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Making post-Soviet counterpublics: the aesthetics of *Limonka* and the National-Bolshevik Party

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This article focuses on the shaping of the aesthetics and ideology of Eduard Limonov's National-Bolshevik Party (NBP) through the pages of the radical newspaper *Limonka*. In order to study the making of the NBP as a political and intellectual community, the piece discusses *Limonka*'s editorial line, its graphic style, and the alternative cultural canon that this radical publication promoted, as well as several interviews with National-Bolshevik activists involved in this process. During its first years of existence, *Limonka* proposed a selection of controversial artistic, literary, and political role models, and the creation of an alternative fashion and lifestyle. The article argues that by provocatively combining totalitarian symbols, the aesthetics and posture of the historical avant-gardes, and Western counterculture, *Limonka* produced a collective narrative that contributed to the shaping of a new language of political protest in post-Soviet Russia. This resulted in a complex combination of *stiob*, a form of parody that involves an over-identification with its own object, and a neo-romantic impulse. This new discursive mode, which the article defines as "post-Soviet militant *stiob*," should be seen as part of a series of tactics of radical resistance to what the National-Bolsheviks saw as the dominant neoliberal discourse of the mid-1990s.

Keywords: Post-Soviet; Limonov; National-Bolshevism; performativity; protest; Russian nationalism

> We have to select people for a new nation. We can call it differently, maybe not "Russians" but, say, "Eurasians" or "Scythians." It doesn't even matter that much, but the new nation should be founded on other principles, not the color of the hair or the eyes, but the courage, the loyalty, and the sense of belonging to our community. We will need children from these new people … This is why we will have to allow many types of family … [and] polygamy, and free love … And the children will be supported and raised by the community … We will teach boys and girls to shoot a grenade launcher, to jump from a helicopter, to besiege villages and cities, to skin sheeps and pigs, to cook good hot food, and to write poetry. There will be sport competitions, wrestling, one-on-one free combat, running, and jumping. They will read the poems of Nikolai Gumilev, and the books of Lev Gumilev. Whole generations will be taught to love the East, according to the precepts of Konstantin Leont'ev. They will learn the beauty of the blue steppe, and the red mountains. And all the vileness of the concrete barracks, and all the vileness of the Moscow slums.
>
> Limonov, *Drugaia Rossiia* (2003, 8)[1]

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Introduction

Modern public life is characterized by the coexistence of a multiplicity of languages, styles, and modes of participation, through which different social groups and individuals can express themselves and contribute to the political life of the community. Publics and counterpublics are, to use Nancy Fraser's definition, "arenas for the enactment of social identities," where these different "styles and languages" of public participation are shaped and negotiated (Fraser 1990, 68–69). Publics are made of specific cultural institutions, journals, common gathering spaces, and canonical books and artworks, which shape and mediate ideologies, and generate different forms of political action. Culture and language are never socially or ideologically neutral. They enable subtle forms of exclusion. In Pierre Bourdieu's terms, "art and cultural consumption are predisposed, consciously and deliberately or not, to fulfill a social function of legitimating social differences" (Bourdieu 1979, transl. 1984, 7). Whereas dominating social groups and ruling classes retain the monopoly on high culture, subaltern counterpublics are "discursive arenas where members of subordinated social groups invent and circulate counterdiscourses, which in turn permit them to formulate oppositional interpretations of their identities, interests, and needs" (Fraser 1990, 67). This is why, according to Fraser, even the existence of counterpublics that promote anti-liberal or antidemocratic ideas can be a good thing in the presence of social inequality, in that "assumptions that were previously exempt from contestation will now have to be publicly argued out … [*and*] the proliferation of subaltern counterpublics means a widening of discursive contestation" (Fraser 1990, 67). In other words, subaltern counterpublics often give voice to disadvantaged, and otherwise voiceless strata of the population, and at the same time create the premises for questioning and rethinking dominant discourses and ideologies.[2]

During the 1990s, after the fall of the Soviet Union and the abrupt shift to an unbridled form of market economy, large strata of the Russian population found themselves deeply impoverished, and at the same time paradoxically deprived (after the democratic movement of the 1980s) of a way of expressing political dissent. "Shock therapy," and what was publicly described as a form of Western liberal democracy, became the banners of the Yeltsin government and the new post-Soviet ruling class. This new leadership, and the new political system that they introduced, could not be called into question, inasmuch as they putatively represented (especially in the eyes of Western observers) the liberation from the yoke of Soviet totalitarianism. In this context, liberal democracy itself could be perceived by disadvantaged and marginalized social groups, and by a suddenly impoverished intelligentsia, as a system imposed from above, and as an ideology aimed at justifying the privileges of the newly formed ruling class.[3] At the same time, in the ideological and symbolic void produced by the collapse of the Soviet Union, and in the absence of a collective project that went beyond passive assimilation of what were perceived to be Western cultural and political values, totalitarian symbols and aesthetics could serve as a catalyst for the creation of alternative publics and communities that resisted mainstream discourses and ideologies.

This article discusses how the creation of a particular radical, totalitarian, and countercultural aesthetics within Eduard Limonov's National-Bolshevik Party (NBP) has contributed to the shaping of new forms, styles, and languages of political dissent in post-Soviet Russia. In order to do so, the article investigates the making of this radical organization, arguably one of the first post-Soviet oppositional and subaltern publics, through the pages of its official newspaper *Limonka*.[4] Scholars have extensively discussed the possibility of defining or classifying the NBP as a fascist or neo-fascist movement.[5] Here, I take a different approach, by studying the emergence of this community from the standpoint

of identity politics and symbolic language. Following Warner's (2002) definition of public discourse as "poetic world-making," I argue that the aesthetics of *Limonka* should be seen as a readaptation of certain themes and devices connected with Limonov's fictional and journalistic writing, and with the making of his literary and public persona. These themes and devices include the individual or collective condition of marginality and periphery, conceived both as geographical periphery, and as periphery of cultural systems and institutions; a provocative display of violence, sexuality, and the body, used as a form of individual and collective rebellion against artistic conventions and social norms; and, finally, a hopeless, desperate, heroic, and quasi-comical (again, individual or collective) protest against cultural, institutional, and economic power, and ultimately, against modernity in its entirety.[6]

In addition, I contend that the aggressive, "anarcho-militaristic" aesthetics[7] of the NBP should be seen as an adaptation of the style and posture of the historical avant-gardes to the post-Soviet political landscape, which the newspaper partly derived from Limonov's own avant-garde stance within the Russian literary system.[8] Finally, I interpret certain aspects of the aesthetics of *Limonka* as a particular kind of *stiob*, the form of parody based on over-identification with its own object that Alexei Yurchak has shown to be a fundamental feature of late Soviet public culture (Yurchak 2006, 2008; Boyer and Yurchak 2010).

According to Yurchak (2006), the ossified, hyper-normalized, and highly citational nature of late Soviet official culture caused its participants to focus on the performative dimension of language rather than on its constative dimension.[9] When members of the last Soviet generation wrote an official document, staged an unauthorized public performance, told a joke, or wrote a satirical poem, Yurchak claims, they did not mean what they said, but they performed a ritual, which confirmed their belonging to a specific group or cultural milieu and defined their identity and value system. This "performative shift" affected both official forms of publicity (the meetings of the *Komsomol*) *and* the cultural production and social life of underground communities that lived outside or "beyond" the boundaries of Soviet official culture.[10] This process also marked the emergence of the discursive genre of *stiob*, which the avant-garde musician and underground performer Sergei Kurekhin has aptly defined as "parasitizing:" "… parasitizing is like looking deep into things – not negating, ridiculing, or judging them, but making visible their internal criteria."[11]

By interpreting *stiob* as a dominant discursive mode in the rhetoric of the early NBP and a subtle tactic of cultural and political resistance, I maintain that the re-appropriation and re-invention of a fascist, and in general totalitarian, aesthetics and ideology within this movement should be seen at the same time as a politically and morally disengaged act of protest (in the spirit of late Soviet underground culture), and as a return to a romanticized utopian ideal of the revolution. At the same time, because the main sphere of activity of the NBP was grassroots politics, and because the NBP adopted a violent and aggressive rhetoric, based on a cult of war, revolution, and masculinity, and oriented toward political action, the making of this radical community marked the emergence of a new, specifically post-Soviet militant mode of collective participation, or a "post-Soviet militant *stiob*."[12] Serguei Oushakine (2000) defines the widespread inability to describe the post-Soviet condition, both "on the personal" and "on the cultural" levels, as "post-Soviet aphasia," and he interprets nostalgic and parasitic uses of the Soviet cultural heritage and aesthetics as a consequence of this symbolic and linguistic void. In the case of the NBP and the newspaper *Limonka*, Soviet and totalitarian cultural symbols were in fact creatively combined in order to produce an alternative post-Soviet "cultural field."

