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*Introduction. The Poetics and Politics of Modern Russian Biography*

Like many genres, biography came belatedly to Russia. As with other such late arrivals, biography underwent intensive growth in quantity, sophistication, cultural significance and popularity from the era of Nicholas I onwards. It stands today as a dominant force in post-Soviet publishing. Yet studies of Russian biography's poetics and its role as a literary and cultural institution in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries remain thin on the ground, a fact often lamented, yet not fully addressed, in the scattered writings on the subject.<sup>1</sup> The present volume examines modern Russian biography as a literary form, a publishing phenomenon and a cultural force that reveals and contests hegemonic ideas of the role of the individual in society, and of the make-up of the human personality itself.

*The History of Russian Biography*

The history of biography is long, with textual narratives of human lives dating back at least to Ancient Greece, if not the Pharaonic era. But it is also relatively short, with recognition (even naming) and theorisation of the genre hesitant and partial in many cultures.<sup>2</sup> Biography's very hybridity or 'impurity'—its fusions of art and science, history and literature—long left it excluded from generic taxonomies, or consigned to the unprestigious periphery of the various professions with which it intersected, primarily history and literature.<sup>3</sup> Its galloping mass appeal and its tendencies to either burnish or demolish reputations (the former still much more common) tended to make critics suspicious, or even disdainful, about the idea of subjecting the genre to serious analysis. Biography for much of its history has exhibited a striking disjuncture between its

enormous growth, even dominance, within the publishing industry and the halting progress of analysis of the genre, especially before the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Even so, scholars of biography largely agree on the periodization of biography's emergence, noting the particular importance for modern biography of the works of Plutarch and Suetonius in antiquity, Renaissance portraiture (such as the works of Vasari), the rich culture of biography writing in eighteenth century England that sprang up around Boswell's seminal *Life of Johnson*, and the Western European polemics around the 'new biography' between World War I and World War II.<sup>4</sup> These landmarks, while scattered across centuries and countries, were united by their humanist commitment to psychological portraiture and secular subjects. Broadly speaking, they reflected the development of new, and progressively more complex, ideas of the human personality: by the end of the 1920s, Andre Maurois set the biographer's task as the capturing of its subject's 'coral-reef of diverse personalities'.<sup>5</sup> Equally, however, scholars have often noted the periodic resurgence of elements of hagiography and the writing of 'exemplary lives'—in the Victorian era, and to some extent even after World War II—which waves of critique, even iconoclasm, have been unable to curtail.<sup>6</sup> Some analyses have gone so far as to see these alternations of heroism and anti-heroism as part of the natural rhythm of the genre.<sup>7</sup>

Where, then, does Russia fit in this narrative of the emergence of modern European biography? It was in the mid-nineteenth century that biography started to appear in Russia in a recognisably modern form: a narrative of a life of an individual who was not necessarily a church or state leader, with some attempt at capturing personality as well as great deeds. This emergence, while belated, was preceded and shaped by long traditions of Russian life writing and commemorative tribute. Anna Makolkin observes that the funeral lament was amongst the most important predecessors to Russian written

biographies.<sup>8</sup> Hagiography had a particularly long history in Russia, and the *zhitie* narrative shaped early attempts at written biography, before undergoing a renaissance in Stalinist culture.<sup>9</sup> The eighteenth century witnessed publication of large swathes of celebratory narratives of state leaders (especially Peter the Great) and the first attempts at collective biographies and biographical dictionaries. During this period, very early, scattered signs of a less traditional approach to biography could also be discerned, most notably in Radishchev's *Life of Ushakov* (1789).<sup>10</sup> Analyses of the eighteenth century generally concur, however, that biography proper had barely started to emerge by century's end.<sup>11</sup>

In this sense, the desire to give narrative shape to human lives was not entirely a modern invention in Russia (nor indeed in the rest of Europe). However, by the era of Nicholas I, many Russian writers and critics started to perceive biography as a peculiarly under-developed phenomenon in Russian culture, yet one with enormous potential. This was a time, of course, when many genres, including the Russian novel and lyric poetry, were inchoate and unstable; nevertheless, biography seemed especially so.<sup>12</sup> And it is certainly true that, in terms of quantity and complexity of biographical portraiture, Russia lagged behind the culture of life writing that had thrived for much of the seventeenth and eighteenth century (and indeed earlier) in England and many other parts of Europe. This shortage of biographies was underscored by the growing numbers of biographical translations—from Plutarch and Suetonius to Byron—published in Russia in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century.

