

CALL FOR PAPERS

28th-31st of May 2009

Place:

University of
Tampere,
Finland

Organizers:

Department of
Russian
Language and
Culture and
Research
Project
Generation,
National
Identity and
the Body:
Polish and
Russian
Women's
Writing in
Transformation



photo by sonick

Women's Nature Writing: New Perspectives on Polish and Russian Literature

The aim of the international conference is not only to study environmental debates but, through them, to examine the myriad ways in which Russian and Polish culture and nature relationships are negotiated. The conference will examine how natural and human worlds are intertwined and how they are evaluated within processes of identification concerning nationality, race, social and gendered contexts, among others. The conference is motivated by a growing interest among literary and cultural studies scholars during the past decade to examine nature and environment from a cultural studies point of view. The ecocritical study of nature in particular has taken an "earth-centred approach" to literary studies. At its centre are questions concerning the relationships between culture and nature, human and animal. We ask how nature is being constructed by cultural artefacts, and how various representations of nature may affect the practice of environmental policy. The questions of our conference will follow the discussion originated by ecocritical scholars while reading nature as an example of cultural rhetoric. The questions will deal with reciprocal relationships between humans and land, environmental ethics and representations of nature in literary work. The questions to be posed are, for example, how physical setting is drawn in novels? What are the values connected with ecological questions? What are the metaphors given to landscapes in the products of culture and literature?

The ecocritical approach of literary studies on nature having its roots in Western studies, has its equivalent Russian scholarship. In the last ten or so years, there has been a strong scholarly interest among Russian philologists, too, to examine national traditions, i.e. how nature has been represented in Soviet-Russian literature, what kinds of metaphors and tropes have been used in order to paint the “Russian” natural landscape.

However, very little has been said about women’s ambivalent response to the nature/culture debate. Apart from a few random essays, there is almost no scholarly work on Russian women’s literary contribution to the understanding of the environment and the (Soviet) Russian natural world.

Our conference will pay special attention to this challenging, yet neglected, task; the relationship between gender and nature. The papers will examine how women writers have contributed to the Russian investigation of nature, and whether we can find connections between patterns and differences between historical texts of women’s nature writing. The majority of papers will be concerned with Russian literary history (19th–20th centuries and contemporary literature) which will be compared with Polish literary material.

Accordingly, while bringing together contemporary Western cultural and literary methodological approaches (e.g. ecocriticism, ecofeminism, ecophilosophy) and Russian and Polish ecological ways of seeing, the conference will open up a new field for a basic study of Russian culture and literature. The conference offers a new perspective to the study of nature in national traditions connected with gender and challenged by contemporary aspects of global environmental crises.

The conference “Women’s Nature Writing: New Perspectives on Polish and Russian Literature” invites scholars of Russian and Polish women’s literature to offer new insights into this emerging field of inquiry. We propose to study the topic in the framework of the following categories and contexts:

- *nature-culture negotiations and representations
- *nature/landscape as a category of identity
- *genre and gender in Russian or Polish “nature writing”
- *national traditions of nature writing and gender
- *memory and landscape
- *body and nature in women’s literature
- *gendered metaphors of nature
- *metaphors of land and ecological knowledge
- *civilization and wilderness
- *environmental crisis in literature and popular culture
- *environmental ethics

The working languages are English and Russian. Deadline for abstracts is 28th February 2009. Abstracts (max. 500 words) should be submitted electronically to arja.rosenholm@juta.fi and marja.rytkonen@juta.fi. The final programme will be announced in April 2009.

