

Snow White and the Enchanted Palace: A Reading of Lenin's Architectural Cult

IN 1965 THE ARCHITECT KONSTANTIN Mel'nikov wrote a short memoir of his work on the Lenin Mausoleum, revealing a folkloric source for his 1924 design of the original sarcophagus. Mel'nikov describes his pyramidal glass construction as "a crystal with a radiant play of interior ambient light, suggesting the fairy tale of the sleeping princess."¹ The reference conflates two literary folk tales: Vasily Zhukovsky's "Tale of the Sleeping Princess," a reworking of Charles Perrault's "Sleeping Beauty," and Alexander Pushkin's "Tale of the Dead Princess and the Seven Heroes," based on the Grimm brothers' "Snow White." Mel'nikov likens the embalmed V. I. Lenin to Zhukovsky's sleeping princess, but his crystal coffin more directly refers to Pushkin's dead one. Pushkin also likens death to sleep in his tale. Before being placed in the coffin, the princess "lay so fresh, so quiet, / As if under the wing of sleep, / That she seemed only just not to breathe," and in the end she rises from the coffin with the cry: "Oh, how long I slept!"² Applied to Lenin, this image is remarkably potent. Not only does Mel'nikov suggest the dead leader might be resurrected; he feminizes him as the bride of some future hero. Who will come to smash the coffin, awaken the princess, and live happily ever after?

The designs, discourse, and practices surrounding the architectural cult of Lenin are replete with such semantically fraught figures, many of which I will discuss in this essay. Such multivalence requires an approach sufficiently flexible and open-ended to identify both coherence and ambiguity. I do not ask what these images' intention or hidden structure was, but what conceptual potentials were invested in them and in what directions these potentials might be unwound.

ABSTRACT This essay offers a chronotopic reading of V. I. Lenin's architectural cult and its relation to Soviet sovereignty in the postrevolutionary period, as reflected in the discourse and plans surrounding the Lenin Mausoleum and the Palace of Soviets in Moscow. Central contexts include Andrei Platonov's novella *The Foundation Pit* and Russian versions of the "Snow White" tale. **REPRESENTATIONS** 129. Winter 2015 © The Regents of the University of California. ISSN 0734-6018, electronic ISSN 1533-855X, pages 86–115. All rights reserved. Direct requests for permission to photocopy or reproduce article content to the University of California Press at <http://www.ucpressjournals.com/reprintinfo.asp>. DOI: 10.1525/rep.2015.129.4.86.

The Suspended Auto-Icon

The folkloric interpretation of the Lenin Mausoleum is not as unusual as it might seem. Lenin's death was a foundational moment in the production of Soviet folklore, which was collected on a mass scale up to the end of the Stalinist period (or, more typically, invented and merely attributed to peasant storytellers). The infusion of folklore's "national form" with "socialist content" demonstrated the peasant masses' ongoing progress toward political consciousness. One of the most popular folk genres was the lamentation, sung for some fallen Soviet luminary, and a number of these were published in 1924 to honor Lenin. Several fairy tales also appeared. In one, "Cunning Lenin," the leader fakes his death to see if the party is capable of running the country without him. A doctor puts him in spacious room instead of a grave and covers him in glass, so no one will "poke him." Lenin then secretly rises at night and travels incognito around the Soviet Union until he is convinced that everything is fine. In the end he returns to the "marzoleum" (as the storyteller pronounces it) and lies down to sleep in peace. But he will wake again soon, the tale assures us, and "what a joy it will be! You won't be able to describe it, either in words or ink."³ Apparently there were indeed rumors going around the countryside that Lenin was still secretly watching over the young Soviet land.⁴ Publications like "Cunning Lenin" and the memory of Pushkin's "Dead Princess" would have served only to encourage fantastical readings of the mausoleum and its crystal coffin.

Mel'nikov's own reference to the "Dead Princess" tale derives from its image of suspended temporality. Pushkin's heroes are incapable of parting with their beloved princess, so they suspend her in the coffin—literally hanging it from chains attached to pillars. The original justification for embalming Lenin follows a similar logic. After a three-day vigil, the body is placed in a crypt on Red Square to accommodate requests from those who cannot make it to Moscow in time for the funeral. The mausoleum's head embalmer, Boris Zbarsky, explained the problem in 1944: "The moment was approaching when access to Lenin's body would end. A huge quantity of telegrams were coming in every minute from numerous delegations of Soviet and foreign workers, who were still on their way. In all these missives, there was a single request: postpone the funeral, wait to consign Vladimir Ilyich's body to the earth."⁵ Behind this explanation lay a general feeling that workers needed more time to come to terms with their loss. Stalin apparently used this argument at a meeting of politburo members in autumn of 1923, during Lenin's illness: "Some comrades think that modern science could, through embalming, preserve the body of the departed for a long time, or at least long enough to allow our consciousness to get used to the idea that Lenin really is no longer with us."⁶

The ritual of visiting the mausoleum preserves this tension between haste and delay. Halting one's movement through the tomb is forbidden, as if we are still rushing to view the body, still postponing burial. Mourners file past in an uninterrupted stream, so everyone gets their moment with the deceased. Amid such temporal pressures, the embalming techniques forcibly suspend the action of time upon the body, indeed repeatedly so, as it must be treated regularly to maintain a "fresh" appearance. Although these treatments include a wide variety of manipulations and, indeed, permanent changes to the body, their principal goal is to keep Lenin perched at the threshold of putrescence.⁷

More precisely, one can say that Lenin and Snow White are both stranded between two frontiers: natural death (the beginning of the mourning ritual and decomposition) and symbolic afterlife (once mourning and decomposition are complete, and the spirit separates from the body).⁸ Instead of traversing this zone of putrescence and mourning, Lenin and Snow White hover between sleep and death in their crystal coffins, waiting for their bodies to decay or for a miracle to raise them back to life. Norman Girardot interestingly links this suspension in "Snow White" to female initiation rites. The source of the young girl's conflict with her stepmother is sexual precociousness, demanding exclusion from the community and a series of ordeals. Snow White's death and rebirth symbolize the passage through puberty, and the stepmother (now as the crone) is the one charged with her education: "She is a witch, yet at the same time she is something like the old women of primitive tradition . . . who must torture and 'kill' the young initiate if she is successfully to cross the threshold to adult life."⁹ A similar metaphorical potential can be found in the mausoleum. To bury and mourn Lenin as truly dead would interfere with the Soviet Union's own revolutionary precociousness—Lenin's voluntaristic seizure of power for the proletariat before a phase of bourgeois revolution has properly "educated" them for this role. Lenin's suspension in the mausoleum marks the period of ordeals that must be endured before the workers can usher in the new age.

At the same time, "Snow White" also warns against such precociousness. As Bruno Bettelheim writes: "Her eating of the apple was premature; she had overreached herself. Experiencing sexuality too soon, the story warns, can lead to nothing good. But when it is followed by a prolonged period of inertia, then the girl can recuperate fully from her premature and hence destructive experiences with sexuality."¹⁰ Yet only the prince reveals this period to have been one of recuperation. Before the happy end we fear the worst: Snow White has succumbed to temptation, and death is her punishment. Eating the apple too soon, she transgressed against the "natural" order of things. Transgression is often associated with the suspended corpse

motif. If a funerary vigil marks the zone between natural death and symbolic afterlife, exceptional circumstances can disrupt this process. Aleksandr M. Panchenko, for example, associates Lenin's embalming with the Russian folkloric figure of the *zalozhnyi pokoinik*—a corpse that must have stones “piled” upon it (*zalozhit' kamniami*) or, perhaps, one that is put “in pledge,” as if held hostage to some unpaid debt (*zalog pod ssudu*). After an unclear or unexpected death, a body cannot be properly mourned, and it often will not decompose.¹¹ The rites of symbolic recuperation cannot be performed because natural death has not yet fully occurred. The deceased was not ready to die, did not make his peace with God, and thus the corpse remains in limbo, as if still partially alive.

