

THE REALM OF RIME: A STUDY OF RIME IN THE POETRY OF THE SLAVS. By *Thomas Eekman*. Bibliotheca Slavonica, vol. 15. Amsterdam: Verlag Adolf M. Hakkert, 1974. iv, 364 pp. Paper.

The preparation of this book was clearly a labor of love. It is a study ranging over many centuries of developments in rhyming in almost all the major Slavic poetry traditions. The two opening chapters are devoted to theoretical considerations such as rhyme frequency and to the genesis of rhyme in European verbal art. They are followed by a lengthy historical survey of rhyme in Russian literary verse. The Polish, Czech, Slovak, and South Slavic traditions are treated with progressive brevity in the remaining sections of the book. In his presentation of each nation's poetry Professor Eekman focuses on the interaction between the folk and literary traditions in rhyme, on the importance first of grammatical and exact rhyme and later of antigrammatical and inexact rhyme, and finally on the occurrence of or prospects for a transition from rhymed to blank verse. Throughout he introduces helpful comparisons with West European rhyming practice and cites an extensive array of his own statistical data, some of which contradict those of previous scholars.

The principal virtue of this work is that its author has assembled in some 270 pages of text and 50-odd pages of footnotes a prodigious amount of knowledge and understanding of rhyme in Slavic poetry. As his bibliography of nearly four hundred items shows, he is aware of a remarkable quantity of material on his subject; with a few notable exceptions he can be said to have mastered it and put it to good use. Unfortunately, the sheer scope of his undertaking has almost of necessity prevented him from developing an independent argument or from offering a fresh interpretation of general trends in rhyming. Instead, he has very often fallen back on the usually reliable research of Zhirmunskii, Tomashevskii, Samoilov, Pszczołowska, and others. Moreover, one of his main points, his explanation for the persistence of rhyme in contemporary Slavic poetry, is far less astutely and rigorously argued than by A. V. Isačenko (with respect to Russian rhyme) in his essay in *Slavic Poetics* (1973).

Among the shortcomings of Eekman's study must be counted the lack of a scientific approach to the phonological aspects of rhyme, the scant attention paid to the correlation between metrical forms and rhyme types, and a tendency to regard the historical changes in rhyme canons as a single and irrevocable process of evolution. Further, his comparative approach to Slavic rhyme, though in isolated instances illuminating, is not completely justified by the results obtained; at one point (p. 164) he admits as much himself. Finally, one can only regret the absence of full bibliographical information for many of the articles on rhyme Eekman has unearthed from little-known journals.

Despite its weaknesses, this is a timely and important book; the enthusiasm with which it was written will undoubtedly inspire other scholars to pursue the problems it raises.

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