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Privatize your name: Symbolic work in a post-Soviet linguistic market[1]

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This paper analyzes the new names given to Russian private businesses that have appeared after the collapse of the Soviet State in 1991. By naming new private ventures their owners – members of the new business class – attempt to privatize public space not only legally but also symbolically and linguistically. They strive to construct their particular new version of social reality, to represent it as positive and meaningful, and to impose themselves publicly as legitimate authors, owners, and masters of this new reality. This paper proceeds on several distinct levels of analysis. First, it analyzes a number of discourses, representing various subcultures and periods of Soviet and Russian history, from which new business names draw their complex meanings. Second, it considers concrete linguistic and semiotic techniques that are employed by the new names in this process. Third, it examines the cultural and social implications of this process of nomination for post-Soviet developments in the Russian society.

KEYWORDS: Russia, post-socialism, language change, naming, market, cultural production, identity

NOMINALIZATION OF SPACE

In the Soviet period the official linguistic representation of public space was controlled by the institutions of the Party State. The names of streets, towns, factories, cinemas, and shops were approved by ideological and artistic committees to fit prescribed ideological patterns. They functioned as a unified, centrally orchestrated, and hegemonic system of public representation, and the chances of being surprised by an unusual name were minimal (see Yurchak 1997: 167, 1999b).

In the early 1990s, after the collapse of the Party State, Russia experienced a major socio-cultural shift. The relative suspension of the centralized control of linguistic representation brought about a quick and creative process of innovation in all forms of public discourse,[2] especially in the language of private business, advertising, mass media, youth culture, and politics. Most authors of this innovation belong to the groups of new private actors – business owners,

copywriters, media moguls, and journalists. This paper focuses on one aspect of this innovation: the invention of names for the places which constitute a uniquely new *privately owned* public space in a post-Soviet city – shops, cafés, travel agents, clinics, clubs, etc., which mostly cater to the emerging urban middle class and the new rich but are regularly visited by less affluent clients as well.

I will treat public space as a physical object (which is constructed, designed, measured, and reshaped) and a symbolic object (which is owned, controlled, exchanged, named, and which can give meaning to one's self identity and manifest power). By inventing new names for privately owned public places their owners are *privatizing* public space not only legally (as legitimate owners) but also symbolically (as the authors and masters of the new meaning of this space). Thus, the focus of this discussion is what sociologist Sharon Zukin calls the 'effects of market practices on a ''sense of place''' (1991: 6). However, in contrast to the changes in the postmodern capitalist landscapes, which Zukin discusses, transformations of space in Russian cities have some uniquely *post-socialist* features. They have been brought about not only by the expansion of the postmodern markets into new domains, but also, sometimes more importantly, by a combination of market practices with the structures and meanings of space constructed in the socialist period.

Lived public and private urban space in Russia today consists of diverse places and discourses, which coexist and clash in multiple combinations. This is a *multilocal* space (Rodman 1992: 640), where new private businesses often rent space inside old state owned enterprises, and crammed communal apartments of the Soviet past share stairs with the luxurious residences of the new rich. This space is also *multivocal* (Rodman 1992: 640), where discourses of commercial advertising in Russian and English and names of public places from the Soviet past and the post-Soviet present coexist and often quote each other. This analysis concentrates on the symbolic work that the new names of private ventures perform in St. Petersburg. Similar processes of business nomination take place in other post-Soviet Russian cities and towns, as is evident, for example, in the preliminary dictionary of business names in the city of Viatka (formerly Kirov), compiled by Russian linguist Tamara Nikolaeva (1994, see also Ryazanova-Clarke and Wade 1999: 299–301).

Public space became a marketable commodity in St. Petersburg in 1990, when the first real estate agency, *Dom Plius*, was created. Soon private ventures started emerging all over the city. These spaces from the beginning were strikingly different from their older state owned counterparts that dominated the urban landscape. Unlike the latter, the new private shops and ventures offered more 'Western' products and services, worked 24 hours a day without days off or lunch breaks, played loud pop music on FM radios, and boasted friendlier and younger service personnel.

The names given to these ventures also seemed strikingly new and unfamiliar, at least at first glance. These names can be broadly divided into

two groups. The first group consists of names which are versions of existing English or French words or personal names and are sometimes transliterated in Cyrillic and sometimes spelled in the original Latin. For example, see pictures 1–4 (Fig. 1):[3] *Лакшери* (*Laksheri*, 'luxury' – food shop), *Элайнс* (*Elains*, 'alliance' – café), *Смайл Маркет* (*Smail Market*, 'smile market' – food shop), *Сити* (*Siti*, 'city' – clothes, cosmetics). Other examples in this group include: *Кэш* (*Kesh*, 'cash' – café), *Super Mag* (spelled in Latin, food shop), *Экстрем* (*Ekstrem*, 'extreme' – computer firm), *Эвэланш* (*Evelansh*, 'avalanche' – dental practice), *Бонжур* (*Bonzhur*, 'bon jour' – café), *Кантри* (*Kantri*, 'country' – clothes), *Лаура* (*Laura*, food shop), *Дональд* (*Donal'd* – café), *Роланд* (*Roland*, food shop), *Джулия* (*Dzhuliia*, 'Julia' – hair salon), *Алекс* (*Aleks*, 'Alex' – security firm), *Marina International* (food shop), *Babylon* (clothes, home appliances), *Holiday* (food shop) – the last three names spelled in Latin.

The names in the second group are products of a more complex linguistic creativity: they are not direct borrowings of concrete words but are invented by the owners. For example, see picture 5 (Fig. 1) and pictures 6–10 (Fig. 2): *Танэт* (*Tanet*, clothes), *Слакст* (*Slakst*, food shop), *Мирай* (*Mirai*, food shop), *Ариэлла* (*Ariella*, clothes), *Рассана* (*Rassana*, café), and *Магна* (*Magna*, food shop). Other examples in the second group include: *Алгоник* (*Algonik*, food shop), *Алівект* (*Alivekt*, clothes), *Тоби Шоп* (*Tobi Shop*, clothes), *Велена* (*Velena*, clothes), *Векада* (*Vekada*, café), *Милана* (*Milana*, food kiosk), *Никс* (*Niks*, bakery), *Флекс* (*Fleks*, food shop), *Ромис* (*Romis*, food shop), and *Конта* (*Konta*, food shop).

As an anthropologist, I will analyze not only the linguistic structure of these names, but also how, why, and by whom they are invented, what they mean to their authors and audiences, and what kinds of 'symbolic work,' including that of which the authors and audiences are not necessarily conscious, these names might perform. The theoretical framework for this analysis is based on a synthesis of the distinct approaches of Pierre Bourdieu, Roman Jakobson, and Jacques Derrida.

