

Novikov was not the author of the *Dramaticheskii slovar'* (1787)—probably it was A. Annenkov; Radishchev's blind beggar is not the fool-in-Christ Alexei, but the singer of a song about him; Arzamas never met under Karamzin's presidency—it had a different president for each session and Karamzin was not one of them; Benediktov was hardly the "laureate" of the Pushkin Pleiade. There are occasional mistranslations (for example, "The unknown singer flowering far from the vales of Germany" for Glinka's "Daleko ot Germanii tsvetushchei") but more frequently, embellishments (see particularly pp. 62–63, a description of Pushkin's father, attributed erroneously, incidentally, to Vigel). A passage from Vigel is used earlier in an extensive paraphrase-cum-translation, which thoroughly distorts its sense (cf. pp. 8–9 and Vigel, *Zapiski*, Moscow, 1928, 1:327–28).

Finally, a word about the transliteration, if only because the author himself makes much of it. He uses his chosen Library of Congress system so waywardly that it becomes a nonsystem. From an *embarras de richesse*: *poezia chustva*; *Ostapevski*; *bibliotheka*; Tomachevski; *romanticism dvatsatykh godov*; Aleksander. B. S. Meilakh becomes Meilakha and Mailakha, regaining his sex in the index, but with two separate entries; and I. N. Medvedeva becomes a Medved.

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RUSSIAN LITERATURE AND MODERN ENGLISH FICTION: A COLLECTION OF CRITICAL ESSAYS. Edited, with an introduction, by *Donald Davie*. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1965. vi, 244 pp. \$1.95, paper.

THE NOVEL IN RUSSIA: FROM PUSHKIN TO PASTERNAK. By *Henry Gifford*. London: Hutchinson University Library. New York: Hillary House, 1964. 208 pp. \$3.00.

THE RUSSIAN NOVEL. By *F. D. Reeve*. New York, Toronto, and London: McGraw-Hill, 1966. vii, 397 pp. \$7.50.

INTRODUCTION TO RUSSIAN REALISM: PUSHKIN, GOGOL, DOSTOEVSKY, TOLSTOY, CHEKHOV, SHOLOKHOV. By *Ernest J. Simmons*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1967. x, 275 pp. \$6.50, cloth. \$2.65, paper.

SOVIET RUSSIAN LITERATURE. By *Marc Slonim*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1964. 337 pp. \$7.50.

The growth of Western scholarship and criticism in the field of Russian literature has been rapid during the last few decades. D. S. Mirsky's *History of Russian Literature* (1926) and *Contemporary Russian Literature* (1927) were undertakings which a man of Mirsky's talent and erudition could tackle with reasonable confidence. Today, anyone who writes a book of even remotely comparable scope must not only survey a huge amount of additional critical literature but must also consider that his Western readers are familiar with the Russian critics and scholarly commentators on the Russian classics and expect a scholarly treatment of Russian literature to be on the same level of sophistication as any comparable discussion of their own literature. To write a comprehensive treatise on any aspect, branch, or period of Russian literature that is more than an undergraduate text is a challenging undertaking. Many failures are already on record.

The volume edited by Donald Davie does not quite fulfill the promise of its provocative title. Davie's introduction, to be sure, is thoughtful and well informed. It makes some good points—for example, that English critical writing on Russian literature was terribly amateurish for a long time, and that consequently the Russians, who were read badly by the English reading public, were prevented from having any real influence on English writers, who simply had no idea that there was anything they could learn from Gogol or Dostoevsky. Fortunately, this situation is now changing, since the English-speaking world has begun to produce some first-rate scholars of Russian literature.

