The Russian thick journal as a discursive space of negotiation

Jean-Paul Sartre’s reception in the Soviet Union during the Thaw Era

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This paper sets out to investigate the crucial role played by Russian “thick journals,” also referred to as literary-artistic and socio-political monthlies, in Jean-Paul Sartre’s Russian reception during the Thaw era. To this end, the positions (Bourdieu 1983) occupied by the four thick monthlies that published Sartre’s work and/or about his work in the USSR during the Thaw are mapped. Considering the position of, and relations between, those journals sheds a different light on Sartre’s reception. It reveals how the thick journals functioned, not only as a medium for introducing Sartre, but also as a space where his reception was actively negotiated.

Keywords: thick journal, translation, USSR, Thaw, field theory

Introduction

In 1955, the French existentialist Jean-Paul Sartre (1905–1980) was first officially translated into Russian and thus introduced to the Russian reader. The first translation of his literary work into Russian, as, indeed, the three subsequent translations published during the following decade (i.e., between 1955 and 1966) – approximately coinciding with the so-called Thaw period – were all (first) published in a leading “thick journal” (tolstyi zhurnal) of the time. Apart from the translations of Sartre’s work, it is also principally on the pages of those thick journals that criticism of his work appeared during the above-mentioned period.1

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1. During the same period, there were also a number of newspaper publications containing critical material on Sartre and translations of Sartre’s own journalistic writing. These publi-
Thick journals hence played a key role in introducing Sartre on the Russian literary scene.

It is the aim of this paper to provide a descriptive contextual analysis based on the translations, on the one hand, and on the critical commentary, on the other, in order to investigate the role that different Russian thick journals played in Jean-Paul Sartre’s early Soviet reception. Looking at what was translated seems crucial, as the reception of a work and author outside of its context of origin no longer concerns the work and author as such, but a translated version thereof. The choice to look at literary criticism as well is mainly motivated by the fact that in the (Russian) thick journal, “criticism supports and propagates the political and aesthetic principles that underlie the choice of texts for a particular publication. Therefore, while the process of text selection is hidden from readers’ eyes, it is through criticism that they are acquainted with the aesthetic and ideological views of the journal or, in essence, with the journal’s public face” (Breininger 2014: 25). In addition to investigating the role of the journals in Sartre’s reception, this inquiry also sets out to illustrate the broader function and impact of the thick journal in the Soviet literary field during the period under study.

The Russian thick journal

The thick journal in general is a phenomenon that has received little attention to date; the scholarship on periodicals has, until now, mainly focused on other types of periodical, such as the thin journal (Philpotts 2010: 55). Philpotts (a.o. 2010, 2012; Parker and Philpotts 2009) was the first to theorize the thick journal, based mainly on his research on the East German thick journal Sinn und Form. The definition of the thick journal is, not surprisingly, very much linked to its thickness. Philpotts (2010: 55) discusses this aspect of the journal as indexing not only its physical dimension, but also the temporal, conceptual and functional aspects of the journal. He characterizes the thick journal as extensive, enjoying longevity, having a broad conceptual scope due to the wide range of discourses included, and tending toward conservatism by embedding itself in tradition. Although thick journals have remained in the shadows, Philpotts (ibid.) argues that they represent a worthy object of study and affirms that “the high levels of symbolic capital associated with these journals and their established mediating role in the field lend them a unique capacity to shape the prevailing values of the field.”

Citations will, however, not be covered in this article, as we will focus exclusively on the thick journal.
Unlike other contexts, thick journals do have a recognized place in Russian literary history, and so their shaping of the literary field is often unquestioned: “The history of Russian literature of the two last centuries has taught both the public and writers that everything significant (…) that has appeared in the Russian literature has been published, first of all, on the pages of periodical publications” (Bykov 2016:1249).

Although the importance of thick journals is widely acknowledged, they remain understudied even in a Russian context. As Breininger (2014:21) notes, “Only a few works and case studies which highlight specific aspects of thick-journal culture have been published. The polemic concentrates more on the pages of the publications themselves, that is, in the form of critical or journalist discussion.” When scholars do focus on aspects of thick journal culture, they often concentrate on the specificities of one journal, rather than on Russian thick journals in general. Examples of such studies include Maguire (2000), Sherry (2012, 2015), Kozlov (2013) and Lygo (2016). More synoptical work on thick journals in Russia does exist, but has, so far, only covered imperial Russia (Martinsen 1997), leaving a vast section of thick journal culture to be explored.

The thick journal dominated nineteenth and twentieth-century Russian cultural life (Martinsen 1997:1). Appearing in Russia in the middle of the eighteenth century, it gained popularity during the nineteenth century. However, the tumultuous end of the century and the revolution and civil war at the beginning of the twentieth century temporarily pushed the literary field and the journals central to it off to the side. Nevertheless, this setback did not mean the end of thick journals. Indeed, after 1917, thick journal culture saw a revival, and it is actually during the Soviet era that the thick journal reached its peak, becoming “a self-contained cultural institution that had a key role in, and unprecedented influence over, the Soviet literary process” (Breininger 2014:20).

