Art as Aping: The Uses of Dialogism in Timur Kibirov’s “To Igor' Pomerantsev. Summer Reflections on the Fate of Belles Lettres”

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Discussions of contemporary Russian poetry frequently mention an artistic movement that found its early practitioners in Russia in the 1960s and later came to be known as sots-art or conceptualism.¹ This paper will focus on a poem by Timur Kibirov, “To Igor' Pomerantsev. Summer Reflections on the Fate of Belles Lettres. Second Edition” (“Igoriu Pomerantsevu. Letnie razmyshleniia o sud'bakh iziashchnoi slovesnosti. Vtoraia redaktsiia”). In addition to being, arguably, the most popular poet of the 1990s in Russia, Kibirov is also one of the best-known (along with Dmitrii Prigov and Lev Rubinshtein) conceptualists.² I will explore, with Kibirov’s piece as an example, the mechanics of heteroglossia’s comic (as well as serious) employment by a postmodernist school. First I will demonstrate that Mikhail Bakhtin’s theory of heteroglossia provides a useful framework for the analysis of Kibirov’s poem. Then I will show that the mechanics of heteroglossia’s utilization by Kibirov somewhat differs from Bakhtin’s schemes. I will proceed to argue that Kibirov’s employment of dialogism for comic and parodic purposes should not overshadow a darker aspect of

¹I am deeply grateful to Alexander Levitsky, Svetlana Evdokimova, and Hilary Teplitz for their insightful comments about my article. For a book-length study of sots-art see Endquote: Sots-Art Literature and Soviet Grand Style, ed. Marina Balina, Nancy Condee, and Evgeny Dobrenko (Evanston, 2000).
²Classifying Kibirov, Prigov, and Rubinshtein together within the school of conceptualism may be an oversimplification. As Andrew Wachtel points out, “although attempts have been made to divide the poets ... who came to maturity between the late 1960s and the early 1980s ... into schools—metarealism and conceptualism—it is clear that there are strong differences even among poets who might be classified together within these schools.” See his “The Youngest Archists: Kutik, Sedakova, Kibirov, Parshchikov,” in Rereading Russian Poetry, ed. Stephanie Sandler (New Haven, 1999), 271. Kibirov’s recent works, in particular, suggest that it may be more fruitful to associate him with postconceptualists. On postconceptualism and “New Sincerity” see Mikhail Epstein, “A Catalogue of New Poetries,” and “On the Place of Postmodernism in Postmodernity,” both in Russian Postmodernism: New Perspectives on Post-Soviet Culture, ed. Mikhail Epstein, Alexander A. Genis, and Slobodanka M. Vladiv-Glover (New York, 1999), 146, 456–68.

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heteroglossia in the poem. The second half of my essay, accordingly, will examine the complex interplay between dialogic pleasure and frustration in Kibirov’s work.

It will be useful here to review a formulation of conceptualist doctrine by Mikhail Aizenberg, a spokesman and a theoretician of the movement:

It is no secret that in a poetic work language is not merely a means but also a reference point, possibly the only one. An author’s artistic solvency is wholly determined by his sensitivity to the processes at work in language. There is the sense of poetic language as a completely other language in which you can say only the right thing and only in a way you cannot in ordinary language. Here the possibilities diverge, though. There is the traditional path of individual, singular poetic language and the path of plural language, like a local Tower of Babel, a language of languages that is made “other” (i.e., artistic) not by the qualitative level of its components but by the author’s dismissive-creative attitude toward them. This is the path of conceptual art. To use someone else’s (I. Kabakov’s) definition, in conceptual art it is not the author expressing himself in his own language but languages themselves, always someone else’s, conversing among themselves. 3

This view, obviously, falls in line with some of the more prominent propositions put forth by Russian literary theorists of the last century. It conceives of poetry as a unique mode of discourse, concisely expresses the notion of poetic function, equates literariness and divergence from everyday language, and, most important for the purpose of my argument, adheres to the dialogic view of literature. 4 Aizenberg makes a distinction between “the individual, unique poetic language,” or monologic language, and “plural language,” or heteroglossia. This distinction replicates the dichotomy Bakhtin constructed in his numerous studies of raznorechie. It follows from Aizenberg’s formulation of conceptualism’s goals that dialogism is, in fact, this movement’s structural dominant, which governs and modifies the other components. 5

Two things should be mentioned before turning to Kibirov’s “To Igor’ Pomerantsev.” First, one may object to applying Bakhtin’s ideas on heteroglossia to a poem since this literary theoretician associated poetry with monologism. 6 It has been argued to the contrary, however, that poetry displays important dialogic features. 7 My analysis of Kibirov’s piece

4The notion of poetry as a unique mode of discourse is one of formalism’s basic precepts. The conceptualist idea of the poetic function corresponds to the formalist notion of the poetic function. The understanding of literariness as divergence from everyday language coincides with the formalist idea of style as deviation from ordinary speech.
5In Language in Literature (Cambridge, MA, 1987) Roman Jakobson defines the dominant “as the focusing component of a work of art: it rules, determines, and transforms the remaining components” (p. 41). Mark Lipovetsky presents Mikhail Bakhtin’s theory of dialogism, along with chaos theory, as the two major conceptual models for the elucidation of Russian postmodernism. Lipovetsky argues that “dialogism cannot be treated as merely an individual element of postmodernist poetics, for it is the structural frame defining the unique nature of postmodernist intertextuality and playfulness. In other words, it functions as the key to the postmodernist artistic paradigm.” See his Russian Postmodernist Fiction: Dialogue with Chaos (Armonk, NY, 1999), 24.
will show that its poetic effectiveness largely depends on the constituents of the work remembering their life in “specific contexts,” as well as on one strongly sensing “typical or reified images of genres, tendencies and worldviews” “behind the words of the work.”8 In fact, it will be demonstrated that Bakhtin’s definition of the novel as “a diversity of individual voices, artistically organized,” with “the internal stratification present in every language at any given moment,” applies to Kibirov’s poem and, by extension, to Russian conceptualist poetry.9 It is worth noting that Bakhtin’s insights on the novel may be a productive venue for analyzing Kibirov’s verse because Kibirov and other conceptualists appear not to be writing poetry in the sense that Bakhtin would have taken it. Taking full advantage of heteroglossia, Kibirov produces a poem that Bakhtin would probably consider a generic hybrid, something like “a novel in verse” or an “encyclopedia of contemporary Russian intelligentsia’s life.”

