

Russian Realisms: Literature and Painting, 1840–1890. By Molly Brunson. DeKalb, Ill.: Northern Illinois University Press, 2016. xv, 263 pp. Notes. Bibliography. Index. Plates. \$59.00, paper.
doi: 10.1017/slr.2017.213

In her study, *Russian Realisms: Literature and Painting, 1840–1890*, Molly Brunson underscores from the outset that she embraces an *elastic* realism (Lydia Ginzburg), one informed by literary critics (Vissarion Belinskii and Erich Auerbach), with an understanding that realism retains a consciousness of the limits of “mimetic proximity” (15). She offers the reader of Ivan Turgenev, Fedor Dostoevskii, and Lev Tolstoi an enhanced appreciation for the commingling of arts in their novels and elaborately portrays their productive interactions with contemporary artists like Vasilii Perov, Iliia Repin, and Ivan Kramskoi. She convincingly argues that interart encounters allowed artists and writers alike an opportunity to champion their chosen medium so that the wordless letter surrounded by still life in “The Zaporozhian Cossacks Writing a Letter to the Turkish Sultan” displays Repin’s preference for a painting’s ability to condense narrative in space while Tolstoi, on the contrary, with the insertion of a map of the Battle of Borodino into *War and Peace* visually attests to the superiority of narration, which creates the illusion of reality by offering the reader an experience with movement over time.

Alternating between paintings and literary works, Brunson begins with the emblem of the window that provides feuilletonists access to intimate corners of the city and then advances to the prominent Realist trope of the road to demonstrate how the road in Ivan Turgenev’s *Notes of a Hunter* allows the author to fuse plot development with landscape description, while its presence in Perov’s *Accompanying the Deceased* and Vasilii Surikov’s *Boiarina Morozova* allow for dynamic movement through pictorial space. In her studies of the window and the road, Brunson innovatively progresses from the cooperative, optimistic, and egalitarian impulses of the Natural School to Turgenev’s “accumulation of text” in place of “a visual gestalt” to portray his hunter’s “persistent journey” through the Russian landscape (73–74). For this School, the presence of the window through which one peers provides the border between art and reality, encouraging reflection rather than immersion in representation, whereas the road in Turgenev and Perov draws the reader or observer into the landscape’s surroundings. In the remaining chapters dedicated to Tolstoi’s verbal illusion, Repin’s politically-infused aesthetic, and Dostoevskii’s transfiguration of reality, Brunson effectively argues for a persistent optimism embedded in a self-conscious realism that recognizes a vast capacity for meaningful interart encounters during Russia’s age of Realism.

Brunson exposes the authors’ anxiety attending the realist experiments insofar as both Nastasia Filippovna’s “Medusan visuality” and Anna’s powerful presence that involuntarily attracts Levin’s admiration display in Tolstoi and Dostoevskii the ability of the visual to invoke silence and thereby halt the narrative (194). Citing Viktor Shklovskii on defamiliarization in connection with Natasha Rostova and the affected portrait of Napoleon’s infant son, Brunson highlights how Tolstoi departs from the mimetic representation of the Natural School as he attempts to strip artifice from the visual arts by illustrating its inability to account for temporality. Examining Dostoevskii’s use of *ekphrasis*, or the rhetorical device of providing a narrative description of a visual work of art, it becomes evident that the author of fantastic realism maintains that the realist artist should prioritize “artistic truth” over verisimilitude and “natural truth” (183). In pursuit of artistic truth, Repin avoids tendentiousness with a view toward the ineffable by integrating form with social content and thereby infusing the visual with narrativity.

There are some prominent works and traditions overlooked by this study that would have enriched Brunson's discussion of aesthetics in connection with the visual arts and narrative. For example, her presentation of the road neglects to mention the crossroad in *Oedipus Rex* or its extensive conception as diabolic in the Russian folk tradition. Brunson accepts too readily George Lukács admittedly simplistic reading of Gustave Flaubert's passive aesthetic as akin to a still life by ignoring Flaubert's celebrated use of *style indirect libre*. The frequency with which art is linked in both Dostoevskii and Tolstoi to pleasure and temptation would have been explored more thoroughly, if Brunson had considered the significance of Tolstoi's "What is Art." All the same, Brunson's analysis of the visual and verbal in nineteenth-century Russian Realism elaborately exposes the expression of creative anxiety over a fragile and diverse interart dialogue representing a range of realists like Dostoevskii, Perov, Repin, Tolstoi, and Turgenev, whose works of art and literature attest to a productive cross-fertilization of realisms conscious of their representational limitations.

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Anna Karenina and Others: Tolstoy's Labyrinth of Plots. By Liza Knapp. University of Wisconsin Press, Madison, 2016. x, 326 pp. Notes. Bibliography. Index. Illustrations. \$79.95, hard bound.
doi: 10.1017/slr.2017.214

When comparing *Anna Karenina* with *War and Peace*, we know that in the latter several storylines are spliced together, with characters interacting in wartime and peacetime, whereas *Anna Karenina* offers two separate stories connected by one brief meeting between Karenina and Levin. This has never stopped anyone, casual or erudite, from enjoying the later novel. Despite its drawbacks, many people prefer this shorter work. So, *Anna Karenina* works in practice, but does it work in theory?

Much ink has been spent in saying yes. Hidden correspondences linking the two narratives of *Anna Karenina*, announced by the author himself (post factum) as a "labyrinth of linkages," have been followed up by teachers as vindication of the literary quality they instinctively know to be there. It was never easy to work out whether the linking omens, contrasts, hints, and symbols had been deliberately hidden by the author, placing responsibility for recognition on readers, or whether they were unconscious alluvia uncovered by acute commentators. But they were there.

This volume achieves further amplification of this helpful school of criticism. Its purpose is to "explore the dynamics of Tolstoi's multi-plot novel . . ." (9) by calling up similar or contrasting devices and methods in the previous Russian literary tradition, in the English novel, and in Pascal's *Pensées*, all of which contribute to "a comprehensive understanding of human life," with much emphasis on vengeance, brotherly love, and religious experience.

Liza Knapp displays her own irrepressible love of the written word, which has turned her style into a quiet flow of eloquence. She has also developed an eye for forensic detail dating back to her graduate days at Columbia. She is now adept at spotting minutiae, and you will read her revelations with a thrill of shared serendipity.

Two examples will suffice. Introducing Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter* in her second chapter, she suddenly produces this remarkable assertion: "Tolstoy . . . signals the kinship with Hester Prynne . . . when the narrator announces that Anna 'was experiencing the feelings of a person on display at the pillory'" (58). This is just the right image for Anna's plight at the opera, and it does seem to have come from