

Towards a History of Russian Émigré Literary Criticism and Theory between the World Wars

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1. Setting the agenda

Writing the history of Russian émigré literary criticism and theory between the World Wars confronts us with a set of challenges. To begin with, we still know relatively little about the ways in which émigré writing began, over time, to interact with the various host cultures, and what implications this interaction had for how émigré literature and criticism related to cultural and political processes in Soviet Russia. Earlier historians of Russian émigré culture, notably Mark Raeff, believed that “Russian literature in emigration remained as isolated from Western literatures as it had been in pre-revolutionary Russia, perhaps even more so”¹. More recent research, foremost by Leonid Livak, has persuasively demonstrated the intensive appropriation of French culture and, more widely, the European modernist novel by the Paris émigrés, as well as their participation in French cultural life, not least as regular reviewers and critics writing for French periodicals (e. g. Yuliya Sazonova, Gleb Struve, Vladimir Veidle)². To give a sense of this integrationist drive, one could turn to evidence from the rich stock of émigré memoirs. In his recollections of somewhat scandalous flavour, *Elysian Fields* (Polia Eliseiskie, 1983), Vasilii Ianovskii relates an episode at a Paris publishing house where he and his fellow-émigré writer Iurii Fel’zen were paying a visit in order to enquire with Gabriel Marcel about the fate of their book manuscripts. In Marcel’s office, they stumbled upon Sirin (Vladimir Nabokov) who was already leaving, having tried to draw Marcel’s attention to his novel *Despair* (Otchaianie), in the hope that it might be published in French³. Generational change was an important factor in this reorientation of the creative energy of émigré literature; even more significant, however, appears to have been

¹ Marc Raeff, *Russia Abroad. A Cultural History of the Russian Emigration, 1919—1939* (New York and Oxford: Oxford UP, 1990), 115.

² Leonid Livak’s book, *How it Was Done in Paris: Russian Émigré Literature and French Modernism* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 2003), while not focusing specifically on émigré criticism, is a very good step towards breaking the inertia of looking at Russian exilic literary culture as self-enclosed and autistic, refusing to cultivate any productive ties with the new home cultures. See also *Russkie pisateli v Pاریzhe. Vzglıad na frantsuzskuiu literaturu, 1920—1940*, ed. Zhan-Filipp Zhakkar [Jean-Philippe Jaccard] et al. (Moscow: Russkii put’, 2007), there esp. L. Livak, “K izucheniiu uchastiia russkoi emigratsii v intellektual’noi i kul’turnoi zhizni mezhdvoennoi Frantsii,” 200—214 (Livak mentions the names of Sazonova, Struve, and Veidle as regular reviewers and critics contributing to French periodicals: 208); for an exhaustive bibliography, see Livak, *Russian Émigrés in the Intellectual and Literary Life of Inter-War France: A Bibliographical Essay* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2010), where Livak extends the list to include other Russian émigré critics writing — sometimes anonymously — for the French press (4; 26).

³ V. S. Ianovskii, *Polia Eliseiskie* (St. Petersburg: Pushkinskii fond, 1993), 254—55. Nabokov’s novel, translated into French from his own English translation, was published by Gallimard in 1939 (see S. Davydov, “*Despair*,” in *The Garland Companion to Vladimir Nabokov*, ed. V. Alexandrov (New York and London: Garland, 1995), 88—101, here 99 n. 1. For statistical information on translations of Russian literature in France from the mid-18th century to the mid-1940s, see Vladimir Boutchik, *La littérature russe en France* (Paris: Librairie Ancienne Honoré Champion, 1947), 10—11.

the multicultural dynamism of European metropolitan cities, such as Berlin (which had hosted the first outburst of émigré creativity in the late 1910s and the early 1920s when Russian writers and artists became integral part of the European avant-garde) and Paris (where Russian writers of both the younger and the older generation became involved in a Franco-Russian literary dialogue, particularly from the mid-1920s onwards)⁴. With this new approach to émigré writing in mind, I focus in this chapter — amongst other key issues — on how a freshly formed European modernist canon (above all Proust's writing) was contributing to attempts by a younger generation of émigré writers and critics in Paris to re-arrange the Russian literary canon of the 19th century.

The second difficulty stems from the fact that we still know very little about what specific impact émigré literature and criticism actually had in Soviet Russia and the Soviet Union. This is a vastly under-researched area, and here we can only begin to state, with some urgency, the need to explore it. The dynamics of this impact differed. It was stronger in the early 1920s while the regime of travel — and that of loyalty — was still more relaxed and the differentiation between living abroad and being an émigré was still not set in stone⁵. As early as April 1921, VtsIK decreed that 20 copies of all leading émigré newspapers should be subscribed, so as to be available to Party policy makers and highly positioned administrators in Soviet Russia; an estimated 160—200 copies of the journal *Volia Rossii* (not unsympathetic towards developments in Soviet Russia) were bought by the Soviet authorities⁶. Control over the import of émigré literature did not commence until 1923⁷. In this period, the competition with the émigré literary press was taken very seriously, as the case of establishing *Krasnaia nov'* in 1921 as the first Soviet "thick" literary journal — a tacit response to the foundation of *Sovremennye Zapiski* in Paris in 1920 — demonstrates⁸. The impact of émigré culture was still perceptible in the mid to late 1920s, when surveys of Russian émigré literature kept appearing in some of the major periodicals⁹;

⁴ This dialogue is partly documented in *Le Studio franco-russe, 1929—1932*, ed. L. Livak and G. Tassis (Toronto: Toronto Slavic Quarterly, 2005).

⁵ On the porous boundaries between home and émigré literature at that juncture, see Greta Slobin, "The 'Homecoming' of the First Wave Diaspora and Its Cultural Legacy," *Slavic Review* 60. 3 (2001): 513—29. Livak seems to believe that authors who had returned to the Soviet Union before the outbreak of World War Two should be excluded from the list of émigré literati, but then makes exception for Kuprin and Tsvetaeva (Livak, *Russian Émigrés*, 8); in the absence of a clear criterion, later in this chapter I consider Jakobson (who never returned), Shklovsky (who returned but had fled the country for political reasons), and Bogatyrev (who spent more than fifteen years in Czechoslovakia) as an integral part of émigré intellectual life at various points in the 1920s and 1930s.

⁶ For VtsIK's decree, see Mikhail Agurskii, *Ideologiia natsional-bo'shevizma* (Moscow: Algoritm, 2003), 163; on the Soviet interest in *Volia Rossii*, see Michel Aucouturier, "Marc Slonim et la revue *Volja Rossii*," in *Prague entre l'Est et l'Ouest*, ed. Milan Burda (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2001), 21—31, here 25 and M. Slonim, "'Volia Rossii,'" in *Russkaia literatura v emigratsii*, ed. N. P. Poltoratskii (Pittsburgh: Department of Slavic Languages and Literatures, 1972), 291—300, here 299.

⁷ See A. Blium, "Pechat' russkogo zarubezh'ia glazami Glavlitia i GPU," *Novyi zhurnal* 183 (1991): 264—82.

⁸ Cf. Robert A. Maguire, *Red Virgin Soil: Soviet Literature in the 1920s* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1968), 21. On the history of *Contemporary Annales*, see M. V. Vishniak, "Sovremennye zapiski": *Vospominaniia redaktora* (St. Petersburg: Logos; Düsseldorf: Goluboi vsadnik, 1993; first published 1957).

⁹ See e. g. Nikolai Smirnov, "Na tom beregu. Zametki ob emigrantskoi literature," *Novyi mir* 6 (1926): 141—50 (I am grateful to Oleg Korestev for drawing this article to my attention); Dmitrii Gorbov, "10 let literatury za rubezhom. 'Pechat' i revoliutsiia 8 (1927): 9—35. See also Gorbov's collection of articles, *U nas i za rubezhom. Literaturnye ocherki* ([Moscow]: Artel' pisatelei "Krug," 1928), which included a reworked version of his 1927 article, as well as an earlier article on émigré literature, "Novaia krasota i zhivuchee bezobrazie" (first published in *Krasnaia nov'* in 1926); in the book publication, the titles of the two articles were

even though reviews of individual works of émigré literature and criticism were less common. Through the prism of Soviet literary criticism of the 1920s, émigré writing was increasingly interpreted as flight from Symbolism, towards Realism. The “high standard” of this resilient émigré Realism was set by Bunin, who in the eyes of his Soviet critics (above all the prominent Pereval critic Dmitrii Gorbov) was both an example of commitment to Realism and proof of the terminal decline of bourgeois writing. Measured by Bunin’s standard, the younger generation of émigré writers was often accused of succumbing to less desirable versions of Realism — excessive attention to the everyday aspects of life (*bytovizm*), — or to old-style “Symbolist abstraction”¹⁰. This attention to émigré writing and the polemics of émigré criticism faded away after the 1920s (although major émigré papers, such as Miliukov’s *Poslednye novosti*, continued to claim the attention of the Soviet political elite¹¹), not to reappear again in full measure until the late 1960s. Significantly, by 1930 references to émigré criticism had begun to function as little more than a weapon in settling domestic scores; Demyan Bedny, for example, was harnessing in *Na literaturnom postu* distorted arguments drawn from émigré literary criticism to denounce the prose writers close to Pereval¹².

The third difficulty is that we are yet to gain a more accurate picture of how literary criticism worked in the émigré environment: who wrote literary criticism, what were its institutions, mechanisms, and status. An insight — perhaps somewhat biased but nevertheless welcome — into this multitude of questions is afforded in a series of articles, “On criticism and the critics” (O kritike i kritikakh), published in April–May 1931 in the Berlin newspaper *Rul’* by the prominent Prague-based émigré Alfred Bem. Bem draws attention to the following features of émigré criticism: a) it is concentrated in the newspapers rather than the journals; the book review acquired ‘permanent residence’ in the newspaper, as did the literary feuilleton (no doubt a somewhat partisan diagnosis by Bem, himself a prominent newspaper critic; as we will see, journals played an indispensable role in the major debates of émigré criticism); b) literary criticism in emigration is no longer in the hands of professional critics: except for Iulii Aikhenval’d (Berlin; Aikhenval’d had passed away in 1928), Petr Pil’skii (Riga), Mark Slonim, and Bem himself (both at Prague), most of the prominent literary critics were actually writers, predominantly poets (such as the two antagonists and most significant critics on the Paris scene, Khodasevich and Adamovich, along with many others); c) émigré literary journals relied on a thin editorial core sharing the same political views, while the writers and critics were appended to it as a periphery, without an expectation of loyalty to the journal’s political agenda (we will see later that Mikhail Osorgin contradicted Bem’s judgement on this point). This meant that the literary sections of the journals lacked “proper guidance”

changed to “Desiat’ let literaturnoi raboty” (28–76) and “Mertvaia krasota i zhivuchee bezobrazie” (7–27), respectively.

¹⁰ See D. Gorbov, *U nas i za rubezhom*, 32 (for accusation in *bytovizm*) and 76 (for the dangers of ‘Symbolist abstraction’ [*simvolistskoi abstraktsii*]).

¹¹ Cf. E. Nil’sen, “P. Miliukov i I. Stalin: O politicheskoi evoliutsii Miliukova v emigratsii,” *Novia i noveishaia istoriia* 2 (1991): 124–52, esp. 131.

¹² See S. S. Boiko, “Russkoe zarbezhe i “Pereval”: K voprosu o formirovanii “zhanra” sovetской prarabotchnoi stat’i,” in “V rassetanii sushchie...” *Kul’turologicheskie chteniia “Russkaia emigratsiia XX veka”* (Moskva, 15–16 fevralia 2005), ed. I. Iu. Beliakova (Moscow: Dom-muzei Mariny Tsvetaevoi, 2006), 232–39, here 236–37.

(*nadlezhashchego rukovodstva*); literary critics were left to their own devices, feeling free to express their own taste and views but deprived of the homogeneity that would guarantee the assertion of a “literary trend” (*literaturnom napravlenii*)¹³.