Among the titles selected by Davie are many that are pertinent to the history of English-Russian literary relations, but the inclusion of some other items does not seem to make sense. The first few pieces, though of modest critical interest, amply illustrate how superficially the great Russians were read even by such perceptive critics as George Saintsbury and George Moore. An essay on Turgenev by Henry James offers more than only historical interest. Two essays by D. H. Lawrence are in order, even though they reveal much more about Lawrence than about the Russian authors he discusses. But then, why two lengthy excerpts from Merezhkovsky's "Tolstoy as Man and Artist"? And why Thomas Mann's essay "Chekhov"? The chapter "The Contrary Traffic" contains only two items, both literary curiosities, but of little consequence. Consider, in this context, that a recently published volume, *Russian Studies of American Literature: A Bibliography*, compiled by Valentina A. Libman (Chapel Hill, 1969), has 218 pages of bibliographical entries! In summary, Davie's volume accomplishes one thing: it suggests that the theme indicated in its title is a legitimate and an intriguing one. It does very little more.

The title of Gifford's book, too, is misleading. Thus, in the chapter "Soviet Writing" Zoshchenko is discussed (pp. 171–72) but not Fedin or Fadeev. The chapter on Gorky concentrates on the writer's famous autobiography but does not even mention the great novel *The Life of Klim Samgin*, the importance of which is beginning to be recognized even in the West. Nevertheless, among the books under discussion Gifford's is easily the best pedagogically. On its chosen level it gives a neat, comprehensive, enlightened view of the subject. Nor is it a naïve or dishonest view of things. It is Turgenev as seen by Henry James, a perfectly acceptable view. But then, there is also Dostoevsky's view of Turgenev, and Gershenzon's, and Granjard's.

Gifford also produces a good conceptual "translation" of the Russian facts into an idiom the educated English reader will understand, and does so without violating those facts. Some excellent parallels with English literature help considerably. For example, Turgenev is compared with Thackeray (p. 74), Saltykov-Shchedrin with George Eliot (p. 104), and the beginning of Sholokhov's *The Quiet Don* is likened to Thomas Hardy (p. 169). On the other hand, the historical ties between Russian and Western literature, so amply demonstrated by Eikhensbaum, Shklovsky, Vinogradov, and others, remain largely unmentioned.

Gifford is well aware of the problems of novelistic structure, but does not always draw attention to important scholarly and critical achievements in this area. For example, Bakhtin's polyphonic theory and Matlaw's observations on structural patterns in *The Brothers Karamazov* are never mentioned in what is otherwise a most intelligent discussion of that novel. Gifford seems to give credence to Turgenev's own words, "Whatever I write, the result is a series of sketches" (p. 71). But this statement is hardly true, for even Turgenev's French contemporaries acknowledged that he was the only Russian writer who could compose "like a French novelist."

Gifford's judgments are usually sound and well substantiated, although on occasion he could have been more concrete and specific. Thus, he correctly observes that Chekhov "was at heart a moralist and no less didactic than Saltykov-Shchedrin" (p. 133). But Frank O'Connor has also specified that the preaching of Chekhov the moralist has something very special about it: it deals with the *venial* sin.

The title of Reeve's book is also misleading: the author discusses many things besides the Russian novel, and very well, too. Thus Reeve's excursions into the history of Russian literary criticism are quite illuminating. He discerns three basic attitudes (pp. 123–24) which we might label "formalism," "mystic organicism," and "social organicism." I would add a fourth: an eclectic, Horatian attitude, such as we find in Pushkin or Turgenev. Reeve's presentation of the critical theories of Belinsky, Chernyshevsky, Dobroliubov, and others is inevitably somewhat simplistic—not too bad a flaw, for it was in this simplistic form that these critics stamped their seal upon their Russian contemporaries. The relation between Belinsky and Hegel could have been presented more substantively (p. 125): Plekhanov has already shown, carefully and in detail, how Belinsky depended on Hegel, and where he differed from him. Regarding Dobroliubov, Reeve chooses to ignore the fact that Dobroliubov, in his better moments, exhibits an organic and dialectic, rather than mechanistic, conception of the relation between art and reality. The distinction between Pisarev's nihilism (p. 134) and that of the *Sovremennik* group might have been made clear. Finally, the important Apollon Grigoriev is "taken care of" in one, rather obscure, subordinate clause (p. 125).

