



The Department of Russian and Slavic Studies (The Hebrew University of Jerusalem) invites you to the guest lecture

## Writing about the Present: from Collage Novels to Scattered Notes by Konstantin Vaginov

Писать о современности: от коллажных романов до разрозненных записей Константина Вагинова

by Dmitrii Bresler (Higher School of Economics, St.-Petersburg)

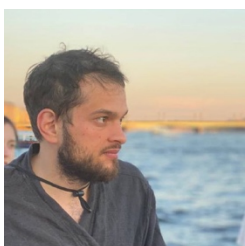
(the lecture will be given in Russian)

**Monday, January 23, 2022, 13:00-14:30, Mt. Scopus, Library, Media 32**

Konstantin Vaginov (1899-1934) is today regarded as one of the most distinctive writers of the 1920s. His poetry calls to mind Baudelaire and the French Symbolists, while his prose, steeped in the literary tradition of the modern, incorporates philosophical reflection on history and critical ethnography of contemporary life. Despite the attacks of critics, who called his work 'decadent' and 'pornographic', Vaginov worked with official Soviet journals and publishing houses in Leningrad, publishing four collections of poetry as well as three of his four novels during his lifetime. Vaginov stayed true to his creative impulses despite his participation in numerous poetic and intellectual circles: he was a part of Nikolai Gumilev's *Zvuzhashaya rakovina* ('Sounding Shell') studio, was close with Mikhail Kuzmin, regularly attended Mikhail Bakhtin's home workshops, enrolled in the literature division of the Higher Courses of Art History at the State Institute for the History of the Arts (GIII), was a part of the creative association OBERIU, participated in the ABDEM collective's home translation workshop for philologists and classicists, and, at the beginning of the 1930s, became involved in Maksim Gorky's literary campaign, leading a poetry circle at the Svetlana factory and collecting materials on the history of the *Narvskaya Zastava* workers' movement. Vaginov considered himself, as he put it, a man of the 'last little island of the Renaissance'. He did not retreat into internal emigration, but continued to participate in literary life and contribute to the poetics of the cultural revolution.



Vaginov's archive contains a large notebook, most of which is taken up by a journal entitled *Semechki* ('Seeds'). The journal records the author's everyday experience of interaction with the verbal and textual environment around him: the language of city streets, conversations in trams, jokes told in queues and snippets of everyday conversations coexist with quotations from posters, announcements and books. These varied materials are united by Vaginov's clear interest in recording the spoken word, in embellishments to spoken language and deviations from it. *Semechki* may be viewed in part as a typical 'writer's notebook' — a collection of sketches, literary materials created *en plein air* and preliminary drafts for later works. But such a characterization of Vaginov's journal is only a partial one. Although *Semechki* was not conceived as an independent work, its creative intentions are clear. It is precisely in *Semechki* that Vaginov developed the poetic agenda and literary techniques that were so important to his work at the beginning of the 1930s: extreme combinations of various discourses and styles, techniques for recording live speech in literary works, methods of literary collage. This poetic technique will be discussed in the lecture.



Dmitrii Bresler is Senior Lecture at the Philology department at the National Research University – Higher School of Economics, St. Petersburg. He has published a number of works on modernist literature of the early Soviet era, history of reception and pragmatics of literary discourse.