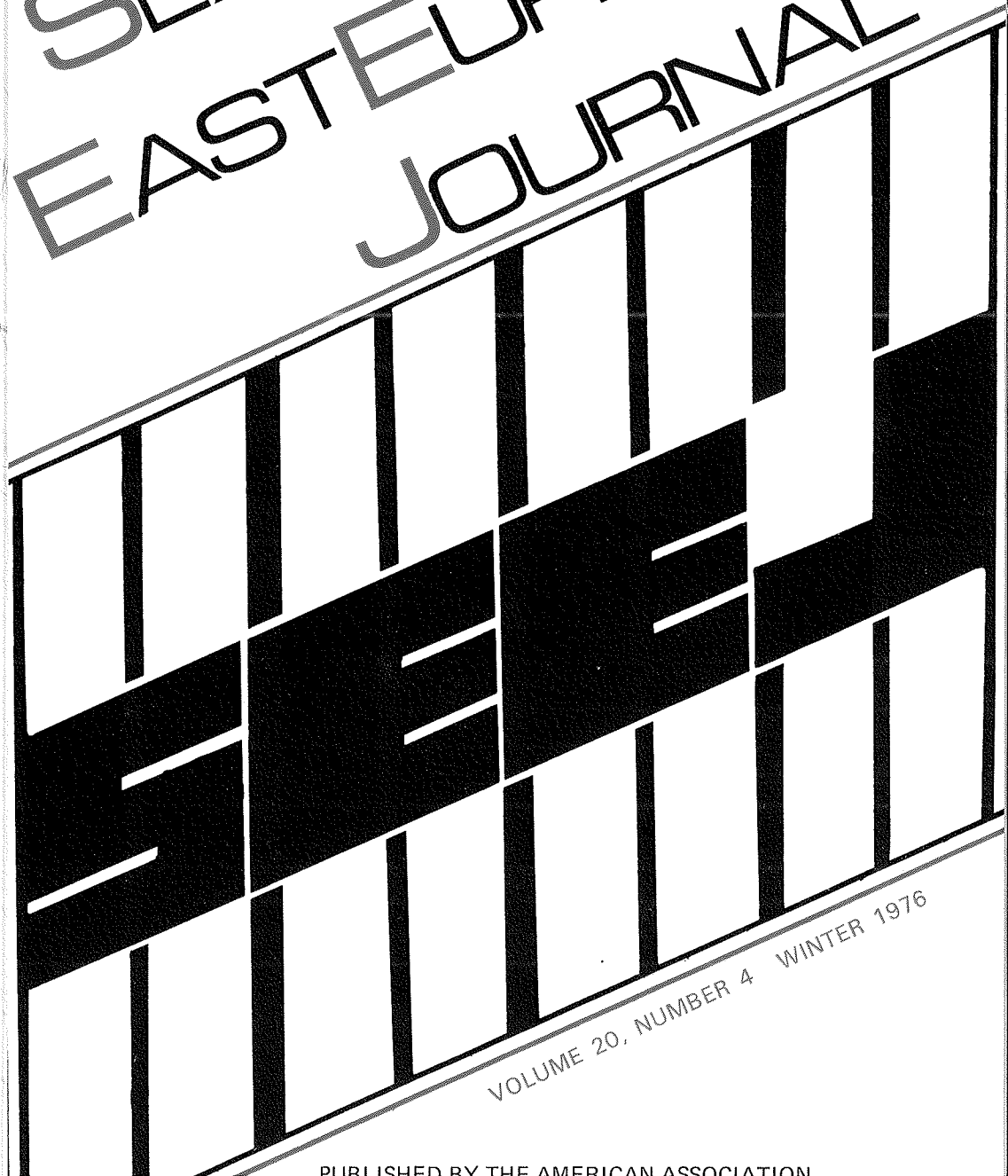


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*Russkij klassicism*, a book in which he attempts both to evaluate the attainments of Soviet scholarship in this area, and to indicate possible new approaches to problems.

