

Title: The Contemporary Avant-garde Literary Market: A Co-opted or Nonco-opted Reading
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The avant-garde movement between Velimir Khlebnikov's 1909-12 works and Daniil Kharms' death in 1942 maintains a very prominent position within intellectual and critical discourse. This paper is a theoretical summary of Panova (2006, 2008, forthcoming), providing an explanation for interpreting the avant-garde intellectual market by introducing two new concepts: the "avant-garde contract" and the "co-opted reading."

As with any other literary movement, the avant-garde made a contract with its readers. Accordingly, the author created a radically new type of literature and brought innovative perspectives to mankind, which were directed at an audience, not an individual reader, and engaged elements of the prophetic, genius, abeyance and worship, resulting in masochistic pleasure. This contract established the cult of the avant-garde, which still exists today and helps to market its product as exceptional.

Avant-garde scholarship since the 1920s has been divided into two branches. The mainstream approach was launched by R. Jakobson et al and relies on the myths that the avant-garde movement created about itself. Engaging in a "co-opted reading" these scholars certified that avant-garde authors were what they pretended to be, thereby fulfilling the avant-garde contract. The minor branch of scholarship represented by D. Sviatopolk-Mirsky et al analyzes the avant-garde from an external (objective) perspective and is usually suppressed by the mainstream scholars. These market pressures create a dilemma for modern avant-garde scholars. Choosing the co-opted reading elevates further the rating of the avant-garde, avant-garde studies and the scholar's own work, but is engaged in mythmaking, while choosing a nonco-opted reading reduces the value of the avant-garde and the scholar, while generating accusations by mainstream critics of a non-scholarly attitude toward the subject.

Works Cited

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