

relations, which Nabokov uses to “correct” (46) Joyce’s aim to reject biology and create an aesthetic paternity by simultaneously imagining the resurrection of Nabokov’s own murdered father and merge his memory with that of Aleksandr Pushkin, his adopted father within Russian literature (50).

Andrei Bitov’s underground novel of the Brezhnev era, *The Pushkin House*, self-consciously parades its literary allusions, among them to Joyce. But it, too, is a novel about imagined alternative paternity for its hero Leva Odoevtsev. It thus serves as part of its author’s “effort to discover a means out of his perceived historical belatedness” (75), a predicament experienced by the post-Thaw generation for whom Joyce became emblematic of their “inability to catch up” with literary history (93). Sasha Sokolov, another underground writer of the Brezhnev years, marks an advance in confidence of Russian appropriations of Joyce. In *School for Fools* and *Between Dog and Wolf*, whose complex prose replicates Joycean devices like stream of consciousness narration and quasi-epic lists, Joyce figures primarily as a stylistic alternative (108), a precedent for taking pleasure in “freedom language provides” (118). In Vergara’s argument, Sokolov goes even further than Joyce in relinquishing any anxiety over the relation between linguistic play and reality (120)—albeit as an implicit escape from the demands of Socialist Realism, a parallel, he suggests, to Joyce’s ambivalence regarding the colonial implications of using English in an Irish novel (128).

For Mikhail Shishkin, a post-Soviet writer able by choice to reside in Switzerland, the engagement with Joyce unfolds at a time of rekindled debates over whether a western writer like Joyce is essential to Russian literature, or “totally foreign, unnecessary” (142). Shishkin’s novel *Maidenhair*, Vergara argues, turns to the precedent of Joycean verbal play and recycled texts in order to come “out the other side of the end of history to put the pieces together and to reintegrate Russian literature into world culture” (144). The book’s conclusion presents results of a series of interviews Vergara conducted with sixteen contemporary writers about Joyce’s influence on their work.

Vergara’s tight focus on a single literary predecessor creates some inevitable blind spots. At times one senses that not all the textual traces he notes necessarily point back to Joyce but could, rather, emerge out of a common stock of modernist themes and motifs. The readings are nonetheless conducted with subtlety and insight, and Vergara’s book ultimately can be read as a study of Russian writers’ enduring engagement with western modernism over the course of the twentieth century, and beyond.

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***Wingless Desire in Modernist Russia: Envy and Authorship in the 1920s.***

By Yelena Zotova. Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2021. xiv, 281 pp. Notes.

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Russian history since the fifteenth century might be read as envy of the other. Petr Chaadaev’s agility could take Russians’ sense of inner lack and replace

their envious gaze westward with a vision of possibility, but the country continues to maintain a charged ambivalence toward cultural and social differences. In her study of Yurii Olesha, Konstantin Vaginov, and Aleksandr Grin, Professor Yelena Zotov explores literature from the 1920s that investigates the dynamic of envy. She also acknowledges a critical idol, Mikhail Bakhtin. Though conceding that “Bakhtin never explicitly wrote about envy,” Zotova likens his “absolute aesthetic need for the Other” as “one’s ultimate desire to be a hero in someone else’s narrative” (36). Other theoreticians of envy, including Harold Bloom, Max Scheler, and Melanie Klein are vetted and introduced as suitable company for the Saransk master, but Zotova is particularly drawn to René Girard, whose theory of desire, like Bakhtin’s reception model, is triangular.

To set up a paradigm for her investigation, Zotova devotes an early chapter to Aleksandr Pushkin’s inventive portrayal of the envious craftsman in “Motsart i Sal’eri,” and characteristically pivots to Bakhtin in promoting her view of authorship: “While Salieri is only capable of objectifying Mozart from without, Mozart is both outside of Salieri and within him” (97). Zotova then considers the dramatized conflict of novelty and obsolescence in Olesha’s *Zavist’*, and while never quite reconciling it with Pushkin’s interest in the opposition of artisan/master, she acutely registers the writers’ similar focus on the self-consciousness of narration: Salieri the storyteller, and the “self-censoring and confused ‘author’” that destabilizes Olesha’s novel (105). Zotova is equally apt in targeting the busy intertextuality of Vaginov, which effectively and simultaneously appropriates its sources and renders them “chuzhie.” Using the distancing voice that marks Vaginov’s affinity with OBERIU prose, the interventionist narrator of *Kozlinaia pesn’* seesaws between mockery and adulation of his various models, particularly two real-life figures from Vaginov’s own circle, Lev Gumilev and Bakhtin. Zotova concludes with Grin’s stories of the fantastic, focusing upon “Fandango” and “Alye parusa.” “If Olesha portrays the pain of envy from within the envious consciousness of the author, and Vaginov conceptualizes this pain as the author’s failure to achieve outsidership in his parodying homage of Bakhtin.... Grin’s empathy always lies with the envied” (199).

