

twentieth century conventions. *Netochka Nezvanova* is best presented, we believe, with a memory to [*sic*] its original, serial appearance in 1849—as an intensely dramatic story whose insights and rich texture were not intended to be savored at a single sitting.”

To these remarks, both lame and audacious, we can only reply: If Dostoevsky had wished to indicate “passage of time” with space breaks, he would have done so; had he preferred shorter paragraphs to longer ones he would have made them shorter; the master translators of the twentieth century strive to respect—not violate—the style of writers. The contemporary reader has a strong constitution: he likes his Dostoevsky straight.

The reader would have been better served if the editor had been less studious of Dostoevsky’s style and more attentive to his own.

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GROWN-UP NARRATOR AND CHILDLIKE HERO: AN ANALYSIS OF THE LITERARY DEVICES EMPLOYED IN TOLSTOY’S TRILOGY *CHILDHOOD, BOYHOOD, AND YOUTH*. By *Alexander F. Zweers*. The Hague and Paris: Mouton, 1971. 165 pp. 32 Dglds.

The attempt to reconstruct and relate the elusive experience of childhood has long engaged Russian writers. For more than a century, in works ranging from the purely autobiographical to those of an exclusively fictional nature, they have dealt with the relation between external reality and the developing consciousness of the child. In their efforts to capture something of the quality of the child’s experience, they have been brought to a reconsideration of the conventions of narrative structure and the assumptions concerning character perception. Critical examination of the genre thus offers an interesting opportunity for expanding our total understanding of “point of view” as a functional element of prose.

Alexander Zweers’s study of the Tolstoy trilogy merits attention as one of the first to deal with Russian works of this sort. Within the confines of this rather slim volume, he attempts to define the salient features of *Childhood*, *Boyhood*, and *Youth*, and to relate Tolstoy’s achievement to the genre as a whole. Regrettably, the study suffers from its erratic focus and the author’s adamant rejection of all psychological considerations. Moreover, by disregarding several outstanding works by other authors, including Turgenev’s *First Love* and Andrei Bely’s *Kotik Letaev*, he deprives the reader of the proper perspective for making a comparative judgment of Tolstoy’s success with the genre.

After an extremely sketchy introductory characterization of various kinds of books about children, Zweers devotes a lengthy first chapter to a survey of the critical literature on the trilogy. It is a rather inauspicious beginning, for much that has been written has little relevance to Zweers’s own analysis, yet he repeatedly becomes entangled in the details of other critics’ commentaries. The space might have been better used for a more thorough investigation of the trilogy itself. As it is, only the second chapter deals directly with the work, and there Zweers itemizes the various ways in which the narrator mediates the impressions of childhood.

Zweers establishes nine different categories, some of them overlapping, which reveal the adult narrator as a passive transmitter, evaluator, commentator, or

seemingly active participant in the events he is describing. His role is in part conditioned by the child's age; with increasing maturity the boy is able to contribute more actively to the analysis of his own situation and feelings. That Tolstoy would elect to present the account as reminiscences is, of course, not surprising, for it would have been most difficult to include all of the insights into the child's environment if he had restricted his point of view to that of the boy narrating in the present tense. Although a catalogue of the narrative devices may thus be considered a useful if somewhat mechanical first step, it needs to be complemented by a discussion of their significance.

Having assumed a resolutely formalistic stance, however, Zweers assumes that the analysis is complete. He does not simply overlook the complex of implications arising from the adult narrator's contemplation of his former actions, but rather explicitly rejects the question of psychological interrelations as unimportant to the total effect. (At one point he even chides Boris Eikhenbaum, whose work on the trilogy he otherwise respects, "because he had not left alone the psychological aspect.") To support his own narrow reading, Zweers cites Kenneth Burke to the effect that the artist's means tend to become ends in themselves. Had he chosen to read further, he would have discovered that Burke sees the exclusive concern with form as an extreme which the artist would do well to avoid. There are, Burke notes, "two extremes or unilaterals: the extreme of utterance, which makes for the ideal of spontaneity and 'pure' emotion, and leads to barbarism in art; and the extreme of pure beauty, or means conceived exclusively as end, which leads to virtuosity, or decoration." As Burke quite clearly indicates, the true realm of art is to be found between these extremes. Zweers, unfortunately, has failed to heed the message of Burke's essay in his own analysis. In his failure to relate structural features to the experiential content, he denies the trilogy that aesthetic vitality which is fundamental to any reading of it. Although his title promises much, Zweers has, in fact, little to offer the reader who is interested in the literature of childhood as an artistic experience.

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THE OXFORD CHEKHOV. By *Anton Chekhov*. Translated and edited by *Ronald Hingley*. London, New York, Toronto: Oxford University Press. Vol. 1: Short Plays. 1968. xii, 209 pp. Vol. 2: Platonov, Ivanov, The Seagull. 1967. xiii, 362 pp. \$10.10. Vol. 5: Stories, 1889–1891. 1970. xi, 257 pp. \$5.95. Vol. 6: Stories, 1892–1893. 1971. xiii, 316 pp. \$16.00. Vol. 8: Stories, 1895–1897. 1965. xiv, 325 pp. \$5.60.

Do we need yet another translation of Chekhov, since Chekhov's works have been rendered into English so many times since Constance Garnett's stilted Victorian version? Yet, looking over the crowded shelves of existent translations, one must conclude that none of them is satisfactory and that to all of them applies, in larger or smaller measure, the saying that reading literature in translation is like kissing a woman through a veil. Frequently, in translations of Chekhov, the veil is rather heavy and opaque. Some twelve years ago this reviewer evoked strong criticism in the USSR for his negative comments on the quality of English Chekhov translations. Yet there is no question that there has been no coherent unified translation of evenly high quality of Chekhov's work. The reason must be sought in the special