Limonov's literary and political career

Limonov's artistic strategy is largely based on his ability to shape and manipulate his own public persona, mainly through a combination of semi-autobiographical fiction and journalistic writing.[13] After establishing himself as an underground poet in Moscow, Limonov emigrated to the United States in 1974. In New York, he lived as an outcast, shocking public opinion with his indictments of the Russian émigré intelligentsia (and, first and foremost, of Andrey Sakharov and Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn). He publicly denounced the miserable conditions of most Russian immigrants in the US, and protested against Western media for not publishing Russian writers who criticized the Western way of life (Rogachevskii 2003, 29–36). Limonov's first novel, *Eto ia – Edichka* ("It's Me, Eddy," 1979, transl. 1983b), a first-person, matter-of-fact confession about the (mis)adventures of a marginalized Russian émigré, including vivid descriptions of occasional sexual encounters with both women and (mostly strong African-American) men, gained him international success, as well as recognition by the American academic community.[14]

In the 1980s, Limonov moved to Paris, where *Eto ia – Edichka* was first published. Among other things, he collaborated with *L'idiot international*, a controversial publication that proposed a renovation of the French left through a "Red-Brown" ideology, that is, a convergence of nationalist and socialist organizations and ideas. In his articles of this period, he publicly criticized perestroika and, later, the fall of the Soviet Union.[15]

The early 1990s marked a sort of macho-nationalist turn in Limonov's public image. His previous alternative, intellectual meek style was replaced by a black leather jacket, a short haircut, and military boots, which mirrored his new personal cult of strength, war, and masculinity. In this period, Limonov traveled to several war zones in former Yugoslavia, Pridnestrov'e, and Abkhazia. As he claims in his own memoir, he was deeply fascinated by "war people" and by war itself, which he saw as a formative and beautiful experience (Limonov, *Moia politicheskaia biografiia*, 2002, 17). In 1992, he appeared in Pawel Pawlikowski's BBC documentary *Serbian Epics*, where he was shown casually chatting with the Bosnian Serb politician Radovan Karadžić and his militia, and then firing a machine gun in the direction of Sarajevo. The documentary caused outrage in the international community, further contributing to Limonov's highly controversial image[16].

In post-Soviet Russia, where Limonov returned and was first published in the early 1990s, his public persona became paradoxically associated both with the anti-Yeltsin "national-patriotic opposition" (and with a certain form of nostalgia for the Soviet past) *and* with newly acquired forms of personal, cultural, and sexual freedom. The first major work by Limonov to be published in Russia, *U nas velikaia epokha* ("The Great Epoch," 1994) depicted the rosy, everyday aspects of the Stalin era through the story of Limonov's own childhood in a provincial Soviet town. The second, *Eto ia – Edichka*, which was a literary sensation, was one of the first books published in post-Soviet Russia that explicitly dealt with the theme of homosexual desire.[17] Iaroslav Mogutin, the young openly gay journalist, performance artist, and poet, who effectively introduced Limonov to the Russian public,[18] was repeatedly prosecuted for explicitly writing about homosexuality, for trying to officially register in Moscow his wedding with his male partner, and, at the same time, for writing fiercely nationalist articles about the war in Chechnya (Gessen 1997, 165–185; Essig 1999, 3–25, 123–161). Aleksandr Shatalov's publishing house Glagol, which published Limonov's works, specialized in transgressive, countercultural, and queer authors, including James Baldwin, William Burroughs, and Evgenii Kharitonov. As Laurie Essig points out in discussing Glagol's editorial line:

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> Baldwin, Burroughs, Kharitonov, and Limonov share neither a common language nor a common culture nor historical moment. Instead, what is present in all four authors is a recognizable (at least to a Russian reader) concept of queer male sexuality. This sexuality is neither bounded nor fixed. It is not an identity, but a practice. The characters are not "either gay or straight" but both, or neither. (Essig 1999, 95)

While cultivating this transgressive image, Limonov also actively sought alliance with such nationalist and conservative political leaders as Vladimir Zhirinovsky and Aleksandr Barkashov, and with the leader of the nostalgic communist movement *Trudovaia Rossiia* ("Working Russia") Viktor Anpilov (Limonov, *Anatomiia geroia*, 1997, 125–154; *Moia Politicheskaia biografiia*, 2002, 5–72).[19]

The eclectic, multifaceted nature of Limonov's public persona is reflected in the aesthetics and ideology of the NBP, which has become, one might argue, the quintessential post-Soviet revolutionary movement.[20] After shocking Russian public opinion with their violent nationalist slogans and their calls for Stalinist repressions, during the 2000s, the *natsboly* (as the National-Bolshevik activists are commonly called in Russia) became among the most vocal opponents of Putin's government, they allied themselves with the liberals, and they were in fact considered a leftist organization.[21] After spending two years in prison between 2001 and 2003 on charges of armed revolt and illegal arms trading, in 2006, Limonov became one of the leaders and founders, along with Garry Kasparov and Mikhail Kasyanov, of the large anti-Putin coalition *Drugaia Rossiia* ("The Other Russia," or "Another Russia"), and the young *natsboly* came to be known as a sort of street avant-garde of the Russian liberal opposition.[22] In 2009, Limonov and his followers were the initiators of "Strategy-31," a series of protests held in front of the monument to Mayakovsky in Triumphal Square in Moscow on the 31st day of every month. During these rallies, protesters claimed the right to peaceful assembly formally guaranteed by article 31 of the Russian constitution, but in fact denied by the Russian police, who regularly forcefully removed and arrested the protesters, in what soon became a sort of ritual of Russian politics. Strategy-31 was supported and joined by several prominent figures in the Russian dissident and human rights movements, including Liudmila Alekseeva, Lev Ponomarev, and Vladimir Bukovskii, and it reclaimed the legacy of the Soviet dissidents (Horvath 2015).

During the Moscow mass protests of 2011–2012, Limonov gradually isolated himself and his followers from the opposition movement, due to disagreements about its ideological orientation and political strategies. In this period, he started to publish harsh indictments of the "Moscow liberal intelligentsia" on his Facebook page and his blog on LiveJournal.[23] Subsequently, Limonov became a more acceptable figure for the Russian establishment as a consequence of his support for Putin's annexation of Crimea and the separatist movement in Eastern Ukraine. Because of this shift, on 31 May 2014, for the first time in five years, Strategy-31, now renamed "rally in support of Donbass," was officially authorized by the Russian authorities.[24]

The aesthetics of Limonka and the National-Bolshevik Party

While the NBP borrowed several themes and techniques from Limonov's literary works, the development of the aesthetics and ideology of this organization should be considered the result of a collective effort. First, the emergence of this community can be explained as a consequence of the appearance of a new readership for Limonov's fiction and poetry in Russia at the beginning of the 1990s. During Limonov's meeting with the public in the concert hall at the TV studios in Ostankino in 1992, a young *neformal* (that is, a member of the Soviet cultural underground, or a young person who refuses the

conventions of Soviet official culture) stood up, dressed all in black, and, quoting a passage from Limonov's early avant-garde poem *My – natsional'nyi geroi* ("We are the national hero," 1977), proposed to start an organization of followers and admirers of the writer.[25]

