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“Male Fantasies” in Ukraine

“Fucking Women and Building Nation”¹

As is known, the discourse on sexuality that was non-public within Soviet totalitarianism (let’s recall the famous “we do not have sex!” of a Soviet participant in a popular TV talk show in the late 1980s) for the first time became legalized in Soviet culture, namely in the literature and art discourses of the late Soviet period (1960 till the 1980s). With respect to this, the collapse of the former communist regime and the disintegration of the USSR can be characterized by the fact that connotations of sexuality start to be used more actively not only in literature and art but also in public politics and the mass media. These changes signify a wide-ranging sexualization in post-Soviet culture as a whole which may be seen as sexualization of politics or politicization of sexuality. In the early 1990s, in post-Soviet research the new phenomenon of gender studies began investigating the specifics of the functioning of gender-marked subjectivity in Soviet and post-Soviet cultures within the discourse analysis of sexuality. In this context, research not only on women’s but also on men’s subjectivity emerged.

The main aim of this article is to present a comparative analysis of two types of male sexuality. The first type is expressed in the late Soviet period when, after many years of being banned in the former USSR, the topic is first articulated within a cultural context. The other surfaces in the post-Soviet period, when sexuality, represented in the famous and extremely abstract, non-national construct of *homo sovieticus*, is, for the first time, linked to the national question. The analysis is based on Ukrainian men’s literature which allows us, first, to reveal some structural peculiarities in the functioning of Soviet men’s sexuality, and, second, to detect some new additional characteristics of post-Soviet men’s sexuality which contrast with the generally accepted ideas and norms.

My analysis focuses on strategies of representing men’s sexuality in relation to women’s subjectivity, using as a basic source the works by the popular Ukrainian authors, Yevgen Gutsalo (1937–1995) and Yuriy Andrukhovich (born in 1960). Gutsalo, *the* author of the “sixties”, was consciously writing in Ukrainian in a period of general Russian domination in Soviet Ukraine and was experimenting with existential problems against the background of a dominating tradition of social real-

¹ The title of my article is a quotation from Zillah Eisenstein, *Hatreds: Racialized and Sexualized Conflicts in the 21st Century*, New York/London 1996, 133.

ism. Andrukhovich is the most popular contemporary Ukrainian writer and poet and is enthusiastically celebrated as a “new Gogol” by Ukrainian critics.

“Male Fantasies” in the Soviet Ukraine or *Once again about Love*²

It was in the early post-Soviet period that in our culture the new discipline of men’s studies appeared which, as can be seen in the works by Igor Kon, Sergey Ushakin, Helene Mesherkina, Anna Temkina, Helene Zdravomyslova, Helene Iarskaia-Smirnova, and others,³ analyzes men’s sexuality. The main paradox of men’s sexuality in the post-Soviet period, as exposed by post-Soviet scholars, consists in the fact that men’s sexuality in this period is not, as one might expect, constructed in terms of phallic sexuality or, as Igor Kon would say, in terms of “the traditional canon of hegemonic masculinity”⁴ which was typical for such patriarchal societies as the former USSR. The new studies analyzed the topic in terms of so-called *deprived* sexuality, indicating that men were *deprived* of subjectivity or, to use Susan Larsen’s terminology, suffered from “aggrieved masculinity”.⁵ The notion of deprivation within this context means first of all men’s actual loss of the right to a private life and to subjectivity; accordingly, researchers define deprived men’s subjectivity or “aggrieved masculinity” of the late Soviet period as dependent, suppressed, manipulated, and victimized.⁶ Researchers also agree on the reasons of such deprivation and locate it in the fact that the monopoly of hegemonic masculinity exclusively belonged to the totalitarian regime and, therefore, all the men’s functions belonged, correspondingly, to the only bearer – the totalitarian leader. In that historical period, men’s sexuality did not have any other way of expression but the aforementioned “aggrieved masculinity”.

