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RUSSIAN SCHOOL CANON IN THE
19TH CENTURY. METHODOLOGICAL
REFLECTIONS INSPIRED BY
*KHRESTOMATIJNYE TEKSTY:
RUSSKAIA PEDAGOGICHESKAIA
PRAKTIKA XIX VEKA I POETICHESKIJ
KANON* EDS. A. VDOVIN, R. LEJBOV,
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RUSSIAN PEDAGOGICAL PRACTICE IN
THE 19TH CENTURY AND THE SCHOOL
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The debate ongoing since the 1960s on the literary canon of the Western world, despite having been conducted generally in university rooms, cannot be regarded as exclusively academic. Its fundamental question has been to what extent the collection of literature ‘classics’ formed over centuries should be left as valid for younger generations, and to what degree, in the name of so-

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cial programmes, it should stay 'open' to the literature till then regarded as marginal, albeit reflecting problems and challenges of the contemporary world. Even the clear voice of Harold Bloom who defended the canon as a value per se, thus not meant to serve any utilitarian purposes (no matter how lofty), did not bring about an unequivocal solution.¹ The multitude of axiological and aesthetical perspectives made it impossible to formulate a 'compromise' list of books which could constitute an acceptable cultural foundation for every educated European or American.

The deadlock in creating such a 'literary programme' served as a major impulse to historical research into the literary canon. Instead of focusing on the canon as 'representating or nonrepresentating particular social groups', John Guillory decided to choose for his research subject 'the historical function of school as consisting in distributing and regulating access to [...] cultural capital'. According to the researcher, the literary canon never existed in a social void, since both access to literary output and to the skill of using it were popularized through schools. This knowledge was of an institutional format, and constituted a capital, understood both literally as a means to acquire definite skills (mainly linguistic), and in figurative terms, thus, bestowing the status of a well-educated individual upon its owner.²

The transfer of research into the canon to the platform formed by social and institutional history allowed the posing of questions related to the role of the school as a tool in the shaping of identity based on the literary heritage of a nation state. Instead of focusing on a vaguely understood literary canon, Guillory was interested in the school curriculum - its evolution and educatory function. He was echoed by another researcher, Ian Hunter, who several years before had published a study showing the interdependence of culture and state in the realities of secondary schools in Victo-

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- 1 H. Bloom, *Zachodni kanon i szkoła wieków*, transl. B. Baran, M. Szczubiałka, Warszawa 2019.
 - 2 J. Guillory, *Cultural Capital. The Problem of Literary Canon Formation*, Chicago 1993, p. VIII.

rian England. In its main thread, it followed the methods of the school's interpretation of literature as a means of indoctrinating the subjects of the British Crown. Hunter stated that 'reading and criticism of literature lost [in the 19th century] their function as the aesthetic-ethical practice of a minority case and acquired new deployment and function as an arm of an emergent governmental educational apparatus'. This implied that the earlier paradigm of learning Latin and Greek grammar as well as reading ancient authors was replaced with modern literary education in which teaching literature was more about forming civic morality, than institutionalizing literature's authority. The advancing shaping of modern national identity was thus decisive for the change of function of school reading practices, no longer meant to be an elitist activity, but a mode of shaping attitudes of whole societies.³

The changing literary models in secondary schools were also described by Martin Guiney where, in his view, the leaders in education's 'nationalization' were Prussia and Russia with their curricula for teaching the language and literature based on the 'official' ethno-nationalism which approval was treated as an expression of loyalty towards the state. A similar situation also took place in France. Apart from the 'civic' national project of the Third Republic, the national identity of the French was to be based on the standard of the literary language and national cultural cohesion. The basic tool serving to culturally homogenize the population was the shared reading of contemporary prose. It was to happen both during classes, which Guiney compared to the analysis of sacral texts in pre-modern society, and during voluntary reading of more extensive literary fragments or whole novels in free time.⁴ The purpose of promoting reading through schools was for the accept-

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- 3 I. Hunter, *Culture and Government. The Emergence of Literary Education*, London 1988, pp. 3-4; R. Leibov, A. Vdovin, 'What and how Russian students read in school, 1840-1917', in: *Reading Russia. A history of reading in modern Russia*, vol. 2, ed. by D. Rebecchini and R. Vassena, Milano 2020, p. 267 - https://www.academia.edu/79494460/Reading_Russia_Vol_2 [accessed 30 June 2022].
 - 4 M. Guiney, *Teaching the Cult of Literature in the French Third Republic*, New York 2004, pp. 53-57.

ance of French literature as the conveyor of the French national identity, while simultaneously acting as a 'banner of universalism' allowing the school curriculum recommended by the Republic's authorities to be regarded as the basis for the assimilation of all the inhabitants of France. This was to also attract the residents of the French colonies to French culture, regardless of their cultural self-identification.⁵ The disseminating of French literature essentially consisted of the imposition of arbitrarily selected cultural contents by the regime. Therefore, using Bourdieu's terms, this can be regarded as a model example of symbolic violence.⁶

