

Summary

Transformation of Humanitarian Knowledge in Post-Soviet Russia Special Issue

To the History of Political Reflection

Irina Paperno's article “‘This Is Not Even the Blockade or a Siege. This Is an Ordinary Soviet Day’: Olga Freidenberg’s Postwar Notes as a Mythopolitical Theory” analyzes the postwar notes

of Olga Freidenberg (1890—1955) and offers an interpretation of this text as a mythopolitical theory in the form of a diary/memoir.

Questionnaire. The Humanities after February 24th

Those fields of the humanities dedicated to Russia, Central Asia and Eastern Europe studies, are faced nowadays with the need not only to reflect on their own imperial or colonial roots, but also to rethink their goals and guidelines. In this questionnaire our regular authors and longtime friends and colleagues **Sergey Zenkin**, **Serguei Alex. Oushakine**,

Alexander Semyonov, **Nikolai Plotnikov**, **Catriona Kelly**, **Elena Chkhaidze**, **Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht**, **Ellen Rutten**, **Kevin M.F. Platt**, **Mark Lipovetsky**, **Evgeny Dobrenko**, **Riccardo Nicolosi**, **Aleida Assmann**, and **Mikhail Iampolski** answer the questions about the recent past and near future of the humanities.

Studies of Texts and Studies of Actions

This round table, initiated by **Irina Prokhorova**, the editor-in-chief of the *New Literary Observer* journal, and **Sergey Zenkin**, philologist and frequent contributor to the journal, focused on how much the humanities in Russia has changed over the last 30 years. **Sergey Zenkin** proposed that social sciences, studies of actions, could create an epistemological base for the renewal of philological research. **Alexander Filippov** spoke about the restoration of rights of reality, which is not dissolvable

in texts and meanings. **Oleg Kharkhordin's** speech was on the current theoretical potential of homiletics (the study of the art of writing sermons). **Michail Maiatsky** ruminated on the necessity of analyzing and debunking Russian “jargon of authenticity,” or specialness, i.e., a “diminished” ideological paradigm. **Pavel Arsenev** presented the mediological approach in the humanities using the history of Russian literature of the 19th century in conjunction with the history of science and technology of that period.

The Evolution of Disciplines in the Institutional and Public Field

Evgeny Dobrenko's article "Reading Stalinism: Stalinist Culture as a Field of Research" analyzes the research field of Stalinist culture, which has been rapidly changing since the early 1990s, when the study of Stalinism left the sphere of traditional Sovietology and gradually became one of the dominant subjects in the history of the 20th century. Its formation was influenced by the change of generations of researchers, interdisciplinarity and methodological shifts, democratization, and the opening of archives, as well as changes in the academic economy. However, the analysis of Western and Russian historiography reveals numerous gaps in the study of Stalinism and the need for new methodological and institutional changes.

Elena Trubina's article "Thirty Years of Academic Urban Studies in the Post-Soviet Russia: Between the Fundamental and the Applied" examines the evolution of Russian urban knowledge. Having survived the transition years, today a number of research groups, research centers, MA programs, experts and activists continue the work. The intermediate result of this evolution is that the "city" — in its different modalities — is used to create ever new interdisciplinary formations and educational projects. The author addresses various attempts to combine humanities (history) and social sciences (geography and sociology), creating educational programs and research projects with "city" at their intersection. The experience of such programs prompts to address the problem of the high value of applied knowledge. The author considers what exactly knowledge about the city is applied to and what conflicts arise as

the demands for making urban knowledge useful intensify.

Women's and gender history in Russia has been developing since the 1990s and began to be institutionalized in the 2000s and 2010s. **Ella Rossman's** article "From Socialism to Social Media: Women's and Gender History in Post-Soviet Russia" analyzes the strategies for legitimizing women's and gender history applied to establish a new field. In the 2000s, these strategies included appeals to scale, geography, and a connection with the "generalized West," as well as highlighting the practical significance of women's and gender history and its connections to the classical heritage of the humanities and social sciences. Researchers in the 2010s started coming to women's and gender history by way of feminist activism and turning to social media and journalism to establish their authority within the academy.

