# Literary Samizdat and Samizdat Publics

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## Abstract

In this article Komaromi considers literary samizdat journals in light of public theory. Although literary samizdat journals do not conform to classic conceptions of public speech, they do yield to more recent analyses of counter-publics proposed by Nancy Fraser and Michael Warner. Picking up on the poetic aspects of public speech highlighted by Warner, Komaromi examines the publics projected by literary samizdat journals through statements about those publics, style, and bibliographic values. While not directly contesting political conditions, these literary journals amplified the implications of samizdat production and distribution to foster plurality and human connection as a basis for a better future.

At the beginning of George Orwell's anti-totalitarian novel *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, the protagonist Winston Smith thinks about beginning a diary, an act of uncensored personal expression for which he expects eventual punishment from the authorities of the dystopian State in which he lives. The prospect of punishment bothers him but it does not deter him. Another thought threatens to derail his efforts more immediately: «For whom […] was he writing this diary?» The thought threatens to be debilitating because Winston does not know people around him in the present who would appreciate it (Orwell 9). However, he strives as he approaches writing to *imagine* a circle of readers and the time in which such readers might live: «He wondered again for whom he was writing the diary. For the future, for the past – for an age that might be imaginary» (29).

In commenting on this scene, Michael Warner emphasized the fact that such imagination of a reading public characterizes *all* public reading and writing. The circle of readers thus imagined always exceeds our knowledge of actual readers.[1] For that reason, public writing, even when it is not in the genre of imaginative works, is always *poetic*, in the sense that it creates – it does not simply reflect – the public addressed. Warner disputed the received notion of public discourse as that which occurs among already co-present interlocutors. A public is «poetic world making», he insisted:

> This performative dimension of public discourse, however, is routinely misrecognized. Public speech lies under the necessity of addressing its public as already existing real persons. It cannot work by frankly declaring its subjunctive-creative project. Its success depends on the

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[1] Warner wrote: «Public speech must be taken in two ways: as addressed to us and as addressed to strangers. The benefit in this practice is that it gives a general social relevance to private thought and life» (77).

recognition of participants and their further circulatory activity, and people do not commonly recognize themselves as virtual projections. They recognize themselves only as being already the persons they are addressed as being and as already belonging to the world that is condensed in their discourse. (114)

In Soviet Russia in the 1960s it took a leap of imagination to conceive of a circle of readers for uncensored texts circulated as typescript copies. In Venedikt Erofeev's samizdat novel *Moskva-Petushki* (1969), protagonist Venichka addresses his audience near the end of the book: «You people out there, humanity, I don't know you too well. […] I'd like to know where your soul is these days, to know for sure if the Star of Bethlehem's going to shine out again, or even just flicker. That's the main thing, because all the other stars have just about had it, and even if they are shining, they're not worth two spits (*dvukh plevkov*)» (Yerofeev 125). Venichka interrogates the public of his late Soviet novel with a provocative statement about loss of faith and uncertainty about their shared future. Other samizdat works rarely portray so directly the imaginative character of the public projection they entail. However, samizdat texts in general might help us reflect on the poetic world making of public speech because of the precarious status of unofficial writing and reading in the late Soviet period. A samizdat public was always something one had to project: its existence could never simply be assumed. Literary samizdat works tend to speak more directly to the poetic world-making at the heart of public writing and reading. The goal of the present article is to analyze via literary samizdat journals the particular character of samizdat public imagination.

## Samizdat Journals and Public Sphere Theory

Approximately three-hundred titles of samizdat periodical editions – including journals, bulletins and collections or thematic collections (*al'manakhi*) – have been found from the period of classic Soviet Samizdat in the USSR, 1956-1986.[2] Such periodical editions represent the most obviously "public" texts in samizdat, since they are usually created by a collective and oriented to a group. These factors also make it more likely they will be documented and preserved as samizdat artifacts, objects that bear witness to the particular conditions of an uncensored culture. The most famous among them is the bulletin of rights activists, the *Chronicle of Current Events* (*Khronika tekushchikh sobytii*, Moscow, n. 1-65, 1968-82). The *Chronicle* stressed objective, fact-based reporting. Thanks to the assiduous efforts of these dissident editors, the bulletin established itself as scrupulously trustworthy, and it covered a wide range of groups and activities, including the independent initiatives and repressions of activists in Moscow, as well as of Crimean Tatars, Baptists, Lithuanians, Ukrainians, and others. Its objective style and reliance on a discourse of legal and human rights helped the *Chronicle* become the most widely read samizdat reference work by audiences abroad as well as in the USSR.

In many ways, the Moscow *Chronicle* exemplified the classic conception of a liberal public sphere. According to Jürgen Habermas, the liberal public sphere emerged in modern Europe as that social space in which civil society recognized itself as an autonomous counterpart to State authority. In the public sphere, citizens would, as François Guizot put it, «seek after

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[2] For a list of journals and information about where copies can be found, see Komaromi (*Soviet*). See also discussion of «classic Soviet Samizdat» in Komaromi ("Samizdat" 79).

truth and […] tell it to power».[3] The rights activists[4] associated with the *Chronicle* pursued this sort of mission, collecting fact about illegal repressions and informing a Soviet and international audience with their samizdat publications. The tone of these rights documents was unemotional, factual and objective – such neutral, rational discourse characterized the classic public sphere as Habermas described it, and it helped make the Moscow *Chronicle* a widely read and trusted source.[5]   The modern European public Habermas described was, importantly, a reading public.[6] Moreover, in Habermas's description, *belles lettres* played an important supporting role by developing subjects who recognized themselves in the universal human values they found in artistic literature. The circulation and discussion of literary works helped create forums in which people could publicize their critique of the State:

> The process in which the state-governed public sphere was appropriated by the public of private people making use of their reason and was established as a sphere of criticism of public authority was one of functionally converting the public sphere in the world of letters already equipped with institutions of the public and with forums for discussion. With their help the experiential complex of audience-oriented privacy made its way also into the political realm's public sphere. (Habermas 51)

Similarly, Liudmila Alekseeva claimed that the human rights activists in the Soviet Union found their values in literature: they «came out of a tradition of sympathy for 'the little man', on which the Russian classics are based» (267). Vladimir Bukovsky talked about using hand-to-hand networks previously established for circulating the poetry of Osip Mandelshtam and Boris Pasternak to distribute the «Civic Appeal» (*Grazhdanskoe obrashchenie*) in 1965 to summon people to Pushkin Square to demonstrate for openness in the proceedings against Andrei Siniavsky and Yuli Daniel, authors on trial for works published abroad without permission (Daniel' and Roginskii 22-23). In the same vein, Andrei Amalrik described a «Cultural Opposition» that became a «Public Opposition» (Amalrik 7-9). Gorbanevskaia, writing in 1968 as anonymous editor of the *Chronicle*, n. 5, in 1968, noted similarly that, «over the course of a few years Samizdat has evolved from predominantly literary works to an emphasis on journalistic writing and documents», that samizdat had, in fact, «begun to fulfill the function of a newspaper».