As for the main body of the book, it is as deceptive as its title. This is, really, a much better book than would appear at first reading. At fault is Reeve's style of presentation, which greatly resembles Viktor Shklovsky's. Reeve seems to make a point of using Shklovsky's *zatrudnennaiia forma*, *retardatsiia*, and *ostranenie* frequently and with gusto.

Reeve also presupposes in his reader an ample erudition in Russian as well as Western literature and, without a scholarly apparatus, constantly refers to the works of Rozanov, Merezhkovsky, Eikhenbaum, Tynianov, Grossman, Tomashevsky, and many others. Thus, his book is clearly addressed to the advanced scholar rather than to the student or the general public. The question arises: Is there enough in the volume to make it worth a scholar's while? My answer is a qualified yes.

Reeve's strength lies in the twentieth century. The essays on Sologub's *Melkii bes* and Bely's *Petersburg* are excellent, and the one on Pasternak is certainly interesting. The discussion of *Anna Karenina*, in spite of some obscurities and extravagances (e.g., p. 250: "The more he wrote, the more he tried to establish a literature based on national history, specifically, during the last thirty years of his life, on 'folk' epic"), is a valuable contribution. In particular, it contains a good passage on the distinction between historical and novelistic vision (p. 249). A stimulating treatment of Turgenev's *Fathers and Children* is disrupted by far too many digressions, which obscure and diffuse what would otherwise have been a well-focused analysis of the structure of that novel. Reeve rightly stresses the importance of what may be called a "third dimension" (besides "passion" and "form") in Turgenev's novels: the leisurely presence of Turgenev's disinterested, intelligent, humane mind as an integral structural element.

The article on *Crime and Punishment* is not particularly revealing, though competent and well informed. The chapter "Oblomov" has some good observations on "Oblomovism," but fails to discuss Goncharov's novelistic craftsmanship, even though Reeve is well aware of it, saying, "The book is well made and painstakingly made" (p. 117). The essay on *Dead Souls* is perhaps the least organized, though it,

too, makes some good points and projects a sophisticated understanding of Gogol's epopoeia. But it does not give a full picture of the whole plenitude of possible contents which generations of readers have discovered in *Dead Souls*. Thus the insights of Konstantin Aksakov or Vasilii Rozanov are not even brought up, while a marginally relevant essay by Viktor Vinogradov is quoted at length (pp. 93–94).

Ernest J. Simmons pursues a unified vision of some of the principal works of Russian literature through an emphasis on their realistic aspect, a legitimate and interesting point of departure. Simmons's book is not addressed to the scholar (it has an index, but lacks a scholarly apparatus), presenting, rather, the view of an erudite and enlightened critic addressing the general public. Nevertheless, there are instances where a more scholarly attitude would have helped the critic to present a more precise picture. Thus the comparative aspect has some weaknesses. For example, Simmons's discussion of the Natural School (p. 92) fails to bring out its dependence on French "physiologism" (pointed out by Vinogradov and others in the 1920s). The statement that the "Natural School was in no sense an anticipation of the Naturalism of Zola" is probably incorrect in every sense: when Russian realism became fashionable in France in the 1880s, French critics (Lemaitre, Brunetière) insisted that it was really nothing but a hybrid of French physiologism and French romanticism. But it was exactly in these trends that these critics also saw the roots of the French *naturalistes*. In effect, it has been assumed (by René Wellek, among others) that the very label of Zola's theory originated with the Russian Natural School (with Turgenev as the intermediary).

Simmons's emphasis is very much on the "real" rather than on the "ideal" side of the works under discussion. He succeeds well in presenting many characteristic examples of the concrete details of imagery, composition, and style, of which the realism of his authors is made. That some of the authors under discussion were major critics in their own right (Dostoevsky, Goncharov, Turgenev), whose creative practice was founded on mature aesthetic theories, is not brought out sufficiently.

