The Poetics of Shock: "The Pitiful Vice" in Khodasevich's "Under the Ground"

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Vladislav Khodasevich. Under the Ground	Владислав Ходасевич. Под землей
There where it smells of black carbolic acid and reeking earth, he stands, bending his sharp profile in front of a tile wall.	Где пахнет черною карболкой И провонявшею землей, Стоит, склоняя профиль колкий Пред изразцовою стеной.
He does not step back, nor turn around, just rocks all over slightly, and the frayed elbow of his jacket is somehow thrashing convulsively.	Не отойдет, не обернется, Лишь весь качается слегка, Да как-то судорожно бьется Потертый локоть сюртука.
Schoolchildren, soldiers, a workman in a blue shirt drop by– still he stands, pressed to the wall by his wild dream.	Заходят школьники, солдаты, Рабочий в блузе голубой,– Он всё стоит, к стене прижатый Своею дикою мечтой.
Here he creates and destroys his voluptuous worlds, and from the adjacent booth an old woman watches him.	Здесь создает и разрушает Он сладострастные миры, А из соседней конуры За ним старуха наблюдает.
Then through the opened door pillows, chairs, jars are visible. She comes out, and now snatches of angry squabbling are heard. Then a smelly broom chases the madman from his corner.	Потом в открывшуюся дверь Видны подушки, стулья, склянки. Вошла—и слышатся теперь Обрывки злобной перебранки. Потом вонючая метла Безумца гонит из угла.
And now, from out of the deep semi-darkness, an old man, stooped but tall, in such a respectable frock coat, in a once stylish bowler hat, climbs—like a shade of Hades– the broad staircase into the wide world, into the Berlin day, the shining delirium. And the sun is bright, the sky blue, and up above is a blue desert. . . And my rage and grief seethe, and my walking-stick relentlessly taps on the alien granite. September 21, 1923	И вот, из полутьмы глубокой Старик сутулый, но высокий, В таком почтенном сюртуке, В когда-то модном котелке, Идет по лестнице широкой, Как тень Аида—в белый свет, В берлинский день, в блестящий бред. А солнце ясно, небо сине, А сверху синяя пустыня. . . И злость, и скорбь моя кипит, И трость моя в чужой гранит Неумолкаемо стучит. 21 сентября 1923[1]

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1. Vladislav Khodasevich, *Sobranie sochinenii v chetyrekh tomakh* (Moscow, 1997), 1:264–65 (hereafter, *SS*); and translation, slightly amended: David M. Bethea, *Khodasevich:*

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In his 1927 enthusiastic review of Vladislav Khodasevich's *Collection of Poems* (1927), published in the central Russian émigré Berlin daily *Rul'* (*The Rudder*), V. Sirin (Vladimir Nabokov) stipulates a reservation, contending that he cannot retell the poem "Under the Ground": "I cannot because in bare prose its topic acquires a tinge of the most crude and blatant impropriety. It is enough if I say that such episodes can be found in books on sexual issues. And yet Khodasevich has made a strong and beautiful poem from the description of the pitiful vice [*zhalkogo poroka*] (for a moment I had a thought: but what if it is offensive to the Muse?—but only for a moment)."[2] The prudish reservations of the future author of *Lolita* had its tantalizing effect on the readership. In his book *Tolkovanie puteshestvii* (The Interpretation of Travels), Alexander Etkind acknowledges that it was Nabokov's review that enticed him to read Khodasevich's poem and straightforwardly to summarize its content: "it describes an old man's act of masturbation in a morgue."[3] Other readings are less macabre. In the first edition of Khodasevich's poems in post-perestroika Russia, published in the prestigious series *The Library of Poets*, Nikolai Bogomolov writes that the event under discussion takes place in a Berlin metro station.[4] Nowadays, there is a near-consensus that the act of masturbation takes place in a Berlin public restroom under the ground,[5] whether a separate underground facility or "the men's room of a subway public lavatory,"[6] yet readers still find various euphemistic and emphatic ways to paraphrase what takes place in the poem and where.[7] While this

His Life and Art (Princeton, 1983), 292–93. All other translations from Russian are mine, unless otherwise noted.

2. V. Sirin (Vladimir Nabokov), "Vladislav Khodasevich. Sobranie stihkov," in Vladimir Nabokov, *Sobranie sochinenii russkogo perioda v piati tomakh* (St. Petersburg, 1999), 2:651–52.

3. Aleksandr Etkind, *Tolkovanie puteshestvii: Rossiia i Amerika v travelogakh i intertekstakh* (Moscow, 2001), 711.

4. Nikolai Bogomolov, "Zhizn' i poeziia Vladislava Khodasevicha," in Vladislav Khodasevich, *Stikhotvoreniia* (Leningrad, 1989), 45.

5. See Aleksandr Dolinin and Konstantin Bogdanov, "Aleksandr Etkind, *Tolkovanie puteshestvii*," *Novaia Russkaia Kniga* 1, no. 12 (2002): 85.

6. This is how Brian Boyd and Anastasia Tolstoy defined the location of Khodasevich's poem, in commenting on a recent translation of Nabokov's review; see Vladimir Nabokov, *Think, Write, Speak: Uncollected Essays, Reviews, Interviews, and Letters to the Editor*, eds. Brian Boyd and Anastasia Tolstoy (New York, 2019), 494.

7. In one case, the euphemistic retelling of Khodasevich's poem has strained the language in a catachrestic way: "Khodasevich's 'Under the Ground' tells the story of an old man who relieves his impulse" (*rasskaz o starike, oblegchaiushchem svoi poryv*). Tania Galcheva, "Krizis molchaniia v poezii Vladislava Khodasevicha i v proze Georgiia Ivanova," *Slavia Orientalis* 44, no. 4 (1995): 509. For a characteristically euphemistic interpretation of the poem, one can see Iurii Kolker's comment in the two-volume émigré edition of Khodasevich: "In this poem, Khodasevich, for the first time in Russian poetry and with his inherent tact, sheds light on one of the painful questions of the modern age (*novogo vremeni*)." Vladislav Khodasevich, *Sobranie stikhov v dvukh tomakh*, ed. Iurii Kolker (Paris, 1983), 2:376. Khodasevich was not the first to deal with the theme of masturbation in Russian modernist poetry. See, for instance, Ivan Ignat'ev's poem "Onan," in Ivan Ignat'ev, *Eshafot: Ego-futury* (St. Petersburg, 1914), 10, and Aleksandr Tiniakov's poem "Onanu" (To Onan) (1906), Aleksandr Tiniakov (Odinokii), *Stikhotvoreniia* (Tomsk, 1998), 203. According to Tiniakov, he let Khodasevich know about his poem in 1907 (ibid., 318). However, Khodasevich's relocating this theme in the modern urban setting of a public under the ground restroom indeed seems to set a precedent in Russian poetry.

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essay adheres to the "restroom" interpretation, I contend that the constant ambiguity of action and location in the poem, as well as its various euphemistic, misleading, and bewildered readings are not accidental and should be considered as constitutive elements of its semantics and interpretation. These textual and interpretative ambiguities are embedded in its rhetorical mechanisms that project its "textual undecidability" or uncertainty of signification onto the level of the reader's reception.[8] This undecidability is generated by the intersection of two taboo themes in turn-of-the-century European, not to mention Russian, culture, namely, masturbation and public restrooms. Khodasevich's intervention into these two fields was primarily self-reflexive, indicating his anxieties about the ambiguous place and status of a modernist poet and exploring the norms of poetic representation. My essay, thus, proposes to read "Under the Ground" as a site of contested and mutually commenting meanings among concerns about tabooed sites of urban modernity, a self-reflexive vision of autoerotism, and aesthetic modernism with an emphasis on the shock effect. Part of the shock effect of the poem is produced by its last lines which, among other things, suggest a troubled identification of the speaker with the old man. The article discusses the meaning of this self-identification in the context of Khodasevich's subversive dialogue with both European modernist and Russian symbolist traditions. This reading underlies the two overlapping aims of my paper: in analyzing Khodasevich's radicalization of his modernist poetics through the self-reflexive re-appropriation of the tabooed themes, I will examine how current theorizations in the developing subfields of sexuality and urban studies that deal with masturbation and restrooms can contribute to the ongoing research on modernist authorship as understood through the figure of the poet-flâneur.[9]

Whereas today we witness the reevaluation of masturbation as "the earliest, most intimate, and perhaps the most common of all sexual behaviours," it retained a highly ambivalent status in the first quarter of the twentieth century.[10] In the cultural history of masturbation, scholars locate its modernist partial rehabilitation in the works of Marcel Proust, André Gide, James Joyce, Christopher Isherwood, and others as an episode between the pre-twentieth century unequivocal condemnation of masturbation in the age of Enlightenment as an "ethically suspect, medically pernicious,"

8. Debarati Sanyal, *The Violence of Modernity: Baudelaire, Irony, and the Politics of Form* (Baltimore, 2006), 25.

9. On the intersectional research of masturbation and restrooms, see, inter alia, Paula Bennett and Vernon A. Rosario, eds., *Solitary Pleasures: The Historical, Literary and Artistic Discourses of Autoeroticism* (New York, 1995); Thomas W. Laqueur, *Solitary Sex: A Cultural History of Masturbation* (New York, 2003); Olga Gershenson and Barbara Penner, eds., *Ladies and Gents: Public Toilets and Gender* (Philadelphia, 2009); Harvey Molotch and Laura Norén, eds., *Toilet: Public Restrooms and the Politics of Sharing* (New York, 2010); and Sheila L. Cavanagh, *Queering Bathrooms: Gender, Sexuality and the Hygienic Imagination* (Toronto, 2010).

10. Paula Bennett and Vernon A. Rosario, "Introduction: The Politics of Solitary Pleasures," in Bennett and Rosario, eds., *Solitary Pleasures*, 2; and Laqueur, *Solitary Sex*, 76–80.

