

READINGS IN RUSSIAN POETICS: FORMALIST AND STRUCTURALIST VIEWS. Edited by *Ladislav Matejka* and *Krystyna Pomorska*. Cambridge and London: M.I.T. Press, 1971. x, 306 pp. \$12.50.

As a rule, anthologies perform a useful service, for whatever purpose they may be intended. The one under review is not an exception to this truism. Its "primary objective . . . is to acquaint English readers with the methodological struggles in which the leading Russian theorists of literature engaged during the 1920s and early 1930s" (p. vii). In other words, this anthology, unless it also has some hidden objectives, has been historically conceived. However, the seventeen articles, contributed by Eikhenbaum, Jakobson, Tomashevsky, Tynianov, Bogatyrev, Propp, Brik, Voloshinov, Trubetskoy, Bakhtin, and Shklovsky, and grouped into three parts, transcend this somewhat narrow objective and acquaint the reader with the Formalist method *sui generis*. It seems to me that these struggles have already been sufficiently described by Victor Erlich, and that it would have been better to make them a marginal issue and to compile the anthology from works which still retain "crucial relevance for present-day endeavors to establish literary scholarship as an autonomous scientific discipline." In fact, these struggles could have been illustrated more effectively by publishing the purely polemical works of the Russian Formalists, rather than Eikhenbaum's essay "O. Henry and the Theory of the Short Story," for example.

The articles were translated by "faculty members and graduate students (past and present)" of the Slavic department at the University of Michigan. It is an impressive rendition, and those who participated are to be congratulated.

But selection and translation aside, I have two general objections to Professors Pomorska's and Matejka's critical retrospective of Russian Formalism. In "Russian Formalism in Retrospect" and "The Formal Method and Linguistics," Pomorska and Matejka, respectively, seem (1) to look at the Formalist intention "to extricate literary inquiries from eclecticism and from methodological enthrallment to psychology, sociology, or political and cultural history" (p. vii) as the actual accomplishment of this goal, and (2) to view Russian Formalism, intentionally or otherwise, somewhat outside the common European intellectual context of the first three decades of this century. As is generally known, this intention had been nurtured by many distinguished European scholars—to name just a few, Walzel, Vossler, Spitzer, and Alonso. In this respect the Russian Formalists have scored some successes but have hardly won the battle. Some of their observations stand in such close proximity to psychologism and sociologism that one often wonders about their specificity. For example, Iakubinsky's views on "perceptibility" (*oshchutimost'*) of sound in verse, Voloshinov's on "reported speech," and even Bakhtin's on various perceptions of speech acts can, without too great a procrustean effort, be translated into modern psychologistic or sociologistic maxims. It seems to me that the principal difficulty which the Formalists did not know how to overcome emanated from their unfamiliarity with the theory of the phenomenological reduction or *epoché*. They knew how to contain the overt psychologism in existing criticism, but they did not know, or perhaps were not aware of, the psychologism which was slipping into their "apodictic knowledge" through their own introspection. The scholar who drew a clear line of demarcation between the "literary fact" as a heteronomous phenomenon and the aesthetic concretion of it, and who thus defined the object of literary scholarship better than his Formalist contemporaries, was neither a formalist nor a struc-

turalist but a phenomenologist. This was Roman Ingarden. The Russian Formalists have failed to be systematically cognizant of this line.

As to the second objection, Professor Matejka's view that there is a direct link between the impact of the Kazan school and the early adherents of the formal method can hardly be contested. Yet such a view is too narrow. As I stated earlier, the Formalists were far from alone in their search for an objective justification of literary scholarship. They were a part, albeit an important one, of a larger movement which swept European and American criticism in the twenties and thirties. They were acutely aware of this movement and both profited from it and contributed to it. At one time T. S. Eliot observed, "Each generation brings to the contemplation of art its own categories of appreciation, makes its own demands upon art, and has its own uses for art." In Russian Formalism we witness, perhaps for the first time in the history of Russian criticism, a highly sophisticated concern with aesthetic phenomena of a supranational character. Through this, Russian critics joined the common European generation of literary scholars. It seems to me that it is from this standpoint that Russian formalism deserves to be retrospected.

My critical observations are not meant to diminish the significance of this anthology. Beyond any doubt it is a valuable addition to the growing literature on Russian Formalism and a fine didactic tool for those whose language skills do not extend to Russian and Czech.

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MASTERSTVO PEREVODA: SBORNIK SHESTOI, 1969. Edited by K. Chukovsky. Moscow: "Sovetskii pisatel'," 1970. 591 pp. 1.54 rubles.

This sixth issue of a distinguished series (published irregularly since 1955) like the others is devoted entirely to literary translation. The recent demise of *Delos*, along with our National Translation Center, leaves *Masterstvo perevoda* without any serious competitor in the field.

Anything edited by the late Kornei Chukovsky is bound to contain a leaven of the merely *dulce* to relieve the *utile*, so the material under review ranges from rather temporary, if diverting, journalism to archival publications and original theoretical work of a very high order. No one interested in translation can afford to ignore the 130-page bibliography, which covers not only the USSR but also, more sketchily, the rest of the world for the years 1965–66.

The best articles are those that survey the fate of individual writers or works in foreign versions. I. Kuzminskaja reports on the Russian translations of Nicolás Guillén, the Cuban poet; B. Ilek and G. Vanečkova on those of Vítězslav Nezval; and the late A. Finkel on those of a poem by Byron ("My Soul Is Dark," from the *Hebrew Melodies*), especially the translation by Lermontov. L. Frizman examines Baratynsky's translation into French prose of some twenty of his own poems, and thereby sheds valuable light on the little-studied area of "autotranslation," which has lately acquired a certain immediacy owing to the practice of such writers as Samuel Beckett, Vladimir Nabokov, and J. L. Borges. Efim Etkind—whose many contributions, beginning with *Poeziia i perevod* (1963), surely qualify him as the leading student of translation in the USSR, if not in the world—contributes a study of Paul Wiens, the German poet and translator of Soviet poetry.

Etkind's article begins rather unpromisingly with a study of several of L.