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The Phenomenon of Freakishness in Russian Popular Music: Concerning the Study of the Problem*

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Abstract. The article is devoted to the phenomenon of freakishness in popular music in Russia — as a rule, a conscious modeling of eccentric behavior in popular music on the part of various types of performers (starting from the late 1980s). The interest towards freaks in popular music is stipulated by the artistic manifestation of a number of colorful and provocative characters, the perception of whom is conducive towards the cognition of profound processes taking place in Russian culture (as a part of world culture). A positive perception of freakishness proves the total legalization and emancipation of what was previously perceived as unhealthy, eccentric, or ugly, which is presently taking place not only in Russia, but also in other countries. At the same time, freakishness in popular music may serve as a solution of the important social aims of the loosening-up of personality, the departure from the conditions of supra-civilization, supra-glossiness, as well as the pressure of social morality and social standards.

The highlight of the movement of freaks in Russian popular music in the 1990s became a sign of the post-perestroika era and the values of the disorientation of Russian society. The emergence of abnormal, marginal phenomena, the violation of previous prohibitions, the wish to feel the edge, the limit manifested itself in the work of pseudo-freakish characters (Zhanna Aguzarova, Vitas, Shura). The demand of originality, the popularity of the new heroes — the representatives of creative industries, has provoked the generation of yet more unusual images and manners of performance. Total freakishness, the promotion of abnormality, non-standard behavior and even pathologies, the aspiration towards provocative behavior and the search for continuously new forms of artistic “shocking” of broad auditorium testifies of the transformation of many aesthetic norms, of the fatigue, the loss of faith in culture and progress, of the yearning for further searches for

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the “boundaries” of the normal. The author observes in conclusion that the intensifying or abating presence of freakish heroes, the expansion or, on the other hand, the narrowing of the zone of their influence and involvement into the cultural space of contemporaneity bears witness of processes the comprehension of which makes it possible to catch hold of certain tendencies in the social, spiritual life of society, which, obviously, merits further research.

Keywords: Russian popular music, post-culture, mass music, pop, freaks, pseudo freaks, made freaks

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Искусство эстрады

Научная статья

Феномен фриковости на российской эстраде: к изучению проблемы**

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Аннотация. Статья посвящена явлению эстрадной фриковости в России — как правило, осознанному моделированию чудаковатого сценического поведения целого ряда исполнителей (начиная с конца 80-х годов прошлого столетия). Интерес к фрикам на эстраде обусловлен творчеством множества колоритных и эпатажных персонажей, восприятие которых способствует осмыслению глубинных процессов, протекающих в российской (как части мировой) культуре. Позитивное восприятие фриковости доказывает полную легализацию и эмансипацию прежде нездорового, чудаковатого, уродливого, что происходит не только в России, но и в других странах. Одновременно фриковость на эстраде может служить решению важных социальных задач раскрепощения личности, ухода от условий сверхцивилизации, сверхглянца, давления общественной морали и социальных стандартов.

Расцвет фриков на российской эстраде в 1990-е стал знаком постперестроечной эпохи и ценностной дезориентации российского общества. Выход наружу аномальных, маргинальных явлений, нарушение прежних запретов, желание почувствовать край, предел проявлялся в творчестве псевдо-фриковых персонажей (Жанна Агузарова, Витас, Шура). Спрос на оригинальность, популярность новых героев — представителей креативных индустрий — провоцировал рождение всё более необычных имиджей и исполнительских манер. Тотальная

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фриковость, пропаганда аномальности, нестандартности и даже патологий, стремление эпатировать и искать всё новые формы художественных «потрясений» широкой аудитории свидетельствуют о трансформации многих эстетических норм, об усталости, утрате веры в культуру и прогресс, о жажде дальнейших поисков «границ» нормального. Автор отмечает в заключение, что усиливающееся или спадающее присутствие фриковых героев, расширение и, напротив, сужение зоны их влияния, вовлечения в культурное пространство современности свидетельствуют о процессах, осмысление которых позволяет улавливать определённые тенденции в социальной, духовной жизни общества, что, разумеется, заслуживает дальнейшего исследования.

