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A One-Way Ticket to Paradise?
Adapting the Bible in Venedikt Erofeev's *Moskva-Petushki* (1973),
Stephen Mulrine's *Moscow Stations* (1993),
and A.L. Kennedy's *Paradise* (2004)

1. Introduction

In the early 21st century, scientists once more declared God a delusion and announced the end of faith, boosting the current critique of religious belief known as 'New Atheism'.[1] Yet the contemporary British and Irish novel engage with religion in various forms, and religion has indeed "returned", Andrew Tate argues, "to the study of literature".[2] The Bible in particular proves a rich source for novelists as different as Colm Tóibín, Zadie Smith, and Philip Pullman among others. Where Colm Tóibín's *The Testament of Mary* (2012) offers a fictional memoir by the mother of God, depicting the Virgin Mary as "a powerful, unsparing figure" (*Guardian*), Zadie Smith's *NW* (2012) describes the lives of its two female protagonists against the backdrop of the stories of Mary and Elizabeth in the Gospel of Luke. And Philip Pullman's bestselling trilogy *His Dark Materials* (1995-2000) is a re-writing of Milton's *Paradise Lost* (1667) that "only really makes sense" according to Tate "if the reader has a detailed knowledge of the biblical scriptures against which it writes".[3] Despite being written from a very critical, ironic or atheist stance, all these novels rely on the Bible as an intertext in crucial ways. The Bible, in other words, is once more living up to its ancient reputation as "the Book of Books"[4], "the *Urtext* of Western literature".[5]

In line with this current trend in British and Irish literature, the Bible provides a central intertext for two Scottish texts, Stephen Mulrine's play *Moscow Stations* (1993), an adaptation of Venedikt Erofeev's short Russian novel *Moskva-Petushki* (1973), and A.L. Kennedy's novel *Paradise* (2004). Erofeev has modelled the life of his protagonist on the Passion of Christ, and allusions to the Bible abound

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[1] See Richard Dawkins' *The God Delusion* (2006) and Sam Harris' *The End of Faith: Religion, Terror, and the Future of Reason* (2004).

[2] Andrew Tate. "Introduction: Literature and Religion in the Twenty-First Century." In: Andrew Tate (ed.): *Literature and Religion. Yearbook of English Studies* 39.1. & 39.2 (2009), p. 1-6, p. 2.

[3] Ibid., p. 3.

[4] Joe Carruthers, Mark Knight and Andrew Tate (eds.). *Literature and the Bible: A Reader*. London, New York 2014, p. 3.

[5] Tate. "Introduction", p. 4.

in his text; Mulrine, in turn, has adapted *Moskva-Petushki,* translated into English as *Moscow to the End of the Line* or *Moscow Circles*,[6] for the British stage in a multilayered process of linguistic, cultural, and generic translation. Kennedy, finally, has arguably imbibed both influences in what reads like an implicit adaptation of *Moskva-Petushki* to a contemporary Scottish context.[7] These processes of adaptation, and in fact adaptation in general, I would suggest, can be conceptualised drawing on Yuri Lotman's model of culture as a semiosphere. This model, which Lotman first introduced in an essay[8] and later developed in *Universe of the Mind* ("Vnutri myslyashikh mirov", in *Semiosfera*, 2000), can account for how texts (in the broadest sense of the word) are translated from one semiotic system to another. What light, then, can Lotman's semiosphere shed on adaptation in *Moskva-Petushki*, *Moscow Stations*, and *Paradise*, and what can this concept contribute more generally to a theory of adaptation and appropriation? And, finally, to what extent can Lotman's model of culture as a semiosphere help to elucidate the cultural functions of adaptation?

2. Adaptation and Yuri Lotman's Concept of the Semiosphere

Yuri Lotman's notion of culture as a semiosphere profitably highlights critical features of current approaches to adaptation and appropriation, especially where the relationship between 'original' and 'adaptation' is concerned. While critics discarded earlier attempts to conceptualise this relationship with one-to-one translation models already in the 1960s[9], current approaches try to come to grips with the connections between texts or media drawing on Mikhail Bakhtin's concept of dialogism and the related notion of intertextuality.[10] From this point of view, adaptation and appropriation form "a sub-section of the over-arching practice of intertextuality".[11] Bakhtin's fellow Russian Yuri Lotman and his notion of culture as a semiosphere, by contrast, seem to have largely escaped the attention of adaptation theory so far.

This omission is all the more relevant because the concept of the semiosphere can help to describe the more complex relationship between adaptation

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[6] To distinguish the Russian original from its translation, I will in the following refer to it by its original title *Moskva-Petushki*.

[7] For the connection between *Paradise* and *Moskva-Petushki* see also Caroline Lusin. "Kennedy, A.L.: *Paradise*." In: Heinz Ludwig Arnold (ed.): *Kindlers Neues Literaturlexikon*. Stuttgart ³2009; "'We Live Again Anew': Loss, Introspection and Redemptive Meta-Narratives in British and Irish Fiction since 2000." In: Anja Müller-Wood and Ulrike Tancke (eds.): *Trauma and Catastrophe. Critical Engagements: A Journal of Criticism and Theory* 6.2 (2013), p. 9-26.

[8] Yuri Lotman, "O semiosfere." *Trudy po znakovym sistemam* 17 (1984), p. 5-23. ("On the Semiosphere." Translated by Wilma Clark. *Signs Systems Studies* 33.1 (2005), p. 205-29).

[9] Kamilla Elliott. "Theorizing Adaptations/Adapting Theories." In: Jørgen Bruhn, Anne Gjelsvik and Eirik Frisvold Hanssen (eds.): *Adaptation Studies: New Challenges, New Directions*. London, New York 2013, p. 19-45, p. 27.

[10] See for instance Linda Hutcheon. *A Theory of Adaptation*. London, New York 2013, p. 21 and Robert Stam. Film Theory: An Introduction. Malden, Mass. 2000, p. 64.

[11] Julia Sanders. *Adaptation and Appropriation*. London, New York 2006, p. 17.

and source texts which contemporary theorists advocate. Julie Sanders emphasises the complexity of semiotic shifts involved in many adaptations by suggesting that "when we discuss adaptations [...] we are often working with reinterpretations of established texts in new generic contexts or perhaps with relocations of an 'original' or source text's cultural and/or temporal setting"[12] Since adaptations often entail a change in the cultural, temporal, and generic setting, they obviously defy simplistic notions of unidirectional, one-level transfer. Critics have therefore called for considering adaptations not as "one-directional", but as "multi-directional", and suggested appraising them "within a more comprehensive understanding of the cultural and textual networks".[13] Conceiving of adaptation in terms of a process in the cultural semiosphere facilitates conceptualizing this multiple embeddedness in a complex system.

