

Pussy Riot and Its Aftershocks:
Politics and Performance in Putin's Russia

Victoria Kouznetsov
Senior Thesis
May 6, 2013

When the all-female anarcho-punk group Pussy Riot staged a protest performance at the Cathedral of Christ the Savior—the spiritual heart of Moscow—in February of 2012, which led to the arrests of three members, they provoked a flood of public responses that quickly spilled over the borders of the Russian Federation. The significance of their “performance” can be gauged by the strength and diversity of these responses, of support and condemnation alike, that were voiced so vocally in the months leading up to and following the trial of Yekaterina Samutsevich, Nadezhda Tolokonnikova, and Maria Alyokhina (ages 30, 23, and 24, respectively). The discourse surrounding the group’s performance, amplified by the passions surrounding the imminent reelection of Vladimir Putin to a third term as president on May 7, 2012, reveals many emerging rifts in Russia’s social and political fabric. At a time when Russia faces increasingly challenging questions about its national identity, leadership, and role in the post-Soviet world, the action, arrest and subsequent trial of Pussy Riot serves as an epicenter for a diverse array of national and international quakes.

The degree to which politicians, leaders of civil society, followers of the Russian Orthodox faith, and influential figures of the art scene in Russia rallied around the Pussy Riot trial speaks to the particularly fraught timing of the performance and its implications in gauging Russia’s emerging social and political trends. The disproportionately high degree of media attention given to the case by the West, however, has added both temporal and spatial dimensions to the case, evoking Cold War rhetoric both in Russia and abroad. Tensions have flared between Putin and international political leaders over questions surrounding the transparency and impartiality of the Russia’s justice system. Political activists, musicians, and celebrities have publically joined together in international

solidarity with Pussy Riot in defense of freedoms of political and artistic expression. But it is not enough to take Pussy Riot's performance at face value, treating it simply as an exploration of freedom of speech. The group, far more of a conceptual and political art collective rather than a rock group, operates on a strict basis of illegality; each member consciously sacrifices personal safety for the sake of transmitting the group's political message in every unsanctioned demonstration.

This thesis undertakes to expose and challenge assumptions such as international and Russian misreadings of Pussy Riot's ideology and goals. Misconceptions and hyperbole have dominated the discourse that followed the performance. A balanced view of the Pussy Riot phenomenon requires cultural, historical and political contextualization. Over the course of nine sections, this thesis will examine Pussy Riot's protest against the backdrop of a large spectrum of reactions from prominent individuals, social movements and religious groups. This study will parse through the often uncomfortable and heated discourse surrounding the group's Christ the Savior performance and the resultant trial, and demonstrate how the Pussy Riot phenomenon acted as a catalyst for serious discussions about the future of post-Soviet Russia.

Section I provides a history of Pussy Riot's activities prior to their Christ the Savior performance. It positions Pussy Riot, their methods, and their ideologies within a broader context of musical, political, and artistic influences, including the notorious group Voina. Part of this reconstruction will rely on interviews and public statements given after the arrests.

Section II treats Pussy Riot's actual performance, as well as the viral music video of the performance that made them world-famous, as texts central to the understanding of their fame and their controversy. In this section I offer a close reading of the music video's lyrics and a discussion of the political events that prompted reaction, as well as an interpretation of the group's use of images, specifically, those of the female body and the cathedral itself.

Section III provides a reading of the Pussy Riot trial in Moscow's Khamovnichesky District Court. It scrutinizes the courtroom tactics and the journalism surrounding the case, in which Yekaterina Samutsevich, Nadezhda Tolokonnikova and Maria Alyokhina were charged with "hooliganism, committed by an organized group of persons by prior conspiracy motivated by religious hatred."¹ This section emphasizes the religious basis for the prosecution and questions the ethical conduct of the parties involved.

Section IV analyzes the impact of Pussy Riot within the Russian Federation. I draw a distinction between official responses, including those by the Putin administration and representatives of the Russian Orthodox Church, and popular responses emerging from such groups as Russian Orthodox believers, Russian nationalists, and the Russian media. This section emphasizes the differences in opinions between and within each of these groups, combatting the generalizing tendency of much of the journalistic coverage of the trial, in both the Russian press and international media.

¹ "Участниц Pussy Riot официально обвинили в хулиганстве по мотивам религиозной ненависти," *Росбалт Москва*, June 4, 2012. <http://www.rosbalt.ru/moscow/2012/06/04/988527.html> (Translations mine unless otherwise noted)

Section V specifically discusses the complicated and often misunderstood relationship of Pussy Riot to Russia's urban opposition movement. Here I attempt to identify the projected goals of the opposition's most prominent leaders and their attitudes towards Pussy Riot's brand of protest, while evaluating the degrees of inclusivity and exclusivity demonstrated by the anti-Putin rallies of the past three years. This section also touches on the viability of the opposition to affect change, or even simply to remain relevant.

Section VI scrutinizes reactions to Pussy Riot from beyond Russia's borders, especially in the United States and Western Europe, where the group's most vocal supporters are based. I point out the persistence of Cold War rhetoric, as well as incidents of official hypocrisy regarding copycat acts and protests following Pussy Riot's arrests. For context, I also touch on connections between Pussy Riot and other international protest movements, and the often questionable assumptions about Pussy Riot's message among American and European activists. For example, visual and digital memes have contributed a great deal to Pussy Riot's impact in the brand-conscious capitalist countries.

Finally, I close with Section VII and a brief conclusion, which engages Pussy Riot's protest within a broader context of international socio-political movements, their sources and potential influences on feminist ideology, religious thought, and anti-capitalist protest. I examine how Pussy Riot's sentencing has affected the group, their supporters, and their opponents in the months following the conclusion of the trial. I then analyze Pussy Riot within a framework of feminist theory, as well as their relevance to the global impulses surrounding movements like the Arab Spring revolts, conjecturing as to whether Pussy Riot

will sink into obscurity, or find continuation in the increasingly radical and international actions of groups such as Femen.

My research for this thesis began in September of 2012 and has gone on to follow the media and critical discourse regarding Pussy Riot and the Russian political climate. Due to the recent nature of these developments, very few academic sources mention Pussy Riot at all. This has necessitated that the majority of my sources come from online periodicals, both English- and Russian- language. Some short articles and posts originate online, on blogs or Facebook pages—and even Twitter feeds, as is the case with the live coverage of the trial. While these sources, read on their own, are far from consistently reliable, my methodology is to interrogate the biases present to understand the position or ideology of the authors. Wherever possible, I have reinforced my readings with scholarly texts for cultural, historical, and political background in pursuit of a more comprehensive understanding of the Pussy Riot trial and its consequences.

I

Despite the shock generated by their appearance onto the Moscow scene in November 2011 with an illegal performance on top of a Metro car, Pussy Riot was not entirely unprecedented. Their all-female composition, their adherence to a code of anonymity, their refusal to perform in sanctioned places and their subversion of dominant patriarchal symbolism all stem from a diverse set of artistic and political influences spanning decades and hemispheres. It was in their timing, however, that they were able to strike so deeply into Russia's sense of national self. Pussy Riot went public as a response to

Putin's announcement of his intentions to run for a third presidential term², a statement accompanied by a vocal reaction from various opposition movements that gained an enormous amount of international attention. During the ensuing culture war, Pussy Riot's uncompromising take on gender, religion and politics was both demonized and idolized by the increasingly polarized camps as the band became a highly visible symbol of artistic freedom at all costs.

Pussy Riot, first and foremost, is a collective of radical political activists composed of exclusively female members. The feminine aspect of their performance is asserted and parodied through the extremely bright dresses and stockings the band members don for every public appearance, with one conspicuous addition: they conceal their faces with equally bright, iconic balaclavas. The balaclava, which has gained a reputation as a staple of dissenters all over the world, enforces the principle of anonymity adopted by the members of the group. Through the concealment of their faces and the use of pseudonyms during all correspondence and interviews, Pussy Riot's members ensure that they can be completely interchangeable in the highly likely event that one of them gets arrested. But there is a less practical reason behind this apparent sacrifice of individuality for the good of the collective. According to an interview with *Vice* magazine, this is meant to instigate a "move away from personalities and towards symbols of pure protest."³ Pussy Riot is able to expand the reach of their message by performing not as individual women, but as women that any woman is capable of becoming.

² Henry Langston, "Meeting Pussy Riot," *Vice*. March 2012. <http://www.vice.com/read/A-Russian-Pussy-Riot>.

³ Henry Langston, "Meeting Pussy Riot."

This characteristic sets Pussy Riot apart from the feminist-punk bands that serve as their musical inspiration, namely those involved in the Riot Grrrl movement of the early 90s. These West coast American bands, including Sleater-Kinney, Bikini Kill, Bratmobile, Huggy Bear, and Heavens to Betsy, rose up under a banner of female empowerment and rage in the midst of a general lag in the women's rights movement. Provoked by the gains of the Right to Life campaign organized by the Christian Coalition, activist women in the Pacific Northeast began using music festivals and self-published fanzines as their own media to spread their feminist messages in urban centers like Olympia, Washington.⁴ A stripped-down, markedly raw sound dominated this music scene, which complemented the frustration of the outsider perspectives these bands largely sought to convey. In place of the Christian Coalition, the Russian Orthodox Church and the church-friendly Putin administration provide the barriers to women's empowerment for the members of Pussy Riot, but the underlying sentiment of resistance is largely similar. Lacking an official channel by which to express their dissent, the group resorts to exclusively illegal performances. These performances set Pussy Riot even farther apart from the American Riot Grrrl bands. As one Pussy Riot member put it, "Putin is scared only of unsanctioned rallies. That's why we promote holding unauthorized protests in our songs. We are not happy about what happens in the sphere of civic protests, which have now turned into sanctioned rallies."⁵ The political component of Pussy Riot, then, is uniquely pronounced, with the band serving not as an outlet for frustration, but as a living tool to enact change.

⁴ John Harris, "From Pussy Riot, A Lesson in the Power of Punk," *The Guardian*, 8/19/12. <http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2012/aug/19/pussy-riot-power-of-punk>

⁵ Sergey Chernov, "Female Fury," *The St. Petersburg Times*, Issue 1693. 2/1/12. http://sptimes.ru/index.php?action_id=2&story_id=35092

In another statement by Pussy Riot, the diversity of influence is further revealed, tying the band to both domestic and international traditions:

It's possible to find features of 1990s Actionism in our performances, while the motif of the closed face of the performer—which has been used by many music bands such as Slipknot, Daft Punk or Asian Women on the Telephone, for instance, is borrowed from conceptual art where the tradition of not showing one's face is present.⁶

As performers, the members of Pussy Riot seek to subvert the traditional role of performance artist, transforming the relationship between artist and observer in the process and emphasizing the viewer's unique experience above all. The main source of the group's artistic impulses is the radical art collective Voina, to which several members of Pussy Riot belonged to prior to the formation of the all-female punk group as a separate entity. In a 2008 interview article, Voina's activist Natalia Sokol told Tom Peter that they "want to fly into space,"⁷ a reference to an installation by the Moscow Conceptualist Ilya Kabakov entitled *The Man Who Flew Into Space From His Apartment*. According to Peter, "the performances of the conceptual artists working in Putin's Russia were designed to create...a boost in velocity that would eject their fellow citizens from their comfort zones."⁸

And this they did with relish. Founded by college-educated members of the middle class intent on casting off their privilege to destroy all "outdated repressive-patriarchal socio-political symbols and ideologies,"⁹ Voina is not for casuals. The group, which contains scores of members, is responsible for an extensive list of highly publicized stunts,

⁶ Sergey Chernov, "Female Fury."

⁷ Tom Peter, "Photographer's Blog: Witness to Pussy Riot's Activist Beginnings," *Reuters*. 8/16/12. <http://www.reuters.com/article/2012/08/16/us-blog-pussy-riots-idUSBRE87F0PW20120816>

⁸ Tom Peter, "Photographer's Blog."

⁹ Tom Parfitt, "Banksy Pledges £80,000 to Russian Radical Art Group Voina," *The Guardian*, 12/12/10. <http://www.guardian.co.uk/artanddesign/2010/dec/12/banksy-russia-voina-donation>

demonstrations, and art pieces. Among the most famous are the “Palace Revolution,” in which demonstrators methodically overturned several police vehicles as a statement against police corruption in St. Petersburg, and “A Dick Held Prisoner at the FSB,” the massive phallus painted onto a drawbridge which, when raised, pointed the erection at the FSB headquarters. But in spite of the latter piece receiving the 2010 Innovation prize from the National Center for Contemporary Arts in Moscow, Voina’s reception in the public sphere has been far from warm. Several of their stunts have involved the shocking use of public sex or women’s exposed bodies which, in a nation with a moral code rooted in Orthodox Christianity, has provoked outrage and calls for arrests.

A founding member of Pussy Riot, Nadezhda Tolokonnikova is famous for having participated in one of these infamous demonstrations with her husband, Pyotr Verzilov. In what Voina called “Fuck for the Heir Puppy Bear” and the Russian media largely referred to as an orgy, several couples involved in Voina had public sex in the Moscow Biological Museum to protest President Medvedev’s February 2008 election. One of the most shocking features of this protest-performance was in fact Tolokonnikova’s participation; at the time, she was nine months pregnant with her daughter. The outrage generated by the presence of a pregnant woman in a deviant sexual act dealt a blow in the minds of many Russians to the sanctity of motherhood. In the radicalism of this act, however, Tolokonnikova challenged whether this sanctity is justified and asserted her own agency over that of society with regards to her pregnant body. This reclaiming of the symbolism of the female body, co-opted in an equally outrageous and visible way by the Ukrainian group Femen, would later surface in the performances of Pussy Riot, which used the female body and its bright, feminine attire as a tool for protest.

