

Reading Stalinism: Stalinist Culture as a Research Field in the West

Evgeny Dobrenko

Over the last thirty years, a new research field has been established. In Russia, Stalinist culture as a subject of study thirty years ago did not exist at all. In the West, even in the early 1990s, the situation was similar, and five first-rate books (Clark 1981; Günther 1984; Paperny 1985; Groys 1988; Golomstock 1990) published by then did not change the overall picture. Thirty years ago, the author of this article, along with Thomas Lahusen, Katherina Clark, and Nancy Condee, organized a panel on Socialist Realism at the AAASS convention. Among the hundreds of panels on the Silver Age, émigré literature, and Russian classics, this panel was the only one devoted to Stalinist culture. Katherina Clark best described the situation with respect to Socialist Realism in Western Slavic studies when she opened her book *The Soviet Novel: History as a Ritual* in the following way:

When, in some chance encounter at a professional gathering, I am politely asked what I “do,” I find myself in the unhappy position of having to admit that I work on the Soviet novel. Usually, my interlocutor tries to help me out at first by suggesting, if he knows anything about Soviet literature, that of course that must mean that I am working on one of the more respectable writers, such as Platonov, Bulgakov, Pasternak, or Solzhenitsyn. “No? ... Well, I suppose even someone like Fedin Not really? ... Oh!” Then follows that dreadful pause when it all comes out: my work is on the *Soviet* Soviet novel, on those hundreds of unreadable texts that serve as examples of Socialist Realism. That is to say, I do not look at good novels that happen to have been published in the Soviet Union, or even at good

Evgeny Dobrenko, Ca' Foscari University of Venice, Italy, evgeny.dobrenko@unive.it, 0000-0003-4039-4967

Referee List (DOI 10.36253/fup_referee_list)

FUP Best Practice in Scholarly Publishing (DOI 10.36253/fup_best_practice)

Evgeny Dobrenko, *Reading Stalinism: Stalinist Culture as a Research Field in the West*, © Author(s), CC BY 4.0, DOI 10.36253/979-12-215-0238-1.19, in Shin'ichi Murata, Stefano Aloe (edited by), *The Reception of East Slavic Literatures in the West and the East*, pp. 211-224, 2023, published by Firenze University Press, ISBN 979-12-215-0238-1, DOI 10.36253/979-12-215-0238-1

examples from typical Soviet fiction, but actually at those works whose authors have *deliberately* followed the conventions of Socialist Realism. It is then that my leprous nose comes finally into view. My interlocutor's response is either to back out of the conversation or to mutter words of sympathy and amazement: "How do you ever manage to get through them!"

Soviet Socialist Realism is virtually a taboo topic in Western Slavic scholarship. It is not entirely taboo, for it can be discussed, but preferably only in tones of outrage, bemusement, derision, or elegy (Clark 1981, ix).

Partially in response to this situation Hans Günther and the author conceived the project on the Socialist Realist Canon, which allowed us to bring together, for the first time, specialists scattered all over the world who worked on Stalinist culture (Гюнтер и Добренко 2000). Today the situation is very different. We are all witnesses and participants in the transformation of this field into one of the leading ones in contemporary Russian studies.

What was this research field like before the turn to Stalinist culture began in the late 1980s? In addition to traditional Sovietology, which, needs to be said, had a lot of first-class works – I would refer to the books of Edward Brown on RAPP (Brown 1953), German Ermolaev on the theoretical premises of Socialist Realism (Ermolaev 1963), Vera Dunham on Stalin's post-war fiction (Dunham 1976), Maurice Friedberg about Russian classics in Soviet jackets (Fridberg 1962). In contrast to impassioned anti-communist manifestos such as Max Eastman's "Writers in Uniform" (Eastman 1934), brilliant ironic pamphlets such as Andrey Sinyavsky's famous essay "What is Socialist Realism" and informative surveys of Soviet literature (Brown 1982; Simmons 1953; Slonim 1964), there was both a serious source base and a qualitative historical and literary analysis. In the works of the 1980s and early 90s very different aspects were considered: historical-literary (Günther), structural (Clark), historical-cultural (Paperny), actual-aesthetic (Groys), comparative-art-study (Golomshtok). They were written in an extremely wide methodological range – from the traditional historical narrative and orthodox structuralism to postmodernism. But of course, these were only the first approaches to a huge mass of material.

The transformations that have taken place in Russian studies over the past 30 years are perhaps most evident in the shift in scholarly interest and its concentration on Soviet history and, even more specifically, on the Stalinist era. Below we reflect on the reasons that seem to us critical for these changes.

