

Style and S(t)imulation: Popular Magazines, or The Aestheticization of Postsoviet Russia

Helena Goscilo
University of Pittsburgh

Photography gave substance to the
idea that images could be the conclu-
sive expression of reality on the one
hand, and exist autonomous of that
reality on the other.

—Stuart Ewen

Beauty for some provides escape,
Who gain a happiness in eyeing
The gorgeous buttocks of an ape
Or Autumn sunsets exquisitely dying.

—Aldous Huxley

Potemkin Villages: Before and After

Despite Platonism and platitudes of the “beautiful inside and out” and “handsome is as handsome does” variety, aesthetics focuses on appearance, on how things look or “seem.” While the course of Western civilization testifies simultaneously to the profound psychological human need for beauty and the ever-changing notions of what constitutes it,¹ few would deny its historical implication in surface and simulacra. In Russia, perhaps the most memorable early triumph of appearance in the political sphere belongs to Catherine the Great’s favorite Grigorii Potemkin: his persuasive display of a stage décor simulating authentic buildings and communities originated the invaluable term “Potemkin villages.” Such eighteenth-century practices provided convenient models for So-

viet policymakers, as Andrei Siniavskii noted in another context;² indeed, the elaborate camouflage that sustained Soviet power for seventy years indisputably elevated the widespread production of Potemkin villages to a supreme art.

The ideology fueling the Soviet art of simulacra publicly valorized moral purity and civic probity, while downplaying beauty and anathematizing luxury as the immoral frivolities of a consumerist culture. According to this binarist formula, whereas degenerate Western capitalists exploited the toiling masses so as to wallow in superfluous goods, official Soviet values followed the Tolstoyan path of material minimalism and an aesthetics of “natural simplicity” that in practice ranged from plain to unsightly. Absence and ugliness acquired tremendous significance, moralized by a rhetoric that made a virtue out of lack. Paradoxically, scarcity or “nothing” appeared as “everything”—that is, everything profound, for beauty and abundance offered visible confirmation of corrupt values. Exposed plumbing, leaking rusty toilets, cardboard shoes, sacklike dresses, and cheap shapeless ties testified not to manufacturing inadequacies, but to the boundless “Russian soul.” In that sense, aesthetics and ethics became mutually exclusive categories. Accordingly, Raisa Gorbacheva aroused widespread suspicion and resentment not by her political attitudes, but by her insistence on dressing with noticeable taste and style. Her preoccupation with chic appearance compromised her spiritual credentials, for it implied a “kowtowing” to vulgar Western priorities.

Soviet distrust of beauty on any scale was materialized in the dreary, enervated horrors of its architecture, art, window displays, book and clothes design, packaging, and the majority of its products. Anyone seeking visual splendors in Soviet Russia until the 1990s would locate them primarily in museums and in structures and objects dating from pre-Revolutionary times. Scorning the Horatian synthesis of *utile et dulce* that dominates American values, the Soviet system touted the functional (*utile*), yet achieved neither. Failure on both pragmatic and aesthetic counts, however, vouchsafed peculiar benefits: ugliness, uniformity, drabness, and lack carried a moral weight, advertising not only Russia’s “uravnilovka” ‘deprivational democracy’ but also its ascetic devotion to profoundly spiritual categories of human experience. That proclaimed idealism—dubbed “hypocritical puritanism” by some (Androunas 110)—complacently underscored the philistine West’s shallow dedication to surface and fads. Thus Soviet shortages ful-

filled an inestimable ideological function, serving as a moral rebuke above all to the American self-gratificatory pursuit of eye-catching plenitude.³

With desovietization and the indiscriminate enthusiasm for things Western among a significant portion of its urban population, Russia in the early 1990s began shedding its identity of virtuous self-denial for “the good life” and a “beautiful style.” In the new Postsoviet aesthetics, beauty and conventionalized signs of wealth became as inseparable as Marx and Engels in the pre-market era. Increased travel abroad, the incursion of foreign business into Russia, the publicized rise of successful young Russian entrepreneurs, and popular entertainment—Western films, videos, television shows, and commercials—all undoubtedly promoted that coupling. Probably the most aggressive role in disseminating these twinned values, however, has been played by popular magazines. These have been the “how-to” primers for success *cum* beauty; they publicize not only an affluent way of life, but also their own role as readers’ initiators into that world of prosperous chic. Obsession with specific images of beauty and wealth within their pages transformed the 1990s into the Martha Stewart decade or the Era of New Simulacra, which substitutes signs of the real for the real (Baudrillard 2), dismantling the “successful layer” of contemporary Western life and reproducing it in scrupulous facsimile (Connor 56).

Whereas during the Soviet period correct ideology was the sole “product” urged upon Russians through slogans, banners, and publications,⁴ Russia’s Postsoviet recuperation of more traditional advertising strategies for marketing commodities was consecrated to selling opulent style.⁵ According to Western commentators, since contemporary mass media “serve as increasingly powerful arbiters of reality, the primacy of style over substance has become the normative consciousness” (Ewen 1988, 2). In addition to displaying gorgeous surfaces, of course, style condenses metonymies of a utopian way of life marked by boundless wealth—a wealth materialized in fetishized objects whose artful configuration/contextualization promises to transport us out of the immediate world as we know it (Ewen 1988, 14). Russians’ lengthy history of utopianism, variously (and precariously) founded on religious, social, and political principles, rehearsed their recovered passion for the production and consumption of a spectacularly escapist style, which found articulation in the ubiquitous word “imidzh” ‘image.’

Omnipotent Image severed from any “reality” other than the one it aspires to create, in fact, presided as the divinity of the 1990s.

As is the case with other recent lexical loans from the West (“mentalitet,” “generatsiia,” “rimeik,” “vizual’nyi,” “art”), ten years ago “image” would have been rendered by a traditional Russian word—“obraz.” For today’s “image,” however, “obraz” (especially given its religious associations) is inadequate, because it predates the cultural developments that made “imidzh” virtually synonymous with Potemkin villages.⁶ The illusion that the hardships of everyday existence may be magically metamorphosed into a fantasy universe of bounty and beauty through the sorcery of style (Ewen 14) has replaced the Soviet utopia of a politically inevitable socialist paradise. Thus Russians have negotiated the transition from a simulated socialist realism to an equally simulated “capitalist realism” that affirms the “good life” (Barthel 12). In effect, they have exchanged an overt, ideologically freighted form of standardization for another that is more mediated, camouflaged, and aureoled in novelty.

Selling Style: Pictures as Exhibitions

Dozens of publications ranging from the recently founded *Voiazh* (*Voyage*) and *ND* (*Novyi dzhentel'men*) (*New Gentleman*)⁷ to the refurbished *Krest'ianka* (*Peasant Woman*), aimed at a non-urban female readership cram their pages with seductive images of elegance and wealth. This boom in gilded aestheticization may be ascribed to the efforts of enterprising Russian editors, but above all to the persistence of the Dutchman Derk Sauer, former Maoist, publisher of the thriving English-language *Moscow Times* (since 1992), and a pioneer in establishing and popularizing Russian versions of Western glossies in Moscow. Following his withdrawal from *Moscow Magazine*/*Moskovskii zhurnal*, the first illustrated Russian bi-monthly along Western lines (founded in 1991),⁸ Sauer, together with his partner, Annemarie van Gaal, introduced Muscovites to a score of glossies, including Russian editions of *Playboy*, Hearst's *Cosmopolitan* (since spring 1994), *Good Housekeeping*/*Domashnii ochag* (since June/July 1995), *Harper's Bazaar* (which was originally scheduled to hit the stalls in late 1995, but debuted in mid-1996), *Men's Health* (1998), and, most recently, *Kul't lichnostei*, (*Cult of Personalities* 1998).⁹ (See Fig. I.1.)



