



## **Salvific Volginas**

Slowly through Russia runs the epic-long Volga River, rich with caviar and historical reverence, but impoverished by pollution: Mother Volga, whose body of snowmelts and obscure fathoms climaxes into the Caspian, metaphysicized by a pair of delightfully identical Russian-sister artists, the Volgina Twins, true incarnations of Hitchcock's idealization of Grace Kelly as "a snow-covered volcano," both cold and infernal, snow and snowmelt.

"Volgina": their surnames.

"Volgina": a hammer, yet velvet.

"Volgina": labiodental sisters to Nabokov's "Lolita."

*Vol. Gi. Na.*

*Top teeth swipe bottom lip, then an alveolar/coronal l, followed by in-between spread lips and bared teeth forced by the hard-g "gī," before the impactful alveolar n and the suggestive open mouth of the ultimate "ah."*

The phonics of the Twins' heritagical hydronomic last name inspires combinations of "vee"s and "ee"s and "en"s and "ah"s – and echoed phonemes: vagina (of course!), vulvae, vulgar, volcanic, gamete, Galatea, G-string, organ, orgasm, origami – love! Thank God those siblings are anything *but* voluptuous: all legs, arms, noses, jawlines and *Lady with an Ermine* fingers, Ingmar Bergman-film incarnate, spiritual/sensual doppelgangers of superhumanly emotive Bergman-Muse/lover Liv Ullmann.

*Russian vloga: wetness; Slavic Volga: wetness.*

*Not a dry bone, but wells of wells, founts of founts, rivers (of arousal? of tears?) and rivers in the bodies of these sisters of unrelenting water, currents and eddies. If Volga is Russia's ego and Chernobyl is its Id, they are its libido.*

Loll in their Russian elocution's semi-Japanese cadence and pronunciation, those voices bold as boiling kettles, coo- and cuddle-free but simultaneously matron-warm and Siren-alien, and fall farther into their spell until "Volgina" becomes somehow onomatopoeic, the aural embodiment of old Russia or restless water itself, absolutely requiring this V-Twin-sacralizing haiku:

*Incant: "Volgina!"*

*The Mused Muses of Russia.*

*Chernobyl redeemed.*

Volginas, you seem obscure but pristine despite pollutive existence, your vibe saving me from total despair of lifelong belief that all is corrupt, vile, putrescent. Your faces of fragrance, your bodies' clear water – and those four lagoonal eyes that can be summed up as only coalesced aurorae from interior magnetospheres.

If you are corrupt, if Death claims you too, please don't divulge, dearest Volginas. Remain silent as Easter Island *moai*, lithe avatars of my purest, stupidest naivete.

*David Herrle, 2019*