than tongue-in-cheek antics. As

³² From the album *Night Flight* (2002) by *The Untouchables*; the video can be watched online <<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1rHXzkFqs9>> [accessed 27 July 2015].

opposition to the incumbent administration gained momentum after the December 2011 parliamentary elections, Chisty prudy became a meeting place for oppositional elites and the public. The largest protests against the state in modern-day Russia occurred in Bolotnaia Square in May 2012. Chisty prudy was the quieter sister to Bolotnaia Square, further from the Kremlin, yet also hosting protests at which dissenting politicians such as Garry Kasparov came to speak.³³ In August 2012, the public gathered there to show their support for Pussy Riot after two of their members were jailed (they were released in December 2013). Officially, this theatre did not take a position on the opposition protests in 2011-2, but nor did it forbid individual actors from joining them (Interview with Kuznetsova 2014). On the *Sovremennik's* main stage, the tandem of Efremov and Sukhachev were reunited, this time as actor and director respectively, collaborating on the production of *Anarchy* (2012) – a play which directly touched on the theme of political protest, while real demonstrations were happening not far from the theatre's doors.

The company's Literary Manager Evgeniia Kuznetsova (1996-ongoing) recounted this detail about her company's audiences between 2000 and 2014, based on a survey which her company ran:

60%-65% are women, from 17 to 60 years old, who listen to *Echo of Moscow* on the one hand, that's our oppositional radio station, and on the other hand, they watch *Channel One*, which is our main propaganda machine.

[60%-65% женщин, от 17 до 60, которые слушают Эхо Москвы с одной стороны, это наша оппозиционная станция, а с другой стороны смотрят Первый канал, это наша такая главная пропагандистская машина.] (Interview with Kuznetsova 2014)³⁴

The description of how these spectators obtain their news suggests that the *Sovremennik's* audiences are aware of the establishment and anti-establishment positions, most likely adhering to the former publicly, while supporting the latter privately (in order to retain their social status and material privilege). Through its programming, this theatre catered to an anti-establishment self-identification, particularly of the so-called 'sixties' generation, which came of age in the 1960s, after Stalin's death, and was educated in an atmosphere of relative, but not total,

³³ Source: <<http://www.kasparov.ru/material.php?id=4FAC948B9CDCA>> [accessed 14 July 2015].

³⁴ The company's literary manager did not share the survey with me so I have had to rely on her commentary.

liberalisation. At the time of writing, the *Sovremennik's* longest-running show since 2000 is *Into the Whirlwind* (1989). This dramatization of Evgeniia Ginzburg's novel (literally, in Russian 'the tough journey' [*крымой маршрум'*]) embodies an anti-Stalinist ideology through a critical depiction of the Gulag camps. This production's ideals were progressive in the era of *perestroika*, when it was created. During the period which I am researching, this theatre promoted *Into the Whirlwind* as one of its flagship productions. When the *Sovremennik* toured to London's West End in 2011, funded by the oligarch Roman Abramovich, the company showcased *Into the Whirlwind* alongside two canonical works familiar to British audiences, Chekhov's *Three Sisters* and *The Cherry Orchard*. The appeal of *Into The Whirlwind* is presumably that it serves as an uncontroversial reminder of the need for social justice, without delving into overt criticisms of the current authorities.³⁵ Between 2000 and 2014, the Artistic Director Galina Volchek (1974-ongoing) catered particularly for these audiences representing the 'sixties' generation, liberal members of the establishment who deplored the state's ultra-conservative policies, particularly since Putin's third presidency in 2012 with its emphasis on patriotism and political conformism by civil society. The *Sovremennik* maintained traditional aesthetic and moral values while simultaneously offering its audiences a vision of tasteful protest.

The varied ticket prices between 200 roubles and 5000 roubles, or approximately 3 GBP and 70 GBP, allowed a broader, educated public to attend alongside the upper echelons of society. There have also been attempts to attract younger audiences to the theatre, primarily by hiring a new generation of directors, including Serebrennikov in the early 2000s and Peregudov in 2011, as I discuss below. I have been unable to gain precise information about the success or failure of these initiatives, from the perspective of audience demographics. The reluctance of the theatre to provide detailed information may suggest that the make-up of audiences has evolved more slowly than it would have wished.

(ii) *The process of artistic programming*

Who is selecting the plays?

³⁵ This production serves the current authorities, by serving as a reminder of the relative severity of political repression under Stalin, as opposed to Putin's administration.

At the centre of the *Sovremennik*'s artistic team stands the charismatic figure of Volchek. Nobody knows this theatre better than this 'mother-wolf' [*'мам[ь]-волчиц[а]'*],³⁶ as one former company member fondly called her ('Muzh Eleny Iakovlevoi' 2013: para. 17). She has been at its helm for over four decades at the time of writing. According to Kuznetsova, Volchek's tenure as artistic director is unrestricted and her contract is renewed automatically – which she believed to be unique among artistic directors in Russia (2014).³⁷ Volchek has earned a reputation as a nationally-recognised stage director, who has now become a cultural icon. She is one of the few female artistic directors of a nationally prominent repertory theatre in Russia, enhanced by the distinction of being the first Soviet theatre director (male or female) to work in the West in the 1970s. Her debut outside of Russia, which led to a prolific international career as a freelance director, was in Houston's Alley Theatre, where she staged Mikhail Roshchin's *Echelon* in 1978 ('Biografiia Galiny Volchek' 2013). Because of the esteem in which she is held, between 2000 and 2014, the Department of Culture afforded Volchek more authority over decision-making than her post legally entitled her to. When a new *direktor* was needed for the *Sovremennik* in 2013, the cultural authorities publicly stated that they were giving Volchek the power of veto over their proposed candidate ('Uvolen direktor' 2013: para. 1 of 2). After being appointed, Valerii Raikov described how he had observed the theatre's inner workings for a month, so that Volchek could assess his suitability; he even claimed that he was the artistic director's candidate from the outset (Kopylova 2013: para. 4 of 11). Nevertheless, Volchek's privileges were not inscribed into any protocol. Her extraordinary status relied on the favourable regard and continued goodwill of the authorities. Programming decisions were (and continue to be) approved both by Volchek and her *direktor*, as is the norm in state-run theatres. Between 2000 and 2014, the advisory team supporting Volchek consisted of a literary manager and five resident directors³⁸ – four of whom joined the company in 2009.

³⁶ This soubriquet is a playful reference to the similarity in the sound of her surname with the Russian word for wolf, 'volk' [*'волк'*].

³⁷ Kuznetsova pointed out that she did not know the status of Mark Zakharov at the Lenkom Theatre – the only other artistic director who may hold the same contractual status, in her view, due to his similar length of tenure and fame, as a Soviet-era theatre-maker who continued to hold the same post in the post-Soviet period.

³⁸ The resident directors between 2000 and 2014 were: Mikhail Ali-Khusein and – joining the company after 2009 – Kirill Vytoptov, Ol'ga Markina, Egor Peregodov, Oleg Plaksin. Source: <<https://sovremennik.ru/actors>> [accessed 20 August 2017].

In the period which I am researching, the idea for the majority of productions originated with the artistic director or among her advisory team – accounting for around 80% of the repertoire (Interview with Kuznetsova 2014). By way of contrast with the Moscow Arts' emphasis on management-led decision-making, a sizeable minority of productions – the remaining 20% – were instigated by actors in the permanent ensemble (Ibid.). In part, the greater involvement of actors at the Sovremennik can be explained by the company's history. The practice of collective decision-making for issues such as role distribution and pay grades was employed by the ensemble between 1956 and 1970. There was a fully-fledged collective management (without an artistic director) from 1970 to 1972. These approaches may have influenced the theatre's practice even after 1972, when Volchek assumed a more conventional managerial role. The significant continuity of personnel in the ensemble, embodied by Volchek herself as a founding member, may have led to an enduring democratic ethos. The Sovremennik's official position – as presented on the 'History' section of its website – continues to define the company as a 'collective'.³⁹ This self-identification is reiterated by the artistic director frequently in interviews (for example, Borzenko 2015; Vandenko 2014). This theatre is not a 'collective' in institutional terms because of its clearly defined management roles. Furthermore, programming contributions were by 'star' actors such as the veteran and legendary actor Valentin Gaft.⁴⁰ Even so, the ability of the high-profile members of the company to influence programming between 2000 and 2014, suggests that the hierarchies were not as rigidly maintained as they might have been. As the normative practice, however, Volchek, Kuznetsova and the resident directors were responsible for programming the theatre, which largely led to the reiteration of the programming practices of the 'director's theatre' in favour of the classical canon over contemporary playwriting.

The theatre's aesthetic

Between 2000 and 2014, the Sovremennik occupied a well-defined aesthetic position, as a flag-bearer of Russian psychological realism. In numerous interviews, Volchek presented her company as defending Stanislavsky's teachings in the contemporary era. She expressed contempt for experiments at other theatres, masquerading as innovation:

³⁹ Source: <<http://www.sovremennik.ru/about.php>> [accessed 1 November 2016].

⁴⁰ *Gaft's Dream. Retold by Roman Viktiuk by Valentin Gaft* (2009).

they were responsible for ‘Stanislavsky being interpreted in a very vulgar fashion’ [*‘Станиславского интерпретировали очень вульгарно’*] (Viazovskii 2004: para. 7). Her belief was that a ‘full-scale destruction’ [*‘планомерное уничтожение’*] (Ibid.) of Stanislavsky’s teachings was under way in Russia. This adherence to conventional, albeit high quality, acting styles largely explains why plays by the New Drama movement were not programmed at this theatre. The cool, detached style of writing, requiring a new type of performance from actors, did not coincide with the practice of the permanent ensemble. Furthermore, traditional acting styles largely coincided with conventional views on theatre. The actors at the *Sovremennik* exhibited conventional notions of ‘good taste’ in theatre, which would align poorly with the confrontational approach by most New Drama dramatists. Even the actor who had gained a reputation for his irreverent stage presence Efremov as I described above, was working within a conventional realist acting practice – not attempting to engage with the hyper-naturalist styles of the studio theatres (see Chapter Two). When Efremov acted in the expletive-filled text *Anarchy* (which I write about below), his acting style – in the lead role – contained the play’s potency, to a degree. The critic Grigorii Zaslavskii commented wryly: ‘something stops me from feeling good about it when I hear swearing at the *Sovremennik*, partly because each word is pronounced so tastefully’ [*‘что-то такое мешает радоваться, слыша его в «Современнике», в том числе и оттого, что каждое слово выдается со вкусом’*] (2012b: para. 7 of 8). The actors’ notions of ‘good acting’ – as inherently linked to psychological realism – played a significant role in restricting – or at least discouraging – the artistic management from experimenting with new directions in this theatre’s programming. The literary manager described resistance by the company when Volchek decided to programme Edward Albee’s *The Goat, or Who Is Sylvia?* in 2003 (Interview with Kuznetsova 2014).⁴¹ The artistic director prepared a model box of the stage design and allocated roles. When she met her company to discuss the production, several actors expressed their moral exception to the play and refused to act in it, because of its (off-stage) depiction of a romantic relationship between a man and an animal (Ibid.). In traditional repertory theatres, actors have the power of veto over which roles they accept. As this illustration demonstrates, their aesthetic preferences potentially have a huge sway over programming. Volchek could

⁴¹ Source of the date (since Kuznetsova did not indicate the year of this conflict): old.russ.ru/culture/podmostki/20030319_volchek.html [accessed 9 August 2017].

have continued to programme Albee's play with other actors, but considerations of artistic quality and box office revenue – by proceeding without the 'star' actors – led her to cancel the production (Ibid.).

As a consequence, there is an uncomfortable contradiction at the heart of the Sovremennik's work. The theatre's stated aim, starting with its very name 'The Contemporary' [*Современник*'], consists of engaging with the current era. Yet, between 2000 and 2014, the company propagated a traditional vision of theatrical practice, largely at the exclusion of new approaches and experimental forms. The Sovremennik does not deny that innovation is necessary in post-Soviet playwriting. Kuznetsova has commented on that point overtly, recognising that, in the new millennium, audiences at the Sovremennik 'wanted a new energy, not just [new] themes' [*хотели новой энергии, не только темы*] (Interview with Kuznetsova 2014). In spite of that rhetorical stance, the company privileged conventional forms over experimental ones, almost without exception, as I discuss at greater length below.

The one area where the company, albeit grudgingly, accommodated new phenomena into its working practices was that of technology. In 2004, the Sovremennik opened a studio – named the Other Space. The artistic director described the function of the smaller stage in the following terms:

It is not yesterday's Sovremennik or even today's. It is the Sovremennik as it should be tomorrow. [The experimentation which will happen in the studio] is not different in principle or artistically. Not in the least. It is simply born in a different time, in a different aesthetic and in different realities. [...] I would not like to live in that sort of a home: it's too late for me to live in that sort of a high-tech [environment]. But I understand with my gut, not with my mind, I understand with my whole being, that the theatre which will live tomorrow must be like that.

[Это не вчерашний или даже сегодняшний "Современник". Это "Современник", который должен быть завтра. Он другой не по принципиальным или по творческим соображениям. Ни в коем случае. Он просто рожден в другое время, в другой эстетике, в других реалиях. [...] Жить в таком доме я бы не хотела, я уже не буду жить в хай-теке. Но понимаю кожей, не головой, всем своим организмом понимаю, что театр, который будет жить завтра, должен быть таким.] (Karas' 2005: para. 29 of 29)

This citation reveals Volchek's ability, in this instance, to accommodate a contemporary aspect of theatrical production, which did not match her own aesthetic preferences ('I would not like to live in that sort of home myself'). The high-tech capabilities in this theatre's new studio – particularly its video projection equipment⁴² – shows an attempt to negotiate a compromise between innovation and tradition. In one interview, Volchek drew a distinction between a superficial and a profound engagement with contemporary concerns, as Volchek does (Viazovskii 2004: para. 7 of 28). Evidently, her theatre viewed new technologies as a historically significant phenomenon and New Drama as an inconsequential theatrical trend.

An analysis of the databox and the Sovremennik's relationship to new plays

One of the principal aims of the Sovremennik, according to its website, is to 'listen to, and express, the present era and to value the truth' [*слышать и выражать время и ценить правду*].⁴³ The company achieves this by 'speak[ing] to the audience members in the language of contemporaneity' [*говорить со зрителем на языке современности*].⁴⁴ Yet the notion of 'express[ing] the present era' at the Sovremennik does not equate simply with contemporary playwriting, as the databox highlights in statistical terms. New plays have a modest place in the Sovremennik's programming. Only seven plays by living Russian-language playwrights were premiered at this theatre between 2000 and 2014 (approx. 16% of new productions). Two new plays were by Nikolai Kolyada, dramatist and Artistic Director of the Kolyada-Theatre (2001-ongoing), in 2000 and 2007. All six playwrights of these works started their careers, and established their reputations, in the Soviet Union.⁴⁵ This theatre did not produce any plays by dramatists from the New Drama movement.

⁴² This equipment was showcased in the Studio's opening production – an adaptation of Gogol's *Overcoat* directed by Valerii Fokin. Source: <http://tvkultura.ru/brand/show/brand_id/31533> [accessed 9 August 2017].

⁴³ Source: <<http://www.sovremennik.ru/about.php>> (para. 29 of 29) [accessed 25 July 2015].

⁴⁴ Source: <<http://www.sovremennik.ru/about.php>> (para. 29 of 29) [accessed 25 July 2015].

⁴⁵ Between 2000 and 2014, there was also a noticeable inclination towards playwrights with a prior relationship to the Sovremennik. For instance, two of the six dramatists, whose work was included in the repertoire, had collaborated with the company in the Soviet period. The production of Aleksandr Galin's *Dzinrikisia* (2009) was the seventh of his plays to be staged at the Sovremennik – the previous six were produced on their main stage prior to 2000 (Shenderova 2009: para. 2 of 12). Nikolai Kolyada received his first ever production in Moscow at the Sovremennik with *Murlin Murlo* in 1990 (Shmeleva 2008: para. 5 of 5).

The company's approach to living playwrights is a relatively recent phenomenon, it is not borne out of historical tradition. The theatre claims that '[f]rom over one hundred shows produced on the theatre's stages during all of the years of its existence, almost two thirds were written by [living] authors specially for the *Sovremennik*' [*'[u]з более чем ста спектаклей, поставленных на сцене театра за все годы его существования, почти две трети написаны авторами специально для "Современника"*'].⁴⁶ The theatre has not decreased the representation of new plays in its programme as a matter of principle. On the contrary, in my conversation with this company's literary manager, it was evident that she was keenly aware of many contemporary playwrights from a new generation, including half a dozen whom she admired, such as Bogaev and Durnenkov (Interview with Kuznetsova 2014). Yet, she explained the scarcity of new plays in their programme with the statement, 'I don't know who to commission' [*'Я не знаю кому заказывать'*] (Ibid.). In Kuznetsova's view, the work of contemporary dramatists lacks stylistic suitability for the *Sovremennik*'s stages. She elaborated on this point by emphasising that the new wave of playwrights do not write in a large-scale format [*большой формат*] (Ibid.). She stated that Durnenkov and Bogaev had both written 'half of a play'⁴⁷ [...] because there is no second act' [*'полпьесы [...] потому что второго акта нет'*] (Ibid.). Beyond the literal length of the texts, the philosophical outlook of contemporary post-Soviet playwrights created an obstacle to their incorporation in the repertoire. Volchek has described how she strives to end her productions:

At the finale of any show, if a person is capable of repentance and contrition, then I will definitely raise him up. Even if he is not prepared for it, but little-by-little something in him changes, I am looking upwards anyway. I will lead [him] away from the everyday – whether negative or positive.

[В финале любого спектакля, если человек способен на покаяние, раскаяние, я обязательно его поднимаю. Даже если он к этому не готов, но вот-вот что-то изменится в нем, я все равно смотрю вверх. Увожу от бытовой – негативной или позитивной – точки.] (Raikina 2004: 570)

Her position conflates the ideals of emotional catharsis and the Soviet-era's modernist, 'universalist' theatre – theatrical precepts which were challenged by the New Drama movement, which espoused hyper-naturalistic forms in order to critically engage with

⁴⁶ Source: <<http://www.sovremennik.ru/about.php>> (para. 4 of 29) [accessed 25 July 2015].

⁴⁷ It is unclear which plays Kuznetsova was referring to.

the postmodern era (see Chapter Two). Furthermore, when describing the attributes of her ideal contemporary play, the artistic director stated: ‘I want complicated human relations, attempts to make sense of oneself as well as what is going on around (without touching on politics)’ [*Мне хочется сложных человеческих отношений, попытки разобраться с собой, с тем, что происходит вокруг (не касаясь политики)*] (Nanoch’ gliadia 2010). Given Volchek’s dislike of ‘politics’ in theatre, it becomes clear that the implicit politicisation of most works of New Drama – through the portrayal of socially marginalised protagonists and the graphic depiction of violence – was another significant reason for the disconnect between this theatre and the post-Soviet generation of dramatists.

The resident directors appear to have conformed to this disinclination for experimental contemporary plays. Graduating from the Government Institute of Theatrical Arts (GITIS) in 2010, the resident director Egor Peregudov (2011-ongoing) described his preference for adaptations over new plays:

I try to write everything myself. It’s interesting... and I was taught to do it, to work with prose, so to speak[.]

[*Я стараюсь сам писать все. Это интересно... и меня этому учили, чтобы как бы работать с прозой[.]*] (Interview with Peregudov 2015)

Beyond his own personal preferences, his assertion testified to the dominant traditions of drama school training in Russia. He elaborated on the latter, pointing out that a substantial amount of his professional education at GITIS was spent learning how to adapt novels: ‘we had a year working with [texts by Leo] Tolstoy, searching for a theatrical equivalent to his prose’ [*У нас был год, мы занимались Толстым, искали сценический эквивалент его прозы*] (Ibid.). This illustration is useful because Peregudov has demonstrated a degree of professional commitment towards identifying new plays written by his peers (he was born in 1983). By his own account, on a number of occasions, he participated as a jury member of various contemporary playwriting competitions in Moscow, including Characters [*Действующие лица*] (2003-ongoing) (Ibid.). He posited that the ‘lack of contact between directors and playwrights’ [*отсутствие такого прямого контакта*] (Ibid.) is the primary reason why the large number of plays being written by a younger generation of dramatists is not reaching main stages, leaving contemporary playwriting in an ‘incomprehensible situation’ [*непонятн[ое] положени[е]*] (Ibid.). In the same interview, he suggested that

dramatists are unlikely to fare better in Russian theatres in the immediate future, because drama schools propagate the same patterns of theatre-making, to the detriment of contemporary playwrights. However, in spite of his assertions, the more problematic obstacle to newly-written dramas by the post-Soviet generation of reaching stages is one of perceived purpose: a theatre of clear morals (adaptations of nineteenth century novels with humane, but didactic, messages) or ‘amoral’ works, eschewing pathos and moralising messages (New Drama).

Instead of producing original works by the new wave of playwrights, this theatre engaged the new generation of dramatists, on a small number of occasions, to adapt novels or canonical plays. This practice represented a method of utilising the talent of the post-Soviet dramatic writers, while curbing their ability to comment in an overtly political way on contemporary social realities. The management commissioned Bogaev to make a co-adaptation of Shakespeare’s *Antony and Cleopatra* with Serebrennikov (2006). This iconic 1990s dramatist suggested that this approach is common practice in the theatrical landscape:

As a general rule, in Russia, theatres commission adaptations of famous, classical Russian works [of prose]. I have done Gogol, Leo Tolstoy, Chekhov[’s short stories]. [...] But [for a theatre] to commission a new play – that doesn’t happen.

[Как правило, в России, театры заказывают инценирования известного классического русского произведения. Я делал Гоголя, Льва Толстого, Чехова. [...] Но чтобы так, пьесу заказать, как бы такого нету.] (Interview with Bogaev 2015)

In other words, the Sovremennik reproduced the dominant methodology among the repertory theatres – to employ talented playwrights within conventional formats, as adaptors rather than creators of original works. Even in this sphere, the company’s reluctance to engage with younger dramatists was evident. The majority of adaptations at this theatre were written by directors, not playwrights,⁴⁸ presumably to give the key creative roles to practitioners – the directors – who had emerged through professional

⁴⁸ As its normative practice, the Sovremennik invited directors – not playwrights – to adapt works for their stages. Director-led works accounted for seven out of the thirteen adaptations. Of the remaining six adaptations: two were solo-authored by playwrights, while the remainder were co-adapted between directors and playwrights (two), a director and a designer (one) and a director and a translator (one).

training, in contrast to the ‘amateur’ playwrights with their own newly-created – and potentially more troubling – conventions. In fact, in Russian practice, directors are ‘commissioned’ – so that it is a new production itself which is being paid for – rather than the playwright and a new text. By failing to challenge – or at least expand – this normative process, the Sovremennik (and other theatres outside of the new ‘fringe’) established a system weighted against the New Drama writers, in practical terms, manifesting itself as a lack of opportunity, since most directors were trained to adapt classics, not to stage work by contemporary playwrights.

Revivals of Russian-language work constituted the predominant type of programming at the Sovremennik between 2000 and 2014: thirteen out of forty-four productions (approx. 30% of premieres). When considering this category as a whole, including revivals of international authorship, the total number rose to nineteen productions (approx. 43%). These figures corroborate the extent to which the Sovremennik was reiterating its identity as a ‘directors’ theatre’, not a venue for contemporary playwrights. To a much smaller extent, there was an emphasis on canonising the company’s own theatre-makers and theatrical traditions. One of the revivals in the same period was an iconic play, staged originally at this theatre: *Five Evenings* by Alexander Volodin (2006), which became a Soviet classic after its original premiere in 1959. Strikingly, two shows reproduced not only the text, but also the original stagings and set designs: Saltykov-Shchedrin’s *Balalaikin and Co.* directed by Georgii Tovstonogov (1972/2001) and Chekhov’s *Three Sisters* directed by Volchek (1982/2001/2008). These examples suggest that the Sovremennik sensed a need, or advantage, in legitimising its position as the upholder of certain aspects of Soviet theatre-making in the post-Soviet era – particularly, the practice of conventional acting styles and the work of iconic directors.

Major shifts in the programming of contemporary playwriting between 2000 and 2014

Socio-cultural and linguistic taboos represented further obstacles for new plays to reach the Sovremennik’s stages. However, these areas witnessed an incremental shift in this theatre’s stance. Between 2000 and 2014, one production offered a clear challenge to socio-cultural norms. The subject matter of *The Naked Pioneer-Girl* (2005), an adaptation by Kseniia Dragunskaja and Serebrennikov from a 1991 novel, was

emotionally troubling: the sexual abuse of a female soldier by her male counterparts. This production coincided with the sixtieth anniversary of the end of the Great Patriotic War (as the Second World War is called in Russia), thereby contesting the positive memorials organised by the authorities. Because of the importance of that historical event in Russian cultural memory, this show could have fulfilled one critic's prediction: 'it is likely to become one of the biggest theatre scandals of the season' [*наверняка станет одним из главных театральных скандалов сезона*] (Shimadina 2005: para. 2 of 4). Yet, in the same article, this critic contextualised the production against the work of other major repertory theatres:

Audiences have not yet forgotten [Serebrennikov's] loud productions of tough contemporary plays by Vasilii Sigarev, Mark Ravenhill and the Presniakov Brothers [...]. The surprising point lies elsewhere: the decision to accept the *Naked Pioneer-Girl* at the theatre [...] was taken by Galina Volchek, formerly renowned for her overly conservative views on art.

[‘[З]рители еще не забыли его громких спектаклей по жестким современным пьесам Василия Сигарева, Марка Равенхилла и братьев Пресняковых [...]. Удивительно другое – пустить к себе в театр "Голую пионерку" [...] решила Галина Волчек, славившаяся раньше весьма консервативными взглядами на искусство.’] (Ibid.)

This production set a benchmark for the *Sovremennik* – but not for Russian theatre as a whole. It is worth noting that, to some extent, the company attempted to curtail public controversy, by avoiding any mention of the anniversary in its marketing (Zaslavskii 2005: para. 1 of 13). The work received a small number of vituperative reviews, swamped by a majority of laudatory ones. Yet, the lack of scandal may have been facilitated by this theatre's pre-emptive actions. By her own account, Kuznetsova spent four hours in the foyer after the premiere, successfully persuading the Duma deputy, Aleksei Pushkov, not to criticise the production publicly (Interview with Kuznetsova 2014). Pushkov's objection was founded on his belief that 'the only truth about the War is the film *Liberation* [*единственная правда о войне это фильм Освобождение*]' (Ibid.) – a patriotic Soviet film from 1968. Unlike some experimental theatre-makers in the same period, this theatre perceived public controversy as antithetical to its ethos. It perceived itself as purveyor of 'pure art', embodying humane but largely apolitical ideals. Five years later, the artistic director steered clear of another potential scandal with another pre-emptive strategy, this time using internal processes. Gaft approached Volchek, expressing his desire to write a play tackling a taboo in contemporary Russia, namely a critical representation of Stalin. This actor described his conversation with the

artistic director in a newspaper interview: ‘Galina Volchek agreed only on condition that the real historical character would not be represented on stage’ [*Галина Волчек согласилась только при условии, что реального исторического персонажа на сцене не будет*] (Sidel’nikova 2009: para. 2 of 6). By stipulating the use of allegory, rather than a documentary representation of the historical figure, Volchek ensured that the resulting play, *Gift’s Dream. Retold by Viktiuk*, engaged audiences intellectually, without offending them. This example demonstrates the artistic director’s desire to occupy a middle ground, facilitating plays which actively challenge official orthodoxies, without indecorously smashing socio-political taboos.

This theatre’s policies regarding linguistic taboos have evolved in a liberalising direction since 2000. In 2005, Serebrennikov agreed to remove the obscene lexicon from *The Naked Pioneer-Girl* (which had featured in the original novel). Surprisingly, this request came from a young member of the acting company, a new star in the ensemble, Chulpan Khamatova (Kuchkina 2005: para. 11 of 15) – serving as a useful reminder that the theatre’s conventional approaches are not solely an attribute of demographics. It appears that younger actors were recruited for their ability to fit within existing criteria. In any case, this editorial decision curbed this production’s potential as a piece of socio-cultural critique because it sanitized the subject matter: offering an intellectual and affective, rather than a more troubling, experiential mode of spectatorship. On that occasion, there is no indication that the theatre applied pressure on the director to remove swearing, although another illustration indicates the management’s ambivalent relationship to linguistic taboos. By her own account, the literary manager intended to replace the profanities in the English play *Anarchy*, which uses extensive swearing with milder alternatives, in its Russian translation. Packer’s drama depicts the lives of a rebellious punk-rock group, which disbanded thirty years earlier, considering whether to accept a highly-paid gig, funded by an American corporation, on condition that they drop one anti-capitalist verse from their top ‘hit’. Kuznetsova felt that it was ‘my big mistake’ [*моя вина большая*] to allow the actor and director duo, Efremov and Sukhachev, to read the original translation. According to Kuznetsova, Efremov and Sukhachev ‘got very excited’ [*завелись по страшному*] (Interview with Kuznetsova 2014) when they read *Anarchy*, presumably because this play explores anti-capitalist themes. This irreverent creative tandem insisted on using the unedited, ‘unsoftened’ translation (Interview with Kuznetsova 2014). In 2012, the artistic management agreed

to stage *Anarchy* in its original translation, demonstrating a willingness to offend the more conservative sections of its audiences. The glass ceiling of how much protest can be expressed in performance – both socio-politically and linguistically – was being renegotiated, incrementally. It is important to point out that the anti-capitalist strands of the narrative in *Anarchy* is expressed as anti-American sentiment. Within a Russian cultural context, this play ‘reads’ as propagating the nationalist rhetoric of Putin’s government, thereby turning an anti-establishment drama (as this British work ‘reads’ in a western cultural context) into a vehicle for Russian establishment ideology. The linguistic ‘liberalisation’ ultimately serves the ultra-conservative ideology of post-2012 state-led policies – suggesting that this company is in fact quasi-anti-establishment, rather than a genuinely oppositional socio-political force.

What emerges is this theatre’s ambiguous relationship towards cultural production as an agent of social change. This company attempted to subvert official doctrines in its work, but never in flagrant opposition to the authorities – thereby largely affirming prevalent social norms and official ideologies. By prioritising revivals and adaptations over new plays, the theatre demonstrated a particular notion of ‘the contemporary’. Rather than engaging playwrights to tackle socio-political realities of the era narratively or through formal experiment, this company appealed to audiences’ moral consciences, largely through allegorical association – reanimating Soviet-era techniques of theatrical production. On occasion, the artistic director has articulated the object of her repertoire’s criticism, when announcing a new season. For instance, Volchek described her 2009-10 programme as a ‘volley [of shots] against glamour’ [‘залп по гламуру’] at a public speech to her assembled company and critics (Zaslavskii 2010: para. 1 of 10). To ensure that her message was correctly interpreted, she provided a definition of glamour as a ‘luxurious life’ [‘роскошн[ая] жизнь’] (Ibid.) – which is to say, she was criticising the privileged segments of society, and therefore her own audiences. This intention to gently castigate the Russian elites and tastefully engage with controversial subjects, perfectly embodies the anti-establishment ideals of this theatre.

(iii) *Institutional realities*

The Sovremennik is one of eighty-six theatres run by Moscow City, through its Department of Culture.⁴⁹ While the status of being an officially-supported Moscow theatre is prestigious, it is a lesser honour than being in the Federal government's portfolio. It offers a correspondingly smaller budget allocation.

The Sovremennik enjoyed a favourable relationship with Moscow City between 2000 and 2014. The appointment of a new Head of the Department of Culture in 2001 (in position until 2011) Sergei Khudiakov, who had no professional background in theatre, did not affect the Sovremennik in spite of the company's fear of unwanted intervention by the 'bureaucrat from the administrative services' [*'чиновник из административных структур'*] (Kuznetsova 2014). The dismissal of older generations of artistic directors by Khudiakov, in favour of younger ones, did not signal change for Volchek. On the contrary, early on in his tenure, Khudiakov identified the Sovremennik as a theatre worthy of praise. At a meeting between Moscow officials and leading cultural managers, the Head of the Department of Culture announced that the capital's theatres had succeeded in increasing audience attendance by 5% over two years ("*Lenkom*" i "*Sovremennik*") 2002: para. 1 of 3). In the same public forum, Khudiakov identified five theatres, including the Sovremennik, as particular success stories which had attracted 'the highest level of interest from audiences' [*'[н]аибольший зрительский интерес'*] (Ibid.).

Another shift in cultural politics in Moscow occurred in 2011. Sergei Kapkov was appointed as the new Head of Moscow's Department of Culture (in post until 2015). His tenure was defined by hiring and firing policies, similar to his predecessor's, except that this Head of Culture provided opportunities to some of the most progressive theatre-makers in the younger generation, such as Serebrennikov. His fans dubbed him as the 'minister of hipsters' [*'министр[...] хипстеров'*] (Semenova 2015: para. 4 of 16). Volchek remained in post but, under Kapkov, her theatre was subjected to the altered landscape of cultural politics. The authorities dismissed Leonid Erman, the *direktor* who had been at the theatre since its inception⁵⁰ ('Leonid Erman' 2015). A period of instability ensued, with a rapid-fire change of *direktors* at the Sovremennik: three

⁴⁹ This figure was accurate as of July 2015. Source: <<http://old.kultura.mos.ru/organizations/theaters>> [accessed 3 July 2015].

⁵⁰ Leonid Erman was *direktor* at the Theatre twice: 1958-76 and 1989-2012.

individuals succeeded Erman between 2012 and 2015.⁵¹ It is difficult to assess these changes for lack of information on the public record, while the literary manager summarised this period as ‘things did not get worse’ [*‘хуже не стало’*] (Interview with Kuznetsova 2014).

In spite of the favourable regard from the authorities, the *Sovremennik* presents itself as being aloof from its municipal sponsor, perhaps primarily to avoid tainting its anti-establishment image in the eyes of its public. Kuznetsova characterised this relationship as a routine transaction: ‘they give us the money and that’s it’ [*‘деньги дают и все’*] (2014). It has been impossible to ascertain whether there are significant informal relations between the authorities and the theatre, although it appears highly likely. In 2011, Volchek spoke at a public forum between then Prime Minister Putin and Moscow’s cultural leaders. She implicitly criticised her *direktor* with a reference to overpriced costumes at her theatre (*‘Teatry poluchat’* 2011: para. 7 of 18). She also stated that:

I think that in today’s circumstances a *direktor* must be a great manager first and foremost, and not a person who can distinguish between Stanislavsky and Meyerhold.

[*Мне кажется, что сегодня, в сегодняшней ситуации директор должен был крупный менеджер прежде всего, а не человек, который различает систему Станиславского и Мейерхольда.*] (Ibid.)

These comments came two months after Kapkov’s appointment and employed this notion of an ‘effective manager’ which came to define his tenure. I have not been able to demonstrate whether Volchek was deliberately using Kapkov’s ideology. It also remains unclear whether the artistic director was the architect of the institutional changes at her theatre, or if she was implicitly demonstrating approval for Kapkov’s modernising agenda. What is clear is that, like most leading cultural figures, Volchek maintained formal – and most likely also informal – relations with the authorities. Her iconic status may have afforded her a privileged relationship, which was more nuanced and mutually dependent than for the majority of theatres. In addition to her iconic status, Volchek was well versed in the nuts-and-bolts of cultural politics. She served as a member of Moscow’s Culture Committee from 1996 to 1999, at the personal invitation

⁵¹ After Erman, the position of *direktor* was held by: Vladimir Bakulev (2012-3); Valerii Raikov (2013-4); and Igor’ Popov (2014-ongoing).

of Viktor Chernomyrdin (Prime Minister from 1996 to 1998), while simultaneously maintaining her artistic leadership of the Sovremennik.⁵² Maintaining a functioning relationship with the cultural authorities was an important aspect of the work of this artistic director, when her theatre was both part of the establishment and, to an extent, critical of it.

The opening of a studio space, the Other Stage, in 2004 was arguably the most significant institutional change for the Sovremennik in the period which I am researching. This new, smaller stage allowed the artistic team to programme somewhat more experimental strands of work, without alienating the theatre's core audience. From the outset, the repertoire of the Other Stage testified to a performance space where new approaches were put into practice. Experiments ranged from innovations in theatrical language, such as the striking visual production by the director Valerii Fokin in *The Overcoat* (2004), to productions which challenged official ideological perspectives like *The Naked Pioneer-Girl*. Equally significant was the opportunity for a new generation of directors to make a debut. Three directing graduates without prior professional experience staged plays of their own choosing, as part of the workshop 'Young Directors on the Other Stage' (17-23 January 2009). While none of these works-in-progress joined the repertoire, the project had a significant legacy. Two of the three directors, Oleg Plaksin and Kirill Vytoptov, subsequently became resident members of the Sovremennik's artistic team.⁵³ In spite of this apparent freedom to experiment, the Other Stage encouraged certain new directions in the company's work, primarily towards high production values which would fully utilise its high-tech equipment. By way of contrast, this space was not comparable to the 'poor aesthetic' of Teatr.doc's basic, ill-equipped studio stage. High production values were used immediately by the director whose work opened the Other Stage: *The Overcoat* featured elaborate video projections. This programming of the new studio appeared to militate towards productions which were aesthetically pleasing, reinforcing the implicit restrictions on plays which are overly unsettling and controversial, such as works of New Drama.

(iv) *Funding*

⁵² Source: <<http://www.duma.gov.ru/deputies/22288>> [accessed 3 July 2015].

⁵³ Source: <<http://www.sovremennik.ru/actors>> [accessed 25 July 2015].

As a state-supported theatre, the *Sovremennik* received a significant proportion of its income directly from the government. In 2005, according to an official statement by the cultural authorities, the annual subsidy of the *Sovremennik* was approximately 24 million roubles, or 335,000 GBP (Mel'man 2005: para. 8 of 8). This figure was somewhat higher than two comparable state-funded repertory theatres in Moscow, the Theatre of Satire and the Ermolova Theatre, which received 20 million and 18 million roubles respectively. By 2015, the theatre's income had vastly increased. While I have not obtained precise statistics in relation to the *Sovremennik*, Kapkov stated that 'each [Moscow-based state-funded] theatre receives roughly 80 million roubles' (*'на каждый театр уходит примерно по 80 млн рублей'*) (Kravchenko 2015: para. 25 of many), or 1.12 million GBP. The budget received from the City of Moscow was intended to cover all expenditure relating to each company's troupe and maintenance of their venues. The entirety of the *Sovremennik's* core organisational outgoings came from the cultural authorities, creating a *de facto* relationship of dependence.

Production budgets were the one area providing the theatre with a significant degree of material independence from the authorities. I have to rely on Kuznetsova's estimate that 'one fifth' [*'одн[а] пят[ая]'*] (2014) of this budget line was provided by the state, subject to approval of the productions, although she believed that the cultural authorities never declined to fund individual works between 2000 and 2014. The majority of costs relating to artistic output were obtained from corporate sponsors. Because of Volchek's fame in Russia, the *Sovremennik* successfully solicited corporate support from one general sponsor, Rosbank,⁵⁴ and also a number of prominent business individuals, specifically Vladimir Potanin, Mikhail Prokhorov and Evgenii Ivanov (Raikina 2004: 523). The opening of the studio space in 2004 received enormous media publicity – even around the size of the donation: the construction firm Kolizei-3 invested 4 million US dollars, or 2.58 million GBP, into the new stage, according to many press reports (for example, D'iakova 2004: para. 1 of 22). According to Erman, as the expectations of theatre-goers evolved through the 2000s, theatres had to raise their production values and incorporate new technologies into their work (Tomskaiia 2009: para. 3 of 6). By necessity, the *Sovremennik* formed functional relationships with Russia's business elites, particularly in the first decade of the 2000s. In keeping with its anti-establishment ethos,

⁵⁴ My understanding is that this partnership began in 1999 and continues at the time of writing.

this theatre garnered support, at least partly, from sections of Russia's business elites which were at last partly critical of the political establishment, such as the businessman Mikhail Prokhorov, who ran as a rival presidential candidate to Putin in 2012. However, the overall picture is of a theatre which positions itself in opposition to the elites, while nevertheless being part of the establishment itself.

(v) Conclusion: a quasi-anti-establishment theatre

Between 2000 and 2014, the Sovremennik positioned itself as a bastion of Russian psychological realism. Its powerful acting traditions continued to serve the conventional expectations of its audiences, but worked to the detriment of contemporary playwriting. The theatre produced a small number of new plays – exclusively ones written by older, more traditional dramatists, whose artistic practices were shaped during the Soviet era. This company rejected the key tenets of the New Drama movement. Instead, the artistic management reinforced the predominant practice of repertory theatres, hiring contemporary younger playwrights solely to adapt classical prose works for the stage. The authorities supported this company with ongoing material and administrative support. The Sovremennik's vision of culture served a useful function for the Moscow City government. It appeared to demonstrate that dissent was possible in the state-supported cultural sphere – while, in fact, offering only mild subversion and more often traditional conservatism in its artistic approach and underlying ideology. Conveniently for the state, the Sovremennik permitted segments of the elite to identify as anti-establishment, while in fact occupying a quasi-anti-establishment position – by indulging them in a tasteful vision of protest which supported, more than it protested, the authorities.

Case Study Three. The Theatre of the Documentary Play, Teatr.Doc

Official name of Theatre	The Theatre of the Documentary Play TEATR.DOC
Popular name, if relevant	Teatr.doc, Doc, Dok
Year founded	2002
Current Artistic Director	Mikhail Ugarov (founding Artistic Director)

<p>Brief history:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Founding of theatre • Name • Relationship to officialdom • Geographical location 	<p>Founded by a collective of playwrights including Mikhail Ugarov, Elena Gremina, Ol'ga Mikhailova and Maksim Kurochkin.</p> <p>This theatre's website explains its name in the following way: 'the majority of productions at Teatr.doc are in the genre of documentary theatre, [...] [a genre which exists] at the junction between art and topical social analysis' [<i>Большая часть спектаклей ТЕАТР.DOC – в жанре документального театра, [...] [жанр существующий] на стыке искусства и злободневного социального анализа.</i>'].⁵⁵</p> <p>Teatr.doc is a not-for-profit organisation, established and managed independently, beyond the jurisdiction of the cultural authorities.</p> <p>For a dozen years, Teatr.doc was located in a semi-basement apartment of a residential block, Building 1, 11-3 Trekhprudnyi pereulok. In 2014, the lease was terminated by Moscow City's Department of Property [<i>Департамент городского имущества Города Москвы</i>]. From January to June 2015, this theatre resided in a stand-alone eighteenth-century mansion at Building 3, 3 Spartakovskaia ulitsa. From July 2015 to the time of writing, this company is located in the basement of a residential block at 12 Malyi Kazennyi pereulok.</p>
<p>Names and sizes of auditoria</p>	<p>60 [2002-15].</p> <p>50 [January-June 2015].</p> <p>The Big Hall: 50 [July 2015-present].</p> <p>The White Hall: 30 [July 2015-present].</p>

⁵⁵ Source: <<http://www.teatrdoc.ru/stat.php?page=about>> [accessed 15 August 2016].

Mission statement	'The theatre in which there is no acting.' [<i>'Театр в котором не играют.'</i>]
Number of paid employees in organisation in 2015 ⁵⁶	1 ⁵⁷
Number of actors in permanent ensemble in 2015	No permanent ensemble ⁵⁸
Number of creatives employed including directors and production team in 2015	0 ⁵⁹
Estimated number of volunteers in 2015	7 ⁶⁰
Modes of advertising	Teatr.doc spends no money on advertising. The company conducts marketing online through its website and also in free online magazines such as <i>Time Out</i> and <i>Afisha</i> . ⁶¹
Website	< http://www.teatrdoc.ru >

(i) *Urban positioning and audience*

From 2002 to 2014, Teatr.doc resided in a residential block about an hour's walk from Red Square, heading north along the busy Tverskaia Street. A five-minute stroll from the main thoroughfare, you came to a quieter, residential road, Trekhprudnyi pereulok. If you did not know there was a theatre on this road, you walked straight past Teatr.doc,

⁵⁶ With this statistical section, I have relied on information obtained from an interview with this company's deputy *direktor* Viktoriia Kholodova in 2015. My understanding is that information obtained in 2015 was, substantially, unchanged from the material conditions in 2014 – and therefore serves as a useful comparison with the other three companies whose work I document in this chapter.

⁵⁷ In 2015, the *Direktor* was the only legally registered employee of this theatre (Interview with Kholodova 2015).

⁵⁸ In 2015, the website listed ninety-four actors who had acted at the venue since 2002, working on a freelance basis. Source: <<http://www.teatrdoc.ru/person.php?type=2>> [accessed 20 October 2015].

⁵⁹ In 2015, there were twenty-seven directors who had staged productions at the Theatre. Source: <<http://www.teatrdoc.ru/person.php?type=1>> [accessed 20 October 2015].

⁶⁰ In 2015, there were seven or eight people who worked regularly at this theatre on a voluntary basis including: Mikhail Ugarov, Artistic Director; Viktoriia Kholodova, Deputy *Direktor*, Stanislav Gubin, Technical Director; and three or four other individuals, covering areas such as PR and maintenance/cleaning (Interview with Kholodova 2015).

⁶¹ *Afisha* is a Russian-based equivalent to *Time Out* (although the latter also exists in a Russian edition). It focuses on cultural listings and information. Source: <<https://www.afisha.ru>> [accessed 15 August 2016].

none the wiser. According to Elena Gremina, the company's *Direktor* (2002-ongoing), the City authorities did not permit her company to advertise its venue with street-level signage (Interview with Gremina 2014).⁶² The more observant stroller would have spotted a football-sized word 'Teatr.doc' stencilled directly onto an adjacent wall. By turning off into a small courtyard, you came to the entrance of Teatr.doc – tucked out of sight from the road. One of the founding playwrights, Ol'ga Mikhailova, arranged the lease for this venue with the housing committee – she was living in this building herself (Ibid.). Gremina described the inauspicious beginnings of Teatr.doc in this way:

We rented a basement which was completely dilapidated and, at that time, [...] there were eight small rooms, filled from floor to ceiling with rubbish. And then we did the refurbishment ourselves.

[Мы сняли подвал который был совсем заброшенный и тогда [...] было восемь маленьких комнат, набитых полом до потолка мусором. И мы тогда сами сделали ремонт]. (Ibid.)

These rooms were converted into a makeshift theatre which opened in 2002. You had to walk down four or five steps to enter Teatr.doc's first venue. It is interesting that, as in the citation above, the founding playwrights of the theatre referred to it as a 'basement' [*подвал*']. In fact, it was half-a-level down. But the notion of being 'underground' was, and continues to be, important to people working at Teatr.doc: their (mostly) voluntary work is only possible when motivated by a sense of difference and mission. The space itself was a black box studio which looked run-down: it appeared to tell a story of something temporary, which had taken root and survived. The theatre's stage was not elevated; there were some seats and backless wooden benches. This design replicated the layout and participatory ethos of the earliest playwright-led institutions, and in particular, the Lyubimovka Festival. Dugdale has described how, in 1997 and 1998, Stanislavsky's estate – which hosted the Lyubimovka – was in a 'terrible, awful state, it was [...] almost derelict, [...] and you'd go to listen to a reading and there's this amazing vitality, a complete contrast to the poverty of the surroundings' (Interview with Dugdale 2013). With its basic, DIY design, Teatr.doc visually evoked its lineage to

⁶² The authorities did not apply this policy equally to all theatres. On numerous visits to Moscow between 2005 and 2015, I observed signage a couple of metres wide, advertising Praktika Theatre, which was the nearest company to Teatr.doc: they are both new playwriting studios and, between 2002 and 2014, they were located within the same residential block. Praktika's poster-sized logo was displayed on an adjacent wall, not physically attached to its building: its placement made it visible to passers-by on the Garden Ring Road, unlike Teatr.doc.

that playwright-led institution where, in the 1990s, these dramatists met for the first time and began collaborating.

In January to June 2015, Teatr.doc briefly inhabited a stand-alone, seventeenth-century mansion beyond the Garden Ring Road, which separates central Moscow from its suburbs. The grandiosity, and visible historical character of the building provided a sense of optimism that the company was surviving and even flourishing. Mikhail Ugarov, Artistic Director (2002-ongoing), described this second venue as a ‘citizens’ refuge’ [*гражданское убежище*] (Lizer 2014: para. 5 of 8). Even so, this building was in a poor state and required refurbishment. As in its original venue, the company organised several ‘subbotniki’ [*субботники*] – collective, voluntary working-bee ‘Saturdays’ – to create a safe and hygienic performance space (Ibid.: para. 8 of 8). From July 2015, Teatr.doc opened its doors to a third – and current – venue, in a quiet, relatively affluent residential area by Kurskaia Station, one metro stop to the east of the centrally-located ‘Revolution Square’ [*Площадь революции*]. By dint of a few hundred metres, this venue is nestled within the Garden Ring Road, as if the company has succeeded in remaining in its position within the metropolis – but has nevertheless been pushed to its very edge. Once again, this company resides in the subterranean level of a residential building, half-a-level down from the street, as if resuming its previous, semi-clandestine existence. Upon entering, there is a simple foyer, with a small box office, a self-service cloakroom and an ordinary residential door leading into the main auditorium. The seating is raked – presumably borne out of necessity, with this venue’s larger audience capacity. It also seems to hint at the sense of longevity felt by the company. In any case, the appearance is more like a traditional theatre studio rather than an ad hoc room serving for performances. There are exposed brick walls behind the stage which narrate an ambiguous story: they do not have the manicured appearance of the trendy ‘exposed brick’ look which pervades cafes in so many capital cities in developed countries including Moscow, yet this décor also tacitly acknowledges the existence of that fashion. From the outset, Teatr.doc uneasily belonged to – but also attempted to gain some distance from – the capital’s cultural elite. It positioned itself as the avant-garde wing of the experimental, playwright-led movement.

In order to accommodate as many spectators as possible, the theatre has always applied a flexible approach to its nominal seating capacity.⁶³ At festivals and rehearsed readings, the company permits as many people to enter as can find an empty space. Audience members who miss out on a seat perch on window sills, sit on the stage around the actors or stand peering in from the doorway – as I have witnessed myself on numerous occasions when attending Teatr.doc between 2006 and 2015. Gremina has commented that ‘we consider that at some readings [...] we have had 350 people’ [*у нас считается что на несколько чток [...] были 350 человек*] (Interview with Gremina 2014). In the same interview, she explained that, in relation to full productions, a decision about maximum capacity is taken on a case-by-case basis: some productions ‘just play badly if there are so many people’ [*некоторые спектакли – просто плохо идут если так много народу*], while for others ‘the [front-of-house volunteer] packs in as many people as possible’ [*набивают сколько можно*]. John Freedman, theatre critic for the *Moscow Times* (1992-2015), has cited 150 people as an estimate of the largest number which he witnessed (2011). As a flexible studio space (with two stages since 2015), the company’s ability to cater to additional audiences at the most popular performances, heightens the ambience of excitement. The crowded – sometimes even overcrowded – rooms also afford the venue with a charged atmosphere – suggesting that each showing is a theatrical event, rather than merely a production.

Teatr.doc’s audiences are younger than the predominant age of theatre-goers. Two years before the company was founded, Gremina posed the following rhetorical question to an interviewer: ‘What would you recommend a 17-year old to go and see in the theatre [...]?’ [*На что бы вы посоветовали пойти 17-летним в театр [...]*]’ (Vasenina 2000: para. 19 of 19). Teatr.doc’s target audiences were new generations of theatre-goers, who grew up in the late Soviet or even post-Soviet era. In the same interview, Gremina described this demographic as the ‘club youth’ [*клубная молодежь*] (Ibid.: para. 12 of 19). Her comment was founded on first-hand experience. She and her collaborators presented a number of productions as part of a ‘tour’ around Moscow, using various venues in the capital including the CDR, funded by the British

⁶³ Although Health and Safety regulations exist in Russia, this theatre is able to adhere to them with a degree of flexibility, because of the inconsistent manner in which the authorities implement those rules. Gremina has indicated that the authorities frequently dispense administrative fines to the Theatre on various counts, and that the monetary level varies depending on a number of factors including the goodwill of the individual conducting the review (2012).

Council (Interview with Gremina 2014). The host venues were not only theatre buildings. The multi-authored *Moscow – Open City* played in night-clubs, including Propaganda in 2000. Gremina used the notion of ‘club youth’ two years before co-founding Teatr.doc, although I would suggest the term that I proposed in Chapter One to be more fitting: the ‘internet generation’ (see p. 46). This phrase captures both the generational, but also ideological, worldview of this company’s target audience, which is informed by global news and cultural sources, as encountered on the World Wide Web. The punctuation in Teatr.doc’s title implicitly acknowledges the nascent surge of interest in new technologies among those younger generations. Durnenkov, whose work has been produced at Teatr.doc, has suggested that 80% of the audiences were adults under the age of thirty-five years (Interview with Durnenkov 2015).⁶⁴ By way of contrast, a sociological study of the Moscow Arts audiences suggested that 47.9% of its spectators were thirty-four years old or younger (Ushkarev 2011: 308).⁶⁵ In 2014, for the first time in its history, Teatr.doc began collecting information about its audiences through questionnaires distributed at the end of performances (Interview with Gremina 2014). The company’s managers hoped to gain a greater understanding about other characteristics of the audiences, including levels of educational privilege and professional background. However, the necessity of moving venues twice in 2015 postponed those initiatives so that they were not available in time for this dissertation. Rather than settling for a single generation as its target audience, this theatre also takes a proactive stance to elicit an interest among subsequent, younger post-Soviet generations. It attempts to make its work financially accessible to teenage audiences and children by offering free tickets to all shows for those under sixteen years old (Interview with Gremina 2014).

My informal interactions with theatre-makers at this venue leads me to conclude that most directors and actors were graduates from leading Russian universities. Gremina received her degree from the Literary Institute named after A. M. Gorky,⁶⁶ while Varvara

⁶⁴ In fact, it was ambiguous whether Durnenkov was including children and teenagers in his figures. It is likely that the vast majority of Teatr.doc’s audiences are adults between eighteen and thirty-five years old, because in 2014, their repertoire contained only two productions specifically targeted at under eighteens: *Nilka and Vilka at the Kindergarten* (2012?) with a ‘4+’ specification, and *150 Reasons Not To Defend Your Motherland* (1 November 2013) with a ‘12 +’ recommendation, both written by Gremina.

⁶⁵ The figure of 47.9% includes children and teenagers. The Moscow Arts had only 2.6% of attendance by children under fourteen years old (Ushkarev 2011: 308).

⁶⁶ Source: <<http://www.theatre.ru/drama/gremina/>> [accessed 14 November 2016].

Faer graduated from the All-Russia State Cinematography Institute named after S. A. Gerasimov (Interview with Faer 2015), both based in the capital. My impression, which is difficult to corroborate without further evidence, is that Teatr.doc's audiences also enjoy a high level of educational privilege, albeit without belonging to the financial or political elites. The productions at Teatr.doc are – with some partial exceptions⁶⁷ – not populist in their appeal, but intended for spectators with a prior interest in alternative artistic forms and ideologies. In other words, the prevalent audiences at this venue constituted a cultural elite. This ethos was apparently not by design. This company placed an emphasis on attracting first-time audiences to its productions, through its marketing strategies. Prior to the performance of Gremina's *One Hour Eighteen* which I attended in November 2015, the Deputy *Direktor* Viktoriia Kholodova (2010-ongoing) entered the auditorium and invited first-time audience members to raise their hands – which approximately half of those attending did. Kholodova enquired how the newcomers had heard about her company: one spectator mentioned a radio feature on *Echo of Moscow*. That sort of free publicity, whether through local radio broadcast or on the internet, served as a means of broadening this company's audience base. According to the deputy *direktor*, Teatr.doc has conducted these sorts of impromptu audience surveys since January 2015, albeit irregularly: each time, at least half of the spectators are making their first visit to this company (Interview with Kholodova 2015). This perspective suggests that audiences do not solely consist of dedicated followers. It does not indicate definitively the extent to which audiences are part of a cultural elite, another elite or indeed how much representation there is by members of a broader, less privileged social base.

(ii) The process of artistic programming

Who is selecting the plays?

Teatr.doc is headed up by the husband-and-wife team, Ugarov and Gremina. The *direktor* has described the process of programming in the following way:

⁶⁷ For instance, a group called 'Office-Based Fucking Around' ['Офисное блядство'] produced several productions at Teatr.doc between 2011 and the time of writing. Faer has described these as containing a greater emphasis on tongue-in-cheek humour than political jokes (Interview with Faer 2015). Even so, this series contains highfalutin humour, rather than essentially popular forms such as melodrama, slapstick or other anti-intellectual genres.

[W]e don't have an artistic director *per se*. [...] We have an informal artistic Board of about six playwrights, and sometimes we initiate projects ourselves. But usually people just come to us, either with a theme or with a project[.]⁶⁸

By this view, this theatre operates an unconventional system, without rigid institutional hierarchies. One member of the Board, the playwright Elena Isaeva, has commented on the size and composition of the governing group, noting that 'we have no strict limitation[s]' [*у нас нету жесткого ограничения*'] (Interview with Isaeva 2013). She elaborated by explaining the process by which the decision-making body considers new proposals:

Whoever is free on that [particular] day, comes along [...] [W]hoever is called up and happens to be in Moscow [attends and votes]. [...] The majority of votes [decides whether the proposal receives a full production]. [...] It is a democracy in all regards.

[*Кто смог в этот день, тот и пришел. [...] Кого обзвонили и в тот момент в Москве [...], [...] большинством голосов [...]. Есть демократия во всем.*] (Ibid.)⁶⁹

This view is compelling because of its democratic ethos but there is a counter-narrative by other members of the company. According to another long-serving Board member,⁷⁰ this body consists of 'whoever Gremina calls up' [*кого Гремина позовет*'] (Interview with Durnenkov 2015). He also suggests that 'decisions are taken by Ugarov and Gremina, and everyone else can advise' [*принимают решение Угаров и Гремина, и все остальные могут советовать*'] (Ibid.). The director Varvara Faer has reiterated Durnenkov's perspective, stating that the Board is solely advisory:

There's no Artistic Board. [...] I mean, there's a certain "opinion" when colleagues are invited to advise constructively [...] [.] [However,] [t]he artistic director [and] the *direktor* [...] decide what will be [programmed] and what won't.

[*У нас нет художественного совета. [...] То есть, у нас есть некое "мнение" когда приглашаются коллеги просто для того, чтобы конструктивно посоветовать [...] [.] Худрук, директор: [...] они решают чему быть, чему не быть.*] (Interview with 2015)

⁶⁸ Original Russian-language quotation not provided. Tom Seller, Yana Ross, 'Art is not for Fear: Russia's New Directors in Conversation', trans. by Yana Ross, *Theatre*, Vol. 36, No. 1, 2006, pp. 131-149: 134

⁶⁹ The quality of the recording from this interview was not high. I have supplied contextual fillers in English, based on the information provided in other parts of same interview.

⁷⁰ It has not been possible to elicit dates, relating to which playwright or director has been on the Board for what length of time, given its sporadic nature.

It seems likely that both views have some validity: conventional hierarchies have been diminished but not altogether relinquished. Even if the Board is solely advisory, the informality of the Board's process – unrestricted by fixed tenures or selection processes – extends the opportunity to influence programming to a potentially larger group of theatre-makers. Furthermore, Durnenkov has described the company as an 'open stage' ['свободная площадка'] (2015). His implication is that the company's top managers actively seek out divergent aesthetics, not restricting the programming to suit their own taste. Faer has also suggested that most new plays originate 'from below' ['снизу'] (Interview with Faer 2015). Her phrase metaphorically depicts the theatre as a grassroots movement which incorporates external ideas and personnel, rather than relying on a top-down approach to programming (Ibid.). In the same interview, Faer estimated that approximately half of the productions in any given year originate from theatre-makers who were engaged in their first project at Teatr.doc. This approach maximises the opportunities for playwrights to receive their first professional production outside of the repertory system, in a venue which privileges experimental approaches, particularly those with a documentary approach or ethos.

The theatre's *modus operandi* sheds further light on the company's self-identification as a 'collective project' ['коллективный проект'].⁷¹ In contrast to the predominant practice in Russia, Teatr.doc does not have a permanent ensemble. Even so, the company creates a seasonal repertoire, mirroring conventional theatrical practice: an average production runs a couple of times a month over the course of a few years. A popular production such as *BerlusPutin*, which premiered in 2012, ran eight times per month for its first two seasons (Interview with Faer 2015). Teatr.doc's actors work on a voluntary basis or at least with minimal reimbursement. As a consequence, there is what might be called a 'freelance ensemble', without a fixed composition. Most performers subsidise their work at Teatr.doc with paid employment elsewhere (for instance, at repertory theatres or in television serials). The lack of industry-standard levels of financial remuneration means that only theatre-makers attracted by the ethos of Teatr.doc are likely to work at the venue, reinforcing the notion of a collective commitment. Furthermore, the creative personnel working at Teatr.doc must take responsibility for the stage management of each production; between 2000 and 2014,

⁷¹ Source: <<http://www.teatrdoc.ru/stat.php?page=about>> [accessed 8 August 2016].

the box office functioned as a decentralised system.⁷² The picture which emerges is of a hybrid venue which functions, to a significant extent, like a conventional theatre with an artistic management but, from another perspective, consists of a series of interrelated companies working together under one roof. Durnenkov has made the following assessment about the founding husband-and-wife team:

Doc wouldn't exist [without them]? I'm afraid so. Everything rests on their shoulders. We each do our own project and they give us the carte-blanche to do that.

[[Без них] Дока не будет? Я боюсь что да. Все держится на их плечах. Мы сделаем каждый свой проект и дают нам карт-бланш, чтобы сделать это.] (Interview with Faer 2016)

The theatre's aesthetic

Teatr.doc was founded upon an ethos of experiment and a desire to challenge the predominant theatrical practice in Russia. A year before Teatr.doc opened, Gremina described the aspirations of her collaborators: '[o]ur playwrights, directors and actors – are bearers of a new theatrical aesthetic' [*Наши драматурги, режиссеры и актеры – носители новой театральной эстетики*] (Kuz'mina 2001). Unlike the high production values of most repertory theatres, between 2002 and 2014, performances tended to be minimalist in form, with little décor, props or other aspects of design. Beumers and Lipovetsky have articulated this point, noting that Teatr.doc 'positions itself as poor theatre' (2009: 211). The majority of productions consisted of naturalist renditions of text, often performed as 'direct address' to the audience. The effect was to shift the relationship between performer and spectator away from a more conventional, passive spectatorship, towards a more complicit one. This device was particularly potent because of the company's commitment to non-fictional work, as its full name indicates, ('The Theatre of the documentary play, Teatr.doc'). Ugarov captured this point, when he

⁷² Between 2002 and 2014 (in fact, I have not been able to confirm the exact year when the change occurred although, as I recall it from my observation, it was after the company moved from its first venue), Teatr.doc operated a decentralised box office system. Each production required a company manager (or performer) to administer ticket sales for their particular show. Audiences called different phone numbers provided on Teatr.doc's website to reserve their tickets – which they paid for on arrival. From 2015, the deputy *direktor* managed a centralised box office at the company's third venue: most tickets are sold through the website, while a portion of tickets are set aside for walk-in sales (Kholodova 2015). This new system appears to respond better to the new financial realities of Teatre.doc since 2014, when it has come to allocating a greater percentage of box office receipts towards organisational costs, as I discuss below.

described the artistic style of Aleksandr Rodionov's *The War of the Moldovans for a Cardboard Box* in 2002:

[T]he audience cannot be sure whether the actor in front of him is a real Moldovan, who came to Moscow [or an actor, portraying a Moldovan].

[...]зритель не понимает, актер перед ним [...] действительно [ли] молдаванин, приехавший в Москву]. (Ugarov in Zagvozdina 2012: para. 11)

Often by using hyper-naturalist acting styles, many productions created a sense of active participation by audiences, diminishing the sense of the performance as a demonstration of artistry for audiences to admire. In the majority of cases, the shows were not interactive *per se*, or involved minimal interaction – such as the invitation to spectators to read aloud the title of each scene in *One Hour Eighteen*.

The sense of narratives being created in front of the audience, as if for the first time, in a seemingly unmediated form, serves a particular ideological position. Ugarov has suggested that Teatr.doc 'has its own ideology, and *that* is a completely unheard of and unseen thing in Russian theatre' [*есть своя идеология, а это вообще неслыханная и невиданная вещь в российском театре*] (Zagvozdina 2012: para. 14). He has elaborated on that point, by stating:

Around us, stories are constructed, on an industrial-scale, like fairy-tales, in the cinema, in TV-series, in theatrical narratives, they are built on the principle "turn away from this life for two hours". We have the opposite ideology: reality is more important than anything, "turn back to this life for two hours because you are switched off from life all of the time". [...] So, it turns out that theatre is not only artistic and aesthetic, but also a social institution.

[Вокруг нас индустриально культивируется история как сказка, кино, сериалы, театральные сюжеты построены по принципу "отвлечитесь от этой жизни на 2 часа". У нас обратная идеология: реальность важнее всего, "вернитесь к этой жизни на 2 часа, потому что в жизни вы все время отвлечены". [...] То есть получается театр не только как художественная и эстетическая, но и как социальная институция.] (Ibid.: para. 15-6)

In other words, Teatr.doc aims to embody not only a space for experimentation, but also a forum for ideological dissent. By 2012, it was possible for the artistic director to characterise the typical Teatr.doc production as a 'demo, albeit [in] a chamber [space]' [*митинг, только камерный*] (Ibid.: para. 22). What binds the productions together, rather than a single aesthetic, is this ideology. Teatr.doc is engaged in the search for new theatrical forms which speak the language of political oppositionality.

An analysis of the databox and Teatr.doc's relationship to new plays

An analysis of the artistic content of the company's repertoire points to some clear trends. The vast majority of productions between 2002 and 2014 were written by living Russian playwrights: 54 out of 63 productions between the company's inception and June 2014 (approx. 85% of premieres). In quantitative terms, Teatr.doc has the largest output of contemporary Russian plays among my case study theatres. This characteristic of the company's work is not surprising, given the venue's articulated commitment to premiering new plays. A small but not insignificant number of productions at Teatr.doc were devised (co-authored by the performers): 7 of the 63 productions (approx. 11%). Between 2000 and 2014, the process of devising was unique to this theatre among my case studies: a further reflection of this company's dedication to unconventional theatrical forms. In the same period, there was one production of a contemporary foreign play and one adaptation of a foreign play (approx. 2% each). The number of foreign-sourced works was almost negligible compared to my other case studies: a further indication of the company's emphasis on redressing a perceived imbalance in theatrical production in Russia (the marginalisation of living Russian playwrights).

Major shifts in the programming of contemporary playwriting between 2000 and 2014

In its opening year, Teatr.doc premiered *Oxygen* by Ivan Vyrypaev (2002). In fact, according to my interview with the deputy *direktor*, it was the company's opening show (Interview with Kholodova 2015).⁷³ *Oxygen* brought critical attention to the venue because this production 'enjoyed a big commercial success' [*он [...] имел коммерческий успех большой*] (Interview with Faer 2015). Two years after its premiere, *Oxygen* won a Golden Mask Award for 'Best Production – Innovation' – one of the highest professional accolades in Russian theatre. Yet, *Oxygen's* poetic, stylised text, which is delineated into sections as if a musical composition with 'couplets' [*куплет(ы)*] and 'refrains' [*припев(ы)*],⁷⁴ was not the prevalent theatrical form at Teatr.doc. From the outset, the majority of productions in the repertoire were documentary texts – which was unprecedented on any professional Russian stage. In the minds of artistic directors and critics, Teatr.doc became associated primarily with

⁷³ The information on the company's website contradicts that claim. I have adhered to the view presented online in the list of productions in Appendix I.

⁷⁴ Source: <<http://www.vyrypaev.ru/piess/11.html>> [accessed 2 November 2016].

verbatim plays between 2002 and 2005, including Rodionov's *The War of the Moldovans for a Cardboard Box* and Aleksandr Vartanov and Ruslan Malikov's *The Big Eat* (both 2003). These works dramatized themes of topical relevance, such as homelessness and unethical practices by reality-show producers respectively. Faer has characterised a new departure in the company's work at the end of that three-year period:

From sharp social problems, the theatre also turned to political problems [...] and the production *September.doc* was premiered [in 2005] about the events in Beslan.⁷⁵ [...] [F]rom that moment on, the theatre periodically addressed political themes.

[Театр от острых социальных проблем, обратился еще и к политическим проблемам [...] и был выпущен спектакль Сентябрь.док по событиям Беслана и с того момента театр периодически обращался к политическим темам.] (Ibid.)

While *September.doc* ushered in a new genre at Teatr.doc, as a 'political play' addressing contentious socio-political subjects, it did not become a dominant strand of work until 2010. The next significant turning point came in 2006. Faer describes this period as follows:

At some point, one and the same people were circling around Doc,⁷⁶ [...] and Ugarov understood that a change of personnel was needed [...] [so] in the middle of the 2000s, newer and newer names kept appearing, [the playwright Pavel] Priazhko appeared[.] The "old guard" of Doc [...], part of it, said: "who is this weird guy?", but he turned out to be a genius.

[В какое-то время, были одни и те же люди так крутились около Дока [...] и Угаров понял, что нужна ротация кадров [...] [В] середине двухтысячных стали появляться все новые и новые имена, появился Пряжко. Старая гвардия Дока [...] частично говорила что это за ненормальный человек, а он оказался гениальным.] (Ibid.)

Alongside playwrights with scant professional experience, like Priazhko, Klavdiev and the Durnenkov Brothers, from 2006, this company also experimented with theatrical practices which were outside of the mainstream in Russia. *Democracy.doc* (2006), and later *The Society of Anonymous Artists* (2011), were interactive productions, with

⁷⁵ In 2004, separatist insurgents from Chechnya stormed into a school in Beslan, in southern Russia, and took over 1,000 school children and teachers hostage. Over the course of three days, negotiations ensued between the militants and state negotiators; militants killed at least one child on purpose, and detonated one bomb, killing many others (although it remains unclear whether that was accidental or not). The stand-off ended with a violent conflict between the security forces and the insurgents – over three hundred adults and children died. The culpability of the Russian government in ending the siege – and whether it contributed to the deaths of the hostages – remains in contention.

⁷⁶ Doc or Dok is a widely-used abbreviation for Teatr.doc.

audience members acting out scenarios devised by the actors. This process of experimentation continued with new productions which were 'not in a Doc format' [*не по формату Дока*] (Interview with Faer 2015) such as *Light My Fire* by Sasha Denisova (2011), which Ugarov described in the following way:

I saw it and said that this isn't Teatr.doc but how cool that we have this show – a fantastical production about a generation in their thirties, and about whether they have spent their lives in vain.

[*Я посмотрел его и сказал, что это не Театр.док, но как здорово, что у нас есть этот спектакль – фантазийная постановка о поколении тридцатилетних и о том, напрасно ли прошла их жизнь.*] (Zagvozdina 2012: para. 12)

By 2010, the political play returned as a major component of Teatr.doc's work, starting with Gremina's *One Hour Eighteen*. This play represented a new departure for the company – even compared to the previous foray into political drama. Ugarov composed *September.doc* solely using 'found text' on internet blogs (Ibid.). It was highly subjective, providing an insight into the fraught emotions and prejudices of those writing – but it did not provide a critique of the authorities *per se*. By way of contrast, *One Hour Eighteen* was a polemical work, composed as an imagined courtroom drama. As a result of the research process, the dramatists decided to provide authorial judgement upon named officials of the Russian government, who allegedly murdered the anti-corruption lawyer Sergei Magnitskii. Gremina has described the evolution of her approach:

When we began work on it, it was still just one of our projects but [...] [then] we stumbled across abuse in prisons, corruption, the lack of human rights [...] [.] After that, we became acquainted with human rights defenders. Mikhail Ugarov, the director [of *One Hour Eighteen*] in particular became much more politicised. [...] If we had previously believed that theatre is theatre, then we believe now that our mission is also to achieve freedom in the country.

[*Когда мы начали над ним [Час Восемнадцать] работать, это было все один из наших проектов, но когда мы столкнулись со злоупотреблениями в тюрьмах, с коррупцией, с нарушением прав человека [...] Мы просто, после этого, познакомились с правозащитниками. В частности Михаил Угаров, режиссер, гораздо стал более политизирован [...] если раньше мы считали, что театр – театр, то теперь конечно мы считаем что наша миссия в том числе добыть в стране свободу.*] (Interview with Gremina 2012)

Subsequently, several pieces of theatrical activism were developed at Teatr.doc. The starting point for Anna Karetnikova's *Songs of Our Prisons*⁷⁷ was testimony which Gremina had obtained during the writing of *One Hour Eighteen*: first-hand accounts about the abuse of prisoners' rights.⁷⁸ Among other political dramas, the company produced Gremina's *Two in Your Home* (2011), about the house arrest of a Belarussian presidential candidate, and Polina Borodina's *The Bolotnoe Affair* (2015) about the inhumane treatment of protestors in the 2012 demonstrations. Already in 2005, the politicisation of Teatr.doc's work set a new benchmark in the landscape of Russian theatre. At that time, Gremina claimed that, aside from September.doc, '[y]ou will not see one show in Moscow today from which you'd be able to guess that our country is at war' (Ross and Seller 2006: 133). By 2010, the depiction of government corruption by named officials – in an openly partisan fashion – was a new departure for Russian theatre, a radical approach which gained prominence in national media, such as the daily tabloid *Argumenty i fakty* and the online news source *Gazeta.ru*.⁷⁹ This prominence bolstered the company's image in the public's mind as a dissident theatre – not only staging work which challenged social taboos, but also engaging with anti-governmental political ideologies in its repertoire.

Alongside these identifiable phases, Teatr.doc has continuously experimented with other forms. Ugarov has described Faer's *BerlusPutin* (2011) as 'not Doc, but rather a piece of "playful theatre"' [*не "док", а скорее игровой театр*] (Zagvozdina 2012: para. 12) – presumably on the basis of its use of satirical caricature to evoke an exaggerated depiction of current political injustices. Faer has also described Gremina's work in historical verbatim, such as *One Hundred and Fifty Reasons Not to Defend Your Motherland* (2013) as 'anti-Doc' [*антн-док*] (Interview with Faer 2015). With the phrase 'anti-doc', she is alluding to the non-contemporary subject of this drama: its use of historical documents to depict the fall of Constantinople in 1453: an allegorical 'political' fable about the collapse of a militaristic empire – staged a year after Russia's incursions into Crimea and Ukraine. Durnenkov has suggested that 'now, the ideology of Doc is somewhat watered down [because so many] different shows are playing at Doc

⁷⁷ The website does not indicate the premiere date of *Songs of Our Prisons*.

⁷⁸ Gremina made this point clear to me in an informal conversation (which I did not record) when we spoke in 2012, when I had embarked on translating *One Hour Eighteen*.

⁷⁹ Teatr.doc provides links to all media coverage: <<http://www.teatrdoc.ru/events.php?id=37>> [accessed 18 August 2016].

[.] [...] In the past, you could say what a Doc show was' [*Сейчас немножко размыта на мой взгляд идеология дока, разные спектакли идут в Доке[.] [...] Раньше можно было сказать что такое спектакль Дока'*] (Interview with Durnenkov 2016). These illustrations reveal that many dramatists and directors, such as Ugarov, Faer and Durnenkov, have a notion of what a typical, or orthodox, Teatr.doc play is, specifically a verbatim work on a contemporary social or political theme. However, it is clear that the company reinvented itself multiple times between 2002 and 2014, because of its commitment to experimentation and its open space format, which permitted a plethora of aesthetic visions to sit alongside each other, united for the most part by their commitment to political dissidence.

(iii) *Institutional realities*

Teatr.doc is an autonomous, non-commercial organisation (Interview with Kholodova 2015). In other words, this theatre is a charity (Interview with Sosnena 2015).⁸⁰ This institutional form denotes dependence by the company upon donations from individuals and organisations (Ibid.). It is well suited to enterprises, such as Teatr.doc, which have a large base of active supporters or volunteers.

Since its foundation, this theatre has been institutionally independent of the state and the corporate sector. This ethos is central to Teatr.doc and is reflected in its mission statement: 'This is a non-governmental, non-commercial, independent [...] project' [*Это негосударственный, некоммерческий, независимый [...] проект'*].⁸¹ This organisational form contrasts with the majority of Russian theatres which are state-run institutions. As a normative practice, the largest repertory theatres have corporate partners that provide financial support for productions. In order to maintain ideological independence, Teatr.doc has never entered into a long-term partnership with a statutory or corporate partner. This lack of accountability to external agencies provides optimum flexibility for responding to new aesthetics and ideologies, unencumbered by restrictive notions of tradition, which might be imposed by vested interests representing sections of the elite.

⁸⁰ Liudmila Sosnena is the Finance director at TEFI – Russia's national television awards (2014-ongoing). To be precise, this institutional form constitutes a non-for-profit *modus operandi*, while stipulating that the organisation is dependent upon grants from donors and foundations, as opposed to capital investments by the company's founders or partners (Sosnena 2015).

⁸¹ Source: <<http://www.teatrdoc.ru/stat.php?page=about>> [accessed 8 August 2016].

While Teatr.doc remained independent from the state institutionally, it is worth noting that it did not reject any form of relationship with the authorities, at least where the management perceived no potential encroachment upon its organisational autonomy. In 2001, Maia Kobakhidze, who was a Head of Department at the Ministry of Culture (2000-8),⁸² invited Gremina to her office. That dialogue led to material benefits for Teatr.doc (Interview with Kobakhidze 2015), which I discuss in the section on funding below. The most significant opportunities to gain an institutional advantage from the authorities emerged during the Medvedev Thaw. In 2011, Gremina attended the meeting between the President and cultural leaders (see pp. 61-2). She did not request support for Teatr.doc since, as the *direktor* stated humorously, ‘we don’t need anything, everything is good for us, as it is’ [*‘нам ничего не нужно, у нас всё хорошо и так’*] (*‘Vstrecha s deiateliami kul’tury’* 2011). Instead, she noted that her professional colleagues in provincial cities aspired to establish independent theatre companies, but were unable to do so due to the absence of material support by regional authorities (Ibid.). At that meeting, she proposed to the President to initiate a system of grants for theatre companies to undertake educational or participatory work: ‘such a programme could provide additional resources for theatres and at the same time be of benefit to society’ [*‘такая программа могла бы быть таким дополнительным ресурсом для театра и в том числе какой-то пользой для общества’*] (Ibid.). In other words, she was suggesting a means whereby small-scale companies could earn money from the state, without becoming state-run theatres. This point is significant because, regardless of Gremina’s intention, Teatr.doc pursued that very course under Kapkov, as I describe in the section on funding, below. Furthermore, around 2011,⁸³ most likely for one year, Gremina accepted an invitation to serve on the Ministry of Culture’s expert committee (see p. 56). That position allowed this theatre to influence cultural policy through a hands-on role in funding decisions. In 2012,⁸⁴ the decision to remain independent from the state, which had been taken on principle at the outset, was reaffirmed in practice. Faer has described the following episode:

⁸² The Ministry of Culture was renamed during that period, so an accurate description of Kobakhidze’s job title during that period is Head of Department of State Support for Arts (Theatre, Music, Visual Arts) at the Russian Ministry of Culture (2000-3), and Head of Department of Modern Arts (Theatre, Music, Visual Arts) at Federal Agency for Culture and Cinema (2003-8).

⁸³ I have not been able to confirm the exact year.

⁸⁴ I have not been able to confirm the exact date, only that it took place during Kapkov’s tenure, therefore between 2011 and 2015. Kholodova suggested it had been either in 2012 or 2013 (2015).

Gremina and Ugarov held their distance [from the cultural authorities], [...] [Капков] proposed [...] that [Teatr.doc] becomes a state-run theatre, but they refused because [...] [if you do that] you're immediately subjecting yourself to censorship.

[Гремина и Угаров держали [свою][...] дистанцию, [...] предлагал [...] сделать театр государственным, а они отказывались потому, что [...] это сразу ты ложишься под цензуру.] (Interview with Faer 2015)⁸⁵

This suggestion that the authorities would have intervened in the company's artistic programme seems plausible, at least in relation to its most controversial work. Kapkov forbade the Gogol Centre from screening a documentary film about Pussy Riot in 2013. The Artistic Director accepted the decision of the City authorities, presumably because his company is City-run, but he made his feelings of anger public in a Facebook post (Serebrennikov 2013). He characterised Kapkov's actions as censorship [*'цензура'*] (Ibid.) and published the Head of Culture's letter online. In relation to *Teatr.doc*, what is beyond doubt is that Kapkov's proposed change in status would have formalised the organisational structures and practices – potentially jeopardising the theatre's ability to stage unproduced playwrights due to its institutional flexibility.

In 2014, *Teatr.doc*'s relationship to the authorities worsened against the backdrop of the nationwide, regressive cultural policies. During that year, Gremina was de-selected from the Ministry of Culture's Expert Committees. Furthermore, an aggressive position against the theatre by other federal agencies became evident. In an article, Freedman describes the episode in this way:

[On October 15,] Gremina [...] discloses that Moscow authorities plan to evict *Teatr.doc* from its famous basement space in the center of Moscow. The official reason for the breaking of a twelve-year lease [after only ten years] is that the theatre violated building codes by installing a new door, although that minor reconstruction was done at the behest, and under the supervision, of the Moscow fire department. After all appeals failed, the last day of performances was set for December 30.](2016: 33)

Moscow's Department of Property terminated the company's lease. While the Department of Culture was not explicitly involved in that decision, it also did not

⁸⁵ Kholodova confirmed that Gremina and Ugarov refused this offer (2015). However, Evgeniia Shermeneva Deputy Head of Moscow City's Department of Culture (2011-3) has stated that 'Капков did not propose [that *Teatr.doc* should gain] state-run status' [*'Капков государственный статус не предлагал'*]. These accounts cannot be reconciled – revealing the difficulty for researchers which emerges when public oversight to decision-making is absent. Source: private email from Evgeniia Shermeneva, 27 September 2016.

intervene to advocate in favour of Teatr.doc against the other government department. Furthermore, on 30 December, Teatr.doc screened the documentary film, ‘Stronger than Arms’ [*Сильніше, ніж зброя*], directed by Igor Malakhov, on the subject of the popular uprising in Ukraine in 2013, commonly referred to as ‘the Maidan’. The showing was disrupted by a bomb-squad, which later permitted the theatre to resume the screening with government officials in attendance, allegedly checking for signs of ‘extremism’ in the film (Ibid.). In the same article, Freedman notes that on 31 December:

Kurochkin is detained by the police overnight for interrogations, and Gremina is summoned to the Ministry of Culture on December 31, where she is threatened – “It will be worse next time”[.] (Ibid.)

It remains unclear whether the more aggressive policy towards Teatr.doc was co-ordinated within the government or taken at the initiative of individual officials. In any case, the termination of this company’s lease did not force it to close. The company’s second venue also had a formal connection to the authorities as Ugarov notes:

The owners of the mansion – are government officials, but far from the politicised and overt power structures, and they know full well to whom they are leasing their property, they are prepared for some sort of complications.

[Владельцы особняка — государственные лица, но далекие от политизированных и совсем уж властных структур, и они прекрасно знают, кому они сдают помещение, они готовы к каким-то сложностям.] (Lizer 2014: para.7 of 8)

The termination of the second lease came less than a month after the company had premiered *The Bolotnoe Affair* on 6 May 2015. Freedman has written that ‘the authorities [...] [are] hypersensitive to any commentary on [the Bolotnaia Square protests], let alone criticism of [the police’s handling of protestors]’ (2016: 35). At the time of writing, the state has not openly declared an intention to force the company to close. The law on swearing would have provided ample opportunity for the authorities to take legal action against Teatr.doc if so desired, because many of the theatre’s productions contain profanities. Methods such as evictions and police checks cause institutional and financial difficulties, so it appears that the state is opting for a low-level campaign of disruptions, perhaps hoping that the company will become bankrupt or decide to close of its own accord. However, throughout 2015 and to date, Teatr.doc continued to produce as many premieres as in its most fruitful years: fourteen premieres since moving from its original venue (Interview with Kholodova 2015). Even so, the company faced certain negative consequences as a result of the evictions,

particularly in terms of attracting the same level of attendance by theatre-goers. In August 2015, a month after opening in its third venue, Durnenkov estimated that the company was attracting an audience at a 50% capacity, compared to the previous, predominantly full-capacity levels (Interview with Durnenkov 2015). He attributed that reduced-level precisely to the change of location (Ibid.). These setbacks are counter-balanced by the theatre's dependence upon the internet generation as its target audience. First-time playwrights who worked, or continue to work, at this theatre perceive themselves as stakeholders in this venue. Social networks and word-of-mouth marketing by a large number of volunteers provide a level of institutional resilience to overcome this challenging socio-political environment.

(iv) *Funding*

Teatr.doc has minimal expenditure. Gremina has referred, hyperbolically, to her company as 'existing altogether without money' [*существует вообще без денег*] (Moskovkina and Nikolaeva 2005: para. 17). In contrast with the majority of theatres in Russia, where creative troupes constitute the most significant budgetary outflow, this theatre evades that financial burden, by having a 'freelance ensemble'. In addition, Teatr.doc's 'poor aesthetic' aides the low cost of venue maintenance (basic seating, basic technical equipment), and also stipulates low production values. Instead, as Gremina has explained, 'rent is the theatre's main expenditure' [*самый главный расход театра – это аренда*] (Moskovkina and Nikolaeva 2005: para. 17).

The driving force behind this theatre's ability to function is its dependence upon voluntary input from a core team of seven to eight individuals: the artistic director, a technical director, a marketing officer for social media, administrators and cleaners (Interview with Kholodova 2015). The deputy *direktor* has noted that, like the other volunteers, she receives a stipend, dependent upon the level of surplus in the company's cashflow during any given month (Ibid.).⁸⁶ Teatr.doc essentially outsources its personnel costs to creative collaborators, who subsidise the company's work with their unpaid labour. This arrangement privileges those who belong to a cultural elite, such as theatre-makers with a sufficient level of income to work without recompense. It is worth noting that, while Teatr.doc positions itself in opposition to mainstream theatrical

⁸⁶ Figures were not provided to me, but my understanding – from the interview with Kholodova (2015) – was that fees for volunteers represent stipends, rather than labour-related professional salaries.

production, the key figures at the theatre frequently work simultaneously for major television companies, as screen writers or making adaptations for repertory venues. To provide one example of many, Viacheslav Durnenkov, Klavdiev and Vorozhbit contributed to the contentious TV-series *The School* (2010), about a dysfunctional school with pupils who become disobedient, which aired on the national broadcaster *First Channel*. On occasion, writers from Teatr.doc were able to influence mainstream culture, as the scholar Il'mira Bolotian argues about *The School*, calling it:

an idiosyncratic revenge by the theatrical-dramaturgical “New Drama” movement, which was unable to realise itself fully on the main stages of large theatres.

[своеобразным реваншем театрально-драматургического движения «Новая драма», так и не реализовавшего себя в достаточной мере на большой театральной сцене]. (Bolotian 2014: para. 1 of 23)

The public controversy surrounding *The School* – leading to public calls for it to be cancelled, which indeed led to the withdrawal of the second series from broadcast – suggests that dramatists from Teatr.doc had to accept a certain amount of artistic compromise in order to earn a sufficient salary beyond the studio venue. In any case, this venue's financial realities appear to confirm the notion of a venue created by, and for, a young generation who had become an ‘alternative’ cultural elite, confined to working on the ‘fringe’, at least in relation to their own plays (as opposed to working as hired hands on TV-series or adaptations of novels for the repertory theatres).

In terms of income, each production brings in modest box office receipts. Between 2002 and 2014, the company's box office system – and income – was decentralised, so that all ticket sales directly offered a basic level of remuneration to the creative teams.

Gremina described her company's approach in this way:

[W]e take no responsibility for the box office. [...] Some shows play for free, but if they do make money, it's up to the company to decide how to share that profit.⁸⁷

As a normative practice, theatre-makers worked voluntarily during the rehearsal period but once a production was running in the theatre's repertoire, ticket sales provided a modest fee for the actors.

⁸⁷ Original Russian-language quotation not provided. Tom Seller, Yana Ross, ‘Art is not for Fear: Russia's New Directors in Conversation’, trans. by Yana Ross, *Theatre*, Vol. 36, No. 1, 2006, pp. 131-149: 134

Given its ideological position towards statutory and corporate partners, between 2002 and 2014, there were few forms of funding available for the company's core organisational costs. On occasion, the theatre-makers associated with the venue funded the organisation out of their own pocket. In 2012, Ugarov was Artistic Director of the CDR (concurrently with Teatr.doc)⁸⁸ and he stated that: 'I receive my salary at the CDR, I bring it here [to Doc] and I pay for the rent' [*Я получаю зарплату в ЦДР, несую сюда, плачу за аренду*] (Zagvozdina 2012: para. 29). Three years later, Kholodova indicated that Gremina donated money to pay for the rent – without specifying precisely how much (Interview with Kholodova 2015). In other words, individual contributions by the most prominent members of the company appear to be a vital source of income. Gremina has described other scenarios: 'the rent is divided up between thirty to forty people who are involved with the theatre' [*аренда делится на 30-40 участников театра*] (Moskovkina and Nikolaeva 2005: para. 17). This collective subsidy was not unique, albeit rare. In 2014, for the first time in its history, Teatr.doc ran an online crowd-funding campaign. It raised 1.5 times more than its target within two months (Kruglikova 2016: para. 17 of 21). That initiative suggests that an active base of supporters was, if not a continual provider of income, at least a resource which provided a degree of 'insulation' from potential financial difficulties.

Another significant source of funding for Teatr.doc was statutory and corporate grants for discrete productions or projects. In 2001, the Ministry of Culture agreed to provide an annual grant for the Lyubimovka Festival from the federal budget, on an ongoing annual basis (Kobakhidze 2015). The significance of this support for that festival relates to Teatr.doc in two ways. Firstly, the organising committee of the Lyubimovka consisted of playwrights who subsequently founded this company.⁸⁹ From 2002 to 2014, finances from the Ministry of Culture provided professional validation, and financial resources, to dramatists working concurrently at this theatre. Secondly, in 2007, the Lyubimovka was formally incorporated into Teatr.doc's theatrical programme, running annually during

⁸⁸ Ugarov was artistic director at CDR from 2012-4, to the best of my understanding, although I have not been able to verify his date of departure.

⁸⁹ Between 1995 and 2000, the organising committee of the Lyubimovka consisted of Gremina, Ugarov and the playwrights Ol'ga Mikhailova, Elena Isaeva and Kseniia Dragunskaja and Maksim Kurochkin. In 2000, the festival's *Direktor* was Aleksandr Rodionov. From 2001, this festival's organisers were the same group as during the years 1995 to 2000. From 2007, Elena Koval'skaia became the *Direktor*. In 2013, Mikhail Durnenkov succeeded Koval'skaia. Sources: <<http://lubimovka.ru/istoriya>> [accessed 9 August 2016]; Interview with Mikhail Durnenkov 2015.

the first week of September, on its stage(s).⁹⁰ At that point, the grants became a direct source of funding to this theatre, albeit for a discrete programme, rather than core organisational costs.

The state has also offered several grants for productions – I have identified three, between 2002 and 2014.⁹¹ By my calculation, these inputs are only a fraction of the total annual outgoings on production costs: this company gains fewer than one per season, while producing half a dozen or more plays in an average year. However, during Kapkov's tenure at the Department for Culture, Teatr.doc also received significant project funding from City-level governmental sources, for education and outreach work. Gremina has described the relationship with the Department of Culture in this way:

We received money [from the government] for a project on classics in schools, this is an entirely social project, and for social work in prisons. This is what we take money for from the government, anything else would be dangerous.

[‘Мы получили деньги [от государства] на проект классика для школ, это абсолютно социальная работа, и на социальную работу в колонии. Это то на что мы берем [...] деньги от государства, на все другое брать опасно.’] (Interview with Gremina 2012)

These forms of finance provided much-needed state support, without necessitating the company to enter into an institutional partnership with the government.

After 2014, statutory grants ceased entirely. Fortunately for the venue, the state was not the sole donor of grants, albeit the primary one. The only major, non-governmental arts funder in Russia, the Mikhail Prokhorov Foundation, supported Klavdiev's *Beyond the Polar Truth* (2006)⁹² and it became the sponsor of the Lyubimovka after the state withdrew its funding (and it still is, at the time of writing).⁹³ Kobakhidze has called the Prokhorov's Foundation's work ‘brave’ [‘смело’] (Interview with Kobakhidze 2015) because it supports ‘theatres, festivals, individuals, which the government has already marked out as being undesirable [entities]’ [‘театры, фестивали, люди, которые

⁹⁰ Source: <<http://lubimovka.ru/istoriya>> [accessed 9 August 2016].

⁹¹ The Ministry of Culture offered a grant, which funded the Theatre to commission Durnenkov to write the *The Drunk Metalworker* in 2007 (Durnenkov 2015). Similarly, the following two productions also received financial support from the federal cultural agency: *I fear love* by Elena Isaeva (2010) and *Kidnap* by Konstantin Kozhevnikov (2012). Source: <<http://www.teatrdoc.ru/events.php?id=48>> [accessed 18 February 2017]; <<http://www.teatrdoc.ru/events.php?id=13>> [accessed 18 February 2017].

⁹² Dolzhanskii, Roman, ‘Teatroterapiia’, *Kommersant*, 26 December 2006 <<http://www.kommersant.ru/Doc/732366>> [accessed 23 December 2016].

⁹³ Source: <<http://lubimovka.ru/>> [accessed 9 August 2016].

государство [...] уже отметило как нежелательных [...]'] (Ibid.). Yet, no funder succeeded the state in providing grants for social work. In 2014, this worsening of the funding climate prompted a change by Teatr.doc over its internal policy. The management decided to retain 20% of box office income to cover its organisational costs (Interview with Kholodova 2015; Interview with Durnenkov 2015).

Finally, it is worth noting that, except for a small number of productions which are free to the public such as *One Hour Eighteen*,⁹⁴ ticket prices vary between approximately 500 roubles and 1000 roubles – approximately 7 GBP and 14 GBP. That level is comparable to the Moscow Arts' New Stage – a further indication that this theatre is catering for a cultural elite, rather than a general public.

(v) Conclusion: a dissident theatre

Between 2002 and 2014, Teatr.doc emerged as one of half a dozen flag-bearing theatres of the New Drama movement. Rather than adopting an overly rigid interpretation of what contemporary playwriting should be, this venue prioritised a broad notion of experimentation with an 'open stage' approach, albeit significantly influenced by the documentary ethos. Initially, this company was defined by an oppositional stance towards the practice of mainstream repertory theatres, aiming to serve as a venue which advocated for the new generation of dramatists. By 2005, and even more clearly after 2010, the company's repertoire incorporated 'political' plays which embodied ideological dissidence. This theatre validated a highly politicised vision of New Drama. Surprisingly, between 2002 and 2014, the authorities offered Teatr.doc limited material support – suggesting that this small-scale venue was not an ideological threat to the state. On the contrary, the authorities appear to have pursued the same strategy in relation to the independent sector as it did with the repertory theatres: to maintain a relationship with the 'fringe' venues was a potential manner of controlling or pressuring them, while also seeming to demonstrate to the cultural elite that freedom of expression existed in the cultural sphere. After 2014, Teatr.doc's forcible change of venue twice within a year, indicates a change of strategy – an attempt to close this

⁹⁴ At the time of writing, the company continues to admit audiences at no cost to *One Hour Eighteen* by Gremina (2010) – as it has since the play premiered. This exception to the rule – of charging for ticket sales – appears to be an attempt to ensure full capacity for what is arguably the theatre's most politically-charged production, while simultaneously avoiding negative publicity (which the state-run press could potentially evoke, at the notion of earning money from the tragic situation of the play's real protagonist).

venue, albeit by using other agencies of the state as proxies so that it would not be possible to trace this closure to cultural policy *per se*. At the time of writing, the authorities appear to have accepted that Teatr.doc cannot be closed by creating material and institutional difficulties. No overt cultural policy has been stated rhetorically or implemented yet to shut this venue, presumably in order to avoid public controversy which would galvanise a broader protest among the intelligentsia in Russia and most likely attract the attention of the western media. The state appears to have accepted that a low-level of dissidence is, for the time being, still preferable to total control of the cultural sphere.

Case Study Four. The Kolyada-Theatre

Official name of Theatre	Kolyada-Theatre
Popular name, if relevant	n/a
Year founded	2001
Current Artistic Director	Nikolai Kolyada (founding Artistic Director) ⁹⁵
Brief history: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Founding of theatre • Name • Relationship to officialdom • Geographical location 	<p>Founded by Nikolai Kolyada in Ekaterinburg, Russia's fourth largest city, with around just over 1.3 million inhabitants.⁹⁶</p> <p>The name refers to the founding playwright and director. In Russian, his surname has two other meanings, as visitors to this theatre's website are reminded:⁹⁷ 'Kolyada' is a Slavic god (specifically, a Young-Sun appearing in winter, representing re-birth); it also denotes a festive winter song.</p> <p>Kolyada-Theatre was registered as a non-commercial partnership.⁹⁸ This company was</p>

⁹⁵ The Kolyada-Theatre website does not credit Kolyada as the 'executive producer' ['*директор*']. No executive producer is credited – only administrative staff. However, other sources, including an official announcement by the Kolyada Theatre on a social media site credits Kolyada as the executive producer. Source: <http://vk.com/baba_channel_rzn> [accessed 1 October 2015].

⁹⁶ Official statistics indicate a population of 1,343,839 as of 1 January 2010. The most up-to-date information is available from the website of the Federal agency of state statistics. Source: <<http://www.gks.ru/>> [accessed 1 October 2015].

⁹⁷ Source: <<http://www.kolyada-theatre.ru/ru/theatre>> [accessed 1 October 2015].

⁹⁸ Source: <<http://www.kolyada-theatre.ru/ru/theatre>> [accessed 1 October 2015].

	<p>established as a private enterprise, albeit on a non-profit basis, and remains so at the time of writing.</p> <p>Initially, the Kolyada-Theatre did not have its own building and moved between Ekaterinburg-based venues. From 2001, the company staged productions at the Sverdlovsk Academic Drama Theatre,⁹⁹ where Kolyada worked as an actor (1977-83) and as a director and director-playwright (1994-2001).¹⁰⁰ In 2003, the Kolyada-Theatre played on the stage of another venue, the Small Drama Theatre 'Teatron'. From 2004, the company began renting its own venue: a basement in Ekaterinburg's Local History Museum [<i>Краеведческий музей</i>], Building 10, 69 Lenin Avenue. In 2006, the City of Ekaterinburg furnished this theatre with a wooden nineteenth-century mansion at 20 Turgenev Street – where it resided for eight years. In 2014, the local authorities provided a larger venue with two stages at 97 Lenin Avenue – which is where the Kolyada-Theatre resides at the time of writing.</p>
Names and sizes of auditoria	<p>Basement: 50 [2004-6].</p> <p>Boiler Room: 20 [2004-6].</p> <p>60 [2006-14].</p> <p>Malachite Hall: 120 [2014-present].</p> <p>Garnet Hall: 50 [2014-present].</p>

⁹⁹ Ekaterinburg is the capital of the Sverdlovsk Oblast' (or Sverdlovsk District).

¹⁰⁰ Source: <<http://kolyada.ur.ru/category/biografiya/>> [accessed 1 October 2015].

Mission statement	'The promotion of contemporary theatre.' [<i>'Пропаганда современного театрального искусства'</i>]. ¹⁰¹
Number of paid employees in organisation in June 2014 (excluding creative personnel)	4
Number of actors in permanent ensemble in 2014	30
Number of creatives employed including directors and production team in 2014	7 ¹⁰²
Estimated number of volunteers in 2014	Between 5 and 7 ¹⁰³
Modes of advertising	No money is spent on advertising: distribution of posters and flyers, interviews in the press and social media networks only.
Website	< http://www.kolyada-theatre.ru >

(i) *Urban positioning and audience*

The Kolyada-Theatre is located along the Lenin Avenue in central Ekaterinburg, one block from the Urals Federal University (Miliaeva 2014: para 3 of 6). This company

¹⁰¹ The Kolyada-Theatre does not offer a mission state on its website. Elena Getsevich, Project Co-ordinator at the company (2008-ongoing), proposed the formulation cited above (Interview with Getsevich and Vashakidze 2014).

¹⁰² Only two individuals were hired solely on the basis of their creative designs: two lighting and sound technicians. However, five members of the permanent acting ensemble also had a second role: three directors and two production managers-builders [*монтировщики*] (Interview with Getsevich and Vashakidze 2014).

¹⁰³ According to the management, '[w]e usually attract volunteers to work on the Kolyada-Plays Festival, they stick up festival posters, distribute posters to public places (cafes, higher education institutes, other theatres, etc.), hand out flyers in the streets. Normally, we have between five and seven volunteers. As a reward, they can attend all the plays in the festival for free.' [*'Волонтеров мы обычно привлекаем на работу в фестивале "Коляда-Plays" они расклеивают афиши фестиваля, разносят афиши по общ.местам (кафе, ВУЗы, другие театры и т.д.), раздают листовки на улицах. Обычно их человек 5-7. В награду они имеют возможность посещать все спектакли фестиваля бесплатно'*]. Source: private email from Eka Vashakidze, Administrator and Company Manager at the Kolyada-Theatre, 6 May 2014.

occupies a refurbished cinema – lending it a sense of grandiosity with its impressive marbled floors and columns throughout. In contrast to the original furnishings, Kolyada has piled high a jumbled mass of objects to decorate the front-of-house areas in his theatre, including personal photos and second-hand domestic furniture. A good number of these objects have been crowd-sourced. One local resident described her feeling of personal connection to the venue, on seeing her own objects on display (Ajushka 2015: para. 16 of 25). A passer-by glancing towards this theatre would see a large stack of fluffy children’s toys assembled randomly on one window ledge and numerous *samovars* in another window. This interior design makes for an unusual collision of the personal and the formal. It also speaks simultaneously to different generations, satisfying a nostalgia for Soviet times among older audiences through a recognition of familiar bric-a-brac, and appealing to younger audiences with its sense of fun and individuality.

When describing his theatre’s target audiences in media interviews, Kolyada regularly emphasises a broad connection to his local City, rather than only to certain segments of it. During the legal conflict over his company’s original venue in 2006, one argument he used publicly to suggest the value of his troupe was that:

People come to our theatre and [they] will keep coming if they have somewhere to come. A questionnaire on the TV channel “Ermak” showed that eighty-seven percent of the town’s inhabitants consider that the City needs the Kolyada-Theatre.

[К нам идет народ, и будет идти, если будет куда. Опрос на телеканале "Ермак" показал, что восемьдесят семь процентов горожан считают, что "Коляда-Театр" нужен городу.] (Ostapov 2006: para. 32 of 34).

The term used by the artistic director, ‘narod’ [‘народ’] meaning ‘people’, is significant because it implies individuals from all socio-economic backgrounds. Eka Vashakidze, the theatre’s principal administrator and company manager since 2007, also evaluated audiences in terms of educational attainment:

We periodically run surveys but as I’m the administrator,¹⁰⁴ I meet with audiences every day, and so I have an excellent understanding of who they are. [...] About seventy percent of the people are educated – in the sense of a higher education.

¹⁰⁴ Vashakidze calls herself an administrator but, as I observed when I attended the Kolyada-Theatre in April 2014 and November 2015, her role incorporates the position of ‘front-of-house manager’ as it is understood in the UK, which is to say a supervisory role in the front-of-house operations.

[Периодически, мы делаем анкеты, но так как я являюсь администратором, я встречаюсь со зрителем каждый день, и прекрасно знаю, кто это. [...] Процентом семьдесят это люди образованные в плане того что высшее образование.] (Interview with Getsevich and Vashakidze 2014)

Vashakidze's view appears to confirm the notion of a broad social composition: almost a third of this theatre's audiences do not have a university education. By way of comparison, a smaller proportion – about a fifth – of audiences attending the Moscow Arts Theatre during the same period were without a university degree (Ushkarev 2011: 306). However, Vashakidze's figure is an estimate. Furthermore, Bogaev has provided a counter-narrative, stating that the rhetoric of diversity, or attendance by the *narod*, is simply a 'game' [*'узра'*] (Interview with Bogaev 2015) played by the theatre's management. In my view, these positions are not mutually exclusive. This troupe caters for two, diverse categories of target audience who have differing notions of taste – ranging from the refined to the populist, correlating approximately to generational demographics.

One aspect of audience composition which commentators appear to agree about is expressed by Shcherbakova: '[Kolyada's] uniqueness is that [his work] speaks to all ages' [*'уникальность в том что он попадает во все возрасты'*] (Interview with Shcherbakova 2015). Vashakidze has provided further details on this aspect of audience composition:

If I divide [audiences] into three age groups, then probably (according to my observation), it is 'young people' (from eighteen to thirty-five years old) – 50%; 'middle-aged' (from thirty-six to sixty years old) – 35% and 'the elderly' (from sixty one years old until [the end of their lives]) – 15%.

[Если делить на три возрастные группы, то скорее всего (по моим наблюдениям), это молодежь (от восемнадцати до тридцати пяти) – пятьдесят процентов; средний возраст (от тридцати шести до шестидесяти) – тридцати пяти процентов и пожилое население (от шестидесяти одного и до...) – пятнадцать процентов.] (Interview with Vashakidze 2015)

This audience demographics can be further divided into two types. The first category – predominantly the theatre's younger 50% – are described by Shcherbakova as: 'devotees and fans of Kolyada and [the troupe's leading actor Oleg] Iagodin, i. e. representatives of a subculture, connected with rock-n-roll culture and with a student environment, specifically Humanities' [*'поклонники и фанаты Н. Коляды и О.*

Ягодина, т. е. представители субкультуры, связанной с рок-н-ролльной культурой и студенческой, главным образом, гуманитарной средой] (2013). This view is plausible not least because alongside his work at this theatre, Iagodin is the singer in the 'Kurara' rock band (founded in 2004). This depiction of the theatre also speaks to recent cultural history: Ekaterinburg is known to Russians as an industrial city which gave birth to an alternative rock scene in the 1980s ('Rodina Rok'n'rolla' 2007: para. 3 of 7). However, this audience profile is also part of the 'internet generation', albeit a regional subgroup: less privileged and with a reduced social capital compared to Moscow's post-Soviet generation. Shcherbakova has described how Kolyada worked as an actor in Germany from 1992-3, and then '[h]e was the conduit for European theatre in the Russian provinces' [*Он был проводником европейского театра в русскую провинцию*] (Interview with Shcherbakova 2015). Her implication is that his aesthetic choices have incorporated aesthetic directions beyond conventional Russian traditions. As a consequence, this company accommodates the 'internet generation', appealing to younger audiences who are most likely to be aware of, and keen to consume, culture from non-Russian sources. In relative terms, this group constitutes a cultural elite – it is not the *narod* – because of its level of educational privilege. These younger audience members seek out experimental, intellectual theatre-making, which nevertheless reflects their lives in Ekaterinburg – a less politicised, but stylistically inventive, vision of non-conformist playwriting.

To accommodate new generations of this regional cultural elite, in 2009, Kolyada founded the Centre for Contemporary Playwriting. For five years, this organisation was run semi-autonomously within this theatre's premises by the *direktor* Natal'ia Sannikova, to promote new generations of dramatists, appealing to this educationally-privileged younger demographic. By 2014, the local authorities agreed to provide the Centre with its own building. Coinciding with the Kolyada-Theatre's relocation to its third venue, Sannikova's company took up residence in the liberated space at 20 Turgenev Street. According to Nikita Plekhanov, the company's Deputy *Direktor* at the time of writing,¹⁰⁵ the Centre does not have its own troupe and should be considered as 'second studio of the Kolyada-Theatre' [*вторая студия Коляда-театра*] (2015). It develops its repertoire part-time, around the availability of directors and actors in the

¹⁰⁵ I did not elicit what year Plekhanov began working at the company.

permanent ensemble. Shcherbakova has noted that this off-shoot, which was renamed the Kolyada-Centre in 2015, caters for a 'student auditorium' [*публика студенческая*] (Interview with Shcherbakova 2015) – thereby cultivating future theatre-goers for the Kolyada-Theatre.

The second group – generally the theatre's older 50% – are people with a 'Soviet mentality' [*советский менталитет*] (Interview with Shcherbakova 2015), who 'come to see comedies, to relax, as a substitution for the cinema' [*ходят на комедии, отдохнуть, заменить кинотеатр*] (Vashakidze from Interview with Getsevich and Vashakidze 2014). According to the theatre's management, there is a strong gender bias towards women in this second group – although the company did not provide any precise statistics (Ibid.). It is also worth noting that, even though this second group seeks out more populist and sentimental dramas, it is drawn to the idiosyncratic nature of the company's shows: their representation of regional prototypes, their quirky humour and their camp aesthetic. After a performance of Goldoni's *A Servant to Two Masters* in November 2016, I witnessed two middle-age women approach Kolyada, among a small crowd of admirers. They chatted to him briefly, expressing their admiration for his work. One confided that they had driven ninety minutes by car to his theatre from a neighbouring town – and also that she considered him, and the Moscow-based Roman Vikiuk to be Russia's best directors.¹⁰⁶ The latter is renowned for the sensuous and homo-erotically charged nature of his productions – in other words, also a stylistic innovator in the Russian theatre landscape. Evidently, this audience member – and, by extension, I imagine, most other members of this target audience group – attend this theatre because even the sentimental dramas and broad comedies are, if not intellectually demanding, nevertheless vivid, sensuous and irreverent in their tone and execution.

The characteristic which unites both category of spectators emerges in the notion of a dedicated following. According to Bogaev, Kolyada has 'cultivated his own public' [*воспитал своего зрителя*] (Interview with Bogaev 2015). Shcherbakova uses a humorous term for this theatre's audiences – 'spectators-recidivists' [*зрители-рецидивисты*] (2013: 128), which is to say, individuals who actively follow the company's work and make frequent visits. Vakhov, a director and actor at the theatre,

¹⁰⁶ I am paraphrasing this conversation from memory.

has also confirmed this perspective, stating that ‘it is rare that people turn up [at the Kolyada-Theatre] by chance. People coming already know the theatre, they know its orientation, [...] in that sense they are “prepared”’ [*‘К нам приходят образованные люди, очень редко случается, что люди приходят случайно. Идут те, кто уже знает театр, знает какую направленность [...], в этом смысле они подкованные’*] (Interview with Vakhov 2015). With its distinctive aesthetic, this company is able to cater artistically for two demographic groups. Unlike Teatr.doc with its relatively narrow target age range, this company attracts generations born in the Soviet and the post-Soviet eras, with their correspondingly different educational levels and expectations of theatre.

According to its management, the Kolyada-Theatre has no budget for marketing (Getsevich and Vashakidze 2014). This troupe actively uses social media to market its work, both because of its low cost and also as a means to reach its younger audience members, the ‘internet generation’. However, according to Vashakidze, this theatre’s greatest asset is the prominence and personality of the artistic director: ‘he’s a genius at that – he [says and] does things so that people are talking about us and watching us but we’re not paying money for it’ [*‘Я считаю это главная заслуга Коляды потому что он гений в этом – он может делать так, чтобы про нас говорили и смотрели, но мы не платим деньги’*] (Ibid.). There have been numerous public scandals with Kolyada – cursing the City authorities with expletives on camera (‘Sorvalsia’ 2015) or being ejected from an airplane for drunkenness (Karmunin 2014: para. 1 of 14). After the latter occurred, the ticket sales for the theatre’s Moscow tour increased dramatically that year, so much so that Kolyada stated ironically in a media interview: ‘I want to organise with Aeroflot to be removed from a flight every year [during my company’s annual tour to Moscow]’ [*‘Я хочу договориться с «Аэрофлотом», чтобы они ежегодно снимали меня с рейса’*] (Ibid.: para. 4 of 14). Besides ‘media stunts’, the artistic director uses his renown to create a sense of intimacy with audiences. Kolyada has described the techniques which he deploys to achieve that as follows:

Before the start of each show, I meet spectators in the theatre’s foyer, I invite them [to buy] programmes, I tell them about [forthcoming] premieres.

[Перед началом каждого спектакля сам встречаю зрителей в холле театра, предлагаю им программки, рассказываю, какие у нас будут премьеры.] (Karpenko 2016: para. 4 of 16)

During almost half a dozen visits to this theatre between 2005 and 2015, I have witnessed the artistic director's interaction with the audience before or after most productions: he chats to spectators and signs editions of his collected plays and other publications on sale in the foyer, for his most ardent fans. By making himself visible in that way, Kolyada also ensures that audiences perceive him as one of the *narod*, not an aloof cultural luminary.

(ii) *The process of artistic programming*

Who is selecting the plays?

The revving motor of the theatre – in both creative and administrative terms – is the company's founding artistic director. Kolyada is one of most illustrious playwrights in Russia, who shot to fame during the *perestroika* era. His willingness to tackle difficult social themes made his work influential across Russia because, as one commentator explained it, Kolyada's playwriting engendered the post-Soviet tradition of gritty realism, or *chernukha* (Vinokurov 1998: para. 2 of 21). This dramatist has what is sometimes called euphemistically in the West a colourful personality. He is plain-spoken and can be charming or blunt, depending on his whim. There is no literary manager facilitating the theatre's programming, which is not necessarily a drawback for the artistic director because he is phenomenally hard-working. Describing Kolyada, the critic Pavel Rudnev (himself a prolific reader of new plays) commented that '[h]e is not a person, he is a literary agency' [*это не человек, а литературное агентство*] (2006: para. 7).

Kolyada does not solicit programming ideas from freelance directors, as is the normative practice in Russian theatres. Instead, he has provided a small number of opportunities for actors within his company to propose, and direct, plays in the repertoire. Between the foundation of this theatre and 2014, performers in the ensemble successfully contributed ideas for six productions – and subsequently directed them (Interview with Getsevich and Vashakidze 2014; Interview with Vakhov 2015). By his own account, Kolyada welcomes these initiatives but imposes a stringent process (Interview with Kolyada 2015). Actors must identify a new play and rehearse it in their spare time; subsequently, they perform a dress rehearsal for Kolyada. If the artistic director judges the production to possess a sufficient artistic merit, he includes it in the repertoire (*Ibid.*). This process relies on voluntary labour in a time-constrained environment. The troupe performs seven days a week (Interview with Vashakidze 2015), although not

every show requires each member of the ensemble. Vakhov, who proposed and directed three new plays at this theatre between 2001 and 2014, stated that most rehearsals for his productions took place at night, after the evening's performance had ended (Interview with Vakhov 2015).

There is no guarantee that these new initiatives will be accepted. According to the artistic director, he has declined two productions after watching a dress rehearsal (Interview with Kolyada 2015). It is worth noting that five of these six productions joined the repertoire after 2009, indicating an incremental shift towards this way of working, during this timeframe. These actor-led productions constituted a third of the premieres – five out of fifteen – between 2009 and 2014. Kolyada ascribes this new environment to a greater trust by local audiences towards this theatre, developed over many years (Interview with Kolyada 2015). Even so, the artistic director has been, and remains, the driving force of programming, responsible for the majority of key decisions. Kolyada's top-down style of management allows Kolyada to impose, and maintain, his own vision of theatre-making on this company – including his perception of the function of contemporary playwriting.

The theatre's aesthetic

The Kolyada-Theatre has a distinctive and idiosyncratic aesthetic, which was borne out of the artistic evolution of its founding director. A watershed occurred when Kolyada – working as a playwright between 1986 and 1994 – 'had travelled to premieres, fought with directors, told them that they should stage [his plays] differently. Then he understood that it was pointless' (Shcherbakova 2013: 80). His disillusionment was based on the fact that 'as a rule, [...] [his] plays were staged [...] in the style of everyday verisimilitude' (Ibid.: 76). This approach reflected the predominant practice of psychological realism in Russia, as well as an overly literal reading of his texts. Social themes, such as poverty and domestic abuse, proliferate in his plays. However, these topics form the background and texture of his dramas. Beumers and Lipovetsky have characterised his plays as 'neo-naturalist and sentimental' (2009: 143), while Shcherbakova suggests that they are 'melodramas' [*мелодрамы*] (Interview with Shcherbakova 2015). In other words, the playwright's aim is not primarily social critique – but instead to provide an affective experience. First and foremost, this dramatist depicts the inner world of his characters, particularly their heightened – and often

repressed – emotions. Beyond the superficial resemblance of his texts to psychological or social realism, the playwright intends a more expressive, less literal theatrical language.

Between 1994 and 1999, Kolyada directed five plays – of which four were his own – on the small stage at the Sverdlovsk Academic Drama Theatre (Shcherbakova 2013: 81). With each production, he experimented incrementally with new techniques, which would be developed subsequently at his own theatre. Shcherbakova has described the key innovations in this period – which I am summarising here – as carnivalesque ensemble-based physical sequences, lengthy musical arrangements to underscore the action, kitsch costumes, the symbolic presentation of stage space, the dual aspect of farce and tragedy in his actors' performances (Ibid.: 80-1). These experiments culminated in a production of Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* in 2001, which Kolyada himself considers to be a 'watershed' [*'перелом'*] (Interview with Kolyada 2015) in his discovery of a 'new theatrical language' [*'новый театральный язык'*] (Ibid.). Shcherbakova notes that, in that work, 'the director decisively breaks with the illusory verisimilitude of theatre, swapping action for the spontaneity of a theatrical game [*'режиссер решительно порывает с иллюзорным жизнеподобным театром, переключая действие в стихию театральной игры'*]. Rudnev characterised that work as an 'apogee' [*'апоге[й]'*] of Kolyada's directing (2006: para. 25 of 39). As well as being the director's most audacious experiment at that time, *Romeo and Juliet* was also a direct challenge to notions of theatrical tradition – by reproducing a canonical text in a 'unconventional format' [*'неформатный'*] (Interview with Shcherbakova 2015). Specifically, Kolyada 'cut [Shakespeare's] text to a minimum, he [only] left some of the best monologues' [*'урезал текст до минимума, оставил какие-то ударные монологи'*] (Ibid.). With that production, Kolyada firmly positioned himself as an auteur-director of non-realist forms.