Bem’s diagnosis of the adverse conditions in which émigré literary criticism operated is correct in emphasising the often ephemeral status of publications in the periodicals. As a matter of fact, only three inter-war émigrés managed to publish books of critical essays and reviews written in emigration (not counting the genre of the critical monograph, e. g. Vladimir Veidle’s short book on Khodasevich [Paris, 1928], Konstantin Mochulskii’s book on Gogol [Paris, 1934], or Kirill Zaitsev’s monograph on Bunin [Berlin, 1934]); Bem himself was hoping to collect his “Letters on Literature” in a book but inclement economic conditions stood in the way. This could serve as an explanation, at least in part, of the desire of émigré critics to anchor their own efforts in the work of their predecessors, spinning out a longer tradition and constructing a superior canon of Russian literary criticism. In a unique collection published in Shanghai in 1941, suitably titled *Masterpieces of Russian Literary Criticism*, the editor Kirill Zaitsev justified his decision to include solely essays written in the 19th century by the need to foreground that which had stood the test of time and steer clear of partisan, and thus also short-lived, criticism. To enhance the promise of longevity, Zaitsev selected pieces written not by “professional critics” — whose bias and subjectivity were as a rule too strong to sponsor a judgement of lasting value — but by intellectuals who combined the work of critics with that of writers, philosophers, and historians; the anthology thus republished essays by Puskin, Belinsky, Gogol, Zhukovsky, Turgenev, Girgor’ev, Khomyakov, Goncharov, Dostoevsky, Leont’ev, Klyuchevsky, Rozanov, and Vladimir Solovyov¹⁵.

The fourth difficulty has to do with the fact that émigré literary criticism and literary theory, while linked of necessity, did not display the same dynamics and followed dissimilar trajectories. While literary criticism felt increasingly committed to, but also constrained by, the need to engage with events in the Soviet Union and take a clear stance, theory was freer from this expectation, and thus also in possession of a larger space and more flexibility to articulate its own agenda. Exile, rather than acting as an impeding factor, was right at the heart of developments in literary theory in the interwar period; it was part and parcel of a renewed cultural cosmopolitanism that transcended local encapsulation and monoglossia¹⁶. For a number of years the activities of the Russian Formalists were taking place in a climate of enhanced mobility and exchange of ideas between the metropolitan and émigré streams of Russian culture. The most gifted ambassadors of the Formalists abroad were Shklovsky, during the time he spent as an émigré in Berlin¹⁷. and Jakobson, whilst in Czechoslovakia

¹³ All references are to Bem’s series of articles, “O kritike i kritikakh,” republished in Al’fred Liudvigovich Bem, *Pis’ma o literature* (Prague: Slovanský ústav; Euroslavica, 1996), esp. 36—7; 43.

¹⁴ In chronological order: Petr Pil’skii, *Zatumanivshiiia mir* (Riga: Gramatu Draugs, 1929); Mark Slonim, *Portrety sovetiskikh pisatelei* (Paris: Parabola, 1933; there is an earlier Belgrade edition: *Portreti savremenih ruskih pisaca* [Belgrade: Ruski Arhiv, 1931]); Iurii Mandel’shtam, *Iskateli* (Shanghai: Slovo, 1938).

¹⁵ See K. I. Zaitsev, ed., *Shedevry russkoi literaturnoi kritiki* (Harbin: s. p., 1941); Zaitsev’s “Predislovie” (5—9) makes the points about the importance of including work by non-professional critics (5) and the need to limit the selection to the nineteenth century (9).

¹⁶ Cf. Galin Tihanov, “Why Did Modern Literary Theory Originate in Central and Eastern Europe? (And Why Is It Now Dead?),” *Common Knowledge* 10. 1 (2004): 61—81.

¹⁷ On the complex semantics of nostalgia and estrangement in Shklovskii’s exilic texts, see S. Boym, ‘Estrangement as a Lifestyle: Shklovsky and Brodsky,’ *Poetics Today* 17. 4 (1996): 511—30. On Russian émigré

(where he arrived as a Soviet citizen, deciding eventually not to return to Moscow). Jakobson is a particularly important example, as his subsequent co-operation with Peter Bogatyrev (another Soviet scholar who resided in Prague for nearly two decades — and for about two years also in Münster — but remained a Soviet citizen, maintaining close cooperation with his colleagues in the Soviet Union¹⁸ and returning in the end to Moscow in December 1938) and with the Vienna-based émigré scholar Nikolai Trubetskoi, as well as his connections with Tynianov (who stayed in Russia but was involved in the work of his Prague colleagues)¹⁹, were all crucial in attempts to revive the Opoyaz in the Soviet Union. These attempts, while unsuccessful, yielded an important document in the history of literary theory, a brief set of theses titled “Problems in the Study of Literature and Language,” written in Prague jointly by Jakobson and Tynianov and signalling the urgent need to revise the supremacy of “pure synchronism” and to promote an analysis of the “correlation between the literary series and other historical series”²⁰. Thus the work of Russian Formalism in its concluding stages and later the formation and flourishing of the Prague Linguistic Circle became possible through intellectual exchanges that benefited from the crossing of national boundaries, often under the duress of exile. The work of the Prague Linguistic Circle, in particular, proceeded in the situation of a veritable polyglossia, which rendered narrow nationalistic concerns anachronistic; Jakobson, Trubetzkoy, and Bogatyrev were each writing in at least two or three languages at the time (Russian, German, Czech). Their careers invite us to consider the enormous importance of exile and emigration for the birth of modern literary theory in Eastern and Central Europe. Exile and emigration were the extreme embodiment of heterotopia triggered by drastic historical changes that brought about the traumas of dislocation, but also, as part of this, the productive insecurity of having to face and make use of more than one language and culture²¹. The work of Jakobson, Trubetzkoy, and Bogatyrev came to embody the potential of what Edward Said was to praise later as “travelling theory”: “The point of theory is... to travel, always to move beyond its confinements, to emigrate, to remain in a sense in exile”²². The possibility to “estrangle” (borrowing Shklovsky’s term) the sanctified naturalness of one’s own literature by analysing it in another language or by refracting it through the prism of another culture seems

literary criticism in Berlin, see V. Sorokina, *Literaturnaia kritika russkogo Berlina 20-kh godov XX veka* (Moscow: MGU, 2010).

¹⁸ On Bogatyrev’s close contacts with Soviet folkloristics and ethnography, cf. A. M. Reshetov, “Pis’ma P. G. Bogatyreva D. K. Zeleninu,” in P. G. Bogatyrev, *Narodnaia kul’tura slavian*, ed. E. S. Novik and B. S. Dolgin (Moscow: OGI, 2007), 324–40. In 1936, for example, having learned that the Soviet delegation is not travelling to Sofia after all, and on talking to the Soviet embassy in Sofia, Bogatyrev cancelled his participation at the IV Congress of Slavic geography and ethnography (cf. Reshetov, 334).

¹⁹ Cf. R. Jakobson, “Yuri Tynianov in Prague” [1974], in Iu. Tynianov, *The Problem of Verse Language*, ed. and trans. M. Sosa and B. Harvey (Ann Arbor: Ardis, 1981), 135–40.

²⁰ Quoted here from the English translation in *Russian Poetics in Translation*, Vol. 4: *Formalist Theory*, ed. L. M. O’Toole and Ann Shukman (Colchester: University of Essex, 1977), 49–51, here 49; written in December 1928 and first published in Russian in *Novyi Lef* 12 (1928) — actually in early 1929.

²¹ In a different context and with different tasks in mind, Stephen Greenblatt forcefully asserts that in order to write cultural history we must “understand colonization, exile, emigration, wandering, contamination [...], for it is these disruptive forces that principally shape the history and diffusion of languages, and not a rooted sense of cultural legitimacy” (S. Greenblatt, “Racial Memory and Literary History,” in *Rethinking Literary History: A Dialogue on Theory*, ed. L. Hutcheon and M. Valdes (New York and Oxford: Oxford UP, 2002), 61).

²² E. Said, “Travelling Theory Reconsidered,” in *Critical Reconstructions. The Relationship of Fiction and Life*, ed. R. Polhemus and R. Henkle (Stanford: Stanford UP, 1994), 264.

to have been a factor of paramount significance not just in the evolution of Russian Formalism and its continuation and modification in the structuralist functionalism of the Prague Circle, but — more importantly — for the emergence of modern literary theory in the interwar period as a whole. Appropriating literature theoretically meant after all being able to transcend its (and one's own) national embeddedness by electing to position oneself as an outsider contemplating the validity of its laws beyond a merely national framework. In Prague, in particular, one could observe in a nutshell the stupendous diversity of approaches marking émigré literary scholarship between the World Wars. Along with Jakobson's post-formalism and Bogatyrev's early functionalist structuralism (developed, recent Russian research would claim, independently of Malinovsky's)²³, we can also see the unfolding of fruitful historico-philological research centred around the Dostoevsky Seminar (1925—33) founded by Alfred Bem²⁴, and of psychoanalytic literary scholarship, the main exponent of which was Nikolai Osipov (1877—1934) who had made Freud's acquaintance in Vienna in 1910 and had propagated his ideas in Russia, before emigrating in 1919 and arriving in Czechoslovakia in 1921²⁵. To this one should add the Prague wing of Eurasianism led by Petr Savitsky who had set himself the task of producing "Eurasian literary studies" (*evraziiskoe literaturovedenie*) in which Russian literary history, both before and after 1917, was to be re-examined from the point of view of its potential to assert Russia's special geopolitical and cultural status. Savitsky acknowledged his failure in this task, but he did succeed in persuading a number of followers in Prague (Konstantin Chkheidze, Leontii Kopetskii, G. I. Rubanov) to embrace Eurasianism as an interpretative prism through which to follow the Soviet literary scene of the 1920s-1930s²⁶. Importantly, Prague was a place where some of these currents inter-

²³ On Bogatyrev's functionalist structuralism and his Prague period, see T. G. Ivanova, *Istoriia russkoi fol'kloristiki XX veka: 1900 — pervaiia polovina 1941 g.* (St. Petersburg: Dmitrii Bulanin, 2009), 748—72; S. P. Sorokina, "Funktional'no-struktural'nyi metod P. G. Bogatyreva," in P. G. Bogatyrev, *Funktional'no-struktural'noe izuchenie fol'klora* (Maloizvestnye i neopublikovannye raboty) (Moscow: IMLI RAN, 2006), 5—72.

²⁴ The most important papers read at the Dostoevsky Seminar were published in three volumes, *O Dostoevskom* (Prague, 1929; 1933; 1936), with a fourth volume, conceived but left in manuscript form, to appear only in 1972. The third and fourth volumes were made up entirely of Bem's own studies on Dostoevsky, while the second volume contained, amongst other contributions, a valuable dictionary of personal names in Dostoevsky's works compiled by Bem, S. V. Zavadskii, R. V. Pletnev, and D. Tschijewskij (more on the Prague scene of Dostoevsky studies and Bem's contributions see in Vadim Markovich, "Obshchestvo Dostoevskogo v Prage," *Československá rusistika* 16. 4 (1971): 165—71, esp. 166—67; R. Pletnev, "Vospominaniia o pervom Mezhdunarodnom obshchestve imeni F. Dostoevskogo," *Zapiski russkoi akademicheskoi gruppy v S. Sh A 14* (1981): 7—25, esp. 14—19 (Pletnev reveals that the dictionary of personal names in Dostoevsky's prose remained incomplete and lists Dostoevsky's works that were left out, 18); M. Bubenikova and A. N. Goriainov, "O nevospolnennykh poteriakh: Al'fred Liudvigovich Bem i Vsevolod Izmailovich Sreznevskii," in Bem and Sreznevskii, *Perepiska, 1911—1936*, ed. Milusha Bubenikova and Andrei Goriainov (Brno: Slavisticheskoe obshchestvo Franka Vol'mana), 2005, 7—40, esp. 27—9; and in S. G. Bocharov and I. Z. Surat, "Al'fred Liudvigovich Bem," in Bem, *Issledovaniia. Pis'ma o literature*, ed. S. G. Bocharov (Moscow: Iazyki slavianskoi kul'tury, 2001), 7—31, esp. 15—22).

²⁵ The correspondence between Freud and Osipov is documented in: S. Freud and N. Ossipov, *Briefwechsel, 1921—1929*, ed. E. Fischer et al. (Frankfurt am Main: Brandes & Apse, 2009).

²⁶ Savitsky's admission can be found in Stepan Lubenskii [Petr Savitsky], "Evraziiskaia bibliografiia, 1921—1931. Putevoditel' po evraziiskoi literature," in *Tridtsatye gody. Uv'erzhenie evraziitsev. Kniga VII* (Paris: Izdanie Evraziitsev, 1931), 285—317, here 288; see also his 1926 paper "Istoriko-geograficheskie zametki po povodu novoi literatury (zametki evraziitsa)," *Dialog. Karnaval. Khronotop* 2 (2010). Savitsky's writings on literature, including a brief but very telling article on Pushkin, are listed in Martin Beisswenger's most helpful *Petr Nikloaevich Savitskii. Bibliografiia* (Prague: National Library of the Czech Republic; Slavonic Library, 2008). On Chkheidze, see in English A. G. Gacheva, "Unknown Pages from Late 1920s and 1930s

sected, most noticeably in Jakobson's attempt to lend legitimacy to Eurasian linguistics (encouraged in part by Savitsky) and Savitsky's efforts to found a linguistic geography with structuralist ambitions, but also in Bogatyrev's (later abandoned) idea of a specifically Eurasian Russian folkloristics²⁷.

