

Title: The Body In The Dark: Body Representations And Social Identities In *Chernukha* Art
Volha Isakava, University of Alberta

My paper examines the representation of the body in *chernukha* films of the late 1980s and early 1990s. Taking up the concept of “body genre” developed by Linda Williams (1991), I argue that the cinematic cycle or movement in the late Soviet and early post-Soviet cinema known as *chernukha* cinema could be similarly categorized as cinema that involves bodily representation as the primary means to elicit the “visceral” or bodily reaction from the viewer. *Chernukha*, as was pointed out by several critics (Andrew Horton & Michael Brashinsky 1994; Mark Lipovetsky 1991), owes a lot in its vision to 19th century naturalism, concentrating on the determination of human subjectivity by the social environment and exploring the marginalized identities that are fostered by a specific social milieu. My goal in this paper is to examine how the medium of film presents a vision of the body in a given environment (certain milieus are specific to the *chernukha* trend, such as: industrialized landscapes, deteriorating apartments, crowded public spaces, etc.); and how that vision contradicts or supports the naturalist vision as well as presents a specific image of the body. I would like to trace how the social metaphor translates into visual language in *chernukha*. I argue that *chernukha* film gives us a vision of the body that is immersed and consumed by its environment in a literal sense: it is a restrained and suffering body that agonizes and vanishes against the backdrop of the chaotic and hostile environment. I will examine how the *mise-en-scene*, *Kammerspiele* techniques and shot length formally contribute to that vision. I will draw my examples from a few films of the period, namely *Little Vera* (Vasilii Pichul 1988) and *The Dog's Feast* (Leonid Menaker 1990) and possibly several others.