In the fall of 2013, Ukrainian president Viktor Yanukovych (b. 1950) rejected a deal for greater economic integration of Ukraine into the European Union in favor of closer ties with Russia. In the Ukrainian capital city of Kyiv, violent riots involving police, unknown shooters, and protesters known as the Euromaidan or the Revolution of Dignity (2013-14) culminated in the president fleeing the country and the overthrow of the government. Following Russia's annexation of Crimea, the world witnessed the beginning of a major civil war in Donbas (eastern Ukraine) where pro-Russian separatist troops fought the Ukrainian army, with soldiers coming from all over the Russian Federation, European countries, the United States, and South America. Many of these pro-Russian groups displayed the Ribbon of Saint George, Russian flags and coat of arms, and communist, Soviet, and fascist symbols. At the time, I did not understand how these different ideological symbols fit with these events.

My recent reading of Fabrizio Fenghi’s book, *It Will Be Fun and Terrifying: Nationalism and Protest in Post-Soviet Russia*, has brought light on and a new understanding of the events of 2013-14. In this volume, the author examines how the aesthetics and culture of radical countercultural movements influenced the development of Russian protest culture and the formation of state ideology during the Vladimir Putin era. More specifically, Fenghi focuses on two far-right groups inspired by revolutionary aesthetics and performance, which played a role in the 2014 Donbas war: the National Bolshevik Party (NBP) and the Eurasia Movement. Both groups reject mainstream culture and Western ideology and perceive Russia as the only site where a new society can be created.

The NBP was founded by Eduard Limonov (1943-2020), an underground poet in the Soviet Union, emigré writer, and political activist. Many of Limonov's novels are semi-biographical, and the author skillfully crosses the blurry line that lays between his fictional and real life events. Like Limonov, his characters live at the margins of society and threaten the social order by use of violence, sexuality, and crude language. Thus, per-
formativity plays a crucial role in Limonov’s novels, politics, literature, and public persona (chapter 1). In both his writings and actions, the poet challenges established values and hierarchies and longs for an alternative imagined community influenced by the Western punk movement, a style and spirit known for “its aggressive stance and radical rejection of bourgeois and mainstream values” (p. 35). More specifically, the NBP’s aesthetics were influenced by the art of punk musician Yegor Letov (1964-2008) and experimental composer and performer Sergey Kuryokhin (1954-96). Limonov’s political action was at first mostly artistic performances (real and fictional), influenced by the aesthetics of constructivism, the Russian and the Soviet avant-garde, and revolutionary culture, as seen in the radical aesthetics and content in the party’s publication, Limonka (chapter 2). He believed that only through radical performance and revolutionary art a new liberal opposition and social order can be created.

The creation of the NBP in the mid-1990s marked the first post-Soviet counter-public activity. It was among the most vocal opponents of Putin’s government and supported human rights activism. Its activities later influenced other performance groups, such as the Voina (War) art collective and Pussy Riot (chapter 3). However, throughout the years, the NBP’s countercultural principles and protest against the status quo changed to display a strong anti-Western and anti-capitalist sentiment, a rejection of modernism, a military aesthetics, and radical conservative thinking. In Limonov’s thought, war is perceived as a beautiful and formative experience and Russia is the last possible site for an alternative modernity and utopian society. By 2014, his activities, which first focused on human rights and dissident movement, converted toward clear support of the Donbas war and Putin’s annexation of Crimea.

The second important figure in this Russian countercultural movement is Aleksandr Dugin (b. 1962), an underground mystical artist philosopher from the writing circle of nonconformist author Yuri Mamin (b. 1946). Dugin was fascinated by cultural and political fascism and had the idea to create a red-brown coalition that combined radically different ideologies of the right and left wings, including leftist radical Stalinism, anarchism, classicism, and youth countercultures and subcultures (radical artists, skinheads, punks, etc.). This ideology emerged in force after the fall of the Soviet Union as a reaction to its unsuccessful transition to democracy and capitalism. In the NBP, Dugin endorsed the role of theoretician and ideologue while Limonov played the man of action. They eventually split and became political adversaries in 2005, as Dugin’s newly founded Eurasia Movement actively promoted repressive measures against any liberal opposition.

The Eurasia Movement is also resistant to mainstream culture and is defined by a cult of the late Soviet underground, paradoxical and esoteric thinking, bohemianism, and the cult of death and the apocalypse. It assimilated radical political strategies, imperial aesthetics, and the concept of “otherness,” as seen in the work of artists Aleksey Beliaev-Gintovt (b. 1965), Georgy Gurianov (1961-2013), and Timur Novikov (1958-2002) (chapter 5). Like the extremist youth group Nashi (Ours), the Eurasia Movement was created in 2005 to counteract a possible emergence of an “orange” wave of liberalism, as seen in Ukraine in 2004. Unlike the NBP though, the Eurasia Movement is by and large a virtual entity that is trying to colonize and recolonize Russian cultural and political space against Western agents by producing preconditions for violence and conflict through their influence of mainstream media. The Eurasia Movement has struggled against capitalism and Western liberalism and has supported Putin’s government through political technology and pro-government grassroots organizations. Dugin’s theoretical vision included forms of postmodern performance, philosophical ideals, street politics, counter-
culture, media manipulation, trolling, and political violence (chapter 4).

In this well-balanced book, Fenghi reveals the complex interconnections existing between the art world and the political sphere in contemporary Russia as art appears to be the main channel for political dissent. The ways the author merges art, performances, queer representation, and revolutionary culture as a new post-Soviet performative mode of political dissent is absolutely fascinating. He certainly shows how the creation of a new form of political dissent produced alternative forms of cultural production and lifestyles. Indeed, both Limonov and Dugin reimagined post-Soviet society and managed to create a sort of *gesamtkunstwerk* community where political radicalism becomes the center of their social organization, language, material culture, and rituals. In this book, Fenghi presents these communities without any prejudice that Western values often create. In that sense, *It Will Be Fun and Terrifying* reassess how to address Soviet and post-Soviet culture outside of the scope of the status quo norms and stands as a true revolutionary book.

Fenghi’s study of pioneering radical political communities is based on archival and ethnographic research (interviews and participant observation) he conducted in Moscow in 2015. The book is enriched by many fascinating testimonies of former and actual members of both groups. The author uses a wide range of media, such as novels, art exhibitions, paintings, performances, punk rock concerts, and protest actions, to support his argument. With the exception of a challenging introduction where all of Fenghi’s concepts are presented, the book is quite accessible to nonspecialists. The author’s argument is easy to understand and is well supported by many examples, making the book a valuable contribution to the classroom. Furthermore, as I mentioned at the beginning of this review, studying the right-wing political performance protest in Russia will resonate with many other contemporary events, such as the Euromaidan in Ukraine or the 2021 attacks on the US Capitol. Therefore, the book will be of interest to Slavicists but also to anyone interested in art history, politics, or sociology.