Second, it must be mentioned that, although the concept of dialogism is habitually associated with Bakhtin, one encounters ideas on the polyphonic interplay of voices in texts in a number of works by Russian literary theorists. Moving from the notion of a literary piece as a hermetic entity, formalists developed an understanding of a work as an utterance which, as Eikhenbaum puts it, “is never perceived in isolation,” and the form of which “is always seen against the background of other works.”10 Iurii Tynianov’s and Roman Jakobson’s programmatic statements, “Problems in the Study of Language and Literature,” express an unmistakably dialogic understanding of all verbal art when they caution against pure synchronism. Both insist on a so-called exchange model of literature in which a function of each element is determined not only by its interrelationship with other elements within the work in question but also, to quote Tynianov, by its interrelationship “with the whole literary system.”11 Tynianov’s distinction between “auto-function” (an element’s correlation with similar elements in other works) and “syn-function” (its status within the work) corresponds to Bakhtin’s theory of dialogism.12 Tynianov’s dichotomy, together with Bakhtin’s explorations, will help to explain Kibirov’s technique.

“To Igor’ Pomerantsev” opens Paraphrasis (Parafrazis), a collection of poems published in 1997. The collection’s title is a recurrent “dictionary of literary terms” appellation, which hints at the book’s fashionable metaliterary concerns. Taking a closer look, one notices that the word presents a hybrid of two terms—“paraphrase” (parafraza) and “peripherasis” (perifrazis). Such a title anticipates what is to come in a number of ways. First, the collection will be concerned with hybridization. Second, it is going to present metaliterary themes; more specifically, it will be preoccupied with issues of intertextuality (“paraphrase”).

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8Compare this to: “The poet strips the word of others’ intentions, uses only such words and forms ... that they lose ... their connection with specific contexts. Behind the words of a poetic work one should not sense any typical or reified images of genres ... nor professions, tendencies, directions ... nor world views. ... Everything that enters the work must ... forget its previous life in any other contexts” (Bakhtin, The Dialogic Imagination, 297).
9Ibid., 262–63.
11See Tynianov’s “O littaraturnoi evoliutsii” in his Poetika. Istoriaia literatury. Kino (Moscow, 1977), 272–73; Jakobson’s “The Dominant” and “Language in Operation” in his Language in Literature, 41–46, 50–61; and “Problems in the Study of Language and Literature” (coauthored with Tynianov) (ibid., 47–49). Unless otherwise noted, translations from Russian are my own.
12On auto-function and syn-function see Tynianov, Poetika, 272.
Third, it will use an indirect, roundabout manner ("periphrasis"). Finally, this play with words prefigures both the ironic and the ambiguous dimensions of the cycle. It may very well be that Kibirov is engaging the New Criticism notion of the "heresy of paraphrase." Is he then going against Tolstoy's famous pronouncement that, in order to say what Anna Karenina is about, one has to write it all over again, or is he employing a frankly erroneous title for comic purposes? Similarly, is "paraphrase" understood to be a restatement of an idea that fully retains its meaning, or is it used to be deliberately misleading? In addition, the collection's title might be an appellation to Three Odes Paraphrasing Psalm 143 (1743), the first book of Russian syllabo-tonic poetry, and one of the most important works in the history of Russian poetry. If Kibirov indeed has the book in mind, does he hint that his collection will prove groundbreaking as well? What else might this allusion suggest about Kibirov's project?

Leaving these questions unanswered for the moment, let us move from the collection's title to the title of its first poem. "To Igor' Pomerantsev" presents the first instance of Kibirov's implementation of a device I propose to call a "syncretic allusion." The title simultaneously echoes Mikhail Lomonosov's "Morning/Night Contemplation of Divine Greatness," Fedor Dostoevsky's Winter Notes on Summer Impressions, and Gavril Derzhavin's "To Eugene. Life on Zvanka." The latter is also emulated metrically, thematically, and generically in the poem, which describes a single summer day in the country in the form of an epistle to a friend. As opposed to a more habitual homogeneous allusion, such a hybrid foregrounds more powerfully the text's general intertextual nature, with intertextuality conceived of not so much as a name for a work's linkage to specific prior texts but more as an indicator of its participation in the discursive space of literature at large. In other words, the technique of syncretic allusions has a double function; it accents the text's dialogic relationship both to concrete prior utterances and, more generally, to the overall literary enterprise. It acts as a mark of literariness, or, in the term's comically degraded sense, of bookishness. Kibirov uses a recognizably traditional genre and offers (very "properly") an epigraph to dramatize literariness/bookishness. The words "belles lettres" sound pointedly old-fashioned, removed from their indigenous environment, and transplanted onto a foreign ground of modernity. As such, they appear ironically tinged. Just as the title is the first example of Kibirov's syncretic allusions, iziaschchnaia slovesnost' is the first case of Kibirov employing words with a strong "aura," as Bakhtin would call it. In this instance, an expression is chosen with a conspicuous Classicist/Golden Age overtone (at once period-bound and socially bound). Moreover, the designation "second edition" (one may recall Venedikt Erofeev's

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13 V asilii Trediakovskii, Mikhail Lomonosov, and Aleksandr Sumarokov, Tri ody parafrasticheskie psalma 143 sochinennyia chrez trekh stikhotvortsov iz kotorykh kazhdoi odnu slozhil osoblivoe (St. Petersburg, 1744). Reprinted in V asilii Trediakovskii, Psalter 1753, prepared and commented by Alexander Levitsky (Paderborn, 1989). Alexander Levitsky suggested this connection to me.

14 For a brief discussion of Kibirov's connections to Derzhavin in the (post)conceptualist's earlier poems see Il'ia Falikov, "Glagol vremen: G. Derzhavin i T. Kibirov: Opyt paralle'l'nogo procheniia," Literaturnaia gazeta, 19 October 1994; and Kevin M. Platt, History in a Grotesque Key: Russian Literature and the Idea of Revolution (Stanford, 1997), 176.

15 The usage of archaisms in an ironic function is a widespread device that has been discussed by, among others, Tynianov ("O literaturnoi evoliutsii," Poetika, 272–73).

introduces a strain of Romantic irony, underscoring the text’s status as a literary piece and playing with a split between “letter” as a spontaneous, private composition, and “letter”/“epistle” as a formal designation. Kibirov’s utilization in the title of a conventional genre (“epistle”), of a recognizably period-bound rhetoric, a syncretic allusion, and Romantic irony initiates a game of heteroglossia that will be sustained throughout the work.

