

Artiklar

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Shock and Alla: Capitalist cures for socialist perversities at the end of the twentieth century

THIS ARTICLE PANS out from the special time and place of Russia in the early 1990s, a society deep in the throes of epistemic transition, in order to disentangle a less local phenomenon described by transnational queer theorists as the insidious linking of perverse modernity and the perverse body in certain instantiations of globalized thinking.¹ In the pages that follow, I pursue one such instantiation, mapping out the itineraries of modernity's normalizing metaphors as they make their way across the world, from the West to the (abnormal) rest, and as they remake the world in the wake of their wanderings. I ask not only how these lines of thought and their expressive repertoires link up "unhealthy" political economies with "unhealthy" economies of desire along the way, but also how the confluences they effect on the figurative level of language register on the real surfaces of the body – especially, I press, when the body in question attempts the reverse voyage, by boldly going against the flows of late-capitalism. Indeed, when dealing with the perverts of modernity, I wonder, how extreme must the treatment administered to a body politic, marked as pathological from the late-capitalist

perspective, be in order to enable its participation in a "healthy" global economy?

To answer these questions, I take a cue from queer theory and parse the poetics of cold war politics that made "enemy production and sexual perversity go hand in hand."² I ground my claims on the idea, well-founded in the field, that capitalist ideology forced communist and queer bodies into an inextricable embrace as enemies of the state in the latter half of the twentieth century. The negative foils for the heteronormative citizen and nation, these figures were forcibly excluded from participating in the Western modernity whose existence they were used to actively produce. Although the USSR constructed its own modernity narrative, one deliberately at odds with the American story,³ it nonetheless deployed a matching idiom of enemy-production, and yoked the sexual and political dissident together by virtue of a shared criminality and pathology. In order to expose the queer coincidences of these supposedly opposed ideologies, my analysis pauses in an instance of historical convergence, as the iconic communist society was converting to capitalism: the year 1992.

In this time of purported US-Russian reconciliation, a team of Harvard economists promised to fix Russia's ailing state-planned economy overnight with a program of "shock therapy." By applying pressure to the terms of intervention by these Western agents, I note certain dangerous effacements that occur under the signs of market democracy and human rights discourse in the immediately post-cold war context. To this end, I strive to render visible the multiple but unmarked *embodied* histories that haunt the terms of economic shock therapy, particularly as a late-Soviet institutional practice that immobilized political and sexual dissent, as well as a threat to the post-socialist queer body that induces its search for politi-

cal asylum at the time of transition. I reflect on the cases of three exemplary figures to illuminate the different faces of this "shocking" discourse: the American Dr. Jeffrey Sachs, then a Harvard professor who championed neoliberal shock therapy for post-Soviet Russia; Vladimir Bukovsky, the Soviet refugee and staunch anti-communist who made known to an international human-rights community the abuses of socialist medicine, including shock therapy for political dissidents; and Alla Pitcherskaia, a sexual exile from the Russian Federation who, at about the time of Sachs' felicitous arrival in her homeland, was fleeing violent persecution in the form of involuntary shock therapy used to "cure" lesbianism.

Close-reading texts from US government bodies alongside articles from the popular press, I detect their shared reliance on a set of medical metaphors that pathologize Russia for its experience of socialism, and verbally justify the violent correction of the former second world by a triumphant capitalist West. My analysis thus focuses not on Russia as such, but on "Russia," that is, its rhetorical construction in the American media of the day. My own methods of diagnosing this discursive situation are, antidotally, "antidisciplinary," deferring to "forms of knowing tied specifically to queerness,"⁴ and, in practical terms, weaving wonkily – promiscuously, even – amidst different cultural sites and scholarly fields to make my case against the straight line from perversity to progress. Between Pitcherskaia and Sachs, sexuality-in-transit and society-in-transition, the genealogy of shock therapy I discern grapples with this geopolitical paradigm shift at the end of the cold war. All the more, it reveals the queer to be very the quilting point of this epistemic transition, stitching together in a single figure the present perception of neoliberalism's inevitability, and the conflicting cold war premise that capitalism once had an ideological alternative. By

looping back to this knotty spot in the not-too-distant past, this essay attempts to tug at the seams of a narrative of global normativity whose smooth ascendancy presumes we keep our perverse little fingers out of the past...⁵

The first shock: Economics

In the spirit of abrupt transitions, let's begin at the ending. In the final days of 1991, and the first weeks of 1992, but days after the USSR's official dissolution into independent states, Russia started plotting its "return to Europe" (Sachs 1994, 505). A team of Western experts and financial analysts, invited by Russia's first-ever elected president, got to work with Boris Yeltsin and his team of advisors headed by Deputy Prime Minister, Yegor Gaidar. Together they implemented a series of rapid economic reforms including de-monopolization, liberalization of currency and trade, and price destabilization. This accelerated approach to marketization, notorious to us today as "shock therapy," sits at the core of neoliberal economics – first formulated as a quick fix for the post-WWII German economy by the major players of globalization: the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank, and the US Treasury.⁶ Then and now, shock therapy should not be considered a neutral mode of economic reparation. On the contrary, it pathologizes non-capitalist experiences of the twentieth century, diagnosing them as developmentally delayed or "civilizationally incompetent" (Sztompka 1996), and thereby authorizing violences, rhetorical and real, which allow "backward" nations to "catch up" with developed countries. In this scenario, Soviet Russia seemed all the sicker for having wittingly opted out in favor of a "new narrative" for modernity – "the emancipation of humankind through Communism" secured through social rights rather than civil liberties (Adamovsky 2005, 620).

