making the prefaces and postscripts of Skaryna more readily available to those interested in the history of Byelorussian culture, even if only 1200 copies of this work were published. It is to be hoped that the appearance of this publication, of which it can be truly said in the words of Skaryna himself that it contains 'so many useful things in such a little book', may stimulate

further interest in the life and work of Skaryna.

The book is artistically produced and contains a great number of reproductions of the magnificent engravings (over 40) and ornaments in Skaryna's original editions, thus giving an idea of yet another facet of the activity of this truly remarkable man.

A. Nadson

Barysienka, V. V. et al. (eds) *Historyja bielaruskaj dakastryčnickaj litaratury* (The History of Byelorussian Literature in the pre-October Revolution Period). Vol. 2. 'Navuka i technika', Minsk, 1969. 620 pages. Chronicle of literary events. Index of names. Illustrations.

The second volume of the *History of Byelorussian Literature in the pre-October Revolution Period* (for a review of the first volume see *JBS*, II, 1, p. 110) encompasses the period from the beginning of the 19th century to the year 1917. Like the first volume, it is produced by a team of authors under the auspices of the Janka Kupała Institute of Literature in Minsk.

The book is divided into two parts. The first part deals with the 19th century, and the second with the early 20th century up to the year 1917. Both parts are written according to the same plan: a general account of the development of the literature, followed by special studies of the most prominent individual writers of the period. The 19th century writers singled out for study are V. Dunin-Marcinkievič (in a chapter written by V. P. Žuraŭloŭ), Francišak Bahuševič (by U. M. Kazbiaruk), Janka Łučyna (by A. A. Siemianovič) and Adam Hurynovič (by D. J. Halmakoŭ). The second part of the book contains special studies of the works of Ciotka (by D. J. Halmakoŭ), Janka Kupała (by M. R. Jaroš), Jakub Kołas (by Ju. S. Pšyrkoŭ), Maksim Bahdanovič (by M. M. Hrynčyk), Jadvihin Š. (by Ł. S. Hołubieva), Zmitrok Biadula (by V. A. Kavalenka), Ciška Hartny (by S. Ch. Aleksandrovič) and Maksim Harecki (by M. I. Mušynski). The subjects selected for special study are well chosen and represent the best in Byelorussian literature, and the studies themselves are competently written.

Modern Byelorussian literature has its origins in the 19th century, and developed in very difficult circumstances. The Polish and polonised

Byelorussian upper classes generally held everything Byelorussian in contempt, while for the Russian government Byelorussia was nothing more than the north-western province of their indivisible empire, and a backward province at that. The social and economic conditions of the peasants, who at that time constituted the overwhelming majority of the Byelorussian people, were little short of appalling. It is against this background that one must consider the birth and development of modern Byelorussian literature from the first attempts by Čačot or Rypinski, whose interest was more ethnographical than literary, to the conscious affirmation of the national identity in the works of the poet Francišak Bahuševič towards the end of the century. An excellent account of this development is found in the general introductory section to the first part of the book (pp. 7-90), written by A. Maldzis. The author clearly has a deep knowledge of the subject and illustrates his writing with an impressive number of well-documented, often little known, concrete facts and examples. In particular he gives short descriptions of the Byelorussian works of several authors other than those considered in special chapters. Some of these authors are better known for their works in the Polish language, but they, nevertheless, made an important contribution to the development of Byelorussian literature. Maldzis also tries to give a more balanced view of writers such as J. Barščeŭski and A. Rypinski, who until recently have been dismissed by official historians of literature as mere 'polonisers' and 'reactionaries',

without taking into account the times and circumstances in which these men lived and wrote.

The general account of the development of Byelorussian literature in the early 20th century (pp. 171-279) is written by four authors: V. V. Barysienka provides the introduction, M. I. Mušynski writes on poetry, Ł. S. Hołubieva on prose and A. M. Piatkievič on the theatre.

The early 20th century was a period of vigorous growth for Byelorussian literature. The number of writers whose work appeared in print at that period exceeded one hundred. Many of them, however, could be called writers only with certain reservations, as their known literary output did not go beyond one or two poems or short stories of no great merit. They are interesting only as representatives of the phenomenon known today as 'mass literature'. It was also at this time, however, that there appeared for the first time in print the names of Janka Kupała, Jakub Kołas, Maksim Bahdanovič, Maksim Harecki, Zmitrok Biadula, Aleś Harun and others, whose works have become classics.

The years 1906-1915 were a particularly fruitful period. It was in the course of these years that there appeared in Vilna a weekly newspaper, *Naša niva*, which became the focal point of the Byelorussian cultural and national revival. The importance of this paper in the history of the modern Byelorussian literature cannot be over emphasised. Suffice it to say that Janka Kupała (he became editor of *Naša niva* in 1914) and Jakub Kołas each published in it over 150 of their works for the first time. Among other significant events one could mention the establishment in 1906 in St Petersburg of the publishing association *Zahlanie sonca i ŭ naša akonca*, which during the subsequent eight years published several books by old and new Byelorussian authors (among them works by Kupała, Kołas, Biadula and Ciška Hartny), thus rendering the masterpieces of Byelorussian literature more accessible to the general reader. One might have expected that these and other similar features of the Byelorussian scene would be considered in some detail in the introduction by V. V. Barysienka.