First, there are generational reasons: the fact that the 19th century has become almost antiquity and that works on the pre-Soviet era have become comparatively rare is partly explained by the departure of an older generation of Slavists (often students of Russian emigrants of the first wave); the sharp decline in interest in the revolutionary era, which had been incredibly popular since the 1960s, may also be explained by the departure of the generation of the 1960s, whose leftist political sympathies brought them into Russian studies in their time. Several generations of scholars have succeeded in Russian studies since its establishment. First, there were the emigrant missionaries of the first wave and the subsequent generation

(partly the descendants of this first wave of emigration, partly the representatives of the second wave), who, in fact, were at the origins of Russian studies as a discipline in the West, which emerged simultaneously with the beginning of the Cold War – so to speak, the generation of the 1950s. Some of them were engaged in Sovietology, but most of them were interested in the Russian classics and the Silver Age. This is when a repulsion/attraction relationship emerged between these groups. The “classicists” (including, first of all, specialists on the Silver Age) despised Sovietologists for their political engagement and considered them not as philologists but as political scientists and barely as journalists. The latter, in turn, believed that “classicists” were wasting time and resources busying themselves with philological exercises instead of studying the enemy (Engerman 2010). But far more important than these divergences was what these groups agreed on ideologically: political and aesthetic retrogradeism. Because of the institutionalized conservatism of academic structures, until twenty years ago the former occupied an absolutely dominant position in Slavic studies departments and constituted the Slavic establishment. Until the late 1980s, Russian studies were frozen in the age-old material and methodology. All this began to change in the 1990s.

Second, an important factor was a change in historical perspective. From the second half of the 1980s, a generation began to enter Slavistics that would most likely have reproduced the previous generation had not the events in the Soviet Union radically changed the perspective. It became clear that the events unfolding there – after decades of frozen time – were real history in action. Accordingly, there was interest in the real historical-political and socio-cultural process, to which the classics and even more so the Silver Age had little relation, being entirely a product of a situation that hopelessly fell into the past. Note that in Russia, the process went in the exact opposite direction where a new generation of scholars rediscovered an epoch, which has lost its historical relevance, and began to withdraw more and more into archival empiricism and textology. A strengthening of methodological isolationism and a recourse to admittedly marginal material testified to the decline of this field, which still exists in the West due to the institutional weight of its proponents. Attempts to cross-pollinate material from the early 20th century with fashionable methodological paradigms (such as gender studies) were able to maintain interest in the topic, but were no longer able to restore its status. Also, since the reasons for turning attention to the Stalinist period were cultural and historical the current interest turned out to be twofold. On the one hand, it became clear that the Soviet era was over (and its real nerve centre was, of course, Stalinism) and the time of historians had come; on the other hand, it became apparent that the Soviet era was not over and that post-Soviet society – from mass expectations and mentality to preferences, complexes and phobias of political and cultural elites – is virtually the same Soviet society, and therefore, to understand post-Soviet modernity, one must look closely at its Soviet and, above all, Stalinist roots.

Third. There has been a profound shift (not another turn, but a shift) in Russian studies: social and cultural history has almost completely replaced political history, a favourite of the Cold War era. The revision of the universal totalitarian

model in the analysis of the Soviet past has changed a great deal in the Western historiography of Soviet Russia (David-Fox 2015; Fitzpatrick 1999). The dominance of political history has contributed greatly to the development of “philologicalism” in Russian studies: the social and cultural spheres were cut off from politics, and scholars could afford to be “apolitical.” Cultural history, by contrast, required not only a turn of the subject toward politics, but also an interdisciplinarity, without which no discipline can survive today. Initially, this shift occurred in Russian historiography thanks to the arrival of a generation of revisionist historians at the turn of the 1980s and the retreat of political history before cultural and social history. Simultaneously, the traditional “humanities” disciplines (art history, literature, film studies, etc.) began to shift into the field of cultural studies (the most pragmatic explanation for this is the need to survive in the era of the changed status of Russian studies in the Western intellectual and academic market). Cultural theory itself, at least during the last two decades, has been drifting in the opposite direction – towards the political field (interest in the political imaginary). Such interdisciplinary approaches have made it possible to re-understand the big themes of Stalinist culture, such as the culture of everyday life (Balina and Dobrenko 2009; Boym 1995; Gronow 2003; Kucher 2007; Piretto 2001), historical mythology (Brandenberger and Platt 2006; Neuberger 2019; Platt 2011; Perrie 2001) and the spatial dimensions of Stalinism (Dobrenko and Naiman 2002; Schlögel 2008). It allowed for approaching the aesthetic specificity of Stalinist art from new angles (Dobrenko 2007; Dobrenko and Jonsson-Skradol 2022; Gutkin 1999; Robin 1986).

A sharp (and intergenerational) transition from an obsession with the narrowly defined political field of traditional Sovietology to the area of cultural representation was not painless. Historians found themselves in a new “epoch of great discoveries” – they suddenly discovered the sphere of culture – literature, film, art, the field of cultural production and the functioning of cultural institutions. On the other hand, if for Russianists it was previously considered indecent to divert from “philology” to politics and to sully science about “dirty ideology”, now literary-, film- and art-critics had discovered for themselves the political field not as an alien sphere of ideological clichés, but as a sphere, having fine analytical tools.

