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**Novorossiya as metaphor: great powerness and the
conservative revolution in the Russian political and
discursive space**

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Abstract

This thesis is focused on the construction of Novorossiia and its relation to great power identity and the conservative revolution in Russia. The aim of this thesis is to analyse the relationship between these three interlocutory discourses in a bid to determine the relationship between Novorossiia and the wider discursive field. Several key questions are answered: of what Novorossiia is an instance; how ideology is inflected in it by conservative revolutionaries; what politics logics are used to move the conservative revolution towards the political and discursive mainstream.

The thesis is founded upon a post-structural ontological position and combines the thought of Laclauian discourse theory and Tartu-Moscow School semiotics of culture to underpin a semiotic model. The concepts of metaphor and metonymy are posited as key theoretical tools of analysis. They are employed in order to explain the conservative revolutionary challenge to liberal hegemony, the chaining of nationalist narratives into a contiguous link with great power identity, and the appearance of Novorossiia as a metaphorical phenomenon. Ideology is unpacked with reference to political logics which focus on forming an analogous relation between discursive and state frontiers.

Due to the existence of Novorossiia as a small part of a greater conservative revolution across the Russian political and discursive space, this thesis seeks to provide greater understanding to a widely misunderstood political movement, whilst aiming to provoke a body of work on the new right in Russia.

Keywords: Novorossiia, metaphor, metonymy, great power, conservative revolution, discourse

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Introduction

This MA thesis is focused on the analysis of the discursive construction of Novorossiia; its place in the conservative revolution¹ within the Russian political and discursive space, and its relationship with the great power identity of Russia. Once a term denoting a region which lay on the north shores of the Black and Azov seas under the Russian empire, Novorossiia stretched from the Dniester River in the West to Novorossiysk in the East (BBC, 2014). In the nineteenth century it was the name of a governate based in Odessa and was historically a multi-ethnic area primarily made up of Jews, Romanians, and Tatars. In the 1926 Soviet census, 17% declared themselves ethnically Russian (Clem, 2014; Laruelle, 2015a). The term re-entered peripheral discourses in the Russian political and discursive space when discussed regarding the Transnistria movement (Trenin, 2011: 100). Novorossiia² has re-entered various *mainstream* discourses of the Russian political and discursive space since the Ukrainian revolution in 2014, most notably when President Vladimir Putin (2014) used the term when speaking about the plight of the Russian-speaking parts of Ukraine:

“I would like to remind you that what was called Novorossiia back in the Tsarist days - Kharkov, Lugansk, Donetsk, Kherson, Nikolayev and Odessa - were not part of Ukraine back then. These territories were given to Ukraine in the 1920s by the Soviet government.”

Since then, Putin has not used the term, suggesting it has fallen foul of his central circle. It can now be primarily associated with the armed separatist movement in south-eastern Ukraine and with nationalist movements in both the political mainstream and the periphery. ‘Officially’ it is made up by the self-proclaimed Donetsk People’s Republic (DPR) and Luhansk People’s Republic (LPR). Also known as the Union of People’s Republics, the State was declared on 22 May 2014 (Babiak, 2014), with a constitution ratified on 26 June 2014 (Lenta, 2014). This thesis

¹ Contemporary Russian nationalism comes in many different forms, but for the purpose of this thesis, the term ‘conservative revolutionaries’ or ‘conservative revolution’ will be used to signify a conjunction of different nationalist groups who support Novorossiia.

² Literally ‘New Russia’

seeks to show how the discourse of Novorossiia made a move to the very highest echelons of power in the Russian political and discursive space, only to fall back to the periphery in a very short space of time. Part of the answer lies amid the backdrop of the annexation of the Crimean peninsula: where Crimea appeared as a construction of Russia as a great power in real terms, Novorossiia - as it takes place in what is internationally-recognised as Ukraine - could only be constructed metaphorically within the Russian whole.

It must be noted that this thesis does not aim to provide an evaluation of Novorossiia as a successful or unsuccessful political endeavour, rather the main aim of the thesis is *to understand the relationship between the discursive construction of Novorossiia in the political mainstream and Russia's identity as a great power*. To this end, this thesis privileges meaning construction and social communication, looking specifically at the metaphors which form mythical or allegorical crystallisations of identity in the social construction of Novorossiia, and drawing conclusions based on the political logics of these identity articulations.

The main research question of this thesis is therefore: *In light of articulations of Russia's great power identity, of what is Novorossiia an instance?* Further problems are raised in terms of the relationship between three other overlapping discourses in the conservative revolution - contemporary messianism, nostalgia for Empire, and anti-Westernism³. Three subsidiary research questions are approached with a view to fully answering the primary question:

- How is Novorossiia constructed in the Russian political and discursive space?
- How are the political logics of conservative revolutionary ideology strategically inflected in Novorossiia?
- How is the notion of Russia's great power/counter-hegemonic identity related to Novorossiia and the conservative revolution?

³ Anti-Westernism will be discussed in terms of anti-liberalism.

The use of metaphor in political discourse is widely studied (Carver & Pikalo, 2008; Martin, 2013; Lakoff, 1996). There is a renewed interest in metaphorical associations within political narratives from the field of discourse analysis in particular. For example, in linguistics, Norman Fairclough (2000) looks at the communicative style of New Labour through critical discourse analysis, whilst in political science, the Essex School of Discourse Analysis (Stavrakakis, 1999; Glynos & Howarth, 2008) look at metaphors in line with their place in Laclau's theorisation of the political, which touches on the post-structural tradition of psychoanalysis. Although metaphors are generally limited to the level of textual analysis, this thesis seeks to employ them more widely: on textual and discursive levels. Metaphor is a tool through which both texts and discourses can be constructed. It is argued that the concept of metaphor can be extended to the level of discourse in order to explain Novorossiia as a social movement which has appeared in light of neo-conservative appropriation of the discourse of Russia as a great power. To this end, this thesis combines Laclauian discourse analysis with Tartu-Moscow School semiotics of culture based on their shared Saussurean heritage in order to answer the research questions outlined. Since the assignation of the term 'metaphor' to a sentence, text, or discourse can only be given once specific contextual conditions have been satisfied (Van Dijk, 1975: 174) - primarily the intention of the speaker - a context in which the discourse of Novorossiia appears must first be established.

This is where this thesis turns from the establishment of the limits of metaphor used in the discourse of Novorossiia to the limits of the context in which it appears. The theoretical background of the semiotic model is established in the theoretical chapter, whereby Novorossiia is placed in the context of Russia's great power identity articulations and boundaries to the discourses are delimited.

Political logics are an integral part of this thesis and an explication of discourse theory is posited in the first chapter in order to answer the research questions above. Firstly, the use of tropes - primarily metaphor and metonymy - in political theory is approached, in order to provide the *context* within which the empirical research *texts* can be posited. Particular focus is paid to post-structuralist accounts of the trope (in particular those of Laclau & Mouffe, 1985; Carver &

Pikalo, 2008; Lakoff & Johnson, 1980; Smith & Katz, 1993; Torfing, 1999) although explicit engagement with Yuri Lotman (2001; 2005) and Boris Uspensky (2012) of the Tartu-Moscow School's (TMS) means that while this thesis pursues a post-structuralist research agenda, it uses the insights of structuralist semiotics to elaborate what post-structuralist accounts omit.

Post-structuralist accounts show how tropological discourse creates cohesion, whereas structuralist accounts show how related dynamics disrupt it. Whilst post-structuralist discourse analysis helps us explain the politicising and depoliticising effects of a given discourse, TMS focuses more heavily on culture - which is important for this thesis as Novorossiia appears as a discourse in which the cultural pervades the political. Most importantly however, where Laclau's use of the concept of hegemony implies that identities are shaped through contestation, structuralist semiotics helps give more precise accounts of *how* this happens (Steedman, 2006).

The first chapter finishes with an outline of the research methodology employed in empirical research. The second chapter lays the theoretical framework for a semiotic model to be introduced and discussed in the empirical chapter of this thesis. In the empirical chapter, the political logics of Novorossiia are split into two distinct parts: metonymy - drawing together a wide range of nationalist discourses into specific popular demands, and metaphor - positing one term, Novorossiia, as representative of a wider collection of conceptual contingencies associated with Russia as a great power and the conservative revolution.

1.1 Metaphor in political analysis

The aim of this chapter is to develop, define, and discuss the concept of metaphor in political discourse. The relationship between signifier and signified are important for this thesis for they frame the concept of metaphor employed in the empirical section, necessarily framing how specific terms are constructed and employed in political discourse. A foundational discussion of the relationship between the signifier and signified is necessary here and will be elaborated upon as the foundations of the methodological tool of discourse analysis is developed throughout the chapter. The concept of tropes - metaphor and metonymy specifically - will be broached, before their use in heretofore completed political analysis is discussed. The chapter will finish with a broader discussion of the conception of metaphor employed by this thesis, outlining a

post-structuralist research agenda which combines the Tartu-Moscow School of semiotics with Laclauian theory of discourse to produce a work of political semiotics.

According to Schofer and Rice (1977: 1), tropes are semantic transpositions from signs “*in praesentia* to signs in *absentia*.” This view of a trope - that is, a metaphorical or metonymical association - is based on the structural turn in linguistics ushered in by Ferdinand de Saussure. de Saussure posited that a *sign* could be separated into its constituent parts; ie. what a speaker wishes to say is not always rendered to the receiver. This in turn is based on his distinction between *langue*⁴ and *parole*⁵. In this structuralist conception of linguistic theory, *parole* is only possible due to the abstract rules and conventions of *langue* (de Saussure, 1999: 21-24). If speech is only made intelligible courtesy of abstract rules, then poetic, or tropological, language works in a similar way; tropes are similarly only intelligible when exposed to traditions, cultures, discourses, epistemic realities, or myths (Pikalo, 2008; Barthes, 1972). The abstract rules of tradition, culture, and discourse work in tropes to make them suitable for communication, thereby presupposing a signifying consciousness. These rules necessarily make tropes suitable for reasoned argument whilst discounting their substance *in praesentia* (Barthes, 1972: 110). There is a relation, then, between *langue* and *parole*, where one creates the conditions of possibility for the other. This raises the question of the power of words: if the images evoked by words are independent from their real significance (Le Bon, 1995: 124) then the *signifier* - that is, the sign or word or image - has an unfixed relationship with the *signified* - the image provoked in the receiver of the sign or word or image (Laclau, 2007: 22). We can therefore posit that Novorossiia is not simply a word which designates an object in reality - the naming of an object or concept provokes unfixed allegorical categories in the recipient of the information ‘Novorossiia’. It is the task of this thesis to unpack these metaphorical allusions, before critically analysing them in order to determine how the political logics of conservative revolutionary ideology are strategically employed by the Novorossiia movement.

⁴ Natural language, for example, Russian

⁵ Spoken language

The differences between metaphor and metonymy can be easily distinguished according to two understandings of the syntagmatic plane of the sign. In both cases there is some sort of substitution of one signifier for another in order to subvert a sign. In the case of metaphor this substitution is done through analogy between two signifiers, whereas in metonymy this is based on contiguity. This means that metonymy allows one to see what has been subverted by the substitution, while metaphors tend to be recognisable by the disappearance of the subverted sign⁶ (Laclau, 2008: 9). Catachresis, meanwhile, can be defined as “a figural term which cannot be substituted by a literal one⁷,” (Laclau, 2007: 71).

Metaphor, metonymy, and catachresis are more than simply linguistic phenomena. They can be inscribed with a form of reasoning whereby political concepts, actors, social phenomena, and chains of causality can be more readily understood (Stenvoll, 2008: 35). It is important to note that metaphorical language often interpellates certain social groups as being ‘inside’ or ‘outside’ of specific discourses. According to Judith Butler’s concept of ‘linguistification’, the more utterances are used, the greater performative power they acquire in the public sphere; ie. entire narratives can be demarcated based on or associated with particular words, phrases, or names (Skradol, 2012: 287). Here it is useful to quote French structuralist Gérard Genette (1972: 63) at length:

Without metaphor Proust says, there are no true memories; we add for him: without metonymy, there is no chaining of memories; no history, no novel. For it is metaphor that retrieves lost Time, but it is metonymy which reanimates it, that puts it back in movement: which returns it to

⁶ An example of this distinction would be in two commonly-used tropes about Russian power. A metonym for the Russian President is often used in the media; ‘Kremlin again says Putin has ordered troops from Ukraine’ (Reuters, 2014). In this case, a building (part) is used as representative of Russian Presidential power (whole), whilst the visibility of the subversion remains because of the direct contiguity of the Kremlin and Russian Presidential Power. A metaphor for Russian power is also commonly used in the west: ‘The West cannot keep poking the Russian bear’ (Independent, 2014). In this case, the signifier *bear* bears no visible relation to Russian political or military power, but the message is understood through analogous relation.

