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Review

Reviewed Work(s): Iveren': Zagoguliny moei pamiati (Modern Russian Literature and Culture, Studies and Texts, Vol. 7) by Aleksei Remizov

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Source: *The Russian Review*, Vol. 47, No. 2 (Apr., 1988), pp. 229-230

Published by: Wiley on behalf of The Editors and Board of Trustees of the Russian Review

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/130002>

Accessed: 22-04-2018 12:19 UTC

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The same can be said of the treatment of the second stated topic—Babel and modernism. Insightful and valid analyses of the themes and, not least, the style of major works are consistently related to and illuminated by the overall modernist context. Ehre does this so well, in fact, that university students should find his book useful as an introduction to modernism as a whole.

Isaac Babel admirably achieves all that can reasonably be demanded of a book of this genre and format, and it is likely to become and remain the definitive introduction to the writer.

Charles Rougle

State University of New York, Albany

Remizov, Aleksei. *Iveren': Zagoguliny moi pamiati* (Modern Russian Literature and Culture, Studies and Texts, vol. 7). Berkeley, CA: Berkeley Slavic Specialties, 1986. 386 pp. \$19.00.

The publication of Aleksei Remizov's memoir *Iveren'*, with the annotations and splendid commentary by Olga Raevsky-Hughes, is a long-awaited event. Remizov began writing this last autobiographical work in Paris in 1927 and continued it in fragments after the war through the late 'forties and early 'fifties. The years described here, 1896-1903, mark the beginning of Remizov's writing career and are crucial for understanding his literary biography, especially the early choices in the "quest for genre" that, as the editor points out, dominates much of his work. Remizov's writing presents a range of problems in genre definition, and this is especially true of his autobiographical prose, beginning with *Kukkha* (1923) and *Vzvikhrennaia Rus'* (1927), and culminating in *Podstrizhennymi glazami* (1951).

Raevsky-Hughes draws a crucial distinction between these works and conventional memoirs and autobiographies. Remizov is anti-chronological, and while he uses a great deal of documentary material, his central concern is the preservation of creative memory outside of spatial or temporal boundaries. The carefully selected episodes become "symbols of his life and fate." The selection process itself is conditioned by the inner, subjective significance of an event, by its implications for the writer. While *Iveren'* abounds in encounters with well-known personalities from literary and political life of the period, what the reader actually gleams from its pages are Remizov's creative transformations and perception of actual events. The material itself is extremely rich and heterogeneous as the narrative passes freely from autobiographical to literary matters, with numerous digressions. *Iveren'* presents the factual background of the writer's life in northern exile, especially in Vologda, then a lively center of cultural and political activity because of the many prominent persons exiled there. But the book's main intent is Remizov's "extended declaration of his special position" in Russian literature. He provides fascinating detail and insight into his first steps as a writer, creating a sense of the inevitability and predestination in his literary vocation, in which "memory" of past writers such as Avvakum, Gogol, Dostoevsky is given a prominent role.

Remizov's *Iveren'* is unique in its combination of documentary material and fictional material and further enhances our understanding not only of Remizov's writing, but of the literary atmosphere of the Silver Age. The extensive scholarly commentary to this major publication is an important bonus. Not only does Raevsky-Hughes provide copious annotations for the numerous references to obscure texts and various persons of

the period, an enormous task in itself, but her commentary points out possible directions for Remizov scholarship and contains brilliant short analyses that can be expanded into longer studies: Remizov and the Russian literary language; Remizov and the Revolution in connection with his encounters with Lunacharsky and Berdyaev; Remizov and other major literary figures, such as Bryusov, Bely, Kuzmin, Gorky, Mandelshtam. What emerges is a sense of the range of Remizov's interests which extended to art, theater and ballet. The publication as a whole is a major scholarly contribution and an invitation to the reading and study of this challenging but still little-known writer.

Greta N. Slobin

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Barker, Adele Marie. *The Mother Syndrome in the Russian Folk Imagination*. Columbus, OH: Slavica, 1986. 180 pp. \$14.95.

In this study, Adele Barker treats the archetypal struggle of the son to liberate himself from his mother's all-devouring love which threatens to prevent his growth into adulthood. Using an approach which combines Freud's concept of the phallic mother and Jung's "battle for the deliverance from the mother," she examines the conflict in different contexts: from the eleventh–twelfth-century *byliny* of Dobrynia Nikitich, Sadko and Vasilii Buslaev to Pushkin and Dostoevsky in the nineteenth century.

The juxtaposition of these two chronological periods is one of the book's best features, permitting us to see the mother-son conflict in its modern permutations. The medieval epics are so well suited to the psychoanalytic approach that we are prepared to accept the hero's slaying of the negative mother figure, symbolized as a snake or dragon, in an act which is both "symbolic and cathartic" in Barker's words. This archetypally correct solution no longer holds in nineteenth-century genres that lean towards "psychological realism." Thus, we are less prepared to find the same struggle in Pushkin's *The Queen of Spades*. Perhaps for this very reason the section on Pushkin is one of the strongest. After discussing the more familiar approach (*The Queen of Spades* as a parody of the sentimental tale), Barker provides an alternate reading, with Hermann, the obsessive adolescent, intimidated by the rival father figure (Chaplitsky) and attracted to the mother-figure (the Countess), an attraction which combines both filial and erotic overtones.

Surprisingly, the weakest section is the one on Dostoevsky. Granted, there is a great deal more ground to cover in the novels *Crime and Punishment* and *A Raw Youth* (*Podrostok*) than in the medieval epics, yet Barker's argument is less focused, and she does not elucidate completely certain relationships. Having identified the multiple manipulative mother figures in *Crime and Punishment* and having noted that each is inseparable from a younger, more submissive female, a daughter or sister, she does not discuss their probable function as anima-figures. She also does not develop in enough detail Raskolnikov's relationship to his real father, although she does treat his relationships to his surrogate fathers, Svidrigailov and Porfiry Petrovich, as manifestations of Lacan's symbolic father.

The only real criticism, however, is that the theme might have been developed at even greater length. From her notes and bibliography, it is clear that Barker has done fairly extensive research on Russian folk ballads. Perhaps the early sections of the book could have been enriched with the material from this genre, in which the mother-son