

images of the square-jawed worker as portrayed during the industrialization of the Soviet Union, Hellebust develops the notion further: "In Soviet literature and culture as a whole, the essential symbol for Communist transformation is the metallization of the revolutionary body." (p. 29) A discussion of the image of the blacksmith, from early Slavic legend to Soviet works, is included, as well as the visual image of the blacksmith as a propaganda icon. His discussion of this metallization includes such literary texts as the works of Shkulev, the symbolists (especially Belyi's *Petersburg*), Gastev, Kirillov, Maiakovsky, Socialist Realists writers (Serafimovich, Gladkov, Ostrovsky, Kataev), Zamiatin, Babel, Pasternak, and many others.

The scope of Hellebust's work is quite extensive particularly considering the relatively brevity of the manuscript. In addition to an examination of literary works, Hellebust includes fifteen illustrations (ranging from posters and statues to cartoons and dust jackets) to support his argument. American and European works are also mentioned (often as a point of contrast to the Soviet works), but Hellebust concludes that "Only in the Soviet flesh-to-metal narrative do we see a confidence in the possibility of total cultural change, fully integrated with a belief in the ultimately positive role to be played by technology." (p. 105) Hellebust discusses both sides of the metal imagery, the positive aspect as used in industry, and the negative one, which often includes the suffering and dehumanization at the hands of industrial production. His examination of the metallization myth and its permutations presents the reader with a different perspective on Soviet art and culture, a perspective which allows the reader to view these artistic works in a new light. Hellebust concludes that the flesh-to-metal myth is "... an indispensable part of the symbolic vocabulary of early twentieth-century Russian culture." (p. 179)

As Hellebust states in the introduction, he sees his work as an "... introduction to some unique aspects of the culture of twentieth-century Russia. . ." (p. 5) Scholars in the field of early Soviet arts and society will find this text an interesting and provocative one, a text that provides a different view of this period in Soviet cultural history. It is the wide scope of Hellebust's study that makes his work valuable to all who study Soviet art and culture.

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Eliot Borenstein. *Men Without Women: Masculinity and Revolution in Soviet Fiction, 1917-1929*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2001. xvi, 346 pp. \$19.95 (paper).

Despite the title, Eliot Borenstein's *Men Without Women* describes a world by no means devoid of women. In Borenstein's view, Russia's first revolutionary decade succeeded – at least in its fictional representations – in ushering in a profound transformation of gender roles; yet this gender revolution resulted in anything but equality between the sexes. Instead, what emerges from the pages of his astute analysis of Soviet fiction of the 1920s is a picture of a society where individuals struggle to create

ideal comradesly (read “manly”) collectives, which are imbued with traditional masculine values and have no use for femininity.

This book adds an essential, literary perspective to the on-going, interdisciplinary discussion about the overturning of social hierarchies that took place (or failed to take place) during the first decade of Bolshevik power, from the reconfiguration of family relations to new ideas about sexuality. Although the subject of this book does not allow a discussion of the realities of Soviet daily life, it does permit the author to explore in great detail the ideologies alive in literary life and beyond. Focused primarily, although far from exclusively, on the works of Isaak Babel, Yuri Olesha and Andrei Platonov, Borenstein turns to a number of effective theoretical frameworks to unravel the complex gender dynamics in these fictional utopias, including those of Edward Said, Luce Irigaray and Sigmund Freud. Mobilizing this eclectic array of theories in order to explore Soviet definitions of manhood, Borenstein successfully establishes that revolutionary utopianism not only failed to necessitate an emphasis on gender equality, but also reified definitions of masculinity that relied on an absence of the feminine.

Borenstein pays particular attention to women and their symbolic importance. He devotes the entire first chapter (“Lady Killers”) to the subject. Here the transformation of social identities means not the leveling of gender, but the annihilation of femininity and its logical corollary, the degradation of women. Women – as the author repeatedly reminds us – are all over the literary portraits, as ghosts, dead bodies, obstacles to masculine achievements or victims of male aggression, whether sexual or psychological. In the worlds of Babel, Olesha, Platonov and many others, hostility toward women (which might manifest itself through rape or murder) is the glue that binds together the utopian masculinist collective. Women become vehicles for the achievement of the comradesly ideal.