The poem is written in iambic hexameter, or alexandrine. Derzhavin’s “To Eugene. Life on Zvanka,” as I pointed out above, uses the same meter. Although the respective rhyme schemes differ (Derzhavin’s archetypal transposition of Horace’s pastoral is written in abab quatrains, whereas “To Igor’ Pomerantsev” is written in couplets), both follow the Russian heroic line. The meter is doubly appropriate—solemn and pointedly formal, again dramatizing play with the lofty poetic discourse. On a higher structural level, the notion of ambience applies to locales or motifs no less than to stylistic details on the lexical plane. Hence, a chronotope is chosen that is “saturated through and through.”

Gary Saul Morson and Caryl Emerson connect the chronotope to a “specific way of conceptualizing the possibilities of action.” As they put it, “it is as if each genre possesses a specific field that determines the parameters of events even though it does not uniquely specify particular events. To study the field is to study the chronotope.” One may observe that different fields limit parameters with varying degrees of strictness. Similarly, while Michael Holquist interprets the chronotope at an elementary level of application as “a kind of recurrent formal feature that distinguishes a particular text type in such a way ... that it will always be recognizable as being that kind of text,” it must be realized that not every text can be equally easily distinguishable as “that kind of text.”

Just as words may have a more or less pronounced “aura” to them, chronotopes may be more or less typified. In this respect, Kibirov’s choices of a hypertypologized locale (countryside), time (summer), and theme (contemplations on literature), amplify three intertwined motifs: dialogism, bookishness, and conventionality.

In “Discourse in the Novel,” Bakhtin observes that

at any given moment of its evolution, language is stratified not only into linguistic dialects in the strict sense of the word ... but also ... into languages that are socio-ideological: languages of social groups, “professional” and “generic” languages, languages of generations and so forth. From this point of view, literary language itself is only one of these heteroglott languages—and in its turn is also stratified into languages (generic, period-bound and others).

Having underscored his work’s status as an utterance in a literary dialogue, Kibirov engages heteroglossia on the literary level (mixing and mingling discourses of different schools and

\[1\] Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination*, 246.
\[2\] Gary Saul Morson and Caryl Emerson, *Mikhail Bakhtin: Creation of a Prosaics* (Stanford, 1990), 370.
\[3\] Ibid., 370.
\[4\] See Michael Holquist, *Dialogism: Bakhtin and His World* (London, 1990), 110. Gary Saul Morson and Caryl Emerson support my suggestion that different chronotopes display varying degrees of typification, when they mention the novel of “historical emergence,” which “exhibits the most profound chronotopicity” (*Mikhail Bakhtin*, 410).
movements) as well as on the extraliterary level (toying with dialects of divergent social, professional, and other groups). This poem-hybrid abruptly switches between an elevated archaic tongue, Soviet Realist clichés, sots-lingo, contemporaneous post-Soviet jargon (“language of a day,” as Bakhtin would say), popular advertisements, political slogans, anglicisms, profanities etc. The poem encompasses an astonishing polyphony of voices, with sustained “Pushkinesque” or “Derzhavinesque” stylizations at one end of the spectrum and a rather impressive host of obscenities at the other. Similarly, on the level of purely literary stratification, one moves along the intertextual continuum from outright quotations through more or less obvious allusions to parodic reworkings and words/expressions which could not be connected to a single source but which, as explained earlier, carry a strong “remembrance of things past”—words with “aura.”

While it would take dozens of pages to go through the poem’s maze of heteroglossia, let me concentrate on the first stanza to illustrate Kibirov’s technique. Kibirov introduces a melancholy, lyrical intonation at the onset of the poem—“stooping in a bizarre way, stiffened with a sad face.” He disrupts the lyrical tone in the beginning of the second line by throwing in a vulgar “defecates,” and then hurriedly resurrects it with “and the forest is as if filled with crystal shine” (lines 2–3), an obvious echo of Tiutchev’s “At the very beginning of autumn there is.” Next, “ravens’ song” that “does not at all seem prophetic” supplies a less specific allusion (lines 3–5), which may have to do with Mikhail Lermontov’s “Raven flies to raven” or Edgar Poe’s “The Raven,” since Kibirov does not confine his intertextual play to the realm of Russian literature. However, the expression could also be employed more generally as a poetic cliché. In the latter case, the image, like the title, would derive its energy from dramatized literariness as such. The reference is negative (“does not at all seem”) and, thus, both gives the first sample of a device I would call “an indicator of dialogism” while also stressing the utterance’s denial of previous statements. Such indicators that an utterance is a rejoinder in a dialogue are quite numerous in the poem. These rejoinders may be positive as well as negative, with the latter in an overpowering majority.

Proceeding further in the direction of increasing intertextual blurriness, Kibirov engages a customarily nineteenth-century, possibly “Nekrasovesque,” stylization in lines 5–7. In these lines what Tynianov calls “the second plane” of the composition (or Bakhtin’s external contexts behind the words of the work) “diffuses into a common notion of style.” The second half of line 7, “July has already come,” again zeroes in on a concrete, but modified, utterance, this time from Pushkin’s “Autumn.” Another Golden Age cliché, “a train of sultry days rolls into the distance,” is thrown in (line 8). Next, the tone is again disrupted by a rapid change of diction from elevated to everyday, with a down-to-earth image of “dust

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23Bakhtin, The Dialogic Imagination, 272.


25“Face,” as opposed to “muzzle,” makes one assume that the first line depicts a human being.

26Tynianov, Poetika, 212. Compare this with Bakhtin, The Dialogic Imagination, 272–75.

caressing one’s foot” (lines 8–9). At this point Kibirov modernizes the dialogic sphere, adding a quotation from Gorky’s “Song about the Stormy Petrel” and a reference to Vladimov’s novel *Faithful Ruslan* in lines 9–11. Subsequently, he makes another unexpected switch from the exalted, with Gorky’s “Song about the Stormy Petrel” as a staple of “revolutionary romanticism,” to the mundane and humorous (“after a crazed cat”; lines 11–12). One should also realize that the placement, side by side, of allusions to an arch-Soviet writer and to a dissident is by no means accidental. Rather, the placement displays Kibirov’s fundamental principle of organizing heteroglossia, which will be explicated below. Subsequently, the play with languages unfolds as follows:

**LINE 12:** contemporary, everyday detail;
**LINES 13–17:** “Nekrasovesque,” with a disruption of “polyethylene” and “male dog,” vulgar usage;
**LINES 18–23:** generally Golden Age, with contemporary/everyday disruptions of “plastic” and “Frenkelia” and a vulgarity interference “pushes forward”;
**LINE 24:** a dialogic indicator “the picture is not new”;
**LINES 25–26:** Golden Age/Pushkinesque.

Lines 27–28 end the first stanza with a characteristic postmodernist reversal of the conventional relationship between life and literature, as life now becomes mediated by art.

