

Summary

Natural Sciences in the Culture of Early Russian Modernism

Guest Editors: Colleen McQuillen and Frederick H. White

Ideas about Progress, Time Forward, and their Reversals

Julia Vaingurt's article "‘Movement Without Gravitation Is Unthinkable’: Techne in Tolstoy’s Natural Philosophy” reassesses Tolstoy’s interest in the topic of science and technology in human life by tracing his engagement with this theme from his fictional works to his essays, textbooks, diaries, and letters, and offers a reevaluation of the writer’s views on the role of these factors in human life. Upon considerations from all sides, Tolstoy’s writings, contrary to the popular belief, evince his thoughtful and sophisticated understanding of modern science and technology that presages some of the most influential 20th-century theories of technology. By analyzing Tolstoy’s keen interest in technological advances, the author argues for the need to revise our understanding of the *fin de siècle* artistic culture, often perceived as oriented solely toward the aesthetic, the spiritual, and the transcendent and, therefore, aloof and unresponsive to great scientific upheavals taking place around it.

The paper “The Rhetoric of Science in Russian Darwinism” by **Riccardo Nicolosi** analyzes the rhetorical dimension of Darwinism, one of the most influential scientific discourses in the culture of early Russian modernism. At the center of attention is the significance of rhe-

torical argumentation and in particular various forms of analogical reasoning, both in Darwin’s writings and in his Russian adherents (Kessler, Kropotkin, and others). After explaining the epistemic function of the metaphors “struggle for existence” and “mutual aid,” the paper analyzes the argumentation strategies in Russian Darwinism, which are presented as a further development and reworking of Darwinian analogical rhetoric.

Frederick H. White's article “1902: Blurring the Boundaries between Medicine and Literature” addresses the popularization of medical theory and how it became a part of literary and popular discourse in Russia at the beginning of the 20th century. Special attention is paid to the role the popular press played in the process by publishing the news of psychopathology and criminal anthropology alongside the polemics around modernist prose informed by the achievements of these sciences as well as criticism of the society where degeneration theory became a universal metaphor linking real-life criminals and criminal anthropologists, on the one hand, — and neurasthenic fictional characters and their creators exploring the connection between literary genius and mental deviation, on the other hand.

Philipp Kohl's article "Ancestralities of the Poetic Word: Evolutionary and Mythological Time in Briusov and Bal'mont" aims to show how scientific models of irreversible natural time provide a framework for latesymbolist poetological concepts and poetic images. The author compares naturalist images of the genesis of poetry in diachronic perspective in the works of Valery Briusov and Konstantin Balmont against the

backdrop of early mythical models of time and eternity. Bryusov's theory of "scientific poetry" and its relationship with evolutionary time is examined in comparison to the expression of evolutionary and mythological time in his poetry. An analysis of Balmont's collection *The Ash* shows how scientific thought and mythological tradition give rise to competing versions of the genesis of sound, speech, language, and the poetic word.

Literary Responses to Contemporary Scientific Discoveries

Colleen McQuillen's article "Zenkevich's 'Voice of Matter': Paleontology in the Era of Modernism" analyzes paleontologically- and geologically-themed poems in Mikhail Zenkevich's collection *The Wild Porphyry* in the context of key scientific discoveries at the turn of the last century. It argues that Zenkevich's speculative portraits of life on earth before humans expand the boundaries of Acmeist realism and Adamist primitivism. It also suggests that Zenkevich's planetary consciousness, which emerged amidst active efforts to popularize science, is a hallmark of a modern worldview and thus integral to understanding Russian modernist culture.

In the article "The Human Colony: Symbiogenesis and Sympoiesis in the Works of K.S. Merezhkovskii and A.A. Bogdanov" **Mieka Erley** considers how the division of labor is treated in the scientific, philosophical, and fictional works of K.S. Merezhkovskii and A.A. Bogdanov. Focusing on their discussions of symbiogenesis and eusocial insect colonies as models of social organization, this article shows how the two authors built divergent political utopias on the basis of shared intellectual influences and the same scientific case

studies. Finally, the article considers Merezhkovskii's and Bogdanov's ideas on the human colony in relation to Lynn Margulis' Gaia Earth theory and Donna Haraway's concept of *sympoiesis*.

