

emptiness in the latter. Pasternak confronts the Stalinist cliché of the “bright future” (76), with which he had struggled earlier, through illumination of the everyday.

In a book of this scope and detail, minor disagreements with some interpretations are inevitable. Overall, however, this meticulously researched and thought-provoking volume makes a significant contribution to Pasternak scholarship and should be of interest to those studying the poetics of light and visuality, and the intersections of Modernist poetry and metaphysics.

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The Gift of Active Empathy: Scheler, Bakhtin, and Dostoevsky. By Alina Wyman. Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2016. Bibliography. Index. xiv, 323 pp. Notes. Bibliography. Index. \$39.95, paper. doi: 10.1017/slr.2017.222

Alina Wyman’s monograph on Dostoevskii begins with a now familiar dissatisfaction with that most famous of Dostoevskii’s readings by Mikhail Bakhtin. As Wyman complains, *Problems of Dostoevsky’s Poetics* neither pays proper attention to characters’ actions in Dostoevskii’s novels, nor acknowledges their spiritual growth. Instead, Wyman suggests to “tackl[e] the question of spiritually relevant communication in Dostoevsky” (5) with Bakhtin’s concept of *vzhivanie* or “live-entering,” developed in “Toward a Philosophy of the Act” and “Author and Hero in Aesthetic Activity.”

To appreciate how radical of a pivot Wyman makes here, we should bear in mind that Bakhtin’s turn to Dostoevskii is commonly understood as a turn away from the architectonics of “Author and Hero” in an attempt to address the fundamental power imbalance inherent in the multi-stage process of *vzhivanie*, which depends on the subject’s “surplus of seeing” vis-à-vis the other and as such exposes the other to the threat of complete objectification. Keenly attuned to the ambivalence of consummation, Wyman revises the concept, supplementing it with the notion of active empathy developed by Max Scheler, who seems to be Bakhtin’s most direct source.

Hence, in the first two chapters of the study, Wyman embarks on a thorough exegesis of Bakhtin’s and Scheler’s theories of empathy, and her grafting of both philosophies results in a powerful and productive methodology for “analyzing empathetic efforts of literary characters” (53). As Wyman shows, Bakhtin and Scheler base their notions of empathy on the necessity of “the ontological gulf between individual personalities,” (50) and the act of divine Incarnation, which they understand as an ideal model for the individuated, embodied acts of agapeistic love directed towards the other. Unlike Bakhtin, however, Scheler reserves a space for the *individual ineffable*, “the Godlike essence of each individual personality [that] may never be completely uncovered even under the revealing gaze of agape” (49). It is the other’s “surplus of being,” inaccessible to one’s “surplus of seeing,” that serves as a guarantee for the spiritually productive intersubjectivity. To become nurturing, active empathy must avoid the pitfalls of objectifying the other, as well as surrendering the “ontological gap” that separates two subjects.

Hence, in Wyman’s analysis, the failure of the Underground Man (chapter III) is that of incomplete Incarnation: unable to positively identify with the absolute, or practice selfless love towards concrete human beings, the Underground Man deprives himself of any opportunity for a positive interpersonal experience.

Driven by *ressentiment*, the Underground Man continues to secretly long for “the highest consummation of the self, which does not limit but . . . expands one’s freedom . . .” (90), yet remains incapable to move beyond the “highly abstract ‘love of mankind’” (93).

One of the book’s most provocative conclusions is that a Christlike Prince Myshkin similarly fails at active empathy. A major preoccupation of the last three chapters, Myshkin is unable to withstand either of the two temptations that endanger the work of empathy. Focusing on Myshkin’s relationship with Rogozhin and Nastasya Filippovna, Wyman argues that “[i]n the first case, *another’s* (Rogozhin’s) consciousness is finalized and objectified . . . ; in the second case [his] own distinctive voice is silenced, merging with the voice of Nastasya Filippovna” (171).

It is against the backdrop of Myshkin’s tragic failure that Wyman looks at characters who succeed at empathy as well as the factors that secure their successes. Hence, through the act of writing his memoirs, the semi-autobiographical narrator of *The House of the Dead* engages in “the process . . . of gradual dialogical self-refinement” as well as in “a discussion [not] *about* his fellow inmates but *with* them” (128, 129). Such dialogic directionality along with the ability to maintain “the ontological gulf between the individuals” guarantee the success of Alyosha Karamazov, Dostoevskii’s most consistently positive character. Addressing others, rather than succumbing to judgments about them *in absentia*, Alyosha “proves to be more effective at ‘applying’ agape to his . . . neighbors precisely because he observes a productive distance to their pain, never losing a hopeful surplus of vision that enables him to remain *active* in his empathetic efforts” (234).

Wyman’s book is a thoughtful addition to what Slavic literary criticism does so well: cultivating the productive relationship between literature and moral philosophy. In Wyman’s investigation, this relationship is not quite equal: literature here is still merely a case study, a superstructure to philosophy’s base. This, ultimately, results in a loss of literature’s specificity that accounts for a somewhat programmatic account of empathy in Dostoevskii’s prose. Importantly, analyzing *characters*, Wyman does not address how the concept of empathy applies to the *reader*. Would the inclusion of the reader’s unavoidable surplus of vision into analysis require a radical reformulation of the concept of active empathy itself? Nevertheless, even as a character study *solum*, the book is remarkable in its philosophical prowess and depth of literary analysis. It will surely become a useful guide to those who seek a better understanding of Dostoevskii, as well as a philosophical self-help manual with the highest potential for spiritual regeneration.

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Trepanation of the Skull. By Sergey Gandlevsky. Trans. Susanne Fusso. De Kalb, IL: Northern Illinois University Press, 2014. xviii, 143 pp. Appendix. Notes. Indexes. Maps. \$29.95, paper back.
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There is a rich tradition of memoir writing in Russian literature, not least in the period following the collapse of the Soviet Union. When in 1995 the prominent poet, prose writer, essayist, and translator Sergey Gandlevsky (b. 1952) first published his “autobiographical tale” *Trepnatsiia cherepa* (The Trepanation of the Skull), it made a very considerable impact on Russian readers, who were fascinated by its highly original form (without consecutive chronology, and with abrupt changes of both style,