⁷ Laclau uses the example of the ‘leg of a chair’.

itself and to its true 'essence', which is its own escape and its own Search. So here, only here - through metaphor but within metonymy - it is here that Narrative⁸ begins.

The distinguished difference between the tropes must here be understood before the combination of the two parts may take place. Building any narrative, even a post-modern one, requires both parts in order to fully constitute it. Returning to the earlier example, the metaphor for Russian political power *bear* - the memory of an aggressive and unpredictable beast, is reanimated with the synecdochal⁹ association of the real seat of power in Russian politics; *the Kremlin*. The two tropes in conjunction create a tropological narrative of a dangerous and capable Russian political power. What is the ontological status of each of these parts, then?

Metonymy exists, as per Uspensky's (2012: 176-180) formulation, as *a centrifugal force which focuses on the identification of the object with a specific place*. Uspensky uses the example of 'Great' being assigned as the name of those peripheral places which *identify* with a historical centre; often places which have been part of a cultural expansion - for example, Great Britain as Britain expanding into its cultural periphery, or, in our present case, Russia as a great power, expanding its place of sovereign power and becoming some form of Greater Russia. In any discourse of great power, there is an identification towards the centre of power with a focus on the place: in our case, Russia.

Metaphor, meanwhile, is antithetical to the logics of metonymy in that it is a *centripetal force which focuses on an orientation towards a specific place* (Uspensky, 2012: 176-180). Uspensky here notes the example of 'New' being used in metaphorical toponymy to designate a comparison between two places: New York and York in his example, or Novorossiia and Russia in ours. What the 'new' in Novorossiia designates is not an expansion but *an orientation towards a specific place with the focus on time*. In naming a movement 'New Russia' one is

⁸ *Récit*

⁹ A synecdoche is often considered a class of metonymy whereby a part of something is used to refer to the whole entity. It differs from metonymy as a metonyms refer to something closely associated with an object or concept, but unlike synecdoche the part does not have to refer to the whole.

invoking the ontological creativity of the metaphor - creating something new - whilst simultaneously orienting the place under that name to its 'old' namesake. In the name Novorossiia there is an orientation towards Russia with a focus on the future.

Metaphor and metonymy are not only distinguishable, as per the Uspensky (2012) understanding of them, but necessarily combinable, as per the formulation of Genette (1972). Despite the lack of engagement with the Tartu-Moscow School in political and discourse theory, it is argued that an engagement with Uspensky and Lotman in particular would be beneficial, especially in light of the so-called cultural turn in International Relations and Political Science. The first place to start in a discussion of TMS' work on tropes should be its relation to Lakoff & Johnson's (1980: 193) overarching definition of metaphor as "imaginative reality" - that is, the unison of reason and imagination that comes through seeing one kind of thing in terms of another kind of thing. In Lotman's terms, substitution is not a simple semantic shift, but "becomes a matter of conventions, approximations, suppositions... a semantic situation that is in principle new and paradoxical," (Lotman, 2001: 41). His work, therefore, is not so much structuralist as it is sympathetic to posthumous post-structural developments in the field of cultural theory, as can be seen by his description of metaphor and metonymy as 'iso-functional' in relation to their respective subverted signs:

All attempts to create visual analogues for abstract ideas, to depict continuous processes in discrete formulae with the help of broken lines¹⁰, to construct spatial physical models of elementary particles, and so on, are rhetorical figures (tropes)," (Lotman, 2001: 37).

Lotman's conception of tropes are akin to the post-structural conception of them as 'ontologically creative' (Carver & Pikalo, 2008: 3). Tropes, through the interaction of the binary discrete/continuous construct something greater than the sum of their parts (Lotman, 2001)¹¹.

¹⁰ *оммочуе*

¹¹ Lotman characterises this conception of discrete and continuous codes by explaining that "by sticking together individual steaks, we don't obtain a calf, but by cutting up a calf, we may obtain steaks - in summarising separate semiotic acts, we don't obtain a semiotic universe," (Lotman, 2005: 208).

The very existence of cultures, traditions, discourses, epistemic realities, or myths earlier posited, create the conditions which make the specific signatory act - the tropological act of communication - possible (Lotman, 2005: 208). The basic condition for meaning to be born is shown to be one which is bilingual, between discrete formulae and continuous processes. It is not only toponymy which can exist as metaphor or metonymy, then, but entire discourses.

The conditions of possibility, as per the understanding of text and discourse by both Lotman and Laclau, are “bounded and closed totalities” (Ventsel, 2009: 23), meaning that any kind of signification is made on the basis of a total system (Ventsel, 2009: 26). The discrete/continuous binary is therefore imperative to an understanding of metaphor on the discursive plane. The existence of antagonism in post-structural conceptions of the political (Ventsel, 2009: 26; Laclau, 2007; Laclau, 2008, Laclau & Mouffe, 1985) means that the political sphere is not antithetical to ethical, economic, and cultural spheres *a la* Carl Schmitt. Instead, the *otlochie* between specific texts and their place in a given context (a discourse) allow tropes to develop, although not in a situation of linear causality (Pikalo, 2008: 46). The trope acts a discursive nodal point (Torfing, 1999: 98), provoking certain processes at the level of both the text and the discourse.

What TMS semiotics of culture can provide this thesis with, then, is a more complete and structured foundational framework for the concepts of metaphor and metonymy, whereby discursive shifts - from the periphery to the centre, or vice versa - can be explained by reference to tropological language. One could explain a move from the periphery to the centre as the crystallisation of metaphor and its shading towards a more ‘humble’ metonymic association (Laclau, 2008: 9), or a move away from the centre as the natural conclusion of the centripetal nature of metaphor. This is where a semiotic theory of hegemony (Selg & Ventsel, 2009; Ventsel, 2009) can be furthered through the empirical study of political phenomena such as Novorossiia.

Moreover, a conception of tropological language as outlined in this chapter is central to critical discourse analysis; politics and political science exist themselves as “linguistic phenomena... created and constructed through actions and activities as forms of life and knowledge,” (Carver

& Pikalo, 2008: 3). From de Saussure's foundational approaches to the sign, through structuralist and post-structuralist conceptions of the trope, the delimitation of tropological constructions is important if we are to understand any discursive shift in the political sphere.

1.2 Research Methodology

It is toward the methodological tools employed in this thesis to which we now turn. This thesis takes a post-structuralist ontological position, emphasising that there is one non-political condition of politics - namely egalitarianism¹² (Ranciere, 1999; Badiou, 2005). As part of this position, the constitution of the political is understood to be ontologically created through language. As per the transcendental turn in philosophy, whereby objective reality is impossible to distinguish from constructed language, this thesis uses critical discourse analysis as part of an interpretive framework which seeks to move past mainstream political science. Whilst the vast majority of study in political science still relies upon juridical edifices of sovereignty and the accompanying state apparatuses (Foucault, 1980), my research aims to move towards the study of *strategic* apparatuses, in which forms of power and ideology are inflected and utilised more subtly. Therefore, it is important that this thesis espouses an understanding of text which is wider than simply verbal utterances. It is vital to approach secondary modelling systems (Lotman, 2005), such as the artistic image, with the same academic rigour as one would approach textual analysis of a constitution. Whilst the focus of this thesis remains on interpreting the discursive construction of Novorossiia in relation to the conservative revolution and great power discourse in Russia, a wider understanding of text is applied whereby the image is deconstructed in a similarly interpretive way as any textual material. Critical visual analysis is therefore employed as supporting evidence for the strategic inflections of conservative revolutionary ideology in the object of study. According to this method, one takes an appropriate piece of art and deconstructs it according to a three step-process, aiming to understand the 'visual grammar' of the image (Wang, 2014: 269-270). In this way it works in precisely the same way as critical discourse analysis:

¹² The author shares the view of Badiou that this is the only internal historical mode of politics, making instances of politics (*des politiques*) extremely rare.

- 1) A linguistic description of the visuals is given, applying certain typologies to specific characteristics within the image.
- 2) The linguistic descriptions and typologies are interpreted, with the focus falling on three different areas: production, distribution, and consumption. Production places the emphasis on those ‘producing’ the material, distribution on the ideological coding of information for the recipient, and consumption on the assimilation of the recipient to the ideology inflected in the image.
- 3) The deconstructed ideologies are presented within a larger cultural context, showing the potential mechanism through which visual semiosis shapes the recipient of encoded information.

The sources for an interpretative, semiotic approach to the construction of Novorossiia can be judged for quality according to “method appropriate criteria” (Flick, 2007: 21). In this case, the source selection and methodology can be judged according to the “emerging criteria” outlined by Lincoln (1995: 3): positionality and community.

Positionality refers to an author “coming clean” (Lincoln, 1995: 5) about the stance of both the author and the text epistemologically. It can be judged as a rejection of realist claims to complete objectivity, viewing what van Mannen (1988) called the “immaculate conception” of realist objectivity as “specious, inauthentic, and misleading,” (Lincoln, 1995: 5). According to Laclau, all objectivity is constructed within a discursive frame. The political logic of any signification process is, then, demonstrated within this same discursive sphere: “from this domain emerges new ideas, new postulates, and hypotheses which previously were thought to be absurd,” (Lotman, 2001: 45). Indeed, a certain discrete formula of signs taken from one culture and transplanted into another would produce not meaning, but sheer confusion¹³. This is all to say that the immaculate conception of scientific objectivity is especially unintelligible when we approach textual or discursive analysis: a post-structural, interpretive model is the most suitable for this thesis. This is an aspect of the research which, from its most primitive stages in thought

¹³ One can imagine a situation where Baroque architects would cry in disgust at the sight of the Brutalist constructions of the post-war years, or where Gothic artists would greet Mallarmé with utter incredulity.

to its culmination as the final word is edited, remains paramount to the researcher. The poststructural argument that texts are never final is articulated throughout in my research: Novorossiia exists as an unstable discursive whole.

Research takes place in and is addressed to a community (Lincoln, 1995: 5); it does not occur in a vacuum. As my research is necessarily interdisciplinary, in that it brings together semiotic, post-structuralist, and post-Marxist approaches to science, it includes precisely what Palmer (1987: 24) describes as “new epistemes”; the author disregards the positivist paradigm of knowing as relational and deliberately addresses objectivity through positioning oneself in the post-positivist school of thought. By articulating precisely that, one manages to oppose objectivist, manipulative modes of political research. Moreover, in the methodology of post-Marxist thought, and particularly in Badiou, there exists the concept of politics as action; a truly communitarian idea, placing my research not only within reach of academic scholars, but also within a community of real politics.

In light of ontological considerations and a wider understanding of text than traditionally posited, source selection becomes key for this thesis. The texts used for discourse analysis should be key texts of the discourse to which they are assigned (Hansen, 2006: 73). They should have clear identity positions, with articulations of anything strongly related to Novorossiia and the conservative revolution or great power discourse laid out within a strong contextual framework (Hansen, 2006: 74). Due to the nature of this project dealing with an originally peripheral discourse, there exist an almost infinite number of relevant sources for nationalist discursive formations of great power. This is where Laclau’s theoretical framework helps in terms of methodology once again: due to the logics of equivalence being a relation of democratic demands centred around specific key signifiers, those key signifiers work as a litmus test for whether a text should be included as part of the empirical research. The key for this thesis in terms of Hansen’s source selection is to pick the sources *most characteristic* of particular identity formations.

The key texts for this thesis are therefore speeches, interviews, and articles from the nationalists who are advocates of Novorossiia, as well as cultural productions - books, films, posters, images - which act as key signifiers on the discursive map. Because of the focus on the creation of a narrative primarily, this thesis engages with the work of Aleksandr Dugin and Aleksandr Prokhanov as key thinkers in the popular demand of Russia as a great power in conservative revolutionary discourse. However, it must be pointed out that because of the ontological position of the research, as well as the explicit use of metaphor - where signified objects may appear *in absentia* - it is the thorough reading of the text which is the most salient detail of source selection. The relationship between Novorossiia and the discourse of Russia as a great power is interpreted through the dominant meanings of tropological communication, with the researcher acting as a medium through which signifiers are assigned a place in the discursive field. Therefore, a semiotic analytic approach to discourse is used, with the researcher describing what language tools are whilst using them, how the relationship between the key signifiers is constructed, how discourse changes as a result of this relationship, and so on. As earlier posited, there is an explicit use of the image as part of a wider understanding of text. It is argued that the future of critical discourse analysis lies in visual analysis, but due to the time constraints and the intertextual nature of the conservative revolutionary movement, the great power discourse, and Novorossiia, visual analysis is not deemed pivotal to argumentation in this thesis and is used as supportive of wider analysis.