Borenstein devotes two chapters to Isaak Babel, the second of which revolves around *Red Cavalry*, a quintessential tale of the masculine collective. Here it becomes, at least in part, a tale of frustrated manhood: the effete, Jewish intellectual forever attempting to find his way into the highly violent masculine Cossack collective. Borenstein reconfigures the Cossack myth that its community is sustained through the father-son relationship (central to Gogol’s “Taras Bulba,” for example), and explains that in Babel the Cossacks, amidst a civil war and in a revolutionary context, are not obligated to their fathers, but only to one another. The plot turns on Kirill Lyutov, the outsider, attempting time and again to enter the community by proving his masculine prowess. He is, however, repeatedly – and ultimately – rebuffed. Lyutov remains – in Borenstein’s words – “a Soviet Sisyphus” condemned to remain an outsider forever. (p. 123)

Just as Babel’s Lyutov attempts to penetrate the Cossack collective, Olesha’s characters struggle to create a camaraderie of their own. They too are repeatedly frustrated by their inability to establish and maintain a meaningful masculine collective; instead, they form a series of unsatisfying triangular friendships, which usually consist of two men and one woman (who is often dead or simply a memory). Women (or their incarnations) inhibit the men from forming comradesly bonds.

Platonov – the subject of the final two full-length chapters – simultaneously undertakes and undermines the creation of an all-male comradesly society in his novel-length *Chevengur*. Here the architects of the all-male utopia must face up to the negative consequences of the creation of a society based on the principle of gender exclusivity. Their attempt to exclude women from the New World backfires; what emerges is a collective organized around ideas of both sexual difference (men are haunted by the absent “other”) and the pre-revolutionary patriarchal family.

Finally, in his concluding chapter, Borenstein moves into a discussion of the fiction written during the period of Stalin’s first five-year plan. His emphasis adds a new twist to the now familiar story of the re-emergence of traditional values under Stalin’s tutelage. Women at the close of the decade are freed from the constraints inherent in the striving for a gender exclusive utopia; they return as active agents in their own destinies, albeit in their double role as workers and wives. By this time a masculine utopia no longer seemed viable and femininity no longer elicited hostility. Instead, classical paternalism returns with Stalin as the father.

Although for a long time historians have written about whether or how the Bolsheviks attempted to create equality between the sexes, scholars have now begun to look again at this Soviet project by focusing on the emergence of a distinctive Soviet masculinity or masculinities, from the overtly masculine project of Soviet state building to the creation of the “Soviet closet” in later decades. Whereas recently there has been a consensus forming, which highlights the continuity of patriarchal values (however transformed) before and after October, Borenstein finds an emergent manhood freed from old patriarchal constraints but plagued by new understandings of comradeship. In fact, Borenstein’s most significant contribution to the scholarly conversation about gender in the early years of Bolshevik power resides in his challenge of the recent emphasis on continuity. By turning our attention to the emergence of fratricide, Borenstein marks a significant shift in literary ideology. To make this claim Borenstein invokes Sigmund Freud and John Remy, who separate patriarchy from “male domination”. Rather than the patriarchal assumption about the “supremacy of the father,” which reserves a marginal place for women, an assumption about the primary relationship being among “young, unmarried men” – or fratricide – underpins revolutionary social relations (p. 22). Overall, this extremely complicated (too complicated to do justice to here) and often witty study of Soviet fiction is a provocative and welcome addition to the literary and gender history of Russia’s first revolutionary decade.

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Evgeny Dobrenko. *The Making of the State Writer: Social and Aesthetic Origins of Soviet Literary Culture*. Translated by Jesse M. Savage. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2001. xxi, 484 pp. \$75.00.

The second book in Evgeny Dobrenko’s meticulously researched study of the genesis of Socialist Realism, *The Making of the State Writer* presents a fascinating and convincing thesis about the literary movement’s objective. As the author argues in