

Lary turns his full attention to Dostoevsky. Unfortunately it is here that Lary is weakest, and his book most deserving of criticism. Though he clearly possesses the talent to offer an intelligent reading of Dostoevsky, his work on that author is often undeveloped and arbitrary. I find particularly unconvincing his allegorical interpretation of *The Idiot*, his attempts to define the Verkhovenskys in *The Possessed*, his rather summary dismissal of Alyosha and Zossima in *The Brothers Karamazov*. A pity, for Lary frequently has a point to make, both suggestive and controversial. I await then, with curiosity and high expectation, the book he clearly wants to write—and can write—on Dostoevsky.

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NIHILISMUS UND NIHILISTEN: UNTERSUCHUNGEN ZUR TYPISIERUNG IM RUSSISCHEN ROMAN DER ZWEITEN HÄLFTE DES NEUNZEHNTE JAHRHUNDERTS. By *Wolf-Heinrich Schmidt*. Forum Slavicum, vol. 38. Munich: Wilhelm Fink Verlag, 1974. 233 pp. DM 48, paper.

In this book the author is primarily interested in tracing the origin, evolution, and complexities of the concept of nihilism in the Russian novels of the 1860s and early 1870s, but he also has many intelligent things to say about the novels themselves. In his first chapter he elucidates the many usages of the term, emphasizing "negation as enlightenment." In his second he deals critically but not unsympathetically with György Lukács's quite individual Marxist treatment of the subject. In his third, three quarters of the book, he discusses Turgenev's *Fathers and Sons* and *Virgin Soil*, Goncharov's *Precipice*, and Pisemsky's *Troubled Sea* and *In the Whirlpool*. There follows a thoughtful conclusion and a rich bibliography of Russian and foreign works. Among English-language works he has been most stimulated by Charles Moser's writings on Russian antinihilist literature of the period.

The author's main thesis is that any simple hypothesis about the nature of nihilism and the nihilists tends to become complicated and at least somewhat diffused by "experience," the complexities of real life, and real nihilists. In his most notable example, he finds the first half of *Fathers and Sons* to be a masterful exposition of Bazarov as a type of all things characteristically nihilist (his origins, planned career, manners, views on science, literature, and presumably politics), and then he explores the second half as Turgenev's wise recognition that even the most formidable nihilist machine could be derailed by chance encounters, personal idiosyncrasies, the suppressed "Romantic" side of Bazarov's nature, and of course by death.

The thesis seems sound, but not dramatically new, and the book as a whole is soberly worked out, though it will probably not make any great splash. Anyone who can't stand the German tradition of dealing with subjects through abstract categorizations will find this book heavy going, but the more kindly disposed will think this a fine example of how a German scholar can use abstract thought to shed a great deal of light on a great many particulars.

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