
'Male Literature' of Udaff.com and Other Networked Artistic Practices of the Cultural Resistance

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Abstract

This article is dedicated to the protest cultural practices taking place on the Russian Internet and concentrates on the non-normative networked resource, Udaff.com. The analysis commences with an examination of the following projects: "What we dislike Mascaw for?", "Vladimir Vladimirovich™" and "The portrait of the President". These projects reflect different aspects of networked artistic practices that cannot be thoroughly analyzed in the given article but nevertheless provide a backdrop to the Udaff.com activities.

The main areas of the study are: the Udaff.com subculture and its relation to the cultural mainstream; the reasons for the perception of the Udaff.com subculture as a protest one; the nature and the means of expression of such protest. Also, some attention is paid to creative activity as the main method of participation in the Udaff.com community – the literature of Udaff.com is viewed as forming a separate, artistic trend, that of 'male literature'. Particular attention is paid to the study of this literary trend as an example of a new way to generate and develop cultural trends within the virtual space.

Terminology: counter-culture, subculture

The terms, 'subculture', → '**counter-culture**', 'underground' began to appear in academic discourse during the 1960s (although the first mention of them dates back as far as the 1930s). The choice of the term 'counter-culture' and its popularity as a definition of the youth protest move-

ments stems from the 1950s-1960s. All such phenomena can be defined through their opposition to 'culture': they place themselves ideologically, symbolically and socially outside the scope of the official culture, but are incapable of independent existence.

Initially the terms, 'subculture' and 'counter-culture' were perceived and used for the description of the spheres that lie outside the 'high', legitimate, sacralized culture supported and reproduced by the élites. Because only the 'high' culture could be called 'The Culture', such spheres came to be viewed (even by themselves) as 'non-cultural' or 'counter-cultural'.

The general opinion, today, is that culture as such, has a highly differentiated character and includes all sorts of different practices: sacred and profane, professional and folklore, official and underground; all subcultures being the subsystems of one culture.

Thus the term, 'counter-culture' has no definite scientific value and is used in this study only as 'the speech of *another's*' – within the quotations of the Udaff.com participants. Observers may but mark in passing that perhaps it is the element of the opposition – definitely stressed and underlined in this term – that attracts the Udaff.com members in their tendency to use it.

The subculture can be termed as that subsystem, which is defined by the code of the larger system but which has a certain range of its own particular characteristics: the signifying characteristics (certain ideology, symbolism), the behaviour (certain patterns and models of behaviour, rituals) and the social characteristics (subculture is always produced by certain social strata). Such subsystems

tems, as well as the ‘high’ (dominating) culture are equally capable of reproduction [Sshepanskaja 2004, 27-31]. It is possible to introduce some changes into this definition as far as the virtual subcultures are concerned, for there the likelihood of the signifying activity is very limited, the norms, the behaviour patterns and the rituals are conditioned by the technological parameters, and the participants are but the virtual characters, not connected directly and indissolubly to any physical presence and social status.

Culture as resistance. Theoretical principles

Culture as politics and cultural activity as → **resistance** – these are the topics whose examination and study became the subject matter for the works of Karl Marx, Antonio Gramsci, Walter Benjamin, Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno, Mikhail Bakhtin, Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, Michel Foucault, Jean Baudrillard, of different schools of cultural studies and many others.

Culture is political in its nature. It forms our ideas of the world and of the domestic life around us, it creates the systems of interpretation of events, it provides the material for our fantasy and determines the frontiers of the imaginary. Through the prism of its cultural experience a human being interprets its past, acts in its present and builds up its future. Culture, thus, is the means of social control. Creating the cultural images and patterns alternative to those in existence and dominant, working to broaden the frontiers of the imaginary, the cultural activists and the works of their art lead a real political struggle [see Duncombe 2002].

In cultural resistance terms, three sets of methods would seem useful for the interpretation of the networked artistic projects.

Mikhail Bakhtin, discussing the nature of the medieval carnival, wrote that all the habitual reality, the hierarchies, the values and the images were changed within the carnival space into their

antitheses. Its destruction of hierarchies, its freedom, its universality, its absence of time and the immediacy of its forces, its disguise, its playing, its grotesqueness – these are the defining characteristics of the carnival [Bakhtin 1990]. The carnival character of some of the cultural phenomena allows us to think and act differently from usual, and the accepted course of things is temporarily suspended. One possible modern example of such carnival political activity is that of ‘street parties’ (music and dance parties – legal or illegal, announced or spontaneous, taking place on highways and blocking traffic). During such parties, gaiety, disguise and playfulness adopt the functions of political action.

Walter Benjamin, in his essay, *The Author as Producer (Der Autor als Produzent)* remarks that a creative work may be called “revolutionary” if, in the course of its production and in the suggested method of its consumption, it destroys a rigid specialization of capitalism. Such creative work invites each and every one of us to participate; it destroys the difference between the author and the spectator; it makes the spectator a participant of the creative process, thus challenging the hierarchical labour distribution [Benjamin 2002].

Jean Baudrillard, analyzing the gradual disappearance of the traditional political struggle and its practices in the West-European arena postulates the conformity of resistance strategies to those of control. If the dominant method of social and political participation is the vote, the acquisition and expression of one’s opinion, then it is the apathy and the absence of opinion, the ironic estrangement, inaction and silence that become the legitimate means of struggle [Baudrillard 2002].

The formation and development of art trends on the Internet

The third, useful theoretical set belongs to a rather new and barely investigated problem. It touches upon the essential change in the meth-

ods of creation, formation and existence of artistic trends and practices, with the arrival and spread of the Internet. One of the brightest examples of this process is the aforementioned Udaff.com, which shall be the focus of attention in this article.

Today, the new generation and production of cultural phenomena are very frequently connected with the networked → **platform** that becomes one of the forming centres of an artistic practice. In this article, the term 'platform' is used to designate the website and large networked portal in all its numerous connections with the community it gives rise to, with the processes and the results of that community's labour and with the cultural phenomena of the past and the present. Also, for this term, the orientation of the resource towards the support of creative initiatives and the stimulation of the creative processes is underlined. The 'platform' offers its visitors, not only the grounds for the discussion, but also an opportunity for their self-education and, sometimes, a choice of the instruments of their creativity.

Such a site is usually created for the working with and the representation of some specific artistic product and is generally constructed according to the chosen format. In the course of the development of its resource a complete, articulated artistic community organizes around it. And the site itself accumulates quite a sizeable number of artistic products. The chosen and unfiltered artistic works, uploaded to this site and available online, become models for other participants' creative work and assist in the development of the given artistic practice. The bulk of the artistic works, together with the discussion surrounding them (all accumulated in the resource) become integral components in the formation of the new cultural discourse.

In general, such a resource is capable of generating and assisting the formation of a new artistic trend and helps to change the cultural landscape.

One of the most interesting characteristics of such a process is that some, purely technical,

decisions may become principle and fatal. For instance, such resources usually need to have quite an authoritarian system of filtering. The introduction of rating and voting systems allow singling out of the most popular works that later make their way to the externalized 'official' offline culture. There are also other systems of reward and distinction. The chat and offline meetings help to consolidate the community.

Frequently, the majority of the participants in such processes are not professionals in the sphere presented by the resource, and the artistic practice is usually rooted, not so much in the history of art but in folklore practices. Thus the artistic trend is partly generated and sometimes forever constrained within the limits of digital and offline folklore.

The process of originating such resources is quite an interesting one. Most frequently, they are created and supported by the enthusiasts without any financial help or immediate profit. The typical organization of the grant system in the art sphere (which primarily concerns the countries of Western Europe) excludes the support of such initiatives, for they arise spontaneously, quickly and without any predictable direction of development. One has to note that the success of resources thus generated is far from being general. The durability and success of such resources depend on many factors, some of which – except from those mentioned above – may not be so easily verbalized.

“What we do not love Mascaw for?”

