

find his ideological approach most debatable. His general view that all subversion, otherness and transgression ends up serving the purposes of established power seems at times more like a structural sleight-of-hand of the author than a plausible explanation of the ideological workings of the plays. To say, for example, that Falstaff's anarchic energy in *Henry IV* or the sexual multiplicity of the middle section of *Twelfth Night* are cancelled out or assimilated by the endings seems, confronted by the "hard" evidence provided by the plays themselves, either a very old-fashioned critical privileging of endings or, more tendentially, a rhetorical attempt to make the plays fit the theory. It is also here, in my view, that Greenblatt departs most from Foucault's work on power and comes closest to Althusser's deterministic views on ideology.

In any case, an extremely sophisticated and detailed account is given here of Greenblatt's *oeuvre*, including his own drive towards conventionality (of criticism) in the *Norton Shakespeare*, as Hidalgo amusingly notes. Apart from Greenblatt and the new historicism, the selection and organisation of feminist approaches to Shakespeare in the first half of the book are excellent, as is the author's account of bibliography related to the boy actor in chapter four. Here, as in the rest of the book, the links established by the author between the various critical works facilitate the reader's task of making sense of them individually and contextually and should be of great help to those interested in Shakespeare, both as students and researchers. Given the great complexity of the endeavour, the result is highly successful and the book should become essential reading for those who, like Olivia in *Twelfth Night*, "catch the plague" and join the ranks of the apparently never-dwindling Shakespearean community.

#### TORPID SMOKE: THE STORIES OF VLADIMIR NABOKOV

Steven G. Kellman and Irving Malin (eds.)

(Studies in Slavic Literature and Poetics, 35). Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2000.

(by José Ángel García Landa. University of Zaragoza)

This is the fourth published book of criticism on Nabokov's stories, three of them being fairly recent (1993, 1999, 2000). I confess that I do not see the title of this work as especially apposite to its subject matter: although it is the title of one of Nabokov's stories, I would have opted for "Terra Incognita" or "Ultima Thule". As academic books go, there are some initial limitations in this one: there is no name index, and a different reference system is used in each paper. That is, this volume, like the earlier *A Small Alpine Form*, is a collection of individual papers rather than a unified volume. The unity comes from the remarkable coherence in the corpus of Nabokov's short stories. Marina Turkevich Naumann had written a book on the short stories of the 20s (*Blue Evenings in Berlin*, 1978); Maxim D. Shroyer's *The World of Nabokov's Stories* 1999 is a more sophisticated monograph on the short stories, although it addresses a relatively small number of them and on occasion from a rather narrow perspective. It usefully complements *A Small Alpine Form*, which remains the best volume written yet on Nabokov's short fiction. *Torpid Smoke* ranks third.

A book on Nabokov's stories might have taken the trouble to refer the reader to a bibliography on certain matters (e.g. the Zembla page). But the contributors to this volume are not overly given to referring to previous studies, to differentiating their readings from previous ones, or to showing much awareness of what is going on in the Web (though there are a couple of references to electronic materials).

And, for a book published in a series on Slavic literature and poetics, surprisingly little attention is paid to the Russian text of many of Nabokov's stories, which in many cases is the original version which preceded the translation by Nabokov and his collaborators.

Barbara Wyllie's "Memory and Dream in Nabokov's Short Fiction" is one of the most readable essays in the collection. She contends that "Nabokov's self-imposed 'problem' was how to overcome the regressive, destructive force of time" (5). This is plausible enough. Her analysis of Nabokov's mnemonics would have benefited, however, from a dialogue with other works on memory in Nabokov, especially John Burt Foster, Jr.'s *Nabokov's Art of Memory and European Modernism*, or, for that matter, with theoretical works which focus on the problem of how narrative art tries to overcome the destructive force of time, such as Gary Saul Morson's *Narrative and Freedom: The Shadows of Time*. Wyllie comments perceptively on the symbolic associations of several of Nabokov's stories, but there is no dialogue with the secondary literature, and the approach is overall a New Critical one.