Potential problems in terms of method can be avoided through the researcher's engagement with a wide range of sources within the given discursive field. For example, care is taken to place each source within an appropriate context, thereby reducing the chance of misinterpretation or outright conceptual stretching. Further measures such as focusing on repetitive signifiers are taken to avoid attributing to specific ideas a more prominent place in the discursive map than is warranted. One of the most problematic issues of this research is the presentation of findings in a structured, linear narrative, as many of the key signifiers overlap and adapt over time. Care has been taken to solve this problem by splitting the empirical chapter into two parts - focusing on metonymy and metaphor - thereby showing how the semiotic model works as clearly as possible.

2 Russia's Identity Through the Conservative Turn

This chapter seeks to elaborate Russia's identity through the conservative turn in order to proceed towards the stated primary research aim: *to understand the relationship between the discursive construction of Novorossiia in the political mainstream and Russia's identity as a great power/counter-hegemon*. It must be emphasised once again that this thesis seeks not to evaluate the successes or failures of Novorossiia as a movement, but rather seeks to place it within a discursive field in order to establish its status as a strategic apparatus of (neo)conservative ideology. To that end, the chapter will begin with an explication of the concept of Russia as a great power and the perceived partial internalisation of liberalism within mainstream discourse. The next section will outline Laclauian political theory surrounding the concept of hegemony, discussing concepts such as the 'logics of equivalence', which are especially important for any understanding of changes in the discursive field. The chapter will end with two sections examining the movement of conservatism, with Novorossiia as its unifying metaphor, from a peripheral discourse to a central one in the Russian political space. These sections will look specifically at how 'Novorossiia as a signifier of conservatism' within the great-power discourse has aided this transformation of the discursive plane.

2.1 Russia as a Great Power

The idea of Russia as a great power resonates strongly with the Russian public, having deep roots in Soviet and Russian imperial history (Mankoff, 2011; Trenin, 2014; Rutland, 2015). The collapse of the USSR intensified the use of this term as the conceptions of the bipolar world were no longer valid. In place of the bipolar model of the international system, a multipolar conception was propagated, with the superpowers (USA and the USSR) becoming a single superpower (USA) alongside a number of regional 'great' powers (Coetzee, 2013). The term 'great power' was conceived to be related to states which had strong military and economic

power, as well as being recognised by one another in the international system of states, thus creating an international society of great powers (Levy, 1981; Nye, 1990; Bull, 1995). The society would be managed by specific rules and norms between one another, emphasising the responsibilities of great powers (Astrov, 2011; Brown, 2004).

Despite its resonance with the Russian public, Russia's status as a great power remains as questionable as ever (Haukula, 2008; Neumann, 2008; Smith, 2014). The liberal conception of power is heavily related to this self-identity problem. It is argued that, through engagement with liberal international society, Russia is perceived to have partially internalised the rampant hegemonic liberalism and now struggles with its status as a 'lost' great power. The liberal conception of power¹⁴ - that it is a thing - necessarily means that power works as a means of repression (Selg & Ventsel, 2008: 172). The liberal conception of power sees it as a tool to be used to make someone do something they wouldn't otherwise do. In other words, power is a tool of hegemony. Despite claims that alternative forms of power are presented - 'soft power' or 'agenda-setting', for example - these concepts are still "reducible to the problem of repression" (Selg & Ventsel, 2008: 172). The internalisation of such a conception means that expressions of liberalism are often seen as signs of Russia's subjugation to the West. This is an impression which has been increasingly represented in Russian cinema in Putin's third term: from the attack on hyper-materialist, superficial post-Soviet society in films such as Melkian's *The Star* (2014) and Bykov's *Durak*¹⁵ (2014), to more anti-Western efforts such as Mikhalkov's *Solnechniy Udar*¹⁶ and *9 days and 1 morning* (2014) by the usually commendable Vera Storozheva. In Russian politics, the perception of partially internalised liberalism is represented by the discourses which present the US and Europe as neo-colonial powers (Dugin, 1991; Korovin, 2013), with the Ukrainian revolution, the 'liberal-fascist' junta¹⁷, as its real-terms referent for this understanding

¹⁴ Although ambiguous in English, it must be noted that when speaking of 'the liberal notion of power', one is speaking about власть, whereas 'great power' can be adequately rendered as великая держава. According to conservative revolutionaries, the perceived internalisation of the liberal notion of power is to blame for Russia's lack of great powerness.

¹⁵ Fool

¹⁶ Sunstroke

¹⁷ Liberalism and fascism are heavily intertwined in Russian political discourse.

¹⁸. What is most important, however, is not whether liberalism has *in reality* been partially internalised by the core of the Russian political and discursive space, but the fact that those squeezed to the periphery of the discursive space a) believe that it has and b) blame it for their peripheral position. Aleksandr Prokhanov¹⁹ (2012) explains:

“Putin is a man with a decreasing tendency toward liberalism. Putin is still largely liberal, but this liberalism is reduced under pressure of the circumstances. One of these circumstances is personal: those liberals prevailing on the squares wish him physical death and he understands that from this liberalism, a part of which lives within his person, brings him personal misfortune, as well as misfortune for the state.”

The understanding of liberalism by conservative revolutionaries as partially internalised is important if we are to understand the relationship between Novorossiia and great power discourse. The discourse of Novorossiia does not oppose what Ranciere (1999) calls ‘the exercise of power’. Indeed sets itself up as a statist ideology, willing to exercise power over a population. In other words, it does not seek a rupture with the liberal conception of power, but rather seeks a rupture with liberal hegemony. It seeks to create an alternative hegemony whereby the ‘liberal-fascist’ is squeezed to the outside of the Russian political and discursive space and their demand for ‘great-powerness’ is achieved. In Ranciere’s terms, liberals are ‘prohibited’ from taking part in what Russian nationalists see as the most important part of Russian identity - great powerness. There becomes a privileging of the concept of Russia as a great power in the discourses of the conservative revolutionaries; it becoming a matter of primary importance that Russia’s needs are listened to on the international stage. This is characterised by an obsession with ‘showing off’ Russia’s ability to their Western rivals:

“There’s gotta be some nice, simple Russian idea, so’s we can lay it out clear and simple for any bastard of their Harvards... and we’ve got to know for ourselves where we come from... Write

¹⁸ On the pro-Novorossiia news site RusVesna, tags are used to summarise the main talking points of each story. One of the most widely used tags is ‘Junta (Kiev)’, which in the period from 17th March until 6th April 2015, was used in 954 different pages on the site.

¹⁹ Prokhanov is a prolific novelist and nationalist intellectual who promotes a leftist version of Russia as a great power.

me a Russian idea about five pages long. And a short version one page long,” (Mafia bandit instructing a copy-writer in Pelevin’s Generation P, 1999: 137/8).

The loss of the sovereign - of an understanding of the self as a superpower, for example - in modern power structures begets the fantasy of its return (Foucault, 1980). This fantasy manifests itself in language as the performative (Butler, 1997: 356). Language becomes a vehicle for a subversion of hegemonic power by engaging with the language of this power in a playful, poetic way. In the mainstream discourse of the Russian political and discursive space, this ‘showing-off’ manifests itself as a movement in which the conservative tendencies of liberalism are privileged. The appeals to the humanitarian crisis in Donbas by Putin (Peskov, 2014; Sputnik News 2014) exist as a facade for statist political nihilism which seeks to expunge the very idea of emancipatory politics²⁰. The political logic here is the appropriation of soft power discourse to aid hard power strategic goals, just as the US did in Iraq, Kosovo, and Libya. Putin has argued that “you can do a lot more with weapons and politeness than with politeness alone” (NY Times, 2014), thus appropriating and radicalising the conservative foundation of soft-power politics. In the peripheral discourses of nationalists, this ‘showing-off’ is different. Instead of emphasising the directional aspect of their discourse - “lay it out clear and simple for any bastard of their Harvards” - they emphasise the demarcation of the great power discourse itself - “we’ve got to know for ourselves where we come from” - setting the boundaries of the discourse, interpellating liberals as outside of the Russian political and discursive space.

This section has shown how liberalism (albeit its conservative tenets) has been partially internalised in the mainstream of Russian political discourse through its use of concepts such as soft-power. It has outlined a framework of the core discourse of Russia as a great power, positioning nationalist demands for great powerness as peripheral. However, of greater importance to this thesis is Novorossiia itself. It exists as the ‘nice, simple, Russia idea’; the newly-constructed metaphor of Russia as a great power with conservative revolutionary appurtenance. In the eyes of nationalists, it exists as as the real-world evidence for Russia’s

²⁰ This is a critique of liberal international society pursued by Badiou (2005) and Ranciere (1999) before him.

great powerness, but it started through an entirely peripheral discourse. Using Laclau's logics of equivalence, a process of metonymy, the multifarious nationalist groups in Russia are drawn together in a unifying discourse and, through the appropriation of the great-power discourse of the mainstream, Novorossiia is constructed as a great power metaphor which is acceptable to the political mainstream, thereby seeking to externalise the internalised liberalism in the discourse of the mainstream. This is the crux of what will be explored in the following section.

2.2 Hegemony and nationalist strategy

When we approach the notion of Novorossiia, it is impossible to avoid a contextualisation of the movement without approaching the concept of hegemony. Originally posited by Gramsci as a problem of the education of the masses (Gramsci, 1971: 195), he explored the notion of hegemony as the situation whereby the ruling class can secure popular consent for the state's use of coercion (Steedman, 2006: 139; Gramsci, 1971). Gramsci explored the concept as part of culture, hence his nomination of the concept as 'cultural hegemony'. However, Gramsci's concept of cultural hegemony should be read in a more comprehensive, insightful way than simply the use of popular consent for state coercion. His concept took into account discursive and cultural aspects of hegemonic power formation. It was later explored by Ernesto Laclau, who posited the notion of hegemony, as befitting the background in Saussurean linguistics he shares with TMS, as a problem which lay necessarily at the level of discourse. Indeed, his conception of a hegemonic relationship is a power relation which articulates a specific set of meanings (Ventsel, 2009; Laclau, 2008). Discourse has become a key signifier in the complex world of power relations in which fewer and fewer aspects of everyday relationships - be they interpersonal, or relating to subjectivity - can be taken for granted by scholars (Laclau, 2006; Glynos, Howarth et al, 2009: 5). The presence of what Laclau terms 'institutionalist' and 'antagonistic' politics in discursive formations is key to understanding the applicability of his thought to discursive and hegemonic formations, such as Novorossiia. His notions of the 'logics of difference' and 'logics of equivalence' (Laclau, 2005; 2006; 2007) help determine two types of discursive formation in the political sphere. In an institutionalist discourse, the logics of difference are emphasised, whereby there is a multiplication of different positions which remain

in combined relation to one another (Laclau, 2008: 12-13). This is in contrast to the logics of equivalence, which are found in antagonistic discursive formations. In antagonistic discourse the number of positions is radically restricted, meaning all identities group around the two poles in discourse, establishing paradigmatic relations of substitution with one another (Laclau, 2008: 12-13). That is to say, where there is antagonism, discourse becomes a battleground for hegemony. To frame the institutionalist/antagonistic divide in different terms, we could say that subjectivity occurs in antagonistic discourse, where community rules in institutionalist discourse. An antagonistic discourse, one which uses Laclau's logics of equivalence, constructs an antagonism on the basis of a common enemy, thereby setting up an 'inside' and an 'outside' of discourse. The 'inside' of discourse will be made up by a number of different 'demands' which have been met - ie. the demands are inscribed in the totality.

So what does this mean when we are talking about Novorossiia specifically? It means that all parties within the conservative revolutionary discourse share the demand for Russia's great powerness to return, thereby radically shrinking the vastly different groups' demands to an equivalent demand based on a common enemy. It means that the liberal conception of power is blamed for failing to deliver this great powerness. It means that in order to create an alternative situation, whereby Russian great powerness is returned, they must prohibit liberals from altering the discourse. It means the creation of the 'fifth column' - to which this thesis will turn shortly - a concept which attempts to make the limits of the discursive formation equivalent to the limits of the community (Laclau, 2007: 81). In terms of this thesis, society undergoes a dichotomic division and great power discourse is limited to those who fall within the constructed global identity formed through the equivalence of a plurality of nationalist demands (Laclau, 2007). We shall call this identity the 'conservative revolutionary', the key signifiers for designating the inside and the outside being 'Novorossiia' and 'liberal' respectively.

