

Long inner monologues, some by a narrator with a split personality and disturbed mind, run the risk of being confusing and boring, and I must confess that I found them to be so in a few stretches of this book. However, at other times, Sokolov succeeds in conveying fine nuances of emotions—for example, love mixed with jealousy for the teacher Veta (pp. 97–98), and sensitivity for nature, in the rhododendron passage (pp. 227–28).

The book eschews the epigonic-realistic narrative techniques which predominate, in quantity if not quality, in contemporary Soviet prose fiction as well as in Russian literature of dissent. This is a two hundred-page exercise in *ostranenie* (making strange); the streams of consciousness of reminiscing narrators must be read like poems. In Russian, Sokolov uses puns, and his language has a haunting, slightly askew, charming quality and rhythms which the translation, accurate as it is when checked sentence for sentence, nevertheless does not fully capture.

The absence of a clear plot makes room for a series of little sketches which remind us of some of Daniil Kharms's ministories, although Sokolov is less absurd, more lyrical. His antistories avoid logic, plot, climactic development, "finishedness." One of them concludes, after Kharms's fashion: "I think that's all. I've nothing more to tell about the sick girl from next door. No, it's not a long story. Not long at all even. Even the moths on the veranda seem bigger" (pp. 84–85).

The reader would be lacking in normal curiosity if he did not try to construct, from the images and lyrical invocations of this long prose poem, a skeleton of characters and plot. The book invites this kind of participatory coauthorship, eliciting jigsaw puzzle-solving pleasure as well as frustration. Also, the reader would be lacking in perspicuity if he did not ponder the broader implications of the central situation (a Soviet institution for the confinement of deviants) and of one phrase in particular: "I have chosen freedom, one of its forms, I am free to act as I wish." We may agree with one reviewer, however, who deplored Sokolov's sentimentality in treating madness as a "chosen form of freedom" and pointed out that, in reality as distinguished from literature, madness is a "terrible humiliation."

It would be patronizing to praise this book merely because its technique is very different from run-of-the-mill Soviet and dissenting writing. However, one can recommend this little book, especially to Samuel Beckett fans, for its pervasive mood of gentle tenderness, and for its occasional high plateaus with a few ridges of fine lyricism.

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DISCORDANT VOICES: THE NON-RUSSIAN SOVIET LITERATURES, 1953–1973. Edited by *George S. N. Luckyj*. Oakville, Ontario: Mosaic Press, 1975. viii, 149 pp. \$9.95, cloth. \$4.95, paper.

By something of a minor coincidence, this collection of essays by various hands, with an introduction, an essay on Ukrainian literature, and a conclusion, all written by the editor, George Luckyj, reached this reviewer along with Polish literary newspapers "celebrating" the "Days of (non-Russian) Soviet writers," held throughout Poland last October (*Życie literackie*, November 6, 1977). The "festivities," if they can properly be called that, began with the arrival of an unspecified number of non-Soviet writers, led by Georgii Markov, First Secretary of the Committee of Writers of the USSR, a Soviet Russian writer and Lenin Prize-winner, and author of the "epic" *Siberia*. The non-Russians recited poems in praise of Poland, some of which were published in translation in the October 9 issue of *Życie literackie*, and it was certainly an

undistinguished collection. The same issue of *ZL* also published an unnerving account of the present "strategies" of the Writers' Union toward non-Russian Soviet writers. These strategies include "surrounding the creativity of writers with maximum attention," and "leadership of the army of budding writers by national committees, special seminars, and consultations."

The six essays in Luckyj's collection shed further light on this dismal state of affairs and, though brief, we have reason to be grateful for the scholarly essays by Leon Mikirtitchian on Armenian literature (15 pages), Stanislaw Stankevich on Belorussian literature (18 pages), Rolfs Ekmanis on Latvian literature (42 pages), Gustav Burbiel on Tatar literature (30 pages), and Luckyj's own essay on Ukrainian literature (20 pages). Luckyj's twelve-page essay, "Socialist in content and national in form," is concise and informative. Unfortunately, the brevity of the essays occasionally causes them to resemble conventional histories of literature with their lists of names, titles, and dates, and expectation that the reader will take on trust such phrases as "extremely well written," or "a great and original talent," with no evidence to support these judgments. Valuable lists for further study in Western languages, Russian, and the vernacular languages are also included.

Precisely how "dissident" some of the voices are (or were) is difficult to gauge. To be sure, the list of voices which have been silenced is a tragically long one. On the other hand, Professor Luckyj and his colleagues can name writers who have "succumbed to Russification," and "jumped on the Soviet bandwagon." Some non-Russian writers have apparently done well enough for themselves: M. Lvov (Tatar) now living in Moscow, V. Petrov (Siberian) in Kharkov, while Amdzhatov's (Kirghiz) novels have been translated into several "fraternal" languages and filmed (Amdzhatov is also the recipient of various literary awards).

Professor Luckyj points out that "our knowledge of the non-Russian literatures of the USSR is abysmal." Vast areas remain unknown: from Moldavia to the northern Caucasus, and Siberia, among others. This volume is therefore a necessary step in the right direction.

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CZYSTA FORMA W TEATRZE. By *Stanisław Ignacy Witkiewicz*. Compiled, annotated, and with a foreword by *Janusz Degler*. Warsaw: Wydawnictwa Artystyczne i Filmowe, 1977. 431 pp. Plates. 100 zł.

The least explored area of Witkaciana has been his theory of Pure Form and its application to his creative works. Janusz Degler's excellent introduction to Witkiewicz's theoretical writings is a step in the right direction, but it is merely a step: Witkacy's theory of Pure Form in the theater remains virgin territory. One does not blame Degler, who almost singlehandedly (with an assist from Konstanty Puzyna) has resurrected Witkacy. The problem is that this Polish Renaissance man was almost too large for the twentieth century. If he had not existed, I doubt if he could have been created. Degler attempts to provide proof of that existence. Some of the material appearing here has been published previously by Degler in *Bez kompromisu* (Warsaw: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 1976), and in his excellent study of Witkacy's acceptance in Poland prior to the latter's suicide in 1939, *Witkacy: W teatrze międzywojennym* (1973). But Witkacy himself remains elusive.

Czysta Forma w teatrze contains not only everything Witkacy wrote about the theater but also brings together for the first time the various polemics he waged throughout his life with his "enemies"—among whom were Irzykowski, Rostworow-