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"fundamentally asocial or socially degenerative practice,"[11] and post-modernist positive, if not enthusiastic, acceptance.[12] As Thomas Laqueur has observed, before the Enlightenment, masturbation was not a subject of great interest or speculation. It is a new, modern concept of self, born in the eighteenth century, with its values of desire, pleasure, and privacy, which started considering masturbation as the disgraceful aspect of these values.[13] In modernist literature, according to Lawrence R. Schehr, the "gradual naturalization still does not let masturbation speak in its own voice."[14] Modernist masturbation had often to employ "the borrowed tongues of repression" from the previous discourses of biopolitics.[15] Otherwise, partially freed from the language of social engineering, masturbation still needed to be displaced, becoming a part of a metaphoric structure: "a set of signifiers describe the literary work as being *like* masturbation."[16] As we shall see, Khodasevich originally employs both modernist strategies, situating them in a particular urban space. While presenting masturbation through medicalized victimization ("madman"), he sets up the lyric persona's poignant identification with the masturbator. Khodasevich further reconfigures the modernist metaphoric structure: a set of signifiers describes masturbation in a *public* "underground" restroom as a *mise-en-scène* of poetic creativity's troubled sense of impropriety in the modern world.

Typologically similar to the modern reinvention of masturbation, a technological by-product of related concerns with privacy and physical/moral cleanliness, the public restroom similarly preserved an ambiguous status in modernist discourse.[17] Along with trains, photography, consumer culture, cinema, metro, and the like, the novel invention of the flush toilet and the public restroom captured the modernist artistic imagination of James Joyce, Marcel Duchamp, and Jean Rhys, among others; they engaged with the representation of the restroom to measure the norms and limits of modernist art.[18] As Andrew Brown-May and Peg Fraser have pointed out, the establishment of the public restroom arose both from a search for convenience and a desire to impose respectability on the space of the modern metropolis.[19]

11. Bennett and Rosario, "Introduction," 14; Laqueur, *Solitary Sex*, 71, 229. On the replication of such public discourse on masturbation in turn-of-the-century Russia, see Laura Engelstein, *The Key to Happiness: Sex and the Search for Modernity in Fin-de-Siecle Russia* (Ithaca, 1992), 222, 226–29, 244–45.

12. Laqueur, *Solitary Sex*, 397–420; and Lawrence R. Schehr, "Fragments of a Poetics: Bonnetain and Roth," in Bennett and Rosario, eds., *Solitary Pleasures*, 221–22.

13. Laqueur, *Solitary Sex*, 185–86.

14. Schehr, "Fragments of a Poetics," 221.

15. Bennett and Rosario, "Introduction," 14.

16. Schehr, "Fragments of a Poetics," 221.

17. As Thomas W. Laqueur, *Solitary Sex*, 210, has observed, masturbation is "the sexuality of *modern* self" (emphasis added).

18. Ian Scott Todd, "Dirty Books: Modernism and the Toilet," *MFS: Modern Fiction Studies* 58, no. 2 (Summer 2012): 191.

19. Andrew Brown-May and Peg Fraser, "Gender, Respectability, and Public Convenience in Melbourne, Australia, 1859–1902," in Olga Gershenson and Barbara Penner, eds., *Ladies and Gents*, 76–77; see likewise Ruth Barcan, "Dirty Spaces: Separation, Concealment, and Shame in the Public Toilet," in Harvey Molotch and Laura Norén, eds., *Toilet*, 25–28.

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Such anxieties about the respectable organizing of urban space likewise established the terms of the discursive place of the restroom in the cultural domain. In his article on the representation of the public restroom in Anglophone modernist literature, I.S. Todd quotes a passage from Virginia Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway*, where Peter Walsh expresses his concern about the increasing presence of the toilet in the contemporaneous public discourse: "those five years—1918 to 1923—had been, he suspected, somehow very important. . . .Newspapers seemed different. Now for instance there was a man writing quite openly in one of the respectable weeklies about water-closets. That you couldn't have done ten years ago—written quite openly about water-closets in a respectable weekly."[20] This passage draws the parallel between the notion of respectability in urban as well as discursive domains: just as the restroom has to reside in a special, secluded space (preferably "under the ground"), its representation cannot take place "in a respectable weekly." This way of thinking finds its parallel in Nabokov's review: the shock he has experienced lies in Khodasevich's relocating "the pitiful vice," whose place ought to be restricted to the "books on sexual issues," into the domain of the aesthetic sublime. Khodasevich's disrupting of the norms of aesthetic propriety for a moment "offended" the Muse as the personification of Nabokov's aesthetic super-ego. By drastically merging these two themes, "the pitiful vice" in the public "underground" restroom becomes a fortuitously found tool for radicalizing Khodasevich's poetry, making it a quintessence of modernist art with its emphasis on shock.

In the Footsteps of Baudelaire's Poetics of Shock

Contemporary readers pinpointed the origin of Khodasevich's modernist poetics in Charles Baudelaire. Thus, for instance, in his review of Khodasevich's *Collection of Poems*, Gleb Struve wrote about the émigré cycle "European Night": "Khodasevich combines creepy, cynical realism with some terrible phantasmagoria, both of which recall Baudelaire ('Windows to the Yard,' 'Under the Ground,' 'An Mariechen,' 'Berlin,' 'Country,' 'Ballad,' 'By the Sea,' 'Stars')."[21] Struve's words echo Baudelaire's description in his essay "The Painter of Modern Life" of "modernist art" as a combination of "the transitory" and "the eternal" and anticipate T. S. Eliot's definition of Baudelaire's modernist poetry as "the possibility of fusion between the sordidly realistic and the phantasmagoric, the possibility of the juxtaposition of the matter-of-fact and the fantastic."[22] Khodasevich's orientation toward Baudelaire in his émigré poetry was self-conscious. In 1928, having published his final book, *Collected Poems* (1927), Khodasevich translates a number of Baudelaire's

20. Virginia Woolf, *Mrs. Dalloway* (Orlando, 2005), 70; quoted in Todd, "Dirty Books," 191.

21. Gleb Struve, "Tikhii ad. O poezii Khodasevicha," *Za svobody!* 59, no. 2391 (March 11, 1928): 6.

22. Charles Baudelaire, *The Painter of Modern Life and Other Essays*, ed. and trans. Jonathan Mayne (London, 1964), 12; and T. S. Eliot, "What Dante Means to Me," in T. S. Eliot, *To Criticize the Critic, and Other Writings* (New York, 1965), 126. Eliot here, of course, rephrases Baudelaire's own definition of modernist art.

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prose poems from *Paris Spleen* (1869). One of the implicit purposes of this venture was, apparently, to provide an interpretive framework for his own émigré poems published under the separate rubric, "European Night," in *Collected Poems*.[23] Indeed, for the recent Russian émigré who had traveled all over Europe prior to settling down in Paris in 1925, Baudelaire's oeuvre offered a blueprint for the poetic mapping of postwar Europe—predominantly its metropolises—and for fashioning his new modernist émigré poetic self.

Khodasevich's deliberate orientation toward Baudelaire in "European Night" parallels the major contemporaneous reevaluation of Baudelaire's heritage currently associated predominantly with Walter Benjamin, T. S. Eliot, Paul Valéry, and Erich Auerbach.[24] These figures, in contrast to the symbolist interpreters of Baudelaire, who highlighted his notions of synesthesia, a "forest of symbols," and his Swedenborgian mysticism of the "correspondences" between metaphysical and earthly worlds from his eponymous sonnet, foregrounded Baudelaire's modernist urban sensibility.[25] In "Under the Ground," Khodasevich's particular contribution to this modernist re-appropriation of Baudelaire lies in his ambiguous, while unwitting, dramatization of two interrelated aspects of Benjamin's conceptualization of modernist poetry: first, Benjamin's theorization of the poetics of shock as Baudelaire's mode of coming to terms with modernity; and, second, Benjamin's nuancing Baudelaire's vision of a modernist artist as flâneur by defining the latter vis-à-vis a particular urban locus of mercantile capitalism—an arcade—as a prime space of his

23. See Viacheslav Vs. Ivanov, "Bodler pered zerkalom," *Inostrannaia literatura* 1 (January 1989), 139; and Pavel Uspenskii, "Pochemu V. Khodasevich perevodil v emigratsii 'Stikhotvoreniia v proze' Sh. Bodlera? (O roli perevodov v tvorcheskoi evoliutsii poeta)," *Wiener Slawistischer Almanach* 93 (2016): 140–41.

24. See Walter Benjamin, *The Writer of Modern Life: Essays on Charles Baudelaire*, trans. Howard Eiland, ed. Michael W. Jennings (Cambridge, Mass., 2006); T. S. Eliot, "Baudelaire," in T. S. Eliot, *Selected Essays* (London, 1932), 381–92; Eliot, "What Dante Means to Me," 125–35; Paul Valéry, "The Position of Baudelaire," in Henri Peyre, ed., *Baudelaire: A Collection of Critical Essays* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ, 1962), 7–18; and Erich Auerbach, "The Aesthetic Dignity of the *Fleurs du mal*," in Erich Auerbach, *Scenes from the Drama of European Literature*, trans. Ralph Manheim, Catherine Garvin, and Erich Auerbach (Minneapolis, 1984), 201–49.

