

Summary

“Through the Layers of Matter and Language”: Reading with Valery Podoroga

Editors: Daniil Aronson, Tatiana Weiser

Oleg Aronson's article “Anthropogram, or Viable Thought” shows the connection between the Soviet and Russian philosopher Valery Podoroga's ideas and the works of the formalists, psychoanalysis, and conceptions of the “thinking body,” going from Nietzsche right up to phenomenology and deconstruction. Podoroga offers his means of the fixation of the act of thinking, which the article's author calls “radical defamiliarization.” It allows for the reveal of the “anthropogram” (Podoroga's term), the trace of thought that is left in a work (it is not important whether it is philosophical, literary, or painting). Using the example of Podoroga's comparison of Descartes' philosophy with the painting of Georges de La Tour, it is demonstrated how radical defamiliarization acts as an analytical procedure, revealing the plastic (corporeal, affective) image of what seems to be an abstract idea. This allows for the interpretation of thought as an organic living form of resistance to the world of entrenched cultural models and domineering discursive strategies.

The article “Kafka's Dream Work in Valery Podoroga's Interpretation” by **Oxana Timofeeva** reflects on the connection established by Valery Podoroga between philosophical anthropology and geophilosophy. There are two major philosophical directions that converge in Podoroga's work, which he calls the metaphysics of the landscape and analytical anthropology. The mediator

between a human being and a landscape is the body which Podoroga thinks of phenomenologically, as an experience of existence in the world in general and in the work of literature as a metaphysical landscape in particular. The article analyzes the modes of such mediation in the book *Parabola: Franz Kafka and the Construction of the Dream*, in which Kafka's work is discussed as a dream world.

Aleksey Sergienko's article “Essays in Landscape Ecosophy: Space and Creativity in the Philosophical Approaches of Martin Heidegger, Valery Podoroga, and Félix Guattari” examines the question of how is a philosophical work made and by doing so follows Valery Podoroga, who tried to answer this question drawing on the philosophy of Martin Heidegger to see the work as a landscape world of thought, linking the existential experience of the author and the reader in a single image of the meta-physical territory where such an experience becomes possible. The author of the article offers an outline of landscape ecosophy, presenting Valery Podoroga's theoretical encounter with the French thinker Félix Guattari, whose works developed the concept of existential territory in the context of subjectivity production as a new step in the direction of revealing the actual significance of creative activity in the conditions of modernity.

Ilya Budraitskis in his article “The Sublime and the Finite: Towards the Escha-

tological Dimension of Aesthetics” reflects on the sublime as one of the defining aesthetic categories proposed by Edmund Burke and Immanuel Kant. Today, the sublime has become an integral element of a popular culture focused on dystopias and catastrophes. However, once placed in the space of cultural consumption, having become “representational”, the sublime has lost its connection to the idea of the finitude of the world and the moral obligations arising from it. This article features a number of attempts to reinterpret the sublime in contemporary culture, revealing the fundamental differences between Burke’s and Kant’s conceptions as well as their socio-political dimension.

In **Valery Podoroga’s** article “The Proximity of the Executioner (Mandelstam’s *Slate Ode*)” the despotic regime of the Stalinist era is examined from the point of view of communication strategies of writing and reading. The graphic symbol of despotic writing is the straight line, and the two fundamental operations that control these writings are profiling and

striking through. Therefore, the despot’s writing is analyzed not from the point of view of a certain meaning it conveys, but rather from the point of view of the regular patterns of distribution of the characters themselves and the construction of the graphic trajectories of its impact. Thus, the reading of the writings of a regime cannot be correct and incorrect. To accept the regime is to copy the symbols of the despot, and the admission of guilt by the victim of terror automatically leads to the inscription of the spoken word in despotic writing. At the conclusion of the article, using the example of Mandelstam’s poetry, the ways in which poetic (graphic) experiments with writing allow one to resist despotic power are examined. Poetic writing creates a space to breathe within the solid walls of Stalinist symbols. But at the same time, Mandelstam’s poetry captures the duality of the image of the despot-executioner: on the one hand is its carnifical proximity, and on the other is the Despot’s inaccessibility and immortality, hence his poems, some denouncing Stalin and others glorifying him.