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[3] Habermas quoted Guizot's well-known formulation of the «rule of public opinion» (Habermas 101).

[4] Described early on as a loosely organized «democratic movement» (Amalrik 9), the dissidents known as rights activists eschewed any political program. Gorbanevskaia referred to Alexander Herzen's activity as a significant precedent for their own endeavors (Hopkins 23); and Peter Reddaway was one of several Westerners who inscribed the rights activists into a liberal democratic tradition dating back to Herzen (Reddaway 15).

[5] Gorbanevskaia told Michael Scammel about the work that went into cultivating the style of the *Chronicle* and the significance she ascribed to it: «The importance of the *Chronicle* lies […] in its objective tone, objective, making no judgments» (Gorbanevskaya 34). *Index*, like other Western periodicals reporting on the Soviet Union, depended on the *Chronicle* as a source of reference for independent activity and news of repressions in the USSR.

[6] Habermas examined the relationship between the traffic in commodities and news between the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries, detailing the adoption by merchants and professionals of the means by which State authorities informed citizens into their own media for expressing an awareness of their role as civic opponent of the State (Habermas 14-15, 22-23).

In Habermas's account, the modern liberal public sphere depended on a separation of public and private, and a transformation of autonomous private identities into public ones within a single sphere of discourse. Habermas was concerned to show that this ideal liberal conception arose in specific historical circumstances and that even its imperfect realization began to break down by the late nineteenth century (142). Subsequent discussion has focused on issues including the actually limited character of participants in the public sphere, who were overwhelmingly male and property-holding. The unified, ideally neutral public discourse that bracketed private issues and identities, while it aimed to create a level playing field, could in fact exclude concerns and forms of expression considered out of bounds: this was the thrust of Nancy Fraser's critique of Habermas's model. She proposed an alternative model of multiple publics that compete and complement one another. The challenge of less powerful «counter-publics» to the more established public contributes to a substantially democratic and robust model for a public sphere that develops over time, with the periodic introduction of new voices, concerns and claims.[7] Using that conception of a dynamic and pluralized public sphere to frame our inquiry, we may observe that samizdat literature did not merely cede its place to public discourse: instead it helped accomplish the pluralization of the dissident public over time.

While it was not the only place for literary samizdat, Leningrad unofficial culture proves to be outstanding in the history of the period because of the wealth of activity in that city. Leningrad 'second culture' developed its own values and modes of expression rooted in poetry and fiction, as well as philosophy, religion, and art. This unofficial culture thus demonstrated the division of the samizdat sphere by the mid-1970s into at least two distinct public areas, with the more politicized rights activism centered in Moscow, and a culture that recognized itself as autonomous and distinct from that political dissidence in Leningrad.[8] A self-conscious literary culture emerged in Leningrad definitively with the appearance of two 'thick' journals in samizdat, the literary and religious-philosophical journal *37*, and the literary survey journal *Hours* (*Chasy*), both begun in 1976. In the case of *37*, editors asserted themselves not simply by opposing the State or official aesthetics and ideas. They defined their task in positive terms, and they staked out a distinctive position vis-à-vis other dissident enterprises. Krivulin emphasized that if *Hours* aimed to «gather mushrooms», that is, comprehensively present literary works not published in the official press, *37* «set for itself the goal of creating a kind of language capable of describing the actual condition of the cultural and historical moment in Russia as seen from a subjective point of view (*s tochki zreniia lichnosti*)» (74-75).[9] This emphasis on personality (*lichnost'*), with obvious importance for lyric poetry, might also be taken to apply to the character of the group associated with

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[7] Fraser wrote that contrary to Habermas's account: «the relations between bourgeois publics and other publics were always conflictual. Virtually from the beginning, counterpublics contested the exclusionary norms of the bourgeois public, elaborating alternative styles of political behavior and alternative norms of public speech» (116-17). She called into question the assumption that a proliferation of competing publics was bad.

[8] Thus, for example, Viktor Krivulin distinguished samizdat in Leningrad from the more commercialized and politicized forms in Moscow in his essay "Zolotoi vek samizdata" (Strelianyi 350-51, 354). The authors of the encyclopedia *Samizdat Leningrada* did not include socio-political editions, unless they featured literary or artistic work, thus emphasizing the belletristic character of samizdat in Leningrad ("O printsipakh izdaniia", Dolinin, et al. 53).

[9] Tatiana Goricheva likewise contrasted the relatively high level of *37* which they strove to maintain, as opposed to the capacious and all-encompassing character of *Timepiece* (Goricheva 123).

the journal. By extension, such «subjectivization» could refer to any particular group, aesthetic trend or point of view articulated meaningfully in samizdat.

Such subjective inflections of the public sphere suggest the contamination of characteristics divided by Habermas into «private» vs. public. They reflect the dynamic relationship – rather than a strict separation – between private and public, internal and external, modeled by Fraser's version of the public sphere.[10] Craig Calhoun commented, «when Habermas treats identities and interests as settled within the private world and then brought fully formed into the public sphere, he impoverishes his own theory. As Nancy Fraser suggests, public deliberation need not be understood as simply *about* an already established common good; it may be even more basically an occasion for the clarification (and I would add, constitution) of interests» (35). Samizdat literature helped to create language and discursive space for articulating the identities, concerns and interests of the late Soviet person – the aim therefore was not as in the case of rights talk to represent the interests of a pre-existing (and theoretically universal) human being, but to create the possibility for independent identities and concerns to exist.