Although early Soviet literature and culture claimed a radical break from the previous aesthetics, and characterized themselves in many respects by renewed, hierarchical and utilitarian relations of the society with the environment, the enmeshment of the human organism within the earth, the environment, value systems, and the distribution of knowledge appears evidently in the literary and artistic works produced at that time and builds on pre-revolutionary theories from the late nineteenth and the early twentieth century. **Elena Fratto's** essay "Metabolic Modernities: Energy Transformation in Bogdanov's *Krasnaya Zvezda* and Beliaev's 'Ni zhizn', ni smert'" analyzes energy transformation across the human-nonhuman divide by examining two works of science fiction — Alexander Bogdanov's *Krasnaya Zvezda* (1908) and Alexander Beliaev's "Ni zhizn', ni smert'" (1926) — along with the pre-Revolutionary scientific theories by which they were informed, system-thinking and anabiosis. By employing

the concept of “metabolism” as energy transformation, the author aims to highlight epistemological continuities between pre-Soviet science and early Soviet imagined futures. In spite of the official Soviet narrative and the slogan

“Everything anew!” writers and intellectuals before and after 1917 produce storyworlds that are still deeply informed by pre-Revolutionary theories. From their works, humankind emerges as inescapably enmeshed in the environment.

Narratology Ad Marginem: Narratives and Boundaries of Media

Guest Editors: Larissa Muravieva and Olga Davydova

Ivan Delazari's article “Comics by Ear: Diegetic Sound as a Transmedial Entity” explores the readerly ways of mental construal of soundscapes in comics and graphic novels. As a visual rather than audiovisual medium, graphic narrative makes the reader's inner ear responsible for its diegetic sound, which it indicates schematically by visual and verbal means. Since any storyworld space has default auditory parameters, it is suggested to consider sound as a transmedial entity. Delazari discusses some particular cases of sound deferral and supplementation in Gene Luen Yang and Sonny Liew's *The Shadow Hero* and Alan Moore, Gene Ha and Zander Cannon's *Top 10*.

Larissa Muravieva devoted her article “*Mise en abyme*: Variations on the Concept” to variations of the narrative term *mise en abyme*. By *mise en abyme* are commonly understood multiple meanings such as the “inner mirror” that reproduces the plot of the whole text within its single fragment (L. Dällenbach, J. Ricardou), or the recursive structure creating the effect of infinite regress (B. McHale), or the “reduced model” (C. Lévi-Strauss), or the self-reflexive connection between the narrator and the text he creates (A. Gide). However, all these definitions are only approximately related to the complex of narrative phe-

nomena denoted by the notion of *mise en abyme*. The article systematises different approaches to defining the *mise en abyme* figure established in classical and post-classical (especially French) narratology and clarifies its semantic and functional effects.

Olga Davydova's article “Transforming Eventfulness in European Cinema: From Realism to Spectator's Experience” is on the conceptualization of the event in film through addressing the topic of film experience. This methodological move is dictated by the desire to trace how the understanding and ways of representing events in the film are transformed: what is considered an event, what events are included in the film, how they are experienced. Referring to the viewer's experience allows us to rethink the well-known dichotomy of history and discourse and suggests placing the film event directly in the field of viewer's experience. The theoretical basis for the article is provided by Seymour Chatman's narrative theory of cinema, Jacques Rancière's concept of the “thwarted fable”, and Jean Epstein's analysis of film sensuality.

The article “Mimesis of Reading in Screenplay: *The Great Consoler* by Lev Kuleshov and Alexandr Kurs” by **Sergey Ogudov** is dedicated to the study of instances of readers in *The Great Con-*

sofer, the screenplay by Lev Kuleshov and Aleksandr Kurs. Special attention is given to the figure of the fictional reader, whose activity is defined as a mimesis of reading in which reflection is not separated from character's bodily reactions. Also discussed are forms of mimesis such as denial of reading, naïve reading and interpretation. In the transition from the literary script to the director's version, the fictional audience becomes more independent from the illusionist intention of the narrator and starts to more actively react to the narration.

In her article "How Are Stories Told in the Post-Digital World?" **Liudmila Komutstsi** examines the causes of the revival of broad societal and academic interest in the art of storytelling in the post-digital era and the principles and functions of transmedial storytelling. Using the categories of experientiality

and storytelling as tools of postclassical narratology, the author analyzes the literary potential of the new narrative genre — the interactive web documentary. The case study for the analysis is the joint Canadian-British project *Seven Digital Deadly Sins*.

