

City Walking and Narratives of Destiny

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In this essay, I will look at two narratives by former Soviet writers, written about New York and London and thematizing walks through the two cities. The first is a novel by Edward Limonov, written in 1976, and the second is a short story by Zinovy Zinik, written in 1994. Both writers belong to the immigrant generation of the so-called Third Wave, which spanned the period between the seventies and eighties. This group of immigrants contained a relatively large percentage of professional and amateur writers and journalists who could not realize their talents in the Soviet Union and were induced or sometimes forced to leave. Many of these people opened newspapers, journals, and publishing houses. Others became active literary contributors. This became a vibrant and dynamic period of unprecedented literary activity. In retrospect, its literary output was probably more important for Russian literary history than the corresponding production of metropolitan literature in the same years. Those whose work was censored under the Soviet regime became published authors for the first time, among them the two authors I will present. Not only did they become known among fellow immigrants, but their books were smuggled back to the Soviet Union, where they achieved an underground cult status. They could not have dreamed of greater influence and popularity. Since the breakdown of the former Soviet Union, the vibrant émigré literary scene has all but ended its existence. As Zinovy Zinik expressed this, the metropolitan literature has reasserted itself and has since engulfed the periphery. But in the period between early 1970s and late 1990s, Third Wave writers enjoyed fame among their former compatriots and occupied a position of literary centrality, with Paris, Berlin, London, and especially New York acting as surrogates for the Russian literary centers of Moscow and Leningrad.

Thematically, I would like to focus on two literary treatments of walking around New York and London. In their wanderings through New York, the writers trace the remembered landscapes of origin (typically Moscow or Leningrad) over the topography of New York and London. For Zinik, it is Moscow. For Limonov, however, it is not only Moscow, the literary capital, where his coming-of-age as a poet took place, but his native Kharkov in Ukraine, where he had grown up and started on a criminal career, later interrupted by his move to Moscow. What interests me in these texts is two things: firstly, how this imaginary “double-exposure” between the new and the old home creates the necessary context for a metanarrative exploration of what constitutes the idea of narrativity and secondly, how these explorations amount to *narratives of destiny*, which I see as exemplary originary narratives.

Limonov's autobiographical novel, *It's me, Eddie*, (released by its American publisher under the subtitle of "The Fictional Memoir"), recounts his traumatic experiences soon after immigrating to the U.S., his year of being down and out in New York City. He meets with adversity when his model-wife leaves him for a rich man and he is fired from a Russian newspaper (for a politically incorrect editorial). After he tries his hand at bussing tables at a restaurant and realizes he cannot do it, he is subsequently reduced to surviving on welfare checks and occasional part-time jobs. The book gained a great deal of notoriety because of its sexual explicitness and bad language, as well as Limonov's open embrace of homosexuality and leftist politics—a position that went against the grain of social norms and political allegiances within the socially and politically conservative Russian émigré community. Limonov calls himself a *flâneur* and dedicates several long sequences in the book to his aimless walks through New York City, during which he observes other pedestrians and has homosexual encounters with black homeless men, all the while recalling his criminal past in Kharkov and fantasizing about a future communist revolution in the U.S., which he would help bring about and thus revenge himself on rich men, who steal poor immigrants' wives. The section at which I want to take a closer look is the chapter that describes his various Manhattan itineraries and ends in Central Park by the sculpture of Alice in Wonderland.

Zinik's story, "The Double Act in Soho" is about another unsuccessful Russian immigrant. Unlike Limonov's alter ego, Eddie, who is a young man and a relatively new arrival, Alex, the protagonist of Zinik's story, is an older man, who has lived in London for a long time. He tries to make a living by writing articles for Russian immigrant publications, but is not very successful at it and can hardly make ends meet. While Eddie is an extremely fashion-conscious "dandy," who takes pride in his flashy clothes and high-heel boots that he manages to buy on his meager earnings (this is the only reason he takes part-time jobs), Alex is a slovenly dresser, pot-bellied and balding, who is keenly aware of his unkempt appearance and the, poor impression he must make on the opposite sex. Just like Eddie, but in a more profound and desperate way, he considers himself a loser. The story begins with Alex taking an interest and almost instantly falling in love with a young woman, Lena, whom he correctly guesses to be Russian, and following her around Soho's sex shops, where she is conducting marketing research on American pornographic videos. Alex, who has no idea why she keeps asking shop assistants about American videos and rummaging through American video sections, keeps revising the story he has created about her. After they finally introduce themselves, he suggests that they join forces and do the research together under a plausible excuse (as Russian tourists looking for a business venture) that would help them avoid detection, since they are supposed to keep their survey a secret. Eventually, Alex's slips of the tongue blow their cover. In the last part of the story, the direction of the narrative reverses. Instead of chasing the girl, Alex and Lena are now themselves chased by the thugs of the pornography mafia. The ending of the story, however, presents another misconstrual and reversal. It turns out that the mafiosi meant Alex and Lena no harm. They only wanted to make a counter business proposition, keeping it a secret from their boss.