Shock therapy operates under the assumption that countries suffering from cases of perverse modernity require the brutal, but beneficent doctoring of the West.⁷ In Russia, it would do double-duty as the cure that harms – at once a generous dose of economic medicine and also a retributive political reckoning with America’s deposed cold war foes. According to Joseph E. Stiglitz, who resigned as Senior Vice President and Chief Economist of the World Bank shortly after Russia’s shocking treatment, America’s political interests were as much at stake as was the reintegration of a robust Russian economy into the global market. As he recalls it, the US Treasury was “worried about the imminent danger of backsliding into communism,” and it was their opinion, shared with the IMF, that “the [Russian] transition [was] the last round in the battle between good and evil, between markets and communism” (Jha 2002, 167). Shock therapy was thus “intended to eviscerate Russia, to remove it as a threat for the indefinite future” (171).

It makes perfect sense then that the US media, at the time saturated with stories of post-communist societies in transition, should luxuriate in a sadistic medical lexicon as it described the painful procedures American doctors cooked up for sickly second world economies. Consider the following representative headlines: “Rx for Russia” (Taber 1992), “Is Capitalism the Cure?” (Harden 1992), and Sachs’ own “Life in the Economic Emergency Room”: “or, even more aptly, the shock trauma unit” (Sachs 1994).⁸ The following news item run by *The Seattle Times* in 1992 proves exemplary for its indiscreet basking in the rhetoric of violent remedy.

Poles offered up their *communism-rotted economy* to “shock therapy.” And today, Russia signed on for a similarly *drastic course of treatment* [...] Russia is in for considerable unpleasantness. There will be

unprecedented unemployment and a flush of inflation. There will also be confusion, fear and gross inequities, not to mention *noxious side effects* like bank swindles, street crime and fast-buck artists in shiny new cars [...] *Shock therapy will probably work in Russia, albeit with nagging aches and pains. As Russians brace themselves for free-market reality*, there is strong evidence here in Eastern Europe's most populous country that *the capitalist cure is taking* and the worst is over [...] while *the severity of the illness* may differ, Russia and Eastern Europe share many of the same *basic economic diseases* [...] Polish leaders have a *nagging backache* that is sure to *afflict* their peers in Russia (Harden 1992, emphasis added).

At its conclusion, this article admits that using "shock therapy to resuscitate the dying economy would hurt and enrage many people" in Russia, but it downplays the pain as dismissable side-effect of the "quick and bitter economic medicine" that would help the country "begin to recover within a year" – just one year – after the seven rotten decades of Soviet socialism that preceded it (Cox 1991).

Of course, shock therapy produced pains more palpable than these mere verbal violences of American journalism. In fact, it halved the country's GDP, hyperinflated the economy at a rate of over one-thousand percent, and wiped "out the savings of most Russians," stranding forty-three million "below the poverty line" by 1995, as an economic super-elite emerged to split the country's income differentials wide apart (Jha 2002, 38–9). Actual poverty and starvation ensued for many but, as Sachs spun it, these embodied consequences were a small price to pay for figuratively feeding the "starved service sector" with the fruits of inchoate capitalism – VCRs and other "Western consumer durables that [had] been out of [Soviet] reach for decades" (Sachs 1994). While imported commodities

were revitalized in Russia, native people were not: the crude death rate climbed dramatically in the early 1990s, and male life expectancy fell a stark six years between the collapse of communism and the conclusion of shock therapy. (Russian men eked out an iffy fifty-eight years, while their female counterparts consistently survived them by a decade or more; Davis 2001; Stiglitz 2002, 142–3).⁹

In turn, the mounting health crisis in Russia engendered a crisis of masculinity, or, in relational terms, set national heterosexuality up for a spectacular failure (Borenstein 2008; Baer 2009). As Russian men contended with their new situation of structural impotency, marked by financial marginalization and domestic demoralization (Ashwin and Lytkina 2004), Russian women were rendered incapable of fulfilling their own normative gender roles. The typical female litany of the day, couched fittingly in terms of economic *and* erotic scarcity, conveyed this compactly – “there are physically not enough [men] to go around,” and within that limited supply, there are “so few men who are worthy of [the many wonderful women]” around them (Kay 2006). With its men outnumbered and outlasted, Russia’s demographic emasculation heaped another round of shame onto a country already symbolically castrated by losing the cold war (Baer 2005; Borenstein 2008).¹⁰ This combination of social precarity and political passivity gave rise in the post-Soviet period to a virulent strain of Russian masculinity whose tenuous integrity was and continues to depend on the violent policing of the population’s racial and sexual purity. (A consummate expression of this logic can be found, for instance, in the coalition of hate in which white Russian nationalist groups, mainstream politicians, and the Russian Orthodox Church band together to ban the gay pride parades in present-day Moscow.)

For all of these reasons, neoliberal shock therapy and its lingering

aftershocks on Russian society lay bare the expendability of certain bodies on the path to globalization and in the maintenance of this new world order, which delights in forcing the former second world to its knees. The atrocious effects of this economic program should compel us to question what kinds of violence are tenable or even commendable as what Vinay Lal has named modernity's "total violence" (Lal 2002, 43); and further which personal and political bodies must bear the brunt of it. I try to do precisely this in the ensuing sections of this essay, by digging up the dead metaphors of cold war politics and forcing them to confront the living, breathing people, whose traumatic experiences of the twentieth century endowed this rhetoric with its terrible resonance in the first place.