The band's name challenges the negative or dirty connotations surrounding female genitalia by attempting to reclaim the word "pussy", a practice with roots in the Riot Grrrl movement. According to journalist Lindsay Zoladz:

From adding a string of growling consonants to the petite epithet *girl* to confronting the connotations of the word *slut*, riot grrrls pioneered a frenzy of linguistic salvage jobs that remains controversial today. Leading this charge was the band Bikini Kill, whose frontwoman Kathleen Hanna famously used to perform with the word *SLUT* scrawled across her stomach, and which christened its 1993 debut album with a provocative title: *Pussy Whipped*.¹⁰

Thus, Pussy Riot has taken a confrontational stance right off the bat, forcing whoever encounters them to immediately engage with the semantics of their name and evaluate their own preconceptions surrounding it. This evaluation occurs every time an opportunity to communicate the band's name arises, making the speaker or writer a part of an ongoing dialog about the status and meaning of the word "pussy." The group's adoption of an English-language name also implies an English-language market or audience for their message. This identification with a western audience is fraught with implications regarding western value systems and concepts of morality. Conservative Russian print media that condemn the usage of the word are quick to censor it from their coverage of the group via the usage of grawlixes. Others simply print the word in Cyrillic to convey the phonetic term, but avoid acknowledging the English meaning. In each case the print media endows the name "Pussy Riot" with an aura of obscenity and foreignness that certainly the audience's reception of the band.

¹⁰ Lindsay Zoladz, "Pussy Is Having a Moment." *Slate*. Aug. 28, 2012. http://www.slate.com/articles/double_x/doublex/2012/08/pussy_is_having_a_moment_pussy_riot_trial_puts_the_p_word_back_in_the_spotlight.html?tid=sm_tw_button_chunky.

II

After their February 21, 2012 performance in the Cathedral of Christ the Savior, Pussy Riot would enter into a period of worldwide fame, criminal trial, and for two of the detained members, conviction and prison. Among the five band members who participated in the performance, only Nadezhda Tolokonnikova, Yekaterina Samutsevich, and Maria Alyokhina would be arrested, the remaining two members having fled the country to protect their identities from the police.

Before the extensive legal and political consequences of this concert to be understood, it is necessary to first contextualize both the content of the performance and the location. The five women, after entering the cathedral, proceeded to don their balaclavas, take their places on the soleas, and kneel while crossing themselves ironically as an accomplice filmed them with a handheld digital camcorder. For less than a minute afterwards, they alternated between submissively kneeling and kowtowing, and moshing aggressively with kicks, jumps and fist pumps. The footage continues even as the band members are physically removed from the building by the cathedral's male security guards and stern female caretakers. Had it not been for the subsequent edited video, the scandal would have most likely ended here.

Instead, the footage from Christ the Savior was edited together with footage of a Pussy Riot performance in a different Russian Orthodox church, and audio of the band playing their instruments and singing what has consistently been referred to in the media as a "punk prayer" entitled *Богородица, Путина прогони!*, or "Holy Mother, Cast Putin

Out”. In November 2012, *The Atlantic*’s website published what it touted as the “first literal translation” of the song’s lyrics, which accompanies the Cyrillic text.¹¹

¹¹ Jeffrey Tayler, “What Pussy Riot’s ‘Punk Prayer’ Really Said.” *The Atlantic*. November 8, 2012. <http://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2012/11/what-pussy-riots-punk-prayer-really-said/264562/>

Virgin birth-giver of God,
drive away Putin!
Drive away Putin, drive away Putin!

Black frock, golden epaulettes
Parishioners crawl bowing
[toward the priest, during the Eucharist]
Freedom's ghost [has gone to] heaven
A gay-pride parade [has been] sent to Siberia
in shackles

Their chief saint is the head of the KGB
He leads a convoy of protestors to jail
So as not to insult the Holiest One
Woman should bear children and love

Shit, shit, the Lord's shit!
Shit, shit, the Lord's shit!
Virgin birth-giver of God, become a feminist!
Become a feminist, become a feminist!

The Church praises rotten leaders
The march of the cross consists of black
limousines
A preacher is on his way to your school
Go to class and give him money!

Patriarch Gunday believes in Putin
Would be better, the bastard, if he believed in
God!
The Virgin's belt won't replace political
gatherings
The eternal Virgin Mary is with us in our
protests!

Virgin birth-Giver of God, drive away Putin!
Drive away Putin, drive away Putin!¹²

Богородица, Дево, Путина прогони
Путина прогони, Путина прогони

Черная ряса, золотые погоны
Все прихожане ползут на поклоны
Призрак свободы на небесах
Гей-прайд отправлен в Сибирь в кандалах

Глава КГБ, их главный святой
Ведет протестующих в СИЗО под конвой
Чтобы Святейшего не оскорбить
Женщинам нужно рожать и любить

Срань, срань, срань Господня
Срань, срань, срань Господня
Богородица, Дево, стань феминисткой
Стань феминисткой, феминисткой стань

Церковная хвала прогневших воджей
Крестный ход из черных лимузинов
В школу к тебе собирается проповедник
Иди на урок – принеси ему денег!

Патриарх Гундяй верит в Путина
Лучше бы в Бога, сука, верил
Пояс девы не заменит митингов -
На протестах с нами Приснодева Мария!

Богородица, Дево, Путина прогони
Путина прогони, Путина прогони¹³

¹² Jeffrey Tayler, "What Pussy Riot's 'Punk Prayer' Really Said." *The Atlantic*. November 8, 2012.
<http://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2012/11/what-pussy-riots-punk-prayer-really-said/264562/>.

¹³ Текст песни Панк-молебен Богородица
Путина прогони Pussy Riot в Храме, Pussy Riot,"
Webkind.ru,
http://webkind.ru/text/56256202_62007434p90_6071039_text_pesni_pank-moleben-bogorodica-putina-progoni-pussy-riot.html

From the very first verse, the lyrics call attention to the virtually inexorable tie between religion and politics in post-Soviet Russia, while turning the relationship on its head to position support Pussy Riot's own radicalism. This close relationship between the church and the state, in spite of a constitutional separation between the two¹⁴, is a result of the anti-religion policies of the Soviet Union. These policies led to a persistent and ever-intensifying defensiveness of Russian Orthodoxy against any perceived external threat in the post-Soviet decades.

The history of the Cathedral of Christ the Savior can shed light onto the symbiosis between the state and the church in the post-Soviet Russia. The reconstruction of the cathedral in 2000 has become a stimulus for the changes in official Soviet and post-Soviet attitudes towards religion throughout the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. The Carnegie Center's analyst Maria Lipman elaborated on the role of the Russian Orthodox Church: "The government relies on the church for loyalty and support, and the church has always relied on the state's generosity....During Putin's election campaign, a number of decisions were made that were beneficial to the church, including on real estate and backing for religious schools."¹⁵ Thus, during the Putin presidencies and prime ministration, he was able to gain a significant amount of political support from the orthodox faithful by aligning his political policies harmoniously with the church's goals. This includes the creation in 2008 of a new official holiday: День Святых Петра и

¹⁴ Marc Bennetts, "In Putin's Russia, little separation between church and state," *The Washington Times*, August 13, 2012. <http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2012/aug/13/putin-russia-little-separation-church-state/?page=all>

¹⁵ Marc Bennetts, "In Putin's Russia, little separation between church and state," *The Washington Times*, August 13, 2012. <http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2012/aug/13/putin-russia-little-separation-church-state/?page=all>

Февроньи, или День Семьи, любви и верности (The Day of Saint Peter and Saint Fevronia or The Day of Family, Love and Faithfulness). Essentially the wholesome Russian Orthodox answer to the Valentine's Day of the West, this holiday was meant to encourage strong family ties in order to decrease the abysmal Russian divorce rate and increase the stagnating Russian birth rate for the good of the nation. The favorable climate created by the government for the church's actions prompted Patriarch Kirill to state during Putin's 2011 election campaign that Putin is a "miracle from God" and that he had "rectified the crooked path of history."¹⁶

Pussy Riot's appeal to the Virgin Mary is an attempt to challenge the platitude that Putin is favored by God to rule over Russia. In their prayer, they insist that truly devout believers need not become complacent in the politicization of the church, and that they should instead freely question both Putin's policies and the actions of the Patriarchy. This call to arms features a decidedly feminist slant, however, as it is the Virgin Mary and not Jesus Christ being invoked by the song. This can be interpreted as a reminder that there would be no Christianity without women, and that women can exercise their power and play a leading role in Putin's downfall.

In the next verse, the "black frock" of the priest is coupled with the "golden epaulettes" of a KGB officer, essentially equating the two figures in terms of both political power and, perhaps, moral reprehensibility. According to *The Atlantic*, "with the collapse of the Soviet Union, many Russian Orthodox priests were denounced as having collaborated with [the] country's most feared spy agency. In fact, the current Patriarch Kirill I stands

¹⁶ Marc Bennetts, "In Putin's Russia, little separation between church and state," *The Washington Times*, August 13, 2012. <http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2012/aug/13/putin-russia-little-separation-church-state/?page=all>

accused by journalists, the Helsinki Group (a prominent Russian human rights organization), and, of course, Pussy Riot, of working with the KGB.”¹⁷ This KGB connection, occurring at such a high level of the Church’s administration, strongly discredits the image of piety projected by the Patriarchy and seems to direct the song’s antipathy to the Church as an institution, and not to the parishioners, mentioned in the next line. The parishioners are portrayed as subservient, under the influence of the powerful priest (with his powerful connections) who is an actor and not to be trusted. As freedom is depicted as sacred, having “gone to heaven” in the next line, it is implied that the repression of homosexuality in Russia (a hot-button issue for some members of the anti-Putin opposition) is sinful, and that the Putin administration has defied God’s wishes.

The line between the secular municipal administration and the religious administration is further blurred with the next line about Putin, with his own prestigious KGB background, being the chief “saint” of the Church. The assertion of a separation of church and state is wholly mocked here, as the lyrics describe how the police arrest protesters for insulting the head of the Patriarchy, Kirill I, thereby protecting the myth of piety associated with him. A comparison can be drawn here to a certain Soviet practice of mythologizing Communist public figures, a practice that is the subject of travesty in the Sots Art tradition.¹⁸ The travesty in this case, however, is almost as much the result of sloppiness on the part of the Patriarchy as it is the result of the efforts of Pussy Riot and their sympathizers. In 2012, months after Pussy Riot’s arrest, a photograph of Patriarch

¹⁷ Jeffrey Tayler, “What Pussy Riot’s ‘Punk Prayer’ Really Said.” *The Atlantic*. November 8, 2012. <http://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2012/11/what-pussy-riots-punk-prayer-really-said/264562/>

¹⁸ Konstantin Kustanovich, “The Unbearable Lightness of Being the Other: Myth and Nostalgia in Sots Art,” *Slavonica*, Vol. 9, No. 1, 2003. Pg. 3.

Kirill featured on the official website of the church prompted an outcry in the public sphere, as it was discovered that the Patriarch was wearing a \$30,000 Breuguet timepiece.¹⁹ Even more scandalous was the attempt by the website's editors to delete the timepiece from the photos, an effort embarrassingly nullified when the reflection of the watch in the table upon which the Patriarch rested his hand was accidentally left un-retouched.

The chant of "Shit, shit, the Lord's shit" has been interpreted in several ways, each either adding to or detracting from the offensiveness of the song in the eyes of devout believers. Some have taken this as a derogatory denunciation of God, as in "The Lord *is* shit," although the Russian lyrics literally translate to "The Lord's shit," referring to the supposedly worthless nature of the worldly religious figures in the Patriarchy in the eyes of God. The next verse emphasizes the corruption that is increasingly tainting the Church's image, and that goes against the principles of suffering ("The march of the cross consists of black limousines"). The black limousine carries strong connotations of wealth, power, and even organized crime in Russia today, especially when paired with the ubiquitous blue bucket lights on top that allow vehicles on important government business to pass unimpeded through traffic jams. "The 'march of the cross' refers to the ceremony (krestnyi khod, in Russian), enacted during Easter celebrations, in which parishioners form processions and carry crosses from local churches around town. Intended as a sincere expression of faith, the march has been corrupted, Pussy Riot implies, both by the Church's proximity to political power and by the Yeltsin-era privilege it once enjoyed (by

¹⁹ Michael Schwartz, "\$30,000 Watch Vanishes Up Church Leader's Sleeve," *The New York Times*, April 5, 2012. http://www.nytimes.com/2012/04/06/world/europe/in-russia-a-watch-vanishes-up-orthodox-leaders-sleeve.html?_r=0

presidential decree) to import luxury cars (as well as tobacco) duty-free.”²⁰ Collections taken up by the Church from young pupils are used to symbolize early indoctrination. The implication is that the money that the pupils are being encouraged (by their parents, ostensibly) to bring to the preacher will not go to the healing of the sick or the feeding of the poor, but to the aforementioned “black limousines” and the construction of bigger, better churches.

In the final verse, Pussy Riot calls Patriarch Kirill mockingly by his secular last name Gundyayev as a reminder that he is human and not above criticism. Not only is his faith judged by the band to be misguided by Putin, but his very faith in God is questioned. Here, Pussy Riot is taking no prisoners. *The Atlantic* interprets the line about the “Virgin’s belt” to

refer to the holy relic, the ‘Belt of the Blessed Birthgiver of God’ brought from Mount Athos in Greece to the Cathedral some months before Pussy Riot’s performance there. Thousands lined up in fierce cold to pay it homage, many in the hope that the sash purportedly worn by the Virgin while she was carrying Jesus might cure their ailments. Pussy Riot was, thus, saying “Don’t look to God for help, you’ve got to get out on the streets and demand change!” The import of the next line is clear: The Virgin Mary, who is purported to stand with the downtrodden (and not, presumably, with institutions allied with authoritarian regimes), must, in Pussy Riot’s view, support them in their fight for justice.²¹

Despite the sharp profanity and jarring criticism present in these lyrics, it is apparent that the underlying message transmitted by Pussy Riot is far more nuanced than it seems at first glance. Considering its history and the place it occupies in Russia’s conscious today, the

²⁰ Jeffrey Tayler, “What Pussy Riot’s ‘Punk Prayer’ Really Said.” *The Atlantic*. November 8, 2012. <http://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2012/11/what-pussy-riots-punk-prayer-really-said/264562/>

²¹ Jeffrey Tayler, “What Pussy Riot’s ‘Punk Prayer’ Really Said.” *The Atlantic*. November 8, 2012. <http://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2012/11/what-pussy-riots-punk-prayer-really-said/264562/>

Cathedral of Christ the Savior, chosen as the venue for this song's performance, was meant to add to the nuance and symbolic meaning of the act while simultaneously acting as an amplifier for the message to reach the rest of Russia and the world. Ever since the original cathedral was built as a national monument to Russia's victory in the Patriotic War of 1812 against the invasion of Napoleon's forces, the various structures that have occupied the space at Volkhonka on the bank of the Moscow River have represented in turn the state's nationalist reading of Orthodoxy, the state's attempt and failure to replace Orthodoxy with Stalinist materialist symbolism, and ultimately a return to the nationalist reading of Orthodoxy with more than a hint of new-Russian flair.

