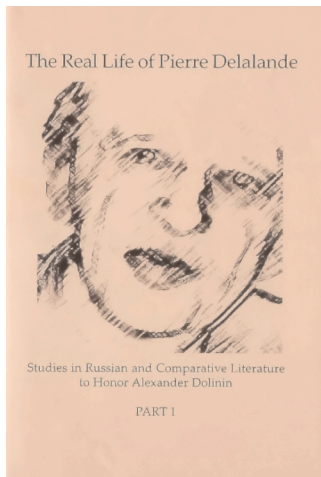


REVIEW ARTICLE

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***The Real Life of Pierre Delalande: Studies in Russian and Comparative Literature to Honor Alexander Dolinin*, ed. by David M. Bethea, Lazar Fleishman, and Alexander Ospovat. Stanford: Berkeley Slavic Specialties, 2007; Stanford Slavic Studies, vols 33 (1-377pp.) –34 (377-774pp.).**



While *Festschriften* still represent one of the principal publication venues for Russian philologists, they are becoming a rarity in American academic printing. The Stanford Slavic Studies series is a notable exception to this trend; its recent volumes honor Olga Raevsky Hughes and Robert Hughes, Caryl Emerson, and other eminent Slavists. The publication of a collection of essays in honor of Alexander Dolinin — a meticulous historian of 19th and 20th c. Russian

literature, a dazzling lecturer in both Russian and English (the reviewer humbly recalls attending a brilliant one-hour talk by the honorand at Berkeley, delivered *bez bumazhki*), as well as an author of sharp, hard-hitting reviews — stands up to the expectation of a major scholarly event. The collection is divided into two parts, with continuous pagination, and comprises 38 contributions, as many as 30 of them in Russian. At the risk of overburdening the reader with detail, I provide brief summaries of each contribution with the goal of making the essential contents of the volume more widely accessible. (It may be said with regret that Berkeley Slavic Specialties publications do not reach a wide audience of Russian readers, as they are difficult to get hold of in the former Soviet Union.) The twelve articles on Nabokov, inasmuch as they are of immediate interest to the readers of *Nabokov Online Journal*, are discussed first and at a greater length.

Much of the scholarship on Nabokov's novels dwells on their rich intertextuality and intricate composition. The contributions of Boris Katz and A. V. Lavrov succeed in bringing these two components together so as to allow them to shed light on each other. Katz argues that the farewell motif (*Proshchai, proshchai*) in *Podvig/Glory*, repeated five times in the novel, is an allusion to a particular musical phrase in the opening scene of Rimsky-Korsakov's *Snegurochka*. The parallels Katz establishes between Rimsky-Korsakov's narrative and the imagery and plot of *Podvig* is in keeping with earlier work (initiated by an Edythe Haber article) on fairy-tale qualities of this novel. To touch upon a minor point: even though Nabokov's apparent disregard for music should be treated *cum grano salis*, one may question the supposition that he could have retained the musical content of the opera from a visit to the Mariinsky theatre while still in Petersburg. As an alternative explanation, one might conjecture that the *proshchai, proshchai* motif was

part of the Nabokovs' family lore, or inquire into the possibility of the opera having been performed in Berlin in 1920s.

In his contribution, Lavrov discusses numerous parallels in the plots of *Zashchita Luzhina/The Defense* and Bely's *III Simfoniia, Vozvrat*, whose second edition — with the subtitle *povest'* — was published in Berlin in 1922. Bely's narrative, similarly to Nabokov's, is that of a failed *Bildungsroman*: a story of a man who seeks refuge in an illusory world before committing suicide in an effort to return to his childhood. In particular, Lavrov draws attention to the themes of the mirror and the crossing into the “otherworld” in Bely's *Vozvrat*. Nabokov's appropriation of the Russian Symbolist conceptual vocabulary may also be the proper context in which to consider V. E. Bagno's contribution to the volume, which presents a summary of the use of the metaphor of “life as a dream” in Nabokov's Russian prose. Inasmuch as the literary-historical significance of the Calderonian subtext for this metaphor in Nabokov is unclear, it is perhaps best considered as part of a broader pattern of imagery with vaguely Symbolist associations.

