

FROM THE EDITOR

This issue of *Slavic Review* breaks new ground. It provides a wide-ranging sample of gender studies in literature and a succinct survey of the attainments of Russian historians in gender and feminist studies. It explores the distress of abandoned children in soviet history. It reports on population movements of as yet uncertain but surely of dismaying magnitude. It offers the first of *Slavic Review's* "fast track" social science publications, whereby fresh research findings challenge established assumptions. Finally, this issue contains the first full statement by Russia's Foreign Minister of that country's human rights foreign policy.

New departures are vital to an area studies journal when the term "area" is proving worrisome. As borders collapse from Berlin to Vladivostok—and most tragically now in the southern tier of lands we study—only new ways of comprehending culture, society, nation and state offer consolation for Gertrude Stein's lament, "there is no there there."

Far better Stein's linguistic scepticism, however, than the "linguistic correctness" that can accompany the quest for political identity: when language is asked to substitute for political borders and asserted to be a sovereign and certain thing. At Swift's school of languages Gulliver encountered a research project aimed at abolishing words: "since words are only names for *things*, it would be more convenient for all men to carry about them such *things* as were necessary to express the particular business they are to discourse on." This project to banish difference failed when women raised a rebellion in the name of "the liberty to speak with their own tongues."

The literature studies in this issue show how the play of language between genders can confer or dispel identity—of poet, of city, of nation. The lesbian poet Sophia Parnok proceeds from the private recognition of "a voice like mine" to the creation of a literature "like mine," initiating a lesbian lexicon in the canon of Russian literature. Marina Tsvetaeva inscribes feminine speech upon St. George's patriarchal Moscow and thus shifts the female experience from periphery to the very center of Russian culture. Literature has served other masters too. Nineteenth century Russian literature underwrote imperial ambitions in its eroticization of Georgian women and marginalization of Georgian men. Russian nationalism still displays an undercurrent of the sexualization of national difference, as in the case of reactions to Andrei Siniavskii's Abram Tertz and his Pushkin.

The "otherness" in sexuality is inextricable from literary language; to investigate it in the context of area studies is to examine linguistic national consciousness at its source; to take steps to restore the "there" there.

E.D.M.



Prince G.G. Gagarin (1810–1893), “Caucasus Types in the Time of Lermontov: Georgian Women.”



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