The conclusions on the Russian cultural/education policy were the reasons why these incited interest among researchers in Russian culture. What is worthy of particular interest in this respect is the team of specialists affiliated with the Department of Russian Literature at the University of Tartu, Estonia. However, given the aggression of the Russian Federation on Ukraine beginning on 24 February 2022, it is important to emphasize that the circle of those academics, including mainly Russians, already on the first days of the war wholeheartedly condemned the armed aggression, manifesting their complete solidarity with the Ukrainian society. The official declaration issued by them expressed great indignation over the attack and reads as follows:

The authorities of Russia, the country with whose language and culture we have been bonded professionally and biographically, are committing today an unjustifiable crime [...]. The first days of the Russian aggression on the people of Ukraine coincided with our Department's celebration of the centenary of Yuri Mikhailovich Lotman. It is hard to imagine something more unnatural to our Master, a soldier who defended Ukraine against Nazism during the war, following which he heard Ukrainian speech in the army, he recorded Ukrainian songs, while after the war, as a student, he

5 Ibidem, pp. 17-16.

6 A. Kłoskowska, 'Wstęp', in: P. Bourdieu, J.-C. Passeron, *Reprodukcja. Elementy teorii systemu nauczania*, transl. E. Neyman, Warszawa 1990, pp. 11-52.

studied Ukrainian at the Leningrad University.⁷

Together with the strong condemnation of the war, the Tartu academics decided to continue cooperation with individual scholars from Russia, while at the same suspending official relations with Russia's academic institutions. Owing to this development, they can be regarded as researchers free from the political pressures of the Kremlin regime, which is of fundamental importance because of the restricted freedom of research in Russia itself. Lotman's legacy induced its heirs of this illustrious semiotician and historian of culture to resume the idea of direct communication among scholars from different centres undertaking research into Russian culture.

RUSSIAN SCHOOL CANON: HISTORY OUTLINE AND MAIN RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Following in the footsteps of the Tartu academics, let me pass over the affiliations of the scholars from Russia who cooperated with them to take a closer look at reading practices in secondary

- 7 'Tartuskij Universitet. Kafedra Russkoi Literatury, Zajavlenie sotrudnikov ot-deleniia slavistiki Tartuskogo universiteta - <https://ruslit.ut.ee> [accessed 30 June 2022]: My, sotrudniki otdeleniia slavianskoj filologii Tartuskogo universiteta, gluboko vozmushheny napadeniem na Ukrainu. Rukovodstvo Rossii, strany, s ja-zykom i kul'turoj kotoroj my sviazany professional'no i biograficheski, sovershaet v eti dni prestuplenie, kotoroe nel'zia opravdat'. K nashemu sozhaleniiu, v nego okazalas' vtianuta ne tol'ko korrumpirovannaja i bezotvetstvennaja verkhushka, no i chast' russkikh grazhdan, kotorye poddalis' dezinformacii i propagande nenavisti//Nachavshaiasia v 2014 godu vojna Rossii s Ukrainoj v poslednie dni razvernulas' na vsej ukrainskoj territorii. Neobkhodimo nemedlenno ostanovit' eto strashnoe prestuplenie.// My vsej dushoi s boriushhimsia narodom Ukrainy. My s nashimi russkimi druž'iami i vseimi liud'mi, kotoryie vystupaiut protiv etoj vojny.// Pervye dni rossijskoi agressii protiv naroda Ukrainy sovпали s prazdnikom dlia nashego otdelenija - stoletnim iubileem Iuriiia Mihailovicha Lotmana. Trudno predstavit' sebe chto-nibud' bolee protivooestestvennoe dlia nashego uchitelia, soldata, na voine zashhishhavshego Ukrainu ot nacizma. Togda, v deistvuiushhei armii, on uslyshal ukrainskuju rech', tam on zapisyval ukrainskie pesni. Posle vojny on, student, izuchal ukrainskii iazyk v Leningradskom universitete. Segodnja, dumaem, on podpisal by eto pis'mo.// Slava Ukraïni!// Irina Abisogomjan, Marija Borovikova, Ekaterina Vel'mezova, Roman Leibov, Alessandra Dezi, Svetlana Dolgorukova, Natalija Joonas, Ljubov' Kiseleva, Irina Kiul'moia, Elizaveta Kostandi, Roman Lejbov, Lea Pil'd, Anastasija Ryko, Tat'jana Stepanishheva, Ol'ga Frajman, Anna Podstawska'.

schools in the Russian Empire. Of special interest to them was the identification of the corpus of texts read by gymnasiasts, the making of the list of applicable chrestomathies (literary anthologies), the analysis of the manner of reading and interpreting belles-lettres as didactic materials, as well as tracing relations between identity policy and literary education in the period between the formulation of the first school curriculum for teaching literature in 1852 and the outbreak of WW I. As seen from the Polish perspective, this research is of relevance since it may contribute to a better understanding of state indoctrination throughout the Russian partition. When perceiving the canon as one of the identity-creative tools, we gain a better platform to analyse the means employed for 'winning' subsequent ethnic groups by the Russian state. School readings can thus be treated as carriers of the state 'narrative' in the light of which the affiliation of smaller entities to the Empire had its justification and logic. Alternately, they can also be analysed in the context of the Empire's representation, therefore, asking whether the books admitted for use in schools were to exclusively represent the culture of the Russian 'centre', or was there also room for the literature of the conquered countries?