There are other cases where disruption fully inverts the mourning process. Here one may recall Jacques Lacan's discussion of Antigone in *The Ethics of Psychoanalysis* as positioned “between two deaths”—banished from the city in a symbolic death that leaves her still physically alive.¹² Giorgio Agamben presents a range of similarly undead bandits and wolf-men in his *Homo Sacer*, and in two related cases he focuses on how representations—statues or wax effigies of the corpse—can be used to remedy the inversion. The first is the Roman *devotus*, a man “consecrated” to the gods of the underworld before battle. After this symbolic death the warrior is not supposed to survive, and if he does, a second rite must be performed, burying a colossus—a statuary double—to reestablish correct relations between the living and the dead.¹³ Agamben compares this ritual to the burning of effigies of dead sovereigns in ancient Rome and medieval France. Revising the doctrine of the two-bodied king (as famously analyzed by Ernst Kantorowicz), Agamben writes: “The death of the emperor . . . frees a supplement of sacred life that, as in the case of the man who has survived consecration, must be neutralized by means of a colossus. Thus it is as if the emperor had in himself not two bodies but rather two lives inside one single body: a natural life and a sacred life.”¹⁴ In both cases, “sacred” life emerges through the inversion of natural and symbolic orders. Suspended between life and death, existing fully neither in nature nor in the symbolic, the *devotus* is a terror to behold in battle. But to return to the city of men the inversion must be put right, depositing this uncanny, alien life in the colossus. The emperor's sovereign life similarly exists beyond the threshold of symbolic death as the sublime, immortal body of power. But his other life is natural, and when this part dies there is no second frontier of symbolic recuperation available, since it has in effect already been crossed. And so, again, an effigy is used to set things right.¹⁵

Succession rituals are directly related to this peculiar character of a sovereign's life, and succession crises are no doubt always a danger when sovereignty is perpetuated in this way. Coming so soon after the radical extermination of

the tsar and his family, Lenin's illness and death must have been particularly awkward in this regard. What role did the mausoleum play in this crisis? Is Lenin's suspended corpse also a kind of effigy or colossus? Boris Groys reads the mausoleum as "a synthesis between a pyramid and a museum," simultaneously mimicking the pharaonic practice of sealing up a sacred, imperishable corpse within a spectacular edifice and violating that practice by displaying the body like an artwork—a kind of corporeal readymade.¹⁶ In this sense, the body does resemble an effigy. In their crystal coffins, Lenin and Snow White both become "auto-icons"—representational doubles crafted through peculiar techniques (embalming, encasing in glass and light, suspension in the air, positioning in a tomb just beyond the wall of the citadel).¹⁷

Groys goes on to interpret the mausoleum specifically in terms of sovereign succession. The displayed body confirms that Lenin has in fact traversed fully through natural death into symbolic afterlife: "Lenin's body is venerated and displayed as evidence of the fact that he has forever departed from the world, as a testimony that he has abandoned this embodiment of his without a trace and that therefore his spirit or 'cause' is available for incarnation in subsequent Soviet leaders."¹⁸ While this reading would seem to contradict Mel'nikov's hint at the possibility of resurrection, it nevertheless depends on a similar logic. As Nina Tumarkin has noted, it was common to think of Lenin in terms that recalled the duality of Christ or the two-bodied king. In 1924, the influential journalist Lev Sosnovsky even gave separate names for these two halves of the departed leader: "Lenin" (the immortal name for the revolutionary struggle with capitalism) and "Ilyich" (the beloved man who incarnated that struggle).¹⁹ If the death of Ilyich marks the completion of natural death, and the survival of Lenin (and the party) marks the achievement of symbolic immortality, the mausoleum then occupies a mediating role quite similar to Agamben's colossi, facilitating the transmission of sovereignty. With one important difference, of course. In Agamben's examples the colossus is only a temporary measure. Once the rituals have been performed the effigy is hidden or destroyed. Indeed, its destruction (through burning or burial) is often a central part of the rite. Such artworks are not made for permanent display.²⁰

Several different interpretations are thus available here, all of which revolve around the zone between natural and symbolic death. First, the mausoleum preserves the haste and uncertainty that accompanied Lenin's funeral. Embalming indefinitely extends the mourning process, ideally allowing all who love Ilyich to come and pay their last respects—throughout the generations if necessary. At the same time, the corpse's suspension suggests the possibility of a final release. It is this perspective that most closely parallels the fairy-tale context introduced by Mel'nikov. Lenin lies indefinitely in state because of his transgression against the natural order of history, and he will

remain so until the “prince” (the mature proletariat) comes to redeem him and herald the new epoch of liberated mankind. Alternatively, one may emphasize the character of the body as a representation—the auto-icon—that resembles Agamben’s colossi. Here the mausoleum mediates between Lenin’s two bodies—his symbolic life, marked imposingly by the simple marker “LENIN” on the building’s edifice, and his natural life, commemorated through the most faithful representation possible, the body itself. When Stalin stands atop the mausoleum to receive the parades on May Day and the anniversaries of October, he confirms the succession of power. Between natural and symbolic life hovers the sacred life of sovereignty—still active, still leading the people.

Yet the body’s function as a colossus or effigy also cuts two ways. First, there is Groy’s remark about how the mausoleum both hides and displays the body. If it is a hidden effigy, then it has already served its purpose in the transmission of sovereignty, binding the uncanny life of power. But if it is still on display, the interregnum is not yet complete. Second, there is the peculiar quality of the body as an artwork. In his interviews with Lenin’s contemporary embalmers, Alexei Yurchak notes how they describe the body as an “anatomical image” or, even, a “living sculpture.”²¹ Gradually replacing all organic content with specially designed substances that preserve its form—skin tone, mobility of the joints, tissue density and flexibility, and so on—the embalming process does indeed render the body a kind of dynamic, ever-evolving sculpture. Yet the suspended corpse inverts the prototypical image of a living statue (like the Commendatore in *Don Giovanni*). Snow White is neither living nor dead, but rather caught in between these states—“only just not breathing.” By contrast, the living statue is *both* living *and* dead, moving through time and space with a body designed for fixity and permanence. The embalmers’ characterization of the body as a living sculpture fuses these two images (emphasizing the labor involved in keeping the body from decay). What matters to the embalmers is not the static miracle on display in the mausoleum, but the dynamic process of the body’s transformation into pure, artificial form—a process that is otherwise hidden from the mausoleum’s everyday visitors.

Yurchak’s informants take an optimistic attitude to this process, clearly proud of their work. Some even claim the body has improved in the ninety years since Lenin’s death. But behind the proud preservation of Lenin’s form, there remains the question of its original content, which the embalmers clearly value, since they work in the smallest increments, replacing organic tissue only when absolutely necessary. The body’s temporality is thus also split by a peculiar ambivalence. On the one hand, it evolves through a potentially endless process—as the embalmers hone their techniques and develop new substances to mimic the anatomical properties of

the body. On the other hand, the body's transformation into a sculpture is also a kind of countdown. For there will come a time when not a single cell of Lenin's original body remains. The sculpture is thus "alive" in two separate ways—first, through the ongoing care afforded it by the embalmers (the real source of vitality) and, second, through the temporally limited emergence of the sculpture.

Stalin occupies a similarly ambivalent position when viewing the parades. If his power is fully established and the succession is complete, he effectively inverts the body's sacred life to embody the plenitude of the living statue—invested with the symbolic permanence of LENIN and characterized by the slogan, "Stalin is Lenin today." From this perspective, the revolution has effectively run its course, and the body begins to resemble a kind of hidden trauma, forever dependent on the labor of the embalmers. Unlike most mediators of succession, the mausoleum stands in perpetuity as a reminder that Soviet sovereignty requires the supplement of a being that is neither alive nor dead, mortal or immortal—the beloved Ilyich alone in his red room. However, Stalin might also bear a sacred life that is the same as Lenin's, meaning that he too is only a temporary vessel, and the revolution's (constituent) power has still yet to be properly bound. In this case Stalin also marks the uncanny core of Soviet sovereignty—waiting to "wither away" (*otmirat'*) with the advent of Communism and self-governance by the people. The patient labor of the embalmers allows as much time as possible for this anticipatory phase of the revolution, but time is finite nonetheless. If we do not reach Communism before Lenin is reduced to pure form, all will be lost.

These different interpretations can be grouped into two distinct chronotopic attitudes, which can be respectively characterized as *monumentalist* and *eschatological*. According to the monumentalist interpretation, Lenin's body cannot be burned or buried, since all Communists must first pay their last respects, ensuring the authenticity of their subsequent efforts to further his cause and guarantee his symbolic afterlife. The auto-icon then marks the traumatic core of Soviet power, a supplement to the true colossus of Stalin and the party. The goal is not to eliminate the uncanny zone of sacred life between Lenin's two bodies but to preserve and domesticate it. First we lay Lenin's natural body to rest, and then we guarantee his survival in the symbolic. By contrast, in the eschatological interpretation, Lenin's body lies suspended because of voluntarist transgression; only the revolution's completion will allow this punishment to end, resurrecting the leader in an immortal body fit for the new age. To repair this inversion requires a patient period of inertia until a new, more perfect body—which no longer suffers the gap between nature and the symbolic—can be found. From this perspective Stalin is also a mere supplement, suspended alongside the auto-icon in anticipation

of the true colossus of popular self-governance. But this great day will come only once all have consecrated themselves to the cause.

