

Years before Rudnitskii's book my first confrontation with Meierkhol'd occurred during the theater seminar of 1936 in Moscow, at which the director spoke and gave a staged rehearsal and during which I saw his second production of Griboedov's *Gore ot uma* at his theater. My first scholarly publication, my article "V. E. Meyerhold: A Russian Predecessor of Avant-garde Theater" (*CL*, Summer 1965) then appeared only, as Bristow recommends, after examination of "the primary source material," made possible in 1963 by a Powers Grant from Oberlin College. My book, *V. E. Meyerhold: The Art of Conscientious Theater* (Amherst, Mass.: University of Massachusetts Press, 1974) was finished in manuscript on my sabbatical of 1968–1969 before the original of the Ardis translation, Rudnitskii's *Rezhisser Meierkhol'd* (Moscow: Nauka, 1969), appeared in Russian. In the interim between its completion and publication I did then include references to Rudnitskii in the footnotes of my book.

I share Bristow's admiration of Rudnitskii's work and myself translated a segment of it for the Ardis journal *Russian Literature Triquarterly* (Winter 1974). Rudnitskii offers a wealth of material in his first and second books on Meierkhol'd, thanks to the advantage in access enjoyed by Soviet scholars and often denied westerners in times of strained political relations between our countries. So, with due acknowledgment, dependence on Soviet scholarship does occur. Still, ever since my first encounter with Meierkhol'd I have had the aim, proper to scholarship, independently to tell the truth about his significant achievement, certainly not to suppress or distort it in accord with any doctrine.

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TO THE EDITOR:

In a recent issue of *The Russian Review* (Vol. 44 [January 1985]) the editor of that journal described the experience of "being reviewed" as follows: "To read a review of one's own book is a rare ordeal."

The fall issue of the *Slavic Review* (44, Fall 1985) contained reviews of two of my books and landed what can only be described as a "double-whammy." An author cannot, of course, handpick the people to whom his books should be sent for review (as appealing as that idea might be), but he should be able to expect that his work will be sent to disinterested parties for unbiased evaluation.

Unfortunately, my monograph on dreams in nineteenth century Russian fiction was sent to a scholar whose psychoanalytic orientation so affected his reading of my work that he had almost nothing positive to say about it. My annotated translation of Alexander Herzen's novel *Who is to Blame?* was sent to someone whose own work on Herzen I criticized in the introduction. I would argue that neither of these reviewers fits the definition of a disinterested party; neither should have been asked to review my work, or, having been asked, each should have disqualified himself.

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PROFESSOR RZHEVSKY REPLIES:

Michael Katz's faith in academic manners can be partially restored since I did indeed point out to David Ransel, then editor of the *Slavic Review*, that my presence in the introduction seemed to call for a different reviewer. He persuaded me to do the piece on the grounds that being close to the subject might be better than being distant from it and

that objectivity was not guaranteed in either case. That rationale, accepted by such publications as *The New York Times Book Review*, need not obstruct another basically sound principle. What matters is not who reviews a book but what the review says.

TO THE EDITOR:

The *Slavic Review's* status among journals dealing with Soviet and East European affairs is standard setting. Unfortunately Victoria F. Brown's review of *Transylvania: The Roots of Ethnic Conflict* (*Slavic Review* 44 [Fall 1985]) does not measure up to the *Review's* standards.

Brown's comments are not about the book she is supposed to be analyzing but are an attack on the credibility of the contributors to the volume. She charges that the latter are "nationalistic" pro-Hungarians, because fourteen of them spelled *Romania* as *Rumania*(?). Yet until the late 1960s it was general practice to write *Romania* as *Rumania*. No lesser scholar of Romania than Stephen Fischer-Galati still used *Rumania* as late as 1971 in the title of one of his books. This question is more closely related to a desire for precision in designations than a manifestation of nationalism. A re-reading of the introduction to the book might clear up this question for Brown.

The clincher for Brown, however, is that the "authors" are "virtually all either Hungarian by origin or Hungarian specialists or both." She obviously believes that all Hungarians are nationalists, that even as scholars they cannot divest themselves of their Hungarian origins, and that they consequently express a "Hungarian sensibility"—in other words, that they cannot be objective. But would Brown apply this yardstick to Russian historians of Russian origin, such as Raeff, Riasanovsky, Dallin, Rabinowitz, and others? Would she belittle a black history collection written by blacks, or a history of women by women, or, even more absurd, historical studies on the United States written by scholars from that country?

Aside from questioning the possibility of objectivity because of the origin of the contributors, Brown makes the point that most of the sources used by the contributors are Hungarian. A more than cursory glance at the work would reveal that there are also numerous Latin, German, French, English, Italian, and Romanian texts used as documentation. Any paucity of Romanian sources is due to the fact that the Romanian archives are closed for many of the subjects that the book covers.

The critique approaches the ridiculous when Brown asserts that the book does not give equal time to a defense of the Daco-Roman theory of Romanian origins. Following her line of argument, one would have to give equal time to the defenders of the Donation of Constantine, even though historians have dismissed its validity ever since Lorenzo Valla.

But the reviewer raises an issue that is even more disturbing: She feels the volume has not given equal time to the discussion of the fate of Romanians in the Dual Monarchy while it devotes a whole section to the fate of Hungarians in Ceausescu's Romania. (Parenthetically, she does admit that the "Hungarian treatment of minorities before World War I has already been more than amply documented.") To make this kind of a demand for equal time concerning things that are unequal indicates that she either knows no pre-1914 Austro-Hungarian history or does not know, or does not want to know, what is going on in present-day Romania. International human rights organizations and forums, such as the latest PEN Congress, Amnesty International, the United States Helsinki Watch Committee, and even United States government officials (former ambassador Funderburk or Secretary of State Shultz), have observed that the Ceausescu regime has a record of repression unmatched in Eastern Europe.

It is sad that Brown has not reviewed the book on its own merits but has instead sought to discredit it by presenting it as a sophisticated version of old-fashioned Hungarian