This under-development of Russian life-writing has, variously, been attributed to the unusually long-standing influence of the Orthodox church, the relatively late advent of the Petrine reforms and the halting progress of change to autocracy thereafter.<sup>13</sup> Closely connected to Russia's distinctive history of church and state is the often noted fact

that concepts of privacy and individuality developed along very different lines to Western Europe.<sup>14</sup> Dmitrii Kalugin suggests that Russia by the mid-nineteenth century did finally start to develop ideas of personality that enabled the development of biography proper, while Boris Dubin links the growth in both biography and photography—as ‘individual’ arts par excellence—to increasingly individualised conceptions of the self in the twentieth century.<sup>15</sup> However, others have argued that notions of the personality, or *lichnost*, remained radically different from Western understandings, making it inevitable that biography and autobiography would develop a distinctive—even unique—trajectory in nineteenth and twentieth century Russia.<sup>16</sup>

While established biographical practices of the eighteenth century, such as the production of biographical dictionaries, continued into the next century—notably with Bantysh-Kamenskii’s five-volume *Dictionary of Notable People of the Russian Land* (1836)—the previously scattered signs of a distinctively modern biography started to coalesce during and just after the era of Nicholas I. The first full biographies appeared in Russia in the 1840s, with literary writers—who at the time were, in Lotman’s words, asserting their ‘right to a biography’ while emerging as a profession in their own right—a particularly popular subject.<sup>17</sup> Viazemskii’s biography of Fonvizin (written in the 1830s but first published 1848) and Annenkov’s biography of Pushkin (1855) were key landmarks in the evolution of this literary biography, and indeed in the history of Russian biography more generally.<sup>18</sup> As Nathaniel Knight shows in his article for this volume, other professionals, such as scholars, were also eager to use and adapt biographical form to articulate their emergent professional identities in this period. More generally, intelligentsia biographies of the time were a crucial testing ground for new ideas of the *lichnost*, reflecting and fostering the development of potentially radical notions of autonomy and agency.<sup>19</sup>

Akin to the rapid evolution of the Russian novel, many of the institutions in biography that had taken several centuries to form in Western Europe emerged in a few short decades in the mid- to late-nineteenth century. A market for biography quickly formed, and its mass, cross-class appeal became swiftly apparent. Publishers spurred fandom by creating new biographical series, most notably 'The Lives of Remarkable People' (LRP), founded in 1890 under the editorship of Florentii Pavlenkov (see article by Ludmilla Trigos and Carol Ueland, and on the later Soviet reincarnation of the series, the article by Polly Jones). Various sub-genres of biography began to thrive, with Dmitrii Merezhkovskii making a notable contribution to the broader development of the *biographie romancée*, though documentary biography remained by far the most common type.<sup>20</sup>

Biography also began to play a key role in the key mid- to late nineteenth-century project of articulation of Russian national identity, echoing processes of nation- building through biography (especially biographical dictionaries and collective biographies) in Western Europe and America of the same period.<sup>21</sup> As in other cultures, this emergent biographical canon of great Russian men often obscured as much as it revealed about the history of the nation. To take one example (analysed in this issue by Ben Eklof and Tatiana Saburova), the biographies of a whole generation of revolutionaries—the 'populists' of the 1870s and 1880s— emerged into the public eye only after a long delay of several decades. By the time that they did, however, this collective project of remembrance and generational identity was already starting to fall out of step with the emergent state narrative of the pre-revolutionary period.

This issue's Stalinist and post-Stalinist case studies, of Stalinist biographical investigation (by Jochen Hellbeck) and post-war Bolshevik biography (by Polly Jones), illustrate that interest in biography did not disappear after the revolution. After a brief

but intensive period of attempted reinvention of the genre by formalist and other avant garde literary critics (analysed in Angela Brintlinger's article), published biographies of the Stalin era became predominantly hagiographic and often lacking a sense of personality.<sup>22</sup> Despite the dashing of the radical hopes of the 1920s and this impoverishment of the form under Stalin, biography nonetheless remained intensely important to the Soviet regime. Life narratives of ordinary citizens and Soviet heroes were assigned crucial roles in propaganda and local party work.<sup>23</sup> As such, they endured heavy interference in both content and form, but also enjoyed a prominence and prestige that may seem paradoxical given the communal orientation of Marxist-Leninist ideology; indeed, histories of biography often assume that the form thrives in democracies but cannot exist in any meaningful way in a 'totalitarian' system.<sup>24</sup> However, this Stalinist and post-Stalinist obsession with biography, as several articles in this issue contend, makes sense in the context of the regime's incessant attempts to transform individual citizens into exemplary Soviet subjects.<sup>25</sup>

### *The Uses of Biography in Russia*

When Maksim Gor'kii restarted the LRP series, he explicitly described biographies of the 'remarkable' as a key guide to life: 'our goal', he wrote to Romain Rolland in 1918, 'is to inculcate in young people love and faith in life. We need to teach people heroism'. The series, which continued to be framed quite explicitly in these edificatory terms, went on to recruit a number of the most celebrated Western European biographers, including Andre Maurois, Stefan Zweig and Irving Stone. The fact that the series was cosmopolitan both at the moment of its foundation and in this ongoing recruitment of authors serves as a reminder that the use of biography for education and edification was far from

exclusive to the Soviet context; rather, it may be seen as typical of the genre, and had by no means been eliminated by the twentieth century.<sup>26</sup>

