

WOMEN IN SOVIET FICTION, 1917–1964. By *Xenia Gasiorowska*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1968. xii, 288 pp. \$10.00.

Xenia Gasiorowska's study of women in Soviet fiction, written with grace, humor, and an impressive familiarity with her material, is a thorough and comprehensive treatment of Soviet literary heroines, but within narrowly circumscribed limits the author has set for herself.

The stylization of Soviet literature under the dictates of socialist realism has produced a plethora of two-dimensional Soviet heroines—idealized literary figures—depicted as typical Soviet women. Having chosen to study women as they appear in Soviet fiction, Mrs. Gasiorowska realizes that she is dealing with the historical development of a literary stereotype and not with the true nature of existence for Soviet women since the Revolution. She does not, except in passing, use the literature to illuminate the realities of Soviet life, nor is she concerned with the aesthetic merits of the stories and novels she examines. Instead Mrs. Gasiorowska has culled fifty years of Soviet literature, seeking the essence of the *fictional* women it has created. Unlike many Western scholars, her bent is to discover the generalizations in the literature, rather than the exceptions.

She derives four basic literary types: the peasant woman, awakened by the Revolution from ignorance and drudgery to become a dedicated and productive member of the kolkhoz; the proletarian woman, eagerly undertaking the strenuous work of production in the factories of the new society; the Amazons, fighting side by side with men in wartime Russia; and the new Soviet intelligentsia of career and professional women who have superseded the other groups as a focal point in post-Stalin literature.

Each of these classifications is broken down further, and its historical development is plotted through three separate eras of Soviet literary history: the twenties, when writers, still free from official controls, portrayed the search for new values in a revolutionary society; the twenty-year period, beginning with 1934, when Soviet literature became totally subservient to the requirements of socialist realism; and the post-Stalin thaw with its fluctuating controls.

The book reveals a change of attitude toward femininity already familiar to students of Soviet society. The turbulent years of the twenties produced a new literary heroine who vigorously asserted her equality with men. Novels of this period were marked by the repudiation of womanly qualities—children were neglected or abandoned, abortions were frequent and casual, and sex was considered merely a biological need, in accord with Madame Kollontai's "glass of water" theory. With the thirties came official recognition of women's domestic instincts, without, however, any willingness to sacrifice the gains that literary heroines had made in their postrevolutionary emancipation. The New Soviet Woman under socialist realism thus became a superwoman by combining her skill and independence in a man's job with distinctly feminine interests and pleasures. She was expected to work with Stakhanovite efficiency, while approaching her role as wife and mother with joy, involvement, and capability. Perhaps these conflicting demands upon her time, interest, and energy explain why the Soviet literary heroine is not portrayed as a leader in her society. She never seems to achieve the status of men, either as a hero or as a villain. But the New Soviet Woman, in addition to her other virtues, is neither ambitious nor competitive; she remains happily subservient to the men around her.

Despite the post-Stalin relaxation in literature, Soviet writers have remained moralistic and prudish in their treatment of sex. The existence of unhappy love

affairs, for example, is now acknowledged, yet the escape from personal difficulties is always found in dedicated work. None of the openness of the twenties has been restored, for the society then was challenging the basic precepts of its prerevolutionary past, whereas now such criticism might reflect unfavorably upon socialist moral values.

It would be unfair for me to criticize Mrs. Gasiorowska's competent book for being no more than what she expressly intended it to be. Yet I found it curiously disappointing, as is the Soviet literature upon which it is based. Not only are its conclusions totally predictable to anyone familiar with Soviet literature, but it unconsciously raises a multitude of unanswered questions about the real woman in Soviet society. How do her problems and aspirations relate to the general phenomenon of female emancipation in the twentieth century? In what ways do they differ from those of women in the non-Communist world? Unfortunately, a study of women in Soviet fiction that will improve our understanding of the real Soviet woman will only be possible when Soviet writers are free to portray life around them as it really is, and not as it is preordained.

JERI LABER
New York City

IN RUSSIA. By *Inge Morath* and *Arthur Miller*. New York: Viking Press, 1969. 240 pp. \$12.95.

This book is a large travel diary, consisting of 178 pages of striking photographs by German-born Inge Morath and 57 pages of text by her famous husband, based on their trip to the USSR in 1967. Some of these travel notes were previously published in *Harper's Magazine* (1969).

Morath's beautifully composed and counterpointed photographs make up three-quarters of the book and include a whole series of fascinating outdoor and indoor scenes in Dostoevsky's, Pushkin's, Tolstoy's, and Pasternak's old dwellings. Morath also has single shots of former royal palaces and museums in Leningrad, children in Samarkand and Tbilisi, many churches in Rostov Veliky and elsewhere, a mushroom market, a hole-in-the-wall watch-repair stand, stage scenes at the Taganka and Malaia Bronnaia theaters, and portraits of many cultural figures (Brodsky, Dostoevsky's grandson, Furtseva, Zavadsky, Plisetskaia, Voznesensky, Mandelshtam's widow, Kassil, Ehrenburg, Simonov, Khachaturian, Kataev, Neizvestny, Aksenov, Efremov, and Evtushenko and his wife). One's only complaint might be the photographer's infatuation with horse-drawn sleighs (a total of six photographs).

Miller's text reflects his ultraserious philosophical and social outlook. The following passage is an illustration: "Turning these pages of pictures one inevitably senses a certain gravity, a special sort of weight in Russian images. To me anyway there is a depth of sadness and at the same time a longing, an aspiration in what one sees there. . . . The longer one contemplates people and scenes there, the more convinced one becomes of a pervading imminence rather than a substantial extant factuality" (p. 48).

Miller describes his meetings with people like Ehrenburg (pp. 8-10), Simonov (pp. 19-20), Kataev (pp. 33-37), and Minister of Culture Furtseva (pp. 20-22). He also gives brief impressions of stage productions he attended: *View from the Bridge* (pp. 21, 41; theater unidentified, but probably Malaia Bronnaia), *Uncle's Dream* at the Moscow Soviet (pp. 42-43), *Ten Days That Shook the World* (pp. 43-44) and *Triangular Pear* (pp. 44-45) at the Taganka, *Bratsk Station* at the Malaia Bronnaia (p. 45), *Leili i Mejnun* at the Tashkent Opera (pp. 53-54), and