

type of criticism that used to look at works of literature solely in terms of their expression of "ideas." But the book was not, presumably, written for specialists, and as an attempt to overcome some of their limitations it is very welcome.

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RUSSKAIA LITERATURA SIBIRI PЕРVOI POLOVINY XIX V. By *Iu. S. Postnov*. Akademiia nauk SSSR, Sibirskoe otdelenie. Institut istorii, filologii i filosofii. Novosibirsk: "Nauka," 1970. 404 pp. 1.54 rubles.

Professor Postnov's study of Siberian prose and poetry in the first half of the nineteenth century is a welcome contribution to our meager knowledge of cultural life in the most distinctive and remote of Russia's outlying regions. This work stands as the first major survey of literature in nineteenth-century Siberia since the publications of Azadovsky and Zherebtsov in the 1920s and 1930s, and it ably integrates the conclusions of recent studies that deal with individual writers of the period. In assessing the works of native Sibriaks, Russian exiles, and voluntary immigrants and administrators in the region, the author begins with the classicists of the 1790s and concludes with the drift from romanticism to realism in the 1850s. Coincidentally, between the years 1796, when Siberia's first printing press was closed down, and 1857, when the official provincial gazettes were first established, Siberian writers could find outlets for publication only in European Russia.

Postnov points out that during this period there was no Siberian literary tradition as such. Nevertheless, certain characteristic features stand out among the writers and their works. Almost every Siberian-born author who is discussed at length either studied in St. Petersburg (rarely Moscow) or took up residence there during his formative or creative period. Despite frequently voiced protests against the social or administrative status quo, Siberian literature presented no clear-cut ideological tendency during the period (regionalist views were expressed only rarely). Moreover, Siberian writers of the time had almost no literary impact on each other; the style and form of their writing were influenced chiefly by either Decembrist writers in their midst or contemporary Russian literary giants. In content, however, certain regional themes recur: Siberian nature (its vast forests, rivers, and steppes), the glories of Siberia's past (Genghis Khan, Yermak and Kuchum, and Cossack heroes), and Siberian natives (Buriats, Tungus, Yakuts, and Tatars—namely, those closest to urban centers).

Though Postnov contends that the 1820s witnessed a "decentralization" of Siberian cultural life, almost all of the forty-odd protagonists in his study emerged from only a handful of "cultural nests": Tobolsk, Irkutsk, Nerchinsk, and, much less commonly, Krasnoiarsk and Kiakhta. No wonder the regionalists of the 1860s, who hailed from backwaters elsewhere, found cause to regard Siberia's cultural life as slumbering and stagnant. True, Postnov's volume serves to correct the idea of a "spiritual desert" in Siberia: the region had its fine poets (Baldauf and Yershov), its talented raconteurs (Slovstov, Kalashnikov, and Shchukin), and its urbane literary circles. Yet these were few and far between, and largely isolated from one another.

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