

Reviews

Fair Land of Byelorussia: An Anthology of Modern Byelorussian Poetry. Translated by Walter May, with an Introduction by Maksim Tank. 'Progress Publishers', Moscow, 1976. 368 pages. Illustrations.

Walter May is an experienced translator, and some of his versions from Byelorussian poetry are familiar to English readers although *Fair Land of Byelorussia* is his first collection. Comparison with Vera Rich's *Like Water, Like Fire* (see *JBS*, II, 4 (1972), pp. 404-5) is inevitable, but there is not in fact nearly so much duplication as might have been expected. Of the two hundred and fifty or so poems in May's anthology only about three dozen are also in the earlier collection. The latter gives examples of the work of seven poets not represented in the present volume (Ciotka, Biadula, Dudar, Hienijuš, Pušča and Zvonak — plus the three nineteenth-century poets Bahrym, Łučyna and Bahuševič who fall outside its chronological scope). Many more are exclusive to May, and his selection of young contemporary poets is admirably broad. It is, however, tragic, though not surprising, that Harun and Svajak are again omitted, and perhaps also to be regretted that no examples are given of the many interesting poets of the twenties like Čarot, Hramyka, Žurba, Łužanin and Klačorny.

The work of both translators varies enormously in quality. May cannot approach Vera Rich at her best (in Bahdanovič, for example) and he seems careless by comparison: in *Ramans* (1912), for instance, despite his declared intention to keep 'close to the core of the original', he not only omits the epigraph from Sully Prudhomme but also fails to reproduce the repeated element in the first and last lines of each stanza, thus robbing Bahdanovič's poetry of two of its cardinal features: an international resonance and formal patterning. May is at his best in the more colloquial poems, but occasionally his consciously cavalier attitude to rhyme produces very awkward effects, as in the eleventh stanza of Kotas's '*Asadzī nazad!*' (where the fourth-line refrain is in any case mistranslated):

'I've a head on my shoulders:

A deputy I would make.

"You've no qualifications.

Take your place at the back!"'

Another clumsy refrain which fails to convey the poet's meaning is in Kupala's *Mužyk* (1905): 'Sure, I'm a peasant, a simple chap'. The same poet's *Za ūsio* (1926) starts infelicitously 'For all, my bread when hungry...' and such instances of awkwardness, though not so frequent as to spoil the collection altogether, are nonetheless not rare. More serious is the complete mistranslation of 'ūsio' in the second line of 'Jak Bazyl u pachodzie kanaŭ...' (1915) which he renders as 'When Vasily fell in war, as he died, / He remembered all his countryside'.

The transformation of Bazyl into its Russian form Vasily (Vassily in the Index) is symptomatic of the somewhat russified, and in any case chaotic, spelling throughout: Bahdanovič's next poem is entitled *Levonikha*, whilst one of his most distinguished successors is given the improbable name Władzimir Dubouka (incidentally, Bahdanovič is given as Bagdanovich by May, Bogdanovich by Tank); Pilip Piestrak on the other hand is, through an accentual misapprehension, subjected to 'jakańnie' as Pilip Pyastrak. Particularly inappropriate is the title of Janka Sipakou's poem of 1966, *Kastus Kalinowski's Noose*, but it would, perhaps, be surprising if there were no orthographical russification when in the fourth from last line of Edzi Ahniačvič's *Traktar 'Bielarus' ū Indyi* (1958) May expands the Indian children's cry on seeing the tractor 'Zirnicie!' into 'Look! From Russia!'

Apart from such distortions the anthology is marred by misprints, but its general appearance and presentation are undoubtedly attractive and clear, each poet being introduced by a photograph and brief bio-bibliographical note. Maksim Tank's intro-

duction paints a predictably romantic picture of Byelorussian life and culture, whilst the translator's afterword equally predictably, but less probably, alludes to the influence of Puškin, Lermontov and Gogol' on the work of Bahušević, Lučyna and Ciotka.

Thus, *Fair Land of Byelorussia* cannot be welcomed without reserva-

tions, but the great majority of the translations are workmanlike and the selection does extend into the early 1970s, whilst giving good coverage to those writers who came to prominence in the cultural revival of the sixties and in whose hands lies the not unpromising future of Byelorussian poetry.

Arnold McMillin

Kłyška, M. K. *Stoŭnik sinonimaŭ i blizkaznačnych sloŭ*. 'Vyšejsjaja škola', Minsk, 1976. 592 pages.

Mažejka, N. S., Suprun, A. Ja. *Častotny stoŭnik bielaruskaj movy. Mastackaja proza*. BDU, Minsk, 1976. 229 pages.