The complexity of the semiosphere as a model of culture derives from the fact that Lotman is here building on the notion of the biosphere, the space of all life on earth, the sum of all ecosystems. By analogy, Lotman defines the semiosphere as the cultural space where all semiotic processes take place. Just as the biosphere consists of different ecosystems, the semiosphere consists of different semiotic systems. What he is referring to here are all kinds of semiotic systems or 'languages,' such as academic disciplines, dialects or literary genres. For Lotman, the semiosphere as the entirety of these semiotic systems is both the result of culture and the condition that culture can develop and change. This is due to three features of the semiosphere above all: its heterogeneity, asymmetry, and dynamism. According to Lotman, every culture or semiosphere is heterogeneous, because it is composed of many 'languages' of varying statuses and functions:

> The languages which fill up the semiotic space are various, and they relate to each other along the spectrum which runs from complete mutual translatability to just as complete mutual untranslatability. Heterogeneity is defined both by the diversity of elements and their different functions.[14]

The impression of heterogeneity is boosted by the highly asymmetrical relationship between the different languages composing the semiosphere, which encourages communication between them. This communication becomes manifest in what Lotman describes as "currents of internal translations with which the whole density of the semiosphere is permeated".[15] Different languages are in constant exchange both on a horizontal, synchronic and on a vertical, diachronic level; this dialogue between different languages and levels entails "a constant renewal of codes".[16] As a result, the hierarchical position of these languages within the semiosphere is always shifting, too. Far from being

[12] Ibid., p. 19.

[13] Bruhn, Jørgen, Anne Gjelsvik and Eirik Frisvold Hanssen. "'There and Back Again': New Challenges and New Directions in Adaptation Studies." In: Jørgen Bruhn, Anne Gjelsvik and Eirik Frisvold Hanssen (eds.): *Adaptation Studies: New Challenges, New Directions*. London, New York 2013, p. 1-16, p. 8.

[14] Yuri Lotman. *Universe of the Mind: A Semiotic Theory of Culture*. Translated by Ann Shukman. Introduction by Umberto Eco. London, New York 1990, p. 125.

[15] Ibid., p. 127.

[16] Ibid., p. 124.

static givens, "all elements of the semiosphere are in dynamic [...] correlations whose terms are constantly changing".[17]

On a larger scale, the heterogeneity and asymmetry of the semiosphere become most potent in the distinction between its centre and periphery. While the centre is the area of the semiosphere in which the languages are organised most strictly according to ideal cultural norms, the periphery marks the cultural fringe associated with deviation from the norm. The centre promotes ideal versions of 'self,' whereas the periphery tends towards the 'other'. As a result, with increasing distance from the centre, "the relationship between semiotic practice and the norms imposed on it becomes ever more strained".[18] It is precisely this strained relationship between centre and periphery which assures the ongoing development and vitality of culture, because the normative centre inclines towards inflexibility and stasis:

> [I]n the centre of the cultural space, sections of the semiosphere aspiring to the level of self-description become rigidly organized and self-regulating. But at the same time they lose dynamism and having once exhausted their reserve of indeterminacy they become inflexible and incapable of further development.[19]

In contrast to the centre's tendency towards ossification, the periphery functions in Lotman's model as "the area of semiotic dynamism".[20] The semiotic difference between central and peripheral languages as well as between languages from within and without the semiosphere creates a productive friction that keeps the semiosphere in a constant process of dynamic (ex)change. Due to the differences between languages and codes, this process of exchange necessitates a medium of translation, a function fulfilled in Lotman's model of culture by the concept of the boundary.

The concept of the boundary is the central feature of Lotman's notion of culture in so far as it safeguards the existence and continuous development of the semiosphere. First and foremost, the boundary separates what is inside the semiosphere from what is outside it; that is, the boundary separates one culture from others to protect its individuality. But there are also boundaries inside the semiosphere which separate different semiotic systems or languages:

> The notion of the boundary separating the internal space of the semiosphere from the external is just a rough primary distinction. In fact, the entire space of the semiosphere is transected by boundaries of different levels, boundaries of different languages and even of texts [...]. These sectional boundaries which run through the semiosphere create a multi-level system.[21]

These sectional boundaries as well as the external boundary of the semiosphere differ in a crucial way from Lotman's earlier concept of the boundary, which he put forward in in *The Structure of the Artistic Text* (*Struktura khodozhestvennogo*

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[17] Ibid., p. 127.

[18] Ibid., p. 134.

[19] Ibid., p. 134.

[20] Ibid., p. 124.

[21] Ibid., p. 138.

teksta, 1970). While *The Structure of the Artistic Text* emphasised the impermeability of boundaries, *The Universe of the Mind* – and this is essential to Lotman's notion of culture – presents them as permeable. Building again on the analogy to the biosphere, Lotman[22] compares the boundary to a membrane, which separates cells, yet facilitates exchange between them. The boundary of the semiosphere thus allows separating self and other, but it simultaneously acts as a filter or unit of translation:

> The boundary is a mechanism for translating texts of an alien semiotics into 'our' language, it is the place where what is 'external' is transformed into what is 'internal', it is a filtering membrane which so transforms foreign texts that they become part of the semiosphere's internal semiotics while still retaining their own characteristics.[23]

Influences from without the semiosphere and from separate languages within the semiosphere can be filtered and translated through the boundary to the inside. The boundary, that is, "both separates and unites".[24] As Michael C. Frank[25] has pointed out, instead of highlighting the static dominance of certain cultural texts, the notion of the semiosphere foregrounds how the semiotic space of culture is continuously changed and remodelled.

In formulating his notion of boundaries as "the hottest spots for semioticising processes" in a multi-level system[26], Yuri Lotman has proposed a model of cultural translation that tallies with a current direction in adaptation studies. Building on Irina Rajewsky's suggestion that adaptations "cannot be a matter of 'fixed' and 'stable' borders between 'fixed' and 'stable' entities"[27], Regina Schober proposes to emphasise "the process of interaction between […] media borders".[28] This focus on fluid borders calls to mind Lotman's emphasis on the boundary as a place of dialogue and exchange. The same metaphor of filtration is actually used by other adaptation scholars, who conceptualise adaptation and appropriation similarly to how Lotman conceives of cultural processes in general. In her ground-breaking *Theory of Adaptation*, Linda Hutcheon argues that "what is involved in adapting can be a process of appropriation, of taking possession of another's story, and filtering it, in a sense, through one's own sensibility, interests and talents".[29] From this point of view, the cultural and aesthetic sensibility of the

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[22] Ibid., p. 140.