Although no monograph on the formation and functioning of the school literary canon in Russia has yet been developed, these issues have been the topic of research of the academic circle affiliated with the University of Tartu since 2000.⁸ Among the authors of those works, mention has to be made, first of all, of Roman Lei-

8 Among the major works of the authors directly or indirectly connected with the Tartu Slavic Studies mention has to be made of the following: M. Loskutova, 'Natsional'nyi literaturnyi kanon v srednej shkole. Zametki o novykh podhodakh k social'noj istorii obrazovaniia', *Novoe Literaturnoe Obozrenie*, 2001, no. 5(51), pp. 19-34; A. Lanu, 'Formirovanie kanona russkogo romantizma', *Novoe Literaturnoe Obozrenie*, 2001, no. 5(51), pp. 35-67; A. V. Vdovin, 'Poniatie „russkie klassiki“ v kritike 1830-1850-h gg.', in: *Pushkinskie chtenija v Tartu 5: Pushkinskaja epokha i russkii literaturnyi kanon: K 85-letiiu Larisy Il'inichny Vol'pert: v 2 ch.*, Tartu 2011, pp. 40-56 - https://www.ruthenia.ru/Push_Chten5/Vdovin.pdf [accessed 30 June 2022]; A. Vdovin, R. Lejbov, 'Pushkin v shkole: curriculum i literaturnyj kanon v XIX veke', in: *Lotmanovskij sbornik*, vyp. 4, eds. L. N. Kiseleva, T. N. Stepanishheva, Moskva 2014, pp. 249-261 - https://imwerden.de/pdf/lotmanovsky_sbornik_4_2014__ocr.pdf [accessed 30 June 2022]

bov, a Slavic philologist, and Alexey Vdovin, who cooperated with the University due to the grants of the Estonian Science Foundation. As the authors remark in the Prologue to the *Anthological Texts: Russian Pedagogical Practice of the 19th Century and the School Canon* (Tartu 2013), in the research into the school canon, apart from the above-mentioned works in English, they also found the tradition of the Tartu historical-literary school equally inspiring. Referring to the reflection of its outstanding representative Yuri Lotman, Vdovin and Leibov believe that the departure point for their study should be found in the means of creating school literature anthologies and their evolution, as well as in the description of the history of the texts in school textbooks. Moreover, the mechanism of the texts' consolidation in collective memory should be analysed.⁹ This proposal treated studies in school readings as an integral part of the research into Russia's state ideology. The methodological coincidence with the main assumptions of the American historians of the literature canon finding inspiration mainly in Pierre Bourdieu's sociology was thus enriched with the acceptance of Lotman's approach to research into literature. The basic function of a literary text is, according to the Russian semiotician, a rhetorical message which reflects the 'universal principle of both individual and collective awareness'. This implied conviction that literary texts can serve as ideology conveyors, while the creation of the school literary canon can be regarded as a comprehensive way of imposing the attitudes and views desired by the authorities.¹⁰

9 A. Vdovin, R. Leibov, *Khrestomatijnnye teksty: russkaja poezija i shkol'naja praktika XIX stoletija*, w: *Khrestomatijnnye teksty: russkaia pedagogičeskaja praktika XIX v. i poetičeskij kanon*, eds. A. Vdovin, R. Leibov, Tartu 2013 ("Acta Slavica Estonica" 4. *Trudy po russkoj i slavianskoj filologii. Literaturovedenie*, 9), pp. 10–11 –<https://library.oopen.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.12657/53123/1/9789949324750.pdf> [accessed 30 June 2022].

10 I. Pil'shchikov, '„Est' naslazhdenie i v dikosti lesov...'' K. Batjushkova (predystorija i edicionnaja sud'ba)', in: *ibidem*, p. 113; S. Zolian, 'Turii Lotman o tekste: idei, problemy, perspektivy', *Novoe Literaturnoe Obozrenie*, 2016, no. 3(139) – <https://magazines.gorky.media/nlo/2016/3/yurij-lotman-o-tekste-idei-problemy-perspektivy.html> [accessed 30 June 2022]; J. Škulj, 'Politics of readings / politics of dissemination', *Primerjalna Književnost*, 2010, vol. 33, no. 2, „Kdo izbere?": *literatura in literarno posredništvo*, pp. 262–263 – https://ojs-gr.zrc-sazu.si/primerjalna_kn-