The peaceful coexistence of approaches practiced in Prague should not, however, obscure the larger dissimilarities in the inner dynamics of émigré theory and criticism. Jakobson, who participated in both discourses, was rather exceptional in a landscape where these two discursive formations remained estranged in their cohabitation. To illustrate this point, let me deal briefly with the divergent positions of Jakobson and Khodaevich, undoubtedly two of the most distinguished émigré commentators on literature, and draw attention to the prevalent hostility towards Russian Formalism amongst émigré literary critics.

Jakobson, who participated in both discourses, was rather exceptional in a landscape where these two discursive formations remained estranged in their cohabitation. Jakobson's large-scale project of literary theory, in which notions such as the differentiation and competition between literature and the series of everyday life (*byt*), the fundamental distinction between metaphor and metonymy, and the systemic nature of the evolution of literature and its generic repertoire played a central role, can be seen at work in his émigré texts that merge literary criticism and theory, notably in his "O pokolenii, rastrativshem svoikh poetov" (On a Generation That Squandered Its Poets), written in May–June 1930 and published in 1931, and in an article on Pasternak, written in a Bulgarian Black Sea resort in 1935 and published the same year in *Slavische Rundschau* ("Randbemerkungen zur Prosa des Dichters Pasternak")²⁸. While elaborating on his theoretical principles embraced and developed in the late 1910s and during the 1920s, these texts are also a remarkable testimony to Jakobson's prowess as a literary critic. They are marked by sustained loyalty to Futurism and especially to Khlebnikov and Mayakovsky; the poetry of the latter, in particular, functions as an implicit model to which Jakobson remains beholden in these and several other articles of the 1920s and 1930s. By contrast, Khodasevich who (unlike Jakobson) had not directly participated in the debates on theory immediately

Eurasianism: K. A. Chkheidze and His Conception of 'Perfect Ideocracy,' *Russian Studies in Philosophy* 47. 1 (2008): 9–39; see also Chkheidze's 1932 paper "O sovremennoi russkoi literature," in A. G. Gacheva, O. A. Kaznina, S. G. Semenova, *Filosofskii kontekst russkoi literatury 1920–1930-kh godov* (Moscow: IMLI RAN, 2003), 375–88. On Kopetskii (1894–1976), see G. A. Lilich, "L. V. Kopetskii i cheshskaia rusistika," in *IX Slavisticheskie chteniia pamiati professora P. A. Dmitrieva i professora G. I. Safronova* (St. Petersburg: Fakul'tet filologii i iskusstv SPbGU, 2008), 38–42. G. I. Rubanov's brief surveys of recent Soviet literature were published in *Evrasiiskaia khronika* 8 (1927): 52–3; 9 (1927): 82–3. For an overview, see A. A. Revianina, "Russkaia literatura v kontekste idei evraziistva 1920-kh godov," in *Klassika i sovremennost' v literaturnoi kritike russkogo zarubezh'ia, 1920–1930-kh godov*, ed. T. G. Petrova et al. 2 vols. (Moscow: INION RAN, 2005–2006), 2: 52–78.

²⁷ See Roman Jakobson, *K kharakteristike evraziiskogo iazykovogo souza* (Paris: Izdanie Evraziitsev, 1931; the last section bears the telling subtitle "The next tasks of Eurasian linguistics" [Ocherednye zadachi evraziiskogo iazykoznaniiia]) and Savitsky's letter of 9 August 1930 discussing a draft of that work, in *Letters and Other Materials from the Moscow and Prague Linguistic Circles, 1912–1945*, ed. J. Toman (Ann Arbor: Michigan Slavic Publications, 1994), 124–38; cf. also Savitsky and Jakobson's joint brochure (each contributing a short article), *Evrastia v svete iazykoznaniiia* (Prague: Izdanie Evraziitsev, 1931). Jakobson generously praised Savitsky as a "talented forebear of structuralist geography," in R. Jakobson and K. Pomorska, *Dialogues* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1983), 68. Bogatyrev's account of a distinctively Eurasian Russian folkloristics was published under pseudonym: Ivan Savel'ev, "Svoeobychnoe v russkoi fol'kloristike. Chto dala i mozhnet dat' novogo v metodologii russkaia fol'kloristika?," in *Tridsatye gody*, 65–81.

²⁸ Both articles are reprinted in Roman Jakobson, *Selected Writings*, 8 vols. (The Hague: Mouton, 1979), 5: 355–81 and 5: 416–32, respectively.

before and after 1917 and had been writing exclusively within the discursive space of literary criticism, failed to recognise Mayakovsky's gift and stature. Characteristically, he also sought to reject the innovative theoretical charge of Russian Formalism (and was equally dismissive of psychoanalytic literary studies)²⁹.

There is, of course, more to all this than Khodasevich's personal refusal of Mayakovsky's poetry or his disagreement with Formalism. Not only Khodasevich but almost the whole of émigré literary criticism remained remarkably conservative in its reaction to Formalism, Georgii Adamovich being another strong exponent of the ironic attitude to Formalism. Adamovich shared this stance with Nabokov, even though he failed to appreciate the latter's prose. Personal tastes thus proved immaterial, as did the critic's (in)ability to spot individual talent³⁰. Amongst the émigré critics, the activist symbiosis between Formalism and Lef seems to have been appreciated solely by the Left wing of the Eurasians, whose political orientation facilitated a more sympathetic treatment of Formalism. On Mayakovsky's death in 1930 Dmitry Sviatopolk-Mirsky, probably the most intelligent of the Left-leaning émigré critics, wrote an important article, "Two deaths, 1837—1930," which appeared in a volume co-published with Jakobson³¹. Mirsky borrowed here several elements from Shklovsky's theoretical apparatus (the concepts of "canonisation" and "device") to drive home the message of Mayakovsky's significance as a poet. Similarly, Mirsky published in the newspaper *Evrasiia* a review of the first volume of Khlebnikov's *Collected Works*, where he praised Tynianov's introduction to the volume³². Another Left Eurasian to welcome Formalism, somewhat more lukewarmly, was Emiliia Litauer, herself a former student of Shklovsky's³³.

The trajectories of émigré literary theory and criticism were thus undoubtedly entangled yet far from identical; each had its own dynamics of promoting or rejecting the new methodological principles worked out since the start of World War I. Since Jakobson's, Bogatyrev's, and Shklovsky's work in literary theory is much better known, both in Russia and in the West, in what follows I elect to concentrate on literary criticism as an inherently polemical discourse, tracing the pivotal points of debate in emigration and examining their articulations and significance (the latter

²⁹ See Khodasevich's article "O Maiakovskom" (1930), republished in Khodasevich, *Literaturnye stat'i i vospominaniia* (New York: Chekhov, 1954), 219—31. On Khodasevich and Formalism, see John Malmstad, "Khodasevich and Formalism: a poet's dissent," in *Russian Formalism: A Retrospective Glance. A Festschrift in Honor of Victor Erlich*, ed. Robert Jackson and Stephen Rudy (New Haven: Yale Center for International and Area Studies, 1985), 68—81; for Khodasevich's scepticism towards psychoanalytic literary studies, see his "Kur'zy psykhoanaliza," *Vozrozhdenie*, 15 July 1938.

³⁰ Adamovich's reviews and short essays on the Formalists are collected in Adamovich, *Kriticheskaia proza*, ed. O. A. Korostelev (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo Literaturnogo instituta im. A. M. Gor'kogo, 1996); see also Adamovich's "Stat'i lu. Tynianova," in Adamovich, *Literaturnye zametki. Kniga 1*, ed. O. A. Korostelev (St. Petersburg: Aleteia, 2002), 244—48, in which Adamovich, while recognising the Formalists' role in challenging the impressionistic criticism of "the late Aikhenval'd and his fellow travellers," finds Formalism—exemplified here by Tynianov's *Arkhaisty i novatory*—to be deeply flawed as a method of literary studies (the article was first published in *Poslednye novosti*, 3 October 1929).

³¹ *Smert' Vladimira Maiakovskogo* (Berlin: Petropolis, 1931), 47—66; the volume also contained Jakobson's "On the generation that squandered its poets" (O pokolenii, rastrativshem svoikh poetov).

³² The review is republished in D. S. Mirsky, *Stikhotvoreniia. Stat'i o russkoi poezii*, ed. G. K. Perkins and G. S. Smith (Oakland, CA: Berkeley Slavic Specialties, 1997), 112—17.

³³ See E. Litauer, "Formalism i istoriia literatury," *Evrasiia* 18 (23 March 1929), 7—8. Litauer's article, an extended review of Pavel Medvedev's 1928 book *The Formal Method*, is analysed at more length in the context of Eurasian émigré aesthetics in Galin Tihanov, "When Eurasianism Met Formalism. An Episode from the History of Russian Intellectual Life in the 1920s," *Die Welt der Slaven* 48, 2 (2003): 359—82.

being arguably more immediate than literary theory's dramatic yet chronologically deferred impact)³⁴.

2. Major polemics

Émigré literary life, not unlike Soviet cultural intercourse, was largely sustained by discussions, some shorter, others more prolonged, some not exceeding the importance of a storm in a teacup³⁵, others of a more lasting impact. Here we can only dwell on the most momentous debates in émigré literary criticism: a) the exchanges on the role of criticism; b) the polemic on “young literature,” in effect a polemic on the future of émigré writing; and c) the important ongoing discussions on the canon. We have to leave out other discussions which, while focusing on issues that merit consideration, did not always enjoy strong enough resonance to warrant inclusion in the present chapter³⁶.

Until recently, many of these polemics have been seen through the prism of personal rivalry and disagreement, notably between Georgii Adamovich and Vladislav Khodasevich, arguably the two most influential émigré literary critics on the Paris scene³⁷. While this remains a valid approach, and one that captures in vivid detail the literary life of the emigration, in this chapter we seek to understand these debates in a way that is not restricted to the predilections and idiosyncrasies of individuals but reconstructs instead the larger playfield, its framework, and the positions available within it³⁸.

³⁴The polemical nature of émigré literary life as a whole has been noted before; cf. Ch. 3 in Ol'ga Demidova, *Metamorfozy v izgnanii. Literaturnyi byt russkogo zarubezh'ia* (St. Petersburg: Giperion, 2003).

³⁵Inconsequential literary polemics were often the result of hurt personal pride dressed up as disagreement on matters of principle; cf. e. g. the 1927 polemic between the Warsaw-based Za svobodu! and the Paris Zveno, reflecting the strained relationship of Dmitrii Filosofov and Zinaida Gippius (for details, see N. A. Bogomolov, “Ob odnoi literaturno-politicheskoi polemike 1927 goda,” *Rossiiskii literaturovedcheskii zhurnal* 4 (1994): 19–24).

³⁶Cf. e. g. the discussion on the Russian literary language in *Zveno and Rossiia i slaviansstvo* (1927–29), in which Sergei Volkonsky (1860–1937) and Petr Bitsilli (1870–1953) were the main protagonists (Bitsilli's contributions are reprinted in P. Bitsilli, *Izbrannye trudy po filologii*, ed. V. N. Iartseva (Moscow: Nasledie, 1996), 598–612). Georgii Adamovich also took part, summarizing Volkonsky's views as conservative-preservationist, and Bitsilli's as in favour of complete relaxation of established language rules; Adamovich believed that the process of Europeanisation of the Russian language had not been completed and had to be further stimulated, even at the cost of changes to syntax (“posiagnut' na russkii sintaksis”); cf. Adamovich, “Dni Turbinykh M. Bulgakova. — O russkom iazyke i spore kn. Volkonskogo s P. Bitsilli,” in G. Adamovich, *Literaturnye besedy*, ed. O. A. Korostelev (St. Petersburg: Aleteia, 1998), 2: 293–300, here 300 (first published in *Zveno* 6 (1927): 309–13). Other more significant polemics included the debate on the historical novel, which peaked in 1927 (the main protagonists were Vladimir Veidle, who believed that the genre had been in decline since its acme in the first half of the 19th century, and Mikhail Kantor, who defended the autonomy of the genre and its potential in the new historical circumstances), and the ongoing discussion on émigré literature of the “capital” vs. that of the “provinces,” which occupied most of the first half of the 1930s, involving Bitsilli, Khodasevich, Bem, and, during its concluding phase, Filosofov and Merezhkovsky (I briefly dwell on some aspects of this polemic at the end of the present chapter).

