During the period of glasnost, between 1985 and 1990, all of Russian literature changed. After 60 years of division between official and unofficial, dissident and emigre, the publishing of Russian literature became unified. Censorship and government control practically disintegrated. Among the "new voices" in Russian literature is Ljudmila Petrushevskaja, whose play cycle, "Kolombine's Apartment," is considered to be one of the most outstanding and creative in contemporary Russian literature. This paper discusses her life as well as her characters, settings, and language. The theme of her "Kolombine's Apartment" is the many faces of love and interpersonal relationships, and it presents truths about day-to-day realities of Soviet life. (LB)
Ljudmila Petrushevskaja: A New Voice of Glasnost
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During the period of glasnost, between 1985 and 1990, the whole face of Russian literature changed. We witnessed the unification of Russian literature, which for over sixty years had been divided between official and unofficial, dissident and emigre, and published either in gosizdat, or in tamizdat and samizdat. We saw the works of unofficial Soviet writers published side by side with official writers. We experienced the practical disintegration of censorship and government control. Главлит (Glavlit) still exists but almost anything can now be published. It is no longer the official government censor who determines what is published and what is not. It is now the prerogative of the editor and his or her taste, as well as that of the reader, which determine what is to be published and what is not. We also witnessed the appearance of private and cooperative publishing houses such as "Книжная палата" ("Knizhnaia palata") which published A. Kabakov's collection of short stories, "Издательство Вся Москва" ("Izdatel'stvo Vsja Moskva") which published V. Voinovich's Москва 2042, and "Интербук" ("Interbuk") publishers which is currently planning to publish T. Tolstaja's collection of short stories. This is significant because writers can now get their works into print sooner. The private publishing houses, therefore, charge more for books, earn more money, and consequently are able to purchase paper, which
gives them priority in printing. They do not have to play favorites with authors who are celebrating their sixtieth birthdays, or who have certain medals, and therefore have to be published as a priority; nor do they have to fulfill a plan. Thus, they can be and are responsive to the demands of the public. Even works dealing with homosexuality, and other taboo subjects such as lesbianism, pornography, and curse words, are now published.

A major event which took place during the early part of 1990 was the formation of a new writers' group called "Апрель" ("Aprel"). In contrast to the Union of Soviet Writers, this group unifies writers on the basis of their interests rather than geographical area. Members of "Апрель" hope to offer an alternative to The Union of Soviet Writers. They also oppose the so-called деревенщина (Village Prose Writers), many of whom are members of "Память" ("Pamjat"). Thus, for the first time in sixty years we are seeing the formation of independent writers' groups.

As part of this creative process, a major event of glasnost has been the appearance of "New Voices" in Russian literature. Among the more notable of these are Ljudmila Petrushevskaja, Tatjana Tolstaja, Sergej Kaledin, Viktor Erofeev, Vjacheslav Petsukh, Evgenij Popov, Mikhail Kuraev and Aleksandr Kabakov. The older of these writers, now in their late forties and fifties, were unable to publish during the Brezhnev years. They wrote primarily for the drawer. Now that they are finally being published, their works appear side by side with those of younger writers in their twenties and thirties. These "New Voices" are united by their rejection of the doctrine of Socialist Realism, their diversity in choice of subject matter, their originality, and their experimentation with language, style, and form. They are committed to present characters as individuals with emotional and psychological problems, and to depict day-to-day life in all of its facets.

This paper will focus on L. Petrushevskaja's play cycle, квартира коломбины (Kolombine's Apartment). Petrushevskaja is considered by many to be the most outstanding, creative, and interesting "New Voice" in contemporary Russian Literature. She has created and given voice to the new "Homo Sovieticus," the Soviet man or woman. She has captured their voices, intonations, and modes of thinking. Benedikt Sarnov, the noted Soviet critic, believes that Petrushevskaja has created a man who belongs to the third generation of Zoshchenko's characters. Whereas Zoshchenko's characters are uneducated, vulgar, former peasants, workers, and often provincials
who come to Moscow and have to be taught such rudimentary manners as not to spit on the floor, or how to behave in a theater, Petrushevskaja's characters represent their more polished descendants, the second and third generation. Her characters are educated and have finished an institute or university. They are usually white-collar workers, librarians, language teachers or bureaucrats who own cars and even travel abroad. Zoshchenko's characters' total possessions often consisted of two sheets and a pitifully worn suit [as in "Телефон" ("Telephone")]. Petrushevskaja's characters have private apartments, and occasionally own dachas. They squabble over children, dachas, and leaking roofs. Petrushevskaja removes their masks and reveals the content of their souls. She exposes their intellectual, moral and ethical bankruptcy.

