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BIBLIOGRAPHIC ESSAY

James Baldwin in the USSR and Post-Soviet Countries, 1970s–2010s

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Abstract

This article explores the history of Baldwin Studies in the USSR and post-Soviet countries (Azerbaijan, Belarus, Russia, Ukraine), which is illustrative of literary approaches and interpretations characteristic of Soviet scholarship. First translations of his short stories, essays, and the play *Blues for Mr. Charlie* appeared in the early 1960s, followed by commentaries in leading Soviet literary and popular journals. For ideological reasons, in the 1960–70s the focus was on the writer’s public stance and involvement in the civil rights movement. It was only in the years of *perestroika*—“openness”—and the 1990s that his oeuvre in its entirety began to be discussed without taboos, omissions, or ideological bias. In the 2000s, the focus shifted to discussions of aspects of Baldwin’s method and peculiarities of his style. At present, James Baldwin is regarded as a key personality in contemporary US literature, though interest in his literary heritage has somewhat subsided.

Keywords: African American literature, James Baldwin, translations into Russian, literary studies, ideological bias

In the essay “James Baldwin: In *Another Country*. The Voice of the Black Revolution” (2021), Boris Gilenson points out, “If Martin Luther King was the spiritual leader of the Black revolution, it acquired its strongest poetic voice in James Baldwin (1924–1987),” and he goes on to say that “already in his lifetime, he was regarded as a living classic.”¹ Thus, the Moscow professor acknowledges the place of the writer on the US twentieth-century literary map. Baldwin’s road to Soviet and post-Soviet readership was not straightforward or simple, though when news of the writer’s death reached the then Soviet Union, all major media responded with obituaries and articles in which his life and work were highly appreciated. The words of Toni Morrison, the first African American Nobel prize winner for literature, in her *New York Times* obituary, resounded in the hearts of Baldwin’s numerous admirers in this part of the world:

Jimmy, there is too much to think about you, and too much to feel. The difficulty is your life refuses summation—it always did—and invites contemplation instead.... I thought I knew you. Now I discover that in your company it is myself I know. That is the astonishing gift of your art and your friendship: You gave us ourselves to think about, to cherish.²

This “astonishing gift of art,” indefatigable struggle for human rights, great belief in the value of every human life regardless of gender, ethnic origin, or sexual orientation, and extraordinary openness and lyricism explain the great interest in Baldwin’s oeuvre in the former Soviet Union and post-USSR world. It is no wonder. He had been critical of racism, discrimination, sexism, exploitation of human resources, and imperialism, and, crucially, in his life and work, he stood for the right of a person to be different, to have a voice, visibility, and, most of all, to love and to be loved. Whatever the circumstances, he had always remained himself.

Remembering his legacy on the centennial of his birth highlights how significant his literary heritage was not only for his homeland but also for the whole world. Assessing this legacy also calls into question the ways Baldwin was not adequately received and interpreted.

The Study of Baldwin in the USSR in the 1960s

The period of the 1950s to early 1960s saw the transition of the Soviet Union from Stalinism to “Khrushchev’s thaw,” which changed the atmosphere in the country. Though censorship remained strict—the Communist Party still dominated every sphere of life, including control of intellectual thought, and Marxist-Leninist ideology had not disappeared—the developments in the USSR led to greater freedom of information, the relaxation of international tensions, wider contacts with the West, the beginning of cultural exchanges, and greater openness to outside influences. The transformation of Soviet society allowed the people to take a look at the world beyond the Iron Curtain through films, music, art objects, and books that had not been allowed before. This was the time when the Soviet readership started

its familiarization with James Baldwin. He stood out among other gifted US writers who began their career in this period as both a public persona and a fiery critic of the American system.

The major event that triggered interest in the young generation of American writers of African descent was the publication of Raisa Orlova's legendary article "Uncle Tom's Grandchildren Continue Fighting" in the journal *Molodoi Kommunist* (Young Communist, 1961).³ It was supposed to commemorate the centenary of the Emancipation Proclamation and to show the achievements of African American literature. Prior to that, there had been scant papers and articles dealing with African American literature, the only academic book used in universities being *US Progressive Negro Literature* by Mary J. Becker (1957), which gave an outline of the history of Black writing in the US.⁴ It was a sort of introduction to African American literature and, as such, was far from comprehensive. It also lacked insight into the contemporary period. Though it appeared at the end of the Stalinist period, the book contained a strong one-sided ideological message that continued to affect approaches to the subject matter for a number of years. Orlova's article turned out to be the starting point for Soviet researchers of African American literature, which began to grow into an important field of study in the 1960s–70s. In subtle ways, Orlova challenged the canonical approaches to literature, and hers was probably the most frequently quoted paper in the era, heralding new names of Black writers, highlighting their work, and showing the artistic level of contemporary African American writing, of which her readership could have only a vague idea, as most of the texts were unavailable in the Soviet Union. She featured such outstanding Black writers as Langston Hughes, Lorraine Hansberry, W. E. B. Du Bois, and John Oliver Killens, emphasizing that "America's black movement demands all human rights during the life of this generation."⁵ In 1962, Baldwin's name appeared in her article "As Much Truth as One Can Bear" in the journal *Voprosy literatury* (Literature Issues), to be followed by her reviews of *The Fire Next Time* (1963) and *Another Country* (1962), in which she also gives an overview of Baldwin's works published in the 1950s and early 1960s. Orlova evaluates the writer's essays approvingly, stressing their importance as documents of the political struggle of the period. As far as his novels are concerned, she finds *Go Tell It on the Mountain* (1953) "a psychologically unconvincing novel," at the same time speaking highly of *Another Country*, which, in her opinion, is "a horrifying shriek of suffering, hatred and despair."⁶ The insightful critic points out Baldwin's closeness to existentialism as, according to her, he "regards the race problem as part of world evil, which is inescapable and unknowable," and examines the controversies underlining the writer's honesty and sincerity in laying bare the hypocrisy and lies of racism in the USA. She claims that he "is looking for answers to his questions in a person's soul, only in the soul." Orlova concludes her article comparing Baldwin's work to a chronicle "that will help tomorrow's historian," pamphlets and leaflets that "explain the goings-on of the participants of the events," and "a mirror and a magnifying igniting glass."⁷ Her book *Huckleberry Finn's Descendants* (1964) contained a chapter featuring Baldwin.

It was also the time when the first translations of Baldwin's works—mainly short stories—began to be anthologized in different collections of US short stories. 1963 saw the publication of his story "Come Out the Wilderness" (1958), translated by T. Shinkar in the prestigious *Contemporary American Short Story* anthology, which problematizes the issue of privacy and interaction with other people. In a collectivized Soviet society, people were looked on as parts of society who had to live according to pre-conditioned social standards determined by the Party. Art was used as propaganda that was aimed at mobilizing the Soviet people "to fight for a bright future." Baldwin's search for identity and one's private space provided a look into human nature with its controversies and failures, and as such it found a response in the hearts of those who had been deprived of individuality and the right to be different from the socially imposed "Soviet persona."

