POLITICAL PRISONER AS AN AGENT OF MODERNITY: CRITICAL READING OF THE SOVIET POLITICAL PRISONERS` MEMOIRS

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ABSTRACT

In the memoirs about imprisonment in USSR, the subject of a political prisoner is constructed as an opposition to the criminal inmate, and this criminal-political binary is a structuring discursive element in the analyzed memoirs.

In this thesis, I aim to analyze the autobiographical texts produced by Soviet political prisoners using critical discourse analysis as a methodological approach. I also use a theoretical framework constructed from the frameworks of Foucault, Agamben and Bourdieu, as well as decolonial theory. With those tools, I analyze the textual production of a point of view of a political prisoner, a political prisoner as "socially-situated identity" or a type of subject that the author aims to be (Gee, 1999, p. 13). I also conceptualize the penitentiary system as a representative space produced by modernity/coloniality – in particular, by addressing the penal colony legacy of the Soviet prison system and the reflection of that in the memoirs of political prisoners.

Building on the work of such scholars as Kuntsman (2009) who writes on affective politics of disgust in the Gulag memoirs and about politics of class and sexuality in the memoirs of political prisoners, I approach the issue from a different angle – by exploring, how political prisoners within the camp can be viewed as agents of Soviet modernity/coloniality. I define four pillars of coloniality/modernity in the analyzed memoirs: sexuality (meaning the reproduction of heterosexist colonial logic in the analyzed memoirs), knowledge (addressing the production of political prisoners` habitus through educational practices in the camp directed towards other prisoners), the ethnographic encounter (addressing the ways in which the authors of the memoirs document the othered spaces and subjects they encounter during the time of imprisonment), and the carceral logic (exploring the ways of reproduction and resistance to the logic that normalizes imprisonment, which is also an effort to approach the context of Soviet penitentiary system and the knowledge on political imprisonment with the prison abolitionist agenda).

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1. INTRODUCTION

This work is an attempt at a critical reading of memoirs of three women political prisoners in the USSR, which overall cover the period from 1920s to 1980s. In the memoirs corpus of texts that is a dominant source of knowledge about the repressions and the experience of imprisonment in the Soviet Union, there is a significant lack of published ego-documents and research about criminal prisoners in Gulag – they are often only talked about, and only in relation to the issue of political prosecutions in USSR, and other people`s experience of being political prisoners and "encountering the criminals" or struggling with the criminals in the camp. Finding and presenting sources which would change that is not an aim for my thesis, as relevant data is not easily accessible. However, I aim to undermine the universality of the political prisoners` perspective on the imprisonment, as well as to question the political-criminal prisoner binary division and to also introduce a prison-abolitionist perspective on Soviet penitentiary system.

The reason for choosing particularly the Soviet context for analyzing the described problems is my preoccupation with the matter of global coloniality, in which the coloniality of Russian Empire and, consequently, Soviet Union is an important element, as well as my need to address the liberal approach to knowledge about the repressions in the USSR that lacks class analysis and does not problematize the coloniality and stigmatizing exclusionary logics reflected in numerous political prisoners` memoirs.

My main objective is to conceptualize the figure of a political prisoner as a agent of modernity, who constructs their political subjectivity through discursive reproduction of coloniality/modernity that relies on the criminalization of non-heterosexuality, employing carceral logic, producing certain positional knowledge regarding the "people", and approaching the space and the indigenous populations that surround them during the imprisonment in a ethnographically othering way. All the translations of the quotes from the analyzed sources used are made by me, if not stated differently.

In the first chapter of the thesis, I offer the theoretical frameworks that I believe are helpful for the nuanced interpretations of the memoirs of the political prisoners`. In the second chapter, I move to the direct analysis of the memoirs.

My **research questions** are the following:

- **How can political prisoners in the soviet prison system be viewed as agents of modernity?** (this is the main overarching question that is linked to the main argument of the thesis);
- What constitutive elements of modernity/coloniality are to be identified in the political prisoners` memoirs?
- How is the production of political-criminal binary involved in production of criminal and political prisoners` subjectivity?

1.1. Methodology and limitations

As for the methodological approach, I rely on the critical discourse analysis, mainly as conceptualized by Fairclough (2003) who himself relies on the Foucauldian discourse analysis. According to Foucault, discourse includes written texts and social practices, in certain historical periods there are dominant discourses, and the function of discourse is to reproduce power-knowledge (1982). The goal of critical discourse analysis research is to reveal how familiar/"natural"/common knowledge is constructed. Critical discourse-analytic approach undermines positivist ideas in the social sciences about the objectivity of knowledge. Critical discourse analysis relies on the idea that text and context are not separable from each other and form a nexus. Concretely in the case of my thesis, it means that the memoirs of political prisoners are not just isolated texts, but a constitutive part of the social reality – and my analysis is first and foremost the analysis of social reality, not literature analysis. The relation of text and context is also present on the level of the actual text – manifesting itself in the relation between said (what is directly expressed in the text) and unsaid (the variety of assumed meanings). Similarly, the categories of said and unsaid exist in a nexus as well. Therefore, the aim of

a research is to address the unsaid, meaning to identify various kinds of assumptions in the text and their function.

One of an important flaws of this thesis concerns the question of coloniality and the academic sphere, namely regarding Kuntsman, the author whose work I abundantly cite in this thesis, and who was academically educated in the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. This institution is founded on the occupied/colonized land of Palestine as a cultural capital producing machine for the settler colonial state of Israel. Citing such an author contributes to normalizing the presence of this colonial being. Hence, I failed to adhere to the principles of feminist citation. The main reason behind this citational flaw is the importance of this author in the field of researching politics of class and sexuality in the Gulag memoirs. Nevertheless, I stand against the normalization of such institutions that reproduce colonial practices (militarily, economically, and discursively), contributing to the ongoing Zionist colonialism and the continuum of genocidal violence against the Palestinian people.

Among other limitations of my thesis is a limited amount of data - both quantitatevly and regarding representation. I did not have access to physical archives, all of my sources are published in print or available online. Therefore, I did not aim to create a representative picture of the discoursive field of the Soviet political prisoners` memoirs, but to define discourses related to modernity/coloniality (and, particularly, its constitutive elements) reflected in the data available, from which I selected the examples that in my opinion are the most illustrative. Moreover, I do not aim to fully proportionately represent the temporal dynamics within the Soviet prison system, the texts I have chosen to analyse refer to various periods of its existence – from 1920s to 1980s.

Then, the present text is an effort to reflect on the direct and indirect manifestations of the Soviet modernity/coloniality that is Russian-centred in its essence – and that at the same time is the limitation of my work, as it is itself focused on the Russian-centred experiences. One of my future research aims that are not fulfilled in this thesis is analysing the memoirs of political prisoners that would not be

geographically and politically affiliated with Russia, as all the authors of memoirs that I use as data in this work are.

Also, the important aspect of the political economy of the camp is not touched upon by me in this thesis – I do not analyze how the ecomonic structures were organized, and how this economical organization related to the different categories of prisoners – which is an aspect to be considered when trying to describe the social structure of the camp.

1.2. Historical context

The structure of prisons and labour camps in the USSR was formed partly on the basis of the prison network existing in the Russian Empire. Starting from 1920s, it has developed into the GULag, the acronym from the Russian "Glavnoye upravleniye lagerey" (chief administration of the camps) – a network of camps during Stalinist period, which, in its turn, was reformed by 1960 into a less brutal system with less focus on economic exploitation of prisoners, while still staying a repressive apparatus of an authoritarian state. Millions of people have come through Soviet penitentiary system during the whole time of its existence, and millions of them were convicted by political articles.

1.2.1. A quantitative note on the Soviet penitentiary system

Even though I am focusing on the analysis of discursive politics, a short not should be made on the quantitative aspect of the Soviet penitentiary system. According to the data in the research that refers to the documents by the Soviet state security institutions an estimation people convicted for counterrevolutionary crimes and other crimes against the Soviet state in the period between 1921-1952 is from 3,753,490 to 4,051,903; with 799,455 people sentenced to capital punishment and 2,634,397 – to detention in prisons and camps from 1921 to 1953 (Zemskov, 2012). The author of this research concludes with providing the number of 3,853,900 political prisoners "during the entire 73 years of Soviet rule" (Ibid, p. 317). This is a conservative estimation (moreover, its author is a historian affiliated with the Russian state academy of sciences hence affiliated with the Russian state and its official politics of memory). On the contrary, American scholar Rummel writes about

approximately 8,000,000 people arrested only during 1936-1938, “possibly as many” as 14,000,000 people incarcerated by the NKVD (Rummel, 1996, p. 112), with 1,000,000 executed (Ibid, p. 114). As I do not have the necessary training in historical demography and the methodology of such estimations, I will not further elaborate on this issue. The quantitative scale of the Soviet penitentiary system, as well the influence of the Cold war dynamics on the respective research are separate important questions to be addressed, which is also not an aim of my thesis. However, my positional argument on this matter is that even the conservative assessment is significant enough – even according to it, millions of people were affected. Also, the number of people affected should not serve as a main factor to define the “importance” of the repressions.

In 1956 – the year when so called post-Stalinist "thaw" began, marked by the 20th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union where the "cult of Stalin`s personality" was condemned, there were 415 prisons under the jurisdiction of the Prison Department of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, and by 1958 there were 381 prisons (Memorial, 1998, p. 539). These statistics cover a limited time frame of the Stalinist period when the repressions reached the highest level during the whole period of the Soviet Union`s existence.

1.1.2 The criminal-political distinction within the classification of crimes on the Soviet legal system

The division between political and criminal prisoners was produced by the Soviet state itself. First Soviet Criminal Code was the Criminal Code of Russian Federal Soviet Socialist Republic (RSFSR), issued in 1922. In 1924, Basic Principles of the Criminal Legislation of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics and Union Republics was issued that served as a document of which criminal codes of all Soviet Republics were derived from, starting from 1926. The “central” Criminal code of the USSR still was the one in RSFSR, and it is reflected discursively. Even though each Soviet republic had its own Criminal code, in which articles could have different numbers, but the symbolically meaningful numbers of criminal articles like the article on “counterrevolutionary crimes” has been colloquially

referred to as “the 58th”, by the number it had in the Criminal code of the RSFSR (a book “58th, Unexamined: Stories of People Who Have Experienced What We Are Most Afraid Of” (Artemieva and Racheva, 2016) can serve an example of that symbolic generalization, as it unites the criminal cases of people from various republics of the Soviet Union under the symbolic colloquial name of the article from the Criminal code of the RFSSR).

In Soviet criminal codes, starting already from 1922, offences were divided in two categories: offences directed against the Soviet state (which were in their turn divided into the “counterrevolutionary” crimes and “the crimes against governance”), with the lowest limit of the punishment established, and all other kinds of offences, with the highest limit of the punishment established. In the Criminal Code of the Russian Soviet Socialist Republic from 1926, all “counterrevolutionary” acts were united under the number 58, which during the times of the Stalin`s rule was the main “political” article. With the reformed basic principles of the criminal legislation being introduced after Stalin`s death, the article on “counterrevolutionary crimes” was substituted with the number of articles that were most frequently used for “political” prosecution. The "crimes against the state" chapter of the new edition of the criminal code included articles under the numbers 64-88 and was split into two sections: "especially dangerous crimes against the state" – espionage, terrorist acts, treason etc.; and "other crimes against the state". Among them was the article on “Anti-soviet agitation and propaganda” (number 70 in the Criminal code of the RFSSR, introduced in its the 1960 version), and was punished by imprisonment for the term from six months up to seven years or exile for the term from two up to five years. The same acts committed by a person previously convicted of especially dangerous state crimes, as well as committed in wartime would be punished by imprisonment for a term of three to ten years (Criminal code of the RSFSR, 1960). Besides that, in 1966 the article on “spreading of knowingly untrue information that defames the Soviet state and social system” (number 190 in the Criminal code of the RFSSR) was introduced to “offload” the flow of convictions with the article number 70, and the punishment would be imprisonment for up to three

years or correctional labor for up to two years, or a fine of up to three hundred rubles (Bulletin of the Supreme Soviet of the RSFSR, 1966).

