

Cold Fusion: Aspects of the German Cultural Presence in Russia. Edited by Gennady Barabtarlo. New York, Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2000. x + 310 pp. \$69.95.

American universities often combine their German and Russian Departments—probably out of a misty notion that both cultures are situated somewhere in North-eastern Europe and use difficult languages. There are, of course, many more common features between Russian and German culture, but so far especially in the Angloamerican context little has been done to elucidate this interesting and versatile relation. Gennady Barabtarlo's reader with 18 contributions is one of the first attempts to present this problem to an American academic audience. A conceptual problem of this collection of articles lies, however, in its excessively broad range of topics: It covers over 200 years, from the Enlightenment to Soviet prison literature. It would have probably been more revealing to focus all the contributions thematically on one century or one specified aspect of the German-Russian cultural encounter.

Annelore Engel-Braunschmidt draws attention to the importance of Ch.F. Gellert whose works became an important model of writing for

Catherine II. In her memoirs, Catherine applied the same system of values and virtues as outlined by Gellert. However, Catherine did not copy Gellert's sentimentalist style: "Her memoirs can be considered as Gellert's *Schwedische Gräfinn* in the language of Voltaire" (28). Anna Lisa Crone analyses Derzhavin's self understanding as a poet within the system of monarchist power. For Derzhavin, writing and ruling are strongly intertwined notions—various biographical facts of his time underline this phenomenon: Catherine II wrote plays, Friedrich II authored odes, and Derzhavin himself held several high posts in the tsarist administration during his official career. Crone's article states an important point by arguing that Derzhavin considered his poetry as an integral part of the monarch's reigning power. It is a pity, however, that she does not refer to Georg Witte's seminal study "Poröse Lebenstexte. Russische Schriftsteller-Autobiographien zwischen Klassizismus und Romantik" (*Poetica* 24, 1992, pp. 32–61), where a similar view on Derzhavin is developed in great depth.

Wolf Schmid challenges in his contribution the superficial, yet common interpretation of Pushkin's Hermann as a cold, calculating German. According to Schmid, Pushkin evokes another cliché of Germanness in his "Queen of Spades"—the romantic stereotype of the split character, which can most prominently be found in the works of E.T.A. Hoffmann. Priscilla Meyer presents a comparison between Gogol's "Nevsky Prospect" and E.T.A. Hoffmann's "A New Year's Eve Adventure." She analyses fantastic motives in both texts and concludes that Hoffmann's subtext enforces the demonic metaphysics which lie at the basis of Gogol's tale. Michael Holquist analyses the concept of the sacred in Gogol. He argues that Gogol's works after *Dead Souls* can be read as an expression of the ardent, yet unsuccessful wish to attain the sacred already in this life. The main problem of Holquist's detailed study lies in the fact that it does not fit into the thematic framework of this collection. It is true that Holquist argues on the first pages of his article that Gogol experienced a kind of "tyranny of German Romanticism" to the effect that he saw himself as a national prophet (75). This thread, however, is not continued in the rest of the article; and one would have to object that no German writer of the time produced such a strong and intolerant self-presentations as Gogol in his "Vybrannye mesta".

Roger F. Cook reconstructs the image of Russia in the writings of Heinrich Heine. Astonishingly enough, Heine hailed Nicholas I in the years before the Polish uprising as the "standard bearer of freedom" and called Russia a "democratic state" and a true heir to the liberal principles of the French Revolution. Only later, this misperception gave way to a new understanding of the individual's role in the historical process. Ma-

rina Kanevskaya compares Varnhagen von Ense's and Dostoevsky's convergent views on Pushkin as a "universal poet." The point Kanevskaya makes here is intriguing: Dostoevsky may have borrowed the main argument for his nationalistic apotheosis of Pushkin from a German critic and thinker. Unfortunately the comparison has to remain a typological one, because there is no proof that Dostoevsky knew von Ense's essay on Pushkin. Alexander von Schönborn tackles a very difficult topic, the relation between Kant's and Dostoevsky's ethics as presented in the "Legend of the Grand Inquisitor." The point of departure seems to be the same: both thinkers identify as relevant categories the complex relations between individual moral conduct, logical reflection, and religious belief. Von Schönborn shows where Kant's and Dostoevsky's ethical thinking overlaps and where it diverges. However, von Schönborn neglects one important feature: It is impossible to look at the "Legend" without taking into account its discursive role within *The Brothers Karamazov*. The "Legend" is but one ethical statement within the whole logic of the novel, and von Schönborn tends to fuse Dostoevsky's voice with Ivan Karamazov's who actually authors the "Legend."

