

realities have to be represented in the language that is *not* the language of the camps. (Her remarks, following Ilya Kukulkin's research, on the discussion of Sergei Eisenstein's film in Solzhenitsyn's "Ivan Denisovich" are important in this and other respects.)

Mikhailik's well-informed analysis demonstrates, among other things, that Shalamov's intertextual agenda offers something to every reader, from those whose knowledge of literature is confined to the Soviet school curricula to those in the intellectual "inner circle" of twentieth-century poetry and prose. Her study is well grounded in literary theory but shows constant awareness of the human suffering and the injustice of the dystopian system of the camps as represented in Shalamov's stories. She has avoided both the pitfalls of emotional gut response and those of intellectualization abstracted from the record of human pain.

With close attention to detail, Mikhailik discusses Shalamov's late work "Vishera: Antiroman," and, in contrast with Josefina Lundblad Janjić, who reads "Vishera" as a *Bildungsroman*, represents it as an artistic failure owing to a *too complete blending* of the authorial position with that of the still insufficiently-experienced first-person protagonist. This controversial view is in tune with Mikhailik's analysis of the nature of Shalamov's *dokumental'nost'*—her occasionally polemical statements should be read in context. Their courage, along with the non-exhaustiveness of her insightful analyses, stimulates further discussion. Indeed, the conversation about Shalamov's complex axiology must continue—the constantly changing cultural realities will further deepen and modify the appreciation of his work.

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***Der Nister's Soviet Years: Yiddish Writer as Witness to the People.*** By Mikhail Krutikov. Jews in Eastern Europe Series. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2019. ix, 308 pp. Bibliography. Index. \$85.00, hard bound; \$38.00, paper. doi: 10.1017/slr.2020.140

Mikhail Krutikov's monograph on *Der Nister's Soviet Years* demonstrates the transformative potential of a richly contextual, culturally informed approach to Yiddish literary studies even as it adroitly reconsiders the whole of the premier Yiddish symbolist's writing career.

Der Nister, the pseudonym of Pinchas Kahanovich, has long been seen as a writer whose work splits into two distinct phases: an early, symbolist phase, in which he brilliantly reworked the form of the Hassidic tale to reflect on the relationship between the real world and the world of fantasy, and a later Soviet phase in which he was seen as abandoning his early literary ambitions in a doomed attempt to fit himself into a mold acceptable to the Stalinist regime. This reading reflected the values of North American literary scholars of the mid- to late-twentieth century, taught to value literary innovation, and trained in close reading techniques that foregrounded the words on the page over the context in which they were written.

In contrast, Krutikov demonstrates in a skillful blending of close reading and historical research that Der Nister's shift to a more realist style was an organic development of his aesthetic. One of Krutikov's most exciting insights that this type of analysis allows is that Der Nister's writing was fundamentally performative. Works such as the famous "Unter a ployt," a dizzying and disturbing symbolist piece, were intended to create a reaction among his contemporaries that would mirror and extend the meaning of the piece itself. For this reason, reading this work in modernist isolation misses half of the story.

This analysis is the jumping off point for the larger argument of the book, which is that Der Nister was always consciously engaging with the interplay between literature and its context, and this engagement changed shape, but did not cease, during the second half of his writing career. In the chapters that follow, Krutikov demonstrates that Der Nister's subsequent writings, although in different genres, retain important elements from his symbolist writings, such as the figure of the wanderer and the ritual of the trial. He looks at Der Nister's children's literature, travel writing, and translations as part of his literary career, in a departure from previous treatments that concentrated exclusively on his properly "literary" short stories and novels. Krutikov analyzes Der Nister's work in light of competing Soviet Yiddish literary schools based in Kiev and Minsk, summoning primary sources found in Russian archives.

One of the most valuable contributions of the book is its re-examination of the critical reception of Der Nister's work, demonstrating that the arguments in the Yiddish press over his writing were part of a larger struggle to define the direction Soviet Yiddish literature should take. Krutikov shows that it was more complicated than the campaign of wholesale destruction it was previously understood to be: some critics aimed to reject his symbolist work (and avant-garde literary experimentation in general) completely, while others suggested redemption, often in coded language, as demonstrated through close readings of anti-Nister screeds such as the manifesto of "Boy" in *Di Royte Velt* (21). This subtle reading that can distinguish between attacks meant to destroy and "attacks" meant to redeem is a very welcome development for the field, building on an increasingly sophisticated consideration of the Soviet Yiddish milieu also seen in the work of Gennady Estraikh.

This kind of scholarship sets a high bar, demanding fluency in several languages and familiarity with not only the official rules but also the unofficial folkways of very different times and places. The difficulty will only increase as time passes and the world of Yiddish writers becomes more distant in time as well as space. Despite the impediments, Krutikov's work shows that contextual analysis is not only better on its own terms at revealing the connections between the work and the world it was written in but also is better than the alternative at interpreting the fundamental meaning of the work.

There are reasons to believe that this approach will gain new adherents in the coming years. The new generation of Yiddish scholars is more internationally informed than ever, nurtured by projects such as Helix, which bring young scholars and artists to eastern Europe to encounter the land and people among which Yiddish literature took shape. They will surely take inspiration from work such as this as they take their place in the world of Yiddish studies.

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***The Poetry and Poetics of Olga Sedakova: Origins, Philosophies, Points of Contention.*** Ed. Stephanie Sandler, Maria Khotimsky, Margarita Krimmel, and Oleg Novikov. Trans. Martha M. F. Kelly. Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2019. xi, 424 pp. Chronology, Notes, Bibliography. Index. Illustrations. \$79.95, hard bound.

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This illuminating collection of essays by international scholars and critics, both well-known and emerging, alongside the translations of Olga Sedakova's poetry by Martha Kelly, establishes the connection of Sedakova's work with her great predecessors