The writer's insight into an individual's tribulations and hardships caused by a system and social taboos was of particular interest to people who were trying to shake off the burden of a state that regulated all spheres of life, including the domestic and intimate sphere. Baldwin's understanding of the inner lives of people was helpful in seeing one's own life not from the point of view of the standardized "ordinary man," but from one's own perspective. This accounts for the popularity of his short stories, which began to be published not only in major Soviet literary journals like *Inostrannaya Literatura* (Foreign Literature, 1964, 1971) and *Novy Mir* (New World, 1965) but also in provincial journals *Ural* (The Urals, 1967) and *Sibirskie Ogni* (Siberian Lights, 1972). The change of focus in Soviet art and literature resulted in the exploration of a person's private life and problems of the self. And though Baldwin dealt with American realities, his treatment of the issues of a person's self-identification, spiritual growth, loss, estrangement, alienation, and despair aroused general interest and paved the way for the academic study of Baldwin. Critical analyses of his work began to appear in literary journals throughout the Soviet Union, but especially in those places that began academic study of Baldwin and contributed to the growing research in the field of contemporary African American literature: Moscow, Kiev, Novosibirsk, and Minsk.

In 1964, the translation of his play *Blues for Mr. Charlie* by the well-known translators E. Golysheva and B. Izakov was published in the renowned journal *Inostrannaya Literatura* (Foreign Literature), whose domain was the best of world literature, thus acknowledging the writer's status. It was expected that the Soviet Army Central Theater, which had the right of the first production of the play in the USSR, would take the advantage of the opportunity. However, this was not to be, in spite of the fact that in the afterword to the publication of the play Nikolay Kurdyumov stressed that "Baldwin's pungent truth burns down; it requires an answer accusing the whole system, the whole mode of life of the past and today's reality of the American South." However, the reviewer reproaches Baldwin for not showing the social roots of racism—"the acute disease of bourgeois society."⁸

On the whole, it may be said that these publications started the discussion of Baldwin's contribution to literature on a large scale, involving not only academics but also a wide general audience; one should remember that, traditionally, Soviet

society was literature-oriented, and *Inostrannaya Literatura* and *Novy Mir* had an enormous circulation of millions of copies throughout the Soviet Union.

The 1970s

The 1970s and the early 1980s was a troublesome period in Soviet history. On the one hand, it started with the policy of *détente*, the conclusion of SALT 1, and the reduction of confrontation with the West; on the other hand, it witnessed the increase of Soviet military spending, military intervention in Afghanistan, and repression of dissidents, which, however, sparked unofficial culture and brought about a counterculture.

Nevertheless, in spite of the change in the political climate in the 1970s, Baldwin's work became one of the high points of Soviet Americanists' research. 1970 began with S. Maksimchuk's dissertation on the role of African American fiction in US literature (Kyiv, Ukraine). He discusses Baldwin's work in the chapter on decadent writers, pointing out the "extreme weakness of the social theme" in Baldwin's novels, which most Soviet literary scholars disagreed with, as in all his works Baldwin dealt with the effects of the white power structure not only on the history of the nation but also on every individual.⁹ Maksimchuk's colleague Yu. Pokalchuk from Kyiv emphasized the power of Baldwin's social criticism and his role in the struggle against injustice and racial discrimination.¹⁰ The two researchers looked at a broad spectrum of issues in post-WW II US literature, Baldwin being only one of the US writers they addressed.

The first Soviet dissertations on James Baldwin appeared in the 1970s. In 1973, Tankred Golenpolski, R. Orlova's PhD student from Novosibirsk, who defended the first Soviet PhD dissertation on Baldwin ("James Baldwin's Publicist Essays and the Black Liberation Movement in the USA," 1970), translated fragments from *The Fire Next Time*. They appeared in the Moscow anthology *Today and Tomorrow. Long and Short Stories by Contemporary American Writers*. The scholar did his best to promote Baldwin in the USSR when the writer's name became more and more associated with political activism and struggles against racism and the tenets of imperialism. Golenpolski's dissertation dealt mainly with Baldwin's non-fiction, which he discussed in the context of the civil rights movement in the USA, as well as analyzing Baldwin's philosophical views with their focus on ethics and moral issues. In the USSR, with its rigid system of values focused on molding the so-called "new Soviet human," the time for discussion of his novels had not yet come. Baldwin prioritized universal human values regardless of race, ethnicity, or gender, which was against the grain of the class-oriented, male-dominated Soviet Union. His artistic world involved the Bible as one of the cornerstones of his poetics, which greatly relied on religious allusions and references that were part of Baldwin's philosophical outlook. However, with the ongoing war on religion, the Bible was not printed in the USSR and was practically unavailable to the general audience, except the clergy. Believers were persecuted. This made an adequate analysis of the writer's novels, which are deeply rooted in the Bible, problematic.

Nevertheless, Orlova's and Golenpolski's works were some of the first steps toward bringing Baldwin to a Soviet readership. Golenpolski's commentaries laid the foundation for further research; in his later publications the critic showed Baldwin as a philosopher, but also remarked on his quandary: "the intermediacy of his characters' position—non-white by blood but non-black by their self-consciousness, their utterly egregious typicality."¹¹ In his 1976 article, he gave an overview of Baldwin's works, showing their roots in the blues tradition that combined simplicity and complexity, sadness, lyricism, and sensibility, and discussing their architectonics. Golenpolski claimed that Baldwin's books contain US history, the national consciousness that was tested during the tumultuous period of the 1960s. He also translated a few of Baldwin's short stories that were published in literary journals.

In 1974, a collection of Baldwin's various works under the title *Come Out the Wilderness: Short Stories and Essays* was published. It included the short stories "Come Out the Wilderness," "This Morning, This Evening, So Soon" (1960), "The Rockpile" (1965), and "Sonny's Blues" (1957), a fragment of the novel *Tell Me How Long the Train's Been Gone* (1968), and the nonfiction pieces *No Name in the Street* (1972) and "An Open Letter to my Sister Miss Angela Davis" (1971). In fact, it contained all Baldwin's texts that had been published in the Soviet Union. It was compiled by R. Rybkin, who translated "Sonny's Blues," and contained the 17-page foreword "James Baldwin's Blues" by V. Bolshakov, who described the Black revolution of the 1950s as the sea of wrath and claimed that "Baldwin is the black sea's own flesh and blood."¹²

Bolshakov gave an outline of the writer's life and commented on the texts included in the collection in the context of the social and political situation of the USA in the 1950s–60s. He prioritized the political Baldwin. As a journalist, Bolshakov made numerous references to the ideological conflicts that were taking place within the Black movement and tried to explain Baldwin's ambivalence concerning the struggle against racism and race discrimination through the division of the Black community into integrationists and separatists. However, the analysis of Baldwin's literary endeavor was made from an ideological point of view; its artistic merits were not properly addressed. The book ended with Baldwin's "Open Letter to my Sister Miss Angela Davis" that was to signify his renunciation of his old remedies to cure his homeland. As the book was published by a major Moscow publishing house oriented toward large audiences, it introduced Baldwin to millions of readers throughout the Soviet Union. In addition, the same year, the short story "Previous Condition" appeared in the anthology *Short Stories by American Writers on Youth*.

