



The Testimonies of Russian and American Postmodern Poetry: Reference, Trauma, and History

By Albena Lutzkanova-Vassileva

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This book challenges the belief in the purely linguistic nature of contemporary poetry and offers an interpretation of late twentieth-century Russian poetry as a testimony to the unforeseen annulment of communist reality and its overnight displacement by a completely unfathomable post-totalitarian order.

Albena Lutzkanova-Vassileva argues that, because of the sudden invalidation of a reality that had been largely seen as unattained and everlasting, this shift remained secluded from the mind and totally resistant to cognition, thus causing a collectively traumatic psychological experience. The book proceeds by inquiring into a school of contemporary American poetry that has been likewise read as cut off from reality.

Executing a comparative analysis, Vassileva advances a new understanding of this poetry as a testimony to the overwhelming and traumatic impact of contemporary media, which have assailed the mind with far more signals than it can register, digest and furnish with semantic weight.

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Editorial Review

Review

"Albena Lutzkanova-Vassileva's groundbreaking study is the first to compare Russian and US avant-garde poetics of the late 20th centuries?Russian Conceptualism and Metarealism on the one hand, American experimental poetry (especially the Language movement) on the other? as emblematic of their respective post-World War II cultures. Often considered merely self-referential, both these poetics, Vassileva argues, document the traumatic historical impact of the postmodern ethos in new and challenging ways. Anglophone readers will be especially fascinated by Vassileva's exciting presentation of the New Russian Poetry from Dimitri Prigov to Elena Shvarts?a poetry as brilliant as it is germane to an understanding of our own. A fascinating and genuinely original book!" - *Marjorie Perloff, Professor Emerita of English and Comparative Literature, Stanford University, USA, and author of Unoriginal Genius: Poetry by Other Means in the New Century*

"An impressive critical study of postmodernist poetics broadly contextualizing its artistic predicaments in a world made readily perceivable through free media and controlled propaganda clichés that breed "happiness machines" and equally deny access to true traumatic experiences." - *Vladislav Todorov, Senior Lecturer in Slavic Languages and Literatures, University of Pennsylvania, USA*

"Albena Lutzkanova-Vassileva's book is the first ever comparative investigation of the major trends in Russian and American poetry of the late 20th century: Metarealism, Conceptualism, and Language School. It is a treasure-trove for everybody who loves contemporary poetry and strives to understand its complex language, experimental courage and international scope. Contrary to the common view, the author demonstrates that postmodern poetic systems are not aesthetically self-enclosed but have a deep referential value and relate to reality both positively (as the multitude of realities in Metarealism) and negatively (as the traumatic experience in Conceptualism). The book explores refined poetic imagery in a most precise way and introduces a number of new concepts emerging at the cutting edges of contemporary critical theory." - *Mikhail Epstein, Professor of Russian and Cultural Theory and Director of the Center for Humanities Innovation, Durham University, UK, and Professor of Cultural Theory and Russian Literature, Emory University, USA*

About the Author

Albena Lutzkanova-Vassileva is an Assistant Professor of English and Comparative Literature at Brooklyn College of the City University of New York, USA.

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