Vdovin claims that the main impulse to promote literature in secondary schools came from the circles of liberal bureaucrats grouped around Jakov Rostovtsev and Grand Duke Konstantin. This facilitated the 1852 publication of the first literature curriculum for secondary schools in Russia which was valid until 1917.¹¹ That curriculum broke with the practice obligatory till then of treating 18th-century poetry as a model for pupils of Russian secondary schools. In the place of the works of Mihhail Lomonosov, Gavriil Derzhavin, or Antiochus Kantemir, the central position in the Russian curriculum was taken by poetry and prose by Alexander Pushkin, Mikhail Lermontov, and Nikolai Gogol. The curriculum was shortly reflected in the readers of the school literature which turned into an apology for Russian Romanticism as the national style. Together with the growing prominence of contemporary poetry, the basic working method with a text was the so-called logical and stylistic method consisting of students working predominantly on grasping the work's central idea instead of approaching a sentence-by-sentence construing of the text. The task was supported by essays students were given as homework. As far as it can be told from the preserved sources, secondary students most frequently described the main ideas entailed in poems by Pushkin and Lermontov, and less frequently dealt with poetry by Zhukovsky or Krylov, or with dramas by Griboyedov.¹²

Another important period for shaping the Russian school canon was that of pedagogical debates in the late 1850s and early 1860s, in which outstanding pedagogues such as Konstantin Ushinsky or Vasily Vodovosov participated. It was they who provided the democratic stimulus consisting in the attempt to emancipate readers from lower social classes, providing them with the appropriate rhetoric of the 'revival', 'uniting with the land', and 'waking from the centuries-long sleep'.¹³ The new narrative coinciding with the

jzevnost/article/view/5424/5065 [accessed 30 June 2022].

- 11 A. Vdovin, R. Lejbov, *Khrestomatijnnye teksty: russkaja poezija...*, p. 14.
- 12 R. Lejbov, A. Vdovin, *What and how Russian students read in school...*, pp. 267-270.
- 13 A. Vdovin, 'Literaturnyi kanon i nacional'naia identičnost': „Chto ty spish', muzhichok?" A. V. Kol'cova i spory o russkosti v XIX veke', in: *Khrestomatijnnye*

period of the Great Reforms, though yielding a true crop of anthologies addressed 'to the people', did not particularly change the content of the anthologies for gymnasiasts, since the literature of the Golden Age created between 1811-1851 continued to serve as the foundation for education. However, at that point, it was interpreted as writing uniting all social classes and overcoming the prejudices of the former serfs towards their lords for the sake of national unity. The peculiar feature of the new chrestomathies was, in turn, a utilitarian approach to literature. As researchers into the canon admit, even masterpieces were assessed first of all because of their usefulness, thus, their impact on boosting memory, concentration, and formation of students' morality. This led to the spread of the aesthetic-ethical educational model inspired by the German school of hermeneutics in which the main role was played by the continuous verification of the correlation between a part and the entire work (supposedly facilitated by extensive lists of questions at the end of each chapter in the textbooks).¹⁴

The next period of relevance for shaping the Russian school canon occurred with the education reforms of Dmitry Tolstoy. According to Vdovin, the 'school classicism' of 1871-1889 is not fully justifiably treated as the most 'reactive' period in the history of Russian education. This assessment arose from the central importance given in classical gymnasia to learning ancient languages and mathematics at the price of teaching updated findings of the natural sciences as well as from including only the literature created in 1811-1851 in the school canon. However, after a more thorough analysis of school textbooks and even to a higher degree of memoir sources, it was discovered that it was precisely the 'Tolstoy era' which brought about true worship of belles-lettres. This applied both to the approved 'historical' literature (from Nestor's *Chronicle* until the literature of the Russian Enlightenment) which was the subject of the school's logical and grammatical analysis,

teksty..., pp. 139-142.

14 R. Leibov, A. Vdovin, *What and how Russian students read in school...*, pp. 273-274.

and the official omission of contemporary literature, in particular the novels by Ivan Turgenev, Ivan Goncharov, Fyodor Dostoevsky, and Leo Tolstoy. This worship was possible, since fragments of literary pieces of these authors were available both in the school literary anthologies, the possession of which was obligatory and also in school libraries operating assumedly at every state gymnasium.¹⁵ From the researchers' perspective, the availability of the works of the Russian prose writers excluded from the curricula led to the mythization of their oeuvre which, as it was believed, reflected the true Russian identity.¹⁶

After 1905 which brought not only the liberalization of the empire, but also the rise of nationalism in the entire society, school curricula were reformed to include such works as Goncharov's *Oblomov*, Turgenev's *Rudin* and *Home of the Gentry*, Tolstoy's *War and Peace*, or Dostoevsky's *Humiliated and Insulted*, *Crime and Punishment*, and *The Poor People*, as well as the poetry of Nikolai Nekrasov, Fyodor Tyutchev, and Apollon Maykov. 'This list redefined the content of the school literary canon', and significantly affected the concept of classic Russian literature, which was created under its direct influence.¹⁷

The researchers grouped around Russian Studies at the University of Tartu focused on the following main issues:

