are prominent in the folklore of other Slavic countries (see, for instance, a lovely book of poems by Linda Nemec Foster, an American of Polish background, titled The Baba Yaga Poems, 1992). There is no attempt to analyze certain interesting regularities in Afanas’ev’s fairy tales, such as the Russian characters’ extraordinary proclivity for submission during their encounters with the tsar/king/ruler. Was this feature edited into the tales by the Soviets, or has it always been present in Russian fairy tales? These are some of the opportunities the editor of the introduction chose to ignore. Finally, the fairy tales in the first section have been translated into a wooden and colorless English, of the kind one learns from books teaching English to foreigners. Gone is the sense of intimacy and the folksy expressions of the originals.

The second section contains texts that should have been consigned to merciful oblivion. They illustrate the well-known truth that in Soviet Russia every area of human activity was under the scrutiny of the appropriate authorities. The tales in this section are badly structured and largely pointless. However, the translations are markedly better, and the introduction is informative and lively.

The third part is characterized by a superior quality of the translations. It also contains some interesting texts, the foremost being Evgenii Zamiatin’s “tales for adults.” I enjoyed parts of Evgenii Shvartz’s, Grigorii Gorin’s, and Vasilii Shukshin’s sketches: in an abbreviated form, they could have served as material for a Russian version of “Saturday Night Live.” However, one notes a considerable distance between these amusing pieces and the great Russian literature of the nineteenth and early twentieth century.

The volume’s title is misleading. The magic was not politicized, because there was no magic to begin with. The Soviet stories do not generate a sense of wonderment, but they occasionally yield bits of information about life under communism. In Lazar Lagin’s story, a happy worker’s family is moving to a bigger and better apartment, and mother and grandmother pack kitchen dishes into a basin in which they used to bathe the narrator when he was a baby. One envisages the size of this basin and the corresponding scarcity of dishes. If this book had been published in the 1960s, when difficulties of getting any materials in Russian trumped their content, it would have been an attractive if ephemeral contribution. Now, it merely smells of mothballs.

Ewa Thompson

Rice University


Varlam Shalamov (1907-1982), a young journalist and fledgling writer, was arrested in 1937 for “counterrevolutionary Trotskyite activity” and spent fourteen years in the labor camps of Kolyma. His six cycles of short stories about that devastating experience, known collectively as Kolyma Tales, were not published in Russia until several years after his death. Since then his reputation has grown steadily, as both Russian and foreign scholars have been gripped by his ability to convey not only suffering and
death on a mass scale, but also the psychological and moral disintegration of the individual under extreme duress.

In one of the first full-length English-language studies of this author, Nathaniel Golden examines *Kolyma Tales* from the perspective of Formalist and Structuralist theory. Applying L. Michael O'Toole's methodology (*Structure, Style and Interpretation in the Russian Short Story*), Golden analyzes the work according to six "structural levels": narrative structure, point of view, fabula, sujet, characterization, and setting. However, Golden does not apply O'Toole's approach consistently. For example, O'Toole sees narrative structure and point of view as the main organizing elements in particular texts. Golden, however, argues that any of the six "structural levels" can be dominant, but does not explain satisfactorily his rationale for this approach or his criteria for identifying dominant levels in a given story. Moreover, he does not make clear the relationship between the dominant and subordinate levels in his discussion of Shalamov's stories.

Golden focuses his study on 11 of the approximately 150 Kolyma tales without outlining the principles (such as representativeness) upon which he bases his selections. His heavy reliance on the English translation rather than the Russian original leads to some errors and anomalies. One of the stories he analyzes, "Fire and Water," is but a version of another, "Tamed Fire," which appears in the more recent, authoritative Russian-language publications of *Kolyma Tales*. Golden also relies heavily on the commentary of several English-language scholars, but overlooks the growing body of Russian and other foreign-language discussions of Shalamov's work.

In his examination of the stories, Golden presents several promising ideas, but fails to develop them or produce concrete conclusions. Golden is perhaps the first to approach the dead in *Kolyma Tales* as both background and characters. He also identifies a series of interesting splits in narrative perspective, such as that between the singular "I," which reports the events, and the plural "we," which experiences them. In neither case, however, does he fully discuss these ideas in terms of their function and significance. Similarly, in his sections on character and setting, the logical conclusion of his argument, but one which he never actually states, is that setting itself is the most powerful and destructive actor in the stories. Finally, in the section on narrative structure, Golden relates the frequent absence of an introduction and epilogue, which typically create a state of equilibrium that is disrupted, then reestablished, to the lack of any state of normalcy in the Stalinist camps. He also focuses on the numerous complications in the plots of the stories "The Lawyer's Plot" and "The Train," but fails to link the way these complications are resolved to that absence of normalcy. Obstacles are most often overcome in Shalamov's universe not through the efforts of the characters themselves, but thanks to fortuitous external events. The characters are helpless because, in a world lacking any semblance of normality, in a world of continuous and unpredictable change, they are unable to identify a set of norms or modes of behavior, which would allow them to have power over their own lives.

The application of neo-Formalism to *Kolyma Tales* has real potential for enhancing an understanding of Shalamov's art. However, this particular study leaves the reader unsatisfied, as it is too mechanical and ultimately lacks cohesion. It also raises important questions, which remain unanswered, such as how the various "structural levels"