

Russia, and, especially in the case of Rasputin, the need to preserve the environment, only increased the sense that they represented something very positive. Recall how few in Russia had the guts to reprimand the government for unbridled industrialization and destruction of the ecology, alcoholism and break-up of the family, and the distrust of people and society.

However, these writers had their own flaws, with antisemitism at the head of their list. They disliked Jews and accused them of promoting evil, abstract intelligence over rootedness, diversity of people versus Russian purity, complexity over simplicity. Interestingly, although the Village Prose writers attacked the authorities, they actually shared antisemitism with them. The communist government also did not like Jews and considered them a problem. Maxim Shrayer tells us that the government appreciated anti-Jewish writings in the years of Jewish emigration (late-1970s and then again in the late-1980s) (84).

Although I agree with Professor Shrayer in much of what he writes, I wonder: did the “fall” of the Village Prose writers occur because they included among their characters stereotypes of scrawny and avaricious Jews? Is not that answer too limited? Is not it more likely that their fall was due to their dizzying success, which made them authorities on everything and encouraged them to turn to pontification rather than art. So they stood up for politically dubious causes, such as *Obshchestvo Pamiat'*, and were sympathetic at least ideologically with the future putshch-makers who attacked the Belyi Dom on October 4, 1993; in other words, with reactionary elements in the state security apparatus.

This book has many virtues. It is well written, clearly argued and documented with mountains of evidence. My only question is this: I remember a time when one could not talk in public about the Jewish question. Now one can write a whole book accusing leading Soviet writers of anti-Jewish bias. Who is the reader of such a book? I am waiting impatiently to receive reviews from Russia to see if—as I predict—some will come to the defense of the Village Prose writers and some will agree that these writers do not represent an exception, but merely follow a pattern that has its origins in the deep past: from medieval Russian literature, through Aleksandr Pushkin, Nikolai Gogol', Fedor Dostoevskii, Aleksandr Blok, Vasilii Rozanov, up to our day.

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Klassika, skandal, Bulgarin...: Stat' i i materialy po sotsiologii i istorii Russkoi literatury. By Abram Il'ich Reitblat. Nauchnoe prilozhenie, Vyp. CCXI. Moscow: Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie, 2020. 576 pp. Notes. Index. €34.00, hard bound. doi: 10.1017/slr.2022.210

Abram Reitblat, Head of both the Department of Bibliography at *Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie* and the Department of Rare Books at the Russian State Art Library, has issued a stimulating collection of his essays on Russian literature as an institution. The essays appear at first to be separate pieces in uncertain relation to each other, but Reitblat weaves them into an integrated whole with

both aesthetic and functional appeal. The volume reaffirms his standing as an innovative scholar offering new insights and approaches to the study of literature and society in Imperial Russia.

The book is divided into three loosely linked sections. The first, “The Sociology of Literature,” presents several concepts that help define literature as a social institution. The lead essay on the production of literary classics explores the classics as an idea and as a body of texts validated by journalists, writers, and educators. Reitblat also considers how literary scandals contribute to institutional definition by highlighting transgression and thereby affirming boundaries. He explains the origin of scandals and how they shape literary practices. Other essays in the section examine idiosyncratic literary concepts of the early nineteenth century, such as literature that circulated in hand-written copies (*pis'mennaia literatura*) and “literary niches” (*literaturnye nishi*). A further essay addresses the evolution of the concept of “writer” as a professional designation.

The second section, “F. V. Bulgarin,” treats in detail Faddei Bulgarin (1789–1859), a figure not often accorded prime billing and chiefly identified with his discreditable association with Alexander von Benkendorff, chief of the secret police under Nicholas I, and his clashes with Aleksandr Pushkin. Reitblat argues that Bulgarin can be considered Russia’s first professional literary critic and a contributor to the evolution of Russia’s literary institutions. Bulgarin challenged literary values and norms as a powerful figure with high social standing and useful connections. He demonstrated that contract law could be relevant to literature by pursuing (and winning in 1845) a legal dispute with the bookseller and publisher Ivan Timofeevich Lisenkov (1795–1881). Reitblat sees Bulgarin’s literary criticism in the large body of his feuilletons published between 1841 and 1858, which offers a lively view of literature and the arts through commentaries on literature, theatrical performances, music, opera, and visits of cultural figures from abroad. As a methodological contribution to the study of Russia’s cultural institutions, Reitblat provides synopses of Bulgarin’s Saturday feuilletons published over the seventeen-year period in his journal *Northern Bee*. Reitblat argues for the feuilleton’s value as a source of information about Bulgarin’s interests, views, and the context of his times.

