

of the media during transformational situations, as he examines the process by which political and commercial elites in Russia came to dominate the country's media complex following the 1991 collapse of communism.

Stephen Gregory closes the book with his exploration of selected literary pieces by John Berger: *Keeping a Rendezvous* (1992), *To the Wedding* (1995) and *Photocopies* (1996). According to Gregory, even as these three books revel in the seeming hopelessness fostered by the development of a more intrusive European (supra-national) structure, Berger simultaneously projects a nascent hope for the future, as illustrated by his characters' efforts to cope with the changing political environment in Europe.

While this anthology does not wholly transcend the dangers frequently encountered with books compiled from conferences — specifically that the presentations on the day, but more importantly the finished product can become disparate and linked only vaguely by topic — the authors here, in aggregate, encourage a critical re-assessment of the continuing development and legitimacy of European Union. Each article moreover challenges common fallacies associated with issues ranging from political imperatives and economic practices, to the social implications of a deeper European integration. Thus highlighted is the fact that no future analysis of Europe should be accepted without discourse.

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Katharine Hodgson, *Voicing the Soviet Experience: The Poetry of Ol'ga Berggol'ts*, Oxford: The British Academy, 2003, x + 202 pp.

Ol'ga Berggol'ts is best known as the poet of the Leningrad blockade, the chronicler of human endurance who was able to capture both the personal tragedy and the heightened patriotism of the 900 days. Katharine Hodgson has written on this aspect of Berggol'ts' work in some detail elsewhere (in her *Written with the Bayonet: Soviet Russian Poetry of World War Two*, Liverpool, 1996, pp. 224–50), but in the

present book she seeks to give a broader view of the totality of Berggol'ts' work. In particular, Hodgson is interested in examining the necessarily complex, contradictory and self-tormented response of a conscientious and published writer under Stalinism, and presents Berggol'ts as a paradigm of an 'official' writer who, while remaining committed to the ideals of the Soviet state, nevertheless found herself frequently opposed to its political practice. Although historians have been investigating the interplay between support and resistance within Stalinist society for some time, literary criticism has been slow to recognise the parallels between 'official' literature on the one hand, which may attempt to introduce subversive elements into overtly loyal texts, and 'dissident' unofficial writing on the other, whose proponents were often forced for reasons of self-preservation into acts of literary conformism. *Voicing the Soviet Experience* is an important step towards a more nuanced view of the whole of Stalinist literary culture, incorporating both its official and unofficial manifestations, and drawing on the wealth of previously unknown material which has become available since the mid-1980s.

Hodgson begins with an account of Berggol'ts' life and works which highlights the extent to which her personal fate was tied in with the vicissitudes of Soviet history. If the Siege of Leningrad is the event with which she is still most closely associated, no less crucial in her development as a poet were, for example, her involvement with Komsomol work and RAPP in the 1920s, her experience as an agricultural reporter in Kazakhstan in the 1930s, her arrest and imprisonment in 1938–9 for 'anti-Soviet propaganda', her participation in the literary commemoration of the Volga-Don canal project, and her outspoken comments on the state of Soviet literature at the Congress of writers in 1954. Hodgson also discusses Berggol'ts' specifically literary ancestry, noting her affinity for poets as diverse as Lermontov, Kliuev, Akhmatova, and Zabolotskii.

Hodgson then turns to a discussion of the poetic self in Berggol'ts' verse. Written largely in the first person, Berggol'ts' lyric poetry projects a clearly defined feminine self-image, but as Hodgson argues, one that is consciously manipulated by the poet to assert the validity of individual self-expression in a Soviet literary-political context which privileged the collective, and later to develop a representative feminine voice that would capture the experience of her generation. Hodgson identifies

a number of different strategies which Berggol'ts adopts in trying to achieve these aims, and to reconcile the personal and official voices in her poetry, including, for example, her manipulation of the conventions of Komsomol verse and folk poetry to set individual experience against a broader industrial or rural context respectively.

Not all of Berggol'ts' writing was in fact in the genre of lyric, and Hodgson also discusses in some detail three works in longer forms: the 'epic' *Pervorossiisk*, about an agricultural commune set up immediately after the October Revolution for which Berggol'ts was awarded the Stalin Prize in 1950; the verse tragedy *Vernost'*, set in wartime Sevastopol; and the autobiographical prose work *Dnevnye zvezdy*, which Berggol'ts worked on after the death of Stalin, but never completed. Hodgson shows the first two of these, for all their superficial conformity to the strictures of official literature, to contain subversive elements, not least because of tensions implicit in their genre affiliations. Hodgson reads the multiple narratives contained in *Dnevnye zvezdy* as an attempt at artistic unity in defiance of the actual contradictions of the writer's life and an expression of the unrealised '*glavnaya kniga*' towards which, according to Berggol'ts, every writer strives.

Hodgson's final chapter deals with Berggol'ts' use of reference to her own work and to the work of other poets to reinforce particular themes relating to memory and continuity in her poetry. In particular she uses this method to draw attention to fate of the prisoners used on the construction of the Volga-Don canal, without mentioning them explicitly. Also noteworthy is her persistent allusion to the legend of the lost city of Kitezh, which comes to represent the lost idealism of the revolution, drowned beneath the waters of so many hydroelectric and other engineering projects.

*Voicing the Soviet Experience* presents a new, compelling and lucid view of a Soviet poet, whose work deserves to be better known. It is perhaps a pity that the war poetry receives relatively little discussion in this volume, but in focussing on her lesser known work written both before and after the war, Hodgson nevertheless succeeds admirably in showing us Berggol'ts the poet whole.

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