

nating reading. Yarmolinsky, a scholar who has devoted many decades to the study of Dostoevsky, possesses an admirable mastery of his subject. If I am critical of his book, it is largely because of the "life and works" approach as such. In Yarmolinsky's treatment the biographic aspect prevails, and inevitably his attitude toward Dostoevsky the man spills over on Dostoevsky the artist. Dostoevsky was not an admirable human being, and Yarmolinsky's "familiar" treatment of him is perhaps preferable to Mochulsky's discreet tactfulness. But Dostoevsky was also a writer whose amazing imagination and virtuosic skill demand all the intense empathy, observant alertness, and painstaking ingenuity that a critic can muster. Perhaps Yarmolinsky has not quite enough respect for Dostoevsky's craftsmanship. He takes too lightly the many revealing observations made in recent decades concerning the structure, imagery, and style of Dostoevsky's novels. One misses references to the results of investigations by Maximilian Braun, Chirkov, Joseph Frank, Matlaw, Wasiolek, Zundelovich, and others. Bakhtin's seminal work, equally important for its polyphonic theory of Dostoevsky's novelistic technique and for its observations on the Dionysian ("carnival") element in Dostoevsky's works, has left almost no trace in Yarmolinsky's book.

Furthermore, now that we have R. L. Jackson's book on Dostoevsky's aesthetics, no comprehensive work about Dostoevsky can afford to by-pass his aesthetic theory, a subject to which he devoted much thought and on which he wrote a great deal. Finally, I feel that Yarmolinsky fails to give Dostoevsky the existential philosopher his proper due. After Shestov, Berdiaev, and Camus, this must be considered a sin of omission. However, Yarmolinsky is obviously so well informed and perceptive a scholar that he can afford to treat Dostoevsky with less awe and caution than most of us.

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ROMAN UND ROMANCHRONIK: STRUKTURUNTERSUCHUNGEN ZUR ERZÄHLKUNST NIKOLAJ LESKOV'S. By *Bodo Zelinsky*. Slavistische Forschungen, vol. 10. Cologne and Vienna: Böhlau Verlag, 1970. xii, 310 pp. DM 48.

This is a book on Leskov in which not a word is said about his original language, in which the word *skaz* does not occur, and in which not a single reference is made to his life, the circumstances under which his works were written, or their socio-political background. It applies modern theories, methods, and terminology of prose analysis to five of Leskov's major prose works: *No Way Out*, characterized as a "time novel," *The Islanders*, a "love novel," *Will-o'-the-Wisps*, a "development novel," and the two chronicle novels *Cathedral Folk* and *A Family in Decline*. The author's aim is to present Leskov's novels as autonomous works of art and to leave out all details about their genesis, psychological aspects, sociological background, and the author's life, because "all understanding of art begins with the individual work and not with insight into the historical context" (p. 3). He admirably adheres to this program, basing himself on a wide variety of scholarly literature on prose and the novel. The result is a highly original and at times revealing book on the artist Leskov which does not trench upon any of the existing Leskov studies.

Welcoming this extremely valuable work, we must also realize that it is one-

sided. A staunch adversary of *l'art pour l'art*, Leskov wanted to be soci(ologic)ally and politically understood. We would do him an injustice to eliminate these aspects completely. Instead of the usual biographical and sociopolitical details, which for Leskov are so abundant and full of interest, Zelinsky supplies us with formal and somewhat dry data that fit his preconceived pattern (all five works are discussed along the lines of their construction, the external and internal action, the narrative attitude or *Erzählhaltung*, the organization of the time element, the space element, and the character presentation). We read, for example: "In general it can be established that each chapter ending of *No Way Out* constitutes a rupture of a narrative phase. Accordingly, in the next chapter a new start is made. Only four times a scene that is under way is interrupted by a chapter boundary without a break. In another case, the scene remains the same, but the number of persons is diminished. In all other cases time, space, or persons of the action change at the beginning of a new chapter. The break may occur abruptly or less abruptly. . . . Characteristically, the chapters only rarely start out with a dialogue, because in that case the reader does not immediately know who the speaker is and what is going on" (p. 16), and so on. Do such communications contribute to our understanding or enjoyment of Leskov's works?

Noteworthy is Zelinsky's positive evaluation of *Will-o'-the-Wisps* (*Bluzhda-iushchie ogon'ki*, 1874–75). I would object, however, to equating the novel with the only other "development novels" in Russian literature according to his qualification (Tolstoy's *Childhood* trilogy, Korolenko's *History of My Contemporary*, and Gorky's *Childhood*), because these works are autobiographies or semiautobiographies. Although the author states that this is not an essential difference, he writes that "the essence of autobiography" is "that a narrating 'I' in the present seeks to understand *through memory* [my italics] events of the past"; and Leskov's novel is fiction without notable autobiographical traits.

Probably the richest and most interesting chapter is the one on *The Cathedral Folk*, which is of course Leskov's richest and most interesting novel. The author considers humor the basic structural element of the work (p. 171). He maintains that the contrast between good and evil, personified respectively by Tuberozov and Termosesov, is "leveled" (p. 204), although it seems clear that Tuberozov is a positive and Termosesov a negative character. He denies the "antinihilistic" line in the novel (pp. 197–98), and calls the figure of Prepotensky "not ideologic, but comic." In my opinion, this is exactly what Leskov was trying to do in *Soboriane*—make the ideological aspects comic. One should seriously question the author's remark that Termosesov is portrayed in a "mildly smiling" way (p. 205). As I pointed out some time ago (*California Slavic Studies*, vol. 2, 1963), the work was written in the midst of Leskov's antinihilistic period.

Leskov probably attained a truly universal level only in *The Cathedral Folk* and a few of his shorter works (and one regrets that the latter were completely left out of the author's discussion of such interesting aspects as the "I"-narration or the building of suspense). One wonders whether Leskov's other works are not given too much credit by putting his novels on the same plane with those of Turgenev, Dostoevsky, and Tolstoy, as the author does in his concluding statement (p. 295). But he certainly draws attention to several unsuspected qualities of Leskov's art.

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