contains Heldt's original introduction along with a new afterword by Daniel Green, in which he assesses the scholarly advances that have been made since the 1970s in the study of Russian women's writing, inscribes Pavlova in her time, and integrates her prolific translation activity into her other writerly pursuits.

When scholars in the field of US literature, such as Jane Thompson, began in the 1980s to challenge the exclusion of women authors from the canon, they argued that writing by women deserved a place there, first, because men had established the aesthetic criteria that tended to exclude women's writing, especially of the sentimental variety, and, second, because works by women were among the most widely read of their time—just compare the enormous popularity of Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* to the tepid reaction to Herman Melville's *Moby Dick*. Except for Verbitskaia, the latter argument cannot be made for Russian women's writing, nor need it be. Pavlova's *A Double Life* stands up to the most highly-esteemed works of nineteenth-century Russian prose fiction, both aesthetically and for its daring. The use of poetry, which ends every chapter, to represent the unconscious dreamlife of the heroine is as experimental a play with genre as Aleksandr Pushkin's novel in verse or Nikolai Gogol′'s satirical *poema*. In his postface, Green finds it ironic that Cecily's liberation is experienced in poetry, which is highly structured, but Pavlova may have been aiming to contrast the non-mimetic nature of lyric poetry (see Culler's 2015 *Theory of the Lyric*) to the mimetic world of prose narrative. (In terms of generic experimentation, one could compare Pavlova's novel to Krichevskaia's *Count Gorsky* of 1837, the first part of which is an epistolary novel and the second part a more conventional third person narrative, suggesting that Russian women writers of this generation were not passive imitators of the dominant forms but real innovators.) Moreover, Pavlova's characters are subtly and insightfully drawn, and her satire is biting and often quite humorous, as when Olga quips that a rival's dress should be awarded a medal for its many years in service. In addition, her posing of the "woman question" is highly original. By representing the rich poetic dreamlife of her heroine, she presents the problem of female "muteness"—the word *mute* appears repeatedly throughout the novel—not as evidence that women have nothing to say but that there are no avenues through which to say it. Moreover, when Cecily, quite to her surprise, suddenly remembers a line of verse from her dreamlife, Pavlova offers a nuanced understanding of women's agency—Cecily's fertile imagination will attempt to find a way into her waking life, whether Cecily wants it or not. This contributes to the radical open-endedness of Pavlova's plot—she eschews both a happy resolution and a tragic one, leaving the future of her characters entirely unpredictable. This novel, therefore, should be read and reread not as a novelty or a token—a woman's work in a still overwhelmingly male canon—but as a daring and sophisticated work of nineteenth century Russian prose.

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***Two Novels: Nikolai Nikolaevich and Camouflage***. By Yuz Aleshkovsky. Trans. Duffield White. Ed. Sussanne Fusso. New York: Columbia University Press, 2019. xxi, 202 pp. $15.95, paper.
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"Attention, Orgasm!"—a catchy, well-known phrase that Yuz Aleshkovsky launched into Soviet literary space in 1970 as an order obliging his protagonist Nikolai Nikolaevich, a sperm donor, to reach climax for the sake of Soviet biological and

scientific advancement—calls on readers, too, to be attentive to an orgasmic outpour of Aleshkovsky's uncensored, provocative narrative. Aleshkovsky began his literary career with screenplays, children's books, poetry, and samizdat novels. He spent four years in Stalin's prison camp for social misconduct and was released after Stalin's death, during the mass amnesties in 1953. This experience colored his literary expression with criminal-style jargon and obscenity that consequently suffered harsh Soviet censorship. Branded as the most popular non-published writer in the USSR, Aleshkovsky gained his reputation through a "cultural camouflage" and as a "donor" of motile, sperm-like literary expressions disseminating the underground culture.

His 1959 song "Comrade Stalin, You Are a Great Scholar" that everyone in the USSR knew by heart, but mistakenly payed tribute for its authorship to either Vladimir Vysotskii or the people, announced Aleshkovsky's language uprising against the master of Soviet rhetorical dictatorship: *Tovarishch Stalin—Vy boil'shoi uchenyi, / v iazykoznan'i znaete vy tolk, / A ia prostoi sovetskii zakliuchennyi* (Comrade Stalin, you are a great scholar / You are the expert in linguistics / And I am a simple Soviet prisoner). Aleshkovsky's unofficial language employed vis-à-vis Stalin's represents an attempt to demonstrate his "criminal" expertise in ideological language indoctrinations within the Soviet "perverse" linguistic paradigm. He came out of Stalin's camp as "a certified professor of the Soviet language," notices Andrei Bitov, which "was in a pre-written state. Everyone spoke it, but no one wrote in it" (*Gazeta.ru*, https://www.gazeta.ru/culture/2019/09/20/a_12664375.shtml). Aleshkovsky stays within the framework of Soviet discourse as he linguistically obliterates it from within. The fight against the "great Soviet scholar" is the fight for and over language.