The article "From 'Socialism with a Human Face' to 'National Socialism.' Discourses of Justice in Post-Soviet Russia" by **Nikolai Plotnikov** examines the main trajectories of discussions about justice in philosophy and social sciences after perestroika. The concept of justice was never an element of the Soviet ideological vocabulary, and only in the era of perestroika it became not only a key concept in the government's official rhetoric, but also a slogan of protest against the system. On the contrary, post-Soviet social theory has not developed any special interest in the problem of justice. Only in the last decade, in the context of the formation of new protest movements in Russia, there has been a significant increase

in theoretical interest in the problem of justice, which indicates the formation of a new paradigm in social theory.

Tatiana Venediktova's article "The Pragmatic Turn, with a Creak" discusses how the literary pragmatics presupposes attention to the text as a multilayered interaction with the participation of virtual and real subjects, taking into account multiple changing contexts that are im-

aginary to varying degrees. The dynamic and close involvement of philology in an interdisciplinary working alliance, as well as the appropriate reworking of insights dating back to classical philosophical pragmatism related to the nature of cultural, cognitive, and aesthetic experience. The shift in emphasis from text-as-object to text-as-interaction also gives rise to the need to refresh literary and pedagogical practices.

The Russian Empire as an Object of (Post)Colonial Research

Kevin M.F. Platt in his article "The Post-Socialist Postcolonial and the Ruins of Global History" states that the critical dictionary of postcolonial theory was rarely applied to the post-socialist and post-Soviet space prior to 2000, but this trend may be coming to an end, as shown by the success of two recent monographs by Monica Popescu and Rossen Djagalov. However, the sharp difference between the two approaches of the authors that is obvious in these two books tells a lot about the unsolved problems of integration of post-socialist and the postcolonial terms of analysis. The difference between these two approaches illustrates the impossibility at present of reconciling the history of empire and the history of ideology in a globally meaningful form.

In the article "Race in Russia as a Figure of Omission" **Marina Mogilner** asks the question about the reasons for the lack of serious reflection on race and racism in contemporary studies of the history and culture of the Russian Empire and the USSR. Emphasizing the political relevance of such reflection, the author, nevertheless, points to the limitations of exclusively ideological motivation. The article proposes an understanding of

"race" as a mechanism for the selective essentialization of differences, and analyzes the consequences of the divergence in Russian studies of the traditions of studying modernity and imperial formations, which led to the marginalization of "race" as a research problem.

The article "A Regional History of Russia: The Research Field and Archival Practices (1990s — early 2020s)" by **Ekaterina Boltunova** examines the current state of the study of the history of Russia's regions. The author analyzes academic literature on the history of Russian regions that has appeared in the last two decades in English and in Russian. The article concludes that Central Russia has not been studied as a macroregion and also analyzes Russian practices of working with archives, pointing out the need to create search engines that can process large databases, including the development of automated system for navigating handwritten texts.

Ilya Kalinin and **Klavdia Smola** in their article "The Empire of the Postcolonial Situations: The Logic of the (Cold) War" discuss how the contradictory political nature of the USSR has affected the fortunes of postcolonial research develop-

ing in the post-Soviet space (and more broadly regional studies which have balanced between the use of authoritative theoretical optics borrowed from the “Western academy,” and the “adherence” to material that has not been reflected upon, and the uncritical reproduction of the language of the studied tradition). As a result, the criticism of hegemony and the affirmation of moral authority, metho-

dological constructivism and traditional primordialism, and sensitivity to the fluid game of differences and the logic of binary oppositions are pulled into an increasingly tighter knot. The historical and cultural politics of the Russia are overlaid on top of all of this, aiming to heighten the shifts and confusions listed above in order to achieve a postimperial patriotic consensus.