Indeed, when in Soviet Ukrainian literature such as, for instance, in Yevgen Gutsalo’s works, sexuality is first included in the construction of masculinity, it is depicted as a feature of the Soviet man who is deprived of his subjectivity. In Gutsalo’s story *Improvisations of the Body* (1985) the question of sexuality is, as can be seen

2 The title of a famous Soviet film (1968) of Georgiy Natanson.

3 The works of almost all post-Soviet men’s studies scholars are mentioned in Sergey Ushakin ed., *O muzhe(n)stvennosti* (On Masculinity), Moscow 2002.

4 See Igor Kon, *Muzhskie issledovaniia: meniaushiesia muzhchiny v izmeniaushemsia mire* (Men’s Studies: Changing Men in a Changing World), in: Irina Zhrebkina ed., *Vvedenie v gendernye issledovaniia* (Introduction to Gender Studies), Kharkov/St. Petersburg 2001, 562–605, 581.

5 See Susan Larsen, *Melodrama, muzhestvennost’ i nazional’nost’: stalinskoe proshloe na sovietskom ekrane* (Melodrama, Masculinity, and Nationality: The Stalinist Past on the Post-Soviet Screen), in: Ushakin, *O muzhe(n)stvennosti*, see note 3, 630–663, 660.

6 See Anna Temkina and Helene Zdravomyslova, *krizis maskulinnosti v pozdnesovietskom discursie* (Crisis of Masculinity in the Late Soviet Discourse), in: Ushakin, *O muzhe(n)stvennosti*, see note 3, 432–451, 448.

from the novel's title, connected to a specific notion of the "body" and as such legalized in the official Ukrainian literary discourse. The story is told in the first person to better express the existential experience of its character who suffers and rushes about because of the impossibility to fully and adequately realize his subjectivity in Soviet social reality. Watching him go through existential problems with his wife, the family, other women, his surroundings at work, etc., the reader is supposed to experience feelings of sharp sympathy and empathy for the character's personal problems. That was quite new for a reader who had got used to the fact that a Soviet person should only know the problem of how to build communism, but should not have any existential problems.

Improvisations of the Body started a new Soviet Ukrainian literary discourse by confronting the reader with the surprisingly strange sexual fantasies of its main character. Tired of his existential troubles, Gutsalo's 'hero' suddenly finds out from a stranger about a "sleeping woman" in a "peasant's house in Slobozhanshina" in the ethnographical museum in Kiev. The unexpectedness of this information consists in the fact that each museum visitor can sexually possess the woman because, as the stranger remarks, "she does not refuse anything to anyone, since she is sleeping".⁷

The fascination of the story and the peculiarities and paradoxes of Soviet men's sexuality lie in the fact that as soon as the character receives this accidental information about the sleeping woman in the peasant's house in Slobozhanshina, he is at once obsessed by sexual desire which appears stronger than all his previous existential self-doubts and uncertainty about his subjectivity as a man. Driven by this desire, he rushes in search of the sleeping woman in a "peasant's house in Slobozhanshina". As he later recollects, he "did not think then, how many men had visited her today, I forgot everything I had heard, I desired ... you see? ... I desired this woman. Nothing frightened me when this desire appeared."⁸

What does this character's irresistible desire mean? It means first of all that the character at once realizes that this woman is for him an ideal sexual partner with whom he can embody his sexuality as a man completely and forget about his former uncertainty in his relationship with his wife and other women who, under Soviet conditions, do not allow him to actually feel what he biologically is – a man. Another peculiarity of Gutsalo's story consists in the fact that the entire experience with the sleeping woman is actually a dream episode which the character, tired of diffidence, goes through. Certainly, the author, in describing the character's sexuality, deliberately employs dream mechanisms and elements indicating that only in a dream can a man have the possibility of adequately realizing his own subjectivity within totalitarian Soviet society.