25. See Michael W. Jennings, "On the Banks of a New Lethe: Commodification and Experience in Walter Benjamin's Late Work," *boundary 2* 30, no. 1 (Spring 2003): 90–91; Ulrich Baer, *Remnants of Song: Trauma and the Experience of Modernity in Charles Baudelaire and Paul Celan* (Stanford, 2000), 156–58; and Ulrich Baer, "Modernism and Trauma," in Astradur Eysteinsson and Vivian Liska, eds., *Modernism: A Comparative History of Literatures in European Languages* (Amsterdam, 2007), 1:308. In Russian modernist poetry, Valerii Briusov initiated the appropriation of Baudelaire's urban poetics, modifying love themes of "À une passante" (To a Passerby). Briusov's Baudelairean urbanism was perceived, however, as a "decadent" departure from "proper" symbolism. Aleksandr Blok adopted this thematics, merging it with his myth of the Eternal Feminine; see Joan Delaney Grossman, *Valery Bryusov and the Riddle of Russian Decadence* (Berkeley, 1985), 207–8; Adrian Wanner, *Baudelaire in Russia* (Gainesville, 1996), 88; I. S. Prikhod′ko, "Traditsii Bodlera v briusovskoi traktovke temy goroda," *Liricheskoe nachalo i ego funktsii v khudozhestvennom proizvedenii* (Vladimir, 1989), 99–100; Gerald Pirog, "Melancholy Illuminations: Mourning Becomes Blok's Stranger," *Russian Literature* 50, no. 1 (July 2001): 107–10; and Stuart H. Goldberg, "Your Mistress or Mine? Briusov, Blok and the Boundaries of Poetic 'Propriety,'" *Slavic and East European Journal* 60, no. 4 (Winter 2016): 661, 669.

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self-realization.[26] In his lyric self's encounter with his masturbating alter ego in the public "underground" restroom, Khodasevich provides a thematic, spatial, and psychosomatic foil to Baudelaire's and Benjamin's problematization of the preferable visual mode of interpreting the urban environment, personified in the flâneur. Khodasevich supplements the visual representation with olfactory images: "There where it smells of black carbolic acid / and reeking earth." As Mark Smith has pointed out, in literature smell often functions as "authenticator" of implicit "truths" and genuineness in contrast to subverted rationality.[27] Accordingly, in "Under the Ground," the contrast between the uncertainty of visual signification and the "telling" smell, with its "radical interiority, its boundary-transgressing propensities and its emotional potency,"[28] metonymizes Khodasevich's poetics of shock with its subversive potential to penetrate beyond established aesthetic and epistemological surfaces.

Modernist studies appropriated the notion of shock, starting with Benjamin's generalizing Sigmund Freud's hypothesis from *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920) about dream characteristics of accident victims of WWI. Benjamin contends that modernity—"the inhospitable, blinding age of large-scale industrialism"—is structured like a historical "accident" that befalls and disrupts the homogeneous structure of "traditional" experience.[29] The traditional poetic point of view lies in the poet's ability to distill the essence of reality for his/her readership; while "shock as poetic principle in Baudelaire"—like the dream characteristics of accident victims—pertains in his susceptibility of absorbing and reflecting the extreme, sometimes worst, forms of modernity in order both to disrupt the empty repetitiveness of commodified history and, retrospectively, to gain some control over them.[30] Benjamin's insights correspond to views of other philosophers of modernity who have considered its disruptive effect on the phenomenological character of experience. Following the destabilization of the social and philosophical structures associated with earlier forms of political and economic organization, it has become harder to assign a stable meaning or value to individual objects and practices. Yet as older forms of organizing experience have weakened, new forms of producing experience, associated with modern industrial technology, have developed. The

26. The arcades stand in the center of Benjamin's unfinished *The Arcades Project* and its accompanying works, as it became a particularly concentrated symbol of the mercantile capitalism of the period, "a world in miniature," in Michael W. Jennings' words; see Michael W. Jennings, "Introduction," in Walter Benjamin, *Writer of Modern Life*, 8. On Benjamin's Arcades Projects, the most detailed research is Susan Buck-Morss, *The Dialectics of Seeing: Walter Benjamin and the Arcades Project* (Cambridge, Mass., 1989).

27. Mark M. Smith, *Sensing the Past: Seeing, Hearing, Smelling, Tasting, and Touching in History* (Berkeley, 2007), 60, 74.

28. Constance Classen, David Howes, and Anthony Synnott, *Aroma: The Cultural History of Smell* (London, 1994), 5.

29. Benjamin, *Writer of Modern Life*, 172, 175–77; see likewise Kevin Newmark, "Traumatic Poetry: Charles Baudelaire and the Shock of Laughter," in Cathy Caruth, ed., *Trauma: Explorations in Memory* (Baltimore, 1995), 238–39.

30. Benjamin, *Writer of Modern Life*, 149; Michael W. Jennings, "Introduction," 15; Josephine Diamond, "Paris, Baudelaire and Benjamin: The Poetics of Urban Violence," in Mary Ann Caws, ed., *City Images: Perspectives from Literature, Philosophy and Film* (New York, 1991), 172; and Kevin Newmark, "Baudelaire's Other Passer-by," *L'Esprit Créateur* 58, no. 1 (Spring 2018): 21.

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perpetually renewing spectacle of commodities and images demanded a new form of representation.[31] According to Benjamin, interpretation of the urban phenomena was provided by feuilletons, "physiologies," and similar modes of writing that claimed to possess interpretative powers to accommodate and compartmentalize a potentially chaotic urban population into superficial stereotypes.[32] As Susan Buck-Morss has pointed out, in this mode of writing and its personification, the flâneur, we "recognize our own consumerist mode of being in the world."[33] Benjamin pointed to Poe's story "The Man of the Crowd" and Baudelaire's urban poetry as literary precedents for critiquing the flâneur's pretension to master a modern city through his interpretive techniques.[34] Poe's narrator-flâneur easily "reads" the representatives of the London crowd, using his superb interpretive abilities. Encountering the "mysterious" old man, however, he acknowledges a failure of his interpretive mastery.[35] As such, the story calls for an upgraded version of the city interpreter, subsequently introduced by Poe's detective stories. Like Poe's "The Man of the Crowd," Baudelaire's urban poetry problematizes the interpretive self-assurance of urban spectatorship. The fantastic resemblance of "seven old men" from his eponymous poem attacks the poet-flâneur's sense of identity and brings him to the verge of mental breakdown.[36] "Under the Ground" reiterates the lyric dynamics of Baudelaire's "Seven Old Men," bringing the poet-flâneur to the peak of "rage and grief" after meeting his own "old man."

Two factors played a role in Khodasevich's re-appropriation of Baudelaire's poetics of shock. First, it reflected the crisis in his symbolist assumptions about the exalted status of poetry as a medium for transcending the mundane condition and distilling its supernatural essence for his readership. Second, it signaled his groping for a new post-symbolist modernist poetics at a vulnerable time in his life: his situation was precarious both financially and existentially after his departure from Russia in 1922. His status as an

31. See Dana Brand, *The Spectator and the City in Nineteenth-Century American Literature* (Cambridge, Eng., 1991), 2.

32. Benjamin, *Writer of Modern Life*, 45, 67–70; Brand, *Spectator and the City*, 6; Tom Gunning, "From Kaleidoscope to X-Ray: Urban Spectatorship, Poe, Benjamin and *Traffic in Souls* (1913)," *Wide Angle* 19, no. 4 (October 1997): 28; and David Frisby, "The *Flâneur* in Social Theory," in Keith Tester, ed., *The Flâneur* (New York, 1994), 86.

33. Susan Buck-Morss, "The Flaneur, the Sandwichman and the Whore: The Politics of Loitering," *New German Critique* 39, Second Special Issue on Walter Benjamin (Autumn 1986): 105.

34. See Benjamin, *Writer of Modern Life*, 79–85, 186–88.

35. Similarly, Khodasevich's poet-flâneur easily designates various urban types as they enter the subterranean restroom ("Schoolchildren, soldiers, a workman / in a blue shirt drop by"), while the masturbator refuses to conform to any established typology.

36. See the last quatrain of "Seven Old Men": "Vainly my reason reached to clutch the helm; / The giddy tempest baffled every grasp, / And my soul danced in circles like a hull / Dismasted, on a monstrous shoreless sea!" Charles Baudelaire, *The Flowers of Evil*, trans. James McGowan (Oxford, 1993), 181. On the significance of Poe's story for Baudelaire's subsequent elaboration of the concept flâneur in his key essay "The Painter of Modern Life" and in his poetry, in particular in "Seven Old Men," see Baudelaire, *Painter of Modern Life*, 7; Edward S. Cutler, *Recovering the New: Transatlantic Roots of Modernism* (Hanover, 2003), 106–7; and Patrizia Lombardo, *Cities, Words and Images: From Poe to Scorsese* (New York, 2003), 62–63.

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expatriate gradually changed to that of émigré when, under several pennames, he started publishing articles criticizing various aspects of Soviet cultural politics in the émigré press. He obtained the Nansen passport, and in 1925 Soviet authorities in Rome rejected his request to extend his Soviet passport.[37] His 1922–27 cycle "European Night," the last section of his ultimate *Collected Poems* (1927), precisely punctuates the moment when the disintegration of the vertical, transcendental axis of his Symbolist poetics leads him to the painful embrace of the diverse postwar European experience, without providing, however, the secure position of its detached interpreter and connoisseur, associated with the flâneur. While "Under the Ground" was written in 1923, Khodasevich's poetics of shock straddles his poems from "European Night," which were written before and after 1925. My reading goes against the grain of Pavel Uspenskii's division of Khodasevich's poems from this cycle in terms of their poetics and pragmatics into "half-émigré" (1922–25) and émigré (1925–27). The first, Uspenskii contends, manifest a "satirical" mood, aiming at "denouncing the social squalor of émigré and partially European life," whereas only the latter fully express "total existential despair."[38] The self-referential character of "Under the Ground," discussed below, attests that this poem reflects Khodasevich's major aesthetic and existential crisis, triggered by a complex of ideological and existential factors, and cannot be reduced to a tendentious satirical mood. Khodasevich's employment of Weimar "underground" life for thematization of his poetics of shock cardinally differs from social criticism of the depraved Weimar bourgeois society, on which some of his contemporaries tried to capitalize politically.[39]

In his letter of January 12, 1925, to Khodasevich, Viacheslav Ivanov discusses the Baudelairean tinge in Khodasevich's 1922 book *Heavy Lyre*, inscribing it in the "vertical" dichotomy of "the spleen and the ideal."[40] Khodasevich's response of January 21, 1925 to Ivanov indicates, however, a conscious attempt to break with his former Symbolist poetics, with its

37. See Khodasevich, *SS*, 4:366.

38. See Pavel Uspenskii, "Travma emigratsii: Fizicheskaia ushcherbnost′ v 'Evropeiskoi nochi' V. Khodasevicha," in Lea Pild, ed., *Aleksandr Blok i russkaia literatura Serebrianogo veka*, Blokovskii Sbornik, 19, Acta slavica estonica 7 (Tartu, 2015): 192, 201.

