

of love and gambling, have always made it popular with the reader. Yet the work is deserving of more scholarly attention than it has received, with respect to its rich problem content, its relation to *Notes from the Underground* and *Crime and Punishment*, and its place in the European literary tradition (for example, its relation to Prévost's *Manon Lescaut*).

In his introduction Wasiolek provides a psychologically perceptive and judicious analysis of Dostoevsky's relationship with Apollinaria Suslova. The last part of the introduction deals with the themes of *The Gambler* itself—a concise, though in our view too brief, account of the novel's problem content. It is here that Wasiolek writes of Dostoevsky's belief—reflected in *The Gambler*—that the “deepest urge in human beings is the revolt against definition and the fixities of life.”

Victor Terras's translations are superior. His translation of *The Gambler* has the important and by no means insignificant virtue of accuracy; the English employed is simple, colloquial. Above all, it captures very well the briskly nervous and abrupt style of the narrator. The reader is never in the mind and world of the translator—only in Dostoevsky's world. And that is the way it should be.

All in all, the Wasiolek-Terras book is an important contribution to the study of Dostoevsky.

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DOSTOEVSKY AND DICKENS: A STUDY OF LITERARY INFLUENCE.

By *N. M. Lary*. London and Boston: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1973. xvii, 172 pp. \$9.75.

Certain subjects seem to offer themselves up for comparative study, like docile and attentive students, ready to be shaped by an aggressive tutor: Byron and Pushkin, Shakespeare and anybody, and, particularly, Dickens and Dostoevsky. Everyone mentions them, courses are taught on them, articles have been written about them, a recent Soviet volume, *Dickens in Russia*, devotes a chapter to them, and now we have an entire book on them. Though Mr. Lary conscientiously explores every conceivable union of figure and incident, and presents them to his reader with engaging modesty, a problem lies within the comparison itself: after the inevitable associations of Little Nell and Nellie (*The Old Curiosity Shop* and *The Insulted and the Injured*), Steerforth and Stavrogin, and perhaps the Micawbers and the Marmeladovs, all the rest is conjecture. The two authors begin to resist alignment, not because new pairings do not suggest themselves, but because the basic clay from which each molds his art is so very different. Dickens offers rich, often dark comedy, a multiplicity of characters and an endlessly imaginative world, curiously revealing of our own, yet arising from a unique and subjective vision (an art far more like Gogol's than Dostoevsky's). Dostoevsky commits himself to an intense and narrow focus, to moments which best permit unexpected irony and moral ambivalence, to a world built of scandal and paradox, measured against a clearly conceived religious outlook, which itself must be subjected to self-mockery. For all their immediate appeal, Dickens and Dostoevsky fail to live up to their mutual promise. Those docile students, so ready to serve their master, suddenly grow recalcitrant; without argument or bile, indifferent to the other's departure, each goes his separate way.

What troubles me even more is that “Dostoevsky and Dickens” disguises the true nature of this book, for Dickens simply drops from view for many pages while

Lary turns his full attention to Dostoevsky. Unfortunately it is here that Lary is weakest, and his book most deserving of criticism. Though he clearly possesses the talent to offer an intelligent reading of Dostoevsky, his work on that author is often undeveloped and arbitrary. I find particularly unconvincing his allegorical interpretation of *The Idiot*, his attempts to define the Verkhovenskys in *The Possessed*, his rather summary dismissal of Alyosha and Zossima in *The Brothers Karamazov*. A pity, for Lary frequently has a point to make, both suggestive and controversial. I await then, with curiosity and high expectation, the book he clearly wants to write—and can write—on Dostoevsky.

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NIHILISMUS UND NIHILISTEN: UNTERSUCHUNGEN ZUR TYPISIERUNG IM RUSSISCHEN ROMAN DER ZWEITEN HÄLFTE DES NEUNZEHNTEN JAHRHUNDERTS. By *Wolf-Heinrich Schmidt*. Forum Slavicum, vol. 38. Munich: Wilhelm Fink Verlag, 1974. 233 pp. DM 48, paper.

In this book the author is primarily interested in tracing the origin, evolution, and complexities of the concept of nihilism in the Russian novels of the 1860s and early 1870s, but he also has many intelligent things to say about the novels themselves. In his first chapter he elucidates the many usages of the term, emphasizing "negation as enlightenment." In his second he deals critically but not unsympathetically with György Lukács's quite individual Marxist treatment of the subject. In his third, three quarters of the book, he discusses Turgenev's *Fathers and Sons* and *Virgin Soil*, Goncharov's *Precipice*, and Pisemsky's *Troubled Sea* and *In the Whirlpool*. There follows a thoughtful conclusion and a rich bibliography of Russian and foreign works. Among English-language works he has been most stimulated by Charles Moser's writings on Russian antinihilist literature of the period.

The author's main thesis is that any simple hypothesis about the nature of nihilism and the nihilists tends to become complicated and at least somewhat diffused by "experience," the complexities of real life, and real nihilists. In his most notable example, he finds the first half of *Fathers and Sons* to be a masterful exposition of Bazarov as a type of all things characteristically nihilist (his origins, planned career, manners, views on science, literature, and presumably politics), and then he explores the second half as Turgenev's wise recognition that even the most formidable nihilist machine could be derailed by chance encounters, personal idiosyncrasies, the suppressed "Romantic" side of Bazarov's nature, and of course by death.

The thesis seems sound, but not dramatically new, and the book as a whole is soberly worked out, though it will probably not make any great splash. Anyone who can't stand the German tradition of dealing with subjects through abstract categorizations will find this book heavy going, but the more kindly disposed will think this a fine example of how a German scholar can use abstract thought to shed a great deal of light on a great many particulars.

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