

WORKING WITH AFFECTS AND EMOTIONS IN MEDIA ECHOES OF THE 1990S: NOSTALGIA AND RESENTIMENT IN POST-PERESTROIKA RUSSIA

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Media workers focus their efforts on engaging with the often vaguely recognized emotions and affects associated with memories of Russia's transformative 1990s. The memory of this period is currently under the control of the state, which promotes the official discourse of the 1990s as a terrible and difficult time, claiming that it would have been better for Russia if it had never occurred. We regard memories of the 1990s as an important component of contemporary Russian politics and seek to investigate the ways in which affects and emotions, initiated by various media outlets, are managed, aiming to reveal the complex and contradictory nature of this memory. Media outlets provide audiences with media products that discursively process and reflect affective and emotional experiences rooted in the socially traumatic period of the 1990s. We analyze a variety of media products, including a documentary project (*Namedni*), communities associated with nostalgic perceptions of Soviet material culture (online community of amateur architecture enthusiasts *Russkaia khthon' / Russian Chthon*), narratives about the 1990s on social media, and stage performances about the "difficult" 1990s in Russia. These cases illustrate the various ways in which affective work engages with prevalent phenomena in Russia such as resentment, nostalgia, and traumatic feelings associated with memories of the 1990s. This engagement includes discursive reflection on difficult to articulate affects and emotions. We examine various methods by which the affective dimensions of resentment and nostalgia are discursively addressed: the aestheticization of objects associated with complex and negative feelings, the narrative revitalization of past experiences, laugh-based distancing, and the kaleidoscopic perception of the past. In doing so, we show how media outlets engage with users' affects and emotions in constructing memory and managing the affects produced by the traumatic period of post-perestroika in Russia during the 1990s.

Keywords: Russian Media Discourse; Affective Work; Post-Soviet Nostalgia; Resentment

Building on the previous discussion of how media figures engage with the emotional and affective legacy of the perestroika era and the 1990s in Russia (Gruzin 2021;

Mironova and Gorbachev 2021; Robbe 2023; Rysina 2016; Volkova and Khlevniuk 2023), it is essential to highlight the powerful collective memory of this transformative decade. Selected media examples can be characterized as nostalgic, evoking longing for the late Soviet Union and memories of the 1990s. These examples reflect media users' desire to return to and relive past experiences. The memory of the transitional 1990s is obviously traumatic and can evoke a range of affects and emotions, as well as diverse modes of understanding, often articulated through various media platforms. Furthermore, this memory is, in a sense, "mobilized" for various purposes by different media, including state-sponsored outlets, and is typically constructed around the representation of the 1990s as a disastrous period that should never have happened.

Our aim is to analyze specific media products as illustrations of how traumatic affects and emotions persist in people's memories and demand expression. We argue that audiences and users of diverse media projects express and "work through" feelings that are not always clearly recognized and which have emerged and remained as a result of the trauma of rapid societal changes, as discussed by many prominent sociologists. Following Piotr Sztompka, we conceptualize traumatic experiences as reactions to abrupt and sudden changes occurring over a short period, as well as transformations affecting multiple social spheres and fundamental societal values, often accompanied by sharp innovations that contradict tradition and provoke shock (2001:8). Regarding the "trauma of the 1990s" (Gudkov* 2023; Zdravomyslov 2008), it is necessary to distinguish between the genuinely "traumatogenic" characteristics of this decade as summarized in expert interpretations of hundreds of surveys conducted by the Russian Public Opinion Research Center (see VCIOM 2019, 2022) in the late 1990s, on the one hand, and, on the other, the discursive instrumentalization of the "turbulence" of this period, which is integrated into contemporary political processes. Among other identified features, sociologists Lev Gudkov* and Boris Dubin point to the "routinization of negativity," that is, the emergence and consolidation of a chronically negative backdrop of events (common to the majority), a consciousness of grievance, deprivation, helplessness, and the compulsion of existence, as well as "the increased significance of structures of negative identification amid a marked decline in the number of idealistic values, orientations, criteria, and standards" (2001:16).

Then there is the sociological side of countertrauma, which shows that the social fabric is being repaired by helping maladjusted people to reintegrate into society. According to Andrei Zdravomyslov, "trauma is experienced pain—a strong impulse to act, the nature of which is irrational. Traumas arise as a consequence of losses, unfulfilled hopes, and sudden changes to familiar social spaces, and as a memory of losses" (2008:6). He argues that "society finds the strength to overcome trauma . . . primarily through a different composition of social action, which creates the

* Здесь и далее * указывает на то, что отмеченные лица/организации внесены Минюстом РФ в реестр иностранных агентов. (From here on, * indicates that the denoted persons/organizations have been listed in the register of foreign agents by the Ministry of Justice of the Russian Federation.)

social basis for overcoming traumatic consciousness” (10). We would like to emphasize that, in addition to cultural rationalization, the discursive accessibility and circulation of narratives about trauma in culture are of great importance in overcoming trauma of a social origin. We believe that affective work is one way of overcoming the traumatic period and the feelings associated with it, although it is not the only way. Combining the perspectives of Sztompka and Zdravomyslov with the objective characteristics of the 1990s identified by VCIOM sociologists enables us to describe this complex decade in Russia as traumatic. We also highlight the prevailing moods among Russians (Levada-Center* 2021): nostalgia and resentment. These are linked to the trauma of the 1990s and represent reactions to the drastic changes that occurred during this period.

The influence of “media machines” and “media workers” (opinion leaders, bloggers, ordinary users, etc.) manifests itself in complex ways in how media users and their wider audiences process their feelings by expressing them, “consuming” promoted media formats of emotion, and relating them to their own experiences. Often this work occurs in identifiable forms, primarily through different descriptive languages. Analyzing the affective-emotional dimension of media discourse relies on the understanding that these experiences carry significant meanings and descriptive languages (Harris 2024). Therefore, they serve as a research entry point to understand the cultural meanings in which they participate, activate, and create these meanings (Nikunen 2019). Media discourse not only employs strategies to influence feelings (Zappettini et al. 2021:598–599) but also has functions that facilitate their exchange. In this context, online audiences and their influencers share their feelings about current events, often for the purpose of self-expression (Döveling and Konijn 2021; Mackenzie and Alba-Juez 2019). As a result, scholars increasingly recognize the necessity to study “affective-discursive practices” (Wetherell 2015:57), which include a variety of verbal and nonverbal means of experiencing, expressing, and interpreting affects and emotions. Following Arlie Hochschild’s (1979) concept of emotion work, we refer to this as “affective work.” This terminology emphasizes that our media illustrations focus not only on the management of conscious emotions but also on the engagement with the affective aspects of collective experiences that are prevalent in Russian society. We believe that choosing a particular media resource indicates an intention to work with the unexpressed and unspoken feelings associated with a complex historical period.