“What we do not love Mascaw for?” – is “the Russian people's questionnaire”, the net project of Sergej Teterin [1999]. The project grew out of a page-questionnaire into a much bigger series with a website with guestbooks, competition for the best design and the design of the sign-stripe, “the newcomer” for guests of the capital to wear and an exhibition in the → **Gel'man** gallery. At its peak, this web questionnaire climbed to tenth place in the Rambler.ru Top100 rating scale, in

the section on “Politics”, for the number of visitors to the site.



Newcomer: *Stripe to be worn by guests of the capital.*

The basis of the project – its idea, its title and its content – lies with one and only one question: “What we dislike Mascaw for?”, the orthography parodies here the “a”-pronunciation of the Moscovites (or, better, “Mascovites”). Initially, visitors to the page were supposed to choose between three answers “Mascaw is a parasite on the body of the regions; Mascaw likes to search the newcomers pressing them against the walls of its houses and throw them out of their own capital for no clear reason; the Mascovites look down on the provincials (to put it lightly) [...]” [Teterin n.d.]. Once something like 600 people voted (and it became clear that they were chiefly offended by “Mascaw’s super-arrogant parasitism in its relations with the regions”), Teterin closed the vote down and opened three guestbooks with three topics for discussion: “Whether it is easy for the non-Mascovites to live in Mascaw?”, “Why the Mascovites dislike the newcomers?” and “Whether one can realize oneself without Mascaw?” The author writes:

Immediately, the furious battles heated up [...] It became obvious that Russians who live beyond MKAD (Moscow Ring Road) have much of pent-up resentment against Mascaw customs. The Mascovites felt much the same way about the provincials. But what was still gratifying is that there were some constructive appeals for the coalition and conciliation [...]. [ibid.]

At the Gel’man gallery exhibition the most radical site’s comments in different pieces of handwriting were shown, as well as some unpleasant pictures of Moscow and variants of the “newcomers’ stripes” design. The parallel with the fascist stripes worn by Jews in Hitler’s Germany is not accidental. The decree of Moscow’s Mayor, → **Jurij Luzhkov**, on the obligatory three-day registration of newcomers has already earned its reputation as fascist. This decree is unconstitutional because it limits the right of citizens to free travel and opens up a broad field of misuse on behalf of the militiamen responsible for its execution. The Moscow government clearly considers this to be the only way of finding a balance in the situation of Moscow’s being the centre where major businesses locate their head-quarters, generating tax revenue for the city, as well as it being the centre of the accumulation of capital and of employment vacancies and massive opportunities.

In realizing this simple idea of his, the author did not expect to receive substantial feedback. Essentially, the project was a success, due to this one brilliantly formulated question. Everything else, people made by themselves: they left several megabytes of forum, they invented sign-stripes for the “newcomers”, they participated; they expressed their support or disapproval.

A project that has chosen hatred for its theme is especially difficult to execute. Because this work has received wide recognition and the leading newspapers have written about it, the author was accused of speculation [Romer 1999] and political ambition. The flow of negative comments, abuse and accusations meted out to the author have lead to Teterin’s frequent refusals to speak in public, especially on TV, and to his expressions of regret at having “got himself into all that”.

On the other hand, he admitted that he exposed an urgent problem, not didactically, not “from above” as in some sort of political declara-

tion, but artistically, allowing the problem to appear by itself, in its own fullness:

Let's, finally, look the truth in the eye: I have merely suggested the topic: the content of the questionnaire was all created by its visitors, according to their needs. I also dislike many of their comments and the general mood of the site. But after a long consideration I decided not to close it down. It is my civil position, if you like. I have come to realize that this problem is far more serious than I, in my naiveté, had foreseen. And I keep this forum open simply for the sake of justice. Yes, yes, this very same justice! People often feel very bad because of Mascaw. This is the truth and they must have an opportunity to say so. [Teterin n.d.]

Vladimir Vladimirovich™

Vladimir → **Vladimirovich™** is a networked resource of literary political satire [Mr.Parker 2005-1]. It is "a textual soap opera" about Vladimir Vladimirovich Putin and the Kremlin inhabitants, a political "comic/soap-opera", "some daily amusing, authorized fables on the evils of the day", the "chronicle of the presidency". Vladimir Vladimirovich™ is the project responsible for reviving the near-moribund genre of topical satire.

Vladimir Vladimirovich™ is the work of → **Maksim Kononenko** (Mr.Parker) and has been published on the net since the year 2002. The site is organized as a news thread. Short stories (around 30 lines) are published practically daily, and sometimes several are published in one day.

The site began as an alternative news system. Because Kononenko mainly builds his story around headline news stories related to the president, visitors are given the opportunity, on a daily basis, to compare the content of the official news with their interpretations of Kononenko's jokes. Mr.Parker specifically takes the rating news and rarely writes on subjects that are not on the front pages [Kononenko 2005]. This work is arranged as an elaborate media project. Accordingly, one can navigate among the short stories, either sequentially, or chronologically.

At the end of May 2005, in Moscow a book was published with a selection of short stories on Vladimir Vladimirovich™ which totaled 50,000 copies. Included are approximately 550 stories and 1,300 commentaries on them, in addition to "the full lists of sacred, working and everyday attributes of Vladimir Vladimirovich™", "the lists of the animals and of the main androids performing State service", all dated from March 2005 and earlier.

The Vladimir Vladimirovich™ project gives rise to much discussion. First, the site can be appreciated by those who share Kononenko's sense of humour, although other visitors would find it senseless at best. In the rating published on the Mail.ru site, the project occupies sixth place in the section "Politics – The state of Russia". Also, in Rambler's portal, it holds the fifth place in the section "Humour". The sheer weight of numbers (the site has approximately 20,000 visitors per day) offers strong support for the idea that this common sense of humour is shared by many.

Secondly, the author himself (a public person, appearing in the TV shows and writing daily in his open LiveJournal) arouses controversy. Kononenko comes under further criticism as his message is misinterpreted by his readers, who seem unable to separate his topical satire from his political views. Critics assail him for his "mildness" towards the President, for his loyalty, for his intolerance of the opposition, for his "revolutionism" and for serving political interests. The forewords to Kononenko's books are written by such well-known → **political technologists** as Gleb Pavlovskij, Stanislav Belkovskij and Marat Gel'man. Kononenko himself says: "And it is really true that I'm very diverse in my 'Vladimir Vladimirovich™', and therefore whatever is written there can satisfy all sides. Everybody will get it there." [Kononenko 2005]

Kononenko, being in the public eye, is sincere about facts that are customary to conceal. For instance, Mr.Parker does not conceal his vanity and searches for his name on the Internet on an almost daily basis [Mr.Parker 2005-2]. Basically,

Kononenko has spent time developing a “bibliography” of writings on himself and his projects, and publishes it in his LiveJournal. This, at least, makes compiling a bibliography for this project an easier task.

Another example of talking openly about things that are considered unethical is even more vivid: Kononenko accepted payment for the right to interfere in editorial policy (although, according to his testimony, that right was never used):

Because I do not have any obligations before anybody as far as Vladimir Vladimirovich™ is concerned I agreed to these conditions. I can work as a watchdog if they pay me well. [Kononenko 2004]

Since he no longer had full editorial control over the Vladimir Vladimirovich™ project, Kononenko stated that, from 2003 to 2004 he regarded the project as no longer his own.

Mr.Parker, as one may surmise, is the sole foundation and shareholder of the limited liability company, “Political Technologies” (as the project is signed below), thinking of himself as the inventor of the new political technologies. The extent of the company’s effectiveness will be shown in time. Currently, “Vladimir Vladimirovich™” is an assemblage of funny short stories. If Kononenko wanted to share his fame and become fundamentally popular, he could have published the stories written by other authors in the style of “Vladimir Vladimirovich™”.

In that case what would be the rules for such texts to follow? The main character is the President; it is to his soul’s movements that the stories are to be dedicated. The secondary personages are the presidential administration, and the leaders of other countries, parties, the Chechen terrorists, the writers and other people. The characters of the short-story must call each other “bro” and address each other without ceremony, but using the full patronymic name, thus parodying the behaviour of the higher ranks of the Soviet party circles, inherited both by the post-Soviet management and by the criminal culture (the full patronymic should be enforced by the use of the criminal, “bro”).



