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Introduction

The seventh issue of «AvtobiografiЯ» is devoted to the genre of private correspondence. The project led by the editor of this issue's special section, Elena Glukhova, focuses on the Russian Silver Age, an era marked by an intense drive for extremely original literary experiments on many auto—biographical genres which were going to leave a trace in the future development of XX century Russian literature. Scholarly literature on the correspondence of individual authors are numerous, however within the field of Russian Life Writing the genre of private correspondence seems to have not been studied thoroughly enough¹. Under that point of view, the present issue of our journal of-

¹ Of pivotal importance is the special issue of the «La Revue Russe», 2009, XXXII, entitled *L'épistolaire en Russie* and edited by Rodolphe Baudin, which is a collection of studies devoted to epistolary exchanges of different epochs. They show their authors' most intimate dimension, the world that they create with their correspondents and also the historical and social contexts in which they are set. Another outstanding aspect is the attention devoted on theoretical aspects related to the practice of letter writing.

fers an important contribution to the field by focusing on some specific lines of research.

A first line is that which sees private letters as biographical and critical sources. Anna Sergeeva—Kliatis, who has recently authored a monograph on the star of early XX century Russian theatre Vera Kommisarzhenskaia (Sergeeva—Kliatis 2018), proposes an unpublished fragment of a 1894 letter sent by her to the diplomat and philanthropist Sergei Tatishchev and puts it within the context of their wider private correspondence. This allows her to reconstruct their relationship, revealing new biographical facts on Kommisarzhenskaia and studying her complex personal dynamics with Tatishchev against the backdrop of her artistic career.

In her long piece, Anastasia Gacheva publishes some hitherto unpublished letters by the father of Russian modernist music Vladimir Rebikov and of the philosopher, literary critic and poet Aleksandr Gorskii, which were written in the mid—1910s. Gacheva analyses their epistolary exchange in depth, showing Rebikov's efforts in explaining the

meaning of his own music to the young Gorskii, for whom the letters were interpretative instruments. The author explains in full details the cultural context in which this correspondence was held — the private letter was used by intellectuals in the first few decades of XX century as a source for critical reflection, an interpretative scheme, a means for the analysis of one's own biography. This last aspect is outlined by Elena Glukhova in her article, in which she refers to the “epistolary laboratory as an epistolary genre”. The Rebikov—Gorskii correspondence is particularly noteworthy, as it allows to show how deep the personal and creative relationships between them and other intellectuals and artists of the period were. Such relationships were indeed derived from the authors' own artistic activity — a peculiar trait of the Silver Age, an epoch in which art and life were intertwined.

Elena Glukhova's article, which follows this line of research, revolves around gender issues in female correspondence² by focussing on the letters exchange

² Apart from the works devoted to the French authors of Russian-language diaries by Catherine Viollet and Elena Grechanaia (see K. V'olle, E. Grechanaia 2006; Gretchanaia, C. Viollet, 2008) of main importance is 2010.

between the young poet and anthroposophist Vera Stanevich and Andrei Bely. Through their letters it is possible to observe how their relationship developed and, above all, how Stanevich was formed spiritually, philosophically and artistically. The young female poet thus follows a model which belonged to the so called 'shestidesiatniki'. Another line of research is that which sees private letters as a means to interpret critical and poetical works. Ol'ga Bogdanova publishes for the first time two letters and a postcard written in 1918—1919 by the Dostoevsky critic Vasilii Komarovich to the poet Maksimilian Voloshin — the letters focus on the idea of the cultural *locus* of Koktebel', where Voloshin had a house which often hosted Russian intellectuals and writers who transformed the small village into a flourishing cultural centre. Again, the correspondence allows to unveil new biographical facts which are crucial to the understanding of the creative and theoretical works of the people involved.

Dmitrii Torshilov's article focuses on an unpublished letter sent by the Ukrainian philosopher and philologist Iakov Golosovker to Andrei Bely in 1921, at the time when they were both members of the Vol'fila. The let-

ter exchange allows Torshilov to identify common themes which are then reflected in the works of both writers – in particular, the image of Christ in a modern urban setting, which will feature in both Bely's *Peterburg* and Golosovker's *Sozhzhennyi roman*. Biographical facts and literary works are interwoven in the *zhiznetvorchestvo* on which, as Gacheva states, the Silver Age is based. Within this context, the private letter becomes part of a biography, which is in itself an artistic project.

Following this perspective, Fedor Poliakov analyses three fragments of unpublished letters written in the first half of the 1930s by the poet Ellis (Lev Kobylinskii) and sent to the book illustrator and Pushkinist Nikolai Zaretskii. The intimate dimension of this epistolary allowed Ellis to reveal the name of his real father, the pedagogue and Pushkinist Lev Polivanov. Poliakov reconstructs the cultural milieu of the first decades of the XX century through Polivanov's figure and through the renowned gymnasium led by him.

Finally, Svetlana Fedotova proposes a study based on the vast epistolary exchange between Aleksandr Blok and Liubov' Mendeleeva, which was recently published (Perepiska 2017). Fe-

dotova analyses how the spouses created their love and erotic discourse and follows its evolution in different moments of their relationship. The author focuses mainly on the evolution of the style and on the transformation, at a later stage, of their erotic discourse into a discourse based on *philia*, an intimate friendship. Also Irina Erman's work, which is not part of the special issue and is devoted to the autobiographical genre of Vasili Rozanov's works, takes into consideration the modernists' views on the auto—biographical genres and covers some of the aspects discussed by Poliakov in his piece. Erman reconstructs how the Dostoevskian myth is the main factor in Rozanov's autobiographical works, which allows her to highlight how the writer created a literary autobiographical mythology based on his 'living plagiarism' of Dostoevsky.

The 'Material and Discussion' section features a lengthy work by Aleksandr Ivinskii who publishes here for the first time 48 letters sent in 1789 by Nikolai Murav'ev to his sister Feodos'ia and her husband Sergei Lunin. These letters — found in the archive of the Division of Written Sources at the Moscow State Historical Museum — represent a unique source to improve our understanding not only of the

biography of the writer, but also of the cultural context in which some of his views on politics, society and culture were formed and debated.

Finally, we would like to thank Cinzia De Lotto for her work over these years and welcome

Connor Doak and Chiara Rampazzo to the «AvtobiografiЯ» family. We are particularly grateful to Chiara for her outstanding work on the present issue.

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