Andrew Wachtel, Stanford University


This first in an ambitious series of five volumes to be dedicated to a "Rekonstruktion des Systems des russischen Symbolismus." In contrast to the traditional strictly chronologic determination of "young" and "old" symbolists, the author posits three periods or group SI (diabolischer Symbolismus), SII (mythopoetischer Symbolismus) and SIII (proteskwalerskil Symbolismus) (17). His "paradigmatic" model permits a study of evolutionary onships and inclusion of poems that might be excluded on purely chronological grounds. This first volume, Hansen-Løve turns his attention to the "early" Symbolism which he characterizes as "Diabolismus."

The book opens with a chapter on эстетизм and панэстетизм in the 1890's, both character of SI. Examining a broad range of poetry from famous and lesser known figures, the book organizes the major motifs into eighteen additional chapters representing general poetic categories, including with dialektik and moving through such topics as лирика, употребление, тень, лита, смутное, почувствие, and тень. The work is not a dictionary of symbols and does not aim at comprehensive coverage of poems or poets. It is rather a "systematization," a qualitative—not quantitative—survey of examples for a comparative look at the progress of themes and motifs. The organization and thought-provoking examination of the major themes where one leads naturally into the next gives new meaning and fresh insight into the poetic vision of the symbolists.

Chapter 10, for example, covers the "Lumare Welt" examining the male-female aspects of мужчина vs. дама in the work of Merezhkovskij, Slavskii and Minks. This leads to Bal'mont's мужчина and a discussion of his moon-sickle (мень луна). The moon's gleam is examined by Brusov and Sologub's use of "значение" refers us back again to Bal'mont, the moon's reflection is captured in examples from Gippius and Sologub. The pale, less or silverly, world is both lifeless and barren and is ultimately the antithesis of all that

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REVI EWS


Das verborgene Zeichen ist fuer die russische Literatur von grundlegendem Bedeutung. The theoretical and practical search for the concealed message and the decoding of the cryptographic in Russian poetry and prose unite the dozen articles in this issue devoted to the proceedings of the “Kryptogramm” Symposium held in Konstanz in 1987. The two articles in Russian, J. Farynko’s “Paronomia—Anagramma—palindrom v poëitke avangarda” and I.P. Smirnov’s “Literaturny tekst i tajna (K probleme kognitivnoj poetiki),” establish a theoretical framework wherein texts with “mysteries” can be examined to yield their hidden meanings. In the remaining ten articles in German, colleagues lead us on treasure hunts through the poetry of Zabolotckij, Gumilev, Xlebnikov and the prose of Puskin and Dostoevskij. The wealth of the material covered leaves one at times breathless, but I was more struck by the depth of the scholarship involved in the revelation of these secrets. There is, of course, the question of searching so intensely that the text must ultimately reveal some hidden combination of letters or concealed references. It is a charge that Wolf Schmid replies to directly: “man uškine Puska ‘poetisch’ lesen muss, d.h. so wie Poesie liest, langsam, sich dem narrativen Strom entgegenwandernd, sich räumlich im Text vorwaerts- und ruckwaerbtbewegend, immer wieder bei einzelnen Wortern stehenbleibend ...” (272). With just such care he fers new insight into the proverbs and sayings of Kapitanskaia dočka.

Renate Lachmann asks “Za Dostoevskij’s Slaboe serce: Steckt der Schluessel zum Text im Anfang?” Her answer uncovers the “paper” and “pen” of the “writer” to open yet another way to interpretation. Walter Koschmal provides the historical literary context for Rus’s delight in the hidden message in his “Zum ‘zenischen Kryptogramm’ und seiner Evoluiton in der russischen Literatur.” But it is in poetry that one finds most of these “Tropen unter Tropen” that J.R. Doering-Smirnov, finds in the politically targeted, yet concealed messages of Zabolotckij. It seems no secret that Xlebnikov is rich in such devices and R. Lengdel delves into the poet’s metrics for the cryptographic (“‘Der Hafer und der Wortuberc’” A.A. Hansen-Loeve in a substantial contribution on “Vladimir Chlebnikovs nomatoepik. Name und Anagramm” establishes a nomenclature for an intriguing range of venia” concealed in Xlebnikov.

While it is fascinating to observe the process by which the prose of Puskin continues to offer a ever increasing array of secret messages in the 1980’s, there is really no secret to these messages. Such revelations are the result of meticulous scholarship delving deeper and deeper to the previously locked doorways to meaning, and a scholarship mated with a method and an edition adequate to the task. This volume provides valuable evidence on how much remains to be found, even as it delights the reader with its discoveries. The articles are of consistently high quality. The notes and lists of works cited will be for many an excellent introduction to the search for concealed meanings. As Soviet literature and literary archives become even more open and available to scholars, the years to come promise to reveal even more secrets to those tuned to the searching. Eager researchers will want to have this handbook with them.