Krivulin and his group – the poets associated with him are sometimes called the 'Petersburg School'[11] – came to occupy a prominent position in unofficial Leningrad literary culture. We therefore find challenges by groups that defined themselves in terms of difference from them. Kirill Butyrin, editor of *Obvodnyi Canal* (n. 1-19, 1981-93) asserted that his journal was designed to «create within unofficial culture the conditions for pluralism» (Dolinin et al. 435). Butyrin contrasted the voices and perspectives of his own acquaintances to those of Krivulin's circle. Krivulin's group was, he said, united by an «aura, which, as much as it increased their authority, also created a certain distance not to say repulsed» others (126-27). According to Butyrin, *Obvodnyi Canal* and its predecessor *Dialog* (n. 1-3, 1979-81), distinguished themselves by their expression of the Slavophile-Soilist (*pochvennicheskii*) trend in samizdat, which was «equally unacceptable for official culture and for [most of] the 'andegraund' (underground, unofficial culture)», but which was an important part of the atmosphere of those times (125).[12] For his part, Dmitrii Volchek, editor of *Mitin zhurnal* (1985-2001), and part of a younger generation, criticized Krivulin and Elena Shvarts for the excessive sociology and psychology of their work.[13]

Tatiana Goricheva, a co-editor of *37*, also worked with fellow dissident feminists on the collections *Woman and Russia* (No. 1, 1979) and *Mariia* (No. 1-6, 1980-82). These editions asserted gendered forms of expression and concerns (about conditions for women in childbirth, abuse of women prisoners, etc.) rarely found in samizdat writing. Iuliia Voznesenskaia observed that dissidents in general considered public discussion of sex, childbirth, domestic labor or other gendered topics «vulgar» (38). Tatiana Mamonova, another editor of the feminist collections, described unofficial culture as «overtly

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[10] Viktor Voronkov and Jan Wielgohs argued that a «private-public sphere» emerged in the late Soviet era, in their article on "Soviet Russia" (Pollack and Wielgohs, 113).

[11] The Petersburg School is sometimes also called «Metarealism» (Epstein; Berg 158, 160; Zhitenev 9).

[12] Sergei Stratanovskii, who also published in *37*, co-edited *Dialog* and the first ten issues of *Obovodnyi Canal*. Butyrin's conception of the Slavophile trend became more apparent in subsequent issues.

[13] Boris Ostanin and Aleksandr Kobak quoted Volchek's colorful turn of phrase: «We have been living for a long time now in the hotel Ritz and they are still arguing about the burnt-out lamp in the communal apartment», in the essay "Molniia i raduga" (Ostanin and Kobak 18; originally published in *Chasy* 61 [1986]).

phallocratic» (*Rossiianka* 12), although Voznessenskaia wrote that Leningrad's unofficial 'second culture' reacted sympathetically to the feminist collections (Voznessenskaia 39). This feminist movement in the late Soviet Union baffled and intrigued Western feminists for its pronounced emphasis on religion. While British feminist editors expressed difficulty in coming to terms with this aspect of the feminist dissidents, French editors made sense of it by analogy with the Polish Solidarity movement, acknowledging there was a different model of opposition in the officially atheist Eastern European countries (Maria 7). Religious forms of expression and identity – as well as networks formed through religious associations and institutions, whether underground or foreign – had importance for Jewish and Lithuanian, Baptist and Russian Orthodox activists, among other groups. Religion, like gender, constituted a blind spot of the classic liberal public sphere theorized by Habermas.[14] Far from being entirely encompassed by the notion of «rights», religious and gendered forms of expression served also to create languages or vernaculars in which Soviet people could develop independent identities and values.[15]

Such identity-based forms of expression help demonstrate the plurality of the samizdat public sphere, but they do not exhaust that plurality. Literary samizdat may be colored by religious or gendered language to one degree or another, or it may not. In either case, it underscores the poetic function that is crucial to Warner's elaboration of publics and counter-publics. Literature highlights the imaginative and performative aspects of public discourse in samizdat; that is, these languages or vernaculars need not simply reflect a pre-existing biological identity or affiliation, they may provide a structure for constructing an alternative, dissident persona for members of a given public. They may also project the world in which such a public would naturally take its place as part of the larger society.

## Public Projections in Literary Samizdat Periodicals

Literary samizdat had a public character. The 1965 samizdat collection *Fioretti* served at once as a herald of the distinctive aestheticism of Leningrad literary samizdat[16] and an edition explicitly oriented to a «new Petersburg public». Aleksandr Churilin wrote in the editor's foreword: «All of us authors who contributed our works to this collection comfort ourselves with the hope that an educated, reading, new Petersburg public will be able to appreciate this bold step as they should» (Dolinin et al. 467). Churilin asserted that each person «possesses the unmitigated right (*polnoe pravoe*) to freely express himself in any form allowed to him by

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[14] Calhoun noted that «Habermas implicitly follows the *philosophes* in imagining that religion and science must stand in a sort of hydraulic relationship to one another. For all their criticism of the Enlightenment, Adorno and Horkheimer (at least until his old age) also shared this view that religion must decline as enlightenment progresses. That secularization is part and parcel of modernity and, closely linked to the rise of rational-critical discourse, goes unquestioned. This view contributes to Habermas's blind spot on the role of religion both as a central thematic topic in the early public sphere and as one of its enduring institutional bases» (35-36).

[15] Fraser, whose approach to the public sphere was influenced by her engagement with women's groups, said that what she called «subaltern counterpublics» like the women's movement have a dual character: «On the one hand, they function as spaces of withdrawal and regroupment; on the other hand, they also function as bases and training grounds for agitational activities directed toward wider publics. It is precisely in the dialectic between these two functions that their emancipatory potential resides» (Fraser 124).

[16] Krivulin wrote, «we can consider the emphatic aestheticism of the authors of *Fioretti* to be a sign of the separation of a unified artistico-political space of uncensored literature». Leningrad became the home of a specifically literary samizdat, he asserted (Strelianyi 351).

his free, elemental, immutable and most precious essence (*svobodnaia ego, pervozdannaia, neprekhodiashchaia dragotsenneishaia sushchnost'*), as far as his conscience allows him». This somewhat purple evocation of an individual basis for the right to free speech obviously departed from the conventions of a materialist Marxist ideology determining official public expression. It also provided an interiorized basis for the right to free speech as opposed to the externalized notion of codified rights to which democratic dissidents appealed: the text of Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights appearing at the top of each issue of the *Chronicle*, echoed the statement on the «free communication of ideas and opinions» as «one of the most precious rights of man», from the 1789 Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen in France, a landmark in setting the conditions for a modern public to flourish (Habermas 71).

