

aspects of its artistic output and her inability to provide an orderly and adequate examination of its main contribution to the Russian Silver Age. Ironically, Gusarova lacks that sense of measure, stylistic balance, and gift of organization possessed by the "World of Art," and leaves us floundering in a text devoid of chapters, name index, and detailed bibliography.

Despite the book's many shortcomings, we must treat it as a gesture promising the appearance of more serious and more professional studies of the "World of Art" and its position within the Modernist movement. In this respect, we must thank Gusarova for her sincere attempt to lift the Soviet anathema on the group and to confirm that, far from being a decadent phenomenon, the "World of Art" was a vital and original source of artistic inspiration.

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THE PSYCHOLOGY OF ART. By *Lev Semenovich Vygotsky*. Introduction by *A. N. Leontiev*. Commentary by *V. V. Ivanov*. Cambridge, Mass., and London: M.I.T. Press, 1971. Translated from the Russian by Scripta Technica, Inc. xiv, 305 pp. \$12.50.

The appearance of an English translation of Vygotsky's major work on the psychology of art is definitely to be welcomed. One of the foremost Soviet psychologists of the interwar years, Vygotsky is of course already known to the non-Russian specialist from the translation in 1962 of his *Thought and Language*, and the lasting originality of his contribution has since earned wide recognition. Vygotsky held that the psychology of art had in his day foundered on the rocks of subjectivism, from which he aimed to free it by placing it on a sound sociological and historical basis. His chosen method was to define the form of a work of art (its most significant characteristic, in his view), to analyze the function of its elements and structure, and thence to arrive at general laws governing the aesthetic response. An interesting feature of the book is that Vygotsky devotes a large proportion of his argument to detailed criticism of a wide range of psychological theories of art, including those associated with the Symbolists and the Formalists; in effect, he presents his ideas embedded in the context in which his contemporaries would have viewed them. Understandable in this context is the zeal and explicitness with which Vygotsky attacks the idea that the creative process is something unknowable. He accepts that it can only be explained in terms of subconscious mental activity, but rejects all the psychoanalytical theories of art known to him—including Freud's—on the grounds that they evade the problem of form and cannot account for the social manifestation of the subconscious, which art is. Vygotsky's own conclusions relate the aesthetic activity to a physiologically based need in man for a balancing-out of contradictory emotions, producing a psychological effect that is "cathartic." The concentration of the individual's biological and emotional processes in art is, for Vygotsky, inherently social; indeed, he views art as a form of social manipulation of emotional life, and consequently emphasizes its educative function. Vygotsky's findings are of interest to the literary critic as much as the serious psychologist, and are partly aimed at him. The translation unfortunately contains many small and a few serious infelicities, despite the considerable care taken over equivalence of technical terms.

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