Vladimir Vladimirovich.ru: Cover of the homonymous book designed by Konstantin Borovoj.

The main character is described indulgently: sentimentally, as if he is a child. His feelings are simple and understandable: “he is frightened”, “he feels ill at ease”. He is a serious, vain boy, playing with great pleasure with the wonderful articles of his presidential household, such as the mobile phone with a button in the form of the two-headed golden eagle, the crystal ball predicting the future, a leg of terrorist Basaev and a fairy golden needle of his death etc.

Another way to explain the particularities of the main character’s conduct is to suggest the presence of a personal Martian in his head. Although, according to the texts, the Martian is sitting in the head of any President’s country, all political leaders are in a conspiracy and their public arguments are acted out just for public consumption. Accordingly, all grand public trials and clamorous declarations are nothing more than a fiction previously agreed upon. Those children-Martians are playing mini-football at work, noughts and crosses, watching TV and playing with all the presidential articles at

their whim. The attribute, “Presidential” must be used throughout: “he raised his Presidential eye-brows”, “he knitted his Presidential brow” etc.

In one short story one should try to use the same words as often as possible and in different short-stories, the same staple expressions, for example: “Suddenly an apparatus of the mobile governmental connection began to vibrate in the pocket of his robe”. On the whole, speech must be very simple.

The story is built on the basis of the short plot and should always have a dialogue, through which the action develops. One can start with, “once” and end with a description of the President’s gradual sinking into deep thoughts and emotions:

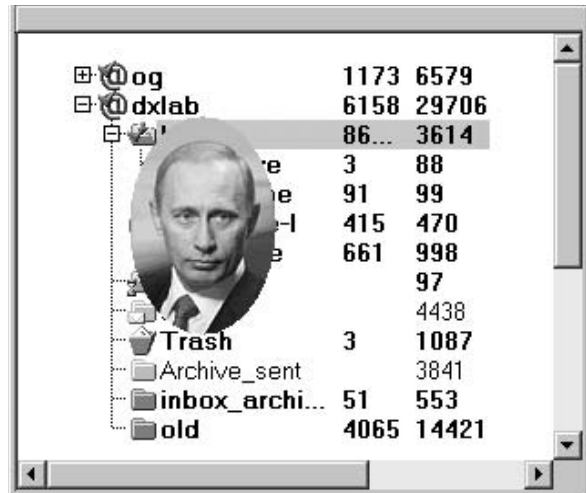
Suddenly an apparatus of the mobile governmental connection began to vibrate in the pocket of his robe. Vladimir Vladimirovich™ put his hand in the pocket, and whence extracted a device with a two-headed golden eagle in place of the keyboard, and pressed its only button.

- Listen, bro, – he suddenly heard an alarmed voice of the Minister of Internal Affairs, Rashid Gumarovich Nurgaliev – you know... here, at the meeting at Messhanskij court the OMON tried to detain Kasparov [At Messhanskij court the trial against JUKOS manager M. Khodorkovskij took place; the OMON are the special forces of the police, and the former chess grandmaster G. Kasparov is planning to participate in the presidential elections 2008,- *the editors*]
- And what? – asked Vladimir Vladimirovich™ with interest.
- The guards didn’t let them – apologizingly answered Rashid Gumarovich.
- Which guards? – Vladimir Vladimirovich™ didn’t quite understand.
- The chess-player’s bodyguards – explained Rashid Gumarovich.
- Vladimir Vladimirovich™ raised his Presidential eye-brows with surprise and slowly put the receiver down.
- What is it coming to [...] – muttered Vladimir Vladimirovich™, – we fail even with one little blood-thirsty regime [...]. [Mr.Parker 2005-1]

What will happen to Vladimir Vladimirovich™ in the year 2008, in the year of the end of Putin’s presidency? Maksim Kononenko plans to send his hero off fishing, where he has always wanted to go, but couldn’t.

The President’s portrait

The President’s portrait is a small programme executed with the file, putin.exe, which installs → **Putin’s** portrait on the computer desktop [Celishev 2001]. The portrait, in an oval frame, may be placed anywhere on the screen and can be put on top of other windows. The project was created in 2001 by the programmer, Vladislav Celishev.



Putin.exe: Offering the President’s portrait for free.

The program is the result of its creator’s work outside Russia: away from the motherland, missing his relatives, Celishev wrote a small programme that allowed the installation of family photos onto the Desktop. The second step was to replace the family photos with the photo of the President. As Celishev sees it, if the state official’s cabinets are decorated with portraits of the President, then their computer desktops should also be adorned with the photos of V.V. Putin. And if in the shops of the State Duma Foyer the portrait of the President (probably a copy) by the infamous artist, Nikas Safronov, is sold for \$US5.000, then why shouldn’t we create virtual portraits of V.V. Putin, free of charge?

The portrait of the President, being an artistic statement that uses software as its material, is, in its thematic orientation, interpretation, mini-

malism and exquisiteness, reminiscent of the similar, satirical project, “Homeland Security Threat Monitor” of Greg Hewgill, which delivers information about the level of the terrorist danger (evaluated by the US government) in colour to the computer desktop [Hewgill n.d.]. Both projects suggest looking at the “Desktop” as a space subject to political arrangement, the space within which access to national and international politics in their most absurd phenomena should be provided.

Udaff.com

What is “Udaff.com” and how does it work?

Udaff.com is a wide and a very popular networked platform. Let’s compare the popularity of this resource with that of the most widely read (according to the Rambler.ru rating) news edition Utro.ru. On April 21, 2005 the Utro.ru site received 195,000 visitors, with Udaff.com logging 36,500; but the requests for pages (on average) totaled 948,000 at Utro.ru, while at Udaff.com it was 603,000 [Rambler 2005; Udaff 2005-1]. Thus, each visitor to Utro.ru has opened (on average) less than 5 pages – in comparison with Udaff.com’s 16.5 pages. The front page of RBC (Rosbusinessconsulting, one of the most popular Russian informational agencies, specializing in the field of business information) was visited by 90,000 visitors. Such numbers give an idea of the scale and success of Udaff.com, which is comparable with that of the rating informational resources.

The pages of Udaff.com carry the copyright tag. The ‘original idea’ of the resource and copyright belong to its creator and administrator, Udav, whose real name remained a mystery for some considerable time. On May 17, 2005 the journal, Newsru.com deprived Udav of his alias and declared him to be Dmitrij Sokolovskij [Newsru.com 2005]. The resource’s domain name was registered on April 2, 2001 (its mirrors, Udaff.

org, Udaff.net, Zaloba.ru and Padonki.ru, were registered later).

Data given in the following paragraphs were gathered with the help of the “Whois” service of the domain names registration system, Joker.com, the Traceroute programme, “view code” in the browser window and the search engine, Yandex.ru. The domain name, “Udaff.com” was registered for the person with a nickname “maloletka” with its snail mail address in Lithuania. For all the administrative, technical and financial questions, users were instructed to contact the person “maloletka”. Also, the name, “Alexey Bestchekov” was given and an address in the town of Troitsk. The site, registered in the name of Bestchekov, publishes the Udaff.com statistics and gives proforg@maloletka.ru as the contact address of the resource’s technical support. Udaff.com and its four mirrors are hosted by the Moscow server of the telecommunication company, Transtelecom. Thus, the “mirrors” are not genuine mirrors, for they lose their main function of replicating the site if it goes offline (if all the “mirrors” are placed on the same server as the original site, then when the server goes down, the site also goes offline and remains inaccessible).

This information is of some interest, taking into account the declared non-normative character of the Udaff.com subculture, the anonymous character of its creator and the numerous pronouncements about Udaff.com being the only free and uncensored place on the net [Udaff 2004-3]. The fact that Udaff.com announces “uncensored hosting” [Udaff n.d.] is also quite interesting, since the anonymity of the resource is imperfect and its freedom excessively vulnerable. The hosting suggested under the address “Udaff.com” is an alternative to the free hosting suggested by, for example, the server Narod.ru. But the former exists only while Udaff.com exists and it is vulnerable, being stored with all its “mirrors” on one server in the Moscow company.