The decision to embalm Stalin and place him alongside Lenin in 1953, followed by his removal eight years later, reflects the ambivalence of these two readings. If the party leadership is still waiting to wither away, then all leaders should be subject to Lenin's fate—stacked up in the mausoleum until the revolution is complete and the workers become sovereign. But if the revolution has already run its course, it is enough to preserve the first victim of its precociousness as a reminder that the secret of sovereignty has not yet been unraveled. Soviet power rests upon a traumatic body of sacred life—which can be taken either as tragedy or farce—while history's locomotive steams ahead somewhere else.²²

The Enchanted Palace

Several scholars have noted the proximity in time between completion of the permanent, granite mausoleum in October 1930 and the announcement of the design competition for the Palace of Soviets in February 1931.²³ Eventually, when the design for the palace was confirmed in 1933, the two structures became the twin foci of Lenin's architectural cult, even if the palace itself was never actually built. On Red Square the leader's body now lay permanently in state, while on the other side of the Kremlin, at the former site of the Church of Christ the Savior (demolished in 1931 in preparation for the project), a hundred-meter statue of the leader was planned to top the oneiric skyscraper (figs. 1 and 2).

The design for the palace evolved from predominantly modern proposals in the 1931 stage of the competition toward increasingly citational, eclectic designs in the final 1933 stage. The winning design—by Boris Iofan, who moved without compunction between modern and eclectic styles in his practice—was then reworked into a much taller structure topped with the giant statue. This stylistic shift has traditionally been taken as a quintessential example of avant-garde iconoclasm's final defeat by the stately monumentality that dominated the Stalin era.²⁴ However, the idea for a double monument to Lenin had been in the air since 1924, and few artists and officials adopted an explicitly iconoclastic posture in these early discussions. Soon after Lenin's death, the old Bolshevik Leonid Krasin published an article in *Izvestiia* calling for a permanent mausoleum: "The structure should be planned and executed to last for centuries, for an entire eternity." Krasin also considers whether the mausoleum should be a monument, arguing that any tall structure will appear alien amid the existing ensemble of Red Square. Instead Krasin recommends building a fantastic Lenin Palace in the hills

FIGURE 1. The Lenin Mausoleum, in A. N. Kotyrev, *Mavzolei V. I. Lenina: Proektirovanie i stroitel'stvo* (Moscow, 1971), 146.



FIGURE 2. The Palace of Soviets, drawing by V. Shchuko and V. Gel'freikh in *Naum Gabo and the Competition for the Palace of Soviets, Moscow, 1931–1933* (Berlin, 1993), 176. Schusev State Museum of Architecture, Moscow.



around Moscow, including a museum and educational facilities for Soviet youth (reading rooms, libraries, concert halls, athletic fields, and so on).²⁵

Krasin felt this palace in the hills should recall an ancient Greek gymnasium—a nod to neoclassicism that fit well with his conservative attitude toward Red Square. This detail is telling, since it reveals how the dominant concern in the early discussion of Lenin's architectural commemoration was not so much iconoclasm. Rather, it was the resistance of any hint of deathly stasis. Thus the guiding principles of Krasin's palace were clearly youth and dynamism. Lenin's wife, Nadezhda Krupskaya—who was reportedly against the idea of embalming—argued that the best way to honor the leader's memory was through improved educational facilities and communications technology. Indeed, many architects felt stasis was best overcome

through technological sublimity. Proposed additions to the new mausoleum included a tower rising higher than Eiffel's, a podium with a "radiotelephone" that would play Lenin's speeches at demonstrations, and a giant statue of Lenin bathed in red light. The leading constructivist, Vladimir Tatlin, argued that the tomb should be big enough to allow huge numbers of people inside, including an auditorium as well as an information office with a powerful radio transmitter. When Krasin and Enlightenment Minister Anatoly Lunacharsky (also an aficionado of neoclassicism) drafted the competition for the new mausoleum in 1925, the idea of communication had decidedly taken hold, and a podium for orators was now included among the specific requirements for the tomb.²⁶ Grandiose plans were also still popular. A nonprofessional entry by one L. Kogan proposed a mausoleum in the form of a giant statue of Lenin, where "besides the tomb, inside this figure there [would] be spaces for the highest state and public offices."²⁷

Ultimately, however, the prevailing discourse stuck to Krasin's original proposal to keep the mausoleum modest, while more ambitious plans could be executed elsewhere. Two high-profile secondary competitions are worth noting for their relevance to the Palace of Soviets: a plan for a monument to Lenin in Odessa, which would also serve as a mausoleum for victims of the revolution, and one on the Neva River in Leningrad. Much like the Palace of Soviets in the 1930s, the monumental tomb in Odessa was specifically designed as a focal point for the convergence of demonstrations (fig. 3). For the Leningrad competition, the architect Vladimir Shchuko and his former student Vladimir Gel'freikh designed a giant statue of the leader that closely resembles the dramatic images they would later produce when selected to assist Iofan in developing the final design for the palace (fig. 4).²⁸ Shchuko was an academically trained architect with a penchant for neoclassicism, but in the 1920s he experimented with more modern gestures, particularly spiral forms, which can be traced back to Tatlin's famous *Monument to the Third International*. Like Iofan, Shchuko could swing effortlessly from eclectic monumentalism (for example, the Lenin Library in Moscow [1927–29]) to constructivism (the Opera Theater in Rostov-on-Don [1930–35]). However, as Sona Hoisington notes, the most important aspect of his background for the Palace of Soviets was his talent for illusion, developed while working as a set designer associated with the neoromantic *World of Art* group in the 1910s.²⁹

The most grandiose project of all belonged to a member of the rationalist and geometrist ASNOVA (Association of New Architects) brigade, Viktor Balikhin. In March 1924 Balikhin wrote an article, "Proletarians of All Countries Will Be Its Builders: The Monument to Lenin," and submitted it to *Pravda*. In sweeping, impassioned terms, he calls for the demolition of



FIGURE 3. Design for Lenin Monument in Odessa, Ia. O. Rubanchik, 1925,. in Kotyrev, *Mavzolei*, 112.

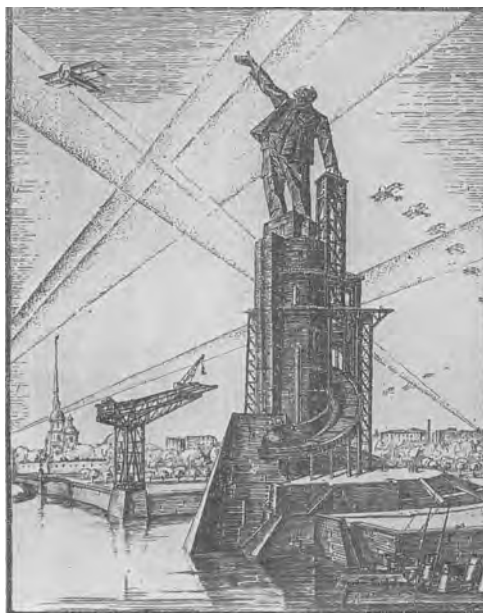


FIGURE 4. Design for Lenin Monument in Leningrad, V. Shchuko and V. Gel'freikh, 1925, in T. A. Slavina, *Vladimir Shchuko* (Leningrad, 1978), 103.

the Church of Christ the Savior and the construction of a giant structure—the form of which remains unstated—housing government offices, international congresses, and a Lenin Institute. Balikhin also considers the building's relationship to the mausoleum, proposing that the two structures should be

connected by a new “Lenin Prospekt,” upon which demonstrators will form a “living link” between them.³⁰ As Balikhin concludes:

There, on one side of the Kremlin, rests the body [*telo*] of the magnificent leader of all the proletariat; on the other side his cause [*delo*] lives and widens and spreads through millions of pupils to all corners of the globe, where proletarians of all nations are languishing under the oppression of capital. Millions of them will rush there to bow to the tomb of the leader and teacher and to arm themselves with the most reliable weapon of all—Leninism.³¹

Although *Pravda* rejected Balikhin’s article, his idea directly predicted the official line that took hold after 1933.