Julian W. Connolly's essay on the precedents for the figure of the “demonic nymphet” in *Lolita* similarly mines Nabokov's oeuvre for literary and cultural allusions. Connolly begins by comparing Nabokov's 1923 poem “Lilith” with particular motifs in *Lolita* (such as the motif of hell mistaken for paradise). A more controversial part of the article proposes to treat *Lolita* as a mermaid figure, projecting the mother-daughter duet in Nabokov's ending of Pushkin's *Rusalka* onto Charlotte and Dolly Haze; I also note Connolly's suggestion that Humbert Humbert's statement “You have to be an artist or a

madman ... to discern ... the little deadly demon among the wholesome children” alludes to Gogol’s *Maiskaia noch*’.

By contrast, Priscilla Meyer’s article seeks to trace the evolution of a motif or idea — that of eros — within Nabokov’s corpus. In particular, Meyer follows up on Maria Malikova’s discussion of the differences in representation of Valentina Shulgina in the three versions of Nabokov’s written autobiography, as well as his adolescent poems of the Petersburg years. Meyer’s argument for the significance of Blok’s *Carmen* cycle is suggestive, but, to my mind, not conclusive. More generally, the mode of reading that treats characters of Nabokov’s novels as projections of real people yields dubious interpretations (an examination of Nabokov’s biography “allows us to understand Humbert’s pedophilia as a perverse variation of Nabokov’s fixation on his first love” [530]; “Humbert’s Annabel Leigh ... is a composite of *Speak, Memory*’s Tamara and Colette” [532]; “Ada is an intellectually improved version of Liusia, though just as faithless” [534] etc.).

In another contribution on Nabokov’s *Zashchita Luzhina/The Defense*, Adam Weiner focuses on the internal structure of one Nabokovian text. Weiner’s reading is on the whole couched in terms characteristic of an ethical strand in Nabokov studies, inquiring into Nabokov’s (supposedly) inhumane treatment of his characters. Some of Weiner’s observations on the figure of a quiet boy who seems to be Luzhin’s more successful double are interesting, but the analysis is marred by occasional mishandling of the textual evidence. For example, Weiner entertains the possibility that Luzhin’s wife could have been dating Luzhin’s geography school teacher who, as she herself recollects,

was "...in love — they said — with one of the upper-form girls." Apart from making Luzhin younger than his wife, this reading becomes untenable if the larger context is taken into account: "one of the upper-form girls, a niece of the white-haired, blue-eyed headmistress... etc." (88). Weiner does not make it clear that the phrase is taken out of Luzhin's wife interior monologue (the reference point for "upper-form" is her own age, not Luzhin's). In fact, Weiner's analysis of the hidden role Luzhin's wife plays in the novel — insofar as it goes beyond what has already been remarked upon in the literature, principally by Vladimir Alexandrov — is made sustainable in the first place by the introductory sentence "she recollects four men she has loved before him [i.e. Luzhin]" (571), which is Weiner's rephrasing of Nabokov's "a modest dimly lit gallery with a sequence of all the people who had in any way caught her fancy" (89)!

The poetics of one Nabokov novel is also the focus of D. Barton Johnson's discussion of avian and lepidopteran imagery in *Pale Fire*. As suggested by Johnson, waxwing, the bird "slain by the false azure of windowpane" in the opening lines of Shade's poem, is associated with the character of Shade and may have a more general connotation of a harbinger of death, as this bird is associated with natural disasters in some European cultures. I note an interesting gloss on Zemblan *sampel* 'waxwing', which Johnson relates to the name of "Gradus", the murderer of Shade, via Vinograd and *Ampelis* 'of the vineyard', an earlier name for waxwing (657-8). Another "winged creature heralding death" in Nabokov's oeuvre is the butterfly Red Admiral; it is also prominent in *Pale Fire*. The article concludes with a discussion of other avian images in the novel (in particular, Johnson points out that the name of Shade's friend Paul Hentzner coincides with that of an author of a travelogue which describes a "bird of paradise").