Udav himself, although he (was) partly ‘under cover’, gives interviews to the journalists and

answers visitors' questions, disseminating the following information: 35 years, married, lives in "Piter" (Saint-Petersburg), works as a sound-man on one of the radio-stations [Udaff 2004-6; Vlasov 2001]. Together with his technical assistant, Udav has administered the Udaff.com site for the past five years.

Let's consider the question of the voluntary principles of Udav's activity, the commercial profits accrued by Udaff.com's creator and the potential for future commercialization. On the basis of the site's statistics, one can make the following calculation. Udaff.com registered 1.5 million hits per month in the winter of 2004-2005. If that number is multiplied by 0.0033 (the average click rate is 0.33 per cent), the total number of banner clicks per month is 5000. In April 2005 Udaff.com has three advertisement banners (the fourth may be excluded, since it advertises the Udaff.com site itself). During the summer of 2005 the number of the side banners augmented, – it is, evidently, not a constant. If 1000 banner clicks cost from US\$5 to US\$15 (an approximate figure obtained from the analysis of different advertisements accessible via the sites), by taking an average sum of US\$10 the following result is obtained: 5000 clicks gives US\$50 a month for one banner – the total sum accrued for three banners is therefore US\$150 a month. Using these calculations as a rough guide Udaff's statement that the advertising revenue from the site only just covers the hosting expenses is credible [see Vlasov 2001]. The traffic is about one terabyte, and the price for the hosting of such a resource is comparable to the profits accrued from the site's advertisements.

Udaff.com, as well as a whole range of other networked resources, created its own network subculture, "the Udaff.com community". This culture functions according to the provided general capacities of the site, within the framework of rules, as formulated by Udav and other members of the community. The main avenue of participation in the life of this community and the reproduction of this culture is in the creation and

posting of the "creative works" (or the "kreativs", as the community refers to them) – short stories united by common genre characteristics. "Kreativ" is a loan word from the English "creative". This term appeared as a result of the arrival of capitalism in Russia. It is often used in connection with the labour of the "kreators" (the authors of the texts and of the concepts of the advertising agencies' actions). It is interesting to note that Russian words, such as "tvorec" (virtual "creator") and "tvorchestvo" (creative activity), which are marked as part of the 'high culture', with its characteristic holding on to the traditional values, are not used to designate this activity.

The "kreativs" of the "hujators" (the "dicking guys", as the authors, or the "othas", or "aftors" also call themselves) and their "camentin" (commenting) by the "sVitchers" (switchers, i.e. readers and viewers) are the kernel of Udaff.com's activity. It is there that the participant receives approval ("the otha bu-urns" – the author burns, i.e. touches) or disapproval (the "dickshit").

The Udaff.com subculture was formed 'in the footsteps' of the earlier cultural experiment, the site, Fuck.ru, which ran from 1998 to 2000 and achieved wide resonance on the Russian Internet (the language and the format of the "kreativ" were, to a large extent, invented then and there, and one of its authors received some literary prizes).

Udaff.com is quite a wide resource with great number of subdivisions. These include "polit.sru" ("sru" – I shit; the name parodies the resource of the news-politics → "**Polit.ru**") with notes on and discussion of political matters; "the view from 'a-broad'" (impressions from life and travel abroad), reviews of books, films, other sites, computer games; there are sections on sport and food (to "i-i-t good"). In addition, there are some associated projects: online radio, "the forum of the pussy-lovers", "the process of Aleksej Rafijev", "free-law consulting" and also the stamps, sticky labels and Udaff.com t-shirts (with regular competitions for the best design).

The procedure for participating in Udaff.com is quite homogenous and takes place mainly through posting texts (stories, poems, essays, articles, fairy tales, declarations, news, visitors' notes, comments, reports, letters, reviews) and the commentaries on each of them.

There are also joke-pictures appearing every day on the Udaff.com site: the so called "everyday pictures". Most frequently, these are the Photoshop-edited posters, photos and other appropriated pictures. There is even a section of authors' photography "the world as we see it" and an associated animation site ("pardonki in da flash" - the scumbags in the Flash). Nevertheless, it may be assumed that all these are not central, either to the activity or for the representation of Udaff.com. The materials presented in those sections do not possess the unity of style that is so recognizable in the kreativs and other Udaff.com texts and which, as a result, distinguishes Udaff.com from all other networked communities and subcultures. One of the proofs of a low significance of the visually oriented sections within the structure of the resource is the absence of an archive of the "everyday pictures". Such an archive would allow the user to navigate more comfortably among the pictures, rather than having to use the "back" and "forward" buttons.

In comparison, the kreativs are structured chronologically and under the names of the authors. There is a separate kreativs' comments thread section and the "fucking trash bin", where one sees the kreativs that were rejected by the administrator, Udav. There is also the "trash bin rules". The latter contains the kreativs filtered from the main "trash bin" by authorized participants of the Udaff.com. These two modes of conservation of the kreativs, i.e., allowing them to be saved in the trash bin and published in the selections from the trash bin that remain available for viewing, would appear to be an innovative feature. There is also a section called "shortly about the main" - the reviews of the kreativs.

In one of the early polls (October 2002) carried out by the site's only administrator and editor, several suggestions concerning the structure of the work with the kreativs were put to a vote, such as breaking the mass of texts into "prose", "journalistic pieces" and "poetry", voting for the best kreativ, rating and the creation of a "selected" section containing the best kreativs, the so called "incorruptible ones" [Udaff 2002]. The suggested functions supported by the majority of the participants would have established a system of reward and distinction and assisted in the recognition of the most popular and widely read works. Such an improvement, in its turn, would have allowed the amateur, essentially folklore Udaff.com culture to find its way into official or at least more populous cultural arenas.

In calling the Udaff.com culture 'amateur' and folklore, one has to bear in mind that nowadays it is impossible to really distinguish between → '**amateur**' and 'professional' art. Any work, any creation, the author of which pronounces him- or herself to be an artist, is considered art. Nevertheless the cultural power structures and the institutions are preserved; some works and practices are brought into the public eye, some remain in the shadows. Thus, when the amateur character of the Udaff.com creativity is discussed, the designation, 'amateur' signifies, first, that the majority of its 'aftors' really do not see themselves as writers, and, second, that the Udaff.com literature really does not get into the spotlight.

Certain structural particularities contribute further to the retention of Udaff.com literature within the digital framework, under the category of a networked subculture's amateur creativity. The fact that the declared intention of introducing structural changes into the website has never been carried out can be interpreted in two ways: the result of time constraints, lack of means and motivation on the part of the "owner" or as a conscious choice. The latter presupposes that the community and the communication, the life of the resource as such was considered more important

than bringing its random creative samples “into the spotlights”. Still, not infrequently, Udaff.com members call themselves the “networked” or “counter-cultural (cc) writers” [Udaff 2004-9]. This, of course, contradicts the idea of conscious (by definition) restraint from the public eye.

Certain members of the community, the “af-tors” become recognized Udaff.com authorities: there are the “elders” (old residents), the authorities, the popular authors, the novices – i.e. there is a certain hierarchy built within the community. Udaff.com organizes the → **offline meetings** but similar to many other virtual communities, the Udaff.com community is organized around certain technical decisions, by which many of its particularities are often determined and explained. Those are: the absence of password protected nicknames and registration; the delivery of the information in form of posting and comments thread, without any voting or other text evaluation method through the system of rating. Also, the system of filtration is controlled by only one person – Udav – whose mailbox receives all the information its creators want to publish on the site.

The Udaff.com subculture has its own stylistic and genre particularities, a particular language and a visual symbolism. It also declares a range of ideological principles. Five years on the net plus the previous history (in the form of Fuck.ru) is quite a long life for the virtual community and subculture, which reproduces itself through the generational changes of the Udaff visitors.

The Udaff.com ideology: protest or mainstream?

