

Eric Naiman, University of California, Berkeley

“Lynchers at Heart’: Another Look at Nabokov’s ‘Signs and Symbols’

From the everyday lines for consumer goods to the ritual line into Lenin’s tomb, the queue was a defining social formation of Soviet Communism. This panel explores figurations of the queue in Soviet and post-Soviet literature, film, and popular culture. In “The Revolutionary Queue: Breadlines in Pudovkin, Shub, and Eisenstein,” Jillian Porter analyzes early Soviet cinematic representations of the women’s breadlines credited with triggering the February Revolution. Porter highlights the gendered conceptual history of the queue, studying its depictions as a site of public time and imagination in which women’s bodies frequently predominate. In “Moving Beyond the Physical Queue: Allocation as Trope,” Andrew Chapman focuses on the crucial role queues played in the state’s planned distribution of goods and services. Examining skits and cartoons from post-Stalin satirical journals as well as Aleksandr Zinov’ev’s sociological novel *Yawning Heights* (1976), Chapman proposes that much like the Soviet economy, Soviet culture may be productively understood as an “allocative system.” In “Queue Time as Queer Time: An Occasion for Pleasure and Desire in the Brezhnev Era and Today,” Anna Fishzon views queues as exemplary of a “queer temporality” that emerged in the years of Stagnation, when the Stalinist past was unspeakable and the future postponed or foreclosed. Considering Olga Grushin’s *The Line* (2010), David Bezmozgis’s *The Free World* (2011), and the songs of Regina Spektor, Fishzon argues that this same queer temporality continues to haunt the narrative fiction and music of the Soviet and post-Soviet diaspora. As a whole, the panel draws recent interdisciplinary work on queues and crowds together with seminal studies of Soviet spaces, temporalities, and imaginaries by Svetlana Boym, Alexei Yurchak, Caroline Humphrey, Katherine Verdery, and Eric Naiman, shedding new light on one of the most powerful tropes of the Soviet experience.