In the same year Orlova wrote a letter to James Baldwin, dated November 18, 1974, in which she highly praised his work. It was discovered in her archives by Valeria Abrosimova who examined Orlova's correspondence with US writers in a 2019 publication.¹³ R. Orlova-Kopeleva commented on the links between Baldwin, Dostoyevsky, and Tolstoy, and quoted an interview in which the writer mentioned Dostoyevsky's novels that helped him get out of the spiritual ghetto,

among them *Crime and Punishment*, *The Brothers Karamazov*, and *The Possessed*. She asked him to answer questions concerning his attitude to Dostoyevsky, Tolstoy, Chekhov, and other Russian writers. Unfortunately, it is not known if she got an answer.

The translation of *If Beale Street Could Talk* (1974) by N. Volzhina (1976) turned out to be a literary breakthrough for the reception of Baldwin in the USSR. Numerous reviews by leading Soviet literary critics and writers were published in the best literary journals across the whole country. Unlike Europe where, as Remo Verdickt claims, “the book is still understudied in Baldwin scholarship,” *Beale Street* achieved spontaneous and exceptional success in the Soviet Union.¹⁴ Alexey Zverev’s insightful review in the renowned *Novy Mir* journal was among the first critical responses to the book; the author went deep into a discussion of the power and lyricism of the novel.¹⁵ The celebrated critic pointed out the parallels between Shakespeare’s *Romeo and Juliet* and Baldwin’s protagonists, and focused on the artistic merits of Baldwin’s masterpiece, showing the writer’s special place in contemporary American literature. His Ukrainian colleague Tamara N. Denisova precisely summed up Baldwin’s place in the world: “His [Baldwin’s] passionate poignant lyrical prose and nonfiction belong to the whole world and to everyone in this world.”¹⁶ At a time when Soviet writers were publishing bombastic novels dealing with fulfilling and overfulfilling state plans, glorifying the accomplishments of the Soviet people, the poetic story of a contemporary African American *Romeo and Juliet* that could be read as a parable of the power of love to transcend evil was so fresh and poignant that it tremendously increased interest in Baldwin’s other novels. However, they were available only in English in the bigger national libraries. At this time the focus in academic research remained mostly on his public stance and involvement in the civil rights movement. Nevertheless, in the 1960s–70s Baldwin was canonized as undoubtedly one of the most recognized US writers in the Soviet Union.

The 1980s

A new step forward in the Soviet study of James Baldwin was the publication of the book *Problems of the Development of the Contemporary American Novel: R. Wright, R. Ellison, J. Baldwin* by Louisa P. Bashmakova (1979), which directly addressed the writer’s fiction, paying special attention to the peculiarities of Baldwin’s ethical stance and his writing strategies in comparison with his contemporaries.¹⁷ This pioneering research was much less dominated by the ideological content characteristic of the previous works on Baldwin and greatly contributed to the change of focus in Baldwin scholarship in the USSR. In large part, it influenced further research on Baldwin, which was complemented by Irina Udler’s PhD dissertation “Publicist Genres in James Baldwin’s Oeuvre” (1982), which she defended at Moscow Lomonosov State University.¹⁸ The scholar analyzed his nonfiction in connection with his drama, pointing out the influence of the traditions of African American folklore on Baldwin’s writing and emphasizing the role his environment

and personal experience played in his formation as an artist and a public persona. Udler gave a detailed analysis not only of Baldwin's worldview as it was reflected in his work; she also demonstrated a well-grounded and multifaceted approach to his books in different genres.

A year later, Serghey Chakovsky (Moscow) defended his PhD dissertation "Afro-Americans and US Literature: On Ideological and Artistic Peculiarity of the Literature of American Blacks" (1983), in which he made a comprehensive analysis of three of Baldwin's novels: *Another Country*, *If Beale Street Could Talk*, and *Just Above My Head* (1979).¹⁹ According to Chakovsky, one of Baldwin's specific themes is "black" or "reverse" blindness, which his fiction demonstrates. Chakovsky claimed that, for Baldwin, of importance was not a Black person as "a social type" but as "a representative of humankind, a psychological type."²⁰ Chakovsky assumed that what he called the "search for language" in Black art could hardly be regarded as a "clearly" aesthetic problem at a time when American Blacks were looking for "ideological and moral self-determination."²¹ For Chakovsky, *Another Country* was a "specimen" of the so-called "integrated novel," which he found "hardly successful" because the focus on love and the "escapist plot line destroy the basis of the tragedy that underlies the novel's first part."²² He also believed that it manifested "a split personality" in Baldwin.²³ However, he saw Baldwin's evolution in the fact that the writer was constantly criticizing himself and re-evaluating his work.

Baldwin's most popular novels, *Go Tell It on the Mountain* and *Giovanni's Room* (1956), were not dealt with as the time was not yet ripe in the USSR for the discussion of sexuality. In fact, the first dissertations publicized Baldwin mostly as a prophet and spokesman for African Americans fighting against race discrimination and oppression. As part of the class struggle, the Soviet Union emphasized the sufferings of Black Americans in contrast to the "happy life" of the Soviet people, who enjoyed freedom and equality. Consequently, scholars prioritized the issues of identity, race, and class but left aside some of the subtler questions of self-identification and sexual expression that could not be discussed in the ideologically charged but rigid atmosphere of the times. Some of the themes that Baldwin addressed in his novels and that he thought were important for the person's private life were somewhat "delicately" interpreted or ignored altogether. (In the USSR, homosexuality was criminalized from 1934 to 1993 and, therefore, the subject had to be tackled with discretion, if at all.)

L. Mishina from Cheboksary, Chuvashia, made use of the facts of Baldwin's biography in her 1984 dissertation concerning the genre of autobiography in US literature of the 1950s–70s and the socialist tradition, referring to his *No Name in the Street* and the novel *Tell Me How Long the Train's Been Gone*, in which Baldwin, according to the researcher, revisited the social and spiritual experience of the tumultuous 1960s.²⁴ Though Baldwin was only one of many writers whom she analyzed, he was the key figure of the period who contributed to the philosophical rethinking of the genre, developing the tradition of American autobiography, which goes back to the eighteenth century.

In 1985, I (from Minsk, Belarus) defended my PhD dissertation “Peculiarities of James Baldwin’s Prose of the 1950s–mid-1970s” at Moscow Regional Pedagogics University.²⁵ It was the first to deal with all of Baldwin’s fiction written up to that time. Of special importance was my analysis of the novels *Giovanni’s Room* and *Another Country*. At that time many US and Soviet critics like A. S. Mulyarchik claimed that from the artistic point of view, Baldwin’s 1970s works were poorer than his earlier books and seemed to be somewhat repetitive; a well-known specialist on contemporary US literature, Mulyarchik commented on the “erosion of the semantic and emotional levels and the desensitization of the readers’ perception” in Baldwin’s books.²⁶ I, on the contrary, argued that they summed up Baldwin’s achievements as a writer and demonstrated his maturity as a philosopher and thinker. This is reflected in his numerous essays, especially in *Notes of a Native Son* (1955), which address such issues as sin and redemption, good and evil, the morality and complexity of a human being, as well as in the way he delves into US history, analyzing its failures and conundrums through the characters in his novels, who are always pursuing existential questions that remain unanswered.