Instead, however, the author makes only a passing mention of them, as though they were factors of little importance; at the same time he devotes two whole pages to describing the influence of Maksim Gor'kij on the development of Byelorussian literature. The fact that Gor'kij showed interest in the nascent Byelorussian literature, and spoke with appreciation of Kupała and Kołas, is all to the credit of this great Russian writer, who was ready to acknowledge genuine talents wherever he came across them. No doubt the Byelorussian writers were equally well acquainted with the works of Gor'kij, and among them he had his admirers. To talk, however, of any significant influence of Gor'kij on the development of Byelorussian literature in the early 20th century appears to be an attempt to extend his role as the father of 'socialist realism', assigned to him by present-day official Soviet literary historians, to a period far beyond that which the facts warrant. Any such suggestion should be dismissed as fanciful.

The sections on poetry and prose deal with general aspects of the development of these branches of literature (themes, form, style etc.), without considering in detail the works of any particular author. There is much to be said for this approach. It is perhaps the only sensible way to study 'mass literature' whereas the great writers are by no means disregarded, since their work is considered individually in subsequent special chapters. There was, however, a whole group of writers, such as A. Ziaziula, H. Leūčyk, A. Paułovič, Stary Ułas and others, who rose well above the level of 'mass literature' and left their individual imprint on the literature of their time (the works of some of them appeared in book form), albeit without reaching the prominence of a Biadula or a Harecki. It is these writers who suffer most in this type of general treatment. They usually appear in the book as little more than names, with a possible mention of one or two titles of their works, which, in the absence of further information, mean little or nothing to the reader. This is particularly true of the poets. Generally the section on poetry is

written in a somewhat arid and abstract manner, with far too few concrete examples being provided.

When writing about the search by the Byelorussian poets for new forms, the author of the section on poetry states that 'a particularly great role in this field was played by J. Kupała, M. Bahdanovič and A. Harun' (p. 221). One naturally becomes intrigued by the third poet mentioned in such distinguished company, and feels disappointed when, apart from the casual mention here and there of Harun's name, nothing further is said of him and no single concrete example is provided of his poetry. The truth is that Aleś Harun (pseud. of Alaksandar Prušynski, 1887-1920) was one of the most outstanding and original poets of his time, highly appreciated by no less a critic than Maksim Bahdanovič and by the first historians of Byelorussian literature, M. Harecki and Ja. Karski. His literary work is of such merit as to deserve a special study in a separate chapter. The fact that his political views were incompatible with those of the supporters of the present establishment in Byelorussia in no way affects his position as an outstanding poet.

The names of other writers, such as V. Łastoŭski and J. Losik, are completely omitted for reasons which, one feels, have nothing to do with literature. It is worth mentioning that Łastoŭski (using his usual pseudonym of Vlast) was the author of the *Short History of Byelorussia* which appeared in book form in 1910. It was the first work of its kind written by a Byelorussian in the Byelorussian language. Its appearance is mentioned in a

chronicle of literary and cultural events published at the end of the present book (p. 595), but the name of the author has for some reason been omitted.

The early 20th century also saw the beginnings of Byelorussian literary criticism. Writers such as Anton Navina (pseudonym of Anton Łuckievič), Maksim Bahdanovič, Siarhiej Pałujan, Alhierd Bulba, Lavon Hmyrak, through their critical articles, did much to further the development of Byelorussian literature. A short reference to their work would have further enhanced the value of the present study.

At the end of the book there is an interesting chronicle of cultural and literary events in Byelorussia during the period in question, and a most useful index of names. It is regrettable that the editors have not thought it worth while to include a good bibliography on the subject. The bibliographical references in the footnotes of the pages are, with a few exceptions, very inadequate and, of course, most inconvenient to use.

The present volume is the first serious attempt since the appearance of the works of Harecki and Karski some 50 years ago to produce a comprehensive history of Byelorussian literature during the 19th and early 20th centuries. As might be expected, the authors and editors had to overcome many difficulties and often to break new ground. Despite certain inevitable defects they have on the whole been successful in their task, and have produced a valuable work which augurs well for the future of literary scholarship in Byelorussia.

A. Nadson

Šott, I. M. *Fol'klor v tvorčestve Janki Kupały (dorevoljucionnyj period)*. 'Nauka', Moscow, 1968. 190 pages.

The Western reader of Soviet treatises on folklore is frequently reminded of the immense gap that exists between his own concept of this subject and that favoured in orthodox socialist circles. The author of the present work sees folklore as 'a poetic chronicle of the workers' dramatic struggle against the terrible forces of nature and social oppression' (p. 154) and it is this interpretation that provides the particular emphasis and direction of her monograph, both in

its approach to folklore as a whole, and also with regard to Kupała, a poet 'given wings by the "rebellious years" of preparation for and development of the first Russian revolution' (p. 4).

The book is divided, somewhat arbitrarily, into two main parts, with an introduction and a conclusion: 'Poemy Janki Kupały, osnovannyje na fol'klornych siužetach ("Bondarova", "Mogila l'va")', pp. 29-89; 'Fol'klornyje obrazy i motyvy v poe-