7 Yevgen Gutsalo, *Improvizazii ploti* (*Improvisations of the Body*), Kiev 1993, 73.

8 Gutsalo, *Improvizazii*, see note 7, 74f.

Therefore, the only thing that troubles Gutsalo's character within the plot of the "sleeping woman" is the fear that the "sleeping" woman could turn out to be a "real woman" who would manifest her own sexual desire and would refuse to act as a passive sexual object, depriving him of the possibility to realize his sexuality. In the story this anxiety is expressed in the character's doubts and fears that the "sleeping woman" may happen to be actually his wife who has become detached from other tourists to "give herself" to "strangers" pretending to be asleep. The fear of losing his male identity is so strong that, even when he finds the "peasant's house in Slobozhanshina" and makes sure that the sleeping woman is not his wife, he is not able to release himself from the fear that his search may end in disaster destroying the illusion of his sexual identity and of being an autonomous man. "Well, I can clearly see, she is not my wife, I feel much better, but still, I can't perceive myself", the character admits, "I see it's not my wife in the bed, but, doesn't matter, she could be there as well."⁹

However, Gutsalo's character is so anxious to realize his sexuality at all hazards and is so carried away by the possibility to do so that when he finds out that the "sleeping woman" is not his wife who can make him aware of his "aggrieved masculinity" or castrated sexuality he immediately has sexual intercourse with the "sleeping woman". The fact that he actually rapes the sleeping woman by simply using her as a passive sexual object does not embarrass him. Moreover, it seems to him that the "sleeping woman", while he was having sex with her, "smiled as if, even being asleep, she knew with whom she was. She neither stretched her hands out to me nor embraced me, but I could feel her body so close to mine, and it was a feeling as if she gave in to me, as if she wanted me and felt comfortable with me. And I did not perceive myself as a violator but, on the contrary, I felt as if everything between us was mutually agreed."¹⁰ Therefore, the paradox of the representation of men's sexuality in the Soviet period consists in the fact that, due to the entire Soviet ideology of gender equality in this period, the character has, despite his actually raping the "sleeping woman", during the actual act of rape the illusion that the woman is a full-fledged sexual partner who enjoys the "sexual relation" as much as he does.

As a result, the conclusion may be drawn that men's sexuality within totalitarian surroundings can only be represented as the sexuality of one who is incapable of realizing his own actions. Thus, infantilized Soviet man is manifested in the novel by the fact that, in spite of his deprived sexuality being realized in the form of the rape of a woman on whom the function of a passive object is imposed and whose desire is not taken into consideration and not satisfied, the character cannot identify his actions towards the woman as violence and cannot see himself as violator. On the contrary, he interprets his actions as relations of mutual consent and affection. Thus,

9 Gutsalo, *Improvizazii*, see note 7, 75.

10 Gutsalo, *Improvizazii*, see note 7, 75.

if the majority of the aforementioned studies of Soviet masculinity describe only one side of deprived men's sexuality – victimization, depression, dependence –, the reading of *Improvisations of the Body* reveals an ambivalent structure of men's sexuality in the late Soviet period. Its other side should not be overlooked in the general analysis of gender relations in Soviet society, namely, the fact that the rhetoric of love and respect can stand for practices of direct violence towards women.

Thus, considering the general social context of gender relations within the Soviet period, one may ask if not the very same illusion of equal gender partnership may nurture discriminatory practices of a totalitarian attitude to women's subjectivity in this period on the whole.

Male Sexuality in the Post-Soviet Period: "Fucking Women and Building Nation"

In the post-Soviet period, when the ruling communist ideology was changed for the ideology of nationalism in the countries of the former USSR, we can witness changes of the old model of Soviet men's subjectivity and the appearance of a new model which consists in the ideal of aggressive masculinity or hyper-masculinity with its corresponding feature of hyper-sexuality. This time, the features are not, as in the Soviet period, concealed; on the contrary, they are openly manifested to meet the requirements of the revival of a national identity which is, compared to the old communist internationalist idea, new. Attention must be paid to a fact which is significant for all post-Soviet national cultures, namely that the appearance of a new national men's identity (as well as women's) is not regarded as a purely personal but as an important political, even national task.

