

THE SLAVIC BAZAAR

April 26, 2009

SESSION 1. 19TH-CENTURY RUSSIAN LITERATURE

Lermontov on Gender: The Ironic Byronic Role in Patriarchal Society

Alina Tulloch

Lermontov's novella *Princess Mary* (part of his larger work, *A Hero of Our Time*) may be read as a social commentary on the pervasiveness of 19th century patriarchal customs. While it is clear that such a reading has little to do with the intentions of Lermontov himself as an author or with what we may understand of the significance *Princess Mary* had in its historical context, its findings are not invalid. In part, Byronism is defined as "an ideology featur[ing] elements of proud rebelliousness" inspired by Lord Byron's own personal "struggle for liberty" (Victor Terras, author and professor emeritus at Brown University). The Byronic man generally practices a life contrary to every social norm. As my investigation of Lermontov's novel demonstrates, however, this rule does not hold true for matters of the heart. Specifically, the Byronic man lives a solitary existence that leads to the implicit subjugation of his lover. That is, by distancing himself from the traditional world, the Byronic man exercises a freedom his female lover cannot. She, who is by definition a dependent being, is doomed to a relationship in which she can never fully participate and which will be shaped according to the Byronic man's will. Ironically, this is in many ways a reflection of the typical social predicament of traditional nineteenth-century women. Close reading of *Princess Mary* can reveal the typical roles of patriarch and dominated woman in Byronic disguise. By pursuing his own freedom, the Byronic man sacrifices that of his lover and, ironically, maintains the culture he so strongly opposes.

Chernyshevsky and Dostoevsky

Gennady Erlikhman

Dostoyevsky's *Notes from Underground* is often connected to Chernyshevsky's *What is to be Done?* However, with the exception of a few overt references in *Notes*, the connection between the two authors and the two works is extremely sparse. Taking a historical perspective, one is able to trace the evolution of intellectual development in Russia in the first half of the 19th century leading up to the literary and cultural environment that could serve as a battleground for these two writers. From this background, one can uncover in *Notes* an extensive commentary on Chernyshevsky's utilitarian materialism. This analysis reveals that the mysterious "underground man" is none other than the reader of *What is to be Done?* and the central point of Dostoyevsky's polemic is to provide a more realistic picture of people as irrational, self-interested and fundamentally free.

Levin and his Peasants: the Complexity of Gentry-Serf Relations in Anna Karenina

Sarah Arkebauer

In the course of the modernization of Russian society during the nineteenth century, members of the Russian gentry were forced to contemplate the relationship between their own estate and that of the peasants. Factions at various points along the ideological spectrum offered alternate conceptions of how Russia ought to develop in the modern world. On one side, Slavophiles believed a return to the Russian roots preserved in the cultural life of the peasantry was the best course of action. In contrast, Westernizers took to heart the progressive reforms of Western Europe and aspired to bring the peasantry and the rest of Russian society "in step" with modernity through reforms modeled on European institutions. This paper focuses on the relationship between *Anna Karenina* protagonist Konstantin Levin and his peasants. My analysis will demonstrate that this relationship reveals traces of both of the aforementioned ideological positions. As a

result of Levin's dialogue with his peasants, he develops and matures. By presenting Levin's story, Tolstoy offers a course of action mediating Slavophile and Westernizer platforms, a course of action he hopes Russia will take.

THE SLAVIC BAZAAR KEYNOTE LECTURE

Reporting Continuity and Change: Soviet Journalists in the Khrushchev Era

Mary Catherine French

Though much is now understood about the dramatic changes that took place in the Soviet Union after the Second World War, the role of Soviet journalists in this period is less clear. My research examines the ways in which journalists emerged as a profession in the postwar period, through the records of the Union of Journalist's First Congress. The ways in which journalists were encouraged to think of themselves reveal the new challenges of superpower status and Cold War, as journalists were encouraged to think of themselves and their work as superior to that of 'bourgeois' journalism, especially as their travel abroad increased. Though the creation of a professional union and increased travel abroad marked significant changes from Stalinist practice, further scrutiny of Party documents reveals continuity, as well. The Party closely scrutinized travel abroad, and oversaw major staffing decisions. The planned economy also determined the circulation and paper needs for newspapers, with a rhetoric of shortage evident in many documents. Thus, the real 'news' of Soviet journalism is what study of the profession reveals about the nature of postwar society and self-conception.

