

Title: Freedom in Exile in Two Novels of Nina Berberova
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When the Russian émigré poet, critic and prose writer Nina Nikolaevna Berberova fled newly Soviet Russia in 1921 with her partner, the poet Vladislav Khodasevich, she was welcomed into her common-law husband's literary circles in the active Russian émigré communities in Berlin and Paris. Due to these circumstances Berberova is often considered to have much in common with other Russian authors writing in exile at the same time. Indeed, much of the comparatively little scholarship that exists on Berberova appears to be based on the assumption that she, Khodasevich and others belong to more or less the same "school" of Russian writers in exile. For these writers, it is generally thought, exile emblemizes "the living death of Brodsky's 'uncomprehending victim', devoid of independence and creativity and unable to respond to life's challenges in a productive manner."# Indeed, these authors, much like many of their fictional characters, suffered a severe decline in wealth, consequence and personal relationships when they fled abroad. However, approaching Berberova's fiction through such a lens obscures much of what makes her exilic voice unique. For Berberova, in contrast to such writers as Khodasevich, exile is replete with new possibilities, a place to be savored and explored in its own right, and not one in which Russians are shackled to the mourning for and recreation of the past.

The proposed paper seeks to address this critical lacuna by examining two of Berberova's most understudied novels, *Bez zakata* from the 1930s and *Mys Bur'* from the 1950s. Through a close-reading analysis of the main characters' internal monologues, authorial asides, the use of *skaz*, and other narrative devices in these novels, the present study traces the theme of the maturation of young Russia abroad, a quest for self-determination on a path toward existential freedom. The paper seeks to demonstrate that, in contrast to many émigré writers of her generation, for Berberova the rupture from her homeland and the task of forging a new class identity in France afford unparalleled opportunities to develop the personal and creative self.

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