Indeed, analysts of biography have often expressed frustration that the genre may never fully disentangle itself from its roots in celebration and commemoration, or from the assumption that it should somehow be socially or culturally 'useful'.<sup>27</sup> In 1954, well after his significant contribution to the 'new biography' in England, Harold Nicolson diagnosed a number of lingering 'contaminations' of the genre, notably the pressure on biography to be commemorative or didactic.<sup>28</sup> This suspicion of biography's significant extra-textual functions was one of the key reasons that it was not viewed as a branch of literature for most of its history (another, of course, was the genre's persistent wariness of departing from factual evidence).<sup>29</sup>

The unusually intense pace of social and political change in nineteenth- and twentieth-century Russia meant that the uses of biography changed repeatedly (sometimes polemically) during the period, although its fundamental use for the study of 'remarkable' lives endured throughout. From what has been said already, it is evident that biography fulfilled multiple functions for the imperial and Soviet state, from the education and 'subjectivization' of citizens, to the delineation of a canon of 'remarkable' historical actors and—related to both these goals—the articulation of Russian and Soviet identities at a time when they were in considerable flux.

Yet our authors also explore the ways in which biography was deployed to fulfil agendas different from—and sometimes, in opposition to—those of the state. The articles by Trigos and Ueland, and by Saburova and Eklof, both dramatise biographers' and publishers' attempts to grant the 'right to biography' to figures outside the canon of the time. The eclecticism of Pavlenkov's LRP—which endures to this day in the post-Soviet series—was partly the result of his cosmopolitanism and impressive breadth of learning,

which his series was intended to disseminate to the newly literate masses. However, as Trigos and Ueland show, the choice of subjects and *raznochintsy* authors for the series was subtly political, reflecting the publisher's long-term and often controversial leftist sympathies. Pavlenkov was at once an establishment figure and an individual close to the margins; this study of LRP's earliest incarnation offers much insight into this biographical publisher's own complex biography. A similar, though more focussed, attempt to 'smuggle' a personal agenda into biographical publishing can be traced in Eklof and Saburova's study of populist biographies. While Vera Figner was, for a time at least, a canonical figure with a clear 'right' to a biography, she had to coax her lesser known colleagues, such as Nikolai Charushin, to write their biographies, and persuade Soviet publishers to publish them. Her populist colleagues came to see biography as a way to consolidate the collective memory of their movement and generation, an impulse that became more urgent given their long prohibition in late imperial period and the suspicion that came to surround them not long after the revolution.

These kinds of struggles played out on an ever more uneven field as the Soviet monopoly on publishing tightened, and the criteria for biographical narrative firmed up (though remaining subject to periodic bouts of anxiety and revision). Jones' study of the particularly sensitive realm of Bolshevik biography reveals the careful editing and tight censorship surrounding the state's most elevated heroes, while Hellbeck demonstrates that even Soviet biographies that were never intended for public circulation—such as narratives of World War II suffering gathered from citizens by various state commissions—were produced in a controlled discursive environment (albeit one sometimes punctured by raw trauma).

Publishing biographies was, of course, not always, or not only, a political act; it was also, increasingly, a sound commercial decision. Biography's popularity in today's

book market has often been noted, and its astronomical growth shows no signs of stopping.<sup>30</sup> The case studies here offer insight into an earlier period of Russian biographical production, when economic capital and cultural capital jostled more evenly. Some of the biographies in question were evidently produced with no thought of turning a profit: Nathaniel Knight's study of scholarly biographies emphasises that they were difficult to read, even for the highly specialist audience for whom they were intended, but that was partly their point, inasmuch as their erudition advertised the skills of the profession. Some of the experiments in literary biography analysed by Angela Brintlinger were also never intended (or suitable) for mass consumption, though the works of Tynianov were amongst the most popular and best-selling biographies of the 1920s.

On the other hand, LRP, as analysed by Ueland and Trigos and by Jones, was a publishing phenomenon in all three of its incarnations: late imperial, Soviet and post-Soviet. Pavlenkov, as Ueland and Trigos argue, deserves considerably more attention not only as one of the first mass publishers of biographies, but also as one of the genre's pioneering entrepreneurs, who found a way to produce and sell huge print-runs of accessible biographical texts, hooking many readers on the series for life. The lasting contribution of LRP to the importance of series in Soviet and post-Soviet Russian reading practices cannot be overstated.<sup>31</sup> Jones' comparative study of LRP and Politizdat reveals that the extensive post-Stalinist changes to their Bolshevik biographies were driven fundamentally by concerns about popularity and sales: the failure of biographies to appeal to a mass audience meant not only a depletion of propaganda efficacy, but also wastage of state money in producing books that failed to sell (which, given Soviet methods of allocating print-run budgets, also meant that other, potentially more profitable texts had lost out too).