The analyzed materials were collected during several periods between 1992 and 1998. I considered around two hundred names of new businesses in St. Petersburg, both private and state owned. The analysis here is limited to about forty. These names, according to my judgment and that of the people whom I interviewed, fit the following categories: they are names of privately owned public spaces, they have appeared since 1990, they differ in some important way (e.g. phonetically, morphologically, alphabetically, and semantically) from the names that could be encountered in public spaces before 1990, and they are representative of broader tendencies in naming practices. I interviewed over fifty people – business owners, members of regular and occasional clientele of private business ventures, and the general public. I also conducted an ethnographic study of business practices of several small firms in St. Petersburg and Moscow. I was interested, among other things, in how

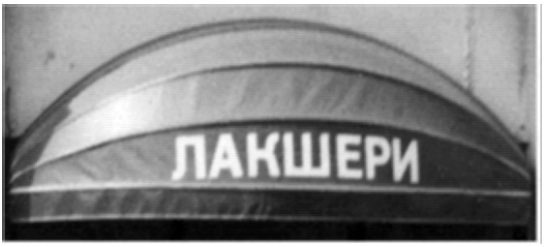

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Figure 1: Pictures 1–5 illustrating names of businesses

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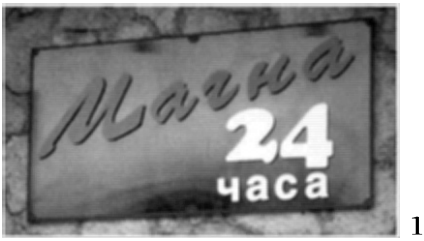

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Figure 2: Pictures 6–10 illustrating names of businesses

today's Russian businessmen see themselves in the context of post-socialist Russia, how they understand what constitutes 'business practices,' how they talk about these issues, and how different groups among a more general public see them and talk about them.[4] Most of the interviews and ethnographic research were conducted for a broader project in which I analyze the

emerging forms of what may be called 'entrepreneurial culture' in the post-Soviet period. The interviews informed my analysis in this paper, but will not be quoted in detail for reasons of space.

GLOBALIZATION AND LOCAL IDENTITY

Today it is easy to notice a certain process of Westernization in the Russian language, reflected by the borrowing of words and phrases from English, the use of code switching, etc. In the language of private business and advertising these trends are especially prominent. The lexical examples we just saw illustrate this process. One result of this phenomenon is the widespread view that post-Soviet cultural production is driven by the import of the Western consumer culture. For example, Western media has frequently written in the past several years about the enthusiastic appropriation of Western lifestyles and symbols of popular culture by Russia's new rich and middle classes. A common view generated by these writings, is that as soon as the lid of oppressive state control and communist ideology was lifted and market reforms introduced, Western consumer culture started pouring into the now empty symbolic space of post-Soviet Russia. An essay in the *New York Times Magazine* illustrated this trend by describing today's Russia in the following way: ' . . . brazen discordance, the hiking-boots-meet-taffeta effect has found its niche where uniformity once reigned. Eclecticism is indeed, by necessity, all the rage as Russia gets a new look cobbled together from imported parts' (Hulbert 1995).

The metaphor of 'cultural import' is also common in academic writings. For example, professional Russian linguists often critique the current process of language shift in various forms of public discourse from this perspective. One author writes: 'It is astonishing that politicians, journalists, and managers of small and large companies strive to use as many foreign words as possible in and out of place. As a result our speech is becoming more and more murky and incomprehensible' (quoted in Kostomarov 1994: 101).[5] A linguist complains: 'we are being more and more subject to the hypnotic influence of the 'American – Nizhnii Novogorod' slang,[6] behind which stands an unmistakable American-ization which has inundated so many strata of our society' (quoted in Kostomarov 1994: 104).

The emergence of this kind of critical public discourse is hardly surprising for at least two reasons. First, one must admit, there is plenty of visual and linguistic evidence on post-Soviet streets and magazine pages, which seem to support the view about the importation of Western culture. Today, one can easily present endless images in the style of before and after pictures, demonstrating how the formerly ubiquitous portraits of Lenin and Brezhnev have been replaced by equally ubiquitous portraits of Marlboro Man and Kate Moss. Second, as Bourdieu reminds us, language professionals are often involved in the symbolic struggle to maintain their legitimate monopoly

within the linguistic field: 'through its grammarians . . . and its teachers . . . the educational system tends . . . to produce the need for its own services and its own products, i.e. the labor and instruments of correction. . . .' (Bourdieu 1991: 60–61).

However, from a purely linguistic perspective, concerns over foreign borrowings into Russian may be misplaced. First, as Ryazanova-Clarke and Wade argue, '. . . of the myriad borrowings that have entered Russian over the centuries, only those communicatively and stylistically expedient have survived.' They add that 'Russian capacity for absorbing loan words and adjusting them to its system testifies to the system's continuing stability' (Ryazanova-Clarke and Wade 1999: 333).[7] Moreover, from a broader cultural perspective the metaphors of Western import and Americanization also fall short of adequately describing the post-Soviet cultural and linguistic production. These metaphors oversimplify both the period of late socialism (presenting it as a unified controlled regime which it was not) and the current post-Soviet period (presenting it as yet another successful stage in the globalization of Western consumer culture – a hypothesis that remains to be proven). The generalized critique of cultural importation and Americanization tends to conceal the fact that cultural and linguistic forms, traveling across borders, often become comprehensively and unpredictably reinterpreted and re-customized to serve very particular local purposes. For example, a close analysis of the new names of Russian private ventures reveals that they neither directly borrow the Western language of consumerism nor belong to a completely new, post-Soviet phenomenon. These names are part of a wider process of social transformation that often precedes the collapse of socialism and the arrival of the Western market, and, to a large extent, follows a complex and often contradictory logic of its own. The result of the interaction between these different cultural materials and histories is often not a cultural importation but a production of something quite new.

PERFORMATIVE NOMINATIONS

In his critique of the classical Marxist definition of social class, Pierre Bourdieu proposed a 'theory of social topology' according to which social actors and groups occupy simultaneous positions not in one, economic, field but in a whole variety of different *fields* within multidimensional social space. A 'field' for Bourdieu is 'a patterned system of objective forces (much in the manner of a magnetic field), a *relational configuration with a specific gravity* which it imposes on all the objects and agents which enter in it. In the manner of a prism, it refracts external forces according to its internal structure' (Wacquant 1992: 17). The actors' different positions in different fields reflect the relative sizes and forms of the actors' cultural, social, economic, and symbolic capital (Bourdieu 1991: 229–230). The process of linguistic innovation within privately owned public space that I am discussing reflects an attempt by a new group of actors to

construct their particular social positions within the *linguistic* field of this multidimensional social space.[8]

Bourdieu does not offer a rigorous analysis of the linguistic and textual structure of discourse (Hanks 1993: 140).[9] Also his sociological framework, which is well suited for the description of social reproduction and gradual change, has greater problems accounting for abrupt and unpredictable ruptures in the social universe and for the role individual agency plays in such moments of unpredictability.[10] For example, Bourdieu's analysis of 'the power of words' as 'nothing other than the *delegated power* of the spokesperson' (Bourdieu 1993: 107) seems to downplay the possible reconfigurations of power relations produced as a result of a creative work of the author. As Judith Butler points out, Bourdieu's view of the performativity of discourse 'fails to consider the crisis in convention that speaking the unspeakable produces, the insurrectionary "force" of censored speech as it emerges into "official discourse" and opens the performative to an unpredictable future' (Butler 1997a: 142). Emphasizing the continuous and downplaying the unpredictable, Bourdieu's theory is less concerned with what Butler calls the text centered 'Derridean "break" with context that utterances perform' (Butler 1997a: 142). In the following analysis of the ruptures and shifts in the field of the linguistic representation of reality I will supplement Bourdieu's approach with the analysis of performativity at the level of textual fabric itself, drawing on the work of Jakobson and Derrida.

