

material, procedure, poetic structure, artifact. Is plot identical with Shklovsky's "fabula" and plot-structure with "siuzhet"? The poetic structure is, after all, more than its text: it stands at the intersection of several phenomenal paths which connect it with the external world and become part of its aesthetic effect. Obviously, more information is needed to clarify the position of the authors.

The translation is lucid and the text is well edited. Unfortunately, the reference numbers to the footnotes are missing in the second article. For the Slavist, it would also have been helpful to have some of the key notions presented in the Russian original.

WALTER SCHAMSHULA
University of California, Berkeley

NIKOLAI LESKOV: THE MAN AND HIS ART. By *Hugh McLean*. Cambridge, Mass. and London: Harvard University Press, 1977. xvi, 780 pp. \$30.00.

It is very, very rare for a reviewer to have the opportunity of reporting on a work of the sustained scholarly distinction and magisterial authority that characterize Professor Hugh McLean's study of Leskov. Leskov has been poorly served by Russian scholarship and seriously neglected by translators. No doubt, "The Musk-Ox," "Lady Macbeth of the Mtsensk District," *Cathedral Folk*, "The Sealed Angel," "The Enchanted Pilgrim," and "The Lefthander" will be the most familiar items in an account of Leskov's literary career and the works most likely to be known to a non-Russian readership, though, as Professor McLean points out, the translations have been uneven and mostly inadequate. Few, one suspects, except experts or keen students of Leskov will have read many other works and hardly anyone will have read his novels. All that must now be altered.

Of the several reasons for the neglect of Nikolai Leskov both in Soviet Russia and in the non-Russian world the question of religion must be considered among the most prominent. From his childhood he was apparently torn between his mother's ritualistic Orthodoxy and his father's incipient Protestantism and in the course of his career he tended to waver between support for the established church, a commitment that branded him as reactionary in the eyes of many critics, and a kind of Protestantism which eventually brought him into the Tolstoyan fold. Another—and more famous—reason for such neglect was his authorship of an editorial in the *Northern Bee* which implied that the burning of the Apraksin market in St. Petersburg in May 1862 was the work of revolutionary arsonists. Professor McLean points out that Leskov achieved precisely the opposite of what he had intended by such editorial opinion. Still, the mud stuck. He could never, strictly speaking, be "progressive," a deficiency for which he was to pay dearly whenever he sought in later life to place his stories with cautious editors. Another reason is that, for all his efforts, he could never be a novelist—and in a novel-loving age that proved to be a serious disadvantage. Yet another reason was a deeply ingrained nonconformity of the spirit, a tough individuality that made human relationships just as difficult for him as the observance of literary fashions and conventions.

If he did not court popularity, he also did not court modernity. The use of *skaz* and accompanying stylistic features proved a greater impediment to his international success than any other. Writing of Leskov's style (in the particular context of "The Battle-axe," though it could apply to many other stories), Professor McLean remarks with great percipience: "The reader is forced to change the focus of his eye: he no longer merely perceives the characters and the action through the glass of language, but finds himself admiring the patterns and colors of the glass itself." The style was the man in Leskov's case so implicitly and pervasively that it must necessarily pose a practically insurmountable problem for anyone who attempts to deal with the writer's

work via a non-Russian culture and for a non-Russian readership. Translation into English imposes a sea change on the original that can render it lifeless or even unrecognizable; the translation of passages with interpolated transliterations may elucidate but simultaneously fragments and clutters. To follow Professor McLean's metaphor, "the patterns and colors of the glass" of Leskov's style must tend to dissolve into invisibility when photographed into another language. This has meant that despite many brief and illuminating discursions into questions of style, the major concern for Professor McLean has been Leskov's storytelling. We are offered here, frequently in considerable detail, digests of the stories, plays, and novels linked to erudite discussion of their place and significance in the author's life and literary career. We are offered, in fact, the first study of Leskov in any language that can make a justifiable claim to be considered definitive. Our ignorance of Leskov can never again be advanced as a reason for ignoring him.

From the abundance of information in this study certain salient points emerge clearly. For example, the assertion, made more than once, that Leskov "always found it easier to maintain artistic control if his characters were separated from himself by clear-cut social boundaries." Or the statement, which could well serve as an epigraph to his work, that "all his life Leskov was a seeker after saints. . . ." He found his saints, of course, in the least likely of places, whether in the historical Artur Benni or the fictional Tuberozov, and each of them serves to epitomize in an individual way Leskov's vision of life as something resembling more closely a journey than the structural unity that one tends to associate with the mid-nineteenth-century novel. But the greatest of the saints whom Leskov sought and found after his fashion was the Tolstoy for whom he wrote many of his final didactic tales. This interesting collaboration, manifestly more valued by Leskov than by the adored master, shows how important didactic intentions had been for Leskov not only at the end of his career but at every stage in his development. Yet the ebullient style always broke out of the didactic shell and tended to dominate, so much so that Professor McLean has to admit, in his warmly appreciative analysis of the posthumous masterpiece "The Rabbit Warren," that "style may have come to outweigh the core." It never outweighed it entirely, that is for sure. There was always, no matter how camouflaged, the bitter residue of satire and tough-minded criticism of established authority that leads Professor McLean to award a final accolade: "Of all the great nineteenth-century Russian writers Leskov, perhaps together with Saltykov-Shchedrin, should be awarded the grand prize for censor-baiting."

In so substantial, affectionate, and devoted a study as this it is not surprising to find that on the whole the views of Leskov and Professor McLean coincide in their appraisal of some of the writer's most illustrious contemporaries. Dostoevsky, for instance, receives only a grudging deference; Tolstoy's presence is much more fulsomely apparent, though he is unfavorably compared with Leskov as one who was "a great rejector, a thrower-away." No reader with any appreciation of original opinion can fail to be delighted by Professor McLean's sturdily independent assessment of literary reputations. His trenchant manner always has a humorous edge. It is without quirks and devoid of prejudice. Generous in its treatment of its subject, this study is generous also in its acknowledgment of the work of others in the same field, particularly that of William Edgerton, and in its monumental contribution to our fuller understanding of Leskov it has the added and special attribute of bringing the man to life in all his crustiness and charm.

RICHARD FREEBORN
University of London