By the early 2000s, studies of the Stalinist culture were taking shape in an interdisciplinary environment. Moreover, a whole stream of a high level works and large-scale research projects were published and implemented by specialists of all disciplines – historians, literary, film, and art critics – as the older generation – books by Victoria Bonnell’s on the Soviet political poster (Bonnell 1999); Hans Günther on the Soviet heroic myth (Günther 1990; 1993); Jeffrey Brooks on Stalinist public culture (Brooks 2001); Katherina Clark on Petersburg and Moscow as the cultural capitals of Soviet Russia (Clark 1995; 2011); Thomas Lahusen on the creation of an exemplary Soviet literary text (Lahusen 2002); Bernice Rosenthal on the Nietzsche influence on Soviet culture (Rosenthal 1995; 2002); Richard Stites on Soviet mass culture (Stites 1992; 1995); Nina Tumarkin on the myths of the leader and the victory (Tumarkin 1983; 1995), and others –, as well as the middle and younger generation – books by Svetlana Boym

about Soviet kitsch (Boym 1995); David Brandenberger about mass culture and national Bolshevism (Brandenberger 2002); Michael David-Fox about cultural diplomacy of the 1930s (David-Fox 2012); Catriona Kelly on Soviet childhood (Kelly 2008); Steven Kotkin on Stalinist civilization (Kotkin 1997); Yuri Slezkine on the origins of Stalinist political culture (Slezkine 2017); Igal Halfin and Jochen Hellbeck – about the Stalinist subject and subjectivity (Halfin 2003; 2009; Hellbeck 2009); David Hoffmann on the formation of mass culture and values in Stalinism (Hoffmann 2003; 2011); Karen Petrone on the festive culture of Stalinism (Petrone 2000); Cynthia Ruder on the mythology of the White Sea-Baltic and Volga-Don canals (Ruder 1998; 2018), and many others. The picture of this interdisciplinary idyll should not be misleading: scientists brought from their disciplines not only certain skills, knowledge and experience but also prejudices and complexes. Moreover, what is useful (and even necessary) in one discipline is sometimes non-functional (and even harmful) in another. The skill and experience of a historian often means a lack of skill and experience, for example, of a philologist (say, in reading and interpreting texts), and, conversely, the ability to work with a text does not necessarily guarantee the ability to work with an archive or the ability to make broad historical generalizations. The same applies to knowledge, which always turns into a certain degree of ignorance in the neighbouring discipline.

Today, the 19th century, the Silver Age, and the revolutionary Avant-garde that dominated the field for decades are far behind Stalinism, which has come to the fore. Moreover, the area of political representation, which is interdisciplinary by definition, turned out to be the most productive. The works of cultural historians, philosophers and political scientists, specialists in specific areas of literature, art and media meet here. This area of research has been understood as the study of the mechanisms of translation from political language to cultural language (and vice versa), from medial language to the languages of art and politics. This changed a lot in the study of the Stalinist culture. The material revealed new dimensions that simply could not have appeared in an era of disciplinary isolationism. Sovietology was developing in a methodological vacuum, it was aloof from modern political and cultural theory, and as a result, vast layers of material were previously either ignored or considered one-sidedly or superficially. For a wide range of humanitarians and historians of Stalinism who had discovered new areas of cultural and political theory, the very possibility of working on interdisciplinary cultural and historical projects, if not nullified, then noticeably diluted the political bias that has always been inherent in Sovietology.

Fourth, with the end of the USSR it became clear that the Soviet project was by no means a class project, but a typical national modernization project, only wrapped up in Marxist rhetoric. Moreover, it was this aspect of the creation of new nations that became defining aspect of the creation of new nations in Eastern Europe, including the post-Soviet space. This has completely shifted the focus from the former ideological explanation to a more traditional national one, with the result that the status of the Russian Revolution and Avant-garde art with their leftism has been greatly reduced. Only in the ideological projection of the Cold

War was the Russian Revolution the central event of the 20th century. From the national perspective, it was not this but Stalinism that became the focal point. It became clear that the revolution of 1917 was only a trigger, while the foundations of the Soviet nation were a product of Stalinism, which created and rooted the economic, political, ideological, and cultural foundation of the Soviet regime, which existed in the framework created by Stalin for almost four decades after his death (Dobrenko 2020). It has also come to be understood that the post-Soviet identity is rooted not so much in the revolution as in Stalinism, as recent events have vividly demonstrated.

