

From the *Slavic Review* Editorial Board:

Slavic Review publishes signed letters to the editor by individuals with educational or research merit. Where the letter concerns a publication in *Slavic Review*, the author of the publication will be offered an opportunity to respond. Space limitations dictate that comment regarding a book review should be restricted to one paragraph of no more than 250 words; comment on an article or forum should not exceed 750 to 1,000 words. When we receive many letters on a topic, some letters will be published on the *Slavic Review* website with opportunities for further discussion. Letters may be submitted by e-mail, but a signed copy on official letterhead or with a complete return address must follow. The editor reserves the right to refuse to print, or to publish with cuts, letters that contain personal abuse or otherwise fail to meet the standards of debate expected in a scholarly journal.

To the Editor:

Dear Sir or Madam,

It is very difficult to respond to the many accusations that Pat Simpson has leveled against my professional reputation in a recent book review of my monograph, *Konstantin Somov: Dama snimaiushchaia masku*. Most importantly, Simpson claims that I published letters to Somov from Elizaveta Martynova (a friend of the homosexual artist who was unrequitedly in love with him) without permission from the State Russian Museum in St. Petersburg. The museum is irrelevant here—Martynova's letters belong to the Russian State Archive of Literature and Arts in Moscow, a fact that I clearly reference in my book,¹ and which RGALI's own catalog confirms.² The Russian archives are legally open, and Russian Federation law prohibits the publication of only classified documents.

More poignantly, however, is that Simpson completely ignores the background of my relationship with the State Russian Museum, which has been widely reported by the Russian press. In 2020, I sued the museum for defamation after enduring what I believe is homophobically motivated pressure from them for many years. An article published in *Colta*, a prominent Russian cultural outlet, details the bizarre interest the museum has taken in my work on Somov's diaries. This article, which has been read nearly 15,000 times, clearly debunks the museum's allegations concerning my project.³

I note that many more of the alleged errors that Simpson finds in my monograph have no basis in fact. Because of *Slavic Review*'s length restrictions for responses, however, I regrettably have inadequate space to correct them here.

PAVEL GOLUBEV

Pat Simpson responds:

¹ Its archive ID is: RGALI, F. 869, Op. 1, Ed. hr. 50. See the references in the publication: Pavel Golubev, *Konstantin Somov: Dama snimaiushchaia masku*, Moscow, NLO, 2019, pp. 121, 128 and so forth in the beginning of every letter.

² <https://rgali.ru/storage-unit/2960501>.

³ See: <https://www.colta.ru/articles/art/26085-pavel-golubev-nezavisimye-issledovatelii-gosudarstvennye-muzei-rossiya>.

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Dear Pavel,

My review suggests that your research is interesting and potentially valuable, and my criticisms have nothing to do with homophobia—indeed I found the data about Somov’s sexual inclinations and how they emerged in his imagery both fascinating and potentially convincing. However, when I wrote the review, I looked you up online and was immediately confronted with data on the controversies around your research, which I had to mention in the review, because those data were out there for anyone to see.

I have also done research in Soviet and post-Soviet Russia, and in either case I can assure you that it is customary—indeed necessary—to obtain permissions to reproduce images or archival texts and pay for these permissions (and it does not matter whether it was the Russian State Museum or RGALI), as it would be anywhere else in the world, and then to have an acknowledgements page at the beginning of the book, in which you clearly name and thank the particular people and archives that have facilitated your research. This was singularly absent, along with a clear introduction that tells the reader the structure of the book.

I would still maintain that the book is poorly structured as an academic research text. Apart from the lack of an acknowledgements page, with the references starting from 1 on each page, the lack of lists of illustrations/references/bibliography, the reader is just bewildered. My conclusion is that you basically need a more professional academic publisher.

PAT SIMPSON
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