*Fioretti* appealed not to a shared political history but to a heritage of spiritual culture – represented by the title, *Fioretti*, referring to the *Fioretti di San Francesco* (*The Little Flowers of St. Francis of Assisi*). The epigraph for the collection came from William Shakespeare's sonnet 74, as translated by Samuil Marshak. The original reads:

But be contented: when that fell arrest
Without all bail shall carry me away,
My life hath in this line some interest,
Which for memorial still with thee shall stay.

The translated sonnet in *Fioretti* read:

Когда меня отправят под арест
Без выкупа, залога и отсрочки,
Не глыба камня, не могильный крест –
Мне памятником будут эти строчки. (Dolinin et al. 467)

Marshak's translation brings to mind a couple of specific associations, including the arrests that threatened heretical authors under Stalin and which some samizdat authors still faced. Marshak's free translation of Shakespeare's lines 3 and 4, so that they read, «Not a boulder of stone, not a gravesite cross – My monument will be these lines», seems also like a cultural translation. To a Russian ear the lines would bring to mind Pushkin's canonical poem with the epigraph *Exegi monumentum* ("Ia pamiatnik sebe vozdvig nerukotvornyi" 1836), which contrasts the Alexandrine stone column and his own verses. That poem of course refers to Horace's ode "Exegi monumentum" with its similar assertion that literary works last longer than monuments in other materials.

Much more powerfully than the verse hints at the contemporary socio-political reality, Marshak's translation of the Shakespeare sonnet evokes «world culture», to which Pushkin seems to have naturally belonged, and for which Mandelshtam expressed longing.[17] The temporality of this world culture transcends the contemporary situation: Mikhail Bakhtin wrote about the «great time» of culture to which enduring literary works like Shakespeare's exemplify (Bakhtin 4). Similarly, Fernand Braudel wrote about the *longue durée* of history, as

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[17] Nadezhda Mandelshtam remembered, «to the question: "What is Acmeism?" M. once replied: "Nostalgia [*toska*] for world culture" ("Italy" 246; ch. 53).

[18] Braudel spoke about distrust among historians regarding the «traditional history, called event-based (*événementielle*) history, a label that gets put together with that of political history» (728).

Literary samizdat is more often oriented to this «great time». In this way literary editions differ from the human rights bulletins that seek to communicate urgent information about current events, in the interest of provoking responses in the short term.

However, the temporality of the literary samizdat journal is not simple – it combines temporal modes that appear separated in the modern imagination: that of lyric speech and that of public speech. The former is 'no time' – lyrics imply private speech addressed by the lyric speaker to him or herself; by contrast, public speech is addressed to an audience and «requires the temporality of its own circulation».[19] Of course, that intimate privacy of the lyric had little place in official Soviet culture, but we might think of the lyric poetry of repressed modernist poets such as Akhmatova, Mandelshtam, Pasternak and Tsvetaeva as exemplary of this mode. The *Fioretti* foreword highlights the public character of an edition that, more insistently because it is samizdat, is oriented to the audience it needs and the circulation required for realizing that audience. As Warner noted, both the public sphere and the lyric mode as they came to be known in modern times found their ascendency with print, and, as he said, both show stress under the more recent advent of electronic mass media (Warner 82). Samizdat shows a similar destabilizing effect on print paradigms, recreating a temporality that might be closer to the audience-oriented speech of Horace's lyrics than to that of modern Western lyrics.

A public lyric that encompassed impassioned exhortation, recalling the fervor of revolutionary rhetoric,[20] can be found in the first issue of the collection *Phoenix* (*Feniks*, 1961). The editor and authors were 'Maiakovtsy', that is, young people who gathered around the monument to Maiakovskii opened in 1958. Editor Iurii Galanskov's poem *A Human Manifesto* (*Chelovecheskii manifest*), functioned as a programmatic document of the young people gathering at the monument: this public lyric evokes the drama of the «I» speaking out, and the direct address to an audience called to share the speaker's quest for freedom and truth:

> It is I –
> calling you to truth and struggle,
> unwilling to serve any longer,
> I tear apart your black ways,
> woven from lies
> [Это – я, / призывающий к правде и бунту, /
> нежелающий больше служить, / рву ваши черные пути, / сотканные из лжи].
> (Bukovskii 131)

Vladimir Bukovskii testified to how movingly Galanskov's poem seemed to capture the spirit of the time. It did not seem like a political program: «truly, this was a human rather than a narrowly political manifesto».[21] As such it conveyed the hopes of a generation emboldened by the post-Stalin Thaw, aiming to revive human values to reform Soviet society. The journal

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[19] Warner cited John Stuart Mill from a famous 1833 essay, "Eloquence is *heard*, poetry is *overheard*". While «eloquence supposes an audience […] Poetry is feeling confessing itself to itself, in moments of solitude» (81).

[20] Warner wrote about the sermon as an American form of this kind of address that is both public and intimate (83-84).

[21] «Deistvitel'no, byl eto chelovecheskii, a ne uzko politicheskii manifest». To this day, wrote Bukovsky, he is not sure whether they are good verses – they were too identified with that time (*krovno oni sviazany*) to be evaluated on aesthetic criteria (131-32).