It is necessary to problematize the concept of a political prisoner, and, consequently, to question the political-criminal distinction and its politics. As Llorente writes, people are referred to as political prisoners only when it is the case that their convictions are not justified (2016, p. 251), and the authors of the memoirs I analyze share this idea, as well as it is reflected in discourses around political imprisonment in the USSR produced, for instance, by human rights organisations (Llorente, 2016). However, I deem it is necessary to question, who is a political prisoner, what are the definition of this term, and who defines it, and what re the limitations of classifying prisoners into political and all the others. As a result of such questioning comes the realization about the presence of an assumption behind the concept of a political prisoner that functions as a privileging mechanism for one category of prisoners over the other categories (Llorente, 2016, p. 250); and what is more, it produces the exclusionary domain of political – at this point arises the question on the definition of "political", political in the sense which expands beyond just an adjective for characterising a prisoner. Regarding this very question, scholars of the repressions in the USSR during the years of Stalinism have claimed that the majority of those convicted for "counterrevolutionary crimes" had not truly opposed the Soviet regime and had not committed any deliberate action against it, and neither the Stalinist approach to defining which acts can be prosecuted as "counterrevolutionary", nor the approach according to which every sentence is perceived as political are sufficient – thus, they argue, "we should devise ways to separate ordinary criminality from genuine opposition to the system" and other cases of criminal prosecution (Getty, Rittersporn, Zemskov, 1993, p. 1033). In my opinion, this argument first of all demonstrates the inconsistency of the concept of "political"; and I generally believe that such argumentation leads to the exclusion of even more people and cases from the domain of political, as it does not question the existence of an "ordinary criminality". I was considering, which concepts to adopt to denote the prisoners with different kinds of sentences, and how to frame them – for instance, whether to use the terms of political and criminal prisoners in quotation marks

to undermine the universal validity of those terms. Eventually, I decided to use those terms without quotations marks due to material conditions (meaning the politics of the state in categorization of the prisoners) that produced the political-criminal division. However, sometimes I still resort to using quotation marks for those terms in order to undermine the fixedness of the categories.

1.3. Literature review

For the review of literature on the topic of politics of class and sexuality in Soviet penitentiary system and connection of those politics with the Soviet modernity, I will be looking at several clusters of debates: a corpus of literature in Soviet studies engages in analysis of institutions of Soviet society including works on penitentiary system, repressions and prosecutions in USSR; a corpus of literature in gender studies and sexuality, including those specifically dealing with the context of USSR; and, in addition to that, at some examples from the corpus of literature in criminology. Even though it is a generalizing claim (which I will develop in the full literature review), I would assume that the general field of Soviet studies has been overlooking non-heterosexuality as a separate phenomena, even when their research was focused on the topic of repressions and prison. In their turn, the field of LGBT studies in the context of USSR tend to overlook the space of prison as a heterotopic space , and might only mention the criminalization of homosexuality in USSR and the fact that homophobia has roots in the prison culture. Also, it important to remember about the Russo-centrism of a significant part research on Soviet Union is Russo-centric (and even more than that, some authors that I engage with in this literature review work predominantly with cities in European part of Russia only), thus it presents a falsely universalizing representation of Soviet realities. However, in this draft I attempted to collect relevant intersections between the above-mentioned fields to show how the issues of non-normative sexuality within a prison space, as well as, discursive criminalization of homosexuality has been worked on.

To continue with queer-theoretical frameworks, approaches of queer criminology and critical prison studies recognises the longstanding legacy of criminology "colonising its subjects" (Dalton, 2016, p.

16) and reflect on the process of criminalising homosexuality as an effect of the scientific apparatus of criminological science (Ibid.), as well as intend to conceptualize shame, also produced by criminology (Ball, 2016, p. 227). Even though the relevance of "queer criminology" for the Soviet temporality and space can be questioned, this framework, as well as the queer-theoretical lens overall offers useful conceptualizations for this context, as they help to connect the issue of homosexuality in prison with the phenomena of coloniality and modernity.

Within "classical" discipline of criminology non-heterosexuality in confinement is conceptualized as a functionalist element in the that deals with inmate-to-inmate prison sexuality, lesbian relations within the prison are framed as a practice of establishing "make-believe pseudo-families" that substituted family kinship for incarcerated women, "providing for women's socially normative emotional and social needs" (Hensley & Tewksbury, 2002, p. 231-232). In "Ukrainian Women in the Gulag: Survival as Victory", which focuses on the Gulag experiences of women political prisoners` from Ukraine in the 1940s, there are also mentions of the existence of proto-family-like, "mother-daughter or sisterly" relationships between political, but they are described as chaste and decent – because tactile contacts among them were non-sexual (Kis, 2020, p. 429). But family-like structures among criminal prisoners who practice lesbian relations are defined with a stigmatizing concept of "quasi"-family (Ibid.), which uncritically reproduces the binary between political and criminal inmates. Healey traces the narrative of a "unnatural" same-sex (particularly lesbian) relations in Soviet prisons back to 1920s which are claimed to, paradoxically, "naturally" be caused by gender-binary segregation of conditions of imprisonment (2018, p. 33-34). Behind the ultimate use of the concept of "quasi-" or "pseudofamily" to interpret the homosexual and homosocial relations in prison there is an propositional assumption that a "non-quasi", real family can only be heterosexual.

Besides that, Healey mentions the division between political prisoners and common criminal ones, claiming that the latter were "the most visible queers" (the author generally uses the concept of "Gulag queers", the politics of which deserve a separate discussion), allowed to engage in non-heterosexual

practices due to the fact that Soviet penal system saw criminal prisoners as "socially close" (Ibid., p. 35). Moreover, he also points to the fact that the level of openness about having non-heterosexual relations depended on the class position (Healey, 2001, p. 51). Another argument Healey makes is that male homosexuality was overall more visible and focuses predominately on data regarding male inmates (2018, p. 35-38), which brings in the question of connection between visibility and criminalization (of non-heterosexual practices).

Existing research on Gulag and later developed Soviet prison system addresses the questions of categorization of prisoners based on class, type of sentence, ethnicity. In "Death and redemption: The Gulag and the shaping of Soviet society", Barnes argues that Gulag has played an important role in shaping Soviet society, and categorization within the diverse body of prisoners according was an important tool of governing for the penal administration (2011, p. 97). However, the author does not analyse the influence of the existing in Gulag non-heterosexual practices on the Soviet society he mentions homosexuality just barely, and, when doing so, links it to the sexual assault only (Barnes, 2011, p. 127), similarly to Kis who within one sections of her book combines paragraphs on lesbian relations in camps with paragraphs on "moral decline" and prostitution (2020, p. 430-431).

In "Regulating homosexuality in Soviet Russia", Alexander writes about homosexuality in USSR being discursively positioned between disease and crime, as well as about growing medicalization as a tool of combatting prison homosexuality in USSR during the post-Gulag period (1970-1980s) (Alexander, 2021, p. 162). Besides that, the author makes a conclusion about the "from police to science" shift in official (state and penal) Soviet discourses on homosexuality (Ibid, p. 168.) Even though medicalization of non-heterosexuality is not in the focus of my work, the author`s idea about Soviet penitentiary system being a site of "new modernity" is definitely relevant (Ibid., p. 162).

"Born to be Criminal. The Discourse on Criminality and the Practice of Punishment in Late Imperial Russia and Early Soviet Union. Interdisciplinary Approaches" (eds. Hartmann and Nicolosi, 2017) addresses the legacies of penitentiary practices in Russian Empire and Soviet Union and the

construction of the distinction between political and criminal prisoners in the USSR – particularly focusing on the Gulag literature (Lachmann, Toker, 2017). Lachmann also writes about the connections between the criminal-political distinction among priosners and the reproduction of the class hierarchy in the camp (Lachmann, 2017).

A queer-theoretical reading of the Gulag political prisoners` memoirs was conducted by Kuntzman, who used the framework of affective politics of disgust towards homosexuality present in the political prisoners` memoirs by using the theory developed by Sara Ahmed, demonstrating that criminalizing homosexuality and perceiving it with disgust is widespread in the memoirs of Soviet intelligentsia (2009). They argue that stigmatization of criminality and reproduction of the political-criminal boundary by the political prisoners was a way of preserving the subjectivity of political prisoners, who for that reason were operationalizing their cultural capital (Ibid.). In their article "With the Shade of Disgust", Kuntsman traces the conceptual linkages around the affect of disgust presented in the memoirs of Soviet political prisoners – mostly using memoirs written by Varlam Shalamov, Eugenia Ginzburg, but also those by Ekaterina Olitskaia and Maya Ulanovskaia – all of them are the prisoners of the Gulag period. The article is part of the author`s larger project that aims to "map discursive and affective formations of sexuality across the different memoirs, noting, for example, the shift from disgust and hatred to pity and compassion" (Kuntsman, 2009, p. 326), to undermine the common ways of presenting the history of Gulag – the history, which is massively shaped by the corpus of "political" prisoners memoirs in be attentive to silences and non-neutrality of this literature (Ibid, p. 327). Also, the author does not set their goal in bringing in the "true" representation of "common" prisoners in the analysis, but to account for their exclusion, dehumanisation and silences surrounding them in the memoirs (Ibid). According to Kuntsman, a central nexus for an analyst in this context is the "relations between sexuality, class and humanness" that are to be unravelled (Ibid, p. 328).

Particularly in this article the author investigates how the affect of disgust is involved in production of categories of classed sexuality within the camp. The author is showing the disgusting and the disgusted subjects are constituted in the Gulag memoirs (p. 311) by relying on the cultural theories

of emotions such as Sara Ahmed`s, Julia Kristeva`s, Mary Douglas's, Elspeth Probyn`s et al. (p. 311). Kuntsman focuses on the disgust that "political prisoners" express towards the non-heterosexual practices and, consequently, towards "common" prisoners who engage in those practices. According to the author, within the discursive space of the given literature corpus the division between heterosexual "political" prisoners and homosexual "common" prisoners is (re)produced – by widely present expressions of disgust towards homosexuality in these texts (Ibid, 2009, p. 310).

Kuntsman argues that in the analysed memoirs, non-heterosexual prisoners, who are always, the "common" prisoners are described by the "political" ones as non-human subjects who carry animalistic characteristics (p. 317), and also are presented as inherently sexual (Ibid, p. 318). They use Ahmed`s point on disgust as a reaction that creates and reinforces human-non-human distinction, and, therefore, on disgust as a boundary between human and non-human subjects (Ibid, p. 315-316). Moreover, disgust together with shame are involved in separating civilized normal subjects from uncivilized and abnormal (Ibid, p. 314) – subjects can be classified into those categories on the basis of experiencing those affects, so the absence of shame (on the part of the "common" prisoners) and the presence of disgust (on the part of the "political" ones) belong to the conditions that predetermine the reproduction a political-criminal binary (Ibid).

