

also deploys a rich selection of less familiar works. The reader is struck by the sheer venom and imaginativeness of these attacks. Also fascinating is Schur's argument about the trial in the *Brothers Karamazov*, which she reads not so much as an attack on "Western" legality, but primarily on the way literary techniques were deployed at a Russian celebrity trial to obscure the facts and to exacerbate judicial errors (145–46).

At times Schur suggests that these attacks were not necessarily fair or accurate (85, 150), or that she is not interested in this question (20), but on the whole she seems to be persuaded by Dostoevskii, his legal consultant Koni, and the equally peppery Saltykov, all cited at great length. Schur also cites research that reaches different conclusions (by Yanina Arnold, Stefan Kirmse, Elisa Becker, and Jane Burbank), but she does not engage with their arguments or the evidence they present that shows writers' attacks on the law to be as tendentious as the unfair trials that they criticized.

A major strength of Schur's book is that it vigorously resists tired Cold War narratives of Russian legal inferiority, pointing out repeatedly that the tradition of censuring the law goes back thousands of years (85, 118, 148). She does not, however, develop the implications of that insight and continues to look for the "culturally specific aspects of the Russian courtroom, (which to her included) its self-defining analogies to literature, its heightened emphasis on psychology, its ambition to serve as a forum for airing "comprehensive" questions, and its relaxed attitude to facts licensed by appeals to higher truths" (117). All of this is highly questionable empirically. Equally unsupported are Schur's characterizations of western trials and lawyers as more technical and less prone to rhetoric and extralegal tactics, even with much hedging and qualification (24, 37–38). No doubt there were real differences, and their implications should be explored, but for now we are left with an account that is very engaging and plausible in itself, but, like the trial narratives it discusses, not complete.

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**Evgenii Kharitonov: Poetika podpol'ia.** By Aleksei Konakov. *Novye materialy i issledovaniia po istorii russkoi kul'tury*. Moscow: Novoe izdatel'stvo, 2022. 270 pp. Notes. Index. ₸857, paper; ₸350, ebook.  
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Aleksei Konakov's monograph examines the life and works of Evgenii Kharitonov (1941–1981), a writer, poet, and theater director who was nearly unique—during the Brezhnev era—in thematizing queer desire and Soviet gay underground in his stunningly effective literary texts. The book productively combines biography and literary analysis, taking advantage of numerous memoirs and recorded interviews about Kharitonov.

In order to conceptualize his subject's biography, the author isolates three essential "layers of Kharitonov's life": "the body of theater," "the nets of literature," and "house arrest" (30). The last biographical section refers metaphorically to Kharitonov's final years, paraphrasing the title of his sole collection of prose and poetry *Under House Arrest* (201–28). The parts of the monograph that focus on Kharitonov's career in acting and directing paint a detailed and expressive portrait of the gifted and ambitious young man from Siberia who was enjoying success in the Moscow theater world of the 1960s and the bohemian life that came with it. Kharitonov's prominence in the Thaw-period Moscow artistic circles and young Kharitonov's overall cheerfully adventurous disposition may come as a surprise to those readers who remember the stifling, lonely, and increasingly tragic atmosphere of Kharitonov's literary worlds created in the next, socially stagnant decade.

*Under House Arrest* comprises texts written between 1969 to 1981, the period over which Kharitonov's writing style evolved from existentialist psychological prose of "The Oven" toward the Rozanovian fragmentary poetics of "Tears on the Flowers," "In a Cold Higher Sense," and "Tears for One Killed and Strangled." Konakov identifies and details what he sees as "three original stylistic strategies, invented by Kharitonov": "miniaturization" produced in response to the grandiosity of the Soviet project (40–46), "provincialization" in response to his experience of living as a transplant in the imperial capital (91–98), and "transparentization" as an answer to his sense of being under state surveillance (158–64). The scholar employs an array of analytical methods, from formalism to deconstruction, in order to discuss the poetics of Kharitonov's texts, and he succeeds in producing the strong and original readings thereof. At the same time, he uses what I would describe as a neo-Marxist sociological approach—rather than, say, the apparatus of queer cultural studies—to explain Kharitonov's artistic methods and his personality as a gay provincial who succeeded in constructing, over a short period of time, several creative careers in the Soviet capital. These careers included one in theater acting and directing, one in teaching pantomime at the VGIK (the Soviet Union's premier film school), one in speech therapy, and finally, the most significant, if unofficial one, in literature.

Konakov's sociological method aims to demonstrate how material, economic, and social conditions shape cultural and literary practices; he employs this method somewhat straightforwardly yet usually quite effectively. For instance, his analysis of how Kharitonov made a literary strategy out of his actual life situation as a transplant from the heartland to Moscow is very insightful and interesting (91–98). It is equally illuminating to learn about the role which Kharitonov's obtaining a typewriter and learning to use it played in forming his poetics of "artistic typing" (241–46). The reader will also be impressed by Konakov's witty explanation of Kharitonov's proto-conceptualist narrative "self-estrangement" and self-observation as reflecting the author's obsessive sense of being watched by the all-seeing state and its repressive organs (164). Occasionally, Konakov takes this approach a bit too far to be fully convincing, as he does when he connects certain features in Kharitonov's aesthetics to the techniques of homosexual intercourse as they are presented in the Soviet manuals on sexual forensics (170–71).