Intellectual History among Other Fields of the Humanities

Sergey Zenkin’s article “Semiotics of Culture and Intellectual History” attempts to methodologically compare two disciplines — the semiotics of culture, developed in the Soviet Union in the 1970—1980s, and intellectual history, which is rapidly developing in the world today. The comparison parameters are the transdisciplinarity, the breadth of empirical material, a synchronic (non-narrative) approach to history, the connection with the urgent problems of society (using the examples of the academic work of Carlo Ginzburg and Mikhail Iampolsky). Intellectual history developed in parallel and not always in direct interaction with semiotics of culture, but some trends of contemporary intellectual history converge with it methodologically.

In the article “Linguistic Realism and Two Types of Intellectual History”, **Timur Atnashev** and **Mikhail Velizhev** aim to describe and analyze two types of intellectual history — its historicist and postmodernist versions — in the Western and Russian academic traditions of the second half of the 20th century and early 21st century, pointing out the differences and unexpected points of intersection between them. To this end, the authors intend to address the problems of the nature of historical knowledge, the philosophy of language, presentism, and the (re)politicization of historiography. They reconstruct the two main approaches to the question of the philosophical foundations of intellectual history and try to show the advantages and sociopolitical implication of a “realist” philosophy of language as a methodological framework.

Soviet Modernism: Between Theory and Artistic Practice

Nadia Plungian’s article “Soviet Modernism of the 1920s—1950s: The Experience of the Scientific and Artistic Rethinking of the Problem in the 2010s” is about the activities of a number of independent associations of Moscow

art historians, philosophers, and artists of the millennial generation who worked in 2007—2022 on the rethinking and restructuring of the art archive of Soviet modernism. This work resulted in cycles of open academic seminars and mono-

graphs, as well as publications and exhibition projects of several types created at the intersection of art and art history. One of the leaders of this process was the architectural historian and curator Aleksandra Selivanova.

The article “On the Problems and Prospects of Studying the Architecture of Soviet Modernism in the Postcolonial Era” by **Olga Kazakova** describes the history of the study of Soviet modernist architecture after the dissolution of the Soviet Union. It analyzes current approaches and issues and lacunae in research and looks at the need to study and describe the “administrative apparatus” that oversaw construction and architecture in the late USSR, as well as the need to develop a tools that would enable researchers to better understand issues surrounding the relationship between the former “center” and the

former “border regions” and the possibility of using postcolonial optics in further studies of the topic.

Lola Kantor-Kazovsky’s article “A Look at Sretensky Boulevard from Eastern Europe and Decentralization of the Narrative of International Modernism” examines the distinctive qualities of the unofficial art of Moscow, upon which light was shed in an article the “Moscow Diary” by the Czech art critic Jindřich Chalupecký (1973). Chalupecký’s observations and conclusions about art in Moscow do not match the narratives of the artists themselves. He turns his attention to the paradox of political involvement of seemingly autonomous art and sees in the works of Moscow artists an affirmation of his theory about how art can carry avant-garde political charge while remaining in the “sacral” sphere.

Lost in Translation: Formation of the Fashion Theory in the Context of Russian Humanitarian Thought

The round table, initiated by the editor of *Fashion Theory* **Lyudmila Alyabieva**, was dedicated to the formation of fashion theory as a discipline within the framework of the humanities in Russia. Fashion theory is a comparatively young research field that has developed in the bowels of cultural studies, the consolidation of came to be in the 1990s in the West. Over the course of the round table, the development of the discipline in the international and Russian context was discussed. **Olga Vainshtein** outlined the approaches that played a decisive role

in the development of fashion studies in the international context and which of these areas were more or less in demand in Russia. **Ksenia Gusarova** talked about how the body and physicality, initially left in the peripheral vision of research, slowly entered into the theory as a significant subject of research. **Irina Sirotkina’s** speech was dedicated to the role of performance theory in studies of fashion. **Olga Annanurova** spoke about the relationship between visual studies and fashion theory and concepts that play a key role in both research fields.