Can the ideology of Udaff.com be recreated through an analysis of its articles and commentaries, discussions in the forum and other texts? Such an attempt would be a rather artificial construction and even falsification: the users of

the resource are extremely heterogeneous and form contrasting social, age and professional strata whose views strongly differ. The resource reflects the multiplicity of the Udaff.com users’ interests, including political and social interests, and suggests the platforms for the realization of such interests through declarations and discussions. Nonetheless, this community undoubtedly possesses certain elements of subculture ideology. This may be interesting in connection with the attitude of the Udaff.com culture to the mainstream (including the political), on the one hand, and with the previous discussion of the protest nature of Udaff.com, on the other.

The participants in Udaff.com possess a certain kind of “self-consciousness” (real sKumbags, *padonki*) and a system of values presented by a slogan that has been constructed by an analogy with the triad, “sex, drugs and rock-n-roll” – “sex, alcohol, pot” (fuks, votkas and “cones”). The corresponding symbolism is presented visually on the Udaff.com t-shirts and it is also reflected in the language of the resource and in the themes of *kreativs*, which will be discussed in greater detail later on in this work.

The → *padonki* (sKumbags) frequently write of themselves as people with broad views on life, free from all the stereotypes and conventions. Udav writes: “simply, the *padonki* are the people not limited by any tiresome stereotypes. Normal people, who live, fuck, smoke ‘cones’ (pot), read books, watch movies, work, dick-around and they do not make a cult out of any of these. Neither a workaholic, nor a looser nor any damned stoned drug-addict can be a *padonok* by this definition. They simply won’t have broad enough views” [Udaff 2004-7].

The Udaff.coms dislike homosexuals. There is a separate term used by them for to specify this minority: “Achtung!” (German: attention!) It is especially favoured by the “switchers” for labeling those who belong to a “fagot’s kAInd”, be it the aftor of the *kreativ*, be it the main character or some “kUmentator” [Udaff 2005-2].



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490 руб.



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Udav: “The padonki are people not limited by any tiresome stereotypes.”

Marijuana is not legal in Russia and the Udaff.com sex-descriptions frequently verge on the → **pornographic**. Thus the several structural elements of the resource’s ideology are illegal and are certainly excluded from the official culture. But nevertheless, the Udaff.com ideology, in many ways, reflects the masculine and traditional attitude, characteristic of the mainstream culture, although this attitude as such is only partly reflected, represented and reproduced by the official culture.

The term ‘counter-culture’ (cc) is frequently seen on the pages of Udaff.com and some of the Udaff.com participants are certainly strongly inclined to use it. Udav himself has, more than once, used it in his interviews: “in less than a year the Udaff resource has become that which it is today – the major resource of the counter-culture” [cf. Vlasov 2001]. The question of the relation of the Udaff.com culture to the counter-culture has been brought up for the discussion more than once on the site as well as in the press. The Udaff.com members do not have a general opinion on the subject (if one could speak of the general opinion of tens of thousands of people). Moreover, there is an opinion that the Udaff.com ideology belongs to that of the mainstream. To quote: “if culture is the totality of knowledge and skills that allow a man to become an integral part of society, then the counter-culture has to be the totality of knowledge and skills allowing one to effectively resist society. The main question is: the culture of *which* society should be considered as the main one? [...] in my opinion the culture that dominates Udaff.com possesses all the characteristics of the predominant culture of Russian men between the ages of 20 and 40 – i.e. some significant groups of our population. In this sense the Udaff.com culture is mainstream and basic [...] for nothing so popular and so “visited” as this site can be really counter-cultural [...] What you see here is not any fucking counter-culture, it is the real culture of the male population in this country.” [Udaff 2004-5]

Apathy as resistance

Nevertheless, to many of the Udaff.com visitors the creativity and activity on the pages of the site seem to be non-normative protest and in this sense counter-cultural. What are they protesting against? The norms of language, of conduct, of mass media imposed notions. But those are not so much the norms and notions of the traditional society but rather of the capitalist order.

E.g.:

The sKumbags, smart and educated, are trAlYing to proteKt themselves from Korporateeve Kultur. The managers are asked to crack their asses for the sAlke of the firm. You sit all day in some TUF totalitarijAn FrAIMZ. You lven don't have a rAljt to have a bad mOOd at the offiS. Iven if yO fAlvArit Kat was kild by a tramm and yO wife's a hOR, and yO son's a IOOsa. The norms of condAct are tAlking ova yO lmotions. It's sUM fucking fascism. [c.f. Koc, Steshin 2003]

There is a shared notion, accepted by many that defence and protest can only be but passive. Political, cultural passivity contains an inherent protest in that refusal of any activity, any participation in the life of the society, any making of political decisions, any consumption of mass-media production, and also in that hedonism, that contemplation, that creativity about which the aforementioned, Jean Baudrillard was writing.

Thinking of passivity as the main counter strategy to traditional political struggle, in my opinion, reveals how deeply ruling-class ideology has permeated the consciousness even of intellectuals like Baudrillard. Instead of limiting the term 'resistance' to anti-capitalist direct action it should, rather, be broadened substantially to also include all forms of self-expression, or to paraphrase Oskar Negt and Alexander Kluge: "authentic experience" and objection to the "economy of speech" as part of it. [Katy Teubener]

Those are the reactions to the calls for "giving up the resounding speeches" and taking up the fight against the mainstream continuing the cause of "punks" and "beatniks":

Lenin in October knew it. Whom to organize? Where to go? What to fight with? Ja-ja, fuck. I get fucked at my fucking job; at home they take my brains out and then I'll go to Udaff and fight. Where should I take my party dues to?

To gOU at the demo-fucking-stration? The resORs is very naturally fighting with the fucking masskultur, that shits into our brain [...]. We have everything: literature (prose, poetry, criticism), photo-art, painting, music, and all that is counter-cultural, and what other fucking "else" there should be? What does the "after" suggest, struggle? This resOrs is exactly it, OUR STRUGGLE! [Udaff 2004-7]

If it was not for the Internet I wouldn't know what on earth I should do and how I should live? When I remember some of the nasty things I had to lay my hands on and to participate in I really want to see no one except maybe some twenty people. What elections, for fucks sakes! [Udaff 2004-4]

My dearest! As I can see nobody claims here a status of the civic movement for the simple reason that they understand: there is no society and can never be and all movements, sooner or later, become senseless. Here all the emphasis is placed on understanding and realization of the senselessness of everything, as I see it, and the purpose of all this is the search for a little sense in at least some eternal values, such as: an internal smile in the most "posh" situation (high, white collars!), also, fucks, drinks etc, including communication with some like-minded people. [Udaff 2004-2]

A new literary trend: the Udaff.com 'male literature'

Talking of the Udaff.com kreativs, one has to bear in mind that any broad generalization is very relative here, considering the high level of heterogeneity in this collection of literary works, which sometimes can be united only through the fact of the author's belonging to the site. Nevertheless, a certain unity of all those works allows to speak of them as of something whole. Trying to deliver

the sense of relativeness when addressing the creativity of that virtual community, the works of those “dicking guys”, I, more than once, turn to the adverbs “often” and “frequent” for help.

It would be interesting to ask oneself whether the Udaff.com kreativs form some independent literary genre (for there is a self-proclaimed name of such a genre – “kreativ”). If one is to follow the formalistic definition of genre, suggested by Boris Tomashevskij [1996, 206], then genre is a specific “grouping of the devices”. Such a definition was developed by Mikhail Bakhtin, who was talking of the specific “genre essence”, of genre as a means for the artist’s “reclamation” of reality. “The word-artist has to learn to view the reality through the eyes of the genre” [Bakhtin 1979, 332]. Among the predecessors of the Udaff.com tradition, one can mention the poet-criminals (François Villon, Jean Genet), the revolutionary romantics (George Byron), the decadents (Charles Baudelaire, Paul Verlaine) and the erotic writers (Guy de Maupassant). Russian literature is represented by such *personae* as Sergej Dovatov, Venedikt Erofeev, Eduard Limonov, Jurij Mamleev, Sasha Sokolov, Bajan Shirjanov (pseud.: Kirill Vorob’ev), Vladimir Sorokin. Nevertheless, it may be a little too soon to be talking of the kreativ as of an independent genre.

