cidental to Pirog's interpretation. The poet who admitted "how we poets cherish life in its fleeting trifles," is absent in this book. Here one encounters Blok the thinker, deeply preoccupied with transcendence, as well as an implied assurance that the author's interpretation will provide the key to the unraveling of the cycle's true meaning.

Feeling strongly that Blok's Italian experience must be viewed in its wider biographical context, I fail to see the relevance of some of Pirog's observations and do not subscribe to his conclusions. I cannot see, for instance, how the grammatical parallelism of the first two lines of stanza two of "Blagoveshchenie" reinforces the local byt (p. 94) or how the use of the perfective form of the verb upali indicates that "the consequences of the action which occurred in the past are still manifest in the present" (p. 105). Statements such as "The peculiar ambivalence and pessimism that permeate the Italian poems is precisely the result of a failure on the part of a modern poet to achieve a relationship with the landscape which was possible for the artist of the Renaissance" (p. 41) are consonant with Pirog's interpretation, but I view Blok's pessimism in the summer of 1909 as having much deeper psychological causes than his failure "to achieve a relationship with the landscape."

The style may well in part detract from an appreciation of this book. One constantly stumbles over abstruse, convoluted sentences; citations other than those directly related to subject, and non-sequiturs spinning off in all directions; constant references to what was mentioned earlier or is to be treated later in greater detail; lengthy Russian quotations all given in transcription; and French, Italian, and Latin quotations in the original. They all attest to Pirog's scholarship, but distract the reader's attention from the core of the book. One cannot help wishing for a less baroque presentation, for this study is not without its strengths. However controversial some of Pirog's arguments may be, and however unlike my own perceptions, many of them are original and worth pondering. There are rewarding insights such as those into the nature of the Christ image within the Composition, the penetrating observations on Florence 5, and the perceptive reflections on aetas and aeternitas. The appendices constitute an important contribution—a reference which can be of great value to any study of Blok. Slavic Publishers are to be congratulated for the neat format and, with the exception of some minor errata, an almost impeccable publication.

A minor point: I appreciate Pirog's reference to my book, but I would like to point out that its correct title is Aleksandr Blok: The Journey to Italy (not Aleksandr Blok: The Italian Journey). Also its description: "largely an English translation of the poems and of the essays in "Molnii iskusstva" is erroneous since the translations represent less than a third of the book.

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Peter Drews' study of the Russian, Polish and Czech avant garde is a welcome addition to the growing body of scholarship on the revolution in art and literature which preceded the Russian revolutions of 1917 and continued on into the twenties. Focusing on poetry, he details the theories and artistic praxis of the major avant garde schools as well as the interaction among the different Slavic avant gardes and between the Slavic and Western avant gardes.
Chapter 2, the heart of the book, treats the program and practice of the Russian, Polish, and Czech (really Bohemian) avant garde. The differences among the various sub-groups of the Russian avant garde which succeeded symbolism are made clear. Acmeists opposed symbolist mystification, stressed concreteness in poetry, advocated a "struggle for this world" and envisioned a "new Adam" and a new unity of the earth and man. Ego-futurists, led by Igor Severianin, viewed the world soul as an incarnation of pure ego of which man is part. Influenced less by Nietzsche and Stirner than by the American poet Walt Whitman, they advocated the free development of the individual in a democratic society. Not as iconoclastic as the cubo-futurists, they believed that the future needed the past. By contrast, the cubo-futurists (the Burliuk brothers, Kruchenykh, Khlebnikov, Kamenskii, Mariakovskii) advocated a complete break with the past, were collectivist in orientation, and stressed the communal function of art. Their poetic theory, especially the concept of zaum, transrational language, involved not just the destruction of grammar and syntax, but splitting the word itself. They associated the new word with a new art and a new world. Most futurists, incidentally, advocated poetry with a "national feeling"; Kruchenykh wanted to forbid foreign words. Drews then turns to Maiakovskii and post-Bolshevik futurism, as manifested in The Poet's Cafe, Art of the Commune, Kom-fut, LEF, and New LEF, and as affected by the political and literary battles of the 1920s. Constructivism, in some respects an outgrowth of futurism, celebrated technology and claimed to be the art of the new society. Its artistic principles were economy of materials, goal-directedness, dynamism, and rationality of construction. Imagism (or imaginism) proclaimed the death of futurism, was mystical and nationalist in its orientation, and indebted to the symbolists for much of its literary theory.

The chapter then turns to the Polish and Czech avant garde, tracing the evolution of their theory and practice, explicating the major features of their leaders and journals, and the regional differences in the Polish avant garde of Warsaw, Pozñan, and Kraków. Of particular interest is Drews' discussion of national variations in the perception of the machine, a key futurist and expressionist theme. Italian futurists' writings on the machine contained an erotic element; Russian futurists regarded the machine as a servant of man, while Polish futurists saw man and machine as roughly equal parts of a higher general organism and looked forward to an entirely new creation based on machine principles. Some Warsaw futurists maintained that the machine had now, through its consumption, become a person. Czech futurism focused less on the machine and more on building a new life. Optimistic in orientation, it viewed German expressionism as the spirit of decadence.

Subsequent chapters discuss the reception of Nietzsche, Bergson, Whitman, and modern painters in the environment of the avant garde and the interaction among and between Western and Slavic avant garde artists. Drews maintains that Italian futurism, German expressionism, and French surrealism were parallel movements with relatively little direct influence on one another and that there was little direct personal contact between the three Slavic avant garde, but that the October Revolution had considerable ideological impact on Polish and Czech artists. The concluding chapter argues that the characteristics of the avant garde were expressionism, vitalism (influenced by Bergson), and cubism. An appendix treats the Slovak, Yugoslav, and Ukrainian avant garde.

Generalists and specialists alike will find valuable Drews' comparative perspective, the new information he provides on the little studied Polish and Czech avant garde, and his discussion of the influence of Nietzsche, Bergson, and Whitman on East European artists. (Nietzsche's influence did not, however, end with the October Revolution as Drews claims, but continued on through the twenties, often in combination with the theories of Richard Wagner.) Drews' survey of the major avant garde movements and the differences between them will be particularly useful to generalists.