

Culture as a battlefield and a tool of warfare

Online seminar

January 23, 2023, 15:00-18:00

Prof. Anna Verschik (Tallinn University)*

Language choice and (reversing) language shift, with a discussion of examples of some Ukrainian poets and writers

The presentation discusses the undoing of earlier language shift (from Ukrainian to Russian and back again) that started already after Maidan of 2014 and is gaining ground. This concerns not only general public but also poets and writers (for instance, Volodymyr Refeenko, Alex Averbuch, Iya Kiva).

Prof. Mark Lipovetsky (Columbia University)*

A new official style?

Looking at some films and TV series that were produced in Russia after 2014, and comparing them most recent propaganda videos, I will try to define more or less stable features of the "official style". This Socialist Realism 2.0 actively enforces nostalgia for the Soviet period, homophobia, sexism, racism and nationalism, but does it in a way that comforts the viewer rather than tries to change his/her worldview.

Prof. Maja Soboleva (Philipps-University of Marburg University)*

While the guns are firing, the muses are silent [Когда стреляют пушки, музы молчат]

Points for discussion:

- 1) Two meanings of the concept of "culture": culture as a norm and culture as the creation of meanings [Два смысла понятия «культура»: культура как норма и культура как создание смыслов].
- 2) Value aspects of culture: the process of naturalization of values in modern Russia [Ценностные аспекты культуры: процесс натурализации ценностей в современной России].
- 3) Retropolitics of modern Russia [Петрополитика современной России].

Implicit questions: Culture presupposes creative autonomy of the individual, can we talk about a culture where this is not? Is mass culture a free acceptance of values or their implantation? Is the imposition of values a degradation of culture, since it involves the usurpation of individual freedom? Propaganda and creation of myths as a tool of warfare? Is this the transformation of the people into an unintelligent mass, the reduction of the field of culture, lack of culture?

Имплицитные вопросы: Культура предполагает творческую автономию личности, можно ли говорить о культуре, где этого нет? Массовая культура – это свободное принятие

ценностей или их насаждение? Насаждение ценностей – это деградация культуры, поскольку предполагает узурпацию индивидуальной свободы? Пропаганда и создание мифов как инструмент ведения войны? Это превращение народа в недумаящую массу, сокращение поля культуры, бескультурие?

*Bio

Anna Verschik is distinguished professor of general linguistics at Tallinn University. Her field is language contacts, multilingualism, and translation theory (with the focus on translating multilingualism). Recently she has translated Ukrainian poetry (Ilya Kiva, Alex Averbuch, Halyna Kruk, Julia Musakovska, Olesya Mamtshych, Ostap Syvynski, Oleh Kotsaev, Maria Kozyrenko) into Estonian.

Mark Lipovetsky is a professor of the Department of Slavic Languages at Columbia University. His research interests are diverse and include Russian postmodernism, New Drama, Soviet literary and cinematic tricksters, Soviet underground culture as well as various aspects of post-Soviet culture. He is the author of twelve monographic books and more than a hundred articles. He also co-edited twenty collections of articles on Russian literature and culture of the 20th-21st centuries, including a volume of articles on Vladimir Sorokin. Among his books, *Charms of Cynical Reason: The Transformations of the Trickster Trope in Soviet and Post-Soviet Culture* (2011) and *Postmodern Crises: From Lolita to Pussy Riot* (2017). He is one of coauthors of the *Oxford history of Russian literature* (2018). In 2022, Lipovetsky published a monograph *A Guerilla Logos: The Project of Dmitry Aleksandrovich Prigov* (co-authored with Ilya Kukulkin); he also curated the publication of *P* at NLO Press in Moscow. Lipovetsky is a recipient of the American Association of Teachers of Slavic and East European Languages award for the outstanding contribution to scholarship (2014) and Andrey Belyi Prize (2019). At Columbia University, Lipovetsky runs the Contemporary Culture Series that includes talks, conversations, and symposia on most significant aspects of contemporary Russophone culture.

Maja Soboleva is an Extra-ordinary Professor of Philosophy at the Philipps-University of Marburg (Germany). Her areas of specialization are epistemology, hermeneutics, philosophy of language, and the history of philosophy, in particular German and Russian philosophical traditions. Her recent publications include *Феноменология политического действия* [Phenomenology of Political Action], in: *Horizon* 11 (1) (2022), 402–420. <https://doi.org/10.21638/2226-5260-2022-11-402-420>; *Необходимость и судьба* [Necessity and Fate], in: *Koinon*, vol. 3, no. 1, pp. 7–21. DOI: 10.15826/koinon.2022.03.1.001; *Marxism as Spinozism? One episode in the history of Soviet philosophy*. In: *Studies in East European Thought*. Vol. 74 (3), 319–332. DOI: 10.1007/s11212-021-09427-0; *Модерн bottom-up: социалистический сюрреализм Андрея Платонова* [Bottom-Up Modernity: Andrey Platonov's Socialist Surrealism], in: *Логос* [Logos] 31 (6) 2021, 123-148. DOI: 10.22394/0869-5377-2021-6-123-145; *The Culture as System, the System of Culture*. Aleksander Bogdanov on Proletarian Culture and Proletarian Art. In: *Cultural Science Journal* 13(1), 2021, 200-210. DOI: 0.2478/cs-j-2021-0016.