

Call for Papers

Writing on the Border in the Post-Stalinist Era: Identities, Conflicts, Dialogues

Workshop, 25 March 2026

Institute of Slavic Studies, TU Dresden, Germany

The Soviet Union developed a unique and deeply contradictory system of internal borders that continue to shape the post-Soviet space today. As Evgeny Dobrenko has noted, the Soviet empire was structured by two opposing vectors: pragmatically, it relied on classical imperial principles of differentiation and domination, while rhetorically promoting internationalist ideals of homogeneity, equality, and solidarity. The two logics were not complementary, but mutually undermining. These internal, often invisible borders – ethnic, linguistic, symbolic, institutional, and the contradiction of simultaneous ‘friendship’ and prison of peoples – did not vanish with liberalization. Fluid and contested, they fostered both hybrid cultural forms and lasting tensions, making the study of Soviet border-making essential for understanding the conflicts and cultural fractures that followed the collapse of the USSR.

The recent development of border studies has shown that borders both divide and connect, mark limits and generate meaning. Borders are not fixed lines but dynamic, context-dependent, and multilayered practices that shape identities, ways of thinking, social practices, produce difference, and structure power (Victor Konrad and Anne-Laure Amilhat Szary, *Border Culture: Theory, Imagination, Geopolitics*, 2023).

This workshop focuses on literature from the post-Stalinist period to the final decades of the USSR, examining how literary texts engaged with the internal borders of the Soviet state – ethnic, linguistic, symbolic, and institutional. We see literature as a medium through which borders are constructed, challenged, and reimagined. Authors working between languages, republics, and cultural traditions often created hybrid and multidimensional narratives that resisted the homogenizing logic of Soviet cultural universalism. We are particularly interested in how writers responded to the contradictions of the so-called “national question,” negotiating the tensions between official internationalism and the persistence of asymmetrical cultural hierarchies. We are interested in how border writing or writing on the border reflects and produces liminality, marginality, multiplicity, and shifting subject positions within the late Soviet cultural matrix.

We welcome papers that address, but are not limited to, the following **topics and questions**:

- Theoretical approaches to borders in the analysis of late Soviet literature and culture

- Literary explorations of the “national question” and internal asymmetries
- Multilingual and cross-cultural writing in the USSR
- Representations of ethnic, linguistic, symbolic, or institutional borders
- Poetics of border narratives and textual constructions of space and identity
- Literary forms of cultural translation, hybridity, and in-betweenness
- Double and multi-coded literature
- Institutions, networks, and agents of border writing
- Transformations of travel writing and internal Soviet mobility
- Gendered, embodied, and affective dimensions of border narratives

Papers addressing related topics beyond the specified period are also welcome. PhD students and early-career researchers are particularly encouraged to apply.

Format and submission details

The workshop language is English. Presentations should be delivered in English and last no more than **20 minutes**, followed by 15 minutes discussion.

The organisers will provide accommodation in Dresden (up to 2 nights) for accepted speakers. Travel expenses may be reimbursed (fully or partially) in cases where institutional funding is not available. Due to the limited budget, decisions regarding the extent of reimbursement will be made on a case-by-case basis, depending on individual circumstances. If you wish to apply for travel support, please indicate this in your application and include your **city of departure** and **estimated travel costs**.

How to apply: Please send one PDF (1. title and abstract, max. 400 words; 2. short bio, max. 200 words) to **alena.pantiukhina@mailbox.tu-dresden.de** by **13 December 2025** (subject: *Workshop Application – Writing on the Border*).

For questions, please contact the organisers at the same email address.

Organised by:

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