

the vibrant children's book communities from physical book fairs to online networks. In the child and teen readers' engaged responses to the new books, the authors find glimpses of a "more inclusive and democratic" world of Russian children's and young adult literature (225). However, elsewhere the authors refer to well-known distribution and economic problems that made new children's books inaccessible to young readers outside the elitist, urban centers of the publishing industry.

Among smaller disturbances to the reading flow are several redundancies combined with lengthy footnotes that sometimes appear repetitive. Possibly, this is a deliberate editorial choice to facilitate stand-alone chapters of the e-book edition to meet the new requirements of academic readers who just like children and teens "don't read books anymore." Brill's hard backs are unaffordable to most students but *Growing out of Communism* is hereby recommended for your research libraries.

BIRGITTE BECK PRISTED  
Aarhus University, Denmark

***The Letters and the Law: Legal and Literary Culture in Late Imperial Russia.***

By Anna Schur. Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2022. xii, 240 pp.

Notes. Bibliography. Index. \$120.00, hard bound; \$39.95, paper.

doi: 10.1017/slr.2023.336

*The Letters and the Law* looks for legal themes in Russian literary culture and, conversely, for the ways literary themes and techniques affect the law. Harriet Murav, Gary Rosenshield, and others have shown that nineteenth-century Russian authors were hypercritical of legality, lawyers, and legal procedures, which were seen as perverting their own values as well as higher ideals of justice. Anna Schur's book complicates this familiar story by showing that the relationship between the literary and the juridical fields in late imperial Russia was reciprocal and even competitive. Most importantly, Schur argues that the legal profession created by the judicial reform of 1864 modeled itself after the Russian writer as a moral authority and civic activist (44), and actively deployed literary techniques in courtroom practice, especially when the bar came under criticism in the 1870s and sought to present itself as more than mere legal experts (28). To support this claim, Schur reviewed courtroom speeches, print media, and textbooks, focusing on elite lawyers such as Vladimir Spasovich, Sergei Andreevskii, and Anatolii Koni, who were known for their eloquence and who actively participated in literary culture. Literary flair, Schur argues, brought about arguments and verdicts that rejected factual veracity in favor of inner moral conviction, and often punished the victim rather than the offender.

Of course rhetoric often wins over facts in court cases anywhere, but for all of its rich research Schur's book does not analyze trial records in any detail, aside from the idiosyncratic and greatly over studied Kronenberg trial of 1876. A closer look at post-reform trials would have shown that the most eloquent lawyers were also highly effective as legal experts. The fact that the lawyers in the fictional trial of Mitya Karamazov never argued about legal issues (119) is easily explained by the fact that such issues were not the jury's business. In real trials' legal questions came before the jury only on specific and rare occasions.

Schur's second major argument is that Russian writers were highly critical of lawyers' self-fashioning efforts, likely perceived as challenging the writer's privileged cultural status, and thus producing the devastating literary attacks against lawyers and trials that rejected the "very trope of the Russian lawyer as an artist of the word" (67). Schur relies heavily on Fedor Dostoevskii and Mikhail Saltykov-Shchedrin, but

also deploys a rich selection of less familiar works. The reader is struck by the sheer venom and imaginativeness of these attacks. Also fascinating is Schur's argument about the trial in the *Brothers Karamazov*, which she reads not so much as an attack on "Western" legality, but primarily on the way literary techniques were deployed at a Russian celebrity trial to obscure the facts and to exacerbate judicial errors (145–46).

At times Schur suggests that these attacks were not necessarily fair or accurate (85, 150), or that she is not interested in this question (20), but on the whole she seems to be persuaded by Dostoevskii, his legal consultant Koni, and the equally peppery Saltykov, all cited at great length. Schur also cites research that reaches different conclusions (by Yanina Arnold, Stefan Kirmse, Elisa Becker, and Jane Burbank), but she does not engage with their arguments or the evidence they present that shows writers' attacks on the law to be as tendentious as the unfair trials that they criticized.

A major strength of Schur's book is that it vigorously resists tired Cold War narratives of Russian legal inferiority, pointing out repeatedly that the tradition of censuring the law goes back thousands of years (85, 118, 148). She does not, however, develop the implications of that insight and continues to look for the "culturally specific aspects of the Russian courtroom, (which to her included) its self-defining analogies to literature, its heightened emphasis on psychology, its ambition to serve as a forum for airing "comprehensive" questions, and its relaxed attitude to facts licensed by appeals to higher truths" (117). All of this is highly questionable empirically. Equally unsupported are Schur's characterizations of western trials and lawyers as more technical and less prone to rhetoric and extralegal tactics, even with much hedging and qualification (24, 37–38). No doubt there were real differences, and their implications should be explored, but for now we are left with an account that is very engaging and plausible in itself, but, like the trial narratives it discusses, not complete.

SERGEI ANTONOV  
Yale University

***Evgenii Kharitonov: Poetika podpol'ia.*** By Aleksei Konakov. *Novye materialy i issledovaniia po istorii russkoi kul'tury*. Moscow: Novoe izdatel'stvo, 2022. 270 pp. Notes. Index. ₪857, paper; ₪350, ebook.  
doi: 10.1017/slr.2023.337

Aleksei Konakov's monograph examines the life and works of Evgenii Kharitonov (1941–1981), a writer, poet, and theater director who was nearly unique—during the Brezhnev era—in thematizing queer desire and Soviet gay underground in his stunningly effective literary texts. The book productively combines biography and literary analysis, taking advantage of numerous memoirs and recorded interviews about Kharitonov.

In order to conceptualize his subject's biography, the author isolates three essential "layers of Kharitonov's life": "the body of theater," "the nets of literature," and "house arrest" (30). The last biographical section refers metaphorically to Kharitonov's final years, paraphrasing the title of his sole collection of prose and poetry *Under House Arrest* (201–28). The parts of the monograph that focus on Kharitonov's career in acting and directing paint a detailed and expressive portrait of the gifted and ambitious young man from Siberia who was enjoying success in the Moscow theater world of the 1960s and the bohemian life that came with it. Kharitonov's prominence in the Thaw-period Moscow artistic circles and young Kharitonov's overall cheerfully adventurous disposition may come as a surprise to those readers who remember the stifling, lonely, and increasingly tragic atmosphere of Kharitonov's literary worlds created in the next, socially stagnant decade.