SESSION 2. LATE 19TH AND EARLY 20TH-CENTURY POLITICS AND ART

Radicalization of Late Nineteenth-Century Russian Proletariat

Ali Gündüz

Nineteenth-Century Russian workers constituted a much smaller proportion of the population of their country compared to their Western European counterparts. Russian Empire had a comparatively underdeveloped industry, dominant autocracy and prevalent peasantry. However, despite these non-optimal conditions for a Marxist upheaval, Russia became the stage for the first country-wide socialist revolution in history. I believe it is crucial to understand the characteristics of radicalization of the early Russian working class in order to appreciate the causation leading to the 1905 and 1917 Revolutions. Kanatchikov's memoirs, written from a post-1917 retrospective, as a radicalized worker provide a valuable resource in understanding the early formation of a revolutionary working class during the late nineteenth century. In my presentation, I will explain that the combination of fading religious dogma, shaken prestige of traditional figures of social and political authority and rising social activism paved the way for a potentially revolutionary Russian proletariat by the end of the nineteenth century.

Inside One's Mind: Pavel Filonov's Heads and the Renaissance Tradition

Christine Weller

In the wake of the apocalyptic events of the first part of the 20th century, the art of the Russian avant-garde was supposed to lay the groundwork for a new, Utopic society where the artist functioned as a prophet, and would transform the world through his or her new, innovative artistic vision. Within this tradition, artist Pavel Filonov (1883-1941) introduced a new system of painting, which he called Analytical Art. A derivative of the avant-garde, Analytical art identified an artist's painting as the psychological and intellectual process of the painter made physical for his audience. Based on his extensive research and writings, Filonov constructed a complex system of artistic analysis and created paintings that introduced his new aesthetic which was misunderstood, ridiculed and rejected by the public during his lifetime. Seemingly

impenetrable, his chaos of forms, figures and symbols were rooted in intense study—what appeared new and illegible in reality derived not only from contemporary Western and Russian artistic school, but rather from inspiration as far reaching as Russian icon painting, and the philosophies of the European Renaissance. This paper explores the paradox of Filonov’s painting, for what was lauded as visually incomprehensible in fact stemmed from traditional artistic views transformed for a modern public. By interpreting how Filonov incorporated the work of his contemporaries, the Cubists and the Futurists along with the visual tradition of European Renaissance artists like Albrecht Dürer, and Peter Bruegel the Elder, this paper posits that Filonov created a hybrid art that simultaneously spoke to the past while prophesying the visual tradition of the future. In what follows, I will focus on Filonov’s cycle of paintings known as the Heads.

SESSION 3. LATE 20TH AND 21ST-CENTURY POLITICS AND ECONOMY

Soviet Jewish Samizdat: United or Divided?

Sarabeth Zielonka

Like many other ethnic minorities in the Soviet Union during the 1960s-1980s, Jews were prohibited from publicly expressing any overtly nationalistic emotions and often faced discrimination in schools and the workplace. However official censorship prevented the publication of any media that directly opposed official Soviet policy, leading to the growth of an underground industry of illegal self-publication and distribution, samizdat. The samizdat literature of other nationalities, such as that of the Ukrainians, Georgians, and Armenians, is replete with dissent as to the best way to relieve their oppression; yet Jewish samizdat is generally perceived to be almost consistently Zionist. Was there a uniformity of opinion that a strong Jewish identity was completely incompatible with contemporary Soviet society in samizdat? Through close examination of Jewish samizdat, it is possible to discern within it three distinct schools of thought: that of the Zionists and nationalists, that of the completely indifferent, and that of the completely alienated. Soviet Jewish samizdat, like that of other nationalities, was a breeding ground for various degrees of dissent, not all of it overtly advocating emigration.

Rise of the Bear? The Extent of Russian Revisionism as Applied to Oil and Gas Machinations

Julie Steinberg

The 2009 Russo-Ukrainian gas skirmish was the most recent example of Gazprom’s oil and natural gas disputes with its neighbors. Over the past several years, Russia has been accused of using Gazprom to further its “neo-imperialist” and “expansionist” foreign policy goals by cutting off energy supply to nations that seem to be orienting toward the West. Careful examination of Gazprom’s actions toward Lithuania, Azerbaijan and Belarus, however, indicate the elimination of foreign subsidies and the normalization of gas prices for all. This trajectory reflects Gazprom’s approach toward deliberations: profits, not politics, dictate how disputes are resolved. This paper argues that ultimately, Russia acts out of economic necessity, not political retribution.