Kuntsman points to the ways in which homosexuality in the analysed memoirs is being bestialized (both among men and women) and is being linked with cruelty, violence criminality, illness and various forms of "deviations" (Ibid, p. 320, 322). They mention that while political prisoners construct "criminal" prisoners` as "distinguishably sexual" (Ibid, p. 318), their own sexuality is absent from the narrative and is presented as something "hidden, masked, ambiguous" (Ibid, Ulanovskaia, as quoted by Kuntsman, p. 317) – and this silence is, in the article, linked to the "classed norms of respectability", namely, to the political prisoners` habitus (Ibid, p. 318). Peculiarly, Kuntsman points to the "juxtaposition of sexuality and morality" (Ibid, p. 319) in the memoirs (particularly in Ginzburg`s one, but it is generally relevant for their approach).

Kuntsman writes about political prisoners as subjects possessing certain cultural capital (using the concept of Bourdieu), particularly, in the form of literary knowledge, and, thus, developing their "survival" practices in the camp based on the reciting and referring to literature and cultural samples they were familiar with. In this way, the author makes a connection between maintaining the class position (manifested through the possession of cultural capital) and maintaining the feeling of one`s humanity. Kuntsman approaches social hierarchies (such as class and race) as those that constituted by disgust.

The survival of a political prisoner subject, Kuntsman writes, in the memoirs is often associated with "the breakdown or transgression" of boundaries (Ibid, p. 323) – including boundaries of class, proximity to the "criminal" Other, morality, food consumption principles etc. And the disgust, in the author`s interpretation, is supposed to serve as a sign of the need to construct a binary that is less fragile.

2. CHAPTER 1: THEORETICAL CONSIDERATIONS

In this thesis, my aim is nor to establish the historical truth, neither to "give voice" to the "criminal" prisoners. But what I plan to do is to analyse the discursive politics of memoir-writing process by the political prisoners and to demonstrate how the ideas of Soviet modernity/coloniality are reflected in those texts. In such a way, I not always address the contextual historical nuances regarding the particular temporality and space of the texts that I use as data.

Kuntsman`s article is an important critical remark on the issue of sexuality and class politics in the memoirs of political prisoners. When developing my theoretical framework, I have taken into consideration their work, while aiming to take it further regarding some aspects and in different direction regarding others. First, I focus on the figure of the political prisoner as an agent of modernity and perceive the discursive political of political prisoners` memoirs to be a reflection of discursive politics of Soviet modernity. In this way, I explicitly address modernity and coloniality as its "dark side" (Mignolo, 2011; Quijano, 2003) that Kuntsman`s article does not.

Then, I depart from the human-non human distinction that Kuntsman uses, according to which "political" prisoners are claimed to deny the humanity of the common ones (particularly through the politics of disgust) towards the more nuanced distinction. I would argue that political prisoners` approach to categorizing prison subjects (including themselves) according to the characteristic of humanity is rather about defining different levels of humanity, than about reproducing the human-hon human distinction. For this reason I employ the concept of species as developed by Foucault (2003), zoe and bios as developed by Agamben (1998) and furtherly supplement it with Bourdieu`s notion of habitus (with cultural capital and habitus as categories that maintain the boundaries between groups of prisoners with different levels of humanity) (Bourdieu, 1992).

To illustrate my claim, I will provide an illustrative quote from the memoirs by Irina Ratushinskaya who was convicted in the 1980s with the "political" sentence:

> You can't really think about the company of KGB-ists as of a human society! And these [criminal prisoners] are still human beings, even though there are probably murderers and thieves among them. But our folk have always referred to convicts "miserable". Poor people, I pity them, and they probably pity me. No, I know about the fierce laws of the criminals, about the ruthless massacres, about their mockery of the weak ... But that there is something else in them – this I will never forget. I will appeal to this other, different side of theirs, which those convicts, and those prison guards have [...] Lord, save and have mercy on my wretched people! (Ratushinskaia, 1989, p. 21).

Even in this single quote, one can see how more complicated is the "political" prisoner`s perception of the different subjects within the camp – and how, firstly, it does not fit in the simple human - non-human binary, but also how the picture gets complicated by the "political" prisoners` relation not only to the "criminal" ones, but also to the representatives of the prison system, namely, KGB officers and the prison guards (I will address this second aspect of connections and distinctions between criminal prisoners and workers of the penitentiary apparatus in the subchapters 2.2. and 2.4 of the Chapter 2).

2.1. Agamben`s zoe vs bios: criminal prisoner as a figure homo sacer?

Agamben`s framework is a relational nexus between the concept of zoe, a simple biological fact of living and bios, a political way of living. It is relevant for thinking of how the bare life of criminal prisoners is captured and reproduced within the discursive structure of political prisoners` memoirs – in other words, how the process of the "extraction" of the bios from the criminal subject and, in this way, producing the bare life is conducted and how bare life of a criminal is politicized (Agamben, 1998, p. 5) as a result. The camp, according to Agamben, as a biopolitical space that functions exclusively in the state of exception mode and is a "hidden paradigm" of the political space of modernity (Ibid, p. 123).

I aim to explore how the zoe-bios nexus can be applicable to the Soviet context, particularly penitentiary context, in which there existed a distinct classification of prisoners with political and criminal charges. In other words, I link zoe-bios distinction to the political-criminal binary, as being a political prisoner is "a political way of living" in the literal sense. Morality (including sexuality), civilizedness and certain class position/habitus are elements that reproduce political-criminal

distinction – thus, their manifestations become characteristics of species. In its turn, political-criminal binary relates to the nature-culture binary and to the zoe-bios nexus.

For the context I am engaging with, the characteristic around which distinction between species is built is criminality. Moreover, I would argue that another side of the racialization is "homo-sacerization" or the process reflected in the equation "bare life=zoe + (zoe-bios)". Such racialization can be viewed as a tool of constructing criminal prisoners as homo sacer figures, which is at the same time a process of a political prisoner constructing oneself as a full-fledged political subject. Memoirs reflect political prisoners` experience of entering the space of prison/camp, that is populated by subjects of various level of humanity – from fellow political inmates to the criminal prisoners to the camp administration. It`s possible to say that political prisoners employ the political technique of "bestialization" (Foucault, as quoted by Agamben, 1998, p. 3) to describe their "criminal" inmates. The aspects that are the grounds for the racialization also serve as the discursive spaces for the "substraction" of the bios and the production of "bare life".

Agamben`s zoe-bios relation is the constructed as a binary, and zoe in this relation is considered to be extractable from the "full life" – that binarity that implies the possibility of their distinction and separation. I question this side of his framework, particularly the assumption of extractability of the "political life" – as the concepts of zoe, bios and the bare life are helpful for complicating the view on the prison hierarchy in the Soviet prison camp, but the relevant question to ask here is: are (some) criminal prisoners really purely perceived as "bare lives" by the "political" prisoners? I assume that the short answer is negative, and the aspect that attention should be directed is how the life of criminal prisoners gets politicized by the political ones.

2.2. Foucauldian concepts of species and race: hierarchy of prisoners as a hierarchy of species

The concept of racism in Foucauldian interpretation as an evolutionist approach that centres not around the category of ethnicity, but around the category of species (Foucault, 2003, p. 261) is relevant when trying to interpret the context of Soviet prison system and the hierarchy of prisoners

that it produced, including the representation of this hierarchy in the memoirs of the "political prisoners". Employing the concept of species challenges the human-non human distinction, as the division into species is more complicated and nuanced than this binary. In such a way, it is possible to think of political prisoners experience of entering the space of prison/camp, that is in their eyes populated by subjects of various level of humanity, therefore the representatives of different species – from fellow political inmates to the criminal prisoners to the camp administration.

The "racism" of political prisoners towards the "criminal" prisoners is not directly related to the "right to take life", as it is in Foucault`s writing, where racism is a precondition for exercising the right to kill (Foucault, 2003, p. 256-257), also because the camp is already a the space where the state (aka the camp authorities) have this right over each prisoner (although the lives of "political" and a "criminal" prisoners are not treated in the same way by the penitentiary institution, which is a separate issue). But this "racism" is a constitutive part of the carceral logic – it is the precondition for normalisation of incarceration for certain categories of people (specifically, incarceration by the criminal offences).

Treatment of "criminal" prisoners as different (in fact, lower) species relies on the evolutionary logic – Foucault writes about the mechanism of defining the lower species, and the boundaries between species based on the differentiation grounded in the evolutionist approach, not the category of ethnicity or race in the usual meaning (2003). Such conceptualization still links the species to biology, however,

It must be noted, in the data that is furtherly analysed in the thesis, the category of ethnicity is also present and the way political prisoners address it complies with their modern/colonial agency – in more details this will be discussed in the data analysis part that addresses coloniality.

2.3. Foucault contra Agamben: addressing the contradictions

There exists an important contradiction between Foucault`s and Agamben`s standpoints which reflect in the frameworks used by me. Agamben`s zoe-bios and bare life concepts, as well as Foucaults` species and race ones are developed in relation to the notions of biopower and sovereign power. For Foucault, biopower and sovereign power are antagonistic, while for Agamben those types of power intertwine, and the bare life is the "hidden point of intersection" between those power models (Ojakangas, 2005, p. 6). For Agamben, biopower is centred around bare life as such (Ojakangas, 2005). Also, for, him bare life is not included in the domain of the normal (Ojakangas, 2005, p. 8). The reduction of the subject to the bare life is produced within the state of exception (Ibid.), which is illustrated by the concentration camp. Foucault, in his tun, does not particularly highlight the camp as an exceptional space.

I do not fully subscribe to the Agambenian conceptualization of the camp as a space that is fully structured as a state of exception; and for that here I need to make a distinction between the "material" and "discursive" spaces of the camp, however doubtful such strict de-dematerialization of a discourse is. So in that way, materially camp is undoubtfully a space of exception for the prisoners – with extreme conditions that produce the prisoner bare lives on the industrial level. However, the modern discursive politics of the political prisoners that are represented in their memoirs stem not from the exceptional space of the camp, but from the "normality", i.e. from the social reality that exists beyond the camp as well as inside it. Foucauldian idea of power as the force that is coming from everywhere and existing everywhere is to the purpose here (Foucault, 1978, p. 93) – meaning that power transcends the space of the camp. Certainly, the camp, be that the concentration camp of the Stalinist period, or a penal colony of the 1980s, is an exceptional space regarding brutal material conditions in which prisoners have to exist. But nevertheless, I would argue that the discourses I define in the memoirs of the "political" prisoners are not exceptional for the space of the camp, but on the contrary, are representative for the wider segments of the social reality beyond the camp.

The concept of habitus by Bourdieu can bridge the theoretical approaches by Agamben and Foucault and, particularly, be the element that fits in my effort to complicate the human/non-human binary, while developing it into the relation based on the conception of Foucauldian species and various levels of humanness instead.

According to Bourdieu, habitus is a "subjective but not individual system of internalized structures, schemes of perception, conception, and action common to all members of the same group or class and constituting the precondition for all objectification and apperception" (Bourdieu, 1977, p. 86). Habitus produces "thoughts, perceptions, expressions, and actions that are limited by the historically and socially situated conditions" (Bourdieu, 1992, p. 28).

The freedom of this production is "as remote from creation of unpredictable novelty as it is from simple mechanical reproduction of the original conditioning" (Ibid.) – and this is another aspect of habitus that makes it useful for addressing (or making a step towards resolving) the contradiction between the camp as a state of exception and the normative space is that practices that habitus generates "cannot be deduced either from the present conditions which may seem to have provoked them or from the past conditions which have produced the habitus" (Bourdieu, 1992, p. 56) – which is an observation that I use to conclude that "political" prisoners` practices (and first of all, discursive practices) in the camp are specific for this space, but are also produced by their habitus that had been formed before their imprisonment, as habitus is an "embodied history, internalized as a second nature and so forgotten as history" (Bourdieu, 1992, p. 56). Furthermore, Foucauldian idea of the power as knowledge that is specifically relevant for the context of the camp, as the memoirs of "political" prisoners is one of the main and abundant source of knowledge on imprisonment in USSR, can be interpreted according to the same principle, when answering the question of the genealogy of this knowledge and the process of its construction – because the knowledge in the memoirs is produced based both on the analysis the imminent camp reality and on the previous knowledge and attitudes that the memoirs` authors already had formed about issues that they describe. In fact, if the aim would

be to generalize the theoretical framework of this thesis to the biggest extent possible, it could be formulated as an investigation of a political prisoner`s habitus through a decolonial perspective.