The two narratives are very different in genre and character, one being a work of hyper realism, another, a postmodern pastiche. What unites them, in my eyes, is their use of city walking. The walks function not just thematically but as a rhetorical device. To show how, I would like first to turn to Michel de Certeau's *Practice of Everyday Life*, where he presents his analysis of walking in the city. De Certeau, quite intuitively, points to the similarity between walking and narrativity. Firstly, there is the dynamic component of movement, being caught in "the city's grasp," subjected to the gravitational pull of its field and carried along the "magnetic trajectories" of its arteries towards the vanishing points of its strange attractors. Secondly, the city walker does not make a completely free choice of itinerary, but plots it on a pre-existing map. In other words, his trajectory is limited to the existing grid of discreet spaces that are individually identifiable and addressable. De Certeau compares the city, with its house numbers and names of streets, shops, and cafes, to a text. Thus, the itinerant does not flow freely through uncharted space but moves from a specified location to a specified location, making his way through the "thicks and thins of an urban 'text'" (93). This can be seen as a framework for a very basic, pared down narrative—a movement through a textualized, semiotic space. The pedestrian himself writes this text without being able to read it, according to De Certeau. What he writes is a kind of travel story. In fact, a travel story is a paradigm for all stories, or in his words: "Every story is a travel story—a spatial practice" (115). I think, De Certeau is right in more ways than he intended, as I will show shortly.

Another important point De Certeau makes is that the narrative of walking is a kind of speech act, a concept we normally do not associate with writing, which we see as an artifact and not a performance. But I think de Certeau is quite correct in seeing walking as a "spatial acting out of the place, which has a rhetorical, "'enunciative' function"—that of "appropriation of the topographical system on the part of the pedestrian" (97-98). I find the idea of appropriation both evocative and anthropologically accurate, insofar as it agrees with GA's theory of narrative performativity. In his "Originary Narrative" article, Eric Gans writes that "the minimal criterion of narrative is making the temporality of the sign a model for worldly action." But, at the same time, the "only action that we can consider *ab ovo* as equivalently human and significant is precisely that of the emission of the sign itself." What this implies is that "the story told by originary sign is, in the first place, that of its own emission." In the most minimal terms, it is the story of how the sign begins by intending an act of appropriation but is derailed into a gesture of designation. While the former exists in the sphere of immanence, the latter belongs to the space of transcendence (insofar as the object, as the new sacred, is no longer within reach). Thus, another way of summarizing the minimal narrative is as a story of "the generation of transcendence from immanence." This first, fundamental generative act contains within itself the original performative. But as a performative is a "way of doing things with words" (or language), does not the movement from immanence to transcendence occur in the direction from effectual to ineffectual (insofar as immanence represents the acquisitive gesture, and thus a possibility of doing things, while transcendence implies deferral and thus inaction)? Not in the sense that

performativity should be understood as a symbolic act—a way of summoning the joint attention of the newly formed linguistic community. The memory of the pre-linguistic act of appropriation is transferred to the act of designation under the guise of ostensive representation. Gans explains that “to designate is to represent, but to represent is to transfer the ‘being’ or ‘essence’ of the physical object to the designatum of the representation, which we may already speak of as its ‘signified.’” Instead of making a lunge for a desirable object in order to take possession of it before our mimetic rival does, we step back and point to it, thus making the originary ostensive sign of calling attention to the cessation of violence. The originary ostensive sign “performs” the conferral to the object of a sacred status, as Gans explains in *Originary Thinking*.

