

The third section contains three items. In the first, "Gogol'—kritik" (1958), we learn at last why Pushkin deemed it necessary to take issue in print with Gogol's article "O dvizhenii zhurnal'noi literatury v 1834 i 1835 godu," which he himself had published in *Sovremennik*. Gogol's article had appeared without his signature, unknown to Pushkin, who was out of town at his mother's funeral. Some critics took the essay to be Pushkin's own work and a kind of program for his periodical. This went too far for Pushkin's tastes, so he responded with his "Letter to the Editor" signed with the letters A and B.

The speech marking the anniversary of Belinsky's 150th birthday ("Slovo o Belinskom," 1961) is full of the usual clichés about Belinsky as the father of realism. The third item, "Khudozhnik v nauke" (1967), is a speech also, given on Konstantin Fedin's 75th birthday. Though he mainly discusses Fedin's autobiographical book, *Gor'kii sredi nas*, Blagoy also offers a survey of Fedin's literary criticism which culminates in a somewhat unexpected comparison of Fedin and Marina Tsvetaeva, not to the advantage of the latter, even if Blagoy is far from detracting from her talent. Fedin emerges as an impressive literary critic, knowing where and how to put his artistic highlights in a scholarly treatise.

Although the tendentiousness that characterizes Soviet criticism is always present, Blagoy's two volumes contain so many remarkable *details* and show such genuine erudition that they are certainly worth reading, even though there are many repetitions because the books consist of essays not specially edited for a collection. Also, an index would have been immensely helpful in this flood of names and titles.

VSEVOLOD SETCHKAREV
Harvard University

TEORIIA DRAMY V ROSSII OT PUSHKINA DO CHEKHOVA. By A. Anikst. Moscow: "Nauka," 1972. 643 pp. 2.65 rubles.

RANNIAIA RUSSKAIA DRAMATURGIIA (XVII—PERVAIA POLOVINA XVIII V.), 2 vols. Compiled by O. A. Derzhavina et al. Moscow: "Nauka," 1972. Vol. 1: PERVYE P'ESY RUSSKOGO TEATRA. 511 pp. 1.97 rubles. Vol. 2: RUSSKAIA DRAMATURGIIA POSLEDNEI CHETVERTI XVII I NACHALA XVIII V. 368 pp. 1.37 rubles.

Alexander Anikst is not only one of the Soviet Union's greatest authorities on Shakespeare and English literature in general but also its foremost chronicler of theories on drama of all periods and all Western countries. His 1967 volume, *Teoriia dramy ot Aristotelia do Lessinga*, is an enormously useful compilation of Western ideas on the uses of drama up to the end of the eighteenth century. As Anikst tells us in the foreword to his more recent book, he had intended to follow the first volume with a similar survey of drama theories of the nineteenth century, but was led in the course of his work to restrict his purview to Russian material only. Nevertheless, the new book was published in the same format as the old one and with a similar cover, and the intended unity of the two volumes is further proclaimed by the identical heading printed facing the title page of both volumes: A. Anikst, *Istoriia uchenii o drame*. The juxtaposition that unavoidably results is perhaps farfetched and certainly unfair, but it is also highly instructive.

The first volume ranged through some twenty centuries and described the drama theories of Ancient Greece and Rome, the Middle Ages, the Renaissance,

the Baroque, and the Enlightenment. The theoreticians included such pivotal figures as Aristotle, Horace, Scaliger, Giraldi, Boileau, Diderot, and Lessing. The second volume covers only about eighty years, a period during which Russian fiction, poetry, and drama scaled heights that few literatures, ancient or modern, have ever attained. But the literary criticism of that period (one can hardly speak of any genuine theory) was derivative, provincial, myopic, oblivious of literary values, and grossly insensitive to any humanistic dimensions of literature that went beyond the topical preoccupations of the moment. In this respect, there was remarkably little difference between the idolized “revolutionary democrats,” such as Belinsky and Chernyshevsky, their “art-for-art’s-sake” opponents, such as Druzhinin, and the occasional unclassifiable mavericks, such as Apollon Grigoriev.

