Moscow. It is unclear whether it is an old Imperial Moscow, a Soviet capital or a contemporary city. The wild folk dancing on the stage where only high Russian ballet is performed captures

3 Ibid., 36.
7 Ibid., 275.
9 Benjamin, W., “Moscow”, 22.
10 Ibid.
11 Here I mean the episode Mickey Mouse in the Donostialaya that was introduced in February 2006, which I will discuss further in this article.
12 Benjamin, W., “Mickey Mouse”, 545.
13 H. Wells called Lenin a “dreamer in the Kremlin” after his meeting with the Communist leader in Moscow in 1920.
14 Benjamin, W., “Mickey Mouse”, 545.
15 Here I apply Henri Lefebvre’s theory of the social production of space and “spatialization”. His concept greatly influenced modern urban theory and drew attention from the space itself to the social mechanisms and relations that participate in its production and formation, as well as in the perception (Lefebvre, 1955/1991) of the city “Natural” space in this case is the initial space that the new state inherited from the Russian Empire, and can be compared to the space of nature that explores enter when discovering a new land and beginning its development. Since the new state broke any ties to previous eras, it began the process of re-appropriating that space by destroying the sites of immediate reference to the space that it had divested itself in order to make that space “appropriate” for the construction of the new state and implementation of the new ideology. The Bolshevik state commissioned the production of a living environment that could raise newly formed citizens and fit them into the ideological communist political and social framework. Thus Russian architects of the first decades after the Revolution could not simply remain artists and constructors but were involved in the process of producing the new “appropriate space”, as Lefebvre names it (Lefebvre, 1974/1991: 58), which was required by Soviet ideology and without which the ideas of social reconstruction “completely lose their meaning” (Lefebvre, 1974/1991: 58). After the process of appropriation was over and the social production of the new state, the space was complete, the space became “absolute”, meaning that it could fully resemble the state and translate its ideology through its spatial organization and architecture.
16 The program that was started in 1935 with the goal of providing the population with housing under the initial rule “1 room – 1 adult”. Later, a minimum of 9 m² for an adult was established. The program was realised by confiscating the excess rooms and square meters from the previous owners and transferring them to the new tenants, mostly workers, resulting in the mass formation of communal apartments.
17 Benjamin, W., “Mickey Mouse”, 545.
18 Ibid.
19 Ibid., 735.
20 Benjamin, W., “Mickey Mouse”, 22.
21 Benjamin, W., “Experience and Poverty”, 735.
24 Paul Schoenbert (1865—1945) was a German thinker, poet and writer of fantastic novels, and the author of the cult book Glasarchitekt (1914), a treatise on the glass architecture inspired by the works by Bruno Taut.
26 Ibid.
27 Ibid.
28 Benjamin, W., “Moscow”, 21.
29 Ibid.
30 Ibid.
31 Ibid., 23.
32 Ibid., 22.
33 Ibid., 24.
34 Ibid., 22.
36 Citation from “Das Passagenwerk” (292) in Benjamin, W., “Experience and Poverty”, 735.
38 Benjamin, W. “Mickey Mouse”, 22.
39 In the Moscow essay Benjamin wonders: “Where else is it conceivable that a distinguished military leader could one day be made a director of a great state theater” — referring to a story of a general appointed to the position of director of the Theater of Revolution, as the Moscow Academic Theater named after Vladimir Mayakovski, the former theater of Meyerhold, was then called (Benjamin, 1999: 29).
40 Benjamin, W., “Moscow”, 29.
41 Benjamin, W., “Experience and Poverty”, 735.
42 Ibid., 270.
43 Ibid., 730.
44 Citation in Heynen, Architecture and Modernity, 101.
45 Benjamin, W., “Moscow”, 28.
46 Ibid., 29.
47 Here I apply the ideas of social reformation “completely lose their meaning” (Lefebvre, 1974/1991: 58) which was required by Soviet ideology and without which the ideas of social reconstruction “completely lose their meaning” (Lefebvre, 1974/1991: 58) which was required by Soviet ideology and without which the ideas of social reconstruction “completely lose their meaning” (Lefebvre, 1974/1991: 58). After the process of appropriation was over and the social production of the new state, the space was complete, the space became