³⁷See e. g. Roger Hagglund, “The Adamovič–Khodasevič Polemics,” *Slavic and East European Journal* 20. 3 (1976): 239–52; O. Korostelev and S. Fediakin, “Polemika G. V. Adamovicha i V. F. Khodasevicha,” *Rossiiskii literaturovedcheskii zhurnal* 4 (1994): 204–208.

³⁸For a treatment of Russian émigré literary criticism organised around portraits of individual prominent critics (Slonim, Sviatopolk-Mirsky, Štepun, Khodasevich, Adamovich), see A. P. Kazarkin, *Russkaia literaturnaia kritika XX veka* (Tomsk: Izdatel'stvo Tomskogo universiteta, 2004), 247–93. For a different approach, see Ch. 5, “Literaturovedenie i literaturnaia kritika,” in A. G. Sokolov, *Sud'by russkoi literaturnoi emigratsii 1920-kh godov* (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo Moskovskogo universiteta, 1991), 157–68, and T. G. Petrova, *Literaturnaia kritika russkoi emigratsii pervoi volny* (Moscow: INION RAN, 2010). For a brief discussion of “first

a) The debate on the role of literary criticism

A decade after the October Revolution of 1917, Russian émigré literature was beginning to reflect upon the lost hope of restoring the previous political and cultural conditions; the focus now was on the mission of émigré culture — what and how was to be achieved by those considering themselves, in Berberova's famous words (often ascribed to Zinaida Gippius), ambassadors of, rather than exiles from, Russian literature (“My ne v izgnanii, my v poslanii”)³⁹. The discussion on literary criticism of 1928 weighed the pros and cons for the existence of objective criticism and pondered its tasks in the new context. There had been pronouncements on criticism even before that discussion, but these had failed to coalesce into a sustained conversation⁴⁰. The discussion of 1928 was launched with a newspaper contribution by Mikhail Osorgin, writer, critic, and bibliophile. The elephant in the room for a long time had been the question of where actually the future of Russian literature lay: in Paris, Berlin, Prague, and Shanghai, or in the Soviet Union, with critics of different persuasion (such as the left-leaning Mirsky and Slonim or the politically more conservative Adamovich) already asserting Moscow as the true centre of Russian literature. Literary criticism was seen as subordinate to this agenda. Osorgin's view was not optimistic: he saw émigré criticism as ensnared by political dogma and the interpersonal ties of émigré literati, enjoying little freedom in a business dominated by the orders of established circles of friends, or by tacit prohibition to write about Soviet literature in an unprejudiced manner. For Osorgin, the dense networks of émigré literary intercourse meant that critics were deprived of the opportunity to pass independent judgement; nor were they — *pace* Bem's verdict adduced above — at liberty to speak against the political creed of the periodical for which they wrote. Instead of advancing the cause of literature, criticism had begun resembling a family enterprise⁴¹. Osorgin thus denied the very possibility of objective criticism in emigration. Agreeing with Osorgin, Georgii Adamovich (writing in *Poslednie Novosti* under the pseudonym “Sisyphus”) and Zinaida Gippius (who preferred the male pseudonym “Anton Krainii”) believed that the émigré cultural environment placed special restrictions on objectivity. In Gippius' caustic words, instead of offering independent verdict on the works of their contemporaries, many critics were engaged in heaping praise on their friends, and even neighbours⁴².

In his next contribution to the discussion, Adamovich (now writing with his real name) formulated a different argument, asking the fundamental question about the role

wave” criticism in the wider context of émigré literature, see Gleb Struve, *Russkaia literatura v izgnanii*, 2nd corrected and expanded ed. (Paris: YMCA-Press, 1984); see also R. Pletnev, “Russkoe literaturovedenie v emigratsii,” in *Russkaia literatura v emigratsii*, 255—70. In English, see Aleksey Gibson, *Russian Poetry and Criticism in Paris from 1920 to 1940* (The Hague: Luxenhoff, 1990).

³⁹ On the attribution, see Oleg Korostelev, “Pafos svobody,” in *Kritika russkogo zarubezh'ia*, ed. O. A. Korostelev and N. G. Mel'nikov, 2 vols. (Moscow: Olimp, 2002), 1: 3—35, here 8.

⁴⁰ These earlier (1926—27), and largely isolated, interventions included essays by Dmitry Sviatopolk-Mirsky, Marina Tsvetaeva (a diatribe against Adamovich), and Mikhail Tsetlin; for the relevant bibliographical details, see Roger Hagglund, “The Russian Émigré Debate of 1928 on Criticism,” *Slavic Review* 32. 3 (1973): 515—26, n. 3.

⁴¹ See M. Osorgin, “Literaturnaia nedelia,” *Dni* (29 April 1928); Osorgin confirmed this view, adding the lack of dialogue between the generations as another reason for the decline of émigré literary life, in the next edition of his column, “Literaturnaia nedelia,” *Dni* (13 May 1928).

⁴² Cf. Anton Krainii, “Polozhenie literaturnoi kritiki,” *Vozrozhdenie* (24 May 1928).

of literary criticism. While tacitly acknowledging the difficulty in sustaining objective judgement in the closely-knit texture of émigré literary life, Adamovich highlighted creativity as the central aspect of criticism. To him, the evaluative act was secondary to the ability of constructing a world of one's own in the process of commenting on the author's work. Critics were writers, Adamovich insisted, and their primary responsibility was to write about what is "most important," "about life" itself, utilising the work to be reviewed as pretext and legitimate springboard for an act of co-creativity⁴³. Although usually in disagreement with Adamovich, in his contribution to the discussion Khodasevich welcomed this emphasis on the creative nature of criticism, relegating the evaluation (*otsenki*) of literature to an accidental and certainly not indispensable business. It was this line of construing literary criticism as an autonomous act of creativity, asserted by critics as different in their aesthetic platforms and approaches as Adamovich and Khodasevich, which elicited a fresh response from Osorgin. The work of the reviewer, Osorgin maintained, should not be held in contempt, necessary as it might be to acknowledge the creative nature of criticism. In terms of significance, evaluation was in his eyes an act on a par with interpretation. The social effect of a literary review, its usefulness for vast numbers of readers could not be overestimated⁴⁴.

The seemingly trivial polemic on literary criticism was representative of deeper anxieties about the destiny of émigré culture: how was it to reach its recipients, who was the real addressee of émigré literature at a time when, in the words of writer Georgii Ivanov, it was increasingly dogged by suspicions of having been left "without a reader"⁴⁵. The highlighting of criticism as a co-creative act, whose value was independent of the need to evaluate literature aesthetically, was a symptom of a growing sense of crisis: the metabolism of literary production had been disturbed and rendered more difficult by the loss of clarity over the target audience of émigré literature and criticism. Repeatedly drawing attention to the painfully closed — and oppressively intimate — mode of literary intercourse and to the relatively small scale of the émigré literary scene (all of which forced critics to abandon objectivity) amounted to articulating a profound sense of isolation and insecurity. The debate over the role of criticism thus mirrored wider debates about the fate of émigré writing at a time when it had become obvious that the Soviet regime was there to stay.

b) The polemic on "young literature"

By the early 1930s, the question of continuity and the need to foster a "replacement" (*smena*) for the older generation of writers was prominently on the agenda. "Young" was not necessarily a designation of age; rather, it referred to all those who had launched their literary careers in emigration rather than in Russia. This new generation, despite some age disparity, was constituted by the shared experience of having to find a different stock of themes, without relying as much on reminiscences about the pre-revolutionary past. Although some of the differences between "fathers" and "children" had already been clearly stated a decade after the October Revolution, notably in an article by Mikhail Tsetlin⁴⁶, it was only in the early 1930s that the po-

⁴³G. Adamovich, "O kritike i "druzhbe"," *Dni* (27 May 1928).

⁴⁴M. Osorgin, "Literaturnaia nedelia," *Dni* (3 June 1928).

⁴⁵Cf. Georgii Ivanov's eponymous article, "Bez chitatelia," *Chisla* 5 (1931): 148—52.

⁴⁶M. O. Tsetlin, "Kriticheskaia zametki. Emigrantskoe," *Sovremennye zapiski* 32 (1927): 435—41. Tsetlin

lemic began in earnest. In 1932—33 the Paris journal *Chisla* featured two articles articulating the views of the younger generation: Vladimir Varshavskii's "On the hero of young literature" ("O geroe molodoi literatury," 1932, no. 6) and Iurii Terapiano's "The man of the 1930s" ("Chelovek 30-kh godov," 1933, nos. 7—8). Pessimistic in tone, both articles insisted on the unique experience of a cohort of writers shaped outside Russia and later — in the 1950s — labelled by Varshavskii "the unnoticed generation," an appellation designed to suggest superfluity, irrelevance, and marginality⁴⁷. Terapiano maintained in his contribution that for the new "man of the 1930s" the "line of inner life" (*liniia vnutrennei zhizni*) had become much more significant and expressive of his true condition, gradually supplanting the "exterior human being" (*cheloveka vneshnego*) and entailing sensations of "solitude and void" (*odinochestva i pustoty*), characteristic of these younger generations of émigré literati who found themselves in a world that had withdrawn the support of the home tradition without offering them domestication in the new (French) culture⁴⁸.

This fascination with "inner life" was considered morbid by others. Christian-Socialist in its orientation, the journal *Novyi grad* championed an activist position that envisaged novel forms of collectivity, declaring war on "self-indulgent" interiority. Fedor Stepun, a philosopher and publicist who had earned for himself the controversial reputation of a "pro-Soviet" émigré, contributed to the debate an article outlining what he hoped would become the mission of the young émigré literature. Under the suggestive title "Post-revolutionary consciousness and the task of émigré literature," Stepun evoked the powerful example of nineteenth-century Polish émigré literature, which served as a morally constructive force, raising national consciousness and keeping alive the ideal of a strong and forward-looking Polish culture⁴⁹. He required nothing less of the young generation of émigré literati. Tracing their faults to Lev Shestov's ostensibly pernicious influence, Stepun saw in Varshavskii's and Terapiano's essays an unacceptable splitting of the human being into a spiritual "thing-in-itself" (*veshch' v sebe*) and a range of less important, "derivative reflections" (*proizvodnye otrazheniia*) of that essence (23). Far from being emphasised, cultivated, or even nursed as part of the human condition, loneliness — the reality of which was material and undeniable, plaguing the lives of thousands of émigrés — had to be fought. Going into the recesses of one's inner self was no exit strategy: émigré isola-

offered a balanced view, trying to weigh the opportunities and the risks facing the two generations; he nonetheless emphasised the danger of self-isolation to which the entire émigré literature was prone (440—41).

⁴⁷ See V. S. Varshavskii, *Nezamechennoe pokolenie* (New York: Chekhov, 1956). Recent research has questioned Varshavskii's image of his own generation, deconstructing it as a strategy of self-identification and self-presentation; cf. Livak, *How it Was Done*, 10—11, and Irina Kaspé, *Iskusstvo oisustvuyvat': nezamechennoe pokolenie russkoi literatury* (Moscow: Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie, 2005). See, however, the objections to this scepticism, insisting on Varshavsky's text being "a retrospective rather than a manifesto," and thus interpreting it as an objective evaluation of the place of his generation in literary history (cf. M. A. Vasil'eva, "K probleme nezamechennogo pokoleniia vo frantsuzskoi literature," in *Russkie pisateli v Parizhe*, 43—62, esp. 44).

⁴⁸ On these two articles in *Chisla*, see more in T. L. Voronina, "Spor o molodoi emigrantskoi literature," *Rossiiskii literaturovedcheskii zhurnal* 2 (1993): 152—59, here 153—54; see also A. V. Martynov, "Literatura na podoshvakh sapog (spor o "molodoi" emigrantskoi literature v kontekste samopoznaniia russkoi emigratsii)," *Obshchestvennye nauki i sovremennost'* 2 (2001): 181—90.