It is important to note that Novorossiia and liberal do not have what one could call a 'relationship' with one another; rather, the gap between the two is exactly that - a gap. Laclau's notion of constitutive antagonism requires a 'broken space'. This can be defined according to

the maxim posited above that Novorossiya is constructed by conservative revolutionaries as the metaphor of Russia as a great power *within their community*, or in Laclau's terms:

“Since the fullness of the community is merely the imaginary reverse of a situation lived as ‘deficient being’, those who are responsible for this cannot be a legitimate part of our community,” (Laclau, 2007: 86).

The demands of the nationalists that Russia be a great power was not wont to appear under their ‘epistemological colonisation’ (Dugin, 2014) by liberals and thus liberals, in the view of conservative revolutionaries, must be excluded. The gap between the antagonistic groups is therefore better described as like an ‘irretrievable chasm’ (Laclau, 2007: 86): logically, one cannot be a pro-Novorossiya liberal.

If politics is a rupture with the logical starting rule of society²¹, this means that the only true instances of politics take place according to non-statist logics of equivalence. However, as Laclau shows, there is a “primacy of differential (consensus) logic over equivalential ruptures,” meaning that statist structures often move the goalposts for groups which appear at the periphery, adapting the core into a new, hybrid core in order to placate these peripheral political groups. In Novorossiya, this situation is problematised because there is no specific rupture with *arkhé*: the conservative revolution simply seeks to exclude a certain identity from the ‘inside’ of a discursive formation, thereby reifying the power relations of the liberalism they seek to oppose. Any new discursive formation or political movement which is formed under these circumstances - of ignoring egalitarianism, the nonpolitical condition of politics - places its subjectivity in opposition to individual expression, doubt, and irony; subjectivity is put entirely at the mercy of order and totalitarian kitsch.

We can therefore posit that the conservative revolution is a metapolitical movement: Novorossiya appears as both a ‘new society’ and a description of that society, with the name pertains to the content of the political movement itself. Authorised metaphor effectively

²¹ The logical starting rule of society is posited by Ranciere (2001) as ‘*arkhé*’.

becomes the boundary marker of discourse, forming an antagonistic frontier and making opposition to the liberal ‘outside’ the starting rule of ideology and, by extension, of the new society²². The first logic used here is the crystallisation of identity, whereby the discourse can assign its outside a fixed, rigid identity. In this case, the liberal is depicted as the figure of the Antichrist, able to transform into various guises in its bid to dismantle the Russian nation whilst Russia itself exists as the restraining force to the Antichrist; its katechon²³. The second logic, linked to the first, is the construction of a *récit*²⁴ for both inside and outside - the inside is the great powerness of the Russian nation, whilst the metaphors of the outside are linked through metonymy in order to create a narrative of death and destruction wrought upon the Russian nation. Here, the antagonistic frontier, or the narrative of assigning blame for Russia’s lack of great powerness to liberals, is constructed through metaphor but within metonymy: that is, through the metaphorical crystallisation of liberal identity as Antichrist, but within the history of Russia as a great power (metonymy). The narrative of Novorossiya can be constructed within this ‘broken space’ of the antagonistic frontier. We need only look to the place which Novorossiya occupies, post-revolution eastern Ukraine, in order to see that Novorossiya is constructed, both metaphorically and literally, at the point of an antagonistic frontier.

2.3 Russian Conservatism: From Periphery to Core

The conservative revolutionary discourse has moved, courtesy of its appropriation of the great power discourse and the appearance of a real-world referent in Novorossiya, from the periphery of Russian political discourse towards the centre. In order to explain this claim, the centrifugal nature of Laclau’s logics of equivalence now becomes central to further analysis. This is where the link TMS and the Essex School of discourse analysis²⁵ is most explicitly posited in this thesis. The shared Saussurean heritage of Laclau and figures like Lotman and Uspensky help form the theoretical background of the semiotic model posited in the empirical chapter. Of

²² This thesis returns to this point in the empirical section, positing the concept of Nomos as a key signifier of Novorossiya as metaphor.

²³ Bible

²⁴ A narrative or a history

²⁵ Of which Ernesto Laclau is a founding father.

particular importance is the *antagonistic frontier* of discourse²⁶, which is constructed in relation to the first-person form of identity. The boundary, or frontier, can be described as an area of accelerated semiotic processes which exists as the outer limit of the first-person form²⁷ (Lotman, 2001). The central problem of Laclau's conception of discourse is thus establishing where its limits lie. Because a given discourse has no 'I', there can be no limits to identities constructed within it. For example, a liberal can call himself a patriot²⁸, blurring the boundaries between the 'inside' and 'outside' of the identity 'patriot'. This is precisely where tropological communication - that is, the logics of equivalence, the chaining of nationalist demands through a process of metonymy - come into our analysis. Laclau goes beyond the concept of direct antagonism by suggesting that any 'outside' of discourse is closed through tropological means: the limits of any possible signification are figuratively constructed within the discourse itself (Laclau, 2006: 114). It is only through the explicit use of 'authorised' metaphor - authorised through the hegemonic struggle *within* the discourse of great power itself - that 'patriots' can be distinguished from 'liberals'.

Extending Laclau's insights to TMS' conception of tropological language shows that TMS may not have been as strictly structuralist as it once appeared. In particular, Lotman's recognition of all objects as being discursively constructed within a given semiosphere affords him the sympathetic ear of the cultural turn in political theory. Any discursive formation is subject to acts of limiting, meaning that discourse itself remains both unstable and bound by language and interdiscursivity (Ventsel, 2009: 16). This is precisely where TMS semiotics of culture and Laclau's discourse theory can be defined with reference to their common Saussurean heritage: signs are understood as distinguishable only by difference, and discourse must be closed in order for coherent identity formation to take place. The condition of untranslatability in Lotman's thought - where two types of code, discrete and continuous, are used to create a meaningful

²⁶ For Lotman's semiosphere, the importance lies at the *boundary*, and although the two concepts are not completely mutually compatible (*vis a vis* the strictness of their interpretation of this boundary or frontier), they both give similar explanations of how the part relates to the totality.

²⁷ By way of example, one group of nationalist 'patriots' could argue that another social formation was not patriotic, thereby excluding them from the first person form.

²⁸ The term 'patriot' here refers to those who are pro-Novorossiia, as per the distinction in conservative revolutionary thought.

totality - is directly analogous to Laclau's conception of 'empty signifier' - whereby the unfixity of the signifier and the signified means that a certain signifier is elevated to the position where it embodies the totality (Laclau, 2007: 70). The two thinkers share not simply a common heritage but also espouse an understanding of the totality as greater than the sum its parts, making both of them indispensable to a theory of hegemony which takes semiosis as its central tenet (Ventsel, 2009; Selg & Ventsel, 2008) and to this thesis' use of tropological language as an interpretive tool of analysis.

As earlier posited, the antagonistic frontier is an area in which an increased rate of semiosis takes place. The increased volume of semiotic activity at the frontier of any given discursive field is coupled with the desire to affix peripheral meaning processes to core structures, with the view to ultimately replacing them (Lotman, 2005: 212-214). There are three important aspects at work here. First, the appurtenance of peripheral cultural processes to core processes results in the appropriation of the core's discursive stability - its terminology, its naming processes, its places. Second, this process means that the core discourse is qualitatively adapted. Terminology, names, and places take on meanings which are different, even antithetical, from their originals. However, due to the *identification* with the original name, the peripheral meaning obtains a centrifugal force. Third, and most importantly, the implicit hegemonic battle taking place within the same discursive space: if the periphery is ultimately trying to replace the core, then there is some sort of hegemonic struggle taking place. Information is re-semiotised, or re-coded, according to the specific ideology of those at the periphery. This is a process of metonymy. These three aspects are implicit in the appearance of Novorossiia in the political mainstream. Conservative revolutionaries appropriated the terminology, naming processes, and places of the great power discourse through its adoption of the leitmotifs of great powers of the past. These leitmotifs were adapted through a process of *internal* hegemonic struggle, whereby their meanings were qualitatively adapted and, due to their identification with core great power discourse, obtained a centrifugal force in the Russian political and discursive space. These adapted leitmotifs were re-introduced into the mainstream great power discourse in order to change the discursive map of Russia as a great power, with conservative revolutionaries *inside*

and liberals *outside*. This is an attempt to make Novorossiia, and indeed the discourse of the conservative revolution by extension, indispensable to the concept of Russia as a great power.

In order to better understand how tropological language closes off the outside of discourse, we must delve deeper, looking toward the boundary of the given totality to see how the hegemonic struggle takes place:

“From an internal point of view, a given culture can look like the external non-semiotic world, which, from the point of view of an external observer, may establish itself as a semiotic periphery. In this way, the crossing point of the boundary of a given culture depends on the position of the observer,” (Lotman, 2005: 213).

Conflicts of meaning, and indeed new cultural productions, arise in liminal spaces - that is, the space between boundaries, where semiotic processes may be relevant to multiple discourses, or even cultures (Steedman, 2006: 160). The internal process of encoding messages for insiders and against others necessarily draws a group together as an ‘I’ (Urban, 2006; Lotman, 2001). In Laclau’s terms, the metonymic process described creates a hegemonic class by taking heterogeneous demands and shrinking them down around specific popular demands. As earlier suggested, texts which identify with the discursively constructed core qualitatively transform in the process of their re-semiotisation. The conservative revolutionary movement from periphery to core is an intra-discursive hegemonic battle relating to Russia as a great power. Novorossiia appears in the gap between worldviews generated by globalised, US-centric liberalism (hegemony) and the counter-hegemonic discourses surrounding the concept of Russia as a great power and operates, for conservative revolutionaries, as a point of closure in the new discursive map.

Success by the conservative revolutionaries in the battle for cultural hegemony would be a broad pre-condition for the restructuring of society, according to their own ideology, something which Dugin believes to be a natural right, defensible by force if necessary:

“The true national elite has no right to leave its people without its ideology, which should express not only what the people²⁹ feel and think about, but what they should not feel and think about. If we are not able to arm the State with our ideology, the State can be temporarily taken from us by the ‘alien elements’, and we will by all means arm the Russian partisan,” (Dugin, 2014).

This seemingly ambiguous quote exemplifies the point that Novorossiia is part of a hegemonic struggle: it uses the hegemonic process of naming. To what does the term State allude? Is the State that Dugin talks about here the Russian Federation, or his Eurasian Empire, or Novorossiia? Naming is one of the most important features of both hegemony and metapolitics. For Badiou, and for Lazarus before him, the ‘abandonment’ of the name ultimately means inscribing it within a totality (Badiou, 2005:29; Lazarus, 1996). The problem they envisage here is similar to Laclau’s ‘empty signifier’: due to the fact that concepts, and not names, are exportable to a wide variety of heterogenous fields, thinking of a name (or in Laclau’s terms, an empty signifier) *only* relative to its totality means that the name ceases to be thinkable on its own and we approach a situation whereby metalanguage is produced; “there is an overbalancing of what exists into what *can* exist,” (Badiou, 2005: 31). The name is ‘sacrificed’ to the greater totality (Lazarus, 1996: 119). In Laclau’s terms, the signifier is emptied of its value of signification and comes to embody the totality to which it now refers. What this means for political discourse, then, is that names become central to the process of hegemonic struggle (Calcagno, 2007; Ventsel, 2009; Laclau, 2007; Selg & Ventsel, 2008): power relations within discourses are crystallised in authorised metaphor (Carver & Pikalo, 2008: 4) and hegemonic power is placed under competition when competing definitions arise (Calcagno, 2007).

