

and synaesthesia underpinning Kandinsky's art. The language of movement and a return to the Hellenic ideals of Ancient Greece, Sirotkina and Smith explain, emerged in various pre-revolutionary Russian settings, such as the Heptachor studio in Petrograd, Faddei Zelinsky's Institute of the Living Word, and the Institute of Harmonic Development, where George Gurdjieff promoted the rhythmic practices of Émile Jaques-Dalcroze and the theatrical system of Aleksandr and Jeanne Salzmann. Kinaesthesia also provided a conceptual springboard for symbolists like Andrey Belyi, who incorporated rhythmical gestures into his verse. "Bely's body and his language formed a whole" (82), the authors contend.

In addition to providing a new kinaesthetic perspective on the work of artists not normally associated with the "sixth sense," Sirotkina and Smith venture into more familiar territory when discussing the creative union of American dancer Isadora Duncan and poet Sergei Esenin or Vsevolod Meyerhold's biomechanical exercises for actors, but even here the research and analysis prove quite original. Less convincing, however, is the authors' discussion of Vladimir Maiakovskii's verse, for here they rely too conspicuously on biographical conjecture: "The habitués of cafes tangoed side by side with the professionals and Mayakovsky, we imagine, was to be found amongst them" (128). But Sirotkina and Smith soon find themselves on surer ground when delving into Viktor Shklovskii's experimental attempts to undermine the automatization of everyday language—and movement—that stemmed, the authors suggest, from the formalist's interest in wrestling, gymnastics, and gesture.

Sirotkina and Smith, it should be noted, have melded together many forms of modern movement, thus creating a slightly lopsided study that dwells mostly on dance but also devotes significant attention to poetry, theater, and sports. Yet such flexibility ultimately serves Sirotkina and Smith well, as they waltz—or foxtrot or tango, as the case may be—their way through the myriad examples of kinaesthetic art in revolutionary Russia. The era's turn to the body and "knowing how," they explain in their concluding chapter, represented "an expression of desire for individual agency" (169). This knowledge and individual expressivity would have a profound impact on twentieth-century art and society.

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Vagabonding Masks: The Italian Commedia Dell'arte in the Russian Artistic Imagination. By Olga Partan. Brighton, Mass.: Academic Studies Press, 2017. 290

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For most scholars of Russian literary and cultural history, the first set of associations with the Italian *commedia dell'arte* tradition relate to modernism: from conspicuous examples, such as Aleksandr Blok's *Balaganchik*, to subtle references as in Belyi's *Petersburg* (the terrorist Lippanchenko is likened to a hunchback Pierrot), the *commedia dell'arte* stock characters populate modernist plays, paintings, poems, and works of prose. While the Silver Age's engagement with figures from *commedia dell'arte* is well studied, until now there has been virtually no consideration of how this vital genre of improvisational performance art ramified in earlier and later periods of Russian culture. Olga Partan's *Vagabonding Masks* remedies this scholarly lacuna by tracing the history of the Italian theatrical tradition in Russia starting in the early eighteenth century and extending up to the present moment. In her chronologically-organized

study, Partan offers new insights into the *commedia dell'arte*'s deep imprimatur on three hundred years of Russian culture.

Methodologically, the book draws on the Russian formalist approaches of Yurii Lotman and Mikhail Bakhtin. Finding parallels between Bakhtin's theorization of carnival and her study of the transposition of *commedia dell'arte* characters, themes, and style into non-performance based art forms such as literature and painting, Partan proposes a new concept: "harlequinization." She defines "harlequinized art and literature" as works containing core elements of *commedia dell'arte*: "the masked character; improvisation within a set scenario or plot; the extensive use of grotesque imagery, plasticity, exaggeration, and self-parody; and the presence of doubles and mistaken identities" (17). Partan writes of "harlequinized characters" such as jesters (44); a "harlequinized element" of a play (using a prop weapon as a symbol of male sexuality) (106); "Sumarokov's harlequinized comedy" (113), which paradoxically lacks many of the traits of *commedia*; "harlequinized imagery" (116) such as the use of the Harlequin character in plays and the donning of Harlequin costumes at masquerade balls; "a harlequinized prism" through which to read Vladimir Nabokov's novel *Look at the Harlequins!* (218); "harlequinized attributes—the pair of harlequin sunglasses (akin to a mask) and golden pencil (a miniature lath and Harlequin's magical stick)" (235); and Alla Pugacheva's "four-decades-long harlequinized reign on the throne of Russian popular culture" (240). Given the variety of ways a creative work can be "harlequinized," and the perplexing use of the term to characterize her own critical reading lens and Pugacheva's period of sustained cultural popularity, this reader would have found it helpful if the analytical apparatus had been developed more rigorously and applied more methodically throughout the book. For instance, the author might have categorized the *commedia*'s core elements and given each category a short name (along the lines of "characters," "improvisation," "style," and "scenarios") and invoked a specific category in regard to each case study of harlequinization in order to help her readers better grasp which aspect(s) of the tradition she was identifying as relevant.

The book's most exciting chapters are also the least expected: one on the *commedia dell'arte*'s presence in Nikolai Gogol's *The Overcoat*; and the other on the jester-like persona of songstress Alla Pugacheva. While the chapter on *The Overcoat* mines Gogol's biography and correspondence for evidence to support the textual analysis, the one on Pugacheva reads her public persona as a tragicomic performative construct. Partan's case studies, in which she applies her concept of harlequinization to subject matter ranging from literary text to self-stylization, illuminate the remarkable extent to which the *commedia dell'arte* tradition reverberates in Russian culture.

Vagabonding Masks will appeal to scholars and students working in the fields of literature, cultural studies, cultural history, and performance studies. The book's prose is cogent albeit redundant at times (for example, the phrase, "vagabonding the roads of Russian culture" or a close variant appears on pages 13, 19, 163, and 246). The copy editor would have done well to remedy this, as well as other minor flaws such as the missing page number in footnote 24 (170), and the inconsistent application of the Library of Congress transliteration system (249). These trifling infelicities aside, Olga Partan's impressive work of scholarship reveals a much fuller picture of the harlequinade's impact in Russia and gives us a "harlequinizing lens" for reading other case studies on our own.

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