Fig. I.1 The blandly domesticated and the peepingly risqué: *Good Housekeeping* (*Domashnii ochag*), June-July 1995; *Cosmopolitan*, May 1998.
Published by New Prairie Press

Purely Russian publications (e.g., *Domovoi*, *Nashe nasledie*, *Krest'ianka*) now attempt to emulate the unmistakably Western look of these magazines through glossy paper, attractive layouts, high-definition visuals, vivid colors, and audience-specific (i.e., anti-“uravnilovka”) ads.¹⁰ The weekly *Ogonek*, for instance, dramatically altered its format and general appearance with its first February 1995 issue, jettisoning its former non-standard dimensions, sober appearance, in-depth coverage, and high moral stance. Modeling itself on *Time*, *Newsweek*, and their German equivalent, the journal began to favor a sound bite approach to its materials, a focus on media personalities, “light” topics in compressed form that tax neither patience nor gray cells, and numerous “pretty” photographs. Success stories accompanied by photographs of “heroes of affluence” have replaced more unsettling, politically engaged contents. Although remnants of serious journalism remain in *Ogonek*, its emphasis has definitively shifted from appeals to readers’ social and political awareness to their aesthetic susceptibilities and thirst for scandal. (See Fig. 1.2.)

Formerly, *Ogonek* depended on its verbal text to attract readers, and the dark, somewhat blurred black-and-white photographs accompanying its earnest reports on hardships, inequities, and sundry socio-political problems lent those items an aura of authenticity. Just as documentaries rely on black-and-white footage as a “guarantor of ‘truth’ ” and “an amplification of the real” (Turner 18), so the rather old-fashioned, grainy visuals in *Ogonek* conveyed the sense of genuine, unedited immediacy that Steven Spielberg, for example, strove for in *Schindler’s List*.

Today *Ogonek* inarguably attempts to attract buyers through its entertainment-oriented visuals, to which the verbal text, short and frequently breezy in tone, is subordinated. This reversed hierarchy comprises but one of numerous symptoms of Russia’s decisive transition from an overwhelmingly verbal to a predominantly visual culture.¹¹ For instance, the cover of an *Ogonek* May 1995 issue (no. 20) boasts a full-page reproduction of a scene from Verdi’s opera *Aida* and a miniature inset photograph of “colorful” spear-carrying natives from New Guinea (a subliminal echo of the chorus from *Aida*?). By virtue of its size, the larger image subsumes whatever associations the smaller one might evoke within an operatic framework. Inside, the lead item on the May Victory celebrations consists almost entirely of densely clustered color shots of jubilant,

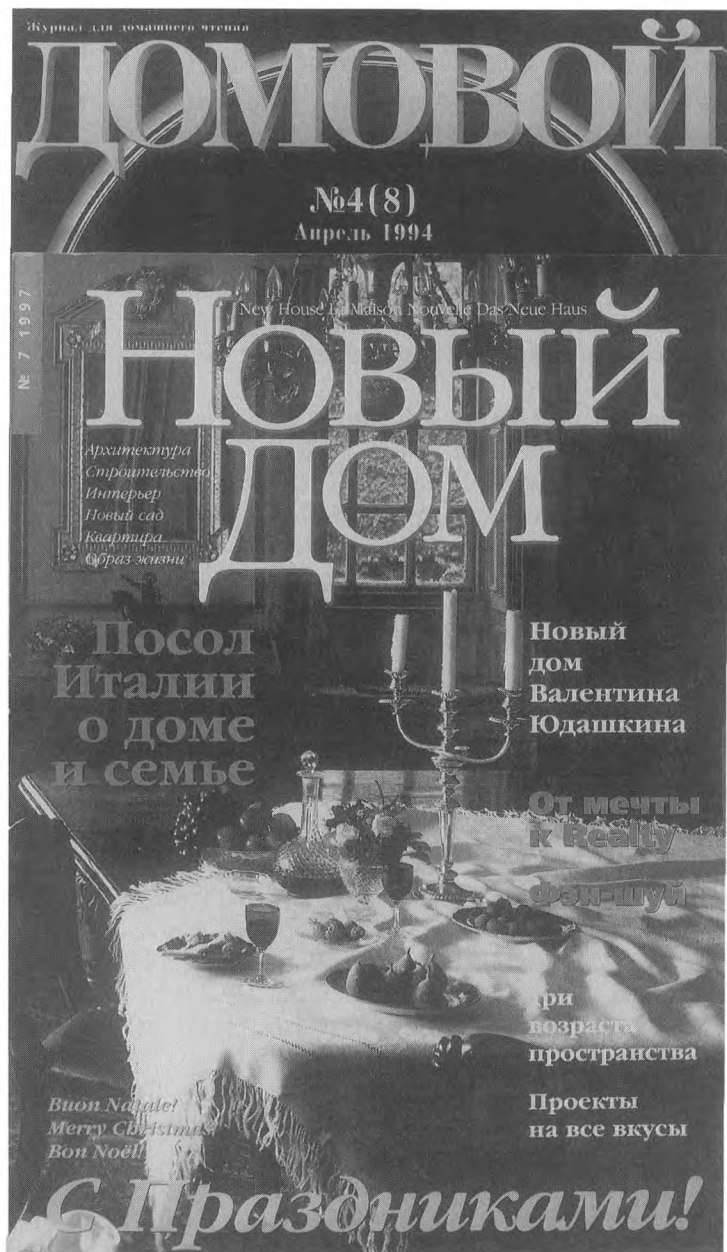


Fig. 1.2 "Home is where the Style is": *Domovoi*, No. 4 (8) 1994;
Published by New Prairie Press
The New House (Novyi dom), No. 7, 1997.

festively garbed participants, practically edging out the abbreviated commentary. Color photographs of Mikhail Baryshnikov (ballet), Il'ia Glazunov (painting), Edita P'ekha (popular music), Russian baritones who have created a stir at the Metropolitan Opera, bankers and commerce-barons, film stars, and video games emphasize the pleasure of leisure-time activities and the material rewards of art. Through its wholesale adoption of Western paradigms, *Ogonek* has shed its former identity of journalism's conscience to join the countless Russian magazines highlighting externals oriented toward spectatorship rather than thoughtful analysis. Whatever cannot be "exhibited" for the most part disqualifies as newsworthy.

That principle obtains *a fortiori* in *Domovoi*,¹² a supplement to the newspaper *Kommersant-Daily*, hence patently targeting an "economically sophisticated" audience. Billed on its masthead as a "magazine for home reading," the 160-page monthly presupposes home readers attuned to international standards of economic security. Its four sections bear the pointed labels "Priiatnye novosti" ("Pleasant News"), "Stil' zhizni" ("Lifestyle"—not the earlier "obraz zhizni"), "Dom" ("House"), and "Weekend" (in English), followed by two "Yellow Pages," advertising companies and services. In the May 1995 issue, lush illustrations and ads for Wella Hair Design "fantaziia bez granits" 'limitless fantasy,' Reebok sneakers "postroite sebia zanovo!" 'build a new self,' computers, printers, and banks purvey flattering self-images, formulas for self-enhancement, and commodities manifestly inaccessible to more than ninety-five percent of a population whose monthly wage during May 1995 averaged 430,000 rubles (approximately \$85), with the minimum wage at 43,700 rubles (\$8.60).¹³ In fact, *Domovoi*'s full-page ad for *Avtopilot* (*Automatic Pilot*)—a magazine devoted to cars, hence touted as synonymous with "stil' zhizni dlia 'novykh russkikh' " 'a lifestyle for the New Russians,' (25)—accurately identifies its projected readers qua consumers.

