V91.0812

Russian Literature in Translation II:

The Twentieth Century

T-Th 4:20-5:35 Prof. Eliot Borenstein

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In this course, we will examine some of the greatest literary works to come out of Russia in the twentieth century. Though nineteenth-century writers such as Dostoevsky and Tolstoy are better known in the West than their twentieth-century succesors, the literature of the present century is remarkable for stylistic and thematic innovations that, while continuing the Russian literary tradition, explore territory unknown the “classic” authors.

Most of the novels and stories we will read are a produce of the Soviet period, a time of unparalleled cultural, political, and psychological upheaval. The early years of Soviet power also roughly coincide with the advent of modernism in world literature, a phenomenon marked by a strong sense of cultural crisis. In the Soviet context, this cultural crisis would take particularly Russian forms; Bolshevik ideology held that the Old World would be utterly destroyed, to be replaced by a new society populated by New Soviet Men. The experience of Russia in the twentieth century can be viewed as the failed attempt to put radical theory into everyday practice, a grand scheme of social engineering that would inevitably be reflected in the country’s literature.

Though this course will provide a historical overview of twentieth-century Russian literature, we will concentrate most of our attention on the two periods of greatest cultural ferment: 1920s modernism and late/post-Soviet postmodernism. Because this is a course in translation, we will be reading only a small selection of poetry.

Course requirements: No knowledge of the Russian language is expected, as all works will be read and discussed in English. It is essential that you keep up with the reading assignments and come to class prepared either to make observations or ask questions. Attendance is, of course, mandatory.

Class participation. Most class periods will be a mix of lecture and discussion; only occasionally will I spend the entire class giving a lecture. Everyone is encouraged to participate in discussion, which will be facilitated by questions that I will be distributing in advance over electronic mail, and by the response papers (see below).

The Internet. If you do not already have an e-mail account, you must apply for one immediately. Once you have an account, please send a message to either of the two versions of my Internet address listed above. The message can be blank; I only need it in order to get your e-mail access in a convenient format. I will be using e-mail occasionally to make announcements to the class, and to distribute class materials (including discussion questions).

Writing Assignments: There will be three short response papers, a mid-semester paper (6-8 pages), and a final paper (10-12).

The response papers may be no longer than two pages, and they can be about any of the works we are reading. These papers are a tool to help you think about an aspect of the text that interests you, and any ideas you generate in the course of these assignments would be welcome contributions to class discussion. You must turn in the response paper by the beginning of the last class during which the text (or film) is being discussed. That is, if you want to write a response to We?, you must turn this paper in no later than February 8. If we are only spending one class period on the work, then you must turn in the response paper at the beginning of that class. No late response papers will be accepted under any circumstances.

You may not wait until April to turn in three response papers. The semester has been divided into three parts, and you must write one response paper by each of these three deadlines. That is, your first response paper must be turned in no later than February 22, your second is due no later than April 4, and no response papers will be accepted after April 25. Though you are not allowed to wait to do all the response papers until the end of the course, if you feel you would rather do your response papers earlier (turning two response papers during the first or second segments of the course), you are free to do so.

The topics of your mid-semester paper and final paper are yours to choose, but you must come talk to me about them in advance. It is hoped that the short response papers will lead you toward topics for your longer papers. Both your mid-semester and your final papers can be based on response papers, as long as you are not tapping the same response paper for both longer works.

The mid-semester paper is due on March 7, and the final must be turned on May 2.

I welcome full or partial drafts of any of these writing assignment. Drafts of the short papers must be shown to me no later than one week before the due date; drafts of the long papers must be submitted no later than two weeks before the due date.

Final Grade. Your final grade will be determined according to the following formula:

Class Participation: 10% Mid-semester paper: 30%

Response papers: 20% Final paper: 40%

Texts: These required works can be found at the NYU Book Center:

Babel, Isaac. Collected Stories.

Bulgakov, Mikhail. The Master and Margarita.

Brown, Clarence (ed.). The Portable 20th Century Russian Reader.

Erofeev, Venedikt. Moscow to the End of the Line.

Gladkov, Fyodor. Cement.

Goscilo, Helena & Byron Lindsey. Glasnost: An Anthology of Russian Literature Under Gorbachev.

Solzhenitsyn, Alexander. One Day in the Life of Ivan Densiovich.

Zamyatin, Yevgeny. We.

Assorted poems will be distributed in class.

I have assembled a Class Reader which is to be purchased (for about $11.50) at Unique Copy Center (252 E. Greene; phone: 420-9198). This Reader includes timelines of Russian history, information about several of theauthors we are reading, and two required texts

. The contents of the Reader are as follows:

Page

Part I: Historical Background

“Russian and Soviet History: A Chronology” 1

“The Silver Age” 13

“The Avant-Garde” 15

“The Culture Wars of the 1920s” 17

“Socialist Realism” 19

“The Thaw” 21

Part II: Author’s Biographies

Isaak Emanuilovich Babel 25

Mikhail Afanasievich Bulgakov 29

Yuri Karlovich Olesha 33

Part III: Writing and Stylistics

“Advice for Student Writers” 35

“Citation” 39

“Russian and English False Cognates” 41

Part IV: Texts

Aleksander Blok. “The Twelve” 43

Vasily Aksenov. “The Steel Bird.” 49

CLASS SCHEDULE

January 23 (T) Introduction

January 25 (Th) The Silver Age:

Symbolism and Acmeism

t For Today:

JGet e-mail account

JSend me an e-mail message

JSelected Poetry (handouts)

J”Blok” (Brown 74-76)

JBlok, “A Girl Was Singing”, “The

Stranger” (Brown 76-78)

J”The Silver Age” (Reader 13-14)

