

CALL FOR PAPERS

Kul't-tovary/Cultural Commodities. The Commercialization of History in Mass Culture and Literature in Contemporary Russia and in the world

University of Bologna, Italy

May 29-31, 2019.

In Russian culture of the 2000s-2010s, historical plots and cultural interpretations of History triggered the most heated ideological debates. Narratives about the past acquired relevance in contemporary Russian culture, especially in its popular segment, due to a variety of factors. Among these, it is possible to mention the shift to a new phase that involves the concepts of “trauma” and “nostalgia” associated to the Soviet Union. In this context, the new political course towards the promotion of a “positive” image of Russia and its historical accomplishments should also be taken into account. Heroic pages of Russian History, such as the Soviet victory in the Second World War, are now undergoing a process of “mythologization”. Over time, these events have generated a series of local and alternative narratives of the past, which, in turn, mirror new interpretations of History. Notably, all these tendencies have peaked after Russia’s annexation of Crimea in 2014.

A successful commercialization of the historical discourse can be observed in what Bauman defined as “a global epidemic of nostalgia” (*Retrotopia*, Polity, 2017: 3). Notably, this phenomenon is taking place in literature, cinema, television series, advertisement, historical reconstructions and other everyday cultural practices. The aim of this conference, which is part of the international and interdisciplinary project entitled “Cultural Commodities: The Phenomenon of Mass Literature in Contemporary Russia”, is to discuss whether these productions shape a “retrotopian” (Bauman, 2017) discourse that presents the Soviet past as an effective, stable and, most importantly, aesthetically attractive fusion of capitalist mores and the communist political regime.

Moreover, contemporary Russian mass culture represents a broad field for a multidirectional examination of such phenomena. A comparative analysis of the Russian commercialization of historical memory and similar processes in Europe, Asia, and America would be beneficial for the understanding of global practices in History construction. Indeed, on the one hand, this phenomenon reflects societal changes, whereas on the other, it contributes to active modelling and remodelling of ideologies and values in a given society.

Possible topics include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Methods and forms employed for the constructions of historical past in popular culture;
- Projections of contemporary ideological discourses onto the past; History as an allegory of contemporary politics;
- New/old historical concepts and mythologies, the modalities of their representation and articulation in mass culture;
- The conceptualization of the past as the nexus of mass culture and political power;
- Economic and symbolic capitalization of images of the past;
- The past as a “justification” for the present and template for the future;
- Alternative (counter-factual) history as a genre of mass culture;
- History in genres of popular culture (fantasy, romance, action fiction/film, etc.);

- Historical re-enactments in documentary genres, games, mass actions, and politics;
- Mass culture and the production of historical knowledge.

Keynote speakers:

Maria Chernyak, The Herzen Russian Literature, Russian Pedagogical University (RUSSIA)

Mark Lipoveckij, University of Colorado at Boulder (USA)

Mario Caramitti, Tor Vergata University (ITALY)

The conference welcomes submissions in English, Russian, and Italian, the three working languages of the conference. Proposals for twenty-minute papers or panels are invited from researchers working in the field of Russian Studies, Cultural Studies, Comparative Literature, Language and Translation Studies.

The submissions should be sent via e-mail **no later than February, 1 2019** and must include:

- The title and a short abstract of the proposed presentation (up to 300 words);
- A short CV (name, surname, institutional affiliation, position, contact details).

The submissions should be sent to: kulttovary.conference@unibo.it

The Organising Committee will choose the presenters based on thematic relevance of the proposal for the conference. Notification of decision will be announced via e-mail no later than **March, 1 2019**.

We are exploring the possibility of using the conference as a springboard for a themed, peer-reviewed volume, in which selected papers would be published as full-length articles.

Due to limited funds, we will not be able to cover participants' travel and lodging expenses.

Registration fee: 80 € (50 € for PhD students)

Payment details will be notified on acceptance of the proposal.

The registration fee includes: coffee breaks, buffet lunch (2 days), conference materials, and publication (if the paper is accepted).

Conference venue:

University of Bologna

Department of Modern Languages, Literatures, and Cultures, Via Cartoleria, 5, Bologna, Italy.

Important dates:

Deadline for the submission of abstracts: February, 1 2019.

Notification of acceptance: March, 1 2019.

Early bird registration: April, 15 2019.

Conference: May 29-31, 2019.

Contacts:

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WEBSITE:

<https://eventi.unibo.it/kult-tovary-2019-it>

<https://eventi.unibo.it/kult-tovary-2019-en>

Organizing Committee [kulttovary.conference@unibo.it]

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Professor Marina Abasheva, Perm State Pedagogical University for the Humanities and Perm State Research University.

Professor Maria Litovskaya, Department of Slavic Languages and Literature, National Chengchi; Ural Federal University.

Dr. Irina Savkina, Ph.D, Lecturer of Faculty of Communication Sciences, University of Tampere, Finland.