

ZVUKOVAIA FAKTURA STIKHOTVORENII SBORNIKA "SESTRA MOIA ZHIZN'"—B. L. PASTERNAKA. By *E. Vukanovich*. Lansing, Michigan: Russian Language Journal, 1971. 185 pp. Paper.

This is evidently an undoctored dissertation. It is, unfortunately, representative of one kind of work that is now being promoted by graduate faculties in the humanities at many institutions, of an "empirical" assumption that the labor of counting leads necessarily to meaningful results. Someone decided that there should be a "phonetic study" of Pasternak, and the thing to do, it appears, was to count all the phonemes (67,100 of them!) of a large sample of the poet's work and classify them. The only meaning that can be ascribed to this enormous labor is a penitential one. There is a pervasive boredom in this dissertation—for example, in the mechanical repetition of irrelevant bibliographic data and information about meter and rhyme—that I find most depressing. I wish that the student's advisers would hold themselves as responsible for the dismal results as the student must.

The book consists of two unrelated parts (chaps. 2 and 3) sandwiched between casual and invariably exceptionable remarks about phonetic phenomena in verse. Chapter 2 pretends to be a phonetic analysis of each of the fifty poems of *My Sister Life*; each poem is printed in full, but there is no analysis. In general, the author's remarks only reveal that she has nothing to say. For example, of "The Weeping Garden" she opines, "There are not many sound repetitions in this poem" (p. 40). If she believes this, one imagines that she must also have wondered often why the hell she was writing this dissertation. It is a shame that her committee did not wonder too at this point.

When the author does happen on an interesting sound combination, her comments are careless and appallingly innocent of the complexity of the questions raised. Here is where her advisers must take most of the blame. In general, she simplifies matters to the point of inanity. Of "Diseases of the Earth," a metaphysical poem which, despite the cuteness of some of its figures, deserves to be taken seriously, the author says, "In the poem, the author, using medical terminology, describes the diseases of the earth" (p. 80), and this is about all she has to say. Even in her dutiful effort to say something about the poem's phonetic features, she usually misses the more interesting ones which her none-too-formidable taxonomical apparatus (simplified from Shengeli, 1960) seeks to identify. Thus in lines 7–8 of "Diseases" she does not notice the "kinetic instrumentation" which determines their meaning. This example may be multiplied many times, by at least fifty.

The second part of the book consists of twelve tables of phonetic distributions in selected works of Pasternak's, compared with the well-known statistics compiled by Peshkovsky (1925). The author's first conclusion (p. 174) virtually nullifies all her labor, for she states that she has found no significant distinctions of sound "texture" among all the works of Pasternak or between those works and Peshkovsky's samples. She has perhaps perceived what is evident on casual inspection of all these tables: that it is very possible that the deviations of many of the distributions among Peshkovsky's ten samples are comparable to those among the works of Pasternak. Here again her advisers are at fault. If they were going to assign a statistical project, they should have required the student to calculate the statistical deviations which would enable the reader to judge whether the figures have any meaning at all. However, unless one is trying to make a case for some

kind of "sound fetishism" in a poet, it is hard to see how data of this sort might be meaningful, even if they were statistically respectable. The overall distribution of sounds in an author's work can at best serve only as background for the study of significant passages which, by their very nature, can never constitute a statistical sample.

D. L. PLANK
University of Colorado

THE HEIRS OF STALIN: DISSIDENCE AND THE SOVIET REGIME, 1953-1970. By *Abraham Rothberg*. Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1972. xii, 450 pp. \$14.50.

Abraham Rothberg has provided a far-ranging chronicle of the conflict between Soviet intellectuals and their government from the time of Stalin's death until virtually the present day. Briefly covering the relatively liberal periods of the first and second thaws, Rothberg quickly turns his attention to the 1960s and the writers and scientists whose names—at least in the Western press—are still in the headlines: Solzhenitsyn, Kuznetsov, Brodsky, Sakharov, and the Medvedev brothers, among others. For the nonspecialist the book contains a readable and comprehensive glimpse into one aspect of recent Russian history. For the specialist the book's merits are of a different nature. There is little that is actually new in what Rothberg says; the period of the thaws and the controversy surrounding Pasternak's *Doctor Zhivago* have already been covered in a number of studies, and anyone who closely follows Soviet affairs is thoroughly familiar with most of the later events as well. Yet the very inclusion of all the major and many of the minor instances of dissidence in a single volume is a service in its own right. It becomes possible not only to follow the chronological development of party policy toward intellectual mavericks but also to see connections between the various cases that are not so evident when each is viewed in isolation. Also, Rothberg does include material that occasionally sheds light on the background and the motivation of the dissidents, thereby often making them appear still more favorable. Particularly moving are the details relating to the execution of Yakir's father, Iona, a Soviet general who continued to believe in the rectitude of the party and of Stalin even as he was being executed.

The book is unfortunately marred by several errors and omissions. One hesitates to complain of lacunae in an admittedly "selected" bibliography intended for those who do not read Russian. Still, there are several works which the author considered important enough to mention in his text, but which are not included in the bibliography even though they have been translated into English. These include *Pages from Tarusa*, Fedor Abramov's *Round and About* (translated as *The New Life*), and Vasilii Aksenov's *A Ticket to the Stars*. Many readers would have also benefited from an explanation of the significance of chapter 2's title, "Engineers of the Soul." Factual errors include two references (pp. 269 and 293) to a government-sponsored celebration on Stalin's birthday in December 1969. A group of dissidents did gather that day to protest in case the rumored celebration took place, but although one of the would-be demonstrators was arrested, there was no marking of the occasion other than a quite balanced article in *Pravda*. On page 333 Rothberg utterly mangles statistics on Stalin's purges taken from Sakharov's