

GUEST EDITOR'S NOTE

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Abstract

The guest editor's note serves as a brief introduction to the articles on Gennadii Aigi collected in the present issue.

Keywords: *Gennadii Aigi; Russian Poetry.*

Gennadij Ajgi (1934-2006) is one of the most significant figures in Russian poetry of the second half of the 20th century. He is quite certainly the most “European” Russian poet of his era, which is evidenced not only by the origins of his poetry and his translations of French poetry into the Chuvash language but also by translations of Ajgi's poetry into dozens of languages and his higher esteem in Europe than in Russia. This situation remains partly the same to this day, although some changes are under way. They are particularly visible in the texts of younger poets born in the late 1980s to the early 1990s, for whom Ajgi and Dragomoshchenko appear to be the two key figures having an apparent influence on their poetry.

Ajgi's status as a “Chuvash-Russian poet” was a major challenge for the first studies of his poetry: he was born in Cheboksary and his native language was Chuvash; but from 1958 on, Russian became his main poetic language. The year 2006 saw the publication of a two-volume collection of Ajgi criticism, most of it written during the poet's lifetime. At that time, it seemed relevant to search for correspondences of his poetic metaphysics to

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particular religious or mythological systems. A second direction was the study of Ajgi's poetry within the framework of post-avant-garde and minimalism.

In October 2014, Moscow's Institute of Linguistics of the Russian Academy of Sciences held a conference dedicated to Ajgi's 80th anniversary. The papers presented at this conference formed the basis of this journal issue, where even the seemingly well-studied topics, such as one set by Ajgi's famous essay *Poetry as Silence*, open up new opportunities of research. For example, it becomes relevant to grasp the combination of extreme hermetic nature with extreme communicative nature of Ajgi's utterance. Ajgi's poems not only constitute case-studies of the poet's individual style but also act as evidence of testing the limits and possibilities of poetic language and language as a whole.

The concept of *poet's language* is broader than that of language of his completed poetic texts as such. For that reason, the articles contained here make a step forward in focusing on various discourses and types of texts, such as the poet's prose, manuscripts, and spoken word.

Ajgi's poetry represents a counterpoint of a wide range of topics relevant for Russian and world poetry in the beginning of the 21st century. The issue of subjectivity, the subject's structuring in the text, in space and from space, becomes specifically relevant. Also important is the topic of semiotic transitions, or translations from one sign system to another. Ajgi's Russian poetry allows to go beyond ordinary solutions of the problem of identity by posing the problem of bilingualism and cultural transfer from a new angle; particularly, by elucidating the links between bilinguality and intersemiotic translation. Ajgi's poetry not only interacts with, but also can be converted to, both music and visual arts. In some cases, poetry can serve as an intermediary between music and the visual. The topic of "poetry and..." is not limited to poetry and music, or poetry and painting, but can also apply to poetry and philosophy or poetry and spiritual disciplines. A special problem discussed with reference to Ajgi's poetry is that of the language of mystical poetry. Ajgi takes a path that differs from the mystical poetry of the Silver Age, the latter being viewed, throughout the 20th century, as a model for mystical

poetry, on the one hand, and metaphysical poetry, on the other. Not only does Ajgi follow the traditions of bridging the avant-garde with metaphysics, established in Russian culture by Khlebnikov and Malevich, but he also demonstrates a unique experience of linking the Russian avant-garde with the European modernism.

Ajgi uses mental predicates in speaking about the inconceivable, if only the habitually inconceivable. Therefore, one can write a scholarly article on Ajgi either concentrating on formal devices and linguistic tools or within a genre that can be called “apophatic scholarship”. For example, we can com-

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pare him with somebody or something in order to not only and not just determine things in common, but also to specify what he is *not*, who he is *not*, or we can inevitably contest the habitual scholarly terms and concepts against the matter of verse, conflicting language and metalanguage. In other words, research on Ajgi's poetry consistently gives rise to new topics and description methods, as well as to new terminologies in Slavic studies. The articles collected here endeavor an effort to this end.

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