Stepping away to a spin-off thought based on the Bourdieu`s framework – it can also be helpful for a side reflection on the question of the limits of "political" prisoners` agency, relevant as I claim them to be agents of modernity. The habitus is a spontaneous "without consciousness or will, opposed as much to the mechanical necessity of things […] as it is to the reflexive freedom of subjects 'without inertia'" (Ibid, p. 56). Habitus is reproduced by the complex of "the dialectic of expressive dispositions and instituted means of expression (morphological, syntactic and lexical instruments, literary genres, etc.) which is observed in the intentionless invention of regulated improvisation" (Ibid, p. 57) – I offer to apply this conceptualization around habitus and the structures that form it to the agency of political prisoners in reproducing their habitus in the camp and to employing the practice of writing memoirs.

The concept of habitus and closely related to it concept cultural capital are relevant for linking together Agamben`s framework of "zoe" as biological existence and "bios" as political subjectivity with Foucault`s concept of species, because they directly bring in the category of class. It is through the habitus and the "possession" of cultural capital that humanity of a prisoner subject is generated within the discursive space of the "political" prisoners` memoirs. In fact, this whole research could be defined as political prisoners` "habitus study", and of the ways in which "through systematic «choices»" their "habitus tends to protect itself from crises and critical challenges by providing itself with a milieu to which it is as pre-adapted as possible" (Ibid, p. 61) – starting from the very practice of writing memoirs (and the recognition of it as a necessary and appropriate practice), which precisely is generated by the specific habitus of an intelligentsia and is a class-based "instituted mean of expression" (Ibid, p. 57).

2.4. Coloniality/modernity: theorising the Russian and the Soviet

Anthropologist Brian Noble writes about two dimensions of the coloniality – as an oppositional encounter and as apparatus/milieu (Noble, 2015, p. 429) that operate in the context of Canadian anthropological research conducted towards the indigenous people of Canada. Despite the very different subject of my research, both elements of Noble`s conceptualisation are relevant for the analysis of the Soviet modernity. Coloniality as an encounter grounds on the "modern opposition […] between a self and the other", and can be manifested through the imposition of "boundary coordinates – such as those of territory, knowledges, categories, normative practices" (Ibid.). Political prisoners resort to the same practice – by constructing multiple boundaries and hierarchies based on the categories of space, knowledge, and certain practices (that they tend to normalize or constrict as deviant) in order to construct and affirm their own political subjectivity. Moreover, a Noble argues, within the colonial encounter the "self" is aiming to "rationalize its dominant presence" within the given space and take a predominant position towards the encountered subjects of Others (Ibid.) – in my case, the "political" prisoners are in the position of the "self" that try to rationalize the fact that they happened to be confined within the penitentiary space of the camp among the criminal others.

According to Tlostanova, whose scholarly focus is the issue of modernity in the USSR writes, modernity is less of an objective historical process, but first of all a system of generating knowledge, and "ontological othering in modernity has epistemic roots" (Tlostanova, 2015, p. 40). I adopt the conceptual framework that defines coloniality as its constitutive aspect of the modernity (Quijano, 2007), as its "darker side" (Mignolo, 2011), and consequently adopt the "modernity/coloniality" way of writing. I approach the modernity/coloniality as the discursive field that is to big extent reproduced by the assumptions present in the memoirs.

Another aspect that should be addressed before full-fledgedly conceptualizing Soviet political prisoners as agents of modernity, is the necessity to align the political ground of using the concept of modernity and coloniality in the Soviet context, as well as to address possible contradictions between

Western and Soviet modernity. As Khalid has stated, instead of being mechanically fitted into the "static definitions" of coloniality and measured accordingly to "classical" post- colonial and/or decolonial theory that focuses on bourgeois Western empires, the Soviet case can expand the perspective on the studies of coloniality in all the complexity of both social macroprocesses and multiple local contexts that the concept of "Soviet" refers to (2007, p. 471).

It is also necessary to note that the concept "Western modernity" itself` is a generalized and an artificially unified concept. First, the "West" itself is a generalization, as Hall writes – the West is not homogenous, but it is a justified simplification to use this collective referral for the analysis of the West as a collective entity that is grounded in the colonial exploration and conquest (Hall, 1992, p. 188). Consequently, "Western modernity" includes multiple modernities, that are not identical to each other even within "the West", but for the purposes of this text it makes sense to define the pillars of modernity that are common.

The premise I am coming from is that that the ways in which Soviet context modernity/coloniality operate is not identical to the functioning of the Western modernity, but at the same time they are interconnected on the discursive and material levels. There are multiple ways to trace the intertwinedness of modernity/coloniality in Russian Empire with the Western one. For example, one can look at the criminalization of homosexuality in the armed forces of the Russian Empire by Peter the Great in the beginning of the 18th century within the military codex modelled on the Western examples, which then led to the criminalization of male homosexuality between civilians too (Healey, 2018, p. 155). This was a direct adoption of the Western (particularly, significantly German Reich-oriented) policy with the aim to reinvent the institution of the army according to the European standard. Beyond the aspect of criminalizing homosexuality, this policy also meant aligning Russian army with the military institutions of the imperial states that were actively leading their colonial conquests at the time. Homosexuality was de-criminalized after 1917 revolution, to then be re-criminalized again by the Stalinist authorities in 1933.

The colonial expansion of the Russian empire has also taken place throughout centuries, and was directed mainly to the North-East. Russian 19th-early 20th century historian Vasiliy Kliuchevskiy who belongs to the canon of classical historians, in his 1904 work "Course on Russian History" writes about the centuries-long Russian colonial process of expansion to such territories as Caucasus, Siberia, Ural region being a formatory factor for the Russian state – presenting it as a rather neutral fact (Kliuchevskiy, 1904). In 1826 year Russian diplomat and cultural figure Alexander Griboyedov designed the project of the Russian Transcaucasian Company, which clearly was based on the example of the Ost-Ind company, was established. Another connection between the Russian modernity/coloniality and the Western one is the prevalence of the Enlightenment ideas produced in the West, and spread in Russian Empire. For example, the anthropocentric view on the nature as a resource "prepared" for the humankind was a product of the Enlightenment philosophy, and can be clearly found in the Note on the Establishment of the Russian Transcaucasian Company: "A close examination of the Transcaucasian region will show that nature has prepared everything for man, but people have not made use of nature until now" (Griboyedov, 1928 (published in 1959), p. 471). Besides that, it is certainly needed to point to the legacies the imperial social structures of the Russian Empire and their connections with USSR (or, in other words, their lasting legacy in the USSR) – especially regarding the prison system, that, though had been modified and expanded, still to big extent relied on the principle of the penal colony (Popova and Di Pasquale, 2019).

One the most noticeable discursive sliding that points to the common power structure the Russian Empire and Soviet Union is the confusion between Russia as a (central, defining) part of them and the whole entity, be that the Russian Empire or the USSR, which are both the entities structured by power institutions centred in Russia (and to be more particular, in metropole Russian cities), while both of those entities included much more wider territories than Russia. Such semantical power dynamics, when "Russian" denotes "Soviet" is similar to the patriarchal generalization of the category of human under the concept of "man".

Regarding the question of the Soviet modernity, it is also relevant to turn to Foucault`s idea on the socialism necessarily having a racist component (2003, p. 261). Although Soviet ideology contained a performative element of prisoners` re-education and rehabilitation through the penitentiary system, in reality being a criminal was stigmatized (and, obviously, the system was far from rehabilitative). And even though I would not agree with the generalizing approach Foucault employs towards all socialist projects, there definitely was a eugenic component to the Soviet one – with the idea of a new superior human species that are to develop – and within this narrative, "the people" are viewed as those that have to be educated, civilized and generally transformed (by the state) on the way to progress – physically, ideologically, on the level of consciousness. This aim of development of new human species is a also a manifestation of Soviet modernity; and interestingly, we find political prisoners as actors on another side of this civilizing Enlightment mission, even while being against the Soviet state – which proves that Soviet and Western modernities share same roots. A concentrated example of such an approach is the quote «Well, you don't know how to control yourself, you didn't know true love, you turn all the camp suffering into aggressiveness, and culture for you is an abstract concept» by Ratushinskaia (1989, p. 192) that demonstrates the elements that constitute a political subjectivity of a political prisoner – rationality, self-control, culture, devotedness to work and valuing the joy of working. All of those are characteristics of a civilized modern subject, but it also fits into the image of a perfect socialist subject. Besides that, even when a political prisoner does not want to be good Soviet citizen and opposes the Soviet state, they might still have an ideology of what a decent dignified citizen must be like (in a political system they desire to see instead of the USSR).

In my analysis, I am looking at the penitentiary space, particularly at the space of a labour camp in the Soviet Union as represented in the autobiographical texts produced by Soviet political prisoners since late 1920s, in the times of Gulag and later on. The dominant source of knowledge about the experiences of imprisonment in the USSR comes from the corpus of political prisoners` (auto)biographical documents – their voice is dominant in the representation of the Soviet penitentiary system, while the perspectives of criminal prisoners are practically absent (due to multidimensional

class issues, such as who gets to write memoirs and get them published, and who even thinks of writing memoirs as a possibility). Nevertheless, political and criminal inmates had to coexist closely within the camp, and while the political-criminal binary was initially constructed and reproduced by the state, political prisoners needed to differentiate themselves from "the criminals". Hence, one of the central discursive element present in the memoirs is the binary division between political and criminal prisoners and, consequently, the construction of political and criminal subjects that are supposed to be radically different from each other. I aim to define structural elements that constitute the agency of the political prisoners as modern political subjects**.** I make an effort to interpret this context by employing concepts of bare life (and, consequently, zoe and bios) by Agamben (1998) and species by Foucault (2003). It is important to note that using Agamben`s and Foucault`s frameworks which are rooted in the Western European contexts, for the different context of Soviet Union is, in my opinion, is justified by the fact that both of those frameworks address the processes that are characteristic for modernity, including camp being the ultimate space of modernity.

The question of how Western modernities/colonialities relate to the Soviet modernity/coloniality is by itself worth a detailed investigation. However, for this thesis I will limit myself with pointing to the fact that those modernities/colonialities are intertwined, while still focusing on the Soviet modernity as a project within the realm of the global coloniality, that, according to Tlostanova, is "always manifested in particular local forms and conditions" (Tlostanova, 2015, p. 40). Therefore, I am talking about Soviet modernity/coloniality as a local form (or, to be more precise, an aggregation of local forms) of modernity/coloniality within the modern/colonial continuum – meaning that they not only relate to this (global) continuum, but also co-constitute it.

3. CHAPTER 2: ANALYSIS OF THE MEMOIRS

For the discourse analysis in this thesis, I have mainly used four following texts written by political prisoners that I use for identifying the discourses: Liudmila Olitskaya`s "My memories", "Steep Trail" (the established translation in English is "Journey into the Whirlwind") by Eugenia Ginzburg, and "Grey is the Colour of Hope" by Irina Ratushinskaia.