## *Theory and Practice of Russian Biographical Writing*

Although biography has been ‘used’ in all the above ways throughout its existence, often attracting suspicion for pursuing (or being deployed for) aims other than the dispassionate investigation of the human personality, it has nonetheless attracted growing critical attention and aesthetic analysis, especially since the 1960s.<sup>32</sup> Earlier, the first major modern intervention in the form—the Europe-wide attempts to articulate the principles of a radically ‘new biography’ after World War I—was largely motivated by the desire to liberate biography from its ‘use’ as a guide to human behaviour or a source of national pride, and to shift its purpose to that of creating vivid, aesthetically sophisticated portraits; the increased attention to inner life propelled an unprecedented borrowing of methods from fiction.<sup>33</sup> More recently, the very hybridity of biography has made its delicate, sometimes fraught combinations of history and literature, its ‘strange amalgam of science and art’, increasingly interesting as the notions of strict generic boundaries and positivist truth claims seem ever more antiquated.<sup>34</sup>

The case studies in this issue illustrate Russian biography’s distinctive, if under-appreciated, contribution to the broader development of modern biographical theory and form. Angela Brintlinger’s analysis of the intense biographical debates and daring biographical experiments of the first decade after the revolution shows that critics such as Eikhenbaum, Tynianov, Vinokur were engaged in discussions as intense as those that attended the emergence of a ‘new biography’ in 1920s Britain, France and Germany. Indeed post-revolutionary iconoclasm and experimentation, and the wholesale rethinking of social and aesthetic categories in the early Bolshevik years, made the Russian discussions perhaps more urgent and far-reaching. Brintlinger immerses us in a time pregnant with possibility, when the future of biography—and, indeed, its imagined

past—was thrown open to radical reimagination. In this febrile atmosphere, some biographers pushed biography towards fiction and even fantasy, much as Strachey, Woolf and Nicolson were attempting in England at the time. But others, perhaps the majority, attempted to forge a more direct, unmediated connection to biographical ‘fact’ and draw life writing closer to real life, seeking revolutionary new formulations of the relationship between everyday life (*byt*), History and the individual (*lichnost*).

This latter current of post-revolutionary biographical practice reflected, most obviously, the broader documentary turn of the 1920s, which Hellbeck argues remained in the later attempt to generate reams of documentary evidence about wartime lives.<sup>35</sup> Yet it also linked back to a longer tradition of biography as documentary compilation, which can be traced in Russian practice as well as the broader history of the genre. Biography’s tendency towards inelegant compilation of evidence—in the Boswellian vein—was one of the major targets of critics such as Strachey and Maurois in the 1920s. However, the ‘paralysis’ of biographers, and the ‘cluttering’ of their texts, by documents without due consideration for aesthetic arrangement featured just as prominently in Western biographical criticism from the 1950s to the 1980s.<sup>36</sup> Nathaniel Knight’s study of nineteenth century scholarly biographies identifies compilation of documents as the key feature of this sub-genre, but argues that scholars’ biographers never in fact intended to capture their personality, but rather aimed to create a monument to assiduous research and to fashion a text-as-archive for future generations of the profession to mine: in the case of Nikolai Barsukov’s 22-volume ‘biography’ of Mikhail Petrovich Pogodin, a truly forbidding one that amply merits the use of Leon Edel’s term, the ‘omnium gatherum life’.<sup>37</sup> Brintlinger’s study of the myriad strands of post-revolutionary biographical thought suggests that this mentality was by no means abandoned; indeed, she draws

attention to the preponderance of unmediated documentary material in 1920s biographies by Veresaev, Feider and others.

More broadly, the case studies in this issue suggest that the biographer's art—and indeed, his very identity as a creative personality—was often overlooked, primarily due to the historical and educational functions that biography was called upon to fulfil.<sup>38</sup> The fact that populist revolutionaries themselves became the main biographers of the movement is one of several Soviet-era examples of state marginalization fuelling a 'historical turn' amongst tight-knit communities.<sup>39</sup> Eklof and Saburova argue that the consequence of this collaboration was an effacement of authorial *and* textual individuality: so important was the imperative to preserve, and indeed mythologise, the memory of the movement that authors freely borrowed tropes from one another's texts, generating a collective (auto)biography rather than an individual one. Many of the biographers in Pavlenkov's pre-revolutionary biographical series were historians in a more strictly professional sense. They saw their mission as the careful, lucid presentation of lives whose details were not yet familiar to the mass readership; their texts' biographical form drew very little attention, either from their own authors or the texts' critics. As biography raced towards ever greater popularity in the late nineteenth century, several of the series' authors became full-time biographers, their careers solidified by the potentially (though not actually) infinite expansion of the serial form and the public's constant thirst for life stories. It was only in the late socialist and post-Soviet period, though, that LRP began to produce biographies that merited serious aesthetic analysis, though as Jones argues, the seemingly conservative Politizdat publishing house had pioneered literary, and even fictional, techniques earlier.<sup>40</sup>

It was also historians, led by the distinguished historian Isaak Mints, who organised the vast archive of World War II biographies analysed in Jochen Hellbeck's

article; Hellbeck shows how these oral historians *avant la lettre* conscientiously and professionally gathered detailed testimony. Yet they also limited the boundaries of biographical discourse by posing questions, about collaboration or trauma for instance, in particular ways that were intended to reconstruct and consolidate post-war Soviet identities rather than allowing wartime biographies to spiral out of control.