Fifth, it is important to mention the shift in academic economics. The break-up of the Soviet Union led to a deep crisis in Sovietology, which proved unable to foresee what had happened and, since Sovietology largely determined the state of Russian studies in general, to a deep crisis of the latter. But the most dramatic effect was produced by the change in the status of post-Soviet Russia in the world and, as a consequence, the cessation of funding for this field of research. In the 1990s, after a brief perestroika boom, student enrolment plummeted and Western universities began to close Slavic studies departments en masse. There is no need to cite the numbers of this dramatic decline—the low number of students and the high number of closed Russian departments and programs. The attractiveness of the discipline has become a matter of survival. Russian studies in the West has not faced such a challenge since its inception. The discipline met this challenge in complete unpreparedness: highbrow academicism, detachment from the actual historical process, inability to make material relevant and interesting for today's consumer (whether students or non-Russianists), archival empiricism and textualism; methodological isolationism, aggressive anti-theoreticism, work with clearly marginal material, etc.

It should be remembered that Russistics – unlike Romanistics or Germanistics – was not a market economy. Its economic survival was supported for decades by budgetary infusions. This shaped generations of researchers who did not have to worry about what they were doing would be “saleable” to students or publishers. They had to adapt successful programs of fellow comparativists “from the wheels” and attract them for joint projects in order to make Russian programs more attractive. But the Russianists did not have a common language with the latter: decades of methodological obscurantism and new empiricism, which went against the theoretical mainstream, were making themselves felt. All this had a detrimental effect on the disciplines that defined the shape of Russian studies: an intense exodus of scholars from 19th-century fields began, producing a paradoxical situation in which there is now a shortage of specialists able to teach Dostoevsky and Tolstoy, a shortage of specialists in poetry; the Silver Age began to melt away before our eyes. On the other hand, the Stalin era and related disciplines (film studies, media, and visual arts) began to develop intensively. Suffice it to point to the emergence of a number of first-rate musicological works, with the Stalin era at their centre (Fairclough 2016; Frolova-Walker 2016; Edmunds 2004; Tomoff 2006; 2015), or works on architectural history (DeHaan 2016; Hatherley 2015; Hudson 2015; Zubovich 2020), as well as works (there are especially many) on

the history of Soviet painting and visual culture (Bonnell 1999; Bown 1998; Golumstock 1990; O'Mahony 2006; Piretto 2009; Plamper 2012; Rusnock 2010).

Sixth, the study of Stalinist culture was conditioned by the already mentioned methodological shifts and responsiveness to them. The new generation of Russianists proved to be more open to other literatures and cultures. They were shaped by comparativism (Lahusen and Dobrenko 1997; Dobrenko and Skradol 2018; Geyer and Fitzpatrick 2008), which, in turn, fed an interest in methodological innovations, in theory, in interdisciplinarity, in related fields. As an example, suffice it to mention the explosive growth of works on the history of Soviet cinema. Prior to the 1990s, there were barely a dozen books on Russian-Soviet cinema in the West. Today, their number runs into the hundreds. Russian cinema studies, both in the West and in Russia, were largely informed by research on Stalinist culture, interdisciplinarity and the rejection of literary-centrism (Belodubrovskaya 2020; Dobrenko 2008; Kaganovsky 2008; Kenez 1992; Spring and Taylor 1993; Widdis 2003).

Seventh, the research field was influenced by democratization. The expansion of the material was influenced by the very subject of research: in Stalinism we are dealing with mass culture and mass taste. Cultural studies, which have been increasingly pushing out traditional literary studies since the 1990s, have found adequate material in Soviet culture. The growth and diversification of the thematic range of research are associated with the very status of the subject and the expansion of the content of the concept of "culture", which in the 20th century was unprecedentedly politically instrumentalized. Revolutionary culture of any type – fascist, Nazi or communist – is, by definition, a culture of overcoming the isolation of the pre-revolutionary period. Producing new subjects, new citizens, mass societies, modern revolutionary culture expands and draws into itself more and more new realities. In this context, the concept of "culture" acquires a set of meanings that go through a full range of transformations – from resistance to autonomy and from it to instrumentalization. In a fundamentally different way from previous centuries and liberal democratic regimes, culture is extremely important to dictatorial regimes and violent nation-states. It is important because it is a universal instrument of political power: as a necessary object of central planning and coordination; as a way to reach out, co-opt or oppose political actors; as a domain that cannot be left in the hands of traditional patrons, since culture is the only way for power to produce its own image and legitimation. Culture is seen as a domain that must be brought under the control and supervision of the state. Therefore the culture of modern dictatorships, including Stalin's, is moving beyond its traditional loci in courts, salons, galleries, and theatres. It enters public squares, libraries and schools, public institutions, sports arenas, and television – the favourite spaces of mass societies, where a developed print culture is increasingly interacting with the visual image, voice, and communication technologies (See: Schnapp 1996; Dobrenko 1997; 2001). All this makes the study of Stalinist culture extremely relevant in modern Russia, where the practices of power grow out of Stalinism.

