

Summary

Cultural Recycling: The (Post)Soviet Experience

Guest Editor: Valery Vyugin

Russia is experiencing an age of total recycling — the recycling of the Soviet. For three decades already, basically from the moment the USSR ceased to exist, the processes of remaking the “socialist” legacy have consistently been at the center of attention. Soviet ghosts haunt mass media, and without them contemporary Russian art would be simply inconceivable; they have long been strongly tamed by the politics and culture of everyday life. But how relevant is the recycling metaphor itself, which has taken place in Russia in the past 30 years? How does it correlate with the concepts of trauma, memory, and nostalgia? What can we say about the concrete forms and mechanisms of recycling of the recent past? These are the circle of questions that link the authors of this section.

In his article “‘Cultural Recycling’: A Contribution to the History of the Concept

(1960s — 1990s),” **Valery Vyugin** analyzes the first and undeservedly forgotten period of the formation of the term. During this time, the new word was simultaneously appropriated by many researchers from various fields within the humanities, but this analysis raised practically no detailed discussion of its semantics. On the other hand, the regular appearance of major works where the metaphorical term is given a title role is characteristic for the second stage, from the late 1990s to the present. Nevertheless, the theories that explain the phenomenon are still very few, just as before, and in most cases, “cultural recycling” is reinvented each time, without regard for prior experience. Meanwhile, despite all this chaos, it was from the 1960s to the 1990s that, thanks to efforts of both the academic and “artistic” communities, the fundamental interpretation matrices arose and its contradictory axiology formed.

Recycling in Literature and Art

Nadezhda Grigorieva’s article “Compressed Culture: Literary Recycling in the Late Avant-Garde and Socialist Realism” discusses cultural recycling as an intellectual practice during the late avant-garde and socialist realist eras. It is argued that in the 1920s and 1930s, literature was widespread that based on elements that had been thrown out of the (preceding) artistic system as lacking value. Having experienced a rebirth in the intellectual world, these elements

organized themselves, mixed and interacted with each other, and formed an aggregate culture, which encompassed many sources. Vladimir Nabokov’s *The Gift*, Konstantin Vaginov’s *Garpagoniana*, Andrei Platonov’s *The Foundation Pit*, and other works of the time were created in this way.

The article “Reprocessing and Resurfacing Reality: Reworking the Everyday and the Avant-Garde in the Artistic Laboratory of

Irina Nakhova” by **Gabriella A. Ferrari** looks at the phenomenon of recycling as the reprocessing of everyday material in the work of artist Irina Nakhova. The article traces its connection with the practice of material processing central to the Soviet avant-garde. Grafting, layering and reassembling the relationship between human and material world via surfaces offers a roadmap for reworking and recirculating obsolescent goods into new systems of exchange and new temporal frameworks. Not quite a palimpsest or a complete resurfacing of reality, Nakhova’s recycling of the past occurs instead through the practice of layering. In doing so Nakhova translates the museum of Soviet by-gones into a playground for new experiments.

Maria Engström’s article “Recycling of the Post-Soviet Counterculture, and the New Aesthetics of the ‘Second World’” focuses on the analysis of different forms of recycling of the aesthetics and ideology of the late Soviet underground and counterculture of the 1990s in contemporary popular culture. Using the high profile projects of Jury Dud’, Mone-tochka, Mikhail Idov, Gosha Rubchinskiy, and *Little Big* as examples, the author investigates two competing strategies of addressing the recent past — meta-

modernist and remodernist. Engström also analyses the “inner recycling”, i.e. intended for the Russian consumer, and the “outer recycling”, which is a part of the global aesthetics of fauxstalgia.

The aim of **Susanne Frank**’s article “Recycling or Resource? (The Concept of Cultural Heritage in the Soviet 1930s vs UNESCO)” consists of the analysis of various definitions of cultural heritage and different ways of handling it: two contemporary — in Russia and from the side of UNESCO — and one historical, the Stalinist 1930s. UNESCO’s conceptualization of cultural heritage and that of the Soviet 1930s are completely opposite of one another, as cultural heritage in the Stalinist/Soviet context is defined as “critically reclaimed,” while UNESCO, for whom the main value is “authenticity,” stipulates “preservation in its original form.” The handling of cultural heritage in contemporary Russia is ostensibly oriented toward UNESCO, but in practice it resembles the Soviet handling of heritage. Despite the differences in understanding, in their own ways, both UNESCO, whose self-determination can be defined as “ecological,” and contemporary Russia exploit “cultural heritage” as a resource both in the ideological and “capitalist” meanings of the word.

