

Ruins and History: Observations on Russian Approaches to Destruction and Decay

ANDREAS SCHÖNLE

This article surveys theories of ruins and discusses their applicability to Russian history and culture. It identifies four major approaches to ruins: the ruin as a site of freedom from social norms and practices (Denis Diderot, Peter Fritzsche, Tim Edensor), the ruin as a reconciliation with nature (Georg Simmel), the ruin as the affirmation of modernity at the expense of the past (Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno), and the ruin as the emblem of on-going historical decay (Walter Benjamin). In contrast to western approaches to ruins, Schönle identifies a reluctance to aestheticize ruins in Russian culture. Yet ruins acquire a distinctive meaning in Russian culture, be it that they occur and disappear as a result of political will, that they serve as exemplars of imperial legitimacy and might, that they reveal the vulnerability of Russia's identity between east and west, or that they betoken the crushing of utopian projects and the magnitude of historical devastation.

Derzhavin's Ruins and the Birth of Historical Elegy

LUBA GOLBURT

Through the prism of Gavriil Derzhavin's 1797 poem "Razvaliny" (Ruins), Luba Golburt explores two concurrent developments in Russian cultural history: the fragmentation of Catherine the Great's overwhelming legacy after her death in 1796 and the contemporaneous weakening of the classicist genre system, which gave rise to such hybrid genres as the historical elegy. In its temporal polyvalence, the historical elegy bears great resemblance to the ruin, a semi-preserved historical artifact, which in the late Enlightenment/early Romantic period becomes the central image for experiencing history. Derzhavin's poem appropriately enacts historical recollection in a place overpopulated by ruins and pregnant with memories of recent history, Tsarskoe Selo. Drawing on a wide variety of sources, the essay tracks the emergence of this summer estate as the central *locus memoriae* in Russian poetry and disentangles the intertwining threads of textual and pictorial representation in Derzhavin's work.

Piranesi in Petrograd: Sources, Strategies, and Dilemmas in Modernist Depictions of the Ruins (1918–1921)

POLINA BARSKOVA

It has long been common to interpret the mythology of St. Petersburg through the prism of eschatological prophecy. But what happens to the cultural tradition when the prophecy of doom comes to be experienced

as reality, and predictions give way to reaction? How did the discourse of the end of Petersburg change when the legendary curse of Peter's estranged wife—"This city will be empty"—turned into the devastation of postrevolutionary Petrograd: violent, starved, frozen, and diseased? In this article Polina Barskova explores various cultural expressions of the urban crisis in the years just after 1917. These artistic reactions come from Viktor Shklovskii, Pavel Shillingovskii, Semen Pavlov, and Grigorii Kozintsev, among others. Here, the focus is on the tension between two impulses: to distance and aestheticize the ruins or to bring them closer to author and recipient, rendering these signs of urban disaster maximally incoherent and ugly. The article argues that the Petersburg authors use both strategies, as well as their hybrids.

The Past in Common: Modern Ruins as a Shared Urban Experience of Revolution-Era Moscow and Petersburg

GREGORY STROUD

In this article, Gregory Stroud considers the modern ruin as a site of common urban conversation and identity for large, diverse, and otherwise fractious populations of Petersburg and Moscow residents. Stroud argues that what began at the turn of the century as a relatively narrow nostalgic intellectual movement anxious over the perceived modern loss of timeless beauty and value exploded with the frustrations of the Christmas holiday during World War I into a common boulevard conversation concerning the loss of holiday, ritual, authenticity, and habit. The failure of the old regime to satisfactorily engage this conversation and to offer meaningful solutions would render such nostalgia into a biting critique of autocracy, mass consumerism, private property, and shopkeeper capitalism.

Decay or Endurance? The Ruins of Socialism

THOMAS LAHUSEN

The building of socialism, in its concrete and metaphorical sense, has been in a state of constant decay—in ruins—from its very foundation. For those who inhabited it, endurance became a way of life. It is precisely this endurance that explains the resistance, by both people and the landscapes in which they live, to the market. Nostalgia for socialism has become a commodity, but not for those who still live in its ruins, because they are home. This essay by Thomas Lahusen explores this ruined landscape, from the vanishing Palace of the Republic in Berlin and the decrepit-looking buildings made of precast concrete slabs of real socialism, to its culture, which shares decay and ruin with its built structures. Lahusen juxtaposes this landscape to philosophical essays on the collapse of communism and to recent histories, some of which yield new fetishes and new commodities.

Eating Out in Imperial Russia: Class, Nationality, and Dining before the Great Reforms

ALISON K. SMITH

During the first half of the nineteenth century, arguments over Russian social structure played a central role in discussions of eating establishments. The Russian state controlled these establishments in part through legislation that kept social groups apart; it focused particularly on the extremes of the social hierarchy, showing little interest in the middling groups. In more narrative descriptions of eating establishments, however, the middling groups—or their absence—seemed remarkably important. Foreign observers generally felt that Russia lacked both a middle class and middling eating establishments. Russians in part agreed, but by the middle of the century they were more likely to locate a middle class among one particular group: Moscow's merchants.

The Economic Dimensions of Art in the Stalinist Era: Artists' Cooperatives in the Grip of Ideology and the Plan

GALINA YANKOVSKAYA

In this essay Galina Yankovskaya explores the economic aspects of Soviet artistic life, which were often as important as political factors or censorship in determining the formal features and content of art production. Yankovskaya considers a complex of multisided trends: Russian artists' egalitarian imagination, the expectations of a new art audience, and the authorities' intentions. Exploring the confusing history of art institutions (mostly Vsekokhudozhnik, but also the Union of Artists and the Artistic Fund) within the everyday routines of the Soviet planned economy enables Yankovskaya to examine the clash of economic, ideological, and political motives in Stalinist culture and to look at how artists escaped from official ideology or exploited it for their own goals of appearing "busy." Certain specific practices from this system of art production and distribution, such as the state's financial support as well as regulation of the art market, copyright law, and the mass production of handmade copies, survived into the post-Stalinist period.