

Grammar and Workbook should be seen as a welcome addition to the overall body of works dedicated to introductory Russian.

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Eliot Borenstein. *Men Without Women: Masculinity and Revolution in Russian Fiction, 1917-1929*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2000. xiii, 346 pp. Notes. Works Cited. Index. \$19.95, paper.

This creative new monograph is an insightful contribution to the emerging literature on masculinity and male social roles in Russia. By focusing on fictional works that most explicitly explored the workings of male communities in the 1920s, Borenstein concludes that revolutionary efforts to replace a "feminine" family with all-male social frameworks ultimately failed, at least in the literary realm. Despite individual protagonists' short-term successes and the differing visions of male societies presented in early Soviet fiction, the collective *œuvre* of Isaak Babel, Yuri Olesha, and Andrei Platonov inexorably reveals a clear inability to substitute "masculine" affiliation for "feminine" filial relations and the family.

Although many works were set in the context of the Russian civil war, Borenstein maintains that Babel's *Red Cavalry* stands out in making "masculinity itself such a dominant and apparent theme" (p. 73). In *Red Cavalry*, the "fathers" are "dead, absent, or fated to die"; women appear as men's sexual partners, but male camaraderie is more meaningful (p. 77). Babel's novel thus concentrates on an exploration of fraternal relationships: the main protagonist, Kirill Lyutov, repeatedly attempts to earn acceptance within a community of men, in this case a community of Cossacks. Although he is sometimes temporarily successful, Lyutov fails to gain "permanent acceptance" in the Cossack community. As Borenstein argues, *Red Cavalry* thus exposes a "fundamental problem of masculine identity: the need to prove oneself a man ad infinitum" (p. 75).

In the work of Olesha, the fraternal longings of Babel's Lyutov give way to Kavalero's unsuccessful attempts to find an appropriate father figure. Here, the "father-son" relationship is an important one, but mere biology will not do. Instead, the tie between "fathers" and "sons" is one of affiliation; men freely "choose each other, love each other, and establish a connection that needs neither mother nor wife" (p. 161). The family itself has not been destroyed in the new world, but the nature of the "family" has been transformed. Instead of a "feminine" realm of filiation, the revolution has produced "an all-male 'family' that is based on political choices" (p. 128). As male characters attempt to draw "feminine" tasks into the "masculine" sphere—by reorganizing the traditional kitchen, for example—the male world in *Envy* becomes increasingly "androgynous." A "feminine idol" remains, but "she" is now embodied in the machine—"woman recreated in man's image" (p. 187).

The most complicated exploration of male roles is found in the work of Platonov. According to Borenstein, Platonov believed that women had contributions to make to society, since they were appropriately pregnant "with something..., whether it be a child, an idea, or a soul" (p. 217). Yet, as objects of male desire, women remained a threat to the male community. In *Chevengur*, an affiliative group of orphaned men—the "miscellaneous"—have no families to remember or reject. Nevertheless, once the revolutionary state has satisfied their basic human needs, the "miscellaneous" demand wives and families of their own. The arrival in *Chevengur* of the "most unfeminine women" the state can find marks the triumph of praxis over theory, the triumph of nature over science, the triumph of the family over an

exclusively male culture (p. 228). Platonov's inescapable conclusion is that a society that shuns women is doomed. In *Chevengur*, the revolutionary goal of unadulterated masculine affiliation fails yet again.

Notwithstanding his concentration on the 1920s, Borenstein suggests that the literary motif of male community dissipated with the onset of the First Five-Year Plan and the Stalinist 1930s. In contrast to the literature of the 1920s, literature of the 1930s identified women not as "symbols of backwardness" but with the forces of industrial progress (p. 271). In the 1930s, literary works were also marked by a discursive shift to an emphasis on the value of family, the importance of the father-son bond, and the wisdom of an autocratic father. Such themes fit the political culture of the 1930s, just as the promotion of fraternal communism in the 1920s meshed well with the chaos of that decade. Fraternal communism, says Borenstein, was "an optimistic response" to a civil war that destroyed the institution of the family, left children fatherless, and pitted brother against brother (p. 276).

The rich incisiveness of Borenstein's text is merely outlined here. Certainly various aspects of his argument may be questioned, including the strength of the fraternal message in the 1920s. There is also some tension between Borenstein's concentrated examination of *Babel*, *Olesha*, and *Platonov* and his attempts to offer broader generalizations about early Soviet literature. Perhaps it is the historian in me, but I also wonder how literary messages about male fraternalism might have been received or paralleled in actual people's lives. But it is a tribute to the Borenstein's creative accomplishment that anyone interested in gender roles in the Soviet state will find much to consider here.

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Sally Dalton-Brown. *Voices from the Void: The Genres of Liudmila Petrushevskaja*. Studies in Slavic Literatures, Culture and Society. Volume 7. General Editor: Thomas Epstein. New York: Berghahn Books, 2000. 214 pp. Bibliography. Index. \$35.00, cloth.

The subject of this book is an analysis of Liudmila Stefanovna Petrushevskaja's manipulation of genres. Dalton-Brown demonstrates that through her use of hybrid genres, Petrushevskaja is able to "generate textual absence, and readerly disappointment as the basis for her themes of absence, death and loss" (p. viii). Dalton-Brown's insightful analysis centers upon the themes of broken communication and the narrators' struggle to find their own voices. She writes, "Petrushevskaja's characters are all storytellers, modern-day bards, prosaic Homeric writers of their own lives; her texts focus on the voice of direct experience, in which the craftsmanship lies in creating a sense of its own absence, as if these are ordinary tales told by those without writerly skills" (p. vii).

The introduction, "Petrushevskaja and Contemporary Literary Trends," provides the reader with a brief personal and literary biography of the author and a quick survey of Russian and Western criticism on her works. Specific emphasis is placed on Petrushevskaja's unique place within the contemporary Russian cultural scene as well as Petrushevskaja's contribution to the development of new literary trends. Dalton-Brown argues that although the main focus of Petrushevskaja's works seems to center on the idea of "finding a voice," Petrushevskaja offers "no easy answers—no answers at all to the question of how one communicates" (p. 13). Dalton-Brown continues, "What she focuses on repeatedly is the problem of being heard..." (p. 13).