

A b s t r a c t s

Birgit Menzel, Ulrich Schmid

The East within the West
Imports in Popular Culture

Numerous products of Western culture are imported from Eastern Europe. This is often overlooked, because the grievance struck up long ago by the Critical Theory of the "McDonaldisation" of European culture defines the debate to this day. On the other hand, impartial individual studies are as a rule limited in their analysis of popular culture to a certain national context. If, however, one follows the import routes of prominent phenomena to Western popular culture, it is seen that East European traditions and influences are present in various ways: They can be hidden by careful camouflage, made to adapt to public taste by cultural transformation or appear as something strikingly exotic.

Dorothea Redepenning

Broadway cum Rakhmaninov
East European Composers in Hollywood

Hollywood film music is a melting pot of popular hits and jazz, of European symphony, of opera, ballet, and Broadway show. It was above all emigrants from Europe who created this music, which belongs to American cultural identity. The melodic models and orchestral effects for producing melodramatic scenes with emotionally stirring sound are to be found in the works of Rakhmaninov and Chaikovskii. There is a subtle irony in the fact that America's most beautiful "native songs", the most popular western songs, were penned at the height of the Cold War by Dimitri Tiomkin, who had learned his trade in St. Petersburg.

Horst-Jürgen Gerigk

Two Russians in America
Irving Berlin and Dimitri Tiomkin

Irving Berlin and Dimitri Tiomkin provided American light music with lasting achievements. Berlin's *White Christmas* and Tiomkin's title song for the film *High Noon* are classics. Both composers hail from Russia and, in their careers, are classic examples of the cultural dialog between America and Europe. However, this should not lead to the impression that these two distinct cultures communicated with one another in light music. A coherent European-American cultural landscape has existed since the 18th century. Only within it could Berlin and Tiomkin make an impact.

Katharina Kucher

From Refugee Camp into the World's Concert Halls
This History of the Don Cossack Choir

Don Cossack Choirs belong to the German concept of Russian folklore just like the balaika, samovar und matryoshka. Numerous Black Sea, Volga, Ural and Don Cossack ensembles serve the West's longing for the expanses of the taiga and the depths of the Russian soul. Few fans of these burly, yet melancholy Cossack singers know that they are admirers of epigones. The "real" *Don Cossack Choir* was formed in the 1920s by members of the White Army in a Turkish refugee camp. The story of their rise to world stardom is at the same time the story of an odyssey of homeless men.

Helena Srubar

Magic from the East
Pan Tau Conquers West German Screens

The congenial children's hero Pan Tau was the most important export product of socialist Czechoslovakia. In the early 1970s, the series revolutionised West German children's television. With its mixture of everyday life and fantasy, it offered entertainment suitable for children and cinematic quality. Above all, however, it was considered critical of consumerism, anarchic and subversive – at the time attributes held in the highest of esteem. Simultaneously, it fulfilled, in Prague fashion, the canon of humanistic moral conception and complied with socialist state ideology.

Ilija Karenovics

Falling Eastern Blocs
Tetris or How the Soviet Union Made Game Boy a Superstar

Probably no other computer game can compete with Tetris when it comes to success and fame. Considerably less known is the fact that this puzzle game was invented by a Russian mathematician the same year Mikhail Gorbachev became general secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. In several ways, the history of this game can be considered symbolic for the perestroika era: With Tetris, Russian pop-culture makes a new start – but so does the global commercial success of Nintendo's handheld console Game Boy. Behind the scenes of this story, an international business mystery unfolds in which actors and institutions from the collapsing Soviet Union play a leading role.

Ulrich Schmid

Intercultural Incompetence
Borat Parodies Western Clichés about Eastern Europe

The Kazakh reporter Borat Sagdiyev is a fictional character created by the British comedian Sacha Baron Cohen. Borat is ostensibly out to make a documentary film in the West, but he emerges in fact as agent provocateur: Using politically incorrect statements, he entices his interlocutors into reacting in a way that has an impact on the audience. Last year, the film

Borat arrived in American and European cinemas. Acting within the loose-knit framework of a road movie, Cohen lets Borat perform in different episodes which attack precarious phenomena within U.S. society: obsequiousness, bigotry, sport fanaticism and cult of stardom.

Ellen Rutten

Dancing Around the Red Star

The Russian Disco between Nostalgia for the East and Socialist Art

Vladimir Kaminer's Russian Disco in Berlin has achieved cult status. It is an evening of dance for exile Russians and those nostalgic for the East. It deconstructs national stereotypes and plays with Western clichés of Russia. In doing so, the Russian Disco follows the practice of East European artists such as Vitalii Komar & Melamid or Oleg Kulik.

Mirja Lecke

Export Hit!

The Russian Girl Band *t.A.T.u.*

T.A.T.u. is the most successful Russian pop band of all time. This success is no coincidence; it is based on the skilful adaptation of the band's lesbian image to different cultural environments. *T.A.T.u.* was conceived as a way to provoke Russian society; by kissing in public, the duo succeeded in being banned twice in Western Europe and the United States, which drew considerable publicity. The pop duo's history shows how structures of the Western consumer industry are applied to Russian conditions, undergo change there and then influence the West's perception of Russia.

