

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 Aduiev 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

variety. As much, perhaps, as any other writer, A. K. Tolstoy helped to give nineteenth-century Russia what she lacked and so badly needed, a *literature*, that is, a respectable corpus of belles-lettres of notable solidity, breadth, and technical skill. He achieved distinction in genres which few if any of his contemporaries practiced: historical drama, historical fiction, tales of the supernatural, humor, and satire. And at the same time he wrote an astonishing body of lyric poetry of high quality which has served, more often perhaps than that of any other Russian poet, as a source of texts to be set to music. So broad is the scope of his work that one is astonished to discover that his complete works, published in the Moscow edition of 1964, fit into a mere four volumes.

Of Mr. Berry's study the less said the better, perhaps. The subtitle has little implication for the book: Tolstoy the humorist is treated along with a *mélange* of other topics of rather disparate character, and it is hard to say what the whole adds up to. The analysis is very superficial, but Berry does translate a number of Tolstoy's poems into English verse, to which he gives rhymes if not a very regular rhythm.

Margaret Dalton's study, on the other hand, is a comprehensive treatment of Tolstoy's life and all his major works; even a considerable amount of lyric poetry has been included. One might wish that every second-rate Russian writer were as well served in English. The treatment is intelligent if not always inspired: the author notes correctly, for example, that the novel *Prince Sercbriannyi* served Tolstoy as a "practice run" for the later dramatic trilogy, and that the failure of the novel is in large part due to weak characterization and the mixture of styles ("Old" Russian, folk speech, and *prostorechie*), which cannot harmonize. Some of the analyses do not go far beyond plot summation, but the chapter on the dramatic trilogy is admirable as criticism.

Neither study deals adequately with the work of "Kozma Prutkov," the collective pseudonym which Tolstoy shared with his cousins, the brothers Zhemchuzhnikov. But this is understandable, since the work of Kozma is probably better dealt with in a separate study. Still, it is a pity that neither writer mentions Kozma's brilliant satire "Project for the Introduction of Uniformity of Thought in Russia." Another lacuna is the lack of adequate discussion of Tolstoy's "art-for-art's-sakism." Both authors are aware of the slogans Tolstoy employed, but neither shows much awareness of the contradictions and questions which those slogans raise. In general we need more study of the so-called Russian aestheticist critics of the mid-nineteenth century.

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POUGNY (IWAN PUNI): CATALOGUE DE L'OEUVRE. Vol. 1: LES ANNÉES D'AVANT-GARDE, RUSSIE-BERLIN, 1910-1923. By Herman Berninger and Jean-Albert Cartier. Tübingen: Éditions Ernst Wasmuth, 1972. 256 pp. 1,200 copies.

Over recent years the Western world has been hearing more and more about Russia's "lost avant-garde," and names such as Larionov, Malevich, Pougny (Puni), and Tatlin have been presented to us in the form of several articles, auctions, and exhibitions. The recent shows at the Leonard Hutton Galleries and Lincoln Center in