

difficulties (which the author acknowledges) in discussing a work as complex and obscure as *The Holy Well* are understandable, but the use of so many “mays,” “mights,” and “possibly” breaks the chapter down into a series of seemingly disconnected conjectures.

The words “surrealism” and “impressionism” are tossed about freely without precise definition. The perhaps too frequent use of these words is symptomatic of the repetitiveness found elsewhere. It may involve a single word (“cryptographic” appears often in the chapter on Kataev) or the use of superfluous examples (the differences between the first and second versions of Nekrasov’s *On Both Sides of the Ocean* are brought up again and again). In fact, one is struck by the generous use of quoted examples throughout. Some of them are needed to support the author’s contentions, but surely there are more than necessary—nearly half the text consists of quotations.

Despite these faults, the book explores an interesting topic and provides some fresh insights into the nature of Soviet literature during the past decade.

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OCHERKI ISTORII RUSSKOI SOVETSKOI DRAMATURGII. Vol. 1: 1917–1934. Edited by S. V. Vladimirov and D. I. Zolotnitsky. 602 pp. 2.06 rubles. Vol. 2: 1934–1945. Edited by S. V. Vladimirov and G. A. Lapkina. 407 pp. 2.24 rubles. Vol. 3: 1945–1967. Edited by S. V. Vladimirov. 463 pp. 2.52 rubles. Leningrad and Moscow: “Iskusstvo,” 1963, 1966, 1968.

“The three volumes of ‘Essays,’” we read in the brief preface to the first volume (p. 4), “aspire to characterize the basic stages of the struggle of Soviet dramaturgy for closeness to the Party and closeness to the people [*partiinost’ i narodnost’*], for socialist realism, and to show the decisive significance for the fate of Soviet dramaturgy of the Leninist tradition of the Party’s approach to the phenomena of art. The authors’ collective is guided in its analysis of historical processes by the spirit of the decisions of the Twentieth and Twenty-second Congresses of the CPSU.” No quotations from those congresses are added at this point.

These books bear the imprint of the Leningrad State Institute of Theater, Music, and Cinematography. However, they do not include anything significant about opera or motion pictures. Plays taken from novels are discussed only briefly, and then when the novels themselves are of Soviet origin. The period covered is from 1917 to 1967, with volume 2 encompassing 1934 to 1945. Yet the editors stop short of terming this work a history of Soviet dramaturgy. The writing itself was done by over a dozen persons, whose names are listed alphabetically at the front of each volume.

In these books the half-century of the Soviet drama is divided into seven sub-periods of four to twelve years, each of which is introduced by a special essay touching on the highlights of those years. The essays are followed by various studies—fifty-one in all—on individual writers who flourished during these subperiods. Because of this chronological arrangement, three chapters each are given to Leonov, Pogodin, and Korneichuk, and two apiece to Afinogenov, Arbutov, Gorky, Lavrenev, Mayakovsky, and Simonov. All three volumes close with a “Khronika” section and an index of names. The last book adds a bibliography of some twenty-five pages,

which apparently is supposed to cover the important Soviet Russian playwrights of the half-century. However, some of the most interesting bibliographical material occurs only in the "Khronika" sections. Thus by looking up Olesha's name in the index and then checking the "Khronika," one can see when and where his plays were first published. The chapter on him and the minibibliography following it are, in this respect, of no help at all.

The result of all this effort is about what might be expected. The mastery of source material, the profusion of detail, the wealth of plot summaries, the use of superb library facilities, and the amount of just plain hard work reflected in both the text and the footnotes all elicit admiration. The reader who leafs through these tomes may well find many phenomena he will want to investigate further. One example of this is the speechifying protagonist of Gorky's *Rabotiaga Slovotekov* (1: 91–96). This work is not included in either the eighteen-volume set of Gorky's works (Moscow, 1960–63) or the thirty-volume edition (Moscow, 1949–55). Perhaps it will appear in the currently incomplete *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, which began to come out in Moscow in 1968. I hope so.

Some individual chapters are written with sympathy and intelligence, such as the one by Sakhnovsky-Pankeev on Mikhail Bulgakov (2:122–44) and the one by Kalmanovsky on Evgenii Shvarts (3:135–62). The first essay states that some of the early Soviet comments about Bulgakov were not made in good faith; the other contains a list of Shvarts's unpublished plays especially compiled by the playwright for Kalmanovsky (3:136).

