

Dennis Ioffe, Marcus Levitt, Joe Peschio and Igor Pilshchikov. *A/Z: Essays in Honor of Alexander Zholkovsky*, Academic Studies Press, 2018. ISBN 9781618117205. 660 pages \$169 (hardcover), \$65 (paperback).

Unlike almost any other academic book I have encountered, this festschrift opens out in numerous ways, and the first and foremost of these is its title. Of course, *A/Z* evokes *S/Z*, Roland Barthes's structuralist analysis of Balzac's short story "Sarrasine" (1831). As readers will know, Barthes's study explores the meanings and codes of Balzac, along the way implying that readers construct the text itself and as they read, they contribute to constructing that text's meaning. This idea—the call to construct our own text and our own meaning—is both a challenge and a kind of liberation—and if we can invoke it, we may indeed be able to approach this monumental work. *A/Z* is a real brick at 660 pages, and one might find it to be intimidating, but applying our own playful approach to reading and meditating on meaning, and on the figure who inspired that meaning, can make the task a fun one. Linguistic, theoretical, scholarly, personal codes, all laid out for the decoding.

A/Z: Essays in Honor of Alexander Zholkovsky features forty essays by forty authors, and the book is arranged not thematically but alphabetically, from Anthony Anemone to Andrei Zorin, from AA to AZ. Alexander Zholkovsky, known to friends and colleagues as Alik, is himself *A/Z*, and editors Dennis Ioffe, Marcus Levitt, Joe Peschio and Igor Pilshchikov see in these initials the very definition of the man. Across his long and varied career—in two languages, two countries, two contexts—Prof. Zholkovsky has written numerous analytical and theoretical works, and has also ventured deep into memoir and fiction. In other words, he both writes about literature and writes literature, thus turning his professional gaze on himself and exploring autobiography and genre in two ways (well, at least two ways). An inspiring scholar and teacher, Zholkovsky has raised several generations of students and disciples, and they come together in this volume with his colleagues and friends to offer tributes, memories, and their own lively takes on the bilingual and bicultural, on life and text.

The table of contents of *A/Z* features, among others, many B's (Bethea, Bezrodny, Bodrova, Bogomolov, Bowlt, Bozovic) and G's (Goldberg, Golstein, Gronas), numerous P's (Panova, Platt, Pratt, Proskurin), not a few S's (Scherr, Schmid, Schönle, Seifrid, Smirnov), a couple of V's (Vinitsky, Vroon) and some W's (M. Wachtel, Weststeijn, White). Colleagues from Belgium, Canada, England, Germany, Holland, Italy, Switzerland, and of course Russia and the United States have contributed essays, on topics ranging from art history to film to the role of commentators, from prose to *priëm*, from structure to semantics, from violence to voice. One exemplary essay, by Alik's longtime colleague at the University of Southern California, Sally Pratt, is itself almost an omnibus, with personal anecdote yielding to memoir and playful reinterpretation of Zholkovsky's genre of the "vignette." In her chapter, Pratt explores the concept of generational transition (435), an idea on display in the volume in both content and form.

Most importantly, perhaps, the energy and talent of its honoree pay forward in this magisterial work. Across his long career Prof. Zholkovsky has joined with many of the erudite and clever experts represented here to create a new generation of transnational, translanguar scholars and writers. Russian history, literature and culture are about more than just Russia, and this encyclopedia ranges across linguistic and cultural landscapes to offer exactly this view. It is no coincidence that the volume ends with Turgenev (no, not that Turgenev whom Henry James called one of the "best French novelists," but Andrei—after all, we're talking about A to Z), whom Zorin celebrates as entering into an "очная ставка с властителем" ("confrontation with the master"). Power, and such confrontations with power, have been one of Alik Zholkovsky's objects of study, "the poetics of which Alexander Zholkovsky has so brilliantly parsed." Since Zorin writes this, in Russian and using Russian syntax, on the last page of the book ("поэтику которых так блистательно разобрал Александр Константинович Жолковский" (660))—*A/Z* is able to have the very last word in this fascinating collection dedicated to him and his career.

Recommended for scholars and students of Russia, of poetic and literary culture, of theory, memoir, autobiography and genre. Grab a copy off the library shelf and dip into it. Construct your own text, reading around in a random order, or follow the path from A to Z. The journey is worth it.

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Dan Healey. *Russian Homophobia from Stalin to Sochi*. New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2017. ISBN 9781350000773. 312 pages. \$23.96 (paperback), \$79.20 (hardback), \$21.56 (ebook).

The recovery of LGBT histories remains a challenging task for contemporary scholars in Slavic, East European, and Eurasian studies. The inaccessibility or absence of documentary materials, memoirs, and unexpurgated biographies pose a major obstacle for historians studying the experiences of LGBT individuals in formerly Soviet states. Dan Healey's series of essays published under the title *Russian Homophobia from Stalin to Sochi* explores a strong queer presence in Soviet and post-Soviet Russia as well as attempts to trace the origins of homophobic attitudes in contemporary Russian society and legislature.

The overarching question that Healey addresses in his book is the relationship between Russia's 2013 "gay propaganda" law and the homophobic policies implemented in the Soviet Union during and after Stalin's rule. Healey argues that Stalin's 1933–1934 anti-sodomy law marked the birth of modern Russian homophobia. Although Stalin's motivation to adopt the anti-sodomy law remains unclear, there is enough archival evidence, on which Healey draws in his book, confirming Stalin's intention to repress Soviet homosexual men.

Stalin's death and the dismantling of the Gulag system did not lead to the authorities' denouncement of the anti-sodomy law. As Healey demonstrates in his book, the persecutions of same-sex acts between men increased with the police regularly monitoring and raiding homosexual meeting places, such as parks and public toilets.

Unlike female homosexuality, never criminalized under Stalin or after his death, male homosexuality remained a crime in Russia until 1993. The late Perestroika years and the 1990s became a period of relative freedom for LGBT individuals who formed new organizations and cultural groups and engaged in publishing initiatives to promote queer visibility in post-Soviet Russia. In the early years of Putin's presidency, many conservative Russian politicians appealed for a return to traditional family values condemning the "sexual revolution" of the 1990s. The prevalence of homophobic attitudes among State Duma legislators eventually led to the adoption of the 2013 "gay propaganda" law, forcing LGBT activists to search for less conspicuous forms of queer activity.

The Soviet state's attitudes toward homosexuality and its regulation of same-sex relationships constitutes the focus of the essays in Part I. To better understand the roots of contemporary Russian homophobia, Healey revisits Gulag memoirs and available archives to demonstrate the ubiquity of same-sex practices in forced labor camps. Healey argues that the so-called "common criminals" remained "the most visible queers in the camp" (35) parading their homosexuality in public as a result of their privileged status of "the socially friendly." The authorities seemed to have tolerated the "Gulag queer," who, according to the Soviet ideology, could potentially be reformed, unlike the "socially alien" political prisoners.

After Stalin's death, Khrushchev's government expressed growing anxiety about the Gulag returnees who threatened to spread same-sex desire throughout the dominant heterosexual environment. Healey's critical examination of archival materials in parts I and II reveals the extent of the persecutions to which queer men were subjected in both Soviet provinces and