



Review: [Untitled]

Reviewed Work(s):

Stanislavsky in Focus by Sharon M. Carnicke
Catherine Schuler

Russian Review, Vol. 59, No. 2. (Apr., 2000), pp. 290-291.

Stable URL:

<http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=0036-0341%28200004%2959%3A2%3C290%3ASIF%3E2.0.CO%3B2-6>

Russian Review is currently published by The Editors and Board of Trustees of the Russian Review.

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of JSTOR's Terms and Conditions of Use, available at <http://www.jstor.org/about/terms.html>. JSTOR's Terms and Conditions of Use provides, in part, that unless you have obtained prior permission, you may not download an entire issue of a journal or multiple copies of articles, and you may use content in the JSTOR archive only for your personal, non-commercial use.

Please contact the publisher regarding any further use of this work. Publisher contact information may be obtained at http://www.jstor.org/journals/russrev_pub.html.

Each copy of any part of a JSTOR transmission must contain the same copyright notice that appears on the screen or printed page of such transmission.

The JSTOR Archive is a trusted digital repository providing for long-term preservation and access to leading academic journals and scholarly literature from around the world. The Archive is supported by libraries, scholarly societies, publishers, and foundations. It is an initiative of JSTOR, a not-for-profit organization with a mission to help the scholarly community take advantage of advances in technology. For more information regarding JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

stood in the shadows of the “great” writers of the age: Elena Gan, Nikolai Gnedich, and Vladimir Odoevsky, all writers primarily recognized for their other literary achievements (the society tales of Gan and Odoevsky, and Gnedich for his translations of foreign works into Russian).

The topics pursued are equally various, but all discussion stems more or less from a finite group of common concerns, which are almost by definition those addressed by all writers of the gothic and fantastic traditions. These are universal concerns, which find expression readily in the equivocal world of the gothic novel. These concerns include problems of parentage, procreation, and origins (Cynthia Ramsey, “Gothic Treatment of the Crisis of Engendering in Osoevskii’s *The Salamander*”); uncertainty and even “anxiety about the position of the self in the world” (p. 179), and in reality itself (Roger Cockrell, “Philosophical Tale or Gothic Horror Story? The Strange Case of V. F. Odoevskii’s *The Cosmorama*,” and Derek Offord, “Karamzin’s Gothic Tale, *The Island of Bornholm*”); and the determinism and supernatural forces that negate and deny man’s free will (Richard Peace, “From Pantheon to Pandemonium”).

One challenge, of course, to addressing and discussing the gothic and fantastic in Russian literature is in establishing that such works are in fact *generic* and not simply imitations in the gothic and fantastic style. Richard Peace describes a logical and even natural progression of one of the common concerns of the gothic when he traces nineteenth-century interest in the supernatural forces. Carolyn Jursa Ayers attempts to establish Elena Gan as a writer in the continuing tradition of Female Gothic, raising the important question of whether one can state that there is such a tradition in Russian literature. On the other hand, Derek Offord suggests that while Karamzin’s “Bornholm Island” is clearly riddled with stock gothic elements, this tale in fact fits into a Sentimental framework and is but “a development of a particular strand of Preromanticism” (p. 41).

One conspicuous detail regarding this collection, however, is the consistent reliance on Tsvetan Todorov’s work on the fantastic: five of the twelve essayists rely on Todorov’s theory to establish or prove the fantastic qualities of the work they are addressing; four of the five quote the same passage from Todorov, the fifth refers to it in a footnote. While Todorov’s contribution to the study of the fantastic is certainly significant, the frequency with which this one theory is applied would seem to suggest that there are only limited methodologies to approaching and interpreting the fantastic.

Vicki J. Hendrickson Hodovance, University of Colorado, Boulder

Carnicke, Sharon M. *Stanislavsky in Focus*. Russian Theatre Archive. Amsterdam: Harwood Academic Publishers, 1998. xiii + 235 pp. \$23.00 (paper). ISBN 90-5755-070-9.

Do actors pursue “objectives” or perform “tasks”? Is a dramatic text structured in “bits” or “beats”? Is theater an artistic or a commercial practice? Should Lee Strasberg be held criminally liable for corrupting Stanislavsky’s theory and practice? Sharon Carnicke’s attention to these and other provocative questions reveals that the preoccupation of Americans with Konstantin Stanislavsky and his notorious “System” for actors continues unabated. Carnicke’s *Stanislavsky in Focus* is the latest in a long line of exegetical texts devoted to the Master’s theory and practice.