Kreativ is practically always short. It is defined by the technical parameters of its consumption, which have to be online: the webpage, the browser window, the monitor, the mouse. As far as one can see, the kreativs are not intended to be printed out and read in your free time. One can write one’s opinion of the kreativ immediately and the author frequently answers in the comments thread and definitely reads it. Thus, the site has catered for the possibility of immediate feedback. Commentary can be made after several years – this function is still valid.

As the Udaff.com polls show, the majority of visitors to the site expect from the kreativs something they call “the positive” [Udaff 2003-2004]. Judging by the abundance of similar commentar-

ies, a considerable section of the resource users access the site in the mornings in the office before getting down to work, for ‘energizing’.

The kreativs are often dedicated to the declared ideological themes forming the foundations of Udaff.com: the consumption of alcohol and marijuana (the process and the consequences), sexual relations and, generally, the relations between man and woman.

The plot is ever absent, the action develops hastily, sometimes a certain detective or a fantastic line is pursued.

As for the composition, many of the kreativs are built with the help of the following thematic elements: preparation for the party and consumption of alcohol; ‘the drink’ itself, accompanied by a gradual change in level of consciousness or the complete loss of it; periodic memory flashes; sexual relations, frequently non-intimate, either public or group; hangovers that are accompanied by the recollection of the physical and emotional details; the acknowledgement of acts carried out in a state of alcoholic intoxication, the hurried goodbyes to an accidental partner; sorting things out with the beloved, or sorting things out with a rival; the acquaintance with a woman and her seduction; a very quick parting after the first satisfaction; the second meeting with the woman, accompanied by her humiliation and the ‘hero’s’ refusal, etc.

The development of the alcoholic intoxication and its stages, the vision of reality in a changed state of mind, the detailed description and emotional contemplation of this process are continuous with the line of, for example, the longer poem of Venedikt Erofeev *Moscow-Petushki* or the works of Sergej Dovatov. Such an alcoholic, carnival (in Bakhtin’s sense of the word) element has quite a lasting tradition in Russian literature.

The enumerated elements of the composition do not exhaust the range of all themes and devices. Frequently, the kreativs, developing along the traditional lines, come to absurdist endings. In such cases they succeed to the devices of Jurij Mamleev and Vladimir Sorokin.

A range of motives can be identified: the torment of relations with an accidental woman, or with a woman who disappoints; the soul's instability, deep sadness and longing; the conflict between the romanticism of a young girl and a tough, worldly man; unhappy love, the hiding of love; treason.

The story is often narrated from the first person; sometimes it is autobiographical. The portraits of female characters are frequently given; the action often takes place in the city environment – the typical flat, house entrance, staircase, office, club. It happens in our time or in the days of the author's youth.

The style of the *kreativs* is frequently brutal, although certain *kreativs* are philosophical-essay-like and confessional-romantic in their character. There are stylistic elements of the trash literature.

On the linguistic level as well as on the imagistic one, revolutionary-romantic stereotypes constantly appear: The traditional images of the *revolté*, destroying himself with alcohol, hiding away from the world with the help of alcohol and pot; brave and fearless in his attitude to life, capable of experimenting with his own body; the macho-man who needs numerous sexual contacts and a great number of female partners, a 'demonic' character disappointed in life. The → **female images** around him are marked by stupidity, self-imposing love, and love for 'the rich' etc. The brutal descriptions of the corporeal (pornographic descriptions of the sexual acts) are encountered throughout the texts.

The *kreativs* can contain the genre elements of the diary, letters, essays, autobiographies, memoirs and instructions. The narration is a monologue – dialogues very seldom appear.

The language of the *kreativs* and its relation to modern Russian word usage

The language of the *kreativs* is very singular. The *kreativs* are often filled with abundant profanities ('maternyj' language, otherwise known as *mat*, which term shall be used from this point forward)

and are characterized by a purposefully wrong orthography. Such writing is barely a sign of orthographic 'naïveté'; rather it is a demonstration of the acknowledged right to make a mistake. It is only on the surface that the main principle of such orthography would be 'write as hear'. In reality, this principle is far from being meticulously observed and the orthography of the Udaff.coms is rather an orthography of a poor student who does understand that the words are not necessarily written as they are heard and who does remember certain rules but hopelessly confuses them. The orthography of such a pupil is remarkable in its own inconsistency: one word is spelled as it is heard; another with an apparent accidental mistake, coming from carelessness or excessive assiduity; the third one is spelled correctly; the fourth displays all the possible mistakes, including the ones made in the stressed syllable etc. Such an impression is (or should be) produced by the best works of the Udaff.com art.

Moreover, such spelling of some words is intended to communicate an individual pronunciation of the author and the motives of his emotional tinting (e.g. southern pronunciation or colloquial, village-like, contemptuous vocabulary). *Kreativs* that have too many mistakes become unreadable and are heavily criticized by other authors and readers.

One could quote here a parallel maxim of Velimir Khlebnikov, avantgardist poet of the early 20th century: "the misprint is the freedom from the given world". But the comparison with Khlebnikov runs short: because so much more often on all the other – morphological, syntactical, lexical, semantic – levels, the word usage of the Udaff.coms is surprisingly traditional.

The usage of the non-normative vocabulary, *mat* within the 'official' literature, the one which is not intended just for the inner consumption, is quite new. Eduard Limonov, Viktor Erofeev, Vladimir Sorokin, Viktor Pelevin are the authors extensively using *mat* in their work – and none of them began publishing before the 1970s. With the fall of the Soviet Union the non-normative

character of *mat* began to weaken (the Western destruction of the cannon finally invaded the creative process in Russia). Still, one can presume that within the public space the taboo on such a vocabulary as well as on the direct depiction of the genitals will never be terminated.

Mat constitutes quite an independent layer of the Russian language. According to the definition of Aleksandr Plucer-Sarno, the core of *mat* usually amounts to 35 non-derivative units, or, according to a more narrow view, to seven lexemes and their derivatives. The obscene vocabulary, which possesses its own system of taboos, also adjoins here but it does not coincide with *mat* and has a markedly independent lexical nest [Plucer-Sarno 2001, 77-78].

Commenting on the relatively independent character of *mat*, Igor Levshin writes: "The 'mat' in our country owes its vitality to the fact that it can form a practically closed and fully valid separate language. Its bearer, rarely crossing the boundaries of this language, will share his opinions not only on the quality of beer, but on his relations to the material and the ideal worlds as well. With an extremely limited range of "lexical nests" all this is realized through the all-encompassing metonymy." [Levshin 1998]

Vladimir Rudnev discusses the same thing in his introduction to the first volume of the *Dictionary of Russian Mat* by Aleksandr Plucer-Sarno, which is solely dedicated to the word "huj" (dick). Rudnev says: "Every inanimate object can be denoted as 'hujovina' [...]. Every abstract noun can be denoted by the derivatives of the word 'huj' [...]. Every quality or characteristic can be denoted as an adjective 'hujovyj' [...]. The verbs 'hujarit' and 'hujachit' have a universal pronominal meaning in Russia, similar to that of the verb 'to do'." [Plucer-Sarno 2001, 21-22] "Huj" can also denote an animate creature, a man. Thus, one can have a fully valid utterance, compiled solely of the derivatives of one word.

Universality, the tabooed characteristics and, as a consequence, the power of the effect of the Russian *mat* cannot but attract the masters of the

word. The Udaff.coms single out and value their own language. And they often discuss both the *mat* and the tottering orthography:

[...] the usage of *mat* must be:

- well placed
- in the delicately chosen word combinations
- in some new, unheard of form
- exclusively in a friendly conversation, in an anecdote or a joke. [Udaff 2005-3]

E.g. the word "Huj" [...] is the most censored of the words, and still any teacher of the Russian language would admit that

The word Huj is the beginning of the Russian language

The word Huj is the end of the Russian language

The word Huj is the basis and core of the Russian language

The word HUI, finally, is the Russian language. [Udaff 2004-2]

The non-normative character of the literature, produced on Udaff.com is showing itself on the thematic and lexical levels and is fixed in the particularities of orthography.