1. the evolution of the Russian school canon in the context of ideological changes among the power elites (thus a gradual 'nationalization' of the Romanov Empire consisting of the growing conviction that it is a state that belongs to Russians);
2. an analysis of the school's interpretation of literary works as a means of student indoctrination;
3. answer to the question as to what extent the process of the

15 A. Vdovin, „Dmitry Tolstoy Classicism” and the formation of the Russian literary canon in the high school curriculum', *Ab Imperio*, 2017, no. 4, p. 110 - https://www.academia.edu/36529098/_DMITRY_TOLSTOYS_CLASSICISM_and_the_Formation_of_the_Russian_Literary_Canon_in_the_High_School_Curriculum [accessed 30 June 2022].

16 Ibidem, p. 114.

17 Ibidem, p. 134.

school canon taking on its final shape was conducted ‘top-down’ (depended on the authorities), and to what degree it was ‘grass-roots’, meaning it resulted from the pressure exerted by the educated classes;

4. a detailed identification of the corpus of readings and the creation of the database of literature textbooks;
5. a study of the reception of the school’s canon in the collective memory of the graduates from Russian schools;
6. identification of the relation between the down-top formation of the national canon and the imposed school canon; and
7. the means by which the Russian school canon operated in the imperial peripheries.

OVERVIEW OF THE TOPIC

The multiple perspectives, the methodological variety, and the vast scope of the topics tackled require taking a closer look at selected chapters of the study *Anthological Texts: Russian Pedagogical Practice of the 19th Century and the School Canon* which gives an overview of all the research concerning the Russian school canon undertaken by Tartu-affiliated scholars. It is worth focusing for a moment on the introductory chapter by Vdovin and Leibov which describes how the Russian school canon functioned in the Empire’s western borderlands, and more precisely, in the Baltic guberniyas. Dominated culturally and economically by Germans, these (guberniyas) were inhabited mainly by the Estonian and Latvian populations. Throughout the entire 19th century, all these groups were targeted by an everchanging cultural policy of the Russian educational authorities. The first quarter of the century was the time marked by the suggested ‘bringing closer’ of the German-speaking population to Russian culture by encouraging them to read Russian Enlightenment and then Romantic poetry. Despite all the efforts of the authorities, the Baltic Germans regarded Russian literature as inferior to that of Germany and that it was not

prestigious. An example of this can be found in the opinion of one of the Russian language and literature professors at the University of Dorpat (Tartu) who, in his 1837 report to the Superintendent of District Schools, explained the reluctance to learn Russian with the fact that ‘there was nothing available to read in Russian’. Thus, the Russian authorities meant to show the German readers who already had their classics like Goethe, Shiller, or Christoph Martin Wieland, that Russian literature had equally outstanding writers. A slightly different selection of readings was proposed to the Estonians and Latvians. In the thinking of the Russian authorities, the latter nationalities were to counterbalance the Germans, while at the same time constituting the ‘social element’ closest to Russian peasants. For these reasons, the canon dedicated to the lower classes of the Baltic Guberniyas was to be composed predominantly of simple texts: mainly poems and tales emphasizing the (imagined) closeness of the Russians and the ‘Baltic people’, or contrariwise, showing the Empire as the place of peaceful coexistence of various *nationalities* and religious groups.¹⁸

According to the authors, Russian educational authorities made attempts to introduce in the schools of the Estonian (*Estlantskaya*) Guberniya: Эстляндия and of the Courland Guberniya a definitely more active promotion of Russian literature than in the central regions. This led to a growing competition between German and Russian literature for prestige and relevance, which finally led to a prompt canonization of those works which were regarded by the Russians as the most outstanding. When comparing the school canon in the Baltic peripheries and central Russia, scholars conclude that the school canon presented to German readers was far more conservative than that in St Petersburg and Moscow. In their opinion, this could have resulted from the ‘desire to present the best-tested samples of Russian literature to the German readers. When recommending literary readers to peasants, the Russian authorities took into consideration, first of all, the texts’ usefulness, the simplic-

18 A. Vdovin, R. Lejbov, *Khrestomatijnnye teksty: russkaja poezija ...*, pp. 21, 24–25.

ity of the language, and the emphasis on the community with Russian peasants. The second motif of this chapter deals with analysing the content of the literature anthologies circulating in the Riga academic district. The authors convincingly demonstrate that school literature readers (so-called chrestomathies), served the purpose of providing fragments of Russian literature, and for the first time, appeared in the Romanov Empire precisely in Riga. These readers were the works of such authors as Johannes Heim and Carl Johann Hartmann who 'exported' within the Empire fragments of the 18th-century literary canon to the German-speaking Baltic Guberniyas. The offering of the works of Sumarkov, Karamzin, Fonvizin, Derzhavin and Khvostov, to the gymnasiasts of Riga, Revel (Tallinn), or Dorpat (Tartu) led to the increase in the symbolic relevance of their works, and these were soon after judged as 'classic' and 'model'.¹⁹

