After exploring genres common to the subject of Joseph Stalin through a preliminary genre analysis, I continued analyzing the language and genres relevant to my field by tracing an argument pertaining to historians. I gathered articles relating to the connection between the factual side of Joseph Stalin to the hypothetical and theoretical side. I found academic articles relating to this topic, and traced the arguments and patterns common to these articles. Through my research, I have found articles and sources that mainly discussed how information on the subject is still coming out and/or public opinion on Stalin and Russia (Dobson, 2011; Loth, 2010; Varga-Harris, 2011, Whitaker, 2012) and others that simply discussed topics including Stalin in terms of politics, personality, military, etc. (Haslam, 1986; Kennan, 1971; Kuromiya, 2011; Markevich, 2011, Marples, 2010; Scheffer, 2012). These sources have helped me identify the various perspectives on the subject matter and in the history field. In addition, these articles have helped me continue exploring the genre conventions that I will need to acquire as I venture on through my academic major.


Miriam Dobson, a Lecturer in Modern History at the University of Sheffield, in her 2011 work, "The Post-Stalin Era", asserts that the new information that is constantly coming up about Stalin is causing Stalin to look like even more of a tyrant. She supports this by giving examples of the new information, all of which is negative for Stalin’s reputation. Her purpose was to explain how and why the view and
perception of Stalin is changing and also to give the reader an idea of how research is constantly being done, which is turn leads to the change in opinions of individuals and events. She targets the “broad interdisciplinary audience” by using simple language in her work and by also taking the time to explain certain aspects and facts.

Dobson’s piece is relevant to my topic because she discusses how the Russian government went about making changes after the death of Stalin. She says, “ground-breaking studies of the purges, collectivization, and daily life in both the new industrial cities and the socialized countryside all transformed the way Soviet history was conceived and taught in all universities across the world” (page 905). By this, she means that with all of the new information about the Stalin-era coming out, the perception of Russian life under Stalin is forever evolving as new information arises. I would say that this article relates to Emily Whitaker’s “Stalin’s resurrection” because both cover the topic of how information is still coming out about Stalin, thus the perception of Stalin is constantly changing in some way. However, most of the information just confirms just how horrible Stalin was.


Jonathan Haslam, a professor at the University of Cambridge, in his 1986 work, “Political Opposition to Stalin and the Origins of Terror in Russia”, asserts that Stalin was by far one of, if not the worst tyrant to ever walk the face of the earth. He supports this claim by giving great examples of how controlling and wicked Stalin was. Haslam discusses how Stalin operated when he was campaigning and while he was in power. In both cases, he went to any extreme just to silence any opposition. His purpose was to give both facts and rumors about Stalin in order to really make the reader buy into believing Stalin was an awful person. Though I disagree with using rumors to back up a thesis, it’s certainly hard to disagree
with Haslam. His intended audience is both “specialists and non-specialists” and he does so by giving background information of Stalin, Russia, and World War II and by not assuming the reader has vast knowledge prior to reading.

Haslam’s work is relevant to my topic because it goes as far back the election before Stalin, where it explains the economic and political state of Russia prior to Stalin taking power. It talks about how Stalin took out his first political opposition, whom he wanted put to death for breaking Party policy, but he was advised to go another route. This article did a great job explaining Stalin’s rule strictly from a political standpoint. However, it simultaneously explained Stalin’s characteristics. For example, the article talks about Stalin’s insecure and paranoid personality, “Indeed Stalin’s worries were not unfounded, although undoubtedly exaggerated” (page 406). This article is highly relative to Christine Varga-Harris’ “Politics, Ideology, and Society After Stalin” because it discusses a few of the same issues, however Haslam’s article goes a bit more in-depth.


George Kennan, a historian, in his 1971 piece “The Historiography of the Early Political Career of Joseph Stalin”, asserts that Stalin was “the most powerful man of this century” (page 165). He supports this assertion through evidence and hypothesis about the political aspect of Stalin’s life. He wanted to support his claim as to how powerful Stalin really was by using documented facts, then by going a step further and using those facts to develop hypotheses about the undocumented parts of Stalin’s life. His intended audience is scholars, authors of memoirs, and other members of the American Philosophical Society. He targets this audience by assuming the reader already has a solid background in Russian politics and World War II.
Kennan’s work is relevant to my topic because he focuses on the actualities of Stalin and then proceeds into the assumptions about Stalin. Saying Stalin was the “most powerful man of this century” is definitely disputable, especially considering we don’t have solid information that could help us come to such a conclusion. Instead, Kennan uses the facts at hand to make educated assumptions. It relates to Paul Scheffer’s piece because both discuss the power Stalin had. Scheffer calls Stalin “the dictator of dictators”. However, Kennan’s piece goes much more in-depth, giving background information and stating more of his conspiracy theories.


