

Swarthmore College

Works

Russian Faculty Works

Russian

Winter 1997

Review Of "Slavianskii Stikh: Stikhovedenie, Lingvistika I Poetika: Materialy Mezhdunarodnoi Konfereniii 19-23 liunia 1995 G" By M. L. Gasparov And T. V. Skulachevaia; And "The Language And Verse Of Russia / Iazyk I Stikh V Rossii: In Honor Of Dean S. Worth" By H. Birnbaum And M. S. Flier

Sibelan E. S. Forrester
Swarthmore College, sforres1@swarthmore.edu

Follow this and additional works at: <https://works.swarthmore.edu/fac-russian>



Part of the [Slavic Languages and Societies Commons](#)

Let us know how access to these works benefits you

Recommended Citation

Sibelan E. S. Forrester. (1997). "Review Of "Slavianskii Stikh: Stikhovedenie, Lingvistika I Poetika: Materialy Mezhdunarodnoi Konfereniii 19-23 liunia 1995 G" By M. L. Gasparov And T. V. Skulachevaia; And "The Language And Verse Of Russia / Iazyk I Stikh V Rossii: In Honor Of Dean S. Worth" By H. Birnbaum And M. S. Flier". *Slavic And East European Journal*. Volume 41, Issue 4. 700-702. DOI: 10.2307/309847
<https://works.swarthmore.edu/fac-russian/111>

This work is brought to you for free and open access by . It has been accepted for inclusion in Russian Faculty Works by an authorized administrator of Works. For more information, please contact myworks@swarthmore.edu.

Review

Author(s): Sibelan Forrester

Review by: Sibelan Forrester

Source: *The Slavic and East European Journal*, Vol. 41, No. 4 (Winter, 1997), pp. 700-702

Published by: American Association of Teachers of Slavic and East European Languages

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/309847>

Accessed: 06-04-2016 19:48 UTC

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at

<http://about.jstor.org/terms>

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.



American Association of Teachers of Slavic and East European Languages is collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *The Slavic and East European Journal*

From the very first Zolotonosov's approach is original and convincing. The very title "I burn Moscow" operates on several levels, the primary one being sexual. It is a well-known fact that Lily Brik was for many years the central figure of a "ménage à trois" between Maiakovsky and her husband (plus others). Notorious for her lascivious and licentious behavior, Morand in his story attempts to conquer Lily, that is "to burn" her with the intensity of his passion; Moscow is synonymous with Lily. (This metaphor appears in Maiakovsky's first work "Oblako v shtanax.") As the story proceeds it becomes apparent that Lily is not to be had, and Morand leaves dejected with another image borrowed from Maiakovsky, this time from the poem "Pro èto."

Zolotonosov maintains that since Morand was partial to Symbolism, he viewed the school of Futurism in a negative light. Accordingly, for Morand the Futurism of Maiakovsky was perceived as being anal-prone in meaning. This is based on Maiakovsky's fear of the future. Zolotonosov contends that this is borne out by the following paradigm of meanings, which are subliminated in Maiakovsky's work: shame/fear, laughter/tears, anus/penis, past/future (77). Having a Russian background and by being privy to all the secrets of Maiakovsky's circle, Morand, by freely employing scatological and sexual imagery from Maiakovsky's own poetry, was able to ironically portray Maiakovsky and his coterie.

The value of Zolotonosov's commentary (305 footnotes!) is not only as a full and complete accounting for all allusions in the text, but also as a sort of Maiakovsky encyclopedia. Although this "explication du texte" is first-rate and academic in reach, it may, at times, provoke consternation among certain readers with its overt musings concerning male and female genitalia. It seems that any book that stimulates thought and raises questions is one that is worthy of attention. This study is precisely one such book.

George Cheron, California Institute of Technology

М. Л. Гаспаров и Т. В. Скулачевая, eds. *Славянский стих: стиховедение, лингвистика и поэтика: Материалы международной конференции 19–23 июня 1995 г.* Москва: Наука, 1996. 254 pp. (paper).

Henrik Birnbaum and Michael S. Flier, eds. *The Language and Verse of Russia / Язык и стих в России: In Honor of Dean S. Worth. UCLA Slavic Studies, New Series, Vol. II.* Moscow: Vostochnaia Literatura, 1995. 320 pp. (cloth).