[23] Ibid., p. 136-137.

[24] Ibid., p. 136.

[25] Michael C. Frank. "Die Literaturwissenschaften und der spatial turn: Ansätze bei Jurij Lotman und Michail Bachtin." In: Wolfgang Hallet and Birgit Neumann (eds.): *Raum und Bewegung in der Literatur: Die Literaturwissenschaften und der Spatial Turn.* Bielefeld 2009, p. 53-80, p. 69-70.

[26] Yuri Lotman. *Universe of the Mind*, p. 136.

[27] Irina Rajewsky. "Border Talks: The Problematic Status of Media Borders in the Current Debate about Intermediality." In: Lars Ellerström (ed.): *Media Borders, Multimediality and Intermediality.* Basingstoke 2010, p. 51-68, p. 54.

[28] Regina Schober. "Adaptation as Connection: Transmediality Reconsidered." In: Jørgen Bruhn, Anne Gjelsvik and Eirik Frisvold Hanssen (eds.): *Adaptation Studies: New Challenges, New Directions.* London, New York 2013, p. 89-112, p. 91.

[29] Linda Hutcheon. *A Theory of Adaptation*, p. 18.

artist acts as a filter in the sense of Lotman's boundary. Julie Sanders suggests a similar notion of adaptation, but avoids the contested agent of the artist or author, when she reflects in more general terms: "Perhaps it serves us better to think in terms of complex processes of filtration, and in terms of intertextual webs or signifying fields, rather than simplistic one-way lines of influence from source to adaptation".[30] With his emphasis on dynamic interchange and interaction on multiple levels, Lotman is meeting the need of adaptation studies to comprehend its subject in a wider context that goes beyond simplifying notions of 'source' and 'adaptation'. As Regina Schober puts it, "to discuss adaptations means to acknowledge their complex textual environment, their cultural implications and their multi-layered processes of signification".[31] Lotman's model of culture, I would argue, facilitates considering adaptations in a broader field that includes cultural and historical context as well as cross-influences between different 'texts' in the widest sense.

Mapping adaptation with Yuri Lotman's model of the semiosphere helps foregrounding the cultural dynamics of this practice. The semiosphere projects a highly dynamic notion of a culture continuously renewed from its margins. It represents the space where, as Susi Frank, Cornelia Ruhe, and Alexander Schmitz illustrate in their afterword to the German translation of *Universe of the Mind*, "culture originates from communicative processes, where a canon comes into being and is challenged again".[32] Adaptation critics likewise emphasise how adaptation and appropriation are fundamental literary practices essential to a lively literary tradition.[33] If adaptation always involves, as Linda Hutcheon maintains, "a double process of interpreting and then creating something new",[34] this process often unfolds its revisionary potential to challenge the canon. Julie Sanders thus highlights the "ability of adaptation to respond or write back to an informing original from a new or revised political and cultural position".[35] Precisely this revisionary potential is also at the heart of culture as defined by Lotman, and it becomes particularly apparent in the processes of adaptation involving the Bible in *Moskva-Petushki*, *Moscow Stations,* and *Paradise*.

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[30] Julie Sanders. Adaptation and Appropriation, p. 24.

[31] Regina Schober. "Adaptation as Connection", p. 92. Kamilla Elliot, too, calls for models of adaptation "that *integrate* rather than simply juxtapose formal and contextual analyses" ("Theorizing Adaptations", p. 33).

[32] Susi K. Frank, Cornelia Ruhe and Alexander Schmitz. "Semiotik der Übersetzung." In: Susi K. Frank, Cornelia Ruhe and Alexander Schmitz (eds.): Jurij Lotman, *Die Innenwelt des Denkens: Eine semiotische Theorie der Kultur*. Transl. Gabriele Leupold and Olga Radetzkaja. Berlin 2010, p. 379-414, p. 398.

[33] Julie Sanders. *Adaptation and Appropriation*, p. 1.

[34] Linda Hutcheon. *A Theory of Adaptation*, p. 20.

[35] Julie Sanders. *Adaptation and Appropriation*, p. 98.

3. The Journey of the Bible from *Moskva-Petushki* to *Paradise*

The Bible is a remarkable example of a text that has been adapted time and again in a variety of contexts. Its adaptations include cultural artefacts as different as John Milton's classic epic *Paradise Lost* (1667) and films such as Monty Python's highly irreverent religious satire *Life of Brian* (1979) or the American box-office hit *The Passion of the Christ* (2004), directed by Hollywood star Mel Gibson. Itself a hybrid text – "a synthesis of law, prophecy, poetry, narrative and letters"[36] – the Bible has on a more general plane left its mark on the European literary tradition like few other books, as the editors of the anthology *Literature and the Bible* stress.[37] Besides providing a nearly endless repository of characters and stories, it is particularly influential in the concise structure of its overarching plot, which stipulates a teleological narrative of birth, death, and redemption. This biblical narrative of redemption is designed to furnish believers with a meaningful foil against which to pin and understand their own lives.[38]

In *Moskva-Petushki*, *Moscow Stations*, and *Paradise*, the biblical narrative plays out against the backdrop of a conflict between centre and periphery which is at the core of these texts. In Lotman's system of the semiosphere, the Bible clearly belongs to the highly organised, normative structures associated with the centre of European cultures, at least for the period in question. If adaptation is defined as "a more sustained engagement with a single text or source than the more glancing act of allusion or quotation, even citation, allows",[39] *Moskva-Petushki*, *Moscow Stations*, and *Paradise* can certainly count as adaptations of the Passion of Christ. While all three texts contain a wealth of single quotations and allusions to the Bible, these combine to form a coherent subtext modelled systematically on the plotline of the Gospels. More specifically, the lives of the protagonists appear analogous to the Via Dolorosa, to the 'Way of Grief' in Jerusalem, which Christ is said to have walked on his way to crucifixion. In the Christian tradition, this way of grief is associated with a number of so-called 'Stations of the Cross'. Christianity emulates the actual way of grief in old Jerusalem in a symbolical 'Way of the Cross' that most often contains fourteen stations, either as pictures or as sculptures. Walking along this Way of the Cross and praying at each station, believers re-enact Christ's own way of grief. Yet while the Bible is invested with a certain moral as well as metaphysical authority as the foundational text of Christian religious belief, *Moskva-Petushki*, *Moscow Stations*, and *Paradise* use the canonical narrative of birth, death, and redemption in a subversive way. In these texts, the religious narrative contrasts sharply with the bleak and largely meaningless everyday reality of the protagonists, who belong to the periphery of their cultures and societies.