The owners and name givers of private businesses in Russia today constitute the group that is among the most actively involved in the dynamic and often unpredictable process of social resignification. Most of these people belong to one generation that was born, educated, and came of age in the last two decades before the collapse of the Soviet system. Elsewhere I have called them *the last Soviet generation* (see Yurchak 1997: 166). Growing up in the 1960s – 1980s, these people became involved in unique and contradictory forms of cultural production centered, on one hand, around the meanings and forms of official Soviet culture, controlled by the Party State, and, on the other hand, around alternative forms of non-official culture that largely escaped state control (Yurchak 1997: 162, 1999a: 79). Among the most readily available of the non-official cultural and linguistic symbols were those of the 'imaginary West' (e.g. music, clothes, slang) (e.g. Fain and Lur'e 1991; Nikitina 1998; Rozhanskii 1992; Yurchak 1999a). These symbols played a central role in the process of personal identity construction among people of this generation (Yurchak 1999a), especially among its more educated and urbanized groups.

Importantly, today it is mostly these people who have the unique symbolic, financial, and legal means for owning, reshaping, and renaming public space. In 1996, the average age of Russian business owners was 36 and most of them were urbanites in their 30s to mid-40s (Kryshtanovskaia 1996). Most of them are also considerably richer than the 'average' Russian and tend to be college educated and come from intelligentsia families (Silverman 1997: 113,

117). By renaming public space these actors, I argue, introduce their particular new version of social reality and strive to impose themselves as the legitimate authors, owners, and masters of this reality. In other words, the names they invent are engaged in what Bourdieu calls 'the symbolic struggle for the production of common sense' (Bourdieu 1991: 239) and can be viewed from the perspective of their *performativity* – understood in broader sense than in Austin's (1999) classic discussion – as 'performative nominations,' which 'under proper social circumstances' define reality rather than merely represent it (Hanks 1993: 143). The role of these names in public discourse is to *perform* the symbolic work of introducing a new common sense vision of the social world, drawing new distinctions and stratifications within it, constructing new identities and power relations, and distinguishing some groups as having the legitimate means to invent, control, and interpret this process and others as not.

In this symbolic process of re-signification of the world the new names must perform two contradictory functions simultaneously. First, in order to break with the past they must be strikingly new and unfamiliar. Second, to be able to draw on the forms of symbolic capital from the past and present they must be experienced as recognizable and meaningful. In other words, these names must be neither completely unfamiliar and unusual nor completely familiar and self-evident.

To analyze the social functions of this new language of nomination we may distinguish between several forms of symbolic work that it performs. The new names do the following:

1. introduce a radical change in the system of signification of the social world;
2. represent this change as legitimate, common-sense, and desirable;
3. claim that their authors (and business owners) are the agents and masters of this legitimate and desirable social change;
4. create social groups of private business owners and their potential clientele, by publicly representing them, and allowing them to imagine themselves, as members of one common speech community of competent co-producers and audiences of this new language.

In the following sections I will analyze each of these forms of symbolic work in greater detail.

INTRODUCING RADICAL CHANGE

Most new names have been designed to startle their audiences, to be experienced, at least from the first glance, as unusual and often even difficult to pronounce. This aspect of the new names was particularly striking in the early 1990s, before the public had become more accustomed to them. More specifically, the first meaning of new business names is in their difference from previously common, and often still existing, Soviet names[11] that were of a

limited variety, tended to be directly functional in what they referred to, and hence were quite predictable to their audiences. Thus, since the Soviet times most state owned food stores in the city have been simply called *magazin* (shop), *produkty* (foodstuffs), *miaso* (meat), *moloko* (milk), *bulochnaia* (bakery), etc. Similarly, most clinics were simply numbered – e.g. 'dental clinic number X of the Y district.' And even the names of cafés and restaurants, which were more varied, were still quite predictable as references to commonly known official cultural symbols – e.g. café *Belye nochi* (The White Nights) or restaurant *Kavkaz* (The Caucasus). In contrast, the new names of most private ventures are not only unusual words, foreign or invented, but words that seem to have nothing in common with the functional occupation of these ventures. By resignifying the public space in this striking fashion, and by turning this representation into an unavoidable experience, the new names perform their first symbolic work of introducing a radical rupture in the logic of social signification.

PRESENTING CHANGE AS LEGITIMATE AND DESIRABLE

To claim that one's own representation of the social world is legitimate, common sense, and desirable it is obviously not enough to simply introduce this representation. The representation must also be experienced by its audiences as such. To achieve this function the language of new names mobilizes various forms of *symbolic capital* (Bourdieu 1990: 6, 171–183) from other contexts, periods, and discourses. By using particular lexical items, phonetic combinations, morphological shapes, and forms of spelling this language literally quotes diverse discourses, produced in different times and sites, tapping into the forms of symbolic capital associated with these discourses. To put it differently, the new names are intrinsically intertextual, and their structure carries a particular 'historicity' – 'the history . . . internal to a name . . . that gives the name its force' (Butler 1997b: 36).

In the following sections I will consider, first, what semiotic techniques are involved in producing such intertextual historicity of the name, and, second, what symbolically important discourses, from the available heteroglossia (Bakhtin 1994: 263) of discourses, are drawn upon by the new names for the production of their specific intertextual meanings.

Metaphor and metonymy

The new business names produce a complex cultural meaning on several linguistic, semiotic, and sociological levels that I will analyze throughout this essay. One level of this cultural production employs metaphoric and metonymic procedures. According to Jakobson (1956) *metaphor* and *metonymy* are two central techniques for producing meaning in naming. In *metaphor*, two signifiers are linked through one common characteristic that serves the role of a 'stitching

point' (Zizek 1991: 154) between them. For example, Louis XIV is metaphorically called *le Roi Soleil* for the radiance of his court: the *brilliance* of the sun and the king is the stitching point between them. In *metonymy*, two signifiers are linked not through a common characteristic but through a commonality of context. Here, a part may stand for the whole and the whole may stand for a part – e.g. a cup stands for coffee, the flag stands for the nation, and Coca Cola stands for America (and the vice versa).

The new business names participate in both metaphoric and metonymic procedures of meaning production. First, they produce a *metaphoric link* (or 'metaphoric extension' Gumperz 1987: 48) to a Western language through similarity of one of the elements of the linguistic structure – phonetic shape, system of spelling, etc. For example, the final cluster of consonants in the word *Слакст* (*Slakst*, picture 6 (Fig. 2)), which does not occur in Russian, links this word metaphorically with German or English (e.g. German *Bakst* and *machst*, English *relaxed* and *slacks*). That connection was easily recognized by most interviewed people regardless of whether they spoke German or English or not. As this example illustrates, such metaphoric link may be established if the name's literal meaning is not understood or if the name has no literal meaning. Such names as, *Лакшери* (*laksheri*, 'Luxury' – picture 1 (Fig. 1)), *Смайл* (*smail*, 'Smile' – picture 3 (Fig. 1)), *Роланд* (*roland*, 'Roland'), *Лаура* (*laura*, 'Laura'), *Эвэланш* (*evelansh*, 'Avalanche'), *Бонжур* (*bonzhur*, 'Bonjour'), and *Кэш* (*kesh*, 'Cash') provide the same metaphoric link because their phonetic shape is recognized as English, French, Italian, German or simply Western. Such names as *Holiday*, *Babylon*, and *Marina International* (spelled in Latin) additionally provide this metaphoric link on the level of alphabet.

