

Title: Pil'niak, Platonov, and the Pursuit of Happiness

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Abstract:

Russian literature first exalted the advent of the revolution as a natural event regenerating life, as Blok states in “Intelligentsiia i revoliutsiia,” and allows for a return to the idyllic past of the devotion to mat'-zemlia, about which Fedotov writes in “Russian Religious Mind.” Throughout the Twenties-Thirties however, the countryside undergoes crucial changes, determined mainly by the development of the city and of technology. So how did the Bolshevik revolution and the following political events affect the portrayal of nature in Russian literature, which has always been characterized by a great sensitivity towards nature? And how did literature incorporate Stalin’s plan, where “the environment and nature were regarded as an enemy to be tamed and enslaved” (Stevenson 222)?

The work of two authors is especially apposite to answer these questions: that of Boris Pil'niak and of Andrei Platonov. As Tolstaia-Segal and Malygina outline, each of the two authors play a crucial role in the other’s literary career – not only because in 1928-29 they co-wrote the satirical sketch Che-Che-O and the play *Duraki na periferii*, but particularly because we can identify mutual links in their production. According to Tolstaia-Segal, traces of Platonov’s thought are in Pil'niak’s works, like “Krasnoe Derevo” (1927), and Platonov’s *Kotlovan* (1930) may be considered a response to *Volga vpadaet v Kaspiiskoe more* (1930). Analyzing Pil'niak’s *Volga vpadaet v Kaspiiskoe more* and *Golyi god* (1921) and Platonov’s *Kotlovan* and “Dzhan” (1934-35) would help us better understand how Russian literature reflects the tension between nature, city, and technology after the revolution. Bakhtin’s idea of idyll will guide us in this analysis and allow to highlight the phases of a process and the literary representations of a situation where “the pursuit of happiness” has been turned down.