The birth of his company provided the opportunity for a more collective ethos in his artistic process. Over the course of seven years at the Sverdlovsk Academic Drama Theatre, Kolyada gathered a group of likeminded actors around him. *Romeo and Juliet* premiered in February 2001 and he formally incorporated his company in December 2001. His troupe continued to work at its *alma mater* within certain artistic restrictions. For instance, the management of the Sverdlovsk Academic Drama Theatre refused

Kolyada's request to stage Gogol's *Government Inspector* (Interview with Shcherbakova 2015). As a consequence, the ensemble of *Romeo and Juliet* divided, and ultimately some actors chose to retain their full-time jobs at the repertory theatre, while others followed Kolyada on a journey to find a new foothold – which occurred first at the Teatron from 2002 to 2004, and subsequently, in dedicated spaces.

The ensemble plays an important role in shaping the company's artistic vision. From the outset, the actors have contributed creatively to productions, through extensive improvisations. Kolyada described a hundred videos, which he filmed over six months, to record *études* for his production of Shakespeare's *Hamlet* (2007). However, this ensemble-approach should not obscure the authorship of the productions. Evgenii Chistiakov, an actor in the troupe (2003-ongoing), has stated unambiguously that it is Kolyada, not the playwrights or actors, who fashions each work's 'artistic form' [*художественный образ*] (Interview with Chistiakov 2015). By the same account, Kolyada 'structures' [*структурирует*] (Ibid.) the works, while the actors are contributors. Another performer shed further light on that perspective, by suggesting that around 5% of the actors' improvisations during rehearsals for *Hamlet* were included in the final production (Interview with Vakhov 2015). In other words, the logic and aesthetic of the works remain in the director's realm. This theatre is not a 'devising' ensemble which produces work according to a system of shared authorship. That point is reflected in Kolyada's multiple roles and high level of creative participation in the majority of productions, in addition to his roles as artistic director and *direktor*. Between 2001 and 2014, he directed 49 out of the 55 productions (approx. 89%), which included responsibility for designing the set, costume, lighting and sound.¹⁰⁷ During that same period, he wrote nearly a third of the plays in the repertoire. He also cast himself in the title role in *King Lear* (2008) and took on smaller parts in several other productions including the Ghost in *Hamlet* (2007) and a walk-on cameo as himself in Goldoni's *A Servant to Two Masters* (2012).

At the helm of his company, between 2001 and 2014, Kolyada continued to forge his non-realist aesthetic. This period witnessed the artistic director pursuing an innovative approach to stage design. At the Sverdlovsk Academic Drama Theatre, he collaborated

¹⁰⁷ He also provided the directing concept, and was supervisory director, for a further 2 productions (approx. 4%), bringing his involvement as a director up to a total of 51 productions (approx. 93%), between 2001 and 2014.

with the designer Vladimir Kravtsev. The latter introduced ‘found objects’ (items which are not designed especially for theatre) into Kolyada’s productions (Interview with Shcherbakova 2015). After 2003, the artistic director assumed the mantle of director-designer (Ibid.). Whereas Kravtsev had favoured tasteful antiques or living elements, such as water, to serve as the main feature of his scenography, Kolyada had another approach, embodied by the following philosophical belief:

The strength of the director, the actors and the designer consists of the ability to turn worthless rubbish into something beautiful.

[Сила режиссёра, актёра, художника в том и заключается, чтобы бросовый хлам уметь превратить в нечто красивое.] (Anashkin 2010: para. 73)

His sets were formed of objects which he bought, usually in bulk, from local shops and markets – both as a money-saving device as well as to create a way of appealing to the taste of the local population, particularly those who purchase discounted and second-hand goods – the *narod*. The design process is not an after-thought in this theatre’s productions: it helps to shape the aesthetic. Kolyada has described this in relation to *Hamlet*:

I went to the pet shop where they sell cat food, I had cats at that time. [...] I saw these dog collars, they are so awful and beautiful. [I asked,] “What’s that?” “It’s for fighting dogs, those really, aggressive ones”. “Well, give me [some]”. [...] I brought them to the theatre[.] [...] Well, it happened purely by accident... from that, a whole beastly world began to emerge, where Hamlet becomes a man, out of a beast, he frees himself from those collars.

[Я зашел в собачий магазин, где продают еду для кошек, у меня кошки тогда были. [...] Я увидел эти ошейники, они – страшные такие, красивенькие. «Это что?» «Это для бойцовских собак, таких агрессивных очень собак». «Ну дайте [...]». [...] Я привез в театр. [...] Это все абсолютно случайно получилось... из-за этого стал вырастать какой-то звериный мир где Гамлет становится человеком из этого зверя, он освобождается из этих ошейников.] (Interview with Kolyada 2015)

This design aspect is woven into different strands of the narrative. Instead of the fencing match of Shakespeare’s original, Kolyada’s *Hamlet* ends with the performers grabbing each other’s dog collars, worn around their necks. The performers playing Hamlet and Laertes swing each other around roughly in an invented, dangerous-looking game. Kolyada privileges cheap and garish objects, such as wind-up toys or replicas of the Mona Lisa, in order to create aesthetic pleasure from items with a low monetary value.

Shcherbakova has described the rationale underpinning the company's work in the following way:

Nikolai Kolyada's auteur-style is eclectic; that is his artistic method. Kolyada uses kitsch and a variation of kitsch – camp – as instruments of his theatrical language. In Kolyada's works, 'high art' and 'mass entertainment' are paradoxically morphed.

[Эклектика является авторским стилем Николая Коляды, его художественным методом. Н. Коляда использует китч и разновидность китча кэмп в качестве инструментов театрального языка. В творчестве Н. Коляды парадоксально преломляется противопоставление элитарного и массового в театральном искусстве.] (Shcherbakova 2013: 193-4)

In contrast to conventional expectations of Russian theatre, this company's work appeared to contravene notions of 'good taste' – a mash-up of earnest emotions with eclectic leitmotifs, pop culture and self-parodying caricatures. There is a particular target to the criticism of this theatre's aesthetic. One critic has articulated this point, suggesting that 'the director is wholeheartedly mocking the Russian intelligentsia with its piety for high culture' [*Режиссер от души издевается над русской интеллигенцией с ее пиететом к высокой культуре*] (Shimadina 2008: para. 2 of 5). This sense of protest has led Rudnev to characterise Kolyada as a 'revolutionary-cum-trouble-maker, by nature' [*революционер-хулиган, по свойству натуры*] (Rudnev 2006: para. 5). Kolyada has described his intention as a theatre-maker, in these terms: 'I love to enrage and to please everyone' [*люблю всех злить и радовать*] (Borisova 2002). This anti-intellectual protest is not of a politicised nature, as with the New Drama movement, nor indeed does this company attempt to smash socio-cultural taboos. Instead, the Kolyada-Theatre challenges the predominant tradition of Russian psychological realism, and in particular, the conventions of narrative linearity, the 'tasteful' representations of characters and theatrical verisimilitude. This troupe's non-realist, self-parodying aesthetic offers an artistic alternative to mainstream theatre. It also contains a gently subversive ideology which, in contrast to New Drama, is only ever expressed in universal terms – as a generalised objection to majoritarian ways of thinking.

An analysis of the databox and the Kolyada-Theatre's relationship to new plays

One of the principal aims of the Kolyada-Theatre is the 'promotion of contemporary theatre practice' [*пропаганда современного театрального искусства*] (Getsevich

in Interview with Getsevich and Vashakidze 2014). There is a clear correlation between that mission and the advocacy of contemporary playwriting, as an examination of the databox makes clear. Between 2001 and 2014, new plays constituted the largest component of the repertoire, with twenty-seven out of fifty-five productions dedicated to it (approx. 49%). Yet, to a significant degree, this theatre served as a vehicle for the artistic director's own plays – sixteen new plays by Kolyada were staged by the playwright-director during this period (approx. 62% of all contemporary plays and approx. 30% of all premieres). He has explained this privileging of his own writing in relation to one of the two target audience groups – the more traditional, older spectators who seek out 'comedies, catering for a less adventurous taste' [*'комедии рассчитанные на невзыскательный вкус'*] (Interview with Kolyada 2015). Correspondingly, he has described some of his own plays – *Comprehensively* (2010), *Lady Chanel* (2011) and *Two Plus Two* (2010) – as 'the productions which feed us' [*'кормящие нас спектакли'*] (Lisin 2011: para. 3). His implication is that these pieces of work have a simpler aesthetic – sensuous and joyful, with less emphasis on the 'apocalyptic [vision]' [*'апокалиптичен'*] (Interview with Bogaev 2015), which pervades much of his work. The notion of dramas 'which feed us' also points to their intention to attract high levels of attendance, thereby serving as reliable sources of box office income. The artistic director has also noted that the programming of his own plays is a money-saving device, avoiding the need for royalty payments (Anashkin 2010: para. 60) – a reminder that, as a private company, his theatre has relatively limited resources. The salient point is that Kolyada does not directly equate the staging of his own plays as experimental theatre practice. Instead, they are valued for their popular appeal. Undoubtedly, his dramas contain some innovations, such as their idiosyncratic use of language.¹⁰⁸ Yet, as Dolzhanskii has suggested about Kolyada, the 'playwright dies in the director' [*'Драматург умирает в режиссёре'*] (in Shcherbakova 2013: 131). In other words, the plays are subservient to the auteur-director's theatricality – so that the performative language (as opposed to the textual one) is the theatre's main field of experimentation.

Contemporary playwriting at the theatre is dominated by, but not restricted to, Kolyada's plays. Between 2001 and 2014, there were ten premieres of works by other

¹⁰⁸ Shcherbakova describes how Kolyada uses observational dialogue, drawn from the Urals, but uses it to create a folkloric, imagined dialect (Interview with Shcherbakova 2015).

living playwrights (approx. 19% of all premieres). These playwrights were all from younger generations than the artistic director, born in the late or post-Soviet period and, predominantly, they were local residents – from Ekaterinburg or the surrounding Sverdlovsk Oblast'. The majority of dramatists – over three-quarters¹⁰⁹ – whose plays were produced at this theatre studied on the playwriting course at the Ekaterinburg Theatre Institute, which Kolyada instigated and runs (1993-ongoing).¹¹⁰ This category of productions caters for the company's younger target audiences. One critic has described this strand of work in the following way:

There are more minimalist things at the Kolyada-Theatre. There is a series of thrillers [called] “theatre in the boiler-room”, which are played directly in the boiler-room [...] plays by Kolyada's students[.]

[Есть в «Коляда-театре» ещё более минималистичные вещи. Это серия триллеров «театр в бойлерной», которые играли они в своём театре прямо в бойлерной, [...] по пьесам учеников Коляды[.]](Lisin 2011: para. 6)

These contemporary works were originally produced in the boiler-room at the company's first venue, but since 2014, they have been presented in the smaller auditorium, the Garnet Hall, as well as at the Kolyada-Centre. Kolyada uses his teaching position at the Ekaterinburg Theatre Institute to identify – as well as educate – younger dramatists, who share his own ideas about dramatic composition. The number of playwrights emerging from this course has led to the common usage of the term ‘the Urals School of Playwriting’ among Russian theatre professionals. A scholar at the Ekaterinburg Theatre Institution has characterised the work of this School as being a combination of the following traits:

A lament by another lost generation, a repenting of sins [and] an accusation of contemporary society[.]

[исповедь очередного потерянного поколения, покаяние в грехах или обвинение современному обществу] (Matafonova 2005: para. 31)

¹⁰⁹ The following playwrights, staged at the Theatre between 2001 and 2014, were students of Kolyada: Aleksandr Arkhipov, Anna Baturina, Svetlana Bazhenova, Andrei Krupin, Iaroslava Pulinovich, Valerii Shergin and Irina Vas'kovskaia. Konstantin Kostenko and Taia Sapurina were staged at the Theatre in the same period, but were not Kolyada's students.

¹¹⁰ The Ekaterinburg Theatre Institute's website credits Kolyada as having the idea for the course, as well as serving as the pedagogue. Source: <<http://www.egti.ru/news/?id=357>> [accessed 3 December 2015].

This phenomenon is not ‘of a single nature’ [*‘однородн[ый]’*] (Ibid.: para. 27), so hard to define precisely, but it has certainly ‘given [Russian theatre] several currently acknowledged names’ (Ibid.: para. 33). Kolyada has suggested that the new generation of dramatists, emerging from his course, belong to a different aesthetic than playwrights from the New Drama movement:

[The term New Drama] is genuinely foreign [to me]. It’s a Moscow – and St. Petersburg – thing, something from the capital(s). What we have is called the Urals School of Playwriting.

[*‘Это действительно чужой. Это нечто московское, питерское, столичное. У нас это называется уральская школа драматургии’.*]
(Interview with Kolyada 2015)

To some extent, this distinction is ideological rather than artistic, representing a strong sense of regional identity which the artistic director cultivates in every aspect of his company’s work: the ‘found objects’ filling his productions and theatre’s foyers; the regional dialects proliferating in his own plays; his policy of supporting local writers on his playwriting course. However, in contrast to the wittingly provocative nature of New Drama, Kolyada has tended to programme dramatists who emphasise narratives with universal messages or use allegorical techniques, such as Bogaev and Iaroslava Pulinovich. Arguably his most famous student Vasilii Sigarev, was largely overlooked by this theatre, presumably on the basis that his work tends to be highly contentious in its use of expletives and graphic violence.¹¹¹ In 2016, at his theatre’s Eurasia competition, Kolyada described his favourite works as being about ‘the absence of love and about how one wishes that there was love’ [*‘об отсутствии любви и о том, как хочется, чтобы была любовь’*] (Varkentin 2016: para. 29). This artistic director tended to programme new plays which struck a compromise between formal innovation and

¹¹¹ The company’s website does not mention any productions by Sigarev. In fact, I watched this dramatist’s *Black Milk* at the Kolyada-Theatre in 2005, directed by Sigarev himself – one of the most memorable theatre productions I have seen due to its evocative content, combined with a theatrically inventive form. As I recall it, Kolyada recounted how Sigarev was due to direct the production at a larger theatre in Ekaterinburg but they cancelled it, and on that basis, he permitted the work to continue at his own venue. In any case, Kolyada claims that it was for practical reasons that he discontinued that production after moving to the Mansion in 2006 (Kolyada 2015). The composite picture which emerges is that the artistic director recognises Sigarev’s talent – but with a certain reluctance, and only briefly embraced the younger dramatist’s work within his repertoire. The role of professional envy by the mentor towards his ward may also be a factor. However, Kolyada’s reluctance to embrace profane language – as opposed to milder forms of swearing – in his repertoire, suggests that restrictive notions of theatrical convention played an equal or larger role in overlooking Sigarev’s plays.

conventional dramaturgical approaches. His theatre produced plays which were aesthetically inventive and contained a degree of criticism of the existing social order, without offering an overt rebuttal to the predominant – or state-led – ideology of the era.

The remaining programming between 2001 and 2014 consisted of six revivals of Russian work (approx. 11%), six revivals of international works (approx. 11%), eight adaptations of Russian works (approx. 15%) and eight adaptations of international works (approx. 15%). These categories total twenty-eight productions – or 51% of the repertoire. With only one exception, all adaptations and revivals were directed by the founding director. Shcherbakova has neatly described Kolyada's directing process in relation to this category of work: he 'takes a classical text, which everybody knows, as a matrix, and creates his own play' [*он берет классический текст как матрицу, которая всем известна, а сочиняет свою собственную пьесу*] (Interview with Shcherbakova 2015). The phrase 'which everybody knows' is significant and is borne out by a closer analysis of the production titles. The revivals overwhelmingly consist of canonical works by playwrights such as William Shakespeare, Anton Chekhov, Alexander Pushkin, Nikolai Gogol and Tennessee Williams. A prior knowledge of the given play allows the audiences to appreciate the extent and specifics of the directorial interventions. To that extent, Kolyada worked within the predominant traditions of most repertory theatres, privileging his role as an auteur-director above all else. Similarly, the adaptations programmed at this theatre were based on widely-known works, such as the cult Russian film, *The Star with No Name* (2008)¹¹² or the French novel *Madam Rosa* (2003) – which became so popular that one critic listed four theatres planning productions of it across Russia in the same year. He opined that this novel had 'suddenly turned into a fact of [Russian] theatre' [*вдруг превратился в факт театра*] (Dmitrevskaia 2005: para. 1 of 23). In her doctoral dissertation, Shcherbakova does not make any formal distinction between revivals and adaptations. She does not explain her reason for doing so, but the implication is that they both serve the same artistic function, as a vehicle for Kolyada's experimental practice as a director. The artistic director has called this type of work the company's 'main shows' [*основные спектакли*] (Interview with Kolyada

¹¹² The film was made in 1978, directed by Mikhail Kozakov, based on a Romanian novel by Mikhail Sebastian.

2015) and ‘our face’ [‘наше лицо’] (Ibid.). Rather than new plays by younger dramatists or indeed his own plays, this theatre promotes its revivals and adaptations as its finest artistic achievements to the media and on tours. In other words, the company reiterates a position akin to the Moscow Arts, advocating for contemporary playwriting, while simultaneously producing it infrequently and on its smaller stages – with both companies staging ten new plays by the younger generation of dramatists during my period of research.

It is worth noting that almost a third of all productions, thirteen out of fifty-four (approx. 24%) between 2001 and 2014, were for younger audiences, primarily the under-fives. This high percentage of children’s shows in the repertoire was unique among my case study theatres: the other three venues premiered a single production each for children during the same time period. This strand of work has not had any attention paid to it by critics or scholars, making it difficult to evaluate. However, in my view, the sense of fun and playful quality of Kolyada’s aesthetic is particularly well-suited to younger audiences. Kolyada’s belief in the importance of programming work for a broad section of his local community, the *narod*, may explain the relatively large quantity of productions for children in his repertoire. If his company is to survive financially, it must cultivate followers among the next generation, not only drawn from the cultural elite, but also from the broader public.

Major shifts in the programming of contemporary playwriting between 2000 and 2014

The two predominant strands of programming – firstly, revivals and adaptations of canonical works and, secondly, new plays by the artistic director – have run concurrently since the company’s founding. Vashakidze has described the former as ‘large-scale productions... in which the whole company acts’ [‘масштабные спектакли ... [в] которых[х] играет вся труппа’] (Interview with Getsevich and Vashakidze 2014). Kolyada has suggested that this strand of programming constitutes a linear, albeit multi-faceted, artistic evolution. According to the artistic director, the company has been travelling along a single ‘path’ [‘путь’] (Interview with Kolyada 2015), since its production of *Romeo and Juliet*. Shcherbakova has reiterated this point, suggesting that ‘in relation to classical texts, [Kolyada] is developing what he already discovered [in previous productions]’ [‘Что касается отношения к классическому тексту, [...] [он] развивает то, что он уже нашел’] (Interview with Shcherbakova 2015). Getsevich

has described a ‘certain tone’ [*определенный тон*] (Interview with Getsevich and Vashakidze 2014) which is shared by revivals and adaptations of classical works at this theatre. This practice contrasts to my other case studies, where a single theatre-maker did not define the company’s output and it is therefore possible to identify distinctive phases, or seminal productions, which challenged the company’s aesthetic.

The third, and final, strand of work – new plays by a younger generation of dramatists – does not fit neatly into either of the two prevalent categories. Even before incorporating his company, Kolyada staged one work by his playwriting student, Bogaev’s *Russian National Mail* (1997), which premiered during the same year as the Moscow production (the latter gained more critical attention, partly because the cast included Tabakov). Two plays by younger dramatists were included in the Kolyada-Theatre repertoire between 2001 and 2009 – yet the key shift occurred in the second half of my period of research. Between 2010 and 2014, a further eight works by young Russian playwrights were premiered by the company. The dearth of scholarly, or even critical, appraisals of this strand of programming makes it difficult to evaluate – although it hints at the perception by commentators that works by these younger dramatists have yet to profoundly influence the company’s aesthetic. The company’s identity continued to be associated with Kolyada, as the auteur-director at the helm and the sole artistic gatekeeper.

(iii) *Institutional realities*

The Kolyada-Theatre is one of ten private theatre companies in the Sverdlovsk District, according to an official report by the regional authorities (*‘O Kontseptsii razvitiia’* 2012: Section 3, Chapter 1). This company is an autonomous, non-commercial partnership.¹¹³ In contrast to Teatr.doc’s status as a ‘non-commercial organisation’, a ‘non-commercial partnership’ denotes an organisation which is dependent on capital investments from its founding directors (Interview with Sosnena 2015).¹¹⁴ This form is well-suited to this company which has relied significantly on Kolyada’s donations.

¹¹³ Source: <<http://www.kolyada-theatre.ru/ru/theatre>> [accessed 28 August 2016].

¹¹⁴ Liudmila Sosnena, the Finance director at TEFI – Russia’s national television awards (2014-ongoing), suggested that equivalence (Sosnena 2015). To be precise, this institutional form constitutes a non-for-profit *modus operandi*, while stipulating that the organisation is dependent upon grants from donors and foundations, as opposed to capital investments by the company’s founders or partners (Sosnena 2015).

While this company has never relinquished its institutional independence from the state, its *de facto* relationship with the authorities has changed significantly since its inception. The company registered in 2001. Reflecting on this point many years later, Kolyada has explained that:

I was certain that the City authorities [in Ekaterinburg] would give me a building immediately, when they found out that Kolyada has a theatre [company], but that didn't happen.

[Я был уверен что сразу власти города дадут мне помещение, когда узнают, что у Коляды есть театр, но этого не произошло.] (Interview with Kolyada 2015)

Instead, the troupe subleased its own premises in 2004. This independent status had advantages – particularly, a total autonomy from the state, but it also afforded fewer protections from other actors, such as private developers. In 2005, the leaseholder of the venue, the Youth Centre of Poetry [*Молодежный центр Поэзии*], attempted to evict the theatre – only one year into the agreed three-year sublease. There is a range of opinions among commentators about whether the local authorities were negligent bystanders to this conflict (Rudnev 2006: para. 2) or complicit in the attempted eviction ('Teatr popal' 2006: para. 2 of 5). In either scenario, in 2006, the Sverdlovsk Minister of Culture, Natalia Vetrova (1996-2010), offered to provide a ten-year lease on a nineteenth century wooden mansion for the sole use of the theatre – ensuring a more stable creative environment.

By the end of the decade, the relationship of the Sverdlovsk Oblast' towards Kolyada became unambiguously pro-active. As Shcherbakova has described it, Kolyada's regular tours to France and Poland meant that 'finally the authorities understood that he's a "brand", who carries the Urals' trademark in Europe' [*наконец-то власти поняли что это – бренд, который несет марку Урала в Европе*] (Shcherbakova 2015). In 2010, the Sverdlovsk Minister of Tourism and Culture Aleksandr Badaev (2010-2) agreed to provide a more spacious and better-equipped venue for Kolyada, in response to lobbying by the regional Union of Theatre Practitioners. The nineteenth-century mansion was an improvement on the original venue. The latter was a former KBG shooting range with a column blocking parts of the stage for some audience members (Anashkin 2010: para. 5 of 19). Nevertheless, the mansion was not a purpose-built theatre and it had its own limitations, such as inadequate fire safety standards and the lack of storage area for props ('Aleksi Badaev' 2010: para. 2 of 4). By 2014, the

Sverdlovsk District authorities renovated a building which formerly hosted the ‘Spark’ [*Искра*] cinema, re-housing the company there in April of that year.¹¹⁵ This third venue – the current one at the time of writing – is a symbolic, and material, upgrade with its façade on the Ekaterinburg’s central thoroughfare, its two performance spaces and its grandiose marbled interiors. The progression from a privately-leased, shared basement to large subsidised, dedicated performance space appears to embody the gradual acceptance of the Kolyada-Theatre by the authorities as an important cultural institution.

No scholars or commentators have suggested that this relationship has adversely affected the company, in terms of its artistic independence. However, the picture is less clear in regards to the artistic director’s role as a cultural leader. In 2011, Kolyada expressed his support for the opposition presidential candidate, Mikhail Prokhorov, but a year later, he switched his allegiance. In January 2012, he joined the ‘people’s staff’ [*народный штаб*] – a body filled with civic and cultural figures to support Putin’s campaign for the presidential election that year. In media interviews, the artistic director stated that he had voluntarily changed his support (Enin 2012). Kolyada’s decision appears to have been primarily strategic, as he articulated it himself in another media appearance, referring to past and future material support for his theatre from the Sverdlovsk District:

I thought: “I mean, they’re giving you [a grant], Kolyada, the government is giving you a building for the theatre [...] – and you’re going to sit there and be part of the opposition?”

[Я подумал: "вообще-то, [грант] тебе дают, Коляда, тебе дает правительство здание для театра [...]– а ты тут будешь сидеть и оппозиционировать?"]. (Vasil’ev 2012: para. 9 of 13)

A different perspective is suggested by Shcherbakova, who posits that the artistic director’s public support for Putin in media interviews must have been a *quid pro quo* for continued subsidy of his theatre’s building (Interview with Shcherbakova 2015). Either way, there was an irate public response to Kolyada’s vocal endorsement of Putin: a large number of abusive comments appeared on the theatre-maker’s LiveJournal blog, forcing him to temporarily shut it down (Enin 2012). Later in the same month, his

¹¹⁵ Source: <http://www.vgusinke.ru/index.php?option=com_news&Itemid=778&vidn=39454> [accessed 14 November 2016].

theatre was covered in posters which mimicked a new production at the Kolyada-Theatre – but with an image of Putin covered in lipstick-kisses. A spokesperson for the group which took responsibility for the posters, People Against Violence [*Движение против насилия*], explained the rationale for criticising Kolyada (i.e. as opposed to other creative leaders from Ekaterinburg who also joined the pre-election staff) (Medvedeva 2012): ‘he was a moral authority in the town, in our district and [...] in our country’ [*Он являлся моральным авторитетом в нашем городе, в нашей области и [...] в нашей стране*]. This episode is revealing because it highlights the politically ambiguous persona which the theatre-maker cultivates in public, rhetorically but also in his productions. Rudnev has captured this contradiction by characterising Kolyada in the following way:

People such as Kolyada were, evidently, very necessary to the young government in the post-Revolutionary epoch [in 1920s Soviet Russia] – to stop people from emigrating and to make them believe in the charms of socialism. [...] People’s heroes and “organisers of the arts”, wonderful “listeners” of contemporary speech and hugely-energetic people, capable of attracting likeminded individuals.

[Такие люди, как Коляда, очевидно, были очень нужны молодому государству в послереволюционную эпоху – чтобы заставлять людей не мигрировать и верить в прелести социализма. [...] Народные герои и «организаторы искусства», прекрасные «слушачи» современной речи и энергоемкие люди, способные притянуть к себе единомышленников.]
(Rudnev 2006: para. 10)

This nuanced description is useful – a reminder of the state’s dependence upon ideological allies, including within the cultural sphere, given the ‘top-down’ mode of governance since Yeltsin’s implementation of a ‘super-presidential’ system in 1993 (and exacerbated under Putin by the subjugation of the media and the business sector to the state). In terms of Kolyada’s role within that system, it captures the sense of a theatre-maker dedicated to his local audiences, who believes in humane ideals, while simultaneously refusing to take a critical position on the state’s authoritarian ideology. In his productions, Kolyada uses the same techniques as Soviet theatre-makers to criticise the authorities, which is to say allegory. That approach provides the appearance of conformity – while allowing audiences to detect a subversive, oppositional message. Describing his production of Alexander Pushkin’s *Boris Godunov* (2011), Kolyada has noted that the production draws a parallel between the eponymous bloodthirsty Tsar and the then Prime Minister: ‘the main hero [is played by the actor] Oleg Iagodin, [who

is] a spitting image of Putin' [*где главный герой Олег Ягодин похож на две капли воды на Путина*'] (Interview with Kolyada 2015). A member of the company's troupe has expressed his own and Kolyada's disdain for overly simplistic criticism of named political officials in theatre (Interview with Vakhov 2015). More broadly, this theatre expresses anti-establishment sentiments indirectly – in its non-conformist taste and by evoking social injustice, albeit without entering the sphere of political polemic. As a private entity, which benefits significantly from state subsidy (without relying entirely upon it, as is discussed in the section on funding below), the theatre is able to pursue this course – advocating for artistic experiment. The ideology underpinning the company appears to question prevailing cultural norms, while largely affirming socio-political ones.

(iv) *Funding*

As a private company, the Kolyada-Theatre is able to keep its expenditure significantly lower than a comparably-sized state-run company. The administrative departments at this theatre are very small, not least because many personnel hold more than one position. Between 2012 and the time of writing, Chistiakov earned additional income to his acting salary, as a part-time administrator (Interview with Chistiakov 2015). The state's rules of good practice would not allow such an institutionally flexible approach. The artistic director has ironically described what would happen if his theatre turned into a state-run institution: 'a *direktor* will be appointed, four deputy *direktors* [...] [and] eighteen set builders' [*будет посажен директор, 4 замдиректора, [...] 18 монтировщиков*'] (Interview with Kolyada 2015). Furthermore, the collective ethos of the company means that actors are willing to accept a lower pay, for what they perceive to be a more fulfilling job. Kolyada has pointed out that when his company tours, he offers his employees a *per diem* which is 25% percent of the level of state-run theatres – 500 roubles a day as opposed to 2000 (Ibid.). As a consequence, the theatre's total monthly outgoings are 1.5 million Russian roubles, or approximately 21,000 GBP (Ibid.). In the same interview, the artistic director detailed the core costs: salaries, artistic expenditure and utilities, as well as a 'surplus' [*запас*'] (Ibid.), which may be used as a contingency or to supplement the expense of festivals organised by the company.

Kolyada has stated that income was raised entirely by ticket sales (Interview with Kolyada 2015). The importance of box office revenue serves as a pertinent reminder of

the company's dependence on its local audience, and why 'we won't be fully fed by *Hamlets* and Shakespeares alone, half of the repertoire are comedies' [*одними Гамлетами, одними Шекспирами, сыт не будешь. Половина у нас сейчас это комедии*] (Interview with Vakhov 2015). However, Kolyada frequently emphasised the critical – albeit sporadic – role of his own donations, between the company's inception and 2014, pointing out that he was the primary sponsor (Karmumin 2014: para.8 of 14). On one occasion, he stated that he invests the entirety of his playwriting royalties into the theatre (Dubicheva 2012: para. 21 of 26). Thanks to his enduring popularity as a dramatist, the artistic director has received, and continues to receive, a regular income from the productions of his plays across Russia. By 2014, he estimated that his monthly remuneration was between 200,000 and 300,000 Russian roubles – which equates to between approximately 2,800 and 4,200 British pounds per month (Karmumin 2014: para. 8 of 14). By 2015, the artistic director stated that he no longer invested his own money into the theatre (Interview with Kolyada 2015). That statement is plausible because, during that year, he apologised to his actors in a Facebook message for delaying their salaries by a week, explaining that:

Before, I added from my own money [to box office income] if needed and everything was fine, I have never delayed [your] payment. But now I have spent all of my money on [buying] a flat [for myself, in the same building as the theatre] on furniture, on the move, and I have nothing [to spare].

[Раньше я добавлял, если не хватало, из своих денег и всё было нормально, ни разу в жизни не задержал зарплату. А сейчас все свои деньги я истратил на квартиру, на мебель, на переезд и у меня нуль.] (“S ultra кое chem i vse” 2015: para. 4 of 5)

It seems likely that Kolyada's decision not to donate his royalties after 2014 is connected with the company's move to its third venue – with its potential for a higher revenue from ticket sales. The audience capacity of the theatre doubled in its current venue (from April 2014 onwards), compared to its previous one (2006-14) – or trebled when counting the number of seats of both stages, in aggregate.¹¹⁶

Outside of his own contributions, Kolyada has stated that he receives no corporate support for his venue, for lack of interest from the business sector (Interview with

¹¹⁶ A brief survey which I made of the repertoire in the new venue, in November and December 2015, suggested that productions may run on both stages simultaneously, but do so rarely: it happened on two dates during those months.

Kolyada 2015). I have identified no evidence to contradict that. This disinterested attitude from the business elites serves as a reminder that the theatre's aesthetic is, at least in contrast to commercially-run or repertory theatres, challenging for conventional theatre-goers.

Since its inception, the company's financial wellbeing has come to depend increasingly on state subsidy. Since 2006, a venue has been provided, and paid for, by the City of Ekaterinburg. It is possible to estimate a pecuniary value for the lease of the company's third venue at 5.4 million roubles a year – approximately 75,000 GBP. This figure is based on an evaluation by the local authorities, which unsuccessfully sued the theatre for moving into the building six months before a leasehold agreement had been drawn up and signed (Shumkov 2015: para. 1 of 15). It is worth noting that the City's support is approximately 23% of the theatre's total annual expenditure. This ongoing support by the municipal authorities was complemented by subsidy from the regional ones. As a one-off contribution, the Oblast's Minister of Culture provided over 90 million roubles, or approximately 1.26 million GBP, for the renovation of the company's third venue (Ibid.: para. 12 of 15). Chistiakov confirmed that the theatre secured grants by tender from the Oblast' three years running since 2013, supporting productions, tours and festivals (Interview with Chistiakov 2015). In the same interview, he cited the amounts as 10 million roubles, 5 million roubles and 3 million roubles, or approximately 140,000 GBP, 70,000 GBP and 42,000 GBP. When the theatre receives pecuniary support from the Oblast',¹¹⁷ it is a greater percentage than input from the City. Between 2013 and 2016, the support from the regional authorities translated to 43%, 22% and 13% of the company's total annual expenditure.¹¹⁸ State subsidy depends upon both formal relations with the authorities, through grant applications, but also informal ones. In 2016, one of theatre's main festivals Kolyada-Plays, which had run for a decade, was almost closed, due to lack of financial resources. Due to its favourable regard of the theatre, the regional authorities intervened to maintain the initiative.¹¹⁹ The importance

¹¹⁷ I have not been able to gain precise statistics on how regularly the theatre received funding from the Oblast' between its inception and 2014.

¹¹⁸ I have not been able to establish precisely when the theatre began receiving financial support from the Sverdlovsk Ministry of Culture but it was certainly earlier than Chistiakov documents. In 2011, the Oblast' awarded three million roubles – approximately 42,000 GBP – for the Eurasia Festival (Dybicheva 2012: para. 8 of 26).

¹¹⁹ In 2016, the theatre publicly announced the closure of Kolyada-Plays in future years (i.e. it would run, in spite of a financial shortfall that year, but close subsequently). In an interview, Kolyada attributed the

of the authorities in providing substantial sums towards the company's core costs is a further reminder of Kolyada's ambiguous position in relation to the state. On the one hand, he maintains his institutional independence and maximises his financial autonomy, but on the other, his theatre would not be able to maintain its current venue or prolific artistic output, without these statutory partners. This company is private but it is nevertheless dependent upon the local and regional authorities. That situation is perfectly suited to the Kolyada-Theatre's ideological position: as a critical voice of mainstream theatre practice, but not of the state's policies.

(v) Conclusion: an impresario's studio theatre

Between 2001 and 2014, the Kolyada-Theatre positioned itself as an 'alternative' company, working in opposition to cultural norms. Its aesthetic was implicitly critical of the Russian intellectual elites, with its incorporation of mass culture into its densely rich, eclectic and highly artistic productions. This theatre is primarily a vehicle for the work of the founding auteur-director and theatrical impresario. Nevertheless, this company has played a significant role in supporting a new generation of dramatists, albeit as a minority strand of programming. It promotes a particular vision of post-Soviet playwrights, one which encourages stylistic and linguistic innovation (over formal experimental or 'political' playwriting), and even invented its own moniker for this regional movement – the Urals School of Playwriting. The authorities did not accommodate Kolyada's company for its first half-decade because of its 'vision' of culture which was antagonistic towards the socio-political status quo. However, after 2006, the regional authorities offered the Kolyada-Theatre its own dedicated theatre space(s), effecting a shift in cultural policy: to accommodate this brand of 'permitted dissidence' which offered a cultural space for gentle subversion by a post-Soviet younger generation as well as a reassuringly nostalgic perspective for older local audiences. In spite of an ongoing fractious relationship with the local authorities, Kolyada became a useful 'brand' for the Urals locally, nationally and internationally – demonstrating a

financial problems to lack of interest by federal authorities, noting that 'the Russian Ministry of Culture does not consider that [this festival] is necessary' (Varketin 2016: para. 10). However, subsequently, the Sverdlovsk Minister of Culture, Pavel Krepkov, announced that he would intervene – becoming the Chair of this festival, taking responsibility for organisational issues including presumably finance. Source: <<http://kommersant.ru/doc/3018543>> [accessed 28 August 2016].

regional self-identification which resisted overtly 'political' protest, while providing a site of moral resistance to local and national politics.

Conclusion to Chapter Three

In the final section of this chapter, I contextualise my four case studies against the broader theatre ecology in Russia, before drawing conclusions in relation to my main argument, advocating for a reconceptualisation of the act of translation. Since 1991, the most significant phenomenon in Russian theatre was the commercialisation of theatrical production (see p. 23, 105). Tabakov brought the Moscow Arts more closely into alignment with this mainstream development, further legitimising commercially-oriented entertainment and 'bourgeois' theatre-making. This establishment venue embraced certain key texts of New Drama, in order to counter-balance this 'commercialisation' in the eyes of the public, critics and other theatre professionals, by accommodating at least a degree of formal experimentation on its smaller stages. Yet, programming choices favoured dramas employing allegorical political critique over overtly 'political' works, in order to offer 'sanitized' messages. For instance, two of Vyrypaev's works were staged – *The Drunks* and *Illusions* – which are more sentimental and less violent compared to his early *oeuvre*, such as the grittier and more formally challenging pieces, *Oxygen* and *July*.¹²⁰ For the same reason, in order to avoid overt dissidence, the Moscow Arts never produced verbatim dramas by non-conformist playwrights – with their emphasis on marginalised social groups and contentious political subjects. This theatre came to embody conservative theatre-making, replicating the tenets of capitalist production – the normative practice in Russian theatre, where qualified dissent can be accommodated as a 'specialist' interest. The *Sovremennik* pursued a different strategy to the normative practice of commercialisation between 2000 and 2014. This theatre positioned itself as the leading bastion of 'high art', maintaining Soviet-era traditions of psychological realism, particularly in its acting styles which were 'old-fashioned', albeit high quality – enunciating verse for its musicality and emphasising the affective role of the performer by favouring melodramatic over 'naturalistic' performances. This theatre's mission to maintain Stanislavsky's teachings, as perceived by the 'sixties' generation (who achieved professional success in the 1960s, a period of relative liberalisation in the post-Stalin era), came at the expense of the non-

¹²⁰ For a description of *July*, see p. 106; to read about the other plays, see the 'Props list' of plays on p. 11.

conformist post-Soviet dramatists whose plays were not staged at this venue between 2000 and 2014 – although one production in 2017 suggests that the Urals School of Playwriting, with its emphasis on stylistic innovation, might yet come to be better represented in the repertoire in the future.¹²¹

The picture that emerges is the institutional inflexibility of Russian theatre as a whole. Even when the management at state-run companies recognised the talent of the younger generation of dramatists, artistic directors did not embrace work from either school of writing to significantly reform their theatre's practice – or create a new vision of how their theatres could respond to the fundamental socio-economic and political changes of the post-2000 era. The repertory system – as these two case studies show – did not embrace a new institutional model, where emerging playwrights could be commissioned to write new plays, or formally experimental work placed at the core of the theatre's work. Instead, the state sector continued to 'outsource' the role of developing and supporting dramatists to the independent sector – the 'fringe' studio theatres. Both Teatr.doc and the Kolyada-Theatre remain among a small number of companies, serving as prolific advocates and producers of non-conformist playwriting in Russia. The Moscow-based venue uses its annual Lyubimovka Festival in September each year to offer a professional platform for thirty to forty mostly first-time dramatists – increasing the scope of Teatr.doc's impact beyond its production capabilities, whereby about a dozen new plays are premiered each year. The Kolyada-Theatre continues to use Kolyada's role as a pedagogue at the Ekaterinburg Theatre Institute to support new generations of playwrights, a small number of whom have work included into his company's repertoire – from 2000 and 2014, and with two new dramas produced between 2014 and the time of writing.¹²² Kolyada's company also pursued an

¹²¹ It is worth noting that in 2017, the Sovremennik incorporated *Girl at the Front-Line* [Фронтвичка] by Anna Baturina (2010) into its repertoire – six years after it premiered at the Kolyada-Theatre. Since Baturina (born 1985) was a student of Kolyada at the Ekaterinburg Theatre Institute, it appears that this Moscow-based repertory venue has begun, at the time of writing, to embrace the younger generation of playwright from the Urals School of Playwriting. This development suggests an incremental shift in position towards stylistically innovative dramatists from a younger generation than Kolyada.

As is common practice in Russian theatre, the Sovremennik retitled this work, calling it *Can Anyone Tell Me Where This Train Is Headed?* [Скажите, люди, куда идет этот поезд...]. Source:

<<https://sovremennik.ru/performances/dvoretz-na-yauze/skazhite-lyudi-kuda-idet-etot-poezd/>> [accessed 14 August 2017].

¹²² Since 2014, two new plays by younger Urals' based dramatists were incorporated into the programme. These were: *The house by the road* [Дом у дорогу] by Ekaterina Bronnikova and Semion Viatkin (2015) and *Let it be crystal* [Пусть Хрустальный] by Vladimir Zuev (2015).

expansionist policy to provide opportunities for younger members of the troupe in Ekaterinburg¹²³ and a platform for the Urals School of Playwriting in Moscow.¹²⁴ The inventiveness – and continued or even *expanding* determination – of both of these independent studio theatres to promote a younger generation of non-conformist playwrights indicates a broader ideological shift by the ‘internet generation’ which has occurred in Russia between 2000 and the time of writing and which mass censorship has failed to eliminate. The reluctance by medium-scale and large-scale state-run theatres to embrace younger generations of dramatists at the institutional level, particularly those writing stylistically or formally innovative texts, is symptomatic of a theatre sector which curbs the most radical potential of performance to question society’s deep-rooted taboos and injustices.

If there has not been radical reform in Russian theatre outside the ‘fringe’, there has at least been a gradual shift in the broader theatrical ecology – influenced significantly by at least one of my two case study repertory theatres. The Moscow Arts’ occasional staging of works of non-conformist dramatic writing prefigured – and most likely influenced – an incremental acceptance of post-Soviet playwriting across the country.

¹²³ In 2014, the producing outfit based at the Kolyada-Theatre – the Kolyada-Centre (originally called the Centre for Contemporary Playwriting, see p. 185) gained its own building – which was the Kolyada-Theatre’s second venue (between 2006-14). This institutional foothold appears to represent not only a symbolic improvement of status for the younger members of the troupe but also a materially-improved opportunity in the programming schedules. Looking at the repertoire in September 2017, I observed over half a dozen plays by the post-Soviet generation of Urals-based dramatists in repertoire at the Kolyada-Centre (in addition to those staged at the Kolyada-Theatre’s two stages at its main site), suggesting a significantly increased capacity for works by dramatists from the Urals School of Playwriting. These included: *Cave Matas* [Пещерные мамы] by Rinat Tashimov (2014); *The Devil of the Sky* [Бес небес] by Valerii Shergin (2015); *Girls in Love, or Go F*** Yourself, Orpheus* [Девушки в любви, или Иди ты на х**, Орфей] by Irina Vas’kovskaia (date of premiere not shown); *A good soul* [A double-entendre allows for a humorous alternative translation: *A good person in the shower*] [В душе хороший человек] by Svetlana Bazhenova (2015); *The Whole Truth about My Father* [Вся правда о моем отце] by Ekaterina Guzema and Aleksei Zaitsev (2015), *Violet Clouds* [Фиолетовые облака] by Anzhelika Chetvergova; *The Jewish Kaftan* [Лансердак] by Ekaterina Guzema (2016); *I’m Justine* [Я - Жюстин] by Roman Kozyrchikov (date of premiere not shown). Source: <<https://uralcsd.ru/dramatics>> [accessed 14 August].

¹²⁴ Kolyada opened a Moscow-based troupe of the Kolyada-Theatre in August 2017, co-managed by an actor, Oleg Bilik (formerly part of Kolyada’s troupe in Ekaterinburg). This branch of the venue will also be a private company – with its own troupe of thirty-eight actors and administrators, initially leasing a space at the Theatre of Labour [Театр труда] on Petrovka Street. Most significantly, the theatre will only produce plays by the Urals School of Dramaturgy, thereby promoting this regional variation of non-conformist writing. Source: <<http://www.mk.ru/culture/2017/08/10/nikolay-kolyada-otkryvaet-svoy-teatr-v-moskve-pomeshchenie-na-petrovke.html>> [accessed 14 August 2017].

Koval'skaia has articulated the way that contemporary drama has continued to permeate Russian theatre – through a geographical relocation to regional cities:

New Drama [...] has taken its place in Russian theatre. It is difficult to name a reputable regional theatre which does not have a contemporary play on its small stage. [...] Today, New Drama is not being staged as actively [in Moscow] as it is in the regions.

[Новая драма [...] заняла свое место в российском театре. Сложно назвать приличный региональный театр где на малой сцене не идет современная пьеса.[...] Сегодня в Москве новая драма не ставят так активно, как ставят ее в регионах.] (Koval'skaia on the radio broadcast, Zaslavskii 2015)

As she suggests, this tendency only represents a minority strand of programming at most regional venues, with its lower hierarchy on the smaller stages – precisely mirroring its position at the Moscow Arts (and other Moscow-based theatres) in the first millennial decade. It is worth qualifying her comment further. Koval'skaia's use of the term New Drama masks a Moscow-based bias towards formally experimental, overtly political contemporary playwriting. Regional venues have tended to privilege 'permitted dissidence' and stylistic innovation over formal experimentation and dissident ideologies. A revealing illustration is Pulinovich's *Joan*, one of the four translations for this doctoral project. *Joan* is based on an earlier play by the same dramatist – called *Next comes a new day* [*Дальше будет новый день*] (2010) – which this Ekaterinburg-based writer revised for the Moscow premiere at the Theatre of Nations in 2014. However, by her account, most regional theatres continue to use the earlier, more sentimental draft which concludes with a 'happy ending' (see p. 237), thereby avoiding the more politically-charged, more explicitly dissident version of this play. In other words, from 2010 to the time of writing, contemporary playwriting – particularly work which conforms to existing conventions of 'good taste' with some innovations of either theme or use of language – gained a permanent, albeit marginal, position within Russian theatrical practice. This somewhat improved situation for dramatists working in the mode of 'permitted dissidence' has meant that playwrights supported by the Kolyada Theatre – as well as Kolyada's playwriting course at the Ekaterinburg Theatre Institute – have a greater level of representation across Russian theatre, particularly compared to the 'political' dramatists from the New Drama movement, such as those having work produced at Teatr.doc, as well as the formal innovators working at other theatres in Moscow, such as Vyrypaev and Priazhko, whose dramas tend not to find 'afterlives'

beyond their occasional premieres in the capital. In other words, non-conformist contemporary playwriting has remained, in the words of the critic Ol'ga Galakhova, as a 'subculture' ['*субкультура*'] (Interview with Galakhova 2013) – an established 'niche' within the cultural sphere, albeit with growing national recognition and status.

What significance does this chapter's portrait of contemporary Russian theatrical production have for British theatres? In earlier chapters, I proposed a broader 'act of translation' which encompassed more than solely the linguistic rendition of new plays from one language to another – incorporating notions drawn from cultural materialism into the process of cultural transfer – in particular, the 'sites of production' (Chapter One) and the implied stage language, hyper-naturalist acting styles and hyper-naturalist linguistic registers of Russian non-conformist plays (Chapter Two). In this chapter, I propose that 'programming' itself is an under-researched area – a restrictive lens through which most foreign-language texts cannot pass. I explore this subject further in the next chapter in relation to contemporary Russian plays which were programmed in the UK between 2000 and 2014, as well as dramas which were considered but ultimately overlooked by British artistic directors. Here, I consider the nuances of the four 'portraits' of Russian theatre – and how that might inform the work of programmers and literary departments in the UK in broader terms. By drawing upon my study of the ideology underlying Russian theatrical production, I suggest that it is reductive for programmers in the UK to consider Russian theatre as a single entity, rather than as a series of institutions with unique 'visions' of culture. Theatrical production in the UK itself consists of different institutional 'types' and conceptualisations of culture. In other words, by understanding the geographical and institutional 'roots' of new playwriting in Russia, British theatres may find innovative methods of embracing cultural 'otherness' by, for instance, identifying Russian theatre companies with comparable notions of the function of performance. The aim is to circumvent the current, reductive approach whereby contemporary Russian plays are produced primarily by 'specialist' companies – such as the Royal Court with its dedicated International Department, the Actors Touring Company with its commitment to foreign-language plays and even my own company Sputnik with its Russian remit. The risk of 'specialist' modes of production is that the work is marginalised, by being pressured onto small-scale stages. It also presupposes that all new Russian plays belong to a single typology. For instance, the Presniakov Brothers' *Terrorism* and *Playing the Victim* were produced in the UK by the Royal Court

in its upstairs studio space. Yet its Russian producer the Moscow Arts is an establishment company, not dedicated to contemporary playwriting like the Court and – at least in institutional terms – could arguably have more ‘equivalence’ with, for instance, the Royal Shakespeare Company: two globally renowned theatres which maintain foundational myths about their national theatre systems (Chekhovian and Shakespearean playwriting traditions as underpinning Russian and British theatrical practice, respectively). *Terrorism* or *Playing the Victim’s* subversive ‘political’ potential could serve as a greater act of ‘permitted dissidence’ at British theatres which are not dedicated to contemporary foreign-language playwriting because its fractured narrative, ‘detached’ presentation of violence and obscene lexicon resonate more with audiences versed in conventional or classical dramaturgy – rather than postdramatic texts. If this example appears to propose a restrictive lens of ‘equivalence’ (whereby a play at the Moscow Arts could only be staged at the RSC), I would in fact suggest that British companies could ‘open the door’ to new potentialities, by engaging with the cultural materialist realities of playmaking in Russia – and by incorporating ‘programming’ as part of the translation process in the UK. For instance, whereas British programmers have tended to only programme New Drama in Britain, the Urals School of Playwriting offers untapped potential for British theatres. In 2015, I began a collaboration with Sasha Yevtushenko, a Producer of Radio Drama at the BBC. Working over three years, we commissioned three newly-written 30-minute plays for broadcast on Radio 3, produced by the BBC in collaboration with Sputnik – which will be broadcast on 12 November 2017. This process has incorporated a much greater degree of ‘domestication’ dramaturgically and linguistically than I have practiced previously in my own work: the BBC retains editorial control over the play, above all other parties including the playwright and the translator. I hope to reflect upon this process in a separate academic article in the future but here the relevant point is that, from my original shortlist of ten playwrights from a range of Russian cities whom I invited to pitch ideas for a commission as part of this project, the resulting three are all from Ekaterinburg – the Presnyakov Brothers, Irina Vas’kovskaia and Ivan Andreev. The latter two are both students of Kolyada. Their choice of theme (embargoed at the time of writing) and linguistic inventiveness have made their plays ideally suited for a ‘mass

audience',¹²⁵ which this national British radio station reaches, compared to more overtly 'political' playwriting from Moscow's New Drama institutions, emblematised by Teatr.doc. What enabled contemporary Russian playwriting to reach a broader audience across the UK through radio was the formal partnership between the BBC and myself – in other words, with a translator serving as cultural mediator in order to circumvent the marginalisation of specialist companies. As I continue to argue in the next chapter and in the Conclusion, British theatre needs to explore new ways to overcome institutional resistance to foreign-language plays, if it is to overcome cultural insularity. Perhaps it is time for the Arts Council to fund 'translators-in-residence' at British theatres, if the UK's main funding body is – as its Director has suggested (see p. 229) – seeking innovative ways to increase the representation of foreign-language plays at British theatres. In this way, the various aesthetic schools of drama – New Drama and the Urals School of Playwriting, as well as any other new phenomena which emerge subsequently – may become part of the cultural discourse in the UK, enriching British theatrical traditions.

¹²⁵ I am borrowing a phrase, used by Yevtushenko in one of our conversations during this collaboration, reflecting his perception of a non-specialist target audience (rather than the presumed level of education by audiences).

CHAPTER FOUR HOW DO CONTEMPORARY RUSSIAN PLAYS REACH BRITISH STAGES?

Introduction

In this chapter, I document the dominant practices in British theatres, in relation to how they programme, stage and translate contemporary Russian plays. I apply the conclusions from the first three chapters to real-world examples of how new Russian playtexts were staged, or overlooked, by British programmers, including a reflection on the process of how four plays were selected for this doctoral project. This chapter serves to highlight the achievements of a small number of theatres, such as the Royal Court, the Royal Shakespeare Company (henceforth RSC), Actors Touring Company (henceforth ATC) and my own company Sputnik, while nevertheless identifying the institutional rigidity of these companies as well as the British theatre landscape as a whole in relation to foreign-language work. While acknowledging the significance of presenting new Russian plays in the UK, as a means of acquainting UK audiences with alternative theatrical cultures, I depict the detrimental influence of labelling these works as ‘foreign’. I argue that the most significant sites of translation – where ‘domestication’ occurs, but which offer the greatest potential for ‘foreignisation’ (see p. 15) – occur *prior* to the linguistic rendition of text from one language to another. I investigate the cultural-editorial process of *programming* as well as (once a play has been selected) the director’s *stage language*. I consider how this doctoral project has offered an opportunity to at least partially circumvent conventional practice by offering an institutional framework which is not dependent upon a theatre company, either my own or indeed the non-academic partner Theatre Royal Plymouth, permitting other programming priorities to be privileged in selecting four plays for translation.

Programming of contemporary Russian plays in the UK

It is rare for contemporary Russian plays to reach British stages. I have made a survey of this category of work, documenting twelve productions between 2000 and 2014: approximately one play per year (see Appendix I, pp. 433-4).¹ The Royal Court Theatre

¹ If this figure incorporates Russian-language plays from other countries, such as Ukraine and Latvia, it increases to fifteen in the same period: *The Grain Store* by Natal’ia Vorozhbit (Ukraine) in 2009 at the Royal Shakespeare Company’s Courtyard Theatre; *Remembrance Day* by Alexei Shcherbak (Latvia) in 2011 at the Royal Court’s Jerwood Theatre Upstairs (formerly the Theatre Upstairs); *Galka-Motalka* by Natal’ia Vorozhbit (Ukraine) in 2011 at the Manchester Royal Exchange. This figure also increases if I incorporate productions made after the period which I am researching. Between 2015 and the time of writing, further premieres of contemporary Russian and Russian-language plays were (this list is comprehensive to the best of my knowledge): *The Harvest* by Pavel Priazhko (Belarus) in 2015 at the Theatre Royal Bath and at Soho

made the largest contribution, with five Russian plays in the Jerwood Theatre Upstairs, the company's studio, between 2002 and 2004: *Plasticine*, *Black Milk* and *Ladybird* by Vasilii Sigarev (2002, 3, 4) and *Terrorism* and *Playing the Victim* by Oleg and Vladimir Presniakov (henceforth the Presniakov Brothers) (2003). The RSC produced *Revolutions* in 2009: a season of work containing *The Drunks* and *Oxygen* by Ivan Vyrypaev. Besides those large-scale venues, ATC performed and toured *Illusions* by Vyrypaev in 2012-3. My own troupe, Sputnik Theatre Company, staged four new plays in fringe venues between 2005 and 2012, *Russian National Mail* by Oleg Bogaev (2005), *Techniques of Breathing in an Airlocked Space* by Natal'ia Moshina (2006), *Slow Sword* by Iurii Klavdiev (2007) and *One Hour Eighteen* by Elena Gremina (2012). I refer to many of these productions at various points throughout this chapter – and synopses of the key texts which I refer to are provided at the start of this thesis (see pp. 11-2).

The small number of contemporary Russian dramas produced in Britain represents a broader trend. As a whole, translated plays occupy a marginal position in the British theatre landscape. A project at the University of Kent describes that point succinctly:

According to the British Theatre Repertoire Survey, in 2013 only 3.2% of all the plays performed in the UK were in translation, and yet according to the Migration Observatory, 12.5% of UK residents are foreign-born, only 80% of the population identifies as 'white British' and hundreds of languages are spoken in the country's schools, especially in London.²

I am able to estimate the percentage of new Russian plays in Britain by referring to 'The British Theatre Repertoire 2013', a survey which documented theatre programming across a single year. That survey found that there were 1771 professional productions. If I take my approximate notion of 'one Russian play in translation per year' and contextualise it against the 2013 figures, then contemporary Russian plays represent, on average, approximately .06% of the British repertoire. Furthermore, my list of productions demonstrates that ten of the new Russian plays produced between 2000 and 2014 were staged in studio spaces with 90 seats or fewer, offering limited audience capacity. These productions are likely to attract less critical attention because of the

Theatre (London); *Take the Rubbish Out, Sasha* by Natal'ia Vorozhbit (Ukraine) in 2015 at the Play, Pie and Pint Theatre (Glasgow); *The War Hasn't Started Yet* by Mikhail Durnenkov (Russia) in 2015 at the Play, Pie and Pint Theatre; *Thoughts Spoken Aloud from Above* by Iurii Klavdiev (Russia) in 2015 at the Play, Pie and Pint Theatre (Glasgow); *The War Hasn't Yet Started* by Mikhail Durnenkov (Russia) in 2016 at the Theatre Royal Plymouth.

² Source: <<http://translatingcultures.org.uk/awards/related-awards/translation-adaptation-otherness-foreignisation-in-theatre-practice>> [accessed 6 December 2016].

lower status associated with the smaller spaces. Only the RSC's Russian translations ran on a large-scale stage, with a capacity of around 1000 seats (Interview with Boyd 2016). However, those plays ran for a week or less, which is shorter than the average three-to-four-week duration typical of professional productions in Britain. With notable exceptions, contemporary Russian plays – as with the majority of new foreign-language plays – exist at the margins of the British theatre landscape.

There are many possible reasons for this marginal presence of contemporary foreign plays. British theatre-makers tend to emphasise the role of cultural and aesthetic difference as the underlying cause: Vicky Featherstone, Artistic Director of the Royal Court Theatre (2013-ongoing), has described British theatre in the following way:

We are not traditionally a country that is good at looking beyond our shores. It is in our DNA that we do not need to. Our island geography, coupled with our imperialist nature, has encouraged a culture of splendid isolation. (Featherstone in Aston and O'Thomas: 185)

In my interviews for this chapter, there was unanimous agreement that it is possible to identify a British aesthetic, in relation to programming decisions. Michael Boyd, Artistic Director of the RSC (2002-12), has described this aesthetic in the following way:

The English tradition – intellectually and artistically – is pragmatic, empiricist [and] naturalistic, in terms of the arts, and there are great flowerings beyond that, usually with reference to Europe or elsewhere, but that's on an elastic band that will always pull back to this central, slightly anti-intellectual, slightly anti-abstractionist tradition. (Interview with Boyd 2016)

In the same interview, Boyd has ironically summarised the consequence for the majority of theatres in the UK: 'the main British aesthetic in relation to the programming of Russian plays is the one which excludes the programming of Russian plays' (Ibid.). A similar perspective has been noted by Laurence Boswell, Artistic Director of the Ustinov Theatre in Bath (2010-ongoing), who suggested that this problem is compounded by the preference of established British critics for plays with simplistic morals (Interview with Boswell 2016). He has noted a 'Shavian spirit' (Ibid.) – stemming from the didactic and moralising works of George Bernard Shaw which, by his view, informs the modern-day traditions of British theatre. The Royal Court has played a pivotal role in creating that dominant theatrical culture, as the scholar, critic and dramaturg Duška Radosavljević explains:

[T]he brand of realism which emerged from the newly founded Royal Court in the 1950s came to define the English and British theatrical mainstream in a way which has determined the critics' expectations up until the end of the twentieth century. (Radosavljević 2013: 134)

The critic Aleks Sierz provides a narrower definition, suggesting that this theatre's brand of realism, particularly around the time of its inception, had a 'naturalistic style and a social realist agenda' (2011: 17), otherwise known as social realism. This form rooted its drama around depictions of social class – often portraying working-class characters – in order to provide socio-political commentary. Even so, one should resist an overly binary view of the British aesthetic. By way of illustration, the Royal Court's productions of the in-*yer-face* playwright Sarah Kane in the 1990s offered experimental theatrical forms, which afforded a broader notion of the parameters of what has come to be known popularly as 'new writing' (i.e. contemporary playwriting which has its roots in social realism but positions itself as ideologically oppositional to mainstream thinking). In other words, what was a radical theatrical form in the 1950s – social realism – came to seem conventional by the 1990s because of its embeddedness in theatrical production, provoking a reaction from the in-*yer-face* writers. Christopher Haydon, Artistic Director of the Gate Theatre in London (2011-6)³ affirms that a prevalent cultural taste exists in Britain. However, he suggests that it is a canonical position against which playwrights position themselves (i.e. as either *for* or *against*) (Interview with Haydon 2016). The latter point resonates with Boyd's notion of a 'flowering beyond', whereby the British aesthetic can be seen as guiding rather than prescriptive. During the period 2000 to 2014, hyper-naturalist theatre practice (which dispensed with social realism) had gained critical attention and positive reviews through a number of high profile productions by continental European directors, such as Thomas Ostermeier and Ivo van Hove, on London stages. The critic Andrew Haydon – who had been advocating for greater dialogue between British and continental European theatre in his articles (2008) and blogs – observed that 'British theatre is looking outwards' (2014).⁴ These experiments of

³ Haydon started as artistic director part-time in 2011 and occupied the post full-time from 2012.

⁴ While it is beyond the remit of this thesis to explore the metropolitan-regional dimension of theatre-making in relation to contemporary foreign-language texts, it is worth pointing out that my interviews led me to perceive London as the most receptive city in the UK to new writing from non-English-language countries. Nick Williams, Executive Director of ATC (2011-6) provided this snapshot of foreign-language reception across the UK, based on his experience of producing Vyrypaev's *Illusions* for a national tour for ATC in 2012-3: 'it entirely depends on how hard the venue works on audience development. You'll always get an audience in Manchester, Bristol, Edinburgh [...], Newcastle is pretty good, Plymouth [Theatre Royal] [tries] hard but it's [level of attendance by audiences to contemporary foreign plays] is up and down, [...]

stage language – which sought to incorporate postdramatic forms into British theatre extended into new experiments in contemporary playwriting by dramatists in the UK. James Grieve, the co-artistic director of the new writing company Paines Plough (2010-ongoing), described an influence on writers such as Simon Stephens and David Eldridge, who had shifted in the late 2000s and early 2010s towards non-didactic, allegorical writing styles (Interview with Grieve 2016) – a distinctive rupture with social realism. While these experiments were significant, they have not led to a greater representation of contemporary Russian plays on British stages, at the time of writing. A. Haydon (the critic as opposed to C. Haydon at the helm of the Gate Theatre) noted a comparable perspective in relation to playwriting from continental Europe:

It seems too simple to say we've got or done Europe[an theatre] now. What is notably missing from my earlier list⁵ [of aesthetic directions missing from British stages] is the presence of any recent foreign plays[.] (2014: para. 7 of 13).

In other words, the period between 2000 and 2014 witnessed an incorporation of postdramatic theatre as a concept – within professional discourse among theatre professionals in the UK. While this appears to offer the possibility for cultural dialogue with Russian theatre – specifically, the postdramatic texts by the post-Soviet generation of dramatists – this trajectory (from Russian page to British stage) has not increased over this period. The rest of this chapter documents the various restrictive ‘filters’ – both aesthetic and institutional – through which Russian plays must pass to reach British stages, in order to suggest that a narrow conceptualisation of ‘translation’ is the key obstacle which prevents a more enriching two-way flow of aesthetics (and their attendant ideologies) between theatrical cultures in Britain and Russia.

Theatres, which have programmed new Russian plays, have all embraced the notion of cultural difference. In fact, it is precisely the ‘Russianness’ of the plays – which is to say, their divergence from the dominant British aesthetic – which is sought after by these

Lincoln Arts are trying to challenge audiences [to accept new work including contemporary foreign plays], [...] the studio programme at the Dome [in Brighton] always does well’ (Interview with Williams 2016). Simon Stokes, Artistic Director of Theatre Royal Plymouth from 1998 (ongoing), cited the Traverse Theatre in Scotland as having a long-standing tradition of working with contemporary foreign-language texts (Interview with Stokes 2016). The metropolitan bias of critics makes it difficult to be certain whether regional theatres have been producing contemporary foreign-language plays – but it has simply gone unacknowledged. This subject merits further scholarly research. This doctoral thesis intends to make a small contribution to overcoming this metropolitan bias by working with a regional theatre as a non-academic partner, Theatre Royal Plymouth: I write more about my partnership with this theatre below.

⁵ He is referring to his 2008 article, where he criticised British theatre for not engaging with postdramatic stage language.

programmers. Elyse Dodgson, founding Head of the International Department at the Royal Court (1996-ongoing), has stated that ‘Russian writers are so distinctive [...] [they] have such strong voices’ (Interview with Dodgson 2014). Speaking about the workshops run by the Royal Court in Moscow in 1999 and 2000, prior to the Royal Court’s season of Russian plays between 2002 and 2004, Dodgson emphasised that:

[A]ll of us at the Royal Court [felt that] the Russians had everything to teach us, and our [British] writers [who participated in the workshops] had everything to learn from their imagination and use of language, by their experimentation with form and by the Russian soul – there’s no other way we can describe what that is. (Ibid.)

Dodgson’s perspective – about the experimentation and expressiveness of the work – is echoed by Boyd, who described the traits of contemporary Russian plays in the following way:

They are [...] a blueprint for performance [...] [which is] very expressive, and sometimes [they are] textually quite bare. [...] [The playwrights are] happy to work with verbal suggestion, whereas [in general] a British writer feels the obligation to be verbally complete. (Interview with Boyd 2016)

This evaluation – of new Russian plays as formally inventive and non-didactic (i.e. disrupting social realism) – appears to be unanimous among directors who have programmed this type of work (Interview with Nicola McCartney 2015; Dominic Cooke in Aston and O’Thomas 2015: 94; Interview with Sam Pritchard 2016). A limited number of programmers have actively sought and accommodated the hyper-naturalist aesthetic of contemporary Russian playwriting which emerged in the 2000s in Russia.

British artistic directors have privileged dramatists whose work came to define New Drama – for example, plays by Sigarev, the Presniakov Brothers, the Durnenkov Brothers and Vyrypaev – which were promoted and produced primarily by Moscow-based institutions because of their qualities of formal experimentation, over the regional Urals School of Playwriting, with its tendency for dramaturgically conventional but linguistically innovative dramas. As the first and most prolific company to present the New Drama dramatists in Britain between 2000 and 2014, the International Department of the Royal Court assumed a pivotal role in forging how the British critics and the public would perceive contemporary Russian playwriting. In five productions, by only two sets of playwrights – Sigarev and the Presniakov Brothers – this company aligned the notion of ‘new writing from Russia’ with Sigarev’s ‘cinematic’ plays and the formally

experimental dramas by the Presniakov Brothers – with their structurally fractured, partly allegorical narratives. It is worth noting that all five plays were received by most critics and scholars as belonging to a realist tradition. The scholars Elaine Aston and Mark O’Thomas have described Sigarev’s *Plasticine* and *Ladybird* as being in the vein of ‘black social realism’ (Aston and O’Thomas 2015: 139), while his *Black Milk* was ‘realism broken by [...] lyrical, poetic redemptive strains’ (Ibid.). Sierz expressed a similar sentiment, noting that *Ladybird* possesses a ‘dirty realist vigour’ (Sierz 2004: para. 3 of 4). In other words, they perceive Sigarev as offering a variation – or partial disruption – of social realism. Below, I explore the significance of *stage language* in ‘domesticating’ contemporary foreign-language texts, to provide a sense of continuity with known traditions by British audiences. Here, the key point is one of cultural materialism: the smashing of socio-cultural taboos in Sigarev’s plays did not ‘read’ as disruptive of realist traditions because of the in-yer-face tradition at the Court, which had at least partly normalised graphic violence for its audiences. A similar ‘normalisation’ occurred when *Terrorism* and *Playing the Victim* by the Presniakov Brothers were produced at this theatre. These dramas received critical approval for their stylistic inventiveness, for instance, Michael Billington characterised *Terrorism* as a ‘dazzling, apocalyptic farce’ (Billington 2003: para. 1 of 5), while Susannah Clapp perceived *Playing the Victim* as ‘an absurdist satire’ (Clapp 2003: para. 3 of 12). None of the ‘shock value’ of the swearing in *Playing the Victim* which had been prominent in Russian reviews of this play (see p. 100) emerged in British criticism – because of the familiarity of the Court’s audiences with obscenities in dramatic writing. In other words, the ideological oppositionality to mainstream Russian theatrical practice embedded in these plays did not ‘translate’ into the British socio-cultural context. Furthermore, drawing upon a cultural materialist approach, it is worth noting that the upstairs studio at this theatre, in particular, primes audiences to expect aesthetic difference. Grieve has described the studio at the Court as being a ‘space which reinvents itself every time’ (Interview with Grieve 2016), as opposed to the large, proscenium arch downstairs stage. While this context offers a pragmatic ‘solution’ for this theatre – namely, a way of identifying audiences who are prepared and presumably even hoping to encounter the cultural ‘other’ – it diminishes precisely the ‘shock value’ of the confrontation by presenting the work to ‘specialist’ audiences.

With these five productions, the contribution of the Court to the British theatre landscape was significant. Besides raising awareness of the vibrant playwriting community in Russia and offering several high quality productions to introduce theatre-goers to some of the most prominent dramatists, these initiatives continued to influence theatres pragmatically after 2005 – even though no new Russian plays were staged subsequently at this venue, between then and the time of writing, as I discuss below. The RSC's Season was, according to Boyd, shaped significantly by the Royal Court's 'preparatory work in Moscow' (Interview with Boyd 2016) – leading to recommendations of which dramatists to meet and consider for playwriting commissions. However, it is important to note that the diminished socio-political potency of these plays in the British context was not coincidental, it stemmed from a preference to reiterate existing 'tastes' in theatrical production. Gordon Anderson, Artistic Director of ATC (2001-7), has pointed out, based on his experience as a director of play readings for the Royal Court's International Department from 1997 to 2004,⁶ that this theatre staged not the *highest quality* plays by foreign playwrights, but those which were 'more of an English tradition' (Interview with Anderson 2016). The selection of Russian plays indicates a preference for dramas which may be staged with a 'fourth wall' – providing an opportunity to employ conventional acting styles, rather than adopting a hyper-naturalist aesthetic. The Court's choices appear unconventional by the standards of the British theatre landscape as a whole; but the selection process – as well as aspects of presentation such as situating the work in the upstairs studio – were designed to minimise the intended level of disruption of existing theatrical conventions for its own audiences. This point becomes particularly clear when considering the rehearsed readings which ran alongside its five productions, which this company overlooked for full productions. Among this 'secondary' programme were works which disrupt realist conventions to a much larger extent, such as Bogaev's absurdist drama *Russian National Mail* in 2001 and Vyrypaev's *Oxygen*⁷ which is written as a metatheatrical 'direct address' to the audience. These plays received high-profile productions in Russia, the former was directed by Kama Ginkas with the iconic comic actor Oleg Tabakov in the lead role in 1998, while the latter was staged at the newly-founded Teatr.doc in 2002 –

⁶ To be precise, Anderson was unable to recall whether he finished directing readings at the Royal Court in 2004 or 2005.

⁷ Dugdale informed me about the reading but did not indicate which year it had taken place or who directed it (Interview with Dugdale 2013).

receiving critical acclaim and a Golden Mask Award in the category of ‘Innovation’ in 2004. These works offered postdramatic forms, which could not be perceived within a realist paradigm. *Russian National Mail* collapses mimetic verisimilitude by using the metatheatrical device of an epistolary play – where the letters, written by the protagonist to himself, become increasingly devoid of logic (to capture an experiential view of his descent into insanity). Similarly, as the play’s translator, Dugdale reflected on the rejection of *Oxygen*⁸ by the theatre’s programmers: ‘[it] is a play where we follow rhythms rather than words. But that isn’t a Royal Court approach’ (Interview with Dugdale 2013). *Oxygen* uses frequent repetition of phrases in the play’s refrains, equivalent to the chorus in a piece of rap music or pop song, while offering metatheatrical commentary on the play’s narrative by the two narrators – a wilful disrupting mimetic representation. By the late 2000s, the Royal Court came to accommodate experimental productions, inspired by ‘live art’ with a couple of postdramatic productions.⁹ Yet, this shift in programming priorities – the broadening of the ‘Royal Court approach’ – has not yet benefited contemporary playwrights from Russia, even at the time of writing. I discuss the reason for this below – the perceived function of contemporary Russian drama – after considering the selection process at the other large-scale producing theatre in the UK between 2000 and 2014 and the commonality between these two major venues.

In 2009, the RSC commissioned ten plays from Russian-language playwrights, from which they ultimately produced two – one by a Russian dramatist.¹⁰ *The Drunks* by the Durnenkov Brothers addressed the topic of a returning veteran from Russia’s second war in Chechnya (2000-9), a highly-charged topic in Russia at the time of the play’s creation. The commissioning process was extensive, beginning in 2005, when ten Russian-language playwrights were invited to a workshop in Moscow, run by the RSC’s

⁸ For a synopsis of the play, see p. 11.

⁹ Tim Crouch’s productions, including *The Author* in 2009, and *Manwatching* by an anonymous female playwright in 2017 both suggest that the Court has come to embrace postdramatic theatre in tandem with other leading venues in the UK. *The Author* confronts the audience with non-mimetic performances by the playwright himself, in a metatheatrical narrative about an imagined previous production at the Royal Court, while the latter is a confessional monologue about female sexuality performed by a different male performer at each performance, who has not read the script prior to performing it for the audience. Both productions draw upon a hyper-naturalist aesthetic, whereby the audience is acutely aware of the ‘construct’ of the theatrical event itself.

¹⁰ The second play was by a Russian-language, Ukrainian dramatist, Natal’ia Vorozhbit. Her play, *The Grain Store*, explored the manmade famine in Ukraine in 1932-3.

Dramaturg Jeanie O'Hare (2005-12). The theatre gave the participants the following brief:

[O'Hare's] invitation was "to paint on a big canvas", this isn't a Teatr.doc piece [...], imagine [you're writing for] one of those big ensemble companies in Moscow but [without] the agenda of those companies [...], [this is an invitation] to write with a narrative strength, with metaphoric flight, to take on the big issues of the day. (Interview with Boyd 2016)

The parameters of this brief clearly invite the participants of the workshop to avoid hyper-naturalism ('this isn't a Teatr.doc piece'), while aiming to inspire them to consider narrative structures which would correlate to British notions of conventional dramaturgy ('to write with a narrative strength'). Specifically, the RSC aimed to find dramatists who could take advantage of its conventional practice as a large-scale theatre ('those big ensemble companies'), in terms of cast size and presumably also duration of the play. Boyd summarised the process of working with Russian-language playwrights as inviting them 'to look at Shakespeare's dramaturgy and then go and write a play' (Ibid.). The intention appears to be a fusion of Russian and British traditions, or perhaps a Russian interpretation of British conventions. Boyd perceives a continuity in his programming choice with Russian theatrical tradition, calling *The Drunks*:

'[a] surreal satire [...] [which] owes a great debt to *The Suicide* [by Nikolai Erdman (written in 1928)], the ludicrous misappropriation of an individual's story' (Interview with Boyd 2016).

This reference point with the classic Russian text – staged by the RSC in 1979, receiving a Broadway production in 1980, and a revival in the UK at the Almeida in 2007 – suggests that this programmer was negotiating a path between a new aesthetic direction, while privileging a sense of continuity with Russian traditions familiar to regular theatre-goers, who will have seen or heard about one of the Erdman productions or more broadly be acquainted with Russian culture. *The Drunks* contains surreal episodes – such as the re-enactment of childhood games by two characters (who 'act' at being dinosaurs). Yet, this drama is largely a conventionally realist piece, overlooking the most radical disruptive strategies of the new wave of post-Soviet generation of dramatists. By way of contrast, the RSC staged Vyrypaev's *Oxygen*, the play which was overlooked by the Royal Court, as part of *Revolutions* in 2009. It appears that this production was an after-thought to the central programme. According to Boyd, it was included in order to give 'an opportunity for [Deborah Shaw, Associate Director] to do some directing, most of

her work at the RSC [prior to 2009] was programming' (Interview with Boyd 2016). Furthermore, the production was given a low profile, with only three performances in a late-night slot, compared with the week-long run of *The Drunks*. It is also striking that, in a promotional article prior to the opening of *Revolutions*, Boyd describes *The Drunks* at length without mentioning *Oxygen* ('Michael Boyd on...' 2009): a further clue to the perceived status of the production as an appendix to the main programme. However, Boyd has suggested that these practical arrangements were *not* due to the play's challenging, non-realist aesthetic but simply because Shaw had proposed it at a late stage in the programming (Interview with Boyd 2016). Whether by design or not, a process occurred, comparable to the one at the Royal Court, whereby the management privileged stylistic, over formal, aesthetic experiments, minimising the disruption to paradigms of spectatorship as practiced at each theatre. This point is further reflected in the imbalance of coverage by reviewers: *The Drunks* received the extensive critical attention, while I have not been able to identify a single review for *Oxygen*. Nevertheless, the RSC's 'last minute' decision to incorporate *Oxygen* into its Russian Season demonstrates that it is possible for a hyper-naturalist text by a post-Soviet dramatist to reach a British stage. It is even more significant because of this company's international renown.

Smaller-scale companies working in studio venues were able to accommodate plays with more disruptive aesthetic strategies more frequently between 2000 and 2014 – given the 'open stage' format of the fringe, with the broader expectations of audiences. Sputnik staged the absurdist drama *Russian National Mail* as its opening production in 2005, followed by a more conventional drama *Techniques of Breathing in an Airlocked Space* in 2006 by the regional writer Natal'ia Moshina; in 2007, the company produced Klavdiev's *Slow Sword* – a formally inventive text with graphic content; and in 2012, the 'Russian verbatim' text *One Hour Eighteen* by Elena Gremina (which blends documentary material with fictionalised scenes). The latter was the only documentary Russian play produced by a British theatre company in the UK between 2000 and 2014. Similarly, ATC staged Vyrypaev's *Illusions* – a metatheatrical romantic comedy with actor-narrators who use 'direct address' to recount the narrative. The institutional flexibility of small-scale companies working on the fringe or by touring allowed a greater leeway for a range of aesthetic directions to be produced, including the hyper-naturalism which constituted the main discovery of the New Drama movement. To

summarise, British programming at the established, nationally prominent venues offered a spectrum of contemporary new Russian plays, ranging from conventional realism to hyper-naturalism, but weighted significantly towards the former. Small-scale and fringe companies faced material obstacles – three of Sputnik’s four productions were run on a profit-share basis (involving voluntary employment by all creative and technical professionals involved)¹¹ – yet, as a consequence, faced no institutional pressure from funders or audiences, allowing a greater aesthetic range of new Russian plays to join their repertoires.

The resistance to hyper-naturalist Russian plays, which fully disrupted existing conventions at the large and medium-scale theatres, originated in the perceived function of staging foreign-language texts. Aston and O’Thomas state that:

The international play at the turn of the millennium [represents] [...] theatre as a means of understanding the contemporary context of another country, of having the capacity to communicate the lived experience of others. (2015: 9)

While this notion of an encounter with a cultural ‘other’ may be beneficial to audiences intellectually, it appears to contradict the ethos of hyper-naturalism which characterised the New Drama movement particularly. As I describe in Chapter Two, the postdramatic ‘turn’ reformed the paradigm of spectatorship – attempting to remove a passive spectatorship in favour of placing spectators and performers within a single space: removing the binary between ‘us’ and ‘them’. Programmers at mainstream venues have engaged with foreign-language texts as a chance to passively observe ‘them’, the cultural ‘other’. This reductive approach is detrimental – another reductive lens in the programming process. A revealing example of this occurred at the Royal Court where Dodgson proposed two new Russian-language plays for inclusion in the Royal Court’s repertoire, during the tenure of Artistic Director Dominic Cooke (2007-2013), but her suggestions were met with rejection. She has described this episode in the following way:

[Cooke] didn’t want to offer what he thought was the same diet of Russian work. I disagree with that. [...] The next wave of work we should have [staged

¹¹ Sputnik’s first three productions were unfunded, with box office income covering essential costs such as set design. The Russian Theatre Festival – producing four rehearsed readings at Soho Theatre in 2010 – was paid for by a grant from Art Council England and small donations by corporations and private individuals. The fourth production in 2012 was funded by a private entrepreneur (who wished to remain anonymous), Arts Council England and box office income. Organisational costs are never funded, other than by voluntary labour primarily by myself.

were *The Harvest* by] Pavel Priazhko and [*Pagans* by] Anna Iablonskaia. [They are] [c]ompletely different [to the plays of] Vasilii Sigarev [and the Presniakov Brothers]. (Interview with Dodgson 2014)

The phrase ‘the same diet of Russian work’ is striking. While there may be specific reasons around the rejection of these works,¹² this underlying cause of rejection of dramas by two of the most highly acclaimed playwrights from the post-Soviet generation is suggestive of how the ‘Russianness’ of the play defines its theatrical function, in the eyes of British programmers. This point has been qualified by C. Haydon, who has depicted the application of that approach in programming by British theatres:

A country with significant [cultural existing] access [for audiences], [such as] Germany, America et cetera, will have greater leeway than a writer from Swaziland, whose play is more likely to [...] [be programmed in the UK] if it is about their country. (Interview with Haydon 2016)

Since most British audiences rely on ‘news items’ for their information about Russian socio-political realities – theatres are likely to privilege works which engage with (and most likely reinforce) stereotypical perspectives on the country. The same factor is at play for smaller-scale companies. The relative ‘freedom’ to programme a broader aesthetic range of plays at Sputnik centres on the specialist knowledge of audiences with Russian culture – since many spectators from my company’s regular theatre-goers have either seen contemporary Russian dramas before or have a professional expertise of the former Soviet region. I have only identified one production in Britain, between 2000 and 2014, where the producing company attempted to circumvent, at least partly, the restrictive paradigm of foreign-language play as socio-political commentary on a foreign country. According to Nick Williams, Executive Director of ATC (2011-6), the second national tour of *Illusions* ‘was sold [to audiences] on a basis of it being a twisted and difficult love story, rather than the fact that it was Russian’ (Interview with Williams 2016). However, this opportunity was possible precisely because of the play’s cultural ambiguity, as Williams pointed out in the same interview. In some ways, the play ‘is [...] set in America although [Vyrypaev] did not [...] [write] that [in the stage directions]’ (ibid.). Williams has suggested that, presenting *Illusions* in this way, ‘worked perfectly

¹² Dodgson described how the artistic team – including Cooke – were divided by *The Harvest*: ‘some people thought it was genius, but some people [said] “What is it? People are just picking apples!”’ (Interview with Dodgson 2014). The allegorical, or non-realist, properties of *The Harvest* appear to have made it less attractive to Cooke. However, in his first Press Conference as Artistic Director, Cooke explicitly stated that his programming would emphasise plays which addressed issues of power and privilege (July 2007: para. 2-3 of 14), so these plays may simply not have suited his programming priorities.

well [artistically]' (Ibid.). Yet, as Gray has noted 'I found [*Illusions*] hard to sell [to British audiences]' (2016). ATC made thirty performances of *Illusions*, compared to three hundred performances of David Greig's *The Events* the following year. It is difficult to ascertain whether the low attendance at *Illusions* was a result of the play's lack of engagement with contemporary Russian realities or as a consequence of Vyrypaev being largely unknown to British audiences. Gray has suggested that 'Greig is not a better writer, they are very different writers [...] but [...] [British audiences] know Greig' (Interview with Gray 2016). In any case, programmers have generally restricted their selection process – as a consequence of perceiving Russian plays as being uniquely Russian, rather than part of an ongoing European theatrical tradition.

British theatre landscape between 2000 and 2014: an institutional perspective

Institutional practice in the vast majority of British theatres is not designed to cater towards the cultural 'other', with no additional resources or mechanisms to facilitate the transfer of contemporary foreign-language work to British stages. This 'level playing field' between foreign and British plays disadvantages the former. Firstly, there is a linguistic barrier. By way of illustration, the Gate Theatre in London, which has a historical commitment to non-English language drama,¹³ did not stage a contemporary Russian play between 2000 and 2014. C. Haydon stated that, during his tenure, he would have gladly programmed:

an emotionally engaging play about life [in] [...] Putin's Russia [,] [however] we don't have resources to read [...] masses of plays in foreign languages, let alone enough to then commission [translations] [...] in order for me to [take a programming decision]. [...] When we have done plays in translation, they tend to have come to us already translated. (Interview with Haydon 2015)

Similarly, Simon Stokes, Artistic Director of the Theatre Royal Plymouth (1998-ongoing) which is the non-academic partner of this doctoral project, pointed to translation as a

¹³ Lou Stein, the founding Artistic Director (1979-95), states on the company's website: 'As the founding director of the Gate Theatre, I am most proud that my vision of the Gate, which was to introduce neglected international classics to a British audience, remains at the heart of its artistic policy today, 35 years on. [...] During the late 1970s and early 80s, the majority of plays on the British stage were inwardly British, both in content and style. The Gate's policy pointed outward, across the channel to Europe, and looked there for inspiration.' Popularly, the Gate is known as a home for international plays, although it is revealing that between 2011 and 2016, the mission statement did not refer to this feature of its programming explicitly, preferring the broader phrase 'we produce epic theatre that tackles big ideas of global concern', presumably in response to the high number of "international" plays on its stage (i.e. from an Anglophone country). Sources: <<http://www.gatetheatre.co.uk/about-us/history>> <<http://www.gatetheatre.co.uk/about-us>> [accessed 25 November 2016].

major obstacle to programming contemporary foreign-language plays (Interview with Stokes 2016). He also suggested a further consequence of this linguistic barrier: ‘talent spotting: how do you do it, if you don’t have the language?’ (Ibid.). His term ‘talent spotting’ reveals a larger issue at play: a cultural barrier. Without access to foreign languages, the majority of British theatres cannot navigate the theatrical terrain in foreign countries; they have no institutional mechanism for identifying talented playwrights and assessing the artistic merit (or indeed cultural context) of their work.

My survey of contemporary Russian plays reaching British stages since 2000 (see p. 433) reveals a shared attribute: a ‘special institutional set-up’ which facilitated the transfer. The five productions of new Russian dramas at the Royal Court between 2002 and 2004 were facilitated by the company’s International Department with its budget-line for commissioning translations. Significantly, this theatre does have a separate production budget for its International Department – only salary costs and translation commissioning fees receive core funding (Interview with Darlison 2016). This material limitation places the department in a dependent relationship to the theatre as a whole (later, I describe how the International Department proposed plays which were not included in the Court’s repertoire). Continuing chronologically from 2000 to 2014, Sputnik’s four productions between 2005 and 2012 were enabled because of the company’s dedicated remit to contemporary Russian plays, and specifically by my multi-professionalization as director, producer and translator of new works – as well as a willingness to offer voluntary labour between 2005-7 (and ask others to do the same), to circumvent additional costs of foreign-language plays. At first glance, the RSC’s Russian Season in 2009 employed a normative institutional practice: commissioning ten dramatists to write scripts, of which two were ultimately produced. Upon closer inspection, this project relied upon two further factors. Firstly, then artistic director Michael Boyd had a pre-existing interest in Russia because of his year of apprenticeship in Moscow in 1980 under director Anatolii Efros (‘Michael Boyd on...’ 2009).¹⁴ Secondly, as mentioned above, according to Boyd, the Russian Season relied significantly on ‘preparatory work in Moscow’ (Interview with Boyd 2016) which had occurred in

¹⁴ While I have limited myself to writing about contemporary Russian plays, it is worth noting that Boyd’s renown as a freelance director (after leaving the RSC in 2012) enabled him to stage a Belarussian play, *Harvest* by Pavel Priazhko, at Theatre Royal Bath and Soho Theatre (as a co-production between those venues). He has described how this choice of play was his, and that the artistic directors of those venues were surprised by his choice but ultimately supportive (Interview with Boyd 2016).

previous years by Elyse Dodgson and Dominic Cooke¹⁵ at the Royal Court – in other words, their ‘talent spotting’ and knowledge of the theatre landscape. Gray’s production of ATC’s *Illusions* resulted from his long-standing relationship with Vyrypaev – which may be traced back to 2000, when they met at the Royal Court (Interview with Gray 2016). Furthermore, Gray directed two of the five new Russian plays at the Court in the early 2000s – the Presniakov Brothers’ *Terrorism* in 2003 and Sigarev’s *Ladybird* in 2004 – as well as directing Marius von Mayenburg’s *The Ugly One* at Praktika Theatre in Moscow in 2010 (which he had premiered at the Court in 2007). As founder of Sputnik, I studied Modern Languages – Russian and French – at Oxford University as an undergraduate degree from 1995-9, and as I wrote in the Foreword to this thesis, encountered Russian theatre directly as a spectator in 2005 and on an annual basis subsequently. In addition to this, my multi-professionalization as director, producer and translator of new works from Russia – as well as a willingness to offer voluntary labour on the productions between 2005-7 to circumvent the additional costs of foreign-language plays – enabled Sputnik to stage four new Russian plays in the UK – second only to the Royal Court in terms of quantity. Arts Council England, Britain’s main statutory funding body, has recently come to recognise the need for additional institutional mechanisms to facilitate cultural exchange with contemporary foreign-language dramatists. Neil Darlison, Head of Theatre at the Arts Council England (2013-ongoing), has stated that ACE is ‘trying to set up a network for [bringing] international performance and work to NPOs’¹⁶ (Interview with Darlison 2016). This initiative comes out of a recognition that foreign-language work on British stages ‘goes in peaks’ (Ibid.), with brief phases of interest by programmers, unsupported by longer-term programmes to sustain cultural exchange between theatres in the UK and living foreign dramatists.

The four plays translated for this doctoral project

This doctoral project is itself a mechanism beyond the institution of professional theatres. For the selection process, I considered around eighty plays for inclusion in this Ph.D.’s practice-based element. Initially, my intention was to translate one contemporary Russian play from the repertoire of each of my four case study theatres,

¹⁵ Boyd appointed Dominic Cooke as Associate Director at the RSC. He had previously worked as Associate Director at the Royal Court – where he had been involved in the work of the International Department, including a visit to Russia in 1999 and the staging of Sigarev’s *Plasticine* at the Court in 2002.

¹⁶ National Portfolio Organisations (NPOs) are organisations which receive core funds from Arts Council England, as opposed to project-based grants through other programmes.

in order to illustrate their artistic practice between 2000 and 2014. However, this approach became problematic since the *Sovremennik* has not produced dramas by non-conformist playwrights since 2000, while some of the outstanding works at the Moscow Arts have already been translated and staged in the UK. Furthermore, while this approach would have benefited my research into my case studies, it would have had disadvantages. By removing any constraint on my selection, I was able to employ a practice-as-research methodology, whereby my decisions become the subject of scholarly reflection, allowing me to take note of my own preconceptions as a theatre-maker in the programming process as well as any external 'pressure' from the non-academic partner. As a consequence, the selection process was idiosyncratic – involving a range of factors such as my personal taste, my perception of the 'target' audience in London as well as the interests of the non-academic partner Theatre Royal Plymouth as I perceived them. The balance of these competing imperatives shifted during the Ph.D. At the outset, I conducted the selection process, based largely on personal preference, a practice defined by being artistic director of an unfunded theatre company. In Sputnik's previous work, I have used this institutional flexibility to produce a diverse canon of Russian work (although the lack of accountability to funders in most cases could have been used to the opposite effect, to pursue a single aesthetic), as I have described earlier. By 2012, my personal interest had shifted to overtly 'political' plays. The financial crash of 2008 contributed to my awareness of a financial elite benefiting materially from economic crises. Around the same time, I read several significant 'anti-capitalist' texts, including Naomi Klein's *Shock Doctrine* (2008). Subsequently, I began to look for ways to accommodate an activist position into my theatre-making, co-authoring *On The Record* with Christine Bacon, which was produced by human rights company iceandfire at the Arcola in 2011. *On The Record* is a semi-documentary play which dramatizes the testimonies of five journalists, dedicated to challenging their governments' dominant ideologies, in the USA, Mexico, Israel, Sri Lanka and Russia.¹⁷ This personal trajectory continued at Sputnik with the production of Gremina's *One Hour Eighteen* in 2012 – which contains an overtly activist stance: it creates a fictional tribunal to condemn the alleged murderers of Sergei Magnitskii, a real-life whistleblower who died in police custody in 2009, after revealing the largest known case of financial embezzlement by

¹⁷ More information about *On The Record* may be found on the iceandfire website: <<http://iceandfire.co.uk/project/on-the-record>> [accessed 10 July 2017].

government officials. I started this doctoral project while *One Hour Eighteen* was running at the New Diorama Theatre in London. My belief in theatre which directly addresses social injustice or explicitly confronts the ideology of neoliberal capitalism informed my selection of texts – particularly the first two plays, as I explain below. I also address the role of the non-academic partner – and how it came to influence my selection of the second two plays. The ‘plots’ of the four plays discussed below are summarised at the start of this thesis (see p. 10). Here, I consider the process of play selection in more detail, in order to continue an investigation into the restrictive lens of programming and to what extent it may be circumvented through a process of self-reflection.

Play One: Grandchildren. The Second Act by Mikhail Kaluzhskii and Aleksandra Polivanova

London reading, produced by Theatre Royal Plymouth and the Frontline Club, in association with Sputnik	7.30pm 14 January 2016, ¹⁸ directed by Caroline Steinbeis
Original production details	Sakharov Centre, 2012, directed by Kaluzhskii and Polivanova. Produced by the Sakharov Centre’s Theatre Programme as its inaugural production. The production closed in 2014, when Kaluzhskii emigrated to Israel – also denoting the formal closure of the Theatre Programme. ¹⁹
How long did the play run in its original staging?	Two years, in repertoire, in the Centre’s exhibition space, for approximately thirty-five audience

¹⁸ I have referenced the plays in the order in which I selected them, rather than the sequence in which they were presented in London, in order to serve depict how the selection process occurred.

¹⁹ The Theatre Programme ran into financial difficulties because of its institutional reliance on its host organisation. As an NGO, the Sakharov Centre was investigated by the Justice Department as a potential Foreign Agent, according to the 2012 law (see p. 48). The Centre relied on funds from international charities and it was declared as a ‘foreign agent’ by the Russian government in 2014. Kaluzhskii stated that foreign funders ceased providing support for the Theatre Programme in 2013, anticipating (correctly) that the Sakharov Centre would be labelled as a ‘foreign agent’. His Theatre Programme had relied on funding from international organisations such as the European Commission and the British-based Oak Foundation (2013).

	members per performance (Shubina 2012: para. 2 of 7).
Further notable production(s)	N/a.
About the playwright(s)	<p>Kaluzhskii was born in 1967 in Novosibirsk. He graduated from the Department of Philology within the Humanities Faculty at Novosibirsk State University.</p> <p>Polivanova was born in 1976 in Moscow. She graduated from the Faculty of History and Philology at the Russian State Humanities University.</p>

The first two plays to be selected – *Grandchildren. The Second Act* and *Dr* – reflected my desire to bring politically-charged texts to the UK. If my predilection for documentary forms originated from my own practice as playwright and director with *On The Record* and *One Hour Eighteen*, it was bolstered by a growing awareness of several other factors. Firstly, my research for this thesis led me to understand the formal inventiveness of ‘Russian verbatim’, whereby many dramatists synthesise fictional and non-fictional material. Secondly, my reading during this Ph.D. led me to scholarly accounts reassessing the dominant view of documentary practice in American theatre. Both Youker (2015) and Arjomand (2016) challenge the discourse around non-fictional forms as simplistic representations of objective ‘truths’. In my experience as a theatre-maker, a stereotype holds sway among most British theatre-makers which positions documentary work as lower than fictional plays on an unspoken hierarchy – or typology – of artistic forms. Verbatim or semi-fictional forms are rarely labelled as ‘new writing’, for instance, in theatre marketing, implying a lesser artistic achievement, albeit as a compromise for a greater political affect on audiences. I have identified with this ‘industry’ perspective, which conceptualises documentary work as a subgenre of contemporary playwrighting – until I co-authored *On The Record*. At that point, I observed

the difficulty of interviewing subjects creatively (in order to elicit trust and bypass the pre-packaged ‘mythologised’ view of oneself developed either consciously or self-consciously); choosing a dramatic theme which does more than reiterate existing social discourses; and editing the text to create the opportunity for an affective stage language.

In 2012-3, I began translating *Grandchildren. The Second Act* without consulting Stokes – initially, as a Sputnik project. When I proposed this work for the doctoral project, Stokes did not consider it suitable for inclusion. The minutes which I took from the meeting on 3 December 2012 suggest that *Grandchildren* was of ‘significantly less interest at this stage’, compared to Maksim Kurochkin’s *Vodka, Fucking and Television* (a play about artistic importance written in 2004 – but which was later rejected on the basis of an existing English-language translation). However, I continued to translate the play for Sputnik and showed Stokes the first scene as a sample. By 2013, perhaps taking into consideration the framework of this doctoral project with its dual scholarly-industry focus, he responded to my email, requesting inclusion of this play as one of the four:

I agree with you about the prospects of ‘Grandchildren’, which seems very interesting as oral history (particularly if one were Russian), but less interesting as drama. Since you’re, rightly, continuing with it, keep me up to date as it comes as I see no reason why, whether it’s in the selection or not, we shouldn’t try to give it a reading to, probably, a specialist audience.²⁰

This perspective captures Stokes’ ambivalence: both his appreciation of the socio-political value of the text as well as his view that this political affect was not matched by artistic merit in this play. Rather than using the documentary form to present facts as a testament to objective ‘truths’, this work focuses on what cannot be articulated – and must be repressed – by the characters. This attribute was described by John Freedman, theatre critic for the *Moscow Times* (1992-2015), speaking at the post-show discussion after the rehearsed reading in London:

One of the things I love about this piece is that it [...] has no answers. It does not say “somebody is guilty, somebody [else] is innocent”. [...] I see the same thing [as depicted in the play] happening right now [in contemporary Russia]. [...] I see people making [...] choice[s] that will help them keep their career going [while thinking:] [...] “I’ll keep quiet about this”. (‘Power, Politics and Performance’ 2016b)

²⁰ Source: private email from Simon Stokes, 14 March 2013.

The play's moral complexity – as well as its incorporation of a psychological perspective on political questions – made it an attractive proposition to translate for this doctoral project, particularly in light of the expectation that the audiences attending the London readings would largely be specialist audiences with a prior knowledge of Russian culture and history. However, the high level of assumed knowledge by the audience makes it unlikely that this play could receive a full production for general audiences, or even in new writing venues in Britain, as Stokes suggested in his initial response. Reflecting on the reading, Steinbeis echoed this perspective, suggesting that this play is:

a witness to history, urgent and also very dramatic in the way each person uncovers a new piece of Russian history. As a piece of drama, it feels a far reach for British audiences to grasp the significance of this testimony fully.²¹

This drama's unadventurous style – with little rhythmic variation – is a further barrier, making it a less interesting artistic prospect for audiences at new writing theatres, who would tend to expect a greater degree of stylistic innovation from contemporary plays and may be less interested in activist theatre. However, as I explore below (see pp. 249-1), an evaluation of the text alone overlooks the embedded invitation for an innovative stage language implicit in this hyper-naturalist text.

Play Two: Dr by Elena Isaeva

London reading, produced by Theatre Royal Plymouth and the Frontline Club, in association with Sputnik	7.30pm 12 January 2016, directed by Kate Fahy
Original production details	Teatr.doc, 2005, directed by Vladimir Pankov. Co-produced by Teatr.doc and SounDrama.
How long did the play run in its original staging?	It continues to run in the repertoire at Teatr.doc at the time of writing, making it this theatre's longest-running show.
Further notable production(s)	This play has not been produced by other theatre companies. One of

²¹ Source: private email from Caroline Steinbeis, 7 March 2016.

	Russia's oldest film studios Mosfilm created a feature film based on the play in 2012, scripted by Isaeva and directed by Pankov.
About the playwright(s)	Isaeva was born in 1966 in Moscow. She graduated from the Faculty of Journalism at Moscow State University.

The process of selecting *Dr* was comparable: motivated by my personal 'taste' and proposed to Stokes as a politically potent text – which he accepted for similar reasons as *Grandchildren*. *Dr* presents a critical perspective on the healthcare reforms under Putin,²² largely absent from Russia's mainstream media. While this polemic, namely defending the notion of a publicly-funded healthcare system, contains many details specific to Russia, I hoped that this play would reverberate with British audiences because of the public discourse around the Health and Social Care Act in 2012 – which has instigated a controversial series of privatisations of the NHS.²³ Beyond the play's content, the playwright has composed her play using an edited version of a *single* testimony. This approach provides a subjective perspective, which has two functions. Firstly, the play gains a distinctive style, comparable to a fictional work, because the testimony was taken from a 'charismatic [...] macho doctor' ['харизматичный [...] мачо-врач[...]'] (Gremina 2016). The real-life surgeon was narrating episodes from his life to the playwright while 'he and I had a drink' ['мы с ним выпивали'] (Interview with Isaeva 2013). In other words, the interviewee was engaging in a process of self-aggrandizement. A clue is provided not only in the flowery language used by the protagonist but also, specifically, when he compares himself to the heroic central character in Bulgakov's fictional short story *The Embroidered Towel* (1925) (see p. 278).

²² A major policy of Putin's second Presidency consisted of financial reductions in the social welfare budget, in spite of the inflated global oil prices around the same time, which were bolstering the government's revenues (Shevtsova 2005: 357-8).

²³ By pure coincidence, Junior Doctors at the NHS were holding protests against pay cuts proposed by the British government during the daytime on 12 January 2016, in front of St. Mary's Hospital, located approximately ten metres from the front door of the Frontline Club, where *Dr*. was given a reading in the evening.

Secondly, the play's humorous and grotesque style confronts the audience with the unreliability of the source material; a subtle reminder that the play cannot provide objective 'truths', and that ultimately the spectators must take responsibility for how they choose to interpret its narrative. To summarise the first two play selections, my role as an individual – not dependent upon existing institutions of theatrical production – permitted unconventional programming choices: two 'Russian verbatim' plays which have generally been overlooked by theatres in the UK for two reasons. Firstly, there is a perception by British theatre managements that documentary works rely on cultural subtexts, not articulated in the 'original' (since the dramatist assumes a certain knowledge by their audiences). While this point is valid, below I address how a more flexible approach to translation can overcome this obstacle. Secondly, British programmers tend to overlook the properties of Russian plays – including documentary works – as 'performative objects', inviting directors to create a hyper-naturalist stage language, as I consider later in this chapter. Here, I simply note that these non-normative plays selected were made possible by the atypical institutional basis of a doctoral project.

Play Three: Joan by Laroslava Pulinovich

London reading, produced by Theatre Royal Plymouth and the Frontline Club, in association with Sputnik	7.30pm 13 January 2016, directed by James Grieve
Original production details	Theatre of Nations, 2014, directed by Il'ia Rotenberg. Produced in the 140-seat studio space.
How long did the play run in its original staging?	During 2014, the production transferred to the theatre's 552-seat main house. ²⁴ It continues to run in repertoire at the time of writing.
Further notable production(s)	Pulinovich wrote an earlier version of this play called <i>Next comes a new</i>

²⁴ Source: <http://theatreofnations.ru/image/schema_big.jpg>; <http://theatreofnations.ru/image/data/def/shema_small.jpg> [accessed 2 February 2016].

	<p><i>day</i> [Дальше будет новый день] in 2010, which was produced by the Penzenskii District Theatre of Drama in 2013. At her own instigation, she shortened that version, re-wrote the 'happy ending' as a tragic one and renamed it <i>Joan</i>.²⁵ After the premiere at the Theatre of Nations, there were productions in several major Russian cities: at the Red Torch in Novosibirsk (2015) and the St. Petersburg State Academic Theatre named after Lomonosov (2016). There were at least half a dozen productions in smaller, regional theatres between 2013-6. According to the playwright, the larger venues tended to use the revised version of the play, while smaller regional venues preferred the more sentimental and affirmative original version.²⁶</p>
About the playwright(s)	<p>Pulinovich was born in 1987 in Omsk. She graduated from the playwriting course run by Nikolai Kolyada at the Ekaterinburg Theatre Institute.</p>

My ongoing dialogues with Stokes, in personal meetings two to three times a year, afforded his views a disproportionate weight in my thinking from 2014 onwards. As the director of a company which has worked in fringe-studio venues, I felt that an

²⁵ Source: Private email from Iaroslava Pulinovich, 4 April 2016.

²⁶ Source: Private email from Iaroslava Pulinovich, 4 April 2016.

overdependence upon my own personal ‘taste’ would restrict the value of this Ph.D., specifically in benefiting from Stokes’ expertise through his input into the selection process – as well as making a more valuable object of research (to evaluate his practice as a programmer in relation to mine, at our respective companies). I also felt the ‘lure’ of identifying a play which might reach a larger platform such as the Drum theatre with its national profile among theatre professionals and its 200-seat capacity (compared to the 50- and 80-seaters where Sputnik has produced work between 2005-12). Under Stokes’ tenure, Theatre Royal Plymouth has incorporated foreign-language companies, coproducing several productions with the Belgian company Ontroerend Goed²⁷ in the UK for instance, and he has expressed this strand of his venue’s repertoire in the following way:

Part of our programme is internationalist, I work with a number of companies from Europe. [...] Not many Russian plays are translated in English and we wanted to add to that canon. (Stokes speaking at ‘Power, Politics and Performance in Russia: “The War Hasn’t Yet Started” Q&A’ 2016c)

To some extent, the awareness of Stokes as potential producer created a process of ‘domestication’, influencing my thinking towards which plays might appeal to his taste – an overdependence upon a single programmer. However, this factor was at least partially counterbalanced by his stated position from the outset, about what this project represented for him. In the funding proposal for this doctoral project, Stokes committed his company to a series of rehearsed readings – and about half way through, agreed to finance those readings. Yet, early on, he had made it clear to me that, in spite of his long-standing interest in Russian drama over more than a decade,²⁸ he did not expect this collaboration to lead to a full production by his company. In an interview in July 2016, I asked him to reflect on this point, and he stated:

²⁷ These include the devised pieces: *Under the Influence* in 2009; *Teenage Riot* in 2010; *Audience* in 2011; *A History of Everything* in 2011; *Sirens* in 2014, *Lies* in 2017. Sources: <<https://www.theatreroyal.com/whats-on/2013/fight-night>> [accessed 30 August 2017]; <<https://www.theatreroyal.com/whats-on/2014/sirens-2>> [accessed 30 August 2017]; <<https://www.theatreroyal.com/whats-on/2014/sirens-2>> [accessed 30 August 2017]

²⁸ Stokes was in Russia to give a workshop at Teatr.doc in the early 2000s; also, his former partner is the Russian screen and stage (female) actor Ingeborga Dapkunaite (Stokes speaking at ‘Power, Politics and Performance in Russia: “The War Hasn’t Yet Started” Q&A’ 2016c). In 2005, a member of the literary department at the Bush Theatre – where I was a Reader of new plays at the time – told me about Stokes as a programmer with a strong interest in new plays, especially those from Russia. I invited him to attend Sputnik’s first production; he came to *Russian National Mail* as well as the 2006 production *Techniques of Breathing in an Airlocked Space*, and in 2009 I invited him to join as a Trustee. He accepted and he continues to be on Sputnik’s Board of Trustees at the time of writing.

I didn't think it likely that we would come up with a play of sufficient quality that hadn't been spotted, particularly by the Royal Court. [S]ome of what we were looking at was very interesting but had no universality. *Grandchildren* [is] very interesting, but why would you do that in Plymouth? I was very unconvinced [...] that a Russian play could take us further forward than a British play in cultural terms. (Interview with Stokes 2016)

Even so, I recognised the need to focus my attention on dramas which might appeal to Stokes or indeed other programmers. The selection of *Joan* by Iaroslava Pulinovich – the third play which I proposed and Stokes agreed to include as one of the readings which his theatre was producing – testified to my desire to offer a work from a different 'school' of playwriting. Pulinovich was a student of Nikolai Kolyada on the playwriting course run by that dramatist at the Ekaterinburg Theatre Institute and she writes linguistically innovative texts which tend to remain within conventional dramaturgical parameters – situating her work as part of the Urals School of Playwriting. Initially, I was ambivalent about proposing this drama. On reading the play, I admired the 'gripping' plot and playful dialogues, but felt that it erred towards over-simplistic moral positions about characters. However, *Joan* evocatively challenges gender stereotypes thematically, by reversing what are traditionally perceived as 'masculine' and 'feminine' traits. The eponymous protagonist is a vengeful businesswoman, while Andrei (her former lover) loves cooking and knitting; her employee Vitaly is passionate about childcare and maintaining his youthful looks. As director of the London reading of *Joan* as part of this doctoral project, Grieve²⁹ assessed this aspect of the play positively in relation to British theatre. His conjecture was that:

the critics would say: "How often do we see a play from Britain with this central female [lead role]? Why is Russia doing it better than here?" (Interview with Grieve 2016).

In other words, this play could push forward public discourse around gender, at least among conservative segments of the British theatre-going public.³⁰ In 2015, I saw a production at the Theatre of Nations in Moscow, where I experienced the play's

²⁹ As mentioned previously, James Grieve is co-artistic director of Paines Plough (2010-ongoing), a British company dedicated to staging the work of contemporary British playwrights.

³⁰ During the rehearsal at the Frontline Club, I spoke informally to a number of actors, who felt that this play appeared conservative, by the standards of the youngest British demographics. In the UK, the most progressive public discourse centres on the number of gender categories – and how to recognise them. Social media has responded most quickly to these shifting social conceptions: in 2014, Facebook offered over seventy gender self-definitions to its British users.

Source: <<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/technology/facebook/10930654/Facebooks-71-gender-options-come-to-UK-users.html>> [accessed 14 July 2017]

affective power. In Russia, the play transferred from the 140-seater studio theatre at the Theatre of Nations to its 552-seater main space within a year of the premiere. As far as I have been able to elicit, it is the only play by a dramatist of the post-Soviet generation to run on the mainstage of a theatre funded by the federal Ministry of Culture, between 2000 and the time of writing³¹ – giving it a unique status in the post-2000 Russian theatre landscape. At a meeting on 24 March 2015, I had described the play as a ‘crowd pleaser’ to Stokes and my supervisors. My co-supervisor Professor Maria Delgado, who is a translator and Chair of ATC, proposed the value of bringing a drama with a ‘populist’ appeal to the London stage, citing Yasmina Reza’s *Art* as an example of an artistically rich play which achieved a critical success, even crossing over into mainstream theatrical life in Britain (it premiered in the West End in 1996, where it ran for eight years). My ambivalence was revealing, suggesting a reiteration of an existing prejudice among many theatre professionals against ‘populist’ genres as a legitimate form of ‘new writing’.³² This dismissal of a certain ‘taste’ appears to stem from considerations of social class. As the scholar Pierre Bourdieu demonstrates in his 1984 monograph *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*, cultural production does not unify society with universal messages but on the contrary, delineates and strengthens distinctions between social classes. He states that ‘art and cultural consumption are predisposed, consciously and deliberately or not, to fulfil a social function of legitimating social differences’ (Bourdieu 1984: 7). The selection of this play marked one step on my own trajectory as scholar-practitioner to reconceptualising the potential role of contemporary Russian plays in the British theatre landscape, confronting me with the limitations of perceiving new dramas from Russia solely as exemplars of ‘new writing’ for specialist audiences, who are already predisposed towards cultural ‘otherness’. *Joan* became an appealing choice for this batch of four, to test whether a ‘populist’ form of new writing could appeal to Stokes, or other British programmers after the Ph.D., as meriting a full production.

³¹ In 2014, there were twenty-four federal theatres – funded by Russia’s Federal Cultural Ministry. They constitute the country’s most distinguished theatres: fourteen in Moscow, five in St. Petersburg and one in each of three regional cities – Ekaterinburg, Yaroslavl and Novosibirsk. Source: <<http://mkrf.ru/deyatelnost/statistics/institution/theatre>> [accessed 5 November 2016].

³² The London-based theatre company Duckie (established in 1995) tackles these false binaries by making productions which, as their mission statement describes it, offers ‘progressive working class entertainment [which] mixes live art with light entertainment’. Source: <<http://www.duckie.co.uk/about>> [accessed 31 August 2017].

Joan's 'populist' form possessed a distinctively 'Russian' aesthetic, both in its dramaturgical form and in its construction of dialogue. According to Grieve, this play diverges from British convention in its structure, albeit not without precedent from the Russian canon:

In *Joan*, [the drama] builds very slowly [...]. It hooks you in but, really, the dramatic climax is at the end. [...] When I talk to writers about [dramaturgical] structure, the play I use a lot is *The Seagull* because it has such an odd structure, because actually the [key] event is at the end, "Konstantin Gavrilovich has shot himself" is basically the climax and then it's over. [...] *Joan* is the same. (Ibid.)

As Grieve points out, in *Joan*, the dramatic climax comes in the final minute of the play, when it is revealed to the audience that the protagonist will pursue her ultimate act of revenge by abusing her power to orphan the child of her (still living) former lover Andrei. This narrative structure differentiates it from Anglo-American conventions, where the climactic action is generally followed by a plot-based resolution. Grieve has ironically characterised pedagogical practice by British theatres, in literary departments and workshops, in this way: 'everybody teaches "get the climax two thirds of the way through, let's have a bit of aftermath!"' (Ibid.). This structure complicates notions of 'domestication' and 'foreignisation'. On the one hand, the play conforms to an existing Russian tradition, not practiced by most British dramatists; yet, on the other hand, most regular theatre-goers are familiar with *The Seagull*, so may find this form familiar. The 'foreignness' of the play in relation to British audiences is more pronounced in relation to the construction of the dialogue. Grieve has contrasted Pulinovich's writing style to the normative practice of most contemporary British playwriting as follows:

There is a clear DNA which runs through [British playwriting] from the start of the twentieth century to now, you could trace a lineage of writers. From Pinter [onwards], there is a sparsity of language, a toughness of language, a use of language that is in and of itself dramatic. [...] *Joan* is much more gentle, and more existential. (Interview with Grieve 2016)

Ultimately, Stokes expressed ambivalence towards this drama, choosing not to produce it after the readings in January 2016. Part of his reluctance to engage with this play further may have been its 'Russianness'. I asked him to reflect on whether *Joan* could find another producer in the UK. He stated that 'I think it's a bit too Russian' (Interview with Stokes 2016). This perspective connects back with his notion of a 'cultural dialogue': his theatre (particularly the Drum, as I discuss below) positions itself as a venue serving a cultural elite (i.e. spectators who would be unlikely to find the

investigation of gender in the play challenging) – not the more conservative segments of the theatre-going public. It is also likely that institutional factors played a critical role in his feeling that this play could not be produced at his venue. This play is composed as a ‘star vehicle’. Pulinovich appears to have written *Joan* with the Russian repertory system in mind – providing a strong role for a female actor in her late forties or early fifties (a demographic often overlooked by dramatists). Stokes acknowledged that the play had ‘a great part for an older woman’ (Interview with Stokes 2016) He also stated that, while his own theatre was not producing it, ‘it wouldn’t surprise me if [another British theatre] could be enticed’ (Ibid.). He did not elaborate further on this, but Grieve provided a perspective which addresses this point explicitly:

Could I see a place for [*Joan* in a UK theatre]? I think I could but it would have to be [cast with a] star [in the main role]. [...] If you had an extraordinary central performance, then maybe. (Interview with Grieves 2016)

While Theatre Royal Plymouth has a mainstage which hosts large-scale works of high artistic merit – such as productions by Theatre de Complicite and Robert Lepage’s company Ex Machina – as well as franchise touring productions,³³ the foreign-language works tend to be produced in the studio, the Drum Theatre. This reiteration of normative programming (by the Royal Court, ATC and Sputnik) augments the institutional difficulty presented by a play, such as *Joan*, which serves a ‘generalist’ audience, rather than a specialist one. Anderson³⁴ – who directed another of the four readings, as I mention below – has pointed out that, in the current theatrical climate:

it’s monumentally difficult to get good actors [to perform in venues outside of London] [...] because obviously the amount of money [on offer is low compared to their television work], they’re out of London, away from their families... You just need to get lucky, to get someone who really cares about that kind of work [who is willing to forego higher salaries and the convenience of working in London]. (Interview with Anderson 2016)

While *Joan* becomes ill-suited for Stokes’ programming practice, the challenge for myself, as translator and advocate of new Russian playwriting in the UK, will be to identify a programmer whose criteria encompasses a ‘taste’ for foreign-language drama with a commercial orientation – considering whether the compelling narrative could

³³ The forthcoming season contains commercially-oriented works such as *Around the World in Eighty Days* and *Faulty Towers: the Dining Experience*. Source: <<https://www.theatreroyal.com/whats-on/list>> [accessed 1 September 2017].

