

Claudia Criveller, Andrea Gullotta

Introduction

This issue of «AvtobiografiЯ» sees the light at the end of a very particular year. The Covid-19 pandemic has affected many lives throughout the world, causing what can probably be considered the most upsetting lifestyle change for millions of people across the globe. Many concepts related to life-writing have seen a remarkable shift in their meaning, causing a rift between a pre- and post- pandemic life that has already started to have an effect in life writing, in the forms of Covid-19 diaries on social media, quarantine vlogs, and other similar products. We will understand the impact of this in the years to come, but it is clear that research will be devoted extensively to life writing and the Covid-19 pandemic in the nearest future.

On a more practical note, the pandemic has bought its challenges also to our journal, forcing us to work under more pressure than usual. We have also suffered our losses. At the beginning of 2020 we have lost Oleg Korostelev, a member of our advisory board, an excellent colleague and a friend, who has

always supported our journal throughout the years. At the end of the year, we were reached by the news of the sudden death of Nikolai Bogomolov, one of the most authoritative voices in the field of Russian studies and a dear colleague and friend, who published an article in last year's issue of our journal. With this brief mention, we want to remember these two outstanding colleagues and thank them for their contribution to our journal.

Regardless of the challenges, suffering and hardships of the pandemic, we have managed to achieve some important results for our journal. We are now listed in some of the major scholarly indexes, and are hopeful to be included in more indexes in the nearest future in order to allow our journal to reach an even wider readership. We have also welcomed in the editorial board Daniele Artoni, who was previously our Social Media Officer. Sara Deon and Peter Taggart now take up the reins as Social Media Officers.

In terms of scholarship, the 2020 issue is the first of a series of is-

sues that investigates areas of Russian life writing that have received scarce attention to date in collaboration with colleagues. This year we are delighted to publish a special section edited by Tatiana Kuzovkina, a member of our editorial board and the chief organiser of the Annual Lotman Days at the University of Tallinn. This partnership makes us particularly proud, especially considering the huge contribution given by Iurii Mikhailovich Lotman to the study of auto/biography, and to the many academic initiatives devoted by our colleagues in Tallinn to Lotman's ideas. The special section of this issue is comprised of a selection of the papers presented at the 2019 Lotman Days and includes contributions from scholars of different countries – a testimony to the value and importance of Lotman's ideas on the study of auto/biography, as well as to academic initiatives such as the Lotman Days.

In the general section we host four contributions. Maria Candida Ghidini and Dario Prola propose two contributions on diaries – those of Lev Tolstói (Ghidini) and those of Jarosław Iwazskiewicz (Prola). Ghidini shows the importance of the diaries in the late Tolstói, while Prola focuses on the homoerotic

discourse in Iwazskiewicz's diary. Anna Ponomareva's article focuses on Belyi's ideas on the I, taking inspiration from an excerpt from a manuscript, *A Crisis of Thinking*. The section is closed by Elena Rozhdestvenskaia's article on the letters from the front written by Russian soldiers and officers in different wars. The author highlights some of their functions and focuses on the idea of military professionalism as expression of the identity of the authors.

The section devoted to materials and discussions hosts two important contributions. 2020 has been the fourth year of the so-called *Dmitriev case*, i.e. the persecution of the historian Iurii Dmitriev. The nature of the accusations, the several violations occurred during his trials and the concomitant events on the memorial cemetery of Sandormokh, where the victims of Stalin are exhumed in an attempt to change their identity (i.e. to show that in Sandormokh are buried Red Army soldiers killed by the Finnish Army during the Continuation War) make us firmly believe that Dmitriev is being attacked for his work on the Gulag. As a token of respect towards his indefatigable work of naming the victims of Soviet repressions, we publish the recollections on two victims of

Sandormokh, Georgii Dmitriev and Iadviga Dmitrieva (née Jadwiga Ujejska), written by their daughter Dialektina Dmitrieva. We are grateful to Iurii Mikhailin, who has edited and introduced the text and collected the photographs that we publish, and to the Sakharov Centre in Moscow for allowing us to publish these materials. With this small gesture, we want to remember the tragedy of the thousands of lives lost to Soviet repression and to express our concern to the attempt of re-writing history and biographies. The second contribution is a text by Dmitri Shalin, which continues our discussion on Mikhail Epshtein and Sergei Iur'enen *Encyclopedia of Youth*, on which we have published a

first set of materials by Marina Balina in the 2019 issue. Shalin proposes a series of thought-provoking and insightful considerations on this *dia-ography*. Three reviews, by Valentina Parisi, Elena Andrushchenko and Iaroslav Golubinov, close this year's issue.

Finally, we would like to thank wholeheartedly all the people of our team who have helped us in this very challenging year, and particularly Adriano Pavan and Chiara Rampazzo for their enormous contribution during the latest stages of publication, Anita Frison for her work on indexing and Samuele Saorin for his constant support on all technological aspects related to the journal's website.