As emphasized in the next chapter by Anna Senkina, in the following years, other authors of chrestomathies followed in the footsteps of the German compilers, among whom mention must be made of Nikolay Gretsch and Nikolai Rklitski who, between 1820-1840, finally confirmed the circle of 'textbook' authors. Apart from the earlier-mentioned writers, it also included Konstantin Batyushkov, Pyotr Vyazemsky, Fiodor Glinka, Anton Delvig, Vasily Zhukovsky, Ivan Krylov, Nikolai Lomonosov, and finally, Alexander Pushkin. However, it soon turned out that this collection, extremely varied stylistically and linguistically, was slowly beginning to be perceived as becoming increasingly more outdated. The year 1848 proved to be decisive in the formation of the Russian school canon when the first edition of the literature reader by Alexey Galakhov was published. In his view, the 'samples of eloquence and poetry' addressed to school youth should be written in 'the language of contemporary times which we hear from educated individuals'. While the 18th-century language, stemming still from the aesthetics of late Baroque, 'was not merely useless, but almost harmful'. Following the model of compilations by the

19 Ibidem, p. 21.

French school, Galakhov radically modernized Russian classes at school, thoroughly changing the proportion of authors included from the 'old' and 'new' literature. Consequently, the base of the school canon as of the 1850s was composed of literature of Romanticism (defined as 'national' literature) represented mainly by the poetry of Alexander Pushkin, Mikhail Lermontov, Ivan Krylov, Alexis Koltsov, and the prose of Nikolai Gogol and Ivan Turgenev.²⁰

The chapter by Tatiana Stepanishheva (of the University of Tartu) concerned the textbook history of Pyotr Vyazemsky's poems. This Russian poet and translator could be initially found in the school canon due not so much to the patriotic poems speaking of the victory of Russia over Napoleon, but for his skilful writing when creating the literary genres such as epigrams and odes, much appreciated in the 18th century. Furthermore, in the first edition of Alexey Galakhov's chrestomathy, mainly his satirical poems and critical essays, were appreciated, and not so much his patriotic oeuvre. The researcher explains this fact with particular emphasis on the formal objectives of gymnasium education in the first half of the 19th century, namely, the matter of mastering various literary forms (e.g., the students were to try creating poetry) and rhetorical skills. The situation essentially changed in the 1860s and is best exemplified by the following poems *The Lodgings*, *Russian Roads*, *German Nature*, and, importantly, *The First Snow* being added to Vyazemsky's repertory of texts. These works drew inspiration from Karamzin's aesthetics which introduced 'Russian topics' into schools through the descriptions of nature and customs. The latter is understood as the conviction that the sources of Russianness should be sought in harsh northern nature and Slavic folklore. The school's representation of the works by that Russian poet changed again in the 1880s. Vyazemsky's textbook repertory was then almost entirely dominated by his 'late' patriotic and

20 A. Senkina, 'Iziashnaia slovesnost' kak didakticheskii material: k istorii ruskoj literaturnoj khrestomatii (pervaja polovina XIX v.)', in: *Khrestomatijnnye teksty...*, pp. 37-38, 40-42.

religious topics. From that time on, he was to be presented as the ‘defender of morals’, and the custodian of sublime culture. On many occasions, Galakhov underlined Vyazemsky’s affiliation to the Russian ‘pantheon’, which in the readers’ eyes was to distance ‘national’ literature even further from contemporary works.²¹

A slightly different character can be found in the chapter authored by Lubva Kiseleva, Lotman’s student and emeritus professor of the Department of Russian Studies at Tartu. Her focus is the position in school education of the informal anthem of the Russian Empire *Боже, Царя храни!* [*Bozhe, tsaria khрани*] *God save the Tsar (Prayer of the Russian People)*, with lyrics by Vasily Zhukovsky and music by Alexei Lvov. According to the scholar, the poem was known by heart by all the gymnasists and elementary school pupils, serving as a kind of a ‘sound emblem’ of the Russian Empire. The piece was performed by school choirs composed both of students with a fluent command of Russian and those who could barely speak it. Performing it during school celebrations and religious services of all the religious denominations in Russia was, therefore, not treated as reciting a piece of poetry, but more as a kind of state ritual. For this reason, the *Prayer of the Russian People* cannot be regarded as a part of the school’s canon eligible, like other Zhukovsky’s works, for a meticulous literary analysis, but as a work that was a self-contained tool of state indoctrination.²²

A different approach should apply to Alexis Koltsov’s *Why Are You Sleeping, Little Man* (*Что ты спишь, мужичек* [*Chto, ty spish’, muzhichek*]). As observed by Alexey Vdovin, the piece was included in Galakhov’s *Chrestomathy* in 1848, and from that time onwards it has never left the textbooks of imperial Russia. The impact of this piece as a stylized folk song stemmed from its interpretation in the light of Hegel’s ‘philosophical criticism’, greatly favoured by the outstanding literary critic, Vissarion Belinsky, and the nation-

21 T. Stepanishheva, ‘Stihotvoreniia P. A. Viazemskogo v russkikh shkol’nykh khrestomatijah XIX v.’, in: *Khrestomatijnye teksty...*, pp. 64–65, 67–70.