The second shock: Politics

Despite the seeming novelty of its 1990s' instantiation, this was not the first time that American political discourse had figured shock therapy as the simultaneous sign of Russian backwardness and of America's role as well-intentioned intercessor and modernizer. Indeed, it was the Soviet Union's application of shock therapy on its dissenting citizens that first garnered Western attention in the 1970s, thanks to Vladimir Bukovsky, the democratic freedom leader in Russia and former Soviet refugee. Bukovsky's own suffering under Soviet psychiatry, and his preemptive crusade against these abuses in his how-to *Manual on psychiatry for dissidents*, were put into service not only within the Soviet Union through dissident channels, but also outside of its borders as an internal indictment of the excesses of communism that lent native authenticity to Western rhetoric against the USSR. For quite a while and on an international scale, he embodied the rejection of Russia's socialist past and present, as well as the newly universal campaign for human rights

whose energies, it must be added, were mostly aimed at the Soviet Union.¹¹

Bukovsky had a long track record of conscientious objection and would spend twelve years in prisons and psychiatric hospitals before his 1976 expulsion from the USSR. In 1963, he was arrested for "anti-Soviet agitation" and diagnosed with so-called "sluggish schizophrenia," a mental imbalance with few to no perceptible manifestations – save for such psychotic "behaviors" as an "excessive valuation of the West" and a desire to be anywhere but the Soviet Union (Helsinki Watch 1990).¹² "Sluggish schizophrenia" read opposition to the regime as neurological aberration or congenital illness, but by no means a product of historical circumstance, as though codifying Khrushchev's comment about internal resistance: "[T]here are people who struggle against Communism [...] but clearly the mental state of such people is not normal."¹³ Because its symptoms were dormant to the point of never actually materializing, the loose application of this "sluggish" diagnosis responded to the anxieties of the state in dealing with its variously dissident communities.

Soviet medicine interpellated sexual deviants with the same invocation of "sluggish schizophrenia." Thus, in the way that psychiatry neutered the potency of political protest by calling it crazy, so it emptied sexuality of its agency by considering it an affliction.¹⁴ Likewise the law hailed the sexual and political dissident with such correspondingly vague crimes as "hooliganism"; and it sent political resisters to hard labor for alleged homosexual activity.¹⁵ Perhaps because these categories of ideological and sexual nonconformism contaminated each other to a degree of institutional indistinguishability, political dissidence was often underwritten by homosexual panic. For Soviet ideological objectors, it was crucial that Western-based international human rights organizations recognized that

they were of sound mind. Affiliation with "truly" pathological subjects, like the homosexual, would severely damage their credibility and potentially prevent the Soviet anti-psychiatry movement from transcending the boundaries of the USSR. So, despite their shared plight of persecution, there was no synthetic struggle for human rights between the various marginalized populations of the Soviet Union. Political dissidence was sanitized of sexuality to curry international support, and thereby conspired in sustaining and obscuring other forms of institutionalized oppression. More than that, the insistent heterosexualization of both anti-Soviet protest and pro-Soviet ideology placed sexual subjects beyond the pale of politics altogether, making them more properly the purview of the clinic (even when they appeared in the courtroom).¹⁶

Thus in the late 1960s and 70s, shock therapy referred to a very literal and highly contested practice in the USSR. And also in the US. During this period, the excesses of the American asylum came under fire from the domestic anti-psychiatry and patient's rights movements, whose claim of the "myth of mental illness" came to the fore of pop culture in Ken Kesey's *One flew over the cuckoo's nest* (1962). This era witnessed a flurry of critique in the West of the cultural construction of unreason, including Michel Foucault's *Madness and civilization*, behind which, he claimed, "lay the problem of Eastern Europe" (Foucault 1988, 98). American anti-shock activists, framing their protests within the civil rights struggle, and holding up Soviet psychiatry as a negative example, were able to introduce legislation against involuntary confinement and treatment, ostensibly confirming the link between democratic representation and the right to individual self-determination. For, as psychologist and patients' rights activist Thomas Szasz asserted, shock therapy uniquely "condenses and symbolizes, in concrete and dramatic form, the ba-

sic moral-political problem that has so long bedeviled psychiatry, namely: Should persons in a *free society* be able to choose – that is, accept or reject – so-called psychiatric interventions?” (Szasz 1984, 111, emphasis added). In other words, at stake in shock therapy was the defining dilemma of America-Soviet enmity: What kind of relationship of the individual to the state and the society was healthy? But even this rephrasing obscures the historically disproportionate application of shock therapy to sexual dissenters in the US, where shock therapy was “deeply implicated in the gender and family role relations” of the cold war, designed to “make a woman more efficient in her home,” make (homosexual) men fall in line with heteropatriarchy, and generally rein in any “rebellion against parental and religious authority” (Kneeland and Warren 2002, 59–62). This detail demands we follow up on the first question by asking to what extent political sovereignty and sexual autonomy were conceived in either cold war camp as continuous concerns?

