

Driven by *ressentiment*, the Underground Man continues to secretly long for “the highest consummation of the self, which does not limit but . . . expands one’s freedom . . .” (90), yet remains incapable to move beyond the “highly abstract ‘love of mankind’” (93).

One of the book’s most provocative conclusions is that a Christlike Prince Myshkin similarly fails at active empathy. A major preoccupation of the last three chapters, Myshkin is unable to withstand either of the two temptations that endanger the work of empathy. Focusing on Myshkin’s relationship with Rogozhin and Nastasya Filippovna, Wyman argues that “[i]n the first case, *another’s* (Rogozhin’s) consciousness is finalized and objectified . . . ; in the second case [his] own distinctive voice is silenced, merging with the voice of Nastasya Filippovna” (171).

It is against the backdrop of Myshkin’s tragic failure that Wyman looks at characters who succeed at empathy as well as the factors that secure their successes. Hence, through the act of writing his memoirs, the semi-autobiographical narrator of *The House of the Dead* engages in “the process . . . of gradual dialogical self-refinement” as well as in “a discussion [not] *about* his fellow inmates but *with* them” (128, 129). Such dialogic directionality along with the ability to maintain “the ontological gulf between the individuals” guarantee the success of Alyosha Karamazov, Dostoevskii’s most consistently positive character. Addressing others, rather than succumbing to judgments about them *in absentia*, Alyosha “proves to be more effective at ‘applying’ agape to his . . . neighbors precisely because he observes a productive distance to their pain, never losing a hopeful surplus of vision that enables him to remain *active* in his empathetic efforts” (234).

Wyman’s book is a thoughtful addition to what Slavic literary criticism does so well: cultivating the productive relationship between literature and moral philosophy. In Wyman’s investigation, this relationship is not quite equal: literature here is still merely a case study, a superstructure to philosophy’s base. This, ultimately, results in a loss of literature’s specificity that accounts for a somewhat programmatic account of empathy in Dostoevskii’s prose. Importantly, analyzing *characters*, Wyman does not address how the concept of empathy applies to the *reader*. Would the inclusion of the reader’s unavoidable surplus of vision into analysis require a radical reformulation of the concept of active empathy itself? Nevertheless, even as a character study *solum*, the book is remarkable in its philosophical prowess and depth of literary analysis. It will surely become a useful guide to those who seek a better understanding of Dostoevskii, as well as a philosophical self-help manual with the highest potential for spiritual regeneration.

ALEX SPEKTOR
University of Georgia

Trepanation of the Skull. By Sergey Gandlevsky. Trans. Susanne Fusso. De Kalb, IL: Northern Illinois University Press, 2014. xviii, 143 pp. Appendix. Notes. Indexes. Maps. \$29.95, paper back.
doi: 10.1017/slr.2017.223

There is a rich tradition of memoir writing in Russian literature, not least in the period following the collapse of the Soviet Union. When in 1995 the prominent poet, prose writer, essayist, and translator Sergey Gandlevsky (b. 1952) first published his “autobiographical tale” *Trepnatsiia cherepa* (The Trepanation of the Skull), it made a very considerable impact on Russian readers, who were fascinated by its highly original form (without consecutive chronology, and with abrupt changes of both style,

manner, and subject matter), and extremely rich language ranging from violent vulgarity to the sensitivity of lyric poetry. A particularly remarkable feature of the book is the apparently seamless changes of time and register, to which even a new reader can adjust without difficulty, both in the original and in Susanne Fusso's outstandingly adroit English version.

The translation of this complex and intensely literary poet's tale uses endnotes, intra-textual explanations, and comprehensive appendices of the many places and people that the author mentions, as well as explanations of the ubiquitous references to Russian literature from Pushkin to the present day that form an integral part of the text. Apart from explanation, the translator has successfully faced the challenge of rendering Gandlevsky's highly personal style into a very readable text that should be particularly enjoyed by those familiar with Gandlevsky's Russian verse, including those who only know the English-language of some of his poems by Philip Metres. It is also a fascinating introduction for those who are coming to his name for the first time.

The principal theme of the book is the delight (and many problems) of heavy drinking, although the author himself advises the reader to take his words with a pinch of salt. Nonetheless, the detailed strategies and consequences of alcoholism are described extremely credibly. Inevitably, perhaps, these episodes recall another highly referential quasi-autobiographical epic of drunkenness by Venedikt Erofeev (1938–1990), *Moskva-Petushki*, published in *samizdat* in 1970, and in Paris in 1973. One small quibble about Fusso's admirable version of Gandlevsky's book is that she references Erofeev's work as *Moscow to Petushki*, rather than by the title of one of the published English translations such as *Moscow Circles*, *Moscow Stations*, or *Moscow to the End of the Line*.

Readers familiar with Russian poetry will, with Fusso's help, enjoy following the unforced ease and delight Gandlevsky takes, even when tipsy, in alluding to a very wide range of poetical and prose texts. The reader also receives a vivid picture of official and unofficial Moscow literary life at the turn of the century, from the absurdity of official policies through the somewhat ambiguous position of Evgenii Evtushenko to unofficial groups and publications in *samizdat*. Gandlevsky emerges from his tale as a gregarious person, enjoying the company of many fellow-poets as well as groups of friends, particularly those who enjoyed drinking. Another evocative although perhaps not very useful supplement to the book is a handful of (deliberately) amateurish hand-drawn maps, showing the districts where Gandlevsky's friends live and places beyond Moscow where his travels took him.

In a quite different register from the swearing and often outrageous drinking episodes is an extended passage towards the end of the book about his family origins, written in a straightforward, often very touching way, particularly when describing the Jewish part of his family, which he appears to remember most warmly.

At one level, the central event of the book, to which it owes its title, is the discovery of a (benign) tumor in the author's head. This is mentioned several times in the deliberately complex ordering of the book's themes, and it is with this that the book ends. Gandlevsky concludes his tale with passages of entertaining realism describing the Soviet health service (still little changed in the post-Soviet period), alongside serious existential reflections on life and mortality that bring this exceptional, semi-fantastic account of a poet's life to an end.

We owe Susanne Fusso a great debt of gratitude for resourcefully tackling the challenge of bringing a major contemporary Russian prose text to the attention of a wide range of readers.

ARNOLD McMILLIN
Emeritus, University of London