22 L. Kiseleva, ‘„Nekanonichnyi” kanonicheskii tekst („Bozhe, tsarja khрани” V. A. Zhukovskogo v dorevoljucionnoj shkole)’, in: *Khrestomatijnye teksty...*, pp. 95–96.

alistic essayist, Mikhail Katkov. In their view, the piece reflected the main qualities of the Russian national character with features including the 'grim feeling of uncertainty' and the 'inexplicable disenchantment with life'. Expressing the state of apathy which, according to the Russian critics, was to testify to the 'Asian character' and 'passivity' of Russian peasants, the poem was to 'awaken' and 'revive', which obviously harmonized with the rhetoric of the Grand Reforms of Alexander II.²³

In the period of 'school classicism' under Dmitry Tolstoy, Koltsov's poem began to slightly lose its prominence in secondary schools, remaining popularly used in elementary schools. This unquestionably contributed to the primers by Konstantin Ushinsky and Yosif Paulson. Importantly, this poem memorized by peasant children, as instructed by the educational authorities, underwent the process of folklorization. This meant that it was absorbed by folk culture, expressed in folk prints (so-called luboks), songs, as well as parodies of the piece, popular, particularly in the early 20th century.²⁴ This trail of 'awakening from sleep' also had other unexpected consequences, benefitted from by poets in the western and southern edges of the Empire. In 1906, the poet Yanka Kupala changed the protagonist's nationality from Russian to Belarussian, which radically altered the poem's message. Here, the cause of the protagonist's apathy was the repressive tsarist regime which had to be destroyed for the nation's true identity to revive.²⁵

The process of popularizing works of literature, which occurred through their mass distribution through school textbooks, had a great impact on shaping the national attitudes of the 'new' peasant readers. An instance of this can be seen in *Kiev*, a poem by Aleksey Khomyakov. In the view of Inna Bulkina of the National Academy of Fine Arts of Ukraine (Lotman's student who passed away in January 2021), this was unquestionably the most important work

23 A. Vdovin, 'Literaturnyi kanon i nacional'naja identichnost'...', in: *Khrestomati-jnye teksty...*, pp. 143-149.

24 Ibidem, pp. 139-155.

25 Ibidem, pp. 158-159.

tackling the topic of the importance of Kiev for Russian nationalism, immersing the Ukrainian territory in the core of the 'Russian national land'. Its leitmotif was for 'Kiev to become the centre of Russian life' radiating onto the whole of historic Rus' (including the fragments outside the Romanov Empire). Initially, because the piece challenged legitimism and openly encouraged a conflict with neighbouring Austria, Khomyakov's poem was questioned by Russian censorship. In due course, however, partially also because the authorities themselves adopted the nationalistic rhetoric, it entered the school literary anthologies. Simultaneously with the school canonization of the text, its dissemination continued through the Orthodox Church's publications, particularly the religious press, songbooks, calendars, and even tourist guides to Kiev. In this very way, beginning in the 1860s, the poem of a representative of Slavophilia gained mass popularity.²⁶

The history of the work's reception shows in what way the oeuvre expressing the emotions and intentions contradicting the imperial status quo led to a gradual alteration of the official state narrative. From that time onwards, Russia was to define her identity not only through enlightened absolutism, in whose terms the Romanov Empire was to be regarded merely as one of the European powers but also through the restoration of the idea of the return to 'Holy Rus' given the mission to 'amass all Ruthenic/Rus' territories'. The old capital of Kyievan/ Kievian Rus' was, according to this conception, to become not only a destination of national and religious pilgrimages but also a real centre of Russian statehood. The shift in the state narrative was happening in this case, as observed by the Ukrainian scholar, without greater involvement of the Russian authorities, but through Khomyakov's persuasive poetical language.²⁷

The topic of the 'nationalization' of the school canon was de-

26 I. Bulkina, 'Receptivnaja istorija stihotvorenija A. S. Khomjakova „Kiev“: „smysl ob unii”', in: *Khrestomitijnye teksty...*, pp. 163-164.

