

Despite my admiration for this excellent book, I find myself in disagreement with certain of Nivat's interpretations and formulations. For example, the author's discussion of literary "types" in Solzhenitsyn's works strikes me as somewhat flat and lacking in subtlety. His comments on the traits of passivity and heroism in Solzhenitsyn's "positive" characters tend slightly to denigrate the former and inflate the significance of the latter, with the result that Nivat somewhat misinterprets Solzhenitsyn's religious views. In a few places Nivat may have been led astray by his sophistication as a critic; I, at least, do not discern the literary "buffoonery" which he sees at work in Solzhenitsyn's *Letter to the Soviet Leaders*. Occasionally, Nivat also has an unfortunate tendency to elevate an insight—one valid in itself—into a symbol or law governing an entire Solzhenitsyn work. Thus he sees the symbol of the ark as "organizing the whole structure" of *The First Circle* and asserts that the novel is "centered" on two banquets—that of Nerzhin and his friends and that of Prosecutor Makarygin.

All criticism of this collection must, however, pale when its impressive achievements are taken into account. *Sur Soljenitsyne* is a must book for any serious student of Solzhenitsyn's writings.

Dr. Lopukhina-Rodzianko's study concentrates on the ethical and spiritual dimensions of Solzhenitsyn's *oeuvre*. In so doing, it provides a useful summary of the writer's views in these areas and also serves to communicate to Russian readers some of the findings of Western Solzhenitsyn scholarship.

Lopukhina devotes a great deal of space in her book to discussing *pravedniki* (righteous men and women) in Solzhenitsyn's works. I find that I cannot agree with some of her interpretations. Is Ivan Denisovich, as she claims, a *pravednik*? I would prefer to see him as a "survivor" who has guarded his basic humanity against great odds. One also wonders whether Solzhenitsyn shares Lopukhina's unqualified enthusiasm for Alesha the Baptist (she terms him "samyi prekrasnyi obraz pravednika v tvorchestve Solzhenitsyna"). In addition to obvious attractive qualities, is there not a certain smugness and narrowness about Alesha which even Ivan Denisovich can sense? Matrena in "Matrena's Home" would, it seems to me, be a more complete *pravednik*.

The virtues of Lopukhina's book stem from its thorough treatment of a restricted but important theme. On the other hand, her study does not offer many genuinely new insights into Solzhenitsyn's writings.

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LEXIKON DER RUSSISCHEN LITERATUR AB 1917. By *Wolfgang Kasack*. Kröners Taschenausgabe, vol. 451. Stuttgart: Alfred Kröner Verlag, 1976. 457 pp. DM 28.50.

Reliable reference works in the field of Soviet and East European Studies are few in number, and if one were to subtract from that number the otherwise accurate volumes that are merely selective in their coverage, the number would shrink even further. In the field of literature, the most recent Soviet source is *Kratkaia literaturnaia entsiklopediia*, which began to appear in 1962 and which completed publication in 1975 with volume eight. The Soviet encyclopedia, however, follows the standard Soviet procedure of ignoring many of the writers it finds uncongenial and of dismissing others with a few disparaging epithets. Also, its entries on Soviet authors systematically ignore the large body of Western scholarship.

Wolfgang Kasack, the well-known German specialist in Russian literature, has placed us all in his debt by compiling a concise dictionary of Russian writing of the post-1917 period. Its approximately six hundred entries, of which about one-tenth deal with special subjects and the rest with individual authors, is a gold mine of information

for any scholar at all interested in the subject. Well balanced and authoritative, the entries refer the reader both to Soviet and to émigré and Western sources. This is a welcome innovation which, hopefully, may one day also be adopted by Soviet dictionaries and encyclopedias. There simply is no other source where all this material can be found as easily.

The book is relatively inexpensive and attractive in appearance. One can only regret that too many of our graduate students, the persons most likely to benefit from Professor Kasack's volume, no longer read German and will probably forgo consulting this truly excellent companion to the English-language *Dictionary of Russian Literature*, which William Harkins published some twenty years ago.

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ON RUSSIAN POETRY. By *Nikolai Gumilev*. Edited and translated by *David Lapeza*. Ann Arbor: Ardis, 1977. 192 pp. \$15.00, cloth. \$4.95, paper.

This book makes available in English the five essays, thirty-six reviews, and several miscellaneous pronouncements which constitute Gumilev's theoretical and critical writings. The originals appeared between 1908 and 1923, for the most part in the journal *Apollon*. "Acmeism and the Legacy of Symbolism" (1913) served as the Acmeist manifesto. The respectful tone with which Gumilev speaks of Symbolism ("a worthy father") is a far cry from the acrimoniousness of Futurist manifestoes. Yet the article announces the Acmeists' intentions to reject mysticism (seen as a Germanic tendency), to adopt a "lucid irony" (a Romance trait), to respect the phenomena of the world as "brothers," and not to conjecture about the unknowable. In his other statements about poetry Gumilev was eclectic. For example, in "The Anatomy of a Poem" (1921) he declares, quite formalistically, that any poem has four aspects (phonology, stylistics, composition, and "eidology"), and yet in "The Reader" (1923) he describes poetry as being of a single coin with religion.

His reviews appeared between 1908 and 1916 and were concerned only with poetry, never prose. He responded to the works of the major Symbolists, beginning with Briusov and Sologub; to nonaligned artists such as Bunin; to Annenskii, Kuzmin, and his fellow Acmeists Mandelstam and Akhmatova; to Tsvetaeva and Kliuev, the Futurists of *A Hatchery of Judges*; and to others. His judgments were not biased; nor were they made on the basis of any theoretical positions, but simply according to the dictates of taste. His comments were impressionistic; he was both generous with praise and outspokenly harsh in the case of inferior work. Time has vindicated his opinions. Our assessments today remain essentially the same as his, although two exceptions can be noted: he did not sufficiently praise his wife's poetry, and he was unable to estimate the worth of Khlebnikov (Gumilev once wrote that Khlebnikov "must learn a great deal more"). In some pieces Gumilev dissipated his efforts by attempting to describe too many poets at once.

The present volume is well annotated but contains many typographical errors.

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THE POET AND THE REVOLUTION: ALEKSANDR BLOK'S "THE TWELVE." By *Sergei Hackel*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975. xvi, 254 pp. £10.50. \$27.25.

Combining fact and erudite speculation about the background and ideological origins of Blok's greatest poem, "The Twelve," this book is both illuminating and disappointing. Illuminating because it presents a great amount of information about the Russian