One of the usages of heteroglossia that Kibirov employs is the orchestration of parodic effects. Bakhtin connected heteroglossia and parody in “Discourse in the Novel,” characterizing parody, along with the polemical and the ironic mode, as “the sharpest and externally most marked manifestations of a dialogized style.” This is how the critic depicts parodic literature of the Middle Ages:

> At the time when poetry was accomplishing the task of cultural, national and political centralization of the verbal-ideological world in the higher official socio-ideological levels, on the lower levels, on the stages of local fairs and at buffoon spectacles, the heteroglossia of the clown sounded forth, ridiculing all languages and dialects; there developed the literature of ... street songs, folk sayings, anecdotes, where there was no language-center at all, where there was to be found a lively play with the “languages” of poets, scholars, monks, knights and others, where all “languages” were masks and where no language could claim to be an authentic, incontestable face.

This portrayal of “low” medieval genres aptly describes conceptualist and, more generally, postmodernist poetics of dialogic play. In another work, Bakhtin goes into a more detailed description of alien languages that converse among themselves (“In Lieu of an Introduction,” 10).
exploration of the linkage between parody and heteroglossia. He stresses parody’s key role in paving the way for the novelistic discourse of modernity as well as in literary evolution in general. In this respect, Bakhtin’s ideas concur with those of such formalists as Tynianov. Bakhtin depicts parodic discourse as “two styles coming together: the language being parodied and the language that parodies,” with the latter “not entering as such into parody, but invisibly present in it.” The language that parodies, Bakhtin explains, is “that ‘normal’ language, that ‘normal’ style, in light of which the given parody was created,” and which is “an actualizing background for creating and perceiving.” According to Tynianov, parody is characterized by the presence of an additional, “parodied plane behind the plane of the work.” Thus, both Tynianov and Bakhtin indicate the existence of two planes as a principal feature of parody. However, whereas Tynianov understands the second plane to be the object of parody, or parodied language, Bakhtin sees it as the opposite—parodying language.

In Kibirov’s case (and, I would argue, in most postmodernist parodies), the mechanics of heteroglossia’s utilization for parodic purposes does not exactly follow either scheme. Instead, this kind of parody involves “reciprocal mockery”: heteroglot languages enter the text, revealing one another’s synthetic nature through coexistence. Language becomes “a language” when perceived alongside another language, and it is the relationship of the text’s heterogeneous components to one another that compromises the components, exposing their inadequacy and transforming them into masks. To return to Tynianov’s dichotomy between syn-function and auto-function, in Kibirov’s poem an element’s syn-function determines its parodic auto-function. The poem engages a multiplicity of discourses, arranged in such a way that their mutual incongruity is brought forth. Incongruity is a key element here. It is not enough for an author to engage a multitude of “tongues.” A haphazard pair of discourses, seen in relation to each other, will not necessarily ridicule each other. Everything hinges on an “improper,” absurd juxtaposition of discourses which are incompatible. Thus, with respect to the “normality” issue raised by Bakhtin, although Kibirov and other conceptualists seem to challenge the existence of a “healthy” linguistic norm, one still needs to have an implied “normal” language on the part of the reader as a background against which incongruity in the text could be discerned.

The deeper the chasm between neighboring elements of heteroglossia, the stronger the parodic effect. This is why Kibirov’s procedure involves switching abruptly and unexpectedly between a hyperarchaic, lofty poetic stylization and “the language of the day,” between “Pushkinesque” or “Derzhavinesque” simulations and contemporary political jargon or advertisements. The peculiar positioning of Gorky and Vladimov side by side mentioned above is an excellent illustration of such a technique. Drawing on a Bakhtinian understanding of languages as bound to particular ideological systems and worldviews, Kibirov chooses two contrasting discourses, with an ensuing strong parodic/comic effect. This explicates how

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34 Bakhtin, The Dialogic Imagination, 75.
35 Ibid., 76.
36 Tynianov, Poetika, 201.
37 However, the discourses would “relativize” each other.
The procedure diverges from Bakhtin’s layout. The method differs from Tynianov’s pattern as well, since parodied languages, rather than being the background of parody, themselves enter the text, and are arranged in a pattern of mutual buffoonery. In addition, granted that Tynianov allows for parody to be directed “not only at a specific composition, but also at a specific series of compositions, with a common genre, author, or even literary movement,” Kibirov goes beyond parroting a “specific series of compositions.”38 “To Igor’ Pomerantsev” does not limit itself to exposing the conventions of an established literary school, genre, or author, much less of a particular piece. As I have shown, its intraliterary heteroglossic interests encompass a profusion of authors and movements. Just as a syncretic allusion drives home the function of intertextuality as a designation of one’s participation in the literary discursive space, such an open-ended parodic sphere targets *iziaschchnaaia slovesnost* at large and comically degrades it, transforming literariness into bookishness. Thus, the target of Kibirov’s parody becomes “bookishness,” or, more specifically, a post-Soviet intelligentsia version thereof. The poem conveys a contemporary Russian weariness of being bombarded with lofty discourses, whatever their ideological underpinnings may be. At the same time, I would suggest, Kibirov’s work should be placed in a more sweeping (post)modernist context of “antiliterary literature.” It is expressive of literary nausea (linked to but not equivalent to linguistic nausea) that, ironically enough, appears to be one of the most salient sentiments of twentieth-century literature. Moreover, the poem’s distrust of “grand narratives” (including the “grand narrative” of classical Russian literature), which is characteristic of post-Soviet mentality, may be deemed a particular case of postmodernist sensibility, marked as it is by a strong anti-authoritarian impulse.39

At this point, a few words should be said about the relationship between the parodic and the ironic in the work. Analyses of parodic compositions customarily focus solely on the way the technique affects the second plane in Tynianov’s sense, or the target of parody. How parody functions with respect to the other side of the equation, “the parodic subject,” is often overlooked.40 Yet an examination of the parodic subject reveals that, very frequently, there occurs “a backward loop effect,” directing derision at the perpetrator of parody as well as at its “victim.” The words, as Bakhtin would say, may “put themselves into quotation marks against the will of the speaker,” or they may be put in quotation marks deliberately.41 Moreover, it is often hard to determine to which extent the parodic subject acts freely as a perpetrator of ridicule, and to which extent the words “put themselves into quotation marks” against the will of the parodic subject. In either case, the parodic subject acquires a comic coloration. This is exactly what happens in “To Igor’ Pomerantsev,” where alien, “inappropriate” discourses not only present one another in a parodic light but also bestow a humorous tinge on the ventriloquizer’s life. Consequently, in an ironic twist, parody begins to border on self-parody. The authorial persona, clearly conscious of this side-effect,
welcomes it as a means to look with ironic detachment at himself as well as at others. Indeed, one may go as far as to argue that parody is subordinate to self-parody in Kibirov’s poem, with the former functioning here in the service of the latter, rather than self-parody being a “byproduct” of parody.