In this fantasy universe of stylish well-being, the body reigns supreme as infinite potential—a potential awaiting realization, amplification, and enhancement through purchasable goods.¹⁴ It exists to be filled with mouth-watering gourmet foods and exotic liquors; clothed in expensive, fashionable garments; honed by myriad exercises and sports associated with the jet set; decorated with gold watches and jewelry; washed and scented with imported expensive

soaps and colognes or perfumes; enhanced by cosmetics; and pampered by the ultimate word in physical comfort and beauty (i.e., Italian furniture). An advertisement in *Domovoi* for the Italian restaurant Dorian Gray (!) orchestrates these entities into a coherent, idealized stage-setting and exposes the sleight-of-hand process of using signifiers for anticipated signifieds. The possibilities of an elegantly appointed table, with a white damask tablecloth, two glasses of white wine, and several colorful dishes, are sketched out in the “poetic” script that translates dining at Dorian Gray into the reification of romantic fantasies:¹⁵

Za oknom siiali kupola, na stolakh peresheptyvalis’ bledno-rozovye khrizantemy, pletenye kresla rastvorialis’ v zolotisto-olivkovo–dymke, i v vozdukhe chuvstvovalsia legkii aromat vesennikh grez i liubovnykh mechtanii.

Outside, the cupolas shone, the pale pink chrysanthemums on the tables whispered to one another, the wicker armchairs dissolved in a golden-olive haze, and the air was scented with the delicate aroma of spring reveries and dreams of love. (15)

The ad, which doubles as a ten-percent discount coupon (thereby exposing the dependence of romance on rubles), substantiates John Berger’s aperçu that “publicity can never really afford to be about the product or opportunity it is proposing to the buyer who is not yet enjoying it. . . . Publicity is always about the future buyer,” whose glamour will be enhanced by the pertinent purchase (132). Market images thus allow us to glimpse the future selves into which our investment of funds will magically transform us. As much is made clear in the advertisement for Dorian Gray in the first genuinely Russian issue of *Playboy* (Summer 1995): in an “intimately darkened,” isolated part of the restaurant, a solitary woman semi-clad in a golden dress, holding a glass of wine, smiles meaningfully into the eyes of a young waiter apparently proffering her a dish of seafood, but synecdochically inviting her to sample fare that will appease a different appetite. The text of the ad urges readers, who presumably identify with both waiter and waiting customer, to realize their Gatsby-like dream of themselves: “Mechtaite. . . . I pust’ Vashi mechty sbyvaiutsia” ‘Dream. . . . And may your dreams come true.’ The orgy of submerged syllogisms in such ads maps the route to the ego’s paradise. (See Fig. I.3.)



In this universe of specular promise, the primacy of gesture, stance, and display of costly or prestigious possessions—designer clothes, fabulous jewels, cars, boats, villas or palatial interiors, paintings and priceless *objets d'art*, animals—accounts for the frequency with which publications feature singers, actors, models, writers, athletes, and public figures whom extraordinary success or scandal has propelled into the limelight. Fashion shows therefore provide ideal subjects for today's popular magazines. For instance, *Moskovskii zhurnal*'s article on a fashion show at the State concert hall Russia in 1994 ran to a full eight pages, mostly filled with photos of extravagant costumes, and bore the hyperbolic wish-fulfillment headline "Moskva—stolitsa Haute Couture?" 'Is Moscow the Capital of Haute Couture?' In a phrase neatly yoking consumption and visuality, the fashion spectacle was dubbed "pir dlia glaz" 'a feast for the eyes.' Accordingly, in the early 1990s, "supermodel" Cindy Crawford, hostess of the TV show "House of Style," became the female icon of affluent panache indefatigably reproduced in countless issues that frequently violated copyright laws by, for instance, superimposing a photo of her face on advertisements for sex-related products or services that she had not endorsed. In the overwhelming majority of cases, she functioned not as Cindy Crawford, but as a shorthand signal for "sexy, moneyed new style." (See Fig. I.4.)

Even *Krest'ianka* (*Peasant Woman*), formerly a bastion of prudish and practical domesticity, nowadays features vivid scenes from uncollectivized Nature ("woman's realm") on its covers, while its contents favor physical grooming, with illustrated tips on cosmetics, fashion, romance, and sex, over traditional recipes and news from the kolkhoz.¹⁶ *Krest'ianka*, which sold 25 million copies during the Soviet era, appears monthly in a print run of 500,000 to 600,000 copies.¹⁷ Given the harsh conditions of the Russian countryside, where women's taxing physical labor continues to imperil health,¹⁸ to receive pitiful remuneration, and to leave little time for rest or relaxation, the revamped magazine's ability to sustain such a sizable readership¹⁹ indicates that in Postsoviet rural Russia, agriculture may be teetering on the brink of catastrophe, but utopian fantasy is flourishing.

Gendering Simulacra: Male Merchants Unpacking Female Goods

Despite disclaimers by various publishers, the new simulacried aestheticization of Russia has been spearheaded by the New Rus-



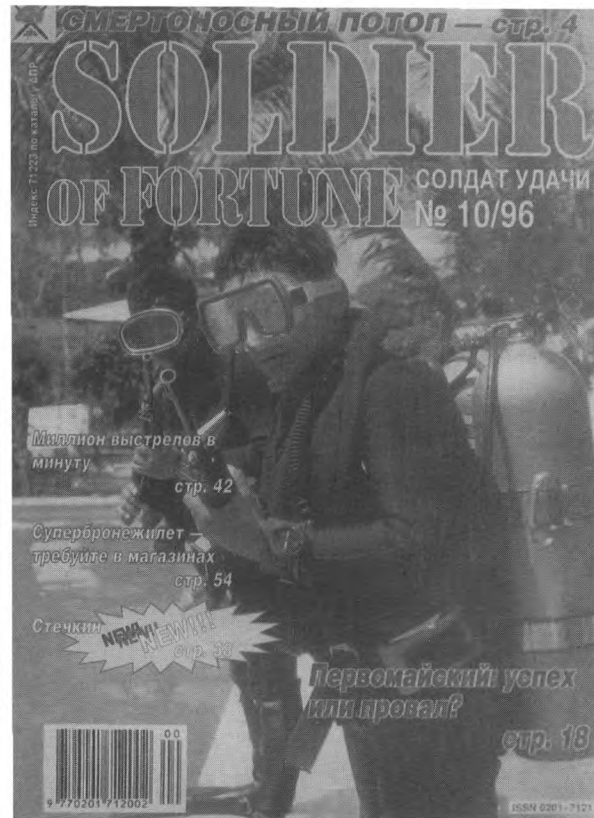
sians—a tiny but influential group of *nouveaux riches* composed chiefly of men. Amidst voluble feminist bashing and laments about a crisis in male identity,²⁰ the 1990s have witnessed the emergence of several magazines patently intended to boost men's morale and supply guidelines for their image construction in the brave new world of market machismo. Synthesizing in various proportions elements from *Mad Max*, *Playboy*, *GQ*, and *All in the Family*, they opt for disingenuously blunt titles: *Supermen*, unsmilingly subtitled “zhurnal dlia nastoiashchikh muzhchin” ‘a magazine for real men,’ *MaKhaON*, *Medved* (*Bear*) “nastoiashchii muzhskoi zhurnal” ‘a real men's magazine,’ *ND Novyi Dzhentl'men* (*The New Gentleman*) and *Dzhentl'MAN* (*Gentleman*).²¹

Printed in Russia, but liberally borrowing material from *Cosmopolitan*, *Penthouse*, *People*, and *Time*, *Supermen* inclines to the “tough men in leather” school of macho strutting. The cover of its second issue in 1995 boasts a biker clad in black, with skullbones on his shirt, a half-dressed, leather-booted “moll” in his lap, and tattoos on his arm, his fingers covered with rings. Two inset illustrations show a naked cannibal from New Guinea²² and an Israeli in “ethnic” garb aiming a Kalashnikov. A proponent of a more powerful and masculine Russia, the editor, Gennadii Shvets, ensures that the magazine intimates Russian prosperity (e.g., ads for Jaguars, casinos, Caribbean cruises), while spotlighting male bodies in action: sexual athletics, shooting and hunting, exploration, “speed and strength” sports, body building, and the like. Technically primitive, *Supermen* strives to project sophisticated machismo not only through advice on sexual prowess (“Kak dovesti zhenshchinu do pika naslazhdeniia odnimi gubami” ‘How to bring a woman to the peak of pleasure with just your lips’), but also through photographs of Western icons of infallible muscledom (Jean Claude Van Damme, Arnold Schwarznegger, and Sylvester Stallone) and a list of the 25 strongest supermen in the country (e.g., film director Nikita Mikhalkov, Evgenii Evtushenko, chess champion Gari Kasparov, and, among politicians, Zhirinovskiy, whose “charisma” after the presidential elections of 1996 suddenly dwindled, but whose calculated buffoonery still keeps him in the news today [see the essay by Borenstein]).²³ (See Fig. I.5.)

