



**New
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New Literary Observer
presents

**29th Bath Readings
International Annual Conference**

NON-IMPERIAL RUSSIA: IMAGES, CONCEPTS, PRACTICES

April 7 – 9, 2023 (in virtual mode)

<https://www.youtube.com/@nlobooks/streams>

Is a Non-Imperial Russia possible? What pivot points can there be today in overcoming the imperial consciousness? While various disputes about the specifics of the imperial nature of Russia in a comparative perspective and the imperial history of Russia are undergoing constant revisions, the reconstruction of the imperial history of Russia suggests a completely different view of our history. What was pre-revolutionary and Soviet anti-imperial thought? Which cultural and philosophical trends formed the modern ideas of Russian intellectuals on the decentralized structure of the state? When did the question get raised and who raised the question about the federalization of the Russian Empire? How did movements for autonomy for peoples subject to Russia resist official nation-building? How were the struggles of original cultures for independence from cultural metropolises of Russia carried out? How did the official imperial narrative relate to non-imperial cultural practices?

In terms of the request for an anti-imperial vision, we do not have prepared answers for these questions. But we are ready to start thinking and discussing about which model (or models) we could put forth as an alternative imperial image of Russia. Can the 300 years of imperial Russia be considered a uniform linear history? Was it a homogenous space, or did imperial and non-imperial movements of social organization compete with one another? Where did the boundary lie between the imperial and the non-imperial in Russian culture? How much did different social and political groups search for a different, non-imperial national identity? What have been the alternative, and sometimes unpredictable, patterns and practices that have had a place in our history, and what traces have they left behind for our present? What do Western and Russian Slavic studies have to offer on this topic today?

We invite our speakers to reconstruct an alternative, non-imperial history of Russia within the framework of conditional triad:

- 1) State institutions (ideas about alternative social structures in Russia; academic programs and educational practices; governmental attempts to overcome or humanize imperialism; different kinds of reforms, decrees, conspiracies of the elite, etc.).
- 2) Alternative models of public life (grassroots organizations and movements that contribute to the formation of a non-imperial consciousness; the everyday as an area of non-imperial existence; etc.).
- 3) Cultural intellectual reflection (public discussions and theories that develop non-imperial motifs of national self-consciousness; artistic practices and visual images of non-imperialism; non-canonical narratives in literature; etc.).

FRIDAY, April 7, 2023

Morning session: 11.00 – 15.00 (Moderator: Irina Prokhorova)

HISTORY

1. Mikhail Krom (European University, St. Petersburg). The Idea of Common Cause and Conciliar Practice in the Moscow State of the 16th–17th Centuries
2. Kirill Soloviev (HSE University, Moscow). Russian Zemstvo Versus the Empire
3. Sergei Abashin (European University, St. Petersburg). From Imperial Loyalty to Soviet Treaty and Independence: A History of Muslim Political Projects in the Early 20th Century
4. Pavel Lukin (Institute of Russian History, Russian Academy of Science). Non-Moscow Concepts of “Sovereignty” in the Russian Lands of the 15th Century: Veliky Novgorod and the Principality of Tver

Afternoon session: 16.00 – 19.00 (Moderator: Kirill Zubkov)

LITERATURE AND CULTURE. I

1. Evgeny Dobrenko (Ca Foscari University, Venice). Soviet Multinational Literature as an Imperial Project and as a Challenge to the Empire
2. Elena Chkhaidze (Ruhr University, Bochum, Germany). Let’s Start Over...?! On the Search for National Identity in Georgian Cinema of the 1980s–2000s
3. Kevin Platt (University of Pennsylvania, USA). Russophone Poetic Anti-Empires: Model(s) of Decolonization
4. Ilya Kukulkin, Maria Mayofis (Amherst College, USA). Criticism of the Soviet Model of the Bildungsroman in Two Books of the Early 1980s on Ethnic Deportations
5. Polina Barskova (University of California, Berkeley). “I Was a Useless Soldier”: The War of Memory in the Texts of the Humanities

SATURDAY, April 8, 2023

Morning session: 11.00 – 14.00 (Moderator: Tatiana Vaizer)

CONCEPTS. I

1. Oleg Kharkhordin (European University, St. Petersburg). How Can One Mix Monarchy with Democracy? Cassius Dio and His Precepts against the Background of Classical (Civic) Republicanism
2. Viktor Kaplun (HSE University, St. Petersburg). The Russian Enlightenment as a Critique of Despotism and the Classical Republican Project
3. Lorenz Erren (HSE University, St. Petersburg). Brutus, Assassin of Tyrants: How Roman Republicanism Attracted the Russian Aristocracy
4. Timur Atnashev (The Moscow School of Social and Economic Sciences). Not/Ours - Constructing the Chronotopes of a Retreating Empire

Afternoon session: 16.00 – 20.00 (Moderator: Irina Prokhorova)

LITERATURE AND CULTURE. II

1. Andrei Zorin (Oxford University, Great Britain). Tolstoy, Empire and War
2. Ilya Kalinin (Princeton University, USA) Russian Liberals as a Mirror of the Russian Empire
3. Oleg Lekmanov (Mirzo Ulugbek, National University of Uzbekistan, Tashkent). Joseph Brodsky as an (Anti)Imperial Poet
4. Ilya Vinitsky (Princeton University, USA). The Shield of “Self-Standing”: Did Pushkin Coin a Key Term of Russian Nationalism?
5. Yasha Klots (Hunter College, New York, USA). Tamizdat: Empire or Multiculturalism?
6. Mark Lipovetsky (Columbia University, USA). Is the Late Soviet Underground an Alternative to the Imperial Culture?

SUNDAY, April 9, 2023

Morning session: 11.00 – 15.00 (Moderator: Tatiana Vaizer)

PUBLIC SPHERE

1. Mikhail Velizhev (Université Grenoble Alpes, France). Capital without a Court: The Imperial and the Non-Imperial in the Moscow Public Sphere of the Mid-19th Century

2. Aleksander Dmitriev (Swiss Federal Institute of Technology, Lausanne, Switzerland). “Together and Apart at the End of the ‘Great War’”: From the Collection *Fatherland* (1916) to National Congresses (1917)
3. Galina Orlova (HSE University, Moscow). Subsidiary, or the Political Anatomy of Scale
4. Ekaterina Boltunova (HSE University, Moscow). “I Ask You to Consider Me a Member of Society”: Soviet Volunteer Societies for the Preservation of Monuments and Reflections on the Historical Past in the 1960s–1980s

Afternoon session: 16.00 – 19.00 (Moderator: Irina Prokhorova)

CONCEPTS. II

1. Alexander Etkind (Central European University, Vienna), Vladimir Kostiushev (HSE University, St. Petersburg). Science, Politics and Foresight: Galina Starovoitova and her Views on the Federal Structure of the Russian Federation
2. Mikhail Iampolsky (New York University, USA). Russia – Between Empire and Nation
3. Kirill Ospovat (University of Wisconsin – Madison, USA). Literature as Democracy: Towards a Relevant Philology
4. Irina Shevelenko (University of Wisconsin – Madison, USA). Anti-Imperial Visions of the Revolutionary Epoch (1900—1910s)