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Review: Gennadi Barabtarlo, Phantom of Fact: A Guide to Nabokov's "Pnin"

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from the beginning of the century (Leo Shestov writing on Chekhov the "necromancer, creating from the void") to the 1980s (John Freedman perceptively elucidating the narratological traps set in the "little trilogy" of "Man in a Shell," "Gooseberries," and "About Love"). The emphasis is on the last three decades and the selection criteria are fairly broad. In addition to the philosophical essay and the analysis of poetics, there is the "writer's view" (Conrad Aiken, George P. Elliott) and that of the performance-oriented drama critic (John Styan, Eric Bentley). The majority of contributors are American, English, and Soviet specialists on Russian literature. This "eclecticism" corresponds to the editor's view of his task, which is to increase "knowledge and understanding of Chekhov among a large general readership and a large number of literary and theater critics and students of Chekhov's works." These categories of readers will find much valuable information (from Richard Peace, Zinovii Paperny, Virginia Llewellyn Smith, for example), whereas the Chekhov specialist looking for new interpretative trends and unexpected approaches is less served by this summarizing anthology with its many names well known to scholars in the field (Vladimir Nabokov, Maurice Valency, Thomas Eekman).

Another goal staked out by the editor is to demonstrate changes in reception history. There the major shift has been the growing awareness of Chekhov's not committing himself to either "laughter or tears," or any other clear-cut categories. Only Robert Louis Jackson among the contemporary critics of the collection presents an earnest Chekhov, claiming that Anna Akimovna (in "A Woman's Kingdom") has an unambiguous choice between the "bald devil" of a lawyer, Lysevich, and the "good shepherd" Pimenov. Perhaps the devil is not as "terrible as he is painted," however, and the pitiless Pimenov not so good as to qualify as a Christ figure. The view that Chekhov typically demonstrates a process "from ignorance to knowledge" (Bentley), and that this change is valuable in itself, seems more convincing. On the whole this open image of a nonjudgmental Chekhov is the one which predominates in the collection.

Irene Masing-Delic

The Ohio State University

Barabtarlo, Gennadi. *Phantom of Fact: A Guide to Nabokov's Pnin*. Ann Arbor: Ardis, 1989. 314 pp. \$37.95 (cloth).

Gennadi Barabtarlo has given us a do-it-yourself *Pnin* kit: two hundred and ten pages of annotation, five appendices, a bibliography, and thirty pages of densely packed introductory notes. This is a particularly splendid idea in the case of Nabokov's novels, the reading of which entails the reader's process of discovery. And Barabtarlo, as the translator of *Pnin* into Russian, is the ideal author of such a work. In *Phantom* he makes it clear to a fledgling Nabokovian that an exploration of Nabokov's work should begin in annotation, and while the notes suggest interesting ways to view the problems presented by *Pnin*, solutions remain fluid, no stillicide is committed.

The appendices include an index of dramatis personae, a "chronograph" of the events in *Pnin*, a "toponymy" of the novel's places, an index of flora and

fauna, and three different charts of color distribution within the novel. These are intended as tools, rather than support for any argument of the author's, an approach that may come as a revelation to undergraduates, usually unschooled in the use of motifs, who use *Phantom* as a textbook.

The introductory notes provide the following: (1) the history of the text: here and in the annotations, divergences from the earlier *New Yorker* version are meticulously recorded. There may not be as much distance between Nabokov's early statement that Pnin was to die at the end and the final ending of the novel as *Phantom* suggests (p. 41): Pnin's ascent of the "shining road . . . narrowing to a thread of gold in the soft mist . . . where there was simply no saying what miracle might happen" (*Pnin*, p. 191) is an image of death (heralded by Pnin's previous address at 999 Todd Road). But this kind of observation is not the task Barabtarlo has set himself.

(2) A chronology: the problems of dating that relate to the question of Pnin's birthday, with its unresolvable discrepancies, are reviewed.

(3) *Pnin's* cast of over three hundred characters: Nabokov's method of having real characters consort with fictional ones, as Pushkin does in *Onegin*, is considered.