Eighth, the study of Stalinism would have been impossible without the opening of archives. The archival revolution that followed the collapse of the USSR not

only changed our understanding of the Stalin's era and made it possible to define new approaches to it, but also played a cruel joke on historiography: by opening long-awaited archives, it blinded many historians to the possibility of easy reconstruction of the "real" development of various historical episodes, reconstruction of the "accurate" picture of the past, reconstruction of the characters and motives of their actions, etc. All this has undoubtedly enriched our understanding of Soviet history, but conceptually and methodologically it has slowed down the development of the discipline: the era of high oil production is not conducive to innovations, as we know.

Ninth, the collapse of previous explanatory matrices demanded new explanations and a reconceptualization of the object of study. Behind the change of schools and approaches there is not only a change of methodology, but also a change of optics, which actually constructs the object. Stalinism is not something permanently "given to us," but the result of the conceptual, discursive, ideological construction that our research engages in. Different schools do not simply approach and frame historical reality differently. Speaking "about the same thing," they often have a different reality in mind and to a large extent construct it.

When two books were published on both coasts of the United States in 1995 – Stephen Kotkin's about Magnitogorsk (Kotkin 1997) and an anthology of Soviet diaries of the Great Terror era, the result of pioneering work by the Mikhail Gefer's group of historians in the Soviet Union and later in Russia, but first seen in English (Garros, Korenevskaya, and Lahusen 1995) – few realized that they marked the critical shift in the field of history of Stalinism.

For the first time, Kotkin approached Stalinism not just as a phenomenon of political and social history, but as a "civilization," drawing attention to aspects of Soviet everyday life that had often escaped the attention of social historians at the time. Thus, his examination of the "Bolshevik language" not only allowed us to conceptualize and reinterpret this material, but also to position it in relation to political and social history in a certain way, opening a dimension previously unknown to historians of Stalinism (Вайскопф 2000; Groys 2007; Сандомирская 2013; Gorham 2003).

By contrast, the diaries of Soviet people of different generations, backgrounds, and experiences, representing various strata of the population of the period of the Great Terror, published in the same year, were emphatically devoid of any conceptual framework. But they opened up a new dimension of research – the Soviet subject, expressing itself through writing, realizing itself in text, is no longer so much a subject of political and social history as of discursive analysis and cultural history. What is meant here is a broad understanding of culture. It is not by chance that representatives of the so-called school of Soviet subjectivity are classified as cultural historians, although they deal with material that is typical of social history. There are several reasons for this.

The first is the introduction of new information: the opening up of archives has not only expanded our understanding of the processes that took place in Stalinist society, which played a key role in the revision of the Sovietological model that took place in the 1980s and 1990s. The broadening of the source base forced us to

think about the genre nature of the input materials, especially those (such as diaries) that had not previously been of interest to historians at all (Paperno 2011).

A *second important factor* has been the close and fruitful interest in the methodology of related sciences (e.g. anthropology, sociology, or the archaeology of knowledge). Whereas in the works of the revisionist historians of the first generation largely contributed to the reconceptualization of approaches elaborated by the totalitarian school, the new generation of historians not only directly appeals to contemporary cultural theories, but makes reliance on the methodology of the allied humanities programmatic.

The third factor is an awareness of the methodological and disciplinary boundaries of history, when historians began to reflect on such factors as historical narrative (the linguistic turn was undoubtedly key here). For a new generation of historians, the experience of the new historicism became defining, and the interest in the form of the statement became critical. It has come to be understood that the content communicated by a source is not indifferent to the form in which it is given. What is required is not simply a correction of the form, but a full-fledged analysis and consideration of its specificity.

The fourth factor is related to culture and ideology: they began to be thought of as a certain environment in which certain historical events take place and which largely determines them. The flat institutionally understood cultural history as some chain of events in the field of cultural and intellectual life was replaced by a full-fledged interest in the synthesis of historical sub-disciplines, the realization that neither political nor social history can be fully considered outside cultural and intellectual history.

Finally, *the fifth reason* is the revision of established causal historical relationships. When one theoretical premise was followed in a logical sequence by all the others, the material had to confirm the “historical logic.” The success was seen in making the material work for the general model, which was ideally facilitated by the totalitarian construction based on “history from above.” Revisionism, on the contrary, complicated the picture by showing the counter-intensions, interaction and transformation of practices coming from below and above. The new generation of historians of Stalinism finally fragmented the picture by introducing into it the concept of the Stalinist subject and by approaching the text at the shortest possible distance.

Summing up the results of thirty years of research into the Stalinist culture, one can note that contemporary Western (as well as Russian) historiography regarding the Soviet (and above all Stalinist) era offers neither a wealth of generalizing ideas, nor a theoretical breadth nor methodological diversity. Although there are some good works, and some first-rate and bright ones, for the most part, they suffer from positivism and an inability to move beyond the narrow confines of Russian-Soviet specificity. In most cases, the authors of these works have nothing to tell the reader, other than a retelling of events and a systematization of various facts.

