

Unfortunately for Chadwick, the publication and study of Central Asian epics began to flourish only in the years following the appearance of her survey. At that time numerous modern collections of the major epics were published, such as *Alpamys-Batyr* (1961), *Manas* (2 vols., 1958) with its continuations *Semetei* and *Seitek* (1959 and 1960), *The Book of My Grandfather Korkut* (1962), and so forth. Also many significant studies of epics appeared, such as I. T. Sagitov's and K. Maksetov's studies on Karakalpak epics (1962 and 1965), I. V. Pukhov's work on the Yakut heroic epic (1962), several studies on *Manas*, and others. These works have put the whole problem of the Central Asian epics and their inter-relationships into a completely different light, and we have reason to question the advisability of the republication of Chadwick's survey, adequate in its time, but outdated now.

The second part of *Oral Epics of Central Asia* (pp. 269–339), written by V. M. Zhirmunsky, complements Chadwick's survey with the results of more modern research. Zhirmunsky, who settled in Tashkent after the evacuation of Leningrad in 1941, has become a leading scholar and the moving spirit in the study of the Central Asian epics. In the book under review he gives an informative bibliographical survey, discusses the "epic tales" and the singers of tales. Zhirmunsky's contribution, though concise, forms the most significant portion of the book. In the chapter on the epic tales he deals with those Turkic epics that were either omitted by Chadwick or treated inadequately by her—*Alpamysh*, *Edigei* (*Idige*), *Köroglu-Gorogli*, *Manas*, and *The Book of My Grandfather Korkut*. Zhirmunsky's discussion of the origin of the individual epics, of the historical events integrated into them, of their spread from one nation to another, and of the transformation of the epics due to the historically determined social structures is, I think, the best that has been written on this subject. The author's masterly synthesis squeezed into some twenty pages would merit expansion into a full-size book on the Central Asian epics.

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SELECTED PASSAGES FROM CORRESPONDENCE WITH FRIENDS.

By *Nikolai Gogol*. Translated by *Jesse Zeldin*. Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 1969. xxvii, 271 pp. \$5.95.

Selected Passages is one of those famous books that are read only by scholars and critics. For more than a century it has been ransacked for clues to Gogol's mind, character, and art. It has been adjudged both an aberration from and a logical culmination of its author's "true" gifts. But as yet it has not been treated seriously as a work of literature in its own right. Some forty years ago, V. V. Vinogradov suggested that it represented a conscious search for a new style. But as far as I know, nobody has gone on to study its links—structural and imagistic—with Gogol's earlier works, not merely the articles and letters, but especially the fiction. Virtually the only readers who have taken the book as a respectable intellectual monument are those of religious or philosophical bent, such as Gershenzon, Mochulsky, Zenkovsky, and Florovsky. But even Mochulsky disapproves of Gogol's theology, and most of the others wince at the pietism.

Certainly no other work of Gogol's has generated more impassioned but less perceptive commentary. Of course, it is not a great book. But it is an important book, not merely because it came from a great artist, but because it falls within a tradition (some say it founded that tradition) of Russian religious writing that

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