This work of metaphor is only the first step in the name's production of meaning. The second step is performed by metonymy. Since a business name is metaphorically connected to a *Western language*, it also becomes metonymically (through context) connected to a whole variety of ideas, identities, commodities, and lifestyles that are associated with 'the West' as a more general concept. Thus, through the two step semiotic work of metaphor and metonymy the whole array of linguistic signifiers – from complete words to fragments of phonetic, morphological, alphabetic, syntactic, and other systems – invoke a very particular culturally constructed concept of 'the West' as it is experienced by many Russian people. This construct is especially relevant for members of the last Soviet generation who, as I have argued, are the main producers and intended audiences of the discourse of new business names. This kind of cultural construct of the West is only marginally linked to the 'real West' – rather, we may speak of a connection to an 'imaginary West,' a cultural construct that emerged in late Soviet period. Its most important feature is not so much its similarity to the real West as its ability to provide a person with symbolic material for constructing a particular form of *personalized* self – one that is different from the officially available and centrally imposed form of

collectivized Soviet self.[12] I will call this type of culturally constructed West, *personalized West*.

At first, I will consider two distinct discourses that are drawn upon in the construction of personalized West today – late-Soviet discourse on the West and post-Soviet discourse on Western advertising. Later I will consider other discourses, which provide material for personalized self-construction without drawing on the construct of personalized West.

Late-Soviet discourse on 'the West'

The first discourse on the personalized West emerged within the *non-official* Soviet culture and became especially prominent during the period of late socialism (1960s–1980s) (Yurchak 1999a: 81–84). At that time, in addition to the official, state controlled system of signification in the public space, there emerged also a system of non-official urban toponyms. This non-official discourse was particularly widespread among members of the last Soviet generation. For example, in the socialist period Leningrad cafés were state-owned and officially known by their predictable Soviet names (often they were simply called *Кафэ- Kafe*, 'Café'). However, many of them became referred to, in youth slang, by such names as *Сайгон* (*Saigon*), *Рим* (*Rim*, 'Rome'), *Сингапур* (*Singapur*, 'Singapore'), *Ольстер* (*Ol'ster*, 'Ulster'), *Лондон* (*London*), *Вена* (*Vena*, 'Vienna'), *Ливерпуль* (*Liverpul'*, 'Liverpool') (Fain and Lur'e 1991: 170), etc. The main street in the city, Nevsky prospekt, was nicknamed *Бродвей* (*Brodvei*, 'Broadway') already in the 1950s (Aksyonov 1987; Fain and Lur'e 1991: 172).

This non-official toponymy was part of a broader non-official cultural discourse that drew on various foreign, especially 'Western,' cultural symbols (in youth slang, clothes, music tastes, etc.). What was the meaning of these cultural symbols during that period? As mentioned above, they became reinterpreted and reinvented anew to serve a very particular local objective – to function as appropriate cultural material for the creative work of the Soviet youth in producing one's alternative, personalized self beyond the official field of state control. This symbolic work can be thought of in terms of Paul Willis's 'symbolic creativity' (Willis 1990) that, in Willis's example, is employed by British working class youth to reinterpret consumption practices as creative cultural production of self. In the process of a similar symbolic creativity, between the 1960s and the 1980s, many 'Western' cultural and linguistic symbols (which often were, in fact, local imitations) became endowed with considerable symbolic capital in the eyes of many Soviet people, especially younger generations. There were several reasons why 'Western' symbols emerged as a particularly attractive material for the creative work on constructing the personalized self:

- they were produced outside of the Soviet Union (even locally produced imitations had to refer to the originals produced abroad), which made

them, by definition, not easily subject to the centralized control of the Party-State;
- for ideological reasons, the Soviet state rarely acknowledged publicly the existence of such 'Western' symbols in Soviet life, which made them even more suitable for the work of non-official cultural production;
- many 'Western' symbols were particularly well suited for stressing the *personalized* aspects of self: as signifiers of Western consumer culture they emphasized individual centered representations of one's body and disposition (e.g. in clothes, hairstyles, cosmetics, tastes, behavior, slang expressions, etc.) and downplayed more collective centered representations produced by the official culture of state socialism;
- most Western symbols, that became appropriated in the Soviet context, originated in Western *youth* culture and therefore also served as useful markers of generational identity, which further boosted their importance for the last Soviet generation.

As pointed out above, most owners and name givers of private business today – as well as their most sizeable and relatively well-to-do clientele – belong to the last Soviet generation. These people grew up in regular contact with the non-official culture of late socialism (that involved various youth subcultures, from rock music to black markets of physical and cultural products) in which the symbols of the *personalized West* circulated relatively freely. This is why members of this generation are particularly skilled in recognizing references to these symbols and interpreting their symbolic meanings and values.

Post-Soviet discourse on 'the West'

Another discourse that is often quoted by the new names is the post-Soviet discourse of Westernized consumer advertising, that appeared in Russia in the 1990s. Today it has occupied a dominant position among publicly circulating cultural discourses. The main value of this discourse, for the symbolic work that I am analyzing, is that it provides ready made metaphoric and metonymic links to the cultural context of *personalized West*, serving as an excellent source of linguistic and semiotic material for the invention of new business names. Some of these names are straightforward references to recognizable Western brand names, although the businesses themselves have nothing to do with these brands. The examples include, *Дональд* (*Donal'd*, café), which, according to the owners, was inspired by both the Disney character and the infamous American fast food chain, and *Роланд* (*Roland*, foodstuffs), which was inspired by a brand of music instruments.

As mentioned above, the language of the new names also draws on the discourses that have nothing to do with the 'West,' but also provide material for the construction of personalized self. Among these the two most prominent

discourses are the discourse of the *experimental revolutionary culture* of the 1910s – 1920s and the discourse of *prerevolutionary Russian culture*.

Discourse on experimental revolutionary culture

This discourse is connected to revolutionary experiments in culture and language that started in the dynamic years preceding the revolution of 1917 and continued for the next ten years, until the mid-1920s (Clark 1995). That early post-revolutionary period, associated with an open and creative experimentation in the Russian culture and language, has become today a popular and even fashionable reference in some post-Soviet discourses, especially in the locally produced post-Soviet advertising and in some forms of youth culture (Yurchak 1999a).

The major linguistic shift in the early revolutionary period of the 1910s – 1920s involved, among other phenomena, the invention of an unusual telegraphic language of acronyms, and words based on acronyms, as names for new cultural movements, state institutions, administrative positions, and documents.[13] That fast and creative process of change broke with familiar linguistic trends and was not controlled from any one center. As Russian linguist Selishchev (1928) observed in the 1920s many words based on acronyms were made to sound so unconventional that they were simply 'not adapted to the sound and formal system of the Russian language' and were 'appropriated with great difficulty by the people not accustomed to foreign phonetics' (Selishchev 1928: 166).

That remarkably innovative language was not a chance development – its piercing unfamiliar sound was meant to serve as a powerful tool for revolutionizing the world and consciousness. Importantly, that creative linguistic work was enthusiastically performed not only by the official institutes of the Bolshevik State but also by many artistic and scholarly groups over whom the state at that period had limited control. One of the most important Futurist poets of the time, Velimir Khlebnikov, saw the invention of new words and neologisms as a 'powerful source of new meanings for both literature and life,' and centered his artistic work on creative innovations of the lexicon (Grigor'ev 1986: 243). Khlebnikov and other Futurists tried to invent a whole new 'transrational language' (*zaumnyi iazyk* or *zaum'*) (Rudy 1997: xii)[14] 'that would be constructed on a system quite antithetical to that of conventional language' (Clark 1995: 40). Roman Jakobson, analyzing poetry written in transrational language, argued that its meaning lay 'both in its disruptive gesture . . . and in its formal reorganization of language' (Rudy 1997: xiii). Similar experiments with various aspects of linguistic form were conducted by other artistic and literary groups (Clark 1995; Jameson 1972; Lemon and Reis 1965; Rudy 1997). In short, the revolutionary language of the 1920s functioned not only as a new unconventional form of representation, but, importantly, as a product of *personal* creativity and

ongoing experimentation with which diverse independent groups and individuals were enthusiastically engaged.