Ключевые слова: российская эстрада, посткультура, массовая музыка, эстрада, фрики, псевдофрики, made freaks

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The discussion of the theme of freaks, which permeated Russian popular music in the 1990s, evokes the necessity not merely of looking at the phenomenon of freakishness from the positions of many (at times strange) innovations in cultural life which emerged after the dissolution of the state of the USSR, but also of entering it into the broader context of the post-cultural stage of development of Western civilization. When discussing the phenomena of the postmodern and post-culture, researchers speak about a serious transformation of the aesthetical paradigm and the radical shifts of understanding the artistic value of art,¹ the shattering and dismantling of culture as a certain powerful integrality; the dismantling

of the Temple. As Victor and Liudmila Bychkov write, “There already are certain new figures and figurants bustling about on its ruins. Something is being assembled, but beyond the clouds of dust from the crumbling sanctuaries it is still not possible to understand almost anything intelligible.”² The thesis about the end of artistic figurativeness is being seriously discussed: “If realism is ‘the truth about the truth,’ and surrealism is ‘falsehood about the truth,’ then postmodernism is ‘the truth about falsehood.’”³ The concepts of the horrifying, the abominable and the depressive are subjected to deep reflection (it suffices to name Yulia Kristeva’s work *Sila uzhasa. Esse ob otvrashchenii* [*The Power of Horror. An Essay about Disgust*],

¹ The definition of the aesthetics of post-culture as non-classics is symptomatic. “Non-classics brings into the topical sphere of the aesthetical (or near-aesthetical) realm a number of notions the greater part of which in classical aesthetics were not only marginal, but, as a rule, were not brought into the field of aesthetics at all. <...> Foremost, among these, we can indicate on such ones as the labyrinth, absurdity, everyday reality, corporeality, cruelty, shock, the thing (thingness), matter, simulacra, artefacts, eclecticism, gesture, intertext, hypertext, deconstruction and others” (see: Bychkov V. V. Parakategorii nonklassiki [The Paracategories of Nonclassics]. *Esteticheskaya aura bytiya* [*The Aesthetic Aura of Being*]. Moscow: MBA, 2010. P. 682).

² Bychkov V. V., Bychkova L. S. XX vek: predel'nye metamorfozy kul'tury [The 20th Century: Extreme Metamorphoses of Culture]. *Polygnosis*. 2000. No. 3. P. 82.

³ Man'kovskaya N. B. *Estetika postmodernizma* [*The Aesthetics of Postmodernism*]. St. Petersburg: Aleteiya. 2000. P. 61.

1982). The matter of reflections over the events of the turn of the millennia and the present days is complicated by attempts of sensing the specificity of Russian culture and the peripetiae of the archeo-modern culture, by means of which, according to Alexander Dugin, "...Russian society has persistently and consistently sabotaged the Western European destiny, deriding or turning all the possible processes of modernization into parody and deformity."⁴ At another point, Mark Lipovetsky, contemplating on the singularity of Russian postmodernism, indicates at the fact that "postmodernism in the context of the *Russian cultural* paradigm appears as an encroachment on its paramount values: Meaning, Ideal, Humaneness, Spirituality — and on the Russian Tradition itself as such."⁵

Many positions of the post-cultural art space have found their reflection in the artistic activities of the representatives of mass popular music. The latter, in our opinion, is a brilliant demonstrator of the existent cultural processes, as a rule, ejecting the most hypertrophied forms of the paradoxical, the ugly, the marginal and the ironic. One of the specific features is presented in the emancipation of the kitschy,

legalization and even the exaltation of the sickly and the unusual, which has found its expression in the efflorescence of the creative activities of freaks (or, more precisely, the pseudo-freaks, considering their conscious modeling of this image). Our goal lies in examining them. Let us turn our attention to the phenomenon of freakishness in popular culture, concentrating primarily on the personalities of Russian popular music which have firmly inscribed themselves into its history as the result of the unusual content of the songs, the extraordinary image and the unique performance styles.

The history of the freaks stems in its roots to the distant past and includes persona who were so different from each other, that they fit into a single notional field with great difficulty. The term itself has substantially expanded itself during the course of centuries, absorbing the characteristic features of the unusualness (abnormality) of the physical, psychic and intellectual manifestations of the human being.⁶ At the present time, an important nuance appears upon discussion of freaks (i.e., freak-singers, freak-artists): it is the notion of "made freaks" (or artificial freaks), whose behavior is consciously simulated and provocative.⁷ This new

⁴ Dugin A. G. *Arkheomodern* [*The Archeomodern*]. Moscow: Arktogetya, 2011. P. 81.

