ment to poets such as Nekrasov and Nadson—to symbolism—under the impact of classical antiquity, Baudelaire, and Nietzsche. These mental processes were accompanied by attempts to rescue contemporary Russian literature and intellectual culture from stagnation, provincialism, and a one-sided preoccupation with social concerns by extolling its great traditions which pointed toward a more idealistic and "symbolistic" interpretation of life and history. The two sections entitled "Christ and Antichrist" and "The Second Coming" contain both a highly perceptive, intelligent, and lucid exposition of the celebrated *Trilogy* (Merezhkovsky's abiding triumph in the field of the philosophical novel masked as historical romance) and a sensible probing into the formation of his most cherished religious and philosophical intuitions. Interestingly, here is the discovery of an affinity between some of Kierkegaard's theses and Merezhkovsky's inner religious experience. The following chapter deals with attempts to translate these inner experiences into the social realities of his time—spiritual campaigns which led him into much literary, political, and ecclesiastical conflict. Within this context, Bedford clearly outlines Merezhkovsky's struggle with the Christian commandment of universal charity, as opposed to his innate intellectual and moral aristocraticness, nonconformity, and rebelliousness. The last section is concerned with the author's career in exile, the period following the irreconcilable stand he had taken with regard to bolshevism. In Paris he assumed a role, not so much of the writer and thinker, but, rather, of the prophet warning Western mankind against its moral and spiritual flabbiness, against imminent disasters of unprecedented dimensions, and general spiritual bankruptcy. Merezhkovsky sincerely and passionately believed in this role, even though it generated much friction with others who were by no means inclined to follow him onto the paths of the religious and moral visionary.

A painstakingly compiled bibliography adds to the value of this highly commendable study, despite the absence of several important works in languages other than English or Russian. The book will undoubtedly render a most valuable service to the student of the labyrinthine intellectual, literary, and spiritual currents and crosscurrents so characteristic of the Russian cultural scene during the first half of this century.

HEINRICH STAMMLER
University of Kansas

LETTERS TO THE FUTURE: AN APPROACH TO SINYAVSKY-TERTZ. By *Richard Lourie*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1975. 221 pp. $8.95.

The risks inherent in writing about the *personae* of living authors are, one would think, self-evident. Yet every so often scholars and journalists cannot resist temptation, particularly since such biographical data (supplemented, to be sure, by generous doses of hearsay and conjecture) cannot—unless the critic's allegiance to the Formalist creed is truly fundamentalist—be entirely separated from an examination of the texts themselves. Some years ago we were told about the hapless Soviet scholar whose dissertation on Howard Fast, the Fighter for Peace, was retroactively rejected and her degree revoked. Solzhenitsyn's recent arrival in the West had less drastic but, one suspects, still painful consequences for several authors of book length studies of the novelist, which are now being remaindered or worse.

Richard Lourie's book, a *Leben und Werke* type of study, is partly salvageable. Certainly, the *Leben* part is to a large extent useless now that Sinyavsky is in the West, as are several other persons who figure in this section of Mr. Lourie's book.

https://doi.org/10.2307/2495709 Published online by Cambridge University Press

On the other hand, some of the chapters devoted to Sinyavsky's early works retain significant interest, even though Andrei Sinyavsky/Abram Tertz (he continues to publish under both names) has been very active in the very short period since his arrival in Western Europe—suffice it to mention his brilliant recent essays in *Kontinent,* and his iconoclastic books on Gogol and Pushkin. Thus, for example, many astute observations are found in the chapter comparing Sinyavsky's *Thoughts Unaware* and Vasilii Rozanov's collections of aphorisms with their random observations on religion, sex, death, and sundry matters. Similarly revealing is Mr. Lourie's comparison of Sinyavsky's literary criticism, published in official Soviet journals and legally printed books, with his celebrated "underground" essay on socialist realism. Mr. Lourie demonstrates how the same author was capable of producing perfectly conventional praise of Gorky—indeed, the kind of praise that is quite obligatory in Soviet criticism—and then would "satirize the follies and excesses of Gorky" (p. 176). It is a pity that Mr. Lourie did not extend his parallel with Rozanov to include this striking similarity as well.

One disappointing feature of *Letters to the Future* is Mr. Lourie's reluctance to portray Sinyavsky against the background of contemporary Soviet writing with which he is engaged in an impassioned polemic. He fails, for example, to discern the importance of the appearance of two living Soviet authors (the neo-Stalinist poet Sofronov and his counterpart in prose Kochetov) as characters in *The Makepeace Experiment* (*Liubimov*)—and under their true names at that! The omission is particularly noticeable since Sinyavsky published a devastating critique of Sofronov's verse in *Novyi mir.* On the other hand, Mr. Lourie finds reasons, which escape this reviewer, to cite such modern Polish poets as Adam Ważyk and Aleksander Wat, and to refer to Witold Gombrowicz, Stanisław Lec, and even such nineteenth-century Polish authors as Mickiewicz and Orzeszkowa.

Letters to the Future is marred by the usual number of misprints and typos, particularly in transliterations from the Russian. Some of these are only misleading (for example, *liubki* [luvs?] instead of *lubki,* old Russia's original comic strips). Others smack of ideological sabotage. For example, on page 190, an early Bolshevik poem promises a Palace of World Freedom with Karl Marx's shining tower, but in Mr. Lourie's book "tower" (*bashnia*) becomes "fable" (*basnia*). As any character from Sinyavsky/Tertz's fiction would attest, a thorough investigation is called for, comrades.

Maurice Friedberg
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

THE SILVER AGE OF RUSSIAN CULTURE: AN ANTHOLOGY. Edited by *Carl Proffer* and *Ellendea Proffer.* Ann Arbor: Ardis, 1975. xv, 454 pp. Illus. $15.00, cloth. $5.00, paper.

Carl Proffer and Ellendea Proffer, who established Ardis Press in 1971, can take pride in their activities as publishers. They have published many books of Russian poetry, fiction, and theater, and twelve book length issues of *Russian Literature Triquarterly.* The Proffer-edited anthology under review, however, is not on the same level as some other publications of Ardis Press. The collection attempts to reveal the achievements of the Silver Age (1894–1917), or, as stated in the preface, "the Russian contribution to world literature during the old regime's last cultural renaissance." Unfortunately, the anthology fails to provide an adequate picture of the period.

https://doi.org/10.2307/2495709 Published online by Cambridge University Press