MaKhaON, visually a much slicker new publication (printed in Finland), likewise promotes expensive cars, imported alcohol, beautiful Italian bathroom furnishings, and all the other instantly recognizable signs of elitism defined by moneyed panache. What

Fig. I.5 Machismo, Postsoviet style: *Supermen*, 2/1995; *Soldier of Fortune*, 10/1996.

Studies in 20th & 21st Century Literature, Vol. 24, Iss. 1 [2000], Art. 3



distinguishes *MaKhaON* from *Ogonek*, *Krest'ianka*, *Domovoi*, and *Supermen* is its receptivity to kinkiness: its avowed dedication to "love of beauty" and "full rights for both sexes," on the one hand, and its exploitation of pornography, on the other. Associating its profile with the "road to a harmonious Russia," which purportedly consists of a "unity of humankind's spiritual and physical essence," *MaKhaON* declares itself "protiv poshloi odinakovosti RAVNOPRAVIA polov" 'opposed to the crass sameness of the EQUALITY of the sexes.' In practice, that "philosophy" predictably means the inclusion of 13 pages of the roller-skating nubile Nastia in various stages of undress ("v zdorom tele—zdorovy dukh" 'mens sana in corpore sano') and a photo-article titled "Lesnye nymfy" 'Wood Nymphs'—three "nymphs" sporting nothing but make-up frolicking in water and woods, engaged mainly in lesbian intimacies. Just as the commodities scattered throughout the magazine invite acquisition, so do the nymphs stimulate the male viewer to thoughts of possession. (See Fig. I.6.)

Yet, like most such magazines, *MaKhaON* actually advertises not products, but affluence and the fantastic "lifestyle" to which it presumably gives access. What the magazine proffers is the excitement of an illusory ever-expanding range of experience that begs to be mistranslated into a condensed eternity. As Berger observes:

Money is life . . . money is the token of, and key to, every human capacity. The power to spend money is the power to live. According to the legends of publicity, those who lack the power to spend money become literally faceless. Those who have the power become lovable.

[S]exuality . . . is a symbol for . . . the good life in which you can buy whatever you want. To be able to buy is the same thing as being sexually desirable. (143-44)

Indeed, "love" recurs with exhausting frequency in the pages of these magazines, even as they speak of saleable objects and experiences. Editors intoxicate male readers with a potent self-image: that of a powerful man with the financial resources to acquire the commodities being advertised, including the women who, as desirable luxuries, corroborate his social status and sexual identity. The symbolic significance of women's physical presence explains the regularity with which the self-styled New Man, contrary to Soviet tradition, arrives with at least one strikingly outfitted woman

MaKhaON

№ 1 (4) 1995

И Н Ы

БОМБА

Американский
след

Тоталитаризм
и Иерархия

Шпионаж

без агентуры

Кровати Лимонова

Лесные Нимфы

Коридоры

власти

Цивилизация

и Эротика

VooDoo



at photo-op functions. The contrast between this New Man's self-presentation and the older gender-separatist style of confronting the public is dramatized by Yeltsin's wife, Naina, a normally silent and invisible persona, who, true to her Soviet roots, speaks out and makes her presence known only when Her Man is incapacitated and *cannot* appear before the public.²⁴

Anyone harboring doubts about gender disposition in the brave new world of Russia's visual era should speak with Igor' Mal'tsev, the editor of Russia's self-nominated first non-pornographic men's magazine, *Medved'* (*Bear*): "All Russian men are male-chauvinist pigs. For seventy years, the state has been oppressing male-chauvinist pigs. It's about time we had a magazine for ourselves" (Matthews 1995b:24). The brainchild of Vladislav List'ev, the assassinated managing director of Ostankino TV, the expensive monthly (in 1996, 15,000 rubles/\$3) has the explicit agenda of restoring to "ego-bruised" Moscow males the machismo suppressed, according to Mal'tsev, by the Soviet regime. The cover of the first issue carries a photograph of List'ev (plus a "memorial plaque" with "vlad" [sic] on it) and a selective list of the contents. These include "Garderob angliiskogo dzhentl'mena" 'Wardrobe of the English Gentleman,' "Bol'shaia medveditsa: Eros—ne vseгда nagota" 'The Great She-Bear: Eros Isn't Always Nudity,' "Kanikuly na Kapri—ostrov starykh i bogatykh" 'Vacation on Capri: The Island of the Old and Rich,' and "Starye russkie: kak brak po raschetu pomog Otechestvu" 'The Old Russians: How Marriages of Convenience Helped the Fatherland.' In addition, the issue contains articles on war correspondents ("Men's Work"), the "erotic" filmmaker Tinto Brassi, historic houses, pipe smoking, wine, a new Kalashnikov carbine ("Toys"), hunting, boxing, and the inevitable photos of young female flesh. On the cover of the second issue, in which Mal'tsev asserts that "Muzhchiny nenasytno praviat mirom" 'men insatiably rule the world,' appears the scowling, uniformed Aleksandr Lebed, former lieutenant general and current governor of Krasnoiarsk, whose heroic exploits in Afghanistan and elsewhere are featured in an article under the rubric "Muzhskaia rabota" 'Men's Work,' consisting largely of photos depicting him in uniform and battle fatigues. That image of stalwart immovability doubtless figured in Lebed's victory in Krasnoiar's elections. (See Fig. I.7.)

The magazine remains virtually unchanged since its inception. The April 1998 issue features a piece on Adrian Lyne's recent film of *Lolita*, enlivened by color photos of Dominique Swain (*Lolita*)

Fig. I.7 “Doing What He’s Got to Do”: *Bear (Medved’)*, No. 1, June 1995; No. 2, 1995.



and interviews with Lyne and Dmitry Nabokov (characteristically, men speak while women constitute objects of onanistic contemplation), items on cars, sauternes (!), European villas and palaces on the market, shots of half-naked "Rubenesque" women, and interviews with Zhirinovskiy and a psychotherapist from Moscow Pedagogical University, who illuminates the concept of "swingers" (spouse-swappers). A two-page ad for a Visa card from the Bank of Moscow makes explicit the fundamental Heffnerian principle undeviatingly advocated by the magazine: the pleasure of purchasing women's bodies belongs to the arsenal of perks vouchsafed men who financially "have made it." The word VISA in bright yellow letters covers strategic parts of a young woman's naked body as she reclines, head propped on her hand, gazing dreamily at the reader. Above her body the caption reads: "Vsia Vasha bez ostatka" 'I'm entirely yours,' while on the facing page, above her head, the text promises the bliss of Paradise Finally (and Financially) Gained: "Vy ochen' dolgo zhdali etogo. . . . Chtoby ta, kotoraya eshche vchera kazalas' takoi nedostupnoi i ne mogla prinadlezhat' Vam tselikom, stala nakonets Vashei... Vashei bez ostatka!" 'You've waited a long time for this. . . . That she who as recently as yesterday seemed so unattainable and couldn't belong to you completely would finally become yours. . . . Entirely yours!' The Visa vision, in short, embraces the laughable notion peddled in the Hollywood fairy tale *Pretty Woman*: whereas paying cash for sexual favors is prostitution, the use of a credit card symbolizes embarking on a high-class romance. In either case, women number among such purchasable commodities as cars, furniture, and so forth, accessible to men of means ("real men").

