

The serious student of Russian literature will prefer the more advanced course offered by *Russian Literary Attitudes from Pushkin to Solzhenitsyn*, although he would be wise to pass quickly over the title and settle instead for what turns out to be simply a collection of six separate chapters on the total literary careers of six authors (chronologically presented): Pushkin, Dostoevsky, Tolstoy (by Richard Freeborn); Gorky (by Georgette Donchin); Pasternak, Solzhenitsyn (by N. J. Anning). In spite of Professor Freeborn's thoughtful introductory essay, "Russian Literary Attitudes from Pushkin to Solzhenitsyn," it is difficult not to suspect that the writers of the individual chapters have labored under an awkward title to which they pay only the required formal deference. In the following passage, for example, the reader may feel that N. J. Anning is working hard to fulfill the obligation of the assignment in order to get on with an otherwise excellent critical piece on Pasternak: "Though it has been stressed that Pasternak's literary attitude was essentially the product of his confrontation with an increasingly hostile environment, his evolution as a writer has its own internal coherence which justifies a more intimate perspective" (p. 109). Sometimes a shifting description of "literary attitudes" is discernible, as in Georgette Donchin's essay on Gorky, which gallantly begins with a passage from a letter to Chekhov that "epitomises Gorky's literary attitude throughout his life," but ends by quietly defining "the essence of Gorky the writer" in rather different terms. And, after all, isn't such a shift likely to occur? Or is an author to be allowed only one permanent "literary attitude"?

If I seem to belabor the problem of the title, it is for the purpose of advising the prospective reader not to take the title too seriously and to concentrate instead on the useful comprehensive essays offered in the volume. A select annotated bibliography of important works in English and in Russian increases the value of this work for the student.

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THROUGH GOGOL'S LOOKING GLASS: REVERSE VISION, FALSE FOCUS, AND PRECARIOUS LOGIC. By *William Woodin Rowe*. New York: New York University Press, 1976. x, 201 pp. Illus. \$12.50.

In his remarkable book on Gogol (*V teni Gogolia* [London, 1975]) Abram Tertz (Andrei Sinyavsky) speaks of the way in which Gogol's characters "each carried away a grain apiece from the great multitude that was Gogol, while never succeeding in being in the least a whole mirror of his 'I,' so susceptible to dispersal in all directions." Just so has Gogol's text in turn become a fragmenting mirror that sends off critical responses in all directions, each reflecting its grain of Gogolian truth while failing somehow to register the whole. Three recent books on Gogol—Sinyavsky's, Simon Karlinsky's (*The Sexual Labyrinth of Nikolai Gogol* [Cambridge, Mass., 1976]), and the book under review—all demonstrate what a rich field for critical manipulation Gogol's work provides. The three studies have a hierarchical relationship to each other, beginning with Rowe's study of artistic device, and proceeding through Karlinsky's study of psychosexual elements in Gogol's life and work to Sinyavsky's ambitious attempt to come to terms with Gogol's metaphysics.

Rowe begins by saying that "the critics whose views have contributed most to my own are Andrei Bely, Vladimir Nabokov, and Carl Proffer." His book is frankly a reflection of a reflection and bears the character of a pedagogical exercise. He has gone through the major Gogolian texts—from *Evenings on a Farm Near Dikanka* to *Dead Souls*—identifying and dismantling for our inspection a quantity of examples

of stylistic devices that have been discussed by the Formalist school of Gogol criticism. His work has the dense texture of quotation we have come to expect from writers on Gogol, and, while it will undoubtedly become a useful mine for students writing papers, it does not contribute any major insights into Gogol's work that will shift our thinking about this anxiety-producing author. Rowe's arguments about Gogol's use of illogic were made long ago, and have been considered and accepted or rejected by the informed reader. The weakness of Rowe's book lies in his failure to take to heart his master Belyi's advice about the study of Gogol's style: "The stylistic peculiarities are conditioned by the style of thought." Rowe makes no attempt to get at what that style of thought might be, and thus his book seems mechanical and thin. Sinyavsky and Karlinsky, on the other hand, propose carefully argued and provocative readings of Gogol which, by trying to get at the nature of his thought, bring his style into vivid new perspective.

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DOSTOEVSKY: THE SEEDS OF REVOLT, 1821-1849. By *Joseph Frank*.
Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976. xvi, 401 pp. Illus. \$16.50.

Joseph Frank conceives Dostoevsky's work as "a brilliant artistic synthesis of the major issues of his time, a personal utterance, to be sure, but one, more than most, oriented by concerns outside himself. . . . one way of defining Dostoevsky's genius is to locate it in his ability to fuse his private dilemmas with those raging in the society of which he was a part" (p. xii). To project Dostoevsky's work against the background of his life and time is a very difficult and grandiose undertaking. The difficulties lie not only in the complexities of the subject and the subject matter—in the unique mode of Dostoevsky's literary expression—but also in the sheer mass of scholarship. Mr. Frank is conversant with a great deal of this scholarship. He is judicious in sifting the real or probable from the merely conjectural and in threading his way through the controversies, factionalism, and historical limitations of Dostoevsky's own times and the distortions, falsifications, and mistaken views of later commentators. It is a measure of Mr. Frank's success that the first of his four planned volumes already establishes his study as the best general consideration of Dostoevsky's early life and work extant in any language and beyond that as a useful panorama of cultural and intellectual Russia in the 1840s, as *Stoffgeschichte* that is made to bear on Dostoevsky's creative work.

His approach is particularly fruitful in dealing with philosophical and social theories in Russia, their impact on literary movements and battles, and their reflection in literature. Dostoevsky's relationship to Belinskii, the vagaries of his early enthusiasm, the interplay and clash of personalities, the development of Dostoevsky's thought and his ultimate ambivalent disenchantment are deftly and revealingly presented, in a way that is frequently lacking in doctrinaire or partisan views. Mr. Frank presents in some detail both the Beketov circle and Valerian Maikov's theories as shaping forces of that period; he also deals with the Petrashevskii circle, and within it the Speshnev-Durov faction, so that all these become vital presences rather than mere carriers of thought.

The biographical parts are similarly revealing, though Mr. Frank is interested in material significant for the work rather than in conventional biography. This leads to some distortion and a disturbing insistence on the importance and relevance of certain early episodes to the later novels, particularly *The Brothers Karamazov*. At times