**abstract**

In his contribution to the volume Russian Literature since 1991 entitled “The Postmodernist Novel”, Mark Lipovetsky makes the now rather widespread claim that the Russian postmodernist post-Soviet novel represents a break with the totalizing tendencies of the socialist realist novel and opens for new ways of experiencing and conceptualizing the world. In this paper I critically examine this claim on the basis of reading Viktor Pelevin’s Chapaev i Pustota (Transl. as Buddha’s Little Finger or Clay Machine Gun) against the backdrop of contemporary debates about realism and simulacra. The basic narrative of the novel is set in the civil war in post-revolutionary Russia and told through the first person perspective of Petr Pustota. Yet, by adding words, concepts from a post-Soviet era and postmodernist narrative style, Pelevin allegedly undermines the hegemony of the totalizing Soviet narrative. Although Pelevin’s able to perorate the Soviet narrative, the question remains if he indeed really is able to open up for an non-totalizing narrative about Russian political history. On the contrary, the Soviet myth of Chapaev lends itself to the totality of the private myth.

**Keywords:** postmodernism, Soviet myth, post-Soviet, Viktor Pelevin.

PELEVIN’S TREATMENT OF THE SOVIET LEGACY IN THE NOVEL IS THOROUGHLY IRONIC.

The term simulacra is in itself not unambiguous. In the 1980s Baudrillard elaborated the notion of simulation as a system of representation that produces a world of signs that is not only different from the real world, but in some cases is more real than it. Baudrillard argued that the simulacrum is the good mode of destruction, the good nihilism and the good creative chaos that Nietzsche called for in the moment of Pop Art. “PELEVIN’S IRONIC.”

By contrast, Pelevin’s treatment of the Soviet legacy in the novel is thoroughly ironic. It can be understood in terms of “inverted stëb”, which he realizes in the form of phantasmagoric imagination. Pelevin also discloses how the contemporary world, which ought to free the hero from perceiving the mythologizing bonds to reality as real, in fact immerses the characters in flows of myths, clichés and images. In the chapters that take place in 1990s Moscow, there is an inherent opposition between on the one hand, the stern reality of science (the doctor and medicine), and on the other, insane phantasmagorical and private appropriations or consummations of cultural artifacts or simulacra. In other words, Pelevin seems to suggest that although the play with simulacra may offer some kind of cognitive escape from the Soviet myths or symbols in their claim to reality, the myths not only remain as such, but also they enter a different and no less problematic economy of distinctions between reality and representation in contemporary society. In short, Pelevin’s treatment of the Soviet legacy in the novel is thor-
oughly ironic. It can be understood in terms of “inverted stëb”, which he realizes in the form of phantasmagoric imagination.

Simulacra and the void

The term simulacra has been defined for our understanding of post-Soviet literature and its relation to Soviet culture. Irony, absurd, grotesque, critical or endorsing accounts of Soviet myths, symbols, historical narratives in a play with representation are undoubtedly characteristic of late socialist and post-Soviet art. Mikhail Epstein argued that post-modernism offered but a “new developmental stage” of the simulative potential, parallel to and greater than the panic of material production: this is how simulation appears in the phase that concerns us — a strategy of the real, of the neoreal and the hyperreal that everywhere is the double strategy of deterrence.” Throughout the book, Baudrillard consistently follows the substitution of the real for the hyperreal, and the substitution of questions of Kansas in terms of imitation, representation and reflection for practices of substitution as such. He defines the culture of simulacra in the following: “Panic-stricken production of the real and of the referential, parallel to and greater than the panic of material production: this is how simulation appears in the phase that concerns us — a strategy of the real, of the neoreal and the hyperreal that everywhere is the double strat egy of deterrence.”

