

Title: Anthropocene for the Skeptic: Valentin Kataev's *Time, Forward!*

Author: Elvira Godek- Kiryluk, University of Illinois at Chicago

Abstract:

The provocation of my title aims not at those who deny climate change or brownwash the science that supports it, but addresses itself toward those, like myself, who doubt that the Anthropocene as a conceptual framework delivers on a promise of social engagement that it makes to the well meaning academic. Such a skeptic would argue that a geological lens essentializes human behavior that leads to the destruction of the environment as a matter of course for human nature and thereby obviates the possibility and effectiveness of political agency. Recent interventions, like *Capitalism in the Web of Life* by Jason W. Moore and Ian Angus's *Facing the Anthropocene: Fossil Capitalism and the Crisis of the Earth System* shift the focus of the discussion from a geological lens to a critique of capitalism, a shift already signalled cleverly by a collection of essays that Moore edited: *Anthropocene or Capitalocene?* Approaching the concerns and ambitions of the Anthropocene in terms of a critique of capitalism enables the critic to engage with both the currency of the Anthropocene and the specificity of Russian art and literature of the 1920s and 30s precisely on the ground of thematizing determinism. Kataev's novel pits the unbridled Soviet enthusiasm for the machinery that bridles nature vis-à-vis, on the one hand, the historical determinism of Soviet Marxism and, on the other, the revolutionary agency presupposed in the ideological project of state building.