Valery Timofeev's article "Transmediality of Parody against the Cult of the Bard" analyzes the tradition of parodic references to the legacy of William Shakespeare in the context of the cult of the national genius. In addition to the ways precedent texts are used and the forms of their coexistence, the terms that signify these ways are also studied. Special attention is paid to the diachronic deformation of the reader and viewer experience that inform the concept of "cult of the national genius." An original topological approach is used as the methodological basis for the research.

"Prize Politics" in Post-Soviet Literature

Guest Editor: Valery Vyugin

Two prizes, the *Booker* and the *Triumph* were founded almost simultaneously, and both claimed to be the first independent prize in post-Soviet Russia. But only one — the *Booker* — played a significant role in the literary process of the 1990s. In the article "Literary Capitalism and the Economy of Prestige (Russian Literary Prizes of the 1990s and 2000s. From the *Triumph* to the *Big Book Award*)" **Bradley A. Gorski** argues that the *Booker's* success can be attributed to its foreign provenance and its capitalist orientation. Though many in the literary world looked to prizes to uphold aesthetic value against the growing force of the market, they nevertheless turned to a prize with an explicit market orientation. As the *Booker* became an important "instance of consecration" (in Pierre

Bourdieu's terms) it connected post-Soviet literature to neoliberal capitalism, becoming part of a broader system of "literary capitalism," in which the market is the central site of negotiation in literary relations.

In his article "Nostalgia for Trauma ('Prize' Literature Nominated of 2019 and the Soviet Past)" **Valery Vyugin** focuses on the problem of recycling Soviet history in recent Russian prose. Only one tendency characteristic of this process is examined, which, however, today can be considered one of the most prominent. The basis for the conversation about it is the large, very heterogeneous corpus of texts that at the same time stand out in a special way from the rest, "prize literature," so to speak. Three novels are dis-

cussed that are on the period of Stalin's rule. Each of these represent an attempt to "harmonize" Soviet history: to smooth out contradictions and find something positive even in the most, it would seem, unsuitable subject for this.

Andrei Stepanov's article "Literature in the Bardo: George Saunders and Victor Pelevin about the Afterlife" compares bio-

ographies and texts of two modern icons, George Saunders and Victor Pelevin, who managed to win the recognition of both prize juries and a wide range of readers. One of the central motifs of both authors is the afterlife (bardo), in which the characters keep talking about their desires, exposing their traumas. This situation can be read indirectly, as an allegory of the current state of literature.

Poetological Studies

Kornelija Ičin's article "What Vvedensky's *Animals Are Talking About*" examines the language of animals, who are, in one way or another, connected to death and the afterlife, and thus let in on their secrets. The author investigates the speech characteristics of animals, birds, insects, and fish and how they relate to Vvedensky's ideas of conducting a poetic critique of reason, discovering new types of connections in the world, feeling its disconnection and fragmentation of time, and, finally, proving that reason does not understand the world. The language of animals is analyzed in the context of the new cosmogony conceived by Vvedensky that should take us back to the starting point — to the creation of the world, to harmony, in which man, plants, and animals talked to and understood each other.

In his article "To Wipe the Dragon's Den off the Face of the Earth': Heinrich von Kleist on the Dynamics of Spontaneous Violence" **Boris Maximov** summarizes the ideas of Heinrich von Kleist — one of the most "brutal" of the romantic authors, commonly seen as an enfant terrible of the Romantic age — about the prerequisites and catalysts for and forms of spontaneous violence. Kleist linked sporadic "waves" of violence with changes that occurred at the end of the

early modern era, when a direct, personal connection with a deity was gradually replaced by an abstract, universal law. As a result of this process, the profanation of the sacred occurred, which gave rise to an axiological ambiguity (unholy deities, impious saints, impure shrines), thereby provoking a crisis of faith and identity. Kleist's characters thirst — and they cannot believe; their rages derives from their confusion. According to Kleist, the end goal of aggression is not to eliminate a situational opponent or inflict "symmetrical" damage on the offender. Rebels stigmatize and mutilate — repulse, overthrow, tarnish, dismember — "false" idols in order to release themselves from their hypnotic power and to purify and revive their own faith. Therefore, violent excesses appear superfluous from a pragmatic point of view, but not from a symbolic one. The path of primitive violence attracts Kleist's characters because of its brevity and directness; it eliminates duality and stops the erosion of faith, but here integrity is restored at the cost of restriction and regression. On the other hand, violent outbursts sweep away any intermediary (institutions, conventions, accumulated knowledge) and thus presenting people with a chance to restore a lively faith and reestablish a connection to the sacred.