

A brief review cannot do justice to the many subjects addressed in Leder's absorbing book. I only wished that she had not stopped with Stalin's death, but described at greater length the last six years of the story – the period of de-Stalinization and her battle to return to the United States.

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John Ryder, *Interpreting America: Russian and Soviet Studies of the History of American Thought* (Nashville and London: Vanderbilt University Press, 1999).

John Ryder has produced a remarkable study of the reaction of Soviet philosophers to American philosophical and political thought. Ryder systematically covers major American thinkers from the colonial period through the twentieth century, and from Puritan Messianism to naturalism. As Ryder notes, Soviet philosophers took history and the history of philosophy quite seriously, and their studies of American thought are also serious. One reason for this is that Marxists believe that the social, political and economic context of a given nation will strongly influence thought. These thoughts concern such fundamental issues as freedom and workers' rights in various political systems. Soviet interest in American thought had much to do with understanding the system that was opposed to it during the Cold War. Another reason for Soviet interest in American thought was that both nations were born of revolution. Soviet scholars emphasized class and economic interests as major motivating factors in philosophy, with bourgeois interests permeating all thought. Ryder focuses almost exclusively on Soviet writers from the 1950s onward.

Interpreting America covers a series of interesting topics and philosophers that Ryder discusses thoroughly and precisely. In his discussion of Puritan Messianism which developed, unlike its British form, in the absence of feudal social institutions, Ryder notes that Soviet scholars were reasonably concerned about the place of religion in American secular society, an important subject for them given that theirs was a society that officially promoted atheism. They had interest in Roger Williams as the most significant representative of Puritan thought, as well as in Increase Mather and Cotton Mather. They explored the ideas of Samuel Johnson who had been stimulated by Berkeley's *Treatise on Principles of Human Knowledge* and his *Three Dialogues Between Hylas and Philonous*. Ryder then turns to the American Enlightenment and aspects of American political theory: the notion of the necessity of central government,

the relationship between popular sovereignty, the social contract and democracy, and even analysis of the U. S. Constitution. Ryder might have related this discussion to the Soviet constitutions of 1936 (the "Stalin" constitution) and 1977 (the "Brezhnev" constitution).

Ryder next considers Soviet interest in American romanticism because it was a reaction against the rationalism of the Enlightenment. He discusses Soviet response to the transcendentalism of Emerson, Thoreau and others. Ryder focuses extensively on pragmatism and the study of Peirce, James, and Dewey that accelerated in late 1960s and 1970s. Soviet philosophers criticized pragmatism because in the end "it has no way to account for the objectively determined traits of the world and for our knowledge of them, a problem rooted in the treatment of ideas solely as instruments." (155)

Ryder's study would have been stronger had he included a brief outline of Soviet philosophy, including the development, if not ossification of the Soviet version of dialectical materialism. What was Soviet philosophy? What is dialectical materialism? Nor does Ryder refer to any aspect of the philosophy of science or the importance of Lenin's philosophical legacy, preferring to focus on questions of epistemology and ontology in philosophical thought more generally. Had he done so, this might have enabled readers to understand how Lenin's hostility for subjective idealism served as a reason for, say, Soviet rejection of pragmatism which, as Ryder notes, "flirted with" subjective idealism.

Ryder's analysis is comprehensive. However, by organizing solely according to the development of American thought, he deprives the reader of context for understanding shifts in Soviet treatment of American thinkers. For example, the 1920s witnessed a Soviet fascination for things American, especially its technology and science. Ryder notes that there were several studies of bourgeois philosophy published in the late 1920s and 1930s that included discussions of American philosophy. But they were mostly descriptive, not critical. By the late 1920s the government had closed the last independent publishing houses. What impact did this have on Soviet analyses of western philosophical thought?

After World War II there was an "explosion of analysis," most dealing with pragmatism. Given the Cold War context, it is not surprising that they were highly ideologized and characterized by "extraordinary hostility" (140). At this time only xenophobic hatred remained of the fascination with America and the west, so much so that Soviet philosophers, historians, and social scientists had turned their attention to proving that Russia and the USSR were the birthplace of many of the great achievements of humanity. I understand Ryder's unwillingness to recount the polemics that American and Soviet intellectuals produced during the Cold War. Still, greater context of the Soviet experience would enhance the appeal of this fine study.

Why were the first major thorough treatments of American thought only published in the last years of the Soviet Union? Ryder says the end of USSR has not been a watershed event in the study of American philosophy; since 1960 those studies had become less ideological. Still Soviet scholars continued to focus on exposing inadequacies in those philosophies as opposed to purpose of learning something.

I have some minor quibbles with *Interpreting America*. In places, Ryder relies heavily on exegesis and analysis of the positions of one or two philosophers, or one or two works, to set forth what then seems to be characterized as the entire Soviet response to American thought. How many Soviet philosophers worked in this area? Where did they work? Were they ensconced primarily in the Institute of Philosophy in Moscow, the conservative bastion of Soviet thought? Were there nuances or differences of interpretation among Soviet schools of American philosophy?

Ryder provides an extensive bibliography of Soviet sources, mostly from the 1960s onward, and many from 1980s and later. (Translations of works of American thinkers also appeared for the first time only in the 1990s.) The bibliography uses an inconsistent (and inaccurate) system of transliteration with the same words transliterated differently on the same page.

In sum, *Interpreting America* is an original, thoughtful piece of scholarship that will be of interest to advanced students of philosophy and history.

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Anthony Cross, *Peter the Great through British Eyes: Perceptions and Representations of the Tsar since 1698* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2000).

To refer to Anthony Cross as a leading scholar of Russian-British cultural relations is rather like calling Lance Armstrong a pretty decent bicyclist. In truth, no other English Russophile or Russian anglophile, living or dead, scholarly or popular, has contributed as much to our knowledge of English Russia and Russian Britannia. Exhibit A: His previous books include *By the Banks of the Thames*; *By the Banks of the Neva*; *The Russian Theme in English Literature*; *Engraved in the Memory*; *Anglo-Russica Cambridge*, *Some Russian Connections*; *Anglo-Russian Relations in the Eighteenth Century*; *Catherine the Great and the British*; *An English Lady at the Court of Catherine the Great*; *Anglofilia u trona*, and..., well, my point is clear.