There began a tendency to use Baldwin’s works for the analysis of various linguistic phenomena. It was already generally acknowledged that the writer’s language and rhetoric were phenomenal and demonstrated the richness of his stylistic repertoire. V. Maksimuk from Lviv, Ukraine, based her examination of sentence structure as a means of realizing the author’s pragmatics on Baldwin’s essays, which showed unusual versatility of sentence structure.²⁷

By the end of the 1980s it was obvious that an acceleration in the translation of Baldwin’s works was beginning to take place. The books *If Beale Street Could Talk* and *Essays* were published in the prestigious 32-volume series “Library of US Literature” (1982) by the biggest Soviet publishing houses Khudozhestvennaya Literatura (Fiction), Raduga (Rainbow) and Progress, which offered the best in American literature, and the inclusion of Baldwin in the series was a sign of academic recognition. Soviet Radio made a recording of *Notes of a Native Son* (read by the popular Soviet actor Armen Dzhigarkhanyan) in 1983, which has been available as an audiobook since then. In 1985, a collection of Baldwin’s works under the title *Beale Street Blues* was published in Riga, Latvia.

James Baldwin’s visit to the USSR in 1986 was a major event in bringing the writer’s name to the front pages of all Soviet media. He took part in a Kremlin meeting with the Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev and in the Issyk-Kul Forum of intellectuals organized by the outstanding Soviet writer Chinghis Aitmatov, who had personally invited figures from the world’s cultural and intellectual elite in order to test *perestroika*’s “new thinking.”²⁸ Among the participants were the UNESCO Secretary General Federico Mayor, famous French, American, Turkish, British, and Cuban writers, musicians, sculptors, and intellectuals, Arthur Miller, Peter Ustinov, Claude Simon, Alvin Toffler, Lisandro Otero, and Baldwin’s longtime friend Yaşar Kemal.²⁹ Aitmatov, the Forum’s president, declared that “We live on different continents but we are one in that we are worried over the future of the planet and human civilization,” to which Baldwin responded,

“I believe that agreement among people, among nations, is possible, because it is urged by the need to avoid self-destruction. I’m sure that the world we live in belongs to everybody. Governments will be forced to heed the nations’ needs and will.”³⁰

Baldwin and his brother David appeared on TV and gave numerous interviews to the Soviet press. The newspapers *Sovetskaya kultura* (Soviet Culture), *Izvestia* (News), and *Nedelya* (Weekly) featured interviews with the writer by T. Rotenberg, T. Golenpolski, and R. Chorny, and published various materials concerning his life and oeuvre. Photos of the participants in these events were on the front pages of major Soviet newspapers. During the meeting with Gorbachev, Baldwin raised the question of the gap between people living in different parts of the world. He spoke about “needless people,” and pointed out that among the great many people inhabiting the world, some live in “the civilized world,” others are referred to as “the third world” with a pejorative connotation. “Our goal is to include into society those who have been excluded. Some of those who are in power consider them useless, surplus for society. This is a global problem.”³¹ This statement by Baldwin was greatly appreciated by people both in and outside the Soviet Union, which was going through cataclysmic changes. Newspapers highlighted the quotation from *The Fire Next Time* that read, “Hatred, which could destroy so much, never failed to destroy the man who hated, and this was an immutable law.”

Understandably, this visit contributed to the popularity of the writer in the USSR. His books continued to appear in Russian translation. Tatiana Rotenberg, Baldwin’s interpreter during the visit, translated his *The Price of the Ticket* (1985; translation 1988).

The 1990s and into the Twenty-first Century

The end of the 1980s through the early 1990s was marked by dramatic changes in all walks of life in the USSR. With the launch of *perestroika* in 1985 the Soviet people went through the process of democratization that brought about *glasnost* (openness), freedom of speech and expression, as well as freedom of information exchange, the end of the ideological *diktat* of the Communist Party and, consequently, of censorship, and did away with the isolationism behind the Iron Curtain. Thousands of works of art that had been banned became available; lots of names that had been prohibited were returned to the general public; taboo topics could be openly discussed. It also signified the end of the Cold War and the collapse of the Soviet Union into fifteen independent states, Russia being the biggest. The country went through enormous transformations, which also found expression in the sphere of literature. However, from the mid-2000s there started a dramatic change of the political climate in Russia that led to serious deterioration in relations with the West, the growth of radical conservatism, a crackdown on dissent, re-imperialization, and the curtailing of political freedoms, which greatly affected the cultural sphere.

The 1990s manifested a turbulent transition toward democracy when censorship was abolished, allowing an influx of literature which had been unavailable to the Soviet readership. This concerns Baldwin's legacy, too. 1990 saw the publication of his essays under the title *What It Means to be an American*, which included *Notes of a Native Son*, *The Fire Next Time*, and *The Evidence of Things Not Seen* (1985). In 1991, the Azeri researcher Farhad Mustafayev defended his PhD dissertation "The Problem of National, Racial and Spiritual Self-Identification in the Oeuvre of James Baldwin." Though it greatly relied on the previous dissertations on Baldwin and reiterated what had already been written about him in the USSR, it was the first of its kind in the Caucasus, thus introducing the writer's name to readers in that part of the Soviet Union.

In 1993, *Giovanni's Room* was translated by Gennady Shmakov (published by Glagol publishing house, Moscow).³² However, this translation was far from satisfactory: it was done in the 1960–70s by a person who translated the book using the dictionary and, therefore, it contained inaccuracies and errors. The translation was only published much later—when the taboo on same-sex relations was lifted during the *perestroika* years. Nevertheless, it was reprinted several times. Two new translations appeared: in 2004 by Aleksandr Radashkevich from Azbuka-Klassika publishing house, St. Petersburg, and in 2018 by V. Bernatskaya for ACT publishing house, Moscow.³³ For all the stylistic differences, the latter two are similar in their respect for the original text; it is more a matter of nuance, with Bernatskaya's being probably the better as she is not only a skilled translator but also a literary scholar who has been involved in the study of US literature, especially of the contemporary period. She also translated *Another Country* in 2000 for ACT, which was published in Nazran', capital of Ingushetia, with a foreword by Alexey Zverev, the renowned Soviet Americanist. In his 1992 article he explained why Baldwin's best novels had not been translated, commenting not only on the same-sex theme in his works but also on his philosophical stance. He wrote,

With regard to Negro literature, his prose breaks the unshakable stereotype: in reality, it turns out to be not the ideologized and incriminating fiction, which, according to the formula, it should be, but the existentialist parable where race confrontation is primarily a sign of human alienation in the world, which incarcerates everyone behind the invisible and impenetrable walls of the spiritual and psychological ghetto. And, if one thinks of it, the dominant feature of Baldwin's work was not the search for a way out of the race conflict but his search for love, "another country," which is so different from everyday life dominated by mistrust, misunderstanding, and vigilance. Is it possible for love, let it be perverted, cruel, and traumatic, to transcend the meta-physical absurdity of existence?³⁴

Zverev points out that in the Soviet Union Baldwin's existentialist views were regarded as an "alien addition to his strong talent of a socially engaged writer," and, therefore, the books could be translated only when existentialism had become recognized as a major philosophical inquiry, which happened only after the collapse of the ideologically Marxist Soviet Union.

