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Publishing and Literary Situation in Tomsk in 1900–1920-ies

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Abstract

The research is focused on the specificity of regional literary collections of the 1900-1920-ies that display common features with the literature of the centre as well as specific features of Siberian literature. For the first time these collections are viewed as an integral part of Siberian book publishing process of the early 20th century. The literary collections of this period were particularly important because they promoted young writers, poets and literary critics thus developing local publishing practices and strategies. The research is based on the systems analysis that covers content, aesthetic peculiarities and interrelation between text and paratext.

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Keywords: Book publishing; Siberia; local approach; literary collections; publishing practices and strategies.

1. Introduction

The current literary studies require that new materials related to the ‘Siberian text’ be analysed and introduced for their further scientific use. Such materials include archival documents, numerous articles contributed by Siberian oblastniki (i.e. regionalists) for the central and regional media as well as their journals and correspondence. Together with the study of Russian-European literary and publishing processes, such research provides an opportunity to show how geopolitical and geo-economic circumstances of the late 19th – early 20th centuries promoted Siberian cultural regionalism and formed another local myth of the Russian civilization. The Western approach to the Orient is described by Said in his groundbreaking book, *Orientalism* (Said, 1978). Bassin (1991), Leontieva & Dolbilov

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(2005), Etkind (2014) also focus on the idea of traditional colonial perception of Siberia, specifying the Western concepts of colonialism and orientalism applied to the Russian culture (Bassin, 1991; Leontieva & Dolbilov, 2005; Etkind, 2014). Diment & Slezkine (1993) emphasize the specific geographical position of the eastern periphery, implying that Siberia has no history of independent political existence, no claim to a separate ethnic identity, and no clear borders (Diment & Slezkine, 1993).

Philology and bibliology define the literary collection as a book that contains literary works of one or more authors. Karaychentseva (2004) states that the collection is the most flexible form of literary publication that contains works of all literary genres selected to meet the needs of any reader (Karaychentseva, 2004, p. 21). Besides, this literary product has two main varieties – author’s collections that include literary works of one author and multi-author collections that include literary works of various authors chosen by the compiler. The collections of the second type have a number of distinctive features and can be subdivided into almanacs, anthologies, and chrestomathies (Kozlova, 2000). While the author’s intention in the first type collection is reflected in paratextual elements (the title, epilogue, table of contents, composition, categorization, etc.), the multi-author collection does not always have such fixed components (Bazhenova, 2010). As the second type collection has a more flexible and open structure, it is particularly important to analyse the relations between text and paratext to determine the dynamics of the relationship between authors’ texts and their readers (Gennette, 1997).

2. Methodology

The methodology is based on a number of works on the history of book publishing, regional publishing processes and literary collections study (Bassin, 1991; Genette, 1997; Dymont & Slezkine, 1993; Said, 1979; Etkind, 2011, Bazhenova, 2010; Karaychentsova, 2004; Posadskov, 2013; Frolova, 1995). In our opinion, regional collections should be studied from various perspectives to get a more holistic understanding of regional publishing processes, literary and social life, and the image of the reader. The most promising is the local approach according to which provincial literature and culture are studied within certain geographical areas or “historical regions” (Dmitrienko, 2000; Frolova, 1995). Indeed, when limited to a certain geographical area, the researcher can use a good source base (newspapers, memorial and reference books (‘pamyatnaya knizhka’), local press indexes, archives, memoirs of contemporaries, and the like) to conduct a more profound research. The category of the reader in terms of their relationship to the regional literature can be determined and described on the basis of the fundamental four-volume theoretical research *History of the French Book Publishing* (Chartier & Martin, 1982–1986). Equally significant is Eco’s idea that any text simulates a certain type of the reader (Eco, 1979).

3. Discussion of Results

3.1. The first regional literary almanacs

Pereira (1988) states that the periods before and after the Revolution of 1917 were the most vibrant in the socio-cultural development of Siberia (Pereira, 1988). This fully applies to the development of literary and publishing processes in Tomsk at the turn of the 20th century: this peripheral city grew into a major publishing centre due to a number of advantages, namely the largest Siberian Publishing House of Makushin (1844–1926) and Siberian Imperial University founded in Tomsk in 1880. In the first decades of the 20th century Tomsk remained the most active publishing and printing centre in Siberia satisfying the needs of many Siberian cities. This trend was largely preserved during the first years of Soviet rule (1917–1921), when the government launched a unified publishing system. There still existed various forms of ownership in book publishing, including Soviet federal or departmental publishing houses and private publishing enterprises (Sytyin, the Sabashnikov brothers, Marx, Soykin, etc.).