In the final section of the book, somewhat infelicitously titled “The History of Literature,” Reitblat turns from society to the influence of politics and the state on literature. In a particularly engrossing essay, he describes how Nicholas I’s Third Section bribed and badgered the writer Nikolai Polevoi (1796–1846) until he became a virtual flunkey of the regime and then betrayed his own rebellious son to the authorities. In another essay, Reitblat focuses on N. N. Grech, a literary figure with dubious political associations like those of Bulgarin. The section also contains an essay on the practically unknown self-taught poet Feoktist Ulegov, a writer of serf origins, and one about a prominent late imperial actress who became a rightwing publicist after 1905.

Reitblat’s lively style makes even secondary literary actors interesting. More importantly, by including lesser-known figures and examining a range of literary products and practices, Reitblat affirms that great literature arises from and exists within a complex ecology of cultural, social, political, and

technological developments and interrelationships. By putting these individually interesting and illuminating essays between two covers, Reitblat recreates a simulation of the nineteenth-century connectedness for the twenty-first century reader.

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Khudozhnik miróvogo rastsveta: Pavel Filonov, 2nd ed. By Gleb Yu. Ershov. St. Petersburg: Izdatel'stvo Evropeiskogo Universiteta v St. Petersburg, 2020. 293 pp. Appendix. Notes. Bibliography. Illustrations. \$47.00, paper. doi: 10.1017/slr.2022.211

Divided into twelve chapters, *Khudozhnik miróvogo rastsveta: Pavel Filonov* is the second edition of Gleb Ershov's fundamental study of the artist and writer Pavel Nikolaevich Filonov (1883–1941) which first appeared in 2015. Initially a specialist in the experimental poetry of Velimir Khlebnikov and with a doctoral dissertation on Filonov, Ershov comes to his subject from a synthetic perspective, referencing sources in critical and creative literature, philosophical treatises, and political tracts so as to provide an illuminating account of a painter who, in spite of publications and exhibitions, remains baffling and enigmatic. Indeed, although the subject of several monographs and numerous articles, Filonov remains the “odd man out” in the course of the Russian avant-garde, with the result that, in Ershov's words, such an outsider status renders him “inconvenient and marginal” (28) within the context of twentieth century European art. Ershov makes copious reference to those scholars, Russian and western, such as John E. Bowlt, Evgenii Kovtun, Jan Kriz, Nicoletta Misler, Irina Pronina, Dmitrii Sarab'ianov, Elena Selizarova, and others, who, after a long period of Soviet disregard, pioneered the study of Filonov's *oeuvre* in the 1960s onwards.

Ershov pursues his narrative via detailed discussions of Filonov's images of renunciation, color theory, pedagogical activities, and other issues, touching on the problems of style, messianism, ideological imposition, and the literary sources of what Filonov called “analytical art,” “painterly formula,” and “madness” (*sdelannost'*). Ershov reinforces his arguments with close-reading analyses of individual paintings such as the *Feast of the Kings* as well as of Filonov's single poem *Propeven' o prorosli mirovoi*, thereby offering a rich appreciation of Filonov, not only as painter, but also as writer and spiritual leader. In this respect, Ershov's commentary on Filonov's three pilgrimages to the Holy Land, on his religious symbols and icon of St. Catherine, and on his manifest debt to the mediaeval traditions of Russian culture is especially rewarding. In turn, Ershov emphasizes the curious position that Filonov holds within Russian Modernism: if colleagues such as Kazimir Malevich and Vladimir Tatlin often rejected academic convention in search of the new and radical, Filonov remained loyal to the classical canon, convinced that rules were first to be observed and then broken, a procedure reflected not only in his love-hate relationship with the St. Petersburg/Leningrad Academy of Arts, but also in his evident debt to the masters of the Renaissance such as Leonardo Da