

FORUM

University of Edinburgh
Postgraduate Journal of Culture and the Arts
Issue 03 | Autumn 2006

Title	I Wrote Eugene Onegin: Voices of Subversion and Submission in Soviet Anecdotes
Author	Sally P.C. Henderson
Publication	FORUM: University of Edinburgh Postgraduate Journal of Culture and the Arts
Issue Number	03
Issue Date	Autumn 2006
Publication Date	12/12/2006
Editors	Claire Altree & Keith Brown

FORUM claims non-exclusive rights to reproduce this article electronically (in full or in part) and to publish this work in any such media current or later developed. The author retains all rights, including the right to be identified as the author wherever and whenever this article is published, and the right to use all or part of the article and abstracts, with or without revision or modification in compilations or other publications. Any latter publication shall recognise FORUM as the original publisher.

I Wrote Eugene Onegin: Voices of Subversion and Submission in Soviet Anecdotes.

Sally P.C. Henderson (University of Edinburgh)

What is the difference between capitalism and communism?

Capitalism is the exploitation of man by man. Communism is the other way round.¹

This was a question aired on the Armenian Radio, a station renowned for offering freedom of speech in Soviet Russia, which notoriously voiced the officially forbidden yet widely accepted truths of Soviet existence; a station that challenged the premises of Soviet ideology and exposed the false promises of propaganda with its barbed question and answer technique; a station that, of course, did not actually exist. The Armenian Radio was created only discursively, in the vast body of quips and anecdotes that are a marked feature of popular Soviet discourse: regardless of the political observation or clarity, the above quotation is merely a joke.

Is there really ever any point in analysing a joke? Many would say definitely not. I certainly have no intention of assessing the actual ‘funniness’ of this or any other soviet anecdotes here, nor will I attempt to explore the humorous techniques that they employ. However I believe that the extensive body of soviet anecdotes is worthy of critical enquiry as it is a substantial part of what George Gibian has called the “vast sub-literary stratum of soviet life,” and hence a vital collection of uncensored voices from a highly censored era (19). Where anecdotes have received scholarly attention in the past it has generally only been to view them as an insider’s view of soviet events, as when, for example, during the Cold War, Henry Chamberlain suggested they could be used as “a

series of corrective footnotes to official soviet history” (27). Valuable as this approach might be—it is not the basis of this paper. The voices that speak through these jokes certainly provide fascinating insights into the mass perception of the soviet political environment and into the preoccupations of a repressed people. But it is my intention to use these anecdotes as a means of exploring the power relationship at the centre of the soviet regime, to see these voices as part of what Foucault calls a “popular” or “disqualified knowledge,” and to explore what the very process of joke telling reveals about the nature of struggle and resistance, under Foucault’s premise of “using resistances as a chemical catalyst so as to bring to light power relations” (“Subject and Power” 211). The fact that these anecdotes seem to reflect both defiance and passivity raises key questions about power and consensus, and about agonism²—the taunting quality at the centre of power relationships. Foucault tells us that there is no ‘power relationship’ if the slave is in chains, but what is the effect on the relationship if the slave is laughing (221)?

It is this act of joke telling as part of the every centre of a power relationship that interests me, especially when joke telling became illegal, and even the illegality of the jokes becomes a feature of their content. It is difficult to interpret this as anything other than defiance, and the complexity of the discursive formations, the Armenian radio for example and the dangerous parrots as will be discussed later, lends the body of anecdotes and air of organised resistance. The creativity of the anecdotes and the complexity of the discourse also suggest a kind of reclamation language and truth generating apparatus, and the remarkable clarity they exhibit shows a lack of successful manipulation by propaganda and official voices. Yet it is more complex than that. It is the act of

simultaneous truth telling, of mocking the necessity of the clandestine nature of that truth telling, and somehow tacitly acknowledging the fear of the consequences of truth telling that makes them so ambiguous. In short these anecdotes have multiple layers of meaning which must be understood in terms of the complex relationship between power and language, along Foucault's model. I will examine a selection of anecdotes in detail in the latter part of this paper, but first I will briefly explore the implications of elements of Foucault's mechanisms of power relationships in the soviet Russian context.