Recycling in the Film and Television Industry

The article “A Man for All Seasons: The Upcycling of a Soviet Spy Hero” by **Cat-riona Kelly** examines “upcycling” with reference to the biography of a Soviet “illegal”, Konon Molody (1922—1970), who posed as the Canadian citizen Gordon Lonsdale while living in London. The author examines the production history of a famous film based on Molody’s life, *The Dead Season* (*Mertvyi sezon*, Lenfil’m, 1968), which “upcycled” both

Molody’s life and the conventions of the thriller genre. The author demonstrates how different versions of Molody, from the principled Soviet patriot to the expert businessman, have emerged at different points of (post-)Soviet history. Yet some elements of his actual biography are impossible to trace, and the prevailing perceptions of appropriate behaviour are permanently shifting, which, together with the twists and turns of geopoliti-

cal relations during and after the Cold War, have driven a constant process of “upcycling” to fit Molody’s life to the standards of a particular time.

Mark Lipovetsky and **Tatiana Mikhailova**’s article “More than Nostalgia: Late Socialism in TV Series of the 2010s” discusses popular Russian TV series of the 2010s that depict a period of late socialism. According to the authors, the main artistic result of these film texts is the creation of an aesthetic utopia that operates on the level of affects, despite the fact that these films apparently highlight negative aspects of the Soviet period. This aesthetic utopia function as a contemporary ideology offering a new social contract for post-Soviet society.

The article “*Old Songs about the Main Thing: An Alternative Anthology of the Soviet Popular Music*” by **Daria**

Zhurkova is dedicated to the analysis of the television show *Old Songs about the Main Thing* (ORT, 1995—2000) in light of the “theory” of cultural recycling. Special attention is given to the changes in musical parameters and semantic codes of the Soviet estrada in the process of their reinterpretation by contemporary pop artists; the principle by which certain songs were chosen for reconstruction within the framework of the television show is traced, contrasting the vocal performance of Soviet and contemporary popular singer and comparing the arrangements of the original and new versions of songs. A new, alternative history of Soviet estrada music has been created, which rather than reflect the musical and stylistic conventions of the past, it represents the trends of the modern Russian pop industry, although its connection with Soviet culture cannot be denied.

Recycling of the Soviet Childhood

In **Svetlana Maslinskaya**’s article “The Magic of Young Pioneers’ Symbols: The Soviet Past in Contemporary Children’s Literature”, children’s literature is viewed as a channel for delivering normalized knowledge about the Soviet past to the contemporary young reader. By analyzing children’s literature the author comes to conclusion that Young Pioneer symbols and ideals are interpreted by contemporary writers as ideologically compatible in relation to new contexts and devoid of collective traumatic connotations. The characteristics of narratives and genres that result from recycling of Young Pioneer idiomatic expressions and ritual practices in the framework of literary representation, are determined by the degree of “visibility” of reused cultural forms from the past. In contemporary children’s literature, mate-

rial objects of the Young Pioneer past have greater aesthetic potential than the Young Pioneer ideology, and are used even in literary genres in which in Soviet culture they could not have been represented (for example, in thrillers or mysteries).

The article “Effective Management vs. Soviet Heritage in the Era of the Revival of the *Artek* Children’s Camp” by **Anna Kozlova** examines the problem of the use of Soviet cultural and ideological heritage through the example of the *Artek* International Children’s Center in the periods from 1991 through 2014 and after Russia’s annexation of Crimea, from 2014 through 2018. Reflecting on her field experience of working at the camp, the author shows that the new management strategies are aimed at

the symbolic “rebirth” of the center (or its “upcycling”), while simultaneously destroying the mechanisms of work that formed during the Soviet era. The treatment of the Soviet heritage during the creation of the contemporary *Artek* is reminiscent of the process of cultural

appropriation: while disposing of junk in museums and discriminating against Soviet staff members, the witnesses of Soviet history, the new ideologues do not shy away from taking advantage of Soviet elements in their official self-representation.

In Memoriam

This section is dedicated to the memory of Nikolai Alekseevich Bogomolov (1950—2020), Doctor of Philology and Distinguished Professor, Lomonosov Moscow State University. Bogomolov’s research interests included the history of Russian literature of the modernist era, theory of poetry, literary biography, the history of Russian émigré literature, and issues in contemporary folklore. He was the author of articles and monographs on Russian literature of the early 20th century, studies of poems and texts, as well as the editor of anthologies and

bibliographic dictionaries, as well as collections of Silver Age poets.