The first local collection in the form of literary almanac was *Pervyy literaturnyy sbornik sibiryakov* [“The First Literary Collection of Siberians”] published in Tomsk in 1906 (Berezovsky, et al., 1906). It has a traditional structure and includes prose and poetry of both renowned and young writers from Omsk, Tomsk and Irkutsk. However, Siberian themes as well as Siberian *colour locale* is hardly represented in this collection, making works of Siberian authors thematically close to the All-Russian trends. The collection was published in the midst of the Revolution of 1905, which determined its ideological and thematic focus.

Vtoroy literaturnyy sbornik sibiryakov [“The Second Literary Collection of Siberians”] was printed in St. Petersburg (Urmanov, et al., 1908). It also proved to be rather far from Siberian themes and issues; however,

compared to the first collection, it had a wider range of authors not only from Tomsk, Irkutsk and Omsk, but also from the Transbaikalian region, the Far East, Chita and Barnaul. Such literary geography together with the most topical issues discussed undoubtedly broadened the readership. As the book was published in the midst of political reaction, it focused on the most acute problems of the time: prison, execution, exile, anti-Jewish pogroms, reflecting the general state of mind during the revolutionary upheaval. However, although the publishers anticipated success, mainly because the book was printed in the capital, the book failed to become popular. Delivered from St. Petersburg to Tomsk almost a year after its publication, it did not sell well and was shelved in the warehouse for a long time.

Thus, although both collections failed to offer any outstanding literary works, they became significant ideological and cultural documents of the epoch. Young Siberian authors made an attempt to overcome regional tendencies of separatism and become an integral part of the all-Russian literary stream.

3.2. *Literary projects of The Fakel Publishing House*

The rapid development of journalism and literature during the First World War and the pre-revolutionary turmoil led to a dramatic increase in the number of periodicals and anthologies, many of which were private publishing initiatives. A striking phenomenon of this period was the *Fakel* ["Torch"] Publishing House initiated by V.P. Mikulin and M.B. Barahovich, who opened their enterprise in St. Petersburg, but later relocated it to Tomsk (Posadskov, 2013). Their target audience was initially the student body and youth, but soon it grew into a full 'adult' socio-political and cultural phenomenon.

The first book published by *Fakel* was the literary collection *Zimnie radugi* ["Winter Rainbows"] (Mikulin, 1914). Nowadays this thin booklet printed in the *Energiya* typography can be found only in two libraries – The National Library of Russia and the Research Library of Tomsk State University. This collection corresponds to the main trends of the time related to the aesthetics of futurism: the cover and the title page of the book showed the emblem of the new publishing house – a hand holding a torch. It is a mixed-content brochure with passages of poetry, prose and critical essays. In fact, this is a typical provincial amateur publishing product of relatively low quality.

The next book published by *Fakel* was the literary almanac *Chernye rozy* ["Black Roses"]. This collection is of a certain interest due to its obvious charitable goal, as evidenced by the commentary on the cover (Mikulin, 1915). This tendency was particularly popular among publishers during the First World War. However, the content of the second collection also failed to meet its publishers' expectations: most poetry and prose were rather mediocre and far from literary standards. Many authors used pseudonyms and cryptonyms instead of their names, which implies that the almanac can be classified as a typically amateur publishing initiative intended for limited circulation. It was probably the reason why the almanac is not listed in the well-known Siberian and all-Russian literary indices. This fact also points to the short-run and secondary collection.

In 1915, Mikulin and Barahovich left Tomsk for Petrograd, thus *Fakel* of that period can be considered a metropolitan publishing house. However, its branches still worked in Tomsk and Kiev. After 1917, Mikulin and Barahovich returned to Tomsk to work on the unfinished projects. One of them is the manuscript of the third literary almanac *Svirel'* ["The Flute"] (1917) printed in Tomsk. The publisher's imprint has double dating: the title page indicates 1917 as the publishing year, while the cover contains the commentary "Printed in Tomsk, January 15, 1918" (Adamovich, et al., 1917). This collection is missing in the funds of The National Library of Russia and Research Library of Tomsk State University. Unlike the previous collections, *The Flute* is of a better quality in terms of its content, as besides amateur poetry and prose it contains works by renowned authors such as Adamovich, Gumilevsky, Yesenin and Severyanin (Adamovich, et al., 1917).