⁵ Lipovetsky M. N. *Paralogii: Transformatsii (post)modernistskogo diskursa v russkoi kul'ture 1920–2000-kh godov* [*Paralogies: Transformations of the (Post)Modernist Discourse in Russian Culture from the 1920s to the 2000s*]. Moscow: Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie, 2008, pp. 4–5.

⁶ In *Webster's New International English Dictionary* we find the following definition of the word "freak": extraordinary or supernatural creature, a sudden apparently causeless turn of the mind, an odd, unexpected, or seemingly capricious action or event, something markedly abnormal mentally or physically especially to the point of shocking usual expectations, an ardent enthusiast, one who uses illicit drugs, hippie, to behave irrationally or unconventionally under the influence of drugs, to lose one's composure. See: *Webster's New International English Dictionary*. 2012. URL: <https://slovar-vocab.com/english/websters-international-vocab/freak-8677674.html> (accessed: 25.08.2023).

⁷ Dzhenenko O. V. Model' frika (made freak) kak chuzhogo/drugogo [Made Freak as the Outsider / the Other]. *Istoricheskie, filosofskie, politicheskie i yuridicheskie nauki, kul'turologiya i iskusstvovedenie. Voprosy teorii i praktiki* [*The Historical, Philosophical, Political and Juristic Disciplines, Culturology and Art Studies. Questions of Theory and Practice*]. 2017. No. 12 (86): in 5 Vols. Vol. 5, pp. 68–71.

“stroke” makes it possible to understand why is it that midgets and hunchbacks (servants and jesters) existent in many European courts, starting from the Middle Ages, the artificially disfigured victims of semi-mythical Comprachicos rhapsodized by Victor Hugo in his novel *L’homme qui rit*, the artists from the American freak shows (shows of deformed people) of the next-to-last century have presented themselves, albeit, with difficulty, in line with the provocative stars of contemporaneity, such as Marilyn Manson and Lady Gaga, Sergei Zverev and Zhanna Aguzarova, i.e., everybody who in our days can be found by the internet search browsers, if one types in the word “freak.”

At all times, the ugly and the excessively nonstandard has attracted people from different social strata, whether they were the farfetched diversions of the high-born or the vulgar areal shows beloved by the plebs. Whether leisure time or entertainment, derision or abuse — the purposes of freaks in society could be varied. Also varied were and have remained to be the criteria according to which various characters have been acclaimed as freaks.⁸ Intrinsically new in our days has become the transformation of freaks into a subculture manifesting itself quite vividly — one of the multitude legally fitting into the contemporary cultural space.

The reasons for this can be found, on the one hand, in the worldwide mega-tendencies (or mega-trends) connected with the overall traits of post-culture, postmodernism and cultural dysfunction and, on the other hand, it is possible to speak particularly about the Russian realities.

In the first case, what is meant here are the symptoms of the post-rational condition of modernity with its crisis of faith in progress in culture and in culture as progress, its comprehension of culture as a lack of freedom, a prison, excessive over-organization, and “stereotypes of pop-consciousness.” [1, p. 79] Liudmila Zubanova writes: “Subcultural movements identified with the idea of rebellion against the traditionally accepted order of values, absurdist views as a declaration of a loss of meaning, chaosology as a reflection of the predominating entropy — all of these are precise symptoms of the erosion of a stable-rational understanding of culture.”⁹

Rebellious moods against supra-civilization and supra-glossiness have been allowed to be expressed when turning to any forms of precipitation of norms. Thereby, contemplating about the freaks of the rock avant-garde of the 1960s and 1970s, Jay Keister indicates at the aggressive visual aesthetics and sound peculiarities (chaotic

⁸ “Why freaks?” — is how Dustin Kidd inquires, observing that this term of offense has never pertained to any concrete group. “Gay children were called freaks due to their sexuality. Christians were called freaks because of their faith. Artists are called freaks for their self-expression. People with limited abilities are labeled as freaks because of the unique qualities of their bodies or minds. Smart people have been called freaks because of their high IQ. Any person can be called a freak” (See: Kidd D. *Pop Culture Freaks: Identity, Mass Media, and Society*. Boulder: Westview Press, 2014. DOI: 10.4324/9780429493287). It is obvious that the person labeled as a freak is poorly socialized to be a member of the community. This is an accusation against an individual aim, but at the same time an indication that our mechanisms of socialization are suspicious.