This section includes Bogomolov’s article for the *Russian Literary Theorists of the 20th Century*, published for the first time, the note “In the Book Corner — 19,” and letters to Konstantin Azadovsky. Also included in the section are memorial sketches by **Nikolai Kotrelev**, **Roman Timenchik**, **Konstantin Azadovsky**, **Aleksandr Zholkovsky**, and **Stefano Garzonio**, as well as a bibliography of Nikolai Bogomolov’s monographs.

Joseph Brodsky: Metamorphoses

Arkady Kovelman’s article “The Sublime and the Beautiful in Joseph Brodsky’s Venice Essay” is an interpretation of Joseph Brodsky’s essay *Watermark*. Since this text does not have a linear composition (either discursive or in terms of events), strictly conceptual or analytical methods cannot be applied. In Brodsky’s words, “for all its beauty, a distinct concept always means a shrinkage of meaning, cutting off loose ends. And the loose ends are what matter most in the phenomenal world, for they interweave.” Nevertheless, there is still meaning, and it can be extracted by unweaving the fabric of the text and weaving it anew. This fabric is interlaced with Greek myths, biblical

stories, philosophical ideas and binary oppositions. The poet strived to reflect the semantics of the world, which is understood as a rhetorical figure.

The ancient idea of total transmutation (metamorphosis) turned out to be extremely congruent to Brodsky’s figurative system, as **Oleg Fedotov** shows in his article “Metamorphosis with the Help of the Word ‘Suddenly’: An Attempt at a Comparative Analysis of the Rhythms of Two Anti-War Poems by Joseph Brodsky, *Postcard from Lisbon* and *Centaur IV*.” All possible centaur images were especially congenial to Brodsky as the most effective type of abbreviated comparison — metaphor.

Brodsky's anti-war pamphlet *Centaurs IV* organically interacts with the three previous *Centaurs* (I—III), as well as with his genetically and associatively connected poems from 1987—1988. Having previously reviewed the contents of all the mentioned works, the author of the article analyzes in detail the rhythmic composition of *Postcard from Lisbon* and *Centaurs IV*.

The article "Brodsky and Virgil: Eclogues for a New Age" by **Denis Akhapkin**

examines Brodsky's cycle of work from the early 1980s that are connected with Virgil and affirm the role of poetry as a mechanism for the preservation and translation of aesthetic and ethical values. The system of views expressed by Brodsky in the cycle of 3 eclogues and the essay *Virgil* formed the basis of his subsequent concept of the primacy of the aesthetic over the ethical, which received its final form in his *Nobel lecture*.

Poetological Studies

Alexander Markov in his article "Krivulin and Dashevsky in a Dispute about Brodsky's New Aeneas" reconstructs a controversy about the global significance of the English language as a new basis for poetic inspiration, in which Brodsky, Krivulin and Dashevsky took part. The key point was the mission of Aeneas, who changed his native language to Latin, and the fate of Dido, faithful to the order of conversation with her lover. Analyzing Brodsky's poem *Dido and Aeneas*, Dashevsky, analyzing Virgil's notion of victim, proved that Brodsky had seen Dido as an ally, and that his English-language essays were not the same case that change of language by Aeneas. Krivulin reproached Dashevsky for assumed inaccuracies in the translation of Brodsky's essay about Isaiah Berlin, and Dashevsky implicitly responded to the reproaches, proposing original interpretation of the figure of Berlin as new Aeneas.

The article "Why Does Andrei Tavrov's Hero Lament over Blake?" by **Vera**

Serdechnaia discusses the interpretation of images and themes in William Blake's poetry in Andrei Tavrov's poetry. The cycle *Lament for Blake* is examined as an example of the reception of English romanticism in contemporary Russian literature. Tavrov and Blake are brought together by the metaphysical nature of poetic exploration in pursuit of "apocalyptic poetry", the complexity of a multi-level world, the rethinking of the structure of poetic narration, and the rejection of an unambiguous logic of language.

In his paper "'A Pile of Random Names': Prussian Subtext in Milorad Pavić's *Dictionary of the Khazars*" **Ilya Dementev** reveals explicit and implicit references to "Prussian reality" in the novel. Based upon multilingual anagrammatic code, the author also proposes a new interpretation of a number character names and toponyms in the novel. The significance of the Prussian subtext in the implementation of the author's concept in the *Dictionary of the Khazars* is evaluated.