Of course, in the post-Soviet historiography there are numerous scholars, mostly of the middle generation, whose interest in generalizing concepts has allowed them to create works that stand out sharply against the general background. But

let us be honest: even the best works rarely go beyond the disciplinary boundaries of Russian studies and traditional positivist history. The fact remains that in post-Soviet historiography, it is difficult to name at least five books comparable to the brilliant and, alas, not published in Russia works on Nazism of recent decades (Kershaw 2001; Michaud 1996; Theweleit 1977-1978). This list can be continued by adding the names of historians of Italian Fascism (Schnapp 1996; Mangan 1999; Spackman 1996). This is explained historically: studies of the culture of Nazism and Fascism as a discipline developed in free intellectual competition, in an open dialogue between different methodological directions, in a real struggle for students and readers, while Sovietology, having special origins, status and financial and institutional support, often existed not only in an archival but also intellectual and methodological vacuum, following almost exclusively an actual political agenda. The higher level of works on the history of Nazism or Italian Fascism in comparison to those on the history of Stalinism is due not only to their long-standing institutional freedom but also to their disciplinary openness.

One way or another, this field has been born in the West, although it is still very loosely organized, disciplinarily isolated and overly ideological, lacking a tradition and a tested categorical apparatus, and the social demand for this research is still very weak, as is its institutional support, although it is now particularly clear that Stalinism, as a product of the entire Russian political culture, is a genetic disease of post-Soviet society. The project of post-Soviet nation- and culture-building without a cure or at least without a diagnosis of this illness is doomed to failure. Here lie the reasons why society has turned out to be so obviously ready for its collapse into a repressive-imperial past and so hungry for the temptations of historical revenge. If there is a topical historical subject for contemporary Russia, it is – alas – Stalinism.

Bibliography

- Balina, Marina, and Dobrenko, Evgeny, eds. 2009. *Petrified Utopia: Happiness Soviet Style*. London: Anthem Press.
- Belodubrovskaya, Maria. 2020. *Not According to Plan: Filmmaking under Stalin*. Ithaca: Cornell UP.
- Bonnell, Victoria. 1999. *Iconography of Power: Soviet Political Posters under Lenin and Stalin*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Bown, Matthew C. 1998. *Socialist Realist Painting*. New Haven: Yale UP.
- Boym, Svetlana. 1995. *Common Places: Mythologies of Everyday Life in Russia*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP.
- Brandenberger, David. 2002. *National Bolshevism: Stalinist Mass Culture and the Formation of Modern Russian National Identity, 1931-1956*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP.
- Brandenberger, David, and Kevin Platt, eds. 2006. *Epic Revisionism: Russian History and Literature as Stalinist Propaganda*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press.
- Brooks, Jeffrey. 2001. *Thank You, Comrade Stalin!: Soviet Public Culture from Revolution to Cold War*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP.
- Brown, Edward J. 1953. *The Proletarian Episode in Russian Literature, 1928-1932*. New York: Columbia UP.

- Brown, Edward J. 1982. *Russian Literature since the Revolution*. Cambridge: Harvard UP.
- Clark, Katherina. 1981. *The Soviet Novel: History as Ritual*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Clark, Katherina. 1995. *Petersburg, Crucible of Cultural Revolution*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP.
- Clark, Katherina. 2011. *Moscow, the Fourth Rome: Stalinism, Cosmopolitanism and the Evolution of Soviet Culture, 1931-1941*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP.
- David-Fox, Michael. 2012. *Showcasing the Great Experiment: Cultural Diplomacy and Western Visitors to the Soviet Union, 1921-1941*. New York: OUP.
- David-Fox, Michael. 2015. *Crossing Borders: Modernity, Ideology, and Culture in Russia and the Soviet Union*. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press.
- DeHaan, Heather. 2016. *Stalinist City Planning: Professionals, Performance, and Power*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
- Dobrenko, Evgeny. 1997. *The Making of the State Reader: Social and Aesthetic Contexts of the Reception of Soviet Literature*. Stanford, CA: Stanford UP.
- Dobrenko, Evgeny. 2001. *The Making of the State Writer: Social and Aesthetic Origins of Soviet Literary Culture*. Stanford, CA: Stanford UP.
- Dobrenko, Evgeny. 2007. *Political Economy of Socialist Realism*. New Haven: Yale UP.
- Dobrenko, Evgeny. 2008. *Stalinist Cinema and the Production of History: Museum of the Revolution*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP.
- Dobrenko, Evgeny. 2020. *Late Stalinism: The Aesthetics of Politics*. New Haven: Yale UP.
- Dobrenko, Evgeny, and Eric Naiman, eds. 2002. *The Landscape of Stalinism: The Art and Ideology of Soviet Space*. Seattle: University of Washington Press.
- Dobrenko, Evgeny, and Natalia Jonsson-Skradol, eds. 2018. *Socialist Realism in Central and Eastern European Literatures under Stalin: Institutions, Dynamics, Discourses*. London: Anthem Press.
- Dobrenko, Evgeny, and Natalia Jonsson-Skradol. 2022. *State Laughter: Populism, Stalinist Culture, and Origins of Soviet Culture*. Oxford: OUP.
- Dunham, Vera. 1976. In *Stalin's Time: Middleclass Values in Soviet Fiction*. Durham: Duke UP.
- Eastman, Max. 1934. *Artists in Uniform: A Study of Literature and Bureaucratism*. New York: A.A. Knopf.
- Edmunds, Neil, eds. 2004. *Soviet Music and Society under Lenin and Stalin: The Baton and Sickle*. London: Routledge.
- Engerman, David. 2010. *Know Your Enemy: The Rise and Fall of America's Soviet Experts*. Oxford: OUP.
- Ermolaev, Herman. 1963. *Soviet Literary Theories 1917-1934: The Genesis of Socialist Realism*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Fairclough, Pauline. 2016. *Classics for the Masses Shaping Soviet Musical Identity under Lenin and Stalin*. London: Yale UP.
- Fitzpatrick, Sheila. 1999. *Stalinism: New Directions*. London: Routledge.
- Fridberg, Maurice. 1962. *Russian Classics in Soviet Jackets*. New York: Columbia UP.
- Frolova-Walker, Marina. 2016. *Stalin's Music Prize: Soviet Culture and Politics*. London: Yale UP.
- Garros, Veronique, Natalia Korenevskaya, and Thomas Lahusen, eds. 1995. *Intimacy and Terror: Soviet Diaries of the 1930's*. New York: New Press.
- Geyer, Michael, and Sheila Fitzpatrick, eds. 2008. *Beyond Totalitarianism: Stalinism and Nazism Compared*. Cambridge: CUP.
- Golomstock, Igor. 1990. *Totalitarian Art in the Soviet Union, the Third Reich, Fascist Italy, and the People's Republic of China*. London: Collins Harvill.

