

Shestov's essay on Martin Buber, not from the Russian text, which is easily available, but from a German translation. The result is rather weird. Why Spencer Roberts's awkward and inept translation of Shestov's essay on Chekhov was preferred to the fluency and lucidity of Koteliansky's remains a mystery.

Also, it must be pointed out that in all his interpretive introductions to Shestov, informative and judicious as they are, Martin never really asks Shestovian questions. He never, for example, attempts to relate Shestov's thoughts and observations to his inner experiences. It is true that he does occasionally refer in a rather banal way to "the crisis of our times"—but then we all live through *that*. Nor does he account for Shestov's own inability to transcend *ratio*, to speak finally in a language that goes beyond discourse and analysis, to speak in poetry. Surely the "old Hassid" (as Kornei Chukovsky once called him) must have felt that this—more than his lack of disciples—was his ultimate failure.

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THE INVISIBLE LAND: A STUDY OF THE ARTISTIC IMAGINATION OF IURII OLESHA. By *Elizabeth Klosty Beaujour*. New York and London: Columbia University Press, 1970. 222 pp. \$8.00.

This book, the first devoted to Olesha, contains much perceptive analysis of his work, but the analysis does not convincingly support the assumptions as formulated. Professor Beaujour examines the grotesque in Olesha's work in order to dispel the myth that he was basically a joyous comic writer, but she never says who subscribes to this myth, and it is difficult to imagine that anyone could see Olesha in this way. Surely the importance of the grotesque has always been clear—even before Professor Nilsson's penetrating article.

Professor Beaujour also maintains that the concentration on *Envy* has given a distorted picture of Olesha's significance. Accordingly, she chooses to neglect *Envy* in favor of some of the lesser-known stories. There are two objections to this approach: (1) the lesser-known works do not, in fact, reveal essential aspects of Olesha's thought and technique not found in *Envy*; (2) this study would have been improved by having *Envy* as its fulcrum. As it is, something is wrong with the formulation that the central problem of *Envy* is the need to dominate and control—verbs singularly inappropriate as descriptions of either Olesha or Kavalero. The relationship between Olesha and Kavalero seems similar to that between Turgenev and Bazarov: in both cases, nostalgia blunts the original purpose of the author and introduces a beneficial ambivalence.

The chapter entitled "Olesha as a Writer of the 1920s" belongs not in this book but in the author's projected study of narrative structure in the novels of the twenties. The comments on novels by Shklovsky, Fedin, Ehrenburg, Kaverin, and Zamiatin are superficial and throw little light on Olesha's work. All these authors, of course, shared the interest in experimental art that prevailed during the twenties. For purposes of context, a chapter on the authors who influenced Olesha would have been better—one including a discussion of Olesha's comment that the most important influence on *Envy* was H. G. Wells's novel *The Invisible Man*. A discussion of the articles written by Olesha during the thirties would also have been helpful.

Finally, more effort should have been made to present an outline of Olesha's

life—admittedly a difficult task, but the author convincingly demonstrates that his work is obsessively autobiographical. Nowhere does she mention that before he married Olga Suok he was married to her sister Serafima, whom he lost to Vladimir Narbut, and who is now married to Shklovsky. The third sister married Eduard Bagritsky. According to the diary of Bagritsky's son Vsevolod, Olesha worked tirelessly during the late thirties to obtain the release of Bagritsky's widow from a forced-labor camp. The diary also mentions the suicide of Olesha's young son.

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RUSSIAN: A COMPLETE ELEMENTARY COURSE. By *Peter Rudy, Xenia L. Youhn, and Henry M. Nebel, Jr.* New York: W. W. Norton, 1970. xxii, 522 pp. \$7.50.

This attractively printed volume is designed to integrate the functions of an elementary grammar, introductory conversation book, and graded reader. The authors have aimed at combining both audio-lingual and traditional methods and thus provide the basis for training in the fundamentals of aural comprehension, speaking, and reading.

In format, the book is divided into three phases: lessons 1–3 (Phase I) deal primarily with introducing the alphabet, handwriting, and pronunciation; lessons 4–12 (Phase II) treat the essentials of grammar—the case system and the verb, minimally presented; lessons 13–30 (Phase III) shift the emphasis to reading, with secondary attention devoted to grammar and conversation. In addition to a dozen or more introductory pages on how to use the book, there are over a hundred pages of “additional exercises” at the end, a sixteen-page appendix, Russian-English and English-Russian vocabularies, and a two-page index. The book contains approximately 1,400 vocabulary items. Tape recordings are available from the publisher. According to its authors, the course has been tried out at Northwestern University over the past six years by both experienced and inexperienced instructors.

A number of good things can be said about the Rudy-Nebel-Youhn textbook. It has been carefully prepared and contains few misprints. Aspect is introduced relatively early along with the past tense (lesson 7), and all of the cases in singular and plural are presented by lesson 12. Handwriting is featured in the first three lessons, though neglected later. The lesson vocabularies are short and manageable for at least the first third of the book. Useful guidelines are contained within the book for both teacher and student. There is an abundance of exercises, including the large number of pattern drills for lessons 4 through 30 called “additional exercises.” It would be a pity if so naming them and relegating them to the back of the book would cause teachers to neglect them. In order to achieve even minimal active mastery of Russian grammar, these “additional exercises” are absolutely essential.

Among the weaknesses of the book, perhaps the most glaring is the presentation of the sound system vis-à-vis the writing system as presented in the first three chapters. This is the result no doubt of the authors' attempt to avoid introducing any phonetic transcription. One also wonders if anything is gained by avoiding traditional terms such as perfective and imperfective in favor of “verbs of completion and verbs of incompletion or repetition.” Soft-series or iotated vowel letters are called “indicator vowels,” consonants which occur in both plain and palatalized varieties are called “variable consonants,” and the misleading terms “incompletion” and “repetition” are used to categorize the two imperfective aspects of the basic