Aleshkovsky also released three camp poems in the Moscow samizdat almanac "MetrOpol" in 1978, prior to his emigration. He was labeled a "criminal pornographer" and "zoological anti-Soviet," an image that he resolutely maintained in his prose. In 1979, Aleshkovsky left the Soviet Union for the United States, where he would serve as a visiting writer at the Russian Department of Wesleyan University for many decades. Aleshkovsky has been working closely with Wesleyan's students and faculty, including this volume's translator, Professor Emeritus Duffield White, and its editor, Professor Sussanne Fusso. Their collaboration might have enriched a deeper understanding of Aleshkovsky's poetics grounded in intentionally-blurred fiction and reality, subculture and officialdom.

The current volume is the first English translation of the two novels, *Nikolai Nikolaevich* (1970) and *Camouflage* (1977), published together in Russian in 1980 by Ardis in Ann Arbor. It is released on the eve of Aleshkovsky's double anniversary: his ninetieth birthday and fortieth year in the US. A two-decade gap between the English translation of Aleshkovsky's novels, *The Hand* (1989) and *Kangaroo* (1999), and White's translation is indicative of the complexity of his literary idiom. The biggest challenge for a translator of his prose is Aleshkovsky's language. As Fusso's Introduction reveals, Moscow "street obscenities" came to the author prior to his discovery of fairy tales (ix). Russian obscene language (*mat*) is thus Aleshkovsky's first language that emerges as dominant against the background of Soviet simulacrum.

Aleshkovsky is the master of articulating the farcicality of Soviet scientific actuality via onanism and sodomy. The two novels satirically depict the disastrous growth of biological science in the USSR, which brought about incomprehensible scientific projects and even more inconceivable results. In *Nikolai Nikolaevich*, Aleshkovsky makes the penis a main instrument of scientific production ("my dick's supporting all of you," 19); masturbation a Soviet job which is a more highly-paid pleasure than work, as "the workday is not a fixed norm": a daily orgasm in the morning, and then the donor is free (11). In *Camouflage*, building the Soviet underground as a camouflage headquarter, where the Party is assembling the first hydrogen bombs,

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appears as a secret game associated with the 1980 Olympics that serves to provoke Soviet vs. America competition, "camouflaging the nation from the Pentagon's eyes" (103). As the full appearance of reality, the camouflage turns the penis into "the crime weapon" (149) utilized as both real and artificial in the mysterious cases of mass anal rape, homosexuality, manufacturing queers and degenerates, and all that "for the sake of our bright future!" (176).

Language is ascendant in Aleshkovsky's works. Filled with sarcasm, humor, the grotesque, witty linguistic turnovers, word play based on prison camp life, an uncensored lexicon, and mixed with clichés of Soviet phraseology, Aleshkovsky's language renders the absurdity of Soviet reality and, therefore, it is at least untranslatable. As the "Mozart of language," according to Joseph Brodsky, Aleshkovsky turned himself into the instrument of the language that functions as the main character in his prose, appearing to be more important than the author himself and his protagonists (*Yuz!*, Middletown, 2010, 57). Nikolai Nikolaevich manages to let his sperm run through his narration as a character whose life depends on voluntarily-ordered autoerotic sexual excitement and ejaculation. He is the embodiment of the two most-repeated words in the novel that avoid English rendition: a) the obsolete *zhivchik* (translated as sperm(atozoa) that unlike the more common *spermatozoid* indicates also an active, live [or real], and moving person), and b) *malofeika*, a vulgar criminal slang for semen that, for lack of a fully apt English word, White cleverly translates as "jizz." The complexity of Aleshkovsky's language is not the vulgar lexicon as such, but rather the way verbal obscenity relies on literary devices fostered through specificities of the Russian language (rhyme, assonance, dissonance, neologisms). In many instances, the translator simply must drop these peculiarities in favor of content and the general atmosphere of the novels. Still, White educes this manner whenever English allows him to do so, even where Aleshkovsky himself fails to do it. For example, Aleshkovsky writes *ot mude i do glaz*, and the English reads: "from his balls to his eyeballs."

Aleshkovsky's language symbolically remains stuck on the frontier of untranslatability into official language: first, it could not make its way into Soviet literature through the dense sieve of censorship; second, it cannot fully pass the barrier of the English language. Nevertheless, White and Fusso did a good job finding a logical solution: to explicate specificities of Aleshkovsky's language in the Introduction and then let it remain camouflaged by the storylines and absurdity of meaning. Thanks to White's remarkable translation, Aleshkovsky's *Nikolai Nikolaevich* and *Camouflage* may well become an inevitable part of the curriculum at many other Anglo-Saxon universities besides Wesleyan in the near future.

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