In the late 1970s, Kharitonov found himself to be "a person of interest" to both the KGB and criminal police. Konakov argues that Kharitonov had problems with the Soviet legal system as early as 1963 when he allegedly received a suspended sentence based on the Soviet sodomy law known as Article 121 (63). The only source that Konakov cites for this potentially very significant biographical fact is a "personal communication" of one of Kharitonov's myriad friends. Konakov writes about it in passing, as if not quite believing this report's doubtful validity. Judging by the apparent lack of immediate administrative consequences from this episode for Kharitonov, it appears likely that on said occasion, the police investigated Kharitonov, harassed him, and then dropped the case. This is one of a few instances when Konakov skips the due diligence necessary to establish the facts based on memoirs and "personal communications." In particular, writer Nikolai Klimontovich, while a good acquaintance of Kharitonov's, later made a career of fictionalizing literary gossip; therefore, there is no reason to accept the juicy details he provided about Kharitonov's romantic and sex life as uncritically as Konakov does (55). It is also hard not to notice that some "personal communications" betray their sources' utter cluelessness about the ways of gay subculture; when Konakov integrates these remarks into his biographical analysis, it creates a very heteronormative perspective on the book's very queer subject (see especially 213–14).

A few methodological problems notwithstanding, Aleksei Konakov's book is constructed splendidly and written with true inspiration. It is also helpful for the reader

that the author cites Kharitonov, a genius literary stylist, copiously. Because of this abundant quoting, the reader gets a very good idea of the stylistic flavors of Kharitonov's oeuvre along with its subtle literary analysis and an ambitious and richly researched survey of Kharitonov's historical and cultural moment. It is an engrossing work that combines historical depth with critical sophistication. Students of Russian literature and Soviet culture will find it both informative and intellectually stimulating.

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***How the Soviet Jew Was Made.*** Sasha Senderovich. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2022. xii, 368 pp. Notes. Index. Illustrations. Photographs. Maps. \$39.95, hard bound.  
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Looking at the title of this book one asks oneself whether there could exist such a well-defined entity as “the Soviet Jew,” given the almost 70-year history of the Soviet Union. Sasha Senderovich clearly had this question in mind when he wrote the Introduction. In it he explains that while the chronology of his work is mainly limited to analyses of the interwar period of the 1920s and 30s, “the figure of the ‘Soviet Jew’ as such would become prominent only decades later after its formation” (5). Senderovich writes a “cultural prehistory” (6) of the figure of the Soviet Jew that became familiar to the English-speaking reader in the second half of the twentieth century. The definition of the Soviet Jew itself is a descriptor used historically not by the Jews of the Soviet Union themselves but rather by those who were looking into the country from outside. Spatially, the figure of the Soviet Jew in this investigation is limited to Ashkenazic Jewry, who resided on the territory of the former Pale of Settlement. The book usefully opens with two maps of the Soviet Union, one showing western borderlands of the USSR 1922–39 with a shaded area indicating pre-1917 imperial Russia's Pale of Settlement. The maps help readers to narrow down geographically the notion of the Soviet Jew under Senderovich's exploration.

The book traces the figure of the Jew in literary and filmic texts and through the historical and cultural context in which it was produced, coined, and circulated. In Senderovich's own formulation, the Soviet Jew is “a figure of indeterminacy that emerged from within the Soviet project, was defined by it and, on occasion, defined it in turn” (8). In terms of language and Russian-Jewish interaction, Senderovich approaches his sources not as separately Russian or Yiddish but as always Russian/Yiddish. He notes that during the interwar period, Yiddish became a language with a number of centers of literary production, which included Minsk, Kiev, and Moscow, as well as Warsaw, Berlin, and New York. This Soviet Jew of the period evolved, in part, in the context of global literary discourse. While Senderovich studies mostly textual and filmic material, it should be noted that a number of Soviet Jews of the former Pale spoke other languages apart from Yiddish and Russian, and that a significant number of the older generation could not write or read.

Five chapters of the book consist of analyses of sources written in Russian and Yiddish, and the first chapter is dedicated to the work of acclaimed Yiddish writer David Bergelson. Bergelson's real life spatial trajectories parallel Senderovich's main postulate of the multidirectional mobility and liminality that formed the figure of the Soviet Jew. Born in Ukraine, Bergelson moved to Berlin with its thriving Yiddish literary scene in the 1920s, returned to the Soviet Union, wrote about Jewish colonists in Birobidzhan, became a member of the Jewish anti-Fascist Committee, was arrested