In this earlier text, he defines the ostensive as the “originary speech-act” (64). “What is ‘performed’ by the ostensive [in this speech act] is a centering of its referent, that is at the same time a subsumption of it under the category of the significant center” (65). I would like to propose an additional way of glossing this, namely via the idea of differentiation (if we think of differentiation as the creation of a difference in potential). As a visual aid, we can think of the metaphor of a contour map representing a field of forces, with equipotential lines representing surfaces of equal potential. The difference in potential causes the movement of an object in such a force field from a higher to lower potential. The center can be thought of as “potential valley” or a “strange attractor” that creates a gravitational pull from one part of space to another. This pull exerted on a peripheral position by attracting it toward the center corresponds to the performative force of narrative desire. This model of differentiation is what I also associate with Gans’s idea of the scenicity of representation: the separation of the stage from the auditorium constitutes an originary act of differentiation. As much is implied, I believe, by Gans in *Originary Thinking*, where he gives a different definition of originary narrativity, explaining it as “the coming of divinity” or a story that narrates the divinity’s “approaching presence” (97).

In other words, the originary narrative contains an inauguration of differentiation via an installing of the sacred center. A non-originary narrative simply wants to tell us a story of successful appropriation (105). Every successful appropriation signifies an act of narrative closure. Every narrative closure performs an act of transferring from the periphery to the center, of attaining the central position. To be more specific, a narrative comes to a stop when the protagonist achieves the goal of his quest or arrives at the moment of expanded knowledge, and thus obtains the culturally central status of a victor or an expert. Of course, the act of acceding to the center is imaginary and unstable because the desire of possessing a central object can only be predicated on its constitutional impossibility. And so a moment of narrative closure is necessarily an illusion that must be succeeded by another illusion, and another... But it creates a temporary narrative teleology, a factor of suspense, to accompany the movement from insignificance to significance, from the periphery to the center. I will return later to the significance of this trajectory from the periphery to the center.

To go back to walking and de Certeau's idea of appropriation, we can ask: what does the pedestrian appropriate through his pedestrian "speech act"? One way of metaphorizing this act of appropriation is through the figure of mastery (another metaphor for acceding to centrality). The walker masters the city by learning all there is to know about its ins and outs, its back alleys and short cuts, its alternative itineraries, to name just a few things. As Alex and Lena are being chased by the thugs, who seem to be gaining on them, Alex manages to "find an escape maneuver, a back door, or a communicating passage every single time. To Lena's surprise, he knew all [Soho's] ins and outs." The practical knowledge is a skill that is both of value to an immigrant and one that he can hone to perfection. It might take him many years to master the new language or become savvy about subtle cultural codes, but it takes a fraction of this time to develop expertise in the area of walking knowledge. In fact, it is not uncommon for the natives to become lazy or complacent and gradually limit their walks to streets in their immediate vicinity, and therefore be surprised and impressed by some relative newcomer's extensive knowledge of the city's nooks and crannies, its hidden treasures. "I have lived in this area all my life," one might say, "but I had no idea that this shop or museum or shortcut was here. You, on the other hand, have just come here, and you seem to know everything about the city. You put me to shame." This is, in fact, true of both protagonists. Eddie Limonov, for example, says about himself: "I am a man of the street. I have to my credit very few people-friends and many friends-streets. They, the streets, see me at all hours of the day and night; I often sit on them, press my buns to their sidewalks, cast my shadow on their walls, prop my elbow or my back against their lampposts. I think they love me because I love them and pay attention to them like nobody else in New York. As a matter of fact, Manhattan ought to put up a monument to me with the following inscription: 'To Edward Limonov, New York's number one pedestrian. With love from Manhattan!'" Once, he adds, he covered "more than 300 blocks on foot in one day." And in a similar vein, Alex calls himself a Columbus of London, a "tyrant king of an empire he discovered." Each day his empire grows bigger. And the charm of it is that the natives are no threat to the king's possessions. They exist independently as an organic part of the environment or theatrical backdrop. The threat, on the other hand (surprisingly?), comes from the direction of new Russian visitors and immigrants who have started filing in after the fall of the Iron Curtain. These people are bound to form their own ideas, parcel out his kingdom in their own ways. He fears that they will not recognize his centrality, not give him his due by ignoring his advice, his primacy, and expertise. What was the point then of being the first immigrant, the trailblazer?