The full name used to designate most Russian thick journals, also typically used by the journals themselves, is “literary-artistic and socio-political journal” (literaturno-khudozhestvennyi i obshchestvenno-politicheskii zhurnal). This definition clearly states the traditional thick journal’s twofold functional structure, consisting of the aesthetic and cultural functions attributed to it by the Soviet regime, on the one hand, and the social and ideological functions ascribed to it, on the other. The content of the journals, which consisted mainly of prose, poetry and criticism, had to address this dual role. As Breininger (2014:20) observes, thick journals were to play “educational and aesthetical roles, and even a role in the formation of the reader’s Weltanschauung.” The journals were thus firmly embedded within Soviet institutions and so were, first and foremost, disseminators of the dominant aesthetics and ideology. However, at the same time, the journals
enjoyed a certain creative and political autonomy, each having its own distinct orientation and line of thought (Kozlov 2013: 4).

**Thick journals and Bourdieusian field theory**

We will approach our investigation of the role and function of thick journals in Sartre’s Russian reception and circulation during the Thaw era by drawing on Bourdieu’s (1983) sociological analysis of the field of cultural production. As Gouanvic (2005: 148) indicates, Bourdieu’s theory is eminently suited to translation studies as it provides “not only a sociology of the institution but also of its agents. It is a sociology of the text as a production in the process of being carried out, of the product itself and of its consumption in the social fields, the whole seen in a relational manner.” Our focus will be on the product, how it is mediated, and the implications this has for its consumption. We will also draw upon Philpotts’s (2010, 2012) and Parker and Philpotts’s (2009) application of Bourdieu’s field theory to periodical studies. Philpotts (2012: 42) conceptualizes the thick journal “as an agent in its own right, participating in the cultural field in the acquisition and exchange of capital in its various forms: literary, economic, and social; material and symbolic.”

Examining the different thick journals that mediated the Russian reader’s reception of Sartre as individual agents, we aim to reconstruct, at least partially, the positions and the position-takings of these journals within a subfield of the literary field, namely that of periodicals, understanding field as “a network, or a configuration, of objective relations between positions” (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992: 97). As Bourdieu notes, every agent in the field adopts, and strives toward a certain position. Insofar as each position is relative to, and dependent on, other positions in the field, “the space of positions, [are] nothing other than the structure of the distribution of the capital of specific properties” (Bourdieu 1983: 312). Hence, the field is a field of forces, consisting of dominant and dominated positions, but also a field of struggles, in which agents look to safeguard or improve their position. The position-taking of agents is, therefore, according to Bourdieu et al. (2015), structured by two crucial factors. The first pertains to the capital these agents have at their disposal (economic and political capital as opposed to cultural capital), while the second involves the opposition of dominant and dominated agents. As Philpotts (2012) puts it, on the one hand, a journal is always located between the “autonomous” and “heteronomous” poles of the field. The autonomous pole is characterized by a higher independence from values external to the literary field, i.e., the economic and political fields, while a heteronomous position is characterized by a higher dependency on those external values. On the
other hand, a journal holds a position in the field between dominant (i.e., established) and dominated (i.e., more heretical) positions. This all impacts the meaning of a work (here a journal and thus its content), which will shift according to each position-change in the field (Bourdieu 1983: 313). This first factor, namely the difference between the autonomous and heteronomous poles of the literary field, is not so relevant when speaking of socialist or authoritarian states such as the USSR, where artistic production was fully controlled by the state. The literary field was firmly embedded within the field of political power, and as a result, all the journals discussed below were located toward the heteronomous pole of the field. Regardless of their “absolute” political heteronomy, the different journals’ relative degree of autonomy from politics still varied depending on, among other factors, their editorial habitus, often wavering between autonomy (aesthetic considerations) and heteronomy (political ones).

The last concept to be introduced is the concept of habitus. Agents occupy certain positions, but as Bourdieu (1983: 344) himself notes, “one still has to understand how those who occupy them have been formed and, more precisely, the shaping of the dispositions which help to lead them to these positions and to define their way of operating within them and staying in them.” Objective positions of agents in the field are very much related to the individual dispositions of each agent in the field, forming the subjective basis for their objective position. Bourdieu defines habitus as a “system of durable, transposable dispositions, structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures, that is, as principles which generate and organize practices and representations” (Bourdieu 1990:53). It is important to note that the relationship between habitus and field is not unilateral, but that both mutually influence each other.

Philpotts (2012: 42, after Bourdieu 1996: 273) argues that literary journals, as agents in the field, possess what one could refer to as their own “common habitus,” that is, “the defining ethos which unites the members of its ‘nucleus’ and which acts as ‘a unifying and generative principle’ for their cultural practice.” The common habitus of the journal is also referred to by Philpotts as its “institutional habitus.” Together with the “personal habitus” of the journal’s editor, they form a journal’s “editorial habitus.” In this paper, when we refer to the journal’s habitus, we are considering only its common habitus, since the general scope of the given study and the corpus material do not allow us to go into the personal editorial habitus of specific editors. This does not mean, however, that the personal editorial habitus of editors does not also influence the habitus of the journals, as discussed below.
Sartre’s introduction in the USSR

Scholarship on the translation and publication of Western literature in the post-Stalin era has often concentrated on the Thaw (Lygo 2016: 49), thus leaving other periods less studied. Our choice to study this period is not driven by the assumption that it is more interesting to study than any other period; rather, it is informed by the particularities of Sartre’s fate in the Soviet Union. It is during this period that Sartre was first introduced in the USSR. Although, taking 1947 (the first thick journal publication on Sartre in Russia) as our starting point and 1966 (the last thick journal translation of one of Sartre’s literary works during the 1960s) as our end point, we stray beyond the official delimitations of this historical period.

