

DER NEGATIVE VERGLEICH IN DER RUSSISCHEN VOLKSPOESIE.

By *Eckhard Weiher*. *Forum Slavicum*, vol. 35. Munich: Wilhelm Fink Verlag, 1972. 224 pp. Paper.

I have yet to encounter such a thorough study of negative comparisons or negative parallelisms in Russian folk poetry. Weiher begins by calling our attention to the first discussion of this phenomenon among the Slavs, namely Jacob Grimm's in 1823 in his remarks on Vuk Karadžić's collection of Serbian folk poetry. A brief introduction to former studies of this stylistic feature in both Slavic and non-Slavic materials is followed by an index of the nineteenth and twentieth-century Russian source materials used in Weiher's study (the author found that negative parallelisms occurred with greatest frequency in epic poetry, historical songs, ballads and soldiers' songs). The author proceeds with a classification of his material into the following categories based on the content of the negative images, two-thirds of which were found to concern nature: (a) the animal kingdom, in which feathered creatures play a significant role; (b) the plant world; (c) landscape and weather phenomena, for example, mountains and forests, rain, fog and thunder; (d) celestial events, especially those concerning the sun, moon and stars, and the dawn; and (e) miscellaneous subjects such as musical instruments, gold and precious stones, and so forth. The book also includes a content index, as well as a comprehensive bibliography of secondary sources that wholly or in part are concerned with the subject of negative comparisons or parallelisms.

This stylistic feature is encountered with great frequency in the folk poetry of the East Slavs, and South Slavs as well. In short, it is a construction which normally consists of a denial of something (it is not "X") followed by a statement which tells what "X" is. Having found former treatments of this problem to be too general, Weiher makes a detailed structural analysis of the various types of negative comparisons, based primarily on their syntactic structures. For example, one line expresses the negative part [non a¹ (subject) — a² (verb)] followed by a single line expressing what "X" is in a parallel syntactic expression [B¹ (subject) — B² (verb)], or the arrangement may be a chiasmic one where [non a¹ (subject) — a² (verb)] is followed by [B² (verb) — B¹ (subject)]. Weiher's structural analysis copes with as many as six negative components with a varying number of parallel statements referring to "X".

Weiher discusses the role played by etymological figures in the formation of the negative image (for example, subject + verb: *ne grom gremit*; adjective + subject + verb: *ne temnye temeni zatemneli*). He also takes into consideration the semantic content of "X", the non-negative component of the comparison, which in his examples concerns primarily such things as characterization, description of outward appearance, emotions, feelings, behavior, and actions. And, he briefly discusses the location and stylistic function of negative comparisons within the body of a variety of textual genres.

This monograph is a significant contribution to a subject that has as yet not received such detailed study.

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