Alex's fear of gradually losing his coveted status as a pioneer and an expert on the West is indicative of the Third Wave literature's double perspective from which its protagonists' subject position is constructed. This notion of double perspective allows me to bridge Michel de Certeau's speculations, which concern both the actual, physical act of walking, which he compares to a narrative, and imaginary literary narratives about walking. The characters are walking in the city and writing their own narratives within the confines of the literary world. But we are reading their narratives as language and extracting their textual

meaning. How can de Certeau's analysis help us in this task? I believe that the narrativity of walking creates a metanarrative context and lifts narrativity to the thematic level, making us focus on narrativity itself.

We can look at how Limonov's protagonist is self-consciously re-constructing his life-narrative as the story of a hero and a revolutionary by leaving behind his earlier identity as a poet. He tells the reader "I have established my poetic fate; whether or not it will last is no longer the issue; it's done, it exists. In Russia my life is already legend, and now I walk free, empty, and terrible in the Great City, amusing, saving, and distracting myself with its streets, and I seek the encounter that will begin my new fate." In "A Double-Act in Soho," a self-consciously postmodern story, references to narrative theory are woven into the text conspicuously and in humorous ways. Thus when Alex, trying to puzzle out reasons behind Lena's interest in American pornography, asks a shop assistant in one of the shops what is so special about American pornography, the salesman explains that it is more interesting to watch than German pornography. Why, Alex asks. Well, because American pornography tells a story, while German pornography is strictly functional. What do you mean, asks Alex. Don't you know the difference between the fabula and the syuzhet? asks the salesman. The narrative itself signals transitions and alludes to various recognizable plots with each new turn of events. One moment it's a quest, the next, an action story, yet the next—a burlesque romp with inverted intertextual references to Mikhail Bulgakov's *Master and Margarita*, a satirical Soviet classic.

This metanarrativity is partly an artifact of the text's double perspective that both creates and is heightened by their extreme (I would call it performative) self-consciousness. This double perspective derives from the third-wavers' unique position of having escaped from a country with closed borders. For the Soviet people, the feeling of being completely isolated or permanently cut off from the rest of the world, especially the West, was inversely proportional to the sense of longing they experienced about everything Western—from fashion to music—about which they could only form second-hand ideas. In other words, their desire for the West was predicated on the impossibility of its fulfillment. The fact that a few were expelled or allowed to emigrate in the 1970s was experienced both by those who left and those who stayed as something unprecedented, a one-in-a-lifetime occurrence. Thus everything felt unreal to the new Soviet immigrants in the beginning. As Sergei Dovlatov, another prominent writer and, briefly, a newspaper publisher, expressed this feeling of wonder in one of his editorials shortly after his arrival: "Everyone of us is experiencing a second birth. We can call it a process of adaptation or assimilation. But the meaning is the same—we are born again. . . . We are trying to comprehend the mysterious and incredible America. Amazing things are still happening to us. For example, you are walking along Broadway, thinking your thoughts. And suddenly you stop dead in your tracks . . . My God! Is it me myself walking along Broadway? Could it all be true? This bar, this black man, this shop. Are we really in America?" Coupled to this sense of wonder was the sense of an obligation Russian writers felt in taking upon themselves the seeing and processing of new

impressions as envoys or representatives and on behalf of friends and colleagues who stayed behind. In another editorial, Dovlatov cites a letter from a friend (who could have been an aggregate of several people), which says “your emigration is not private matter. . . . You must remember us. We are many, and we are still alive.” Because of the uniqueness of the situation, the Third-Wave writers thus consciously took on a role of becoming the others’ eyes, which gave their writings an added quality of a travelogue. In his article, “The ‘Narrative is Travel’ Metaphor,” Kai Mikkonen makes a convincing case that all modern writing has characteristics typical of travel writing. But this is especially true of Russian Third-Wave narratives. As an example, we can consider Limonov’s city walk narrative, which has a degree of detail, especially in describing things that various stores sell, that would be superfluous in a narrative addressing a Western reader.

Another instance of double-perspective is the double topography of the narratives, the discernible second layer of the invisible native city, which becomes manifest in flashbacks, moments of recognition, and the ongoing process of “translation”—the new environments and the new experiences are read through the old ones. *It’s Me, Eddie* has especially many instances of such explicit translations. For example, when Eddie is observing the people in Washington Square, he says to himself that they “are absolutely the same. There are small, purely American differences, the colored tattoos on their skin, for example, and the fact that some of these people, the singers and those standing around them, are black. Nevertheless I recognize in many of them my faraway Kharkov friends, who by now have long since taken to drink. . . . I recognize our unchanging girlfriends, the girls from Tyura’s dacha, Masha and Kokha, except that they are talking between themselves in English. . . . This man here with the black teeth is Yurka Bembel, who was shot in 1962 for raping a minor. . . . And this is the exemplary technology student Fima.”