*Phoenix* featured prose as well as poetry, with stories and essays. In total it was around two hundred pages. The dispersal of the crowd gathering around the monument by officials in late 1961 meant that opportunities to share copies of the collection became fewer. *Phoenix* did not circulate particularly well in samizdat, and part of the problem probably had to do with its length: it was not easy to reproduce and discretely carry copies of it. The length and the explicit social pathos testify to an exuberant belief in social possibilities that the authorities were not in fact prepared to allow.[22]

By contrast, the journal *Siren* (*Sirena*, n. 1-2, 1962), edited by Mikhail Kaplan, who was involved with *Phoenix*, hewed to a more strictly literary line. The poetic works, mostly by 'Maiakovtsy', came in a number of cases from the literary materials in the *Phoenix* archive. Thus, verses by Leonid Aronzon, Alexander Kushner, and Gleb Gorbovskii appearing in *Siren* had been collected but not published by Galanskov, who was more interested in social problems. The poetry in *Sirena* was not suitable for official publication thanks to its aesthetic divergence from official norms, not because of its politically sensitive content. The journal was smaller, with sheets folded in half, and more visually appealing, with covers of green velvet paper and cut-out letters for the title. The tipped-in pages dividing sections were eye-catching – a number of the illustrations were done by Vitalii Komar. A verse by Iurii Stefanov expressed belief in the power of art:

> Everything will perish – both culture and writing,
> But talent is deathless like time,
> And the caves will again be adorned by drawings
> of the mammoth, by a Rembrandt to come.
> [Все погибнет — культура и грамота, / Но, как время, бессмертен талант, /
> И пещеры рисунками мамонта / вновь украсит грядущий Рембранд][23]

The journal *Siren* was produced in just five copies, but it circulated relatively widely – with copies sent to Riga, to Ukraine and to Leningrad. The copy circulated in Moscow was intended to be reproduced, and apparently it was (Polikovskaia 310). The more political *Phoenix* was picked up by NTS and printed in its émigré journal *Facets* (*Grani*) n. 52, 1962. By contrast, the journal *Siren* depended for its distribution on the enthusiasm of a dispersed group of readers, and a belief in the lasting power of art. This more literary samizdat journal oriented itself less to current problems as it anticipated a projected future: the poem suggested a time to come when art would again occupy the place in society it always had, since the dawn of human history.

Memoirs about the journal *Art of the Commune* (*Iskusstvo kommuny*, Moscow, n. 20-33, 1962-63), demonstrate another instance of public formation and imaginative construction of an alternative future from within Soviet reality. The title of the journal refers to the journal *Art of the Commune* (n. 1-19, 1918-19), which involved Futurists Maiakovskii and Osip Brik. Issues of the new *Art of the Commune* were designated beginning with n. 20 to signal a continuation of the artistic legacy from the early part of the century. Memoirs about the journal shed light on the social context. Editors Vladimir Petrov and Grigorii Freidin

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[22] Between August and October, 1961, four of those who gathered at the "Maiakovka" were arrested – Eduard Kuznetsov, Vladimir Osipov, Il'ia Bokshtein and Anatolii Ivanov. Others were subjected to extra-judicial repressive measures. See the article on the edition and its context (Igrunov and Barbakadze, vol. 1.2, 350).

[23] Stefanov's poem is called "No, art causes no loss…" (Net, iskusstvo ne delaet ubyli…") (Igrunov and Barbakadze, vol. 1.2, 352).

presented individual issues at Saturday evening gatherings when a few dozen people would assemble at a private apartment to read poems and discuss art. These gatherings included figures who would become famous for their work in other contexts, such as future Moscow *Chronicle* editor Natal'ia Gorbanevskaia, Sots-artist Aleksandr Melamid and playwright and prose author Liudmila Petrushevskaia. That independent public was not uniform or unified – but in the early 1960s in Moscow, people who were or would be part of various groups and spheres of activities could come together to share and discuss new ideas and endeavors. Within that developing system of unofficial culture, the journal *Art of the Commune* began to establish its own «ecological niche», as Vitalii Gribkov put it, consisting of activity at the crossroads of politics and art, realized through art works and the theory of art (4; "Zhurnal 'IK' ('Iskusstvo kommuny)'").

An editorial statement in the first issue of *Iskusstvo kommuny* referred to a «lost generation» in the Soviet Union. A new art and literature created possibilities for developing an intense and independent relationship to the historical and social moment that fit into this group's convictions about the need to construct anew the social reality using the arts: «material values, once established, lose their validity. […] Only art is capable of reanimation». At the moment, wrote the editors, the paths to readers are closed. «We have to open those paths», they asserted, so that the new art can be communicated and accomplish its mission of revitalizing society. Thus, the editors projected a public beyond their close friends, imagining through the medium of the samizdat journal a reanimation of society to be accomplished through communication of the new art (Gribkov 5-6).

Apart from the theoretical elaboration of what this new art might be (featuring, for example, a «Constructive principle» in prose), the journal exemplified in its pages some ways in which alternative publishing might open up possibilities for new meanings, critique and the reanimation of society. The addendum "Questions of Degeneracy" (*Voprosy marazma*) in n. 33, 1963, of the journal featured verbatim reproduction of a speech by L. F. Il'ichev from the meeting of Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev and Secretary of the Communist Party Il'ichev with six hundred representatives of the cultural intelligentsia at the Kremlin, on March 7-8, 1963. The speech "On the Responsibility of the Artist", reflected the official view of art and artists, and it was studded with gems of official solidarity and wisdom such as «we all live and work for the people». In fact, the speech was not retyped; rather, it was cut from the pages of *Pravda* and pasted in full into the pages of an addendum to the samizdat journal. The collage of the title "Questions of Degeneration", written by hand over the pasted text of the speech (which took up at least five pages),[24] transferred the work of analysis and critique onto the readers to whom the journal editors were trying to open a path, thus enlisting them in a common project. Instead of a critical essay analyzing the stultifying long speech, this collage created the possibility for immediate recognition by Soviet readers of the editors as fellow independent thinkers. In this way it pointed toward critique and an alternative (unofficial) type of solidarity.

The unofficial solidarity imagined in democratic or rights-activist texts tended to depend less obviously on analysis or irony – it was more neutral, straightforward and rational. For example, in the first issue of Valery Chalidze's *Social Problems* (*Obshchestvennye problemy*, Moscow, n. 1-15, 1969-72) the lead item by Aleksandr Volpin was entitled "To All Thinking People". Volpin wrote about the achievement of American astronauts who walked on the moon as a sort of watershed, a milestone of which «thinking people of our century» had

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[24] Based on the copy of *Iskusstvo kommuny*, n. 6 (33). Archive of the Forschungsstelle Osteuropa, University of Bremen. Fond F. 76.

dreamed, and one which he as a Soviet scientist was no less happy to see accomplished by Americans, since it represented the accomplishment of all mankind. Volpin directed his public address broadly «to all thinking people» at this moment of scientific pride, exhorting them to reconsider failures and wrongful pride and to think in planetary terms, rather than narrow and conflictual terms. He concluded: «let each person who takes pride in the cosmic successes of humankind accomplished today do all he within his power for the moral foundations of such successes!» (Vol'pin).