Holger Gemba

Ruslana

Intercultural Marketing from the Carpathians

In 2004, the Ukrainian singer Ruslana won the Eurovision Song Contest. Contrary to what the title of her song *Wild Dances* suggests, Ruslana is not wild but an educated, successful woman from western Ukraine. She was successful because she mirrored the stereotypes of her homeland and its people so that audiences saw their prejudices confirmed. Since 2006, Ruslana has changed her image. The ethno-regional clichés of *Wild Dances* have been replaced by the trans-national project *Wild Energy*. This marketing concept aims for a broader market.

Adrian Wanner

A Russian in New York

Gary Shteyngart and the Immigrant Chic

In his novels *The Russian Debutante's Handbook* and *Absurdistan*, Gary Shteyngart – Russian Jew, Soviet émigré, and New Yorker by choice – depicts his comet-like rise to “the new Nabokov” with considerable self-irony. With his East European immigrant novel, which

at the same time is a novel about exile Americans, Shteyngart is setting a new literary trend. Shteyngart, somewhat like Vladimir Kaminer in Germany, uses his Russian identity for self-promotion. In a grotesque mix of Russian, Jewish and (Afro-) American pop culture, he attacks American nostalgia for the East and Russian clichés and satirises the idea of an authentic national culture as well as that of the multi-cultural synthesis. Yet the border between parody and sentimentality, between kitsch and authentic national pride is fluid.

Maria Rubins

In Foreign Tongues

Milan Kundera's and Andreï Makine's French Prose

The trans-European identity of bilingual authors such as Milan Kundera and Andreï Makine forces us to reconsider the conventional categories of "East" and "West" or "foreign" and "native". Both authors have exchanged their homeland for exile; both write novels and essays in French. Their belonging to the European tradition combines with a distanced, "eastern" view of French culture, society and media. Kundera resists being classified as a Czech patriot and author. Instead, by means of inter-textual references, he stresses the transnational element of his work. Makine presents himself as writer and prophet in the tradition of Tolstoi and Dostoevskii and exposes cultural and historical myths.

Andrea Meyer-Fraatz

Balkan-Beat, Eskimos and a Polish Cream Gateau

Eastern Elements in Emir Kusturica's Film *Arizona Dream*

At first glance, Emir Kusturica's film *Arizona Dream* created a grotesque picture of conditions in America. At second glance, it is seen that the strange elements refer to Eastern culture. Behind the conspicuous natural symbolism lurk myths of Eskimos and Siberian peoples, which provide depth to a barely coherent plot. The soundtrack by Goran Bregović borrows from Balkan Roma music. All of this can be understood, for one, as an attempt to undo the East-West antagonism and, for another, points to the director's growing nationalism.

Tom Jürgens

Give Us This Day Our Daily Siberia

Imaginary Geography as German Pop Culture

Siberia is an enduring element of German pop culture: The novels of Edwin Erich Dwinger, Ferdinand Ossendowski or Heinz G. Konsalik influenced the 20th century as much as the first German television series "So weit die Füße tragen" (As Far as My Feet Will Carry Me) or Gerd Ruge's reportage. The images depicted here frequently utilise stereotypes established in the Siberian travelogues of the late 17th century and in the publications of German scientists in the 18th century. In doing so, the stereotype is not only a "flat picture", but fulfils a communicative function between mediation and overcoming trauma.

Andrei Rogachevskii

Marks Not Marx

Eastern Europe, the Supermarket and the British Health System

Necessity is the mother of invention. Michael Marks showed how to make affluence out of poverty. Due to the mounting pressure on Jews, he emigrated from the Tsarist empire to Great Britain in the 1880s. There he became a street trader. Because he could hardly speak English and could not haggle, Marks sold his goods at a single price. The idea of the supermarket was born. But not only is the idea of a consumer paradise for everybody linked to the chain Marks & Spencer. It also stood godfather to the British health system. The company has employee Flora Salomon – another Jewish emigrant from the Tsarist empire – to thank for this aspect of its reputation.

Andrea Huterer

We Poor Schlawiner

Elegy of a Slavic Loan Word

Slavic loan words in German can be counted on one hand. And when they are enunciated, they are not always titles of honour. While the Gentleman ostensibly hails from the West, Halunken (scoundrels) and Schabracken (hags) come to us from the East. Reason enough for a Slavic loan word which has remained anonymous to intone an elegy. Andrea Huterer chronicles its history.

Karlheinz Kasper

“Rome Lies Somewhere in Russia. . . ”

Russian Literature in German Translation 2006

Although the number of translations of Russian novels and poetry to German is below the annual average, there are several pleasant trends. At a time when prose or non-fiction prose is being pushed, it is impressive to see that several publishing houses have the courage to produce volumes of poetry which offer not only good adaptations but are pleasing to the eye in terms of layout and design. Among the novels, there are surprises and real discoveries, including demanding works by Leonid Tsypkin and Sergei Gandlevskii on the oppressive atmosphere of “stagnation”. With few exceptions, however, the copious supply of new Russian short stories remains beyond the scope of German publishing houses, which, for economic considerations, prefer to gamble on mystery and fantasy.

