

Summary

Metropolises of Culture / Provinces of Experience

Guest Editor: Ilya Kalinin

Nikolai Vokuev in his article “Structures of Feeling” in the “Rebellious Peripheries”: Russophone Decolonial Discourse in the Context of Cultural Materialism and the Semiotics of Culture” analyzes the similarities between Juri Lotman’s semiotic theory of culture (semiosphere) and Raymond Williams’s cultural sociology (cultural materialism). The author argues that both theories are sensitive to the counter-hegemonic potential of peripheral cultural dynamics, including anti-colonial one, which can be explained, among other things, by the biographical trajectories of both scholars. This dual perspective (particularly concepts such as “structures of feeling” and “explosion”) is applied to understanding the decolonial discourse emerging in the Russian-language public sphere in the context of the tragic events of the last years.

Ilya Kalinin’s article “Poetics of History: Russian Formalism on Metropolis and Periphery” is dedicated to the attempts of placing Russian formalism at the crossroads of two interconnected theoretical optics that reveal the political dimension of cultural production and (self)description. The first one goes back to Antonio Gramsci and views culture as a space of struggle for hegemony, in which traditional and organic intelligentsias enter. The second owes its origin to subaltern and post-colonial studies, which turned to the baring of the inter-

relations between political supremacy, economic dominance and symbolic hegemony that permeates authoritative models of cultural interpretation and historical narratives of its evolution. Reading theoretical, historical and literary texts by the OPOYAZ representatives (primarily Shklovsky) from this analytical perspective allows us to reconstruct intuitions and arguments similar to the critique of cultural hierarchies and progressivist paradigms that emerged at the turn of the 1970s and 1980s. The political charge of this criticism was determined by the logic of the struggle for the cultural emancipation of oppressed groups described by Gramsci. By appealing to this logic, one can also describe the commonality of theoretical emphases characteristic of the works of the Petrograd formalists and researchers from Southeast Asia, which arose as a theoretical aftershock generated by revolutions, the collapse of empires, and anti-colonial wars.

Stepan Popov in his article “I Am Telling About Events and Making a Preparation from Myself”: Russian Formalists between Biographical Experience and Literary Theory” states that, as early as the early twenties, the Russian Formalists began to discover ways to describe literary production within the context of various social, economic and institutional factors. However, the Formalists did not use the analytical potential of

this discovery only at the level of literary history or literary criticism. In a socio-logical vein, the Formalists, especially Boris Eikhenbaum (*Moy Vremennik*) and Viktor Shklovsky (*Tret'ya Fabrika*), tried to evaluate their own biography. Formalists attempted to describe not individual psychological or existential experiences, but the logic that stood behind their

social actions and social behavior. In this way, they changed the genre features of autobiographical writing and also provided an example of successful convergence of literary and theoretical discourses. A “side effect” of the act of rereading the biography was a more general transformation of the Formalists’ approaches to literary history.

Culture in / of Relocation

Guest Editors: Irina Golovacheva, Lyubov Bugaeva

In the article “On the Trail of the Sun: Aldous Huxley’s Case Study against the Background of Continental and Transatlantic Migration of British Writers in the Inter-War Decades” **Irina Golovacheva** examines Aldous Huxley’s European and transatlantic relocations as a case of self-exile. The author identifies a set of internal reasons and external circumstances that highlight the pattern of Huxley’s choice against living in England. The quarter of a century he spent in the United States, where he finally settled, must be added to the twelve or so years he spent in Italy and France. The material used in the paper includes Huxley’s texts, his correspondence, the memoirs of his friends, the archives of the Huntington Library, and, finally, the author’s interview with Laura Archera Huxley (1911—2007), the writer’s widow.

Olga Panova’s paper “Blacks Among Reds: African American Expatriates and Emigrants in the USSR in the 1930s” examines the phenomenon of African American emigrants and expatriates in the Soviet Union in the 1930s. The first part is devoted to African American communists (Lovett Fort-Whiteman, Williana Jones Burroughs, etc.), the second to “fellow travellers” — technical and agricultural specialists, journalists, artists (Homer Smith, Wayland Rudd, Lloyd

Patterson, etc.). Case studies focusing on individual life stories offer a generalized vision of the phenomenon in which ideology, ethnic/racial, cultural, and professional identity define the peculiar world of the small African American community in Stalin’s USSR. The article uses primary source materials from the Russian archives.

The article “At the World History’s Dirty Wall”: The Wanderings of Klara Blum, the Austrian Poet” by **Aleksandr Belobratov** explores the life and work of the Austrian/Soviet/Chinese poet Klara Blum (1904—1971) which were marked by her continuous relocation/immigration — from Austro-Hungarian Empire to the Republic of Austria, Palestine, the Soviet Russia, France, and China. At first, her desire to find a true homeland led first to a deep faith in the Aliyah (resettlement of Jews in the Holy Land), then to a belief in the communist ideals proclaimed in the Soviet Union, and finally to the pursuit of love in the “Middle Kingdom”. In the countries that “revealed their essence” to Blum, her poetic Self formed through things that “inspired and inflamed” her: Jewish national identity, a sense of belonging to liberated humanity, and a shared love for a Chinese communist.