Despite the prevalence of historical concerns and historical writers, literary writers and literary technique made an important contribution to Russian biography in both the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, albeit perhaps not as significant as that of modernist and later post-modernist literary writers in the West. In the mid-nineteenth century, it was above all literary biography, often written by literary colleagues of the subject, that first pushed the genre to public attention, although without making major formal breakthroughs. In the post-revolutionary decade analysed by Brintlinger, the constellation of literary critics and literary writers trained in Vengerov's literary seminar, briefly revitalized biography and sketched out a number of highly innovative paths for the genre, including a convergence with the novel or even an appropriation of the genre. For Eikhenbaum, the principal theorist of this potential new relationship between novel and biography, the realisation of these ambitious theories proved difficult. However, the works of his contemporary Tynianov traversed effortlessly the full spectrum of the genre, from strictly documentary texts to highly experimental fantasies.

It is generally assumed that this kind of textual experimentation ceased with the advent of Stalinism and Socialist Realism, even though biography publication continued apace. However, Jones argues that Soviet publishers and propagandists were all too aware in the post-war period of Bolshevik biography's failure to evoke personality (and thus its failure to attract or captivate readers), and increasingly called for a rethinking of biographical approaches. They came to view literary expertise and even fictionalization

as the key solution to the problem. This study of late Stalinist and post-Stalinist biographies of Bolsheviks argues that their two main publishers were in their own way, and for their own pragmatic aims, just as preoccupied with the problems of personality and narrative form as Western biographical criticism of the same period.

In 1973, one of Molodaia gvardiia's most senior biography editors Sergei Semanov observed to literary colleagues at a Soviet roundtable that there was an 'undoubted boom in the distribution of biographical literature. This boom needs thinking through, deep analysis'.<sup>41</sup> The late socialist years indeed witnessed an explosion of biographies that was at least the equal of the 'rampant' Western 'boom' of biography that critics really started to notice from the 1960s onwards; moreover, the late Soviet adoption of literary techniques often ran ahead of the slow evolution of the biographical novel, and biographical experimentation more generally, in Western Europe and America (the experimentation described in Jones' article was one of the first signs of this literary turn).<sup>42</sup> During the last Soviet decades, a rich debate about biography as a genre—and, unavoidably, about the nature of personality and individual identity—unfolded across Soviet media and in the literary and historical professions.<sup>43</sup>

One of the origins of this late socialist biographical obsession was the Soviet authorities' early appreciation for the unique propaganda potential of biography and the correspondingly close attention that they paid to producing and policing its texts. Another factor was the increasing expertise, skill and professionalization of biographers themselves, as its social utility and cultural popularity continued to grow and granted them relatively secure careers. One of the key outcomes of this Soviet-era rise in biography consumption is the post-Soviet craze for life stories, reflected in the current proliferation of biographical books (including the still wildly popular LRP series), magazines and TV programs, a phenomenon that still awaits its historian.

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<sup>1</sup> Book length studies of Russian biography are almost non-existent, with the exception of: G. O. Vinokur, *Biografiia i kul'tura*, Moscow, 1927; Dmitrii Zhukov, *Biografiia biografii: razmyshlenie o zhanre*, Moscow, 1980; D. Kalugin, *Proza zhizni. Russkie biografii XVIII-XIX veka*, St Petersburg, 2015; and the series published by Memorial, *Pravo na imia. Biografii XX veka*. Important Russian articles on the form include Boris Tomashevsky, 'Literature and Biography', in Krystyna Pomorska and Ladislav Matejka (eds.), *Readings in Russian Poetics*, Cambridge, MA, 1971, pp. 47–55; Iurii Lotman, 'Literaturnaia biografiia v istoriko-kul'turnom kontekste (k tipologicheskomu sootnosheniiu teksta i lichnosti avtora)', in *O russkoi literature. Stat'i i issledovaniia: Istoriia russkoi prozy, teoriia literatury*, St Petersburg, 1997), pp. 804–17; B. V. Dubin, 'Biografiia, reputatsiia, anketa. O formakh interpretatsii opyta v pismennoi kulture.', in *Slovo, pis'mo, literatura*, Moscow, 2001, pp. 98–119. The *Lives of Remarkable People* series has attracted the most analysis, though more historical than textual (several texts are analysed in Zhukov, *Biografiia biografii*; see also G. E. Pomerantseva, *Biografiia v potoke vremeni: ZhZL, zamysly i voploshcheniia serii*, Moscow, 1987; Ludmilla A. Trigos and Carol R. Ueland, 'Literary Biographies in the Lives of Remarkable People Series (zhizn' Zamechatel'nykh Liudei)', *Slavic & East European Journal*, 60, 2016, 2 (2016), pp. 207–20; Inna Bulkina, 'The Lives of Remarkable People: Between Plutarch and Triapichkin', *Russian Studies in Literature*, 49, 2013, 2, pp. 87–95. Several excellent studies of Russian concepts of the self shed light on biography but are not intended as direct studies of the genre: Jochen Hellbeck and Klaus Heller, *Autobiographical Practices in Russia = Autobiographische Praktiken in Russland*, Göttingen, 2004; Lidiia Ginzburg, *On Psychological Prose*, trans. Judson Rosengrant, Princeton, 1991).; Laura Engelstein and Stephanie Sandler, *Self and Story in Russian History*, Ithaca, 2000.