What may strike a Westerner perusing *Medved'*, apart from its programmatic sexism, is the magazine's apparent historical dimension. That preoccupation with older Russia, however, merely reflects a strategy of contemporary legitimization through picturesque nostalgia. Style and opulence, after all, characterized the pre-Revolutionary aristocratic way of life, and any Russian today bent on certifying his sophistication and finesse in matters of wardrobe, cuisine, domicile, art, and so forth could do worse than demonstrate his connections with the era of the Anglophile "gentleman." That is precisely the tactic employed nowadays by both the *nouveaux riches* and the *nouveaux pauvres*, the latter constituting the progeny of Russia's diminished nobility, who formed the Nobles' Club, headed by Prince Andrei Golitsyn, so as to consolidate their elite

status and to teach the younger generations of blue bloods the rudiments of "noble style." For specifics of that style—for the "image"—one can turn to the coffee table glossy bimonthly *Nashe nasledie* (*Our Heritage*, founded in 1988), originally printed in Great Britain and devoted entirely to the graceful aspects of bygone Russian culture.

The very titles of several new publications announce the primacy of an aristocratic and moneyed style, notably *Dzhentl'MAN* (1995), which is a supplement to the magazine *Biznes klass* (*Business Class*), and *ND* (*Novyi dzhentl'men*).²⁵ The latter's inaugural spring issue, its cover boasting a naked, sandy Naomi Campbell posed with her back to the camera, carries photo-studded items (combining interviews and extracts from their works) on the three currently most popular (and financially secure) media stars of High Culture: the writers Viktor Yerofeev, Dmitri Prigov, and Vladimir Sorokin. In addition to warming male egos, the magazine has a pedagogical dimension, as evidenced, for instance, in the article by Dar'ia Tsvina titled "Dzhentl'men v restorane" 'A Gentleman in a Restaurant,' which provides pointers for civilized etiquette in fine dining (2: 54-57). The first two issues offered an accelerated education in what a "real gentleman" (a "man of means" aspiring to "style") needs: how he should dress and comport himself, with the aid of what accouterments and "signs of chic" he should construct his image, and what he should know and appreciate. (See Fig. I.8.)

To varying degrees, the glossy magazines project the ideal New Russian as a paradoxical composite of macho, crime-friendly tough, fabulously wealthy sybarite, and self-confident, glamorous man of the world. Yet this fantasy figures requires basic pointers on how to spend his money, behave in public, dress to impress, and satisfy women's sexual needs—the last concern numbering among the novel imports ushered in by desovietization.

Men's Health, one of the latest additions to Russian men's glossies, foregoes nude pinups, but brims with counsel about domination, women's "nature," a seductive breakfast menu to share with your bed-partner, and bedroom behavior in general. Sagacious advice regarding sexual technique consists chiefly of prohibitions, cautioning men not to ask the women they have succeeded in enticing into their bedrooms to "talk dirty," not to wear flowered underwear (!), not to mimic film sex scenarios, and not to delay the deci-



21

woman might become insecure about her own cleanliness or fall asleep (!!). (See Fig. I. 9.)

Sexual fantasies, bicycle selection, gym etiquette, weight lifting, and instructions for the consumption of exotic fruit (mango, lichee, avocado, starfruit) comprise the topics of the magazine's fourth issue (July/August 1998). The implied readership may be inferred from an article titled "Seks-Mashina" 'Sex-Machine/Car,' which coyly explains the hydraulics of male arousal and performance by running into the ground the presiding metaphor of a man's penis as a stick-shift. The accompanying illustration shows two dice dangling on a string from the stick, presumably the gambling man's equivalent of testicles. Doggedly pursuing the car analogy, the author's "wit" draws predictable parallels between an oil change, acceleration, fuel, etc., and aspects of men's bodily movements and reactions during sexual intercourse. As in most men's glossies, the emphasis of *Men's Health* falls on social, and especially sexual, comportment in specific settings and circumstances that presuppose a male with a fat wallet, poor manners, and the desire to create an ineradicable impression as an (omni)potent "real man."

"Live" Images and Life's Theatre

Visitors to Moscow have no difficulty perceiving the symbiosis between simulacra in publications and simulacra in "real" life. Evidence of the pursuit of beauty, conceived predominantly as cynosural style, proliferates in the countless spectacles mounted throughout the city: Mayor Luzhkov's conspicuous revival of decorative architecture in downtown Moscow, the relentless barrage of openings, inaugurations, "presentations" (of prizes, books, journals, etc.), exhibitions (of art, hairdressing "innovations," handicrafts), competitions,²⁶ benefit balls,²⁷ fashion shows (of clothes designed by the perennially popular Viacheslav Zaitsev, Natal'ia Naftalieva [leather], and the current Couture King, Iudashkin), body-building performances, beauty contests (Miss Moscow, Miss Russia, Miss Hair, Miss Legs, Miss Tit [sic]), strip shows, bride markets, casino scandals, and a broad range of other spectatorship genres.

Three "events" typical of this trend punctuated the first four years of born again Petrine re-visioning: (1) the publicity-saturated opening of the Ridzhina Art Gallery in 1992, revealingly labeled *100 porosiat* (*100 Piglets*), at which film sex symbol Svetlana Syetlitskaia distributed handfuls of suckling pig, slaughtered and



Fig. I.9 Maintaining masculine health, in the male body and around the female form: *Men's Health*, No. 4, July/August 1998; First Russian issue of *Playboy*, Summer 1995.
Published by New Prairie Press

cooked for the “happening,” among the glitterati in attendance. (2) In a tamer but more luxurious mode, at the inauguration of *Medved'* (1995) in the Moscow Business Club, the city's *beau monde* feasted on caviar, sturgeon, and champagne, to the deafening music of a jazz band (Matthews 1995b:24). (3) As the nightclub Metropole celebrated a “presentation” of “Luka,” a full-length erotic musical cartoon (sic) based on Barkov's infamous narrative poem *Luka Mudishchev* that director Roman Mitrofanov expected to complete in two years (by 1998),²⁸ red-stockinged thespians performed a strip-tease on stage, while a fleshy, gaudily but minimally dressed woman sprawled on a table contemplating a teapot and a mound of bagels, in imitation of the artist Boris Kustodiev's hefty merchant wives (Ziablik 16-17). Short-lived public performance that may be photographed has superseded production of objects for prolonged or repeated perusal.

Under the impact of the current specularization, even professions normally deemed unspectacular have undergone theatricalization. Mayor Luzhkov has become “a man for all media,” who not only frequents all possible photo-op events, but had Moscow's “hottest” new men's cologne, *Mer* (*Mayor*), created in his honor. The packaging, “loaded with political symbolism,” in its color and lines evokes the Kremlin and White House, while, according to its producers, “the contrast between the square bottle and the silver cap creates the impression of the broad, masculine shoulders of a man able to build a home and be responsible for what happens to it” (Mitlyng 7). Tellingly, Georgii Noksov, the fashion critic for *Domovoi*, characterizes *Mer* as “a scent for a man who is not afraid to reveal his sensitive side. I can see young men wearing it” (Mitlyng 7).

Karina Gyulazizova, a psychoanalyst who opened shop in 1989 at the ripe age of 20, also became a media star, and was voted the fourth most popular woman in Russia, according to one poll several years ago. With a regular column in the magazine *Rabotnitsa* (*Working Woman*), she often performed on television and at women's clubs that sought her wise counsel. A graduate of the School of Psychoanalysis at the Moscow Society of Psychoanalysis, Gyulazizova frankly admitted to incorporating into her practice aspects of her second profession—that of theater producer (with a diploma from the Moscow Institute of Culture)! That background, coupled with her four marriages and her reputation as a charlatan

with the psychiatric establishment, did not deter clients, presumably with genuine psychological problems, from consulting her (Bode 16). After all, her credentials as a chic television personality with “style” are impeccable.