Within the new discourse of post-Soviet nationalism women are also split according to the general binary logic of the nationalist discourse which divides the world into "us" and "they" or "ethnically ours" and "ethnically aliens". When we apply this logic to the politics of men's sexuality, we can observe that the sexual attitude to women as "ethnically alien" is represented mainly in a discourse of violence, including, as numerous studies of national wars and conflicts show, direct violence, while the attitude to women as "ethnically ours" is represented mainly in a discourse of desire towards the so-called "sublime" or towards woman as symbolic object for the sake of which so-called "real women" are sacrificed (for the nation or for men's subjectivity).

A characteristic example of nationalist masculine politics of subjectivity and sexuality in the post-Soviet period is the work by the Ukrainian postmodern writer Yuriy Andrukhovich. If the novels by the Ukrainian Soviet writer Yevgen Gutsalo deal with men's sexual identity as "aggrieved masculinity", the novels by Yuriy Andrukhovich, on the contrary, show the new national identity of Ukrainian man with

features of a hyper- masculinity which has been missing from both the Ukrainian traditional pre-Soviet and the imperial totalitarian Soviet cultures.

One of the most famous novels by Andrukhovich, *Moskowiada* (1993), is dedicated to the identity problems of a young Ukrainian poet, which he is trying to solve within an ethnically alien cultural medium, namely in Moscow. The plot collision of the novel is based on the fact that the young man, Otto von V., who studies at Moscow Literary Institute and suffers in an alien totalitarian Soviet milieu, starts his way from one point of Moscow (the dormitory of the Literary Institute) to another (the center of Moscow). After several dramatic adventures (meetings with criminals and militia, the horrors of the Moscow underground, and arrest by KGB, etc.), he should at last join his Ukrainian friends, i.e. the “ethnically ours,” the meeting with whom is to symbolize his attainment of both an independent national and a poetical identity. Though his meeting with the “ethnically ours” in Moscow never takes place, the character manages to acquire his own national and intellectual identities because, as a result of this dramatic and dangerous trip in the ethnically different and alien space, he settles the score with the Russian Empire in different ways and, at the same time, kills his own fear and dependence on it (he shoots himself).¹¹ Thus, the novel has an optimistic ending by suggesting to the reader that Andrukhovich’s killed character still goes to the railway station and with a bullet in his head leaves for Ukraine, where he will meet the real “ethnically ours” and finally resolve his identity problems.

Moscow, in view of Andrukhovich’s character, is the capital of the Russian Empire which is ever so hostile to Ukrainian culture and presents a constant threat to it and which, as the poet ‘jokes’, “would better be level to the ground and planted with forests as before the foundation of the city”.¹² Thus, when he comes from Ukraine to Moscow for his studies, he feels as if he were in the epicenter of a hostile imperial totalitarian world where almost everything seems aggressive and hurts his national feelings: the Russophile writers, his neighbors in the dorm, the architecture, the underground, Russian itself which seems to him so vulgar that he compares it with Mongol or Swahili. Even the street names bear this “despotic spirit.”

The scornful attitude of the women in Moscow seems especially offensive and discriminatory to the character’s national feelings, because women, according to the ideology of nationalism, represent the most important national symbols and values both of their own and ethnically different cultures. Hence, first of all he tries to avenge on the women for the offenses of his nation by referring to them as *moskovi, katsapki* (an offensive and scornful nickname of Russian women in general and

11 Andrukhovich’s *Moskowiada* as the transformation of a usual trip into a phantasmagoric adventure was compared by critics with the famous Russian novel by Venedikt Erofeev, *Moscow-Petushki* (1970).