Because “sane,” that is, heteronormative, citizens of the USSR were still being subjected to various violent cures against their will, shock therapy circulated in the American psycho-political imaginary as a symbol of Soviet perversity and repression. Dr. Norman Hirt, for one, made this connection explicit in his testimony before the American Senate Judiciary in 1975:

World psychiatry has gone ahead so far that we can't allow the Soviets to throw us back to the Middle Ages and worse [...]. There are many, many things that have advanced and will continue to advance in our own country. In the USSR, this has all gone backward. That is, this whole KGB forensic psychiatric branch is a tremendous step backward to the worst Middle Ages kind of treatment of persons by psychiatry.¹⁷

For Hirt, this is medieval brutality "with modern methods" – of which shock therapy offers the most salient example and sounds for him the urgent call of intervention by the US government and humanitarian campaigns (ibid). In such a way, the persistent figure of Soviet shock therapy deflected the scene of institutional culpability away from America's own crisis of psychiatric legitimacy at this time.

While American psychiatric professionals erected a *cordon sanitaire* around bad Soviet medicine, for their part, Soviet psychiatrists attempted to block the stories and bodies of their unwilling patients from flowing into the West. In general, the Soviet system was undergoing a crisis of mobility in the 1970s, as it opened and quickly closed its borders to the brain drain of "third wave" emigration (Smith and Oleszczuk 1996; Chandler 1998). The traveling spectacle of dissident suffering exacerbated this national anxiety; it painted a grotesque diptych of Soviet human rights violations with, on the one side, a portrait of the domestic misuse of psychiatry to immobilize protest; and on the other, infractions of international emigration policies. In response, Western countries awarded asylum to those of the USSR's "internal exiles" selectively martyred by Western-based international humanitarian organizations. (As scholars have noted, such gestures on the part of the American government were not truly altruistic, but also played into the politics of détente.) At this moment, Soviet punitive psychiatry – often rhetorically condensed down to the violent images of electroshock and overdose – was interpreted by the US as the limits of cold war coexistence, and the type of persecution intolerable to the enlightened US in its alleged guardianship of civilizational progress and human rights.

To sum up, in the USSR, shock therapy traveled as a figure of

painful deterrence that punished or prevented the realization of politically "perverse" subjectivities; in the West, it stood in for the perversity of the Soviet state itself, particularly its irrational pathologization of the citizens most sympathetic to, and from, the Western perspective. Though this metaphor would be redistributed after the warming of bipolar politics, the sign of shock therapy itself persisted beyond the cold war, as did its embodied application. Since the anti-communist dissenters of the Soviet era are no longer subjected to painful disciplinary measures by the decentralizing post-Soviet state, in the remaining pages, I would like to turn my attention to those bodies that were still forced into shock therapy at the time of the eponymous policy. By so doing, I hope to limn the strategically shifting shape of persecution as it has been formed and reformed in the history of US-Russian relations and emigration practices. Whose shock therapy, I ask, is read as real persecution? And whose persecution is regarded as matter of mere metaphor?

The third shock: Sex

Let us fast-forward to the 1990s again, and return to the scene of economic shock therapy, now that we are better equipped to reckon with its rhetorical history and the historical subjects on whose broken backs it was made. In the midst of this abrupt transition to capitalism, the nascent Russian gay rights movement was also in the market for lightning-fast change. The sudden liberalization of the post-socialist social landscape was seen as a direct consequence of the rapid economic reforms. The US press depicted Russia as having eagerly opened itself up to the free market and all the personal and sexual freedoms that advanced capitalism brought with it. As one *New York Times* journalist put it, "privatization yields privacy" (Bohlen 1993) – apparently a novelty for former Soviets – and with

it the possibility of Western-style private identities, around which Western-style identity politics could coalesce.¹⁸ The American gay rights activists agreed that only after communism could Russia's sexual minorities be free like their capitalist counterparts.

But by condoning this naturalized link between capitalism and sexual freedom, the well-intentioned Western activists dangerously replicated the assumptions of the shock-therapeutic economists. Their movement to construct a global economy of gay desire, with the "global gay"¹⁹ as its emissary, mirrored the efforts of financial actors to install a global capitalist economy. Resting on the same story of US exceptionalism, this subgenre of the perverse-modernity discourse proffered queerness "as a sexually exceptional form of American national sexuality through a rhetoric of sexual modernization that [was] simultaneously able to castigate the other as homophobic and perverse, and construct the imperialist center as 'tolerant' but sexually, racially, and gendered normal" (Puar 2005, 84-5). Accordingly, the American activists represented Russia's same-sex lovers as deprived of self-consciousness, "still [stuck] in a cold war," caught lurking in "the Soviet-era shadows" having not yet been brought "into the more tolerant embrace" of "the new Russia, in the throes of a great democratic awakening" (Filkins 1992).²⁰ As a corrective, they introduced incipient Russian organizers to the tools of identity politics they had been honing at home for decades. And while Americans were dealing domestically with the "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" debacle, they offered their Russian students seminars on "gay and lesbian visibility" abroad (Tuller 1996, 8-9). While these circuits of sex and specularly crisscrossed between the sites of the concluding cold war, connecting them in hot new ways, some bodies got too tangled up in transit to be seen from either shore. I want to look at one of those transitional subjects now.