The culture of simulacra appears as a form of destruction, a nihilism that leads to the “desert of the real”, where the real becomes an object of anxiety, consumption and production in an even more contingent relation between art and reality than in the case of realism. Simulacra is the place of the non-place, the stage of the non-stage, the narrative of the non-narrative, the real of the non-real, as an object of strategies of deterrence. Nowhere can the real be found, and nowhere can it be avoided. It is everywhere in a “produced” form and therefore destructible; but there is also nothing but this production, no art and no aesthetic experience that is somehow other to the experience of produced reality. Further, there is no way that experience breaks in its property. The world is the argument of art and time. And Baudrillard’s doom is quite faithful in the final chapter entitled “Nihilism”. He asserts that the world of simulacrum is the “circuit short-circuited by a monstrous finality.”

Although Deleuze and Baudrillard debated the notion of simulacra from different angles, both can nevertheless be situated in a discussion about the question of representation in popular culture, and in particular in virtual reality, where the real and the imaginary fuse. To begin with, Deleuze presents a certain apologia for popular culture in arguing that “the factitious”, in other words, what is set on the real, “must be pushed to the point where it changes its nature and turns into a simulacrum (the moment of Pop Art)”.

Baudrillard, furthermore, as mentioned, is fundamentally critical of the consequences of popular culture while arguing for an understanding of the way that the simulacrum becomes a kind of fetishization of the real. These two standpoints are highly interesting in the context of postmodernism as well as to Pelevin’s attempt to understand the promises and failures of the post-Soviet world. On the one hand, post-Soviet culture offers itself as a break with a culture bound by a totalizing authoritative realist narrative based on a theory of truthful representation, and therefore as the beginning of a free “paralogical” play of phantasms. On the other hand, post-Soviet reality is anything but this, as it is and can be understood in terms of “inverted stëb”, which he realizes in the form of phantasmagoric imagination. It can be understood in terms of “inverted stëb”, which he realizes in the form of phantasmagoric imagination.

Buddha’s Little Finger: a short description

The writer himself asserts that he posed himself the task of rec onciling the irreconcilable, which largely means fusing incompatible cultural stereotypes. His work with the Chapaev myth in Soviet literature was not to be read as deconstruction, but rather as a form of ironic reconstruction of the myth. The novel presents a form of contemporary adaptation of the myth for the post-Soviet popular literary scene, where the heroic qualities of the anecdotal heroes are spiced with narcotic hallucinations and instructive dialogues on Bolsheviks of subhuman of the contact of the world. Through the treatment of the mythical character, the reader is made to feel that the problem with the Soviet myth was not that it was a myth, but that it was a myth of reality, which always had the form of a
narrative historical reality in accordance with official Soviet his-
tory. These myths were cumbersome, tiresome and static, and always told as a quasi-realistic story about the hero-people of the
Soviet Union. Pelevin therefore departs from that myth in order to
form an ironic contemporary popular representation of a his-
torical anti-thesis.

The main character of the novel is, as mentioned, called Pyotr
Voyd in the English translation. Whether this Pyotr is something
or just a void, filled and ridden by the flight of his phantasms,
which in their turn are nurtured by narcotics, is ultimately
difficult to say. As already mentioned, Voyd is entirely con-
vincing that he is a hero of the civil war, but the story he tells is
utterly unrealistic and parodic. The reference to Chapaev owes
as much to history, to Furmanov’s novel or even to the 1934
film Chapaev by the Vasilev brothers, where the figure Petka ap-
appears, and to the endless jokes about Chapaev in Soviet culture,”
but these references are at the most the skeleton on which the
historical part is built. According to the Soviet myth, Voyd and
Chapaev are rather simple heroes of the people, and according
to the anecdotes they are narrow-minded, but in the novel they
are highly intellectual super-heroes who constantly engage in
Buddhist and quasi-Buddhist nihilist disputes about the world,
while feeding on alcohol and drugs. Voyd is presented as a poet
and representative of the literary avant-garde in St. Petersburg
on the eve of the Revolution, and Chapaev a kind of natural ge-
minus and Buddhist master. We follow Voyd’s flight from Moscow
to the provinces as he accompanies Chapaev in the civil war, but
most of the significant events bear the mark of something unreal,
since they either take place under the influence of narcotics, are
told to him as forgotten due to an amnesia after a contusion, or
bear the marks of surreal phantasms.