Hiroaki Kuromiya, a professor at the University of Indiana, in his 2011 work, “Stalin’s Great Terror and International Espionage”, asserts that Stalin was a very devious person, both militarily and politically. He claims that Stalin used espionage probably more than any other major power leader of recent and his purpose was to show how powerful and influential Stalin was in power and he does so by giving examples of Stalin’s “espionage” and using stories to back that thesis up. His intended audience is professional scholars and graduate students and he does so by going very in-depth on certain topics and to fully understand this piece, one would require significant background knowledge.

Kuromiya’s work is relevant to my topic because it talks about Stalin’s approach to many of the situations he faced and gives great examples. The article allows the reader to see how pompous Stalin was. For example, Kuromiya writes that Stalin believed, “An intelligence hypothesis may become your hobby horse on which you will ride straight into a self-made trap” (page 239). Then Kuromiya follows with, “In light of this it is instructive to observe that in June 1941 Stalin himself fell into a trap of his own making: he believed that he was outsmarting his archenemy Hitler, whereas in fact the exact opposite
was the case” (page 239). This example shows that while Stalin may have been a very powerful individual and was full of confidence, he wasn’t nearly as great or as smart as he believed. This article relates to Paul Scheffer’s “Stalin’s Power” because Scheffer also talks about Stalin’s shortcomings as an individual, such as his unattractiveness and average intelligence.


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Wilfried Loth, a Professor of Modern History at the University of Duisburg-Essen, Germany and Chairman of the European Union Liaison Committee of Historians, in her 2010 work, “The German question from Stalin to Khrushchev: The meaning of new documents”, asserts that, like Dobson’s work, changes (and failed attempts at making changes) were made by the Russian government after the death of Joseph Stalin. However, many of those changes did not change the perception of the Motherland. She supports this assertion by discussing some of the political moves made under Stalin’s rule and then political moves made by Khrushchev, which were attempts to undo what Stalin did. Her purpose is to give a chronology of the perception of Stalin and how it has changed as new information came out. Her intended audience is the academic and scholarly individuals and she does so by referencing other academic articles throughout her work. She was very detailed in her work.

Loth’s piece is relevant to my topic because she discusses how new documentation about Stalin has come out and how those documents have changed some prior beliefs about Stalin. The documents are about how Stalin and Russia viewed Germany and what their true intentions were of the subject. According to Loth, the new documents “further strengthen the thesis of the Soviet leadership’s focus on the neutralization of Germany in the early 1950s” (page 232). Loth describes how Stalin viewed Russia (as a potential expansion) and how Khrushchev and Russia post-Stalin viewed Russia. Essentially, Stalin
wished to use Russia as an expansion of Socialism. Stalin also refused to leave West Germany after World War II, which put him at odds with the United States leadership. This article relates to Miriam Dobson’s “The Post-Stalin Era” in that both reference Nikita Khrushchev and the Germany situation. Both also discuss how Khrushchev’s policies and ethics differed from Stalin’s.


Andrei Markevich, a professor in Russian History at the New Economic School, in his 2011 piece, “How Much Control is Enough? Monitoring and Enforcement under Stalin”, asserts that Stalin essentially had complete control in his governmental staff. Markevich looks into how the government let certain events transpire and uses hindsight to criticize them for that. He supports this claim by describing certain actions that Stalin took, dissects Stalin’s intent on the matter, and then questions how the Russian government could be so negligent. In my opinion, this is a great example of hindsight being 20/20. His intended audience is those in the academic area. He does so by having his work published in a peer-reviewed academic article and by referencing other academic articles in his work.

Markevich’s piece is relevant to my topic because it explains the “system of enforcement of orders under Stalin”. This article relates to Haslam’s “Political Opposition to Stalin and the Origins of Terror in Russia” because both spend significant time explaining how economics worked under Stalin. However, Haslam spends more time on politics while Markevich spends more time on economics, but Markevich says, “The Soviet dictatorship was simultaneously a political and an economic entity. In such a system, managerial and political transaction costs interacted” (page1452). Basically, Stalin and his party had total control over both politics and economics in one of the great world powers and by commanding both the political and economic machine, he had full control over the military as a result.
David R. Marples, a Professor of History at the University of Alberta, in his 2010 piece, “Stalin: authoritarian populist or great Russian chauvinist?” asserts that Stalin was overly obsessed with military victory during his tenure. He supports this by explaining Stalin’s perspective on certain topics, including his use of Russian pride as a tool for his pro-war campaign. The purpose of this article is to rebut David Bradenberger’s piece, where he claimed that Stalin was just a “populist”. His intended audience is the moderately educated crowd. Nationalities Papers, where his piece was published, is a peer-reviewed academic journal covering a variety of different subjects. He targets this audience by giving some background information, but not spending too much time on that matter. However, in some parts he assumes that the reader has knowledge of what he’s referring to.

