

Claudia Criveller, Andrea Gullotta

Introduction to the 12th issue of *AvtobiografiЯ*

The first ten years of *AvtobiografiЯ* can be seen as a long thematic journey on different genres, forms, and approaches in the field of Life Writing in Russian and, to a lesser extent, Slavonic cultures. The 2023 issue constitutes a sort of balance of the studies conducted so far, reflected in an overview of autobiographical writing in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, constructed through theoretical references, different genres, and methods. The value of this new issue lies in the variety of approaches proposed by the authors. The articles presented here explore studies on ego-documents, applying different approaches: the reconstruction of biographical facts based on unpublished or unstudied materials, the publication of unpublished materials, theoretical and genre analysis, and the definition of facts and cultural contexts based on reinterpretations of private documents.

The thematic monographic section, edited by Marina Balina, Claudia Criveller and Andrea Gullotta and illustrated in their preface, gathers the works of three scholars who are already

important contributors to *AvtobiografiЯ* as authors or members of the advisory board (Irina Savkina joins the editorial team this year). For a more detailed presentation, we refer to the introduction by the editors and here we will only introduce the different genres, trends, and methods applied. Leona Toker's article analyses, also in a comparative perspective, the memoirs of four authors who survived the Stalinist purges; Maria Mayofis frames the memoir cycle of Konstantin Paustovskii through the theoretical filter of Jens Brockmeier's "memory episteme"; Irina Savkina studies a group of female autobiographical works from the late nineteenth century to the 1990s.

The works in the second section, despite their thematic variety, share a common thread, showing how egodocuments of different nature can go beyond the narrow context of the writer's private life and allow for the reconstruction of cultural periods, events and generations, and more specifically, the intellectual and cultural biography of the Russian and Soviet intelligentsia. The articles of this section show

how egodocuments and fictional discourses should not be considered as separate dimensions, but when examined as a whole in a holistic approach, they allow for the investigation of subjectivity in relation to its social and cultural context.

The article by Andrey Fedotov and Pavel Uspenskij is dedicated to a writer, Avdot'ia Panaeva, who has so far been neglected by scholars and is mainly remembered for her relationship as lover and muse of Nikolai Nekrasov. The authors, using egodocuments and fictional discourses by Panaeva, refute hypotheses derived from contemporary criticism (for example, by Kornei Chukovskii). Instead, they use Panaeva's artistic prose as a material that allows for the reconstruction of her consciousness and subjectivity, which has so far been mainly interpreted through androcentric lenses that ignored her individuality. The authors examine the biographical material, reading it through the filter of literary works, thus allowing for the reconstruction of principles and facts based on new and plausible interpretative patterns.

Ilya Vinitsky proposes a similar approach in his work on Mikhail Gasparov. He examines letters and autobiographical annotations by the distinguished schol-

ar on the Age of Augustus, in which he studies the historical Aesopian language as a sign of the moral and intellectual crisis of Roman intellectual society, which Gasparov compares to the Soviet counterpart in the twentieth century. He also reconstructs the intellectual biography of Gasparov and, with him, of the Soviet intelligentsia, examining the perspective on the Aesopian language in the Roman Empire and its parallel interpretation by the Soviet cultural elite during the Brezhnev stagnation, a term that, according to private letters, Vinitsky argues, can be traced back to Gasparov himself.

Also the article by Liudmila Sproge and Marco Caratuzzolo focuses on theoretical issues by working on the genre – or rather the *subgenre* – of *avtobiografiia po zakazu* [commissioned autobiography] through the analysis of an unpublished autobiographical fragment by Vasilii Nemirovich-Danchenko, a journalist, writer, and memoirist who is the less famous brother of the well-known theatre director Vladimir. The publication of the unpublished fragment is introduced by a meticulous reconstruction of biographical facts and their connections with the intelligentsia of the time, the military and literary world,

which provokes Nemirovich-Danchenko to reflect on the role of heritage in the development of the future writer.

In other cases, egodocuments are assigned a socio-cultural function as a result of deliberate choices by the writer, as in the case of Ben Musacchio's article, who shows how Evgenii Evtushenko's *A Precocious Autobiography* (1963), written at a rather young age, is based on a common assumption in the autobiographical genre, i.e. the author's self-defense in response to the fame that has arisen around him. Musacchio bases his interpretative framework on Philippe Lejeune's well-known "autobiographical pact" and on typical assumptions related to the genre of autobiography. He reconstructs the story of the publication of the text in tamizdat and defines its epitext – consisting of reviews, speeches, and published and unpublished egodocuments – with the aim of analysing the text's receptive context both in the West and in the Soviet Union.

The material section features a bloc dedicated to the writer Slava Sergeev, who publishes an excerpt of his unpublished diary in which he recounts his departure from Russia after the outbreak of war in February 2022 and his decision to emigrate to Israel.

The diary excerpt is introduced by a preface by Francesca Lazzarin, Sergeev's Italian translator, who proposes also an interview with the writer. Although destined for publication, Sergeev himself did not imagine that his diary would be published so quickly, while the critics (and the protagonists themselves) are still defining the *fifth wave* of migration. With Lazzarin, who interprets Sergeev's autobiographical prose through the filter of autofiction, the author discusses his memoiristic and autobiographical prose, his possible sources of literary inspiration, as well as his personal autobiographical strategies.

The issue is completed by reviews by Iaroslav Golubinov on the publication of Vasilij Gorodtsov's diaries, by Giorgia Rimondi on two new volumes published in the *Narrare la memoria* series by Edizioni Guerini, namely the Italian translation of Vera Inber's Leningrad diary and of the diaries of Eduard Kuznetsov. Finally, Attilio Russo reviews a collection of documents, letters, and memoirs by the famous scholar of Russian Symbolism, Zara Mints, published by the University of Tallinn.

