Are the audiences for these books as wide as they could or should be? Perhaps one of the most striking aspects of both studies is how they construe who constituted Soviet Russia, and how the atheist movement fit into broader cultural projects. Peris, for example, offers us a degree of specificity that Husband does not when he delves into the records of Yaroslavl and Pskov. Pskov was hardly a city in the late 1930s, when it had a population of some 60,000, but neither could it be called rural, as was the overwhelming proportion of Soviet Russia in the early decades of Communist power. Agrarian life is distinctly absent in each of these volumes, despite their consistent allusions to atheism's path nationwide. Both books, in fact, with their attention fixed on the urbanizing spaces of European Soviet Russia, deliver remarkably little sense of the lived experiences of these profound reforms, conveyed as they are, beyond policy studies, through memoirs, popular culture, or even interviews with the few remaining veteran activists of these years.

Both authors appropriately recognize the Russian Orthodox Church as the defining religious community in the new national laboratory, but it was also by no means the only influential faith in the RSFSR. The League of the Militant Godless was in large part a pan-Sovietizing body that reached out to all nationalities in its purview. Here both books miss the opportunity to explore—even at a nominal level that need not have displaced their European focus—how the League's mission was complicated and challenged by the presence of Soviet Russia's substantial Jewish community, the Muslim populations of the south, or the complex shamanic traditions across all of Siberia. The result is a somewhat partial accounting of the movement's legacy, particularly when so many key atheist leaders equally made their names by serving on the countless nationality commissions. At stake is whether a broader sense of who comprised Soviet Russia ultimately challenges our understanding of early socialist politics.

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Simon Dixon's treatment of The Modernisation of Russia 1676–1825 is careful not to sacrifice precision in striving for comprehensiveness. Nor does it simply seek to apply any rigidly conceived theoretical matrix to Russia in the period in question. On the contrary, Dixon emphasizes that "modernization theory is useful only if we reject its more restrictive implications" (112). In keeping with the broad aims of the series in which it appears, his book uses modernization theory as a "comparative analytic framework" for viewing Russian development in a European context. Following a brief exploration of various aspects of modernization theory—from economic transformation to the development of the modern secular state to industrialization—Dixon provides a concise overview of political history from 1676 to 1825 (pp. 7–24), which serves as an introduction to the body of his text. Seven thematic chapters follow: "Imperial Great Power," "Finance and Taxation," "Society," "Government and Justice," "Culture," "Ideology," and "The Economy." Each chapter closes with a bibliographical note surveying scholarship by North American, European, and Russian authors on the topic in question. These are one of the book's most useful features, even if the individual one-sentence characterizations can do little more than sound a general positive or negative tone.

On the whole, the book does not break new ground. As it states clearly from the start, that is not its central aim. The very presentation of a wide variety of topics and information, organized around the central theme of modernization, constitutes the study's greatest strength. Dixon's clear prose and light touch with regard to modernization, which is conceived
in a flexible manner that takes into account the term's variability, make the work more useful to generalists and non-historians than it otherwise would be.

But there is plenty of compelling material in and of itself to make Dixon's study worthwhile reading, both for its wealth of facts and for its occasional trenchant judgments. The survey of Russian expansion and ambitions through the period in question helps to clarify the import of the imperial army's entrance into Paris at the end of the Napoleonic wars, as well as Russia's official entrée into European politics. Dixon provides excellent material on the growth of Russian power and territorial gains, despite the British and French, and on Russia's place in European power politics of the eighteenth century. The book is especially helpful in placing Russian attempts to modernize its institutions, society, and culture within the larger contexts of coterminous European modernization. Moreover, the chapter on ideology, as Dixon himself notes, surveys material not covered in any systemic way elsewhere.

Indeed, among the book's most useful aspects are the author's repeated indications of gaps in our knowledge and scholarship. He notes, for instance, the absence of any full-scale study of an eighteenth-century court, the limitations of what we know about the workings of "peasant justice" on which landowners continued to rely until well into the nineteenth century, and the degree to which kinship played a role in the patronage networks. He also makes an especially forceful argument for maintaining a conceptual separation, despite unitary appearances to the contrary, between Orthodoxy and the Russian state (210).

Dixon carefully emphasizes the mixture of old and new that constituted Russian eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century life. "The 'traditional,'" he states, "and the 'modern' were not successive stages in Russia's social development: they overlapped and interacted" (113). We are wrong therefore to look for a crucial turning point, institution, or individual on which to focus exclusive attention. The book's breadth of topics and disciplines are well-justified.

This, however, makes one omission noteworthy. Dixon does not treat literature per se, not even in the chapter on culture, and his bibliographical note points only to general histories of Russian literature in compensation. It is a commonplace of literary history to say that with the early nineteenth century, and Romanticism in particular, Russian belletristic literature came of age vis à vis Europe, and that this was the first literary movement that Russia experienced simultaneously with its Western neighbors. The lack of discussion here, then, suggests the continuing divide between, on the one hand, historical studies of Russian social, political, and economic development and, on the other, literary history, particularly in the absence of any full-blown literary study that takes into account the kinds of social, political, and economic factors that inform Dixon's treatment.

That said, students and teachers of history will find a great deal of wide-ranging information skillfully condensed into a sleek and readable two hundred pages. The book is also well suited to those teachers whose duties include general education courses and/or introductory courses in Russian civilization, literary culture, and social and cultural history, where it can be supplemented by authentic cultural artifacts and by specialized texts in literature, music, and art. Finally, anyone writing on the period in question will find Dixon's survey of contemporary scholarship in each chapter, the bibliographical note in particular, an invaluable resource for his or her own future work.

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As Russia struggles to reinvent itself as a democratic, free-market society, the Cold War seems to fade to ancient history. Nevertheless, our psychological distance from the Cold War does