As the preface shows, politics has intruded almost everywhere. Frequently, chapters dealing with a period, and even sections of such chapters, open with a quotation from some party statement about the problems of a given time (for example, 1:149 and 359, 2:6, and 3:6). Even Mayakovsky's attack on bureaucracy in *Bania* is fortified with this type of reference (1:339). The chapter on the 1930–34 period refers to party and government statements a dozen times in its forty-four pages (1:359–93). The chapter on the Second World War is largely written in official jargon; the word "hero" and its derivatives are used over thirty times on the four pages starting with 2:282—and these pages are not unique. The first volume contains page after page about Civil War plays, with their noble Reds and villainous Whites. The reader may well find himself wondering once again what sort of strange, stereotyped synecdoche this is that substitutes man as a political animal for the whole of human life.

The writing in these books is all too often heavy, self-righteous, and repetitive. To call a work an "encyclopedia of Russian life" (1:394) may have been meaningful when Belinsky said it about Pushkin's *Evgenii Onegin*, but is scarcely original today. The reader may expect a chapter giving an overview of the entire half-century, with its strengths and weaknesses—but he will not find it. Too often this work, like some of the other Soviet writing on the drama, confuses a specific production with the textual essence of a given play (e.g., 1:329, 509). To quote a 1928 review of a production based on Kataev's novel *Rastrachiki* is not the same thing as reviewing the adaptation—especially some four decades later.

Sometimes these essays answer the wrong questions and avoid the right ones. For example, we are told that 622 one-act plays were written during the four years of Russia's involvement in the Second World War (2:271). But we are not told how many of them are worth reading or seeing today, and why. We are also not told why Mayakovsky's plays, *Bania* and *Klop*, went unstaged for twenty years.

Some of the judgments are extraordinary, if not always original. Gorky's play *Meshchane* dates from 1901, and "socialist realism" was proclaimed a third of a century and at least three revolutions later. But *Meshchane* is termed here "the first work of the dramaturgy of socialist realism" (1:77). The discussion that ought to follow this anachronism is simply not there.

A "correct" political approach to writing is no automatic guarantee of artistic excellence. One wonders what has happened to Friedrich Engels's idea that more could be learned about the changes in French society from the legitimist Balzac than from many technical volumes.

Despite their serious shortcomings, these books are worth consulting as reference material—particularly for the "Khronika" sections and for information about individual authors. Native critics always have a great advantage over the foreigner, because they are far closer spiritually and intellectually to the milieu they are writing about, and therefore often understand it much better. One wishes they could write all they understand.

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A GRAMMAR OF ASPECT: USAGE AND MEANING IN THE RUSSIAN VERB. By *J. Forsyth*. Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1970. xiii, 386 pp. \$16.00.

Verbal aspect is a facet of the grammars of the Slavic languages that continues to attract the attention and efforts of linguists both within and without the various Slavic cultures. Aspect enables a language like Russian, which seemingly has a primitive two-tense system, to create verbal structures of great complexity and delicacy. In this solid work Forsyth addresses himself to the problem of defining, describing, and classifying Russian aspectual usage. After treating the theoretical problems of defining imperfective and perfective aspect, he considers the functions of procedurals (*Aktionsarten*) and the validity of aspectual pairs, and then examines in detail the functioning of the aspects in various grammatical categories: the past tense, present and future tense, negative constructions, infinitive expressions, and so forth. He provides a plentitude of illustrative examples with sufficient context to allow the reader to draw his own conclusions and match them with Forsyth's.

Much as I like this thoughtful and careful treatment I feel that Forsyth has "handcuffed" himself at the very beginning by subscribing to the notion of "private opposition" and defining the perfective aspect as the "marked" category, with the imperfective aspect emerging as the "unmarked" category. This concept of markedness versus unmarkedness, of something versus its empty reflection, is effective in dealing with low orders of abstraction, as in characterizing phonemes in terms of voice and lack of voice, but for higher orders of abstraction (e.g., grammatical concepts) the yes-no, plus-minus approach imposes severe and unrealistic limitations.

Forsyth thus overloads his definition of perfective aspect: "a perfective verb expresses the action as a total event summed up with reference to a single specific juncture" (p. 8). And his imperfective aspect practically vanishes in his definition or lack of definition of it: "The definition given above of the relationship between the aspects . . . makes no attempt to define the meaning of the imperfective verb