Petrushevskaja, the mother of three children, is now in her early fifties. In the last five years, concurrently with glasnost, she has gained wide recognition in the Soviet Union and abroad; yet, like the heroines in her plays and stories, she feels mistreated and unappreciated. Interesting, sharp, and intelligent, she is brusque and abrasive and has antagonized various people in the publishing field. She had the misfortune to start writing in the 1960s, at a time when Khrushchev's "Thaw" was over and her works could no longer be published. In 1963 she submitted a monologue titled "Такая девочка" ("Such a Girl") to the journal НОВЫЙ МИР (Novyi mir). Although it was not published, A. Tvardovskij, Editor in Chief at the time, wrote on the manuscript "not to be published, but keep track of the author." During the late sixties, seventies and early eighties, Petrushevskaja wrote primarily for the drawer. During this time she supported herself by working in radio and television. From the late 1970s throughout the 1980s, her one-act plays were performed by small amateur and professional groups and her reputation as a playwright kept growing.

Petrushevskaja is the author of almost fifty works for the stage, many of which are monologues or one-act plays which she frequently organizes into cycles such as КВАРТИРА КОЛОМБИНЫ ОГ БАБУЛЯ БЛЮЗ (Grandmother Blues), as well as two full-length plays ТРИ ДЕВУШКИ В ГОЛУБОМ (Three Girls in Blue) and УРОКИ МУЗЫКИ (Music Lessons). She is the author of short stories as well as a bard. Those who have heard her in person consider her a wonderful performer. Her short stories include "Наш круг" ("Our Crowd") and "Изолированная бокс" ("An Isolated Cell"). The latter became part of a play cycle entitled БАБУЛЯ БЛЮЗ and has been playing in Moscow for the past two years.
Petrushevskaja is currently the leading Russian dramatist and a major contemporary figure in Russian literature. In 1989 and 1990 five of her plays were being performed in Moscow theaters alone. They were: Цинzano (Cinzano), Три девушки в голубом, Квартира Коломбины, Уроки музыки and Бабуля блюз. Цинzano has been staged in the United States at the Kentucky Theater Festival as well as in England. Since the beginning of glasnost Petrushevskaja's works have regularly appeared in major Soviet journals; and within the last three years, collections of her stories and plays have finally been published in book form. In 1988 the publisher Московский рабочий (Moskovskij Rabochij) published a collection of her short stories under the title Бесмертная любовь (Immortal Love). A collection of her plays entitled Песни XX века (Songs of the XX-th Century) was published the same year by Союз театральных деятелей (Sojuz teatral'nykh dejatelej). Since 1987 Petrushevskaja has been allowed to travel and has visited most European countries and the United States.

The setting of Petrushevskaja's works is very specific: it is Moscow and Moscow dachas. The characters are usually Moscovites or Moscow dwellers who have come from the provinces but now live in Moscow. Their language, manner of speaking, intonation and lexicon are those of the Moscow technocrats and the new Russian intelligentsia. They are not intelligentsia in the full sense of the word, but rather the Moscow semi-educated new class. Petrushevskaja's characters are defined by and through their language. She has an unusual ability to capture nuances and shades of speech. The characters' profession, generation and social standing can be identified through their dialogue. We watch their lives as they struggle with быти, day-to-day problems. Through her characters Petrushevskaja creates her own world.

