

Abstract

Dirk Uffelmann (Passau)

The Chinese Future of Russian

В «Голубом салe» есть и то, и другое, и третье.

(Lipovetskii 2008)

Vladimir Sorokin is an excellent writer. His conceptualist (and also post-conceptualist) texts display a – deceiving – homogeneity on the stylistic surface which – in my view – is aesthetically highly valuable. I disagree with Sorokin’s critics who assume that with his Trilogy of 2002–06 “Сорокин исписался”. There is, I concede, one (rather short) period in his work when he wrote veritably bad literature – in the late 1990ies and early 2000s.

How is it possible to justify such a naive aesthetic judgement on one of the most anti-aesthetic and confronting writers ever? Is it not that Sorokin has been producing “bad texts” during his whole productive life? My argument will be that indeed, if viewed from an ethical point of view, while misunderstanding the un-ethical nature of his meta-aesthetical poetics and while referentially reading his meta-discursive texts, almost all works by Sorokin may be considered “bad”. From an aestheticist perspective, however, most of his texts are “good” according to the criterion of consistency and superficial homogeneity.

Among the few works by Sorokin which are exempt from this observation are the novel Goluboe salo [The Blue Lard] from 1999 and two short texts included in the compilation Pir [The Banquet] from 2001, Iu and Concretные, to sum it up: his “Chinese” texts. In my paper I am going to explore the poetics of “bad writing” inherent in these texts and to contrast it to the “good bad writing” of Sorokin’s earlier and later works.