

Panel Abstract "The Media Politics of Russian Digital Poetry"

Tue, November 26, 8:00 to 9:45am, San Francisco Marriott Marquis, Floor: 5, Sierra G

Chair: Henrieke Stahl (Trier)

Discussant: Dirk Uffelmann (Passau)

In the age of digital communication, the publication of Russian-language poetry has to a large extent gone online. While the reasons for this are predominantly to be found in digital media's speed, accessibility, and low costs, the genre demands of digital platforms such as LiveJournal blogs or social network sites co-shape both the multimodal framing of poetic text and its societal and political outreach.

Going beyond binaries such as media determinism and media marginality or commodification of users and their empowerment via means of technology, the contributions to this panel investigate the diverse modes of usage of digital platforms by various contemporary Russian-language poets. They zoom in on the way in which these modes are inspired by pre-digital poetologies and post-digital political agendas. This allows the panel participants to comparatively evaluate the performative politicality of the poets' media strategies, i.e. the media politics of Russian digital poetry.

Presenters:

Jacob Edmond (Otago):

Poetry in the Age of Global Media: Modernist and Conceptualist Legacies in Contemporary Russian and US Avant-Gardes

Why has twenty-first century avant-garde poetry in both Russia and the United States witnessed a revival of conceptualist approaches of the 1960s and 1970s and the radical modernist media theories and practices of the 1920s and 1930s?

This paper identifies in these parallel developments in contemporary Russian and US poetry a common response to the conditions of the Internet age as presaged in two earlier ages of global media. The online posting and cut-and-paste compositions of some contemporary avant-garde poetries in Russia and the United States might seem to be purely products of the digital era. These poetries are embedded in the world of social media, but, this paper argues, they derive many of their strategies from literary and artistic responses to earlier global media revolutions. The paper asks how and why have contemporary Russian and US avant-garde poets revived and extended poetic techniques and theories from two previous periods of upheaval in mass media and artistic theory and practice: the modernist revolution in media and art in the 1920s and 1930s; and the similar upheaval in media in the 1960s and 1970s to which pop, sots, and conceptual art and writing responded.

The paper assesses the importance of the new media theory and practice of the 1920s and 1930s (deriving in particular from Sergei Tret'iakov and Walter Benjamin) to the new media theory and practice of online poetic avant-gardes in Russia and the United States as evinced by the work of poet-theorists such as Pavel Arsen'ev, Aleksandr Skidan, Kenneth Goldsmith, and Vanessa Place. Both Arsen'ev's "ready-written" poetry and the "conceptual writing" of US authors like Goldsmith and Place reflect the contemporary media conditions of the Internet while drawing on the responses of artists like Dmitrii Prigov and Andy Warhol to the media of the 1960s and 1970s and on the radical media theories of Tret'iakov, Benjamin, and others from

the 1920 and 1930s. Today's writers renew the playfully appropriative techniques of Warhol and Prigov and the highly politicized literature of fact promoted by Tret'iakov, Benjamin, and others in the 1920s and 1930s. They thereby both illuminate a broader citational or iterative response to new media and globalization and contribute to this response's explicit politicization.

Kirill Korchagin (Moscow):

Poetics of (Digital) Self-Destruction: Vadim Bannikov, Rostislav Amelin, Ian Vygovskii

The paper is focused on three poets based in Moscow who made their debut in the second half of the 2010s. Vadim Bannikov is one of the most consistent followers of Dmitriy Prigov: the important part of his poetic strategy is to publish several short poems per day on his Facebook page making no selection between them. Bannikov's poetry strives to play the role of the kollektive Unbewusste for the local literary scene melting heterogeneous informational flows into bizarre, eccentric poetics. Rostislav Amelin prefers another social network, Vkontakte and explores all its functionality which allows combining texts, images, music, and video. His "cosmological" poetry treats this network as a complex system of relations and connections mirroring the complexity of the universe. The poet's debut book *Ancient Rap* originated from such a page in Vkontakte. Finally, Yan Vygovskiy's poems include pieces from different user's manuals, breaking news, philosophical essays to show the absence of a subject uniting all these speech acts. His Facebook page follows this strategy by the abruption of conventional communication: all his statements are made under the guise of his personage Old Nihilist who reacts to any situation by the means of similar formulae. The poet, therefore, imitates an internet bot, and this can be regarded as a kind of controversy with artists deciphering texts created by machines. These three authors are quite different but all their media strategies can be outlined as a kind of response to the fact that Russian public life significantly migrates to the social networks.

Klavdia Smola (Dresden):

Intervention into Cyberspace: Techno-Poetry and Politics

As Aleksandr Skidan lamented in 2007, "poetry in the age of total communication" does by far not produce just *texts*, but rather *visual market objects* in a technological environment that serves a synthetic perception of mass media and a regime of immediate temporality, established by the cultural industry. As a matter of fact, in the years 2000-2010, a number of new aesthetic techniques and devices emerged in the leftist, politically engaged Russian poetry, which use "medial amplification" (McLuhan) of lyrical text in order to thwart the new neoliberal cultural conservatism in Russia. They draw on the current boom of video poetry in Russia (and the genre's subsequent institutionalization, for example, in festivals such as "Piataia noga" and new prize awards), but also on the upswing of *techno-poetry* inspired by the internet.

In my presentation, I will take a look at recent *cyber poetics* in Russian poetry and explore how the methods of electronic literature as they have been developed by theoreticians like Nancy Katherine Hayles, Mark Poster, and Marie-Laure Ryan in fact stimulated the emergence of a new platform for societal participation and *left-wing political dissent*. Moreover, I am interested in the recent politicization of particular literary theories, keeping in mind that left-wing poets are often theoreticians themselves and that they, for example, regard the Russian Formal School as the forerunner of techno-texts. What impact do the "intervention" in digital spaces and procedures such as "vreading," "wreading," and "treading" have on real political spaces?