⁹ Zubanova L. B. *Sovremennaya kul'tura v postklassicheskikh kontseptsyakh i aktual'nykh sotsiokul'turnykh trendakh* [Contemporary Culture in Post-classical Conceptions and Relevant Sociocultural Trends]. *Vestnik Chelyabinskoi gosudarstvennoi akademii kul'tury i iskusstv = Bulletin of the Chelyabinsk State Academy of Culture and the Arts*. 2013. No. 1 (33). P. 49.

sounds, “insane panic”), meaningless texts and amateurish musicality (virtually, non-professionalism and lack of competency on the part of the performers), arbitrariness of form rejecting the established perceptions of the structure of song (he narrows down concisely all the characteristic features of freak rock music to three notions: anarchy, absurd and dilettantism).¹⁰ Keister includes in this freakish avant-garde the artistic experiments of the hippies and the artists of the proto-punk (the album *Freak Out!* released by Frank Zappa and the group THE MOTHERS OF INVENTION), the psychedelic groups from the 1960s (VELVET UNDERGROUND), as well as John Lennon’s and Yoko Ono’s collaborative work (*Unfinished Music No. 1: Two Virgins*, 1968), fitting their creativity into the artistic tradition of madness.

Or, for example, analyzing the specificity of Fresh Kid Ice (rapper of Asian-American descent, Christopher Wong Won), Roderick N. Labrador gives notice that “the black Chinese” owes his success to the fanciful mixture of abnormal behavior, racial and ethnical unusualness and an effective demonstration of masculinity by means of rudeness and ostentation of one’s male power (which demonstrated a direct challenge to the stereotype of the asexual Asian-American man). “First and foremost, his freakiness is about being sexually deviant and hedonistic. He shows off his shameless kinkiness, wild and excessive heterosexual desires, and promiscuity.” [2, p. 477] Affronting the established social

standards and social morals, *Fresh Kid Ice* has liberated itself from the complex of the “Chinese” character and that of “the eternal foreigner,” at the same time, distancing itself from this cliché and proving that it presents a different type of “Asian American.”

While for some societies freakishness presents a long-time formed norm (such as, for instance, the English type of eccentricity, manifesting itself in the opulently flourishing subcultures of punks, goths and skinheads), for post-Soviet society the manifestation of freakishness has become quite an acute phenomenon: it formed a reaction to decades of certain ideological notions and standards of cultural polity. The incredible flourishing of freaks in the Russian pop music scene took place in the 1990s — the epoch of the post-perestroika change of the vector of the development of our society towards Western values (market economy, various freedoms and rights, multiculturalism) — all of these constituent parts of modern culture which accompanied, among others, the shattering of the Soviet ideology. The period labeled in the lay culture as the “heady nineties” is characterized by the disclosure of numerous abnormal, previously prohibited, marginal phenomena.¹¹ The state of “forsakenness” of the citizens of the post-Soviet state generated a new outburst of youth rebellion, which manifested itself in the bulging out of the ego, violation of taboos, and “grotesque conceptions of the body.” [3] The dethronement of the previous values and cultural canons impacted, among other things, the emergence of numerous quasi-

¹⁰ Keister J. “The Long Freak Out”: Unfinished Music and Countercultural Madness in 1960s and 1970s Avant-Garde Rock. *Volume!* 2012. Vol. 9, No. 2. DOI: 10.4000/volume.3413

¹¹ Let us name among them the preaching of coming out of the closet (the process of open acceptance of personality in its pertaining to a sexual or gender minority), asocial behavior, and interest in the mutational processes in the human being.

freak characters: a “fighting woman” with a henpecked husband in the manner of Sancho Panza (the cabaret duo AKADEMIYA), the masculine woman Verka Serdyuchka [“Vera the Meanie”], who was seen as being comical due to the hypertrophy of the secondary attributes of her sex, the toothless sweet-voiced Shura, and the “amphibian man” Vitas. These and many other types of freaks assumed honorary positions, having combined together the freakishness of their outward appearances, their behavior on stage and offstage¹² and, what interests us the most, the vividly expressed singularity of their artistic manners. The lust for a different life, entertainment and pleasures collided with the wish to scent the boundary, to cast away human decency and formalism, to permit raving and lawlessness, and to flee common sense. The distraction from problems, the foreboding of global changes, and the ultimate perspectives were perceived to be polar opposites of each other — all of these generated strange forms of self-manifestation which were important from the perspective of escapement from collective sameness.¹³