Similarly, in the midst of his chase through Soho, Alex, the “Double Act” protagonist, is suddenly transported in his mind to the Moscow of the 1970s. It is the dead of winter, and he is trying to sneak into the Dutch embassy with a heavy suitcase full of his unpublished manuscripts. His heart is pounding as he is imagining that he is followed and that, at any moment, a secret policeman will apprehend him and search his suitcase, containing “anti-Soviet” writings. But, luckily, he is wrong, and his mission is successful. His suitcase is left safely at the Dutch embassy and is returned to him after his escape to the West.

And finally, and most importantly, the doubleness that interests me is constituted by a convoluted forward-backward perspective of reading and understanding a narrative. Earlier I talked about narrative as a temporal and spatial progression from one point to another. But a simple journey towards a goal does not capture the whole of narrative experience. As Meir Sternberg explains in “Reconceptualizing Narratology,” narrativity emerges out of the interplay between the temporalities of what he calls three narrative interests—those of propection, retrospection, and recognition (or suspense, curiosity, and surprise). “Suspense arises from rival scenarios about the future.” Curiosity involves manipulation of the past:

“knowing that we do not know, we go forward with our mind on the gapped antecedents, trying to . . . bridge . . . them in retrospect.” Finally, in surprise, the narrative “unexpectedly discloses to us our misreading and enforces a corrective rereading in late re-cognition” (48). According to Sternberg, the double perspective of prospective and retrospective orientation is something that is generally true for the way we read all narratives. But in this instance, I would like to transfer Sternberg’s analysis of narrative interests from how we read to how *characters* read and write their narratives. Namely, I associate the future orientation of prospection with writing, and the backward orientation of retrospection with reading. I am not making a broader claim about the applicability of Sternberg’s analysis to all narratives of city walking or all immigrant narratives. But his observation about the dual temporality of narratives is highly relevant for metanarrative stories, where protagonists are playfully aware of the narrativity of their accounts.

Narratives of walking foreground different narrative interests. A reading of a goal-oriented walk might coincide with Sternberg’s future-oriented perspective of suspense. Am I really going to find a needed pharmacy in this maze of streets? Are they really going to have my medicine or will my quest be unsuccessful? But one could also meander around the city aimlessly in a mood of curiosity. Asking questions about where this or that alley leads to or what is behind this or that door is done from the perspective of retrospection with respect to the future goal of mental mapping and systematizing. In addition, one could walk around the city in the *flâneur*-like attitude of openness—observing and being observed, wanting to be seen and surprised, and yearning for all possible kinds of encounters. The narrative of walking self-consciously, being aware of one’s walking, placing oneself on a scene of representation as a character in one’s own story, and so on, makes for a hybrid genre or hybrid narrative structure of writing and reading. This is where writing meets reading. When one walks in this special conscious mode I described above, one creates one’s own written narrative that one tries to read. In other words, one molds one’s destiny. Thus, one could define destiny as a kind of a narrative configuration that involves reading and writing. You read your destiny as it is writing you. (Or, perhaps, conversely: you write your destiny as it is reading you).

The two protagonists of the novel and the short story are both reading and writing their respective narratives. In “A Double Act,” Alex keeps projecting and revising the narrative he is reading. He first decides that the girl is a Russian tourist who has a penchant for American pornographic videos because in Russia, everything American is seen as glamorous. As Alex continues his pursuit of the girl, he revises his story. He observes the girl greeting a friend and overhears a few phrases they exchange. Based on them, he changes his mind about her. She is probably not a tourist but an illegal immigrant who is earning money by prostitution, and the reason she is interested in American videos is because many of her clients are American. They make each other’s acquaintance after Lena confronts Alex and asks him to explain his stalking. When she introduces herself, she tells him that it was her father who helped her to get this job. Alex first thinks that the father has

