

**“Vygotsky as an Art and Literary Scholar”:
Maltsev, V.V. The Soviet theatre of 1920s in Vygotsky’s assessment
Kotik-Friedgut, B. The seeds that sprout: An overview of early
journalistic essays of L.S. Vygotsky (1916-1923),
and other papers**

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The two papers by Maltsev (this issue of the journal) and Kotik-Friedgut (issue 4, 2011)¹ complement each other in a sense that they explore the uncharted domain of Vygotsky’s early works of his first Moscow (1913-1917) and second Gomel’ period (1917-1923). Most typically, these works were published in a number of journals and newspapers such as *Novyi Put’* (Moscow; in circulation in 1916-1917) and *Letopis’* (Petrograd; 1915-1917), *Nash Ponedel’nik* (Gomel’, 1922-1923) and *Polesskaia Pravda* (Gomel’, 1920-1930).

Vygotsky’s publications of his first Moscow period are devoted to the topics of literary criticism (book reviews in *Letopis’* in 1916-1917), including the issues of interrelations between Russian and Jewish cultures, Jewish history and identity (essays and reviews in *Novyi Put’* in 1916-1917); on Vygotsky’s treatment of “Jewish question” as it is reflected in his early published papers and archival documents see recent studies (Kotik-Friedgut & Friedgut, 2008; Zavershneva, 2012). In contrast, his activities of Gomel’ period (1917-1923) shift to social activism of various sorts, and his focus of his publications under the Bolsheviks notably change to theatrical reviews in local editions *Nash Ponedel’nik* (reviews and occasional essays of 1922-1923) and *Polesskaia Pravda* (reviews of the end of 1923). In early 1924 Vygotsky returned to Moscow and stayed there most of his life thereafter.

Maltsev and Kotik-Friedgut should be commended for opening the discussion of the new topic that can be vaguely characterized as “Vygotsky as an Art and Literary Scholar”. The topic that seemed hardly manageable until quite recently, has now become open for discussion, especially so after the publication of the rare early Vygotsky’s papers of 1922-1923 in our journal, *PsyAnima* (issue 4, 2011 and this issue)². Other early materials of Vygotsky an art a literary scholar will also be published in the forthcoming issues of this journal. In addition, a series of new studies of Vygotsky’s involvement with humanities, including Art, Literature, Culture, and Language Studies, have already been accepted for publication and will also appear in this journal in the future, such as: Priscila Nascimento Marques. A critica do leitor de L. S. Vigotski [L.S. Vygotsky’s reader’s critique].

Interestingly enough, Vygotsky’s early literary writings of on literature, theatre and psychology of art are mirrored by the later writings of the mature Vygotsky in his discourse of the last and the most productive period of 1932-1934. The topics that he seemed to have fully abandoned during his “instrumental period” of the second half of 1920s re-emerge in his discourse of his book “Thinking and speech”, most notably, in chapter 7 of the book, and some other writings of that time that present Vygotsky that is quite different from Vygotsky of the late 1920s (see, e.g., Miller, 2011; Rey, 2011). The topics of art, language and literature become very common in these writings to the extent that makes this discourse a particularly difficult reading for the audiences with the background in mainstream experimental psychology. In contrast, this discourse makes much

¹ Full text available in Russian at <http://www.psyanima.ru/journal/2011/4/2011n4a6/2011n4a6.pdf>

² for Vygotsky’s full text newspaper publications of 1922 see <http://www.psyanima.ru/journal/2011/4/2011n4a7/2011n4a7.pdf>

sense to scholars with training in a range of humanities, most notably, language and literature studies (Yasnitsky, 2011a, 2011b). A paper that explores later linguistic and psycho-linguistic interests of Vygotsky in mid-1930s against the background of linguistic theories of that time is scheduled for publication in one of the nearest journal issues. This is the study by Maria Bondarenko (Мария Бондаренко) conducted under the tentative title *The theory of sign and meaning in Lev Vygotsky's "Thinking and Speech" in the context of "contemporary linguistics" and certain non-existent scientific discipline* (Теория знака и значения в «Мышлении и речи» Льва Выготского в контексте «современной лингвистики» и одной несуществующей науки).

A series of other cross-disciplinary papers on the topics of Vygotsky's both early and later involvement in Art, Language and Literature Studies are expected to appear in following issues of the journal. Yet, even all these excellent studies taken cumulatively are still quite far from revealing the whole richness and complexity of the theme of "Vygotsky as an Art and Literary Scholar". Therefore, the Editorial Team of the journal most enthusiastically welcomes future contributions on this topic. Linguists and psychologists, historians and aestheticians, literary and art scholars are equally encouraged to contribute. Please do not hesitate to contact us at psyanima@mail.ru !

References:

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6. Zavershneva, E. (2012). Evreiskii vopros v neopublikovannykh rukopisiakh L.S. Vygotskogo [Jewish question in the unpublished manuscripts of L.S. Vygotsky]. *Voprosy psikhologii*(2), 79-99.