³⁴ As mentioned earlier, Gordon Anderson was Artistic Director of ATC (2001-7).

overcome resistance to foreign-language texts in a large-scale venue, by casting an equivalent ‘star’ actor in the UK to match the renown of the Russian lead performer.

Play Four: The War Hasn’t Yet Started by Mikhail Durnenkov

London reading, produced by Theatre Royal Plymouth and the Frontline Club, in association with Sputnik	7.30pm 15 January 2016, directed by Gordon Anderson
Original production details	The Play, Pie and Pint Theatre in Glasgow, 2015, directed by Davey Anderson, translated by Alexandra Smith, adapted by Davey Anderson. It was part of a three-play season of Russian-language plays curated by the playwright Nicola McCartney.
How long did the play run in its original staging?	One week.
Further notable production(s)	Subsequent to the reading at the Frontline Club, Theatre Royal Plymouth programmed this play – in a new version with four new scenes commissioned for this 2016 production.
About the playwright(s)	Durnenkov was born in 1978 in Tynda, in the Amur Oblast’ in Russia’s far east. He graduated from the Automotive Faculty of the Polytechnical Institute in Togliatti, in the south of Russia. He has a second undergraduate degree from the All-Russia State Institute of

	Cinematography, from the course run by the screenwriter Iurii Arabov.
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I encountered *The War Hasn't Yet Started* on 8 November 2014 at a seminar at Oxford University, *Back to the USSR? Theatre and drama in Russia and Ukraine*, of which I was a co-organiser with Professor Philip Bullock, Professor Julie Curtis and Sasha Dugdale. Earlier in 2014 and unrelated to the seminar, the playwright and director Nicola McCartney was curator of a project, for an international collaboration with the Play, Pie and Pint Theatre (Glasgow), the National Theatre of Scotland and the University of Edinburgh, which commissioned Durnenkov to write a new play. She gave a rehearsed reading of the resulting drama in Oxford, as a 'test run' prior to a week-long full production at the Play, Pie and Pint in 2015. This drama struck me as being qualitatively different to this dramatist's other works. There is an artistically rich 'unresolvedness' about this play, which I had not experienced to such an extent in the rest of his *oeuvre*. Even Durnenkov's 2005 work *The Cultural Layer*, which consists of three discrete scenes with characters who never meet, provides a shared location for the disparate strands of narrative – the same flat in three different temporal periods – which permits spectators to 'join the dots' or, by the account of the critic Aleksandr Sokolianskii, to identify a 'living thread' ['жив[ая] нитк[а]'] (2005: para. 3 of 6) holding the story-lines together. By way of illustration, it emerges that the real-estate agents in the second scene purposefully burnt down the flat of the former residents, a young man and his grandfather, encountered by the audience in the first scene (Durnenkovy 2005: 173-97) – most likely murdering them. In *The War*, the title provides an important clue to the playwright's intentions to depict a militarised society on the brink of war. However, the play is enigmatic – and non-didactic – in its refusal to offer a single narrative thread, which might allow spectators to reduce the work to a single 'message'. This drama is composed of eight sets of unnamed characters (and twelve in the play's second version, as discussed later), who exist in disparate scenes about thematically diverse subjects. The playwright has stated that he intended to create:

a musical structure. I'm writing certain stories which have a shared theme, but no shared ideas [...] [...] I hoped to create a certain "cloud of meaning" which should develop [...] to form a proposition.

[...] музыкальная структура. Я пишу некие истории у которых есть общая тема, нет общих идей. [...] У меня было желание создать некое смысловое облако, который должно сложиться по идее некоего высказывания.] (Interview with Durnenkov 2016)

This play investigates a diverse range of subjects including personal anxieties, narcissism, state propaganda and the ideology underlying most computer games. The director of the London reading has described this work as depicting ‘the “noise” around the lead up to war, [...] it’s a meditation’ (Anderson 2016). By ‘meditation’, Anderson suggests that the play is not a socio-political tract, but rather a lyrical and nuanced exploration of the inner lives of citizens living in a country which is about to launch a war. Broadly speaking, the play may be described as ‘anti-war’ in its ethos, but rather than a single ‘message’ this play investigates the relationship between citizens’ inner lives and a country’s militaristic foreign policy, which may be articulated in this way: is fear and personal anxiety the cause or by-product of war? I proposed this play for inclusion in this doctoral project – and Stokes agreed. He felt that this drama responded to the cultural discourse in Britain – it ‘take[s] us further forward than a British play in cultural terms’ (Interview with Stokes 2016). Rather than perceiving the play as an anti-war tract, Stokes observed how the play would resonate with the distrust of ‘experts’ which informed recent political events, such as Britain’s vote to leave the EU in the 2016 referendum.³⁵ He pointed to *The War’s* ability to address a contemporary concern among citizens in economically developed countries with ‘what communication actually is; nobody believes [anymore] in respectability, authority and expertise’ [...] (Ibid.). This drama came into existence through an intercultural collaboration, which appears to have created an opportunity to circumvent existing institutional rigidities in British theatre. The dramatist has stated that, besides the temporal duration of the work (the play had to last for forty five minutes to suit the Glasgow theatre’s lunchtime performance slot), the commission brief was entirely open. He considers that to be an unusual practice (Interview with Durnenkov 2016). Evidently, in Russia, he feels that certain themes may not be permissible, at least at the state-run theatres. He was presumably thinking about one scene, which depicts the broadcasting of a falsified event – a deliberate act of propaganda by the journalists – on television news.

³⁵ Specifically, Michael Gove, the Conservative MP, claimed that ‘people in the country have had enough of the experts’, to build support for the campaign against Britain remaining in the EU. Source: <<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2016/jun/09/michael-gove-experts-academics-vote>> [accessed 1 September 2017].

Furthermore, while the play never identifies specific geographical locations, it would be 'read' by Russian audiences as being about Russia's military incursion into Ukraine. Durnenkov may have been comparing the openness of the commissioning brief with British practice. By 2015, this dramatist had already written for the RSC through a commissioning process. In my informal conversations with theatre managers in the UK, I have noted a tendency for companies to commission plays where the intended theme may be summarised as a single sentence. It is unlikely that *The War* could have been commissioned by that principle since its thematic proposition is broad: some scenes do not clearly relate to a war and the drama does not specify a socio-political message about Russia – creating a mismatch with the perceived function of new Russian plays in the UK by most programmers. Postdramatic texts – which disrupt liberal ideological messages or conform to existing theatrical conventions – are unlikely to pass through the commissioning filter, except perhaps where a playwright has an established reputation. This intercultural collaboration – which started prior to the writing of the text – provided the conditions for Durnenkov to write a play which drew on Russian realities³⁶ but did not include detailed culturally-specific references. The production in Glasgow in 2015, as with the works which I documented earlier between 2000 and 2014, came to fruition due to an additional institutional facility. This play reached a British – or to be more specific a Scottish – stage because of McCartney's prior involvement in playwriting in the region;³⁷ her professional acquaintance with dramatists whom she could invite to do a commission,³⁸ overcame institutional and aesthetic resistance to contemporary Russian plays by theatres in the UK. When Stokes decided to programme *The War* because of its artistically rich form and 'cultural' relevance, he commissioned four further scenes both in order to make the play longer, to suit the expected 60 to 90 minute running time of most shows at the Drum (Interview with Stokes 2016). This commissioning process also gave the theatre 'ownership' over the text (Ibid.) – allowing his company to market the production as a 'world premiere' to reviewers (rather than a

³⁶ Durnenkov emphasised to me that, although many scenes are invented, his work is mainly based on real events which he dramatizes (Interview with Durnenkov 2016).

³⁷ McCartney participated as a writer in *Class Act* in Russia from 2004-6 – a participatory arts project for young people, run by the Traverse Theatre initially in Scotland but extended to other countries, which aims to overcome social divides through drama. From 2011 (ongoing), McCartney was Lecturer in Writing for Performance at Edinburgh University.

³⁸ The Season curated by McCartney also included a play by Iurii Klavdiev *Thoughts Spoken Aloud from Above* and Natal'ia Vorozhbit *Take the Rubbish Out, Sasha*. These were all performed in 2015 for week-long runs.

revival of the Glasgow production), making it a more attractive proposition for critics. Without this doctoral project (or at least another translator-cultural mediator bringing the play to his attention), Stokes would presumably not have programmed this play. He encountered it for the first time as a participant at the 2014 Oxford seminar, mentioned earlier, where the play was given a rehearsed reading, directed by McCartney. Stokes did not make any mention of it until I subsequently proposed it for consideration. Asking him to reflect on this, he suggested both that the reading had been ‘poorly presented [...] [or perhaps] I was just exhausted’ (Interview with Stokes 2016) but also that ‘I prefer to *read* plays [to gauge their quality rather than watch readings]’ (Ibid.). These factors may indeed have influenced him to ‘overlook’ a play which he would later programme. However, I would suggest that rather the reading in Oxford being of a ‘poor quality’, instead it was crafted by the Scottish translator-adaptor and Scottish-based creative team towards its intended Glasgow audience. The focus by the creative team on a Scottish target audience may have accentuated what felt like ‘parochial’ concerns to a director-programmer who lives in London – and who has his eyes keenly on the capital as a centre of taste-making. Even after the London reading of *The War* in my ‘received pronunciation’ English, the decision was not uncomplicated. At the post-show discussion after the Frontline reading, an audience member asked Stokes if he would programme any of my four play selections. He emphasised his feeling that *The War* had much to offer but concluded: ‘The short answer is I don’t know [if I will produce any of the four plays]’ (‘Power, Politics and Performance’ 2016c). A couple of weeks after the London readings at the Frontline Club in January 2016, Stokes called me, informing me that he was considering a production of Durnenkov’s play at the Drum in Plymouth. He explained that a company had pulled out of a three-week performance slot in May 2016 and that he was considering *The War*. His decision – based on his evaluation of the work’s artistic merit and cultural relevance – was confirmed a few weeks later. He decided to use my translation, and commissioned me to translate the four new scenes, as they were written – which brought my work as a dramatic translator to a national platform.³⁹ This trajectory from a fringe theatre in Glasgow (with a professional standing

³⁹ It is also worth noting that Sputnik was credited as an associate producing partner of the London readings in January 2016, to reflect my role: I identified and negotiated a favourable deal with the Frontline Club, based on my prior relationship with that company. Sputnik was not credited as a producing partner or involved creatively (with a further role as director, associate director or dramaturg) in May 2016, which Stokes told me informally was because my company could not bring any financing (or significant in-kind benefit) to that production – a further reminder of how difficult it is for small-scale companies to develop

but unpaid labour and no financial recompense for dramatists); to a seminar at Oxford University, to a professionally-paid production at Plymouth, points again to the additional institutional and material resources required to bring foreign-language work to British stages.

The role of directors: playtexts as 'performative objects'

Beyond the marginalisation of contemporary foreign-language texts in the British theatre landscape, there is a further filter of theatrical production which influences how Russian plays reach British stages. The normative directing practice in professional British theatres is designed to serve a text-centric approach to staging plays. This interpretative model of directing – where the director is hierarchically subservient to the playwright – is at odds with the dominant Russian practice. The latter presupposes that 'stage language' is the primary site of communication with the audience, rather than the text *per se*. The director's role as the primary creative force testifies to that point, as my interviews with Russian playwrights confirmed. Bogaev suggested that dramatists are rarely invited to rehearsals – a cultural norm since the time of Chekhov (Interview with Bogaev 2015). The playwright Rodion Beletskii suggested hyperbolically that Russian directors have achieved a quasi-dictatorial status: 'there are 500 Stalins [running theatres] across Russia' [*Есть*] 500 Сталинов по всей России'] (Interview with Beletskii 2015). Even the emergence of a Russian 'fringe' in the 2000s, which placed dramatists into the decision-making positions within the studio theatres, did not shift that paradigm entirely. Beletskii cited Teatr.doc as a venue which involves dramatists in the rehearsal process (Ibid.), but this is rare even among the venues of the independent sector.⁴⁰ Even at Teatr.doc, this company pioneered a hyper-naturalist acting style as I

their work beyond fringe venues. Stokes' comment demonstrates the difficulty of 'translating' professional and cultural expertise gained on the fringe, perhaps particularly for companies specialising in the 'niche' market of foreign-language contemporary dramatic writing, into larger professional arenas – a further reason why so few new plays from non-English language countries reach British stages.

⁴⁰ Eka Vashakidze, the Kolyada-Theatre's principal administrator and company manager since 2007, replied to my question, about whether contemporary playwrights whose work is produced by the Kolyada-Theatre attend rehearsals: 'some of them, of course, if they have the opportunity and desire' [*Некоторые из них, конечно, если есть возможность и желание*'] (Interview with Vashakidze and Getsevich 2014). Her answer suggests that at least some dramatists do not attend rehearsals – but she implies that the theatre is not able to offer a royalty for attendance ('if they have the opportunity and desire'), which reduces the likelihood of attendance. Most significantly, Kolyada's practice as auteur-director militates against the necessity of the dramatist being present, since rehearsals are not a process of interpreting the text – but rather about forging a stage language. Furthermore, 'the text itself [of plays by younger dramatists] does not change [during rehearsals], but Kolyada shortens them. [...] Some of them, he shortens a lot' [*сам текст не меняются но просто он сокращаются. [...] Некоторые из них много сокращаются*']

explored in Chapter Three – so the focus is on forging a type of communication with the audience, at least as much as interpreting the text. It is revealing that many playwrights frequently staged their own plays between 2000 and 2014, including Sigarev, Vyrypaev and Gremina,⁴¹ while others had long-time collaborations with visually inventive auteur-directors, such as Vyrypaev with Viktor Ryzhakov, and Dmitry Volkostrellov with Pavel Priazhko.⁴² This tendency suggests that many leading playwrights were seeking a specific stage language – or at least for directors who would depart from normative practices of mimetic realism which proliferated in Russian theatres.⁴³

The mode of theatrical performance to emerge in the playwright-run institutions was predominantly not naturalist. As with the playtexts themselves (see Chapter Two), the stage language of most contemporary dramas offered an opportunity for an affective, non-mimetic stage language. Beumers and Lipovetsky capture this point in their monograph:

The major feature of New Drama lies in the fact that its most significant texts do not represent or reflect life, but create (or aspire to create) a magic and/or ritual space of performative existence and a special kind of communication with the audience. (2009: 42)

The Russian productions of the plays which I have translated for this Ph.D. provides a nuanced illustration of the role of Russian directors in staging contemporary playwriting. In my first translation for this doctoral project, *Grandchildren. The Second Act*, the playwrights, doubling as director, presented the production as if it were a participatory work, with no visible differentiation between actor and audience member. A system of

(Interview with Vashakidze and Getsevich 2014). The imperative for dramatists to attend rehearsals is if playtexts will be re-drafted during the lead-up to an opening night, whereas Kolyada – by this account – only edits dramas by his students and other dramatists of the Urals School of Playwriting.

⁴¹ I saw Sigarev's production of his play *Black Milk* at the Kolyada-Theatre in 2006; Vyrypaev frequently premieres his own plays at *Praktika* including *July* in 2006; Gremina's work has mostly been staged by her regular collaborator and husband Ugarov, such as *September.doc* and *One Hour Eighteen* in 2005, although from 2013 she started to direct her own plays, including *One Hundred and Fifty Reasons Not to Defend Your Motherland*.

⁴² Ryzhakov frequently premiered this dramatist's works at other theatres (beyond *Praktika* where the playwright directed his own plays), including *The Drunks* at the Moscow Arts in 2014. Volkostrellov frequently premiered plays by Priazhko, such as *The Soldier* at *Teatr.doc* in 2011 *Three Days in Hell* at the Theatre of Nations in 2013.

⁴³ In Chapter Two, I described the advent of postdramatic work by a dozen or so auteur-directors in the early 1990s; that tendency was not the normative practice of most Russian directors who – in spite of their status – were working rigidly in forms of mimetic realism inherited from the main Soviet-era tradition.

'lottery ticket' style numbers flashed up on adjacent screens,⁴⁴ reinforcing the illusion that the speakers were randomly selected (whereas, in fact, the numbers corresponded to the tickets held by performers, reciting pre-learnt text). Using this theatrical illusion, the playwrights created dramatic suspense for their testimonial work – avoiding a passive spectatorship, which recounts historical events as objective 'truths'. A second theatrical device further destabilised a conventional paradigm of spectatorship. After the playtext had been performed, the production extended its artistic device, of 'lottery ticket' numbers, while genuinely offering the audience a participatory experience: the numbers flashing up on the screens were generated automatically and corresponded only to the numbers on spectators' tickets. This second part of the production – its 'second act' – was arguably the most important, dramatically. Experientially, it extended the play's central theme, namely the difficulty of articulating historical trauma. Reflecting on the Moscow production, Polivanova noted that, in the majority of performances, audiences remained silent when their number appeared and, as she has pithily explained, '[their] silence is Russia's main drama' (Chilton 2013: para. 10 of 10). The critic Mariia Shubina has described the 'charged' atmosphere of this theatrical game, describing the sense of how 'you wait with horror [for your number to appear on the screens]' [*с ужасом ждешь*] (Shubina 2012: para. 3 of 7). The inability of most audience members to reveal their grandparents' complicity in Soviet-era state crimes (with occasional exceptions),⁴⁵ and therefore play a meaningful role in the production's second act, theatrically represented a psycho-social drama of repression. The playtext of *Grandchildren* does not indicate this 'second act' – indeed, the idea of the production concept emerged when the co-authors staged it at the Sakharov Centre (NGO) in Moscow in 2012.⁴⁶ This production reveals how even *documentary* playwrights from the New Drama movement perceive their works as performative objects, requiring (or at the very least inviting) directors to devise a stage language which abandons mimetic

⁴⁴ Each audience member's ticket contained a number and the instruction, 'You may speak when your number lights up' [*Вы можете говорить, когда загорится ваш номер*]. Spectators were seated on a circle of chairs. On diametrically opposite sides, behind the spectators (but within their eye-line), digits flashed up on two screens – corresponding to numbers on some of the tickets.

⁴⁵ On a minority of occasions, audience members took the opportunity to express themselves publicly, which served a therapeutic aim. Kaluzhskii has described how, at one performance, an audience member began revealing the history of a relative of hers who ran a gulag camp, for the benefit of her own cousin (also in attendance), who had never heard that aspect of their family history: 'It was like [a] soap opera, but it was so moving, so awful' (Interview with Kaluzhskii 2013).

⁴⁶ I learnt about the provenance of the production concept from Kaluzhskii in one of half a dozen (unrecorded) conversations over Skype while I was translating the play between 2012 and 2014.

verisimilitude with its attendant ‘fourth wall’, in favour of experimental forms. Similarly, the grotesque style of the second translation in this doctoral project, *Dr*, with its ‘subjective’ perspective as a dramaturgical principle was perceived as an opportunity for a non-mimetic, multi-genre production by the director Vladimir Pankov. As a co-production between his company SounDrama and Teatr.doc, premiering at the latter in 2005 and continuing to run in repertoire at the time of writing, the director employed singing and music, as well as choreography and projections, in his rendition of this verbatim drama. Pankov’s production emphasised the ‘playfulness’ and humour of much of the text, reminding the audience to question the play’s ‘authenticity’, rather than passively accepting it as a portrayal of an ‘objective’ truth.

Unlike the three other translations created for this doctoral project,⁴⁷ *Joan* is largely a work of mimetic verisimilitude, serving as a reminder that most works by dramatists of the Urals School of Playwriting are realist. Pulinovich was educated on Kolyada’s playwriting course at the Ekaterinburg Theatre Institute and she lives in Ekaterinburg, suggesting her refusal to conform with Moscow’s notions of non-conformist playwriting. Pulinovich’s drama centres on a psychological portrait of the protagonist as its key dramaturgical principle: the plot revolves around whether she will enact revenge on her former lover, Andrei. The director of the Moscow production, Il’ia Rotenburg, responded to this realist form, in his 2014 premiere at the Theatre of Nations, by crafting carefully-observed character depictions as the locus of the play’s narrative – with a playful use of scenography to frame the action. According to one critic, the director ‘builds the action according to the principle of filmic montage, whereby frames quickly replace one another, [...] each new episode naturally grows out of the previous one’ [*Роменберг выстраивает действие по принципу клипового монтажа, при котором кадры быстро-быстро сменяют друг друга [...] а каждый следующий эпизод естественно вырастает из предыдущего*] (Berman 2014: para. 9 of 14). This ‘televisual’ style accentuated the populist appeal of this drama. His production was designed, as another reviewer suggests, with a ‘stylish and multi-functional space, using the famous principle of “two in one” [...] [for example], the bed covers are taken away – and everything turns into the black tombstone of Joan’s father who died “under a

⁴⁷ I have not discussed *The War Hasn’t Yet Started* because it has yet to be staged in Russia, seemingly on account of its politically-charged content – restricting the number of producers willing to stage it severely.

fence” [‘стильное и многофункциональное пространство, которое по знаменитому принципу «два в одном» [...] убрать постельное белье — и все обернется черным надгробным памятником умершему «под забором» отцу Жанны’] (Alpatova 2014: para. 4 of 8). The director’s artfulness visually reminds the audience about the inherent instability of human existence both in socio-economic terms – expensive and inexpensive apartments co-exist on stage – as well as philosophically – a bed becomes a tomb. In other words, the director captures the play’s ideology of ‘permitted dissidence’, its rejection of corruption in the private sector, in a vivid way which is potent but is not designed to offend audiences. Overall, my selection of four plays confirms that New Drama, with its emphasis on formal experimentation, invites directors to rupture realist stage conventions, while the Urals School of Playwriting tends to conform to mimetic verisimilitude.

British directors: new Russian plays as ‘literary objects’

The predominant approach to new Russian plays in that period in the UK was informed by the culture of new writing, whereby the play is perceived as a ‘literary object’ (rather than a performative text offering creative primacy to a director). An act of translation occurs whereby British directors tend to respond creatively to Russian New Drama’s aesthetic innovations through scenography, rather than ‘stage language’ (which might, for instance, include expressive, non-literal choreography). By way of illustration, Dominic Cooke, the director of the original British production of *Plasticine*, has described how the play resembles a film script stylistically (Cooke in Aston 2015: 93), which had the effect of taking ‘the audience into a subjective experience rather than a literal one’ (Ibid.: 94). Understanding that he had to ‘do something radical spatially’ (Ibid.) with his production, Cooke created a promenade production with a shifting playing space, enabled by a moving platform, forcing the audience to move while watching the performance. Similarly, when Ramin Gray was preparing to direct *Ladybird* at the Royal Court in 2004, he asked Sigarev to re-write certain scenes in the play to situate the action into a single location (Interview with Gray 2016). The dramatist refused: evidently, he perceived this challenging aspect of this work – with its sudden shifts between multiple geographical locations – as integral to his ‘performative object’. Ultimately, like Cooke, Gray solved these challenges with scenography: the stage designer Lizzie Clachan included a non-verbal ‘pre-scene’ as the audience entered the

auditorium. This device established a playing space – referred to subsequently by video-link during the main part of the performance. According to the director, the playwright was pleased with these creative, non-literal responses (Ibid.). Both Cooke and Gray unwittingly engaged in an act of cultural translation, treating the play as a ‘literary object’ rather than a performative one. By way of contrast, Serebrennikov’s Moscow staging of *Plasticine* was expressionist, adding visual leitmotifs – such as choreographed physical sequences in the opening scene, which do not exist in the play’s stage directions (Sigarev 2002: 3). Reviewing that production for the journal *Afisha*, Koval’skaia has characterised this directorial approach: ‘Serebrennikov, without hitting a false note against the text, created a new text – a scenic one’ [*‘Серебрянников, не соврав против текста, сочинил новый текст, сценически’*] (2003: para. 4 of 4). The director Viktor Ryzhakov engaged a similar process with Vyrypaev’s *The Drunks* at the Moscow Arts in 2014, which I watched in 2015. The opening sequence witnesses a ten-minute sequence during which the actors perform a piece of ‘music’ using rubbish (such as water bottles and plastic bags), seated at music stands – as if they were members of an orchestra. This scene does not exist in the (unpublished) playtext – nor is it ever referred to again in the production. Ryzhakov has offered a ‘scenic text’ (or ‘stage language’ as it is more commonly called in English) which interacts with the dramatic text in creating how the audience will ‘read’ the meaning. I interpreted Ryzhakov’s contribution as an invitation to reflect upon how society construes value unequally between categories – emotional, economic and social; but this performative solution is ambiguous in its meaning, intellectually destabilising and affective. Cooke and Gray’s approach was legitimate: a ‘domesticating’ translation of *the theatrical practice* which is embedded in the playtext. Both productions were critically acclaimed – Cooke’s even helped Sigarev to win the Evening Standard Most Promising Playwright Award in 2003, which was the first time a foreign dramatist had gained that accolade.⁴⁸ However, the British theatre landscape is impoverished if it does not explore other potential approaches including a ‘foreignising’ one, which would consider how to ‘translate’ the theatrical culture implicit in the text.

Postdramatic approaches to Russian New Drama

⁴⁸ Source: <<https://www.nickhernbooks.co.uk/plasticine>> [accessed 1 September 2017]

In contrast to the normative practice in Britain describe earlier,⁴⁹ Michael Fentiman, the director of *The War Hasn't Yet Started* in Plymouth, created a production which treated the text as a 'performative object'. His visually inventive approach created an exciting atmosphere and led to at least one piece of staging, which strikes me as significant as an act of translation of theatrical practice. In the scene with two cancer patients sitting in the doctor's waiting room (see pp. 371-3), the director inserted a sequence of expressive, choreographed movements, which was his own addition to the text, not a response to stage directions. In his production, when the nurse enters the waiting room, the patients' hands move in ballet-like fashion in a large arc towards her, evoking (it seemed to me) their desperation to understand the results of their medical tests. Without obscuring the play's primary narrative, this 'scenic language' provided an affective, expressive act of communication between the production and the audience. By way of contrast, the play's premiere in Glasgow in 2015, directed by Davey Anderson, responded to the aesthetic of the Play, Pie and Pint Theatre, which has been described by McCartney as emphasising the 'ethos [...] [of just] actors and text' (Interview with McCartney 2015), which is to say the use of psychological realism with a minimalist staging.⁵⁰

⁴⁹ Between 2000 and 2014, the only programmer of new Russian plays who took that approach was Boyd, who recognised that new Russian plays are a 'blueprint for performance [...] [with] an eye [...] [to what] a director might do with it' (Interview with Boyd 2016). His conception of plays as a 'starting point' for the director is drawn from first-hand experience as a trainee director in Moscow with the Russian director Anatolii Efros ('Michael Boyd on...' 2009) (see p. 228). As a consequence, under his leadership, the RSC hired a 'devising' director Antony Neilson – the British equivalent to an auteur-director – to stage The Durnenkov Brothers' *The Drunks*, who used improvisations to create additional performative action, which were not prescribed by the stage directions. Similarly, Shaw embellished *Oxygen* with music provided by an on-stage DJ and dancing by a breakdancing troupe from Russia. The former is a creative response to the play's composition as a series of ten scenes with lyrical refrains, while the latter (the breakdancing) was a significant departure from the original text, with its minimalist stage directions – implying an unmediated relationship between the performers and the audience. The RSC's work was an exception between 2000 and 2014 and was, most likely, facilitated by audience expectations of director-led revivals of classics, unencumbered by the text-centric orthodoxies common to new writing theatres. It is revealing that *Oxygen* received three performances in London, after its run in Stratford, at the Institute of Contemporary Arts on 15 to 18 July 2010. This London venue's tradition of promoting experimental performance is a clue as to how this approach was perceived by its producers: as an idiosyncratic experiment, appropriate to audiences versed in alternative 'live art' traditions but not suitable to a new writing venue.

⁵⁰ A clothes rail on stage served as a playful equivalent to a door – allowing performers to enter and exit by passing through the costumes hanging on it. The actors were able also to use costume from the clothes rail, to delineate scenes. In a review which I was invited to submit to the *Scotland-Russia Review*, I suggested that 'Anderson's direction is well-paced but places a restrictively realist framework on a play with a more enigmatic and challenging style' (2015: 14). It seems likely that this approach was designed with the target audiences in mind. McCartney has pointed out that the 'Play, Pie, Pint audiences are not used to this kind of thing, this play is highly metaphoric and non-linear, but [even so] they were completely engaged' (2015).

Reflecting on the production in Plymouth, Stokes was critical of the production, evaluating Fentiman's staging in this way:

[He] wanted to portray a visual trope in which the war had definitely [already] started, in fact it was almost a post-apocalyptic landscape. [...] [It] had the effect of taking away from the content of the scene[s]. (Interview with Stokes 2016)

It may be that Stokes' view of the production was based on a new writing tradition, whereby the text is 'literary object'. However, I would argue that the more problematic aspect of the production was its stage design – created by designer James Cotterill – which was firmly rooted in a realist tradition – contradicting the expressive language being explored by Fentiman. Half of the stage depicted a flat's interior with table and chairs, while half was a burnt mound – as if the same building ravaged by fire or war. In other words, the destabilising 'unresolvedness' at the heart of the play was 'resolved' by the designer, providing an impression that a thematic progression is inevitable. In other words, it felt as if the audience should attempt to discover narrative connections between scenes rather than perceiving the non-linear 'musical structure' of the work.

One reviewer noted that point:

The short scenes and fast role changes highlighted the fast changing and multi-media world we live in but were a little too disorientating at times. [...] As a whole, it feels slightly frustrating, with little connectivity between the scenes to form a complete work. (Uragallo 2016)

One could argue that this critic would have felt frustrated at the 'little connectivity' between the scenes in any directing format – but, in my view, situating the action in a way which destabilises assumptions of time and place, would augment spectators' appreciation of the play's poetic resonance (while diminishing their potential frustration at the work's non-adherence to conventions). While Fentiman achieved a 'translation' by considering the text as performative object, he did not 'translate' all aspects of his work including scenography. A more tantalising postdramatic approach to stage design – with either a hyper-naturalist form inserting the audience 'into' the production as if it were a participatory work – would be a valid, future experiment, in order to attempt to re-create Durnenkov's 'cloud of meaning'.

The role of the translator in transporting new Russian plays onto British stages

As a normative practice, translators are excluded from programming decisions at British theatres – a further restrictive 'filter' through which new Russian plays must pass, in

addition to programming and directing practices in Britain. I interviewed two highly experienced play translators working in Britain – translating from Russian and German, respectively – who both confirmed that point (Interview with Dugdale 2014; Interview with Oakes 2014). Dugdale has stated ironically about programming decisions that ‘it’s a complete mystery to me! There have been plays that are extraordinary that nobody has been interested in’ (Interview with Dugdale 2014). This situation is particularly striking when contrasted with Dugdale’s active role in promoting contemporary Russian playwriting in the UK, prior to working as a translator.⁵¹ Furthermore, this role of translators is ironic given theatres’ inevitable dependence upon them in order to access new plays: I am not aware of any professional theatre companies, where the programmers command a mastery of the Russian language at a sufficient level to evaluate playtexts. This general tendency has exceptions – particularly at smaller theatre companies. Anderson noted that, when he was at the helm of ATC, he programmed at least one play in 2002, *Arabian Nights* by the German playwright Roland Schimmelfennig, at the recommendation of the translator and playwright David Tushingham (Interview with Anderson 2015). Yet, as a predominant practice, the employment of translators as solely linguistic (and not cultural) mediators, appears to reinforce the point that British theatres gravitate towards foreign plays which offer the opportunity to produce them in a realist paradigm, in spite of their ‘original’ hyper-naturalist form. For instance, I have found no evidence of theatres engaging translators to provide insight into the theatrical practice of living Russian playwrights, such as the specific performance cultures of the playwright-led institutions. British theatres have tended to respond to new Russian plays as literary texts, hiring translators to fulfil a technical function, rather than serve as cultural mediators.

The restrictive paradigm of translation theatre practice

As a normative practice, British theatres differentiate between two types of translation process. The first relates to contemporary plays, while the second is applied to all other categories of production, such as revivals of canonical work and adaptations from prose.

⁵¹ Dugdale worked for the British Council in Moscow (1995-2000), where she struck up a professional relationship and personal friendship with the playwright Elena Gremina. She described how she and Gremina jointly developed the idea of contacting the Royal Court Theatre, which she did in 1998 – leading to the series of workshops by the London-based theatre in Moscow in 1999 and 2000 (Interview with Dugdale 2014). Whether the Royal Court would have conducted their workshops in Russia without Dugdale’s facilitation is impossible to ascertain, but most likely not – and her role as a cultural mediator and facilitator is undeniable.

This duality goes largely unquestioned by the majority of mainstream venues. As a consequence, the predominant practice among new writing theatres is to employ translators with a professional competence in the language and culture of the ‘source’ text, who can engage directly with the nuances of the ‘original’ work. The expectation of theatres, as I can testify from my experience as Assistant Director on *Ladybird* at the Royal Court, was that Dugdale would offer minimal subjective authorial input, following the play’s dramaturgical convention and semantic units closely, except where deviation became necessary or desirable in order to make accommodations for cultural difference. The industry labels this process as ‘translation’ proper, crediting the English-language text as a ‘translation’. The second process occurs at the majority of theatres, which do not have a specific remit for contemporary playwriting. These venues – particularly the largest ones, such as the National Theatre and companies working in the West End – habitually commission renowned British playwrights, who do not have a command of the language of the original, to re-create the foreign-language work in English. There is an implicit invitation to those dramatists to offer subjective authorial input and as a consequence, the English-language text is credited as a ‘version’ or ‘adaptation’. In order to overcome the language barrier, these translators rely on what is called a ‘literal’ translation (Eaton 2011: 332), a very close rendition which privileges semantic content over literary effects, symbolic meanings and even readability. For instance, in December 2016, I was employed to make a ‘literal’ translation of Maxim Gorky’s *Vassa Zheleznova* in its 1936 version for the National Theatre, to be passed on to the playwright Tanya Ronder who will gain the primary credit for a ‘version’ or an ‘adaptation’. Another translator (whose name I was not told) will render the 1916 version of *Vassa Zheleznova* into English and he or she will, like me, be credited as a ‘literal translator’; their work will also inform Ronder’s translation. The industry’s terminology – ‘translations’, ‘versions’ and ‘adaptations’ – augments the impression of entirely different disciplines.

The scholar Geraldine Brodie problematizes those categories and demonstrates the fundamental similarity of these apparently disparate translation processes, suggesting that in fact they exist along a single continuum (2013: 121-4, 133-4). She does not deny the question of proportionality (the extent to which the translator offers subjective authorial intervention compared to an adaptor) but states that, in spite of the best efforts of scholars and commentators, ‘the translation/version/adaptation terminology

has thus far defied exact definition' (Ibid.: 123). A similar perspective has been voiced by the scholar Susan Bassnett. She has placed translation processes in a historical context, noting that in the pre-modern era, there was no popular distinction between writing and translating. By that view, writers were perceived as story-tellers who borrowed and adapted tales from other cultures. This system was swept aside by the post-Renaissance idea of the 'mighty Original' as well as the advent of copyright laws which came with printing (Bassnett 2006: 174). This scholar concludes that even in contemporary times 'it is absurd to see translation as anything other than a creative literary activity' (Ibid.). The rigid application of these two practices by the industry evidences partisan identities within the British theatre landscape: some venues identify as 'new writing' companies (and prefer translation by one individual), while most other theatres favour a two-step translation process.

At the Royal Court, the five Russian-language plays staged between 2000 and the time of writing were translated by Dugdale, which conforms to normative practice given this theatre's self-identification with new writing. Dugdale is a poet, who lived in Russia for around five years in the 1990s and, in her own words, when she made her first dramatic translation for the Court, she 'wasn't a very experienced translator' (Interview with Dugdale 2014). The theatre's decision to employ her appears to be based on her proficient knowledge of Russian language and culture, as well as in recognition of her pivotal role in creating contact between the venue and the New Drama movement (see p. 256). On the playtexts of these five productions, Dugdale's name appears in a smaller font than the playwrights (for example, Sigarev 2002), emphasising the creative primacy of the latter. Presumably, this approach is designed to persuade audiences that they are encountering the 'original' play in an unmediated form.

In keeping with dominant practice in the UK, the RSC employed Nina Raine – a well-known playwright since her critically acclaimed *Rabbit* in 2006 – to translate *The Drunks*. The theatre confirmed to me that Raine worked from a 'literal' translation made by Maria Kozlovskaya.⁵² Yet, there was a departure from mainstream convention here since Raine's text is credited as a 'translation', not a 'version' or 'adaptation'. Furthermore, the publication of *The Drunks*, which contained both programme and playscript, credited only the Durnenkov Brothers and Raine on the cover page with the former in a

⁵² Source: private email from Michael Boyd, 6 January 2016.

larger font (Durnenkov 2009). By distancing this English-language text from the mainstream ‘two-stage’ translation process, the theatre was visually framing *The Drunks* within the canon of new writing. From a marketing perspective, this categorisation had its merits. Boyd has suggested that the Russian-language season attracted ‘lots of people [...] who weren’t normally RSC-goers [...] about ten percent [were first-time or infrequent visitors to the RSC]’ (Interview with Boyd 2016). Yet, artistically, this decision appears to have contributed to the expectations of reviewers, encouraging them to evaluate the work primarily for its socio-political topicality, rather than for its artistic invention (Coveney 2009; Billington 2009). Similarly, the RSC opted to use the existing ‘translation’ of *Oxygen*, which the Royal Court had commissioned several years earlier (Dugdale was not able to confirm which year), rather than engage another pair of hands. The picture which emerges in relation to contemporary Russian plays is a *de facto* consensus by theatre managers that contemporary plays, being presented for the first time in Britain, should be credited as ‘translations’, regardless of whether a professional translator or playwright is the primary English-language author, in keeping with the modern conception of the ‘original’ foreign-language text. Yet, the key point is that even a ‘translation proper’ is a creative act of writing – but one in which the translator is too often rendered ‘invisible’ by marketing departments. In terms of my main argument, the point is not that one or other type of translation is preferable, but rather that a rigidity of practice restricts how many new foreign-language plays will reach British stages. In relation to my four translations, *Grandchildren*, *The Second Act* and *Dr* would most likely both require a greater degree of adaptation in order to transpose their ‘subtextual’ cultural contexts for British audiences, while *Joan* and *The War Hasn’t Yet Started* could be rendered either by a translator or as a two-step translation process – depending on whether the ‘target’ audience is specialist or generalist.

Alternative, innovative, approaches to translation emerged among small-scale companies. Caz Liske translated and performed in ATC’s production of *Illusions*. Liske was an American-born, Moscow-based actor (who died in 2017) with a role in Vyrypaev’s production of *Illusions* at Praktika in Moscow (2011-ongoing), so he served as a point of cultural contact with Russian theatrical practices for the London director, presumably enriching the rehearsal process. Liske’s involvement enabled the constant presence of the translator throughout rehearsals, which is rare under normal circumstances due to financial constraints as well as the predilection of many directors

to treat the translation process as being complete after a week of rehearsal for the sake of convenience. In other words, Gray collapsed the division between the pre-rehearsal literary object and the performed text by engaging Liske in the production. With *Sputnik I* I was simultaneously translator and director of the four productions to date, ensuring that the translation process was not divorced from the creation of a stage language. Furthermore, with Gremina's *One Hour Eighteen*, I co-authored a 'version' – and it was credited as such in marketing – with the permission of the Russian dramatist. This unconventional approach towards the premiere of a contemporary play allowed me to contextualise this documentary work, in a way which British audiences would be able to 'read' even without any knowledge of contemporary Russian realities. The rigidity of translation practice by most British theatres – outside of small-scale companies – further restricts the trajectory of new Russian plays onto stages in the UK. In particular, it disadvantaged 'Russian verbatim' texts: not a single new documentary Russian play (besides *One Hour Eighteen*) was produced on a British stage between 2000 and 2014, in spite of the vast quantity of documentary-based works being written by the post-Soviet generation of Russian playwrights. By imposing rigid notions of which process must be applied to each category of theatrical production, as well as by failing to perceive translation as an area of practice which may submit to experimentation, British theatres provided another filter, restricting the trajectory of Russian dramas onto British stages.

The four translations in performance: reflections on the London readings

The process of rehearsing the four plays, over the course of three to six hours per play prior to the rehearsed readings in London, highlighted the difficulty of retaining cultural difference in translation. For the most part, it has reaffirmed a nuanced position, in my own translation practice, whereby I negotiate a play-responsive approach, depending largely on whether the language is purposefully natural-sounding or 'non-normative' in the original. I have provided extensive annotations to my translations in order to provide practice-based illustrations of cases where I negotiated a balance between linguistic 'domestication' and 'foreignisation'. In this chapter, I provide examples which delineate my normative practice, as well as demonstrating where I have deviated from it – in the four play translations. In one scene in *The War Hasn't Yet Started*, a character has a sexual encounter with a fellow conference participant (see pp. 364-6). He reveals that, in spite of being forty-two years old, he was a virgin – and believes this 'conquest' to be his

spiritual mate. This earnest but eccentric character states 'la ne vstrechal edinstvennuiu'. I deliberated over whether to render this phrase into its closest equivalent idiom in English, 'I never met my one and only'. This direction was taken by Smith and Anderson for the Scottish production, who opted for the idiomatic-sounding 'I never met the special woman of my dreams', presumably because of the natural-sounding quality of this phrase. However, I felt that a closer rendition captured the more unfamiliar, strange-sounding original: 'I just never met my Only' (see p. 365). I capitalised the 'O' of the final word to emphasise the deliberate choice by the playwright to compose a phrase which remains grammatically unresolved. In Russian, the semantic ambiguity of using 'only' without providing an attribute, begs the question 'Only what?'. This phraseology embodies the unsettling nature of the scene, whereby the audience remains uncertain whether the eccentric character is a visionary or deluded. In other words, it is unclear whether the playwright is seriously, or ironically, offering a spiritual message about the pre-ordained nature of love. Both in Russian and when directly rendered into English, the linguistic peculiarity of the phrase 'my Only' captures a bleaker nuance about how appealing self-delusion can be. As spoken at the reading by the actor David Westhead, the line also evoked humour and discomfort at the awkward social interaction in the scene – with audible laughter from the audience, as I recall it. Of course, in this approach, I was not documenting Russian cultural difference or 'Russianness'. More than anything, it was a response to the distinctiveness of this play – since, as I mentioned earlier, this unsettling 'unresolvedness' is the key dramatic impulse of the work. That process – of observing a Russian play against the cultural and linguistic expectations of Russian audiences (or at least normative Russian grammar) – should, I would suggest, be the foundation block of translation.

Documentary plays tend to adopt a highly idiosyncratic use of language, by recording the individual speech patterns of their subjects – including hesitations, casualisms and illogical or unfinished thoughts which are part of everyday communication. This approach, of writing in unconventional English, also features in my two translations of fictional works, *Joan* and *The War Hasn't Yet Started* – but to a much lesser extent.

Overall, I have conformed to the process of the new writing translator, adhering closely to the dramaturgical structure of the original works, with my subjective authorial input restricted to the linguistic realm. This approach was a response to the perceived target

audience of this doctoral project: a combination of new work specialists⁵³ – followers of Theatre Royal Plymouth and Sputnik, and those with a prior interest in social justice who frequently attend events at the Frontline Club. For instance, I did not ‘adapt’ the documentary works (by adding significant contextual information, for instance) since I assumed that some or most of the audiences attending those performances would have a pre-existing knowledge of Russia. In my translations, I have attempted to negotiate – and strike a balance – between cultural similarity and ‘otherness’. During rehearsals, I noted a greater scope – than I had taken advantage of in my first-draft translations – to employ English idioms, as a response to idiosyncratic phrasings or indeed common speech patterns particular to Russian. For instance, the Russian ‘nu’ [‘ну’ – lit. ‘well’] has a better rhythm if transposed into an equivalent phrasing:

‘Ну, вас на фиг.’
[Lit. ‘Well, screw you.’]

‘You know what? Screw you.’

The revised translation creates a pause after the question mark, creating an opportunity for the actor to place more emphasis on the swear word – which results in a more evocative, and humorous, line of dialogue. Similarly, a more idiomatic phrasing worked better for this adverbial construction:

‘Одним словом, три дня я над ним прыгал и скакал.’
[Lit. In a word, I jumped and danced over him for three days.]

The long and short of it is that I jumped and danced around him for three days.

The literal translation is also possible, but I would argue against using it in this case, since it suggests a formal mode of speaking, at odds with the protagonist’s ability to narrate compelling stories. A larger leap of translation was suggested to me by Anderson. He proposed an alternative idiom for the following line, which I felt to be apposite:

‘Ну, и главное силы, правильно? Силы сберегли.’
[Lit. Well, and the main thing, is your energy, isn’t it? You conserved your energy.’]

⁵³ In 2007, Arts Council England revised its primary theatre policy document, in particular, it replaced the term ‘new writing’ with ‘new work’ – in other words, a broader category which recognised the increased level of ‘devising’ and experimental approaches to theatre-making in Britain since the new millennium (Radosavljević 2013: 86).

‘Well, the main thing is you got to put your feet up, isn’t it? You conserved your strength.’

These natural-sounding equivalents facilitate the verisimilitude of the fictional world created by the playwright, while retaining this play’s desirable ‘strangeness’ through plotting and characterisation. I observed several other areas which benefitted, in my view, from indirect linguistic equivalence. First, passive constructions in Russian often worked better when rearranged as active phrasings in English. Second, Russian phraseology often uses long sentences without providing a verb for each subclause, while English speech patterns lend themselves more naturally to shorter sentences. When dividing long Russian sentences into shorter English ones, I found that it was often necessary to supply verbs to avoid confusion over meaning. I came to feel that my role was to advocate for the distinctiveness of the ‘original’ text, by bringing a deeper understanding of how the play works in relation to Russian culture and language. Rather than being inflexible in advocating for a single interpretation of the play, my hope is that a rigorous analysis of the ‘source’ work is liberating, offering many ways of interpreting the drama on stage. More than anything, I have come to feel that the translation process is not so much a conflict between cultural familiarity and ‘otherness’ but instead a creative negotiation between a literary text and real (and implied) target audiences. I assume that not only would two translators end up with different versions of a single play, but also that I would render the same play differently depending on several factors including the intended audiences and the site of performance.

Reflection on the translation process of The War Hasn’t Yet Started

The full production of *The War* at the Drum Theatre in Plymouth provided a more extensive rehearsal period – of five weeks, which allowed me to gain further insights into my own translation practice. The limited number of reviews for this production make it hard to give an assessment of its critical reception. There was a consensus by *The Stage*, as well as two reviews in local newspapers, *Exeter Express and Echo* and *The Reviews Hub*, that this play had artistic merit. It is worth noting that the reviews uniformly pointed to the play’s combination of unsettling drama with entertaining comedy. *The Stage* described it as ‘hilarious and startling’ (White 2016), while *Exeter Express and Echo* suggested that it was ‘a not entirely pleasant experience, the production is nevertheless remarkable and well worth seeing’ (Johnston 2016). Similarly, *The Reviews Hub* noted that the play was ‘overwhelmingly bleak, this is a sometimes

surreal collage of scenes of human beings at their worst' (Uragallo 2016). It is revealing that none of these three critics provided any assessment of my translation, while *The Stage* – a newspaper intended for those working in the British theatre industry – failed to make any mention that the play was translated. This omission indicates how translation tends to be perceived as a purely technical task, unworthy of critical appraisal. It may also point to the reviewers' difficulty in evaluating translations if they do not speak the 'source' language.

During the four-week rehearsal process, the director Michael Fentiman – as well as the producer Jenny Topper, on occasion – requested textual changes, which emphasised a natural-sounding translation. For the most part, I felt that these alterations improved the rhythm of the text and I welcomed the suggestions. In some cases, I felt that their proposed alterations were problematic and highlighted the risk inherent in the notion of catering (in an overly dogmatic way) for target audiences in Britain. In one scene, a man at a public swimming pool asks another man:

‘Ты чего пялился на мою жену?’

My initial translation was:

Why were you eyeing up my wife?

When discussing this phrase with Fentiman and Topper, I forgot to bring the Russian text. I was pleased with their suggestion of 'looking at', so that the line read:

Why were you looking at my wife?

Re-reading the original, I realised that their version offered a natural-sounding phraseology, which mimicked the language of film: it is easy to imagine a famous Hollywood actor speaking that line in a menacing and evocative way. Yet the verb in Russia is 'pialit'sia' [lit. 'to stare', 'ogle', 'give someone the eye'] – it is somewhat more unusual and perhaps comedic. Subsequently, I requested that we return to 'eyeing up' and even offered 'ogling' because of its absurd overtones. This phrase is repeated three times in Russian: Fentiman and I agreed to a compromise, using a success of different terms in English (whereas the same wording is re-used in Russian) including both my more comedic as well as his more natural-sounding variations. In this instance, the solution satisfied the director and translator.

An intractable translation disagreement centred on the word ‘zalipat’, which is used repeatedly in one scene in the original,⁵⁴ to denote subtly different meanings, such as ‘to relax’ and ‘to feel elated’ (etymologically, it was a slang word implying a drug-induced state which evolved into a more common usage). I have written about the dilemma around ‘zalipat’ at length, in my annotations to the translation of *The War Hasn’t Yet Started* (see p. 361, footnote 2). Here, I will simply note that after the first preview, on 12 May 2016, the director called me from Plymouth (I was in London), requesting a change of translation from my neologism ‘zoning’ to his suggested ‘drifting’. His rationale was one of semantic clarity: he felt that my term was confusing audiences. My translation was arguably more taxing than the original because the slang ‘zalipat’ is likely to be familiar to most audiences (particularly younger ones) in Russia, whereas I had opted for an invented word to solve a translation dilemma. I assented to the change in performance: his version was more natural-sounding than mine, which seemed appropriate to the original. However, I have retained ‘zoning’ in my written translation, representing an unresolved ambivalence on my part. I feel that the ‘strangeness’ of my term is helpful in capturing the heightened state of mind of the characters in the scene, who incite each other to violence. Yet, I acknowledge at least some benefit of clarity and rhythm from his suggested version, while nevertheless offering my own in future productions. Again, the key may be in understanding the target audience – and whether they are generalist or specialist.

The totality of my experience on the practice-based part of this doctoral project convinced me that, rather than perceiving translation as a discrete part of the process, translators are highly dependent upon the director and other theatre-makers. Contractually, translators have ownership of the text which they have rendered into the ‘target’ language: it may only be changed with their permission, in contrast to all other aspects of theatrical production where the producer and director retain a veto over artistic decision-making. That hierarchical status bolsters the appearance of translation as a literary activity – divorced from the other stages of the theatrical process. Yet, the collaborative nature of theatre complicates the apparent sole authorship by the named translator. Brodie has described the ‘multiple voices of collaboration’ (2013: 134),

⁵⁴ This word appears in the first line of the first scene – which may also suggest its significance in setting the tone for the rest of the play. However, the stage directions permit the director to re-order the scenes of the drama – so this militates against laying too much emphasis on this word as a key to unlocking the stylistic idiosyncratic properties of the play as whole.

including the director, actors and creative team, whose contributions may vary greatly based on the specificities of each production. Her case study of Schiller's *Don Carlos* (2004-5) offers a valuable insight into the extent of the director's role. She illustrates how Michael Grandage was 'effectively the instigator for [the translator Mike] Poulton's stylistic reinterpretation of Schiller's creation' (Ibid.: 129). My interviews for this doctoral project provided another example of the translator's role as subordinate to the larger theatrical process. In 2016, the Ustinov produced *Forever Yours, Marie-Lou* by Michael Tremblay (2015), a French-language Canadian play. In order to re-create a sense of the socially and geographically-specific Québécois dialect, Boswell invited the Irish playwright and translator Michael West to render the play into Irish-accented English (Interview with Boswell 2016). His intention was to capture cultural equivalence, by depicting two formerly colonised countries, Canada and Ireland, which continue to use the language of their colonisers. For that production, the primary decision was taken by Boswell, by opting for a cultural transposition, as the key to unlocking this text for his target audiences in Bath. The picture which emerges is that the theatre-maker with the greatest authority over any given production also determines the parameters of dramatic translation, ranging from practical issues – how long the translator has to complete their first draft – to aesthetic ones, such as requesting or negotiating stylistic changes. While translators retain legal primacy over their work, there is a *de facto* expectation that they should engage in a collaborative process with other theatre-makers, both in order to participate in the normal processes of theatrical production as well as to ensure that they retain favour with their employers (in anticipation of future employment). My experience of *The War Hasn't Yet Started* confirms the notion of a translation as a single part of a larger theatrical process, with the aesthetic of the text as a site of negotiation particularly, in this instance, between director and translator.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have considered the transfer of works of Russian New Drama onto British stages, challenging the notion of 'dramatic translation' as merely a linguistic act. Instead, I have depicted the intercultural process as occurring in three stages, involving programming, staging and linguistic translation. I have suggested that each one is an opportunity to accommodate cultural 'otherness', while also facing resistance from rigid institutional practices inherent in British theatres.

There is a broader history of cultural dialogue which stems back at least as far as the 1936 when, as the scholar Jonathan Pitches explains in his edited volume *Russians in Britain*:

In London, Theodore Komisarjevsky was directing *The Seagull* with a host of British luminaries including Edith Evans, John Gielgud and Peggy Ashcroft; 200 miles south west, Michael Chekhov was leading his first term at his newly inaugurated theatre studio near Totnes in Devon, with an altogether more international cast of students; back in London, Stanislavsky's much-awaited book, *An Actor Prepares*, was published by Geoffrey Bles, translated and adapted by Elizabeth Reynolds Hapgood; and Joan Littlewood and Ewan MacColl formed the Russian-inspired Theatre Union – the precursor to Theatre Workshop – having rigorously researched Russian ideas and practices in the Manchester Library. (2012: 1)

His volume concludes that 'there is a surprisingly continuous relationship between the actor-training traditions of twentieth-century Russia and the British theatre tradition' (Ibid.: 192). In the period which I am researching, contemporary Russian playwriting reinvigorated the ongoing cultural dialogue between Russia and the UK – primarily around formal innovation in theatre-making and the staging of postdramatic texts. A dozen productions between 2000 and 2014 achieved critical success and offered works of high artistic merit to British audiences. Yet, the rigidity of British theatre's institutional practice meant that the broader act of translation – involving a three-part process: programming, staging and translation – restricted the greater potential for new Russian dramas from disparate traditions (such as the two dominant schools, New Drama and the Urals School of Playwriting) to have a transformative impact on British theatre. It is unclear where these new channels of dialogue will emerge, if at all, although my hypothesis – based on my research – is that new institutional mechanisms will be required, whether at the national level of funding policy; or among key taste-makers perhaps beyond the venues which already stage occasional contemporary foreign texts – such as commercial producers; or by directors and translators bringing intercultural methodologies and ideas to the stage through practice. If any or all of those three occur, contemporary Russian playwriting could play a greater role in offering new ideas about the relationship between society, aesthetics and ideology – and new provocations.

*CHAPTER FIVE FOUR PLAYS IN TRANSLATION**Introduction*

Below, I present the four plays which I incorporated into the practice-based component of this doctoral project. I have attempted to format my translations in a way which captures the idiosyncracies of the original formatting: in my experience, Russian playwrights tend not to write according to a highly standardised template. I find these subtle variations visually pleasing, while also suggesting that, between 2000 and 2014, theatrical production in Russia did not formalise its relationship to contemporary playwriting through institutional mechanisms, such as literary departments which might have enforced a broad conformity of presentation. I have placed them below in the same order in which they were presented as rehearsed readings in London between 12 and 15 January 2016.

TRANSLATION ONE

Dr

*Notes of a Provincial Doctor*¹

By Elena Isaeva

Translated by Noah Birksted-Breen

The Power of Attraction

SURGEON. When I graduated from my institute, I was assigned² to Kaluga.³ They sent me to a little village called Boryatino...⁴ on the border of the Bryansk province,⁵ an area which was irradiated after Chernobyl.⁶ That's where they sent me. There was no briefing. The doctors had all fled as far as they could. But in my case: graduate from the institute – year-long internship. An interning doctor. Well, basically, a doctor, but then again not really a doctor. Wet behind the ears.⁷

And it was such a wonderful little hospital. The village centre had, maybe, thirty peasant huts.... The sticks.⁸ I left – as it happened my wife was due to give birth at home, a

¹ In an interview in April 2014 in Moscow, the playwright told me that the subtitle, *Notes of a Provincial Doctor*, was her original and intended title for the play. With the playwright's permission, the director of the original production, Vladimir Pankov, changed the title to 'Dok.tor' ['Док.тор'], which I have translated as *Dr*.

² Alternative translation for the play's director: it may be helpful to add a few words about Russia's geography here for the sake of British audiences. 'When I graduated from my institute, I was assigned to the north, to Kaluga.'

³ Kaluga is a city approximately 100 miles south-west of Moscow. It is the capital of the Kaluzhskaya Oblast'. In 2014, it had a population of circa 350,000 people, according to the Kaluzhskaya Oblast' Branch of the Federal Agency for Government Statistics. Source: <http://kalugastat.gks.ru/wps/wcm/connect/rosstat_ts/kalugastat/ru/statistics/population> [accessed 28 August 2014].

⁴ Boryatino (actually spelt Baryatino and most likely mistranscribed by the playwright, which is an easy mistake since an unstressed 'o' in Russian is pronounced the same as an 'a') is in the Kaluzhskaya Oblast'. It is approximately 40 miles south west of Kaluga. I have not been able to find an official website giving a population estimate for Boryatino.

⁵ The protagonist uses an Imperial-era term 'province' ['зуберния']. In fact, the contemporary name is the Bryansk Oblast', which lies to the west of the Kaluzhskaya Oblast'. The Bryansk Oblast' borders Ukraine and Belarus.

⁶ In 1986, there was a fire at the Chernobyl Nuclear Power Plant in Soviet Ukraine, on the border with Belarus. This led to one of the world's worst nuclear disasters.

⁷ The Russian term, 'salaga' ['саласа'] literally means a young and inexperienced sailor. In its figurative sense, it is derogatory, implying a young and inexperienced individual. My original translation was 'a new recruit', which provided a sense of the doctor's relationship to the medical profession: a call of duty as well as simply a job. In my footnotes, I provided 'wet behind the ears' as an alternative translation, and that was preferred by the director and actors of the rehearsed reading, because of its humour and the evocative nature of the image.

⁸ The Russian word, 'razvalyushka' ['развалюшка'], can mean literally a 'wreck' or 'ruin'. The paradox is that the surgeon applies a diminutive form – which is generally used in Russian to suggest that the speaker is fond of their subject. Of course, it is possible that the protagonist is being ironic, depending on the reader's interpretation of his character.

thousand miles away⁹ in the city of Astrakhan,¹⁰ right around that time. And there was no phone¹¹ connection. Only by radio. I travelled over the snow drifts. Snow – as high as your chest. A person from the south isn't used to all that. I made it to the hospital and went into the registrar's room. A man is sitting there. I found out later he was deputy to the chief surgeon. He said:

MAN. Who are you?

SURGEON. I said: I'm a surgeon.

MAN. What's your name?

SURGEON. Andrei.

MAN. Do you play preference?

SURGEON. Yes.

MAN. Aha! A fourth!

SURGEON. Basically, they were just sitting there, waiting for a fourth player. And that was the start of a pretty interesting and busy life. I slept on the X-ray table. They gave me a room later on. But I'd already got so used to the X-ray table, I found it hard to adapt to a normal bed again... So then I spent my remaining time, living in a hospital room. That was about three weeks, probably. A sort of business trip. Of course, the food at the hospital was... hospital food.

MAN. In other words, the herring soup is salty. The so-called 'coffee' is made of oats.

SURGEON. That was the first time in my life that I've tasted something like that. I kept asking them, why do you make porridge out of coffee? Anyway, that's just the way it was.

And one of the preference players was a gynaecologist called Roma. He was the women's specialist for the whole village. (*A woman on stage coquettishly comes to life.*) He had a whole harem. And it was always¹² hard to find him. And on something like my third day there, this remarkable thing happened. A phone call from the maternity ward:

WOMAN. Doctor, we can't find the gynaecologist. Would you be able to come? There are some complications.

SURGEON. Um, alright. What?! I'm a surgeon, aren't I? So, off I went. I turn up. And it's quite a place. It reminds me of a dissection room. There's a concrete floor. An old

⁹ Rehearsal room addition (context for British audiences): 'at home, a thousand miles away'. It was felt that this contextualisation was necessary for British audiences. It is worth adding that Russia uses 'kilometres' rather than 'miles' – which would be another viable option.

¹⁰ Astrakhan is a city approximately 950 miles south-west of Moscow, lying along the river Volga. It is the capital of the Astrakhanskaya Oblast'. In 2004, it had a population of circa 502,000 people, according to the official site of Astrakhan. Source: <<http://astrgorod.ru/about/obshchie-svedeniya>> [accessed 28 August 2014].

¹¹ Rehearsal room addition (context for British audiences): 'phone'.

¹² Rehearsal room addition: when hearing the actor read this line, I found that the meaning would be clearer if 'very' was substituted for 'always'.

babushka's¹³ standing there – she's the midwife. She's wearing a black, oilskin apron, which is full-length like a butcher's. And she has a little white hat on her head – but it's knitted. And in front of her, there's a pregnant woman just standing there, with her eyes bulging out. She's squatting. And straining. So I say to the midwife¹⁴ (*To the Woman*): "What's going on?"

WOMAN. We're giving birth.

SURGEON. But why – standing up? (*To the audience.*) And at that point the midwife starts explaining –

WOMAN. Well, it's the law of gravity. I mean, everything falls downwards.

SURGEON. An astonishing story. So I say (*To the Woman*): How long?

WOMAN. Well, it's been an hour and a half... We often deliver like this, although – to be fair, we don't always catch the baby...

SURGEON. The poor mother-to-be's eyes almost popped out. Well, anyway, I put her on a bed. As is the norm. I start examining and it's going to be a breech delivery. In other words, the child's bottom first... And that's generally problematic. And what do I know about this whole thing – about delivering babies? To be precise, there was a series of lectures on it at my institute, but that was all. Well, come on now, I'd better try to remember. Wasn't there a system developed by Tsovyanov¹⁵ – for assisting with breech deliveries? One way or the other, we were delivering. She had a slow progression. I put in a drip – I began to induce labour. Anyway, the upshot was after three hours, we had delivered a boy. And I was waiting, myself, to hear from my wife: had she given birth yet? No connection whatsoever. He was a heavy boy. And the paediatrician was having difficulties with an asthmatic child. And the paediatrician was nothing more than a girl, really, also an intern like me. I told her: "Call the Air Ambulance immediately". She did.

WOMAN. So this helicopter arrived, with a glass bottom – it was see-through underneath.

SURGEON. And while the emergency team are running into the hospital, I run into the helicopter. I got in, sat down and I tell them: "I'm not coming out. Take me to Kaluga." So, we got the boy and we took off. It was my first and last time in that sort of helicopter. Apart from the fact that there's a transparent floor where I was sitting... there's an abyss underneath you, I didn't have any ear protectors either. A day later, I was still vibrating – I walked around, unable to hear a thing. Then I made contact – and my mum told me that my baby daughter had been born.... Vika. That was 15 years ago.

¹³ Alternative translation for the play's director: the Russian word is 'babushka' ['бабушка'], literally 'a grandmother'. In my original translation, I used 'granny', but the director of the rehearsed reading felt that 'babushka' was known by enough British audiences that it could be used, while simultaneously providing a sense of an authentic cultural context.

¹⁴ Rehearsal room addition: 'to the midwife'. This addition may not be necessary in a full production, if more context for each character is provided by performance, staging, costume and so on.

¹⁵ N. A. Tsovyanov was a Soviet gynaecologist (1882-1965), who invented a manual system of delivery for breech births.

Kamizyak and Olivecrona-Gigli

SURGEON. Then I moved back to Kaluga. And the chief surgeon of the General Hospital¹⁶ said to me:

MAN. So, how's things? You've got to know the countryside?

SURGEON. Yes.

MAN. That's where you'll be going after your internship.

SURGEON. You know what... fuck this.¹⁷

MAN. I'm sorry?

SURGEON. I have a wife – she's a musician studying at the conservatory. And a small child. If you are in higher education – and my wife is a student at a higher education institute – and I have¹⁸ a child who is less than two, then they must automatically reassign me to Astrakhan.

MAN. Ah... (*Smirking.*) I see...

SURGEON (*to the audience*). So after that, I spent four months looking for work. Because finding work in the south is very hard. Astrakhan is a small city.¹⁹ Well... relatively. But

¹⁶ Alternative translation for the play's director: the surgeon uses the term 'oblastnoi khirurg' ['областной хирург'] which is literally a surgeon who works for an *Oblast'* hospital. The relative status of hospitals is described, throughout the play, using two principle attributes: 'oblastnaya' ['областная'] and 'raionnaya' ['районная']. These relate primarily to administrative status. An *Oblast'* is among the largest administrative denominations in Russia, and the *Oblast's* make up over half of the subjects of the Russia Federation, according to the Russian Constitution of 1993. An *Oblast'* is approximately equivalent to an English County. *Raion* is a smaller administrative unit within an *Oblast'* although the word also be used to refer generically to an 'area'. *Raion* may be most similar to an English borough or district. Broadly speaking, the status and the size of the hospitals in the play can be ascertained by whether they belong to the *Oblast'* or the *Raion*. For the sake of clarity, I have chosen to translate these two terms not in relation to equivalent British administrative districts but purely as a function of size and status. Therefore, I translate a hospital belonging to an *Oblast'* as a General Hospital. Another possible option for an *Oblast'* level hospital, in English translation, would be a County Hospital. I have not opted for this translation as it sounds too culture-specific to the UK without the benefit of being a direct equivalent. For hospitals which are considered to belong to a *Raion*, I have used the term Community Hospital. This term, which exists in the UK (albeit not as a particularly widespread phenomenon), clarifies the status and size of these hospitals for British audiences. Also, the term Community Hospital is comprehensible to non-specialists and it does not sound too culture-specific. Source: Russian Constitution of 1993 <<http://www.constitution.ru/10003000/10003000-5.htm>> [Accessed 28 August 2014].

¹⁷ Rehearsal room change: the original translation was 'You know... screw you.' During rehearsals, I felt that the rhythm of 'You know...' did not sound natural for an English speaker, and it occurred to me that a more accepted idiom is 'You know what...'. An actor suggested changing 'screw you' – which is somewhat more rude and confrontational in translation than the original Russian, 'damn you' ['Вас на фиг'] – and a compromise was agreed upon, 'fuck this', which shifts the focus onto a rejection of the situation as a whole by the Surgeon.

¹⁸ Rehearsal room addition: 'I have'. There is a tendency in the play to miss out pronouns and verbs, in order to create a sense of drama and momentum. However, I found during the rehearsal that it did not work well to replicate that approach in English, as it led to a lack of clarity, as well as forcing the actor to take small pauses where the pronouns and verbs were missing. With more time, it is likely that I would have added more pronouns and verbs in other places in the text where the speaker has omitted them.

¹⁹ A note on the translation: Russian does not have two different words 'town' and 'city'. In Russian, a 'city' is called a 'big town' ['большой город']. For the purpose of clarity, I have chosen to denote Astrakhan as a city and Kamizyak as a town.

new doctors graduate from its medical institute every year... I found work in a Community Hospital. There's a small town called Kamizyak,²⁰ twenty miles away.²¹

WOMAN. Sounds romantic.

SURGEON. That shithole²² is where I worked for three years. An hour's journey by bus from the town, from the bus station.

WOMAN. It's horrible because in the summer the bus would get baking hot like a furnace. But in winter – it's freezing. In the spring and autumn – straight through the mud. And that's how it was for three years.

SURGEON. The hospital itself is good for a Community one – a large, standard²³ five-storey building.²⁴ As soon as I arrived, before I'd even worked a single day there – I was sent off on a work trip to the Kirovsky fish factory.²⁵ It's pretty far from Kamizyak but the surgeon there had gone on leave. Again, I've got no phone²⁶ connection – and no support network... But anyway, off I went. I arrive.

WOMAN. Are you afraid?

²⁰ Kamizyak is a town approximately 20 miles south of Astrakhan. In 2011, it had a population of approximately 16,000 people, according to the official site of Kamizyak. Source: <http://gorodkam.ru/?id_menu=10&pid_menu=40> [Accessed 28 August 2014].

²¹ Rehearsal room addition (context for British audiences): 'twenty miles away'. It is worth noting that Russia uses 'kilometres' rather than 'miles' – another viable option would be 'twenty kilometres away'.

²² The surgeon uses the term 'koz'ya m'yaka' [*'козья мяка'*]. This sounds similar to the town's name, Kamizyak, with the implication that they are etymologically linked. Literally, 'koz'ya' is an attribute meaning 'belonging to a goat' but I have been unable to find 'm'yaka' in any dictionary. I consulted with the playwright who gave the following explanation: 'Koz'ya myaka is an ironic neologism by the surgeon who is pained by the backwater into which he has fallen. I think you can translate it as 'meat'. Something squidgy. But also with some sort of linguistic idiosyncrasy. In Russian, there's an expression 'Murka's arse' – Murka is a cat's name. In other words, something which is at the end of the earth. Well, he's made up his own version of that'. [*'Козья мяка – это ироничное новое словообразование самого хирурга, который переживает, что он в эту дыру попал. Думаю, можно перевести как "мякоть". Что-то мягкое. Но тоже с какой-то речевой неправильностью. У нас есть еще выражение "муркина жопа" – Мурка-имя кошки. То есть что-то совсем на краю света находящееся. Ну, вот по этой аналогии он и словообразовал.'*] I have opted for a translation which gives clarity. The director, or actors, may wish to devise their own term such as 'the back end of beyond', or to create a pun around these ideas, while trying to keep some of the same sounds as are found in the original word, such as 'Kamikaze Creek', 'Cat-Muck-Hole' or 'Kambuktu' (playing off the English expression 'Timbuktu' implying a distant place). Source: private email from Elena Isaeva, 10 September 2014.

²³ The word used is 'tipovoe' [*'типовое'*] which may imply a pre-fabricated building; in any case, it has a negative connotation.

²⁴ The five-storey building is a widespread form of architecture in Russia. Popularly, it is called *Khrushchevki* – although the surgeon does not use that word. This new type of building was instigated under the Soviet leader who succeeded Stalin, Nikita Khrushchev, hence the popular nickname. The journalist, Kirill Zhurenkov, writing in 2005, described the *Krushchevki* in this way: 'They appeared [...] at the end of the 1950s, as the most convincing solution to the housing question. People were moved into them from communal apartments, huts and wooden peasant cabins.' [*'Появились они [...] в конце 1950-х, как самое убедительное решение жилищного вопроса. Туда переселяли людей из коммунальных квартир, барачков, сельских пятистенков.'*] Kirill Zhurenkov, 'Khrushchoba-mama', *Oktyabr'*, No. 10, 2005 <<http://magazines.russ.ru/october/2005/10/zhu9.html>> [accessed 28 August 2014].

²⁵ The Kirovsky fish factory is approximately 37 miles due south from Astrakhan and therefore 17 miles south of Kamizyak. The factory was set up in 1913, according to the company's website. Source: <http://kirstrafish.ucoz.ru/>

²⁶ Rehearsal room addition (for context): 'phone'.

SURGEON. Who the hell knows. Of course, it was the unknown which made me the most afraid. Well... anyway, I was poised for action. On the third day after my arrival, I'm sitting there waiting, when an ambulance driver runs in.

MAN. Dr. Andrei, a man's been run over²⁷ by a tractor!

SURGEON. What the hell can Dr. Andrei do for him?

MAN. No but... he's still alive!

SURGEON. Oh, okay. I ran over and got into the ambulance. We pull up. The boundary marking has been knocked over.²⁸ The tractor is standing there – and a man is lying in the furrow. I get out and walk over to the man.²⁹ One leg is virtually gone – it's mush. Same with the second – it's pointing in another direction. I mean... it's mincemeat.³⁰

MAN. But he's conscious.

SURGEON. In shock, of course, badly in shock. No pulse. No blood pressure. (*To the tractor driver.*) What's your name?

MAN. Kolya Mekhantiev.

SURGEON. For the rest of my life, I've never forgotten his name – Kolya Mekhantiev. The guy was around fifty, about fifty years old.

MAN. A tractor driver. A heavy drinker. He was at it from the early morning, as one does... And... he'd set his tractor to automatic, but his legs slipped, and the tractor drove through the mud and right over him. His own tractor.

SURGEON. So, what could I do? I applied the tourniquets. And I gave him drugs. We took him, me and the driver, and we loaded him up into the ambulance – and off we went. We got to the hospital and unloaded him. We put him down right next to the operating table. And an interesting thing happened next. So basically, well, there's some doctors working there. The chief doctor – and some therapists. I mean, it's an experienced staff.

²⁷ Note from the rehearsal room: an actor suggested 'flattened' instead of 'run over'. I preferred that option but the director felt the word was too specific, implying the total destruction of man who was run over. In any case, 'flattened' would be another option.

²⁸ The surgeon uses the expression 'mezha raspakhannaya' [*'межа распаханная'*]. This is adapted from the term 'mezha neraspakhannaya' [*'межа нераспаханная'*]. The latter means 'headland' in its less common usage: 'A strip of land left unploughed at the end of a field', according to the Oxford Dictionary online. The surgeon is implying that the tractor has accidentally crossed the unploughed land which marks the boundary between different properties. In order to avoid an overly wordy translation, I have adapted this phrase to make it meaningful for a British audience. The director of the reading provided another version, which was used effectively at the rehearsed reading: 'The fence has been knocked over.'

Source: <<http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/headland>> [accessed 28 August 2014].

²⁹ Alternative translation for the play's director: the surgeon uses an unusual phrase which is 'vykhozhu k cheloveku' [*'выхожу к человеку'*]. Literally, this means 'I get out to the man'. In other words, he has compressed two phrases, most likely, 'I get out of the ambulance and I walk over to the man'. This idiosyncratic phrasing may be caused by the heightened emotion of recalling the event. I have opted for clarity, in my translation, over a more direct rendition, but both translations are viable.

³⁰ Alternative translation for the play's director: the surgeon uses the word 'kasha' [*'каша'*]. Literally, this means 'porridge', which is also a viable translation.

Some more than others – but as for me, I’m just a lad.³¹ And they prepare for theatre and then stand there, watching me, to see what I’m going to do. The surgeon’s on leave and I’m there in his place. To be fair, the nurse was great – the general duty nurse. She threw herself into it and began to help me.

So – institute then internship. I’d almost never done any emergency care.³² All the hospitals³³ I’d been through had an anaesthetics department. I was taught to brandish a scalpel³⁴ around by my father. He was a surgeon. There are four generations of doctors in my family. In my hometown, there’s a road named after the surgeon Nikolai Georgievich Lychmanov.³⁵ He’s my great uncle. I feverishly began to recall – whatever I can. A hop, a skip and two drips.³⁶ So, I’m trying to save him. Well, somehow I raised his

³¹ Alternative translation for the play’s director: the surgeon uses the word ‘patsan’ [‘пацан’]. Literally, this means a ‘lad’ or ‘bloke’, which presumably implies his relative youth and inexperience, given the context (although the more common usage is to denote adolescence and immaturity). I have opted for ‘lad’, to make this as clear as possible in translation. Another viable approach could be to replace a one-word translation with an appropriate phrase or expression in English which denotes youth and inexperience, such as ‘wet behind the ears’, so it could read ‘Some more than others – as for me, I’m wet behind the ears.’

³² Information point for the director: one of the Russian doctors whom I consulted found these three sentences confusing on the basis that a surgeon who has not trained in emergency care is a bad surgeon. In my view, the doctor who advised me was implying that this is exaggeration on the part of the surgeon, rather than that the protagonist is, in fact, a bad surgeon – and he recommended that some sentences could be omitted here without changing the meaning. I have not omitted these sentences as they seem to reveal an interesting side to the surgeon’s character, in my view, namely his tendency for turning presumably real-to-life situations into exciting stories.

³³ Alternative translation for the play’s director: the surgeon uses the word ‘bolyachki’ [‘болячки’]. Literally, this means ‘boils’ but it sounds similar to ‘bolnitsy’ [‘больницы’], the Russian word for hospital. Two Russian doctors whom I consulted, separately, in September 2014, for advice on medical terminology both confirmed that this is a reference to ‘hospitals’. One of them suggested that the surgeon’s choice of words is a low register. She also pointed out that this word is used more commonly by patients than by doctors. The other doctor suggested that the word ‘bolyachki’ is not a common slang word but it is nevertheless understandable to all medical personnel. Arguably, a British equivalent would be a ‘feet-up general’, a British medical slang term meaning ‘a quiet rural hospital’. This is a viable alternative translation and in this case, I would suggest reversing the sentence, to aid clarity, so that it reads: ‘There’d been an anaesthetics department at all the feet-up generals I’d passed through as an intern.’ The risk of using slang is that it becomes opaque to the audience; the advantage is that it retains the character of the original. It should be noted that the equivalent slang in translation is less clear than the Russian (which provides a clue through rhyme), and this is why I have added ‘as an intern’ as a contextual clarification in the alternative translation.

³⁴ Alternative translation for the play’s director: the surgeon uses the ‘shishka’ [‘шишка’]. Literally, this means ‘sabre’. I have not found this term in any medical dictionaries. One of the doctors I consulted suggested that this is a common medical slang for ‘scalpel’.

³⁵ Lychmanov does not appear in the Big Soviet Encyclopaedia [‘Большая Советская Энциклопедия’]. However, I have been able to find one reference which appears to confirm that Lychmanov is not a fictional character. An Astrakhan-based journalist, Konstantin Garanin, writing on his blog *Garanin Pro* in March 2014, described a clean-up operation underway in a cemetery on Sofia Perovskaya Street in Astrakhan. His article includes the names of those individuals whose tombs will be uncovered, once the debris and rubbish has been removed. Among Garanin’s list is: ‘The honourable doctor of the RSFSR [trans. – Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic] doctor of medical science, the surgeon Nikolai Georgievich Lychmanov, whose name adorns one of the streets in Astrakhan.’ [‘Заслуженный врач РСФСР, доктор медицинских наук, хирург Николай Георгиевич Лычманов, именем которого названа одна из улиц Астрахани’]. Source: Konstantin Garanin, ‘Ochistim istoricheskuyu pamyat’ ot musora!’, *Garanin Pro*, 26 March 2014 <<http://garanin.pro/?p=8579>> [accessed 28 August 2014].

³⁶ The surgeon uses the phrase ‘gormony... mormony... dve kapalnitsy’ [‘гормоны... мормоны... две капальницы’]. Literally, this means ‘Hormones... Mormons... two drips’. This expression does not appear in any dictionaries, nor have I been able to find it in online blogs or social media, at least with any consistent meaning. Both Russian doctors whom I consulted felt that this was an invented term. An actor came up with the phrase ‘bish, bash, bosh’ during the rehearsal, which was used at the rehearsed reading, evoking laughter in the audience.

pressure to seventy or eighty. Meanwhile, the chief doctor made radio contact with the head of the department at the nearest Community Hospital. Our hospital is a level lower. So...

MAN. Radios!

SURGEON. Yes. I'm listening.

MAN. What have you got?

SURGEON (*to the audience*). I tell him: this is the situation, this, that and the other.³⁷

MAN. Well, Andrei, I'm going to make your day. Our anaesthetist is busy with an operation – the patient is lying on a table with a tube inside. So, he can't come. Just get stuck into it with a local anaesthetic.

SURGEON. Fine. The local anaesthetic is novocaine and that lowers blood pressure.

WOMAN. There's no blood pressure. Shall I call the air ambulance?

SURGEON. To get him to Kamizyak – that will take an hour and a half. We need to get on with it... Right. Lift him up on the table.

They lifted Kolya Mekhantiev up onto the table. I need to amputate³⁸ but I need to form a stump! There's one leg missing... We need a stump of a limb... or something, at least, for the prosthetics later. I go³⁹ to look at the instruments. I go through all the tables – there isn't a single saw – to cut the bone. I find a piece. There's this wire-saw we use: it's the famous⁴⁰ Olivecrona Gigli... it's incredibly fine. I find a fragment of this saw. Only a piece of one – and it was all rusty. (*To the Woman.*) Is that it?

WOMAN. There aren't any other saws.

SURGEON. Well, alright, let's soak it, sterilise it. I suppose with this... thing... I guess I'll be able to saw something off, if I use clamps. Alright.

(*To the audience.*) I went to wash for the operation. Liquid ammonia to clean your hands, just like the old days. This takes a long time and two basins. It's probably something like eight minutes to treat the hands. I washed and then I'm on my way to theatre. An orderly approaches and takes my hand –

WOMAN (*walking past and, as if in a narrow corridor, taking the surgeon's hand*). Doctor, wait.

SURGEON (*after her*). Oh for fuck's sake!

³⁷ Alternative translation for the play's director: the surgeon uses the phrase 'tak i tak' [*'так и так'*]. Literally, this means 'so and so', which is another viable alternative. The point of the phrase is to signify talking, without specifying what has been said, so other appropriate English phrases could be used instead, including 'such and such', 'this and that', and so on. A further option would be 'blah blah blah', although this adds a nuance of carelessness which is not contained in the original.

³⁸ Rehearsal room addition (for clarity of meaning): 'I need to amputate'.

³⁹ Rehearsal room changes: the tense of the verbs in this paragraph were changed from past to present, in order to aid the immediacy of the story-telling.

⁴⁰ Rehearsal room addition (for humour): 'the famous'.

I went to wash again. So, once again... I washed my hands. I go over to the table. Just then the theatre nurse sneezed and wiped her nose with her hand. (*To the woman who does that.*) So I say: "Have you been a theatre nurse for long?"

WOMAN. Well, the surgeon had only just started teaching me when he went on leave – normally I'm a general duty nurse.

SURGEON (*sighing*). Go and wash them. (*To the audience.*) Well, you long to flee into the steppe and leave it all behind. Right. We began the operation. I'm operating. I inject the novocaine economically. To control the pressure – seventy to eighty. He's chatting away – fully conscious.... That's the alcohol. Well, he skipped right over the state of shock.

MAN. Well, this is great – just do what you want – whatever pops into your head! The main thing is I'm going to live.

SURGEON (*to the audience*). So basically, I'm cutting the bone and I've managed to cut about two thirds. And the saw just breaks into pieces. Well, I'm going to do it somehow – even if I have to snap it with my teeth. I'm not strong enough. It's good that I sawed through two thirds. I take that piece of bone and break it off. The bone... it isn't particularly painful, just unpleasant. He didn't give a damn. Well, okay. I made a stump of a limb.

I decided not to bother the second leg too much. I put it in a splint and plaster cast. The second leg was saved. Well, there were multiple fractures – we did those operations, later. I just put a cast on it. Best not to dig around right now, he won't be able to cope with that. But something serious needs to be poured in. Dripped in. Well, we're not talking blood. Plasma blood, perhaps.

WOMAN. We could look for⁴¹ some donors.

SURGEON. But the blood must be fully tested, by the book. And where can I do that? (*To the audience.*) I mean, we've stopped practising straight transfusions. I found a dry synthetic plasma. But we need to ascertain the patient's⁴² blood group. So, I say: "Where do you keep the, um... serums. For blood groups?"

⁴¹ The Woman uses a word which is rarely used even in vernacular Russian: 'nashukat' ['нашукать']. According to *Vladimir Dal's Dictionary of Definitions of the Living Great Russian Language* ['Толковый словарь живого великорусского языка Владимира Даля'], the word – in its shortened form – 'shukat' ['шукать'] is of Polish origin and means 'to look for'. In fact, it appears that the word has been appropriated by contemporary Russian street language, according to the *Dictionary of Youth Slang* ['Словарь молодежного слэнга']. I have not found a way in English to reflect the idiosyncratic nature of the original word.

If the interpretation of the word as coming from youth slang is preferred, then one viable translation option is to adapt the sentence to incorporate a different element of youth slang, such as: 'We could find some donors, innit?'. However, there do not appear to be any other references to youth slang in the play. Sources: *Vladimir Dal's Dictionary of the Living Great Russian Language* <<http://slovari.yandex.ru>>; *Dictionary of Youth Slang* <<http://teenslang.su>> [accessed 28 August 2014].

⁴² The doctor uses two words for patient during the play, 'klient' ['клиент'] and 'patsient' ['пациент']. The former is used four times and the latter appears twice (both uses of 'patsient' are during the section with the title 'Every Surgeon Has a Cemetery'). A 'klient' is a medical slang which, according to a dictionary of medical slang compiled by Russian Esquire in 2011, means 'a patient, most frequently one in A&E' ['пациент, чаще всего скорой помощи']. Source: <<http://esquire.ru/doctors-language>> [accessed 28 August 2014].

WOMAN. In the fridge.

SURGEON. In the fridge – well, that’s something⁴³ at least.

The Woman brings it, gives him a serum and he looks at it.

SURGEON. These expired half a year ago. For fuck’s sake!

WOMAN. What should we do? (*Looks at him with large frightened eyes.*)

SURGEON (*to the audience*). Well, what *should* we do? On my head be it: I defined his blood group with the rancid serum. While the plasma was being infused, forgive me for the level of detail, but my balls were in my stomach... it’s a cremasteric reflex... caused by fear. I sat there, thinking – if he dies, I’ll be locked up. Because to give someone the wrong blood group – that’s the worst thing you can do.

WOMAN. And if we don’t give him blood?

SURGEON. He’d definitely die. Better to have killed him under the tractor.

The long and short of it is⁴⁴ I jumped and danced around him for three days. And when I brought him out of a critical condition, and he became transportable, I sent him over there – to the Central Community Hospital. And when I went back to the CCH myself, from the fish-factory, he turned up in my ward. Then I took care of his second leg. I organised his prosthetics. And that guy, Kolya Mekhantiev – I worked there for another three years – for three years he came to see me, on all the public holidays, to say thank you...

A while later, I read Bulgakov’s short story *The Embroidered Towel*.⁴⁵ It’s the same situation – blow by blow. Except it’s a girl – for me, it’s Kolya Mekhantiev. But otherwise it was spot on – blow by blow. The exact same ordeal, the exact same terrified young doctor. There was an amputation in the short story, too... Nothing changes.

A Philosophical Story

Perhaps the men have laid a small table and are drinking and snacking.

SURGEON. For me, this is a kind of philosophical story... We’re on duty. It’s night – midnight. And since it’s a Community Hospital, there’s a surgeon and an anaesthetist on duty. A call from “emergency” –

⁴³ Rehearsal room change: originally, I translated this sentence as ‘Well, that’s good at least’. This felt stilted, when spoken by the actor, which gave me the idea of adapting it to ‘Well, that’s something at least’, which is more natural for an English speaker.

⁴⁴ Rehearsal room change: originally, I translated this sentence as ‘In short’, which is a close rendition from the Russian, ‘in a word’ [*‘Одним словом’*]. This phrase did not sound natural when spoken by the actor, which gave me the idea of changing it to a more idiomatic one, ‘the long and short of it was’.

⁴⁵ *The Embroidered Towel* is a standard English-language translation for the title of a short story by Mikhail Afanasiev Bulgakov which is literally named *Towel with Cockerel* [*‘Полотенце с петухом’*]; it was published originally in 1926 in the *Meditinsky rabotnik* journal [*‘Медицинский работник’*], a medical journal. The subtitle of the story was ‘From the book “Notes of a Young Doctor”’, since it was intended to open a cycle of short stories about the medical profession – although the stories were never published together as a book.

MALE ORDERLY. They're bringing in a knifing. But, Dr. Andrei, there's something about this one, it's not good. Come outside, to the ambulance.

SURGEON. Um, okay. So I went out. I'm smoking. The ambulance drives up. (*To the Man.*) Where's the patient?

MALE ORDERLY. There.

SURGEON (*to the audience*). I glance into the car – a guy is lying under some sort of heavy jacket,⁴⁶ face down. (*To the Man.*) Why are you transporting him in this interesting position?

MALE ORDERLY. Go ahead and take off the coat.

SURGEON. So, I take off the coat – all of his intestines are on his back. Holy shit!

(*Coming back to the table, to the orderly.*) Well, what was the situation? Straight away, I describe it. What I managed to work out, anyway. (*To the audience.*) That's called an "anamnesis review". (*To the man.*) So basically – here's this guy. A good bloke, a quiet alcoholic. Very kind and gentle. The next day we found out that he has a wife – who is one of our anaesthetists.⁴⁷ (*To the man.*) As well as two daughters. So, the youngest daughter, (quite a strapping girl, not like her dad, but like her mum) is fifteen, and basically she's the one who did this. In other words, all of these women took turns, beating him up.

MALE ANAESTHETIST. But he drank.

SURGEON. Well... yes. He was a very quiet and peaceful fellow, but he was regularly beaten up by the women in the family.

MALE ANAESTHETIST. They kept him on a tight leash.

SURGEON. And, in short, that day he came home a bit drunk. His daughter took a kitchen knife, with a long blade, and jabbed him in back. So yeah. The cut was wide enough... And his intestines fell out of the gash onto his back – past his loins.

(*To the audience.*) Well, we took him straight into theatre. And there's a funny detail about that. The thing is, in this type of hospital, men don't become orderlies. Well, the salary is a pittance. So it's mostly women who do that job. And theatre is on the first floor. There are no lifts – it's a two-storey building. And the patient is brought on a stretcher to theatre, and carried off after the operation, if they need to go to the

⁴⁶ The term used is 'bushlat' ['бушлат'] which is a double-breasted coat. I have chosen to use a more generic word, since the double-breasted coat is much less common in the UK.

⁴⁷ Rehearsal room note: I noticed during the rehearsal that I had maintained a literal approach to the Russian word order, in spite of the tendency of Russian grammar to put the subject at the end of the sentence. The original translation read: 'He has a wife (*to the audience*) who is – the next day we found out – one of our anaesthetists.' The director and actors did not comment on this and the original – more foreign-sounding version – was used in the reading. The advantage of the latter is that it reminds the audience of the authentic testimony-based nature of the script. However, my preference is to avoid the awkward phrasing which sounded stilted, in my view, during the rehearsed reading, in order to create an equivalent normative English, as if the testimony had been given in English originally.

intensive care unit on the first floor, by the surgeon and the anaesthetist. It's fun, it's good fun.⁴⁸

So, it's – “you did the operation, you carry him”. It's really great.⁴⁹ So anyway, the anaesthetist and I – well and the ambulance driver helped us too – we carried him up to theatre. The anaesthetist, Sergei, is a top bloke. A very experienced guy, really smart. What to do? The intestines are on his back. Almost the whole of his small intestine. And there are eight holes in it. And shit is flowing out of them. It's completely filthy. Well, she jabbed him, his intestines fell out – and that was that. But there's another problem – there's a wide muscular layer on the spine, very bulky. And the intestines are trapped in this wound. And they're starting to go blue. The period of exposure since the trauma is unknown. But I can see that time is slipping away. His intestines are just becoming numb. Of course, theoretically, we can just take the whole intestines out, but practically – it's “woah, stop right there”. We put him onto the operating table on his stomach. (*To the Man-Anaesthetist.*) Sergei, we need to act quickly to set his intestines.

(*To the audience.*) And for me to put them back in, we need to relax his muscles, i.e. to inject a preparation which will relax the muscles. But at the same time, we need to keep him breathing, so we'll intubate – put a tube into his trachea. But our patient has his nose pointing down. Just you try and stick the tube in. Basically, I tell Sergei – do what you have to, do whatever magic you need to, but stick the tube in while I sew up the hole.

(*To the audience.*) So, I'm splashing his intestines with antiseptic. And I didn't even get dressed up, I just put on my gloves – after washing my hands, to be fair – I'm going to sew up these holes in his intestines in one row of stitches if I have to. My goal is to stop shit trickling out of the holes. So, I sew up the eight holes. I don't know how Sergei did it⁵⁰... He's a magician, he managed to stick the tube in from underneath. While I was sewing up the holes. He intubated him. Then, we turned him over onto his back, and I gave him a Laparotomy, which means I cut open his stomach. I go in – and everything inside is intact, because everything had fallen outside. So actually, apart from the eight holes in his intestines which I'd sewn up, there was nothing else. Well, I washed his intestines again carefully and put in a second row of stitches. And that was it. In other words, Sergei had relaxed the muscles and I'd shoved the intestines back in. He's going to live.

MAN-ANAESTHETIST (*wiping away sweat*). Well, that's that. Shall we carry him on the stretcher to intensive care? The two of us.

⁴⁸ Rehearsal room addition: the surgeon uses the word 'razvlekukha' [*'развлекуха'*] which is a vernacular term. It seems that the word is used ironically. My original translation was 'It's great fun', however this did not capture the irony. During rehearsals, it struck me that a repetition in English might be more effective in providing an ironic commentary on the literal meaning of the words used. It was possible to test this idea immediately, and the actor and director both agreed that the new version contained more biting irony.

⁴⁹ Alternative translation for the play's director: the surgeon uses the words 'ochen' khorosho' [*'очень хорошо'*]. If this is taken literally, without irony, the translation would be 'It's very good' or 'It's really good' which are two other viable translations. I have preferred a gently ironic reading, which suggests that the surgeon is fond of the hospital's archaic practices, to some extent, while simultaneously understanding that they are outdated and unpractical.

⁵⁰ Rehearsal room addition (for clarity and rhythm): 'did it'.

SURGEON (*to the audience*). The anaesthetist, his wife, comes in, in the morning.

FEMALE ANAESTHETIST (*waving her hand*). Ah, everything on him will heal, just like on a dog. It's all fine!

SURGEON (*to the audience*). Of course, he wrote a "denial", saying he was making no claim against his daughter.

MALE PATIENT. It was me – I fell on the knife – I wasn't sober.

SURGEON. I discharged him after ten days, same as for appendicitis. And actually, everything did heal, just like on a dog, without any complications, without a paresis of the intestines, without peritonitis.

And here's how the whole situation was resolved. A year went by. He killed his wife. He broke her skull with a brick at a bus stop. And I sat down and thought about it. And there was a really interesting philosophical moment: should I have saved him or shouldn't I have saved him?

So, it's, you know, that's the kind of work it is.

MALE ANAESTHETIST. If you keep telling a man: "Stand up! Stand up! Stand up and be a tiger!" In the end: "Ro-a-ar!" And then he eats you.

Every Surgeon Has A Cemetery

SURGEON. Also, in Kamizyak – my second year after the internship – I was a fairly young doctor. And in the night – they brought in a man, around two in the morning. And he had cancer of the larynx. It was already advanced – with a growth in the soft tissue. After passing through the ontological wards, he had been put onto symptomological treatments, in other words there was already so much of everything – that you couldn't do much for him. So anyway. He was brought in asphyxiating. He was choking. Turning blue. The growth in his larynx was so large that no air could pass through it. So basically, I understand that, in this situation, there's nothing to be done. And, most likely, now, with experience, I wouldn't start doing anything. It's the normal outcome of this illness, that's just the way it is. Well, I'm looking at this terrible blue face. At the.... Attempts to breathe... And for my sins, I pushed a tracheostoma through the ulcer. It went through. But there's no anatomy there whatsoever. Essentially – it's all just ulcer. Well... on my entry into the trachea – as you're meant to – I pressed on his jugular vein. The large vein – the main flow of blood to the brain. And this terrible bleeding begins. A fountain of black blood, a hypoxic bleeding. I grab the clamps – I try to stop it somehow. The ulcer crumbles... So, yes. He came in, alive, and passed away under my hands.

I'm standing there, covered in black blood. You want to die. You feel completely as if you've cut a man's throat – and then he died. I don't know what would have become of me if it hadn't been for the anaesthetist, a very good man. Experienced. And a kindly soul. So... Well, he poured me a glass of the hard stuff. I gulped it down.

MALE ANAESTHETIST. Andrei, the thing is, your motivation was to save a man. Secondly, you saved him from a horrible death – by suffocation – the blood flowed out of his brain – it was an instantaneous death. So... you can calm down.

SURGEON. And his family?

MALE ANAESTHETIST. Well, what about them? They brought him in dying. They understand that it's just an attempt to relieve his suffering. Not to extend the agony – just to give him access to air.

SURGEON (*to the audience*). And the day after, when I got home after night-duty, and I was already a bit calmer... I came in and got undressed – my chest was covered in black blood. I got into the shower and scrubbed it all off...

The kind of work we do means that every doctor – as well as having their own cemetery – has some things, not by ill intent... But just tragic situations happen. Yes... every doctor has their own cemetery. Former patients, let's say. Former patients. The only thing I can say is that with experience comes a distancing. In other words, you don't die with every patient and you don't take their pain as your own because it interferes with your work. When I'm doing an operation, I absolutely abstract myself from the person, because if I keep looking behind the screen to the anaesthetist, nothing good will come of it. I only see the injury – a substratum which I'm working with.

That will live on in my memory for a long time. It still troubles me even now.

Happiness

SURGEON. On the subject of absorbable material for sewing.... As well as working in the Community City Hospital, I combine that with a job as a consultant surgeon at the Maternity Hospital. So, last year, they call me up.... Well, what happened... Sometimes these sorts of things just happen in life. An abortion, a perforation of the womb, and the intestines are damaged. Pretty badly, too. That's iatrogenesis – damage which is a pathology caused as a result of some intervention or treatment. There's a term for it.

So anyway, they call me. And before then, I hadn't operated there. I'd just had consultations in surgical pathology, but I hadn't yet had any contact with the operating theatre. And I'm looking – and there's this gash in the intestines – about twenty centimetres, we have to resect – remove it. So. Well... I'm washing, I'm preparing everything and.... to sew it up. I say: what do you stitch with?

WOMAN. Catgut.

SURGEON. Catgut is an absorbable material – and I need to stitch up a vessel, I mean it's not recommended to stitch up vessels with catgut, it needs a durable material. I say: give me something which won't dissolve.

WOMAN. We don't have anything.

SURGEON. What?!

WOMAN. But we always stitch with catgut... Well... There's silk, I guess.

SURGEON. They give me silk. There's this sort of cable which goes – snap! – and falls apart in my hands. How old is this silk?

WOMAN (*shrugging*). Who knows.

SURGEON. I say: oh, for crying out loud!⁵¹ What are we gonna do? – There’s nothing else! There’s nothing else in theatre! Well, I’ve got a stock of good suture material at home. So... I say – go quickly, drive over to my flat and get it. They called my dad and I told him where it was. But I was lucky, the driver was only just setting off when my acquaintance turned up, a surgeon, for some other matter. And he always has some with him, because he’d been a consultant before. He’s a Professor. He’s well aware that there’s nothing. He came up –

MAN. Aha! he says. He shot in:⁵² – Here you go!

SURGEON. That’s happiness. And, well, there you have it.

The Catastrophe

SURGEON. So, basically, the situation now in this city is a catastrophe. Well, I’m working at a hospital which functions like an A&E ward, in other words carrying out emergency pathology, five days a week. So yes. The burden, the constant flow is colossal. Also, we rarely get visits from the, you know, elite segments of society. In general, we’re working with the homeless and with anti-social elements. And it’s awful here. Having an insurance policy here is, you know, symbolically absolute. It plays a role from the moment of hospitalisation, because, if you don’t have insurance then we can keep someone for three days, but on the fourth day – either he has to go to the hospital cashier and pay, or we have to discharge him. It’s not covered. Occupancy of a hospital bed, even for one day, is very expensive and, basically, people just aren’t in a position to pay.

As far as.... Well, let me put it this way, if a more or less respectable person is admitted, who has a family, or at least some relatives... whether or not they have insurance, they buy the medicines themselves. There’s nothing we can offer.⁵³ There’s a hospital pharmacy but they’re generally stocked with expensive medicines. Routine medications, which we work with, are cheap – in theory people can buy those, themselves. I mean, the funding is pitifully meagre. Basically, medical insurance ... We’re fed by the insurance companies. We ought to be fed by them, I should say. But how does that work out? Well, for example, there’s a monopoly at the moment: one insurance company in our city. And so they... There’s a General Hospital. For the more elite types. And it is confirmed officially at some meeting that they owe our City Hospital a certain sum, and actually it’s not a small one, either. They change the tariffs for the provision of medical help. In other words, they raise the cost of medical provision in the General Hospital and

⁵¹ Alternative translation for the play’s director: the surgeon uses the words ‘vashu mashu’ [*Bawy Mawy*]. Literally, this means ‘your Masha’. It is a politer version of the phrase ‘your mother’ (sometimes used in its longer version, ‘fuck your mother’). However, it has two meanings – either ‘screw you’, in other words a personal insult, or ‘dammit’, an expletive denoting disappointment. I have opted for an expression of disappointment but one which implies, in my view, impatience with the conversant, thereby capturing something of both potential meanings. Other viable alternatives could be ‘oh, dammit’, ‘oh, for God’s sake’, or if the words are interpreted as a direct insult to the woman in the operating theatre, then ‘you bloody idiot’, ‘you fool’, and so on.

⁵² Rehearsal room cut (for clarity and rhythm): ‘he says. He shot in:’. The director and actors felt that these metatheatrical words undermined the rhythm of the Man’s statement and impeded the naturalness of the dialogue.

⁵³ Rehearsal room addition (for clarity): ‘we can offer’.

lower the cost in ours. And as a result, because of the new tariffs, they basically don't owe our hospital anything anymore. And that's that. End of discussion. And that's why, in crude terms, there's just no money to buy anything. So, I'm looking after a homeless guy. He doesn't have any relatives who could buy him some medicine. I can prescribe him a medication, perhaps an expensive antibiotic, but to do that, I need to give a rationale, based on his case history. In other words, theoretically, I must allow him to deteriorate to the point where he needs the medicine, and only then can I start to treat him. It's awful. So bad it makes your hair stand on end.

And another thing. At some point we don't have anything to feed the patients. We can put them on bread and water. The patients write some complaints, they fight for their rights, along the lines of we have insurance, we're buying the medicine, for God's sake, you're not even feeding us. So, the hospital hunts around for some inner reserves. They buy chicken. But on the same day, the phone lines are cut off as a result of non-payment. And the hospital, which is providing the main emergency care, ends up without an external line – only internal telephone lines. Can you imagine?

So, it's a terrible situation. And it's getting more and more brutal, with every passing day. You know, if we buy some chicken, then there's no money for the phones. It's this or that: you can either use the phones or eat chicken.

So there you are... My father is an old surgeon. He has been working his whole life and continues to work. In the same hospital, in the same division. They call us Dumas-père and Dumas-fils. And he says:

MAN. I used to be happy coming to work, but not any more, now it's just terrifying. The apathy – and not only mine... because everything is constantly getting worse, then worse, and then worse again.

SURGEON. Now, there's a possible scenario – all of these benefits will be removed. In other words, the salaries will be the same, but the benefits will be cut: additional pay for long-term practice, paid internships, hazard compensation... Loads of cuts.

You know, nobody wants to work as a surgeon nowadays. Among the next generation, nobody's going into surgery. They're not idiots. Because of the contact with blood. You cut yourself – and that's it. I work in ordinary gloves. Never in my life have I caught a glimpse of any nickel-plated gloves. We have an "Anti-HIV/AIDS" medicine chest. Inside it, there's a jar of iodine and some sort of flask. Also, the iodine's always diluted. Anyway, you get the idea.

I wanted to go to an arts college but my grandma – who was a psychiatrist – said that all artists are hairy and drink. She was a good psychiatrist. But my mum went with me to the college – we kept it secret from everyone. We took some of my art works along. We turned up but the building was closed, for pest control. That was fate.

I do three jobs now. I operate at the hospital, I teach surgery at the medical institute, and I'm a consultant at the Maternity Hospital. I earn less than 5,000 roubles⁵⁴ a month. For three jobs... My wife's a linguist.

Drunk as a Surgeon

SURGEON. This is a tragic story. I was covering for the deputy of the department while he was on leave. And a young surgeon – wet behind the ears –⁵⁵ calls me over.

MAN. Gastrointestinal bleeding, vomiting, black stool. An ulcer. It had gone undiagnosed. A young man. 30 years old.

SURGEON. There's no choice. Again, it's the level of hospital – there's no endoscopist, to try to stop it endoscopically or even to examine it – to find out what's going on. We had to get him on the table at the height of his bleeding. I'm operating – I open his stomach. At the distal segment of his stomach is a huge ulcer, and it's an old one with everted edges, in the middle is a vessel. I'm standing there, wondering what to do. There's two options: either a minimal approach – just sew up the bleeding vessel and then treat him with canned food. But on the other hand, it's a chronic ulcer, the possibility of cicatrization is low and this is a young man. So you know. I resolve to resect the stomach. To remove the part of the stomach which contains the ulcer. So, I begin the preparation, divide up the tasks. The nurse in the operating room is good – the boy... he's a novice, he won't be much help. And when I'm preparing, when I've already started fashioning the anastomosis⁵⁶ – that's when you remove the... and you need to join the...⁵⁷ and I have the clamps on the large vessel. Well.... The lights go out.

WOMAN. There are no spare generators. Theoretically, there are some batteries, but they haven't been re-charged for a long time. Because there's no money.

SURGEON. The lights go out. But there's an anaesthetic machine. It works – it breathes – by electricity. The girl – she's a young anaesthetist but fairly experienced.

WOMAN. What can we do?

SURGEON. She begins to blow into the pipe. Herself.

⁵⁴ 5,000 roubles equates to approximately 100 pounds when the play was written in 2005. Source: <<http://www.oanda.com/currency/historical-rates>> [accessed 28 August 2014].

⁵⁵ Rehearsal room change: the surgeon uses the term 'soloped' [*'солонед'*]. I have not found this term in any dictionaries. Both doctors whom I consulted confirmed that this is a rare slang for an inexperienced person. One of them felt that this word is probably borrowed from army or street slang. Other slang terms from English are possible here, such as 'a whippersnapper', 'a novice' and so on. However, during the rehearsal, it was felt that it would be helpful to re-use the phrase 'wet behind the ears', providing a sense of time passing: by this point in the play, the surgeon has become experienced himself.

⁵⁶ The surgeon uses the term 'rastamoz' [*'растамоз'*]. This term does not appear in medical dictionaries. The two Russian doctors whom I consulted confirmed that this is a reference to 'anastomosis'. One of them suggested that the surgeon's choice of words is a low register, akin to a medical vernacular which would be understandable to all doctors, albeit not used by all of them.

⁵⁷ Alternative translation for the play's director: the surgeon is speaking quickly and misses out several words. One of the doctors, whom I consulted for advice on medical terminology, suggested that what the surgeon is implying is: 'And when I'm preparing, when I've already started fashioning the anastomosis, – that's when you remove the infected section of the stomach and you need to join the two ends... and I have the clamps on the large vessel.' This longer version, which prefers clarity to rhythm, is another viable option.

WOMAN (*blowing*). Ffff.... Fffff.... Ffff.....

SURGEON. Well? What?! There's nothing else we can do. Then, they attached the pipe to a resuscitation bag. But it was torn. She starts blowing into the pipe again. And I've got the clamp on his vessel. I'm saying – these clamps must be about thirty years old. If they suddenly slip off – it's game over. And I say – give me some sort of light here. So the anaesthetist takes a laryngoscope, an instrument which is used to insert a tube.⁵⁸ There's a tiny light on it. So, they light up the stomach with that. Under the light of this little lamp, I sew up the vessel. I manage to sew it up, thank God. I shout – hello? Can any kind soul run and find out when we'll have the light back! Someone ran off. Time is ticking by. She's blowing into this tube. I still need to do something else. So I begin to operate by the light of the tube. She breathed into that tube for twenty minutes. When the light went back on, she switched off the tube and collapsed. Hyperventilation of the brain. We nursed her back to consciousness. Breathing isn't effective in any case – because nobody can blow constantly for twenty minutes non-stop, that's number one. Secondly, exhaled air has a lot of carbon dioxide and not much oxygen. In other words, at some point his brain would be starved of oxygen, and he'd die.⁵⁹ He has no reflexes – he's hooked up to the artificial respirator.⁶⁰ Well, I think – that's it – decortication. That means the membrane of his brain is dead. So, the subcortex area is living – circulation, breathing. Those all work – but he's a vegetable. So yeah... I finish the operation. We go down to the intensive care unit.

Afterwards, the anaesthetist – Sergei – and I... we got drunk. We'd been operating already that night. And at around five in the morning, we started drinking. At eight, we handed over the shift to the deputy chief doctor. A woman who had worked for the hospital her whole life. She was a meticulous type – but a completely stupid individual. You know how it is – this, that and the other.

WOMAN. What's going on? Uh huh! You've been drinking! Well – the game's up.

SURGEON. She wrote a report about us – to the chief doctor. But the chief doctor was a smart lady. She protected us. She understood – who what and why. We go in to her office.... She was:

WOMAN. Well?

SURGEON. We said – this and that.

⁵⁸ The surgeon uses the word 'livingoscope' [*ливингоскоп*]. The former term does not appear in medical dictionaries. The two Russian doctors whom I consulted both confirmed that this is a reference to 'laryngoscope'. One of them suggested that the surgeon's choice of words is a low register, akin to a medical vernacular which would be comprehensible to all doctors. I have not been able to find a viable alternative translation based on slang used by British surgeons.

⁵⁹ Information point for the play's director: it is worth noting that both Russian doctors whom I consulted felt that death would be an unlikely result; one suggested that it would only occur as a result of serious blood-loss.

⁶⁰ When translated literally, this sentence means: 'On the machine, we can't see his head.' Both Russian doctors whom I consulted felt that the machine which is referred to is an artificial ventilator. One of them suggested that the meaning of this cryptic sentence revolves around the idea of the patient losing their reflexes and relying on the ventilator: I have relied on her interpretation for my translation. I do not feel that a literal translation would be clear for British audiences.

WOMAN. I need to report back to the administration. Everything by the books: a report. Go on – write a chit explaining yourselves.

SURGEON. She already had a pile of our chits on her desk. So Sergei and I write:

MAN. “We admit that around five in the morning, we drank 250 millilitres of good cognac. For which we are genuinely sorry.

BOTH. Yours respectfully”.

WOMAN (*laughing*). Louts!

SURGEON. And in it goes – into the pile. It’s all about the personal factor, that’s the only important thing.

At some point, I introduced the concept of ‘drunk like a surgeon’ because, after you’ve gone through all of that, you have to drink some bitter vodka to somehow stay sane. It’s been three years since I stopped ... I had a problem. But I stopped. I quit. How did I do it? I started a rumour that I’d been injected with an antidote, to push people away, so they wouldn’t offer. I had to train them. Because I can’t drink *just* a bit. When I’m drunk, I get picked up by the police. Well, after work, you’re walking along, tipsy. And when the cops take me, I tell them: “I’m a surgeon. I operate on you.” They’re often in our hospital. They would always drive me home. I’m a sort of figure of authority, you see.

And that lad with the ulcer. He’s lying in a coma, for three days. On the third day, it’s the same novice who’s on duty.

MAN. Dr Andrei, for some reason it’s started dripping.

SURGEON. I go – and I see – internal tissue oozing from the stomach. I keep thinking – we’re screwed – the saga with the light – a failed operation. I start a repeat operation. He’s right – there’s a problem with some of the stitches... But it hasn’t yet developed into diffuse peritonitis. Well, I stop the dripping and sew it back up. And anyway after a week he comes around. He has recovered practically without consequence for his head.

WOMAN. Is such a thing possible?

SURGEON. As the doctor said in *Formula of Love*:⁶¹

MAN. “The brain is a dark thing, it does not submit to examination.”

SURGEON. It happens that things are totally hopeless, then the person recovers without a single problem, but it also happens that there’s an illusion of wellbeing and... It’s a mystery, obviously. There’s a lot we don’t know in these affairs. I called the expert at the General Hospital.

MAN. Well, that’s fine, wait and see, the fistula might close by itself.

SURGEON. Well, there’s also bedsores and pneumonia, as can happen with immobile patients. The bedsores gradually pass, he begins to eat, he gets up and walks around.

⁶¹ A film released in the Soviet Union in 1984, directed by Mark Zakharov, based on the story Count Cagliostro [*Граф Калиостро*] (1921) by Aleksei Tolstoi, adapted by Grigory Gorin.

And it was my watch, I'm sitting with him smoking – I'd gone in to see him. I say to him (*to the man*): I can tell you now that you came back from other side. (*To the auditorium.*) I made myself a promise, never to say those words again. Doctors – surgeons, in general, are very superstitious people. On my next shift, three days later, I came in, in the morning, and the chief doctor told me:

MAN. That lad of yours died yesterday.

SURGEON. What was it?

MAN. A clot in the pulmonary artery.

WOMAN (*comforting*). A clot flew out of nowhere and got stuck in his artery – he died instantly.

MAN. The type of complication which you can't foresee... Everything is decided up there, by God.

SURGEON. I'd given so much energy, so much of myself. I'd become like a relative to that lad's family.

And then there's a completely terrible continuation of that situation... It's the same shift. I'm sitting, ready to eat. And one of the lad's relatives comes in.

WOMAN. Dr. Andrei, please help us.

SURGEON. And she says the lad's surname. And suddenly my patient walks in. I think – that's it, he's come back. This is the end.

WOMAN. His twin brother – who lives in another city. He's flown in for the funeral. And there was a gust of wind, a tile went flying and cut open his head.

SURGEON. I sewed up his head, of course, but still – this is the end. And Sergei and I drank again in the morning, at the end of the shift... And I went home...

And... The cops... Me, as usual – I'm a surgeon, I operate on you... But that's what I thought and I got confused because I was too sozzled...⁶² Out loud I said: "I'll cut you up, you bastards". And they ... they beat me up... (*He laughs.*)

WOMAN. Avitaminosis.⁶³

MAN. Goitre.

WOMAN. Bronchitis.

⁶² Rehearsal room addition (conjunctions for rhythm): 'and', 'because'. The original sentence reads: 'But that's what I thought. I got confused. I was too sozzled.' The lack of conjunctions in Russian, when the meaning is rendered literally, necessitated small pauses by the actor during the rehearsal, which felt stilted in English.

⁶³ Alternative translation for the director: in Russian, the nature of the game, played by the Man and Woman, is more evident because the words are linked by letters, rather than meaning. So, as in a child's game, the first person says a word: the final letter of that word must be the first letter of the next person's word. I have rendered the words for their meaning, but an alternative translation would be to find terms for medical conditions which link by letters: Angina, Avitaminosis, Septicemia, and so on.

MAN. Thrombophlebitis.

WOMAN. Typhoid.

MAN. Furunculosis.

WOMAN. Retroverted uterus.

MAN. Ischemic heart disease.

WOMAN. Angina.

And so on – they continue playing with words ad infinitum.

A man walks cautiously towards the front of the stage.

SURGEON. When I graduated from my institute, I was assigned to Kaluga. They sent me to a little village called Boryatino... on the border of the Bryansk province, an area which was irradiated after Chernobyl. That's where they sent me. There was no briefing. The doctors had all fled as far as they could. But in my case: graduate from the institute – year-long internship. An interning doctor. Well, basically, a doctor, but then again not really a doctor. Wet behind the ears.

And it was such a wonderful little hospital. The village centre had, maybe, thirty peasant huts.... The sticks. I left – as it happened my wife was due to give birth at home, a thousand miles away in the city of Astrakhan, right around that time. And there was no phone connection. Only by radio. I travelled over the snow drifts. Snow – as high as your chest. A person from the south isn't used to all that. I made it to the hospital and went into the registrar's room. A man is sitting there. I found out later he was deputy to the chief surgeon. He said:

MAN. Who are you?

SURGEON. I said: I'm a surgeon.

MAN. What's your name?

SURGEON. Mikhail.

MAN. Do you play preference?

SURGEON. Yes.

MAN. Aha! A fifth!

TRANSLATION TWO

Joan

By Iaroslava Pulinovich

Translated by Noah Birksted-Breen

A two-act play.

Characters:

Joan Georgievna¹ – 50

Andrei Ivansky – 28

Katia – 19

Vitaly Arkadievich – 55

Olga – 38

Vika – 27

A Call Boy

A Woman at the Cemetery

Two Lads

¹ In my previous translations, I have always chosen to render proper nouns as transliterations because British audiences tend to be familiar with the sound of Russian names. I have opted to do so with the majority of the characters in this play: 'Andrei', 'Katia' and so on. However, a literal rendition of the central character's name is 'Zhanna' ['Жанна'] which, although possible, is problematic because no 'zh' sound exists in English. Rather than highlighting the 'foreignness' of the name, I have used the cultural equivalent, Joan. 'Joan' has the same association with the historical figure for Russian and British audiences: 'Zhanna D'Ark' ['Жанна Д'арк'] in Russian and Joan of Arc in English. It would be possible to develop this approach further by translating the other characters into cultural equivalents: 'Andrei' into 'Andrew', 'Katia' into 'Katie', 'Vika' into 'Vicky', while 'Olga' could remain as it is, and 'Vitaly' would need a looser translation such as 'Willy'. I have chosen not to do so in order to retain an aural connection with the original cultural context.

Act 1.

1.

A kitchen. Large and bright. Beautiful furniture, a huge glass table, a few paintings, blinds chosen for their colour. Many different, everyday gadgets. Andrei walks into the kitchen, in slippers and a comfy dressing gown. He is holding a mobile phone, which is ringing non-stop. Andrei pushes the door behind him – but leaves it slightly open. He answers the phone.