In 1919, *Fakel* launched another interesting project – an illustrated literary magazine *Strana* ["Country"] advertised in the Tomsk newspaper *Segodnya*. *Strana* was the most successful periodical that combined informative, entertaining, satirical and publicistic materials (Posadskov, 2013). The magazine employed a variety of interesting marketing strategies, such as lotteries and coupons for the readers. The magazine developed by recruiting its own correspondents in other Siberian cities (Irkutsk, Chita, Omsk, Krasnoyarsk). Much attention was given to the literary section where the readers could find works of such authors as Sorokin (Omsk), Lesnaya (Barnaul) and even Tsvetaeva. However, the main contributors were Barahovich and Vifleemskiy, the author of satirical poems, who replaced Mikulin as the editor. Another periodical launched by *Fakel* was the newspaper *Rodina*, published in November, 1920, with Mikulin as the editor. The publishing house was gradually increasing the number of book-

publishing newsstands in Tomsk. However, this type-specific diversity of books and periodicals was accompanied with the overall growth of their ideological component.

3.3. Regional publishing projects of the first years of Soviet Rule (1917–1922)

From the first years of Soviet rule the Tomsk Cooperative Union publishing house published fiction with a clearly educational focus, but the Soviet government introduced a package of austerity measures, among which was paper saving. Such policy led to a drastically lower quality of publications and reduction in their number. These processes were accompanied with the deterioration of editorial and typography standards the quality of which was given little attention, if any. It was not unusual that brochures were published with no cover at all, so they had neither the endpaper nor the back flyleaf. Advertising, announcements and publisher's imprint were often printed in a row at the bottom of the cover or the last page. The text block was usually bound using saddle stitching method.

A typical example of regional publishing products of the early Soviet rule is the collection of revolutionary songs *Pesni bor'by i truda* ["The Songs of Struggle and Labour"] (Vasilieva-Potanina, et al., 1917) from Domaevsky's book collection stored in the Regional Research Library. Published by the Soviet of Soldiers' Deputies of Tomsk garrison, the book reflects typical trends of the first Soviet years. The book has neither the editorial nor the Table of Contents and includes anonymous revolutionary songs. The case is made of light cardboard, with the title and the year printed by hectography. The paper is yellow, rough-edged and poor quality. The title on the cover is printed in the frame with the use of various typefaces. There are no endpapers, title page and indexes. Pagination is located at the top middle. The design can be described as very laconic.

Many social and cultural processes in Tomsk were determined by the participation of the studentship. Such was the mixed-type literary collection *Elan'* edited by Professorial Fellow, poet and publisher Krasnogorsky and published during the reign of Kolchak (Krasnogorsky, 1919). With its provocative subtitle "The first spring collection, a little erotic" it resembles bold futuristic publications of the early 20th century. Though the Preface "From the Publisher" sounds as outrageous as speeches of pre-revolutionary futurists, the reader can find here new post-revolutionary motives of fatigue, satiety and strained eroticism, demonstrating that the authors were more opposed to Kolchak's regime than to a new revolutionary era: "You, engineers, doctors and lawyers, merchants and girl students, you, people of different professions, stupefied by routine, slow, boring ruminants! We are inviting you to the delight of the spiritual works – to Thoughts, Words, Colors, Gestures, Sounds! Look here, philistines! Open your swollen eyes – oh, it is so stuffy, so very stuffy with you! And we, trembling with rage, fling the window open. We want to shave this gloomy taiga of your ignorance completely, that is why we called this collection *Elan'* (Russ. dialect. vast and open plain). We sing, forge, beat – bong, bong! On your copper foreheads – bang-bang! But after audacities here's a sweet lollipop for you. Cheer up!" (Krasnogorsky, 1919). Among the authors of this experimental collection were Krasnogorsky, Hesse, Bakhmutova, and Maslov (Krasnogorsky, et al., 1919). Other authors used pseudonyms or cryptonyms.

