

The book ends rather abruptly, and the author provides no comprehensive conclusion to pull together her main observations or to advise areas of future work on the topic. To some readers, this will be disappointing. However, the document-based revelations in each chapter of the monograph more than make up for the absence of a conclusion. By dismantling the clichés and myths that have obscured the realities of this complex history, this book is a valuable addition to both Russian and Ukrainian history. For anyone interested in this or any period of Russian/Ukrainian relations, it should be essential reading.

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Diskursy svobody v rossiiskoi intellektual'noi istorii: Antologiya. Ed. Nikolai S. Plotnikov and Svetlana V. Kirshbaum. Moscow: Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie, 2020. 488 pp. Notes. P720, hardbound.
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This collection of excerpts from Russian thinkers aims to demonstrate that the concept of freedom has occupied Russian minds for many centuries. One of contemporary Russia's most innovative publishing houses, Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie, challenges the trope that Russian history is nothing but a record of oppression and disempowerment. Instead, this volume is "the first attempt to systematically map the Russian discourse on freedom in all its thematic variety and wide temporal scope: from the end of the XVIII century to today" (4).

Tackling "Declarations of Freedom," the first section opens with an excerpt from Catherine the Great's famous "Instruction" to the Legislative Commission, which followed Baron de Montesquieu in defining freedom as "doing all that the laws allow" and intentionally ignoring the concept of "natural right" (47). Forty years later, Mikhail Speranskii graduated the concept from estate-specific "civic freedom" to "political freedom," which allowed for popular participation in the empire's political and legislative life (47). Slavophile Konstantin Aksakov argued, on the other hand, that the Russian people preferred apolitical and internal "ethical freedom, the freedom of life and spirit" over the external political variety (48). Nonetheless, he also argued that free speech and the freedom of opinion were essential. Mikhail Bakunin went well beyond internal freedom in arguing that liberty was "the absolute right of all mature men and women... to be guided in their actions only by their own will" (49).

The section about "Orders of Freedom" opens with Lev Tikhomirov's argument that the state is a pre-requisite for the development of the "moral individual's... "rational freedom" because the primitive state of anarchy results in violence and inequality (109). Sergei Witte gave form to abstract debates about state-individual relations in his note to Nicholas II that urged the tsar to approve the famous October Manifesto of 1905. Witte argued that civil rights did not threaten the monarchy and that a constitution would stabilize the relationship between subjects and authorities by institutionalizing the division of powers. Five years later, legal scholar Iurii Gambarov argued that material

equality was also an important component of liberty and that freedom for its own sake is not “an absolute good” while governmental authority is not “an absolute evil” (110). The state forces children to receive an education to create free citizens, he argued. Therefore, people need both the “negative” freedom from state interventionism, but also the “positive freedom” of socio-economic rights that enable self-fulfillment. In the wake of the February 1917 revolution, historian Aleksandr Kizevetter encouraged the Russian people to limit their own liberty with the same commitment with which they challenged the power of the dynastic state. “Genuine liberty has boundaries,” he warned (111).

The “Freedom and Liberation” section asks whether these two concepts are equivalent. While Lev Tolstoi’s 1905 essay “Liberty and Liberties” argues that only moral freedom is real, Aleksandra Kollontai identifies gender slavery as one of society’s greatest ills. One of the less hackneyed selections comes from Ivan Pavlov and Maks Gubergrits, who worked on conditioned reflexes and noticed that some dogs simply refused to be tethered. This inspired them to posit “physiological mechanisms of behavior” behind human conceptions of freedom (175). Written in 1917, their paper, “The Reflex of Freedom,” came at a historical inflection point for Russia, which Vladimir Lenin’s “False Speeches about Freedom” made clear with its emphasis on liberty from the “prejudices, weaknesses, [and] prevarications” of political opportunists and centrists (175). The result would be freedom from freedom under the Bolsheviks.