Thomas R. Beyer, Jr., Middlebury College


Perhaps never very distinct, the line between literary fact and fiction is almost completely obscured in modern literature, often to the consternation of author and reader alike. This situation lends special interest to the twentieth-century autobiographical statement, which, as editor Jane Gary Harris points out, focuses precisely on “the boundary between what is told (the plane of reality, autobiographical consciousness) and the telling (the plane of aesthetic interpretation, the autobiographical imagination)” (35). Modern Russian autobiography and memoir, as fascinating as they are diverse, illustrate perfectly the philosophical, theoretical, and aesthetic dilemmas facing all modern authors. As a result, this collection of essays—intended to address “the deth of scholarly materials on basic problems of modern Russian and Soviet autobiography, memoirs, and first-person narrative” (xi)—ends up treating a much wider range of issues central to modern artistic endeavor in general. The volume is a much needed contribution to the study of Russian modernism, and it should be on the shelf of every large research library.

Autobiographical statements in twentieth-century Russian literature have been extraordinarily broad and varied. This volume discusses some of the most important and attempts to place each in a theoretical framework. Harris summarizes recent theory on autobiography in her informative introduction, “Divinity of Discourse: Autobiographical Statements in Theory and Praxis.” As her title suggests, there is considerable disagreement as to what

With volume 5, the Zenkovskys have completed their monumental translation of Nikonovskaja letopis', which engaged them for more than a decade (3:ix). They based it on the edition of the original in volumes 9–13 of Polnoe sobranie russkix letopis', using as primary text the Obolenski Copy but supplementing that with some selected passages from other manuscript sources and omitting a few items they considered extraneous to Russian history (see, e.g., 1:x, 3:128 n.). Thus their version is a composite; but they are careful to indicate in notes where and how they have diverged from their basic source. The first volume of their English Nikonian Chronicle was reviewed by Michael S. Flier in Slavic and East European Journal 29 (1985): 340–42. Space allows me only limited comments about the remaining volumes, which cover a long and eventful period of East Slavic history, from 1132 to 1520.

Nikonovskaja letopis', traditionally so called because a copy once belonged to Patriarch Nikon, is now thought to have been compiled in the 1520s in the Moscow chancery of Metropolitan Daniil and with his participation or direction. It is a late compilation that both culminated a long history of chronicle writing in Rus' and became the basis for further Muscovite historiography. Though it includes some inaccurate and legendary information, it is valuable, Zenkovsky stresses, because of its great scope (from the beginnings to 1520) and because it preserves material from several provincial chronicles that have not survived in their own localities (Rostov, Rjazan', Tver', Nižnij Novgorod) (1:xiii, 3:ix). Clearly, the Nikonian Chronicle is a major cultural monument in its own right and well worth translating, even if as a historical source it must be approached very cautiously. Zenkovsky's footnotes are helpful in calling attention to factual errors and to legends that have crept in, often from epic folklore.

The chronicle makes for surprisingly good reading. Dry annalistic notes ("The same year there were heavy rains" [3:94]; "The same year in Nižhni Novgorod in the church of St. Savior [sic] a large bell rang three times by itself" [3:216]) are relatively scarce, and in the main the text is a series of more or less coherent narratives of varying lengths about princes, warfare, saints, and the like. Among the many short povesti some longer works are interpolated, such as an account of the Battle on the Don (3:264–302) and the Life of St. Sergi of Radonež (4:51–83). Occasionally narratives bear their own titles, and the editor has added helpful bracketed titles for others. Zenkovsky is right to call this massive chronicle (some 1,500 printed pages in the original) "a kind of encyclopedia of the history of Russia and, to some extent, of the Eastern Christian world" (1:vi), and part of it almost a "historical-literary anthology" (3:xxi)—if we overlook the fact that "encyclopedia" and "anthology" do not reflect the work's mainly chronological organization and historiographical purpose.

A reviewer may be forgiven for checking only samples from these four volumes against the original. The translation appears to be consistently dependable and readable, with only rare inaccuracies and infelicities. The editor states (5:xi) that he was badly served by a proofreader of volumes 1–3. Indeed, volume 2 in particular has an excess of typos and of anomalous forms, including weird plurals like "Polovcew." By volume 5 the Zenkovskys had changed publishers, the book jacket noting that the entire set will now be published exclusively by The Darwin Press. Can we look forward to a corrected edition? If so, a re-editing of the front matter and a few corrections to the text itself would be desirable. In addition to misprints, some of the prose is not quite English: Vladimir Monomax had a "brilliant and patient mind" (2:xx n.); Svjatoslav "reigned shortly in Kiev" (2:xxi); "up to now scholars discuss" (4:52, instead of "scholars still debate"). A number of sentences read like literal translations from Russian. As Flier noted,