

The merits of Hayton's careful research and analysis often reveal themselves more effectively at the paragraph level than in the book's overarching argument, however, for instance, examining tensions between punks and protestant clergy and within the East German Communist Party, efforts by the West German state to suppress punk, and punk's breeches into popular awareness, including on state airwaves, in Eastern Germany. These and myriad other examples, as well as the book's expansive and original archival research on both sides of the "iron curtain," make it well worth reading for scholars of east/central European punk and popular culture and anyone interested in comparing culture and society under state socialism and capitalism.

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Meanwhile, In Russia . . . Russian Internet Memes and Viral Video. By Eliot Borenstein. London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2022. 146 pp. Notes. Index. Illustrations. \$61.00, hard bound; \$17.95, paper.

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For such a small work *Meanwhile, In Russia* packs a big punch. The book traces the evolution of culture on the Russian internet (RUNET), showing that, while much of the content is not political in nature, the internet has been a relatively safe space for mocking those in power or the vagaries of everyday life. Absurdity is in fact often the point since, as Borenstein puts it, the "refusal to engage with official discourse on its own terms is a common thread running through Internet culture" (4). Two additional conclusions permeate Borenstein's analysis: he argues that it is impossible to separate internet content from "the real world" and that memes have long played an important role in the construction of Russian identity, something that makes them crucial to understanding events in the country today.

The book begins with two introductory chapters. The first explains the origins of the term "meme" and considers various ways of conceptualizing them. That is followed, in Chapter 2, by a discussion of Soviet memetic culture after World War II, in other words, from the era when state propaganda campaigns began to look increasingly stale. Borenstein shows how Soviet joke culture and Russian television advertisements from the 1990s paved the way for the widespread use of memes on the Russian internet. A closer examination of how memes play with the Soviet past is the subject of the next chapter. Among the examples that are discussed are images mocking the themes of death and immortality associated with the Lenin cult or reminding viewers about "highlights" of the Khrushchev era, such as his corn program and speech at the United Nations.

Borenstein shifts his focus to the contemporary era in the middle chapters of *Meanwhile in Russia*. First, what he terms folk heroes of the RUNET—characters such as the Jolly Milkman, Peter Piglet, Vatnik, and Zhdun—and how they fit into modern Russian culture are explained. The subsequent chapter offers a detailed analysis of memes about international figures, notably the "Putin—khuilo," "Obama is a Shmoe," "Angry Greta," and "What do you think of that, Elon Musk?" memes. Here, Borenstein reminds readers about a 2019 Russian law that allows for the prosecution of people who make memes about public figures, but notes that it is rarely used. Certainly, no one was charged in connection with the examples considered in the chapter. Other well-known memes such as the squatting Slav or those that involve dashcam footage are discussed in Chapter 6. Throughout this section of the book,

Borenstein underscores that while the images of DIY (do-it-yourself) projects gone wrong, drunks, bad drivers, and street thugs certainly do not offer a positive impression of modern Russian life, they do provide a kind of perverse pride in failure and dysfunction.

While the memes featuring prominent people mentioned above seem to have been ignored by Russian authorities, Chapter 7 of *Meanwhile in Russia* shows how other viral videos have gotten ordinary Russians in trouble. The 2015 moral panic over sexually provocative dancing, specifically twerking, by young women at war memorials is one of the examples. Another incident came in January 2018 when freshmen cadets at an aviation academy were filmed twerking. In both instances, Russian patriots were outraged, but their pronouncements only got them labeled as enemies of fun, while the dancers were deemed to be “fighting for the right to be frivolous” (95).

Borenstein’s final two chapters concern the ways in which works of art figure into Russian digital culture. He shows how Sots Art in the 1970s, which parodied official slogans and socialist realist images, was a precursor to the memes of today, before going on to discuss how famous paintings or strange images from medieval manuscripts often serve as a starting point for contemporary Russian memes. This fascination with art apparently continued during the Covid-19 pandemic, when “art of isolation” (*izoizoliatsiia*) became a popular trend on RUNET. It entailed people recreating a work of art with whatever they had on hand while in isolation; photoshopping the images was specifically frowned upon.

Meanwhile in Russia is both a first-rate, in-depth study of the Russian internet world and a snapshot of a particular moment in time (namely 2020 when Borenstein wrote the book). The plentiful examples are well-chosen and make his main arguments abundantly clear to readers. The lively prose means the book is well-suited for teaching purposes, although it must be said that the publishers did the book a disservice with the illustrations, which are small and only in black and white. Still that is only a minor quibble with an excellent book.

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Tideline. By Krystyna Dąbrowska. Trans. Karen Kovacic, Antonia Lloyd-Jones, and Mira Rosenthal. Brookline, Mass.: Zephyr Press, 2022. xvi, 164 pp. \$16.00, paper. doi: 10.1017/slr.2023.201

To write poetry in Poland today is to follow an increasingly hermetic pursuit in the shadow of giants. In the late twentieth century, Polish poetry boasted two Nobel laureates—Czesław Miłosz (1980) and Wisława Szymborska (1996)—and a host of other internationally influential figures, including Zbigniew Herbert, Tadeusz Różewicz, and Adam Zagajewski. The end of this extraordinary era is still very recent. Szymborska passed away in 2012, Różewicz in 2014, and Zagajewski in 2021. They have left behind the memory of a blockbuster poetry that sold thousands of volumes and filled concert halls. Following them has been a challenge for new generations of poets working without the mystique—or burdens—of their predecessors’ often unwanted status as national “bards.”

Yet poetry has continued to develop impressively in Poland, both continuing the great tradition and fighting against it, with an innovative scene concentrated in university departments, small journals, and literary prize galas. Among the most acclaimed and accessible of the contemporary poets is Krystyna Dąbrowska, whose