

Summary

Nihilists: Radical Consciousness and the Institution of Literature in the Russian Empire

Guest Editor: Kirill Zubkov

Yulia Krasnoselskaya in her article “The Karakozov Affair in *War and Peace*: The Genesis of the Unsuccessful Regicide Motive and the Representation of Political Violence by Leo Tolstoy” shows that the episodes in volumes 3–4 of *War and Peace*, describing Pierre’s plan to kill Napoleon, his subsequent captivity, and his spiritual resurrection after meeting Platon Karataev were created by Tolstoy under the influence of, among other things, Dmitry Karakozov’s attempt on Alexander II’s life on April 4th, 1866. Musing on the nature of political violence (coming both from the empire or from its political opponents, the “nihilists”), Tolstoy tried to go beyond the limits of law into the sphere of pure morality, depicting its ideal spokesman in the image of Platon Karataev, which was constructed by moving away from both a symbol of political radicalism (Karakozov) and from a figure that was “officially designated” as his ideological antagonist (Osip Komissarov).

The article “Fedor Livanov’s Authorial Position: “The Destruction of Aesthetics” or a Resentment of *Raznochintsy*?” by **Marta Łukaszewicz** discusses the authorial position of Fedor Livanov, a little-known 19th-century writer in whose novel *Zhizn’ sel’skogo svyashchennika* (*The Life of a Village Priest*) one finds an expression of the feeling of inferiority and resentment characteristic of many *raznochintsy*. A special feature of Livanov’s position is connected with

his position as an oppressed subject, “a marginal among marginals” in search of his own identity, and for that he resorts to literary clichés from works in ideological opposition to his own. Such attempts at mimicry, however, actually prevent him from finding his genuine voice and only enhance the polemical and utilitarian component of the work.

Kirill Zubkov’s article “‘An Unprecedented Point of Literary Ownership’: Goncharov, Nihilism, and Copyright Discussions in the 1860s and 1870s” examines the discussion of copyright and the category of authorship as such in 1860s and 1870s. At this time, French and Russian radical journalists proposed their own interpretation of the problem of literary ownership, which implied the rejection of the post-romantic notion of the author as the autonomous creator. This discussion informed *An Uncommon Story* by Ivan Goncharov, an autobiographical work dedicated to plagiarism that identified an acute crisis of the institution of literature, perceived by Goncharov as a constant threat to his work and himself from the government, the literary community, and the international market.

Julia Safronova’s article “A Reading Journal of a ‘Real Person’: The Reading Practices of the 1870s Generation” examines the reading practices of the 1870s generation, which are analyzed with regard to types of goal-oriented reading and writing typical for the second half

of the 19th century types: religious and scientific, which have in common the reader's intense work on themselves. The author analyzes a reading diary from 1875—1876 by Apollinaria Yushina, who was a participant in the populist movement. Engaged in self-development, the reader followed the unwritten rules of the interpretive community, which included ideas about mandatory reading and guidelines for keeping a reading

journal. Yushina contrasted her own type of writing to the school practice of writing based on examples. The ideal, in contrast, was complete independence in comprehension and description of what was read. The task, however, turned out to be beyond her capacity. The journal includes confessions of the inability to understand text and yearning for authority or a teacher.

Archaeology of the Soviet: Self-Criticism in USSR

Guest Editor: Valerii Otiakovskii

Lorenz Erren's article "On the Origin of Some of the Characteristics of the Soviet Party Community. A Subject of the Stalinist Regime and 'Self-Criticism' in the 1930s" discusses two important effects of the 1928 slogan "criticism and self-criticism" on the Soviet public sphere in the 1930s: the social practice of individual repentance and the transformation of the public sphere into a refined space of denunciation. The author emphasizes the difference between oppositionists' individual declarations of repentance and the collective "self-criticism". Later on, however, both phenomena merged into a single social practice. The author points out the Stalinist nature of the corresponding ethics: being unable to fulfil this ideal and not knowing how to bring the call for "criticism" in accordance with the official ideology in each given case, citizens were forced to play "Soviet roulette" trying to anticipate the unpredictable politics of the party. The political public sphere was transformed into a zone of mutual control, ensuring the lasting authority of the regime.

Valerii Otiakovskii's article "Between Self-Criticism and Self-Justification: The Case of Yuri Pertsovich" is a commen-

tary on a self-criticism report by the critic and bibliographer Yuri Pertsovich and a letter he sent to Maxim Gorky. These documents, as well as an archival source featuring an account of Pertsovich's expulsion from the party, make one think about the specific pragmatics of this message. Having experienced the destructiveness of misused self-criticism before, in his letter Pertsovich resorts to a trustworthy tone in order to rhetorically justify himself not only before Gorky, but before the entire system.

The article "Summarizing Soviet Pushkin Studies: Nikolai Piksarov's Report at the Pushkin Conference in 1937" by **Vladimir Turchanenko** is devoted to the history of Soviet academic Pushkin studies in the 1930s and precedes the publication of a previously unknown report by Corresponding Member of the USSR Academy of Sciences Nikolai Piksarov on the results of Soviet Pushkin studies (1917—1937). An analysis of the content and rhetoric of the report in the context of Piksarov's relationship with members of the Pushkin Commission of the Academy of Sciences of the USSR leads to two possible interpretations of this public speech. The more likely is

that Piskunov participated in the criticism of Pushkinists with the goal of raising his own status in the institutional struggle; in addition, there is reason to believe that the speaker made a “comradely criticism” of academic Pushkin studies in an attempt to defend researchers from attacks by the authorities and a progressive public.