The demand for unique “star” projects has led to the expansion of the boundaries of artistic brilliance. The necessity for the relief-like distinction of the artist from the mass of his colleagues on the pop music scene (we shall explain this artistic “upsurge” as a result of the degradation of the “manufacturing” professions and role specializations, as well as the demand for the merchandize of “creative” industries — designers, members of television crews and musicians) led to the invention of outstanding “looks” and images. The exhaustion of the versions of the numerous “heroes” of the pop industry (the guy from home, the ladies’ man, the macho, the “exotic character,” the institutionalized boy, the “tavern star,” etc.) led more and more often to the search for new eccentric characters who were singular, original and inimitable. This paved the way for the appearance of the enigmatic Linda,¹⁴ Bogdan Titomir,¹⁵ who in our country has proclaimed the triumph of masculinity, as well as the reckless “clowns” from the group DUNA¹⁶ Their affected manners possessed subtle boundaries with kitsch (the latter already

¹² This outward component, as a rule, is the most obvious and, at the same time, the most superficial sign of freakishness. Haircuts, tattoos, piercings, implantations, unusual costumes and accessories, footwear on the platform, gestures of beings from other planets or animals — these are the most frequently discussed parameters of contemporary artificial freaks. All the outward attributes are directed at overcoming normal human appearances (height, facial and bodily forms) and manners.

¹³ In essence, at the present time, many of the everyday “details” of the 1990s seem to be freakish: raspberry-red blazers, acid colors of clothes, hairdressing with big hair which was upheld by lacquer, etc. The idolization of any imported goods which appeared in the country, generated strange combinations of them in a single “image,” which in its turn led to the triumph of tasteless eclecticism and ungainliness.

¹⁴ Linda’s albums *Pesni tibetskikh lam* [*The Songs of Tibetan Lamas*] and *Vorona* [*The Crow*], as well as music videos made from separate songs astounded her listeners and critics by the unusualness of the text, the blending of means of electronic trance music, ethnic music, art rock, as well as the singer’s alien gothic image.

¹⁵ One of the first representatives of the hip-hop style in Russia Bogdan Titomir, both as a solo performer and as a part of the CAR-MAN group, became a preacher of Western values, the outward appeal of which was formulated by him with his famous phrase “people khavayet” [“the people are buying it”] (the beautiful life in the faraway countries, sexual emancipation, the expensive “star” image).

¹⁶ The hits of DUNA were songs which elaborated in a humorous manner on the subjects of “wild” capitalism, inflation, and the eradication of Soviet convictions.

endowed with full-fledged freakishness). And while the kitsch of Anzhelika Varum's early musical activities presented an avenue of approach towards such noble images of the singer as the "girl on the balloon" and the "queen" (Alexander Morsin¹⁷), while many provocative representatives disappeared quickly, without having left any discernible trace in the history of Russian pop music (the bald girls from the POLITSIYA NRAVOV group, the "extraterrestrial" Oscar), some artists, such as dancer Boris Moiseyev,¹⁸ have consciously worked on the creation of the image of a freak.

The uniqueness of the freaks and the accentuation on the originality of image, manners and behavior do not allow us to reveal any unified criteria of this phenomenon and demand from us literally a perception of separate figures identifiable by name. The pseudo-insane Zhanna Aguzarova, of "unearthly origin," is extraordinary not only by her provocative behavior, but also for her inimitable shrill voice in her non-vibrato manner of singing. Falsetto singer Vitas in his composition "Opera No. 2" has demonstrated the possibilities of the human vocal cords, seemingly, with fish gills (a refrain with the characteristic glissando in the high range is not too difficult, but joined with the video recording about a creature which survived in a bathtub filled with water has deeply struck the listeners).

The singer Butch (Elena Pogrebizhskaya), notwithstanding her rather modest vocal abilities, has become popular as the result of the population of androgynous appearance in our country. The representative of the drag-queer culture¹⁹ Shura with his characteristic lisping (this defect, formed as the result of the lack of front teeth, has been deliberately not corrected either by him or by his producers) sings in a shrill manner a variety of songs filled with humanism about good, purity, tears and the invisible light.