The peripheral status of the protagonist becomes nowhere more apparent than in Venedikt Erofeev's short novel *Moskva-Petushki*. This subversive classic

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[36] Joe Carruthers, Mark Knight and Andrew Tate (eds.). *Literature and the Bible: A Reader*. London and New York 2014, p. 5.

[37] Ibid., p. 5.

[38] Ibid., p. 6.

[39] Julie Sanders. *Adaptation and Appropriation*, p. 4.

tells the story of Venya Erofeev, alter ego of the author and a vulnerable, endearing drinker who likes to philosophise about everything. At the beginning of the novel, Venya sets out from a random house entrance in Moscow, where he has spent the night, to travel by train to the small town Petushki. While he is chatting away lost in thought and chronicling the kind of booze he is taking in, he increasingly loses touch with his surroundings, and the train journey turns into a nightmare. Apocalyptic darkness falls, and Venya has to face horrendous creatures, such as a gang of furies, Satan, and a maimed sphinx. Instead of reaching Petushki, he suddenly finds himself back in Moscow and ends up in the same place he started out from; the most plausible explanation is that he actually left this place only in his imagination.[40] At the end, four unknown men accost and attack him, ultimately killing him on a staircase with a cobbler's awl or screwdriver. Venya's outsider status derives less from his addiction than from the fact that his story is steeped in literary allusion. Indeed *Moskva-Petushki* itself could hardly fall shorter of implementing the aesthetics of social realism prescribed by the Soviet regime, which shows in its chequered publication history.[41] Celebrated as the beginning of Russian postmodernism[42], *Moskva-Petushki* consists of a collage[43] of allusion and citation which comprises the entire history of Russian and Western European literature, history, and philosophy from classical antiquity, in a manner that purposely defies any finite interpretation.[44]

One of the most fertile sources of *Moskva-Petushki* is no doubt the Bible, whose echoes permeate the text, as criticism has widely acknowledged.[45] In his introduction to the edition published in 2000 by Vagrius, Evgeni Popov identifies the Bible as a book which Erofeev cherished all his life.[46] In *Moskva-Petushki*, already the name of the protagonist gestures towards the significance of the Bible as a subtext: 'Venya' and 'Venichka' are affectionate forms of 'Venedikt', which

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[40] Mark Althsuller also proceeds from the assumption that Venya is hallucinating. Mark Altshuller. "*Moskva-Petushki* Venedikta Erofeeva i traditsii klassicheskoy poemy." *Novy Zhurnal* 146 (1982), p. 75-85. Vladimir Tumanov argues that Venya returns to Moscow because he accidentally switched trains, but there is no real indication of that in the text. Vladimir Tumanov. "The End in V. Erofeev's Moskva-Petuški." *Russian, Croatian and Serbian, Czech and Slovak, Polish Literature* 39.1 (1996), p. 95-114, p. 102.

[41] First circulated in samizdat after its conception in 1969 and 1970, it was first published in tamizdat in Israel in 1973 and saw its first Soviet edition only in 1988 (Mulrine 1998: 50). The full authoritative text was published in Russia by Sakharov as late as 2005.

[42] Karen L. Ryan-Hayes. "Introduction." In: Karen L. Ryan-Hayes (ed.): *Venedikt Erofeev's Moscow-Petushki: Critical Perspectives*. New York 1997., p. 1-17., p. 1.

[43] Neil Stewart. '*Vstan' I vspominaj': Auferstehung als Collage in Venedikt Erofeevs* Moskva-Petuški. Heidelberger Publikationen zur Slavistik B. Literaturwissenschaftliche Reihe. Vol. 10. Frankfurt am Main 1999.

[44] Ibid., p. 15. In fact, such is its richness in intertextual reference that in the Russian edition of 2000, the commentary by Eduard Vlasov takes up more than four times as much space as the actual narrative.

[45] Among others Stewart ('*Vstan' I vspominaj'*, p. 21; 57) also emphasises the special role of biblical allusions in *Moskva-Petushki*.

[46] Evgeny Popov. "Sluchay s Venediktom." Venedikt Erofeev, *Moskva-Petushki: Poema*. S kommentaryami Eduarda Vlasova. Moscow 2000, p. 5-12., p. 8.

derives from 'Benedictus', Latin for 'the Blessed'.[47] This name provides the starting point for a plethora of conspicuous and inconspicuous references to the Bible from the first chapter. When Venya muses how the alcohol he has consumed the day before has rendered his soul strong, but his body weak,[48] this clearly refers to the Gospel of Matthew (26,41): "Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed *is* willing, but the flesh *is* weak".[49] Apart from the Gospels, the biblical sources cited in *Moskva-Petushki* include the Song of Solomon and the Book of Revelation.[50]

The most prominent biblical subtext in *Moskva-Petushki*, however, is the story of the Passion of Christ,[51] which the novel incorporates on several levels. On a structural level, Venya proceeds through various stations and ends up being virtually crucified; the Russian original explicitly says about Venya's attackers at the very end that "they nailed me to the floor".[52] On the level of content, too, his story flaunts numerous parallels to the Passion. As Neil Stewart illustrates, it is set on a Friday, and Venya encounters Pontius Pilate (here masked as Mithridates) as well as a disloyal Peter.[53] In terms of quantity and quality, the passage that occurs most frequently is from chapter five of the Gospel of Mark,[54] where Jesus resurrects a dead girl: "And he took the damsel by the hand, and said unto her, Talitha cumi; which is, being interpreted, Damsel, I say unto thee arise. And straightaway the damsel arose, and walked […]." (Mark, 5,41-42) The phrase "stand up and go", or only "go", or the Hebraic original "Talitha cumi", permeates the novel in many variations.[55] Erofeev mostly associates this leitmotif in a desecrating manner with either going somewhere to get drunk, or standing up after a hangover.[56] Vladimir Tumanov hence considers Venya's allusions to the Bible as "a mixture of mockery and reverence, desecration and veneration",[57] a result of adaptation that illustrates

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[47] Ibid., p. 3.

[48] "[M]y soul was strengthened in the highest degree while my members were weakened" (Venedikt Erofeev. Moscow to the End of the Line, p. 13).

[49] Yuri Levin. *Kommentari k poeme "Moskva-Petushki" Venedikta Erofeeva*. Predislovie Khainrikha Pfandlya. Graz 1996, p. 30.

