in conjunction with Adamovich's study, but Soviet readers will gain a decidedly one-sided picture of the poet and his times, particularly since *Vietrazi Adysieja* (328 pages; 2000 copies) is far more likely to be read than *Vieršy* (136 pages; 2000 copies),

long since unavailable. In the circumstances it may be felt that a scholarly edition of Žyłka's work would have been a more worthwhile project.

Arnold McMillin

Majsiejenka, A. F. *Tvorčasć Michasia Zareckaha: Stanaŭleńnie talentu. 'Vyšejšaja škola'*, Minsk, 1978. 152 pages. Bibliography.

Anatol Majsiejenka begins his long overdue study of Michaś Zarecki (pseudonym of Michaił Kasiankoŭ, 1901-41) by correctly noting that although he was one of the most talented of early Soviet Byelorussian prose writers he has for a long time been deliberately neglected, indeed 'erased from the history of literature' (p. 3). It is a pity that this frankness is not maintained throughout what is otherwise a serious attempt to revive interest in Zarecki, for the author fails to mention several of his significant works, thus presenting an incomplete picture of a most colourful and varied figure. For example, in the discussion of the sketches on collectivization of 1930, *Listy da znajomaha* and *Viasna 1930 hoda*, and of the rather dull novel *Viaźmo* (1932) which to some extent derived from them, Majsiejenka specifically contrasts Zarecki with those writers who depicted collectivization in terms of black and white (pp. 74-75), at the same time completely failing to mention his far more critical *Padarožža na novuju ziamlu* of 1929, a book which brought him accusations of 'deviationist' and 'kulak' tendencies, and was partly the cause of his expulsion from the Communist Party later that year.

The other reason for Zarecki's temporary disgrace (he was not arrested as an 'enemy of the people' until 1936) was a nationalistic novel somewhat in the spirit of Vaclaŭ Łastoŭski, *Kryvičy* (1929-31), of which only the first and last parts were published, although the important central section was quite well known in manuscript and deemed by the contemporary critic Orest Kanakocin 'the "highest achievement" of Byelorussian National Democracy in Literature' (see Anthony Adamovich, *Opposition to Sovietization in Belorussian Literature*

(1917-1957), Munich, 1958, p. 118). In his first, and in many ways best, major novel *Šciežki-darožki* (1927), a lively account of the Revolution and Civil War, Zarecki had consistently made his 'villains' more lifelike and interesting than their rather boring 'positive' Communist counterparts, often allowing them to utter anti-Soviet sentiments without contradiction or comment. In *Kryvičy*, however, the expression of nationalist feelings is much more direct, with Byelorussianization, for instance, dismissed as a 'sly trick' (see Adamovich, *op cit.*, p. 19). None of this emerges clearly from Majsiejenka who, whilst according *Kryvičy* 'significance', declines to discuss its literary merits on the grounds that it is unfinished, merely observing that to judge by the published parts it did not justify the attacks made on it by contemporary critics (p. 73). Even this, however, is an improvement on the previous practice of passing the novel over in complete silence or dismissing it, as does Aleś Adamovič (*Bietaruski roman*, Minsk, 1961, p. 142), as one of Zarecki's '*idejna-tvorčyja zryvy*'. *Kryvičy* is not included in the Bibliography of works by and about Zarecki (pp. 149-51) which, though welcome in itself, is in fact marred by several omissions in both categories. For instance, no works by Kavalenka are cited although he is mentioned in the Introduction as one of the scholars who have written about Zarecki recently.

Tvorčasć Michasia Zareckaha is a slight and imperfect book, published in an edition of only 800 copies, but it reflects a genuine attempt to redress some of the injustice which this novelist has suffered from critics and publishers in the past. A great deal remains to be done before all Byelorussia's major 20th-century writers

and poets are restored to their rightful place in the panoply of Byelorussian literature. In the meantime all

steps in that direction, however timid, are to be welcomed.

Arnold McMillin

Rjabcevič, V. N. *O čem rasskazyvajut monety*. 2nd ed. 'Narodnaja aśvieta', Minsk, 1977. 398 pp. Illustrations.

Fortunately numismatics is now firmly established as an indispensable auxiliary historical discipline. This book is an excellent example of how a study of coins, their production and circulation, and their changes in value can have direct bearing on our knowledge of the history of a country. Although written primarily for the layman, it nevertheless succeeds in providing invaluable information for the professional historian.

Rjabcevič's book serves to complement the various editions of I. G. Spasskij's *Russkaja monetnaja sistema*, in that, despite the necessarily common nature of the material in the early chapters of both books, the former concentrates primarily on the coinage of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania and, to a lesser extent, Poland. The book's most important chapters are precisely those (6-8, pp. 89-171) dealing with the currency in circulation in Byelorussia between the fourteenth and the end of the eighteenth centuries. The author draws his information from documents of the period and uses extensive quotation to illustrate his material. He makes a careful distinction between the coinage systems of the Grand Duchy and Poland; this is absolutely essential at a time when the Polish *grosz* was lighter in weight, and therefore in value, than its Lithuanian equivalent. He is also precise about identifying the occasions on which currency terms are used to signify a unit of account rather than an actual coin. It is for this reason, and for his tabulation of the exchange values of different types of coin within the currency system, that Rjabcevič's book will be of great benefit to the historian who needs answers to the many complex problems that arise in the course of an examination of the decline of the Polish-Lithuanian commonwealth. It

is obviously beyond the scope of this volume to go into detail on the economic reasons for this decline, but it is sufficiently well documented to be used as an introduction to a complex area of economic history.

The final section of the book, pp. 207-398, contains valuable photographs of coins and reproductions of heraldic devices. Unfortunately the quality of the photographs is not as good as that to be found in Spasskij's book or in D. Ja. Fedorov's indispensable catalogue *Monety Pribaltiki XIII-XVIII stoletij*, Tallin, 1966, but this is essentially a very minor drawback. A far more serious shortcoming is one that this book shares with most modern Soviet publications, even those that lay claim to being 'scholarly': complete lack of bibliography and index.

There is one really noteworthy error, undoubtedly caused by the author's excessive enthusiasm for Kiev's international trading connections in the thirteenth century. At the end of his account of a journey to the Mongol Khans (1245-1247), Friar John of Pian de Carpine gives a list of merchants he met in Kiev who can verify the truth of what he has written: 'Sunt et testes mercatores de Constantinopoli qui per Tartaros in Rusciam venerunt... nomina autem mercatorum illorum sunt haec: Michael Genuensis enim et Bartholomeus, Manuel Veneticus, Jacobus Reverius Acre, Nicholaus Pisanus.' Rjabcevič takes 'Acre' to mean that Reverius came from Accra in Ghana but unfortunately omits to identify his source. M. d'Avezac, in his edition of the text *Relation des mongols ou tartares*, Paris, 1838, makes a much more likely deduction: 'peut-être faut-il lire *Acrensis*, pour *Acconensis*'.

J. Dingley