Quite apart from organized institutional “image making” and individual media-created stars, “average Russians” encountered along city streets often seem ambulatory copies of the simulacra peddled by popular magazines. Clones of Stallone and Van Damme²⁹ in sleeveless bodyshirts flex their biceps, aspiring though unemployed young businessmen wear three-piece suits and exorbitantly priced imported ties, and terminally *soignées* young women awash in French perfume shop for groceries decked out in what Westerners would consider formal evening wear. The dramatic increase in two status symbols—foreign cars and pedigree dogs—has noticeably changed the overall look of many urban regions and exerted an impact on the city’s traditionally potent smells. So has the innovation of parading on horseback along Moscow’s streets, where horses answering the call of nature leave their substantial mark.³⁰

Ubiquitous aestheticization takes various forms: the emphasis on prettifying apartments (Italian furniture and especially Italian bathrooms are “in”) and on presenting food attractively in restaurants and cafés, which also pay more attention than formerly to the aesthetics of place settings and service; incomparably improved store displays, “enhanced” by the artificial plants Mayor Luzhkov forced store owners to place by their doors in honor of the city’s 850th anniversary (1997)—an occasion that cost the capital fabulous sums and transformed it into a neon-lit torte; individualized book designs; imaginative flower arrangements; and the like. Most bookstalls carry literature on beauty and modes of beautification. The aesthetic trend runs the gamut from moderate efforts at eliminating the unsightly to a frantic chase after impressive effects that will establish an identity by astounding spectators and imprinting an indelible “image” in their memories. To the latter category belong not only stunning exercises in conspicuous consumption, but also dramatic outsized gestures, such as wildly extravagant tips and outrageous statements: Zhirinovsky’s advocacy of group sex as a solution to Russia’s travails comes to mind—a “bad boy” provocation in fascinating dialogue with his image on Zhirinovsky vodka, advertised, not coincidentally, on the rear cover of *MaKhaON*.³¹ Transcending the ordinary is *de rigueur*, and the drive for uniqueness and originality accounts for the relentless repetition of the

words “super” and “skazka” ‘fairy tale’ in the vocabulary of the late 1990s.³² Visitors accustomed to the undifferentiated grayness of Soviet life might well grow dizzy from the new kaleidoscope of vivid behavioral hues. (See Fig. I.10.)

Simulation and Stimulation

That Potemkin villages nonetheless remain operative on both micro and macro levels in Russia may be deduced from numerous factors. Illusion relies on distance, and much of the surface glitter does not withstand close scrutiny. Perhaps one of the most telling, if trivial, details about Russians’ priorities is the majority’s preference for makeup, cologne, and perfume over deodorant—still not an overly popular item even among self-conscious image seekers. Cover-up is favored over clean-up, as attested not only by the activities of Yeltsin’s government, but also by the heaps of garbage strewn over sidewalks, the debris abandoned by construction workers after they complete a project, and the puddles of urine forlornly spreading in elevators of countless apartment buildings. Luzhkov’s extravagant campaign for the 850th anniversary of Moscow, admittedly, had its hygienic consequences, however, and transformed parts of central Moscow into a trophy town. The clean-up necessitated the forcible expulsion of dogs and dark-skinned members of the city’s population, but certainly improved the city’s image as a vibrant metropolis uncontaminated by vagrants.

Campaigns of this sort signal a retreat from the ugly facts of contemporary Russian reality, but simultaneously serve to underscore them. Simulacra of grand style compensate for, without eliminating, the knowledge that amidst commercialized modernization, the Russian economy is in shambles; life expectancy and population levels have plummeted;³³ the overall death rate increased by 18 percent in 1993;³⁴ teenage crime has escalated drastically;³⁵ estimates of mafia control over businesses range from 40 to 80 percent;³⁶ unemployment continues to rise;³⁷ alcoholism and bootlegging have reached all-time highs, as have drug-related crimes;³⁸ Russia’s abortion rate remains the highest in the world;³⁹ and burying the dead has become so expensive that many corpses in Moscow and St. Petersburg rot unclaimed. Even for the stalwart, such conditions must appear irreversibly bleak, hardly susceptible to improvement through individual action. Given the sweeping disillusionment with, and indifference to, politics ushered in by

<https://newprairiepress.org/stcl/vol24/iss1/3>
DOI: 10.4148/2334-4415.1474



Fig. I.10 One hundred-proof machismo, Zhirinovsky style, or in
Zhirinovskiy Vodka Veritas: MaKhaON, No. 1 (4) 1995.
Published by New Prairie Press

desovietization, a shift to consumerist narcissism offers one of the few available escape routes from the unpalatable facts of daily existence.

Berger maintains that envy is at the heart of consumerist psychology, for the publicity that ostensibly promotes merchandise in fact promises the happiness of eliciting envy: "Being envied is a solitary form of reassurance. It depends precisely upon not sharing your experience with those who envy you" (133). The communal imperative under Soviet rule, in tandem with *uravnilovka*, minimized the likelihood of such envy, as well as the pleasures of solitary experiences. Untrammelled individualism, however, sets a different psychological stage, highly dependent on economically marked props. Tellingly, Iurii Olesha's *Zavist'* (*Envy*, 1927) explored its fantasist-protagonist's bitter resentment of his NEP "rival's" public success precisely during a period that in its modified receptivity to free enterprise has analogies with Russia's 1990s lurch to capitalism.⁴⁰ No doubt, nowadays envy partly motivates many Russians' automatic accusation of mafia involvement leveled against anyone who achieves rapid financial success and flaunts it through New Style.

To suggest that the potentially lemming-like rush toward image is the only venturesome "act in town," however, would be inaccurate. A small but visible percentage of the younger generation of Russians comprise less flamboyant seekers of financial security who have chosen to build stable careers through hard work. Largely in their twenties and thirties, they have founded their own businesses or joined slowly developing enterprises that give every indication of success. To cite but a few representative examples in Moscow: Dmitrii Blekher runs a real estate agency, Ekaterina Shalneva handles press relations for the Russian Privatization Center; Sergei Skatershchikov owns a financial information company that now employs fifty people; Elena Andreeva has a thriving security agency; Irina Belikova heads the health-tourism company Rantek; Galina Selivanova operates a bustling cosmetics studio; Andrei Gusarov is president of Moscow's premier demolition corporation, Satori; Marat Gel'man draws large crowds to his irreverent art gallery;⁴¹ and the journalist Leonid Bershidsky works as a translator for *Newsweek* and *The Philadelphia Enquirer* (Erlanger 1 and 12).⁴² Resourceful and down to earth (Skatershchikov reportedly turned down a job with an annual salary of \$120,000 to pursue his own projects), these vocalized Russians and others like them

in business, industry, culture, academic institutions, and government offices have faith in the old ethic of unglamorous, tireless effort as a viable means not only of achieving personal well-being but also of rebuilding a traumatized society. While probably not impervious to the lure of “image” (one of the photographs accompanying an article on the young entrepreneurs features Shalneva, for example, with the now obligatory pedigree dog [Erlanger 1]), this segment of Russia’s population seems to have escaped the hypnosis of the “quick fix” Potemkin village gesture popularized by the mass media. It provides a vital counterbalance to what Baudrillard gloomily characterizes as a situation of “inoperable inertia, in which nothing can challenge or upset the system of interchangeable simulacra” (Conner 57).

In a culture that for seven decades radically politicized the good, the bad, and the ugly according to puritanical criteria equating beauty with moral turpitude, the pleasures of aestheticization must be irresistibly seductive. Succumbing to the allure of “looking good” does not necessarily doom one forever to a surface, fantasy existence. As Peter the Great’s dream of a “Venice of the North” bore out, wild flights of the imagination may translate into tangible reality. Baudrillard’s lugubrious scenario of signs obliterating or substituting for experience notwithstanding, Potemkin villages did not eliminate the possibility of the rise of *bona fide* rural communities. And, perhaps more interestingly for the cultural historian (as opposed to the prophet intent on predicting the future fate of Russia), the current Russian mania for the stylish *imidzh* offers endlessly rich material for analysis, delectation, and imaginative speculation.

Notes

Warmest gratitude to the friends and colleagues who helped obtain some of the publications discussed in this essay: Nadezhda Azhgikhina, Seth Graham, John Kachur, David Lowe, and Galina Shcherbakova. A special note of thanks to Petre Petrov for his Petronius-perusal of the final draft and to Seth Graham for tasty tidbits.