Serman opens his study with a discussion of theories of classicism from the early nineteenth century to the present. G. Gukovskij, whose studies form the basis of current scholarship on Russian literature of the eighteenth century, receives special attention. Serman devotes much space to a questioning of the older scholar's equation of classicism and realism. In the following chapters—the heart of this study—he studies the ode (Chapters 2–4), the tragedy (Chapters 5–6), and satire (Chapters 7–12). Here he presents the reader with perceptive readings of individual texts as well as a thorough introduction to the history and current status of research on individual texts and genres.

In his discussions of the ode, Serman concentrates on Lomonosov and Deržavin, and to a lesser extent on Sumarokov. His analysis of the style of Lomonosov's poetry and discussion of the *Ritorika* recall his own earlier studies as well as the formulations of such older scholars as Gukovskij and Berkov. Serman also seeks to modify traditional interpretations by treating the few personal elements in Lomonosov's poetry, as for example in the wavering between the use of "we" and "I" in certain odes. According to Serman this use of the first person singular allowed Lomonosov to express, to a small degree, his own personal view of the subject of a particular ode. The spiritual odes reflect to a limited extent events from the poet's life, as well as his attempt to inform them with a simpler style than that found in his panegyrics. While emphasizing the originality of many of Deržavin's works such as *Felica*, Serman shows through a careful analysis of texts the relationship of the style and structure of the poet's philosophical odes to the spiritual odes of Lomonosov.

In the chapters devoted to tragedy Serman concentrates mainly on Sumarokov and to a lesser extent on Nikolev and Knjažnin. He discusses their presentation of social problems and human emotions rather than their observance of such classical conventions as the three unities. The discussion of social questions in Sumarokov's tragedies follows that of other Soviet scholars, but the treatment of the emotional aspects of these plays is somewhat more innovative. Serman recalls Karamzin's statement of 1800 in *A Pantheon of Russian Authors* that Sumarokov "described feelings" in his plays, but failed to create "characters" (i.e. stage figures with the complexity of Shakespeare's heroes). It should be remembered here that the poetry of Murav'ev, Karamzin, and their contemporaries was concerned primarily with descriptions of feelings and emotions. They could therefore view Sumarokov as a forerunner of their own literary practice. Serman, however, simply quotes from Karamzin and fails to develop ties between Sumarokov and the Sentimentalists. Although Knjažnin is known primarily for his *Vadim*, Serman chooses to study his *Rosslav* (1784) and shows through his analysis of this tragedy that the dramatist wished to present "an emotional and psychological conception of the Russian citizen-patriot."

In the chapters devoted to satire, the author discusses satires, fables, and comedies. Of particular interest is his study of the fable which concentrates on the history of the genre from seventeenth-century Polish translations through the works of Sumarokov. Of special interest here is the analysis of several works from Sergej Volčkov's 1747 translation of Roger L'Etrange's *Aesop*. Serman's study, one of the first since V. Adrianova Peretc's treatment of the material in 1929, is marked by his desire to treat a text as a worthy piece of literature, not as a linguistic or literary curiosity. The thorough discussion of Sumarokov's fables does not add anything to the studies of L. Vindt and Gukovskij. Serman, however, also introduces the possibility of a polemic

between Lomonosov and Sumarokov over the nature of the fable by contrasting Lomonosov's statements about allegory and Aesop in his *Ritorika* with Sumarokov's statements about the comic nature of the genre in *Epistola o stixotvorstve*.

The writer attempts with varying degrees of success to relate the literature of this era to Old Russian literary traditions. A major fault of the book is the author's failure to mention any of the Western European Pre-Romantic developments which were contemporary with the literary careers of Lomonosov and Sumarokov. For example, James Thomson, the author of *The Seasons*, died in 1748 in England at a time when Sumarokov and Lomonosov had written and published theoretical works which established the course of development of Russian literature. Thus many concepts which were then current in Russia coexisted uneasily with or were giving way before newer ideas in the West. Despite these few faults, this book is an interesting contribution to the study of this period. Aside from presenting the reader with the current status of research on various problems, the author also indicates—at times too briefly—possible new approaches to the solution of problems. He has also presented a revealing picture of a movement that was complex, not at all so rigid and monolithic as it has sometimes been shown to be.

