

SL15: TOPICS IN SLAVONIC STUDIES: CULTURAL HISTORIES OF THE PRESENT



Now more than ever, contemporary Russia is the subject of much debate. It is an extraordinary prism through which to study culture.

This paper covers the period from Gorbachev's Perestroika to the collapse of the USSR and the tumultuous 1990s to the early Putin years to the annexation of Crimea and the war in Ukraine. It looks at contemporary Russian culture as having been shaped by the coexistence of two ostensibly opposing discourses, the official and the dissident, which have interacted throughout the late- and post-Soviet period in different and often contradictory ways. The paper covers different media, focusing particularly on cinema and literature, with excursions into drama, painting, and performance art. The paper is divided into four topics and two set texts. Each of the topics engages a broad array of sub-topics, including those of identity, nationalism, gender, sexuality, trauma, memory, and nostalgia.

SECTION I. SET TEXTS

Set Text 1

Primary Sources

Viktor Pelevin, *Pokolenie „P”* (1999)



Secondary Literature

Barker, Adele. *Consuming Russia: Popular Culture, Sex, and Society Since Gorbachev*. Durham: Duke University Press, 1999.

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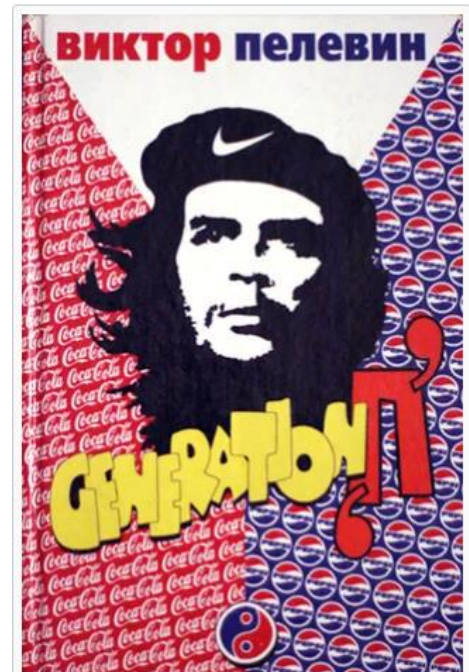
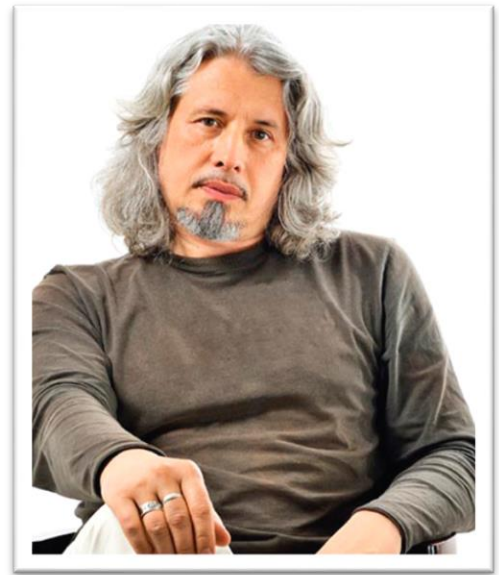
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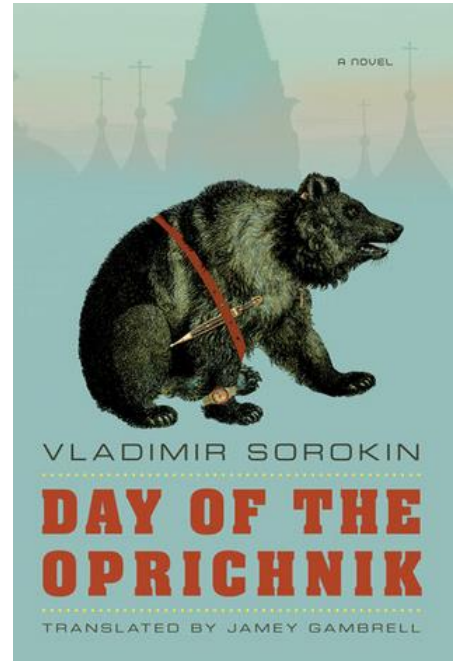
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Vladimir Sorokin, *Den' Oprichnika* (2006)

