

## Introduction

Introduction to the second number of «AvtobiografiЯ»

The second issue of «AvtobiografiЯ» was created with the intention to broaden discussions on two autobiographical forms and genres to two concepts of primary importance in Russian culture, namely 'Space' and 'Memory'. An international conference, held at the University of Padua (7-9 May 2013), has been devoted to these themes. All the contributors were from different nationalities and backgrounds. They were requested to address these themes from different angles. The results of their research, meditated and thoroughly revised in respect to their presentation in Padua, are contained, among others, in two issues of «AvtobiografiЯ», this second issue and the third, which will be published in the first half of 2014.

'Russia' and 'space' just as 'Russia' and 'memory', are particularly significant pairs if referred to in a cultural context that, over centuries, has incessantly confronted such questions. Urban and rural space; national, transnational and foreign space; internal and external immigration; own and exile space; private and collective memory; repressed, shifted memory; aestheticized, negotiated memory; memory in conflict. These are just a few of the topics faced by the papers published in this and the next number. They try to give a concrete contribution to the intersection between memory, space and Life Writing in the Russian context, bringing to light not only periods and previously studied authors, but also unpublished material and themes that have been so far neglected and, finally, innovative critical approaches.

We propose to our readers a diachronic path through the texts, aimed at underlining the development of the theme in Russia through the centuries. The opening paper is by Yury Zaretskiy, devoted to the representation of Nastas'ia Markovna, wife of the Protopop Avvakum in what is considered to be the first Russian autobiography. Zaretskiy depicts this

human figure within the tormented path in the immense and hostile Northern Russian space. Zaretskiy's work sheds new light on the character, the only female figure in the antique genre of *zhitie*. From this emerges a stylistically lively and profound portrait outlined by Avvakum. The analysis provided renders the authentic dimension of the character, distancing herself from the depictions made by many Russian writers of the Twentieth century, who found inspiration in the character of Nastasia Markovna. Despite the literary manipulation, the character remains anchored to reality.

The topic of intimate writing during detention and deprivation of liberty is at the heart of Rodolphe Baudin's paper, that proposes a study of Radishchev's epistolary. Baudin explores mainly the author's stylistic register, highlighting its simplicity, very different from the usual elaborate style in other works by Radishchev. In his personal letters addressed to the Count Vorontsov that makes up the corpus studied by Baudin, the author utilizes instead a simple style, both for vocabulary and syntax, that characterizes his intimate prose. Bilingualism and the use of French are at the center of the second part of Baudin's essay, which introduces the Russian concept of '*epistolarnyi diskurs*' on the basis of the corpus of letters by Radishchev.

Another work focused on bilingualism and, particularly, the use of French is proposed by Emilie Murphy, who browsed the diary of some Russian noblewomen in Europe between the late Eighteenth and early Nineteenth century, showing how the use of memory in these texts is fundamental for the construction of a collective identity.

To the genre of diary is also devoted the paper by Stefano Aloe, who, just as Zaretskiy and Baudin, deals with the theme of intimate writing in people deprived of freedom. Aloe studies the diary written in exile by V.

Kiukhel'beker. Also in this case, the author focuses on the literary form of the diary, rather than on the content. Kiukhel'beker's *Diary* is different from the traditionally accepted sense of the term. It utilizes strategies that are typically literary that unite intimate writing to a sort of public writing, in which reality and fantasy are intertwined and focus their attention more on the future than on the past. The article by Raffaella Vassena leads us to Petersburg in the era of the Great Reforms. Thanks to the numerous quotes from memoirs from the period, she analyzes how the urban space becomes a giant 'social stage' in that period. Vassena pinpoints the importance of autobiographical rendering of the visual memory of events and how this affects the formation of a collective memory on those same events.

