

Title: Turning the Rivers Backwards: Temporal Aspects in Kir Bulychev's The Chronos River
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Abstract:

“Revisiting the recent past is still an ongoing process in Russia, but one thing is already crystal clear and agreed upon: the USSR is seen as “the lost paradise” - such a conclusion was made by the Colta.ru upon commenting on the patriotic TV-series “Sleepers” that Channel One launched in 2017. The “lost paradise” concept is also supported by an impressive amount of sociological data collected within the last three decades. These data show that the evaluation of the Soviet past has shifted dramatically, from highly critical in the 1990s to nostalgic and melancholy in the second decade of the twenty-first century.

There is no doubt that such a change could not have happened instantaneously, which makes tracing the change in reflections of the Soviet past an intriguing research project. I approach it by analyzing the works of Russian speculative fiction and alternative history (альтернативно-историческая фантастика) written on the topic of the Russian Revolution from the 1990s to the present. The specifics of the genre compel its authors to provide a specific vision of temporality, historical time and its driving forces, while the revolutionary events of 1917 are almost necessarily linked in such works with the following Soviet period.

The focus of this paper is the series The Chronos River written from the 1980 to the 2000s by the prominent Soviet science fiction writer Kir Bulychev. By analyzing the key historical figures and the alternate outcomes of important historical events presented in the series, I intend to shed some light on the proposed historical and temporal model, and the role of individuals in the historical process. The second part of the paper analyzes the readership response that The Chronos River produced and situates this literary work within the historical and social context of the 1990s.