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II. SECTION B: TOPICS

Topic 1. Perestroika and the End of the Eternal State

Primary Sources

Core Texts:

Prose

Nina Andreeva, “Ne mogu postupat’sa printsipami” (letter to *Soviet Russia*, 1988)
Liudmila Petrushevskaya, “Gigiena” (1990)

Poetry

Dmitry Prigov, “Obrashchenia k Grazhdanam” (1986)

Films

Tengiz Abuladze, *Pokaianie* (1986)
Vasilii Pichul, *Malen’kaia Vera* (1988)
Rashid Nugmanov, *Igla* (1988)

Visual Arts

Sots-Art; Komar and Melamid



Additional Texts:

Prose

Marina Palei, *Kabiriia s Obvodnogo Kanala* (1991)
Petrushevskaya, “Nash krug,” “Novye Robinsony” (1989)
Khrushchev, Nikita. “O kul’te lichnosti i ego posledstviakh.” *Izvestiia TsK KPSS*, no. 3 (1989): 128–70. (the “Secret Speech”)

Films

Vitaly Kanevsky, *Zamri–Umri–Voskresni!* (1990)
Georgii Danelia, *Kin-dza-dza* (1986)
Petr Todorovsky, *Interdevochka* (1989)

Visual Arts:

Moscow Conceptualism

Secondary Literature

General

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On cinema

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On Visual Art

- Balina, Marina, Nancy Condee, and E. A. Dobrenko, eds. *Endquote: Sots-Art Literature and Soviet Grand Style*. Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2000.
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Topic 2: The Roaring 90s: Trauma, Nostalgia, and Capitalism

Primary Sources

Core Texts:

Prose

Svetlana Alexievich, *Vremia Secondhand* (2013, selections) and the Nobel Prize acceptance speech

Films

Nikita Mikhalkov, *Burnt By the Sun* (1994)
Alekssei Balabanov, *Brother* (1997)
Aleksandr Sokurov, *Russian Ark* (2002)



Additional Texts:

Prose

Viktor Pelevin, "Mittelspiel" (1991), "Buben Verkhnego Mira" (1993), *Omon Ra* (1992)
Aleksandr Prokhanov, *Gospodin Geksogen* (2001)
Tatiana Tolstaya, *Kys'* (2000)

Films

Aleksei German, *Khrustalev, Mashinu!* (1998)
Alekssei Balabanov, *Brat 2* (2000)

Secondary Literature

General

Borenstein, Eliot. *Overkill: Sex and Violence in Contemporary Russian Popular Culture*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2008.

Epstein, Mikhail. "Proto, ili konets postmodernizma." Essay. In *Postmodern v Rossii*. Moscow: Izdanie R. Elinina, 2000.

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On Alexievich

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On Nationalism

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- Clowes, Edith W. *Russia on the Edge: Imagined Geographies and Post-Soviet Identity*. Cornell University Press, 2011.
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On Nostalgia

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On Film

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On Trauma

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On Reactionary Postmodernism (*The Slynx* and *Mr Hexogen*)

- Faure, Juliette. "A Russian Version of Reactionary Modernism: Aleksandr Prokhanov's 'Spiritualization of Technology.'" *Journal of Political Ideologies* 26, no. 3 (2021): 356–79.
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<http://old.kinoart.ru/archive/2001/02/n2-article21>.
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- Oushakine, Serguei. *The Patriotism of Despair: Symbolic Economies, National Memory, and Communities of Loss in Russia*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2005.
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Topic 3: Before Crimea: Nationalism, Violence, and Dissent

Primary Sources

Core Texts:

Drama

Yelena Gremina, Mikhail Ugarov, *Sentiabr'.doc* (2005)

Vasilii Sigarev, *Plastilin* (2000)

Presnyakov Brothers, *Terrorizm* (2002)

Poetry

Elena Fanailova, "... Oni opiat' za svoi Afganistan" (2003), "Lena i Liudi" (2008)

Kirill Medvedev, "Konets Peremiria" (2005);

Films

Aleksei Balabanov, *Gruz 200* (2007)

Andrei Zvyagintsev, *Leviatan* (2013)

Vasilii Sigarev, *Strana Oz* (2015)

Performance: Voina, Pussy Riot, Petr Pavlensky,

Additional Texts:

Drama

Vasilii Sigarev, *Chernoe Moloko* (2001)

Ivan Vyrypaev, *Iiul'* (2006), *Kislород* (2002)

Prose

Zakhar Prilepin, *San'kia* (2006)

Film

Natalia Meschaninova, *Kombinat "Nadezhda"* (2014)

Aleksandr Sokurov, *Aleksandra* (2006)

Pussy Riot, "Osvobodi Bruschatku" and other songs.



