

ABSTRACTS

Heroic Aesthetics and Modernist Critique: Extrapolations from Bakhtin's *Author and Hero in Aesthetic Activity*

ILYA KLIGER

Ilya Kliger addresses the question of Mikhail Bakhtin's intervention in modernist discourse by taking a step back from Bakhtin's views on modernist literature and outlining instead a more general Bakhtinian conception of the modernist condition as characterized by what Kliger calls "a crisis of authorship." The article focuses on Bakhtin's early work in narratological aesthetics and situates it within the *longue durée* context of debates about the status of the subject of aesthetic experience and, more generally, of knowledge, debates that can provisionally be seen as originating at the end of the eighteenth century and coming to a head within the intellectual and creative milieu of twentieth-century modernism. Early Bakhtin helps us formulate a specifically modernist—by contrast with what will be called "transcendental" and "realist"—critique, a critique not limited to the field of literary analysis alone but applying to all forms of thinking that either presuppose abstract subject-object division or rely on modes of synthetic reconciliation.

Masks of the Poet, Myths of the People: The Performance of Individuality and Nationhood in Georgian and Russian Modernism

HARSHA RAM

Georgian and Russian modernisms engaged in a conversation that was by no means one-way and in which the chronological development and aesthetic premises of Russian symbolism became curiously inverted. Piecing together this forgotten dialogue allows us to recover a neglected cross-cultural and properly Eurasian dimension of the Silver Age. Russians and Georgians alike invoked the mask as a theatrical form and myth as a narrative structure to articulate problems of individual, collective, and national identity. Mask and myth shared two distinct and somewhat incompatible genealogies, the one deriving from the Italian commedia dell'arte and the other from Friedrich Nietzsche's reading of Greek tragedy, both of which corresponded in turn to a typically Russian tension between the "decadent" and "mythopoetic" redactions of symbolism. These genealogies were critically adapted by the Georgians in an attempt to address the perceived needs of Georgian national culture. Aesthetic and philosophical problems concerning the semiotics of the name, the nature of the poetic persona, and the structure of myth came to be related to wider questions proper to an era of crisis and transition: modernity and historical belatedness, the dynamics of cultural importation, the gendered nature of nationhood, and the vexed relationship between popular culture and modernism as an elite cultural formation.

Lyricism and Philosophy in Brodsky's Elegiac Verse

AARON BEAVER

In this article Aaron Beaver analyzes two elegies written by Joseph Brodsky—one for his father (“Pamiati ottsa: Avstraliia”) and one for his mother (“Mysl’ o tebe udaliaetsia . . .”). The point of departure is Brodsky’s appropriation of the genre from his Silver Age predecessors (Anna Akhmatova, Osip Mandel’shtam, Marina Tsvetaeva), as made evident in a number of Brodsky’s well-known essays. Beaver’s central thesis is that Brodsky reshapes the elegy by centering it not on the death of the loved one but on time. Brodsky is inspired in this endeavor by his Silver Age forebears, but he extends their poetic practice into more philosophical territory. Specifically, close reading of Brodsky’s two elegies exposes a model of time consistent with the temporal idealism elaborated by Jean-Paul Sartre in *Being and Nothingness*. Based on this exegesis Beaver ventures to generalize about the nature of lyricism in Brodsky’s verse, arguing that it is inseparable from his philosophical assumptions.

Visual Poetry after Modernism: Elizaveta Mnatsakanova

STEPHANIE SANDLER

The impact of neither Andrei Belyi nor Velimir Khlebnikov has been fully comprehended, and their legacies are joined in unusual combination in the work of the contemporary visual poet Elizaveta Mnatsakanova. Her poetry appeals to both eye and ear, expanding on innovations introduced by Belyi and Khlebnikov, and it raises broad questions about the integration of sensory experiences by readers of visual poetry. Mnatsakanova uses illustrative handwriting, calligraphy, and images of a hand or a face in her one-of-a-kind albums and books, and her poems are set out in symmetrical columns or other spatial arrangements. Repetition is the central rhetorical device in her work, yet her unique albums emphasize individualized aesthetic production and anticipate highly charged reader reaction. Special attention is paid to “Das Hohelied,” a part of *Das Buch Sabeth*, which engages both the literary tradition and the immediacy of a reader’s experience with the text.

Violating the Canon: Reading Der Nister with Vasilii Grossman

HARRIET MURAV

“Violating the Canon” makes the case for an alternative Jewish and literary space in the context of Soviet war literature by comparing works by Vasilii Grossman, Il’ia Erenburg, and the Yiddish author Der Nister. In this article, Harriet Murav distinguishes the question of literary value from the question of identity and separates out the problem of determining the typicality or representativeness of a work from the problem of engaging the complexity of its meanings. Jewish literature from the Soviet Union ought to be recovered from the constraints that subordinate it to Cold War-era sociological and political constraints. Mikhail Bakhtin, Werner

Sollors, and Michael Warner provide approaches that allow access to more fluid and open-ended readings.

Russian Hybrids: Identity in the Translingual Writings of Andreï Makine, Wladimir Kaminer, and Gary Shteyngart

ADRIAN WANNER

Authors writing in a language other than their native tongue have become a common phenomenon in an era of increased international mobility. This article is devoted to three Russian-born émigré writers—Andreï Makine (b. 1957), Wladimir Kaminer (b. 1967), and Gary Shteyngart (b. 1972)—all of whom have achieved literary stardom with books written in French, German, and English, respectively. Although each of the three authors has a distinctive style and ideological position, in his own way each projects a “Russian” persona to the western public. Using the notion of cultural hybridity, Adrian Wanner explores the various strategies these authors have adopted in fashioning an identity for themselves that is tailored to meet the demands of the reading public in their respective host nations while exploiting the cachet of the Russian “brand name” in today’s global literary economy.

Revisionism in Retrospect: A Personal View

SHEILA FITZPATRICK

This is a participant’s account of the movement in Soviet history during the 1970s and 1980s known as “revisionism,” which Sheila Fitzpatrick understands as an iconoclastic challenge by social historians to the dominance in Sovietology of political scientists and the totalitarian model. Particular attention is paid to the debates on the nature of Stalinism, which in the context of the Cold War became highly politicized and bitterly polemical, as well as to internal arguments: for example, between Marxists and non-Marxists and between first- and second-generation revisionists. Revisionists’ early interest in questions of social support and later focus on resistance is discussed. The essay offers an assessment of the intellectual and historiographical contribution of revisionism, including an appreciation of contingency, a new approach to power and the interplay of government and society, new standards of historical professionalism, and an emphasis on archives and primary sources. Finally, a line of continuity between revisionism and its 1990s challenger, “post-revisionism,” is suggested. Comments are provided by Robert V. Daniels, J. Arch Getty, Elena A. Osokina, and Jochen Hellbeck.