This is not completely true. Assol, the Cinderella-like heroine of “Alye parusa” is shunned, not envied, and commands the narrator’s and reader’s sympathy because she is an outcaste. Having defined the 1920s in terms of socio-economic change and brutal repression, Zotova labors somewhat to explain the escapist writings of Grin. Using its ostentatious display of fetishized objects—the paintings in Brock’s apartment, the sumptuous treasures of Professor Bam-Gran—Zotova quickly unlocks “Fandango” with an envy-based reading, but “Alye parusa” resists her efforts to complicate what is a straightforward fairy tale.

Zotova’s uncritical acceptance of Bakhtin exacts a price. In allowing him to exert a strong gravitational pull on her thinking, she does not submit his ideas to the test of usefulness, instead reversing the normal direction of critical reading and reconciling elements of her writers’ stories with Bakhtin’s theory of authorship. Further, while Bakhtin gives Zotova a vocabulary for describing alienation, his deeply religious theory of interpersonalit

on responsiveness to others, inevitably turns the works of Olesha, Vaginov, and Grin into failures, which they are not, conceptually or aesthetically. Girard and Bakhtin may both premise human activity on a response to incompleteness, but Girard's "desire" (A wants B because B is looking away at C) and Bakhtin's summons to engage the other (A and B need each other to complete themselves) are absolutely opposed in outcome.

Though their most nuanced approaches to the theme of envy fall in the 1930s, one questions Zotova's exclusion of the "Berlin" Vladimir Nabokov (especially *Mashen'ka* and "Sogliadatai") and Mikhail Bulgakov. With its repulsive incarnation of the "new man," "Sobach'e serdtse" certainly anticipates Olesha's Andrei Babichev. All these works were published in or before 1930. Further, while it offers Zotova a fitting springboard for her argument about envy, one wonders at her choosing "Motsart i Sal'eri" over Fedor Dostoevskii's *Zapiski iz podpol'ia*, which exerted an untold impact on the Modernist authors she addresses.

Zotova has read an impressive amount of scholarship—given the mountain of academic writing devoted to *Zavist'* alone, an astonishing feat. Olesha is paradoxically the author where Zotova is able to contribute the most, particularly in her analysis of the Odessan's imagery of disfigurement, which she finds to be a metaphor for both cultural dislocation and the belligerence of envy. Zotova's theses also beg to be read in relation to discussions of fame/shame cultures. Though the theoretical apparatus of the monograph often loses in depth what it attempts in latitude, her readings will reward students of the individual authors, particularly Olesha and Vaginov.

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***Dostoevsky's Incarnational Realism: Finding Christ among the Karamazovs.*** By

Paul J. Contino. Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2020. xii, 322 pp. Appendixes. Notes.

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Paul J. Contino's book *Dostoevsky's Incarnational Realism*—which includes the bonus of an afterword by Caryl Emerson—is a spirited (and inspired) reading of Fedor Dostoevskii's final novel from a frankly Catholic perspective. Strikingly, for this reviewer (who has spilled ink about this novel from a certain Jewish point-of-view, that of Emmanuel Levinas's radical ethics), Contino's project is partly motivated by the odd confluence of anti-Catholic vitriol in Dostoevskii's work alongside the novelist's profound impact on Catholic readers: see Appendix 1 (211–12) for two pages of blurbs from such luminaries as Martin Sheen, Dorothy Day, and Thomas Merton, an insertion that feels a little bit like Contino is *koshering* Dostoevskii for a Catholic audience, to mix a metaphor. The beating heart of this book, however, is Contino's claim that Dostoevskii's "fantastic" or "higher realism," rooted in his Christian faith, sees visible, finite reality as bearing an *analogical* relationship to an invisible, infinite reality" (7). The "both/and" capaciousness of Contino's analogical—he also calls it Trinitarian and incarnational—approach is particularly