

includes Dostoevsky, Vladimir Soloviev, Berdiaev, and Merezhkovsky. Considering the intense interest that even non-Slavists have shown in this tradition, one marvels that *Selected Passages* has never been translated into English until now.

In a well-crafted introduction, Jesse Zeldin gives the reader something of the context necessary for understanding the book: the story of its composition and of its critical reception. The notes, while not prolific, are by and large adequate, even though Zeldin does not always avail himself of the information in the Academy edition, particularly when the identities of addressees are concerned. Otherwise, the book seems to have come from a different hand. One sympathizes with the difficulties Zeldin had to face in making his English version: Gogol is often murky, and his word usages can be eccentric. But that does not justify the dozens upon dozens of mistakes that riddle the translation. It is laudable to strive for as close a rendition of the original as possible, and Zeldin often does capture the letter and the spirit very successfully. But when literalness also produces flagrant errors, tortured syntax, and that still vigorous dialect known as translationese, then one finds the author's advance apology for possible occasional "slips" rather too modest. Let me point to just a few by way of example, and by way of a caveat.

First, there are some outright omissions—three clauses, for example, in the second letter, and an entire long paragraph in the seventh. In some places the eye has obviously misconstrued: *put'* was seen instead of *pust'* (p. 144), *videt'* instead of *vedat'* (p. 36). Far more serious is the kind of gaffe which suggests that Zeldin simply does not know Russian very well. Thus, *po chasti* becomes "down to every part" instead of "as concerns"; *nakhodili na menia minuty* is rendered as "they have found moments in my . . ." instead of "moments have come upon me"; *sozhgi assignatsii* is "deplore currency" rather than "burn money"; and *ni* rather regularly emerges as "not," instead of an "—ever" construction. Especially convoluted Gogolian syntax can elude Zeldin completely: examples can be found on page 16, lines 1 and 2; page 78, line 15; page 98, the last four lines; page 100, lines 7-9; page 139, lines 4-7. Blurred niceties are common too—for example, "completely incorrect" instead of "not entirely correct" (p. 21). Finally, we have non-English: ". . . rather should we look at ourselves sternly, thinking not of blackness to others, not of blackness to the entire world, but of blackness to ourselves." Letter 30 offers a convenient anthology of most of these genres of error.

This sort of enumeration ought to have been done by a patient reader *before* the manuscript went to press. A full list would run to many, many pages. Perhaps Zeldin knows Russian no worse than many other translators now active; but many of his readers know it a good deal better, and rightly expect higher standards.

Because this is the only translation of *Selected Passages*, it will probably be used in courses in Russian literature, history, and philosophy. But any teacher who does use it should carefully check the English against the Russian and issue an errata sheet to his students.

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DAS GROTESKE BEI N. V. GOGOL': FORMEN UND FUNKTIONEN. By  
*Hans Günther*. Slavistische Beiträge, vol. 34. Munich: Verlag Otto Sagner,  
1968. 289 pp. Paper.

The source of Gogol's novelty in Russian literature is also the source of the notorious difficulty critics have had in dealing with him: the elusiveness of ultimate point of view, the tantalizing sense of some camouflaged intention beneath the

baffling coruscation of his style. By a characteristically Gogolian exercise in synecdoche, the Belinsky tradition let one side of his work stand for the whole; later, the symbolists did the same for the other side. The recent vogue for discussing the grotesque in Gogol is a sign of a new attempt to find a single concept that can accommodate his contradictions and hold his ambiguities up for inspection without simplifying them. In one sense at least, Dr. Günther's work is the most thorough effort of this kind to date.

Following the traditions of his form (this is a dissertation, photomechanically reproduced), the author is a long time getting to what is most original in his perception of Gogol's art (in part 3). In part 1 Günther surveys existing theories of the grotesque—accepting, rejecting, modifying. The grotesque, he concludes, is not a generically limited concept; best spoken of in the plural, it falls into two main categories—*Kompositionsgroteske* (subcategories are the comic and fantastic grotesque, representing the dominant elements of unstable compounds that contain as well the "tragic" and "real," respectively) and *Stilgroteske* (characterized by alogism, animation of the inanimate and vice versa, expanding and "realized" metaphors, etc.).

In part 2 Günther considers the grotesque in Gogol's fiction, with an abundance of close analysis and copious citation of disparate scholarly opinion. After a look at the beginnings of the grotesque in *Evenings on a Farm Near Dikanka*, he details in four chapters the workings of the comic grotesque in *Ivan Fedorovich Shponka and His Aunt*, *Old-World Landowners*, the story of the two Ivans, and part of *Nevsky Prospect*. In three more chapters, he analyzes the fantastic grotesque in *The Nose*, *Notes of a Madman*, and *The Overcoat*. A final chapter treats the grotesque style of *Dead Souls* under the heading of "Realistische Groteske."

In part 3 the author abandons the adjustment and application of reasonable but generally familiar distinctions to confront the import of what we have seen Gogol doing. Günther rejects the notion, advanced by Merezhkovsky and Tschizewskij, that Gogol's work is the expression of a "dämonische Weltgefühl" and suggests instead that the playful (*spielerische*) function of the grotesque is related to its satiric function, which in turn is directed (albeit in predominantly moral terms) to the exposure of a widespread feeling of social alienation that existed in the 1830s and 1840s. Particularly refreshing in this connection is the discussion of *poshlost'*, based on a conviction that "Die konkreten Erscheinungsformen der 'poshlost' in der Darstellung Gogol's werden nur dann sinnvoll erschlossen, wenn man die 'poshlost' in ihrer historisch-gesellschaftlichen Vermitteltheit begreift." This attempt to recognize all the oddity of Gogol's writing (so persistently undervalued by Russian "social" critics) and still see him as practically engaged with the Russian society of his time is highly interesting as far as it goes, and makes one miss all the more keenly that analysis of the literary-cultural context which its full development would require.

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ANTON P. ČECHOV: DAS WERK UND SEIN STIL. By *Petr M. Bicilli*.  
Translated from the Russian and edited by *Vincent Sieveking*. Forum Slavicum,  
vol. 7. Munich: Wilhelm Fink Verlag, 1966. 252 pp. DM 36.

This work, published in a Bulgarian journal of small circulation in the war year 1942, has been known to most students of Chekhov only as a bibliographical item. After a quarter of a century it has been made available, not as a photomechanical