However, scholarly study of Baldwin's heritage took a different turn in the 2000s. The 1990s were a difficult period for former Soviet academics who had to struggle for survival after the collapse of the USSR. The former database of the Russian State Library, which used to get a copy of every book or journal published in the country, was no longer viable. Links between academics began to wane, and it became difficult to trace what was being done in the former Soviet republics—the new independent states. Thus, information became scarce and accidental.

In 2009, I. Galinskaya discussed Baldwin's work as an existentialist writer in her article "US Existentialist Writers," focusing on the novel *Another Country*, which she strangely calls in Russian *In Another Country*. She concluded that the novel is "a bright example of the existentialist approach to reality because alienation in it has become a law of life."³⁵

Valeri Belyakovich, a gifted theater director and founder of Moscow's very fashionable "Theater in South West," adapted *Giovanni's Room* for his company, focusing on the power of love to transform life. But in the finale of the play a sad angel takes Giovanni up to the starry skies where only love matters. The director read G. Shmakov's translation in 1993 and resolved to stage it, whatever the obstacles. When asked whether he was afraid of being accused of promoting violence and homosexuality, he answered, "No more than of promoting vampirism after staging *Dracula*."³⁶ He interpreted the novel as a parable of love, seen as the greatest treasure on earth, which requires honesty and responsibility for those you love. The atmosphere of the bright spectacle emphasized the existential loneliness of a person in the face of love and death. The protagonist David goes through an existential crisis as, in his "innocence," he cannot accept himself and is afraid of love; that is why he escapes not only from Giovanni's room but also from himself, betraying those who love him. The play reaches its climax in the scene of Giovanni's remembering the tragic day when he lost everything he had had: son, wife, and God. However, David cannot hear him because he is unable to love. The director also represents intergenerational conflict, transforming the play into an ongoing dialogue between David's father, a well-established man brought up on traditional values and banalities, and the protagonist, who is perplexed by the complexity of the world and the multifariousness of human nature. They don't understand each other because each is deprived of the gift of hearing another perspective. The protagonist and those around him, with the exception of Giovanni, prefer the world of illusions (the scene is set in a semi-dark Paris nightclub) and don't want to look the truth in the face, thus condemning themselves to never know the reality of life. Freedom is a challenge, and they are unable to confront it. The setting presents a labyrinth of iron cages that remind one of cells, from which they try to find an exit, but they always get to the wrong door.

The play was premiered on July 31, 2007, and became one of the company's hits; it had a run of fifteen years and was later filmed for the "Kultura. RF" educational project, where it was available until 2022 when the new anti-LGBT law was adopted by the Russian parliament.³⁷ In November 2023, the international LGBT community was declared "extremist" and was banned in Russia.

A similar interpretation of the theme of love in Baldwin's work was made by Yulia Sapozhnikova, an academic from Smolensk, Russia, who in her 2014 dissertation maintained that "one of the leitmotifs" in *Another Country* was "love as a means to resist conformity and the struggle with loneliness," which, in fact, is also true of *Giovanni's Room*.³⁸ Summing up the role of Baldwin in the literary process, she concludes that "in spite of some inconsistencies, James Baldwin had a formative influence on African American post-WWII literature and helped in defining what it means to be a Black American."³⁹

Nevertheless, judging by the publications available, it is possible to say that the study of James Baldwin did not stop at that point but went in a different direction. Though the researchers who had already been involved continued their study of the writer's oeuvre (Irina Udler, Yuri Stulov), scholarly interest changed its focus. On the one hand, Baldwin's name appears in major works on twentieth-century US literature (histories of US literature/US literature as part of world literature) published by academic teams from Moscow Lomonosov State University (1999, ed. Ya.N. Zasursky; 2003, ed. L.G. Mikhailova and Ya.N. Zasursky), Kazan Federal University (2009, ed. G. Frolov, O. Nesmelova, and L. Khabibullina; 2017, O. Nesmelova and O. Karassik) as well as by individual authors: B. Gilenson (2003, 2021, Moscow), T. Denisova (2012, 2014, Kyiv), V. Prozorov (2001, Petrozavodsk), and A. Solomina (2012, St. Petersburg). E. Butenina discusses Baldwin's work in her 2013 book *US Multicultural Fiction* along with other major African American writers of the second half of the twentieth century, without going deeply into the problematics and aesthetic aspects of Baldwin's oeuvre. However, as her book is intended for graduate students it shows the importance of Baldwin for understanding US ethnic literatures.

Interestingly enough, the figure of Baldwin emerges during discussion of Russian émigré writers of the so-called fourth wave. In her analysis of the work of Russian émigré writers, I. Mineeva (Petrozavodsk) points out their "transcultural picture of the world, the characters' existentialist position, ambivalent vision of reality," and comments on the feelings of homelessness in the émigrés' own homeland and alienation abroad.⁴⁰ For Mineeva, in your own home there is no room for you, and you are an alien in your new country; thus, there develops a transcultural worldview. The researcher speaks of the so-called "interspace," life in between the two worlds, which might inspire the person to overcome Otherness. These characteristics might be applied to James Baldwin, who had a very special relationship with his alternative home countries France, Switzerland, and Turkey, where he spent most of his life.

On the other hand, Baldwin's work is also analyzed in the context of the development of world literature or in reference to specific aspects of the world literary process. His intersections with Russian writers are analyzed by Tatiana Morozova in her paper on the connections between Dostoevsky and US writers (2002), and by Yuri Stulov (Baldwin and Leo Tolstoy, 2018, 2022).

In her articles of 2017, E. Bepalova explores Paris through the eyes of émigré writers and draws parallels between US émigré authors and Baldwin, while

Yuri Stulov analyzes the representation of Paris in the works of Henry James and Baldwin. E. Bespalova focuses on the phenomenon of transatlantic literature, considering émigré writers transatlantic “from the point of view of their successful or unsuccessful integration into the new literary space.” She considers Baldwin to be “a key figure of twentieth-century transatlantic literature.”⁴¹ She insists that transatlantic connections and interactions between two continental philosophical and cultural traditions gave birth to the phenomenon of transatlantic culture and transatlantic literature.⁴²

Recent years have shown that though there have been no big research projects focusing on Baldwin, his work has not been lost on the younger generation of scholars. There have been a number of publications that demonstrate the possibility of using Baldwin’s work for various purposes. In 2020, V. Bernatskaya translated *Go Tell It on the Mountain*. The only novel that has not yet been translated into Russian is *Just Above My Head*.

