

a matter which the authors of *The Formal Method* recognize as central to any poetics, sociological or otherwise.

It may be worth noting that, in 1924, four years before the appearance of *Formal'nyi metod*, Bakhtin had subjected Formalist literary theorizing to critical scrutiny within a framework that owed more to Neo-Kantianism than to Marxism. In deploring the narrowly technical emphasis of Opoiaz writings, Bakhtin's early methodological statement placed the problem of value and value orientation at the center of the creative act. In *The Formal Method*, the key term becomes "social evaluation" (*sotsial'naiia otsenka*), which is viewed as an integrating principle in the literary work of art.

If the 1924 essay could be termed an "idealistic" prelude to *Formal'nyi metod*, *Formalizm i formalisty* (1934)—signed and possibly written by P. N. Medvedev—was a revised and characteristically coarsened version of the 1928 tract. Some of the sections in *Formal'nyi metod* appear to have been transferred bodily to the later book. Yet the overall tenor of the argument became more hostile and strident with bona fide intellectual polemic frequently yielding to ominous name-calling. Conceivably, the Medvedev-Bakhtin ratio had shifted in the meantime; it is fair to assume, however, that relative authorship was not as crucial a factor here as relative chronology.

Albert Wehrle's translation is generally careful and workmanlike, though his handling of key terms is not always felicitous: "finalization" is much too bureaucratic an equivalent of *zavershenie*. His introduction, especially as it bears on the intricacies of the Bakhtin circle, is eminently helpful, but it is marred occasionally by a modish lingo and far-fetched analogies.

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RUSSIAN LITERATURE IN THE AGE OF CATHERINE THE GREAT: A COLLECTION OF ESSAYS. Edited by *A. G. Cross*. Oxford: Willem A. Meeuws, 1976. 229 pp. £4.50. \$9.00, paper.

Five of the essays in this collection are revised and expanded versions of papers given in a panel organized by the editor at the 1974 Banff Slavic conference. They are supplemented by two invited essays and a useful bibliography of English-language materials on eighteenth-century Russian literature. Four contributors (including the editor) are British, the others American, and most are young scholars in the early stages of their professional careers.

It is appropriate that the collection be dedicated to scholars in the Group for the Study of Eighteenth-Century Literature in Leningrad, since the essays rely heavily on Soviet scholarship—a debt that is fully acknowledged by the contributors. The essays are, for the most part, well written and carefully researched but tend to be of the "new light on . . ." variety, exploring further aspects of familiar topics quite well covered in the past, and are not likely to appeal to nonspecialists. Those who share the background and enthusiasm of the contributors will probably not find anything very new here, except for the bibliography mentioned above. Topics covered include the clumsy attempts at prose fiction by Fedor Emin, the Russian ode (as practiced by Lomonosov and Derzhavin), Radishchev, the Masons, and the use of terminology (classicism, sentimentalism, preromanticism). The parochialism and narrow focus of the essays perhaps result from the nature of the material, but one may regret that the quotient of originality is rather low and that broader questions were not addressed and possible new approaches not attempted. One cannot help feeling that a valuable opportunity to produce a volume that might have challenged our perceptions of the Catherinian period has been lost, particularly since, as the editor claims, this is the first collection of essays by British and American scholars "concerned solely with literature and ideas."

I do not think it unkind to add that the lack of such a collection has not caused much alarm among students of Russian literature until this point, and I doubt whether the present collection will cause many to revise their low opinion of Russian literature (and ideas) in the eighteenth century. Indeed, I wonder whether the rise in interest in eighteenth-century Russian literature—which the editor catalogs with obvious pride in his introduction—amounts to little more than the fact that graduate students find the period a mine of manageable dissertation topics. It is surely significant that very few mature scholars, in this country at least, continue to specialize in the period. Perhaps eighteenth-century Russian literature has been unjustly slighted and deserves further consideration, but a cogent case is not made by its champions in this volume.

The book illustrates a growing trend in scholarly publication: it has soft covers and is produced by photo-offset from a typescript without right-hand margins.

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IVAN GONCHAROV: HIS LIFE AND HIS WORKS. By *Vsevolod Setchkarev*. Colloquium Slavicum, Beiträge zur Slavistik, vol. 4. Würzburg, Germany: Jal-Verlag, 1974. vii, 339 pp. DM 53, paper.

Vsevolod Setchkarev's monograph on Ivan Goncharov represents a comprehensive and long-needed study of one of Russia's major literary figures. Western Slavists will be grateful for this detailed, informative work. Especially valuable for the English reader are the succinct accounts and shrewd analyses of Goncharov's lesser-known works—his early and late prose, which, for the most part, has been unjustly neglected by Western specialists.

The book is arranged chronologically, following Goncharov's literary career according to his biographical data. This order gives a peculiar impression of a drawn-out, somewhat indolent unfolding of events which reflect and parallel Goncharov's laboriously slow literary evolution. As might be expected from such a monograph, each stage of Goncharov's development is given equal space and attention. Setchkarev raises many interesting points to which a short review cannot possibly render justice. His treatment of Shtolts and Olga in *Oblomov* is noteworthy: he rejects the hackneyed notion of their stiff "woodenness" and instead offers a convincing analysis of their quite modern existential approach to the problems of life. Setchkarev also succeeds in proving that Goncharov, not unlike Dostoevsky and Tolstoy, presents a complete and consistent philosophical and ethical system, which accounts for the lasting impression of his *oeuvre* on world literature. Goncharov's keen awareness of the metaphysical problem of existential boredom is propounded again in the stimulating chapter on *The Precipice*, "artistically and philosophically . . . [the] most relevant work" of the writer (p. 203). Contrary to the opinion of Goncharov's "liberal" contemporaries and present-day Soviet critics, Setchkarev points to Tushin, Vera's faithful suitor in *The Precipice*, as the "unconscious new man," a real representative of the new generation, "a man formed by life itself whom Russia needs" (p. 245).

Setchkarev also demonstrates Goncharov's potential as a playwright and as a capable essayist who left a substantial heritage of interesting articles, feuilletons, and book reviews, some of which still await meticulous research for proper identification and evaluation. The extremely useful bibliographical remarks and indexes listing Goncharov's works and proper names contribute to the value of the study as a basic source book, possibly the best available in Goncharov scholarship.

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