radically different eras and that were written to radically different aesthetics — his inclusion of a work from the eighteenth century being particularly satisfying.

In some ways Platt is more explicit in his treatment of revolutions than he is in his discussion of literary texts. Although he establishes early in his study that a period of revolution is colored by its contemporaries' recognition of previous such periods, he fails to consider whether the authors of various works of revolutionary grotesque literature likewise recognize their kinship with earlier writers in the tradition. This, in turn, begs the question of whether there is, in fact, a conscious tradition. One wonders whether this might explain why Platt discusses so few texts. Could he have looked at more, or are these works idiosyncratic, i.e., largely non-productive of literary progeny? A final, small quibble concerns Platt's reading of pre-Petrine culture. Did Peter's transformations really unfold against a "staid and stable traditional world?" Certainly the Church Schism, not to mention the Time of Troubles, had already destabilized social and intellectual mores well before the advent of Peter's reforms. Moreover, the Petrine reforms and the literature that reflects them need not conform all that closely to Platt's paradigm, if only because they represent an antecedent to it rather than a conscious part of it.

Minor cavils notwithstanding, History in a Grotesque Key represents a valuable contribution to Slavic studies. Platt's formulation of the revolutionary grotesque, his recognition of the common features shared by the works in question, as well as his ability to synthesize across a period of 250 years are more than impressive.

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Ordinarily, the technical shortcomings of a book under review are relegated to a brief mention in the penultimate paragraph, if indeed they are mentioned at all. In the present case, however, this reviewer feels compelled to begin with technical matters, since the book under review has been extremely poorly edited. It is rife with errors that render the text often unidiomatic, sometimes ungrammatical, and occasionally nearly unintelligible. The author has been badly served by her editor (if indeed the text was edited) and the publisher. Article usage is often unidiomatic — "While trying to eliminate a comedy from Elena's passive nature" [p. 74]; "now Irina wakes up and dreams in the bed at least till nine" [p. 105]; "Sharing completely the Baehr's explanation of Firs' name" [p. 149; the reference is to the scholar Stephen L. Baehr] — as are noun/preposition and verb/preposition collocations: "Astrov makes a small 'inter-rogation' to Voynitsky, asking him about people in the estate" [p. 78]; "thus the 'crone' [sic] of the 'Forest,' its acme is assigned by Elena" [p. 95; the context requires "to"]. At times a required preposition is omitted: "It smells the
heliotropes” [p. 63] for “It smells of heliotrope”. Many lexical choices tend to obfuscate meaning: “As long as Astrov flourishes about the ideal beauty of the man” [in the sense of humanity; p. 82]; “Andrey Prozorov, Baron Tuzenbach, and Kozyrev are united in the plot by the card’s notion of their names” [p. 109]; “Plato’s guardians are prototypes of Chekhovian soldiers who expand on the matter of life and death” [p. 113; presumably “expound” is meant]; “the key sound of breaking string heard from the sky becomes an inversion of the biblical event — the nonsigned precept with God” [p. 141]. At times these errors are clearly the result of inaccurate translation; neither Sonia (Uncle Vania) nor Natasha (Three Sisters) is a hostess [pp. 85; 107], but rather housekeeper or mistress of the house; “semantic row” for semanticheskii riad [p. 139] is meaningless; “series” would be the appropriate English idiom. It should be emphasized that these samples are taken almost at random and could be easily multiplied.

While the preceding examples may seem trivial, such constant puzzles force the reader to correct grammar or usage, while often guessing at the meaning. With the high frequency of such problems, reading the text at first seems a game, but quickly becomes a chore and a bore. In addition to these linguistic and stylistic inadequacies, there are numerous inconsistencies that proper copy editing should have eliminated. Biblical and classical names appear in varying forms or forms that are not standard in English: Eleyah and Elijah; Arcas and Arcadas, the legendary king of Arcadia (standard form Arcas); Cornelius Nepot [Roman historian; standard form Nepos]. Transliteration is inconsistent and follows no standard system, even in the bibliography. No doubt through failure to switch fonts, foreign words in passages cited in Russian from the plays often appear as incomprehensible sequences of Cyrillic letters rather than in the Latin alphabet.

Finally, there are errors of literary fact. Appollon Appollonovich and Nikolai Appollonovich in Andrei Belyi’s Petersburg are referred to three times as brothers [pp. 27, 28] rather than as father and son, their actual relationship in the novel. Serebriakov (Uncle Vania) proposes to sell not “his ancestors’ estate” [p. 75], but rather the estate that was his first wife’s dowry and now is Sonia’s inheritance, as Vania explains in response to Serebriakov’s suggestion. The “heroine, a young country girl” of Chekhov’s story “In the Ravine” (Vovrage) is Lipa, not Aksin’ia [p. 149], who is actually the rapacious murderer of Lipa’s infant son.

Faced with such extensive evidence of carelessness and inconsistency, the reader tends to approach the book’s main argument with caution. After an opening chapter espousing a method based on systems analysis, in which broader levels of organization are privileged over more narrow ones, the book proceeds to an analysis of each of Chekhov’s main plays in terms of mythic and archetypal patterns. These consist of a Hesiodic/Arcadian myth of a golden age in The Seagull, the Iliad (specifically the struggle over Helen) in Uncle Vania, a myth of the polis/urbs in Three Sisters, and a myth of the Promised Land in The Cherry Orchard. Russian folklore is also brought into play at certain points. Although there are occasional observations that are of