The discrete code which creates the tropological whole of Novorossiia is the very name ‘Novorossiia’. Through naming the movement thusly, advocates of the movement fill the *otlochie* (or what Lazarus (1996) calls the ‘prescriptive possible’) related to the name ‘Novorossiia’. Novorossiia becomes *more* than simply a name. It becomes a catachresis of

²⁹ народ

exportable conceptual contingencies; *not* Ukraine, *not* Donbas, *greater than* Donetsk People's Republic, *anti*-Maidan, *anti*-liberal-fascism, and so on. However, by inscribing a new state into the name Novorossiia whilst metaphorically closing discourse to certain groups in society, conservative revolutionaries take an opposition to the rupture which accompanies increasing popular participation, popular mobilisation, and the creation of competing meanings. In other words, they reify the 'exercise of power' of the liberals they seek to oppose. Novorossiia as the name of a new state allows a circular logic of subjectivity arise: subjectivity is defined with reference to the state's capacity to engage in hegemonic practices (a monopoly on the legitimate use of force, for example), but these practices are not contested with reference to subjectivity. Due to the fact that the new society is positioned as a Party-State, with reference for all forms of subjectivity falling in line with the state hegemonic order, Novorossiia appears as a Stalinist movement. By invoking the history of Russia as a great power, politics in Novorossiia can only exist as what Lazarus (1996: 17) called a 'thought-relation-of-the-State' (Lazarus, 1996: 17), ie. it is only thinkable through the medium of discourse. Novorossiia can only be constructed through metaphor but within metonymy, or, put another way, through *orientation towards* Russia whilst *identifying with* the discourse of Russia as a great power.

3 Novorossiya: Russia as a Great Power Through the lens of the Conservative Revolutionary

The great power discourse appears when Russia's place in the international system is questioned (Astrov, 2011; Neumann, 2008). The discourse was seen as especially important in the newly-founded Russian Federation³⁰. However, the hegemonic ball was very much in the West's court and in order to be recognised as a great power Russia would have had to match Western norms (Neumann, 2008). Not wishing to partake in the 'moral bankruptcy' of the West, the peripheral nationalist discourses of Russia as a great power turned to appropriation, distortion, and/or conjunction of various discourses linked with the history of the concept of Russia as a great power. For the purposes of this thesis, these chained discourses are outlined as Political Orthodoxy and Imperial Nostalgia (in both Soviet and Tsarist form). This empirical chapter approaches these two popular demands, showing how they have been formed through the logics of equivalence and moved towards the centre of the discursive space through a process of metonymy. They are then unpacked in two further sections, taking two specific concepts which are present in the political logics of Novorossiya. First, katechon as a specific metaphor of political orthodoxy is approached, before nomos as a specific metaphor of imperial nostalgia is explicated. Remembering that a narrative is created through metaphor but within metonymy, the concluding section of this thesis posits a semiotic model through which Novorossiya should be seen as a multimodal metaphor of Russia as a great power and the movement of the conservative revolution towards the political and discursive mainstream.

The conservative revolution uses the logics of equivalence, acting as nodal point around which various nationalist discourses can align against liberalism. In other words, they reframe the discourse of Russia as a great power in terms of their own ideology, delimiting the discursive plane with liberalism on the outside and rendering identity politics 'amenable to consensus'

³⁰ Notably, this is the last time nationalists had anything great to cheer about in Russia. Since the 1993 storming of the White House, nationalist discourse has remained on the periphery of Russian politics.

(Badiou, 2005). In Novorossiia, they construct an ideologically-grounded metaphor of Russia as a great power.

Dugin's conception of the 'Fifth Column' as the greatest challenge to Russia, whereby the state is captured by liberals determined to destroy the Russian nation and its culture (Urban, 2006; Dugin, 2014), exemplifies the delimiting function which has come to be associated with the conservative revolution: liberalism is portrayed as something completely alien and liberals are interpellated outside the 'inside' formation of Russia as a great power. The concept of the Fifth Column actively constructs an antagonism between liberalism and Russia's great powerness. That is not to say that conservative discourse on Russia as a great power, through the guise of Dugin's neo-Eurasianism, is static. Through this concept, the aspirations of the conservative revolutionaries are inscribed: their belief that Russia's great power has been bypassed due to the hegemonic force of liberalism means that Russia as a great power is what Laclau (2007: 90-94) calls a *false totality*. When Dugin (2014) argues that "freedom without justice is meaningless", he means that a *fully-fledged totality* inscribes within it the collective equivalential chain of demands of the conservative revolutionaries that would make up an imagined, just society. Novorossiia is identified as an ideal of the universally *just* society which the existing system of partially-internalised liberalism negates by subjecting, and thereby demeaning, the discourse of Russia as a great power to liberal international society. How, then, is this equivalential chaining of demands undertaken in the Novorossiia discourse? We turn first to Political Orthodoxy, before analysing Imperial Nostalgia.

3.1 Political Orthodoxy

The conservative discourse surrounding Russia as a great power is centred around Aleksandr Dugin's neo-Eurasianism, although there has been a boom in the number of conservative think tanks and political discussion clubs since the end of Putin's first term as President³¹. Dugin's thought is based on a mixture of influences, but his most fundamental philosophy pits Russia as

³¹ Maria Engstrom (2014: 361) outlines the most salient as: The Eurasia Party, The Seraph Club, Eurasian Youth Union, The Russian Project, The Conservative Press Club, The Northern Katechon in the Department of Philosophy at the Russian Academy of Science, The League of Conservative Journalists, The Centre of Conservative Research, The Russian Observer, Odnako, The Institute of Dynamic Conservatism, The Essence of Time, and The Izborsk Club.

culturally closer to Asia than to Europe (Dugin, 1996). Dugin argues that the Traditionalism of René Guenon is central to the Eurasian political program (Dugin, 1996a). However, his endorsement of Guenon's spirituality is subordinated to the political goals which the project of Eurasianism seeks to accomplish (Shekhovtsov & Umland, 2009: 668). Guenon himself rejects nationalism as fundamentally incompatible with traditionalism; his spirituality holds a strict aversion to political activism as one of its central tenets (Guenon, 2004: 98). The use of Guenon's name and terminology, as opposed to explicit engagement with his thought, is understood to be for two reasons: first, it gives neo-Eurasianism the political attribute of non-conformity and idealism; and, second, it allows Dugin to hide his Western European ideological roots - the conservative revolution of Germany in the 1920s (Vinkovetsky, 2000; Shekhovtsov & Umland, 2009). Neo-Eurasianist ideology appears to take on a skeuomorphic³² character. A reading of neo-Eurasianism which takes into account the primarily poetic nature of the movement is not posited here simply in order to tarnish it or point out its ideological inconsistencies. Rather, it demonstrates that the movement cannot be understood through rationality, based on demonstrative argumentation; it instead attempts to dictate thought through metaphorical allusions and magical hypnosis (Senderov, 2007: 70). The texts of the conservative revolutionaries are designed to 'enchant and bewitch' (Engstrom, 2014: 359) and their manifesto is enacted on the cultural level - it is of no coincidence that their political allies in Europe are those from the French New Right: those who use explicitly the term '*Gramscisme de Droite*'³³ (Piccone, 1994; Hill, 2013). Neo-Eurasianism appropriates the great power discourse to argue for a counter-hegemonic process based on a symmetric Orthodox response to liberal hegemony (Senderov, 2007; Engstrom, 2014). Culture is politicised and the movement itself takes on a metapolitical, or as Senderov (2007) calls it 'literary-political' trend, with the battle for hegemony taking place "at the junction of art, literature, philosophy, and politics" (Engstrom, 2014: 358). The Eurasian Youth Union, the youth branch of Dugin's Eurasia Party, uses this logic in arguing that "Our network will permeate everything - in schools, on the streets, in the

³² Skeuomorphs retain design features from original objects which were necessary in the original, but are subsequently used for ornamental design.

³³ Gramscism of the right

universities and discos, clubs and factories, barracks and ministerial offices, military schools and art galleries” (Rossiya 3).

The equivalential chaining of metaphors to produce a conservative revolutionary narrative uses political Orthodoxy as a central tenet to bring together different nationalist groupings. Here, Orthodoxy takes on its English dual meaning: relating both to the Eastern Orthodox Church³⁴ and to political conformism - that is, a privileging of collective conformism in the old, Prussian sense. The Russian conservative revolutionary discourse engages with the conservative revolutionaries of 1920s Germany, and in particular the thought of Oswald Spengler. Orthodoxy in the sense of a collective conformism is justified in terms of the differences between land and sea powers. In Spengler’s writings, he contrasts England and Prussia as ‘islanders and non-islanders’, which gave the English the ability to constitute themselves, where the Prussians were constituted with reference to another³⁵. Therefore “In England a liberal³⁶ is an integral individual ethically free...We Germans are made so that we cannot be English...That is why liberalism provokes nothing but disdain in Germany...English politics is the politics of private individuals and associations of such individuals...The German liberal is a moral non-entity that merely negates the state but is unable to justify his negation,” (Spengler, 1993: 112). The German, despite his inability to possess this English version of a culture of society, remains free but in a different way: “A genuine spirit of unity reigns in the small circles; the whole life is thought of as a service; this pathetic pale of earthly existence only acquires meaning in light of a higher task...The system of social duties ensures for a person with broad horizons a sovereignty of his inner world which cannot be combined with the social rights that come with individualistic ideals,” (Spengler, 1993: 112). Dugin’s neo-Eurasianism in particular alludes to this dichotomy - and he explicitly uses it in his book ‘*Osnovy Evraziista*’ (Dugin, 2001) where he contrasts the Atlantic powers, led by the USA, with the Eurasian powers, led by Russia - but the binary is radicalised through the replacement of the Englishman with the American “absolute enemy”

³⁴ The movement of political Orthodoxy includes Serbian nationalism, so instead of Russian Orthodox, simply Orthodox is emphasised here.

³⁵ Spengler says that Prussia was constructed on the basis of the Hohenzollerns, a Royal House of the German Empire.

³⁶ Spengler’s liberal cannot be directly equated with today’s liberal, but the aspect most keenly recognised in common here is their individual freedom.

(Rossiya 3) and the substitution of the Russian for the German (Senderov, 2007). Dugin uses the Orthodox duality to his advantage by combining aspects of Orthodox Christianity to complete his ideal of a just society:

“In Orthodox christianity a person is a part of the Church, part of the collective organism, just like a leg. So how can a person be responsible for himself? Can a leg be responsible for itself? Here is where the idea of state, total state originates from. Also because of this, Russians, since they are Orthodox, can be true fascists, unlike artificial Italian fascists...The true Hegelian is Ivan Peresvetov - the man who in the 16th century invented the oprichnina³⁷ for Ivan Grozny. He was the true creator of Russian fascism. He created the idea that the state is everything and the individual is nothing,” (Dugin, 1999).

Unfulfilled demands from across the nationalist spectrum are shrunk down on the basis of a common denominator (the common liberal enemy) and are represented by the equivalential demand ‘Political Orthodoxy’. The shrinking down of unfulfilled demands is a process of metonymy, whereby the popular demand for political orthodoxy expresses an identification with the Greater Russian *narod*. This popular demand is therefore accompanied, courtesy of this identification, with a move towards the political mainstream.

In Dugin’s ideal just society, the individual becomes a catachresis for the Church and the Church synonymous with the State. The individual thus becomes a tool for completing the work of the totalitarian state, which encompasses his religion and his subjectivity. The political Orthodoxy of the conservative revolutionary has the specific aim of: “building a new country - Russia 3³⁸, a Russian-Eurasian Empire stretching from ocean to ocean” (Rossiya 3). This idea is grounded in the thought of Nikolai Berdyaev (1948), who posited the notion of Russia as the “last Orthodox kingdom”. Here, the eschatological panic of the conservative revolution is animated through its

³⁷ A period of repression in the era of Ivan Grozny, between 1565 and 1572, where a secret police organisation instituted public executions, mass repression, and confiscation of land from the aristocracy.

³⁸ Russia 1 is described as the current corrupted state, with Russia 2 the state which the Americans want to impose – the ‘Orange’ state in the Eurasian Youth Union manifesto, relating to the Orange Revolution in Ukraine, but can now be updated to a post-Maidan state in light of the Ukrainian Revolution of 2014.

appropriation of historical great power: Russian communism. Collective conformism is posited as one of the key characteristics in the equivalential chain of nationalist demands. In this way, Dugin himself has become a sort of ideological family figurehead of the conservative revolution, as can be seen through his membership in many of the most important conservative organisations: the Eurasian Youth Union, the Izborsk Club, and the Institute of Dynamic Conservatism, amongst others.

The metaphorical association of Russia as katechon exists as the metaphor which is animated by the collective conformism posited in this section. The orientation of Novorossiia towards ‘Russia, the great power’ is preceded by the humble metonymic identification between those advocating Political Orthodoxy and Russia as a great power. The second metonymic identification between conservative revolutionaries and Russia as a great power approached in this chapter is Imperial Nostalgia.