For too long lexicography was the Cinderella of Byelorussian linguistics. After the pioneering work of M. Bajkoŭ, M. and I. Harecki, M. Kašpiarovič, S. Niekrašević and others in the 1920s — and apart from the disastrous *Ruska-Bielaruskij stoŭnik* (ed. A. Aleksandrovič, 1937) which was notable chiefly for the absence from it of many common Byelorussian words and expressions, the lack of any grammatical categorisation and a tendency to simply transcribe Russian words into Byelorussian — a quarter of a century passed before the appearance in 1953 of the *Rusko-beloruskij slovar'* edited by Jakub Kolas, K. Krapiva and P. Hlebka. The reasons for this are not hard to find: the reaction of the Soviet authorities in the 1930s against the 'nacdemy' (who had been responsible for much of the work done in the 1920s) and their attempts to Russianise the Byelorussian language which extended into the early 1950s, together with the disruption caused by the Second World War (when a card index of some two million forms was destroyed), all combined to hinder the work of Byelorussian lexicologists and lexicographers.

Since the publication in 1962 of the *Bielarуска-ruski stoŭnik* (ed. K. Krapiva) there has been something of a resurgence of scholarly interest in Byelorussian lexis and the late 1960s and early 1970s have seen the appearance of a number of dictionaries, among them S. M. Grabchikov's *Rusko-beloruskij slovar' dlja srednej školy* (1st ed., 1965, 2nd ed., 1969) and *Belorusko-ruski slovar' dlja srednej školy* (1st ed., 1970, 2nd ed., 1975);

Tłumačalny stoŭnik bielaruskaj movy dla siaredniaj školy (ed. A. Ja. Bačaŭkoŭ, I. M. Hajdukievič and P. P. Šuba, 1st ed., 1966, 2nd ed., 1972); F. Jankoŭski's *Bielaruskaja fraziealohija* (1959); the 2nd and 3rd editions of M. P. Loban and M. R. Sudnik's *Aršahrafičny stoŭnik dla siaredniaj školy* (1966, 1971); Je. Miacielskaja and Ja. Kamaroŭski's *Stoŭnik bielaruskaj narodnaj fraziealohii* (1972); and A. M. Bardovič and L. M. Šakun's *Marfiemny stoŭnik bielaruskaj movy* (1975). It is noticeable that attention was initially focussed on bilingual dictionaries with Russian; only more recently have a number appeared which are concerned solely with Byelorussian. To these may be added the two under review here, both of which are the first of their kind. Kłyška's dictionary of synonyms is the first such dictionary to appear in Byelorussian (though some of the material was previously published in *Poŭymia*). It contains over 11,000 words, ranged in approximately 1900 semantic groups in alphabetical order of the semantic dominant in each group (no criteria for determining the dominant are given). It includes a limited amount of regional and archaic vocabulary. The illustrative material has been assembled from Byelorussian literature, folklore, journalism and scientific publications of the last 100 years, with quotations from some 150 authors. Among the linguistic sources for his dictionary the author lists many of the works referred to earlier in this review, including a number of the dictionaries compiled in the 1920s, both bilingual and dialectal, which were subsequently anathematised as

part of the campaign against the 'nacdemy'. Noticeable omissions from the list are Niekraševič and Bajkoŭ's *Bielaruska-rasijski sloŭnik* (1927) and *Rasijska-bielaruski sloŭnik* (1928).

Kłyška claims his inspiration for the dictionary from a sentence in Jakub Kołas' tale *Niedastupny* in which five different verbs (*žviarnuŭ, šusnuŭ, zabieh, zatamaŭ, pasučyŭ*) are used synonymously. He does not, however, appear to have regarded them as sufficiently synonymous to group them together — indeed three of the five (*šusnuć, zabiehcy* and *pasučyć*) do not figure in the dictionary at all!

More seriously, although it is undoubtedly far easier to criticise a dictionary for what it does or does not contain than to compile one, it does seem to this reviewer that *Stoŭnik sinonimaŭ i blizkaznačnych sloŭ* has one major defect: the almost total absence of explanation of shades of meaning or indications of semantic or contextual limitations on the use of any given synonym. A small amount of stylistic information is given, but generally explanations are kept to a minimum. Thus for example, under the entry *havaryć* are listed some 70 synonymous words and expressions, for only a handful of which is given any further definition. No doubt this reflects the author's statement that the dictionary is designed primarily as a practical tool for those with a good knowledge of Byelorussian. But tools can be dangerous if they are not used in accordance with the instructions, and if they come without any instructions at all or very few, the chances of misuse are greatly increased. Certainly the lack of explanation hinders the dictionary's stated secondary aim — to be a valuable aid to those who wish to study Byelorussian and '*avatodać jaje baŭačciem*'.

Another drawback is that in the illustrative quotations each synonym is faithfully allocated a single example, regardless of its currency in the language, with the result that archaic and regional forms receive equal prominence with more widely used synonyms; and although Kłyška's dictionary (unlike some comparable ones in other languages) includes prepositions and conjunctions, the fact that only one example is given for each 'meaning' limits the usefulness of their inclusion, especially in the case

of prepositions, which are notoriously difficult to categorise semantically.

Notwithstanding these criticisms, in the continuing absence of a major defining dictionary of Byelorussian *Stoŭnik sinonimaŭ i blizkaznačnych sloŭ* may be regarded as a useful contribution to Byelorussian lexicography which functions well on the level of a thesaurus. In this it is well served by an excellent 100-page index of cross-references.

