

ing that the art of verse translation is a firmly established tradition in Russia, and listing a few names of well-known twentieth-century poets who helped to uphold that tradition. Of the six poets named, however, two (Bunin and Khodasevich) do not belong to Soviet literature, while Briusov was active in it only in the earliest period, and as a translator belongs really to the prerevolutionary epoch. As for Anna Akhmatova, it is well known that she did not like translating verse and was more or less forced into it after the revolution by the necessities of life. She is also perhaps an unfortunate example of the widespread Soviet practice of translating poetry with the help of *podstrochniki* (interlinear literal translations) which Friedberg mentions in this connection (I happen to know a good Russian connoisseur of Chinese poetry who thinks very poorly of Akhmatova's versions of it done by this method). But, of course, the problem of the quality of Soviet translations, whether of verse or of prose (as well as of the reception of modern Western literature in Soviet scholarship, which Friedberg also barely touches upon) deserves and requires a special study, and it would be unfair to reproach him for by-passing it, though he should have at least mentioned (and even emphasized) the interest which this problem arouses among Soviet writers and scholars, as witnessed especially by the publication of a many-volume series entitled *Masterstvo perevoda*, in which we find contributions by some of the best Soviet literary scholars. Also worth mentioning would have been the book by Professor Efim Etkind (who since 1974 has been living and teaching in France), *Poeziia i perevod* (1963), and his two-volume anthology of poetry translations (published, it is true, in 1968—that is, outside the main period covered by Friedberg's book).

I would also like to mention a minor omission of another kind: in speaking of the growing interest manifested in the Soviet Union in detective novels, and the emergence of homebred competition in this field, Friedberg does not name one of the most successful and ingenious Soviet practitioners of this genre, Julian Semenov.

There are not too many misprints in the book, and most of them are venial and easily corrigible. One strange exception is the name of the well-known French writer Henry Montherlant who has been turned into "Motherland"! Not every reader will guess this, and Montherlant's name is not to be found in the index. There is also a curious *lapsus calami*: on page 170 Primo de Rivera, the subject of Ramon del Valle Inclan's satirical novel, is described as "the *Mexican* dictator of the 1920's."

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STRUCTURALIST POETICS: STRUCTURALISM, LINGUISTICS AND THE STUDY OF LITERATURE. By *Jonathan Culler*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1975. xiv, 301 pp. \$4.95, paper.

ANALYSIS OF THE POETIC TEXT. By *Yury Lotman*. Edited and translated by *D. Barton Johnson*. With a bibliography of Lotman's works compiled by *Lazar Fleishman*. Ann Arbor: Ardis, 1976. xxx, 309 pp. \$16.95.

For the structuralist, man is not just *Homo sapiens* but *Homo significans*—the system-building biped who is constantly giving meaning to arbitrary signs. Structuralism has had great influence on fields ranging from film, art, psychology, anthropology, and linguistics to literary theory—all of which have been united under the term "the sciences of man." As Robert Scholes has noted, structuralism is a methodology with important ideological implications, expressing an almost religious need for a "coherent system that would unite the modern sciences and make the world habitable for man again." The two works reviewed here make a great contribution to structuralist literary theory. They clarify much of the murk and obfuscation of earlier

structuralist works and illustrate the great strides which structuralism has made in the 1970s.

Jonathan Culler's *Structuralist Poetics* begins with a critical survey of structuralist theories from Saussure, Jakobson, and Levi-Strauss (who are treated—but not nearly so deeply or probingly—by virtually every book on structuralism) to Barthes, Genette, Greimas, and Derrida. Beginning with a very useful discussion of the role of linguistics in the development of structuralist literary theory, Culler concludes that linguistics should be a model and not a method for semiological/structuralist analysis and that the role of linguistics should be “to emphasize that one must construct a model to explain how sequences have form and meaning for experienced readers.” He proposes literary competence as the object of structuralist poetics and then attempts to present his own model of reading and its conventions, concentrating on the novel and the lyric. Culler is nothing if not critical, and this (rather than his own model) is the great advantage of the book. Culler's study, probably the deepest and most stimulating overview of structuralist theory available today, is a welcome complement to Robert Scholes's more basic primer *Structuralism in Literature: An Introduction* (Yale University Press, 1974), which I feel is the best *introduction* to literary structuralism available.

Culler pays lip service to Russian formalism and completely omits references to the Soviet structuralists. The reason is fairly obvious: when his book first appeared in 1975, there were virtually no translations into English of the better works of Lotman, Uspenskii, Ivanov, and other Russian structuralists. Fortunately, their works are now being translated. In the past year alone, two major book-length translations of Soviet structuralist theory have been published in English: Henryk Baran's excellent collection of articles entitled *Semiotics and Structuralism: Readings from the Soviet Union* (International Arts and Sciences Press, 1976) and Lotman's book reviewed here. Both present the best face of Soviet structuralism and should help eliminate a large gap in Western treatment of the structuralist movement.

