

The central theme is most evident in the poetry, although this is the genre most likely to suffer in the process of translation. To trace the genesis of the postwar mood, the editors, in keeping with their policy of stepping over chronological and national boundaries, have introduced some literary antecedents from the period between the two world wars. Among these antecedents we find four poems by Attila József, which are relevant indeed. But, alas, their translations do not do justice to this foremost of modern Hungarian poets. In one translation the savage "verték" of the original is reduced to a mild "spanking," in another "a szükségét végző vadállat" is rendered as a beast "relieving itself against a stone," which suggests a dog rather than a wild beast of the forests, and so forth. One has the sensation of watching the gestures of a dancer without hearing the music. The best translations in the volume have been made by poets who have, to continue the simile, guessed the music from the gestures of the dancer. For instance, Richard Lourie's renderings of Sándor Veöres—particularly of his superb "Mural of the Twentieth Century"—are poetic masterpieces. Aleksander Wat's "A Damned Man," translated by Czesław Miłosz, and Anne Pennington's translations of two Yugoslav poets—Vasko Popa and Miodrag Pavlović—also strike me as remarkably beautiful.

The editors have done a good job in choosing the prose fiction, too. Tibor Déry's "The Portuguese Princess" sets the mood—a search for identity by orphans, both literal and figurative—to be maintained in all the other stories despite their great differences. In my subjective judgment, Jacek Bocheński's "Tabu," a tale of psychological symbolism recalling the style of Hermann Hesse, and Bohumil Hrabal's delightfully absurd, impressionistic piece, "The Kafkorium," stand out as particularly brilliant.

George L. Kline's lucid discussion of revisionism is relevant to the poetry and prose of the volume, but the same cannot be said of some of the other essays. First of all, it seems clear from Kline's essay itself that a passage from Leszek Kołakowski's *Responsibility and History* would have been a better choice than his mannered and disputable discourse on Jesus. Second, while brief critical appraisals of the writers represented are certainly to the point, I do not see the purpose of including a number of essays—however brilliant they may be—on authors not here represented. These clog up the volume and lend it a scholastic air. The bulk of its contents leads me to assume that the volume is intended, as Tymon Terlecki writes in another context, for "the common or rather uncommon reader displaying a taste for aesthetic adventure, a refined curiosity and a generous open-mindedness." Such a reader will not appreciate the more ponderous pieces, but fortunately there are many other, very readable selections he can turn to in this rich anthology.

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THE HISTORY OF POLISH LITERATURE. By *Czesław Miłosz*. London: Collier-Macmillan Ltd., 1969. xvii, 570 pp. \$14.95.

This book is unique in many ways. It is the only one in English covering the history of Polish literature from its beginnings to the present time, for Manfred Kridl's *Survey of Polish Literature and Culture* makes no reference to the last thirty years of development. *The History of Polish Literature* is a scholarly work by the leading Polish poet, who, also defining himself as a Lithuanian, includes discussions of the Eastern Slavic languages and Lithuanian literature. This work, not subject to the limitations of censorship imposed upon the literary historian writing in Poland, is

able to pay full tribute to writers and works that are taboo there; it also avoids the factional pettiness of the so-called literature-in-exile and pays tribute as well to the writers living in Poland who are ignored in the exile press.

Polish literature, one of the oldest of the modern Slavic literatures, remains little known in English-speaking countries, because, as Miłosz indicates, it has been traditionally oriented toward poetry and the theater rather than toward fiction. (Another reason, it would seem, is an inseparable combining of universal motives with a strong national and politically colored idiom, as is manifested, for example, in Polish romanticism.) Miłosz knows how to write for the foreign reader, a virtue chronically absent in Polish attempts to popularize Polish culture abroad. The book is rich in comparative references and associations, aimed at helping the American reader to grasp the specifically Polish features of the literature. For instance, Miłosz sees a connection between the messianistic motifs of romanticism and a Polish "talent for self-pity"—a definition of messianism atypical for most of the "domestically oriented" accounts of this period. For the foreign reader, Norwid is compared to Jules Laforgue, Melville, and T. S. Eliot, and, more paradoxically, Mazepa to Buffalo Bill.

Miłosz sees the contradictory development of Polish literature, shunning the exaggerated one-sidedness of most Polish chroniclers. He is both sympathetic and critical. He sees in the Poles, as reflected in their literature, an amazing vitality and a tendency toward "moronic apathy," a refinement of taste, irony, and brilliance, threatened by "drunken torpor and parochial mumblings," and the tradition of political tolerance in opposition to a tendency toward "morbid, sick nationalism."