J”Akhmatova” (Brown (111-113)

JAkhmatova, “Three things in

this world he loved”,

“We’re no good at saying

goodbye”, “Dante”, “When

A Man Dies”

(Brown 113-114)

J”Mandelstam” (Brown 169-171)

JMandelstam, “The Admiralty”,

“The thread of gold”,

“Leningrad”, “The Last

Supper” (Brown 183-186)

January 30 (T) Futurism and the

Avant-Garde

Film: Victory Over the Sun

(excerpts)

t For Today:

JSelected Poetry

J “The Avant-Garde”

(Reader 15-16)

February 1 (Th) Blok: The Twelve

t For Today:

JBlok, “The Twelve” (Reader 43-48)

JBlok, “The Scythians” (handout)

February 6 (T) Zamyatin

t For Today:

JBrown, Introduction to We

JZamyatin, We (Records 1-18)

February 8 (Th) Zamyatin

t For Today:

JZamyatin, We (finish)

February 13 (T) Babel

t For Today:

JBabel, From “Crossing the Zbrucz” through Beresteczko”, with special attention to “A Letter”, “Pan Apolek”, “Gedali”, “My First Goose”, “The Rebbe”, “Sashka Christ”

J “Babel”(Reader 25-28)

February 1 5 (Th) Babel

t For Today:

JBabel, Finish (with special attention to “Salt”, “Treason”, “The Rebbe’s Son”, “Agarmak.”)

February 20 (T) Olesha

t For Today:

JOlesha, Envy (Part One) (Brown

250-309)

J “Olesha” (Reader 33-34)

J “The Culture Wars”

(Reader 17-18)

February 22 (Th) Olesha

t For Today:

JOlesha, Envy (Finish) (Brown

309-378)

Final Deadline for

First Response Paper

February 27 (T) Gladkov

t For Today:

JGladkov, “Autobiographical

Note (v-vi)

JGladkov, Cement (Ch. 1-6)

J “Socialist Realism”

(Reader 19-20)

February 29 (Th) Gladkov

t For Today:

JGladkov, Cement (Ch. 7-12)

March 5 (T) Gladkov

t For Today:

JGladkov, Cement (finish)

March 7 (Th) Platonov

t For Today:

J”Platonov” (Brown 116-118)

JPlatonov, “The Potudan River” (Brown 118-152)

Mid-semester Paper Due

March 12 (T) SPRING BREAK

March 14 (Th) SPRING BREAK

March 19 (T) Bulgakov

t For Today:

JBulgakov, Master and Margarita (Chs. 1-9)

J (Reader 43-48)

March 21 (Th) Bulgakov

JBulgakov, Master and Margarita (Chs. 10-18)

March 26 (T) Bulgakov

t For Today:

JBulgakov, Master and Margarita (Chs. 19-26)

March 28 (Th) Bulgakov

t For Today:

JBulgakov, Master and Margarita (finish)

April 2 (T) Solzhenitsyn

t For Today:

J “Solzhenitsyn” (Brown 435-437)

J Kalb, “Introduction” (Solzhenitsyn ix-xiv)

J Solzhenitsyn, One Day in the

Life of Ivan Denisovich

(1-90)

April 4 (Th) Solzhenitsyn

t For Today:

J Solzhenitsyn, One Day in the

Life of Ivan Denisovich

(finish)

Final Deadline for

Second Response Paper

April 9 (T) Sinyavsky

t For Today:

J “Sinyavsky” (Brown 481-484)

J Sinyavsky, “Pkhentz”

(Brown 485-506)

J “The Thaw”(Reader 21-24)

April 11 (Th) Venedikt Erofeev

t For Today:

J Erofeev, Moscow to the End of the

Line (1-85)

April 16 (T) Venedikt Erofeev

t For Today:

J Erofeev, Moscow to the End of the

Line (finish)

April 18 (Th) Aksenov

t For Today:

J Aksenov, “The Steel Bird”

(Reader 49-76)

April 23 (T) Kuraev

t For Today:

J Goscilo, From “Introduction” (Goscilo xxxiv-xxxvi)

J Kuraev, Captain Dikshtein (Goscilo 59-186)

April 25 (Th) Viktor Erofeev

t For Today:

J Goscilo, From “Introduction” (Goscilo xxxx-xxxxii)

J Erofeev, “The Parakeet” (Goscilo 367-378)

J Erofeev, “Anna’s Body” (Goscilo 379-382)

Final Deadline for

Third Response Paper

April 30 (T) Makanin

t For Today:

J Makanin, “Left Behind” (Goscilo 195-270)

May 2 (Th) Petrushevskaya

t For Today:

J Petrushevskaya, “Our Crowd” (Goscilo 3-24))

FINAL PAPER DUE

Petrushevskaya’s “Our Crowd” is also listed on the Reader’s first page, but this is an error.

Borenstein Russian and Slavic Studies (NYU) 20th Century

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New York

Geneva

Monaco

Zapf Dingbats

Bookman

N Helvetica Narrow

Palatino

Zapf Chancery

Helvetica

Courier

Symbol

Avant Garde

New Century Schlbk

Mangia

KOI7-Russian

American Heritage

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Lucida Bright

Garamond Narrow

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Oxford

Garamond

Technical

Trade Condensed

KOI8-Terminal

eWorld Tight

V

TTYFont

&p Espy Sans

Espy Sans Bold

Klang MT

Script MT Bold

Old English Text MT

New Berolina MT

Bodoni MT Ultra Bold

Arial MT Condensed Light

Helvetica Compressed

Helvetica Black

Gill Sans Condensed Bold

CyrillicII

CyrillicIISans

January 23 (T) Introduction

Russian Language Office