ANDREI (*quietly, almost in a whisper*). Hi. What happened? Hey now, wait, don't cry... What happened? Did you call an ambulance? No? Why not? But it's passed now, yeah? Thank God! I know you're tired. Wait... Wait! I'm also tired. I'll come soon. Yes. Very soon. Today. I'll be there in an hour. Wait till I get there. And don't cry, I'm begging you. See you soon. I love you.

Andrei hangs up. He puts the phone in his dressing-gown pocket. He looks out of the window and thinks about something. Joan walks into the kitchen. She is a tall, stately, and perhaps even a somewhat plump woman beyond her most youthful years. She is wearing a silk negligée. She has already styled her hair and put on her lipstick. Her eyes sparkle.

JOAN. Are you already up? Andrush, why have you started getting up so early? Go in and sleep a bit more – I'll get breakfast ready. Lie down and relax. I'll bring you breakfast in bed. What do you want? Scrambled eggs with bacon, croissant, grapefruit?

Joan heads over to the fridge and opens it. The fridge is crammed to the point of bursting with all possible varieties of food.

JOAN. Do you want some yoghurt? Cottage cheese? Ah ha, look, here's your favourite yummy treat! Can you guess what it is? Chorizo! Or maybe we should order from a restaurant? I mean, it's a special day for us today, you hadn't forgotten, had you? Can you remember the occasion? You do remember, don't you?

She walks over to Andrei and strokes his head.

JOAN. I knew you'd forget – you amnesiac! (*She kisses Andrei on the cheek.*) It was five years ago that we met. Remember? My favourite boy came to apply for a job at my company. And then I understood immediately that you're my destiny. It took me one glance to understand – here it is, happiness. *Mi amor!* (*She kisses Andrei again.*)

Andrei hardly reacts to Joan's chatter, just as he hardly registers her kisses.

JOAN. Andrei! Andrei! Where are you? Did you hear what I said?

ANDREI (*as if he'd woken up*). Joan, if we deposit one million, four hundred and fifty thousand in the bank, at eleven per cent interest a year, and then a year later withdraw the money, how much will we earn?

JOAN. Can't you count?

ANDREI. How much, hm?

JOAN. You're testing me, are you?

ANDREI. Well, how much? How much?

Joan very quickly makes a mental calculation.

JOAN. A hundred and fifty-nine thousand, five hundred. Why do you need to know? Andrush, you've become really stressed-out recently. Are you worn out, is that it? Are you exhausted from working? I'm exhausted too. You're my only salvation. Feeding my love, putting him to bed – there's no time for getting tired, is there? Will you go back to bed? No?

Andrei shakes his head.

JOAN. Then I'll tell you here. I wanted to do it in bed but since you're already up, I'll tell you here. *Un moment, s'il vous plaît!*

Joan leaves – or rather, runs out – out of the kitchen and returns almost immediately. She is holding two multi-coloured, rectangular envelopes.

JOAN. Surprise! Andrushenka, we need a break! When was the last time we, you and me went on holiday? So I thought about it and realised – never! We're going next month... Guess where? Africa! Af-ri-ca! I've hired a personal guide for us, there's a car already waiting for us with the most amazing set of wheels! We're going on a safari! Andrushenka, can you imagine that, a safari? We're going to see elephants, giraffes, huge apes! By night, we're going to drink Amarula! We'll be walking around, suntanned, in kitschy clothes. We'll make love every night – we won't miss a single one! Will we, Andrush? Are you pleased?

Andrei keeps staring straight ahead, gloomily.

JOAN. Andrusha, what's happened? Are you pleased? Are you? Did I come up with a great idea?

ANDREI (*not looking at Joan*). Joan, I'm really pleased... Forgive me – I can't go with you.

Pause.

JOAN. Why not? We'll give all the workload to Vika and Olga, they'll manage, I'm sure of it...

ANDREI. Joan, I've been seeing another girl, for a year now. And now she's pregnant. She's going to give birth in a few months. I'm tired of lying. I'm leaving you. I'm sorry. I just can't go on like this...

Joan seems to have lost the power of speech.

JOAN. You... you... Hang on... What, Andrushenka? Are you serious? Are you joking? You're joking?

ANDREI. No.

JOAN. What do you mean 'no'? You couldn't really... (*shouting*) You bastard! You swine! You filthy prostitute! You whore in trousers! Have you found someone who's younger and richer? You prick! Who is she? Tell me, who is she! Tell me, you shit!

ANDREI. She's called Katia, she's nineteen, she's a student. I can't say any more than that. Again – I'm sorry.

Pause. Joan lets out a deep sigh.

JOAN (*calmly*). You've got fifteen minutes to get out of here. You can take your toothbrush. Everything else was bought with my money and belongs to me.

ANDREI. Can I put on jeans and a shirt?

JOAN. Wear whatever you want!

Andrei gets up and goes. Zhanna is shaking. It's as if she is choking. It seems like she will start sobbing any moment now. But it's against Joan's principles to give free rein to her tears.

JOAN. Joan... Joan... be silent. One, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine... I've calmed down. I've pulled myself together. He can go.

Andrei comes into the kitchen. He has got dressed. He's now in jeans and a shirt. Andrei puts his keys to the flat and the car onto the table.

ANDREI. Please forgive me, if you can...

Joan doesn't reply.

ANDREI. You're strong, you can survive anything. She's still so small and fragile, she won't survive without me.

JOAN. Get out.

Andrei looks awkwardly at Joan and leaves. The front door slams.

JOAN. If you cry – I'll kill you.

Joan breathes heavily. Then she takes a phone from the table. She dials.

JOAN. Tanusha? It's Joan Georgievna. Andrei Ivansky is no longer working for us. Do you understand? No two-week notice, no holiday, no compensation. What? Well... find some loophole in employment law. Yes, perfect, fire him pursuant to article 81, paragraph 5. It's fool-proof. He never came to work before one. And add up all his 'no shows'. Yes. And tell Olga that she's my deputy now. She can organise a feast.

Joan ends the call and dials another number.

JOAN. Vitaly Arkadievich? I fired my deputy today. Yes, Andrei. He'll come to you to ask for a job. If you take him on – you'll become a worthless son-of-a-bitch to me. Yes. Pass that information on. I haven't forgotten about Friday. Olga is preparing the business plan. Ciao.

Joan hangs up. Then she goes into the walk-in wardrobe. She takes a large bag from the shelf and puts all of Andrei's things into it: blazers, trousers, shirts, ties, socks and T-shirts. Then she starts on her own wardrobe. Lots of things fly into the same bag: her idiotic, frivolous chemises, cardigans, frilly coats, lace underwear, négligées, corsets, some ridiculous suspenders and transparent blouses. At the same time, Joan is making a call.

JOAN. Hello? Olga? Has Tanya told you already? Not at all... My pleasure, you're a truly valued colleague... Hang on... You remember you told me that you donate things somewhere? I have this whole pile of designer clothes which I don't need any more... Who can I give that to? A children's home, the Church, anything... A shelter, you said? Uh-huh. Send the address. Or what...? The tramps will take it from the rubbish? Okay, sure... I'll probably do that. Well – thanks. I'll be there soon. *(She ends the call.)*

Joan shuts the bag with difficulty. She stands, looking at the fruits of her labour. She kicks the bag. Then she opens it up again and takes out an embroidered, semi-transparent cardigan lying on top. She looks it over. She holds it up to herself.

JOAN *(suddenly crumpling up the cardigan and throwing it on the floor)*. The tramps can wear you!

With that, Joan starts to get dressed. She dresses in items which survived her cull, namely – a severe business suit which is expensive but boring and unassuming. Joan carelessly puts on eyeliner. She transfers her personal affairs from a funky bag into a brown briefcase. She leaves her flat holding this briefcase.

2.

A small flat. These are still called bedsits.² Sitting on the sofa, wrapped in an old cardigan with her legs tucked under her, is Katia – she is very skinny with a small 'bump' of a tummy. She is watching TV. From time to time she lets out a sob. She seems to have been weeping just a moment ago. Someone opens the door with a set of keys. Katia jumps up abruptly from the sofa and runs to the door.

KATIA. Andrei!

Andrei comes into the flat, holding a plastic bag. Katia jumps onto him.

ANDREI. Were you crying?

KAYTA. No. Only a teensy bit.

ANDREI *(looking at her tummy)*. Is it hurting?

KATIA. Not really, not at the moment.

KATIA cuddles Andrei.

ANDREI. Have you eaten?

² The word in Russian is 'malasemeika' ['маласемейка'] which refers to a self-contained, one-bedroom flat for a small family. Source: <<http://sovdep.academic.ru/1880>> [accessed 12 June 2015].

KATIA. Last night. But not since then. I just slept.

ANDREI. Were you watching TV all night again – and sleeping during the day?

KATIA. What else can I do? I'm afraid of sleeping alone! I get these panics, you know? My friends are all studying, they haven't got time for me, you're not with me – you've got your own life...³

ANDREI. Alone... without anyone? I do come every day.

KATIA. You come! But then you go again! And I'm alone every night, all day long I'm alone...

ANDREI. Hey – d'you know what happened today?

KATIA. Are you going to tell me another of your stories? Ugh...

KATIA goes off into the kitchen. Andrei takes off his boots and follows her. There are dirty dishes in the sink, a mêlée of crumbs and chocolate wrappers reveals Katia to be a careless home keeper. Andrei strokes Katia's head and silently tries to make peace with her.

ANDREI. It's a pigsty again! (*He smiles.*) Bag lady!⁴

Andrei roles up his shirt sleeves.

ANDREI. Let's tidy up first, wash the dishes, clean the floor...

KATIA. How about I wash the dishes, you do the floor?

ANDREI. Sit down okay? You'd just fall to pieces without me.

KATIA (*happy*). Yes,⁵ I'd fall to pieces!

Andrei washes the dishes. Katia sits next to him on the stool, watching him intently.

³ I have observed that Russian playwrights tend to use ellipses to signify two different conjunctions: a short pause or an interruption by the next speaker. This ambiguity does not usually exist in British plays since a short pause is predominantly indicated by an ellipsis and an interruption is usually denoted by a dash. Throughout this play, I have tended to leave ellipses in translation where they appear in the original, so that the director and actors may decide for themselves whether the playwright intended a pause or an interruption. The only exception to that rule is where I feel that the dialogue unambiguously demands an interruption. In those instances, I have 'translated' the grammar and replaced ellipses with a dash.

⁴ Alternative translation: Andrei uses the term 'tetyokha' [*'memexa'*]. This noun is a derogatory term for 'woman', implying corpulence, lack of manners or ill-repute, according to the Dictionary of Vladimir Dal'. The Dictionary of Russian Language suggests that 'tetyokha' has a figurative meaning of 'ignorant woman'. The latter is the most likely interpretation when used by Andrei, considering his patronising attitude towards Katia at certain points in the play (and articulated by Katia in Act 2, Scene 1). What is striking is that Andrei uses 'tetyokha' to tease Katia, akin to a nickname and even as a term of endearment. My decision to use 'bag lady' is a lateral interpretation of the original term, implying an outcast woman or a homeless person. What is advantageous about 'bag lady' is that it interacts, at the level of association, with notions of wealth and poverty – a theme which runs throughout the play. Alternative translations, which are closer semantic equivalents to the original, include fatty, floozy, wench, and so on. Sources: <<http://dal.sci-lib.com/word039826.html>>; <<http://www.vedu.ru/expdic/111701>> [accessed 12 June 2015].

⁵ Rehearsal room addition: 'yes'. When I heard the actor speak this line, I felt that the paradoxical nature of Katia's words – i.e. her joy at her vulnerability because of her implied need of Andrei – came across more clearly by adding an affirmative.

KATIA. Today I had the same dream, that we came home to our place. That we're living together... That we're watching *Wheel of Fortune* on TV. We can only tune into one station – but we're watching it – you and me and mum and our son. And Uncle Lyonya is smiling at us and saying – 'do you want to win a million? It's very easy!' And I believe him. I don't fall for these crazy city scams, but in my dream I believe Uncle Lyonya. We'll win that million – that's what I believe.

ANDREI. Katia, and what if you had one million, four hundred and fifty thousand roubles, what would you do with it?

KATIA. Hm, that's a strange amount.... Not a round number. I don't know. I'd buy a flat.

ANDREI. I was already thinking about that. But it'd have to be a one-bed flat, way out...

KATIA. So what? Your own place, doesn't matter where – it's your own place.

Andrei cleans the floor.

ANDREI. And could you think of a way, with that money, to buy a new flat in a good area?

KATIA. I don't know. No. You mean a mortgage? Or what?

ANDREI (*cleans the floor*). Lift your legs up.

KATIA lifts her legs up. Andrei cleans the floor around Katia.

ANDREI. A mortgage – that's even more expensive.

KATIA. Put it in a bank?

ANDREI. If you put the money in a bank, the interest would only be a hundred and fifty-nine thousand five hundred, a year later.

Andrei has cleaned the floor. He tidies the table.

ANDREI. Shared-cost construction!

KATIA. Eh? What's that?

ANDREI. Shared-cost construction!

Andrei washes his hands. He takes out food from the plastic bag which he brought with him. He cuts chicken on the chopping board. He cleans and slices potatoes.

KATIA. What does it mean?

ANDREI. It means, firstly, that there's a million four hundred and fifty thousand in my account. That's the money I've managed to save the whole time we've been seeing each other. And also something else happened today – and you don't have a clue what it is...

Andrei looks at Katia, waiting for her reaction.

KATIA. Seriously? You saved all that yourself? More than a million? For me?

ANDREI. Who else?

KATIA. Andrei... I don't know wh-... You're so cool! God sent you as a gift to me at that disco, so I wouldn't fall to pieces.

Andrei smiles, pleased with himself.

ANDREI. And secondly I decided to put my money into shared-cost construction. Look... Shall I fry the chicken and potatoes or put them in the oven?

KATIA. In the oven.

ANDREI (*smiling*). Do you love my chicken?

KATIA. I love it.

ANDREI. Have you eaten chicken as tasty as mine anywhere else?

KATIA. No.

ANDREI. Hm.⁶ The recipe is actually really simple – you just have to put sliced apple and garlic around the chicken and inside it. Then it gets that particular taste. My grandma used to cook chicken like that – and my mum. I was always hanging around the kitchen – they couldn't get me out of there. They said – 'he'll grow up to be a chef or the director of food shop.' But for some reason I made tracks for here, even though my mum told me – 'go to Ishim,⁷ sign up for the technical college or to a cooking school so you learn a profession, then you can leave'... But anyway I didn't listen, you could say I ran away from home. It wasn't quite like that, obviously. And where didn't I work after that? It's scary just thinking about it. So anyway, the construction... Look. We buy a flat in a building which hasn't yet been finished. Our own flat, can you imagine? Because we can't stand renting any more, you know?⁸ And there, in our future flat, we've got the foundations, walls but nothing else yet. A building site. We bring our cash to the office. We say – 'we want a flat on the second floor.'

KATIA. There's a better view from the seventh.

ANDREI. Okay, we say – 'seventh floor, closer to the sun.' So, then the builders come. They build and build. They build and build. They build for a day, they build for two days. And half a year later – bam! And we're the owners of a totally new flat on the seventh floor worth a million four hundred and fifty thousand! Twenty minutes to the centre, next to a park, a children's playground right by the building!

KATIA. And our little son will play in the sand pit.

⁶ The Russian word is 'vot' ['vot'] – a particle associated with pointing at an object. The use of 'vot' here may refer to Andrei's pleasure with Katia's answer or that he is pointing with pride at the chicken he is about to prepare. An alternative effect would be achieved in performance by omitting any verbal response by Andrei, and replacing it with a physical gesture instead such as a smile, contented nod or even a self-satisfied fist-pump.

⁷ The town of Ishim is located in Western Siberia, in the South-Eastern part of the Tyumen' Oblast' [District], with approx. 65,000 inhabitants as of 1 July 2014. Source: Official site of Ishim, <<http://ishim.admtyumen.ru/mo/Ishim/index.htm>> [accessed 10 June 2015].

⁸ The Russian word is 'da' ['da'] which Andrei uses primarily for emphasis. Alternative translations include 'can we?', 'innit?' for a hint of youth slang, or to omit it and rephrase the sentence as a statement, 'Because, basically, we can't stand renting anymore.'

ANDREI. Yes, our little son. And his mummy and daddy... And there will be no landlady demanding anything from us.

KATIA. And lots of green around. In the spring, we'll plant trees in the courtyard. An apple tree and a lilac bush.

ANDREI. Yes! Do you know how good I am at growing things by the way? Potatoes and strawberries – and I was the king of planting trees⁹ at home in the garden. And they're all growing. That's because of my positive attitude – everything grows.

KATIA. But the earth is normal, there, isn't it? If there was a building site next to it, it's going to be stony – it will need to be fertilized.

ANDREI. Well, the soil¹⁰ is obviously worse than... in my village, for example... but we can try to look for some compost. Or firewood ash – that helps a lot too.

KATIA. My mum always sprinkled dry chicken dung onto the raspberries and apple trees and blackberries.

ANDREI. Yeah! My grandma does the same thing! My grandma's, like, so active – she's eighty-five and, get this,¹¹ she has her own plot in the vegetable garden – and even now she won't let anyone else go in there, she tends to it herself.

Andrei sets out the potatoes, chicken and other essential food on the baking tray and slides the baking tray into the oven. He washes his hands.

KATIA. Why did you make so much chicken? We won't eat it all, you know? And I don't eat alone in the evenings – I don't like eating in the evenings by myself.

ANDREI. Bag lady, do you know what happened today?

KATIA looks enquiringly at Andrei.

ANDREI. I've come for good, bag lady.

KATIA. What, you mean, actually for good? Today?

KATIA happily cuddles Andrei.

ANDREI. I told you we'd live together, didn't I? Didn't I?

KATIA nods.

ANDREI. Did I keep my word?

⁹ In the original, Andrei uses the verb 'peresazhat' ['пересажать'] which means to plant one tree after the other, i.e. lots and lots. Russian is more flexible in its use of verbs, because of the option of adding prefixes; in this case the prefix 'pere' means to carry out an action repeatedly. I have added 'the king of', where the Russian used a prefix to the verb, in order to replicate the effect of Andrei's enthusiasm (and possible exaggeration) in English.

¹⁰ Rehearsal room change (for clarity): 'ecology' replaced with 'soil'.

¹¹ Alternative translation: the Russian word is 'predstavliaesh' ['представляешь']. A valid option would be to render this term with a literal translation: 'can you imagine?'. I have opted for a colloquialism since, in my view, it better captures the sense of Andrei's excitement.

KATIA. Yes! (*She touches her tummy.*) Oh! He kicked me! He's happy too.

ANDREI. It's a boy. He's just like his dad.

KATIA hugs Andrei. She stands on her tiptoes to kiss her loved one. Andrei returns her kiss.

3.

Joan's flat. Large and dark. Evening. The curtains flutter, almost unnoticeably, by the open window. Joan and Vitaly enter the flat – he's a man of around fifty, smart, really trendy in his 'hipster' jacket and washed-out jeans. But his haircut, expensive glasses, mannerisms and expressions, reveal him to be rich and solid but no longer young, although he got into the habit of hiding his age.

JOAN. Come in, Vitaly Arkadievich... my rickety shack is at your disposal. Make yourself at home, as the saying goes...

Joan switches off the burglar alarm and switches on the lights.

VITALY. But, as the saying also¹² goes, don't forget that you're a guest... (*looking around*) Hey, you've got a great place. How do they say that now? (*He thinks.*) Suck? Sack? Got it – sick! Cool!

JOAN. Where shall we sit? In the dining room, the living room, the bedroom?

VITALY. You're the host, Joan Georgievna.

JOAN. How about not using our patronymics today?

VITALY. Okay.

JOAN. Then in the living room.

VITALY. And why not the bedroom?

JOAN. We're not drunk enough yet.

VITALY. I see! I'm all for it!

Joan and Vitaly go into a large room. Everything, here, seems to be straight out of the journal Interior Design. There are some vases, figurines, soft poufs, a coffee table with curvy legs, floor-to-ceiling windows, floating shelves, a bear skin rug, etc.

JOAN. What do you think?

VITALY. Nice. Strong choices.¹³ How do they ... Awesome! Really awesome. Did a designer come up with it all?

¹² Rehearsal room addition: 'also'. During rehearsal, I could hear that the connection by Vitaly between Joan's idiomatic expression and his own was not as clear in English as in the original. I proposed adding 'also' to clarify that point and the director and actor agreed that it would be helpful.

¹³ The Russian word is 'boikii' ['*бойкий*']. A literal translation would be 'lively' or 'colourful.' There is a second, figurative meaning to 'boikii', namely 'brave'. I have taken a liberty in the translation, using the figurative meaning of the word, to make Vitaly's comment reflect as much on Joan's character as on the

JOAN. I told him what I wanted and he did it. But I designed it all myself.

VITALY. Yeah, really beautiful... She'd never have come up with this...

JOAN. Who – your wife?

VITALY. Sorry. I drifted off.

JOAN. Candles, coffee, cognac, liqueur?

VITALY. Vodka.

JOAN. D'you know something – I've always felt you to be a kindred spirit.

Joan lights the candles and quickly sets everything out on the small table – a bottle of vodka, caviar, gherkins.

JOAN. Well, please be seated. Shall we drink?

Joan and Vitaly sit on the bear-skin rug near the table. Vitaly pours vodka into the shot glasses.

VITALY. To you!

JOAN. To our informal *rendez-vous*!

They drink.

VITALY. That slipped down. And our *rendez-vous* is going well. And the contract we signed – also good. Cool!

JOAN. Well, this is a strange date we're having.

VITALY. It's good that the cognac ran out in the office.

JOAN. A blessing in disguise, as the saying goes...

VITALY (*in a studiously playful tone*). But aren't you afraid of inviting me to your place, Joan?

JOAN (*acting naive*). What should I be afraid of?

VITALY. Well... that I'll get drunk and start hitting on you.

JOAN (*smiling*). First you try, and then I'll be afraid.

VITALY. You be careful... I'm that kind of guy. Impulsive.

He pours vodka into their shot glasses.

VITALY. You've got good vodka, Joan. And you're a good lady. Everything is just so, with you – your skin, your curves, your entourage...

room itself. The main advantage, other than putting the focus on Joan's character, is a further opportunity to create a sense of Vitaly's way of talking – that he is self-consciously attempting to speak in a trendy and humorous manner, in the hope of being perceived by others as younger than his real age.

JOAN. I try. I make my own fate.

VITALY. Joanie¹⁴ – let's drink to your good fortune.

They clink glasses. They drink.

JOAN. And the next one is for you!

VITALY. What about me?

JOAN. We'll drink for you. So that everything in your life falls into place and multiplies.

VITALY. Oh! *Multiply*? You'll never make enough to feed my guzzlers. My son's planning to get married – he comes running: 'Dad, a flat!' Just two years ago, I bought him a one-bed flat – eighty square metres. It's not enough, he needs three rooms and a hundred and fifty square metres minimum. We found one – a hundred and seventy square metres – not far from the centre. It needs furnishing as well. My daughter's a student – also comes running – 'dad, a Lamborghini'. My one joy is my baby girl – three years old. I come in from work – she throws her hands in the air and runs straight to me. She doesn't need anything. You go into the toy shop after work and there's a doll, or you buy some colouring-in books, and she's happy. Do you know what my daughter's like, Joan?

JOAN. How did we get onto children? Let's talk about... I don't know, music or, what else, theatre...

VITALY. I don't go to the theatre.

JOAN. Me neither.

VITALY. Problem! Or what's that thing they say now? Road block! Any other ideas?

JOAN. Just not about work.

VITALY. Absolutely not.

JOAN. Shall we drink then? To you!

Vitaly pours vodka into their glasses. Joan and Vitaly clink glasses and drink. Silence.

VITALY. But, tell me, though, Joan – how's life for you?

JOAN. *How's life*? Life's good, as you can see. I have eight rooms, three here, five on the first floor. I don't go up there. It's only the cleaner who goes up there – to clean. What else? I ordered the chandelier from Italy.

VITALY. But what do you do outside of work? I mean, how do you relax?

JOAN. *Relax*? (*She thinks about it.*) Well, I guess, I work all the time. I can't remember if I went to the toilet today or not, and you're asking me about time off! It's not possible!

¹⁴ The Russian term is 'Zhannochka' ['Жанночка'] – an affectionate diminutive for Joan. In Russian, the use of this diminutive suggests tenderness or sexual intent on the part of Vitaly. Another viable translation would be to omit the name altogether, and simply use a tender term, 'sweetie', 'honey' and so on.

Well, I'm relaxing with you today. That's important too – romance. What else?
Sometimes I read journals...

VITALY. Women's glossies?

JOAN. Yeah sure. It's called *The Economist*.¹⁵

VITALY. I hope you don't knit?

JOAN. No. Why?

VITALY. Nothing, just...

JOAN. No, I don't knit. I also don't watch TV. I don't like it. It's just a load of crap. The news is a lie, TV-series are a lie – life just isn't like that... It's all made-up. I don't believe in it.

VITALY. Sport?

JOAN. No, I don't like sport either. My back hurts after work.

VITALY. Shall we drink?

He pours. They drink.

JOAN. Have something to eat, Vitaly, take some fish and gherkins.

VITALY. I'm eating, Joanie. And you? Why aren't you eating?

JOAN. I don't like to. I only drink vodka in its natural state. Without *canapés*. That's how I was taught, as a kid.

VITALY. You had a good childhood, evidently.

JOAN. I can't complain.

VITALY. You know, I've been thinking about that – we had nothing when we grew up. No computers, none of these games. But we lived, somehow. But now! I went to the shop¹⁶ with my daughter, recently, when we were... hanging. Radio-controlled technology it's called. There's everything under the sun! Flying helicopters! Submarines! Robots which sing! It's all like in real life!

JOAN. Children's products are very profitable right now. Children are in vogue right now.

¹⁵ The newspaper referred to is *Kommersant*. *Den'gi* [Коммерсант', Деньги] which literally means *Trader. Money*. This publication is credited, by its owners, as being the first popular economic weekly in Russia (first issued in 1993). Source: <<http://www.kommersant.com/about.asp>> [accessed 9 June 2015].

¹⁶ Vitaly says 'v etot... v magaz' [в этом... в магаз]: another instance of Vitaly purposefully using a youth term to appear trendy. 'Magaz' is a shortened form of 'magazin' [магазин]. Both versions mean 'shop' but the shortened form 'magaz' is borrowed from criminal slang in Russian (which has now entered a more mainstream colloquial usage). I have not been able to find a direct equivalent translation. Instead I have attempted to achieve the same effect by adding a phrase which is not in the original, 'when we were... hanging loose,' borrowing from international youth slang. There are many alternatives for 'hanging' including 'chilling out', 'chillaxing', 'vibing' and so on. Sources: <http://argo_ru.academic.ru/3253/магаз>; <<http://onlineslangdictionary.com/meaning-definition-of/chill-out>> [accessed 10 June 2015].

VITALY. My daughter and I bought all sorts of things – two helicopters, a boat and a moon rover. We try them out before bed. My daughter’s called Varushka. She’s Varvara. Varvara Vitalievna. Three years old. She’s such a little princess.

JOAN. I can put some music on.

VITALY. Yes, music, yes – what an¹⁷ idea! Let’s have a dance, Joanie. Physical contact – and that’ll be that! Which music do you like most?

JOAN. I don’t know. (*Thinking about it.*) I like Pugacheva. I used to like a lot of things but I can’t remember anymore. Allegrova as well...

VITALY. Shall we drink?

Vitaly and Joan drink. Joan switches on the music player, puts on a record onto the record player. Pugacheva sings.

VITALY. Oh! Pugacheva-aaa! (*He sings along quietly.*) Shall we dance?

Vitaly goes over to Joan and offers his hand. Joan stands up. They dance awkwardly in the middle of the room. The song comes to an end. Joan sits down again.

VITALY. You know what, I actually love this life. The world is beautiful – isn’t that true, Joanie?

JOAN. Probably...

VITALY. Beautiful, against all the odds. I never loved anyone, Joan. I hardly remember my son when he was small. My older daughter – she was small just a moment ago, and suddenly now she’s twenty. She grew up, in a flash. Somehow it all just passed me by. But my Varushka, Varushka is my miracle of miracles. I remember her every day, every moment. Doesn’t matter what anyone says to me... They can say, ‘It’s wrong of you, you’re a bad father, treating one this way and the others that way.’ But I can admit it to myself, I know that I only love Varushka. These are streetwise kids, give them a roof and wheels then send them on their way – they understand everything better than me. But Varushka’s only three, she’s my little munchkin.¹⁸ A ray of light has beamed right into my life. Come on, Joan, let’s drink for our children!

Pause. Joan is flustered, she straightens her hair.

JOAN. I don’t have children, Vitaly.

VITALY. Oh. Really? Sorry.

JOAN. Why? Why are you sorry? I don’t like children.

¹⁷ Rehearsal room observation: I noticed that it is common in Russia to use ‘such’ [‘*такой*’] before a noun, implying a non-specified adjective. It sounds more natural in translation to supply an adjective from colloquial English such as ‘great’ (although alternatives might be ‘fab’ to indicate Vitaly’s desire to replicate youth slang, not always successfully, and so on). However, the more foreign-sounding ‘What an idea!’ is my favourite option because it retains a sense of difference and foreignness, as well as using linguistic idiosyncrasy to portray Vitaly as somewhat eccentric.

¹⁸ Vitaly uses the term ‘knopka’ [‘*кнопка*’] which literally means a ‘button’, and is a humorous term referring to a small woman or child. Alternative translations are ‘my little pumpkin’, ‘my sweetie pie’, and so on.

VITALY. Not even a bit?

JOAN. Not even a bit. I'm indifferent.

VITALY. Yeah. That happens.

Pause.

JOAN. Maybe we should just drink?

VITALY. To friendship, crossing arms?¹⁹

JOAN. Well, let's see.

They drink. Vitaly has a bite to eat.

VITALY. I don't love my wife, you know, Joan. She's an old frump. She doesn't need anything. She sits down by the TV and says 'I love to knit'. She also says, 'when your hands are busy, television is fodder for the brain.' She's younger than me, Joan, but she looks like my mum. She has no interests. She loves shopping. But only for the house. She never treats herself, you know? Only things for the house. She says she gets tired of Varushka, too. She seems old beyond her years. But how old is she really? She's forty-eight!

JOAN. Why did you marry her?

VITALY. The thing is she wasn't always like that. She had breasts – and legs... oh those legs! She was obnoxious – playing hard to get. But I was like: I'm going to get my way, come what may.²⁰ I broke a jar of oil on purpose, outside her flat. She slipped when I was standing next to her, so I jumped over and held her. There aren't any tickets at the box office for the cinema: who has some? Vitaly does. You can't buy jeans anywhere and the touts are hiking the prices. Who's going to give her jeans? Vitaly will. She had such long legs – just like Varushka's Barbie doll.

JOAN. I see.

VITALY. Yes, I've been kicking myself my whole life because of those legs. I married the legs but I had to live with the person. We used to fight, really fight, not only the dishes but chairs would go flying. But suddenly we had two kids, so we kept on living. I mean, we just snapped at each other,²¹ we didn't have screaming rows. Then the children grew

¹⁹ Vitaly uses the term 'bruderschaft' ['брудершафт'], a German word borrowed by Russian, to indicate 'drinking for friendship' (or literally 'drinking for brotherhood') which includes crossing arms and, often, exchanging kisses as well as switching to the informal form of address. In fact, Vitaly and Joan are already on informal terms, addressing each other in the informal second person singular 'ty' ['ты'], rather than 'vy' ['вы'].

²⁰ Vitaly uses an expression 'ne nyt'em, tak kataniem' ['не нытьем, так катанием'] which literally means 'if not by groaning then by riding', but figuratively means 'come what may'. Alternative translations, which capture the spirit of the original would be 'come Hell or high water', 'by hook or by crook', 'one way or the other', and so on.

²¹ The original is 'mychim tol'ko, ne dergaemsa' ['мычим только, не дергаемся'] which literally means 'we just moaned, we didn't create a disturbance'. I have employed the verb 'to snap' which has an oblique association with animals (dogs and crocodiles), thereby retaining a degree of the vivacity of the original Russian idiom.

up. I was planning to leave her. I fell in love with a woman from PR, a young woman – she smashed a vase in my office. She knocked it over, by mistake. The vase was in pieces obviously. It was some Japanese shit, some flower arrangements. But that girl loved me – I mean, I wasn't blind, I saw it. Talenka she was called.²² It was love – that's what we had, the whole package, dates and meetings – sex in the lunch breaks. And then suddenly my old lady was pregnant.²³ At forty-five years old, for crying out loud! So, we did the rounds to all the doctors, the doctor says – 'everything's possible.' We gave him money, so he got to work and did all the tests – relentless observations. She gave birth – a natural one by the way. She says it was actually kind of easy. It was only afterwards she became very flabby. But that's another issue. I was really annoyed with her all the time. I thought, 'fine – I'll wait... and then what? I'm not sentenced to her for life. I'll leave her everything. I'll give her what she needs for the child – a nanny, obviously – and I'll pay for everything.' And then they bring her over. Varushenka. I didn't understand straight away. There's a bundle lying in a swaddle. 'Well, here's your child,' they tell me, 'you're a third-time father.' I sat with my relatives and had a drink. I'm on tenterhooks, 'I'll secretly write to my girl, "tomorrow", I'll write "we'll see each other, so don't miss me".' Then we went to bed. Varushka was in the bed next to me. I'm lying there, thinking, 'what sort of an idiot am I that I live my life not feeling a damn thing. My own daughter is lying next to me, and I'm planning to run away from her to another girl.' But then I think, 'so what', I think, 'I mean, what we have is love. Let me finally live in happiness'. Then I think, 'she'll grow up without me'. The older ones grew up and I was never home, I was always stuck at work. 'And this one will grow up too', I think to myself. 'I won't abandon her. I'll just live separately.' And then from her cot, I hear Varushenka sigh so quietly in her sleep. Just like... 'ah'... And it was so childish, and so meaningful. And that's it... And then I understand that there's no more love for me, no more girl from PR. There will only be Varushenka, my little daughter. Because there's no-one dearer to me in life than her. Because her one and only sigh suddenly became more important to me than everything on earth. You won't believe me when I say this but then I cried for the first time in my life. The last time I cried I was six, when my new ball went under a car... but that doesn't count.

Pause.

JOAN. And what happened to the girl?

VITALY. Nothing. She's probably happy right now somewhere or other. I fired her without providing any explanation. My heart was breaking into pieces. But I didn't have a choice. I had no options, as they say now.

JOAN. It happens...

VITALY. I don't regret it, you know, Joan. I don't regret a thing. I've got women. And different pleasures. I come in from work, Varushka and I have dinner and we play. I give

²² Talenka is a common nickname for Natalia.

²³ Vitaly uses the term 'moya' ['моя'], literally 'my'. The possessive pronoun 'my' in English requires a noun, unlike in Russian. Alternative translations are 'my wife', 'my other half' and so on.

her a bath, I read her a bed-time story, she loves Karlsson²⁴ and Pushkin's fairy tales. She's a clever girl, no? She already understands Pushkin, can you imagine? Then I put her to bed. And after that – I'm free. That's the understanding I have with my wife – we each have our own lives. We haven't spoken at all in two years. Not at all. We don't say a word to each other the whole week.

JOAN. That must be hell, I suppose?

VITALY. Hell or no, it's hard to say but we're used to it. I mustn't get old, Joan. Varushka will go to school and they'll say to her – 'is that your grandfather who collects you?' Then she'll be ashamed of me. I must avoid that at all costs, Joan. I won't let anyone do that to me. I'll do everything so everyone can see – I'm her father, not that person over there. If needs be, I'll learn all the tricks. Fashion, too, and I'll get a facelift if I have to.

JOAN. Yes... Children – they're really something...

VITALY. I'll look younger than any of the youngsters. So my Varushka will be proud of me! So she can tell everyone – 'that's not an old man, it's my young father coming over!' And then everyone will see! It's Varushka's father! So young! She'll grow a bit older, I'll pick her up and we'll go and build a home in Italy, and that's where we'll live! And we won't take any of them with us. We'll go away just the two of us! Do you understand me, Joan?

JOAN. Perhaps I should put some coffee on?

VITALY. You – *only* you understand me, Joanie. You are kith and kin to me! (*He puts out his arms to Joan.*)

JOAN. I'll put the coffee on.

Joan leaves. Vitaly reaches for the iPhone, he searches for something on it. Joan comes back in.

JOAN. How do you take it? Strong, with frothy cream, with sugar?

VITALY. Come here, Joanie.

Joan goes over to Vitaly.

JOAN. Maybe it's time to put on some other music? I have one other record, it's called the romantic collection.

Vitaly puts his arm around Joan's waist.

²⁴ *Karlsson on the Roof* (1955) is a story by Swedish writer Astrid Lindgren: 'In Russia Karlsson on the Roof is the most popular character of them all. With his irreverent attitude toward the establishment, he probably had a very important function to fill in the former Soviet Union. It was a place where Lindgren became, more than anybody else did, "the people's author". Boris Pankin, the Soviet Ambassador in Stockholm for a few years at the beginning of the eighties, told her that there were two books which could be found in most Russian homes, namely the Bible and *Karlsson on the Roof*. "How remarkable", said Astrid Lindgren, "I had no idea the Bible was that popular.'" Source: <<http://www.astridlindgren.com/en/characters/karlsson-roof>> [accessed 27 July 2015].

VITALY. Now I'm gonna to switch on *my* music,²⁵ Joanie.

JOAN. Okay... I wouldn't mind dancing to some slow music...

VITALY. Just hold on... What a song – I've got tears in my eyes.

The iPhone is playing "The Tired Toys Are Sleeping".²⁶

VITALY. My Varushenka falls asleep listening to this song. She shuts her eyes, but she's so sneaky, she peeks to check – is her daddy sitting next to her or not. She hawkishly watches that her daddy doesn't go anywhere until she falls asleep. But actually I'm not planning to... I'm at my post, guarding her sleep. She's got these little dimples on her cheeks, and her sweet hair is so soft and shiny like feathers... I've never seen hair like that on any child...

With that, Vitaly starts intoning loudly, trying to sing all of the words of the song. Joan goes into the kitchen. She picks up the phone and dials a number.

JOAN. Hello. Number 12, Karl Marx Street. Please come immediately. Destination? He'll tell you that himself. (*She ends the call.*)

She looks out of the window. Outside is the night, the streetlights, adverts, sounds of passing cars, the shouting of drunk young people. Life is everywhere.

JOAN. Well, you're a real idiot, Joan...

Joan gets a pack of cigarettes and a lighter out of the kitchen cabinet. She lights up.

4.

The rented flat – Katia and Andrei. Katia and Andrei sit on the sofa, snuggled up to each other. Andrei has a book on his knees, a piece of paper lies on the book. Andrei is sketching something on this paper.

ANDREI. So, in this corner, the nursery...

KATIA. I still can't believe that we'll have a flat. Somehow it's so unreal. I lived at home in one room with my mum, then four of us in one room in the hostel, and now – our own kitchen, our own bedroom, our own balcony... We can walk around naked all day long if we want, and nobody will say a word...

ANDREI. Count me in!

KATIA. We can leave the dishes overnight and wash them in the morning. I've always hated washing dishes, even as a child. And all because of that idiotic simple law – *you*

²⁵ Rehearsal room change (for rhythm): word order changed from 'Now I'm going to switch my music on, Joanie.'

²⁶ The name of the song has been translated directly from the original 'Spat ustalye igrushki' ['Спят усталые игрушки']. This song is played at the end of the Russian children's programme 'Good Night, Children!' ['Спокойной Ночи Малышу!'] which was first broadcast in 1964 and continued to be aired when this play was written (2013).

ate so *you* tidy up after yourself. When people say that, I always think I'm at a camp²⁷ or at school.

ANDREI. I'm the opposite. I was always the first to run into the kitchen to do the washing up and to cook, and I knitted with my grandma, different scarves and socks. And even a sweater once too! A red one with stripes. Even my grandma was surprised.

KATIA. You knitted it yourself? Seriously?

ANDREI. Yeah. I'd come back from school, we'd eat and then I'd go into my grandmother's room – she had all these different threads on a low table, and also wool and knitting needles – it was fun! She'd tell me stories from her life and I'm listening and knitting, no need for TV or anything like that. Then we'd go to the kitchen to make dinner. We'd make dinner, and then sit there a bit more, drinking tea. Then mum would come in with my old man. We'd all have dinner together and then I'd go off again to knit in my grandma's room. I'd just keep doing it till they made me do my homework. The only thing is my old man would swear at me for not making friends with the lads, and for growing up with a woman. But my grandma and my mum liked it. Mum actually thought that I'd stay living with them, that I'd never go anywhere, because I was so good around the home and I could think for myself, not like the other lads.

KATIA. So why did you leave?

ANDREI. There was no work for us in the village. And somehow I didn't want to go to college in Ishim. And then my dad started pressuring me – 'you should prove you're a real man, achieve something in life.' More or less chased me out with his fists while my mum and grandma weren't looking. I didn't want to leave, didn't want to make something of my life – I didn't really understand, achieve what exactly, you know? But the fist is hammering down on your table – 'go and do something'. My old man's strict, you can't talk sense to him. I decided – I'll come here, well there are all sorts of options, here... I tried to get in to university – but somehow couldn't get a free place. I'm not sure of this but probably all the places were offered to those who could pay for them... or maybe I'm just stupid.

KATIA. In my last year at school, my mum went and beat me with a broom so I'd study. She said 'you, my daughter, are an idiot – so learn everything by heart'. She stood next to me with my school books and checked. She said 'let's make sure something works out for you in life'. Well, things did go well in my second year at university... (*She strokes her tummy.*) I was afraid to apply to university, what a nightmare. I even got this nervous tick. But the worst of all was in the autumn, when I arrived with my mum, she helped me settle into the dormitory and then went back home that evening. I just lay on the bed and sobbed – that it was so dark outside and she'd left and I was all by myself in this huge and ugly town.... on a squeaky bed – with three bags and no other neighbours who had arrived yet. There was a shopping centre outside the window, all lit up, and I'm lying in this dark room, all skinny and tiny, and I couldn't even move it was all so horrible.

²⁷ The original is equally ambiguous in the original, as it is in translation. A 'camp' [*лагерь*] in Russian can mean a children's holiday camp or a prison camp.

ANDREI. My poor bag lady! Pity that I wasn't with you then.

KATIA. Yes! (*Teasingly hits Andrei's shoulder*). Where were you then?

ANDREI. Well... Where was I? I was working, probably. And I was thinking – somewhere my kindred soul²⁸ is walking around these streets.

KATIA. You thought that, but you were living with whoever it was...

Andrei doesn't answer Katia.

KATIA. My nerves were so worn down because of her – she's all alone over there, the poor thing... She's not poor! You said it yourself – she's rich.

ANDREI. Don't start, okay? She's a good person, just not right for me, okay? Things can't always be cut off so easily. I did come to you, though.

KATIA. You did.

ANDREI. So, let's keep going... Here's our kitchen. How many doors do we need? Two – do you think? One into the hallway, the other into the living room. Let's draw it. Two doors... Here and here.

KATIA (*touching her tummy*). Oh...

ANDREI. 'Oh' what?

KATIA. It's just strange the way he's kicking me... We should have done that expensive ultrasound yesterday. What if suddenly...? I'm scared, you know.

ANDREI. Monday. It's the weekend now. I've sent my CV around to a thousand firms... They'll call on Monday, I'll start work on Tuesday... I'll ask straight away for an advance. You can get it done on Wednesday.

KATIA. It's still a long time till Wednesday...

ANDREI. Well, be patient... You realise that if I hadn't put all the money into this construction, we wouldn't be holding the plans to the flat in our hands right now. We'll get the money. We'll get it on Wednesday. We'll do all the ultrasounds you need, bag lady, and we'll get you checked out from head to toe. And in half a year we'll move into our new place...

KATIA. Andrei, when are we going to get married?

ANDREI. Give birth and then we'll get married. What sort of wedding would it be with a big fat tummy?

KATIA. No, that's not the right way. A child but no wedding – they'll call him a bastard.

²⁸ An alternative translation, which sounds more idiomatic in English than the literal translation 'kindred soul' would be 'soulmate'. However, there is a danger of normalizing ideas which may seem 'foreign' to British audiences, thereby glossing over cultural difference. In this case, the Russian tendency to speak in everyday – or at least non-religious – contexts of the 'soul' offers, in my view, a useful counterpoint to British culture, while remaining semantically clear.

ANDREI. But marrying with a big fat tummy – they'll call it a shotgun wedding.

KATIA. I was thinking perhaps we could have the wedding in my village? We don't need to splash out on *chic* wedding like rich people, do we? We'll just set out a nice meal, sit down and switch on the music.

ANDREI. I was thinking – we'd do it in the new flat. A housewarming and a wedding together.

KATIA. How could it be a housewarming? No tables, no chairs, no dishes – like tramps – we'd be drinking from plastic glasses. But in the village, my girlfriends would come and they'd see that I'm in a white dress...

ANDREI. Then better in my village, it's cheaper to bring your mum over, than bringing my lot to yours.

KATIA. Sure, why not! And my mum can make my dress herself, so we don't waste anything at the shops.

ANDREI. My grandma can also do it. Do you know what a great dressmaker she is?

KATIA. So, we'll have the child and then immediately get married?

ANDREI. Immediately.

KATIA. Yay! (*Hugs Andrei.*) So, we need to give our notice at the registry right away!

ANDREI. We'll go tomorrow.

KATIA. So that means, I can call mum and tell her I'm getting married?

ANDREI. That's what it means.

KATIA. Give me the phone – there's no money on mine.

Andrei hands his phone to Katia, Katia dials a number.

KATIA. Hi! Mama? It's me! Mama, I'm getting married! Of course, to Andrei, my Andrei! He's the best! He bought us a flat! I'm not on edge, I'm just happy! Seriously, he bought one!

5.

Meanwhile, in Joan's flat, a bout of binge-drinking is in full flow. Joan and her employees, Vika and Olga, sit in the living room. It's evident that Olga – a woman well over thirty – is very business-like, by nature she's a careerist and a real bitch. Vika, the youngest in the group, is twenty-seven. Vika's in her prime and she's somewhat bored in the company of Joan and Olga – she'd prefer more active entertainment than binge-drinking with these lonely women.

OLGA. Yes, Joan Georgievna, that's too true. I don't even want to be in a relationship – it's just one big headache. It's slavery – and I don't wish that on anyone. My mum suffered her whole life with my stepfather. It was only after he died – she could breathe

freely. The fact that she cried for him for three years – that's called depression.... because he drank – and that creates a bad energy.

JOAN. Bastard!

OLGA. The genuine article.

VIKA. More vodka for you, Joan Georgievna?

JOAN. Pour away.

Vika pours vodka into their shot glasses.

JOAN (*lifting her shot glass*). A toast, ladies!

OLGA. Be my guest, dear Joan Georgievna!

JOAN. Let's drink to our fortunate lives and also to men – they're all bastards – but also here's to their students. To the hounds and their bitches! Because we're proud and we have no need of any animals in our lives!

OLGA. What a beautiful toast!

They clink glasses and drink.

OLGA. This is really nice, ladies, don't you think? I feel so at ease sitting here with you, Joan Georgievna.

JOAN. And the call boys will be here any minute now.

OLGA. Call boys?

JOAN. Call boys.

OLGA. Joan Georgievna, isn't that a bit –

JOAN. Relax, it'll be fine...

VIKA. Joan Georgievna, I'm sorry but I can't, my fiancée is at home waiting for me.

OLGA. Vika!

JOAN. Silence! I invited you as a free woman, free in all respects. To hell with your fiancée, admittance to my home is strictly on one condition: presentation of a passport unsullied by a dirty stamp!

Joan stands up and looks drunkenly at Olga and Vika.

JOAN. I'm going to show you something now, ladies...

She leaves the room.

OLGA. Vika, you can see that Joan Georgievna is suffering, why did you tell her about your fiancée?

VIKA. This is crazy. Everyone knows that Volodya and I are getting married soon.

OLGA. Everyone knows – so why bring it up?

VIKA. Olga Andreevna, I believe that I have the right to a personal life beyond the scope of corporate ethics.

OLGA. You do – but it's the whole department who will lose our bonuses. Don't you see that she's in pain, that she's suffering? Don't pour salt on her wound, Vika. Or that salt could end up flying into our eyes later on!

VIKA. That Andrei of hers – what a bastard. How on earth did she find him?

OLGA. Maybe he's a bastard, maybe not – but he jumped ship at exactly the right time, the clever bastard! It couldn't possibly have worked out better. My nephew graduated with an economics degree this year.

VIKA. And?

OLGA. And! I became the deputy, which means my position is available... Just don't tell anyone. Sashka's like a son to me. I love him as if he were my own child. Do you know how clever he is? An Einstein! He's obviously not from my sister – that's my genes. He even has a birthmark on his cheek – the spitting image of me!

VIKA. Right. Someone studies for five years, chained to their desk the whole time. And someone else just buys their diploma – just by sleeping with an old lady!

OLGA. A very old lady!

The women giggle, covering their mouths with their palms. Olga suddenly puts her finger to her lips, indicating to Vika – that's enough, let's be quiet now. Joan comes into the room. She's wearing a long, semi-transparent dress with crystals. She has a bag of clothes in her hands.

JOAN. Time to get changed, ladies! I've got a few rags here! And feather boas and all sorts of things... Come on, come on, don't just sit there, get a move on! Well, Olya? Here – a corset and a miniskirt! Put them on! You'll be our *ingénue*!

OLGA (*giggling*). Joan Georgievna, I've never done this before! What are you up to?

JOAN. Why are you wetting yourselves, ladies? Or are we not having a party?

OLGA. It's a party all right, Joan Georgievna! I'm not backing out – I've already pressed the trigger!

She takes the clothes offered and gets changed.

JOAN. And you, Vika, what do you want to be? A cat? A nurse? A schoolgirl? An extremely old lady!

Joan bursts into drunken laughter.

VIKA. I really can't, Joan Georgievna. I really do approve of all of this but can I look Volodya in the eyes then?

JOAN. Volodya? We'll bury him in the backyard! Get changed!

VIKA. You see, I'm from an old-fashioned family, my dad was very strict...

JOAN. We'll sell your dad for a few hats! Any other questions?

VIKA. No, dear Joan Georgievna, I understand that this is a game. It's a game... is that right? And were you joking about the call boys?

JOAN. Who's joking around here? Get changed – come on! Or else I'm going to get angry and offended!

Vika looks at Olga for support but she is standing there, changed into her corset and chicken-coloured miniskirt.

OLGA. Vika! Our dear Joan Georgievna is joking! Come on, have a sense of humour – don't let your team down!

VIKA. Yes! I realised you were teasing us, Joan Georgievna! I understood straight away that this is a big joke!

Vika changes into a negligée made of black and pink lace.

VIKA. The thing is, Joan Georgievna, everything's new to me because I only joined your company recently. Yes, it's all new to me! Because no other company gave me the chance to work with people as wonderful as you and Olya!²⁹ So lively! So simple and honest...

JOAN (*contemptuously*). Oh my God... The mares are braying!

Olga laughs. Vika is forced to laugh at herself with Olga.

JOAN. Are you offended? I can see it in your eyes – you're offended. Don't be, Vika – you're a very professional wench.³⁰ I've been thinking and this is what I decided – Olga became my deputy and her place is now available. I don't want to take an outsider. (*She pours vodka into their shot glasses.*) So, here's to your promotion, Vikulya!³¹

VIKA. Oh lovely Joan Georgievna, I don't even know what to...³² That's such amazing news for me! It's such an opportunity, such a sudden step up on my career ladder, my lovely Joan Georgievna... I really...

JOAN. Let's drink!

They women clink glasses and drink. Olga curls her lips contemptuously.

JOAN. And now I'm going to put on some music for us, ladies! Get moving! It's my favourite song!

²⁹ 'Olya' is a diminutive of 'Olga', indicating an affectionate attitude towards her by the speaker.

³⁰ Joan uses the word 'devka' ['девка'], which has a dual meaning as a derogatory term for 'girl' and to denote a 'prostitute'. The degree of rudeness with which Joan is addressing Vika is difficult to transpose into English because of that ambiguity in the original. I have opted for 'wench' – the closest equivalent which I have been able to identify. 'Wench' is a derogatory term for 'girl' or 'woman' but has archaic links to 'prostitute' which many British audiences will be aware of.

³¹ Vikulya is an affectionate diminutive of Vika (which is, in turn, short for Victoria).

³² Rehearsal room change (for clarity): addition of 'what to'.

*Joan goes over to the music centre and puts on a record. The song starts: “Young lieutenant, young boy, everybody wants to dance with you, if you knew a woman’s longing for a strong shoulder...” etc.*³³

Joan dances. She drags Vika and Olga into the centre of the room. Vika and Olga are not confident, they pretend to dance, shifting from one foot to the other.

Suddenly Vika lifts up one leg unnaturally high and demonstrates a whole series of manoeuvres resembling acrobatic exercises.

OLGA. Vika, what are you doing?

VIKA. It’s my yoga!

OLGA. Did you learn that for Volodya?

VIKA. To hell with Volodya!

The women dance ecstatically. The doorbell rings.

JOAN. That’s the boys, ladies! Shall I open it?

VIKA. Let’s do it!³⁴

6.

Joan’s bedroom. The television is on, but without sound. A tall, dark-haired lad is lying on the bed – a call boy. Joan is walking around the room.

JOAN. So, do you understand? It’s 1991, the collapse of the USSR. I’m still an idiot at that point, twenty-nine years old. No work, no money. And what beauty!... Tights which I re-darned a hundred and fifty times! Do you know what tights meant to me? And mascara? People were giving half their salary for a pair of nylon tights – and I didn’t even have a salary. The government sold us down the river!³⁵ I lived in some sort of dump,³⁶ it’s scary to even think about it! I bet you’ve never even seen that kind of communal apartment! There was me and one old lady plus her daughter, all living in one room. The old lady was bed-bound, she needed to be looked after. Well, I looked after that old hag in exchange for a folding bed and some warmth. She kept planning to die. ‘You just try it!’ – I told her, ‘When you die, they’ll throw me out on the street! That very second! Until I get work, don’t even dare think about dying.’ She did well, she lasted long enough... She was a good old woman, may she rest in peace! She used to call me her

³³ *Young Lieutenant* by Irina Allegrova (1992).

³⁴ Vika uses the term ‘zaprosto’ [‘запросто’] which is an adverb denoting action taken lightly, without hesitation or pre-planning. Alternative translations depend on the perception of Vika’s character or manner of speaking, so for example options relying on English slang idiom may include ‘absolutely!’, ‘it’s a no-brainer!’, ‘yeah!’ or ‘hell yeah!’.

³⁵ Joan uses the verb ‘nadut’ [‘надуть’] which is slang for ‘to con’ or ‘to trick’. I have rendered this into an idiomatic expression to capture Joan’s anger, hinted at by the playwright’s placing of the verb ‘nadut’ at the start of the sentence in the most emphatic grammatical position. Alternative translations which derive from other interpretations (astonishment as much as anger, for example) may read ‘we were conned by the government’, ‘we were tricked by the government’ and so on.

³⁶ Joan uses the word ‘bomzhatnik’ [‘бомжатник’], meaning a ‘homeless shelter’, in its literal usage, or a ‘run-down place’, if used figuratively by the speaker.

'darling daughter'. What a fool! I think about it sometimes, I even feel a bit nostalgic. And that's how I lived for half a year. But then I think – 'better to hang yourself than rely on our government! You've got hands, you've got legs, you even appear to have a head on your shoulders!' So I had a go at some trading.³⁷ I found a university friend and he was involved in some business deals in trucking. I named my sum. Of course, he could see that I didn't have a penny³⁸ in my pocket. 'You'll fail, Joan', he told me, 'so I won't ask for interest but you'll owe me the money till your dying day.' 'Okay, my sweetheart', I whispered, 'hook me up with the right person, I need to borrow three thousand dollars from him,' He looked at me like a crazy person – 'you idiot, do you understand what these people are like?'³⁹ 'Any interest – I reply. 'It's not about that,' he says, 'if your deals fall through, it's not me, it will be the nasty toothy blokes. There will be one grave more on the earth,' he tells me. 'Or you'll have to pay it off by prostituting yourself!' 'I'm going to do it', I shout, 'I'll do whatever it takes, just introduce me!' Two days later, he comes for me. We drive off. I put on a long skirt so I'm not showing my tights. Even though I understand that I'm a fool, my legs are my trump card, what else have I got! But it's either my legs or the ripped tights – take your pick! We arrive. He sits. He watches. He thinks. His finger nails have been trimmed with a nail file. He acts like a big shot.⁴⁰ I can see from his eyes that he's wasting away. I start behaving like – I'm a real business woman. I look into his eyes and I don't falter in the slightest – a proper actress. I name-drop. I say 'I know such and such as well as...'. On the way over, my university friend had given me a short lecture on the town's most recent news. He kept looking me over and coughing. 'Good', I think, 'he's making himself out to be a big shot – and since he's doing that, he'll give me the money. For him, three thousand dollars is jack all.⁴¹ 'Okay,' he says. He names an insane interest rate. But I knew that if my deals work out, I'll pay him everything back in two days! He got his money out of a safe, licked his fingers and counted out the money. We get straight into the car and drive to Lower Uriupinsk.⁴² There are three lorries behind us! I'd never been to Lower Uriupinsk but I knew there

³⁷ Joan uses the phrase 'del'tse-delishchko' ['дельце-делишечко']; both words have origins in 'delo' meaning a deal or business. This idiosyncratic phrase implies a derogatory, albeit humorous, attitude towards the business being referred to. An alternative translation, to emphasise Joan's condescending attitude towards her own early years in business, would be 'street trading' or 'hawking'.

³⁸ Throughout the play, I have chosen to use 'penny' instead of 'kopeck'. My decision is influenced by the fact that kopecks (the equivalent of 'pence' in Russian currency) are used for their symbolic value in the play, rather than for a literal denomination of a financial sum.

³⁹ Rehearsal room change: 'who these people are?' replaced by a more natural sounding phrase in English 'what these people are like?'

⁴⁰ Joan uses the verb 'vazhnichat' ['важничать'] which means 'to act in a self-important manner'. I have rendered this into a more colloquial form, 'he acts like a big shot'. In my view, a literal translation would sound more bookish in English than in the original because it requires a phrase to achieve what is contained in a single word in Russian.

⁴¹ Joan uses the word 'fignia' ['фигня'] which means 'rubbish', 'nonsense' or 'nothing'. I have opted for American slang, 'jack all' which has come into common parlance and seems less specific to a geographical location than a British equivalent such as 'bugger all'. An alternative translation, opting for a more neutral variation, would be 'nothing'. 'Fignia' is only mildly rude so at the other extreme of the scale, 'fuck all', although possible, would seem to be an overly explicit translation.

⁴² The village of Uriupinsk is located in Western Russia, in the North-Western part of the Volgograd Oblast' [District], with approx. 39,200 inhabitants as of 1 December 2014. For Russian speakers, the name 'Uriupinsk' ['Урюпинск'] has a symbolic value, epitomising a distant countryside location (with both positive associations of rural bliss as well as negative connotations of uneducated inhabitants). Sources: Official site of Uriupinsk <<http://www.urupinsk.net/f>>; <http://russian_argo.academic.ru/13439/Урюпинск> [accessed 12 June 2015].

was a failing factory there, making bread products. We turn up. Oh my God! It's like I'd gone right back to my childhood – mud up to your knees. I walk into the factory and find the director. He's all over the place. Red eyes, a real drunk, screaming about politics. I buy three truckloads of macaroni from him, for a few pennies. While they're loading up the macaroni, we speed back to town in the car. I find a company. I sorted out everything beforehand – no jokers, just hard-workers. I turn up and right away I put my money on the table. 'You've got one night', I shout! I'd come up with the logo already, my friend graduated as a graphic designer, she did me a favour and made me this logo. There's this large American flag and in huge, bright red letters in English – 'Macaroni! Made in USA!' And next to it, for anyone who's uneducated – 'Made in the USA' but in Russian. Ten thousand packs! By four in the morning, all of the packaging was ready. I was all nerves – where are the trucks? Please God don't let anything go wrong! We arrive at my friend's garage. The trucks are there. There's a group of people – everyone wants to earn some money. My friend had been briefed earlier – I'd need people but he wasn't in the know about the essence of the matter. We're packing macaroni by hand until ten in the morning. I'm doing it too, with all of them. At eleven, we run the car into the town centre. And I think – 'this is it, Joan, your time has come. Let's see! It's all or nothing – prepare for the worst!' At first they were slow to start buying. One or two, then a dozen... By one o'clock, there was a crowd around us. People are surging forwards! They're taking ten to fifteen packs! I've got this story – that I just got back from America and these macaroni are a new brand, I tell them, 'you won't find macaroni like these anywhere – it's American food at its best'. There are grannies around us and old dears⁴³ with their children. One is shouting – 'put ten packs aside for me, I'm going to withdraw my savings and come straight back!' We sell the last hundred by seven in the evening and then I see them: here they come, the friendly lads! The leather jackets! The mafia! 'Let's wind this up,' I shout! I jump from the lorry. Into the car. And step on the gas. We go to the gangster and I pay the debt. His eyes dart around angrily – he got jack all from his percentage. He shakes my hand and the fat on his chin wobbles. 'You're wasting away', I think. 'You won't last a year.' Well, that was just an instinct I had. And I was right. They found him on the road, I was told – less than three months after that. Do you understand? I settle up with my university friend and we part ways like Scully and Mulder after their victory over the aliens.⁴⁴ Three days later, I have my own car and I live in a rented flat. The rest of the money – I put back into the business. Six months later, I have my own flat, an office in the centre, ads on TV. And you know, there was all sorts after that – I had an ugly fight with my workers, I drank glasses of vodka with gang leaders, I was sabotaged by the economic crime unit,⁴⁵ I was almost tried in court, I

⁴³ The word 'mamasha' [*'мамаша'*] has its roots in the word for 'mother' [*'мать'*] – although it may be used to indicate an older woman. According to the Ozhegov dictionary, the application of this term implies an affectionate attitude by the speaker. An alternative translation may render the term without using colloquial language, for instance: 'old mums with their children', 'mums with their kids' and so on. Source: <<http://dic.academic.ru/dic.nsf/ogegova/102854>> [accessed 8 June 2015].

⁴⁴ A reference to the X-files, an American television series (Fox, 1993-2002). The X-files were broadcast on REN-TV in Russia from 1997 to the time of writing (July 2015), rebranded as 'Secret materials' [*'Секретные материалы'*]. Source: <<http://ren.tv/o-kanale>> [accessed 27 July 2015].

⁴⁵ The reference is to the 'Otdel s ekonomicheskimi prestupleniami i protivodeistviia korruptsii' [*'Отдел по борьбе с экономическими преступлениями и противодействия коррупции'*], which is the division of the Russian Interior Ministry responsible for tackling corruption and fraud. Source:

barely survived assassination in 1995, I was robbed of every penny in 1997, then came the default⁴⁶ and I started again from scratch, and in 2005 I gave a bribe to the wrong person. There's been all sorts in my life. But even now I remember that night – we were travelling along the dark road into town. And my whole life was on a knife-edge, my whole life depended on those macaroni in that idiotic packaging! My heart is knocking and 'it's going to work out, it will work out!' keeps turning around my head. 'I'm clever, I'm strong, I'm daring, it's going to work out!' And I had so much strength in me, so much belief, such a strong animal instinct had awoken! I became a woman in that very moment, do you believe me? I felt such passion and ecstasy and adrenalin – I've never felt anything that intense with any man! A man will betray you, your work will burn down, and you've only got yourself to count on. If you're strong, you'll survive and race along the road at a hundred and twenty miles an hour,⁴⁷ and you'll be happy because you know without a doubt – it's all going to work out. Because you're first class, because success is yours, because you have the strength. Because you have yourself. Do you understand that? Do you understand?

The lad has been watching the television the whole time that Joan was talking.

LAD. Dammit, I can't bear it. SpongeBob⁴⁸ is so damn cool! How could anyone not watch the series – it's so wicked! It's such a cool cartoon, seriously...

Joan lies down on the bed next to the lad.

LAD. What do you want?

JOAN. Piss off!

The lad stands up, gets dressed and starts to leave.

JOAN. Wait!

The lad stops and looks at Joan.

JOAN. Am I old?

LAD. 'Course not – you're normal. Just like all middle-aged women.

JOAN. Get lost.

The lad leaves. Joan looks at the silent television. In the neighbouring room, Vika is sobbing, talking to someone on the phone.

VIKA. Wait, Volodenka. Where have you gone? To your mum? But why? It was a work meeting, just a work meeting! I'm so bored with them, they're old ladies, why would I

<https://mvd.ru/mvd/structure1/Glavnie_upravljenija/Glavnoe_upravlenie_jekonomicheskoi_bezop> [accessed 12 June 2015].

⁴⁶ Please see Chapter One – p. 40 – in my thesis for an explanation of the Russian default of 1998.

⁴⁷ Russia uses Imperial measurements so while the original refers to 'two hundred' ['*dvěcemu*'], i.e. 200 km an hour; the equivalent is approximately 120 miles an hour.

⁴⁸ SpongeBob Squarepants is an American animated series for television (Nickelodeon, 1999-ongoing at the time of writing, September 2017). It was broadcast on TNT in Russia from 1 September 2003 1997 to the time of writing (July 2015). Source:

<<http://gybka-bob.ru/premeri-v-rossii.html>> [accessed 27 July 2015].

start drinking with them?! Volodenka, it's just a work relationship! What? What boys, what? Are you out of your mind? It was a working evening! Yes, all night! That's true, I didn't warn you... But I couldn't, Volodenka! The old dragon was banging on all night, I couldn't even call you! Volodenka! I'm sorry! I'll come over right now! What boys? What are you talking about, darling? (*Pause.*) Call boys? What on earth...!!! Who called you? Volodya – it's a lie! Who called you? A woman's voice? Who? Who?! Volodya, don't hang up, I'm begging you... I'm coming over right now...

Evidently, the person on the other end of the line has hung up anyway. Vika sobs.

Joan smirks. She watches television.

End of the first act.

Act 2.

1.

Four months have passed.

Katia and Andrei are in the same flat. Daytime. Andrei sits on the sofa. He is holding a newspaper. He is talking on the phone.

ANDREI. Hello? Hello, I sent you my CV about the position of sales manager... What? Oh, you've already hired, have you? Okay, I see... (*He dials another number.*) Hello? Hello. You had an advert in the newspaper that you're looking for a manager ... Yes, of course I have a higher education! A distinction!⁴⁹ Five years' work experience. Twenty-eight. Last job – for the chain of shops 'Taste Sensation'.⁵⁰ Did you hear me? You'll call me back? Okay, I'll be waiting for your call... Has my number come up on your phone? Great, all the best – hopefully, see you soon! (*He ends the call.*) What a load of bullshit.⁵¹

Katia who is heavily pregnant, walks into the room.

KATIA. Have we run out of the cordiale in the jar?

ANDREI. There were only a few drops left, I drank it up.

⁴⁹ The phrase, in Russian, is 'red diploma' [*красный диплом*]. The official order from the Ministry of Education and Science – No. 364 from the 2 May 2012 – which outlines the criteria for evaluation of higher education state courses – does not use this term. However, a 'red diploma' refers popularly to a distinction grade because of the colour of the certificate awarded, and contrasts to a standard honours degree, a 'blue diploma' [*синий диплом*], in colloquial usage. Source: <<http://минобрнауки.рф/документы/2157/файл/447/12.04.24-порядок.выдачи.pdf>> [accessed 6 June 2015].

⁵⁰ The term in Russian is 'vkusniatina' [*вкуснятина*], a noun or predicate adjective which implies a good taste without specifying its subject, according to Efremova's *Contemporary Dictionary of the Russian Language*. So, literally, it could be translated as 'a delicacy'. The Russian word is more evocative than 'delicacy', in my view, which is why I have opted for a vivid term in English. However, an alternative translation would be 'Delicacies'. Source: <<http://dic.academic.ru/dic.nsf/efremova/147184/Вкуснятина>> [accessed 6 June 2015].

⁵¹ Andrei uses the word 'fignia' [*фигня*] which means 'rubbish', 'nonsense' or 'nothing'. I have opted for American slang, 'bullshit' which has come into common parlance in the UK and seems less specific to a geographical location than a British equivalent such as 'crap'. In fact, 'fignia' is a mild swear word, less explicit, in my view, than 'bullshit' or 'crap'. I have not been able to identify an English word which is a precise equivalent to 'fignia'. Another alternative would be to use a non-cursive word such as 'rubbish'.

KATIA (*sitting next to Andrei*). I want some cordiale.

ANDREI (*hugging Katia*). Be patient, bag lady. Daddy's getting set up with a job right now, and then we'll have tasty treats, and cordiale, and we'll have chicken...

KATIA. When exactly will you get a job?

ANDREI. I'll get one. I'll get one soon. How could I not get a job in this town? Come on! Everybody knows me. As soon as they hear the news that I don't have a job – they'll be falling over themselves.

KATIA. So call them – the people who are going to do the falling. 'Cos it's four months that they haven't heard...

ANDREI. Well, it's not how things are done, you see...

KATIA. And how are things done? The thing is... My mum called. She said she's not sending any more money. Mum also said that she's been supporting us for four months – like a Sherpa.⁵² She also said it's time for you to find work.

ANDREI. And what else did your mum say?

KATIA. What else? She also said she's not planning to feed a stranger, a healthy man who isn't able to feed himself. And she also said – get your things and come home to give birth.

ANDREI. Bag lady, everything will work out, these are just temporary setbacks... What a silly idea – to leave! Shall I make you some tasty macaroni with some yummy carrot?

KATIA. *No yummy carrot!*⁵³ Temporary setbacks? It's been four months of your temporary setbacks! I haven't had the ultrasound! I don't have winter boots! It's the second month of nothing but macaroni. You drank my cordiale!

ANDREI. You silly thing, at least we have our own flat! I bought it, do you understand? It may not be built yet, but it exists!

⁵² The expression used by Katia is 'like a barge-hauler along the Volga' [*как бурлак по Волге*]. This reference to an iconic Russian painting, called 'Barge-Haulers on the Volga' [*Бурлаки на Волге*] (1873) by Ilya Repin, metaphorically evokes a huge physical effort by workers subjugated to poor pay and working conditions.

⁵³ In the original, the dialogue repeats the verb 'to cook' in the infinitive form. So, literally, the exchange between Andrei and Katia reads 'ANDREI. Cook you some tasty macaroni with yummy carrot?/ KATIA. Do not cook!' [*Макароны тебе сварить по-вкусенькому, с морковочкой? / Не сварить!*]. It is less common to use repetition in English, where it can be avoided without grammatical ambiguity. So, Katia's reply could simply be translated as 'No!'. However, this simplification, while a valid option, has the disadvantage of missing the humorous effect of her reply (for the audience, rather than for the characters). After all, Katia could equally have replied 'no!' [*нет!*] in the original. Instead, Katia's repetition of 'Do not cook!' contains a more emphatic and emotive rebuttal of Andrei's intentions, including his tenderness towards her. I have attempted to render this into English by reiterating a phrase from Andrei's proposal, 'No yummy carrot!'

KATIA. *You silly thing,*⁵⁴ you don't have your own job yet and I'm about to give birth... What are we going to live on? My mum – you know she's struggling in her village as it is! Your parents are far away and pensioners!

ANDREI. Be quiet!

KATIA. Don't tell me to shut up!

ANDREI. Bag lady... What's up with you?

KATIA. I'm scared, Andrei. You think I'm a silly little thing, that I don't understand anything? But I understand everything. You're not being offered a job *not* because they haven't heard – because you're never going to be offered a job! On principle! Because you can't get a job, because they're not taking you, because you can't get one, and they're not taking you! Because you can't get one, you can't, and they're not taking you – you can't earn money for us, because they're not taking you, and I'm about to give birth, and they're not taking you, you're calling and they're not calling you back. And the landlady is threatening to kick us out! And she'll kick us out if this keeps going on... You drank my cordiale and I'm about to give birth and I don't know how we're going to manage and my mum's going to kill me because I never finished university and I gave birth and I've got a child and you can't even earn enough money for us to eat!!!

ANDREI. Shut up! Be quiet! Or I don't know wh-... Haven't I broken my back at work? And run around looking for work, left, right and centre?⁵⁵ Or haven't I worked, huh? I'll buy you your stupid cordiale, but don't talk to me like that! I'll go right now and bring you your money, since you're so fed up with it all, since you seem to need me only for that!

KATIA. Go then! Go on! Where will you go?

ANDREI. I'm going right now – and I'll get it!

KATIA. Go!

ANDREI. I'm going!

KATIA. Go!

Andrei goes into the hallway and puts on his shoes.

ANDREI. Katia, you'll have to eat your words, do you hear me?

⁵⁴ There is a play on words with 'zato' ['*зато*'] which has a dual meaning in Russian of 'at least' and 'however'. In a literal rendition, the exchange between Andrei and Katia reads 'ANDREI. You silly thing, at least ['zato'] we have our own flat! [...] / KATIA. However ['zato'], you don't have your own job yet and I'm about to give birth...' The effect of the repetition is, as above, a more emphatic and emotive rebuttal by Katia of Andrei's assertion. Since there is no equivalent conjunction in English with a dual meaning, I have replicated this effect by Katia's repetition of the phrase used by Andrei to describe Katia: 'you silly thing'.

⁵⁵ Andrei uses the phrase 'where should I run to stick up posters?' ['*Куда бежать листовки клеить?*'], a figurative expression meaning 'What should I do? Where should I go?', according to the Large Dictionary of Russian Proverbs ['*Большой словарь русских поговорок*']. Source:

<<http://dic.academic.ru/dic.nsf/proverbs/29204/куда>> [accessed 11 June 2015].

KATIA. Then I'll eat them! But first you have to go!

ANDREI. I'm out of here.

Andrei leaves, slamming the door. Katia stands there, very red in the face, and fuming. She touches her tummy and winces.

2.

Joan's flat.

Joan sits in her living room on the sofa, she is wearing glasses. Her legs are tucked under her and she is wrapped up in a warm blanket. There's a computer on Joan's knees and she's typing something very fast. She is moving her lips – making a mental calculation of something. The doorbell rings. Joan stands up, takes off her glasses and goes to open the door. On the threshold stands Andrei, of course. Joan is silent. She looks at Andrei. She is deciding something for herself.

JOAN (*finally, letting Andrei into the flat*). Hi, my love.

She kisses Andrei on the cheek. Andrei takes off his shoes, hesitantly.

JOAN. Are you hungry or did you eat in town?

ANDREI. Joan, I –

JOAN. I have pizza. I can make sandwiches. We could order something.

ANDREI. Joan, I have –

JOAN. What do you want? Pizza?

ANDREI. Yes. I –

JOAN. I'll heat it up. Where did you get that jacket? They still sell them in the markets, don't they? I thought their goods had become more upmarket.

ANDREI. Joan, I want to talk –

JOAN. Take it off.

ANDREI. What?

JOAN. Take your jacket off.

She hugs Andrei.

JOAN. Andrushenka, to walk around in a jacket like that – it's a crime. I mean, didn't I teach you anything? Come on, cast it off.⁵⁶ (*She takes Andrei's jacket off.*) Oh! And

⁵⁶ Joan uses the verb 'razoblachat'sia' ['разоблачатся'] which literally means 'to take off'. According to Efremova's Contemporary Dictionary of the Russian Language, this verb is antiquated. There are a range of translation options, to capture the old-fashioned and therefore grandiose nature of the word, including 'to doff', 'to discard', 'to shed' so on. I have chosen 'to cast off', given the association of religious redemption in the first scene when Joan referred to Andrei as 'my only salvation'. Source: <<http://dic.academic.ru/dic.nsf/efremova/234991/Разоблачатся>> [accessed 12 June 2015].

what's going on with your shirt?! It's dirty! It makes you look like a tramp. Take it off, quickly! Come on, come on. Let's wash some clothes for you and splash you into the bath and scrub you down. The water is warm and gentle, and we'll pour some scented bubble bath into it. I can rub your hands with a pumice stone if you want. Okay?

ANDREI. So, basically, my situation is that –

JOAN. My poor hungry boy, he's tired, he's been running around the town all day long... Come on, take off your clothes. While you're washing, I'll order from your favourite restaurant. Give me your shirt...

ANDREI (*taking off his shirt*). I've become so exhausted... Can you imagine how many I've called. Joan, I don't understand why they aren't taking me on....

JOAN. Take your socks off. You'll get cleaned up, then we'll have something to eat, you can have a rest while I rub your back and we talk about everything... You'll tell me everything – everything. What you were thinking, how much you missed me...

Andrei takes off his trousers and socks. Joan nudges him in the direction of the bathroom. Andrei goes into the bathroom. The sound of running water can be heard. Joan goes into her bedroom. She puts on her make-up in front of the mirror.

3.

Evening. Joan's bedroom. Andrei sits on the bed in his pyjamas. Joan sits next to him in a lace blouse. On the coffee table, there are plates with some half-eaten delicacies.

JOAN (*she wants to kiss Andrei*). Did you miss me?

ANDREI (*moving away from her*). Don't, Joan. I was thinking that we just need to talk. That basically we could even still be friends. That we're not strangers, so to speak...

JOAN. We're not strangers. Of course we're not! (*She hugs Andrei.*)

ANDREI. I've got problems, Joan.

JOAN. And I thought you missed me.

ANDREI. And I missed you, of course – that too...

JOAN. Kiss me.

Pause.

ANDREI. It's probably better not right away...

JOAN. What do you mean, right away? Do you think it's disgusting now to kiss me?

ANDREI. Of course, not, why would I...?

JOAN. Then kiss me.

ANDREI. I can't.

JOAN. Why not?

ANDREI. Because I can't...

JOAN. Do you see me differently now – just horribly ugly?

ANDREI. No, what's that got to do with it! You're beautiful! You're pretty! (*After a pause.*) But I can't.

JOAN. Hm, and you were saying, you missed me...

ANDREI. I did miss you, it's true... we're not strangers after all....! I just can't, but I'm not lying, I did miss you...

JOAN. Hold me.

Andrei awkwardly hugs Joan. Joan kisses Andrei in the corner of his lips.

ANDREI. Joan, don't...

Joan kisses Andrei again, this time she is more demanding. Andrei gives in, yields, returning Joan's kiss. Joan presses into Andrei and undresses him. She switches off the light. Some antics and indistinct whispering can be heard in the darkness. Suddenly, Andrei's phone lying on the bedside table starts to sing a happy melody and illuminates everything around it in a dim light.

JOAN. Don't answer it –

ANDREI. I have to.

JOAN. I said – don't answer it –

ANDREI. I'm going to –

JOAN. You'll call back later...

The phone falls silent but then starts ringing again.

ANDREI. I'm going to answer it, what if something has happened...?

JOAN. No!

ANDREI. I'll be back in one second...

He picks up the phone and answers the call, he goes into the room next door.

ANDREI (*on the phone*). Call the ambulance. I'll be there in ten minutes.

Andrei runs into Joan's bedroom.

ANDREI. Where are my things?!

JOAN. We'll get them from the mezzanine –

ANDREI. No. Where are *my* things? The ones I came in?

JOAN. They're drying in the dressing room.... What's happened?

Andrei runs out into the dressing room. He returns, fully dressed in his old clothes. Joan stands up and walks around the room.

JOAN. Andrusha, what's happened?

ANDREI. Katia's giving birth...! Joan, forgive me. Please give me some money. For a taxi and expenses. I'll pay everything back from my salary. 'Cos the buses aren't running anymore. And I don't have anything for the bus. And she's there, giving birth. Please.

Joan silently goes off somewhere. She returns with money and sticks it into Andrei's shirt pocket.

JOAN. I called out some rent boys, they took more than this but you're freelance, so that's probably enough for you?

ANDREI. I'll pay you back...

JOAN. Why? You don't need to pay it back, you worked honestly for that money.

ANDREI. I'll pay it back... I'll pay it back...

Andrei looks at Joan, it seems that he's about to start crying from shame, like a little boy. But remembering that he has no time to lose, Andrei runs out of the flat.

Joan stands there, as if turned to stone, following Andrei with her eyes. Then she shuts the door behind him.

4.

A cemetery. Rows of graves. As in a large city: junctions, roads and dead-ends. But instead of houses – graves. Crosses. Statues. Instead of cars – sweet wrappers which are blown along the paths by the wind. Instead of planes – large black crows with greedy and piercing eyes, living here thanks to the offerings which are left for the dead by the living guests. Joan walks around the graveyard, and then off to the far end of it. She stops by a majestic statue made of black granite. Joan is holding a large bouquet of flowers. She puts the flowers by the headstone.

JOAN. Hello, dad... I haven't come to see you for a long time. Since last year.

Joan takes out a bottle of vodka, a shot glass and some sweets from her bag. She pours the vodka into the glass.

Well, how's it going lying here, dad? Not too cold? You're not freezing here are you? Well... To your eternal memory... *(She drinks vodka)*. Hey dad, look! I brought you a wonderful bouquet of flowers! Expensive flowers. Yes! I'm not sparing any expense for you, dad. I only have *you* now. I don't go to mum's grave anymore, it's too far to travel – I can't find the strength.... And you're lying here in my town. When you were rotting under my fence – in your own vomit – you probably didn't remember your daughter, did you? You forgot, did you? You had other children, so Joan... well, you forgot her and didn't think about her at all. But I remembered, see? I brought you into town. We washed you, sang for you, everything as it should be. We organised a wake. It's true not many people came. Your children didn't come, dad. It was only me there. Your Dasha,

the little slut, was pregnant then for the third time – nobody knows who the father is. I don't know where she is now. I've heard she's freezing her arse off somewhere up north. Your son, Volodka, has taken to the bottle, dad. He's taken after you – he was drunk in a ditch somewhere and died, that's what I heard anyway. And your wife, the one you exchanged me and mum for, apparently she's become obese, like a pig, she can't even squeeze through the door now. Her children are on the street, I've heard they're afraid. She's very ill, apparently. She'll probably kick the bucket⁵⁷ die soon. So, let her die – she deserves it. She didn't take pity on me or mum when she moved into our flat – and she'd walk past us in the street snorting out of her horsey face. Do you remember that, dad? The way you sent me and mum into a six square metre room in a communal flat, you don't remember that either? The way you gave a bribe to the head of the Passport Office so he'd unregister us from the flat? You have a bad memory, dad. Are you lying there? Is it soft lying in my coffin? I ordered you an oak coffin, dad, an expensive one lined with velvet. I personally placed a pillow under your head so you would sleep easy. I dressed you in a suit, a high quality one, you never had a suit like that one in your life, dad. You see, I've not spared any expense for you. Did you see what beautiful flowers I brought you? And I come to remember you – I don't forget. I'm a good little daughter to you, dad. Next time I'll bring you a whole carload of flowers – you'll be turning in your grave, dad. So you'll remember my mum. So you'll remember how she became emaciated. How she came to you to ask for money. How she begged you not to abandon me. How her cancer spread. How she was biting her pillow from the pain. How you didn't open the door. How I had to go to the hospital to clean other people's bedpans when I was thirteen. How I buried mum alone when I was seventeen and you didn't give a single penny to help. How you got drunk at her wake and started shouting obscenities about her. You remember that, don't you? Have they buried you down there, dad? Did they bury you deep? Are the worms biting you? Everything's great in my life, dad! I've got a chain of shops, I've got a huge flat, I've got a three-storey country house⁵⁸ in the countryside. So what?! I can pamper myself! I want to buy a house for myself in Italy now. Dad, the furniture in my flat is bespoke, it's all from natural materials, the colour is just right, the shade is just right! I can indulge any whim! Your daughter turned out well, wouldn't you agree, dad? And I don't forget you. I built such a fine monument for you! I bring you such beautiful flowers. Did you ever give someone a single flower even once in your life? No, dad, you never did. But I brought you flowers and I'll keep bringing them, and I'll come here – I'll come to remember you, dad. So you start howling in your grave, dad – so Hell seems cosier than having me beside you. I mean, I hope you are burning in Hell, aren't you dad? Are you there

⁵⁷ She uses the verb 'podokhnut' ['подохнуть'], which means 'to die' in relation to animals, lending it an insulting nuance in this context. Source: <<http://dic.academic.ru/dic.nsf/enc2p/312866>> [accessed 27 July 2015].

⁵⁸ Joan uses the term 'dacha' ['дача']. Literally, this means a country house but culturally the term is not an exact equivalent. It is relatively common for Russians from all socio-economic groups to have 'dachas' – varying from very simple shacks to exquisite mansions, whereas a 'country house' implies a certain level of privilege to British audiences. It seems reasonable to use the term 'country house' in this context given Joan's intention of evoking her own privilege. However, it is also a viable option to keep the Russian word 'dacha' in the English text, particularly if the target audience consists of spectators with a degree of knowledge about Soviet and post-Soviet culture.

burning up with your degenerate, Volodya? You men are all the same, all identical – like you, dad, and your Volodka, all bastards, I haven't met a single good one among you...

At the same time, a woman with a simple wooden cross approaches the neighbouring grave. She straightens something on the grave. She pulls up a weed.

WOMAN (to Joan). Oh, such beautiful flowers... Are they from the shop? Do you happen to know what those blue ones are called?

JOAN. I don't know.

WOMAN. Oh! Well done you! You've come to see your dad, have you? Is it your dad? I've noticed that grave before – what a monument! And the inscription, so expensive, so much money. I've even thought about that before: such a good daughter or son to put up a statue like that for their parent. He must have been a good father, obviously, if he brought up such good children. Nobody's going to put up a statue for me. Your dad was a good man, was he?

JOAN. A complete swine. A rare variety of vermin. The bastard went and snuffed it⁵⁹ under a fence. That's the best place for him.

WOMAN. Well why do you say this? You're his daughter. You loved him anyway, right? Whatever he was, he was your father, you love him anyway, come what may. Is that it?

Pause.

JOAN. I hate him. I hope he burns in hell, the bastard.

Pause.

WOMAN. My poor girl... You must have been so hurt in life, daughter, for your soul to be so bitter...

Pause.

JOAN. I'm not your girl... I'm not your daughter... I'm not poor. I'm rich... I'm rich! I've got a chain of shops! I'm no daughter to you...

Joan practically runs away from the cemetery. The woman makes the sign of a cross in Joan's direction.

5.

Katia and Andrei's flat. The radio is playing. Andrei jumps in front of the mirror with a comb in his hands, pretending that the comb is a microphone and he's a famous singer. The doorbell rings. Andrei goes to open up. There are two lads at the door, whose photograph could be printed in school history books with the title "stone-age men".

FIRST LAD. Are you Andrei Ivansky?

ANDREI. That's me.

⁵⁹ Refer to footnote 51 above.

The lads quickly and efficiently twist Andrei's arms. One of them holds Andrei while the other searches the flat. He is looking for Andrei's keys and passport.

ANDREI. Lads, what's happening?!

FIRST LAD. Do you know Avdotya Pavlovna Sinitsina?

ANDREI. No.

FIRST LAD. What do you mean no? Whose flat are you living in right now?

ANDREI. Ah, okay, I just forgot her name...

FIRST LAD. What are you muttering? Did you owe her four months' rent? Well, game over. You don't owe her anything anymore! Now you owe us! The whole sum plus twenty thousand⁶⁰ for moral distress. Got it? Kosya, did you find his passport?

SECOND LAD. Found it. But there's only one set of keys here.

FIRST LAD. Where's the second pair? (*He twists Andrei's arms.*)

ANDREI. Ow! My wife has the second pair – she's in the maternity ward. Lads, be human about this. My wife just gave birth! Where will we go?

SECOND LAD (*leafing through Andrei's passport*). You were born in Ust-Ishimsk?⁶¹

ANDREI. Not Ust-Ishimsk – it's Ust-Ishim.

SECOND LAD. Well, go back to Shit-Shitim then, why did you come here anyway?⁶²

ANDREI. Ust-Ishim! Are you going to dictate what I can and cannot do?

FIRST LAD (*kicking Andrei*). You're going to do what I tell you, you got that? If I say go to Shitim, then you go to Shitim. So look, boy, get this – you'll get your passport back when you give the money back. You get the second pair of keys from your wife, no later than tomorrow, and you take them to your landlady. You got that? You got that or not, I'm asking you?

ANDREI. I got it. Lads, that's enough!

FIRST LAD. Well, then, that's enough. Come on, Kosya...

⁶⁰ The First Lad does not refer to a specific currency, instead he uses the word 'kosar' ['*косарь*']. As the Dictionary of Youth Slang explains, 'kosar' implies one thousand units of any currency. I have translated this as a generic term, 'twenty thousand', even though some valid slang alternatives exist, particularly 'twenty grand'. However, using a British slang unhelpfully restricts the currency to a British context. The First Lad may be referring to dollars – a common habit among privileged Russians since 1991 – or to roubles, although the latter is less likely since 20,000 roubles equates to approximately 400 pounds, when the play was written in 2013. Source: <<http://www.oanda.com/currency/historical-rates/>> [accessed 12 June 2015].

⁶¹ The village of Ust-Ishim is located in Western Siberia, in the North-Western part of the Omsk Oblast' [District], with approx. 16,700 inhabitants in 2006. Source: Official site of Ust-Ishimskii Municipal Area in the Omsk Oblast'. Source: <<http://www.ust-ishim.narod.ru/index.html>> [accessed 11 June 2015].

⁶² The Second Lad uses a slang Russian term, 'zasransk' ['*засранск*'], based on the verb 'srat' ['*срать*'] which means 'to shit', although the Dictionary of Slang Terms ['*Словарь русского арго*'] suggests that 'zasransk' is normally used with humorous intent. Source: <http://russian_argo.academic.ru/засранск> [accessed 11 June 2015].

The lads chuck Andrei out into the stairwell. His things fly after him – his jacket, boots and hat.

FIRST LAD. If you want to get your passport – call the landlady, she'll tell you how to find us...

ANDREI. Lads, let's make a deal! I'll give you everything – just let me collect my things, I've got a newborn child!

FIRST LAD. Suck my dick!

Andrei throws himself at the First Lad who kicks him in the stomach. Andrei doubles over. The lads take the keys and the passport and then leave.

Andrei remains sitting on the floor. He looks for his phone in his jacket and dials a number.

ANDREI. Hello? Hi, I wanted to find out... You said we can move in in a month and I understand there are still building works going on, but could we move in now, because my wife has given birth and I don't have any accommodation? What? Why have you come from the Prosecutor's Office?⁶³ What do you mean it doesn't exist? They are not owners? How's that? Wait. Who are you? An office? I see. Ah ha... No, they deceived me – not clear. They fucked me over – that's clearer. No, lady, I'm not upset – I'm just finding this so hilarious... When's the recovery of funds for shareholders? Of course, I'll come, I'll write a statement... No, I can't come now. I'll come later, sometime.

He ends the call. Andrei pulls out a pack of cigarettes from his pocket and smokes. The phone rings.

ANDREI. Hi. How's my little Mitenka? Is he sleeping? Is he snoring? Kiss him from his dad. Everything's good, bag lady. Yes, everything good. I found some work. No, not as a manager, just as a driver, I've got to unload goods. But it's not too bad though, is it? In this country, there's dignity in any work. I'll go to work on Monday – I think they don't have any other applicants. But anyway, bag lady, I was thinking, we should go back to my folks in my village or to yours. What do we need this awful city for? We're nobody here. We're some sort of ants without any rights, we're foreigners. We won't build our own home, we won't plant our own tree, and our son – what will he become here? The same as me, homeless? No, I've not gone all philosophical, seriously – everything's good... What? They've discharged you? So soon? No, I'm not upset! On the contrary! I'm coming right away. In a taxi. Or I'll flag a car⁶⁴ – I should have enough for that.

6.

⁶³ The Prosecutor General's Office's is Russia's equivalent to the Crown Prosecution Service in the UK. Source: <<http://eng.genproc.gov.ru/history/>> [accessed 11 June 2015].

⁶⁴ This way of travelling, 'catching a private [car]' [*частника ловить*] is a legacy of the Soviet period which persists, to a lesser extent, even today. A person wanting to catch a private car stands with their arm outstretched by the roadside, until a driver comes over to negotiate a price. Catching a car is cheaper and potentially more convenient than waiting for a taxi.

The stairwell in front of Joan's flat. Andrei and Katia step out of the lift. Andrei is holding a small bundle. Katia is crying.

KATIA. Did you see how the security guard looked at us? As if we're tramps... And actually we are...

ANDREI. No, he didn't, I know them. Go down to the landing...

KATIA. Give me Mitka, in case she suddenly does something to him...

ANDREI. Are you a moron, or something? There's nothing wrong with her. Come on, go down, I'm ringing the bell...

Katia goes down to the landing. Andrei rings on the doorbell. Joan opens the door.

JOAN. Oh! The A-listers have turned up!⁶⁵

ANDREI. Joan –

JOAN. Good-bye.

ANDREI. Joan, my son was born!

JOAN. Congratulations. *(She tries to shut the door.)*

ANDREI. And now we have nowhere to live.

JOAN. And?

ANDREI. And. We were thrown out of our flat, we have no money and it's minus fifteen outside.

JOAN. What's it got to do with me? Am I the homeless service?

ANDREI. Joan, I know I'm an idiot...⁶⁶ Tomorrow early in the morning we're going to Katia's in the countryside. The buses just aren't running right now. Can you let us stay for one night? One of my acquaintances has his phone off, the other isn't in town.

Pause.

JOAN. Where's your Katia?

ANDREI. She's there, standing down there...

JOAN. Come in, both of you...

She goes further into the flat.

⁶⁵ Joan is citing a line from a song by the Russian Band The Combinations called 'Such People in Hollywood!' [*Какие люди в Голливуде!*](1991?), in which an accountant dreams of living among film stars. The specific reference will not be apparent to British audiences, so I have translated the term laterally, to ensure semantic clarity.

⁶⁶ Andrei uses the word 'urod' [*'ypod'*] which refers, literally, to physical disfigurement or to an immoral person, a 'freak' or a 'monster'. There are a range of synonyms which could be used instead of 'idiot', which capture the humorous (albeit insulting) nature of the word, such as 'blockhead', 'wally', and so on. Alternatively, the self-criticism – contained within the word – can be emphasised with adjectives of self-reproach such as 'bastard'.

Andrei calls Katia. They go into Joan's flat together. Andrei holds the baby while Katia takes off her shoes, then he hands their child back to Katia and takes his own shoes off.

KATIA (*whispering*). Did you live in this huge flat?

Andrei nods.

KATIA. Where do we go now?

ANDREI. I don't know....

Katia and Andrei stand in the middle of the hallway. Katia straightens the bonnet on the baby. Joan comes out of her room.

JOAN. Well?

ANDREI. Here he is.

JOAN. What did you call him?

ANDREI. Dmitry. Mitya.

JOAN. Mitya – that's cheesy, Dmitry – that's handsome. It's fine. So you must be Katia?

KATIA. Katia.

JOAN. Oh well, I was hoping you'd be ugly.

ANDREI. Where should we go?

JOAN. Go into the living room, we'll work it out there...

ANDREI. Katia, go in...

Katia goes into the living room. Andrei remains in the hallway with Joan. Silence.

ANDREI. I'm sorry, Joan. You're a very good person.

Pause.

JOAN. No, Andrei. I'm a bad and angry person. And stop patronising me with meaningless compliments.

ANDREI. You're strong, Joan.

Pause.

JOAN. No. If I was strong, you wouldn't be here. Leave me alone, okay? You'll find the clean linen in the bathroom cupboard, go up to the first floor, make up the bed. I don't want to see you.

ANDREI. They stole my flat...

JOAN (*shrugs*). So it's you who's to blame...

ANDREI. And I don't have a passport now.⁶⁷ I'm homeless.

JOAN. Should I feel sorry for you?

Joan goes into her bedroom. She switches on the television. She watches it without sound.

7.

It's early morning. Joan is asleep. She never turned the television off. Andrei comes into the bedroom. He quietly touches Joan on the shoulder. Joan is muttering something in her sleep. She opens her eyes.

JOAN. What d'you want?

ANDREI. Do you have a thermometer?

JOAN. What?

ANDREI. Katia's ill, she probably caught something on the way over. She's got a temperature, she's really hot.

JOAN. Look in the wardrobe, there's all sorts of junk floating around. There's a big red box with medicine.

ANDREI. And you said you refuse to take medicine...

JOAN. You also said a lot of things!

Andrei makes to leave.

JOAN. Wait! What about Dmitry?

ANDREI. He's fine. No temperature.

JOAN. He'll catch it. Do you want your son to get ill in the first week of his life?

ANDREI. No. But what can I do?

JOAN. Give him to me.

ANDREI. Sorry?

JOAN. Bring him here. To me. Look, I'm not going to eat him alive! You'll find camomile, aspirin to lower her temperature, take it with hot water, the main thing is to give her lots of it... Well? Why are you just standing there?

ANDREI. Alright, I'll be back in a sec....

⁶⁷ A passport is essential in order to rent or buy a property in Russia because all citizens must register their place of residence with the authorities. Anyone 'without papers' is effectively made homeless, unless they identify somebody willing to register them at their address for a fee. It may be advisable to add an explanatory subclause such as 'And I don't have a passport now, so I can't register to live anywhere' for the sake of audiences without a specialist knowledge of Russia.

Andrei leaves. Joan quickly gets dressed. Andrei comes back holding his child. He holds the baby out to Joan.

ANDREI. Here. Just be careful. For some reason, she's really ill, she's sweating all over...

JOAN (*takes the child*). Perhaps you should call an ambulance?

ANDREI. We're leaving tomorrow.

JOAN. Look at him sleeping. He's so content. If she's not better by tomorrow, she'll need antibiotics.

ANDREI. She's breast-feeding.

KATIA. You'll need to find a wet-nurse. Or get formula.

ANDREI. Where will we find one?

JOAN. What are you standing around for? Go on, cure your leper.⁶⁸

Andrei leaves. Joan sits on the bed holding the child. She rocks him. It's night. Everything is quiet.

JOAN. Are you awake? You can't fool me, I saw you open your eyes. Ssh...Ssh... Your mum's ill. I said, she's ill. It's stupid to walk around in the frost. Well well well, what are we looking at? My name is auntie Joan. I'm auntie Joan.

Andrei comes into the room.

ANDREI. Katia's asking for the baby back. She's feeling better already...

JOAN. Is her virus also better? Did it evaporate in five minutes?

ANDREI. She's asking for him. She's in tears...

Joan gives the baby back to Andrei.

JOAN. You won't go anywhere tomorrow in this freezing weather. I won't let you.

ANDREI. Er...⁶⁹

JOAN. Er, yes?

⁶⁸ Joan uses the word 'strashilka' [*'страшилка'*] which has multiple meanings including 'bogeyman', 'monster', 'horror story' and so on. The ironic implication is that Katia will look like a scarecrow or a monster because of her illness. It also refers back to Joan's statement 'I was hoping you would be ugly [*'strashnaia'*]' because there is an etymological link between the words in Russian: 'strashnaia' and 'strashilka'. I have opted for 'leper' to show a clearly ironic hyperbole, as well as a reverberation with the religious imagery Joan used at the start of the play (as if Joan is jokingly suggesting that Katia has fallen ill due to a divine punishment). An alternative to 'leper' is 'sickie', although the latter has a less overt connection to a person's appearance. It is also possible to use nouns which are translated more directly from the original such as 'monster', 'scarecrow' and so on.

⁶⁹ In the original, Andrei says 'A...' which has a dual meaning: it is a sound of hesitation (equivalent to 'um') and the first letter of the Russian alphabet ('А'). Joan replies with 'B', the second letter of the alphabet, indicating that she will brook no dissent to her proposal. Literally, their dialogue reads: 'ANDREI. A... / JOAN. B.'

ANDREI. Well, alright... But wait, Joan... Then what?

Joan goes over to Andrei and straightens the bonnet on the baby. Joan and Andrei stand with eyes lowered to the baby.

Andrei leaves, carrying the baby. Joan walks around the room. Then she picks up her phone and dials a number.

JOAN. Greetings, oh servant of the people! Did I wake you up? I remembered that you're an early bird... Well, friend,⁷⁰ how's life in the fast lane?⁷¹ All work, no play – I understand. We've all got to work! I just feel so proud of you when I see my university pal on television! So look I've got a question for you. Tell me – is it hard to strip someone of their parental rights or not really? Well, yeah, I know, it is a strange question. The parents – him and her, they're both jobless, homeless, and they've no money either. He's an alcoholic – she's a drug addict, I can testify to that in court. We can try, yeah? Maybe I can come over to yours this evening and we'll talk it all through with a bottle of vodka? You're not busy this evening, are you? I'll bring homebrew and cured meat!⁷² No, you've never had any like this! And we'll talk about 'thank yous' later – you know I never leave a debt unpaid. Well, things are all working out. A big hug to Marina from me! See you this evening, my friend!

Joan stands and looks out of the window.

The End.

⁷⁰ The term in Russian is 'odnokursnichek' ['однокурсничек'], meaning a friend who studied at the same university in the same peer group' here, it is in the diminutive form, implying an affectionate relationship (or possibly capturing ironic overtones). This attribute suggests that the individual conversing with Joan may be the same person who featured in her story to the Call Boy (and the audience is likely to make that connection imaginatively since he is the only one of Joan's acquaintances ever referenced in the play, outside of her workplace). The phrase 'university friend' is awkward in translation because it is only used in normative English grammar in the third person singular. It is important to capture this point of information (so that the audience can make the imaginative link with the previous 'friend' from the story to the Call boy), without rupturing the verisimilitude through misapplication of conversational English. Therefore, I have rendered 'odnokursnichek' only as 'friend', when it first appears in this passage and when it is repeated as the final word in the play. To compensate for this omission, I have replaced 'you' with 'university friend' in a later sentence, so that it now reads: 'I just feel so proud of you when I see my university friend on television!' This statement supports a third person reference because the term 'university friend' is couched in an indirect clause.

⁷¹ Joan uses the term 'zhit'e-byt'e' ['жизнь-быть'] which is a flowery expression meaning approximately 'life and existence' (i.e. 'How's your life and your existence?'). I have been unable to identify an equivalent expression in English which captures the meaning 'How's life?' but is simultaneously expressed with an elegant turn of phrase. Therefore, I have rendered this as 'How's life in the fast lane?', which does not contradict existing ideas expressed in the play about Joan's friend being successful.

⁷² Joan uses the word 'salo' ['сало'], a traditional canapé in Russian cuisine. The literal meaning is 'lard' – but that term in English evokes animal fat used for cooking, rather than a dish in itself; hence I have opted for a cultural equivalent, 'cured meat'. In fact, it is probable that Joan is being ironic about 'salo' since her other offering will be 'homebrew'. Knowing how refined the character's tastes are, from the first scene of the play, it can be assumed that Joan does not brew her own vodka (a practice associated with low-quality vodka made cheaply during Soviet times). In other words, Joan is humorously and nostalgically evoking the Soviet era – as well as (probably) what she and her friend drank and ate when they socialised at university in the Soviet period. An alternative approach would be to find an ironic cultural equivalent, evoking the original more closely, such as: 'I'll bring the homebrew and the cheap meat' or 'I'll bring the homebrew and the off-cuts'.

TRANSLATION THREE

Grandchildren. The Second Act

By Mikhail Kaluzhskii and Aleksandra Polivanova

Translated by Noah Birksted-Breen

Characters:¹

Mikhail – 56 years old. He wears spectacles to read. He always dresses smart-casual: he doesn't wear a tie even for official gatherings. His grandfather was the Chief Soviet censor. He trained as a sociologist and works as a media commentator. He lives in Government House,² in the same flat that was assigned to his grandfather by the Soviet regime.

Polina – 40 years old. She is very energetic, open and easy-going, speaks very quickly. A chain-smoker. Loves bright colours, ethnic textiles and huge necklaces. An expert in cultural studies-turned-reporter, she still writes academic articles occasionally. Spends a lot of time and money collecting Caucasian rugs. Her great-grandfather was top NKVD³ officer, in particular he was responsible for the mass deportations in the early 1940s.⁴ Polina didn't know about her Jewish origin and her great-grandfather's occupation until she was in her mid-twenties. Polina is a close friend of Inna's and they sometimes

¹ This character list was written by the playwrights in Russian and English for the play's publication in 2014. I have translated and edited the text provided, as necessary.

² A decision to build Government House [*Дом правительства*] – which is also known popularly as House on the Embankment [*Дом на набережной*] – was taken in 1927. This was a response to the Soviet government's decision to move the capital from St. Petersburg to Moscow in 1918 and the aim was to 'build accommodation for members of Government, the Central Committee of the Communist Party, the Central Control Commission of the Communist Party, the Society of old Bolsheviks and other categories of high-ranking workers.' [*С*]троить жилье для членов Правительства, ЦК партии, ЦКК, Общества старых большевиков и других категорий ответственных работников. Source: The Museum of the House on the Embankment [*Музей «Дом на набережной»*] <<http://museumdom.narod.ru>> [accessed 28 August 2014].

³ The NKVD stands for the 'Narodnyi komissariat vnutrennykh del' [*Народный комиссариат внутренних дел*], which literally means the People's Commissariat of Internal Affairs. This agency was created in 1918 as the 'central organ for political governance of the RSFSR [trans. – Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic] in the fight against crime and for maintaining civil order.' [*Ц*]ентральный орган политического управления РСФСР по борьбе с преступностью и поддержанию общественного порядка. In contemporary layman's terms, the NKVD was the Ministry of the Interior of the USSR. Source: Human Rights Defenders Against Torture [*Правозащитники против пыток*] – <http://protivpytok.org/sssr/osnovnye-vexi-razvitiya-organov-gosudarstvennoj-bezopasnosti/nkvd>

⁴ The lead researcher of deportations in the USSR is Pavel Polyanyan. He writes: '[f]orced migrations were practiced in the USSR starting from 1919-20 until 1952-3, i.e. during one-third of a century and nearly half of the period of existence of the Soviet Union, which thus won it the dubious position of becoming the world's leader in the sphere of deportation technology and with regard to the results gained through deportations. [...] [T]he data at our disposal led us to the conclusion that a total of at least 53 deportation campaigns and some 130 deportation operations were carried out. [...] The following is a tentative list of the operations, compiled as a result of the work we carried out: [...] XXI. Total deportation of Karachais (August-November 1943); XXII. Total deportation of Kalmyks (December 1943-June 1944); XXIII. Total deportation of Chechen and Ingushetians (February-March 1944)'. Source: Pavel Polyanyan, trans. Anna Yastrzhemska, *Against their Will: the History and Geography of Forced Migrations in the USSR* (Budapest: Central University Press, 2004), pp. 305, 307, 308-9.

collaborate professionally. Their fathers were classmates and close friends, so these families have had close relations since the early 1950s.

Marina – exact birthdate not known (approx. 1929), died in 2012. Her father was a Senior Major of State Security, one of the organisers of the repressions; he himself was arrested on political charges and shot in 1937. She was a university student when she was arrested on political charges in 1947. Until 1955, she was living in forced exile in Karaganda (Kazakhstan) where she met her future husband, a famous poet who had also been arrested. She and her husband were comrades-in-arms, close to the dissident movement; they worked as teachers of literature and language, both were fired from their schools for anti-Soviet activity. At the time of the interview in 2012, she was a widow; she was thick-skinned, having lived through ‘fire, water and copper pipes’ (a Russian expression meaning ‘all conceivable physical and moral difficulties and deprivations’). She answered the interview questions without deep reflection, almost without any reflection at all; she had come to her conclusions in the 1950s. She was an ‘iron lady’, with a bitter, but also a happily lived, life.

Benjamin – very private, somewhat dejected, he agreed unwillingly to an interview. He was one of the last editors of the dissident periodical publication *Chronicle of Current Events* [‘Хроника текущих событий’]. It seemed like he was ashamed of his family’s past but was trying to convince himself that he was not on the basis that ‘you don’t choose your family’. He speaks in a somewhat confused manner and is uncomfortable answering questions. He is not well-off.

Inna – 39 years old. Very self-assured and straightforward; at least, that’s how she wants people to see her. A well-known and influential museologist with substantial Russian and international professional experience. Her grandfather served in the “Death to Spies” Unit,⁵ and was one of Raoul Wallenberg’s⁶ interrogators. She is the only person

⁵ Translation note: throughout the play, I have chosen to replace the acronym SMERSH with the longer form of the term, for the sake of clarity. If the play is presented to an audience with a specialist knowledge of Russian history, it is possible to replace all instances with the acronym, SMERSH, as in the original. SMERSH stands for ‘Death to Spies’ [‘Смерть шпионам’]. The author Alexander Sever has published a detailed account of SMERSH: ‘On 21 April 1943, Joseph Stalin signed a GKO [trans. – Government Defence Committee] Decree No. 3222, SS/OV [trans. – Top Secret/Of Special Importance], confirming the creation of GUKR [trans. – Governmental Directorate of Counter Intelligence] “Smersh” NKO [trans. – People’s Defence Commissariat] USSR.’ [‘21 апреля 1943 года Иосиф Сталин подписал Постановление ГКО № 3222 сс/ов об утверждении положения о ГУКР «Смерш» НКО СССР.’] The functions of SMERSH, as documented in the same book by Sever, include: ‘(a) the fight with spying, sabotage, terrorist and other subversive activities of foreign intelligence in units and institutions of the Red Army; [...] (d) the fight with treason and betrayal of the Motherland in units and institutions of the Red Army (crossing over to the enemy’s side, the concealment of spies and in general the abetting of the work of the latter).’ [‘a) борьба со шпионской, диверсионной, террористической и иной подрывной деятельностью иностранных разведок в частях и учреждениях Красной Армии [...] д) борьба с предательством и изменой Родине в частях и учреждениях Красной Армии (переход на сторону противника, укрывательство шпионов и вообще содействие работе последних)’]. Source: Alexander Sever, “‘Smert’ shpionam!”: voennaya kontrrazvedka SMERSH v gody Velikoi Otechestvennoi voinoi’ (Moscow: Eksmo, 2009) <<http://coollib.com/b/231789/read>> [accessed 28 August 2014].

⁶ As cited in an article on the Memorial (NGO) website: ‘Raoul Wallenberg (1912-1947?)’, a Swedish diplomat belonging to a family of finance magnates, widely known around the world thanks to his efforts in saving Jews during the Second World War. In 1945, he was detained in Budapest by the military counterintelligence [unit] “SMERSH”. According to the Soviet leadership, Wallenberg died from a heart attack in an internal prison at the MGB [trans. – Ministry of State Security]; a version by an unofficial [account suggests that] he was transferred to a special cell ‘Laboratory X’, where he was given a fatal

among the characters who did not agree to an interview at the playwrights' first request. It took almost one year to convince her to speak.

Natalya – 71 years old but looks younger. She wears smart-casual. A chain-smoker. She is very thoughtful and contemplative when she speaks. A granddaughter of the Soviet Foreign Minister: she grew up in her grandfather's apartment in Government House, emigrated to the United Kingdom in the 1970s, married a Baron, worked at the BBC for many years and returned to Moscow in the 1990s. Once a famous journalist, for over ten years she has been living at a farm and every morning she posts on Facebook about her horses, goats, sheep, dogs and turkey.

Olga – 34 years old. Likes long skirts. She is very open, very energetic and emotional to the extent of being almost hysterical. During a long conversation she can easily switch very suddenly between subjects and can just as easily burst into laughter or tears. She has a fairly successful career as a reporter, but did not succeed when she was promoted to the position of editor-in-chief. Her great grandmother was a prominent revolutionary and was responsible for the execution of Admiral Kolchak.⁷

Vera – 45 years old. She is very attentive to her sartorial style and has a love of accessories: watches, cuff links and rings. She rides a bicycle. She is very open with friends and suspicious of others. Well-known writer and journalist: she is probably the most famous individual among this group of people. She was a teenager when her family emigrated to America. She is bilingual but only writes books in English. She came to Russia in the early 1990s to work as a journalist. Her first book was about her two grandmothers. Vera is a rare example of a public figure who is openly lesbian; she and her partner have three children. After the introduction of new Russian anti-LGBT

injection. The Minister of State Security, [Viktor] Abakumov, who had given the order to arrest Wallenberg and, most likely, once informed about the true reason for the death of the Swedish diplomat, forbade the release of his body and ordered him to be cremated.' [*Рауль Валленберг (1912-1947?), шведский дипломат, принадлежавший к семейству финансовых магнатов, широко известен в мире благодаря своей деятельности по спасению евреев во время второй мировой войны. В 1945 году в Будапеште он был задержан военной контрразведкой «Смерш». Что случилось потом, до сих пор остается загадкой. По версии советского руководства, Валленберг скончался от сердечного приступа во внутренней тюрьме МГБ в 1947 году, по одной из неофициальных — был переведен в спецкамеру «Лаборатории-Х», где ему ввели смертельную инъекцию. Министр госбезопасности Абакумов, отдавший в свое время приказ об аресте Валленберга и, вероятно, осведомленный о подлинной причине смерти шведского дипломата, запретил вскрытие тела и приказал его кремировать*']. Source: Afanasy Mamedov, 'Nikita Petrov on Raoul Wallenberg', L'Chaim journal, No. 8 (244), August 2012, <<http://www.memo.ru/d/124354.html>> [accessed 28 August 2014].

⁷ The entry for Admiral Kolchak in the Encyclopaedic Dictionary of Natural Sciences online reads: 'KOLCHAK, Alexander Vasil'evich (1873-1920), Russian military commander, polar explorer, hydrologist, Admiral (1918). Son of V. I. Kolchak. Commander of the Black Sea Fleet in 1916-1917. One of the organisers of the White movement in the Civil War. As 'Supreme Ruler of the Russian Government' in 1918-1920, he established a dictatorial regime in Siberia, the Urals and in the Far East, which was liquidated by the Red Army and partisans. Kolchak himself was executed by firing, by the decree of the Irkutsk VRK [trans. – Military-Revolutionary Committee].' [*КОЛЧАК Александр Васильевич (1873-1920), российский военачальник, полярный исследователь, гидролог, адмирал (1918). Сын В. И. Колчака. В 1916-17 командующий Черноморским флотом. Один из организаторов белого движения в Гражданскую войну. В 1918-20 "верховный правитель российского государства"; установил режим военной диктатуры в Сибири, на Урале и Дальнем Востоке, ликвидированный Красной Армией и партизанами. Сам Колчак по постановлению Иркутского ВРК расстрелян.*'] Source: *Entsiklopedicheskii slovar' estestvoznaniia*, <<http://slovaronline.com/search>> [accessed 28 August 2014].

legislation in 2013, she returned to the USA to live in New York. Her grandmother was a Soviet censor.

Evgenia – 38 years old. She is friendly but her manner is always ironic. She is a well-known historian who has done a lot to make history more accessible and popular in Russia. She is also a civic activist, especially known for her pro-Pussy Riot⁸ campaign. She adopted an orphan with infantile cerebral paralysis. Her father was a KGB⁹ officer.

This production premiered at the Sakharov Centre in Moscow on 21, 22 and 24 November 2012.

This version of the Grandchildren. The Second Act¹⁰ is based on the original Moscow production with some minor edits introduced at the request of the playwrights, to reflect changes which were made during performances in 2013 and 2014.

The annotations, added by the translator, provide information about people, events and places mentioned in the play which are specific to Russian history and culture and may be difficult for British readers and audiences to obtain information about from English-language encyclopedias and online. Annotations are only included where additional information has been perceived to be useful (i.e. not for street names and so on). No annotations are provided for references to Western people, events and places since information about these may be easily obtained by British readers and audiences in English-language encyclopedias and online.

⁸ Pussy Riot is a feminist punk group which reached global notoriety for an anti-Putin performance in Christ-the-Saviour Cathedral in February 2012. As a result, two members were found guilty of ‘hooliganism’ by the Russian state and sentenced to two years in penal colonies. Source: ‘Pussy Riot’, *Lenta.ru*, 28 August 2014, <<http://lenta.ru/lib/14216713>> [accessed 28 August 2014].

⁹ The KGB is the Committee for State Security [‘Комитет государственного безопасности’]: ‘[f]ounded in 1953, responsible for ext. intelligence, counter-intelligence and the fight against dom. “crime against the state”. [...] In 1992, the KGB was disbanded, and its functions were transferred to several new fed. agencies, in particular the FSB [trans. – Federal Security Agency], the SVR [trans. – Agency for Foreign Intelligence], FAPSI [trans. – Federal Agency for Government Communications].’ [‘Создан в 1953 г., отвечал за внеш. разведку, контрразведку и борьбе с внутр. “преступлениями против государства”. [...] В 1992 г. КГБ был расформирован, и его функции переданы неск. новым федер. службам, в т.ч. ФСБ, СВР, ФАПСИ’].

Source: Dictionary of Terms (Moscow: Ves’ Mir, 2001), <<http://dic.academic.ru>> [accessed 28 August 2014].

¹⁰ Translation note: The original title is *Act Two. Grandchildren* [‘Акт Второй. Внуки’] because it is a sequel to another production at the Sakharov Centre in Moscow. *The Legacy of Silence* [‘Груз молчания’] (2010) was the precursor to this play, although it was not planned originally as a diptych. *The Legacy of Silence* was a dramatization of a book called *The Legacy of Silence: Encounters with Children of the Third Reich* by Dan Bar-On (1989). The play adaptation was scripted by Mikhail Kaluzhsky. Dan Bar-On was an Israeli psychologist who had interviewed children of former Nazis, of various ranks. I have changed the word order and altered the phrase, to place less emphasis on the notion of the play as a sequel. Polivanova has also stated that ‘act two’ refers to the second part of the performance, which is the opportunity for the audience to speak publicly, after the playtext has been performed – but also a part of the performance. Source: Krizhevskii, Aleksei, “‘Bolshinstvo zritelei molchat’”, *Gazeta.ru*, 23 January 2013 <http://www.gazeta.ru/culture/2013/01/23/a_4937829.shtml> [accessed 1 February 2016].