Ekaterina Olitskaya (1899-1974) was a member of the Russian Socialist Revolutionary party, the left opposition to the Bolsheviks. She participated in the underground movement in 1920s. She was first arrested and imprisoned in 1924, and after some time of being imprisoned in Solovetsky camp, she was sent to the exile in Kazakhstan in 1926 and amnestied in 1930. Two years after that, she was arrested and sentenced with the article 58 again – to 10 years in the camp, to the be released in 1947 and be arrested in 1949 for the third time. In 1960s she moved to live in Uman, Ukraine and started working in her memoirs that got published in 1971 abroad and was distributed illegally undercover as dissident literature in the USSR. Later, closer to the end of her life, she was prosecuted by the police again because of the connections with the Ukrainian dissident movement (Memorial, n.d.).

Eugenia Ginzburg (1904-1977) was born in Moscow and was a historian by education. She worked as a teacher in the university in Kazan, RSFSR, teaching, among other things, the history of the Soviet Communist Party; also, Ginzburg worked in the newspaper "Red Tataria". She was arrested in 1937 under the article 58 and was sentenced for 10 years in the camps. She lived in exile after being released, to then get imprisoned again in 1949. After Stalin`s death she applied for the rehabilitation and got rehabilitated in 1955. In 1957 she returned to live in Moscow. (Memorial, n.d.)

Irina Ratushinskaia (1954 - was born in Odesa, Ukrainian SSR, in the family of an engineer and a Russian language teacher. She received higher education as a physicist and worked in the pedagogical university, but besides that wrote poetry and theatre plays that received attention from Soviet security forces (Gerashchenko, 1986, p. 7). Her writings were published, for instance, in the Russian-speaking

journal in exile "Posev" ("Sowing") that was published in Germany and was oppositional to the Soviet regime. She was also involved in human rights activism – for example, she was among the people who wrote a protest letter against the arrest of the famous dissident Andrei Sakharov. For all of her activities, Ratushinskaia got fired from work in 1981 and then arrested for "anti-Soviet agitation and propaganda" in 1982 (Gerashchenko, 1986, p. 9). She was sentenced for 5 years of prison camps and 7 years of exile, but due to the international advocation campaign and liberalization of Soviet regime during "perestroika" she has been released in 1986. After that Ratushinkskaia and her husband emigrated to the United States and were deprived of Soviet citizenship.

Building on the Quijano's framework of pillars of coloniality, although not using precisely the pillars that he offered (Mignolo, 2007; Quijano, 2003), I have defined following discursive pillars that constitute the general discourse of modernity/coloniality in the analysed memoirs as sexuality, knowledge, and colonial encounter. Using the post-structuralist discourse-analytical approach, those three elements can also be conceptualized as the discursive nodes (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002; Laclau & Mouffe, 2014) around which the discourse on modernity/coloniality is centred within the discursive space of the memoirs (that, as I have previously stated, are the constitutive part of the social context and of the corpus of knowledge on the political repressions in the USSR).

While reading the given memoirs critically, I do not aim to invalidate or to devalue the experience of political prisoners in the authoritarian state who spent years in camps and/or exile. This is, without a doubt, a brutal experience to survive which required tremendous efforts to survive it. At the same time, her text is produced from specific positions in social structures – mostly by people from intelligentsia, members pf political movements or, later, dissident circles, mostly coming from cities and identifying with the metropole Russian culture. Such memoirs are an example and a constitutive and representative part of the Conversations (from the capital "C" as long-running themes that many texts have focused on (Gee, 1999, p. 12)) on experiences of Soviet repressions represented by numerous political prisoners.

3.1. Sexuality and criminality in the eyes of the political prisoners

One of the pillars of the political-criminal binary division is the politics of sexuality, particularly, representing non-heterosexuality as a criminal practice, and criminal prisoners as "masters of sexual perversions" (Ginzburg, 1975, p. 255). Ratushinskaia mentions that "lesbian love" in everyday prison life has struck her the most, being the incarnation of insanity, wildness and abnormality, reproducing the trope about the oppositional encounter between "the savage and the innocent" (Trouillot, 2003, p. 23). Political prisoners commonly refer to the non-heterosexuality as "criminal love", "camp love" etc. The structuring principle of discourse on non-heterosexuality and gender-non-conformity in the memoirs is linking it with criminality. I assume that such attitudes towards homosexuality among the political prisoners, or, in Bourdiesian terms, such dispositions of theirs had been shaped before they got to prison – in particularly, I speculatively assume without being able to provide any evidence for that, under the influence of the re-criminalization of homosexuality that took place in Soviet Union in the thirties.

Interestingly, the similar logic can be found in the academic publications, like the book "Ukrainian Women in the Gulag: Survival as Victory" (Kis, 2020), particularly in the chapter 6, titled as "Sexuality, Body, and Love". Obviously, the focus of the book is on the experiences of the Ukrainian women political prisoners, but the way the discourse around homosexuality and criminality is constructed in the book is relevant despite that. Paragraphs about homosexuality among female prisoners in the Gulag are situated within two subchapters: "Sexuality as Both Resource and Risk", and "Involuntary Prostitution". Claims represented in this book are the following: homosexuality is to big extent a silenced issue in the memoirs (openly expressed statement); homosexuality in the camps was linked with criminality (an assumption). Women political prisoners who are directly quoted in the sample. They wrote about homosexual relations among other women (which supports the claim on silencing) either detachedly (Blavatska, as quoted by Kis, 2020, p. 428); or with compassion (Skarga, as quoted by Kis, 2020, p. 430); or claiming "lesbian love" to be an expression of a "hysterical passion" (Ibid, p. 429) – all of those approaches are stigmatizing to greater or lesser

extent. The author, however, does not directly articulate her stance on "homosexual practices" in the camps. Nevertheless, her perspective shapes the text, and, judging by the inner morphology of the text, I would argue that the author has not differentiated herself enough from the stigmatizing approach. For example, the fact that homosexuality is mentioned in the subchapter on "Involuntary Prostitution" contributes to the idea on homosexual practices as inherently involuntary and provoked by violence. Moreover, right after discussing the quote on homosexuality of prisoners, the author introduces another quote on bribery and women being mistresses of camp authorities with the following comment: "The former prisoners generally avoid direct judgment, even when they are aware of the moral decline of some women" (Kis, 2020, p. 430) which links homosexuality with "moral decline" and puts it in one row with condemned practices of collaboration with authorities. As Kulick and Cameron write, often it is non-normative sexualities that are getting marked and referenced to in the discussions on sexuality, while heterosexuality is an undiscussed background norm (2003, p. 51). In the sample this mechanism is at work. But there is a slight difference – as the author states that heterosexual relations were more prosecuted (Ibid, p. 428), she steps towards openly pointing to the heterosexual social order. However, to the large extent the ideology of heterosexuality as a default mode of women`s existence is still present in the chapter. For instance, the concluding paragraph of one of the subchapters refers only to "prostitution" and "relations with men" without mentioning homosexuality (Ibid, p. 431). One of the important assumptions in the texts is that there were no non-heterosexual women in the camp, only "homosexual practices" were present. Building on Eckert`s work (2002, p. 100), I can conclude that homosexuality in the book is conceptualized as an activity, and heterosexuality (expressed among other ways in a form of the chaste family-like non-sexual intimacy (Kis, 2020, p. 428-429)) – as a desire that was constitutive for a politically imprisoned highly moral woman.

Ratushinskaya, in her turn, makes sense of homosexual behavior solely as of "ersatz-love" that women resorted to due to isolation (1989, p. 190):

"Cut off from normal life, women, mostly young, created ersatz love and ersatz families for themselves. Yes, yes, whole families - with grandparents (their roles were taken on by the elderly), with daddy-mother and young children. Youngsters were only those who came from the children's zone, which means they had reached the age of eighteen" (1989, p. 190).

Ratushinskaia writes about the "erzats-families" consisting of women inmates who would "play a role" of traditional family members – describing it with unhidden judgement and astonishment (and she definitely predicts that a reader would also be surprised by what she describes). In research on political women prisoners` experience in Gulag, such as the work dedicated to the Ukrainian women`s experiences of imprisonment in the 1940s, there are also mentions of the existence of proto-family-like, "mother-daughter or sisterly" relationships, but they are described as chaste and decent– because tactile contacts among them were non-sexual (Kis, 2020, p. 429). But family-like structures among prisoners who practice lesbian relations are defined with a stigmatizing concept "quasi"-family (and not only in memoirs, but also in scientific research on sexuality in prison (Hensley, C., & Tewksbury, R. 2002, p. 231)). Behind the ultimate use of the concept of "quasi" or "pseudo" family to interpret the homosexual and homosocial relations in prison there is an propositional assumption that a "non-quasi", real family must be heterosexual.

Moreover, gender binary and clear gender distinction is another aspect that political prisoners present as a norm in contrast to criminal prisoners with non non-conforming gender expression that are referred to as "it" ("ono") – a neutral gender in Russian language that is used towards non-human creatures. Olitskaya describes such women prisoners in the following way: "nasty, disgustingly insolent creatures. […] Cheeky faces, manly-cut hair, over the shoulders of the overcoat... They had their mistresses, their keepers among the prisoners. They walked around the camp in pairs, hugging each other, bravading with their love. The bosses, like the vast majority of convicts, hated "it". Other female prisoners fearfully shunned them" (Olitskaya, 1971, p. 243-244). Interestingly, she reproduces the idea of "showing off" with non-heterosexual relations – a trope that is very present in modern homophobic discourses. Such pathologization and stigmatization of "criminal" prisoners gender non-conformity and them undermining (or violating) the boundaries of the gender binary (and I am aware of the possible anachronistic effect of me using those terms, but I consider their interpretative

potential to be more important) can be interpreted by appealing to the coloniality of the gender binary. Maria Lugones has established the connection between the establishment of the binary heterosexist gender system and the development of Western colonialist regimes (Lugones, 2008). In this way, by marking the "non-binarity" of "criminal" prisoners` gender as a deviation, "political" prisoners are reproducing this very colonial knowledge-power. Moreover, gender binary and heterosexuality are institutions that form a nexus, both being constitutive elements of the heterosexist matrix. So, by the assumption that heterosexuality is the default norm, which is present in the analyzed memoirs, also reinforces the global coloniality.

According to the political prisoners, non-heterosexuality is a pathological phenomenon that belongs to the space of the camp (naming lesbianism a "prison love"), and heterosexuality is the ultimate norm. Once again, Ratushinskaia depicts her experience of witnessing homosexuality among inmates as a dramatic collision with the "unbelievable" prison world. It is important to stress that I do not question the fact that homosexual relations in prison environment could be one of the ways to establish a power hierarchy and could involve non-consensual acts and sexual violence. However, in the memoirs the effort of differentiation between consensual and non-consensual practices is not present, and the main issue that author is critical to is not violence, but homosexuality. All examples the author provides and her general approach are presenting homosexuality as deviancy and as a practice that political prisoners will never get involved in due to their high morals:

> Even those who had normal families at large reach complete insanity. [...] Most men do not wait for their wives in trouble – they get divorced. There are, of course, exceptions, but rarely. These are not political prisoners, who, anyway, have been waiting for each other for twenty years (Ratushinskaia, 1989, p. 191).

In this way heterosexual family becomes linked with the dignity, loyalty to one`s partner and, in general, proper ("normal") family values – that, in their course, are linked with the way of life of political prisoners on the contrary to criminal ones.

