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Review: Standards for Foreign Language Learning: Preparing for the 21st Century

Larysa Stepanova

Elizabeth F. Geballe

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known cultural artifacts and reflections of native speakers. This makes the material relatable to students and gives them a richer understanding of Russian culture in general.

Although this textbook does not include many explanations of syntactic constructions practiced in exercises, students at this level likely already have other reference materials. Instructors may want to supplement a course with some review, depending on the overall level of the students. The book is of great interest to a targeted audience of readers – those who want to develop their Russian language skills beyond the Intermediate level and to enhance their understanding of Russian culture, particularly the arts. Being strongly communicative in nature, this textbook will be of great help to any instructor of the Russian language.

This final work is a testament to Dr. Olga Kagan's scholarship, expertise and compassion for Russian as a foreign language. Teachers of Russian as a foreign language will miss her guidance and wisdom, yet they will greatly benefit from her work and the legacy that she has left behind.

Larysa Stepanova
The Ohio State University

References

"Standards for Foreign Language Learning: Preparing for the 21st Century." American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages. 1996. Accessed August 20, 2019. <https://www.actfl.org/sites/default/files/publications/standards/1996%20National%20Standards%20for%20FL%20L%20Exec%20Summary.pdf>.

Bowers, Katherine, Connor Doak, and Kate Holland, eds. 2018. *A Dostoevskii Companion: Texts and Contexts*. Boston: Academic Studies Press. 535 pages.

Are you a professor of Russian literature, tired of assigning companions organized novel-by-novel? Are you a reader of Dostoevskii who has forsaken *A Writer's Diary* or "Poor Folk," unconvinced that they were produced by the same author who penned *Crime and Punishment*? Are you an undergraduate, hoping your next course will include less commonly

taught Dostoevskii texts and fewer discussions about *The Extraordinary Man*? If so, see *A Dostoevskii Companion: Texts and Contexts*, edited by Katherine Bowers, Connor Doak, and Kate Holland, for an innovative guide to Dostoevskii, designed especially for undergraduate students. Logically organized into three major parts—Biography and Context, Poetics, and Themes—this companion combines primary sources with reviews, excerpts from biographies, and a range of critical approaches in voices classic (Mikhail Bakhtin, Nikolai Berdiaev), contemporary (Katherine Bowers, Kate Holland, Sarah J. Young), and inevitable (Robert Louis Jackson, Gary Saul Morson, Vladimir Zakharov). Authors' names are not, however, included in the table of contents, which makes perusing by author—something more advanced scholars might wish to do—onerous.

Because the Companion's many sections and chapters overlap, even as they prioritize different agendas, the volume is admirably comprehensive. By foregoing a chronological or novel-by-novel approach to its subject, the book gives its readers the chance to follow ideological trends that weave their way through Dostoevskii's fiction, drafts, journalism, and correspondence. The result—often buoyed by insightful commentaries—yields a vision of the author as sociologist, politician, and psychologist. One dimension of Dostoevskii's agenda that is particularly pronounced is his paradoxical, at times religious, nationalism. Ostensibly the topic of Chapter 9 ("Russia"), the author's prophetic nationalism is anticipated as early as Chapter 6, where the inclusion of the 1877 *Writer's Diary* documents Dostoevskii's paradoxical support of the war with the Ottoman Empire. Other dimensions of his nationalism emerge in Chapter 8 ("Dostoevskii's Others"), as manifested in his writings on the Jewish Question. By the time readers encounter the text of Dostoevskii's Pushkin Speech, which closes Chapter 9, they have been primed to question the ideal of universal brotherhood and the "spirit of Russianness" that arise there. By including Lev Shestov's "Dostoevskii's Religious Thought" in the final section of the Companion ("God"), the editors ingeniously round out the discussion, using the essay to arouse a fertile skepticism of Dostoevskii's ideals. Other topics that benefit from such deft editorial maneuvering include the genre of the novel, the construction of utopias, and the advent of extraordinary women in the author's oeuvre.

The organizational brilliance of the Companion goes a long way towards elevating the individual essays within it, many of which have been

published elsewhere but lend themselves effortlessly to a more general recontextualization of the author. Some, perhaps, repeat too insistently claims that have already been made by the editors or obscure rather than clarify the discussion at hand (Robert Louis Jackson's "Philosophical Pro et Contra in Part I of *Crime and Punishment*" is an example of the former issue; Igor Volgin's "A *Writer's Diary* as a Historical Phenomenon" an example of the latter). Others—contributions from the editors as well as Carol Apollonio, Sarah J. Young, Nina Pelikan Straus, and Konstantine Klioutchkine—offer inventive demonstrations of what scholars can do with the primary materials that accompany each section. Insights into Dostoevsky's relationship to the genre of the novel are particularly collectible: a fertile section from Bakhtin's *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics* evokes the unfinalizability of Dostoevskii's worlds; Dmitrii Likhachev casts Dostoevskii's novels as "quick chronicles" penned by clumsy annalists; Harriet Murav traces how Dostoevsky's novels teach us how they'd like to be read; Holland pairs Dostoevskii's 1876 articles about suicide with the fictional work "The Meek One," suggesting that *A Writer's Diary* was born out of Dostoevskii's struggle with narrative form. Rarely do pieces in edited volumes—and from different periods—complement each other so consistently.

The occasional quibble might arise in response to the scope of the volume. The excerpts from Dostoevsky's predecessors included in Part I—the briefest of selections from Rousseau, Schiller, Radcliffe, Balzac, Dickens, and Gogol designed to "give a taste of the kind of literature that inspired young Dostoevskii" (2)—come without commentary and therefore only partially serve to anchor his early writings. Alternatively, one might have preferred a unit on psychological disorders and illness (beyond the epilepsy questions treated in passing) or a unit addressing issues of translation and reception in the Anglophone world—issues that would call attention to the history and characteristics of the texts that students are actually reading in university courses. But one wouldn't want a Companion so thick it threatened to turn into a Dostoevskii novel, nor would one want to add another item to Ivan Karamazov's list of things that make children—or undergraduates—suffer. As it stands, readers of *A Dostoevskii Companion* won't want to return their tickets.

Elizabeth F. Geballe
Indiana University, Bloomington