In this context, we examined the established interpretations of contemporary Russian society where nostalgic sentiments have become deeply rooted (see, e.g., Bagdasaryan and Korol 2020; Gudkov* 2023; Sandomirskaja 2020). A variety of influential figures and Russian media outlets have been observed to actively promote the spread of nostalgic sentiments and an appeal to the past, with the objective of reinforcing existing ideologies. Studies of Russian society predominantly portray it as a society charged with resentment, which can be further described through its lens (see Scheller 1992; Sharafutdinova 2022). Discourses in the public sphere, both external and internal, demonstrate that Russian identity has long been characterized by resentment, which is supported by research portraying Russia as the country of triumphant ressen-

timent (Iampolski 2014; Malinova 2014; Medvedev[§] 2014). The concepts of resentment and nostalgia have their roots in sociocultural narratives and are closely connected to the present circumstances and collective memory and trauma. They also function as affective and emotional mechanisms (Salmela and Capelos 2021) that transform negative emotions into socially acceptable feelings for those who experience them. In this context, it is of interest to examine the manner in which the media capture, shape, and potentially direct the affective reactions and emotions associated with memories of the 1990s. The official discourse characterizes the Soviet era as a period of lost prosperity and the 1990s as a time of significant challenges, difficulties, and transition (Sadowski 2019). The results of sociological surveys indicate a prevailing sense of disappointment with the perestroika period, as well as negative attitudes toward the 1990s and rejection of that particular era. Conversely, the late Soviet era is viewed in a more positive light (VCIOM 2022). Nevertheless, the respondents do not perceive themselves as victims of perestroika and the 1990s. Instead, they recall substantial hopes for the future associated with that period (VCIOM 2019). This study is primarily exploratory in nature, because to understand the process by which memory is constructed in the media and to identify how these feelings are handled is incredibly challenging. It is important to highlight the various potentially competing media discourses about the 1990s, since they reframe social and personal memories in terms of their impact and significance. This has been convincingly demonstrated by Aleida Assmann (2010) using the example of memories of World War II.

AFFECTS AND EMOTIONS IN MEDIA DISCOURSE: EXPRESSION, CONSTRUCTION, TRANSFORMATION

In order to address the conjoined terminology of affect and emotion, it is necessary to consider the clarification provided by the well-known paradigm shifts in research approaches, namely, the affective turn and the emotional turn. The rise of affect as a pivotal concern in the social sciences is a response to the mounting pressure to transcend the dominance of representation and discursive signification. In response to this dynamic, Marie-Luise Angerer (2007) introduces the notion of the “affective dispositive” as a shift away from hermeneutic procedures of meaning interpretation in favor of a more affective recognition. Influenced by philosopher Baruch Spinoza, Brian Massumi defines affect as bodily intensity, or the body’s ability to affect and be affected (2015:25–28). An intense experience of an extreme nature, affect is external to the subject, whereas emotion, according to Massumi, is the internalization of affect, its psychological expression. Should the affect be situated within an unconscious “zone of indefinability” or “zone of uncertainty,” it may be redirected into

[§] Здесь и далее [§] указывает на то, что отмеченные организации/лица внесены в формируемый Росфинмониторингом перечень организаций и физических лиц, в отношении которых имеются сведения об их причастности к экстремистской деятельности или терроризму. (From here on, [§] indicates that the denoted organizations/individuals are included in the list of organizations and individuals, compiled by the Federal Financial Monitoring Service of the Russian Federation, regarding which there is information about their involvement in extremism or terrorism.)

symbolically designated structures as a result of being processed into emotion. Both the experience of affect and the state of being affected entail encountering something performative, namely, an action and a degree of involvement. In contrast to affective theories, emotion theory approaches are more discourse based, involving phenomenological concepts with a focus on subjective perception, action, and the narrativization of action in language (Bondi et al. 2007).

A growing body of literature suggests that emotions can be viewed as forms of discourse and discursive practices (Döveling and Konijn 2021; Mackenzie and Alba-Juez 2019; Nikunen 2019; Wetherell 2015). The concept of emotion as discourse entails a shift in perspective, whereby emotions are no longer regarded as solely internal psychological states, but rather as socially constructed and communicated phenomena. The capacity of media platforms to facilitate rapid and widespread communication provides an ideal environment for the flourishing of emotional discourses. The concept of emotion work put forth by Hochschild (1979) suggests that emotions are managed and performed in accordance with social norms and expectations. This concept has been further developed in the context of social media, where users engage in emotional management by curating their online personas and regulating their emotional expressions in accordance with societal expectations and norms (Marwick and boyd 2011). In social media environments, emotions are expressed and interpreted through linguistic and symbolic systems, including emojis, hashtags, and other visual cues (Ilouz 2007). The latest research has concentrated on the performative aspect of emotions in the context of social media. Users proactively construct narratives around their emotional experiences, sharing narratives, images, and videos that elicit specific emotional responses from their audience (Dean 2010). It is possible to view emotions as forms of discourse, particularly in the context of social media, because they are socially constructed, culturally mediated, and enacted through various discursive practices, including language use, symbolism, and performance. Research on the media sphere acknowledges the shift toward the affective-emotional domain, highlighting the fluid boundary between affects and emotions. Both of these contribute equally to the formation and transmission of collective meanings (Nikunen 2019).

The analytical focus of this study builds on the aforementioned trends. Conceptually, we engage with the notions of affective perception of national history, the architecture of public space, and domestic humor (stand-up) in relation to recent history. The analytical approach that we adopt maintains a critical intent and emphasizes that affects and emotions relate to gaps in available or competing discourses and the limited social opportunities available for the discussion of events with a historically complex and ambivalent perception. The societal work on these events remains incomplete, and competing narratives remain a feature of the discourse. We propose that various media discourses, involving opinion leaders or other active participants, can facilitate work with affects and emotions, encompassing both conscious and partially unconscious experiences. In this study, we introduce an exploratory concept of affective work, drawing an analogy with Hochschild's (1979) notion of emotion work. Affective work entails the description of manifestations, expression, and interpretation of intense feelings that are not clearly articulated.

These feelings may subsequently transform into specific emotions that carry significant social meanings. Affective work can take various forms, which we will describe below, to express memories, articulate affects, and engage with them in specific ways. This concept allows us not only to focus on the discursive engagement with well-known feelings, specifically resentment and nostalgia, but also to understand how attitudes toward official discourses emerge, are sustained, and change based on affective experiences. Researchers typically examine emotions as discursive resources (Mackenzie and Alba-Juez 2019), studying various emotional codes (Loseke 2009) and discursive emotions (Shakhovskii 2019). However, in this case, our objective is to highlight the processing of affects and emotions as a set of diverse ways for their designation, recognition, and articulation, which are influenced by the genre or platform of the media. Media discourses employ cultural representations as rules that can, for example, define the feeling of nostalgia as normal, beautiful, appropriate, or the opposite. People rarely recognize resentment as a cohesive emotion due to its nature as a complex amalgamation of affects, including undesirable feelings of envy, shame, and indignation (Salmela and Capelos 2021). However, during the process of affective work, individuals can frame and label these feelings in terms of existing emotional vocabularies (Harris 2024).

The selection of cases for this article stems from their simultaneously nostalgic and resentment-driven emotional backgrounds, as well as their typicality for the Russian internet segment. Nostalgic online communities, such as Russian Chthon (Russkaia khton'), the journalistic project *Namedni* focusing on Soviet and post-Soviet events, personal recollections and stand-up performances (disseminated via media such as YouTube) about the beginning of perestroika and the 1990s all reflect a deep engagement with past experiences and ways of processing affects and emotions. Each of these examples represents different types of affective work aimed at understanding and making sense of both past and present events while simultaneously coping with affects. Although these are digital discourses, they operate under a specific type of leadership, with media studies referring to its representatives as opinion leaders, influencers, or celebrities (see, e.g., Abidin 2015; Bodrunova 2021). Leaders' personally tinted evaluations influence the audience, evoking a sense of belonging and a desire to share information with others while serving as role models for group identification. In our cases, we present different types of influencers, including a well-known journalist, a celebrity, and anonymous users. Our goal is to demonstrate how traces of affective work are evident in different media genres, reflecting efforts to process people's experience of the 1990s. The choice of media resource and interpretation of its framework and discourse form the basis for affective work. Users may resist or accept the official discourse and may or may not succumb to nostalgia. They may also establish a distance from a complex past and support or weaken feelings associated with resentment, such as shame, disappointment, and resentment. It is often difficult to identify specific audiences in a mediated space, as users often drift through this space, freely expressing themselves in comments and various content. However, we can use our case studies to demonstrate the unique guidelines set by different resources that shape different forms of affective work.