Balikhin’s division of Lenin’s architectural commemoration into “body” and “cause” (*telo* and *delo*) once again refers to the zone between natural death and symbolic afterlife. While the mausoleum grapples with the loss of Lenin’s biological life, suspending it in the auto-icon, another structure rises to supplement this work, confirming the immortality of his spirit—the great cause of Leninism. Many officials clearly saw this second half of the commemorative effort as wide ranging, involving the erection of various monuments and institutions in Lenin’s honor across the country. Most understood their task as providing Lenin with a metaphorical afterlife in the collective—Krasin’s gymnasium, Tatlin’s radio transmitters, Balikhin’s stream of pupils pouring down Lenin Prospekt. However, something in this discourse was also pushing for a single structure, a perfect counterpart to the mausoleum, and this is what the Palace of Soviets eventually became. The decision—apparently Stalin’s own—to crown the tower with a statue of Lenin (one quarter of the building’s total height in the final design) meant that Lenin’s cause would be even more closely linked to his body, as it took on a new form in the sublime building, overcoming the suspension of the mausoleum to rise again.³² But the monumental grandeur of the palace did not entail a new acceptance of stasis. The statue would also be dynamic; it too could “live,” infused with the vital energies of the collective. Such dynamism might be drawn from the productive activity around it, as in Shchuko and Gel’freikh’s painting of the Leningrad monument, or from government offices within it, as in Kogan’s fantastic mausoleum proposal.

It is notable that so many diverse and competing architectural styles in the 1920s (not to mention the ideological positions behind them) contributed to the final configuration of Lenin’s architectural cult in the 1930s. Conceived as a kind of anthropomorphic super-building, most of the forms of symbolic life described earlier would eventually be incorporated into the design for the Palace of Soviets. Like many of the fantastic designs of the early Soviet period, the palace would at once be an eternal monument to the ideals of socialism, a vibrant meeting place for workers and their deputies,

and a showcase for the most technologically advanced forms of propaganda. Though rejected in 1924, Balikhin's vision of mass demonstrations flowing along a new Lenin Prospekt between mausoleum and monument returned as part of the final design for the palace. Although Iofan was nominally the head architect of the palace's construction council, Shchuko and Gel'friekh were added to the team in 1933, and—as mentioned earlier—Hoisington argues that it was their dynamic, illusionist images of the building that determined its design as much as anything else.³³ Even Kogan's idea of gathering huge numbers of people within the statue found its place. Balikhin and ASNOVA offered their own version of this idea in their 1931 submission for the first palace design competition, proposing a hundred-square-meter cube featuring a bas-relief of Lenin coextensive with the entire building (fig. 5). In 1933, when Iofan's original design was telescoped into a much taller tower, and the colossal statue of Lenin was added on top, the building beneath was explicitly characterized as the statue's pedestal (fig. 6).³⁴ The great assembly halls of the palace would thus be located, if not inside the actual body of the monument, then at least inside its structural support.

With these historical and discursive links between the mausoleum and the palace established, let us consider their chronotopic relationship more closely. The mausoleum begins as a temporary, wooden structure, which then “petrifies” into a permanent granite version of the same building, when no alternative design can be found. The palace also exists in two temporal hypostases: the real building under construction and the sublime

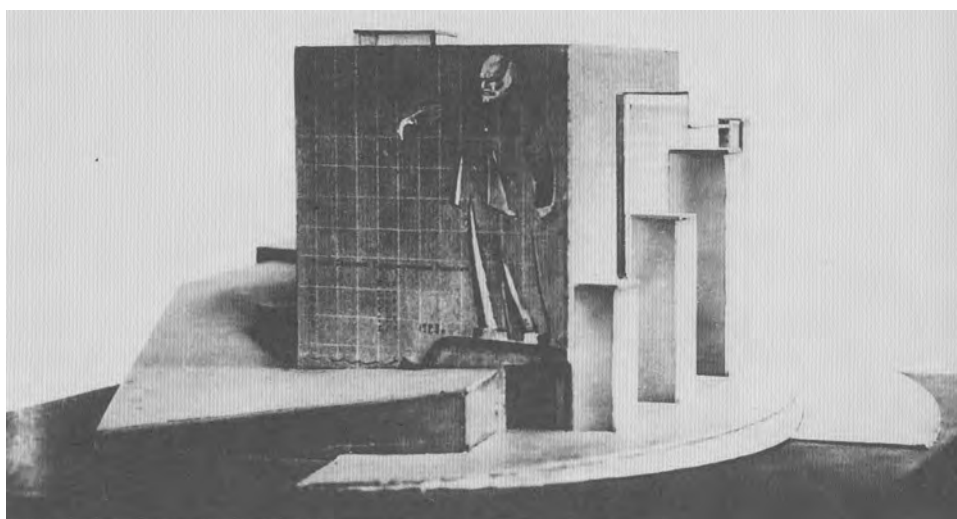


FIGURE 5. Design for the Palace of Soviets, ASNOVA brigade, 1931, in S. O. Khan-Magomedov, *Viktor Balikhin* (Moscow, 2009), 182.

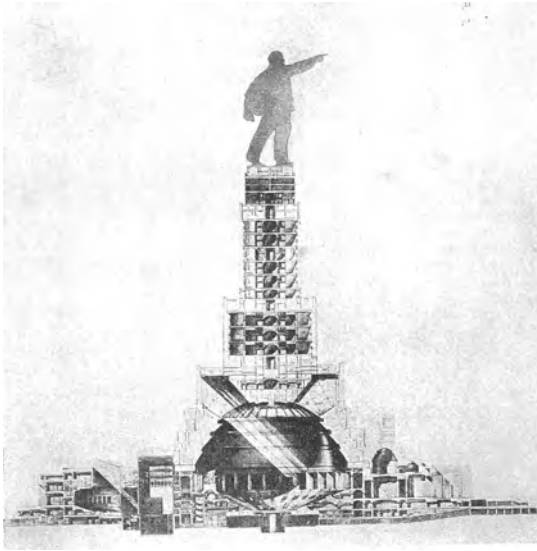


FIGURE 6. The palace as pedestal, in *Dvorets Sovetov* (Moscow, 1939), 23.

immateriality of its anticipatory presence through an abyssal layering of images (figs. 7–9). Each repetition of the image promises the future structure with unflinching certainty, while the actual construction never gets much further than the foundation pit.³⁵ Both buildings are also ideally designed to accommodate the entire Soviet collective. The collective files through the mausoleum in an uninterrupted stream, as each mourner has the same few-second interval to view the body. This design is then repeated during Red Square parades, as each row of marchers in turn meets the gaze of Stalin and the party leadership on the podium atop the tomb (fig. 10). The palace, by contrast, lays its chronotopic emphasis not on successive moments but on a single one: the great day when its promise will be fulfilled and the entire collective will gather within and around the anthropomorphic super-building.

Perhaps the most suggestive link between the two buildings is their reference to Egypt. Both the mausoleum and the palace commonly appeared as modern, improved pyramids—the former in terms of the perfected embalming techniques and the latter in its size.³⁶ Kogan's bizarre proposal also suggests this context. In Egyptian ritual the anthropoid coffin, whose portraiture symbolically fuses with the mummified remains inside, serves to establish and preserve an earthly form for the deceased, allowing partial revival in this makeshift body.³⁷ For Kogan, who saw no problem housing government offices inside his mausoleum-statue, this model is stripped of all mystery and made more transparently metaphorical. At the same time, when the living join the corpse inside the anthropoid coffin, its

FIGURE 7. "Soviets of workers' deputies in the capital lead the struggle to fulfill Stalin's plan for the reconstruction of Moscow," poster by K. Ryvkin, 1939. Stalinka: Digital Archive of Staliniana, <http://images.library.pitt.edu/s/stalinka/>. Russian State Library, Moscow.



FIGURE 8. Model of the Palace of Soviets with Iu. Pimenov's fresco, *Physical Culture Parade*, at the New York World's Fair, 1939, in. *Agitatsiia za shchast'e: Sovetskoe iskusstvo stalinskoi epokhi* (Dusseldorf-Bremen, 1994), 181. Russian Museum, St. Petersburg.



FIGURE 9. Still from *The New Moscow*, directed by Aleksandr Medvedkin (1938; Moscow, 2007), DVD.





FIGURE 10, a and b. Greeting the leadership during a Red Square parade, in *Parad na krasnoi ploshchadi* (Moscow, 1937), 12, 25.

magic also becomes more intense. On a symbolic level, the mourners no longer simply preserve contact with the departed spirit but incarnate it through their own vital presence, as if becoming the organs or blood cells of the new, makeshift body, while the embalmed original is its heart. Even if Kogan's proposal was rejected as fantastical, the mausoleum ritual eventually came to reflect a similar logic. The stream of mourners through the crypt supplies Lenin with a constant support in time, as each visitor reestablishes a connection to the leader's spirit and, ideally, is steeled in her resolve

to labor and fight for the cause. If these same visitors then continue down Lenin Prospekt to gather inside the giant body of the palace, would this not be a near identical version—only distributed in space and restricted in time—of Kogan’s giant anthropoid coffin? Together the two buildings would fashion an immortally living Lenin by architectural means.