The Udaff.coms have elaborated their own vocabulary, which contains such terms and expressions as "ftikatel" (switcher) which can be transcribed as "a sVitcher"; or "ftikat" – "to sVitch" – to press (a button), to read, to look; the "hujator" – "the dicking guy" – the author; "hujarit" – "to dick" – to write; "aftor zzhot" – the aftor bUrns – the author has written a good kreativ; "atzkij otzhig" – "the hel's Burn oveRR" – great party; "zachot" – "the paS" (as in exam, but wrongly spelled) – the praise of the text; "nizachot" – "the no-paS" – the criticism of the text; "aftor vipej jadu" – "aftor, drink some poJson" – the criticism of the text; "pelotka" – the female genitals. And others which can be approximately transliterated as follows: "nofucking", "gothic-like", "glamour-like", "guffawing-can't-stop", "rAlt", "throw-it-in-the furnace", "PR-it", "couldn't-rEEd-ET", "Al crAld", etc.

It is interesting to note that from all the creative production of the Udaff.com it is the actual vocabulary, with its original orthography that is penetrating the broad layers of the Russian culture and the Russian language. In June 2005 one

could buy the “guffawing-can’t-stop” logo for the mobile phone: the expressions “rAlt mor”, “pAs” and “Al crAld” are starting to be used in the women’s forums and in the everyday communication of those who apparently have no idea of the origin of these words. There are several publications already on the subject of the penetration of network jargon into the common Russian language [see for example Newsru.com 2005]

Summarizing the analyses of the Udaff.com literature, one can make several conclusions, which would be, in many ways, analogues to those made in the section on ideology. I suggest that the networked, counter-cultural writers are producing ‘literature for men’. These are ‘love-novels for men’, analogues to those belonging to the ‘love-novels for women’ (literature for men and for women are certain literary phenomena: both men and women, of course, can read these two types of literature.) Evidently, this literary niche has not been filled by any adequate literary production, and what’s more, it cannot be filled by such, for reasons of its non-normative lexical and thematic character, so broadly present in the works of the Udaff.com members.

The Udaff.com literature reflects the clichéd and brutal notions held by certain groups of Russian men about themselves and about women. These notions are mainstream, mass-produced and to a certain degree, supported and reproduced by the mass-media and by the market of the glossy editions that give birth to the ingrained cultural myths on the polygamy of men and monogamy of women, on the disease of “spermotoxication” etc.

Thus, one can make a paradoxical conclusion: the Udaff.com literature cannot be widely commercialized, for it is non-normative and obscene, but this does not deprive it of its mainstream masculine qualifications. Non-normative cultural products are, of course, capable of bringing high profits to their creators (similar to pornographic products, they can be consumed in specific venues or on specific occasions). By stating that Udaff.com literature resists broad commercialization I

mean that it can never attain a socially acceptable level as a cultural product, it cannot appear on TV or in media, and thus cannot bring in profits commensurate with attaining mass popularity.

The Udaff.com kreativs cannot exist officially as a form of mass culture production. Elaborating its own style – the clichéd, brutal, reflective of our main modernity’s myths – the Udaff’s literature forms a particular artistic literary trend, ‘male literature’, a trend to which official culture will not admit.

This trend is a protest in its non-normative character. It does not submit to the broad commercialization, is rooted in the wide layers of the population and its basic notions, is carnival in character, temporally destroying the stable order, and finally, it stimulates an independent creativity. In all these traits Udaff.com represents a complex alloy of protest, independence and freedom, with traditionalism, adequacy to modern society and demonstration of its institutional influence on people’s minds. It is very probable that this form of cultural protest is the most commensurate within the context of modern society and its arrangements.

Social portraits. The Udaff.com site for teenagers and the office workers

Who are the Udaff.com visitors in real life? It may be considered a thankless task to try and trace and interpret the connections between virtual *personae* and real people. But even the Udaff.coms like to classify their users. Shown below, is one of the most impressive attempts, met in a traditionally negative spirit by the visitors to the site, who suspected its author of trying to confine the diversity of the site’s users into the rigid frames of classification:

1. A “little sKumbag”. A frequently met site-species. The first stage of the long path of evolution from the man into the Udaff.com visitor. Age 14-16. Hence, still at school. And this is worthy of respect

as such, for all the most disgusting things are done and being done exactly there. The little sKumbags are attracted by the mix of the naked women's pictures and the mat, used by the representatives of the later evolutionary stages.

2. A "typical sKumbag". A more rarely met species, but some very impressive personalities. Age 20 to ... till they get their jobs or marry. They are the bearers of the real sKumbag ideology which is the mixture of fascism, dicking around, punk-style and asceticism.
3. An "office sKumbag". The most widely spread type of the virtual sKumbag. Age ... from the time they are married and go to work till the elderly weakness. Very bitter with life and brutal. Are very sensitive to the theme of fucking and pot, think of themselves as of real sKumbags, hate both the first and the second types. Consider the little sKumbags as children and are envious of the typical ones. [Udaff 2004-11]

The forum, associated with Udaff.com, contains a questionnaire concerning the education (which also gives an idea of the approximate age of the site-visitors) and the professions of the Udaff.coms. In general, the results are supportive of the aforementioned theory: 80% of those who answered the questions have higher education, even post-graduate education or some scientific degrees. Around 12% have special secondary education and around 8% – secondary education, i.e. they are studying or have just finished secondary school or gymnasium.

It may be assumed that for teenage schoolboys, Udaff.com presents the possibility of initiation, of entrance into the world of 'adults', while the adults are visiting the Udaff.com for other reasons, the main one being to 'relax'. In the commentaries there is a great number of direct indications that the Udaff.com visitor is reading the kreativ at work, that the reading of the fresh kreativ is the first thing the user does once he is at the office and switches the computer on, that Udaff.com helps to neutralize the unpleasant collective and the working environment. Here are several examples:

Each morning dJUrIng two mAnths alrEdy i start with sVitching to udafcom.

- I gather all my hElthy cYnYclsm before the fucking hard day.

- After a half-an-hour syrvey it is so much easier to tell all the noisy motherfuckers to fuck off.
- And generally I get an uncomparable pleasure. Respect to you all!

[...] Instead of the professional sites I sit in this one... I have a shitty team at my office. And as they say in *Dog's heart* [a famous story by M. Bulgakov - O.G.] – "Everything is "yes, please, merci", torturing themselves as during the tzarism"... I like politics, but I have nobody to discuss it with, and here I can stop restraining my tongue. I'm tired of the female (at the office) – laundry-dish-washing – so-s-s-iety – I'm sick and tired of it. I like that the rosy girls with all their cocketry do not crawl in here, and you know you are not a "dame" here – the opponents just keep telling you to fuck off – and that I can do that too, in case I disagree [...] – Ha-aaaa. [Udaff 2004-1]

Curiously enough, Udaff.com is not primarily a 'male' resource. A certain percentage of women among the Udaff.com visitors is testified by the commentaries and nickies as well as by the remarks of the Udav and other Udaff.coms: "You have [...] an equal person in front of you, alsOU a sKumbag, although in a skOrt" [Udaff 2004-9].

In Russian mass-media and in modern cultural circles in general, there is an opinion that it is 'the white collars' that form the kernel of the "Leningrad" fans (the musical collective, using abundant *mat* in its texts and, despite its popularity, it is not being aired on radio), as well as of the Udaff.com visitors. Such a theory presupposes that the office managers, tired from their rigidly regulated labour are 'reducing their stress levels' in their free time, consuming the obscene cultural products, communicating within the non-normative collectives and engaging in the 'counter-cultural' creativity. Such a theory does, in general, reduce the modern cultural experience, explaining the artistic processes through economic relations and presenting the human experience as linear and predictable. It was also severely criticized on the pages of the Udaff.com [Udaff 2004-10]. Still, it is not lacking in curiosity and if not in 'truthfulness' than in some kind of 'likelihood', thus helping to obtain a deeper understanding of modern cultural process and of Udaff.com as one of its phenomena. The elements of this theory, their origin and dynamics will now be discussed.

