reputation seem not just out of place in an academic publication but also do the book a disservice.

But Bronk卡车t and Bota do not leave things at that. The spectacular, if unfounded, corollary of their thesis is that Bakhtin did not even write his own work, namely Problems of Dostoevsky's Art, the original version of the Dostoevskii book published in 1929. They claim that Voloshinov in the wake of Bakhtin’s arrest in 1929 (and to save him from certain death) “decided to publish under [Bakhtin's] name a part of the work he was producing at the ILiaZV . . . attempting to insert into it . . . some notes from Bakhtin's manuscripts, without however hiding completely the contradictions between these notes and his own writings. And in agreement with him, Medvedev has for his part taken responsibility for publishing this hybrid book in the series of which he was an editor” (555). Although they describe it as a “hypothesis,” they consider it “the most probable (if not the only plausible one)” (555). They overlook the fact that I. R. Titunik’s very levelheaded arguments in favor of Medvedev’s and Voloshinov’s authorship, which they quote at length, namely that the “theoretical concepts presented in the analysis of reported speech, in [Voloshinov’s] Marxism and the Philosophy of Language, are not exploited at all in Bakhtin’s Problems of Dostoevsky’s Art,” that “the style of the works by Voloshinov is totally different from that of the works signed by Bakhtin,” and finally that “all of Voloshinov’s (and Medvedev’s) works display a profoundly Marxist orientation, which is obviously absent from the works signed by Bakhtin” (60), they would seem to invalidate their own claim. Perhaps more alarmingly, they base their painstaking analyses of various Bakhtinian texts, not on the original Russian texts, but on the French and Italian translations, of which some at least are anything but accurate and reliable. Unfortunately, although a heavy volume, Bronckart and Bota’s book is not as weighty as one might at first expect.

KARINE ZBINDEN
University of Sheffield


Vladimir Sorokin is one of the most versatile contemporary Russian writers. He started off as a conceptualist who experimented with stylistic forms and eventually turned to epic narratives that try to come to terms with the age and body of Russian culture, its form and pressure. Surprisingly, Sorokin has attracted more scholarly attention from western, especially German, critics than from Russians. Maksim Marusenkov is one of the first Russian scholars to present a book-length study of Sorokin’s oeuvre. He believes that the main mode of Sorokin’s work is the absurd—he calls his own study an “absurdopedia of Sorokin’s Russian life.” Marusenkov knows his topic very well—he worked his way through Sorokin’s collected works and, what is more, through his numerous interviews. One problem with Marusenkov’s book, however, lies in his concentration on Russian philology. For example, one important interview from 1992 escaped his attention (“Zabintovannyi shtyr’,” Wiener Slawistischer Almanach, Sonderband 31 [1992]: 565–68). His bibliography lists exclusively Russian secondary literature. Important contributions by Peter Deutschmann, Helena Goscilo, Sylvia Sasse, Dirk Uffelmann, and Georg Witte are omitted.

Marusenkov begins his study with a chapter on the “axiological basis of Sorokin’s work.” He correctly points to the philosophical problem of the presence of evil and the anthropological consequences of this precarious situation. In Sorokin’s concep-
tion, violence and oppression have a prominent literary dimension in Russia. The Russian revolution and the Bolshevik regime were prepared by the classic canon of nineteenth-century literature—for this reason, Sorokin likes to talk about the “body” of Russian literature that can both hurt and be hurt. Marusenkov maintains that Sorokin holds a gnostic worldview and sees the world—most prominently in his *Led* Trilogy (Ice Trilogy)—as a battleground between good and evil.

Marusenkov correctly interprets Sorokin as a uniform writer whose oeuvre can be seen as one consistent text. He splits Sorokin’s literary production into four periods. The first, conceptualist, period begins with a poem “Proshchanie s letom” (1972). At first sight this seems to be a Romantic text but Sorokin himself labeled it a “hoax.” This seems to be a convincing explanation since Sorokin at that time got to know the Sots-Art scene in Moscow. During this first period Sorokin wrote five novels: *Norma* (The Norm, 1979–84), *Ochered’* (The Queue, 1982–1983), *Tridtsatai liubov’ Mariny* (Marina’s Thirtieth Love, 1982–84), *Roman* (A Novel, 1985–89), *Serdtsa chetyrekh* (The Hearts of the Four, 1991)—all these texts deal with the corporeality of literary signs and deploy the realization of the metaphor. After the last novel, however, Sorokin felt that he had reached a border and stopped writing novels for the next seven years.