1. To appreciate the rich diversity of long-standing, let alone recent, concepts of beauty, see Hofstadter and Kuhns.

2. Concerned chiefly with literary issues, Siniavskii’s *Chto takoe sotsialisticheskii realizm?* (*What Is Socialist Realism?*) accurately observes that the eighteenth century shared the Soviet period’s “idea of political

purposefulness" and similarly "conceived of itself as the center of Creation." See Terts 431-32; in English, Tertz 195-96.

3. Soviet moralization of a minimalist way of life accounts in part for its intelligentsia's romance with Ernest Hemingway and his signature brand of macho heroics couched in a "stripped," "bare-bones" style.

4. As Mark Hopkins notes, Soviet advertising "pleaded for special causes rather than merchandised goods." And the advertising revived after World War II took the form primarily of announcements. For examples of infrequent exceptions to this rule, see Hopkins 186-89.

5. For a sampling of pre-Revolutionary Russia's advertising campaigns, see *Torgovaia reklama i upakovka v Russii XIX-XX vv.* (Moscow: Gos. istoricheskii muzei: 1993).

6. Perhaps that explains why the term "*lakirovka*" 'varnish[ing],' so frequently wielded by proponents of alleged "truth telling" during the Soviet period to denounce the prettification of a grim reality, has greater affinities with *imidzh*.

7. Although the new Russian publications, often in cooperation with Western colleagues, sponsors, etc., rely on at least a scattering of English in each issue, they often make primitive errors of the sort found on the cover of the inaugural issue of *Novyi dzhentel'men* (*Zhurnal dlia muzhchin*) (Spring 1995): Whereas the Russian title is in the singular (*novyi* has the masculine singular ending of the adjective), its English rendition on the cover page is *New Gentlemen*.

8. Sauer ultimately pulled out of that joint venture at considerable loss to the Dutch publishing giant that financed the project. For a summary of his publishing activities in Moscow, see Hockstader, Roi.

9. The magazine's title ironizes the notorious Cult of Personality under Stalin.

10. Nowadays the majority of "Russian" popular magazines have foreign partners or (co-) sponsors and often are printed abroad: e.g., in England, Finland.

11. That shift was noted by Vladimir Padunov in a private conversation as early as 1992.

12. The title, in contrast to the adjective "*domovyi*" 'house,' conjures up the folkloric house spirit *domovoi*, thereby suggesting the ineffable nature of what the magazine purveys. That precious aura of "something extra, indefinable" informs all those magazines that sell style, deploying a rhetoric that indefatigably repeats "fantastic," "super," "unique," and so forth.

13. See Morvant. During July of 1995, however, Yeltsin and the government approved an increase in the minimum wage, which approximated

\$12.10 (55,000 rubles). See Alaina Lemon, "Government Proposes Wage Rise without Printing Extra Money," OMRI Daily Digest I, No. 137, 17 July 1995.

14. The post-perestroika body in general has acquired formidable symbolic status in Russia. Fascinatingly, Zhirinovskiy's supporters and proponents of a militaristic solution to Russia's travails, who decry the Western commodification of the (primarily female) body, embrace a masculinist glorification of the body as a "mean, lean machine," amply evidenced by the cult of Bruce Lee, Sylvester Stallone, Jean Claude van Damme, Arnold Schwarzenegger, the proliferation of macho magazines and martial arts manuals (*Sportsmen, Commando*) along Moscow streets, a mania for body-building, and the related production of and traffic in such growth hormones as Somatropine and Gonadotropine. On smuggling activities in such hormones, see Penny Morvant, "Illegal Trade in Growth Hormones," OMRI Daily Digest I, No. 134, 12 July 1995. The latest addition to male "body" publications is *Men's Health*, the first issue of which appeared in 1998.

15. On the role of reification in advertising, see Goldman 23, 61-84.

16. *Krest'ianka* has retained a sufficient number of its old features to strike some journalists as not having undergone Westernization (see Bershidsky). While it is a far cry from Russian versions of Western glossies, to deny its transformation is myopic.

17. Under the editorship of Anastasiia Kurpiianova, the magazine is printed in Germany.

18. In January 1995 the State Statistics Committee reported that 90,000 women suffer occupational injuries annually. Interfax maintains that deterioration in women's health is due largely to poor working conditions, particularly in agriculture. See OMRI Daily Digest I, No. 8, 11 January 1995.

19. By comparison with the circulation of men's magazines in the United States, however, that readership is modest. In America, *Playboy*, for instance, sells 4.1 million copies, *Penthouse*, 3.8 million, while *Sports Illustrated* sells 2.7 million. Barthel 170. *Krest'ianka*'s sales, however, place it firmly in the ranks of leading Russian women's magazines, and its advertising rates reportedly are second only to the Russian edition of *Cosmopolitan* (Bershidsky).

20. These emanate not only from conservatives and nationalists, but also from self-designed liberals. On this question, see Kunkle.

21. To these may be added the male-oriented glossies *Tovarishch*, *Penthouse*, and *Soldier of Fortune* (Matthews 1995b:24). Most of these share elements with the irregularly issued first Russian pornographic magazine,

Andrei (1991-96), likewise subtitled "Russkii zhurnal dlia muzhchin" ("Russian men's magazine"), the fifth issue of which carried a "thriller" by Iurii Nagibin, titled "Pereverten" ("Werewolf").

22. In Russia, where male impotence is an acute problem, "natives" from New Guinea may offer a reassuring image of male potency in the two-foot orange gourd penis sheathes of the tribesman. See Fisher 46.

23. The abrupt diminishment of media attention to Zhirinovskiy's lunatic antics lent credence to the rumor that Yeltsin orchestrated his brief fame as a terrifying alternate candidate in the elections, a straw man who, like Zyuganov, would presumably plunge Russia into disaster and mayhem if elected. Until 1998 the press rarely concerned itself with Zhirinovskiy's "thoughts" on national issues, briefly reporting, instead, about his manhandling of a journalist and his cheating at "Fool," a card game for which nature seems to have uniquely equipped him to emerge as the No. 1 player. See Interfax, 15 June 1997. Zhirinovskiy's most recent descent into hormonal Hades is his "primer," *Azbuka Seksa* (*The ABCs of Sex* 1998), which proposes, *inter alia*, that licensed prostitutes be launched into space "to reduce the stress of the Motherland's weary cosmonauts" (*Time*, January 18, 1999): 20. Zhirinovskiy, of course, represents not a political, but a zoological phenomenon.

24. For instance, it took one of Yeltsin's numerous hospitalizations and lurid speculation about his highly publicized alcohol abuse to bring his indignant wife into the limelight as she defended his public image.

25. *ND* has not appeared in the last two years and may well be defunct, though it would not be the first glossy to resume publication on an irregular basis (such as *Andrei*, for example).

26. A revealing "sign of the times" is the ironic transfiguration of political space, as when the gym of the Central Army Sports Club served as the venue for a heavily publicized hairdressing championship in late 1993. See *Moscow News*, No. 49, December 3, 1993: 15.

27. For instance, *Life* magazine photographed a benefit ball at one of Moscow's palaces to which an entrance ticket cost "about three months' salary for an average worker." *Life* (July 1995): 62.

28. The film is, indeed, finished, and, quite fittingly, the first issue of *Cult of Personalities* carries an illustrated summary of its plot, which turns on the trials and tribulations of its protagonist's "Moby Dick" (i.e., outsized penis).

29. Until approximately 1996, Stallone, whose bared testosterone torso weary travelers had encountered on posters at practically every Moscow subway station since the early 1990s, remained a big draw for Russian movie viewers. The hottest muscle king of the mid-1990s, however, was

the Belgian Van Damme, who reportedly accounted for approximately 20 percent of "unofficial" (i.e., illegal) video sales in Moscow kiosks. Photos of Van Damme, often reproduced from Western publications, repeatedly turn up in popular magazines, and the first issue of the monthly *Moskvarium* devoted a full page, with no text, to color shots of van Damme taken when he visited Moscow (Jean Claude Van Damme in Moscow" ["Zhan Klod Van Damme v Moskve"]) (1995) 1: 33.