By contrast, the thematic collection *Literary Pages* (*Literaturnye stranitsy*, Moscow, n. 1, 1968), about which we know relatively little, featured an editorial foreword in which the editor(s) claimed a modest goal – to see their works in print more often then they could if they had to struggle with official editors. Moreover, they sought to distinguish their efforts from those who «ascribe the rightful (*zakonomernye*) and inevitable contradictions of life to the nature of our society». These people «don't like to engage in analysis, they are relieved to find enemies, to find outstanding targets […] On these pages one will not find piquant hints. In short, whatever reaction this might elicit, we want to distance ourselves from self-publishing of a certain type. Literary work before all else. We want to believe and we believe, that the reader will understand». We cannot say exactly what samizdat editions the editors had in mind as a foil to this collection, but we can note that the emphasis is on «literary work» as opposed to social problems, and that the public for this literary work is therefore distinguished from those who seek «piquant hints» at political conflicts in samizdat. Of course, to return to the previous example, Volpin was not claiming a political agenda: he promoted moral renewal. However, the «planetary» audience he evoked is closer to the neutral Habermasian unified public than the literary samizdat public the editors of *Literary pages* sought. Moreover, their imagination of that public and their ability to connect with it seems tentative and provisional – «We want to believe… the reader will understand», by contrast to the confident address to «All thinking people», Volpin made.

Literary journals tend to show in various ways the precariousness of their existence and the uncertainty of their prospects for reaching the audience they seek. One of the editors of the Ukrainian literary journal *The Chest* (*Skrynia*, Lviv, n. 1, 1971), Mykola Riabchuk, talked in an interview about the possible allusion of the title to the aesthetic hermeticism favored by authors associated with the journal. The title might also have been some kind of reference to «writing into the drawer». Samizdat sought to break out of the isolation and lack of audience to which much uncensored writing «into the drawer» had long been condemned. However, editors could not be sure they would reach the audience. It is not clear that many saw the journal *The Chest* in its initial samizdat run of about fifteen copies: the edition and its authors subsequently became known for having been expelled from the university due to the scandal over the edition. The story helped to give the samizdat journal and the authors a sort of 'legendary' status that may have played a role in helping to stimulate further unofficial literary and cultural activity in Lviv (interview with Mykola Riabchuk, 31 March 2008). For his part, Riabchuk found the literary samizdat he saw during his study at the literary institute in Moscow in 1978-79 to be significant in enhancing his sense of an unofficial literary public that extended beyond his own circle of acquaintance and his home city:

> *Moskva-Petushki* was circulating, etc., samizdat of this type. Texts from *Metropol*, in the main. But there were also students at the Institute writing quite interesting texts. The communication, writing letters and the sense of support was important for me there. I think, at that age, when you are young, it is very important to sense that you are not the only one, that there are others who think like you and that there is a community. And it was very important to feel that there was a certain amount of non-conformism, that it was not just a

Lviv phenomenon, but that there was a parallel life, so to say. I am talking here about the mass effect. That you are not isolated, you are not completely a black sheep. Well, maybe we were black sheep, but there was a big flock of us, a huge population of black sheep. I think it was very important. (Bukovskii 131)[25]

Many samizdat journals and collections did not manage to survive for the multiple editions planned, since editors were often forced to cease operations after just one or two issues. These editions also did not necessarily circulate widely at the time – although some did. They needed to go beyond the intimate domestic or friendly circle to achieve the public status required for samizdat. Those that circulated – even as rumors – helped readers conceive of a public beyond their own friendly circle.

Editors of the Leningrad journal *37* projected the sense of the small and friendly group into their public organ: they wrote that the idea for the journal arose as «a necessary continuation of our friendly socializing». Too often, they said, «the significant *facts* of a living cultural process remain the property of a small group of people». In apartment number *37* (shared by editors Tatiana Goricheva, Viktor Krivulin and Lev Rudkevich), for which the journal was named, there were seminars, poetry readings and discussions. Therefore, «the goal of the journal 37 is TO BRING THE CULTURE OF [OUR] SOCIALIZING OUT OF ITS PRE-WRITTEN CONDITION» ("Ot redaktsii"). The sense of the oral word in the written text (Krivulin elsewhere cites Mandelshtam on literature written «from the voice»), the intimacy of the friendly circle whose works and discussion are brought into the public sphere – these contaminations are characteristic of samizdat and vital to its special force as a cultural and social phenomenon. They tend to be more visible in literary editions where authors and editors more frequently reflect on the conditions of production and reception.

Early issues contain the "Evangelical Dialogues". Goricheva and Krivulin begin the first of this series in *37*, n. 1, with a discussion of Jesus' non-response to Pilate, who asks him, «Art thou the King of the Jews?» And Jesus answers him, «Thou sayest it» (Luke 23:3). Pilate's question is intended to catch Jesus in terms of a political hierarchy in which he makes criminal claims, explains Krivulin. This opening piece illustrates the assertion made elsewhere that the unofficial literati of this group do not speak the language of the powers that be. The piece inaugurates a different sort of dialogue, among members of this unofficial society, who speak about philosophy, religion, literature, art and science in the pages of the journal (Komaromi, "Modernism") – but not about law or the distinctions that matter to the State. In this way they differ not only from the official Soviet public, but also from rights activists and legalists in samizdat.

The other fundamental journal of Leningrad literary samizdat, *Timepiece* (*Chasy*, n. 1-80, 1976-1990), set itself a different task: insofar as the goal of the journal was to provide a forum for unofficial culture *in toto*, the editors did not as a rule make distinctions with regard to aesthetic or ideological values. There was little of the sense of a specific group about it: «nonconformism and professionalism were announced as the only criteria of editorial selection» (Dolinin et al. 464). To provide that all-encompassing forum, journal issues ran to 250-300 pages each, and they appeared regularly, like a watch, six times a year. Subscribers paid twelve roubles an issue to cover the costs of production. In all these ways, *Timepiece* differed from its thinner, less regular and more idiosyncratic counterpart, *37*. The journal *Timepiece*, more than *37*, was oriented to eventual legalization – it aimed to accommodate

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[25] Interview with Mykola Riabchuk.

unpublished works and sustain the unofficial cultural process until those authors could assume their rightful place in Soviet society, a process that began to happen with the establishment of the independent, but officially recognized Club-81 (Dolinin et al. 410-11). The editors of *37* purported to have little concern for how Soviet authorities might define their place in contemporary society.