The incompleteness of the list of the works cited is a slight hindrance to the reader of the article.

Two contributions are dedicated to Nabokov's *Dar/The Gift*. Arkady Blumbaum supplies a note on the figure of Zina's father-in-law, Shchyogolev (see, the Russian-language version of the article in the present issue of the *Nabokov Online Journal*, Vol. II, 2008). While in his commentary on the novel Dolinin has related the name of that character to the Pushkin scholar P. E. Shchyogolev,¹ his occupation as a "public prosecutor" (*prokuror*) has not been seen as related to this prototype. Blumbaum finds a likely connection in the use of overtly juridical language in P. E. Shchyogolev's 1927-8 polemic against Khodasevich's biographical reading of Pushkin's *Rusalka*.

Yuri Leving, after addressing the state of the surviving manuscripts of *Dar*, offers an experimental edition of the first page of the novel with an exhaustive commentary built around subtexts and recurring "themes" (the method is reminiscent of Barthes' *S/Z*). This is a rewarding approach for an attentive reader of Nabokov. Leving points to the cinematic quality of the opening of the novel, as well as to several pertinent subtexts (Sasha Chernyi's story *Zheltyi furgon*, Lermontov's *Geroi nashego vremeni*). Some other generalizations and observations are less convincing ("in the beginning of *any* epic narrative, the hero leaves his home" [642; italics added]; the mention of a cigar prompting the theme of a palimpsest; treatment of the word *shtuka* as an archaism [641] or *vybezhat' nalegke* as non-idiomatic; the discussion of the hero-narrator, which seems

¹ In fact, this connection had been previously made by Robert Hughes in his commentary to the publication of Khodasevich's letters to M. A. Tsiavlovskii, some of which pertain to the controversy around Khodasevich's reading of *Rusalka*; see "V. F. Khodasevich. Pis'ma k M. A. Tsiavlovskomu. Publikatsiia Roberta H'iuza." *Russkaia literatura*. 1999. No. 2. P. 226.

to confuse the categories of omniscient [rather than “omnipotent” (630)?] author and the chronicler figure typical of Dostoyevsky novels).

Yuri Tsivian’s note on “dead gestures”, which become obsolete along with the costumes that called them into life, is possibly the most entertaining contribution in the collection. First of all, I should mention a misprint in the URL containing illustrations to the article, as well as its full text: it should read <http://www.cinematics.lv/dolinin> (with a lower-case “d” in the honorand’s name). Tsivian puts together Nabokov’s descriptions of the complicated procedure of putting on a coat (hardly a “dead” gesture today, even providing for the change of tailoring fashions), to which one might add the remark from the end of the first Chapter of *Dar*: “Nakinuv na sheiu sero-polosatyi sharfik, on po-russki zaderzhal ego podborodkom, po-russki zhe vlezaia tolchkami spiny v pal’to” (“Draping a skimpy, gray-striped scarf around his neck, he held it in place with his chin in the Russian manner while, also in the Russian manner, he got into his overcoat by means of several dorsal jerks”). Tsivian notes that the term *karpalistika* (carpalistics), which he uses to refer to the study of gesture, is a neologism found in *Pnin* and denoting complicated hand movements (from *carpal* <medical Latin *carpus*> ‘wrist’, not attested in classical Latin). One should add to this that the word *karpalistika* is not related to the root of *corpus* (Latin for ‘body’) in the Russian *korpus*, etc., as opposed to what one might mistakenly suspect given both the lack of cognates of the English *carpal* (or Latin *carpus*) in Russian and the broader meaning (‘any bodily movement’) in which Tsivian uses the term.