The section titled “The Free Word” begins with an excerpt from Aleksandr Radishchev’s *Journey from Petersburg to Moscow* (1780) in which the author reiterated Immanuel Kant’s famous idea *Sapere Aude!* (Dare to Know!)—an endorsement of the public’s free use of reason. Instead of state censorship, which Radishchev believed stunted society’s development, he urged the government to let “the court of public opinion” determine what was acceptable (219). Conservative publisher Mikhail Katkov, on the other hand, argued that a free society can only grow within “the fence” of a strong government: “Power is taken away from the strong, and everything that has an enforced character is brought under a single origin Superior to the state” (220). Pavel Miliukov argued that men were not born with inherent rights, which instead resulted from a “most complex and delicate social balance established by the long labors of generations” (221). Therefore, it was not the individual who was the source of rights, but society itself. Boris Kistiakovskii placed the emphasis on outer freedom as a condition for individuals to become internally free. Bringing the conversation up to recent history, historian and philosopher Leonid Batkin reflected during perestroika on the difference between “glasnost” as “the right to say much and about many things” and “free speech” as the ability to “speak without permission” from state or social institutions (222).

The “Burden of Freedom” section begins with Fedor Dostoevskii’s “Tale of the Grand Inquisitor” (1880) and its argument that humanity is incapable of carrying the responsibility that comes with free will. Viktor Shklovskii’s 1926 essay “On Freedom of Art” adds a comical touch when he argues that writers crave freedom, but when they get it they immediately give it up “to a woman or a publisher” (351). Although freedom is essential for art, “fear and oppression are also necessary” since new works come from the “struggle for a new aesthetic” (352). Zinaida Gippius bemoans the fact that even in

immigration, the Russian intelligentsia became confused by its newly found freedom. “To live in freedom means to know how to limit it,” she concluded (352). Both Joseph Brodsky and Yuri Levin argued that the freedom that one earns is better than liberation received from others. In a conference speech in 1991, Levin argued that the hard-won freedom of the 1960s was more genuine than that of the era of perestroika. The section ends with Belarussian writer Svetlana Aleksievich’s 2013 reflections bemoaning the materialization and commercialization of freedom for post-Soviet generations.

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Leskov: Prozevannyi genii. By Maya Kucherskaia. Moscow: Molodaia gvardia, 2021. 661 pp. Notes. Bibliography. Chronology. Index. Plates. Photographs. P759, hard bound.
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Drawing upon a wide range of sources and bringing broad archival research to her study, Maya Kucherskaia offers a richly insightful account of Nikolai Leskov’s artistic and intellectual trajectory, with its twists and turns and recurring public scandals caused by his impetuous judgements and prickly temper. While Kucherskaia explores a vast and varied body of Leskov’s works, she strategically focuses on his masterpieces, treating them as benchmarks in his convoluted trajectory and making her own strong readings of these texts into pillars of her book.

Following many of her predecessors, Kucherskaia approaches “Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk” as the first story where Leskov fully developed his narrative strategies. But like no one before her, Kucherskaia masters a wide range of diverse sources—William Shakespeare and Ivan Turgenev, folk songs and criminal chronicles, the discussion of the woman question, and readings from church services—to reveal how all these seemingly incompatible pretexts of Leskov’s novella contributed to its semantic complexity and linguistic vitality. “The first and most significant of his discoveries was storytelling: the imitation of a free-flowing, not always grammatical speaking style by which he built up an image of his narrator” (254). Kucherskaia unravels all the components of this type of storytelling (*skaz*)—the signature feature of Leskov’s prose—to situate his novella outside the psychological realism of his time. She explores how Leskov filtered the portrayal of his characters through many cultural prisms to create an exuberant narrative that was in many respects closer to modernist than to realist prose.

In her discussion of the subsequent benchmarks in Leskov’s artistic trajectory—from *The Cathedral Folk* to “The Enchanted Wanderer,” “The Sealed Angel,” and “The Steel Flea”—Kucherskaia examines the author’s growing discomfort with realist conventions and studies his literary experiments in the context of his political views, which had undergone radical changes. As Leskov shifted from his alliance with the state-supporting press (Mikhail Katkov’s periodicals in particular) to sharp criticism of the official ideology, a satirical tone and urgent concern about Russia’s future increasingly pervaded