These two collections of articles cover a similar range of specialties, in the first case because of the interdisciplinary nature of the enterprise (linguistic poetics), in the second because of the broad expertise of the Slavist it honors, Dean S. Worth. Like most volumes of studies by a variety of authors, these too are not wholly even, but parts of both should attract the interest of many scholars. The articles that combine different disciplinary approaches or move beyond standard thematic clichés are particularly engaging.

Slavianskii stix: Stikhovedenie, lingvistika i poetika presents papers from a 1995 conference of the same name that was held in Moscow. All the texts are in Russian, with contributions from Bulgaria, Italy, Kazakhstan, New Zealand, Poland, Slovenia, Ukraine, the United Kingdom and the United States as well as from Russia. A few articles treat Slavic verse besides Russian, justifying the title. These include an article on Slovene syllabotonic verse; on the comparative studies of Byzantine liturgical hymns and Russian poetry; Russian translations of Keats, Whitman and Ukrainian folk verse; Greek and Latin prosody in Russian poetry; and Bulgarian versus Russian iambic tetrameter. Properly Russian topics range from analyses of folk verse forms, through metrical and numerical investigations of classical and contemporary poets, to an analysis of the structure of reference works in the field.

The volume's editors, M. L. Gasparov and T. V. Skulacheva, have themselves made tremendous contributions to this area of study, and the volume presents some of the major players in linguistic poetics. Gasparov's introduction shows a keen awareness of the shape of the field and possible directions for its future development. Russian contributors to the volume seem to concentrate on more traditional material, selecting material from Pushkin or Lermontov, or (in Zh. A. Dozoretz's rather rambling piece) tracing a single motif's changing form and focus through several generations of canonical poets. The computer analysis that puts masses of data into coherent form, or relatively innovative approaches such as cluster analysis, contrast oddly in several pieces with persistent attention to the accepted canon of Great Poets. Though perhaps inevitable, such traditionalism might limit the promise of linguistic poetics: the rich data on the poetry of Lermontov or Pushkin would emerge in fuller significance if presented against the background established by lesser poets' stress patterns and the like. A similar tacit acceptance of canonical petrification appears in the analyses of folklore texts. (I use the oxymoron "folklore texts" advisedly: the articles concentrate on written forms of songs or *byliny* collected in the nineteenth or early twentieth centuries, a choice that makes the articles more innovative in linguistic poetics than in folklore.) The foreigners in the collection seem more at ease applying new ideas and methods to more recent poets such as Andrei Bely or to less canonical ones like Mariia Shkapskaia or Inna Lisnianskaia.

In reviewing a collection of articles space prevents much detail, but a few high points are worth mentioning: Antonina Gove's conceptually rich and aesthetically informative treatment of Old Slavic translations of Byzantine liturgical hymns and the relationship of church singing with twentieth-century Russian poetry, and S. E. Nikitina and N. V. Vasil'eva's outline of linguistic poetic terms for a thesaurus-type dictionary, which is intellectually engaging and written with lively clarity. These articles and others hint at the extent of work that goes on outside the bounds of the volume. This slim and inexpensive paperback is an excellent investment for any scholar of either linguistic or poetics; it should be in any research library. At its best, it proves the value of collaboration between linguistics and literary scholarship, and what we can do for each other in a field where our training often divides us.

The Language and Verse of Russia is a festschrift in honor of Dean S. Worth's sixty-fifth birthday, published with a few years' delay in 1995, as the editors explain, for technical reasons. The tactic of publishing this series in Russia appears to pay off in the volume's cost and the quality of text in the Russian contributions; only an occasional glitch creeps into other languages—such as "strangle" for "strange" (214), my contender for the best typo of 1995. The collection includes an international cast of scholars; most write in Russian or English, a couple in German or French. Thirty-one articles are arranged alphabetically by author and are followed by a monumental 155-item bibliography of Worth's own publications. The collection's title could be more usefully specific; in fact, within a wide variety of topics, most of the works that treat both language and verse cluster in the periods before the nineteenth century. A preponderance of articles are linguistic, historical or synchronic. All are first rate. Several, as in the other collection, combine linguistic and literary terms of analysis to elicit an impressive depth of significance from the material examined.

