

KARL MARX AND WORLD LITERATURE. By S. S. Prawer. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976. xii, 446 pp. \$19.50.

MARXISM AND LITERARY CRITICISM. By Terry Eagleton. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1976. viii, 88 pp. \$6.95, cloth. \$2.65, paper.

There is a long row of German dissertations on this or that author's *Belcsenheit*: a list of every book an author has read or referred to. Professor Prawer, Taylor Professor of German Language and Literature at Oxford University—well known for his excellent book on Heine and a well-informed survey of *Comparative Literature Studies*—has done this job for Karl Marx with meticulous care, enormous diligence, and a desire for completeness which must be unrivaled in this type of study. He has assembled all the evidence for Marx's omnivorous reading in many literatures and has traced Marx's use of quotations and allusions to many books, to characters in fiction, and even to sayings or tags in all sorts of contexts. Because Mr. Prawer has elected a chronological order of exposition, he is forced to review the same or similar references many times over, as Marx calls somebody a Don Quixote, a Mephistopheles, a Shylock; or quotes the same passage from *Faust*, the *Divine Comedy*, and Shakespeare's *Timon of Athens*; or alludes to this or that poem by Schiller, Heine, or Freiligrath. Mr. Prawer's learning, ingenuity, and patience are beyond praise, but one wonders why we have to be told twice that Marx called a forgotten journalist named F. Zabel a Wackford Squeeres (pp. 203 and 392) or George IV, king of England, a Caliban (p. 243). Unfortunately, Mr. Prawer did not take Marx's advice that the mode of investigation should not be confused with the mode of presentation. Still, there is some interest in finding out what Marx had read of Russian authors and what he thought of them. Luckily they come bunched together at a specific time, in the last years of Marx's life (pp. 384–85).

Mr. Prawer's book is not, however, a mere compendium of Marx's wide reading and literary culture. The author discusses every passage of any importance for literary theory, always construing it as favorably as possible, carefully commenting on the passage itself, and attempting to extract confirmations or anticipations of modern doctrines from what, after all, were scattered pronouncements on a subject hardly in the center of Marx's concerns. Prawer thus shows that Marx never spoke of literature as mirroring society (though once he made the surely unconvincing statement that "the condition of Germany at the end of the last century is completely reflected in Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*" [p. 110]); that Marx never used the term "realism" for literature; and that, in practice, he admired and loved a great deal of writing that could not conceivably be called realistic—the *Arabian Nights*, E. T. A. Hoffmann, Chamisso, *Frankenstein*, and so on. Mr. Prawer demonstrates Marx's oscillations about the relations between basis and superstructure and his increasing leaning toward economic determinism, and rightly judges that Marx was "one of the great mediators between the classical aesthetics of the eighteenth century and the realist aesthetics of the nineteenth" (p. 224). Marx as literary critic is firmly located in history.

Terry Eagleton's slim pamphlet expounds the main issues of Marxist criticism under such headings as "Literature and History," "Form and Content," "The Writer and Commitment," "The Author as Producer," and manages to work in clear, though sketchy, expositions of the main doctrines of Marx, Engels, Lukács, Goldmann, Macherey, Benjamin, and Brecht. His point of view is that of a dedicated Marxist who sides with Brecht against Lukács in the realism debate, criticizes Goldmann for "the incorrect contrast between 'world vision' and 'ideology'" (p. 80), and condemns "Stalin's cultural thug Zhdanov" (p. 38). Marxist criticism, he argues, is not simply a sociological or economic approach but implies "a revolutionary understanding of

history itself" (p. 3). Mr. Eagleton accepts uncritically even the most Utopian features of Marxism. Thus we are told (though not told how) that "socialist society can reproduce a primitive image of 'measure between man and nature' at an incomparably higher level" (p. 13). Critics, he can say, "are not just analysts of texts; they are also (usually) academics hired by the state to prepare students ideologically for their functions within capitalist society" (p. 58), yet he never reflects that critics in Communist societies serve the same purpose more exclusively and explicitly. Mr. Eagleton, a fellow at Wadham College and lecturer in English at Oxford University, can even give a class on Marxist criticism in which Marxist criticism is exalted, to quote the concluding words of the booklet, as "part of our liberation from oppression" (p. 76).

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THE SEXUAL LABYRINTH OF NIKOLAI GOGOL. By *Simon Karlinsky*. Cambridge, Mass. and London: Harvard University Press, 1976. xii, 333 pp. Illus. \$14.00.

Most attentive readers of Gogol have been struck by the conspicuous contrast between his lively, colorful, and often grotesque male characters, and his beautiful, but pale and lifeless heroines. The usual explanation for this phenomenon has been Gogol's alleged lack of knowledge of women and the fact that he never married. Professor Karlinsky's book is devoted to a close examination of Gogol's sexuality (a subject treated most gingerly until now), and its reflection in Gogol's artistic work. Karlinsky's thesis is that the conflict between Gogol's homosexual desires on one hand, and his dislike of women and revulsion against marriage (strongly championed by social custom and tradition) on the other, were at "the nerve center of Gogol's biography and of much of his creative achievement" (p. 6). He then proceeds to a step-by-step examination of relevant biographical data from Gogol's life, combined with a survey of the writer's work, starting with "Ganz Küchelgarten" and ending with *Selected Passages from Correspondence with Friends*. The book concludes with a summary of Gogol criticism, both in Russia and the West, since the nineteenth century, and a "mini-bibliography" of Gogol in English.

The biographical facts that shed light on Gogol's sexual orientation are carefully and convincingly presented: Gogol's one-sided, frustrating involvements with Gerasim Vysotskii, Mikhail Pogodin, and Nikolai Iazykov, his close friendship with Alexander Ivanov, and his love for Iosif Viel'gorskii, point to the writer's constant search for male companionship and love. Gogol's strong ties to his mother, his brotherly and often piously colored relations with women—such as Nadezhda Sheremeteva, Maria and Varvara Balabin, and Alexandra Smirnova—and his abortive "romance" with Anna Viel'gorskaia complement the picture. Karlinsky's interpretation of Gogol's death as the deliberate suicide of a lonely, frustrated, guilt-ridden man in expiation of his "sins" is utterly convincing.

Karlinsky's analysis of Gogol's art combines a wide panorama of Russian and European literary history (with occasional excursions into the arts and music) with a close review of individual works. Already in the early Ukrainian tales, the author finds several interesting patterns to prove his point: many of Gogol's male characters "who seek love, marriage, or sexual conquest are swiftly and inevitably punished with death, humiliation, and assorted other catastrophes" (p. 35). According to Karlinsky, Gogol's idea of a "happy ending" to a story is "the male protagonist's escape from impending marital involvement" (p. 36). As long as woman is kept in her place—that is, for procreative purposes, or as a vehicle of male pleasure—she is not dangerous. It is only when she becomes an equal to man, or even gains the upper hand, or when,