Although Miłosz employs the utilitarian structure of a textbook, he succeeds in avoiding dryness and monotony. He accepts conventional periodization, but merely for the sake of convenience. The factual and the interpretive sections are deliberately distinct. The author's synopsis of each work is unusually lucid. For example, Leszek Kołakowski's *Religious Consciousness and Church Structure*, a monumental work of nonfiction, is summarized thus: "Religious movements, as they gather strength, are confronted at a given moment with a choice; they can either organize themselves as churches, impose orthodoxy upon their members, and betray their initial, genuine impetus or try to preserve their original purity, but then the price is disintegration and disappearance" (p. 518). To avoid the "boredom of abstract statements," Miłosz also includes "literary portraits": the biography of an author and his artistic development in the most significant works, with a very rich and functional use of well chosen quotations.

Miłosz's sense of history (not at all surprising for the author of *The Captive Mind* and *Native Realm*) finds expression in the enlightening remarks that preface each chapter. These remarks focus on economic background and on the history of institutions and ideas, because Miłosz perceives literature as determined by non-artistic factors. For instance, a secret memorandum from Prince Metternich to Tsar Alexander I in 1820 is used by Miłosz to characterize the activist element of Polish romanticism.

One of the strongest aspects of Miłosz's book is his analysis of poetry. His aesthetic sensitivity and experience as a translator lead him to a refined treatment of literary samples. He prefers the literal translation of a poem to an inadequate artistic transposition, and uses the poetic version only if it can defend itself in English. More than half of the section on Różewicz (pp. 462–70) consists of quotations, which are perfectly chosen to give a sampling of the poet's style and to illustrate a basic assumption about Różewicz's links with existentialism, namely, that his brand of despair is much more radical than Camus's.

Miłosz makes extensive, if enigmatic, use of the critical literature, often prefacing his statements with: "Critics like to explain. . . ." When he agrees with the critic's argument, he quotes him extensively and often identifies with him. For instance, in the section on Kochanowski, Miłosz identifies himself with the interpretation of Backvis. In this way Miłosz presents not only writers, but insights into the critical literature about them as well. Doing so, he never relinquishes his own right to define, offering such excellent formulas as: "Różewicz is a poet of chaos with a nostalgia for order. . . . [He is] an antipoet writing poetry, defending man, to whom he refuses dignity" (p. 464).

The impact of Christianity on Polish culture is one of the best elaborated motifs of Miłosz's book. Discussing the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries as the formative period of Polish literature, its "Golden Age," he stresses the role of the controversies surrounding Hus, Luther, and Calvin in the development of the vernacular, which had earlier been suppressed by church Latin. He connects the tradition of intellectual rebellion in Polish letters with this largely Protestant period, and the tradition of emotional moralism with the Catholic Counter Reformation.

Understatement—which is not at all a Slavic virtue—is at Miłosz's command in this book and happily defines its style. In a genuine and organic way Miłosz has successfully incorporated in his opus all conclusions of the latest research with his own insights as a sensitive reader, poet, and skillful essayist.

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RUSSIAN FOLK TALES. Translated by *Natalie Duddington*. Illustrated by *Dick Hart*. New York: Funk & Wagnalls, 1969. 144 pp. \$4.95.

This book, a selection of twenty-two tales taken from A. N. Afanasiev's classical collection (1855–63), represents a small segment of Russian folk tales—some animal tales and tales of magic ("fairy tales"). Both of these types are international. The only tales that are typically Russian are the realistic tales and anecdotes that constitute over half the Russian folk-tale repertoire. However, none of these have been included in Miss Duddington's collection.

The selection of tales in this collection is apparently random. The animal and magic tales that enjoy the greatest popularity in Russia have been omitted, but curiously enough the literary reworking of a tale called "Vassilissa the Fair and Baba Yagá" is included. Thus the editor's claim that she had "simply tried to select stories which are . . . peculiar to Russian folklore" is not quite justified. The tales in English translation are slightly shortened and simplified. They are often stripped of their beginning and concluding formulas and other stylistic adornments that give Russian tales their characteristic flavor.

The introduction consists for the most part of misstatements. Pushkin is said to have put into verse several folk stories told him by his nurse, Arina Rodionovna. Actually, only one of Pushkin's verse tales may have been based on what he heard from her. The others are reworkings of the French translations of the Grimms' tales, the tales of *A Thousand and One Nights*, and the stories of Washington Irving. Listing Afanasiev as the initiator of Russian folk-tale collecting ("Afanasyev, and others after him . . .") is misleading. Afanasiev himself collected only about ten folk tales and compiled his famous collection from tales recorded by others. The remark that the editor has not seen any reprints of Afanasiev's collection is puzzling, to say the least. This collection has been printed six times in Russia,