Alla Pitcherskaia, a self-described lesbian, political dissident from the former Soviet Union, and immigrant of the newly-founded Russian Federation, would wage a protracted legal battle against the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) and Board of Immigration Appeals (BIA) throughout the early to mid-1990s. Pitcherskaia had endured a lifetime of violent discrimination in Russia. She had been continuously charged by the militia with hooliganism, interrogated "about her sexual orientation and her political activities," and routinely beaten in police custody (Pitcherskaia v. INS 1997). She was expelled from medical school on the grounds of her sexual orientation. She could no longer hold down a job owing to the public nature of her harassment by the police. When she opened her own place of business with other "out" homosexuals, the Russian Mafia also began to bully her on a regular basis. Regrettably, the catalog of tortures goes on: "[S]he was kidnapped and assaulted, her friends were beaten, her car was burned, and her apartment was burglarized. When she asked police for help, they refused to send their officers to defend 'perverts'" (Lambda Legal 1997).

In addition to her being singled out by the militia and the mob, Pitcherskaia suffered the abuse of Soviet and post-Soviet medicine, whose agents threatened her with involuntary psychiatric confinement if she continued "to see women" (Pitcherskaia v. INS 1997, 2). After several unwanted stints of clinical treatment, she was diagnosed with sluggish schizophrenia. Her experience was by no means unique on this count. In her case before the Court of Appeals, "Pitcherskaia provided evidence that many lesbians in Russia were, and continue to be, involuntarily 'treated' and involuntarily confined in psychiatric institutions solely because they are lesbians. This 'treatment' can include *electroshock treatment* and sedative drugs." The issue of psychiatric persecution carried a particular emotional

charge for Pitcherskaia, whose own former lover had been "forcibly sent to a psychiatric institution for over four months [in 1985 or 1986], during which time she was subjected to electric shock treatment and so-called 'therapies' in an effort to change her sexual orientation" (ibid.).

Pitcherskaia left Russia and arrived in America as a "visitor of pleasure" in 1992. Soon after her departure, her mother apprised her that the mafia had destroyed her business and murdered one of her co-workers. It was at this point, "on June 2, 1992, [that] she applied for asylum on the basis that she feared persecution on account of her own and her father's *anti-Communist* political opinions" (ibid.). Indeed, her father was an artist and political dissident of Bukovsky's generation, who had been arrested for "antigovernment activities" and had died in prison in 1972. Later she would argue that she was "persecuted and feared future persecution on account of her political opinions in support of lesbian and gay civil rights in Russia," as well, but that "she did not include a claim for persecution on account of her lesbianism and her political activism in her original application *because she did not know* that it was a possible ground for an asylum claim" (ibid., 1-2, emphasis added).²¹

Shockingly, Pitcherskaia's application for asylum was rejected by the Board of Immigration Appeals on the grounds that she had never truly been the subject of persecution. Of all the possible premises for granting Pitcherskaia asylum, the BIA isolated the threat of shock therapy as the site over which to contest the legal meaning of "persecution." (This is especially consequential, inasmuch as the final resolution of this case set precedent for the legal definition of "persecution" in US asylum law.) The stark passage below lays bare the rationale for denying Pitcherskaia a safe-haven in the US. The BIA majority did not find in favor of Pitcherskaia

because, "even if her testimony [was] essentially credible." They reasoned:

Pitcherskaia had not been persecuted because, although she had been subjected to involuntary psychiatric treatments, the militia and psychiatric institutions intended to "cure" her, not to punish her, and thus their actions did not constitute "persecution" [...].

In a language that uncannily capitulates the logic of the concurrent program of economic shock therapy, Pitcherskaia – like post-socialist Russia itself – is forced to undergo a "cure that harms" as it allows the pathological body access to "healthy" geopolitics. Neither Pitcherskaia nor her native land has truly suffered, the story goes, for the rewards of market democracy far outweigh the painful process of rapidly correcting modernity's perverse bodies.

By deciding that what Pitcherskaia had endured was *not* persecution, the BIA sought to perform multiple acts of personal and collective amnesia. It commanded Pitcherskaia to forget her painful experience as a lesbian in the Soviet Union and the Russia Federation – of violent and involuntary treatment, of incessant and police-choreographed gay-bashing, of her lover's brutal, shock-therapeutic encounter with late-Soviet psychiatry, of the homophobic slaying of her friend and co-worker. The BIA ordered her to disregard her more recent and local mishandling by the organs of US immigration, reaffirming the myth of America's committed history to human rights by obscuring the country's own legacy of homophobic shock therapy and other violent but "curative" psychiatric practices for dissidents of sexual, gender, and political varieties. Correspondingly, it reduced the complexity of Pitcherskaia's appeal as a sexual

and political dissident, an intersectionality that put her at odds with official ideology no matter what "what" or "when" we are talking about.

Furthermore, this outcome revised the US relationship to its own deeply ideologized track record of asylum conferral. This amnesiac gesture has particularly painful implications for the sexually dispossessed, who, depending on their point of origin, may have come to expect the extension of citizenship privileges in situations of state persecution, as Pitcherskaia likely did. As Juana María Rodríguez has observed:

[H]istorically, in the United States the category [of refugee] has been selectively applied to admit those individuals emigrating from countries with whom the United States has had a hostile relationship (Cuba, Vietnam, Cambodia, and the former Soviet Union), and to deny entry to those who, while claiming persecution on similar grounds, are seeking to emigrate from countries whose governments are supported politically, economically, or militarily by the United States (Haiti, El Salvador, South Korea, or Brazil, for example) (Rodríguez 2003, 88).

