

The narrative starts with the Turkish writer Nâzim Hikmet, a student at the Communist University of Toilers of the East (KUTV) in Moscow, and his use of sound for his agitational poetry. The next chapter charts the attempts by the Persian and Kurdish writer Abolqasem Lahuti, another KUTV student, and the Russian avant-gardist Velemir Khlebnikov to integrate the Persian literary tradition into revolutionary poetry. Chapter 3 focusses on another literary genre, looking at the travelogues of Larisa Reisner and Lev Nikulin sent to Afghanistan, the gateway to India for the Bolsheviks, and how the two writer-diplomats tried (and failed) to escape imperialist stereotypes in their writings. The account then moves to India, a country closed to communists by British imperialism. In this chapter, Clark chooses a different angle with Nicolai Marr's challenge to Indo-Europeanism with his alternative map of languages that gave priority to oral culture and the languages of the Caucasus. Chapter 5 moves further east, to China, to which the revolutionaries turned their hopes in the first half of the 1920s, and to the question faced by writer-journalists such as Qu Qiubai, Sergei Tretiakov, André Malraux, and Boris Pilniak how to convey "authentic" or "true" knowledge in their accounts. China is also central in the first chapter on the 1930s, but the focus lies on the literary and cinematic interactions with Soviet Russia (Vsevolod Pudovkin, Iakov Bliokh) and Germany (Anna Seghers, Bertold Brecht, Friedrich Wolf) and on the cultural intermediaries (Émi Xiao, Mao Dun). Chapter 7 asks how the members of the London literary left (in particular Mulk Raj Anand) negotiated their appropriation of socialist realism. The last chapter then turns to the late 1930s and the Sino-Japanese war, the time when the literary ecumene began to unravel.

By looking through the lens of literature at the attempts to create a leftist Eurasian cultural space, Clark's book fills a void. Even if the Eurasia without borders did not come about, Clark carefully excavated the traces of the many committed writers and cultural practitioners who, each in their own way, participated in the realization of this internationalist vision. Her dense book draws our attention to an alternative literary world whose hitherto little-known networks stretched across large parts of the globe in the interwar period. The only regret is that the gender dimension is neglected in this innovative book about a rather unique political experience of creating a single cultural space through literature. As the brief comments on this (page 228) show, it would undoubtedly have been fruitful to pursue such an approach. It should also be noted that the name of Johannes Itten (not von Itten) and his origin (Switzerland not Austria) should be corrected.

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Soviet Samizdat: Imagining a New Society. By Ann Komaromi. NIU Series in Slavic, East European, and Eurasian Studies. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2022. xviii, 318 pp. Appendix. Notes. Bibliography. Index. Illustrations. \$49.95, hard bound. doi: 10.1017/slr.2023.229

There are two schools of thought about how best to describe the complicated relationship between the Soviet project and those who were its makers, beneficiaries, participants, and victims. One school privileged theory, especially the kind that was pioneered by twentieth century French sociologists. This school embedded the Soviet experience in a more universal cultural reading. The second school concentrated on the meticulous recovery of empirical evidence from archives, memoirs, interviews, newspapers, and other primary sources. It foregrounded the diversity of Soviet society. These two schools did not always see eye to eye—or better, their findings

sometimes left large gaps in their explanatory models. Yet once in a while, books come along that combine both approaches in a creative way, not only providing a new way of understanding Soviet society, but offering a glimpse into the dynamic processes that propelled change within it. Ann Komaromi's beautifully written book on the socialist phenomenon of samizdat is such a fortunate marriage of theory and evidence. It is brimming with interesting thoughts on how to understand the role of samizdat, while leaving no doubt about the breadth of the author's empirical knowledge, accumulated over many years of engagement with the topic and the materials of samizdat.

Soviet Samizdat is a thorough exploration of many different items of the underground publishing world, ranging from the *Lithuanian Chronicle of the Catholic Church* to the rock journal *Roxy* and much more. It constructs a model for making sense of the nexus between people, thought, and system with each factor constantly moving and repositioning itself, depending on time, space, place, and protagonists. Komaromi has one simple trick for making plain the higher truths and deeper intricacies of samizdat. She takes the texts as such—both in their physical and intellectual form—and turns them into a platform on which her actors meet, negotiate, and jostle for meaning. Rather than presenting samizdat as an extraordinary phenomenon of dissidence, Komaromi argues that it widened the possibilities of Soviet subject-society relations after Iosif Stalin's death and created a more complex and modern Soviet existence. In short, samizdat is one of the vital ingredients of late socialism, functioning as both participant in and reflection of its existence.