Polina When I'm telling my daughter about her family, it's not always easy. She doesn't encourage me, she doesn't ask me anything.

Well, I'll say to her, something like: "Do you actually know what went on in our family? My great granddad, your great great granddad... even if he didn't directly kill anyone himself, he sent them off – by the carriage load – to a place where a good number of them wouldn't survive." Naturally, my daughter turns pale. Maybe I am too sarcastic about it. And of course that can't be the right way to go about it, I probably need to find some other way, but there's no precedent for this, because no-one ever talked to me about it. So I have absolutely no idea how to do it. She knows bits and pieces – but she doesn't yet have any real intellectual or emotional interest. Maybe – I find this idea horrible but it wouldn't surprise me – maybe, this thing is actually inherited. Not genetically, but by upbringing. This lack of any need to ask questions. That strikes me as a very unpleasant idea because I have to make an enormous effort, myself, every time. You have to drag yourself up by the boot straps every time. In fact, it's impossible. You just don't answer a question until you're asked one.

Marina You see, the thing is... I can't say I was always against the death penalty. But I did turn against it pretty early on. I just felt that to kill... To kill is a cardinal sin, you simply mustn't kill. Which is why: no¹¹ – to the death penalty, no – to the death penalty. I thought the authorities were guilty. Much guiltier than my father – that's what I thought. But my father took part in all of it. His sins be on him.¹² And, all along, he probably did the same things as the Soviet authorities did later... That's why we mustn't talk about rehabilitation from the Soviet authorities, that would be amoral. By the way, my daughter wrote an application for his rehabilitation. But I didn't support it, absolutely not. They mustn't. No way.¹³

Natalya Of course, I never had any serious conversations with my dad on that subject, or with my mum. They protected us. I think he couldn't talk openly even with his family.

Benjamin My memories of my granddad aren't very complete. Granddad was the boss of a particular department in the NKVD tackling banditry. Then he was some kind of military commander, then they sent him away somewhere, but he was still serving in the NKVD. Granddad died in exile. I was named in honour of my granddad's brother, but I never met him. What else do I know about them? They were handsome, kind and

¹¹ Rehearsal room observation: I noted during rehearsals that 'no – to' sounded strange to English speakers. The director and actors did not comment on this phrase and appeared to accept it. Even so, it gave me an idea for another option – more common for British speech – which is 'down with' to replace both instances of 'no – to'.

¹² Translation note: one of the playwrights wrote to me to explain the reference in this phrase: 'I believe that there's a reminiscence of the [First] Epistle of John, chapter 3: "And ye know that He was manifested to take away our sins; and in Him is no sin". In Russian: "И вы знаете, что Он явился для того, чтобы взять грехи наши, и что в Нем нет греха".' Source: private email from Mikhail Kaluzhsky, 11 September 2014.

¹³ Alternative translation for the play's director: Marina uses the phrase 'chego nel'zya, togo nel'zya' ['чего нельзя, того нельзя']. Literally, this idiom means 'what must not be done, must not be done'. This phrase is neat in the original and can be rendered in various ways in English, none of which are directly equivalent. For instance, 'no way', 'full stop' and so on.

wonderful, according to the family stories. Granddad had a house, which everyone called a dacha. He was hospitable, he loved children and treated them well, there were guests visiting all the time, he offered food and drink to everyone. There were wonderful dogs, horses and people – prisoners – who took care of all of this. Granddad was the boss of a section of the Moscow-Volga canal.¹⁴ In the town of Yakhroma.¹⁵ Well, this country house was actually a camp. The Dmitrovsky correctional work camp.¹⁶

Olga At first: it's grandma, the good communist, they're writing books about her, very prestigious, by the way, they're not writing books about everyone, so – cool. But¹⁷ then something else. Then you kind of think: grandma? That's my grandma? Are you sure grandma did all of that? You're surprised to start with, then you get over it. You think: okay.¹⁸ But you also have to totally understand that the whole family treats her just like a grandma. What she herself thought about her past and the history of the country – fuck knows.

Marina My mum was absolutely Soviet, but as a person, she was kind and fair and very principled. But she *was* Soviet, and all of that rubbish was deeply drummed into her. She dragged me by the hair only once in my life. Do you know why? I was thirteen years old and I'd read *The Forty-First* by Lavrenyov,¹⁹ and she asked me: "Could you fall in love with a White Guard?". I said: "yes". Well – that's why. She'd never raised her hand against anyone in her life – even more so because she was a kindergarten teacher – and there she was grabbing me by the hair. She never forgave herself for that.

Mikhail I never met my granddad, he died the year I was born.

¹⁴ According to the official site of Dmitrov: '[t]he Moscow-Volga Canal joins the Moscow and Volga Rivers.[...] It was opened on 15 June 1937. [...] Construction of the Moscow-Volga Canal began in September 1932. [...] During the Canal's construction, the labour of Gulag prisoners was used. [*Канал имени Москвы — соединяет реку Москву с Волгой. [...] Был открыт 15 июля 1937. [...] Строительство канала Москва-Волга началось в сентябре 1932 года. [...] При строительстве канала использовался труд заключённых ГУЛАГа.*]' The site goes on to explain the rationale for building the canal: 'in the early 1930s, there was not enough drinking water in Moscow.' [*К началу 30-х годов Москве не хватало питьевой воды.*]' Source: <http://www.moidmitrov.ru/About_dmitrov/History/kanal.php> [accessed 28 August 2014].

¹⁵ Yakhroma is a town approximately 34 miles to the north of Moscow, situated within the Dmitrovsky region. It was given the status of town in 1940, according to the official site of Yakhroma. Source: <http://www.yakhroma.ru/history-goroda-p.html> [accessed 28 August 2014].

¹⁶ Benjamin uses the word 'Dmitrovlag' [*Дмитровлаг*] which was a common abbreviation, at that period, for the Dmitrovsky correctional work camp. The work camps would also come to be known, in popular parlance, as *gulags*. Since the abbreviation used by Benjamin is not likely to be familiar to most British audiences, I have used the longer form in my translation. Dmitrovlag is: 'the largest unified camp of OGPU-NKVD, it existed from 1932 to 1938, and was situated on the territory of the Moscow Oblast' and partly in Moscow, itself. It was created to use prison labour for the construction of the Moscow-Volga canal.' [*[Крупнейшее лагобъединение ОГПУ-НКВД, существовал с 1932-го по 1938 год и располагался на территории Московской области и отчасти в самой Москве. Он был создан для использования труда заключённых на строительстве канала Москва-Волга.*]' Source: N. Ryzhakova, 'Музыка из gulaga', *Neva*, No. 7, 2003 <<http://magazines.russ.ru/neva/2003/7/ryzhk.html>> [accessed 28 August 2014].

¹⁷ Rehearsal room addition (for rhythm): 'But'.

¹⁸ Alternative translation for the play's director: Olga uses the word 'okei' [*окей*]. Literally, this means 'okay' but because the word is borrowed from the English, it has a somewhat more heightened effect in Russian. Alternative translations might look to replicate the playful and ironic nature of the word in Russian, rather than sticking to the closest literal equivalent, such as 'right you are then', 'okay-dokey' and so on.

¹⁹ *The Forty-First* [*Сорок первый*] (1924) is a short story by Boris Andreevich Lavrenyov (1891-1969).

Natalya I remember granddad as a family man, at home in his dressing gown. He really, really loved us, he was such a tender grandfather. He called me Violet for some reason. Perhaps I had a pallid colour? A little bit blue-ish...²⁰ He was such a gentle, tender granddad. We were brought to him after our shower, after our bath, to say “good night”, in English.²¹ Also he had a weakness for chocolate and he always hid some in the drawer of his desk, in his office. We helped ourselves to little pieces of it, we would hide behind the curtains in his office and eat it. It turns out that granddad was keeping the chocolate to give us treats on birthdays and special occasions – but we weren’t allowed to eat sweets the rest of the time.

Also we used to help ourselves to his foreign change. He had lived abroad, mostly, and his last post was as Ambassador in Washington during the war. So these coins were left in a pouch. And I was handing out this money in the courtyard of Government House, I thought that was really great. But we also took his shaving blades. “Sheffield”, I think. The ones which double back into the handle, those very sharp steel ones. This was some sort of currency for me, I don’t even know what I got for them. I remember we found some official letter paper in his office from the People’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs,²² and we started making paper airplanes and throwing them down from the seventh floor, straight down onto the embankment. We lived above a variety theatre. Well, we had a happy childhood with granddad.

Inna Strictly speaking, I found out about everything from my mum, even though she wasn’t actually involved in this story – well, less than everyone else anyway. But she was married to dad and carried the same surname, and she was in the same line of work as granddad. After the “Death to Spies” Unit, my granddad worked in the Scientific Institute of Architecture. At some point, mum started feeling things that she couldn’t understand or deal with and I guess she wanted to warn us. Because dad wouldn’t talk

²⁰ Translation note: in Russian, the term ‘blue-ish’ [‘синюшный’] is a term used to describe skin that has turned somewhat blue due to an underlying medical condition.

²¹ Alternative translation for the play’s director: in the original, Natalya says ‘We were brought to him after our shower, after our bath, to say “good night”.’ However, she uses the English words ‘good night’. This is impossible to translate directly since, if no contextual explanation is provided, it seems as if Natalya has spoken to her granddad entirely in Russian. A lateral approach would be to replace ‘good night’ with a cultural practice from the UK, such as an English nursery rhyme or saying, with an implication of cultural specificity, for instance: ‘We were brought to him after our shower, after our bath, to sing “London Bridge is falling down”, before bed’ or ‘We were brought to him after our shower, after our bath, to say “good night, sleep tight, mind the bed bugs don’t bite”, before bed’. Finally, another lateral approach is to make the granddad more active in his relation to Natalya, by suggesting that he teaches her English words, so: ‘We were brought to him after our shower, after our bath, to learn a new English word, such as “Good Night” before bed.’ My favourite option is the one which uses an English cultural practice, not least since it removes a jarring cross-cultural reference, but it is problematic since it implies a warmer relationship to the granddad than is suggested elsewhere in the text. Given the documentary nature of the play, I feel that the option included in the playtext, as well as the final option in this footnote, are the closest possible versions.

²² Alternative translation for the play’s director: if the play is being presented to an audience without a specialist knowledge of Russian history, it is possible to adopt a normative equivalent term for this phrase from a British context, for the sake of clarity. In this case, it would read: ‘I remember we found some official letter paper in his office from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs,’ etc.

for love or money.²³ He was the master of neutral, the master of silence.

Benjamin My great uncle was slightly younger, he was born within a year of my father, but he climbed the ladder faster than granddad, he worked for Criminal Investigations,²⁴ then he became the Chief of Criminal Investigations for the City of Moscow. And later, I think, he got the position which they created – Head of Police,²⁵ that was in the 1930s. I was reading a newspaper from 1930-something, an announcement in the *Vecherka*,²⁶ that um there's going to be a military parade in Moscow, comrade Stalin will be waving from the tribune, the commander will be Marshall someone or other, and the person responsible for the parade is my great uncle – my namesake (same first name, patronymic and surname).

He died in 1938 or 1939. When dad named me in his honour, he only knew that my great uncle was the Chief of the Moscow Criminal Investigations,²⁷ then Head of the Moscow Police, so he was responsible for organising the parade. When they travelled in his car, police officers would salute. That's all he knew. Of course, dad didn't know that my great uncle was a member of the big three and signed death sentences. How could he have known that then? I read everything about my great uncle in Mel'gunov's books –²⁸ and in Solzhenitsyn's.²⁹

Vera When I asked my maternal grandmother to give me an interview on this subject, she felt very conflicted. Sometimes she wanted to talk, sometimes she didn't. And it was really very interesting. Because normally when you interview someone about things which happened thirty or forty or fifty years ago, you always get one and the same story, which is told in a rehearsed way – damned if you want to find out the real story! But it seems grandmother had never told these stories to anyone, or had only told them once or twice. Anyway, these weren't pre-packaged at all, because apparently she'd never even told them to herself. And that's why I could interview her three times and get quite different interpretations of one and the same event, different versions of history.

Marina My father was in a leftist Socialist Party. They were, many of them were, well – terrorists, actually. They joined the Secret Service, the Cheka.³⁰ And so did my father. For

²³ Translation note: the original expression is 'molchat' kak partizan' ['молчать как партизан']. Literally, this phrase means 'to stay silent like a partisan'. This expression is commonly used in Russia and I have opted for a normative equivalent expression in English.

²⁴ Criminal Investigations was part of the People's Commissariat of Internal Affairs.

²⁵ Alternative translation for the play's director: Benjamin uses the word 'militsiya' ['милиция'], which is literally 'militia'. I have rendered this as 'Police' for the sake of clarity, but the original is a viable option, too in which case 'And later, I think, he got the position which they created – Head of Militia, that was in the 1930s.'

²⁶ Alternative translation for the play's director: the *Vecherka* is the nickname for the *Vechernyaya Moskva* ['Вечерняя Москва']. Literally, this appellation translates as the *Evening Moscow* and refers to a newspaper founded in 1927, which still existed at the time of translation in 2014. It is possible to add the word 'newspaper' after 'Vecherka', for the sake of clarity. Source: <<http://vm.ru/staticpage/about>> [accessed 28 August 2014].

²⁷ Benjamin uses the acronym MUR which stands for 'Moskovskii ugovovnyi rozysk' ['Московский уголовный розыск']. I have translated the term, for the sake of clarity.

²⁸ Sergei Petrovich Mel'gunov (1879-1956), Soviet historian.

²⁹ Alexander Isaevich Solzhenitsyn (1918-2008), Soviet and Russian author.

³⁰ Cheka is a widely accepted term: it refers to the Russian letters 'Ch' and 'K'. This is a shortened version of the Russian term which translates as the All-Russia Extraordinary Commissions in the War against Counter-

quite a long time, until... until around 1932, probably, he was working... as a what's it, what do they call that now? A covert spy,³¹ yes? Stationed abroad. And after that he was back in Moscow. I remember my father. But my daughter asked me recently, did I love my father? I always thought I loved him. But I saw him so little that it's hard to say for sure... Well how can I put it? It was habit. So, the routine was – dad's home, and dad loves me, and dad sometimes comes and reads me a fairytale, and he'll read me some little ditty or other, he'll stroke my head. But basically, not much and not often. It's also hard for me to say what he was like. But he had a totally explosive personality, that's for sure.

Mikhail Granddad came from a big Jewish family. He had three sisters and a brother. I knew his brother a bit – apparently, he worked in the Secret Service,³² and later he worked for the “Death to Spies” Unit, but after the war he became bohemian, started writing plays... The husband of my granddad's sister was Leonid Chertok³³ – he was one of the most fearsome investigators in the NKVD. Well, I got most of the family history from my parents – but it wasn't very straightforward. Especially because all the archives were destroyed. It was also complicated by the fact that everyone changed their surnames. There were some things that my family refused to talk about. For example, I don't know much about my father's life. I heard about him through stories told at the table or when the family was chatting... When I became interested in it myself, I kept hesitating whether to ask about it. And as for my mum – it was like pulling teeth. And so I began to get the information, about the country I live in, from elsewhere. Perhaps my parents were protecting me, perhaps they believed that we were building socialism with a human face...³⁴ Of course, they were anti-Stalin. And of course there

Revolution and Sabotage. These Commissions were effectively the new security service of the Bolshevik Party, falling within the remit of the NKVD (please see above). The Cheka 'was created on 7 [...] December 1917 [...] on the initiative of V. I. Lenin. [...] At the beginning of 1918, the Commissions were divided into the following departments: – The struggle with counter-revolution [...] – Political investigations. [...]’ [*‘Всероссийская Чрезвычайная Комиссия (ВЧК), была создана 7 [...] декабря 1917 г. [...] по инициативе В.И. Ленина. [...] В начале 1918 г. ВЧК разделялась на следующие отделы: – борьбы с контрреволюцией [...] – политического следствия [...]’*] Source: Human Rights Defenders Against Torture [*‘Правозащитники против пыток’*] <<http://protivpytok.org/sss/osnovnye-vexi-razvitiya-organov-gosudarstvennoj-bezopasnosti/vchk>> [accessed 28 August 2014].

³¹ Alternative translation for the play's director: Marina uses the term ‘Rezident’ [*‘Резидент’*]. I have put this into its closest equivalent which is a ‘covert spy’. It would be possible to use the original term, ‘Resident’, to suggest a specific historical term, albeit somewhat less clear to British audiences.

³² Alternative translation for the play's director: Mikhail's term Chekist is a common way of referring to somebody who worked for the Cheka (please see footnote 30 above for a description of the Cheka). A viable option would be to translate this as ‘he was working in the secret services’, to replace ‘he was a Chekist’, particularly if the play is being presented to a non-specialist audience with little background in Russian history.

³³ Iosif Chertok (1902-37?), known also as Leonid Chertok. He held many posts at the NKVD and was infamous as an interrogator. In an article in 2000, the Soviet political cartoonist Boris Efimov reminisced about knowing Chertok, through a marriage relation: ‘He was, undoubtedly, a man, or rather a “product” of his times, unforgettable, cruel, terrifying.’ [*‘Он, безусловно, был человеком, вернее, “продуктом” своего времени, незабываемого, жестокого, страшного.’*] Source: Boris Efimov, ‘Stoit li o nem vspominat?’, *Lechaim*, April 2000 <<http://www.lechaim.ru/ARHIV/96/efimov.htm>> [accessed 28 August 2014].

³⁴ This expression, ‘socialism with a human face’, is a well-known phrase in Russia. The *Encyclopaedic Dictionary of Proverbial Phrases and Expressions* attributes the expression to the Communist leader of Czechoslovakia, Alexander Dubcek, in 1968. Source: *Vadim Serov's Encyclopaedic Dictionary of Proverbial Phrases and Expressions* (2003) <<http://www.bibliotekar.ru/encSlov/17/156.htm>> [accessed 28 August 2014].

were some conversations about Stalin at home, so when I read Solzhenitsyn, I had some sort of context for it. But in my family the acts were seen as separate from the people who carried out those acts.

Vera The legend about my other grandmother was not that she was a censor, but the fact that afterwards, she worked for thirty years at the Nauka publishing house³⁵ and she gave the Soviet Union the full Gerald Durrell, she arranged for the translation and publication of his books, and she took up mountain climbing when she was fifty. So that was my grandmother – a sophisticated, intelligent woman, and also a very passionate person. But it never occurred to me to ask her what she did before the Nauka publishing house.

Inna How do I relate to this? I relate to it like something from distant history. It's just that my family was involved. I don't know under what circumstances my grandfather was called to the "Death to Spies" Unit. I don't know what was at stake – what sort of choice he had. I don't know how it happened that he was the investigator in the Wallenberg affair. I completely understand why he was called up. Well, his education. He spoke German completely fluently. But then again, I know that he was absolutely dedicated to the ideals of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union.

Benjamin My upbringing was different to my father's. My father spent his whole childhood and youth at the dacha – for him, that's just how it was. His father was committed to the system. But for me – the Soviet Union, Stalin, Stalinism, I rejected all of it. It was disgusting.

And then it was just obvious³⁶ that for my grandfather to be the boss of a camp was not a good thing. When did that start to happen? ... Hmmmm.... Well, when all children rebel against their parents, fourteen years old, most likely... I hadn't really thought about it before then.

Marina I didn't feel any hurt or anger. It had nothing to do with me, do you see? Somehow I always felt that my father³⁷ had chosen his path and then followed it, just the way he was – he must have been a very narrow-minded individual... I mean, why get upset about it? But I never wanted to justify him either. I understand that each person who ends up as an executioner, gets there step by step, it's not in their nature from the get-go – they live through certain stages, they followed their principles, something drives them on, something holds them back, there's a whole evolution there. I think my father went through something like that, too, and I've always thought that everything began with the leftist Socialist Parties, and his fairly lengthy underground existence in the Tsarist regime played a role as well, and there were some contradictory things in his

³⁵ Nauka [*'Наука'*] means 'Science'. The Nauka publishing house has been functional as a printing press since 1727, but in 1923 it was set up as a publishing company. Source: <<http://www.naukaran.ru/history.shtml>> [accessed 28 August 2014].

³⁶ Rehearsal room change: 'a logical extension' instead of 'obvious'. An actor felt that the original phrase sounded unnatural in English and I accepted a proposed change to a more colloquial and clearer equivalent in English.

³⁷ Rehearsal room change (for clarity): 'my father' instead of 'he'.

nature, too, yes. There's no justification, I knew that. Still, there's no justification. Of course I would never have justified my father. Guilt is guilt and... it ends with death.

Olga My grandmother didn't live for herself. She was ready to make sacrifices. She had an idea for which she was ready to sacrifice so much. She was ready to give everything to make a better life for others. She was prepared to starve. My grandmother would give her last piece of bread to other people's children. Even with her own babies in her arms. I'm not sure it expiates anything, I actually think it expiates fuck all, but you can't remain indifferent when you know that someone was ready to sacrifice everything. To deny herself children and a flat. Because she had a hell of a lot of men, they all swarmed around her, you know. Some Jew, then some other bloke, then another, and one after that. Shall I give birth? Fine, I will. And then she's living and living and living, and surviving everybody, and turning to stone. She was always alone.³⁸ With her ideas, in her life. And running alongside that you find out that she lied about her age, she didn't join the Revolution³⁹ as a fourteen year old girl. She was twenty. Her mother kept a brothel. In Siberia. What made her do it? What happened to her? Some wild love? Well, bloody hell, that's the truth of it, I mean, something happened to her and she threw everything she had into it. And you saw it all: your children have died, the people you started this with have all died, but you're still alive. You're alive. Then some strange journalists come to you and say: let's take a photo of you with your whole family. And all these military parades – and they're all standing there, all of these... Brezhnev... and two along from him is gran.⁴⁰ And her face is always, you know, of the school of: "I'm performing my duty". I mean, the word "duty" was always very important for her. Perhaps this was their religion. Maybe they were all religious fanatics. But they didn't live for their own enjoyment or shoot people for their own enjoyment, I know that *for sure* about my grandmother, one hundred percent.

Evgenia Mum was told what to do by her father – so she entered the law faculty of Moscow University without delay. One of the teachers there was Andrei Yanuar'evich Vyshinsky⁴¹ – until the end of her days, she had the most glowing memories of him, and

³⁸ Rehearsal room cut (for rhythm): 'You know – these people are by themselves and I'm by myself.'

³⁹ This may be a reference to the Bolshevik Revolution of October 1917 as well as a broader point about the spread of revolutionary ideas across the Soviet Union after October 1917.

⁴⁰ Alternative translation for the play's director: Olga uses the word 'babulya' ['бабуля'], an endearing word for grandmother. I have translated this as 'granny' although other English-language versions are possible such as 'gran'. It may also be possible to use the transliterated Russian word 'babushka' here for a humorous, idiosyncratic effect – many British audiences know this word thanks to Anthony Burgess' *A Clockwork Orange* (1962).

⁴¹ Andrei Yanuar'evich Vyshinsky (1883-1954), prosecuting lawyer and Soviet official. By one account: 'If Vyshinsky spoke publicly, the whole country leant in to their radios, poured over his speeches which were published in the newspapers – before he would reason, clearly and intelligibly, about the fairness of comrade Stalin's actions. [...] His eloquence knew no bounds. [...] On 11 May 1931, Vyshinsky was appointed as a Judge of the RSFSR [trans. – Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic]. [...] Vyshinsky subserviently and uncomplainingly fulfilled his position as the main inquisitor of the Leader [trans. – i.e. Stalin].' [*Если выступал Вышинский, вся страна прикивала к радиоприемникам, зачитывалась его речами, опубликованными в газетах – до того ярко и доходчиво он рассуждал о справедливости действий товарища Сталина. [...] Красноречие его не знало границ. [...] 11 мая 1931 г. Вышинский был назначен Прокурором РСФСР. [...] Вышинский услужливо и безропотно выполнял роль главного инквизитора вождя.*] Source: Alexander Zvyagintsev, *Nyurnbergskii nabat. Reportazh iz proshlogo, obraschenie k buduschemu* (Moscow: Olma Media Group Publishers, 2006), pp. 195-6.

all the time she would tell me, ah, he was a true professor, oh how he knew Latin! And I tried to explain that Andrei Yanuar'evich Vyshinsky wasn't just a wonderful professor. I'd read *The Gulag Archipelago*⁴² by then and many other books, but mum didn't particularly argue, she said: "What a professor! He knew Latin so well, he gave such intelligent lectures, he had such a neat haircut, with such handsome grey hair, he always wore such impeccable suits, and he gave such beautiful lectures in the Big Communist auditorium". I would reply: "Mum, how can you say that about him? He was a murderer – who caused millions of deaths." "I don't know about that", she'd say, "but he gave the most wonderful lectures".

Mikhail We have a large room, an "office", with large shelves which have glass panels, so-called Swedish shelves – sometimes I would sleep in there. And as a child, my main reading was the spines of books, titles and authors. We had art books, everything under the sun. Granddad was a book-lover, we had a really wonderful library, books from the 16th and 17th centuries, originals from Pushkin's time. So, among other things, we had these little cushions with black mounts displaying awards and medals for granddad: the Order of Lenin, two Orders of the Great Patriotic War,⁴³ numerous medals. You see, it was just a part of the interior design. Also, there were books written by granddad. He wrote a whole load, there were textbooks about Marxist-Leninist philosophy, a series of books about Lenin's early years called *Lenin by the Volga*.⁴⁴ He also published folklore. That is one of my main childhood memories, – the medals behind the glass and granddad's book *Lenin by the Volga*. Keeping the medals is completely illegal. We're meant to give them back. It's quite a sombre story because those cushions – that's what they take to the grave, the Orders. Well, I lived in that funereal atmosphere. Red and black.

Polina It was only after my dad died that I found out who my granddad was – well, my great granddad, in fact. Because it was a taboo subject, especially for him. Anything that he felt was dangerous wasn't talked about. He didn't want me to know⁴⁵ that we are Jewish, he didn't want me to know that my great granddad worked in the NKVD. He didn't want me to know that my father himself studied at the KGB's Higher Institute. In other words, I found out about this when he was still alive, of course, but I was easily old enough and had been for some time. My grandmother told me about my dad when he was a little boy. Dad became granddad's friend, he asked him for chocolate, he went walking with him. Dad told us that one time they were walking along the Lubyanka,⁴⁶ and he was holding granddad's hand. And granddad can't salute to the person who is

⁴² *The Gulag Archipelago* by Alexander Solzhenitsyn (written between 1956 and 1968; first published in Paris in 1973).

⁴³ The Great Patriotic War is a standard way of referring to the Second World War in Russia.

⁴⁴ Boris Volin, V. I. *Lenin v Povolzh'e: 1870-1893* (Moscow: Gospolitizdat', 1955).

⁴⁵ Rehearsal room change: during the rehearsal, I could hear that I had rendered a Russian phrase literally, in a way which is not natural in English, so for the reading, I changed 'I shouldn't know' into 'He didn't want me to know', in three places.

⁴⁶ The Lubyanka is the name of a Square in Moscow but it also refers, popularly, to the imposing building which stands on the square, number 11 Bol'shaya Lubyanka. This building became the headquarters of the Cheka, the first state security organ in Soviet Russia, in 1918, and remained the HQ for Soviet Russia's security organs throughout the Soviet Union. Source:

<<http://www.agentura.ru/dossier/russia/fsb/lubyanka>> [accessed 28 August 2014].

coming towards him and because dad was holding on to his sleeve the whole time. As a child, that meant nothing to me, I just saw how adults do – hop! – and stand to attention...⁴⁷ That story was only ever told in family circles. A really “funny” story. It’s the portrait of a very kind great grandfather. Since I never met him, I wasn’t very interested in him as a person, that’s why I didn’t particular ask a lot of questions. But I didn’t ask them later either.

Evgenia There were some conversations at home. About... they called it the repressions then. About Stalin, the repressions, the camps. But I felt that people um... were sort of talking about it, but somehow not saying the main thing. And many people said that it was right, that we wouldn’t have built our state any other way, that we wouldn’t have won the war. Others started getting worked up and shouting that Stalin was a cannibal. And I knew that this was a very big topic.⁴⁸ And when I had grown up intellectually, I really wanted to formulate my own point of view on the subject. Because it seemed like all the people I cared for and loved, some are saying one thing, the others – something different, others aren’t even talking about it at all. Like my parents, for example – they tried not to talk to me at all on that subject.

Inna I feel that I can easily imagine why he did what he did. But I’d give a lot to find out what conversations granddad had with his family about it. His Jewish family. About Wallenberg’s fate. You know, between his mum, his dad, his sister. That would be interesting. Because families, as everyone knows, are the least forgiving.

Mikhail My parents made no claims on my granddad beyond those that are normal between parents and children. And all the family relationships were far more important than the achievements of my granddad and grandma. I can’t say that I blame granddad. But I think that I’ve become interested in history and now I take on quite an active civic position, partly because the desire for turning things upside down is encoded into my genes. And maybe that’s from granddad. If they’ve managed to re-direct the course of the whole country, then why won’t I succeed? You see, I grew up and lived my whole life in a house with windows looking out onto the Kremlin! History itself took place right under my nose!

Olga To be honest, she just lost her maternal feelings towards her children. She had many, from different men, her lovers included the splendid comrade Khrushchev,⁴⁹ who

⁴⁷ Rehearsal room discussion: it became clear that the director and actors understood this sentence to refer to the original situation – where the granddad was walking with Polina’s dad. However, the playwrights explained to me at the Oxford Conference ‘Back to the USSR? Oxford Russian and Ukrainian Theatre Seminar’, 6-8 November 2014, that, as they understand it, it refers to the dinner parties where the story was told, and people listening pricked up their ears, as the implications of the story sank in. The director and actors preferred the current version. An alternative would be to replace ‘hop!’ with ‘oh!’, and ‘they stand to attention’ with ‘their jaws drop’, to capture the intended meaning of the testimony, as interpreted by one of the playwrights.

⁴⁸ Rehearsal room change: ‘discussion’ was replaced with ‘topic’. This change was proposed by an actor, to capture a more natural way of speaking in English.

⁴⁹ Nikita Sergeevich Khrushchev (1894-1971) was the Soviet leader who succeeded Stalin. He was First Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the USSR from 1953-64 and Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the USSR from 1958-64.

was actually the one to pull her out of jail, when she was doing time, and he got all of her children out too. But all these children were of no interest to her, she had the great business of the Revolution and was completely committed to it. Clearly when the child was small, like with animals, she looked after it, worried over it, and then – it's standing on its feet, it's running around, fetching its own food, and that's it.

Evgenia I felt that my parents weren't the worst people in that system. More likely, the opposite. And dad wasn't the worst person in his organisation. We were told about how he had tried to help some people, sometimes doing it in quite an unusual way. Yes, of course they're responsible. Of course – they're responsible for everything. Especially dad, with a father who'd been shot in jail, he shouldn't have gone to work for the Committee of State Security. I always knew – they were always telling me – that granddad died of tuberculosis in 1938. He was a miner, working as a Komsomol⁵⁰ organiser in some mine in Donbass,⁵¹ and that's a professional miners' disease and he died young of tuberculosis. But sometime in 1989 or 1990, literally two or three years before my father died, he told me that granddad had been shot in jail in 1938. And grandmother, his mother, wandered from village to village, moving every six to seven months, so she wouldn't be found. They were on Nazi-occupied territory for eleven months. I said: "Dad, why didn't you say anything all these years? How come?" He told me: "Well, you're anti-Soviet, if I say something to you, you'll blab it to everyone". He shouldn't have gone to work for the KGB. But that's typical Soviet conformism.

Vera Grandmother's work as a censor wasn't central to our lives. Our family had other points of tension, a whole load of rubbish, to do with our emigration: at some point, my grandfather from the other side began to snitch on us. Well that – *that* was really stressful.⁵² But the fact that my grandmother had worked in censorship during Stalin's time, many years before I was born, that was just accepted as a fact, a historical fact. In other words, a completely neutral fact. While, of course, the fact that the other grandmother had refused to collaborate with the NKVD – that was seen as a heroic fact.

⁵⁰ The Komsomol was the standard abbreviation for the *Kommunisticheskii soyz molodezhi* [*Коммунистический союз молодежи*], the youth movement set up by the Communist Party of the USSR in 1918.

⁵¹ The Donbass is a popular abbreviation for the Donetsky Basin which comprises regions in Eastern Ukraine and South Russia, primarily the Dnepropetrovskaya and Rostovskaya regions, respectively. One account describes the economic modernisation – and its human cost – for the Donbass in the 1930s: 'the Bolsheviks turned the Donetsky Basin once again into the largest industrial base in the country. As a result, at the start of the 1940s, Stalin's Donbass was providing 85.5 million tonnes or sixty per cent of the All-Union's coal extraction. [...] During the period 1937 to 1940, by Article 54 of the Criminal Code of the USSR, 20,000 people were found guilty in Donbass, of whom 13,000 were executed by firing.' [*«Б»ольшевики заново превратили Донецкий бассейн в крупнейшую индустриальную базу страны. В результате, к началу 1940 года сталинский Донбасс давал 85,5 млн.т. или 60% общесоюзной добычи угля. [...] [В] период с 1937 по 1940 годы по 54-й статье УК СССР в Донбассе были осуждены 20 тыс. человек, 13 тыс. из которых были расстреляны.*] Source: <<http://www.manekin.narod.ru/hist/forever/part1/op3.htm>> [accessed 28 August 2014].

⁵² Rehearsal room change: 'moral pressure' replaced with 'stressful'. It was felt by the director and actors that 'moral pressure' was unclear in English and accepted the proposal to change it with a more colloquial term.

That grandmother – it’s harder to talk with her because she is much more guarded. At first, she “heroically” refused to work for the NKVD when she was called up.

But then one day she decided that she somehow had to feed her children. So she went in, but didn’t pass the medical commission for the NKVD because she was blind in one eye. But rather than admitting that she was ready to collaborate, she turned the whole story into a comedy about forgetting that she was blind in one eye.

So, I ask her: “And what would you have been there if you had got the job?”

“Well, I would have...”, the rank of lieutenant, I think, was the post she would have held to start with, – “I would have been, yes, an officer of the MGB”.⁵³ – Well, and what do you think of that? Well, to do translation, what’s the big deal? It’s technical work, everybody knows that.

Evgenia We celebrated the Day of the Chekist,⁵⁴ in my family; the official security service holiday. 20th of December. Well, not that mum would have celebrated it, but dad did. And basically that word, ‘Chekist’, that word in particular,⁵⁵ was a holy word in my family. It even had a surprising double meaning, they understood everything perfectly well. And once when I asked my father about it directly: “Well, how can you be a member of a party which has cost this country millions of lives? How can you?” He replied: “You know, everything which I have in my life is thanks to the Party. I was an uneducated peasant boy who, up until the age of 18, thought that “obelisk” was spelt with a “d”, “odelisk”, from the word “odd”, and I saw a train for the first time when I was seventeen years old. And now I’ve travelled the whole world, I’ve seen everything, I’ve even managed to raise you, an anti-Soviet pig”. By that point, I had read the Gospels so I said to him, “Grief to He who gains the world but loses his soul”. To which dad replied: “Just get out of my sight, I don’t want to see you here”. So, yes, he allowed me talk to him like that. Also, I was wrong, of course, because he hadn’t lost his soul at all, he was a very kind person. And everyone who remembered him – remembered that he was kind. And I actually was anti-Soviet. But only with my family. I mean, I was happy to

⁵³ The acronym stands for *Ministerstvo gosudarstvennoi bezopasnosti* [‘Министерство государственной безопасности’], which translates as the Ministry of State Security. This was the successor to the NKVD; it would later become the KGB. One account explains this change in the following way: ‘after the Second World War, the perspective of “a world revolution” [trans. – whereby the Bolsheviks hoped that communism would spread to Europe and the rest of the world, by dint of the Soviet Union’s example] was lost, once and for all, and the revolutionary terminology became obsolete: they needed to start thinking about the security of the USSR’. [‘[П]осле Второй мировой войны была окончательно утрачена перспектива «мировой революции», и революционная терминология стала неактуальной: нужно было думать о безопасности СССР.’] Source: Human Rights Defenders Against Torture [‘Правозащитники против пыток’] <<http://protivpytok.org/sss/osnovnye-vexi-razvitiya-organov-gosudarstvennoj-bezopasnosti/mgb-ministerstvo-gosudarstvennoj-bezopasnosti-sss-1946-1953>> [accessed 28 August 2014].

⁵⁴ Alternative translation for the play’s director: Evgenia uses the term Chekist. For a non-specialist audience, context could be added, by providing an additional phrase, directly after Chekist, namely ‘the official security service holiday’.

⁵⁵ Evgenia is emphasising the word Chekist in spite of the fact that her father worked for the KGB, not the Cheka. She repeats the word, Chekist, which I have not done in translation, as it sounds less natural: repetitions are more common in Russian. The word Chekist continues to be used by some even in 2014, usually with negative connotations, to denote officials working for the security services in any era, not only in the earliest Bolshevik decades.

argue, sitting at home – but not to take it to another level – no. I wasn't willing to go out to demonstrations or distribute flyers.

Marina Mum didn't have anything good to say about our system. But when Stalin died, she cried for three days. Three days of crying: what will they do to us now? She came up with her own answer: "They will do, what they will do". I.e. we're just somebody's playthings in any case. And that things will get even worse, which was terrifying. And then one day... I even remember the date, 4th of April 1953, when they published a decree that the doctors involved in the doctors' plot⁵⁶ weren't involved in a plot at all, she came home again in tears. I said: "Why are you crying now?" She said: "I'm an old fool. Why did I cry for three days?"

Benjamin At the beginning of the 20th century, there was this feeling that something had to be done with the foul, rotten Tsarist regime. This phrase appears in the memoirs of many poets and writers: we were breathing the air of revolution, waiting for revolution. And basically – what I think is that if I had been living at that time, I would have had the same attitude towards the Tsarist regime. It was even more pressing for them – because of the Jewish question – which was another reason some men joined the revolution. And perhaps what happened next wasn't their fault – it's just what they were told to do. But then again, they still followed orders thoroughly.⁵⁷

Natalya And the way my grandfather got involved – it makes sense. He became a revolutionary in 1917 because he wasn't happy with what was going on. He escaped from the Kiev jail, the one where Timoshenko⁵⁸ is doing time now, by the way. He ran away and found himself in emigration. I don't think he joined the battle knowing that they were going to create a totalitarian state. In fact, I'm sure he didn't think that. It's obvious. He had a strong sense of fairness. We all have that. My brother had that, too, when he went out onto Red Square. I was driven by it every time I did something for the dissident movement. So I can fully understand that a person who sees that things aren't right and feels he can change them – he takes action. Of course, there was an

⁵⁶ According to an article on the media website *Grani.ru*: 'On 4 April 1953, in *Pravda* [trans. – a prominent Soviet newspaper], a "Message from the Ministry of the Interior of the USSR" was published. Soviet people learnt that the famous "affair of the doctor-murderers", allegedly at the instigation of American and Israeli intelligence which had killed members of the Politburo, Scherbakov and Zhdanov, and had prepared for the murder of Stalin and other members of the government, had been fabricated "by the management of the former MGB" and all those arrested over this affair had been freed.' [*4 апреля 1953 года в "Правде" было опубликовано "Сообщение Министерства Внутренних Дел СССР". Советские люди узнали, что знаменитое "дело врачей-убийц", якобы по наущению американской и израильской разведок умертвивших членов Политбюро Щербакова и Жданова и готовивших убийство Сталина и других членов правительства, было сфальсифицировано "руководством бывшего МГБ" и все арестованные по этому делу освобождены.*] Source: Boris Sokolov, "Delo vrachei": nachalo i konets', *Grani.ru*, 4 April 2003 <<http://grani.ru/Society/Health/m.28183.html>> [accessed 28 August 2014].

⁵⁷ Translation note: a literal translation is 'On the other hand, who asked you to be the best pupil? But they were among the best.' According to the playwrights, this is a reference which would be recognisable to educated Russians. It refers to the film *To Kill The Dragon* [*Убить дракона*] (1988) directed by Mark Zakharov, based on the play *The Dragon* [*Дракон*] by Evgeny Schwartz (1944). These lines of dialogue appear in the film: 'Don't look [at me] like that, it's not my fault. We were taught that way, as youngsters, do you understand? That's how we were taught./ Everybody was taught but why did you turn out to be the best pupil?' [*Не смотрите так, дело не во мне. Нас, молодых, так учили, понимаете? Так учили./Всех учили, но почему ты оказался первым учеником?*].

⁵⁸ Iulia Vladimirovna Timoshenko (b. 1960), Ukrainian Prime Minister (2005, 2007-10).

adventurous streak in what he did and in his nature. Granddad had a real fighting spirit. He brought money over to distribute the revolutionary newspaper, “The Spark”,⁵⁹ Lenin was writing to him regularly – he’d already been given the nickname “Old Man”⁶⁰ by that point. Expropriation of banks, purchase of weapons – that all happened. It was a revolutionary struggle. I know from my own dissident activities how it takes hold of you. You start doing something, you’re buzzing with activity, it’s all so dangerous...

Mikhail Yes, I feel that I’m righting the wrongs of my grandfather! But it’s very hard for me to delineate his mistakes. Once, when granddad was reflecting on Stalin, he said this: “If I were Stalin, I would have done the same as him”. Fine, my granddad made mistakes, but that’s what he thought. He was sincere. Many of his errors were harmful. Much of what I do is quite possibly – it’s a subconscious attempt to right... I’m trying... It’s possible that my drive to bar former Communists from public life is connected to the fact that my granddad was a high-placed official in Stalin’s government. But it isn’t just subconscious, it’s an inherited attempt to change the situation! And that’s typical: there are dissidents among the descendants of the revolutionaries. But among the descendants of the Brezhnev regime – no, none of them became modernisers. I’m like my granddad – I’ve got ants in my pants.

Evgenia My father worked in Ethiopia and Japan, in many countries. (Somewhere I’ve got a cut-out from a Japanese newspaper, *Asahi*, lying around, with a photo of mum and I leaving Japan on a ship with the caption: Wife and daughter of Russian spy return to the USSR.) Well, of course, he wasn’t a spy, he just used the cover of a trade representative to get... He was mainly doing what they call... what’s that called? Technical reconnaissance? I.e. he pinched various secrets. Which were not sold directly to the USSR – but through other people, middlemen. At some point, in the 1980s, he was issued with a certificate, that his activities had made five million roubles for the USSR.⁶¹ That was insane money in those Soviet times. He was very proud of that. He never showed me the document, he just told me. But he was already very drunk at that moment. Not that he drank much, just like the others.

Inna Mum was not a historian, and what she told us didn’t always make sense, but somehow it didn’t seem to matter to us at the time. My sister was seventeen, I was eighteen, we had completely different interests, and I can honestly say that neither of us had time for Wallenberg. We actually found it all a bit romantic, I think. Then some curious story surfaced, something about the war. That’s how we found out. But then, later, I began to understand. When I began to socialise with people who had worked

⁵⁹ *Iskra* [‘Искра’], the Spark – an underground, Marxist pamphlet initiated by Lenin in 1900.

⁶⁰ Natalya uses the word ‘papasha’ [‘nanawa’] which is a slang, and sometimes derogatory, term for father.

⁶¹ Information point for the play’s director: one of the playwrights suggested – ‘It sounds like an unbelievable, enormous sum. [...] My mother who was a doctor had a salary of around 160 roubles, my father’s around 350, but he was a head of a department in the Novosibirsk Conservatory and had had bonuses for teaching and a degree. Students’ stipend was 46-55 roubles. Once I’ve found a figure (although in a not very reliable source) that average Soviet salary in 1983 was 165 roubles. Sounds more a less realistic. [...] An airplane ticket from my native Novosibirsk to Moscow was 56 roubles. American jeans were available [on the] black market for 200 roubles, Bulgarian or Polish jeans from time to time appeared in regular stores for 30-60. There are some official prices: <http://www.fresher.ru/2012/12/01/skolko-stoilivary-v-1975-godu>. Source: Private email from Mikhail Kaluzhsky, 11 September 2014.

with granddad in the Scientific Institute of Architecture after he had been fired from the “Death to Spies” Unit. My grandfather was always ideologically-motivated, but my frustration with his ideological nature came later, because I was his beloved granddaughter. And whenever I saw him he was just granddad.

Evgenia My father died in 1992. A classical, almost mythological, death: one system collapsed and he couldn’t cope in the new system. He couldn’t accept these changes – the new – he couldn’t bring himself to look at it. He wasn’t an especially big fan of the old, but⁶² he knew that system well, knew its value. He died a decorated colonel on the KGB.⁶³ And he died with that system. When I’d read a lot, I began saying to him: “But what about Novocherkassk? What about the massacres?”⁶⁴ He replied: “We didn’t know anything about that.” And that was also mum’s favourite line: “We didn’t know anything. We didn’t know about the purges.” I said to her: “Mum, how could you not know about the purges when half your family were in camps?” Well, then it turned into a shouting match. And of course I didn’t believe them.

Natalya Granddad had died by then, but I remember mum telling me how everyone was stunned by Stalin’s death. That’s when I found out who Stalin was. I said to dad: “You never took us to Red Square to look at the guy on the tribune”. And I clearly remember dad’s face twisting with anger. It was the first time I’d seen dad like that. He said: “You didn’t miss anything!” I remember this sentence, it struck me: “You didn't miss anything!” But of course they knew everything by then. We still lived in Government House and we had windows in the bathroom and the water-closet looking out onto the Kremlin, across the river. I remember the zeppelins, I remember the huge portraits of Lenin and Stalin which were hanging there. All of it was interesting but I didn’t know what it meant. And mum told me that when Stalin died, they were in shock, everyone was, obviously. And she looked from the water-closet window at the Kremlin and suddenly understood that it wouldn’t get worse. This feeling had obviously been in the family for a long time. But obviously nobody shared that with us. They really wanted

⁶² Rehearsal room addition (for clarity): ‘but’.

⁶³ Translation note: the original prefers the full phrase to the abbreviation: Committee for State Security.

⁶⁴ ‘The shooting of peaceful demonstrators in Novocherkassk became the blackest page in the history of Khrushchev’s rule, a Tragedy on the scale of the whole country. [...] The first day of summer 1962, the workers of the largest – not only in Novocherkassk but also in the whole country – Electro-Locomotive Plant gloomily came to their work stations, telling each other news about the sharp rise in food prices. [...] Prices had shot up by almost a third. And a short time earlier, people’s salaries had been cut by about the same amount. [...] The director of the company’s words became a detonator of a civic explosion. [...] The situation escalated, a telegramme flew to Moscow about an anti-Soviet rebellion. Khrushchev ordered the Minister of Defense, Malinovsky, to quickly restore order in the town and, if required, call up the troops. [...] Twenty-six people were killed, more than forty were wounded.’ [*Расстрел мирной демонстрации в Новочеркасске стал самой черной страницей в истории хрущевского правления, трагедией масштаба всей страны. [...] Первый день лета 1962-го рабочие крупнейшего не только в Новочеркасске, но и всей стране электровозостроительного завода хмуро подходили к станкам, передавали друг другу новости о резком повышении цен на продукты. [...] Почти на треть взлетели цены. А чуть раньше людям на столько же урезали зарплаты. [...] Слова директора предприятия стали детонатором народного взрыва. [...] Обстановка накалялась, в Москву полетела телеграмма об антисоветском мятеже. Хрущев приказал министру обороны Малиновскому быстро навести порядок в городе и, если нужно, ввести войска. [...] 26 человек были убиты, больше 40 ранены.’]*

Source: A. Gavrilov speaking on the Moscow-based radio station, *Ekho Moskvy*, on 15 November 2009 <<http://echo.msk.ru/programs/hrushhev/633360-echo>> [accessed 28 August 2014].

to keep us from all of that. From understanding it, from the vulgarity of it, from everything.

Olga If there had been a trial against the Communist Party of the Soviet Union in the early 90s, my family would have felt an unbelievable senses of relief. It's important to say that grandmother was always emotionally distant from my family. Maybe that's why we have this relationship to her: she's nothing but a grandmother. Not a hero – just grandma.⁶⁵ That's why I think the family would have been relieved because there are so many questions, such a lot of unknowns which had been hidden. Who knows? First you find out one little bit, then another little bit, then someone else reveals another little bit. And each time you think – well, bloody hell, how about that! And you'd soon have a long inventory. I think it would be interesting for everyone to find out what grandma got up to.⁶⁶

Vera Of course, we weren't allowed to ask any questions about my family's past. Questions about the Soviet Union – sure. To discuss the *Gulag Archipelago* for weeks on end, which my parents had given me to read – be my guest. But to talk about our own family – better not.

Inna I know now that there are certain things that my grandfather wouldn't talk about with the people who came to try to work out what had happened to Raoul Wallenberg. Various people, including my mother, had found out things. I was his beloved granddaughter – so I knew nothing about anything. People even came to see him at home. They left Swedish chocolates and Swedish sweets. Once, we came home, and grandmother said something like "They tried again, they turned up. But he wouldn't talk to them. I invited them into the flat, they drank tea but he wouldn't even come out of his room to talk to them".

Polina When I was eight, we got a dog called Chuck. And somewhere on the pavement I wrote Chuck Alexandrovich and our surname. As a joke, because my father's name was Alexander.⁶⁷ And then I told my dad about it. Dad's face changed so much that I can remember it even now. He turned green, then white, his facial muscles were churning, and he told me never to do it again and to go and wipe it off. So⁶⁸ I went to wipe it off. After asking "why?", on that occasion. I was told that personal information must never be disclosed. That's why, when he bought his first mobile phone, he didn't give his number to anyone. He used the phone so he could make calls himself but nobody was allowed to know his number. Obviously, there was no practical reason for that, it was entirely his psychosis.

⁶⁵ Rehearsal room change: 'but a grandmother' replaced with 'just grandma'. An actor proposed this change as a more natural-sounding equivalent, which I accepted.

⁶⁶ Rehearsal room change: 'how grandmother behaved' replaced with 'what grandma got up to'. During rehearsals, an actor pointed out that this phrase sounded unfamiliar in English because 'to behave' is a verb more associated with children. She proposed a more colloquial alternative which I accepted.

⁶⁷ In Russia, it is common for people to have patronymics. These are middle names which are derived from the father's first name. So, a boy whose father was Alexander would be have the patronymic Alexandrovich, while a girl whose father was Alexander would have the patronymic Alexandrovna.

⁶⁸ Rehearsal room addition (for rhythm): 'So'.

Vera At the end of the 1970s, my mum read Orwell's *1984*. She recounted the story to my grandmother, the censor. Mum said: "He foresaw it all, everything about our life! Except the Ministry of Truth – that's just hyperbole compared to our reality". At that point, my grandmother turned pale, looked nauseous, grew red in the face and said: "And what do you think I was doing in the Directorate for Literature and Publishing?"⁶⁹

Mikhail In the 1930s, granddad was Head of the Directorate for Literature and Publishing. And there's a reference to him in Pasternak as a bad man, who wouldn't let something be published. Later, granddad was Deputy People's Commissar for Public Enlightenment. The People's Commissar was Bubnov. He was an old Bolshevik – he disliked the intelligentsia and thought that granddad was a good-for-nothing intellectual. And granddad really looked like an intellectual. He walked around in a pince-nez. People say I look like him. Granddad quarrelled with Bubnov all the time – And at some point in 1937, the argument got so big that Bubnov flung a paperweight at granddad. Granddad wrote a letter to Stalin. And sent it. And that night, he had a big heart-attack. Followed by eight months in the hospitals and sanatoria. Apparently, that saved him from elimination along with the whole commissariat. That's how the family legend goes. But after that granddad never occupied top posts again.

Evgenia And later dad brought me *The Gulag Archipelago* – it was a crazy thing to do from abroad. He was in Switzerland, he bought the book and brought it back for me. In English. Incidentally, I also read Pasternak's correspondence with Freidenberg for the first time in English, it was my mum who gave it to me. Some foreign delegation gave it to her as a present, saying: "Look, they've published *such* an elegant edition". Mum took a look and said "Ah yes" and gave it straight to me. And I read it and practically learnt it by heart. So, I read it first in English, it only appeared later in a Russian edition. And we also had *Doctor Zhivago*⁷⁰ at home in an English edition.

Vera For her, it was a question of conscience. She graduated with a diploma to become a history teacher. And then she decided that she couldn't teach history in schools because then she'd have to lie to the children. So she worked in censorship. It's technical work, everybody censors in exactly the same way. There's a list of forbidden themes, forbidden terms and forbidden information, it's completely rigid. That's why she went to work in the Directorate for Literature and Publishing. For the first three years, her job was opening and checking private correspondence, and after that she became a literary censor. And that's when a series of moral and ethical complexities emerged. She was given a job at the central post office, and she started to love her work. The point is she hadn't thought that she could love her job, she thought it was all technical. But, you know, someone sends someone else a Hemmingway, she puts it in her pocket, takes it home with her and reads it. Then she brings it back and puts it straight into the safe deposit zone. She could do that. They aren't punished for that – it's

⁶⁹ The term used in Russian is *Glavlit*. This is an abbreviated form of 'Glavnoe upravlenie po literatury i izdatel'stvo' [*Главное управление по литературе и издательство*]. Since the abbreviation would be unclear to British audiences, I have provided the unabbreviated term.

⁷⁰ *Doctor Zhivago* by Boris Pasternak (1955; first published in Italy in 1957).

obvious that she's not the only one doing it. Also – even more interesting, she learnt languages in the Directorate, she loved learning languages more than anything on earth, and they're always giving her new qualifications. Basically, as a censor you know what's going on in the West, in some sense you know how the West thinks. Censors were the most knowledgeable people in the country, and understandably what follows directly from that is a complete intellectual addiction.

Evgenia And it was only after her death that a friend of my mum's told me that my mum worked in Japan – listening to the wiretaps. Somehow I didn't expect that. I remember those years well. I would go to school – every day the bus dropped us off at the Embassy school. And it's true that mum then walked in to work, somewhere or other – I never thought about what sort of job it was. But I never suspected that she was sitting listening to wiretaps. And she never told me about that. She became seriously ill after dad died, the last five years we basically lived in the fifteenth floor oncology centre on Kashirskoe Avenue. And she told me a lot – but never a word about *that*. Apparently because Homo Sovieticus was brought up in this particular way: like a safe with several locks. On top of that, they knew perfectly well that I'm a chatterbox. I think they were a little bit afraid, too. Perhaps mum was ashamed. I think it's perfectly plausible that as she was still a person of honour and conscience – and she clearly *was* that – she understood that there are things about herself which mustn't be told to her own daughter.

Marina My father was a fiery man, but it's difficult to say what his convictions were. Very difficult. He was unquestionably a supporter not just of the revolution, but also of Soviet power... But did he take it as gospel truth? – apparently not. Because he wouldn't speak in positive terms about the leaders. He always called Molotov⁷¹ – Stone Arse.

Natalya Thank God it wasn't granddad who signed the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact. Basically, Hitler saved him from that shame. Well, or from something else. It's well-known: they wouldn't even sit at the same table with a Jew; they simply wouldn't have sent Ribbentrop. But granddad wouldn't have signed the Pact. He said earnestly at the League of Nations and he really meant it: “define the aggressor”, he spoke about Hitler all the time, about the danger. Well, how could he have signed it after that... No – he wouldn't have signed.

Marina In 1939, after the signing of the famous Ribbentrop-Molotov Pact, I was walking to school and passed “Germany House”. I lived in Savelevsky Lane, and my

⁷¹ Vyacheslav Mikhailovich Molotov (1890-1986), a high-ranking Soviet official. He was one of the main organisers of the repressions in 1937. He justified the mass killings to the writer F. Chuev in the following way: ‘1937 was a vital year. If you take into account that after the Revolution, we hacked to the right and to the left, we gained a victory, but the remainder of the enemy of different stripes existed, and they could unite in the face of the imminent danger of Fascist aggression. We did not have a fifth column during the [trans. – Great Patriotic] War thanks to 1937.’ [*‘1937 год был необходим. Если учесть, что мы после революции рубили направо-налево, одержали победу, но остатки врагов разных направлений существовали, и перед лицом грозящей опасности фашистской агрессии они могли объединиться. Мы обязаны 37-му году тем, что у нас во время войны не было пятой колонны.’*] Source: <<http://kuraev.ru/smf/index.php?topic=338993.0>> [accessed 28 August 2014].

school was on Gagarin Lane; I had to cross Ostozhenka Street and Kropotkinskaya. And there on the corner of Starokonyushennyi and Myortvyi Lanes was an Art Nouveau mansion, Germany House. With a German flag fluttering above it – red with a white square and a swastika. I have to say – I was horrified. It was just horrible. Here's a ... it's a fascist flag, these are fascists, and they're being recognised by us! How can we be their friends?! And this flag is in Moscow... and we're against England and France... I didn't ask a single adult about it. I knew that they'd wiggle their way out of it.

Inna I had mixed feelings because my grandfather was alive then, but in a bad way; I knew that if I asked him questions, he wouldn't tell me anything. He was very defensive, it would have only made him angry. It was obvious that *this man doesn't want to talk about it*. You're not going to force it out of him. Unless you're some sort of professional psychologist or if you don't mind ruining your relationship with him. Every time I started to discuss it, I reproached myself. I knew everything already – and I had this moment of despair: who is my grandfather really, oh God oh God, what am I going to do. There's no doubt that grandfather felt fear – he was fighting it off his whole life. He tried to just wipe it out of his life. At no point in his life did he want to admit to it or tell anyone. It's possible, I can imagine, he had to sign some papers when he left the organisation and he naively and honestly kept that oath until the end and didn't talk to anyone. Plus, I think he was convinced that he could take his secret to the grave. And that's what actually happened. He never told anyone.

Olga I talked about this once, with my own child,⁷² and I understood that there aren't enough words. I mean, I know that I have to say something and I begin to search for some platitudes. Like: you know, sweetie,⁷³ it was a time when, how can I put this... And you start to justify it on the one hand, and on the other it's unconvincing, it sounds trite, there's no sense of the scale of great grandmother's personality, or the scale of the tragedy in the country. In fact, it's worse, it looks like you have been given a colouring-in page and pencils, and you need to fill it in with various colours. But you only have two pencils.

Mikhail The psychological process – to take in that it was my relatives who took part in the construction of this country, to digest this information – I haven't managed that yet.

Marina You see, I never hid whose daughter I am, to me that feels undignified. It was, perhaps, let's say, drummed into me, from early childhood, the awareness that each person answers for himself. And his deserves his just desserts.

⁷² Alternative translation for the play's director: Olga uses the word 'edinozhdy' ['единожды'] which is an old-fashioned, literary word for 'once'. Using the English term 'once upon a time' is not an exact cultural equivalent since it has additional overtones of fairytale-like storytelling; this same effect (i.e. of starting to tell a fairytale) is achieved in a different way in Russian. If the phrasing 'once upon a time' is felt to be too emphatic, it is possible simply to revert to 'once'. The disadvantage of the latter is that it loses the idiosyncratic way of speaking used by Olga.

⁷³ Alternative translation for the play's director: Olga uses the term 'detka' ['детка'] which is an affectionate way of saying 'child'. Other possible translations are 'honey', 'baby', 'love' and so on.

Inna And I know that this will haunt me my whole life. I met some Embassy people, at an exhibition. And the Swedes recognised my surname: “Wh-what? It’s a very familiar surname, we’ve come across it before.” And that was that – they walked off. And I quickly connected the dots, in my head. I knew that quite a lot of commissions were coming to grandfather at that point. In terms of my future, lots of doors were shutting. Then I had to work in the same office as a person who was working in the first commission to investigate the Wallenberg affair. So it was inevitable people would find out I was his granddaughter.

Polina Then, when Pavel Polyan’s book came out *Against their will: forced migration in the USSR*,⁷⁴ it turned out that a decent number of pages in it were dedicated to my great grandfather, who didn’t come off well there in spite of all his great qualities as a grandfather. I didn’t read it right away. I’ve found a few things accidentally about granddad on the internet – first he was a Major, then something else, but he was never made a General; that he was, um, the Head of a division of the Special Settlement Programme in the Gulags. I looked at everything available on the web. I actually fainted. I calmed down, at some point. Well, sometimes, I’d tell myself: “It’s true, my great grandfather was an executioner, it’s true”. And then I was personally introduced to Polyan. I knew who he was. When someone said my name, I thought that I saw Polyan’s face change. He doesn’t remember that moment. Because it didn’t mean anything to him. But it meant a lot to me. I sat down and thought about what I was actually going to do now, how to behave in life, knowing what I know now.

Evgenia It wasn’t that I was ashamed in front of my acquaintances, but of course I did hide it. Only the very closest of my friends knew. And my friends were, mostly, from the same crowd.

The relationship with your parents is a sacred thing. That’s why I didn’t tell anyone that my father was a Colonel in the KGB. But when I did mention it, people’s reactions were generally very hostile. So I tried not to discuss the subject.

Olga I could give you a whole story about how it pains me and shames me but that wouldn’t be honest. Sometimes you don’t know how to act. Either nobody’s explained it to you – or there’s no existing formula for it. You know, it’s like: can’t do this, can do that. Well, nobody filled me in on it. That’s why I don’t feel anything. It’s not painful.

Benjamin Once it cropped up in conversation, when I was talking to Alexander Daniel – that his grandparents had been in detention in Int and Vorkuta,⁷⁵ well that’s where my granddad was doing time. Daniel said: “How interesting – I’ll ask them”. And it turned out that his grandfather, who was Joseph Aronych Bogoraz, and his wife, Alla Zimina, wanted to see me because they’d been in detention with my granddad. I went to see

⁷⁴ See footnote 4, p. 334.

⁷⁵ Inta and Vorkuta are two towns in the north of Russia in the Komi Republic. The reference here was to the nearby Vortukinsky Gulag. According to Memorial (NGO), this gulag functioned from 1938 to 1960, with an inmate population between approximately 5,000 in 1938 to a peak of around 72,000 in 1951. Source: <<http://www.memo.ru/history/NKVD/GULAG/r3/r3-64.htm>> [accessed 28 August 2014].

them. And they told me “Of course, later he was arrested himself,⁷⁶ but before that, he was the Head of the Camp, he was in the NKVD, and that isn’t good, but he has atoned for his guilt, for the unhappiness he caused others, by his life there, by his actions⁷⁷ in the camp. So yes. You shouldn’t feel ashamed”. But I told Joseph that I wasn’t ashamed. You see, granddad had a correct world view. I’m utterly unashamed that he went to work in the area to which he was assigned by the Party, because that’s what he had to do and because he honestly believed that it was the right thing to do. And then to leave that system – that would require a particular courage, and perhaps not only courage, one would have to fly off the handle with it all. And as I see it, as the Head of a Camp, he tried to behave like a decent human being, basically. There’s no real blame there either. And the fact that he had no awareness of the awful things happening and so on and so forth – well you see, well he didn’t, and he was raised differently, with different ideals. God! How many people came back from the camps broken and without faith in the communist ideals and professed their love of Stalin.... My granddad didn’t do that to them.

Polina Not long before he died, my father made friends with the remaining dissidents of that era. And at some point... I remember my father telling me about this... He ended up at the same table as Sergei Kovalev who was a well-known Soviet dissident.⁷⁸ And when he got home, he didn’t tell me what Kovalev had been saying or what they talked about, or what happened. But dad said that as he was sitting there on his stool, fidgeting non-stop, he felt like an informer. Even though he’d only worked in the KGB for one year, as he’d been obliged to, and that was more than thirty years ago. And after that he’d worked as an academic in maths, so⁷⁹ for him there’s never been a dilemma⁸⁰ of “collaboration or no collaboration”. But at that moment, his past – and I suspect that of his granddad’s too – suddenly re-surfaced. And he told me that he didn’t know what to do. In other words, they saw him as one of their own, but he couldn’t confess his past to them. And he didn’t confess to it because, in the end, it was stronger than him.

Olga I don’t know how to feel about it. Take pride in it? Fuck knows. Can you feel proud that your relatives shot someone? But then again.... Look, I’ll tell you one final story and that’s it, I’m not going to say anything else. This was most likely after the Revolution, when my grandmother was still in Siberia. There was a famine in central Russia, things were a bit better in Siberia, so they sent children there, to be looked after. And she was responsible for taking in these children. And one time she came to the station, she opens one carriage and all the children inside are dead. She opens the next one – not a single living child. It’s the same in the next carriage. She calls over the train’s supervisor

⁷⁶ Rehearsal room change (for clarity): the director asked me to explain how Benjamin’s grandfather could be doing time in jail and also Head of the Camp. I emailed one of the playwrights who explained that he had been Head of Camp first and later arrested. For the sake of clarity, we added ‘later he was arrested himself, but before that’.

⁷⁷ Rehearsal room change (for clarity): ‘behaviour’ replaced by ‘actions’.

⁷⁸ Sergei Adamovich Kovalev (b. 1930), Soviet dissident originally from Ukraine, civic and human rights activist, Russian politician.

⁷⁹ Rehearsal room change (for clarity): ‘And’ replaced by ‘So’.

⁸⁰ Rehearsal room change (for clarity): ‘problem’ replaced with ‘dilemma’.

was not as clear as it could be, whereas the more precise alternative based on the context, ‘dilemma’,

and he says to her: “comrade so and so, they gave me these children but they didn’t give me food for them. And I didn’t let them out at the stations so they wouldn’t run away, they’re all street children. I delivered what I received.” She pulled out her revolver and shot him, right there, on the spot.

OK. That’s all – please, don’t ask me anything else.

Marina You see, I have this strange thing, I mean, it’s not strange, it’s from my subsequent life, after their arrest, basically... The feeling that, essentially, blood relationships don’t define anything. They are not defining.⁸¹

Inna Coming back to that question of a Nuremberg process, I do feel that it’s still necessary. Putting aside any personal motivations, it’s just necessary. Maybe it would make our country a better place to live.

Evgenia I really loved my parents, especially my dad. Dad was very kind, and thanks mainly to dad, I had a happy childhood. Mum had a harsher personality. Dad was much kinder. And somehow I took it as a fact that, yes, they worked in that organisation, well, they just did. At the same time, you see, they knew the value of that organisation only too well. And if we’d had Nuremberg trials⁸² here, then I think that some sort of judgement would have awaited them. At least, dad – that’s a complete given. Of course, they would have had some sort of investigation, perhaps even some punishment. I don’t know about my mum... I just don’t know. Actually, I think that one of the main reasons why we have ended up where we are, is the fact that there were no Nuremberg trials or any form of barring former Communists from public life.⁸³

Marina Children have the right to know about their fathers and ancestors. And they must know – and it must be published. After Stalin’s death, I didn’t want to rehabilitate my father because... You see, it’s like this. Of course, father was accused of being a German spy, a Turkish spy and some other spy... I understood perfectly well that it wasn’t true, that it couldn’t be the case, and that it wasn’t the case. But in as much as he took part in the whole system and was guilty of other things, then actually, to forgive people who are guilty – that’s wrong. So there you are.

Natalya Once, I remember this very clearly even now, granddad was walking towards me in the corridor. Where we lived, in the House on the Embankment, there was this large, long and quite wide corridor. Our two families were living there, we had six rooms. Like a communal flat. We had bikes and we rode the bikes along the corridor. And so my granddad came across me in the corridor and looks at me thoughtfully: “You

⁸¹ Translation note: the playwright, Alexandra Polivanova explained this comment to the translator in an email; in her view, this comment refers to the fact that Marina is closer to her husband than to her own father, despite being a blood relation of the latter. Source: Email from Alexandra Polivanova to Noah Birksted-Breen, 30 August 2014.

⁸² Rehearsal room change (for clarity): ‘a Nuremberg process’ for ‘Nuremberg trials’.

⁸³ Alternative translation for the play’s director: lustration is a term meaning ‘the barring of former Communists from public life’. At both instances where the word is used in the play, the word could be replaced by the definition provided here, if it is felt that the audience will not know this term.

know, I need to have a serious conversation with you". My heart sank because I remembered my currency operations and my trade in his shaving blades and I thought I was in big trouble.⁸⁴ Also, he said it with such a serious expression. I was six years old – he died when I was seven. He told me we need to talk – but he didn't have time for it right then and there for some reason. And I still have the feeling that a serious conversation awaits me. Like a sword of Damocles, which hasn't yet fallen, this serious conversation has been hanging over me my whole life.

⁸⁴ Alternative translation: the director of the reading made a good suggestion to change the tense of this sentence from past to present, to provide an added sense of immediacy in the final passage of the play.

TRANSLATION FOUR

The War Hasn't Yet Started

By Mikhail Durnenkov

Translated by Noah Birksted-Breen

This play was written for three actors. Depending on the artistic objective, each actor may play male and female characters of different ages in the different scenes¹ – old people, young children, etc. In other words, gender and age are of no particular significance.

The play's sections can be played in any order, at the director's discretion.

Notes from the translator

The following translation is the performance draft of *The War Hasn't Yet Started* which was used for the production at Theatre Royal Plymouth. The scenes are ordered according to the decisions of the director Michael Fentiman.

The playwright does not specify the gender of the speakers at the start of each scene – although in many scenes, there are clear hints about gender in the dialogue. Russian grammar gives clues about gender to the reader since verbs in the past tense, and adjectives in any tense, must be identified as either masculine, feminine or neuter. I have deliberately chosen not to render the grammatical clues into English, unless it is unavoidable, because it leaves more room for interpretation by creative teams. This ambiguity responds helpfully, in my view, to the playwright's initial stage directions.

¹ The playwright uses the word 'novella' ['новелла'], rather than the more traditional 'scene' ['сцена'] in the stage directions, suggesting a narrative completeness to each storyline in the play.

FIRST. I love stuff that makes you zone.² You're zoning – in the right way – when you're quiet 'n³ calm 'n you don't feel any guilt, like it's a rainy day, it's cold, it's shit weather,⁴ 'n you quickly knock back a shot of vodka and then, without rushing, you're zoning... with beer... slowly-really slowly, always slowly, 'n either *you're* drinking the beer, or the beer is drinking *you*, 'n it's warm, at home it's warm and you're warm inside, and the zoning goes on and on...

SECOND. Or you're surfing the internet, you're in the 'Buy' section, 'n you're just swiping through the pictures, in an uneven, zone-y rhythm, trainers, gloves... a great design on a T-shirt, I'd never... not that one... no, I don't think, no... a rucksack... funny, shiny bumps on the souls of the shoes... holes so the shoes can breathe, stitched with a silver thread which is purposefully uneven...⁵ it's a real high...

THIRD. Or on your phone, you're playing some sort of game, like decorating cakes or bursting bubbles or building some sort of never-ending tower of Babel until it bends double under its own weight and shatters into pieces – so you start again... You're just doing it, totally zoning...

FIRST. Actually, zoning is probably the more or less the only way of relaxing now.

SECOND. And probably the best, too.

THIRD. Yeah, true, just think about it – you head down into the metro, down into the tunnel, and there's all those, you know... with their burning eyes.

SECOND. As if they'll attack you any minute now – tear you into pieces and eat you up.

FIRST. Just 'cos they've got something burning inside them. Like it's indigestion, or their soul, anyway – fucked if I can work them out. 'N they're always – you know, got messed-up hair, 'n like, blotchy red skin, 'n burning eyes –

THIRD. They're dangerous... those people out there... So cold... and angry...

² The verb used throughout this section is 'zalipat' [*'залупать'*]. The Russian word originated in relation to drug-use but has gained a more mainstream usage, with a dual meaning of 'to be sleepy' or 'to fall into a meditative state of mind'. The subtlety of the original is twofold. Firstly, 'zalipat' is employed in Russian to qualify external activities, but the verb's subtext is an emphasis on internal states of mind. Secondly, the characters use 'zalipat' to denote a positive state of being, but the audience may receive it more ambiguously – is this meditative mindset, in fact, a form of unhealthy escapism? I felt that it was important to use one word in most of the same places as 'zalipat' (I deviated twice with 'surfing the internet' and 'swiping through the pictures'), in order to provide a semantic and aural coherence to this section. The risk of using different verbs in English – which is a viable alternative approach – is the possible loss of rhythmic momentum, which the original relies on in order to suggest the connection between an altered inner state and the characters' thoughts of violence. My solution was to create a neologism, 'to zone', which sounds similar to an existing idiom 'to zone out' (i.e. to relax), but is altered enough to allow for a more varied usage.

³ I have replaced commas with "n' multiple times in this passage since I have observed a normative tendency in Russian speech to separate lists with commas, whereas English would most likely use a conjunction, such as 'and', for an equivalent effect. My decision to use of a more colloquial version, "n', in this scene in particular avoids the danger of formalising the language for a group of characters who appear to be part of a subculture, although 'and' is a viable alternative translation. Every addition of a conjunction in the Russian (in this first scene) is indicated with "n', while 'and' indicates a usage of 'and' [*'u'*] in the original.

⁴ The Russian is 'nepogoda' [*'непогода'*] which means 'bad weather'. I have taken the liberty of using a swear word because it suggests that the characters are from a subculture, perhaps a younger generation who has grown up with the internet and other similar technologies as part of their everyday lives.

⁵ Rehearsal room change: my original version of this sentence borrowed from English-language marketing speak: 'funny, shiny cushioning pods on the soles... perforations for breathability, a mesh with silver overlays, uneven on purpose...'. However, I noticed an unfortunate consequence of this decision, namely the implication that the character has become an expert on trainers and perhaps collects them, whereas the original appears to suggest that Second is window-shopping with no intention of make a purchase. In other words, the activity of looking at trainers has the sole purpose of escapism from reality.

SECOND. If you give them free rein, they'll just burn everything down. Just a little bit more and...

FIRST. They'll just spread that inner fire to the world. And everything will burst into flames. Do we need that?

SECOND. No, I don't want to wake up from the smell of smoke, I want to sleep... I don't want to think about them, I want to zone, to zone, to zone, to zone...

THIRD. What should we do with them? I mean, tomorrow –

SECOND. Why do they even exist?

THIRD. Yeah, true. Why? Isn't there a way to get rid of them? Surely that's possible?

FIRST. Where did they even come from? You know, those people with the burning eyes? Who are they?

FIRST. Have you gone mad?

SECOND. We almost went out of our minds!

FIRST. We called your school!

SECOND. We called your friends!

FIRST. I was pacing up and down!

SECOND. I almost turned grey with worry!

FIRST. And then, hello! – thank you very much! How do we find out?

SECOND. From the internet! 'Your son was tagged at a Peace Demo'!

FIRST. In the city centre!

SECOND. On the Square!

FIRST. What if they'd beaten you up!

SECOND. What if they'd maimed you!

FIRST. Yes, we know the demonstration was sanctioned –

SECOND. And there's no need to tell us that the authorities were in the know –

FIRST. Because that doesn't mean everyone's going to be happy about it.

SECOND. And don't tell me that the police were there to protect you.

FIRST. At the moment, we can't be sure who the police were protecting.

SECOND. Maybe the police came to protect everyone from you.

FIRST. Well, not you, but from the people who you were with.

SECOND. To hell with them.

FIRST. Just – to hell with them. The main thing is you're alright.

SECOND. It's good that you're alright, that you're alive and in good health.

FIRST. It's very dangerous, how can you not see that?

SECOND. They say it's 'in the name of peace'.

FIRST. But anything could happen.

SECOND. I mean, did you see those flags?

FIRST. If it's a peace demo, why were those flags there?

SECOND. The enemy's flags! They had no reason to be there! We might be at war with them tomorrow!

FIRST. The right thing to do – if it's a *peace* demo – would be to burn them.

SECOND. Exactly! Burn their flags in the square!

FIRST. Then it would have been a proper demonstration for a good cause! Or um, you know... 'in the name of peace'.

SECOND. There just can't be enemy flags at our peace demonstrations.

FIRST. I read what they're writing on their blogs... those... other people.

SECOND. I read it too. They just can't stop writing. They ruined *their* country, now they want to ruin ours by writing. There's nothing left for them to do except write. So that's what they do.

FIRST. They can't believe that everyone went their own way after the demo, do you get it?, Why did everyone just go their own way, head down into the metro and go back to their homes? Why didn't they start beating up the police?

SECOND. Why didn't they throw rocks?

FIRST. That's what they wanted you to do! To turn it into a bloodbath!

SECOND. I shudder to think!

FIRST. That's what we're fighting for. I mean... not fighting but... that's what we don't want! We want to stop that from happening! To prevent war! Do you understand?!

SECOND. And you're popping up at all sorts of demonstrations – and stirring things up!

FIRST. Yes! You're stirring up a war! You need to think carefully!

SECOND. Seriously, how could you do that? How *could* you?

FIRST. You're a good person...

SECOND. You're still a child...

FIRST. And already you're agitating for war...

SECOND. I mean, really...!

FIRST. How could you?!

FIRST. Is that it?

Pause.

FIRST. That's alright. It happens.

Pause. First begins to get dressed.

FIRST. What do you reckon, is the party still in full swing? We left early, didn't we? I got so drunk. Probably because – you know, on an empty stomach. I haven't eaten since morning. I had my presentation at two. I was really nervous. Did you hear my presentation?

Pause.

FIRST. I didn't hear yours either. Was yours today as well? I was so stressed out, I went to have some coffee and cognac, but even that didn't calm me down. Then I paced around town for a couple more hours, then I went back to the hotel, got changed, had a shower and went to the closing party. And I forgot to eat. As a consequence... half an hour later I was already kissing you in the taxi.

Pause.

FIRST. I'm not saying that to justify myself. It's just... oh dear!... guess I'm sober now.

Pause.

FIRST. Let's go back to the party, we'll have something to eat, we'll drink and do some networking with our colleagues. It's been three days – and I haven't introduced myself to a single person!

Pause.

FIRST. I don't travel much. Three children, work, the whole package. A husband. I don't come to these kinds of conferences much. That's why I don't have any experience....

Pause.

FIRST. No experience of public presentations. Why aren't you saying anything?

SECOND. I prefer to experience the moment fully.

FIRST. Oh you mean... Forget it! It's just... We drank a lot and anyway, nobody can... not the first time...

SECOND. Yes, the first time.

FIRST. Yes, that's what I'm saying.

SECOND. It was my first time.

FIRST. Exactly. Sorry, what?

SECOND. You're my first. In my life.

Pause.

FIRST. What do you mean?

Pause.

FIRST. You're joking?

SECOND. No.

FIRST. How old are you? Forty?

SECOND. Forty-two.

FIRST. You're not joking. Oh, God. Maybe you're joking...? Oh, God. Why? You're, you seem to be, so... so... well-rounded.

SECOND. I just never met my Only.

FIRST. Your only what?

SECOND. Just – my Only.

FIRST. I'm suddenly not feeling so great, I probably need to eat something other than cognac chocolates. You know, there are five, or even six, and I mean probably by now actually seven billion people on the planet. And you're telling me ... You're telling me that you haven't found your, some sort of... 'only'.

SECOND. I didn't. I mean, I did. Right now. I'm very lucky.

Pause.

FIRST. I see. So look, are you good with this idea of going back to the party?

SECOND. Wait. We should talk.

FIRST. It's better if I say something. I'm the first. I mean – I'll say something first. A pun, ha!... Anyway... look, I'm very flattered, and so on. And, actually, for a first time, you really... nailed it!⁶ But I'm still, well just so you know, I'm still basically, sort of, married. And I have a family, and things are good in my life, well, I mean, things probably aren't totally good in my life since I just slept with you, but that's just a detail, and we can put that down to nerves, and the cognac, and the world going crazy, and I went somewhere without my children for the first time in a year and... Does that make sense?

SECOND. It does. You're not willing to change your life for me.

FIRST. God, it's so nice to be dealing with an intelligent, mature man!

SECOND. I'm not expecting you to change your life on my account.

FIRST. I almost love you! And now let's go back. Let's call a taxi right now – we can be back there in half an hour.

⁶ The original is 'molodets' ['молодец'], which literally means 'well done' or 'good man'. I have opted for a more lateral approach with the phrase 'nailed it'. My translation suggests the speaker's greater approval (i.e. 'nailing it' implies a successful completion of an action, not just a satisfactory one). This version contains more humour in English, because of its undercurrent of irony and a possible interpretation by the audience as a back-handed compliment by First.

SECOND. But if you can hear me out.

FIRST. Why.

SECOND. I know I look strange. I'm forty years old, okay, fine, forty-two. I mean all this. Look, I do understand what's going on and how this whole thing must look to you and... To put it bluntly, I can tell you exactly why it's you. Why I waited for such a long time for you. Why you're the Only. And you'll understand me. You'll understand why we should be together. I'm not crazy, please believe me! It's just... It's just other people live without thinking. Everything happens by chance, of course. But that's not the case for me. It's not the case for us. This is for real. I'm going to tell you everything and you'll see why.

FIRST. I'll understand why it must be you?

SECOND. Yes. That's exactly right.

FIRST. And not my husband, for example? Is that it? Just so I've understood.

SECOND. Yes.

FIRST. And my life will change?

SECOND. It already has changed. We met, didn't we? You know it wasn't by chance. Everything is by chance, things just happen the way they happen, it goes without saying – except you meeting me. That was for life. People are like jigsaw puzzles, they don't fit together, but they really want to, but they can adapt, you know how you can jam two bits of puzzle together by force, but really everyone knows that there can only ever be one match! And that's why I didn't waste my energy on anyone before you. Why? Better once for real than your whole life taking whatever turns up. Why do I need seven billion fakes if there's only one real you!

FIRST. Three and a half. Three and a half billion. If there's the same number of women and men.

Pause.

FIRST. But only one real one?

SECOND. The question is – how to recognise that one and only person.

FIRST. And now you're going to explain it all to me?

SECOND. Yes.

FIRST. And my life will change?

SECOND. I know that it's terrifying. But there's no need to be afraid. Life will change for good, but who said it would get worse? Don't be afraid! It's like... like losing your virginity. It's once and for all. To start with you need to say – Hello, my love. I was looking for you my whole life and then I found you. Just repeat it – Hello, my love, I was looking for you my whole life...

Second shuts his eyes and flings open his arms for an embrace. First suddenly runs away.

SECOND. And then I found you.

Second, still with open arms, opens his eyes.

THIRD. Perhaps I need to re-examine my life philosophy, but I don't trust that people aren't built for saving the world.⁷ Each person can do good only in the here and now, beyond that – everything turns to evil. You can only help another person who is within arm's reach. Like that.

He makes a gesture, with his arm outstretched.

Before all this happened, I'd been unlucky for ages, no work, no money, I was buying on credit all the time, and there was an extended period of unemployment when you gradually lose all your friends. You lose them because you keep borrowing money from them, and then you don't pay them back for a very long time. Your friends notice the nasty stench of bad luck and, sooner or later, they start avoiding you. You make new acquaintances – when you're queueing for the interviews at the employment centre, all the same faces down the discount aisle. These are your new friends, they suit you more than your old ones, who you owe money to. It's sad, Christ it's sad, but it's a fact. Life knocks you off your feet and throws you to the ground. Like that.

He repeats the gesture, with his arm outstretched.

But I always knew: even in the shittiest situation, you can help someone who's worse off than you, someone who's within arm's reach. You remember that, yes? It's my life philosophy. I believe in it. I hope you do, too.

He repeats the gesture with his arm outstretched. He suddenly claps.

And then suddenly I got lucky! It was a spring morning, a morning of possibilities, with new smells, new feelings, a new sun. The previous evening my old friend had called me – I hadn't yet had time to borrow money from him, so I hadn't spoilt our relationship – and he invites me to get involved in a new project. I'm alert, focussed, business-like. I'm on top form – I arrive and literally mesmerise the client. I don't know what's come over me, I literally don't recognise myself! Where are the traces of bad luck, where is the dismay of the last few months? I'm sharp, fresh and energised. Ideas are spraying off me! After the meeting, I'm on such a high that I steel myself and in a completely natural tone, as if I do this every time and without so much as doubting a positive outcome, I ask for two months' wages upfront. I don't even need to reach out my arm. Hey presto! So I withdraw all the money from the cash machine because I want to feel the texture, the crinkly roughness, the smell of the ink, that's important for me, I've been unlucky for such a long time, you must understand that! So, I'm on my way home... The King is going home! In a taxi!

And then suddenly it happens. My taxi stops at a traffic light, and I see a girl at the bus stop. She's a heavily pregnant girl, who clearly doesn't want everyone to see she's crying. She is weeping inconsolably and trying to hide behind the bus stop. The bus stop is transparent and however much she turns away, she is still visible from all sides. She's a very ugly, weeping pregnant girl. She's got spots everywhere, bad hair, sickly pale skin and fat legs – really not what I'm into at all. I don't remember what she's wearing. Something grey or brown from one of those cheap shops. And somewhere deep inside me, I feel ... an impulse. I open the door of the taxi, I get out of the car and walk over to her. The taxi driver beeps his horn at me, but I don't pay him any attention. I go over to the girl and I give her a huge amount of money.

⁷ The Theatre Royal Plymouth commissioned Durnenkov to write four new scenes to add to the 2015 text of this play. This scene was one of four written in 2016 and incorporated into the production in Plymouth.

Basically everything that I have in my hands. The money drops onto the tarmac, I pick it up, one note at a time, and put it into her hands. I think: that will last her a long time. For a couple of months, without a doubt. I don't know what her problem is, and I don't want to know, that's why I run back to the taxi, to the stunned driver, and we move on. That's an example of my life philosophy, the way that good works within arm's reach.

He repeats the gesture with his arm outstretched.

Believe me, this isn't "I'm always doing great deeds". I never... it's... it was the most genuine impulse! Her grief was so heartfelt that I just couldn't have acted in any other way. Do I hold myself in esteem for that action? If I'm honest, I wasn't thinking about that, at the time.

Pause.

As you know, my story doesn't end there. A few weeks later, or so, I was going along the same road. I'm in a good mood, the project is underway, although it's not a walk in the park, like I'd imagined. And there's the very same girl, standing at the bus stop. Except now things are different. She has a forced expression on her face, but I'd say it seems well practiced... she's begging for money. She's got a sign on her chest. At the top, in large letters – "Help me", I can't read whatever comes next. I'm very disappointed. Believe me – I'm very disappointed!

Esteemed members of the jury, you are not at a great distance from me. One could even say that here, in the courtroom, you're sitting within arm's reach from me. Listen closely to yourself and then tell me – wouldn't you feel exactly the same impulse, if you were in my shoes... the same desire to get out of the car, to walk over to her and kick her in the stomach?

He involuntarily repeats the gesture of reaching out his arm.

FIRST. You, yes, you, I'm talking to you. To you, to you, don't turn away. Why were you eyeing up my wife?⁸

SECOND. What? Sorry, are you talking to me?

FIRST. Why were you eyeing up my wife? Who gave you permission?

SECOND. Sorry, I don't understand...

FIRST. You were eyeing up my wife – you undressed her with your eyes!

SECOND. When?

FIRST. There, in the pool.

SECOND. It's just a pool, I mean it's public...

FIRST. And you were eyeing up my wife!

SECOND. I was just swimming –

FIRST. Who gave you that right! What right do you have to undress my wife in your head?

SECOND. But I really –

⁸ This scene was written in 2016, an addition to the 2015 text.

FIRST. Don't lie!

SECOND. I really wasn't planning to undr –

FIRST (*interrupting him*). And you had sex with her! When she was swimming on her back, you had sex with her in that position, but when she turned around, that didn't stop you! You kept at it, on and on!

Pause.

SECOND. Hang on... I think... Look...

FIRST. Do you get what you've done? You understand what you've done, yes?

SECOND. Look, I'm going to call over security. You're mad – and what you're accusing me of ... (*First tries to interrupt him.*) No, you listen to me! If you don't calm down, I'll call security. Because I'm not guilty! Because everything which happens in my head –

FIRST (*interrupting*). An orgy with my wife!

SECOND (*continuing*). Whatever happens in my head has absolutely nothing to do with you.

FIRST (*exploding*). God dammit! She's my wife! In forty minutes you did what I haven't dared to suggest to her in eight years of marriage!

SECOND. That's not my problem!

FIRST. You! Are a pervert!

SECOND. Listen to me now. Just stop and listen. Breathe out. I don't know what you're talking about. Try – just for a second – to see this situation from my side. I'm just... oh boy... I don't even know why I should explain this. Well, alright. This is how I see the situation. I was just swimming. I was swimming in my lane – back and forth. There were a few people in the pool, other than me. Probably.

FIRST (*exploding*). What??!! Probably?!!

SECOND. Okay! Okay! Fine! Definitely! Not probably! Definitely! And your wife was definitely there. Well, maybe I did glance in her direction once...

FIRST. You fucked her! You fucked my wife, you son of a bitch!

SECOND. What do you want from me?

FIRST. What would you want from a person who fucked your wife in front of everyone, publicly, in the most cynical and perverted way which could possibly have entered his sick mind?

SECOND. I'm telling you again, I didn't...

FIRST (*interrupting*). You know yourself that it's the truth!

Pause.

SECOND (*buckling*). Okay. Do you want... I don't know... what you want...

FIRST. What?

SECOND. Do you want me to give you money?

FIRST. How much?

SECOND. I have... About... well, maybe three hundred with me... I can't remember exactly. It's in the locker.

FIRST. The key to the locker.

SECOND. But all my things are there. Let's go together and I'll open it and...

FIRST. You. Are a pervert. You want to trick me. You think you can get out of it just like sex with my wife? 'Fraid not.

SECOND. They're my things, they're mine...

FIRST. Ah... now you've remembered about property. Of course! Now you've remembered that you have your own personal property! But did you think about it when you were doing *that* with my... with my... with my bird?!

SECOND. Your bird?!

FIRST. My wife! I call her a bird!

SECOND. Okay. Here's the key, but I'm begging you... my things... Leave me the clothes. I need to get changed at least. Looking like this – I won't be able to...

FIRST. You don't deserve any promises from me.

SECOND. I'm begging you...

FIRST. Shut up. You cunt. I'll do what I consider necessary. And you'll sit here and wait. Because you made a bad move. Because you took a chocolate from the shelf and wanted to walk past the check-out. Because...

SECOND. I understand, I understand all your metaphors.

FIRST. If you understand, then pay up. Cunt.

First leaves. Third comes over.

THIRD. Listen. I heard your conversation and I feel so embarrassed, and I wanted to apologise to you for him...

SECOND (*shaking his head*). I don't understand what's happening...

THIRD. I wanted to apologise for my husband.

SECOND (*continuing to bemoan his lot*). ... It's the first time this has happened to me. It's some sort of... it's some sort of madness, this whole thing... absolute madness...

THIRD. But still. I wanted... For me... for me it was nice.

SECOND. What?

THIRD. Yes. You were... not amazing, but you were fairly good.

SECOND. Are you talking to me now? I just want to clarify that.

THIRD. Do you... do you want to do that again?

SECOND. What? What are you talking about?

THIRD. I'm really pleased that you want to do it all again – everything which took place between us. But I need to think, I'm not exactly like that, there...

SECOND. There?

THIRD. You know, there, in your head. I'm not exactly that person. That's why I need to think. I'll think about it. And perhaps we will meet. And next time... perhaps it needn't be so rough? Can we take it a bit more slowly? For example, coffee? Do you like coffee?

Pause.

SECOND. Yes.

FIRST. I'm a robot with an absurdity implant.⁹

Pause.

FIRST. Did you hear me?

SECOND. Who are you?

FIRST. I'm a robot with an absurdity implant. In human terms:¹⁰I'm a robot but to make sure that nobody can compute my origin and recognise that I'm a robot, I have an absurdity implant lodged inside me.

SECOND. I see.

FIRST. Do you want me to say something absurd?

Pause.

FIRST. Are you asleep or something?

SECOND. No.

FIRST. Do you want me to say something absurd?

SECOND. What the fuck do you want from me?

Pause.

FIRST. The absurdity implant makes me look like I'm alive. Like a real person. I can make paradoxical jokes, react bizarrely and basically (*pause*)¹¹ I understand absurdity. No artificial intelligence exists which can comprehend, if it finds itself in a ridiculous situation. But I can.

⁹ The phrase in Russian is 'blok absurda' ['блок абсурда'], which is literally a 'block', 'pack' or 'unit' of 'the absurd'. I have opted for a more futuristic-sounding 'absurdity implant', suggesting that the speaker has either been inspired by sci-fi films or, at least, is making his role-play as realistic as possible. Similarly, throughout the passage, I have rendered his speech into a somewhat stilted form, particularly by using formal speech patterns, as if the speaker has enjoyed this game before and is proficient at it.

¹⁰ The original is 'in other words' ['мо етмь'], but I have altered the conjunction for one which suits the speaker's role-play.

¹¹ Translation note: in the original, the playwright uses a full stop after 'basically' which I have replicated with a pause because, in my view, 'basically' refers to the following sentence, rather than qualifying the verb 'react'.

Yesterday I met up with a friend of mine, an artist. He was with his child in a playground and he bumped into some acquaintances. And I came over and greeted him, then I asked him to introduce me to those people, and he tried but it became clear that he had forgotten their names, and it was a very stupid situation, and those acquaintances were very hurt by him, and it was terribly awkward for him and I was able to comprehend everything. But if I had been without my absurdity implant, I would not have processed what had occurred, because...

SECOND. Go on then...

FIRST. I'm sorry?

SECOND. Go on – tell me something absurd, anything. I'll be honest, you're boring the crap out of me. Say it and then fuck off.

FIRST. Good. Are you sure?

SECOND. Get on with it.

FIRST. An absurdism is being generated. And will be with you shortly.

SECOND. I see.

FIRST. In just one minute.

SECOND. Aha.

FIRST. The process may, perhaps, take longer than was initially predicated...

Pause.

SECOND. God, I'm bored...

A Third enters.

THIRD. Who's next in line?

SECOND. Him. Then me.

THIRD. Did you bring your test results?

FIRST. Yeah, yes, I just can't understand what it all means, or why nobody can explain to me in the slightest what it all means?! I just can't understand these lines and dots, I asked the nurse doing the ultrasound – nothing...

SECOND. Me too. They sent me to the cancer specialist, too. They won't tell me anything either. God knows what's wrong with me...

THIRD. The doctor will explain everything. When it's your turn. After this young man. Not long now. *(To First.)* And you – follow me.

FIRST. Yes? Right now? *(To Second.)* I could let you go first. Do you want to? Do you want to go ahead of me? I suddenly have the feeling that I can wait a bit longer...

SECOND. Go on, go. You're first. You wanted to be first, I was in the queue after you, and it would be fair if you go first. Logical and fair. And correct. And also, actually, I'm lucky when I go second. Yes, I'm always lucky when I go second. I need it, I need that luck...

THIRD. I don't understand – this is confusing. Who's first? *(To First.)* You? Right, let's go.

FIRST. Ah... yes. I'm coming. I'm coming!

THIRD. Keep up.

Third leaves. Pause.

SECOND. Go on. The doctor's waiting.

Pause. First stands unmoving. Second roughly touches him on the shoulder.

SECOND. What are you doing? What's wrong with you? Are you okay? Hey? Hello---o?

FIRST (*in a guilty tone*). It's just... It's not working?

SECOND. Eh?

FIRST. The implant isn't working. It's broken. Completely. Do you understand? It's broken down. It doesn't work.

SECOND. Ah. You're joking. That's good. Humour can be very... Anyway. We've had our little joke... so. Go on. It's alright, it's alright, go on. Go on! Get out of here! Off you go! I'm telling you – go! Do it... Well?! Now just – fuck off!

Pause. First starts to leave. He is walking terribly slowly. Or the light on him is dimming.

SECOND. Good luck!

FIRST (*turning around in a flash*). What?

SECOND. I said, good luck!

Pause. First nods profusely.

FIRST. Oh... yes... thank you. Thank you!

The lights suddenly go out. The darkness explodes into indistinct screams.¹²

Extremely close –

FIRST. Fucking hell...

SECOND (*from far away*). Where are you? *Where are you?!*

FIRST. Here!

SECOND (*from far away*). *Where are you?!*

FIRST. I'm here, I'm *here!* Stay where you are!

The sound of someone falling down.

SECOND. God dammit! I tripped! Jeeesus... Where are you?!

FIRST. Look! I'm lighting up my phone! I'm here! *Here!* Come over here!

SECOND. I can't... *You* come to me.... That *really* hurt...

¹² This scene was written in 2016, an addition to the 2015 text.

FIRST. Give me your hand... There... Sit down. I told you – until we're on the plane, stay right next to me! *Right* next me!

SECOND. Christ... that scared me... I went to put money on my phone, I stuck the note into the... the machine and then...

FIRST. Maybe a bomb went off?

SECOND. I hit my leg... sssshhit... I fell at least a couple of metres, I think...

FIRST. I'm saying – did you hear the explosion?

SECOND. What are you talking about? Why are you inventing some rubbish about an explosion?

FIRST. Then what the fuck was that?

SECOND. It was a crash.

FIRST. Oh sure, a crash. Well, obviously – the lights go off in the whole airport – so, it must be a crash.

SECOND (*rubbing her leg*). It's going to bruise... dammit...

FIRST. Best keep our bags by our feet or someone will grab them.

SECOND. Like fuck they will.

FIRST. What's your problem?

SECOND. My leg hurts!

FIRST. Yeah, so what?!

SECOND. So, I'm telling you!

Pause.

SECOND. Give me some light, then.

FIRST. We should save the phone battery – I mean, fuck knows how long this is going to last.

SECOND. Give me some light, I dropped my phone.

FIRST (*annoyed*). For Christ's sake...

SECOND. What?!

FIRST. Well....?

SECOND. Oh, here it is, I found it.

FIRST. You're unbelievable...

SECOND. Maybe we should go and find out what's going on?

FIRST. Stay here. Don't move. Maybe that's what they're hoping for – to make you give up and go back?

SECOND. You're paranoid. Fine. We'll stay here. I hope the lights will come back on soon.

FIRST. There haven't been any announcements.

SECOND. How would they make announcements if there's no electricity?

FIRST. They're going to cancel our flight – the bastards.

SECOND. It will be delayed. But they don't have the right to cancel it. We have fucking tickets, and everything else.

FIRST. They'll cancel the flight and they'll cancel the tickets. Seriously, they don't give a shit.

SECOND. We cleared passport control, so really we're already... that counts as being abroad. There's no way for us to go back.

FIRST. Like they give a shit.

SECOND. Don't panic.

FIRST. Don't tell me what to do.

SECOND. Oh Christ!... I give up! Do what you want!

FIRST. Alright. Everything's fine. Everything *will* be fine.

Pause.

FIRST. They'll switch everything back on soon. Everything will be back in action soon. Everything's fine.

A long pause. Suddenly, Second giggles briefly.

SECOND (*giggling*). What are you doing?

FIRST. What?

SECOND (*giggling*). Stop it.

FIRST. What?

SECOND (*giggling*). Stop it... There are people around...

FIRST. What? They can't see anything anyway...

SECOND (*giggling*). Have you gone mad?

FIRST. What?

Pause.

SECOND (*in a whisper*). Come on, stop it...

Pause.

FIRST (*in a whisper*). What?

Suddenly, Third turns up next to them.

THIRD. I'll sit next to you? You don't mind?

Pause. First and Second move apart.

THIRD. May I take a seat?

FIRST. We're waiting for a friend. He went off somewhere... over there.

THIRD. I'll give up my seat when he comes back.

SECOND (*disapprovingly to First*). Why are you being like that? (*To Third.*) Sit down – of course you may.

THIRD. Where are you flying?

SECOND. To Frankfurt, to start with.

THIRD (*with respect*). Is that a city?

SECOND. Yes.

THIRD. And then?

FIRST. What's it to you?

Pause. Third shrugs in the darkness.

THIRD. You know, when the lights went off, I suddenly realised that I'd forgotten my photo album at home. Probably it's old-fashioned – to keep an album, but...

FIRST (*tense*). O-kaaay...

SECOND. What?

FIRST. You didn't leave the hard drive with our photos in the drawer, did you?

SECOND. I took it.

FIRST. Are you sure?

SECOND. Yes, I took it. I put it in the yellow bag.

THIRD. It's got all my family photos.

FIRST (*to Second*). Are you sure?

SECOND (*to First*). Yes, I'm sure I took it, I'm sure! I put it with all the cables.

THIRD (*continuing*). It's got photos of my granddad and grandma. Dad's photographs from the north... Showing the forest and the mountains... Some of mum's friends... at her college, as far back as that. With those bouffant hairdos... oh what were they called... *Breakfast at Tiffany's*. There's even a photo of my great grandmother. She's there, on a bench, with a clay doll. And she already has two girls. And they're both bald. Because of lice. They're war-time photographs. Well, and also a photograph of our home. The last photograph... actually has nobody in it. It's just a photo of a doorframe, with lots of those, you know, markings...

Pause. Third reminisces, he's thinking about something.

THIRD. You know... The security scanners, they must have been switched off, too. If we needed to, we could go through them in the dark...

SECOND. Go where?

THIRD. Go there... Go back.

FIRST. Listen, why are you hassling us? What do you want from us?

THIRD. Sorry? I quite simply forgot my album and started thinking, purely as a hypothetical...

FIRST. What exactly do you want from us?

SECOND (*indecisively, to First*). Leave him...

FIRST. Quite simply? Then, quite simply go and sit somewhere else and bang on into someone else's ears! Quite simply!

THIRD. What are you talking about?

FIRST (*aggressively*). You want light? I said, from my phone – you want light? To get away? Yes? So you don't trip on your way? You want light?

He shines the light from his phone right into Third's eyes. Pause.

THIRD. Thank you. I'll manage myself, somehow.

Third leaves.

SECOND (*suddenly*). The scanners are switched off.

FIRST. What, didn't you get it? That was an informer. A fully paid-up informer.

SECOND. We can go back. Pass through customs in the dark and go back. Nobody will notice. We'll pass through quietly and nobody will notice.

FIRST. Have you lost your mind?!

SECOND. Come on!

FIRST. Have you gone insane? Don't even dare think about it...

SECOND. Come on! Are you coming?! Or... are you staying?

Pause.

FIRST (*smirking*). Just like that. And you're even prepared to leave me? Yes?

SECOND (*decisively*). I asked you. You don't want to. I'm going back. War or not war. I'm staying.

FIRST. So, that's how it is, yes?

SECOND. Yes. You can keep the hard drive. Good-bye.

FIRST. I hate you. Do you hear me? I hate you.

SECOND. And I've always hated you. I'm pleased that I've told you that.

Pause. Suddenly the lights go on. There's a short pre-recorded sound, followed by a public announcement in the distance, noises start up etc.

PA ANNOUNCEMENT. Ladies and Gentlemen! Your attention please! All airport services are functioning as normal, flights will depart according to their planned timetable! The airport administration apologises for any inconvenience!

First – blinking in the light – looks at Second, who covers her eyes.

SECOND. I... I think that I... You... We both... got upset... and...

FIRST (*interrupting*). Let's go to our gate. Why are you just sitting there? Take your bag! You can see for yourself – my hands are full! Come on! And the most important thing is – stay *right* next to me!

They leave together.

FIRST. The taxi will be here in five minutes. Excellent.

SECOND. You were here for such a little time, son.

FIRST. Ah well, mum, it's so busy at work, and on top of it all ... I really just can't get time off. And I have to be back by Monday.

SECOND. Why don't you have some soup? You can sit at the table under the apple tree?

FIRST. And have an apple fall in my plate like last time, you mean?

SECOND. Oh, well, that was just an accident.

FIRST. A nice accident – soup all over my face... But anyway, it was funny, I'm not going to lie. Dad, why are you so quiet?

THIRD. Well, what do you want me to say?

FIRST. The main thing is I checked how it turned out. I think it's really good. It is really good, isn't it?

SECOND. Of course! It's a great house! They were great builders. They came and literally – out of nothing – literally on an empty spot, hup-hup-hup. And there's a house. Amazing!

FIRST. And it looks more or less okay.

SECOND. What do you mean! It's a beautiful house! Beautiful!

FIRST. Contemporary techniques. Seriously, dad, you'd have spent, like, eight years building that. At the very least. And here it's done in a month.

SECOND. Eight? Why just eight? For years, we would had a pit right here, for the foundations. And all those sticks would have been sticking out of it, you know, the, what's um... the reinforcements.

FIRST. Well, and the main thing is you got to put your feet up, isn't it? You conserved your strength. At your age, you should be resting, enjoying the countryside, not doing your backs in. Don't you think?

SECOND. All we need now is our health, to live here... And not do a thing... I'll plant flowers... And we need trees over there, at the far end of the lot. I want a cherry tree and a yellow plum tree. Maybe you want some soup after all?

FIRST. No, mum. I'll get food on the plane. And anyway I'm not hungry.

SECOND. Oh! The food you get on planes – it's awful.

FIRST. I'm off. I'm pleased that everything's good. To be honest, when dad said in the winter that they'd start building in the summer, basically I just got really worried. I thought – well, that's no life you'll get there, that'll be just one big building-site. And your health! You'll be looking after your health now. And I'll be less worried. And then I just thought – I have to do something, I must come up with some sort of plan.

SECOND. You worried our boy!

THIRD. Well, what do you want me to say?

SECOND. It's just you've spent so much money, son. It must have cost a scary amount of money. All because of you! He'd decided to start building! Why did you get that into your head?

THIRD. What's it got to do with me?

FIRST. Don't fight. Everything's been done now. The house is standing. It's a decent house. A decent company. Seems like they did a good job.

SECOND. The builder was foreign. They didn't talk to us at all, they couldn't understand anything. They worked for a month in silence – sometimes, between them, just 'odzh-dodzh-gabodzh'. And then – zip¹³ – again.

FIRST. That doesn't matter. The main thing is it all seems to be working.

SECOND. Everything works. Thank you, son. You're really looking after us!

FIRST. Well, that's what I wanted to be sure about. That's it. I'm off. Bye, mum...¹⁴

They exchange kisses.

FIRST. High five, dad!¹⁵ Why so gloomy?

¹³ In the Russian, the term is 'molchok' ['молчок'] which derives from the word for 'silence' ['molchanie'] – it is flexible in its application and can mean 'don't say a word', 'I won't say a word', 'I didn't say another word' and so on. I have rendered it into a sound 'zip' which may be accompanied by a performative gesture, such as drawing the hand across the mouth, to demonstrate 'no more talking'. An alternative is to omit any sound and just make a gesture of silence. A more literal translation would be: 'And then – silence again'.

¹⁴ The term in Russian is 'mamulechka-krasulechka' ['мамулячка-красулячка'], two slang, rhyming words equating, at least in meaning, to 'beautiful mummy'. This phrase is playful because its rhyme is evocative of fairytales. I believe there is no equivalent in English, i.e. a mythical-lyrical term for a beautiful mother. I would encourage the actor playing the role, or the director, to replace 'mum' with their own personal term of endearment for their mother, or a term which they have heard used by others, in order to create an idiosyncratic phrase, albeit not an exact semantic equivalent to the Russian.

¹⁵ The Russian term is 'zhat' krabu' ['жмать крабу'], which literally means 'press the crab'. There are two possible interpretations of the son's request – either 'Shake my hand' or 'High five'. I have opted for the latter because it provides a more socially awkward – and dramatic – moment between father and son, i.e. an unrequited playful gesture by the son. However, the former is an equally valid interpretation whereby the son invites the father to shake his hand and, after a hesitation, the father does respond – a more simple and, perhaps, humane interpretation (i.e. a more positive view of the father's character).

THIRD. Eh?

They shake each other's hands.

FIRST. Right, folks, bye! Good-bye one and all! Don't see me out – I've got to dash.

He leaves.

SECOND. Why aren't you saying anything? Why didn't you say a word the whole time? You're like a bump on a log.¹⁶ Our son came for one day only, you might have talked to him. You could have said thank you, he's got a, well, you know how busy he is, but he goes and buys us a house. He built you a home, what else do you need? You could have at least said thank you! A two-storey house! He designed it himself – ordered everything! He spent a lot of money! For you! And you sit there and can't say a word to our child.

Pause.

THIRD. I'm... you know... I'm going to burn it down.

SECOND. What?

THIRD. I'm going to burn down the house. I'll get up in the morning, at about five, when there's no wind, when it's quiet and nobody's around, I'll lay down some kindling and burn it to the god damn ground.

SECOND. You're out of your mind.

THIRD. I'll burn it down, do you understand? And then he'll come back here again. For me.

FIRST. What happened?! I was ringing non-stop! I thought the bell must have broken, I thought I should call 999,¹⁷ I thought that you'd... I don't know... left the gas on!

SECOND. I wanted to be certain it was you.

FIRST. Why do you think there's a peep-hole on the door? Couldn't you just look through that?

SECOND. I looked.

FIRST. And?

SECOND. I had to be certain...

FIRST. What's actually going on here? What's the matter with you?

SECOND. I was afraid.

¹⁶ The Russian phrase is 'nadut'siia kak zhaba' ['надутся как жаба']. The verb 'nadut'siia' means literally to puff yourself out, and figuratively, to sulk. The expression 'like a bullfrog' captures the visual image of the sulking man – and plays on the verb's double-meaning. The Russian phrase is more evocative than the rather passive English expression 'to be a bump on a log' – since sulking is a more active (albeit passive aggressive) stance. However, it felt important to me to use an expression in translation, to capture range of emotions including both dismay and anger – and this saying is the closest equivalent to the Russian original, in my view.

¹⁷ First uses the term 'spasateli' ['спасатели'], which means 'the rescuers' (i.e. the 'emergency services' or the 'firemen and firewomen' etc). I have rendered this into a colloquial British term, but another option is to a normative phrase such as 'the emergency services' or 'the firemen'.

FIRST. Right. Where is he? Where's my son?

SECOND. I took him away.

FIRST. I don't understand.

SECOND. I took him to my mum.

FIRST. You took him to your mum.

SECOND. Yes.

FIRST. Right.

SECOND. We just got in the car, I drove him over there because that's where he'll be safe.

FIRST. At your mum's? Your mum?

SECOND. I understand that it's stupid...

FIRST. Right. At least you seem to understand something. That's already a result.

SECOND. Well, I'm sorry. I had a panic attack.

FIRST. Is he alright?

SECOND. Yes. He's already asleep. I called mum and he's already asleep. He's alright.

FIRST. What's happening?

SECOND. I was watching TV.

FIRST. Nothing wrong with that.

SECOND. You were there. On the screen. The daytime news. And you said...

FIRST. I get it.

SECOND. You were talking about that boy. The one they killed. So brutally. And they burnt him. And...

FIRST. I get it.

SECOND. And I became scared.

FIRST. But do you understand, that's another country? That it's not here? Look at me. Look at me – right now! Honey, tell me, you understand that?

SECOND. I do. But I was scared.

FIRST. And that there's a thousand or however many kilometres between us. And that between us, there's a border and our troops.

SECOND. And I couldn't think of anything better than packing his things and going to mum.

FIRST. And will your mum be able to protect him?

SECOND. I know it's stupid.

FIRST. It is stupid.

SECOND. Yes, I know.

FIRST. You're aware that your mum takes out her teeth at night?

SECOND. Yes, I'm aware.

FIRST. She couldn't *bite* anyone even if it came to that.

SECOND. Don't make me laugh.

FIRST. I just want you to laugh at your own fears. And then we can put it behind us.

Pause.

SECOND. I can't laugh. I mean, that little boy was there. The one they burnt alive. And they were laughing. And his mother was watching him and at first she was screaming bloody murder and then she was also laughing. Laughing with them. Because she'd gone mad. That's right, isn't it?

FIRST. No.

SECOND. Why are you saying – no?

FIRST. It wasn't like that.

SECOND. What do you mean?

FIRST. Our department was sent that news story in the morning. It came from, you know, those guys who follow the blogs. We immediately called a meeting for everyone, in our department, and sat there stunned. Our office has to have every piece of news independently verified. So nobody could work, we sat there horrified, waiting for it to be confirmed. For two hours, probably. And we just sat there – nobody could work after that, and we were talking. Why did they start this war? Why are they killing people? That kind of thing.

SECOND. They're killing because they've gone crazy.

FIRST. Yes. They've gone crazy. The whole country in a single second.

SECOND. And they want to do that to us too.

FIRST. Probably.

SECOND. That's what you're saying on the news.

FIRST. Yeah.

SECOND. What else is there to understand?

FIRST. Yeah.

Pause.

SECOND. What?

FIRST. Then the confirmation came. The footage was a hoax. I mean, the story was a fake. No children were burnt, there was no woman laughing.

SECOND. Is that the truth?

FIRST. Thank God. Nobody was burnt alive. That child was never on the Square.

SECOND. Is that the truth? You're not just saying it to calm me down?

FIRST. It's the truth, the truth, I swear it. Thank God! There was no burning.

SECOND. Then why did you –

FIRST. Because they could have.

SECOND. What?

FIRST. They could have done it. Those people. They're not the same as us. When we were sitting there and waiting for the confirmation, we didn't think – did this happen or not? – we thought – *why* did they do this, *why* are they such savages, *why* don't our troops go in and shoot the lot of them? Not just them, their old people and their children, too... so that sickness doesn't spread like a madness. We didn't think about the fact that it was a lie!

SECOND. Don't shout.

FIRST. But they could have done it! And that's why we reported it anyway. To make sure they'd never do that. So, we reported that it was true! Yes, I was the one who reported it on air. You saw me yourself. I lead the broadcast with that story. Because everything else seemed so petty compared to that.... The stock markets... I mean, who gives a damn about that? So children have to be the headline.

SECOND. I believed you. I mean, I know you. I trust you.

FIRST. Yes. And everyone is like you. They believed me.

SECOND. And I still believe you. I believe you.

FIRST. It didn't happen. I'm telling you. None of that happened. But it could have happened!

Pause.

SECOND. I understand. You're lying to me. Now. Not then – on the day time news on TV, but now. Is that right? You just want me to calm down. Is that it? You love me and you want me to calm down. To calm down and bring back our child from my mum's, and then we can live like before, is that it? As if there had never been children burnt alive and all of that horror. Is that it? Is that what you want? A lie in the name of calm?

FIRST. Come on, that's stupid.

SECOND. Don't. Don't lie to me. Don't calm me down. Don't pull the wool over my eyes. I want to know the truth. And I know it, I know the truth!

FIRST. Now, look, honey –

SECOND. Sssh! There's no need to say anything.

FIRST. But this is –

SECOND. Sssh! When you tell me there – on screen – that it's not the truth, that's when I'll believe you. But until then...

FIRST. Honey –

SECOND. Sssh! Don't get in my way. Don't get in my way, please. I'm watching the news.

*Pause.*¹⁸

SECOND. Or aren't you listening to me?

FIRST. We're listening. Listening and remembering everything.

THIRD. We're making a note of everything. On the dictaphone and in writing.

SECOND. Because I hate it when people don't listen to me. Not listening means not respecting.

THIRD. Believe me, we respect you a great deal.

FIRST. A great deal.

SECOND. Okay... Because I felt like... Well, okay. Where was I?

THIRD. That your appearance...

SECOND. Yeah, yeah, yeah, that my appearance means people can take me for twenty. If I go to any screening at the cinema, I always get in. Because I have an incredibly grown-up face.

THIRD. Yes. It's because of your demeanour... you have an intelligent demeanour. A person with an intelligent demeanour immediately seems older.

SECOND. I'm very independent. That's not the word – I'm *incredibly* independent.

FIRST. We don't doubt that.

SECOND. So, you agree that I'm very mature? Well, I mean, given my age?

FIRST. We agree.

SECOND. Well, since we hold each other in such high esteem... I guess what I'm basically saying is... I'm working my arse off, and you're transferring the money into my mum's account.

THIRD. That's procedure.

FIRST. It wasn't us who came up with it.

SECOND. Well, since I'm very grown-up, maybe you can just give it to me? Do you see – this is what I've been telling you – I sit here from morning till evening, and she hardly gives me anything. Incredibly little! I can spend my money myself. Correct? I'm really, well, practically grown-up.

FIRST (*repeating*). It wasn't us who came up with it.

THIRD (*repeating*). It's procedure. Sorry.

SECOND. Sugar! Well, I had to try. In case it was my lucky day. Can I have another cola and this pie?

FIRST. Everything you see here on the table, it's all for you. Help yourself.

¹⁸ This scene was written in 2016, an addition to the 2015 text.

SECOND (*with a full mouth*). Tastes great! Unbelievable!

THIRD. So, what about the war?

FIRST. Yes, what about the war?

SECOND. Well, I'll write something about it later, in great detail.

FIRST. But in broad brushstrokes? Some of the most problematic areas.

FIRST. Maybe there are some glitches.

SECOND. In broad brushstrokes? Well, I think it's all a bit dirty, somehow.

THIRD. Dirty?

SECOND. Yes, the whole image is sort of dirty. I get that it's war, but still it's just very... shitty. It's so, I mean, the colour... Can I speak my mind?

FIRST. Please do.

THIRD. That's the reason we're working with you.

SECOND. Colours of shit. Of dried-up old shit.

THIRD (*taking notes, repeating*). Of dried-up, old shit...

SECOND. You want something brighter. Seriously, if you sit like that for about five hours, you start to somehow feel like total crap, from the fact that it's all so...

FIRST. Gloomy?

SECOND. No, not gloomy. When it's gloomy, that's just the style, I guess. But this is really just so ... well there's no other way of describing it. Shitty.

THIRD. Joyless.

SECOND. Yeah! Exactly! That's the word! Well, that's about the image. As far as the strategy goes. This is a very tasty pie... Well, basically, everything is divided very neatly into two camps, mind-fuckers and cannibals. That's what I call them, anyway. It's easier that way – and you can understand right away – which person uses which strategy.