The world as reality and the distinctions between different
myths and realities is constantly called into question in the
philosophical discussions as well as in the narrative form. The
play with reality as imagination is anchored in the first person
perspective, so that we constantly read the world as narrated
through Petka’s imagination. The movement between the worlds
is affected through certain “signs of the real,” as Razdvaldskii de-
fines simulacra. The torso of Aristotle in the clinic with which the
fourth chapter ends appears in Chapave’s dream on awakening
from unconsciousness after a battle, at the beginning of the fifth
chapter. The fifth chapter ends with the cry: “Open the dyna-
mos,” and the sixth takes place close to the metro station Dynamo
in contemporary Moscow. In a certain sense, the narrative of the
novel is directed to the “reality” of the form: “I hereby move in this
imagination to the contemporary phantoms of some of the other patients in-
ternal at the hospital, where the main doctor Timir Timurovich
attempts to cure them. Yet whereas Pyotr’s phantasms present a
relatively contingent pop version of Chapaev and Petka, the
hallucinations of the other patients fuse reality with contem-
porary myths of super-heroes in American films and in Japanese
culture. We therefore only really follow the process of recovery,
or rather, the failed recovery of Voyd. In the clinic, he is charac-
terized as someone who refuses to acknowledge the new times,
and therefore clings on to the old socialist realist narrative. Ac-
cording to the doctor, he belongs “to the very generation that
was programmed for life in one socio-cultural paradigm, but has
found itself living in a quite different one.” (109) In other words,
he seems to be a typical sovok, that is, a typical reminder of the Soviet period in the shape of someone who does not want to let
go of the socialist past. However, as mentioned, as the novel pro-
ceeds, the refusal to let go of the mythical past begins to look like
rather normal behavior. The other patients teach him that he
must confess to, or at least pay lip service to, a belief in reality
in order to get out of the hospital, although no one really does.
The translucent patient Maria says:

“No, he said, peering through half closed eyes at the
bust of Aristotle, ‘if you want to get out of here some
time, you have to read the newspapers and experience
real feelings while you’re doing it. And not start doub-
ing the reality of the world. Under Soviet power we
were surrounded by illusions. But now the world has
become real and knowable. Understand?’” (109)

None of the characters in the contemporary part of the
novel, except perhaps for the doctor, experience “real feelings”,
and, as mentioned, the catharsis of the novel is based on the simulta-
neous recognition of the irreal reality of reality and of the reality
of the unreal in terms of the total nothingness of the world as a void
and in imagination. What is more, Pelevin entertains an un-
resolved ambiguity in the way that the relation between Timur
and Petka is portrayed. First, Timur wishes to cure Petka by an
injection that will lead him to recognize himself in contemporary
post-Soviet Russia, but the doctor eventually realizes the vanity
of this attempt, and instead chooses to help the patient to inten-
sify the experience of the past in order to reach a recognition
of himself in the form of a psychological “catharsis.” In the pen-
ultimate chapter, the doctor sends him back to the past, again
with the help of drugs, and Pyotr indeed reaches this catharsis.
He does so after a conversation with Chapave, during which he
realizes that “any form is a void” and that “the void is any form”
as an ecstatic and quasi-sublime fusion with the universe in the
imago of the Urall as the river of love at the end of the pen-
ultimate chapter. The mark of the success of this catharsis
is that the two parallel story lines meet. Finally Timur is able to
realize what Pyotr’s dreams and appear to him in his imagi-
nation. In the conviction that he is cured by this catharsis, he
sets him free, but when Pyotr leaves the hospital and enters the
Moscow “world” he is merely returned to his imagination to
the beginning of the novel and repeats the same acts. The novel
ends with the place and date “Kafka-buri, 1923–1943.”