It has been claimed repeatedly that postmodernist compositions transfer the basic modernist motifs of alienation, existentialism, discontinuity, and so on, onto the level of structure. In other words, to employ the early formalist partition of form and content, modernist “content” becomes postmodernist “form.” According to such a view, to reverse a well-known formalist slogan, new content gives rise to new form. A work of art, talking about disorder, fragmentation, and absurdity in an organized, orderly manner, gives way to a composition which is “messy” both thematically and structurally. One can see, however, from analyzing a piece like Kibirov’s that an appearance of structural disorder may be deceptive. Like modernist pieces, “To Igor’ Pomerantsev” is concerned with fragmentation. Likewise, it conforms to a specific method to convey this notion. Kibirov attains “cacophony” through an orchestration of heteroglossic polyphony with a distinguishable pattern. Like the sots-art painter Kabakov with his installations of heterogeneous objects, Kibirov juxtaposes contrasting voices and thus creates a Gestalt that possesses parodic properties which none of the constituents holds on its own.

While parodic/comic aspects of the poem are prominent, “To Igor’ Pomerantsev” displays less amusing facets as well.43 For one thing, the parodic and the comic do not necessarily equate. Thus, for instance, Tynianov disputes a conception of the parodic genre as essentially comic:

If a parody is not detected, a composition changes. Likewise, any composition that is detached from the second plane against which it got delineated changes. But even a parody, the main element of which is in stylistic particulars, having been detached from its second plane (which may be simply forgotten), naturally loses its parodic effect. This largely solves the question of parodies as comic genres. The comical is usually a color accompanying parody, not at all a color of parody itself. The parodic vanishes but the color remains.44

Yet the fact that “unrecognized parody” retains humorous properties does not allow one to make any conclusions about the properties of the undetected parodic element. In other words, we cannot immediately claim that the parodic contains (or does not contain) in itself a humorous quality. A parody might just as easily be both accompanied by the ludicrous and contain the ludicrous as one of its constituents. As Tynianov himself points out, the genre involves the existence of two planes and, as opposed to stylization, depends on their “discrepancy” (neviazka).45 This discrepancy, or incongruity, results in the comical.

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42See, for example, Douwe W. Fokkema, Literary History, Modernism, and Postmodernism (Philadelphia, 1984).
43Mikhail Epstein sees the non-comic aspects of conceptualist poetry as follows: “If conceptualist poetry is not met with sheer laughter, taken as a parody of stereotypes of mass consciousness, then it is possible to perceive something else through it: the authentic lyricism of the silent super-Subjectivity standing behind the speaking No One. For it is only in relation to Its super-abundant silence that all words ring hollow, flat, trivial, and disharmonious—just as they are made to ring, deliberately, in conceptualist poetry” (“Catalogue of New Poetries,” 136–37).
44Tynianov, “Dostoevskii i Gogol’,” 226.
45Ibid., 201.
traditional parody which, while preserving the form of a particular piece, lowers the content, one observes this *neviazka* of style and subject matter, that produces a comic impression.

On the other hand, the parodic does not limit itself exclusively to the comical, which is only one of its functions. The serious subtext varies, but commonly involves, as a part of it, the exposition of literary conventions. In this respect, parody, like Shklovsky’s technique of defamiliarization, supplies a novel point of view which opposes petrification. Interestingly enough, both techniques revolt against the ossified lyrical vocabulary, and both (parody always, defamiliarization frequently) accomplish this task through utilizing the incongruous. Unlike defamiliarization, however, which seeks an unusual point of view to make the familiar seem strange, parody aims at making the familiar consciously clichéd. It must be realized, however, that a very thin line divides turning the habitual into the hackneyed and making one aware that one perceives something as hackneyed. Hence Kibirov recycles textbook quotations to point as much, if not more, at our “bad-smelling” perception of “dead words” as at the “dead words” themselves.46

The predominance of Pushkin’s voice in the heteroglossia of “To Igor’ Pomerantsev” elucidates the last point well. Although here we also encounter Krylov, Lermontov, Tiutchev, Baratynsky, Nekrasov, Gorky, Pasternak, Vladimir, as well as several non-Russians (for example, Coleridge, Wilde, and Marquis de Sade), it is the “Pushkinian” and the “Pushkinesque” that lead the chorus.47 Thus, for instance, stanza 2, lines 20–21 allude to “Conversation between Bookseller and Poet”; stanza 2, lines 39–42 refer to *Eugene Onegin*, chapter 1, stanza XVIII; stanza 3, lines 4–5 (a good illustration of the link between parody and self-parody in Kibirov), invoke *The Little Tragedies* and *Queen of Spades*; and stanza 3, lines 29–32 again allude to Eugene Onegin, chapter 8, stanzas I–VII.

Apart from quoting, misquoting, echoing, and travestying Pushkin, Kibirov engages a number of Pushkinian trademark devices, most frequently from *Eugene Onegin*, such as line and strophic enjambments. Stanzas 6–9, depicting the lyrical hero looking at books, punctuate his movement from one stall to another with a series of strophic enjambments, exactly like the celebrated “and breathless on the bench / Fell” in Pushkin’s novel in verse.48 At one point (stanza 9, line 1) the device is bared, with “crossing” (perekhod) playfully designating at once the hero’s movement from one bookstall to the next one, and the technique.

Kibirov obviously chooses Pushkin on account of the latter’s status of cultural icon. First, insofar as the poem’s parodic effect depends on the recognizability of the second plane, Pushkin is by far the strongest candidate. Second, the oeuvre of this officially accepted “national poet” has been ossified more than that of any other Russian man of letters. Thus, Kibirov aims less at conventionalizing the famous utterances than at making the reader forcefully conscious of existing petrification. Third, the antonomasic employment of Pushkin as a *litterateur par excellence*, and as the substitution for a general idea of Russian belles lettres, permits Kibirov to target literariness as a whole.

