

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

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.