Marples’ piece is relevant to my topic because he breaks down an argument made by David Bradenberger. According to Marples, Bradenberger believes that “anti-German sentiment was more effective as a source of unity than patriotic or national sentiments in inspiring Russian soldiers to fight in 1914” (page 751). Marples disagrees, saying that because the Russians lost in a war with Japan in 1904-1905, therefore making Russia “more or less impelled a more warlike stance there-after, though not necessarily one directed against Germany” (page 751). Essentially, Marples believes the almighty Russian war machine was embarrassed by losing to Japan, so they were bitter and looking for someone to take it out on. In this case, Germany was the punching bag. Where Stalin comes in is when Russia violated their non-aggression pact with Japan when they occupied the Kuril Islands in 1945. Stalin was able to use the bitterness of his people as a motivational tool in the war. Because this article speaks from more of a militaristic perspective, it relates more to Wilfried Loth’s “The German question from
Paul Scheffer, a former correspondent of the Berliner Tageblatt in Moscow, in his 2012 work, “Stalin’s Power”, asserts that Stalin was just a downright terrible person. Not only was his personality foul, but he was unattractive, insecure, and not nearly as intelligent as he thought he was. He supports this by describing Stalin in more of a personal sense and also describes some of his relationships with other people, including Lenin. His purpose was to portray Stalin as a conniving individual, which I feel he did successfully. His intended audience is the scholarly and well educated population and he does so by using very organized and professional work. He also includes information that, to understand, one would have to have a little background information.

Scheffer’s work is relevant to my topic because it is a direct criticism of Stalin as a person. Scheffer writes, “He is not an electric person. Let us be more blunt: he is frankly unattractive, and all the more so since he knows he is, and shows by his demeanor that he does not care! Even his voice, a voice as hard and brittle as glass, lacks the undertones, the rhythm, that work so powerfully upon the music-loving populace of Russia.... You feel at once that he is ‘dangerous’” (page 67). Scheffer jumps into his criticisms of Stalin right off the bat here. This article relates to Andrei Markevich’s “How Much Control is Enough? Monitoring and Enforcement under Stalin” because both make comparisons of Stalin to Mussolini and Hitler and their respective policies.
Christine Varga-Harris, a history professor at Illinois State University, in her 2011 work, “Politics, Ideology, and Society after Stalin”, asserts that after Stalin, Russia tried relentlessly to undo and conceal all the bad Stalin did and that because of Stalin, the perception of Russia was forever changed. She supports this claim by discussing how Nikita Khrushchev and other successors went about politicking for change once he took over after Stalin’s death. Her purpose was to show that Stalin changed Russia permanently, even though the country tried dearly to change that. Her intended audience is also the scholarly population and she does so by first publishing her piece in a scholarly journal, but by also assuming the reader has moderate knowledge of the topic beforehand.

Varga-Harris’ work is relevant to my topic because it talks about Russia after Stalin and how Nikita Khrushchev’s “secret speech” Twentieth Party Congress in 1956 was groundbreaking because “It signified the shattering of a cult of personality that had generated more than two decades of authoritarian rule and the dismantling of a terrifying, arbitrary punitive apparatus bent on liquidating anyone deemed hostile to the regime. The denunciation of Stalin thus held great promise for a new course in Soviet society” (page 3). However, Varga-Harris states that Stalin’s imprint on both the government and the citizens was permanent. Stalin’s impact was felt during the Cold War and even some in today’s Russia. This article relates to Wilfried Loth’s “The German question from Stalin to Khrushchev: The meaning of new documents” in that both explain Stalin’s role in the future of Russia and both give explicit detail in how Stalin’s policies gave way to the Soviet Union in the Cold War.
Emily Whitaker, a graduate student at the University of London, in her 2012 work, “Stalin’s Resurrection”, asserts that present day Russia is trying to cover up its past and even try to change the public opinion of Stalin’s rule. She supports this claim by giving numerous examples of the Russian government making changes to try and show support and cover up the atrocities of Stalin’s regime. The intended audience is any person that would have interest in the topic. She does this by not using difficult jargon or by assuming the reader has much background information on the topic.

Whitaker’s work is relevant to my topic because she discusses how the general view of Stalin is trying to be cover and repaired to hide the truth. Her article puts more focus on Stalin’s portrayal in today’s world. Whitaker gives examples of how Russia today is playing damage control in terms of Stalin’s image, including, “when a television station held a national vote for the ‘Greatest Russian Ever’ in 2008 Stalin came in third, even after the station had made pleas for the nation to vote for other candidates” (page 6). We can find that Whitaker’s work relates highly to Miriam Dobson’s “The Post-Stalin Era” because both pieces talk about the Russian government after Stalin’s death and they explain to what lengths the government has gone to try and repair Stalin’s image, however Dobson’s piece spends more time explaining the changes in policies and moving on after Stalin while Whitaker’s article talks more about how the government is covering up for Stalin.