Again, this image can be read from either a monumentalist or an eschatological perspective. Communists will travel to the mausoleum from all over the world to participate in Lenin’s indefinitely prolonged vigil. Completing this first half of the ritual, they will then move on to the palace to continue his cause in Balikhin’s school of Leninist militancy. Taken together, the double monument instills in each revolutionary subject a sense of her debt to past martyrs of the struggle and gives her the means of its reparation. At the same time, the ritual allows the stream of mourners to confront and accept the traumatic core of Soviet sovereignty. Occupying a chronotopically distinct zone from the mourner-marchers during the parades—positioned in vertical rather than horizontal relation to Lenin’s body and permitted to linger with it in time—Stalin and the leadership are the true beneficiaries of the procession’s ritual vivification. But Stalin is not only the head of the mausoleum’s guard of honor; he is also the palace’s chief engineer. First he shows us the sacred life that founds his power, and then he sends us on to put this power into effect, building (becoming) the giant pedestal that will allow Lenin’s cause to rise and spread across the earth. Together the two images of Lenin delineate the zone between natural and symbolic life in which sovereignty dwells. But *we* do not dwell there and never will. Most likely the construction of the palace will be an infinite labor, and even if it is not, other tasks can surely be found to take on its metaphorical function.

By contrast, an eschatological perspective would see the mausoleum’s permanence and the immateriality of the palace as rooted in the still unfinished education of the workers. Until they have mastered Lenin’s teachings, he will remain suspended and the palace will remain a dream. But once this education is complete, the workers will have at last recuperated from voluntarist prematurity, and it will be possible to burn or bury Lenin’s natural body and awaken his symbolic life as the giant statue, standing like a beacon in the sky. In such a narrative, the mausoleum represents a practical, temporal reconciliation of the contradictions Lenin’s death revealed between the “body” (the workers) and the “spirit” (the party) of the revolutionary society. The palace, by contrast, offers an ideal, atemporal solution. Within the flow of time this solution can only be imagined or promised, but that is precisely the point. What the palace promises is an end to that temporal flow: a final moment of triumph when the mausoleum is no longer necessary because the colossal super-building has risen to replace it. Here both Lenin

and Stalin endure a liminal, inverted existence between nature and the symbolic—the latter as a temporary placeholder for the true colossus (the living statue, at once temporal and eternal) that must rise above the gathered masses, reconciling all contradictions in their union, even between life and death. As long as the people still stream past the leader's body, rather than gathering within it, time still reigns and the putrescent thing at the heart of the Soviet project—Lenin, the leadership, and the entire party vanguard—remains suspended in expectation of the great day to come. But to achieve this dream, we must all be consecrated.

The monumentalist chronotope treats Stalin and the party leadership as this true colossus in an imaginary formation that differs both from the premodern concept of the two-bodied king and the modern, democratic concept of an empty place of power, temporarily occupied by elected representatives of the people. In Soviet sovereignty, the place of power is filled with the auto-icon—at once buried and displayed.³⁸ Like Agamben's colossi, the body binds the sacred life of power, domesticating it and allowing its transmission. But the body cannot be destroyed after this transmission is complete, since it also marks the place of mediation between the people and the party (and not only between one king and the next). When the workers march off to build the palace (or any other immortalization of the Leninist cause), they are not completing the mausoleum but repeating it, copying its structure. From the mundane body of their own temporally suspended labor emerges the towering glory of the party. The eschatological chronotope, by contrast, treats only the palace as the true colossus—the final sublation of all contradictions in the self-governance of the people. Until this day comes, Stalin stands atop the mausoleum as an extension of the uncanny body within it, a sign that our work is not yet done. Thus, if monumentalism domesticates the gap between Lenin's two bodies, eschatology thrusts everyone within it. Suspended in the gap, ever swelling (but never actually moving) toward incarnation of the dream, the famous "happiness" of the Soviet 1930s represents little more than an attempt to make merry in the midst of putrescence, enduring all manner of pollution (residual imperfections in the system, internal and external enemies, moments of doubt in the project, the leadership, or oneself) in expectation of a transformative rapture. This scenario also has its dark side. Along with expectant rejoicing, the most natural activity in the suspended world of eschatology is purgation—striving to repair the rent between real and ideal, ruthlessly eliminating the rot that has collected in the space dividing them.

Both of these chronotopic models are necessary if all that we know about Stalinism's bizarre, brutal (comic and tragic) order is to be accounted for. Somehow, we must find a way to see Stalinist culture as positioning itself both inside and outside the gap between Lenin's two bodies. One way to do

this is to say that Stalinism's official "fantasy" chronotope is monumentalist, while the traumatic truth of the failed revolution rises to the surface as eschatological tremors. But this solution presumes too much about what is true and false in the culture. The fact is that Stalinism quite organically mingles the two chronotopes in a number of different ways, and not all can be summed up as a return of repressed trauma.

Consider, for example, the chronotopic qualities of the following narrative, taken from a wartime publication about the mausoleum:

We walk slowly past Lenin's bed [*ложе*]; there are a lot of us, so we are only given a few short seconds. They are not enough to get one's fill of looking at that dear face, but how many thoughts pass through one's head in these short seconds, on the threshold of immortality.

We walk past Lenin's bed; the last, unforgettable seconds fall into eternity. Near me are a young artillery lieutenant, an elderly woman, and a little girl—the girl was born after Lenin was already gone—and a Buryat, who arrived in Moscow two hours ago.

Holding our breath, we look at the dear face. Tears sparkle in the eyes of the lieutenant. The cheeks of the Buryat are trembling. The eyes of the little girl are opened wide. The woman is crying without wiping away her tears. She will not wipe them away on the street either, and they will freeze, but she will not notice. Perhaps I do not even notice that I have tears in my eyes? . . .

"If only he were alive! If only he could see! If only he could rejoice with us in our deeds and victories!"³⁹

The dominant chronotope in this passage is a particular "elegiac" form of monumentalism, evoking the pain of transitory being and sublimating it into symbolic figures of beauty. The speaker does not deny Lenin's death and even exaggerates the pathos of mourning, lingering over images of time's passage (the short seconds of his visit, the Buryat's recent arrival in Moscow, and so on). But time also seems to stretch out and expand in a way that allows the rich experience described, including the still portraits of the multigenerational group, who in reality must have been walking steadily on, and were perhaps not even visible to the speaker. The use of the future tense in the description of the old woman's tears at the end reveals an atemporal, omniscient perspective, which was masked but present in the earlier parts. Most important, though, is the desire for time to stop. The suspended breath, the frozen tear, and the chronotopically ambivalent doublet—"short seconds on the threshold of immortality" and "the last seconds fall into eternity"—all work to position the time-space of the passage at the point where elegiac monumentalism and the raptures of eschatology collide. From this point, the raw fact of Lenin's death, implied in the final conditional structures—"If only he were alive!"—opens up dialogically as an invitation to assert his life in different ways.⁴⁰ The committed monumentalist may reply,

“He is alive in our hearts and in our deeds.” The committed eschatologist, by contrast, may exclaim, “He will live again! We have only to endure until it is possible, and anything is possible for us!” Integrating the Palace of Soviets into these responses, the monumentalist might continue, “And so I will build the palace to honor him.” The eschatologist would instead cry, “I consecrate my life to this sublime edifice, so that he might rise again in it.”

Perhaps both responses are equally available, leaving the reader to choose between them. However, the object of the discourse seems to be more than merely opening up this dialogic space. The ultimate goal of this willful ambivalence is to preserve the gap between nature and the symbolic, the auto-icon and the true colossus, deferring a decision about the postrevolutionary period and its peculiar form of sovereignty. Each chronotopic attitude is used to counterbalance the other, guarding against the negativity that might force a decision. Eschatology promises the palace as a true colossus that will finally lay the auto-icon to rest. In turn, monumentalism protects us against this dream’s ceaseless virtuality, transforming its realization into a temporal (if infinite) labor. The reaction to Lenin’s body and the extrapolated attitude toward the palace oscillate between the two perspectives, looking for the perfect point of their collision. But if that point is missed, one need not worry. The main thing is to avoid slipping too far in either direction—investing too fully in either attitude.⁴¹

Digging into the Earth

One thing these different interpretations of the Lenin Mausoleum and the Palace of Soviets share is the negative affect of *toska*, an untranslatable Russian word that covers all manner of melancholic longing—whether specific or aimless, dully bored or spiritually anguished. Lenin’s corpse is a body of *toska*. In this sense, it arises not only as a result of melancholic attachment, blocking the work of mourning, but also through fetishistic veneration, as the auto-icon veils (but also indexes) the emptiness opened by the revolutionary event. As several scholars have noted, both melancholy and fetishism depend on an ambivalent duality of recognition and disavowal. We know Lenin is dead and gone forever, but nevertheless we cannot let him go. We know the auto-icon does not really prop up Soviet sovereignty, but we will treat it as such all the same.⁴² This duality suggests an explanation both for the ambivalence regarding the party leadership and for the reluctance to end Lenin’s vigil once the sovereign succession is complete.

