Aušra Jurgutienė, Dalia Satkauskytė, (eds), *The Literary Field under Communist Rule*, series Lithuanian Studies without Borders (Brighten, US, 2019), 258 p. ISBN 9781618119773

This collection brings a variety of perspectives to bear on the role and significance of literature in the USSR, specifically on the nature and function of what the editors call Soviet multinational literature. Based on the proceedings of a 2015 conference held at the Institute of Lithuanian Literature and Folklore in Vilnius, five of the chapters focus on Lithuanian literature and criticism, four cover Ukrainian, Russian, Latvian and Estonian literature, and the first three lay out the question of Soviet literature as a theoretical and historical problem.

The panoply of cultures, literatures, languages and critical traditions implied in the very notion of Soviet literature makes it an exceedingly difficult subject to treat in a comprehensive or coherent manner. This difficulty is usually solved by reducing Soviet literature to its Russian core, or by treating any one of the national literatures in isolation from the overarching Soviet cultural institutions. Another reductive solution is to reject the aesthetic dimension of Soviet art and literature, treating it as a purely ideological or political construct.

In this volume, the editor Dalia Satkauskytė deploys Pierre Bourdieu's concept of the literary field to reveal the interaction of politics and literature, and to bridge the gap between the universal aspirations of Soviet literature and the particularism of its national manifestations. In the introduction, she readily admits the difficulty inherent in applying this concept, which was developed to characterise the relative autonomy enjoyed by literature in a national framework, to the multi-national and totalitarian context of Soviet communism.

Nevertheless, the value of this framework comes through in Satkauskytė's analysis of Aesopian language in Soviet Lithuanian literature as a socio-poetic form, and in the other chapters in the collection, insofar as the literary field provides a broad framework for considering the intersections of literature, politics and society.

The chapters by Yevgeny Dobrenko and Vilius Ivanauskas provide a strong historical and theoretical introduction to the case studies that

follow. Dobrenko offers a very broad perspective, and argues for the need to study multi-national Soviet literature as a self-contained subject, irreducible to the national literatures it assembled. Specifically, he describes the rise and fall of multi-national Soviet literature in terms of the influence of Stalinism on the histories of the national literatures in question.

He divides this history into four periods: a) the unification of literatures in the 1920s and early 1930s; b) their development under Stalin; c) the progressive destalinisation through the late 1980s; and d) the re-nationalisation of literatures in the post-Soviet era. Each of these epochs has unique features, he says, but the key to his argument lies in the coherence he ascribes to the overall evolution, and his insistence that even post-Soviet developments in the national literatures should be interpreted in the light of a reappraisal of the central influence of Stalinism, especially in terms of the efforts to overcome the imposed provincialism of that period.

The historian Vilius Ivanauskas picks up on the tension between cultural universalism and ethnic particularism in his study of Lithuanian writers as social actors, tracing their efforts, individual and collective, to promote themselves within the framework of the all-union culture of the USSR, while leaving space for local interest. He credits Lithuanian writers with the shaping of a Lithuanian titular national culture within the Soviet framework, and the construction of Soviet modernisation, and describes the various strategies by individual Lithuanian authors to develop alternative forms of localised authenticity.

The next five chapters constitute a series of case studies of Lithuanian literature and writers. The first, by the philosopher Nerija Putinaité, offers a penetrating analysis of atheist autobiographies as a specific sub-genre characteristic of the epoch of the 'thaw', illustrating the subjection of literature to the political aim of transforming society. Solidly framed in a discussion of relevant national, Soviet and international literature, Putinaité's analysis of *Ite, missa est!* (1970) by the ex-priest Jonas Ragauskas, is nuanced and persuasive.

The next three chapters in this section, about the visit by Jean-Paul Sartre to Lithuania, by the literary historian Solveiga Daugirdaitė, and on Eimuntas Nekrošius' production of the play *Kvadratas*, by Loreta Mačianskaitė, and yet another on the lives of a trio of Lithuanian poets, by Donata Mitaitė, provide rich detail in their descriptions of particular historical and cultural events, or iconic Lithuanian cultural figures, but are rather weakly integrated into the broader theoretical and historical framework of the volume as a whole.

The last chapter in the Lithuanian section, by the co-editor Aušra Jurgutienė, offers a fine, sophisticated analysis of perhaps the most challenging topic in the volume: literary criticism under communist rule. Jurgutienė does a superb job of contextualising the issue of modernism in Lithuanian literature theoretically and comparatively, not only by comparing the Lithuanian case with other Soviet and European literatures, but also by pointing out major intersections of influence. The two Lithuanian critics she takes as her case studies are treated with insight and sensitivity. Their works are investigated in depth, and yet the chapter is engaging to read, no small challenge when writing criticism of criticism. The conclusion, which points the way to further research on the distinction between 'loyal' and 'rebellious' conformity, is convincing and relevant.

The last section of the book treats subjects from the literatures of Soviet Ukraine, Russia, Latvia and Estonia, grouped under the broad heading 'Hermeneutics of Truth and Compromise'. The chapter on Ukraine by Valentyna Kharkhun is a solid piece of well-contextualised research, providing an interesting analysis of three generations of Ukrainian writers, that develops the main themes of the volume as a whole. Paven Arsenev provides a strong study of Varlam Shalamov's stories, and the question of truth and authenticity in representations of the Gulag. It stands out from the other chapters as the only piece on Russian literature and the tradition of Russian realism. A very focused case study of the publication history of one journal (*Karogs*, 1940–2010) in Latvia is provided by Eva Eglaja-Kristone. In spite of the diverse subject matter, each of these articles ties in well with the theoretical and historical themes outlined in the introduction.

In conclusion, this volume meets its stated ambition of overcoming the 'dualistic schemes' that often afflict research on Soviet literature through a judicious application of the concept of the literary field. The book should be of interest to students and teachers of history, politics, literature, Soviet studies, and related fields. It has a unique value for its sophisticated treatment of the subject matter and coverage of non-Russian literatures of the former USSR.

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