It is with some trepidation that I refer to Foucault and Soviet Russia in the same breath, and to do so is deeply problematic. In some ways this pairing seems obvious: the Soviet government exemplifies the three "ways" in which power can be exerted, through political domination, through economic exploitation, and through tying the individual to his identity—subjugating him. But the very first stumbling block is a linguistic one: it is very difficult to find the language to write about ideology and domination. Soviet anecdotes are in some ways an example of a non-manipulative discourse, in that they have emerged from society in an organic, everyday way. But that does not mean that there is a neutral language with which to discuss them. In general, soviet history is recorded from, and must be described in, either insider or outsider terms. I do not necessarily mean insider or outsider in the geographical sense, but rather in terms of compliance with conflicting ideologies. Etkind highlights this problem of the absence of neutrality and non-ideological language in current Soviet studies:

Would we trust a cannibal who wrote a history of cannibalism? A repentant cannibal, perhaps. Most of the available histories of Marxism were written by either Marxists or former Marxists. Poets have written histories of poetry, but they did it in prose, not in poetry. Is there a non-ideological language for writing a history of ideology? (173)

Etkind also suggests the recent trend in applying Foucault to Soviet Russia created a trend for emphasising the significance soviet everyday—or *byt*—to look for methods of subjugation, a trend for which this examination of anecdotes is a clear example. Certainly a number of scholars have focused their attention more on the third of Foucault's above-mentioned three techniques of domination, on the totalising nature of the soviet government in terms of its desire to shape the very identity of the people. Kotkin's survey of Magnetic mountain, or David-Fox's study of university life show how the soviet regime attempted to control psychology, culture, manners and everyday life, and create what David Fox calls "new men" (1). The problem Etkind identifies with this change in approach is has created the idea of Soviet Subjectivity as different from the Subjectivity experienced by all other nations, peoples or individuals. There is certainly a sense that the Soviet regime was unusual in that the process of transforming everyday mindsets was openly acknowledged as intentional, and also that the soviet government was notorious for its forceful, violent and clandestine methods of attempting to instigate such transformations. But the subjectivity that occurs should not be examined as though it is in some way unique and nation specific; we must explore, rather, what can be ascertained from this power relationship about the nature of power relationships in general. Indeed, the severity of the situation may only provide greater illumination, as "one should try and locate power at the extreme points of its exercise, where it is always less legal in character" (Foucault "Subject and Power" 213). That is, the severity of the power struggle in place here should mean that the anecdotes which emerge at its centre should be all the more illuminating.

The next, and more significant problem when assessing domination and subjugation is the tendency to focus on success and failure. Resistance may be seen only as failed domination, or submission as successful domination: there is no acknowledgement of a more complex system in operation. I venture that the success/failure binary comes into play with particular readiness in the Soviet context for western scholars. It is as if we have grown tired of exploring the ways in which the soviet regime failed in its political and economic endeavours, and so we will move on to its failings at a more human level. That is to say that the surveys of Kotkin and David-Fox, which focus on the Soviet regime's desire to control the everyday may provide evidence for this failure, failure to control thinking. This is a particularly strong temptation when examining the anecdotes. We can easily make stark judgments here, to see these anecdotes as a series of clear failures on behalf of the soviet government: failure to prevent anecdotes being told at all, despite the fact that it was made illegal; failure to convince the masses of the superiority of Soviet produce, the integrity of the press and the validity of the political system; failure to incite admiration for rulers; failure to silence complaints and differing opinions. Eventually we could simply conclude as Chamberlain did that they prove "that thinking cannot be completely planned and the sense of irony and humour is not to be extinguished" (34). However, it is important to remember that a key element of Foucault's subjectivity is the notion of being tied to identity, and so in this sense we may observe 'successful' subjugation. Where joke telling is the only form of resistance in operation, and forms part of a national inner stereotype and sense of self-identity, it is example of a people tying themselves to an identity and discourse.