This was not an uncommon reaction to Limonov's work and public image. In fact, many of the members of the older generation of *natsboly* that I interviewed, most of whom were adolescents at the time, recalled deciding to join the party because they were attracted by Limonov's writing style, as well as by his demeanor and by the way he dressed. For instance, when I interviewed her in the spring of 2015, Katia, 35, a former member of the NBP and a doctoral student in political science, recalled how, when she joined the party in the mid-1990s, she was particularly attracted by the "socialist tendency" of *Limonka*, and by a "strange nostalgia for the Soviet past," which was conveyed through "a new and original language." Although she was a leftist, at the time Katia found the fascist and totalitarian aesthetics of the NBP very appealing. Limonov's "good taste," she claimed, allowed him to create an "accomplished aesthetics," which attracted to the party many "creative people, writers, and artists." Another early member of the NBP, Kirill, 42, now a journalist and an amateur photographer, recalled seeing Limonov for the first time at a public event in Moscow in 1989. First and foremost, Kirill said, he was struck by Limonov's attitude, by the new and simple way in which he talked and interacted with the public, and by the way he dressed ("all in black and with a bright red shirt"), which was so different from that of the other journalists, congressmen, and members of the Soviet nomenklatura who participated in the event. Limonov's short stories and books, Kirill added, made an impression on him because they were written in a "different language," so far from the Soviet literary style he had been used to.

In a sense, the shaping of the NBP as an artistic and political counterpublic is related to the development of Limonov's public persona, and to his reception among the Russian public in the very specific political and cultural context of the early 1990s. At the same time, the making of this community should be seen as the result of the convergence of a diverse range of cultural and ideological formations, and of the collective creative effort of a group of artists, intellectuals, and political thinkers who tried to develop an alternative to what they perceived as a hegemonic, all-encompassing, and oppressive neoliberal discourse after the political crisis of 1993.

The NBP was registered in September 1994, only one year after the siege of the Russian parliament of October 1993. Beyond Eduard Limonov, the founders of the party included the radical right-wing philosopher Aleksandr Dugin, today internationally known as the leader of the Eurasia movement, and commonly described by Western commentators and journalists as a sort of ideological mastermind behind Putin's regime; Taras Rabko, then a law student and a fan of Limonov; and Egor Letov, the lead singer of the legendary Soviet underground punk band *Grazhdanskaia oborona* ("Civil Defense"). Limonov and Dugin, who acted, respectively, as the political leader and the ideologue of the party, conceived the NBP as a combination of radical right-wing and left-wing ideologies, supporting a nationalist and imperialist foreign policy, together with strong social welfare and equal distribution of wealth. The emblem of the party was taken from the back cover of *Ischeznovenie varvarov* ("The Disappearance of the Barbarians," 1992), a tongue-in-cheek science fiction essay, written in the mid-1980s, in which Limonov imagined the nefarious consequences of the sudden disappearance of the Soviet Union from the geopolitical landscape.

The symbol of the NBP, an encircled black hammer and sickle on a red background, evoked Nazi and Soviet aesthetics in a very immediate and somewhat uncanny way (Figure 1). The poet, visual artist, performer, and queer activist Iaroslav Mogutin proposed

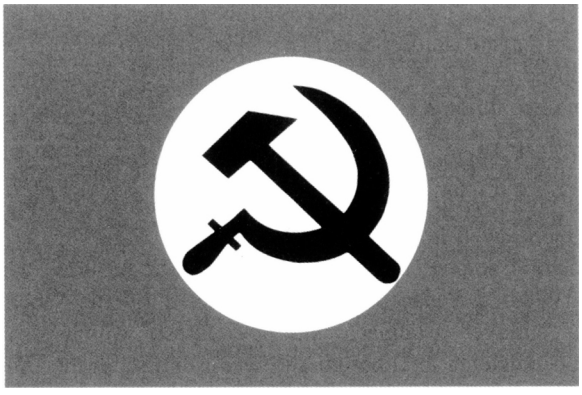

Figure 1. The symbol of the NBP.

the name for the party newspaper, borrowing it from Limonov's above-mentioned poem *My – natsional'nyi geroi* ("We are the national hero," 1977): "Any kind of clothes that Limonov wears become the clothes of the national hero./ T-shirts – limonovki/ socks and shirts – limonki/ Jackets – limon./ haircuts – ailimonov." The graphic designer Konstantin Chuvashev, at the time one of Aleksandr Dugin's closest "disciples," drew the masthead for the newspaper, including the iconic hand grenade that became the symbol of the movement after the NBP was legally banned in 2007 (Figure 2). In creating *Limonka*'s distinct graphic style, Chuvashev was inspired by various forms of political art, including Soviet constructivism and the Dutch school of graphic design of the 1920s and 1930s. When I interviewed him, Chuvashev claimed that, beyond his political convictions, as a beginning graphic designer, he was particularly enthusiastic about participating in the creation of *Limonka*, because this experience gave him the opportunity to experiment with a wide range of styles and political symbols.[26]

In both its graphics and its content, from the large squared print of the masthead to the photomontages by John Heartfield and Aleksandr Rodchenko that periodically appeared on the first page of several issues of the newspaper, as well as through the selection of its

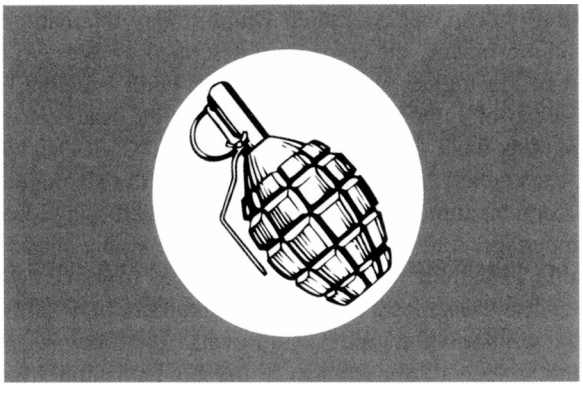

Figure 2. The symbol of *Drugaia Rossiia* ("The Other Russia"). "The Other Russia" became the name of Limonov's party in 2010, 3 years after the NBP was legally banned (see footnote 22). At the time, the original party symbol also became illegal, and it was replaced by the hand grenade from the masthead of the party newspaper *Limonka*.

Figure 3. Covers of *Limonka*.

historical role models, *Limonka* reproduced the aggressive and direct style of the Soviet propaganda of the 1920s and 1930s, what in Russian one would call "*plakatnaia estetika*" ("the aesthetics of the political poster").[27] Party slogans – provocative, politically incorrect, sometimes ironic – were printed vertically in big letters on the right side of the first page of each issue of *Limonka*, creating a sort of visual history of the party line through the covers of its newspaper (Figure 3). Each issue contained one of Limonov's now famous political articles or "*limonki*," verbal hand grenades aimed at political opponents, intellectuals, government leaders, and even the Russian intelligentsia in its entirety.[28]

Limonov contributed significantly to the creation of the political and literary canon of the newspaper, and to its conception of history, by authoring, under the pseudonym of Colonel Ivan Chernyi, a series of articles about a diverse range of historical topics, such as: the Beer Hall Putsch and the rise of Hitler in Germany; Italian radical right-wing and left-wing terrorist groups from the 1970s, and the Red Brigades in particular; the rise of fascism in Italy; Stalin's youth, and Lenin's ideas about nationalism.[29] A similar eclectic editorial line was also reflected in the cultural topics addressed in *Limonka* in its first years of existence, and in the role models chosen by its contributors, which included Louis Ferdinand Céline, William Burroughs, Jean Genet, Herbert Marcuse, Ernesto Che Guevara, and Guy Debord. Articles about even more extravagant "rebels" and "anti-systemic" figures, like Arnold Schwarzenegger and Charles Manson, also made their appearance in the newspaper.[30]

