

tive connection with the lower provincial gentry—has proved fruitful. The specimen of Russian Freudianism is, of course, Ivan Ermakov, apparently martyred during the 1930s and still unrehabilitated. Ermakov's chapter on "The Nose" is full of imaginative *aperçus*, despite his humorless solemnity, his penchant for ponderous *obiter dicta*, and his literary naïveté. Viacheslav Ivanov's study is a relatively minor, but nevertheless, seminal treatment of *The Inspector General* in terms derived from the study of ancient Greek comedy.

The second half of the collection belongs mostly to the Formalists, though not to their most strident and doctrinaire spokesmen. The fringe-Formalist Vasilii Gippius, perhaps the greatest of the Russian Gogolians, is represented not by an extract from his 1924 book (probably the best single monograph on Gogol in existence), but by a 1936 essay on *The Inspector General*. Though more concise than the book, it manages—as successfully as anyone ever has—to create an integrated interpretation of the play in combining formal-aesthetic, social-historical, and literary-historical categories. After Gippius comes Boris Eikhenbaum's "How Gogol's 'Overcoat' Is Made," undoubtedly the most celebrated single essay on Gogol ever written. It too now seems a bit dated in its Formalist overstatements and polemic spirit, but it is still enormously stimulating. Eikhenbaum's essay is followed by Dmitry Čiževsky's equally brilliant, and more judicious, dismantling of that much dismantled "Overcoat," an interpretation that, among other things, gives Gogol's devil his due (Maguire has rescued the German version of Čiževsky's article the devilish parts suppressed in the Parisian Russian one). There follows a complete translation of Alexander Slonimsky's wonderful booklet, "The Technique of the Comic in Gogol" (1923), as valuable in its concrete observations as it is in its theoretical speculations. Finally, it is both appropriate and gratifying that the book should conclude with translations of two fine Russian essays by Leon Stilman, "The 'All-Seeing Eye' in Gogol" and "Men, Women, and Matchmakers."

As high as the quality is of the essays he has chosen, the work of the editor himself deserves nothing but praise. Maguire has done a superb job. His translations are virtually faultless, not only accurate, but amazingly sensitive to the varied stylistic qualities of the originals. Each essay is preceded by a brief introductory note, placing the author in his time, and the particular essay within his *oeuvre*. Sufficient, but never obtrusive, footnotes not only elucidate many references that most non-Russians would find obscure, but sometimes correct errors in the originals. Best of all, the book begins with an elegantly written introductory essay by Maguire, studiously fair, yet with a firm standpoint of its own, surveying the whole history of Gogol criticism.

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DOSTOEVSKY AND HIS DEVILS. By Václav Černý. Translated by F. W. Galan. Afterword by Josef Škvorecký. Ardis Essay Series, no. 3. Ann Arbor: Ardis Publishers, 1975. 77 pp. \$2.50, paper.

Václav Černý is a Czech critic and scholar who has combined a passionate commitment to ideas of freedom in art and society with a wide-ranging erudition, mainly in the history of Czech, French, and Spanish literatures. His fierce independence of mind and his outspoken participation in the ideological battles of his time have earned him the enmity of the two dictatorships which have plagued Czechoslovakia.

He was persecuted by the Nazis, by the Communists in the 1950s, and again by the new regime after the Russian invasion in 1968. Three times—in 1939, 1948, and 1970—he was removed from his position at the University of Prague.

Students in the West may remember his *Essai sur le Titanisme dans la poésie romantique occidentale* (1935), which ranges from Byron, Leopardi, Lamartine, Vigny, and Hugo to Dostoevsky and Nietzsche, and includes several essays in French on the baroque in literature. But one would need a knowledge of Czech to appreciate the full scope of his work, often published under trying circumstances and by now completely suppressed in his native land. The book on *Old Czech Love Poetry* (1948, oddly enough not mentioned in the introduction) is probably his most valuable contribution to scholarship, while *The People and Literature in the Middle Ages* (1958) makes enforced concessions to the ruling ideology. But during the brief interval of the Prague Spring, Černý was able to collect his scattered essays in two volumes: *Studies and Essays in Modern World Literature* (1969) and *Studies in Older World Literature* (1969).

The essay on “Dostoevsky and *The Devils*” appeared in the first book. It was originally written as the postscript for a Slovak translation of *The Devils* (1967) which was suppressed because of Černý’s contribution. The reason for its suppression is clear: the essay contains not only a rejection of the orthodox Marxist interpretation of Dostoevsky as a realist, but also a ringing denunciation of Marxist ideology and its justification of any lie and even murder for the end of a future Utopia of universal justice—a message Černý appropriately finds in the text of *The Devils*.

There can be no question of Černý’s courage and commitment to freedom, or of his ardent eloquence and literary sensibility. But as a study of Dostoevsky, the essay will strike an informed reader less favorably. One can sympathize with Černý’s rejection of Dostoevsky as the incarnation of the Russian or Slavic soul, and Dostoevsky’s cruelty and sadism have been noted since Mikhailovskii’s essay in 1882. The only new point seems to be the interpretation of the three main protagonists of *The Devils*, each character striving to achieve one of the traditional attributes of God: Stavrogin aims at omniscience, at total self-consciousness with absolute pride; Kirilov desires absolute existence, self-affirmation paradoxically by suicide; and the younger Verkhovenskii strives for absolute power. This theme, schematic as it may be, is developed in a few luminous pages (pp. 50–64), which deserve the attention of every student of Dostoevsky’s novel.

Mr. Galan’s translation captures the fervent tone of the original. However, his translation of Christ’s words as “Why didst thou desert me?” (p. 59) seems inapt, when we all know the Authorized Version’s “Why hast thou forsaken me?” is generally accepted. His introduction and the sympathetic reminiscence of Josef Škvorecký, the well-known Czech novelist in exile, very appropriately stress the theme of persecution, but overrate the novelty of Černý’s theories. “The criticism of identification” (p. 14) is the slogan of the Geneva school of phenomenologists proclaimed by Georges Poulet, and the final quotation about the eternal present of all great art is a variation of an old idea, most memorably formulated in this century in T. S. Eliot’s “Tradition and the Individual Talent” (1919). Nevertheless, it is good to have this essay in English. It may whet the appetite for some of the more original and substantial writings of Václav Černý.

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