What the negative body of *toska* preserves is the impossibility of a decision about the revolution. Has the succession crisis ended, or are we still in its

midst? Will the state ever wither away, or are we doomed to persist in the tragicomic condition of the revolution's betrayal? The body of *toska* is a challenge to the people. The ideal Soviet subject will endure the impossibility of answering these questions one way or the other, resisting either overt acceptance or rejection of the revolution's post-Leninist phase. Instead she will persist in her *toska* as the only appropriate medium for revolutionary authenticity.

To understand the full complexity of this logic, it is useful to examine a literary text that occupies a conceptual and affective territory very similar to that of the mausoleum and palace—Andrei Platonov's novella *The Foundation Pit*, about a group of proletarians digging the foundation for a great monumental tower in which all the local workers will gather to live. Platonov's thought often has a strangely prescient quality, anticipating trends in Stalinist culture that emerge soon after the completion of his texts, even when they are not published. His association of the mausoleum with a giant tower in which all workers will gather is one of the most striking examples of this phenomenon. *The Foundation Pit* was written between December 1929 and April 1930, the same time as the wooden mausoleum was being remade in granite and one year before the first competition for the Palace of Soviets was announced. Indeed, at the time Platonov was writing, there was no mausoleum on Red Square but only a construction site (fig. 11).⁴³



FIGURE 11. Foundation pit for the permanent mausoleum, 1929, in Kotyrev, *Mavzolei*, 137.

There is only one direct reference to the mausoleum in Platonov's text, but it comes at a crucial moment. The celebrations after the successful "liquidation" of the local *kulak* population are over (they have been sent downriver on a raft, like a ship of fools), and the newly collectivized farmers have all been put to bed. Chiklin, the most positive figure among the workers (despite a great capacity for punitive violence), imagines how the blacksmith—Mikhail, who happens to be a bear—will work with even greater zeal now that he no longer has enemies in the village. There is a powerful sense of approaching certainty, dispelling *toska*: "The entire exact meaning of life and full, global joy should yearn in the breast of the proletarian class as they dig the earth, so that the heart of the hammerer and Chiklin do nothing but hope and breathe, so their toiling arm is true and patient."⁴⁴ But then Chiklin finds his other comrade, the sad dreamer Voshchev, collecting "beggarly, rejected objects" off the ground—objects that recall the oppressed farmworkers of the past—in order to exact "socialist vengeance" on their behalf (513). Affected by this touching commemorative effort, Chiklin asks the engineer Prushevsky, "Will the successes of high science be able to resurrect people who've rotted or not?" Although the bourgeois engineer says no, the crippled proletarian, Zhachev begs to differ: "Marxism will be able to do everything. Why else is Lenin lying whole in Moscow? He's waiting for science—he wants to be resurrected!" (515). The bedtime chatter ends soon after this remark, and in the morning the workers wake to find that the bear has become too zealous in his hammering, ruining the iron. Voshchev interprets his furious joy as a sign that certainty, though close, is still out of reach: "The beast was working so hard, as if he felt the meaning of life close by, . . . [and he] was pounding through the door of the future" (519).

The reference to Lenin's suspended body, along with Voshchev's forgotten objects and the bear's ineffectual zeal, comes as a signal that the time for *toska* has not yet ended, despite vengeance against the *kulaks*. However furiously he pounds, the bear cannot yet open the door to the future. Having secured the place of *toska* in this way, the novella proceeds to its catastrophic conclusion. The activist in charge of the local collectivization drive is denounced; the young girl Nastya, whom the workers dote upon, catches fever and dies; and Zhachev loses faith in Communism and goes off to kill Pashkin, the administrator of their work on the tower. Traditionally readers have taken this ending as a clear sign that Platonov meant *The Foundation Pit* as a radical dystopian critique of the collectivization campaign. Yet Platonov's efforts to publish the novella suggest he did not conceive it as a dissident statement. In a final postscript (removed from the first canonical version of the text and only recently restored), Platonov instead explains the story in terms of an "anxious feeling" about the first socialist

generation and its fate (534). But what does he want us to do with this anxiety?

Jonathan Flatley reads the similarly soul-wrenching conclusion of Platonov's earlier novel *Chevangur* as akin to the work of psychoanalysis, manipulating the transference of affect: "As the book ends, it evokes sympathetic, imitative emotions, stimulating our desire for human contact, and then leaves us with nowhere to go with that desire."⁴⁵ Instead of validating the transference (encouraging unconscious repetition), Platonov—like a good analyst—maintains a flat deadpan style, forcing the reader to wrestle with negativity in a way that thrusts her out of the text and into the world. Artemy Magun builds on Flatley's reading but relates the simultaneous evocation and blockage of transference more specifically to the work of forging a subjectivity that can remain faithful to the revolutionary event. For Magun, Platonov's *toska* does not reflect a "mythical, original 'desire' or 'loss,' but a *retrograde movement* that occurs here and now," and *The Foundation Pit*'s allegory of digging into the earth describes the movement of subjectivization as "running back in order to leap forward"—or, in Lacanian terms, accepting the castration that founds the dialectic of desire. The danger, however, is that Platonov's proletarians may never make the transition from digging to building, from the backward run to the forward leap. According to Magun, Platonov staves off such a melancholic response to castration through a compensatory interest in the fetish. "Fetishism allows Platonov to convey the specific hardening and suspension of the revolutionary event, to preserve its incompleteness, its 'permanence.' But it also helps reproduce desire, using anxiety as leverage for the leap."⁴⁶

The fetish at the center of *The Foundation Pit* is clearly Nastya, described as the proletarians' "future joyous object," which they fondle throughout the second half of the book, assuaging their *toska* for socialism (469). The veneration of Nastya is accompanied by a clear disavowal of her negative qualities. She invariably provokes violent tendencies in her protectors, while her revolutionary consciousness is largely a performance designed to mask bourgeois class origins. When she dies, Nastya's body comes to occupy a place similar to Lenin's in the mausoleum. Chiklin digs for fifteen hours, placing her tomb so deep that "neither worm, nor root of plant, neither warmth, nor cold could penetrate it." He hews the coffin out of "eternal stone," covering it with a special granite slab that protects the girl from "the huge weight of sepulchral earth" (534). Thus, although Nastya is not captured in the dialectic of burial and display that marks the mausoleum, she is buried in a way that rejects putrescence, evoking a similar sense of melancholic retention, as the diggers are unable to let go of their beloved object.

Nastya's burial comes as the culmination of an incredible burst of tragic energy that immediately follows her death. Unable to weep, the workers go

to the pit to dig, and Platonov describes their labor in manifestly uterine terms, developing similar associations from earlier in the novel:

Chiklin felt a desire to dig the earth; . . . without hurrying he headed for the foundation pit. He began to dig the ground, but it had already frozen, and Chiklin was forced to cut the earth into mounds, sending them flying out in whole dead chunks. Deeper it went more softly and warmly; Chiklin drove his iron shovel in with cutting thrusts, and soon he had almost fully disappeared in the quiet of the depths, but even there he could not wear himself out, so he started to pound at the sides of ground, stretching the crowded earth open wide. (532)

Following Chiklin's example, the collective farmers join in the digging—suggesting a resolution of the class conflict that drives the plot—and they, too, “work with such effort, as if they wanted to save themselves forever in the abyss of the foundation pit” (533).⁴⁷ At the same time, the transition to building may finally have begun. The bear and some of the peasants, riding the collectivized horses, are carrying rubble masonry, presumably to lay the foundation of their new home. Whatever comes of this is unknown, however. The book ends, bidding Nastya farewell as the collective farmers sleep.

The potential for transference is incredibly strong in this final scene. If the reader does not simply close the book with a sigh—as if awakening from a strangely enjoyable nightmare—she will likely also be filled with the desire to dig or perhaps even to build. But, as Flatley says, we have nowhere to put this desire within the book's pages. Instead we are left alone with our *toska*. To endure the impossibility of certainty (about the construction of socialism as about our status as revolutionary subjects), we can only return to the real world of life and labor.

