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Review Of "Svezho Predanie" By I. Grekova

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Recommended Citation

Sibelan E.S. Forrester. (1997). "Review Of "Svezho Predanie" By I. Grekova". *Slavic And East European Journal*. Volume 41, Issue 1. 171-172. DOI: 10.2307/309529
<https://works.swarthmore.edu/fac-russian/35>

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Review

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Source: *The Slavic and East European Journal*, Vol. 41, No. 1 (Spring, 1997), pp. 171-172

Published by: American Association of Teachers of Slavic and East European Languages

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/309529>

Accessed: 06-04-2016 19:53 UTC

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grows the epic model, ends with the conclusion that in his portrayal of Lara Pasternak deviates from the standards of a national epic toward “a personal religious vision” (72). According to Clowes, Lara’s portrayal helped Pasternak magnify the idea of free personality that is so important to the religious and philosophical meaning of the book.

In “Soaked in *The Meaning of Love* and *The Kreutzer Sonata*,” Jerome Spencer looks at *Doctor Zhivago* in the context of the turn-of-the-century debate about love. Spencer compares Pasternak’s concept of love with that of Tolstoy and Solov’ev and concludes that, like Solov’ev, Pasternak condemns pure physical love and privileges spiritual love that includes elements of physical and family love. Spencer points out that Pasternak’s idea of love differs from Solov’ev’s in that the former emphasizes how one can reach “the immortality of individuals” through love whereas for the latter the goal is the “immortality of humanity” (87).

Boris Gasparov’s “Temporal Counterpoint as a Principle of Formation in *Doctor Zhivago*” focuses on the structural labyrinth of the novel and illuminates the complex texture of its interwoven thematic lines. Gasparov’s analysis also successfully explains the novel’s extensive use of coincidence, circumstance, and unbelievable characters. Finally, Dina Magomedova’s short article, “The Relationship of Lyrical and Narrative ‘Plot’ in *Doctor Zhivago*,” focuses on the interrelationship between the novel’s text and its poetry. Through her reading of the single poem “Autumn,” Magomedova establishes the correlation between narrative and lyrical plots as one of the central aspects of Pasternak’s poetics.

While reading these articles, readers will not only discover the multiplicity of thematic, structural, and ideological layers in *Doctor Zhivago*, but also encounter a variety of critical discourses, each of which could become a learning experience in how to think and write about works of literature. The volume’s inclusive nature is significantly strengthened by the appended correspondence that Pasternak maintained relating to *Doctor Zhivago*, and by the select bibliography. Clowes’ critical companion to *Doctor Zhivago* thus unquestionably does a great service to the serious student of the novel. It should become required reading in courses that include *Doctor Zhivago* in their curriculum.

Larissa Rudova, Pomona College

И. Грекова. *Свежо предание*. Tenafly, NJ: Hermitage, 1995. 214 pp., \$12.00 (paper).

This book by Irina Grekova (pseudonym of Elena Sergeevna Ventsel’) was written in 1962 and met a fate even more obscure than Lidiia Chukovskaia’s *Sofia Petrovna* and *Spusk pod vodu*. It was not published during the “Thaw,” nor during glasnost, and has come to light now after spending some 30 years in the drawer—or, more precisely, in a safe in the offices of the journal *Novyi mir*. The reasons for this tardy publication, which make Grekova’s novel even more of a storybook case than many other long-buried novels by prominent Russian authors of the Soviet period, has to do with the book’s topic: Jewish experience and anti-Semitism in Soviet society.

Svezho predanie was not Grekova’s only risky piece of work; several stories, such as “Khoziaeva zhizni,” lay “in the drawer” until glasnost. In her afterword to this edition, Ruf’ Zernova, another writer of distinction, details the manuscript’s history. Zernova seeks to explain why the book was not published until 1995, and by an emigre press at that. The shame that literary and party functionaries have displayed at the mere mention of Soviet anti-Semitism suggests a society in deep denial, at least in its official discourse. Even during the period of glasnost, which saw the publication of numerous documents about formerly taboo topics such as the Doctors’ Plot and the murder of Mikhoels, memoirs and documents have been preferred to literary treatments of anti-Semitism. In Zernova’s words, “Events that

everyone knows about, about which so many articles, memoirs and documentaries have been written, frighten editors and publishers in their literary transformation. History fixes, [whereas] literature stirs, slightly shifting some layers of (our) consciousness and subconscious" (214). Any reader unfamiliar with Grekova will also benefit from Zernova's vivid description of her life as a mathematician and writer, her importance in the Thaw and post-Thaw periods, and of her other works, including a characterization of her style and themes.

The novel's title recalls Griboedov, "Svezho predanie, a veritsia s trudom" (the legend is fresh but hard to believe). The novel follows its hero, Konstantin Isaakievich Levin, from his birth in Petrograd in 1917, with a brief flashback to his parents' courtship, until his death some time after Stalin's, in 1953. The time span lets the author take on many of the great themes of twentieth-century Russian history: Revolution, hunger, NEP, collectivization, the purges, the Second World War and the siege of Leningrad, and the last years of Stalinism. The child Kostia, raised without any kind of religious consciousness, is all the more perplexed and wounded when others attack or insult him for his religious background. The adults around him explain with lectures on parts of history that some readers may more gladly forget. As an adult, Kostia remains oblivious to much of what goes on around him; his best friend Iura Nesterov and later his wife Nadia continue to mediate the dangers and injustices of society for him. The work scenes are among the book's most convincing and enjoyable, and the genuine talent and professionalism of Kostia's colleagues seems to keep most of them decent. The novel's didactic tendency would make a translation valuable for courses in Russian and Soviet history and culture. The plot takes its characters through devotion to Communism, political skepticism, love of literature, abandonment, death of loved ones in war or illness, education, work, love, sex, marriage, parenthood, friendship, political meetings, pressure to inform on friends, arrest, loss of work, madness and death.

Grekova's meticulous structure foreshadows crucial episodes to create a satisfying narrative symmetry. Her style is occasionally awkward, especially in early sections, but for the most part lively and very readable, even gripping. As Zernova assures us, readers who like Grekova will find all her best traits here, even without considering the book's topic. While the historical revelations offer nothing unusual, attention to the psychology of developing self-hatred makes the story's outcome more thought-provoking than a more conventional end for the hero would have been.

In short, this novel offers all the lively writing, openness to real-life issues, and frankness of Grekova's other works, while in addition addressing Jewish experience and anti-Semitism in Soviet society. It is an intriguing work by an important writer as well as a plot-coated education in miniature for younger readers. Like Zernova, I wonder why it was first published in the United States. Surely not everyone who can bear to consider a literary treatment of the topic has already emigrated? Or, on the other hand, surely readers of Russian literature are not interested in Jewish themes only when the authors are Jewish themselves?

Sibelan Forrester, Swarthmore College

Caryl Emerson and Robert William Oldani. *Modest Musorgsky and Boris Godunov: Myths, Realities, Reconsiderations*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994. 339 pp., \$59.95 (cloth).

If the neo-classicist Stravinsky served as an apt icon for the critical Age of Eliot, surely Musorgsky, with his radically incomplete, collaborative and multi-versioned works (and life!) makes an ideal subject for the Age of Bakhtin. (The slippage toward multiplicity begins even with the spelling or pronouncing of his name!) What might be termed "the new Musorgsky