The period of Thaw refers to the changes that followed Stalin’s death in 1953. This was a period of liberalization in literary and artistic spheres. In the cultural field, the Thaw was characterized by the publication of works that had been considered unacceptable before, principally through the medium of the country’s leading thick journals, such as Novyi mir (New World) and Znamia (Banner) (Kustanovich 2007: 620–622). In fact, the publication in Novyi Mir of Alexander Solzhenitsyn’s One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich in November of 1962, can, according to Kustanovich (ibid.), be considered the culmination of this period. The debates prompted by these more liberal publications caused readers to rethink and reevaluate the foundations of their lives and the world around them, including the prevailing socio-political order (Kozlov 2013: 7). This period, however, was not without conflicts, and not everyone was like-minded. Unrepentant Stalinists launched attacks, accusing liberal writers, journalists and critics of literary revisionism, nihilism, or political pessimism, and the ideological opposition between journals like Oktiabr’ (October) and Novyi Mir became ever more pronounced (Kustanovich 2007: 620–622). Nonetheless, this period of liberalization would not last forever. Brezhnev’s coming to power in 1964 is often taken as the endpoint for this era, as the country declined into a period of stagnation under his leadership.2

Whether Sartre’s introduction into Russia was a consequence of the liberalization during this era or a result of Sartre’s own doing, as we will briefly highlight in the following discussion, is hard to tell. It is most likely a combination of the two that facilitated his introduction into the Soviet literary field. In what follows, we will provide a general overview of the relationship between Sartre and the USSR in the period under study.

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2. This claim, however, deserves some nuance, as recent scholarship (e.g., Yurchak 2013; Lygo 2016) has demonstrated that the period of stagnation was not, as is often assumed, characterized by absolute torpidity; on the contrary, trends of liberalization did continue to develop during this period too.
Sartre's introduction on the Soviet literary scene was somewhat delayed. In France, he gained popularity from 1938 onward, whereas his Russian readers would have to wait until 1955 for him to be translated into Russian. The reasons for this delay are many, and we cannot but overlook some of them in this short analysis. For the most part, however, they were politically-inspired. “From a relatively unpolitical stance in the 1930s Sartre became increasingly involved in the politics of the left,” he held anti-fascist and anti-colonial beliefs, and was increasingly involved in the struggles of the oppressed (Birchall 2004:1). During the war, through his involvement with the French Resistance, Sartre came into contact with both the PCF (French Communist Party) and other (anti-Stalinist) leftist groups (Birchall 2004:13–19). Throughout this period and after the Liberation, however, the PCF and the USSR continued to be suspicious of Sartre, his position-takings, and his philosophy, leading party intellectuals to repeatedly and virulently denounce him (Birchall 2004:52).

With the outbreak of the Cold War in 1947, Sartre's need for political engagement became more pressing than ever (Birchall 2004:93). He had no hope of collaborating with the PCF, which continued to denounce him, and the same year, he became a leading member of the French Democratic Revolutionary Assembly (RDR), a militant party advocating democratic and revolutionary socialism. The RDR positioned itself against Stalinism and American imperialism, in this way embodying the neutral third way that Sartre believed in at the time. The group soon collapsed, but the fact that Sartre had joined this new left party, which was clearly opposed to Stalinism, made him unacceptable in the Soviet Union (Birchall 2004).

Sartre's stormy relationship with the PCF, along with his anti-Stalinist stance and his criticism of Soviet prison camps, which was published on the pages of his journal Les Temps Modernes (Modern Times), not to mention his earlier trips to the USA, did not help his cause. However, the basis for this difficult relationship was not only external to his writings, the content of his work, in particular his philosophy, was also subject to severe criticism. Moreover, in 1948, after the publication of Dirty Hands, Sartre was openly accused by the USSR of being anti-Soviet, after which the relationship further deteriorated (Cohen-Solal 1985). During this whole period, Sartre continued to be seen as a threat, and both Moscow and the PCF launched repeated attacks against him (Birchall 2004:56).

From the beginning of the 1950s, however, Sartre started shifting positions on the political spectrum. Whatever standpoints he and the broader movements he had been part of had advocated the years before, Sartre also had “the vague sense that the Russian state’s public commitment to the goal of ‘communism’ somehow made it progressive” (Birchall 2004:116), and contrary to some of his contemporaries, he would remain silent or seemingly blind in the face of certain evils
of Soviet communism, behaving “as if these were merely an epiphenomenon of socialism” (King 1992:248).