Although Petrushevskaja's stories are populated by both sexes; the dominant roles are assigned to women. Men usually play secondary roles and are often shadowy figures. The narrator is usually a woman. Women are the breadwinners, they are the aggressors, and they also provide stability and support mechanisms for each other. Loneliness, the inability to have lasting relationships with men, relationships between mother and daughter and mother and child, generational clashes between mothers and daughters, the need for support and the life of a single mother are all subjects of her stories and plays. Her world is depressing; although it is redeemed by irony and a very subtle sense of humor. She depicts the selfishness and
predatory instincts of her characters and the effect of wear and tear of быть.

Through Petrushevskaja's works the reader finds the characters to be rounded human beings with illusions, hopes and dreams. Their true natures evolve before our eyes; and we discover, together with the characters, that our judgements are often mistaken and that people are frequently the opposite of what we thought they were. This is well illustrated by the call girl and protagonist of "Такая девочка," or the mother in "Наш круг," as well as by the characters in Лестничная клетка (The Staircase Landing) which became part of the cycle квартира коломбины.

Petrushevskaja's language is not merely authentic; it is poetic. Her prose is interspersed with verses, jingles and proverbs. The action of her plays is fast-moving. The endings of her stories and plays are usually unexpected. She is often ironical, has a fine sense of humor and the ability to see the absurdities of life and of day-to-day realities. Her talent lies in her ability to glean pearls of human character from the gray dust of everyday reality. Although her characters are unmistakably Soviet, they transcend the Moscow and Soviet setting and are ultimately universal.

The focus of the following part of this paper lies in Petrushevskaja's play cycle квартира коломбины which has been playing in Moscow's Современник ("Sovremennik" theater) since 1988. This cycle presents the new "Homo-Sovieticus" in various situations and from different points of view. It is one of the most interesting and engaging productions in the Moscow repertoire. The cycle form serves to strengthen the basic theme by presenting it with variations and thus restating it in a more forceful way.

The cycle квартира коломбины is composed of four one-act plays. The first play Любовь (Love) was published in 1979 and is followed by Лестничная клетка published in 1973, Анданте (Andante) published in 1988, and квартира коломбины also published in 1988. As can be seen, the plays in this cycle were written over an almost ten year period. There is a musical quality to these and other works by Petrushevskaja. Even titles such as Elegy and Andante are derived from the musical world. Анданте, the third play in the cycle квартира коломбины, is a slower movement; and the pace of this particular play is different from that of her other plays. By utilizing the cyclic form, Petrushevskaja achieves a cumulative effect; and as in a musical composition, there is a linking of various themes and the
presentation of a theme and variations. In this case, the play cycle presents multiple facets of the same theme: the many faces of love and interpersonal relationships. One could even view квадрила коломбины as a symphony, wherein the main theme is presented in the first play; and then each subsequent play, as in an orchestral movement, repeats and presents variations on this theme, restating it in different forms.

The action of the first play любовь takes place in a one-room apartment stuffed with furniture. In the Sovremennik theater production the center of the room is dominated by a huge bed. The central topic of this play is love. The plot is simple: a newly married couple (Толja and Света) arrives in the room where they will live with Евгенiя Ивановна, Света’s domineering mother. As the play progresses we become acquainted with this couple as they become acquainted with each other. They have been classmates at the university but had not seen each other for over five years and had not been sweethearts, or lovers, or even close friends while they were students. The groom Толja is older in his early thirties. Света, the bride, is at least seven years younger than he. We discover that before entering the university he had been educated at the Нахимов Naval Academy. After finishing the university he was assigned to work in Свердловск. Having spent almost seven years looking for a wife, and after all the "candidates for marriage" had refused him, he finally proposed to Света.

