

Title: Exploring the Limits of Empire: Eurasianism in Pavel Krusanov's *The Bite of an Angel* (1999)

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Shortly after the fall of the Soviet Union, a Neo-Eurasianist movement gained popularity in Russia, both within the masses, the intellectuals and the political elite. Eurasianist themes penetrated into a wide array of literary texts, from pulp fiction to the popular intellectual prose of Pavel Krusanov. Krusanov assumes a philosophical interest in the Eurasianist ideas of empire, ethnic and cultural amalgamation, and the spiritual significance of the land. Identifying himself ideologically as an "empirist," he believes that his works reflect the Post-Soviet nostalgia of many Russians for the lost geographical scope and political power. Author of five novels and numerous short stories, Krusanov gained wide popularity with his first novel *The Bite of an Angel* (*Ukus Angela*, 1999). This intricate text, rich in cultural and philosophical allusions and phantasmagoric details, received mixed responses from the critics. Some claimed that the author promoted the cause of conservative Eurasianist ideologues, others interpreted the novel as a parody on the Russian-Eurasian empire.

I suggest that despite his "empirist" inclinations, Krusanov did not write *The Bite of an Angel* with the sole purpose of promoting Eurasianist imperialism. Rather, he explored the philosophic and aesthetic limits of empire as a concept, basing his experiment on the familiar Eurasian terrain, and, perhaps, secretly hoping for the empire's success.

Ultimately, the novel shows the failure of an Empire, but why, as an "empirist," does Krusanov write a story of failure? If his imperialism functions in the novel covertly, how did this text produce such a variety of conflicting interpretations and a host of admirers on each side? Looking for answers to these questions, I offer a reading of the novel and an interpretation of its reception by considering the intellectual and political climate of the time, as well as Krusanov's own insights.