Both *37* and *Timepiece* featured extensive gray text, with the exception of some photos appearing in a couple of late issues of *37*, and photos of artworks occasionally included in issues of *Timepiece* beginning with n. 41 (1982). In both journals, we might read the monotonous typescript as a function of the samizdat conditions of existence: typescript was the easiest to produce and reproduce without access to photographic copy machines, which were rarely available in the era of classic Soviet samizdat. For the authors of *37*, however, the typescript could take on other significance. On the one hand, for poets of the Petersburg School, the wretched body of the typescript functioned as a meaningful sign: the sacred «word» transcends and redeems the poor material vessel. The samizdat text remains unadorned, left in the poverty that contrasts meaningfully with the sublime content. On the other hand, for the Conceptualists who contributed to later issues, such as Lev Rubinshtein, the samizdat text could served as an index of the unofficial conditions of independent art in the late Soviet period, of their extremely conscious relationship to that extra-Gutenberg life of the text, indeed, of «unofficiality turned into a poetics» (Rubinshtein 214).

The poverty of the textual object also bears relationship to the Leningrad cityscape as apprehended through the late Soviet existentialist lens: Sergei Stratanovskii, whose poems appeared on the pages of *37* and who edited the first issues of another journal, *Obvodnyi Canal* (*Obvodnyi kanal*), begun 1981, referred with the title of that journal to an industrial stretch of the city: «for me the region of Obvodnyi, especially the section between the Baltic Station and Prospect Gaza, always was the quintessence of urbanism, and also a symbol of being forgotten and abandoned by God, and this was connected to my 'Leningrad' verses» (Dolinin et al. 435; cf. Sabbatini). Thus, the contemporary industrial cityscape, like the torn and blurred pages of gray samizdat text, became part of a new myth of Petersburg, at once locating the authors in an impoverished cultural and physical location and connecting them to a rich and transcendent culture associated with the text of the city.



Fig. 1. Obvodnyi Canal, near the Baltic Station, January 2015. Photo by Ann Komaromi.

It was possible to produce something other than plain typescript. In the journal *Transponans* (Eisk-Leningrad, n. 1-34/36, 1979-1987), for example, we find that the gray typescript yielded in later issues to colorful pages and whimsical forms, such as the poetic tree on the cover of n. 24. The item on "Poetic Acupuncture", from n. 27 features a collage combining a pasted representation of a head with letters pasted in various places on it – a needle is provided at the bottom of the page to allow the user to prick a head as indicated to elicit various sounds. The journal by Sergei Sigei and Ry Nikonova and their friends featured other neo-avant-garde experimentation, such as 'irfaer' poetry, which consisted of marking out and recombining letters in found text, and futurist types of phonetic play. Dmitrii Prigov composed an 'irfaer' text for the cover of n. 18, for example. Obviously, issues of *Transponans* featuring drawings, collages of found text and illustrations, innovative graphical layout and highly idiosyncratic language that would be hard to reproduce, although the editors managed to organize five copies of each issue.[26] Like other art journals, *Transponans* functioned in the first place as a laboratory for authors to work out artistic ideas and experiments. In this way *Transponans* did not *represent* the content of seminars, poetic readings and the like – it *was* the work in progress. Moreover, the text object in this case was oriented to the future when it could be presented and evaluated for the interesting artefact it is – indeed, the journal has been one of the most visually arresting and curious items of the Bremen collection, featured in albums on samizdat and samizdat art in the post-Soviet era (Eichwede 451), as well as in the Sackner Archive of Concrete and Visual Poetry, in Miami, Florida.
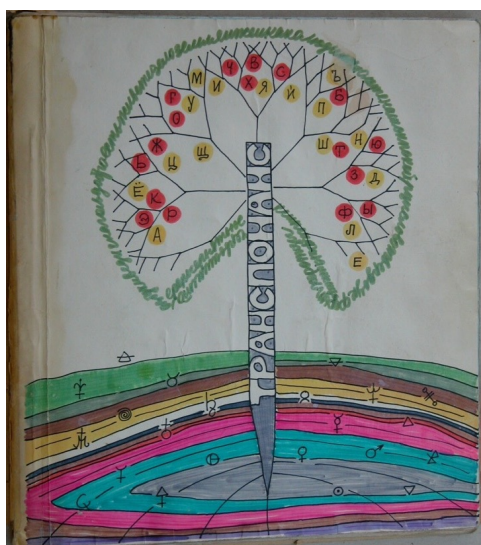


Fig. 2. Cover. *Transponans* 24 (1984). Archive of the Forschungsstelle Osteuropa, U of Bremen. F. 37.
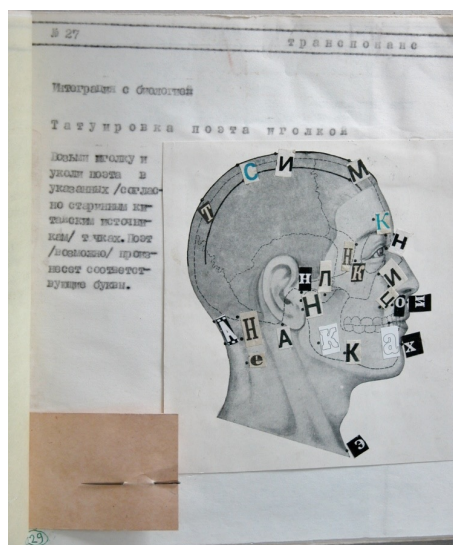


Fig. 3. "Poetic Acupuncture." *Transponans* 27 (1985). Archive of the Forschungsstelle Osteuropa, University of Bremen. F. 37.

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[26] Boris Konstriktor wrote about the difficulty of cutting, gluing and coordinating the various parts of each issue for five copies (45).

