Russian economic development nevertheless remains dependent upon the state, a fact that the Washington Consensus failed to recognize. Hence, the market reforms have weakened both the country and the state leaving it in a potentially unstable situation. Should oil prices drop for any sustained period of time, Russia's domestic political situation would be rendered uncertain at best.

The thesis, which bears some resemblance to that of Richard Pipes, particularly concerning the patrimonial state, is well-argued and compelling. Nonetheless, to this reader's mind a few questions beg to be addressed, if for no reason other than to deflect criticism from those favoring general theories and models. Given the frequent argument that the oligarchs were licensed by the state (indeed that all business must be approved by the state), is it really the case that the nexus between political and economic power has been broken? Are not the current economic maneuverings of the siloviki, who surround Putin, evidence that state position and personal economic gain are still connected in Russia? Further, why must geography translate into a permanent Russian economic disadvantage in the current global order? The argument makes sense in a global economy dominated by industrial production, but this is the information and communication age. Geography has little impact on the creation of wealth by these means. Indeed, the communications age has meant that borders and terrain have been rendered far less meaningful (if meaningful at all). In short, history does change, and historical patterns may well lose their relevance as it does so.

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Occasionally a book comes along that cuts across disciplines without addressing the general reader. Russia's Dangerous Texts is such a book. The subject is literary subversion, literary roles, canonized texts, and the Russians' bookish peregrinations over their national identity. The author ranges over a hundred and fifty years, from Pushkin to Siniavsky. She tells a great story that is fun to read for anyone familiar with Russian literary history. And she brings in some curious and to me unfamiliar incidents and information. My favorite is her discussion of the most recent anti-Semitic constructions of the deaths of famous writer-martyrs according to which Pushkin was done in by Jews. One such publicist fixes on the words "greedy" and "gold" in Lermontov's famous poem on Pushkin's death as clear proof that Jews had a hand in it (pp. 116-17). Parthé might have noted that in 1937, as I point out in Thank You Comrade Stalin, Stalin's publicists intimated that Pushkin had been murdered by a gang similar to the accused Trotskyites.

Parthé commences and concludes her study with ten propositions about Russia none of which, however, directly addresses the issue of Pushkin's death by Jews or by the precursors of Trotsky. The propositions are as follows:
1. "Russians read more than any other people" (p. 176)
2. Literature is "politics, prophecy, and national identity" (p. 176).
3. Everyone thinks of one text at the same time
4. "Poets get shot" (p. 187)
5. "But manuscripts don’t burn" (p. 187)
6. "Although they can cause fires" (p. 187)
7. "Writers must avoid all contact with vlast’ (power)” (p. 187)
9. Censorship was more stimulating than freedom
10. “Writers undermined the authoritarian state until it collapsed” (p. 19).

These familiar statements, she argues, though sometimes misleading or false, sum up the place of literature in the Russian experience. But the book is not a historical survey of Russian literature and politics. Parthe has more to say about some propositions than others. There is little about the role of writers in weakening the state or about politics undermining art but much on writers’ suffering, national identity, and contact with power. Parthe also digresses and puts the propositions aside for several chapters. But that is perhaps just as well. She is not concerned with the content of literature or the positions and actions of writers so much as with the overall literary situation. She casts her net not only over the great age of Russian culture but also over its aftermath, particularly the last decades of the twentieth century and the first years of the twenty-first.

The strength of the book is in the author’s wide range. She moves back and forth across the historical record, exploring the state’s understanding of what constitutes a “dangerous text” and how writers positioned themselves in this stimulating if stressful environment. That various rulers considered writers threatening and that writers used literature as “a forum for an alternative politics” is well known, but Parthe documents this in a fresh manner, bringing in the recent past. Her contribution is chiefly that. She thrusts the experience of writers such as Voinovich, Brodsky, Siniavsky, Solzhenitsyn, and representatives of the village school into the great tradition.

The focus of much of the book is on the period from the sixties to the present day. This is both a plus and a minus. Much of the interest in Russian literary culture centers on the era from Pushkin to the last of the old modernist generation, Akhmatova and Pasternak. Parthe treats the imperial period, the incidents and the engagement with the state of Pushkin, Gogol’, Dostoevsky, Tolstoy, and so forth, as a staging ground for the long tradition of literature and politics. The modernist generation is largely marginalized. There is no mention of Valery Briusov and Dmitry Merezhkovsky though these two authors did much to set the literary tone for the 1890s and each had a different though equally fascinating relationship with state power before and after 1917. Fedor Sologub and Zinaida Gippius, two other luminaries of the first modernist generation, get one mention each, Sologub for his hero Pereydonov’s fear of being caught with subversive books and Gippius for an anti-Bolshevik poem written in emigration. Yet the modernists challenged the traditional relationship between writers and the state. In fact, there is no mention in the index of N. A. Berdi-