3.2 Imperial Nostalgia

Through a decisively Thermidorean movement towards national bolshevism, the great power discourse takes on the form of imperial nostalgia. This movement makes up the second part of the nationalist groups aligned with the Novorossiia movement and finds its real-world referents in the *Zavtra*³⁹ network and the Izborsk Club (Dynamic Conservatism, 2012), both led by Aleksandr Prokhanov. The Izborsk Club, named after a town in the Pskov region where a fortress stands, is made up of more than 30 anti-liberal intellectuals, including members of various nationalist circles; for example neo-Eurasianists such as Dugin and Leontev, ethno-nationalists such as Narochnitskaya, contemporary messianists such as Father Tikhon Shevkunov, and Soviet nostalgists such as Prokhanov. It calls itself “ideologically directed towards social conservatism... a strong ideological and political coalition of patriotic statesmen... an imperial front to resist the manipulation of the fifth column’s centres of influence inside the country.” The group grew as a result of the “ideological and moral decline of the liberal community” and “has long aspired to serve as an expression of intellectuality of the

³⁹ Tomorrow – weekly newspaper espousing National Bolshevik views.

Russian Federation” (Dynamic Conservatism, 2012). In both the makeup of its personnel and its ideological premises, the Izborsk Club is an example of the right-wing use of counter-hegemonic struggle: equivalential links are drawn between nationalists of vastly different ideologies in order to advance the goal of dismissing the ‘fifth column’ and squeezing liberals to the outside of a clearly demarcated discursive field. The tactics of the group in advancing Novorossiia towards the political mainstream are located in the appropriation, distortion, and conjunction of discourses from across Russian history.



Figure 1: Donbass - the heart of Russia (1921) Source: Evrazia (2015)

The preceding image (entitled ‘Donbass - the heart of Russia’, 1921) is one appropriated by the Izborsk Club from the Russian avant-garde movement during the Civil War. This poster

appeared as part of their advertisement campaign for the first meeting of the Izborsk Club in Novorossiya, which took place in March 2015 (Evrazia, 2015). The appropriation of an avant-garde poster for an explicitly conservative movement may seem ideologically incoherent, but it appears acceptable to the Izborsk Club in light of their nostalgia for great-powerness in the Soviet empire, coupled with the nature of the conservative movement in Russia being self-reflexively ‘revolutionary’⁴⁰. The poster is not simply a call for revolutionary action; through its appropriation by the Izborsk Club, it is simultaneously re-semiotised in accordance with conservative revolutionary ideology. A contiguous link is created between the Izborsk Club and Soviet great powerness. The poster is problematised, however, by the situation of its appropriation. The Izborsk Club has been extremely vociferous in terms of the Novorossiya movement, even penning a draft constitution (Nakanune, 2014). However, in its ‘revolutionary’ call for a statist political consciousness, it has revealed itself to be Thermidorean.

For a Thermidorean, salience is placed not in the *country*, but in the *objective view of the country*. Importance is placed not in the *law* (in the sense of principles relating to the situation), but in the *functioning of the law*. The importance of politics for a Thermidorean lies not in *insurrection* as a response to principles being trampled, but in *peace* despite those principles being trampled over (Badiou, 2005: 129). This Badiouian triad of “objective conception of the country”, “conservative conception of the law”, and “security-obsessed conception of situations” (Badiou, 2005: 129) emphasises that the statification of political consciousness, necessarily departing from the ‘constant striving towards virtue’⁴¹, and towards interestedness (Badiou, 2005: 130). Interestedness is an important concept for the remainder of this thesis, for it demarcates the discourse of Novorossiya as a battle for *an alternative hegemony*. This means that the discourse of Novorossiya places calculable interest in place of subjectivity; the law becomes only that which works in the favour of the patriot, insurrection is only acceptable when *certain*

⁴⁰ Dugin’s translated and published work by German conservative revolutionaries, such as Carl Schmitt, from the early 1990s onwards.

⁴¹ This is what I will term Badiou’s ‘Socratic moment’, in which he channels Socrates’ assertion that he would rather die than give up philosophy.

principles are trampled over (for example, the Orthodox Church⁴²). As Senderov (2007: 77) put it; “what causes the ire of contributors (to the conservative revolution) is not so much the habit of addressing stadium crowds to peddle propaganda (liberal propaganda), but its success: ‘we can be just as successful’ seems to be the refrain and meaning of the numerous recipes of a *symetric* Orthodox response.”

Interestedness involves the constant search for a *place* for this Thermidorean politics, and herein lies the most salient point we can glean from the Novorossiya discourse. Novorossiya exists as a *place* which is directly related to the political programme of that great nationalist/conservative amalgamation, the Izborsk Club. The place, the statist political consciousness, and the interestedness of the conservative revolution combines to form a metaphor for the unification of conservative discourse with that of great power discourse: Novorossiya. This metaphor is constructed in order to create an alternative hegemonic force, and it battles for the discursive centre through its use of the symbols of great power in what Adorno (1932) called the ‘pop unconscious’. For further evidence, we turn to another poster of the conference.

⁴² For more on this see the Vice News (2015) documentary on the Protestant movement in the Donetsk region. Protestants have had to worship secretly and in private housing, whilst Orthodox Churches remain an important part of society in the new state of Novorossiya.



Figure 2: Source (Evrazia, 2015)

The three intertwined symbols of the poster - the Soviet flag, the *Georgevskaya Lentochka*⁴³, and the Tsarist imperial tricolour - represent the various sections of Russian nationalist nostalgia associated with the Izborsk Club and indeed with Novorossiya. Their use in combination with one another is a form of totalitarian kitsch which runs throughout the appropriation of former *grands récits* for Thermidorean ends. The aim, or rather, interestedness, of the Thermidorean in this sense is Russia's return to great powerness. The demand for a return to great powerness based on historical grand narratives is the other key popular demand related to the conservative move from periphery to core.

⁴³ St. George's ribbon.

Totalitarian kitsch can be described as the banishment of “every display of individualism (because a deviation from the collective is a spit in the eye of the smiling brotherhood), every doubt (because anyone who starts doubting details with start doubting life itself), and all irony (because in the realm of kitsch everything must be taken quite seriously)” (Kundera, 1984: 59). Individualism in the Novorossiia discourse is subsumed under the appeal to national liberation, with opposition to individualism forming a key part of the anti-Western foundation of ideology (Burenkov, 2014; Dugin, 2014). Doubt is crushed beneath the framing of the discourse as part of a ‘conservative revolution’. Violence is sublimated in various parts of the pro-Novorossiia Ruset⁴⁴ and, without any hint of irony, is inserted into the discourse as part of the security-based solution to protect the ‘peaceful civilians’⁴⁵ of the Donbas region. The branding of the Russian army (RIA, 2014) which was prevalent following the annexation of Crimea and continuing today as *polite people*⁴⁶ is an example of the overlap between nationalist discourse and mainstream discourse. The image of the soldiers, complete with camouflage gear and automatic weapons, is juxtaposed with the cat, whose presence signifies that the soldiers are ultimately benevolent forces and wish to do no harm. It also signifies that the struggle for what Dugin’s neo-Eurasianism calls ‘national liberation’ is an objective reality: Novorossiia exists as a collective (plural), conservative movement, based on the security of civilians in Donbas.



Figure 3: Source: Vsemayki.ru

⁴⁴ Russian-language internet.

⁴⁵ мирные жители - this term is widely used throughout the Novorossiia discourse to explain that all the DNR and LNR want is peace.

⁴⁶ A t-shirt website selling clothing emblazoned with the slogan *vezhliyve lyudi* (polite/courteous people) is advertised on several Novorossiia information or news sites, including RusVesna and TopWar.ru.

Adorno's kitsch contained a sense of how hegemony ran through the concept. He called kitsch the 'precipitate of devalued forms', whereby the kitsch itself comes in the character of a model⁴⁷ (Adorno, 1932); a generalised conceptual form. Identification with the three intertwining symbols of great-powerness in the event posters for the Izborsk Club use this type of stylisation to invoke the pop unconscious; that is, the former *grand récits* - of St. George, of Soviet great power, and of Tsarist imperialism - develop new life and new art "from the husks of old" (Meisel, 2010: 58). Here we can really see why the avant-garde of the revolution is appropriated by the Izborsk Club and the traditionalism of Guénon by Dugin: they function as stylisations, or skeuomorphisms, which create new forms of thought, based on a distortion of the original conceptions. The aspects of avant-garde (revolutionism) and traditionalism (spirituality) which suit their ideology are cherry-picked and inserted as appropriate. Likewise, it is not that nationalists wish to return to the Soviet period, the Tsarist period, or otherwise; they merely wish to use the precipitate of these narratives - the great power associated with them - to construct a new ideological framework which could possibly exist *in the political mainstream*. By appropriating core narratives and forming new precipitates based on their re-semiotisation, the conservative revolution moves towards the political mainstream.

3.3 Russia as Katechontic Restrainer

This section is dedicated to the idea of Russia as Katechon. This specific metaphor is relevant to various cultural practices, and from painting to philosophy it appears frequently in the contemporary turn towards conservatism. Inside the discursive field of Russia as a great power, it is animated through the metonymy of Political Orthodoxy to create a narrative of Novorossiya as a new Russian idea. Katechon is originally a biblical concept and appears in 2 Thessalonians 3-7;

Let no one deceive you in any way. For that day will not come, unless the rebellion comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction, who opposes and exalts himself

⁴⁷ Bakhtin used the term 'stylisation' to describe an exaggeration of any kind at all.

against every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, proclaiming himself to be God. Do you not remember that when I was still with you I told you these things? And you know what is restraining him now so that he may be revealed in his time. For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work. Only he who restrains it will do so until he is out of the way.

Verses 6-7 are of particular importance; Katechon (from the Greek ὁ κατέχων, ‘the one who withholds’) is that which restrains the antichrist from being completely manifested. The term is of salience to contemporary Russian political discourse as it grounds a renewed interest in great powerness by bringing together military-conspirational discourse and contemporary messianism in Russian foreign policy (Engstrom, 2014), as well as in the conservative revolution at home. It would be reasonable to start with some examples from an artist who endorses Donetsk as “a typical, southern Russian city”, Kandinsky Prize winner of 2008, Alexey Belyaev-Gintovt. Whilst 4 pieces are shown as examples, only the first is analysed in great detail. The others function as representatives of the same idea, showing that the notion of Russia as katechontic restrainer is part of a wider intellectual manoeuvre and is not simply a flash in the pan.



Figure 4: One Soul, One People (2005) by Alexey Belyaev-Gintovt



Figure 5: Sevastopol is a Russian City (2008) by Alexey Belyaev-Gintovt



Figure 6, Left: Glory to Russian Weapons! (2008) by Alexey Belyaev-Gintovt. Figure 7, Right: We are all going back! (2008) by Alexey Belyaev-Gintovt

Belyaev-Gintovt's striking, and widely-criticised⁴⁸, work is important for understanding the construction of Novorossiia in the Russian political and discursive space. Military might is placed front and centre, juxtaposed with a depiction of spirituality in the form of an Orthodox

⁴⁸ An open letter on the 2008 Kandinsky Prize, which Belyaev-Gintovt won, was penned by the Chto Delat Platform, arguing that his work should have won the Leni Riefenstahl Prize instead.

woman. She is conservatively-dressed in white, and in symbolising the purity of the pan-Slavic people, invokes the thought of the forefather of pan-Slavism and slavophilism, Nikolai Danilevsky. Coupled with the star of absolute expansion, which is also the symbol of Aleksandr Dugin's Eurasian Youth Union, the Orthodox people, as *one soul, one nation*, are depicted as a unified katechontic restrainer. The military power and the spiritual power are aligned in a furthering of the idea of neo-Eurasianism; that is, that the 'Reds' and the 'Whites' of the Russian past are allied in a new metapolitical movement. The reds, whites, and blacks used in the piece paint an allusion to avant-garde constructivist art, analogising the piece with a broader revolutionary tendency. As earlier posited, the allusion to such an ideologically antithetical movement as constructivist art is based on the unfulfilled demand of great powerness. The image as a whole, then, shows us an example of Orthodox identity in the world; revolutionary, restraining, subversive - the revolutionary colours of the avant-garde, the restraining tendencies of contemporary messianism in the form of Orthodoxy, and the subversive nationalism associated with the star of absolute expansion combining to form a unifying metaphor.