By contrast public Soviet discourse in later periods, after 1925, including the language of acronyms, became totally controlled from the Party Center. All experimentation ceased. Now acronymic language signified not change and personal creativity but status quo and central control. In this respect the linguistic changes in today's post-Soviet period, that I am analyzing, invoke the creative changes that happened in the early Soviet years, before the imposition of a strict centralized control of language and culture. New names today similarly signify an unconventional, uncontrolled, and private work of linguistic innovation designed not only to reflect but also to initiate changes in the social world. By establishing a metaphoric link between contemporary business names and the names in the early revolutionary language business owners attempt to import (metonymically, through contextual associations) whole aspects of the symbolic capital associated with the early revolutionary discourse – especially its aspects that emphasize personal creativity involved in building a completely new world. In other words, this link provides important and symbolically valuable material for the construction of *personalized self*. In addition, the symbolic capital associated with that early Soviet period serves to legitimize other practices of business owners.

The following two examples illustrate a more explicit connection of this type: *Алгоник* (*Algonik*, foodstuffs) – the name stands for *Александр Гончаров и Компания* (Alexandr Goncharov – the owner's name – and Company); and *Алівект* (clothes) – the name is produced as a combination of the owner's daughter's name, *Alisa*, and the name of the firm *Vektor*, the mother company of the shop.

Discourse on pre-revolutionary Russian culture

Some new names also draw on the discourse of pre-Revolutionary Russian culture, especially on elements of its high culture and merchant culture, which appear to be particularly 'non-Soviet.' Obviously, this discourse, like the previous one, provides access to cultural forms and meanings that carry symbolic capital because they come from outside of the official Soviet culture. The use in the business names of obsolete words, concepts, and archaic spellings of the pre-revolution period, establishes metaphoric and metonymic links to that old culture, again offering rich symbolic material for producing personalized self. For example, *Съестная Лавка* (*S'estnaia Lavka*, 'Provisions Shoppe') and *Трактиръ* (*Traktir'*, 'Tavern') – here the adjective *s'estnaia* (provisions) and the noun *lavka* (shoppe) are both obsolete yet recognizable terms. The noun *traktir'* (tavern) is also obsolete and is spelled in the pre-1918 spelling fashion ending in a hard sign.

However, this form of discourse, perhaps because of its past-oriented message (as opposed to the orientation on change and the future in the experimental

discourse of early revolutionary years and in the discourses of personalized West) has been considerably less influential as a source of new linguistic innovations in the business field.[15] This is why I will not consider this discourse in detail.

CONSTRUCTING THE AUTHORS AS THE MASTERS OF CHANGE

Recollect that the third symbolic work of the new names, as argued above, is to inscribe the identity of their authors onto the changing social world, presenting them as the authors and masters of the social change. The discourse in which the audience is made aware of the author's presence is impressed with a particular form of power. One of the messages of this discourse is that its author has the power to claim publicly his/her authorship over the discourse and its representation of reality. Such author impressed discourse, noted Michel Foucault, does not become 'immediately consumed and forgotten' because 'its status and its manner of reception' carry additional culturally constructed value (Foucault 1977: 123).

Mundane examples of this powerful gesture of the author in public space are endless. Consider, for instance, personal graffiti markings on various public surfaces, such as the stereotypical 'X was here' inscriptions. The function of such markings is to inscribe one's personal identity over physical and social space, making a certain claim of symbolically possessing it. The ultimate claim of symbolic authorship over the world was made by proverbial Adam whom God charged with the duty of naming all living creatures. In this primary act of signification to name quite literally meant to create, to bring into existence, and therefore to 'know, possess, and master' (Kaplan and Bernays 1997: 212, 224). Of course, real speakers, as Bakhtin pointed out, are never 'the first to speak' which differentiates them from 'the biblical Adam, dealing with virgin and still unnamed objects. . .' (Bakhtin 1994: 91). However, I argue, a real speaker's act of naming or re-naming can also be a claim of creation and ownership, except that it is performed in the context of many other such acts that often compete with it for legitimacy. The new business names represent precisely a claim of symbolic ownership over the world. They declare that their authors have the power to publicly impose a very particular, even completely unconventional, representation of the social world, and to render it not only unavoidable but also legitimate to most audiences. Ultimately, the power of such imposition amounts precisely to the power to 'know, possess, and master' the represented world. This point should be understood in broader terms of representation rather than simply naming. To put it in the eloquent words of Pierre Bourdieu, language has an 'originative capacity' derived from its 'power to produce *existence* by producing the collectively recognized, and thus realized, *representations of existence*. . .' This capacity of language serves as 'the principal support of the dream of absolute power' (Bourdieu 1991: 42, emphasis added).

Let us consider the linguistic and semiotic techniques of this process. Derrida

(1984) discusses this assertive gesture of the author's self inscription within text in greater detail, calling it the 'effect of signature' and distinguishing three of its different 'modalities.' The first, most straightforward, modality is *proper signature* – the placement of the author's name on the title page of the text – whereby the author is 'engaged in authenticating (if possible) the fact that it is indeed he who writes' (Derrida 1984: 53). The second modality of the signature, *stylistic signature*, is 'the set of idiomatic marks that a signer might leave by accident or intention in his product. . . . We sometimes call this style, the inimitable idiom of a writer, sculptor, painter, or orator' (Derrida 1984: 54). Even if the author's proper name is never mentioned an experienced reader recognizes the author in his/her work. The third most complex modality of signature, *heraldic signature*, involves an encoding of the author's name within the very textual structure. In this peculiar heraldic text, remarks Derrida, the author refers to oneself: 'this is writing, I am a writing' (Derrida 1984: 54; Murray 1992: 11).

In the case of new business names, similarly, the most straightforward technique would be to use *proper signature* – i.e. the owner's name as the name of his/her business. In the West this technique of naming is quite popular (e.g. *Arthur Andersen* and *Siemens*). In today's Russia, however, it is highly uncommon to use one's name, especially last name, in this way. As we will see, personal names are widely used in business names, but usually in a cryptic form of heraldic signature. The reasons for this have hardly anything to do with concerns for personal security, since heraldic encoding would not conceal the real identity of the business owners from the representatives of state organs and organized crime. To understand the real reasons behind this strategy let us first analyze the use of all three techniques of signature in the construction of new business names.