27 Ibidem, pp. 168.

scribed by Kristina Sarycheva (of the University of Tartu) in the example of the school reception of Fyodor Tyutchev's '*Villages of mean appearance...*'. Published for the first time in 1855, the piece was promptly regarded to be the Slavophile ideological manifesto. According to the researcher, this resulted directly from the very content of the work which began from the rhetoric call combining the semantics of 'poverty' with the emotion of 'compassion'. In the second verse, a symbolic image of another alien nation whose main feature was to be pride appeared. Pride was next opposed to Russian 'humbleness', in order for Christ to appear blessing the Russian land and the people who inhabit it in the final stanza. As seen from the poet's perspective, the Russian people were doomed to suffer, yet this suffering entailed a higher purpose reflecting the messianic mission of Russia.²⁸

Tyutchev's poem was included in the school literary readers for the first time in the early 1860s and was unquestionably decided upon by the debates on the relevance of this work for formulating Russian state ideology conducted at that time. Although in the subsequent decades it was supplanted by descriptive lyrics showing northern nature as being the most constitutive of Russian national identity, the poem returned to school circulation in the early 20th century. The boost in nationalistic attitudes and the fascination with aestheticism of the Romanticism caused this very work to be regarded at the time as the most important one in the oeuvre of the Russian poet.²⁹

CONCLUDING REMARKS

The views of the researchers affiliated with the University of Tartu were based on the fundamental assumptions formulated by Ian Hunter and Martin Guiney. What they had in common with the first of them was the conviction about the 'hybrid quality of

28 K. Sarycheva, '„Eti bednye selen'ia..." F. Tiutcheva v russkom kanone (poezija i kritika 1850-1890-kh godov)', in: *Khrestomatijnye teksty...*, pp. 173-177.

29 Ibidem, pp. 185-186.

the Russian system of literary education' combining 'classical' education based on reading ancient texts with modern education rooted in reading national literature. It, thus, encompassed both pre-modern (elitist) and modern education paradigms. Guiney was inspiring to the group of Tartu scholars, since he showed that the reading and analysis of national literature functioned at schools as a sort of a 'secular exegesis', thus, a kind of reading whose task was to discover 'truths' and national allegories in literary works.³⁰ In the reflection on the ways of the formation of the Russian school canon, the basic context for the specialists of the Tartu Slavic studies was the increase in relevance of belles-letters in the countries of Western Europe caused by the intense involvement of the state in the process of the cultural homogenization of its citizens. An important role in their reflection was the reference to the views of Yuri Lotman, the 'founding father' of Slavic Studies at the University of Tartu. His contribution was, according to the authors of the discussed papers, the call to analyse the mechanisms of the consolidation of the texts in collective memory, while also treating the studies into school reading as an integral part of research into a Russian state ideology.

The range of topics undertaken by the Tartu scholars covered the widely understood question of the role of the school canon as the tool to shape political attitudes (as desired by the state authorities) in the Empire's changing social architecture throughout the whole 19th century. It was emphasized that in the early 19th century, the school canon was composed mainly of 18th-century works targeted at the higher social classes and creating in them a bond with the ruling Romanov dynasty. As of the 1840s, the canon was to reflect the Russian 'national' culture expressed in the poetry of the 'Pushkin' era, while over the period of the 'Grand Reforms', it was biased towards folklore, and to also include works by the most prominent Russian writers at the turn of the 20th century. The research into the canon, its evolution, and its admission of certain readings to be

30 M. Guiney, *Teaching the Cult of Literature in the French Third Republic...*, p. 112.

incorporated in it, while passing over the others, was an integral part of the research into Russian cultural policy.

As I have mentioned, from the Polish perspective, this research can help to better understand state indoctrination within the Russian partition. By using the canon as one of the identity-creative tools, we can better analyse the means that allowed for the 'winning' of respective ethnic groups by the Russian state. The reflection on the shaping of the Russian school canon in the territories subdued by Russia focused not only on the circumstances of Russian literature functioning under the condition of a strong expansion of culture perceived as competitive but also on the description of the literary canon being created for those ethnic groups which were regarded as friendly to the Russian authorities (or at least unfriendly to the Germans dominating the space). Although, in my view, what is missing has to do with the fact that this cultural 'feedback' affected the creation of the German/Estonian/Latvian school canon. However, what I find to be of unquestionable merit is being able to show the context of Russian literary education from the perspective of the centre to the peripheries.

The scholars affiliated with the University of Tartu focused on identifying the questions related to the Russian school canon, searching for comparisons and analogies to the situation at schools of imperial Russia. This certainly has its justification in the history of Russian education which drew inspiration from the solutions adopted by European powers, particularly Prussia and France. The latter country attempted to combine the prestige of classical education with the need to shape the patriotic and national attitudes of their subjects/citizens on a large scale. However, the lack of comparison with the countries whose national canon was formed outside the school context implies that these studies should not be regarded as being concluded. The instance of formation of the Polish literary canon, which in the 19th century was the result of both official education and that which was entirely illegal, took a position close to that of Russian education. This means that researching the canon should encompass studies into read-

ing practices both in state institutions and clandestine organizations. The omission of Polish literature of Romanticism in the Russian schools of the Kingdom of Poland (and much more so of the Western Krai) formed the context for its mythization and the vivid conviction among Polish readers that this very literature was the most profound expression of Polish national identity. In the meantime, the ‘legality’ of the literature of the Polish Enlightenment incited negative connotations of it being ‘conciliatory’ literature, indifferent to the Polish independence aspirations. Nonetheless, the investigation of the Polish school canon requires entirely new studies.

Translated by Magdalena Iwińska