Between 1952 and 1956, Sartre became a faithful fellow traveller (but not a member) of the French Communist Party and, by extension, the Soviet Union. In this period, he openly supported the USSR, defending the Party’s positions and not shying away from glorifying Soviet life. In 1952, he wrote a series of positive articles about the communists, *Les communistes et la paix* (Communists and peace). That same year, he also took part in the World Peace Congress in Vienna (Cohen-Solal 1985). In 1954, Sartre became vice-president of the France-USSR Association and, that same year, he made his first trip to the Soviet Union, one of many to come (ibid.). It was during that period that Sartre’s work was finally introduced to Soviet readers. It is important, however, to observe that even when the Sartre-USSR relationship flourished, Sartre’s Existentialism and his Existential Marxism (which he had been developing since the early 1950s in writings, such as *Search for a Method* (1957) or *Critique of Dialectical Reason* (1960), were found to be problematic by the PCF and the USSR, and so he remained an outsider.

Sartre’s ambiguous relationship with Stalinism and communism has been the subject of many publications. He has often been criticized for being ‘soft on Stalinism’ (e.g., tolerating the Gulag), and, in large part, this formed the basis of the quarrel that ended his friendship with Camus in the early 1950s. However, while Sartre did indeed make some serious misjudgments about Soviet communism, “contrary to the pervasive myth,” he did publicly condemn the camps (Birchall 2004:2). Moreover, Birchall (2004:1) argues that although Sartre did indeed tie his faith to Stalinism, he also never stopped distrusting it. Too often, Sartre’s Marxism is bluntly equated with the PCF’s or Stalin’s Marxism, and the complexity of what drove him to ally himself with Stalinism is overlooked. Nevertheless, this goes well beyond the scope of this article. In what follows, we will principally draw on the information collected in the publications that appeared in Soviet thick journals.

**Sartre in the Soviet periodical field (1947–1966)**

From 1947 onward, the Russian literary-artistic and socio-political thick journals (along with newspapers) became the main channel through which Sartre was made available to the Russian reader. Based on material collected in the Russian State Library, it would seem those publications appeared for the most part in four journals: *Oktiabr’* (October), *Novyi mir* (New World), *Znamia* (Banner), and *Inosstrannaià Literatura* (Foreign Literature). Although a small number of additional works were published in other periodicals, such as *Teatr* (Theatre), we do not take them into account here, as those journals are harder to categorize and do, in fact,
differ from the other four mentioned above, both in terms of form and function. Although some could be seen as a particular type of thick journal, none of the journals in question correspond to the definition of literary-artistic and socio-political journal.  

In what follows, we will first provide a brief overview of the four journals’ history and their relative positions in the field. By mapping their positions, this paper sets out to show how Sartre was introduced, mediated and appropriated in different ways by journals holding different positions in the periodical field. This will illustrate how the periodical field functioned as an active and dynamic space of negotiation.

All four journals are thick monthlies, self-described as literary-artistic and socio-political journals. Each of these journals was administered by the Writers’ Union under the supervision of the Ministry of Culture. Despite this official institutional consecration and their political heteronomy, the journals held different positions in the periodical field both with regard to their political capital (heteronomous values) and their cultural and literary capital (autonomous values). As Breininger (2014:25) observes, during the post-Stalinist era, a strong ideological dissociation occurred between the different thick journals. On one side of the spectrum, there was Novyĭ Mir, which made use of the weakening of censorship to become more liberal, later becoming the “only legitimate oppositional journal.” On the opposite side of the spectrum, there was Oktiabr’, the mouthpiece of official state ideology (Vinogradov in an interview with Pugacheva and Ïîrmolok 2001).

Oktiabr’ (October) is a monthly literary-artistic and socio-political journal founded in 1924 in Moscow by the Moscow Association of Proletarian writers (MAPP). The journal initially intended to bring together the creative forces of proletarian writers. In the period studied, the journal was an official organ of the Writers’ Union of the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic (RSFSR) (Dikushina 1968). The journal was considered conservative, publishing works that closely conformed with the aesthetics of socialist realism and official ideology, while promoting Stalin’s cult of personality. Even during the Thaw, the journal held on to those principles (Kazak 1996:294). Together with Novyĭ Mir (New World), it was one of the most eminent journals founded during the 1920s.

Novyi Mir (New World) is a journal of the same calibre as Oktiabr’, also a monthly, literary-artistic and socio-political journal, founded in 1925, and an official organ of the Soviet Writers’ Union. Although the periodical was considered to be prestigious from its very beginning, its heyday came about only in the 1950s.
and 1960s, during the Thaw era (Kozlov 2013:6). After Stalin’s death, the journal set a liberal course in the Soviet literary landscape. Some of the works that were published in the journal during the Thaw underwent harsh criticism from the press of the USSR’s Writers’ Union (Levitskiĭ 1968). These developments created a rift between the readers of ideologically opposed journals (Kustanovich 2007).

Znamīa (Banner) was founded in 1931, and soon became an eminent journal too. Once again, this was a literary-artistic and socio-political monthly, initially established as LOKAF (Literaturnoe Ob’edinenie Krasnoĭ Armiĭ i Floty), that is, the periodical of the Literary Association of the Red Army and Fleet. From 1934 onward, the journal was an organ of the Soviet Writers’ Union. It published typical works of socialist realism, as well as authors that did not closely conform to official ideology. In the period preceding and following the Thaw, the journal struggled between these two positions, and although it gave a voice to official culture, it is also the journal that first published Ilya Ehrenburg’s novel The Thaw, from which the Thaw period got its name (ibid.). Compared to the two above-mentioned journals, the first, a diehard, communist one and the second, the most liberal one of the time, Znamīa, occupied a more central position.