[50] Neil Stewart. '*Vstan' I vspominaj*', p. 58. For a detailed identification of quotations and allusions see Svetlana Gaiser-Shnitman. *Venedikt Erofeev 'Moskva-Petushki': ili 'The Rest is Silence'*. Slavica Helvetica. Vol. 30. Bern, Frankfurt am Main, New York, Paris 1989.

[51] As Neil Stewart ('*Vstan' I vspominaj*', p. 25) illustrates, Paperno and Gasparov (1981) first identified the Passion as a central subtext of *Moskva-Petushki*. Cf. Iris Paperno and Boris Gasparov. "Vstan i idi." *Slavica Hierosolymitana* 6-7 (1981), p. 387-400.

[52] "oni prigvizdili menya k polu" (Venedikt Erofeev. *Moskva-Petushki: Poema*. Pervoe v Rossii izdanie polnogo avtorskogo teksta. Moscow 2004, p. 141).

[53] Neil Stewart. '*Vstan' I vspominaj*', p. 68-69.

[54] Ibid., p. 34-35.

[55] Ibid., p. 35.

[56] This transpires for instance in the chapter "Novogireevo – Reutovo" on one of the numerous occasions where Venya is talking to himself: "Go on and get drunk, Venichka, go on and get drunk as a skunk" (Venedikt Erofeev. *Moscow to the End of the Line*, p. 42).

[57] Vladimir Tumanov. "The End in V. Erofeev's Moskva-Petuški." *Russian, Croatian and Serbian, Czech and Slovak, Polish Literature* 39.1 (1996), p. 95-114, p. 105.

the dynamic renewal of codes suggested by Lotman's model of the semiosphere. The resulting conflation of the sacred and the profane introduces an ironic distance that recedes again towards the end of the novel, when the biblical references acquire a more serious, urgent tone. Shortly before his murderers virtually crucify him on the staircase, Venya quotes the words of Jesus in the ninth hour on the cross:[58] "Trembling all over, I said to myself, *Talife cumi*, that is, 'Get up and prepare for the end …' This isn't *Talife cumi*, it's *lama savahfani*, as the Saviour said … That is, 'Why hast thou forsaken me?'"[59] In thus expressly connecting the leitmotif "talitha cumi" with his impending crucifixion, Venya implicitly underscores the notion of resurrection inherent in it. However, he is disrupting the chronology of the Passion; unlike Jesus, he is not crucified at this stage. Indeed breaking up the chronology is a hallmark of Erofeev's adaptation of the Passion that directly bears on its significance.

Moskva-Petushki juxtaposes notions of teleology with a marked emphasis on circularity, which contributes decisively to the subversive functions of the subtext. At first glance, Venya's story seems to follow a clear-cut linear structure. The sequence of chapters, which is oriented on the train stations on the line from Moscow to Petushki, implies a teleological journey from one place to another, evoking the literary conventions of the travelogue.[60] The biblical subtext, too, initially reinforces this impression of linearity and teleology. Where Moscow appears as "the fallen Third Rome, […] the seat of the Antichrist and therefore a *Godless* city",[61] Venya identifies Petushki as his own Paradise or Garden of Eden (ibid.): "Petushki is the place where the birds never cease singing, not by day or by night, where winter and summer the jasmine never cease blooming."[62] Yet, Neil Stewart[63] underlines that *Moskva-Petushki* not only breaks the chronology of the Gospels – Satan here appears on the way to Calvary; the motif of resurrection proliferates in this novel to an extent that creates the impression of a never-ending circle of death and resurrection, which leads the notion of redemption *ad absurdum*. This notion of circularity also fits with the oft-noted paradox that Venya should still be able to narrate his story in retrospect after his death.[64] In conjunction with the ironic contrast between the sacred and the profane, this

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[58] "And at the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani? which is, being interpreted, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" (Mark 15,34).

[59] Venedikt Erofeev. *Moscow to the End of the Line*, p. 162, emphasis in orig.

[60] Critics have accordingly placed *Moskva-Petushki* in the context of travel literature (Katerine V. Moskver. "Back on the Road: Erofeev's *Moskva-Petuški* and Traditions of Russian Literature." *Russian, Croatian and Serbian, Czech and Slovak, Polish Literature* 48.2 (2000), p. 195-204.) and made connections to Lawrence Sterne's *Sentimental Journey through France and Italy* (1768) (Neil Stewart. '*Vstan' I vspominaj',* p. 85ff.) and the tradition of the picaresque (Karen L. Ryan. *Contemporary Russian Satire: A Genre Study*. Cambridge 1995) in particular.

[61] Vladimir Tumanov. "The End in V. Erofeev's Moskva-Petuški." *Russian, Croatian and Serbian, Czech and Slovak, Polish Literature* 39.1 (1996), p. 95-114, p. 102. Emphasis in orig.

[62] Venedikt Erofeev. *Moscow to the End of the Line*, p. 43.

[63] Neil Stewart. '*Vstan' I vspominaj'*, p. 70-71.

[64] Vladimir Tumanov. "The End in V. Erofeev's Moskva-Petuški", p. 95.

juxtaposition of teleology and circularity underscores the subversive functions of the Bible in *Moskva-Petushki*.

In sum, the biblical references in *Moskva-Petushki* emphasize the element of non-conformity and subversion that is central to Erofeev's life and work. The Bible as such is an incongruous, even subversive element in a culture like the Soviet one that pursued a politics of state atheism,[65] a fact which the author's own biography illustrates pointedly: According to Erofeev himself, he was expelled from the Vladimir Pedagogical Institute on the grounds of possessing a Bible.[66] True or not, this anecdote illuminates the self-conception of the author, who evidently modelled his fictional alter ego closely on himself. His association with Roman Catholicism – Erofeev had himself baptised a Catholic towards the end of his life[67] – appears especially subversive, since Roman Catholicism is traditionally not considered a Russian religion. If Erofeev himself refused early on to become involved in Soviet institutions like the Pioneers or the Comsomol,[68] *Moskva-Petushki* subverts central tenets of the Soviet regime on an aesthetic level. While some critics have identified Venya's murderers as the four horsemen of the Apocalypse,[69] others consider them as the four titans of Soviet communism, Marx, Engels, Lenin, and Stalin.[70] From this point of view, narrating his story all the same appears as an act of defiance against the attempt of these communist authorities to silence his subversive voice. The motif of resurrection, in other words, opposes the silencing or death of Russian literature under the Soviet Regime.[71] As if to support Lotman's assertion that semiotic processes are especially lively and dynamic in the periphery of the semiosphere, *Moskva-Petushki* subversively incorporates the Bible into a dense and heterogeneous network of intertextual allusion celebrating the productivity of culture.

