

The phenomenon of propaganda as reflected in Victor Pelevin’s novel S.N.U.U.F

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Abstract

The aim of this paper is to draw a parallel between today’s situation – not only political and military, but also between the ideological confrontation between Russia and the Western world and the religious wars, which were waged during the Reformation, and Counterreformation in Europe in the 17th century. Epoch when arguably wars were waged not only for the military domination in Europe, but also, and most importantly, for the minds of people. Jose Antonio Maravall in his book “Culture of Baroque: Analysis of Historical Structure” describes the means of influencing audiences, calling this influence a “Baroque mechanism”. The connection between the modern times and the epoch of Baroque is also described in Greg Lambert’s book “The Return of the Baroque in Modern Culture”. Lambert is comparing the alliance between politics and culture present in the modern world to that of Baroque epoch. Recent developments in Russian history and its reflection by the state propaganda and television quite often make the citizens feel that it is almost impossible to tell where fictional tragedy ends and a real one starts. The occupation of Crimea by the Russian Federation and the sanctions that followed gave rise to a new spiral of Russian propaganda which gave an impetus to a new wave of nationalism on the government-sponsored television and created the so called “Olgin Trolls” on the internet. This policy of state-sponsored ideology and propaganda found its reflection in Russian literature. Prominent contemporary writers, such as Viktor Pelevin and Vladimir Sorokin, gained almost prophetic status for their ability to predict developments in Russian politics albeit in a satirical and provocative form. By describing the present, Pelevin models the future and for this reason he is often credited with prophetic qualities. It seems that he manages to foresee not only the general outline of events, but also the smallest details. While reading Pelevin, one cannot help returning back to the title page and double check the date – it’s hard to believe that the book has been written not in the wake of the Chechen wars (Generation II) or the hybrid war

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with Ukraine (S.N.U.F.F.) but anticipated the events and provided their astonishingly accurate description. As a rule, Pelevin's books outpace the historic events by about five to six years. Presumably we are not dealing here with a mystical providence, but with Pelevin's unique ability to observe and his brilliant capacity for analysis. The aim of this paper is to analyze Viktor Pelevin's novel S.N.U.F.F. This post apocalyptic novel was published in 2011 and predicted the confrontation between Russia and the Western world, which began after 2014. Pelevin suggested even the name of Ukraine, albeit in a distorted form – Urkaina, which is a derivative of укры (the term which became to serve as a pejorative name for Ukrainians in Russia), орки (Orks by Tolkien) and урки (prisoners in the prison jargon). Although the book describes a dystopian future, one can clearly establish a connection with modern day realities. One of main discourses of the book is a fusion of ideology and art. The research based on works by Greg Lambert and Jose Antonio Maravall will be mainly focused on the analysis of the system, created in Pelevin's book. In this system society is based on the films it is itself producing. The films are divided in two halves: one part of the film is a pornographic footage, and other part is a footage of killing during war, hence both the book and the films are called snuffs. The films relentlessly fed to the public serve to educate it and to offer it news.

In this way they are the only source of information in Pelevin's dystopia. The connection discussed in this paper will show that these films carry out not only an educational and information functions, they also become the main object of a religious cult and are an integral part of ideological and religious propaganda.

The results of our analysis will hopefully show the mechanisms and effects of such forceful cultural pressure on individuals and how they can cope with and resist the pressure of government-controlled media.