Inostrannnaĭa Literatura (Foreign Literature) was launched in 1955 after the second congress of Soviet Writers (Sherry 2012). Like the aforementioned journals, Inostrannnaĭa Literatura was an organ of the Soviet Writers’ Union. It published literature, journalism, poetry and literary criticism translated into Russian from different languages. The journal sought to publish progressive writers, who were opposed to capitalism, imperialism and colonialism (Sherry 2012:21–22). The launch of Inostrannnaĭa Literatura in 1955, was, according to Lygo (2016:51), proof that the Thaw had really kicked in. Indeed, a journal dedicated to foreign literature implied an opening that had been impossible in the previous years. That Inostrannnaĭa Literatura focussed on the publication of Western and other foreign works, however, did not mean it automatically also held a liberal position in the field. In fact, the journal occupied a place closer to the side of official ideology (see Sherry 2012:22).

In the following, we provide two tables, which form the basis of our subsequent analysis. Table 1 consists of a chronological overview of the thick journal

5. The publication lists in Tables 1 and 2 were collected with the help of the catalogues (both the paper library map collection and the electronic catalogue) of the Russian State Library. This information was supplemented by keyword searching the Letopis’ zhurnal’nykh stateĭ (Chronicle of journal articles) (keyword: Sartr) for each of the years of the period under study (1947–1966). Although both lists aim to be exhaustive, they depend on the completeness of the catalogues and chronicles consulted, which we cannot fully guarantee.
translations of Sartre’s literary work during the period 1947–1966, while Table 2 contains a chronological overview of critical material on Sartre and translations of Sartre’s journalistic and polemical writing for the period 1947–1966. Sartre’s journalistic and polemical writing is included in Table 2, because despite the fact that these pieces are in most cases presented as translations, they often consist of interviews or selected excerpts that are accompanied by framing introductions or critical commentary (in or surrounding the text), which confers these translations a form and function that lean closer to criticism.

Table 1. Chronological overview of translations of Sartre’s literary work in four thick journals for the period 1947–1966 *

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year (Issue)</th>
<th>Journal</th>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Title (our translation from Russian)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1955 (1)</td>
<td>Inostrannaià Literatura</td>
<td>Sartr, Zh.-P.</td>
<td>Lizzi [Lizzi]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1955 (8)</td>
<td>Znamia</td>
<td>Sartr, Zh.-P.</td>
<td>Tol’ko pravda [Only the truth]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1964 (10, 11)</td>
<td>Novy Mir</td>
<td>Sartr, Zh.-P.</td>
<td>Slova [The words]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1966 (1)</td>
<td>Inostrannaià Literatura</td>
<td>Sartr, Zh.-P.</td>
<td>D’iavol i gospod’ bog [The devil and the good lord]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Both the translations of Nekrassov (Only the Truth) and of Slova (The Words) appeared in book form following their journal publication (respectively in 1956 and 1966). Apart from these two translations, no other (official) book translations of Sartre’s work circulated during the period studied. In 1967, however, a collection of plays (containing translations of the previously published plays and new ones) appeared in book form.

In the paragraph below, we will first go over the materials in Tables 1 and 2 chronologically. A first observation that should be made, considering the fact that there were no book translations of Sartre’s other literary work circulating at the time, is that although his introduction to the readers in 1955 was a major step, the number of his works available would remain small, not only during the Thaw period, but until Perestroika. If we look at the thick journal publications from a chronological perspective, we notice that the first publications date back to 1947. During that period, as was mentioned earlier, Sartre’s relationship with the Soviet Union was rather aloof. Although both 1947 articles do not cover Sartre alone but also include the broader Western literary and philosophical context, much attention is devoted to him in the articles, and that attention is largely negative. He and his work are described as pessimistic, individualistic and opposed to communist values. These articles appeared the same year that the Soviet anti-existentialist campaign was launched (Betschart s.d.), and were possibly also published in that context. It was seven years before a new publication was dedicated to Sartre, when,
Table 2. Chronological overview of critical publications about Sartre and translations of Sartre’s journalistic and polemical work in four thick journals for the period 1947–1966

