

REVIEWS

Woronzoff, Alexander. *Andrej Belyj's "Petersburg," James Joyce's "Ulysses," and the Symbolist Movement*. American University Studies, Series III, Vol. 1, Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 1982, 211 pp.

One often hears the comparison made between Belyi and Joyce, *Petersburg* and *Ulysses*; this book is the first major attempt to explore the idea. Woronzoff succeeds in identifying and illuminating several major areas of confluence between the two novelists.

The study is divided into five chapters followed by a selected bibliography: "The Symbolist Movement"; "Epiphany and Symbol"; "Expansion of Moment"; "Poetic Devices"; "Allusive Construction." Woronzoff explores in his first chapter the common historical and literary heritage to which both writers were exposed. He sees the essential element that gives rise to the comparison between them in their similar responses to early twentieth-century novels drawing heavily on the aesthetics and literary devices of French Symbolist poetry.

But if the influence was the same, and the general response similar, the specific response of each is often unique. The major contribution of Woronzoff's work is an identification and clear differentiation between the general and the specific as it applies to the aesthetics, structure and style of *Ulysses* and *Petersburg*. For example, both employ a Symbolist aesthetic, but Joyce's concept of epiphany (wholeness, harmony, and radiance) never extends into the metaphysical realm characteristic of Belyi's Symbol. Both novelists construct their works "spatially" rather than "temporally" and both rely upon expansion and cyclic recurrence as major structural devices. They differ, however, in narrative technique, with Belyi utilizing an "oral monologue" distinct from the many voices of *Ulysses*.

In the chapter on poetic devices Woronzoff continues to explore this pattern of similarity and difference. There is an excellent discussion of "stream of consciousness" as used by Joyce and an explanation of why it is not applicable to *Petersburg*. Several other topics, such as color, rhythm, puns, and word play, are also covered in some detail. The discussion of stylistic devices is somewhat limited by the decision to rely primarily on the English translation of *Petersburg*. This decision conceals some of Belyi's own "magic of words." Woronzoff's insights, which indicate his own familiarity with *Petersburg*, will serve only to whet the appetite of specialists in Russian literature. The chapter on literary allusion provides a summary of what is known about Joyce's use of allusion and an introduction to Belyi's use of Russian literary antecedents. The comparativist will find suggestions and direction here already familiar to Slavists.

Woronzoff's study examines a topic which deserves more than passing attention. It is also a partial answer to those who read Nabokov's comments on the two novels, then read *Petersburg* only to wonder aloud: "What is so special here?" Since Woronzoff's work is addressed to a broad audience, there are surely specialists who will find fault; on the other hand, there is something of

value here for everyone. For the comparativists the book can serve as the beginning of the Belyi-Joyce comparison. Scholars of English literature should gain a better sense of why *Petersburg* deserves mention as one of the finest novels of the twentieth century. Finally, Belyi scholars will learn enough about Joyce to appreciate the comparison and will be delighted by many of Woronzoff's interesting comments and interpretations of names, synesthesia, musical effects, and the like.

THOMAS R. BEYER, JR.

Middlebury College

Ljunggren, Magnus. *The Dream of Rebirth: A Study of Andrej Belyj's Novel Petersburg*. Stockholm Studies in Russian Literature 15, Stockholm: Almqvist and Wiksell International, 1982, 179 pp.

In the author's words, this dissertation attempts "to reconstruct the complicated genesis of *Petersburg* [...] from Belyj's first embryonic plans to the publication of the final original text. In describing this chronology, I shall be applying a Freudian approach to uncover the autobiographical subtext of the work."

Freudians tend to find what they seek, often with a vengeance, and Ljunggren is no exception. His work contains insights such as that Nikolai Apollonovich embodies Belyi's own "fear of castration and infantile hate of the father deriving from the unconquered Oedipus complex of personality," and Belyi's unconscious "striving for [...] anal fertilization by Steiner; likewise [...] for homosexual gratification with Vladimir Solov'ev."

O Nabokov, give me strength!

Since Ljunggren's main thrust is to make Belyi and *Petersburg* fit Freud, he repeatedly stretches biographical and textual evidence. He actually does not adduce any evidence that Freud was important for Belyi personally (although, *en passant*, he provides interesting details about the dissemination of Freudianism in Russia at the beginning of this century). Neither does Ljunggren identify any specifically or uniquely Freudian teachings in *Petersburg*. (Khodasevich wrote successfully about the importance of the patricidal theme in Belyi's art as early as 1927, without involving poor Oedipus). There is nothing to suggest, for example, that Belyi saw Blok as "the menacing yet elusive father," or his wife Liubov' Dmitrievna as the "capriciously aggressive mother." It is of course true that *Petersburg* is filled with biographical reminiscences; a tendency to meld life and art is an important feature of Belyi's entire oeuvre, as it is of Symbolism in general, for reasons that are ultimately epistemological. But it is going too far to claim that Likhutin's chasing Nikolai in the novel in order to prevent the patricide is patterned on an attempt by Medtner (who had been undergoing Freudian therapy) to stop Belyi's anthroposophical meditations. Similarly, it is not illuminating to claim that "[t]he feminine element in the personalities of both Ableuxovs is underscored by the fact that the word *figura*, of feminine gender, is often used in their physical description." And why understand the significance of references to "the back" (*spina*) in the novel in