The very first article published in *Limonka*, Aleksandr Dugin's *Novye protiv starykh* ("The new against the old"), while mainly referring to recent developments in the Russian nationalist camp, evoked the style and cultural stance of Italian or Russian futurist manifestoes. According to Dugin, a "schism on matters of style" occurred within the patriotic opposition. For him, much more important than the distinction between left and right, or between communists or monarchists, was the distinction between old and new opposition, or between old and new patriots. The "old," Dugin claimed, are fundamentally oriented toward the past; they are reactionary, and they always support the maintenance of the status quo, or the restoration of a past system or regime – no matter whether embodied in the USSR, socialism, or the Russian empire. They respect power, but "more than everything they keep in high consideration the 'mechanism of power,' a structure, organization, or system … because in their spirit they are bureaucrats … they are not revolutionary, but 'conservative reformers,' or, more simply put, just conservatives." The "new," on the other hand, are revolutionaries, and, Dugin wrote:

> regardless of their political view, be it communism, monarchism, or Russian fascism, they conceive the rise of a new society as a deeply revolutionary process, as a new creative construction,

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> as a dangerous and dramatic genesis. Their aim is to build something new, and it doesn't matter if this is going to be a "new communism" or a "new Empire."[31]

The representatives of this new form of opposition were to be found, Dugin continued, among outcasts, radicals, and passionate extremists. These included volunteers fighting in Transnistria, Abkhazia, and Serbia, members of radical right-wing and left-wing groups who participated in violent confrontations with the authorities, non-conformist artists, "anarchist rockers and nihilist punks," "fanatical idealists and crazy romantics," and, finally, mystics and "seekers of religious truth through radical experience." In Dugin's view, among these marginal groups one would find the future members of a new intellectual "counter-elite," which would be able to lead Russia out of its current ideological and spiritual crisis.[32]

Through the establishment of a new historical, political, and literary canon, Dugin, Limonov, and the other "founding fathers" of the NBP aimed at creating a new intelligentsia, which could somehow resist and propose alternatives to what they considered to be the dominant neoliberal and blindly pro-Western rhetoric of Russian mainstream culture. The "style" of this new radical intellectual elite was also reflected in the way in which NBP activists were supposed to dress, combining Soviet military clothing and accessories, allusions to Nazi and neo-Nazi aesthetics, and various Western punk movements. Suggestions about fashion, drawings, collages, and photographs displaying the ideal National-Bolshevik dress code appeared in the pages of *Limonka* in the mid-1990s. This "new style" was closely linked to the beginnings of Russian alternative fashion and club culture during the late 1980s and early 1990s. Some of the early issues of *Limonka*, for instance, published a series of photographs of boys and girls in an urban setting wearing military boots and hats, and black clothing, followed by somewhat ironic and provocative captions, like "A healthy fashion for a healthy idea!" And, "Strength and sophistication, fury and a prayer for mercy: the new fashion starts here" (see Figures 4–7).

These photographs were part of a photo session of the latest collection by the "Polushkin Brothers," who were among the pioneers of Russian alternative fashion. The Polushkins' collection, called *Fash-Fashion*, was supposed to reflect the apocalyptic atmosphere of the first post-Soviet years, and Nikolai Polushkin's own "presentment of a dictatorship." The author of the photos was the young photographer Laura Il'ina, who was close to Limonov and other National-Bolshevik leaders:

> We did the shootings on that bridge and somewhere else…With those Dr. Martens boots. Dr. Martens were, you know, they used to wear them in Germany, and they are made in the style of fascist, of Nazi uniforms; while the clothes were … On the one hand men wore silk skirts … It was a sort of mix of toughness and tenderness, and the idea was that, well, that 'soon the fascists will come!' [*laughs*] … Intuitively I kind of understood him [*Nikolai Polushkin*]. He wanted to shoot a sort of fantasy on the theme of the future, in the style of [*George Orwell's*] 1984, a totalitarian fantasy of sorts. This wasn't in any way related to the party. Limonov just really liked the photos, and he asked them for *Limonka* …[33]

At the beginning, the party "style" and dress code were largely determined by Limonov's own tastes, and they were closely linked with the emergence of Russian urban subcultures. At this early stage, no more than 10 people were involved in the publication of *Limonka.* Limonov, as the founder and editor-in-chief, was still completely in charge of the editorial line, and he authored most of the collective articles, announcements, political programs, and declarations published in the newspaper.[34] The National-Bolshevik aesthetics was at this point still largely the product of Limonov's, and partly Dugin's, imagery. Later on, by the beginning of the 2000s, when the party became a real political entity with thousands of members in Moscow, Saint Petersburg, and throughout Russia,

Figure 4. "The New Style I." *Limonka* 4: Dec. 1994. Photo: Laura Il'ina.

Figure 5. "The New Style II." *Limonka* 4: Dec 1994. Photo: Laura Il'ina.

the National-Bolsheviks developed their own distinct style somewhat independently (Limonov, *Moia politicheskaia biografiia*, 2002, 238–240).

Through Dugin's first programmatic article, and consistently throughout the pages of *Limonka* in its first years of existence, the NBP was conceived as an artistic and political avant-garde, aptly defined by Mike Sell as "a minoritarian formation that challenges

Figure 6. "Strength and sophistication, fury and a prayer for mercy: the new fashion starts here." *Limonka* 5: Jan. 1995. Photo: Laura Il'ina.

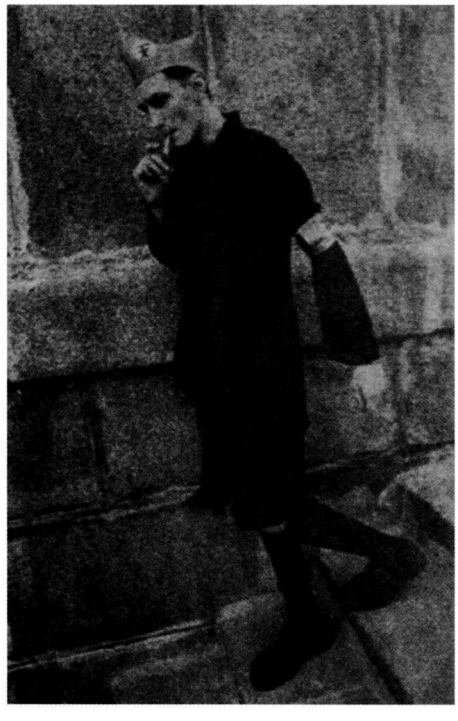

Figure 7. "A healthy fashion for a healthy idea!" *Limonka* 5: Jan. 1995. Photo: Laura Il'ina.

power in subversive, illegal or alternative ways, usually by challenging the routines, assumptions, hierarchies and/or legitimacy of political and/or cultural institutions" (2011, 41). This was a conscious choice, as is proven by a call for submissions laconically entitled *Action*, published in *Limonka* in August 1995:

> Each revolution needs its independent and aggressive visual space: the Italian "Fasci" had futurism; the French leftists had the Dada movement; the Bolsheviks had the great posters of Mayakovsky, and the daring constructions of Tatlin. *Limonka* calls for submissions by Russian art-revolutionaries who wish to participate in the creation of a new, invincible art.[35]

The NBP returned to the aggressive, provocative, and shocking gestures of the avant-gardes by appropriating, re-adapting, and combining symbols, aesthetics, and ideas belonging to Soviet culture (mainly of the 1920s and 1930s), German fascism, and radical European terrorist movements of the 1970s, in addition to various Western countercultural movements, ranging from the student protests of the 1960s and 1970s, to various punk groups of the 1980s. That is, from the point of view of Russian society and intelligentsia of the mid-1990s, possibly the most unacceptable and morally unjustifiable combination of cultural categories.