46 See Nikolai Gumilev’s “Slovo”: (“I kak pchely v ul'e opustelom / Durno pakhnut mertvye slova” [“And like bees in a deserted hive / Dead words smell bad”]), in his *Stikhotvorenia i poemy* (Volgograd, 1988), 309.
47 By “Pushkinian” I refer to comparatively direct allusions to Pushkin, whereas by “Pushkinesque” I designate stylizations inspired by Pushkin’s oeuvre. For discussions of references to Pushkin in other poems by Kibirov see Wachtel, “Youngest Archaitists,” 281; and Weststeijn, “Timur Kibirov.” 272.
What would motivate one to spoof Literariness with a capital “L”? The existential sense of alienation extends to the linguistic, and particularly literary, sphere, so that all discourses present themselves as “alien.” It is not simply that, as in Bakhtin’s formulation, “all languages are masks, and no language can claim to be an authentic, incontestable face”; rather, it is that the masks are prone to invoke resentment, and make one feel trapped amid a heteroglossic carnival. As Fredric Jameson observes, there seems no way for a contemporary writer to find his/her own voice:

With the collapse of the high-modernist ideology of style ... as unique and unmistakable as your fingertips ... the producers of culture have nowhere to turn but to the past: the imitation of dead styles, speech through all the masks and voices stored up in the imaginary museum of a now global culture.

One may recall that Aizenberg, while appearing to disagree with such a pessimistic view, relies on the authorial alienation as the means of making “plural language” different. Thus, negation itself is made to function positively, being the chosen way of dealing with “bad-smelling dead words.”

In this article I have moved from the discussion of Kibirov’s utilization of heteroglossia for comic purposes to the analysis of his employment of raznorechie to question literary clichés and, more generally, literariness as such. Another somber aspect of dialogism should not be overlooked. The ambivalent dimensions of the cycle hinted at in the title have to do first and foremost with reverse mimesis, or the perception of life as a “paraphrase” of art (stanza 1, lines 27–28). The lines are of key significance insofar as they reveal the author’s concern with the now-standard “simulacrum” approach to reality.

The approach to the present by way of the art language of the simulacrum, or of the pastiche of the stereotypical past, endows present reality and the openness of present history with the spell and distance of a glossy mirage. But this mesmerizing new aesthetic mode itself emerged as an elaborated symptom of the waning of our historicity. ... It demonstrates ... the enormity of a situation in which we seem increasingly incapable of fashioning representations of our current experience.

As I have pointed out, the couplet reflects a reversal of the conventional relationship between life and literature, with the latter interceding between the perceiver and the object of perception. As a result, reality appears to be bookish, fictitious, “read” (vychitannia). Neither the ash berries nor the birch trees are seen as “authentic” but are perceived as a picture in a book, “a copy for which no original has ever existed.” Reverse mimesis, of course, is not a uniquely postmodernist phenomenon. It is also typical of numerous other literary works, including Eugene Onegin, in which Tatyana, significantly, begins to suspect

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49 Recall Aizenberg’s “languages themselves, always someone else’s, conversing among themselves” (“In Lieu of an Introduction,” 10).
50 Bakhtin, The Dialogic Imagination, 273.
51 Fredric Jameson, Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism (Durham, NC, 1991), 17–18.
52 See Aizenberg’s “there is the path of plural language ... which is made ‘other’ ... not by the qualitative level of its components, but by the author’s dismissive-creative attitude toward them” (“In Lieu of an Introduction,” 10).
53 For more on simulacra see Jean Baudrillard, Simulations (New York, 1983).
54 Jameson, Postmodernism, 21.
that Onegin may be “a parody.” However, the theme of life as a paraphrase of art, although addressed before, becomes ubiquitous in postmodernist writing. The question arises as to what degree it is possible to fashion an utterance which is not constrained (influenced, contaminated, distorted, stifled) by prior utterances in the midst of heteroglossia. When reality is sensed to be “literature,” and when life is experienced as a conglomeration of literary clichés, how can one construct, as Aizenberg aims to do, the “other (that is, artistic) language”?

An attempt to resolve this problem comes at the conclusion of the poem. Concurrent dialogic pleasure and frustration constitute one of the work’s ambiguities. The ambiguities, however, do not stop at this point. Whether moved to parody by appreciation or resentment of prior articulations, or by a sheer pleasure of playing with the device, Kibirov unexpectedly changes his intonation at the finale of his poem. With just a few lines remaining before the conclusion, ridicule suddenly transforms itself into something which is, if yet not quite reverential, then seemingly earnest (stanza 11, lines 13–17). Both Tynianov and Bakhtin note the vagueness of the boundaries separating parody from straightforward quotation. Tynianov observes that “there is one step from stylization to parody.”

In Kibirov’s case, on the contrary, the demarcation line that crosses stanza 10 is, if anything, too well defined. The technique remains the same—constructing the text as a mosaic of quotations, but the tone is strikingly dissimilar. The “word of the other” begins to sound as one’s own heartfelt expression; cliché turns into wisdom; the “bad infinity” (Mandel'shtam’s durnaiia beskonechnost’ of Literariness presents itself as eternal recurrence (stanza 12, lines 1–4). The lines continue to be interspersed with “indicators of dialogism,” now positive ones (for example, “we, too, will rest,” a Chekhovian allusion), but the changed intonation makes their function the opposite of what it used to be. Whereas previously such elements underscored aesthetic weariness and denial, now they appear to convey a realization of emotional and poetic continuity. It is noteworthy that Pushkin’s voice no longer leads the chorus of heteroglossia. Instead, Lermontov and Chekhov get center stage. The change may reveal something of the author’s literary preferences. More important, however, it supports

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56 Tynianov, “Dostoevskii i Gogol’,” 201.
57 Bakhtin, “From the Prehistory of Novelistic Discourse,” in The Dialogic Imagination, 69–70. Compare this with Mikhail Epstein’s characterization of “neo-sentimental” aesthetics: “This ‘post-post-postmodern’ neo-sentimental aesthetics is defined not by the sincerity of the author or the quotedness of his style, but by the mutual interaction of the two. What is characteristic is the elusive border of their difference, which allows even the most sincere utterance to be perceived as a subtly quoted imitation, while a common-place quotation may sound like a piercingly lyrical confession” (“Catalogue of New Poetries,” 457).
my suggestion that Pushkin’s oeuvre, given the extent to which it has been ossified in the Russian/Soviet literary consciousness, is particularly difficult to “dis-alienate.”

In his examination of Kibirov’s earlier cycle, Sentiments, Gregory Freidin considers the collection in the context of post-Soviet nostalgia. As Freidin puts it, “it is in the imperfect fit between, on the one hand, the meaningful sentimental nostalgia experienced by an average post-Soviet citizen and, on the other, the sots-art aesthetic game that Kibirov’s poetry has found its unique niche in modern Russian culture.” As my analysis of “To Igor’ Pomerantsev” has shown, one may make a broader claim that, to paraphrase Freidin, it is in the imperfect fit between, on the one hand, a will to repudiate “the other’s word” and, on the other, a desire to dis-alienate the culture of the past that Kibirov’s poetry has found its niche in modern Russian culture.