Platonov's writing often has a folkloric quality (indeed, he wrote a number of fairy tales in his later years), and *The Foundation Pit* exhibits interesting parallels of its own to “Snow White.” The proletarian diggers manifestly recall the Grimm brothers' dwarves both in the nature of their labor (the dwarves work as miners) and in their “stunted” development as subjects. It is also interesting to note that Nastya has seven named protectors in the novella: the six proletarians (Chiklin, Voshchev, Mikhail, Kozlov, Safronov, and Zhachev) and Elisei, the peasant who breathes on her for warmth when she is ill. Anxiety over Nastya's sexual maturity is also a central theme in the book, particularly during the celebrations after the liquidation of the *kulaks*, when the collectivized peasants are dancing and singing the praises of their Soviet motherland:

“Oh, you, mother-USSR of ours!” one peasant shouted, delirious with joy, showing his sprightliness and slapping himself on the belly, cheeks, and mouth. “Have a go with our stately realm—she's not married!” “Is she a maid or a widow?” asked a neighboring guest in the middle of dancing. “A maid!” the peasant, still moving,

explained. "Don't you see how tricky she is?" "Let her have her fun!" the same visiting guest agreed. "Let her fatten up a bit! Then we'll make her a quiet wench; it'll be good." (508)

Nastya seems to associate herself with this exchange, jumping down from Chiklin's arms to join the festivities at this moment. Zhachev crawls about the crowd, knocking the peasants over (an oblique play on the Russian verb "to stand" which can also refer to an erection), and he punches the man who hoped to marry off the "USSR-girl," threatening to put him on the raft with the *kulaks*. It seems, however, that he is too late, for when Chiklin warns Nastya that she will catch cold, she refuses to come back to him (509). Presumably this is when she contracts her fatal illness, leaving her proletarian protectors and becoming the object of the peasants' desire.⁴⁸

In his analysis of "Snow White," Bettelheim describes the dwarves as creatures that are paradoxically phallic and pre-oedipal at once. They "are free of inner conflicts, and have no desire to move beyond their phallic existence to intimate relations. They are satisfied with an identical round of activities; their life is a never-changing circle of work in the womb of the earth, as the planets circle endlessly in a never-changing path in the sky."⁴⁹ While Platonov also depicts a society of stunted males digging in the womb of the earth, they are hardly free of conflict. Instead they more closely recall the maiden's protectors in the Russian versions of the tale, who are gripped with a *toska* born of painfully suppressed sexual desire. In the Alexander Afanas'ev tale "The Magic Mirror," for example, the banished girl is guarded by two heroes who make a pact with one another, each holding a saber to the other's chest: "If either of us dares to interfere with our sister, then he should be mercilessly hacked down with this very saber."⁵⁰ When the girl succumbs to the crone's temptations and cannot be revived, the heroes construct her crystal coffin but preserve their bond to the end: "A great *toska* overcame them. . . . They embraced and said farewell to one another, went out onto the high balcony, took each other by the hand and threw themselves down; they smashed into the sharp rocks and ended their life."⁵¹ The workers in *The Foundation Pit* are similarly protective of Nastya's maidenhood, and Chiklin's final effort to dig himself into oblivion after the girl's death suggests a similar suicidal impulse.

In this context, fetishism hardly seems to be a means of controlling or mediating postrevolutionary *toska*. Rather, Platonov seems to use each psychic strategy to accentuate and distill the negativity of the other. On its own, each carries a danger that Platonov clearly indicates. The danger of *toska*, as in all of Platonov's works, is that it may prove too difficult to endure, and the longing for socialism will be consummated prematurely, usually through sex and procreation. We see this in *The Foundation Pit*, for example, in the character

of Kozlov, who does shoddy work because of excessive masturbation, or with Prushevsky, who suffers a variety of *toska* characteristic of intellectuals—he is incapable of drawing true spiritual sustenance from his utopian visions of the future. In the end, Prushevsky goes off with a young peasant girl, one of the few times in the novella when he is distracted from his thoughts of suicide. Another variant of this danger can be found in an earlier moment, when Pashkin decides that the foundation pit should be increased in size, “for socialist women will be filled with freshness and ruddy health and all the surface of the earth will be covered with scampering [*semeniashchii*] childhood” (469). Here, through the phonetic and etymological association of the verb “to scamper” (*semit'*) with “semen” (*semia*), the profound *toska* of the diggers is reduced to the spilling of seed.

The danger of the workers' fetishistic attitude toward Nastya and the socialist future follows the opposite trajectory—instead of encouraging a premature release, fetishism delays and disfigures maturation. Unlike the Grimm brothers' dwarves, who seem naturally stunted in their development, Platonov's diggers are held back by the hope they invest in Nastya, whom they identify with the Soviet Union as a whole. As long as it seems to serve Nastya, any vaguely socialist act can be justified, however dubious it actually is. In reality, however, the diggers—like the society as a whole—are suspended in fetishistic ambivalence, at once recognizing and disavowing the awkward truth of persistent class conflict behind their fantasy. Ostensibly, they persevere in this attitude because they are guarding Nastya's virginity, as if hoping she will mature from a mere fetish into a true object of desire or, more likely, something beyond phallic desire entirely. The problem, however, is that real maturation is not taking place. Nastya's prince will not be the new man of Communism, but a forcibly collectivized peasant, who will make her a “quiet wench.”

With Nastya's death and nonputrescent burial the diggers' *toska* and fetishism begin to interact in a way that potentially eliminates these dangers. Their earlier goals—the mature Nastya, the tower, and Communism—no longer define them. Instead of banging at the door of the future, *toska* has become entirely intransitive, pushing them deep into the womb of the earth, making room for all in a brotherly union. And while the desperate labor at the end of the novella resembles a kind of death drive much more than productive activity, this may just be what is required to unite the collective. All must gather in the pit, consecrating themselves to the cause like Agamben's *devotus*. Instead of erecting a giant phallic tower to veil and reproduce the law of castration, the diggers plunge into a darker place beyond that law, beyond the phallus.

At the same time, their fetish no longer holds them in suspension. Preserved in her granite tomb, Nastya becomes a body of *toska* much like

Lenin in the mausoleum. Instead of an imperfect longing for socialism, it is now their more concrete melancholic attachment to Nastya that drives the workers on. Moreover, instead of the disparate objects in Voshchev's bag, each recalling an individual victim of exploitation, the young girl's body is not fragmented, but whole, concentrating *toska* and gathering others to it. The workers are building their home—the unimaginable, impossible, but necessary future—in inverted form, populating its negative space before constructing its positive form. Again, one can say that the building is like a human being, only here it grows from the inside out, with the diggers as its first organs, its sacred life. Nastya's body is the building's sleeping heart, waiting to throb into life.⁵² Beyond this gathering, Platonov can only offer his novella as a means of evoking transference and sustaining the reader through the abandonment that follows. It is we who must finish populating the Soviet Union with sacred life, after which it may finally organize itself into sovereign humanity.

This is precisely where Platonov's *Foundation Pit* differs from the mainstream discourse about the Lenin Mausoleum and the Palace of Soviets. In the novella's final scene, the strange hybrid of fetishism and *toska* (as opposed to monumentalism and eschatology) rejects all compensatory promises and protections in favor of a more direct orientation on negativity. Notably, Platonov has no interest in the problem of sovereignty in this scene. The question arises only occasionally in the novella through the motif of the "main person" (named by Nastya as Stalin), whom one peasant suggests will be the only one left after the revolution is complete (460, 506). But for Platonov's workers the true body of *toska* does not index the origin of Soviet sovereignty. Rather, it is a dead child—a future that is covered in stones and put "in pledge" just like the future denied to all the vanquished of history.⁵³ The house the workers are building will not rise to replace this child. Rather, it is the labor itself that matters, uniting the collective in a way that resembles organs gathering to become a body. In this body Nastya will also have her place, since, as Chiklin claims at one point: "The dead are people, too" (474). Instead of a phallic tower, Platonov looks for the true bottom of Soviet society, where its contradictions are most intense. For it is here that the totality at last becomes available, gathering all in the pit—worker and peasant, man and beast, living and dead—for consecration to the cause, which now pushes them from behind rather than glimmering on some distant horizon. Nastya is not displayed like Lenin, and the form of the new building cannot be imagined like that of the palace. Instead, Platonov strives—through transferential abandonment before a broken body of *toska*—to encourage and sustain the emergence of those people who must inhabit it, not as castrated subjects but as subjects of the collective body to come.