J. E. Rivers offers an analysis of the original French text of "Mademoiselle O" which throws light on the nature of the transformations both the story and Mademoiselle underwent in later translations and rewritings. The notion of Nabokov playing with generic attributions and conventions to create a "hyper-genre" which conflates biography, autobiography and fiction is suggestive, as is Rivers's analysis of the way Nabokov gradually dissociates himself from Mademoiselle as a fellow-exile in later rewritings. Rivers then focuses on the strangely attractive O of the title, and provides a juicy analysis of the role of o's, round shapes and orotundity in the story. The analysis succeeds, not least in that it manages to leave one open-mouthed and pulling faces.

Maxim D. Shrayer's paper is one of the high points in the collection. Alas, it had already been published shortly before in Shrayer's book *The World of Nabokov's Stories*, which I warmly recommend to anyone interested in things Nabokovian. We find in this paper, exceptionally in the *Torpid Smoke* volume, a close familiarity with Nabokov's literary circle, with the peculiarities of his Russian stylistics, and with a good deal of secondary literature on Nabokov. The Russian quotations are transliterated (unlike those in Shrayer's book) and translated; the last paragraph has been cut and some minor adjustments made, but otherwise Shrayer's analysis of Nabokov's "Vasily Shishkov" is the same. The title adds a theoretical move, proposing an "Author=Text Interpretation" of the story, and a brief theoretical introduction has been added. Shrayer argues that this "Author-Text" interpretive model is "Nabokov-specific", and that it "eliminates a critic's need to draw an impossible and meaningless line where the authorial dimension supposedly ends and the textual begins" (135). I confess that to me this seems a hermeneutic choice

which cannot claim to be "Nabokov-specific", that is, unless Shrayer chooses to treat other writers in New Critical fashion. Anyway, "Vasily Shishkov", being based on a real-life hoax played by Nabokov on the critic Adamovich, cannot but be addressed through biographical materials. Perhaps Shrayer's point would be better proved through any of the seemingly more autotelic works — e.g. through the kind of analysis of "Christmas" or *The Real Life of Sebastian Knight* sketched by Boyd in his biography. Shrayer intends his analysis to serve as a refutation of twentieth-century anti-intentionalism, and he argues that "such notions as Barthes's 'death of the author' or Foucault's 'author-function', which deny the author his creative powers and violate the indivisible author-text continuum, are inapplicable to Nabokov's text" (135). Rivers, too, suggests that Nabokov's practice refutes Derrida's theory that "il n'y a pas de hors-text" (126, sic). To me, the relationship between theory and practice does not work that way, and post-structuralist theories do not necessarily have the implications ascribed to them by Rivers or Shrayer. The engagement with post-structuralism is cursory, but these critics sound as if they had merely a hearsay acquaintance with the theories they reject.

Linda Wagner-Martin's feminist reading of Nabokov uncovers the distance between the implied author and the narrator in "The Vane Sisters", with the narrator as insensitive male chauvinist and the implied author as an ethically aware observer. Her terminology in discussing the role of the reader might have benefited from a similar terminological split between narratee and implied reader. As it is, though, "the reader too accepts the devaluing of Sybil's passion" (235). Surely not the actual reader (Wagner-Martin), nor the implied reader as the implied author's interlocutor. Wagner-Martin argues that Nabokov perceived his marginal position in an American university as having analogies with women's marginal position in a heterosexual love relationship. This is the kind of reading which should be complemented with biographical investigation in an "author-text" continuum.

The remaining papers are of more limited interest. Julian W. Connolly notes the evolution in Nabokov's stories from an explicit (though often parodic) use of religious symbols to a more implicit and subtle personal symbolism to deal with metaphysical subjects. All in all, the volume suffers from an excess of "friendly criticism" and a lack of resisting reading and critical distance from the subject. R. H. W. Dillard's essay on Nabokov's Christmas stories is marred by an anxiety to bring the author back to the Christian fold, which results in a neglect of the specifically Nabokovian approach to the otherworld (as described by Alexandrov or Shrayer). Dillard spells out the implied authorial meaning of "Christmas", but fails to comment on the autobiographical roots of the story which are perhaps the most interesting symbolic actions in connection with this story. Some of these are traced in Boyd's autobiography. But, like many of the contributors, Dillard's New Critical approach is concerned only with the story Nabokov wanted us to read, not