Let me now return to the questions which I posed at the beginning of this article. Is paraphrase an earnest depiction of Kibirov’s activity? What about periphrasis? Is it significant that the collection’s title is reminiscent of Trediakovsky’s, Lomonosov’s, and Sumarokov’s Three Odes Paraphrasing Psalm 143? As I have shown, the main body of the poem manipulates heteroglossia in a parodic design. Until the very end, accordingly, “Paraphrasis,” the title of the collection which “To Igor’ Pomerantsev” opens, is perceived by the reader in an ironic light. The poem, a parody, is the opposite of paraphrase. What is the latter? Retaining the content while changing the form. What is the former? Changing the content while retaining the form. Likewise, until the penultimate strophe, “To Igor’ Pomerantsev” presents a critique of periphrasis in a negative sense of the term—a critique of empty verbosity. The last few lines attempt to reverse matters. A parody, having exhausted itself, seeks to become both periphrasis in its positive connotation and paraphrase, yet another restatement of the venerable “freedom and peace” of Russian literature. The author gives his rendition of the “psalms” of Russian literature, at once competing with the poetics of the “sacred” text, and longing to reinvigorate it. Whether the durnaia beskonechnost’ of art and life can indeed be transformed by Kibirov into vechnoe vozvrashchenie remains to be seen.

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58 Gregory Freidin, “Transfiguration of Kitsch—Timur Kibirov’s Sentiments,” in Endquote, 128.
SYNOPSIS OF “TO IGOR’ POMERANTSEV”

The poet is on his dacha in Shil’kovo, composing an epistle to his friend Igor’ Pomerantsev. In the first portion of the poem he depicts a summer day in the countryside; following this he muses on the portentous cultural and ideological changes that have taken place in post-Soviet Russia. In these ironic musings he zeroes in on the predicament of the artist in a newly formed consumer society. Kibirov offers a detailed, satirically charged portrayal of the sociocultural milieu of the early 1990s, playing with the new reality of the market economy and invoking a multitude of allusions to both high and popular culture. Stanzas 6–9 supply an extended parodic “catalogue” of literary bestsellers that vividly illustrates the vulgarization of art in the new social order.

In the final 3 stanzas the poet portrays an evening in Shil’kovo, seeking respite from the crude realities of contemporary life in the traditional ideals of freedom and artistic harmony.
и, словно фронтиспис из деревенских проз,
в окне рябины гроздь и несколько берез.

2 И странный взгляд козы, и шип гусей змеиный,
златых шаров краса, незлобный и невинный
мат шильковских старух, и жгучий самогон,
и коморадский жук, и первый патиссон.
Так, Игорь, я живу на важных огородах.
Казалось бы, давно в элегиях и одах
я должен был вспеть пустьнынный уголок.
Чем не Тригорское? Гармонии урок
daют мне небеса, леса, собаки, воды.
Казалось бы, АН нет! Священный глас природы
не в силах пробудить уснувшей лиры звук.
Ах, как красиво все, как тихо все вокруг!
Но мысль ужасная здесь душу посещает!
Далекий друг, пойми, мой робкий дух смущает
инфляция! Уже излюбленный «Дымок»
стал стоить двадцать пять рублей. А денег йок!
Нет денег ни хрена! Товар, производимый
в восторгах сладостных, в тоске неизъяснимой,
рифмованных словес заветные столбцы
все падают в цене, и киногопродавцы
с поэтом разговор уже не затевают.
Меж тем семьи растет, продукты дорожают,
все изменяется. Ты право б не узнал
наш порт пяти морей. Покойный адмирал —
Шишков в своем гробу не раз перевернулся
от мэрий, префектур, секс-шопов. Развернулся
на стогах шумный торг — Гонконг, Стамбул, Тайвань
соблазнов модных сеть раскинули и дань
сбирают со славян, забывших гром победы.
Журнальный балагур предсказывает беды.
А бывший замполит (теперь политолог)
нам демократии преподает урок.
А брокер с дилером и славный дистрибьютер
мне сильнятся продать Тойоту и компьютер.
Вотще! Я не куплю. Я покупаю с рук
«Имбирную». О да! Ты прав, далекий друг, —
вкус препротивнейший у сей настойки горькой.
С аванся я куплю спирт «Роял»... Перестройка
закончена. Теперь нам, право, невдомек,
чем так прельщал умы хитрейший «Огонек»,
честнейший «Новый мир», Коротич дерзновенный
и “Moscow News”. Увы! Читатель развращенный
листает «Инфо-СПИД» и боле не следит
затем, кто, наконец, в сраженьи победил,
свободы друг Сарнов иль Кожинов державный.
Литературочка все более забавна
и непристойна. Жизнь, напротив, обрела
серьезность. Злой Кавказ кусает удила,
имамов грозных дух в нем снова закипает
и терпкой коноплей джигитов окрыляет.
Российский патриот, уже слегка устав
от битв с масонами и даже заскучав
от тягостной борьбы с картавою заразой,
все пристальной глядит на сыновей Кавказа,
что, честно говоря, имеет свой резон,
но лично мне совсем не нравится. Кобзон
отметил юбилей. Парнишка полупьяный
I need your love в метро играет на баяне.
В пивной Гандлевского и Витю Коваля
блатные пацаны избили. П.-.-.-.
вите в воздухе. А Говорухин бедный
Россию потерял на склоне лет. Намедни
еще была и вдруг — бац! Нету! Где искать?
В Вермонте, может быть?.. Мне, в общем, наплевать
на это все. Но есть предметы, коих важность
не в силах отрицать ни Эпиктет строгий,
ни строгий Эпикур вальяжный,
ни строгий Эпикурет. К примеру — колбаса!
Иль водочка! Иль сыр! Благие небеса!
Сколько дороги они и сколько они желаны!

4 И вот, пока в слезах за склокой Марианны
с кичливой Эстер все Шильково следует,
я отвращаю слух от пенья аонид,
я, как Албер, ропщу, как Германн, алчу злата,
склоняясь с лейкой над грядкою салата.
Как оной стрекозе, мне песнь нейдет на ум.
Исполнен алчности, озлоблен и угрюм,
прикидываю, как мне обрести богатство.