Častotny stoŭnik bielaruskaj movy. Mastackaja proza is much more a dictionary for the specialist. It is the first of three projected volumes (the other two are to deal with journalistic and business texts), contains just under 22,000 words and is based on 290 extracts of approximately 1,000 words selected from Soviet Byelorussian literature mainly of the post-war period. Extracts were chosen from a wide variety of texts in preference to a small number of complete works in order to minimise the distorting effect of, say, a heavy concentration of military terminology in a war novel. If the reader is interested in knowing the provenance of the extracts, however, he will be disappointed — there is no list of the texts from which they were taken.

In the introduction (pp. 3-24) the authors explain the principles underlying the dictionary and there is some analysis of results. There are no surprises in the semantic fields which are best represented in the thousand most frequently used words (syntactic words, human relationships and occupations, daily life, natural phenomena, emotions etc.).

The main body of the dictionary (pp. 25-202) consists of a list of the 21,754 words encountered (excluding proper names and large numerals). Each word is recorded only in its base form i.e. for a noun the nominative singular, for an adjective the masculine nominative singular, for a verb the infinitive etc. The pronoun *ён* thus subsumes *яго, яму, яна, яны* etc. The words are ranged in descending order of frequency from *ён* (11,711 occurrences) down to *ячэйкавы*, the last of 9,915 words encountered only once. Those with a frequency of 15 or above (the first 2,037) are tabulated. Alongside the absolute frequency is given the number of extracts in which a given word was found and where

several words have equal frequency this determines their order e.g. можна (267 occurrences in 161 extracts) is placed above нешта (267 in 154). The pattern emerges of an inverse ratio between the most commonly encountered words expressed as a percentage of the total number of occurrences in the extracts and these same words expressed as a percentage of the lexical items in the dictionary: half the total number of occurrences is accounted for by the 150 most frequently registered words, two thirds by the first 500, three-quarters by the first 1,000. The twenty most frequently encountered words were, in descending order of frequency: ён і. у (ў), не, на, я, з, быць, а, што (as a conjunction), ты, гэты (гэта), як, увесць, да, за, той, які and але. Not surprisingly these are all words which predominantly convey grammatical information, serving as link-words without which the more concrete specifics of a text cannot be related in a meaningful way. Pronouns, prepositions and conjunc-

tions in fact dominate the upper reaches of the frequency count; in the first hundred words there are only 16 verbs, 14 nouns, 11 adverbs, 2 cardinal numerals and a single adjective. The highest placed verb (apart from быць) is сказаць (24th), the highest placed noun is рука (36th), while to find the first (non-pronominal) adjective one must go down to 77th place (стары).

An interesting fact to emerge from the dictionary is that the authors came across a considerable number of words not registered in the *Biela-russka-ruski sloŭnik* (1962) e.g. бэтонавы, бібула, буркатаць, дзятлік etc. This once again underlines the need for a definitive *tłumačalny sloŭnik* of Byelorussian comparable in scope to the Academy Dictionary of modern Russian.

On pp. 203-220 there is an alphabetical index of the thousand most frequently encountered words. The dictionary also contains, as an appendix (pp. 221-9), a mathematical commentary by V. V. Niešytoj.

Peter J. Mayo

McMillin, Arnold B. *A History of Byelorussian Literature / From its Origins to the Present Day*. Wilhelm Schmitz Verlag, Giessen, 1977. 447 pages. Bibliography. Index.

For Mickiewicz, as Professor McMillin records, Byelorussian was 'the most harmonious of all the Slavonic languages', while the country itself has endured misfortunes on a scale that is remarkable even in the Slav world. A language so pleasing and a destiny so harsh were almost bound to create between them a literature with its own pathos. After reading the history of that literature, never before treated seriously in a western account, with all the detailed investigation and apparatus of the book under review, one is impressed by the Byelorussian genius for maintaining their national identity, likened by the novelist Bryl to a 'stubborn plant forcing its way up between two paving stones', Poland and Russia. The nineteenth century saw in many parts of Europe a phenomenon similar to that which took place in Byelorussia, where a language spoken by the peasantry but with few written monuments came suddenly into its own, acquiring the force and authority of a national tongue. The great exemplar

for Byelorussian poets outside their own literature has been Ševčenko, whose reputation in Europe is perhaps comparable with that of Mistral. But whereas the movement led by Mistral in Provence was a deliberate cult, to save a language almost as gravely threatened as the Gaelic of Ireland, Ševčenko and the Byelorussian writers of his age and ours had not to revive but to emancipate and adorn their mother tongue. It is sufficient to read only a few lyrics by Bahdanovič or Kupała, or a passage here and there from Kołas' *Novaja ziamla*. After that experience, there can be no doubt in the reader's mind: these are the accents of a national poetry that can achieve only in such words and rhythms its particular tone. The true language of poetry springs from a given landscape and the immemorial ways of the men who have worked it. The leading poets of Byelorussia whom I have just mentioned could say with Pasternak: 'rodnym vojdu v rodnoj jazyk'.