⁴⁹ See Fedor Stepun, "Porevoliutsionnoe soznanie i zadacha emigrantskoi literatury," *Novyi grad* 10 (1935): 12—28; page references appear in brackets in the main text. On *Novyi grad*'s platform more generally, see V. Varshavskii, "Perechityvaia Novyi Grad," *Mosty* 11 (1965): 267—85; R. Iu. Safronov, "'Novyi grad' i idei preobrazovaniia Rossii," in *Kul'tura Rossiiskogo Zarubezh'ia*, ed. A. V. Kvakin and E. A. Shulepova (Moscow: Rossiiskii institut kul'turologii, 1995), 79—90.

tion required a move forward — not into the “crowd” (itself a form of solitude), but into the “common cause” of the emigration. “Only in such — we wouldn’t be afraid of saying this — *heroic mood*,” Stepun concluded, “is it possible for the young émigré writer to find himself and his own path of creativity” (24)⁵⁰. Not only did Stepun’s appeal for heroism presuppose homogeneity and a conserved notion of cultural identity; worse than that, it identified forces that were allegedly out to destroy “the Russianness of the young writers which the émigré cause needed” (24: “nuzhnuiu dlia dela emigratsii russkost’ molodogo pisatel’stva”). Stepun was perturbed by the fact that the names of James Joyce, André Gide, and particularly Marcel Proust occurred more often in the conversations of the younger Russian émigrés than the “greatest Russian names”. (From the vantage point of the “émigré children” (*emigrantskikh detei*), Gide had indeed been declared by Vladimir Varshavskii “closer and more comprehensible than any of the contemporary Russian writers”)⁵¹. In Stepun’s eyes, those of the young generation who tried to write à la Proust (*pod Prusta*) had adopted a streak of “analytical psychologism alien to Russian art”. The “non-Russianness” of this “young literature” was evident in the abandonment of the “spiritual leadership” that Russian literature traditionally exercised over both the writer and the reader. Paris literary criticism, Stepun charged, was “sustained by taste, not by faith” (25: “derzhitsia ne veroi, a vkusom”).

It was to these accusations of passivity and lack of a moral compass that the representatives of “young literature” responded, sometimes even without mentioning directly Stepun, in a number of articles throughout 1936, which in turn triggered further objections and qualifications⁵². The 1936 (concluding) leg of the polemic began with an article by prose-writer Gaito Gazdanov, “On the young émigré literature”⁵³. Gazdanov spoke with some authority, as he had already made a successful debut as a novelist with his acclaimed *An Evening with Claire* (Vecher u Kler, 1930). His account of the achievements of the young generation was rather sombre; in his view, since 1920 not a single great writer had made his appearance on the stage of émigré literature, the sole exception being Nabokov. The rest of the “production” of the young émigré writers he disparagingly called “literature” in the same sense in which one talks about “the literature on the beet”, or “the literature on internal combustion engines” (404). But this diagnosis didn’t mean that Stepun was right: to Gazdanov, Stepun’s criticism was operating with “by now completely archaic concepts dating back to the start of the century” (405). The real reason for the problems faced by “young literature” Gazdanov saw in the “minuscule size of the readership” (*nichtozhnoe kolichestvo chitatelei*), itself the result of the pressures on former members of the intelligentsia to assume social roles and positions that lowered their cultural standards (as Gazdanov noted, former lawyers, physicians, engineers, and journalists were becoming manual workers and taxi drivers in their droves — a transition he

⁵⁰ Emphasis in the original: “Tol’ko v takom — ne poboimsia skazat’ — *geroicheskom* nastroenii vozmozhno molodomu emigrantskomu chitateliu naiti sebia i svoi tvorcheskii put’”.

⁵¹ V. Varshavskii, “Neskol’ko razsuzhdenii ob Andre Zhide i emigrantskom molodom cheloveke,” *Chisla* 4 (1930—31), 216—22, here 221.

⁵² The full list of the 1936 responses and counter-responses, by Gazdanov, Adamovich, Osorgin, Bem, Aldanov, Varshavskii, and Khodasevich can be found in *Kritika russkogo zarubezh’ia*, 2: 445; the following émigré periodicals were involved in the 1936 exchanges: *Sovremenniaia zapiski*, *Poslednie novosti*, *Mech*, *Vozrozhdenie*.

⁵³ *Sovremennye zapiski* 60 (1936): 404—408; page references appear in brackets in the main text.

was well-placed to comment on, for he was earning his living at the time precisely as a Paris taxi driver). But even that was only part of the truth about the unenviable state of “young literature”. The deeper explanation of its plight lay in the destruction of the “harmonious schemes” and “outlooks” brought about by the “horrible events” of the Revolution and the civil war. Deprived of their mainstays, the young Paris writers had lost access to “inner moral knowledge” (*vnutrennego moral'nogo znaniia*, 406), this all-important pre-condition for creating genuine works of art. Although Gazdanov considered Stepun’s call for “heroism” old-fashioned and wonting in the new environment, he, too, remained trapped in the opposition between Russian and non-Russian (European) literature, insisting on the importance of “inner” moral orientation: the lack of “inner moral knowledge” does “not mean that writers cease writing; but the most important thing we demand from literature, not in the European but in the Russian understanding of it, is removed from it and makes it uninteresting and pale” (407)⁵⁴. He thus warned against expectations that émigré writers should be able to create literature in the sense of the word which one assumes when talking about the “writings of Blok, Belyi, and Gorky”. The impossibility to deliver on such expectations was conditioned by the younger generation of émigrés “not being able to believe in some new truth while also being unable to completely negate the world it lives in” (408)⁵⁵; all this meant the generation was “doomed” (*obrecheno*).

In the next issue of *Sovremennye zapiski*, Mark Aldanov intervened with an article titled “On the situation of émigré literature”. Like Stepun, Aldanov adduced the constructive example of Polish émigré literature; but he judged the situation of the Russian literati abroad to be radically different and saw the reasons for the difficulties they experienced exclusively in the poverty of the emigration. Even more than Gazdanov, Aldanov believed that poverty had deprived the émigré writers, particularly the younger generation, of a cultured audience and had also forced them to take up jobs that over time proved incompatible with the demands of a literary career. The sales of prose and poetry, often not exceeding 300 copies, would not support a thriving émigré literature. Powerful patronage was entertained by Aldanov as a solution, but then quickly declared “unrealistic” and abandoned⁵⁶. Referring to another text by Stepun (without mentioning him by name), Aldanov averred that Stepun had exaggerated the role of interpersonal communication as a condition for the well-being of émigré literature. Stepun had lamented the disconnect between individual writers, claiming that literature does not arise simply from a number of writers finding themselves in the same place at the same time. Echoing the discussion on the tasks of literary criticism, where the size and cohesion of the émigré community were considered a major impediment to objectivity, Aldanov maintained that autonomy and isolation were not absolute evils: after all, he argued, Dostoevsky had never met Tolstoy (406).

The same issue of *Contemporary Annales* also carried an essay by Varshavskii, “On the prose of the “younger” émigré writers”⁵⁷. Note the deliberate ambiguity of

⁵⁴ “Eto ne znachit, chto pisateli perestaiut pisat'. No glavnoe, chto my trebuem ot literatury, v ee ne evropeiskom, a russkom ponimanii, iz nee vynuto i delaet ee neinteresnoi i bledoi”.

⁵⁵ “ne buduchi sposobno ni poverit' v kakuiu-to novuiu istinu, ni otritsat' so vsei siloi tot mir, v kotorom ono sushchestvuet”.

⁵⁶ Mark Aldanov, “O polozhenii emigrantskoi literatury,” *Sovremennye zapiski* 61 (1936): 400–409, here 409; page references appear in brackets in the main text.

⁵⁷ V. Varshavskii, “O proze “mladshikh” emigrantskikh pisatelei,” *Sovremennye zapiski* 61 (1936): 409–14; page references appear in brackets in the main text.

the title: the Russian “mladshikh” means both “younger” but also “junior,” also in a qualitative-hierarchical sense. Varshavskii was speaking as a representative of this younger literature, feeling it could no longer follow the aesthetic and social tenets of the older generation of established émigré writers who saw the preservation and amplification of the idealised image of pre-1917 Russia as their principal mission. Varshavskii took up the main argument of his 1932 article “On the hero of young literature” and asserted once again, this time with explicit reference to Nabokov’s 1935 novel *Invitation to a Beheading*, the split of modern man into an exterior layer of objectifications (*eksteriorizirovannogo v ob’ektivnom mire “ia”*) and an “authentic and genuine being that cannot be defined by any ‘passport’ designations” (413: *nas-toiashchego sushchestva, neopredelimogo nikakimi “pasportnymi” oboznacheniiami*). Observing Paris life, the young émigré writers were confronted with a reality where people “lived only in the socialised segment of their ‘I’” (*tol’ko v sotsializirovannoi chasti ikh “ia”*, 413), that exterior segment of the self, the realm of normality, success, and well-being with which the young émigrés could not — and positively refused to — identify. At the same time Varshavskii realised the risk attached to this solipsistic trend: forgetting that the celebration of the self ought to be wedded — if only as an ideal — to a celebration of the “personality of the other, of each person, of all people” (414: *lichnosti drugogo cheloveka, kazhdogo cheloveka, vsekh liudei*), as in “the great past of Russian literature”.

Gaito Gazdanov’s position, which was soon taken to be representative of the anxieties of the younger generation, was severely criticised by both Adamovich and Osorgin who considered pessimism a “legitimate” (*zakonen*) but ultimately counter-productive attitude⁵⁸. Osorgin’s criticism grew even more unrelenting in an article published following the appearance of Varshavskii’s second intervention in the debate. The very title, “On the ‘desolation of the soul’”⁵⁹ suggested Osorgin’s distance from the younger literati’s self-understanding as a generation shaped exclusively by the experience of solitude and deprivation. While the financial situation of émigré literature remained indeed precarious, the malaise of isolation seemed unduly over-emphasised. Admittedly, the émigrés did not have a home of their own, but from their Paris vantage point they had “the whole world at their disposal” (*imeia v svoem rasporyazhenii ves’ mir*), and it was difficult to accept that these creative resources should yield nothing but “inner void and the assertion of one’s ‘solitude’” (*dushevnoi pustoty i utverzheniia svoego “odinochestva”*). Attacking the young generation’s infatuation with Proust, Osorgin went as far as calling the state of inner desolation a “private matter” (*iavlenie chastnoe*): after all, other (read: the better) prose writers of the younger generation displayed in their works affinity with “the world struggle for genuine humanism”. In brief, Osorgin called on the exponents of existential angst to “stop wallowing in self pity” (*perestan’ te varit’sia v sobstvennom soku*).

Last in this discussion spoke Vladislav Khodasevich, who since the mid-1920s had increasingly been expending his energy on literary criticism and at the time of contributing to the debate was the chief literary commentator of the influential newspaper *Vozrozhdenie*. While agreeing with Aldanov that the adverse economic conditions were indeed

⁵⁸ See Adamovich’s reviews of *Sovremennye zapiski* (Nos. 60 and 61) in *Poslednie novosti* 5467 (12 March 1936): 3; 5606 (30 July 1936): 3 and Osorgin’s article “O ‘molodykh pisateliakh’,” *Poslednie novosti* 5474 (19 March 1936): 3; it is here that Osorgin speaks of Gazdanov’s “legitimate” but nonetheless unhelpful pessimism.

⁵⁹ M. Osorgin, “O ‘dushevnoi opustoshennosti,’” *Poslednie novosti* 5617 (10 August 1936): 3.

a major impediment, causing as they did a chronicle decline in the number of educated readers, he took issue with Aldanov's over-simplistic contrast between the situation in the Soviet Union and in emigration, according to which Soviet literature enjoyed a wide audience and state protection but no freedom, whereas the émigré writers had freedom but no readership and no economic security. In émigré literature, orders from society (*sotsial'nyi zakaz*) do not exist in the political sense; in the Soviet Union such orders determine literary life in considerable measure. In the émigré environment, however, Khodasevich — against Aldanov's optimism — detected another type of social order. Safe from *political* social orders, émigré literature was exposed to, and often also driven by, *aesthetic* and *intellectual* orders. One demands from émigré writers that their “works be ideologically and artistically simple and outdated” (*v ideinom i khudozhestvennom smysle byli neslozhny i ustarely*)⁶⁰. Khodasevich diagnosed émigré literature as suffering from submission to the imperatives of what, in today's terms, we can term the nostalgia industry, an ideological and aesthetic enterprise catering, according to Khodasevich, to the prevalent mass audience of philistine, low-brow, moderately educated expatriates. Thirst for the old and familiar meant that the literary youth disappeared from the purview of this audience; it created discomfort by its very freshness and unfamiliarity of themes, devices, and “even by its previously unknown names” (181: *dazhe samoiu noviznoiui svoikh imen*). There may well be no censorship and political sanctions in the émigré environment, but a book that stands above the comprehension of this audience, Khodasevich warned, would not be printed or sold; its author would be submitted to a “silent, decorous” (*tikhoi, prilichnoi*) sanction “called hunger” (182). In Russia, literature had been naturally stratified, with different genres and writers reaching different social layers and classes; in emigration, literature has become “classless” in the most bitter-ironic sense: it reaches only “individuals dotted across the vast space of our dispersion” (182: *odinochek, rasseianiakh po neobozrimomu prostranstvu nashogo rasseianiia*). Thus the freedom of émigré literature Aldanov had so ardently praised proved merely a “freedom to cry in the desert” (183: *svobodu vopit' v pustyne*).

c) Disputes over the canon

The polemics on “young literature” betrayed a very clear sense of generational change and shifting notions of literary value. The new cohort of writers whose foundation years were spent largely outside Russia had unorthodox answers to the questions about the social mission of literature and its loyalty to tradition. An ongoing polemic re-examining the central axis of the Russian poetry canon of the 19th century and juxtaposing Pushkin and Lermontov was a salient feature of this rethinking of literary reputations that accompanied the rise of the new generation on the Paris literary scene.