Critical analysis of Stanislavsky and his work began shortly after the founding of the Moscow Art Theater in 1898; following the dissemination of the System in the West, “Stanislavsky studies” have become increasingly complex and vexed. Although Stanislavsky expounded at length on his theory and practice in a series of published texts, he apparently failed to explicate the System satisfactorily because the secondary literature and lore on the System and its corruption by American admirers is great and still growing. In her introduction, Carnicke proposes to “demythologize Stanislavsky” through careful analysis of three frequently misunderstood and misinterpreted aspects of his work: “the history and premises of the System”; “the transformation of the System into the Method”; and “Soviet conditioning of the System” (p. 6). Although Carnicke fails to demythologize Stanislavsky and her study tends to reinforce “great man” theories of history, there is much of interest in this articulate comparative investigation of Stanislavsky’s System and Strasberg’s Method.

The book is organized in three parts. Part 1, "Transmission," describes the Moscow Art Theater's New York tours; part 2, "Translation," considers the appropriation of the System by American admirers through classroom lore and Elizabeth Hapgood's translations of Stanislavsky's texts; part 3, "Transformation," interrogates issues of linguistic and cultural translation. Part 1 will interest readers new to Stanislavsky studies in English; the uniqueness of Carnicke's contribution to the field is, however, her discussion of linguistics in parts 2 and 3. Although skeptics might argue that by the simple act of theorizing acting, Stanislavsky mystified an otherwise uncomplicated activity, confusion escalated when monolingual members of the Group Theater appropriated terms and concepts associated with the System.

Mistranslations and misinterpretations occurred on both mundane and recondite points. Thus, for example, in Richard Boleslavskii's broken English, the System's "bits" (*kusoki*) became the Method's "beats." Hapgood's translation of *zadacha* as "objective" rather than "task" had serious practical consequences for American actor training. Mistranslation and cultural transformation of Stanislavsky's "lost term," *perezhivanie*, gave rise to profound conceptual antagonisms between Russian and American practitioners. Stanislavsky, Carnicke argues, understood *perezhivanie* as the ability of an actor to "experience" the role with dual consciousness of self and character, while Strasberg construed *perezhivanie* as "living through" the role. The translation of the System into the Method reveals the preference of Russians for behaviorism and Americans for Freudian psychology.

Carnicke's account of Stanislavsky's heritage from nineteenth-century theatrical theory and practice is less satisfying than her discussion of translation and transformation. Although the relationship she establishes between Tolstoy's writings on aesthetics and Stanislavsky's practice is surely significant, other critical influences are neglected. Indeed, readers might conclude on the basis of this book that Tolstoy and Stanislavsky invented performance theory in Russia. In fact, Stanislavsky joined a conversation already in progress. The first purely theoretical treatise on acting, P. D. Boborykin's thoroughly materialist manifesto, *Teatral'noe iskusstvo*, was published in 1873; the terms of the debate over *igra* and *perezhivanie* were established in the 1870s in response to neurasthenic actors like Polina Strepetova; and by the 1890s, professional journals regularly included articles on the theory and practice of acting and actor training. Surely Stanislavsky drew from this lore and literature as well.

Catherine Schuler, University of Maryland

Sandler, Stephanie, ed. *Rereading Russian Poetry*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1999. xi + 365 pp. \$40.00. ISBN 0-300-007149-3.

This is the first book dedicated entirely to the reinterpretation of Russian poetry from Zhukovsky to Kibirov, and it should be warmly welcomed. It is edited by one of the most knowledgeable scholars, who possesses the talent for reading Pushkin and Sedakova with equal ease, as her very informative introduction and essay on Elena Shvarts confirms.

Each contribution is interesting in its own way. The collection contains a wide range of topics. Part 1 has the subtitle "Vocation of the Russian Poet"; part 2 reconsiders some less-known Silver Age poets (Annensky, Kuzmin, Gumilev, Merkureva, and Gertsyk); part 3 focuses on imagery, tropes, and genres. There is a fascinating discussion of homosexuality (Esenin, Kliuev, Ivlev) by Luc Beaudoin, and a balanced and convincing essay on Nina Iskrenko's poetry by Vitaly Chernetsky. While David Bethea deals mainly with Pushkin's first poem, Gerry Smith concentrates his attention on Brodsky's last poem.

This reviewer has a problem with Andrew Wachtel's contribution on the odic genre employed by contemporary Russian poets. By including such different poets as Sedakova, Parshchikov, Kibirov, and Kutik in one article, Professor Wachtel opens the sluice gates rather too far. He speaks of every poet as if for the first time, ignoring the considerable literature on each one of them; for example, there is no reference to a special issue of *Literaturnoe obozrenie* (1998, no. 1) which was dedicated to Kibirov; or to Olga Sedakova's interview, where she speaks about her own poetry, including the symbol of water