A lyrical digression. **Intelligentsia, intellectuals and white collars in the zero years**

In connection with the 'white-collars' theory, it is important to consider two elements: the → **class** dynamics of Russian society, which are structurally and ideologically reflected by the Udaff.com, and the conceptual pair, 'intelligentsia – intellectuals'. Since I am discussing the opposition of the two scientifically unverifiable concepts, applied to the virtual community, as if it were a group of real persons, I can only present it as a kind of lyrical digression.

It is customary to think that → **intelligentsia** is a specifically Russian cultural phenomenon. But as with many other phenomena of the 'border' [see Uspenskij 2001, 409], West-oriented culture, the concept of intelligentsia was taken from Europe. The term itself comes from Latin and was reactivated during the Enlightenment and the French Revolution; in classical Cicero tradition, the term denoted "understanding", the "ability to understand" [Gasparov 2001]. It was given new content within the Russian context and brought back to Europe, enriched with new meanings and marked as a 'Russian' term or phenomenon.

In the 17th to 18th centuries the term denoted, rather a 'capacity to think' or even of 'being educated' and was used mainly in literature. In the 19th century the meaning of the term was substantially broadened, acquiring new functions; from this time on, the word 'intelligentsia' was applied to the 'people of conscience', not only of intellect. The Russian intelligentsia, first and foremost, embodied spiritual values. Mikhail Gasparov notes: "Intelligentsia feels to be compiled of those people who professionally care that humanity survives as a species" [Gasparov 2001, 94]. Gasparov specifies that the question of being part of intelligentsia is the question of self-determination, of a mission [see also Uspenskij 2001, 403].

There have been many attempts to explain why, first, the intelligentsia took it upon itself to be the

'bearer' of spiritual values, and secondly, why the intelligentsia has consistently been in opposition to power. Boris Uspenskij suggests that the intelligentsia is a product of the Russian orthodox parish tradition: the absence of celibacy gave rise to a situation where the priesthood became a heritable occupation. The elder son or the elder daughter's husband would inherit a parish while all the other progeny, poorly provided for, but well educated, had no place within the Church. Such a situation, as Uspenskij sees it, brought to the formation of a new class of well-educated but cash-strapped people from the Church circles, which became the main source of the intelligentsia [Uspenskij 2001, 403-404]. Uspenskij then notes: the role of the Church in the life of society has weakened since Peter the Great's reforms. And its place has been filled by the intelligentsia.

Mikhail Gasparov supposes that the intelligentsia is the product of the bourgeois epoch, as well as the result of Russian political history. European intellectuals, presenting an opposition to the ruling classes, have been able, from time to time, to turn their criticism into practical deeds, finding their place within the legitimate opposition. In Russia, the system of a two-party parliament was introduced only in 1905 and survived for only 12 years. The Russian intelligentsia was formed as a critical force. But this criticism has always taken place, 'behind the fence': Russia's steady tradition of the impossibility of transforming negativism into practice and into positivism transformed the intelligentsia into a purely critical phenomenon, with the danger of such criticism becoming an end in itself [Gasparov 2001, 93]. Thus, it had to focus on self-perfection, national consciousness, ideals and faith:

[...] intelligentsia, which can be viewed as a kind of cultural élite, cannot by its nature belong to the social élite: it can never be rich [...], can never be at power [...]. Just like the monks, the intelligentsia representatives refuse everything secular and concentrate on the spiritual (although the notions of the "secular" and the "spiritual" acquire the new content). [Uspenskij 2001, 402]

Narodniks, Marxists, scholars of liberal-religious orientation, have all turned to the notion of the intelligentsia. During Soviet times it went through some crucial changes. Marxist-Leninist theory defined the intelligentsia as a layer, existing between the two classes of workers and peasants; much effort was put into exterminating it, changing it or shaping it. But the notion of its own mission remained unchangeable: the intelligentsia was serving the people.

A considerable percentage of educated people after the Revolution of the 1917 either left Russia or died in the course of the Civil war and repressions. From the mid-1930s, Stalin's programme of creation and education of the Soviet intelligentsia was put forward. The growth in the numbers of high school students began. In particular, this growth touched the engineering and the technical professions. The second cycle of the shift to mass technical education began in the mid-1950s. As Lev Gudkov sees it, the necessity for the advancement of the technical potential of the militarized economy demanded growth in the numbers of technical workers and scientists. Between the 1950s and 1970s the number of scientific and technical workers was increasing rapidly. By the end of the 1980s, the Soviet Union had formed an enormous body of scientific specialists (around 1.5 million people), more than 80% of whom worked in Scientific Research Institutes, i.e. they were asked to concentrate on applied science, not on tuition or "pure" university science [Gudkov 2004, 717-725].

In the 1990s a part of this enormous "over-produced" clan of scientists emigrated and continued to work in the countries of Europe and North America; those left behind had to change their qualifications. The prestige of the intelligentsia began to fall rapidly. Their place in the public consciousness became occupied by the new notions of → 'élites' and 'intellectuals'. "Élite is a group of people occupying the high or the key positions in the power structure or the status-hierarchical system of the society" [Gudkov 2004, 692].

The working places of the intelligentsia were destroyed. And the new places in the social structure were taken by far less numerous 'intellectuals'.

The 'intellectuals' – in the modern Russian view of the term – are the highly educated people serving the ruling political and economic relations within the sphere of political communication, political technologies etc. Such understanding comes rather close to Michel Foucault's opinion of the new type of the intellectual – specific intellectual (who came to replace the universal intellectual of the 19th century), whose main features are defined by class position, particular conditions of life and work and a special political role of the truth played in society [Foucault 2002]. In modern Russia, the intellectual is often seen as a specialist at the service of political interests and capital.

Another interpretation suggests that the decomposition of such a community as 'the people' – the main object of the intelligentsia's service – began much later in Russia than in Europe. As a result, the change of function and position of the intelligentsia in the society takes place much later than the analogous processes in European countries.

This lyrical digression is aimed at outlining my unverifiable impressions: that the section of Udaff.com visitors with a higher education and who are aged 22 years and older, spent its childhood in the former USSR and absorbed its system of vital and professional self-definition, which was destroyed later on. Had the historical development taken another turn, if I am allowed to use the conjunctive mood, this particular Udaff.com demographic would be working in the Scientific Research Institutes, within which the 1.5 million scientific workers of the 1980s were gathered. For today's professions and the working occupations of the Udaff.coms a survey has been conducted in the forum [Udaff 2004-8]. One of the so-called 'intellectuals' is the "sKumbag" Linksy, the author of the Udaff.com language, and it was he who organized the PR-campaign of the presi-

dential candidate, Umar Dzhabrailov and worked in Gleb Pavlovskij's polit-technological team [Koc, Steshin 2003]. The majority of today's visitors to Udaff.com are neither intellectuals nor members of the élite. Judging by their education, social position and viewpoints on politics and culture, I suggest that they were brought up to become the intelligentsia of the USSR, and since there is hardly a place for such a class in new Russia, they 'mutated' into 'disillusioned' unsatisfied Udaff.com visitors.

Conclusion

The Udaff.com subculture, possessing a certain number of constitutive elements, such as the commonness of ideology, of conduct in virtual space and of symbolic unity, is in the process of creating its own literary trend, 'literature for men'. The subculture and literature of Udaff.com combine the features of mainstream culture, reflecting and producing the masculine myths, as well as the features of the protest culture. The Udaff.coms' opposition to the mainstream is expressed in the brutalization of reality, in the non-normative thematic of the imaginative and in the chosen linguistic particularities, as well as in the orientation towards creativity and festive resting. In one of his interviews Udav says: "I knowingly did not separate readers from the authors [...]. For us it is a normal situation that our readers become our authors" [c.f. Vlasov 2001]. Moreover, this culture is not threatened by the dangers of broad commercialization.

Udaff.com is a modern example of the development of an artistic trend on the basis of the networked resource. Being administered by one enthusiast only, based on the foundation of a living tradition, flexibly responsive and reflexive to the needs of certain groups of people, Udaff.com is capable, without being a perfect technological system, of participating in the creation and reproduction of an impressive culture and a particular product, demanded by tens of thousands of people.

Translation by Ksenija Golubovich who also contributed very insightful comments on the topic of the intelligentsia as discussed in this article.