Another problem with the success and failure idea is the tendency to wards idealism and nostalgia. As one interviewer of Foucault suggested, it might be that as scholars we are always searching for some kind of human triumph, we are “longing for a form of power innocent of all coercion, discipline and normalisation...knowledge without deception” (192). This is again a temptation with the anecdotes, to see them as what Bhabha calls “non-canonical cultural forms”, which are “produced in the act of social survival” and hence have some heightened sense of truth just because of the difficult situations in which they developed (172). That is, we must not become too nostalgic about the notion that “It is from those who have suffered the sentence of history—subjugation, domination, Diaspora, displacement—that we learn out most enduring lessons for living and thinking”(172).

This nostalgia is particularly likely given that it is an attitude that seems to pervade many of the anecdotes and is also part of a broader Soviet and indeed Russian tradition, that deprivation creates a higher understanding. Proverbs from the nineteenth century suggest that, “those who have nothing to eat can tell other’s fortunes’. This is a trend which permeates Russian culture seemingly from popular culture to high culture. In Ewa Thomson’s collection of essays on Russian self-identity in literature, the notion of heightened awareness because of poverty is a marked theme. As one dissident character in a soviet novel³ suggests:

The meaning of life is a purely Russian invention. We invented it for the same reason the Asiatics invented Buddhism: because of our shortage of the most essential objects. Eleven –twelfths of the population of the earth have never heard of any meaning of life and, believe me, they feel just fine. (Gibian 11)

This leads to a final danger to be discussed, the tricky business of how much value to place on commodity in examining power relationships through these anecdotes. The above quotation, and the clarity and awareness shown by many anecdotes suggest that perhaps without the illusory quality of commodity and abundance the mechanism of domination might be starker, more readily understandable to the masses. The poverty stricken soviet citizen, much like the poverty stricken Russian peasant before him, has a clearer view of the manipulations and repressions he faces because he is not dazzled by consumerism and luxury. But could this domination be working in a subtler way? Again the third element of Foucault's 'way' of exercising power is evident here. The Russian accepts material exploitation because it allows him to generate some deeper truth—or at least a discourse has been created which suggests he has access to this heightened awareness. Thus he is tied to the identity of someone who has heightened awareness because of his material poverty. He therefore may mock the systems and his surroundings, but ultimately has no cause to attempt to alter them because he believes they contribute to his sense of understanding.

Among Soviet dissidents there was certainly an eagerness to examine the different levels on which ideology could permeate the mass mindset, and with different manifestations. Zimin, the dissident character in Zinoviev's 1978 novel *The Radiant Future*, suggests there are two forms of ideology, formal and real, and that real or "practical" ideology "imposes upon the population by such factors as shortages of essential products, disinformation, fear of coming events, dreams of improvement, lack of protection from the authorities and so on" (Brom 108). The dissident scientist and social scientist Valentin Turchin created an entire theory of the subtle indoctrination of

peoples under totalitarian regimes, described in *The Inertia of Fear*. He describes the third stage of oppression by totalitarian regimes, whereby complete violent oppression, as in the first stage, of blinding by deprivation of information, as in the second stage, is no longer necessary. A level of acceptance is created after decades of these other forms of oppression, whereby the terror and unfairness of life is so ingrained as to become an ordinary part of existence: herein lies the 'Inertia'. So a regime can perpetuate itself with no fear of uprising from a passive, if reluctant, society. For Zimin or for Turchin, these windows of acknowledgement reflect a tragic ultimate consequence of ingrained fear, dealing as they do in apathy rather than anger, rather than any genuine enlightenment. Again, this goes back to Etkind's cannibal problem: these are writers who are struggling against a power relationship from the inside, yet opting out of the everyday realities of it.

