

monosyllabic words and the consequent effect on their position in the line. James Bailey, who also compiled the bibliography of Taranovsky's works that concludes the volume, analyzes a poem by Mayakovsky as part of an effort to define the distinction between stricter and freer types of accentual verse. Both Soviet (Zhovtis) and non-Soviet (Isačenko) scholars look at the fate of rhyme in twentieth-century poetry; at the same time Dean Worth—whose major article on the topic appeared in *Russian Literature* (no. 3)—presents another bit of evidence that supports his findings regarding rhyme in the eighteenth century.

In short, *Slavic Poetics* is a valuable sourcebook not just for its specific articles but also for indicating the current state of research in the field it covers. As such it is a fitting tribute to the man whose own work has, for many years, pointed the way for others interested in Russian versification and in poetics in general.

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A TRAVELER DISGUISED: A STUDY IN THE RISE OF MODERN YIDDISH FICTION IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY. By *Dan Miron*. New York: Schocken Books, 1973. xv, 347 pp. \$10.95.

Sholom Yakov Abramovitsh, widely known by the name of his fictional narrator-character Mendele Moykher Sforim, is acknowledged to occupy a place in Yiddish literature comparable to Pushkin's place in Russian literature and Bialik's in Hebrew literature. Certainly in the 1970s a book on Abramovitsh's literary art or on the "rise of modern Yiddish fiction in the nineteenth century" should be of interest to Slavists, especially since it deals with Russia. Yet somehow Jewish contributions to the cultural life of tsarist Russia have remained beyond the ken of most Slavists. Unfortunately, the book under review does little to reverse the course of neglect.

Miron argues that the narrative persona Mendele served as a catalyst in developing language and literary norms for Yiddish and that Mendele is neither of the Jewish community nor of the outside world, since he parodies and satirizes both worlds from his position as a marginal man. Unhappily, these and the book's other theses are developed somewhat chaotically and differ little from earlier appraisals of Abramovitsh by others; but a few interesting sections do emerge, including the one about problems Jewish writers faced in choosing a language for literary expression (in which Miron discusses the "aesthetics of ugliness," pp. 43–63), and also the sections dealing with Mendele as an intermediary, or *eiron* (peacemaker), between the characters and the reader and between the characters themselves (pp. 161, 201).

The following are some of the book's major defects. Miron is obviously knowledgeable about Yiddish literary history, but he has not sifted or organized his facts so as to produce a unified and clear presentation. As it is, the title and subtitle indicate only two of the several unrelated and nonunified strands that run through the book. Miron seems to want the best of both worlds, the scholarly audience *and* the general reading public (Jewish and non-Jewish). The surgery performed on what was his doctoral dissertation has left a heavy-handed and at times incoherent essay which can satisfy neither audience and can only bore both with its redundancies, mishandling of critical terminology, misinformation (e.g., pp.

155, 210), and organizational shortcomings. (Regarding organization, the reader would do better to read the chapters in this order: 8, 5, 6, 7, 2, 3; 4, 1.) The intense polemics which run through Yiddish criticism are only cursorily discussed, and the various parallels and affinities to the development of Russian literature during the same period are ignored (save for a mention of Gogol that someone else pointed out to Miron).

The "purpose" of the book is thoroughly clouded by a series of disclaimers and hedging statements. The disclaimer about Wayne Booth's *Rhetoric of Fiction* (p. x) is ill-conceived, since Booth's influence is noticeable throughout the book. The discussion of the narrative persona Mendele could only have benefited from a consideration of Booth's and other theoretical books on the nature of narrative. All of the disclaimers merge into the author's statements (for example, on p. 9) that his contribution is almost totally speculative. When Miron says that others must judge whether or not he has acquitted himself in discussing the cultural and historical backdrop to the Yiddish literary scene in Russia, we must sadly conclude that he has not.

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ANTHOLOGY OF CZECH POETRY. Compiled by *Alfred French*. Introduction by *René Wellek*. Michigan Slavic Translations, no. 2. Ann Arbor: Department of Slavic Languages and Literatures of the University of Michigan, and Czechoslovak Society of Arts and Sciences in America, 1973. xix, 372 pp. Paper.

This first volume of a projected two-volume anthology of Czech poetry covers the six centuries between the emergence of poetry in the Czech language in the early fourteenth century and the foundation of the Czechoslovak Republic in 1918. It is an interesting and valuable anthology and represents, both in scope and conception, a considerable advance over most of its predecessors.

The editor, the Australian literary scholar and translator Alfred French, has selected not only the "highlights" of Czech poetry but also poems by minor poets and some lesser works of major poets as well. Of special interest is the presentation of poems by relatively unknown Catholic poets of the seventeenth century who are often ignored in their native country. One of them, Holan Rovenský, is not even mentioned in Novák's standard *Přehledné dějiny*. In addition, in his critical introductions to the individual chapters French repeatedly emphasizes the history of Czech poetry as an art, reserving space for observations on genre, theme, composition, and style. Clearly, in all this he is concerned with the "inner" history of Czech poetry as a specific and autonomous cultural phenomenon. The underlying emphasis proves effective for selection and arrangement of the poems. If the reader closely follows the order of poems, he will indeed be able to perceive how in the history of Czech poetry things cohered, broke apart, and were recombined. As French further implies, the driving forces of the process are to be found primarily within the inner history itself rather than in external events. The influence of external events on the literary structure is not denied but characterized as complex and mediated. This aspect of the inner development is also cogently discussed in René Wellek's introduction.

This being a bilingual anthology, the Czech prototypes are printed side by side