- Gorham, Michael. 2003. *Speaking in Soviet Tongues: Language Culture and the Politics of Voice in Revolutionary Russia*. DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press.
- Gronow, Jukka. 2003. *Caviar with Champagne: Common Luxury and the Ideals of the Good Life in Stalin's Russia*. London: Bloomsbury.
- Groys, Boris. 1988. *Gesamtkunstwerk Stalin*. München-Wien: Hanser Verlag.
- Groys, Boris. 2010. *The Communist Postscript*. London: Verso.
- Günther, Hans. 1984. *Die Verstaatlichung der Literatur. Entstehung und Funktionsweise des sozialistisch-realistischen Kanons in der sowjetischen Literatur der 30er Jahre*. Stuttgart: Metzler.
- Günther, Hans, ed. 1990. *The Culture of the Stalin Period*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Günther, Hans. 1993. *Der sozialistische Übermensch. M. Gor'kij und der sowjetische Heldenmythos*. Stuttgart: Metzler.
- Gutkin, Irina. 1999. *The Cultural Origins of the Socialist Realist Aesthetic, 1890-1934*. Evanston: Northwestern UP.
- Halfin, Igal. 2003. *Terror in My Soul: Communist Autobiographies on Trial*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP.
- Halfin, Igal. 2009. *Stalinist Confessions: Messianism and Terror at the Leningrad Communist University*. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press.
- Hatherley, Owen. 2015. *Landscapes of Communism: A History through Buildings*. London: Allen Lane.
- Hellbeck, Jochen. 2009. *Revolution on My Mind: Writing a Diary under Stalin*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP.
- Hoffmann, David. 2003. *Stalinist Values: The Cultural Norms of Soviet Modernity, 1917-1941*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell UP.
- Hoffmann, David. 2011. *Cultivating the Masses: Modern State Practices and Soviet Socialism, 1914-1939*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell UP.
- Hudson, Hugh. 2015. *Blueprints and Blood: The Stalinization of Soviet Architecture, 1917-1937*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP.
- Kaganovsky, Lilya. 2008. *How the Soviet Man Was Unmade*. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press.
- Kelly, Catriona. 2008. *Children's World: Growing Up in Russia, 1890-1991*. London: Yale UP.
- Kenez, Peter. 1992. *Cinema and Soviet Society: From the Revolution to the Death of Stalin*. Cambridge: CUP.
- Kershaw, Ian. 2001. *The "Hitler Myth": Image and Reality in the Third Reich*. Oxford: OUP.
- Kotkin, Stephen. 1997. *Magnetic Mountain: Stalinism as a Civilization*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Kucher, Katharina. 2007. *Der Gorki-Park: Freizeitkultur Im Stalinismus 1928-1941*. Köln: Böhlau.
- Lahusen, Thomas. 2002. *How Life Writes the Book: Real Socialism and Socialist Realism in Stalin's Russia*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell UP.
- Lahusen, Thomas, and Evgeny Dobrenko, eds. 1997. *Socialist Realism without Shores*. Durham, NC: Duke UP.
- Mangan, J.A. 1999. *Shaping the Superman: Fascist Body as Political Icon – Aryan Fascism*. London: Routledge.
- Michaud, Éric. 1996. *Un art de l'éternité. L'image et le temps du national-socialisme*. Paris: Gallimard.
- Neuberger, Joan. 2019. *This Thing of Darkness: Eisenstein's Ivan the Terrible in Stalin's Russia*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell UP.
- O'Mahony, Mike. 2006. *Sport in the USSR: Physical Culture – Visual Culture*. London: Reaktion Books.