If the motif of resurrection is central to *Moskva-Petushki*, the novel itself experienced a resurrection of sorts when the prolific Scottish poet, playwright, translator, and adapter Stephen Mulrine adapted it for the stage in 1992. Adapting a Soviet novel with a plethora of culture- and time-specific references into a contemporary Scottish play obviously necessitates a variety of minor and major updates; at the same time, *Moscow Stations* is an excellent case in point of the

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[65] Cynthia Simmons also emphasises the repression of the church by the Soviet State in her analysis of *Moskva-Petushki*, and simultaneously identifies alcohol as the prime means of 'opting out' of this repressive society, see "An Alcoholic Narrative as Time Out and the Double in *Moskva-Petushki*." *Canadian-American Slavic Studies* 24.2 (1990), p. 155-68, p. 156.

[66] Karen L. Ryan-Hayes. "Introduction", p. 3.

[67] Ibid., p. 4.

[68] Ibid., p. 2.

[69] Vladimir Tumanov. "The End in V. Erofeev's Moskva-Petuški", p. 103; David M. Bethea. *The Shape of Apocalypse in Modern Russian Fiction*. Princeton 1989., p. 275. Vladimir Tumanov offers a concise analysis of the apocalyptic features of *Moskva-Petushki*. See Tumanov. "The End in V. Erofeev's Moskva-Petuški", p. 103f.) also sees these men as a reference to Book of Daniel (7,7) with its vision of four destructive beasts.

[70] Iris Paperno and Boris Gasparov. "Vstan i idi", p. 390.

[71] Neil Stewart. '*Vstan' I vspominaj*', p. 38.

necessity for contraction which Linda Hutcheon[72] finds involved in the process of adaptation. In the case of *Moscow Stations*, adaptation involved a tripartite process of translation into a different linguistic, cultural, and generic system. Stephen Mulrine has described this process in detail in a journal article tracing the way, as the title says, "From Novel to Play". Mulrine here relates not only how he translated the play from Russian into English, but also how he adapted it for a British audience and for the stage (which necessitated a reduction in material by as much as four fifths). The drama was first produced as a radio play for BBC Radio 3, which meant that the first adaptation had to be further cut to fill only one hour.[73] Where the adaptation to a contemporary British horizon of reference is concerned, Mulrine simply swapped less well known personages with figures more prominent in the 1990s; he thus substituted the political figures Indira Gandhi, Moshe Dayan, and Carel Dubcek with the more universally known George Bush, Saddam Hussein, and Margaret Thatcher. More interesting are the choices he made in reducing the subject matter to fit the new genres of radio play and dramatic monologue. According to Mulrine, the task of every adapter from novel to play "is first to expose the basic structure of the novel, thinning out its texture […], to make it more overtly purposeful, for the much shorter-winded medium of drama".[74] From Mulrine's point of view, this basic structure consists of the story of the Passion, which he carved out in much detail.

The title of the adapted play reflects Stephen Mulrine's central principle of adaptation by alluding to the Way of the Cross,[75] to which Mulrine accords especial prominence. *Moscow Stations* establishes a straightforward analogy between the stations of Venya's railway journey and the stations of the Way of the Cross.[76] From the start, Mulrine sets up a clear-cut intertextual frame for the text. To condense the text and simultaneously highlight the subtext, Mulrine reduced the railway halts of the edition on which he based his adaptation from thirty-five to twelve.[77] When *Moscow Stations* thus ends with the station at which Jesus is nailed to the cross, skipping those where he is taken from the cross and placed in his grave, this corresponds to the ending of *Moskva-Petushki*. Yet Mulrine depicts "Venya's drunken Odyssey-cum-Via Dolorosa"[78] in a light that reduces the ambivalence of Erofeev's text regarding the notion of resurrection. Where *Moskva-Petushki* keeps up the contradiction between linearity and circularity, *Moscow Stations* tilts the balance in favour of linearity. As Venya muses in *Moscow Stations* on one occasion: "God is good, yes. He is leading me out of suffering towards the light. From Moscow – to Petushki. From the torments of Kursk Station, through the Purgatory of

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[72] Linda Hutcheon. *A Theory of Adaptation*, p. 19.

[73] Stephen Mulrine. *Moscow Stations*. London, 1993, 20, p. 52-53.

[74] Ibid., p. 57.

[75] Ibid., p. 53.

[76] In accordance with the conventions of drama, Mulrine substitutes the chapter headings in the ongoing text of his play with interjections of the on-board announcer naming the next stations. This approach also increases the ambivalence of the title.

[77] Ibid., p. 53.

[78] Ibid., p. 51.

Kuchino, to light, and Petushki."[79] Indeed Mulrine eliminates the repetitive references to the circularity of death and resurrection contained in *Moskva-Petushki*, arguing that the "overt references to Christ's Passion give *Moscow Stations* a discernible purpose and direction which belie its meandering texture".[80] If anything, though, *Moscow Stations* therefore turns out even more pessimistic than *Moskva-Petushki*; the emphasis on linearity leaves readers even more conscious of the fact that Venya fails to reach Petushki, i.e. paradise, especially since his own Way of the Cross breaks off at his crucifixion. In thus adapting the Russian play for a British audience, Mulrine not only promoted the reception of *Moskva-Petushki* in Britain; his emphasis on the Way of the Cross may well have inspired the Scottish stand-up-comedian and novelist A.L. Kennedy.[81]

If adaptation and appropriation "frequently affect[.] a more decisive journey away from the informing source into a wholly new cultural product and domain",[82] *Paradise* is certainly far removed from *Moskva-Petushki* at first glance. Written in the autobiographical mode of a confession, *Paradise* tells the life-story of the 36-year-old first-person narrator Hannah Luckraft, whose biblical name encapsulates the use of religion in this novel. The fact that it signifies "favour" or "grace"[83] ironically contrasts with her entirely meaningless existence. In mediating Hannah's story from her own subjective point of view, *Paradise* offers the psychological profile of an intelligent, oversensitive, and egocentric outsider who has failed in all spheres of life. Without any professional training, or a job, or friends, or a family of her own, Hannah concludes: "Every prior experience proves it – there is no point to you."[84] The equation she draws of her life so far could hardly be bleaker; it amounts to "Hannah Luckraft = Nothing".[85] This mathematical equation puts her almost on a par with the narrator of Fyodor Dostoevsky's *Notes from the Underground* (1864)[86], another monologue addressed to an imaginary audience. The so-called 'underground man', a literary type which had a strong impact on Russian as well as Western literature and philosophy,[87] lives isolated beyond society, and his relationship to the world is deeply troubled. Like Hannah, Dostoevsky's monologist is morbidly sensitive and completely centred on himself; like her, he lives beyond all social institutions. Determined to depict his retreat from society as a voluntary act, he tries to negate any determination from outside, going as far as to claim that $2 + 2 = 5$.[88] While Hannah's disposition towards society

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[79] Ibid., p. 31.

