the remark that the book "is a scholarly event." Unfortunately, this cannot be said of Russian Imagism, 1919-1924. In the preface to the first part the author points to Professor Nils A. Nilsson's study of 1970, The Russian Imaginists, as proof of the renewed interest in this short-lived literary school. He then continues: "This book is an attempt to complement Professor Nilsson's contribution with a short historical survey. . . ." (p. v) The truth is, however, that Markov's book can hardly be considered a complement to Nilsson's excellent historical survey and interpretation of the literary movement since the acquaintance with it is a conditio sine qua non for the understanding of the confusing treatment of the subject matter by Markov. In itself it is not so particularly difficult to offer a survey of the different manifestos issued during the turbulent period from 1919 to 1924 by the literati who called themselves imazhinisty. Nevertheless, we are greatly indebted to Professor Nilsson for the lucidity with which he traced the history of the movement and discussed the parallels and divergences between the Russian imaginists and the English poets who called themselves imagists. The major question which now arises is: does the literary school after this fine, comprehensive study of Nilsson deserve more attention and further investigation? Perhaps it does, but then not in the way Markov does it which basically amounts to retelling Nilsson's story and adding a great number of facts about minor poets of whom one gets the impression that it is hardly worthwhile to dwell.

Nilsson's study should have been followed up, if at all, by a detailed investigation of the ways in which the major representatives of the movement, such as V. G. Shershenevich, A. B. Mariengof, Sergei Esenin, and A. B. Kusikov, implemented their theoretical postulates in their artistic works. Esenin is naturally a case by himself, but after one reads the poetry of the three others, the question may be raised again whether such an investigation is called for. Nilsson very aptly points out that "they [the imazhinisty] continued, in other words, the depoetization of the Symbolists' 'beautiful' imagery which the Futurists had begun. It is doubtful if they gave us very much more (Esenin excepted). Imprisoned as they were in their theoretical reasoning, their imagery was not infrequently cramped and mannered. They hunted new and unused comparisons at any price." (p. 52) There is no doubt that the demands placed by Shershenevich on the poet in his theoretical writings are often intriguing and, moreover, daring when one keeps in mind the time and place where they were made, namely post-revolutionary Russia. But all that is discussed by Nilsson.

Once Markov had decided to publish an anthology of poetry of the Russian imaginists, he could have made the accompanying volume into an interpretative study of the collected poems. However, to the great surprise and disappointment of the reader, the first, historical, theoretical volume contains not a single reference to the anthology volume.

In conclusion it should be mentioned that the discussion at the end of the book of Esenin's participation in and relationship to what Markov insists should be referred to as imagism is very revealing, but it is not enough to leave the reader with a favorable impression of the work.

A. F. Zweers


The analysis of Soviet literature of the 1920s has so far centered on literary politics, writer's groups, and individual authors. Less attention has been paid to the development of genres and narrative modes. For this reason, in the context of the genesis of Soviet literature, a book on Soviet satire of the 1920s is particularly welcome. Satire, a narra-
tive mode closely dependent on the cultural changes occurring in Russia, in its forms and its themes reflected the formation of new concepts of literature and new cultural values. More than any other literature, satire aimed at concrete and immediate effectiveness and for this reason provoked controversies which had their origin in the general debates on the formal and thematic direction of Soviet literature. Although the bulk of early Soviet satire functioned mainly as propaganda and is now commonly dismissed as non-literary, this new use of literature as a transmitter of ideology grew out of new aesthetics which assigned to an artistic medium a special role in restructuring societal patterns. Next to the works of writers such as Zamiatin and Bulgakov, this propagandistic satire should have a legitimate place in the study of the period during which the concept and the function of popular literature underwent a radical reevaluation.

In general, during the 1920s it is not always easy to classify individual works as satire, fantasy, or simply as an experiment in a narrative perspective. At the time when the genre boundaries were fluid and when an ironic undertone frequently appeared in non-proletarian literature, literary works containing satirical elements may in other aspects be completely dissimilar. Zamiatin's We, Bulgakov's Master and Margarita, and Maiakovsky's Bedbug show a satirical tendency; and yet their individual perspective, genre, and style do not bear any resemblance, nor is there any similarity in the political stance of these writers and the message of their works.

In his book on Soviet satire, Richard Chapple finds the common denominator in the recurrence of satirical themes which lead to the creation of Soviet satirical stereotypes. Chapple's presentation is grouped around the larger subjects of "the Revolution and the Civil War," "the Emigre," "Contemporary Life," "Foreign Lands and Peoples," and "Religious and Other Malefactors." The authors who deal with these themes are in turn divided into "proregime" and "antiregime" groups. Unfortunately, attitudes held by the writers during the 1920s offer little guidance for the analysis of satire: time and time again the reader finds that both groups deal with the same themes, that their views of Russian reality differ in emphasis but not in substance, and that the literary methods of the "proregime" group can hardly be distinguished from those used by the "antiregime" writers. These political categories lead Chapple to classify the "fellow travelers," a loose gathering of assorted writers who contributed the majority of works regarded as satirical, as an "antiregime" group, all debates about their function in Soviet literature notwithstanding. At the same time, recognizing that his classification is inadequate and misleading, Chapple establishes a most vague aesthetic formula for this group: "modernist poetry and classical Russian realism modified by the innovations of the ornamentalists" (p. 3).

The problem with a thematic survey of Soviet satire is that such an account is rather predictable: all those familiar with the literature of the period could put together a fairly adequate listing of subjects which were satirized. In his account, however, Chapple could have attempted to convey a sense of the evolution of themes and a sense of progression in formal methods from the agit-prop and the modernist experimentation toward the Socialist Realism of the 1930s. In the chapter on "Literature," Chapple does make a brief effort at analyzing the complexity of formal-thematic-political connections and mentions the ongoing debates on the principles of Soviet satire. Soon, however, he abandons these central issues and continues with the description of motifs.

In reality, neither the thematic interests of the writers in question nor their political positions are sufficiently distinct to serve as a basis for presenting the satire of the 1920s. The developmental patterns should instead be drawn along the general concepts of literature which were explored and debated in the 1920s. For example, the schematism and distortions of Zamiatin's prose do not necessarily reflect his "antiregime" position, but more often are a function of his artistic method. And if an artistic method becomes a function of a certain ideological stance, the connection between the two is rather complex. In any case, We is not the creation of an anti-Soviet, anti-Marxist author, as Chap-