Writing the Self in Times of Catastrophes: Belarusian Autofiction after 2020

Panel discussion
06.10.2026
18:00 - 19:30 (Berlin)
19:00 - 20:30 (Minsk)

The discussion will be simultaneously translated into English and Belarusian.

One of the most notable phenomena in contemporary literature is autofiction: literature that exists in the space between fact and fiction, engaging with questions of identity, memory, trauma and the process of writing itself. Such texts have gained recognition from both the wider public and literary institutions, with Annie Ernaux being awarded the Nobel Prize in 2022.

In line with global trends, Belarusian literature has produced a wealth of autofictional texts in recent years, particularly since the pivotal year of 2020. Several such books have been awarded the Jerzy Giedroyc Prize, Belarus's most prestigious literary award. Publishing houses in exile continue to release numerous works that seek to make sense of a world with new spatial and temporal boundaries, shaped by mass repression and emigration. In this world, memory and identity acquire new dimensions. Cultural scholar Maksim Zhbankou suggests considering such literature as post-apocalyptic or 'postfiction'.

In this online discussion, we will explore why autofiction has become a fitting form through which to understand the Belarusian experience of recent years. What does the 'Self' look like in autofiction, and how are language, gender, sexuality, experiences of migration and a sense of belonging to Belarus reflected in it? How do these texts relate the individual 'Self' to the collective traumas of a generation, community and country? Does postfiction perpetuate the discourse of victimhood so prevalent in twentieth-century Belarusian literature, or does it offer an alternative? Where does the boundary lie between memoir, documentary prose and autofiction, and between reality and fiction? How important is this distinction? Are autofiction and postfiction truly literatures of crisis? If so, what will become of this literature when the historical situation changes?

Moderation

Yaraslava Ananka, Leipzig University

Discussion

Pavel Ancipau, author and publisher at 'Miane niama' Publishing House
Hanna Jankuta, author, translator and literary scholar
Tatsiana Zamirovskaya, author and journalist

Introduction

Simon Lewis, University of Bremen

Registration here:

https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_QoB6JlMkQXmgUa_4UwaQhA