

historian who forged the past into a tool of Czech national revival and into a divining rod of the nation's future: *historia magistra vitae*.

Although they fought for the right of self-determination and self-expression, Czech poets did not translate their national aspirations into expressions of universal humanity; consequently their works remain largely unknown. This volume evaluates Czech literature and its traditions, marks the impact of foreign influences, and analyzes the artistic and social roots of individual authors. It is a reliable guide to the spiritual climate of the country, and an excellent example of the high standards of pre-World War II Czech literary scholarship.

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MODERN SLAVIC LITERATURES, vol. 2: BULGARIAN, CZECHOSLOVAK, POLISH, UKRAINIAN, AND YUGOSLAV LITERATURES. Compiled and edited by Vasa D. Mihailovich et al. A Library of Literary Criticism. New York: Frederick Ungar, 1976. xvi, 720 pp. \$30.00.

This is the second volume of a series devoted to literary criticism of twentieth-century Slavic literatures; the first volume, edited by Vasa D. Mihailovich, and devoted exclusively to Russian literature, was published in 1972. Entries are arranged alphabetically by literature (Bulgarian, Czechoslovak, Polish, Ukrainian, and Yugoslav literatures are included), and within each literature alphabetically by author. The entries themselves consist of excerpts taken from reviews, critical articles, and introductions to works of literature themselves. Most of the entries are from the national literature (translated into English), but quite a few are drawn from English-language sources and a very few are taken from Western European sources (also translated into English). Editors for the various sections include Thomas Butler (Bulgarian), Igor Hájek (Czechoslovak), Zbigniew Folejewski and Bogdan Czaykowski (Polish), Leo D. Rudnytzky (Ukrainian), and Vasa D. Mihailovich (Yugoslav). A preface conveys the editors' regret for failing to include Belorussian literature, an omission they attribute to lack of availability of suitable critical material.

The present volume contains no statement of purpose, but the companion first volume states that it is intended "as a reference tool for students, scholars, librarians and researchers—the first such compendium on Russian literature in any language. It is also hoped that the general reader . . . will find both a satisfaction of curiosity and a desire to pursue further individual writers and critics." (Presumably the word "further" belongs at the close of this sentence.) This is an expression of pious hope, but still the present reviewers must question the purpose of the volume. No doubt it is well executed, the selection of writers for inclusion is generally good, and the choice of critics to be excerpted, while sometimes rather limited, is quite acceptable. The series itself is a respectable and successful one, with companion volumes for American, British, German, French, and Latin American literatures. But the real purpose of this book is singularly unclear. The reader is given no systematic information concerning the writers included (other than that which he can glean casually or reconstruct from the critical excerpts); the excerpts themselves are sometimes condensed almost to the point of unintelligibility, and at times the opinions of the individual critics tend to cancel each other out, so that the final impression is extremely confused. A scholar can cope with all this, no doubt, but would a real scholar wish to satisfy himself with excerpts? It is also hard to see how a librarian could use the book, except as an indication of which works and authors are worth buying (and this can be gained from several literary dictionaries currently in print which deal with many of the same writers). Heaven help the untutored student who attempts to use the book, especially if he should try to base a paper on its contents! Finally, the scholar hardly needs such

a work, except conceivably as a bibliographical aid. In the end, the volume seems best suited to the needs of the "general reader," but the question can legitimately be raised as to whether this reader will ever seek out the present volume and, should he attempt to do so, whether he would ever find it.

Contributing to the confusion the work creates is the fact that there is no recognizable principle of arrangement of the excerpted critical entries. Sometimes the arrangement seems to be chronological by publication date of the works treated; at other times, chronological by publication date of the review excerpts. This and similar confusion could have been dispelled by including brief biographical and critical sketches as an introduction to each writer's work. But in our view an anthology of outstanding critical pieces—presented in full—would have done a far greater service to the Slavic literatures, even though fewer authors and critics would necessarily have been represented.

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PROSTORECHNYE I DIALEKTNYE ELEMENTY V IAZYKE RUSSKOI
KOMEDII XVIII VEKA. By *Al'f Grannes*. Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, [n.d.].
282 pp. N.Kr. 109.50, paper.

One of the least studied and at the same time most important periods in the history of the Russian language is the lengthy time span from what is frequently called the Old Russian or Common East Slavic period to the establishment of Modern Russian. The latter is commonly reckoned as the era when the literary language became stabilized, beginning with the writings of Pushkin. Linguists have long argued whether or not the history of the Russian language might best be divided into two or three periods. Of considerable interest to the linguist is the middle period, or in any event, those centuries after which Old Russian could no longer be considered a viable entity and the three separate East Slavic languages had clearly acquired their own peculiar characteristics. This was a period of transition during which many new linguistic features developed, and a period which coincided with the explosion of publishing in Russian. Works by Russian authors, each writing in his own regional dialect, began to appear on the scene. Both Russian orthography and a uniform linguistic system remained to be codified. The emergence of Russian as the vehicle for literary expression culminated in a veritable explosion of writing in the eighteenth century when the process of the Westernization of Russia was in full bloom. Prior to the eighteenth century, an insufficient number of texts exist from which to derive a complete linguistic picture of the state of the Russian language, but this situation was greatly improved by the mid-1800s.

Al'f Grannes has undertaken to expand our knowledge of linguistic facts about the Russian language at the close of the period of transition discussed above. His work on colloquial and dialectal elements of eighteenth-century Russian comedy is in fact his doctoral dissertation from the University of Bergen. It is written in Russian and appears to be a photo-offset copy of the actual dissertation. The author has not succeeded in freeing his work entirely of "dissertationese." On the other hand, a work of this nature is not meant to provide witty insights and clever turns of words: the authors whose language he has studied have already done that. Dr. Grannes's study is a detailed compilation of empirically gathered linguistic facts. It is an extensive sorting and classification of a myriad of linguistic data, all of which together create some kind of picture of nonstandard Russian of two centuries ago. The reader cannot but be impressed with the thoroughness of Grannes's research. However, his endless examples could leave the reader with the impression that Russian literature of that