<sup>2</sup> Biography as a term appeared in English in the 17<sup>th</sup> century; in Russia, the term took until the 19<sup>th</sup> century to be established. On the disjuncture between practice and theorisation of the

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genre, see Daniel Madelénat, *La biographie*, Paris, 1984 (whose detailed genre study is intended to address the ‘lack of an –ology’ of the genre, as he terms it). On the neglect of biography in criticism, especially before the 1950s, see also David Novarr, *The Lines of Life: Theories of Biography, 1880-1970*, West Lafayette, 1986. On the neglect of its poetics, see Ira Bruce Nadel, *Biography: Fiction, Fact and Form*, London, 1984. He points out that most studies of biography are historical rather than textual.

<sup>3</sup> On ‘impurity’ of biography, see Harold Nicolson, ‘The Practice of Biography’, *The American Scholar*, 23, 1954, 2, pp. 151–61; and Matthew Josephson, ‘Historians and Mythmakers’, *VQR Online* <<http://www.vqronline.org/essay/historians-and-mythmakers>> [Accessed 8 August 2017]. On the genre’s combination of history and literature, see Madelenat, *La biographie*, and J. Flexner, ‘Biography as a Juggler’s Art’, in James L. Clifford, *Biography as an Art: Selected Criticism, 1560-1960*, London, 1962, pp. 178-84. On the consigning of biography to the periphery of history, see e.g. Josephson, ‘Historians and Myth-makers’, and Barbara Caine, *Biography and History*, Basingstoke, New York, 2010. Garraty argues that what sets biography apart from history is its central concern with personality, which compels it to move beyond mere fact (John A. Garraty, *The Nature of Biography*, New York, 1964) On the long-standing tendency to ignore biography within literary studies, see Paul Murray Kendall, *The Art of Biography*, London, 1965; Nadel, *Biography*. While many studies of biography present this hybridity as a difficulty, anxiety or tension, others have pointed out that early modern biography was considerably less anxious about the boundaries between truth and fiction, and literature and history, with life narratives drawing liberally on both (Judith H. Anderson, *Biographical Truth: The Representation of Historical Persons in Tudor-Stuart Writing*, New Haven, 1984; Donald A. Stauffer, *The Art of Biography in Eighteenth Century England*, Princeton, 1941; Naomi Jacobs, *The Character of Truth: Historical Figures in Contemporary Fiction*, Carbondale, 1990.

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<sup>4</sup> Thorough analyses of at least two millennia of biographical production can be found in: Caine, *Biography and History*; Clifford, *Biography as an Art*; Kendall, *Art of Biography*; John A. Garraty, *The Nature of Biography*, London, 1958; Nigel Hamilton, *Biography: A Brief History*, Cambridge, 2007; Catherine Neal Parke, *Biography: Writing Lives*, New York, London, 2002. For a magisterial study of the 18<sup>th</sup>-century English golden age of biography, see Stauffer, *The Art of Biography*. On the ‘new biography’, see André Maurois, *Aspects of Biography*, Cambridge, 1929; Laura Marcus, *Auto/biographical Discourses: Criticism, Theory, Practice*, Manchester, 1994; Laura Marcus, *Dreams of Modernity*, Cambridge, 2014; Ruth Hoberman, *Modernizing Lives: Experiments in English Biography, 1918-1939*, Carbondale, 1987.

<sup>5</sup> On the development of biography in line with theories of the self, see Clifford, *Biography as an Art*; Madelénat, *La Biographie*; Hermione Lee, *Biography: A Very Short Introduction*, Oxford, 2009; Nadel, *Biography*. On the particular influence of Freud, see Marcus, *Dreams of Modernity*; Hoberman, *Modernising Lives*. Garraty contrasts this more or less uninterrupted progress toward individuality to the supposed effacement of individual personality from communist biography (in China): John A. Garraty, ‘Chinese and Western Biography: A Comparison’, *The Journal of Asian Studies*, 21, 1962, 4, pp. 487–89. A similar argument is made by William Ayers, ‘Current Biography in Communist China’, *The Journal of Asian Studies*, 21, 1962, 4, pp. 477–85.

<sup>6</sup> On the Victorian resurgence of heroic and hagiographic biography, see A. O. J. Cockshut, *Truth to Life: The Art of Biography in the Nineteenth Century*, London, 1974, and Hamilton, *Biography*. On heroic tendencies in 20<sup>th</sup> century biography, even after the ‘new biography’ critique, see Josephson, ‘Historians and Mythmakers’, and Peter France, William St. Clair, and British Academy, *Mapping Lives : The Uses of Biography*, Oxford, 2002.

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<sup>7</sup> Both Lee, *Biography* and Hamilton, *Biography*, argue that the genre oscillates between these two tendencies over the centuries; Madelenat (*La Biographie*) traces a broad trajectory towards ‘modern biography’ but points out that even in the present, this type is merely dominant, not exclusive. Anna Makolkin attempts a more systematic classification of the patterning of these tendencies in the genre: Anna Makolkin, ‘Probing the Origins of Literary Biography: English and Russian Versions’, *Biography*, 19, 1996, 1, pp. 87–104.