[80] Ibid., p. 53.

[81] Kennedy professes a certain foible for Russian literature when she names Anton P. Chekhov as her second favourite writer (after R.L. Stevenson) on her homepage ("ALK FAQ." *A. L. Kennedy*, www.a-l-kennedy.co.uk/alk-faq/. Accessed 14 June 2016).

[82] Julie Sanders. *Adaptation and Appropriation*, p. 26.

[83] Wilfried Seibicke. "Hanna." *Historisches deutsches Vornamenbuch: AE*. Vol. 1. Berlin, 1996, p. 268.
[84] A.L. Kennedy. Paradise. London, 2004, p. 234.

[85] Ibid., p. 281.

[86] Caroline Lusin. "Kennedy, A.L.: *Paradise*"

[87] Robert Louis Jackson. *Dostoevsky's Underground Man in Russian Literature*. Gravenhage 1958.

[88] Fyodor Dostoyevsky. *Notes from the Underground*. Unabridged. New York 1992, p. 23.

is very similar, her strategy of refusing to engage with her surroundings or herself is to drink. The way in which Kennedy develops this motif is so strikingly reminiscent of *Moskva-Petushki* as to suggest a very close intertextual relationship.

Drinking defines the style and above all the structure of Hannah's narrative, which is contingent and remarkably regular at the same time. The novel begins with Hannah's slowly regaining consciousness during a serious hangover in what turns out to be a hotel at Heathrow airport. At first Hannah neither knows where she is nor how she got there, and neither does the reader, as the story is told entirely from Hannah's limited and highly unreliable perspective. Only piece by piece do Hannah and the reader discover what happened, and Hannah herself is often unsure of what is true and what is not. Due to her frequent blackouts, many things remain unclear and uncertain, and her narrative is often fragmentary and associative. On one occasion, she even concedes that the coexistence of alternatives characterises her narration as a whole: "This is how my stories stop, they peter out into more and more lists and I find myself saying *or* far too often."[89] Yet, the fourteen chapters of the novel fall into a regular pattern. In a flashback interspersed with childhood memories, chapters one to seven retrospectively tell the story of how Hannah meets and falls in love with Robert, embarks on an affair with him, and of how Hannah's parents and brother send her to a clinic in Canada when her condition deteriorates. Chapter fourteen, finally, is again set in the Heathrow hotel. *Paradise* thus combines linearity and circularity in a similar manner as *Moskva-Petushki*.

Apart from the associative style motivated by the narrators' bouts of drinking, *Paradise* and *Moskva-Petushki* also share the peculiar association of alcohol and religion. At least as explicitly as Venya, Hannah describes her drinking habit in biblical terms. Just like *Moskva-Petushki*, *Paradise* establishes a connection between drinking and the motif of resurrection, when Hannah reflects: "My whiskey is down to the final glass […]. And this is the lesson of life: all that was full will be emptied. But there is always the chance of resurrection, a bar at hand to sort things out."[90] For Hannah, alcohol and "the ideal degree of drunkenness" promise "the undiluted flavour of paradise".[91] In an idiosyncratic attempt at biblical exegesis, Hannah draws on this authoritative text to support her conviction that drinkers are favoured by God. Reading the Bible, she argues,

> I learned that Isaac chose Rebecca to be his wife because she offered him a drink and Gideon – the warrior, not the book-pusher – was ordered by God to pick his troops according to the way they drank: […] watchful drinkers, those are the ones the Lord prefers.[92]

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[89] A.L. Kennedy. *Paradise*, p. 29, emphasis in orig.

[90] Ibid., p. 25. A very similar imagery reoccurs later: "I drink myself higher, it's all I need do to ascend. […] Alkhol, ethanol, ethyl alcohol – we christened drink in the magic of distillation" (85).

[91] Ibid., p. 187. In line with this imagery, Hannah also refers to drinking as "playing with the snakes" (p. 296).

[92] Ibid., p. 38.

Drinkers, Hannah tries to prove, must be particular favourites of God.[93] The title of the novel – *Paradise* – appears to confirm this identification in setting Hannah's story directly in relation to the story of the Passion.

More explicitly than either *Moskva-Petushki* or *Moscow Stations*, *Paradise* follows the structure of the Passion, with its fourteen chapters imitating the fourteen stations of the Way of the Cross.[94] The key to this structure is hidden in plain sight in Chapter 8, where two of Hannah's drinking pals are having an argument about whether the Way of the Cross has twelve or fourteen stations.[95] More distinctly than in *Moskva-Petushki*, each of the chapters of *Paradise* corresponds to one of the stations of the Passion. When Hannah's brother Simon tries to help her to become sober in Chapter 5, this is reminiscent of Simon of Carene, who relieved Christ of the cross to carry it himself at the fifth station. Her cross is twofold: on the one hand it is drink, as Hannah implies in Chapter 4: "Robert said he'd be the cross that I would bear, because he didn't understand my situation and couldn't know that was a lie. I already have my cross: we've been getting acquainted for years."[96] On the other hand, Robert identifies himself as her cross in Chapter 2: "You'll see – I'll be the cross you have to bear".[97] This corresponds to the second station in the Passion where Christ is given his cross. The subversiveness of biblical references emerges most bluntly in Chapter 11, which corresponds to the station where Jesus is nailed to the cross. In this chapter, Hannah accidentally steps on an upturned plank with nails protruding from its surface:

> So I get to feel the odd, slow sink of my foot as the nail slides clear through the rubber sole of my baseball boot and – in a way that is almost interesting – climbs, as my foot descends on it, to spike in through my skin.
> And I could do something about this – […] relieve the damaging pressure in any number of […] ways – but I don't. I keep very quiet and finish my step, force it absolutely flat, and then, rather more slowly than usual, I raise my foot back up again, drag it off the cling of metal until it's free.[98]

This scene amounts to a parody of crucifixion, in which Hannah minutely registers and self-consciously embraces being pierced by a nail. On a psychological level, the dissociated way in which she savours the self-injurious experience is reminiscent – along with other aspects of her narrative – of an identity disorder associated with

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[93] This becomes also apparent in the following passage: "[…] God is on our side. He left word to that effect in the Bible. Surprising this, I realise, but I have known the Bible for many years and it's all there: we are His favourites" (ibid., p. 37).

