

Dostoevsky was able to entertain views other than his own (his own views as a man were fairly definite and definable) is fairly clear; indeed one can describe his novels as assaults upon what he believed in. But to insist that his voice was totally autonomous, as Bakhtin does over and over again, is to indulge in some measure of philosophical mystification. At the very least the thesis makes a number of assumptions, which are never proved or even discussed, one of which is that an author can create characters that are untouched by his own being and consciousness. One can grant Dostoevsky exceptional distancing and dramatic abilities without having to resort to exaggerations about autonomous worlds. Dostoevsky's voice is only too evident in some of his work; he was not always successful in restraining it. We can also grant him genius without speaking of Copernican revolutions. But such is the power of Dostoevsky that critics have a hard time talking about him in normal tones. Bakhtin is part of "classical" Dostoevsky criticism, and serious students of Dostoevsky who do not know Russian will now have an opportunity to judge for themselves whose voice they hear in his novels.

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LEONID ANDREYEV. By *Josephine M. Newcombe*. Modern Literature Monographs Series. New York: Frederick Ungar, 1973. ix, 118 pp. \$6.00.

ISAAC BABEL. By *Richard Hallett*. Modern Literature Monographs Series. New York: Frederick Ungar, 1973. ix, 118 pp. \$6.00.

These two volumes are part of a series called Modern Literature Monographs, which includes brief introductory studies of many important twentieth-century authors: T. S. Eliot, Faulkner, Joyce, Sartre, Günter Grass—even Maxim Gorky. The list is impressive in the names it offers, and judging by the two works under review, it aims at making available basic introductory material on the life and works of important modern writers.

The study of Andreev is intended for readers who know almost nothing of its subject and have no knowledge of Russian: the bibliography emphasizes translations of his works into English and works about him in the same language. The book has little interest for the student specializing in Russian literature, and its critical approach (or lack of one) will probably disappoint students of other literatures seeking information about a Russian writer whose reputation early in the century rivaled that of Chekhov and Gorky. The author does give us, interestingly and in roughly chronological order, an account of the contents of Andreev's works, offering some speculation concerning the influence on him of contemporary writers (Gorky and Chekhov) and contemporary critics, and pointing out clear evidence of Schopenhauer's influence in certain stories. She sketches his progression from "realism" to the "purely fantastic and allegorical." Sometimes the present reviewer would have quarreled with the interpretation of certain stories. Chekhov's pregnant evaluation of Andreev is quoted, but without the appreciation it deserves: "There's no simplicity in Andreev, and his talent reminds me of the singing of a clockwork nightingale."

Richard Hallett's sketch of Babel also suffers from the limitations imposed, apparently, by the editors of the monograph series. Here, too, we are given a chronological account of what Babel wrote, together with biographical facts

relevant to the material in the stories. The coverage of Babel's work appears to be very complete: the author gives an account of early sketches and stories ("Doudou," "The Public Library") that are barely touched upon in other works on Babel. He argues convincingly that the narrator in many of the stories (Liutov in *Red Cavalry*) has much in common with the author himself. The reader gets some impression of Babel's brevity of expression and highly figurative style, though certainly too little attention is given to his frequent use of the *skaz* technique. Hallett knows the criticism of Babel and uses it rather well, though at times he leans heavily on Lionel Trilling. Some will disagree with the author's own interpretation of certain stories. Surely it is an oversimplification when the author says of Liutov's behavior in "The Song" and "My First Goose": "Only hunger seems to rouse him to violence" (p. 33). And it is at least puzzling to hear that it was "because of Babel's Jewish blood" that his attitude toward the Cossacks was "more complex, more stark . . . and suffused with an ambivalence" not to be found in nineteenth-century authors who dealt with them (p. 36).

In spite of occasional failures in style and interpretation, this little volume does provide an interesting introduction to Babel's work.

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THE WORKS OF IVAN BUNIN. By *Serge Kryzyski*. Slavistic Printings and Reprintings, 101. The Hague and Paris: Mouton, 1971. 283 pp. 56 Dglds.

This volume is an attempt to answer the need for a complete and authoritative treatment in English of Ivan Bunin's life and work, and it has much to offer. The content of Bunin's prose and poetry is treated exhaustively, with frequent comments on matters of literary language and style. Bunin's biography is carefully worked out, and the reader receives a lively impression of the famous writer's personality. The author makes every effort to tie Bunin's literary production to his life, and quite often to explain the former in terms of the latter. He has read extensively in the criticism of Bunin, and makes frequent reference to the comments of earlier critics: Gleb Struve, Renato Poggioli, Edward Wasiolek, K. Zaitsev, Peter Bitsilli, and many others. The student of Bunin will come away from this work with a comprehensive knowledge of what Bunin wrote and what he did in his life, and some notion of already existing criticism.

The author's critical approach is reminiscent of nineteenth-century Russian criticism at its most traditional. We learn of the possible "real-life" models of many characters and situations. Although there is no doubt that a writer's experiences often form the basis of his art, we have come to expect a certain subtlety in treating the problem of biography in literature. Here we receive dull and unverifiable biographical detail, much of it from the pen of Bunin's widow, Muromtseva, who is never subjected to criticism; for instance, Bunin took from his father "liveliness, gaiety, and artistic perception of life" (p. 17). The treatment of the Russian muzhik in Bunin is described with great emphasis on fairly obvious traits of the members of that class who appear in his works. There is even some Russian corn to be had, on page 49: "'Antonov Apples'—(a certain kind of Russian apple with fragrance which causes homesickness in a Russian)." There are references to the "Russian Soul," a dead horse that should not have been beaten again in 1971.