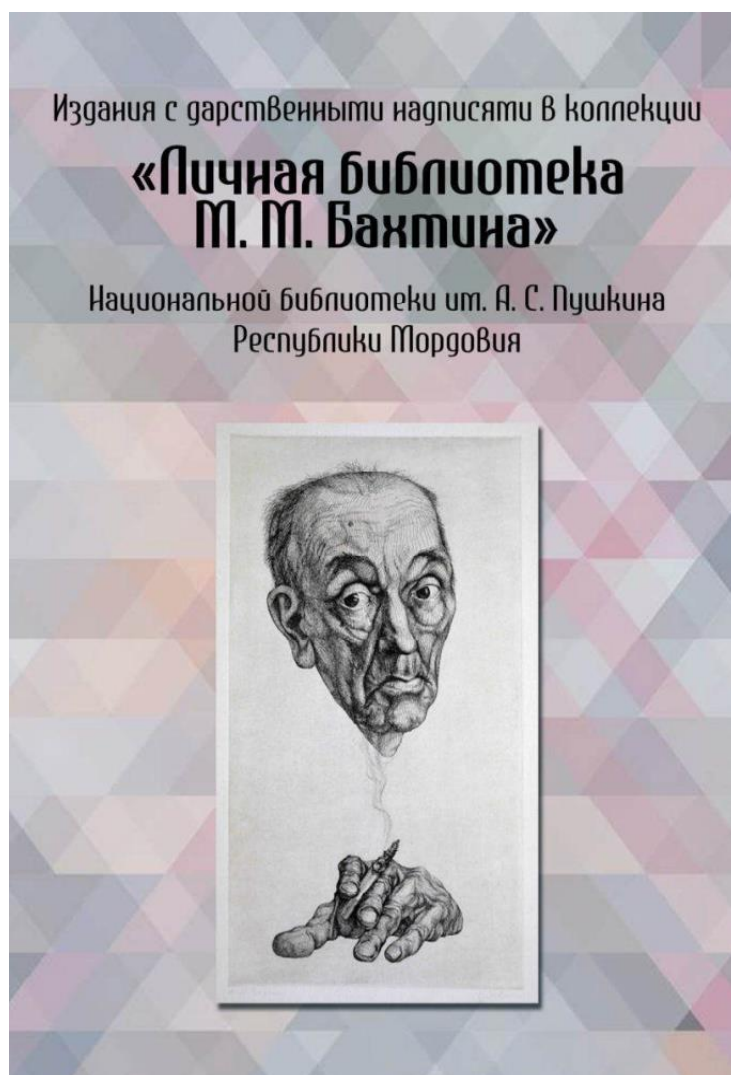


**Publications with Dedicatory Inscriptions in the Collection “The Personal Library of M. M. Bakhtin” of the National Library of the Republic of Mordovia named after A. S. Pushkin: Catalog / comp.by N. N. Zemkova; ed. O. A. Paltina. Saransk, 2018. 264 p.**

*Svetlana Dubrovskaya\**  
*Oleg Osovsky\*\**



\* National Research Mordovia State University – MRSU/ Faculty of philology, Department of Russian as a Foreign Language, Saransk, Russia; Dr. of Sc. (Philology); <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1361-6942>; [s.dubrovskaya@bk.ru](mailto:s.dubrovskaya@bk.ru)

\*\* M. E. Evseyev Mordovian State Pedagogical University –MSPU/ Faculty of philology, Department of Linguistics and Translation, Saransk, Russia; Dr. of Sc. (Philology); <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9869-3233>; [osovskiy\\_oleg@mail.ru](mailto:osovskiy_oleg@mail.ru)

The inscriptions in books and journals given to Mikhail Bakhtin as gifts and preserved in his library provide an important source, not only for the reconstructing certain moments in his biography but also for clarifying the nature and characteristics of the reception of Bakhtin's ideas and works. In particular, they indicate that Bakhtin gained his reputation as a renowned scholar and innovator in academic circles long before publication of the second edition of *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, and the publication of *Rabelais and His World*.

They also reflect the refreshing effect of Bakhtin's ideas on the young generation of scholars in the field of humanities. Meanwhile, an inscription in a book becomes a line in the silent dialogue between the authors and Bakhtin, an expression of hope for a future conversation, and a cause for self-reflection and self-criticism. Among the authors of the inscriptions are Bakhtin's old and new friends, his former scientific opponents, famous writers, and literary critics, colleagues in the department, and students. The special value of the publication lies in the reproduction of the book covers or front pages and the inscriptions themselves.