We learn from the political geography lesson Rodríguez embeds above that the granting of asylum in America during the second half of the twentieth century hinged on an applicant's demonstrable desire to relinquish his or her communist homeland for the promise of democracy and human rights – all ideals supposedly afforded by the capitalist system alone. By contrast, in the age of Alla, "the post-Cold War period, a number of states [began] to recognize persecution on the basis of homosexuality as a basis for the award of refugee status," a political development made possible, according

to Jon Binnie, by the end of the cold war (Binnie 2004, 97).²² In the case of Pitcherskaia, and others like her, once the US becomes "friendly" with Russia, the national pervert does not have to do the work of a global human rights movement. In other words, the sudden partnership between Russia and the US presumably eliminated the very ground for asylum, as the appellate response suggests, since no threat to queers in the second world can logically exist after the cold war has been declared over and won by the West. In the words of the BIA, "recent political and social changes in the former Soviet Union make it unlikely that she would be 'subject to psychiatric treatment with persecutory intent upon [her] return to the *present-day* Russia'" (Pitcherskaia v. INS 1997, emphasis added).

But Pitcherskaia did not return to "present-day Russia" right after the BIA handed down its ruling in 1992. Instead she spent the next five years appealing her case until finally, in June 1997, the United States Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit in San Francisco unanimously granted the thirty-five year old – not yet asylum – but the ability to return to the BIA to reapply. The restrictions placed on Pitcherskaia's relocation to the US, and her half-decade of being fixated in immigration services and the American legal system, call attention to the double standard of movement in the post-cold war world. While she was frozen on the fringes of the US border, gay and lesbian Americans proliferated Russia and other Eastern European sites suddenly freed up for consumption by the collapse of communism. As Jasbir K. Puar has argued, "gay tourism [functioned] as an ironic marker of a cosmopolitan mobility available to very few bodies especially in relation to the growing criminalization of immigrants and restrictions on their mobility" (Puar 2002).

And this differential access applied to Russian travelers who fit the global gay profile, too. For example, Yaroslav Mogutin, the sexy

and irreverent twenty-three-year-old journalist, became the first-ever sexual refugee from the ex-Soviet republics in the Commonwealth of Independent States in 1995, upon fleeing persecution for his reports on the Chechnya conflict, which were sympathetic with the American position; and, significantly, after attempting the first-ever gay marriage in Russia with his American artist-boyfriend – an event which garnered a lot of media attention in the West.²³ It matters that Mogutin did this at the same time Americans were debating the Defense of Marriage Act, adding political cache to his cross-cultural gay engagement. The union of a Russian and American man symbolically packaged up the end of the cold war and the supremacy of the US, while reminding us that, in the international economy of desire, “some queers are better than others” for the ideological labor they can do (Puar and Rai 2002, 127). Surely, market democracy has its perks for a certain class of homonormative subject or global gay – whose very being is based on an “evolutionary model of modernity” with “the recognition of lesbian and gay rights as [its] end point” in the West (Binnie 2004). But for queers “who find themselves quite literally placed beyond the reach of federal protection, legal rights, or state subsidy, democracy is simply the name of their exclusion” (Halberstam 2005, 35), market capitalism the means, and people like Alla Pitcherskaia the living proof.

Aftershocks

As economic shock therapy was giving Russia a metaphorical make-over from rival to friendly, if inferior, partner in world politics in the 1990s, embodied shock therapy seemed no longer able to bear its literal weight. Instead, in its clinical capacity, it could only stand in for the historical elsewhere of cold war enmity. As a form of somatic and psychic persecution, it belonged to the irrecoverable Soviet past,

unimaginable in the moment when Americans were helping Russians over to the other ideological side. And this inconceivability is the very essence of shock therapy in all of its applications – whether rhetorical or corporeal, capitalist or communist, pre- or post-1991. It uses violence to make us forget about things in the past we find too painful to contemplate as part of our present, as individuals, as whole societies, and as globalized economies. Even today, despite our seemingly endless distance from the era of bipolar politics, shock therapy cannot be forgotten, not least of all because it has not receded from the international horizon. It persists as a staple of neoliberal policy applied to the developing world, as well as a tactic of punitive psychiatry in *present-day* Russia used to disempower sex and gender activism.²⁴ Indeed shock therapy does not belong to a “then and there” opposed to a “here and now,” categories carved up sharply by transition; rather it needs to be rethought in the urgent and transnational terms that Jacqui Alexander proposes of a “here and there,” “then and now” (Alexander 2006, 246).

For this act of anamnestic defiance against shock therapy’s forced forgetting, “another historical memory must organize our practice” (Puar and Rai 2002), and guide us to see continuities as well as breaks in geopolitical logics and landscapes over the *longue durée*. As an opening gambit, this article has doubled back to a few disappeared stories about the nowhere-nowadays of the former second world from the point of view of the first. That contemporary queer theory quite often eclipses this time and place may symptomatize its own genesis within the chronotope of neoliberalism, whose geographic and temporal inequities are reproduced as the invisible horizon of the literature. Given the degree to which Russia and other states in Central and Eastern Europe were instrumental foils for capitalist identity *before* the fall of communism, we should be

shocked by this apparent incuriosity *after* the era of transition, and awed by the seeming breeziness with which these once oppositional spaces are assimilated into the West's conception of itself, in terms of LGBT activism and academic discourse. If queer theory, for its part, wants to go global in good faith, and account for the "borderless" world in which we now live and love, then it must start to interrogate the terms of its transition to "transnational" (Grewal and Kaplan 2001). And what better way to get at the beginning of transition than by starting with the end?