[94] Caroline Lusin. "Kennedy, A.L.: *Paradise*"; Julie Scanlon. "Unruly Novels, Unruly Selves." In: Madelena Gonzalez and Marie-Odile Pittin-Hédon: *Generic Instability and Identity in the Contemporary Novel.* Newcastle upon Tyne 2010, p. 139-159, p. 154.

[95] This might well be in mockery of *Moscow Stations*, which reduces the Way of the Cross to twelve stations; traditionally, the Way of the Cross has seven or, most frequently, fourteen stations. Bavaria and Austria also knew ways with fifteen stations (Notger Eckmann. *Kleine Geschichte des Kreuzweges.* Regensburg 1968, p. 23), while twelve or nineteen stations existed in the Netherlands in the 16th century (ibid., p. 12).

[96] A.L. Kennedy. *Paradise*, p. 84.

[97] Ibid., p. 60.

[98] Ibid., p. 281-282.

auto-aggressive behaviour, such as the borderline personality disorder.[99] On a metaphorical level, the scene distinctly recalls a previous one, where Hannah uses a similar imagery to pinpoint her situation in life: "I am helplessly nailed between two second-rate locations and trying not to find this symptomatic of my moral state."[100] While Julie Scanlon argues that "Kennedy frames this self-harm as an attempt to transcend the physical",[101] the scene in fact indicates how Hannah's state is self-inflicted, which contrasts ironically with the genuine tragedy and poignancy of the Passion of Christ. Far from "searching for some true self", as Scanlon maintains,[102] Hannah is – like Dostoevsky's underground man and Erofeev's Venya – trying to escape a reality and identity she cannot cope with, as the last lines of the novel confirm. Back in the Heathrow hotel and with the circle closed, Hannah envisions herself in Chapter 14 poised for a new beginning:

> I smile. I reach into my holdall and find the full bottle of Bushmill's undisturbed: that marvellous label: the long, slim door to somewhere else. When Robert has finished, when he steps through, pink with scrubbing, wrapped snug in a towel, then we'll lie on the bed together and [...] we'll tell each other everything. I'll ask him to bring through the glasses and then we'll begin.[103]

Corresponding to the station at which Jesus is placed in his grave, and following a chapter that clearly indicates Hannah's death,[104] this scene completes a circular movement which promises a new beginning in what Hannah conceives of as 'paradise', but which undermines the teleology of the Bible. After all, Hannah expressly defines alcoholic blackouts as "the art of escaping linear time".[105] Yet despite the unresolved ironic contrast between the sacred and the profane, between linearity and circularity, Hannah's explicit reliance on the Bible as well as the implicit intertextual references to the Way of the Cross bespeak a yearning for meaning and transcendence in a world that otherwise seems to lack both.[106]

4. Conclusion

The processes of adaptation at work in *Moskva-Petushki*, *Moscow Stations*, and *Paradise* bear eloquently witness to the fact that adaptation should be considered a key principle of any lively literary tradition. All of these texts are certainly literary artefacts in their own right which refute the prejudice long ingrained in Western culture that adaptations are in some way inferior to the 'originals'. But considering them as adaptations facilitates tracing the dynamic flows of translation and exchange which, according to Yuri Lotman, are an essential component of every culture. If we regard the texts in question as semiotic systems within the

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[99] I would like to thank Barbara Magin for this suggestion.

[100] A.L. Kennedy. *Paradise*, p. 199.

[101] Julia Scanlon. "Unruly Novels, Unruly Selves", p. 155.

[102] Ibid., p. 139.

[103] A.L. Kennedy. *Paradise*, p. 344.

[104] Caroline Lusin. "'We Live Again Anew'", p. 14.

[105] A.L. Kennedy. *Paradise*, p. 18.

[106] Caroline Lusin. "We Live Again Anew", p. 14.

semiosphere, each of which is governed by a specific code, the boundaries of these systems act as a filter that virtually translates aspects of other semiotic systems into the system's own code. According to Lotman, this very process of exchange between semiotic systems is absolutely vital to the continuous development, and thus the continued existence, of culture.

If the dynamics of culture rely, as Lotman argues, on the exchange of periphery and centre in particular, the adaptation of the Bible in *Moskva-Petushki*, *Moscow Stations*, and *Paradise* is a salient example. In the atheist universe of *Moskva-Petushki*, the Bible acts as a peripheral text which underscores the peripheral protagonist's rebellion against the rigid norms of the Soviet centre, an aspect which Mulrine retained in his adaptation of Erofeev's novel as *Moscow Stations.* In *Paradise*, by contrast, the subversive function of the Bible derives from the fact that Hannah associates a central authoritative text with her own peripheral status and worldview. In the upshot, then, *Moskva-Petushki*, *Moscow Stations*, and *Paradise* go a long way towards asserting the independence of 'original' and 'adaptation' in their subversive approach to the story of the Passion. In all three cases, however, the references to the Way of the Cross reflect a self-ironic desire of the narrators to latch onto a grand narrative that provides them with structure, coherence and a metaphysical foundation of life in a narrated world perceived as devoid of any orientation or transcendence.

There certainly remains an element of friction between the religious narrative of the Passion of Christ on the one hand and the transgressive, peripheral subcultures to which Venya and Hannah belong on the other. It is precisely this friction which allows for the particular resonance involved in the adaption of the Passion in these texts. While religion and the Bible are, as Andrew Tate maintains, "often connected with closure, monolithic creeds, and exclusion",[107] *Moskva-Petushki*, *Moscow Stations*, and *Paradise* break up these restrictions. In translating the culturally authoritative Bible into new peripheral contexts, *Moskva-Petushki*, *Moscow Stations*, and *Paradise* perpetuate the influence of this narrative beyond the constraints of the normative centre. Continuously oscillating between linearity and circularity, the three texts replace the teleology of the Bible with an evocative network of intertextual allusions geared towards creating ambivalence. If all these texts thus refuse their protagonists the single ticket to paradise, adaptation is clearly not a one-way track. The multiple echoes between *Moskva-Petushki*, *Moscow Stations*, and *Paradise* are certainly a case in point.

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[107] Tate. "Introduction", p. 1.