The fact that Pyotr preserves his belief is represented as an
escape from the contemporary world, as a victory over Timur’s
limited idea of reality and as a mental illness. On the one hand,
that he visits the catharsis of the novel from which he is finally
able to enter the kitschy and ironic “Undefinable
River of Absolute Love” of the river Ural, which refers to one
of the most famous and productive anecdotes about Chapaev and Petka. There he transcends the historical boundaries of the
world so that he suddenly appears able to embrace himself in his two different
hypostases in the narrative. Thus, the all and the nothing seem to come
together – the world is nothing, a void, and as a void, it can enhance and be all in
that “boundless stream of life”.

In a play with words, Pelevin lets his main hero look for himself
as a search for the void, and he constantly searches as much for
the meaning of the void of the real as for the reality of the void
in the world and in the self. What Pyotr recognizes in the moment
of catharsis is himself or his self as a void, that is, as a non-entity
and non-existence. This insight is the kind of Buddhist wisdom
that Chapave seeks to bestow on him, and, as a confirmation of
this insight, Chapave tells him a parable about “a clay
bust of Aristotle, ‘if you want to get out of here some
time, you have to read the newspapers and experience
real feelings while you’re doing it. And not start doub-
ing the reality of the world. Under Soviet power we
were surrounded by illusions. But now the world has
become real and knowable. Understand?’” (109)

Lipovetsky aptly characterized the novel as a “paradoxical Biol-
dungsroman,” which captures the greater part of the ambiguous
structure of the novel, but which I would like to expand further on
the nature of this paradox because it is related to the problem of real
ity in general. In short, what the novel does, is to, as mentioned
in the intro to the first two chapters, where Pyotr follows Chapave to the Russian provinces
in his fight in the civil war after having gone through Chapave’s
lessons, and in his transmigrating with Timur in the world as the
borders between myth and reality, he reaches an insight into the world and the
self, as well as into the self in the world, or into the world in the self, according
to the scheme of Bildungsrroman. In other words, the central catharsis and climax
of the novel takes place in his phantasy of the 1930s and not in the alleged “reality”
of the 1930s. This introduces an ambigu-
yty to the catharsis and to the insight
that he reaches. The issue at stake in the catharsis is related to
the question of the reality of the self as established in the epigraph
of the novel and the quote from Genghis Khan:

“Gazing at the faces of the horses and the people, at
this business stream of life raised up by the power of my
will and now hurrying into nowhere across the sunset-
crimson steppe, I often think: where am I in this flux?”

(VIII)

Throughout the novel, Pyotr continuously poses the question,”Where am I?” The answer that he must reach is given by his
name. What Pyotr realizes, however, is that the “I” then only
represents an empty entity, and it does not really matter what
or where this “I” is. In the final conversation that leads up to the
final recognition, Chapave and Pyotr discuss precisely the ques-
tion of the self:

“Tell me, Chapave, who are you in reality?”

“Better tell yourself, Petka, who you are in reality. Then
you’ll understand all about me. But you just keep on
repeating ‘me, me, me,’ like that gangster in your film
nightmare. What does that mean – ‘me’? What is it? Try tak-
ing a look for yourself”? (157) […]

“How fascinating! I whispered quietly, so am I/
Then who is this? he asked, pointing at me. ‘Voyd!/ replied.’” (158)

“WHAT TAKES PLACE IN BUDDHA’S LITTLE FINGER IS A KIND OF FUSION OF A LITERARY AND A PSYCHOLOGICAL CATHARSIS.”

Film poster from 2015. The author Viktor Pelevin.

IN BUDDHA’S LITTLE FINGER IS A KIND OF FUSION OF A LITERARY AND A PSYCHOLOGICAL CATHARSIS.”

Film poster from 2015. The author Viktor Pelevin.

“WHAT TAKES PLACE IN BUDDHA’S LITTLE FINGER IS A KIND OF FUSION OF A LITERARY AND A PSYCHOLOGICAL CATHARSIS.”