12 See Yuriy Andrukhovich, *Moskoviada*, Moscow 2001, 104.

Moscow women in particular). It seems to him that they treat him – as a Ukrainian – with contempt and, in particular, they ridicule his Ukrainian accent and language (*mova*). To defend his own individuality, he tries as hard as he can to prove his intellectual and purely biological, i.e. men's superiority to those haughty and at the same time ignorant *moskovki*. He follows one and the same pattern in all his relations with Moscow women. When, in the beginning of their acquaintance, *moskovki* treat him very arrogantly and contemptuously because of his Ukrainian origin, then, at the end, he puts them in their place not only by first suppressing them with his knowledge of modern culture, literature, and especially of psychoanalysis, but also by suppressing them sexually, with the result that all the *moskovki* admit his superiority at last and try to begin sexual relations with him.

Why does men's subjectivity as represented by *Moskoviada's* character appear so effective? Why does it take the shape of the sexual macho type who at the most intimate level has no doubts, no uncertainty, and no defeats? And finally, why is this type which is so common for pre-Soviet and Soviet Ukrainian men, so highly desired in traditional Ukrainian culture? Certainly, the logical effect of the new man's hyper-masculinity becomes possible only because the character's own subjectivity in his communications with "ethnically alien" women (as well as men) is supplemented by the universal structure of the national imaginary which presupposes that the subject is always "more than he is", to use Lacan's expression.¹³ That is to say that, as a result of an ingrown structure of the national imaginary in the inner structure of men's subjectivity, the Ukrainian poet turns into a unique hyper-masculine personality, which is stressed by Andrukhovich calling him by an Arian name (Otto von V.). The naming is definitely done to mark the character of the novel as both an heir to the literary traditions of Taras Shevchenko and Nikolai Gogol and to the bellicose traditions of the Ukrainian Insurgent Army. During his adventures in Moscow, the character of the novel can, in Andrukhovich's view, only as a successor of the latter stand alone against hostile *moskovki* and the agencies of the Soviet patrocacy, the militia and the KGB (which he meets in his dramatic struggle for national and artistic identity).

According to the common logic of the nationalist imaginary in Andrukhovich's novels, women's subjectivity is also marked by the binary structure of the logical opposition of "our" versus "alien". Men's sexuality towards "ethnically alien" women is expressed through possessing a woman or, as Andrukhovich's character would say, through "having a woman". There is an episode in the novel where four men, sitting in a pub, discuss the men's national identity by denoting the latter just

13 See Jacques Lacan, *Nisproverzhenie subjecta* (Subversion du sujet et du desir dans l'inconscient freudien) (The Overthrow of the Subject), in: Jacques Lacan, *Instanzia bukvy, ili sud'ba razuma posle Freud* (L'instance de la lettre dans l'inconscient ou la raison depuis Freud) (The Instance of a Letter or the Fate of Reason after Freud), Moscow 1997, 148–183, 155.

through the possession of a woman, thus, placing the sexual at the basis of the national. "There are four of us now and each of us had a woman once ... There are four of us and we represent at least four nations."¹⁴ Thus, having sexual relations with Moscow women, Andrukhovich's character displays rudeness and cruelty towards them, which seems, at first sight, pointless. When he, for example, comes to his Moscow lover Galya ("typical moskovka") who gives him dinner, washes him, and has oral sex with him, he declares that in Moscow he has had tons of such *katsapki* as she is, and before he leaves her, he cruelly beats her up.

Regarding Moscow women as "ethnically alien", Andrukhovich's character describes them as disgusting, obscene, and aggressive: "They are a true beauty of the blessed city. They wear loose unzipped pants. They have half bald heads and they are proud of being beaten up and swollen. They stink with garbage. Their legs are hairy as of the queen of the Soave. They are ready to have sex even with a dog."¹⁵ Moreover, in the character's view, those *moskovki* who look different, behave haughtily and arrogantly, and pretend to be untouchable, are actually lecherous, full of lust, false, and treacherous, as for instance his Moscow lover Galya who, in the Ukrainian poet's opinion, pretends to be caring but actually constantly deceives him. She is also a hypocrite, what the author of the novel emphasizes through her job: she is a professional snake hunter.

