

suitcase is likely to be stolen. Perhaps. But when a suitcase contains a body, there are certainly other reasons for wanting to hold onto it. The fact that it is stolen does not, in this case, seem to have much to do with Soviet actuality.

The bibliography lists all the major articles on Kharms and Vvedensky, but there are a couple of curious omissions. After going to the length of listing some Polish and Czech translations of works by Kharms, Gibian neglects to mention two of the three stories by Kharms that were published in *Literaturnaia gazeta*, 1967, no. 47. He also fails to note that the article by Flaker which he lists includes three works in Russian, two of which do not appear here in translation.

Though it is perhaps too early to judge the literary value of the Oberiuty, I think it safe to say that Gibian has performed a valuable service in introducing Kharms and Vvedensky, and that their work will prove to be of some interest to specialists and nonspecialists alike.

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THE MATURING OF YIDDISH LITERATURE. By *Sol Liptzin*. New York: Jonathan David Publishers, 1970. xii, 282 pp. \$6.95.

The second part of a projected three-volume history of twentieth-century Yiddish literature, this book deals with the period between the two world wars. The title is apt, for the interwar years are by far the most interesting in the annals of Yiddish writing, particularly in poetry, and much of it compares favorably with the better works of modern East European prose and verse, where most of Yiddish literature is rooted and where the bulk of it was actually created. Sol Liptzin, formerly of the City College of New York and now at the American College in Jerusalem, is the author of several books on various aspects of German and Yiddish literature. The present volume is a competent enough study of its subject, though somewhat old-fashioned and expository rather than analytical. There is no questioning Professor Liptzin's credentials as a scholar in Yiddish literature as such. He also is more than adequately equipped to deal with its roots that go back to the Bible, to rabbinic writings, and to Jewish history and lore. It goes without saying that he is similarly at home with the Germanic background of the Jewish Enlightenment which begot Yiddish letters. Unfortunately Liptzin's book suffers from a serious handicap—namely, the author's relative lack of familiarity with the modern Slavic literatures that often exerted a powerful influence on this century's Yiddish writers. And little wonder: a Yiddish writer, after a traditional religious education in a *cheder* and then in a *yeshiva*, usually received his first taste of secular writing in a Russian or Polish school. The influences were both good and bad. The great Slavic classics were imitated, but so were some of the second-rate symbolists, not to speak of such celebrities as Artsybashev and Przybyszewski. Consequently, Yiddish literature cannot be seriously examined without frequent reference to its Slavic background. Similarly, its most important component in this century, Soviet Yiddish literature (Liptzin's book includes separate chapters on its three major centers: Kiev, Minsk, and Moscow), must be viewed both as part and parcel of Yiddish literature as a whole (chronologically and geographically) and as a part of Soviet literature in general. Thus some Soviet Yiddish writers (e.g., Emmanuil Kazakevich) wrote in both Yiddish and Russian. Others wrote in Yiddish only, but were read primarily in translations, much as Isaac Bashevis Singer is in the United States. These

included Leib Kvitko (executed in 1952), whose poems were memorized by millions of Soviet school children, and Rachel Baumvol, the author of several books of nursery rhymes, who was recently allowed to leave for Israel. The study of Yiddish led the late Uriel Weinreich, the Columbia linguist, to the general subject of languages in contact. Similarly, a scholar in the field of Yiddish literature must really be a comparatist, with Slavic literatures as one of his main areas of competence.

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POETRY IN EAST GERMANY: ADJUSTMENTS, VISIONS, AND PROVOCATIONS, 1945–1970. By *John Flores*. Yale Germanic Studies, 5. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1971. xiv, 354 pp. \$12.50.

After a long period of neglect, the literature of East Germany currently seems to be fashionable in the West. Books devoted to this subject almost outnumber those on West German literature. The reasons for this are partly political (the reevaluation of the GDR by the Brandt government) and partly cultural (the emergence of an independent, self-conscious new generation of East German poets and novelists). John Flores's book on East German poetry from 1945 to 1970 is the first comprehensive study of the subject in English (it compares very favorably indeed with Gregor Laschen's *Lyrrik der DDR*, Frankfurt am Main, 1971). The author, who is an assistant professor at Stanford University, spent a year in Berlin on a Fulbright research grant. He sets out to summarize the development of poetry in the GDR under the somewhat arbitrary headings "adjustments," "visions," and "revisions." Problems of adjustment were certainly acute for poets such as Stephan Hermlin, Franz Fühmann, Peter Huchel, and Johannes Bobrowski, to whom Flores devotes the main part of his book. The conflict between instant comprehensibility on the one hand and the officially required generalities on the other proved too much for this older generation. It was not until authors such as Wolf Biermann, Volker Braun, and Karl Mickel developed a style well suited to the new political situation after the Berlin Wall was built that East German poetry really came into its own. Flores's detailed interpretations of Huchel and Bobrowski are illuminating and introduce some new aspects of the work of these poets, whereas his perceptive comments on Biermann, Kunerts, and Braun often tend to diminish the considerable differences in quality and significance of the poems discussed.

The difficulty facing every Western critic of East German poetry goes beyond the normal analysis of creative literature. The temptation to seek antigovernment sentiments in almost every line seems to be irresistible, even for a sober scholar like Flores. Thus his selection of representative poets is not entirely unbiased: there is no mention of Uwe Gressmann; Erich Arendt is unaccountably dismissed; and so is Georg Maurer, whose influence on many of the younger poets simply cannot be ignored. Admittedly it is not easy to come to terms with poems that contain "powerful, driving sections" but are made unreadable by "empty socialist realist platitudes," as Flores says. His work represents a piece of good solid research and will serve well as an introductory survey of East German poetry until such time as a more balanced and definitive study appears.

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