

I. S. TURGENEV POSLE "OTTSOV I DETEI" (60-E GODY). By A. B. Muratov. Leningrad: Izdatel'stvo Leningradskogo universiteta, 1972. 144 pp. 60 kopeks, paper.

This book, by one of the most prominent Soviet scholars of the subject, is a cogently argued addition to the output of *turgenevedenie*—and this virtue is also its defect. Muratov's well-informed awareness of the state of Turgenev scholarship results in the clarification, and sometimes the correction, of some recent criticism, but ultimately his effort seems only part of an intramural debate, and a curiously short-circuited one at that. The ostensible source of this debate—the ambiguous fictive structures which are Turgenev's works—often vanish from sight altogether.

Within his chosen framework Muratov can be quite useful. Thus he discusses with approval Vinnokova's claim that the intent of *Dym* was to show the futility of revolutionary activity in the 1860s; but Muratov also insists that this ideological purpose can only be fully understood by placing the novel in the literary tradition. Muratov's rejection of the view (most recently expressed by Azadovsky) that Schopenhauer crucially influenced "Prizraki" also makes sense. The pessimism in that work was indeed not the exclusive possession of this German philosopher and might as easily be traced back to Goethe or even Shakespeare.

Muratov, however, is little concerned with what would seem the next obvious question. If Turgenev is not the sum of his influences, literary and extraliterary, then what is he? At only one point does Muratov come close to confronting this issue, when he remarks on the disappearance of a central hero from Turgenev's later works. This sort of development (which, as Muratov notes, extended to other authors in the 1860s) would seem to mark a change in sensibility too profound to be defined by applying a strictly causal scheme. But Muratov at this point can only conclude that as no effective force existed in political reality, none could be embodied in Turgenev's fiction. Though politics is obviously a conspicuous element in Turgenev's works, Muratov's view is inadequate, even in terms of the Marxist-Leninist tradition which is several times invoked. To grant to fiction an unexamined descriptive power is to empty it of its meaning.

VICTOR RIPP  
Cornell University

VOM KRITISCHEN ZUM SOZIALISTISCHEN REALISMUS: STUDIEN ZUR LITERARISCHEN TRADITION IN RUSSLAND 1880 BIS 1925.

By Rolf-Dieter Kluge. Munich: Paul List Verlag, 1973. 255 pp. DM 11.80, paper.

SOVIET SOCIALIST REALISM: ORIGINS AND THEORY. By C. Vaughan James. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1973. xiii, 146 pp. \$9.95.

Despite forty years of "legal" existence, and a very clear formulation of its theory, Soviet socialist realism still manages to attract investigators, as evidenced by two recent studies.

Mr. Kluge's book is an attempt at a historicoliterary analysis of Russian realism from the 1880s to the 1920s. Starting with the literary spokesmen of the abortive *narodnichestvo* movement (Zlatovratsky, Uspensky, Mamin-Sibiriak), the author proceeds to Korolenko, Chekhov, and the realists of the "Znanie" circle (Andreev,

Bunin, Kuprin, Veresaev, Serafimovich), ending up with Gorky. A description of Marxist theory of art as elaborated by Plekhanov and by Lenin, and a description of socialist realism as the theory and method of Soviet literature, conclude the book. Kluge's main thesis—the continuity between “critical” realism of the 1880s and socialist realism of the 1920s—can be found in any Soviet history of literature, and hardly needs restatement. This approach involves complete disregard for the literary complexities of Chekhov, Andreev, Bunin, Tolstoy's later work, and of Garshin (not to speak of the Symbolist-Acmeist-Futurist movements). Kluge's second thesis—Gorky as the first socialist realist writer—is so generally known as to require no comment.

The question that inevitably arises in reading Kluge's book is the audience for which it is intended. For the general reader the topic seems too specialized, and the bibliographical references (predominantly in Russian, some in English) too awe-inspiring. For the specialist the book is decidedly too elementary (for example, the repetition of well-known biographical facts and historical data), the literary evaluations too superficial, and the author's attempt at forcing writers into a preconceived system much too obvious. To give only one example of Kluge's treatment of the period: “The internal-literary process can be interpreted in the following manner: the ruined peasant (*muzhik*) of the *narodnichestvo* is being replaced by Lopakhin, the capitalist (Chekhov, *The Cherry Orchard*), as hero of a literary work. But the Ionychs (Chekhov) and Lopakhins rule the literary scene for only a relatively short while, the disintegration of bourgeois society moves continuously into the foreground of literary creativity, and finally the retreating capitalist and bourgeois intellectual is replaced by the proletarian socialist revolutionary: Pavel Vlasov (from Gorky's novel *Mother*)” (pp. 23–24). The author's professed objectivity—he claims to offset the one-sidedness of both Western and Soviet scholarship—cannot be taken seriously, since he operates basically within the framework of Soviet “aesthetic” criteria.