Irwin Radezky, Fairleigh Dickinson University, Rutherford

Maximilian Braun. *N. W. Gogol: Eine literarische Biographie*. (Slavische Biographien, geistes- und kulturgeschichtliche Studien, 1.) München: Verlag Dr. Dr. Rudolf Trofenik, 1973. 244 pp.

This characterization of the works of N. V. Gogol' is intended to provide the reader with a better understanding of the enigmatic Gogol' and his considerable influence on subsequent Russian literature. Within the framework of "literarische Biographie" Braun omits almost all references to Gogol's personal life and non-fictional works, such as *Vybrannye mesta iz perepiski s druž'jami*. The book is divided into six chapters: I. "Der literarische Hintergrund" (a survey of the development of Russian literature during the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries); II. "Anfänge und erster Erfolg" (*Večera na xutore bliz Dikan'ki*); III. "Der Höhepunkt der Novellistik" (*Arabeski, Mirgorod, "Nos"*); IV. "Die Bühnenstücke" (*Revizor, Ženi't'ba, Igroki*); V. "Die Toten Seelen" (*Mertvye duši*); VI. "Die letzten Werke" ("Rim," "Sinel").

Although Braun states in his "Vorwort" that he will concentrate more fully on the reception of Gogol' by his contemporaries than is usually the case, he actually treats only the writings of V. Belinskij, giving little attention to others. Braun's critical methodology is eclectic. In addition to the opinions of Belinskij, the discussions of each work rely largely on the views, observations, and assessments of Gippius, Vinogradov, and Setchkarev. In his own role as critic Braun is reserved and cautious, as is evident in his introductory remarks on *Mertvye duši*: "Bei einem solchen Werk erscheint es nicht zweckmässig, von vornherein nach einer grundsätzlichen, umfassenden Definition zu suchen; das könnte nur leicht zu subjektiven oder willkürlichen Deutungen führen" (161). At times the author does offer original and informative insights on Gogol's prose, but these are unfortunately all too rare. On the other hand, the methodical approach of the book accounts for the excellent treatment of such minor works by Gogol' as *Igroki* and "Rim." "Rim," for example, is discussed both as an individual piece and as it relates to Gogol's unsuccessful attempt to complete

his sequel to *Mertvye duši*. The author also examines with care the various revisions of "Portret" and other stories.

Braun's book provides a balanced and multifaceted picture of Gogol's prose, but it fails to fulfill the author's promise. The extensive review of Russian literature prior to Gogol, presumably intended to prepare the reader for an appreciation of Gogol's innovations, is not paralleled by the expected passages on his influence. Instead, Braun contents himself with unproven and undocumented generalizations, for example, that *Revizor* is "eine groteske Tragödie—eine Gattung, die in der russischen Literatur nach Gogol eine wichtige Rolle spielte" (153). Braun also falters in his attempt to make Gogol the writer more comprehensible to his readers. Although he carefully illustrates both the continuity and progression in Gogol's literary career, he is unable to account for the magic of Gogol's genius: "Wir wissen immer noch nicht, was Gogol eigentlich im Sinne hatte und warum er seine Erzählung gerade so geschrieben hat." (242). These failings may be ascribed in part to the limited scope of the author's research. There is no bibliography and no mention of the works of Merežkovskij, Mandel'stam, or Ermakov, to name a few. There is also no indication that the author has consulted any of the valuable sources in English. Several of the author's quotes and citations are merely German translations of material found in N. V. Gogol, *Polnoe sobranie sočinenij* (14 vols.; M.: AN SSSR, 1937–52), and these are not always properly identified. In a few places statements are made which deserve further development or clarification, such as: "Es gibt Anzeichen dafür, dass Gogol gelegentlich mit Rauschgiften wie Haschisch oder Opium experimentiert haben könnte" (33).

As an introduction to the works of Gogol for a German audience with no access to Russian sources, this book is a valuable collection of selected materials. For American students and scholars of Russian literature there is little information to be found that is not already available in the original Russian.

Thomas R. Beyer, Jr., Middlebury College

Dale E. Peterson. *The Clement Vision: Poetic Realism in Turgenev and James*. Port Washington, N. Y.: Kennikat Press, 1975. 157 pp., \$9.95.

