

In Search of the Grand: Pavel Krusanov

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Pavel Krusanov (1961-), a native of St. Petersburg is a prolific and talented writer who is nevertheless little known outside of Russia. His most important works are *Ukus angela* (*The Bite of an Angel*) (2000), *Bom-Bom* (2003) and *Amerikanskaia dyrka* (*The American Hole*) (2005). Krusanov also attracted some attention in 2000, when a group of St. Petersburg writers and philosophers wrote an open letter to president Putin: A Russian leader, whether his title be tsar, *gensek* or president ought never to forget that the ultimate goal of Russian foreign policies remains to acquire the city of Constantinople, the Bosphorus and the Dardanelles. While the letter certainly had an ironic and playful form, it remains difficult to define whether these qualities applied to content as well.

Each of the three novels seems to explore certain aspect of Russian national mythology. *The Bite of Angel* tells of Russia's destiny in an alternative history. Russia acquires her ultimate goals, Constantinople and the straits, but is herself at the mercy of a perfect despot. In *Bom-Bom* Russia's destiny is dependent on a hidden struggle between good and evil forces. At the beginning of the 20th century, evil gained the upper hand, and the cataclysms that followed were a result of this. In *The American Hole*, a Pskov-based internet firm wages a successful war against the Evil Empire (USA) by means of practical jokes.

According to Krusanov himself, his literary programme is threefold: 1) The author wants to challenge the hegemony of realism. According to him, only realist literature is generally accepted as serious literature. 2) For too long Russian literature has been dealing with "the little man". It is time to explore the idea of the *great* man, the singular personality, irrespective of whether this person is good or evil. 3) To take part in what he conceives of as Russian literature's search of a *new grand style*.