Such provocative selection of radical role models should not be interpreted literally (or not exclusively literally), but as part of a new post-Soviet performative mode of political dissent. The style of *Limonka* was mostly paradoxical and sarcastic. An explicit example of this was the satirical section of the paper, which was entitled *Smachno pomer* – "he died in a vivid way" or, literally, "he died in a juicy way," and included such news as: "Underage Girl Rapes Retired Old Man;" "He Ran into Yeltsin and Got Scared;" "A Foreign Person Was Eaten by the Mafia;" "Solzhenitsyn Died After Being Bitten by a Snake at the Zoo (the One at the Metro Station 'Year 1905 Street');" and, finally, the following "recipe" to solve the problem of unemployment, entitled "He Who Does Not Work, Will Be Eaten" ("*Kto ne rabotaet – togo ediat*"):[36]

> Canned unemployed. The unemployed is a parasite, a completely inept member of society: he is not able to open his own business, and he can't work for somebody else. One would think that the unemployed is just a waste, a defective piece. But even these individuals can serve capitalist society. In the form of food. The preparation is simple. Cut off the heads, wash, gut, and boil a couple of hours, so that all the meat separates from the bones, and let cool down. Add nitrates, salt, calcium bicarbonate … Wonderful color labels can be ordered from Austria. How to call it? Here are a few possibilities: "Humanitarians;" "Humanitarian Breakfast;" "Humanitarian Help."[37]

The passage was a harsh and dark satire of the capitalist system and its periodic crises, which during the 1990s left behind and condemned entire sections of the Russian population to poverty and horrible deprivations. The proposed names for the labels polemically alluded to the food parcels marked "humanitarian aid," which invaded Moscow markets after the fall of the Soviet Union, and which soon came to be perceived as a gloomy symbol of the "collateral damage" produced by the adoption of an unregulated capitalist system in post-Soviet Russia. Incidentally, the style of *Limonka*'s satirical section evoked that of another non-conformist author recently published and re-discovered in Russia – Daniil Kharms, whose famous sketches reflected with similar tragic irony on the absurdity and brutality of everyday life during the Stalinist period. Kharms, whose fiction and diaries were published by Shatalov's publishing house Glagol soon after *Eto ia – Edichka*, was also an important literary model for Limonov's poetry, and was soon included in *Limonka*'s literary canon.[38]

For the old guard of the NBP, *stiob* and performativity, along with a return to the provocative stance of the historical avant-gardes, were at the same time part of an artistic strategy and a form of political action. One of the first issues of *Limonka* contained, almost as an homage or declaration of kinship, an interview with the members of the Slovenian experimental rock band *Laibach*, widely considered pioneers in the complex use of symbols and stylistic features of totalitarian (both fascist and communist) regimes, which produced in their performances a sort of sublime simultaneous combination of attraction, repulsion, and ironic detachment.[39] Furthermore, the avant-garde musician and performer Sergei Kurekhin himself, widely known in Russia for having proven to TV audiences in May of 1991 that Lenin was a mushroom (!), was an early supporter of the NBP. Before dying suddenly

of a rare heart disease, Kurekhin supported Dugin's candidacy for the Russian parliament in one of Saint Petersburg's districts, writing a musical piece for the occasion, and organizing his campaign under the enigmatic slogan "*Tainoe stanet iavnym*" ("What is concealed will be revealed"). Famously, both Dugin and Limonov participated in the last carnivalesque performance of Kurekhin's Pop-Mekhanika[40] (Figure 8).

Dugin was also clearly conscious of the ironic, ambiguous, and provocative side of this political project, for he was also part of a similar culture of late Soviet and early post-Soviet underground artistic and literary circles (see Laruelle 2015). In an interview about his political campaign in Saint Petersburg published in *Limonka* in 1995, Dugin wrote about his meetings and exchanges with Saint Petersburg underground artists and intellectuals – including Sergey Bugaev, Vladlen Gavril'chik, Timur Novikov, and the poetic circle of the *Mit'ki* – who in their turn expressed a keen interest in *Limonka* and National-Bolshevism.[41]

In the spirit of the French situationists, Dugin (and the other founders of the NBP) called for an alliance between radical politics and certain forms of art, and, art performance in particular. In an enthusiastic review of a performance by the art group Sever ("The North"), for instance, Dugin hailed the foundation of what he considered a genuinely Eurasian art through the combination of contemporary forms (such as techno music, body art, and post-modern ballet) with the return to and creation of Aryan myths, mystical rituals, and religious cults. The purpose of the National-Bolsheviks' political struggle, Dugin wrote in this article, was to create a world in the image and likeness of a performance by the art group Sever.[42]

In a later article devoted to Guy Debord's suicide, which he interpreted as marking the final triumph of the society of the spectacle in the Western capitalist world, Dugin called even more explicitly for the creation of a post-Soviet "situationism," metaphorically embodied in an "eternal return" to the siege of the Ostankino TV tower:

> We have to go back to Ostankino, again and again. With those who are alive and those who died. With Guy Debord. That sinister tower – that Satan's phallus, generating the poisonous hypnosis of the 'society of the spectacle.' Blowing it up, we castrate the demon of violence hiding behind the decrepit masks of the brezhnevs, the gorbachevs, the gaidars, the yeltsins, the ziuganovs [*sic*], and the other puppets of the systems. And the eternal spectacle will finally end.[43]

The presence of Egor Letov, the lead singer of the pioneering Soviet punk band *Grazhdanskaia oborona* ("Civil Defense"), among the "founding fathers" of the NBP

Figure 8. Fragments from: Sergey Kurekhin. "Pop-mekhanika № 418." 1995.
Source: YouTube. 12 May 2012.

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symbolically marked the continuity between the National-Bolshevik anti-liberal agenda and the late Soviet underground, rock, and anarchist movements.[44] Among other things, Letov contributed to the definition of the party line by publishing in *Limonka* an interview and a long, two-part "creative-political autobiography." Here, he described his career as an underground artist, his struggle against Soviet authorities, and his subsequent forced internment in a psychiatric institution. He then related how he decided to get involved in politics as a consequence of the political stagnation that followed the 1991 coup and the 1993 siege of the White House.

According to Letov, during the 1980s, the artistic method of *Grazhdanskaia Oborona*, based on futurist shock tactics, and the absurd conceived as "the principle of maximal rebellion toward logical reality," had quite naturally turned into political activity in the form of criticism of Soviet institutions. Referring to the necessary alliance between the punk movement and radical right- and left-wing groups, Letov now imagined the creation of a new utopian civilization of artists, poets, and heroes, which he described as a "young force" that would be able to deliver the finishing blow to a dying Western civilization.[45]

Sexuality and the body also played a crucial role in the making of the aesthetics and ideology of the NBP. Throughout the years, *Limonka* published both provocative and exaggeratedly macho (to the point of verging on the absurd) calls for promiscuity and the end of monogamous relationships among party members, and articles promoting the return to patriarchy and traditional values.[46] As in the case of ideology, also in the sphere of social politics the NBP developed what might be seen as a fluid position or identity. In the early issues of *Limonka*, this stance was mirrored in an ironic play on gender roles and identities that one would definitely not expect from a nationalist publication. For instance, Iaroslav Mogutin, who was a close friend of Limonov and one of the founders the paper, authored in its first issue a ferocious indictment of Russian intellectuals, significantly entitled "Without intellectuals. Utopia" ("*Bez intelligentov. Utopia*"). In the article, which is still famous among several generations of *natsboly*, Mogutin defined Russian intellectuals as "flabby and childish beings, with greasy hair and rotten teeth, who inhabit dark, smoky, and moldy lodgings, are absolutely useless and meaningless, but have an opinion about everything."[47] A situation in which intellectuals occupy positions of power was to be considered "dangerous" and "unacceptable," Mogutin claimed. He then proposed a series of "theses," prescribing how to deal with Russian intellectuals, who, according to him, "should live in perpetual fear," who should not be allowed to have a family or to publish, whose movements should be limited, and who, finally, should either be assimilated or annihilated as a social class.[48]

The shocking, uncategorizable stance of Mogutin's article will also become a sort of trademark of *Limonka*, and, in turn, of what could be defined as a sort of "style of behavior" of the National-Bolshevik activists. In his indictment of the Russian intelligentsia and, indirectly, in his call to create a new community of radical intellectuals, Mogutin also introduced two fundamental elements or themes that the National-Bolshevik aesthetics and ideology partly inherited from Limonov's work: the juxtaposition of periphery (or marginality) and the center (of power, the country, or the cultural or literary system); and the crucial role played by the body in determining aesthetic and moral categories. Mogutin's hatred toward Russian intellectuals, as he himself explained in the article, came from his belonging to another class, and from the fact that he grew up in a family of workers from the Russian province. Furthermore, Mogutin's criticism is first and foremost physical and aesthetic, that is, the passivity and backwardness of the *intelligent* is mirrored by his/her physical weakness and repulsiveness. Finally, Mogutin's cult of youth, masculinity, working-class values, and political and totalitarian violence against what is described as

a conformist, stereotypical, and fundamentally powerless intelligentsia, is possibly even more difficult to define or classify according to traditional political categories, if one considers that Mogutin was one of the first openly gay public figures in post-Soviet Russia.