The action revolves around arguments about the restaurant in which they celebrated their wedding, the food there, his "dowry" (consisting of a suitcase filled with sheets), but most importantly about their relationship, about love and the lack of love between them. Света’s leitmotif and her recurring line "Ведь ты меня не любишь" and his recurring answer "Я не могу любить ... любить никого не способен" and their variants dominate the play. In the end Света wants to annul their marriage and the couple is ready to break up when, suddenly, the huge domineering mother who had left them alone, presumably to visit friends, walks in. She states that she hates visiting and therefore returns, moves in, and declares that the bed is hers; this is her place. They can do next to her whatever they wish, and she will "plug up" her ears. It is at that point that the relationship between the newlyweds changes, and Света leaves with her new bridegroom. This is the one chance she has at acquiring freedom; and the audience, together with the characters, discovers that they might have a chance at saving their marriage. These characters represent contemporary
"Homo Sovieticus." Tolja, the bridegroom, has almost nothing to say. To Sveta's repeated phrase, "ты же меня не любишь," he keeps answering in formulas. He continually refers to his dowry, the sheets which he used to buy for himself as birthday presents and which he then washed and ironed. The phrase "я стирал и гладил, гладил и стирал" becomes one of the recurring leitmotifs associated with Tolja. When Sveta tells him "ведь ты же меня не любишь," he keeps repeating again in a recurring unchanged formula, "кандидатуры одна за другой отпадали, ... я любить никого не способен." Another of Tolja's memorable phrases, "я покраснел," is connected with rain and Sveta's mother. There is no real conversation between these two people. Even Sveta, who is capable of a little bit more depth and breadth in her psychological and moral makeup, who is more human, who wants to be loved and has genuine feelings and concerns, begins to use Tolja's formulas. She even refers to the other women to whom Tolja had proposed as "кандидатуры." Although the ending does not provide answers, there is a slight hint that perhaps Sveta might become more like Tolja, rather than the opposite. They are lonely individuals who find each other but remain most ordinary and empty.

In the second play, Лестничная клетка, the subject is again a variant of love. The action starts with a pick-up. The protagonists are two men and a woman who meet on a "blind date" arranged by a matchmaker for whose services Galja, the woman, had paid. Galja would like to have a baby. This is the central plot of the play. The three, Jura, Slava and Galja, met at a bus stop and now stand in front of her apartment door while Galja hesitates and fumbles for the key, pretending that it has been lost. For this reason, all action takes place on the staircase landing. It is there that Galja and the audience learn that Jura is a musician, who plays Chopin marches in a funeral orchestra, and that Slava works in some kind of institute. All three have very little to say; but the two men tell her about the problems of getting involved with a man and having a baby, those connected with marriage, with mothers-in-law, and so on. In the course of this conversation, a sympathy develops between them; and in the end, when at eleven o'clock Galja is thrown out of her room by her apartment mate, she brings food out onto the staircase. As they eat and drink, it appears that a relationship is developing and that something will happen on a level beyond the money and matchmaking.
The action of the third play Андреев also takes place in one room; this one is jammed with suitcases and boxes. It is the apartment of Soviet diplomats who have returned from abroad loaded with goods. For this play Petrushevskaja has chosen members of the diplomatic and bureaucratic Soviet elite as her subject. They have everything a Soviet citizen dreams of owning. There are four characters in the play, three of whom are: a diplomat Maj, his wife Julja, and her former friend and his mistress Bul'di. In addition to this "мénage à trois" there is a fourth character, the seemingly weak, innocent and abused young girl, Au. There is a play on the word "Au" which is the cry one sometimes hears from mushroom hunters in the woods or when a baby cries.

The three people who are living a "мénage à trois," Maj, Julja and Bul'di, are inseparable and interdependent. If Julja were to divorce Maj, he would lose his position and she would lose opportunities to travel abroad and access to foreign goods. Bul'di can not leave Maj or Julja because she also would lose her opportunity to travel abroad and buy foreign goods. All three are tied to each other because of material possessions and greed. Au, who took care of the apartment while the menage lived abroad, is still living there. Au's husband had left her when she was in the hospital having a baby which she miscarried. She has no place of her own and no one to go to. As the three move back in, they want to throw Au out. In order to stay in the apartment, Au begins to blackmail them by reciting long lists of merchandise which she demands. Her "shopping" list includes: "дубленка ..., сапоги ..., косметику ..., белые, только не синтетику ..., спортивное все ..., куртка ..., брюки вельвет ..., маечки ..., комбинезон ...," the list seems endless. Au, who in the beginning was the only character who had the potential of being a true human being, becomes just as corrupt as the others. Maj, Julja and Bul'di have almost nothing to say, no thoughts to reveal; they are on drugs and pills. In the end they give Au pills and induce her to become addicted.