Non-normative sexuality within this discursive field is often a part of a complex of criminal characteristics, being intertwined with other vices of the prison system. In the same paragraph where

Ratushinskaia writes about lesbianity among criminal inmates who, according to her, practice lesbian relations due to traumatic experiences and lack of culture and self-control, she abruptly switches to the point that criminal prisoners do not value the joy of working. She mixes all of those different aspects in order to make an argument about the viciousness of the penal system, and stigmatisation of former prisoners:

> Well, you don't know how to control yourself, you didn't know true love, you turn all the camp suffering into aggressiveness, and culture for you is an abstract concept. But are you the only one to blame for this? And are you to blame at all? Or are those people to blame who are now holding you in swine mud, setting you against each other, mocking you simply because they nothing to do?! And labour for you is hated penal servitude, so you prefer to cause artificial fractures and sugar tuberculosis to yourself! They want to re-educate you! Make full-fledged people out of you? No! They just need slaves – miserable, disenfranchised and always to blame for everything. And when you, with a mark of a criminal record in your passport, go "to freedom" with a warped soul, a district police officer will come to you to supervise you. And he will be king and god over you – he can easily arrange an article on hooliganism for you, for example, and send you back to the camp. Be grateful if he only asks you for money. Otherwise, he may demand such things that all camp love will seem the height of chastity to you! (1989, p. 192-193).

In fact, criminal prisoners are described as the "lost souls", with non-heterosexual practices being a part of the typical behavior in such situation; the author sees them as the people spoiled by the destructive environment and those being continuously subjugated and oppressed by the state police apparatus. This way to express compassion to people who were sentenced with criminal articles still pathologizes homosexuality and unwillingness to work, linking them with each other and once again linking them with the class position. In addition, such an effort to address structural problems in the penitentiary system strips agency of the prisoners, as they are declared to fully be products of this system, which homosexuality is exclusively a consequence of normally heterosexual people staying within the pernicious prison environment.

Coming from a slightly other side, this argument praises the rational, disciplined, cultured, civilized subject – and criminal prisoners are portrayed as the savages who are not able to reach the level of consciousness, high enough to experience "true love" instead the physiological sexual attraction – their aggression is claimed to be an uncontrollable, automatic reaction, which is close to a biological interpretation – this is where the criminal prisoners` existence is constructed very closely to

Agamben`s "zoe", and criminal prisoners are constructed as subjects who are almost solely ruled by physiological impulses. To have this idea recapitulated, such logic is a clear example of the logic of Enlightenment – with its glorification of rationality and civilization, as well as with establishing the links between those qualities and "true love", meaning heterosexuality under it. Furthermore, I consider the concept of Enlightenment to be an important aspect of the discursive politics of the political prisoners` memoirs – as it is also linked with coloniality/modernity and with the reproduction of practices that constitute political prisoners` habitus.

3.2. Knowledge, Enlightenment, and "the people"

Continuing the issue that was touched upon in the previous subchapter, in this one I address the process of constituting the political prisoners` political subjectivity and reproduction of their habitus through the process of "enlightening" the other prisoners around them and through the construction of the category of "the people" that are actually to be enlightened.

In Ratushinskaia`s text "the people" almost equates "the criminal prisoners", and "the people" is in its mass uncivilized and uneducated. In the first chapter of the book she describes her first encounter with a large number of incarcerated people at once.

> How many of them, my God? I should have recounted, because I gave myself a word, entering my very first cell, not to miss anything! Observe, memorize – every bit of it! Someday all this will come in handy – not just naked emotions, but facts and figures. However, I'm not up to numbers now: gray faces, gray quilted jackets. Only the eyes are different. Everyone looks in on me: political prisoner – a high title! (Ratushinskaia, 1989, p. 18).

She describes this experience of entering the space filled with the massive crowd, faceless mass of people at large – in this encounter she is a dominant figure of the scene, the recipient of attention. She also admits that she has only read about both the prison and the people in books. Moreover, she states that being a political prisoner had drawn intensive attention to her, which is a reinforcement of political identity/subjectivity; when Ratushinskaia states that she had received her sentence "for the poems" (Ratushinskaia, 1989, p. 14), she is exactly asserting her cultural capital in this way and reinforces her habitus of a poet, a representative of intelligentsia.

Lecturing prisoners, reciting poetry to them, educating them in other ways is indeed a recurrent trope in the memoirs. To cope with life in such circumstances, political prisoners would need special skills, such as storytelling: as Applebaum writes, prisoners reported the skill of retelling book plots to criminal prisoners for entertainment to be crucial for their survival in the camp (2003). Lev Finkelstein, as quoted by Applebaum, says that

> I will be forever grateful to a thief who, in his first day in prison, identified this potential in him and said, 'You probably read a lot of books. Tell them for people, and you will live very well'. And in fact I lived better than the rest. I had some notoriety, some fame (Applebaum, 2003, p. 419).

From what you can see in the further analysis of Ratushinskaya`s text, later on (at least in the dissident time 1980s) along with re-telling fictional literature and poems, there also existed a practice of educating "the people" on human rights and general humanistic values, that could involve re-telling dissident literature like Solzhenitsyn. Survival, then, also includes the preservation of habitus that is related to the practices of reading and intellectual work. When Ratushinskaya states that she had received her sentence for the poems" (Ratushinskaia, 1989, p. 14), she is exactly asserting her cultural capital in this way and reinforces her habitus of a poet, a representative of intelligentsia.

Along with storytelling, political prisoners could demonstrate physical force to impress and "hypnotize" the criminals (Ginzburg, 1967, p. 131). "Hypnotising" is not an accidental word choice to describe such this interaction, it once more proves the dehumanization of common criminals in eyes of political ones and the level of othering. Another way to encounter "the criminal world" or to deal with it is to find a conductor among the criminals (which can happen accidentally – for instance, by meeting a criminal inmate by mistake, as Ratushinksaia describes (1989, p.235-236), and this accidentality stresses even more on the criminal-political division), who could then let political prisoners into the criminal life and/or be their protector (here a comparison can be made with a Western traveller in the field who needs to find a local guide to adapt in the unknown).

The provided examples are not exhaustive, and this were just briefly presented elements of a narrative that I identified after reading multiple memoirs. Even though such events are described non-lineary

(there is rarely a clear unified sequence of events), those hardships described by political prisoners can be described as steps within their journey and contribute to the construction of narrativity within their memoirs.

Ratushinskaia mentions scenes of educating the people several times. Enlightening "the people" is presented as a noble mission – working with a demanding and difficult audience and preaching her values. Ratushinskaia portrays herself in the role of an enlightening lecturer, and other [mostly criminal] prisoners are presented predominantly as passive recipients, who are only listening. Moreover, the author does not omit sharing her doubt whether it is worth reciting poems to "criminals", as she thinks they are half-literate and will not understand anything, but then she reasons that all people in her "audience" cannot be criminals, because there are so many other kinds of people who could also end up in Soviet prison camps (Ratushinskaia, 1989, p. 14) – which leads to a value assumption made by her that it would not be worth it to speak to those people if they were criminals only. She as well as writes about how she struggled to make her lectures simple and understandable fur such an "unsophisticated" audience, and moreover, she states that if her poems are good enough, they should be understood by "the common people", otherwise they are worth nothing (Ratushinskaia, 1989, p. 25-26), which draws a strict line between her and "the people" and reflects Ratushinskaia`s urge to gain recognition from the "people". It is for a good reason that in the book there are numerous episodes when criminal prisoners ask Ratushinskaia to cite her poems or, for instance, the works of Alexandr Solzhenitsyn (Ratushinskaia, 1989, p. 14, 28-29) – I believe they must illustrate the popular desire of masses to enlighten themselves, to strive for "the culture". Practices of knowledge exchange in form of lectures or discussions were widespread in camps among educated prisoners, but what matters in this case is the obvious hierarchy with which this enterprise is described – in fact, the author is describing other prisoners a her student audience:

> The fact that I am a political prisoner arouses legitimate interest in all cells [bolding is mine to stress on this consolidation of a political prisoner identity and the author aiming for "the people"`s recognition – T. K.]. And I have to tell everything from the beginning: about human rights, and about poetry, and read poetry – for everyone, for the whole car. [...] My first big auditorium-halls for no less than a hundred people - there were these Stolypin carriages, where

> most of them did not even see me - they only heard my voice. And I need to recite poems in the most unsophisticated way possible – to be clear, choosing simple words, as I do now in English. Because my current English vocabulary is equal to their average Russian, although there are people in the camps who can quote Omar Khayyam, but the majority are still semi-literate. And yet I read. [.. .] I'm reading. I'm worthless with all my poems if these people don't understand me: there's been enough of us already – "terribly far from the people!" (Ratushinskaia,1989, p. 25-26).

The main assumption that the author presents is "the people" (or "this"/"my" people) need to be talked to differently – in a less complicated way, that they at all need to be educated and that that "the people" are a fixed social group that such persons (apparently, those belonging to civilized intelligentsia possessing the same level of cultural capital) can be "far away from".

However, class does not work as an ultimate division factor, as space is still left for "noble peasants/workers" among political prisoners or "good/moral" enough criminal inmates. This leads to another double-bind in the discourse around "criminal" prisoners` morality – they are described as uncultured savages that are closer to a "lost cause" for the civilization, but at the same time there exists another, discordant, perception of the "criminals" as those representing the "pure folk".

In the next given quote Ratushinskaia, firstly, ironizes about the camp authorities` practice of separation between political and criminal prisoners and constructs the exceptional status of the political prisoners – as if only quoting the reaction of other prisoners around her, but this exceptonalisation "leaks" into the discourse that she reproduces:

> Especially dangerous state criminals are kept separate from the others. So that, therefore, they do not have a bad influence: what if the ordinary criminals give up stealing and robbing and start writing poetry? Or, even worse, speak in defence of the Sakharov, the renegade? (Ibid, p. 13).

Moreover, she presents a political prisoner as a subject that is supposed to influence "the others" in an re-educating, elightening way – so that they might even stop their criminal activities if political prisoners bring up the values of human rights, sharing poetry. This quote contains an assumption that "the others", non-political prisoner are not capable of reaching this knowledge without the presence of a political prisoner. At the same time, she expresses some sense of anguished populist pride, alleging that these prisoners – tormented, uneducated, uncivilized, however, are "still her people"

(1989, p. 21) – however, inconsistently, sometimes she does perceive them as different human species:

> The most difficult thing for me during the year of imprisonment seemed to me complete isolation from lively and normal people and the need to communicate with people who were not only strangers in everything, but also mutilated... In Lefortovo [the prison in Moscow], these nightmarish bribers and these human-like creatures, in camp - criminals (which is much easier than the Lefortovo environment, but also tough). It's also bad that you get used to it hard, you take everything too close to your heart. Sometimes I thought in utter fatigue: when will I finally see at least one person with an unmutilated soul, with undistorted, not turned upside down values, thoughts, deeds... (Ratushinskaia, 1989, p. 281).

> Our people [political prisoners with whom the author will live during the imprisonment in the camp], when I got to them, were even more hungry and starved. But — more like people in my understanding: a different look and a different posture (Ratushinskaia, 1989, p. 24).

The important note is that the folk is a flexible signifier in the memoirs – it can include basically any category of prisoners except for those political ones that write the memoirs – working-class prisoners with political sentences, criminal prisoners, camp overseers.

Coming back to the idea of "dignified" and dignified" folk, with the image of "undignified" introduced being, I have defined two elements that constitute and reproduce the boundary between dignified "pure" noble folk and the undignified, ignoble folk (as an analogy of Hall`s with the noble and ignoble savages (Hall, 1992, p. 217), which is the popular trope in the Western Enlightenment discourses). The first element is the presence or absence of striving for culture among "the people". The following part of the Ginzburg`s text provides an example of a noble folk representative:

> Polya Shvirkova, the cook, had read Nekrasov in solitary and also began to rhyme. In general, she, despite everything, was somewhat flattered that the investigator gave her such an intellectual criminal article – counterrevolutionary Trotskyist activity, introduced her to such a society, where everyone is a member of the [Communist] party and has higher education (Ginzburg, 1975, p. 104).