30. Report from Moscow by David Lowe via E-mail, 16 July 1995, and personal experiences during trips in 1996 and 1997, when a self-conscious rider galloped along the sidewalk of Dorogomilov Street.

31. The ad equates Zhirinovskiy vodka with New Russia ("Vodka Zhirinovskii—eto novaia Rossiia").

32. On the ordinary as something to be overcome at all costs in advertising, see Barthel 91.

33. According to Labor Ministry representative Aleksandr Tkachenko, by 1995 life expectancy for men had fallen to 57.3 years, and for women to 71.1. In 1993-94, the population likewise diminished, by 1.7 million. See OMRI Daily Digest, No. 135, 13 July 1995. Most recent surveys indicate 58 and 71 years, respectively, for male and female life expectancy.

34. See *Newsweek*, July 11, 1994: 37.

35. Russian and Western agencies report that teenagers committed three murders in 1991, as compared to sixty in 1994. A spokeswoman for the Interior Ministry cited a gang of children led by a 10-year-old, which robbed shops, kiosks, and state institutions with impressive skill. See OMRI Daily Digest I, No. 64, 30 March 1995.

36. See OMRI Daily Digest, No. 135, 13 July 1995, and Stephen Handelman, *Comrade Criminal: Russia's New Mafiya* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1995).

37. By September 1994 the unemployed made up 1.7 percent of Russia's entire adult population. See RFL/RL Daily Report, 27 September 1994. According to Labor Minister Gennadii Melikian, in January 1995 roughly 5.1 million people were jobless, although only 1.5 million registered as unemployed. OMRI Daily Digest I, No. 4, 5 January 1995.

38. Crimes committed by drunken offenders reportedly increased from 316,000 in 1985 to 600,000 in 1994. The number of fatalities caused by bootlegged alcohol rose from 16,600 in 1991 to 29,600 in 1993 and approximately 53,000 in 1994. See "Officials: Drink Fatalities Rise," *The Moscow Times*, May 17, 1995: 4. More than 1.5 million people in Russia use narcotics, and according to the Interior Ministry, the 74,000 drug-related crimes in 1994 represented an increase of more than 60% over

1993. See Thomas Sigel, "Drug-Related Crime Rises," OMRI Daily Digest I, No. 124, 27 June 1995.

39. The latest statistics indicate that for every 100 births in Russia there are 225 abortions, compared to 67 in Sweden, 62 in France, and 25 in the Netherlands. See OMRI Daily Digest I, No. 122, 23 June 1995.

40. For some perceptive albeit frustratingly undeveloped remarks about Kavalero as envious consumer, see Elizabeth K. Beaujour, *The Invisible Land: A Study of the Artistic Imagination of Iurii Olesha* (New York: Columbia UP, 1970), Chapter Two.

41. Two of the most recent shows, which created a stir, exhibited "The Art of the Kompromat" (a quintessentially Russian genre consisting of gathering compromising material against one's "enemy") and, to honor this year's bicentennial of Pushkin's birth, "Fuck You, Dantes!" For a report on the latter, see *Ogonek* 8 (February 1999): 42.

42. For a cultural analysis of the New Russians, see the forthcoming study by Nadezhda Azhgikhina and Helena Goscilo, titled *Born Again: Entrepreneurship and the New Russians*.

Works Cited

Androunas, Elena. *Soviet Media in Transition: Structural and Economic Alternatives*. Westport, CT: Praeger, 1993.

Barthel, Diane. *Putting on Appearances*. Philadelphia: Temple UP, 1988.

Baudrillard, Jean. *Simulacra and Simulation*. Trans. Sheila Faria Glaser. Ann Arbor: Michigan UP, 1994.

Berger, John. *Ways of Seeing*. London: BBC and Penguin, 1972.

Bershidsky, Leonid. "MEDIA WATCH: Women's Glossy Meets Nostalgia for Old Values." *Moscow Times*. February 5, 1998.

Bode, Veronica. "New Russian Psychiatry: Dr. Ruth and 'Dear Abby'." *The Moscow Tribune*. 2 June 1995.

Callaghan, Karen A., ed. *Ideals of Feminine Beauty: Philosophical, Social, and Cultural Dimensions*. Westport, CT: Greenwood, 1994.

Connor, Steven. *Postmodernist Culture. An Introduction to Theories of the Contemporary*. Oxford: Blackwell, 1989.

Dunham, Vera S. *In Stalin's Time: Middle-Class Values in Soviet Fiction*.

Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1976.

<https://newprairiepress.org/stcl/vol24/iss1/3>

DOI: 10.4148/2334-4415.1474

- Erlinger, Steven. "To Be Young, Russian and Middle Class." *The New York Times*, July 23, 1995: 1, 16.
- Ewen, Stuart and Elizabeth. *Channels of Desire: Mass Images and the Shaping of American Consciousness*. New York: McGraw, 1982.
- Ewen, Stuart. *All Consuming Images: The Politics of Style in Contemporary Culture*. New York: Basic, 1988.
- Fisher, Helen E. *Anatomy of Love. The Natural History of Monogamy, Adultery, and Divorce*. New York: Norton, 1992.
- Goldman, Robert. *Reading Ads Socially*. London: Routledge, 1992.
- Hockstader, Lee. "The Cosmo Naut: Magazine Man Derk Sauer Is Pushing 'Factory Worker Lady' Off Moscow's Shelves." *The Washington Post*. February 22, 1995. D1, D12.
- Hofstadter, Albert and Richard Kuhns, eds. *Philosophies of Art and Beauty. Selected Readings in Aesthetics from Plato to Heidegger*. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1964/1976.
- Hopkins, Mark W. *Mass Media in the Soviet Union*. New York: Western Publishing, 1970.
- Kunkle, Sheila. *Gender, Sexuality and Discourse of Russian National Identity*. Unpublished Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Pittsburgh, 1995.
- Matthews, Owen. "Nobility's Big Night on the Town." *The Moscow Times*. 3 June 1995a.
- . "A Magazine for Pigs, and Proud of It." *The Moscow Times*. 7 June 1995b.
- Morvant, Penny. "Russians Unhappy with their Wages." OMRI Daily Digest I, No. 133. 11 July 1995.
- Roi, Sergei. "Derk Saur." *Moskovskii zhurnal* 1, 1995.
- Terts, Abram. *Fantasticheskii mir Abrama Terts'a*. New York: Inter- Library Associates, 1967.
- Tertz, Abram. *The Trial Begins and on Socialist Realism*. Trans. Max Hayward and George Dennis. New York: Vintage, 1960.
- Williams, Raymond. "Advertising: the Magic System." In *Problems in Materialism and Culture*. London: Verso, 1980: 170-95.
- Ziablik, Aleksandr. "Vozvrashchenie Luki sprovotsirovalo Dmitriia Krylova na kalambur." *Stolitsa*, 19 March 1995, 12: 16-17.

Magazines

Andrei, Nos. 1-7.

Cosmopolitan, April, May 1995; July/August 1996; March 1997; May 1998.

Domashnii ochag/Good Housekeeping, June-July 1995.

Domovoi, No. 4, April 1994.

Dzhentl'MAN, No. 2, Summer 1995.

Krest'ianka, Nos. 1-5, 1995; 1, 1998.

Kul't lichnostei, No. 1, 1998.

MaKhaOH, No. 1, 1995.

Medved', Nos. 1, 2, 4, 5, 1995; 10, 1996; 3, 11, 1997; 4, 1998.

Men's Health, Nos. 1, 3, 4, 1998.

Moskovskii zhurnal/Moscow Magazine, No. 1, 1995.

ND (Novyi Dzhentl'men), Spring 1995.

Ogonek, 1995, 1997, 1998.

Playboy, No. 1, Summer 1995.

Rabotnitsa, No. 1, 1998.

Stolitsa, No. 12, 19 March 1995.

Supermen, Nos. 2, 6, 1995; 7/8, 11, 1997.

Voiazh, Summer 1995.