Steven Cassedy examines the intellectual lines that lead from German idealism to the philosophical positions of Dostoevsky, Soloviev, and Florensky. All Russian thinkers were challenged by Kant's and Hegel's systematic description of the human mind, but at the same time remained unsatisfied in their spiritual quest for the ideal. Each Russian thinker thus tried in his own way to outline a speculative theory which would meet the genuine Russian interests of philosophical perception. Michael Bernard-Donals tries to juxtapose a Bakhtinian with a Benjaminian approach to analyse historical representations of the Holocaust. The three elements themselves seem to be rather incompatible, and in fact, Bernard-Donals remains inconclusive about the insights both Bakhtin and Benjamin could provide for his topic. Moreover, Bernard-Donals uses questionable intellectual stereotypes such as the following: "Bakhtin was anti-Marxist while Benjamin turned to Marxism after flirting with Jewish mysticism" (153). It is hardly acceptable to force either thinker into one or the other cliché in such a careless manner.

William Craft Brumfield presents the influences of German modernism on Russian architecture. Several illustrations show interesting examples of modernist buildings inspired by German architects at the beginning of the twentieth century. Anna Muza demonstrates in her contribution how Chekhov challenges common stereotypes of the Germans in his works. Problems of national identity which Chekhov most prominently attributes to Russified Germans are used to indicate more intense

conflicts between individuals and society. Bernice Glatzer Rosenthal shows the hidden presence of Nietzsche's philosophy of art in Socialist Realism. For Nietzsche, art is a willful deception, a conscious lie, which corrects reality. The same goes for the ideology of Socialist realism: Gorky for example called for a "created truth" (201). Paradoxically enough, official Soviet culture never acknowledged its debt to Nietzsche who was rather condemned as the first philosopher of fascism. John Burt Foster analyses the concept of the "transnational author" on the German-Slavic border. Both Nietzsche and Nabokov serve as examples of authors who developed their influence independently from their national cultures.

Alexander Dolinin casts a glance at the "stepmother of Russian cities," Berlin in the 1920s. He investigates the different literary renderings of Berlin as given by Bely, Pasternak, and Nabokov. Omry Ronen tackles a hitherto neglected topic in Nabokov criticism: Nabokov and Goethe. Nabokov's resilience to German literature is well known (Kafka, Rilke, and Goethe are the only writers whose ranks he acknowledges). Goethean topics are present in Nabokov's work throughout his whole literary career but mostly in a hidden manner and with equivocal significance. Karen Evans-Romaine draws attention to Pasternak's rather traditional reception of Heine. Pasternak often recurred to 19th-century translations of Heine—thus laying bare the romantic roots of his own modernist art. Leona Toker concludes the volume with a comparison between Kafka's "The Hunger Artist" and Varlam Shalamov's "The Artist of the Spade." Toker examines both stories as literary expressions of the discourse of Lent which has to be considered as an integrative part of the Bakhtinian concept of carnival.

In conclusion, one may say that Barabtarlo's collection of essays raises many interesting issues, but unfortunately fails to give a general assessment of the German-Russian encounter. The heterogeneity of the various contributions could be justified if there was a kind of synthesis trying to identify the continuities and discontinuities in the historical development of German-Russian cultural relations. In its present state, Barabtarlo's book leaves the reader with a somewhat scattered impression. But this volume by all means deserves attention because it draws the attention of the scholarly community to a problem that leads to a new understanding of Russian culture within the European context.

Ulrich Schmid
University of Basel
Switzerland