The singer, writer, and model Nataliia Medvedeva, Limonov's third wife and herself a cult figure for NBP activists in the 1990s, authored a series of short and provocative articles that appeared to aim at producing in the reader a similar form of "estrangement."[49] For instance, in her "Ode to the Russian *muzhik*," also published in one of the first issues of *Limonka*, she wrote:

> I want to be a Russian *muzhik*, to occupy two seats in the metro at the same time, spreading my legs very-very wide … I want to be a Russian *muzhik*, in order to swear at everyone, pick on everyone, and just not do a damn thing, and drink away my underdeveloped skills in front of the TV … I want to be a Russian *muzhik*, in order to wipe them all out – communists and democrats, fascists and faggots, prostitutes and racketeers – close the borders and finally live in peace.[50]

By playing with gender categories and stereotypes, Medvedeva also produced an ironic and ambiguous message, through which she both endorsed and undermined some of the values that the newspaper was supposed to promote, namely nationalism and masculinity.

This way of embracing paradox in fact came to be a trademark, a philosophy of life, and a code of behavior of the NBP activist. As a sign of this, at the end of 1995, *Limonka* published a sort of handbook of the perfect National-Bolshevik, which explicitly elevated this style and behavior to a moral ideal:

> The National-Bolshevik is that person who will bring death to radical-right, and radical left-wing ideologies. The National-Bolshevik is their dialectic sublation, and negation… The National-Bolshevik is a person who hates the system, and its lies, alienation, conformism, and stupidity, but he is able to immerse himself in it, to assimilate it, to then destroy it from the inside. This is a person who loves the paradox and "sublation" (*preodolenie*); discipline and freedom, spontaneity and calculation, erudition and inspiration. He is against the dogma, but for authority; he is against external limitations, but he is capable of a strict self-control… [51]

This quotation captures what can be considered a fundamental duality in the aesthetics and ideology of *Limonka* and the NBP. On the one hand, we have the "avant-garde posture," the taste for the aggressive and shocking gesture, which often took the form of harsh attacks and derision of any cultural and political institution or hegemonic group. On the other hand, we see a return to a utopian romantic ideal belonging, in very different forms, to both the Soviet system in various stages of its existence, and German fascism (here embodied in the image of a new man), which was employed to call into question what during the 1990s the *natsboly* saw as a cultural and stylistic "liberal dictatorship."[52] The totalitarian aesthetics adopted by *Limonka* and the NBP, and their celebration of war and world revolution (as well as a new conception of nationality), assumed very unexpected meanings, and helped form a new collective identity and sense of belonging to a community, in the midst of the cultural, moral, and ideological void produced by the fall of the Soviet Union.

Conclusion

In her 1975 article "Fascinating Fascism," Susan Sontag explained the interest and fascination of American culture with Nazi aesthetics (both in New York high-brow intellectual circles, and in gay subcultures) by laying bare some of the values that such aesthetics surreptitiously evoked:

> … it is generally thought that National Socialism stands only for brutishness and terror. But this is not true. National Socialism – or, more broadly, fascism – also stands for an ideal, and one

> that is also persistent today, under other banners: the ideal of life as art, the cult of beauty, the fetishism of courage, the dissolution of alienation in ecstatic feelings of community; the repudiation of the intellect; the family of man (under the parenthood of leaders). (Sontag 1975)

Sontag's words capture some of the fundamental elements of the revolutionary or subversive potential of fascism (and of its popular appeal) as the response to a utopian and romantic impulse, aimed at a complete and quasi-mystical regeneration of society. In May 1995, *Limonka* asked its readers to send the newspaper their own personal definition of the word "fascism." Some of these definitions clearly resonate with Sontag's article, and they can help in understanding what the return to a totalitarian aesthetics could mean for the members of this radical community: "Fascism is active pessimism; fascism is leftist nationalism; fascism is social romanticism; … the futuristic impulse; … the will to die; … the celebration of a heroic style; … anarchism plus totalitarianism; … the loyalty to the sources, and the aspiration to the future."[53] These definitions suggest that in the early issues of *Limonka* totalitarian symbols and ideas were used to signify both a radical form of protest against the current political system, and the return to a romantic and utopian conception of art and politics.

In the pages of *Limonka*, and in general within the intellectual and political community built around the NBP, fascist and totalitarian aesthetics and ideas were used to produce a futurist-like "slap in the face of the public taste" (or a form of Shklovskian "estrangement"[54]), and to call into question mainstream cultural and political values. At the same time, these political symbols reflected a return to the romantic impulse (as well as to the artistic values) of the early Soviet period. The aesthetics of the NBP, and the collective narrative produced by its official newspaper *Limonka* throughout the 1990s, should be considered the result of this complex and paradoxical combination of *stiob* and dark humor, and the return to what was seen as the original utopian spirit of the Russian revolution.

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Notes

1. Unless otherwise indicated, all translations are my own.
2. On publics and counterpublics, and the evolution of the debate on the public sphere toward the concept of "multiplicity," see also Cody (2011). See also Spivak (1988), Felski (1989), Calhoun (1992), Taylor (1995), Benhabib (1996), Asen (2000), and Warner (2002).
3. For a general introduction to post-Soviet history and politics during the Yeltsin era, see Medvedev (2000) and McFaul (2001).
4. *Limonka* is a slang name for a hand grenade, and a play on words on Limonov's own pseudonym, also derived from the word *limon*, that is, "lemon."
5. See Shenfield (2001), Umland (2002), and Mathyl (2002, 2007a, 2007b). In their definition of the NBP as a "fascist" movement, Umland and Mathyl employs Griffin's concepts of "uncivil society," "groupuscular new right," and of "a fascist minimum," applicable to any "political ideology whose mythic core in its various permutations is a palingenetic form of ultra-nationalism" (Griffin 1991, 26, 2003). For a debate about the effectiveness and the heuristic value of this approach, see Gregor and Umland (2004–2005) and Gregor (2006).
6. As an example of the development of such themes and motifs, see Limonov's semi-autobiographical novels *Eto ia – Edichka* (*It's Me, Eddie* 1979, transl. 1983a), *Dnevnik neudachnika* ("Diary of a Looser," 1982), *U nas byla velikaia epokha* ("The Great Epoch," 1994), *Podrostok Savenko* (*Memoir of a Russian Punk* 1983b, transl. 1990), and *Molodoi negodiai* ("The Young Scoundrel," 1986).