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NOTES

1. I have in mind the *Perverse Modernities* series of queer theory books published by Duke University Press and co-edited by Lisa Lowe and Judith Halberstam, which emphasizes embodied sexuality and "such perversities [that pose a] challenge to modern assumptions about historical narrative and the nation-state," over and against narratives of normativity and health. In sync with its substance, the series stresses the critical function of style, and accordingly "highlights intellectual 'perversities,' from disciplinary infidelities and epistemological promiscuity, to theoretical irreverence and heterotopic imaginings," as the present essay similarly essays. This article is indebted to self-avowed work in perverse modernity studies, such as Alexander 2006 and Puar 2007.
2. From an interview with M. Jacqui Alexander during a book-signing at UC Berkeley on November 6, 2006. For the American case, see Corber 1997 and Johnson 2004.
3. For the most thorough investigation of the ways in which the Soviet Union invented "a specifically socialist civilization based on the rejection of capitalism," consult the seminal history Kotkin 1995.
4. Under Jack's *nom de plume*, see Halberstam 2012, 147. For a recent metacritical sampling of the strange and sundry forms queer method can take, see Browne and Nash 2010.
5. I borrow this loopy language from the co-editors of the current volume to sketch out the "knotted time" of entanglement between Eastern Europe, Western LGBT politics, and global sexuality studies, see Mizielska and Kulpa 2011.
6. For a comparative analysis of economic shock therapy in the developing world

- as the primary implement of American-emanating "disaster capitalism," consult Klein 2007. Though Klein also pursues the connections between economic and embodied shock therapy, her analysis eclipses the coincidences between these two literally linked practices in the Russian case, arguably because her argument does not account for state-sponsored violence perpetrated against citizens outside of capitalist systems.
7. While, according to most Western commentators, Russia's transition to capitalism was tantamount to its reformation into a recognized form of modernity, Prem Shankar Jha notes how, on the contrary, shock therapy's "de-industrialisation" of the "modern" Russian economy entailed "what one writer on Russia has called the de-Modernisation of a twentieth-century state," rendering it a closer resemblance to "Europe in feudal times" (2002, 57). The proposed alternative to shock therapy, so-called gradualism, differed in tempo but not in neoliberal intent.
 8. Tellingly, the *New York Times* printed an article on Sachs and shock therapy in its "Health" section.
 9. Jha 2002 and Klein 2007 supply relevant statistical information regarding the subsequent health and demographic crises that emerged as an effect of shock therapy's gutting socialized medical programs.
 10. On the feminization of formerly socialist spaces, and the complex dialectics of political penetration after the cold war, see Kitlinski and Lockard 2004.
 11. The foundational document of the modern human rights movement, the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights, has been "a partisan battering ram" since its adoption in 1948, "used by both sides in the Cold War to accuse the other of being the next Hitler," focusing with special intensity on "Soviet abuses" of human rights since the late 1960s (Klein 2007, 118).
 12. The Russian – *vialotekushchaia shizofreniia* – is translated alternately as "sluggish," "slow-flowing," "creeping," "latent," "soft," "non-psychotic," "pseudoneurotic," "ambulatory," "subclinical," and "borderline" schizophrenia (Calloway 1993, 149–50).
 13. Khrushchev is quoted from the May 24, 1959 edition of the primary Soviet newspaper, *Pravda*.

14. On the slippery relationship between repressive Soviet sexology and Soviet "repressive psychiatry," see Healey 2001 and Gessen 1994.
15. For the legal and penal overlap between political dissidence and sexual deviance, see Healey 2001 and Kozlovskii 1986. A similar impulse to purge political dissidence of sexual deviance runs throughout the canon of camp literature, as Adi Kuntsman has convincingly argued (2008 and 2009).
16. The confluence of criminal and clinical discourses of homosexuality in the Russian revolutionary era has been thoroughly documented in Healey 2009.
17. Testimony submitted to the Subcommittee to Investigate the Administration of the Internal Security Act and Other International Security Laws of the Committee of the Judiciary United States Senate, 1975.
18. For this crude notion that Russian culture, especially under socialism, lacked a concept of privacy to match their very un-Western experience of total exposure precedes the era of shock therapy and indeed spans the length of the cold war, consult Boym 1994.
19. This concept of the global gay was coined in Altman 1997, and fleshed out for the Russian context in Baer 2002.
20. One gay journalist from San Francisco was in Moscow the moment when the LGBT and capitalist agendas fell into synchrony, a coincidence he is keen to point out. "*Our queer delegation had arrived in Russia at an auspicious moment*" the summer 1991, when the "control of events was clearly slipping from Gorbachev's grasp, and the ultimate success of his reforms was in doubt. During the past year, the Soviet leader, hesitant and fearful, had swung back and forth between the Kremlin hard-liners, urging him to impose order by force and *the democrats and the capitalists yearning for more freedom and open markets.* [...] Amid these developing freedoms, a tiny gay and lesbian rights movement percolated noisily" (Tuller 1996, 15, emphasis added).
21. A mere two years after Pitcherskaia's original petition to the INS for asylum, as she was still filing appeals with the BIA, the then Attorney General Janet Reno expanded asylum law to protect sexual minorities against persecution as

a social group. Some legal scholars have reasoned that she would have been granted refuge had she filed with the INS in 1994 or after. It is precisely the out-of-syncness of Pitcherskaia's case that poses a threat to smooth stories of transition. In effect, she fell between two epistemes: her persecution disappeared into the cracks of the cold war past, while literally defining the terms of the post-cold war future. For the history of asylum law based on sexual orientation, and a focused analysis of Pitcherskaia's case in particular, see Bennett 1999 and Bowerman 1997.