A peculiarity of Byelorussian litera-

ture is that its full emergence should have been so long delayed. (The supremacy of prose did not come until the 1930s). Professor McMillin assigns 119 pages to what had preceded *Naša niva*, and individual figures — Skaryna, Dunin-Marcinkievič, and Bahušević — receive each his own chapter. But in this record of the centuries preceding ours the most he can sometimes attribute to an author is 'a modicum of interest'. There had been ample proof that the language was endowed with exceptional vigour but maturity arrived only with Bahdanovič and the period of *Naša niva* which is also that of the miscalled 'silver age' in Russian poetry. The range of Bahdanovič's acquaintance with foreign literatures makes him the equal in this respect, one may assume, of a Russian contemporary like Annenskij or Blok. The flowering of Byelorussian literature coincides then with a memorable epoch in Russian poetry and art, and also in Western poetry and art. Byelorussian writers were able to learn from Gorkij, Majakovskij, Blok and Esenin. The Soviet period has brought them exceptional difficulties since they are always under suspicion of bourgeois nationalism over and above all the heresies to which the living imagination is prone in Soviet Russia. Professor McMillin gives more than 200 pages to the literature Byelorussia has produced during the present century, poetic in feeling, nationally aware, and often not without psychological acuteness. There are separate chapters for Bahdanovič, Harun, Kupała, Kołas, Biadula and Čorny. His final note is one of strong optimism. Since the 'thaw' in the late 1950s he can report that 'developments have been rapid and, for the most part, extremely positive'. The 1930s 'had been calamitous in the Soviet Union, bringing personal disaster or imaginative paralysis to so many writers. But it would certainly seem that there is the closest of ties between Byelorussian literature and the Byelorussian people. Literature in the Slavonic world carries far more resonance than it does today in the west. For Byelorussia, we infer, nationhood is a reality as yet in its literature alone, whatever the political facts or fictions may seem to assert.

The verse quotations, which are

plentiful in Professor MacMillin's history, have been supplied mainly in the well-known English renderings by Vera Rich. Ideally I should have liked to see them in the Byelorussian original with an accurate prose translation that preserved so far as possible the order of words and phrases. Byelorussian is not too difficult for the practised reader of Russian to make out, and there would have been the added pleasure of recognising the familiar in a new guise, and of appreciating more fully the common genius in both languages. But although Vera Rich's determination to keep the form and rhyme scheme of the original not infrequently weakens her renderings as English poetry, she is highly skilled at retaining the sense with some closeness, and her versions are more acceptable than the majority made from Russian poetry today.

Professor McMillin's description of Byelorussian literature and its setting is as complete as anyone could wish, backed by most useful and ample bibliographies, and with excellent indices of authors and works. The experience of reading right through a history of literature — particularly when that literature is quite unfamiliar — will have its ups and downs. An unskilful history can become the merest directory and plodding guide book. What the historian of literature needs is a clear perspective and an engagement with the subject which may even verge on the partisan. Professor McMillin is not only erudite in the whole lore of Byelorussia and uncommonly at home in Byelorussian studies. He has acquired that feeling of vicarious patriotism which arises from a warm regard for the nation who, in the words of Kołas,

'ŭsim sercam i dušoju
Astacca choča sam saboju.'

The way is now clear for a series of good monographs which will place the leading writers of this talented people in a wider context, and relate the achievement of Byelorussian letters to that of Russian and Ukrainian in a time when literature in the Soviet Union has had such opportunities and such ordeals to face.

I have no doubt that the scholars and critics who turn to this task will appreciate the instrument they have

been given in Professor McMillin's responsible pages. It is not disparaging to regard the function of the literary historian as chiefly that of laying the groundwork. While the estimates that Professor McMillin has formed of individual poets and novelists (Byelorussian drama seems hardly as yet to have begun) are not likely to be overturned by subsequent critics, one has to recognise that the stage following a sound history of literature may be more fruitful in a way that only the history itself has made possible. We can now see in a clear glass the dimensions of Byelorussian literature; the problems have been stated, the successes proclaimed, and the difficulties brought to light. Byelorussian literature has always been compelled to choose between three paths, as Biadula understood — one leading to Warsaw, one to Moscow, one 'far off,

to the very sun.' The question to be asked, without prejudice and indeed with some confidence in the outcome, is how near 'the very sun' has this literature, still dominated it would seem by the Byelorussian village, actually been able to get. Has the still recent backwardness of Byelorussia, its tenacious roots in the rustic, proved after all to be a peculiar source of strength in this rootless century? It should be most interesting for our grandchildren to see what eventually grows out of the promise, so apparent both to Arnold McMillin and Vera Rich, in contemporary Byelorussian writing. The survival of this small people in their literature may have much to do with the survival of literature elsewhere as a significant part of human life.