For this reason, it is perhaps time to allow the anecdotes to start speaking for themselves. I have chosen five anecdotes to analyse in detail here, which I believe exhibit different elements of the power struggle. They illuminate in turn the issue of controlled knowledge and awareness, the notion of ingrained pessimism, fear and defiance, verbalization and interrogation. I will begin with the issue of awareness, as I venture that the clarity is the most immediately striking feature of the anecdotes to a western observer:

An agitator assures a meeting that after a few five year plans, not only will most soviet citizens have their own cars they'll have their own airplanes. A listener is so carried away with the idea that he whispers to his wife; 'Won't that be the life, Manka, we can take the plane anytime we hear they're selling cabbage in Moscow.'

(Von Geldern and Stites 213)

There are, indeed, no shortage of anecdotes which expose a general knowledge of the inferiority of Russian produce or the inadequacy of supply, from the matches that "were

ready burn with shame for the factory that produced them, but they couldn't," to the shop assistant who, when asked, "you don't sell meat?" replies, "no, we don't sell fish, the shop next door doesn't sell meat," right down to the man who scolds his wife when he catches her in bed with another man only for not queuing for oranges like a good wife should (Von Geldern and Stites 486; wikipedia; Draitser 35). All these expose an awareness of life in soviet Russia, and disprove the common western myth that people had no idea that they were deprived, as demonstrated by an American acquaintance of Turchin's in the following:

In America we feel that technological progress in the Soviet Union is of great importance in making society more democratic. For example, your country is not producing enough automobiles to meet the demand, but production will be increased. Then anybody will be able to get into a car and drive around the country. And he will see, for instance, that in many cities there is no meat, and that in general the newspapers print lies.⁴

(Turchin 33)

The cabbage anecdote also goes further though, and demonstrates the understanding of the futility of promises about the future. There is a common assumption that even if the soviet people of any given era understood their present condition was dreadful, they believed at least on some level that they were building a better future, as Kotkin asserts was the case up until 1991 (Kotkin 357). To return to the success/failure dichotomy, one could argue that this joke represents a significant failure on behalf of the Soviet regime. It has failed to provide for the people. It has failed to conceal from them that it has failed to provide for them, and—perhaps most crucially—it has failed to convince them of future success. Yet the awareness shown might indicate the passivity described and condemned by Turchin or Zimin, and mark the success of the regime to subdue the masses, since

although “everybody knows everything” they remain “docile ones,” and hence demonstrate the success of the regime (Turchin; 33, 89). This notion, however, is addressed by the anecdotes themselves:

A Russian, a Frenchman and an Englishman argued about Adam's nationality.

The Frenchman said, "Of course Adam was French. Look how passionately he made love to Eve!"

The Englishman said, "Of course Adam was British. Look how he gave his only apple to the lady, like a real gentleman."

The Russian said, "Of course Adam only could be Russian. Who else, possessing nothing but a sole apple, and walking with a naked ass, still believed he was in a paradise?"

(www.langston.com)

Unfortunately I do not have time here to explore the fascinating racial stereotypes displayed in this anecdote or in the *bravery* anecdote which follows. My interest is in the way that while this anecdote represents an awareness of the material deprivation of soviet life, it simultaneously ridicules the Russian for being unaware—for believing he is satisfied. This captures the essence of the inadequacy that lies in the binary distinctions between seeing and unseeing, disbelieving and believing, as the joke teller seems to possess complete awareness yet ties himself and his nation to the identity of the naïve believer. There is a defiant acknowledgment of dissatisfaction, and awareness of exploitation, but ultimately the effect is passive and accepting.

Yet on a very basic level this anecdote also represents subversion of soviet “newness” in that—however frivolously—it works with a biblical idea. There are other anecdotes which show imbrications of religiosity within more traditional discursive frameworks. For example, we have Freud examining God and concluding that he suffers from delusions of grandeur: He thinks he’s Stalin (www.langston.com). Or perhaps even

more crucially we have a man who complains to his tailor that his suit isn't ready after six days, when God created the whole world in a week. The tailor's comeback speaks volumes: "and do you like it?" (Von Geldern and Stites 119). What is to be mocked is disillusionment, as with Cabbage and Eden, the most important truth to be accepted is the inevitability of dissatisfaction.

