

(several major poets were omitted and others deserve more space than they get), Gerbel's compilation was influential not only in Russia but also in Bulgaria and Serbia, where knowledge of German literature had not been widespread. Such contemporary works as the *Kratkaia literaturnaia entsiklopediia* and *Istoriia nemetskoï literatury* of the Academy of Sciences still take Gerbel's *Nemetskie poetry* into account.

This monograph is highly recommended to scholars of German-Russian comparative literature, who will especially appreciate the exhaustive research evidenced in its footnotes and bibliography.

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SELECTED LETTERS OF EVGENIJ BARATYNSKIJ. Edited by G. R. Barratt. The Hague and Paris: Mouton, 1973. 131 pp. 44 Dglds.

English translations of any but the most prominent Russian writers are in meager supply, and Professor Barratt's version of seventy-four letters by Evgenii Baratynsky is greatly to be welcomed on that score alone. This is a book, the editor tells us, both for those with specialized interests in the period dealt with (1814–44) and for those more generally interested in the poetry and literature of nineteenth-century Russia. The value of Baratynsky's correspondence as background reading for the age of Pushkin is considerable, since he was acquainted with many of the leading literary figures of his time, and in his letters to them the proportion of serious literary discussion to more mundane gossip is higher than one is entitled to expect.

Baratynsky was one of the least partisan observers of the world of letters in the period during which Russian literature finally acquired its national identity by transcending rather than resolving rival claims to cultural parentage, and some of his more sage observations provide a fascinating commentary on this process. He hints in January 1825 at the desirability of a "special, national romanticism." In December he finds the French romantics "pitiful" in their lack of an "elegant popular speech" such as Russian can provide. But in 1832 he voices, apropos of Pushkin's *Tsar' Saltan*, some canny reservations about the use of folk material in sophisticated poetry. In 1826 he comments wryly to Pushkin on the intrusion of German metaphysics into the Russian literary scene ("Muscovite youth is possessed by transcendental philosophy"), but by 1832 he can archly suggest to I. V. Kireevsky that the Russians adopted only as much of the new metaphysic as they needed to prove to themselves something they already felt—an interpretation of the Schellingian influence that is confirmed, but laboriously, by modern scholarship.

The notes with which Professor Barratt has equipped the letters are for the most part too technical for the "simply curious" reader at whom they are aimed, without satisfying the specialist, who will not be content with anything less than the standard Russian editions. They are sometimes unhelpfully pedantic, as when, having pointed out that Baratynsky's French was often misspelled, Barratt devotes a footnote to a trivial orthographic error that does not even generate ambiguity. Nor is it helpful to the layman to use the specialist's transliteration system, which will often give the uninitiated a totally false impression of Russian pronunciation, or to solemnly record in a footnote, without explaining its significance, the use in the Russian text of a diminutive whose pejorative force could easily have been

conveyed in translation. By and large, though, the translation is excellent and readable, and pays careful attention to Baratynsky's epistolary style.

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WOMEN IN TOLSTOY: THE IDEAL AND THE EROTIC. By *Ruth Crego Benson*. Urbana, Chicago, London: University of Illinois Press, 1973. xii, 141 pp. \$6.95.

Tolstoy early concluded that the chief enemy of his own and his heroes' moral aspirations was woman's nature, unless subdued by marriage and motherhood. Later in life he doubted even this solution. No one acquainted with Tolstoy can question the centrality of this theme to both his biography and his works. The special merits of Ruth Crego Benson's essay on the double image of woman in Tolstoy are its lucidity and singleness of aim. In view of the quantity of writing on Anna Karenina, if not Natasha Rostova, the author's statement that "most Tolstoyan critics have written chiefly about his heroes" may raise some question. Nonetheless, an intelligent, sharply focused treatment such as this one is welcome. Using journals, letters, and recollections to establish Tolstoy's mentality—indeed the traditional Christian one, rigorously applied—she studies its expression in Tolstoy's literary work by way of theme, character portrayal, and novelistic structure. Besides the two great novels, the author has chosen five works (*The Cossacks*, *Family Happiness*, the late *Kreutzer Sonata*, "The Devil," and "Father Sergius"), representing the "optimum of thematic relevance and artistic excellence." Interesting is the effort to rescue *Family Happiness* from certain influential, if obtuse, negative critical opinions. Yet the argument that male writers and critics are unlikely to regard "female experience as the legitimate substance of moving literature" suffers in the light of Chekhov's achievement. Nonetheless, the author's own critical analysis is lively and perspicacious.

There are small inaccuracies and oddities. Why are *Fathers and Sons* and *Asya*, not *On the Eve*, used as examples of Turgenev's attitudes toward the "woman question"? And, for all of his distaste for the lady, Tolstoy would have had not George Sand but her heroines dragged through the streets of Petersburg. As for the central subject matter, certainly further development could be given the theme. But need it? The author set out to make a point—energetically, incisively—and most readers will agree she has made it.

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OBLOMOV AND HIS CREATOR: THE LIFE AND ART OF IVAN GONCHAROV. By *Milton Ehre*. Studies of the Russian Institute, Columbia University. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1973. xi, 295 pp. \$14.50.

The main purpose of Milton Ehre's book, as defined in the preface, is "to reach beyond the standard clichés of Goncharov criticism to a contemporary reading of his art." The book succeeds splendidly in doing precisely this. It is an outstanding work, certainly one of the best American studies on Russian literature. In cliché-ridden Russian criticism, only Gogol may have fared worse than Goncharov, who did not even benefit from the Symbolist and Formalist respite. André Mazon's and Evgenii Liatsky's books had merit, but they are now obsolete in most respects. More recently, "contemporary readings" of Goncharov's masterpiece have