

The fasts maintained by the Armenians were among the most rigorous of any nation in the world. The courage of the patriarch and his fellow Greeks was shown by their opposition to mixed marriages with Turks. In short, Ricaut's account is a significant document about an era that has influenced immeasurably the shaping of these churches today.

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IVAN GONCHAROV. By *Alexandra Lyngstad* and *Sverre Lyngstad*. Twayne's World Authors Series, no. 200. New York: Twayne Publishers, 1971. 184 pp.

Though presented as a survey of Goncharov's major fiction (the nonfiction and writings after *The Precipice* are excluded from consideration), this book offers many original insights and interpretations. The Lyngstads' scholarship is thorough; their literary judgments are often sound; the style is readable. It is also discursive, perhaps because of the survey genre in which it is written. The Lyngstads rush quickly from topic to topic and sometimes loosen their grip on the realities of the texts. They especially stray when they indulge a penchant for far-ranging analogies, some of which are suggestive and others wrong-headed. Ilia Oblomov is hardly a Byronic hero, much less "Baudelairean"! It clarifies little to see in Peter Adujev of *A Common Story* "an ironic reflection of Hegelianism," especially when Hegel is muddled in the process (as is Freud later on). A number of unresolved problems and contradictions have been left in the wake. The Lyngstads' unconventional argument that *Oblomov* transcends realism through its "poetic" manner and symbolic nuances is persuasive, but can a cause of the success of *Oblomov* simultaneously be a cause for the failure of *The Precipice* (whose lyricism the Lyngstads otherwise overstate)? Can Goncharov be "mediocre at presenting states of mind" and yet "one of the most important" nineteenth-century writers to anticipate the stream-of-consciousness novel? If Oblomov is only the "weak conformist" the Lyngstads describe, then what is the source of his tremendous appeal for generations of readers including the Lyngstads? They are surely right that the sense of life Oblomov conveys in his failure at life is the central paradox of Goncharov's art, but literary paradoxes, unlike contradictions, are ways of illuminating the complexities of the human condition that must be traced with rigor and system if they are to divulge their mysteries. This the Lyngstads have not always done. To their credit, though, they have touched upon the major issues of Goncharov's fiction, and their book deserves to be read.

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A. K. TOLSTOY: RUSSIAN HUMORIST. By *Thomas Edwin Berry*. Bethany, W. Va.: Bethany College Press, 1971. vii, 79 pp. \$4.50.

A. K. TOLSTOY. By *Margaret Dalton*. Twayne's World Authors Series, no. 168. New York: Twayne Publishers, 1972. 181 pp.

Two books on A. K. Tolstoy in the same year may seem a surfeit. But though everything Tolstoy wrote bears the unmistakable stamp of being second-rate, it must be added that his creation shows a remarkable imagination, intelligence, and