The publication of the book under review is an event of immense importance in the field of Bakhtin studies in Russia. Never before has such a large number of documents spanning Mikhail Bakhtin's life and work been published in one book.

The catalog contains 234 gift inscriptions in 227 books and 5 journals, every single one providing unique value to researchers. But of even greater importance are the photographs of inscribed books and journals themselves. As some inscriptions are difficult to read, this allows the readers to compare the handwritten inscription with how it is deciphered.

This publication offers an opportunity to clarify many details concerning the biography and work of Mikhail Bakhtin. It gives a chance to delve into the world surrounding Bakhtin, to see many individuals behind the books, each connected with the philosopher through their own story. These people sometimes remain unknown or hidden under the vague definition: "from a grateful reader" (p.240), "Mordovian branch of the VTO [All-Russian Theatrical Society]" (p.249). Yet sometimes, these individuals are prominent scholars, and their appearance to a large extent changes our perception of the sympathy or antipathy that others felt towards Bakhtin himself. An obvious example

is the book inscribed by an OPOYAZ leader and Formalist Viktor Shklovsky, one of the most active participants in the Prague Linguistic Circle and a friend of Roman Jakobson Petr Bogatyrev and the brightest of the “younger formalists” Lydia Ginzburg. It must, therefore, be considered that the fact that these people gave books to Bakhtin in the 1960s and early 1970s requires a new perspective on what can be loosely referred to as the last page in the history of relations between Bakhtin and the Russian Formal School. The most dramatic example in this regard is the inscription made by Viktor Shklovsky on February 18, 1973, in his book on Sergei Eisenstein: “Dear Mikhail[1] Mikhailovich! Here is another book. I don’t see it myself, but I love the man. I love his path less. He walked compellingly and performed a miracle, reached his goal” (p.208).

These newly discovered details shed much on Bakhtin’s biography.

This raises a number of simple questions, whose answers can be found in the book: What was the gift? Who gave it? When was it given? And where was it given? In part, they were already answered by the authors of the inscriptions and the compiler of the catalog, who tried to give information about each of the individuals who presented Bakhtin a gift while, unfortunately, not mentioning the circumstances of their acquaintance with Bakhtin. As it turns out, the first in the list of books given to Bakhtin is dated 1943 (p.193), and the last was handed to him shortly before his death – February 1, 1975 (p.161). Having limited herself to the main task of introducing inscriptions, the compiler did not offer a formula for a possible analysis of the “gifts”: the years when most of the books were donated (needless to say that most of them were given to Bakhtin when his “fame” reached its climax); the main places where the books were handed over (Saransk, Moscow, the Writer’s Dachas in Maleevka and Peredelkino). Those questions are left to be answered by researchers of Bakhtin’s heritage, who compare the data available in the publication with information from other sources – archival documents, memoirs of contemporaries, colleagues etc.

It should be noted that the potential use of Bakhtin’s library collection, and especially the inscribed books as a historical and biographical source, was already indicated by the commentators of Bakhtin’s collected works, referring to relevant publications whenever this was possible. Accordingly, Sergei Bocharov, tracing the history of the Leningrad academic circles’ attitude towards the *Problems of Dostoevsky’s Art* gives the example of Naum Berkovsky. Publishing Berkovsky’s letter

to Bakhtin, dated January 18, 1956, Bocharov explains: “The letter shows how exceptional the unofficial reputation of M.M.B[akhtin] and his book [...] was among philologists [...] at the time of the author’s seemingly greatest neglect and obscurity, seven years before the second edition of the book” (Bakhtin, 2000, p.513). At the beginning of April 1955, Bakhtin’s younger colleague, Valentina Estifeeva, came to Saransk to Leningrad and brought Bakhtin the book inscribed by Naum Berkovsky and other colleagues. The history of these signatures is partially disclosed by the published letter: “Thank you for responding to the book (which we) sent to you. There were others who wanted to make an inscription for you, but the book could not wait any longer, it had to be sent. The man who was really upset with not inscribing the book for you was A. S. Dolinin” (Bakhtin, 2000, p.513). Bocharov himself referred to the book, which at that time was still in Bakhtin’s archive. Today, the researcher can read these inscriptions in the catalog. Berkovsky, for example, was quite traditional: “To Mikhail Mikhailovich Bakhtin with the deepest respect. Apr[il] 4, 1955” (p.28). Dmitry Maksimov, a specialist in the works of Alexander Blok and Russian literature of the Silver Age, wrote: “To Mikhail Mikhailovich Bakhtin with deep respect for his brilliant talent” (p.131). The inscription of Anna Romm, a historian of British and American literature and theatre is also rather concise: “To Mikhail Mikhailovich as a sign of deep respect” (p.158).