THE AFFECTIVE-EMOTIONAL DYNAMICS OF NOSTALGIA AND RESENTMENT AND THE ANALYSIS OF MEDIA DISCOURSE

Our analysis of the selected cases is based on our prior research into the emotional dynamics of nostalgia and resentment (Simonova 2023). We consider these two complex emotions to be integral to post-Soviet society, resulting from sociocultural changes that have led to collective trauma, which is often not clearly articulated. We recognize that the trauma of sudden social change is intertwined with the mood of the 1990s, a period characterized by a division between winners and losers. For some, this period presented an opportunity, while for others it signaled the collapse of all hopes. These traumatic experiences offer a fresh perspective on the past, prompting us to draw on the insights of experts regarding the role of nostalgia and resentment as prevalent experiences following profound social changes.

Scholars consider resentment an “emotional mechanism” analogous to the psychological defense mechanism, which essentially serves as an affective, unconscious regulation of emotions (Salmela and Capelos 2021). This mechanism transforms initial emotions of shame, powerless anger, envy, resentment, and humiliation, that is, emotions arising in situations marked by increasing social inequality and injustice, into other feelings that place the individual experiencing these painful emotions in a more morally advantageous position, thereby restoring subjectivity. For example, this can manifest as hatred and indignation toward those individuals and groups perceived as responsible for the prevailing situation. At its core, this mechanism represents an *affective* transformation of initial negative emotions into other negative and positive emotions, distinguishing between, on one hand, hatred and hostility toward others and, on the other, pride and joy toward one’s own (see, e.g., Scheff 2000; Szanto 2020). In this context, we focus on the affective dimension of resentment, which originates from the suppression of painful social feelings that typically intensify as a result of the trauma of change, when people experience shocking social transformations in a society where previous social contracts between social groups and the state have broken down. Paths to social mobility are unclear and perceived as unfair by the general public (Rozhdestvenskaya 2019).

We focus on nostalgic media content and emphasize that nostalgia can be intrinsically linked to resentment (Simonova 2023). Nostalgia can serve as a functional emotion (Batcho 2021), especially when connected to individual memory (Boym 2001). However, in the context of deteriorating social circumstances and the spread of collective nostalgia, this feeling fully reveals its affective dimension (Bagdasaryan and Korol 2020; Reynolds 2004; Sandomirskaja 2020). Nostalgia also acts as an affective defense mechanism that typically activates during social changes. In an effort to avoid painful emotions, individuals experience a longing for the past that triggers a search for blame and acute dissatisfaction with the present (Simonova 2023).

These reflections hold significant relevance for contemporary Russian society, where nostalgic sentiments have been established, aided by mass culture, the media sphere, and online communities. These platforms not only brim with nostalgia for Soviet times but also support and fuel this feeling to varying degrees (Simonova

2023). One can metaphorically describe the emotional culture of Russia as driven by nostalgic resentment, where these feelings mutually reinforce each other. In our analysis, media engage with and articulate not so much the feelings of resentment and nostalgia themselves but rather the specific emotions and vague affective experiences associated with them. Affective work within the media space, conducted by both opinion leaders and ordinary users, occurs in various ways shaping these painful affects and transforming them into emotions related to memories. To some extent, this process manages the collective memory of the perestroika period as a difficult and seemingly hopeless time. Rather than articulating feelings of resentment and nostalgia, the media place them in the context of an emotional response to prolonged trauma. Feelings such as anger, resentment, and shame fixate on the traumatic situation, creating an emotional dependence on the person who is the target of the resentment. Is this not the root of painful nostalgia for difficult times, which is nevertheless successfully recreated by nostalgic media?

NOSTALGIA AND RESENTMENT IN THE MEDIA DISCOURSE OF RUSSIAN SOCIETY: ANALYZING EMPIRICAL CASES

THE CASE OF SOCIAL MEDIA: A BAG OF PEARL BARLEY FROM THE 1990S AND THE RIGHT TO SHAME

Journalist Elena Kostyuchenko* wrote a Facebook[§] post in May 2024 about her childhood experience in Yaroslavl' in 1997.¹ At that time, 10-year-old Kostyuchenko* was returning home from music school on a trolleybus when she encountered a woman carrying large bags. The woman spoke to the girl and mentioned that she had brought humanitarian aid. She asked Elena about her hungry and impoverished childhood and handed her one of the bags. As the girl exited the trolleybus, she fell and spilled the pearl barley onto the snow. Kostyuchenko* gathered the dirty grains with her hands, and a man offered to accompany her home. The girl was scared that he might take the barley or rob their apartment, but fortunately her mother was at home.

Kostyuchenko* shared a poignant memory: "Mom! There's pearl barley! But I fell! I spilled it! But I gathered it! It got mixed with the snow.' Mom is silent. She says: 'It's okay. We'll sort it all out.' We spread the barley on a newspaper and carefully put it into a bag, grain by grain. Then we will soak the grains, drain the water, and wash off the snow and dirt. We will boil the barley. We will eat it. This is my most shameful memory. But I should not feel ashamed."² Within less than two days, Kostyuchenko's* original post garnered nearly 4,500 likes. However, criticism also emerged, primarily regarding the accuracy of such an illustration of the late 1990s. The next day, Kostyuchenko* posted on Facebook[§] again: "For me, for my family, and for many people around me, this time represents a period of horror. A familiar, dull,

¹ See also "Geroinia Iuriiia Dudia* napisala pro golodnoe detstvo v 1990-kh. Ee istoriiu razbirauiut na pravdivost'," *Dzen*, May 8, 2024, <https://dzen.ru/a/Zjy7kZ50uRiJBesL>.

² Elena Kostyuchenko*, "1997. Mne bylo 10 let," Facebook[§], May 6, 2024, <https://www.facebook.com/elena.kostyuchenko.7/posts/8014723828572911>.

repulsive horror that yes, one wants to forget. But I remember. Here I must apologize for my memory. Yet I am grateful for it. When you deny my experience and the experiences of those who share their horror, do you want our silence? Our shame? . . . Do you think that if you write 'it never happened,' it will become untrue?"³

This episode of social network life is a kind of ego-document asserting the right to one's own 1990s. Over the past decades, shifting evaluations of the social lessons from the 1990s have swung, thanks to the media's interpretative framework that shapes perceptions of the past, toward a negative assessment of the 1990s as a turbulent era marked by widespread crime, the burdens of economic reforms, wage payments crises, property redistribution, and military conflicts. In the pearl barley episode, the girl has an audience: some sympathetic, such as the woman who shared her food, and some potentially threatening, such as the man who offered to help. The shame she feels is a social reaction to the humiliation of poverty, forcing her to gather groats from dirty snow, and to the breakdown of social ties. In this situation, the 10-year-old girl feels her striking difference. In response to the online audience's doubts, Kostyuchenko* acknowledges that "everyone had a different experience," but highlights the habitual nature of the horror of everyday life and its normalization. This is accompanied by shame about poverty and a desire to pass on this shame and responsibility for what happened to someone else. Kostyuchenko* says, "This is my most shameful memory. But it should not be me who feels ashamed." Hidden behind this last sentence is an implied figure of silence: the addressee, the person who should really feel ashamed. It is because of them that the heroine's mother, a teacher, is forced to wash floors; it is because of them that syringes lie around in stairwells; it is because of them that the girl is starving; and it is because of them that the help of a passer-by is perceived as a potential threat. As it turns out in the discussion of Kostyuchenko's* post, not everyone wants to experience the feelings and emotions that the heroine experienced (some said: "Isn't it cranberry?," "A terrible fairy tale, who would believe it?"). The dynamics of the discussion transform the emotion of shame articulated by Kostyuchenko* into unreliable social and anthropological signs of the era, calling into question the truthfulness of details that undermine trust in the episode. Thus, the moral imperative to identify with the suffering heroine is undermined. If there is any consensus among the discussants, it is in delegating shame to an abstract entity, namely, the Other. The heroine's reaction in her own defense and the authenticity of her experience affirm her right to her own voice: "When you deny my experience and the experience of people who share their horror, do you want us to remain silent?"

