Reviews

Bas, I. *Litaraturaznaŭčyja eciudy*. 'Mastackaja litaratura', Minsk, 1977. 224 pages.

Isadar Bas is a well-known literary scholar whose interest in the remoter corners of Byelorussian nineteenth- and early twentieth-century culture and careful archival research link his name with those of Hienadź Kisialoŭ, Ściapan Aleksandrovič and Adam Maldzis. His first important work was a comparison of the various manuscript and printed versions of *Taras na Parnasie* (*Biełaruskaja litaratura*, III, 1971, pp. 213-33), followed by a valuable collection of essays offering new bibliographical archive material on Bahrym, Bahuševič, Kupała and Kołas together with fresh information about *Enieida navyvarat* and *Taras na Parnasie: Litaraturnyja poŭsuchi, znachodki, dašledavańni* (Minsk, 1969). Two years later *Padarožža ŭ litaraturnaje minulaŭje* was only partially connected with Byelorussia, concentrating on the 'brotherly links' between Russian, Ukrainian, Polish and Byelorussian literature and including a good deal of peripheral material on such varied Russian writers as, *inter al.*, Čaadajev, Gogol' and Černyševskij.

In many respects *Litaraturaznaŭčyja eciudy* resembles the last collection, and one is led to wonder whether the type of material suitable for Bas's archival research is in fact coming to an end, for the present essays are marked by their slightness, a tendency to waffle (for example, the description of the Central State Historical Archive in Leningrad and of the view from the reading-room windows) and the scant relevance of some of the items to literature of any kind whatsoever.

The first section, entitled 'Staronki žyćcia' (pp. 5-70), is the most interesting, presenting as it does some new archive material on the lives of Kupała, Łučyna and Paľujan; the latter is especially welcome, for this brilliant

and tragically short-lived poet is still too little known, despite the considerable number of poetic necrologues written by his contemporaries, most notably Bahdanovič and Kupała. The second section, 'Za ŭsio vysokaje, sumlennaje' (pp. 73-146), is devoted to Darafiej Bochan, a minor Russian poet of the Mahiloŭ region, Michaił Mysaŭski, the editor of a subversive newspaper, and Alaksandr Mikulčyk, the author of some unremarkable political verse. 'Archiunyja ściažynami' (pp. 147-98) is also concerned with some little-known figures from Byelorussia's past: Leŭ Šapialevič, a specialist in foreign literature; Kaetan Kasovič, the first Sanskrit scholar in the Russian Empire; two medical specialists, Siarhiej Čyr'jeŭ and Anton Čačot, whose inclusion in a collection of literary studies the author tries to justify by describing their activity as 'an interesting page in the history of Byelorusso-Russian and Byelorusso-Ukrainian cultural and scientific relations' (p. 181); and the composer and musicologist Michaił Ancaŭ who also wrote some humorous verse fables in Russian. The concluding section of this heterogeneous and somewhat slight collection is entitled 'Spadčyna' (pp. 199-221) and comprises examples of the (Russian) verses of D. Bochan, Ja. Okuń and others.

Bas is, as always, a methodical scholar and his work reflects some patient archival research, but if the book's title implies relevance to Byelorussian or any other major literature it is rather misleading, and at a time of alleged paper shortage when important works of creative writing and scholarship are being printed in lamentably small editions the justification for publishing such peripheral material must be in doubt.

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