

The intent of surveying so much material does not make for easy reading. Sadly, poets do not come off as well as prose writers. Some key writers are parceled out across several chapters. Frequent promises that certain works will be discussed in other places seem disruptive. Poor Voloshin, for one, is relegated elsewhere altogether; the reader is invited to find out about him from Mirsky. Although Grin has now been upgraded, as well he should be, and dwells in a small section all his own, Platonov is still treated obliquely. It is not altogether easy to agree with the clipped statement, "Of newcomers of promise there were practically none during the war" (p. 331). Mezhirov, Sluzky, Gudzenko, Dudin—and not only they—deserve at least mention. Some of them may show up in the next volume, but this will dislodge the chronological order.

The author structures and controls a mass of unwieldy materials masterfully. Incisive periodization is supported by a lucid grasp of what the regime has done to the literary life of the country. The book is not a series of portraits. By design, rounded-out figures do not emerge, and therefore, perhaps, the human sense of time and place—the revival of an epoch—is obscured by detail. However, even those who fancy a dislike of surveys—but cannot work, let alone teach, without them—stand indebted to the author.

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V. A. KAVERIN: A SOVIET WRITER'S RESPONSE TO THE PROBLEM OF COMMITMENT: THE RELATIONSHIP OF *SKANDALIST* AND *KHUDOZHNIK NEIZVESTEN* TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF SOVIET LITERATURE IN THE LATE NINETEEN-TWENTIES. By D. G. B. Piper. Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1970. vii, 180 pp. \$7.95.

This book is a very careful, scholarly study of two important novels as they relate to the development of Soviet literature during the twenties, and as they express the grim choices that were offered to Soviet writers at the end of the decade. The author has covered the literature of the period with remarkable thoroughness, and certain parts of the book are worth reading just for the rich new material they offer on the dilemmas faced by artists and writers of the Russian avant-garde during that period. The bibliography is meticulously complete, and the material cited in the text is an enlightening selection culled from a vast body of books, articles, speeches, and the like. As we know, Soviet critics and literary theoreticians did not spare words. For instance, the transformation of one group representing "left art" in the Soviet Union, the Futurists, into a rigorous proponent of the "social demand" and service to the state is well documented by copious quotations from the magazine *LEF* and from other documents of the day. The fact that the LEF-Futurists Mayakovsky and Brik were far ahead of the proletarian literary organization, RAPP, in their demand for a purposeful and didactic literature, Mr. Piper demonstrates beyond question.

The two novels *Skandalist* (1929) and *Khudozhnik neizvesten* (1931) are analyzed by Piper as statements of the effect on writers of the pressure to participate directly in "the building of socialism." He has thrown much light on the nature of those books and has told us much about how they were made. His researches on the real-life models of the principal characters in them have succeeded in clearly

identifying some of them and locating likely candidates for others. One is fully convinced that Nekrylov in *Skandalist* is Victor Shklovsky of the middle twenties, during the period when he was trying to adapt his views—or at least his behavior—to the circumstances of Soviet life. In other cases, as the author admits, “the degree of similarity between character and prototype varies.” Piper’s critical analysis of *Khudozhnik neizvesten* reveals the greatness and tragedy of the artist Arkhimedov in that novel. But does it really help his case to insist on the identification of Khlebnikov with Arkhimedov? The most one can say is that the two men had “much in common” in their personalities and in their artistic vision. But to say flatly that “Khlebnikov is the prototype of Arkhimedov” goes well beyond any data that the author has adduced.

There are a few minor criticisms that should be made. “Factology” is the rather strange locution the author uses in referring to the literary tenets of LEF, which are usually designated as “factography.” The author frequently speaks of “old futurists” and “old formalists” when what he means is Formalists or Futurists who have abandoned their former positions. The translation of the phrase *sotsial’nyi zakaz* as “social command” is not really accurate; in fact a distinction was often made between “social demand” (*zakaz*) and “social command” (*prikaz*). But these are admittedly minor matters and do not detract from the value of the book.

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AMERICA IN CONTEMPORARY SOVIET LITERATURE. By *Alayne P. Reilly*. New York: New York University Press. London: University of London Press, 1971. xiii, 217 pp. \$8.95.

Alayne Reilly examines the way in which four authors—Andrei Voznesensky, Viktor Nekrasov, Valentin Kataev, and Evgenii Evtushenko—have recently written about the United States. Her thesis is that their works indicate a new approach to America by certain Soviet writers who no longer let ideology or preconceived notions stand in the way of an open and at times sympathetic appraisal of the successes and failures of American society. The book’s findings are generally well supported by detailed stylistic and thematic analyses of works by the various writers. Furthermore, many specific observations about an author (especially Voznesensky and Nekrasov) shed light on all of his writings, not just on those about America. But the most valuable contribution of the study is the perspective it provides of the Soviet literature of the 1960s. The fact that four literary figures—representing different genres of writing as well as different generations—all took a more enlightened view of America indicates that new forces were (and, one hopes, still are) at work. Alayne Reilly examines some of them, focusing in particular on stylistic experimentation and on the new introspectiveness among writers.

Unfortunately several shortcomings detract somewhat from the work’s overall value. The first chapter, which deals briefly with earlier writers (Gorky, Mayakovsky, Pilniak, and Iif and Petrov) who also gave firsthand accounts of America, tends to dismiss the most anti-American works as being artistically poor and to praise those that are more moderate. At times the judgments seem valid; at others (most notably in the discussion of Mayakovsky) I have my doubts. In any case, one feels that the polemical tone is unnecessary. The same could be said of the chapter on Evtushenko. The weakest section, however, is the one on Kataev. The