The purpose of the original cathedral as a monument to the defeat of Napoleon incorporated the belief that the Patriotic War was a divinely influenced struggle. "For the deeply religious majority of the country, the invasion was God's punishment for Peter the Great's policy of westernization in the eighteenth century, and for the consequent betrayal of national values, crystallized in Orthodoxy. Accordingly, the spectacular victory in the war also was largely received as divine salvation. In short, the victor was associated less with the state than with the people themselves and their religion."²² A parallel can be drawn between the backlash against the religious reforms of Peter the Great and certain contemporary responses to the ongoing influx of western ideas and culture into Russia, which spiked sharply following the collapse of Communism. Indeed, Patriarch Kirill evoked the national memory of the fight against the French invasion following Pussy Riot's act in the cathedral, stating that "those who would invite us all to mock our shrines, reject our

²² Dmitri Sidorov, "National Monumentalization and the Politics of Scale: The Resurrections of the Cathedral of Christ the Savior in Moscow," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, Vol. 90, No. 3 (Sep., 2000), pp. 548-572. Accessed 11/03/13. Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1515528> . 553.

faith and, if possible, destroy our churches” are “testing the people’s ability to protect their holy places.”²³ This defensive type of response has manifested itself in the current burgeoning of Orthodox culture, evidence of which is apparent in the religion’s increasingly frequent appearance in the mainstream. For example, a 2008 article by Konstantin Petrenko states that “the presence of political dignitaries at major Christian events, unimaginable two decades ago, has become an ordinary occurrence in recent years. It underscores the special status of Russian Orthodoxy and harkens back to Russia’s tsarist past when the Church and the monarchy were inseparable.”²⁴ In its mainstream interpretation, this Orthodoxy has generally fashioned itself as an alternative to secularism and democracy.

This dichotomy is present in the differences between the two designs considered for the plan of the original cathedral. The first design competition in 1816 yielded a winning plan by the Swedish architect Alexander Vitberg, which was eventually discarded by the new tsar, Nicholas I, for not being reflective of the national culture.²⁵ The winning design from the second competition, by a Russian architect named Konstantin Ton, made the crucial change: “While Vitberg’s project was influenced by international Greek and Roman classicism, Ton’s inspiration came from Byzantium and the ancient Russian church tradition. Ton called his style ‘Byzantine, which has been related since ancient times to

²³ Nastassia Astrasheuskaya, Steve Gutterman, “Russian Orthodox Patriarch Rails Against Pussy Riot Protest,” *The Globe and Mail*. September 9, 2012. <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/world/russian-orthodox-patriarch-rails-against-pussy-riot-protest/article4531669/>

²⁴ Konstantin Petrenko, “The Kremlin and the Church: Russia’s Holy Alliance,” *Religion Dispatches*, May 7, 2008. http://www.religiondispatches.org/archive/politics/223/the_kremlin_and_the_church%3A_russia%E2%80%99s_holy_alliance.

²⁵ Dmitri Sidorov, “National Monumentalization and the Politics of Scale: The Resurrections of the Cathedral of Christ the Savior in Moscow,” 554.

elements of our nationality.”²⁶ The ancient architectural features present in Ton’s design lent themselves to highlighting Russia’s importance in the Christian world and combining religious glorification with nationalist goals. By placing imparting the Russian Empire with title of successor to the Byzantine Empire, the cathedral was to act as a signal to the world that Moscow was the Third Rome.

The original cathedral was demolished on December 5, 1931 by the Bolsheviks to strike a physical and symbolic blow against Russia’s religious establishment. The planned construction of a massive Stalinist Palace of the Soviets never occurred, however, and the foundation pit created for the Palace was eventually repurposed, serving as the world’s largest outdoor swimming pool until 1997. Although the restored version of the cathedral features many of the same architectural elements as the original, many of these features have been altered, and new ones have appeared, which collectively highlight the concerns of the Moscow authorities. Faced with a need to construct a cathedral symbolic of Russia’s renewed identity, the Moscow city authorities found themselves at the same time confronted with requests for underground parking garages, a lavish subterranean headquarters for the Moscow Patriarchy, and similar add-ons to the main structure of the cathedral. These features, which were negotiated with minimal input from the public, were viewed by many to detract from the sanctity of the space, including one Orthodox priest who added that “the pillars of the Cathedral, hollowed out by elevators, staircases and ventilation shafts, yet simulating massiveness and firmness [is] the start of the lie in the revival of churches, both in a constructive and spiritual sense. May God save us from

²⁶ Dmitri Sidorov, “National Monumentalization and the Politics of Scale: The Resurrections of the Cathedral of Christ the Savior in Moscow,” 555.

that!"²⁷ Among the Russian public, including devout Orthodox believers, the reconstruction of the cathedral was also fraught with controversy. Geographer Dmitri Sidorov writes:

One Orthodox priest conducted an unofficial opinion poll and was surprised, not that different people were against restoration, but that their arguments were based on the Bible, Russian history, and current realities: that to waste millions of dollars in a country with millions of homeless is a sin; that church construction in Russia always is associated with corruption, and that the Patriarch's current Cathedral of Epiphany is semi-empty even on important holidays. The priest himself is in favor of the reconstruction, but not at this 'Bolshevik pace.'²⁸

With Christ the Savior exhibiting a double identity as both a symbol of Russia's reversion to a nationalist-religious state and a symbol for corruption and political favoritism in the post-Soviet era, Pussy Riot's performance there was meant to draw attention to the contradictions and cracks apparent in the Russian Federation's current system of politics draped in the cloak of religion. And although the Ukrainian FEMEN group staged a topless protest in December of 2011 outside the Cathedral of Christ the Savior to protest Medvedev's election, with a similar call upon God to "Cast the Tsar Out"²⁹, Pussy Riot's protest led to much more severe consequences, as we shall see in the next section.

III

The raw footage of performance at Christ the Savior, having been montaged together with a clear audiovisual recording of "Holy Mother, Cast Putin Out!" and footage

²⁷ Dmitri Sidorov, "National Monumentalization and the Politics of Scale: The Resurrections of the Cathedral of Christ the Savior in Moscow," 564.

²⁸ Dmitri Sidorov, "National Monumentalization and the Politics of Scale: The Resurrections of the Cathedral of Christ the Savior in Moscow," 564.

²⁹ "Femen Against Church and Millionaires," *English Russia*. Posted Dec. 9, 2011 by ok4u2bu. <http://englishrussia.com/2011/12/09/femen-against-church-and-millionaires/>.

from an earlier spontaneous, illegal performance at the Epiphany Cathedral in Yelokhovo,³⁰ was uploaded to YouTube the very same day, where it was discovered by the Federal Security Service's Special Department on Terrorism following the initiation of a criminal case by the Russian Orthodox Church on February 26.³¹ According to a statement later released by the free members of Pussy Riot, this was far from the first time government agents had pursued the band; they had long been the target of Center E, an offshoot of the Ministry of the Interior's Organized Crime Directorates, disbanded in 2008.³² The statement reads that "Ordinary policemen are not as bothersome as Center E. Center E taps our telephones, breaks into our email and tries its best to prevent our concerts."³³ Proceeding from these efforts, Tolokonnikova and Alyokhina were shortly arrested and detained on charges of "hooliganism"³⁴ on March 3, the eve of the Russian presidential election which Putin was projected to win effortlessly. Samutsevich was arrested and detained roughly two weeks later, on March 16.

From the arrests onward, the defense team would later argue, proper legal procedures had not been adhered to, with Tolokonnikova and Alyokhina being "incarcerated prior to being officially charged, and in the absence of sufficient evidence to file such charges, which violates...a law that permits a maximum of 48 hours of detention

³⁰ "Pussy Riot gave a 'concert' in Yelokhovo Cathedral two days before their action in the Cathedral of Christ the Savior," *Interfax*, March 19, 2012. <http://www.interfax-religion.com/?act=news&div=9161>

³¹ "About," *Free Pussy Riot*. <http://freepussyriot.org/about>

³² Grigory Tumanov, "The Dark Doings of Russia's Centre E," *Open Democracy Russia*. August 28, 2012.

<http://www.opendemocracy.net/od-russia/grigory-tumanov/dark-doings-of-russia%E2%80%99s-centre-e>

³³ "Russian Punk Band Pussy Riot Go on Hunger Strike in Moscow," *The Week*. March 6, 2012.

<http://www.theweek.co.uk/russia/russia-election/45722/russian-punk-band-pussy-riot-go-hunger-strike-moscow>

³⁴ "Third Member of 'Pussy Riot' Charged Over Punk Prayer," *Russia Today*. March 16, 2012.

<http://rt.com/news/prime-time/third-member-pussy-riot-765/>

on suspicion.”³⁵ Furthermore, Alyokhina’s lawyer Nikolai Polozov argued during the appeal that there was insufficient evidence to support the claim that his client was indeed among the masked women performing on the soles of the cathedral.³⁶ According to press coverage from the hearing, Polozov made a speech emphasizing that it “was the investigation’s responsibility to prove detention was necessary due to one of the following: the suspected person may interfere with investigation, flee from justice or destroy evidence,”³⁷ criteria which he argued did not apply to Alyokhina. However, during the March 15 appeal against the pre-trial detention, regardless of any procedural errors on the part of the authorities, the judge would quickly side with the prosecution, who argued that the magnitude of the crime and the potential for flight or obstruction of justice was too great to release the women.³⁸ The appeal was rejected, and the decision was made to hold the women without bail until April 24.

Tolokonnikova and Alyokhina had responded to their arrest with a hunger strike “in protest against being held in jail away from their young children until their case comes to trial in April.”³⁹ Although as of March 12, 2013, according to a letter written by Alyokhina to friends on the outside, the hunger strike had apparently ended⁴⁰, incarceration would begin to take an increasingly personal toll on the members of Pussy Riot. In late March 2013 their lawyers turned their attention to the increasingly invasive privacy breaches

³⁵ “About,” *Free Pussy Riot*. <http://freepussyriot.org/about>

³⁶ Roman Priyatkin, “Pussy Riot Case: Detailed Report on Rejection of Appeal Against Pre-Trial Arrests,” *Free Pussy Riot*. <http://freepussyriot.org/news/pussy-riot-case-detailed-report-rejection-appeal-against-pre-trial-arrests>

³⁷ Priyatkin, “Pussy Riot Case”.

³⁸ Privatkin, “Pussy Riot Case”.

³⁹ “Russian Punk Band Pussy Riot Go on Hunger Strike in Moscow,” *The Week*. March 6, 2012. <http://www.theweek.co.uk/russia/russia-election/45722/russian-punk-band-pussy-riot-go-hunger-strike-moscow>

⁴⁰ “Машино Письмо,” *Радио Эхо Москвы*, March 23, 2012. <http://echo.msk.ru/blog/alekhina/871468-echo/>

surrounding the case. In addition to round-the-clock video surveillance of the women in jail, Samutsevich's lawyer Violetta Volkhova complained, the police "posted all of the girls' personal information on the net. It is for this reason that Samutsevich initially hid her real name and called herself Irina Lokteva."⁴¹ The public release of the names and addresses of the Pussy Riot band members resulted in several threats being made against their relatives, including Alyokhina's son.⁴²

As the pre-trial proceedings and eventual trial ran their course, the court demonstrated a consistent disinterest in protecting the defendants from external harm, contrasting conspicuously with the meticulous efforts to conceal the identities of the prosecution. Reports from the trial revealed that Moscow's Khamovnichesky District Court, having initially committed to streaming a live online broadcast of the proceedings "in a bid to show transparency"⁴³, first declined to allow filming of the prosecutors or judge in the broadcast, and then turned off the broadcast altogether on the second day of the trial.⁴⁴ Between late March and early July, the defense's appeals for bail and release were repeatedly rejected, and the court threatened to revoke the parental rights of Alyokhina and Tolokonnikova,⁴⁵ leading to increased speculation by the international media as Amnesty International led a call for action. Amnesty International stated that

Since the three women's arrest, some of their family members as well as one of their lawyers have received threats. Even though the police and the

⁴¹ Robert Gally, ed. "Court Refuses to Release 3rd Pussy Riot Band Member, Cites Safety," *Gazeta.ru English*. March 28, 2012. http://en.gazeta.ru/news/2012/03/28/a_4108945.shtml

⁴² "Pussy Riot Suspect's Family Receive Death Threats—Lawyer," *RIA Novosti*. March 28, 2012. <http://en.ria.ru/society/20120328/172447275.html>

⁴³ AFP, "2 Plaintiffs Accept Pussy Riot Members Apology," *Free Pussy Riot*. July 31, 2012. <http://freepussyriot.org/news/2-plaintiffs-accept-pussy-riot-members-apology>

⁴⁴ AFP, "2 Plaintiffs Accept Pussy Riot Members Apology".