Henry Gifford

Malecki, J. *Pad znakam Pahoni. Uspaminy*. Pahonia Publishers & Arts Club, Toronto, 1976. 198 pages.

Any book which attempts to describe the vast complexities of the national problems of eastern Europe immediately before and during the Second World War must inevitably bring the reviewer, particularly one born in England in the middle of the events described, face to face with his own ignorance. The problem is compounded when the author gives an eye-witness account of the situation as he experienced it. Dr Malecki has produced a necessary book, necessary because students of Byelorussia in the West have, to the best of my knowledge, no other book sources dealing with the situation from the Byelorussian national point of view. Vakar's (1956) and Lubachko's (1972) studies cannot, because of their wider scope, do more than scratch the surface of the subject. Standard histories of the eastern front, e.g. Clark (1965), Werth (1964) make little mention of the political complexities of Byelorussia, beyond recounting German atrocities and the activities of Soviet partisan groups. To judge from Dr Malecki's graphic description, the Byelorussians had to deal not only with these two hostile forces, but also with bands of marauding Lithuanians and Poles, both presumably seeking to establish supremacy in the Vilna region, and with Vlasov's Russian Liberation

Army, as well as all manner of *agents provocateurs*. That anyone could be found who was willing to attempt to establish the foundations of a Byelorussian state within the 'Weissruthenische Generalbezirk' at the same time as ensuring that life could continue as near normally as possible is amazing. That those who were found were able to achieve as much as they did in an impossible situation is little short of miraculous. That Malecki mentions no Byelorussians who tried to help the Jews is extremely regrettable.

Inevitably when the Germans came to realize that they had need of allies, it was too late. Even if they had been properly equipped, the 100,000 men called up to the colours of the *Biela-ruskaja Krajevaja Abarona* could have had little effect on the course of the war by the middle of 1944; on the other hand it must be recognised that the existence of the BKA, as well as the earlier *Samapomač* and *Sama-achova*, has been totally ignored by historians. Dr Malecki's book should also go a long way to countering the charge of collaboration with Nazi tyranny that has doubtlessly been, and will surely continue to be, levelled at Astroŭski and his associates. The situation in which they found themselves bears little comparison to that

of such obvious collaborators, as Mussert in the Netherlands and Quisling in Norway; moreover the temptation to make moral judgments at a safe distance, in both space and time, needs to be strongly resisted.

The *ad hominem* style of memoirs which gives such immediacy and interest to Dr Malecki's book may also serve to detract slightly from its importance as a historical source. The differences between various Byelorussian political groupings, clear though they may be in the author's mind, will probably escape a reader new to the subject. For example, Byelorussians in the West may understand why the paper *Bielaruski Holas* is described as a 'hazecina' and a 'paškvil na Bielarusau' (p. 116-7), but a non-Byelorussian will not, and may well not care to find out. The conversations quoted *verbatim* present another problem. Did Dr Malecki have an eye for posterity and write them down as they occurred or immediately afterwards, or has he used a modicum of author's license to add liveliness to his book? In his prefatory note he writes: 'Što apisaŭ u knižcy, taho ŭ bolšyni byŭ švietkam, toje sam pieražyŭ. Čaho-ž nia bačyŭ, toje zapisana ad viery hodnych ludziej.' This is of course a perfectly acceptable procedure, but are we always told where the author is recounting his own experience, and where he is relying on the evidence of 'viery hodnyja ludzi'?

Since the author's aim in writing the book is 'pieradać dla historyi

praŭdziva padziei na našaj bačkaŭščynie', we must hope that the appearance of *Pad znakam Pahoni* will encourage others to write of their experiences. Historians of the future will need memoirs like these, if they are ever to hope to assess the total impact of the Second World War; the success of Nicholas Bethell's *The Last Secret* shows that they are needed. Dr Malecki's book succeeds because the author is able to speak directly to the reader about the problems besetting his country without having an obvious axe to grind for one particular party viewpoint. It will surely open a hornet's nest of reactions, not only from Byelorussians of differing views, but also from enraged Poles and Lithuanians. This is all to the good, since the picture will become more and more complete.

It is to be hoped that *Pad znakam Pahoni* or, preferably, a collection of memoirs, will appear in suitably annotated form in English, for the benefit of the wider readership that it deserves.

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J. Dingley

Pol'skij, S. A. *Demografičeskije problemy razvitija Minska*. Izdatel'stvo BGU, Minsk, 1976. 152 pages. Tables, diagrams.

This interesting book focusses on various aspects of the demography of the capital of the Byelorussian SSR. Its author has already published other studies of Byelorussian demography, and this recent addition is welcome.

