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Fall 2023

### Review of Ann Komaromi, *Soviet Samizdat: Imagining a New Society*

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#### Recommended Citation

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410 *Slavic and East European Journal*

Ann Komaromi. *Soviet Samizdat: Imagining a New Society*. Ithaca: Northern Illinois University Press, an imprint of Cornell University Press, 2022. 297 pp., \$49.95 (cloth); \$32.99 (e-book).

Ann Komaromi strongly advances the history of uncensored textual production and circulation in the post-Stalin USSR in her new book *Soviet Samizdat: Imagining a New Society*, a monograph that will be of great interest to scholars of Soviet culture and history, scholars of resistance studies, historians of the book, public theorists, and others.

Komaromi's community-based history draws on scholarly studies of dissent, first-hand accounts of participants, and the author's own extensive study and digital curation of Soviet samizdat to present a huge array of self-published texts—leaflets, bulletins, literary works, periodicals, and more—in their social context, including such familiar cases as Nikita Khrushchev's 1956 "secret speech," Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn's *The Gulag Archipelago*, Aleksandr Ginzburg's *Syntax*, the long-running *Chronicle of Current Events*, as well as more marginal publications such as the *Baptist Fraternal Leaflet*, the bulletin of the Free Interpersonal Association of Workers (SMOT), and journals focused on literature, philosophy, or rock music, such as *Thirty-Seven* and *Roxy*. Abundant snapshots of individuals, groups, and their publications showcase the ideological breadth of Soviet self-publication and make clear that its production was hardly limited to oppositional intellectual elites in the capitals.

Though encyclopedic in scope, unlike many early (and extremely valuable) accounts of self-publication, *Soviet Samizdat* is a history from the ground up that also takes readers out of the weeds for a bird's eye view. Komaromi combines literary analysis, geopolitical history, and sociological approaches, deftly weaving together disparate publications and their publics with an overarching analytical framework that treats samizdat as "more than a set of texts," as she frames it in the introduction (9). Via samizdat, Komaromi argues, citizens throughout the USSR created and shared alternative relationships to historical truth, time, space, and their society—themes which structure the book's four main chapters—to generate "their own forms of knowledge and truth" (18).

Chapter 1 traces the emergence of samizdat on the backdrop of de-Stalinization, when Soviet citizens were called to speak out and participate in the reformation of society even as the Communist party sought to control spoken and printed discourse, and argues that self-publication grew out of this contradiction. Chapter 2 addresses the politics of voice and voicing in totalitarian contexts and foregrounds the testimonial, witnessing, and truth-telling functions of samizdat. In Chapter 3, Komaromi shows how communities accessed and created alternative temporal regimes through consideration of samizdat as Bakhtinian chronotope. Chapter 4 addresses the challenging social, political, and material conditions under which samizdat created a "set of imagined social spaces" (113). The conclusion is followed by an appendix of Soviet samizdat periodicals, 1956–1986, a guide to the era's classic Soviet samizdat periodicals that will be of great help to those who seek to learn more about particular communities and publications, interests and agendas. Each entry indicates dates and place of publication, the subjects addressed (*i.e.*, defense of rights, literature, Ukrainian topics) and where to find archival holdings and secondary literature on the publication.

The variety of political and humanistic agendas presented in *Soviet Samizdat* brings welcome complexity to the history of self-publication, of dissent, and even of late Soviet culture as a whole. Sidestepping traditional preoccupations with samizdat's long-term political impact, Komaromi demonstrates its acute relevance as a tool of social poesis for diverse communities. Like Philip Boobbyer, who has argued for the centrality of truth-telling to the Soviet dissident movement, Komaromi underscores the relevance of moral agendas to samizdat culture, arguing for their applicability to ostensibly apolitical forms of samizdat, which was sustained by similar communities of practice. Bridging a longstanding notional divide between underground *kul'turniki* and *politiki*, Komaromi harnesses this ethical dimension to suggest new sociological ap-

proaches to texts that were created and circulated mostly outside of a money economy. Noting the attendant limits of Bourdieusian approaches to samizdat as cultural production, the author turns to theorizing about publics to argue that the myriad groups producing and circulating uncensored writing created alternative social spheres in the process, experiences that shaped individual social imaginaries and empowered communities to construct alternative views of themselves and their society.

*Soviet Samizdat* contributes to the ongoing project to overcome fossilized perceptions of samizdat as an index of Soviet dissent. Doubling down on Aleksandr Daniel's foundational formulation of samizdat as a "mode of existence [of the text]" (sposob bytovaniia [teksta]) (5), Komaromi moves us firmly beyond the heroic approach to samizdat characteristic of Cold War accounts and the dismissive view that came in its wake: of samizdat as a relic that had relied on Communism for its very existence. Building on a growing body of scholarship that focuses on samizdat as a social activity that was not necessarily oppositional, the author argues persuasively that the networks that produced, consumed, and circulated it are of greater interest than the Soviet institutions they may or may not have opposed. What's more, presenting samizdat as a mode of textual production and exchange that created communities, Komaromi is able to connect the seemingly esoteric domain of Soviet nonconformity to the "fluid textual condition" (159) of our digital, socially networked present.

Laura Little, Connecticut College

Julie Loison-Charles. *Vladimir Nabokov as an Author-Translator: Writing and Translating between Russian, English and French*. London (etc.): Bloomsbury Academic, 2023. 266 pp, \$117 (cloth), \$93.60 (e-book).

This book marks a welcome complement to Stanislav Shvabrin's recent study, *Between Rhyme and Reason: Vladimir Nabokov, Translation, and Dialogue* (Toronto, 2019). Where Shvabrin gave us a detailed look at Nabokov's workshop, Julie Loison-Charles archivally-rich monograph examines Nabokov's translation practices alongside the theme of translation throughout the writer's works. Shvabrin showed us how Nabokov's translation choices reveal some of his textual secrets; Loison-Charles takes us on a journey through Nabokov's artistic and theoretical approaches to the theme and concept of translation, as an aesthetic and even philosophical category. This is new territory for Nabokov scholarship, and it is both fertile and exciting to explore.

The study comprises thirteen chapters (plus an introduction and conclusion) in three parts; consequently, my discussion is compressed.

Part 1 deals with the world's rich history of pseudotranslations—that is, works (like *Don Quixote* or *Ossian*, as well as Aleksandr Pushkin's *The Covetous Knight*, among many others) that purport to be translations from some other language, but in fact they are not—and Nabokov's incorporation of this tradition into his own art. It is not surprising, but it is a revelation, that Nabokov's engagement with pseudotranslation is mediated by his love for Pushkin: he translated part of *The Covetous Knight* and all of the poem "From Pindemonti" (both pseudotranslations) into English in the 1940s. And, Loison-Charles shows, two of Nabokov's early works were pseudotranslations in Pushkin's spirit: his play *The Wanderers* (*Skital'tsy*, 1921) and poem "From Calmbrood's Narrative Poem 'Night Journey'" (1931) were both attributed to the "English writer" Vivian Calmbrood. Loison-Charles reveals delightful and subtle connections between Pushkin's models and Nabokov's later rejoinders. In addition to these free-standing pseudotranslations, Nabokov and Pushkin also embedded such texts within their works, the most famous being Tatyana's letter to Onegin in *Eugene Onegin*—which Nabokov also translated, of course, and echoed in Charlotte's letter to Humbert in *Lolita* (see Priscilla Meyer, *Find*