



Seminar

BORIS LANIN

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George Orwell's Forerunners and Disciples: Anti-Utopia in Modern Russian Literature

Tuesday, 5 November, 2019, 2:15 p.m.

In the Thunberg Lecture Hall
SCAS, Linneanum, Thunbergsvägen 2, Uppsala
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ABOUT BORIS LANIN

Boris Lanin is Professor of Russian Literature at the Russian Institute of Theatre Arts (GITIS), Moscow. He graduated with honors from Baku Slavic University in 1983, and received his Candidate of Philology Degree in 1990.

After obtaining his Doctorate in Philology from Moscow State Pedagogical University in 1994, Boris Lanin served as a visiting professor at the Kennan Institute and later at Woodrow Wilson International Center (Washington DC), at Institut d'études avancées de Paris, at the Hokkaido, Stanford, Kobe, Waseda (Tokyo), and Saitama universities, and at Alfried Krupp Wissenschaftskolleg Greifswald. In 2018 he was a National Endowment for the Humanities Distinguished Visiting Professor at the State University of New York, Potsdam. Lanin is a member of the Scientific Board of Study Center Vasilij Grossman, Turin.

Recent publications include: *The Prose of the Third Wave of Emigration* (2018, 2nd rev. ed.) (in Russian); "Revolution in Babel's 'Red Cavalry' and Vasilii Grossman's Stories" (in *Russian Culture under the Sign of Revolution*, eds. V. Gretchko, SooHwan Kim, S. Nonaka, 2018) (in Russian); "Life and Fate' in Theatre and Cinema" (in *Grossman Studies: The Legacy of a Contemporary Classic*, eds. M. Calusio, A. Krasnikova, P. Tosco, 2016) (in Russian); "Les traditions classiques et les anti-utopies russes contemporaines" (in *La Revue Russe*, 43, 2014); "Vassilyi Grossman's Philosophical Ideas" (in *Acta Slavica Iaponica*, 36, 2015) (in Russian); "Stalin in Grossman's Prose" (in *Herald of RUDN University: Literary Studies/ Journalism*, 2014) (in Russian); and Vladimir Sorokin and Victor Pelevin, *a Hidden Dialog* (with H. Kaizawa, 2015) (in Japanese). Lanin's literature textbooks for the 5th to the 11th grades are widely used at secondary schools in the Russian Federation, with almost a million having been sold to date.

ABSTRACT

Russian Utopia considered social reality as something to be transformed: the title of Nikolai Chernyshevskii's novel *What Is To Be Done?* is indicative. A Utopian implied goal is the realization of a visionary future, anti-utopia depicts its dark consequences. "Anti-Utopia" suggests the negation of a specific 'utopian' system or construct. It implies that there may exist a genuine utopia. "Dystopia" suggests the impossibility of any utopia whatsoever.

Anti-Utopias in contemporary Russia have transformed from a literary genre into a method of modeling reality and depicting the near future. The orientation to political issues happened:

- 1) because of postmodernism's legacy, with its 'border crossing trends' that reshape the readers' picture of the world.
- 2) because of the transformation of a literary genre from intellectual mainstream into mass literature.
- 3) because modern anti-utopia becomes kind of 'universal' - social, philosophical, futurological, - and literary genre.