To Yuri Lotman’s 100th Birthday: Remembrances from Students and Colleagues

Guest Editor: Pavel Glushakov

The section brings together remembrances of his relatives, students, and colleagues. It starts with accounts of direct conversation with Lotman; they all, in some way, speak about his human appeal. Along with the inarguable influence of Lotman’s academic discoveries on their own, for many, the values he held of the individual, unique, and humanistic were important, especially significant in an era of the influence of “class,” “social,” and “collective.” Encountering a dif-

ferent type of thought and a different level of individual freedom formed the personal qualities of his students and informed their humanities knowledge no less than Lotman’s primary directions of research. The aim of this selection of articles is to show the points of interaction with Yuri Lotman as a person that fostered a new view of the world and served as a starting point for their own research and reflection. Among the authors of the remembrances are **Marietta Chudakova, Svetlana**

Tolstaya, Larissa Naiditch, Galina Ponomarjova, Lyudmila Gorelik, Liudmila Zaionts, Tatjana Kuzovkina,

Kirill Razlogov, Suren Zolyan, and Vadim Parsamov. The section ends with poetry by **Aleksandr Kushner.**

Redefining Pushkin

Sergey Zenkin's article "The Idol's Space: Visual Structures in *The Bronze Horseman*" endeavors to describe how the structure of Pushkin's poem *The Bronze Horseman* shapes the individual experience of its protagonist and its reader. This experience is considered not so much in its lexical as in its visual aspect, taking into account such features of the poem as its narrative structure, the interweaving of two instances of vision and speech (the narrator's and the protagonist), implicit references to "local knowledge" of inhabitants of St. Petersburg, and magical motifs tracing back to romantic fantastic stories. The protagonist's traumatic visual experience consists of changing the perspective from which he looks at the monument of Peter the Great, in a mimetic imitation of the sculpted horse's affect, with the emperor's gestures denoting the space of the city. The monument is experienced as an idol, an image endowed with sacred power and associated with the element of water. The confrontation of a madman with a statue manifests the aesthetic interaction of the author and the protagonist of the poem.

The article "On the Visuality of Pushkin's Poem *Hero*" by **Igor Nemirovskiy** offers a reading of Pushkin's poem *Hero* (1830) in relation to iconography of Napoleon as a tsar/messiah, as well as remembrances of Napoleon, particular about his visit to a plague hospital in Jaffa. The article shows how in Pushkin's poetry, elements of Napoleon's legend carry over into the image of Nicholas I,

which makes it possible for the arguments of the French anti-monarchist polemic to be spread to the image of the Russian tsar.

Vera Milchina's article "Again about Justice and Mercy: Another Possible Source of the Finale of *The Captain's Daughter*" suggests adding to the already known sources of the final scene of *The Captain's Daughter* a historical anecdote about Marguerite Lambren — the maid of Mary Stuart, who, wanting to avenge the death of her mistress and her husband, tried to kill Queen Elizabeth of England. When asked by the Queen what she should do with the one who attempted to kill her, Marguerite answered with a counter question: are you asking as a judge or as a queen? When Marguerite heard that she was a queen, she said: Then I should be pardoned. But when Elizabeth asked for assurances that the attempt would not be repeated, Marguerite replied: a favor given with caution ceases to be a favor, and in that case I am ready to be tried. The queen told her courtiers that in thirty years of her reign she had never heard such a lesson from anyone, and she dismissed Marguerite without any conditions. This anecdote, which was repeatedly reproduced in the collections of the XVIII—XIX centuries, is also contained in the *Historical Dictionary of Anecdotes about Love*, which is preserved in the Pushkin library, and the pages on which it is printed are cut. Therefore, there is reason to assume that Pushkin was familiar with this "lesson to the queen", and the opposition of the

queen and the judge, mercy and justice, formulated by Marguerite Lambren, was

reflected in the finale of *The Captain's Daughter*.

Readings

In the second part of the article “Vladimir Sorokin: 40 Years Wandering in Anticipation of the Desert (The Historical Novel/ Article),” **Ilya Gerasimov** continues to examine the key features of Sorokin’s writing deconstructed almost to the “white” or “zero” level which secured for him an unconditional primacy in post-

Soviet Russian literature, and at the same time the opportunity to position himself outside of literature, comprehending it completely “objectively”, from an outside perspective. Sorokin’s writing is analyzed as a constantly reproduced situation of transgression, in which the living language exists.

Literary Modernism in Norway: Tor Ulven’s Poetry of Impersonality

The section opens with an article by **Sigurd Tenningen**, “What the Stones Know in Norwegian,” which gives a short, but extremely informative outline of the biography and “poetry of impersonality” of Tor Ulven in the context of post-war Scandinavian literature. This is followed by a selection of his poems from 1983—1993, the most productive and original period in the poet’s artistic life, when he moved away from his inter-

est in surrealism and began focusing on other things, including short, fragmentary prose. Skepticism in regards to traditional narrative forms and the search for a new, non-narrative logic are presented in his essay with the characteristic title of “Unprogrammable.” The section concludes with **Olga Balla**’s essay “The Different Life of Tor Ulven,” which is on the intricacies and strangeness of his book *Replacement*.