

Forum on Jan Gross's *Neighbors*

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 NORMAN M. NAIMARK, JAN T. GROSS

In this forum on *Neighbors* by Jan T. Gross (Princeton, 2001), four scholars respond to the book and to the issues of evidence, causality, and interpretation that it raises. Janine P. Holc summarizes the contents and the book's approach and explores the roles of individual choice, on the one hand, and ethnic identity categories, on the other, in Gross's presentation of the causes of the massacre of the Jewish residents of Jedwabne by their non-Jewish neighbors. She argues for an approach to reading *Neighbors* that links the emotive mode in which some of the narrative is expressed to a productive engagement with traumatic or violent historical episodes. This type of history resists finality and closure and creates an avenue for active engagement by members of ethnic (or other) communities with violent and traumatic pasts. Wojciech Roszkowski discusses three aspects of the debate on *Neighbors* in Poland: the credibility of the book, the facts of 10 July 1941 and their moral meaning, and the representativeness of the Jedwabne case and the question of "innocence" or "guilt" of nations. While arguing that the credibility of *Neighbors* is low and that Gross's thesis that "one half of the Jedwabne inhabitants killed the other half" has not been proven, he writes that it is impossible to deny Polish participation in the massacre. Yet, as with other documented cases of Polish wartime evildoing, it is unfair to blow this incident out of proportion and produce unwarranted generalizations. Past and present realities are always more complicated than simple stereotypes that "Poles" or "Jews" are to blame or that they have always been innocent. William W. Hagen argues that Gross vacillates between a robust positivism promising that "a reconstruction" of "what actually took place" is possible, such that guilt and motive may confidently be assigned, and an interpretive pessimism suggesting that "we will never 'understand' why it happened." In his assignment of causality, Gross offers a largely unconnected, in part inferential or speculative, array of determinants and motives. Although some of the causes Gross adduces are certainly persuasive, his analysis does not address the Jedwabne perpetrators' and witnesses' perception of the cultural meaning of the inhuman violence their Jewish neighbors were suffering. Hagen offers some suggestive historical evidence on the Poles' subjective response to the Jewish genocide and to their own wartime fate, arguing that the Jedwabne Poles' participation in the mass murder of the Jews must be conceived as a response, mediated by the penetration of ideological anti-Semitism into the countryside, to profound anxiety over the individual and social death menacing Polish identity under Soviet and Nazi occupation. Norman M. Naimark argues that the appearance of Gross's *Neighbors* has created an entirely new dimension to the historiography of World War II in Poland. The book demonstrated, as has no other work, the extent to which the Poles were directly involved in the genocide of the Jews.

The clarity and force of Gross's presentation provides Polish historiography with an unprecedented opportunity "to come to terms with the past." The essay also suggests that the Jedwabne massacre needs to be looked at in the context of overall German policy "in the east" and in comparison to similar horrors taking place roughly at the same time in Lithuania, Ukraine, Belarus, and Latvia. The Nazis intentionally (and surreptitiously) sought to incite pogroms in the region, filming and photographing the horrific events for audiences back home. Their own propaganda about the "Jewish-Bolshevik" menace both prompted and was ostensibly confirmed by the pogroms. In his response, Jan T. Gross replies to Roszkowski's criticism concerning historical credibility.

The Moral Dimension of the Prophetic Ideal: Pushkin and His Readers

PAMELA DAVIDSON

In this article Pamela Davidson identifies a range of literary strategies that evolved in response to the disparity between the high standard of moral purity, which was a prerequisite for the Hebrew prophet, and the much laxer moral standards of Russian writers who adopted this role model. Strategies designed to reinforce the moral credentials of Aleksandr Pushkin, commonly regarded as the prototype of the poet-prophet, include the substitution of artistic for moral integrity (Nikolai Gogol'), the treatment of literary accounts of purification as evidence of the writer's moral standing (readings of "The Prophet"), the cult of martyrdom as an aspect of the writer's biography, derived from his suffering in life (Mikhail Lermontov) and extended to the interpretation of his death (Vladimir Solov'ev). Although these strategies enabled such later writers as Fedor Dostoevskii to assume the role of prophet, the blurring of the moral dimension of the prophetic ideal had long-term consequences for the development of Russian society and culture.

The Dead Wives in the Dead House: Narrative Inconsistency and Genre Confusion in Dostoevskii's Autobiographical Prison Novel

KARLA OELER

In *Notes from the Dead House*, fictional narrator Aleksandr Petrovich Gorianchikov appears as wife murderer in the preface and as a political prisoner in the memoirs. In the preface, Gorianchikov experiences moral anguish over his crime. But the memoirs actively employ social analysis to shift the burden of guilt from convicts onto the social structure. This authoritarian structure, which divides society into an underclass of ignorant "children" ruled by violent "fathers," notably excludes women. The murder of a second wife in an inset tale brutally enacts this exclusion: while Gorianchikov's social analysis helps him understand many of the prisoners, it cannot account for the convict Shishkin's murder of his wife Akulka. Gorianchikov's personal guilt for murdering his wife constitutes a response to—and a repetition of—the moral bewilderment that emerges out of Akulka's death. Seen in this light, the formal tensions between pref-

ace, memoir, and inset tale are motivated by and demonstrate a conflict between social analysis and individual responsibility.

The World of Ostap Bender: Soviet Confidence Men in the Stalin Period

SHEILA FITZPATRICK

In this article, Sheila Fitzpatrick investigates the phenomenon of Soviet conmanship in the Stalin period through the medium of conman stories, both real (as reported in newspapers and archives) and fictional. While attention is paid to the distinctive characteristics of conman stories as a discursive genre, the main emphasis is on the social. The article explores the sources and processes of the Soviet confidence trick, as well as showing how conmen and their exploits illuminate social, bureaucratic, and cultural practices. In the comparison of prewar and postwar periods, the “Jewishing” of the conman in postwar representation is discussed and related to the broader phenomenon of officially encouraged anti-Semitism in the late Stalin period.

Views from Inside: Memoirs concerning the Yugoslav Breakup and War

SABRINA P. RAMET

Recent memoirs published in Zagreb, Ljubljana, Sarajevo, and Podgorica offer glimpses into how the principals would like their roles in the events connected with the Yugoslav breakup and war to be remembered. The most indispensable of the ten memoirs under review are those by Janez Drnovšek and Janez Janša, who have differing perspectives on developments in Slovenia between 1988 and 1991; by Martin Špegelj, who outlines in detail his argument that Croatia should have laid siege to the Yugoslav Army barracks much earlier than was done; and by Raif Dizdarević, who provides interesting details on how Serbian leader Slobodan Milošević subverted the Yugoslav federation and put his protégés in charge of Montenegro, Kosovo, and Vojvodina. Sefer Halilović, Branko Mamula, and Špegelj challenge observers’ usual conceptions of events, while Alija Izetbegović, Davorin Rudolf, and Zdravko Tomac offer more standard accounts. Hrvoje Šarinić provides details of his secret conversations with Milošević and other figures.