

The Annual Program of the Journal "Novoe Proshloe / The New Past" 2026

«The Days of the Turbins» (1/2026)

Editors: Pavel G. Kultyshev, Andrey V. Venkov

Continuing a tradition of our journal to problematize the themes of its issues through the motifs of great texts, we chose M.A. Bulgakov's play "The Days of the Turbins", which celebrates its 100th anniversary in 2026. Its premiere became a turning point not only in the development of literature and theatre art but also in the entire interwar history of our country, signaling a substantial shift in the perception of the nation's recent past and, more broadly, all of its "pre-revolutionary" history. The public resonance of Bulgakov's play is eloquently illustrated by the fact that it was performed 987 times before the beginning of the Great Patriotic War.

The staging of "The Days of the Turbins" became a true challenge, presenting a completely different – until that moment strictly taboo – side of the Russian Civil War, where the defeated "Whites" were portrayed not as caricatured characters, but as people with their own fears and mistakes, striving to preserve a fading past and to resist the impending changes. The issues raised by M.A. Bulgakov in "The Days of the Turbins" remain relevant for understanding contemporary issues of identity and memory, especially given that modern Russian society is still far from reaching not only a consensus on the perception of the events of the Civil War but also, more broadly, from "reconciliation" with its own past in a wider historical context.

Our focus is on a wide array of issues inspired by the motifs of Bulgakov's play – the dialectic of continuity and discontinuity, of succession and the rupture of connections between eras during times of epochal change. How do the mechanisms of transmitting cultural experience transform when familiar social institutions collapse? In what ways are former values reinterpreted in conditions of systemic crisis? How and why does the rejection and tabooing of past historical experience occur, and for what reasons is partial or full rehabilitation of it undertaken after some time? Bulgakov's play provides rich food for thought on how family and close circles become the last stronghold of stability – that very "small home" where the characters attempt to maintain their usual way of life in the face of fateful historical changes. We invite authors to explore how universal this phenomenon is: in which other critical epochs did private spaces serve as a protective buffer against the chaos of the outside world?

Equally significant is the question of identifying "us" and "them" in the context of civil confrontation. The art world of "The Days of the Turbins" demonstrates how fluid and conditional these boundaries are: yesterday's comrades turn into opponents, while recent enemies may become potential allies. The editorial invites reflection on the processes of self-identification during the Civil War and the reasons for the constant reconfiguration of its markers under the influence of circumstances, personal motives, and changing political conditions. How stable are the signs of group affiliation during periods of acute

social conflict? Which factors contribute to the blurring or, on the contrary, the hardening of boundaries between opposing sides?

A special place in this issue will be given to the problem of historical memory of the Civil War: how narratives about the events of 1917–1920 were formed and transformed within various social groups, and which mechanisms ensured the preservation or suppression of memories about the conflict. It is interesting to compare the artistic images of the play with documentary evidence of the era: where they coincide, and where they diverge – and why? How does a literary interpretation influence the collective perception of the historical past?

Finally, the editorial team invites a discussion on the current state of historical science and public consciousness from the perspective suggested by the motifs of Bulgakov's play. What new sources and methodological approaches allow us today to rethink the events of the Civil War? Why do the themes raised by Bulgakov remain relevant for understanding contemporary processes of identity and memory? We are convinced that a dialogue between artistic text and historical scholarship opens up new perspectives for comprehending the nature of social divisions and finding ways to overcome them.

“Provincial Sketches” (2/2026)

Editors: Maksim N. Krot, Alexander Yu. Bendin

The life of the Russian provinces found its reflection on the pages of many domestic writers' works. It was written about in varying tones by Gogol, Leskov, Pisemsky, and Chekhov. However, perhaps the most detailed study of life in the Russian hinterland was conducted by “the leader of our denunciatory literature” (according to D.I. Pisarev) – M.E. Saltykov-Shchedrin, whose 200th birth anniversary will be celebrated in 2026. The work that became the literary foundation of the issue's theme – “Provincial Sketches” – brought the budding writer fame and marked his emergence as a relentless political satirist. The publication of the “Sketches...” in the pages of the “Russian Messenger,” the beginning of which will mark its 170th anniversary next year, symbolized to a large extent the advent of a new era – the era of “thaw” and glasnost, when many ulcers and vices of Russian life not only became vividly illuminated but were also mercilessly castigated in the public sphere. The key to the widespread popularity of the “Sketches...” among readers, besides their sharply critical nature, was also the widely noted effect of authenticity, a distinctly pronounced “commitment to veracity,” which allowed them to be perceived as accurate depictions of Russian society down to specific details and prompted readers to look for real-life prototypes of the characters portrayed in the sketches. At the same time, the similarity of the fictional Krutogorsk, where the sketches take place, to Vyatka, which Saltykov knew well, should not mislead the reader: in describing the scenes of the town, its simple way of life, administration, and economy; and in creating a gallery of portraits of its inhabitants and visitors, the writer aimed to form a composite image of the Russian provinces; to depict it as an integral part of the unified Russian whole, in which this whole is reflected and represented in a specific way. It is this aspect of the “Sketches...” that determines the range of issues addressed in this issue.

As is well known, the history of any state unfolds on two spatial levels. The first of these, meticulously recorded in historical annals, occurs primarily on the capital's stage, under the bright lights of spotlights catching the close attention of contemporaries and future generations – both participants and outside observers; it is here that the most dramatic events involving great historical figures take place. The second, which has attracted much less interest, is provincial life, subtly similar across different eras and peoples, often characterized as "quiet, peaceful," and sometimes even as "remote." But is the gap between these two levels really so vast? What is the dialectical interdependence of capital and provincial life? To what extent are they interconnected and mutually alienated? To what extent is the provincial reality depicted in Saltykov-Shchedrin's "Sketches..." as a whimsical mixture of the real and the illusory a reflection and embodiment of the Russian state and society as a whole? Equally important seems to be the question of how provincial life changed during an era of upheaval and socio-political turmoil. How were major historical events refracted on a local scale? Under what conditions did it become fertile ground where initiative and a new reality rapidly flourished, or a swamp in which innovations hopelessly sank?