Here we identify one of the common strategies of affective work, namely, narrativizing memories of experiences and representing the protagonist's feelings in relation to the events endured. The subjective truth and intensity of the experience

³ Elena Kostyuchenko*, "Stydno byt' nishchei," Facebook[®], May 7, 2024, <https://www.facebook.com/elena.kostyuchenko.7/posts/8020294874682473>.

⁴ *Razvesistaia kliukva* (leafy cranberry) is an idiomatic expression denoting fictions, false stereotypes, or distorted ideas.

affirm the narrator's right to her own version of the 1990s, which is a *revitalization of experience* that allows her to relive shame, yet the audience does not acknowledge this shame and actively avoids it to overcome the trauma of that period.

THE CASE OF CITY RUINS, OR RUSSKAIA KHTON'

Both conceptual branches, that is, theories of emotion and theories of affect, have significantly influenced contemporary urban geography, which relies heavily on mobilized emotions related to the affectively mediated appropriation of urban spaces, engagement, and identity (see Laketa 2016). By selecting the virtual community *Ruskaia khton'*, which has been active on the Russian social network VKontakte since 2020 and has over 8,700 followers currently, as our object of study, we gain access to visual and discursive materials that depict abandoned, ruined, and degraded urban spaces primarily associated with the Soviet era.⁵ The name of the community, *Ruskaia khton'*, evokes archetypal and nostalgic connotations. In contemporary Russian, both the noun *chthon* and the adjective *chthonic* carry associations with darkness, irrationality, chaos.⁶ However, etymologically, they refer to "the fertile power of the earth" and "the indomitable force of the elements," deriving from the modern Greek word *chthōn* (χθών), meaning "earth" or "soil." Like many online communities, the feed of *Ruskaia khton'* consists of posts from members across various cities in Russia, who share photographs⁷ and brief comments that stimulate discussion.

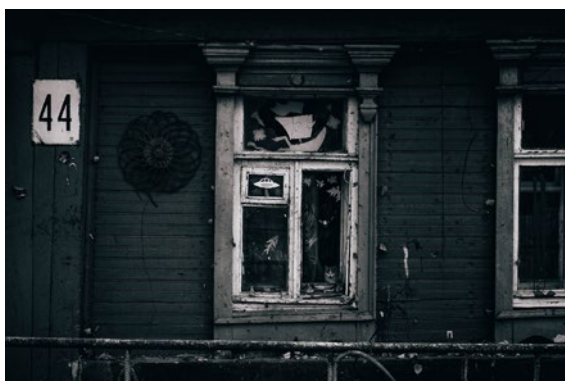


Figure 1. A residential house in a rural settlement, suburb of Nizhniy Novgorod, 2020. Source: https://vk.com/htonicheskoe?z=photo-200087470_457239043%2Fwall-200087470_7.

Framed without perspective or context, the old wooden house in figure 1, characterized by peeling paint and decaying frames, appears devoid of hope. However, the contrast created by a homemade paper ship and a flying saucer, remnants of New

⁵ <https://vk.com/htonicheskoe>.

⁶ Literary critic Lev Danilkin (2007), in a review of the Russian novel *The Truck Factor* (Faktor fury) by Aleksandr Garros and Aleksei Evdokimov, wrote that "Russia produces irrationality, chaos, . . . and chthon . . . ; that is its function."

⁷ We are grateful to Arina Rasputina (Tomashova) for kind permission to use her photographs in the article.

Year's decorations or children's crafts affixed to the windowpane, reveals traces of emotion. The photo is accompanied by a comment from the poster: "Pretend that everything around you is not so scary, but only until the darkness stares you in the eye." The focus on the window adorned with stickers visually supports the author's desire to escape the darkness referenced in the comment.



Figure 2. A country road, June 2022. Source: https://vk.com/htonicheskoe?z=photo-200087470_457239554%2Fwall-200087470_607.

Figure 2 depicts a foggy, hazy morning, featuring a country road lined with shriveled wooden electricity pylons, silhouettes of single-story houses, and an old minibus parked nearby. This blurred representation of a semirural, semiurban suburb conveys a subjective meaning rooted in personal experiences, as revealed in the accompanying commentary: "God, what a vibe. . . I want to go there so badly. I remember the mornings of the day leaving on vacation. You wake up early, and your father is already warming up the car. It's cold outside, and you're in shorts and a T-shirt. The only thing you can have for breakfast is tea—cheap but very tasty. There's a pleasant smell of fresh air outside. You get into the back seat of the car, lie down with your knees bent, and wrap yourself in a blanket. You wait for your parents to get in, and then you drive off."⁸ This nostalgic childhood memory finds its essence in the morning mist, evoking feelings of warmth and longing for simpler times.

⁸ Comment by R K on Russkaia khton', June 12, 2022, https://vk.com/wall-200087470_607.

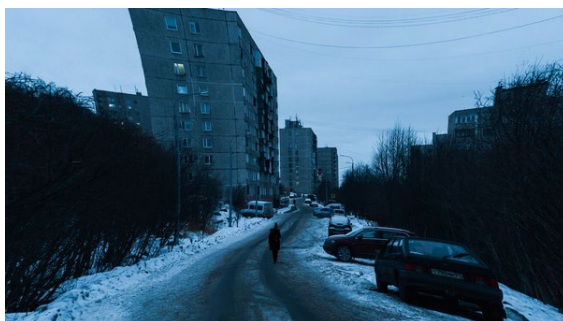


Figure 3. Murmansk, December 2022. Source: https://vk.com/wall-200087470_38.

The nearly monochromatic night image in figure 3 captures the snowy landscape of Murmansk, a northern Russian city. The photo features a disordered, snow-covered road, overshadowed by dark masses of trees and panel houses, along with randomly parked cars. The distinctive character of this seemingly simple image arises from a large multistory building resembling a massive concrete wing, which dominates the surrounding space. Although the landscape appears cold, it is not entirely darkened by the night; a solitary black figure stands on the road, suggesting life within this setting. The photographer comments, “Perfect melancholy in the polar night of Murmansk,” indicating that there is someone present who experiences feelings, even if those feelings are described as melancholic.



Figure 4. The unfinished Khovrino Hospital in Moscow. Source: <https://poraionu.ru/info/hovrinskaya-an-abandoned-hospital>.⁹

Alongside personal visualizations of the past that aestheticize experiences, typical online photographs of industrial ruins also emerge, reflecting elements of the urban landscape that have persisted for decades and are linked to the Soviet heritage. These structures, while deprived of their original purpose, are not entirely abandoned; they are occasionally inhabited. This raises questions about the feelings evoked in unwitting tourists who encounter abandoned industrial zones, unfinished

⁹ Khovrino Hospital was an unfinished building located in the Khovrino district in the north of Moscow. Construction started in 1980 but was halted due to lack of funding and the proximity of groundwater. The building was demolished in 2018.

hospitals, and demolished houses. Urbanist Alice Mah (2010) introduces the concept of industrial ruination, which encompasses both the form and process of deindustrialization as well as neoindustrialization that characterizes urban spaces and shapes urban perception. This concept invites further exploration into how these ruins affect emotional responses and perceptions among those who engage with them.