Gift inscriptions by the inner circle of Elena and Mikhail Bakhtin also provide more accurate details of Bakhtin’s biography. The dramatic story of Bakhtin’s theses defense on November 15, 1946, continues the next day, when Bakhtin and his friend, the great pianist Maria Yudina, go to visit the famous art critic Mikhail Alpatov. This is evident from the date in the album of Pieter Bruegel the Elder, given by the owner to Bakhtin: “To the esteemed Mikhail Mikhailovich Bakhtin with best wishes. M.A. 16.XI.46” (p.16).

The story of returning Bakhtin’s library back to Saransk, from where it had moved with its owner into a Moscow apartment, deserves special commentary. Unfortunately, it is only briefly mentioned in the catalog. After Bakhtin’s death, in accordance with his will, the library was placed at the disposal of Leontina Melikhova, who in the early 2000s decided to transfer most of it to Saransk. As the compiler of the catalog points out, “in November 2008 the A.S. Pushkin National Library of the

Republic of Mordovia [...] took custody of the collection of Mikhail Mikhailovich Bakhtin's books and journals" (p.6).

It should be added that in 2015, to mark the 120th anniversary of the birth of Mikhail Bakhtin, Melikhova donated a number of the remaining publications to the Mordovian University, where Bakhtin had worked for more than 20 years. At the moment, these books are also cataloged, and the University M. M. Bakhtin Centre and the National Library are preparing a common catalog of the collection.

We have to mention that, despite all the efforts of "Bakhtinologists," Bakhtin's biography in many ways remains a bizarre mixture of real facts and fantastic legends, and even the "oral history" told by Bakhtin in conversations with Viktor Duvakin, according to Vitaly Makhlin's astute observation, raises more questions than it gives answers (See Makhlin, 2004). The circumstances of Bakhtin's biography, the hardships that he encountered, his relocation from Petrograd to Nevel and then from Nevel to Vitebsk, wandering through rented rooms in Leningrad, the exile in Kustanai and then the total uncertainty of life in the first Saransk and Savelovo periods, all of which naturally did not contribute to Bakhtin either collecting or preserving whatever books he had. From the evidence of the Savelovo period, it is known that before he left Bakhtin handed out his small library to his school colleagues (See Ponomareva & Stroganov, 1992). It is absolutely certain that from his stay in Savelovo, Bakhtin had a German-Russian Dictionary given to him by the director of school No. 39 and Leonid Timofeev's popular essay "Poet and Prose" inscribed by David Chernov, as we might assume, Bakhtin's colleague from one of the Savelovo schools. The latter wrote: "On the eternal memory of a man of great soul and kind heart Mikhail Mikhailovich Bakhtin from David Chernov, with infinite respect and forever devoted to you. In moments of reflection, painful hardship, remember the men who shared with you the hours of painful ordeal of World War II, with a pen and a book. Always your David. 24 / VI-43 g." (p.193).

Bakhtin received a real opportunity to collect his library only in Saransk, where he could finally have his own study in his newly acquired apartment. Valentina Estifeeva, Leonid Vasiliev, Ivan Voronin and Yuri Basikhin who visited the Bakhtins in the 1950s and 1960s (their works are also presented in the catalog) recall a bookcase and stacks of books and journals on a desk (See Yestifeyeva, 2000). By the early 1970s

the Bakhtin library had become a fairly solid collection of books and journals. Irina Klyueva and Lyudmila Lisunova indicate that the collection has 1378 volumes: 1019 of them are in Russian, 301 in German (mainly journals), 19 in English, 11 in French, 5 each in Latin and Polish, 4 in Czech, 3 in Bulgarian, 2 each in Mordovian languages (Moksha and Erzya), Romanian, Serbian and Croatian and one volume each in Spanish, Swedish and Ukrainian (Klyueva & Lisunova, 2010, p.31).

Inscribed publications make up a considerable part of Bakhtin's book collection. The circle of donators is extremely diverse and accurately reflects the whole range of Bakhtin's social contacts: from students, younger colleagues, visitors of his public lectures and semiotics and structuralists from Moscow and Tartu to major Dostoevsky scholars, old friends from Nevel and Leningrad and translators of Bakhtin's books into various languages. The history of the inscriptions therefore becomes the history of the reception of Bakhtin's ideas and the different attitude towards the work and personality of the scholar during several decades. This allows the researcher not only to obtain more accurate information concerning Bakhtin's biography but also to understand some features of a particular period of his life.