To visual memory and, more generally, visual culture is devoted the paper by Aleksey Kholikov, who undergoes the analysis of comparative forms of autobiographical representation, both textual (memoirs and autobiography) and visual (portrait and caricature) and thus brings to light the different memorization mechanisms occurring in Dmitrii Merezhkovskii's case.

Evgenii Dobrenko's essay goes back to the first critical and theoretical studies on autobiographical genres within the Russian context made by the formalists. Dobrenko focuses on Eikhenbaum's works on Lermontov and Tolstoy. Eikhenbaum traces the evolution of Russian Literary System and sheds light on Lermontov's typical stylistic romantic features, and on Tolstoy's style experiments made in his diaries and in the 'autobiographical trilogy'. The features analyzed by Eikhenbaum are fundamental for the development of autobiographical Russian prose.

Patrizia Deotto, who had already exposed the first results of her research on autobiography on commission in the first number of «Автобиография», focuses here on the contribution to such a genre by Evgenii Zamiatin. From her analysis, emerges the author's relationship with the power and the cultural-historical context of his time. Although deprived of a real private dimension, the genre of autobiography on commission allows, according to Deotto, an entirely personal reconstruction of the biographical

events recounted and implies specific strategies that lead to a reshaping of memory which brings the author to a new shaping of his own identity.

Oleg Kling identifies 'five dimensions' of autobiographism that distinguish the works by Andrei Belyi and, in particular, those of the 'Blok' theme, i.e. poems, letters, memoirs, the novel *Peterburg*, and the contributions and essays written by Belyi on A. Blok. The author identifies one strategy, aimed at grasping the intertextual links, that can be found in other works. In particular, Kling compares the poem *Dal' – bes kontsa* and *Kachaetsia lenivo*, which are part of the *Zakaty* cycle, and the novel *Zapiski chudaka*.

According to Massimo Tria, memory acquires a 'topographical' value and becomes spatial. The author studies the autobiographical writings and the memoirs of some representatives of Russian intellectual emigration in Prague between the two wars, both more (M. Tsvetaeva and M. Slonim) and lesser known (K. Chkheidze and N. Terlitskii). In particular, Tria focuses on their representation of Prague as it emerges from their writings, and sheds light on aspects of literary re-elaboration on biographic facts, which allow us to read a report on Russian immigrants in one of the main centers of Russian diaspora.

Marina Sal'man guides the reader to the literary prose and studies the chapter *Sinani's Family* from Osip Mandel'shtam's *The Noise of Time*, in which scholars believed to find Mandel'shtam's intention to enroll in the terrorist wing within the Socialist-Revolutionary Party. Through the analysis of lexicon and syntax prompted by the author, Sal'man refuses this hypothesis also thanks to the work on extra-textual elements.

Finally, Alexandra Smith tackles a lesser studied genre, that of the autobiographical essay examining the work of Joseph Brodsky *In a Room and a Half*. In the context of a thorough theoretical investigation and through a dense network of references drawn from both books and films, Smith analyses Brodsky's exilic discourse comparing the figure of the immigrant with similar characters from the history of Russian literature.

The Discussion section contains heterogeneous material. We would like to thank Monica Soeting, manager of «European Journal of Life

Writing», for welcoming our journal into the international academic community of studies on auto-biography with her well wishing text, which is followed by the chronicle of two conferences: the international IABA Europe conference in Vienna (article by Andrea Gullotta) and the conference *Autobiographical Occurrences in the European Tradition* in Moscow (article by Elena Karpenko). These three texts have not been written with the explicit intention of provoking a discussion. However, they raise questions that are open to a debate that our journal intends to pursue in the following numbers. Together with the reviews and the news, their aim is to show the direction of the studies on auto-biography in the Russian context, where the links between society and diverse cultural phenomena are gaining strength.

One of the main tasks of «AvtobiografiЯ» is therefore to give space to these new issues, other than to the lively discussions on autobiographical genres.

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We invite you to contact us (red.avtobiografija@gmail.com) for our print on demand, which will be available in the following months.