THIRD. But there are many more sides to the conflict?

SECOND. It only seems that way. But in fact – just two: it's the mind-fuckers versus the cannibals.

FIRST. Let's start with the cannibals.

SECOND. Cannibals play a numbers game. They have practically no morale and no strategy, but on the other hand it's unreal how cheap their troops are. And the main thing is there are just loads of them. They multiply with terrifying speed, that's why nobody cares about them. One million, two million, you don't have to worry about it. They can all drop dead, but while that was happening, you've made new units – and off you go again. And you keep on going like that until your enemy goes out of their mind.

THIRD. And why did you call them cannibals?

SECOND. Well because they eat their own. Cannibals lose most of their troops before they even reach the front line. The leadership eats those who are lower than them, *they* eat those who are lower than them, and the lowest ranks eat the ground troops. Their morale is so down because troops know that their own kind are worse than the enemy. And their strategy is a pile of shit because why do you even need a strategy if you're going to crush everyone with your sheer numbers? Right?

THIRD. But why do they eat their own?

SECOND. God only knows. If you're top dog, you should eat your own. It's just the way of things.

FIRST. And these mind –

SECOND. Mind-fuckers? They're more cunning. But they need to be more cunning because they don't have as many units. That's why they build them up. In simple terms, they fuck their minds.

FIRST. How?

SECOND. By raising their morale. They do this in their own territory, before the war's even started. They need to raise their morale so the units always know what they're fighting for and why they should do it. Half of everything the government produces goes on raising morale, it's crazy-expensive. If they hadn't had to build that up, they'd be swimming in a sea of gold.

THIRD. But they have to spend resources on it all the same?

SECOND. On fucking their minds? Yeaah, it's the main expenditure. If they don't do that, they'll lose the war, here and now. Well, what else happens there apart from war? Citizen-units are running away from the cannibals' territory all the time. They're a bit like pests. They run away so they won't be eaten by cannibals. They run off from their own land and infect new lands, again and again. And in the new lands, the morale and motivation of the mind-fuckers drops instantly. The only way they can fight back is with their mind-fucking. They have to beat them down, just like one of their own, and knock them into shape, good and proper. And then their territory is protected.

THIRD. So, whose tactics are the most effective?

SECOND. That's the thing – nobody's. If the war is quick, then the cannibals are more effective in a quick one, but if it's a long campaign, then the mind-fuckers will hold out longer. And the gameplay is so dull, first one lot win, then the other lot.

FIRST. Really? Dull gameplay?

SECOND. Very dull. But you're not paying me money for nothing. Because I've come up with the answer!

THIRD. Will you share it with us?

SECOND. If you give me a cigarette. I'm joking – joking. Basically, you have to provide another option in the game...

THIRD. Like what?

SECOND. The cannibals should also have mind-fucking skills. Well, you just add a button, so they can fuck with their troops' minds now and again. At least a bit! Well, the way it's normally done by "raising their level of patriotism". And then game over, nothing will stop the cannibals. With their high morale, they'll drive everyone off the map. What? It's a cool idea right?

THIRD. Yeah, it's cool. But the thing is – it can't be done...

FIRST. Unfortunately, there's no way...

SECOND. Oh come on! It's just a small addition, I've seen that kind of thing in a bunch of games!

THIRD. The thing is, if you'd read the notice to users...

FIRST. Yes. Before each major campaign, a text with reference to real countries and events appears on the screen. That's why we can't add anything to the game which doesn't in fact exist.

THIRD. That's our concept, we take contemporary history and build on its foundations.

SECOND (*disbelievingly*). Do you mean the cannibals and mind-fuckers really exist?

FIRST. Well... we don't exactly call them that...

SECOND. I mean, who reads all that? I didn't! Not even once! I didn't even know it was like "based on real events"!

THIRD. If you'd read the notices carefully...

SECOND. I'm telling you – your notices with their stupid information is total bullshit! You're not listening to me at all!

Pause.

THIRD. We're listening to you.

FIRST. And by the way, we're making a note of everything.

SECOND. I don't know what it's actually like in your real world, but you wouldn't fucking believe how many games I've tested! I know for certain – cannibals need an extra option! And when that appears, there will be gameplay, not this dull pile of wank. Then you'll get a real war, not this steaming pile of shit. Do you hear me? You'll get a real war!

THIRD (*calming Second down*). Okay. We've heard you. Really, we've heard you.

FIRST. Your expert opinion will be taken into consideration.

THIRD. And we're making a note of everything. Is that it? Is that everything?

SECOND. Jesus – look, it's up to you. You'll see, though, it'll gonna be like I said, I don't know where – but either at the interface, or the gameplay, or somewhere else. Okay... Just one more question... You wouldn't have a cigarette, by any chance?

FIRST. I'm not going to give you cigarettes.

SECOND (*shrugging*). No harm in trying. And... you don't have to tell mum that I was swearing? Well, you know, about those words...

THIRD. We promise.

SECOND. Good. I'll just take this pie. And this one, too. Well, then, bye everyone. And also – change the image. Make it beautiful. I get it – you want it to be like life – and everything's ugly in real life. But it's just a game! It should be beautiful!

THIRD. I stopped smoking two years ago. Giving up was agony and it took forever but I feel good that I don't smoke. I feel good sharing my experience. I want there to be more people who don't smoke. More than anything, remember this – when you give up smoking, everything which happens to you will appear to be a reason for taking up smoking again. Seriously, as soon as you stop smoking, that same day – you'll lose your job. I can guarantee that. I'm joking. Anyway, there's nothing for it – in those circumstances – other than to buy some cigarettes and start inhaling, to your lungs' content. That's why you need to understand that this is only a temptation¹⁹ which must strengthen your desire for victory.

Let me tell you my own story. It was late autumn, there was a biting wind, all smokers know what a biting cold wind means – it's like a knife jabbing into your windpipe. And I hadn't smoked for four days, so basically I couldn't even tell you whether the fog outside was from the cold or if the fog was in my head. My child and I were walking along after a drawing class, it was a few blocks from our home. He was speeding along on his little child's scooter behind me, from time to time he'd shoot up ahead and then come back again, like, you know, a little doggie. I don't remember what happened, I think I slowed down by the cigarette kiosk, looked at them absent-mindedly and then kept going. At that moment, I noticed that my child wasn't next to me. Probably, he's gone on ahead – I thought, and walking faster, I ducked²⁰ around the building on the corner and went on a couple of blocks, to catch up with him. But after a short time, I came out onto a pavement which was well-lit for a considerable distance ahead, and I realised that he wasn't in front of me. Then I turned around and I quickly retraced my steps, occasionally even breaking into a run. He was nowhere to be seen. He could have gone into one of the courtyards near the cigarette kiosk, I decided, so I ran back there in the dark.

It's very difficult for a smoker to run. One or two hundred metres – and you've got a metallic blood taste in your mouth, your lungs are burning, scraped by the cold air as if by a saw. He wasn't anywhere in the courtyards. I called my wife, she was at the theatre and didn't pick up. I called the police. The operator asked which building I was in front of. The building number²¹ wasn't visible in the dark, I had to run somewhere to a well-lit place, but there, as if to spite me, there were no numbers on the walls. I rushed between the buildings, calling out my child's name from time to time. Some random people in dark courtyards, plump women

¹⁹ Alternative translations: in the original, Third uses the term 'ispytanie' ['испытание'], which literally means a 'test', 'trial' or 'ordeal'. Those three are all possible, although each one is narrow in its nuance. I have opted for 'temptation' in order to provide an ambiguity in translation, since that word may be used in mundane contexts ('to be tempted to deviate from a diet') or in heightened ones ('the temptation of Christ').

²⁰ In the Russian, the speaker says 'zavernul za dom' ['завернул за дом'], which means 'I turned at the corner of the building'. I have rendered this phrase, which is colloquial in the original, into English slang, but an alternative translation – if 'ducked' sounds too specific to an English context – would be 'I turned the corner at the end of that block and walked on for a couple more blocks'.

²¹ In Russia, addresses are listed by building number and flat number. The building number appears on the side of the building, visible from the street, while the flat number is written above the entrance door.

walking their dogs, all shrug, the courtyards all look identical in the pitch-black,²² with the ghostly carcass²³ of a playground in the middle of each...

I had no idea where I was by then, I was running wildly between buildings, heading towards car noises and... I ended up right next to the cigarette kiosk. I looked around in all directions, by a sudden miracle, it can happen like that sometimes, you're looking for something, and it's in your pocket, that does happen, please, let that be now! Please! Not a soul...

And I understood that if I don't smoke now, I'm going to die. My blood was knocking in my ears as if I were inside a drum, and somebody was banging that drum with all of their strength. Boom-boom, boom-boom!

I went over to the kiosk, I looked at the cigarettes... And suddenly I understood, that this is all just a temptation, and temptations will always appear when you're giving up smoking, and if I light up now, then basically ... nothing in my life will have meaning. I'll have lost the battle. And you know... I didn't start smoking. I didn't start smoking then and thanks to that, I'm not smoking even to this day. Because if I didn't start smoking in those circumstances, what sort of new temptations would there have to be, to make me start again? Do you see? I'm a rock! Thank you for listening! Good-bye!

FIRST. And in the lunch break, he comes over to my table, can you imagine, and says – all your questionnaires, this all works with large numbers. But we have an individual approach. Can you imagine? Individual. What are you looking at?

SECOND. Nowhere. Honestly, nowhere. I'm looking at you.

FIRST. Individual... Hm...

SECOND. What?

Pause.

SECOND. What?

FIRST. You won't be able to repeat that now. Will you? You won't be able to repeat what I just said.

SECOND. I can.

FIRST. I'm waiting.

SECOND. Individual.

FIRST. Right.

²² I have added the phrase 'in the pitch-black' because I have omitted the verb from the subsequent phrase: the playground is qualified by the verb 'chernet' ['чернеть'], which means 'to be black' or 'to grow black'. A relatively close equivalent to 'chernet' would be to describe the skeleton (or carcass) as 'silhouettes' – however, that implies a certain level of light, whereas the speaker emphasises the total lack of light.

²³ It is common for courtyards between buildings in Russia to have a small play area with a climbing frame or other play equipment. The speaker, in Russian, uses the term 'skeletons of a playground' ['скелеты детских площадок'], which I have transposed to 'ghostly carcass of a playground', in order to make it as clear as possible that the phrase is being used metaphorically.

SECOND. Individual...

FIRST. Here I am – I'm listening.

SECOND. Sorry.

Pause.

SECOND. Forgive me.

Pause.

SECOND. I'm sorry. I thought that something was banging in the stove, but I know there's nothing there. I thought – there's probably something cooling down there, the metal is cooling and that happens, when the metal cools down and it clangs.

Pause.

SECOND. As if somebody's knocking.

FIRST. Why? Why do you need to make me angry? Why do you want me to hit you? What, do you think I enjoy doing it? That's a question.

SECOND. No...

FIRST. What no?!

SECOND. You don't enjoy it.

FIRST. Then why? Why do you make me do it? Are you a pervert? Maybe you like me hitting you? That's why you drive me into a blind fury? You cunt! Is that why?!

SECOND. Sorry...

FIRST. You're just a cunt... Pfff... I need to calm down. You make a person into a monster, do you understand? Do you understand?! It's a question!

SECOND. Yes...

FIRST. You understand?! Look me in the eyes!

SECOND. I understand...

FIRST. You know I love you. You're just using that. You're using the fact that I depend on you, that I do give a damn about what's happening to you.

SECOND. Forgive me.

FIRST. But you won't get that now. You won't force me to hit you now. I'm working on it. Darling...

SECOND. Thank you...

FIRST. Thank you what? Thank you what? You want me not to give a damn, yes?! Not to give a crap about you?²⁴ Yes?! You think I'll give up wanting to turn you into a human being?! You

²⁴ This passage relies on a double meaning of the verb 'plevat' na' ['плевать на']. Literally, the term means 'to spit on' but figuratively, it means 'not to care about'. Initially, the speaker uses the term figuratively, which I have rendered as 'not to give a crap about', and then reverts to a literal use, 'to spit on'. I have not found a way of replicating the shift from

want me to spit in your face? There, take that! I'm spitting! There! Is that what you wanted? Maybe I should hit you, huh? Mash you up with my fists...

Pause. It takes a considerable effort for First to calm down.

FIRST. Or do you want me to take care of you? To bring you up and not abandon you? Do you want me to be beside you? Always sitting beside you and holding your hand on my lap. What do you want? Huh? What do you want? Well, tell me...

Pause.

SECOND. I... don't know...

Pause.

FIRST. You're not fully conscious, yes?

SECOND. Yes...

FIRST. You're aimless. You're like a 'fish, which is swimming inside the ocean current – partly water, partly warm stream, partly aimless fish'. Or how did you put it?

Pause.

FIRST. Why have you clammed up?²⁵ Or here's another bit that I liked 'my sides are a mirror, in which a turquoise nothingness is reflected, and it is not at all like the inside of my head which pulses with red smudges'. Very poetic. You thought I wouldn't notice that someone had moved the grille? I don't believe in your appetite for cleanliness enough to conclude that you moved the ventilation grille to clean out the dirt or some such. You're a pig, admit it. You love dirt, don't you? Huh? No need to answer – I know.

Pause.

FIRST. So, suddenly that's the fact of it. You're a writer, it seems. Like what's her face... J Rowlings.²⁶ Yes? But the fish – to hell with the fish. The fish is small fry. The most interesting thing, obviously, is your erotic dreams... Yes? Dreams of that lad, of that prince-next-door. Yes?

Pause.

FIRST. Ye-e-es... Why are you staring at me? Obviously, after I found your papers behind the grille, I decided to conduct a search. To go through the flat, checking – perhaps my writer has

figurative to literal meaning of a single phrase. One alternative – not my preferred option – would be to use the phrase 'to laugh in someone's face', which evolves into 'slap your face'. So – 'FIRST. [...] You want me not to give a damn, yes?! To laugh in your face? Yes?! [...] You want me to laugh in your face? There, I will, ha! I'm laughing in your face! Ha ha ha! There! Is that what you wanted? Maybe I should hit you, huh?' etc.

²⁵ The verb in Russian is 'szhat'sia' ['сжаться'] which means to shrink or clench (or be clenched), which implies a more defensive posture than 'to clam up'. The latter is the best equivalent which I found, but may imply disdain as much as fear or horror – most likely to be the reasons for the silence (as Second comes to understand that First has found the secret diary).

²⁶ First says 'Rowlings' ['Роулингс'], in other words a mistaken form of the surname of the famous children's writer, JK Rowling. I have added 'J' in translation to provide two mistakes in English, so that it is clear to audiences that the mistake is by the character, not the actor.

written something else? Where else could a woman hide her papers?²⁷ In her underwear? You realise that writers are actually original people with original minds. Not chicken-brains, take note, but original minds! People with original minds hide their notes in original ways. People with chicken-brains hide them in their underwear. Although, you know what, I've got that wrong. So, I'm sorry, my friend, I'm not right about that. Because people with chicken-brains are not people. They're chickens. Yes? That's logical, isn't it? What are they? Chickens? Ha-llo?

SECOND. Chickens.

FIRST. Chickens... You cunt. I'm treating you like a person – but you're just a cunt. 'He came out of his flat at the same time as me'. You just think about sex, yes? Nothing for a whole month, and then 'he opened the door of the lift and held it open for me. He smiled until he saw the bruise on my wrist'. How many times have I told you to take care of yourself? You look awful! Bruises, blurs in your head... Were you really like that when you married me? What sort of an entry is that – about pissing yourself from the door bell ringing? That's rubbish... It's disgusting! But it seems your prince-next-door likes it, yes? Does he like stinking, piss-ridden sluts?! Answer me!

SECOND. Yes....

FIRST. Well, then, you see? We're having a dialogue. And I'm not at all angry. Even though you betrayed me with the prince-next-door. He looks exactly like a prince in your diary. A wonderful next-door prince. You have dubious tastes. I'm joking. Could someone else, some other man be making jokes when he found out that his wife is betraying him with the neighbour? That's a question.

SECOND. No.

FIRST. What?

SECOND. No, he couldn't.

FIRST. But I'm joking. Wonderful descriptions of dialogues. A kindred spirit. The first sex. Well, it's just... it's just bravo! Bravo – you're the best! How do you need to respond when someone praises you?

SECOND. Thank you.

FIRST. You were betraying me behind my back. Where was he hiding, when I came home for lunch? Here, in the closet? Why have you gone dumb? You wrote that he was sitting in the closet. He isn't there now by any chance? Right now? Huh? Should I open it?

SECOND. Please...

FIRST. Maybe he'll jump out and kill me? What should I do? Open it or not? Maybe I should just finish my lunch and go back to work? And not check the closet? Should I check it or not? Yes or not? Should I or shouldn't I? Answer me!

SECOND. There's no need...

²⁷ The term is 'baba' ['bɑbɑ'], a derogative term for woman, often implying 'old woman'. One translation option would be 'pathetic old woman', however this risks implying that she is old, whereas the emphasis here is not so much on age, rather on the speaker's condescending relationship to the woman.

FIRST. I'm so defenceless after all, I'm not sporty at all, look at me! I have a paunch, not many hairs on my head, I don't see well... But he's very strong, the way you describe him, he has a strong back, yes, yes, I liked that scene, I was aroused, even though I know you, I know there's nothing to get excited about. I mean, you're not *that* good – not enough to get aroused, but I got aroused. An excellent scene. Well done! What's that?!

SECOND. Thank you. I'm begging you...

FIRST. You're much more eloquent on paper than in life. And more erotic. Why? Well, anyway, hey – handsome prince! Come out! We're opening the closet... Everyone, get ready... Beat the drums, sound the bugles, we present to you...

SECOND. Don't ... Please...

FIRST. We present to you... a closet! By the way, it's very dirty here. Your prince doesn't have an allergy to dust, does he? You could clean up at least.²⁸ It'll be hellish for him to sit here next time, in this dust, waiting for me to go back to work.

Pause.

FIRST. What am I to do with you? Huh? Encourage your writer's instincts? Or take away the paper and pens? I can take them away.

SECOND. As you wish...

FIRST. I'll think about it. Did you have to imagine all of this, really? Think it all up... The prince-next-door from the opposite flat, your romance, all of those... dirty little games... Very arty. I see your heard works just fine, in spite of the smudges. Or maybe the smudges help you, huh?

Pause.

FIRST. Hang on, I've had an idea! What if I rent the flat opposite. Huh? It's been empty for more than two years. And I'll rent it and move in there. As if I'm the prince? Huh? And we'll play out all the chapters of your diary. In order – just the way you've written it. Imagine that, I'll leave the flat, as if I'm me – your husband and I'll go to work, then run over to the neighbouring flat, get changed and ring your doorbell, already like the prince, as if I want to find out where there's a print shop nearby. And you can piss yourself from the doorbell, all just like in your diary, and you'll talk through the door and will suddenly start crying, and I'll get upset and reassure you, everything the way you wrote it, and then I'll come back and hang a flower on your door handle. Yes? And then I – me at that point, your husband – I'll be coming up the stairs, and you'll be untying the flower in a panic so that I – your husband – don't see it, and you'll hide it behind the ventilation grille, and at night, you'll write the story of the fish and everything will begin – our romance will begin, a fine, beautiful, romance, behind the back of a cruel husband and ... Damn, I'm a genius... Yes? You want me to, don't you? You want me to become your prince? Not an imaginary one but a real one. Do you want me to? That's a question.

SECOND. I do.

²⁸ The speaker uses the term 'stremno' ['*стремно*'] which means 'frightening' or 'humiliating', according to a dictionary of criminal terms, *Slovar' kriminal'nogo i polukriminal'nogo mira*. Source: <<http://fenya.academic.ru/7053>> [accessed 7 August 2015].

FIRST. Cool, cool, cool. I need to buy a leather jacket. I mean it. A leather jacket. That will make me a real prince. Cool, cool, cool. And I'll fuck you standing up in the kitchen. I just need to call the owners of the flat opposite. Probably through the building management committee, yes? The contact details are somewhere here, aren't they? I have to think how to do it. Need to think this through carefully. I'm a genius. No, I'm a prince. And you're my princess. Cool, cool, cool. Let me kiss you. Come here. That's it. We'll begin tomorrow. You should get ready. But now I have to run to work. I – your husband – am going to work. And your prince will appear tomorrow. I can't wait! How about you? Huh? That's a question.

SECOND. Yes, I'm can't wait.

FIRST. I love you.

SECOND. And I love you.

FIRST. Right. I'm going. I'll take the diary with me. I need to learn the prince's lines by tomorrow. I really came up with a great idea there. Cool, cool, cool. Bye.

He leaves. Third comes out of the closet.

SECOND. He's gone.

THIRD. You stopped me with a glance.

SECOND. Yes.

THIRD. Why?

SECOND. I'm not ready.

THIRD. But he deserves it. If you'd winked, moved, trembled, I'd have hit him. He would have fallen and lost consciousness immediately. And I would have beaten him to death. You wouldn't have had to do anything.

SECOND. I can't. It's too...

THIRD. Too sudden? It's been going on for years – and you're saying it's too sudden? Is it really all too sudden?

SECOND. I can't.

THIRD. But now we don't have a choice. He'll take my place tomorrow. And that's that. You'll have nowhere left to turn.

SECOND. What should I do?

THIRD. Let me do it.

SECOND. No.

THIRD. Can you tell me why we shouldn't do it? Give me one reason why he should live. Just one.

SECOND. And then you won't kill him?

THIRD. If you can tell me why I shouldn't do it, then I won't.

Pause.

THIRD. Give me a reason.

Pause.

SECOND. I can't. I mean, I can but not now. I know it but I can't remember the word. My head hurts and I can't concentrate, and that's why I think that you don't exist and I'm sitting here alone and thinking about how to kill my husband, and I'm thinking about how not to kill him and that's why my head's splitting in two because...

THIRD. I do exist. We'll deal with him and your head will never hurt again. And I'll be here forever.

SECOND. I'll remember why we mustn't do it.

THIRD. We don't have another option.

SECOND. I'll remember why we mustn't kill him. It's a really simple word. It means... It's a concept... Please, give me just a little time, and I'll remember it. Right now, my head is aching. But I'll definitely remember it.

THIRD. What do you mean?

SECOND. Give me a little time.

THIRD. We don't have any time. Tomorrow...

SECOND. Until tomorrow! Until tomorrow – give me time until tomorrow!

THIRD. Okay.

Pause.

THIRD. I'll come tomorrow and we'll do it. And we'll be free. And we'll be together. And you won't feel the pain any more.

He leaves.

SECOND. It's such a simple thing. I've forgotten it but I'll remember. I'll definitely remember. I'll definitely remember it. It's something very, very simple. Very simple.

The End

CONCLUSION

In this thesis, I have proposed a new paradigm of dramatic translation. Current scholarly debate tends to emphasise the linguistic dimension of rendering playtexts between languages, characterising this process as either ‘domesticating’ or ‘foreignising’ (or a negotiation between the two) – depending on the extent to which the translator attempts to accentuate the unfamiliar ‘otherness’ of the ‘original’ in the translated text. In addition to the linguistic aspect of translation, I argue that translators may benefit from acknowledging the cultural and material contexts of play-making – since those are implicitly encoded into most dramas in a variety of ways, particularly: the playwright’s imagined site of performance and target audience; the stage language (directing) of the ‘original’ production; the socio-cultural position of the dramatist in identifying (or not) with certain theatres and aesthetic ‘schools’ of writing. In theoretical terms, I am suggesting that cultural materialism – whereby material aspects of theatre-making as deemed to be ‘co-authors’ of the meaning of each production – is a constructive basis for expanding the scope of translation, to discover the ‘invisible mechanisms’ of each play which may otherwise remain hidden to the translator. The aim is not to provide a restrictive paradigm, quite the contrary. My argument is that current translation practice is rigidly applied by most theatres – and that this approach will offer a greater scope to explore new methodologies, even reconceptualising the function and status of foreign-language texts within theatrical production.

My primary object of study is the development of contemporary Russian playwriting between 2000 and 2014, as well as the trajectory of a small number of new dramas from Russian onto British stages during the same period. I have assembled new findings about these subjects – based on scholarly information, obtained primarily through archival and field research in Russia and in the UK. In Chapter One, I consider an unprecedented historical turn in Russian theatre: the birth of a ‘fringe’. From the late 1990s, ‘stand-alone’ studio theatres established by playwrights to support the post-Soviet generation of dramatists emerged as alternative sites of theatrical production, independent from the dominant state-run sector. This ‘fringe’ engendered a new performance culture, predicated on an active paradigm of spectatorship, which placed the audience and performers into a mobile, dialogic relationship, mostly conveying texts through hyper-naturalist acting styles to rupture the conventions of ‘fourth wall’ realism. These ‘sites of performance’ are embedded into most contemporary plays, particularly those by non-conformist dramatists who gained professional experience and recognition in the playwright-run institutions. By fully engaging with this socio-cultural

position of playwriting in Russia – as a disruption of existing Russian conventions, British theatres could consider how to ‘translate’ the radical intent of these dramas from their ‘original’ cultural context. In this chapter, I argue for a ‘translation’ of the atmosphere (or urban positioning) of the original site of performance in order to render the *intended function* of the drama as an aesthetic and socio-political intervention in contemporary society – based, for example, on an oppositionality to mainstream theatre-making or thinking. In Chapter Two, I argue that the period between 2000 and 2014 witnessed the advent of postdramatic writing in Russia, based on a unique blending of theatrical traditions. I base my notion of the ‘postdramatic’ largely on the scholarly writing of Hans-Thies Lehmann (2006), who uses this term to describe postmodern forms of theatre-making which eschew ‘fourth wall’ realism (and its attendant didacticism), in favour of hyper-naturalism and an active paradigm of spectatorship. From the late 1990s, post-Soviet playwrights without previous professional experience started to working in the new ‘fringe’ venues, to forge their own styles. They drew inspiration from Hollywood art-house films, British in-yer-face writing and verbatim, disrupting a sense of continuity with the legacy of Soviet theatre traditions – particularly a realist paradigm. I explore the specific disruptive strategies employed by the new wave of dramatists, such as graphic violence, obscene lexicons and depictions of an ‘underclass’, which is to say, those who were most severely punished by the shock-therapy neoliberalism of the Yeltsin years. I consider several ways in which British programmers may engage with this postdramatic aesthetic. For instance, directors may adopt hyper-naturalist acting styles in order to capture the affective value of the graphic violence depicted in many works by Russian playwrights. This strategy may recreate the ‘shock value’ which British audiences would not experience, at least those familiar with in-yer-face playwriting. Programmers may also consider alternative strategies for rendering the ‘untranslatable’ and extensive obscene lexicon from Russia, which cannot be adequately captured by the limited range of profanities in English. For instance, the translator Sasha Dugdale has investigated ‘toning down’ obscenities into more expressive, but less offensive, phrases. This sparing usage may help to recapture the affective value of profanities, when used (more sparingly) within the same text. Overall, I am suggesting that theatres should consider dramatic translation as a ‘sum total’ of all parts of the process of cultural transfer including – but not limited to – the linguistic rendition between languages.

In Chapter Three, I document the two majors aesthetic ‘schools’ of playwriting between 2000 and 2014: Moscow-based New Drama and the Ekaterinburg-based Urals School of Playwriting. I delineate their distinguishing characteristics as formal experimentation at the former,

compared to the stylistic and linguistic innovation at the latter. I depict the work of the playwright-led studio theatres, Teatr.doc in Moscow – one of the primary advocates of New Drama, as well as the Kolyada-Theatre in Ekaterinburg which engendered a playwriting culture in the Urals region (which is located between Western Russia and Siberia). The institutional flexibility of these theatres as ‘independent’ (private) entities in the post-Soviet ‘fringe’ engendered a culture of aesthetic innovation. Teatr.doc maintained its artistic output through a material dependence on voluntary labour, while the Kolyada-Theatre relied on donations by the founder-director, Nikolai Kolyada – indicating a range of institutional approaches had influenced their respective aesthetic styles.

While the ‘fringe’ is where most contemporary Russian playwriting originates, the state-run repertory theatres – which accounts for the majority of theatrical production in Russia – ‘cherry-picked’ dramatists who had achieved critical success, as a means of out-sourcing risk-taking and material costs to the Russian ‘fringe’. My other two case studies – the Moscow Arts and the Sovremennik – employed two different strategies towards the post-Soviet dramatists. The Moscow Arts embraced New Drama as a phenomenon briefly by co-founding the New Drama Festival in 2002, before withdrawing in 2004. Subsequently, it continued to produce contemporary Russian plays sporadically on its smaller two stages – about one per year – in order to attract a younger generation from the cultural elite. However, it did not re-orient its own aesthetic direction in response to the experimental, hyper-naturalist approaches by the non-conformist playwrights. The Sovremennik overlooked New Drama but accommodated – to a very limited extent – the Urals School of Playwriting, as a more conventional playwriting movement which nevertheless offered a degree of theatrical innovation. I use this chapter to consider how the British theatre landscape might overcome the compartmentalisation of foreign-language work – by programming a broader range of plays from different aesthetic schools. Artistic directors could consider how New Drama and the Urals School of Playwriting correspond to different institutional ‘types’ of British theatre, on a continuum from experimental to conventional. This perspective could circumvent current practice, which primarily facilitates the trajectory of New Drama plays into specialist or ‘new writing’ theatres. In Chapter Four, I consider many of the same issues as in the first three chapters – extending these lines of investigation to encompass a survey of how British theatres programmed new Russian playwriting, between 2000 and 2014. I also consider the choices made by programmers, directors and translators, who produced new Russian plays on British stages during that period. In spite of some achievements by almost half a dozen companies, the theatre landscape in the UK has generally resisted espousing contemporary dramatic texts

from Russia. In spite of their ‘good intentions’, the companies which stage Russian works – particularly the larger institutions – tend to enact a process of ‘domestication’, primarily through programming choices and directing practices. For instance, these theatres privilege new Russian plays which may be interpreted as ‘fourth wall’ realism, over those which offer a total disruption of mimetic verisimilitude. I reveal a greater scope to accommodate cultural difference – and the cultural ‘other’ – by considering how the restrictive practices at British theatres may be circumvented, through my proposed paradigm of translation. In this chapter, I also reflect on my own practice, particularly the four plays selected, translated and presented as rehearsed readings, as part of this doctoral project. I suggest that the most radical potential of new Russian plays to influence the British theatre is largely missed, because of overly rigid institutional mechanisms in the UK – including the marginalisation of translators, who could act as cultural mediators in facilitating a translation of the material theatre beyond the linguistic text. In Chapter Five, I provide annotated play translations, offering a commentary on the dilemmas which I have faced as a practising translator – providing a greater insight into the ongoing scholarly debate on linguistic ‘domestication’ versus ‘foreignisation’.

Underlying this whole dissertation is that notion that theatre is in crisis – in Russia and in the UK: an ethical crisis of intent and function. The ‘fringe’ theatres in both countries, which attempt to challenge the socio-cultural status quo, are forced to remain at the margins of their respective theatre landscapes. As the scholars Maria Delgado and Caridad Svich observe, this crisis relates to the increased economic ‘duress’ (Delgado and Svich 2002: 6) in which theatre-makers work. It is also a symptom of the marginalisation of experimental forms, so that society has turned ‘theatre, especially the kind of theatre made by experimental artists [into] an increasingly elitist form’ (Ibid.). This notion of ‘experiment’ contains larger implications – about theatre’s potential to offer an aesthetic and ideological intervention into mainstream cultural discourses. Considering what an ethical theatre might be in the postmodern era, the scholar and theatre-maker Nicholas Ridout proposes a socio-philosophical framework. He posits that theatre must offer audiences an encounter with ‘the other’ and otherness, through its aesthetic form. His perspective serves as an explicit repudiation of pre-Second World War western philosophy which advocated for the fulfilment of the self (Ridout 2009: 48-53). However, he complicates that notion by questioning whether an ethical theatre needs to abandon ethics and a consciously-maintained ethical position (Ibid.: 70). His suggestion is that, if theatrical production is designed to promote a set of ethical ideals, it leads solely to a confirmation of the known. In this doctoral project, I am

proposing that translation may play a role in providing an ethical theatre in the UK – not only to combat cultural insularity but also for the broader philosophical purpose of facilitating encounters with an unknown ‘other’.

Between 2000 and 2014, although the situation remains largely unchanged at the time of writing (September 2017), British theatres as a whole offered limited opportunities for audiences to experience contemporary foreign-language dramas – including new Russian plays. Also problematic – in its ethical implications – is that fact most British theatres circumscribe the parameters of this encounter with contemporary dramas from Russia in several ways: by using relatively risk-averse programming practices to select them; by mostly staging them in new writing or specialist venues or for specialist audiences; by using normative British directing practices to recreate the texts on stage; and by employing a limited range of translation practices to render them linguistically into English. This doctoral thesis is primarily advocating for a ‘foreignising’ approach – or at least an approach which privileges ‘foreignisation’ (and therefore otherness) – towards Russian New Drama and the Urals School of Playwriting. I depart from most previous advocates of ‘foreignisation’ by suggesting that the site of encounter with the foreign ‘other’ should not be limited to the realm of text. I could express this best perhaps by ‘adapting’ Walter Benjamin’s citation, which I offered in the Introduction to this thesis (see p. 15), to propose an ethical statement of practice:

Our British theatres, even those with the best intentions and the most skilful and talented professionals, proceed from a wrong premise. They want to turn contemporary Russian – and other foreign-language texts – into British productions. [...] The basic error of the British artistic director is that he preserves the theatrical process in which his theatre is accustomed to working, rather than allowing his theatrical practice to be reconfigured and reinvented by the culture, philosophy and institutional realities embedded in the foreign-language play.

In other words, I am observing an alignment between institutional practice and aesthetic form, proposing that a genuine act of translation alters theatrical production through contact with a foreign culture.

Since this project is practice-based, I will conclude by connecting this theoretical position with the four plays which I translated for this doctoral project, by asking: could plays which appear to be difficult, or unattractive, propositions for programmers – find producers and audiences in the UK through unconventional translation practice? If this concluding section appears speculative, it originates in my desire to end a practice-based doctoral project in the ethos of experiment. As opposed to the unifying impulse behind theory, practice is driven by an ‘improvisational spontaneous state of mind and alert responsive reflexes [which] we train

ourselves to release when creating work' (Furse in Delgado and Svich 2002: 72). In that spirit, I now consider each of the four plays, in turn, so that I can provide a less abstract vision of what a cultural materialist approach to translation might look like. With its decontextualized cultural (and historical) specificity, *Grandchildren. The Second Act's* 'hidden' cultural subtext makes this play inaccessible to the general British audience. It is understandable that programmers would respond in unambiguously negative terms to this drama. Simon Stokes, Artistic Director of Theatre Royal Plymouth, the non-academic partner of this project, stated in relation to *Grandchildren* that 'one is not a butterfly collector' (Interview with Stokes 2016). His view compares work which will be of interest to 'specialist' audiences (the 'butterfly collectors') and 'general' spectators. Underlying that view – which is enforced by institutional realities such as existing audiences bases which bring in box office revenue – is the notion of the 'British' spectator. I propose another paradigm for London- or Oxford-based venues, in other words, cities where there are large, diasporic Russian communities in the UK, to stage this production in its original Russian language text (with surtitles for non-Russian speakers) – as an 'alternative' act of cultural translation. The purpose of this would not be primarily to cater to the Russian community, although that in itself would be valuable as a means of acknowledging the cultural 'other' within Britain. Instead, the intention would be to attract a composite audience of many nationalities, reacting differently – and having their responses acknowledged in the 'second act'. How would mixed Russian and British audiences (or indeed other nationalities) react in the 'second act' of the play, when they are invited to speak about their grandparents' complicity with colonial powers? That would be an experiment which removes the passive spectatorship of the notion 'what can we learn about Russia from a new Russian play?' into an active one 'what can we learn about this multi-cultural audience sitting in this particular auditorium, from this Russian play?'

My second play translation *Dr* offers a different opportunity for reflection upon realities in the UK: the comparable trajectories of privatisation of healthcare in Russia and in Britain – as well as the impact of that process upon doctors and patients. In my view, this play offers at least two opportunities to British programmers. Firstly, as a venue, Teatr.doc – where this drama received its premiere and continues to run as its longest-running production – is suggestive of an unconventional theatrical experience in terms of its 'underground' location and oppositional ideology. A production could be staged, for example, in former or existing operating theatres for a mixed audience of surgeons and the general public – to elicit a dialogue around the 'myths and realities' of the healthcare system or, more broadly, to question a society's duty of care towards its citizens during an age of ultra-conservative

politics. Secondly, the ‘Gogolian’ properties of the text – the macho self-aggrandizement of the single-narrator perspective – could serve as an invitation to directors to consider some form of mediatized production, investigating whether there is a relationship between society’s overdependence upon new media and the political elite’s ability to dismantle society’s duty of care towards its citizens. This suggestion takes account of the tendency of many non-conformist dramatists in Russia – to write ‘performative objects’. In other words, a broader act of translation may acknowledge that verbatim dramas from Russia intend to offer aesthetic as well as ideological interventions into the theatre landscape.

My third play translation *Joan* invites programmers to produce a drama which does not belong firmly in the ‘new writing’ genre because it is not formally experimental (postdramatic). The dramaturgy of Puliovich’s work is unconventional by British standards with its climactic moment in the final line of the play, but its two-act structure does not challenge conventional dramaturgical principles of storytelling (a linear narrative developing across a temporal linearity) or mimetic verisimilitude. I am currently in conversation with a commercial producer and an experienced British director with no prior experience of contemporary Russian plays (I will not name them since this partnership is at the exploratory phase). My proposal to these potential collaborators is to bring *Joan* to a medium- or even large-scale venue, replicating its broader appeal among audiences in Russia (beyond the Russian ‘fringe’). By framing *Joan* as a ‘commercial’ project, I hope to offer an encounter with the cultural ‘other’ to audiences who have seen few, or perhaps even no previous, contemporary Russian plays. My fourth play *The War Has Not Yet Started* received a production in Plymouth, as I documented in Chapter Four. At the time of writing, it has just been confirmed that Theatre Royal Plymouth will produce a London version of this play, with Gordon Anderson as director: he directed the reading in January 2016 and was this company’s first choice for their Plymouth production in May 2016. Anderson’s national reputation – as a director of popular TV-series such as *The Inbetweeners* and *Shameless* – makes it possible that this production will attract a combination of generalist and specialist audiences. *The War* may play a role in broadening the range of spectators experiencing contemporary Russian plays – which is normally subjected to a process of marginalisation within the theatre landscape. Beyond these four plays, the process of this Ph.D. has served as self-reflection about my work with Sputnik, primarily around how to ensure that new Russian drama do not become stratified into only one segment of the British theatre landscape – either generalist or specialist – or indeed part of only one form of theatre-making, whether new writing, collaborative devising or any other. Overall, this doctoral project represents a provocation – to

others and to myself – to consider the ‘act of translation’ as an ongoing cross-cultural negotiation around the function of theatre, rather than as a particular set of techniques.

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APPENDIX I: A LIST OF ALL PREMIERES (FULL PRODUCTIONS ONLY) OF CONTEMPORARY RUSSIAN-LANGUAGE PLAYS PRODUCED IN ENGLISH TRANSLATION IN THE UK SINCE 2000

2000

N/a

2001

N/a

2002

Plasticine by Vasilii Sigarev, dir. by Dominic Cooke, trans. by Sasha Dugdale, at the Royal Court Theatre, Upstairs Theatre.

2003

Black Milk by Vasilii Sigarev, dir. by Simon Usher, trans. by Sasha Dugdale, at the Royal Court Theatre, Upstairs Theatre.

Terrorism by Oleg Presniakov and Vladimir Presniakov, dir. by Ramin Gray, trans. by Sasha Dugdale, at the Royal Court Theatre, Upstairs Theatre.

Playing the Victim by Oleg Presniakov and Vladimir Presniakov, dir. by Richard Wilson, trans. by Sasha Dugdale, at the Royal Court Theatre, Upstairs Theatre.

2004

Ladybird by Vasilii Sigarev, dir. by Ramin Gray, trans. by Sasha Dugdale, at the Royal Court Theatre, Upstairs Theatre.

2005

Russian National Mail by Oleg Bogaev, dir. and trans. by Noah Birksted-Breen for Sputnik Theatre Company at the Old Red Lion Theatre.

2006

Techniques of Breathing in an Airlocked Space by Nataliia Moshina, dir. and trans. by Noah Birksted-Breen for Sputnik Theatre Company at the Old Red Lion Theatre.

2007

Slow Sword by Iurii Klavdiev, dir. and trans. by Noah Birksted-Breen for Sputnik Theatre Company at the Old Red Lion Theatre.

2009

The Drunks by Mikhail and Viacheslav Durnenkov, dir. by Antony Neilson, trans. by Nina Raine, at the Royal Shakespeare Company, Courtyard Theatre.

The Grain Store by Nataliia Vorozhbit (Ukraine), dir. by Michael Boyd, trans. by Sasha Dugdale, at the Royal Shakespeare Company, Courtyard Theatre.

Oxygen by Ivan Vyrypaev, dir. by Deborah Shaw, trans. by Sasha Dugdale, at the Royal Shakespeare Company, Courtyard Theatre.

2011

Remembrance Day by Alexei Shcherbak (Latvia), dir. by Michael Longhurst, trans. by Rory Mullarkey, at the Royal Court, Jerwood Theatre Upstairs (formerly the Theatre Upstairs).

Galka-Motalka by Nataliia Vorozhbit (Ukraine), dir. by Sam Pritchard, trans. by Sasha Dugdale, at the Manchester Royal Exchange.

2012

Illusions by Ivan Vyrypaev, dir. by Ramin Gray, trans. by Caz Liske, for Actors' Touring Company (UK tour).

One Hour Eighteen by Elena Gremina, dir. and trans. by Noah Birksted-Breen for Sputnik Theatre Company at the New Diorama Theatre.

2015

The Harvest by Pavel Priazhko (Belarus), dir. by Michael Boyd, trans. by Sasha Dugdale at the Theatre Royal Bath in the Ustinov Studio and Soho Theatre.

Take the Rubbish Out, Sasha by Nataliia Vorozhbit (Ukraine), dir. by Nicola McCartney, trans. by Sasha Dugdale, at the Play, Pie and Pint Theatre (Glasgow), with the National Theatre of Scotland and University of Edinburgh.

The War Hasn't Started Yet by Mikhail Durnenkov, dir. Davey Anderson, literal trans. by Alexandra Smith, adapted by Davey Anderson, at the Play, Pie and Pint Theatre (Glasgow), with the National Theatre of Scotland and University of Edinburgh.

Thoughts Spoken Aloud from Above by Iurii Klavdiev, dir. by Candice Edmunds, literal trans. by Alexandra Smith, adapted by Peter Arnott, at the Play, Pie and Pint Theatre (Glasgow), with the National Theatre of Scotland and University of Edinburgh.

2016

The War Hasn't Yet Started by Mikhail Durnenkov, dir. by Gordon Anderson, trans. by Noah Birksted-Breen, at the Theatre Royal Plymouth in the Drum Studio.

APPENDIX II: A LIST OF PREMIERES OF MY FOUR CASE STUDY THEATRES (2000-14)

Key for the databoxes

- P – New play (from the Russian-language canon)
- A – New adaptation (from a Russian-language source text)
- R – Revival of a play or adaptation (from the Russian language canon)
- PI – New play ‘international’ (from the non-Russian-language canon)
- AI – New adaptation ‘international’ (from a non-Russian-language source text)
- RI – Revival of an ‘international’ play or work (from the non-Russian-language canon)
- O – Other performance (incl. devised work, physical theatre, musicals, pantomime, performance installation)

In all categories above, ‘New’ signifies a text which has not been previously staged by a professional theatre company in Russia. By way of contrast, a ‘Revival’ indicates a text which has been previously produced by a professional theatre company in Russia.

In all categories above, ‘International’ signifies that the source text was ‘non-Russian language’.

I have not distinguished in any of the above categories above between different target age-ranges, i.e. works intended for adults, young people and children. Nevertheless, the target age-range is recorded in the databoxes in brackets alongside the play’s title, where the information was provided on the company’s website.

Notes on my system of classification

This Appendix contains four databoxes: one for each of my case study theatres. In each databox, I have listed the productions which premiered between 2000 and 2014. I have also categorised the premieres, in order to provide a quantitative analysis of each company’s work. My system of categorisation borrows heavily from the *British Theatre Repertoire 2013* (Edgar, D. et al. 2015). That report created a rigorous system of classification which allowed for a statistical comparison of new work and revivals in the British theatre repertoire. I have deviated from the system devised by Edgar et al. in two ways. Firstly, I have conflated six of their categories into one: devised work, physical theatre, musicals, pantomime, performance installation becomes ‘Other performance’ in my classifications. This conflation retains a focus on the distinction between plays, adaptations and revivals at my case study theatres – at the expense of other types of performance which are, in any case, marginal at my selected companies. Secondly, I have added categories to represent plays, adaptations and revivals from non-Russian source texts. Edgar et al. have not distinguished between British and non-British works, for instance, their categories – ‘new plays’, ‘revivals’ and ‘devised works’ may include translations. I felt that the distinction between Russian and non-Russian work was important for my study because I observed – at an early stage of research – that my four case study theatres programmed from the international canon to very different degrees. In my classifications, an international work may either be a ‘new play’, a ‘new adaptation’ or a ‘revival’ of an international work, i.e. depending on whether it is being premiered for the first time in Russia (either in a direct form or as an adaptation).

General notes on the databoxes

- (a) Each databox only includes plays which premiered between 1 January 2000 and 1 July 2014 (inclusive). This simplification was a necessary device in order to make information-gathering an achievable task within the timeframe of my Ph.D.: most theatre companies archive their performances by the date of the premiere without recording the length of the run. However, there is one major disadvantage to this approach: it does not record works which were already in the repertoire in 2000, regardless of how long they ran.

- (b) An underlined title of a play indicates that the production was still running on 1 July 2014 when I collected this data.

Case Study One: The Chekhov Moscow Arts

YEAR	TITLE	WRITER(S)	DIRECTOR(S)	AUDITORIUM	TYPE ¹
2000-2001	<i>Cyrano de Bergerac</i> (1 October 2000)	Edmond de Rostand, translated by Iurii Aikhenvaľ'd	Oleg Efremov until his death in May 2000, completed by Nikolai Skorik	Main	RI
	<i>The Antiquarian's Family</i> ([11 January 2001?])	Carlo Goldoni, translated by Nikolai Sheiko and Evgenii Ratiner	Nikolai Sheiko	Main	RI
	<i>The Beatles Girls</i> ([25 January 2001?])	Sergei Volynets	Aleksandr Marin	Small	P
	<i>No. 13</i> (7 April 2001) ²	Ray Cooney (original title <i>Out of Order</i>), translated by Mikhail Mishin	Vladimir Mashkov	Main	RI
2001-2002	<i>The Cabal of Hypocrites</i> (9 September 2001)	Mikhail Bulgakov	Adol'ph Shapiro	Main	R
	<i>Iu</i> (20 September 2001)	Ol'ga Mukhina	Evgenii Kamen'kovich	Small	P
	<i>Antigone</i> (29 September 2001)	Jean Anouilh, translated by Valentin Dmitriev	Temur Chkheidze	Main ⁶	RI
	<i>The Seagull</i> ([26 October?] 2001) ³	Anton Chekhov	Nikolai Skorik, based on the 1980 production by Oleg Efremov	Main	R

¹ Please see the Key located at the start of this Appendix, pp. 435-6.

² This production ran for eleven years and was re-staged by the same director on 21 January 2014, with the new title *No. 13D*.

³ This is a restaging. The original production premiered on 9 July 1980, directed by Oleg Efremov.

⁶ The audience members were seated on the main stage with the actors.

	<i>Old-World Landowners</i> (25 December 2001)	Nikolai Gogol	Mindaugas Karbauskis	New	A
	<i>The Sacred Flame</i> (15 January 2002)	William Somerset Maugham, translated by Vitalii Vul'f and Aleksandr Chebotar'	Svetlana Vragova	Main	RI
	<i>Retro</i> (29 January 2002) ⁴	Aleksandr Galin	Andrei Miagkov	Small	P
	<i>The Flying Goose</i> (24 February 2002) ⁵	Viktor Astaf'ev, adapted by Marina Brusnikina from two stories	Marina Brusnikina	New	O
	<i>Eternity and a Day</i> (21 April 2002)	Milorad Pavić, translated by Natal'ia Vagapova	Vladimir Petrov	Main	AI
	<i>Duck Hunting</i> (7 June 2002)	Aleksandr Vampilov	Aleksandr Marin	Small	R
	<i>Crime and Punishment</i> (24 June 2002)	Fyodor Dostoevsky, adapted by Elena Nevezhina	Elena Nevezhina	New	A
2002-2003	<i>Sonechka</i> (30 September 2002)	Liudmila Ulitskaia	Marina Brusnikina	New	O
	<i>He Who Gets Slapped</i>	Leonid Andreev	Raia-Sinikka Rantala	Main	R

⁴ This is a revival of a play written, and produced originally, in 1979.

⁵ A reading of two tales, *The Flying Goose* and *Grandmother's Tale*, by the Russian writer Viktor Astaf'ev.

	(31 October 2002) <i>Terrorism</i> (7 November 2002) <i>Nothings</i> (21 December 2002) <u><i>Copenhagen</i></u> (25 February 2003) <u><i>A Little Tenderness</i></u> (5 March 2003) <i>The Sun Was Shining</i> (29 March 2003) <i>Oblomov</i> (9 April 2003) <u><i>The Make-Up Room</i></u> (15 June 2003) <i>The Literature Teacher</i> (20 May 2003)	Oleg and Vladimir Presniakov Pavel Kohout, translated by Vladimir Savitskii Michael Frayn translated by Zoya Anderson, edited for the stage by Aleksandr Popov Aldo Nicolai, translated by Tamara Skyi Anatolii Kurchatkin Ivan Goncharov, adapted by Mikhail Ugarov Kunio Shimizu, translated by Aia Maruti Fedor Sologub, adapted by Valerii Semenovskii	Kirill Serebrennikov Ian Burian Mindaugas Karbauskis Arkadii Kats Marina Brusnikina Aleksandr Galibin Elena Nevezhina Nikolai Sheiko	Small Main Main Small Small New New Small	P PI PI RI O A PI A
2003-2004	<u><i>The Siege</i></u> (6 October 2003) <i>Voilin and A Bit Nervously</i> (27 October 2003)	Evgenii Grishkovets Svetlana Savina Valerii Iskhakov	Evgenii Grishkovets Aleksandr Marin	Small Small	R P

	<i>Light After-Taste of Betrayal</i> (19 November 2003)	Alexander Ostrovsky	Marina Brusnikina	Small	O
	<i>The Last Sacrifice</i> (15 December 2003)	Caryl Churchill, translated by Tatiana Oskol'kova	Iurii Eremin	Main	R
	<i>A Number</i> (3 March 2004)	Maxim Gorky	Mikhail Ugarov	Small	PI
	<i>The Philistines</i> (6 March 2004)	Mikhail Bulgakov	Kirill Serebrennikov	Main	R
	<i>The White Guard</i> (30 March 2004)	Rubén David González Gallego, adapted by Marina Brusnikina	Sergei Zhenovach	Main	R
	<i>White on Black</i> (9 April 2004)	Anton Chekhov	Marina Brusnikina	New	O
	<i>The Cherry Orchard</i> (3 June 2004)		Adolph Shapiro	Main	R
2004-2005	<i>Playing the Victim</i> (18 September 2004)	Oleg and Vladimir Presniakov	Kirill Serebrennikov	Small	P
	<i>King Lear</i> (30 October 2004)	William Shakespeare, translated by Boris Pasternak	Tadashi Suzuki	Main	RI
	<i>Tartuffe</i> (10 November 2004)	Molière, translated by Mikhail Donskoi	Nina Chusova	Main	RI
	<i>Beast on the Moon</i> (24 November 2004)	Richard Kalinoski, translated by	Aleksandr Grigorian	New	PI

	<p><i><u>The Forest</u></i> (23 December 2004)</p> <p><i>Cat-and-Mouse</i> (30 December 2004)</p> <p><i>Last Day of Summer</i> (1 February 2005)</p> <p><i>Artist Descending A Staircase</i> (12 February 2005)</p> <p><i><u>Don't Part From Those You Love</u></i> (8 March 2005)</p> <p><i>The Return</i> (25 May 2005)</p>	<p>Aleksandr Popov</p> <p>Alexander Ostrovsky</p> <p>Istvan Erken</p> <p>Mikhail and Viacheslav Durnenkov</p> <p>Tom Stoppard, translated by Il'ia Kormil'tsev</p> <p>Alexander Volodin</p> <p>Andrei Platonov</p>	<p>Kirill Serebrennikov</p> <p>Iurii Eriomin</p> <p>Nikolai Skorik</p> <p>Elena Nevezhina</p> <p>Viktor Ryzhakov</p> <p>Iurii Eriomin</p>	<p>Main</p> <p>Small</p> <p>New</p> <p>Small</p> <p>New</p> <p>Small</p>	<p>R</p> <p>RI</p> <p>P</p> <p>RI</p> <p>R</p> <p>R</p>
2005-2006	<p><i><u>The Golovliovs</u></i> (7 October 2005), 18+</p> <p><i>Shining City</i> (16 November 2005)</p> <p><i>Hamlet</i> (14 December 2005)</p> <p><i>Live and Remember</i> (17 January 2006)</p>	<p>Mikhail Saltykov-Shchedrin</p> <p>Conor McPherson, translated by Tatiana Oskolkova</p> <p>William Shakespeare, translated by Boris Pasternak</p> <p>Vladimir Rasputin</p>	<p>Kirill Serebrennikov</p> <p>Ilze Rudzite</p> <p>Iurii Butusov</p> <p>Vladimir Petrov</p>	<p>Small</p> <p>Small</p> <p>Main</p> <p>Small</p>	<p>A</p> <p>PI</p> <p>RI</p> <p>A</p>

	<i>The Fast-Flowing River</i> (25 January 2006)	Vladimir Makanin	Marina Brusnikina	Small	O
2006-2007	<i>Leading Ladies</i> (20 October 2006)	Ken Ludwig translated by Mikhail Barskii	Evgenii Pisarev	Main	PI
	<i>Mozart's Last Mistake</i> (26 December 2006)	Dmitrii Minchenok	Production concept by Iurii Eriomin, directed by Andrei Shiriaev	Small	P
	<i>Twelves Pictures From the Life of an Artist</i> (27 February 2007)	Iurii Cooper	Vladimir Petrov	Small	P
	<i>The Pillowman</i> (10 May 2007), 18+	Martin McDonagh, translated by Mikhail Barskii	Kirill Serebrennikov	Small	PI
	<i>Lady From the Sea</i> (27 May 2007)	Henrik Ibsen	Iurii Eriomin	Main	RI
2007-2008	<i>Tutish</i> (27 October 2007)	Aleksei Tort	Marina Brusnikina	Small	O
	<i>The White Rabbit</i> (25 January 2008)	Mary Chase translated by [Elena?] Golysheva and [Boris?] Izakov	Evgenii Kamen'kovich	Small	RI
	<i>Hay Fever</i> (17 February 2008)	Noël Coward, translated by Mikhail Mishin	Aleksandr Marin	Small	RI
	<i>Forty-first. Opus Post.</i> (28 February 2008)	Boris Lavrenev, adapted by Viktor Ryzhakov	Viktor Ryzhakov	Small	A

	<u><i>The Hunch-Back Horse</i></u> (15 May 2008)	Petr Ershov, adapted by Oleg and Vladimir Presniakov	Evgenii Pisarev	Main	A
2008- 2009	<u><i>The Kreutzer Sonata</i></u> (2 December 2008)	Leo Tolstoy, adapted by Anton Iakovlev	Anton Iakovlev	Main	A
	<u><i>The Breath of Life</i></u> (7 February 2009)	David Hare, translated by Ol'ga Bukhova	Elena Nevezhina	New	PI
	<i>Kizhe</i> (27 February 2009)	Iurii Tynianov, adapted by Kirill Serebrennikov and the actors	Kirill Serebrennikov	Small	A
	<u><i>The Threepenny Opera</i></u> (5 May 2009), 18+	Bertolt Brecht and Kurt Weill, translated by Sviatoslav Gorodetskii	Kirill Serebrennikov	Main	RI
	<u><i>The Pickwick Club</i></u> (12 May 2009)	Charles Dickens, adapted by Natalia Venkstern	Evgenii Pisarev	Main	AI
2009- 2010	<u><i>Nest of the Nobility</i></u> (7 October 2009)	Ivan Turgenev	Marina Brusnikina	Main	O
	<i>Ivanov</i> (14 November 2009)	Anton Chekhov	Iurii Butusov	Main	R
	<i>Vassa Zheleznova</i> (23 March 2010)	Maxim Gorky	Lev Erenburg	Main	R
	<u><i>The Precipice</i></u> (10 April 2010)	Ivan Goncharov,	Adol'f Shapiro	Main	A

		adapted by Adol'f Shapiro			
	<i><u>The Duel</u></i> (25 April 2010)	Anton Chekhov, adapted by Anton Iakovlev	Anton Iakovlev	Small	A
	<i><u>The Marriage</u></i> (14 May 2010)	Nikolai Gogol	Igor' Zolotovitskii	Main	R
2010- 2011	<i><u>The Cursed and the Slain</u></i> (5 September 2010), 18 +	Viktor Astaf'ev	Viktor Ryzhakov	Small	R
	<i><u>Ghosts</u></i> (27 September 2010)	Eduardo de Filippo	Evgenii Pisarev	Main	RI
	<i><u>The Egg</u></i> (12 December 2010)	Félicien Marceau	Magomed Cheger	Small	PI
	<i><u>My Dear Mathilda</u></i> (18 November 2010)	Israel Horovitz	Vladimir Petrov	Small	PI
	<i><u>Shaga</u></i> (13 April 2011)	Marguerite Duras	Mary-Luise Bischofberge	New	AI
	<i><u>The Overcoat</u></i> (19 May 2011)	Nikolai Gogol, adapted by Anton Kovalenko	Anton Kovalenko	New	A
	<i><u>The House</u></i> (19 June 2011)	Evgenii Grishkovets and Anna Matison	Sergei Puskepalis	Small	R
	<i><u>The Master and Margarita</u></i> (29 June 2011)	Mikhail Bulgakov, adapted by Ianosch Sas	Ianosch Sas	Main	A
2011- 2012	<i><u>The Letter-Book</u></i>	Mikhail Shishkin,	Marina Brusnikina	Small	O

	(22 October 2011)	adapted by Marina Brusnikina			
	<u><i>Snow White and the Seven Dwarves</i></u> (4 November 2011)	By Lev Ustinov and Oleg Tabakov, adapted by Mikhail Mironov	Mikhail Mironov	Main	AI
	<u><i>The Event</i></u> (21 January 2012)	Vladimir Nabokov	Konstantin Bogomolov	Main	A
	<u><i>Mr. Karenin</i></u> (4 February 2012)	Leo Tolstoy (original title <i>Anna Karenina</i>), adapted by Vasilii Sigarev	Viesturs Meikshans	New	A
	<u><i>Crime and Punishment</i></u> (20 March 2012), 18 +	Fyodor Dostoevsky	Lev Erenburg	Small	A
	<u><i>The Limits of Love</i></u> (15 April 2012), 18+	Pascal Rambert, translated by Mariia Zonina	Pascal Rambert	New	PI
	<u><i>Last Summer in Chulimsk</i></u> (26 May 2012)	Alexander Vampilov	Sergei Puskepalis	Small	R
	<u><i>Zoya's Flat</i></u> (9 June 2012), 18+	Mikhail Bulgakov	Kirill Serebrennikov	Main	R
	<u><i>Witness for the Prosecution</i></u> (26 June 2012)	Agatha Christie translated by [Viktor?] Ashkenazi	<i>Marie-Louise</i> Bishofberger	Small	RI
2012-2013	<u><i>He's in Argentina</i></u> (29 September 2012)	Liudmila Petrushevskaja	Dmitry Brusnikin	Small	P

	<u><i>Savannah Bay</i></u> (19 October 2012)	Marguerite Duras, translated by Dmitrii Rumiantsev	Christian Benedetti	New	AI
	<u><i>The New Sorrows of the Young W.</i></u> (27 November 2012)	Ulrich Plenzdorf, translated by Klarissa Stoliarova, adapted by Mikhail Durnenkov	Vasilii Barkhatov	Small	A
	<u><i>Krechinsky's Wedding</i></u> (10 December 2012)	Aleksandr Sukhovo-Kobylin	Viesturs Meikshans	Main	R
	<u><i>An Ideal Husband</i></u> (10 February 2013), 18 +	Oscar Wilde, adapted by Konstantin Bogomolov	Konstantin Bogomolov	Main	AI
	<u><i>Evening of Contemporary Poetry</i></u> (1 March 2013)	Various	Marina Brusnikina	All stages	O
	<u><i>Circle Mirror Transformation</i></u> (12 April 2013)	Annie Baker	Adrian Giurgea	Small	PI
	<u><i>Circles/Fictions</i></u> (24 April 2013)	Joel Pommerat, translated by Natal'ia Sannikova	Brigitte Jacques-Wajeman	Small	PI
	<u><i>A Tale of What We Can Do And What We Can't</i></u> (11 June 2013), 18+	Petr Lutsik and Aleksei Samoriadov, adapted by Mikhail Durnenkov	Marat Gatsalov	Small	A

2013-2014	<u><i>The Karamazovs</i></u> (26 November 2013), 18 +	Fyodor Dostoevsky, adapted by Konstantin Bogomolov	Konstantin Bogomolov	Main	A
	<u><i>The Miraculous Journey of Edward Rabbit</i></u> (28 November 2013), 8+	Kate DiCamillo, translated by Ol'ga Varshaver	Gleb Cherepanov	Small	A
	<u><i>The Double Bass</i></u> (1 March 2014)	Patrick Süsskind, translated by Nina Litvinets	Gleb Cherepanov	Main	AI
	<u><i>The Drunks</i></u> (4 April 2014)	Ivan Vyrypaev	Viktor Ryzhakov	Small	P
	<u><i>A Streetcar Named Desire</i></u> (26 May 2014), 18+	Tennessee Williams, translated by Vladich Nedelin	Roman Feodori	Main	RI
	<u><i>Dear Treasure</i></u> (21 June 2014), 16+	Francis Pignon (original title <i>Le Dîner de Cons</i>), translated by Aleksandr Brailovskii	Dmitrii D'iachenko	Small	AI

Case Study Two: *The Sovremennik*

YEAR	TITLE	WRITER(S)	DIRECTOR(S)	AUDITORIUM	TYPE
2000-2001	<u><i>Get Out-Get Out</i></u> (10 October 2000)	Nikolai Kolyada	Nikolai Kolyada	Main	P
	<u><i>Three Sisters</i></u> ⁷ (6 February 2001)	Anton Chekhov	Galina Volchek	Main	R

⁷ The theatre calls this the 'second edition' of the production. The 'first edition' was directed by Volchek in 1982. A subsequent 'third edition' was staged in 2008. The set design and the interpretation of the characters remained substantially unchanged; only the distribution of roles among the acting ensemble changed, in order to accommodate the changing ages of the actors in the ensemble (Karas', 2008).

	<i>Once again... the naked King!</i> (15 April 2001)	Leonid Filatov	Mikhail Efremov	Main	P
2001-2002	<i>Balalaikin and Co</i> (16 November 2001)	Mikhail Saltykov-Shchedrin (original title <i>A Modern Idyll</i>), adapted by Sergei Mikhalkov	Original production by Georgii Tovstonogov (1973), direction by Igor Kvasha and other members of the ensemble	Main	R
	<i>La Celestina</i> (13 April 2002)	Fernando de Rojas, adapted by Nikolai Kolyada	Nikolai Kolyada	Main	AI
2002-2003	<i>Sweet Bird of Youth</i> (6 December 2002)	Tennessee Williams, scenic version by Kirill Serebrennikov, prologues by Nina Sadur	Kirill Serebrennikov	Main	AI
	<i>Mumdadsondog</i> (28 December 2002)	Biljana Srbljanović, translated by Sergei Girin	Nina Chusova	Main	PI
2003-2004	<i>The Devils</i> (16 March 2004)	Fyodor Dostoevsky, adapted by Albert Camus	Andrzej Wajda	Main	RI
	<i>The Storm</i> (18 April 2004)	Alexander Ostrovsky	Nina Chusova	Main	R
2004-2005	<i>The Overcoat</i> (5 October 2004)	By Nikolai Gogol, adapted by Valerii Fokin	Valerii Fokin	Other Stage	A
	<i>The True Story of Margarita Gauthier Who Was Known as "Lady of the Camellias"</i> (18 February 2005)	By Alexandre Dumas-fils, adapted by Iurii Eremin	Iurii Eremin	Main	AI

	<i>The Naked Pioneer-Girl</i> (3 March 2005)	Mikhail Kononov, adapted by Ksenia Dragunskaja from the novel, with participation by Kirill Serebrennikov, based on novel of the same name	Kirill Serebrennikov	Other Stage	A
	<i>Flight of the Black Swallows, or Historical Episodes at a 40-degree Angle</i> (25 April 2005)	Peter Khotianov and Inga Garuchava	Vladimir Ageev	Other Stage	P
2005-2006	<i>America. Part 2.</i> (1 April 2006)	Biljana Srbljanović, translated by Sergei Girin	Nina Chusova	Main	PI
	<i>Five Evenings</i> (11 April 2006)	Alexander Volodin	Aleksander Ogarev	Main	R
2006-2007	<i>Antony and Cleopatra. A Version</i> (2 October 2006)	By William Shakespeare, adapted by Oleg Bogaev and Kirill Serebrennikov	Kirill Serebrennikov	Main	AI
	<i>Hare / A Love Story</i> (13 April 2007)	Nikolai Kolyada	Galina Volchek	Main	P
	<i>Maleine</i> (27 May 2007)	Vladimir Ageev, based on two plays by Maurice Maeterlinck <i>Princess Maleine</i> and <i>Joyzelle</i>	Vladimir Ageev	Main	AI
2007-2008	<i>Woe from Wit</i> (9 December 2007)	Alexander Griboedov	Rimas Tuminas	Main	R
	<i>Would you like to Stroll Arm-in-Arm? 75 minutes of love,</i>	A compilation of Soviet and Russian poems	Igor' Kvasha	Other Stage	O

	<p><i>poetry and music</i> (9 February 2008)</p> <p><u><i>Three Sisters</i></u> (26 March 2008)</p> <p><i>The Barrel Organ</i> (26 May 2008)</p>	<p>Anton Chekhov</p> <p>Andrei Platonov</p>	<p>Production concept by Galina Volchek, directed by Aleksandr Savost'ianov</p> <p>Mikhail Efremov</p>	<p>Main</p> <p>Main</p>	<p>R</p> <p>R</p>
2008-2009	<p><u><i>Gaft's Dream.</i></u> <u><i>Retold by Roman Viktiuk</i></u> (30 January 2009)</p> <p><u><i>Murlin Murlo</i></u> (25 March 2009)</p> <p><u><i>God of Carnage</i></u> (21 May 2009)</p>	<p>Valentin Gaft</p> <p>Nikolai Kolyada</p> <p>Yasmina Reza, translated by Dmitrii Bykov</p>	<p>Roman Viktiuk</p> <p>Concept by Galina Volchek, directed by Sergei Garmash</p> <p>Sergei Puskepalis</p>	<p>Main</p> <p>Main</p> <p>Main</p>	<p>P</p> <p>R</p> <p>PI</p>
2009-2010	<p><u><i>Dzinrikisia:⁸ A Moscow Story</i></u> (17 October 2009)</p> <p><u><i>Gentlemen</i></u> (5 February 2010)</p> <p><u><i>The Good Woman</i></u> (23 February 2010)</p>	<p>Aleksandr Galin</p> <p>Aleksandr Sumbatov-luzhin</p> <p>Sergei Naidenov</p>	<p>Aleksandr Galin</p> <p>Evgenii Kamen'kovich</p> <p>Ekaterina Polovtseva</p>	<p>Main</p> <p>Main</p> <p>Other Stage</p>	<p>P</p> <p>R</p> <p>R</p>

⁸ Dzinrikisia is the transliteration of a Japanese word meaning rickshaw.

2010-2011	<u><i>Happy New...</i></u> (25 December 2010)	Rodion Ovchinnikov	Rodion Ovchinnikov	Main	P
	<u><i>Enemies: A Love Story</i></u> (5 February 2011)	Isaac Bashevis Singer, adapted for the stage by Evgenii Ar'e and Roy Chen	Evgenii Ar'e	Main	AI
	<u><i>Serezha</i></u> (1 March 2011)	Anton Chekhov, adapted for the stage by Kirill Vytovtov based on two stories <i>The Literature Teacher</i> and <i>Fear</i>	Kirill Vytovtov	Other Stage	A
	<u><i>The Time of Women</i></u> (18 April 2011)	Elena Chizhova, adapted by Egor Peregudov, from the novel	Egor Peregudov	Other Stage	A
2011-2012	<u><i>Gorbunov and Gorchakov</i></u> (14 October 2011)	A poem by Joseph Brodsky	Production concept by Evgenii Kamen'kovich, directed by Vera Kamyshnikova	Other Stage	A
	<u><i>Anarchy</i></u> (30 January 2012)	Mike Packer (original title <i>tHe dYsFUUnCKshOnalZ!</i>), translated by Oksana Aleshina	Garik Sukachev	Main	PI
	<u><i>Autumn Sonata</i></u> (4 March 2012)	Ingmar Bergman	Ekaterina Polovtseva	Main	RI
	<u><i>Hidden Perspective</i></u> (21 May 2012)	Donald Margulies	Evgenii Ar'e	Main	RI
2012-2013	<u><i>Genocide: A Village Story</i></u> (2 December 2012)	Vsevolod Benigsen, adapted by Kirill Vytovtov and Nana Abdrashitova, based on the novel	Kirill Vytovtov	Main	A

	<i>Emilia Galotti</i> (14 January 2013)	Gotthold Ephraim Lessing	Gabriella Tuminaite	Other Stage	RI
	<i>The Stranger</i> (15 February 2013)	Albert Camus, adapted by Ekaterina Polovtseva, based on the novel	Ekaterina Polovtseva	Other Stage	AI
	<i>An Ardent Heart</i> (26 April 2013)	Alexander Ostrovsky	Egor Peregudov	Main	R
2013-2014	<i>The Gin Game</i> (3 December 2013)	Donald L. Coburn	Galina Volchek	Main	RI
	<i>Cinderella</i> (6 April 2014)	Evgenii Shvarts	Ekaterina Polovtseva	Main	R

Case Study Three: Teatr.doc

YEAR	TITLE	WRITER(S)	DIRECTOR(S)	AUDITORIUM	TYPE
2000	N/a				
2001	N/a				
2002-2003	<i>Angels/Androids</i> (2002)	Linor Goralik, Aleksandr Gavrillov	[?]	Trekhprudnyi pereulok ¹¹	P
	<i>The Amusing God-seeking</i> (26 September 2002)	Rodion Beletskii	[?]		P
	<i>Oxygen</i> (24 October 2002) ⁹	Ivan Vyrypaev	Viktor Ryzhakov		P
	<i>The First Man</i> (2002)	Elena Isaeva	Aleksander Velikovskii		P
	<i>Crimes of Passion</i> (2002)	Galina Sin'kina ¹⁰	[?]		P

⁹ The management of Teatr.doc indicated to me that this production constituted the opening performance of Teatr.doc (Kholodova 2015), which would indicate that it must have been running from 14 February 2002, contrary to the date provided by the company's website.

¹⁰ Galina Sin'kina adopted the pseudonym Varvara Faer in subsequent productions. This play transferred from Teatr.doc to the Theatre Teatral'nyi Osobniak in 2014.

¹¹ Between 2002 and 2014, all productions were on the sole stage of the company's first venue on Trekhprudnyi pereulok – except where I have indicated otherwise.

	<i>The Big Eat</i> (14 February 2002)	Aleksander Vartanov, Ruslan Malikov	[?]		P
2003-2004	<u><i>About My Mum and About Me</i></u> (2003)	Elena Isaeva	Elena Isaeva	Theatre Teatral'nyi Osobniak ¹²	P
	<i>The War of the Moldovans for a Cardboard Box</i> (2003)	Aleksander Rodionov	Principle director: Mikhail Ugarov, directors: Ruslan Malikov, Tatiana Kopylova		P
	<i>Pitchforks</i> (2003)	Sergei Kaluzhanov	Alena Anokhina		P
	<i>Songs of the People of Moscow (Homeless.Moscow)</i> (2003)	Georg Genoux, Maksim Kurochkin, Aleksandr Rodionov	Georg Genoux		P
	<i>Norway.Today</i> (October 2003)	Igor' Bauershim	Georg Genoux		P
	<i>Survival of Leopards in the Urban Environment</i> (1 November 2003)	Ekaterina Narshi	Aglaia Romanovskaia		P
	<i>Apples of the Earth</i> (10 March 2004)	Ekaterina Narshi, Aglaia Romanovskaia	[?]		P
	<i>Sober-PR</i> (14 March 2004)	Ol'ga Darfi	Ol'ga Darfi		P
2004-2005	<i>Third-Form Alesha</i> (2004)	Elena Isaeva	Galina Sin'kina		P

¹² This play transferred from Teatr.doc to the Theatre Teatral'nyi Osobniak in 2014.

	<i>Phantom Pains</i> (2004)	Vasilii Sigarev	Irina Keruchenko		P
	<i>Manager</i> (2005)	Nikita Denisov, Ruslan Malikov	Ruslan Malikov		P
	<i>The Beauties</i> (23 March 2005)	Vladimir Zabaluev, Aleksi Zenzinov	Ol'ga Lysak		P
	<i>September.doc</i> (June 2005)	Mikhail Ugarov ¹³	Ruslan Malikov, Mikhail Ugarov		O
2005-2006	<i>Dok.tor</i> (8 November 2005), ¹⁴ 18 +	Elena Isaeva	Viktor Pankov ¹⁸		P
	<i>Six plays</i> (2006) ¹⁵	Linor Goralik, Stanislav L'vovskii	Ol'ga Lysak		P
	<i>Work Saviours at the Sea Shore</i> (2006)	Konstantin Steshik	Irina Volkova		P
	<i>Democracy.doc</i> (April 2006) ¹⁶	Devised by the actors ¹⁷	Georg Genoux		O
2006-2007	<i>Beyond The Polar Truth</i> (2006)	Iurii Klavdiev	Georg Genoux ¹⁹		P
2007-2008	<i>The Drunk Metalworker</i>	Mikhail Durnenkov	Mikhail Ugarov,		P

¹³ Teatr.doc's website describes Ugarov as the 'author of the project' [*автор проекта*], implying that he is the playwright. The writing process was in two stages. First, Gremina collected around 200 texts from the internet; second, Ugarov and the actors shaped those texts to create a production (Grigor'ev 2005: para. 5 of 10). Source: <<http://www.teatrdoc.ru/events.php?id=37>> [accessed 18 August 2016].

¹⁴ I have rendered the title as *Dr* in my translation.

¹⁵ Co-produced with the Meyerhold Centre.

¹⁶ Coproduced with the Joseph Beuys Theatre and the Institute of Cultural Politics.

¹⁷ Arman Bekenov, Nina Belenitskaia, Georg Genoux, Elena Margo, Ivan Ugarov.

¹⁸ Coproduction with the SoundDrama Studio.

¹⁹ Coproduced with the Joseph Beuys Theatre.

	(2007)		Ruslan Malikov		
	Pants (2007) ²⁰	Pavel Priazhko	Elena Nevezhina		P
	1612 (4 November 2007) ²¹	Evgenii Kazachkov, Maksim Kurochkin	Ruslan Malikov, Mikhail Ugarov		P
	<i>Rubik's Cube</i> (March 2008)	Egor Psycho ²²	Iurii Muravitskii		O
2008-2009	<i>Nikolai Nikolaevich</i> (2008)	Iuz Aleshkovskii	Vladimir Mikhel'son		P
	<i>The Sokols</i> (28 December 2008)	Valerii Pecheikin	Elena Reiss		P
	<u><i>Medium: The Chosen One</i></u> (2009)	Aleksei Iudnikov	[?]		P
	<i>The Extermination</i> (13 February 2009)	Kseniia Dragunskaiia	Ol'ga Lysak		P
	<i>Life Is Beautiful</i> (9 March 2009) ²³	Pavel Priazhko	Marat Gatsalov, Mikhail Ugarov		P
	Exhibits (9 March 2009) ²⁴	Viacheslav Durnenkov	Aleksei Zhiriakov		P
2009-2010	<u><i>I'm Afraid of Love</i></u> (11 January 2010), 18 +	Elena Isaeva	Grigorii Kataev		P
	<i>The Killer</i> (February 2010)	Aleksandr Molchanov	Mikhail Egorov		P
					P

²⁰ Coproduced with CDR.

²¹ Coproduced with Theatre Ad Spectatores (Poland).

²² This is a rapper's stage name.

²³ Coproduced with the CDR.

²⁴ Coproduced with the CDR.

	<i>Eh</i> (20 May 2010)	Irina Vilkova, Alekssei Litvinenko	Marat Gatsalov		
	<u><i>One Hour Eighteen</i></u> (4 June 2010) ²⁵	Elena Gremina	Mikhail Ugarov		P
2010- 2011	<u><i>Castina</i></u> (16 November 2010)	German Grekov with the participation of Iurii Muravitskii	Igor' Stam		P
	<i>Alconovella</i> (13 February 2011)	Liubov' Mul'menko	Valeriia Surkova		P
	<u><i>Light My Fire</i></u> (20 March 2011)	Sasha Denisova	Iurii Muravitskii		P
	<u><i>Noise</i></u> (11 April 2011)	Ekaterina Bondarenko	Talgat Batalov		P
	<i>89-93: Squats</i> (25 April 2011)	Nana Grinshtein, original idea by Iulia Ovchinnikova, Ivan Lebedev, Vsevolod Lisovskii	Ruslan Malikov		P
	<u><i>The Gods Have Fallen and All Safety Gone</i></u> (May 2011?)	Selma Dimitrijevic	Viktor Ryzhakov		PI
	<i>Beasts</i> (22 June 2011)	Timofei Usikov	Timofei Usikov		P
2011- 2012	<u><i>Offended Feelings</i></u> (25 September 2011)	Aleksandr Rodionov, Ekaterina Bondarenko, Il'ia Fal'kovskii	Anastasiia Patlai		P

²⁵ In 2012, the production was given a new title, *One Hour 18 – 2012*. This reflects the fact that it is an updated version of the script, based on the original version which was staged in 2010.

<i>Society of Anonymous Artists</i> (11 October 2008)	Devised by the actors ²⁹	Georg Genoux ³¹		O
<i>Office F-ing Around</i> (12 November 2011)	Devised by the actors	Directed by the actors ³²		O
<i>Transmitter: Favourites</i> (? November 2011?)	Aleksei Iudnikov	Aleksei Iudnikov		P
<i>Two in Your Home</i> (21 December 2011) ²⁶	Elena Gremina	Mikhail Ugarov		P
<i>The Soldier</i> (23 December 2011)	Pavel Priazhko	Dmitrii Volkostrellov ³³		P
<i>Nilka and Vilka²⁷ at the Kindergarten</i> (? May 2012?), 4 +	Elena Gremina	Talgat Batalov, Mikhail Ugarov		P
<i>BerlusPutin</i> (February 2012), 18 +	Dario Fo and Franca Rame (original title: <i>L'Animalo Bicefalo</i>), adapted by Varvara Faer	Varvara Faer		AI
<i>The Pagans</i> (March 2012), 18 +	Anna Iablonskaia	Valeriia Surkova		P
<i>Uzbek</i> (14 May 2012)	Talgat Batalov	Talgat Batalov ³⁴		P
<i>Alaska</i> (16 May 2012)	Gibran	Main director Mikhail		PI

²⁶ The premiere was in Helsinki, Finland, at the Balticcircle Festival on 19 November 2011; the date indicated here is the Moscow premiere.

²⁷ These are made-up names which derive from the verbs 'to whinge' and 'to whine' – so they appear to mean 'the little girl who whinges' and 'the little girl who whines'.

²⁹ Arman Bekenov, Nina Belenitskaia, Mikhail Kaluzhskii, Verochka Polozkova.

³¹ Coproduction with the Joseph Beuys Theatre.

³² Coproduced by the OB Group.

³³ Co-produced by Theatre-Post (St. Petersburg).

³⁴ Co-produced by the Sakharov Centre and the Joseph Beuys Theatre

	<i>Akyn-Opera</i> ²⁸ (16 September 2012)	Ramirez Portela Original idea by Vsevolod Lisovskii, devised by the actors ³⁰	Ugarov, director Igor Stam' Directed by the actors		O
2012-2013	<i>Kidnap</i> (29 September 2012) <i>9 months / 40 weeks</i> (20 October 2012) <i>Tolstoi – Stolypin. A private correspondence</i> (1 March 2013), 18 + <i>Viatlag</i> (May 2013), 16 +	Konstantin Kozhevnikov, Ekaterina Bondarenko Aleksei Kulichkov and Sergei Shevchenko Ol'ga Mikhailova The 1942 diaries of Artur Stradin'sha	Aleksei Bogachuk Aleksei Kulichkov and Sergei Shevchenko, produced by Elena Rozhkova Vladimir Mirzoev Boris Pavlovich ³⁵	Various ³⁶	P P O
2013-2014	<i>Gogol: Home Work</i> (21 September 2013), 7 + <i>Quantum Leap</i> (3 October 2013)	Devised by the actors, based on short stories by Nikolai Gogol Concept by Vsevolod Lisovskii, based on improvisations	Aleksei Bogachuk Aleksei Rozin		O O

²⁸ *Akyn* is a word from Central Asia indicating a story-teller who uses improvisations, songs and poetry.

³⁰ Pokiz Kurbunashenova, Adzham Chakoboev, Abdulmamad Bekmamadov.

³⁵ A co-production with the Drama Laboratory in Kirov.

³⁶ This play runs at Teatr.doc but is also performed in site-specific locations such as building sites, car washes and hostels for migrants.

		by the actors, in response to audience participation			
	<u><i>150 Reasons Not To Defend Your Motherland</i></u> , (1 November 2013), 12 +	Elena Gremina	Elena Gremina		P
	<u><i>Akyn-Opera 2</i></u> (24 November 2013)	Aleksei Kulichkov, Sergei Shevchenko, based on stories from the audience	Aleksei Kulichkov, Sergei Shevchenko		P
	<i>Hug me</i> (22 January 2014)	Konstantin Kozhevnikov	Aleksei Bogachuk		P

Case study Four: The Kolyada-Theatre

YEAR	TITLE	WRITER(S)	DIRECTOR(S)	AUDITORIUM	TYPE ³⁷
2001-2002	<i>Romeo and Juliet</i> [?]	William Shakespeare	Nikolai Kolyada	Sverdlovsk Academic Theatre of Drama	RI
	<i>Persian Lilac</i> [?]	Nikolai Kolyada	Nikolai Kolyada	Sverdlovsk Academic Theatre of Drama	P
2002-2003	<i>Demobilization Train</i> [?]	Aleksandr Arkhipov	Nikolai Kolyada	Teatron	P
2003-2004	<i>La Celestina</i> [?]	Fernando de Roja, adapted by Nikolai Kolyada	Nikolai Kolyada	Teatron	AI

³⁷ Please see the Key located below the databox for an explanation of the acronyms.

2004-2005	<i>Carmen is alive</i> [?]	Nikolai Kolyada	Nikolai Kolyada	Basement, 69 Lenin Avenue	P
	<i>The Phoenix</i> [?]	Nikolai Kolyada	Nikolai Kolyada	Basement, 69 Lenin Avenue	P
	<i>Claustrophobia</i> , [?], 18+	Konstantin Kostenko	Nikolai Kolyada	Boiler Room, 69 Lenin Avenue	P
	<i>Madame Rosa</i> [?]	Emile Azar (original title <i>La Vie Devant Soi</i>), adapted by Nikolai Kolyada	Nikolai Kolyada	Basement, 69 Lenin Avenue	AI
	<i>The Government Inspector</i> (25 February 2005), 18 +	Nikolai Gogol adapted by Nikolai Kolyada and the actors	Nikolai Kolyada	Basement, 69 Lenin Avenue	R
	<i>Tutankhamun</i> (26 June 2005), 18 +	Nikolai Kolyada	Nikolai Kolyada	Basement, 69 Lenin Avenue	P
2005-2006	<i>Tenderness</i> (7 September 2005), 18 +	Nikolai Kolyada	Nikolai Kolyada	Basement, 69 Lenin Avenue	P
	<i>Amigo</i> (3 December 2005), 18 +	Nikolai Kolyada	Nikolai Kolyada	Basement, 69 Lenin Avenue	P
	<i>The Surveyor</i> (22 April 2006), 16 +	Nikolai Kolyada	Nikolai Kolyada	Basement, 69 Lenin Avenue	P
	<i>Old Lady Hare</i> (28 June 2006), 18 +	Nikolai Kolyada	Nikolai Kolyada	Basement, 69 Lenin Avenue	P
2006-2007	<i>Bouquet</i> (26 November 2006), 18 +	Nikolai Kolyada	Nikolai Kolyada	Mansion, 20 Turgenev Street	P
	<i>Dolores Claiborne</i> (15 December	Stephen King, adapted by	Aleksandr Sysoev	Mansion, 20	AI

	2006), 18 + <i>Hamlet</i> (26 June 2007)	Aleksandr Sysoev and the actors ³⁸ William Shakespeare	Nikolai Kolyada	Turgenev Street Mansion, 20 Turgenev Street	RI
2007- 2008	<i>The Chicken</i> (29 August 2007), 18 + <i>The Marriage</i> (3 December 2007) <i>King Lear</i> (19 May 2008)	Nikolai Kolyada Nikolai Gogol William Shakespeare	Nikolai Kolyada Nikolai Kolyada Nikolai Kolyada	Mansion, 20 Turgenev Street Mansion, 20 Turgenev Street Mansion, 20 Turgenev Street	P R RI
2008- 2009	<i>The Star with No Name</i> (1 November 2008) <i>The Rejoicing Group</i> (3 December 2008), 18 + <i>A Streetcar Named Desire</i> (3 March 2009), 18 +	Mihail Sebastian Nikolai Kolyada Tennessee Williams	Nikolai Kolyada Nikolai Kolyada Nikolai Kolyada	Mansion, 20 Turgenev Street Mansion, 20 Turgenev Street Mansion, 20 Turgenev Street	AI P RI
2009- 2010	<i>The Cherry Orchard</i> (4 December 2009) <i>The Girl On The Front Line</i> (31 March 2010), 18 + <i>Comprehensively</i> (15 June 2010)	Anton Chekhov Anna Baturina Nikolai Kolyada	Nikolai Kolyada Nikolai Kolyada Nikolai Kolyada	Mansion, 20 Turgenev Street Mansion, 20 Turgenev Street Mansion, 20	R P P

³⁸ Source: Email from Elena Getsevich, Project Co-ordinator at the Kolyada-Theatre, to this author, 24 March 2014.

				Turgenev Street	
2010-2011	<u>Two Plus Two</u> (27 September 2010)	Nikolai Kolyada	Nikolai Kolyada	Mansion, 20 Turgenev Street	P
	<u>Natasha's Dream</u> (4 December 2010), 18 +	Iaroslava Pulinovich	Concept by Nikolai Kolyada, directed by Oleg Bilik	Mansion, 20 Turgenev Street	P
	<u>Boris Godunov</u> (15 March 2011)	Alexander Pushkin	Nikolai Kolyada	Mansion, 20 Turgenev Street	R
	<u>Lady Chanel</u> (30 May 2011), 18 +	Nikolai Kolyada	Nikolai Kolyada	Mansion, 20 Turgenev Street	P
2011-2012	<u>The Moon and The Transformer</u> (3 September 2011), 18 +	Andrei Krupin	Oleg Bilik and Aleksandr Vakhov	Mansion, 20 Turgenev Street	P
	<u>The Girl of My Dreams</u> (25 February 2012), 18 +	Nikolai Kolyada	Aleksandr Sysoev	Mansion, 20 Turgenev Street	P
	<u>Mascarade</u> (20 March 2012), 18 +	Mikhail Lermontov	Nikolai Kolyada	Mansion, 20 Turgenev Street	R
	<u>A Jar of Sugar</u> (12 June 2012)	Taia Sapurina	Oleg Bilik and Aleksandr Vakhov, Nikolai Kolyada as supervising director	Mansion, 20 Turgenev Street	P
	<u>The Large Soviet Encyclopaedia</u> (22 June 2012)	Nikolai Kolyada	Nikolai Kolyada	Mansion, 20 Turgenev Street	P

2012-2013	<u><i>A Servant to Two Masters</i></u> (11 October 2012)	Carlo Goldoni	Nikolai Kolyada	Mansion, 20 Turgenev Street	RI
	<u><i>Lessons of the Heart</i></u> (4 December 2012), 18 + ³⁹	Irina Vas'kovskaia	Nikolai Kolyada	Mansion, 20 Turgenev Street	P
2013-2014	<u><i>Let's Play Molière!</i></u> (?), 18 +	Molière (original title <i>The School for Wives</i>), adapted by Nikolai Kolyada and the actors ⁴⁰	Nikolai Kolyada	Mansion, 20 Turgenev Street	AI
	<u><i>Dead Souls</i></u> (27 November 2013), 18 +	Nikolai Gogol	Nikolai Kolyada	Mansion, 20 Turgenev Street	R
	<u><i>The Concentration Campers</i></u> (9 December 2013), 18 +	Valerii Shergin	Alexander Vakhov	Mansion, 20 Turgenev Street	P
	<u><i>Gran and Another way</i></u> (30 March 2014)	Iulia Tupikina and Svetlana Bazhenova	Nikolai Kolyada	Mansion, 20 Turgenev Street	P
	<u><i>Violin, Tambourine and Iron</i></u> (14 September 2014)	Nikolai Kolyada	Nikolai Kolyada	Malachite Hall, Former cinema, 97 Lenin Avenue	P
	<u><i>Thumbelina</i></u> (20 December 2014), 3+	Nikolai Kolyada	Nikolai Kolyada	Malachite Hall, Former cinema, 97 Lenin Avenue	A

Productions for children at the Kolyada-Theatre website (no date of premiere indicated)

Dates unknown	<i>Cinderella</i>	Charles Perrault	Nikolai Kolyada		RI
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³⁹ This production is combines two plays by Irina Vas'kovskaia, *Lessons of the Heart* and *Russian Death*. Ibid.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

	<i>Carlsson Returned</i>	Astrid Lindgren, adapted by Nikolai Kolyada	Nikolai Kolyada		AI
	<i>Old Man Khottabych</i>	Lazar Lagin, adapted by Nikolai Kolyada	Nikolai Kolyada		AI
	<i>Russian Fairytales</i> 3 +	Tat'iana Shiraeva, based on classic Russian fairytales	Nikolai Kolyada		A
	<i>Little Miss Piggy-Tails</i> ⁴¹ 3 +	Based on a classic Russian fairytale	Nikolai Kolyada		AI
	<i>Mr. Frost</i> ⁴² 3 +	Nikolai Kolyada, based on a Russian fairytale	Nikolai Kolyada		A
	<i>The Cat, the Blackbird and the Rooster</i> 5 +	Based on several Russian fairytales Aleksandr Afanas'ev, adapted by Nikolai Kolyada Nikolai Kolyada	Nikolai Kolyada		A
	<i>Fin the Red Falcon</i> 3 +	Kornei Chukovskii, adapted by Nikolai Kolyada	Nikolai Kolyada		A

⁴¹ Original title: *Kroshechka-Khavroshechka*. Literally, this means 'the little Khavroshechka girl'. However, the girl's name sounds like the old Slavonic word 'khavron'ia' meaning a pig; in other words, the girl's name suggests by association that she may have a naughty or 'piggish' nature.

⁴² Original title: *Morozko*

	<i>Wash-'em-Dry</i> ⁴³ 0 +	Based on a classic Russian fairytale	Nikolai Kolyada		A
	<i>The Frog Princess</i> 5 +	Nikolai Kolyada	Nikolai Kolyada		A
	<i>Alia's Little Flower</i> , 5 +	Iaroslava Pulinovich, based on a fairytale	Nikolai Kolyada		P
	<i>The Gilded Foreheads</i> 6 +	[?]	Nikolai Kolyada		A

⁴³ Original title: *Moidodyr*

APPENDIX III: THE RUSSIAN-LANGUAGE TEXTS OF THE FOUR PLAYS SELECTED FOR THIS DOCTORAL PROJECT

Introduction

Below, I have reproduced the four plays – translated for this doctoral project – in Russian, in the same formatting as I received them from the playwrights. In the case of *The War Has Not Yet Started*, I have left the scenes in the same sequence as I encountered them in 2015 (prior to the Plymouth production), while adding the four new scenes in the order in which I received them from the playwright in February and March 2016.

PLAY ONE

ДОС.ТОР

(Записки провинциального врача)

ДЕЙСТВУЮЩИЕ ЛИЦА:

ХИРУРГ

ЖЕНЩИНА

МУЖЧИНА

Женщин и мужчин может быть и больше – на усмотрение режиссёра. Они играют всё «окружение» хирурга.

На сцене изначально – все действующие лица.

СИЛА ПРИТЯЖЕНИЯ

ХИРУРГ. Я, когда закончил институт, поехал по распределению в Калугу. И сослали меня в деревню такую, называется она Борятино. На границе с Брянской губернией, то есть, это облученный после Чернобыля район. Сослали туда. Информации-то никакой не было. Врачи все оттуда разбежались. А у меня: институт заканчиваешь – год интернатуры. Врач-интерн. Ну, то есть, врач, но вроде как не совсем врач. Салага.

И такая замечательная была больничка. Там районный центр где-то дворов на тридцать крестьянских. Развалюшка. Я уехал, а у меня жена в это время как раз должна была рожать в Астрахани. А связи вообще никакой. Связь только по рации. Приехал туда, значит, по сугробам. По грудь – снега. Человек южный, не привыкший к этому всему. Добрался до этой больницы, зашел в ординаторскую. Сидит мужик какой-то. Он потом оказался заместителем главного врача по лечебной работе. Он говорит

МУЖЧИНА. Ты кто?

ХИРУРГ. Я говорю: Я хирург.

МУЖЧИНА. Как зовут?

ХИРУРГ. Андрей

МУЖЧИНА. В преферанс играешь?

ХИРУРГ. Да

МУЖЧИНА. А-а! Четвертый!

ХИРУРГ. В общем, они там сидели и ждали преферансиста. И началась достаточно интересная и насыщенная жизнь. Спал я на рентгеновском столе. Потом мне выделили палату. А я уже так привык к этому рентгеновскому столу, что перестраивался к нормальной кровати... Потом я в палате остаток прожил. Это было, наверное, недели три. Командировка такая. Еда, конечно... больничная.

МУЖЧИНА. То есть, суп из селедки – соленой. Кофейный напиток из овса.

ХИРУРГ. Я первый раз в жизни там попробовал такой. Я все их спрашивал, почему вы делаете овсянку из кофе? В общем, вот так.

И один из преферансистов там был гинеколог Рома. Он был специалист по женщинам всей этой деревни. (*Женщина на сцене кокетливо активизируется*). У него такой гарем был. И его было очень трудно найти. И где-то, наверное, на третий день моего там пребывания случилась одна замечательная история. Звонок из родильного отделения:

ЖЕНЩИНА. Доктор, мы гинеколога найти не можем. Вы не можете подойти? У нас сложные роды.

ХИРУРГ. Ну, ладно. Чего. Хирург, действительно. Пошел. Прихожу. Значит, такой зал – секционную напоминает. Бетонный пол. Стоит бабушка – акушерка. На ней черный фартук клеенчатый до пола, как у мясника. Белая шапочка на голове, но вязаная. И перед ней, выпучив глаза, стоит баба беременная. Враскоряку. И тужится. Я говорю (*Женщине*): «Чего делаем?»»

ЖЕНЩИНА. Рожает.

ХИРУРГ. А чего – стоя?.. (*В зал*). И тут мне эта акушерка начинает рассказывать...

ЖЕНЩИНА. А закон тяготения ведь. Ну, все к земле должно притягиваться.

ХИРУРГ. Изумительный рассказ. Я говорю (*Женщине*): Давно?

ЖЕНЩИНА. Ну, уже часа полтора... Мы часто так рожаем, правда, не всегда успеваем ребенка поймать...

ХИРУРГ. У этой бедной беременной вылезают глаза. Ну, в общем, я ее положил на кушетку. Как, полагается. Залез туда, смотрю, а там – ягодичное предлежание. То есть, попой ребенок... А это, вообще, проблематично. А чего я знал-то там по этому акушерству? Собственно, то, что в институте цикл был, да и все. Ну, давай вспоминать. Есть такое пособие Цовьянова? – по родовспоможению. В общем, рожали мы. А у нее слабость родовой деятельности. Я ей капельницу поставил, начал стимулировать. В общем, через три часа мы родили мальчика. А сам я ждал информации от жены: родит – не родит. А связи никакой. Тяжелый ребенок был. И у педиатра сложный ребенок – с астмоидом. А педиатр – девчонка, тоже интерн, как я. Я говорю: «Срочно вызывай санавиацию». Она вызвала.

ЖЕНЩИНА. Прилетела блоха эта, вертолет со стеклянной попой – прозрачной.

ХИРУРГ. И пока эти санавиаторы бегут в больницу, я бегу в этот вертолет. Сел туда, залез и говорю: «Я отсюда не вылезу. Везите меня в Калугу». И дальше мы забрали этого ребенка и полетели. Я первый и последний раз летал на такой блохе. Кроме того, что там прозрачное дно, где я сидел... под тобой – бездна, мне ещё не хватило наушников. Я потом вибрировал еще в течение суток, ходил – ничего не слышал. Потом вышел на связь, и мама сказала, что у меня родилась дочка. Вика. 15 лет назад это было.

КАМЫЗЯК И ДЖИГЛИ-ОЛИВЕКРОНА

ХИРУРГ. Потом я вернулся в Калугу. И главный областной хирург мне сказал

МУЖЧИНА. Ну, чего? Посмотрел деревню?

ХИРУРГ. Посмотрел.

МУЖЧИНА. Вот туда и поедешь после интернатуры.

ХИРУРГ. Ну, вас на фиг.

МУЖЧИНА. Чего?

ХИРУРГ. У меня жена – музыкант, в консерватории учится. И ребенок маленький. Если высшее образование, жена – студентка ВУЗа и ребенок до полутора лет, то автоматом должны перераспределить в Астрахань.

МУЖЧИНА. А-а... (*Усмехаясь*). Ну-ну.

ХИРУРГ (*В зал*). Потом четыре месяца я искал работу. Потому что найти у нас работу очень тяжело. Маленький город Астрахань. Ну, относительно. Но свой мединститут, каждый год врачей выпускает... Нашел я работу в районной больнице. Такой есть районный центр – Камызяк называется.

ЖЕНЩИНА. Романтичное название.

ХИРУРГ. И в этой «козьей мяке» я проработал три года. Час езды на автобусе – от города, от автовокзала.

ЖЕНЩИНА. Ужасно, потому что летом этот автобус раскалялся, как жаровня. А зимой он – ледяной. Весной, осенью – по грязи. И так три года.

ХИРУРГ. Больница сама хорошая для районной – большое типовое здание пятиэтажное. Я как только туда приехал, еще не успел проработать ни дня, меня сразу послали в командировку на Кировский рыбзавод. Это достаточно далеко от Камызяка, а там ушел в отпуск хирург. А я еще – ни связи, ни структуры... Ну, поехал туда. Приезжаю.

ЖЕНЩИНА. Страшно?

ХИРУРГ. Страшно – не страшно, фиг его знает. Больше, конечно, страшила неизведанность. Ну, дождался я своего часа. На третий день после приезда сию, вбегает водила со «скорой»

МУЖЧИНА. Андрей Георгич, там человека трактор переехал!

ХИРУРГ. А на фига ему Андрей Георгич-то?

МУЖЧИНА. Не, он живой еще!

ХИРУРГ. Ну, ладно. Побежал я, сел в эту «скорую». Приезжаем. Межа распаханная. Стоит трактор, и в бороздах – человек. Выхожу к человеку. У человека одной ноги практически нет – месиво. Вторая тоже – на Арзамас смотрит. Ну, каша.

МУЖЧИНА. Но он в сознании.

ХИРУРГ. Шок, конечно, глубоченный. Пульса нет. Давления нет. (*Трактористу*). Как звать?

МУЖЧИНА. Коля Механтьев.

ХИРУРГ. На всю жизнь запомнил – Механтьев Коля. Мужуку лет пятьдесят, около пятидесяти.

МУЖЧИНА. Тракторист. Крепко пьющий. С утра поправился, как некоторые... И... он трактор на автомат поставил, а ноги соскользнули, и трактор его по грязи прямо переехал. Свой трактор.

ХИРУРГ. В общем, чего делать? Жгуты наложил, там, наркотики. Взяли мы его с этим водилой, загрузили в машину – и в больницу. Приехали в больницу, выгрузили. Положили прямо около операционной. А дальше получилась интересная штука. В общем, там как бы работают какие-то врачи. Главный врач, терапевты всякие. Ну, они уже опытный состав. Кто – больше, кто – меньше, я-то пацан вообще. А они такой театр с этим Механтьевым организовали и стоят – смотрят, чего я делать буду. А хирург в отпуске, и я за него. Там, правда, сестра классная была, постовая сестра. Она вписалась быстро, начала мне помогать.

В общем, институт, интернатура. Реанимацией как таковой я не занимался практически. Все болячки, через которые я проходил, была служба анестезиологическая. Шашкой махать-то меня отец научил. У меня отец – хирург. У меня четыре поколения в семье врачей. У нас в городе улица есть имени хирурга Лычманова Николая Георгиевича. А я его внучатый племянник. Лихорадочно начал вспоминать – чего я помню. Гормоны... мормоны... две капельницы. Спасая, стало быть. Ну, кое-как я ему давление до 70-80 поднял. В это время главный врач связался по радиации с заведующим отделением в ЦРБ. А наша участковая больница – ступенькой ниже. Ну, вот.

МУЖЧИНА. На рацию!

ХИРУРГ. Да. Слушаю.

МУЖЧИНА. Чего у тебя?

ХИРУРГ (*в зал*). Говорю, так и так, такая ситуация.

МУЖЧИНА. Ну, Андрей, могу тебя обрадовать. У нас тут анестезиолог уже занят на операции – больной на столе лежит с трубой. То есть, он приехать не может. Давай кувыркайся под местной анестезией.

ХИРУРГ. Нормально. Местная анестезия – новокаин, а он снижает давление.

ЖЕНЩИНА. А тут и так давления нет. Санавиацию вызывать?

ХИРУРГ. Они пока долетят до Камызяка – это часа полтора. Надо делать, конечно... Вот. Грузите на стол.

Загрузили этого Колю Механтьева на стол. А мне же надо культю формировать! Там одной ноги нету... Надо сделать культю, чтоб потом протез можно было... Ну, как-то хотя бы. Пошел посмотреть инструменты. Все столики перерыл, пилы ни одной нет – кость пилить. Нашел кусочек. Есть

такая проволочная пила – называется Джигли-Оливекрона, такая тоненькая проволочная пила. Нашел фрагмент этой пилы. Кусочек нашел ее, ржавый такой. (*Женщине*). Всё?

ЖЕНЩИНА. Больше вообще никаких пил нет.

ХИРУРГ. Ну, ладно, давайте замачивайте, стерилизуйте. Хоть этот шмоток – на зажимах буду чего-то пилить. Ладно.

(*В зал*). Пошел мыться на операцию. А руки, по старинке, нашатырным спиртом. Это очень долго – в двух тазах. Уходит где-то, наверное, минут восемь на обработку рук. Я помылся, иду в операционную, мне навстречу санитарка идет, и – за руки меня

ЖЕНЩИНА (*проходя мимо и отстраняя, словно в узком коридоре, хирурга за руки*). Доктор, подождите.

ХИРУРГ (*ей вслед*). Твою мать!

Пошел заново мыться. Ну, помылся. Подхожу к столу. В этот момент операционная сестра чихнула и вытерла нос рукой. (*Женщина это делает*). Так, говорю: «Давно вы операционная сестра?»

ЖЕНЩИНА. Да меня только начал учить хирург, который в отпуск ушел, а так я постовая.

ХИРУРГ (*вздыхая*). Иди опять мойся. (*В зал*). Ну, в степь бежать хочется, забыв об этом всем. Ладно. Начали операцию. Опирую. Экономно вколочу новокаин. На контроле давление – 70-80. Он калякает, в сознание полной... Алкоголь, короче. То есть он шок проскочил.

МУЖЧИНА. А, отлично, делай, чего угодно – как бог на душу положит. Главное, буду жить.

ХИРУРГ (*в зал*). В общем, пилю я кость, где-то две трети удалось пропилю. И у меня в прах эта пила рассыпается. Ну, чего – хоть зубами грызи. Сил-то мало. Хорошо, я ее на две трети успел распилить. Я этот шмоток кости взял да отломил. Но кость – там особенно не больно, просто неприятно. Ему по фигу. Ну, ладно. Сформировал культю. Вторую ногу сильно тормозить не стал. Лонгету наложил – гипсовую. Вторая нога спаслась. Ну, там, множественные переломы оскольчатые – потом уже оперировали. Я просто гипс положил. Сейчас уже ковыряться нельзя, потому что он просто не перенесет. Но надо лить что-то серьезное. Капать. Ну, о крови речь не идет. Хотя бы плазму.

ЖЕНЩИНА. Можно нашукать доноров.

ХИРУРГ. Но кровь должна по инструкции обследоваться полностью. А где я ее буду обследовать? (*В зал*). Прямое переливание сейчас как бы не практикуется. Нашел я фабричную сухую плазму. Но надо определить группу крови клиента. Я говорю: «Где у вас эти... сыворотки. На группу крови?»

ЖЕНЩИНА. В холодильнике.

ХИРУРГ. Ну, уже хорошо, хоть в холодильнике.

Женщина приносит, подаёт сыворотки, он смотрит.

ХИРУРГ. Они уже полгода, как просрочены. Твою мать!

ЖЕНЩИНА. Что же делать? (*Смотрит большими испуганными глазами*).

ХИРУРГ (*в зал*). Ну, в общем, чего? Я этими тухлыми сыворотками на свой страх и риск определял группу крови. Пока плазму капал, у меня, пардон за нюанс, яички в животе были... есть такой кремастерный рефлекс – от страха. Я сидел, думал – помрет, а это, вообще, кутузка. Потому что другую группу крови перелить – это самое поганое, что может быть.

ЖЕНЩИНА. А не переливать?

ХИРУРГ. Помер бы точно. Проще – убить на меже.

Одним словом, три дня я над ним прыгал и скакал. И когда я вывел его из тяжелого состояния, он стал транспортабелен, я перевел его туда – в ЦРБ. А когда я через месяц сам вернулся в ЦРБ – с этого рыбзавода, он оказался в моей палате. Я потом занимался его второй ногой. Оформлял его на протезирование. И вот этот Коля Механтьев – три года я там еще проработал, – он три года ко мне приезжал на все праздники, спасибо говорил...

И спустя какое-то время я прочитал у Булгакова «Полотенце с петухом». Там ситуация – один в один. Только там девушка была, а здесь Коля Механтьев. Это впадет вообще, один в один. Вот по переживанию, по всему ужасу молодого врача. Потом там тоже ситуация ампутации... Ничего не меняется.

ФИЛОСОФСКАЯ ИСТОРИЯ

Мужчины, может быть, выпивают и закусывают, организовав небольшой стол.

ХИРУРГ. Это для меня философская такая история... Дежури́м. Ночь-полночь. А поскольку районная больница, дежурит один хирург и анестезиолог. По «скорой» звонок –

МУЖЧИНА-САНИТАР. Везут ножевое. Только, Андрей Георги́ч, там что-то, в общем, нехорошее. Вы выйдите на улицу, к машине.

ХИРУРГ. Ну, ладно. Вышел. Курю. Подъезжает «скорая». (*Мужчине*). Где клиент?

МУЖЧИНА-САНИТАР. Там.

ХИРУРГ (*в зал*). В машину заглядываю – лежит мужик под бушлатом каким-то, мордой вниз. (*Мужчине*). А чего в таком интересном положении транспортируем?

МУЖЧИНА-САНИТАР. А вы бушлат снимите.

ХИРУРГ. Я, значит, снимаю бушлат – у него весь кишечник на спине. Ни хрена себе!

(*Возвращаясь к столу, мужчине-анестезиологу*). Значит, ситуация в чем? Как бы сразу обрисовываю. Ну, то, что успел разведать. (*В зал*). Называется «сбор анамнеза». (*Мужчине*). В общем, мужик. Хороший мужик, тихий пьяница. Добрый очень и милый. Имеет жену (*в зал*), которая, потом как выяснилось на следующий день, наша анестезистка. (*Мужчине*). И двух дочек. Младшая, значит, дочка (достаточно рослая, не в папу, а как бы в маму) пятнадцати лет – вот она, собственно, все и произвела. То есть они его били, все эти бабы – по очереди.

МУЖЧИНА-АНЕСТЕЗИОЛОГ. А он пил.

ХИРУРГ. Ну, да. Он был очень тихий и смирный мужичок, но избиваемый регулярно домашними женщинами.

МУЖЧИНА-АНЕСТЕЗИОЛОГ. В строгости его держали.

ХИРУРГ. И, в общем, в этот день он пришел пьяненький. А дочка взяла тесак кухонный вот с таким лезвием, и пиканула его в спину. Вот. Разрез достаточно широкий... И через этот разрез вывалились кишки на спину, то есть через поясницу.

(*В зал*). Ну, мы его сразу в операционную. А там такой еще смешной нюанс. Значит, в таких больницах мужики не идут в санитары. Ну, копеечные оклады. В основном, женщины. А операционная на втором этаже. Лифтов нет – двухэтажный домик. И по лестнице на носилках клиентов на операцию и после операции, если нужно в реанимацию, которая на первом этаже, носят хирург и анестезиолог. Развлекуха.

То есть поработал – поноси. Очень хорошо. Вот мы, значит, с анестезиологом – ну, там еще водила еще со «скорой» помогал – подняли его в операционную. Анестезиолог, классный мужик, Сергей Михалыч. Опытный очень дядька, умница. Чего делать? Кишки на спине. Практически весь тонкий кишечник. И дырок в нем восемь. Из них дерьмо течет. Все это в грязи. Ну, она ударила – у него кишки выпали – и все. Но там другая проблема – там широкий мышечный слой на пояснице, очень массивный. И кишки в этой ране ущемились. И они уже начинают синеть. Время какое экспозиции, с момента травмы – неизвестно. Но я вижу, что время уходит. Он просто омертвевает – кишечник. Весь кишечник можно конечно теоретически убрать, но практически – это «отстой». Мы его кладем на живот на операционный стол. (*Мужчине-анестезиологу*). Михалыч, надо чего-то быстро делать, чтобы кишки вправить.

(*В зал*). А для того, чтобы мне их вправить, надо релаксацию мышцам создать, то есть ввести препарат, который мышцы расслабляет. Но при этом остановится дыхание, значит, надо его заинтубировать – трубку ему поставить в трахею. А клиент мордой вниз. Попробуй ему эту трубку засунь. В общем, я говорю, Михалыч, делай чего хочешь, колдуй, как хочешь, трубу суй, я пока дырки зашиваю.

(*В зал*). Я, значит, пополоскал кишки антисептиками. И, даже не одеваясь – только перчатки надел, собственно, руки помыв – я эти дырки на кишках хотя бы одним рядом швов зашиваю. Моя задача, чтоб дерьмо не текло из дыр. Я, значит, зашиваю эти восемь дырок. Я не знаю, как Михалыч, он – колдун, но ему удалось воткнуть трубку мордой вниз. Пока я эти дырки зашил. Он его заинтубировал. Тогда мы его уже развернули на спину, я сделал ему ЛАПАРОТОМИЮ, в смысле, живот разрезал. Захожу туда, а там все интактно, потому что все вывалилось наружу. Соответственно, кроме этих восьми дырок в кишечнике, которые я зашил, уже ничего не было. Ну, я помыл еще раз уже хорошо кишечник, наложил второй ряд швов. Ну и все. То есть, Михалыч расслабил мышцы, а я кишки пропихнул. Жить будет.

МУЖЧИНА-АНЕСТЕЗИОЛОГ (вытирая пот). Ну, значит, все. Переводим в реанимацию его на носилочках? Вдвоем.

ХИРУРГ. (*В зал*). С утра приходит анестезистка – жена.

ЖЕНЩИНА-АНЕСТЕЗИСТКА (*махнув рукой*). А, да на нем как на собаке все заживет. Все хорошо!

ХИРУРГ (*в зал*). Ну, естественно, он написал «отказку», что он к дочке претензий не имеет.

МУЖЧИНА-БОЛЬНОЙ. Сам упал на ножик – нетрезв был.

ХИРУРГ. Я его выписал на десятые сутки, как после аппендицита. Действительно, все зажило, как на собаке, без всяких осложнений, без пареза кишечника, перитонита.

И вот завершение ситуации. Прошел год. Он убил свою жену. Он проломил ей череп кирпичом на автобусной остановке. И я сел и задумался. И вот здесь вот самый интересный философский момент: надо было мне его спасать, не надо было спасать?

Такая вот как бы работа.

МУЖЧИНА-АНЕСТЕЗИОЛОГ. Если человеку всё время внушать: «Стань! Стань! Стань тигром!» Он в конце концов: «На-а-а!» И тогда он тебя ест!

У КАЖДОГО ХИРУРГА – СВОЁ КЛАДБИЩЕ

ХИРУРГ. Там же в Камызяке – второй год после интернатуры – я был достаточно молодым доктором. И в ночь – где-то часа в два – привозят мужика. И у него – рак гортани. Такой уже – запущенный – с прорастанием в мягкие ткани. Он уже, прошедший через онкологический диспансер, списанный на симптоматическое лечение, то есть там всё уже настолько, что радикально не вылечишь. Вот. Его привозят в асфиксии. То есть он задыхается. Синий. Там прорастание трахеи такое, что воздух не идёт. Одним словом, я понимаю, что в этой ситуации просто ничего не нужно было делать. И, наверное, сейчас – уже с опытом – я бы и не стал ничего делать. Это исход этого заболевания – ну, вот такой. Ну, я смотрю на это ужасное синюшное лицо. Там... Попытки вздохнуть... И я, чёрт меня дёрнул, попёр на трахеостому через опухолевую ткань. Пошёл. А там анатомии никакой. По сути – всё опухоль. Ну, и при подходе к трахее, как и полагается, я впоролся в яремную вену. Крупная вена – основной отток крови из мозга. И начинается такое жуткое кровотечение. Фонтан чёрной крови, вот этой гипоксичной. Я хватаю зажимами – пытаюсь как-то остановить. Это всё крошится... опухоль. Ну, вот. И, в общем, вжих, и он у меня под руками уходит.

Я стою весь в этой чёрной крови. И хочется сдохнуть. То есть ну, полное ощущение, что ты перерезал человеку глотку – и он умер. Я не знаю, чего бы было со мной, если бы не анестезиолог, очень хороший человек. Опытный. И душевный мужик. Вот. И он налил мне стакан спирта. Я его хряпнул.

МУЖЧИНА-АНЕСТЕЗИОЛОГ. Андрей, ты пойми, мотивация у тебя основная была – спасти человека. Во-вторых, ты избавил его от страшной смерти от удушья. Тут мгновенно просто – кровь ушла из мозга – и мгновенная смерть. Вот. Успокойся.

ХИРУРГ. А близкие его...

МУЖЧИНА-АНЕСТЕЗИОЛОГ. Ну, что ж, близкие. Они привезли его умирающим. Они ж понимали, что это только попытка облегчить его страдания. Не продлить агонию, а просто дать доступ воздуху.

ХИРУРГ (в зал). И через день, когда я приехал домой после дежурства, немножко так уже успокоившись... Я вошёл, снимаю с себя одежду, у меня грудь вся в этой чёрной крови. Я пошёл в душ, всё это оттирал...

Но у нас работа такая, что у каждого врача, кроме своего кладбища бывают всегда какие-то штуки, что не по злому умыслу, но происходят вот трагические ситуации. Ну, у каждого врача есть своё кладбище. Бывшие пациенты, скажем так. Бывшие пациенты. Единственное, что я могу сказать, возникает экранирование с опытом. То есть ты не умираешь с каждым своим больным и не воспринимаешь боль как свою собственную, потому что это мешает делу. Когда я делаю операцию, я абсолютно абстрагируюсь от человека, потому что если я всё время буду смотреть ему на лицо там за ширму к анестезиологу, ничего хорошего не будет. Я вижу только рану – субстрат, с которым работаю.

Это в памяти надолго остаётся. До сих пор переживаю.

СЧАСТЬЕ

ХИРУРГ. По поводу рассасывающегося шовного материала. Я, кроме того, что работаю в районной городской больнице, совмещаю ещё консультантом-хирургом в роддоме. И, в общем, в прошлом году вызывают они... Ну, ситуация... Бывает такое в жизни. Аборт, перфорация матки, и повредили кишечник. Вот. Причём достаточно прилично. Это ятрогения, это повреждение – патология, которая делается в результате там манипуляций или лечения. Такое понятие есть.

