

this monograph opens new lines of inquiry into Dostoevskii's novel for scholars of literature, visual culture, and art history.

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Approaches to Teaching the Works of Anton Chekhov. Ed. Michael C. Finke and Michael Holquist. New York: The Modern Language Association of America, 2016. viii, 233 pp. Appendixes. Notes. Bibliography. Index. \$24.00, paper. doi: 10.1017/slr.2018.180

As a novice university teacher, some fifty years ago I discovered that Anton Chekhov's work was miraculous both as a subject to teach and as an aid to teaching: by staging *Uncle Vania* (which has only nine speaking parts and which takes even amateurs only 90 minutes to perform), we bonded native speakers of Russian with *ab initio* learners, discovered how to unlock the possibilities latent in a printed script, acquired both literary and colloquial, but living and still contemporary Russian language, and understood an enormous amount about human relationships and how they are revealed in dialogue by Chekhov's sensitivity to idiolect.

This compilation includes articles that have as their aim both the teaching of Chekhov as a way of gaining insight into Russia's most student-friendly author, and as a way of studying something else—medicine, film craft, translation, creative writing, acting, philosophy, environmental studies—by using Chekhov's work as a medium. Michael Finke expands his editorial role with some twenty pages of preliminary information about Chekhov's life, works and critical literature, as well as a short piece on Tolstoian narratological influence on Chekhov. Some contributors are very familiar to *chekhovedy*. Julie de Sherbinin explores Chekhov as a source and teacher for Anglophone short stories (in fact Katharine Mansfield's and Raymond Carver's). One's only regret is that she chose Mansfield's "Bliss," instead of "Prelude," which reworks Chekhov's "Steppe" with such genius. Cathy Popkin deals with Chekhov and medical humanities, which reminds me that several Russian professors of medicine have used the clues in Chekhov's stories, such as "Ward No. 6," to test their students' diagnostic abilities. Gary Saul Morson examines *Uncle Vania* as a study of theatricality (or its absence). Nearly every contributor has something valuable or new to offer, although lack of space sometimes prevents them from giving a fully-rounded view: for instance, Carol Apollonio's point-counterpoint of English translations omits the very best versions by Ronald Wilks, as does Finke in his introduction, which omits both Wilks's version of the stories and Michael Frayn's highly actable versions of the plays.

The volume clearly anticipates that Chekhov will inevitably be taught in English to monoglot students, which means that a lot of valuable French, German and, of course, Russian scholarship is ignored. Still, this is a useful and at times even inspirational guidebook for college teachers and will encourage them to read and teach Chekhov even to students who have no interest whatsoever in literature, Russian or other, but who may discover that Chekhov is unexpectedly relevant to their lives and studies.

Some contributors betray their frustration at student negativity and hint at possible ways of overcoming it: de Sherbinin reports an undergraduate's course evaluation: "The professor wouldn't show us the point of all the stories," (35) and then proceeds to inquire into the problem of indeterminacy and narrative expectations, recommending Chekhov's own mockery of predictable, clichéd narratives, as well as a reading of Chekhov's Anglophone pupils.

Some contributors tend too easily to see Chekhov as a universal panacea for all incomprehension: Thomas Adajian's analysis of Chekhov's "The Beauties" (not one

of Chekhov's important works) failed to convince me that it was relevant to the concept of beauty in classical philosophy, as in Plato and Kant, let alone that either philosopher had any influence whatsoever on Chekhov, who certainly never read them. Adajian clearly knows his Plato, but should not have been tempted to use Chekhov's women at a railway station as material for philosophical exegesis.

The most interesting parts of this compilation are the points where the opinions of contributors, despite their different topics, concur, for example the David Mamet film of *Uncle Vanya on 42nd Street*. Like many others, I consider this to be the most convincing and enthralling production of Chekhov that I have ever seen. The question arises: why does a filmed rehearsal (or pretense at a rehearsal) work better than a full theatrical performance with complete Stanislavskian adherence to Chekhov's text? John Mackay's and Rita Safariants's discussion of Mamet and Heifetz forms one of the longer articles in the book: they explore the role that camera angles, changing perspective and focus, and peripheral action (rehearsal guests) play in opening up aspects of Chekhov that neither the printed page nor the theater stage can reveal. One is left wondering why Mamet, or other directors, have not followed up on this expansion, and why Iosif Heifetz's "Lady with the Little Dog" is almost the only other successful transition to film.

The book is well indexed and has an extensive English language bibliography. It may lead other editors to explore the approaches to teaching that, say, Fedor Dostoevskii or Aleksandr Pushkin can reveal.

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The Russian-Jewish Tradition: Intellectuals, Historians, Revolutionaries. By Brian Horowitz. Boston: Academic Studies Press, 2017. vii, 282pp. Notes. Bibliography. Index. \$82.00, hard bound.
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In an article on Russian-Jewish historians, Brian Horowitz cites the lawyer and Jewish communal leader Maksim Vinaver's description of a meeting of the Jewish Historic-Ethnographic Commission (an organization founded in St. Petersburg in 1889):

Whoever peeked into this crowded room, in which a play of personalities took place, would be amazed at the scene before him. Ten or fifteen people appeared, each with a packet of cards, which he took out of his pocket with pride, showing off the abundance of his cards. And the reading began. The unfortunates who had not succeeded in locating a single mention of the word *zhid* looked depressed and confused and asked everyone to take them at their word that they had indeed read through the fat tome, alas, entirely fruitlessly. (27)

This citation describes one aspect of east European Jewish studies: the pleasure, and communal approval, attached to gathering and sharing data. This pleasure is evident in Horowitz's collection of essays, which includes thirteen chapters about historians, and Jewish and non-Jewish writers on Jewish topics. It addresses well-known figures: the historian Simon Dubnow; the Jewish writers S. An-sky, Vladimir Zhabotinskii, and Mikhail Gershenzon; the Russian writers Vladimir Solov'ev and Vasiliï Rozanov. There are also less familiar topics, including a very informative article on how the Soviet Jewish historian Saul Borovoi survived the years of repression, and an exploration of the literary critic Boris Eikhenbaum's interest in his Jewish roots.