7. Here, I am borrowing the expression that the writer Zakhar Prilepin, also a member of the NBP, used to describe the aesthetics of the movement when I interviewed him in the summer of 2013. See Zakhar Prilepin, Personal Interview, 8 August 2013.
8. On Limonov's fiction, see, among others, Kron (1979), Matich (1986), Ryan-Hayes (1988, 1993, 1995), Simmons (1993), Golynko-Volfson (2002), Rogachevskii (2003), Chantsev (2009), and Wakamiya (2009).
9. Yurchak's argument is based on Austin's (1962) theory of performativity.
10. See Yurchak (2006), 126–157. Yurchak defines "living *vnye*," or, "living beyond," as a widespread condition in late Soviet society, described as being at the same time "outside" and "inside" the system, formally and performatively participating in its rituals, while providing them with new, personal, and unexpected meanings. At the same time, Yurchak takes as an example of "living *vnye*" the life of various late Soviet underground communities, including the Necrorealists, the Leningrad underground poetic circle of the *Mit'ki*, and the Moscow conceptualists. While Yurchak claims that the performative character of late Soviet public life in fact caused the Soviet system to collapse, an interesting question that such discussion raises is whether in the context of these communities "being *vnye*" might be also in part seen as an active form of cultural and political resistance.
11. Interview quoted in Yurchak (2011, 328).
12. In an article that I discovered when this piece was already in production, Mischa Gabowitsch (2009) describes various forms of "fascist *stiob*" in Russia, including the NBP, as a way of compensating for the impossibility " …to express political dissent or social critique in straightforward, politically constructive ways, through party competition and public debate" (8). Gabowitsch also draws on Yurchak's discussion of late Soviet performativity. More recently, *stiob* has been seen as a central component of Russian political culture in general, and of Russian nationalism and conservatism in particular (See Hemment 2015, Noordenbos 2016, 111–143). Here, I look at the origins and cultural underpinnings of this specifically post-Soviet mode of collective participation.
13. On the making of Limonov's public persona, see, in particular, Golynko-Volfson (2002), Rogachevskii (2003), Chantsev (2009), and Wakamiya (2009). Limonov's very eventful life has recently become the subject of Emmanuel Carrère's bestseller fictional biography *Limonov*, published in France in 2011 (transl. 2014), and now translated into over 20 languages. Interestingly, Carrère's book is mostly based on Limonov's own semi-autobiographical novels (see Prilepin 2012).
14. See Kron (1979), Matich and Heim (1984), Carden (1984), Matich (1986), Ryan-Hayes (1988, 1993, 1995), and Simmons (1993). Carden significantly defined *Eto ia – Edichka* " … the quintessential novel of the Russian third wave emigration" (1984, 221).
15. See Limonov *Inostranets v smutnoe vremia (1992)* 2007, *Ischeznovenie varvarov* 1992, *Ubiistvo chasovogo: Stat'i* 1993, *Anatomiia geroia* 1997, and Limonov's articles for *L'idiot international*, available online: http://www.limonow.de/download/download.html (last accessed April 19, 2016).
16. After Limonov's "nationalist turn," the attitude of Western scholars and intellectuals toward his work changed drastically. As an example of this, see Gessen (2003).
17. *Eto ia – Edichka* was published in Russia for the first time in 1990 by the publishing house Glagol, with a total print run of 390,000. See Limonov's full bibliography on his "unofficial website" limonow.de (last accessed 19 April 2016) and the website of the publishing house Glagol old.russ.ru/info/GLAGOL/ (last accessed 19 April 2016). On Limonov's first years in Russia, as well as on his travels to war zones in the early 1990s, see Dodolev (2012), as well as Limonov's own memoirs (and collected articles): *Inostranets v smutnoe vremia (1992)* 2007; *Ubiistvo chasovogo: Stat'i* 1993; *Ischeznovenie varvarov* 1992; *Anatomiia geroia* 1997; *SMRT* 2008.
18. See Mogutin (1992, 1994, 2001).
19. Wakamiya argues that after returning to Russia and becoming involved with radical nationalist politics, Limonov distanced himself from his previous "exilic identities," embracing "particularly defined canons … … *[and]* narrowly defined national traditions." In post-Soviet Russia, according to Wakamiya, Limonov " … asserts his 'inherited' and 'authentic' qualities, among them an exaggeratedly heteronormative sexuality, which he defines in narrative forms that exploit hierarchical and patriarchal structures" (Wakamiya 2009, 109–112). In fact, Limonov's close association with Mogutin, and the fact that his novels were first published by Shatalov's publishing house, demonstrates that the shaping of his post-Soviet public persona was more nuanced than

that (see Essig 1999, 146–149, 95, and in general on the link between queer identities and nationalism in post-Soviet Russia, 123–161). Certain elements of Limonov's writing before and after his return to Russia can indeed be interpreted as masculinist and misogynist, and the aesthetics of the NBP was indeed based on a peculiar cult of war and masculinity. However, after his return to Russia, Limonov has often harshly criticized "traditional family values," and the position of the NBP in the sphere of gender and social politics has been far from being straightforward (see Limonov, *Drugaia Rossiia*, 2003, 7–21, 167–173; and my own discussion of these issues in the present article). Finally, both Limonov and the NBP have been very critical of Russian cultural institutions and literary tradition, and have promoted a fairly eclectic and cosmopolitan cultural and literary canon (see Limonov, *Drugaia Rossiia*, 2003, 22–43, 91–104; and my own discussion of these issues in the present article).

20. For a general introduction to the history of the NBP and its key figures, see Shenfield (2001), Savel'ev (2006), Rogachevskii (2007), and Verkhovskii and Kozhevnikova (2009), 287–299.
21. See Gessen (2005), Kozhevnikova, Verkhovskii, and Veklerov (2008, 124–128), Verkhovskii and Kozhevnikova (2009, 287–299), and Bennetts (2014, 30–43). The NBP has in fact collaborated with leftist and anarchist organizations and counted several leftists among its members since its foundation (Tarasov, Cherkasov, and Shavshukova 1997, 56–59).
22. *Drugaia Rossiia* ("The Other Russia") became the name of Limonov's party in 2010, 3 years after the NBP was legally banned (see "Reshenie Mosgorsuda o zapreshenii NBP ot 19.04.2007" 2007; Verkhovskii 2007). In the 2000s, the *natsboly* became famous for their *aktsii priamogo deistviia*, that is, peaceful direct-action stunts against prominent political figures, sit-ins, and occupations of government buildings (see Gromov 2012). Because of their vocal opposition against Putin's government, during the 2000s, the *natsboly* were frequently imprisoned and physically assaulted by street thugs and soccer hooligans, allegedly hired by pro-Putin youth organizations (see Kozhevnikova, Verkhovskii, and Veklerov 2008, 124–128; "Napadenie na natsbolov v Moskve," *SOVA Center for Information and Analysis*, 30 August 2005. Web. 20 April 2016; "Pravozashita/Programmy: Podderzhka politzakliuchennykh/Dela natsbolov," *Mezhdunarodnoe obshchestvo Memorial*, 24 June 2011. Web. 20 April 2016; and, the archive of the official website of the NBP, now forbidden: web.archive.org/web/20090122065905/http://nbp-info.com/; on the NBP's "political style" and specific approach to violence, see Sokolov, 2006). The repressions against the NBP were justified by the government as part of an anti-fascist and anti-extremist policy, and pro-government media used the NBP's own nationalist rhetoric to prove Limonov's and the NBP's alleged "fascism" (Iakemenko 2006; *Sud and Prizrakom*. 29 November 2002. Television). At the same time, paradoxically, in 2006, a group of radical right-wing members of the NBP who disagreed with Limonov's new liberal/leftist line left the party to found, with the support of Dugin's Eurasian Youth Union and, indirectly, of the Putin administration, the more straightforwardly ultra-nationalist, anti-Western, and pro-government National-Bolshevik Front (see Verkhovskii and Kozhevnikova 2009, 196–206).
23. Later collected in: Limonov *Propovedy. Protiv vlasti i prodazhnoi oppozitsii* (2013).
24. See "Moskva: 'Strategiia 31,' Triumfal'naia Ploshchad' 31.05.14." *Drugaia Rossiia*. Drugaia Rossiia, 2 June 2014. Accessed 20 April 2016. http://drugros.ru/galeries/4086.0.html.
25. See the television program *Eduard Limonov. Vstrecha v kontsertnoi studii Ostankino* (1992). Pervyi Kanal Ostankino. Moscow, Russian Federation, February 1992.
26. See Konstantin Chuvashev, Personal Interview, 16 May 2015. Chuvashev was responsible of the design of *Limonka* up to issue 33, February 1996. On the foundation of *Limonka*, see also Limonov, *Moia politicheskaia biografiia* (2002, 23–47).
27. Limonov himself used this expression to describe the aesthetics of *Limonka* when I interviewed him. See Eduard Limonov, Personal Interview, 15 August 2013.
28. See Limonov, E. "Limonka protiv stukachei-intelligentov." *Limonka* 2: Dec. 1994.
29. See, among others: Polkovnik Ivan Chernyi. "Pokhishchenie i kazn' Al'do Moro" (on the Italian terrorist group "Red Brigades"). *Limonka* 12: Apr. 1995; "Pivnoi putsch. Munich, 1923." *Limonka* 13: May 1995; "Rozhdenie partii" (on the beginnings of the National-Socialist Party in Germany). *Limonka* 14: May 1995; "Bog voiny-Makhagala" (on Baron Ungern-Shternberg). *Limonka* 15: Jun. 1995; "Skachka na tigre" (on Italian right-wing terrorism in the 1970s and 1980s). *Limonka* 17: Jul. 1995; "Noch' dlinnykh nozhei." *Limonka* 22: Oct. 1995; "Val'kiriia revoliutsii." *Limonka* 25: Nov. 1995 (on Bolshevik leader Larisa Reisner); "Stalin. Molodye gody." *Limonka* 28: Dec. 1995; "Nash Lenin." *Limonka* 30: Jan. 1996; "Pervye fashisty" (on the beginnings of the Italian Fascist Party). *Limonka* 37: Apr. 1996. The pseudonym "Polkovnik