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year (Issue)</th>
<th>Journal</th>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Title (our translation from Russian)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1947 (2)</td>
<td>Novyĭ Mir</td>
<td>Leĭtes, A.</td>
<td>Filosofii na chetveren’kakh [A crawling philosophy]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1947 (8)</td>
<td>Oktiabr’</td>
<td>Frid, ŤA.</td>
<td>Ėstetika sovremennogo dekadeništva [An aesthetics of contemporary decadence]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1954 (6)</td>
<td>Znamienia</td>
<td>Garaudy, R.</td>
<td>O nekotorykh įavlениïakh v sovremennoï frantsuzskoi literature [On some phenomena in contemporary French literature]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1954 (10)</td>
<td>Oktiabr’</td>
<td>Sartr, Zh.-P.</td>
<td>Vpechatleniïa ot poezdki v Sovetskii Soïuz [Impressions from the USSR]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1955 (5)</td>
<td>Inostrannai Literatura</td>
<td>Sartr, Zh.-P.</td>
<td>Otrazhat’ nostoiashchee skvoz’ prizmu budushchego [Reflecting the present through the prism of the future]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1959 (12)</td>
<td>Inostrannai Literatura</td>
<td>Sartr, Zh.-P.</td>
<td>Sartr o probleme molodezhi [Sartre on the problem of the youth]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1960 (9)</td>
<td>Inostrannai Literatura</td>
<td>Zonina, L.</td>
<td>Al’tonskie uzni Sartra [Sartre’s condemned of Altona]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1961 (8)</td>
<td>Inostrannai Literatura</td>
<td>Sartr, Zh.-P.</td>
<td>Naemniki protiv Kuby [Mercenaries against Cuba]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1963 (1)</td>
<td>Inostrannai Literatura</td>
<td>Sartr, Zh.-P.</td>
<td>Kholodnaia voïna i edinstvo kul’tury [The Cold War and the unity of culture]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1966 (1)</td>
<td>Inostrannai Literatura</td>
<td>Velikovskiï, S.</td>
<td>Izvergi, sviatye i zemnoe spasenie [Monsters, saints and earthly salvation]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1966 (9)</td>
<td>Inostrannai Literatura</td>
<td>Sartr, Zh.-P.</td>
<td>Samoe glavnoe dlia menia ëto deïstvie [Action is most important to me]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In 1954, an article by the French communist Roger Garaudy on new tendencies in French literature was published in Znamienia. For the first time, Sartre received some positive attention in the Soviet Union.

During the same year, Sartre travelled to the USSR, and the laudatory accounts he published on the USSR after this trip were published in translation as well. After this second, positive introduction, Sartre’s literary work was translated for the first time in 1955. This was followed by regular publication throughout the 1950s and 1960s. Although these post-1954 publications still often included criticism, they were no longer only aimed at dismissing or denouncing Sartre. The more problematic aspects of his work were either concealed or denounced, while the elements approved of were emphasized. Another significant observation is that, while all four journals played an active role in introducing him during the early period, from 1955 on, the bulk of publications appeared in Inostrannai Literatura.
In what follows, the publications for each journal will be looked into separately (and thus no longer chronologically). First, the publications in Oktiabr’ will be discussed, second, the publications in Novyi Mir, third, in Znamia, and fourth, in Inostrannai Literatura.

In 1947, Oktiabr’ was one of the first journals to publish a critical piece referring to Sartre, under the title “An aesthetics of contemporary decadence.” The article is not about Sartre alone, but about Western philosophy and literature in general (also referring to authors such as Camus, Valéry, and Kafka), which is characterized as bourgeois, anti-Marxist, individualistic, pro-capitalistic, dark and pessimistic. In this context, Sartre is depicted as a bourgeois Western writer and analyzed from a Marxist-Leninist perspective, which fits within the journal’s post-war line of thinking.

It may seem surprising that the same journal published Sartre’s own words in 1954. However, by that time, Sartre was on friendlier terms with the French communist party, and returning from a trip to the Soviet Union, he published a series of enthusiastic articles about the USSR in the French newspaper Libération. It is a selection of these publications that was published in Oktiabr’, starting with a translation of Sartre’s statement that “freedom of criticism in the USSR was absolute and the Soviet citizen’s conditions of living were improving in a constantly progressing society” (Sartr 1954:130). In this light, the publication is less surprising, as it supported the journal’s own ideological position, not only by showing that a previously “reactionary” author had come to join the communist side, but also that this author’s opinion of the USSR was nothing but positive.

The first article on Sartre to appear in Novyi Mir, under the title “A crawling philosophy,” was also published in 1947 (prior to the above-mentioned one in Oktiabr’). Although again, the article portrayed decadent Western philosophy in general, a closer look reveals that almost the entire piece was devoted to criticizing Sartre and his philosophy. Being and Nothingness, Sartre’s philosophical magnum opus, is extensively referred to. Although the attention is mostly negative, this is one of the only comprehensive references to his philosophical work during the period 1947–1966. Sartre’s philosophical system is said to be based on eclectic fundamentals, anti-academic, cynical, reactionary, hypocritical, as well as promoting bourgeois liberalism (Leîtes 1947:207). Toward the end of the article, the tone is somewhat more positive, with the author stating that, although Sartre might not be a bad person, his philosophy could become a weapon in the hands of reactionary individuals. The article goes on to argue that although Sartre is talented as an artist, the soil from which his talent has grown is rotten, and Sartre’s philosophical position damages his talent (ibid.). This is a nuance that is completely absent from the 1947 Oktiabr’ publication, and although it is hard to interpret, it does remind us of what Loseff (1984:x) calls “Aesopian language,” defined as “a special
literary system, one whose structure allows interaction between author and reader at the same time that it conceals inadmissible content from the censor.” The article might then be not as negative as it seems at first glance, passing on otherwise objectionable information to the “shrewd Aesopian reader,” capable of deciphering this language (Loseff 1984: 21). Although Novyi Mir was not yet as liberal in 1947 as it would become during the Thaw, and the article is still very critical of Sartre and his work, the journal was more liberal than Oktiabr’, even under the leadership of Simonov. The 1947 publication in Oktiabr’ later that year could, in this light, be seen as a reply to this publication in Novyi Mir.

