

accounts of dozens of authors and works are presented one after another, we suddenly run into a paragraph or page of what are really essays—introductory, summarizing, analytical—about special topics. One wishes they had been printed in a different typeface, or that they could have been marked by subheadings, so that one could go through the book just picking out these “opinion” sections. They include fascinating and original little surprises—for example, a delightful miniature essay on “happy endings” in Soviet literature (p. 309), style and colloquial language in Soviet short stories (pp. 184–87), “suppressed rage” as a dominant theme (p. 182), the nomadic period of Soviet poets with a proclivity to long journeys (p. 108), or an excursus on how *skaz* muffled or disguised the voice of the author in prose of the 1920s (p. 150).

Since the book covers hundreds of works and authors, it would be unfair to quarrel with the relative amounts of space allotted to various works or to object to the omission of individual books or topics—one’s own favorite dark horses or sleepers. This reviewer, for example, missed any reference to Kaverin’s important *Pered zerkalom* (*In Front of the Mirror*), or a sufficient account of rehabilitations—the delayed impact of posthumously published works (Slonim has a whole section headed “Posthumous Revivals”)—or a fuller discussion of Trifonov’s *House on the Embankment* and of the late Bitov. However, Deming Brown is excellent on innumerable authors; let me name only four—Iurii Kazakov, I. Grekova, Kushner, and Voznesensky. Throughout, we feel we are not reading entries in a dry survey, but rather, the personal, direct reactions of a prudent and sensitive scholar to hundreds of recent Soviet works.

Deming Brown’s general view of Soviet literature since Stalin is that “socialist realism . . . has largely been replaced by critical realism” (p. 19), and he concludes: “When the idea of writing this book was conceived in the mid-1960’s, Soviet literature appeared to be on the upswing. A new, bold generation of poets and prose writers, reinforced by an older generation recently released from decades of frustration, was in the process of introducing a variety of fresh topics, ideas, and styles into a literature that had been virtually moribund. The present book, then, was planned as the chronicle and analysis of a literary renaissance. The events and developments of the ensuing decade, however, have been so disappointing that the process can now be best described as a renaissance in reverse. What began as a great burst of liberated creative energy subsided into something fragmented, depressed, and lifeless” (p. 373).

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POEMS. By *Nikolai Kliuev*. Translated by *John Glad*. Published by the Iowa Translation Series, International Writing Program, University of Iowa. Ann Arbor: Ardis, 1977. xx, 96 pp. \$2.95, paper.

Translating the poetry of Nikolai Kliuev is such a thankless job that one can only admire John Glad for having undertaken this difficult task. Kliuev mixes folklore, dialect, Slavonicisms, neologisms, obscenities, slang, and historical references into a messy vinaigrette of pseudo-Slavophile philosophy, mystical religiosity, and fairy tales spiced with sentimental longing for village Rus'. His style so far has not won the so-called “peasant poet” many enthusiastic admirers either in Russia or abroad, where he is mostly known for his stormy relationship with Esenin, and in particular for his role as Esenin’s mentor and possible lover.

Glad’s introduction with its description of *Khlysty* rites and Kliuev’s emotional histrionics titillates the reader’s imagination but fails to provide an overview of his poetry or even list his major collections. Such empty rhetorical questions on the fate

of Kliuev's poems as "Or in that land of chronic paper shortages [Siberia, 1937!] were they used . . . for toilet paper?" (p. xix) have no place in a brief introduction to the poet's work. No footnotes are given for the various sources quoted in the introduction. The Russian text is provided only for *Pogorel'shchina*; originals of the other poems would have made for a highly interesting dual-language edition of these difficult poems, though considerations of length may have been a factor in the decision to omit them. At the least, the Russian titles of the poems would have been useful, for changes of the first lines in the translations have made identification of some of the originals difficult. Useful notes explain some of Kliuev's myriad mythical, biblical, literary, and historical references and help make the poems comprehensible to the general reader as well as the Russian specialist.

Faced with the unenviable and formidable problem of Kliuev's hodge-podge of styles, twisted syntax, and heavy use of diminutives, Glad has opted for fairly literal translations which are generally faithful to the originals, although sometimes at the expense of poetic grace or fluidity. "The angel of simple human affairs" (p. 26) for "Angel prostykh chelovecheskikh del" sounds a bit bureaucratic, somewhat like a minister of foreign affairs. There are some outright mistranslations: "Da obronil ty khazarSKUU grivnu" is not "But you dropped the mane of the Khozars" (p. 40), since the word in question is *grivna* (an old coin) and not *griva* (mane). "Ne kru-chin'sia i ne plach' / Neob"iatno i bezdumno" hardly comes across as "Grieve not in thy boundlessness, / Wail not in thy madness" (p. 3)—perhaps a misreading of *bezumno* for *bezdumno*? "Oblik krovavyi i glybkii" is not "A deep and bloody face" (p. 40); the root is *glyba*, not *glubokii*. On the other hand, Kliuev's imitation of folklore is so impossible to convey accurately that it is really unfair to quarrel with Glad's rather flat "Who so frightened you" (p. 40) for "Kogo ty spolokhalsia-spu-zhalsia." Criticizing a translation is always far simpler than coming up with a better possibility, and Glad has made a noble try. Anyone truly interested in Kliuev would be well advised to take a look at this volume.

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CANTUS FIRMUS. By *Aleksis Rannit* and *Eduard Wiiralt*. Translated from the Estonian by *Henry Lyman*. Foreword by *Norman Holmes Pearson*. Postscriptum by *Aleksis Rannit*. New Rochelle, N.Y.: The Elizabeth Press, 1978. 56 pp. + 6 pp. plates. \$50.00. Distributed by Serendipity Books, Berkeley, Calif.

Cantus firmus stands as a monument to a friendship between two distinguished Estonian artists: the poet Aleksis Rannit (1914–) and the engraver Eduard Wiiralt (1898–1954). The origins of the book lie in an exhibition held at the Yale University Cloister Gallery in the fall of 1974, and repeated at the University of Virginia in the spring of 1977. The beautifully made, boxed volume, published in small folio in an edition of seven hundred fifty copies, is the work of Martino Mardersteig and the Stamperia Valdovona in Verona. Four years in preparation, it represents, as the publisher's announcement states, "a collaboration of several hands," chief among them the poet and the engraver.

Wiiralt, who traveled widely and died in Paris, received a gold medal at the 1937 International Graphic Arts Exhibition in Vienna. Rannit, curator of Russian and East European Studies at Yale and a full member of the International Academy of Arts and Letters since 1963, has earned wide recognition as a poet, with six collections in his native Estonian, and through books of his translated works in languages as diverse as German, Hungarian, Lithuanian, and Russian. The sixteen poems in *Cantus firmus* come from three sources: eleven were first published in the