The location — Paris — is significant here, for the emerging Lermontov cult was indeed confined to Montparnasse and was part and parcel of what was quickly becoming known as the “Paris note” (*parizhskaia nota*) in émigré poetry⁶¹. It was not

⁶⁰ V. Khodasevich, “Pered kontsom” (*Vozrozhdenie*, 22 August 1936), quoted from the republication in *Rossiiskii literaturovedcheskii zhurnal* 2 (1993): 179—83, here 181; further page references are in brackets in the main text.

⁶¹ On the history of the designation “Paris note” see Oleg Korostelev, “Parizhskaia nota,” in *Literaturnaia entsiklopediia russkogo zarubezh'ia*, 1918—1940, 4 vols., ed. A. N. Nikoliukin, 2: *Periodika i literaturnye tsentry* (Moscow: ROSSPEN, 2000), 300—303.

by accident that Paris was the centre of this new cult. In the early 1920s Berlin had offered propitious ground for the collaboration of Russian and German avant-garde artists who were members of the international constructivist movement. Since the latter half of the 1920s, with the relocation of the capital of Russian émigré cultural life to France and Paris, following the inflation hike and the collapse of book publishing in Germany, many of the younger Russian literati were actively pursuing their interest in writers and styles that were shaping the modernist literary landscape, foremost Proust and Joyce. For these younger literati, French and, more widely, European literary life was gaining increasing significance; it was often more germane to their own artistic preoccupations than the time-honoured, petrified catalogue of Russian masterpieces, with the totemic veneration of Pushkin at its core. While the émigré Pushkiniana was flourishing in quantitative terms⁶², a new sense of priorities was emerging. Georgii Adamovich was the patron of this revisionist drive, which in the eyes of the established émigré writers who had launched their careers before 1917 appeared to be little less than unforgivable infidelity to the ideals and the values of the past.

Lermontov was the unsung hero of the poets of the “Paris note,” a choice partly conditioned by the desire to counterbalance the religious and moralistic tenor at the heart of the literary hierarchy erected and guarded by the older generation. In 1899 philosopher Vladimir Solovyov had delivered a public lecture on Lermontov, posthumously published as an article⁶³, in which he acknowledged Lermontov’s genius but implied that this was rather a Western genius of utter concentration on one’s own subjectivity, and thus an exception in the history of Russian letters. Lermontov, even when he spoke of something else, ultimately spoke of himself; Pushkin, on the other hand, “even when he talks about himself, seems to be talking about something else” (335: “Pushkin kogda i o sebe govorit, to kak budto o drugom”), demonstrating a gift of openness to the world. As if this would not have sufficed to cast a shadow on Lermontov, Solovyov reproached him for not being strong enough in fighting his “demon of pride,” and for failing to embrace “humility” (344). Genius he no doubt was, but he took this extraordinary gift of God as a right and privilege — not as a duty to serve (340: “kak pravo, a ne kak obiazannost’, kak privilegiuu, a ne kak sluzhbu”). Adamovich and his fellow-literati of the younger generation discerned in Solovyov’s verdict the rigour of public expectations they no longer felt called upon to satisfy. To them, literature had ceased to be a moral watchtower and had become a “human document” (*chelovecheskii dokument*), a phrase often employed by Adamovich and borrowed by him from Edmond de Goncourt who had used it in the mid-1870s to signal Naturalism’s loyalty to, and appreciation of, the details of everyday life (“document humain”).

On the devisive Lermontov issue, Adamovich and his followers found themselves closer to another established position in Russian literary criticism, that of Merezh-

⁶² Mikhail Filin has estimated that the first-wave émigrés produced about 100 books and 1,500 articles on Pushkin (without including the articles in daily newspapers); he also reports that the centenary of Pushkin’s death in 1937 was celebrated in 231 cities in 42 countries on all five continents (cf. T. G. Petrova, “Literaturnaiia kritika emigratsii o pisateliakh XIX veka (Pushkin, Lermontov, Chekhov),” in *Klassika i sovremennost’*, 1: 34–59, here 38–9, fn. 2 and 8).

⁶³ V. S. Solov’ev, “Lermontov,” *Vestnik Evropy* 2 (1901): 441–59; further references are to the republication in *Lermontov: pro et contra*, ed. V. M. Markovich and G. E. Potapova (St. Petersburg: RkhGI, 2002), 330–47, with page references in brackets in the main text.

kovsky who in his article “M. Iu. Lermontov, a poet of supermankind” (M. Iu. Lermontov. Poet sverkhchelovechestva), first published in 1909, had declared Lermontov’s daring a virtue rather than a sin. Merezhkovsky coined the polar distinction between Pushkin and Lermontov (he had similarly coined an influential if somewhat crude opposition between Dostoevsky and Tolstoy⁶⁴) that was to resurface in the writings of the younger émigrés almost thirty years later: “Pushkin is the diurnal, Lermontov the nocturnal luminary of Russian poetry, the whole of which oscillates between them as between the two poles of contemplation and action” (Pushkin’s poetry positing, for Merezhkovsky, the pole of inaction and contemplation)⁶⁵. “Why did Lermontov draw closer to us? Why do we all of the sudden want to talk about him,”⁶⁶ asked Merezhkovsky, and a similar sense of Lermontov having drawn closer to their concerns was informing the attempts of the younger generation of Paris émigrés to reorganise the canon of Russian literature: in the opening editorial of *Novyi korabl’*, a journal of the young generation, in which Merezhkovsky and Gippius nonetheless played a dominant part, Pushkin was conspicuously missing from the list of names (Gogol, Dostoevsky, and Lermontov amongst them — but also Vladimir Solovyov)⁶⁷ upplying the young literati with a link between the past and the future.

The leading critic of the “young,” Georgii Adamovich, had begun praising Lermontov even earlier. As part of his “Literary Conversations” (Literaturnye besedy) in *Zveno*, he questioned the healthiness of a situation in which “the Pushkin canon of clear, firm, male, ‘sunny’ attitude to life seemed the only one,” rendering Lermontov “provincial, old-fashioned, and ever so slightly ridiculous with his melancholy”⁶⁸. Admavovich’s objection was informed not only by Merezhkovsky but also by Rozanov’s judgement from his 1898 essay “Vechno pechal’naia duel’” (An Eternally Sad Duel): “by the structure of his spirit he [Pushkin] is facing the past, not the future”; Pushkin was an autumnal “echo”; “he gave us the ‘resonance’ of universal beauty in its fading accords”. In contrast to Pushkin’s “autumnal feel,” Lermontov introduced to Russian literature the “current of ‘vernal’ prophecy”⁶⁹. In a later article, “Pushkin

⁶⁴ On how this opposition was born out in émigré criticism, see Raeff, *Russia Abroad*, 97—8; for a good panorama of “first-wave” Dostoevsky criticism, see Jean-Philippe Jaccard and Ulrich Schmid, “Dostoevskii i russkaia zarubezhnaia kul’tura. K postanovke voprosa,” in Zhakkar [Jaccard] and Shmid [Schmid], *Dostoevskii i russkoe zarubezh’e XX veka* (St. Petersburg: Dmitrii Bulanin, 2008), 7—26.

⁶⁵ “Pushkin — dneвноe, Lermontov — nochnoe svetilo russkoi poezii. V’sia ona mezhdum nimi kolebletsia, kak mezhdum dvumia poliusami — sozertsaniem i deistviem” (D. S. Merezhkovskii, “M. Iu. Lermontov. Poet sverkhchelovechestva,” in Merezhkovskii, *V tikhom omute. Sat’ i i issledovaniia raznykh let* (Moscow: Sovetskii pisatel’, 1991), 378—415, here 379). On Merezhkovsky’s role in the turn-of-the-century Lermontov myth, see V. M. Markovich, “Mif o Lermontove na rubezhe XIX-XX vekov,” in Markovich, *Pushkin i Lermontov v istorii russkoi literatury* (St. Petersburg: Izdatel’stvo S.-Peteburgskogo universiteta, 1997), 157—84.

⁶⁶ “Pochemu priblizilsia k nam Lermontov? Pochemu vdruz zakhotelos’ o nem govorit’?” (Ibid. 378).

⁶⁷ Cf. “Ot redaktsii,” *Novyi korabl’* 1 (1927): 4.

⁶⁸ Georgii Adamovich, *Literaturnye besedy. Kniga 1: “Zveno” 1923—1926*, ed. O. Korostelev (St. Petersburg: Aleteia, 1998), 125 (“Pushkinskii kanon iasnogo, tverdogo, muzhskogo, “solnechnogo” otnosheniia k zhizni kazalsia edinstvennym. Lermontov riadom s nym byl provintsialen, staromodn i chut’-chut’ smeshon so svoei melankholiei”; first published in *Zveno*, 1 December 1924).

⁶⁹ “Po strukture svoego dukha on obrashchen k proshlomu, a ne k budushchemu”; “on dal nam ‘otzvuki’ vseмирnoi krasoty v ikh zamiraiushchikh akkordakh”; “osennee chuvstvo”; “struia ‘vesennego’ prorochestva” (V. Rozanov, “Vechno pechal’naia duel’,” in V. V. Rozanov, *O Pushkine. Esse i fragmenty*, ed. V. G. Sukach (Moscow: Izdatel’stvo gumanitarnoi literatury, 2000), 185—210, here 191; 202; 208; 209 (first published in *Novoe vremia*, 24 March 1898); the title of the article is an inaccurate quote from an article by the son of Lermontov’s killer (S. N. Martynov, “Istoriia dueli M. Iu. Lermontova s N. S. Martynovym,” *Russkoe Obzrenie* 1 (1898): 313—26). On Rozanov’s importance for Adamovich’s intellectual formation, see V. S. Ianovskii, *Polia Eliseiskie* (St. Petersburg: Pushkinskii fond, 1993), 105.

and Lermontov” (1914), Rozanov, not unlike Merezhkovsky, constructed an antithesis between Pushkin as a poet of “harmony” (*lad*), “accord” (*soglas'ia*), and “happiness” (*schast'ia*), “the head of world-wide safeguarding” (*glava mirovogo okhraneniia*), and Lermontov who was suggested to be an example of motion, dynamism, and of a realisation that “the world had ‘sprung and run away’” (*mir 'vskochil i ubezhal'*)⁷⁰ not to be captured or conserved in simple and transparent words. In a brief article on Lermontov of 1916, Rozanov brings to a head this simmering contrast: “Pushkin was all-encompassing, but old — ‘former’... Lermontov was totally new, unexpected, ‘unforetold’”⁷¹. Adamovich was thus not entirely original when concluding: “in our poetry, Pushkin faces the past, Lermontov looks forward”⁷². In a review discussing Boris Pasternak’s narrative poem “Lieutenant Schmidt,” Adamovich formulated his distance from Pushkin, concluding: “It seems the world is indeed more complex and richer than Pushkin imagined it to be”; the new generations of Russian writers, both in Russia and abroad, thus had to realise that following Pushkin (which not amount to following the “line of greatest resistance”) might well prevent them from learning to speak in a voice of their own⁷³.

It was this perceived relinquishing of Pushkin’s legacy that occasioned a retort from Vladislav Khodasevich, in which he raised the stakes of the polemic, demonising Adamovich (Khodasevich’s article was suggestively titled “The Demons”) for his alleged lack of patriotism displayed in his questioning of Pushkin’s standing⁷⁴. A counter-response followed swiftly, in which Adamovich emphasised the futility of calls for a return to Pushkin⁷⁵. The contrast between Pushkin and Lermontov was further elaborated in Adamovich’s articles “Lermontov” and “Pushkin and Lermontov,” both of 1931⁷⁶. Interestingly, Adamovich now maintained that this opposition had also gained relevance in the Soviet Union, where a division seemed to be under foot between those orientated towards Pushkin and those drawing their example and inspiration from Lermontov; the Soviet Lermontov vogue even took on proportions that called forth “irritation and puzzlement” amongst “literature’s

⁷⁰ All quotes are from V. Rozanov, “Pushkin i Lermontov,” in Rozanov, *O Pushkine*, 117—21, here 117; 119 (first published in *Novoe vremia*, 9 October 1914).

