

Katharine Hodgson: 'Official' Soviet poets in the post-Soviet canon: the case of Aleksandr Tvardovskii

Tvardovskii was one of the poets who secured a central position in the canon of published Soviet poetry. In the post-Soviet period, as literary reputations have been reassessed, some 'official' poets have lost their canonical status. This paper will assess the extent to which he has retained his place in the canon, what aspects of his work are now seen as most important, and by whom.

Discussion will focus in particular on whether the various facets of Tvardovskii's work and biography have led to him being 'appropriated' by any particular literary grouping (or a number of them), as he could be thought of as appealing to both 'patriots' and 'liberals' as an exemplary figure. Tvardovskii's reputation as an 'official' poet was firmly established by the award of Stalin Prizes in 1941, 1944, and 1946, and a Lenin Prize in 1961; his wartime work made him popular with a broad readership. Yet he also struggled with the censorship, which banned his *poema* 'Po pravu pamiati' in 1969, and was twice removed from his post as editor of *Novyi mir*. As well as holding prominent posts in the Union of Writers, Tvardovskii was the son of a 'kulak' family who first came to attention with an epic poem about collectivization.

This paper will attempt to find out whether Tvardovskii's potential appeal across a broad spectrum has made him a figure who could unite opinion rather than divide it.