However, indecency and baseness of the ethnically different *katsapki* are, as Andrukhovich remarks, not manifested simply in their sexual dissipation and perversity but, what seems to the novel's character most horrible, in their corrupt relations with the imperial totalitarian power – the police, the KGB, and the security agencies where many of them serve as informants, as, for example, the very same Galya who, as finally becomes clear, is a worker in the KGB simultaneously serving the authority as informant and sexual object. After the novel's character has left Galya, he encounters her again during his adventures, when he gets to some secret party meeting a la Gogol in the Moscow underground, where a new imperial conspiracy of totalitarianism is being prepared which *moskovki* attend in their national outfit, the Sarafan, worn on the naked body, so that, as Andrukhovich expresses it, they can "screw them straight away".

Since obscene Moscow women present simultaneously a threat and aggression, and their image appears, as we have seen, in association with something appalling and sinister, the adequate sexual reaction towards them seems to Andrukhovich's character to be rape. As a result, when the Ukrainian poet takes a shower in the dorm and hears behind the wall a woman singing, the author describes a scene which can be called the symbolic climax of the novel. Being unable to suppress his sexual arousal which suddenly seized him, the character of the novel bursts into

14 Andrukhovich, *Moskoviada*, see note 12, 54.

15 Andrukhovich, *Moskoviada*, see note 12, 50.

the shower room for women, rapes a girl that is left there alone, and quickly disappears. It is not accidental that the singing girl raped in the shower turns out to be a dark-skinned student from Africa who, as he declares "gave in to him as slave girls do".¹⁶ We think that this episode of the novel is significant first of all because Andrukhovich complements the nationalistic principle of gender discrimination towards "ethnically different" women with the racist principle of gender regulations which do not recognize any restraining interdictions towards the women's otherness in post-Soviet practices of representing men's national subjectivity.

Since the rape of the African student in the shower is, according to Andrukhovich's character, an absolutely just and adequate sexual act towards an "ethnically alien" female, Andrukhovich's character is not ashamed of it at all. He is even proud that he has committed an act of violence towards a woman of a different race – "For a couple of unforgettable moments, I connected with my *penis* far continents, cultures, and civilizations."¹⁷ The Ukrainian poet boasts that she had, looking up to him, recognized in him a man "equal to god" (in the character's view, the dark-skinned girl thought that the "spirit of a god of fertility had come over her").¹⁸ One can say that Andrukhovich's character who is "nationally aware", unlike Soviet men's character expects from a woman neither reciprocal caress nor love, but he is longing exclusively for satisfying his feelings of hatred towards the "ethnically different" sexual object. As a result, his new national consciousness is free from that existential split from which the Soviet Ukrainian character of Gutsalo's story suffered.

In his novel *Recreations* (1992) Andrukhovich presents a completely different strategy or attitude of men relating towards "ethnically our" women who, in contrast to the "ethnically alien", deserve absolute respect and love. These women are represented in the novel as well as in the poetic works by Andrukhovich through personalities such as the Virgin Mary and Shevchenko's Katerina who symbolize the high values of national culture and women's image of Ukraine. What do Andrukhovich and his characters value the most in the structure and practices of representing women who are "ethnically ours"?

If in the "Babylonian fornicatress" Moscow women are dissipated and degraded beings who, at the same time, are attending the authorities, then in an idyllic and patriarchal Ukraine where, as Andrukhovich expresses it in his poetry, "Christmas brings things mysterious and eternal", the women are exclusively presented through lofty symbolic personalities. It is definitely in Ukraine that, according to Andrukhovich's poetic line, "the image of Mary shines sacredly". This image corresponds to the feminine and tender Ukrainian language for "a gentle nightingale