The central problem outlined is the research of migrational movement of the population of Minsk, and as the study expresses it: 'The problem of the management of urbanisation is one of the central questions under the conditions of a Socialist society' (p. 5). It may be added that urbanisation is also perceived as central to many problems in capitalist society too nowadays. The first section

(chapter I) of a bipartite division of the book is devoted to an examination of the economic aspects of growth of the city and the regulation of that growth. This problem can be graphically illustrated by the statement that with its current rates of population growth, Minsk at present occupies first place among Soviet cities with a population of 750,000 or more. In line with current Soviet urban planning ideas it is recognised that growth of the capital city occurs not only within the city limits, but in a regional context within the oblast' and the Republic. This is causing the creation of the Minsk agglomeration

(conurbation), which in turn is being formed by the amalgamation of the surrounding settlement network. Recognising that the development of large cities is a complex process, the author does not set out to design and evaluate methods for the regulation of city growth. However, the text does include candid documentation of some of the fundamental problems in Soviet city development of the 1970s.

Population figures relating to the difficult period of World War II show that the population total decreased from 270,400 in 1941 to 45,000 in 1944. If mean annual growth for the period prior to 1941 is extrapolated, a total of 307,000 — 310,000 could have been expected by mid-1944; thus the short-fall or demographic loss was of the order of 260,000. Since the end of hostilities Minsk has experienced a rapid rate of growth, particularly pronounced since 1970, and attained a total population of 1,147,000 in 1975. The increase of 585,500 between 1959 and 1974 consisted of the following components: migration — 379,400 (64.8%), natural increase — 178,600 (30.5%), and administrative changes to boundaries and status — 27,500 (4.7%). At the present time Minsk absorbs 60% of all the migrants moving from rural to urban settlements in the Byelorussian SSR; between 1965 and 1972 71.5% of all migrants moved from the Republic to the capital — there is no question that Minsk is the *primate city* of the Republic. Pol'skij describes this rapid growth as the 'Minsk phenomenon', observing that only six other cities in the World with a population of 750,000 or more recorded a faster rate of growth between 1959 and 1970. At the present time the population of the city is doubling in a period of thirteen years.

Massive urban development is accomplished within the framework of a General plan, although the plan's forecasts are sometimes exceeded. The 1965 General plan predicted a total population of one million by 1980, whereas in reality this figure was exceeded in 1973.

The reasons for this rapid growth are not difficult for the author to establish. Industries such as electronics, radio engineering and precision instruments create a demand for specialised labour which has migrated

to the city. Pol'skij introduces a useful term: *deglomeracija* (deglomeration) to denote the complex of economic and administrative measures designed to limit city growth. A criticism of the statistical analysis, however, which can also be made of other studies of Soviet cities, is that there are few figures relating to intraurban data. To what extent has the inward migration affected the pattern of population densities within the city centre and the suburbs? How has the city's retail service network been modified to meet the changing patterns of demand? How does the city's planning mechanism cope with an increasing influx of migrants? These must remain as questions at the present time.

The second part of the book (chapters II-V) examines the age-sex structure of the population, migrational movement to the city, natural changes in the population such as birth and death rates, and family life within the city. Of particular interest is the section on the scale of migration where the problem of passport registration is outlined. It is noted (pp. 91-92) that a proportion of the city's inhabitants may be resident within the city before they obtain their registration or 'propiska'. In 1973 some 15,000 people without registrations were included in the city's population by a special decision of the ispolkom of the city soviet. This is indicative of the intensive urbanisation processes continuing in Byelorussia at the present time. Pol'skij predicts that by 1990 the proportion of the rural population will be reduced to 34-35% of total population (the current level is 50-51%), thus in terms of absolute numbers there will be a reduction of one million people. In the last twenty years one million people have departed from rural localities to other economic regions. Combine this with the prediction for the next decade and a half and it is then possible to appreciate the scale of rural-urban migration occurring in Byelorussia in the 1970s. The exodus from countryside will continue to assume massive proportions.

Three factors are identified to account for this movement (p. 81): the demand for labour in non-agricultural spheres of production; secondly, the modernisation of agriculture, thus

reducing its labour requirements; thirdly, the psychological premises which pertain to the attractiveness of an urban lifestyle, and the negative attitude of rural youth towards some forms of agricultural labour. Fig. 4 (p. 89) shows the 'migration explosion' that has occurred in the 1960s and early 1970s, and it is therefore understandable why the city has had a strict passport regime in operation for more than ten years. It is interesting to note that among migrants of less than two years, habitation in Minsk in 1970, 31% gave personal reasons for their move to the capital.

A useful discussion on the problems of pensioners in society is included and the author notes that by the year 2000 a young person can be expected to change his or her profession three or four times during a lifetime, because of the rapid rate of technological development.

Tables of birth rates for the period 1945 to 1973 show that the number of live births has risen from 4,000 in 1945 to 19,000 in 1973, while the death rate coefficient of 15 per 1,000 in 1945 has decreased to 4.6 per 1,000 in 1973. There has been a significant reduction in the death rate of newborn infants from 22.2% in 1950 to 6.8% in 1973. Divorce, however, is on the increase with absolute numbers increasing from 200 in 1945 to 3,900 in 1973. Reasons for this are not difficult to find. Measures taken by the Soviet government in 1965 have made divorce easier, namely, no announcement in the press, and the right to decide

upon divorce at the first legal instance. The majority of divorces are in the 25-39 age group, and Pol'skij outlines some explanation of why young couples apply for divorce. They enter wedlock without suitable housing, professional or financial status, and problems can arise immediately if they lack a private dwelling; the birth of the first child can add to accommodation problems.