<sup>8</sup> Makolkin, ‘Probing the Origins’.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid. and Gareth Jones, ‘Biography in 18th Century Russia’, *Oxford Slavonic Papers*, XXII, 1989, pp. 58–80.

<sup>10</sup> Jones, ‘Biography’.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.; and Dmitri Kalugin, ‘Iskusstvo biografii: Izobrazhenie lichnosti i ee opravdanie v russkikh zhizneopisaniiax serediny XIX veka’, *Novoe Literaturnoe Obozrenie*, 91, 2008.

<sup>12</sup> Ginzburg, *On Psychological prose*; Simon Franklin, ‘Novels without End: Notes on “Eugene Onegin” and “Dead Souls”’, *The Modern Language Review*, 79, 1984, 2, pp. 372–83.

<sup>13</sup> Jones, ‘Biography’; Makolkin, ‘Probing the Origins’; Dmitri Kalugin, ‘Soviet Theories of Biography and the Aesthetics of Personality’, *Biography*, 38, 2015, 3, pp. 343–62.

<sup>14</sup> Derek Offord, ‘Lichnost: Notions of Individual Identity’, in Catriona Kelly and David Shepherd (eds.), *Constructing Russian Culture in the Age of Revolution, 1881-1940*, Oxford, 1998, pp. 13–25; Nikolai Plotnikov, ‘Ot individual’nosti k identichnosti (istoriia poniatii personal’nosti v russkoi kul’ture’, *Novoe Literaturnoe Obozrenie*, 91, 2008; Hellbeck and Heller, *Autobiographical Practices*.

<sup>15</sup> Kalugin, ‘Iskusstvo biografii’; Id., ‘Soviet Theories’; Dubin, ‘Biografiia’.

<sup>16</sup> Offord, ‘Lichnost’; Anatoly Pinsky, ‘The Origins of Post-Stalin Individuality: Aleksandr Tvardovskii and the Evolution of 1930s Soviet Romanticism,’ *Russian Review*, 76, July 2017, 3, pp. 458-483.

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<sup>17</sup> Lotman, 'Literaturnaia biografiia'.

<sup>18</sup> For analyses of these texts, see Zhukov, *Biografiia biografii*.

<sup>19</sup> Kalugin, 'Iskusstvo biografii'; Ginzburg, *On Psychological Prose*; Heller and Hellbeck, *Autobiographical Practices*.

<sup>20</sup> Temira Pachmuss, *D.S. Merezhkovsky in Exile: The Master of the Genre of Biographie Romancée*, New York, 1990).

<sup>21</sup> Keith Thomas, *Changing Conceptions of National Biography: The Oxford DNB in Historical Perspective*, Cambridge, 2005; Ian Donaldson, 'National Biography and the Arts of Memory: From Thomas Fuller to Colin Matthew', in William St. Clair and Peter France (eds.), *Mapping Lives. The Uses of Biography*, Oxford, 2002, pp. 67–82.; Parke, *Biography*, pp. 111–124.

<sup>22</sup> Katerina Clark, *The Soviet Novel: History as Ritual*, 3rd ed., Bloomington, 2000; Claude Pannetier and Bernard Pudal, 'Stalinism: Workers' Cult and Cult of Leaders', *Twentieth Century Communism*, 1, 2009, 1, pp. 20–29.

<sup>23</sup> Jochen Hellbeck, 'Galaxy of Black Stars: The Power of Soviet Biography', *American Historical Review*, 114, June 2009, 3, pp. 615–24; Igal Halfin, 'From Darkness To Light: Student Communist Autobiography During NĖP', *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas*, 45, 1997, 2, pp. 210–36; Igal Halfin, *Terror in My Soul: Communist Autobiographies on Trial*, Cambridge, MA and London, 2003.

<sup>24</sup> Madelenat argues that 'totalitarian' system such as the Soviet state uses biography in a different way, for disinformation and active falsification of the past, than liberal political systems (*La Biographie*, p. 188). See also: Josephson, 'Historians and Mythmakers'; Hamilton, *Biography*.

<sup>25</sup> This apparent paradox is analysed in Hellbeck, 'Galaxy of Black Stars' and Id., *Revolution on My Mind: Writing a Diary under Stalin*, Cambridge, MA and London, 2006. Eastern

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European analyses include Catherine Epstein, 'The Politics of Biography: The Case of East German Old Communists', *Daedalus*, 128, 1999, 2, pp. 1–30; Josie McLellan, 'The Politics of Communist Biography: Alfred Kantorowicz and the Spanish Civil War', *German History*, 22, 2004, 4, pp. 536–62.

<sup>26</sup> Andre Maurois (in Maurois, *Aspects of Biography*) offers a complex combination of 'new biography' principles and an unstinting belief in biography's capacity for moral improvement through emulation of heroes: 'certainly it is a wholly admirable thing to put lofty examples before men, and especially young men but they will not strive to imitate them unless these models are true to life', p. 23.