- Paperno, Irina. 2011. *Stories of the Soviet Experience: Memoirs, Diaries, Dreams*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell UP.
- Perrie, Maureen. 2001. *The Cult of Ivan the Terrible in Stalin's Russia*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Petrone, Karen. 2000. *Life Has Become More Joyous, Comrades: Celebrations in the Time of Stalin*. Bloomington: Indiana UP.
- Piretto, Gian Piero. 2001. *Il radioso avvenire: mitologie culturali sovietiche*. Torino: Einaudi.
- Piretto, Gian Piero. 2009. *Gli occhi di Stalin: la cultura visuale sovietica nell'era staliniana*. Milano: Raffaello Cortina.
- Plamper, Jan. 2012. *The Stalin Cult: A Study in the Alchemy of Power*. New Haven: Yale UP.
- Platt, Kevin. 2011. *Terror and Greatness: Ivan and Peter as Russian Myths*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell UP.
- Robin, Régine. 1986. *Le Réalisme socialiste: Une esthétique impossible*. Paris: Payot.
- Rosenthal, Bernice, ed. 1995. *Nietzsche and Soviet Culture: Ally and Adversary*. Cambridge: CUP.
- Rosenthal, Bernice. 2002. *New Myth, New World: From Nietzsche to Stalinism*. University Park, PA: Penn State UP.
- Ruder, Cynthia. 1998. *Making History for Stalin: The Story of the Belomor Canal*. Gainesville: University Press of Florida.
- Ruder, Cynthia. 2018. *Building Stalinism: The Moscow Canal and the Creation of Soviet Space*. London: I.B. Tauris.
- Rusnock, K. Andrea. 2010. *Socialist Realist Painting During the Stalinist Era (1934-1941)*. Lewiston: The Edwin Mellen Press.
- Schlögel, Karl. 2008. *Terror und Traum. Moskau 1937*. München: Hanser.
- Schnapp, Jeffrey. 1996. *Staging Fascism: 18 BL and the Theater of Masses for Masses*. Stanford: Stanford UP.
- Simmons, Ernest J., ed. 1953. *Through the Glass of Soviet Literature: Views of Russian Society*. New York: Columbia UP.
- Slezkine, Yuri. 2017. *The House of Government: A Saga of the Russian Revolution*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP.
- Slonim, Mark. 1964. *Soviet Russian Literature: Writers and Problems, 1917-67*. Oxford: OUP.
- Spackman, Barbara. 1996. *Fascist Virilities: Rhetoric, Ideology, and Social Fantasy in Italy*. Minneapolis: Minnesota UP.
- Spring, Derek, and Richard Taylor, eds. 1993. *Stalinism and Soviet Cinema*. London: Routledge.
- Stites, Richard. 1992. *Russian Popular Culture: Entertainment and Society since 1900*. Cambridge: CUP.
- Stites, Richard. 1995. *Culture and Entertainment in Wartime Russia*. Bloomington: Indiana UP.
- Theweleit, Klaus. 1977-1978. *Männerphantasien*. 2 Bände. Frankfurt am Main: Stroemfeld; Basel: Verlag Roter Stern.
- Tomoff, Kiril. 2006. *Creative Union: The Professional Organization of Soviet Composers, 1939-1953*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell UP.
- Tomoff, Kiril. 2015. *Virtuosi Abroad: Soviet Music and Imperial Competition during the Early Cold War, 1945-1958*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell UP.
- Tumarkin, Nina. 1983. *Lenin Lives! The Lenin Cult in Soviet Russia*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP.
- Tumarkin, Nina. 1995. *The Living and the Dead: The Rise and Fall of the Cult of World War II in Russia*. New York: Basic Books.

Widdis, Emma. 2003. *Visions of a New Land: Soviet Film from the Revolution to the Second World War*. London: Yale UP.

Zubovich, Katherine. 2020. *Moscow Monumental: Soviet Skyscrapers and Urban Life in Stalin's Capital*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP.

Вайскопф, Михаил. 2000. *Писатель Сталин*. Москва: Новое литературное обозрение.

Гюнтер, Ханс, и Евгений А. Добренко, под ред. *Соцреалистический канон. Канон*. Санкт-Петербург: Академический проект.

Паперный, Владимир. 1985. *Культура Два*. Ann Arbor: Ardis.

Сандомирская, Ирина. 2013. *Блокада в слове: очерки критической теории и биополитики языка*. Москва: Новое литературное обозрение.