The expression of this dissatisfaction is a key function of the anecdote, even where it is illegal for such voices. The following anecdote shows the defiant nature of this truth telling:

An American, Frenchman and a Russian are praising the bravery of their respective countrymen:

"One in five of us ends up in a car crash," says the American, "and despite that we are not afraid to drive."

"One in four of our prostitutes has venereal disease," says the Frenchman, and despite that we are not afraid to visit brothels."

"But one in three of us is an informer," says the Russian, "and despite that we are not afraid to tell political anecdotes."⁵

(Shturmann and Tiktin 270)

This anecdote raises the crucial issue that telling political anecdotes was indeed illegal for much of the soviet period, and punishable by heavy sentencing. The very act of verbalising awareness of the dissatisfactory political system and its effects on everyday life became a crime which could lead to confiscation of property or incarceration. It is therefore very easy to rely solely on the success/failure model to interpret this anecdote: The government tried to ban the telling of political jokes, but failed because jokes were still told. It tried to use fear to enforce the ban, and spies to catch the offenders, but although many were captured and punished it failed because this simply became

incorporated into the jokes. Moreover, it lent the act of joke-telling an added weight and air of defiance. Yet looking more closely the voice of this anecdote is not entirely subversive. For the joke teller is tying himself and his entire nation to an identity: “We are Russian. We tell jokes. That’s what we do and that is our major source of bravery and defiance.” Hence he is subjugated; there is no victory in simple terms. Yet this is a key example of Foucault’s agonism: the government is sufficiently rankled by the practice of telling anecdotes to legislate against it, the joke expresses fear of consequences but turns this into yet more humour. There are no winners or losers, rather a complex power relationship with consensus: the government agrees to be intimidated and offended by the jokes, the joke tellers agree to be frightened, but neither party changes its position.

This anecdote also illuminates the effects of spies, that they forced any subversive discourse into ever more private spheres. This issue is illuminated by the discursive creation of the dangerous parrot:

A man phones the KGB office in a panic when he loses his parrot. When told that he has phoned the wrong department he explains: “No, I just wanted to tell you that we haven’t had him long, and didn’t influence his opinions at all.”

(Shturmann and Tiktin 268).

The parrot in this anecdote is a reoccurring motif in many others. It is significant in that it provides a forbidden voice. In the owner’s fear is the tacit acknowledgment that he has been verbalizing the officially unspeakable, and that his Parrot might cause trouble by shifting his private, illegal discourse from behind closed doors into a public arena. This demonstrates the failure of official soviet ideology to permeate inner, private circles, and also the failure to silence the people. Yet the fear again shows the consensus, the parrot owner will not voice his defiance openly. The joke-teller however is still taunting, he is

truth telling about the issue of truth telling: it is happening everywhere and cannot be controlled. But once more he ties himself to the identity of one who must deal in secrecy and fear.

The importance of verbalising and truth telling is central to the power relationship because “we are subjected to the production of truth through power and we cannot exercise power except through the production of truth”(Foucault “Subject and Power” 211). The Parrot anecdote shows truth generation, and hence power generation as widespread yet clandestine among the people. However, its emphasis is on the failure of enforced silence from above, and it is the issue of enforced verbalization that should be explored next:

[A Professor explains to a member of the political police that he is disheartened because not a single one of his students could answer the question “who wrote Eugene Onegin the Opera?” The policeman suspects counter revolutionary influence and returns two week later looking very pleased, saying:]

“Well, professor, there is nothing like our organization for getting to the bottom of a conspiracy. We arrested every member of your class and after a few separate all night grillings we got signed confessions from six of them that they had written Eugene Onegin themselves!”