⁴⁵ Jen Carlson, "A Timeline of the Russian Punk Band Pussy Riot's Arrest and Trial," *Gothamist*. August 8, 2012. http://gothamist.com/2012/08/08/a_timeline_of_the_russian_punk_band.php

Moscow Prosecutor's Office have been informed about these threats, there appears to be no investigation into the incidents. In addition, the tax authorities have reportedly blocked the bank account of the lawyers' association where the lawyer of one of the three women works. The lawyers think that this is intended to put pressure on the lawyers to withdraw from the case.⁴⁶

Following months of repeatedly prolonged detention, the formal charges against the defendants were presented to the court on July 4. "Hooliganism, committed by an organized group of persons by prior conspiracy motivated by religious hatred"⁴⁷ was the charge brought upon all three women under Part 2 of Article 213 of the Criminal Code.⁴⁸ The published bill of indictment, which featured testimony from ten witnesses and nine victims, emphasized the shocking effect of the band's actions, but especially their dress. It reads that "the short dresses, showing certain parts of the body...increased the danger of the crime they committed, giving it an outlook of a deliberately malevolent and carefully planned event to debase the feelings and beliefs of the numerous believers of the orthodox Christian faith, and diminishing the spiritual foundations of the state."⁴⁹ The overt political messages that permeated the act are either conspicuously ignored or heavily downplayed in favor of the spiritual dimension in this document, with the emphasis squarely placed upon the "severe spiritual pain"⁵⁰ inflicted on the victims in the cathedral. The spiritual pain, magnified by the timing of the performance—which preceded Lent by only a week—

⁴⁶ AI-Index: EUR 46/017/2012, "Alleged Feminist Punk Singers Detained," in "Amnesty International: Urgent Call for Actions + Take Action," *Free Pussy Riot*. <http://freepussyriot.org/news/amnesty-international-urgent-call-actions-take-action>

⁴⁷ "Участниц Pussy Riot официально обвинили в хулиганстве по мотивам религиозной ненависти," *Росбалт Москва*, June 4, 2012. <http://www.rosbalt.ru/moscow/2012/06/04/988527.html>

⁴⁸ "Pussy Riot Indictment Posted," *SOVA Center for Information and Analysis*. July 6, 2012. <http://www.sova-center.ru/en/misuse/news-releases/2012/06/d24590/>

⁴⁹ Daria Zagvzdina, ed. Semyon Kvasha, "Pussy Riot Indicted for Licentious Dance and High Kicks," *Gazeta.ru*, July 19, 2012. http://en.gazeta.ru/news/2012/07/19/a_4686637.shtml

⁵⁰ Daria Zagvzdina, "Pussy Riot Indicted for Licentious Dance and High Kicks."

and the presence of a Christ relic—a swatch of the Holy Tunic worn during the Passion—is attested to by all of the victims in the indictment documents.

The testimonies echo, however, the public statement made during a Moscow church service by Patriarch Kirill following a month of silence over the Pussy Riot performance. He uses the platform of the service to voice his condemnation of the act in front of an audience of devout believers, stating that Russia “will have no future if sacred shrines are desecrated, if this desecration is seen by some as virtue, as some proper expression of political protest, as some appropriate action or harmless joke.”⁵¹ By using his position as head of the Church to set a precedent among the Orthodox faithful, the Patriarch demonstrated once again the enormous political power of his office. Although a rift in the Church between those who condemned Pussy Riot and those who petitioned for their freedom and forgiveness would gradually make itself visible, as we shall later see, Kirill, by virtue of his power, projected an image of a unified church position on the act at Christ the Savior that appealed to the conservative and nationalist sentiments of the majority of the country.

Pussy Riot’s defense team would, however, discover another, more immediately pressing incident of ideological repetition during the trial. The official bill of indictment reveals notably similar wordings in the victims’ evaluations of the band, their performance, and their own indignation. The homogeneity in the nine victims’ testimonies is concentrated not only in their descriptions of the personal trauma inflicted upon them as witnesses to the act, but also in their round condemnation of feminist ideology. Their

⁵¹ “Pussy Riot ‘Desecrated’ Cathedral—Russian Church Head,” *RIA Novosti*. March 24, 2012. <http://en.rian.ru/russia/20120324/172366988.html>

uniformly voiced belief in the irreconcilable nature of feminism with Russian Orthodoxy expands the symbolic meaning of the performance beyond Pussy Riot's overt political message. The victims demonstrate an acute awareness of the intentionally subversive feminist currents of the performance, including the presence of women in a zone restricted to males, the refusal to adhere to conservative church dress codes and the lyrics which ask the Virgin Mary to become a feminist. Even the dances performed on the soles are described as "sexually debauched," adding an entirely new dimension, that of sexual exploitation, to the performance. While the band did consciously politicize the female body, using it to challenge the dynamics of the cathedral and Russia as a whole, allegations of sexual debauchery neglect the context of the band's punk aesthetic; while it is understandable that the audience of parishioners did not possess a strong background of exposure to punk moshing, the implication that the band intended to sexualize their dancing contradicts their own proclaimed purposes. This is a testament to the associations the victims had with feminism: "All the victims were filled with indignation because Pussy Riot called for the Mother of God to become a feminist." They all said in their testimony that feminism is not the fight for women's rights but the destruction of family values: "They laugh at the grand destiny of the mother—to bear children—and call for senseless protest or an all-out war."⁵² Such sentiments are entirely in line with the Moscow Patriarchy's unyieldingly defensive stance against any threat to orthodox religious and social codes, as outlined earlier by Patriarch Kirill.

⁵² Daria Zagvzdina, ed. Semyon Kvasha, "Pussy Riot Indicted for Licentious Dance and High Kicks," *Gazeta.ru*, July 19, 2012. http://en.gazeta.ru/news/2012/07/19/a_4686637.shtml

Throughout the duration of the trial, Judge Marina Syrova remained reluctant to allow much from the defense in terms of challenging the plaintiffs or calling their own witnesses to the stand, a trend journalists present at the trial were quick to point out. Miriam Elder's impression of the proceedings as she covered the trial portrays an uphill battle for the defense:

Guards, armed with submachine guns, grabbed journalists and threw them out of the room at will. The judge, perched in front of a shabby Russian flag, refused to look at the defense. And the police dog—a 100lb black Rottweiler—no longer sat in the corner she had occupied since the start of Russia's trial of the year, but barked and foamed at the mouth as if she were in search of blood....After five days' sitting in the cage, some days for 10 hours at a time, the women appear exhausted. Violetta Volkova, one of their lawyers, said they were being tortured—denied food and adequate sleep.⁵³

Aware of these details being pounced upon by journalists eager to feed into the frenzy of Pussy Riot support, the court chose not to take a softer approach with its methods, but simply to limit the press coverage of the trial. Beginning with the above-mentioned cessation of the live video broadcast of the trial, the judge then moved for the trial to take place in a smaller courtroom on the second day of proceedings, restricting the capacity of the court to allow journalists entry. This was accompanied by a barring of reporters with cameras from the courtroom⁵⁴, and an announcement by the court press secretary on the third day that journalists reporting on-line would not be allowed to “disclose the factual circumstances of a case on which witnesses were testifying.”⁵⁵ These restrictions reveal a strategy on the part of the Khamovnichesky Court to keep the trial in favor of the

⁵³ Miriam Elder, “Pussy Riot Trial “Worse than Soviet Era,” *The Guardian*, August 3, 2012.

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2012/aug/03/pussy-riot-trial-russia>

⁵⁴ “Pussy Riot's Second Day of Trial—Live Updates,” *RAPSI Russian Legal Information Agency*, July 31, 2012.

http://rapsinews.com/judicial_news/20120731/264002084.html

⁵⁵ “Media Coverage of Pussy Riot Trial Restricted By Court,” *RAPSI Russian Legal Information Agency*, August 1, 2012. http://rapsinews.com/judicial_news/20120801/264043667.html

prosecution while attempting to influence public opinion surrounding the band. Within Russia, the reports from mainstream media outlets contrasted sharply with coverage from the blogosphere in the wake of the performance, and the national response of Russians proved to be largely shaped along the lines of which news sources they subscribed to.

IV

According to the Levada Center poll conducted in July of 2012, “a mere 5 percent of respondents...said that the women should be let off without punishment, only 15 percent supported a jail term of more than two years. Most called for a lighter punishment, and 29 percent said the women should be sentenced to community service.”⁵⁶ As we shall see, the factors that drove public opinion on the case of the Pussy Riot trial in Russia transcend any attempts to seamlessly correlate opinions and demographic norms.

To begin with, Patriarch Kirill attempted to reinvigorate a commonly held defensive stance among Russian Orthodox believers with his public comments on Pussy Riot’s performance. This stance, having previously taken root with Orthodox believers in the post-Soviet era, directed how most church-going Russians would respond to the act in Christ the Savior Cathedral. Vladimir Putin, having owed his reelection primarily to the conservative Orthodox believers, would defend the arrest of the band, commenting on the arrest of the band to reporters in London that “there is nothing good in this. I wouldn’t really like to comment, but I think if the girls were, let’s say, in Israel, and insulted something in Israel... it wouldn’t be so easy for them to leave.” If they “desecrated some

⁵⁶ Andrew Roth and Robert Mackey, “Russia Assigns Bodyguards to Judge Ahead of Verdict in Pussy Riot Trial,” *The New York Times*, August 16, 2012. <http://thelede.blogs.nytimes.com/2012/08/16/russia-assigns-bodyguards-to-judge-ahead-of-verdict-in-pussy-riot-trial/>

Muslim holy site, we wouldn't even have had time to detain them. Nonetheless, I don't think they should be judged too severely for this. But the final decision rests with the courts—I hope the court will deliver a correct, well-founded ruling.”⁵⁷

Putin's statement attempts to appease as many groups as possible. He first sets the official precedent of condemning the moral and religious slights of the performance, while neglecting to mention the anti-Putin, anti-corruption message of the lyrics. He then opines that the band should not receive the maximum sentence, a view held by the majority of polled Russians, as seen above. By contrasting Russia's religious policies with those of Israel and the Middle East, Putin subtly scoffs at the vocal outcry for Pussy Riot's freedom, asserting that a measured degree of punishment is a reasonable reaction to the act. In October 2013, after the sentencing of Alyokhina and Tolokonnikova to two years each in remote penal colonies, Putin would come under scrutiny for casually referring to the sentence as a *dvushechka*, or 'a little two'. Sergey Chernov of the St. Petersburg times elaborates on the semantics of the word, writing that “it sounds loutish, somewhat tender and almost lustful, giving the idea that a man who has it in his vocabulary has certain power, finds nearly sexual pleasure in imposing it on those who cannot defend themselves and does not care about what others think about it.”⁵⁸ Whether or not this reads too deeply into Putin's choice of the word, *dvushechka* does appear to carry an unmistakable nonchalance, reflective of the attitude Putin projected onto the band throughout the trial. Putin generally remained aloof from the Pussy Riot scandal, cultivating an image of unperturbed composure to vitiate the negative publicity surrounding his alleged role in the

⁵⁷ Miriam Elder, “Pussy Riot Trial: Vladimir Putin Calls for Leniency,” *The Guardian*. August 3, 2012. <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2012/aug/03/pussy-riot-trial-vladimir-putin>

⁵⁸ Sergey Chernov, “Chernov's Choice,” *The St. Petersburg Times*. October 10, 2012. Issue #1730. http://www.sptimes.ru/index.php?action_id=2&story_id=36329

trial. In a documentary created to mark the occasion of Putin's sixtieth birthday, he reiterates his position on the verdict: "My first reaction was that they should ask believers for forgiveness and that would have been that. But they kept building it up, and so the whole case ended in the court slapping them with two-year jail terms, so there you have it. I have nothing to do with this. They wanted it and they got it."⁵⁹ Putin also used the documentary as an opportunity to comment on the Mikhail Khodorkovsky trial, seen by many in the Russian opposition movement and the international press to pair with the Pussy Riot trial "to symbolize the Kremlin's crackdown on dissent."⁶⁰ The symbolic bond between the two is strengthened by the fact that the two trials even occurred in the same courtroom of the Khamovnichesky court. The parallels would be immediately recognized, as Khodorkovsky himself would write in a piece for *The Guardian*, by the strong visual presence of "the aquarium," the glass cage in which the defendants were kept. Khodorkovsky writes of the aquarium:

They made it especially for me and Platon Lebedev, "just for us", after the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) declared that keeping defendants behind bars is degrading and violates the convention on human rights. This is a subtle and sophisticated way of mocking people who dared to file a complaint with the ECHR: ah, OK, so you say that a cage with bars is bad; well then, here's a cage made of glass, with a little porthole through which you can talk to your lawyers, but you need to twist and contort yourself every which way to actually be able to speak through it. In the summer you feel like a tropical fish in that glass cage—it is hot, and the air from the air conditioner in the courtroom does not circulate through the glass.⁶¹

⁵⁹ "Putin Blasts Pussy Riot, Opposition In Birthday Documentary," *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*. March 24, 2013. <http://www.rferl.org/content/putin-blasts-pussy-riot-and-opposition-in-birthday-documentary/24732618.html>

⁶⁰ "Putin Blasts Pussy Riot, Opposition in Birthday Documentary," *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*. March 24, 2013. <http://www.rferl.org/content/putin-blasts-pussy-riot-and-opposition-in-birthday-documentary/24732618.html>

⁶¹ Mikhail Khodorkovsky, "Pussy Riot Trial: I've Been There—How Can These Women Endure It?" *The Guardian*, August 6, 2012. <http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2012/aug/06/pussy-riot-trial-shame-russia>

The disregard for the spirit of the ECHR's ruling was an assertion by the court that defendants would be treated and judged on the court's terms, setting the precedent that the Russian justice system is uniquely tailored to the needs of the country and should not abide by the rules which outside entities attempt to impose upon it. Many Russians would respond to the Pussy Riot trial with similar contempt for liberal Western sensibilities, viewing the accusations of human rights abuse as simply a masking device for a resurgence of Cold War propaganda tactics.