<sup>27</sup> On biography's 'uses', see Edwin Paxton Hood, *The Uses of Biography: Romantic, Philosophic, and Didactic*, London, 1852; France, St. Clair, *Mapping Lives*. See also Josephson, 'Historians and Mythmakers'.

<sup>28</sup> Nicolson, 'Practice of Biography'.

<sup>29</sup> Nadel, *Biography* and Hoberman, *Modernising Lives*, both call for biography to be read as literature. Yet even such a distinguished and prolific analyst of biographical form as Leon Edel repeatedly warned biographers to borrow from fiction, but not lapse into it (or, put differently, to produce at most novelistic, not novelized, texts): Leon Edel, *Writing Lives: Principia Biographica*, New York and London, 1987; Leon Edel, *Literary Biography. The Alexander Lectures, 1955-56*, London, 1957.

<sup>30</sup> Nadel, *Biography*, notes it is the most popular non-fictional genre in Western markets. Lucy Riall similarly points to the immense popularity of biography, and the conservatism of a great deal of this commercial biography, especially of political figures (Lucy Riall, 'The Shallow End of History? The Substance and Future of Political Biography', *The Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, 40, 2010, 3, pp. 375–97. On the post-Soviet market for biography, see Bulkina, 'The Lives of Remarkable People'.

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<sup>31</sup> Stephen Lovell, *The Russian Reading Revolution : Print Culture in the Soviet and Post-Soviet Eras*, Basingstoke, 2000.

<sup>32</sup> Particularly striking is the increase in references to ‘art’ and ‘form’ in titles of studies of biography from the 1950s onwards (see Nadel, *Biography*; Clifford, *Biography as an Art*; Kendall, *Art of Biography*).

<sup>33</sup> Marcus, *Auto/Biographical Discourses*; Id., *Dreams of Modernity*; Hoberman, *Modernising Lives*.

<sup>34</sup> Clifford, *Biography as an Art* (quotation p. ix); Jacobs, *Truth to Life*; Michael Lackey, *The American Biographical Novel*, London, 2016.

<sup>35</sup> Elizabeth Astrid Papazian, *Manufacturing Truth: The Documentary Moment in Early Soviet Culture*, DeKalb, 2009.

<sup>36</sup> Edel, *Writing Lives*, p. 14; Kendall, *Art of Biography*, p. 121 (‘for the art of biography, precariously perched between the demand of fact and the hope of illumination, this ambience of mass attack on mass materials, of fact triumphant, has already posed, as we shall see, the threat of paralysis’); Nadel, *Biography*.

<sup>37</sup> Edel, *Writing Lives*, p. 98.

<sup>38</sup> Lotman, ‘Literaturnaia biografiia’ offers a fascinating analysis of the oscillations between biographers’ anonymity and celebrity in different periods. Nadel, *Biography*, also argues that the biographer has not generally been appreciated as a professional, let alone a creative, writer.

<sup>39</sup> Denis Kozlov, ‘The Historical Turn in Late Soviet Culture: Retrospectivism, Factography, Doubt, 1953–91’, *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History*, 2, 2001, 3, pp. 577–600.

<sup>40</sup> Zhukov, *Biografiia biografii* offers detailed analysis of several later LRP texts, including celebrated biographies by Leonid Grossman. For close analysis of multiple LRP literary biographies, see the special issue on the series in *Slavic & East European Journal*, 60, 2016.

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<sup>41</sup> ‘Zhizn i deiatel’nost’. Nereshennye problem biograficheskogo zhanra’, *Voprosy Literatury*, 1973, pp. 16–93.

<sup>42</sup> Hamilton, ‘Biography’, p. 191; Kendall, *Art of Biography*, p. 115. On the slow rise of the Western biographical novel, see Michael Lackey, ‘The Rise of the Biographical Novel and the Fall of the Historical Novel’, *A/b: Auto/Biography Studies*, 31, 2016, 1, pp. 33–58; Irving Stone, ‘The Biographical Novel’, in Gertrude Clarke Whittall, Poetry and Literature Fund (eds.), *Three Views of the Novel*, Folcroft, 1977 (1957); Carl Bode, ‘The Buxom Biographies’, *College English*, 16, 1955, 5, pp. 265–69. On biographical experimentation more broadly, see Kendall, *Art of Biography*, p. 115; Sally Cline, *Life Writing: A Writers’ and Artists’ Companion: Writing Biography, Autobiography and Memoir*, London, 2013; Lackey, *American Biographical Novel*; Hamilton, *Biography*; Kendall, *Art of Biography*; Jacobs, *Truth to Life*.

<sup>43</sup> Examples of this growth of critical attention to biography in late socialism are legion, but some examples include: the roundtable on the genre, ‘Zhizn i deiatel’nost’’, pp. 16–93. Zhukov, *Biografiia biografii*; Iurii Lotman, ‘Biografiia Zhivoe Litso’, *Novyi Mir*, 10, 1985, 228–36, who argues explicitly for the ‘sense of the individual’ to be captured in unique biographical forms; Most notably perhaps, the 1966 founding of an almanac, *Prometei*, as an offshoot of LRP, offered more than two decades of critical analysis of the genre and many experiments with the form.