An interesting comment in the final chapter concerns the value of a child in an urban environment, where he or she is not economically active until 16 years of age. The author notes that in a rural environment young children can assist with the work of the rural community. This is recognition of the sharp contrasts that still exist between urban and rural life styles in modern Byelorussia.

An appendix contains a list of population totals and rates of growth of cities with populations of 750,000 or more in North America, Europe, Japan and Australia. Statistics relate to 1960 and 1970 or the nearest possible dates and are for conurbations/agglomerations rather than official city limits.

The publication of this book is a valuable contribution which assists in an understanding of the changing urban profiles of Minsk and Byelorussia. Despite certain shortcomings it is a useful source of statistical data and the author is to be applauded for his detailed study of the capital city.

John Sallnow

Rothe, H. (ed.). *Die älteste ostslawische Kunstdichtung 1575-1647*. Bausteine zur Geschichte der Literatur bei den Slawen, Band 7, 1-2 with Supplement. Wilhelm Schmitz Verlag, Giessen, 1976-7. xviii + vi + 533 + 48 pages. Indexes. Illustrations.

Professor Rothe's annotated anthology is an ambitious undertaking and one which will earn him the gratitude of many scholars with an interest in the early history of East Slavonic cultivated poetry. In taking all the verse of this formative period together he avoids the immense problems of classification besetting those who seek to trace the development of the individual literatures, leaving himself free to include verses in Church Slavonic, Latin and Greek as well as Middle Byelorussian, Ukrainian and

Russian; the editor's principles of selection, based mainly on geographical criteria, are explained in the very lucid Introduction.

Hitherto, of course, A. F. Koršunaŭ's *Chrestamatyja pa staraŭnajaŭ bielaruskaj literatury* (Minsk, 1959) has been the standard reference work for students specializing in this area of Byelorussian studies. The only major poem included in Koršunaŭ but omitted by Rothe is one that first appeared in *Voprosy i otvety pravoslavnomu s papiežnikom* (1603), reproduced in *Pamjatniki polemieskoj*

literatury, vol. 2, St Petersburg, 1882, col. 1: *Vieršy abo stichi do toho, što čital, kotorym krajehraniesije sicievo: Čhranisia Italijan*. Also in Koršunaŭ but not Rothe is the four-line dedicatory verse which appears at the beginning of Skaryna's preface to the Book of Job (1517). This, together with two other poems of 1519 (a paraphrase of the Ten Commandments in the preface to Exodus, and the short verse summarizing the contents of the Book of Esther which begins 'Nie kopaj pod druhom swoim jamy...') together with the apparently original verse prayer which follows the acathistus in the *Malaja podorožnaja knižica* of 1622, may be reasonably regarded as the beginning of Byelorussian poetry. Some scholars have even tried to trace its origins back to the many rhythmically articulated passages in the sermons and prayers of St Cyril of Turaŭ, but no less cogent arguments can be adduced for the adoption of 1575 as a starting date, and, similarly, 1647 seems a sensible cut-off year.

Rothe's omissions, if such they be, are insignificant beside the positive benefits to be derived from the viewing of this aspect of East Slavonic literature as a whole, and readers familiar principally with Koršunaŭ's anthology will find this new collection of 116 chronologically arranged items richly rewarding for the light it throws on the contemporary background to Byelorussian literary development. The spelling of poems is modernized in various ways (for example, nasal vowels are denasalized), but with rigid consistency. The poems are accompanied by only the most important background information: the source of the given text, references to other sources, with variants, and references to critical literature not falling within the second category. Indexes of names, places and contents add greatly to the anthology's usefulness as a work of reference. Professor Rothe states in the Introduction that he had intended to provide a comprehensive commentary but deferred this task when the 'Biblioteka poeta' volume of Russian syllabic poetry was announced (A. M. Pančenko (ed.), *Russkaja sillabičeskaja poezija XVII-XVIII v.v.*, Leningrad, 1970), realizing subsequently that a full commentary was still necessary.

He now hopes to provide one in a separate volume of the 'Bausteine' series. To judge by the care with which the anthology has been produced, the commentary will be a valuable and eagerly awaited tool.

Die älteste ostslawische Kunstdichtung is attractively presented, and amongst its welcome features is the provision of seventy-seven illustrations to accompany the poems, ranging from heraldic devices described in the armorial panegyrics to portraits (of writers and the noble subjects of 'epigrams' and laments) or to pictures of a few of the places associated with the poems such as, for example, the castles of Łuck and Ostrog. Of particular Byelorussian relevance are those depicting the Ahiński, Chadkievič and Vałovič coats of arms described in *Epikhramma na hierb Bohdana Ohinskaho* (Jeŭje, 1611), *Na starožitny klejnoty ich m. kniažat Okhinskich i ich m. panov Vołovičov* (Jeŭje, 1618) and *Na starožitny klejnot ich milostej panov Chodkievičov* (Jeŭje, 1616). Also of interest is the illustration of the arms of Leŭ Sapieha together with the original poem on them, *Epikhramma na hierb L. Sapiehi* (Viłna, 1617).