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Topic 4. After Crimea: From New *Zastoi* to Bucha

Primary Sources

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Galina Rymbu, “VRL (Velikaia Russkaia Literatura)” (2021), “son proshel, Lesbiiaa, nastalo vremia pechali” (2020)

Dmitry Kuzmin, “Neskol’ko Slovo o Metro i o Gei-identichnosti” (2013)

Oksana Vasiakina, “Veter Iarosti-Pesni Iarosti” (2019)

Films

Kirill Serebrennikov, *Uchenik* (2016) and *Petrovy v Griппe* (2021)

Kantemir Balagov, *Tesnota* (2017)

Anti-war Activism and Performance:

Aleksandra Skochilenko

Katrin Nenasheva

Resfemen. “Rozhai Miaso” (2019)

Anonymous, “Bucha=Moscow” (2020)

Anti-war graffiti

DOXA closing speeches

Responses to War:

Maria Stepanova, “The War of Putin’s Imagination” in *Financial Times*

Mikhail Shishkin, “Neither Nato nor Ukraine can de-Putinise Russia. We Russians must do it ourselves” in *The Guardian*

Vladimir Sorokin, “Vladimir Putin Sits Atop a Crumbling Pyramid of Power” in *The Guardian*

Additional Texts:

Prose

Serhii Zhadan, *Internat* (2020)

Linor Goralik, *Found Life* (2017)

Poetry

Polina Barskova, *Vozdushnaya Trevoga* (selections, 2021)



Galina Rymbu, “Moia Vagina” (2020)

Film

Kantemir Balagov, *Dylda* (2019)

Andrei Konchalovsky, *Dorogie Tovarishchi!* (2020)

Il’ia Khrzanovsky, *Dau* (selections, 2020)

Aleksei Fedorchenko, *Angely Revolutsii* (2014)

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On Gender and Sexuality:

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On Protest Culture

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On Zhadan

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LECTURE SCHEDULE

Michaelmas Term:

Week 1 - Topic 1. Perestroika and the End of the Eternal State

Week 2 - Topic 1. Perestroika and the End of the Eternal State

Week 3 - Topic 2. The Roaring 90s: Trauma, Nostalgia, and Capitalism

Week 4 - Topic 2. The Roaring 90s: Trauma, Nostalgia, and Capitalism

Week 5 - Set text 1: *Homo Zapiens*

Week 6 - Set text 1: *Homo Zapiens*

Week 7 - Seminar on Topics 2 and Set text 1

Week 8 - Topic 3. Before Crimea: Nationalism, Violence, and Dissent

Lent Term:

Week 1 - Topic 3. Before Crimea: Nationalism, Violence, and Dissent

Week 2 - Set text 2: *Day of the Oprichnik*

Week 3 - Set text 2: *Day of the Oprichnik*

Week 4 - Seminar on Topic 3 and Set Text 2

Week 5 - Topic 3. Before Crimea: Nationalism, Nostalgia, and Dissent

Week 6 - Topic 4. After Crimea: From New Zastoi to Bucha

Week 7 - Topic 4. After Crimea: From New Zastoi to Bucha

Week 8 - Seminar on Topic 4.

SUPERVISION SCHEDULE

Michaelmas Term:

Week 2 - Supervision on **Topic 1**

Week 4 - Supervision on **Topic 2**

Week 6 - Supervision on **Set Text 1**

Week 8 - Supervision on **Set Text 1**

Lent Term:

Week 2 - Supervision on **Topic 3**

Week 4 - Supervision on **Set Text 2**

Week 6 - Supervision on **Set Text 2**

Week 8 - Supervision on **Topic 4**