(4) A section, "Structure, Thematic Lines, Theory" (twenty-five pages) frames the annotations, raising central questions and tracing the interrelated themes of reflection and of the squirrel. The key issue of the relationship of N- to Pnin is discussed in terms of Pavel Florenski's understanding of the antinomian nature of ultimate Truth. Applied to *Pnin*, Barabtarlo concludes that from an aerial view of the novel's labyrinth "all contradictions will cohere" (p. 38), Pnin and N- may coexist. He does not discuss, although he cites, Julian Connolly's convincing argument for the positive progression of Pnin's lot, or the possibility (documented in an unpublished undergraduate paper) of change in N-'s attitude toward Pnin in the course of the novel.

Phantom is a philological rather than an interpretative work. In the annotations Barabtarlo correlates passages in *Pnin* with Nabokov's other novels, notes patternings within the text, provides sources, identifies references, condensing a vast amount of knowledge into minimal and readily accessible space. While Barabtarlo does not impose interpretations, he does have strong opinions. For example, he deplors the "misguided debate" concerning the narrator N-'s social snobbery, "absolutely unthinkable for a man of Pnin's and N-'s ken" (p. 29), but does not review the critical evidence. This tendency again prevails when the Good Guys attempt to purge Nabokov criticism of the Bad Guys: Andrew Field is taken to task ("invidious," "slandrous," "preposterous" (p. 45), and W. W. Rowe's squirrel = Mira's ghost hypothesis dismissed ("One does not hunt harlequins with an harquebus à croc" [p. 22]). However accurate these assessments, the faith would be better defended by reasoned refutation.

These moments, however, in no way undermine the great value of this work, both for research and for teaching. *Pnin* may now be profitably included in syllabi by instructors who know little about Nabokov; the clarity, accuracy, and completeness of *Phantom of Fact* enables a rich enjoyment of *Pnin* for any willing reader. Let us hope that other equally demanding and knowledgeable scholars will undertake similar volumes for more of Nabokov's novels (an

Annotated *Ada* from Ardis, Ann Arbor, has alliterative and amphisbaenic allure).

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Crisp, Olga, and Linda Edmondson, eds. *Civil Rights in Imperial Russia*. New York: Clarendon Press, Oxford University Press, 1989. xvi, 321 pp. \$64.00 (cloth).

The 1985 conference which gave rise to this volume brought together authorities in a wide range of historical subjects to consider the topic of civil rights in late imperial Russia from differing perspectives. As the editors point out in their preface, both Western liberals and socialist theoreticians have long defined the "otherness" of Russian/Soviet political culture through an appraisal of its stance on civil rights. While liberals view Russia as deficient by Western standards, socialists deny the universality of the Western notion of civil rights and posit a need for a broader notion of human rights and collective responsibilities in the modern world. The aim of the conference, and of the fourteen essays in this anthology, was not to resolve the above conflict over the definition of civil rights (though some ammunition for the respective camps has been provided), but to approach the subject in a new way.

Three contributions focus on the political dimension. W. E. Butler's introductory essay first discusses the broad scope and elusive meaning of the phrase "civil rights," and goes on to explore the Russian legal interpretation over time as manifested in the Basic Law of 1906 and the various Soviet constitutions. Linda Edmondson traces the development in 1905 of a true movement for civil rights on the part of "thousands, even millions of people," from *zemstvo* liberals and professionals to teachers and schoolchildren, all attracted to political protest by their desire for freedom, equality, and an end to autocratic arbitrariness. H. J. White takes a detailed look at 1917; he concludes that in comparison to the Provisional Government, the ideology and institutions of the "democratic elements" in this fateful year were retrospectively more promising, yet equally unable to bring about a new order maximizing the "Freedom" in the name of which the autocracy had been destroyed.

Other essays explore the theme of civil rights from the perspective of a particular class or discrete issue. S. A. Smith shows that far from being concerned only with bread-and-butter issues, Russian workers from 1899 to 1917 contributed significantly to the fight for civil and political rights, and that these latter concerns became a significant part of working-class consciousness. G. R. Swain demonstrates that the autocracy's response to trade union activities after 1905, while predictably negative, indicated a reluctant commitment to operating within the law. Raymond Pearson's essay (which includes a stimulating historiographical survey) on the fluctuating fortunes of national minorities highlights the fact that the autocracy dealt in terms of formal and informal privileges, not rights (which not even Russians enjoyed). Caspar Ferenczi discusses the press boom from 1905 to 1914, concluding that in this period Russia enjoyed "a relatively free press of high quality . . . not substantially different from the western press"