– so, a working class women, who is not a "real" political prisoner in the eyes of Ginzburg, as she was convicted for the "counterrevolutionary activity" she had no connection to or understanding of – and political article is itself constructed as constituting cultural capital and as a part of intelligentsia habitus; the working-class prisoner is a "noble one", because she strives for poetry, for the culture, while being among the "real" political prisoners. Criminal prisoners and overseers are an example of

the “ignoble” folk for Ginzburg, as they are “impossible to talk to”, as the convicts are all the same and the overseers communicate with the help of “three dozen cliched phrases” (Ginzburg, 1975, p. 185).

Another element that creates the “noble-ignoble” people distinction is the attitude to labour. The criminal prisoners are often portrayed as those who do not engage in any labour and live a careless leisurely life:

> These humanoids live a fantastic life in which the lines between day and night are blurred. Most do not go to work at all, lying on the bunk beds all day. And those who do go out only to build a fire and, huddled around it, shout their shrieking songs (Ibid, p. 195).

The author of the memoirs` provides a rather detailed description of their “leisure” practices, which resembles the ethnographic field note (and in the next subchapter the parallel with ethnography is addressed in more detail). Ratushinskaia, when addressing criminal prisoners, sadly notes that “labour turns into a hateful servitude” for them, to which they prefer committing self-injuries such as artificial fractures and sugar tuberculosis (1989, p. 192). I would argue that The idea of being hard-working as a value has its connection with the Enlightenment discourse through the idea of rationality – as hard work is a rational value.

All in all, all of the discursive mechanisms that I have defined and described above, contribute to the reproduction of the hierarchy of categories of prisoners (or species), with the political ones on the top.

3.3. Discovering spaces and “natives”: documenting the encounter

In the analyzed data, political prisoners do not admit question the colonial legacies of the Russian Empire and Soviet Union (meaning recognizing the colonial conquests that resulted in the certain territories being included in the territory of the Russian Empire and Russia itself as an entity). A part of Olitskaya`s memoirs can serve as an example, where she writes about a fellow politically convicted prisoner:

> In 1917, after the revolution, he returned from hard labor (penal servitude). He remained faithful to his past and to the party, but did not take part in the revolutionary work after 1917. He devoted himself entirely to scientific work. While still in prison he fell in love with the north of Russia, he became attached to it. All his time he devoted to work on the development of the Russian north (Olitskaya, 1971, p. 139).

She is not framing the "exploration of the «Russian North»", meaning formerly colonized territories, as a problem and not questioning neither this term, nor its actual meaning in any way – even though both Olitskaya and the person she is writing about had been revolutionaries. This shows how uncritical to the Russian imperialism (and the Soviet one, that carries its legacy) she is, while being the representative of the social movement that could be expected to support liberatory anti-imperialist ideas.

A significant pillar of the perception of space in the analyzed texts and its relation to coloniality. It is, once again, important to stress that the penitentiary system of the Soviet Union was structurally connected with the colonial project of USSR and Russian Empire. The process exploitation of colonized territories for extraction of resources has been going along with developing prison networks on those territories (it is enough to take a look at the map of Gulag prisons in order to notice numerous camp networks in Northern and Eastern parts of the Soviet Union[1]. Significant amount of them remained functioning after reformation of the Gulag industrial complex). Existing in the Russian Empire and Soviet Union penitentiary system can be conceptualized, at least partly, as the network of penal colonies, built on the lands colonized during centuries-long imperial conquest.

I would argue that the positionality and gaze of a Russian-identified political prisoner from intelligentsia describing "savage" criminals are comparable to those of Western anthropologists describing their expeditions and "natives" in the field – where it is necessary to live according to the "law of the jungle", and where they encounter the space and the local "native" people.

Some of those who had been prosecuted with "political" articles, were sent into exile as a form of punishment – meaning that they had to live at the territories defined by the state, but among the local

[1] The visualization can be found here: https://gulag.online/places?locale=en

people, not in the camps/colonies. A part of Olitskaya`s memoirs is dedicated precisely to her experience of exile, starting from the middle 1920s. The territories designed to serve for exile, as well as many colonies and camps would often be located in the regions of the USSR that have been previously colonized by the Russian Empire, like Siberia or Kazakhstan. And here, it is relevant to think about the concept of penal colony in the colonial context – as the institution that reproduces "imperial hierarchies of territories and populations, establishes and maintains control" (Popova and Di Pasquale, 2019, p. 422), and those power relations are being reproduced both within the space of the camp (among all the actors that are involved in the camp structure).

By problematizing those aspects I address the issue of political prisoners` agency arises again – as being prisoners who are sentenced and sent to the penitentiary space, they do not possess the same agency to an ethnographer. However, there have been cases in the history of ethnography when the place of ethnographers` exile became their field – for example, for members of the Polish national movement or the revolutionary movement "Popular Will" that were prosecuted in the Russian Empire (Znamenski, 2007), so the ethnographer-convict linkage is not unprecedented.

The camps in which Ratushinskaia served her sentence were located in Mordovia, an autonomous republic (within the Russian SSR) that was created as an ethnicity-based territorial unit for the Finno-Ugrian peoples. Those peoples (Moksha and Erzya) were colonized by the Grand Duchy of Moscow during 14th-15th centuries. In her memoirs, Ratushinskaia mentions Mordovia several times, and all those mentions can be read as the propositional assumption that the whole region is to index "prison life" (Ratushinskaia, 1989, p. 100, 206-207) with very tough climate (p. 66, 71, 102). This resembles the colonial discourse of the empty land (van Eeden, 2004, p. 25) voiced by the "political prisoner" author, but expressed in the present tense – in this variation the assumption is that in the whole (colonized) region there is nothing except for prisons and forces of nature hostile to "civilization". This is how the author describes the associations she had with Mordovia:

> For me, Mordovia was more likely to be represented in the broad-cheeked face of a woman prison guard who at night pushed a piece of bread, or even a couple of sweets, into our

> punishment cell [...]. Of course, we starved honestly and did not take that bread. But she shoved it with good intentions. The understanding of the concept of honesty, God willing, will come to her later (Ratushinskaia, 1989, p. 206-207).

In the quoted text the typical colonial logic within which the new territory is perceived as a woman (Hulme, 1986, as quoted by Hall, 1992, p. 210). First, the author feels the need to describe the physical otherness of the Mordovian woman (broad-cheeked here is an ethnic characteristic) and this urge to document the exterior of the "natives", again, relates her to an anthropologist. Furthermore, such personalization of the whole [colonized] land in a figure of an ethnicized woman camp overseer, who is naïvely kind, but kind as a savage, who just does not comprehend high moral values of political prisoners such as honesty yet (Ratushinskaia generously grants her an ability to learn about those values) is an example of the colonial gaze. Racialization of the space is in a linkage, or in the discursive sliding with ethnicity and species, hence space is also constituted as inherently racialized.

Furthermore, regarding the gendered and racialized perceptions of women, more of "ethnographic" documentations of them can be found in the memoirs, again, with the detailed descriptions of their appearances:

> Kazakh women do not veil. They worked alongside the men. They did not live in the city. They came from the mountains, from the pastures with the caravan. The ones I saw were not beautiful. Wide, cheekbones, sunburned faces. The Uzbeks seemed all the more beautiful. And they knew it. With a slight beautiful movement they took off the burqa for a moment which was just enough to see their oval faces with huge black eyes under the narrow band of brooches. They liked to adorn themselves. We were struck by their eyebrows: they had a long green line under them (Olitskaya, 1971, p. 13).

Here Olitskaya is commenting on the Kazakh and Uzbek women as on Orient others – from the position of the white woman from the European part of the USSR, who is, in addition, entitled to evaluate their beauty.

Some authors of the memoirs directly describe it as a journey. Travellers` tales are one of the discursive themes on which the colonial discourse relies in the process of the representation of the Other (Hall, 1992, p. 205-207). Julius Margolin, who was originally from Poland, not from the USSR

but had spent 5 years in Gulag camps during the Second world war, describes in the accordingly named book "Journey Into the Land of the Zeks and Back" this process of "traveling":

> At dusk, after hours of standing in line, we were loaded onto a steamship and sailed down the river. We lay down on the sloping deck, stretched out, and rested. It was good to lie on one's back at night, with hands under the head, and to look at the dark, starless sky. It was good in the daytime in the sun, watching from the deck as the low shores and green dewy meadows floated by. We felt like tourists; it was our genuine «journey into the unknown». We had been on the march for ten days (Margolin, 2020, p. 371).

Even though the narration of discovery in this quote is intentionally exaggerated. When reading further along the text, at who were met during the journey, we will see such racialized and classed descriptions – describing the encounter with "the savages":

> The Asiatic brigades, vestiges of generations that had perished in the camps, inspired horror: monstrously dirty, bestial-looking people with heads encircled by dirty rags, with incomprehensible speech, savages who had descended to some cave-like condition. They worked ferociously, neither mingling with anyone else, nor permitting anyone to approach them (Ibid, p. 244).

Even without claiming to have an adventure/journey, political prisoners were reproducing the narrative of the investigative travel discovery. The memoirs of Olitskaya where she describes her exile period in 1920s in Kazakhstan are indeed a prominent example of the documentation of such a colonial encounter. They are filled with the undisguised exoticization of the Orient:

> After prison cells, we found ourselves among the unfamiliar exoticism of the South. A southern bazaar, teahouses, where shashliks were roasted and served on metal sticks in front of us. Merchants in their long blue robes and bright skullcaps sat cross-legged. Here, on koshmas, visitors drank green tea from pots. Caravans of camels passed through the streets. I was most impressed by Kazakh mahouts who rode small donkeys with their legs almost dragging on the ground (1971, p. 12).

Here, again, the question of political prisoners` agency arises, as it is aptly reflected in this quote – the political prisoners are dependent on the agency of the state apparatus which transfers them from the prison cell to the exile in an imperial periphery, but they still exercise their agency through the modern-colonial gaze. This quote also illustrates how the prison infrastructure is glottalized with the colonial periphery by the state apparatus. So, travel notes, and is indeed the example of the encounter

– consequently, coloniality as an encounter (Noble, 2015). And this encounter is being documented as a dynamic process, often from the position of an observer:

> The exiled prisoners were aloof. We were separated from the native population by our language, and they were not very favourable to the Russians. I did not meet a single woman who spoke Russian, nor did I see one who took off her burqa.
>
> […]
>
> We were greatly interested in the habits and customs of the population, but somehow we could not see them closer. The life of the natives went on behind high douwals in the yards. Our men were not allowed in at all. They let us women in willingly, but we did not understand each other and only exchanged smiles (Olitskaya, 1971, p. 35).

The author is directly stating her curiosity to traditions and customs of the "aborigines" – she is initially framing her interest in the othering ethnographic terms. Another aspect in this quote is how the order of the text creates the link between speaking Russian and being unveiled, with both of those acts being a charactersistic of a modern emancipated Soviet woman – such as Olitskaya herself. This view is linked not only with more general imaginaries of a civilizedness, but also, more nuancedly, with the Soviet project of modernization and emancipation in Central Asia, directed to liberate the people the region, and, particularly, to emancipate the "women of the East" – the process that, among its other effects had contributed to the establishment of colonial power relations between the Soviet metropole(s) and Central Asian peripheries (Shchurko, 2016).

