military and cultural relationship. Russia, perennially seeing itself as not quite measuring up to Europe's standards, found some comfort in maintaining a superior stance vis-à-vis the peoples of the Caucasus. But the other side of Russian identity has always been Asia, and the "orientalizing" of the Caucasus is not totally an act of rejection, but more likely self-contemplation. The Cossacks, who figured heavily in these wars, occupy some place in between Russia's European and Asian identities.

As good as Russian Literature and Empire is, it is not without flaws. Layton makes it clear that she relied primarily on Said, Bakhtin, and gender theory to bring her material into focus. While most of the time these theories and their associated terminology do just that, her use of theory has a more static than dynamic quality in the second half of the book, where the conclusions drawn from a particular author become somewhat predictable. The three most theoretical chapters—"Little Orientalizers," "Feminizing the Caucasus," and "Georgia as an Oriental Woman"—could have been condensed to greater overall effect. The one place where theory seems to have actually led her astray is in the interpretation (in chapter 12, "The Anguished Poet in Uniform") of Lermontov's 1840 poem "Valerik." Layton makes a great deal of the persona's switch to the second person in describing his activities at the front, but rather than clear evidence of sadomasochism or a double-sided identity, these second-person verbal forms (lezhish', dremlesh') are quite commonly used to describe precisely that: one's daily routine.

Other flaws are stylistic and ought to have been picked up by a copy editor. To show how Pushkin, Lermontov, and Tolstoi changed their views of the literary Caucas and its inhabitants, Layton resorts to phrases like "young Tolstoy" and "mature Lermontov," which is fine when we are first absorbing this chronological information, but the several dozen instances of "young Pushkin" are unnecessary and distracting, as are the five appearances of "Promethean" in the space of two pages (pp. 184-85).

Susan Layton has brought a work of literary-historical sophistication and depth—as well as contemporary relevance—to the field. Russian Literature and Empire should have a lasting influence on our reading of the nineteenth-century literature of empire, and of the Russian empire's role in the imagination of some of its most gifted writers. As Layton elegantly demonstrates, when describing the "other," in this case, a non-Slavic, non-Europeanized enemy, these writers revealed a great deal about themselves and the tortured relationship they had with their enigmatic and unpredictable homeland.

Kathleen Parthé
University of Rochester


Wolf Schmid's book is a collection of previously published articles which have appeared as recently as 1994 and as far back as 1982 in a variety of Western, East European, and Russian journals. They have been brought together here under the unifying theme of the book's subtitle—articles about narrative strategy in Russian literature. Although the title, проза как поэзия, is catchy, it does not give an indication of the actual
contents or the central focus of the majority of the articles. (There are two exceptions in
the volume, an article which treats the development of Pushkin’s later elegies and an-
other on Bakhtin’s category of quasi-direct speech.) There is much to please the spe-
cialist of narrative strategy of nineteenth- and twentieth-century Russian prose, but
there is little which unifies the studies across their vast disparateness—other than
Schmid’s keen insight into the tales’ structures. From the articles on Pushkin’s “Belkin
Tales” and “The Captain’s Daughter” to the general article on Bitov’s prose, or from
Lemontov’s A Hero of Our Time and Dostoevskii’s Brothers Karamazov to Zamiatin’s
The Flood, there are few unifying themes relative to narrative technique. What there
most decidedly is, however, are highly competent and deeply interesting close read-
ings of the texts. As a specialist in early nineteenth-century Russian literature, I will
attend to the Pushkin here in some detail. But I do so only with some misgiving, for
Schmid makes equally fine readings of Chekhov, Zamiatin, and Bitov. The assessment
of the quality of those articles, however, I will leave to others.

The chapters entitled “Proza i poezia v ‘Povestiakh Belkina’,” “Dom-grob, zhivye mertvetsy i pravoslavie Adriana Prokhorova: 0 poetichnosti ‘Grobovshchika’,”
“Nevezuchii zhenikl i vetrenye suzhenye: Podteksty i razvertyvaishchiesia rechevye
klihe v ‘Meteli’,” and “Su’dba i kharakter: Razvertyvanie rechevykh klihe v ‘Kapitan-
skoii dochke’,” indicate the parameters of Schmid’s interests in treating these stories
(novellas by his definition). Least satisfying is the author’s attempt to force his close
readings of the texts into the Procrustean bed of “poeziia.” The first two articles attempt
to define what is “poetic” in Pushkin’s narratives, but in the process of doing so,
Schmid leads the reader astray from what eventually forms the substance of his
presentation—eross-referentia! phenomena within the individual text and across
several texts which explicate the complex forces bearing on generation and reception.
By the third article, the pretense of “poeziia” is dropped. It should have been edited out
entirely in the first place. I do not wish to emphasize this point too much, however.
Rather, Schmid’s explications bear greater attention for the riches he delivers.
Especially noteworthy are Schmid’s examinations of parallel structures within each tale
as those structures “realize a metaphor” (to use a favorite phrase of the Formalists
Schmid activates frequently in his analyses) inhering in a key pogovorka or a set of
interrelated sounds on which the stories hinge.

Of particular interest is the effect the sounds “grob,” “Pro[khorov],” “pokh[orony],”
“drog[i],” have on “Grobovshchik.” The reading of various levels of enclosure in this
Pushkin tale is especially pleasing. But Schmid also presents a set of binary opposi-
tions through which this conflation of phonetic elements takes on special meaning,
becoming equivalents in some quasiliteral way. Examining Adrian Prokhorov’s dream
not only as a response to the party he has attended (and from which he leaves feeling
an offense has been given that in fact has not been [!]), but as the means by which the
narrative exposes the folkloric basis of Prokhorov’s odd Orthodoxy, Schmid effectively
exposes how auctorital technique cannot be separated from meaning-building. The
argument that this makes the story “poetic” hardly bears discussion, even though
Schmid makes an attempt to set the poetic elements against the background of the
prose the story in fact is.