Maria Malikova contributes two notes; one proposes to return to a meta-literary, allegorical reading of *Otchaian'e/Despair* as a novel about a writer's failure, the other draws on Gleb Struve's archive to reconstruct the fate of the originals of Nabokov's letters to Struve (which the latter sold to an unreliable bibliophile in 1975 and which surfaced in 1987 at an auction where they were purchased by the Library of Congress). Finally, Wolf Schmid's essay details Nabokov's polemic with Shklovsky in *Putevoditel' po Berlinu* (continuing Omri Ronen's work) and compares Nabokov's use of *ostranenie* with Yuri Olesha's. Schmid points out that the practice of both writers differs from Tolstoy's in that they do not make use of defamiliarization as a means of social critique, instead foregrounding its aesthetic function. The main part of the article consists of a subtle analysis of Olesha's style, drawing on *Zavist'* and his short stories.

The remaining contributions deal with diverse aspects of Russian literary and cultural history, often in a comparative perspective. (One exception is Maria Neklyudova's essay, which links Horace Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto* (1765), one of the first Gothic romances, to the low genre of "secret histories", pointing in particular to the anonymous *The Secret Life of Pythagoras* that was claimed to have been found near Otranto.) My discussion of the articles generally follows the order in which they were arranged by the editors, which is itself determined by the chronology of the texts and topics addressed.

Kirill Ospovat, focusing on Lomonosov's "Pis'mo k ego vysokorodiiu Ivanu Ivanovichu Shuvalovu" (1750), discusses a number of literary and institutional parallels between the patterns of patronage at the Russian and French courts. Ospovat's case for the political usefulness of the panegyrist to the members of the court elite — intended as a polemic against V. M. Zhivov's

account of the literary biographies of 18th c. Russian poets as eccentric and often marginal figures — is largely dictated by comparative evidence. Nataliia Mazur's and Roman Leibov's contributions address the background of Pushkin's *Graf Nulin*, and both provide essential additions to the interpretation of the poem: Mazur points to Béranger's "La Double Chasse" as a precedent for Pushkin's plot, while Leibov undertakes a philological investigation of the significance of a scandalous episode of 1803, involving the heir to the throne Konstantin Pavlovich, for the date of the composition of *Graf Nulin* (which, as famously noted by Pushkin himself, coincided with the pro-Konstantin Decembrist uprising). It is only to be regretted that the authors were apparently not cognizant of each other's work, as a synthesis of their conclusions, given the charge of immorality which resulted in Béranger's three-month imprisonment, is an obvious temptation.

Two further articles pertain to Pushkin. Ekaterina Liamina discusses the topography and cultural associations of Kolomna with reference to *Domik v Kolomne*. Alexander Ospovat's study of the genesis of *Kapitanskaia dochka* complements Yu. D. Levin's finding that the plot of Pushkin's novel is similar to that of Lecointe de Laveau's *Dmitri et Nadezhda, ou le Chateau d'Oural* (1808) by showing that the latter text is itself based on Baculard d'Arnaud's short story "Le paysan généreux" (1785). Ospovat also provides literary and historical comparanda for the final scene of the heroine's encounter with a benevolent ruler. Two contributions address the reception of Pushkin's oeuvre within the Russian literary tradition. Andrei Nemzer points to a polemical stance of A. K. Tolstoi's *Kniaz' Serebrianyi* with respect to what Dolinin described as the proto-Slavophile historical vision of *Kapitanskaia dochka*. David M. Bethea offers an essay on Pushkin and Brodsky, which, as he cautions the readers, is not trying to strike "a strict 'scholarly' note" (101); it is indeed up to the readers whether they agree with the author's particular observations, which are presented apodictically (e.g. "with Pushkin, the notion of

romantic biography was born for Russian poetry, and, with Brodsky, that notion died” [102], “[t]he notion of the Old Testament sacrificial son ... sits very deep in Brodsky” [109]).