Analysis of the Poetic Text presents an excellent introduction for those who are not acquainted with Lotman's previous work. In the first part of the volume, he restates most of his basic theoretical assumptions in a far clearer form than in his previous books. D. Barton Johnson's introduction to this Ardis edition should also prove useful in orienting the reader who is unfamiliar with these theories. Unlike Lotman's earlier books, *Analysis of the Poetic Text* includes a long section of detailed illustrations of his theories, using twelve poems from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Although the relationship between theory and practice is somewhat tenuous in the book (as Johnson points out in his introduction), the analyses are often very perceptive, and Lotman goes a long way toward filling the gap in the area of structuralist analysis of the lyric—a gap emphasized by Culler in his own weak chapter, “Poetics of the Lyric.”

Lotman's brand of structuralism is extremely dialectical and he subtly continues his earlier arguments for the compatibility of structuralism and Marxism. For Lotman, every text establishes and then breaks (or, in his terms, “automatizes” and “de-automatizes”) a system, and the poetic text always represents a tension between a system and its violation. The poetic text thrives on this tension between the fulfillment and nonfulfillment of its own norms, causing what Lotman calls a tendency toward “maximal information content”—a characteristic of all good literature. He introduces the useful concept of a “minus device” to refer to expected but unfulfilled norms and argues that every element of an artistic text (phonological, grammatical, semantic, generic, and so forth) may communicate aesthetic information by either presence or absence.

Both books reviewed here are important works and cannot be adequately treated

in a short review. Given their importance, it is hoped that Ardis will follow the example of Cornell University Press and issue the Lotman volume as an inexpensive paperback in order to facilitate its use in university courses.

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MODERN RUSSIAN POETS ON POETRY. Edited by *Carl R. Proffer*. Selected and with an introduction by *Joseph Brodsky*. Ann Arbor: Ardis, 1976. 203 pp. \$3.45, paper.

It is a pity that Russian poets of this caliber must still be "popularized," in this case by an anthology of their views on art. Had they been French poets, for example, at least their poetry would be well known already, and something of their aesthetics as well.

The selection of poets made here is unbiased; all the major poets of a certain generation (all, except Blok, are post-Symbolists) who made significant statements about the nature of poetry have been included. The poets agree remarkably on assigning to poetry an exceptionally elevated or powerful role, greater, certainly, than is now thinkable in the English-speaking world. Blok's title, "On the Mission of the Poet," can stand for the message in which all concur. In this respect the younger poets all appear to be the neo-Romantic heirs of Symbolism. Their differences are, of course, apparent. The Acmeists Gumilev and Mandelstam speak of an "organic" quality of verse; the erstwhile Futurist Pasternak speaks of a power originating in a displacement from reality; Mayakovsky extols social command; and the unaligned Tsvetaeva grapples with the relationship between art and morality. Fortunately, the inclusion of Khodasevich has restored him to our attention.

Brodsky, in his short preface, also lauds poetry as an "intuitive synthesis." The preface is followed by a brief "Bio-Bibliographical Introduction," which might have been better placed at the end of the book. (Items omitted from the section of Pushkin criticism are John Bayley, *Pushkin: A Comparative Commentary* and David Magarshack, *Pushkin*.) The articles are fully annotated at the back of the book. These notes are useful, but they are blemished by a certain amount of editorial neglect. Mayakovsky's title, for example, is translated differently in the notes.

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OSIP MANDELSTAM: SELECTED ESSAYS. Translated by *Sidney Monas*. The Dan Danciger Publication Series. Austin and London: University of Texas Press, 1977. xxvi, 245 pp. \$15.95.

As always, in providing the English-speaking public with selected translations from the original, the translator's personality and personal taste mediate the selection. This is as it should be, and the book under review is no exception. Professor Monas is a good judge of himself and of his book. He is forthright in admitting and indicating his preferences: "Inevitably a certain subjective element has entered into my choices of what to include. . . . In addition, I have tried to limit myself to the literary essays. . . . I must also confess that I could not resist the eloquence of [the] angry style [of *Fourth Prose*]. . . ." He also acknowledges that "a number, though by no means the greater number of these essays, have been previously translated by other hands . . . the only one that struck me as unimprovable upon was the 'Conversation about Dante' in the version by Clarence Brown and Robert Hughes." As for the translations, Professor Monas states: "I wish I could have done better; but I have done my best."