

his close friend Matvei Kogan. In this sense, Hirschkop's volume follows the spirit of its subject: providing its readers with an overview of Bakhtin's life, context, and thought, it feeds our desire to turn to Bakhtin himself and propels it into the future.

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***Snapshots of the Soul: Photo-Poetic Encounters in Modern Russian Culture.*** By Molly Thomasy Blasing. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2021. xxiii, 328 pp. Notes. Index. Illustrations. \$55.00, hard bound.  
doi: 10.1017/slr.2023.152

Twenty years ago, I composed a long cycle of poems, each dedicated to an individual work of art by a famous photographer. Molly Thomasy Blasing's book, *Snapshots of the Soul*, is dedicated to such depictions of photo-art in Russian poetry, a phenomenon she calls *ekphrasis*, or "the way that photography operates as the material or method for poetic writing in the twentieth century" (xxiii). The book persuasively attempts to answer the question of "how and why poets are drawn to the language, representational power, and metaphorical possibilities that photography offers" (xxiii).

The first chapter is fittingly dedicated to Boris Pasternak, from whose poetry the title, *Snapshots of the Soul*, is taken. To me, the archival *visual* material which complements the analysis of the text is the most intriguing part of the whole study. The rarely-seen results of Pasternak's relationship with his camera, his own photographs as well as the photographs of Pasternak and his family, are generously scattered across the pages of the book. The presence of Pasternak's own photography gives strong support to Blasing's characterization of Pasternak's poetic style as a photographic one. In Pasternak's speech at the First Congress of Soviet Writers, he stated that "poetry is prose" to the confusion of many present there. What Pasternak meant by this was his belief that poetry, like prose, should capture events in their immediacy. Later, in his essay on Paul Verlaine, he calls this "impressionism," which, in Pasternak's paradoxical terms, is the highest possible realism. To Pasternak's approach to his poetry and poetry in general, Blasing adds her "photographical" understanding of it without contradicting Pasternak's own definitions. She analyzes different poems by Pasternak, including the famous one (from *My Sister—Life*) about the thunder, which "took as a souvenir/A hundred blinding photos of night" (translation by Blasing, 51). While only several of his poems explicitly mention photographs, Blasing attributes the photographic approach to Pasternak's oeuvres in general (especially, as we learn from the book, his long poems, such as *The Year 1905*), calling it "an ekphrastic ideal of balancing motion and stasis in poetry" (85).

The chapter on Marina Tsvetaeva is, to my mind, the most interesting in the book because it is *apophatic*, that is, it speaks about the presence of that which is absent. Tsvetaeva, differently from Pasternak, does not have in her poetic vocabulary such a word as "photograph." The sole poem by Tsvetaeva that may even touch upon the subject is "To Grandmother," in which the reader may guess that Tsvetaeva is looking at an image of her grandmother and describing what she sees. Blasing's research removes any doubt by including in the book a photo of Tsvetaeva sitting at a table under the large photographic portrait of her grandmother. Moreover, we learn from the book about Tsvetaeva's own involvement in the art of photography. Her cycle "Tombstone" is well known. But it was a surprise to me to see the photos taken by Tsvetaeva in 1934 of the empty apartment of the late poet Nikolai Gronskii, whose untimely death this cycle is dedicated to. As Blasing writes, "photographs in

Tsvetaeva's family . . . were associated as much with the spirit world as with the material world" (96). These photographs are present in the book, and one of them is indeed "ghostly," since—due to double exposure—Tsvetaeva herself is depicted on it, holding (most probably) Gronskii's book.

The third and fourth chapters are dedicated to Joseph Brodsky and Bella Akhmadulina.

Brodsky was the son of a photographer and a photographer himself. He stated: "A good poem, in a sense, is like a photograph that puts its subjects' metaphysical features into sharp focus" (161). In her analysis of Brodsky's poems (especially his *Roman Elegies*), Blasing interprets Brodsky's poetry through this lens. She concludes: "The aspect of Brodsky's photo-poetics that emerges from these drafts [of *Roman Elegies*] is related to the poet's view of the analogical relationship between photography and poetic writing. That is, the drafts reveal Brodsky working through the parallels he sees in the process of taking a photograph and the stages of poetic writing" (170). Brodsky's drafts that are included in the book support her comparison of the processes of photographic exposure and writing.

The chapter on Akhmadulina, like that of Tsvetaeva, takes an apophatic approach. Blasing writes: "[T]his chapter asks: what is the difference between writing a poem about a photograph you hold in your hand, as opposed to one that exists only in the mind's eye?" (180). She compares Akhmadulina's poem dedicated to a known photo of Akhmatova and "I swear," Akhmadulina's meditation on a photo of Tsvetaeva, which after much research, Blasing concludes never actually existed. Her wonderful analysis of this poem gives the reader greater appreciation of Akhmadulina's poetic genius.

The book also mentions more contemporary Russian poets, including Sergei Gandlevskii, Polina Barskova, Arsenii Tarkovskii, Elena Shvarts, Arkadii Dragomoshchenko, Andrei Sen-Sen'kov, and Kirill Medvedev, and their ways of *ekphrasis*—the poetic translation of the visual into the verbal. While Blasing cites Aleksei Parshchikov as a theorist of photography, she misses the opportunity to include his poem describing Perseus as the first photographer, whose shield was his "camera." I highly recommend *Snapshots of the Soul* to all interested in *ekphrasis* and the "development" of Russian poetry.

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***Rethinking the Gulag: Identities, Sources, Legacies.*** Ed. Alan Barenberg and Emily D. Johnson. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2022. x, 320 pp. Notes. Index. Illustrations. \$35.00, paper.  
doi: 10.1017/slr.2023.153

"The scale of the Gulag contrasted with its futility" (274). So writes Aleksandr Etkind in aptly summarizing why the Gulag remains a complex and important topic in academic studies. From the earliest camps on the Solovetskii Islands of Russia's Far North, to today's male prisons in Russia and former Soviet republics, these sites and their practices have left, for better and worse, a legacy of material for historians, anthropologists, sociologists, literary scholars, and other scholarly disciplines. The significance of this volume is announced in its title—to "rethink" a field of inquiry that was initially largely defined by the (typically privileged) members of the intelligentsia who had been incarcerated as political prisoners. Instead, the fourteen contributors to *Rethinking the Gulag* broaden the scope to include previously understudied groups