In a paper whose methodology, influenced by cultural studies, makes it stand out in the volume, Leonid Livak reads Chekhov’s *Tina* and *Skripka Rotshil’da* as texts that share a pan-European Judeophobic code, which included the smell of garlic, an excessive interest in lucrative activities, and (in the case of Susanna, the protagonist of *Tina*) an association with vampirism. While the general contextualization Livak proposes is compelling, one can argue about details in the interpretation of the two short stories. Yet even as many readers will harbor doubts about Chekhov’s intention “to take on ... Russia’s political liberals and their theoretical Judeophilia” (140), Livak has succeeded in showing that Chekhov “could not ignore the suggestive power of the language of ‘Jewish’ difference and its potential artistic uses” (142). In a second paper pertaining to the reception of Dracula as an arch-decadent figure on Russian soil, D. I. Ungurianu, continuing Z. G. Mints’ work on intertextuality and *mifotvorchestvo* in Merezhkovskii, analyzes the network of allusions to Bram Stoker’s *Dracula*, first translated into Russian in 1902, in Dmitri Merezhkovski’s *Petr i Aleksei*.

Several contributions address particular problems in the interpretation of Russian modernist poetry. Roman Timenchik’s methodological remarks on the purposes of commentary (mostly illustrated with examples from early Akhmatova) focus principally on the need to reconstruct the expectations of the text’s original reader. In this context, references to A. I. Beletskii’s 1964 call for “a history of readers” (beside traditional literary history — “the history of writers”) highlight the historical, rather than the hermeneutic, orientation of Timenchik’s concept of commentary. Daria Khitrova’s discursive treatment of the visual aspect of the final scene of Blok’s *Dvenadtsat’*, in which Christ is represented as an epiphany of light, succeeds in situating this image in the contemporary rhetoric in which religious metaphors were used to describe the revolutionary actuality; the author’s more specific conclusions, however, remain

tentative, if only because of the bewildering amount of circumstantial evidence which often points in different directions. Nevertheless, perhaps the most blatant parallel, namely the iconography of Christ's Transfiguration at Mt. Tabor and the vision of uncreated light, witnessed by the twelve disciples, is not discussed. Khitrova's study seems to instantiate some of the difficulties of pursuing the philological exercise of subtext-hunting in the extra-verbal domain of visual associations.

Mikhail Bezrodny presents an elegant analysis of the rhythmical and acoustic patterns in Khodasevich's "Slepoi" ("Palkoi shchupaia dorogu"). N. A. Bogomolov discusses three cases of possible (and, in one case, unwitting) dialogue between the poetry of Khodasevich and Pasternak, including the possible link between Pasternak's "Belye stikhi" and Khodasevich's "Epizod." Viacheslav Vs. Ivanov's remarks provide an illuminating commentary on some of Pasternak's early verse; one might point to an obvious comparandum for Pasternak's use of the word *tuga* 'sorrow' from *Slovo o polku Igoreve* (266) in Mandel'shtam's play with this word ("Kak Slovo o polku, struna moia tuga").²

Three further studies focus on Pasternak. Ronald Vroon inquires into Pasternak's early theoretical pronouncements on the "ontology of the word", which puts emphasis not on a particular subject or an object of perception, but on a relation between them that Pasternak variously described as *soznanie* and *sub''ektivnost'* or *Lirika* and posited as "a universal shared by humankind across time and space" (283); the article also includes a gloss on the term *coffre volant* in Pasternak's *Chernyi bokal*. A. K. Zholkovsky presents a corpus-internal and intertextual commentary on Pasternak's "Roial' drozhashchii penu s gub oblizhet" (from the cycle "Razryv"), discussing possible allusions to Fet's "Siiala noch'...", Shakespeare's *Love's Labour's Lost*, Goethe's *Die Leiden des jungen Werthers*, Pushkin's *Kamennyi gost'* and "Ia Vas liubil..." Irina

² This echo in Mandel'shtam has been pointed out by G. A. Levinton ("K probleme literaturnoi tsitatsii." Materialy XXVI nauchnoi studencheskoi konferentsii. Literaturovedenie. Lingvistika. Tartu, 1971. P. 52, fn. 1).

Shevelenko traces the changing attitudes of Pasternak and Tsvetaeva toward the relevance of history to their poetic pursuits in the course of the 1920s — a topic prominent in their correspondence from that period. Notwithstanding their many disagreements, both poets move from lyric to longer historical poems and later to “lirico-historical” prose; in particular, Shevelenko points out that Tsvetaeva’s plans to write a poem on the roots of the White Volunteer movement was most likely a response to Pasternak’s *1905*.