sold his daughter into prostitution, and re-writes his story about her as an immigrant's narrative of poverty and survival. Later he understands that the job concerns doing a survey about the percentage of American pornographic films on the London market, and he subsequently rebrands her as someone who has emigrated recently with her parents and is forced to take odd jobs. And eventually, Alex is disappointed to find out that Lena has lived in London as long as himself. This means that his fantasy of becoming her mentor and guide around London will not be realized, and he will have to invent another story for himself. But in the end, as they flee from the mafia, he ends up playing the role of a hero anyway. As he is first guiding Lena around Soho's shops and later arranges their last minute escapes, his perception of himself is gradually transformed. "Even in the shining of his bald spot, one could detect a certain purposefulness: as if the superfluous hair was blown away by the blustering wind in order not to impede his progress." Suddenly, he feels decisive, athletic, and courageous—a veritable superman. It is suggested at the end of the story that he and Lena will spend the night. In addition to being a conventional ending of the boy-gets-the-girl type (albeit in a playful, postmodernist way), it also represents a befitting closure for a narrative of destiny. The particular trajectory from the periphery to centrality that this narrative takes represents a providential reclaiming of his identity in a more powerful, more masterful, more central way. Being a writer, even an unofficial, underground writer, in the Soviet Union held a great deal of cultural cachet but is no longer a position of cultural centrality in his present life, and especially not in the eyes of this young and beautiful girl, who would have a greater appreciation for a hero than a literary has-been. But an even deeper reason is that being a writer in the present is a constitutionally peripheral position: as a writer you observe the center but do not occupy it. The act of claiming one's destiny as a hero, on the other hand, puts one in an unstable and unsustainable position of being the center of one's own narrative—a position that evacuates one's consciousness and therefore can only be occupied toward the end of the story.

In Limonov's novel, the opposing orientations of writing and reading are figured even more explicitly than in Zinik's story as components in the reciprocal structure of destiny. Eddie, who calls himself a *flâneur*, walks for the sake of an encounter. As he walks up and down New York streets and avenues, he asks himself why walking has become a compulsion. "Most of the time I walked as if just for fun, as if it were my heart's desire to take a stroll, yet in fact my goal was . . . to be honored with an encounter. . . . Whom did I hope to meet? A man? A woman? A friend, or love? Oh, the image I had in mind was very unspecific, but I waited, tremblingly waited."

I would like to finish by locating Sternberg's moment of recognition in the two texts. Again, for Sternberg, this is readerly recognition. This moment has to do with a misunderstanding or misprision, when the reader has misconstrued some elements of plot or narration and is forced to re-map his understanding of the text by shifting paradigms. In the narratives of destiny, this moment of understanding may happen on the part of the character who is reading his own story. And this is something we find both in *It's Me*, *Eddie* and *A Double Act*

in Soho.

Alex experiences the moment of recognition when his new hero's self-consciousness is superimposed over the memory of smuggling the suitcase. When his suitcase is returned to him and he rereads his writings, he realizes that he can no longer relate to them. They belong to the past, to the life that is no longer his, and now, even worse, to the country that no longer exists. It strikes him, therefore, that his presence in the past no longer makes sense. He shuts down the suitcase, and with setting aside his writings, he leaves his identity as a Russian writer behind. But the symbolic act of closing the lid of the suitcase creates an emptiness inside him—an emptiness nothing could fill until the moment of holding Lena's hand. The feeling of her hand in his reminds him of the feeling of the suitcase's handle. Thus, metonymically, Lena comes to fill the gaping hole left by the redundancy of his writings. Recognizably, "he was again in his right place, in his home, surrounded by enemies and saving friends."

Finally, Eddie's encounter ends up (perhaps predictably) being with himself. Here, once again, the moment of recognition is brought to the surface by the momentum of metonymic sliding. Eddie's long walk comes to an end by the sculpture of Alice in Wonderland in Central Park. Watching children romping around it, he becomes fascinated by a boy with long hair, who reminds him of himself at the same age. Recalling some of his exploits, he suddenly realizes that he has not changed. All other people around him became grown-ups—dull, careful, complacent. But he remained as he had been as a child—an uncompromising and passionate extremist. "To this day, I am a pilgrim, I have not sold myself." This is a turning point in the narrative. His realization not only soothes him but functions, as in Zinik's story, as a pivotal moment that allows him to put his legendary status as an underground Russian poet behind him and emerge a revolutionary. Just as Alex does, Limonov reconfigures himself as a hero of his narrative almost at its point of closure. He leaves the park singing a revolutionary song.

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