

The Poetries of Language: Studies in Russian and American Experimental Writing

The study addresses several cases of linguistically eccentric literary writing in Russia and the US over the last century. It is only in the late perestroika years, when Language poets visited the still Soviet Leningrad, that Russian and American experimental writers first came together to cooperate between and across the two great literary traditions of avant-garde poetry. Before that, the two national traditions were developing independently of each other, yet exposing a common orientation towards artistic and linguistic experimentation. The alternating chapters of the book to be published as a result of this study focus on major literary “breakthroughs into language”, starting from Velimir Khlebnikov, Ilya Zdanevich and Alexander Vvedensky, on the Russian part, and Gertrude Stein, E.E. Cummings and Louis Zukofsky, on the American part. The post-WWII cases in focus include Russian and American conceptualist art and poetry, as well as linguistically challenging poetics of Elizaveta Mnatsakanova and Pierre Joris. The final chapter is dedicated to more recent developments in language-oriented writing in contemporary American and Russian poetic communities (language poetry, metarealism, post-conceptualism). The literary inventions are analyzed from the perspective of linguistic theories and paradigms underlying the experimental techniques used in poetic texts.