

Title: *Novyi mir* in the Institutional Spaces of Early Soviet Literature

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The notion of institutional space in the domain of Soviet literature likely brings to mind formal organizations like the Writer's Union, but one of the most important institutions of the early Soviet period was clearly the "thick" journal. Although scholarship on early Soviet Russian culture has long acknowledged the formative role of the thick journal after 1921, apart from Aleksandr Voronsky's *Krasnaia nov'* few of the many NEP-period periodicals have been examined closely as semi-autonomous institutions in early Soviet life, in other words, as distinct cultural enterprises with their own specific formulas for developing Soviet literature. In the wake of Voronsky's removal from the editorial board of *Krasnaia nov'* in 1927, the "literary-artistic and socio-political" journal *Novyi mir* became arguably the most important organ of a broad and "eclectic" orientation, one which refused to exclude or discourage the works of "fellow-travelers" from its pages. Despite the general decline of the thick journal toward the end of NEP, from 1926 to 1930 *Novyi mir* persevered as a NEP institution that consistently promoted artistic merit as the principal criterion for new works of Soviet literature.

Like *Krasnaia nov'* before it, *Novyi mir* sought to publish writers on the basis of talent. The refusal to subordinate talent to ideological interests therefore allowed the journal logically to accept or even solicit the contributions of accomplished writers, regardless of their political orientation or class outlook. Yet through its willingness to offer its highly sought-after literary space to writers whose ideology often remained suspiciously marginal (Pasternak, Pil'niak, Aleksei Tolstoi and others), *Novyi mir* effectively advanced an alternative set of cultural priorities. *Novyi mir* actively defended its disputed space, moreover, through its conspicuously independent literary criticism, which for five years sustained a number of engaging polemics with adversaries from the ranks of nominally "proletarian" organizations. Led by Viacheslav Polonskii, the journal's chief editor and outspoken advocate of an organizationally broad, "syncretic" [sinkreticheskii] Soviet literature, *Novyi mir* frequently challenged, defied and ultimately opposed the monolithic critical discourse endorsed by the Communist Party. By exploring a number of important landmarks in Soviet literary criticism that appeared in *Novyi mir* between 1926-1931, my presentation seeks to illuminate the nature, ideological trajectory and significance of *Novyi mir* as an institution within Soviet culture prior to the final imposition of Party control.