On one extreme of the spectrum, some Russians subscribe to the belief, vocally espoused and disseminated by the Canadian anti-globalization non-profit Centre for Research on Globalization, that Pussy Riot is directly backed by the US State Department and was used as a tool to undermine the moral and political foundations of Russia to pave the way for foreign economic interests. In an article on its website, the organization states that

the West, and more specifically, the corporate-financier interests of Wall Street and London, see Russia's current government as a barrier to not only the return to the unmitigated plundering of the Russian people they had enjoyed in the 1990s, but a check and balance inhibiting their hegemonic ambitions globally. The West has propped up with money and political support the opposition movement from which 'Pussy Riot' has emanated.⁶²

This belief turns Pussy Riot into a foreign agent in much the same way that a bill passed through the Duma in July, 2012 forced NGOs working in Russia to declare themselves

⁶² Tony Cartalucci, "Russia's 'Pussy Riot' Stunt Supported by US State Department," *Global Research*, August 18, 2012. <http://www.globalresearch.ca/russia-s-pussy-riot-stunt-supported-by-us-state-department/32395>

'foreign agents,'⁶³ drawing attention to a larger movement to out peoples' foreign connections in the wake of the divisive Russian presidential election. The equation of opposition to government policies with sedition or immorality is a feature of Russian political discourse that has done much to hinder the burgeoning of a civil society free from the threat of imprisonment. Another belief, gravitating far into the realm of conspiracy theory, is demonstrated by at least two people involved in the trial: the lawyers for Vladimir Potan'kin, one of the injured parties who worked at Christ the Savior as a security guard. During an interview, the lawyers alleged that the Pussy Riot incident could

'...soon escalate into events comparable to the explosion of the twin towers on September 11th in America...It was proven that the act had been committed not by the American government or by the CIA but by forces above them. For instance, all the employees of the [WTC] had been informed through secret masonic channels that they should not report to work on September 11th.' When the interviewer asked, 'Do you mean that the Pussy Riot act and the terrorist attack in the U.S. were organized by the same people?', the lawyers responded, 'In the first instance it was a satanic group, and in the second it was the global government. But at the highest level both are connected—by Satan.'⁶⁴

Again, the outcry that Pussy Riot should not simply be taken at face value, and that they are involved with greater, reveals hidden forces that are bent on chipping away at the moral and political foundations of Russia. No evidence is given, of course, but when notions such as this are given an outlet in the press, it plants the seed of doubt in the minds of readers, and can contribute to the general zeitgeist in the twentieth and twenty-first century Russian history of mistrust of Western powers on both moral and political grounds.

⁶³ Marc Bennetts, "Russian Parliament Approves NGO 'Foreign Agents' Law," *RIA Novosti*. July 6, 2012. <http://en.rian.ru/russia/20120706/174436993.html>

⁶⁴ Masha Lipman, "Putin's Religious War Against Pussy Riot," *The New Yorker*. July 24, 2012. <http://www.newyorker.com/online/blogs/newsdesk/2012/07/putins-religious-war-against-pussy-riot.html>

It is, therefore, no surprise that the call for maximum punishment for Pussy Riot was taken up by nationalist and religious organizations in Russia, including two very different groups: vigilante Orthodox “Christian culture warriors,”⁶⁵ who began patrolling the streets in the wake of the Pussy Riot trial, and the Kremlin-backed Youth Democratic Anti-Fascist Movement (Nashi), who mobilized forces to counter the anti-Putin rallies of late 2011. Nashi, the most well-organized of the two, functions as an arm of the Kremlin in a unique way. During the parliamentary election protests of 2011, “it was the first time the youth group Nashi had been deployed for the purpose it was created—to put down pro-democracy protests similar to those that successfully swept post-Soviet Ukraine and Georgia in 2004 and 2005.”⁶⁶ By arriving at the scene of opposition rallies, Nashi attempted to demonstrate for the domestic and international media outlets that the anti-Putin protesters were a minority, and that the majority could take charge of the public spectacle themselves.

After the Pussy Riot performance, however, Nashi took on a new, more direct role in helping the Kremlin undermine opposition. Rather than simply drumming up anti-Pussy Riot sentiment among Russians by projecting a united front of Russian nationalism, Nashi began to get involved in the investigation into Pussy Riot, with the leader of its special investigation division, Konstantin Goloskov, offering \$1,600 out of his own pocket to

⁶⁵ Robert Mackey, “After Pussy Riot Verdict, Christian Culture Warriors Run Riot in Moscow,” *The Lede*, *New York Times*, August 30, 2012. <http://thelede.blogs.nytimes.com/2012/08/30/following-pussy-riot-verdict-christian-culture-warriors-run-riot-in-moscow/>

⁶⁶ Miriam Elder, “Russian election: police, troops and youth groups stifle anti-Putin protests,” *The Guardian*, December 6, 2011. <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2011/dec/06/russian-election-anti-putin-protests>

anyone who could provide information on the fugitive members of Pussy Riot.⁶⁷ With two members having left Russia and 12 to 14 remaining in the country⁶⁸, Goloskov saw an opportunity to break down the group's best defense: its anonymity.

This kind of vigilantism was taken to another level by the extralegal methods of several groups of Russian Orthodox activists following the sentencing of Pussy Riot. For instance, the Moscow-based Holy Rus' movement, comprised of volunteers, was formed to "remind all apostates and theomachists that it is our land and we forbid blasphemous, offensive actions and statements against the Orthodox religion and our people."⁶⁹ The movement, ostensibly peaceful, was to function as a kind of neighborhood watch, surveying the city for offensive activity and detaining the perpetrators before alerting the police. The rather arbitrary nature of the activity the group hoped to monitor, which would in essence be offensive but not necessarily illegal behavior ("sneering at priests,"⁷⁰ for example), creates the potential for harmful extralegal retaliation.

For instance, another group, led by Dmitri Tsorionov and Andrey Kaplin, responded to the efforts of several Pussy Riot supporters with confrontations that, on one occasion, spilled over into violence as they ripped a Pussy Riot t-shirt off of a supporter.⁷¹ The confrontations, which were filmed and posted to the Russian Vkontakte website, targeted

⁶⁷ Anna Nemtsova, "Pussy Riot Witch Hunt by Kremlin-Backed 'Youth Movement'", *The Daily Beast*. September 30, 2012. <http://www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2012/09/30/pussy-riot-witch-hunt-by-kremlin-backed-youth-movement.html>

⁶⁸ CNN Wire Staff, "Two Pussy Riot Members Flee Russia to Recruit Foreign Feminists," *CNN*. August 27, 2012. <http://www.cnn.com/2012/08/27/world/europe/russia-pussy-riot>

⁶⁹ Alina Lobzina, "Orthodox Activists Create Moscow Patrol Squads," *The Moscow News*. August 22, 2012. <http://themoscownews.com/local/20120822/190122832.html>

⁷⁰ Alina Lobzina, "Orthodox Activists Create Moscow Patrol Squads."

⁷¹ Robert Mackey, "After Pussy Riot Verdict, Christian Culture Warriors Run Riot in Moscow," *The Lede, The New York Times*. August 30, 2012. <http://thelede.blogs.nytimes.com/2012/08/30/following-pussy-riot-verdict-christian-culture-warriors-run-riot-in-moscow/>

first a play about the Pussy Riot trial at the Moscow Teatr.doc, and then the somewhat eccentric director of the G-Spot Museum of Erotic Art, Aleksandr Donskoy, “a former politician who ‘announced the creation of his Party of Love’... ‘by holding a demonstration in support of Pussy Riot in which party activists swam in a fountain at the GUM shopping center next to Red Square’”⁷². RIA Novosti, a Russian state-run news outlet, identified the state television crew that accompanied the activists as NTV, “a pro-government channel known for its scathing propaganda attacks on the Kremlin’s enemies, including opposition activists.”⁷³ NTV, owned by Gazprombank, a subsidiary of the Gazprom public joint-stock company (50.002% of whose stocks are owned by the Russian government), is one of the top three highest rated television channels in Russia.⁷⁴ In a country where the vast majority of citizens name television as their primary news source⁷⁵, NTV has an influential bearing on public opinion.

These attempts to bring street justice to any moral offenders exemplify an increasingly conservative and active religious sphere in Russia. The United Russia political party’s Vladimir Sidyakin, in an effort to gain a political edge from this trend, introduced to the Russian Duma what is known as the Blasphemy Bill. The bill, which will be up for review in the spring of 2013, would criminalize “public offence to or humiliation of worship services or other religious rites and ceremonies by religious associations professing religions constituting an integral part of the historical heritage of Russia’s peoples” and

⁷² Robert Mackey, “After Pussy Riot Verdict, Christian Culture Warriors Run Riot in Moscow,” *The Lede, The New York Times*. August 30, 2012. <http://thelede.blogs.nytimes.com/2012/08/30/following-pussy-riot-verdict-christian-culture-warriors-run-riot-in-moscow/>

⁷³ Alexey Eremenko, “Orthodox Radicals Find ‘G-Spot’ in Moscow,” *RIA Novosti*. August 29, 2012. <http://en.rian.ru/russia/20120829/175501438.html>

⁷⁴ Sarah Oates and Gillian McCormack, “The Media and Political Communication,” in Stephen White, Richard Sakwa and Henry E. Hale eds. *Developments in Russian Politics*. (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010), 120.

⁷⁵ Oates and McCormack, “The Media and Political Communication,” 119.

“public offence to the religious convictions and feelings of citizens.”⁷⁶ The delay of the bill, which was originally introduced in September 2012, results from the prevalence of yet undefined terms in the wording of the bill that would render its interpretation arbitrary, which could harbor the potential to inspire Holy Rus'-like activity on a much larger scale.

Attempts by these groups to push through a particular ultraconservative brand of Russian Orthodoxy in the wake of Pussy Riot's performance and trial has not gone unopposed by members of the religious community in Russia. In one of the most well-known cases, a “заштатный клирик” or “a cleric not on staff”⁷⁷ based in the city of Tambov posted an open letter on Facebook⁷⁸ addressed to Patriarch Kirill in support of Pussy Riot, decrying what he viewed as the rampant corruption of the Russian Orthodox Church and calling for both church reforms and mercy for the accused women. Sergey Baranov's letter, which as of this writing has received 4, 481 likes and has been shared 1,897 times, denounces the church's close ties to the Russian government, and what Baranov views as the hypocrisy of the Orthodox victims involved in the Pussy Riot trial. He writes:

God forgive me, but I do not believe either those Orthodox victims, or those who refer to themselves as the Orthodox community. Why? Because, in my opinion, the true believers—they know the Scriptures, they know that the

⁷⁶ “Analysis on Russia's New Blasphemy Law,” *The Institute on Religion & Public Policy*. February 28, 2013. <http://www.religionandpolicy.org/reports/the-institute-country-reports-and-legislative-analysis/europe-and-eurasia/russia/analysis-on-russia-s-new-blasphemy-law-2013/>

⁷⁷ Andrey Tselikov, “Russia: Pussy Riot and the Orthodox Reformation,” *Global Voices*. August 21, 2012. <http://globalvoicesonline.org/2012/08/21/russia-pussy-riot-the-orthodox-reformation/>

⁷⁸ Sergey Baranov, “Открытое письмо Патриарху Кириллу,” *Facebook*. August 18, 2012. <https://www.facebook.com/notes/%D1%81%D0%B5%D1%80%D0%B3%D0%B5%D0%B9-%D0%B1%D0%B0%D1%80%D0%B0%D0%BD%D0%BE%D0%B2/%D0%BE%D1%82%D0%BA%D1%80%D1%8B%D1%82%D0%BE%D0%B5-%D0%BF%D0%B8%D1%81%D1%8C%D0%BC%D0%BE-%D0%BF%D0%B0%D1%82%D1%80%D0%B8%D0%B0%D1%80%D1%85%D1%83-%D0%BA%D0%B8%D1%80%D0%B8%D0%BB%D0%BB%D1%83/268048409972818>

Lord has commanded us, they know what mercy is, they know what forgiveness and LOVE are! They know, in the end, what is adequate.⁷⁹

Baranov, who asks in the letter to be defrocked in protest of the criminal case against Pussy Riot, is part of a small but noticeable movement which some in Russia have compared to the Protestant Reformation. The movement is characterized by growing discontent in the Orthodox community with the Church's leadership and administration, accompanied by calls for modernization and a more Scripture-based approach to religion.⁸⁰ In 2011, after venting their grievances with the Orthodox Church, three priests set the example for Baranov to later follow by being "dishonorably discharged"⁸¹ in the city of Izhevsk. Since then, encouraged by the developments of the Pussy Riot trial, numerous bloggers supportive of reforms have entered the fray of religious discourse, contributing to the perception that a schism is developing within the Church.

To a large degree, the opinions of the Russian public correspond with the news sources they trust and subscribe to. From the Christ the Savior performance onward, discourse surrounding Pussy Riot was characterized by visual means of ideological transmission. Filmed rallies, the use of visual symbols such as the balaclava and the cross, and photographs of clashes between protesters and the OMAN riot police could quickly be released to the press with little accompanying analysis. In post-Soviet Russia, however, a stark distinction exists between televised news and the continually developing blogosphere. The nuances of this idiosyncratic relationship are expounded by Sarah Oates and Gillian McCormack:

⁷⁹ Sergey Baranov, "Открытое письмо Патриарху Кириллу," Baranov's translation.

⁸⁰ Andrey Tselikov, "Russia: Pussy Riot and the Orthodox Reformation."

⁸¹ Andrey Tselikov, "Russia: Pussy Riot and the Orthodox Reformation."

[The Russian focus group participants] were aware that much of the news reporting on state television is selective, unbalanced or biased, but many of them viewed that as appropriate. Having lived through the economic and political chaos of the 1990s, they placed little value on wide-ranging political discussion. They viewed public debate as often leading to poor policy and economic chaos. Many of the respondents made clear that they believed the role of state-run television was to provide central authority and order in troubled times. This explains what might seem a paradox: Russian citizens appear to know that state-run television essentially functions as a propaganda machine for the authorities, but they often approve of this as they value order over democracy.⁸²

This paradox manifested itself in much of the state-television audience adopting the conservative view of the Pussy Riot trial, in line with the beliefs of the Moscow Patriarchate, while followers of independent or social media feeds, such as LiveJournal blogs and Vkontakte, had a higher tendency to adopt a more liberal stance. With television spots at a premium for opposition perspectives, supporters of Pussy Riot, whether or not they belonged to the opposition, found themselves confined to the Internet in their search for like-minded opinions.

