

Mandel'shtam, and many other Jews. The Merezhkovskys' shockingly simple [wedding] ceremony with no white gown, no flowers, and no music" (p. 25) in November 1888 was but one manifestation of those artificial poses and masks which were in vogue at the time among Russian writers, poets, artists, and musicians. There are many other dismaying factual errors, misleading and repetitive statements, misinterpretations, misprints, and other editorial lapses which, unfortunately, impair the quality of this insightful and original study.

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ESSAYS ON MANDEL'STAM. By Kiril Taranovsky. Harvard Slavic Studies, vol. 6. Cambridge, Mass. and London: Harvard University Press, 1976. xii, 180 pp.

It is always a pleasure to reread intelligent, perceptive essays, and it is a rare pleasure to find those essays not merely collected and bound in some new expensive volume, but revised and organized in such a way as to enhance the art of reading poetry. The problem (and, indeed, the art) of reading poetry is a recurrent theme in Mandelstam's own prose essays and fiction. In the 1920s, when faced with the task of collecting and assembling his essays for publication (*O poezii*, 1928), Mandelstam revised and reorganized them in such a way as to emphasize the development of his own aesthetic and intellectual vision, focusing on his "love of the word" (his literal, Mandelstamian interpretation of "philology") as synonymous with the poet's cognition of history and culture. The quest of his essays might be reduced to a phrase used in "On the Nature of the Word," the key essay of that collection: to determine "what is perceptible to a mind seeking unities and connections."

Professor Taranovsky, in discussing his analytical approach to Mandelstam's poetry, refers to the poet's essays for a definition of the critic's function: "A critic does not have to answer the question: What did the poet want to say, but he is obliged to answer the question: Where did the poet come from . . ." ("Badger Hole"). Professor Taranovsky bases his critical method on a literal interpretation of Mandelstam's text, claiming that "to reveal all [Mandelstam's] literary subtexts is the fundamental problem which stands before the investigators of his poetry" (p. 114). Professor Taranovsky does not disallow more impressionistic approaches to Mandelstam's work, but he does favor the most systematic methods possible and tries to define and characterize his own approach. He assumes that everything Mandelstam wrote has a source which can be found and illuminated; that nothing was "just written" (*prosto tak*, as he quotes Nadezhda Mandelstam's comments at one point). Whether or not one accepts this assumption, Professor Taranovsky's book cannot be criticized for lack of clarity either in setting forth its author's aims, in carrying out his intentions, or in indicating that his is a valid method for approaching Mandelstam's difficult poetry. Whether or not this method would work as well for other investigators (who lack Professor Taranovsky's keen grasp of poetics, in general, and Russian poetry and poets, in particular) or for interpreting other poets less "cryptic" than Mandelstam, or whether it is the only approach is, of course, open to discussion. Although Nadezhda Mandelstam adds an invaluable dimension to Mandelstam criticism in her highly personal and nonscientific reading of her husband's life and work, her approach, despite the sensitivity and brilliance of her clues and comments, is primarily intuitive and impressionistic. Professor Taranovsky's "polemic" with her arises out of an attempt to justify his more systematic approach to poetry and poetics.

The first essay is concerned with defining the concepts of "context" and "sub-text," concepts which are not meant to mystify but, on the contrary, to clarify Taranovsky's highly systematic approach to Mandelstam's *oeuvre*. Thus, according to the author: "If we define context as a set of texts which contain the same or a similar image, the subtext may be defined as an already existing text (or texts) reflected in a new one." He goes on to list four kinds of "subtexts" which he characterizes as follows: "(1) that which serves as a simple impulse for the creation of an image; (2) *zaimstvovanie po ritmu i zvuchaniju* [borrowing of a rhythmic figure and the sounds contained therein]; (3) the text which supports or reveals the poetic message of a later text; (4) the text which is treated polemically by the poet." The latter two types are considered the most significant, either alone or in conjunction with the second (p. 18).

The second essay defines and illustrates the related concepts of "open" and "closed" analysis and points out the "polysemantic quality of the texts" chosen to illustrate the theoretical propositions raised in this essay. The subsequent essays are less theoretical. They are extremely subtle and precise exegeses of difficult poems representing different phases of Mandelstam's poetic career. Each essay works to illuminate a recurrent theme or set of recurrent images in Mandelstam's work as a whole, complementing the more "theoretical" chapters.

The overall effect of this concise collection of essays on Mandelstam's poetry is extremely forceful. Professor Taranovsky's book appears to be leading to an ultimate revelation of Mandelstam's artistic system. Taranovsky seems to indicate that the poet's perspective on the realities of his own age—as well as on the past and future—emerge, as it were, from a special literary-historical consciousness which sets each moment of time, as Mandelstam perceived it and responded to it, in a universal context. Taranovsky points out that this context seems to have been inspired, stimulated, and reinforced by what he terms Mandelstam's "subtexts." Thus, the proper investigation of these "subtexts" and their internal relationships should help us eventually to reveal the impetus behind Mandelstam's quest to find "what is perceptible to a mind seeking unities and connections."

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FROM DESIRE TO DESIRE. By *Yevgeny Yevtushenko*. Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1976. xvi, 126 pp. \$6.95.

The attractive dust jacket, its background a sensually flowing traditional end paper, might lead the unsuspecting reader to be delighted by the prospect of a slim new volume of Evtushenko poems in English translation. The poet's own introduction—a series of impressions and aphoristic comments on love, dated Moscow, 1976—may further arouse the reader's expectations. Yet, as appearances often deceive in life, so they do, alas, in the realm of art. Upon closer scrutiny one discovers that of the fifty-two translations or "adaptations," thirty-nine have been previously published in this country. Only one-fourth of them, hardly the best rendered or most interesting, appear here for the first time. Of those poems that appeared earlier, almost half can be found in *Stolen Apples* (1971), a bilingual edition still in print.

Because the editor has failed to provide a brief explanatory preface, several questions need to be answered. Did Evtushenko personally have anything to do with the selection? Why are some poems dated and others not? (A careful search through Russian editions easily provides most of the dates.) Why are there several poems that have no connection with love? (Obvious examples are "The City of Yes and the