The next publication of Sartre in Novyi mir was his autobiographical novel Les mots (The Words) in 1964 (Sartr 1964; 1964a), almost twenty years after the above-mentioned publication on Sartre in the journal. This publication is significant as well insofar as it is the only literary work by Sartre translated before 1966 that was not a play or piece of journalistic or polemical writing. Moreover, out of all the works that were translated, it also seems to be the only one without clear ideological motivation. Indeed, Sartre’s journalistic and polemical work and the plays that were translated all fit or can be made to fit within the official narrative of the time. Considering Novyi Mir’s liberal position in the field, which in Bourdieu’s terms implies more autonomy from the field of power, i.e., less influence of values other than those internal to the literary field, Novyi Mir’s choice to publish this work in particular is likely to have been motivated by its intrinsic literary qualities and the absence of any ideological component. Although Lygo (2016) covers the Brezhnev era, she observes that during that period, Novyi Mir was more inclined to publish neutral Western authors than progressive or communist ones. This would appear to corroborate our findings. The fact that Novyi Mir did not publish more of Sartre’s other work may be attributable to a variety of reasons, however, it is very likely that the appropriation of the progressive Sartre by other journals in the field made it disadvantageous for Novyi Mir to publish him, from the perspective of its own position in the field.

Now we turn to a discussion of the publications that appeared in Znamia. It is this journal that in 1954 published Garaudy’s piece on new developments in contemporary French literature. This was to be the first positive introduction of Sartre in a Russian thick journal. The portrait Garaudy paints of Sartre is hopeful. Although Sartre’s understanding of materialism remains poor, he is becoming more progressive and his literature seems to be moving in the right direction (Garaudy 1954). Together with Sartre’s enthusiastic response after his trip to the USSR, this publication in Znamia played a key role in his re-introduction in the USSR. Sartre was now no longer unknown or to be avoided, and the path was thus cleared to start publishing his work. Although it was, in a sense, a daring move to positively introduce Sartre, the publication in question was not a risky one for the
Sartre had been moving closer to the PCF and the USSR for the previous two years, becoming gradually more acceptable. Moreover, he had been planning a trip to the Soviet Union later that same year, which may have been the impetus behind this re-introduction.

In the following year, 1955, the second of Sartre’s plays to be published in the Soviet Union, Only the truth (Tol’ko Pravda, in English and French: Nekrassov), appeared on the pages of Znamia (Sartre 1955b). In this pro-communist play, Sartre satirizes the French press of the time and denounces the attitudes toward the Communist press, a theme perfectly befitting official Soviet discourse. Hence the motivations to select this play, in particular, were most probably linked to its ideological acceptability. Znamia’s publication choices thus seem to bear witness to its rather moderate position in relation to official ideology.

The last journal to be discussed is Inostrannai Literatura. Following the path that had been cleared by the three aforementioned journals, this journal featured the highest number of publications by and on Sartre. The journal’s first publication of Sartre, which appeared in its very first issue, was Lizzi, a translation of Sartre’s play La putain respectueuse (The Respectful Prostitute). The play depicts the story of Lizzie, a white prostitute pressured by officials into giving false testimony about having been raped on a train by an African-American in a small southern U.S. town. Again, the motive for selecting this play is likely to have been ideological, as “the subject of racial injustice rank[ed] high on the soviet list of evils of the capitalist world, and foreign novels and plays dealing with the matter [were] viewed favourably by soviet critics and publishers” (Friedberg 1977:143).

In addition, the Russian translation of the play, to a certain extent, testifies to the prudence of Soviet censorship, starting with the translation of the title “Lizzi” (versus “La putain respectueuse”), but also in tuning down the more explicit sexual references in the text. Moreover, the end of the translated version was rewritten. Unlike the French original, however in accordance with the dictates of Socialist realism, the Russian version ended on a positive note. It seems more likely that the two last observations follow not so much from the specificities of Inostrannai Literatura’s editorial habitus, but from the general proprieties of the literary field the journal functioned in. Although these choices do, at the same time, confirm the journal’s heteronomous position in the field.

The second play published by the journal, and the last work by Sartre translated during the period under study, was Le diable et le bon Dieu (The Devil and