V

Pussy Riot and Russia's opposition movement, the latter of which came to the foreground of international politics as rallies gained intensity during the Duma elections of 2011, have often been mistakenly equated with one another in ideological terms. Aside from their common desire to see an end to Putin's presidency, these comparisons are largely superficial. Pussy Riot and their objectives are extreme by even liberal Russian standards. As "self-confessed descendants of the surrealists and the Russian futurists, determined to radically, even violently, change society,"⁸³ the group rejects the notion that

⁸² Oates and McCormack, "The Media and Political Communication," 129.

⁸³ Vadim Nikitin, "The Wrong Reasons to Back Pussy Riot," *The New York Times*. August 20, 2012. http://www.nytimes.com/2012/08/21/opinion/the-wrong-reasons-to-back-pussy-riot.html?_r=4&

simple transparency and free elections will cure all of Russia's ills. Through demonstrations and acts bent on shocking the public out of complacency, they protest against "the discrimination of sexual minorities and the anti-gay law excluding displays of homosexuality that could supposedly influence children; the general dysfunction of the education and healthcare systems; and the gradual secularization of the Church through its businesslike behavior."⁸⁴ Their ideology is broad and complex, but also unyielding in the face of public criticism from both the Right and the Left. It is because of their uncompromising, un-populist agenda, and their willingness to subvert long-established cultural norms, that opposition leaders like Alexey Navalny have distanced themselves from Pussy Riot. In his reaction to the Christ the Savior performance, he states: "I seem to have missed the initial goal of the whole protest action. Some prefer calling it a piece of art. I'd rather characterize their performance as a misstep," while Oleg Kozlovsky, another prominent member of the opposition, agreed that "it's very dangerous when one fails to see the limits."⁸⁵

A central feature of the opposition's tactics, this unwillingness to push political limits to the breaking point in the name of lofty ideologies pays testament to the intense pragmatism of the movement, which values action and results above all else:

...the new civil society activists are democrats with a small "d" and an even smaller appetite for the ideological grandstanding and deal-making of transactional politics. Such pragmatic localism better reflects the worries of ordinary people, who place corruption, abuse of privilege and lack of

⁸⁴ Anna Derinova, "Russian Opposition Looks to Move Forward After Pussy Riot Trial," *Waging Nonviolence*. August 23, 2012. <http://wagingnonviolence.org/feature/russian-opposition-looks-to-move-forward-after-pussy-riot-trial/>

⁸⁵ Anna Derinova, "Russian Opposition Looks to Move Forward After Pussy Riot Trial," *Waging Nonviolence*. August 23, 2012. <http://wagingnonviolence.org/feature/russian-opposition-looks-to-move-forward-after-pussy-riot-trial/>

accountability well above authoritarianism on the list of the country's biggest problems. A December 2010 Levada poll found that more than half of Russians prefer law and order even if it comes at the expense of some democratic rights.⁸⁶

The opposition's leadership, in its efforts to grow the movement's political influence, opted for an all-inclusive approach with the goal of fostering a vibrant civil society that could push for accountability and transparency in the government to lend more power to the voting public. Through encompassing everybody from liberals to rightists, nationalists to Bolsheviks, and environmental activists to anarchists, the movement sought to balance its composition and achieve a diverse following for a relatively moderate platform. The moderate nature of the movement would prove to be at the root of its success, as "the most adversarial civil society groups tend to be the least successful. This is not just a result of state repression but because broad antigovernment protests end up alienating government loyalists, who remain a strong majority of the population."⁸⁷ The cooperation of these groups, which manifested itself in the successful planning and realization of massive rallies in the streets of Russia's urban centers, did allow the movement to experience a degree of recognition that would have been nearly impossible to manage had just one group been represented.

Pussy Riot's "adversarial" nature might have prevented their full acceptance by the majority of opposition members, but they presented the opposition with a moment for introspection after Putin's reelection left many uncertain about their future course of action. The prison sentences received by Tolokonnikova and Alyokhina drew attention to

⁸⁶ Vadim Nikitin, "The Rebirth of Russian Civil Society," *The Nation*. July 18, 2011.

<http://www.thenation.com/article/162108/rebirth-russian-civil-society>

⁸⁷ Vadim Nikitin, "The New Civic Activism in Russia," *The Nation*. October 20, 2010.

<http://www.thenation.com/article/155496/new-civic-activism-russia>

the inequities in the Russian justice system that plagued opposition leaders and participants from the start, and shed light on the sacrifices demanded of dissenters. Female activists, especially mothers like Alyokhina and Tolokonnikova, were often targeted in particularly dispiriting ways following their arrests or investigations, being threatened with losing custody of their children and having their sex lives publicly scrutinized and condemned. Maria Baronova, an active opposition figure at the time of the Pussy Riot trial, was spied on by social-service workers as they evaluated whether or not she was a fit mother to her then 6-year-old son as she was put under investigation for coordinating rallies.⁸⁸ Ksenia Sobchak, Russia's famous socialite-cum-political journalist and then-girlfriend of Ilya Yashin of the People's Freedom Party, had her apartment raided in June 2012 by investigators who confiscated \$1.7 million in hard foreign currency.⁸⁹ The money, ostensibly seized as part of an investigation into possible tax fraud, was taken during a rash of raids against opposition figures. What stands out, however, are the intimidation tactics used against Sobchak in her own apartment, where Yashin happened to be spending the night. Andrew Meier comments on the situation:

For six hours the men—a squad from the Investigative Committee of the Russian Federation—tore apart the apartment, neither removing their masks nor dropping their weapons. “You know what’s going on,” one of them chided her. “If you had married a good K.G.B. man, it would be another story.” They teased her by reading love letters from an ex-beau aloud in front of Yashin. And they humiliated her by sending a man to shadow her to the bathroom.⁹⁰

⁸⁸ Anna Nemtsova, “Russia’s Opposition Movement Starts to Crack,” *The Daily Beast*, November 14, 2012. <http://www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2012/11/14/russia-s-opposition-movement-starts-to-crack.html>

⁸⁹ AP, “Russian Police Seize \$1.7 mln from Protest It Girl,” *Bloomberg Businessweek*. June 12, 2012. <http://www.businessweek.com/ap/2012-06/D9VBOQHG0.htm>

⁹⁰ Andrew Meier, “Ksenia Sobchak, the Stiletto in Putin’s Side,” *The New York Times*. July 3, 2012. <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/07/08/magazine/ksenia-sobchak-the-stiletto-in-putins-side.html?pagewanted=all>

Taken as a whole, these tactics wielded by the government against female opponents send a message that the authorities are more than willing to exploit traditional gender roles in pressuring the women to abandon their causes, with personal shaming serving the dual purpose of tarnishing the reputation of the individual in the face of largely conservative scrutiny and reminding other women of the consequences of following suit.

The government authorities were not, however, the only entities urging conformity with traditional gender roles. As the Pussy Riot trial revealed further details of their platform, focus was renewed on the opposition movement's intense, even violent disdain for the LGBT movement which had been revealed during winter 2011's rallies. Antigay sentiment has steadily intensified in Russia over the past 8 years, with a recent Levada Center poll revealing that "22% of respondents said they think LGBT people should be 'cured'....16% said LGBTs should be isolated from society....85% opposed same-sex marriage, 87% did not want gay pride celebrations in their cities, 80% opposed letting gay couples adopt children, and 5% said LGBT people should be 'liquidated.'"⁹¹ The opposition's refusal to allow LGBT speakers to take the stage at its rallies and its regular use of offensive antigay slurs when referring to enemies of the movement or LGBT protesters⁹² stem from an embedded cynicism in the movement that values mainstream acceptance of its preferred candidates over any ideological victories. In fact, the movement's intermingling with Pussy Riot's supporters, no matter how casual, has been seen by some as a liability due to the extremity of the band's stance on religion, women's rights, gay rights, and artistic freedom. The sociologist Olga Kryshchanovskaya expressed

⁹¹ Trudy Ring, "Antigay Attitudes Intensify in Russia," *Advocate*. March 13, 2013.

<http://www.advocate.com/politics/2013/03/13/antigay-attitudes-intensify-russia>

⁹² Dan Littauer, "Pro-Democracy Russian Movement Rejects LGBT Activists," *GayStarNews*. December 30, 2011. <http://www.gaystarnews.com/article/pro-democracy-russian-movement-rejects-lgbt-activists>

this doubt in saying of the movement's future that "we need some more fuel to light the fire, but Pussy Riot may have harmed the opposition by taking away some of its moral high ground."⁹³ It would soon come to light that some of Pussy Riot's biggest champions would be found abroad.

VI

In the wake of the Christ the Savior performance, the overwhelming majority of media outlets in the US and Western Europe voiced their support for Pussy Riot. Groups such as Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch mobilized to lobby for the band's release, artists and musicians from all over the world expressed their solidarity with Pussy Riot in support of freedom of speech and artistic expression. Vladimir Putin and the Russian government were rebuked by numerous political figures worldwide for allowing the trial to continue. This incredibly enthusiastic response, though, was not without its misunderstandings, contradictions, and hypocrisy. The Putin administration and much of the Russian press would be quick to point out the biases inherent in outsiders' evaluation of the performance and the trial, creating a dialogue interspersed with rhetoric reminiscent of the Cold War.

Numerous factors contributed to Pussy Riot's nearly instant rise to fame in the West. Their English name, for starters, was both sensational and memorable, lending to its general ubiquity, especially in the Internet community. The image of the balaclavas and the bright dresses also proved to be easily imitable, transmitted through graphic design and

⁹³ Anna Derinova, "Russian Opposition Looks to Move Forward After Pussy Riot Trial," *Waging Nonviolence*. August 23, 2012. <http://wagingnonviolence.org/feature/russian-opposition-looks-to-move-forward-after-pussy-riot-trial/>

street protests. The propensity of Westerners to react positively to the brand-like nature of the Pussy Riot image most likely contributed to the popularity of the group, as did their widely discussed good looks. Nadezhda Tolokonnikova, in an interview with *GQ*, was even coaxed into commenting on the role of the band's beauty in their popularity:

I humbly hope that our attractiveness performs a subversive function. First of all, because without "us" in balaclavas, jumping all over Red Square with guitars, there is no "us" smiling sweetly in the courtroom. You can't get the latter without the former. Second, because this attractiveness destroys the idiotic stereotype, still extant in Russia, that a feminist is an ugly-ass frustrated harridan. This stereotype is so puke-making that I will deign to be sweet for a little bit in order to destroy it. Though every time I open my mouth, the sweetness goes out the window anyway.⁹⁴

It is ironic, yet indicative of a larger trend in Western journalism, that a magazine, such as *GQ*, which often features distinctly un-feminist depictions of women and perpetuates a strong consumerist ethic among its readership, has taken an interest in Pussy Riot at all. But the majority of coverage surrounding Pussy Riot outside of Russia places the emphasis not on their broadly relevant political ideologies, but rather on the persecution of the band for practicing the freedom of artistic expression, and the similarities between the Putin administration's response and Soviet era policies. This is an important distinction between typical Russian and Western mainstream reporting on the case.

In the one variation, Pussy Riot is simply understood to be an artists' collective or a punk band, not a radical feminist organization. The sincere message of their work, in cases like this, gets lost in the haze of truisms regarding the necessity of freedom without much introspection or analysis on the part of the spectator. Amidst all of the glowing responses to Pussy Riot's actions, one op-ed piece stood out, appearing in *The New York Times* and

⁹⁴ Kat Stoeffel, "Pussy Riot Gives Us Permission to Find Them Hot," *The Cut*. September 25, 2012. <http://nymag.com/thecut/2012/09/pussy-riot-gives-us-permission-to-find-them-hot.html>

urging supporters of the band to carefully consider their reasoning before professing their full support of Pussy Riot, lest they miss the point:

How many fans of Pussy Riot's zany "punk prayer" in the Cathedral of Christ the Savior and Nadezhda Tolokonnikova's erudite and moving closing statement were equally thrilled by her participation, naked and heavily pregnant, in a public orgy at a Moscow museum in 2008? That performance, by the radical art group Voina...was meant to illustrate how Russians were abused by their government. Voina had previously set fire to a police car and drew obscene images on a St. Petersburg drawbridge. Stunts like that would get you arrested just about anywhere, not just in authoritarian Russia. But Pussy Riot and its comrades at Voina come as a full package: You can't have the fun, pro-democracy, anti-Putin feminism without the incendiary anarchism, extreme sexual provocations, deliberate obscenity and hard-left politics.⁹⁵

This evaluation does quite a bit more justice to Pussy Riot than some of the previously mentioned articles, as it treats the three women as more than just symbols of Putin's oppression, but as forces capable of transcending borders and making even the "complacent" West confront its own shortcomings.

The symbolic comparisons between Pussy Riot and the dissidents of the Soviet era, however exaggerated, appealed to the traditional American and Western perceptions of Russia left over from the Cold War. Equation of the Putin administration with the power structures of the Soviet era, including the reign of Stalin, was not something unheard of before. Pussy Riot and their lawyers encouraged this perception to some degree, with Nikolai Polozov at one point shouting in court that "even in Soviet times, in Stalin's times, the courts were more honest than this one,"⁹⁶ and Samutsevich commenting upon her release that "there's not that much difference between prison and the outside world.

⁹⁵ Vadim Nikitin, "The Wrong Reasons to Back Pussy Riot," *The New York Times*. August 20, 2012. http://www.nytimes.com/2012/08/21/opinion/the-wrong-reasons-to-back-pussy-riot.html?_r=3&

⁹⁶ Miriam Elder, "Pussy Riot trial 'worse than Soviet era'", *The Guardian*. August 3, 2012. <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2012/aug/03/pussy-riot-trial-russia>

Russia is like one big prison. In or out, you are always under someone else's control."⁹⁷

Although the motivation behind these statements could very well have been to persuade older, more conservative-minded Russians to view Pussy Riot's official persecution through the historical lens of Stalinism, they seemed to be far more effective at reinforcing a persistent post-Cold War bias in the United States. This is strongly indicated by the unusual convergence of liberal and conservative opinions in the United States regarding the outcome of the trial. New Hampshire Republican Senator Kelly Ayotte echoed the U.S. State Department's concerns, tweeting "Shame on Putin regime for sentencing female punk band to 2 [years] in jail for speaking out against oppression."⁹⁸ For a pro-life U.S. senator with a firm stance against same-sex marriage,⁹⁹ Ayotte's support of Pussy Riot can only be explained by the need to exhibit a united front against Putin in the name of the U.S.'s geopolitical objectives.