Another aspect of Olitskaya`s modern gaze at the "natives" and on the urban-rural divide and modernization:

> Uzbeks were more adapted to urban life. They were engaged in trade and were more easily exposed to culture. From their families, many young men went to schools and even universities. Our master's son studied in Tashkent. What confusion and turmoil there was in his mind at that time can be understood from his wedding (Olitskaya, 1971, p. 34-35).

In this quote, the order and logic of the sentences in the text links the level of adaptation to the urban environment of Uzbek people with their culturedness. Then she describes how the young Uzbek komsomol [Soviet youth party section] member had to follow the traditional Uzbek wedding rituals because of the wish of his family to illustrated the "mess in the heads" that led to such "confusion".

Among other descriptions from Kazakhstan, Olitskaya describes how she was looking for a housing to rent in the city of Shymkent located near the Kazakhstan-Uzbekistan border. This experience of hers reflects a specific power balance: as Olitskaya and her companions are in the position of exiled prosecuted people who does not possess much of the material capital, but at the same time they are the educated representatives of intelligentsia, who are afraid to share food with local Uzbek people in order not to get infected with sexually transmitted diseases (the fact that diseases are specifically sexually transmitted also contributes to the image of the Uzbeks not only as unhygienic, but lecherous and sexually undisciplined):

> Immediately he invited us to his place. We went in with curiosity. The room was even bigger than the one we had been offered, and it seemed larger because there was no furniture in it. The floor was covered with rugs. Along the walls on the floor there were quilts and pillows in variegated covers. There was a little table in the middle of the room, not higher than a quarter of the floor. The whole family was sitting around it on mats. A huge dish with pilaf was smoking on the table. Both women and children dipped their hands into the bowl and filled their mouths diligently; they licked their fingers and put them back into the dish with gusto. Everyone squeezed in hospitably, making room for us. The host was reluctant to let us go until we had shared the meal with him. Klavdia Porfirievna and I resolutely refused. We said we were full and that we were in a hurry to get home, when in reality we were afraid to join such a table. We were also warned today: be careful with Uzbeks in the dormitory – they are infected with syphilis and trachoma (Olitskaya, 1971, p. 11).

Additionally, in the given quote one can also notice the ethnographic approach to the description that Olitskaya employs to describe the "exotic" interior of the house, the household arrangements and the eating practices of the locals, just like in the previous examples.

3.4. Carceral logic and prison abolition

The Enlightenment logic in the memoirs of the political prisoners which had been discussed in one of the previous subchapters is complemented with the carceral logic – meaning the approach that is uncritical to the prison system or justifies/reinforces it, being grounded, according to Kaba, in the "punishment mindset" (2021, p. 105). The carceral logic is, as well linked to the modernity/coloniality. The example of such carceral logic which is vividly reflected in the words of Eugenia Ginzburg, who states that "even now I believe that such people should be isolated not in prisons and camps, but in psychiatric hospitals" (Ginzburg, 1975, p. 131). Here the link between

prisons and medical institutions is made very clear, as well as the pathologizing gaze that sees criminal prisoners (aka "real criminals") as literally biologically inferior, different species that should be isolated. It is also important that this gaze belongs to a representative of the intelligentsia that exceptionalizes the position of the political prisoner within the penitentiary system.

There exists a narrative on the Soviet authorities treating criminals as "socially close elements" can be found in the academic literature (Lachmann, 2017, p. 200; Healey, 2001, p. 35) and in the memoirs (Rozanov, 2006, p. 106-107). However, I have failed to find any documental confirmation of the official usage of the term "socially close" towards the "common" prisoners in the documents issued by the state. But actually, the factual confirmation of the "socially close" term being used is not even needed, as I interpret this idea as an example of the political prisoners` (as a generalized entity) perception of the criminals and the state constituting the nexus and being parts of the same system.

Ratushinksaia admits that according to the logic of Gulag authorities, lives of criminal prisoners are valued less as their cases are never public, and they are not advocated for – so at times life-threatening punishments can be more easily applied to them. At the same time, Ratushinskaia presents the camp overseers and criminal prisoners as equivalent elements of the prison system. I assume, an important reason for making such an equation is the fact that one of the camp authorities` tactics of governing inmates was using those with criminal articles to pacify the political prisoners (Kis, 2020; Ratushinksaia, 1989, p. 177):

> The guys in uniform – whether they are convicts, soldiers, doesn`t matter .. [bolding is mine – T.K.]. After all, not all of you are thieves and bandits for life! All of your lives are crippled, but the soul remains. What is it like for this soul that from childhood was launched into the machine of lies and violence? It would be good for your soul to survive, but is there any chance? I still hope there is (Ratushinskaia, 1989, pp. 28-29).

While political prisoners perceive criminal prisoners as politicized "bare lives", another kind political subjectivity they are endowed with is the subjectivity of a penitentiary system system`s tool that is being used to oppress the political inmates. Even in academic articles one can come across expressions like "criminal element" to denote criminal prisoners (Kis, 2020, p. 428, 432) – which are

dehumanising and represent this category of inmates as literally an element in the prison system, as a generalized vicious entity. In such a way, state and the camp administration are the sovereign power and criminal prisoners as either tool or victims of sovereign power. From a slightly other angle, the people who work as overseers in the camp can be seen by political prisoners as belonging to the same category of "the people" (or the same species) as the criminal prisoners. From yet another perspective, the representation of criminal prisoners as parts of the prison system is at the same time the way to politicize their (otherwise bare) lives, granting them the political subjectivity in the form of cooperation with the camp administration (or even in te form of merging with the prison system).

As was mentioned previously, when other prisoners ask Ratushinskaia what she is sentenced for, she answers she is jailed for poems, sometimes adding "for poems that are independent from the state" (Ratushinskaia, 1989, p. 14). The surface-level meaning of such formulation is to stress on the absurdity of the political repressions, but besides this obvious intention, this answer produces the distinction – she is here for the poems, the criminals are for "real" crimes; political prisoners as such are not meant to be in the camp, they are innocent and their imprisonment is illegal. Criminal prisoners might be unjustly sentenced, but overall their imprisonment as such does not cause many questions – they should at most be treated with dignity and they also have rights, but the fact of their imprisonment is not addressed, grounding on the assumption that non-political prisoners overall deserve to be imprisoned, unlike the political ones. Actually, this is a dominant approach to political-criminal division that also structures the discursive field around Gulag and, more generally, around political repressions. After all, what are chances that an authoritarian state that issues numerous repressive political verdicts will provide just judgement in all other "non-political" cases? The prison abolition agenda might seem foreign in this context (in fact, because it never is presented in the sources or in the debates in the field); modernity serves as a normalizing context for the prison, and with regard to the authoritarian state`s prison structure it is tempting to demand just a more liberal and less violent penitentiary system, not its abolition. But I believe such data as Soviet political prisoners` memoirs is appropriate for questioning and undermining an absolute necessity of a prison system as a whole.

To sum up, I believe one of the most important for this context (an authoritarian state that politically prosecutes people) is connected to the prison abolitionist agenda that is often absent from discourses on political imprisonment. A criminal prisoner is perceived as a non-political subject, as the one who is "deservedly judged by the people" (Festus, as quoted by Agamben, p. 71) for an action that is considered a "real" crime, on the contrary to political prosecution that is considered repressive. The existence of criminal prisoners and, thus, the necessary existence of the penitentiary system is the status quo that is reproduced in the memoirs of political prisoners as well as in the wider mainstream discourse on political prosecutions in Soviet Union.

The exceptionalisation of political imprisonment, constructing it as a state of emergency, constructing only political prisoners as political subjects (as bios) is a problematic tendency – as it normalizes the existence of penitentiary system with criminals who allegedly belong there. It is necessary to problematize the political-criminal binary, as well as dominant ways of representing experiences of political or criminal incarceration in USSR and beyond it.

4. CONCLUSIONS

In this thesis, I analysed the selected Soviet political prisoners` memoirs using the critical discourse analysis methodological approach from the decolonial perspective that problematizes modernity/coloniality logic that is present in them and that conceptualizes political prisoners as agents of modernity, with the reproduction of political-criminal binary being a process that supports such their agency. I define Soviet modernity/coloniality as a project that bares the legacy of the Russian Empire and that is interconnected with the generalized project of Western modernity. By merging the conceptual frameworks of Foucault, Agamben, and Bourdieu, it is possible to create the theoretical framework that is helpful in defining the main discursive elements that contribute to the reproduction of coloniality/modernity. The Foucauldian concept of species complicates the human-non human distinction that can be found in the academic literature that analyses the camp memoirs; Agamben`s concepts of zoe, bios, and the bare life allows to interpret the political-criminal distinctions in a way that relates to political prisoners` production of their own agency and the agency of the criminal prisoners, though this approach assumes the binary of political (bios) and biological (zoe) life, with treating the political as clearly definable and extractable. Also, Foucault`s and Agamben`s frameworks contain a contradiction regarding the conceptualization of the camp as the state of exception, in this thesis I argue that Bourdieu`s concept of habitus helps to step away from this contradiction and neutralize it to a certain extent, as the habitus is relying on the past practices and experiences, which undermines the idea of the camp being the ultimate space of exception, and at the same time is being constituted and reproduced "in the real time".

I have defined the following discursive pillars, or, in other terms, nodes, around which them modernity/coloniality discourse in the analyzed memoirs is centered: sexuality, knowledge, ethnographic encounter, and carceral logic.

Regarding sexuality, the political-criminal binary is reproduced by the political prisoners in connection with the criminalization of homosexuality and non-conforming gender performance – in this way, non-heterosexual relations are constructed as the practice that belongs to the space of the prison and as one of the criminal characteristics. Generally, such perception fits in the modern/colonial narrative on the sexuality that reinforces heterosexuality and the gender binary.

The Enlightenment logic is also linked to the modernity/coloniality, as well as to the habitus of the political prisoners coming from intelligentsia – throughout the memoirs, they construct their political subjectivity (that correlates to Agamben`s concept of bios) as the educated, cultured, and civilized, while the other prisoners are representing the folk that is to be enlightened and cultured. The double bind regarding "the folk" is such, that "the folk" can be perceived as undignified criminal people who do not like engaging in work, and are not cultured;. and at the same time as the "pure folk" that strives for education, and has a positive attitude to work. Those logics fit in the framework of the hierarchy of species – from different kinds of political prisoners to the criminal ones and workers of the camp.

Another context where political prisoners exercise their modern/colonial agency is the encounters with the colonized spaces and peoples – I employ the idea of coloniality as an encounter and compare the memoirs of political prisoners with the anthropological field work, focusing significantly on their descriptions of the "natives".

The last pillar of modernity/coloniality defined by me is the carceral logic. I aim to undermine the exceptional status of political prisoners and demonstrate how they themselves employ the carceral logic towards criminal prisoners, stating that they should be incarcerated; this reproduces the assumption that political prisoners are the ones who do not deserve the imprisonment, whereas the criminal are convicted rightfully. I offer to apply the agenda of prison abolition to the context of Soviet penitentiary system, as it allows to approach the analysis of its existences structurally.

Finally, I have formulated the following further implications and directions of research that are linked to the topic of my thesis:

- Analysing memoirs of the political prisoners that are not coming from/identifying with Russian culture; focusing on the memoirs and discourse on political imprisonment that are not produced in the metropoles, and that, if possible, have a different habitus from the one of intelligentsia. This would allow to step away from the Russian-centred perspective on the knowledge about penitentiary system in the USSR.
- Analysing the discourse on political and criminal prisoners beyond the Soviet context – spatially and temporally, as the given thesis provides an opportunity of further comparative analysis.

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