(Chamberlain 31)

This anecdote is significant because it focuses on that most central of soviet methods of domination—the interrogation. Etkind suggests that this feature permeates soviet life at all levels, and that the principle is the same irrespective of whether it is a show trial or the severe oral examination faced by students, there is seemingly a sense of interrogation for interrogation’s sake alone. For Foucault, confessions and interrogations are a key part in the subjugation process: one is forced to verbalise their identity, and lay it before the

scrutiny of a master, psychiatrist or priest. Yet under Foucault's model what is generally extracted is a truth that the subject has merely forgotten, they are probed to iterate how they have deviated from a set of standards or rules that were already known (Foucault "About the Beginning" 165). In the soviet system something entirely different occurs, the interrogation is arbitrary: the subject must verbalise an identity and reality that reflects only the whim of the interrogator. Herein lies the beauty of the anecdote: it seems to create some kind of inversion in a very crucial mechanism of domination. In a few short sentences the joke teller not only passes judgement on the efficiency of the education system and the stupidity of the police, but crucially highlights the absence of truth which is generated by interrogation. The submission at the heart of this anecdote is a travesty; hence in illuminating this absurdity its voice is ultimately subversive. Moreover, it crucially reclaims the truth generating impetus, drawing it back into the hands of the joke teller, exemplifying the potential power of the anecdote, its ultimate, if befuddling triumph.

These anecdotes have been proven to be ambiguous if nothing else. But there are other conclusions to be drawn. As a tradition within the Russian context they represent an absence of soviet "newness" and a link with a broader tradition from the Russian past. Their morose, dead-pan tone, and the varying levels of pessimism can be found elsewhere in Russian discourse, from the proverbs of the previous century which state that "if a man is hanged: he'll not drown" or "once wet through, no need to worry about the rain" to Nobokov's epigraph to his novel *Dar* which states, "An oak is a tree. A rose is a flower. A deer is an animal. A sparrow is a bird. Russia is our fatherland. Death is inevitable" (Gibian 3). They provide a link with the past because they discursively merge

traditional religious ideas with current soviet realities. What the morose pessimism shows is a complete lack of the messianism which marks so much of Soviet intellectual writing—both official and dissident. They do not show the disillusionment that implies there was ever belief in the first place (Kotkin).

Beyond this conclusions become more problematic as we look to the actual nature of struggle and power relationships. Instinctively we are drawn to highlight the defiant element of the anecdotes, and argue that it is difficult to scan through these jokes without a sense of the triumph of the oppressed, that “the anecdote demonstrates in its purest form the miracle of art, which only takes advantage of the brutality and fury of dictators” (from the foreword to Draitser 7). Even the pessimism might be taken as a method of making life more bearable, and hence a form of resistance in itself if as Kotkin suggests “one resists, without necessarily rejecting, by assessing, making tolerable and in some cases even turning to ones advantages the situation one is confronted with” (1995). This leads to the understanding of the body of anecdotes as a cultural phenomenon which performs a function, which “reaches out to create a symbolic textuality, to give the alienating everyday an aura of self-hood, a promise of pleasure” (Bhaba 172). The jokes are a coping strategy and protest at the same time, hence a pure form of culture, as “culture, in the true sense, did not simply accommodate itself to human beings; but it always simultaneously raised a protest against the petrified relations under which they lived, thereby honouring them” (Adorno 86).

Yet it is too simple to say that this occurs from straightforward opposition; if that were the case the anecdotes would appear more resolutely subversive. It would not be possible to identify the instances of submission. The over simplification is the result of a

faulty understanding of the way power behaves. Foucault writes of a “curiously widespread” “wholly negative, narrow, skeletal conception of power,” and explains the need for deeper understanding that, “what makes power hold good, what makes it accepted, is simply the fact that it doesn’t only weigh on us as a force that says no, but that it traverses and produces things, it induces pleasure, forms knowledge, produces discourse” (“Truth and Power” 119). That is, these anecdotes exist precisely because they represent both resistance and consent to the power relationship. They are produced by the power and restraint, and form the retaliation and taunting defiance which fuels the power’s continued exercise. The discourse and knowledge that emerges hence appears dually submissive and subversive. The anecdotes are both constructed by this power and generate it themselves as they vie for control of truth generation and verbalisation. I venture that the pleasure that emerges does so precisely because of the complexity of the power relationship and dynamism at the centre of Foucault’s agonism, because of the glimpses of insight and snatches of power. These sparks of ignition bring delight because they do that thing that truth does: they articulate what is already known.