A broad view on Soviet literary politics and history is assumed in Marietta Chudakova’s and Oleg Lekmanov’s contributions. Chudakova’s insightful observations on the divergent politics and poetics of the Petrograd/Leningrad and Moscow-based writers, in effect, add up to a synthetic vision of the first decades of Soviet literary history. Lekmanov traces the competing perceptions of Esenin as a Soviet poet, from the rise of the negative term *eseninshchina* and the association of Esenin with the “kulak” ideology in the second half of the 1920s to the eventual establishment, in the wake of the Second World War, of an official image of Esenin as a singer of the Russian folk.

Stefano Gardzonio, V. Khazan and Lazar Fleishman take up lesser-known episodes in Russian émigré literary life. Gardzonio’s contribution concerns the biography of Aleksandr Saulovich Sokolovsky, a poet who actively participated in the literary life of Odessa and Feodosia before emigrating in 1920, and includes six letters from 1921-2 that Sokolovsky, then in Bucharest, wrote to A. S. Iashchenko, the editor of *Novaia russkaia kniga* in Berlin. V. Khazan’s contribution pertains to the biography of Osip Dymov, a Russian writer and, after emigration to the United States in 1913, an American Yiddish playwright; the publication includes a Russian translation of Dymov’s autobiographical essay, which, unexpectedly, relates to SR terrorist activities in the 1900s. Lazar Fleishman analyzes the circumstances of the writing and publication of N. A. Tsurikov’s “Pamiati pavshikh” in 1928 — a collection of commemorative biographies of

the four members of an anti-Soviet terrorist group linked to Kutepov; the text of “Pamiati pavshikh” is reproduced on pp. 476-494.³

The volume concludes with three studies that view Russian cultural history in the light of Russia’s interaction with the West. Vera Milchina’s article discusses the circumstances of the unveiling of the Alexander column in St. Petersburg in 1834 in the context of the uneasy relations between Nicholas I and Louis-Philippe, who became the “Roi Citoyen” of the French after the July Revolution. The changes in the attitude of the French ambassador N.-J. Maison, who in the end failed to make an appearance at the ceremony, serve to bring out the conflicting meanings assigned to this monument as a memorial of war and a statement of peaceful, civilized intentions associated with Alexander’s reign. Liubov Kiseleva presents an analysis of a treatise “on the Russian national character” published in 1781 by A. W. Hupel, a German pastor who spent most of his life in what is now Estonia. In this apologetical text aimed at Western readers, Hupel follows closely the argument of Catherine’s “Antidote”, which makes it likely that the text was part of Russian government propaganda. In a controversial essay, Maria Plyukhanova discusses the ideas of millennialism, associated in the Western Christian tradition principally with Joachim of Fiore (late 12th c.), and argues for their impact on the doctrine of Moscow as the Third Rome and the eschatology of the Old Believers. In the latter case, in particular, differences seem to outweigh similarities, yet Plyukhanova’s broad comparative approach is nevertheless promising.

In conclusion, it should be noted that a more palpable presence of the organizing will of the editors would certainly not have been out of order in a biography of Pierre Delalande. Articles use different styles of citing sources, and in more than one case no full reference can be found. The reader of the *Festschrift* will also miss a bibliography of Alexander Dolinin’s publications.

³ In this context, I would like to mention another recent article dedicated to Alexander Dolinin’s jubilee and pertaining to the biography of several Russian émigré terrorists (in particular, those involved in the attempt to assassinate P. V. Milyukov in which V. D. Nabokov was killed): G. V. Obatnin. “Proteus: Eshche raz o satanistakh XX veka.” *Russkaia literatura*. 2007. No. 4. P. 32-46.

Despite these editorial deficiencies, the volume will undoubtedly be a welcome addition to the library of any scholar interested in Russian literary and cultural history.