The 2016 movie *I Am Not Your Negro* by director Raoul Peck, based on Baldwin’s unpublished essay, brought about a wave of commentaries. Mikhail Trofimov, one of the most insightful contemporary Russian film critics, called the writer “a great American novelist” and emphasized that the film director “does not reduce Baldwin, does not oversimplify him. It is as if he reconstructs those images that could and must have stood before Baldwin’s eyes when he wrote.”⁴³ Anton Dolin, until recently editor-in-chief of the journal *Iskusstvo kino* (Cinema Art), calls the movie “a really sensational exploration of the genesis of America,” referring to Baldwin as “an essayist and philosopher.”⁴⁴

Baldwin’s influence on and connections with younger African American writers (Toni Morrison, Randall Kenan, Toni Cade Bambara) are examined in Yuri Stulov’s papers (2011, 2014). Among other noticeable materials it is worthwhile to mention O. Baranova (Petrozavodsk), who made use of Baldwin’s novel *Go Tell It on the Mountain*, exploring ways to promote the humanization of education by means of literature (2006). She showed how novels like Baldwin’s could be used to help students enhance their emotional and spiritual development and creative potential. O. Panova (Moscow) discusses Baldwin’s essay “Everybody’s Protest Novel” of 1949 in her research concerning the reception of Harriet Beecher Stowe’s *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* by African Americans over a period of nearly 170 years, and maintains that it “became a turning point in the history of Stowe’s book in the twentieth century,” though she disagrees with Baldwin’s evaluation of it, emphasizing that in his criticism Baldwin prioritizes the principle of race, not Christian values or social inequality, which were of significance for Stowe.⁴⁵ O. Shalay (Minsk) analyzed the importance of the writer’s essays for the civil rights movement in the USA, taking special note of his rhetorical powers. A. Gafarova and T. Kalegina (Kazan) compare speeches by Malcolm X and James Baldwin in their analysis of the communicative stereotypes of African Americans.

Baldwin’s centenary is approaching, and the study of his reception in the USSR and post-Soviet countries gives hope that there will be new approaches

to his literary heritage as well as new discoveries. It is especially encouraging that his persona and literary legacy draw the attention of university students. M. Degtyannikova (Izhevsk) looks at how *Uncle Tom's Cabin* by Beecher Stowe influenced the work of Baldwin, while E. Vostrikov discusses *Giovanni's Room* from the point of view of twenty-first-century new ethics. To Vostrikov, the “new ethics” pointed out by Baldwin symbolized “the ethics of humankind” as most valuable for the contemporary world, making people “more tolerant, more friendly, more humane.”⁴⁶

Conclusion

In the USSR, the study of James Baldwin started in the early 1960s and went through several periods, with the 1960s introducing the writer as a prophet and a spokesman for African Americans fighting for civil rights. At this period his essays were of primary importance for publishers, though his short stories began to appear in Russian translations in different literary journals not only in Moscow but also in the Urals and Siberia. The first PhD dissertations go back to the late 1960s–1970s where the focus was on Baldwin's political stances, therefore dealing with his essays and the play *Blues for Mr. Charlie*. The 1980s were the most fruitful time for the discovery of Baldwin the novelist, as new PhD dissertations followed as well as translations of some of his fiction. His most famous novels were, however, translated only in the 2000s when censorship was removed and all kinds of taboos were lifted. Unlike in Europe, where, according to Remo Verdickt, “Baldwin remains first of all a *literary* commodity rather than a political agent,” the situation with access to the writer's texts in translation in the Soviet Union was quite the opposite.⁴⁷ It was only at the end of the Soviet era that he stopped being regarded mostly as a political agent: his major novels appeared in translation only in the 1990s and 2000s. His standing as a major American writer of the second half of the twentieth century ensured continued interest in his work and the inclusion of his oeuvre into university curricula. The artistic quality of his books inspired artists to transform them into audiobooks (*Notes of a Native Son*) or theater productions (*Giovanni's Room*).

The twenty-first century saw Baldwin's works analyzed from different points of view: their rhetorical powers, political and philosophical aspects, language and style. The writer has been canonized and his texts have been included in university curricula. By 2022 almost all of his major works had been translated into Russian (with the exception of the novel *Just Above My Head*). A new generation of scholars can thus further explore the subtler points of his literary heritage and philosophy.

Acknowledgments

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Notes

- 1 Boris Gilenson, *Afroamerikanskaya literature SShA: Ocherki i portrety* (African American Literature of the USA: Essays and Portraits) (Moscow: INFRA-M, 2021), p. 104. All translations from the Russian here and later in the text are by the author. Boris A. Gilenson (1932–2018) was a well-known Soviet and Russian academic who specialized in world and US literature, honorary professor of Moscow Pedagogics State University, eminent scientist of the Russian Federation, author of over 750 academic papers including course books on the literature of Antiquity, Classical Greek drama, history of world literature (different periods), history of US literature, African American literature, and monographs on the oeuvre of Mark Twain, Ernest Hemingway, John Reed, and Sinclair Lewis. He was one of the first to acknowledge the talent and courage of James Baldwin.
- 2 Toni Morrison, “Life in His Language,” *The New York Times* (December 20, 1987), p. 27.
- 3 Raisa Davydovna Orlova-Kopeleva (1918–89) was an outstanding Soviet specialist in American literature, literary critic, editor, translator, writer, civil rights activist; wife of Lev Kopelev, scientist, author, and dissident. Along with her husband, she had to live in exile after 1980 as they were deprived of Soviet citizenship in 1981. Author of a number of books that familiarized the Soviet readership with contemporary African American writers as well as their predecessors: *Uncle Tom’s Grandchildren Continue Fighting* (1961), *Huck Finn’s Descendants* (1962), *Harriet Beecher Stowe* (1971), and *The Cabin that Survived a Century* (1975).
- 4 Mary Iosifovna Becker (1920–2010) was a Russian literary critic and translator; she defended her PhD dissertation on American Negro literature that was later published as *Progressive Negro Literature of the USA* (1957). Most of her translations, including *Absalom, Absalom!* by William Faulkner, were published only in the years of perestroika.
- 5 R. Orlova, “Vnuki dydi Toma boryutsia” (Uncle Tom’s Grandchildren Continue Fighting), *Molodoi Kommunist* (Young Communist), 5 (1961), p. 126.
- 6 R. Orlova, “V poslednem krugu ada” (In the Last Circle of Hell), *Inostrannaya Literatura* (Foreign Literature), 12 (1963), p. 262.
- 7 *Ibid.*, p. 261.
- 8 N. Kurdyumov, “Svobodu, i nemedlenno!” (Freedom! At Once!), *Inostrannaya Literatura* (Foreign Literature), 11 (1964), p. 214.
- 9 S. Maksimchuk, *Negrityanskii roman v literature SShA poslevoennogo perioda* (The Negro Novel in the Literature of the USA after WW II) (Kyiv, 1970), p. 11.
- 10 Yu Pokalchuk, *Problema molodyozhi v amerikanskom romane 50 – 60-kh godov* (The Problem of Youth in US 50s–60s Fiction) (Kyiv, 1969), p. 22.
- 11 T. Golenposki, “Lubov’ i bol’ Dzheimsa Bolduina” (The Love and Pain of James Baldwin). *Literaturnoie obozrenie* (Literary Review), 1 (1976), p. 98. Tankred Golenpolski (1931–2015) was an Americanist focusing on American literature, film, and culture; publisher and editor of *International Jewish Newspaper*, ran the program “Culture and Art” on Radio Moscow World Service. Born in China to a family of Jewish expatriates. Translated books by Samuel Beckett, Thornton Wilder, James Baldwin, Irwin Shaw, Arthur Hailey, Arthur Miller, Edward Albee, and Robert Penn Warren.
- 12 V. Bolshakov, “Bluzy Djeimsa Bolduina” (James Baldwin’s Blues), in James Baldwin, *Vyidi iz pustyni* (Come out the Wilderness) (Moscow: Molodaya Gvardia, 1974), p. 5.
- 13 V. Abrosimova, “Mosty: ‘Russko-Amerikanskie literaturnye svyazi’ Raisy Orlovoi polveka spustya” (Raisa Orlova’s “Bridges: Russian-American Literary Links” Half a Century Later), *Literatura dvukh Amerik* (Literature of the Americas), 6 (2019), p. 399.