В общем, вызывают меня. А ещё до этого там не оперировал. Просто консультации были по хирургической патологии, но с операционной я контакта не имел. И смотрю – ну, так кишечник пропорот – сантиметров двадцать, надо резецировать – убирать. Вот. Ну, я моюсь, готовлю всё и... шить. Чем, говорю, шьёте?

ЖЕНЩИНА. Кетгут.

ХИРУРГ. Кетгут – рассасывающийся материал, а мне надо прошивать сосуды, то есть сосуды не рекомендуется шить кетгутом, нужен такой прочный материал. Я говорю: дайте чего-нибудь нерассасывающееся.

ЖЕНЩИНА. А у нас нет ничего.

ХИРУРГ. Как?!

ЖЕНЩИНА. А мы всё кетгуттом шьём... Но... Вообще, шёлк есть.

ХИРУРГ. Шёлк дают. Там вот такой вот канат, который – тык – и рассыпается в руках.. Сколько этому шёлку?

ЖЕНЩИНА (*пожимая плечами*). Кто его знает.

ХИРУРГ. Я: вашу машу! Чё делать? – Ничего больше! Ничего нет в операционной! Ну, у меня дома свой запас есть хорошего шовного материала. Ну, вот. Я говорю – давайте, рулите быстро ко мне домой за шовным материалом. Папе позвонили – объяснил – где чего лежит. Но мне повезло, водила только отъезжал, появился приятель мой – хирург, чего-то просто по своим делам. А у него всегда с собой, потому что он до этого тоже консультировал. Он – доктор наук. Он в курсе, что там нет ничего. Он поднялся –

МУЖЧИНА. Ага, говорит, влетел. На тебе.

ХИРУРГ. Это счастье! И вот так вот.

КАТАСТРОФА

ХИРУРГ. То есть ситуация сейчас в городе катастрофическая. Вот я работаю в больнице, которая работает как больница скорой помощи, то есть по экстренной патологии она оказывает помощь пять дней в неделю. Вот. Нагрузка, поток колоссальный. Причём, у нас как бы элитный контингент бывает редко. В основном, работаем с бомжами, с асоциальным элементом. И здесь ужасно. И здесь наличие полиса как бы символично абсолютно. Оно играет роль при госпитализации, потому что если нет страхового полиса, то три дня мы можем держать человека, а с четвёртого дня – либо он платит в больничную кассу, либо мы его должны выписать. Не финансируется. Один койкодень стоит очень дорого, и, в общем, люди просто не в состоянии это оплачивать.

Что касается.... Ну, допустим, поступает человек более-менее приличный, с семьёй, вот, хотя бы с родственниками... есть полис, нет полиса – все покупают медикаменты сами. Нет ничего. Есть больничная аптека, но в ней, в основном, закупают медикаменты дорогостоящие. Рутинные препараты, которыми мы работаем, они дешёвые, вроде как, люди могут купить сами. Ну, потому что источник финансирования жутко скудный. В основном, страховая медицина... Мы кормимся со страховых компаний. Должны, верней, кормиться. А получается что? Вот, например, сейчас есть монополист – страховая компания у нас в городе. И они вот... областная больница. Там народ поэлитней. И они официально подтверждают на каком-то заседании, что они должны нашей больнице городской определённую сумму, причём немалую. Они меняют тарифы на оказание медицинской помощи. То есть таким образом, тарифы на услуги они повышают в областной больнице и понижают в нашей. И в результате, по новым тарифам

они нашей больнице как бы уже ничего и не должны. И всё. И тема закрывается. И поэтому, грубо говоря, просто покупать не на что. Значит, а вот у меня бомж. У него нету родственника, который бы мог ему чего-то купить. Я могу ему назначить препарат, допустим, дорогостоящий антибиотик, но чтобы его назначить, мне нужно дать обоснование в истории болезни. То есть, я должен теоретически довести его до состояния, когда ему этот препарат понадобится, и уже тогда начать его лечить. Это ужасно. То есть, волосы на башке шевелятся.

Или, например. В какой-то момент у нас нечем кормить больных. Переводят на хлеб и воду. Больные пишут там жалобы какие-то, бьются за свои права, типа там, полисы есть, лекарства покупаем, вашу мать, ещё и не кормите. Значит, изыскивают внутренние резервы. Покупают курочку. Но в этот день отрубают все телефоны за неуплату. И больница, которая несёт основную экстренную помощь, оказывается без внешней связи – только внутренние телефоны. Представляете?..

То есть ситуация ужасная. С каждым днём это становится всё круче и круче. То есть если курей покупаем, то на телефоны уже денег нет. Либо то, либо то: либо по телефону поговорить, либо курицу съесть.

Ну, вот. У меня отец – старый хирург. Он проработал всю жизнь и продолжает работать. В этой же больнице, в одном отделении. Нас называют Дюма-отец, Дюма-сын. И вот он говорит

МУЖЧИНА. Если раньше я ходил с удовольствием на работу, то теперь уже всё, теперь уже просто страшно. Апатия, и не только моя, потому что всё время хуже, хуже, хуже.

ХИРУРГ. Сейчас вот этот возможный вариант лишения льгот вот этих всех. То есть компенсация будет вот такая, а льготы мы теряем – выслугу, стаж, вредность, кровяные. До фига. И ведь никто не хочет сейчас уже работать хирургом. Из молодёжи никто в хирурги не идёт. Идиотов нет. Потому что контакт с кровью. Порезался – и всё. А я работаю в обычных перчатках. И никаких кольчужных перчаток я за всю жизнь в глаза не видел. У нас есть аптечка «АнтиСПИД». Там стоит флакончик с йодом, какая-то ватка. Причём йод всегда разбавленный. Ну, ладно.

Я хотел поступать в художественное училище, но моя бабушка – психиатр – сказала, что все художники волосатые и много пьют. Она была хороший психиатр. Но мама в тайне от всех пошла со мной в училище. Мы взяли какие-то мои работы, пришли туда, а там был санитарный день. Я понял – такая карма.

Я сейчас работаю на трёх работах. В больнице оперирую, в медучилище преподаю хирургию, и консультантом в роддоме. Я зарабатываю меньше пяти тысяч рублей. На трёх работах... Жена – филолог.

ПЬЯН КАК ХИРУРГ

ХИРУРГ. Это трагическая история. Я выполнял обязанности зав.отделения, пока тот в отпуске был. И совсем солопед – молодой хирург вызывает меня.

МУЖЧИНА. Желудочное кровотечение – рвота, чёрный стул. Язва. До этого недиагноцированная. Мужчина молодой. 30 лет.

ХИРУРГ. Вариантов никаких. Опять-таки такой уровень больницы – эндоскописта нет, чтобы эндоскопически попытаться остановить или хотя бы посмотреть – чего там такое. Приходится брать на стол на высоте кровотечения. Опирую, вскрываю желудок. Там в выходном отделе желудка огромная язва, причём старая с подрывными краями, в центре сосуд.. Я стою, думаю – чего делать. Варианта два: либо минимальный объём – просто прошить этот кровоточащий сосуд и дальше лечить консервами. Но с другой стороны – язва хроническая, перспектива заживания низкая, парень молодой. Вот. Я решаюсь на резекцию желудка. Убрать, то есть часть желудка, несущую язву. Ну, начинаю, мобилизацию, выделять всё. Операционная сестра – хорошая, а мальчик... начинающий – помощи особой нет. И когда у меня в процессе мобилизации, когда я уже двигаюсь к наложению растамоза – это когда убираешь – соединить надо... А у меня ещё зажим на крупном сосуде. Вот. Гаснет свет.

ЖЕНЩИНА. Запасных аккумуляторов нет. Теоретически есть какие-то батареи, но они уже давным-давно не подзаряжены. Потому что нет денег.

ХИРУРГ. Свет гаснет. А там наркозный аппарат. Он ведь от электричества работает, дышит. Девчонка – анестезиолог молодой, но достаточно опытный.

ЖЕНЩИНА. Чего делать?

ХИРУРГ. Она начинает в трубу дышать. Сама.

ЖЕНЩИНА (*дышит*). Ху, ху,ху.

ХИРУРГ. Ну, а что? Вариантов-то нет. Потом, значит, подсоединили мешок амбу. А он – рваный. Она дальше начинает дышать. А у меня – зажим на сосуде. Я и говорю... А этим зажимам уже лет тридцать, наверное. Если он сейчас слетит – и кердык. Я и говорю – давайте мне хоть чем-то светите. Значит, анестезистка берёт ливингоскоп – инструмент, с помощью которого трубу суют. На нём маленькая такая лампочка. Они мне, значит, туда в живот светят. Я при свете этой лампочки подшиваю этот сосуд. Ладно, слава богу, зашил. Кричу – кто-нибудь, люди добрые, сбегайте, узнайте, когда свет дадут! Люди побежали. А время идёт. Она дышит в эту трубу. Мне надо что-то делать. И вот я при свете ливингоскопа начинаю накладывать растамоз. Двадцать минут она дышала в трубу. Когда дали свет, она

подключила эту трубу и упала. Гипервентиляция мозга у самой. Её там отхаживали. А неэффективное всё равно дыхание, потому что она ж не может всё равно постоянно двадцать минут в одном режиме дышать – раз. Во-вторых, выдыхаемый воздух – углекислоты много, кислорода мало. То есть там потом – гипоксия мозга и, значит, крыша у него уплыла. Я, значит, докладываю растамоз такой вот. Кончаю операцию. Спускаем в реанимацию. На аппарате головы нет. Ну, думаю – всё – декортикация. То есть смерть коры головного мозга. То есть подкорковые образования живут – там дыхательный центр, сосудодвигательный. Все они функционируют, но это растение. Вот...

И после этого мы с этим анестезиологом – Михалычем. Нажрались. Мы уже ещё оперировали в ночь. И часов в пять мы с ним выпили. А с утра в восемь А с утра в восемь сдавать смену заместителю главного врача. Женщина всю жизнь в администрации проработала. Педантичный исполнитель, но абсолютно глупый человек. Ну там – то, сё.

ЖЕНЩИНА. Чего делали? Ага! Пили! Ну, всё.

ХИРУРГ. Пишет на нас рапорт и – главному врачу. А главный врач баба умная была. Она нас берегла. Она представляла – кто что из себя значит. Мы заходим. Она...

ЖЕНЩИНА. Ну?

ХИРУРГ. Мы – так и так.

ЖЕНЩИНА. Мне надо как администратору отреагировать. Тут же официально всё – рапорт. Давайте – пишите объяснительную.

ХИРУРГ. А наших объяснительных у неё в столе уже вот такая стопка. Мы с Михалычем пишем:

МУЖЧИНА. «Признаёмся, что в районе пяти часов утра выпили по 250 миллилитров хорошего коньяку. О чём сильно сожалеем.

ОБА ХОРОМ. С уважением».

ЖЕНЩИНА (*смеётся*). Хамы!

ХИРУРГ. В общем, в эту стопку. В общем, только личностный фактор очень важен.

Я когда-то ввёл понятие такое «пьян как хирург», потому что

приходится, проходя через всё это, водку горькую пить для того, чтобы хоть как-то защищать башку. Вот я три года, как избавился... У меня была проблема. Я избавился от этой проблемы. Я завязал. Как? Я пустил «мулю»,

что я затормозился, чтобы отключить социум, чтоб не предлагали. Надо было народ приучить. Так как я не умею пить чуть-чуть... Я когда пьяный, меня забирает милиция. Ну, после работы идёшь под-шафе. А меня менты когда вяжут, я им говорю: «Я хирург. Я вас оперирую». Они ж часто к нам попадают. Они меня всегда до дому довозили. То есть я как бы в авторитете.

А парень этот с язвой. Лежит он в коме, значит, на аппарате трое суток. На третьи сутки опять дежурит тот молодой хлопец.

МУЖЧИНА. Андрей Георгиевич, там чего-то по дренажу потекло.

ХИРУРГ. Я приезжаю – смотрю – желудочное содержимое. Всё думаю – ништяк – эпопея со светом – несостоятельность растамоза. Беру на повторную операцию. Там, действительно, несколько швов... Но такого разлитого перитонита ещё нет. Ну, я ограничиваю, ставлю дренаж, зашиваю. Заведомо иду на свищ – ставлю дренаж для оттока. Ну, и в общем, где-то через неделю он приходит в себя. Восстанавливается голова практически без последствий.

ЖЕНЩИНА. Разве такое бывает?

ХИРУРГ. Как говорил врач в «Формуле любви»:

МУЖЧИНА. «Мозги – вещь тёмная, исследованию не подлежит».

ХИРУРГ. Бывает так, что полная безнадёга, и человек восстанавливается без проблем, а бывает мнимое благополучие, а... Загадка, конечно. Мы очень многого не знаем в этом деле. Светилу вызываю из областной больницы.

МУЖЧИНА. Ну, всё нормально, веди, может, сам свищ закроется.

ХИРУРГ. Ну, там и пролежни, и пневмония, как бывает в застойных таких делах. Пролежни потихоньку проходят, он начинает кушать, вставать, ходить. И вот моё дежурство, мы с ним сидим курим – я к нему зашёл. И я ему говорю (*мужчине*): вот теперь я могу тебе сказать, что ты вернулся с того света. (*В зал*). Я себе дал теперь зарок – никогда больше такого не говорить. Врачи – хирурги вообще, очень суеверные люди. На следующее дежурство через три дня я прихожу с утра, а заведующий мне говорит

МУЖЧИНА. А парень-то твой вчера помер.

ХИРУРГ. Что такое?

МУЖЧИНА. Тромб в лёгочной артерии.

ЖЕНЩИНА (*успокаивающе*). Какой-то тромбик вылетел непонятно откуда, влетел в лёгочную артерию – мгновенная смерть.

МУЖЧИНА. Такое усложнение, за которым невозможно уследить.... Всё оттуда – от Бога.

ХИРУРГ. Я отдал столько сил, столько нервов. Я для этой семьи стал как родной человек.

И дальше идёт продолжение жуткое совершенно этой же ситуации.. Это же дежурство. Я сижу накрытый. Вдруг заходит его какая-то родственница.

ЖЕНЩИНА. Андрей Георгиевич, помогите.

ХИРУРГ. И называет его фамилию. И вдруг заходит он в дверь. Я думаю – всё, приехали. Атаас.

ЖЕНЩИНА. Его брат-близнец, в другом городе живёт. На похороны прилетел. И там был ветер, слетела черепица, рассекла ему голову.

ХИРУРГ. Ну, я зашил эту голову, конечно, но это был атаас. И мы с Михалычем опять под утро – в конце дежурства – выпили... И я домой пошёл...

И... менты... И я, как всегда – я хирург, я вас оперирую... Но это я про себя подумал, а вслух... перепутал, был слишком выпимши, я сказал: «Я же вас, сук, режу». И они меня... отметили. (*Смеётся*).

ЖЕНЩИНА. Авитаминоз.

МУЖЧИНА. Зоб.

ЖЕНЩИНА. Бронхит.

МУЖЧИНА. Тромбофлебит.

ЖЕНЩИНА. Тиф.

МУЖЧИНА. Фурункулёз.

ЖЕНЩИНА. Загиб матки.

МУЖЧИНА. Ишемическая болезнь сердца.

ЖЕНЩИНА. Ангина...

И так далее – до бесконечности играют в слова...

Мужчина неуверенным шагом выходит на авансцену.

МУЖЧИНА. Я, когда закончил институт, поехал по распределению в Калугу. И сослали меня в деревню такую, называется она Борятино. На границе с Брянской губернией, то есть, это облученный после Чернобыля район. Сослали туда. Информации-то никакой не было. Врачи все оттуда разбежались. А у меня: институт заканчиваешь – год интернатуры. Врач-интерн. Ну, то есть, врач, но вроде как не совсем врач. Салага.

И такая замечательная была больничка. Там районный центр где-то дворов на тридцать крестьянских. Развалюшка. Я уехал, а у меня жена в это время как раз должна была рожать в Астрахани. А связи вообще никакой. Связь только по рации. Приехал туда, значит, по сугробам. По грудь – снега. Человек южный, не привыкший к этому всему. Добрался до этой больницы, зашел в ординаторскую. Сидит мужик какой-то. Он потом оказался заместителем главного врача по лечебной работе. Он говорит

ХИРУРГ. Ты кто?

МУЖЧИНА. Я говорю: Я хирург.

ХИРУРГ. Как зовут?

МУЖЧИНА. Сергей.

ХИРУРГ. В преферанс играешь?

МУЖЧИНА. Да

ХИРУРГ. А-а! Пятый!

ЗАНАВЕС

PLAY TWO

ЯРОСЛАВА ПУЛИНОВИЧ

ЖАННА

(пьеса в двух действиях)

Действующие лица:

Жанна Георгиевна – 50 лет,

Иванский Андрей – 28 лет,

Катя – 19 лет,

Виталий Аркадьевич – 55 лет,

Ольга – 38 лет,

Вика – 27 лет,

Мальчик по вызову,

Женщина на кладбище

Двое парней.

Первое действие.

1.

Кухня. Большая, светлая. Красивая мебель, огромный стеклянный стол, несколько картин, в цвет подобранные шторы. Много разной бытовой техники. На кухню заходит Андрей, в тапочках и махровом халате. В руках у него сотовый телефон, который беспрерывно звонит. Входя на кухню, Андрей прикрывает за собой дверь. Отвечает на звонок.

АНДРЕЙ *(тихо, почти шепотом)* Привет. Да. Что случилось? Подожди, не плачь... Что случилось? Ты скорую вызвала? Нет? Почему? Но сейчас прошло? Слава богу! Я понимаю, что ты устала. Подожди... Подожди! Я тоже устал. Я скоро приеду. Да. Скоро. Сегодня. Через час приеду. Жди меня. И не плачь, прошу тебя. До встречи. Целую.

Андрей отключает звонок. Кладет сотовый в карман халата. Смотрит в окно, о чем-то думает. На кухню заходит Жанна. Это высокая статная, может быть, даже немного полноватая немолодая уже женщина. На ней шелковый пеньюар. Она уже причесана, губы подкрашены, глаза сияют.

ЖАННА Ты уже проснулся? Андрюш, а ты почему стал так рано вставать? Сходи, поспи еще, я пока завтрак приготовлю. Поваляйся в кроватке. Я тебе прямо в постельку принесу. Чего хочешь? Яичницу с беконом, круассаны, грейпфрут?

Жанна направляется к холодильнику, открывает его. Холодильник до отказа забит всевозможной едой.

ЖАННА Йогурт хочешь? Творожок? А тут еще твоя любимая вкусняшка! Угадай что? Бастурма! А, может, из ресторана закажем? У нас ведь сегодня все-таки праздник, ты не забыл? Помнишь, какой? Помнишь, нет?

Подходит к Андрею, гладит его по голове.

ЖАННА Так и знала, что забудешь, склеротик! *(Целует Андрея в щеку)* Пять лет назад мы с тобой познакомились. Помнишь? Ко мне в компанию пришел устраиваться на работу мой любимый мальчик. А я тогда сразу поняла, что ты моя судьба. Мне одного взгляда хватило, чтоб понять, вот оно – мое счастье. Любонька моя! *(Еще раз целует Андрея)*

Андрей на щебетание Жанны почти не реагирует, как, впрочем, и на поцелуи.

ЖАННА Андрей! Андрей! Ты куда улетел? Ты меня слышишь?

АНДРЕЙ *(как очнувшись)* Жанна, если миллион четыреста пятьдесят тысяч положить в банк под одиннадцать процентов годовых, и через год деньги снять, сколько мы заработаем?

ЖАННА Ты сам посчитать не можешь?

АНДРЕЙ Ну, скажи.

ЖАННА Ты что, проверяешь меня?

АНДРЕЙ Ну, скажи, скажи....

Жанна очень быстро подсчитывает в уме.

ЖАННА Сто пятьдесят девять тысяч пятьсот. А тебе зачем? Андрюш, ты какой-то замученный стал в последнее время. Устал, да? Замучился на работе совсем? Я тоже замучилась. Меня только ты и спасаешь. Любоньку мою покормить, спать уложить – когда тут уставать? Ты в кроватку пойдешь? Нет?

Андрей отрицательно качает головой.

ЖАННА Тогда здесь расскажу. Хотела в постели, но раз ты уже встал, расскажу здесь. Джаст э момент!

Жанна выходит, а вернее – выбегает, из кухни, но почти сразу же возвращается. В руках у нее два разноцветных прямоугольных конверта.

ЖАННА Сюрприз! Андрюшенька, нам обязательно нужно отдохнуть! Когда мы с тобой в последний раз были в отпуске? Я тут подумала, и решила – никаких! Через месяц мы едем.... Угадай куда? В Африку! В Аф-ри-ку! У нас с тобой заказан личный гид, нас уже ждет машина с вот такими колесами! Мы едем на сафари! Андрюшенька, сафари, представляешь? Мы с тобой увидим слонов, жирафов, огромных обезьян! Мы с тобой будем пить «Амаруло» по ночам! Будем ходить загорелые, в цветастых одеждах. Будем каждую ночь заниматься любовью, не пропустим ни одной! Да, Андрюш? Ты рад?

Андрей все так же хмуро смотрит перед собой.

ЖАННА Андрюша, что случилось? Ты рад? Рад? Хорошо я для нас придумала?

АНДРЕЙ *(не смотрит на Жанну)* Жанна, я рад... Прости меня, я не могу с тобой поехать.

Пауза.

ЖАННА Почему? Всю текущую работу передадим Вике с Ольгой, они справятся, я уверена....

АНДРЕЙ Жанна, я уже год тайно от тебя встречаюсь с другой девушкой. Сейчас она беременна. Через несколько месяцев ей рожать. Я устал врать. Я ухожу. Прости. Не могу так больше....

Жанна, кажется, лишается дара речи.

ЖАННА Ты... Ты.... Да подожди.... Да как, Андрюшенька? Ты серьезно? Ты пошутил? Пошутил?

АНДРЕЙ Нет.

ЖАННА Как это нет? Ты ведь не мог.... *(кричит)* Козел! Свинья! Проститутка гребаная! Шлюха в штанах! Нашел себе помоложе и побогаче? Сука! Кто она? Кто она, говори! Говори, скотина!

АНДРЕЙ Ее зовут Катя, ей девятнадцать лет, она студентка. Большого сказать не могу. Прости еще раз.

Пауза. Жанна делает глубокий вдох.

ЖАННА *(спокойно)* У тебя есть пятнадцать минут, чтобы убраться. Зубную щетку можешь забрать с собой. Все остальное куплено на мои деньги и тебе не принадлежит.

АНДРЕЙ Джинсы и рубашку можно надеть?

ЖАННА Надевай, что хочешь!

Андрей встает, выходит. Жанну трясет, она, как будто, задыхается. Кажется, она вот-вот разрыдается. Но не в правилах Жанны давать волю слезам.

ЖАННА Жанна.... Жанна... Молчать. Раз, два, три, четыре, пять, шесть, семь, восемь, девять.... Успокоилась! Взяла себя в руки. Пусть уходит.

На кухню заходит Андрей. Он переоделся, теперь на нем джинсы и рубашка. Андрей кладет на стол ключи от квартиры и от машины.

АНДРЕЙ Прости меня пожалуйста, если сможешь....

Жанна не отвечает ему.

АНДРЕЙ Ты сильная, ты все выдержишь. А она совсем еще маленькая, ей без меня не выжить.

ЖАННА Убирайся.

Андрей кидает неловкий взгляд на Жанну, уходит. Хлопнула входная дверь.

ЖАННА Если ты заплачешь, я тебя убью.

Жанна глубокий вдох. Затем берет со стола трубку радиотелефона.

Набирает какой-то номер.

ЖАННА Танюша? Жанна Георгиевна. Андрей Иванский у нас в кампании больше не работает. Поняла меня? Никаких двух недель, никаких отпускных и выплат. Что? Ищи лазейки в трудовом кодексе. Да, замечательно, увольняй по 81, пятому пункту. Не придерешься. Он на работу раньше часа не приходил. Приплюсуй еще все прогулы. Да. И сообщи Ольге, что теперь она будет моим замом. Пусть готовит банкет.

Жанна сбрасывает звонок, набирает еще какой-то номер.

ЖАННА Виталий Аркадьевич? Я сегодня уволила своего зама. Да, Андрея. Он придет к тебе проситься. Примешь, станешь для меня руконеподаваемой сукой. Да. Передай информацию дальше. Про пятницу помню. Ольга готовит бизнес-план. До связи.

Жанна кладет трубку. Затем она идет в гардеробную. Достает с полки огромную сумку, складывает в нее вещи Андрея – пиджаки, брюки, рубашки, галстуки, носки, майки. Принимается за свой гардероб. В ту же самую сумку летят дурашливые легкомысленные сорочки, кофточки, платица с оборками, кружевное белье, пеньюары, бюстье, какие-то дурацкие подвязки, прозрачные блузки. Параллельно Жанна звонит по телефону.

ЖАННА Алло? Ольга? Таня уже сказала? Да не за что.... Не за что, ты действительно ценный для меня сотрудник.... Подожди.... Помнишь, ты говорила, что отдаешь вещи куда-то? У меня тут куча ненужных фирменных шмоток... Куда это можно отдать? Детский дом, церковь, я не знаю.... В приют, говоришь? Ага. Пришли адрес. Или что? У помойки бомжи разберут? А, ну да.... Я, наверное, так и сделаю. Все, спасибо. Скоро буду.
(Сбрасывает вызов)

Жанна с трудом закрывает сумку. Стоит, смотрит на плоды своей работы. Пинает сумку ногой. Затем расстегивает ее, достает лежащую сверху полупрозрачную кофточку с вышивкой. Рассматривает. Прикладывает к себе.

ЖАННА (вдруг мнет и бросает на пол кофту) Пусть вас бомжи носят!

С этими словами Жанна начинает одеваться. Она надевает те вещи, которые остались после ее тщательной ревизии, а именно – строгий деловой костюм, дорогой, но скучный и неброский. Жанна небрежно подкрашивает глаза. Из игривой сумочки перекладывает свои вещи в коричневый портфель. И с этим портфелем в руках выходит из дома.

2.

Маленькая квартира. Такие называют еще малосемейками. На диване, закутавшись в старую кофту и поджав под себя ноги, сидит худенькая с небольшим животом Катя. Она смотрит телевизор. Время от времени всхлипывает. Кажется, еще совсем недавно она рыдала. Кто-то открывает дверь ключами. Катя резко вскакивает с дивана, бежит к двери.

КАТЯ Андрей!

В квартиру заходит Андрей с пакетом в руках. Катя виснет на нем.

АНДРЕЙ Ты плакала?

КАТЯ Нет. Совсем чуть-чуть.

АНДРЕЙ *(кивает на живот)* Не болит?

КАТЯ Теперь вроде нет.

Катя прижимается к Андрею.

АНДРЕЙ Ты ела?

КАТЯ Ночью. А потом еще нет. Только спала.

АНДРЕЙ Опять ночью телик смотрела, а днем спала?

КАТЯ Ну, а что мне делать? Я боюсь спать одна! У меня, знаешь, какие страхи? Подружки все на учебе, им не до меня, тебя рядом нет, у тебя своя жизнь....

АНДРЕЙ Прямо одна? Я же каждый день прихожу.

КАТЯ Приходишь! А потом уходишь! И я каждую ночь одна, все дни напролет одна...

АНДРЕЙ А знаешь, что сегодня случилось?

КАТЯ Опять мне зубы заговариваешь? Ну тебя!

Катя уходит на кухню. Андрей снимает ботинки, идет следом. Грязная посуда в раковине, крошки вперемежку с обертками от шоколада на столе выдают в Кате небрежную хозяйку. Андрей гладит Катю по голове, пытается молчаливо помириться с ней.

АНДРЕЙ Опять развела бардак! *(Улыбается)* Тетеха!

Андрей засучивает рукава рубашки.

АНДРЕЙ Сначала мы приберемся, помоем посуду, вымоем пол....

КАТЯ Давай я посуду, а ты пол?

АНДРЕЙ Сиди уже. Пропадешь ведь без меня.

КАТЯ *(довольная)* Пропаду!

Андрей моет посуду. Катя сидит рядом на табуретке, смотрит на него во все глаза.

КАТЯ Мне сегодня опять снилось, что мы домой к нам переехали. Что мы там все вместе... Что дома телевизор смотрим – Поле чудес. И один канал только ловит, а мы смотрим – и ты, и я, и мама, и сыночек наш. А дядя Леня такой нам улыбается и говорит – хотите выиграть миллион? Все просто! И я вот ему верю. В разводки эти все городские лохотроновские не верю, а дяде Лене во сне верю. Что будет у нас этот миллион, верю.

АНДРЕЙ Катя, а вот если бы у тебя было один миллион четыреста пятьдесят тысяч рублей, ты бы что с ними сделала?

КАТЯ Ну, такая сумма странная... Не круглая. Не знаю. Квартиру бы купила.

АНДРЕЙ Я про это уже думал. Но это же однушка на выселках...

КАТЯ И что? Свое жильё, оно хоть где – свое жильё.

Андрей моет пол.

АНДРЕЙ А ты бы смогла придумать, как на эти деньги купить новую квартиру в хорошем районе?

КАТЯ Не знаю. Нет. В ипотеку что ли? Или как?

АНДРЕЙ *(моет пол)* Подбери ноги.

Катя поднимает ноги. Андрей моет пол рядом с Катей.

АНДРЕЙ В ипотеку – это еще дороже.

КАТЯ А в банк положить?

АНДРЕЙ Если положишь деньги в банк, через год у тебя будет навар всего лишь сто пятьдесят девять тысяч пятьсот.

Андрей вымыл пол. Убирает со стола.

АНДРЕЙ Долевое строительство!

КАТЯ Это че такое?

АНДРЕЙ Долевое строительство!

Андрей моет руки. Достает из пакета, с которым пришел, продукты.

Рубит курицу на разделочной доске. Чистит и режет картошку.

КАТЯ Что это значит?

АНДРЕЙ Это значит, что, во-первых, у меня на карточке лежит миллион четыреста пятьдесят тысяч. Это деньги, которые мне удалось скопить за то время, пока мы с тобой встречаемся. И еще сегодня кое-что произошло, а ты даже не знаешь....

Андрей смотрит на Катю, ожидая ее реакции.

КАТЯ Серьезно? Ты все это сам накопил? Больше даже миллиона? Ради меня?

АНДРЕЙ А ради кого?

КАТЯ Андрей.... Я не знаю.... Ты крутой. Это мне тебя боженька на той дискотеке подарил, чтобы я не пропала.

Андрей самодовольно улыбается.

АНДРЕЙ А, во-вторых, я решил вложить эти деньги в долевое строительство. Смотри... Картошку с курицей пожарить или в духовке лучше?

КАТЯ В духовке.

АНДРЕЙ *(улыбается)* Любишь мою курочку?

КАТЯ Люблю.

АНДРЕЙ Ты еще где-нибудь такую вкусную курицу ела?

КАТЯ Нет.

АНДРЕЙ Вот. А рецепт на самом деле простой – нужно в курицу и вокруг нее положить нарезанное яблоко и чеснок. Тогда у нее особый вкус будет. У

меня еще бабушка такую курицу готовила, и мама, а я на кухне все время отирался. Меня не прогнать было. Говорили – поваром вырастет или директором гастронома. А я чего-то сюда подался, хотя мама говорила мне – поезжай в Ишим, поступай в училище на технаря или на кулинара, будет в руках профессия, тогда и поедешь.... А я не послушался че-то, сбежал из дома, можно сказать. Не совсем так, конечно. И где только не работал потом, даже вспоминать страшно. Так вот, строительство... Смотри. Мы покупаем квартиру в еще не достроенном доме. Свою квартиру, представляешь? Потому что съемная нам уже надоела хуже горькой редьки, да? А там, в нашей будущей квартире фундамент, стены, но ничего еще нет. Стройка то бишь. Относим в контору наши денежки. Говорим – хотим квартиру на третьем этаже.

КАТЯ А на восьмом вид лучше.

АНДРЕЙ Хорошо, говорим, – на восьмом хотим, поближе к солнцу. Значит, приходят строители. Строят они, строят. Строят они, строят. День строят, два строят. А через полгода – бах! И мы с тобой обладатели совершенно новой квартиры на восьмом этаже за миллион четыреста пятьдесят тысяч! Двадцать минут до центра, рядом парк, возле дома детская площадка!

КАТЯ И наш сыночек в песочнице играет.

АНДРЕЙ И наш сыночек. И мамочка с папочкой....И никакая хозяйка с нас ничего не требует.

КАТЯ И много зелени вокруг. Мы деревья весной во дворе посадим. Яблоньку и сирень.

АНДРЕЙ Да! У меня, кстати, знаешь, как хорошо все вырастает? И картошка, и клубника, и цветы. Я этих деревьев дома в саду во сколько пересажал! И все растут. Менталитет у меня такой – все растет.

КАТЯ А там земля нормальная, нет? Если рядом стройка была, она же каменистая потом, ее удобрять надо.

АНДРЕЙ В принципе, экология там ,конечно, хуже, чем у меня в поселке, например, но можно попробовать компост поискать, или древесной золой... Тоже хорошо помогает.

КАТЯ У меня мама сухим пометом куриным всегда посыпала – и малину, и яблони, и смородину.

АНДРЕЙ Точно! У меня бабушка тоже так делает! У меня бабушка вообще бодрая – ей восемьдесят пять лет, представляешь, а у нее на огороде свой участок, и она до сих пор никого туда не пускает, сама обрабатывает.

Андрей укладывает картошку, курицу и остальные необходимые продукты на противень, засовывает противень в духовку. Моет руки.

КАТЯ А ты куда столько курицы сделал? Мы же все не съедим? А по вечерам я одна не ем, мне по вечерам не хочется есть одной.

АНДРЕЙ Тетеха, а знаешь, что сегодня случилось?

Катя вопросительно смотрит на Андрея.

АНДРЕЙ Я навсегда пришел, тетеха.

КАТЯ Прямо навсегда? Сегодня?

Катя счастливо прижимается к Андрею.

АНДРЕЙ Я же говорил тебе, что мы вместе будем жить? Говорил?

Катя кивает.

АНДРЕЙ Слово свое сдержал?

КАТЯ Сдержал! *(трогает живот)* Ой! Он меня ножкой пнул! Тоже радуется.

АНДРЕЙ Мужик! Весь в отца!

Катя обнимает Андрея. Встает на цыпочки, чтобы поцеловать любимого. Андрей целует Катю в ответ.

3.

Квартира Жанны. Большая, темная. Вечер. Чуть заметно колыхаются занавески у открытого окна. В квартиру заходят Жанна и Виталий – мужчина лет пятидесяти, подтянутый, в таком модном, «под молодежный стиль» пиджаке и джинсах со «стильными потертостями». Но стрижка, дорогие очки, жесты, мимика выдают в нем человека уже не молодого, обстоятельного и богатого, хотя и ударившегося немного в игры с возрастом.

ЖАННА Прходи, Виталий Аркадьевич... Моя скромная халупа в твоём распоряжении. Чувствуй себя, как дома, как говорится...

Жанна отключает сигнализацию, включает свет.

ВИТАЛИЙ Но, как говорится, не забывайте, что вы в гостях....
(осматривается) Слушай, здорово у тебя. Как это сейчас говорят?
(задумался) Килл? Калл? Вспомнил! Кул! Круто!

ЖАННА Где будем сидеть? В столовой, в комнате, в спальне?

ВИТАЛИЙ Ты хозяйка, Жанна Георгиевна.

ЖАННА А давай сегодня без отчеств?

ВИТАЛИЙ Давай.

ЖАННА Тогда в комнате.

ВИТАЛИЙ А почему не в спальне?

ЖАНА Мы с тобой еще недостаточно пьяные.

ВИТАЛИЙ А! Я только за!

Жанна с Виталием проходят в большую комнату. Здесь все, как в журнале «Дизайн и интерьер». Какие-то вазы, статуэтки, мягкие пуфы, журнальный столик с изогнутыми ножками, окна во всю стену, полочки, шкура медведя на полу и т.д.

ЖАННА Как тебе?

ВИТАЛИЙ Хорошо. Бойко. Как это... Супер! Очень даже. Тебе дизайнер делал?

ЖАННА Я рассказала, что хочу, он сделал. В общем, придумала все сама.

ВИТАЛИЙ Да, красиво. Моя бы так не придумала.

ЖАННА Твоя – это жена?

ВИТАЛИЙ Прости, задумался.

ЖАННА Свечи, кофе, коньяк, ликер?

ВИТАЛИЙ Водку.

ЖАННА Слушай, я в тебе всегда чувствовала родную душу.

Жанна зажигает свечи, быстро накрывает маленький столик – бутылка водки, икра, соленья.

ЖАННА Ну, прошу за стол. Выпьем?

Жанна и Виталий садятся на медвежью шкуру у стола. Виталий разливает водку по рюмкам.

ВИТАЛИЙ За тебя!

ЖАННА За нашу неформальную встречу!

Пьют.

ВИТАЛИЙ Хорошо пошла. И встреча у нас хорошая. И контракт мы подписали – тоже хорошо. Круто!

ЖАННА Да, такая вот у нас странная встреча образовалась.

ВИТАЛИЙ Хорошо, что в офисе коньяк закончился.

ЖАННА Не было счастья, да несчастье, как говорится....

ВИТАЛИЙ *(наигранно игриво)* И не боишься ты, Жанна, меня к себе в гости приглашать?

ЖАННА *(наигранно наивно)* А чего мне бояться?

ВИТАЛИЙ Ну... Напьюсь, приставать начну.

ЖАННА (*улыбается*) Начнешь, тогда и буду бояться.

ВИТАЛИЙ Ты смотри... Я ведь такой! Несдержанный.

Разливает водку по рюмкам.

ВИТАЛИЙ Хорошая у тебя, Жанна, водка. И женщина ты хорошая. Все у тебя как надо – и масть, и статья, и антураж.

ЖАННА Стараюсь. Держу судьбу за хвост.

ВИТАЛИЙ Выпьем, Жанночка, за твою счастливую судьбу!

Чокаются. Пьют.

ЖАННА Тогда следующую пьем за тебя!

ВИТАЛИЙ Что за меня?

ЖАННА Пьем за тебя. Чтобы все у тебя складывалось и приумножалось.

ВИТАЛИЙ А! Что там приумножится? На моих проглотов не напасешься. Сын собрался жениться – бежит ко мне: «Папа, квартиру!» Я же ему два года назад однокомнатную купил – восемьдесят квадратов. Мало, надо, чтобы три комнаты и не меньше ста пятидесяти. Нашли недалеко от центра сто семьдесят. Обставить еще. Дочка, студентка, тоже ко мне бежит – папа, Ламборджини. Одна радость, маленькая – три года. Я с работы прихожу, она руки раскинет и бежит ко мне. Ничего ей пока не надо. С работы в детский мир заедешь, куклу там, раскраску купишь. Она счастлива. Ты знаешь, какая у меня дочка, Жанна?

ЖАННА Чего это мы о детях? Давай о... не знаю, о музыке там, о чем еще, о театре...

ВИТАЛИЙ Я в театр не хожу.

ЖАННА Я тоже.

ВИТАЛИЙ Проблема. Или как это сейчас говорят? Засада! Тогда о чем?

ЖАННА Только не о работе.

ВИТАЛИЙ Ни в коем случае.

ЖАННА Выпьем тогда? За тебя!

*Виталий разливает водку по рюмкам. Жанна и Виталий чокаются, пьют.
Молчание.*

ВИТАЛИЙ Ну, а вообще, Жанна – как ты живешь?

ЖАННА Ну как? Хорошо живу, как видишь. Восемь комнат у меня, три здесь, пять на втором этаже. Я туда не поднимаюсь. Домработница там прибирается только. Что еще? Люстру вот из Италии заказала.

ВИТАЛИЙ А чем во вне рабочее время занимаешься? Ну, отдыхаешь как?

ЖАННА Да как... *(Задумалась)* У меня, считай, все время рабочее. Я не помню, ходила я сегодня в туалет или нет, а ты мне про отдых. Некогда отдыхать. Ну вот, с тобой вот расслабляюсь сегодня. Романтика тоже полезна. А так что? Журнал, бывает, читаю....

ВИТАЛИЙ Женский?

ЖАННА Ага. «Коммерсант. Деньги» называется.

ВИТАЛИЙ Надеюсь, не вяжешь?

ЖАННА Нет, а что?

ВИТАЛИЙ Ничего, так...

ЖАННА Нет, не вяжу. Я и телевизор не смотрю. Не люблю. Фигня там все одна. Новости врут, сериалы тоже врут, нет ничего такого в жизни...
Выдумка все. Не верю я в это.

ВИТАЛИЙ Спорт?

ЖАННА Нет, спорт тоже не люблю. Спина после работы болит.

ВИТАЛИЙ Выпьем?

Разливает. Пьют.

ЖАННА Ты закусывай, Виталий, рыбки вот положи, огурчик.

ВИТАЛИЙ Я закусываю, Жанночка. А ты? Ты почему не закусываешь?

ЖАННА Не люблю. Я водку только в натуральном виде пью. Без закуси. С детства так приучена.

ВИТАЛИЙ Хорошее у тебя, видно, было детство.

ЖАННА Не жалуясь.

ВИТАЛИЙ Ты знаешь, а я вот тут думал все – у нас ведь ничего в детстве нашем не было. Ни компьютеров, ни игрушек всех этих. И как-то жили ведь. А сейчас! Мы недавно с дочкой зашли в этот... в магаз! Радиоуправляемая техника называется. И чего там только нет! Вертолеты летают! Подводные лодки плавают! Роботы песни поют! Все как в жизни!

ЖАННА Товары для детей сейчас выгодно продавать. На детей сейчас мода.

ВИТАЛИЙ Мы с дочкой накупили всякой всячины – два вертолета, лодку и луноход. Перед сном теперь запускаем. Дочку у меня Варюшкой зовут. Варвара она. Варвара Витальевна. Три года. Такая вся принцесса.

ЖАННА Могу вот еще музыку включить.

ВИТАЛИЙ Да, музыка, да – это такая тема. Потанцуем, Жанночка, с тобой! Телесный контакт и все дела! Ты какую музыку любишь?

ЖАННА Не знаю. (*Задумалась*) Пугачеву люблю. Раньше многие нравились, теперь уже не помню никого. Аллегрова вот еще...

ВИТАЛИЙ Выпьем?

Виталий и Жанна пьют. Жанна включает музыкальный центр, вставляет диск в проигрыватель. Поет Пугачева.

ВИТАЛИЙ О! Аллочка! *Подпевает.* Потанцуем?

Виталий идет к Жанне, протягивает ей руку. Жанна встает. Они неловко танцуют посреди комнаты. Песня заканчивается. Жанна садится обратно.

ВИТАЛИЙ Ты знаешь, а я люблю эту жизнь. Мир прекрасен, Жанночка, правда?

ЖАННА Наверное....

ВИТАЛИЙ Прекрасен, несмотря ни на что. Я никого не любил, Жанна. Сына маленького почти не помню. Старшая дочь – вот вроде была маленькой, а вот ей двадцать. Выросла и выросла. Все как-то мимо меня. А Варюшка моя, Варюшка – это чудо из чудес. Я каждый день ее денечек помню. И пусть мне кто угодно что скажет. Мол, так нельзя, и я плохой отец, раз этой так, а этим эдак. А я вот про себя знаю, что только Варюшку люблю. Эти здоровые лбы, квартиру-машину им, и в добрый путь, они сами все лучше меня знают. А Варюшке три годика всего, она такая кнопка у меня. Прямо лучик света в мою жизнь заглянул. Давай, Жанна, выпьем за наших детей!

Пауза. Жанна смутилась, поправляет волосы.

ЖАННА У меня нет детей, Виталий.

ВИТАЛИЙ А. Да? Извини.

ЖАННА Почему? Зачем извиняться? Я детей не люблю.

ВИТАЛИЙ Совсем?

ЖАННА Совсем. Равнодушна.

ВИТАЛИЙ Да. Бывает.

Пауза

ЖАННА Может, просто выпьем?

ВИТАЛИЙ А на брудершафт?

ЖАННА А посмотрим!

Пьют. Виталий закусывает.

ВИТАЛИЙ А я свою жену не люблю, Жанна, ты знаешь. Она клуша старая. Ничего ей в жизни не надо. У телевизора сядет, вязать, говорит, люблю. Когда руки заняты, говорит, телевизор – это семечки для мозга. Она меня младше, Жанна. А выглядит как моя мама. Ничего ей не надо. По магазинам еще любит. Только это все для дома. Себе лишнего не купит, нет. Все в дом несет. От Варюшки тоже устает, говорит. Не тот уже вроде у нее возраст. А какой возраст? Ей сорок восемь лет!

ЖАННА Зачем же ты женился?

ВИТАЛИЙ А она не такая была, нет. Грудь у нее была, и ноги, знаешь, какие ноги? Вредная была такая, не больно-то в руки давалась. А я же такой – я свое не нытьем, так катаньем. Масла банку разбил специально, у ее квартиры. Она поскользнулась, а я уже рядом, выскочил, удержал. В кино в кассе билетов нет, а у кого есть? У Виталия есть. Джинсы не купить нигде, фарца цены ломит. Кто джинсы подарит? Виталий подарит. У нее ноги длинные такие были, как у Варюшкиных барби прямо.

ЖАННА Ясно.

ВИТАЛИЙ Да, и за ноги эти я всю жизнь себя грызу. Что женился на ногах, а жить пришлось с человеком. Мы с ней ругались, так ругались, что там посуда, – стулья летали. Но вроде двое малолеток у нас, живем, значит, мычим только, не дергаемся. Дети выросли. Я от нее уходить уже собрался. Влюбился в одну из отдела по связям, молодая девочка, она мне вазу в кабинете расхерачила еще. Задела нечаянно. Ваза вдребезги, конечно. Японская там хрень была, сухоцветы какие-то. А девочка эта меня любила, я же не слепой, видел. Таленькой звала. У нас с ней любовь прямо, серьезно все, свиданья – встречи, секс в обеденный перерыв. И тут мне моя – беременна. В сорок пять лет, екарный бабай! Ну, пошли по врачам – врач говорит, все возможно. Денег дали ему, он подсуетился, все анализы, неуспынный контроль. Родила она, сама причем. И даже легко как-то, говорит. Растолстела только потом сильно. Но это другое уже. Я весь

раздраженный по ее поводу ходил. Думал, ладно – подожду, потом что? Не приговорен же я к ней. Все ей оставлю, на ребенка буду давать, естественно – няню, все оплачу. И тут приносят ее. Варюшеньку. Я сначала даже не понял. Лежит такой комок в пеленках. Ну, ребенок твой, говорят, ты теперь трижды отец. С родней посидели, выпили. Я как на иголках, девочке моей втихаря пишу – завтра, пишу, увидимся, не скучай, зая. Потом спать легли. Варюшка в кроватке рядом. Лежу и думаю – это как же я, дурак, живу, что ничего не чувствую. Рядом дочь моя родная лежит, а я от нее к девчонке уходить собрался. А потом думаю – ну и что, думаю, ну, любовь же там у нас. Хоть напоследок поживу в радости. Вырастет, думаю, без меня. Старшие же выросли, а меня, считай, и дома никогда не было, на работе зашивался. И эта вырастет, думаю. Я же ее не бросаю. Просто жить буду отдельно. И тут Варюшенька в кроватке так тихонечко во сне вздохнула. Так – ах... И по-детски так, и так осознанно. И все... И тогда вот я понял, что никакой любви у меня не будет больше, и никакой девушки из отдела по связям больше не будет. А будет только она – Варюшенька, доченька. Потому что роднее нее никого у меня в жизни нет. Потому что мне ее един-единственный вздох вдруг дороже всего на свете стал. Ты не поверишь, я впервые расплакался тогда. Последний раз плакал в шесть лет, когда новый мяч под колеса угодил. Но это не считается.

Пауза.

ЖАННА А что стало с той девушкой?

ВИТАЛИЙ Ничего. Наверное, где-то счастлива сейчас. Уволил я ее без объяснения причин. Сердце разрывалось. Но тут уже не до выбора. Без вариантов, как теперь говорят.

ЖАННА Бывает же...

ВИТАЛИЙ А я не жалею, Жанна, ты знаешь. Ни о чем не жалею. Девушки у меня есть. Увлечения разные. Я с работы приеду, мы с Варюшенькой поужинаем, поиграем. Я ее искупаю, книжку ей на ночь читаю, Карлсона она любит и сказки Пушкина. Умная девочка, да? Пушкина уже понимает,

представляешь? Потом спать ее уложу. И все – дальше свободен. У нас с женой договоренность такая – каждый своей жизнью. Мы с ней вообще не разговариваем уже два года. Вообще. Слова за неделю не скажем друг другу.

ЖАННА Ад, наверное?

ВИТАЛИЙ Ад – не ад, привыкли. Мне стареть нельзя, Жанна. Пойдет Варюшка в школу, а ей скажут – это дедушка тебя забирает? Она стесняться меня потом будет. Мне этого никак нельзя, Жанна. Я никому этого не позволю. Я все сделаю, чтобы все видели, я – ее отец, а не кто-то там. Надо будет – всему научусь. И моде, и подтяжки сделаю, если надо.

ЖАННА Да... Дети – такое дело....

ВИТАЛИЙ Я еще моложе всех юнцов выглядеть буду. Чтобы Варюшка моя мной гордилась! Чтобы всем заявляла – это не дед старый, это мой отец молодой идет! И чтобы видели все! Что отец Варюшки! Молодой! Станет она постарше, я ее заберу, мы с ней в Италии дом построим, и будем там жить! А этих никого не возьмем с собой. Вдвоем с ней уедем! Ты понимаешь меня, Жанна?

ЖАННА Может, кофе сварить?

ВИТАЛИЙ Одна ты меня, Жанночка, понимаешь. Да кровинушка же ты моя! *Тянет к Жанне руки.*

ЖАННА Сейчас сварю.

Жанна уходит. Виталий достает айфон, что-то ищет в нем. Входит Жанна.

ЖАННА Ты какой любишь? Со сливками, крепкий, с сахаром?

ВИТАЛИЙ Иди сюда, Жанночка.

Жанна подходит к Виталию.

ЖАННА Может, музыку другую поставить? У меня еще один диск есть, романтик-коллекшн называется.

Виталий обнимает Жанну за талию.

ВИТАЛИЙ А я тебе свою музыку сейчас, Жанночка, поставлю.

ЖАННА Давай... Я бы под медленную потанцевала еще....

ВИТАЛИЙ Сейчас... Такая песня, я прямо плачу.

Из айфона звучит песня «Спят усталые игрушки».

ВИТАЛИЙ Под эту песню моя Варюшенька засыпает. Прямо глазки закроеет, а сама хитренькая, подглядывает – сидит с ней рядом папа или нет. Зорко следит, чтобы никуда папа не ушел, пока она не заснет. А я ведь и не собираюсь... Я на посту, сон ее охраняю. У нее вот тут ямочки на щеках, и волосики такие мягонькие, светленькие, как пух.... Ни у одного ребенка таких волосиков не видел.

Тут Виталий принимается громко подвывать, пытаясь выговорить все слова песни. Жанна уходит на кухню. Берет телефон, набирает номер.

ЖАННА Алло! На Карла Маркса 12 будьте добры, пожалуйста, на текущее время. Куда поедет? А он вам сам все расскажет. *(Сбрасывает вызов)*

Смотрит в окно. За окном ночь, фонари, реклама, звуки проезжающих машин, крики подвыпившей молодежи. Везде жизнь.

ЖАННА Ну ты и дура, Жанна....

Жанна достает из буфета сигареты, зажигалку, закуривает.

4.

Та же съемная Квартира Кати и Андрея. Катя с Андреем сидят на диване, прижавшись друг к другу. У Андрея на коленках книга, на книге лежит лист бумаги. Андрей что-то расчерчивает на этом листке.

АНДРЕЙ Значит, в этом углу у нас детская....

КАТЯ Я до сих пор не верю, что у нас будет квартира. Это как будто не настоящему. С мамой жили в одной комнате в доме, потом в общежитии

вчетвером, а теперь – своя кухня ,своя комната, свой балкон.... Можно голой ходить – хоть заходишь, и никто слова не скажет...

АНДРЕЙ Я только за!

КАТЯ Посуду можно на ночь оставить, и с утра помыть. Я посуду с детства мыть ненавижу. А все из-за этого дурацкого – у нас закон простой, поел – убери за собой. Когда так говорят, мне всегда кажется, что я в лагере или в школе.

АНДРЕЙ А я вот наоборот. На кухню первый всегда бежал, и посуду мыл, и готовил, с бабушкой шарфики вязал разные, носки. Даже свитер один раз! Красный такой, с полосками. Бабушка и та удивилась.

КАТЯ Сам связал? Серьезно?

АНДРЕЙ Ну да. Из школы приду, поем, и к бабушке в комнату – ниточки у нее там всякие на журнальном столике, шерсть, спицы – интересно! Она мне истории из жизни рассказывает, а я слушаю и вяжу, никакого телевизора не надо. Потом мы с ней пойдем ужин на кухню готовить. Приготовим, посидим еще, чаю попьем. Потом уже мама с батей придут. Поужинаем все вместе, и я опять к бабушке в комнату вязать. И так пока уроки не погонят делать. Батя ругался только на меня, что я с пацанами не дружу, и бабой расту. А бабушке и маме нравилось. Мама вообще думала, что я с ними жить останусь, не поеду никуда, потому что я хозяйственный и голова у меня на плечах, не то, что у других парней.

КАТЯ Почему ты уехал тогда?

АНДРЕЙ Да работы у нас в поселке никакой не было. А в училище в Ишим не хотелось как-то. И тут отец насел на меня – ты должен доказать, что мужик, всего в жизни добиться. Чуть ли не с кулаками меня гнал, пока мать с бабушкой не слышали. Я так-то уезжать не хотел, и добиваться тоже – вот непонятно, чего добиваться, да? А тебе кулаком по столу – иди и добейся. Батя у меня суровый, че ему скажешь? Решил – поеду вот сюда, ну, всяко тут вариантов больше.... Пробовал поступать, да на бюджет провалился что-то. Не знаю, наверное, куплено там все было, или, может, сам дурак.

КАТЯ Меня мама последний год в школе прямо веником била, чтобы я училась. Говорила, ты у меня дурочка, поэтому учи все наизусть. С учебниками рядом стояла и сверяла. Говорила, хоть у тебя в жизни что-то получится. Ну вот, на втором курсе уже получилось.... *(Гладит себя по животу)* Я поступать боялась, просто кошмар. У меня даже тик от нервов начался. Но самое ужасное, это осенью, когда мы с мамой приехали, она мне в общагу помогла заселиться и домой этим же вечером поехала. Я прямо на кровати лежала и редела, что так темно за окном, а она уехала, и я одна в этом огромном некрасивом городе осталась. На этой скрипучей койке, с тремя сумками и соседки еще не приехали никто. За окном торговый центр весь светится, а я такая тощая, маленькая, лежу в темной комнате и даже пошевелиться от ужаса не могу.

АНДРЕЙ Бедная тетеха! Жалко, что меня тогда рядом не было.

КАТЯ Да! *(в шутку толкает Андрея в плечо)* Вот где ты был?

АНДРЕЙ Ну.... Где я был? Работал, наверное. А сам думал, что где-то по этим же улицам моя родная душа ходит.

КАТЯ Думал, а сам жил непонятно с кем....

Андрей не отвечает Кате.

КАТЯ Столько мне нервов с ней вымотал – она там одна, она там бедная.... Чего она бедная-то? Сам говорил – богатая.

АНДРЕЙ Не начинай, ладно? Она хорошая, просто не моя, что ли. Не все ведь так просто рвется. Я же к тебе пришел.

КАТЯ Пришел.

АНДРЕЙ Так, давай дальше.... Вот здесь у нас кухня. Сколько нам нужно дверей? Две – да? Одна в коридор, другая в комнату. Рисуем. Две двери.... Здесь и здесь.

КАТЯ *(Трогает живот)* Ой...

АНДРЕЙ Что ой?

КАТЯ Пинается как-то странно.... Это узи дорогое нужно еще вчера было сделать. А то вдруг что? Я ведь боюсь.

АНДРЕЙ В понедельник. Сейчас два дня выходных. Я свое резюме в тысячу фирм разослал.... В понедельник позвонят, во вторник выйду на работу.... Сразу попрошу аванс. В среду все сделаешь.

КАТЯ До среды-то долго еще....

АНДРЕЙ Ну, потерпи... Понимаешь, если бы я все деньги в это строительство не вложил, мы бы с тобой план квартиры в руках сейчас не держали. Будут деньги. В среду уже будут. Сделаем тебе все узи, проверим тетеху от макушки до пяток. А через полгода въедем в новое жилье

КАТЯ Андрей, а когда мы поженимся?

АНДРЕЙ Родишь и поженимся. Какая свадьба с пузом?

КАТЯ Нет, так не положено. Ребенок без свадьбы – это называется нагулять.

АНДРЕЙ А свадьба с пузом называется по залету.

КАТЯ Я подумала, что может быть, у нас в деревне свадьбу отпразднуем? Что мы, богачи что ли, шикавать – просто накроем на стол, посидим, музыку включим.

АНДРЕЙ А я думал, в новой квартире. И новоселье и свадьба.

КАТЯ Да что там это новоселье? Ни столов, ни стульев, ни посуды, как бомжи, из пластиковых стаканчиков пить будем. А так в деревне, подружки мои придут, увидят, что я в белом платье....

АНДРЕЙ Тогда уж лучше у меня в поселке, твою маму к нам всяко дешевле привезти, чем моих к тебе.

КАТЯ Давай у твоих! А платье мне мама сама может сшить, чтобы на магазины не тратиться.

АНДРЕЙ Моя бабушка тоже может. Она у меня, знаешь, какая портниха?

КАТЯ Значит, ребенок родится и сразу поженимся?

АНДРЕЙ Поженимся.

КАТЯ Есс! *(Обнимает Андрея)* Так, а заявление-то нужно уже сейчас подавать!

АНДРЕЙ Завтра и подадим.

КАТЯ Значит, я звоню маме, что замуж выхожу?

АНДРЕЙ Значит.

КАТЯ Дай телефон, на моем денег нет.

Андрей протягивает Кате телефон, Катя набирает номер.

КАТЯ Алло! Мамочка? Это я! Мама, я замуж выхожу! За Андрея за своего, да! Он самый классный! Он нам квартиру купил! Да я не нервная, я просто счастливая! Серьезно, купил!

5.

А у Жанны в квартире самый разгар пьянки. В гостиной сидят Жанна, и ее сотрудницы – Вика и Ольга. Ольга – женищина сильно за тридцать, видно, что очень деловая, по натуре своей карьеристка и стерва. Вика – самая молодая среди присутствующих, ей двадцать семь. Вике немного скучно в компании Жанны и Ольги, она сейчас в самом расцвете, и предпочла бы пьянке с этими одинокими женищинами более подвижные развлечения.

ОЛЬГА Да, Жанна Георгиевна, так оно и есть. Это все головная боль, и я даже связываться не хочу. Эта кабала, никому не пожелаю. У меня мама всю жизнь с отчимом промучилась, и только после его смерти вздохнула спокойно. А то, что плакала по нему три года – это депрессия называется. Потому что он пил, а это плохая энергетика.

ЖАННА Козел!

ОЛЬГА Натуральный.

ВИКА Водочки еще налить, Жанна Георгиевна?

ЖАННА Валяй.

Вика разливает водку по рюмкам.

ЖАННА (*поднимает рюмку*) Тост, девочки!

ОЛЬГА Просим, Жанночка Георгиевна!

ЖАННА Выпьем за нашу счастливую жизнь, и за то, что все они козлы, а студентки их козы. А мы гордые и в сельскохозяйственном скоте не нуждаемся!

ОЛЬГА Красивый тост!

Чокаются. Пьют.

ОЛЬГА А хорошо сидим, девочки? Так душевно с вами, Жанна Георгиевна.

ЖАННА Сейчас еще мальчики по вызову приедут.

ОЛЬГА Мальчики?!!

ЖАННА Мальчики.

ОЛЬГА Жанна Георгиевна, ну это как-то...

ЖАННА Не бзди.

ВИКА Жанна Георгиевна, вы меня простите, но я не могу, меня жених дома ждет.

ОЛЬГА Вика!

ЖАННА Молчать! Я тебя приглашала, как девушку свободную во всех отношениях. К черту жениха, вход в мой дом только при предъявлении паспорта, не заляпанного грязным штампом!

Жанна встает, пьяно смотрит на Ольгу и Вику.

ЖАННА А что я вам сейчас покажу, девочки....

Выходит из комнаты.

ОЛЬГА Вика, ты видишь, Жанна Георгиевна страдает, зачем ты ей про жениха сказала?

ВИКА Что за ерунда? Все знают, что мы с Володей скоро поженимся.

ОЛЬГА Все знают, а зачем напоминать?

ВИКА Ольга Андреевна, я считаю, что имею право на личную жизнь вне рамок корпоративной этики.

ОЛЬГА Имеешь ты, а премии весь отдел лишают. Ты не видишь, человеку плохо, страдает человек? Не сыпь ей соль на рану, Вика. Как бы нам потом эта соль в глаза не полетела!

ВИКА Андрей этот ее – вообще козел. Где она его только нашла?

ОЛЬГА Козел не козел, а молодец, ускакал, козлик, в самую нужную минуту! Лучше и представить нельзя было. У меня племянник в этом году экономический закончил.

ВИКА И?

ОЛЬГА И! Я пошла на зама, значит, моя должность освобождается.... Только никому не говори. Сашка мне как сын. Я его как родного люблю. Знаешь, какой умный он у меня?! Эйнштейн! Явно не в сестру, моя кровь. И родинка на щеке точь-в-точь как у меня!

ВИКА Вот. Кто-то пять лет учится, гранит науки грызет. А кому-то запросто так дипломы покупают, только за то, что он со старой теткой спит!

ОЛЬГА С бабкой!

Женщины хихикают, прикрывают ладонью рот. Ольга вдруг резко прикладывает палец к губам, делает знак Вике – мол, все, замолчи. В комнату заходит Жанна. На ней длинное полупрозрачное платье со стразами, в руке у нее сумка с вещами.

ЖАННА Переодеваемся, девочки! Тут шмотья у меня! И перья, и все такое.... Давайте, давайте, не сидим, двигаемся! Оля, ну? Вот, бюстье с юбочкой! Надевай! Будешь цыпленочком у нас!

ОЛЬГА (*хихикает*) Жанна Георгиевна, я же не привыкла! Вы чего?

ЖАННА Че, зассали, девки? Или у нас не праздник!?

ОЛЬГА Так праздник, праздник, Жанна Георгиевна! Я не бзжу, уже лечу ракетой!

Берет у Жанны предложенный наряд, переодевается.

ЖАННА А ты, Вика, кем хочешь быть? Кошечкой? Медсестрой? Школьницей? Престарелой! *Жанна пьяно хохочет.*

ВИКА Да я не могу, Жанна Георгиевна. Я все это очень одобряю, но как я буду смотреть в глаза Володе?

ЖАННА Володю – закопаем в огороде! Переодевайся!

ВИКА Понимаете, я из семьи старой закалки, у меня очень строгий папа....

ЖАННА А папу продадим на шляпы! Есть еще вопросы?

ВИКА Нет, я понимаю, Жанночка Георгиевна, что это игра. Это ведь такая игра? И насчет мальчиков по вызову вы пошутили?

ЖАННА Какие тут шутки? Переодевайся давай! А то сейчас рассержусь и обижусь!

Вика в поисках поддержки смотрит на Ольгу, которая стоит, переодевшись в бюстье и юбочку цыплячьего цвета.

ОЛЬГА Вика! Жанночка Георгиевна шутит! Ну, имей чувство юмора, не подводи коллектив!

ВИКА Да! А я догадалась, что вы затейница, Жанна Георгиевна! Я сразу поняла, что это такие шуточки! *Вика переодевается в пеньюар из черно-розовых кружев.*

ВИКА Мне ведь, Жанна Георгиевна, поскольку я у вас недавно, все в новинку. Да, в новинку! Потому что ни в одной компании мне не

доводилось работать с такими прекрасными людьми, как вы, как Оля! С такими веселыми людьми! С такими простыми и честными людьми....

ЖАННА (*презрительно*) Ой-ой-ой..... Кобылы запели.

Оля смеется. Вика вынуждена тоже засмеяться над собой вместе с Олей.

ЖАННА Обиделась? По глазам вижу – обиделась. Не обижайся, – ты, Вика, девка деловая. Я тут думала и надумала вот что – Ольга пошла на зама, ее место освободилось. Чужих брать никого не хочу. (*Разливает водку по рюмкам*) Так что, с повышеньем тебя, Викуля!

ВИКА Жанночка Георгиевна, я даже не знаю... Это такая новость для меня! Это такой шанс, такой стремительный карьерный рост, Жанночка Георгиевна.... Я ведь....

ЖАННА Выпьем!

Женщины чокаются, пьют. Оля недобро кривит губы.

ЖАННА А я вам сейчас музыку поставлю, девочки! Закачаетесь! Моя любимая песня!

Жанна подходит к музыкальному центру, и запускает диск. Звучит песня: «Младший лейтенант, мальчик молодой, все хотят потанцевать с тобой, если бы ты знал женскую тоску по сильному плечу....» и т.д.

Жанна танцует. Вытаскивает в центр комнаты Вику и Ольгу. Вика и Ольга, неуверенно пританцовывают, перетаптываются с ноги на ногу. Вдруг Вика неестественно высоко поднимает ногу, показывает целый ряд каких-то акробатических упражнений.

ОЛЬГА Вика, ты чего?

ВИКА Это моя йога!

ОЛЬГА Для Володи научилась?

ВИКА А к черту Володю!

Женщины упоенно танцуют. Звонок в дверь.

ЖАННА Это мальчики, девочки! Я открываю?

ВИКА А запросто!

б.

Спальня Жанны. Телевизор без звука. На кровати лежит высокий темноволосый парень – мальчик по вызову. Жанна ходит по комнате.

ЖАННА И вот, ты понимаешь? Это девяносто первый год, распад СССР. Я тогда еще дура, двадцать девять лет. Работы нет, денег нет. Вот такая красота! Колготки перештопаны на сто пятьдесят раз! Знаешь, что такое для меня были колготки? А тушь? Люди ползарплаты отдавали за пару капроновых чулок, а у меня и зарплаты не было! Надуло нас государство! Жила я в каком-то бомжатнике, даже страшно представить каком! Ты таких коммуналок, поди, и не видел! В одной комнате я да бабка, да ее дочь. Бабка лежащая, за ней ходить надо. Ну, я за раскладушку и тепло с этой бабкой сидела. Она все помирать собиралась. Попробуй только помри – говорю ей, я тебе помру, ты помрешь, а меня на улицу! Сейчас же! Пока на работу не устроюсь, ты даже думать не смей помирать. Она молодец, дотянула.... Хорошая бабка была, царствие ей небесное! Доченькой меня называла. Дура такая! Вспомню иногда, аж накатит че-то. И вот я полгода так жила. А потом думаю – на наше государство надеяться – лучше сразу в петлю! Ручки есть, ножки есть, голова на плечах вроде тоже присутствует! Затеяла я одно дельце-делишечко. Нашла своего однокурсника, а он в каком-то бизнесе крутился, грузоперевозками занимался. Назвала сумму. Он, конечно, видит, что у меня ни копейки в кармане. Прогоришь, говорит, Жанна, на проценты ставить не буду, но по гроб жизни будешь обязана. Хорошо, светик мой, шепчу, сведи меня с человечком, три тысячи долларов мне у него занять нужно! Он на меня как на ненормальную – дурочка, ты понимаешь, какие это люди? Под любые проценты, – отвечаю. Да не о том, – говорит, – не выгорит твое дельце, это ж не я, это злые дяденьки зубастые. Одной могилкой, говорит он мне, на земле станет больше. Или в проститутки пойдешь отрабатывать! Пойду, – кричу, – куда угодно пойду, только познакомь! Через два дня он за мной заезжает. Едем. Я длинную юбку

надела, чтоб колготки не светить. Хотя и понимаю, дура, что зря, что ноги – козырь, да еще какой! Но тут уж либо ноги, либо колготки заштопанные – выбирай! Приехали. Сидит. Смотрит. Думает. Ногти на руках пилочкой обточены. Важничает. А по глазам вижу – не жилец. Завожу себя, вроде этакая я бизнес-вумен. Актриса прямо, в глаза ему смотрю, нигде не прокололась. Именами сыплю. Мол, того знаю и того. Однокурсник мне краткую лекцию по новейшей истории города еще в машине прочитал. Он посмотрел-посмотрел, крикнул. Хорошо думаю, главного корчит из себя, а раз корчит – значит даст. Для него три тысячи долларов – фигня! Хорошо, говорит. Заломил проценты дикие. Но я знала – если дельце выгорит, я через два дня все верну! Из сейфа деньги достал, палец послюнявил, отсчитал. Мы тут же в машину, едем в Нижне-Урюпинск! За нами три грузовика! В Нижне-Урюпинске этом я никогда не была, но знала, что там завод по производству мучных изделий скопытился. Приезжаем. Мать моя женщина! Как в детство вернулась, грязищи по колено. Иду на завод, нахожу директора. Невменяемый. Глаза красные, пьянящий, про политику кричит. За копейки покупаю у него три грузовика макарон. Пока макароны грузят, гоним машину обратно в город. Нахожу фирму. Я про нее заранее все выяснила, что дельные ребята, не фуфлоделы. Приезжаю, сразу деньги на стол. У вас ночь – кричу! А я образец заранее придумала, знакомая моя худграф закончила, она мне по дружбе образец этот и нарисовала. Там такой американский флаг крупно, и большими буквами ярко-красными по-английски – макароны! Made in USA! А рядом по-русски для неграмотных – сделано в Америке! Десять тысяч упаковок! К четырем утра обертки эти готовы. Я вся на нервах – где грузовики? Не дай бог что! Приезжаем к однокурснику в гараж. Грузовики там. Толпа народу – заработать все хотят. Однокурсник мой заранее предупрежден был, что люди понадобятся, но по сути дела не в курсе! До десяти утра пакуем макароны вручную! Я вместе со всеми! В одиннадцать пригоняем машину в центр города. Ну, думаю – все, вот оно, Жанна, твое времечко настало. Была не была! Или пан или пропал – готовь вазелин! Сначала вяло покупали. Один-два, десять.... К часу вокруг нас толпа. Народ ломится! Берут по десять-пятнадцать упаковок! У меня

такая байка, что я только что из Америки, а эти макароны – их новая марка, что, мол, вы таких макарон нигде не достанете – это чисто американский продукт. Бабки вокруг нас, мамы с детьми. Одна кричит – вы мне еще десять пачек отложите, я со сберкнижки сниму и сразу к вам! К семи вечера продаем последнюю сотню, и тут вижу – идут, красотки! Кожаные куртки! Рэкет! Сворачиваемся, кричу! Спрыгиваю с грузовика. В машину – и по газам! Едем к бандиту, отдаю ему долг. У него аж глаза от возмущения забегали, процентов-то накопало с гулькин нос. Руку мне пожимает, жирок на подбородке трясется. Не жилец ты, думаю. Года не протянешь. Ну, было у меня такое чувство. И точно. Убрали его, говорят, с дороги – и трех месяцев не прошло. Понимаешь меня? Рассчитываюсь с однокурсником, расстаемся как Скалли с Малдером после победы над инопланетянами. Через три дня у меня машина, живу на съемной квартире. Остальные деньги вложила в дело. Через полгода квартира, офис в центре, реклама в телевизоре. И ты знаешь, много потом всякого было – и с рабочими матом ругалась, и с братками водку стаканами пила, и ОБЭПом меня травили, едва под суд не пошла, в девяносто пятом чуть не застрелили, в девяносто седьмом ограбили до нитки, в дефолт разорилась и все с нуля начинала, в две тысячи пятом дала взятку не тому человеку. Много чего в жизни у меня случалось разного. А я до сих пор вспоминаю ночь эту, мы несемся по темной трассе в город. И вся жизнь моя на кону, вся жизнь моя в этих макаронах и дурацких упаковках! Сердце стучит, а в голове – выгорит дело, выгорит! Я умная, я сильная, я смелая, выгорит дело! И такая сила во мне, такая вера, такое чутье звериное проснулись! Я в тот момент женщиной стала, веришь – нет? Я такую страсть испытала, и азарт, и адреналин, что ни с одним мужиком мне потом так кайфово не было! Мужик предаст, дело сгорит, ты одна у себя и есть. Если ты сильная, то выживешь и будешь гнать по трассе двести, и будешь счастлива, оттого, что знаешь точно – выгорит твое дело. Оттого что ты фартовая, оттого что удача с тобой, сила с тобой. Оттого что ты сама у себя есть. Понимаешь ты это? Понимаешь, нет?

Парень все время, пока говорит Жанна, смотрит в телевизор.

ПАРЕНЬ Блин, я не могу! Этот Губка Боб такой прикольный! Как ни посмотришь серию – это такой прикол! Это такой прикольный мультик, вообще....

Жанна ложится на кровать рядом с парнем.

ПАРЕНЬ Что-то хотите?

ЖАННА Пошел вон!

Парень встает, одевается, собирается уходить.

ЖАННА Подожди!

Парень останавливается, смотрит на Жанну.

ЖАННА Я старая?

ПАРЕНЬ Да нет, обычная. Все тетеньки такие.

ЖАННА Уматывай!

Парень уходит. Жанна смотрит телевизор без звука. В соседней комнате, рыдая, Вика разговаривает по телефону.

ВИКА Ну, подожди, Володенька! Куда ты уехал? К маме? Ну, зачем? Это была рабочая встреча, просто рабочая встреча! Мне с ними неинтересно, они старые тетки, зачем бы я стала с ними пить просто так?! Володенька, это чисто рабочие отношения! Что? Какие мальчики, ты что, с ума сошел? Это была рабочая встреча! Да, на всю ночь! Да, я тебя не предупредила. Но я не могла, Володенька! Эта старая дракониха съела мне весь мозг, я не могла позвонить! Володенька! Прости! Я сейчас приеду! Какие мальчики? Ты что, миленький? *(Пауза)* По вызову? Да ты что....!!! Кто позвонил? Володя, это ложь! Кто позвонил? Женский голос? Кто? Кто?! Володя, не бросай трубку, я прошу.... Я сейчас приеду....

На том конце провода видимо все-таки положили трубку. Вика рыдает.

Жанна усмехается. Смотрит телевизор.

Конец первого действия.

Второе действие.

1.

*Прошло четыре месяца.**Та же квартира Кати и Андрея. День. Андрей сидит на диване, в руках у него газета. Он разговаривает по телефону.*

АНДРЕЙ Алло? Здравствуйте, я вам высылал свое резюме, по поводу должности менеджера по продажам.... Что? Уже взяли, да? А, ну....
(Набирает другой номер) Алло? Здравствуйте. А вот вы давали объявление в газету, что вам требуется менеджер.... Да, образование высшее, конечно!!! Красный диплом! Стаж работы – пять лет. Двадцать восемь. Последнее место работы – сеть магазинов «Вкуснятина». Слышали? Перезвоните? Хорошо, буду ждать вашего звонка.... Хорошо. Мой телефон у вас определился, да? Хорошо, всего доброго, надеюсь, до встречи! *(Сбрасывает вызов)* Фигня какая-то.

В комнату заходит сильно беременная Катя.

КАТЯ А компот в банке закончился?

АНДРЕЙ Там оставалось на доньшке, я допил.

КАТЯ *(садится рядом с Андреем)* Компота хочу.АНДРЕЙ *(обнимает Катю)* Потерпи, тетеха. Вот сейчас папа на работку устроится, и будут нам вкусняшки, и будет нам компотик, и будет нам курочка...

КАТЯ Когда ты уже на эту работу устроишься?

АНДРЕЙ Устроюсь. Скоро устроюсь. Чтобы я в этом городе на работу не устроился? Ты что? Меня все знают. Как дойдет до них новость, что я без работы – с руками оторвут.

КАТЯ Так ты им сам позвони – тем, кто с руками. А то до них уже четыре месяца не доходит.

АНДРЕЙ Ну, так не принято, понимаешь....

КАТЯ А как принято? Короче.... Звонила мама. Она сказала, что денег больше не вышлет. Еще мама сказала, что она и так уже четыре месяца тянет нас, как бурлак по Волге. Сказала еще, что пора бы тебе уже устроиться на работу.

АНДРЕЙ А еще что твоя мама сказала?

КАТЯ Еще? Еще сказала, что не собирается кормить здорового чужого ей мужика, который сам себя прокормить не может. А еще сказала – собирай вещи, и рожать приезжай домой!

АНДРЕЙ Тетеха, все устроится, это временные трудности.... Куда ты собралась уезжать? Макароны тебе сварить по-вкусненькому, с морковочкой?

КАТЯ Не сварить! Временные трудности! Уже четыре месяца у тебя временные трудности! Узи так и не сделали! Сапог зимних нет! Второй месяц одни макароны. Компот мой выпил!

АНДРЕЙ Дурочка, зато у нас есть собственная квартира! Я ее купил, понимаешь? Пусть еще недостроенная, но она есть!

КАТЯ Зато работы у тебя собственной нет, а мне рожать.... На что мы будем жить? Мама моя – ты знаешь, и так в деревне из последних сил! Твои родители далеко и пенсионеры!

АНДРЕЙ Замолчи!

КАТЯ Не затыкай меня!

АНДРЕЙ Тетеха.... Ты чего?

КАТЯ Я боюсь, Андрей! Ты думаешь – я дурочка и ничего не понимаю? А я все понимаю! Тебя не берут на работу не потому что до них не доходит, а потому что тебя вообще не берут! В принципе! Потому что ты не можешь

устроиться на работу, потому что тебя не берут, потому что ты не можешь, и тебя не берут! Потому что ты не можешь, ты не можешь, тебя не берут, ты не можешь заработать нам денег, потому что тебя не берут, а мне рожать, а тебя не берут, ты звонишь, а они не перезванивают. А хозяйка нас выгнать грозит! И выгонит, если так дальше будет.... Выпил мой компот, а мне рожать, и я не знаю, как мы будем, и моя мама меня убьет, потому что я ничего не закончила, и уже родила, и я с ребенком, а ты не можешь заработать нам денег, чтобы даже поесть!!!

АНДРЕЙ Заткнись! Замолчи! Или я не знаю... А товар я грузил? А листовки клеил? Или не работал, скажешь? Да куплю я тебе твой дурацкий компот, не надо так со мной разговаривать! Прямо сейчас пойду, и принесу тебе твои деньги, раз тебе так невмоготу, раз я тебе только так нужен!

КАТЯ Иди! Давай! Куда ты пойдешь?

АНДРЕЙ Сейчас прямо пойду – и принесу!

КАТЯ Иди!

АНДРЕЙ Пойду!

КАТЯ Иди!

Андрей идет в прихожую, обувается.

АНДРЕЙ Катя, ты возьмешь свои слова назад, слышишь?

КАТЯ И возьму! Ты пойдя сначала!

АНДРЕЙ И пошел!

Андрей уходит, хлопнув дверью. Катя стоит раскрасневшаяся и злая.

Трогает живот, морщится.

2.

Квартира Жанны.

Жанна в очках сидит в комнате на диване. Поджала под себя ноги, укрылась теплым пледом. На коленях у Жанны компьютер, она что-то

быстро на нем печатает. Шевелит губами – видимо, подсчитывает что-то в уме. Звонок в дверь. Жанна встает, снимает очки, идет открывать. На пороге, конечно, Андрей. Жанна молчит. Смотрит на Андрея. Решает что-то для себя.

ЖАННА *(наконец, пропуская Андрея в квартиру)* Привет, любимый.

Целует Андрея в щеку. Андрей неуверенно разувается.

ЖАННА Ты голодный или в городе поел?

АНДРЕЙ Жанна, я....

ЖАННА У меня есть пицца. Бутерброды могу сделать. Можем что-нибудь заказать.

АНДРЕЙ Жанна, у меня....

ЖАННА Что будешь? Пиццу будешь?

АНДРЕЙ Да. Я....

ЖАННА Сейчас разогрею. Слушай, что на тебе за куртка? На рынках такие еще продают, да? Я думала, у них сейчас товар поприличнее стал.

АНДРЕЙ Жанна, я хочу поговорить....

ЖАННА Снимай.

АНДРЕЙ Что?

ЖАННА Куртку снимай.

Обнимает Андрея.

ЖАННА Андрюшенька, ходить в такой куртке – это преступление. Я что, не учила тебя? Давай, разоблачайся. *(Снимает с Андрея куртку)* Фу! И ты в такой рубашке ходишь? Она же грязная! Ты в ней на бомжа похож. Немедленно снимай! Давай, давай. Сейчас мы тебе одежду выстираем, самого тебя в ванночку засунем, выкупаем. Вода теплая, нежная, мы в нее пены ароматной нальем. Я тебе пемзой лапки потру, если захочешь. Да?

АНДРЕЙ У меня ситуация такая в общем....

ЖАННА Мальчик мой голодный, устал, весь день по городу бегал.... Давай, раздевайся. Пока будешь мыться, я из твоего любимого ресторана закажу. Давай сюда рубашку...

АНДРЕЙ (*снимает рубашку*) Я уже так устал, совсем.... Представляешь, я столько звонил. Жанна, я не понимаю, почему они меня не берут....

ЖАННА Носочки снимай. Сейчас вымоешься, поешь, отдохнешь, я тебе спинку разотру, и обо всем поговорим... Ты мне все-все расскажешь. О чем думал, как по мне тосковал...

Андрей снимает брюки и носки. Жанна подталкивает его в сторону ванной комнаты. Андрей заходит в ванную. Слышатся звуки льющейся воды. Жанна идет в свою комнату, красится перед зеркалом.

3.

Вечер. Спальня Жанны. Андрей сидит на кровати в пижаме. Жанна в кружевной рубашке сидит рядом. На журнальном столике тарелки с какими-то недоеденными яствами.

ЖАННА (*хочет поцеловать Андрея*) Ты по мне скучал?

АНДРЕЙ (*Отстраняется*) Жанна, не надо. Жанна, я подумал, что нам пообщаться бы просто. Что вообще в целом мы можем быть друзьями даже. Что мы вообще-то не чужие люди как бы....

ЖАННА Не чужие. Конечно, не чужие... *Обнимает Андрея.*

АНДРЕЯ У меня проблемы, Жанна.

ЖАННА А я думала, ты по мне соскучился.

АНДРЕЙ И соскучился, конечно, тоже...

ЖАННА Поцелуй меня.

Пауза.

АНДРЕЙ Наверное, не нужно пока как бы так сразу....

ЖАННА Что сразу? Тебе уже поцеловать меня противно?

АНДРЕЙ Да нет, почему...?

ЖАННА Тогда поцелуй.

АНДРЕЙ Я не могу.

ЖАННА Почему?

АНДРЕЙ Потому что я не могу....

ЖАННА Я уже страшная для тебя стала?

АНДРЕЙ Нет, при чем здесь это? Ты красивая! Ты хорошая! *(Через паузу)*
Но я не могу.

ЖАННА А, говоришь, скучал....

АНДРЕЙ Я скучал, я правда... мы же не чужие....! Я не могу просто, но я не вру и скучал....

ЖАННА Обними меня.

Андрей неловко обнимает Жанну. Жанна целует Андрея в краешек губ.

АНДРЕЙ Жанна, не надо....

Жанна еще раз целует Андрея, на этот раз требовательней. Андрей сдается, уступает, отвечает на поцелуй Жанны. Жанна прижимается к Андрею, раздевает его. Выключает свет. В темноте слышны возня и невнятный шепот. Лежащий на тумбочке телефон Андрея вдруг начинает распевать веселую мелодию и озаряет все вокруг себя неярким светом.

ЖАННА Не бери....

АНДРЕЙ Надо взять....

ЖАННА Я сказала, не бери....

АНДРЕЙ Я возьму....

ЖАННА Перезвонишь попозже...

Телефон умолкает, но тут же начинает звонить вновь.

АНДРЕЙ Я возьму, вдруг, что-то случилось....?

ЖАННА Нет!

АНДРЕЙ Я на одну секунду...

Берет телефон с тумбочки, отвечает на вызов, уходит в другую комнату.

АНДРЕЙ *(говорит в трубку)* Вызывай скорую. Через десять минут буду.

Андрей забегают в спальню Жанны.

АНДРЕЙ Где мои вещи?!

ЖАННА Сейчас с антресолей достанем....

АНДРЕЙ Нет. Где МОИ вещи? В которых я пришел?

ЖАННА В гардеробной сушатся.... Что случилось?

Андрей убегает в гардеробную. Возвращается переодевшийся. Жанна встала, ходит по комнате.

ЖАННА Андрюша, что случилось?

АНДРЕЙ Катя рождает....! Жанна, прости меня, пожалуйста. Дай, пожалуйста, денег. На такси и на расходы, пожалуйста. Я с зарплаты все отдам. А то автобусы уже не ходят. И на автобус нет у меня. А она там рождает. Пожалуйста.

Жанна молча уходит куда-то. Возвращается с деньгами, засовывает их Андрею в карман рубашки.

ЖАННА Я мальчиков-шлюх вызывала, они брали больше, но ты же не от фирмы работаешь, так что тебе сойдет, да?

АНДРЕЙ Я отдам....

ЖАННА Зачем? Ничего отдавать не нужно, ты эти деньги честно заработал.

АНДРЕЙ Я отдам.... Я отдам.

Андрей смотрит на Жанну, кажется, он, как маленький мальчик, вот-вот расплчется от обиды. Но вспомнив, что медлить нельзя, Андрей выбегает из квартиры.

Жанна стоит, как окаменевшая, смотрит Андрею вслед. Затем закрывает дверь за Андреем.

4.

Кладбище. Ряды могил. Как в большом городе – перекрестки, улицы, тупики. Но вместо домов могилы. Кресты. Памятники. Вместо машин – конфетные обертки, которые гонит по тропинкам ветер. Вместо самолетов большие черные вороны с жадными и пронзительными глазами, живущие здесь ради приношений, которые оставляют умершим их живые гости. Жанна идет по кладбищу, уходя в самую глубь. Останавливается у величественного памятника из черного гранита. В руках у Жанны огромный букет цветов. Жанна кладет цветы на надгробие.

ЖАННА Здравствуй, папа.... Давно я к тебе не приходила. С прошлого года не была.

Жанна достает из сумки бутылку водки, рюмку, конфеты. Наливает водку в рюмку.

Ну, как тебе тут ложится, папочка? Не холодно? Не мерзнешь тут? Ну...

Вечная память.... *(Выпивает водку)* Посмотри, папочка, какой я тебе букет цветов принесла! Дорогие цветочки. Да! Вот, ничего мне для тебя, папочка, не жалко. Один ты у меня остался. К мамочке на могилу не езжу, далеко ездить, никак не соберусь. А ты вот в городе у меня лежишь. Когда сгнил ты у меня под забором, в собственной блевотине, так, поди, про дочку-то не вспомнил? Не вспомнил ведь? У тебя другие дети были, ты про Жанну свою забыл и не думал. А я вот вспомнила. В город тебя привезла. Обмыли мы

тебя, отпели, все как у людей. Поминки устроили. Людей правда мало было. Дети твои, папочка, не приехали. Только я одна и была. Даша твоя, блядина, третьим тогда ходила беременная, от кого – непонятно. Не знаю, где она сейчас. Говорят, где-то на севере жопу морозит. Сын твой, Володька, спился, папочка. Весь в тебя пошел – в канаве где-то пьяный и помер, говорят. А жена твоя, на которую ты нас с мамочкой променял, толстая стала, как свинья, говорят, в дверь не пролазит уже. Ее дети на улицах, говорят, боятся. Болеет она сильно, говорят. Подохнет, наверное, скоро. И пусть подохнет – туда ей и дорога. Она нас с мамочкой не пожалела, в нашу квартиру въехала, и по улице мимо с лошадиным лицом ходила, фыркала. Не помнишь, папочка, нет? Как ты нас с мамой в комнату шесть метров в коммуналке выселил тоже не помнишь? Как ты взятку начальнику паспортного стола дал, чтобы нас из квартиры выписали? Плохо у тебя с памятью, папочка. Лежишь там? Мягко тебе лежать в моем гробике? Гробик я тебе, папочка, дубовый заказала, дорогой, бархатом обшитый. Сама лично подушечку под голову подложила, чтобы мягко тебе спалось. В костюме тебя передела, фирменный, у тебя такого костюма, папочка, никогда в жизни не было. Видишь, ничего мне для тебя не жалко. Видишь, какие я тебе цветочки принесла? И поминать прихожу – не забываю. Я хорошая дочка у тебя, папочка. Я тебе в следующий раз машину цветов привезу, чтобы ты там в гробу перевернулся, папочка. Чтобы ты вспомнил мамочку мою, чтобы вспомнил, как она исхудала, как она к тебе денег просить приходила, как умоляла, чтобы ты меня не бросал, как у нее метастазы пошли, как она всю подушку от боли изгрызла. Как ты нам дверь не открыл, как я в тринадцать лет пошла в больницу горшки чужие мыть. Как в семнадцать мамочку одна хоронила, а ты ни копейкой нам не помог, как на поминках ее напился и матом про нее орать начал. Помнишь, нет? Что, папочка, зарыли тебя? Глубоко тебя зарыли? Черви тебя кушают? А у меня все хорошо, папочка! У меня сеть магазинов, у меня огромная квартира, у меня дача за городом в три этажа! А что – могу себе позволить! Сейчас вот дом в Италии купить хочу. Мебель у меня, папочка, в квартире вся на заказ, все из натуральных пород, все в цвет, все в тон! Любую прихоть позволить могу!

Хорошая у тебя дочка выросла, папочка, правда? И про тебя не забываю. Вон какой памятник тебе отгрохала! Какие цветочки тебе приношу. Ты за всю жизнь хоть кому-нибудь цветочек подарил? Нет, папочка, не подарил. А я тебе подарила, и еще подарю, и приду еще к тебе – помянуть тебя, папочка, приду. Чтобы ты из могилы, папочка, завыл, чтобы тебе в аду уютнее показалось, чем со мной рядом. Ты ведь, надеюсь, в аду горишь, папочка? Вместе с Володькой, выродком своим, горишь? Все вы мужики такие, все как один – как ты, папочка, и Володька твой, все вы козлы, ни одного хорошего я еще среди вас не встречала....

В это время к соседней могиле с простым деревянным крестом подходит женщина. Она что-то поправляет на могиле. Вырывает траву.

ЖЕНЩИНА (*Жанне*) Ой, какие цветочки у вас красивые.... Это из магазина, да? А как вот эти голубые называются, не знаете?

ЖАННА Не знаю.

ЖЕНЩИНА Ой, какая вы молодец, к папе своему пришли, да? Папа он вам? Я еще раньше на эту могилу внимание обратила – и памятник какой, и надпись, дорогие какие, денег стоят. Я еще и раньше подумала – какая дочка или сыночек молодец, такой памятник родителю своему поставить.

Хороший, видно, отец был, раз таких детей вырастил. Мне вот никто уже памятника не поставит. Хороший папа у вас был, да?

ЖАННА Свинья последняя. Такая мразь, каких поискать еще. Под забором, сука, и подох. Там ему и место.

ЖЕНЩИНА Ну, зачем вы так? Вы же дочка ему. Все равно его любили, правда? Какой никакой, а отец, все равно любишь, куда денешься. Правда?

ЖАННА Ненавижу его. Пусть в аду горит, козел.

Пауза.

ЖЕНЩИНА Бедная ты моя девочка.... Как же тебя в жизни, доченька, обидели, что у тебя душа так озлобилась....

Пауза.

ЖАННА Я вам не девочка.... Я вам не доченька! Я не бедная. Я богатая... Я богатая! У меня сеть магазинов! Я вам не доченька....

Жанна почти бегом уходит с кладбища. Женищина крестит ее вслед.

5.

Квартира Кати и Андрея. Играет радио. Андрей прыгает перед зеркалом с расческой в руках, представляя, что расческа – это микрофон, а он – известный певец. Звонок в дверь. Андрей идет открывать. На пороге двое парней, фотографии которых можно печатать в учебниках по истории в параграфе: «Человек эпохи палеолита».

ПЕРВЫЙ ПАРЕНЬ Ты – Андрей Иванский?

АНДРЕЙ Я.

Парни быстро и слаженно скручивают Андрею руки. Один из них остается держать Андрея, второй обыскивает квартиру. Находит ключи и паспорт Андрея.

АНДРИЙ Парни, что случилось?!

ПЕРВЫЙ ПАРЕНЬ Ты Синицыну Авдотью Павловну знаешь?

АНДРЕЙ Нет.

ПЕРВЫЙ ПАРЕНЬ Как это нет? Ты в чьей сейчас квартире живешь?

АНДРЕЙ А, ну да, я просто имя забыл....

ПЕРВЫЙ ПАРЕНЬ Че ты пыхтишь? Ты ей за четыре месяца должен был? Все, гуляй Вася! Ты ей больше ничего не должен! Ты теперь должен нам! Всю сумму и двадцать косарей за моральный ущерб. Понял? Кося, ты паспорт его нашел?

ВТОРОЙ ПАРЕНЬ Нашел. Только тут ключей одна пара.

ПЕРВЫЙ ПАРЕНЬ Где вторая пара ключей? (*Выворачивает Андрею руки*)

АНДРЕЙ Ай! Вторая пара у жены в роддоме. Парни, будьте людьми! У меня жена родила! Куда мы пойдем?

ВТОРОЙ ПАРЕНЬ *(листает паспорт Андрея)* Ты же в Усть-Ишимске родился?

АНДРЕЙ Не в Усть-Ишимске, а в Усть-Ишиме.

ВТОРОЙ ПАРЕНЬ Ну и катись в свой Засранск, че ты сюда-то приехал?

АНДРЕЙ Усть-Ишим! Вы мне диктовать будете, что мне делать?

ПЕРВЫЙ ПАРЕНЬ *(пинает Андрея)* Ты будешь делать то, что я скажу, понял? Скажу, в Засранск, поедешь в Засранск. Короче, запоминай, лошпек – паспорт свой получишь обратно, когда деньги отдашь. Вторые ключи заберешь у жены, и крайняк завтра отнесешь хозяйке. Запомнил? Запомнил или нет, я спрашиваю?!

АНДРЕЙ Запомнил. Парни, все!

ПЕРВЫЙ ПАРЕНЬ Все так все. Кось, давай....

Парни вышвыривают Антона на лестничную клетку. Следом летят его вещи – куртка, ботинки, шапка.

ПЕРВЫЙ ПАРЕНЬ Захочешь забрать свой паспорт – позвони хозяйке, она скажет, как нас найти...

АНДРЕЙ Парни, давайте договоримся! Я все отдам – дайте хоть вещи собрать, у меня ребенок новорожденный!

ПЕРВЫЙ ПАРЕНЬ Отсоси!

Андрей кидается на Первого парня, тот пинает его в живот. Андрей сгибается пополам. Парни, забрав ключи и паспорт Андрея, закрывают квартиру и уходят.

Андрей остается сидеть на полу. Ищет в куртке телефон, набирает номер.

АНДРЕЙ Алло? Здравствуйте, я хотел узнать.... Вы сказали, что можно заехать через месяц, и я понимаю, что там еще строительные работы, но можно мы заедем сейчас, потому что у меня жена родила, а я без жилья остался. Что? А почему вы из прокуратуры? Как не существует? Не собственники? Как это? Подождите. А вы? Офис что? Ясно. А-а-а... Нет, обманули – непонятно, насбали – понятнее. Нет, женщина, я не нервничаю, я сейчас засмеюсь просто.... Когда сбор дольщиков? Я приеду, конечно, напишу заявление..... Нет, сейчас не могу. Потом как-нибудь приеду.

Сбрасывает вызов. Андрей достает из кармана куртки сигареты, курит. Звонит телефон.

АНДРЕЙ Привет. Как там Митенька мой? Спит? Сопит? Поцелуй его за папу. Все хорошо, тетеха. Все хорошо, да. Я на работу устроился. Нет, не менеджером, водилой, товар развозить. Но это же ничего страшного, правда? У нас в стране любой труд в почете. В понедельник выйду на работу, у них других кандидатур вроде нет. А, вообще, я подумал, тетеха, нужно возвращаться к моим в поселок, или к тебе в деревню. Что нам в этом большом ужасном городе? Кто мы здесь? Какие-то муравьишки, бесправные чужие люди. Дом не построим, дерево не посадим, а сын наш – кем он здесь вырастет? Таким же, как я, бездомным? Нет, не философствую, правда, все хорошо.... Что? Выписали? Так скоро? Нет, почему расстроился? Наоборот! Я сейчас приеду. На такси. Если частного ловить – думаю, хватит.

б.

Лестничная площадка перед квартирой Жанны. Из лифта выходят Андрей и Катя. В руках у Андрея маленький сверток. Катя плачет.

КАТЯ Ты видел, как охрана на нас внизу смотрела? Как будто бомжи мы... А мы и есть...

АНДРЕЙ Нормально смотрела, я их знаю. Спустишь на пролет...

КАТЯ Дай мне Митьку, вдруг она что-нибудь ему....

АНДРЕЙ Дура, что ли? Нормальная она. Все, спускайся, я звоню....

Катя спускается на пролет вниз. Андрей звонит в дверь. Открывает Жанна.

ЖАННА О! Какие люди в Голливуде!

АНДРЕЙ Жанна...

ЖАННА До свидания.

АНДРЕЙ Жанна, у меня сын родился!

ЖАННА Поздравляю. *(Хочет закрыть дверь)*

АНДРЕЙ И нам теперь жить негде.

ЖАННА И?

АНДРЕЙ И. Из квартиры нас выгнали, денег нет, на улице минус пятнадцать.

ЖАННА А я при чем? Служба помощи бездомным?

АНДРЕЙ Жанна, я знаю, что я урод... Мы завтра рано утром уедем в деревню к Кате. Автобусы сейчас уже не ходят просто. На одну ночь пусть переночевать? Куда мы под вечер с ребенком? У одних знакомых телефон отключен, второй нету в городе.

Пауза.

ЖАННА А где твоя Катя?

АНДРЕЙ Она там, внизу стоит...

ЖАННА Заходите....

Уходит вглубь квартиры.

Андрей зовет Катю. Вместе они заходят в квартиру Жанны. Андрей держит ребенка на руках, пока Катя разувается, затем передает ребенка Кате, разувается сам.

КАТЯ *(шепотом)* И ты в такой большой квартире жил?

Андрей кивает.

КАТЯ Куда идти теперь?

АНДРЕЙ Не знаю....

Катя и Андрей стоят посреди коридора. Катя поправляет чепчик на ребенке. Из комнаты выходит Жанна.

ЖАННА Ну и?

АНДРЕЙ Вот.

ЖАННА Как сына назвал?

АНДРЕЙ Дмитрием. Митей.

ЖАННА Митя – слюняво, Дмитрий – красиво. Нормально. А ты, значит, Катя?

КАТЯ Катя.

ЖАННА Ну вот, а я надеялась, что ты страшная.

АНДРЕЙ Куда нам проходить-то?

ЖАННА Проходите в гостиную, там разберемся....

АНДРЕЙ Катя, вон туда иди....

*Катя уходит в гостиную, Андрей с Жанной остаются стоять в коридоре.
Молчание.*

АНДРЕЙ Прости меня, Жанна. Ты очень хорошая.

Пауза.

ЖАННА Нет, Андрей. Я очень плохая и злая. И перестань унижать меня бессмысленными комплиментами.

АНДРЕЙ Ты сильная, Жанна.

Пауза.

ЖАННА Нет. Если бы я была сильной, тебя бы здесь не было. Отстань от меня, а? Чистое постельное белье найдешь в гардеробной, поднимайтесь на второй этаж, там стелитесь и чтобы я вас не видела!

АНДРЕЙ У меня квартиру украли....

ЖАННА (*пожимает плечами*) Сам виноват значит....

АНДРЕЙ И паспорта у меня теперь нет. Я бомж.

ЖАННА Я тебя пожалеть должна?

Жанна уходит к себе в спальню. Включает телевизор. Смотрит без звука.

7.

Раннее утро. Жанна спит. Телевизор так и не выключила. В спальню заходит Андрей. Тихонько трогает Жанну за плечо. Жанна что-то бормочет во сне, открывает глаза.

ЖАННА Ты чего?

АНДРЕЙ У тебя градусник есть?

ЖАННА Что?

АНДРЕЙ Катя простудилась, наверное, пока шли. У нее температура, горит вся.

ЖАННА Посмотри в комод, где всякие сувениры валяются. Там такая большая красная коробочка с лекарствами.

АНДРЕЙ А говорила – не признаешь лекарства....

ЖАННА Ты тоже много чего говорил!

Андрей собирается уйти.

ЖАННА Подожди! А с Дмитрием что?

АНДРЕЙ Ничего. Температуры нет.

ЖАННА Он же заразится! Хочешь, чтобы у тебя сын в первую неделю жизни заболел?

АНДРЕЙ Нет. А что делать?

ЖАННА Давай его сюда.

АНДРЕЙ Куда?

ЖАННА Сюда. Ко мне. Да не съем я его! Найдешь там ромашку, жаропонижающее, воды горячей, главное, много давай.... Ну! Чего ты встал?

АНДРЕЙ Ладно, я сейчас....

Андрей уходит. Жанна спешно одевается. Андрей возвращается с ребенком на руках. Протягивает ребенка Жанне.

АНДРЕЙ Вот. Осторожнее только. Че-то ей совсем плохо, аж испарина везде...

ЖАННА *(берет ребенка на руки)* Может, скорую?

АНДРЕЙ Нам уезжать завтра.

ЖАННА Смотри, как спит, такой довольный. Если до завтра не полегчает, надо антибиотики.

АНДРЕЙ Она же кормящая.

ЖАННА Кормилицу придется искать. Или на смеси.

АНДРЕЙ Где мы найдем?

ЖАННА Чего стоишь? Иди, лечи свою страшилку!

Андрей уходит. Жанна сидит на кровати с ребенком на руках. Качает его. Ночь. Тихо.

ЖАННА Ты проснулся? Не хитри, я же вижу, ты глаза открыл. Тихо, тихо... Мама твоя заболела. Заболела, говорю. Не фиг шляться по морозу. Ну и что мы смотрим? Меня зовут тетя Жанна. Тетя Жанна я.

В комнату заходит Андрей.

АНДРЕЙ Катя просит ребенка обратно. Ей легче уже....

ЖАННА А вирусам ее тоже легче? Они за пять минут испарились?

АНДРЕЙ Она просит. Плачет прямо...

Жанна отдает ребенка Андрею.

ЖАННА Никуда вы завтра по морозу не поедете. Я вас не отпускаю.

АНДРЕЙ А...

ЖАННА Бэ.

АНДРЕЙ Ну, хорошо.... Жанна, подожди.... А дальше?

Жанна подходит к Андрею, поправляет чепчик на младенце. Жанна и Андрей стоят, опустив глаза.

Андрей уходит, унося ребенка на руках. Жанна ходит по своей комнате. Затем берет телефон, набирает номер.

ЖАННА Привет, слуга народа! Не разбудила? Я помню, что ты жаворонок, рано встаешь... Ну, как житье-бытье, однокурсничек? Работа – понимаю. У всех работа. Я тобой прямо горжусь, когда по телевизору вижу. Я к тебе вот с каким вопросом. Скажи – а у нас в стране родительских прав человека легко лишить или не очень? Ну да, вот такой странный вопрос. Родители – он, она, оба безработные, своего жилья нет, денег тоже нет. Он – алкоголик, она – наркоманка, я могу на суде подтвердить. Можно попробовать, да? Может быть, я к тебе сегодня вечером заеду и подробно обо всем под водочку поговорим, да? Не занят сегодня, нет? С меня самогон и сало! Нет, ты такого не пробовал! И о благодарности там же сговоримся – я, сам знаешь, в долгу никогда не оставалась. Вот и хорошо. Маринке твоей привет огромный! До вечера, однокурсничек!

Жанна стоит, смотрит в окно.

Конец.

PLAY THREE

Александра Поливанова, Михаил Калужский

“ВТОРОЙ АКТ. ВНУКИ”

Полина

Когда я рассказываю дочери о ее предках, это не всегда просто. Она сама не стимулирует меня рассказывать, не спрашивает ни о чем.

Ну я ей говорю, например, так: “а ты вот знаешь, что вообще у нас в семье происходило? Вот мой прадед, а тебе-то он прапрадед, это, может, не очень интересно, но тем не менее: пусть людей не прямо убивал, но отправлял их вагонами туда, где из них выживали далеко не все”. Дочь, естественно, бледнеет, она вообще девушка впечатлительная. Но это я сейчас пересказываю иронично. А вообще так конечно неправильно, надо, наверное, как-то по-другому, но у меня нет протоптанной дорожки для этого, потому что со мной на эту тему никто не разговаривал. Поэтому я абсолютно не знаю, как это делать. Она пунктиром что-то такое знает, но у нее нет никакого ни эмоционального, ни интеллектуального пока к

этому интереса. А может быть, – это было бы очень для меня неприятно, но я бы не удивилась, – может быть, действительно наследуется вот эта штука. Наследуется не генетически, разумеется, а через воспитание. Вот это отсутствие необходимости задавать вопросы. Что мне было бы очень неприятно, потому что сама я правда делаю каждый раз над собой специальное усилие. А чтобы его сделать, ты саму себя за волосы вытаскиваешь. Это нереально на самом деле. То есть пока ты не получил вопроса снаружи, ты и не отвечаешь на него.

Марина

Понимаете, какая вещь... Я не могу сказать, что была всю жизнь противником смертной казни. Но достаточно рано стала. Я вообще считала, что убивать... ну, во всяком случае, лет в 20 я уже, наверное, думала... раньше не помню... Что убивать – это великий грех, вообще нельзя убивать. Поэтому, конечно, никакой смертной казни, никакой смертной казни. Я думала, что власть виновата. Гораздо больше виновата, чем мой отец – это я тоже думала. Но отец в этом во всём принимал участие. Грехи его на нём. И он, наверное, делал такие же вещи, как потом и советская власть... И до того, и потом. Поэтому ни о

какой реабилитации от советской власти говорить нельзя, это аморально. Кстати говоря, дочка моя писала заявление о его реабилитации. А я не поддержала, ни в коей мере. Нельзя. Чего нельзя, того нельзя.

Наталья

У меня не было с ним, естественно, серьёзных разговоров на эту тему, да и с мамой тоже. Они берегли нас. Я думаю, он даже не мог откровенно говорить с семьёй.

Вениамин

Мои воспоминания о деду не совсем полные. Дед был начальником особого отдела НКВД по борьбе с бандитизмом. Ну что такое бандитизм во время гражданской войны и после – понятно. Потом он был каким-то комендантом, потом его откуда-то вычистили, но он остался служить в системе НКВД. Дед умер в ссылке. Меня назвали в честь брата деда, но его я не застал. Что я знаю ещё о своих дедах? Они были по рассказам семейства, красивые, добрые, замечательные. У деда был дом, это называлось "дача". Дед был гостеприимный, любил и хорошо относился к детям, все всё время приезжали в гости, всех кормили, поили. Там были

замечательные собаки, лошади, люди – зеки – которые за всем этим ухаживали. Дед был начальником участка на канале Москва-Волга. В Яхrome. Ну эта “дача” – это лагерь собственно. Дмитровлаг.

Ольга

Сначала: вот бабушка, вот коммунистка, про нее книжки написали, очень почетно, между прочим, не про каждого пишут книжку, клево. Потом еще что-то. Потом так типа думаешь: бабушка? Это моя бабушка? Вы уверены, что это все сделала бабушка? Ты сначала удивляешься, потом ты преодолеваешь это. Думаешь: окей. Но просто надо еще хорошо понимать, что вся семья относится к ней как просто как к бабушке. Что она думала по поводу своей истории и истории страны – хрен знает.

Марина

Мама была абсолютно советской, – там никаких возражений быть не могло. И там... ну, даже всякие нелепости на эту тему были совершенно очевидные. Но она была человеком и добрым, и справедливым, и абсолютно принципиальным.

Но насколько она была советской, и насколько в ней эта дурость была глубоко... Знаете, я была ею один раз в жизни оттаскана за волосы. Она мне вцепилась в волосы. Вы знаете, за что? Мне было 13 лет, и я прочла «Сорок первый» Лавренёва, и она меня спросила: «а ты могла бы влюбиться в белогвардейца?» Я сказала: «да». Вот, за это. Она, никогда в жизни не поднимавшая руку ни на кого, – тем более, что она была воспитательница в детском саду, – и тут она вцепилась мне в волосы. Этого результата своей педагогической деятельности она не могла себе простить.

Михаил

Я деда никогда не видел, он умер в год моего рождения.

Наталья

Я помню деда домашним человеком в халате. Он очень-очень любил нас, очень вообще нежный был дед. Меня называл Фиалкой почему-то. Может я такого синего цвета была? Немножко синюшного... Нежный-нежный был. Нас приносили после душа, после ванной, ему сказать “Good night”. Ещё у него была слабость, он любил шоколад и прятал его у себя в ящике стола в кабинете. Мы немножко подворовывали у него этот шоколад из ящика,

прятались за занавесками у него в кабинете, и съедали. А дед, оказывается, и хранил его, чтобы нам подарить на какие-то праздники, дни рождения — просто так нам не разрешали есть сладости. А ещё подворовывали у него иностранную мелочь — он же в основном, за границей жил, и последний его пост был послом в Вашингтоне во время войны, и, в общем, оставались у него эти самые монетки в каком-то таком кисетике. И, я помню, во дворе Дома правительства тоже раздавала эти деньги, это очень мне казалось здорово. Ещё подворовывали у него опасные бритвы. «Шеффилд», по-моему, вот такие, которые вставлялись в станок, очень острые, стальные. В общем, это было какой-то такой валютой у меня, что я за это получала, я даже не знаю. Помню, как мы в его кабинете нашли бланки Наркомата иностранных дел, и стали делать самолётики и пускать с восьмого этажа туда, прямо на набережную. Мы жили прямо над Театром эстрады. В общем, веселое детство у нас с дедушкой было.

Инна

Собственно, мне обо всём рассказала моя мама, которая формально меньше всего вовлечена в эту историю. Но она замужем за папой и носит такую

же фамилию, и работала в той же среде, что и дедушка. Он после СМЕРШа работал в архитектурном НИИ. Мама в какой-то момент неожиданно для себя получила некоторую эмоцию, которую не могла понять, в которой сама не разбиралась и, видимо, захотела нас предупредить. Потому что папа молчал как партизан. Он вообще мастер нейтралитета, мастер молчания.

Вениамин

Двоюродный дед был чуть младше, они с дедом были погодки, но он обошел деда по этой самой лестнице, работал в угрозыске и стал затем начальником угрозыска города Москвы. А потом, кажется, была введена такая должность – начальник милиции, это уже в 30-е. Я читал газету тридцать какого-то года, в “Вечерке” сообщение, что вот в Москве состоится военный парад, принимает парад товарищ Сталин, командующий парадом – маршал такой-то, ответственный за парад – мой двоюродный дед, которого я полный тезка (по имени, отчеству и фамилии). Он погиб в 1938 или 1939. Когда отец называл меня в его честь, он знал только, что тот был начальником МУРа, потом начальником милиции Москвы, вот отвечал за проведение парада. Когда они ездили на его машине, то милиционеры отдавали честь. Вот все,

что он знал. Конечно, отец не знал, что двоюродный дед был членом тройки и подписывал смертные приговоры. Откуда он мог это тогда знать?

А я про двоюродного деда все прочел у Мельгунова и Солженицына.

Вера

Когда я попросила бабушку по маминой линии начать мне давать интервью на эту тему, она, конечно, испытала массу каких-то противоречивых эмоций. Она то хотела говорить, то не хотела. И это была прямо интересная работа. Потому что обычно, когда берёшь интервью у человека о каких-то вещах, которые произошли 30-40-50 лет назад, ты всегда получаешь одну и ту же историю, которая рассказывается по накатанной, и фиг её пробьёшь. А бабушка эти истории, видимо, никогда никому не рассказывала, или рассказывала один-два раза. В общем, они никак не были обкатаны, она и самой себе, видимо, их ни разу не рассказывала. И поэтому я могла, допустим, взять у неё интервью три раза и получить довольно разные интерпретации одних и тех же событий, разные истории.

Марина

Отец был из левых эсеров. А они были многие ну в общем террористами. Во всяком случае признавали и применяли это дело. Не обязательно, но в том числе. Они пошли в ЧК. И отец пошёл в ЧК. По началу довольно долго, до... ну, года до 32-го, наверное, он работал... этим самым, как теперь называется? Резидент, да? По заграницам. А после этого был уже в Москве. Я отца помню. Но меня вот дочка спросила сейчас, любила ли я отца? Я всегда считала, что любила. Но я его так мало видела, что сказать определенного... Ну как? – Это было привычно. Вот, так принято — дома папа, и папа любит, и папа иногда придёт и сказку прочтёт, и стишок какой-нибудь прочтёт, по головке погладит. Но мало и редко, в общем. Какой он был — мне сказать трудно. Но характер у него был совершенно взрывной, это точно.

Михаил

Дед происходил из большой еврейской семьи. У него было три сестры и брат. Брата я немного застал — он был чекистом, дед его тоже вытащил, служил потом в СМЕРШе, а после войны стал богемным, писал сценарии... А мужем сестры дедовой был Черток — один из самых страшных следователей НКВД. Вообще я большую часть биографий узнал от родителей, — но это было не

очень просто. Тем более что архивы все были уничтожены. Еще всё осложнялось тем, что все меняли фамилии и они у всех разные. Какие-то вещи кто-то в моей семье упорно отказывался обсуждать. К примеру, я плохо знаю родословную своего отца. Но большая часть биографических сведений рассказывалась – ну в каких-то байках за столом, таких семейных разговорах... Когда я стал сам интересоваться, то почти не решался задавать вопросы, из мамы клещами приходилось вытаскивать. Некоторые разговоры мемуарного свойства мне даже в голову не приходило завести. И поэтому информацию, в какой стране живу, я начал получать не от родителей. В нашей семье как-то информация существовала отдельно от людей.

Может быть, родители оберегали меня, считали, что мы строим социализм с человеческим лицом... Сами они, конечно, были антисталинистами. И, конечно, какие-то разговоры о Сталине дома были, говорили, поэтому когда я читал Солженицына, у меня уже был какой-то контекст. Но в нашей семье как-то информация существовала отдельно от людей.

Вера

Легенда моей бабушки была не в том, что она — цензор, а в том, что после того как она была цензором, она 30 лет проработала в издательстве «Наука», она дала Советскому Союзу всего Джеральда Даррелла, была инициатором перевода и издания его книг, заделалась альпинистской в 50 лет. Так что эта моя бабушка, – классическая интеллигентная бабушка, только ещё очень пассионарная. А что было с ней до того, как она пошла в издательство «Наука», мне и в голову не приходило спросить. К тому же, что вообще могло быть до пятидесят какого-то года? В моём воображении и времени-то такого не было.

Инна

Как я к этому отношусь? Как к эпизоду истории я отношусь. Просто моя семья оказалась в это вовлечена. Я не знаю, при каких обстоятельствах мой дедушка был позван в СМЕРШ. Я не знаю, что было поставлено на карту, какой у него был выбор. Я не знаю, как случилось, что он стал следователем по делу Валленберга. Я прекрасно понимаю, почему его туда позвали. Ну собственно его образование, школа predetermined, что его туда позовут, потому что он говорил на немецком совершенно свободно. А с другой стороны, как я

**понимаю, он был абсолютно предан идеалам
Коммунистической Партии Советского Союза.**

Вениамин

**У меня другое воспитание, нежели у отца. Отец все
детство и юность провел на этой самой “даче”, для
него это было в порядке вещей. Его отец причастен
к этой системе. А для меня Советский Союз,
Сталин, сталинизм, вся эта система мерзкая
воспринимались как нечто враждебное, ну а
далее простые логические связи привели к
пониманию, что быть начальником лагеря вообще-
то нехорошо.**

**Когда это началось?.. Ну-у-у, когда все дети бунтуют
против своих отцов?.. лет с 14, наверное... Раньше я
об этом не задумывался.**

Марина

**А у меня вот обиды и досады не было. Это не мое,
вообще, понимаете? Я как-то всегда считала, что он
выбрал свой путь и по этому пути шел, таким,
каким он был — он, наверное, был очень узким
человеком... Значит, он и шёл по выбранному пути.
Ну, за что ж тут обижаться? Это уже судьба. Но
желания оправдывать у меня тоже не было
никогда. Я понимаю, что каждый человек, если он**

просто не палач от природы, переживал какие-то этапы, чем-то руководствовался, что-то его толкало, что-то его задерживало, что там был свой процесс. Я думаю, что такой процесс был и у отца, и я всегда думала, что вообще началось все с левого эсэрства, и его довольно долгое подпольное существование сыграло роль, и в характере были очень противоречивые вещи, да. А оправдания нет, это я знала. Тем не менее, оправдания нет. Вина — есть вина, и она... кончается смертью.