The language of this play at times transcends rational speech. Utterances are often meaningless sounds, mere gibberish resembling foreign nonsense words such as "Андреев, пули, метвицы, грабнио, мальро, бескайты, пинди, чурчхела, кашпо, кишкильда" and etc. These endow the work with a musical quality. The sounds seem mysterious and full of hidden meaning. They create a rhythmical pattern. Since Maj has taken a liking to Au as the play ends, we watch the four of them beginning to live "happily" together. There is a final
choral statement addressed to Au: "Come to us, we will sing in four voices." The play ends with all the characters together dancing a "Хоровод," a Russian circular dance. In Айданте Petrushevskaja again reveals the moral and ethical bankruptcy and corruption of another layer of Soviet society. This is yet another variant of "Homo Sovieticus."

Квартира Коломбины, the last and most powerful play in this cycle, continues the theme of love. The characters in this play are all actors, another privileged group in Soviet society. Petrushevskaja presents human relationships in farcical situations and human beings as stock characters. She utilizes the traditional "commedia dell'arte" structure and characters familiar to Russian audiences in Балаганчик, Петрушка, and Пagiacci. She stands much of the traditional "commedia dell'arte" on its head and imbues it with a uniquely Russian character.

In квартира коломбины, as in "commedia dell'arte," there is much improvisation, comedy, raciness, buffoonery and slapstick. The names are those from "commedia dell'arte": Colombina, Pierrot and Harlequin. However, Petrushevskaja gives Colombina and other characters Russian patronymics, names and nicknames: Kolombina's patronymic is Ivanovna, and she is nicknamed Kolia; P'ero is called Vanja or Manja; and Arlekin is called Arik. In addition, Petrushevskaja shifts, reverses and rearranges the roles and functions of the "commedia dell'arte" stock characters. Colombina is usually Harlequin's young, saucy, adroit sweetheart. Petrushevskaja shows her as an older woman of uncertain age and not pretty. She is the seductress, the aggressor and bird of prey. She uses any means in her power to seduce P'ero (Pierrot), rather than Arlekin (Harlequin) who is traditionally the stock lover. The object of Kolombina's advances is P'ero, the young actor whose only role had been that of a cat in a children's play. He therefore wears a permanently glued mustache on his face. In a traditional "commedia dell'arte," Pierrot, the messengerservant, is sent on errands. In this play Kolombina sends Arlekin, the husband, to shop for food because a foreign visitor from Denmark is coming for dinner. He has to buy "гречневая каша" (buckwheat groats cereal), cabbage and tangerines. Since these ordinary food items are not available in the stores, he returns with what he can find: cream of wheat, bone fat and beets. The shopping takes a long time; and while her husband is away, Kolombina tries to seduce P'ero.
A "commedia dell'arte" scenario is usually a story about love. In квартира коломбины Петрусевская reverses the traditional love story and replaces it with a double seduction: first Kolombina and later Arlekin try to seduce P'ero. In addition, she inserts a rehearsal of Romeo and Juliet, the story of true love, into the narrative. However, Kolombina and P'ero reverse their roles: Kolombina plays Romeo and P'ero (still wearing his glued-on whiskers) plays Juliet. By reversing sex roles in this play within a play, Petrushevskaja uses Romeo and Juliet as a foil for contrast. This serves to illustrate the lack of love and innocence and the sordidness and vulgarity of her three characters. Their only motivation is sexual desire and lust. Petrushevskaja reveals the true nature of the three characters to be the opposite of everything usually expected.

The reversal of stock character functions and role reversals creates slapstick comedy and increasing confusion. This confusion is further heightened by Kolombina's attempts to seduce P'ero and later by Arlekin's attempt to also seduce P'ero, whom he thinks is Manja rehearsing the role of Juliet. This creates a case of double mistaken identity, a situational slapstick comedy, which results in total confusion.

Through this play Petrushevskaja satirizes backstage life in the Soviet theater, in particular, the behavior and character of the actors, the way in which meetings and rehearsals are conducted, and the way roles are assigned.