Mr. James's book is based on a much more solid scholarly background than Kluge's. It is concerned with the gradual evolution of Lenin's views on the functions of the press (and literature) to the final formulation of the well-known theory of socialist realism at the First Congress of Soviet Writers in 1934, and its subsequent application. The book is thus concerned with political theory rather than literary development. The study is complemented by abundant quotations from Soviet sources. As a matter of fact, of 120 pages of text over a third consists of translations from collections such as *Osnovy marksistsko-leninskoi estetiki* (edited by A. Sutiagin, Moscow, 1960), *V. I. Lenin i russkaia obshchestvenno-politicheskaia mysl' XIX–nachala XX vekov* (edited by Sh. Levin, Leningrad, 1969), and *Lenin on Literature and Art* (Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1970). The main purpose of the book seems to be to find an answer to the question whether socialist realism was “invented by Stalin, Zhdanov and Gorky and forced on the unwilling artists in the early thirties” (p. x) or was a “world-wide development . . . associated with the rise of a politically conscious, i.e. Marxist, industrial proletariat . . . [and] therefore the reflection in the arts of the battle for the creation of a socialist society” (p. x). After a careful analysis of all pertinent data, as well as the main ingredients of Soviet aesthetics (*narodnost'*, *klassovost'*, *partiinost'*), James comes to the not unexpected conclusion that since *partiinost'* “lies at the heart of socialist realism,” it was “Lenin's *partiinost'* that made Stalinist art possible” (pp. 101–2). As to the viability of socialist realism, which is James's further deduction, recent Soviet literary developments do not seem to bear him out.

As in the case of Kluge's book, the question of the audience for this study remains open. The abundant translations make it clear that it is intended for the nonspecialist. But its painstaking analyses and dryness of subject matter make it questionable that a nonspecialist will have the enthusiasm to work his way through the mass of repetitive Soviet clichés, or to digest Lenin's simplistic pronouncements on literature. Although James's enthusiasm for his subject is admirable, his final deductions seem hardly worth the energy expended on reaching them.

MARGARET DALTON  
Brandeis University

MAYAKOVSKY: A POET IN THE REVOLUTION. By *Edward J. Brown*. Studies of the Russian Institute, Columbia University. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1973. ix, 386 pp. \$16.50.

This is the first full-length biography of Mayakovsky in English. (*The Life of Mayakovsky* by Wiktor Woroszyński, recently translated from the Polish, is a valuable and comprehensive montage rather than a coherent narrative.) Moreover, it is truly a *critical* biography, predictably free from the pieties and the taboos which hamstring V. O. Pertsov's three-volume account, shutting deftly, and "without embarrassment" (p. 7), between the poet's life and his work. In urging the legitimacy, indeed the indispensability, of this procedure, Professor Brown takes issue with the "well-established dogma that the facts of a poet's biography must never be deduced from his poems." In Mayakovsky's case, he maintains, this dogma is subject to radical modification: "Indeed, the structure of his poetry as a whole . . . was shaped by the events of his life as a piece of bronze statuary is shaped by its mold" (p. 7).

One may be inclined to qualify this "modification" either by invoking the third force which visibly affected both Mayakovsky's life and his work—the myth of the Revolutionary Poet—or by suggesting that the events which "shaped" his poetry were transmuted into it through the medium of a recognizable "symbolic system" (Lawrence Stahlberger). But Brown scarcely needs to be reminded of such verities. What makes his book so thoroughly satisfying is a felicitous synthesis of a keen sense of personality and of history with a modern structural sophistication.

Brown's adeptness at literary analysis, at identifying the work's commanding images and disentangling its thematic and ideational strands, is evidenced by his dissections of Mayakovsky's long poems such as "The Cloud in Trousers," "The Flute Spine," "Man," and, most notably, "About That." The critic-biographer is equally successful in charting his hero's tortuous path from the early Bohemian rebellion through short-lived revolutionary euphoria to the frustrations and ordeals of the final years. To a student of modern Russian literature much of this tale will have a familiar ring: the plight of the immensely gifted poet, caught between lyrical rage and total commitment, had been shrewdly diagnosed and eloquently evoked by the best Mayakovsky scholars, especially by Roman Jakobson, whose contribution is fully acknowledged here. Brown's unerring good sense proves a consistently reliable guide to Mayakovsky's contradiction-ridden career. He is too fair-minded to deny the irrepressible verbal inventiveness of Mayakovsky's most blatantly propagandistic output, which he terms "one of the finest examples of didactic verse in the world's literature" (p. 304). By the same token, he is too clear-eyed to ignore the appalling cost of the frenzied *engagement*, to overlook that