Proper and stylistic signatures

When the technique of *proper signature* is involved in the production of a business name, it is usually the first name of the owner that is used. However, this name is not used in its original form – instead, it is replaced with its English or French equivalent – or, if such equivalent does not exist, the name may be spelled in Latin. This technique of 'translation' has also been common since the 1960s in the invention of nick names among the Russian youth, for example, school and college nicknames: *Майк* (*Maik*, Mike) for Mikhail and *Боб* (*Bob*, Bob) for Boris, *Кэт* (*Ket*, Kat) for Katia, etc. Clearly, here we already have at least two modalities of signature used at once – *proper signature* (using one's name) and *stylistic signature* of the last Soviet generation (using a stylized Western version of one's name instead of the original Russian). This stylistic twist provides a metaphoric connection to *personalized West* with the same implications for the construction of one's self as discussed above. Many business names apply these two modalities of signature in the same way. For example: *Marina International* (spelled in English, food shop) – owned by Marina; *Джулия*

(*Dzhuliia*, hairdresser's – the Russian name of the owner, *Юлия* (*Yuliia*), is replaced by its English version, 'Julia,' spelled in Cyrillic); *Алекс* (*Aleks*, security agency – the Russian name of the owner, *Александр* (*Alexandr*) is replaced by its English short form, 'Alex').

Many business names can be seen as only *stylistic signatures* of the last Soviet generation, without the proper signature of the owner involved in their production. Such names simply draw on the recognizable stylistics of the discourse of *personalized West*. For example: *Лакшери* (*Laksheri*, food shop, picture 1 (Fig. 1)) – Cyrillic transliteration of the English word 'luxury.' As explained above this word is not necessarily understood literally, which does not prevent it from performing its symbolic work. If its literal meaning is understood it reinforces the metonymic connection to personalized West. Among the people I interviewed only a minority recognized the original English word 'luxury,' but everyone recognized its 'Western' sound. A comment made by a young shop assistant, who worked in this shop and did not know the literal meaning of the name, summarized its symbolic meaning: 'I don't know what it means but it sounds good.'

Similar symbolic procedure is performed by the following names: *Элайнс* (*elains*, 'Alliance' – computer shop, picture 2 (Fig. 1)); *Смайл Маркет* (*smail market*, 'Smile Market,' food shop, picture 3 (Fig. 1)) – this name, given to the shop after its privatization in the mid-1990s, replaced its original Soviet name *produkty* (foodstuffs); *Сити* (*siti*, 'City' – clothes, picture 4 (Fig. 1)); *Кантри* (*kantri*, 'Country' – clothes); *Кэш* (*kesh*, 'Cash' – café); *Holiday* (foodstuffs); and *Babylon* (clothes and home appliances) – the last two names are spelled in English in the original.

As mentioned above, the metaphoric link to the construct of *personalized West*, provided by this stylistic signature of the generation, can be also based on other languages than English. For example, some names work within the stylistics of French: *Экстрем* (*ekstrem*, 'Extreme'), *Деликат* (*delikat*, 'Delicat'), *Бонжур* (*bonzhur*, 'Bonjour'), etc.

In all these examples an experienced audience is able to understand the references that the stylistic signature provides and to recognize to what group the authors of the names and owners of the businesses belong.

Heraldic signature

Often, the new names are intertwined with the identity of their author in a more intricate manner. In that case, business names may also include the author's personal name in a particular coded form within the very texture of the word. This is Derrida's heraldic signature of the author. Derrida's example of this technique is the work of the French poet Francis Ponge. Kevin Murray explains:

> '[t]here is a disconcerting slippage from nomination to signification such that the things evoked in the texts (a sponge, a Turkish towel, puice-stone) reverberate with

> the poet's proper name (*éponge, serviette-éponge, ponce*). Ponge loses his proper name, it becomes a common name, letting it slip into lower case, Ponge sends it out to occupy more territory. It begins to colonise the world of things; while at the same time, his proper name is monumentalised, writ large by the world of things'. (Murray 1992: 11–12)

Consider how this heraldic technique works in the case of the business names – for example:

Эвэланш (*evelansh*, 'Avalanche' – private dental clinic) is a Cyrillic transcription of the French pronunciation of the word 'avalanche.' The last name of the clinic's owner is Lavinov, associated with *lavina* – Russian for 'avalanche.' This translation is similar to the examples of Bob for Boris and Julia for Yuliia above.

However, in 'avalanche' the translation hides the proper name deeper, encoding it in a nontransparent way. The result is again a type of metaphoric link of the owner's identity to personalized West. However, due to the heraldic technique, this link involves an additional hidden dimension of meaning. I will discuss this dimension a little later. First, let us consider more examples. Obviously, in most cases proper names do not readily lend themselves to such translation as the name *Lavinov* does. In these cases the technique of heraldic encoding produces names that have no literal meaning. For example:

Векада (*Vekada*) is a name of a café, which is co-owned by several people whose last names are encrypted in the title. Explaining why they chose this word one of the owners emphasized the importance of having a name that is not reminiscent of the common and predictable names and 'is easier to remember than some *Ivan, Marina*, or whatever.' In this way *Vekada*, and other names listed below, break the predictable representation working like the unusual names invented during the early revolutionary period (see above).

All of the following names are also constructed out of the personal names of the ventures' owners and members of their families and all have unusual phonetic shapes for Russian. After each example I summarize how most interviewees described what these names meant to them (see pictures 5–10, Figs. 1 and 2):

> *Танэт* (*Tanet*, clothes, picture 5 – constructed out of the names of the two owners, Tania and Tania) and *Мирай* (*Mirai*, foodstuffs, picture 7) – both were recognized as 'French' (in both words the last syllabi are stressed. The first name was compared with such French names as *Annette*, the second name was compared with the French name *Mireille* – well-known in Russia not least because of the popular French singer Mireille Mathieu);
> *Слакст* (*Slakst*, food shop, picture 6) – recognized as German or English (see the discussion of this name above);
> *Ариэлла* (*Ariella*, clothes, picture 8), *Рассана* (*Rassana*, café, picture 9), and *Милана* (*Milana*, food kiosk) – all three were recognized by most as Italian sounding female names (compare with *Gabriella, Rossana, Roxana*, etc. *Milana*

also sounded to some like a possible Western Slavic name, with the same connotations of a 'Western' link);
Магна (*Magna*, foodstuffs, picture 10) and *Конта* (*Konta*, foodstuffs) – both were recognized as Latin sounding words or parts of words (compare with common roots of many Latin words – e.g. *magnanimus*, *contamino*, etc.);
Тоби Шоп (*Tobi Shop*, clothes), *Никс* (*Niks*, bakery), and *Флекс* (*Fleks*, foodstuffs) – all were recognized as English sounding words (compare with English *Toby*, *Bobby*, *nicks*, *flex*, etc. The word *shop* in the first name, of course, also helped to produce the association).

We also saw more examples of such heraldic signature above – e.g. *Alivekt* and *Algonik*.

Two fields of cultural production

As argued above, the owner's proper name, encoded as heraldic signature in the name of private business, represents a claim of ownership over that space. Such a name, in the words of Kevin Murray, becomes 'monumentalized, writ large by the world of things' (1992: 12). However, this process is not necessarily evident to the public – if anything, the personal name of the author tends to be completely hidden from the public view. Moreover, most owners, who explained to me that their personal names were inscribed within the names of their ventures, usually found it not important to explain what these personal names were and precisely how the inscription was performed. Similarly, most of the clientele of these private ventures, and the general public who daily sees these names, tend to be oblivious not only of the owners' personal names but even of the fact that these personal names are somehow represented in the business names at all. This situation is clearly different from the example given by Murray (see above) where the poet's name, *Ponge*, is known to the reading public, and this is one of the reasons why the heraldic play 'monumentalizes' it.