⁷¹ V. Rozanov, “O Lermontove,” in Rozanov, *O Pushkine*, 247—51, here 249: “...Pushkin byl vseob’emliushch, no star — ‘prezhnii’... Lermontov byl sovershenno nov, neozhidan, ‘ne predskazan’” (first published in *Novoe vremia*, 26 April 1916).

⁷² See Adamovich’s review of Petr Bitsilli’s book *Etiudy o russkoi poezii* [(1926), actually published at the end of 1925], in *Literaturnye besedy*. Kniga I, 381—85, here 384 (first published in *Zveno*, 3 January 1926): “v nashei poezii Pushkin obrashchen litsom v proshloe, a Lermontov smotrit vpered”.

⁷³ Georgii Adamovich, *Literaturnye besedy. Kniga II: “Zveno” 1926—1928*, ed. O. Korostelev (St. Petersburg: Aleteiia, 1998), 198 (“Kazhetsia, mir, deistvitel’no, slozhnee i bogache, chem predstavialos’ Pushkinu”; “ne est’ liniia nai-bol’shego soprotivleniia”). Adamovich’s review was first published in *Zveno* (3 April 1927).

⁷⁴ V. Khodasevich, “Besy,” *Vozrozhdenie*, 11 April 1927 (reprinted in *Rossiiskii literaturovedcheskii zhurnal* 4 (1994): 210—13 (Khodasevich wrote of Adamovich’s comments: “Here, finally, our literary (and not only literary) patriotism is offended, for Pushkin is our homeland, ‘our all’”; “Pushkin’s is in fact the path of greatest resistance, for in the depiction of greatest complexity he takes the way of greatest simplicity” [(‘Tut, nakonets, — nash literaturnyi (nu, i ne tol’ko literaturnyi) patriotizm zadet: ibo Pushkin est’ nasha rodina, “nashe vse” (211); “Imenno potomu-to pushkinskaia liniia i est’ voistinu liniia naibol’shego soprotivleniia, chto Pushkin dlia izobrazheniia velichaishei slozhnosti idet putem velichaishei prostoty” (212)]).

⁷⁵ G. Adamovich, “O Pushkine,” *Zveno* (17 April 1927); reprinted in *Literaturnye besedy. Kniga II*, pp. 205—211 (on the futility of the call “Back to Pushkin”, see 209). More on the Khodasevich-Adamovich exchanges over Pushkin in the context of their other aesthetic disagreements, see David Bethae, *Khodasevich: His Life and Art* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1983), 322—31.

⁷⁶ “Lermontov” was first published in *Poslednie novosti* (1 August 1931); “Pushkin and Lermontov” also there, in the issue of 1 October.

guardians⁷⁷. Lermontov's crucial advantage over Pushkin was seen and couched by Adamovich in terms strikingly reminiscent of Bakhtin's praise of flux and lack of closure. Thus Lermontov's "idea of man and the world is not finalised, is in progress, and not put in equilibrium and order;" this makes him an "ally and partner rather than a reproachful ideal" (576)⁷⁸. Formal perfection came at the price of expunging man from poetry. As a poet, Lermontov was no doubt far less perfect than Pushkin, but instead of crafting a "porcelain trifle" (Adamovich was referring to Pushkin's "Queen of Spades"), Lermontov probed the deeper layers of the soul, inaccessible to the serene and classically accomplished Pushkin. Adamovich concluded from this juxtaposition that "outward completeness" should not be privileged over "inner riches," nor should the "object" be allowed to triumph over "spirit" (580: "vneshnei zakonchennosti nad vnutrennym bogatstvom"; "veshchi nad dukhom").

This line was carried forward in Adamovich's famous "Commentaries," a rubric reserved for him at *Chisla* (1930—34), the almanac of the younger Paris literati (with Merezhkovsky and Gippius's influence still recognisable, despite the almanac's polemic with Gippius⁷⁹, and other writers of the older generation, notably Boris Zaitsev, also valued and published in its pages). The younger writers around *Chisla* believed literature to be a field of experimentation and a "human document" rather than an exercise in correctness, regularity, and formal glitter. In the very first issue of *Chisla*, Adamovich suggested that Pushkin had by the time of his violent death already reached the natural end of his career as a poet; no way forward was seen (in contrast to Lermontov)⁸⁰. In his second set of "Commentaries," Adamovich warned that the recent "collapse of the notion of artistic perfection has affected most markedly our relationship to Pushkin;"⁸¹ without formal perfection, Adamovich implied, there was very little Pushkin would be able to offer a generation that reads avidly Proust, Joyce, and Gide, seeking to cultivate and assert its new sensitivities in a Western cultural metropolis. In a review published in the same instalment of *Chisla*, Adamovich called upon the young poets of the emigration: "Gentlemen, sacrifice your classicism and strictness, your purity, your pushkinism, write — if only a pair of words — in

⁷⁷ G. Adamovich, "Pushkin i Lermontov," in Adamovich, *Literaturnye zametki. Kniga I*, ed. O. Korostelev (St. Petersburg: Aleteia, 2002), 571—81, here 576 ("razdrazhenie i nedoumenie opekunov literatury"). Further page references to this text are in brackets in the main text.

⁷⁸ In Russian: "predstavlenie o cheloveke i mire ne zakoncheno, ne zavershenno, ne privedeno v ravnovesie i poriadok"; "sputnikom, sotrudnikom, a ne ukoriaiushchim idealom". Adamovich could be credited with having anticipated the use of "polyphonic" in describing the narrative features of the Russian novel. In a review of Leonov's Barsuki he mentions Leonov's "'polyphonic' narrative (*polifonicheskoe povestvovanie*) modelled on Dostoevsky or Tolstoy" (G. Adamovich, *Literaturnye besedy*, Kniga 1, "Zveno", 1923—1926, ed. O. A. Korostelev (St. Petersburg: Aleteia, 1998), 296—97 (the review was first published in *Zveno* (7 September 1925); in the same year, Adamovich also called Belyi's Moscow a "polyphonic narrative," *ibid.* 249; first published in *Zveno*, 29 June 1925). However, later Adamovich objected to the terminological use of "polyphonic" by Bakhtin, comparing it with the "barren" Formalist (Eikhenbaum's) statements about how a text "is made" ("Romany Dostoevskogo polifonichny, 'Takaia-to povest' sdelana tak-to. 'Prekrasno, a chto dal'she?'" quoted in Adamovich, *Kommentarii*, ed. O. A. Korostelev (St. Petersburg: Aleteia, 2000), 588 (Adamovich's text was written in 1971). This should serve as another example of the rather dissimilar discursive dynamics of émigré criticism and theory.

⁷⁹ On Merezhkovsky's influence, see A. B. Mokrousov, "Lermontov, a ne Pushkin. Spory o "natsional'nom poete" i zhurnal "Chisla", in *Pushkin i kul'tura russkogo zarubezh'ia*, ed. M. A. Vasil'eva (Moscow: Russkii put', 2000), 153—66, esp. 158.

⁸⁰ Georgii Adamovich, "Kommentarii," *Chisla* 1 (1930): 136—43, here 142.

⁸¹ Georgii Adamovich, "Kommentarii," *Chisla* 2—3 (1930): 167—76, here 167 ("Krakh idei khudozhestvennogo sovershenstva otrazilsia otchetlivee vsego na nashem otnoshenii k Pushkinu").

such a manner as if you had known nothing prior to them”⁸². “Pushkinism” was Adamovich’s shorthand for a fetish-like veneration and imitation of the poet, without heeding the realities of modern life (Khodasevich was also sceptical of “pushkinism” [pushkinizm], but he understood by this merely the fetishisation of Pushkin through scholarship, above all in the Soviet Union)⁸³.

It was these perceived assaults on Pushkin’s authority by Adamovich that prompted Alfred Bem, a distinguished émigré literary critic and scholar based in Prague, to defend the cult of the poet. In an article titled “The Pushkin cult and those who shake the tripod,” Bem stigmatised Adamovich as “the theoretician of this new anti-Pushkin movement,” and *Chisla* as the almanac that sheltered it⁸⁴. It is important to note that the title of Bem’s text played on Khodasevich’s 1921 article, “The Shaken Tripod” (Koleblemyi trenozhnik), an early admonition of the need to keep alive Pushkin’s lessons at a time when history rendered his epoch remote and seemingly less relevant. Published while Khodasevich was still in Soviet Russia, the article invoked the last verse of Pushkin’s poem “To the Poet” (“Poetu”: “I v detskoï rezvosti koleblet tvoï trenozhnik”), which declared the artist’s freedom to rise above the crowds and highlighted their immature and destructive attitude toward their poets. Like Khodasevich, Bem called upon the new generations of poets to heed rather than refuse Pushkin’s biddings, and to rediscover his oeuvre for their own time: “without a cult of the past, there are no attainments in the future” (57: “bez kul’ta proshlogo net i dostizhenii budushchego”). Nor was Bem the only ally of Khodasevich in the Pushkin–Lermontov debate of the mid-1930s: the subtexts of Nabokov’s novel *Dar* (“The Gift”, serialised in 1937–38 in *Sovremennye zapiski* but not published in full until 1952), at the time all but transparent to the émigré artistic community, played on this topical debate, satirising Adamovich in the figure of the female literary critic Khristofor Mortus, a composite character whose male pseudonym concealed real-life features of Zinaida Gippius, Merezhkovsky, and Nikolai Otsup, the co-editor of *Chisla*; Adamovich, the circle around *Chisla*, and their anti-Pushkin line were also the target of Nabokov’s satire in a short story, “Usta k ustam”⁸⁵.

⁸² Georgii Adamovich, “Soiuz molodykh poetov v Parizhe. Sb. III, 1930; Perekrestok. Sb. stikhov, Parizh, 1930,” *Chisla* 2–3 (1930): 239–40, here 240 (“Pozhertvuïte, gospoda, vashim klassitsizmom i strogost’iu, vashei chistotoi, vashim pushkinizmom, napishite khotia by dva slova tak, kak budto vy nichego do nikh ne znali”).

⁸³ Khodasevich’s article “O pushkinizme,” *Vozrozhdenie*, 29 December 1932.

⁸⁴ Alfred Bem, “Kul’t Pushkina i kolebliushchie trenozhnik,” in Bem, *Pis’ma o literature*, 53–8, here 54 (first published in *Rul’* (Berlin), 18 June 1931); further page references to this collection are in brackets in the main text. According to Zinaida Shakhovskaia’s memoirs, Adamovich vowed never to respond to Bem’s article (cf. Z. Shakhovskaia, *Otrazheniia* (Paris: YMCA-Press, 1975), 92); privately, Adamovich would go as far as calling Bem a “bastard;” “without a single thought of his own” (“My s Vami ochen’ raznye liudi. Pis’ma G. V. Adamovicha A. P. Burovu (1933–1938),” ed. O. Korostelev, *Diaspora: Novye materialy* 9 (2007): 325–54, here 338: *merzavets; bez odnoi svoei mysli*. Adamovich’s letter is dated 23 June 1934).

⁸⁵ On the resonance of the Pushkin–Lermontov debate and the prototypes of Khristofor Mortus, see A. Dolinin, “Dve zametki o romane ‘Dar,’” *Zvezda* 11 (1996): 168–80 and his article “*The Gift*,” in *The Garland Companion to Vladimir Nabokov*, ed. V. Alexandrov (New York and London: Garland, 1995), 135–69, esp. 142–49, where Dolinin reveals the significance of the 1930s discussions on émigré literature as a background to Nabokov’s novel. On the prototypes behind Mortus, see also John Malmstad, “Iz perepiski V. F. Khodasevicha (1925–1938),” *Minuvshee* 3 (1987): 262–91, esp. 281 and 286. On the conflict of Nabokov with the younger literati around *Chisla*, including Adamovich, see L. Livak, “Kriticheskoe khoziaistvo Vladislava Khodasevicha,” *Diaspora: Novye materialy* 4 (2002): 391–456, here 418–21; see also S. Davydov, “*Teksty-matreshki*” *Vladimira Nabokova* (Munich: Sagner, 1982), 37–51.