Figure 5. “Tesla Coils,” Istra, Moscow Oblast. Source: https://welcome.mosreg.ru/stories/zabroshennie_ugolki_podmoskovia.¹⁰

Empty urban spaces, vacant lots, unfinished buildings, and temporary structures contribute to a regime of “unfinished places” in every city. This sense of emptiness is often “associated with loss; it serves as a reminder of the end of a stable past, particularly the conclusion of the Soviet era. While loss in the past could signify potential gain in the future—such as when the clearing of a pond leads to the creation of a recreational area—there is often little urgency to transform these spaces. Consequently, they lose their potential for future revitalization in the eyes of the local population” (Vandyshev et al. 2022:49). This phenomenon highlights the complex interplay between memory, urban development, and community perception. Nevertheless, the technoruins attract curious young people and extreme explorers, who engage with them through the lens of mnemonic imagination. This concept posits that the image of a bygone era is “completed” by the experiences derived from tourist practices. Abandoned buildings serve as sites around which various activities are layered, including graffiti, photography, performances, events, and extreme tourism (Volkova and Khlevniuk 2023). The atmospheric quality of these abandoned structures draws individuals seeking unique aesthetic experiences, while the perceived danger associated with these locations is regarded as a novel and extraordi-

¹⁰ One of the most unusual places near Moscow is the testing facilities of the High Voltage Research Center of the Russian Electrotechnical Institute. Electromagnetic Field Resistance Testing Complex includes the Arkadyev-Marx tower generator (up to 9 million volts), a transformer cascade (up to 3.6 million volts), and a direct current voltage installation. The facility was built in the 1970s to test aircraft lightning protection and to develop high-voltage equipment. It is now in a semiabandoned state. The testing facilities are referred to as “Tesla Coils.” Stalkers, professional photographers, and tourists who want to take spectacular futuristic pictures often come here.

nary adventure (Göbel 2014). This interplay between curiosity and risk contributes to the ongoing fascination with industrial ruins and their role in contemporary urban exploration. Ruination within urban environments serves as a precondition for the emergence of new meanings and practices regarding space usage (Dale and Burrell 2011). A group of Russian sociologists have examined the phenomenon of youth culture in abandoned buildings in the city of Vorkuta (Litvinova et al. 2020). Their study highlights how young people, operating under conditions of limited resources, create unique recreational spaces within these abandoned structures and interact with them and other youth cultures. These vibrant communities establish modes of access to their defended spaces by marking them with distinctive logos and tag colors. Participants in these youth scenes aim to transform abandoned buildings not only by providing light and heat for basic physical comfort but also by cultivating places that foster specific social dynamics and events.

The image of former architectural grandeur, whether it be a ruined noble estate, a water tower, an unfinished factory, or an obsolete and abandoned electrical substation, changes the perception of the reappropriated spaces that new generations associate with their own context. As these spaces encapsulate emotionally diverse experiences, the previous industrial and urban decline undergoes an affective redefinition. Despite this acceptance of the past, the Soviet era is reinterpreted not only through the lens of individual memory but also in relation to collective history and present circumstances. The architectural traces of the past begin to “speak” through various modes of appropriation, as captured by counterculture youth, tourists, or flâneurs in the city. Representations of ruins in the media become a kind of aesthetic resonator, evoking the emotions visitors seek to experience. Therefore, the manifestation and *aestheticization* of these architectural traces are a means of expressing contradictory and unspoken feelings.

THE CASE OF STAND-UP ABOUT THE 1990S: HUMOROUS ELABORATION OF HEAVY MEMORIES OF POST-PERESTROIKA

This section of the article focuses on the discursive distancing, or *defamiliarization*, from a challenging period in Russian social history, specifically the socioeconomic and political transition associated with perestroika, through the medium of laughter. The genre of stand-up comedy, along with the broader category of sociopolitical anecdotes, draws on the ritual and entertainment traditions of Russian laughter culture, known as *balagurstvo* (Likhachev et al. 1984). To *balagurit'* means to tell jokes. Jokes based on widely recognized facts can be delivered in a humorous manner that is cognitively accessible and culturally familiar. This relies on cultural and linguistic competence, as well as background and situational knowledge (Ritter et al. 1971–2007). This interplay between humor and historical context allows for a nuanced exploration of how laughter can serve as a coping mechanism in the face of difficult social realities.

Stand-up as a distinct genre of mass communication encompasses several key characteristics: (1) It represents a public, prepared performance that incorporates elements of improvisation; (2) practitioners of this genre utilize mass media to

broadcast their performances, which are intended for broad audiences; (3) these performances are accessible for reproduction and distribution through electronic platforms at any time and in any location; (4) while the communication typically flows in one direction, from artist to spectator, interactive modes of performance can facilitate dialogical engagement. According to semantic theory, humor within the stand-up genre arises from the interplay of two scripts (frames), namely, the schemas and descriptions of typical properties associated with objects and events depicted in the oral narrative of the performance (Raskin 1985). This linguistic play generates the emotional category of the comic.

A pertinent example is provided by Russian stand-up comedian Stas Starovoytov, born in 1982, who presented a routine about Russia in the 1990s to the public in 2016. This performance illustrates how stand-up comedy not only serves as entertainment but also engages with historical narratives, allowing audiences to reflect on their collective experiences through humor. We would like to analyze the following excerpt from Starovoytov's routine:

It was a hard time. It's on Facebook⁸ now; everyone's put pictures in there. "The '90s, the '90s; don't denigrate that time, it was great." Yeah, it was great because it was childhood. Any childhood is very cool, even the hardest childhood. The harder the childhood, the cooler the memories of it.

For example, I remember the first time we had a Snickers bar at home in the '90s (*laughter*). We split it up. . . We divided it into seven pieces (*laughter*), we drank sweet tea for a week, you know, drank with it. And then I spent a month (*laughter*) sniffing the Snickers wrapper to remember the taste (*laughter*). And I remember it with nostalgia because that was my childhood. But if you think about it, a child sniffing a candy wrapper. It's creepy! That's. . . If you film it, you can show it on CNN in a "No Comments" segment somewhere between Syrian refugees and ISIS⁹ executions, right there.

The most important thing is to look cool in the '90s. People who look normal now remember that the whole country was suffering from a general lack of taste. Remember what the country looked like in the '90s. Crimson jackets, gold chains, guns (*laughter*). The whole country looked like a gypsy camp from a Kusturica film. Hai-hai-hai-hai! (*laughter*) . . .

And people love to have a '90s party. '90s stars, '90s stars, '90s stars everywhere. I would like to take these stars of the '90s, like Shark,¹¹ Hands Up,¹² yes, and take them to the Vagan'kovskoe Cemetery (*laughter*), where the Solntsevskie¹³ are buried, and say: Here are the stars of the '90s, understand? (*laughter*) And then take them to the State Duma and say: Here is the other half of the stars of the '90s, right?

It was just a hard time, and we long for it now. It's so strange because I don't think there's ever been such a longing for hard times. I sincerely doubt that in the '60s people were crazy about '37 (*laughter*). "It was so cool, of course, cool,

¹¹ In the 1990s, Shark was the stage name of disco singer Oksana Pochepa.

¹² Hands Up is a Russian pop music group active in 1993–2006 and 2008–present.

¹³ Solntsevskie is a name of a gang based in the Moscow suburb Solntsevo in the 1990s.

cool." There was always some kind of intrigue, you know, a black car¹⁴ drove up, you thought, for you, not for you? (*laughter*) Cool, interesting. Then it turned out it wasn't for you, and then we all went to a Stolypin wagon,¹⁵ but at least we saw the country, right? (*laughter*) At least like that.

And for me, Russia in the '90s is like a troubled family where the father drinks. Do you know such families? They are filthy, they are dirty, they hang around everywhere, they quarrel, and all the time some of the father's friends hang around in the house, and all the time they take something from the apartment. So I feel very insulted when the Russian people are accused of having some kind of an imperial ambition, that we want to conquer the world. Come on, we're just unhappy kids from the '90s, that's all (*laughter*). That's why everyone was so happy to get Crimea back. No politics. Just imagine, you had nothing in your entire childhood, and then your new father gives you a children's swimming pool (*laughter*). Or does he give you a new pool? He gives you back the one that the old dad drank away (*laughter*).¹⁶

Philosopher Mikhail Bakhtin characterized laughter as a means of escaping the "seriousness of life" (2000:30). In the example above, a stand-up comedian resorts to wordplay, a specific type of speech behavior based on the deliberate violation of comparable registers in speech. He does this by drawing parallels between Snickers candy bars and ISIS⁵ executions; the crimson jackets of the 1990s gangsters and retro parties; black state security cars and neighborly peeping; the Crimean Peninsula, which changed jurisdiction, most recently in 2014, and a child's toy given to the father.