As one landmark appeared after another in the history of Russian drama (*The Misfortune of Being Clever*, *Boris Godunov*, *The Inspector General*, *A Bitter Fate*, *Krechinsky’s Wedding*, *The Seagull*, and *The Cherry Orchard* all fall within the book’s scope), the contemporary critical reaction, as outlined by Anikst, was invariably petty, carping, and misguided. Even when critics liked an important new play (as Belinsky liked *The Inspector General* and Dobroliubov liked Ostrovsky’s *Thunderstorm*), they liked it for all the wrong reasons, hastily reading their own half-baked ideas into the text and not even trying to understand what the playwright was actually saying.

Under those circumstances, any meaningful theory of drama had to be generated by the playwrights themselves, and this they did—in their essays, in private letters, and personal statements recorded by memoirists. The sections in which Anikst summarizes Pushkin’s and Gogol’s views on drama are seriously handicapped by the obligatory efforts to represent them as realists and as Belinsky’s ideological allies (neither of which they were in actuality), but he does a highly creditable job in tracing Ostrovsky’s and especially Chekhov’s views on the uses of drama. Among the critics that the book deals with, two oddly appealing figures emerge: the untypical Ivan Kireevsky, with his genuine perceptiveness and sensitivity, and the highly typical Dmitrii Pisarev, with his sophomoric self-assurance, blurting right out the tacit assumptions of his entire age, which can be paraphrased as: “I come to bury drama, not to praise it / So we can talk of things that really matter (that is, sociology and current politics).”

This period, covered in Anikst’s new book, was the one which saddled subsequent Russian tradition with the triple national fetish of realism, materialism, and nationalism. The continued equating of this triad with absolute truth and absolute goodness in most of Soviet literary scholarship has resulted in an incalculable amount of historical distortion and misrepresentation. A particularly striking example is to be found in the otherwise excellent introductory essay to the new two-volume edition of the earliest plays that were performed in Russia at the turn of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The essay opens with the periodization of the four principal phases in the development of Russian drama of the past three hundred years and lists the leading playwrights for each of these stages. The first period is said to be that of court and school drama, with Simeon of Polotsk as its leading practitioner. The second period is the drama of Russian classicism, represented by Sumarokov, Kniazhnin, Nikolev, Fonvizin, and “other writers of the eighteenth century.” The third period is the realistic drama of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, which comprises the plays of Pushkin, Gogol, Ostrovsky, Chekhov, Tolstoy, and Gorky. The fourth stage is the drama of socialist

realism, consisting again of Gorky and also of the plays of Vishnevsky, Korneichuk, Pogodin, Trenev, and “many other well-known Soviet playwrights.”

There can hardly be a better example of how Russian culture recurrently impoverishes itself by sweeping some of its finest achievements under the rug in the name of some contrived, abstract scheme or other. Because a teleologically preordained drift toward realism is the ultimate aim of all art, there is no room in this listing for the crowning achievements of Russian neoclassical drama, which were all written in the nineteenth century. Ozerov, Shakhovskoy, and Griboedov are not listed, but Nikolai Nikolev, the author of the pallid and imitative *Sorena and Zamir* and the favorite poet of Gogol’s madman, is—merely because he fits the scheme’s chronology. Russian Romantic drama apparently never happened: there is no room in this scheme for either Küchelbecker’s *Izhorskii* or Lermontov’s *Masquerade*. Nor is there room for any of the important plays and playwrights of the early twentieth century—Leonid Andreev, Aleksei Remizov, Fedor Sologub—or, for that matter, the great poetic plays of such honored figures as Alexander Blok and Vladimir Mayakovsky, since all these cannot be reduced to the scheme’s Procrustean requirements. Thus Gorky is listed twice in order to replace, all by himself, an entire brilliant age in Russian drama. In the Soviet period, the original and significant plays of Bulgakov and Babel, of Daniil Harms and Evgenii Shvarts, apparently do not matter, although the jerrybuilt, formula-ridden propagandistic productions of the Korneichuks and the Pogodins do, since they certifiably belong to socialist realism. And of course a definition of realism that could accommodate the plays of Pushkin and Gogol, of Ostrovsky and Chekhov, would have to be so broad as to end up a meaningless synthetic construct.

Didn’t the fine scholars Olga Derzhavina and Andrei Robinson, who wrote the introduction in which the periodization is found, realize all this? Of course they did. But the collection they prepared, edited, and annotated is composed of plays written by German Protestant clergymen and Russian Orthodox monks on subjects taken primarily from the Bible and intended for performance either at the tsar’s court or at religious seminaries. This combination is bound to be distasteful and irritating to the conventional Soviet mind. The ultradogmatic periodization that opens the first volume and the obligatory quotation from Engels on the first page of volume 2 were probably intended as placating gestures, to protect the project from the wrath of orthodox fanatics.