The title of the piece fixes a rigid, hierarchical identity to the Eurasian people of the Orthodox world in light of their unstable post-Soviet identity and against a flexible, fluid, or horizontal conception of identity. The names *dusha* and *narod* are thus crystallised metaphorically - and quite literally in this case - where they are made into one soul and one people. This move thus gives characteristics of essential belonging: all the different parts of the image metaphorically construct the indivisible one. The identity of this one can be explained by Aleksandr Dugin's essay 'Katechon and Revolution' (1997), in which he argues for a move towards Russian National Bolshevism;

Russian National Bolshevism is a modernistic expression of messianic aspirations inherent to the Russian people since the fall of Constantinople, but it is similarly expressed in the socio-economic ideas of creating an eschatological society in Russia based on the principles of justice, truth, equality, and other values of the 'Thousand Year Kingdom'⁴⁹.

⁴⁹ царство. The use of a term relating to monarchy shows how the monarchists have been subsumed under the umbrella chain of the conservative revolution.

Such an eschatological society harks back to the thought of Belyaev⁵⁰ and is embodied by the Belyaev-Gintovt's image of the woman and in the construction of Novorossiia as a State in which identity has been crystallised around clear nodal points; "traditional family, Orthodoxy as the state religion, and trying to nationalise private big business," (Dugin, 2014).

The oneness of the military power of the State is the Kalashnikov held by the woman. The relationship between the Church and the military is thus depicted as the cross shape in which the Orthodox Church and the military State make up the oneness of the single *dusha* and the single *narod* - that is, they not only cross, but they are carved from the same piece of wood. Moreover, there is an allusion to the three Orthodox horizontal crossbeams, which are usually made up by *Tsar Slavy* (the King of Glory, the inscription over Jesus' head when he was crucified), the cross to which the arms are nailed, and the slanted footrest (the slant points upwards towards penitence and downwards towards impenitence, as in the case of those who were crucified next to Jesus - St. Dismas and Gestus respectively). Seen through the prism of Roman Jakobson's conception of metaphor as "a substitution *in absentia* and the establishment of a semantic link by similarity" (Lotman, 2001: 39), these three crossbeams represent the spiritual, the metapolitical, and the moral aspects of katechon respectively. In the case of Gintovt's image, the spiritual dimension is the white light surrounding the woman, whose conservative, white dress makes up the moral aspect of Orthodoxy. She holds the physical, second beam of the cross in her hands; the biopolitical aspect of the neoconservative movement is depicted by the sharp juxtaposition of the gun. Together they make a single Orthodox one. This one, with its spiritual, metapolitical, and moral dimensions, defiantly constructs a rigid (stance), hierarchical (Orthodox) identity to the *narod* and *dusha* in question. Together, the image embodies the idea of Russia as Katechon.

The conservative revolution, and the defiant stance of the conservatively-dressed Orthodox woman, stands in direct opposition to the undepicted, but tacitly represented, 'liberal-fascism'. Liberal US hegemony appears as the basis of the ideological position for advocates of

⁵⁰ Belyaev is said to be Putin's favourite philosopher.

Novorossiya. However, this position is reduced to a construction of the liberal ‘Other’ as follows:

In the West, if A is allowed, then B is disallowed (Raskin & Zarubin, 2015).

This is shown best by the depictions of Western liberals in discourse surrounding the conservative revolution and Novorossiya more specifically. Political analyst and strategist Stanislav Belkovsky (2006: 5) created the collection *Political Orthodoxy*, in which the following excerpt describes “an American plutocrat, designed to be hated by the masses,” (Senderov, 2007: 71):

“What did he die from?”

“Stomach cancer. All his life he ate in his glorified McDonalds joints...He also, it seems, guzzled stolen beer and turned his nose up in disgust at the thought of Siberian vodka...He earned pitiful profits on speculation in some kind of currencies alien to his understanding. He breathed provincial petrol from frozen money and after 5pm he loaded himself with a cheeseburger, with Texan mustard and went to watch a thriller...Was the deceased a married man? Yes, he was married to a 140 kilogram American woman, a loud-mouthed leader of a league of feminists. She had been receiving treatment for obesity and drug addiction for three years at Dr. Kissinger's clinic.”

This hardline anti-liberalism exists as the very basis of ideology (Senderov, 2007: 73). The conservative revolution, as metaphorically represented by Novorossiya, is therefore presented as an opposition to this McDonalds-eating, beer-guzzling, morally and spiritually-corrupt liberal. Igor Strelkov (2014), former military commander of the separatist forces, upon resigning his post, delivered a speech at a press-conference in which ‘the enemy’ (in this case, a US-backed Ukrainian fascist junta) was depicted in animalistic or immoral terms on numerous occasions. As animals, liberal-fascists were depicted as “*snarling*”, “*monstrous*”, “*masquerading in sheep’s clothing*”, “*howling in unison*”, “*zombified and brainwashed*”, and “*like hyenas*” in a five-minute speech. They were also lacking human morality, according to Strelkov, provoking

“a savage orgy of rampant crime, immorality, propaganda...and the most vile vices that can be imagined”. These metaphors are important, for they tell us not what things *are*, but what things *are like* (Ringmar, 2008: 57). They contain within them hidden messages, agendas, and ideologies, explaining what the ideological State “should express not only what it thinks and feels but also what it does *not* feel and does *not* think about,” (Dugin, 1991). This is the very heart of Russia as a katechontic restrainer; Dugin’s work in translating Carl Schmitt⁵¹ helped to spread the concept, adapting it to fit the ideology of the conservative revolution and in doing so, expressing a specifically literary-political (Senderov, 2007) form of thought. Metaphor, as we remember from earlier, also delimits the discursive space. Through the metaphor of katechon, liberals are interpellated outside of the discursive space.

Metaphorical allusions are central to the construction of the map in the Russian political and discursive space. Culture becomes a strategic tool for ideology and the metaphor becomes a central tenet of constructing an alternative hegemony in opposition to US liberal hegemony. The use of metaphor to crystallise a Schmittian friend/enemy distinction is demonstrated through the concept of Katechon. Strelkov’s metaphors are given life through their application within the newly-adapted discourse of Russia as a great power. They are acceptable to the political mainstream based on antimony to US liberal hegemony; one does not, in Novorossiia, indulge in the vile vices of crime, propaganda, and immorality, as presented by Strelkov, nor does one take part in the Americanisation of culture, as does the plutocrat in Belkovsky’s tale. The metaphorical image of the enemy is demonised to such an extreme that only conservative revolution can stop the tide of liberal hegemony. Dugin (2014) shows this in his discussion of the fifth and, now, sixth columns operating within Russia, with reference to Novorossiia joining the Russian Federation:

The overthrow of Putin may lead to a cynical and vile scenario, and pressure comes from both flanks. Liberals, for all of their activity and financial capabilities can do nothing alone - there are too few. They need to bring in patriots from the opposition camp. They represent the ‘Sixth

⁵¹ Schmitt used the notion of Katechon in his work *Nomos of the Earth*.

Column', which insists that Novorossiya is merged (with the Russian Federation). What indignant patriots to come out against the President! The calculation is done. It's a scary scenario, indeed. In order that it (the overthrow) should not take place, we need to sail between Scylla and Charybdis. This is perfectly understood by Igor Strelkov or any true patriot.

The antagonistic frontier has been tropologically constructed. To be between Scylla and Charybdis is to be caught between two equally evil entities or unpleasant options. The metaphor of Novorossiya, as a movement, needing to pass between Scylla - the liberal - and Charybdis - the anti-Putin nationalist - represents a similarly literary-political trend as earlier posited, as well as functioning to de-legitimise any opposition to Putin through dehumanisation. Any opposition to the President is shown to be not simply political, but rather metaphysical enmity. In this way, Dugin's opposition takes the friend/enemy distinction to its very extreme. By radicalising the boundary of the friend/enemy distinction, the metaphor of Russia as katechon interpellates liberals outside of the discursive formation of Russia as a great power. In the same way that Lenin, for Schmitt (2007: 89), "blindly destroyed all traditional bracketing of war in his theory of war. War became absolute war, and the partisan became the bearer of absolute enmity against an absolute enemy," Dugin, Belkovsky and Strelkov crystallise liberals as the absolute enemy, prohibiting them from the Russian political and discursive space through de-humanising metaphors of immorality. Such a prohibition is only possible through a statist political consciousness: liberals can be interpellated outside of the discursive space, but to stop them from sharing your own *real* space, a legal framework needs to be put in place. This is suggested as the reason why conservative revolutionaries try to create a state, the Confederal State of Novorossiya, in the Donetsk and Lugansk oblasts. It is toward the political logics of legality which this thesis takes its final turn.

3.4 The New Russian Nomos

This section will be dedicated to an analysis of another logic which accompanies the construction of Novorossiya, looking specifically at Carl Schmitt's conception of Nomos - that is, "the full immediacy of a legal power not mediated by laws... a constitutive historical event - an act of legitimacy, whereby the legality of a mere law first is made meaningful," (Schmitt, 2003: 73).

The logic of Schmitt's concept can be seen as extra-legal foundation of law which places emphasis on a common sense of orientation amongst a political community, based on order and localisation (Prozorov, 2011: 28). Schmitt's conception of Nomos specifically reasoned that it was *not* law, but rather an *orientation*; he never excluded from his concept the ideas of contestation or resistance in the form of violent imperialism or secessionism (Prozorov, 2011: 29). This falls in line with Uspensky's (2012) understanding of metaphor as an orientation towards a place, as discussed in earlier chapters. What does this mean for real space as an iconic image of the discursive plane (Lotman, 2001: 191) and, simultaneously, what does this mean for the discursive plane as a transformative medium for real space?⁵² For an answer to this question, we must turn to the discourse of Moscow as the Third Rome as a specific example of Novorossiia being oriented towards Russia as a great power in the context of the popular demand for imperial nostalgia laid out above.

To say that it was originally written in a letter from a monk in Pskov to a Grand Duke in 1510 (van den Burcken, 1999), the discourse of Moscow as the Third Rome has experienced remarkable longevity (see also Dvorkin, 1992; Lurje, 1980). Originally, the concept of the Third Rome was related to the understanding of Rome as imprisoned by the Devil and Constantinople⁵³ as fallen alongside the Byzantine Empire and was expressed by the monk, Filofei, as follows:

“I would like to say a few words about the existing Orthodox empire of our most illustrious, exalted ruler. He is the only emperor on all the earth over the Christians, the governor of the holy, divine throne of the holy, ecumenical, apostolic church which in the place of the churches of Rome and Constantinople is in the city of Moscow, protected by God, in the holy and glorious Uspenskij Church of the most pure Mother of God. It alone shines over all the earth more radiantly than the sun. For know well, those who love Christ and those who love God, that all Christian empires will perish and give way to the one kingdom of our ruler, in accord with the

⁵² Lotman (2001: 191) originally argues that the semiosphere transforms the real world of space into its image.

⁵³ The Second Rome

books of the prophet, which is the Russian empire. For two Romes have fallen, but the third stands, and there will never be a fourth,” (quoted in van den Burcken, 1999: 146).

The concept of Moscow as the Third Rome has re-emerged in the nationalist discourses of the conservative revolutionaries, linking messianism with geopolitics to produce a discourse which centres around Imperial Nostalgia. In the first collection of *Strategicheskyy Zhurnal*, with the conspicuous title *Political Orthodoxy*, Boris Mezhuyev argues that the sovereignty of the Russian nation is seen as symbolically rooted in its special religious self-awareness as the Third Rome (Mezhuyev, 2006: 25). The Third Rome metaphor takes place, once again, is intra-discursive of the great power discourse. Remizov (2006: 13) in the same collection argues that the Third Rome “is not an idea of leadership, but an idea of solitude. Russia is a ‘state-world’. Maintaining sovereignty is synonymous here with maintaining the boundaries of the world within which it is meaningful.” Here, the political logic makes directly a direct analogy between Russia’s discursive space and Russia’s sovereignty, effectively tying together discourse and state. This logic is reliant on two ideas from Schmitt’s *nomos*. First, that unity is in fact a political strategy in order to establish a friend/enemy distinction (Schmitt, 2003; Minca & Vaughan-Williams, 2012) and; second, that the border exists as the site where the ‘decision’ is enacted and where power is revealed. The friend or enemy for Schmitt is a strategic choice, based on a rational choice model of conducting public affairs (Schmitt, 2003). Any decision therefore delimits the bounds of existing social unity. The border for Schmitt appears as both a literal and metaphorical ‘line in the sand’ (Minca & Vaughan-Williams, 2012: 759-761). An equally direct analogy between the frontier of discourse and of the state is evident in the ending of Vladislav Surkov’s (2014) short story⁵⁴ on non-linear warfare ‘Without Sky’, published a week before Putin’s sole use of the term Novorossiia:

“We founded the Society and prepared a revolt of the simple, two-dimensionals against the complex and sly, against those who do not answer ‘yes’ or ‘no’, who do not say ‘white’ or ‘black’, who know some third word, many, many third words, empty, deceptive, confusing the

⁵⁴ Published under the alias Natan Dubovitsky.

way, obscuring the truth. In these shadows and spider webs, in these false complexities, hide and multiply all the villainies of the world. They are the House of Satan. That's where they make bombs and money, saying: 'Here's money for the good of the honest; here are bombs for the defense of love.'