In Europe, however, the ease of condemning the trial as a sham was complicated soon after by copycat acts in countries like France, where the Notre Dame cathedral became the site of a Femen protest to mark the occasion of Pope Benedict XVI's resignation.¹⁰⁰ Afterwards, the Russian government-owned *Voice of Russia* broadcast service pointed out with almost palpable delight that "Bertrand Delanoë, the Mayor of Paris, criticized the act of Femen and said that it made him sad. Strange as it may

⁹⁷ "Pussy Riot's Samutsevich: 'For Me, Russia Is Like A Big Prison,'" *RIA Novosti*. October 17, 2012. <http://en.ria.ru/analysis/20121017/176700893.html>

⁹⁸ Mario Trujillo, "White House protests Pussy Riot's two-year prison sentence," *The Hill*. August 17, 2012. <http://thehill.com/blogs/global-affairs/europe/244127-sen-ayotte-putin-should-be-ashamed-over-pussy-riot-sentence>

⁹⁹ "Pro-life, with exceptions for rape, incest, and emergency," from Shira Schoenberg in *Concord Monitor*, August 12, 2009. *On The Issues*. http://www.ontheissues.org/social/Kelly_Ayotte_Abortion.htm

¹⁰⁰ Meredith Bennett-Smith, "Topless Femen Activists Hail Pope's Resignation, Shout 'No More Homophobe' in Notre Dame," *Huffington Post*. February 12, 2013. http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/02/12/topless-femen-activists-hail-popes-resignation-shout-no-more-homophobe-notre-dame_n_2670611.html

seem...just recently the city council of Paris discussed the issue of giving the participants of Pussy Riot the title of honorary citizens of Paris. Alexander Schipkov, a journalist and a church historian, sees the following logic in this double standards approach of the Paris authorities: the hooliganism that destroys Russia is good, it is democracy. But if the same hooliganism destroys France—it is a completely different matter.”¹⁰¹ Similarly, German Chancellor Angela Merkel directly questioned Putin about the appropriateness of the two-year prison sentence handed down to Alyokhina and Tolokonnikova¹⁰², when just a couple of months prior a trio of protesters entered Cologne cathedral during a mass in a show of solidarity with Pussy Riot and were subsequently arrested and charged with “the disruption of free practice of religion,” which carries a maximum of three years in prison.¹⁰³ As we shall see, mutual influences between Pussy Riot and international protest movements, such as Occupy Wall Street and Femen, have also contributed to the contradictions inherent in official support of the group.

VII

By working outside the considerably more narrow constraints of the Russian opposition movement, Pussy Riot allowed themselves the freedom to act in accordance with their own concepts of morality and feminism and, contrary to the evaluation offered by Olga Kryshtanovskaya, this arguably allows them to take a kind of moral high ground. By sacrificing their personal freedom, they outlined a choice that all activists in Russia face:

¹⁰¹ “Femen Act in the Cathedral—French Politicians in Fury—Similarities to Pussy Riot,” *The Voice of Russia*. February 20, 2013. http://english.ruvr.ru/2013_02_20/Femen-act-in-the-cathedral-French-politicians-in-fury-similarities-to-Pussy-Riot/

¹⁰² “Merkel provokes Putin over Pussy Riot punishment,” *Euronews*. November 17, 2012.

<http://www.euronews.com/2012/11/17/merkel-provokes-putin-over-pussy-riot-punishment/>

¹⁰³ Andy Eckardt, “Copycat Pussy Riot protesters could face 3-year sentence in Germany,” *NBC News*. August 24, 2012. http://worldnews.nbcnews.com/_news/2012/08/24/13454525-copycat-pussy-riot-protesters-could-face-3-year-sentence-in-germany?lite

refuse compromise at the expense of one's personal safety, or dilute the power of the individual as a tool against the institutions of the state. In the wake of the trial, Pussy Riot and the opposition movement were both plagued with hardships, with interest waning as Russia and the world came to grips with Putin's third presidential term. After Alyokhina was sent to the IK-32 penal colony in the Perm oblast, and Tolokonnikova was sent to IK-14 in the Mordovia oblast, the prosecution turned its attention to filing to declare the video of the Christ the Savior performance as extremist. Samutsevich, having been released on probation following the trial, was denied participation in the case as an interested party, and the Zamoskvoretsky District Court moved to place the video on a blacklist.¹⁰⁴ The two imprisoned women met with various hardships within months of arrival at their respective penal colonies. Tolokonnikova was relocated to a prison hospital after being plagued with chronic migraines ever since the trial¹⁰⁵, and Alyokhina, fearing for her own safety after run-ins with other prisoners, was taken into solitary confinement for protection.¹⁰⁶

Samutsevich has been in contact with the press on behalf of the group, alone upholding Pussy Riot's anti-capitalist principles in the face of worldwide media pressure to embrace fame and begin playing gigs and selling merchandise. This pressure is epitomized by unsanctioned efforts by the band's lawyer Mark Feigin and his wife to register Pussy Riot as a trademark in order to "produce clothing, badges, pens, printed products, toys,

¹⁰⁴ AFP, "Russian court issues Pussy Riot video ban," *The Australian*. November 30, 2012. <http://www.theaustralian.com.au/news/world/russian-court-issues-pussy-riot-video-ban/story-e6frg6so-1226527589707>

¹⁰⁵ Howard Amos, "Pussy Riot's Nadezhda Tolokonnikova transferred to prison hospital," *The Guardian*. February 1, 2013. <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2013/feb/01/pussy-riot-nadezhda-tolokonnikova-prison-hospital>

¹⁰⁶ Cosima Glaister and agencies, "Jailed Pussy Riot member describes Russian prison camp 'anti-life'," *The Telegraph*. December 17, 2012. <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/europe/russia/9751083/Jailed-Pussy-Riot-member-describes-Russian-prison-camp-anti-life.html>

films, as well as shows and concerts.”¹⁰⁷ Samutsevich is currently fighting these efforts, stating:

We’re against commercial forms, against music as goods. It’s our principled position to put our work only on open sources—YouTube, VKontakte—where you can listen and don’t need to buy anything. We’ve got invitations to perform with certain musicians, but we reject legal performances. It’s a matter of principle for us to give unsanctioned, illegal performances. We can’t do something by agreement, even more so with superstars. It contradicts our struggle with commercialization. How can we perform with a commercial star, who has been built up with the help of this industry, and perform and get support from this industry, which we were against from the beginning? It’s a total contradiction of our views and we won’t do it.¹⁰⁸

Although Samutsevich demonstrated her loyalty to the group’s core values by combatting Pussy Riot marketing, the fact that enough of a demand for Pussy Riot merchandise exists to inspire the group’s own lawyer to trademark the band’s image indicates that these values have already been overlooked by others.

Pussy Riot’s actions, like those comprising Ukraine’s Orange Revolution nearly a decade before, were spurred on by allegations of election fraud and rampant corruption.¹⁰⁹ In both cases, too, the specter of geopolitical rivalry in Eurasia was raised by cries for more transparent democratic processes, threatening the established orders with western-oriented opposition. But unlike the Orange Revolution, condemned by Russia on account of the role “the United States, European governments, the National Endowment for Democracy, and private philanthropists”¹¹⁰ played in fostering Ukrainian civil-society, Pussy Riot does not collaborate with NGOs or other official political bodies. They agitate

¹⁰⁷ Lev Pravin, “Pussy Riot turns into squabble for money,” *Pravda*. November 2, 2012. http://english.pravda.ru/russia/politics/02-11-2012/122696-pussy_riot-0/

¹⁰⁸ Yekaterina Samutsevich, in Miriam Elder, “Yekaterina Samutsevich: ‘We can’t perform with superstars,’” *The Guardian*. December 20, 2012. <http://www.guardian.co.uk/music/2012/dec/20/yekaterina-samutsevich-pussy-riot-superstars>

¹⁰⁹ Adrian Karatnycky, “Ukraine’s Orange Revolution,” *Foreign Affairs*, 84, no. 2 (Mar.-Apr., 2005), 35-52.

¹¹⁰ Karatnycky, “Ukraine’s Orange Revolution,” 43.

for a freedom that is as incompatible with a liberal economic democracy as it is with Putin's Russia. As their viral music video demonstrates through its incorporation of both sacred and taboo images into the same space of discourse, Pussy Riot's uncompromising message was transmitted on the group's own terms. The West's nearly uniform support of Pussy Riot, demonstrated by both the Right and the Left, has exposed deep-rooted misconceptions about the consequences of such an endorsement. The group's struggle for the universal application of human rights is ideological, refusing to abide by political correctness or consider the notion of cultural relativism. Complete endorsement of the group's ideology and methods would simply be incompatible with *realpolitik*.

In this way, Pussy Riot's fate parallels that of many worldwide protests between 2011 and 2012, from the Arab Spring revolts to the Occupy Wall Street movement. These protests against injustice and inequity flared up in bursts of publicity and optimism, then slowly faded out of the public eye as the struggles grew increasingly protracted and fraught with practical considerations. Although the optimism with which many of Pussy Riot's supporters were so imbued has waned in light of Pussy Riot's sentencing and the bitter infighting among the group members and their lawyers, a strong female presence appears to be growing in the realm of international political activism. Femen in particular have adapted to remain active and relevant, with provocative photos of their rallies appearing regularly in the international press. Having expressed their solidarity with Pussy Riot during the trial, Femen have repeatedly proven their willingness to take Pussy Riot's subversive brand of anti-patriarchal feminism to the extreme. The unmediated and uncompromising ferocity, nudity, and persistence exhibited by Femen, coupled with their growing international presence, have forced their iconography into the forefront of

feminist discourse, and have shown little sign of fatigue. Whether or not Femen's protests have the power to affect meaningful and lasting change is unclear, but the controversy and debate that has surrounded the group has yielded constructive dialogue about feminism, women's rights, and morality in the twenty-first century. Pussy Riot, having previously occupied this influential position in the media, has demonstrated just how powerfully a well-timed, well-constructed act of defiance and courage can shake the world. When and where the next major quake will happen remains to be seen.

Bibliography

“About.” *Free Pussy Riot*. <http://freepussyriot.org/about>

AFP. “Russian Court Issues Pussy Riot Video Ban.” *The Australian*. 11/30/12.
<http://www.theaustralian.com.au/news/world/russian-court-issues-pussy-riot-video-ban/story-e6frg6so-1226527589707>

AFP. “2 Plaintiffs Accept Pussy Riot Members Apology.” *Free Pussy Riot*. 7/31/12.
<http://freepussyriot.org/news/2-plaintiffs-accept-pussy-riot-members-apology>

AI-Index: EUR 46/017/2012. “Alleged Feminist Punk Singers Detained.” Published in “Amnesty International: Urgent Call for Actions + Take Action.” *Free Pussy Riot*.
<http://freepussyriot.org/news/amnesty-international-urgent-call-actions-take-action>

Amos, Howard. “Pussy Riot’s Nadezhda Tolokonnikova Transferred to Prison Hospital.” *The Guardian*. 2/1/13. <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2013/feb/01/pussy-riot-nadezhda-tolokonnikova-prison-hospital>

“Analysis on Russia’s New Blasphemy Law.” *The Institute on Religion & Public Policy*. 2/28/13. <http://www.religionandpolicy.org/reports/the-institute-country-reports-and-legislative-analysis/europe-and-eurasia/russia/analysis-on-russia-s-new-blasphemy-law-2013/>

AP. “Russian Police Seize \$1.7 mln from Protest It Girl.” *Bloomberg Businessweek*. 6/12/12.
<http://www.businessweek.com/ap/2012-06/D9VBOQHG0.htm>

Astrasheuskaya, Nastassia and Steve Gutterman. “Russian Orthodox Patriarch Rails Against Pussy Riot Protest.” *The Globe and Mail*. 9/9/12.
<http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/world/russian-orthodox-patriarch-rails-against-pussy-riot-protest/article4531669/>

Baranov, Sergey. “Открытое письмо Патриарху Кириллу.” *Facebook*. 8/18/12.
<https://www.facebook.com/notes/%D1%81%D0%B5%D1%80%D0%B3%D0%B5%D0%B9-%D0%B1%D0%B0%D1%80%D0%B0%D0%BD%D0%BE%D0%B2/%D0%BE%D1%82%D0%BA%D1%80%D1%8B%D1%82%D0%BE%D0%B5-%D0%BF%D0%B8%D1%81%D1%8C%D0%BC%D0%BE-%D0%BF%D0%B0%D1%82%D1%80%D0%B8%D0%B0%D1%80%D1%85%D1%83-%D0%BA%D0%B8%D1%80%D0%B8%D0%BB%D0%BB%D1%83/268048409972818>