39. See, for instance, Victor Shklovskii's anti-capitalist correlation of the widespread gay prostitution in the 1920s with the deteriorating Weimar socio-economic situation: "in the dark public toilets of Berlin, men indulge in mutual onanism (*zanimaiutsia drug s drugom onanizmom*). They are suffering from a devalued currency and hunger; their country is perishing." Victor Shklovskii, *Zoo, or Letters Not about Love*, ed. and trans. Richard Sheldon (Ithaca, 1971), 136. Probably influenced by Khodasevich's "Under the Ground," this description was a part of the "Postscript" written after Shklovskii returned to Russia in 1923, which was inserted in the second edition of *A Sentimental Journey* (Leningrad, 1924), 185–86; see Shklovskii, *Zoo, or Letters Not about Love*, 161. It seems that "mutual onanism" was not rare in the Weimar era. Thus, in 1935, Nazi legislators added "mutual masturbation" to the Federal Criminal Code against homosexual relationships; see Mel Gordon, *Voluptuous Panic: The Erotic World of Weimar Berlin* (Los Angeles, 2000), 83.

40. See Nina Berberova, "Chetyre pis′ma V. I. Ivanova k V. F. Khodasevichu," *Novyi zhurnal* 62 (December 1960): 286–87. On the "vertical" axis of the Symbolist Weltanschauung, occurring predominantly in Khodasevich's pre-émigré book *The Heavy Lyre* (1922), see Vladimir E. Alexandrov, *Andrei Bely: The Major Symbolist Fiction* (Cambridge, Mass., 1985), 42, 94.

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inherent hierarchical dichotomies: "I clearly feel that my previous form has to be changed somehow, broken somewhere. I keep failing, however, in either calculating the angle and point of fracture, or in coming across them in the process of writing."[41] Despite the expressed dissatisfaction with his current attempts to find the right "angle" "to break" his old "form," his contemporaneous poems precisely realize this intention, variously problematizing his and his peers' Symbolist assumptions, including their Symbolist appropriation of Baudelaire. In this regard, Baudelaire's and Khodasevich's poetics of shock were analogous expressions of their respective negation of prevalent poetic schools of their time—romanticism and symbolism in post-revolutionary France and postwar and post-revolutionary Russia and Europe.[42]

Khodasevich proclaimed his new post-symbolist modernist poetics in his March 24–27, 1923, poem "Vesennii lepet ne raznezhit" (The spring babble will not soften), which Wladimir Weidle has defined as a sort of ars poetica of the later Khodasevich:[43]

The spring babble will not soften sternly clenched lines of verse. I have fallen in love with the iron gnashing of cacophonous worlds. . . .	Весенний лепет не разнежит Сурово стиснутых стихов. Я полюбил железный скрежет Какофонических миров. . . .
Sweet to me is the strike of a broken arrow from a tin cloud, I love the melodious and the screeching clatter of the electric saw.	Мне мил—из оловянной тучи Удар изломанной стрелы, Люблю певучий и визгучий Лязг электрической пилы.
And in this life dearer to me than all harmonious beauties is the shiver running over my skin, or the cold sweat of horror,	И в этой жизни мне дороже Всех гармонических красот— Дрожь, побежавшая по коже, Иль ужаса холодный пот,
or the dream where, at one time whole, I, exploding, fly apart like mud splashed by a tire along the alien spheres of being.	Иль сон, где некогда единый,– Взрываясь, разлетаюсь я, Как грязь, разбрызганная шиной По чуждым сферам бытия.[44]

Khodasevich redefines the axiological premises of his poetry, prioritizing the psychosomatic experience of shock over "all harmonious beauties."

41. Khodasevich, *SS*, 4:483.

42. It seems that Nina Berberova was the first to draw the line connecting Khodasevich and Baudelaire (and Mallarmé) in their respective "struggles" against major literary schools of their times—romanticism and symbolism. In her unpublished October 27, 1986, letter to Michael Kreps, she writes: "Russian symbolism was Russian romanticism, the last 'Christian' trend in European cultural history. . .. I would very much like you to pay attention to [Khodasevich's] *struggle* against Romanticism—this, as he himself understood, was his 'role,' his 'life' and 'literary' task. . ..You remember that he loved and translated Baudelaire. He felt in both of them [Baudelaire and Mallarmé] their struggle against Romanticism, and they, indeed, destroyed it (Romanticism)." Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Nina Berberova Papers, GEN MSS 182, Box 12, folder 323.

43. Wladimir Weidle, "A Double-Edged Ars Poetica," Carl R. Proffer, trans., *Russian Literature Triquarterly* 2 (Winter 1972): 339.

44. Khodasevich, *SS*, 1:250.

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"[T]he shiver running over my skin / or the cold sweat of horror" designate the very moment when the defense mechanism fails and the shock penetrates the body, whether shock of fear, shock of poetic inspiration, or both.[45] In the poem, Khodasevich dramatizes this agonizing experience by oxymoronically embracing traditionally "unharmonious," "extreme" occurrences, either natural or technological—the stroke of lightning from "a tin cloud" or the noise of an "electric" saw which is, nevertheless, characterized as "melodious." This undermining of the traditional aesthetic hierarchy is epitomized in the image of "the iron gnashing of cacophonous worlds" with its striking combination of the subverted audial harmony and scatological connotations.

Khodasevich further redefines his poetic subjectivity: no longer a discrete entity, observing reality from some secured viewpoint, it is an entity at the moment of its psychosomatic disintegration. Nevertheless, in the last lines, Khodasevich, in a Baudelairean way combines the "low," technological imagery of this physical "exploding" experience with the celestial imagery "the alien spheres of being," thus still attempting to provide the overall symbolist framework for his poetics of shock. "The alien spheres of being," however, do not function as a transcendental signifier reunifying the distorted earthly self but rather enhance the non-individual, if not anti-individual, character of this experience.[46] Publishing it as one of the first programmatic poems in "European Night," Khodasevich, nevertheless, writes in his 1927 comments to *Collected Poems* that he is not satisfied with this poem.[47] Apparently, Khodasevich's reservations extended beyond the issue of its rhythmic and phonetic design overdetermining its semantic message.[48] He may have been also dissatisfied with its overly declarative and abstract proclamation of the principles of his new modernist poetics. In his other poems from "European Night," perceptively assessed by Struve, Khodasevich succeeded in thematizing the "cacophonous worlds" and "the shiver running over [his] skin" in the concrete imagery of postwar European metropolises and the predicaments of his poetic subjectivity.

The need to concretize his newly adopted poetics of shock was correlated with his refiguring of his lyric persona. The pre-émigré Symbolist model of the poet Orpheus with his transformative power of poetry is superseded in "European Night" by a new model analogous to that of a poet-flâneur bereft

45. "[T]he shiver running over my skin" is a paraphrase of the expression "drozh′ po kozhe" (goose pimples). Khodasevich's psychosomatic definition of his preferable creative state echoes Baudelaire's elaboration of his shock-driven poetics in his essay "The Painter of Modern Life": "I am prepared to . . . assert that inspiration has something in common with a convulsion, and that every sublime thought is accompanied by a more or less violent nervous shock which has its repercussions in the very core of the brain," Baudelaire, *Painter of Modern Life*, 8.

46. In the analysis of this poem, I have refrained from discussing how skillfully Khodasevich embodies its disruptive subject-matter into its sound instrumentation and rhythmic patterning; this has been persuasively examined in Bethea's *Khodasevich*, 281; and Michael Wachtel's "Vladislav Khodasevich as Innovator," in *Living through Literature: Essays in Memory of Omry Ronen*, eds. Julie Hansen, Karen Evans-Romaine, and Herbert Eagle (Uppsala, 2019), 70–73.

47. Khodasevich, *SS*, 1:440.

48. See Bethea, *Khodasevich*, 281; Wachtel, "Vladislav Khodasevich as Innovator," 72; and Weidle, "A Double-Edged Ars Poetica," 340.

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of a larger-than-life aura and inspired by the urban experience rather than by otherworldly sublime stimuli typical of Symbolist poetry.[49] Similarly to Poe's narrator in "The Man of the Crowd" and Baudelaire's lyric "I" in his cycle "Parisian Pictures," the poet-flâneur of Khodasevich's "European Night" implicitly manifests characteristics of a voyeur or an "amateur detective" who finds themes for his writing in wandering along streets of the metropolis and tracking down various urban phenomena.[50] Moreover, in Khodasevich's case, flânerie was not just a poetic trope; it exemplified his self-fashioning as a modernist émigré poet, which took place predominantly in the circumstances of his writing "Under the Ground."[51] Witness his comment on the poem, which he wrote on a copy of the *Collected Poems* belonging to Nina Berberova: "I saw him on Viktoria-Luise Platz. I trailed [*prosledil*] the old man (incidentally, some 50 years-old plus) to Kurfürstendamm."[52] Khodasevich, thus, incarnates the behavior of the narrator of "The Man of the Crowd," who obsessively traces the "mysterious" old man on streets of London. In his poem, Khodasevich probably calls the fifty plus man, whom he followed from Viktoria-Luise Platz to Kurfürstendamm, "an old man" not without setting up the thematic parallelism with Poe's and Baudelaire's similar characters, who function as implicit alter-egos of the respective speakers.[53]

It seems that, just as in Poe's story, Khodasevich's poet-flâneur's fascination with his "man of the crowd" stems from his semiconscious recognition of their similarity—now the similarity between his own predicament as an alienated modernist émigré poet and the act of (public) masturbation. In Poe's and Baudelaire's works the similarity between the flâneur and his men

49. Orpheus was the image prevalent in Khodasevich's pre-émigré poetry and central in his "Ballad" (1921), marking the highest point of Khodasevich's self-identification with the values of theurgic symbolism—which Ivanov could not fail to recognize and appreciate; see Bogomolov, "Zhizn′ i poeziia Vladislava Khodasevicha," 19, 25, 33.

