

there is facile and superficial speculation on Dostoevsky's personality; unfortunately, psychological analysis is probably the weakest weapon in Mr. Frank's impressive arsenal. There is also a lack of focus: in the perceptive treatment of Dostoevsky's mother, the reconstruction of her character and Dostoevsky's attitudes toward her are not carried as far as Dostoevsky's reaction to her death (the date of which is not even given). An extensive and unusually kindly view of Dostoevsky's father is perhaps ultimately directed more to a consideration of Dostoevsky's disease, which is given in an appendix (the interesting *TLS* piece, "Freud's Case-History of Dostoevsky"). But all these sketches seem of interest in their own light, rather than as part of a larger picture of Dostoevsky's development.

The essence of the book is the treatment of Dostoevsky's work. Cultural and psychological analyses are balanced with structural considerations. Questions of narrative and other techniques that place the work in proper perspective and offer numerous felicitous insights, as in the consideration of *Netochka Nezvanovna*, are seen in a broad context of European letters, in new configurations that ring true. Linguistic and formal analysis and the vital question of narrative tone is less germane to Mr. Frank's interpretative approach.

Much of the material has been treated in far greater detail in dozens of books known to specialists, and in one sense this book suffers from an extraordinary attempt to bring vast materials and concepts together cogently. So much is broached so well that there is some fragmentation: the whole seems less than the sum of its parts. It is partly a question of conceptualizing the whole task. In some ways this is not a book about the early Dostoevsky so much as about Dostoevsky up to his arrest, that is, the approach is linear and chronological rather than (one is tempted to say) spatial. Dostoevsky's incarceration and trial, and the mock execution and departure for Siberia will presumably appear in the next volume, but that leaves this volume open-ended, undramatic, and unfocused. In terms of the title—which remains puzzling—what seeds? what revolt?

The translations are generally rather stilted and stodgy, and occasionally quite wrong: "God be with them" for *bog s nimi* (p. 74), "moist earth" for the formulaic *v seroi zemle* (p. 90), "we carried him in our arms through the streets" (p. 159), "newest French thought" (p. 122). There are also a number of simple errors despite Mr. Frank's great erudition: Schiller's play is not *Luise Millerin* (p. 105), Stavrogin might better be said to transform Pechorin than Onegin (p. 65), Grigorovich's *The Village* is certainly not a novel and less certainly not major (p. 201). The book is far too important to be flawed by such lapses. Hopefully they will be eliminated in the following volumes which are eagerly awaited.

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SDACHA I GIBEL' SOVETSKOGO INTELLIGENTA: IURII OLESHA. By  
*A. Belinkov*. Madrid and Monterey, Calif.: N. Belinkova, 1976. 686 pp. (Available from N. Belinkova, 141 Via Gayuba, Monterey, California 93940.)

In the early 1960s a colleague called to my attention a study of Iurii Tynianov, the Formalist literary theoretician and author of prose works set in early nineteenth-century Russia. Although the name of the monograph's author, Arkadii Belinkov, was unfamiliar, I felt an instinctive sensation of discovery. Here was a book of literary criticism which afforded its author an opportunity to comment ostensibly on Russia under the despotic rule of Paul I, while in reality denouncing the infinitely more oppressive tyrants of Soviet Russia.

Several years later Arkadii Belinkov explained to me that his book on Tynianov was conceived as a case study of a literary intellectual honestly loyal to the Soviet regime. There were to be two others, a study of Solzhenitsyn, an open foe of the system, and one of Olesha, a non-Communist ready to make whatever concession the Communist rulers demanded. The Solzhenitsyn book will never be written. His health ruined by prolonged confinement in Soviet camps, Belinkov died in America only two years after his escape from the USSR. The study of Olesha, however, was written some years earlier and the manuscript was smuggled out of the USSR. After a delay of several years it has now appeared in the West in the original Russian, thanks to the heroic efforts of Arkadii Belinkov's widow Natalia.

*Iurii Olesha* is not, strictly speaking, a book about *Envy* and its author's other writings, nor is it a systematic biography of Olesha. Rather, it is a portrait of *un enfant de son siècle*, with most of the attention devoted to the depressing background of Stalin's Russia. As Belinkov put it: "I wrote a book about [Olesha], a wretched human being (as were all men of his social milieu and generation), and not a very good writer (as were all writers of his social milieu and generation). I did it because I believe that the task of a historian of literature is not the analysis of artistic devices and imaginative works, but the study of causes that condition the appearance and the character of a work of art. And these depend strictly on the relationship between the artist and society" (p. 457).

*Iurii Olesha* is, above all, an impassioned tract about the tragic and pitiful fate of a man whom Belinkov considers a typical Soviet intellectual. Conventional accounts of his life maintain that sometime in the 1930s Olesha grew silent and did not write or publish until after Stalin's death and shortly before his own in 1960. Not so, Belinkov demonstrates. Olesha never stopped writing. Quite to the contrary. It is simply that the author of *Envy*, "stepping on the throat of his own song," dutifully produced ever larger quantities of obsequious political drivel. In contrast to such courageous authors as Bulgakov and Akhmatova, Olesha surrendered to the "social command," and in the process he also destroyed himself both as an artist and as a human being. Belinkov's book, conceived in pain and in anger and surreptitiously written in the USSR, bristles with sarcasm and defiance. Its countless digressions, multitudes of secondary subjects, and bewildering array of references (ranging from Freud to chess manuals and from the Bible to matchbook labels) occasionally disorient the reader. Yet, in the final analysis, what emerges is a massive study of a totalitarian regime brutally crushing anything it cannot fully control. In the short story "The Cherry Pit," Olesha's protagonist expresses the hope that utilitarian society in its wisdom would allow art a minimum of autonomy. Belinkov's thesis is that beasts and bulldozers cannot be swayed to moderation.

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VALERY BRIUSOV AND THE RISE OF RUSSIAN SYMBOLISM. By  
*Martin P. Rice*. Ann Arbor: Ardis, 1975. iv, 155 pp. \$2.95.

Martin Rice's book is a welcome addition to the literature on Briusov. It is neither a biography nor a critical evaluation, but, as its title suggests, an appraisal of Briusov's role as a literary organizer and editor who mobilized the various forces that loosely constituted the Symbolist movement in Russia. Focusing on a single figure is a very defensible and perhaps the only way to present with any clarity the growth of such a complex, controversial, and untidy movement; thus the more general aim of the book should certainly be taken seriously. Overall the work is well organized and well re-