- 14 Remo Verdickt, "The Evidence of Things Translated: Circulating Baldwin in Contemporary Europe," *James Baldwin Review*, 8 (2022), p. 211.
- 15 A. Zverev, "Gde ulitsa korchitsia bezyazykaya" (Where the Street Writhes Speechless: A Quotation from the Poet Vladimir Mayakovski) *Novyi Mir* (New World), 1 (1976). Alexey M. Zverev (1939–2003) was a leading Soviet and Russian specialist on US literature and culture, Russian-American literary links, philologist and translator, professor at the Russian State University for Humanities, deputy editor-in-chief of the journal *Inostrannaya Literatura* (Foreign Literature), author of a number of books on Mark Twain, Jack London, William Saroyan, Leo Tolstoy, and Vladimir Nabokov, as well as the US modernist novel and the US novel of the 1920s–30s.
- 16 T. Denisova, *Pro literaturu SShA* (On the Literature of the USA) (Kyiv, Kyivo-Mohyla Academy Press, 2014), p. 410. Tamara N. Denisova (1934–2015) was a leading expert on American literature at T. Shevchenko Institute of Literature, National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine, and professor at Kyiv T. Shevchenko National University. She pioneered the study of Richard Wright in the USSR and took part in international conferences on Wright which also inspired her to take great interest in the work of James Baldwin. She wrote chapters on Baldwin in her *History of US 20th-century Literature* (2 editions: 2002, 2012), *The Contemporary American Novel: Social-Critical Tendencies* (1976), *Existentialism and the Contemporary American Novel* (1985), *US Novels and Novelists* (1990), and *On the Literature of the USA* (2014). The quoted paper was included in the academic collection of the USSR Academy of Sciences: *Amerikanskii kharakter: Impuls reformatorstva: Ocherki kultury SShA* (The American Character: A Reformatory Impulse. Essays on US Culture), ed. O. E. Tuganova (Moscow, 1995).
- 17 Until her retirement, Louisa P. Bashmakova (b. 1942) was professor at Krasnodar State University, Russia, founder of the research center History of Culture: Russia and North America, author of a wide range of publications on US literature, and one of the leading Soviet and Russian specialists on African American literature, as well as being a member of the Melville Society. For a number of years she was the co-director of the program of Russian Studies for the students of the Great Lakes Colleges Association and the Associated Colleges of the Midwest. She authored the program of Comparative Soviet-American Studies at Krasnodar State University. Her PhD dissertation was on *Richard Wright's Creative Work of the 1930s*.
- 18 Irina M. Udler (1939–2023) was professor at Chelyabinsk State University, Russia, and a leading specialist on slave narratives, Olaudah Equiano, the oeuvre of Frederick Douglass, James Baldwin, and African American journalism.
- 19 Serghey A. Chakovsky (b. 1949), literary critic and translator, worked until the 1990s at the A.M. Gorky Institute of World Literature; he is son of the Soviet writer Alexander Chakovsky, USSR Hero of Labor.
- 20 S. Chakovsky, "Rasovyi konflikt v literature SShA XX veka (negriyanskaya literatura v 20-30-60-e gody)" (Race Conflict in US Literature of the 20th Century (Negro Literature in the 20-30s–60s)), in *Literatura SShA XX veka. Opyt tipologicheskogo issledovaniya (avtorskaya positsiya, konflikt, geroi)*, ed.-in-chief Ya.N. Zasursky (US Literature of the 20th Century. Attempt at the Typological Research (Author's Stance, Conflict, Hero) (Moscow, Nauka Publishers, 1978), p. 309.
- 21 S. Chakovsky, *Afroamerikantsy i literatura SShA: ob ideino-khudozh. spetsyfyke lit. amer. negrov* (Afro-Americans and US Literature: On the Ideological and Artistic Peculiarity of the Literature of American Blacks) (Moscow, 1983), p. 10.

- 22 *Ibid.*, p. 14.
- 23 *Ibid.*, p. 15.
- 24 L. Mishina (b. 1950) is a philologist, professor, head of the Department of World Literature at Chuvash I. Ulyanov State University, and author of a number of monographs. L. A. Mishina, *Zhanr avtobiografii v amerikanskoi literature 50 – 70-kh godov XX veka i sotsialisticheskaya traditsia* (The Genre of Autobiography in American Literature of the 1950s–70s and the Socialist Tradition) (Moscow, 1984).
- 25 Yuri Stulov (b. 1945) is an independent researcher; until March 2021 he chaired the Department of World Literature at Minsk State Linguistics University; head of the Board of the Belarusian Association for American Studies, BelAAS representative on the Board of the European Association for American Studies. Distinguished Leadership Award for Internationals 2005 from the University of Minnesota, USA.
- 26 Alexander S. Mulyarchik (1938–2021) was a distinguished Soviet and Russian Americanist, literary critic and translator; head of the fiction department at Progress Publishers, senior research fellow at the Russian Science Academy's Institute of the USA and Canada and A.M. Gorky Institute of World Literature, professor at Moscow Lomonosov State University, head of the Department of World Literature at Moscow State Regional University. He had chapters on James Baldwin in his books *Poslevoennye amerikanskii romanisty* (Post-WWII American Novelists) (1980); *Spor idyot o cheloveke. O literature SShA vtoroi poloviny XX veka* (Arguing about a Human Being. On US Literature of the Second Half of the 20th Century) (1985); *Sovremennyi realisticheskii roman SShA: 1945–1980* (The US Contemporary Realist Novel: 1945–1980) (1988; SShA: vek XX); and *Grani literaturnogo processa* (USA: 20th Century. Facets of the Literary Process) (1994). A. Mulyrachik, "Predislovie" (Foreword), in James Baldwin, *Chto znachit byt' amerikantsem* (What It Means To Be an American), ed. A. S. Mulyarchik (Moscow, Progress Publishers, 1990), p. 20.
- 27 V. M. Maksimuk, *Struktura predlozhenia kak sredstvo realizatsii avtorskoj pragmatiki v publitsisticheskoi tekste: na materiale publitsystiki Dzheimsa Bolduina* (Sentence Structure as a Means of Realization of the Author's Pragmatics in a Publicist Text: On the Material of James Baldwin's Essays) (Lvov, 1987).
- 28 Issyk-Kul Forum was an international, informal, non-governmental forum of intellectuals created on the initiative of the Kyrgyz writer Chinghiz Aitmatov in October 1986. It brought together prominent intellectuals from East and West in the early years of *perestroika* in the USSR. Among them were writers, actors, artists, scientists, and public figures of that time. At first the forum participants gathered in the city of Frunze (now Bishkek), the capital of Kyrgyzstan, and then continued their debate in the city of Cholpon-Ata on the coast of Lake Issyk-Kul (Kyrgyzstan). This event was very important at the beginning of the decline of the Cold War between the USSR and the West. Chinghiz Aitmatov (1928–2008) was the best-known Kyrgyz-Russian writer, playwright, essayist, translator, statesman, diplomat; advisor to M. Gorbachev (1990–91), Soviet and Russian ambassador to Luxemburg and Belgium, from 1995 Kyrgyzstan's ambassador to Belgium, Luxembourg, and the Netherlands, EU, NATO and UNESCO; member of Soviet and Kyrgyzstan parliament; Lenin and USSR State Prize winner (three times), the European Literary Award and the Javaharlal Nehru International Prize winner, Hero of Socialist Labor. He was the author of a number of outstanding novels and short stories translated into over twenty languages as well as film scripts and co-authored plays. He is also known as the initiator of the development of the Kyrgyz language and culture.