16 Andrukhovich, *Moskoviada*, see note 12, 26.

17 Andrukhovich, *Moskoviada*, see note 12, 68, Emphasis by the author.

18 Andrukhovich, *Moskoviada*, see note 12, 26.

song” which, in its melodious sound, is the second in the world (!) against which, for Andrukhovich, the “crude” Russian takes the 34th place shared with Mongol and Swahili in its sound (!).¹⁹

However, the main characteristic of Ukrainian women’s subjectivity in the novels by Andrukhovich is a feature of selflessness up to self-sacrifice. Thus, Ukrainian woman is contrasted with the aggressiveness and hostility of the character *katsapki* in the novel *Moskoviada* in whose face man had to desperately stand on his own and defend his sexual identity, while all the strivings of Ukrainian woman are, as it appears in *Recreations*, intended exclusively to support the uncertain subjectivity of the man who is anxious of his intellectual identity.

For instance, in *Recreations* the image of simultaneously sublime and sacrificial Ukrainian woman is embodied in the ideal image of the Ukrainian poet Martoflyak’s wife Marta. Though Marta is a beautiful, educated, and smart woman, no less gifted than her husband, her function in her husband’s intellectual and existential search of identity is emphasized to be secondary in comparison with his search, defeats, and acquisitions. One can assert that, according to Andrukhovich, the primary function of this wonderful woman is to unselfishly support and console her husband. Marta’s husband experiences in the novel a crisis in his intellectual activities and his complex relations with his friends and seeks, much like the young Ukrainian poet in *Moskoviada*, different ways to realize his poetic identity. By turning to traditions of West Ukrainian carnival culture, he undertakes various life and creative experiments, has relations with other women, deceives his wife, etc. The wife has nothing else left than to serve and support him when he comes back home and to stay up late at night waiting for her husband who, exhausted from his daily intellectual battles and defeats, needs her comfort. But exactly this is, as Andrukhovich thinks, what makes her extremely happy.

The mechanism of such an attitude to women is well studied. Its basic regularity follows the conviction that the higher women’s *symbolic* position, the worse is their *real* status. Isn’t the sublime symbolic image of mythological *Bereginya* (a Ukrainian pagan goddess who symbolizes caring and support for the house and family) that is being offered today by nationalist ideology to Ukrainian women very much the same as the old Soviet image which resembles women’s actual catastrophic status in post-communist Ukraine? And finally, isn’t Ukrainian women’s mass impoverishment and the diminution of goods to satisfy the basic needs what Julia Kristeva called “the sado-masochist exploitation of the women”?²⁰ After all, what Michel Foucault described in his *Discipline and Punishment* as the paradoxical functioning of violence in modern culture consists in the fact that symbolic violence

19 Andrukhovich, *Moskoviada*, see note 12, 111.

20 See Julia Kristeva, *Sily uzhasa: esse ob otrashenii* (Pouvoirs de l’horreur. Essai sur l’abjection) (The Powers of Horror. An Essay of Objection), Moscow/Kharkov 2003, 163.

is seen as all-penetrating, and thus more acute and more brutal than direct physical violence.²¹

Conclusion

As a result of this comparative analysis of two different types of man's sexuality and subjectivity we can conclude that, despite their differences, both observed types are shaped within a discourse of Soviet/post-Soviet power in which women's subjectivity was not represented in the form of an independent subject but as an object of violence. The peculiar attitude towards the female in the late Soviet period lay in the fact that the rhetoric of love and respect was hiding the violence that was directed against women. This hidden violence surfaced in the post-Soviet period, when practices of violence against women were aggravated by practices of nationalist and racist violence which led to the escalation of national conflicts. At the same time, the ambivalent attitude was legalized which consisted in idealizing the woman subject as "ethnically ours" which acquired high symbolic status but was, at the same time, reduced to the actual victim.

Therefore, the main question of this article is: Do and can alternative, non-violent logical possibilities for representing man's subjectivity and sexuality exist within the discourse of post-Soviet culture?

21 See Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punishment. The Birth of the Prison*, London et al. 1991 (Reprint).

