

**Title:** A Purged Monument: Yuri Trifonov's *House on the Embankment*  
**Author:** Mihaela-Andreea Pacurar, Harvard University

Yuri Trifonov's 1976 novella *House on the Embankment* is an unusually frank account of Stalinist repression and the Great Purges. Critical studies of Trifonov's work delve into aspects of his style that made this novella suitable for publication in the official Soviet literary circuit despite its unorthodox reassessment of recent history. Scholars note Trifonov's subversive use of Aesopian doublespeak; free indirect style and competing narrative voices complicate authorial stance, and he relies on everyday gestures to show how characters adapt to moral compromise.

In my paper, I show that Trifonov's doublespeak remains, indeed, double, in that it is not only subversive. *House on the Embankment* simultaneously contests and mythologizes the House on the Embankment as a monumental expression of political power and historical memory. The House, built in 1932 on an embankment of the Moscow River facing the Kremlin, was intended as a home for the new Soviet elite. A utopian city within a city, its physical presence was overwhelming, though shabbier buildings continued to exist in its vicinity.

The novella's main character, Vadim Glebov, lives in a crowded communal apartment in this shadow of the "big house." He inhabits what in Foucault's terms can be called a counter-space, where the utopia of the House is regarded with awe and resentment. Trifonov's choice to chronicle the demise of the inhabitants of the House during the Purges through Glebov's eyes would seem to support the idea of a subversive narrative. However, Trifonov introduces a second narrator, an unnamed insider of the House, who resents Glebov and his callous participation in the Purges. In the final analysis, Trifonov's text is indeed a denunciation of repression, but also an exaltation and reaffirmation of the authority of the building as a site of memory.