The editorial team invites authors and readers to reflect on these and other questions related to the phenomenon of Russian provincial life, which instilled in many generations of domestic intellectuals both fear of its dark and consuming depths and awe of its eternally dormant forces.

"Radetzky March" (3/2026)

Editors: Andrey V. Korenevskiy, Ashot A. Melkonyan

The theme of the next issue of "The New Past" was suggested to us by the novel of J. Roth, which, along with the works of S. Zweig, R.M. Rilke, and G. Meyrink, is traditionally associated with *Finis Austriae* – the era marking the decline of one of the most brilliant monarchies of the Modern Age. In the plot framework of the novel, two layers of events are metaphorically synchronized: the fading of the family of the "imperial Slavs" Trotta von Sipolje and the disintegration of the state that three of its generations served faithfully. The choice of the novel's title is also deeply symbolic – the name of a march by Johann Strauss Sr., dedicated to a Czech aristocrat who became the most celebrated Austrian military commander. The multiple overt and hidden meanings, as well as the metaphorical structure of this novel, provide reason to reflect on issues that are a priority for our magazine. On the one hand, the topic of the departure of a state of such scale from the historical stage falls within our interest in the issues of historical ruptures and cultural memory, since empires like the Austrian one undoubtedly serve as key mnemonic actors in world history. By transforming chaos into order, they, as A. J. Toynbee once keenly observed, "win such strong appreciation and respect from their subjects that the latter simply cannot imagine their lives outside the Empire". And even if at the moment of the collapse of former colossi they are spoken of unkindly, over generations imperial nostalgia almost inevitably gains strength. This brings us to another, no less important aspect

of the journal's subject matter, reflected in its title – the continuous renewal of memory of the past, as well as knowledge about it, or at least what we consider as such.

Finis Austriae represents an almost ideal model case for a comparative study of the entire spectrum of problems of “imperiology” in the broadest spatial and chronological context. Let us list just a few questions proposed for discussion in the pages of our journal: are the decline and fall of empires fatal, or is their degree of adaptability significantly higher than generally assumed; how relevant is the analytical language applied to these political systems, which is entirely composed of oppositions – starting with the contrast between “maritime” and “continental” empires, and empire itself versus the nation-state, and ending with such clichéd antitheses as metropolis-colony and center-periphery? Today, when the phrase “imperial nation” no longer seems like an oxymoron, it may be time to reconsider other established oppositions as well. Moreover, it is appropriate to ask whether we are dealing with familiar, and therefore almost unnoticed, cognitive aberrations – those very “traps of dichotomies”, in O.G. Exle's words, which tempt us with the simplicity of black-and-white thinking instead of a gradient of shades?

“From the outskirts to the center” (4/2026)

Editors: Evgeny V. Vdovchenkov, Svyatoslav V. Smirnov

Referring to Joseph Brodsky's poem to justify the theme of an issue dedicated to current problems in the history and archaeology of an ancient city may at first seem somewhat strange. In reality, however, this text, as in the consciousness of the author himself, contains a deep historical substrate, generated by many millennia of urban culture and, first and foremost, the ancient tradition. Although the poem was written by a poet of the Sixtiers about Leningrad in the final years of the “Thaw”, one should take into account, firstly, the significance of classical images and motifs in general for Brodsky's poetry and worldview, and secondly, the fact that both in content and style, through reference to the genre of elegy, the author engages in a dialogue with the classics of Russian literature (primarily A.S. Pushkin and Y.A. Baratynsky), and through them—with the poetic tradition of Greece and Rome, which gave rise to and nurtured this genre.

On the other hand, the vector of unfolding the elegiac chronotope chosen by Brodsky turns out, paradoxically, to resonate with the approaches used by historians and archaeologists studying ancient cities. The poet immerses the reader in the space of his native city, mentally moving from the outskirts to the center, starting with the industrial-port area (“this locality of love, the peninsula of factories, paradise of workshops, haven of river steamers”). Similarly, an archaeologist usually begins exploring a city from its periphery – the suburbs (khors), country estates, fortifications, as well as widely scattered but reliable signs of its existence: coins, stamps on pottery, imported goods that have passed through its port. The solemn and magnificent center does not immediately reveal itself to the researcher's eye. At times, it lies beneath later constructions (like ancient Chersonesus under Byzantine ones, or ancient Rome and Athens under modern buildings), and at other times it is buried under ruins and indeterminate (as in Tanais). A historian studying ancient cities, mainly using written sources, also approaches the subject of their research generally with the perspective of an outsider, rather than that of an insider – a native resident. For most

ancient cities, descriptions have been preserved of those for whom the city is revealed, starting from the harbors and walls.

The issue, which will be published in the year marking the 30th anniversary of Joseph Brodsky's death, will emphasize the relevance of the poet's work – including for the sciences under the aegis of Clio. Our authors are offered a range of topics on historical urban studies, related to the issues of the center and periphery of urban space: the city as a socio-cultural phenomenon – concepts and problems of terminology; theories of city origins; the "spatial turn" and the ancient city – the concepts of "center" and "periphery" in the early 21st century; topography of cities and urban necropolises; the city and its surroundings – models of interaction; sacred topography of the city; urban institutions; the private and the public in city life.