

opposite views on art, the Futurists and the *Proletkul'tists* addressed very similar appeals to the party: in each case, there was a call to reject other, less "worthy" artistic groupings. Second, by calling for official intervention on their behalf, the Futurists helped legitimize the principle of party interference in artistic matters (granted, this would almost certainly have come to pass on its own). Finally, the Futurists' failure to ally themselves with the party was a harbinger of the future. Despite—or perhaps precisely because of—their claims to be to culture what the Bolsheviks were to politics and economics, the party held them at arm's length, favoring, instead, almost any group of a more conservative bent, and, ultimately, choosing to repudiate the avant-garde altogether. In retrospect, these events foreshadowed Mayakovsky's eventual failure to subordinate himself successfully to the demands of Soviet *byt*.

Jangfeldt's exploration of a generally unmapped area differs greatly from Miroslav Mikulášek's study of Mayakovsky's theater. The Czech scholar regards his work as a complement to the writings in this area by Fevral'skii, Jakobson, Ripellino, and others. In this volume, Mikulášek considers the plays from a broader theoretical perspective, maps out their various generic and formal sources, and places them within the context of European literature. To this end, three separate sections, subdivided into chapters, are devoted to "Tragediia," "Misteriia-buff," and "Klop" and "Bania." An introduction and conclusion provide the framework, and lengthy summaries in Czech and English are included.

The breadth of Mikulášek's comparative discussion is certainly noteworthy, and some of it is quite interesting—for example, the parallels between Mayakovsky's plays and medieval dramas, plays from the period of the French Revolution, and German expressionist theater. Yet his technique of listing and describing at length analogies between elements of Mayakovsky's works and various works by other playwrights becomes schematized and tiresome. The flood of names, for some reason always letter-spaced, obscures the author's principal arguments, including his interesting observations on the element of the absurd in the two late comedies. As it stands, the volume is rather turgid; it would have gained enormously from rigorous pruning.

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VOL'NAIA RUSSKAIA LITERATURA, 1955–1975. By *Iu. Mal'tsev*. Frankfurt/Main: Possev-Verlag, 1976. 473 pp. DM 34.50, paper.

This is a pioneering effort to sketch the history and assess the literary worth of "free Russian literature" during the period 1955–75. By "free" literature Mal'tsev means *samizdat* works which were either refused publication in the USSR or were not submitted to publishing houses because of a conviction that they could not pass the censorship.

Mal'tsev's attempt to distinguish between two "antagonistic" literatures and cultures—one "official" and the other "underground"—during the period under review lacks subtlety and occasionally lands him in difficulty. He is clearly embarrassed when he discusses important works, such as *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich*, which somehow found their way into print in the Soviet Union. Likewise, his assertion that contemporary official Soviet literature is nothing more than a "gray mass" reminiscent of the Zhdanov era smacks of polemical excess. Are the writings of Vasilii Shukshin, Iurii Trifonov, and Valentin Rasputin, to take just several examples, a "gray mass"? I think not. Even when making the required obeisances to the censors, such literature can be superior to much of the "free" literature circulating in *samizdat*. None of these

remarks, however, is intended to dispute Mal'tsev's central thesis that most of the enduring literature of the post-Stalin period—for example, Pasternak's *Doctor Zhivago*, Solzhenitsyn's *The First Circle*, Voinovich's *The Life and Extraordinary Adventures of Private Ivan Chonkin*—has appeared in *samizdat* form.

The organizational problems confronting Mal'tsev as he undertook to encompass a vast body of writing were formidable, and it cannot be claimed that he has always coped successfully. He seems, for instance, to have had trouble deciding whether to adopt a chronological or typological approach to his material. His solution—an awkward one—is to proceed chronologically until the trial of Siniavskii and Daniel' and then to marshal a series of chapters with such headings as "Satire," "Memoirs," or "Poetry." On occasion Mal'tsev devotes a large number of pages to works (such as *Doctor Zhivago*) or authors (such as Andrei Platonov) which are presumably well known to his readers, while begrudging just a few lines to important newly emerged writers (such as Venedikt Erofeev), about whom little is known in the West.

In a work of this genre, bibliography is, of course, important. Unfortunately Mal'tsev has a tendency to discuss works which spark the reader's interest without providing references for them. It may be that many of these writings remain unpublished. In that case, Mal'tsev could at least have cited the appropriate document number in the Radio Liberty Samizdat Archive.

The biographical sketches of *samizdat* authors which appear at the end of the volume constitute one of the book's more attractive offerings. One only wishes that this section could have been more inclusive.

Despite various drawbacks, Mal'tsev's study is indispensable reading for anyone concerned with contemporary Russian literature. The comprehensiveness of the volume's coverage is impressive—Mal'tsev discourses on subjects ranging from Soviet "alcoholic prose" to *samizdat* science fiction—and the author is to be congratulated for managing to remain catholic in his approach, rising above the party strife which characterizes much of the literary criticism of the "third emigration." Mal'tsev's literary judgments are on the whole sensible and astute, except, as previously mentioned, his assessments of "official" Soviet literature. Like Mal'tsev, I would put Solzhenitsyn and Voinovich at the summit of contemporary Russian prose, though I would hesitate to join him in placing Maksimov in their company.

All of us in the trade owe a debt to Iurii Mal'tsev for having set out, pen in hand, into the largely uncharted wilderness of twenty years of *samizdat* writing.

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A SCHOOL FOR FOOLS. By *Sasha Sokolov*. Translated by *Carl R. Proffer*. Ann Arbor: Ardis, 1977. 288 pp. \$10.00, cloth. \$3.00, paper.

Sasha Sokolov, born in 1943, studied at the Military Institute of Foreign Languages, and later at the School of Journalism at Moscow State University. He worked for provincial newspapers and at a variety of other jobs, and left the Soviet Union in 1975. He has now published *A School for Fools*, a narrative consisting of five chapters, further subdivided into brief sections giving the reveries of several characters. The chief narrator is a former inmate of a school for retarded and disturbed children. The book's stream-of-consciousness technique reminds us somewhat of Virginia Woolf's works, Faulkner's *The Sound and the Fury* (the idiot Benjy's section), and many other Western works.