Dmitry Tsyganov’s article “From Self-Criticism to Self-Destruction: The Reorganization of the Canon of Soviet

Aesthetics During the Period of Late Stalinism,” which is based on a wide range of historical and literary material, traces the trajectory of the formation of self-criticism as a category of artistic thinking and its influence on the production of socialist-realist texts that were part of the Soviet literary canon. Another main line of research has been to identify and examine the role of the self-criticism “method,” which was promulgated in the late 1920s, in destroying the Late-Stalinist aesthetic canon.

Readings

Examining the internal structure of the first chapters of Leo Tolstoy’s *War and Peace* (composition, number and types of characters, “point of view,” the prevailing type of movement) in detail,

Viatcheslav Kuritsyn in his article “‘War and Peace,’ the Beginning of the

Book” comes to the conclusion that changes from chapter to chapter occur in accordance with a complex but strict scheme, and raises the question of what ideology is behind this development of the structure.

Archival Materials: Public Thought in the Russian Empire

Irina Surnina’s article “‘I Work Like an Ox...’: Excerpts from the Diary of Fedor Chizhov from 1857—1862” is a publication of excerpts, with commentary, from the diary of Fedor Chizhov, famous Russian figure of the 19th-century, which he kept for five years, from 1857 to 1862. This was the time when he was preparing to edit the business journal *Vestnik promyshlennosti* (Herald of Industry) (1858—1861). This journal is of particu-

lar interest to researchers of journalism, literature, the culture and history of Russia and European countries, because in addition to describing Chizhov’s personal relationships with his contemporaries, he also comments on the significant events of those years, gives an assessment of the periodicals published at the time, censorship changes, and several books published in Russia and abroad.

Khlebnikov Revisited

This section is dedicated to rethinking the legacy of Velimir Khlebnikov and timed

to coincide with the centenary of his death (October 28 [November 9] 1885 —

June 28, 1922). **Irina Mashinskaya** in the article “Between Volkhov and the Volga. On Vladimir Gandel’s *Velimirova Kniga (Velimir’s Book)*” offers a close reading of the 2021 book by Gandel’s, in which a modern poet enters into a dialogue with the great *budetlyanin* and in poetic form conducts a critical revision

of his ideas. In the article “Instigators of Death: Velimir Khlebnikov’s ‘Voices from the Street’ and Soldiers’ Songs from the Civil War Era” **Ilya Vinititsky** reveals the folklore and literary overtones of one of the fragments of *The Present* (1921), Khlebnikov’s dramatic poems about the revolution.

Multidimensional Mnatsakanova: Space of Interpretations

Stephanie Sandler’s essay “The Archival Poetics of Elizaveta Mnatsakanova” recounts the story of how Elizaveta Mnatsakanova’s archive came to be in Harvard’s Houghton Library, and reads closely some items in the archive as studies in her unique creative process. It draws on the theories of the American poet Susan Howe for that reading, and offers comparisons to Howe’s own poetry. Archival holdings like lecture notes, translations, letters from students and people met during her travels also show Mnatsakanova’s many meaningful connections to others, which should diminish the impression of her as isolated.

Yury Orlitskiy’s article “Elizaveta Mnatsakanova’s Poetic Household (The Experience of an Analytical Inventory)” examines the characteristic features of the visual poetics of Elizaveta Mnatsakanova: her use of different types of text alignment, two- and more columns, spaces of different length, word fusion, different types of staircases, paronymy, multilingualism, etc. allowing the poetess to create a unique and original style. Special consideration is given to Mnatsakanova’s constant appeals to musical culture, her use of musicological terminology and corresponding formal means, and elements of verse notation.

The article “Meeting with Infinity. Time, Memory and Return in *The Book of Childhood* by Elizaveta Mnatsakanova” by **Anton Azarenkov** states that the basis of this book is the phenomenon of recollections of childhood. The first section of the article, “Words and Time” is devoted to the study of the verbal representation of the theme of time. The section “Plot and Time” discusses how the mechanisms of memory determine the plot structure of the book as a whole. Then in the section “Form and Time” we focus on some verse features of *The Book of Childhood*, which in our opinion correlate with the general semantic dynamics. Finally, the last section, “Idea and Time,” reviews the author’s concept of memory as a literary technique developed in Mnatsakanova’s poems and essays.

Vladimir Aristov’s article “Mnatsakanova and Aigi: Hidden Cooperation” offers an analysis of the poetry of Elizaveta Mnatsakanova and Gennady Aigi, with all their similarities and differences which are examined in detail. The key concepts of the analysis are translation of meaning (in the broad sense of the concept), visuality and musicality of their poetic strategies.

The article “Translingualism in ‘Migrating’ Russian Poetry: From Mnatsakanova to Contemporary Practices” by **Vladimir Feshchenko** considers several cases of Russian-language poetry of the last decades, which are positioned by the authors themselves as interlingual. An illuminating example of translingual verse is the work of Elizaveta Mnatsakanova, which involves multiple foreignisms in several languages. The borderline posi-

tion between two linguistic and poetic cultures (Russian and Austrian-German) also affected the linguistic poetics of her texts, incorporating various national idioms into the space of visual-and-musical verse. The second part of the article is devoted to very recent practices of translingual writing by poets migrating between Russia and other countries: Eugene Ostashevsky, Nika Skandiaka, Inna Krasnoper.