50. Benjamin, *Writer of Modern Life*, 98; Rob Shields, "Fancy Footwork: Walter Benjamin's Notes on *flânerie*," in Keith Tester, ed., *The Flâneur* (New York, 1994), 63. See, for instance, the poem "Skvoz′ nenastnyi zimnii denek" (Through a rainy winter day): "I followed them for a long time, / And they came to the railway station" (*Я за ними долго шагал, / И пришли они на вокзал*), Khodasevich, *SS*, 1:28. In another poem, "Berlinskoe" (Berlin poem), mentioned by Struve, the convalescent observer-poet, looking through a café window and discerning a distorted reflection of his head, echoes Poe's convalescent narrator, meeting with his alter-ego in "The Man of the Crowd." See, likewise, Jason Brooks, "Peering and the Poem: The Poetics of Voyeurism and Exile in Khodasevich's 'Okna vo dvor,'" *Slavic and East European Journal* 55, no. 2 (Summer 2011): 245–63.

51. Significantly, the cycle "U moria" (By the Sea), which was included in "European Night" and which contains its tutorial image: "He is twisting his hands / Under black European night" (*Под европейской ночью черной / Заламывает руки он*), Khodasevich, *SS*, 1:254, was initially called "Cain" who appears there as the poet's alter ego. On Poe's and Baudelaire's employment of the images of the obsessive wanderers Cain and the Wandering Jew (another self-reflexive image of "European Night") in their flâneur works, see Steven Fink, "Who Is Poe's 'Man of the Crowd'?" *Poe Studies* 44, no. 1 (2011): 17–38; and Brand, *Spectator and the City*, 86.

52. Khodasevich, *SS*, 1:454.

53. See Frederick S. Frank and Anthony Magistrale, eds., *The Poe Encyclopedia* (Westport, 1997), 219; Dawn B. Sova, *Edgar Allan Poe, A to Z: The Essential Reference to His Life and Work* (New York, 2001), 148; and Brett Bowles, "Poetic Practice and Historical Paradigm: Charles Baudelaire's Anti-Semitism," *PMLA* 115, no. 2 (March 2000): 202.

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of the crowd derives from their common inscription in the consuming mode of urban spectatorship, where the flâneur presents only its more sophisticated form.[54] In Poe's and Baudelaire's works, this recognition leads flâneurs to its suppression in the form of the criminalization and demonization of their respective men of the crowd. Historically appearing near the end of the period that Poe and Baudelaire inaugurated, "Under the Ground" revises the tradition of urban spectatorship in a nutshell form, providing a poetic equivalent to its subsequent philosophical explications. First, Khodasevich ironically exposes "the secret" of "the man of the crowd," thus depriving him of his larger-than-life aura. Second, while the poet-flâneur ostensibly stigmatizes him as a "madman," their similarity, nevertheless, emerges in the poem both spatially, thematically, and intertextually, destabilizing the poet-flâneur's detached reading of the urban experience. Simultaneously, transferring the gap of the interpretation from the thematic to the hermeneutic level, the poem makes its very reading equivalent to the poet-flâneur's encounter with the limits of the self-secured urban spectatorship.

During his stay in Berlin in 1923, Khodasevich lived in a boarding house located on Viktoria-Luise Platz.[55] Along with Kurfürstendamm, this area was considered part of "Russian Berlin."[56] Viktoria-Luise Platz was likewise not far from various homosexual and transvestite venues of the rich sex nightlife of Weimar Berlin.[57] This meta-poetic spatial overlapping of Russian émigré Berlin and nightlife Berlin, which in itself blurred the identity contours of two marginalized yet distinct socio-cultural groups, corresponds to the poet-flâneur's problematic (self-)positioning vis-à-vis his "man of the crowd." His trailing the latter in real life and voyeuristically viewing his autoerotic manipulations, while replicating the flâneur's penetrating gaze on the diverse urban phenomena, put him in a position of the "watchqueen" or "look-out" in the homosexual "tea room trade," examined by Laud Humphreys. While the watchqueen's role in the public restroom homosexual practice is to signal when someone approaches, he "gets his kicks" by watching the action of others without participating in it.[58] The poet-flâneur's sexual integrity is thus deeply destabilized by the very act of voyeuristically observing masturbation, which involuntarily entails self-gratifying or homosexual connotations.[59] The thematic blurring of the line between the poet-flâneur and his man of the crowd has likewise its intertextual counterpart, where the old masturbator turns out eventually to be the visual projection of Khodasevich's own poetic self.

54. On the dynamics of relations between the narrator and the man of the crowd, see Brand, *Spectator and the City*, 84–88.

55. See Vladislav Khodasevich, *Kamer-fur'erskii zhurnal*, ed. Ol'ga Demidova (Moscow, 2002), 33–35, 473.

56. See Alexander Dolinin, "The Stepmother of Russian Cities: Berlin of the 1920's through the Eyes of Russian Writers," in Gennady Barabtarlo, ed., *Cold Fusion: Aspects of the German Cultural Presence in Russia* (New York, 2000), 238; and Vadim Andreev, *Istoriia odnogo puteshestviia* (Moscow, 1974), 247.

57. See the map of nighttime Weimar Berlin in Gordon, *Voluptuous Panic*, 257–59.

58. Laud Humphreys, *Tearoom Trade: Impersonal Sex in Public Places* (Chicago, 1970), 27–28, 49.

59. On the linkage between masturbation and homosexuality in the European cultural imagination, see Laqueur, *Solitary Sex*, 254–67.

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The Shock of the Autoerotic Intertextuality

Among other things, Khodasevich expressed his new post-symbolist poetics in a drastic reconsideration of his earlier approach to referentiality. Previously, his rich employment of intertextual allusions, primarily to the Russian Golden Age and symbolist poetry, was aimed at inscribing himself into the Russian literary tradition, envisioned as a coherent continuum of everlasting aesthetic values, both reincarnated in and endowing its auratic power to its attentive poetic successors.[60] Reconfigured by his modernist poetics of shock, in "European Night," intertextuality often performatively punctuates the "point of fracture," as he had intimated in his letter to Ivanov, in the continuity of literary and existential experience. Two main techniques accomplish this in "European Night." In "Khranilishche" (Repository) or in "Pered zerkalom" (In front of the mirror), literary and visual-art allusions underscore the inadequacy of traditional fields of reference to provide meaning for the modern experience.[61] In other poems, allusions deprive elements of the literary, mostly symbolist tradition of their aura by re-situating them in bleak surroundings of postwar European metropolises, for that matter, in the public subterranean restroom.

The "creator" of "voluptuous worlds" in front of "a tile wall" probably refers to Valerii Briusov's programmatic poem "Tvorchestvo" (Creativity) (1895). This meta-poetic poem reiterates the process of its own creation, engendered by contemplating blurred reflections of the moon on tiles of the stove in Briusov's flat. Briusov's poem epitomizes the triumph of the symbolist poet's creative power to transform mundane reality into an imaginary one. The suggestive imagery of the poem with its Mallarmé-like idiosyncrasy was considered incomprehensible. In his 1914 article "Briusov's *Juvenilia*," Khodasevich provides a detailed analysis, suggesting a mundane—now widely accepted—interpretation of the poem's imagery: the poet just indulges in daydreaming about the shadows of palms on the stove's tiles in front of him.[62] Khodasevich's half-ironic comments on Briusov's enigmatic daydreaming foreshadows his radically relocating it into the "underworld" of masturbatory phantasy. This relocating may have been anticipated by Briusov's own endowing the creative process with (self-)erotic tinges. Thus, at the end of "Creativity," the poet's daydream receives an eroticized self-gratifying tone: "Secrets of created creatures / cuddle me with a caress, / And the shadow of latania palms trembles / On the enamel wall."[63] Travestying his literary father

60. See Andrei Belyi, "'Tiazhelaia lira' i russkaia lirika," *Sovremennye zapiski* 15, no. 2 (1923): 374–88; and Nikolai Bogomolov, *Russkaia literatura pervoi treti XX veka: Portrety, problemy, razyskaniia* (Tomsk, 1999), 359–73.

61. See, respectively, "I lazily walk through the halls, / Sick of truths and beauties"; "Yes, it is not a panther / that chased me to a Parisian attic. / And there is no Virgil accompanying me. / There is only loneliness / in the frame of the truth-telling mirror." Khodasevich, *SS*, 1:268, 277. Characteristically, in the first case, Khodasevich disparagingly calls a museum a "Repository" (*Khranilishche*), as if by its very retitling depriving it of its traditional high cultural status.