Elan' is a big rarity valued among bibliophiles, with its single copy kept in the Research Library of Tomsk State University. It is a thin paperback with a yellowish cover and saddle stitched text block. The cover text is decorated with an ornamental frame and printed with various typefaces. There is a picture in the frame at the bottom, while at the top there is an autograph of the publisher in black ink, "For Tomsk University Library from the publisher. May 23, 1919. V. Krasnogorsky. Tomsk". Both the endpapers and the title page are missing. The paper is thin, yellow and of poor quality paper. The prose text is typed in two columns.

Another interesting poetic collection was *Chetvertyy god* ["The Fourth Year"] now stored in the Research Library of Tomsk State University. Printed in 1921 by the Tomsk Branch of *Gosizdatelstvo* [The State Publishing House], it was initiated by Konstantin Molotov, a writer, Communist and leader of the Siberian Bolshevik underground during the Kolchak rule. With its exaggerated romantic pathos the collection bears many signs of the time, primarily ideological, thus advocating a new proletarian culture. The Preface given on the first unnumbered page says: "Through the grandest reorganization of economic life to completely destroy the rule of private property the Russian workers opened a new era for mankind in the ideological superstructure as well, including science and art. The creative energy of the working class is equally identifiable in new artistic achievements, so amazing in their form and content. We are just entering a great era of proletarian art: therefore we must value every new drop in the glass of the sparkling wine of the young art, which will be full in the future" (Perelshin, et al., 1921). The authors listed on the cover and in the Table of Contents are largely unknown Siberian poets of the first years of Soviet rule, yet, as the Preface says, they are those "tiny particles" reflecting the specificity of a new attitude typical of the

proletariat.” The collection is a poor quality small saddle-stitched booklet. The cover text is printed in red with the use of various typefaces. The bottom bears the stamp of the RSFSR State Publishing House. There are only fly-titles. The margins are wide.

New tendencies in Tomsk book publishing are also reflected in two poetry collections of 1922. *Pereklich* [“Echo”], an author’s collection by Bugoslavskiy, contains poems of poor quality, each accompanied with the date and place of writing (Bugoslavskiy, 1922). *Besedka* [“The Arbor”] signed by Lirik (Lirik, 1922) is mentioned in the bibliographic index of the Russian poets of the 20th century, yet it is not found either in the Research Library of Tomsk State University or in the National Library of Russia, where it is listed as a desideratum. However, such publishing and author’s failures demonstrate the decline of literary and artistic projects in Tomsk as well their deteriorating editing and publishing quality.

Thus, in the first decades of the 20th century, Tomsk book publishing traditions were established by the publishing projects of P.I. Makushin. Soviet rule gave life to new forms of ownership in publishing business, though they were gradually ousted by official government agencies. The first and most difficult years of the new economic policy in Siberian book business brought about two regional book publishing associations based on the principles of self-financing and self-sufficiency: *Sibgosizdat* [Siberian State Publishing House] (1922) and *AO Knizhnoe Delo* [AO Book Business] in the Far East (1923). As the ideological component implicit in the concept of the publishing house was gradually becoming stronger, the established forms of literary collections underwent significant changes.

The analysis of Tomsk literary collections published in the early 20th century has resulted in the general typology of book editions that can be described as follows:

- low volume, with limited circulation
- of relatively poor quality
- in terms of type-specific classification most of them are poetry collections
- with an emphasis on the ideological component with the advent of Soviet rule

4. Conclusion

The method of content-analysis employed for the first time to process literary collections discovered in bibliographic indices of local and central libraries as well as occasional references found in local newspapers, memoirs and autobiographies allowed to describe many new literary texts that have never been introduced to the scientific use before. While most studies on Siberian literary collections are based on the literary-historical approach, we find the mixed-method approach the most useful to investigate the material under study in terms of book publishing and cultural development of the region. The local approach proved very productive, too, as it implies the territorial limitation of the object of study, which allows more in-depth and holistic research grounded in socio-cultural and historical contexts.

This study is particularly relevant in terms of multidisciplinary approaches that erase clear boundaries between philosophy, cultural studies, history, philology, and sociology. The Siberian literary collections and their publishing practices studied for the first in these terms allowed us to dispute the traditional idea of the cultural interaction between the Russian Center and the Siberian province and, in particular, to challenge both the well-spread perception of Siberian culture as being absolutely backward to the central and the idea of Siberian writers and publishers being absolutely dependant in the metropolitan culture.

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