Ольга

Моя бабушка не пожила в свое удовольствие. Она была готова жертвовать. У нее была идея, ради которой она была готова пожертвовать многим. Она была готова отдать все ради того, чтобы вот эта лучшая жизнь для других состоялась. Она была готова голодать. Моя бабушка отдавала последний кусок хлеба чужим детям. Имея на руках младенцев. Я не уверена, что это что-то искупает, я даже думаю, что это никуды не искупает, но ты не можешь остаться безучастным, когда ты понимаешь, что человек был готов на все. Отказаться от детей, от квартиры. При этом у нее до хера было мужиков, они все были вокруг нее, вот так вот штабелями. Еврей какой-то, какой-то еще, следующий, после следующий. Родить? Рожу,

ладно. И вот она живет, и живет, и живет, и она переживает всех, и она каменеет. Она всегда была одна. Типа эти люди отдельно, а я отдельно. Со своей идеей, со своей жизнью. А параллельно ты понимаешь, что она скрыла возраст, пришла в революцию не 14-летней девочкой, как она пишет, а 20-летней. У которой мать держала публичный дом. В Сибири. Что ее подтолкнуло? Что с ней случилось? Блядь, великая любовь? Ну вот правда, ведь что-то же случилось с ней, что она все туда вбухнула. И вот у тебя прошло все: у тебя умерли дети, умерли люди, с которыми ты все это затевал, а ты все живешь. Ты живешь. Потом к тебе приходят какие-то странные журналисты, которые говорят: давайте вас сфотографируем со всей вашей семьей. И все эти военные парады, и стоят эти все, Брежнев, и через одного моя бабуля стоит. А лицо у нее всегда было такое, знаете, из серии: я исполняю долг. Слово «долг» вообще для нее было очень важным. Может быть, это была их религия, правда. Может быть, они все были религиозные фанатики. Но то, что они не пожили в свое удовольствие и расстреливали не в свое удовольствие, по моей бабушке я точно это знаю, сто процентов.

Евгения

Мама ее отец велел и она поступила немедленно на юридический факультет Московского университета. Где одним из её учителей был Андрей Януарьевич Вышинский, о котором она до конца своих дней сохранила самые радужные воспоминания, и всё время мне говорила, что, вот, был настоящий профессор, так латынь знал! А я пыталась рассказать, что Андрей Януарьевич был не только настоящим профессором. Я уже читалась к тому времени "Архипелаг ГУЛАГ" и многих других вещей, а мама особенно не спорила, но говорила: "ты знаешь, он был такой профессор, он так знал латынь, такие академические у него были лекции, он был так подстрижен, седина такая красивая, он приходил в таком безупречном костюме, и он так читал лекции в этой Большой Коммунистической аудитории." Я говорила: "мама, как ты можешь про него так говорить? Это палач, который стоил жизни миллионам". "Вот это я не знаю", – говорила она, – "но читал он замечательные лекции".

Михаил

У нас есть большая комната, «кабинет», и там большие стеллажи со стеклянными крышками, шведские полки так называемые, я иногда там спал. И в детстве, с тех пор, как я научился читать,

в основном моим чтением были корешки книг – названия и авторы. Там были альбомы по искусству, все на свете. Дед был библиофилом, у нас вообще замечательная библиотека, книги 16-17 века, прижизненный Пушкин, и это связано с тем, что дед занимал такую должность... Так вот, среди прочего там, например, долгие годы до недавнего времени стояли подушечки с черной окантовкой с орденами и медалями деда: орден Ленина, два ордена Отечественной войны, медали многочисленные. Это просто была деталь интерьера, понимаете, дизайн такой. Кроме того, там стояли книги, которые написал дед. Он написал много всего, это были учебники по марксистско-ленинской философии, серия книг про юные годы Ленина, которая называлась «Ленин в Поволжье», он еще издавал рабочий фольклор. Это одно из главных детских воспоминаний, связанных с тем, в какой среде я живу, – это ордена, которые стояли за стеклом, и дедушкина книга «Ленин в Поволжье». У нас хранится, кстати, сигнальный экземпляр «Мистера Твистера» с иллюстрациями Лебедева и подписью Сталина. Красным карандашом. «Можно разрешить». Да, кстати. Ордена совершенно незаконным образом мы храним, потому что их положено сдавать. Это вообще-то похоронная такая история, потому что эти подушечки – это вот то, что

несут за гробом, эти ордена. В общем, я жил в такой похоронной атмосфере. Красное и черное.

Полина

Кем, собственно, был наш дед, мой прадед в смысле, я узнала по большому счету уже после того, как умер мой папа. Потому что это запретная тема была, прежде всего, для него. Он был ограждением, которое не давало проникнуть вообще никакой информации, которая с его точки зрения была опасной. Я не должна была знать, что мы евреи, не должна была знать, что мой прадед работал в НКВД. Я не должна была знать, что мой отец сам учился в Высшей школе КГБ. То есть я об этом узнала, конечно, еще когда он был жив, но мне уже было вполне достаточно лет. Поэтому для меня детская история про прадедушку – она в контексте историй, которые моя бабушка рассказывала про моего папу. Папа дружил с дедом, он просил у него шоколад, он ходил с ним вместе гулять. Мой отец иногда еще добавлял к этим рассказам, как-то он так сильно усмехался в бороду, у него была такая специфическая мимика, когда он говорил: «ну да, конечно, шли мы по Лубянке как-то раз, я держу деда за руку. А он, значит, не может ответить, например, человеку, который идет навстречу и отдает деду честь, потому что я его в это время

дергаю за рукав». Мне маленькой это ни о чем не говорит, и я вижу только, как все взрослые так – тынц! – делают стойку... Это в семейном кругу исключительно рассказывалось. Такая «смешная» история. В общем, это не расчленимый на какие-то конкретные сюжеты образ очень доброго прадедушки. Поскольку я его не застала, меня не очень интересовала эта фигура, поэтому я как-то даже вопросов особо не задавала. Но я их и позже не задавала.

Евгения

Какие-то такие разговоры дома были. Про... репрессии тогда это называлось. Про Сталина, про репрессии, про лагеря. Но я чувствовала, что люди как-то... вроде бы и сказали, но, вроде бы, и чего-то главного не сказали. И многие говорили, что это было правильно, по-другому мы бы не построили наше государство, мы бы не выиграли бы в войне. Некоторые наоборот начинали возмущаться и кричать, что Сталин – людоед, что-то ещё в этом роде. И я чувствовала, что тут есть какой-то очень большой спор. И когда я уже как-то в ум вошла, мне очень хотелось сформировать собственную точку зрения на этот счёт. Потому что, вроде, все люди, которых я нежно любила, одни говорят одно, другие – другое, третьи вообще ничего не говорят.

Как родители, например – они вообще старались со мной на эту тему не разговаривать.

Инна

То, что он сам думал, мне кажется, я могу легко реконструировать. Но я бы много отдала, чтобы узнать, какие разговоры были в семье у дедушки по этому поводу. В его еврейской семье. Про судьбу Валленберга. Вот между мамой, папой, сестрой, которая был на шесть лет его младше. Это было бы интересно. Потому что в семье, как известно, все самые беспощадные.

Михаил

У моих родителей не было других претензий к деду, кроме тех, что бывают обычно между родителями и детьми. И все семейные отношения были гораздо важнее, чем биографии дедушек и бабушек. Я не могу сказать, что обвиняю деда. Но мне кажется, что я стал интересоваться историей, а сейчас занимаю довольно активную гражданскую позицию, отчасти потому, что в генетическом коде, может, заложена попытка перекорезить. И может, это как раз от дедушки. Если у них получилось перенаправить всю страну в другую сторону, то почему у меня не получится? Понимаете, я вырос и

прожил всю жизнь в доме с окнами на Кремль! Вся история происходила у меня перед носом!

Ольга

Если быть точной, она просто потеряла материнские чувства по отношению к своим детям. Их было много, от разных мужиков, у нее был в любовниках прекрасный товарищ Хрущев, который собственно и вытащил ее из тюрьмы, когда она сидела, и всех ее детей вытащил. Но все эти дети ей были даром не нужны, у нее было великое дело революции, и ему она была абсолютно предана. И очевидно, что пока ребёнок маленький, вот как у животных, она о нем заботилась, переживала, а потом раз – на ногах стоит, бегают, еду себе добывает и как-то так.

Евгения

Мои родители, на мой взгляд, были совсем не худшими людьми в этой системе. Скорее наоборот. И папа в своей организации был, не худшим человеком. Мне рассказывали, как он пытался помочь нескольким людям, иногда очень своеобразно это делал. Да, конечно они ответственные. Конечно, они за все ответственные. Особенно папа, который имея расстрелянного в

тюрьме отца, не должен был идти работать в Комитет государственной безопасности. Я всё время считала, то есть они мне всё время говорили, что дедушка в 38-м году умер от туберкулёза. Он был шахтёром, комсоргом какой-то шахты в Донбассе, и это профессиональная шахтёрская болезнь, такой молодой умер от туберкулёза. Где-то в 89-м или 90-м, то есть, буквально за 2-3 года до смерти, отец сказал, что деда расстреляли в тюрьме в 38-м году. А бабушка, его мать, скиталась по всяким станицам и меняла место жительства каждые 6-7 месяцев, чтобы не нашли. Они были на оккупированной территории 11 месяцев. Я говорю: "папа, а что же ты вообще молчал все эти годы? Это как?" Он мне сказал: "Да ты антисоветчица, тебе скажи, у тебя язык как помело..." Не должен был он идти работать в КГБ. Но это такой советский конформизм.

Вера

Бабушкина работа в цензуре точно не была каким-то центральным фактом нашей жизни. У нас были в семье какие-то точки морального напряжения, куча всякой ерунды, связанной с нашей эмиграцией: в какой-то момент дедушка мой с другой стороны начал на нас стучать. Вот это, да, это было моральное напряжение, будь здоров. А то,

что бабушка за много лет до моего рождения, в сталинское время работала в цензуре, это воспринималось как факт, как факт истории. То есть, абсолютно нейтральный факт. При том, что, конечно, то, что другая бабушка отказалась сотрудничать с НКВД, воспринималось как факт героизма.

Со этой второй моей бабушкой сложнее обсуждать, потому что у нее более обкатанная история. Она сначала героически отказалась сотрудничать с НКВД, когда ее призвали. А потом однажды решила согласиться, потому что надо было кормить детей. И для нее это эпизод не о коллаборационизме, а о том, как она смешно забыла, что она слепа на один глаз, и поэтому не прошла медкомиссию НКВД. И сбить её с того, что эта история про то, как она была слепа на один глаз, оказалось решительно невозможно. То есть я её спрашиваю: «а кем бы ты там была?» – «Ну, я бы там...», в ранге лейтенанта, по-моему, она должна была там начать работать, – «была бы, да, офицером МГБ». – Ну и как тебе это? – Ну, что, переводить, подумаешь. Техническая работа, как известно.

Евгения

День чекиста в семье отмечался. 20 декабря. Ну, не то, что бы мама отмечала, но папа отмечал. И вообще это слово "чекист", именно "чекист", было священное для нашей семьи. При этом было какое-то удивительное двоемыслие, они вообще все хорошо понимали. И когда я как-то раз отцу впрямую сказала: "ну как же ты можешь быть членом партии, которая стоила нашей стране миллионы жизней? Ну как это вообще может быть?" А он мне сказал: "ты знаешь, благодаря этой партии я имею в жизни всё, что имею. Я – неграмотный крестьянский паренёк, который до 18-ти лет полагал, что слово "обелиск" пишется через "т" – "отбелиск", от слова "отбеливать", а паровоз в первый раз увидел в 17-лет. А теперь я поездил по всему миру, увидел всё, тебя, свинью такую сумел воспитать, антисоветчицу". Я к этому времени Евангелие прочла, и я тут же ему сказала "горе тому человеку, который приобретёт весь мир, а душу свою потеряет". После чего папа сказал: "да вообще иди ты отсюда, видеть тебя не хочу". То есть он мне, в общем, позволял так с ним разговаривать. При этом я, конечно, была не права, потому что душу он совершенно не потерял, он был очень добрым человеком. И все, кто его вспоминали, вспоминали, что он был добрым. И я действительно была антисоветчицей. Но такой домашней. То есть спорить с ними сидя дома, я

была готова, но переходить что ли в другой лагерь – нет. Выходить на площадь или разбрасывать листовки – не была готова.

Марина

Ничего хорошего про наш строй мама не думала. Но когда Сталин умер, то она три дня плакала. Три дня плакала на тему: что теперь с нами сделают? Причём сама отдавала себе отчёт в этой формулировке: «с нами сделают». То есть, всё равно мы игрушки в чьих-то руках. Что будет ещё хуже, очень страшно. А потом в день... я даже число знаю, 4-е апреля 53-го года, когда опубликовали постановление о том, что «врачи-убийцы» – вовсе не убийцы и ни в чём не виноваты, она снова пришла вся в слезах. Говорю: «что ж ты плачешь-то?» – «зачем я, старая дура, три дня плакала?», ответ был такой.

Вениамин

В начале века было ощущение, что вот этот прогнивший мерзкий царский режим, что с ним надо что-то делать. В воспоминаниях многих поэтов, писателей начала века была такая фраза: мы все дышали воздухом революции, ожиданием революции. И вообще-то – так я думаю – что и я если бы жил в то время, точно так же относился бы

к царскому режиму. Тем более все это было для них отягчено различными препонами, которые по национальным причинам стали дополнительным стимулом для дедов присоединиться к революции. С другой стороны, кто ж тебя просил быть лучшим учеником? А они были из лучших.

Наталья

И как это всё началось у него — можно понять. Он стал революционером потому что был недоволен тем, что происходит. Он ведь бежал из киевской тюрьмы, — где сейчас Тимошенко сидит, кстати. Бежал, и оказался в эмиграции. Я не думаю, что он участвовал в этой борьбе, понимая о том, что построят такое тоталитарное государство. То есть, я не думаю, а знаю. Естественно. У него было чувство справедливости, это было, это есть у всех у нас, у моего брата, который вышел на Красную площадь, у меня, которая что-то делала в тоже диссидентском движении. Так что я вполне могу себе представить, что человек, который видит, что всё не так, и что можно что-то изменить — он что-то предпринимает. Конечно, была в этом какая-то авантюризм, и в том, что он делал, и в его характере. Он такой боевой был, дедушка. Он переправлял деньги на распространение «Искры», Ленин ему что-то писал, у него было партийное прозвище «Папаша» уже к тому времени.

Экспроприация банков, закупка оружия – всё это было. Революционная борьба. Я помню по своей диссидентской деятельности, как это захватывает. Ты начинаешь что-то делать, копошишься, это всё так опасно...

Михаил

Да, у меня есть ощущение, что я исправляю ошибки деда! Но мне очень трудно вычленить его ошибки. Дед как-то, проанализировав Сталина, высказался так: «Если бы я был Сталиным, я бы поступал как он». Но что он имел в виду? Воссоздать логику Сталина. Ок, у моего деда были ошибки, но он так думал. Он был искренним. Многие его заблуждения были губительны. Много из того, что я делаю, возможно, это подсознательно попытка исправить... Я пытаюсь... Возможно, даже моя горячность по поводу люстрации связана с тем, что мой дед был высокопоставленным человеком в сталинской системе. Но это не только подсознательная, это и наследственная попытка изменить ситуацию! И вот что характерно, среди потомков революционеров есть диссиденты, а среди потомков брежневцев – нету, никто не стал модернизатором. У меня как и у деда, шило в жопе.

Евгения

Отец работал в Эфиопии, в Японии, в разных странах. (Где-то у меня валяется вырезка из японской газеты "Асахи" с фотографией, где я и мама отплываем из Японии на теплоходе и подпись: "Жена и дочь русского шпиона возвращаются в СССР"). Ну, он, конечно, не шпион был, просто использовал крышу торгпредства для всяких таких... Он в основном занимался тем, что называется... как это называется? Техническая разведка? То есть тырил разные секреты. То, что не продавали СССР напрямую – через других людей, посредников. Когда-то ему, в 80-е годы выдали грамоту, что его деятельность принесла СССР доходов на пять миллионов рублей. Тогда это были безумные деньги по тем временам советским. Он этим очень гордился. Грамоту мне не показал, но сказал. При этом он уже был такой, сильно выпивший. Особенно не пил, но как они все.

Инна

Мама не историк, и она так как-то очень путано сказала, и нам как-то ничем особенным это не показалось. Сестре тогда было 17, мне 18, у нас были совершенно другие интересы, и честно могу признаться, не до Валленберга нам было. Мы это все так восприняли даже немножко, я думаю, романтически. Какая-то появилась история

любопытная, что-то такое про войну. Это так мы узнали. Но потом, позже, я стала гораздо больше понимать про своего дедушку, когда стала общаться с людьми, которые с ним работали в одном НИИ после того, как силами своего начальника он был уволен из СМЕРШа. Дедушка всегда был очень идеологизированным, но у меня раздражение этой его идеологичностью было поздним, потому что я была очень любимой внучкой. И любая дедушкина идейность отступала при виде меня.

Евгения

Он умер в 92-м году. Классическая, почти античная смерть: рухнул тот строй и он совершенно не смог при новом строе. Он совершенно не мог принять эти перемены, это новое, он не мог на всё это смотреть. При том, что он не был особенно большим сторонником старого, он хорошо знал ту систему, хорошо знал ей цену. Но умер он полковником Комитета государственной безопасности, в боевых орденах. И с этой системой он и ушёл. Когда я уже, начитавшаяся, ему стала говорить: ну, а как же, а Новочеркасск? А эти расстрелы? Он говорит: "мы ничего про это не знали". И это же была любимая мамина тема: "Мы ничего не знали. Мы ничего не знали про

репрессии". Я говорю: "мамочка, как же ты могла ничего не знать про репрессии, у тебя половина родни сидело?" Ну, тут дальше уже начинались крики. И я, конечно, им не верила.

Наталья

Дедушка не дождался, умер чуть раньше. Но я хорошо помню, как мама рассказывала, всех поразила смерть Сталина. Я тогда и узнала, что такое Сталин. Я сказала папе: «Так ты нас на Красную площадь и не сводил» – посмотреть на этого на трибуне. И я хорошо помню, как папино лицо просто перекопилось злобой. Я первый раз папу видела таким. Он сказал: «ничего не потеряли!» Я помню эту фразу, так она меня поразила: «как, ничего не потеряли?!» Но они, конечно, к этому времени всё знали. Мы ещё жили в Доме правительства, и у нас были из ванной и туалета окна на Кремль, через реку. Помню дирижабли, помню портреты Ленина-Сталина, которые болтались там. Это всё было интересно, но что это такое, было непонятно. И мама рассказывала, что когда умер Сталин, – они были в шоке, естественно, все, – и она смотрела из туалета на Кремль, и вдруг поняла, что хуже уже не будет. Это ощущение было в семье уже давно. Но с нами никто, естественно, не делился. Действительно,

они хотели нас уберечь от всего. От знания, от пошлости, от всего.

Ольга

Если бы в начале 90-х суд над КПСС состоялся, то моя семья в этой связи испытала бы невероятное облегчение. Важно сказать, что бабушка всегда была эмоционально очень далека от своей семьи. Может быть, поэтому к ней такое отношение: бабушка и бабушка. Не герой, но бабушка. Поэтому я думаю, что семья бы испытала облегчение, потому что накопилось у всех очень много вопросов, очень много было неизвестного, что скрывалось. Кто знает? Вот узнаешь кусочек, потом еще кусочек, потом кто-то открыл еще кусочек. И каждый раз ты думаешь: ну ни фиги себе. А тут у тебя был бы перечень. Я думаю, что всем было бы очень интересно, как повела бы себя бабушка.

Вера

Конечно, привычки к тому, чтобы задавать острые политические вопросы про историю моей семьи никакой не было. Острые политические вопросы про Советский Союз — пожалуйста. Обсуждать неделями «Архипелаг ГУЛАГ», который мне родители давали читать, — пожалуйста. А вот применять это к своей семье — скорее нет.

Инна

Я знала, есть вот такая сумма фактов, что бабушка не разговаривает с людьми, которые приходят и пытаются выяснить судьбу Рауля Валленберга. От разных людей, от мамы собралась вся эта сумма фактов, которая говорила о том, что я, любимая внучка, ничего об этом не знаю. Те, кто хотели поговорить с дедом, даже приходили к нему домой. После них оставались шведский шоколад или шведские конфеты. Однажды мы пришли, и как-то про это зашла речь, и бабушка сказала что-то типа «опять пытали, приходили. Но он не стал с ними разговаривать. Я их приняла, они попили чаю, а он к ним даже и не вышел».

Полина

Когда мне было лет 8, у нас появилась собака, звали его Чак. И я где-то на асфальте написала Чак Александрович и нашу фамилию. В шутку, имея в виду, что папа у меня Александр. А потом сообразила рассказать об этом папе. У папы изменилось лицо так, что я помню об этом до сих пор. Он позеленел, побледнел, мимические мышцы проделали какую-то невероятную работу, и он сказал, чтобы я этого больше не делала никогда и сейчас же пошла бы и все стерла. Я пошла все это

стирать. Задав вопрос «почему?» уже на этот раз. Мне было сказано, что никакая личная информация не должна никуда проникать. Поэтому когда он купил свой первый мобильный телефон, он номер никому не давал. То есть ему нужен был телефон, чтобы он сам мог позвонить, но его номер никто не мог знать. Очевидно у этого не было никаких прагматических причин, это абсолютный такой психоз.

Вера

Когда в конце 70-х годов моя мама читала «1984» Оруэлла, и мама пересказывала бабушке (той бабушке по маминой линии, которая работала в цензуре) книжку. Пересказывает очень подробно и говорит: «он всё, он всё про нашу действительность предсказал! Кроме Министерства правды, всё-таки это гипербола по сравнению с нашей действительностью». Тут бабушка как-то побелела, позеленела, посинела и говорит: «а чем, ты думаешь, я занималась в Главлите?»

Михаил

В тридцатые годы дед был руководителем Главлита. И кстати, где-то в переписке Фрейденберг с Пастернаком есть упоминание, что вот дед такой нехороший человек – что-то там не

пропустил. Позже дед был зам наркома просвещения, а наркомом был Бубнов. Тоже старый большевик – не любил интеллигентов, и считал деда недобитым интеллигентом. А дед выглядел действительно интеллигентом. Ходил в пенсне. Говорят, что я на него похож. С Бубновым дед все время ссорился, в 1937 году в какой-то момент так поссорились, что Бубнов запустил в деда пресс-папье. Дед написал письмо Сталину. Отправил его. И ночью его хватил тяжелейший инфаркт. 8 месяцев по больницам и санаториям. Видимо, это его спасло от уничтожения вместе со всем наркоматом. Так гласит семейная легенда. Так или иначе, после уничтожения того наркомпроса дед уже не занимал командных постов.

Евгения

Но потом, надо сказать, папа мне привёз "Архипелаг ГУЛАГ", это вообще сумасшествие из-за границы. Он был в Швейцарии, купил эту книжку и привёз мне. На английском языке. Кстати говоря, переписку Пастернака и Фрейденберг я тоже впервые прочла по-английски, это уже мама мне дала. Ей какая-то иностранная делегация подарила, сказала: "видите, какое шикарное издание вышло". Мама посмотрела, сказала "да-да-да", и отдала мне. Я её тут же прочла и почти

наизусть выучила. То есть, впервые я её читала по-английски. Это уже потом только появилось русское издание. И "Доктор Живаго", тоже, у нас был дома на английском.

Вера

Для неё это был вопрос личной морали, а не общественного блага. Она закончила университет с дипломом преподавателя истории. И она решила, что она не может преподавать историю в школе, потому что тогда ей придётся врать детям.

Цензурой она заниматься может, это техническая работа, если она это не отцензурирует, то другой цензор это отцензурирует точно так же. Есть перечень запрещённых тем, запрещённых терминов, запрещённой информации, есть совершенно внятные принципы. Поэтому для неё это был принципиальный выбор не идти в учителя истории, а пойти работать в Главлит. В Главлите она первые три года занималась перлюстрацией, а потом уже стала цензором. А тут начинаются некоторые морально-нравственные сложности, когда она попадает на главпочтамт, и ей начинает безумно нравиться эта работа. То есть она не предполагала, что она эту работу полюбит, она думала, что это техническая работа. Она приносит себя в жертву этой технической работе для того,

чтобы быть в ладах со своей совестью. Но кто-то ведь будет посылать кому-то Хемингуэя, она этого Хемингуэя кладёт в карман, уносит с главпочтамта и читает. Потом приносит обратно и сдаёт в спецхран. Это можно. Их за это не наказывают, понятно, что это делается. А дальше — ещё интереснее, в Главлите её учат языкам, она больше всего на свете любит изучать языки, им всё время повышает квалификацию тем или иным образом. Они, в общем, в курсе того, что происходит на Западе, они в некотором смысле в курсе западной мысли. Цензоры становятся самыми просвещёнными людьми в стране, и от этого вырабатывается совершенно понятная интеллектуальная зависимость.

Евгения

А про маму мне только после смерти ее подруга рассказала, что в Японии мама работала на прослушке. Я как-то этого не ожидала. Я хорошо помню эти годы. Я в школу ездила, каждый день нас автобус отвозил в посольскую школу. А мама действительно, она ходила на какую-то работу, я никогда даже не задумывалась, что это за работа. Но я не подозревала, что она, оказывается, на прослушке сидела. И она никогда мне про это не говорила. Она очень тяжело болела после папиной

смерти, последние лет 5 мы с ней вообще жили на 15м этаже онкоцентра на Каширке. И она мне много про что рассказывала, но про это – никогда. Видимо, потому что советский человек был так воспитан, как сейф на несколько замков. Кроме того, они знали прекрасно, что язык у меня без костей. Они, я думаю, и побаивались тоже. Может быть, маме было стыдно. Я вполне это допускаю, что она как человек, всё-таки, с честью и с совестью, – а она была такой, – она понимала, что есть вещи, которые дочери про себя нельзя говорить.

Марина

Человек он был взрывной, убеждения – трудно сказать, какие они были. Очень трудно сказать. Он был безусловно, так сказать, не просто сторонником революции, а сторонником советской власти... Но чтобы свято верил – вроде нет. Потому что о деятелях высказывался нелицеприятно. Молотова иначе чем «Каменная жопа» не называл.

Наталья

Слава богу, что не дед подписывал пакт Молотова-Риббентропа. Гитлер его спас, в общем, от позора. Ну, или от чего-то ещё. Это известно: они с евреем

не собирались даже вообще садиться за один стол, Риббентропа бы просто не послали. Но дед бы пакт и не подписал. Он действительно же, честно говорил в Лиге Наций: «определить агрессора», он всё время говорил о Гитлере, об опасности. Ну, как он мог бы после этого подписать... Нет, не подписал бы. Он бы ушёл, да. Может его бы арестовали, не знаю, но он бы точно ушёл.

Марина

В 1939 году после подписания пакта Риббентропа-Молотова, я ходила в школу мимо так называемого «немецкого дома». Я жила в Савельевском переулке, а школа моя была в Гагаринском переулке, мне нужно было пересечь Остоженку и Кропоткинскую. И там на углу Староконюшенного и Мёртвого переулка – стоит особняк современный, «немецкий дом». И над ним развевался немецкий флаг. Вот тот самый – красный с белым кругом и со свастикой. Надо сказать, что мне это было ужасно. Просто ужасно. У нас... это же фашистский флаг, это же фашисты, их признают! Как же мы можем с ними дружить?! И в Москве этот флаг... а мы против Англии и Франции... Я ни одного взрослого об этом не спросила. Я понимала, что они будут выкручиваться.

Инна

Были смешанные чувства, потому что дедушка тогда был жив, но уже в плохом состоянии, я понимала, что если расспрашивать его, то ничего не добьюсь. Он вставал в стойку, и кроме страшного гнева ничего это не вызывало. Было очевидно, что человек не хочет про это говорить. Ты же не будешь насильно действовать. Только если ты не какой-то профессиональный психолог или тебе все равно, как дальше будут развиваться ваши отношения. А я себя корила каждый раз, что начинала это обсуждать. Я уже все знала, и у меня был такой момент отчаяния: кто же такой мой дедушка, ужас-ужас, что мне делать. А у дедушки, безусловно, это был немыслимый страх, который он отгонял от себя всю жизнь. Просто таким образом пытался стереть из своей жизни. Никогда он не хотел никому в этом признаваться, кому-то что-то рассказывать. Возможно, я могу только предполагать, он должен был подписать какие-то бумаги при уходе из этой организации, и наивно и честно хранил эту клятву до конца и никому ничего не рассказывал. Плюс, я думаю, что он был убежден, что вместе с ним это уйдет. Собственно, так и произошло. Он никому ничего не рассказал.

Ольга

Со своим ребенком я обсуждала это единожды и поняла, что мне не хватает слов. То есть я понимаю, что мне же надо что-то говорить, а я начинаю искать какие-то банальности. Из серии: ты знаешь, детка, было такое время, в котором, как бы тебе сказать... И ты начинаешь, с одной стороны, оправдываться, с другой – быть неубедительным, все это звучит пошло, нет никакого ощущения масштаба ни личности моей прабабушки, ни масштаба трагедии страны. Это хуже на самом деле, это выглядит так, как будто тебе дали раскраску и карандаши, и тебе нужно раскрасить разными цветами. Но карандашей-то всего два. Как взять и сказать: вот знаешь, детка, было так, твоя прапрабабушка, делала вот такие-то вещи, а ее дети за эти же самые вещи, в которые она верила, получили вот то-то и то-то, а сама прабабушка получила потом вот это...

Михаил

Психологического перехода – понимания, что эти мои родственники принимали участие в строительстве этой страны, эмоционального освоения этой информации у меня нет до сих пор.

Марина

Понимаете, я никогда не скрывала, чья я дочь, я считаю, что это недостойно вообще. У меня было... может, это тоже вбитое, так сказать, с раннего детства, сознание, что человек отвечает за себя. И он достоин того, чего он достоин.

Инна

И я понимаю, что меня это будет преследовать всю жизнь. На какой-то выставке меня познакомили с какими-то посольскими людьми. И шведы встrepенулись: "Как-как? очень знакомая фамилия, где-то мы ее встречали". И все, и удалились. А я очень быстро все соединила в голове. Я знала, что к этому моменту к бабушке приходило достаточно много комиссий. Если говорить с точки зрения моего будущего, то все ужасно замыкается. Потом мне пришлось сидеть в одном офисе с человеком, который, собственно говоря, работал в первой комиссии по расследованию дела Валленберга. Так что это была неизбежность.

Полина

Потом, когда вышла книжка Павла Поляна "Не по своей воле", выяснилось, что в ней приличное количество места посвящено моему прадедушке, который вовсе там не положительный герой при

всем его великолепии в качестве дедушки. Я ее не сразу прочла. Случайно наткнулась в сети обнаружила про прадеда – сначала майор, потом кто-то еще, а генерала ему так и не дали, что он, значит, был начальником отдела спецпоселений в ГУЛАГе. Я посмотрела все, что есть, в сети. Попадала в обморок. И успокоилась в какой-то момент. Ну и так периодически себе говорила: «ну да, у меня прадедушка палач, ну да». Как-то так. А потом меня лично познакомили с Поляном. Я понимала, кто передо мной. А когда ему назвали мое имя, я ожидала некоторой реакции, и ее немедленно увидела, потому что мне показалось, что у Поляна изменилось лицо. Он этой ситуации не помнит. Естественно. Потому что для него она ничего не значила. А для меня она значила очень много, потому что я очень быстро ретировалась, села и стала думать, что я теперь буду делать вообще в этой ситуации. Не в этой конкретной, а по жизни как мне теперь себя вести.

Евгения

Перед моими знакомым мне не то, чтобы было стыдно, но я, конечно, скрывала. Только очень близкие какие-то мои друзья это знали. И друзья-то были, как правило, всё из той же тусовки. Родители – это было святое. Поэтому особенно я

никому не рассказывала, что у меня папа – полковник КГБ. А когда говорила, реакция людей была очень, как правило, неприязненная. После этого вообще старалась на эту тему не говорить.

Ольга

Я точно не испытываю боли, увы. Я могу сейчас нагородить, что я испытываю боль, что стыжусь, но это будет нечестно. Так бывает, когда не знаешь, как должно быть на самом деле. Либо тебе не объяснили, либо это правда не сформировано никак. Знаете, вот так: вот здесь нельзя, а здесь можно. Вот мне этого никто не сказал. Поэтому испытывать что-то по этому поводу я не могу. Боли нет.

Вениамин

Как-то раз с Александром Даниэлем проскочило в разговоре, что его деды сидели на Инте, в Воркуте, ну и мой дед там же сидел. Даниэль говорит: “интересно, я спрошу”. И выяснилось, что и дедушка его Иосиф Ароныч Богораз, и жена Богоразы Алла Зимина очень хотят меня увидеть, потому что они сидели вместе с дедом. Я приехал к ним. И Алла стала рассказывать... Иосиф Аронович сказал примерно такую фразу: “Конечно он был

начальником лагеря, был НКВДшником, и это не есть хорошо, но своим поведением в лагере, своей жизнью в лагере, он искупил ту вину, те несчастья, которые причинил другим. Вот. Так что вы не должны стыдиться”. Ну и тут я не выдержал и сообщил Иосиф Ароновичу, что я и не стыжусь. У деда было правильное мировоззрение. Я совершенно не стыжусь того, что он пошел работать на тот участок, на который послала его партия, потому что так было надо и потому что он искренне считал, что это правильное дело. А потом выйти из этой системы – для этого требовалось какое-то специальное мужество, а может быть не только мужество, должно было переполнить чашу. А он старался, ну мне это видится, вести себя так, чтобы на этом самом месте – будучи начальником лагеря – не делать подлостей, в общем, быть нормальным человеком. В этом тоже нет особой вины. А то, что у него не было такого сознания мерзости всего происходящего и так далее и так далее – ну что ж, ну не было, по-другому воспитан, на других идеалах. Господи, ну сколько людей возвращались из лагеря, с изломанными судьбами и с верой в коммунистические идеалы и признавались в любви к Сталину... Мой дед этого не делал.

Полина

А мой отец незадолго до смерти подружился с остававшимися на тот момент диссидентами. И как-то раз... Помню, как мне отец говорил... Он попал за один стол с Сергеем Ковалевым. И вернувшись домой он рассказывал мне не о том, что говорил Ковалев, или что обсуждали за столом или что происходило, а о том, что он сидел на этой табуретке и бесконечно ерзал, потому что он чувствовал себя таким засланным казачком. При том, что он работал в КГБ только год по распределению за 30 лет до этого. И после этого он всегда занимался математикой как наукой, и для него не было проблемы «сотрудничество или не сотрудничество», потому что он себя всегда просто вычеркивал из этого противостояния. Но в тот момент вся его биография и, я так подозреваю, что и дедушка его тоже, всплыли на поверхность. И он мне говорил, что он не понимал, что ему делать. То есть они к нему обращались как к своему, а он им не признался сразу, что вообще-то у него есть такая в биографии черта. И никогда не признался, потому что это все-таки было сильнее его.

Ольга

Как относиться к этому, тоже не ясно. Гордиться этим? Вот хрен знает. Будешь ли ты гордиться тем,

что твои родственники кого-то расстреливали? А с другой стороны... вот одну последнюю историю расскажу и все, не буду больше ничего говорить. Это было вскоре после революции, бабушка была ещё в Сибири. В центральной России был голод, в Сибири было получше, и туда присылали детей – подкормить. И она отвечала за то, чтобы принимать этих детей. И вот она один раз приходит на станцию, открывает один вагон, а там все дети мёртвые. Открывает следующий – ни одного живого ребёнка. Следующий вагон – то же самое. Ей прислали поезд с мёртвыми детьми. Она вызывает начальника поезда, а тот ей говорит: “товарищ такая-то, мне детей дали, а еды для них не дали. А на станциях я их не выпускал, чтобы они не разбежались, они же беспризорники. Доставил, что получил”. Она достаёт револьвер и тут же, на месте, его расстреливает. Всё, пожалуйста, больше не спрашивайте меня.

Марина

Понимаете, у меня как-то есть такая странная вещь, то есть, она не странная, она от моей последующей жизни после их ареста в конце концов... Ощущение, что по существу кровное родство ничего не определяет. Не это определяет.

Инна

А возвращаясь к вопросу про Нюрнбергский процесс, я считаю, что все равно он нужен. Несмотря на какие-то личные мотивы, все равно нужен. Может быть, это что-то бы оздоровило в обществе.

Евгения

А родителей, особенно, честно вам скажу, папу, я очень любила. Папа был очень добрый, и благодаря папе, в основном, у меня было очень счастливое детство. Мама была человеком с более резким характером. Папа был добрее гораздо. И как-то я это воспринимала как данность, что, да, они работают в этой организации, ну, вот, работают. При этом, понимаете, они тоже хорошо знали цену этой организации. И если бы был Нюрнбергский процесс у нас, то я думаю, что какая-то участь их бы постигла. По крайней мере папу, это уж точно совершенно. Конечно, какое-то разбирательство, может и наказание бы его точно постигло. С мамой не знаю... просто не знаю. Вообще мне кажется, то, что у нас не было ни Нюрнбергского процесса, ни люстрации, – это одна из главных причин, почему мы сейчас оказались там, где оказались.

Марина

А дети имеют право знать про отцов и дедов. И знать как раз надо, и публиковать это надо. И, в общем, говорить и о каких-то, может быть, личных трагедиях этих людей, которые тоже были, без всякого сомнения. Я после смерти Сталина не захотела реабилитировать отца, потому что... Понимаете, какая вещь. Конечно, отец был обвинён в том, что он был шпионом немецким, турецким и ещё каким-то... Я прекрасно знала, что это неправда, что этого быть не могло, и этого не было. Но поскольку он принимал участие во всей этой системе и виноват в другом, то просить о людях, которые в этом виноваты — нельзя. Вот так.

Наталья

Однажды, я это очень хорошо помню до сих пор, дед меня встречает в коридоре. У нас там в Доме на набережной был огромный, длинный и довольно широкий коридор. Там жило две наши семьи (мы — мамины дочери и дети брата) и бабушки, все-все, шесть комнат было. Как коммуналка такая. У нас были велосипеды, и мы катались на этих велосипедах по коридору, даже двустороннее движение в этом коридоре было. И вот дед встречает меня в коридоре, смотрит на меня задумчиво: «Знаешь, мне надо с тобой серьёзно

поговорить». У меня сердце упало, я стала вспоминать, во-первых, валютные операции, во-вторых, операции с бритвами, и я поняла, что настал конец. Причём он с таким серьёзным выражением лица это сказал. Мне лет 6 было, потому что он умер, когда мне было 7. А он сказал про разговор, но у него в тот момент не было времени что-то в этот момент. И у меня до сих пор ощущение, что должен состояться этот серьёзный разговор. Как Дамоклов меч, который так и не опустился, всю жизнь надо мной висит серьёзный разговор.

PLAY FOUR

Война еще не началась

Михаил Дурненков

Пьеса предназначена для трех актеров, каждый из которых, в зависимости от художественной задачи, может *представлять* в различных новеллах персонажей мужчин и женщин разных возрастов – стариков, детей и тд. То есть пол и возраст здесь особого значения не имеет.

Части пьесы могут меняться местами по усмотрению режиссера.

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ПЕРВЫЙ. Я люблю такие вещи от которых залипаешь. Правильно залипаешь, это когда так мягко, спокойно, без чувства вины, будто дождливый день, холодно, непогода, ты быстро бахнешь рюмку водки и уже не спеша залипаешь... с пивом... медленно-медленно, все медленно, то ли ты пьешь пиво, то ли пиво пьет тебя, тепло, дома тепло и внутри тепло и залипание длится и длится...

ВТОРОЙ. Или залипаешь в интернете, в разделе «вещи», просто в таком залипающем неровном ритме меняяяяешь картинки, кроссовки, перчатки... какой принт на майке, я бы такой никогда... наверное... рюкзак... смешные блестящие ключки на подошвах... эти дырочки, чтобы дышать обстрочены серебряной ниткой специально неровно, какой кайф...

ТРЕТИЙ. Или на телефоне, в какую-то игру, типа украшать тортики, хлопать пузыри, строить что-то типа бесконечной вавилонской башни, до тех пор, пока она не перегнется в дугу под своим весом и не рассыплется, а затем снова... И так залипаешь, залипаешь...

ПЕРВЫЙ. В принципе залипать, это, наверное, самое сейчас главное удовольствие.

ВТОРОЙ. И, наверное, самое важное.

ТРЕТИЙ. Ну правда, ты сама погляди, в метро это спускаешься в подземку, там все эти... у них глаза колючие.

ВТОРОЙ. Сейчас будто набросятся, разорвут на клочки и сожрут.

ПЕРВЫЙ. Ну просто потому что у них там что-то горит внутри. То ли гастрит, то ли душа, то ли хрен их разберешь. Постоянно причем, волосы всклокочены, кожа какая-то красная пятнами, глаза колючие...

ТРЕТИЙ. Они опасные... эти люди снаружи... Такие холодные... злые...

ВТОРОЙ. Если им дать волю, они просто сожгут все. Еще чуть-чуть и...

ПЕРВЫЙ. Они просто выпустят этот огонь изнутри наружу. И все вокруг запылает. А нам это надо?

ВТОРОЙ. Нет, я не хочу проснуться от запаха дыма, я хочу спать... Я вообще не хочу думать о них, я хочу залипать, залипать, залипать, залипать...

ТРЕТИЙ. Что же с ними делать? Ведь завтра...

ВТОРОЙ. Залипать, залипать, залипать...

ПЕРВЫЙ. Зачем они нужны?

ТРЕТИЙ. Ну правда. Зачем? От них можно как-то избавиться? Это вообще реально?

ПЕРВЫЙ. Откуда они вообще взялись тут? Вот эти вот люди с колючими глазами? Кто они?

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ПЕРВЫЙ. Ты с ума сошел?

ВТОРОЙ. Мы чуть с ума не сошли!

ПЕРВЫЙ. Мы звонили в школу!

ВТОРОЙ. Мы звонили твоим друзьям!

ПЕРВЫЙ. Я себе места не находил!

ВТОРОЙ. Я чуть не поседела от ужаса!

ПЕРВЫЙ. И вот, здарсьте – пожалуйста! Откуда мы все узнаем?

ВТОРОЙ. Из интернета! «Ваш ребенок отмечен на фотографии Марш Мира»!

ПЕРВЫЙ. В центре города!

ВТОРОЙ. На площади!

ПЕРВЫЙ. А если бы тебя там побили?

ВТОРОЙ. А если бы тебя там покалечили?

ПЕРВЫЙ. Я знаю, что это было согласованное мероприятие.

ВТОРОЙ. Вот только не надо говорить, что власти были в курсе.

ПЕРВЫЙ. Это не значит, что это всем у нас нравится.

ВТОРОЙ. Вот только не говори, что вас охраняла полиция.

ПЕРВЫЙ. Еще неизвестно кого охраняла полиция.

ВТОРОЙ. Может от вас полиция и охраняла.

ПЕРВЫЙ. Не от тебя, а от тех, которые там были с тобой.

ВТОРОЙ. Черт с ними.

ПЕРВЫЙ. Но это черт с ними. Главное, что с тобой все в порядке.

ВТОРОЙ. Хорошо, что с тобой все в порядке, и ты жив и здоров.

ПЕРВЫЙ. Это очень опасно, как ты этого не понимаешь.

ВТОРОЙ. Это только называется «во имя мира».

ПЕРВЫЙ. Там может быть все что угодно.

ВТОРОЙ. Ты видел там эти флаги?

ПЕРВЫЙ. Откуда на демонстрации во имя мира флаги государства, с которым мы враждуем?

ВТОРОЙ. Вражеские флаги! Им там нечего делать! Мы же возможно завтра будем с ними воевать!

ПЕРВЫЙ. Самое правильно для такой демонстрации было бы их сжечь.

ВТОРОЙ. Точно! Сжечь их флаги на главной площади!

ПЕРВЫЙ. Тогда бы это была настоящая демонстрация во имя добра! Или как там? Во имя мира!

ВТОРОЙ. Не могут на нашей демонстрации во имя мира быть флаги врагов.

ПЕРВЫЙ. А я читал, что пишут у себя те... другие. С другой стороны.

ВТОРОЙ. И я читал. Они пишут и пишут. Развалили свою страну, хотят развалить нашу и пишут, больше же им делать нечего кроме как писать. Пишут и пишут.

ПЕРВЫЙ. Удивляются, видишь ли, почему это после этой демонстрации все разошлись? Почему это все разошлись, спустились в метро и разъехались по домам? Почему не начали избивать полицию?

ВТОРОЙ. Метать булыжники?

ПЕРВЫЙ. Вон они чего захотели! Чтобы это все превратилось в бойню!

ВТОРОЙ. Это страшно себе представить!

ПЕРВЫЙ. Вот за это мы и воюем. То есть... не воюем, но... это то, чего мы не хотим! Не допустить это! Не допустить войну! Понимаешь?!

ВТОРОЙ. А ты ходишь на всякие демонстрации и разжигашь!

ПЕРВЫЙ. Да! Ты же разжигашь войну! Вдумайся!

ВТОРОЙ. Как ты вообще мог? Как ты мог?

ПЕРВЫЙ. Ты же хороший человек...

ВТОРОЙ. Ты же еще ребенок...

ПЕРВЫЙ. А уже за войну...

ВТОРОЙ. Эх ты...

ПЕРВЫЙ. Как ты мог...

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ПЕРВЫЙ. Все?

Пауза.

ПЕРВЫЙ. Ну это ничего. Бывает.

Пауза. ПЕРВЫЙ начинает одеваться.

ПЕРВЫЙ. Как ты думаешь, вечеринка ведь еще идет? Мы же рано ушли? Я так напилась. Наверное, потому что на пустой желудок. С утра ничего не ела. У меня выступление было в два, и я волновалась. Ты слушал мое выступление?

Пауза.

ПЕРВЫЙ. Я твое тоже не слушала. У тебя же тоже сегодня было? Я просто переволновалась, потом пошла выпила кофе с коньяком, и все равно не смогла успокоиться. Потом бродила еще по городу часа два, потом вернулась в гостиницу, переделась, приняла душ и пошла на закрывающую вечеринку. А поесть и забыла. В результате уже через полчаса целовалась с тобой в такси.

Пауза.

ПЕРВЫЙ. Я не в смысле что я оправдываюсь. Просто... Уф... я кажется протрезвела.

Пауза.

ПЕРВЫЙ. Давай вернемся на вечеринку, поедим, выпьем, пообщаемся с коллегами. Я за эти три дня даже не познакомилась толком ни с кем.

Пауза.

ПЕРВЫЙ. Я редко выезжаю куда-то. Трое детей, работа, все такое. Муж. Редко бываю на таких конференциях. И поэтому у меня никакого опыта...

Пауза.

ПЕРВЫЙ. Никакого опыта публичных выступлений. Почему ты молчишь?

ВТОРОЙ. Переживаю момент.

ПЕРВЫЙ. Ты про то что.. Да ладно! Это все... Много выпили, и вообще, в первый раз ни у кого...

ВТОРОЙ. Да в первый.

ПЕРВЫЙ. Вот я и говорю.

ВТОРОЙ. У меня это впервые.

ПЕРВЫЙ. Понятно. В смысле?

ВТОРОЙ. Ты у меня первая. В жизни.

Пауза.

ПЕРВЫЙ. В каком смысле?

Пауза.

ПЕРВЫЙ. Шутишь?

ВТОРОЙ. Нет.

ПЕРВЫЙ. Тебе сколько лет? Сорок?

ВТОРОЙ. Сорок два.

ПЕРВЫЙ. Ты не шутишь. О, Господи. Может, ты шутишь? О, Господи. Почему? Ты вроде же такой... такой... полноценный.

ВТОРОЙ. Просто я не встречал единственную.

ПЕРВЫЙ. Единственную кого?

ВТОРОЙ. Просто – единственную.

ПЕРВЫЙ. Что-то мне опять поплохело, наверное, надо есть что-то кроме шоколадных конфет с коньяком. Слушай, на планете пять... или даже шесть... а сейчас, наверное, и вообще семь миллиардов людей. И ты хочешь сказать... Ты хочешь сказать ты не нашел себе какую-то там... единственную?

ВТОРОЙ. Не нашел. То есть нашел. Сейчас. Мне очень повезло.

Пауза.

ПЕРВЫЙ. Ясно. Слушай, ну ты как насчет того, чтобы вернуться на вечеринку?

ВТОРОЙ. Подожди. Давай поговорим.

ПЕРВЫЙ. Давай лучше я скажу. Я первая. В смысле – я первая скажу. Каламбур, ха-ха. Эээ... послушай, мне очень приятно, и все такое. И, кстати, для первого раза, ты прямо... молодец! Но я еще, ну просто чтобы ты знал, я еще, в общем-то, как бы замужем. И у меня семья, и у меня все в порядке, ну то есть не совсем вероятно все в порядке, раз я с тобой переспала, но это все мелочи, и это можно списать на волнение, и на коньяк, и я за год первый раз куда-то выехала без детей и... Ты понимаешь?

ВТОРОЙ. Понимаю. Ты не готова менять свою жизнь из-за меня.

ПЕРВЫЙ. Господи, как приятно иметь дело со взрослым умным человеком!

ВТОРОЙ. Я не жду, что ты будешь из-за меня менять свою жизнь.

ПЕРВЫЙ. Я тебя почти люблю. А теперь давай поедем назад. Вызовем такси прямо сейчас и через полчаса будем там.

ВТОРОЙ. Но если ты меня выслушаешь.

ПЕРВЫЙ. Зачем.

ВТОРОЙ. Я знаю, что я выгляжу странно. Мне сорок лет, ну ладно, сорок два. И я не просто так. Ну я же понимаю, что происходит и как вся эта ситуация выглядит со стороны и... Я скажу проще – я могу тебе рассказать, почему именно ты. Почему я тебя ждал так долго. Почему ты – единственная. И ты меня поймешь. Ты поймешь, почему мы должны быть вместе. Я не сумасшедший, поверь! Просто... Просто люди они же живут не задумываясь. Все происходит случайно, само собой. А у меня не так. У нас с тобой не так. Это по-настоящему. Я тебе сейчас все расскажу, и ты поймешь, почему.

ПЕРВЫЙ. Я пойму, почему именно ты.

ВТОРОЙ. Да. Совершенно верно.

ПЕРВЫЙ. А не мой муж, например? Да? Я просто сейчас уточняю.

ВТОРОЙ. Да.

ПЕРВЫЙ. И моя жизнь изменится?

ВТОРОЙ. Уже изменилась. Мы же встретились, и ты знаешь, что это – не случайно. Все вокруг случайно и само-собой и как попало, а наша с тобой встреча – нет. Это на всю жизнь. Люди как картонные пазлы, не совпадают, но им очень хочется, и они притираются, знаешь так любые два пазла можно соединить через силу, но ведь все чувствуют, что единственная пара только одна! И именно поэтому я не разменивался на что-то еще до тебя. Зачем? Лучше один раз по-настоящему, чем всю жизнь как придется. Зачем мне семь миллиардов подделок, если настоящая только одна!

ПЕРВЫЙ. Три с половиной. Миллиардов три с половиной. Если женщин и мужчин поровну.

Пауза.

ПЕРВЫЙ. А настоящий только один?

ВТОРОЙ. Вопрос в том, чтобы распознать этого единственного человека.

ПЕРВЫЙ. И ты все мне сейчас объяснишь?

ВТОРОЙ. Да.

ПЕРВЫЙ. И моя жизнь изменится?

ВТОРОЙ. Я знаю, что это очень страшно. Но надо не бояться. Жизнь изменится непоправимо, но кто сказал, что она станет хуже? Не бойся! Это как... как потерять девственность. Раз и навсегда. Для начала, надо сказать – Здравствуй, моя любовь. Я искал тебя всю свою жизнь и нашел. Просто повтори – Здравствуй моя любовь, я искал тебя всю свою жизнь...

Второй закрывает глаза и распахивает объятия. Пауза. Первый внезапно убегает.

ВТОРОЙ. И нашел.

Второй, всё еще держа руки распахнутыми, раскрывает глаза.

•

ПЕРВЫЙ. Я робот с блоком абсурда.

Пауза.

ПЕРВЫЙ. Ты слышал?

ВТОРОЙ. Кто ты?

ПЕРВЫЙ. Я робот с блоком абсурда. То есть я робот, но чтобы никто меня не вычислил и не узнал, что я робот, вот для этого во мне стоит блок абсурда.

ВТОРОЙ. Ясно.

ПЕРВЫЙ. Хочешь, скажу что-нибудь абсурдное?

Пауза.

ПЕРВЫЙ. Ты спишь что ли?

ВТОРОЙ. Нет.

ПЕРВЫЙ. Хочешь, я скажу что-нибудь абсурдное?

ВТОРОЙ. Что ты доебался до меня?!

Пауза.

ПЕРВЫЙ. Блок абсурда делает меня похожим на живого. На настоящего человека. Я могу парадоксально шутить, неадекватно реагировать и вообще. Я понимаю абсурд. Ни один искусственный интеллект не понимает, если он оказался в глупой ситуации. А я понимаю. Вчера я видел своего друга художника. Он был с ребенком на детской площадке и встретил там своих каких-то знакомых. И я подошел, поздоровался с ним, потом попросил его познакомить меня с этими людьми, и он честно пытался, но тут же стало понятно, что он забыл, как зовут этих знакомых, и была глупейшая ситуация, и эти знакомые страшно на него обиделись, и ему было ужасно неудобно, и я все это понял. Но если бы я был без блока абсурда, я бы не понял, что произошло, потому что...

ВТОРОЙ. Давай.

ПЕРВЫЙ. Что давать?

ВТОРОЙ. Давай, говори что-нибудь абсурдное. И вообще ты заебал меня, если честно. Просто скажи и отъебись от меня.

ПЕРВЫЙ. Хорошо. Ты уверен?

ВТОРОЙ. Давай.

ПЕРВЫЙ. Абсурд генерируется. Сейчас.

ВТОРОЙ. Ясно.

ПЕРВЫЙ. Одну минуту.

ВТОРОЙ. Ага.

ПЕРВЫЙ. Процесс, возможно, займет больше времени, чем было рассчитано...

Пауза.

ВТОРОЙ. Господи, какая тоска...

Подходит ТРЕТИЙ.

ТРЕТИЙ. Так, кто следующий на прием?

ВТОРОЙ. Он. А я после него.

ТРЕТИЙ. Анализы с собой?

ПЕРВЫЙ. С собой, собой, только я не понимаю, что там написано, почему мне никто толком не может объяснить, что там написано, что все это значит?! Я вообще не могу понять эти закорючки, я спрашивал УЗИста, он ни черта...

ВТОРОЙ. У меня такая же ситуация. Меня тоже отправили к онкологу. Мне тоже ничего не говорят. У меня тоже черт знает что...

ТРЕТИЙ. Доктор все вам разъяснит. В свою очередь. После вот этого молодого человека. Подождите еще. (Первому) А вы – пойдете со мной.

ПЕРВЫЙ. Да? Прямо сейчас? (Второму) Я могу, кстати, тебя пропустить. Хочешь? Хочешь передо мной пройти? Что-то я тут подумал, я могу еще подождать...

ВТОРОЙ. Иди, иди. Ты первый. Ты хотел быть первым, я занимал очередь как раз за тобой, и будет справедливо, если ты пойдешь первым. Логично и справедливо. И правильно. И вообще, мне везет, когда я иду вторым. Да. Мне всегда везет, когда я иду вторым. Мне нужно, мне нужно это везение...

ТРЕТИЙ. Ничего не понимаю, вы меня совсем запутали. К онкологу кто из вас первый? (Первому) Вы? Пойдемте.

ПЕРВЫЙ. А... да. Иду. Иду!

ТРЕТИЙ. Догоняйте.

ТРЕТИЙ уходит. Пауза.

ВТОРОЙ. Иди. Доктор ждет.

Пауза. Первый стоит неподвижно. Второй несмело трогает его за плечо.

ВТОРОЙ. Ты чего? Что с тобой? Ты в порядке? Эй? Ты чегооо?

ПЕРВЫЙ (виновато). Прости... Не работает.

ВТОРОЙ. Что?

ПЕРВЫЙ. Блок не работает. Сломался. Совсем. Понимаешь? Сломался. Не работает.

ВТОРОЙ. А. Ты шутишь. Это хорошо. Юмор он очень... Все. Пошутил и... Все. Иди. Ладно, ладно, иди. Иди! Вали давай! Пошел! Пошел, говорю! Давай... Ну?! Пиздуй, я сказал!

Пауза. ПЕРВЫЙ уходит. Он идет страшно медленно. Или свет на нем гаснет.

ВТОРОЙ. Удачи!

ПЕРВЫЙ (мгновенно оборачиваясь). Что?

ВТОРОЙ. Удачи, говорю!

Пауза. Первый часто-часто кивает.

ПЕРВЫЙ. А... да... Спасибо. Спасибо!

•

ПЕРВЫЙ. Через пять минут приедет такси. Отлично.

ВТОРОЙ. Мало так побыл, сынок.

ПЕРВЫЙ. Ой, мам, столько работы, а тут еще... Реально, не отпускают. А мне надо в понедельник уже вернуться.

ВТОРОЙ. А давай супу еще поешь? Сядешь тут под яблоней за столик.

ПЕРВЫЙ. А мне опять как в прошлый раз в тарелку яблоко упадет, да?

ВТОРОЙ. Ой, ну это была случайность.

ПЕРВЫЙ. Хороша случайность, все лицо в супе... Хотя смешно было, чего скрывать. Пап, чего молчишь?

ТРЕТИЙ. А чего я?

ПЕРВЫЙ. Главное, что я проверил, как все прошло. Мне кажется хорошо все. Хорошо же ведь все?

ВТОРОЙ. Ну конечно! Такой дом! Такие работники. Приехали, буквально с нуля, буквально на пустом месте, раз-раз-раз. И дом стоит. Удивительно!

ПЕРВЫЙ. И более-менее выглядит ничего.

ВТОРОЙ. Да ты что! Красивый дом! Красивый!

ПЕРВЫЙ. Современные технологии. Ну, правда, сам бы ты его строил, пап, лет восемь. Как минимум. А тут за месяц всего.

ВТОРОЙ. Да какие восемь?! Какие восемь! Тут одна яма под фундамент стояла бы годами. А из нее палки эти торчали бы, как их... арматура.

ПЕРВЫЙ. Ну и главное силы, правильно? Силы сберегли. В вашем возрасте на даче отдыхать надо, а не горбатиться. Правильно?

ВТОРОЙ. Теперь бы только здоровья, чтоб тут жить себе... И ничего не делать... Я вот там цветы посажу... А вон там надо деревья, на том конце участка. Вишню хочу и сливу желтую. Может все-таки супа?

ПЕРВЫЙ. Не мам. В самолете кормить будут. Да и вообще я не голодный.

ВТОРОЙ. Ой, там в самолете так кормят, ужас.

ПЕРВЫЙ. Поеду. Рад, что у вас все хорошо. Вообще, честно сказать, как вот отец сказал зимой, что летом начнет строиться, я прямо испугался. Ну, думаю, это же не жизнь у вас тут будет, а сплошная стройка. Да и здоровье! Здоровье теперь побережете. И я буду меньше волноваться. А тогда прямо думаю – надо что-то делать, надо немедленно что-то придумать.

ВТОРОЙ. Напугал ребенка!

ТРЕТИЙ. А чего я?

ВТОРОЙ. Только ты ведь столько денег потратил, сынок. Это же страшные деньги стоило, наверное. Все из-за тебя! Собрался он строить! Чего вот ты собрался?

ТРЕТИЙ. А я то чего?

ПЕРВЫЙ. Не ссорьтесь. Теперь уже все сделано. Дом стоит. Дом приличный. Фирма приличная. Построили вроде аккуратно.

ВТОРОЙ. Работник были нерусские. Вообще с нами не говорили, не понимали ничего. Месяц молча работали, иногда только между собой тыр-быр-быр, тыр-быр-быр. И опять молчок.

ПЕРВЫЙ. Это ничего. Главное, что все вроде работает.

ВТОРОЙ. Все работает. Спасибо тебе, сынок. Ты так о нас заботишься!

ПЕРВЫЙ. Ну вот в этом я и хотел убедиться. Все. Пойду. Давай, мамулечка-красотулечка. (целуются)

ВТОРОЙ. На один день, на один всего денечек приехал...

ПЕРВЫЙ. Папа, давай, жму краба. Че такой хмурый?

ТРЕТИЙ. Я то?

(жмут друг другу руки)

ПЕРВЫЙ. Ну все, пока! Всем пока! Не провожайте меня, я быстро пойду.

Уходит.

ВТОРОЙ. Чего ты молчишь? Чего ты все время молчишь? Надулся как жаба. Сын приехал всего на один день, мог бы с ним поговорить. Мог бы ему сказать спасибо, у него самого там, сам знаешь, какая жизнь, а он нам дома тут покупает. Дом тебе построил, что тебе еще надо? Сказал бы спасибо хотя бы! Двухэтажный дом! Все спроектировал, все заказал! Денег кучу потратил! И все для тебя! А ты сидишь, и слова не можешь сказать ребенку.

Пауза.

ТРЕТИЙ. Я его... Знаешь... Я его сожгу.

ВТОРОЙ. Что?

ТРЕТИЙ. Я этот дом сожгу. Утром встану, часов в пять, когда ветра не будет, когда тихо и никого, обложу хворостом и сожгу к чертям собачьим.

ВТОРОЙ. Ты с ума сошел.

ТРЕТИЙ. Я его сожгу, понимаешь? И тогда он опять приедет. Ко мне.

•

ПЕРВЫЙ. Что случилось?! Я звоню-звоню! Я думал, сломался звонок, я думал надо вызвать спасателей, я думал, вдруг вы там, не знаю... вдруг вы включили газ и забыли об этом!

ВТОРОЙ. Я хотела убедиться, что это ты.

ПЕРВЫЙ. А глазок на двери зачем? Ты что, не могла посмотреть в глазок?

ВТОРОЙ. Я смотрела.

ПЕРВЫЙ. И что?

ВТОРОЙ. Я должна была убедиться...

ПЕРВЫЙ. Что происходит вообще? Что с тобой?

ВТОРОЙ. Я боялась.

ПЕРВЫЙ. Так. Где он? Где мой ребенок?

ВТОРОЙ. Я его увезла.

ПЕРВЫЙ. Не понял.

ВТОРОЙ. Я его увезла к маме.

ПЕРВЫЙ. Ты его увезла к маме.

ВТОРОЙ. Да.

ПЕРВЫЙ. Так.

ВТОРОЙ. Мы сели на машину, я его увезла, там он в безопасности.

ПЕРВЫЙ. У мамы? У твоей?

ВТОРОЙ. Я понимаю, это глупо...

ПЕРВЫЙ. Так. Что-то ты все-таки понимаешь. Это уже хорошо.

ВТОРОЙ. Ну извини. У меня был приступ паники.

ПЕРВЫЙ. С ним все в порядке?

ВТОРОЙ. Да. Он уже спит. Я звонила маме, он уже спит. С ним все в порядке.

ПЕРВЫЙ. Что происходит?

ВТОРОЙ. Я смотрела телевизор.

ПЕРВЫЙ. Это нормально.

ВТОРОЙ. Там был ты. На экране. Дневные новости. И ты сказал...

ПЕРВЫЙ. Ясно.

ВТОРОЙ. Ты рассказал про этого мальчика. Которого они убили. Так жестоко. И сожгли. И...

ПЕРВЫЙ. Ясно.

ВТОРОЙ. И мне стало страшно.

ПЕРВЫЙ. Но ты понимаешь, что это другая страна? Что это не у нас? Посмотри на меня. Посмотри сейчас на меня! Милая, скажи, ты это понимаешь?

ВТОРОЙ. Понимаю. Но мне так стало страшно.

ПЕРВЫЙ. Что это тысяча или сколько-то там километров между нами. Что между нами граница и наши войска.

ВТОРОЙ. И я ничего лучше не придумала, как собрать его вещи и ехать к маме.

ПЕРВЫЙ. И твоя мама его защитит?

ВТОРОЙ. Я знаю, это глупо.

ПЕРВЫЙ. Это глупо.

ВТОРОЙ. Да, я знаю.

ПЕРВЫЙ. Твоя мама на ночь снимает вставную челюсть. Ты в курсе?

ВТОРОЙ. Я в курсе.

ПЕРВЫЙ. Она даже покусать никого не сможет, если что.

ВТОРОЙ. Не смеди меня.

ПЕРВЫЙ. Просто я хочу, чтобы ты посмеялась над своими страхами. И тогда все пройдет.

Пауза.

ВТОРОЙ. Я не могу смеяться. Там ведь был этот мальчик. Которого они сожгли заживо. И они смеялись. А его мать смотрела на него и сначала она кричала как кошка, а потом тоже смеялась. Вместе с ними. Потому что сошла с ума. Так ведь?

ПЕРВЫЙ. Нет.

ВТОРОЙ. Что нет?

ПЕРВЫЙ. Нет не так.

ВТОРОЙ. Что ты имеешь в виду?

ПЕРВЫЙ. К нам в отдел эта новость пришла утром. Знаешь, от этих ребят, которые блоги отслеживают. Все сразу собрались у нас в отделе, сидели подавленные. У нас же все до одной новости проверяют. И никто не мог работать, все сидели в ужасе и ждали, когда это проверят. Часа два, наверное. И мы сидели, работать после этого никто не мог, и мы разговаривали. Почему они развязали эту войну. Зачем они убивают людей. И все в таком духе.

ВТОРОЙ. Убивают, потому что сошли с ума.

ПЕРВЫЙ. Да. Сошли с ума. Целая страна в одно мгновение.

ВТОРОЙ. И хотят того же у нас.

ПЕРВЫЙ. Наверно.

ВТОРОЙ. Так вы говорите в новостях.

ПЕРВЫЙ. Ну да.

ВТОРОЙ. Что тут думать?

ПЕРВЫЙ. Ну да.

Пауза.

ВТОРОЙ. Ты чего?

ПЕРВЫЙ. А потом пришло подтверждение. Это утка. Ну то есть фэйк. Не жгли никаких детей.

ВТОРОЙ. Правда?

ПЕРВЫЙ. Слава Богу. Никого не жгли. Не было этого ребенка на площади.

ВТОРОЙ. Это правда? Ты же не хочешь меня просто успокоить?

ПЕРВЫЙ. Это правда, это правда, я клянусь. Слава Богу! Никого не жгли.

ВТОРОЙ. Тогда почему...

ПЕРВЫЙ. Они могли.

ВТОРОЙ. Что?

ПЕРВЫЙ. Они могли это сделать. Мы, когда сидели и ждали подтверждения, мы же не думали было это или нет – мы думали почему они это сделали, почему они такие звери, почему наши войска не войдут и не перестреляют их всех вместе с их стариками и детьми, чтобы эта зараза не распространялась, как бешенство! Мы не думали о том, что это неправда!

ВТОРОЙ. Не кричи.

ПЕРВЫЙ. Они могли это сделать! И чтобы они этого не сделали, мы сказали о том, что это было! Было! Я сам сообщил эту новость в эфир. Ты же меня видела. Я начал выпуск новостей с этого. Потому что все остальное слишком мелкое по сравнению с этим. Биржи и все прочее – это же ерунда. Главное дети.

ВТОРОЙ. Я тебе поверила. Я же знаю тебя. Я верю тебе.

ПЕРВЫЙ. Да. И все эти люди, они так же как и ты. Они мне поверили.

ВТОРОЙ. И я продолжаю верить. Я тебе верю.

ПЕРВЫЙ. Этого не было. Я же говорю. Ничего этого не было. Но это могло быть!

Пауза.

ВТОРОЙ. Я поняла. Ты мне врешь. Сейчас. Не тогда, в телевизоре в дневных новостях, а сейчас. Да? Просто ты хочешь, чтобы я успокоилась. Да? Ты любишь меня и хочешь, чтобы я успокоилась. Чтобы я успокоилась, привезла ребенка от мамы, и чтобы мы жили как раньше, да? Как будто не было заживо сожжённых детей и всего этого ужаса. Да? Ты этого хочешь? Ложь во имя спокойствия?

ПЕРВЫЙ. Слушай, но это же глупо.

ВТОРОЙ. Не надо. Не надо мне врать. Не надо меня успокаивать. Не надо мне вешать лапшу на уши. Я хочу знать правду! И я ее знаю, я знаю правду!

ПЕРВЫЙ. Ну милая, послушай...

ВТОРОЙ. Тссс! Не надо мне ничего говорить.

ПЕРВЫЙ. Ну это же...

ВТОРОЙ. Тссс! Вот когда ты скажешь мне там, на экране, что это не правда – вот тогда я поверю. А до тех пор...

ПЕРВЫЙ. Милая...

ВТОРОЙ. Тссс! Не мешай мне. Не мешай мне, пожалуйста. Я смотрю новости.

•

ТРЕТИЙ. Я не курю уже два года. Бросал мучительно и долго и рад, что не курю. Рад поделиться своим опытом. Хочу, чтобы людей, которые не курят, стало больше. Прежде всего помните – когда вы бросаете курить, все, что с вами происходит, будет расцениваться вами как повод к тому, чтобы закурить снова. Вот реально – как только вы бросите курить, в тот же день вас уволят. Это я вам обещаю. Это шутка. Тем не менее, в таких обстоятельствах не остается ничего кроме как купить сигарет, и как следует

затянуться. Поэтому надо понимать, что это всего лишь испытания, которые должны только укреплять вашу волю к победе.

Позвольте рассказать мою собственную историю. Была поздняя осень, воздух такой был резкий, все курильщики знают, что такое резкий от холода воздух – будто нож входит в дыхательное горло. Я уже не курил дня четыре, то есть в принципе даже не могу сказать на улице был туман от холода или это туман был в моей голове. Мы шли с моим ребенком с занятий по рисованию, это в нескольких кварталах от моего дома. Он ехал на своем детском маленьком самокатике позади меня, время от времени выезжая вперед и снова возвращаясь, как, знаете, собачонка. Не помню, что там произошло, кажется я притормозил у ларька с сигаретами, рассеяно посмотрел на них и пошел дальше. В тот момент я и заметил, что ребенка рядом нет. Наверное, поехал вперед, – подумал я, и ускорив шаг, завернул за дом и пару кварталов прошел, нагоняя его. Но через какое-то время я вышел на хорошо освещенный на большом расстоянии впереди тротуар и понял, что там, впереди его нет. Тогда я повернул и быстрым шагом, уже временами переходя на бег, вернулся назад. Его нигде не было. Он мог повернуть внутрь дворов у ларька с сигаретами, – решил я и побежал туда, в темноту.

Очень тяжело бегать курящему человеку, сто, двести метров и во рту железистый привкус крови, легкие горят и обдираются ледяным воздухом как пилой. Во дворах его нигде не было. Я позвонил жене, она была в театре и не взяла трубку. Я позвонил в полицию. Диспетчер спросил возле какого дома я нахожусь. Номера домов в темноте не было видно, мне пришлось бежать куда-то на освещенный участок, но там, как назло, на стенах не было никаких номеров. Я метался между домов, иногда начиная звать своего ребенка по имени. Какие-то редкие люди в темных дворах, полные женщины, выгуливающие собак, все разводят руками, все дворы одинаковые, всюду по середине чернеют скелеты детских площадок...

Я уже не понимал где я нахожусь, я выбежал наугад, между домов, куда-то на шум машин и... оказался точно возле ларька с сигаретами. Я осмотрелся по сторонам, вдруг чудо, просто вот бывает так, что что-то ищешь, а оно у тебя в кармане, так же бывает, пожалуйста, пусть это будет сейчас! Пожалуйста! Никого...

И я понял, что если я сейчас не закурю, я умру. Кровь стучала в ушах так, будто я находился внутри барабана, а по этому барабану кто-то изо всех сил стучит. Бам-бам, бам-бам!

Я подошел к ларьку, посмотрел на сигареты... И вдруг понял, что это просто испытание, и оно появляется всегда, когда ты бросаешь курить и если я сейчас закурю, то в принципе умру я или не умру – это не будет играть ровно никакого значения. И знаете... я не стал курить. Я не закурил тогда и

благодаря этому не курю и по сей день. Потому что если я не стал курить в тех обстоятельствах, то какие же должны быть новые испытания, чтобы я снова начал это делать? Понимаете? Я – скала! Спасибо за внимание! До свидания!

•

ПЕРВЫЙ. И в обеденный перерыв он подходит в моему столу, представляешь, и говорит – эти ваши опросы, все это работает при больших числах. У нас индивидуальный подход. Представляешь? Индивидуальный. Куда ты смотришь?

ВТОРОЙ. Никуда. Правда, никуда. На тебя смотрю.

ПЕРВЫЙ. Индивидуальный... М-да...

ВТОРОЙ. Что?

Пауза.

ВТОРОЙ. Что?

ПЕРВЫЙ. Ты не сможешь сейчас повторить. Да? Ты не сможешь повторить то, что я сейчас сказал.

ВТОРОЙ. Смогу.

ПЕРВЫЙ. Я жду.

ВТОРОЙ. Индивидуальный.

ПЕРВЫЙ. Так.

ВТОРОЙ. Индивидуальный...

ПЕРВЫЙ. Я слушаю, слушаю.

ВТОРОЙ. Прости.

Пауза.

ВТОРОЙ. Прости меня.

Пауза.

ВТОРОЙ. Прости. Мне показалось, что в плите что-то стукнуло, но я знаю, что там ничего нет. Я подумала – наверное там что-то остывает, металл остывает и так бывает, когда остывает металл и тренькает.

Пауза.

ВТОРОЙ. Как будто кто-то стучит.

ПЕРВЫЙ. Зачем тебе это? Зачем тебе нужно выводить меня из себя? Почему ты хочешь, чтобы тебя били? Мне, что, думаешь, приятно это делать? Это вопрос.

ВТОРОЙ. Нет...

ПЕРВЫЙ. Что нет?!

ВТОРОЙ. Тебе неприятно...

ПЕРВЫЙ. Тогда зачем? Зачем ты меня вынуждаешь? Ты извращенка? Может тебе нравится, когда тебя бьют? Поэтому ты доводишь меня до белого каления? Тварь! Поэтому?!

ВТОРОЙ. Прости...

ПЕРВЫЙ. Тварь, ты просто... Уф... мне надо успокоится. Ты делаешь из человека зверя, понимаешь? Понимаешь?! Это вопрос!

ВТОРОЙ. Да...

ПЕРВЫЙ. Понимаешь?! В глаза мне смотри!

ВТОРОЙ. Понимаю...

ПЕРВЫЙ. А я ведь люблю тебя. Ты просто этим пользуешься. Пользуешься тем, что я завишу от тебя, что мне не все равно, что с тобой происходит.

ВТОРОЙ. Прости меня.

ПЕРВЫЙ. Но сейчас ты не добьешься этого. Сейчас ты не заставишь меня тебя ударить. Я работаю над этим. Милая...

ВТОРОЙ. Спасибо...

ПЕРВЫЙ. Что спасибо? Что спасибо?! Тебе что, хочется, чтобы мне было все равно, да?! Чтобы мне было плевать на тебя?! Да?! Чтобы я не хотел сделать из тебя человека?! Хочешь, чтобы я плевал на тебя?! На получай! Я плюю на тебя! Получай! Ты этого хотела?! Плюю! А может ударить тебя, а? Вмазать тебе кулаком прямо...

Пауза. Первый с трудом успокаивается.

ПЕРВЫЙ. Или ты хочешь, чтобы я о тебе заботился? Чтобы я тебя воспитывал, чтоб я не бросил тебя? Чтобы я был с тобой рядом? Всегда сидел рядом и держал твою руку у себя на коленях. Что ты хочешь? А? Что ты хочешь? Ну скажи же...

Пауза.

ВТОРОЙ. Я... не знаю...

Пауза.

ПЕРВЫЙ. Ты не сознательная. Да?

ВТОРОЙ. Да...

ПЕРВЫЙ. Ты бессмысленная. Ты как «рыба, которая плывет внутри океанского течения, которая отчасти вода, отчасти теплый поток, отчасти бессмысленная рыба». Или как там?

Пауза.

ПЕРВЫЙ. Что ты сжалась вся? Или вот это место мне нравится «мой бока зеркало, в которых отражается бирюзовое ничто, и это совсем не так как в моей голове, которая пульсирует красными кляксами». Поэтично. Ты думала я не замечу, что решетку кто-то двигал? Я не настолько верю в твою тягу к чистоте, чтобы решить, что ты двигала вентиляционную решетку, чтобы вытереть там грязь или типа того. Ты же грязнуля, сознайся. Любишь грязь? А? Не отвечай, я и так знаю.

Пауза.

ПЕРВЫЙ. Вот так вот оказывается. Ты писатель у нас, оказывается. Как ее... Роулингс. Да? Но рыба черт с ней с рыбой. Рыба это полбеда. Самое интересное это конечно твои эротические мечты... Да? Мечты про этого парня, про этого соседского принца. Да?

Пауза.

ПЕРВЫЙ. Даааа... Что ты на меня вылупилась? Конечно, после того как я нашел твои бумажки за решеткой, я решил провести ревизию. Пройтись по квартире, посмотреть, может наша писательница написала что-то еще? Где еще баба может прятать свои бумажки? В трусах? Ты в курсе, что писатели они вообще-то оригинальные люди с оригинальными мозгами. Не куриными, заметь, – оригинальными! Люди с оригинальными мозгами прячут свои записи оригинально. Люди с куриными мозгами прячут все в трусах. Хотя, знаешь, я ошибаюсь. Прости. Вот прости дружище, тут я не прав. Потому что люди с куриными мозгами это не люди. Это куры. Да? Все логично? Кто они? Куры? Алле?

ВТОРОЙ. Куры.

ПЕРВЫЙ. Куры... Тварь ты. Я к тебе как к человеку, а ты тварь. «Он из своей квартиры вышел одновременно со мной». Ты только про секс думаешь да? Весь месяц ничего, а потом «открыл мне и придержал дверь лифта. Улыбался до тех пор, пока не увидел синяк на запястье». Я сколько раз тебе говорил, давай заботься о себе, на кого ты похожа? Какие-то синяки, какие-то кляксы в голове. Ты разве была такой, когда выходила за меня замуж? Что это за запись, про то как ты описалась от звонка в дверь? Это же блин...

Это же отвращает! Но кажется соседскому принцу все это нравится да? Ему нравятся вонючие обоссавшиеся шлюхи?! Отвечай!

ВТОРОЙ. Да...

ПЕРВЫЙ. Ну вот видишь. У нас диалог. И я совсем не сержусь. Хотя ты изменила мне с соседским принцем. Он в твоём дневнике именно как принц выглядит. Прекрасный соседский принц. Ну и вкусы у тебя. Это я шучу. Мог бы кто-то другой, какой-нибудь другой мужчина шутить, если бы узнал, что его жена изменяет ему с соседом? Это вопрос.

ВТОРОЙ. Нет.

ПЕРВЫЙ. Что?

ВТОРОЙ. Нет, не мог.

ПЕРВЫЙ. А я шучу. Прекрасные описания разговоров. Родственная душа. Первый секс. Ну просто... ну просто браво! Браво, ты крутая! Что надо отвечать когда тебя хвалят?

ВТОРОЙ. Спасибо.

ПЕРВЫЙ. Ты изменяла мне за моей спиной. Где он прятался, когда я приходил на обед домой? Тут, в чулане? Что молчишь? Ты писала, что он тогда сидел в чулане. Он случайно не тут? Прямо сейчас? А? Может открыть?

ВТОРОЙ. Пожалуйста...

ПЕРВЫЙ. Может он тут и сейчас набросится, и убьёт меня? Как мне поступить? Открыть или нет? Может мне просто доест свой обед и идти обратно на работу? И не проверять чулан? Проверять или нет? Да или нет? Проверять или не проверять? Отвечай!

ВТОРОЙ. Не надо...

ПЕРВЫЙ. Я же ведь такой беззащитный, я совсем не спортивный, посмотри на меня! У меня живот, у меня редкие волосы, я плохо вижу... А он, как там у тебя написано очень сильный, у него сильная спина, да, да, мне эта сцена понравилась, я возбуждился, хотя я же знаю тебя, тут не от чего возбуждаться. Я имею в виду, ты же не настолько хороша, чтобы от тебя возбуждаться, но я возбуждился. Отличная сцена. Молодец! Не слышу?!

ВТОРОЙ. Спасибо. Я прошу тебя...

ПЕРВЫЙ. На бумаге ты гораздо красноречивее чем в жизни. И эротичней. Почему так? Ну в общем, эй, прекрасный принц! Выходи! Открываем чулан... Всем приготовиться... Бейте барабаны, трубите горны, мы представляем вам...

ВТОРОЙ. Не надо... Пожалуйста...

ПЕРВЫЙ. Мы представляем вам... чулан! Кстати, тут очень грязно. У твоего принца нет аллергии на пыль? Могла бы и убраться. Ему будет тут стремно в следующий раз будет сидеть, в пылищи и ждать, пока я снова уйду на работу.

Пауза.

ПЕРВЫЙ. Что же мне с тобой делать? А? Поощрять твои писательские инстинкты? Или отобрать бумагу и все карандаши? Я могу.

ВТОРОЙ. Как скажешь...

ПЕРВЫЙ. Я подумаю. Ведь это ж надо было все это вообразить? Все это придумать... Соседского принца из квартиры напротив, ваш роман, все эти... грязные штучки... Ловко. Голова то у тебя, вижу, работает, несмотря ни на какие кляксы. Или может эти кляксы тебе помогают, а?

Пауза.

ПЕРВЫЙ. Слушай, а у меня идея! А что если я сниму эту квартиру, напротив. А? Она же уже третий год пустая стоит. А я сниму ее и поселюсь там. Будто я тот самый принц? А? И мы будем разыгрывать все главы из твоего дневника. По порядку, вот как у тебя написано. Прикинь, я буду выходить из квартиры, будто я это я – твой муж и иду на работу, потом бежать в соседскую квартиру, переодеваться и звонить тебе в дверь, уже как принц, будто хочу узнать где тут рядом фотоателье. А ты опишешься от моего звонка, все как в твоём дневнике, и будешь говорить через дверь и вдруг заплачешь, а я растеряюсь и буду тебя утешать, все как у тебя написано, а потом принесу и привяжу тебе цветок на ручку двери. Да? А потом я – уже я, твой муж, буду идти вверх, по лестнице, а ты в панике будешь отвязывать этот цветок, чтобы я – твой муж – не увидел его, и ты спрячешь его за вентиляционной решеткой, а ночью напишешь этот рассказик про рыбу и все начнется – начнется наш роман, красивый, прекрасный роман, за спиной у жестокого мужа и... Блин, я гений... Да? Ты ведь хочешь этого? Ты ведь хочешь, чтобы я стал твоим принцем? Не воображаемым, настоящим. Хочешь? Это вопрос.

ВТОРОЙ. Хочу.

ПЕРВЫЙ. Круто, круто, круто. Надо купить мне кожаную куртку. Реально. Кожаную куртку. В ней я буду настоящим принцем. Круто, круто, круто. И буду трахать тебя стоя на кухне. Надо только созвониться с хозяевами квартиры, напротив. Наверное, через домоуправление, да? Где-то же есть его контакты? Я подумаю, как это сделать. Надо все тщательно продумать. Я гений. Нет, я принц. А ты моя принцесса. Круто, круто, круто. Дай я тебя поцелую. Иди сюда. Вот так. Начнем завтра. Ты должна подготовиться. А сейчас я должен бежать на работу. Я, твой муж идет на работу. А твой принц появится завтра. Я предвкушаю. Ты предвкушаешь? А? Это вопрос.

ВТОРОЙ. Да, я предвкушаю.

ПЕРВЫЙ. Я люблю тебя.

ВТОРОЙ. И я люблю тебя.

ПЕРВЫЙ. Все. Ушел. Дневник беру с собой. Надо выучить реплики принца до завтра. Это я все круто придумал. Круто, круто, круто. Пока.

Уходит. Из чулана выходит ТРЕТИЙ.

ВТОРОЙ. Он ушел.

ТРЕТИЙ. Ты взглядом остановила меня.

ВТОРОЙ. Да.

ТРЕТИЙ. Почему?

ВТОРОЙ. Я не готова.

ТРЕТИЙ. Но он этого заслуживает. Если бы ты моргнула, пошевелилась, дрогнула, я бы ударил его. Он бы упал и сразу бы потерял сознание. И я бы добил его. Тебе не пришлось бы ничего делать.

ВТОРОЙ. Я не могу. Это слишком...

ТРЕТИЙ. Внезапно? Много лет подряд это внезапно? Разве это внезапно?

ВТОРОЙ. Я не могу.

ТРЕТИЙ. А теперь у нас ведь нет выбора. Завтра он займет мое место. И все. И тебе больше некуда будет бежать.

ВТОРОЙ. Что же мне делать?

ТРЕТИЙ. Разрешить мне.

ВТОРОЙ. Нет.

ТРЕТИЙ. Ты можешь мне сказать, почему нам не нужно этого делать? Назови хоть одну причину, почему он должен жить. Хоть одну.

ВТОРОЙ. И тогда ты не будешь его убивать?

ТРЕТИЙ. Если ты скажешь мне, почему я не должен этого делать, я не буду.

Пауза.

ТРЕТИЙ. Докажи мне.

Пауза.

ВТОРОЙ. Я не могу. То есть могу, но не сейчас. Я это знаю, но не могу вспомнить как называется это слово. У меня болит голова и я не могу сосредоточиться, и от этого мне кажется, что тебя на самом деле нет, и что я

сигу одна и думаю о том, как убить мужа, и думаю о том, как его не убивать и от этого моя голова разваливается на две части, потому что...

ТРЕТИЙ. Я есть. Мы покончим с ним, и у тебя больше никогда не будет болеть голова. И я буду всегда.

ВТОРОЙ. Я вспомню почему не надо этого делать.

ТРЕТИЙ. У нас нет другого выхода.

ВТОРОЙ. Вспомню почему не надо его убивать. Это какое-то очень простое слово. Оно означает... Это понятие... Дай мне, пожалуйста, немного времени, и я вспомню. Сейчас у меня очень болит голова. Но я обязательно вспомню.

ТРЕТИЙ. Что ты имеешь в виду?

ВТОРОЙ. Дай мне немного времени.

ТРЕТИЙ. У нас нет времени. Завтра...

ВТОРОЙ. До завтра! До завтра, дай мне времени до завтра!

ТРЕТИЙ. Хорошо.

Пауза.

ТРЕТИЙ. Завтра я приду, и мы сделаем это. И будем свободны. И будем вместе. И никогда больше не будет больно.

Уходит.

ВТОРОЙ. Это какое-то очень простая вещь. Я ее забыла, но я ее вспомню. Я обязательно вспомню. Я ее обязательно вспомню. Это что-то очень и очень простое. Очень простое.

Занавес.

ADDITIONAL SCENE (FIRST)

ТРЕТИЙ. Возможно, мне придется пересмотреть свою жизненную философию, но я считаю, что человек не создан для глобального добра. Каждый может делать добро только на расстоянии вытянутой руки, дальше любые намерения превращаются во зло. Ты можешь помочь другому человеку только на расстоянии вытянутой руки. Вот так.

Показывает жест с вытянутой рукой.

Перед этим мне долго не везло. Не было работы, не было денег, надо было все время выплачивать по кредиту, и был такой затяжной момент безработицы, когда ты постепенно теряешь своих друзей. Теряешь, потому что все время занимаешь у них деньги и после этого долго не отдаешь. Друзья чувствуют, что от тебя пахнет невезением и, в конце концов, начинают тебя сторониться. Ты знакомишься с

новыми людьми – в очередях на собеседованиях, на бирже труда, когда видишь одни и те же лица на дешевых распродажах. Это твои новые друзья, они подходят тебе больше чем те, прежние. Которым ты к тому же должен денег. Это грустно, черт побери, но это факт. Жизнь тебя сбрасывает с твоего места, на котором ты находишься, сбрасывает вниз. Вот так.

Повторяет жест с вытянутой рукой.

Но я всегда знал: даже в самой хреновой ситуации ты можешь помочь кому-то, кому хуже чем тебе. Кому-то, кто находится от тебя на расстоянии вытянутой руки. Помните, да? Это моя жизненная философия. Я в нее верю. Надеюсь и вы тоже.

Повторяет жест с вытянутой рукой. Резко хлопает в ладоши.

И тут мне повезло! Весеннее утро, утро возможностей, новые запахи, новые ощущения, новое солнце. Накануне звонит мой старый друг, у которого я еще не успел занять денег и таким образом испортить отношений и предлагает поучаствовать в новом проекте. Я бодр, собран, деловит. Я в ударе – я приезжаю и буквально очаровываю заказчика! Я не знаю, что на меня нашло, я буквально не узнаю себя! Где отпечаток невезения, где уныние последних нескольких месяцев? Я остроумен, свеж и энергичен. Я брызжу идеями! После встречи я опьянен собой настолько, что набираюсь духу и совершенно естественным тоном, так, будто я делаю это каждый раз, и никогда не сомневаюсь в положительном результате, прошу часть денег вперед. Мне даже не приходится протягивать руку. Хэй-хо! Я снимаю деньги в банкомате, потому что хочу почувствовать их фактуру, их шершавость, запах краски, мне это важно, мне так давно не везло, вы должны меня понять! И я еду домой... Король едет домой! На такси!

И вот тут это и происходит. Мое такси останавливается на светофоре, и я вижу девушку на автобусной остановке. Это сильно беременная девушка, которая явно не хочет, чтобы все видели, что она плачет. Она безутешно рыдает и старается спрятаться за автобусной остановкой. Остановка прозрачная и как бы она не отворачивалась, ее всё равно видно со всех сторон. Это такая некрасивая рыдающая беременная девушка. Вся в конопушках, с плохими волосами, с болезненно бледной кожей и полными ногами, – всё как я не люблю. Не помню, во что она была одета. Что-то такое серое и коричневое из дешевых магазинов. И я чувствую где-то глубоко внутри себя... импульс. Я открываю дверь такси, выхожу из машины и иду к ней. Таксист сигналил мне, но я не обращаю на него внимания. Я подхожу к девушке, и даю ей очень много денег. Собственно все, что у меня с собой. Деньги валяются на асфальт, я подбираю их, раз за разом, и кладу ей в руки. Думаю, ей хватит на долгое время. На пару месяцев точно. Не знаю, что там у нее за проблема, и знать не хочу, поэтому бегом возвращаюсь в такси, к ошалевшему таксисту и мы едем дальше. Это пример моей жизненной философии, так работает добро на расстоянии вытянутой руки.

Повторяет жест с вытянутой рукой.

Поверьте, я не то чтобы постоянно совершаю такие поступки. Я никогда...это... это был самый настоящий импульс! Её горе было настолько неподдельным, что я просто не мог поступить иначе. Уважаю ли я себя за этот поступок? Если честно я об этом не думал тогда.

Пауза.

Как вы знаете, у моей истории есть продолжение. Где-то через пару недель я еду той же дорогой. У меня хорошее настроение, проект идет, хотя всё и не так легко и радужно, как казалось с самого начала. На автобусной остановке стоит та же самая девушка. Только теперь все по-другому. С фальшивым выражением на лице, я бы даже сказал, не сильно притворяясь, она клянчит деньги. На ее груди табличка с надписью. Сверху крупно - «Помогите...», что написано дальше я не читаю. Я очень разочарован. Услышьте меня – я очень разочарован!

Уважаемые присяжные заседатели, вы находитесь не так далеко от меня. Можно сказать, что здесь, в зале суда, вы сидите от меня на расстоянии вытянутой руки. Прислушайтесь к себе и скажите, разве вы, на моем месте, не испытали такой же импульс... такое же желание выйти из машины, подойти к ней и ударить её в живот?

Непроизвольно воспроизводит жест с вытянутой рукой.

ADDITIONAL SCENE (SECOND)

BLACKOUT

Михаил Дурненков

Резкое отключение света. Темнота взрывается неразборчивыми криками.

Прямо над ухом –

ПЕРВЫЙ. Твою же мать...

ВТОРОЙ (издалека). Ты где? Где ты?!

ПЕРВЫЙ. Здесь!

ВТОРОЙ (издалека). Где ты?!

ПЕРВЫЙ. Да здесь я, здесь! Стой на месте!

Звук падающего тела.

ВТОРОЙ. Черт! Я упала! Блиииин... Где ты?!

ПЕРВЫЙ. Вот! Телефоном свечу! Я тут! Тут! Сюда иди!

ВТОРОЙ. Не могу... Сам иди... Как больно...

ПЕРВЫЙ. Давай руку. Давай.... Садись. Я же тебе говорил, пока в самолет не сядем, от меня ни на шаг! Ни на шаг!

ВТОРОЙ. Господи... как же я испугалась.... Хотела денег на телефон положить, сую купюру в этот... в автомат и тут...

ПЕРВЫЙ. Может, рванули где?

ВТОРОЙ. Ногу ушибла... пииииздец. Летела метра два, наверное...

ПЕРВЫЙ. Говорю, взрыв не слышала?

ВТОРОЙ. Что ты такое говоришь?! Что ты придумываешь?!

ПЕРВЫЙ. Ну а какого хрена тогда?

ВТОРОЙ. Да просто авария.

ПЕРВЫЙ. Ага, авария. Ну, конечно - во всем аэропорте выключается свет это авария.

ВТОРОЙ (трет ногу). Синяк будет... вот блин...

ПЕРВЫЙ. Надо сумки возле себя держать, а то сейчас потырят все.

ВТОРОЙ. Все через жопу....

ПЕРВЫЙ. Ну что ты ноешь?

ВТОРОЙ. Я ногу ушибла!

ПЕРВЫЙ. Ну и что?!

ВТОРОЙ. Ну и то!

Пауза.

ВТОРОЙ. Ну, посвети мне.

ПЕРВЫЙ. Давай экономить заряд на телефоне, хрен его знает, сколько это еще все продлится.

ВТОРОЙ. Посвети мне, я телефон выронила.

ПЕРВЫЙ (раздраженно). Блин...

ВТОРОЙ. Чего?!

ПЕРВЫЙ. Ну...?

ВТОРОЙ. Ага, вот он, нашла.

ПЕРВЫЙ. Ну ты даешь....

ВТОРОЙ. Может, пойти, узнать что происходит?

ПЕРВЫЙ. Сиди здесь. Никуда не ходи. Может, они этого и добиваются, чтобы ты куда-нибудь пошла?

ВТОРОЙ. Ты параноик. Хорошо. Будем сидеть здесь. Надеюсь, скоро все включат.

ПЕРВЫЙ. Объявлений никаких нет.

ВТОРОЙ. Как они тебе будут объявлять, если нет электричества.

ПЕРВЫЙ. Отменят, суки, рейс.

ВТОРОЙ. Задержат. Права не имеют отменить. У нас билеты, вся хуйня.

ПЕРВЫЙ. Рейс отменят, билеты отменят. Им вообще похуй.

ВТОРОЙ. Мы прошли паспортный контроль, мы вообще уже, считается, за границей. Нам обратно уже нет хода.

ПЕРВЫЙ. Да им насрать.

ВТОРОЙ. Не паникуй.

ПЕРВЫЙ. Не указывай мне, что мне делать.

ВТОРОЙ. О, Господи.... Я отстала! Делай что хочешь!

ПЕРВЫЙ. Ладно. Все нормально. Все будет нормально.

Пауза.

ПЕРВЫЙ. Скоро все включат. Скоро все разрулится. Все в порядке.

Долгая пауза. Внезапно ВТОРОЙ коротко хихикает.

ВТОРОЙ (хихикая). Ну что ты делаешь.

ПЕРВЫЙ. А что?

ВТОРОЙ (хихикая). Перестань.

ПЕРВЫЙ. А что?

ВТОРОЙ (хихикая). Ну, перестань. Люди вокруг....

ПЕРВЫЙ. А что? Они все равно не видят...

ВТОРОЙ (хихикая). Ты с ума сошел?

ПЕРВЫЙ. А что?

Пауза.

ВТОРОЙ (шепотом). Ну, перестань...

Пауза.

ПЕРВЫЙ (шепотом). А что?

Внезапно рядом с ними появляется ТРЕТИЙ.

ТРЕТИЙ. Я сяду рядом? Вы не против?

Пауза. Первый и Второй отодвигаются друг от друга.

ТРЕТИЙ. Присяду?

ПЕРВЫЙ. Мы друга ждем. Он отошел куда-то... туда.

ТРЕТИЙ. Я ему уступлю, когда он вернется.

ВТОРОЙ (укоризненно, Первому). Ну зачем ты так?.. (Третьему)
Присаживайтесь, конечно.

ТРЕТИЙ. Куда летите?

ВТОРОЙ. Сначала во Франкфурт.

ТРЕТИЙ (с уважением). Большой город?

ВТОРОЙ. Да, большой.

ТРЕТИЙ. А потом?

ПЕРВЫЙ. А вам зачем?

Пауза. В темноте ТРЕТИЙ пожимает плечами.

ТРЕТИЙ. Знаете, выключили свет, и я вдруг понял, что забыл дома альбом с фотографиями. Наверное, это старомодно – хранить фотографии, но...

ПЕРВЫЙ (напряженно). Тааак...

ВТОРОЙ. Чего?

ПЕРВЫЙ. Ты же ведь жесткий диск не оставила в ящике?

ВТОРОЙ. Взяла.

ПЕРВЫЙ. Точно?

ВТОРОЙ. Да взяла я. В желтую сумку положила.

ТРЕТИЙ. Там все фотографии нашей семьи.

ПЕРВЫЙ. Точно?

ВТОРОЙ. Да я точно взяла, точно! Я его вместе со всеми шнурами положила.

ТРЕТИЙ (продолжая). Там фотографии деда, бабушки. Папины фотографии с севера... Тайга там, горы... Какие-то подружки мамины... с института еще. С такими на голове прическами высокими... как их называли-то... «бабетта идет на войну». Даже прабабушки фотография есть. Она там, на лавочке, с куклой глиняной. А с ней еще две девочки. И все лысые. Потому что вши.

Это военного времени фотографии. Ну и фотографии дома нашего. Последняя фотография так вообще без людей. Просто фото дверного косяка, с множеством таких, знаете, черточек...

Пауза. Третий вспоминает, о чем-то думает.

ТРЕТИЙ. А знаете. Рамки ведь тоже отключили, наверное. Если что, можно в темноте пройти...

ВТОРОЙ. Куда?

ТРЕТИЙ. Туда... Назад.

ПЕРВЫЙ. Слушай, ты чего к нам прицепился? Тебе чего надо?

ТРЕТИЙ. В смысле? Я просто забыл альбом и подумал, чисто гипотетически...

ПЕРВЫЙ. Тебе от нас чего надо?

ВТОРОЙ (нерешительно, Первому). Оставь его....

ПЕРВЫЙ. Просто? Так просто иди и сядь где-нибудь в другом месте и другим в уши вдувай! Просто!

ТРЕТИЙ. Вы чего?

ПЕРВЫЙ (агрессивно). Посветить? Телефоном, я сказал, посветить? На дорогу? А? Чтоб по дороге не споткнулся! Посветить?

Светит прямо в глаза Третьему телефоном. Пауза.

ТРЕТИЙ. Спасибо. Я сам как-нибудь.

Уходит.

ВТОРОЙ (внезапно). Рамки выключены.

ПЕРВЫЙ. Ты чего, не поняла? Это же провокатор! Купленный провокатор!

ВТОРОЙ. Можно вернуться назад. В темноте пройти мимо таможенников и вернуться. Никто не заметит. Мы тихо пройдем, и никто не заметит.

ПЕРВЫЙ. Ты с ума сошла?!

ВТОРОЙ. Пойдем!

ПЕРВЫЙ. Ты с ума сошла? Даже не смей и думать...

ВТОРОЙ. Пойдем! Ты идешь?! Или... остаешься?

Пауза.

ПЕРВЫЙ (усмехаясь). Вот как. И ты даже готова оставить меня? Да?

ВТОРОЙ (решительно). Я тебя позвала. Ты не хочешь. И я возвращаюсь.

ПЕРВЫЙ. Значит так, да?

ВТОРОЙ. Да. Жесткий диск пусть останется у тебя. Прощай.

ПЕРВЫЙ. Ненавижу тебя. Слышишь? Ненавижу тебя.

ВТОРОЙ. А я всегда тебя ненавидела. Рада, что сказала тебе это.

Пауза. Внезапно включается свет. Играет короткий электронный сигнал, вдалеке раздаётся голос объявления, возвращается шум и т.д.

ГОЛОС. Уважаемые пассажиры! Внимание! Все службы аэропорта функционируют в обычном режиме, рейсы происходят по обычному расписанию! Администрация аэропорта приносит свои извинения за причиненные неудобства!

Первый смотрит на Второго, морщась от света. Второй прячет глаза.

ВТОРОЙ. Я... Кажется я... Ты... Мы оба... погорячились... и...

ПЕРВЫЙ (перебивая). Пойдем к нашему гейту. Чего застыла? Сумку бери! Видишь же, у меня все руки заняты! Идем! И главное – не отставай от меня ни на шаг!

Уходят вместе.

ADDITIONAL SCENE (THIRD)

ПЕРВЫЙ. Ты, да, ты, я с тобой разговариваю. С тобой, с тобой, не отворачивайся. Ты чего пялился на мою жену?

ВТОРОЙ. Что? Простите, это вы мне?

ПЕРВЫЙ. Ты чего пялился на мою жену? Тебе кто разрешал?

ВТОРОЙ. Простите, я не понимаю...

ПЕРВЫЙ. Ты пялился на мою жену, ты раздевал её своими глазами!

ВТОРОЙ. Когда?

ПЕРВЫЙ. Там, в бассейне.

ВТОРОЙ. Это просто бассейн, он же публичный...

ПЕРВЫЙ. И ты пялился на мою жену!

ВТОРОЙ. Я просто плавал...

ПЕРВЫЙ. Кто тебе дал такое право! Какое право ты имеешь раздевать мою жену в своей голове?

ВТОРОЙ. Но я вовсе...

ПЕРВЫЙ. Не ври!

ВТОРОЙ. Я вовсе не собирался разде...

ПЕРВЫЙ (перебивает его). И ты занимался с ней сексом! Пока она плыла на спине, ты занимался с ней сексом в этой позе, но когда она перевернулась, тебя это не остановило! Ты продолжал и продолжал!

Пауза.

ВТОРОЙ. Э... Мне кажется... Послушайте...

ПЕРВЫЙ. Ты понял, что ты наделал? Ты понял, что ты натворил?

ВТОРОЙ. Послушайте, я сейчас позову охрану. Вы сумасшедший, и то в чем вы меня обвиняете... (Первый пытается его перебить) Нет, вы меня выслушайте! Если вы не успокоитесь, я позову охрану! Потому что я не виновен! Потому что всё, что происходит у меня в голове...

ПЕРВЫЙ (перебивает). Оргия с моей женой!

ВТОРОЙ (продолжает). ...То, что происходит у меня в голове, вас абсолютно не касается.

ПЕРВЫЙ (взрывается). Твою мать! Это моя жена! Ты за сорок минут сделал с ней такое, что я не осмеливался ей предложить за восемь лет нашего брака!

ВТОРОЙ. Это не мои проблемы!

ПЕРВЫЙ. Ты! Извращенец!

ВТОРОЙ. Послушайте меня сейчас. Просто остановитесь и послушайте. Выдохните. Я не знаю, о чем вы говорите. Но попробуйте, хотя бы на минутку увидеть эту ситуацию с моей стороны. Я просто... Уф... Я даже не понимаю почему я должен это объяснять. Ну ладно. Это то, как я вижу эту ситуацию. Я просто плавал. Плавал по своей дорожке – туда-сюда. Там было несколько человек в бассейне кроме меня. Наверное...

ПЕРВЫЙ (взрывается). Что??!! Наверное?!!

ВТОРОЙ. Хорошо! Хорошо! Окей! Точно! Не, наверное! Точно! Там точно была ваша жена. Ну, может я и глянул в её сторону раз...

ПЕРВЫЙ. Ты её трахнул! Трахнул мою жену, сукин сын!

ВТОРОЙ. Что вы от меня хотите?

ПЕРВЫЙ. Чтобы ты хотел от человека, который трахнул твою жену при всех, публично, самым циничным и извращенным способом, какой только может прийти ему в его больную голову?

ВТОРОЙ. Я еще раз говорю, я не...

ПЕРВЫЙ (перебивая). Ты сам знаешь что это правда!

Пауза.

ВТОРОЙ (мнется). Хорошо. Хотите... я не знаю... хотите...

ПЕРВЫЙ. Что?

ВТОРОЙ. Хотите, я заплачу вам денег?

ПЕРВЫЙ. Сколько?

ВТОРОЙ. У меня с собой.... Около... ну может триста... Я точно не помню. Они в шкафчике.

ПЕРВЫЙ. Ключ от шкафчика.

ВТОРОЙ. Там все мои вещи. Давайте мы дойдем вместе, и я открою и...

ПЕРВЫЙ. Ты. Извращенец. Ты хочешь обмануть меня. Ты думаешь, тебе это сойдет с рук также как секс с моей женой? Не выйдет.

ВТОРОЙ. Это мои вещи, они мои...

ПЕРВЫЙ. Ааааа, теперь ты вспомнил про собственность. Конечно! Теперь ты вспомнил, что у тебя есть твоя личная собственность! А ты вспоминал о ней, когда делал это с моей... с моей... с моей птичкой?!

ВТОРОЙ. Птичкой?

ПЕРВЫЙ. Это моя жена! Я называю её птичкой!

ВТОРОЙ. Хорошо. Вот вам ключ, только я умоляю... мои вещи... Оставьте мне одежду. Мне надо хотя бы переодеться. Я не могу в таком виде...

ПЕРВЫЙ. Ты не заслуживаешь того, чтобы я тебе что-то обещал.

ВТОРОЙ. Я умоляю вас...

ПЕРВЫЙ. Заткнись. Тварь. Я сделаю всё, что считаю нужным. И ты будешь сидеть тут и ждать. Потому что ты оступился. Потому что ты взял с полки шоколадку и хочешь пройти мимо кассы. Потому что...

ВТОРОЙ. Я понял, я понял все эти метафоры.

ПЕРВЫЙ. Если понял, то плати. Тварь.

ПЕРВЫЙ уходит. Подходит ТРЕТИЙ.

ТРЕТИЙ. Послушайте. Я слышала ваш разговор и мне ужасно неловко, и я хотела извиниться перед вами за него...

ВТОРОЙ (качая головой). Я не понимаю, что происходит...

ТРЕТИЙ. ...Я хотела извиниться за своего мужа.

ВТОРОЙ (продолжая сокрушаться). ...Со мной такое впервые. Это какое-то... это какое-то безумие всё, что происходит... Абсолютное безумие...

ТРЕТИЙ. И еще. Я хотела... Мне... мне было приятно.

ВТОРОЙ. Что?

ТРЕТИЙ. Да. Ты был... не великолепен, нет, но ты был хорош.

ВТОРОЙ. Вы сейчас со мной разговариваете? Я просто уточняю.

ТРЕТИЙ. Ты... ты хочешь это повторить?

ВТОРОЙ. Что? Вы о чем?!

ТРЕТИЙ. Мне очень приятно, что ты хочешь повторить всё, что было между нами. Но мне надо подумать, я не совсем такая как там...

ВТОРОЙ. Там?

ТРЕТИЙ. Да, как там, в твоей голове. Я не совсем такая. Поэтому я должна подумать. Я подумаю. И если что мы встретимся. И в следующий раз... давай не так резко? Давай начнем с чего-то более нейтрального? Например, кофе? Ты любишь кофе?

Пауза.

ВТОРОЙ. Да. Я умею варить отличный кофе. Я имею в виду в моей голове. Тебе понравится. С корицей и перцем. Отличный кофе. Лучший в округе. Тебе точно понравится.

ADDITIONAL SCENE (FOURTH)

Пауза.

ВТОРОЙ. Или вы меня не слушаете?

ПЕРВЫЙ. Мы слушаем. Слушаем и всё запоминаем.

ТРЕТИЙ. Мы всё записываем. И на диктофон и так.

ВТОРОЙ. А то я не люблю, когда меня не слушают. Не слушают, значит, не уважают.

ТРЕТИЙ. Поверьте, мы вас очень уважаем.

ПЕРВЫЙ. Очень.

ВТОРОЙ. Хорошо... А то мне показалось... Так. На чем я остановился?

ТРЕТИЙ. Что у вас такая внешность...

ВТОРОЙ. Да, да, да, что у меня такая внешность, что мне и двадцать можно дать. Я в кино на любой сеанс хожу, меня всюду пускают. Потому что у меня ужасно взрослое лицо.

ТРЕТИЙ. Да. Это потому что взгляд... умный взгляд. Человек с умным взглядом сразу кажется старше.

ВТОРОЙ. Я очень самостоятельный. Я даже ужасно самостоятельный.

ПЕРВЫЙ. Мы не сомневаемся.

ВТОРОЙ. То есть вы согласны, что я очень взрослый? Ну, то есть для своих лет?

ПЕРВЫЙ. Мы согласны.

ВТОРОЙ. Ну раз мы так друг друга уважаем... Я это к чему все? Я тут типа впахиваю, а все денюжки вы переводите на мамкин счет.

ТРЕТИЙ. Такой порядок.

ПЕРВЫЙ. Не мы придумали.

ВТОРОЙ. Ну раз я такой взрослый, может вы мне просто их давать будете? Понимаете, я же говорю, я тут сижу с утра до вечера, а она мне дает по чуть-чуть. Ужасно мало! Я могу и сам эти свои деньги тратить. Правильно? Я ж такой, ну, почти взрослый.

ПЕРВЫЙ (повторяет). Не мы придумали.

ТРЕТИЙ (повторяет). Такой порядок. Простите.

ВТОРОЙ. Блин. Ну надо было попробовать. Вдруг бы прокатило. Я могу еще колы и вот это пирожное?

ПЕРВЫЙ. Всё что вы видите здесь на столе, это всё для вас. Угощайтесь.

ВТОРОЙ (с набитым ртом). Вкусно! Обалдеть!

ТРЕТИЙ. Так что насчет войны?

ПЕРВЫЙ. Да, что насчет войны?

ВТОРОЙ. Ну я еще напишу потом подробнее.

ТРЕТИЙ. А в общих чертах? Самые какие-то проблемные места

ПЕРВЫЙ. Может сразу баги какие-то.

ВТОРОЙ. В общих чертах? Ну, мне кажется все немного какое-то грязное.

ТРЕТИЙ. Грязное?

ВТОРОЙ. Да, вся картинка какая-то грязная. Понятно война, но все какое-то очень... говняцкое. Такое, цвета... Я ж могу себя не фильтровать?

ПЕРВЫЙ. Не фильтруйте, ради Бога.

ТРЕТИЙ. Мы ради этого с вами и работаем.

ВТОРОЙ. Цвета говна. Старого говна.

ТРЕТИЙ (записывает, повторяя). Старого говна...

ВТОРОЙ. Хочется ярче. Реально, если сидеть так часов пять, становится как-то очень хреново, от того что всё такое...

ПЕРВЫЙ. Мрачное?

ВТОРОЙ. Не, не мрачное. Когда мрачно это типа стиль. А это именно такое вот... ну вот я по-другому и сказать не могу. Говняцкое.

ТРЕТИЙ. Безрадостное.

ВТОРОЙ. Во! Точно! Вот это слово! Ну это что касается картинки. Что касается самой стратегии. Очень вкусное пирожное... Там короче все очень четко делятся на две стороны - мозгоёбы и людоеды. Ну, это я их так называю. Так проще и сразу понятно у кого какая стратегия.

ТРЕТИЙ. Но сторон у конфликта гораздо больше?

ВТОРОЙ. Только кажется. А на самом деле две – это мозгоёбы versus людоеды.

ПЕРВЫЙ. Давайте с людоедов начнем.

ВТОРОЙ. Людоеды берут числом. У них мораль почти на нуле, стратегия никакая, но зато у них нереально дешевые юниты. И самое главное, их просто тьма. Они воспроизводятся со страшной скоростью, поэтому их не жалко. Туда миллион, сюда миллион, о ресурсах можно не думать. Они там полягут все, а ты за это время новых юнитов понаделал и вперед. И так до тех пор, пока враг с ума не сойдет.

ТРЕТИЙ. А почему вы их называете людоедами?

ВТОРОЙ. Ну потому что они своих жрут. У людоедов главные потери происходят еще до линии фронта. Начальство жрёт тех, что поменьше, те жрут еще меньших, а самые мелкие питаются простыми юнитами. У них мораль такая низкая, потому что юниты в курсе, что свои еще хуже врагов. А стратегия у них хреновая, потому что зачем тебе стратегия, если ты количеством давишь? Правильно?

ТРЕТИЙ. А зачем им своими питаться?

ВТОРОЙ. Да фиг знает. Если ты главный, то должен своих жрать. Порядок такой.

ПЕРВЫЙ. А эти мозго...

ВТОРОЙ. Мозгоёбы? Они похитрее. Но им надо быть похитрее, потому что у них юнитов меньше. Поэтому они их накачивают. Проще говоря, ебут им мозг.

ПЕРВЫЙ. Это как?

ВТОРОЙ. Прокачивают им мотивацию. Это тоже на своей территории происходит, еще до войны. Их нужно прокачать мораль, чтоб юниты всегда знали, за что они сражаются и зачем им это надо. На прокачку морали уходит реально половину всего, что производит государство, это дико дорого стоит. Если бы прокачкой не парились, жили бы в шоколаде.

ТРЕТИЙ. Но они все равно тратят на это ресурсы?

ВТОРОЙ. На еблю мозга? Даааа, это самая главная статья расхода. Они если это делать не будут, их тут же завоюют. Там же еще кроме войны что происходит? С территории людоедов все время прут гражданские юниты. Это что-то типа паразитов. Они прут, чтобы их не сожрали людоеды. Они прут и заражают собой все новые и новые местности. И на этих локациях сразу мораль и мотивация у мозгоёбов пропадает. Единственное чем они могут сопротивляться, это своей еблей мозга. Надо и своих вздрючить и приезжих как следует обработать. И тогда вроде как они сохраняют за собой территории.

ТРЕТИЙ. Так кто же из них эффективней в своей тактике?

ВТОРОЙ. В том-то и дело, что никто. Если война быстрая, то в быструю людоеды эффективнее, а если компания долгая, то мозгоёбы дольше продержатся. И геймплей такой вялый, то одни побеждают, то другие.

ПЕРВЫЙ. Вот как? Вялый геймплей?

ВТОРОЙ. Очень вялый. Но вы мне не зря денюжки платите. Потому что я всё придумал!

ТРЕТИЙ. Поделитесь?

ВТОРОЙ. Если дадите сигаретку. Шучу-шучу. Короче, в игре надо предусмотреть еще одну опцию...

ТРЕТИЙ. Какую?

ВТОРОЙ. Надо, чтобы у людоедов тоже было мозгоебство. Ну просто прикрутить такую кнопку, чтоб время от времени ебать своим юнитам мозг. Хотя бы минимально! Ну как там обычно делается – «поднять уровень патриотизма». И тогда пипец, людоедов ничего не остановит. С высокой моралью они на карте вынесут всех напрочь. Что? Крутую я штуку придумал?

ТРЕТИЙ. Крутую. Но дело в том, что так сделать не получится...

ПЕРВЫЙ. К сожалению никак...

ВТОРОЙ. Да ладно! Элементарная примочка, я в куче игр такую видел!

ТРЕТИЙ. Дело в том, что, если бы вы читали информационные вкладыши...

ПЕРВЫЙ. Да. Там перед каждой главой кампании на экране появляются тексты и специальные отсылки на реальные страны и события. Поэтому мы не можем в игре делать то, чего на самом деле не существует.

ТРЕТИЙ. Это наша концепция, мы берем современную историю и создаем на её базе...

ВТОРОЙ (недоверчиво). Хотите сказать людоеды и мозгоёбы правда существуют?

ПЕРВЫЙ. Нуууу мы их немного по-другому называем...

ВТОРОЙ. Да кто всё это читает? Я вообще ни разу! Я даже не в курсе, что это типа «по реальным событиям»!

ТРЕТИЙ. Если бы вы внимательно читали вкладыши...

ВТОРОЙ. Да я говорю – ваши вкладыши с какими-то дурацкими текстами это полный отстой! Вы меня не слушаете вообще!

Пауза.

ТРЕТИЙ. Мы вас слушаем.

ПЕРВЫЙ. И кстати, все записываем.

ВТОРОЙ. Не знаю как там на самом деле в этом вашем реальном мире, но я охренеть сколько игр тестировал! Я точно знаю – у людоедов должна такая опция появиться! И когда она появится, тогда и геймплэй будет, а не эта унылая суходрочка. Тогда реальная война начнется, а не это копошение в старом говне. Слышите? Тогда начнется война!

ТРЕТИЙ (успокаивая). Хорошо. Мы вас услышали. Мы, правда, вас услышали.

ПЕРВЫЙ. Ваше экспертное мнение будет учтено.

ТРЕТИЙ. И мы всё записали. Всё? На этом всё?

ВТОРОЙ. Блин, ну как хотите. Вот увидите, всё случится, как я вам сказал, не знаю уж где – в интерфейсе, геймплее или где-то там ещё. Хорошо... Один только вопрос... Закурить, случайно, не найдется?

ПЕРВЫЙ. Сигареты я вам давать не буду.

ВТОРОЙ (пожимая плечами). Попытка не пытка. И это... можете не говорить маме, что я ругался? Ну там, насчет всяких слов...

ТРЕТИЙ. Обещаем.

ВТОРОЙ. Хорошо. Я только возьму это пирожное. И еще это. Ну что, всем пока. И еще смените картинку. Сделайте её красивой. Я уже понял, что вы

как в жизни хотите, а в жизни типа всё некрасиво. Но это же игра! Она должна быть красивой!