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L. I. Vol'pert. *PUŠKIN I PSIXOLOGIČESKAJA TRADICIJA VO FRANCUZSKOJ LITERATURE*. Tallin: Eest Raamat, 1980. 215 pp.

This comparative study of Puškin and French literature makes an important contribution to the area of scholarship indicated in its title. Vol'pert's central thesis is that Puškin's enthusiasm for the French literature popular in his day was closely linked with what she terms "игровое поведение" or "облитературенный быт": the acting out of literary situations in everyday life. Her theoretical approach is an outgrowth of several works by the cultural semiotician Ju. M. Lotman: for Lotman the notions "art" and "everyday life" represent sign systems occupying separate realms within a given culture. It is the hallmark of early nineteenth-century culture that "active influence is directed from the sphere of art to the region of extra-artistic reality. Life chooses art as an example and hastens to 'imitate' it" (*Stat'i po tipologii kul'tury. Materialy k kursu teorii literatury, vyp. 2*. Tartu, 1973, pp. 43-4). Widely popular among educated Russians, French literature provided an especially fertile source for such modeling. It is Vol'pert's claim that Puškin's own theatricalizations of French plays and novels carried into his subsequent writing, most notably into his prose. Through them, she asserts, Puškin mastered that literary tradition's subtler renderings of human psychology.

Working from the abundant evidence of a theatrical element found in Puškin's letters and in the diaries of his acquaintances, Vol'pert extends Lotman's conceptual framework by including an analysis of the reflection of this cultural phenomenon in Puškin's art. Thus the chain of interactions focussed on becomes that of literature — life — literature, or more specifically "roman — tvorčeskaja igra — roman" (p. 210). Herein lies the book's most rewarding innovation: Vol'pert avoids the usual pitfalls of often facile "influence" studies by providing us with one of the mechanisms by which influence was exerted.

The book consists of seven chapters and a conclusion. The first four of these center on specific French novels and their importance to Puškin. Chapter One analyzes Choderlos de Laclos's *Les liaisons dangereuses* (1782) as a model for the theatrical behavior of Puškin and his acquaintances during his Autumn, 1831 exile in Mixajlovskoe: With Trigorskoe as a "stage" the circle imitated the novel in life and letters (with Puškin as Valmont). This enactment ("progryvanie") then found reflection in Puškin's use of plot structure, character development, and style in *Roman v pis'max* and *Evgenij Onegin*. Chapter Two similarly treats Juliane von Krudener's *Valerie* (1803), on the margins of which Puškin made pointed references and quoted Byron, Rousseau, and Žukovskij to compose a love "letter" to Anna Kern. Here again Vol'pert argues that in doing so Puškin was assimilating the portraiture and language of the French psychological tradition. In the same light the third chapter considers the influence of Lovet de Couvray's *Les adventures du chevalier de Faublas*, particularly

on "Domik v Kolomne", and the fourth compares Benjamin Constant's *Adolphe* (1815) and *Evgenij Oegin*.

Vol'pert then shifts her strategy from focussing on individual works and their influence on Puškin to the larger theme of eighteenth-century comedy. She views Puškin's attraction to the genre as one closely linked to its many instances of masks, plays on identity, and intrigue based on disguise. On the French side Marivaux and Beaumarchais receive particular attention, while the author finds the French comic tradition to have exerted a strong influence on *Povesti Belkina*. Chapter six considers Beaumarchais as an influence on *Evgenij Oegin* and as a possible model for the image of Mozart in "Mocart i Sal'eri". The seventh and final chapter argues that Puškin's affinity to Stendhal was based on their mutual attention to the phenomenon of theatrical behavior (as exhibited by the letters of the former and the diaries of the latter) and on their shared impulse to carry the theme into art.

The most striking chapters of Vol'pert's book are those in which her central concept allows her to encompass varied aspects of the poet's life: behavior, letters, reading, and literature (as in the first chapter's analysis of Puškin's autumn visits to Trigorškoe and the second's analysis of the "letter" to Kern). These are all the more convincing for her attention to detail — such as when she distinguishes the theatrics of the Arzamas group from those of Puškin's personal life, or when she lends concrete support to her conceptual chain by tracing a given line from a French novel through Puškin's letters and into his works. Certain portions of the work, it must be mentioned, are more lax in their argumentation. In places the author provides interesting, but purely empirical parallels between works, and some segments of her argument come to rest on commonplaces: the influence of a particular French work on Puškin, for instance, is at times reduced to its "deepened psychologism". Such lapses are occasional and disappoint one mostly because they lose the sense of Puškin's uniqueness which emerges so well from the rest of Vol'pert's study. The author apparently did not have the works of Paul Debreczeny and William Mills Todd III (whose recent publications deal with her general theme of Puškin and French literature and her specific theme of Puškin and theatrical behavior, respectively) available to her at the time of writing. This is unfortunate; one can only surmise that it is due to the slowness with which Western scholarship reaches the Soviet Union.

Vol'pert's book is at once innovative and firmly based on traditional scholarship. The particular excellence of its opening chapters is undeniable, and as a whole it should prove valuable to Puškin scholars as well as to students of comparative literature and the semiotics of culture.

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