Позия — увы — при всех своих приятствах
низкорентабельна. Конечно, есть Симон
Оснагили и Ю. Ряшенцев — музон
стихам их придает товарный вид. Ах, Игорь,
когда бы я тоже мог специосты вериги
отбросить и пора-порадоваться власль!
Ах, пуркуа па? Но нет. Не суждено попасть
мне в сей веселый цех, где некогда царили
Ошанин и Кумач, где Инна Гофф грустила
над тонким колоском, и где миллины роз
Андрей Андреевич Раймонду преподнес.
Что делать? Может быть, реклама? Мне Кенжеев
советовал. А что? Полночный мрак рассеив,
сияют Инкомбанк, «Алиса», МММ,
у кой нет проблем, час пробивает Рэм.
Да и завод «Кристалл» явился в новой славе.
И Баковский завод. Да и пахучей «Яве»
пора воспеть хвалу. К примеру — пара строк:
петитом “If you smoke” и крупно «Smoke Дымок!!»
Ну, это Рубинштейн придумал хитромудрый,
а я ни тпру, ни ну. Упрямая лахудра
все корчит девочку, кривит надменный рот.
Ах, Муза, Музочка! Как будто первый год,
дурнила, замужем. Пора бы стать умнее.

4 Короче. Отложив бесцельные затей
поэзии, хочу смиренною прозой вперед
я зарабатывать. Ведь, если промотреть
на жизнь прозаника, как не прельститься! Бодро
вернувшись утромом с излюбленного карта,
засесть за новый цикл рассказов, за роман,
который уж давно издатель вставил в план.
Так, просидев в тиши родного кабинета
пять или шесть часов, пиджак такого цвета
зеленого надеть, что меркнет изумруд,
и галстук в тон ему. А в ЦДЛе ждут
друзья, поклонники. Уже заказан столик.
Котлетка такова, что самый строгий стоик
и киник не смогли б сдержать невольный вздох.
Вот благодарение прямое, видит Бог!

Но это все не вдруг! Покамест, Померанцев,
чтоб растолкать толпу таких же новобранцев
и в сей Эдем войти, не сей Олимп взойти,
нам надобно стезю надежную найти.
Что выгодней? Давай подумаем спокойно,
отбросим ложный стыд, как говорил покойный
маркиз де Сад. У нас, заметим кстати, он
теперь властитель дум и выше вознесен
столпов и пирамид. Пост-шик-модерн российский
задрав штаны бежит за узником бастильским.
Вообще-то мне милей другой французский экз,
воспетый Пушкиным, но в наш железный век
не платят СКВ за мирую щепицу.
Чтоб рукопись могла перешагнуть границу,
необходимо дать поболее того,
что сытых бюргеров расшевелит. Всего
и надо-то, мой друг, описывать пиписки,
минет, оргазм, инцест, ах, некрофил,
героем должен быть, конечно, некрофил,
в финале не забыть про поеданье трупа.
А чтобы это все не выглядело глупо
аллюзиями текст напичкать. Вот рецепт.
Несложно, вроде бы. Теперь его адент
уже Нагибин сам, нам описавший бойко,
как мастурбировал Иосиф Сталин. Ой, как
гнет роковой стыда хотелось свергнуть мне,
чтоб в просвещении стать с веком наравне.
Не получается. Ох, дикость наша, Игорь,
ох, бескультурье, бля! Ведь сказано — нет книги
безправственной, а есть талантливая иль
не очень — голубой британец так учили.
Я ж это понимал еще в девятом классе!
А нынче не пойму. Отточенные лясы
все тщусь я прицепить и к Правде, и к Добру.
Прошай же, СКВ! Моральности муру
dавно уже отверг и Лондон щепетильный,
и ветреный Париж, и Гамбург изобильный.
А строгий Тегеран, пожалуй, слишком строг...

Итак, даешь рубли! Посмотрим на лоток.
Что нынче хавают? Так. Понял. Перспективы
ясны. Наметим план. Во-первых, детективы:
«Смерть в Красном Уголке», «Ухмылка мертвеца»,
«Поручик Порох прав», «Кровавая маца»,
«Хоренья и Кузьмин», «Так жить нельзя, Шарапов!»
«В пивной у Коваля», «Блондинка из гестапо»,
«Последний миллилитр», «Цикады», «Дело Швах»,
«Каплан, она же Брик и Айседора», «Крах
коньковской мафии», «Прозрение Левы», «Драма
в Скотопригоньевске», «Месть Бусикеллы», «Мама


Не хочешь — хрен с тобой... Бесстыдно истекая слюной стяжательства, я голову теряю от калькуляции. Но, потеряв ее, вновь обретаю я спокойствие. Вранье, и глупости, и страх исчезли. Треволненья отхлынули. И вновь знакомое гуденье музыки чую я. Довольно. Стыдно мне на Вольность клеветать! В закатной тишине я на крыльце курю, следя за облаками, как Колридж некогда, как Галич. Пустяками божественными я утешен и спасен. И бесом обуян, и ленью упоен. Не надо ничего. След самолета алый в лазури так хорошо, что жизни будет мало, чтоб расплатиться мне. Бог Нахтигаль, прости! Помилуй мя и грех холопский отпусти! Кабак уж полон. Чернь резвится и блукует. Прости, бог Нахтигаль, нас все еще вербуют для новых глупостей, и новая чума идет на нас, стучит в хрущевские дома, осклабившись. Так что ж нам делать? Ведь не Сирии вернулся в Ульдаборг, мсье Пьер все так же жирен, все также юморит. Лощеный финансист, конечно, во сто крат милей, чем коммунист, и все же, как тогда от мрази густобровой, запремся, милый друг, от душки Борового! Бог ему в помощь! Пусть народ он одарит "Макдональдсом". Дай Бог. Он пищу в нем варит. И нам достанется. И все же — для того ли уж полтораста лет твердят — покой и воля — пинты русские — свобода и покой! — чтоб я теперь их предал? За душой есть золотой запас, незыблемая скала...

И в наш жестокий век нам, право, не пристало скулить и кукситься. Пойдем. Кремнистый путь все так же светел. Лес, и небеса, и грудь прохладой полнятся. Туман стоит над прудом. Луна огромная встает. Пойдем. Не будем загадывать. Пойдем. В сияньи голубом спит Шильково мое. Мы тоже отдохнем, немного погоди. В рябине филомела, ты слышишь, как тогда, проснулась и запела, и ветр ночью в листве плакучих нв шумит, стволы берез во тьме мерцают, и блестит бутылки горлышко у полусгнивших кладей. Душа полна тоской, покоеи и прохладой. И черный Том бежит за тению своей красиво и легко, и над башкой моей, от самогоночки слетка хмельной, сияют светила вечные, и вдалеке играет (в Садах, наверное) гармоника. Пойдем. Не бойся ничего. Мы тоже отдохнем. Кремнистый путь блестит, око горит в сельмаже. Вослед за кошкой Том скрывается в овраге. лето–осень 1992г.