As we see, for most private owners it seems more important to know personally that their names, or the names of their children, look on from the facades of their private ventures than to announce this fact publicly. Considering that business names perform some of their symbolic work of signification in a loudly public manner – e.g. overtly trying to startle the audience – such covertness about the personalized aspect of business names may seem surprising. What is the logic behind this apparent paradox of publicity and anonymity? This logic is hidden in the post-Soviet uniqueness of the space that the names signify. This space is neither purely public nor purely private but is both at once – I called it above, *privately owned public space*. Bourdieu's (1993) theory of cultural production will help us to understand the apparent paradox involved in the naming of this space.[16]

CREATING THE GROUPS OF BUSINESS OWNERS AND THEIR CLIENTS

The class of business owners

Bourdieu argues that in capitalism artistic producers (e.g. writers and film-makers) are involved in two types of cultural production simultaneously – one goes on in the field of *restricted cultural production* and the other in the field of *large-scale cultural production* (Bourdieu 1991: 57–58, 1993: 114).

In the field of *restricted cultural production* the work of cultural producers is directed at other cultural producers. The highest symbolic capital in this field is accumulated by those who are most interested in art for art's sake and least interested in profits. In accordance with this principle, cultural producers strive to maintain *autonomy* of this field from the larger social world, limiting it to artists, experts, and narrow groups of sophisticated public, by controlling the knowledge that is needed to decipher their cultural work. In the field of *large-scale cultural production* the work of cultural producers is directed at the general public. The highest symbolic capital in this field (which usually directly translates into financial capital) is accumulated by those who are successful among the widest audience. Here, unlike the restricted field, cultural producers strive to maximize the size of their audience by reproducing standardized cultural forms, which wider audiences prefer and that do not require special knowledge to be understood. In other words, according to Bourdieu, the principles of restricted cultural production and large-scale cultural production, in the conditions of the market, tend to be reversed while operating simultaneously (Bourdieu 1991: 57–58).

The new business names of privately owned public space, in the context of the post-Soviet market, also perform their work of cultural production within two distinct fields simultaneously. In this case, in the field of large-scale cultural production (which I have been considering so far in this essay), where the *public* aspect of the space is stressed, business names address the general public. At the same time, in the field of restricted cultural production, where the *private* aspect of the space is stressed, the names address a limited audience of other business owners, partners, and competitors. In these two fields the principles of cultural production are indeed reversed. In the large-scale field the logic of cultural production is shaped by a widespread public discourse about the New Russians (new rich), which among other things, ridicules them for their supposed lack of cultural capital and cultural knowledge, which is coupled with their desire to publicly demonstrate their wealth. For example, Sergei Oushakine (forthcoming) shows that a common image of the new Russian rich among the general public today is associated with such imagined patterns of their consumption, which are seen as uncultured and uncivilized, as spending as much as possible on things that can be bought cheaper just to make one's wealth publicly known. Oushakine calls this popular stereotype about the style of consumption of the New Russians, 'the quantity of style,' illustrating it with the following joke:

'One New Russian asks another New Russian: ''How much did you pay for this fantastic tie?''

The other one replies proudly: ''Three thousand dollars!''

The first one shouts in disbelief: ''You idiot! I saw it around the corner for five thousand!'' '

Most business owners are aware of this widespread public discourse and attempt to distance themselves from the image of the New Russians that it constructs. One important way of doing this is avoiding public connections between one's personal identity (especially, one's name) and the identity of one's business. In other words, in the field of large-scale cultural production any publicly and explicitly made associations of one's personal name and identity with the size of one's financial capital and one's business success tend to reduce one's symbolic capital, potentially exposing one to deriding and even hostile discourse. Conversely, in the field of restricted cultural production, directed at other private property owners who are active in the business field, the logic of cultural production is diametrically reversed. Here overt association of one's personal name and identity with one's financial capital and business success increases one's symbolic capital in the eyes of other business people.

Obviously, because new business names simultaneously address the audiences in these two different fields they must be able to perform the two opposing forms of cultural production at the same time. They must conceal one's personal identity within the large-scale field while simultaneously announcing it within the restricted field. It is precisely this contradictory task that the heraldic signature elegantly performs. It conceals personal name from the oblivious public but allows for it to remain visible to other businessmen and the new rich, especially those who belong to the circle of one's clients, partners, friends, and competitors. Indeed, most business owners are not only aware of the personal names of many other business owners, but also of how these names are encoded in the names of their businesses. This knowledge has led to the emergence of a certain shared style of heraldic encoding, when new business names become constructed according to the same principles that are used in the names of already existing successful businesses.

The two reversed principles of *anonymity* and *publicity* are seen in other aspects of life of the new Russian business class. For example, these people are notorious for their relentless and wasteful socializing with each other behind the closed doors of exclusive clubs, restaurants, luxurious private residences, and foreign resorts, all of which belong to the restricted field of cultural production and remain largely invisible to the general Russian public. As a result although the figure of the New Russian is widespread in the public discourse, it still remains an enigma to most people who the New Russians are and how they live. Russian sociologist Olga Kryshtanovskaia recently wrote:

'We often see his shining automobile racing through the city at high speed. Sometimes his slightly plump figure in an expensive cashmere coat is glimpsed as he passes from

> his car to a restaurant or bank or through the mysteriously glittering doors of a luxurious office' (Kryshtanovskaia 1997 quoted in Humphrey 1997: 1)

By helping to construct business field in terms of restricted cultural production, available only to other members of this field, new names also allow business owners to imagine themselves as belonging to one cohesive class – an *imagined community* (Anderson 1983) of new business Russia. In this sense, such names function as one of linguistic instruments of class formation.

There is also another, more private, process of cultural production that takes places at the level of heraldic signature: the personal self-construction, some aspects of which we have discussed above. The new names allow business owners to experience themselves both in terms of revolutionary transformations that they introduce into the social world, and in terms of meaningful consistency and continuity that they preserve within their personal world. Or, to put it differently, such names allow these people to see themselves as those who change the world while remaining in control of the change. In the same manner, personal names of one's children, as part of heraldic signature in some business names, also help to construct a sense of continuity of one's self by suggesting a kind of a future oriented symbolic extension of oneself.

The combination of the large-scale and restricted forms of cultural production, performed by the new names, can be also compared to the work performed by anonymous graffiti tags. Such graffiti tags, when located in the places where they are seen by great numbers of people (e.g. on subway cars or highway overpasses), send one message to the general public and another message to the subculture of graffiti writers and to the author him/herself. Like in the case of new business names here we find a combination of publicity and anonymity. Or, in words of Walter Ong (1990), who studied graffiti writers in New York, graffiti tags represent 'a peculiar mix of revealing and concealing. . .' (Ong 1990: 406).

On the one hand, graffiti writers 'really want to call public attention to themselves individually' (Ong 1990: 402). To do so they invent particular striking styles in which to write their tags because this is a way of making your name publicly noticeable – of 'making your name sing' (Ong 1990: 402). This work of public self-construction takes place in the large-scale field, in front of the unfamiliar and wide audiences. On the other hand, the graffiti tag is never the writer's real name but a pseudonym. Other members of the graffiti subculture (who constitute the field of restricted cultural production) understand this pseudonym well, but the greater audience (members of the large-scale field) does not. In fact, Ong remarks that most New Yorkers whom he quizzed 'seemed not to know even of the existence of the [graffiti] writers' culture' (Ong 1990: 402). Although Ong does not explain this apparent paradox, I suggest that here, like in the case of new business names, the work of self-construction goes on in the two fields of cultural production simultaneously and becomes subject to Bourdieu's opposing principles.

