

DIE PERSONENDARSTELLUNG IN DEN DRAMEN ANTON P. ČECHOVS. By *Friedrich Hübner*. Bibliotheca Slavonica, vol. 4. Amsterdam: Verlag Adolf M. Hakkert, 1971. viii, 350 pp.

In his introduction Friedrich Hübner first states his goal: to examine systematically Chekhov's techniques for characterization and their structural function in each play. Consequently he wants not only to investigate characterization in *Ivanov*, *The Seagull*, *Uncle Vanya*, *Three Sisters*, and *The Cherry Orchard* separately but to include discussion of other contributing elements as well, in order to arrive at a composite picture of the function and role of characterization in developing the theme of each play. The second part of the introduction offers a survey of research and critical literature concerning Chekhov's dramas. The survey is rich in footnotes citing both Soviet and Western sources; here Hübner discusses the changes in the interpretation of Chekhov's plays since his death.

Taking his cue from S. D. Balukhaty's *Problemy dramaturgicheskogo analiza: Chekhov* (Leningrad, 1927), Hübner treats each play according to the following scheme: (1) details about the persona (factual details such as age and occupation), (2) self-characterization of the persona (behavior and statements), (3) mutual characterization of the personae (statements by one character about another), (4) characterization within the structure of the *sujet* (here Hübner discusses the interrelation of the various characters' actions according to Balukhaty's definition of *sujet*), (5) characterization within the scenic composition (the role of staging), (6) characterization within the dialogue structure, and (7) the relation of characterization to theme. In the treatment of *The Seagull*, *Three Sisters*, and *The Cherry Orchard* another category is added: characterization through the use of symbols. Hübner first lists the objective details for each character in a play, then he discusses the inferences that can be made from the characters' actions, statements, and their reactions to each other, thus providing a modified *explication de texte*. He also often compares each play and its characters with those previously discussed.

At first glance this method seems to offer much. Still, Hübner's approach is painfully pedantic. When applied to five dramas, one by one, the same schematic presentation has a deadening effect. One longs for the stimulating and thought-provoking treatments of the same material by J. L. Styan and Maurice Valency, yet nothing of the sort rises from these pages. Instead, after some 325 pages of this methodical dissertation, Hübner offers a summary of his findings. Unfortunately his basic conclusion is hardly new. He states: "Our investigation has revealed that the basic situation of the characters is thematically at the center of the five dramas treated here. This basic situation is fundamentally always the same: the heroes in Chekhov's dramas live in a state of alienation. They are incapable of bringing their ideas of life as it should be into harmony with the given facts of reality. Their idea of the 'true' life cannot be reconciled with 'real' life" (p. 326). Having thus pinpointed a truism, Hübner continues by differentiating two types of drama he finds here: the "period" pieces, *Ivanov* and *Uncle Vanya*, in which he sees the hero's alienation as determined by the historical and social environment (i.e., the monotonous, meaningless life of the provinces), and *The Seagull*, *Three Sisters*, and *The Cherry Orchard*, in which the characters' alienation is an existential problem. To be sure, he says, each of the characters in these three plays has a role in society, but their alienation is not determined by that role or their environment as it was in *Ivanov* and *Uncle Vanya*; rather it is the result

of their inability to relate to the world or to others. Thus, he says, their alienation is largely symbolic rather than concrete. To this extent, at least, Hübner offers food for thought. This distinction between the two sets of plays is worth further investigation.

In his summary Hübner also briefly comments on Chekhov's more subtle methods of characterization in the later plays, the techniques of contrasting dialogues, two-plane staging, the subtext, the mood, and so forth—all of which found their refinement in *Three Sisters* and *The Cherry Orchard*. The book is equipped with a lengthy and useful bibliography. The excellence of the editing and proof-reading betrays, as does the substance of the book itself, a Germanic passion for thoroughness.

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CULTURE IN EXILE: RUSSIAN EMIGRÉS IN GERMANY, 1881–1941.

By Robert C. Williams. Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1972. xx, 404 pp. \$14.50.

In his preface Professor Williams says that his original intention was to write “a political and intellectual history of the Russian colony in the 1920's,” but that “what finally resulted was a more comprehensive study of Russians in Germany from the 1880's through the 1930's.” He gives two reasons for this change of plans. He thinks that the original plan would have meant losing sight of “the traditional framework of Russian-German relations and of Russians in Germany, particularly the pre-1914 emigration which was to be so crucial for the later diaspora.” He sees this as the main defect of Hans-Erich Volkmann's book *Die russische Emigration in Deutschland, 1919–1929* (see my review of it in the *Slavic Review*, March 1971). His second reason is that “a look at the life of Berlin Russians in the 1920's quickly reveals the importance, as intermediaries between Russians and German society, of two non-Russian ethnic groups—Russian Jews and Russian Germans—whose arrival in Germany antedated the war and whose influence in Germany was, tragically, extended into the Third Reich.”

Both in its chronological scope and in the breadth of its treatment of the post-World War I Russian emigration in Germany Williams's book leaves Dr. Volkmann's somewhat skimpy and lopsided study well behind. It is divided into nine chapters: “The Imperial Heritage” (pp. 1–53), “The Time of Troubles: 1914–1921” (pp. 54–110), “Community of Despair: Emigré Institutions” (pp. 111–58), “Politics of Adjustment” (pp. 159–98), “Politics of Frustration” (pp. 199–243), “The Way Out to the East” (pp. 242–81), “Shock of Permanence: 1923–1933” (pp. 282–330), “The Third Kingdom” (pp. 331–63), and “The Legacy” (pp. 364–72). There are also thirty-two pages of biographical notes and glossary (unfortunately not free from mistakes and misprints), a bibliography, and an index.

Chapters 3–7 cover what must be regarded as the main period of the post-revolutionary Russian émigré activities in Germany—from 1921 to Hitler's advent to power in 1933. The author uses in his narrative a wealth of unpublished archival material. This material is of great variety, but also no doubt of uneven value and trustworthiness. It is by no means confined to what is to be found in the official German sources on which Dr. Volkmann's study was, for the most part, based. Despite some factual errors, omissions, and questionable statements, Williams's