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Review Of "State Of Madness: Psychiatry, Literature, And Dissent After Stalin" By R. Reich

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series of acquaintances the author interviewed to frame his representation of the Gulag (Grossman was never arrested himself), helping this text to become both his most ambitious stylistic work and the clearest crystallization of his political-philosophical views.

A question arises from Popoff's references to the poet Semen Lipkin's memoir about Grossman, *Zhizn' i sud'ba Vasiliia Grossmana* (Moscow, 1990). Lipkin was Grossman's confidant in the post-war years and his text formed an important basis for early scholarship on the author. However, recent research by Iurii Bit-Iunan and David M. Fel'dman, published in Russian as *Vasilii Grossman v zerkale literaturnykh intrig* (Moscow, 2015) and *Vasilii Grossman: literaturnaia biografii v istoriko-politicheskom kontekste* (Moscow, 2016), has questioned some of the detail of Lipkin's account. Popoff likely decided that, as the memoir of Grossman's closest friend, Lipkin's text could not be dismissed. Furthermore, her analysis does not rely too heavily on any one particular source. However, it would have been helpful to note the potential problems of memory and subjectivity inherent to using this, or indeed any, memoir as a source for biography.

Nonetheless, Popoff's work is an engaging contribution to Grossman scholarship likely to appeal to general and expert readers alike. Its contextual approach provides a useful framework with which to introduce Grossman's work within the historical developments that shaped his writing and ideas. Her readings of the author's early novels and identification of new source material in regard to the later works are very helpful for those wishing to understand his thought and narrative style in detail.

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O. T. JONES

Reich, Rebecca. *State of Madness: Psychiatry, Literature, and Dissent After Stalin*. Northern Illinois University Press, Dekalb, IL, 2018. xi + 283 pp. Illustrations. Notes. Bibliography. Index. \$60.00.

A literary study is only as good as its villain. In the case of Rebecca Reich's analysis of Soviet punitive psychiatry, dissident writing, and their intersections, the author has found an excellent antagonist in Andrei Snezhnevskii, who 'at the time of his death in 1987 [...] had been memorialized as a consummate clinician', but 'just two years later [...] was being remembered as the architect of a diagnostic system that facilitated the pathologization of *inakomyslie*' (p. 24). Through a series of multifaceted close readings of writings by psychiatrists including Snezhnevskii, Reich demonstrates in her first chapter how 'the business of a psychiatrist was making accurate diagnoses based on

objective facts and methods. Yet within that context was room for a subjective skill that ultimately amounted to an “art [of diagnosis]” (p. 27).

Starting from this opposition, Reich explores how the state and its psychiatrists, on the one hand, and political dissidents and dissenting writers, on the other, engaged in a rhetorical war from the 1950s to the 1980s. Doctors could hospitalize those ‘*inakomyslie*’ for expressing beliefs that contradicted Soviet ideology, leading dissenters into a ‘discursive trap’ (p. 5). The psychiatrists regarded their diagnoses as objectively pure, despite the fact that they were constructed from interviews, as well as from other evidence that required interpretation; indeed, their psychiatric reports betrayed a subjective approach to describing patients’ life histories, symptoms, attitudes toward the state, or even their art. Any arguments that dissenters would make against their own diagnosis could then be deployed as evidence of insanity. The vicious circle of Soviet psychiatry grew tighter around them as the very question of what it meant to be mad was addressed in these various realms of society.

But such rhetoric cuts both ways, of course. Dissenters of assorted stripes fought back, as Reich shows in the remaining chapters, by ‘depathologiz[ing] themselves and pathologiz[ing] the state’, by arguing through their writings (artistic or otherwise) that it was *society* that had taken the dive into madness (p. 60). In chapter two, Reich focuses on political dissidents (Aleksandr Vol’pin, Vladimir Bukovskii, Semen Gluzman) and the strategies they developed to combat the discursive trap. For instance, Vol’pin promoted appealing to legalese and the alleged rights of Soviet citizens over the psychiatric discourse. Reich afterward turns her attention elsewhere, taking up literary figures rather than explicitly political ones. Joseph Brodsky, the subject of chapter three, countered the Soviet state’s adoption of the dictum ‘existence determines consciousness’ with his own ‘art of estrangement’, exploring in the process what happens to writers who allow their artistic energies to run amok (p. 145). Next, in chapter four, Reich contrasts Lenin’s ‘reflection theory’, which turned into ‘a pathological tendency to perceive and represent life itself as if it were a malleable work of art’, with Andrei Siniavskii’s *ostranenie*, à la the Formalist Viktor Shklovskii, and, finally, in chapter five, the state’s focus on psychiatric dis/simulation is paired with Venedikt Erofeev’s ‘mask of madness’, behind which he rendered his entire life into a lived theatrical performance (pp. 149, 187).

At times it is difficult to see how all these pieces of Reich’s fascinating study fit together, how Brodsky, for example, who explored madness in very personal terms, rather than through a social lens, fits into the same scheme as those she considers ‘dissidents’ proper. The sparse linking threads between chapters partly explains this issue. Early on, however, Reich frames these conflicts in Bakhtinian terms as the tension between an ideological power who wishes to

dominate with its single, monologic voice and those dissenters who pursue alternative forms of thought and discourse. There is an intriguing logic to this book, and how Reich juggles close readings, literary genealogies, medical reports and theory, among other things, speaks to her abilities as a skilled analyst of these varied materials.

What makes Snezhnevskii, leader of the so-called Moscow School of psychiatry, especially powerful as a villain for Reich's account is not so much what he himself accomplished during his reign as Soviet Russia's premier psychologist. Rather, it is what he represents: the corruption of psychiatric science that pushed authors to experience a need to prove their sanity before a state that seemed itself to have lost sense. At times zooming in to the level of parts of speech in a poem, at others expanding outward to the broad historical factors at work in the post-Stalin era, Reich offers a thorough and engrossing story of this battle of wills fought in examination rooms and in samizdat publications.

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Skinner, Amy (ed.). *Russian Theatre in Practice: The Director's Guide*. Methuen Drama, London, New York, Oxford, New Delhi and Sydney, 2019. xv + 278 pp. Illustrations. Notes. Bibliography. Index. £24.00 (paperback).

TWELVE brief essays covering a period from the turn of the twentieth century to the present day, written by six male and six female contributors advocating the theoretical and practical importance of eight male and four female theatre directors, form the content of this ambitious student handbook. The names of the subjects are both well-known and less familiar, as are their formal means and methods, including puppetry and children's theatre. The book's format is very attractive, consisting of bite-sized sections prefaced by bold, indicative headings interspersed with areas of highlighted text containing advice on ways to match acting theory with directorial practice.

As far as the choice of practitioners is concerned, the pre-1945 group are virtually self-selecting — Stanislavskii, Vakhtangov, Meierkhol'd, Tairov and Mikhail Chekhov. Less well-known are Aleksandra Remizova (pedagogue and director), Natalia Sats (children's theatre specialist) and Nina Simionovich-Efimova (puppeteer). The post-war selection, once again, includes the more and the less familiar: Oleg Efremov and Anatolii Efros among the former, with Mar Sulimov (pedagogue and director) and Genrietta Ianovskaia (Theatre for Youth) among the latter. The editor is alert to criticism of what might be