

biography or extended study of the actor, so I could copy neither his structure nor his emphases. His angle of vision was not, as Bristow suggests, Marxist; in fact, he wrote a scathing review of the standard edition of Shchepkin's memoirs and letters that attacked the shortcomings that derived from narrow political and artistic vision. As for Klinchin, four of whose works are cited in my bibliography, he was merely one predecessor among many.

In fact, my biography is fuller than, and organized differently from, any in Russian, precisely because I used both nineteenth century material published in journals but suppressed or neglected by Soviet biographers and the researches of Soviet scholars, many of them writing in the 1920s when political arteriosclerosis had not yet set in. For instance, I quote extensively Shchepkin's letter to Herzen deploring his radical activity, a letter which is pointedly omitted by Soviet biographers. No previous biographers sought out and quoted Annenkov's letters on Rachel or many of the valuable memoirs in the year-books of the imperial theaters. Throughout, I am at pains to explode the Soviet myth of Shchepkin the protoliberal and to indicate the essential conservatism of his views. At no point does the word *Marxism* rear its head that so alarms Bristow.

As evidence of my slavishness to Soviet sources, he says that I refer to Ostrovskii as a Slavophile. But a careful reading of that chapter will reveal that I am describing the way Ostrovskii was regarded by the acting company of the Malyi Theater, using their terminology, and not subscribing to or endorsing that view. (In my *Russian Dramatic Theory from Pushkin to the Symbolists* [1981], I discuss in detail the misnomer of Slavophile as applied to Ostrovskii.)

I cannot begin to speculate on Bristow's motives for this misrepresentation, for he had already given this book a favorable critique in the May issue of *Theatre Journal*. He incidentally tars with the same brush such reputable scholars as Edward Braun (who did his research on Meierkhol'd in Russian libraries). I shall leave them to reply in person to what amounts to a libel on their *modus operandi*. In my own case, the welcome my book has received from Slavists who are familiar at firsthand with research on the nineteenth century Russian theater suggests that it is neither jejune nor supererogatory.

LAURENCE SENELICK  
Tufts University

#### TO THE EDITOR:

I must object to two points of criticism implied in Eugene K. Bristow's review of *Serf Actor: The Life and Art of Mikhail Shchepkin* by Laurence Senelick (*Slavic Review* 44 [Summer 1985]). Bristow rightly calls attention to "basic problems in research, translation and biography of concern especially to scholars in Russian studies who work solely with published research by Russian and Soviet scholars." For, as he says, western scholars who base their work on that of Soviet historians inadvertently take over the suppressions and adjustments required in the USSR to fit the facts within the Marxist framework. He goes on to note the long dependence of English-speaking students "on biographies of Meierkhol'd by Marjorie Hoover and Edward Braun, who, in turn, had based their studies on the magnificent work of K. L. Rudnitskii. Not until Rudnitskii's seminal biography *Mey-erhold the Director*, translated by George Petrov and published by Ardis, appeared in 1981 was the significance of the scholarly source for the works by Hoover and Braun apparent to everyone." First, neither Braun's first book nor mine on Meierkhol'd depends at all, and certainly not solely, on Rudnitskii's. Second, far from taking over Soviet suppressions and thus unconsciously propagating the party line, my work, on the contrary, aims at correcting the approximately two-decade-long "illegal repression" of Meierkhol'd.

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.

MARJORIE L. HOOVER  
*Oberlin College*

#### 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.

MICHAEL KATZ  
*University of Texas, Austin*

#### 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