Film poster from 2015. The author Viktor Pelevin.
leads merely to an insight into the pointlessness of establishing an intelligible relationship to the world. In spite of all the irony, the question of whether this insight really can be qualified as an insight in the self and in the world still seems to be of certain importance. Like the style of Nabokov, to whom the characters in the novel refer several times, Pelevin leaves the question open as to whether the escape from the world as a reality is a defeat or a victory. Poyt fleeis from reality to the imaginary because he has realized the ultimate sublation or Aufhebung of the opposition between reality and imaginary, of the self and the world. \(^1\) Yet, at the same time as he overcomes the oppositions of time, place, the world and being, in realizing himself as being nothing, or being the void, he transcends, or rather escapes to a beyond where he is unable to recognize the features of the contemporary world. There is no self, and everything is the self, the novel suggests to us. The novel ends with the image of a Poyt completely encapsulated in his own imaginary past and without any recognition of the contemporary world, which, on the other hand, is a reality to which no phantoms seem to grant any access.

The world as a void, and the void of the post-Soviet world

Since the ambiguous escape from the contemporary world is an escape into the historical past, Pelevin seems indeed to conform to the double nature of the “inverted stb”. On the one hand, Pelevin makes his escape myth in its socialistic realist version and aligns the myth with the popular narratives of the contemporary world, which are equally absurd, private and filled with kitschy clichés, as for instance in the case of the protagonist character Maria who dreams about Arnold Schwarzenegger. Yet, at the same time, he enhances the myth and seems to advocate a return to the imaginary or to the para-doxical past illusion of the past. It is indeed in the Soviet past that Poyt can find the transcendent stage and refuge of his imagina-tion, and consequently also the stage of his experience of tran-scendence. The joke, or inverted joke, is in other words less an expression of his relation to the symbol itself than to his relation to the contemporary world where the symbol lives on beyond recognition.

Thus, through his postmodernist poetics of simulacra, Pelevin poses in an ambiguous and paradoxical way the ques-tion of how the postmodern world can feed on centralizing myths that it allegedly has freed itself from. The question thus arises to what extent the imaginary, which is the realm where the world of simulacra can have its free flight, is conditioned by being an image or an imitation of a “reality” that it has ceased to com-municate with. Thereby Pelevin without any direct or indirect reference confirms the problem that Baudrillard identified in the relation between cinema and reality, namely that it (cinema) “is fascinated by itself as a lost object as much as it (and we) are fascinated by the real as a lost referent”. \(^2\) The postmodern aesthetics of Pelevin, the myth of the revolutionary hero as historical reality reappears in an aesthetics that negates that history as reality. What is more, in the way that the novel dwells on the ad-aption of the Soviet myth, contemporary Moscow appears as a “desert of the real” from which only flights of (narcotic) imagina-tion can be made. The real of the contemporary world becomes the destitute place of man’s private fantasies. The style of “the inverted stb” is thus sustained by the fact that the distinction between real and imaginary, inner and outer, is paradoxically both maintained and eradicated. Thus the conflict of man’s being in the world, which was crucial for the modern fiction novel, remains not only unresolved, but also deterred, because it does not matter what is real and unreal. In the end, at the same time as the novel was to be the “final cure for what is known as ‘the inner life’”, it tells nothing but the story of inner life, taking place, as Pelevin asserts in “the monasteries of Inner Mongolia”. In other words, in the contemporary world Poyt resigns from analyzing about himself and his inner life can be redeemed only through the free flight into private phantasmatics, but this mat-ters to no one but himself.

Conclusion

The question of the Soviet legacy in Buddha’s Little Finger is not treated as a question of engagement with history or the narra-tive of history in the form of confirmation or deconstruction of the Soviet myth. The myth is explored simply for the sake of its potential to be retold in the mode of a historical and intelligent super-hero narrative of the 1990s. In the midst of the phantas-magoric play with imaginations of reality conveyed through parody devices, discussions and demonstrations of Bud-dhistic philosophy, references to popular culture and anecdotes, Pelevin shows how the main character at the same time main-tains and abandons the legacy in the idea that his myth of the world is real, and that reality is a non-entity. In this way he illustrates us how the Soviet myths continue to live on in the form of attractive grand narratives in a post-Soviet divide between real phantasmagorical nightmares and what appears as an unattainable “reality” of facts.