Already in our days the interest in freaks has somewhat abated, rather, due to the overall atrophy towards any forms of unusualness or provocation. In the conditions of contemporary society, another tendency has been formed — the acceptance of irregularity, inclusion of any forms of deviation into society, compassion, amiability, and leveling the differences from the norm. Moreover, the deviations have begun to be "implanted" into society, the freaks have become involved in the cultural space of the majority, their achievements have been transmitted, their images have become manufactured; the freaks have become the idols for millions of people. Abnormality is promoted, and people with various deviations from the norm and pathologies are brought forward as leaders or people's mentors. It suffices to name the winners of the well-known competition

¹⁷ Journalist Alexander Morsin applies, in particular, the term "post-Soviet kitsch." For more detail about this see: Morsin A. Pevitsa, chto risuet dozhd'. Chem rossiiskaya estrada obyazana Anzhelike Varum [The Singer who Draws Rain. What does the Russian Pop Music Culture owe Anzhelika Varum]. *TASS: Novosti v Rossii i mire. Mnenie* [TASS: News in Russia and the World. An Opinion]. 24.05.2019. URL: <https://tass.ru/opinions/6459446> (accessed: 25.08.2023).

¹⁸ Having finished his dance career, Boris Moiseyev began his singing activities, performing with provocative shows promoting licentiousness and nontraditional relations (it suffices to name the performer's hits *Ditya poroka* [Child of Vice] and *Golubaya luna* [Blue Moon]).

¹⁹ The drag culture involves male artists who make use of images of the opposite sex. Queer culture and LGBT culture is the culture shared by representatives of sexual minorities.

“Evrovidenie” (*Eurovision*) — the bearded woman, Conchita Wurst (2014); musicians from the Finnish group PERTTI KURIKAN NIMIPAIVAT possessed with a down syndrome (2015); in 2012 Russia sent to the competition a chorus of old ladies with weak vocal abilities (“The Buranov Grannies”); in 2018 a singer in an invalid wheelchair with the diagnosis of “spinal muscular atrophy” Yuliya Samoilova was sent there. In fairness, it must be noted that in a number of cases this tendency promotes a tolerant attitude towards people with particularities. But much more frequently the advancement of anomalous characters is connected with the aspiration to provoke, shock, and receive significant financial gain from consumers of the market of musical entertainment. When brought out to a broad audience, they become “stars” who can be discussed, derided or admired — any emotions can be poured out, possibly, except for any neutral feelings. Freakish images have been tried on and experimented with by many pop performers of various generations (Filipp Kirkorov, Eldzhey Allj, Morgenshtern).

The increasing or abating presence of freakish heroes, the expansion or, on the contrary, the narrowing down of the zone of their influence, their involvement in the cultural space of modernity, obviously, testifies of the processes the comprehension of which makes it possible to grasp the very essence and spirit of the time and certain tendencies in the social and spiritual life of society, which, naturally, deserve to be

researched further. Already now it has become possible to observe that while in relation to the post-Soviet pop music it is referred to the protest character of freakishness (as the wish to compensate for the ideological pressure on culture), what has happened subsequently is the “thinning out” of this wish. Gradually marginality (including freakishness) as a testimony of a new understanding of freedom degenerated into an emptiness,²⁰ a simulacrum of a demarche, while the intensification of destructive tendencies has led to the idle interest in various forms of physical deviations and mental disorders, the symptomatology of protagonists of virtual reality and unimaginable, shocking mixed doubles. What was previously prohibited, out of the question, rejected by the official culture is being more actively accepted, legalized, emancipated, institutionalized and, simultaneously, appears among the customary lexemes of a multitude of people. [4] At the same time, displays of marginality may pertain to different spheres: tattoo and piercing, androgynes and transgenders, as well as clown politicians (about the latter Pavel Karabushchenko writes, while contemplating about the contemporary political structure: “Essentially, the political carnival is a factory for the production of three f’s: fallibilism (mistakes), fakes (lies) and freaks (perversions).” [5, p. 93] Most likely, these forms of non- (extra- or freak-) culture will subsequently penetrate more and more into our lives, generating new eccentric characters and their artistic impulses.

²⁰ In this sense, the words of Gilles Lipovetsky in his work *L'ère du vide. Essais sur l'individualisme contemporain* [*The Era of Emptiness. Essays about Contemporary Individualism*] are remarkably penetrating: “Comment nommer cette lame de fond caractéristique de notre temps, qui partout substitue la communication à la coercition, la jouissance à l'interdit, le sur-mesure à l'anonyme, la responsabilisation à la réification et qui partout tend à instituer une ambiance de proximité, de rythme et de sollicitude libérée du registre de la Loi?” See: Lipovetsky J. *L'ère du vide. Essais sur l'individualisme contemporain*. Paris: Gallimard, 1999. P. 25.

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