6. It is worth noting that the play’s content and title caused a commotion in France at the time of publication as well, after which the French title “La putain respectueuse” became “La p… respectueuse” (Philippe 2005:1357). In 2018, the adapted title is still the one figuring on the folio collection by Gallimard, for example.
the Good Lord), in 1966. At first sight, this play is ideologically the most neutral publication in this journal, as it can be read as a philosophical reflection on violence, good and evil, and the role of God. O’Donohoe (2005:124) observes, however, that the play could also be seen as Sartre’s most Stalinist piece of writing. As the main character, Goetz, who “progressed from villain to saint to revolutionary,” O’Donohoe (ibid.) argues, “it was possible to see Sartre working his way through the argument that would lead him to make his rapprochement with Moscow.” The play can be interpreted as an “oblique defence of such miscarriages of justice” leading to the death of many innocent victims during the purges that took place in Eastern Europe at the time the play was first published in 1951 (O’Donohoe 2005:125). For the Stalinists, however, Sartre’s defense, if this was a defense, could hardly please them (ibid.). In their eyes, the victims of the state-sponsored repressions were guilty and not innocent. This might explain why the journal’s translation was followed by an afterword (by Velikosvkiï). Not surprisingly, the afterword makes no mention of Stalinism. The play is thoroughly analyzed and framed as a European quest for understanding instead of a work having universal appeal. The choices made by Goetz (and also Sartre) are critically examined and re-evaluated through the lens of Marxism-Leninism. The afterword seems to steer the reader’s interpretation in a particular direction. Although it was not uncommon for para-text to play this role in Soviet publications, none of the other translations in this corpus are accompanied by a foreword or afterword. This suggests that the given play was more likely to be “misinterpreted” and hence the reader needed more guidance so as to read it in the “correct” way.

Apart from these two translations, it is also in this journal that most of the translations of Sartre’s journalistic and polemical writing was published. We will not provide an in-depth discussion of each of them, as this would not add great value to our analysis. The themes – be it the duty of a writer to be engaged (1955a, 1966a), a reflection on the crisis of Europe’s bourgeois youth (1959), Sartre’s indignation about the American aggression in Cuba (1961), or Sartre’s opposition to the Cold War (1963) – fit within the official state narrative and highlight Sartre as a progressive and leftist intellectual, involved in the fight for peace, and the anti-colonial and anti-imperial struggle.

The last publication to be discussed is a review of Sartre’s play The Condemned of Altona, which appeared in 1960. The play’s central theme is the role the individual plays in historical evil. Although the review was published a year after its French publication and the review’s chief aim seems to be to introduce Sartre’s new play, the analysis it provides, characterizing the main theme as the crisis of capitalist conscience and the evils of fascism, is rather narrow and specific to the Soviet context.
Inostrannai\text{\textquoteleft}a Literatura in a way played a double role. Although it was almost the only channel through which Sartre was presented to Russian readers during the later Thaw, the selection of what was presented was relatively one-sided. That this was so suggests that it was rooted in the journal’s core habitus. Indeed, the choices of publication very much corresponded to the journal’s progressive line of thought on the side of official ideology, and Sartre’s co-option by the journal would have served to secure the journal’s own position in the periodical field.

Conclusions

After a shared introduction to the Soviet periodical field by the four thick journals discussed in this paper, Sartre was actively co-opted by the journal Inostrannai\text{\textquoteleft}a Literatura. The fact that Oktiabr’ did not play a more liberal role in Sartre’s reception is not surprising, as this did not fit the journal’s hard-line communist habitus. However, Novyi Mir’s small contribution to Sartre’s mediation shows us that, although the journal had the potential to present the Soviet reader with another version of Sartre, his instrumentalization by other agents in the field (and Sartre’s own political position-takings) rendered this unattractive, as it would not have served the journal’s own struggle for positions in the periodical field. As for Znamia, which occupied a more moderate position on the official side of the field, the fact that the journal did not play a more important role after having positively introduced Sartre, is also likely to be related to its habitus and position, and the absence of any incentive to do this, as this was unnecessary to safeguard or to improve the journal’s strategic position in the periodical field. Even if Znamia had wanted to focus more on Sartre, the works by Sartre and pieces of writing on the author that the journal could have published according to its position in the field, would have overlapped with the progressive Sartre that was being mediated by Inostrannai\text{\textquoteleft}a Literatura. In that sense, it may not have seemed worthwhile for Znamia to compete for this position, all the more so because Sartre’s profile better matched Inostrannai\text{\textquoteleft}a Literatura’s line of thought than it matched Znamia’s.

The few studies that have covered Sartre’s reception in the Soviet Union (e.g., Galtsova 1999, 2001) have noted that his reception was surprising in regard to the works that were selected, presenting a lopsided, or at least one-sided, representation of Sartre’s oeuvre in the Soviet Union before Perestroika. Indeed, the Sartre that was translated and mediated was the ideologically acceptable one, whereas his many other works, with the exception of his autobiography, were to remain in the dark. Although this may not seem so surprising, the reasons for this might not be as straightforward as one might first assume. The fact that only certain facets of Sartre and his work made it to the USSR is not only related to his ideological
unacceptability, the absolute conservatism and/or censorship in the Soviet literary field. Although this was not common practice, more liberal works and authors were being published in that same period.

A closer analysis of the Soviet periodical field shows that the way Sartre was mediated could also be understood, at least in part, as a consequence of the spatial relations the different mediating journals held toward one other. These positions, in themselves, seem to have been as meaningful for Sartre’s reception as the content of the works and the criticism they published, thus confirming Bourdieu’s (1983) claim that the position of an agent in the field is also a determining factor for the meaning ascribed to a work. We can conclude that the space of positions occupied by the thick journals that mediated Sartre, agents in their own right, acted as a discursive space where Sartre’s reception was first actively negotiated and subsequently appropriated.

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