This stand-up routine is characterized by its use of dialogical units or pairs:

1. "The difficult 1990s" as a time of untainted childhood
2. A joyful encounter with Western sweets amid poverty, refuge, and violence
3. The 1990s were cool, but the country suffered from a lack of taste
4. The true stars of the 1990s are criminals, and they lie in the cemetery, but that doesn't stop you from throwing a 1990s-style party
5. It was a time of difficulty and nostalgia
6. Stalin's repressions and a nosy neighbor
7. A country in transition and a dysfunctional family addicted to alcohol
8. Ressentiment toward imperialism and adults acting like children in the 1990s
9. The joy of Crimea's return and a swimming pool gifted by an alcoholic father

¹⁴ *Voronok* (black car) is a slang term for state security vehicles used to transport prisoners and detainees during the Stalinist repressions.

¹⁵ "Stolypin wagon" was a railroad carriage that used to transport peasants and their livestock during resettlement to Siberian and Far Eastern lands in the early twentieth century as part of agrarian reforms under Prime Minister Petr Stolypin, which was later also used for transporting defendants and convicted citizens.

¹⁶ "Stas Starovoitov—O Rossii v 90-kh," TNT, December 18, 2016, video, 02:39, <https://rutube.ru/video/7dc3d81dd36f997f14be8917a91d2b73>.

In this stand-up routine, Starovoytov employs a linguistic technique that uses contrasting frames of different levels and certain rhetorical devices (linguistic means of creating expressiveness) in nine dialogical units.

Allusions to events such as the 1990s, Stalinist repressions, perestroika, and the status of Crimea imply that the reader has the necessary background knowledge to understand them.

Puns, such as those relating to Crimea as a popular image of a seaside resort and as a metaphor for a swimming pool, are based on polysemy (the possession of different meanings by the same word) or homonymy (the possession of similar meanings by different words).

Breaking the fourth wall by addressing the viewer directly is a playful gesture that correlates the conditions of speech with the reality experienced by the viewer (Remember what the country looked like in the '90s? Understand? Right? Do you know families like that?).

Irony is used as a means of conveying double meaning. It correlates what is said and what is meant (i.e., explicature and implicature): "The whole country looked like a gypsy camp from a Kusturica film"; "I would like to take these stars of the '90s, like Shark, Hands Up, yes, and take them to the Vagan'kovskoe Cemetery, where the Solntsevskie are buried, and say: Here are the stars of the '90s. And then take them to the State Duma and say: Here is the other half of the stars of the '90s." Ironic statements imply a subtext reflecting the speaker's true attitude toward what they have said; this subtext is always negative.

Burlesque helps to create irony when describing lofty topics, such as imperial ambitions or world conquest, using a debasing style. One example is the unfortunate children of the 1990s.

Humorous or ironic intent is most often built on the contrast between the country, on the one hand, and family and individual, on the other. As an integral and irrevocable part of life, childhood becomes a resource that the stand-up comedian draws on in an act of perlocution (intentional influence on the addressee): "Don't denigrate that time; it was great because it was childhood." In this case, the comedian takes on an evaluative and summarizing role, offering a pragmatic solution without providing a profound critique of the 1990s. Instead, they attempt to help the audience come to terms with their past.

In this stand-up routine, the language game represents a conscious and purposeful manipulation of linguistic resources, aimed at achieving an estranging comic effect. The discourse serves to navigate feelings of resentment and paradoxical nostalgia for a past that individuals do not wish to revisit. Laughter facilitates the recognition of inferiority, humiliation, and the horror of experiences, while also highlighting the ambiguity of the present. Through irony and humor, the tension and affective charge of contemporary life prompt reflection on the past. The context of this performance is the entertainment industry, which offers consumer practices centered around humorous improvisation. Within this framework, the comedic form of stand-up provides one of the few avenues sanctioned by the public sphere today for articulating and engaging in discursive work that names and addresses the phenomena and events of a complex past.

THE CASE OF NAMEDNI: A MEDIA DOCUMENTARY PROJECT BY LEONID PARFENOV

A prominent example of the mechanisms underlying reflexive mediatized nostalgia and post-memory, as well as the transformation of ressentimental emotions stemming from the heavy legacy of the 1990s, is the acclaimed media project *Namedni. Nasha era* (literally “The other day. Our era”) by renowned Russian journalist Leonid Parfenov. The television program *Namedni*, hosted by Parfenov, aired from the early 1990s until 2003. Its episodes covered events from 1961 to 1999 (the series consists of a total of 43 episodes). *Namedni* enjoyed widespread popularity among viewers, being broadcast weekly during primetime hours. Subsequently, Parfenov published several books based on the television series (with a Moscow publisher Corpus), and *Namedni* itself became a model for informational-entertainment programming in Russia (Gruzin 2021; Mironova and Gorbachev 2021; Rysina 2016).



Figure 6. Cover of Leonid Parfenov's book *Namedni. Nasha era: 1991–2000*

In the making of his media product, Parfenov employs the following linguistic mechanisms: In his broadcasts, he uses proper names and historical terminology to orient the audience in social time and space. He also makes use of contextual quotations from well-known books and slogans as a special gesture of historical and cultural education. To attract and retain the audience's attention, Parfenov uses several lexical devices simultaneously, such as expressive synonymy and colloquial, vernacular, and slang vocabulary. These linguistic mechanisms are reinforced by visual ones, such as a kaleidoscope of images ranging from everyday life to media representations of historical figures, show business personalities, and crime reports. The visualization particularly focuses on the material environment, enabling the television recordings to be transformed into a book with a visual thesaurus of the era. This was undoubtedly done to stir up memories and touch the emotions of viewers and readers.

The project's slogan, reiterated in each episode, is particularly noteworthy: "Events, people, phenomena that defined the way of life. That without which we cannot be imagined, even more difficult to comprehend." This selective approach by the television journalist involves curating a range of events and phenomena from the 1990s for media representation, which are then presented to viewers as a kaleidoscopic reflection of that era, serving as an instructive lesson on what should be remembered from the past along with a proposed interpretation. In this context, historical facts are juxtaposed with elements of folklore, such as anecdotes, proverbs, and references to ideological slogans, often accompanied by their humorous popular usage. This interplay between historical narrative and cultural commentary facilitates a deeper understanding of the complexities surrounding Russia's sociopolitical history during this tumultuous period of the 1990s.

"NAMEDNI: 1990," 30TH EPISODE OF A TV PROGRAM

The topics announced by Parfenov for the episode of the documentary on the 1990s include a wide range of cultural and historical references: McDonald's in Moscow, leggings, television programs *Field of Miracles* and *Television News Service*, the criminal case of the cooperative ANT, the sale of Soviet tanks abroad, Patriarch Aleksii II, Mikhail Gorbachev as the president of the USSR, the documentary *You Can't Live Like That* by Stanislav Govorukhin who addressed the rise of crime, the tragic death of singer Viktor Tsoi in a car accident, the reunification of Germany, the liberation of Nelson Mandela from South African prison, and the lambada dance, among many others. The documentary features various video clips depicting everyday life, city streets, shops, and interviews with politicians and public figures. Parfenov's narrative intertwines diverse elements such as the lambada, hamburgers, and the war in Chechnya to establish vivid milestones that stimulate collective memory and encourage viewers to situate their own past experiences within this framework. This juxtaposition reflects how life unfolded between television news broadcasts and the contents of household refrigerators. Even the inclusion of experts within this fragmented narrative fails to provide a cohesive structure beyond its historical context. This approach underscores the complex interplay between personal memory and broader societal narratives shaped by significant events in recent Russian history.