Ivan Chernyi" was used both by Limonov, and by Andrey Karagodin, also one of Dugin's "disciples," and one of *Limonka*'s first contributors.

30. See Sil'nyi, D. (pseudonym of Daniil Dubshin). "Bol'shoi belyi chelovek." *Limonka* 3: Dec. 1994 (on Arnold Schwarzenegger); Melent'eva, N. "Chernyi messiia Menson: 'ia boikotiruiu vash mir.'" *Limonka* 7: Jan. 1995; Klimova, M. (compiler and translator). "Nash Lui-Ferdinand Selin" *Limonka* 9: Mar. 1995; Dugin, A. "Gi Debor Mertv. Spektakl' prodolzhaetsia." *Limonka* 14: May 1995; Kondratovich, T. (translator) "Zhan Zhene. Otryvki iz poslednego interv'iu." *Limonka* 15: Jun. 1995; Pavel Vlasov Partizan (pseudonym of Aleksey Tsvetkov). "Doktor Gerbert Markuze." *Limonka* 25: Nov. 1995; Limonov, E. "Poslednii den' komandante Che." *Limonka* 36: Apr. 1996; Burroughs, W. "Dikie mal'chiki." *Limonka* 39: May 1996 (transl. of fragments from the novel *Wild Boys*), and "Ekspress na planetu Nova." *Limonka* 41: Jun. 1996 (fragments from the novel *Nova Express*). NB: some of these texts, such as the fragments from Burroughs' novels and the interview with Jean Genet, were being published in Russian for the first time. The first Russian translations of Marcuse's books were published in the mid-1990s. It is reasonable to presume that the readers of *Limonka* learnt about these authors and historical figures from the pages of the newspaper.
31. Dugin, A. "Novye protiv starykh." *Limonka* 1: Nov. 1994.
32. Dugin, A. "Kontrelita," *Limonka* 2: Dec. 1994. Dugin here is also referring to Italian sociologist Vilfredo Pareto's theory on the circulation of elites.
33. Laura Il'ina, Personal Interview, 26 March 2015. On the Polushkin Brothers, and the beginnings of Russian alternative fashion, see also Baster (2011) and Kostrova (2011).
34. As I was able to verify when I consulted Chuvashev's personal archive, which contains manuscripts and drafts for the first 33 issues of *Limonka*, Limonov personally wrote (mostly by hand) extensive sections of the newspaper at least until the beginning of 1996.
35. "Aktsiia." *Limonka* 20: Aug. 1995.
36. "Smachno pomer." *Limonka* 7: Feb. 1995; *Limonka* 10: Mar. 1995; *Limonka* 12: Apr. 1995; *Limonka* 6: Feb. 1995. The title of this satirical article is a parody of the famous early Soviet slogan *Kto ne rabotaet, tot ne est*, "He who does not work, will not eat."
37. "Smachno pomer." *Limonka* 6: Feb. 1995.
38. See Dubshin, D. "Vsiakaia morda blagorazumnogo fasona vyzyvaet vo mne nepriiatnye oshchushcheniia." *Limonka* 29: Dec. 1995. On the relationship between Limonov and Daniil Kharms and the "Oberiuts," see Limonov's (1977) introduction to the almanac of the group *Konkret, Apollon-77* (Shemiakin 1977); Iosif Brodsky's postface to Limonov's poetry collection *Moi otritsatel'nyi geroi* (1995).
39. See Kamennyi, A. (pseudonym of Andrey Karagodin). "ALLE GEGEN ALLE. Interv'iu nashego korrespondenta s gruppoi *Laibach*." *Limonka*. 3: Jan. 1995. On the use of totalitarian aesthetics in the performances of *Laibach*, see also Žižek (1993) and Monroe (2005).
40. On Sergei Kurekhin's TV hoax and on his participation in Dugin's political campaign, see also Yurchak (2011) and Kushnir (2013).
41. Dugin, A. "Iz kolybeli revoliutsii." *Limonka* 22: Sep. 1995.
42. Dugin, A. "Vsia vlast' severu." *Limonka* 11: Apr. 1995.
43. Dugin, A. "Gi Debor mertv. Spektakl' prodolzhaetsia." *Limonka* 14: May 1995.
44. In 1994–1995, during his tour *Russkii proryv*, Letov famously performed in front of a giant NBP flag. Throughout the 1990s, the history of the NBP remained closely linked with that of the post-Soviet punk, rock, heavy metal, noise, and industrial scenes. See Rogatchevski and Steinholt (2015) and Sandalov (2016).
45. See Letov, E., "Eto znaet moia svoboda," *Limonka* 1: Nov. 1994; "Imenno tak vse i bylo," *Limonka* 2: Dec. 1994; "Imenno tak vse i bylo," *Limonka* 3: Jan. 1995. Letov's original term for shock is "epatazh," which more clearly evokes the original bohemian (and futurist) motto "épater les bourgeois."
46. See Dugin, A. "K zhenshchinam." *Limonka* 25: Nov. 1995; Timur Bonch (General Brusilov). "K chlenam NBP." *Limonka* 52: Nov. 1996; "SEX-trenazher elitnogo partiitsa." *Limonka* 55: Dec. 1996; SEX-trenazher zhenshiny partii Limonka 56: Jan. 1997.
47. Mogutin, Ia. "Bez intelligentov. Utopia." *Limonka* 1: Nov. 1994.
48. Mogutin's language evoked that of the Soviet propaganda of the 1920s and 1930s – the expression "*unichtozhit' kak klass*" ("destroy as a class"), for instance, echoed the famous slogan of the anti-kulak campaign, "*unichtozhit' kulaka kak klass!*" ("destroy the kulak as a class!").

49. I am here borrowing Viktor Shklovsky's famous term *ostranenie*, "estrangement" or "defamiliarization," used to describe the specific type of experience produced by the reading of literary texts (Shklovsky 1917, transl. 1990).
50. Medvedeva, N. "Oda russkomu muzhiku." *Limonka* 2: Dec. 1994.
51. "Razdavit' dvukh zmei," *Limonka* 29: Dec. 1995.
52. I am here borrowing the expression of one of my informants.
53. "Fashizm ili ne fashizm: konkurs." *Limonka* 11: Apr. 1995.
54. See note 49.

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