62. Khodasevich, *SS*, 1:404–405.

63. Valerii Briusov, *Sobranie sochinenii v semi tomakh* (Moscow, 1973), 1:35. Indeed, this dream-like world became liable to sexual interpretations. Making the poem an object of

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figure's arbitrary omnipotence over his fantasies, their antithetical description ("Here he creates and destroys / his voluptuous worlds") is likewise self-referential, harking back to Khodasevich's 1921 poem "Gorit zvezda, drozhit efir. . ." (A blazing star, the quivering ether. . .) included in *The Heavy Lyre*: "And out of nothing I create / Your seas, Your deserts, and Your hills, . . .And suddenly at merest whim / I destroy this splendid nonsense. . ."[64] With a tinge of self-irony, Khodasevich reiterates the romantic view of the creative consciousness as a dialectic of authorial self-creation and destruction, which celebrates its supremacy over the constraints of empirical phenomena.[65] In "Under the Ground," this neo-romantic, demiurgical creativity, encapsulated epigrammatically in the phrase "Here he creates and destroys. . . ," conjures up "voluptuous worlds" that traditionally were forbidden entrance into the domain of pure art. The further description of the old man bolsters his self-referential origin. Trance movements of his body ("just rocks [*kachaetsia*] all over slightly") echo the semi-conscious trance in which the speaker of the 1921 "Ballad" falls under the spell of his own incantations: "And I begin to rock [*kachat'sia*], / embracing my knees."[66] Such creative self-stimulation on the verge of self-eroticizing is present likewise in other poems of *The Heavy Lyre*. In the poem "K Psikhee" (To Psyche) (1920), for instance, the poet addresses his own soul as his beloved, reciprocally eroticizing himself:

Suddenly, not enduring happy pangs any longer,	Вдруг, не стерпя счастливой муки,
cherishing our sacred union,	Лелея наш святой союз,
I kiss my own hands,	Я сам себе целую руки,
I can't get enough of myself.	Сам на себя не нагляжусь.
And how can I not love myself,	И как мне не любить себя,
a fragile and ugly vessel,	Сосуд непрочный, некрасивый,
yet precious and happy	Но драгоценный и счастливый
because it contains you?	Тем, что вмещает он—тебя?[67]

ridicule, Vladimir Solov'ev points out, with feigned indignity, the indecency of its imagery: the crescent moon (*mesiats)*, rises naked before the feminine full moon (*luna*, feminine in Russian). Vladimir Solov'ev, "Eshche o simvolistakh," *Vestnik Evropy* 10 (October, 1895): 847–51; see likewise Grossman, *Valery Bryusov and the Riddle of Russian Decadence*, 43.

64. Khodasevich, *SS*, 1:223.

65. See A. Leslie Wilson, ed. *German Romantic Criticism*, trans. Ernst Behler and Roman Struc (New York, 1982), 126.

66. Khodasevich, *SS*, 1:241. Iaroslava Ananko has likewise pointed out to the self-referential character of "mechtoi" ("by his wild dream"), which is used in Khodasevich's pre-émigré poetry to designate subliminal aspirations of his poetry; Iaroslava Ananko, *Kanikuly Kaina: Poetika promezhutka v berlinskikh stikhakh V. F. Khodasevicha* (Moscow, 2020), 263.

67. Ibid., 198. Roman Gul' referred to this poem as one of the prominent examples of Khodasevich's "poetry of narcissism" in his eponymous article; Roman Gul', *Odvukon': Sovetskaia i emigrantskaia literatura* (New York, 1973), 128.

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By overlapping with the theme of the self-stimulating solipsism, the self-referentiality of "Under the Ground" blurs the line between the masturbatory and creative imagination. Khodasevich, thus, taps into modernist literary engagements with masturbation as a trope for the trauma (and certainly delight) of autonomous imaginative rêverie, self-cultivation, and auto-representation.[68] Uneasily exposing the work of the masturbatory (and creative) imagination in a semi-public setting of the "underground" restroom, Khodasevich, at the same time relives the poetics of shock by the dramatized subversion of artistic, often self-complacent, autonomy as the premise of modernist art.

In his book *Khodasevich: His Life and Art*, David Bethea has likewise noted that the poem's biblical theme of Onan reconsiders the image of a poet as a happy sower from Khodasevich's *Grain's Way*, instead symbolizing the miserable state of the émigré poet alienated from his homeland.[69] Indeed, in his programmatic eponymous poem from this book, Khodasevich's quilted imaginative comparison of poetry and a peasant's plowing aimed at naturalizing himself and his own poetry, inscribing it into the symbolic domain of Russian history, peoplehood, and literature. While contrastively nodding toward his former poetic program, the very writing abroad of "Under the Ground," the "forceful" poem (in Harold Bloom's terms), however, challenges the essentialist correlation of the creative process with physical proximity to native soil, especially as Khodasevich's poetic self-perception was hardly rooted in a (neo-)romantic vision of a homeland as the "natural" wellspring of poetic creativity. His own non-Russian, Polish-Jewish origin and his strong opposition to both Polish and Russian ethnonationalisms, expressed on various occasions, primed him for distancing himself from the nostalgic conviction, widespread in the Russian emigration, of the émigré plight as bare of creative capacities. In his 1933 article "Literatura v izgnanii" (Literature in Exile), Khodasevich criticizes the "biological" denunciation of émigré literature on the basis of its "separation from the national soil and way of life" and argues for the creation of extra-territorial Russian émigré literature, drawing on the examples of Jewish diasporic literature and Polish literature of the so-called Great emigration in the nineteenth century.[70] This possibility of extra-territorial émigré literature was confirmed by Khodasevich's own "European Night": a nostalgic mood was not mandatory for émigré creativity. His fluid national-cultural identity and his uprooted, expatriate situation arguably correlated with his contemporaneous proclivity toward the modernist poetics of shock, announced in "The spring babble will not soften," which develops from precisely the willful, if painful, disavowal from cultural allegiances and aesthetic norms taken as "natural."[71]

68. Bennett and Rosario, "Introduction," 10.

69. Bethea, *Khodasevich*, 293–94.

70. See Khodasevich, *SS*, 2:256–58.

71. On Khodasevich's hybrid, Russian-Polish-Jewish identity and his critique of essentialist tendencies in contemporary Russian literature, see Edward Waysband, "Vladislav Khodasevich's 'On Your New, Joyous Path' (1914–1915): The Russian Literary Empire Interferes in Polish-Jewish Relations," *Slavic and East European Journal* 52, no. 2 (Summer 2015): 246–54; and "Between Essentialism and Constructivism: Maksim Gor′kii

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A Flâneur in the Public "Underground" Restroom

Khodasevich's destabilization of the poet-flâneur's sexual and creative integrity through merging him with his masturbatory reflection is intensified by the similarly destabilizing foil to the flâneur's paradigmatic locus of self-realization, namely, the arcades. Indeed, the public "underground" restroom and the arcades are intrinsically, but inversely, correlated in their urban localization and functioning. Originating in a single span of time as two prototypical urban representations of modernity, they are designed to domesticate the public space as both street and interior, where their visitor simultaneously is alone and exposed to others.[72] Arcades and public restrooms present two subordinate and interdependent loci intended to regulate the urban space and to serve the bodily needs of urban dwellers. While the arcades display their mercantile façade, the restroom is designed to conceal the arcades' waste.[73] Taken as Baudelaire's key definition of the "Modern," Benjamin theorizes "a phantasmagoria" of the arcades in Marxist terms as the powerfully illusory quality of this environment, determined by commodity production.[74] Mentioned in Struve's review as one of the main features of Khodasevich's Baudelairean poems, "Under the Ground" locates the need and origin for the "phantasmagoria" in the old man's and the viewers' imaginations. Such introjection seems in tune with deconstructive and psychoanalytic re-readings of Baudelaire and Benjamin, which argue that the shift in experience and consciousness conveyed by Baudelaire resists Benjamin's sometimes "brutal inscription of Baudelaire's poetry in its sociohistorical contexts" and are rather inherent in the human psyche or "endemic to the iterable nature of language itself."[75]

In relocating the phantasmagoric effect inside or under the ground, Khodasevich metonymized the human psyche by subverting the visual representation, privileged by the flâneur, and prioritizing the olfactory effect, with its disturbing potential to penetrate visible surfaces.[76] Indeed, the arcades' phantasmagoria is expressed predominantly in visual effects of display and consumption and achieves its foremost embodiment in surfaces of showcases and mannequins.[77] In "Under the Ground," however, while the poet-narrator behaves as a voyeuristic flâneur, the visualization of the "underground" setting is constantly hindered. In fact, the reader understands who is depicted in the poem only when the protagonists have left the restroom. In the restroom

and Vladislav Khodasevich on Russian Neo-Peasant Poetry," *Slavic and East European Journal* 62, no. 4 (Winter 2018): 672–80.

72. Alexander Kira, *The Bathroom* (New York, 1976), 193.

73. Todd, "Dirty Books," 209.

74. Benjamin, *Writer of Modern Life*, 36; Martina Lauster, "Walter Benjamin's Myth of the 'Flâneur,'" *The Modern Language Review* 102, no. 1 (January 2007): 140–42.

75. Rainer Nägele, "The Poetic Ground Laid Bare (Benjamin Reading Baudelaire)," in David S. Ferris, ed., *Walter Benjamin: Theoretical Questions* (Stanford, 1996), 122; and Sanyal, *Violence of Modernity*, 20–21.

76. Chris Jenks, "Watching Your Step: The History and Practice of the Flâneur," in Chris Jenks, ed., *Visual Culture* (New York, 1995), 146; and Rob Shields, "Fancy Footwork," 65.

77. On the treatment of the surface culture of Weimar Berlin by Russian émigré literature, see Luke Parker, "The Shop Window Quality of Things: 1920s Weimar Surface Culture in Nabokov's *Korol', dama, valet*," *Slavic Review* 77, no. 2 (Summer 2018): 390–416.

