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# INTELLECTUAL HISTORY

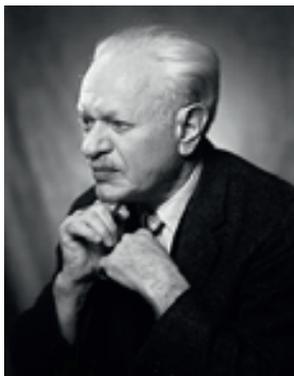
## KENNETH BURKE

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*LITERATURE OF THE AMERICAS*

KENNETH BURKE SOCIETY  
JOINT PROJECT



## A KNOWN STRANGER: KENNETH BURKE IN RUSSIA

### Editor's Note

Kenneth Burke's heritage – that of a universal genius, one of the most unorthodox and challenging twentieth-century thinkers – demonstrates the rich potential of interactionism and interdisciplinary approach, both of which were central to Burke's writings throughout his career. The paradox of Kenneth Burke's reception in Russia, however, highlights the shortcomings of “crossing borders – closing the gaps” between various disciplines. Essays dedicated to Burke (or, to Burke among other things) are few in number and usually belong to the fields of linguistics, rhetorical theory, political science, philosophy or sociology.<sup>1</sup> Translations are very rare as well: several fragments from Burke's

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<sup>1</sup> Kovaleva, E.D., Kovaleva, M.D. “Kenneth Burke's Rhetorical Theory in Early Motherhood Studies.” *Reflections on Man. A Collection of Critical Essays*, ed. N. N. Sedova. Volgograd: Volgograd State Medical University, 2019: 115–121. (In Rus.); Budaev, E.V., Anikin, E.E., Chashchina, S.S. “Rhetorical Criticism in American Political Linguistics.” *Politicheskaja Lingvistika [Political Linguistics]* 2 (25) (2008): 134–135. (In Rus.) See also a paragraph on Kenneth Burke in: Smolenenkova, V.V. *Rhetorical Criticism as Philological Analysis of Public Argument. PhD thesis*. Moscow, 2005. (In Rus.)

books were rendered into Russian by experts in social and political sciences and were published in periodicals dedicated to these fields of study, but complete works by Burke have simply not been available to Russian scholars.<sup>2</sup> It is probable that linguists, rhetoricians, philosophers, sociologists, political theorists regard Kenneth Burke as a marginal figure – how can one otherwise explain the fact that he remains understudied and practically untranslated into Russian? The situation in the field of literary studies is even more disheartening. Burke is occasionally mentioned by literary theorists in connection with New Criticism,<sup>3</sup> but Russian historians of American literature have not yet broken their “conspiracy of silence” regarding him – even though it is well-known that Burke, as both artist and critic, was a prolific writer and prominent intellectual figure, one whose influence over mid-twentieth century American literary life was no less than that of Edmund Wilson or Henry Louis Mencken.

In an attempt to redress his relative obscurity in Russian scholarship, the aim and purpose of the present collection of critical essays is to attract attention and stimulate interest in Burke as a versatile and sophisticated thinker, as a key figure in twentieth century American literary history, and as playing an important role in American literature and culture. We are honored and pleased that our colleagues from abroad welcomed this project, carried out as a joint venture of the *LoA* and the KB Society. We thank our translator Tatiana Pirusskaia for her assistance and our contributors for their excellent papers, as well as for their commitment and dedication. Very special thanks go to Bryan Crable, the President of the Kenneth Burke Society, for being the engine of the project, its architect, coordinator and contributor. We do believe that this collection will be a groundbreaking experience for Russian academia, and that it will stir up substantial interest in Kenneth Burke – “a known stranger” – among Russian scholars of American literature. We hope that it will thereby spark the beginning of in-depth and comprehensive research in this country, and represent a remarkable expansion of KB studies, both in Russia and worldwide.

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<sup>2</sup> Burke, K. “The Rhetoric of Hitler’s *Battle*”, transl. by E.E. Anikin. *Politicheskaja Linguistika [Political Linguistics]* 2 (25) (2008): 149–160. (In Rus.); Burke, K. “Philosophy of Literary Form. Fragments”, transl. By V.G. Nikolaev. *Lichnost’. Kultura. Obshchestvo [Personality. Culture. Society]* XVII: 1-2 (85-86) (2015): 28–52. (In Rus.); Nikolaev, V.G. “Kenneth Burke and His *Grammar of Motives*: A Preface.” Burke, K. “A Grammar of Motives. Selected chapters.” *Sotsial’nyie i Gumanitarnyye Nauki. Otechestvennaja i Zarubezhnaja Literatura [Social and Political Sciences. Native and Foreign Literature]*, series 11 “Sociology”. Abstract journal 2 (2006): 133–172. (In Rus.)

<sup>3</sup> Gornyxh, A. “Russian Formalism and Anglo-American New Criticism: From the Poetics of Form to the Anthropology of Text.” *PROBLEMOS* 66: 1 (2004): 40–49. (In Engl.)