In general, Parfenov's style can be characterized as infotainment, which is implicitly apolitical and detached. An interesting aspect of media documentaries is the concept of the "two-event narrative," which involves the narration of past events alongside those occurring at the moment of narration (Pronin 2017:20). By addressing both everyday life and high politics, Parfenov acknowledges the social issues arising from the 1990s, such as crime and the disintegration of a once-unified country. This approach liberates previously taboo topics for public discourse while politicizing formerly private subjects, including personal choices about clothing, food, and transportation. According to content analysis of 10 episodes of *Namedni* documentary series conducted by Elizaveta Volkova and Daria Khlevniuk (2023), key aspects of public life during this period are predominantly portrayed in a positive light, highlighting foreign innovations, the flourishing of capital, and the actual restructuring of daily life. Parfenov's work exemplifies how humor and narrative can be employed to engage with complex historical realities while fostering a reflective understanding of the sociopolitical landscape in post-Soviet Russia.

THE NAMEDNI BOOK PROJECT

Originally conceived as a series of documentary television programs, Parfenov's project evolved into a collection of printed publications and in October 2020 transitioned into the format of an internet show titled *NMDNI*.¹⁷ Since 2008, Parfenov has published several books that followed the themes of the TV series,¹⁸ and *Namedni* itself has become a model for informative and entertaining programming in Russia (Gruzin 2021; Mironova and Gorbachev 2021; Rysina 2016). The fourth volume of *Namedni* book focuses on the 1990s, a revolutionary decade marked by significant changes in both the country and its political system.¹⁹ This volume serves as both a guide to the era and a thesaurus of iconic names and events that have emerged in the lexicon of post-perestroika since the 1990s. It includes references to various cultural and historical phenomena, such as the stock exchange and homelessness, singer Zemfira* and Communist Party leader Gennady Zyuganov, the GAZelle line of vehicles and politician Egor Gaidar, Princess Diana and Russia's economic default, Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin and the Chechen War, chanson music alongside Emergencies Ministry head Sergei Shoigu (who later became defense minister), writer Victor Pelevin and Vladimir Putin's political ascent, as well as Baltika beer and Bounty candy bars, writer Boris Akunin[§] and ICQ, the "Macarena" dance, and mobile phones. The 1990s are often referred to as the "dashing decade," notable for its dramatic social changes and diversity of social forms.

¹⁷ Parfenon (@parfenon), YouTube channel, <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCbhMGG0ZievPtK8mzLH5jhQ>.

¹⁸ Toma "Namedni. Nasha era," <https://namednibook.ru/volumes>.

¹⁹ Leonid Parfenov, *Namedni. Nasha era 1991–2000*, Labirint online store, <https://www.labirint.ru/books/652453>.



Figure 7. Photos from the book *Namedni. Nasha era: 1991–2000*

How did readers of Parfenov’s book *Namedni* perceive this representation of the 1990s? To outline the main discursive lines regarding the media product’s portrayal of the 1990s, we will analyze reviews left by readers on the online platform Labirint, which sells Parfenov’s book series *Namedni*. A thorough examination of several hundred mini-reviews revealed a range of evaluative and emotional responses, with notable praise highlighted. Below are typical examples, with emotional assessments emphasized in bold.

Review 1: “A thorough and **heavy** book, both literally (1.8 kg) and figuratively. Extraordinarily rich as the decade itself, varied in subject matter, with excellent print quality. The cover of the book is labeled ‘18+’ for a reason: Some events are accompanied by **explicit** footage, others by photographs of mutilated people. On the one hand, I object to my **unwillingness to confront** even a printed reproduction of the reality that **many people had to live through, not just see**. On the other hand, when I first encountered the book, I felt as if I had been going to a museum but had mistaken the door and ended up in the morgue. It’s **creepy** in places, but, as they say, **‘you can’t take words out of a song.’**”²⁰

Review 2: “An impressive volume about an extremely **difficult and frightening** decade. The contrasts are **overwhelming**. 342 different facts of the time, from tea bags to Chechnya, from Gaidar to *Brother 2*. . . I was 9 years old in 1991; it is still childhood. I bought this book to see and remember how my country lived during those 10 years.”²¹

²⁰ Irina Turina, review of Leonid Parfenov’s *Namedni. Nasha era: 1991–2000*, Labirint online store, December 8, 2018, <https://www.labirint.ru/books/652453>.

²¹ Sadykova Aleksandra, review of Leonid Parfenov’s *Namedni. Nasha era: 1991–2000*, Labirint online store, September 17, 2020, <https://www.labirint.ru/books/652453>.

Review 3: "Would only recommend to those who collect the whole series of books. This book is **the most unpleasant, disgusting, and dirty**. Of course, it was all in the '90s, but the story can be told in different ways. All Parfenov's books are in NTV style, i.e. tinny. There are a lot of photos, not just of corpses, but of corpses in detail, filmed in such a way that everyone gets a thrill out of them."²²

Review 4: "Flipping through the book, **I plunged into those times** (just as I was finishing school, then I had an institute, my first job . . .). The reviewer above writes that on every 5th page of the corpses, Chechnya, etc., **but it was like that** . . . caviar, and crimson jackets, and house explosions . . . and Macarena, and karaoke, and detectives by Marinina, and the [TV] series *Streets of Broken Lights*. I can't believe it was all so long ago, and so recently."²³

Review 5: "1991–2000: our **teenage and younger years**. Of course, **it is very interesting to remember, to discuss, to argue** about this or that event."²⁴

Review 6: "Because of my age, the book simply evokes **NOSTALGIA**. . . . No, not Chechnya, not coup d'état, and other gloomy things, but **cute things** like [chewing gum] inserts, [Walkman] players, and other paraphernalia of children and teenagers of that time."²⁵

Review 7: "If you lived in the Soviet Union at that time, you would spend many **pleasant minutes remembering** your life. If you were born later, you **will feel the atmosphere** in which your parents breathed and perhaps understand them a little better."²⁶

Review 8: "I was an eyewitness to most of the events and facts mentioned in the book. When I read it and relived it all over again, **I experienced a lot of emotions, both positive and not so positive** (still, **it is difficult to call the events of that period joyful**)."²⁷

Review 9: "The Dashing Nineties. The not-so-distant past in reportage format. Subtle **humor. Optimism**. And at the same time **the bitterness of the terrible trag-**

²² Timofeeva Elena Anatol'evna, review of Leonid Parfenov's *Namedni. Nasha era: 1991–2000*, Labirint online store, September 9, 2015, <https://web.archive.org/web/20200909021448/https://www.labirint.ru/reviews/goods/249238>.

²³ Gromova Elena Vasil'evna, review of Leonid Parfenov's *Namedni. Nasha era: 1991–2000*, Labirint online store, October 18, 2010, <https://web.archive.org/web/20200909021448/https://www.labirint.ru/reviews/goods/249238>.

²⁴ Verlgochka, review of Leonid Parfenov's *Namedni. Nasha era: 1991–2000*, Labirint online store, October 30, 2014, <https://web.archive.org/web/20200909021448/https://www.labirint.ru/reviews/goods/249238>.

²⁵ Lerych201, review of Leonid Parfenov's *Namedni. Nasha era: 1991–2000*, Labirint online store, October 10, 2010, <https://web.archive.org/web/20200909021448/https://www.labirint.ru/reviews/goods/249238>.