The second period coincides with the era of Boris El’tsin. The communist system had broken down, leaving only the ruins of a blissful utopia. The most important work of this period is the novel *Goluboe salo* (Blue Lard, 1999) in which literary style is materialized in food. The third period lasts from 2001 to 2005 and features the *Ice* Trilogy—a science fiction series about a “Brotherhood of Light” that seeks to annihilate the meat machines (as normal human beings are called in this text). Marusenkov lets the fourth period begin in 2006—Sorokin turned to a new narrative style that combines history with science fiction. In *Den oprichnika* (The Day of the Oprichnik, 2006) and the *Saharnii Kreml* (Sugar Kremlin, 2008), he sketches out a grim vision of a new totalitarian government in Russia and the extermination of Russian culture. Marusenkov’s attempt at a periodization is quite convincing. He points to the links between the different periods and explains the unity and diversity of Sorokin’s work. He also elaborates on Sorokin’s experiments with different genres from lyrics through drama to film scenarios.

The three following chapters form the main body of Marusenkov’s book. He puts Sorokin into the tradition of *zaum’*, the grotesque, and the absurd. Every chapter opens with a “theoretical preambula” that supposedly sums up the state of the art (some of the items quoted here are outdated, though). Marusenkov successfully links Sorokin’s linguistic experiments with the traditions of the Russian avant-garde. Sorokin’s metaphysical speech creates a new fictional world of its own where the traditional semiotic relationship between sign and real thing is no longer valid. Marusenkov presents Sorokin’s early short story “Flyer” (1981) as an example of zaum’ speech. But in later books, Sorokin also uses zaum’ to describe communication in the near future (Blue Lard and *Pir* [The Feast, 2000]). The next section deals with the grotesque. Marusenkov detects grotesque elements in the prose volume *Pervy Subbotnik* (The First Saturday Workday, 1979–1984) in which Sorokov plays skillfully with clichés from socialist realist aesthetics. Finally, Marusenkov tries to come to a synthesis with the notion of the absurd, which in his view is a superordinate concept of both zaum’ and the grotesque. The absurd plays an important role in Sorokin’s antidramas, *The Heart of the Four*, and the *Ice* Trilogy.

Marusenkov’s study provides valuable insights into the work of this major writer. Maybe Marusenkov focuses too exclusively on the absurd and neglects to a certain degree Sorokin’s fascination with corporeality. The absurd is certainly an important feature in Sorokin’s writings, but at the same time his texts do not lead into a semiotic
void but create a very carnal sense of life that uses bodily fluids instead of ink as a signifier.

Ulrich Schmid
University of St. Gallen, Switzerland


David-Emil Wickström has given us an interesting ethnomusicological study about the post-Soviet rock/pop music scenes in St. Petersburg (Russia) and Berlin (Germany). This book, a shortened version of his dissertation, written under the mentorship of Yngvar Steinholt, is a result of serious fieldwork conducted in St. Petersburg from 2004 until 2006. The author used not only his interviews with Russian musicians and promoters (managers) of Russian pop/rock music but also his own unique personal experience and observations as a trumpet player in two local (from St. Petersburg) bands (Svoboda and Con Brio). In his study he examines (1) how the local “organization of musical practice explored through the concept of scenes . . . travels through time and space connecting scenes,” (2) how it is influenced by “transcultural flows,” and (3) “how bands both position themselves and are perceived within the scenes—aspects of identity” (44, emphasis in the original). Inspired by the original study of Liverpool’s rock scene by Sarah Cohen and using various anthropological and ethnomusicological theories (from Alexei Yurchak to Will Straw), Wickström concentrates on music production and the politics of identity among musicians in St. Petersburg, who continue the innovative traditions of the first rock club in the history of Soviet pop music established in Leningrad in 1981. Despite the original discussions of the new post-Soviet developments, such as anti-Ukrainian nationalistic stereotypes during the “Orange Revolution,” or the pro-Putin position of Boris Grebenshchikov and Zemfira, or the Orthodox Christian preferences of the leaders of Alisa and DDT, this first part of the book contains themes already explored in Steinholt and Thomas Cushman’s study of the Leningrad rock music scene: problems of national identity, confrontation with the Moscow rock scene, rock versus popsa/estrad, and so on.

The more original and interesting part of the book is devoted to the story of the Russian emigrant community in Germany, their music production, and the reception of music from the Soviet Union/Russia. Wickström explores the music practices of post-Soviet emigrants such as Iurii Gurzhii from Kharkiv, Ukraine, and Wladimir Kaminer, from Moscow, Russia, who organized the music event known as the “Russendisko” in a Berlin cafe in 1999. Later on this event blossomed into a venue for music production, which involved the organization of not only various east European music clubs but also music labels and different forms of music businesses targeting both Russian emigrants and local consumers in Germany.

Some aspects are missing from this book, though. The first is the issue of the consumption/reception of rock music in the post-Soviet scene (at least in Russia). The author ignores recent studies about the consumption/reception of rock music in Soviet Ukraine written by myself (Rock and Roll in the Rocket City, 2010) and William Jay Risch (The Ukrainian West: Culture and the Fate of Empire in Soviet Lviv, 2011). Incorporating these new findings into his own research could have helped Wickström in his