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Research Project

Fantasy, Fiction, Faction, and Fascism. A Comparative Literary and Discursive Analysis of the Contemporary U.S. American and Russian Radical Right's Narratives of Empire

Project funded by own resources

Project title Fantasy, Fiction, Faction, and Fascism. A Comparative Literary and Discursive Analysis of the Contemporary U.S. American and Russian Radical Right's Narratives of Empire

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This comparative thesis examines narratives of newly revived imperial greatness as expressed in radical right Russian and U.S. American speculative fiction. The annexation of the Crimea in 2014 and Putin's populist and nationalist stance have encouraged the Russian ultraconservative right to openly call for a new Russian empire. Across the Atlantic, the U.S.' long existing imperial policies have never been voiced more clearly than under the Trump presidency with the paligenetic campaign slogan "Make America Great Again," and with the rise of a new radical right-wing movement, the alt-right. While these developments have been analyzed from the perspective of political science, literary studies investigations have been scarce. Literary expertise, however, is absolutely necessary when analyzing this recent surge in neo-imperialism, for a socio-political approach does not fully capture the historical and rhetorical thrust of these issues. Purely historical analyses, on the other hand, often disregard how right-wing notions are developed collectively through literary and fictional means. To address this lacuna of scholarship, the project reads literary texts, more specifically speculative fiction, a highly popular genre of literature including sci-fi, fantasy, and alternate history, for which the concept of *alternative utopia* will be coined, against the background of far-right texts written or spoken for a realpolitik audience, such as speeches, articles, and essays. Both textual genres will be analyzed with regard to the permeability of fiction and faction by means of close readings in terms of narratology and reader-response criticism in order to reveal the way in which they intend to influence society's opinion-forming processes. In a synchronic approach, the two national discourses, which are inextricably intertwined, are then compared to reveal the ways in which they adopt the other's rhetoric and line of argument, without disregarding the specificity of each literary tradition. This thesis thus aims at examining the literary access to political topics in fictional texts through a comparative approach, paving the way for further interdisciplinary radical right studies, which, in an age of ever-increasing right-wing violence, is needed in order to properly assess, deconstruct, and counteract this discriminatory discourse.

Keywords empire,fantasy,fascism,right wing,fiction

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