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itself, as if literalizing its "deep half-darkness" and the poet-flâneur's embarrassment, the very syntactic patterning blurs the clear visualization: the first two stanzas lack the noun definition of the actor ("[he] stands"; "[He] does not step back, nor turn around"); whereas in the subsequent two stanzas, only the cryptic pronoun "he" designates the old man.[78] Creating a gap in the poet-flâneur's and readers' interpretive control of the actual and textual reality, the subversion of the visual and semantic clarity deprives the old man's act of masturbation of its locus. The act of masturbation becomes a dislocated process conjured up in the observers' (including readers') imagination, preconditioning their participation in the shock experience, as in order to interpret correctly the old man's body language, they should be cognizant of its autoerotic semantics. The disturbing comprehension of this shared language results in the old woman's burst of violence, in the poet's outburst of rage and grief, and in the euphemistic and embarrassed interpretations of the poem by its readers. One may correlate Khodasevich's giving readers the vicarious experience of shock with the general modernist and avant-garde anticipation of the current widespread attempts to undermine the opposition between the critical-aesthetic and the autoerotic. Thus, following Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's suggestion concerning the unstable division between art and masturbation, critics have argued that this instability works likewise to break out of academic protocols that maintain secure critical distance from variously disturbing texts.[79]

In contrast to the consciously thwarted voyeuristic characterization of the old man, the main clues for deciphering the poem's locus are primarily olfactory. Indeed, the olfactory imagery of the first two lines of the poem literally ushers the reader into the interiors of "Under the Ground": "through smell. . . one interacts with *interiors*, rather than with surfaces, as one did through sight."[80] Just as the shock strips consciousness of its self-defense mechanism under the effect of urban stimuli, the "underground" smell functions as the sensorial metonymy of the shocking effect of the poem, compelling the reader vicariously to participate in its inhaling.[81]

The "smell" likewise exacerbates the ultimate victimization and castigation of the old man, which takes the form of direct physical violence: "a smelly broom / chases the madman from his corner." In an interconnected process of the dehumanization, the agent of this moral and social castigation is metonymized into a depersonalized "smelly broom" (in Russian the feminine *voniuchaia metla*), while the old man is ultimately depersonalized

78. Significantly, his masturbation is also defined through the double-refracted device of metonymy: it is not his elbow itself but "the frayed elbow of his *jacket*" that "is somehow thrashing convulsively."

79. Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, "Jane Austen and the Masturbating Girl," *Critical Inquiry* 17, no. 4 (Summer 1991): 818–37; Bennett and Rosario, "Introduction," 11; and Heather Love, "Truth and Consequences: On Paranoid Reading and Reparative Reading," *Criticism* 52, no. 2 (Spring 2010): 236.

80. Classen, Howes, and Synnott, *Aroma*, 5.

81. Characteristically, another subversive poem from "European Night," "Khranilische" (see p. 23), also undermines flâneur's visual preferences, now associated with his museum sightseeing, in favor of "modern" visceral experience: "No! enough! Eyelids are heavy / in front of the procession of Madonnas, / And so gratifying is that in the pharmacy / there is sour pyramidon." Khodasevich, *SS*, 1:268.

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and diagnosed as a "madman." His *behavior*, which so far has had no clear denotation, has finally been converted into an *identity*, assigning the old man a special place in the modern disciplinary society.[82] Thus the poet-flâneur's cognitive act of labeling the old man replicates the physical violence inflicted on him. At the same time, the discursive regime that the poet has interiorized has, in turn, similarly pathologized his own modernist creativity: notoriously, various contemporary anti-modernist spokesmen, from Max Nordau to Lev Tolstoi and from Russian Marxists to Italian Fascists and German Nazis, disparaged new art through the lens of degeneration theory.[83] This inner clash in the poet's subjectivity psychologically parallels the old man's instantaneous psychosomatic agony. Their parallel shock experience, analogous to its somewhat abstract description in "The spring babble will not soften," embodies the poignant birth of Khodasevich's modernist self via the subversive appropriation of the anti-masturbatory "tongues of repression" and the predominant mode of urban spectatorship. At the end of "Under the Ground," the traditional socio-moral and metaphysical domains whose norms were crucial for castigation of the old man as "a madman" themselves evince the feeling of "madness" or are eviscerated ("the Berlin day, the shining delirium . . . and up above is a blue desert. . ."). Consequently, the post-symbolist escape from the dehumanized and de-spiritualized world finds its niche (or "oasis" as a contrasting comparison to the celestial "blue desert") in a marginalized, "smelly" urban space of a public "subterranean" restroom.

The axiological rehabilitation of the "underground" as the place of modern creativity is supported likewise by its mythological projections. "Under the Ground" intrinsically combines the features of two prototypical plot-lines of catabasis narratives, which Raymond J. Clark conveniently distinguishes as descents in a "fertility tradition" and those in a "wisdom tradition."[84] In the fertility tradition, the descent restores a lost vitality to the earth, which was romanticized in a plot of resurrection of lost love (Orpheus and Eurydice). In the wisdom tradition, catabasis provides the hero with knowledge about the future and the afterlife (Odysseus, Aeneas, and Dante). The old man's masturbation in the "underground" with his subsequently being chased away by the old woman travesties Orpheus's descent into Hades in quest of his beloved wife Eurydice. In Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, Orpheus was eventually torn apart by Maenads because of his avoiding women and his homosexual preferences.[85] The vision of the old man as a degraded Orpheus (with a nod to his own various self-mythologizations as Orpheus in his pre-expatriate poetry) is juxtaposed with the speaker's own catabasis leading to his meeting with his

82. See the discussion of "perverts who were on friendly terms with delinquents and akin to madmen" in Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality: An Introduction*, trans. Robert Hurley (New York, 1978), 40–44; see likewise Robert A. Nye, *Masculinity and Male Codes of Honor in Modern France* (New York, 1993), 102.

83. See Olga Matich, *Erotic Utopia: The Decadent Imagination in Russia's Fin de Siècle* (Madison, 2005), 30; and Leonid Livak, *In Search of Russian Modernism* (Baltimore, 2018), 14.

84. Raymond J. Clark, *Catabasis: Vergil and the Wisdom-tradition* (Grüner, 1979), 15, on Orpheus's catabasis; see ibid., 99.

85. See Ovid, *The Metamorphoses*, trans. Horace Gregory (New York, 1958), 272, 297.

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purported father figure whose modern "madness" or "perversity" punctuates "the point of fracture" with the classical paternal wisdom from Virgil's *Aeneid* and Dante's *Divine Comedy*.[86] Both fertility and wisdom subplots variously support the intrinsic correspondence between two protagonists, making the poet's descent into the subterranean restroom indeed an inaugural experience in his transformation into a modernist poet.

Khodasevich's poetics of shock that reified the dynamics of his disillusionment in and the reclaiming of his modernist poetic self was inscribed in a particular historical-biographical context whose modification, it seems, entailed renunciating his disturbing poetics. Khodasevich himself was aware of the precarious stature of his shock poetics in the contemporaneous political cum literary circumstances. Sending "Under the Ground" to Maksim Gor′kii on September 24, 1923, Khodasevich acknowledges that its nonconventional character may create problems with its publication, in other words, problems in situating it within the "respectable" space of Russian literature: "Unfortunately, there is no journal that would dare to publish such 'poetry.'"[87] Putting "poetry" in quotation marks, Khodasevich self-ironically preempts the possible questioning of its aesthetic status, indeed subsequently voiced in Nabokov's review.[88] While correlating his poem's undermining of literary propriety with its own possible problematic positioning within the precincts of contemporary Russian literature, Khodasevich's remark, in effect, aligns "Under the Ground" with similar modernist attempts to redefine the interrelated aesthetic and sexual norms, attempts that in turn were deemed "improper" and censored. One can recall the epitome of such modernist endeavors, Baudelaire's *Flowers of Evil*, and—contemporaneous to Khodasevich's "Under the Ground"—Joyce's *Ulysses*, both accused of obscenity.[89]

In his September 27, 1923, response, Gor′kii pinpoints the roots of Khodasevich's provocative poetics: "it is a devastating poem; I hear something of Baudelaire in it; but, if I may say so, the last three lines seem superfluous to me."[90] One can discern a clash of realist and modernist perspectives on art in Gor′kii's skepticism about the last three lines. Without them, the poem might read as an exemplar of the bitter socio-moral criticism of postwar Weimar

86. The change of stereotyped gender roles between the pushy old woman and the old man, chased away, makes the latter likewise an ironic variant of the gender ambivalent, blind Tiresias from Homer's *Odyssey* (this identification is supported likewise by Khodasevich's subversion of the visual representation). In general, the situation in which the woman, and not a man, "violates" the traditionally segregated male-female spatial borderlines in restrooms is quite exceptional and further undermines the self-integrity of two main male protagonists—now in terms of their gender vulnerability.

87. Maksim Gor′kii, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii: Pis′ma v dvadtsati chetyrekh tomakh* (Moscow, 2009), 14:621.

88. With assumed indignation, Roman Gul′, for his part, consciously flattened the meaning of "Under the Ground" as being "harshly autoerotic" (*grubo autoeroticheskoe po soderzhaniiu*); Gul′, *Odvukon′*, 128.

89. Ian Scott Todd has made a suggestion that Peter Walsh's indignation about the modern omnipresence of the restroom expresses Virginia Woolf's own indignation about *Ulysses*'s scatology; Todd, "Dirty Books," 201.

