

ABSTRACTS

Sons, Lovers, and the Laius Complex in Russian Modernist Poetry

SIBELAN FORRESTER

In this introduction to the articles written by Jenifer Presto and Stuart Goldberg that focus on the psychosocial tensions between Russian modernist poets of slightly different generations, Sibelan Forrester explores the distinct options of filiation and affiliation as ways to imagine or describe poetic choices, modeling textual relationships on the familial or genetic, with the interest in personal psychology characteristic of the period. These modes of thinking are reflected in creative writing, diary entries or poetry, as well as in scholarship. The anticarnal bent of Russian symbolists, particularly of Aleksandr Blok, springs from the religious philosophy of the time. Imagining poetic creation as maternity turns out to be less threatening—at least, for a male poet—than treating it as paternity, which raises other concerns too close to home. Both Presto and Goldberg suggest that Blok rightly considered the Acmeists, especially Osip Mandel'shtam, a threat to his own poetic intentions.

Unbearable Burdens: Aleksandr Blok and the Modernist Resistance to Progeny and Domesticity

JENIFER PRESTO

Drawing on contemporary critical theory, as well as on the works of a wide variety of Russian modernists, Jenifer Presto discusses the ways in which the symbolist poet Aleksandr Blok responded to what Edward Said has termed the modernist “crisis of filiation.” This essay contends that despite the fact that Blok was consecrated as one of the poetic sons of Russian modernism, he envisioned modern poetic history as a violent family romance that involved murderous impulses not just, as Harold Bloom would suggest, toward his literary forefathers, but also toward his imagined children. Although Blok’s complicated reaction to the appearance of a new generation of children has received far less critical attention than that of the futurist Vladimir Maiakovskii, it is Blok—not Maiakovskii—who can be credited with inaugurating a filicidal model of poetic creativity that would come to dominate the more radical flank of Russian modernism, the avant-garde. By examining Blok’s resistance to progeny within the larger context of Russian modernism, this article reveals the existence of an antigenerative male poetic tradition that extends from Blok to the futurists, reflecting the writers’ growing sense of rupture with the past in the period leading up to and immediately following the revolution.

Bedside with the Symbolist Hero: Blok in Mandel'shtam's "Pust' v dushnoi komnate"

STUART GOLDBERG

In the formation of postsymbolist poetic movements in Russia and in the development of Osip Mandel'shtam's poetics in particular, 1912 was a pivotal year. In this article, a close analysis and establishing of the subtexts and biographical context of Mandel'shtam's highly cryptic poem, "Pust' v dushnoi komnate, gde kloch'ia seroi vaty" (1912), illuminates a key moment in the process of Mandel'shtam's overcoming of symbolism. Through a deflation of the tragic pose of Aleksandr Blok's lyric hero, Mandel'shtam frees his own poetics from the shadow of Blok's powerful and charismatic lyric voice. This diminishing of Blok is accomplished through the collision of past and present, narrative and subtext, literary myth and biographical anecdote. Mandel'shtam's struggle with Blok is both unique and illustrative of the more universal dilemma that confronted his generation as it strove to wrest itself from the suffocating "bosom" of symbolism.

The Hero in the Madhouse: The Post-Soviet Novel Confronts the Soviet Past

ANGELA BRINTLINGER

Using Viktor Pelevin's *Chapaev and Pustota* and Vladimir Makanin's *Underground, or a Hero of Our Time*, Angela Brintlinger explores the way contemporary fiction portrays the post-Soviet intelligentsia and its search for identity in postmodern Russia. These authors juxtapose contemporary heroes with literary and historical heroes of the Russian and Soviet past in a struggle to come to terms with Soviet experience and the intelligentsia's relationship to Russian literature. Both Pelevin and Makanin use the chronotope of the madhouse to examine the idea of the hero in Russian literature and history. In making such deliberate use of the Russian past, from its literary heroes to the insidious institution of the mental asylum, both authors force their post-Soviet readers to confront the fact that the flow of history is as much about continuities as it is about change.

History, Politics, and the Constitution: Ethnic Conflict and Constitutional Adjudication in Postcommunist Bulgaria

VENELIN I. GANEV

Infamously, the 1991 Bulgarian Constitution contains a provision banning political parties "formed on an ethnic basis." In the early 1990s, the neo-communist Bulgarian Socialist Party invoked this provision when it asked the country's Constitutional Court to declare unconstitutional the political party of the beleaguered Turkish minority. In this article, Venelin I. Ganev analyzes the conflicting arguments presented in the course of the constitutional trial that ensued and shows how the justices' anxieties

about the possible effects of politicized ethnicity were interwoven into broader debates about the scope of the constitutional normative shift that marked the end of the communist era, about the relevance of historical memory to constitutional reasoning, and about the nature of democratic politics in a multiethnic society. Ganev also argues that the constitutional interpretation articulated by the Court has become an essential component of Bulgaria's emerging political order. More broadly, he illuminates the complexity of some of the major issues that frame the study of ethno-politics in postcommunist eastern Europe: the varied dimensions of the "politics of remembrance"; the ambiguities of transitional justice; the dilemmas inherent in the construction of a rights-centered legality; and the challenges involved in establishing a forward-looking, pluralist system of governance.

The Size, Composition, and Dynamics of the Russian State Bureaucracy in the 1990s

ROBERT J. BRYM AND VLADIMIR GIMPELSON

In this paper Robert J. Brym and Vladimir Gimpelson analyze changes in the size and social composition of the Russian state bureaucracy in the 1990s based on official data. Although the Russian state bureaucracy grew somewhat at the regional level in the 1990s, it actually shrank at the federal level. Comparing the Russian state bureaucracy to the Weberian ideal type of bureaucratic efficiency, the authors also demonstrate the existence of strong gender and age segregation, with women and young people concentrated at lower levels and men and older people concentrated at higher levels. Furthermore, because many public officials were formally educated in the pre-perestroika era, they are poorly adapted to the needs of a modern state. Finally, circulation of new personnel through the bureaucracy, or bureaucratic "renewal," is slow and occurs mainly at low-status levels. Circulation of personnel at high-status levels is practically nonexistent. Consequently, young recruits have little incentive to remain in state service and older officials confront little competition from either below or outside the state bureaucracy. Much of the inefficiency of the Russian state bureaucracy stems from these realities.

Are They Jews or Asians? A Cautionary Tale about Mountain Jewish Ethnography

SASCHA L. GOLUBOFF

In this article, Sascha L. Goluboff investigates the development of ethnographic knowledge about Mountain Jews in Azerbaijan to provide new ways of understanding who Mountain Jews are and to provoke scholars to reflect critically on empire, ethnicity, and religion in the Caucasus. Following Nicholas B. Dirks's recent call for anthropologists to pay attention to the "textual field that is the pretext to fieldwork," Goluboff analyzes how the work of the first ethnographers of Mountain Jews—Yehuda

Chernyi (1835–1880) and Il'ia Anisimov (1862–1928)—created an image of Mountain Jews as both “savage Asians” and “primordial Jews” and how subsequent scholarship has reinforced this dichotomy as modern “fact.” Goluboff believes that by paying more attention to the intersections among ethnic groups and refraining from making moral judgments, it is possible to open up new ground for creatively researching the relations between Islam and Judaism in the Caucasus.