It was not too great a price to pay, because the resultant collection is an important and most welcome contribution to our understanding of the earliest period of Russian theater and written drama. The text of *Artakserksovo deistvo*, which takes up most of the first volume, has recently been published on two occasions (in France by André Mazon and Frédéric Cocron in 1954 and in the Soviet Union by I. M. Kudriavtsev in 1957), but the wealth of commentary and the inclusion of Pastor Gregori’s original German text, which enables us to judge the quality of the Russian translation, justify this new reprinting of what is, after all, the first “literary” play ever performed in Russia. The two extant plays by Simeon of Polotsk were likewise included in the volume of his selected writings edited by I. P. Eremin in 1953, which is available in most Western libraries. But the other German-authored plays written for the court theater of Aleksei Mikhailovich (*Iudif*, *Temir-Aksakovo deistvo*, etc.) have not been published in recent times. In any case, it is good to have all this material under one cover.

For those who are not familiar with them, the real surprise and delight of the collection should be the two surviving miracle plays by Saint Dmitrii of Rostov,

surely the finest examples of this genre in Russian literature. The plays of Pastor Gregori and his associates belong to the history of Russian theater but not to Russian literature (they were written in German by Germans). Simeon of Polotsk is an historically important figure, but as a writer he is almost totally devoid of originality and poetic talent. Dmitrii, however, is a writer whose verbal flair again and again triumphs over the awkwardness of the unformed literary idiom of his epoch. He is furthermore both a true poet and, within his chosen convention of the mystery-and-miracle play genre, an effective dramatist. The soliloquy of Jacob in his *Uspenskaia drama* and the shepherd interlude in the *Rozhdestvenskaia drama* belong to the finest literary achievements of their age. Because of his canonization, his work has not been reprinted in Soviet times, but he is a significant link in the history of Russian drama, and it is good to have him restored to it.

The wholly admirable scholarly apparatus of the two volumes draws on everything of importance that has been published in the field in prerevolutionary Russia, the Soviet Union, and the West. The bibliographies and the wide-ranging references are almost encyclopedic in their scope. All in all, this collection should serve as the basic text for anyone teaching or planning to teach courses on the history of Russian theater or a survey of Russian drama.

SIMON KARLINSKY

University of California, Berkeley

DEUTSCHE DICHTER IN RUSSLAND IM 19. JAHRHUNDERT: N. V. GERBEL'S "DEUTSCHE DICHTER IN BIOGRAPHIEN UND PROBEN" ALS ZENTRUM DER KENNTNIS UND VERBREITUNG DEUTSCHER DICHTUNG. By *Annelore Engel-Braunschmidt*. Forum Slavicum, no. 36. Munich: Wilhelm Fink Verlag, 1973. 362 pp. DM 78, paper.

This recently published dissertation concerns itself with the degree to which German poets were known in nineteenth-century Russia as a result of N. V. Gerbel's (Härbel) Russian anthology of many German and some Austrian poets (*Nemetskie poetry v biografiakh i obraztsakh*), which appeared in St. Petersburg in 1877. That impressive 690-page compilation, arranged in lexicon form, included excerpts from selections of German verse and a few dramas which reflect the nature of German poetry from its beginnings until 1877. It should be noted, however, that Gerbel made no effort to evaluate the selections chosen for his anthology.

Annelore Engel-Braunschmidt carefully examines the biographical sketches and examples of poetry found in *Nemetskie poetry*, and discusses the various errors she encountered in comparing the Russian versions with the original German ones. For example, some of the biographies contain printing errors. But a more serious oversight is Gerbel's failure to give credit to Heinrich Kurz, whose four-volume literary history he used for many of the vitae in *Nemetskie poetry*. Although Kurz is mentioned in the preface, his literary history is not listed as the source for most of Gerbel's profiles. On the other hand, Gerbel always credited Johann Scherr as his source of information for the biographies he wrote for *Nemetskie poetry*.

Engel-Braunschmidt also draws attention to the vague or faulty translations of the original texts. She demonstrates how several of the translators commissioned by the editor altered the original versions and failed to grasp subtleties in meaning. To be sure, she praises some of the translations.

The author's scholarly treatment of *Nemetskie poetry* leads one to these conclusions: although by today's standards the anthology is lacking in some respects