

Title: Gogol Émigré Criticism within the Context of Cultural Memory and Literary Jubilee Discourse: 1930s and Beyond
Author: Elena Murenina, East Carolina University

In his early studies on semiotics, Yuri Lotman indicated the sinusoid nature of collective memory with its periods of cultural oblivion and cultural recollection, concerning the reading audience. Perhaps nothing shows the power and idiosyncrasy of cultural memory in Russia with such intensity as the literary jubilee celebrations of Russian writers (see Murenina 1997). The phenomenon of a yearlong commemoration of hundredth anniversary of Pushkin's death in 1937, both in Soviet Russia and Russia Abroad, is undeniable and well described scholarly, solidly backed up by the concept of Pushkin canonization in Russia (see Brintlinger 2000, Sandler 2004). The recent Gogol bicentennial (2009) intensified my research interest on the roots of Gogol's cultural existence in exile during the first wave of Russian emigration. In this proposed paper I will demonstrate how the Pushkin celebration (1937) was preceded by a less festive, but yet remarkable for émigré intellectuals, 125th recognition of Gogol's birth (1934). This latter jubilee produced an exceptional collection of critical revelations, affected significantly the future direction of Gogol scholarship both in Russia and in the West.

To explore the nature, effects and boundaries of literary jubilee discourse, I will focus primarily on the poetics and socio-cultural specifics of Gogol jubilee texts published in Paris, Belgrade and Prague. Analyzing both well-known and forgotten cases of Gogol's treatment in émigré press by such culturally or ideologically opposing figures as Khodasevich, Adamovich, Bitsilli, Mochulsky, Bem, and Weidle, I will trace the correlation between diverse biographical and textual approaches dominant in the early émigré reaction to Gogol in their comparison to symbolism and formalism legacies of pre-revolutionary and post-revolutionary Russia. To identify the important dialogue relations between critical publications concerning Gogol, I will evaluate closely selected jubilee texts from both representative and exemplary modes within the context of Russian émigré critical thought and the broader legacy of Gogol's criticism in the twentieth century.

Questions to be addressed in this paper: How can the émigré criticism, at the same time, be elucidated and "transgressed" by the jubilee impulse, practice and rhetoric, and its powerful ritual energy? Can the rise of posthumous popularity of a poet be correlated with his jubilee? How was Gogol seen aesthetically and politically differently as the jubilee figure by Russian émigré circles in 1934 compared to Pushkin in the 1937, and how was this reflected in their jubilee texts? How were jubilee environment and the duality of the literary-anniversary tradition in Russia interconnected with the creative priorities of literary critics and scholars in exile? What are the relationships between the jubilee chronotope and cultural memory in Gogol case?

References

Brintlinger, Angela. *Writing a Usable Past: Russian Literary Culture, 1917-1937*. Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2000.

Лотман Ю.М. (1985). Память в культурологическом освещении// Ю.М.Лотман. Семиосфера. Санкт-Петербург: Искусство-СПБ, 2000:673-676.

Муренина Е.К. (1997). Литературно-юбилейная статья как социокультурный факт и литературный жанр// Н.Г.Чернышевский. Статьи, иссл., материалы. Вып. 12:63-77.

Муренина Е.К. (1998). К вопросу о современной рецепции Н.В.Гоголя в Великобритании // Русская литература, 4: 212-221. Санкт-Петербург: Наука.

Sandler, Stephanie. *Commemorating Pushkin: Russia's Myth of a National Poet*.
Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2004.