22. It should also be noted that: "In the United States, new regulations adopted in 1989 abolished the automatic and unlimited entry of Soviet emigrants into the country as refugees and restricted the total number of persons from the USSR who would be admitted as regular immigrants to 50,000 annually" (Heitman 1991, 12).
23. For the details of the marriage attempt and the other events that led up to Mogutin's application for asylum, see Mogutin 1995.
24. Though she was not subjected to shock treatment nor other punitive psychiatric "cures", journalist Larisa Arap, a punk feminist from Pussy Riot was tagged by the court psychiatrist as suffering from "mixed personality disorder," an echo of the Soviet diagnosis, with symptoms shared by sluggish schizophrenia, including "stubbornness and a tendency to insist categorically on her own opinion as well as a tendency toward oppositional forms of behavior."

ABSTRACT

Armed with transnational queer theory in hand, this article returns to the primal scene of post-socialist transition – the year 1992 – in order to unpack the political and cultural baggage that the era's primary metaphor of shock therapy smuggles in from the preceding episteme of cold war. While conjuring up the neoliberal program for rapidly converting "sickly" second world economies to first-world capitalisms, shock therapy simultaneously points a less figurative finger at the clinical practice by which the late-socialist state attempted to con-

vert lesbian desire into "healthy" heterosexuality. The embodied and economic terms of shock therapy converge in the single person of Alla Pitcherskaia, a Russian lesbian seeking political asylum in the United States in 1992, at the precise moment of economic shock, on the grounds that she faced persecution for her sexuality in Russia in the form of shock therapy and other psychiatric "cures." By restaging Pitcherskaia's symbolic drama, and enlisting a small supporting cast of shocked and shocking historical personalities, this article shows the second world queer to be the very quilting point of post-cold war geopolitics, not to mention a mostly unthinkable figure in the queer theory that comes out of this neoliberal chronotope.

SAMMANFATTNING

Beväpnad med transnationell queerteori vänder denna artikel tillbaka till 1992 – urscenen för andra världens övergång – för att packa upp det politiska och kulturella bagage som periodens främsta metafor, chockterapi, smugglar in från det föregående epistemet, det kalla krigets. Avsikten är att komplicera historien om ett friktionsfritt framåtskridande från tiden av ideologisk bipolaritet ("då") till kapitalistisk globalisering ("nu"), på sätt som gör att "post-" alltför lättvindigt påförs forna socialistiska sfärer, och genom vilka "andra världen" försvinner som kategori i politisk diskurs och kritisk analys. Den andra världen får ett andra liv i detta argument, och reaktiveras som del av ett övergivet semantiskt fält som det transitionella begreppet "chockterapi" annars el-stängslar av från vår samtid. Samtidigt som det associerar till det nyliberala programmet för snabb förvandling av andra världens "sjuka" ekonomier till första världens kapitalism, betecknar "chockterapi" också den kliniska praktik den sensocialistiska staten sökte förvandla lesbiskt begär till "frisk" heterosexualitet med. I bägge dessa valenser används disciplinärt våld för att rätta till misslyckanden eller avvikelser och framkalla glömska hos individuella och samhälleliga kroppar. Genom att pressa tidigare tillstånd in i det förflutna, uttraderas spåren av övergången.

Chockterapiens två dolda sidorna möts och blir tydliga i en speciell person, Alla Pitcherskaia, en rysk lesbisk kvinna som sökte politisk asyl i Förenta staterna 1992. När som hennes hemland drabbades av den fria marknadens första konvulsioner, orsakade av ekonomisk chock, flydde Pitcherskaia förföljelse på grund av sexuell läggning, i form av chockterapi och andra psykiatriska ”kurer” administrerade av den ryska staten. Hennes ansökan om en fristad hos Rysslands forna ideologiska fiende avlogs, och hennes erfarenheter av förföljelse förnekades av USA:s immigrationsmyndigheter, som därigenom strödde salt i såren hon fick genom att falla mellan stolarna hos två politiska kronotoper. (Betecknade nog kom Pitcherskaias prejudicerande fall att definiera ”förföljelse” i Amerikanska asyllagar efter kalla kriget, trots att hennes ansökan föregick erkännandet av minoritetssexualitet som grund för rättsligt skydd med bara två år.) Genom att återuppsätta detta symboliska drama och engagera en mindre birollsbesättning av chockade och chockerande historiska personligheter, visar denna artikel att andra världens queer är själva nodalpunkten i perioden efter kalla kriget, för att nu inte tala om att vara en, för det mesta, otänkbar figur i den queerteori som uppstod vid denna framväxande, nyliberala punkt. Till sammans med läsarna av denna text stannar författaren till i det förflutna för att minnas Pitcherskaias smärtsamma erfarenhet av chockterapi, i dubbel bemärkelse, och försöker på det sättet öppna upp övergångens oavslutade projekt.

Keywords: cold war, legal persecution, political asylum, queer theory, sexual dissidence, shock therapy