Her play is also a commentary on Soviet быт, the day-to-day problems and drudgery of Soviet reality. There are numerous references to shortages in the stores and to the problem of obtaining basic necessities. These are presented matter-of-factly through the characters' speech and actions.

When Arlekin returns home from shopping, he shouts:

"Коля! Коля! Коломбина! Гречки нет, я купил манки. Сварим Датчанке манку, тоже чisto русская пица. Капусты нет, я купил костного жира, у них там небось этого нет! Мандарин нет, я купил свёклу. Кулинария закрыта на санитарный день, выводят тараканов!"15

Petrushevskaja's use of language is remarkable. Language is her primary means of characterization. We get to know Pierrot/Vanja/Manja through the character's utterances. His poor preparation for
acting is revealed through his diction. For example, he mispronounces "чего мой принц" as "чего мой принц."\(^{16}\)

Petrushevskaja is a master of verbal comedy. Her dialogues, which are constructed in stages with numerous pauses, produce unexpected, often comical effects. The following dialogue between Kolombina and P'ero illustrates this:

Пьеро: А где ваш муж?
Коломбина (медленно): Какой ... муж?
Пьеро: Ваш.
Коломбина: Мой ... муж?

.................................................
Пьеро: А где он?
Коломбина: Он? Пошел в магазин.
Пьеро: За чем?
Коломбина: За капустой.
Пьеро: Ну, всем вам доброго. (Встаёт)
Коломбина: Сядьте. Он пошел за капустой и за гречневой крупой.\(^{17}\)

Later we learn that he also went to get tangerines, which any Russian knows are a rarity and a ridiculous and preposterous idea. This demonstrates Petrushevskaja's method of word renewal. When describing the truly Russian supper she is preparing for her Danish visitor, Kolombina says: "шуг, каша, мандарини ...."\(^{18}\) Petrushevskaja uses the worn-out saying "шуг да каша, пища наша" and adds to it the unexpected "мандарини," a very un-Russian, exotic food item. She breaks up a cliché expression and creates her own trope.

Petrushevskaja's comments on Soviet reality and her indirect satire are revealed in a humorous, "laughter through tears" way. "Квартира Коломбины" is the last movement in this dramatic cycle. It presents characters who not only wear masks but are truly masks and are no longer human. They are stock characters from a play transformed into the reality of Soviet быт in which they play out their roles. They have no thoughts, no ideals, no love. Everybody including her husband knows that Kolombina lies and that she has many lovers; however, they accept it. Lies have become part of daily life and do not surprise or shock anyone.

The plays in this cycle show the many faces of love and the humanizing effect of love, without which men are transformed into masks and spiritual robots.
Ljudmila Petrushevskaja, like other contemporary Russian prose writers representing the New Voices of Glasnost, presents the naked truth about mundane, day-to-day realities of Soviet life and gives voice to her contemporary "Homo Sovieticus." She reveals the tragedy of Soviet life. Moral bankruptcy and poverty of spiritual life are basic ingredients of the "Homo Sovieticus" of the 1980s.

2 Benedikt Sarnov, personal interview, Wayne, PA (10 April, 199?).
3 Ljudmila Petrushevskaja, Любовь в книге Песни XX века (Москва: Союз театральных деятелей РСФСР, 1988), сс. 133-147.
4 Petrushewskaja, Любовь, сс. 137, 139, 141.
5 Petrushewskaja, Любовь, сс. 140, 142.
6 Petrushewskaja, Любовь, с. 146.
7 Petrushewskaja, Любовь, с. 145.
8 Ljudmila Petrushevskaja, Лестничная клетка в книге Песни XX века (Москва: Союз театральных деятелей РСФСР, 1988), сс. 148-159.
10 Petrushewskaja, Анданте, с. 170.
11 Petrushewskaja, Анданте, сс. 160-1, 165-6, 168.
12 Petrushewskaja, Анданте, с. 171.
15 Petrushewskaja, Квартира Коломбины, с. 177.
16 Petrushewskaja, Квартира Коломбины, с. 179.
17 Petrushewskaja, Квартира Коломбины, с. 172.
18 Petrushewskaja, Квартира Коломбины, с. 175.