

EMPEROR OF THE EARTH: MODES OF ECCENTRIC VISION. By *Czesław Miłosz*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977. x, 253 pp. \$8.95.

"Politics is our destiny, a cyclone in the eye of which we are stuck permanently, even if we try to hide from it in the shell of poetry," Miłosz wrote recently in his introduction to Aleksander Wat's *Mój wiek* (1977). This statement could be used as a motto for the collection of essays under review, most of them devoted to Russian literature, and written in the last twenty years, between 1956 and 1974. But the everpresent *homo politicus* does not overshadow the "eccentric vision" of a critic and a poet; on the contrary, his presence sharpens the awareness of certain overwhelming problems which a less conscientious critic might have overlooked. Thus the "eccentric vision" becomes well focused and results in some revealing interpretations of such authors as Shestov, Solov'ev, Dostoevsky, Pasternak, and Solzhenitsyn. Miłosz's wide range of critical interest also encompasses some Western authors, Swedenborg, and Simone Weil; touches upon a forgotten American, Thomas Mayne Reid; and, naturally, goes back to his "native realm" in essays on the Polish writers—Zygmunt Krasiński, Apollo Korzeniowski, Stanisław Brzozowski, and Stanisław Ignacy Witkiewicz (better known as Witkacy). All these writers, states Miłosz, have one thing in common: they "passionately believed that they were called to influence the future" and, like the critic himself, must have been obsessed "with the riddle of Evil active in History." As a result, the book provides a coherent, well-composed, and brilliantly executed discussion of the foremost problem of our century—the political cyclone that shapes our destinies. Miłosz's critical essays should be of great value not only to literary scholars but to a large circle of readers whose interest in philosophy, history, and political science will be stimulated and enriched by them.

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GENERATING THE LITERARY TEXT. By *A. K. Zholkovsky* and *Yu. K. Scheglov*. Translated by *L. M. O'Toole*. Russian Poetics in Translation, vol. 1. Essex, England: Department of Language and Linguistics, University of Essex, 1975. 77 pp. £2.50, paper. Distributed by Holdan Books, 15 No. Parade Avenue, Oxford OX2 6XL, England.

Russian Structuralism as a theory of literature, an offspring of computer linguistics, made its formal debut at the Gorky conference on poetic language in September 1961. Since then, interest in this trend has been widespread among Western scholars. Except for writings by Lotman and Uspenskii, however, works by Russian structuralists have been accessible only to the limited number of literary historians who read Russian.

In the interests of better communication, L. M. O'Toole of the University of Essex has translated two articles by the Moscow scholars Yu. K. Scheglov and A. K. Zholkovsky for the first volume of the series, Russian Poetics in Translation. The first essay, "Towards a 'Theme - (Expression Devices) - Text' Model of Literary Structure" (1971), written by both Scheglov and Zholkovsky, is devoted to questions of generative poetics in general. The second, "A Description of the Structure of Detective Stories" (1968), written by Scheglov alone, is an application of generative analysis to the prose of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle.

Both articles deal with the notion of theme, which the authors try to rehabilitate after years of neglect by the first generation of Formalists. In the process of generating the text, the theme is the most abstract version, followed by the "plot" which utilizes general fictional devices. The final step, the "text," also called "plot-structure" in the second article, could be characterized as theme plus all the devices of expression used by the author. Unfortunately, this brief model does not include either Formalist or Prague Structuralist concepts of the fable—plot relation, or, in terms of Mukařovský: