And a decade in our times is a long period, involving many changes, linguistic (lexicographie) and otherwise. (I hope, of course, that this prediction will prove false, and that the last volume will be published well before 1980.) On the other hand, it is encouraging to learn that the gathering of the word stock will continue (p. vii) and that succeeding volumes will absorb the most recent lexical changes. 

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Mr. West's book is not an easy one, but neither is the subject which he has chosen to expound, namely, the Russian symbolist theory of art. Much is said, but little ever made, of this murky area in Russian literary criticism, for the task of introducing order into swirling chaos dismayed the symbolists themselves, let alone the mere literary critic. The reader should be forewarned that there is no reference to, or analysis of, any of the symbolist literary works. Nor will he encounter the biographical and historical data which make up the usual content of literary handbooks. The author has devoted himself exclusively to a painstaking, concentrated study of aesthetic theory alone.

The author sets about his unenviable task by defining his arena as the "representation of reality in art." Viacheslav Ivanov is to receive major attention because, according to Mr. West, he alone of all the symbolists achieved a "coherent aesthetic." The second reason for concentrating upon Ivanov appears to be an ironic, yet serious, assertion on the part of the author that "the stature which posterity accords him rests less on the importance and influence of the ideas he contributed to the forum of his day, than on the respect for his obscurity." (p. 49) The author, thankfully, goes on to qualify this somewhat unnerving statement by adding that his followers remembered him best for stimulating personal contact and for his obscure, idiosyncratically phrased ideas. In other words, it appears that while acting as broker for those macrocosmic ideas to be assimilated into the individual microcosms of such symbolists as Andrei Belyi, Aleksandr Blok and Georgiy Chulkov, he also maintained his philosophical aloofness and divinely serene devotion to the sphere of his own "symbolist realism." Indeed, in the hectic flux of symbolist theory and counter-theory, Ivanov must have seemed an awe-inspiring figure in his aesthetic tranquility, holding the keys to all the mysteries.

The book consists of four distinct sections and a conclusion. The first part, some forty-three pages entitled "The Nineteenth-Century Heritage," proposes to trace the specific relationship of art to reality in the aesthetic theories of six of Russia's leading literary theorists: Belinskii, Chernyshevskii, Apollon Grigor'ev, Lev Tolstoi, Aleksandr Skabichevskii, and Vladimir Solov'ev. Whether outwardly materialist, moralist, idealist, populist or socialist in their theories of art, Mr. West extracts in a few brief pages on each the same specific bias on the relationship of art to reality by way of preparation for the main body of the book on Viacheslav Ivanov and symbolist theory. This bias appears to be that art cannot be simply mimetic of nature, but that a balance must be struck between the author as subjective fashioner of the objective reality and
the autonomy of the objective reality in itself. Mr. West is the first to admit that in this particular section he is treading on thin ice, but he justifies this calculated risk for the preparation and elucidation it provides for dealing with Ivanov's theories and those of his fellow symbolists. As might be expected, Vladimir Solov'ev, everyone's most popular choice as father of Russian symbolism, emerges as the formative influence on the concerns of art and reality in the symbolist doctrine. What is unusual — and competently argued — is the fact that Mr. West sets out to show that Ivanov understood Solov'ev's ideas best of all the symbolists and expounded them together with his own variations to others of his generation, principally Blok, Belyi and Chulkov.

The second chapter, approximately fifty pages, is entitled "Viacheslav Ivanov's Philosophy of Art." In order to wet the feet of the neophyte in "Ivanovism," Mr. West chooses to paraphrase one of Ivanov's most important aesthetic treatises "Two Elements in Contemporary Symbolism" (first published in Золотое руно in April and May of 1908 and then republished in his collection of essays По звездам in 1909). Here the reader is introduced to what the author rightly considers the difficulties of Ivanov's theoretical terminology and the meanings of such ambiguous symbolist commonplaces as "reality," "symbol," "myth," "art," "religion" and so on. The three major dogmas that emerge from the article are that art is representational of the phenomenal world but also plays a revelatory role by disclosing the essential nature of things in the divine scheme; that art is a means of communication, because it aids in the revelation of the truth; that art possesses a cognitive power allowing us to perceive a "higher reality" with our aesthetic sense just as we perceive the phenomenal world with our normal senses. With these three principles under his symbolist belt, the reader is then treated to a detailed discussion of Ivanov's theory of symbolism under the three categories of "Art and the Theory of Knowledge," "Art and Communication" and "Art and Reality." By now it has become clear why the author chose to make a brief examination of the nineteenth-century critics, who were in fact dealing with precisely the same questions. Consequently, the theories of the Russian symbolists do not represent such a complete break with previous literary theory in Russia as had been supposed. This chapter ends with a foray into contrast and comparison with Ernst Cassirer, the neo-Kantian thinker best known for his monumental work The Philosophy of Symbolic Forms, in the hope of further elucidating Ivanov's thought.

The third section, "The Symbolist Debate," introduces the reader to a welter of opinion drawn from the other leading symbolist and modernist figures like Belyi, Briusov, Blok, Zinaida Gippius, Bal'mont, Sologub, Volynskii, Ellis, and others. This chapter opens in a manner similar to the preceding one, offering the reader a sampling of brief definitions of symbolism by some six or seven symbolists. The common denominator of all these appears to be a deep preoccupation with the existence of a transcendent realm beyond the external, phenomenal world. For ease of comparison, Mr. West continues the structure of the previous chapter, using the same three general categories of "Art and Life," "Art and Communication" and "Art and Reality." There follows an immense collation of symbolist source material and theoretic pronouncement. The author has indeed performed a worthy service in gathering, editing and organizing this material.

The conclusion, "Poetry and the Absolute," returns us to one of the author's earlier conclusions, namely the paramount influence of Solov'ev's ideas for the symbolist aesthetic and Ivanov's faithful reiteration of these. It also contains