

"*przekłete problemy*," Warsaw, 1964), knows his hero thoroughly and understands him to the very bottom of his predicaments and problems.

Otherwise, the book is skillfully edited and well printed, and the illustrations are selected with taste and circumspection. But as far as originality, empathy, and the unflinching courage to face the facts of history are concerned, it does not measure up to the standards set by Brückner. The last word of Polish scholarship in this field has not yet been said. This handbook is rather a beginning, and as such, despite much honest, expert work and good will, is not a very promising one, especially in its second part.

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THE BROKEN ICON: INTUITIVE EXISTENTIALISM IN CLASSICAL RUSSIAN FICTION. By *Geoffrey Clive*. New York: Macmillan, 1972. xxi, 233 pp. \$7.95.

One of the outstanding features of Russian literature is its dramatization of what, in modern philosophy, has come to be called "existential" problems. Partly as a result of its delayed development, the classical Russian literature of the nineteenth century was in the same phase that major Western literatures had reached during the Renaissance. This accounts for the special explosive force and spiritual freshness and intensity of the great Russian novelists, who portray the fundamental antinomies and dilemmas of human existence with a vividness and directness that their Western contemporaries are no longer able to command.

Geoffrey Clive has obviously felt this quality of Russian literature, and has been led by this perception to approach a series of important novelists in terms of modern philosophical concepts. Existentialism is a philosophy that attempts to analyze and systematize the same sort of spiritual experiences to which only Russian literature in modern times has succeeded in giving convincing artistic life. Each of the chapters begins with a discussion of one or another existential category or issue (the absurd, boredom, the inauthentic, the hubris of pure rationalism, the ultimate "subjectivity" of the truth about human life), and correlates this with the work of Russian novelists (Gogol, Goncharov, Tolstoy, Dostoevsky, Solzhenitsyn). The result is a suggestive and continually interesting book, extremely well written, and quite illuminating within the terms of the task that Professor Clive has set for himself. It provides an excellent introduction to some of the leading existentialist ideas as well as to the interplay between philosophy and literature.

For the specialist in either field, however, the work will probably prove less satisfactory. Anyone acquainted with existentialism is not likely to find anything new in Clive's discussion; and his use of it in relation to Russian literature, though deft and skillful, will seem partial and fragmentary to the literary critic. One could also quarrel with points of detail (such as Clive's cautious but unmistakable acceptance of Shestov's view that Dostoevsky was of the devil's party); but this is not the place to discuss problems of that kind. A more general criticism would be that Clive tends to separate the existential and the sociohistorical off too sharply one from the other. Thus he loses some of the *existential* specificity—the rootedness in concrete life—of the literary works he is discussing. In analyzing such works only as examples of presumably universal existential categories, he tends to revive the

type of criticism that used to look at works of literature solely in terms of their expression of "ideas." But the book was not, presumably, written for specialists, and as an attempt to overcome some of their limitations it is very welcome.

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RUSSKAIA LITERATURA SIBIRI PЕРVOI POLOVINY XIX V. By *Iu. S. Postnov*. Akademiia nauk SSSR, Sibirskoe otdelenie. Institut istorii, filologii i filosofii. Novosibirsk: "Nauka," 1970. 404 pp. 1.54 rubles.

Professor Postnov's study of Siberian prose and poetry in the first half of the nineteenth century is a welcome contribution to our meager knowledge of cultural life in the most distinctive and remote of Russia's outlying regions. This work stands as the first major survey of literature in nineteenth-century Siberia since the publications of Azadovsky and Zherebtsov in the 1920s and 1930s, and it ably integrates the conclusions of recent studies that deal with individual writers of the period. In assessing the works of native Sibriaks, Russian exiles, and voluntary immigrants and administrators in the region, the author begins with the classicists of the 1790s and concludes with the drift from romanticism to realism in the 1850s. Coincidentally, between the years 1796, when Siberia's first printing press was closed down, and 1857, when the official provincial gazettes were first established, Siberian writers could find outlets for publication only in European Russia.

Postnov points out that during this period there was no Siberian literary tradition as such. Nevertheless, certain characteristic features stand out among the writers and their works. Almost every Siberian-born author who is discussed at length either studied in St. Petersburg (rarely Moscow) or took up residence there during his formative or creative period. Despite frequently voiced protests against the social or administrative status quo, Siberian literature presented no clear-cut ideological tendency during the period (regionalist views were expressed only rarely). Moreover, Siberian writers of the time had almost no literary impact on each other; the style and form of their writing were influenced chiefly by either Decembrist writers in their midst or contemporary Russian literary giants. In content, however, certain regional themes recur: Siberian nature (its vast forests, rivers, and steppes), the glories of Siberia's past (Genghis Khan, Yermak and Kuchum, and Cossack heroes), and Siberian natives (Buriats, Tungus, Yakuts, and Tatars—namely, those closest to urban centers).

Though Postnov contends that the 1820s witnessed a "decentralization" of Siberian cultural life, almost all of the forty-odd protagonists in his study emerged from only a handful of "cultural nests": Tobolsk, Irkutsk, Nerchinsk, and, much less commonly, Krasnoiarsk and Kiakhta. No wonder the regionalists of the 1860s, who hailed from backwaters elsewhere, found cause to regard Siberia's cultural life as slumbering and stagnant. True, Postnov's volume serves to correct the idea of a "spiritual desert" in Siberia: the region had its fine poets (Baldauf and Yershov), its talented raconteurs (Slovtsov, Kalashnikov, and Shchukin), and its urbane literary circles. Yet these were few and far between, and largely isolated from one another.

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