While in some ways this kind of journal seems to have been at the time possibly more confined to its circle of authors, in fact, that group of contributors grew to include people from Moscow, well-known conceptualist artists among them. It also featured documents of the historical avant-garde (Malevich, Kruchenykh, Gnedov, and others), provided by Nikolai Khardzhiev. These contributors helped build a larger audience. The group around this journal was more explicitly avant-garde – and, as they looked back to artistic experimentation from the earlier part of the century, they engaged the kind of forward-looking transformational power of futurist art. The specific ethos of this late-Soviet variation of the neo-avant-garde did not imply the kind of total top-down revolutionary transformation envisioned by Constructivists, for example. Rather, *Transponans* editors and their friends revived along with experimental versification the practice of hand-made journal and book-production engaged in by early Futurists. They also developed their own ideas about the kind of 'transposition' that might be accomplished based on existing textual and cultural material. Thus, theirs was a strategy of critical infiltration and independent adaptation of official culture and the artistic legacy, not entirely unlike that seen in the use of found text in *Iskusstvo kommuny*, although there seems to have been no specific overlap among the groups. Moreover, the *Transponans* editors developed in their work two principles with implications for the public significance of the journal: dilettantism and provincialism. As artistic principles these were realized in the provincial origins of the editors and some of the contributors, as well as the emphasis on artistic process, rather than finished product.[27] These principles implied the expansion of independent artistic work and the spirit of freedom it was meant to foster out from editors and authors to others, including those outside the capital cities where activity was concentrated, to people with or without training and experience. Such artistic principles resonated profoundly with the textual mode of existence of samizdat, which accommodated works by authors without professional status or special training, and which depended on the active participation of readers to validate and reproduce the text, thus blurring the distinction between roles assigned to authors vs. readers.

While we know that samizdat activity extended to the provinces, we have less information about it. One notable exception is the study by E. N. Savenko of samizdat in Siberia – for the period under consideration, seventeen literary periodical editions were recorded, along with a couple of socio-political editions, a couple of religious editions, and seven jazz and/or rock titles (Savenko). Savenko's evidence comes mainly from the archives of KGB and prosecutors' offices, indicating that literary editions – even when they had no socio-political agenda, could attract repressive measures. Such repression was surely greater outside Moscow, and greater in the provinces than in Leningrad. In those conditions, literary and music fan culture – while not without risk – seemed like a more viable option for those interested in independent activity. Literary samizdat and rock samizdat truly did widen the scope of people involved in nonconformist enterprises, creating micro-publics with some kind of connection to a culture beyond their locale and exceeding what was officially approved and provided to them.

We do not have all of the samizdat literary periodicals at our disposal. If we did, we could apply to them the same types of analysis we have been developing on the basis of better-known editions. To summarize, we might pose questions pertaining to three general areas of inquiry:

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[27] Ilja Kukuj discussed the origins and realization of these avant-garde principles in *Transponans* (227).

1. What *direct statements* were made about the type of public and type of future envisioned? These might include statements by editors in paratexts or by authors, within the edition or subsequently, in memoirs and interviews.
2. What does the *style* of the edition reveal about the character of the public, its identity and its values, not only as it exists, but as it is projected through the edition?
3. What other conclusions can be drawn on the basis of the *bibliographic codes* of the edition,[28] that is, from its format, its length, its use of materials, its methods of production and reproduction, its transmission abroad, or preservation?

Such questions can be applied, of course, to non-literary editions. Literary samizdat shows more clearly than some other types of editions the self-conscious reflection on form and style, as well as relatively complex engagement with questions of reception and audience. In short, literary editions tend to reflect more openly on their *poeisis*, the way they imaginatively create the relationship between authors and readers, and construct alternative futures and worlds. For this reason, they also show the range of possibilities according to which we might position and compare various editions and publics. Two axes of possibility present themselves: one axis runs from *autonomy* at one end of the spectrum to *engagement* at the other end. The other axis spans the range from the *limited circle* of readers (where that circle still possesses indefinite boundaries that help establish it as samizdat and thus public) to the *widest possible audience* of readers.

## Conclusion

Samizdat did not significantly impact the regime, and its constitution of an independent civil society in the Soviet Union is open to question (Kotkin and Gross xiv, 7). If publics are evaluated only on the basis of the breadth of population they encompass and the political impact they may have, samizdat publics do not count for much. However, in Soviet society, the independent public had been eliminated: Nancy Fraser cited the failure in the dominant wing of socialist Marxist criticism to appreciate the need for a public separate from the state as the basis for her retention of Habermas's notion of the public sphere, to which she proposed major modifications, as we have seen (Fraser 109-10). Fraser's reconceived public sphere offers more for an analysis of Soviet samizdat, which not only challenged the abuses of power by the Soviet State but which also, significantly, introduced into the notion of independent society the value of plurality and difference. Literary samizdat realized this principle of difference within unofficial culture, and it modeled the kind of counter-publics that could foster the development of independent identities and values to change Soviet society from the ground up to social structures and institutions. The evidence of provincial literary and music fan samizdat suggests this impact may have been broader than sometimes realized. At the same time, literary samizdat as it developed in the pre-Perestroika period perhaps most compellingly exemplifies an aspiration for social connection and renewal, rather than its realization.

Michael Warner read the scene of Winston's diary in Orwell's *1984*, with what he called its «intense melancholy», in terms of an «unrecognized allegory of the displacement of the writer by the technologies of the mass. There is something unmistakably nostalgic in Winston's fetishization of the cream laid paper, the nib of the pen, writing by hand

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[28] Jerome McGann proposed «bibliographic codes» as a category to complement «paratexts» for an analysis of the text that addresses its materiality and exceeds the confines of the «main textual event», which has been the traditional object of analysis (13).

[…]» (132). Samizdat features its own nostalgia – of the Leningrad cityscape, of the poor, battered typescript, that testifies from the heart of a socialist society to a longing for world culture. Such longing for a social connection and the response of those he meets is what Venichka sought at the end of his journey in *Moskva-Petushki*. This social connection need not necessarily extend across the whole Soviet empire or out to the international press: the intimacy that tempers samizdat public speech particularly in its literary variants suggests that small steps will do. To evoke the sympathy of a stranger might be enough already to save a life – as it would have saved Venichka's at the end of his journey. Such response may validate the speaker and generate the *human* (rather than wholly anonymous) micro-connections needed to repair the social fabric.

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