Another point is related to the specifics of the inscription and its place in the process of communication between the donor and the person to whom the book is given. It is safe to assume that the inscription becomes a line in a silent dialogue, the beginning of a conversation that is supposed to or expected to continue in the future. The inscription reveals a lot about the person who wrote it and the feelings he or she had for Bakhtin. It can also be viewed as an act of self-reflection, which is extremely important for understanding the nature of the reception of Bakhtin's ideas and personality, both in the 1960s and the beginning of the 1970s. This is also the case for the previous period when Naum Berkovsky was not the only one who sought to preserve the memory of "Problems of Dostoevsky's Art." In this respect the inscription made by the young theatre historian Tatyana Bachelis characterizes the refreshing effect of Bakhtinian ideas on the 1960s generation: "To the genius Mikhail Mikhailovich Bakhtin, with deepest gratitude for the wonderful thrill that he stirred up in the minds of people of my generation. (Please,) do not bother yourself reading that book – let it just stay beside you. Sincerely, T. Bachelis. Peredelkino, August 1972" (p.26).

Sometimes a gift inscription turns into the beginning of a letter or even becomes a kind of letter, an attempt to talk to Bakhtin, and this conversation is much more important for the author of the inscription. This is exemplified by the words of one of the leading Dostoevsky scholars Arkady Dolinin, who sent Bakhtin his new book: “To the esteemed Mikhail Mikhailovich Bakhtin with a sincere wish for health and success in your work. I would love to meet you in person someday. A. Dolinin. 16/III 64. P.S. I have recently re-read your ‘Problems’ (2nd edition). What a clever, original work this is of yours!” (p.163).

The inscriptions demonstrate the recognition which was given by the masters of Soviet studies of Dostoevsky: not only did they accept Bakhtin’s ideas, but they actually recognized him as *primus inter pares*. The inscription Leonid Grossman made in his biography of Dostoevsky on October 8, 1963 is particularly noteworthy: “To the author of the best book on Dostoevsky, Mikhail Mikhailovich Bakhtin, as a sign of deep affection for his work” (p.57). These inscriptions are sometimes echoes of the “crossing of fates.” Alisa Akimova wrote in November 1969 in the book by her late husband Adrian Piotrovsky, classic philologist and translator, that she had compiled: “To my dear Elena Alexandrovna and Mikhail Mikhailovich, a book very dear to me by the man and about the man whom Mikhail Mikhailovich knew before me, with best wishes and love, Alisa Akimova” (p.15). The inscription already made later by Akimova in her own book allows us to assume that the relationship between the Bakhtins and the donor developed further: “To my dear and highly esteemed Elena Aleksandrovna and Mikhail Mikhailovich Bakhtin. While I am unwell and cannot visit you, I am sending you my Voltaire instead as my representative. Please forgive the scribbled and scratched typos and not my mistakes, awkwardly corrected by ink. I am afraid that there are other major flaws as well, but I still dare to send the book. I would be very grateful if you could take the time to read it and tell me your opinion. A. Akimova. 2/III/1971” (p.14).

The attitude towards Bakhtin is also manifested in the style of the inscription – from formally polite and routine to almost confessional. The latter is evident in the inscription of an art historian Valery Prokofiev: “To Mikhail Mikhailovich Bakhtin with the deepest respect. Please, accept this book as a sign of admiration for your study of Rabelais, whose influence, I hope, you recognize in this work too [Prokofiev]” (p.150). Sometimes the inscriptions show a high degree of self-criticism in the writer, as for

example when Sergei Bocharov wrote: “To the dear Elena Alexandrovna and Mikhail Mikhailovich, I decide to send this lightweight composition with love and trepidation. 7.12.63” (p.34). A most exotic gift inscription belongs to the famous classical philologist, a future member of the USSR Academy of Sciences Sergey Averintsev: “*Domina clarissimo, omnis juventutis doctae ingeniosissimo Magistro MICHAELLI MICHAELIS F. BACHTINIO d.d.d. devotus S. A.*” (p.12)