- Bennetts, Marc. "In Putin's Russia, Little Separation Between Church and State." *The Washington Times*. 8/13/2012.
<http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2012/aug/13/putin-russia-little-separation-church-state/?page=all>
- Bennetts, Marc. "Russian Parliament Approves NGO 'Foreign Agents' Law." *RIA Novosti*. 7/6/12. <http://en.rian.ru/russia/20120706/174436993.html>
- Bennett-Smith, Meredith. "Topless Femen Activists Hail Pope's Resignation, Shout 'No More Homophobe' in Notre Dame." *Huffington Post*. 2/12/13.
http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/02/12/topless-femen-activists-hail-popes-resignation-shout-no-more-homophobe-notre-dame_n_2670611.html
- Carlson, Jen. "A Timeline of the Russian Punk Band Pussy Riot's Arrest and Trial." *Gothamist*. 8/8/12.
http://gothamist.com/2012/08/08/a_timeline_of_the_russian_punk_band.php
- Cartalucci, Tony. "Russia's 'Pussy Riot' Stunt Supported by US State Department." *Global Research*. 8/18/12. <http://www.globalresearch.ca/russia-s-pussy-riot-stunt-supported-by-us-state-department/32395>
- Chernov, Sergey. "Chernov's Choice." *The St. Petersburg Times*. 10/10/12. No. 1730.
http://www.sptimes.ru/index.php?action_id=2&story_id=36329
- Chernov, Sergey. "Female Fury." *The St. Petersburg Times*. No. 1693. 2/1/12.
http://sptimes.ru/index.php?action_id=2&story_id=35092
- CNN Wire Staff. "Two Pussy Riot Members Flee Russia to Recruit Foreign Feminists." *CNN*. 8/27/12. <http://www.cnn.com/2012/08/27/world/europe/russia-pussy-riot>
- Derinova, Anna. "Russian Opposition Looks to Move Forward After Pussy Riot Trial." *Waging Nonviolence*. 8/23/12. <http://wagingnonviolence.org/feature/russian-opposition-looks-to-move-forward-after-pussy-riot-trial/>
- Eckardt, Andy. "Copycat Pussy Riot Protesters Could Face 3-Year Sentence in Germany." *NBC News*. 8/4/12.
<http://worldnews.nbcnews.com/news/2012/08/24/13454525-copycat-pussy-riot-protesters-could-face-3-year-sentence-in-germany?lite>
- Elder, Miriam. "Pussy Riot Trial 'Worse than Soviet Era.'" *The Guardian*. 8/3/12.
<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2012/aug/03/pussy-riot-trial-russia>
- Elder, Miriam. "Pussy Riot Trial: Vladimir Putin Calls for Leniency." *The Guardian*. 8/3/12.
<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2012/aug/03/pussy-riot-trial-vladimir-putin>

- Elder, Miriam. "Russian election: police, troops and youth groups stifle anti-Putin protests." *The Guardian*. 12/6/11. <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2011/dec/06/russian-election-anti-putin-protests>
- Eremenko, Alexey. "Orthodox Radicals Find 'G-Spot' in Moscow." *RIA Novosti*. 8/29/12. <http://en.rian.ru/russia/20120829/175501438.html>
- "Femen Act in the Cathedral—French Politicians in Fury—Similarities to Pussy Riot." *The Voice of Russia*. 2/20/13. http://english.ruvr.ru/2013_02_20/Femen-act-in-the-cathedral-French-politicians-in-fury-similarities-to-Pussy-Riot/
- "Femen Against Church and Millionaires," *English Russia*. Posted 12/9/11 by "ok4u2bu". <http://englishrussia.com/2011/12/09/femen-against-church-and-millionaires/>.
- Gally, Robert, ed. "Court Refuses to Release 3rd Pussy Riot Band Member, Cites Safety." *Gazeta.ru English*. 3/28/12. http://en.gazeta.ru/news/2012/03/28/a_4108945.shtml
- Glaister, Cosima and Agencies, "Jailed Pussy Riot Member Describes Russian Prison Camp 'Anti-Life'." *The Telegraph*. 12/17/12. <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/europe/russia/9751083/Jailed-Pussy-Riot-member-describes-Russian-prison-camp-anti-life.html>
- Harris, John. "From Pussy Riot, A Lesson in the Power of Punk." *The Guardian*. 8/19/12. <http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2012/aug/19/pussy-riot-power-of-punk>
- Karatnycky, Adrian. "Ukraine's Orange Revolution." *Foreign Affairs*, 84, no. 2 (Mar.-Apr., 2005), 35-52. <http://0-www.jstor.org.library.colgate.edu/stable/20034274>
- Khodorkovsky, Mikhail. "Pussy Riot Trial: I've Been There—How Can These Women Endure It?" *The Guardian*. 8/6/12. <http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2012/aug/06/pussy-riot-trial-shame-russia>
- Kustanovich, Konstantin. "The Unbearable Lightness of Being the Other: Myth and Nostalgia in Sots Art." *Slavonica*. 9, no. 1 (2003), 3.
- Langston, Henry. "Meeting Pussy Riot." *Vice*. March 2012. <http://www.vice.com/read/A-Russian-Pussy-Riot>.
- Lipman, Masha. "Putin's Religious War Against Pussy Riot." *The New Yorker*. 7/24/12. <http://www.newyorker.com/online/blogs/newsdesk/2012/07/putins-religious-war-against-pussy-riot.html>

- Littauer, Dan. "Pro-Democracy Russian Movement Rejects LGBT Activists." *GayStarNews*. 12/30/11. <http://www.gaystarnews.com/article/pro-democracy-russian-movement-rejects-lgbt-activists>
- Lobzina, Alina. "Orthodox Activists Create Moscow Patrol Squads." *The Moscow News*. 8/22/12. <http://themoscownews.com/local/20120822/190122832.html>
- Mackey, Robert. "After Pussy Riot Verdict, Christian Culture Warriors Run Riot in Moscow." *The Lede, New York Times*. 8/30/12. <http://thelede.blogs.nytimes.com/2012/08/30/following-pussy-riot-verdict-christian-culture-warriors-run-riot-in-moscow/>
- "Media Coverage of Pussy Riot Trial Restricted By Court." *RAPSI Russian Legal Information Agency*. 8/1/12. http://rapsinews.com/judicial_news/20120801/264043667.html
- Meier, Andrew. "Ksenia Sobchak, the Stiletto in Putin's Side." *The New York Times*. 7/3/12. <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/07/08/magazine/ksenia-sobchak-the-stiletto-in-putins-side.html?pagewanted=all>
- "Merkel Provokes Putin Over Pussy Riot Punishment." *Euronews*. 11/17/12. <http://www.euronews.com/2012/11/17/merkel-provokes-putin-over-pussy-riot-punishment/>
- Nemtsova, Anna. "Pussy Riot Witch Hunt by Kremlin-Backed 'Youth Movement.'" *The Daily Beast*. 9/30/12. <http://www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2012/09/30/pussy-riot-witch-hunt-by-kremlin-backed-youth-movement.html>
- Nemtsova, Anna. "Russia's Opposition Movement Starts to Crack." *The Daily Beast*. 11/14/12. <http://www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2012/11/14/russia-s-opposition-movement-starts-to-crack.html>
- Nikitin, Vadim. "The New Civic Activism in Russia." *The Nation*. 10/20/10. <http://www.thenation.com/article/155496/new-civic-activism-russia>
- Nikitin, Vadim. "The Rebirth of Russian Civil Society." *The Nation*. 7/18/11. <http://www.thenation.com/article/162108/rebirth-russian-civil-society>
- Nikitin, Vadim. "The Wrong Reasons to Back Pussy Riot." *The New York Times*. 8/20/12. http://www.nytimes.com/2012/08/21/opinion/the-wrong-reasons-to-back-pussy-riot.html?_r=4&
- Oates, Sarah and Gillian McCormack. "The Media and Political Communication," in *Developments in Russian Politics*, eds. Stephen White, Richard Sakwa and Henry E. Hale. (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010), 120.

- Parfitt, Tom. "Banksy Pledges £80,000 to Russian Radical Art Group Voina." *The Guardian*, 12/12/10. <http://www.guardian.co.uk/artanddesign/2010/dec/12/banksy-russia-voina-donation>
- Peter, Tom. "Photographer's Blog: Witness to Pussy Riot's Activist Beginnings." *Reuters*. 8/16/12. <http://www.reuters.com/article/2012/08/16/us-blog-pussy-riots-idUSBRE87F0PW20120816>
- Petrenko, Konstantin. "The Kremlin and the Church: Russia's Holy Alliance." *Religion Dispatches*. 5/7/08. http://www.religiondispatches.org/archive/politics/223/the_kremlin_and_the_church%3A_russia%E2%80%99s_holy_alliance.
- Pravin, Lev. "Pussy Riot Turns into Squabble for Money." *Pravda*. 11/2/12. http://english.pravda.ru/russia/politics/02-11-2012/122696-pussy_riot-0/
- Priyatkin, Roman. "Pussy Riot Case: Detailed Report on Rejection of Appeal Against Pre-Trial Arrests." *Free Pussy Riot*. <http://freepussyriot.org/news/pussy-riot-case-detailed-report-rejection-appeal-against-pre-trial-arrests>
- Pussy Riot 'Desecrated' Cathedral—Russian Church Head," *RIA Novosti*. 3/24/12. <http://en.rian.ru/russia/20120324/172366988.html>
- "Pussy Riot Gave a 'Concert' in Yelokhovo Cathedral Two Days Before Their Action in the Cathedral of Christ the Savior." *Interfax*. 3/19/12. <http://www.interfax-religion.com/?act=news&div=9161>
- "Pussy Riot Indictment Posted." *SOVA Center for Information and Analysis*. 7/6/12. <http://www.sova-center.ru/en/misuse/news-releases/2012/06/d24590/>
- "Pussy Riot's Second Day of Trial—Live Updates." *RAPSI Russian Legal Information Agency*. 7/31/12. http://rapsinews.com/judicial_news/20120731/264002084.html
- "Pussy Riot's Samutsevich: 'For Me, Russia Is Like A Big Prison.'" *RIA Novosti*. 10/17/12. <http://en.ria.ru/analysis/20121017/176700893.html>
- "Pussy Riot Suspect's Family Receive Death Threats—Lawyer." *RIA Novosti*. 3/28/12. <http://en.ria.ru/society/20120328/172447275.html>
- "Putin Blasts Pussy Riot, Opposition In Birthday Documentary." *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*. 3/24/13. <http://www.rferl.org/content/putin-blasts-pussy-riot-and-opposition-in-birthday-documentary/24732618.html>
- Ring, Trudy. "Antigay Attitudes Intensify in Russia." *Advocate*. 3/13/13. <http://www.advocate.com/politics/2013/03/13/antigay-attitudes-intensify-russia>

Roth, Andrew and Robert Mackey. "Russia Assigns Bodyguards to Judge Ahead of Verdict in Pussy Riot Trial." *The New York Times*. 8/16/12.

<http://thelede.blogs.nytimes.com/2012/08/16/russia-assigns-bodyguards-to-judge-ahead-of-verdict-in-pussy-riot-trial/>

"Russian Punk Band Pussy Riot Go on Hunger Strike in Moscow." *The Week*. 3/6/12.

<http://www.theweek.co.uk/russia/russia-election/45722/russian-punk-band-pussy-riot-go-hunger-strike-moscow>

Samutsevich, Yekaterina. Interview by Miriam Elder. "Yekaterina Samutsevich: 'We Can't Perform with Superstars.'" *The Guardian*. 12/20/12.

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/music/2012/dec/20/yekaterina-samutsevich-pussy-riot-superstars>

Schoenberg, Shira. "Pro-Life, With Exceptions For Rape, Incest, and Emergency." *Concord Monitor*. 8/12/09. Quoted in *On The Issues*.

http://www.ontheissues.org/social/Kelly_Ayotte_Abortion.htm

Schwartz, Michael. "\$30,000 Watch Vanishes Up Church Leader's Sleeve." *The New York Times*. 4/5/12. <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/04/06/world/europe/in-russia-a-watch-vanishes-up-orthodox-leaders-sleeve.html? r=0>

Sidorov, Dmitri. "National Monumentalization and the Politics of Scale: The Resurrections of the Cathedral of Christ the Savior in Moscow." *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, 90, no. 3 (September, 2000): 553.

<http://www.jstor.org/stable/1515528>

Stoeffel, Kat. "Pussy Riot Gives Us Permission to Find Them Hot." *The Cut*. 9/25/12.

<http://nymag.com/thecut/2012/09/pussy-riot-gives-us-permission-to-find-them-hot.html>

Taylor, Jeffrey. "What Pussy Riot's 'Punk Prayer' Really Said." *The Atlantic*. 11/8/12.

<http://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2012/11/what-pussy-riots-punk-prayer-really-said/264562/>

"Third Member of 'Pussy Riot' Charged Over Punk Prayer." *Russia Today*. 3/16/12.

<http://rt.com/news/prime-time/third-member-pussy-riot-765/>

Trujillo, Mario. "White House Protests Pussy Riot's Two-Year Prison Sentence." *The Hill*.

8/17/12. <http://thehill.com/blogs/global-affairs/europe/244127-sen-ayotte-putin-should-be-ashamed-over-pussy-riot-sentence>

Tselikov, Andrey. "Russia: Pussy Riot and the Orthodox Reformation." *Global Voices*.

8/21/12. <http://globalvoicesonline.org/2012/08/21/russia-pussy-riot-the-orthodox-reformation/>

Tumanov, Grigory. "The Dark Doings of Russia's Centre E." *Open Democracy Russia*. 8/28/12. <http://www.opendemocracy.net/od-russia/grigory-tumanov/dark-doings-of-russia%E2%80%99s-centre-e>

Zagvzdina, Daria, Semyon Kvasha, ed. "Pussy Riot Indicted for Licentious Dance and High Kicks." *Gazeta.ru*. 7/19/12. http://en.gazeta.ru/news/2012/07/19/a_4686637.shtml

Zoladz, Lindsay. "Pussy Is Having a Moment." *Slate*. 8/28/12. http://www.slate.com/articles/double_x/doublex/2012/08/pussy_is_having_a_moment_pussy_riot_trial_puts_the_p_word_back_in_the_spotlight.html?tid=sm_tw_butt_on_chunky.

"Машино Письмо." *Радио Эхо Москвы*. 3/23/12. <http://echo.msk.ru/blog/alekhina/871468-echo/>

Текст песни Панк-молебен Богородица Путина прогони Pussy Riot в Храме, Pussy Riot." *Webkind.ru* http://webkind.ru/text/56256202_62007434p906071039_text_pesni_pank-moleben-bogorodica-putina-progoni-pussy-riot.html

"Участниц Pussy Riot официально обвинили в хулиганстве по мотивам религиозной ненависти." *Росбалт Москва*. 6/4/12. <http://www.rosbalt.ru/moscow/2012/06/04/988527.html> (Translations mine unless otherwise noted)