Each chapter privileges one agent on the platform—self, truth, time, and space—but all are present throughout the book. The rationale behind publishing non-literary samizdat, which was one step up from publishing literary samizdat in the Hegelian historicist view, was that the self can only emerge as a significant actor, if in the background there was a horizon of true historical facts (39). For the dissident and underground samizdat publics, the “telling of truth” was of existential necessity. Komaromi does not dismiss this most central of all samizdat credos as corny or naïve, as has become custom in the last few years—certainly in Russian society. To the contrary she approaches samizdat from a variety of angles, including historical, religious, and ethical truth, all of which did much more than merely challenge the authoritative discourse. The writing down of truths created communities. Komaromi also explores samizdat's search for truth by dwelling on the opposite: the burden of silence as described by Il'ia Erenburg and the liberation of silence from the “human verbosity” as experienced by Boris Pasternak through his character Yuri Zhivago (57). Maybe it is only now that Russia is once again drowning in both deafening silence and an avalanche of propagandistic verbosity that the full meaning and existential importance of truth-seeking for the samizdat publics can be grasped in its full desperation by younger historians who did not live through the Soviet years.

The final two chapters about time and space also offer many historical insights into the nature of late socialism, while at the same time feeling sadly au courant. Showcasing the many levels of time and space that encompassed the samizdat life cycle, Komaromi argues that samizdat transcended chronological and spatial confines. It connected spheres of late socialist society that were otherwise drifting apart (especially the many particular national, religious, or cultural interest groups). Its manifestations, which included sound, art, and performance, dissolved established linear time by claiming all three modes of temporality: the nature of history, the here and now and its demands for activism, and the future which held the promise of individual and collective transformation. It is thus no surprise that the last chapter, which follows the many social and cultural tentacles of samizdat—beyond town, country, gender, and genre—finishes with a discussion of the transformation of samizdat into

the independent press during perestroika and ultimately the mediascape of the post-Soviet world.

A review of this book would not be complete without a nod to the extraordinary labor that has gone into its appendix: an extensive list of samizdat periodicals 1956–86 with references about where to find them (a printed version of Komaromi's online database). Anyone who has written on topics related to the diffuse and elusive Soviet underground knows what an exhaustive labor of love such background work is. Future historians will thank Komaromi for this database and the excellent analytical compendium she provided with this book.

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The Origins of Russian Literary Theory: Folklore, Philology, Form. By Jessica Merrill. Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2022. ix, 312 pp. Appendix. Notes. Bibliography. Index. \$39.95, paper.
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The modesty of this book's title and cover belies the force of its intervention in twenty-first century literary studies. Jessica Merrill's study is unfashionable in the best sense of the word: she charts a course that is distinctly her own, synthesizing and shining new light on an early twentieth-century intellectual context where philology and psychology go hand in hand. Merrill joins a growing number of scholars searching for ways to approach literature and culture after the "turn against the linguistic turn" (Julie Orlemanski, cited on 3). She contributes to this broader effort by limning the "philological paradigm" of Russian formalism and reconstructing a non-structuralist philosophy of language that traces the origins and evolution of language to extralinguistic sources. Ultimately, Merrill does nothing less than argue that an alternate history of Russian formalism might show literary studies a way out of its current impasse and even out of the hermeneutic mode itself.

Merrill establishes that Russian formalism "needs to be uncoupled from structuralism" (220) to reveal those elements of the movement that speak to twenty-first-century concerns. This claim may seem self-evident to many Slavists, but, as Merrill demonstrates, it has not yet permeated Anglo-American scholarly circles, something she hopes to change. Merrill frames her study with an introduction and conclusion steeped in recent theoretical approaches, devoting special attention to new formalism, quantitative formalism, historical poetics, and cognitive poetics. The five body chapters linger on the mid-nineteenth century and the first decade of Russian formalism. They cover (1) nineteenth-century comparative philology; (2) Viktor Shklovskii's theory of the author as grounded in oral performance and collective creation; (3) the psychology of poetic form, linking Aleksandr Veselovskii's psychological parallelism to Shklovskii's narrative theory; (4) poetic dialectology—a "lost branch of Russian Formalism" based on "extralinguistic social history" (146) debated by Osip Brik, Roman Jakobson and others in the meetings of the Moscow Linguistic Circle; and (5) a chapter on structuralisms that marks Jakobson's move from the earlier philological paradigm (based on a non-differentiation of folklore and literature) to a structuralist one in the late 1920s.

There is no doubt that readers knowledgeable about Russian literary theory will find Merrill's book a must-read. Along with its bold claims about the extralinguistic drivers of Russian formalist theory and the need for non-hermeneutic literary studies, *The Origins of Russian Literary Theory* offers many welcome insights about familiar