90. Gor′kii, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, 14:246.

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Germany from the objectified point of view of some universal humanistic ideal.[91] The three last lines, however, where the personal pronoun "my" appears for the first time in the poem, bolster the personal presence and bewildered self-identification of the lyric persona, enraged and grieved with the old man, thus undermining secure detachment from the observed act of masturbation. While Gor′kii appreciates the Baudelairean subject matter of the poem, he, as well as some other readers of the poem, would prefer to eschew this traumatic self-identification, which is largely predetermined for the reader by the last lines of the poem. Gor′kii might also have recognized the formal "impropriety" of these lines that break from the rest of the poem both syntactically and formally: the ellipsis at the end of the line preceding these three creates the sense of a break; this is the only time in the poem that Khodasevich rhymes three consecutive lines, which strengthens their link to each other and helps the reader to single them out. Similarly to "The spring babble will not soften," "Under the Ground" seems to set up an implicit correspondence between its subject-matter and formal patterning. Approximately from the poem's middle, when the old woman dislodges the old man from his "voluptuous worlds," it moves from regular quatrains increasingly to longer and irregular stanzas with unpredictable rhyming. In the final 12-line stanza, this rhyming can both imitate the old man's somber ascent from the underworld and, reinforced by internal rhymes (*zlost′*/*trost′*), the relentless tapping of the walking stick.[92] For such a formal-conscious poet as Khodasevich, even these relatively moderate formal incoherencies might imply an "exploding" effect similar to the one described at the end of "The spring babble will not soften."

"Under the Ground" was initially published in the journal *Beseda*, edited by the sympathetic Gor′kii and Khodasevich himself, which positioned itself as an ideologically neutral bridge between expatriate-Soviet and European-Russian literatures.[93] Ironically, *Beseda*'s distinctive place in the ideological "no man's land" both allowed the unproblematic publication of such "poetry" and rapidly led to its own extinction in the intensifying, polarized Soviet-émigré battle-field of contemporary Russian literature.[94] The looming closure of *Beseda*, apparently Khodasevich's main venue of literary activity and

91. It seems that Iurii Kolker's terming masturbation "one of the painful questions of modern times" (see note 7 above) reiterates such a vision.

92. As David Bethea has pointed out, "the walking stick that taps on the pavement seems an image of impotence and frustrated sexuality," supporting a correspondence between two male characters of the poem; Bethea, *Khodasevich*, 294. Interestingly, this image likewise reinforces the inscription of Khodasevich's poem into the *flâneur* tradition, as Poe's narrator likewise launches in his quest after his man of the crowd, "seizing [his] hat and cane"; Edgar Allan Poe, *The Collected Tales and Poems of Edgar Allen Poe* (Ware, 2004), 211.

93. In 1923, Gor′kii declared Khodasevich to be "the best, in my view, poet of the modern Russia," *Literaturnoe nasledstvo, vol. 70: Gor′kii i sovetskie pisateli: Neizdannaia perepiska* (Moscow, 1963), 563. On Gor′kii's and Khodasevich's participation in editing *Beseda*, see Barry P. Scherr, "A Curtailed Colloquy: Gorky, Khodasevich and *Beseda*," in Alexander Dolinin, Lazar Fleishman, and Leonid Livak, eds., *Russian Literature and the West: A Tribute for David M. Bethea* (Stanford, 2008), 2:129–46.

94. Significantly, while in the first years of his emigration Khodasevich tended to republish in Soviet Russia most of his poems that had appeared in émigré periodicals, this was not the case with "Under the Ground."

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source of income in emigration, along with other circumstances mentioned above, triggered his decision with regard to his future ideological allegiances, which, it seems, could not but have its effect on the destiny of his evolving modernist poetics. His spatial move away from peripheral Sorrento, where he stayed in Gor′kii's villa from October 1924 until April 1925, to Paris (where, as it turned out, he settled for good), the cultural center of the émigré life of the period, unequivocally indicated his allegiance with émigré, anti-Soviet circles.

After several years, in 1927, this spatial and ideological move culminated in Khodasevich's accepting, after a period of bitter vacillations, the offer to work as a key literary critic in the right-wing émigré newspaper *Vozrozhdenie* (Renaissance).[95] This marked the end of his peregrinations, one could say flânerie, throughout Europe, providing him with a stable, if meager, income for exhausting work. Working in *Vozrozhdenie*, Khodasevich could not help but subscribe to its ideological agenda, characterized by political conservatism and literary traditionalism. Aligning with the conservative line both in politics and in literature was especially vital for Khodasevich, as he wished to whitewash himself from his cooperation with Soviet cultural organizations after the revolution and his cooperation with Gor′kii prior to his moving to Paris.[96] An aesthetic reflection of his dealing with his deep existential and ideological crisis, his shock poetics was incompatible with his current settling down as an adamant adherent of traditional ideological and literary values. Contrary to popular views that Khodasevich abruptly stopped writing poetry after 1927, Nikolai Bogomolov has convincingly demonstrated that Khodasevich did not stop writing poetry till the end of the 1920s and occasionally wrote it afterwards.[97] Khodasevich, however, certainly stopped writing in a style defined in this essay as poetics of shock, while retreating to the neoclassical or occasional comic exercises, often reminiscent of his pre-émigré poetry.[98] His deliberate ideological and literary alignment with

95. We can find evidence of Khodasevich's awareness of what sacrifices this work might demand in Zinaida Gippius's January 27, 1927, letter to him, persuading him to accept this job despite all scruples; see Zinaida Gippius, *Pis′ma k Berberovoi i Khodasevichu*, ed. Erika Freiberger Sheikholeslami (Ann Arbor, 1978), 75–76. Indeed, in his February 14, 1927 letter to his mother, even Gleb Struve, who highly appreciated Khodasevich's poetry, termed the poet "unprincipled" (*besprintsipnyi*), referring to his ideological shifts from co-editing *Beseda* with Gor′kii to the permanent position in *Vozrozhdenie*; Gleb Struve, "Rabota v gazete 'Vozrozhdenie' (1925–1927)," *Vestnik russkogo khristianskogo dvizheniia* 145, no. 3 (1985): 215.

96. His literary adversaries in emigration did not lose opportunities to compromise Khodasevich's solidified central position in émigré literary life by reminding the émigré public about Khodasevich's former pro-Soviet affiliations. See, for instance, Georgii Ivanov's 1930 article "K iubileiu V.F. Khodasevicha. Privet ot chitatelia" (On V.F. Khodasevich's Anniversary. Greetings from a Reader), published under the pen-name "A. Kondrat′ev," *Chisla* 2–3 (1930), 313.

97. Nikolai Bogomolov, *Sopriazhenie dalekovatykh: O Viacheslave Ivanove i Vladislave Khodaseviche* (Moscow, 2011), 227–28.

98. Actually, he occasionally wrote such poetry during the first half of the 1920s as well. But, as Bogomolov has shown, Khodasevich's very selection of particular poems written in these years for "European Night" was guided by their accord with the overall Baudelairean atmosphere of this cycle; ibid. 233.

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Vozrozhdenie's conservative line, sometimes respectful to a fault, was, in a way, his defense mechanism against his former "suspicious" (as it teleologically turned out) left-wing allegiances; similarly, his renunciation of the poetics of shock is negatively correlated with his former experiments in the new grounds (and "undergrounds," one might say) of modernist poetry.[99] My interpretation of the dynamics of Khodasevich's émigré poetic creativity takes issue with the version that it was primarily "the trauma of emigration" that "silenced Khodasevich as a poet."[100] The latter view perpetuates the essentialist devaluation of émigré literature, widespread in Soviet Russia for ideological reasons and expressed likewise in attempts, during the *Thaw* period, to "rehabilitate" Khodasevich ideologically on the basis that his émigré poetry expresses "his dissatisfaction with life in an alien land."[101] As I have shown in this essay, Khodasevich's "trauma of emigration" precipitated his more general reliving of "the trauma of modernity," which engendered his creative response in the form of his poetics of shock. In essence, his attempts to alleviate his trauma of modernity by normalizing his émigré status societally and ideologically led to the renunciation of his problematic poetics of shock; he did not, however, derive satisfaction from resorting to neo-classicist poetics, which is reflected in the gradual decline of his poetic creativity and his reluctance to publish his more traditional émigré poems.[102] Khodasevich's literary politics was likewise indicative of a conservative turn in the context of transnational modernism. Symptomatically, a year after Khodasevich started working in *Renaissance*, T. S. Eliot declared his orientation as "classicist in literature, royalist in politics, and anglo-catholic in religion," surprising some of his modernist comrades-in-arms.[103] After their "Sturm und Drang" years, high modernists started giving up faith in artistic autonomy for the sake of extra-artistic activism, in which writing often became subservient to sociopolitical causes.[104]

99. In one of his first programmatic articles in *Vozrozhdenie*, "Besy" (The Devils) (*Vozrozhdenie* 678, April 11, 1927: 2–3), for instance, Khodasevich presents himself as a protector of traditional literary values, personified in Pushkin's heritage, against the "devils" of both left-wing emigration and the Soviet Union, the ones who question Pushkin's centrality for contemporary Russian literature. Identifying political and literary extremism of the Bolsheviks and "anti-Pushkin" avant-gardists, respectively, Khodasevich singles out Boris Pasternak as a prominent exemplar of these "devilish" tendencies. See also Roger Hagglund, "The Adamovič–Xodasevič Polemics," *Slavic and East European Journal* 20, no. 3 (Autumn 1976): 241.

100. See Pavel Uspenskii, "Travma emigratsii," 208.

101. Livak, *In Search of Russian Modernism*, 119–20; and Edward Waysband, "Putem zerna: Epizod 'reabilitatsii' V. Khodasevicha v Sovetskom Soiuze (L. Chertkov i Kratkaia literaturnaia entsiklopediia)," *Literaturnyi fakt* 9 (2018): 68–76.

102. For a critique of current excessive use of the models of trauma, which often "overlook[s] how texts—and people—actively context the particular violences of a given historical moment (rather than simply 'bearing witness to them')," see Sanyal, *Violence of Modernity*, 4, 6.

103. T. S. Eliot, *For Lancelot Andrews: Essays on Style and Order* (London, 1928), ix; and North Michael, *The Political Aesthetic of Yeats, Eliot, and Pound* (Cambridge, Eng., 1991), 106.

104. Livak, *In Search of Russian Modernism*, 132.

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