- 29 The final statement said, “The Issyk-Kul meeting participants stress their resolve to contribute to shaping the future. This means a new way of non-linear thinking, imagination, new insights, and new anticipatory initiatives. The future should depend not only on political decisions and confrontations of power, but also on the imagination of men and women of genius, the initiatives and discoveries of scientists and scholars, the dreams of poets, and hopes of all people. All this would sow the seeds of new thinking—general and political.” O. Martynenko, “Discussions on Lake Issyk-Kul,” *Moscow News*, 43 (1986), p. 3.
- 30 O. Martynenko, “On the Way to the 3rd Millennium: Opinions of the Participants of the Issyk-Kul Forum,” *Moscow News*, 44 (1986), p. 5.
- 31 “Vremya trebuet novogo myshlenia” (The Times Require New Thinking), *Literaturnaya Gazeta* (Literary Gazette) (May 11, 1986), p. 2.
- 32 Gennady Shmakov (1940–88) was a philologist, translator, author of papers on the Russian poet Mikhail Kuzmin, a monograph on the ballet dancer Mikhail Baryshnikov; translated into Russian poems by Konstantinos Kavafis, a great modernist Greek poet. Emigrated to the USA in 1975. I. Brodsky dedicated one of his poems to him.
- 33 Valeria Bernatskaya (b. 1938), PhD, literary scholar and translator, is author of the monograph *Four Decades of US Drama (1950–1980)* and a number of papers on contemporary US and British literature. Translated works by E. Albee, D. Mamet, W. Allen, Henry Miller, T. Williams, James Baldwin, and a few other major US and British writers.
- 34 A. Zverev, *Lektsyi. Stat’i* (Lectures, Articles) (Moscow, 2013), p. 411.
- 35 Irina L. Galinskaya (1928–2017) was a Soviet and Russian philologist, head of the Department of Cultural Studies at the Center for Academic Research and Information Studies on Humanities at the Institute of Scientific Information for Social Sciences of the Russian Academy of Sciences (INION RAN), and editor-in-chief of the journal *Culturology*. Digest. I. Galinskaya, “Pisateli-ekzistentsialisty SShA” (US Existentialist Writers), *Kulturologia* (Culturology), 2:49, 2009), p. 20.
- 36 Valery Belyakovich (1950–2016) was a famous Soviet and Russian actor, theater director and teacher, founder and artistic director of the South-West Theater, Moscow, later artistic director of the Moscow Stanislavsky Drama Theater; winner of numerous theater prizes, people’s artist of the Russian Federation. Interviewed by Seva Galkin, “Komnata Dzhovanni v teatre na yugo-zapade” (*Giovanni’s Room* at the South-West Theater), *Kvir* (Queer), 12:53 (2007), <https://teatr-uz.ru/komana-dzhovanni-v-teatre-na-yugo-zapade> (accessed June 7, 2023).
- 37 A humanitarian and educational project dealing with the culture of Russia, describing interesting and significant events and people in the history of literature, architecture, music, film, and theater, as well as folk traditions and natural landmarks in the form of educational articles, notes, interviews, news and in other modern Internet formats.
- 38 Yulia Sapozhnikova (b. 1976), professor at Smolensk State University, specializes in African American slave and neo-slave narratives, author of a number of papers on the work of Harriet Jacobs, Frederick Douglass, and contemporary writers such as I. Reed, Ch. Johnson, Sh. A. Williams, and Toni Morrison. Yu Sapozhnikova, *Kategorija identichnosti kak khudozhestvennaya dominanta v afro-amerikanskikh klassicheskikh i novykh istoriyakh rabov: XIX–XXI vv.* (The Category of Identity as the Dominant Artistic Idea in African American Classical and New Slave Narratives: 19th–21st Centuries) (Smolensk, 2014), p. 179.
- 39 *Ibid.*, p. 180.

- 40 I. N. Mineyeva, "Emigratsia kak syuzhet v sovremennoi russkoi literature (Z. Zinik I K. Kobrin)" (Emigration as a Subject Matter in Contemporary Russian Literature (Z. Zinik and K. Kobrin), *Vestnik SPbSU* (St. Petersburg State University Annals), 9:4 (2014), p. 99.
- 41 E. K. Bepalova, "Fenomen transatlanticheskoi literatury: k postanovke problem" (The Phenomenon of Transatlantic Literature: Posing a Problem), *Voprosy russkoi literatury* (Russian Literature Issues), 2:32/89 (2015), p. 165.
- 42 *Ibid.*, pp. 167–8.
- 43 Mikhail Trofimenkov (b. 1966) is a famous Russian art and film critic, director of the international program of the film festival Kinotavr, member of the editorial board of the Seans publishing house. M. Trofimenkov, "Otchayanie proshlogo i razocharovanie nastoyashchego" (The Despair of the Past and the Disillusionment of the Present), *Kommersant. Weekend* (Businessman. Weekend) (June 23, 2017), p. 18.
- 44 A. Dolin, "Pobediteli Berinale-2017" (Winners of Berinale-2017), *Meduza* (February 19, 2017).
- 45 Olga Panova (b. 1965) is professor in the World Literature Department, Moscow Lomonosov State University, senior research officer at A.M. Gorki World Literature Institute of the Russian Academy of Sciences, author of monographs and numerous papers on the history of African American literature, editor-in-chief of the journal *Literature of the Americas*, and a translator. O. Panova, "Khizhina dyadi Toma Harriet Bicher-Stowe v vospriatii afroamerikantsev (The Reception of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* by African Americans), *Vestnik Permskogo universiteta. Russkaya i zarubezhnaya filologiya* (Perm University Annals. Russian and foreign philology), 10:2 (2018), p. 115.
- 46 E. Vostrikov, "Komnata Dzhovanni Dzheimsa Bolduina v aspekte novoi etiki XXI veka" (*Giovanni's Room* by James Baldwin from the Aspect of 21st-Century New Ethics), in *V mire studencheskoi nauki* (In the World of Student Science) (Penza, 2021), p. 111.
- 47 Verdickt, "The Evidence of Things Translated," p. 214.

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