Many of those who wrote gift inscriptions did not belong to the field of humanities but saw Bakhtin as a comrade in art. These were prose writers and poets, including some whose popularity reached its peak in the 1960s (Boris Slutsky and David Samoilov). Of special interest are inscriptions of former students who chose a creative path and gave the teacher their first literary works. Prose writer and journalist Gennady Balabaev wrote: “To my dear Mikhail Mikhailovich Bakhtin from his student. You taught me how to feel and understand the living soul of literature, and by your example, you taught me a unique lesson in how to behave in life. This book is a timid tribute and a token of my respect to you” (p.20). The poet Vitaly Yushkin wrote: “To Elena Alexandrovna and Mikhail Mikhailovich. I will never (be able to) find the spiritual world that you have found. I suffer from this, but I still have to suffer less than you. Yours, Vitaly. 7 Oct[ober] 1969, Saransk” (p.214). These words prove that a considerable number of Bakhtin’s younger contemporaries in Saransk were aware of the tragic life of their mentor.

It is not always clear why gift inscriptions made by Sergei Bocharov, Vadim Kozhinov, Georgy Gachev and other members of the “Bakhtin’s younger circle” appear to be so concise. We may assume that the brevity of the inscriptions is explained not only by the deepest respect and reverence they felt for Bakhtin but also by the fact they were able to have frequent personal contact and correspondence with him, which eliminated the need for an additional channel of communication. Vadim Kozhinov wrote: “To my infinitely dear Elena Aleksandrovna and Mikhail Mikhailovich Bakhtin with great love. V. Kozhinov. 23/II.64” (p.95). Sometimes an inscription becomes a form of light verbal play, as in Bocharov’s line to his article on Leo Tolstoy’s “War and Peace”: “To Elena Alexandrovna and Mikhail Mikhailovich about peace. 16 Sep[tember] 70” (p.36).



An equally important story is the attitude towards Bakhtin and his relationship with the major representatives of the literary establishment, the “monsters” of the Stalinist literary theory Grigory Abramovich, Alexander Revyakin, Leonid Timofeev and Mikhail Khrapchenko. While Timofeev’s good personal relationship with Bakhtin had been known for a long time, as confirmed in Timofeev’s inscription: “To my dear Mikhail Mikhailovich Bakhtin, from the reteller – with the most cordial feelings. 21.III.66” (p.173). The sympathy that Revyakin felt for Bakhtin deserves special mention, especially since he had been giving his books to the author of “Problems of Dostoevsky’s Art” long before the publication of the second edition: “Hello to dear M. M. Bakhtin from his admirer A. Revyakin. 28.VIII-60” (p.153). Warm feelings for Bakhtin are also indicated by Khrapchenko’s inscription. He was the former Stalin’s Minister of Arts and one of the official leaders of Soviet academic philology, yet nevertheless, he signed collective letters in support of the publication of Bakhtin’s books. It can be assumed that the member of the USSR Academy of Sciences Khrapchenko was quite sincere when he wrote: “To Mikhail Mikhailovich Bakhtin as a sign of deep respect. M. Khrapchenko. 30/III-66” (p.191).

The inscriptions in the books of English, American and other foreign researchers, who actively visited Bakhtin in the late 1960s–1970s, are also interesting. In this part of the collection the inscription by Richard Pease, Vice-President of the F. M. Dostoevsky International Society, is noteworthy: “To the great master Mikhail Mikhailovich Bakhtin from the author. Richard Pease. August 1971” (p.225). Or for example, the inscription by one of the greatest modern German Slavists Renate Lachmann, who back in 1970 was a beginning researcher: “To Mikhail Bakhtin with respect. R. Lachmann” (p.226).

Bakhtin cherished all the publications donated to him – from reprints of articles and dissertation abstracts to educational literature. Among them are a reader by the historian of German literature Boris Purishev, teaching manuals “Methods of teaching the phonetics of the Russian language at the 5th grade of the Erzya-Mordovian school” by Alexandra Chikina, “Studying the general basics of the history of Russian literature in the national school” by Alexander Lipaev, “Essays on the history of mathematics in ancient times” by Anna Raik and even the issue of the journal “Russian Language in the Kyrgyz School” with a tiny article by the Pushkinist Yuri Chumakov.

We can say that every single inscription in the catalog deserves attention, study and reflection in the context of the biography and scientific work of Mikhail Bakhtin. And the fact that this opportunity is now available to a wide circle of researchers is the merit of the catalog compiler Natalia Zemkova. Another remarkable detail of the digital era deserves our special gratitude as well – the electronic version of the publication is available on the library website at <https://natlibraryrm.ru/?p=6669>.

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