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Introduction

The fourth issue of «AvtobiografiЯ» inaugurates what we as editors would like to establish as a tradition, i.e. the publication of special sections devoted to important themes related to auto/biographical studies in Russian culture. We are proud to start with the special section edited by one scholar who has supported immensely our journal ever since its first issue, Marina Balina. The special section we hereby propose is devoted to childhood, seen as a device used for articulating the representation of the self. As explained in the editor's preface, the seven essays that compose the cluster demonstrate how childhood is not simply a period of one's life and therefore an important moment of autobiographies, but is a fundamental element in the artistic representation of the construction of the self in a variety of Russian texts and films throughout the 20th and 21st centuries. The specific contribution that the cluster provides to the study of the self in Russian culture is described by Marina Balina in her introduction.

After the special section we propose four articles which deal with different periods and types of texts. Yuri Mann's article utilises a wide range of ego-documents in order to support his thesis on how Nikolai Gogol' used his public readings as an important moment of his creative process. Françoise Genevray proposes an in-depth analysis of the diary of Nadezhda Sokhanskaia arriving to the very roots of the text, of its motivation, structure, style and 'paradoxes'. Simone Guagnelli's article looks at one of the most debated autobiographical texts of 20th century Russian literature, i.e. Georgii Ivanov's *Peterburg's Winters*, of which the author reconstructs the genesis and structure. Similarly, Irina Savkina deals with such a controversial text as Sofia Ostrovskaia's diary, which the author studies as a compositional work, thus highlighting the narrative techniques implemented by Ostrovskaia and, more importantly, underlining the value of the text as an ego-document rather than as the 'diary of an informer'.

The section 'Discussion' from the fourth issue on becomes

'Materials and Discussions' thanks to the decision to start the publication of unpublished materials, yet another change that is intended to become a tradition of «AvtobiografiЯ». The first text published is the diary of Maria Bruss, a woman who describes her years in Kazakhstan through several historical and personal events, thus showing – as pointed out by Sarah Cameron and Julia Herzberg in their introduction – the text's importance as a historical document, regardless its many stylistic flaws, which are described in the introduction by Stefano Aloe, who took care of the philological reconstruction of the text. Thanks to the support of the Wissenschaftliche Gesellschaft Freiburg and the German Historical Institute in Moscow we are also able to publish the translation of the diary in English. The section is concluded with an interview conducted by Andrea Gullotta with Rosamund Bartlett, author of the most recent biography of

Tolstoy in English, and by a review of Serbian auto/biographical studies written by Monica Fin, another step towards the broadening of «AvtobiografiЯ» towards the cultures of Eastern Europe. A final evolution of the strategies of the journal is the decision to move the section 'News' onto the social media pages of the journal, where they will reach the public in a more efficient way.

Regardless all the innovations and developments of the journal, for which we thank our collaborators and particularly Adriano Pavan and Samuele Saorin, we haven't forgotten our past. This issue is therefore opened by the full bibliography of Catherine Viollet's works, compiled by Danielle Constantin with the help of Rodolphe Baudin. A way to further remember a friend, a collaborator and a great scholar in the field of autobiographical studies.