Notes

1. The original document of the memoir has been reproduced on the live journal page of the Shchusev Museum of Architecture: <http://arch-museum.livejournal.com/26358.html>. Censored excerpts of the memoir can be found in A. N. Kotyrev, *Mavzolei V. I. Lenina: Proektirovanie i stroitel'stvo* (Moscow, 1971), 62–63.
2. Aleksandr Pushkin, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii v 10 tomakh* (Moscow, 1959–62), 3: 354, 357. Unless otherwise noted, all translations are my own.
3. “Khitryi Lenin,” in *Rukopisi, kotorykh ne bylo: Poddelki v oblasti slavianskogo fol'klora*, ed. A. L. Toporkov et al. (Moscow, 2002), 822, 923. Aleksandr A. Panchenko argues that “Cunning Lenin” has roots in the tale of the “Sleeping Princess” (which Panchenko also conflates with the “Dead Princess,” erroneously referring to V. A. Zhukovsky’s tale as authored by Pushkin). See A. A. Panchenko, “Kul't Lenina i ‘sovetskii fol'lor,’” *Odissei: Chelovek v istorii* (2005): 348.
4. See Panchenko, “Kul't Lenina,” 347.
5. B. I. Zbarsky, *Mavzolei Lenina* (Moscow, 1944), 26.
6. Aleksandr M. Panchenko, *O russkoi istorii i kul'ture* (St. Petersburg, 2000), 427.
7. On the embalming techniques, see Alexei Yurchak, “Bodies of Lenin: The Hidden Science of Communist Sovereignty,” in this issue, and Alexei Yurchak, “Netlennost' formy: Leninizm i material'nost' mavzoleinogo tela,” *Neprikosnovennyi zapas* 89, no. 3 (2013), <http://nlobooks.ru/node/3732>.
8. For ritualistic practices associated with this temporal attitude toward death, see Robert Hertz, “A Contribution to the Study of the Collective Representation of Death,” in *Death, Mourning, and Burial: A Cross-Cultural Reader*, ed. Antonius C. G. M. Robben (London, 2004), 203.
9. N. J. Girardot, “Initiation and Meaning in the Tale of Snow White and the Seven Dwarves,” *Journal of American Folklore* 90 (1977): 291.
10. Bruno Bettelheim, *The Uses of Enchantment: The Meaning and Importance of Fairytales* (London, 1991), 213.
11. Panchenko, *O russkoi istorii*, 443.
12. Jacques Lacan, *The Ethics of Psychoanalysis: Seminar VII*, trans. Dennis Porter (New York, 1992), 220–21, 247–49.
13. Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*, trans. Daniel Heller-Roazen (Stanford, 1998), 98.
14. Ibid., 100.
15. In “Bodies of Lenin,” Yurchak argues that Lenin was also subject to a kind of inverted death. Banished from public life during his convalescence from a series of strokes in 1922 and 1923, Lenin was effectively already “dead in the symbolic” (replaced by the discourse of Leninism), even though his physical body was still alive. However, Yurchak’s discussion of the body-effigy in the mausoleum does not attend to the uncanny aspect of this process of inversion.
16. Boris Groys, *The Total Art of Stalinism: Avant-Garde, Aesthetic Dictatorship, and Beyond*, trans. Charles Rougle (Princeton, 1992), 67.
17. For more on the concept of the “auto-icon” with specific discussion of “Snow White,” see Elisabeth Bronfen, *Over Her Dead Body: Death, Femininity and the Aesthetic* (Manchester, UK, 1992).
18. Groys, *The Total Art of Stalinism*, 67.
19. Nina Tumarkin, *Lenin Lives! The Lenin Cult in Soviet Russia* (Cambridge, MA, 1983), 167.
20. See Yurchak, “Bodies of Lenin.”

21. Ibid. and Yurchak, "Netlennost' formy."
22. Yurchak's own conclusions in "Bodies of Lenin" are distinct from my own. According to his argument Lenin's body is doubled into a dynamic *body-effigy* visible only to the leadership and the embalmers and a static *body-corpse*, displayed to the public. This doubling produces Soviet sovereignty as the "twinning coexistence" of Leninism as an immortal, foundational truth and the party as its mortal incarnation, mediating between this external position of power and the social body. However, Yurchak neglects two crucial points: first, the uncanny ambivalence of the fact that it is the immortal body that lives and evolves (as the body and Leninism itself are constantly reshaped and renewed), while the mortal body lies static and fixed (for all purposes dead); and second, the peculiar temporality of the revolutionary state, anticipating (or forever deferring) a new form of sovereignty—that of liberated mankind. The persistent gap between the party and the people must also be incorporated into our understanding of Soviet sovereignty.
23. See, for example, Panchenko, *O russkoi istorii*, 428, and Dmitrii Khmel'nitskii, *Zodchii Stalin* (Moscow, 2007), 14–15.
24. See, for example, Vladimir Papernyi, *Kul'tura Dva* (Moscow, 1996), 27–35.
25. L. B. Krasin, "Arkhit'ekturnoe uvekovechenie Lenina," *Izvestiia*, February 7, 1924.
26. Kotyrev, *Mavzolei*, 105.
27. Ibid., 110.
28. An example of Vladimir Shchuko and Vladimir Gel'freikh's drawings for the palace appears in fig. 2.
29. Sona Hoisington, "'Ever Higher': The Evolution of the Project for the Palace of Soviets," *Slavic Review* 62, no. 1 (2003): 61.
30. S. O. Khan-Magomedov, *Viktor Balikhin* (Moscow, 2009), 164.
31. Ibid., 166.
32. Notably, the same sculptor who cast Lenin's death mask, Sergei Merkur'ov, received the commission for the giant statue atop the palace.
33. Hoisington, "Ever Higher," 61–62.
34. "Dvorets Sovetov," *Arkhit'ektura SSSR* 1 (1933): 5.
35. Fig. 7 depicts the reconstruction of Moscow with the future palace rising ghost-like behind the already constructed Crimean Bridge. Fig. 8 shows a model of the palace displayed in tandem with a fresco by Yuri Pimenov at the 1939 World's Fair in New York, as if depicting the future celebrations to be held there. In fig. 9 animated images of fighter planes fly past the palace (again depicted by a model).
36. See Zbarsky, *Mavzolei*, 37–40, and N. Atarov, *Dvorets Sovetov* (Moscow, 1940), 11–13.
37. See Seigfried Morenz, *Egyptian Religion*, trans. Ann E. Keep (Ithaca, 1992), 155, 187.
38. See Claude Lefort, "Outline of the Genesis of Ideology in Modern Societies," in *The Political Forms of Modern Society: Bureaucracy, Democracy, Totalitarianism*, ed. John B. Thompson (Cambridge, 1986). Yurchak explores this characteristic of Soviet sovereignty in detail in "Bodies of Lenin," although again his conclusions are different from my own.
39. Zbarsky, *Mavzolei*, 50.
40. It is perhaps this invitation to dialogue that explains the peculiar use of quotation marks at this point in the passage.
41. That is, of course, until state violence forces one to worry very much indeed about one's position between the two viewpoints.

42. See, for example, Artemy Magun, *Negative Revolution: Modern Political Subject and Its Fate After the Cold War* (New York, 2013), 35–36, and Rebecca Comay, “The Sickness of Tradition: Between Melancholia and Fetishism,” in *Walter Benjamin and History*, ed. Andrew Benjamin (New York, 2005), 90.
43. The permanent mausoleum was constructed between June 1929 and October 1930.
44. Andrei Platonov, *Chevengur: Roman: Kotlovan: Povest* (Moscow, 2011), 512. All subsequent references to this work will appear parenthetically.
45. Jonathan Flatley, *Affective Mapping: Melancholia and the Politics of Modernism* (Cambridge, 2008), 190.
46. Artemii Magun, “Otritsatel’naia revoliutsiia Andreia Platonova,” *Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie* 106 (2010), <http://magazines.russ.ru/nlo/2010/106/ma7.html>. In *Negative Revolution*, Magun presents melancholia and fetishism as part of a complementary strategy for delimiting the infinite negativity of the revolutionary event. See Magun, *Negative Revolution*, 36–38.
47. Chiklin later remarks in response to the peasants’ desire to join the proletariat: “Now the foundation pit must be dug even wider and deeper. Let every man from a barracks or a clay hut crawl into our house” (553).
48. Nastya’s maturation is further suggested by the way she characterizes her illness: “Juice is coming out of me everywhere” (529), recalling Snow White’s fatal bite of the apple.
49. Bettelheim, *The Uses of Enchantment*, 210.
50. “Vol’shebnoe zerkal’tse: [Skazka] No. 211,” in *Narodnye russkie skazki* A. N. Afanas’eva (Moscow, 1984–1985), 2:103.
51. *Ibid.*, 104. Pushkin combines the celibate heroes with the Grimms’ dwarves in his narrative, numbering them seven, while making sure to indicate their powerful (“heroic”) desire for the princess.
52. Platonov approaches this image with Prushevsky’s inability to imagine the life that will inhabit his future towers: “What will the body of youth be like then, and what agitating power will make the heart start beating and the mind think?” (428).
53. Platonov does consider issues of sovereignty more closely in the texts of the mid to late 1930s. See Jonathan Brooks Platt, “Platonov, Incommensurability, and the 1937 Pushkin Jubilee,” *Urbandus* 14 (2011/2012): 214–46.