

This well-researched study covers a great deal of ground, but it adds little to what is already known, namely, that a literary report by a foreign traveler is, in most cases, a combination of his perception of the external environment and self-projections of values and views created in the process of the reporter's past experiences. If nothing more, Erhard Schütz makes an effort to remind us that what often appears to be factual is not factual at all, and that reports of firsthand impressions often do not tell us much more than fiction tells us.

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ÄSTHETISCHES DENKEN IN RUSSLAND: KULTURSITUATION UND LITERATURKRITIK. By *Klaus Städtke*. Berlin and Weimar: Aufbau-Verlag, 1978. 378 pp.

Klaus Städtke's study of nineteenth-century Russian aesthetic thought might have been one of the best comprehensive treatments of the subject in any language if it had dealt more extensively with critics outside the camp of the "revolutionary democrats," for example, Apollon Grigor'ev, Druzhinin, and Botkin. As far as it goes, it is excellent. Städtke's consistent Marxist stance does not prevent him from considering the opinions of non-Marxist Western scholars, and he is often critical of Soviet scholars. His erudition is broad in every dimension—historical, aesthetic, philosophical, and literary. His method is sound and challenging, especially to the Western scholar.

Städtke gives Western scholars, such as René Wellek, credit for having elucidated specific connections between Western philosophical thought and the aesthetic ideas of Russian critics, but he points out—with some justification—that Western scholars have generally paid insufficient attention to the peculiarly Russian traits in the critical thought of Belinskii, Chernyshevskii, Pisarev, and others. Städtke suggests that Russian criticism after Belinskii derived its premises not only from philosophy and aesthetics, but also from the development of Russian literature, particularly narrative prose (p. 26). He tries to observe Russian literary criticism in a socio-historical, ideological, and cultural context, and deals with the economic factor in literature (publishing practices, readership, reception) as well. On occasion one cannot escape the impression that Städtke is somewhat selective in the latter respect. Thus, the socioeconomic and political background of the Decembrist movement is carefully outlined, while Pushkin's role as an exponent of the world view and interests of the landed gentry (emphatically pointed out by Belinskii) is underplayed. Gogol's aesthetic philosophy is properly and competently juxtaposed to Pushkin's, but Gogol's personal and unresolved conflict between the moral and aesthetic purpose of art is given little attention. And in general, Städtke seeks to avoid indicating an open dichotomy of *Formästhetik* and *Gehaltsästhetik*, even though his accurate account of Chernyshevskii's aesthetics describes the latter perfectly.

Städtke bases his own work on Russian scholarship to a greater degree than Western scholars and demonstrates a good command of Soviet Marxist and Formalist scholarship. He uses Russian terminology (for example, *Akzentverschiebung* = *pereaktsentovka*), his conception of "romanticism" is the Russian, not the traditional German one, and his treatment of Russian critics and scholars who are relatively unknown outside the Slavic countries (Pypin, Veselovskii, Potebnia) matches that of the "major" figures. Furthermore, Städtke follows the mainstream of Soviet scholarship by consistently seeking to find ways to match aesthetics with political philosophy. For example, he ingeniously explains the progression from Dobroliubov the "enlightener" to Pisarev the "realist" by pointing out that the former still sees

the masses as the *subject* of revolution, whereas to the latter they are merely an *object* to be manipulated by the educated revolutionary leadership (p. 251). Similarly, Städtke gives a political meaning to the "canonization" of Pushkin, on the one hand, and the reckless attacks on the poet made by some revolutionary democrats, on the other (p. 227).

Belinskii is naturally the focus of Städtke's book. Predictably, Städtke sides with Soviet scholars—and Plekhanov, to some extent—in seeing Belinskii's later period as his "mature" one and recognizing the movement toward his positions in the mid-1840s as "progress." Nevertheless, the author sees the inconsistencies in Belinskii's theoretical positions, and his critical attitude is not limited to the early Belinskii. He points out that Belinskii's aesthetic system did not allow for conflicts which were not based in objective reality (pp. 199–201); consequently, Belinskii could not appreciate Dostoevsky's *The Double* and the works of some other major authors (Balzac, George Sand) which showed "romantic" tendencies. Städtke's description of Belinskii's criticism as "aesthetics in motion" (*eine sich bewegende Ästhetik*), in which aesthetic categories are subordinated to historical and literary change, is remarkably apt (p. 201).

Altogether, Städtke's book combines the better qualities of East European scholarship with the strengths of Western scholarship. Among other things, Städtke shows great competence in the comparative aspect of his subject by demonstrating full control not only of the German sources of Russian aesthetics, but of French sources as well.

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CHEKHOV'S ART OF WRITING: A COLLECTION OF CRITICAL ESSAYS.

Edited by *Paul Debreczeny* and *Thomas Eekman*. Foreword by *Ronald Hingley*.
Columbus, Ohio: Slavica Publishers, 1977. iv, 199 pp. \$8.95, paper.

This anthology of articles on Chekhov is the result of a Chekhov symposium organized at the University of North Carolina in the spring of 1975. Although the collection contains articles by Thomas Winner and Karl Kramer, both of whom have published books on Chekhov, the emphasis is on work by a generation of scholars who are just now beginning to say their word on Chekhov, so far in the form of journal articles. The anthology thus serves as a useful introduction to a new generation's thinking about Chekhov.

The volume will not in any way greatly revise the understanding of Chekhov currently held in academic criticism. It does show a methodological bias, as the editors note, for the methods of Formalism and Structuralism. Most of the authors show themselves to be well-trained readers of text, and one can glean a number of interesting insights about specific stories.

Ordinarily, the most useful gesture a reviewer can make in reviewing an anthology is to list the contributors and indicate the nature of their efforts, so that the reader can select from the menu what pleases his taste. In this case, the editors of the volume have written an excellent review of its contents in their introduction. I would simply suggest that anyone interested in Chekhov should pick up a copy of the volume and read these three pages to find what he wants.

Several of the most interesting essays are those considering the question of Chekhov's relationship to Impressionism in painting. The notion that Chekhov is an "Impressionist" has been much bandied about, most notably, perhaps, in an article by Dmitri Čiževsky, "Chekhov in the Development of Russian Literature" (re-published in *Chekhov: A Collection of Critical Essays*, edited by Robert L. Jackson). "Aspects of Impressionism in Chekhov's Prose" follows Čiževsky's outline to some