The merit of the individual treatment of each author appears to be, as could be expected, proportional to the extent to which that author is a realist in the conventional literary sense of that term. I should say that Sholokhov is presented best of all. Chekhov comes off very well also, although Chekhov the moralist, the humanist living in an absurd, godless world (Shestov was the first to draw attention to this aspect), and the impressionistic artist do not emerge as fully as they might have.

But when it comes to Dostoevsky, one often cannot help disagreeing with Simmons on many details, though his synthesis is still a sound one. I do not believe that *Poor Folk* has more autobiography in it than Gogolian inspiration" (p. 100). After all, *Poor Folk* is an antiparody of and a polemic against Gogol's *Overcoat*, as N. N. Strakhov has shown. And where is the "autobiography" in *Poor Folk*? Simmons gives a good summary of the motivation for the epilogue of *Crime and Punishment*, then finishes by saying, "It is a most lame and impotent conclusion" (p. 121). This must be wrong. From Dostoevsky's Christian viewpoint, the novel would be meaningless without the epilogue. In fact, the novel is structured so as to culminate in the epilogue, as Wasiolek has shown very well. Speaking of *The Possessed*, Simmons observes that "here realism is sacrificed to didacticism, and the characters in question, instead of being driven by their own ideas, are driven by those imposed upon them by their creator" (p. 128), thus agreeing with the Russian radicals' opinion of the novel. Has not history proven Dostoevsky's "grotesque parody of Russian radicalism" to have been a deep and prophetic vision, rich in objective historical truth?

Simmons's treatment of Gogol is, in my opinion, the weakest part of this book. His assertion that "one has only to read the memoirs and correspondence of this period to learn that the ugly picture of society in Gogol's works was not exactly drawn from a Russia that he had invented, as the Symbolist critics would have us believe" (p. 50) misses the point that Rozanov and his followers were trying to make: the unreal quality of Gogol's world, of which they speak, has to do with its soullessness, the inhumanity of its grotesqueness, rather than with sociohistorical credibility. Throughout his essay, Simmons underplays the element of parody, travesty, ambiguity, mystification, and hyperbole in Gogol's works. There are also some specific statements with which one must disagree. It is not true that Gogol "was neither well educated nor well read" (p. 55). Tschizewskij and others corrected this mistaken opinion many years ago. Nor is it true that Gogol "tended to think more feebly than justly" when he concerned himself with intellectual matters (p. 62). Let us not forget that Gogol the thinker anticipates, after all, virtually every single thesis of Russian conservative thought, as found, for example, in Grigoriev, Leontiev, and Dostoevsky.

Gleb Struve's *Soviet Russian Literature, 1917–1950* (1951) is, for the period it covers, still the only acceptable text in English on the subject. But inasmuch as Struve's book has been out of print for many years (a revised edition has been announced), Slonim's book has been widely used as a text in Soviet literature courses. Yet it has important shortcomings.

Slonim, a native of Russia, is very familiar with the Russian literary scene. He is obviously more widely read—not only in Russian but in several other literatures—than are most scholars and critics today. He has a lucid and orderly style of presentation. Inevitably there are many inaccuracies in dates, biographical data, plot summaries, and so forth (this information is difficult to get and unreliable; plots of Soviet works are subject to change), but these defects are generally minor. So what is wrong with Slonim's book? Slonim's greatest fault is his light regard for critical literature and scholarship. For example, in discussing Mayakovsky's early poetry Slonim says that "Mayakovsky used futuristic diction and eccentric, broken meters, *outré* near-rhymes, assonances, topiary arrangements, and whimsical punctuation, while his vocabulary was ostentatiously colloquial and crude" (p. 20). Here, "futuristic diction" is never defined. The investigations of Mayakovsky's versification performed by Jakobson, Shtokmar, Tager, Gasparov, and others allow one to describe it much more precisely than the vague "eccentric, broken meters" would suggest. As for Mayakovsky's rhymes, although they are indeed inexact to the right of the stressed vowel, they also tend to compensate for this by extending further to the left of it. It is also inexact to describe Mayakovsky's vocabulary as "colloquial and crude." Actually, he also uses literary, poetic, and even ecclesiastic expressions. The point is that he throws all of the different levels of speech into one melting pot.

