

## ABSTRACTS

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### **Addressing Contingency in REEES Fields**

ANIA AIZMAN

Research on how faculty have attempted to subvert the casualization of academic labor, that is, the conversion of stable and well-paying jobs into temporary ones, has been going on for decades. The COVID-19 pandemic and the resulting economic crisis have cast academic contingency in new light. Given the prevalence of contingency in Slavic and REEES, and the threat of budget cuts in the humanities, REEES faculty have a particular stake in undertaking anti-contingency efforts to protect their colleagues, institutions, and scholarship. This article will assess the conclusions of some recent studies, opinion pieces, debates, and policy recommendations with a view to their potential to address contingency in REEES and Slavic Studies.

### **An Unstable Bridge: A REEES Graduate Student Perspective on Contemporary Academia**

CAITLIN GIUSTINIANO AND ZACHARY HICKS

Our aim in this article is to foreground the specific role that graduate students play in academia today and some structural issues that are connected with it. As both workers and students, graduate students occupy a unique position within the larger academic system. They work at what for the majority is the beginning of a continuum of casualization, precarity, and adjunctification. Meanwhile, graduate students are educated following an older, apprenticeship-based model proper to a time when a PhD was a more likely bridge to secure employment. To articulate a REEES graduate student perspective, we interviewed eighteen REEES graduate students and recent grads from across the US focusing on these structural problems. At a moment when almost 75% of contemporary academic labor is carried out by graduate students and non-tenure track faculty, we hope to open up a conversation about contingent labor in REEES and to spotlight potential for practical changes.

### **Slutsk in 1920: Entangled Fighters, Locals, and Conflicts**

ALEKSANDRA POMIECKO

This article examines the armed fighting that took place in Slutsk, in present-day Belarus, in November and December of 1920, primarily between local forces and the Red Army. In contrast to existing understandings of the insurrection, this article situates the incident within more recent scholarship dedicated to better understanding the post-WWI period, the collapse of the Russian Empire, and experiences at the local level. In doing so, the goals are two-fold: to detangle the story of Slutsk from existing nationalist interpretations and to examine Slutsk as a site witnessing a series of clashes between centers of power and periphery, among different ethno-national groups, soldiers, and

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ideas. Ultimately, those participating in the Slutsk insurrection sought to resist any outside dominance and control. Though on the surface the insurrection in Slutsk has been interpreted as rather marginal in the longer history of Belarus and the region, the events that occurred manifested as a clash of some of the most critical processes underway in the early to mid-twentieth century. Through Slutsk, this article seeks to better understand the experience of the “periphery” during this time.

Keywords: Belarus, armed insurrection, Polish-Bolshevik War, Russian Civil War

### **The Poetics of Shock: “The Pitiful Vice” in Khodasevich’s “Under the Ground”**

EDWARD WAYSBAND

With its central image of the old masturbator in the Berlin “underground” restroom, Khodasevich’s poem “Under the Ground” (1923) both shocked and fascinated its readers. Khodasevich’s intervention into two taboo themes in turn-of-the-century European culture—masturbation and public restrooms—is primarily self-reflexive, indicating his anxieties about the ambiguous place and status of a modernist poet and exploring the norms of poetic representation. The essay proposes to read “Under the Ground” as a site of contested and mutually commenting meanings among concerns about taboo sites of urban modernity, a self-reflexive vision of autoerotism, and aesthetic modernism with an emphasis on the shock effect. In analyzing Khodasevich’s radicalization of his modernist poetics through the re-appropriation of these taboo themes, I also examine how current theorizations in the developing subfields of sexuality and urban studies that deal with masturbation and restrooms can contribute to the ongoing research on modernist authorship as understood through the figure of the poet-flâneur.