Many of the contributors, fittingly, are scholars whose stature will make the volume a required purchase for any serious linguist or research library: Henrik Birnbaum, Catherine Chvany, Michael Flier, Mikhail Gasparov, Horace Lunt, Riccardo Picchio, Vladimir Toporov, Boris Uspensky, Alexander Zholkovsky, and other respected scholars too numerous to mention. Topics include linguistic-semantic interpretation of "zeroes," consonant reduction, aspectual paradigms, comitative turns of phrasing, the treatment of motion in the oldest Russian grammar, Russia's proximity (or not) to Old Church Slavic, problems of borrowing, zero-vowel alternations, and the function of the phoneme -y (jery) in onomatopoeic verbs. Literary topics span Solzhenitsyn's *GULAG Archipelago*, Nabokov's poetry, Pushkin's "Gypsies," and "slaughterhouse" motifs in and around Mandelstam's *Egyptian Stamp*. Another group of

articles combines linguistic and literary (or other) forms of analysis: these deal with proverbs of the absurd, the verb "iměti" in the Laurentian *Primary Chronicle*, the syntax of Pushkin's six-foot iambs, gerundial constructions in Kantemir, the scriptural framing of "The Tale of Sorrow-Misfortune," and the traditional "Avsen" songs. Interlocking questions of linguistics and politics are particularly well handled in G. Shevelov's "Muscovite Clerks Face Another Country: The Rendition of Ukrainian Place Names in *Kniga bol'somu čertežu*."

As a whole, this is an impressive collection: it both underlines the achievements of its honoree and commands the attention of serious readers of Russian linguistics and literature.

Sibelan Forrester, Swarthmore College

Herman Ermolaev. *Censorship in Soviet Literature, 1917–1991*. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 1997. 323 pp., \$26.95 (paper).

Herman Ermolaev's book, *Censorship in Soviet Literature, 1917–1991*, presents a fundamental study of Soviet censorship in literature from Lenin's 1917 Decree on the Press and other early repressive measures of the Bolshevik government against artistic freedom to the weakening of the censorial grip on literary production just before the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991.

The book contains six uniformly-structured chapters covering successive periods in Soviet history (1917–31, 1932–45, 1946–53, 1953–64, 1965–84, and 1985–91). Each chapter begins with a concise but highly informative sketch of the political background of the given period. The author then proceeds to a brief characterization of the works to be considered in the chapter. A detailed account of censorial revisions is given further, in sub-chapters on political and puritanical censorship. Themes subject to political censorship included the Communist Party and its leaders, prerevolutionary Russia, the Soviet Army, the West, peasants, religion, and nationalities. Puritanical censorship consistently purged literature of erotica, obscenities and naturalistic details. At the end of each chapter, Ermolaev presents authors' reactions to the censorship of a particular period. Four chapters include an additional section on children's editions. This multi-focal approach facilitates an exhaustive analysis of each text, although at times it produces some overlap in material between different sections.

Censorship in Russian Literature may be read for a variety of purposes by a diverse audience. The book provides valuable information pertaining to the fields of Soviet literature, history, and cultural studies. Scholars researching particular Soviet literary works will be able to trace minute changes in the texts from edition to edition, the extent of authorial involvement in the revising process, and the rationale behind censorial intervention. Professors of Soviet literature will find Ermolaev's book extremely helpful, as it will facilitate the selection of an edition closest to the original, unadulterated version. Everyone interested in Soviet history and culture will certainly enjoy this exposition of the grotesque, hierarchical censorial mechanism which governed intellectual life in Russia for over 70 years. Despite fairly specific and technical content, the book is written with a great deal of humor, and it is a pleasure to read.

Ermolaev's bibliography, which extends to 1996, is highly laudable. It comprises Russian and Western sources on censorship, previously unpublished archival materials, as well as personal correspondence and conversations with writers and censors. Ermolaev, who is the author of several books on Soviet literature, demonstrates a brilliant command of various editions of over a hundred literary texts. The reader is taken on an exciting journey through Soviet history, tracing changes in works by Zamiatin, Babel, Maiakovsky, Platonov, Bulgakov, Sholokhov, Solzhenitsyn, Rybakov, and many other prominent writers.