Lacking the scholar's precise technical knowledge, Slonim must rely on his intuitive critical gifts, which are, to be sure, considerable. But it is impossible to have the right critical intuition all the time, or even most of the time. Thus Slonim is guilty of a number of faulty judgments. He says that Pasternak's poetry "may be regarded as a synthesis of the classical tradition, a symbolist musicality, and of the colloquial bent of the futurist, combined with surrealist imagery" (p. 221). This is hardly an adequate description. "Symbolist musicality" is exactly what Pasternak has not got: his point of issue is the concrete sense impression, usually visual, as C. M. Bowra pointed out many years ago. Recently, Iurii Lotman has confirmed



this observation through a study of Pasternak's manuscripts. Pasternak, in spite of his musical background, is a painter, not a musician, in his poetic expression.

As might be expected, Slonim has some difficulties when he treats of the more abstruse aspects of literature: aesthetics, literary theory, poetics. Thus his presentation of Russian formalism, and of Viktor Shklovsky's ideas in particular (p. 102), is quite inadequate. LEF comes off a great deal better (pp. 22–23), but why is Osip Brik not identified as its principal theoretician?

Unfortunately, Slonim's book became obsolete virtually the moment it appeared. Osip Mandelshtam, who has been for some years considered one of the greatest Russian poets of this century, is hardly discussed at all. Andrei Platonov, who has experienced a great renaissance even in the Soviet Union, is given a few cursory lines. The name of Evgenii Shvarts does not even appear in the index. There are other similar lacunae. A new edition of Slonim's book will have to be thoroughly revised and enlarged.

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THE ICE AGE. By *Tamas Aczel*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1965. 287 pp. \$5.95.

NEW WRITING OF EAST EUROPE. Edited by *George Gömöri* and *Charles Newman*. Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1968. 270 pp. \$6.95.

*The Ice Age*, written in London by the onetime poet laureate of Communist Hungary, recaptures the mood of Budapest in the early fifties, above all the fear gripping every aspect of life. The only escape from the all-pervading gloom was the acrid, black, Budapest humor, which turned every pompous dogma into absurdity—a sense of humor Aczel brings alive in his book. The plot of the novel concerns the arrest of an outstanding physician. The author treats this central event in a circular fashion, detailing more and more of its repercussions. A similar technique is used in *Herzog* and *The Confessions of Nat Turner*, but in those novels the cyclical technique is employed to reveal greater depths to the characters each time the authors return to their points of departure. Indeed, the success of this technique depends on the author's prowess at characterization, and in this respect Aczel fails. His characters are cardboard figures whose speech is not individual and who often express the same ideas. In fact, behind the characters we can discern only the author's lyrical persona voicing his indignation at Stalinism, and that without restraint. The truth Stendhal and Chekhov teach us, that passionate beliefs can be best conveyed through cool detachment, seems to have been lost on Aczel. Despite the dust jacket's claims, in *The Ice Age* one finds neither Pasternak's reticent lyricism nor Solzhenitsyn's austere matter-of-factness.

*New Writing of East Europe* is a loosely structured anthology of poetry, fiction, and essays. For all its diversity it reveals a central theme, best defined by Ted Hughes in a brief introduction to the poetry of Vasko Popa. This central theme is a literary vision, not unlike those encountered in Western literatures but focusing on slightly different areas. It is a sharp vision, "armed" with the thought of Marx, Freud, and more contemporary thinkers, but at the same time it is a fragmentary vision, fractured, as it were, by the realities of war, nazism, and communism which intruded upon it. The main merit of the volume is that it brings writers of various nationalities together in a brotherhood of common despair.