

## Introduction

The centenary of the October Revolution has inspired an outstanding amount of events around the world. Exhibitions, conferences, publications and other initiatives have contributed to the commemoration of a fundamental event in history, and have caused mixed reactions, from the polemics about the opportunity of celebrating revolutionary art (see, for instance, the debate generated by the London's Royal Academy's exhibition *Revolution: Russian Art 1917-1932*, Cummings 2017, Jones 2017) to the different interpretations of the Kremlin's cautious position and of the overall indifference towards the event in Russia (for instance Carroll 2017, Zubov 2017).

The 'centenary-effect' has been felt also in the field of Russian auto/biographical studies. The publication or re-edition of memoirs, biographies or collected volumes has brought to the fore the question of the impact of such drastic events on the lives of people. The web has also contributed to this wave: of all the websites and virtual spaces devoted to the revolution, the most strikingly has probably

been the London's Pushkin House 'Project 1917' (<https://project1917.com>), devoted to the publication of excerpts of diaries, letters, memoirs and other egodocuments taken from the year 1917 and published each day in a form that is similar to contemporary social media writing.

We have decided to take the unique occasion given by the centenary and to provide a different perspective on the Russian Revolutions. The sixth issue of «AvtobiografiЯ» is devoted to the auto/biographical texts of the revolutionaries, of those who fought or inspired the revolutions, and were eventually defeated in victory. The focus is mainly on two aspects: the text (and its changeable value in relation to a series of extra-textual factors) and the author (and his/her motivations and strategies). The revolution is here seen through the lenses of the protagonists, but is inserted into a historical perspective which helps to identify common structures and patterns. The texts analysed by the authors of the special section edited by Tatiana Saburova are here analysed with

a multidisciplinary approach, thanks to which the focus on the autobiography of the revolutionaries – which have so far been usually treated as a historical source – is here on narrative choices and strategies, including the question of the author's omissions (Geoffrey Swain's article) and selection of materials according to the texts' function (Stephan Rindlisbacher), as well as the creation of a different image of the self in texts generated in different contexts (Felicita Fischer von Weikersthal) and the collective narrative strategies of a group of individuals (Ol'ga Edelman). This special section sheds new light on the revolutionaries' egodocuments and proposes a series of important questions on the revolution and on the revolutionaries themselves.

Three articles are hosted in the general section. Duccio Colombo's text proposes a close look at the tradition of the (criminal) biographies on Len'ka Panteleev, a tradition generated by the myth of the bandit. Lia Buhkanets' article touches upon some of the points raised by Colombo, specifically those about the opposition between reality and fiction, although her text focuses on Nikolai Ezhov's memoirs on Anton Chekhov. The general section is closed by Svetlana

Maslinskaia's article on children's literature and autobiography, a theme that is dear to our journal, as shown by the 2015 special issue edited by Marina Balina. Maslinskaia focuses on an innovative topic, i.e. the creation of a biography by Soviet children's literature writers.

An ideal companion to this issue's special section is the unpublished autobiography of Mikhail Novorusskii, held at the State Archive of the Russian Federation, that we propose in the section 'Materials and Discussions' thanks to Ol'ga Shemiakina, who provides also an insightful introduction to the text. Another text devoted to 1917 is the unpublished diary of a peasant of the Iaroslavl' region, edited by Irina Sleptsova (Kyzlasova) and Natal'ia Artem'eva. Pavel Bugrov's diary, held in the archive of the Iaroslavl' museum-reserve, offers a unique point of view 'from below' on the events of the Revolution.

The 'Materials and Discussions' section hosts two more texts: an interview to the novelist Aleksandr Snegirev by Giulia Marcucci, and the report of the conference *Автобиографические сочинения в междисциплинарном исследовательском поле: Люди, тексты, практики – II*, held in June 2017 at the Higher School of Economics in Moscow.

It was the last act (together with the edited volume which was published in the very last days of 2017, Зарецкий, Карпенко и Шушпанова 2017) of the 'Group of interdisciplinary research on autobiography' of the Higher School of Economics in Moscow, led by Iurii Zaretskii, an eminent scholar in the field, member of the advisory board and contributor of our journal. Over the past few years, thanks to the work of teachers, doctoral students and undergraduate students, the group has been a reference to all scholars in the field of Russian auto/biography thanks to the many publications, conferences and seminars that

have put together scholars from Russia and from abroad. A natural arena for the exchange of ideas, methodologies and approaches coming from different disciplines and backgrounds, the group has had a terrific impact on Russian auto/biographical studies, both in Russia and abroad. We hope Iurii Zaretskii and his group might soon find a way to continue their outstanding work.

## Bibliography

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