

remarks, however, is intended to dispute Mal'tsev's central thesis that most of the enduring literature of the post-Stalin period—for example, Pasternak's *Doctor Zhivago*, Solzhenitsyn's *The First Circle*, Voinovich's *The Life and Extraordinary Adventures of Private Ivan Chonkin*—has appeared in *samizdat* form.

The organizational problems confronting Mal'tsev as he undertook to encompass a vast body of writing were formidable, and it cannot be claimed that he has always coped successfully. He seems, for instance, to have had trouble deciding whether to adopt a chronological or typological approach to his material. His solution—an awkward one—is to proceed chronologically until the trial of Siniavskii and Daniel' and then to marshal a series of chapters with such headings as "Satire," "Memoirs," or "Poetry." On occasion Mal'tsev devotes a large number of pages to works (such as *Doctor Zhivago*) or authors (such as Andrei Platonov) which are presumably well known to his readers, while begrudging just a few lines to important newly emerged writers (such as Venedikt Erofeev), about whom little is known in the West.

In a work of this genre, bibliography is, of course, important. Unfortunately Mal'tsev has a tendency to discuss works which spark the reader's interest without providing references for them. It may be that many of these writings remain unpublished. In that case, Mal'tsev could at least have cited the appropriate document number in the Radio Liberty Samizdat Archive.

The biographical sketches of *samizdat* authors which appear at the end of the volume constitute one of the book's more attractive offerings. One only wishes that this section could have been more inclusive.

Despite various drawbacks, Mal'tsev's study is indispensable reading for anyone concerned with contemporary Russian literature. The comprehensiveness of the volume's coverage is impressive—Mal'tsev discourses on subjects ranging from Soviet "alcoholic prose" to *samizdat* science fiction—and the author is to be congratulated for managing to remain catholic in his approach, rising above the party strife which characterizes much of the literary criticism of the "third emigration." Mal'tsev's literary judgments are on the whole sensible and astute, except, as previously mentioned, his assessments of "official" Soviet literature. Like Mal'tsev, I would put Solzhenitsyn and Voinovich at the summit of contemporary Russian prose, though I would hesitate to join him in placing Maksimov in their company.

All of us in the trade owe a debt to Iurii Mal'tsev for having set out, pen in hand, into the largely uncharted wilderness of twenty years of *samizdat* writing.

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A SCHOOL FOR FOOLS. By *Sasha Sokolov*. Translated by *Carl R. Proffer*. Ann Arbor: Ardis, 1977. 288 pp. \$10.00, cloth. \$3.00, paper.

Sasha Sokolov, born in 1943, studied at the Military Institute of Foreign Languages, and later at the School of Journalism at Moscow State University. He worked for provincial newspapers and at a variety of other jobs, and left the Soviet Union in 1975. He has now published *A School for Fools*, a narrative consisting of five chapters, further subdivided into brief sections giving the reveries of several characters. The chief narrator is a former inmate of a school for retarded and disturbed children. The book's stream-of-consciousness technique reminds us somewhat of Virginia Woolf's works, Faulkner's *The Sound and the Fury* (the idiot Benjy's section), and many other Western works.

Long inner monologues, some by a narrator with a split personality and disturbed mind, run the risk of being confusing and boring, and I must confess that I found them to be so in a few stretches of this book. However, at other times, Sokolov succeeds in conveying fine nuances of emotions—for example, love mixed with jealousy for the teacher Veta (pp. 97–98), and sensitivity for nature, in the rhododendron passage (pp. 227–28).

The book eschews the epigonic-realistic narrative techniques which predominate, in quantity if not quality, in contemporary Soviet prose fiction as well as in Russian literature of dissent. This is a two hundred-page exercise in *ostranenie* (making strange); the streams of consciousness of reminiscing narrators must be read like poems. In Russian, Sokolov uses puns, and his language has a haunting, slightly askew, charming quality and rhythms which the translation, accurate as it is when checked sentence for sentence, nevertheless does not fully capture.

The absence of a clear plot makes room for a series of little sketches which remind us of some of Daniil Kharms's ministories, although Sokolov is less absurd, more lyrical. His antistories avoid logic, plot, climactic development, "finishedness." One of them concludes, after Kharms's fashion: "I think that's all. I've nothing more to tell about the sick girl from next door. No, it's not a long story. Not long at all even. Even the moths on the veranda seem bigger" (pp. 84–85).

The reader would be lacking in normal curiosity if he did not try to construct, from the images and lyrical invocations of this long prose poem, a skeleton of characters and plot. The book invites this kind of participatory coauthorship, eliciting jigsaw puzzle-solving pleasure as well as frustration. Also, the reader would be lacking in perspicuity if he did not ponder the broader implications of the central situation (a Soviet institution for the confinement of deviants) and of one phrase in particular: "I have chosen freedom, one of its forms, I am free to act as I wish." We may agree with one reviewer, however, who deplored Sokolov's sentimentality in treating madness as a "chosen form of freedom" and pointed out that, in reality as distinguished from literature, madness is a "terrible humiliation."

It would be patronizing to praise this book merely because its technique is very different from run-of-the-mill Soviet and dissenting writing. However, one can recommend this little book, especially to Samuel Beckett fans, for its pervasive mood of gentle tenderness, and for its occasional high plateaus with a few ridges of fine lyricism.

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DISCORDANT VOICES: THE NON-RUSSIAN SOVIET LITERATURES, 1953–1973. Edited by *George S. N. Luckyj*. Oakville, Ontario: Mosaic Press, 1975. viii, 149 pp. \$9.95, cloth. \$4.95, paper.

By something of a minor coincidence, this collection of essays by various hands, with an introduction, an essay on Ukrainian literature, and a conclusion, all written by the editor, George Luckyj, reached this reviewer along with Polish literary newspapers "celebrating" the "Days of (non-Russian) Soviet writers," held throughout Poland last October (*Życie literackie*, November 6, 1977). The "festivities," if they can properly be called that, began with the arrival of an unspecified number of non-Soviet writers, led by Georgii Markov, First Secretary of the Committee of Writers of the USSR, a Soviet Russian writer and Lenin Prize-winner, and author of the "epic" *Siberia*. The non-Russians recited poems in praise of Poland, some of which were published in translation in the October 9 issue of *Życie literackie*, and it was certainly an