

POSTMODERNISM IN RUSSIAN LITERATURE

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Annotation:

This article examines the phenomenon of Russian literary postmodernism: its chronological scope, key differences from its Western counterpart (its traumatic nature, its reaction to the collapse of the Soviet utopia), and its main aesthetic principles (intertextuality, irony, and demythologization). The author identifies the main trends (Moscow conceptualism, Leningrad metarealism, “other prose”) and key figures (Venedikt Erofeev, Vladimir Sorokin, Viktor Pelevin, Dmitry Prigov, Tatyana Tolstaya). Special attention is given to seminal texts (“Moscow—Petushki,” “Pushkin’s House,” “Chapaev and the Void”) and an analysis of the crisis of postmodernism in the 2000s with the transition to new literary strategies (metamodernism, new sincerity). The material is structured and suitable both for an introduction to the topic and for consolidating knowledge.

Keywords:

Russian Postmodernism, Underground Literature, Soc-Art, Moscow Conceptualism, Metarealism, Alternative Prose, Traumatic Postmodernism, Carnivalization, Intertextuality.

Annotatsiya:

Ushbu maqola rus adabiy postmodernizmi fenomenini o'rganadi: uning xronologik doirasi, g'arbiy hamkasbiga nisbatan asosiy farqlari (uning travmatik tabiati, Sovet utopiyasining qulashiga reaksiyasi) va asosiy estetik tamoyillari (intertekstuallik, ironiya va demifologizatsiya). Muallif asosiy yo'nalishlarni (Moskva konseptualizmi, Leningrad metarealizmi, "boshqa proza") va asosiy vakillarni (Venedikt Erofeev, Vladimir Sorokin, Viktor Pelevin, Dmitriy Prigov, Tatyana Tolstaya) aniqlaydi. Maxsus e'tibor asosiy matnlarga ("Moskva—Petushki," "Pushkin uyi," "Chapaev va bo'shliq") hamda 2000-yillarda postmodernizm inqirozi va yangi adabiy strategiyalarga (metamodernizm, yangi samimiylik) o'tish tahliliga qaratilgan. Material mavzuga kirish va bilimni mustahkamlash uchun tuzilgan bo'lib, mos keladi.

Kalit so'zlar:

Rus postmodernizmi, yerosti adabiyoti, sots-art, Moskva konseptualizmi, metarealizm, alternativ proza, travmatik postmodernizm, karnavalizatsiya, intertekstualiyat.

Chronological Framework and Specifics

While postmodernism emerged in the West in the 1960s, its appearance in Russian literature was delayed for political reasons. The rigid framework of Socialist Realism made the legal existence of postmodernist aesthetics impossible. Therefore, the evolution of Russian postmodernism can be divided into three stages: Early (underground) period (1960s–1970s): Emergence within the realm of uncensored literature (samizdat). Writers experimented “for their own sake,” reflecting on the totalitarian experience through irony and carnival.

Constitution (1980s): The return of key texts to the homeland (the wave of emigration and perestroika). Legalization of the aesthetic, polemics with Socialist Realism.

Official Phase (1990s): Postmodernism becomes one of the dominant trends and eventually a mass phenomenon. Peak popularity, the emergence of the “scene” (conceptualists), and the transition into mass culture.

Key Features and Aesthetics

Intertextuality: The texts are woven from quotations, allusions, and echoes of classical literature, Soviet clichés, and myths. The world is perceived as a gigantic text. Irony and Carnival: A blending of the high and the low, a “suspension” of hierarchy (classics may coexist with criminal slang or profanity). Laughter becomes a means of exorcising the past. Death of the author: The dismantling of the figure of the “master of thought.” The author often acts as a director, a manipulator of quotations, or disappears entirely (soc-art). Demythologization: Debunking Soviet myths (about the hero, the bright future, the leader), as well as myths of Russian classical literature (for example, the image of the “little man”). Quotation and secondary nature: Conscious reliance on what has already been created. “The world has been exhausted; all that remains is to quote.”

Key Movements and Figures

Russian postmodernism is heterogeneous. Several key branches can be identified:

Moscow Conceptualism (Sots Art)

A movement that engaged with the clichés of socialist culture. Its main principle was to work with the “dead” language of Soviet propaganda, pushing it to the point of absurdity.

Dmitry Prigov is a cult figure. Poems where “militionsers” and ordinary citizens merge in a ritual dance, as well as installations. Lev Rubinstein is the author of “card indexes” (poems on library index cards).

Vladimir Sorokin is a radical author. In his early texts (“The Line,” “The Norm”), he lays bare the horror of Soviet everyday life through both physiology and language. His later work (the novel “Blue Lard”) is an explosion of the language of classical literature and Soviet history.

The Leningrad School (Metarealism)

In contrast to dry conceptualism, representatives of this movement (the “Academy” group) maintained a connection to high culture, working with archetypes, cultural layers, and complex metaphors. Joseph Brodsky (though he is generally associated with modernism/acmeism, his later essays and techniques had a tremendous influence).

Viktor Krivulin, Elena Shvarts (poetry).

“Other Prose” and Magical Realism

Prose of the late 1980s, moving away from Socialist Realism toward myth, the absurd, and psychological realism. Tatyana Tolstaya (“Kys,” “Somnambula in the Fog”)—a combination of the grotesque, nostalgia, and wordplay. Lyudmila Petrushevskaya—“naturalistic” postmodernism, where everyday speech and the nightmare of daily life border on surrealism. Venedikt Yerofeyev — a forerunner. The poem “Moscow–Petushki” (written in 1970) is considered the quintessence of Russian postmodernism. A fusion of the Gospel, Soviet life, obscene language, and tragic undertones in a drunkard’s journey.

Satirical Postmodernism

Viktor Pelevin is the most commercially successful author. His novels (“Chapaev and the Void,” “Generation ‘P,’” “Omn Ra”) combine Buddhism, advertising, Soviet myths, and pop culture. Pelevin explores the nature of virtual reality as a simulacrum. Vladimir Voinovich (“The Life and Extraordinary Adventures of Private Ivan Chonkin”)—a parody of the Soviet myth of war and the state.

The Crisis and the Current State

By the early 2000s, Russian postmodernism had run its course as the dominant movement. The reasons: Repetitive techniques: Irony and quotation had become commonplace clichés, losing their rebellious edge. A shift in reality: In the 2000s, a process of remythologization (the creation of new heroic narratives) began in Russia, against which postmodernism (with its relativism) proved powerless. The Departure of the Classics: The deaths of Prigov and Brodsky, Sorokin's departure, and Pelevin's retreat into absolute escapism. Today, many critics speak of a transition to post-postmodernism (metamodernism), where total irony is replaced by "seriousness" (a new sincerity), a return to plot, and an attempt to reinterpret history without cynicism (for example, the prose of Zakhar Prilepin, Alexei Ivanov, Evgeny Vodolazkin).

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