Bem was concerned that the digression from the norms of clarity and simplicity set by Pushkin was beginning to shape not just Adamovich's preferences but rather the outlook and the style of the wider circle of young literati around *Chisla*, the outlet Adamovich and his associates used for their "erosive work" (*podkop*) which, in the words of Gleb Struve in the Paris newspaper *Rossii i slavianstvo*, amounted to an attack on "Russian culture, Russian statehood, Russia's entire recent history"⁸⁶. In response to *Letters about Lermontov* (Pis'ma o Lermontove, 1935), a novel by Iurii Fel'zen (a pseudonym of Nikolai Freidenshtein, the first part of which signalled his love for Lermontov)⁸⁷, Bem wrote a sarcastic and apprehensive review titled "Metropolitan Provincialism" (*Stolichnyi provintsializm*), accusing Fel'zen not only of following Adamovich's "anti-Pushkin" line, but also of paraphrasing portions of the latter's "Commentaries" in his novel⁸⁸.

As a matter of fact, "Metropolitanism" (*stolichnost'*) was to Fel'zen a feature based not just on space, but equally on history and the experience of time. Provincialism lived in the folds of "dim, ordinary, difficult-to-remember" (59: "tusklye, obyknovennnye, nezapominaemye") and eventless years; Fel'zen's protagonist, on the contrary, prided himself on being metropolitan in the sense of having witnessed historic events that raised him above and beyond provincial mentality. Added to this sensation of having been thrust onto the stage of history is the protagonist's affinity for French literature. The names of at least half a dozen of French writers are strewn all over the novel, but it is Proust's that stands out unmistakably. Proust aids Fel'zen's protagonist in shedding the "constraining 'skin of homogeneity'" (30: "stesnitel'nuiu 'kozhu odnorodnosti'"), i. e. the cultural uniformity grounded in a suffocating and intrusive notion of Russianness. In the eyes of Fel'zen's protagonist, Proust's writing rearranges the entire European literary canon: "If there ever was a miracle known to us, this is, of course, Proust who has already somehow outshone Tolstoy and Dostoevsky" (29)⁸⁹. On balance, Tolstoy fares better than Dostoevsky in this account and, together with Lermontov and Proust, would be cited as an example of "goodness" (*dobrota*) and of the all-important ability to write "about man in general" (52). Yet it is Lermontov who appears most often, almost always in Proust's company, as an emanation of the new ideals of the younger metropolitan intellectual. Fel'zen constructs an image of Lermontov consonant with that of Volodia, his introspective and meditative protagonist who shies away from the practical aspects of life and prefers instead to ponder the depths of human interiority: "Lermontov was simply a human being and, immersed in himself, he relentlessly thought about himself and

⁸⁶ "russkoi kul'tury, russkoi gosudarstvennosti; protiv vsei noveishei istorii Rossii" (quoted in K., "Po retsenziiam," *Chisla* 4 (1930—31): 210—11, here 211).

⁸⁷ Cf. Leonid Livak, "Iurii Fel'zen," in *Twentieth-Century Russian Émigré Writers (Dictionary of Literary Biography, Vol. 317)*, ed. Maria Rubins (Detroit: Thomson and Gale, 2005), 102—109, here 103.⁸⁸ Bem, "Stolichnyi provintsializm," in *Pis'ma o literature*, 242—46, here 242 [(("V romane Iu. Fel'zena vy priamo naidete otryvki iz "Komentarii" G. Adamovicha, no menee ostro podnesennye i bolee vialye po stiliiu"); the review was first published in *Mech* (Warsaw, 19 January 1936)]. This claim was not unfounded: Fel'zen does indeed paraphrase (without explicit reference, but with the help of the pointer "it has become a common place") Adamovich's view of Lermontov as "the start of the new" (contrasted to Pushkin's role as finaliser of the old); see Iu. Fel'zen, *Pis'ma o Lermontove* (Berlin: Izdatel'skaia kollegiia parizhskogo ob'edineniia pisatelei [n. d.; actually published in 1935]), 84 (further page references to the novel are in brackets in the main text).

⁸⁹ In Russian: "esli bylo kakoe-nibud' chudo, nam izvestnoe, eto konechno Prust, chem-to uzhe zatmivshii Tolstogo i Dostoevskogo".

his life” (58)⁹⁰. Compared with Lermontov’s predilection for contemplation, Pushkin’s prose struck Fel’zen’s protagonist as “flat, dim-grey, and lightweight,” lacking in “sincere personal tone” (10/11: “gladkaia, tusklo-seraia i legkovesnaia”; “iskrennii lichnyi ton”)⁹¹. Lermontov and Proust were thus being enthroned as the new icons of a generation that considered literature to be, in Boris Poplavsky’s words, “a private letter sent to an unknown address”⁹², not an instrument of civic and moral edification. Refusing to be measured by external success, and even rhyming success with swindle (and hence calling Pushkin “somewhat deceitful” (309: “zhulikovat”; cf. Poplavsky’s later juxtaposition — indicatively, in a section of literary criticism discussing Joyce — between Pushkin, “the greatest worm,” and Lermontov, “huge and...endlessly gothic”)⁹³, Poplavsky, just like Fel’zen after him, endorsed Adamovich’s reshuffling of the canon: “How can one at all speak of the age of Pushkin. There is only the time of Lermontov...” (310)⁹⁴. Significant here is the contrast between “age” (*epokha*), with its implication of grandeur and the intimation of limited duration, and “time” (*vremia*), devoid of greatness but suggesting open-endedness and contemporaneity: the time of Lermontov has arrived and he has become a friend and ally of the younger Paris émigré literati.

When Fel’zen claimed the privilege of being the exponent of a metropolitan worldview, he was asserting at the same time a new allocation of cultural capital, and, as we have seen, a new version of the canon. This was judged to be a twofold affront by Bem who, as noted earlier, accused Fel’zen (and by implication Adamovich) of false metropolitanism (*stolichnost’*); Fel’zen’s protagonist, he insisted, resembled a provincial non-entity who had found himself by accident in the capital but had remained impassive and severed from the great historical events of his time. He devoured the culture of the capital (Paris) with provincial eagerness and regurgitated it in an equally provincial, unassimilated, and tiresomely pretentious (*pretentsioznoi*) manner⁹⁵. The simplicity that marked Lermontov’s style was beyond Fel’zen’s reach; therefore, his *Letters about Lermontov* were, ironically, a document merely of undigested, provincial modernism, and as such could not assert a revision of the canon and of Pushkin’s place in it. The battles over the canon were thus accompanied by a heated discussion about what constituted metropolitanism and provincialism in émigré literature and how the domain of émigré culture was to be reconstituted and divided, a polemic which lasted throughout the 1930s, reflecting the new artistic sensitivities cultivated in Paris and the distance that was building up between it and other centres of émigré literature⁹⁶.

⁹⁰ “Lermontov byl prosto chelovek i, pogruzhennyi v sebia, on nastoichivo razsuzhdal o sebe i o svoei zhizni”.

⁹¹ Cf. Mochulsky’s later claim: “Of course, Lermontov did learn from Pushkin; but how wonderfully did he transform Pushkin’s manner, softening its stern dryness and lending it new, inexplicable charm” (K. V. Mochul’skii, *Velikie russkie pisateli XIX v.* (St. Petersburg: Aleteia, 2000), 77; first published in Paris in 1939: “Konechno, Lermontov uchilsia u Pushkina; no kak chudesno preobrazil on pushkinskuiu maneru, smiagchiv ee strogiuiu sukhost’ i pridav ei novoe, neobiasnimoe ocharovan’e”).

⁹² B. Poplavskii, “O misticheskoi atmosfere molodoi literatury v emigratsii,” *Chisla* 2–3 (1930): 308–311, here 309 (“chastnoe pis’mo, otpravlennoe po neizvestnomu adresu”). Further page references are in brackets in the main text.⁹³ Boris Poplavskii, “Po povodu...,” *Chisla* 4 (1930–31): 161–75, here 171 (“samyi bol’shoi cherv”); “Lermontov ogromen...on bezkonechno gotichen”).

⁹⁴ “Kak voobshche mozžno govorit’ o Pushkinskoi epokhe. Sushchestvuet tol’ko Lermontovskoe vremia...”

⁹⁵ Bem, “Stolichnyi provintsializm,” 246.

⁹⁶ The polemic was triggered by Adamovich’s “Provintsia i stolitsa” (‘Province and Capital,’ in *Posled-*

The last word in this protracted debate seems to have come from Adamovich, who in 1939, the year of Lermontov's 125th anniversary, published his strongest statement yet⁹⁷. Adamovich here returns to his idea of Pushkin and Lermontov as "two poles, two poetic ideals" (841); he makes repeated use of his tried and tested criterion of evaluation: in terms of poetic quality, Pushkin's verse is no doubt better, but in "its aspirations — if not its accomplishments — Lermontov's poetry reached farther than Pushkin's" (843). To the 1930s Paris literati, "Pushkin remained a god, [while] Lermontov became a friend, in the intimacy of whose presence everybody would become purer and freer" (843)⁹⁸. Surveying retrospectively the scene of Russian émigré literature in Paris, Georgii Fedotov reiterated this underlying opposition: "Pushkin is too lucid and earthly, too much asserting life and too accomplished in his form. The Parisians, rather, perceive the world as hell and want to demolish any established forms that are turning into fetters. Lermontov is closer to them..."⁹⁹ Lermontov was thus considered a better embodiment of the new understanding of literature and the public role of the writer: no longer a "national poet," but a diasporic voice in a culture subsisting increasingly on adaptation, hybridity, and live interaction with Western literature, art, and philosophy.

The canon wars, particularly those at *Chisla*, were keenly observed in the Soviet Union, where Vladimir Ermilov dedicated to them a few cynical passages in an article welcoming the Party Decree to liquidate RAPP and establish a single Writers' Union. An embarrassing document of vulgar sociology, Ermilov's article is written in a style that could hardly serve as a recommendation for its author's literary prowess. Using a disturbingly coarse vocabulary, Ermilov tells his readers that the white-guardist war over the canon was evidence of the "cannibalism" (*kannibal'skoi sushchnosti*) of the bourgeoisie which was now prepared to give up and destroy what was truly valuable in its own bourgeois and aristocratic past. Writing after the appearance of the first five issues of *Chisla*, Ermilov concludes that who exactly would win this skirmish is immaterial, as the white-guard would most certainly "abandon tomorrow Lermontov," just as it is now turning against Pushkin. The Soviet working class, by contrast, should not be moved by these wars; it should instead take what is best from each of the two poets and make it work for the proletarian cause¹⁰⁰. The émigré canon wars were thus kept at bay, a sign of their potential significance — and that of émigré literary criticism as a whole — at a moment when the battles in Soviet aesthetics and literary history over the legacy of the nineteenth century were meant to reach a resolution in the doctrines adopted a couple of years later by the First Writers' Congress.

nie novosti, 31 December 1931), a rather condescending review of the Harbin collective volume Bagul'nik. Bem's above-mentioned article "Stolichnyi provintsializm," as well as his later "Stolitsa' i 'provintsia'" are echoes of this discussion, which, as Oleg Korestev notes, had reached its peak in 1934, in the pages of the Warsaw-based *Mech*; cf. Korestev's notes in Adamovich, *Literaturnye zametki*. Kniga 1 (St. Petersburg: Aleteia, 2002), 745.

⁹⁷ G. V. Adamovich, "Lermontov" (*Poslednie novosti*, 19 December 1939), quoted here from the republication in M. Iu. Lermontov: *pro et contra*, 840–45, with page references in brackets in the main text.⁹⁸ "I esli ne sversheniia, to stremieniia lermontovskoi poezii tianutsia dal'she pushkinskoi"; "Pushkin ostalsia bogom, Lermontov sdelalsia drugom, naedine s kotorym kazhdyi stanovilsia chishche i svobodnee".

⁹⁹ "Pushkin slishkom iasnyi i zemnoi, slishkom utverzhaet zhizn' i slishkom zakonchen v svoei forme. Parizhane oshchushchaliu zemliu skoree kak ad i khotiat razbivat' vsiakiie naidennye formy, stanoviaschchie okovami. Lermontov im blizhe;" cf. G. P. Fedotov, "O parizhskoi poezii," in Kovcheg: *Sbornik russkoi zarubezhnoi literatury* (New York: [Association of Russian Writers in New York], 1942), 197.

¹⁰⁰ V. Ermilov, "Za rabotu po-novomu," *Krasnaia nov'5* (1932): 161–74, here 162.