Works Cited

- Adorno, Theodor W. *The Culture Industry: Selected Essays in Mass Culture*. London: Routledge, 1991.
- Bhabha. *The Location of Culture*. London and New York: Routledge, 1994.
- Brom, Libor. "Alexandr Zinov'ev's Vision of Soviet Ideology" in Thompson, Ewa (ed). *The Search for Self-definition in Russian Literature*. Houston, Tex.: Rice UP, 1991:06-120
- Chamberlain, W.H. "The Anecdote: Unrationed Soviet Humour." [Russian Review](#) 16.3 (July 1957): 27-34.
- Cohen, Ted. *Jokes*. Chicago: Chicago UP, 1999.
- David-Fox, Michael. *Revolution of the Mind: Higher Learning Among the Bolsheviks 1918-1920*. Ithaca, NY; London: Cornell UP, 1997.
- Draitser, Emil (ed.). *Forbidden Laughter*. Jon Parisier, transl. Los Angeles: Almanac, 1978.
- Etkind, Alexander. "Soviet Subjectivity: Torture for the Sake of Salvation?" *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History* 6.1 (2005): 171-186.
- Foucault, M. "About the Beginning of the Hermeneutics of the Self." *Religion and Culture*. (1999): 158-82.
- "Truth and Power." *Power/Knowledge* Brighton : Harvester Press, 1980:107-120
- "Subject and Power: Afterword." in *Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics*. Hubert L. Dreyfus and Paul Rabinow, eds. Harvester, 1982: 208-227.
- "Two Lectures." in *Culture/Power/History*. N.B Dirks, G. Eley and S.B.Ortner,

- eds. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1994: 200-221
- Von Geldern, J and Stites, R, eds. *Mass Culture in soviet Russia*. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1995.
- Gibian, George. "The Quest for Russian National Identity in Soviet Culture Today." in *The Search for Self-definition in Russian Literature*. Thompson, Ewa. (ed). Houston, TX: Rice UP (1991):1 -21
- Kotkin, Stephen. *Magnetic Mountain: Stalinism as a Civilization*. Berkeley, CA; London: U of California P, 1995.
- Shturmann, Dora, and Tiktin Sergei, eds. *Sovetskii soiuz ve zerkale politicheskogo anekdota*. London: Overseas Publications Exchange, 1985.
- Thompson, Ewa, ed. *The Search for Self-definition in Russian Literature*. Houston, TX: Rice UP, 1991.
- Turchin, Valentin. *The Inertia of Fear and the Scientific Worldview*. Guy Daniels, transl. Oxford: Robertson, 1981.

www.langston.com/Fun_People/1994/1994ARV.html

www.wikipedia.org/wiki/Russian_joke

¹ This is a widely circulated anecdote, in a number of different forms. See for example

www.langston.com/Fun_People/1994/1994ARV.html

² Foucault uses this term in "Subject and Power," but it is the translator who draws attention to the provocation and taunting it implies in the footnote to that page (222).

³ I think using examples from literary texts is valid here, and elsewhere is this paper, as a means of contrasting intellectual resistance with popular.

⁴ The anecdotes also prove that everybody knew the newspapers were full of lies as such as the well known play on words about the two newspapers, Truth and News, that "there is no news Truth and no truth in News", or the idea that when Krushchev lost a race to Kennedy the Russian press reported that "our beloved Nikita Sergeevich Krushchev won a very respectable second place. The American president barely managed to arrive at the finish line in next-to-last position." (Draitser 45)

⁵ Translation mine.