

Małgorzata Abassy, *A RUSSIAN MASON ON THE PATHS OF HIS NATIVE CULTURE. THE CASE STUDY OF NICHOLAS NOVIKOV*, Kraków: Księgarnia Uniwersytecka, 2014, ss. 195.

Małgorzata Abassy's book provides a study of an extraordinary and significant figure within Russia's 18th century elite – Nicholas Novikov, the founding father of Russian journalism and one of the leading promoters of freemasonry.

Although the market offers some books on Novikov's heritage that have appeared in Russia throughout twenty decades most of them were written either in the pre-revolutionary period or in the Soviet times (like G. Makogonenko's monograph of 1951), which makes them slightly outdated. There are some scarce publications on Russian freemasonry with Raffaella Faggionato's *A Rosicrucian Utopia in Eighteenth-Century Russia* (1977) being probably the leading one. Since their discourses' objectivity seems disputable a fresh look on Novikov prepared for an English-speaking reader becomes a sensible project.

Structurally it is composed of four chapters: one referring to Russian patterns of culture and their clash with the situation of nobility in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, another one – on the masonic lodges in Russia, a chapter about Novikov inside the Masonic world, and, finally, the main part of the book, in which we read about the old and new patterns of Russian culture in Novikov's texts. This sequence of issues allows the Author to show how the evolving Russian culture reflects itself in its own product, which has risen to become high enough to reach the level of individuality.

The idea of the book lies in presenting Nicholas Novikov as a descendant of the Masonic tradition on the one hand and as a promoter of individual rights and dignity "in the face of Empire" on the other. It seems that the Author (resorting to Lotman's semiotics) rightly explains the background of Novikov's activity as a combination of the Orthodox tradition and the idea of Empire. This way we can observe how the rough Russian soil becomes fertilized with a new system of values, in which individual conscience goes beyond the traditional authorities. The highly hierarchical, Byzantine styled society, based on ranks is being gradually invaded by the spirit of equality, which is considered a predominant rule among the freemasonry.

If one were to search for the essential conclusion of the monograph, it is probably placed not in the concluding remarks. There is certainly no doubt that in the social and political life of Russia masonic ideas were prolonged by the Decembrist associations but the spiritual value of Novikov's attempts boils down to something else. We read in the main chapter that in fact Novikov rejected two patterns (or narratives even): the determinism of the Orthodox interpretation of Christ's message i.e. the belief that the History had already been written by God and the belief that was being constructed by an eminent individual – the emperor. This way the writer becomes inconvenient for both pillars of Russian civilization. Such kind of interpretation places the heritage of

Novikov and 18<sup>th</sup> century Russian freemasonry in the stream of ontologically grounded cultural studies.

As the author clearly points out is the fact that Novikov's heritage became the soil for a new phenomenon in Russia – the counterculture whose first emanation was the Decembrist movement. It carved the split between the faithfulness to the monarch and the faithfulness to the country, between the interests of individuals and the interests of the empire, beginning their rebellion at the Senate Square to change the system into something more human-like, into an order able to protect human rights and individual dignity. However, as Abassy suggests, the new cultural pattern based on anthropocentrism initiated a tragic cracking inside Russian culture.

The text of the book provides a deep insight into a reasonable set of primary sources and literature. What seems especially valuable is the fact of resorting to direct examples of polemics with Catherine the Great, whose doctrine differed from the ones of her predecessors only in the dimension of methodology, not in the objectives.

Małgorzata Abassy's monograph is a useful and clever analysis, in which an intellectual story of a Russian thinker becomes a material for a case study, which strengthens a broader reflection about the transformation of seemingly unchangeable patterns of Russian culture.

*Joachim Diec*

*Uniwersytet Jagielloński*

ТЕКСТ И ТРАДИЦИЯ: АЛЬМАНАХ 1, Институт русской литературы (Пушкинский Дом) Российской академии наук, Музей-усадьба Л.Н. Толстого «Ясная Поляна», Санкт-Петербург-Росток, 2013, с. 432.

В 2012 году в ИРЛИ (Пушкинский Дом) был открыт исследовательский центр «Современная словесность в литературной традиции», а уже год спустя появился первый том альманаха *Текст и традиция* (ТТ), отразивший научную и просветительскую деятельность этого центра. Редактором альманаха стал медиевист, ведущий научный сотрудник ИРЛИ – Евгений Водолазкин.

В редакторском введении центральное устремление нового альманаха обозначено по-пушкинотомски академично: «максимально широко исследовать бытование литературного текста в традиции» (с. 8). Это значит, что альманах мыслится как серийное издание научных текстов, объединённых по тематическому признаку; при этом потенциальным авторам рекомендуется рассматривать произведения современной литературы преимущественно копаративистски, хотя в принципе не воз-