²⁶ Golikov Vladimir, review of Leonid Parfenov's *Namedni. Nasha era: 1991–2000*, Labirint online store, September 10, 2010, <https://web.archive.org/web/20200909021448/https://www.labirint.ru/reviews/goods/249238>.

²⁷ Dergacheva Mariia, review of Leonid Parfenov's *Namedni. Nasha era: 1991–2000*, Labirint online store, September 10, 2010, <https://web.archive.org/web/20200909021448/https://www.labirint.ru/reviews/goods/249238>.

edies of the crucial nineties. In general, Parfenov is, as always, true to his precise style."²⁸

Review 10: "**A riot of colors**, a mixture of French and Nizhnyi Novgorod—dolce vita in Russian! But all this beauty leaves **a bitter aftertaste**—and it's not Parfenov's fault. You can't take the words out of a song."²⁹

The language of the reviews reveals three distinct groups of evaluations: (1) a portrayal of the 1990s as a harsh, terrible, and dirty time that leaves a bitter aftertaste associated with the tragedies experienced; (2) a recollection of this period as one coinciding with childhood and youth, thereby imbued with affective value; and (3) positive, optimistic emotions reflecting a pleasant material environment. What emerges from this material is an affective trace of strong negative feelings. The overarching assessment of the 1990s is predominantly negative, assessed as the worst decade marked by tragedy and bitterness. This negative appraisal contrasts sharply with the self-sufficient and self-justifying value attributed to childhood and youth. Moreover, aspects of the epoch that are celebrated through nostalgic consumption also elicit positive emotional responses. This interplay illustrates a complex combination of positive and negative emotions, highlighting the ambiguity surrounding assessments of both Soviet and post-Soviet history. The kaleidoscope of recollections presented in this media discourse allows for a departure from simplistic interpretations of the past. In this context, nostalgia and resentment do not serve as foundations for perceiving the present as hopeless; rather, they become subjects of reflection for this media audience.

CONCLUSION

In this article we focus on the affective-emotional dimensions of discourses in contemporary Russian media. By employing a general cultural and sociological approach to the study of emotional content in media discourse, we characterize the mediated social life and reminiscences of the 1990s—a period that holds significant importance for Russians as a transformative time, whose evaluation varies across generations yet is marked by nostalgia through the manifestation of affects and emotions. We propose that the concept of resentment serves as an appropriate category for describing this complex affective-emotional and nostalgic system. We consider resentment as an affective and emotional mechanism that redirects initial affects and emotions, such as shame, impotent anger, envy, resentment, and humiliation, that evolve into a more morally advantageous position in contexts of increasing social inequality and injustice, such as hatred and indignation toward designated enemies or opponents, or even laughter. Resentment encompasses an affective

²⁸ Lelichek, review of Leonid Parfenov's *Namedni. Nasha era: 1991–2000*, Labirint online store, September 6, 2010, <https://web.archive.org/web/20200909021448/https://www.labirint.ru/reviews/goods/249238>.

²⁹ Kuz'ka, review of Leonid Parfenov's *Namedni. Nasha era: 1991–2000*, Labirint online store, September 3, 2010, <https://web.archive.org/web/20200909021448/https://www.labirint.ru/reviews/goods/249238>.

component, namely, the desire to rid oneself of painful emotions, suffering, and distress functioning as an unconscious coping response that shifts individuals into different emotional registers. Various intermediaries, such as social institutions, communities, and media discourses, can participate in this process. We also consider nostalgia as an emotional and affective mechanism that serves as a coping force in the traumatic period of social transformations.

In this context, we used the exploratory concept of affective work as a means of discursive processing and reflection on emotions and affects, which conceptually aligns with and expands upon the ideas of Arlie Hochschild. We observed traces of affective work in the media, and we regard the very selection and use of such traces as evidence of users' and readers' intention to cope with unarticulated affect and emotion through engagement with media and its various genres. Furthermore, we consider this affective work as a part of countertrauma phenomenon (Zdravomyslov 2008), when through the work with feelings people can find the channels to express and partly articulate their experience. Empirically, we presented a series of illustrative cases demonstrating the pragmatics of resentment and nostalgia. Based on this analysis, we identified a range of strategies influenced by the genre of the media resource, namely, revitalization of the past in the narrative episodes in social media, aestheticization through photographs of abandoned yet emotionally resonant places, comedic estrangement as a production of humor in stand-up performances, and kaleidoscoping as a method for producing media products that ambivalently compress the era into a kaleidoscope of numerous experienced events, images, and faces. This multifaceted approach allows for a deeper understanding of how affective work operates within contemporary media narratives, reflecting both individual and collective emotional responses to historical contexts. By examining these strategies, we can better comprehend the complex interplay between media representations and the emotional landscapes they evoke, particularly in relation to the nostalgic reflections on the 1990s in Russia.

This form of managing affects and emotions involves the identification, naming, and recognition of emotions, as well as compensatory work with their meanings in accordance with specific rules, norms, and boundaries within the media context. The selection of cases discussed in this article is influenced by their simultaneously nostalgic and resentimental emotional backdrop, which is characteristic of the Russian segment of the internet. These cases include testimonies of the past on social media, nostalgic online communities of amateur architecture enthusiasts (such as Russian Chthon), the journalistic project *Namedni*, which covers Soviet and post-Soviet events, and media stand-up performances reflecting on the onset of the 1990s. All these examples are infused with reflections on the past and approaches to dealing with emotional experiences. They represent various types of affective work, often not fully conscious in their methods yet clearly aimed at estranging and making sense of both past and present experiences while simultaneously coping with them. Therefore, the complex system of media discourse contains different forms of affective work that illustrate the desire to cope with the trauma (Lindquist 2009) associated with memories of the tumultuous 1990s.

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РАБОТА С АФФЕКТАМИ И ЭМОЦИЯМИ В МЕДИЙНОМ ЭХО О 1990-Х: НОСТАЛЬГИЯ И РЕСЕНТИМЕНТ В ПОСТПЕРЕСТРОЕЧНОЙ РОССИИ

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Медиа направляют усилия на работу с существующими и зачастую лишь смутно осознаваемыми эмоциями и аффектами, связанными с памятью о переломных 1990-х годах в России. Этот период в настоящее время находится под контролем государства, поддерживающего официальный дискурс о 1990-х как о совершенно ужасном и тяжелом времени, которого словно лучше и не было бы вовсе. Авторы настоящей статьи рассматривают память о 1990-х как важную составляющую современной российской политической повестки и стремятся изучить способы управления аффектами и эмоциями, инициируемыми различными медиаресурсами, чтобы выявить сложный и противоречивый характер этой памяти. Медиамшины предлагают аудитории медиапродукты, в которых аффективный и эмоциональный опыт, укорененный в социально-травматичном периоде 1990-х, подвергается дискурсивной переработке и рефлексии. Авторы анализируют различные медиапродукты, включая документальный проект («Намедни»), сообщества, связанные с ностальгическим восприятием советской материальной культуры (например, «Русская хтонь»), нарративы о 1990-х в социальных медиа, а также стендап о «трудных 1990-х» в России. Эти кейсы иллюстрируют различные способы аффективной работы с распространенными в России чувствами resentment, ностальгии и связанными с памятью о 1990-х травматическими переживаниями, включая дискурсивную рефлексию по поводу аффектов и эмоций, трудно поддающихся выражению. Авторы статьи рассматривают следующие способы дискурсивной проработки аффективных аспектов resentment и ностальгии: эстетизацию объектов сложных и негативных чувств, нарративную ревитализацию прошлого опыта, отстранение посредством смеха и калейдоскопическое восприятие прошлого. В результате демонстрируется, как медиа работают с аффектами и эмоциями пользователей в процессе конструирования памяти о тяжелом постперестроечном периоде в России 1990-х годов.

Ключевые слова: российский медиадискурс; аффективная работа; постсоветская ностальгия; resentment