Keywords: Khodasevich, modernism, restrooms, masturbation

### **The Thaw’s Provincial Margins: Place, Community and Canon in *Pages from Tarusa***

POLLY JONES

This article offers a comprehensive examination of the editing, publication, reception, and after-effects of the almanac *Pages from Tarusa* (1961), a major, but little-analyzed, Soviet publication of the Thaw. Drawing on a wide range of memoir and local archive material, it argues that *Pages* was crucially shaped by Tarusa’s position astride dacha territory and the “101st kilometer”, the borders of the metropolitan zone from which Gulag and exile returnees were banned. *Pages*’ diverse and flexible cohort, and its editing practices, were shaped by the migration, residency, and socializing practices associated with both these territories. The almanac’s concern with cultural and social (re-)inclusion and innovation was visible both in its content (especially its overlooked documentary texts) and in the “emotional style” of its cohort and

their activities in Tarusa. The almanac's production, as well as its content, epitomized key elements of Thaw sensibility and sociability that had hitherto largely been confined to private *kompanii*, and more inchoate. In concluding, the article outlines the subsequent development of these Thaw agendas and behaviors in the "Tarusa fraternity" and in Tarusa itself, including the emergence of samizdat and dissidence, as well as the "provincialization" of the local Soviet literary scene.

Keywords: Russian literature, Soviet history, Tarusa, Gulag return, Soviet publishing

### **The Problems of Perestroika: The KGB and Mikhail Gorbachev's Reforms**

SIMON MILES

The KGB and the rest of the Soviet intelligence and policing apparatus are commonly portrayed as having been among the staunchest of conservative opponents to the reform process in the Soviet Union during the latter half of the 1980s. But while key leaders of the August 1991 effort to oust General Secretary Mikhail Gorbachev, for example, did come from the security services, this characterization obscures how the KGB rank-and-file responded to and participated in the reforms. This article uses their own words and experiences, recorded in the KGB's top-secret in-house journal, *Sbornik KGB SSSR*, to examine how everyday KGB officers navigated liberalizing reforms in which they in fact played an active and evolving role implementing and shaping. In these firsthand accounts, which cover topics from nationalism to environmentalism, a sense of loss of control is clear, both over events unfolding in the Soviet Union and over their own leading role and privileged position within it.

Keywords: KGB, Soviet Union, Mikhail S. Gorbachev, perestroika, glasnost

### **Nuclear Power as Cultural Heritage in Russia**

EGLĖ RINDZEVIČIŪTĖ

This article maps the presentation of nuclear power as valuable cultural heritage in Soviet and post-Soviet Russia. Drawing on the analysis of archival documents, exhibitions, site visits and interviews, it argues that the nuclear cultural heritage-making that is taking place in Russia is not limited to self-promotion by the nuclear industry but is shaped by different professional and societal groups seeking to define their identity and gain recognition in the public sphere. The selected case studies, the Polytechnical Museum (Politekh) in Moscow and Rosatom's recent attempts to institutionalize nuclear cultural heritage, add new empirical material to the existing studies of Soviet and post-Soviet nuclear culture and offer new insights into its character.

Keywords: heritage, nuclear power, museums, cultural politics

**“Cheerful Nonchalance” as an Affective Response to Precarity:  
Refusing Safety Measures in Eastern Siberia**

VASILINA ORLOVA

This article is building on the analysis of affective responses to precarious conditions to argue that one such response can be described as “cheerful nonchalance.” The village of Anosovo emerged in 1961 after the construction of the Bratsk dam on the Angara River. Many villagers were certain Anosovo was a temporary settlement from the beginning. Yet more than half a century later, Anosovo is still there, even as its population diminishes. When not only the state gives up on a place, but people also adopt a kind of blasé attitude to the risks of daily life, the affect of cheerful nonchalance comes to life to help with the living. Various affective attitudes toward precarity and uncertainty in post-Soviet realities and beyond have been described as nostalgia, “patriotism of despair,” and “cruel optimism” in post-Soviet realities and beyond. Nonchalance has been overlooked, even though it is doing the work of making life possible in a place enduring socio-economic disenfranchisement. With the use of ethnographic methods, this article shows how mundane events—such as the implementation of a polygraph test by a timber harvesting firm or a refusal to abide by safety measures like wearing seat belts—are the expressions of the affect of nonchalance.

Keywords: affect, nonchalance, Siberia, ethnography, anthropology