In 1947, the filmmakers known as the “Hollywood Ten,” refused to testify before the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC) and were cited for contempt of Congress. The vast majority lost their jobs: some relocated to Mexico, some left the profession, while others continued to work under pseudonyms. The article “Expulsion from Paradise: The Fate of the Hollywood Ten” by **Lyubov Bugaeva** casts the history of the “Hollywood Ten” as a narrative of forced relocated in external and internal space (as well as in the intersections of the two spaces), as a relocation both to a diffe-

rent country and to a different identity (a false name and personage). The article studies the consequences of this “relocation” for both those displaced and for Hollywood. Those “expelled” during the McCarthy era included not only members of the “Ten” (Dalton Trumbo, John Howard Lawson and others), but also Bertolt Brecht and Charlie Chaplin. Special attention is given to this artistic community’s experience of a conflict between ideology and art as well as to the reflections about this conflict during the era of the blacklist and afterwards.

Akhmatova’s Orphans

Guest Editor: Yuri Leving

Roman Timenchik in his article “Akhmatova and so-called “Orphans” returns to the validity of the notion of “the literary school” when speaking of the group of four young Leningrad poets centered around Anna Akhmatova in 1962—1966. The intertextual interrelations of the writings of Akhmatova and **Anatoly Naiman** are addressed and Naiman’s unpublished essay of 1964 is annexed.

Evgeny Soshkin in the article “Akhmatova’s Dead Orphans” reconstructs and analyses Akhmatova’s paradoxical recurring motif of the free circulation of the orphan trait between mother and child, regardless of who is dead and who has suffered the loss. This paradoxical motif accompanied Akhmatova’s theme of motherhood from the very beginning but gained new connotations in the context of her mourning for her repressed and imprisoned son during his lifetime. The author of the article concludes that Akhmatova’s dialectic of mutual guilt between mother and child is based on the unconditional imperative of preventing

separation even at the cost of the death of both. A dead mother feels the same guilt towards a living child as a living one towards a dead one, and in both situations she can address the child with a counter-reproach for her own, maternal, orphanhood.

Alexander Dolinin in his article “Joseph Brodsky’s Poem «Dorogaia, ia vyshel segodnia iz domu...» («Brise Marine»): A Non-Biographical Approach” offers a new interpretation of Joseph Brodsky’s poem “Dorogaya, ya vyshel segodnya iz domu pozdno vecherom...” that based not on biographical facts and legends, but on a comparison of the Russian text with its English self-translation. The most serious discrepancies between the two — the addition of the French title “Brise marine” borrowed from Mallarme and of the baffling “middle name” as arendering of “name” in the English version — indicate the existence of a hidden scheme built into the poem that contradicts the overt message of its first half: a denunciation of M.B., Brodsky’s former lover and muse. According to the author, Brodsky

invoked two related traditions of classical and Renaissance poetry: bashing an unfaithful lover in the poems of Catullus and Propertius, and promising “immortality through verse” in the sonnets of Shakespeare and other Renaissance poets.

Lev Oborin in his article “Anatoly Naiman’s “Vegetation”: Towards Poetology of Branching” examines the poem “Vegetation” by Anatolii Naiman in the context of his poetics, and in particular of his late period. The poem’s three parts are interpreted as reflections on three possibilities of poetic writing developed by Naiman and his contemporaries: in discussing the natural cycle of life and death, the poet alternately employs elegy, philosophical essay in verse form, and scientific poetry. While the first part of the poem can be traced back to Romantic melancholy, the second and third parts refer to the poetics of the European

Baroque. All of these possibilities were developed by “Akhmatova’s Orphans” and other poets of the Soviet underground; in “Vegetation”, Naiman attempts to summarize these explorations, giving each part of the poem its own stylistic overtone.

Yuri Leving in his article “Where is the Mattress’s Cowgirl Riding? On Joseph Brodsky and Alexander Kushner’s Controversy around “Letter to an Oasis” examines the history of the creation and publication of Joseph Brodsky’s poem “Letter to the Oasis,” which was originally addressed to the poet A.S. Kushner, but at the request of the addressee the initials were removed. Along with the reconstruction of the historical and literary contexts, the author offers a line-by-line commentary on Brodsky’s poem, showing its structure and intertextual connections.

The Language of Witness, the Language of Catastrophes

Nikita Bystrov in his article “A Quiet Whisper Without Words”: The Language of Silence in the Poetry of Dan Pagis” explores the relationship between motifs referring to the biblical myth of the Tower of Babel and the idea of the language of silence in the works of the Israeli poet Dan Pagis. In the texts under discussion — primarily in the poem “Tower” and in the poem “Traces” — the language

of silence is interpreted as the language of testimony about those who perished in the Jewish Holocaust. But for Pagis, it is also the language of poetry — to the extent that it can describe the existence of a subject who seems to be “stuck” on the border between the worlds of the living and the dead, feeling that they belong to both simultaneously.

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