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Social and Cultural Transformations of 1920–1930 in the USSR in the Perception of Venedikt Mart: Revisiting the History of the Writer's Archive Publication

Abstract

Venedikt Mart was a writer and an outstanding expert on Chinese and Japanese culture, who shared the fate of other Russian migrants. Mart has a special place in Russian literature of the 20th century. Nowadays much of his artistic legacy is housed in national archives, yet more is irretrievably lost. His works reflect modernist ideas of the Silver Age of Russian literature, display his interest in “artistic ethnography”, and follow traditions of social service commissioning. Venedikt Mart was born into the family of Nikolai Petrovich Matveev-Amursky, famous poet, journalist and local historian. Following familial traditions the writer has from his young age studied Japanese and Chinese languages, culture and literature of the East, which influenced his later work: even in Soviet period, China and Chinese people remained main themes of his works. Only a small part of Mart's artistic legacy has so far been introduced into scientific use and become available to researchers. His literary activity of the Soviet period is little known, published works of this period, such as “Collection of Stories” (1928), “The Lair of Red Devils”, “River People: The Story of Life in Modern China for Children” (1930) and others, is a bibliographic rarity. The article reviews an unknown essay of the writer, “The Former Homeless” (circa 1930), that was written in the USSR. The article aims to broaden the artistic scholarship of the Russian literature of 1920–1950s and of the literature of the Russian abroad, and also to introduce into scientific use the unpublished archival sources. The published materials broaden the literary, historical and biographical framework of the writer's works and form new approaches to studying Mart's artistic legacy of the Soviet period.

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Keywords

Social and cultural transformation, Russian literature of the 20th century, Soviet culture, social services commissioning, Russian State Archive of Literature and Art, Soviet essay, children town.

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