We will come tomorrow. We will conquer, or perish. There is no third way."

So when Vladimir Putin announced in his speech to the Duma following the annexation of Crimea that there was "A fifth column... A disparate bunch of national traitors with which the West now appears to be threatening Russia" (Putin, 2014a), he re-articulated the border, interpellating liberals to the outside. Metaphorically, he posited the Schmittian concept in the sense that there is some sort of pre-existing, fundamental right to the land held by the Russian people. Simultaneously, he metaphorically prohibited liberals from both great power discourse and the state. Within discourse, this led to an important juncture: between the discourse of the conservative revolution and the discourse of Russia as a great power *in the political mainstream*. This juncture, conjoined with the other events of March 2014 - the annexation of Crimea and Putin's use of the term Novorossiia - led to the conservative revolution in Russian politics achieving its first real-world referent in terms of foreign policy: the coming-together of territory and population in a spatial metaphor of Russia as a great power – Novorossiia.

An extra-legal foundation of law is a foundational point of departure for the conservative revolution. The focus lies in what conservative revolutionaries frequently term 'social justice' (RusVesna, 2015; 2015a; 2015b; Dugin, 2014). The conception of a socially just land (Novorossiia) is based on what Laclau calls "a negativity inherent to the equivalential link" (Laclau, 2007: 96). Both katechon and nomos exist as negative relations in the equivalential chaining of nationalist narratives into their popular demands; political orthodoxy and imperial nostalgia. Through Novorossiia, the metaphor for great power and the conservative revolution, they seek to create what I will call an 'alternative justice'⁵⁵. If we accept that justice necessarily

⁵⁵ This is linked to earlier points about creating an alternative hegemony.

designates what is, rather than what should be – or as Badiou (2005: 99) puts it, that “we are either in justice, or we are not” - then we end up in a situation in which those who seek justice revolt⁵⁶ and political statements spring up absent of any statist prerogative (Badiou, 2005: 99-101). Therefore, we can say that the statist order which is constructed through Novorossiia is absent of any egalitarian maxim: instead of seeking to revolt because they are not 'in' justice, they simply seek to create an 'alternative justice' – that is, they prescribe a situation whereby there *ought* to be justice on the basis that there *is* no justice currently. It is precisely here that the concept of Moscow as the Third Rome is adopted, adapted, and employed by conservative revolutionaries in Novorossiia:

“Russia is the Third Rome. Russia is the only un-enslaved civilisation which is capable of being Christian. Therefore our patriotism is not chauvinistic – it is not the call of blood, not without the critical emotional attachment to our places of origin – it is primarily an understanding of the importance of the unique Christian mission with which our narod lives” (Vsevolod Chaplin, quoted in RusVesna, 2015).

Notice how Moscow has changed to Russia. Novorossiia is referred to as the 'Vision of the Future' (Dugin, 2014), but again we must ask the question of Dugin – to what does this future refer? The Russian Federation, the Eurasian Empire, or Novorossiia? Does Russia as the Third Rome relate directly to Novorossiia? We can now suggest an answer to Dugin’s ambiguity: the vision of the future refers to all three; the Russian Federation, the Eurasian Empire, and Novorossiia. This is because the discursive space, through the conservative revolution’s move towards the centre, privileges the discourse of Russia as a great power above others. The contiguous link between great power and the conservative revolution means that ‘Russia as a great power’ has become the part which embodies the whole totality, and in this way, has become an empty signifier. If we remember that the trope acts as a discursive nodal point (Torfing, 1999; Laclau, 2007) then we can reach the key finding of this thesis. Novorossiia

⁵⁶ Remembering Ranciere’s term, we could say that those who seek justice seek a rupture with arkhé.

should be seen as a multimodal metaphor of Russia as a great power and the conservative revolution.

3.5 Novorossiia as metaphor

If we take Novorossiia as a discursive nodal point around which an alternative hegemony and alternative justice can crystallise, one can make the statement 'Novorossiia, this is Russia as a great power'⁵⁷. Such a statement is impossible to invert. Whilst Novorossiia exists as an example of Russia as a great power, this discourse is not signified solely by the existence of Novorossiia. So we can say that there is something greater at play here. Novorossiia plays the role of a signifier around which the conservative revolutionary conception of Russia as a great power crystallises. Novorossiia is, then, a multimodal metaphor: it acts as a metaphor for the conservative revolution *and*, simultaneously, Russia as a great power. The separatist struggle for the Donetsk and Lugansk oblasts can be seen in this way: because they do not exist legally as a part of the Russian Federation, Dugin's use of *nomos* as a means of legitimating the armed occupation of the area shows that Novorossiia can *only* be constructed as a metaphor in the Russian political and discursive space, ie. it cannot be constructed literally. Moreover, it does not quite fit the description of a pure signifier in Laclau's sense: "The unity of the equivalential ensemble, of the irreducibly new collective will in which particular equivalences crystallise, depends entirely on the social productivity of a name. That productivity derives exclusively from the operation of the name as a pure signifier – that is to say, not expressing any conceptual unity that precedes it," (Laclau, 2007: 108). By taking on a preceding conceptual unity (the conservative revolution) Novorossiia exists not as a pure signifier, but as a metaphor. It is not the case that any demand existing as heterogeneous to the existing symbolic framework is 'irresistibly attracted' to Novorossiia: Navalny's opposition block is fervently anti-war and anti-Crimean annexation and there even exist some nationalists fighting against Novorossiia (IGCP, 2014). Novorossiia, as a name, "retroactively supports the identity of the object" (Zizek, 1989: 95-7): Dugin's 'Vision of the Future', the conservative revolutionary vision for Russia³, is retroactively supported by the name 'New' Russia. Here, one has to be careful not to fall back

⁵⁷ Note that the connotation of great power has changed to interpellate liberals to the outside.

into the descriptivist conception of the name: in positing Novorossiya as inheriting the conservative revolutionary political model, this thesis posits neither that the name has a content given by its descriptive features (as in Bertrand Russell's account), nor that it can be described in relation to a singular description. Rather, it posits that there is a plurality of descriptive forms which can be attached to Novorossiya and that this is precisely what the chaining of metaphors shows.

Here, we can return to our original research question: *In light of articulations of Russia's great power identity, of what is Novorossiya an instance?* We can answer that it should be seen as a multimodal metaphor for both the conservative revolution in Russia and Russia as a great power. We can also say that it has appeared within a metonymic process of bringing the conservative revolution into the political mainstream. It is constructed as an alternative hegemonic class to liberal hegemony, which is posited by conservative revolutionaries as to blame for the unfulfilled demand of Russia's great powerness. We can say that the logics of equivalence are used in order to shrink down the multifarious nationalist demands into popular demands in an attempt to achieve the goal of Russia's great powerness. This is an example of metonymy – the shrinking of various demands into two key aspects of the great powerness demand: Political Orthodoxy and Imperial Nostalgia. This empirical section has unpacked these two sides of the coin, with a view to answering the second subsidiary research question: 'how are the political logics of conservative revolutionary ideology strategically inflected in Novorossiya?' It has gone further still, looking at how the concepts of katechon and nomos are used to legitimate the popular demands of the conservative revolutionaries. A visual summary of the key empirical finding of this thesis follows below:



Figure 8: the perception of partially internalised liberalism

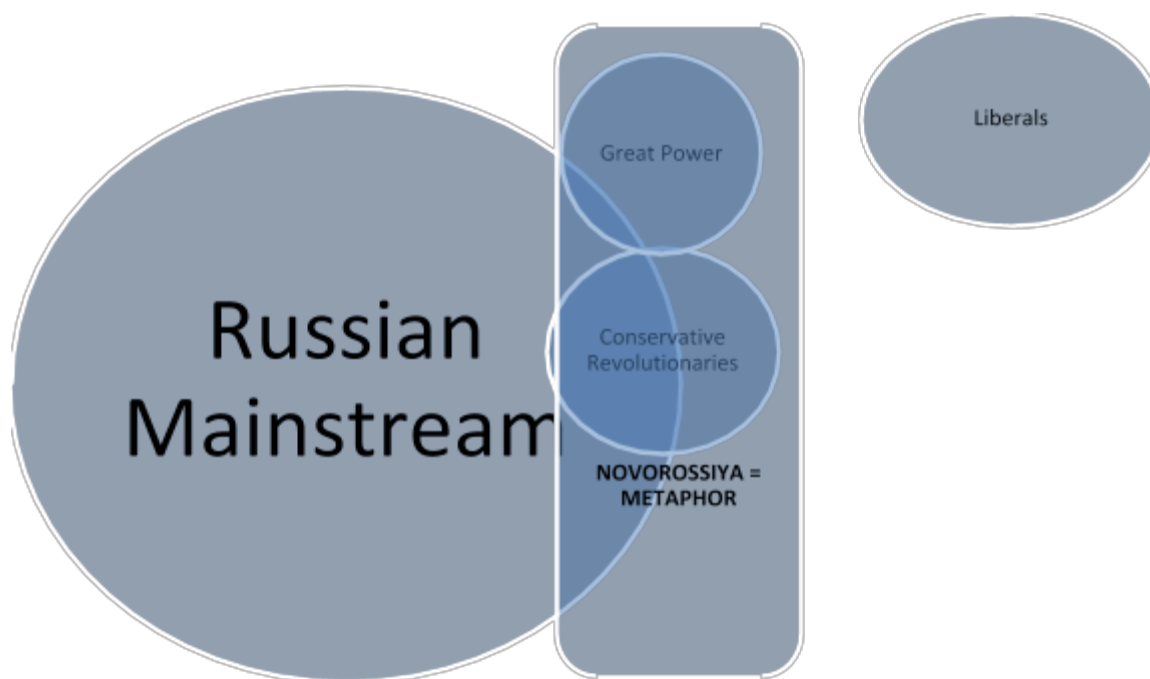


Figure 9: Novorossiia as a metaphor for great power/conservative revolutionaries

The conservative revolutionaries see themselves not just as the only social agents taking up the fight for Russia as a great power, but as the only social agents with the legitimacy to do so. The political logics employed are what Laclau (2007) termed “the three relations of the name”. First of all, despite the

differential particularism of the initial struggles of various nationalist groups, a homogeneity is created between them through the creation of the conservative revolutionary idea. Secondly, conservative revolutionaries change in the process of this metonymy: by shrinking down their demands around key nodal points (political orthodoxy and imperial nostalgia as subsets of Novorossiia) they change both the nature of the demand (Russia's great powerness) and of the group itself. Thirdly, Novorossiia becomes the name of a concrete social agent with a unified collective will. This will is determined according to the popular demand of Russia as a great power and the conservative revolutionary move towards the political mainstream. Metaphors tend to have a centripetal force – that is, they move away from the discursive centre. Where the metonymic chaining of conservative revolutionary discourse with the discourse of Russia as a great power was centrifugal – moving towards the core – Novorossiia could not be literally constructed within the Russian state. It's position as a metaphorical construction therefore explains the sole appearance of it at the very highest echelons of power. The move from metonymy to metaphor is exemplified by the very names 'great power' and 'Novorossiia'.

4 Conclusions

This thesis has placed Novorossiia within the Russian political and discursive space. Novorossiia as a concrete social agent, a Stalinist state, should be seen as a metaphor of the first and second relations of the naming process. Through its construction in discourse, it exists as a metaphor of the homogeneous narrative created through the equivalential relation between the 'conservative revolutionary' and 'Russia as a great power'. It exists simultaneously as a metaphor of the change in the nature of the conservative revolution: from a peripheral discourse to a nodal point in the creation of a hegemonic class. This class then, courtesy of the real-life referent for their conception of Russia as a great power (Novorossiia), uses the name as analogous for 'Russian great power through a conservative lens' to attempt a move towards the political mainstream.

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