The Supplement (*Beiheft*) to the two main volumes is devoted to the well-known *Lament domu knjažat ostrozskich* of 1603, and comprises the text (which is also printed on pp. 118-24 of volume 1), a translation into German, commentary and facsimile. The commentary, though brief, is wide-ranging and augurs well for the projected commentary on the period as a whole.

Naturally, any such collection of early literary texts is bound to be incomplete, whatever its terms of reference. Lost works will continue to be re-discovered and published, in some cases causing a major reappraisal of conventional wisdom and judgments: one that seems likely to do this in the case of Byelorussian literature is the 1620 *Lament* on the death of Laoncij Karpovič when at last it is published in full. Professor Rothe's compilation is a remarkably comprehensive and scholarly piece of work. It is to be hoped that its price of DM 145 will not deter too many libraries from making a valuable addition to their Slavonic collections.

Arnold McMillin

Smykoŭskaja, V. I. *Tvorčaja koncepcyja pišmieńnika: Zaduma i jaje mastakaje uwasableńnie ŭ 'Paleškaj chronicy' I. Mieleža*. BDU, Minsk 1976. 112 pages.

The death of Ivan Mielež at the height of his powers on 9 August 1976 robbed Byelorussian literature of one of its most outstanding novelists. Born in 1921, he began writing while Stalin was still alive and displayed considerable narrative mastery in his otherwise rather conventional war novel *In the Direction of Minsk (Minski napramak, 1950-2)*, but it was not until 1960 when the first part of the so-called Palesian trilogy *People of the Marsh (Ludzi na balocie)* appeared that he unfolded the full range of his originality and epic skill, most notably in the areas of characterization, complex but convincing plot development and above all psychological perceptiveness. Set in the pre-collectivization period of the author's childhood, it was followed by the no less masterly *Breath of the Storm (Podych navalnicy, 1965)*, but for many years there was no sign of the expected third part. The relatively relaxed atmosphere ensuing from the 20th Party Congress had gradually dispersed, and Mielež — unlike Bryl and Šamiakin who also received a new lease of life in the Thaw — seemed unable to respond to the post-Khrushchev era; in 1976, however, *Polyμία* published the final part of trilogy *Snowstorms, December (Zaviei, śniežań)*, and Mielež's magnum opus was successfully completed, only months before his death.

V. I. Smykoŭskaja's short study has been unfortunate in its timing since its appearance coincided almost exactly with that of *Snowstorms, December*, thus preventing it from taking the latter into account. The author's aim has been to throw light on Mielež's 'creative laboratory' by comparing the three main variants of *People of the Marsh* and *Breath of the Storm*: the 'first draft', the text as published in *Polyμία* and the revised version which appeared in book form. When she concentrates on structural and stylistic comparisons based on her research into the novelist's 'personal archive' she can be interesting, but regrettably, a great part of the book is taken up with rather rambling generalizations which apparently owe nothing to the special material at her disposal. Though himself an acute commentator on contemporary literary

developments, Mielež has not so far been fortunate with his critics, too many of whom, including Smykoŭskaja, have indulged in *parti pris* statements introduced by expressions like *ahulnaviadoma* (the latter's universal adoption, incidentally, coinciding precisely with the dropping of compulsory references to Stalin).

The author attempts to place Mielež in a rudimentary context, showing his move towards the epic genre to have been characteristic of Soviet literature as a whole, and indicating his immediate predecessors (who were no more than general influences, for she is rightly at pains to emphasize Mielež's originality): Kołas in theme and Čorny in technique, with a nod in the direction of Šolochov. Smykoŭskaja very properly stresses the background to the writing of the first two parts of the trilogy, showing the change of conditions characteristic of the post-Stalin era, with new possibilities opening up before writers and a far greater premium set on originality and individuality; on the other hand, her conclusion from the increased role of the communist activists in the final ('book') version of her text is only that the novelist was broadening his work's philosophical basis.

Not many Western readers will be impressed by Smykoŭskaja's suggestion that Mielež's epic 'in present-day conditions of fierce ideological struggle with bourgeois tendencies towards the dehumanization of art and literature rings out as a call to unity on the part of the progressive forces of humanity in striving for the lofty ideals of Freedom, Equality and Brotherhood, in the struggle for Peace and the Happiness of all peoples'. Nor are they likely to find his work made more valuable by the remarks of the General Secretary of the CPSU at the 24th Party Congress with which this very uneven study ends.

The author has had access to some new material but has not made as much use of it as she might. Nonetheless, the subject is an interesting one and some readers may think it worthwhile to winnow the wheat from the chaff. We are still, however, a long way from anything like a definitive study of one of Byelorussia's greatest writers. *Arnold McMillin*