This is an ambitious, complex, and wide ranging little book which traces the impact of Turgenev on James through an examination of "those prior mysteries of cultural and temperamental affinities which stimulate actual textual borrowings" (2). Peterson eschews the "mindless literalism about specific textual details" (42) and the "vague chatter about comparative natures of imagined beings" (86) that inform many source and influence studies. He intends to demonstrate a more organic relationship between authorial perspectives and their subsequent literary embodiment. His attempt to explain the American Realists' attraction to Turgenev takes him into a brief discussion of Reconstruction sensibilities, its impact on James' evolving aesthetic attitudes, and the influences that paved the way for his appreciation of Turgenev as a kindred spirit.

Peterson's treatment of the two writers' works elucidates convergence and divergence: convergence in the overall perspectives that prompt a borrowed *fabula*, in similar conceptions of character typification and in the development of similar relational interplay among literary structural elements; divergence in the shadings of perspective that impart peculiarly Russian or American colorations, and in some technical features which are partially shared but ultimately determined by the authors' different aesthetic aims. In overview Peterson produces a comparative study which deals with

cultural impact on perspective and then with the impact of both on technique. The approach is both rich and organic.

Peterson designates the shared Turgenev-James perspective as poetic realism: an objective portrayal of disillusioning experience which does not abandon the individual to the steamroller of fated circumstances. The mediating element is the perception of the individual who may be left disillusioned by an experience, but who gains perspective from it and so derives value for his own self-comprehension. Perception emerges as the determining factor of reality by virtue of the moral value it culls from it.

Although postbellum America and James had become wary of moral absolutism, neither was willing to cast moral perspective to the winds in the pursuit of experience, open though they were to new vistas. It is precisely because James perceived in Turgenev a moral sensitivity that stopped short of English didacticism, as well as the catholic treatment of reality which he so admired in the French, that James turned to him as the "beautiful genius." Peterson contributes to James criticism by distinguishing Turgenev's appeal and ultimate influence from that of the French Naturalists with whom he is often so blithely grouped.

The author argues that James borrowed the basic *fabula* for his "tales of initiation" and disillusionment from Turgenev. However, in dramatizing Reconstruction America's thirst for experience, he countered the Russian's fatalism by introducing an American touch—the volitional principle. Eugene Pickering and Madame de Mauves are disillusioned but consciously choose a mode of coping, whereas Turgenev's Sanin is saved from a spurious idyll by an enslaving passion. There is fatalism in Turgenev in that Čulkaturin of "The Diary of a Superfluous Man" has no real alternative for behavior, while the narrator of "The Diary of a Man of Fifty" realizes he might have acted otherwise. A comparison of the masterpieces *What Maisie Knew* and "First Love" illustrates the clement vision of the book's title. Volodja is fatefully victimized; Maisie takes charge of the novel's resolution. Yet, both emerge with an equanimity that neither condemns nor moralizes and accepts life in all of its aspects.

The book is rich in theoretical implications. It draws creatively from other critical works and concepts, sometimes fleshing out, sometimes reformulating, adding, and synthesizing to produce tenable theses and interpretations. A virtue is that it defines areas for further investigation. But not all the interpretations prove easy to accept, nor are all the general statements necessarily true. Are Turgenev's heroes always rebuffed by the heartland? Do all end their careers as spiritual waifs? The handling of some supportive and illustrative materials tends to be laconic as is the consideration of contrasting and complementary critical studies. The bibliography for both authors is selective and the last entry for James dates as far back as 1968. Although James is the focus, a fuller treatment of Turgenev's cultural context would add substance and, I am convinced, enrich the major theses still further.

Although the book might have been more finely honed, its richness, theoretical sallies, and comprehensive comparative method are fine compensation.

Judith M. Mills, Fordham University

N. M. Lary. *Dostoevsky and Dickens: A Study of Literary Influence*. London and Boston: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1973. xiv, 172.

For the literary comparatist, Dostoevskij's works are a simultaneous source of delight and despair. To his delight, he can find and identify numerous echoes, parallels,