

**Marina Balina and Serguei Alex. Oushakine**, eds., *The Pedagogy of Images: Depicting Communism for Children* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2021), 548 pp.

This is the latest contribution to the exploration of early-Soviet-era literature, particularly illustrated books for children. While several studies have addressed modernism in the former USSR, the novelty of this volume emanates from its focus on children's literature and its attempt to capture Soviet modernism in cultural productions targeting children. Since children's books generally contain written text alongside important visual elements such as illustrations and photographs, this book transcends a single field of research, with its authors displaying a wide range of perspectives covering literature, cinema, art, and history.

Evident in the introduction, the editors have been very careful to keep the volume's coherence by conveying the common cultural background of the era, articulating questions throughout the volume, and maintaining the assumption that Soviet children's literature functioned as a sort of "ideological apparatus." Since education and enlightenment were strongly politicized in the early Soviet era, children's literature aimed to prepare young minds for a new type of citizenship relevant to a socialist country. The book consists of sixteen essays categorized into three subthemes—Part I Mediation; Part II Technology; and Part III Power. Part I demonstrates how children's literature connects the pre-revolutionary "old" and post-revolutionary "new" eras. Erika Wolf focuses on pioneers' activity called "Foto-glaz" with Dziga Vertov as its authority. Under the circumstances of new media after the revolution, literacy involved not only reading and writing but also taking pictures. Pioneers used cameras to report on their political activities and displayed their pictures in journals for children. Aleksandar Bošković examines Sergei Tret'iakov's book for children, *Samozveri* (*Autoanimals*), which is also an object of film studies by Aleksandr Rodchenko and Varvara Stepanova. Bošković points out that *Samozveri* was designed to shape children's perceptions and their relationship with the socialist world (e.g., through movies), as it embraced the features of photo illustration as a chief genre of Soviet children's literature and the qualities of a "do-it-yourself" book at once.

Part II addresses the role of children's books as guides to living in a new society built on novel industrial trends, processes, and projects, as well as helping children to navigate a new information terrain. Larissa Rudova shows that children's books in the early Soviet era had two contradictory elements, "culture" and "nature," reflecting the Soviet expectation that children should hold a contrasting attitude toward nature. What Rudova calls "production books" had the purpose of turning the new Soviet citizens into people capable of molding nature and unsparingly reorganizing themselves, whereas books about animals represented the creatures living in nature free from historical interventions but having their voice. Kirill Chunikhin examines the representation of electric power in children's books: at first, electricity was depicted as a marvelous phenomenon in magical fairytale plots; ultimately, however, electric power was expected to be a common asset of the whole country and to be controlled by specialists.

Part III underscores the tools in children's literature through which powerful institutions shaped intangible entities such as time, identity, and labor. Kevin M.F. Platt reveals that in children's books, the temporal processes of national five-year plans

turned into visual forms of representation. He argues that time was portrayed with the help of avant-garde art, which was losing its openness and radicalism under Stalinism. Daniil Leiderman and Marina Sokolovskaia reveal the role of children's books about Lenin's death in helping young readers overcome the collective trauma that Soviet society endured. They argue that the illustrations in children's books bridged a societal gap between allegories for adults about Lenin as a symbol of future progress and discourses for children about Lenin as a friendly person with a physical form.

Furthermore, this volume also addresses the substantial impacts of adult media on children's media. Elements of American culture in Soviet children's books, as Helena Goscilo and Thomas Keenan note, suggest a rapid inflow of Western culture immediately following the end of the civil war, as well as the boom of Western pop culture among the early Soviet masses. Katerina Clark, for instance, assigned one chapter to this question in her book *Petersburg, Crucible of Cultural Revolution* (1995). Meanwhile, one of the well-known critics of the Serapion Brothers, Lev Lunts, in his article "Go West!" admired the Western adventure novels by Arthur Conan Doyle and James Fenimore Cooper. All these facts testify that both Soviet writers and the masses benefited from an influential American culture, which is clearly visible in children's books, too.

Sara Pankenier Weld and Maria Litovskaya in their chapters assert that Soviet children's books served to educate children as future workers and engineers, transforming them into effective biomechanical cogs of the greater Soviet machine. Although the two chapters do not explicitly argue so, these educational politics should be seen as an application of Taylorism—a system for managing adult workers—to children. The Russian version of Taylorism (NOT movement) compared the bodies of workers to machines and sought to improve their functions, with the perspective of the human being as a mechanic and impersonal substance applied not only to adults but also to children.

Alexey Golubev detects two contrasting forms of representation in Soviet children's books: a conflict between describing people by using stereotypes and repetition of a schematic structure on the one hand and describing products through a montage of fragmented documents on the other. This contradiction in aesthetics is comparable to the antagonism between the rightists and leftists among avant-garde artists. In fact, Илья Куклин has tackled the question of fragmentariness in Soviet art in his book *Машины зашумевшего времени* (2015). Taking Shklovsky's article "Золотой край" as an illuminating example, Kukulin argues that the end of the fragmented form of representation was tantamount to the end of the Russian avant-garde. One might wonder how Golubev could have engaged with Kukulin regarding the increasing tendency of children's literature to be published using rightist methods.

Covering important topics about Soviet children's books, this book has made brilliant achievements in the study of children's literature. It will also open a new horizon for the broader field of Soviet history if one incorporates it into the study of Soviet culture in general.

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