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Petersburg / Petersburg. Novel and City, 1900-1921. Ed. by Olga Matich. Madison, London: University of Wisconsin Press. 2010. 352 S. ISBN: 978-0-299-23604-5.

This book represents a novel attempt in Russian studies to explore the possibilities of combining a web site and a book. From an informal graduate seminar at the University of California-Berkeley to investigate the relationship between Andrey Bely's novel and Russia's early twentieth-century imperial capital, Olga Matich and students developed a web-site, "Mapping Petersburg" (<http://petersburg.berkeley.edu/index.html>; last visited 02/10/12), and then this book. Matich suggests that the two be used separately or in tandem. The web site offers eleven "itineraries" (nine coinciding with chapters in Part II of the book) that provide entry into "the everyday life and the material, political, and literary culture" of the city. Each itinerary consists of from two to twelve "pages" containing images and explanatory text. The chapter authors seem to have developed their itineraries primarily to illustrate their texts. Indeed, some images in the itineraries also appear as photographs in the book. In the few months I prepared this review the web page seems not to have changed. How does it differ then from simply a larger collection of illustrative material that could have been published at low cost in the volume? Digital resourcing offers the possibility of ever evolving, whereas a printed book is static. Full advantage yet has to be taken of the web site. And how is the user to know what is changed, and when? The union of book and web site offers multitudinous possibilities, but what are the best ways to make use of them?

Part I of the book ("Petersburg, the Novel") consists of Matich's discussion of issues arising from her reading of "Petersburg." The novel is replete, almost obsessive, with mistrust and suspicion, captured in the chapter on "Backs, Suddenly and Surveillance." The second thematic, the poetics of disgust, is seen in the sequencing of eating and death. The third has to do with the aesthetics of the avant-garde, drawing particular parallels to Kandinsky and referencing Bely's own sketches. Drawing on theoretical writings of Georg Simmel and Walter Benjamin, Matich makes her own contribution to the Petersburg text.

The itineraries developed in Part II ("Petersburg, the City") delve into the "lesser known history and geography" of early twentieth-century Petersburg. Some remain rather closely tethered to Bely's novel while others roam farther afield. Alyson Tapp brings to life the excitement of the streetcar, introduced

into Petersburg shortly before Bely wrote the novel. Her web tab "Tramvai" is the least developed. The chapter by Alexis Peri and Christine Evans relating Boris Savinkov's two literary accounts of the assassination of Viacheslav von Plehve to Bely's design of the murder that did not quite take place in "Petersburg" is superb. Their web tab, "Visions of Terror," takes greater advantage of the medium than some of the other contributions by offering the visitor alternative routes. Lucas Stratton, drawing on the importance of bridges in the novel, considers the Alexander III Bridge in Paris and the Trinity Bridge in Petersburg in both article and web tab "as loci of political legitimacy and authority." Mieka Erly, drawing from Matich's earlier chapter on eating and death, discusses the process by which meat, specifically beef, appeared on Petersburg's tables, through transport, slaughterhouse, and processing of byproducts. Her detailed description and analysis raise several practical questions. Was beef the city's main meat course? What share did pork, mutton / lamb and poultry (chicken, duck, goose) claim? How might their processing have differed from that of the commoditized production of beef? For those Petersburgers who followed Russian Orthodox fasts, nearly a third of the year was meatless. How did this seasonal increase and decrease in demand affect the industry?

The *flâneur* apparently sees what he wants to see. Polina Barskova in dealing with the "fluid margins" of the city, the Karpovka River, focuses especially on "modernity under construction" and Alexander Blok's notebooks about his solitary walks along the river. Neither Barskova nor Blok mentions the newly constructed large edifice (built 1901–1903) near the center of the river's meandering course through the northern part of Petersburg Side, the church and other buildings of the St. Ioann of Sila female monastery. True, the architectural style represented a slap in the face of modernity with its neo-Byzantine architecture, but it could hardly not have been noticed. Furthermore, it was founded by John of Kronstadt, no symbolist yet a significant figure in Petersburg in the first decades of the twentieth century.

Alexander Blok provides the organizing principle for two other chapters, Cameron Wiggins' interesting discussion of Blok's play "The Puppet Show" (Balaganchik) and Victoria Smolkin-Rothrock's account of Blok's death and funeral in August 1921. Two other literary lights, Viacheslav Ivanov and Mikhail Kuzmin, provide context for Ulla Hakanen's presentation of two views of the city, from above and below, with their locus in Kuzmin's tower apartment on Tavricheskaia Street. Finally, Matich looks

at another new architectural monument, the Singer building on Nevsky Prospect, famous throughout the Soviet era as *Dom Knigi*. Article and web tab both provide fascinating tidbits of information on social history.

Overall, the volume represents a fascinating attempt to combine book and web. As such it is sure to be followed by more such blendings. The juxta-

position of old and new, the need of each for the other, is the topic of a brief afterword on “new architecture and old mythology” by Gregory Kaganov, in which he leaps forward nearly a century from Andrey Bely to early twentieth-century revolutionary statements in the new Mariinsky Theater – built – and the Gazprom tower – not built.

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