

depths of the human soul; that the single exception to this rule, Anna Karenina, became the object of the author's love; that Tolstoy's prose, clumsy, foursquare, unpoetic, nonetheless achieves its object, and presents a fictional world as real, clear, and unambiguous as any; that Tolstoy, in his later period, attacked the art of others in order to mask the general diminution of his own gift.

Mr. Crankshaw recognizes Tolstoy as a genius, but, like Pushkin's Salieri, he regards that genius as a distinction appended to an objectionable man. One cannot really criticize the many small errors in the book, the author's heavy reliance on Maude and Troyat, the inclusion of pictorial material which, while pleasing to the eye, has little to do with Tolstoy.

A popular biography need not display great erudition, but it should convey some faint enthusiasm for its subject. Here Mr. Crankshaw is at a loss, and we are left with a conventional mind trying to describe a highly unconventional mind, and failing. It is a pity that Mr. Crankshaw did not choose to write his book on Turgenyev, whom he approaches with feeling, sensitivity, and obvious sympathy.

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KONSTANTIN BATYUSHKOV. By *Ilya Z. Serman*. Twayne's World Author Series, no. 287. New York: Twayne Publishers, 1974. 187 pp. \$7.95.

The curve of Batiushkov's life (1787–1855) rises through a single decade of acclaim as poet, reaching its high point with publication of his prose and verse *Opyty* in 1817, only to falter in mental breakdown, four years at Sonnenstein hospital in Dresden, and twenty-eight years of largely quiescent house rest. I. Z. Serman, a distinguished scholar at Pushkin House, devotes more than half of his book to tracing the poet's early steps, with the result that "the most fruitful period"—from mid-1814 (pp. 94 ff.)—does not receive coverage adequate to the growing complexity of Batiushkov's situation. The book suffers from choppy, fragmented exposition (especially the first two chapters). Distortion is evident in quotes that make Batiushkov sound aphoristically conclusive. But the greatest shortcoming is the lack of whole poetic texts and analyses, necessary to defend controversial and puzzling judgments such as the following: "In his *Letter to Nikita*, Batiushkov managed to weave the two themes [war and the joys of life] into such an emotional unity that the contrast itself became redundant" (p. 103).

On the final page of Serman's last chapter, one finds these "remarkable and intensely experienced words" translated from Osip Mandelstam's "Batiushkov" (1932): "With him he brought us our wealth and our anguish,/ Tongue-tied, the glorious burden he bears—/ Tumult of poetry, bell of true friendship,/ And a harmonious downpour of tears" (p. 162). The key epithet here (*kosnoiazychnyi*) was taken directly from Batiushkov, who applied it to his divided self in his private journal of 1817 ("Chuzhoe—moe sokrovishche!," *Sochineniia*, vol. 2 [St. Petersburg, 1885], pp. 288–367). For some understanding of how the poet's fragile gift was overwhelmed by the complexity of his perception, the self-analytic passage which evidently caught Mandelstam's eye is of great importance, indeed a logical starting point, but it does not figure in Serman's study. Furthermore, we are given no glimpse of the ultimately "tongue-tied" Batiushkov, who was more articulately engaging in his madness than one might suppose. This more serious

omission could easily have been remedied by references to the accounts of Dashkov and other friends, or the long detailed report by Dr. Dietrich (*Sochineniia*, vol. 1 [St. Petersburg, 1887], pp. 318–53). A small error on page 165 (“in” instead of “and”) which assigns the opening couplet of Derzhavin’s “Videnie murzy” instead to his “Ode to a Nightingale” makes it seem that Batiushkov’s memory failed him. (Within that couplet, however, the change of Derzhavin’s line *Na temnogolubom efire* to *svetlogolubom* is an authentic and noteworthy slip by Batiushkov.)

Despite many objections, one must express gratitude for a study of this kind, which honestly aims at a comprehensive treatment, and which generally succeeds in placing the subject in broad historical and poetic contexts, in the hope of communicating Batiushkov’s significance beyond a “limited circle of connoisseurs” (p. [5]). The book has a good index and bibliography, and in his conclusion the author gives a useful account of Soviet scholarship. This account needs to be brought up to date by the addition of N. V. Fridman’s *Poeziia Batiushkova* (Moscow, 1971), to which Wladimir Weidlé has responded in his engaging article “Batiushkov i Mandel’shtam. Pevuchie iamby” (*Novyi zhurnal*, no. 117, 1974, pp. 103–32).

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DIE LYRIK VL. SOLOV'EV'S UND IHRE NACHWIRKUNG BEI A. BELYJ
UND A. BLOK. By *Armin Knigge*. Bibliotheca Slavonica, vol. 12. Amsterdam: Verlag Adolf M. Hakkert, 1973. v, 303 pp. Paper.

Every summary pronouncement on the Russian Symbolists entails a necessary acknowledgment of the movement’s debt to Solov’ev, but it is usual to avoid a detailed account of the nature of that debt. There exist only a few works devoted wholly or partly to the impact of Solov’ev’s thought on the characteristic ideas of the Russian Symbolists, and almost all of them display a tendency to regard Solov’ev’s poetry as simply an alternative lyrical expression of his philosophy. At the same time, it is recognized that occasionally Solov’ev’s poetry was influential in its own right—as in the case of Blok, who appears to have differed from his immediate confederates in the cult of the Lady Beautiful, being more receptive to Solov’ev’s poetic voice than to his doctrines. Armin Knigge’s book (which is in fact a doctoral dissertation, as its cumbersome title suggests) examines Solov’ev’s poetic legacy, and, in doing so, makes a valuable contribution to a steadily growing literature dealing with the antecedents to the Russian Symbolist movement.

The relation of philosophy to poetry is at best a difficult subject, notoriously fraught with pitfalls for the unwary doctoral student, but Mr. Knigge has succeeded remarkably well. His fifty-page exposition of the central ideas of Solov’ev’s philosophy is no secondhand summary. He demonstrates very clearly that in Solov’ev’s poetry we are not faced with mere versified philosophy, and he bases some interesting conclusions about the place of the poetry in Solov’ev’s work as a whole on the differences in emphasis he discerns. The central point of his thesis is that Solov’ev provides a vital link in the continuity of the Russian poetic tradition, and a substantial section of the book relates Solov’ev to the trends represented by Baratynskii, Khomiakov, Tiutchev, and Fet. Knigge concludes that, if Solov’ev is particularly close to such idealists of the “pure poetry” school as Fet (which is generally taken to be the case), it is by virtue of an odd paradox, because he