The audience for new business names

Today, almost ten years after the first names of private businesses appeared on post-Soviet streets, they are experienced as less new by broader audiences. They have become part of a new *hegemonic* (Gramsci 1992; Yurchak 1997) discourse of post-Soviet private representation. It is impossible to live in St. Petersburg today and avoid not only knowing but also regularly hearing and using a great number of these names. Also, as we have seen, these names, even though they are different from each other, still share some important structural and cultural characteristics many of which are recognized by their audiences. In the act of successfully interpreting multiple linguistic and cultural cues of these names, and in reproducing these names in one's speech, people become not only an active and competent audience, but, further, start participating in the *co-production* of these names. This adds legitimacy to this post-Soviet form of representation.

Karl Sornig discusses how the symbolic work of co-production is performed by the language of advertising. He argues that if a member of an audience deciphers a message 'the content and purpose of which are not manifest and cannot in fact be gathered from its surface structures,' the pure act of successful deciphering marks this person as one of those 'who can receive and process the messages without having to be told everything in so many words' (Sornig 1989: 102). This person becomes involved in a cognitive act of paraphrasing the message to make it clearer. In other words, he/she becomes involved in the 'illocutionary intent and perlocutionary purpose' of the message, taking 'upon himself the responsibility for what he himself has said in his own words' (Sornig 1989: 103).

Similarly, by successfully interpreting symbolic meanings hidden behind a limited set of linguistic and semiotic techniques employed in the production and interpretation of the new names people become actively involved in a co-production of these meanings. Thus, the final kind of symbolic work of the new names is the construction of a particular social group, within the field of large-scale cultural production, which is not only competent in interpreting this new language and its representation of the social world, but also becomes involved in this language as its co-producer. As a result, many people from this group will increasingly experience this form of social representation as natural and will interact with others who use these names just as naturally. They will be able to imagine themselves as belonging to one social group of those for whom the new system of social representation has become naturalized, as opposed to those who do not understand, are oblivious of, actively attack, or resist it.

In this manner, the ubiquitous language of new names (alongside other linguistic innovations connected with private business) participates in the gradual construction of the social groups of business owners and their audiences and clients, and in distinguishing them from others. Or, in broader

terms, the language of new business names performs its ultimate symbolic work of shaping new distinctions, identities, class affiliations, and relations of power in the new social world.

CONCLUSION

As we have seen, the language of new business names in Russia does not simply introduce a new system of signification into the physical public space, but also becomes involved in the contested process of redefining social space, personal identities, and power relations. By renaming public space the groups of business owners attempt to privatize it not only legally but also linguistically and symbolically. In this act they strive to introduce their particular, new version of social reality as positive and meaningful and to construct themselves, in their own eyes and the eyes of the general public, as the authors, owners, and masters of this reality. By performing symbolic work at linguistic and social levels the new names play their role in the struggle for introducing new distinctions and stratifications into the social world, and defining some groups (such as their authors) as having the legitimate power to design and control this process, and to enjoy its results, and others (such as the poorer majority that cannot afford to be regular customers of these new private ventures, let alone to own and name them) as not. As it is often the case, especially in the situation of quick and unpredictable social transformation, this sociolinguistic innovation is contested by a whole heteroglossia of other post-socialist discursive alternatives – e.g. communist, nationalist, patriotic, cultural conservatist, linguistic purist and others.[17] We will be able to evaluate the results of the contested process of new business re-signification of the world only much later. However, judging by the current ubiquity of the kinds of business names that I have discussed, this process has not been unsuccessful.

NOTES

1. A version of this paper was presented at the annual conference of the Association for the Study of Nationalities, Columbia University, April 1999. I thank Tara Sinclair, Sergei Oushakine, and Martha Kebalo for helpful suggestions.
2. I use the term *discourse* in this essay in two related senses: first, as it is usually used in social theory, as 'a flow of ideas that are connected to one another' (O'Barr 1994: 3), and, second, in a more linguistic sense, as a flow of written or spoken representations meaningfully connected to one another.
3. The examples are presented in the following way: first, the name is written in italics as it appears in the original Cyrillic or Latin, followed, in parentheses, by the word's transliteration in Latin (also in italics), its English translation (in inverted comas), and, finally, a description of the private venture which bears this name (e.g. shop, café, etc.).
4. In most cases the business owners' last names are not mentioned to protect their

identities. There are two exceptions when the last name of the owner was important for the analysis and was made explicit to me.

5. All Russian quotes appear in the author's translation.
6. A play on the idiom, *smes' frantsuzskogo s nizhegorodskim* (the mix of French with Nizhni Novgorod dialect) – a parochial attempt to sound foreign.
7. According to Rysazanova-Clarke and Wade, '[d]uring the reign of Peter the Great (1682–1725) Russian borrowed some 1,500 words from Dutch, of which only about 250 are still extant. Furthermore, 74 per cent of words borrowed from French in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries have narrowed their meanings by comparison with their French counterparts, and 35 per cent have acquired a different meaning not available in French' (Ryazanova-Clarke and Wade 1999: 333).
8. For lack of space I will not analyze the changes of privately owned space from other perspectives (e.g. the changes in the visual design of the name-signs or interior design of these ventures).
9. On a similar critique of James Scott's analysis (1990) see Susan Gal (1995: 409).
10. For further critical discussions of Bourdieu's categories see Lash (1993: 208–211) and Bourdieu and Eagleton (1994: 271).
11. Discussing experimental poetic language of Russian and German Futurists Roman Jakobson, building on Saussurean logic, explained how the meaning of a *newly* invented word is created through negative association: 'as far as the ''new word'' is believed to belong to the given language, its meaning with high probability is expected to be in some respect divergent from the meaning of the other words in the same language. Thus one has an opinion ''as to what it should not signify'' without knowing ''what it should signify''' (quoted in Rudy 1997: xiv). Bourdieu similarly reminds us that linguistic '[v]alue always arises from deviation, *deliberate or not*, with respect to the most widespread usage. . . In the usage of language as in lifestyles, all definition is relational' (Bourdieu 1991: 60).
12. This work is done again through a kind of negative identification akin to the work for constructing the linguistic value as an opposition (Saussure 1966: 88; Bourdieu 1991: 60).
13. A similar development happened in the French language after the French revolution – see, e.g. De Certeau (1975), Frey (1925), and Guilhaumou (1989). Examples of new names for post-revolutionary Russian institutions are: *Narkompros* (*Narodnyi kommissariat prosveshcheniia* – People's Commissariat of Enlightenment), *Proletkul't* (*Proletarskaia kul'tura* – Department of proletarian culture), *Agitprop* (*Agitatsiia i propaganda* – Department of agitation and propaganda), etc.
14. Katerina Clark translates *zaumnyi iazyk* as 'trans-sense language' (1995: 40).
15. This situation seems to be changing. After the crisis of August 1998 many Russian food producers replaced Western firms as the main suppliers of foodstuffs for the Russian market. The new brand names of their new foodstuffs often reflect the post-crisis pride in local production and more often draw precisely on the symbols of the pre-revolution Russian culture – e.g. butter *Fermer* ('Farmer,' as opposed to *kolkhoznik* – 'collective farmer'), etc.
16. On applications of Bourdieu's theory of the field of cultural production to the analysis of post-Soviet crisis of Russian film industry see Faraday (2000) and of the cultural discourses about the new Russian rich see Oushakine (forthcoming).
17. Analyzing the interaction between such competing discourses would be an important topic for a separate study.

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