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references

1 In this article, in accordance with the guidelines of the journal, I refer primarily to the English text, and I have chosen the American version of the English translation: Victor Pelevin, Buddha’s Little Finger trans. Andrew Bromfield (New York: Penguin Books, 1993). Henceforth I will refer to page number only.
3 With the narrative distinction between the biblical time of Christ, rendered through the serious and cumbersome reflections of Pontius Pilate, and the grotesque reality of the times rendered in a satiric and phantasmatological absurd style in the novel, the religious world appears as the more real historically in the novel. The convergence of these (6) realities on a transcendent level in the realms of “rational” and “irrational” only seems to confirm the initial impression that time in the Soviet Union of the 1930s was helplessly out of joint and beginning to behave in accordance to the utterly unreal principles of dialectic materialism, claiming to be realistic.
5 In The Total Art of Stalinism, (Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 1992), Boris Groys spots the symbolist poet Andrei Bely, who asserted that “the victory of materialism in Russia resulted in the disappearance of all matter” (20) when arguing that the myths of the avant-garde resulted in the “aesthetic dictatorship” of Stalinism.
7 The notion of “inverted stb” is a development of the notion of ‘stb’, a slang term for an ironic form of making fun at something, with which Vurcha describes “artistic absurd” of the culture of late socialism. Alest Vurcha, Everything Was Going Until It Was No More. The Last Soviet Generation, (Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 2007), 201.
9 Ibid, 300.
10 The distinction between a modernist culture, where the real was at stake, and a postmodern culture of simulacra, seems to be most apparent in relation to Soviet and post-Soviet culture. Evidently, socialist realism generated myths or narratives about the force of the people and its heroes in relation to history, and as those myths were deconstructed what was left was their representation in popular culture and an ironic disbelief. Yet several scholars argue for the contingency between Soviet culture and post-Soviet culture in terms of using socialist realism as a “production of reality” just like postmodern aesthetics. As mentioned, according to Mikhail Epstein, socialist realism was a kind of postmodernist aesthetics of simulacra avant la lettre, and there were two postmodernisms in Russian literature—one that arose in the 1930s with the establishment of socialist realism, and the other in the 1960s with the reaction towards the outmoded official discourse of Soviet culture in, for instance, Moscow conceptualism. The difference between them is allegedly that the first postmodernism is heroic and the second ironic. The first has a truth claim and tells the mythical narrative of the socialist’s engagement in reality, whereas the second paradoxically abandons all claims to reference reality, and yet in this seems to preserve a certain truthful relation to the dynamics of reality and imagination. Mikhail Epstein, “The Origins and Meaning of the ‘Paradigm’s’ in”, After the Future: The Paradigms of Postmodernism and Contemporary Russian Culture, (Amherst: The University of Massachusetts Press, 1995) 188—202.
13 Ibid.
15 Ibid, 7.
16 Ibid, 46.
17 Ibid, 30.
18 Gilles Deleuze, “Plato and the Simulacrum”, 56.
19 In a way, as has been argued, Deleuze’s defense of simulacra and pop art can be read as a token of him being the “ideologist of late capitalism” as Zizek asserted in Organic Whistle Blowing: On Deleuze and Guattari, (London: Routledge, 2004), 64, whereas Banfiell attempts to understand to what extent capitalism preserves and fetishizes production and the real at the same time as it extinguishes the difference between production and the real.
20 Mark Lipovetsky, Paraphrase: Transformatio postmodernismi (postmodernerihokkaan) vuodelta 2000—2005 a.g.e (Moskva: Novoe Literaturnoe Obozrenie, 2005) XXX.
25 Banfiell, Simulacrum and Simulation, 48.