
BOOK REVIEWS

LITERATURE AND FINE ARTS

Dinesman, T. G., ed. *A. A. Fet i ego literaturnoe okruzhenie*. Vol. 1. Literaturnoe nasledstvo 103. Moscow: IMLI RAN, 2008. 992 pp. ISBN 978-5-9208-0295-8.

That most metonymic poet Afanasy Fet is perennially conjoined: Fet *and* Tolstoy, Fet *and* Tiutchev, Fet *and* any number of others. The book reviewed here presents epistolary relationships established in Fet's earlier years (through the 1850s): with S. P. Shevyrev, I. P. Borisov, V. P. Botkin, Ia. P. Polonskii, and I. S. Turgenev. Awaiting publication in a second book of the same volume is Fet's correspondence with N. N. Strakhov, S. A. Tolstaya, and K. R., as well as previously unpublished correspondence with L. N. Tolstoy.

The Shevyrev and Polonskii sections include all the extant correspondence, and the Botkin section includes correspondence with M. P. Fet, Botkin's sister, who married Fet in 1857. Fet's correspondence with Turgenev (mostly published elsewhere) is represented by two previously unpublished drafts of letters by Fet. The Borisov section includes only Fet's letters; no contemporary letters from Borisov to Fet are extant.

This lacuna is characteristic. We have little documentation of Fet's life as an adolescent or young man. We know his early poetry nearly entirely from the published record. Similarly, until his marriage Fet either did not maintain an extensive record of his correspondence, or he destroyed it. In addition to Borisov, we know that Fet corresponded with relatives in Russia and Germany and with the headmaster and probably also a few friends from his school in Werro, but his German correspondence, like his German-language poetry, is mostly lost and forgotten. Most tantalizing is Fet's correspondence with A. A. Grigor'ev, who published some of it—as fiction.

The letters published here are edited from autographs, of which one photographed page (p. 154) can be compared with the edited version directly opposite it. The comparison reveals the idiosyncrasies of Fet's handwriting and of the editors, who, like others before them, improve his punctuation. Divergences from previously published versions of the letters receive no comment. Editorial principles are largely unstated and presumably conform with series policies. The book lacks indices, which one may hope to find in the successor volume. Besides the annotated letters, illustrations, and a list of abbreviations, the book contains an introduction by the series editors and an essay by one of them, L. M. Rozenblium, whose starting point is that, before the fall of the Soviet Union, Fet had scarcely been studied. This judgment is amplified both in the essay and throughout the volume, which mentions earlier scholarship sparingly, inconsistently, and dismissively. Even if earlier studies do not meet the editors' standards, references to them would have been useful, since they sometimes exploit materials since lost. Some of the editors' interpretation, moreover, has unacknowledged roots in analyses by such predecessors as B. Ia. Bukhshtab. The size of the volume may have precluded fuller references.

The great value of the book is its unprecedentedly rich documentation of Fet's personal and professional life. It thus affords multiple perspectives on events important not only for Fet but also more broadly for Russian literary culture. The book also presents the editors' interpretations of Fet, whom they view as a great poet deeply misunderstood and requiring a new introduction. This is most explicit in Rozenblium's essay, which situates Fet in the quarrels of his time and place and defends him against hostile contemporaries and even such later advocates as V. Ia. Briusov, in response to whom Rozenblium accentuates Fet's Schopenhauerianism and ignores his earlier Hegelianism. Other interpretive gestures run through the commentaries, sometimes connecting different sets of letters. Thus, Fet's view of the delayed publication of his 1850 book is documented in letters to Borisov and Shevyrev. Lacking (presumably lost) are letters not only from Borisov but also between Fet and the Grigorievs, charged with seeing the book through the press. The

commentaries make the relevant passages easy to find but also commit the editors to a questionable interpretation of material long available and discussed in literature they ignore.

The book has minor factual errors. Fet's 1850 book was not delayed by three years, and Fet did not shorten "The Nightingale and the Rose" by half when he republished it.

Emily Klenin, University of California, Los Angeles

Tucker, Janet G. *Profane Challenge and Orthodox Response in Dostoevsky's Crime and Punishment*. Studies in Slavic Literature and Poetics, 52. Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2008. 285 pp. €58.00. ISBN 978-90-420-2494-6.

In this thoroughgoing and detailed study, Janet G. Tucker examines *Crime and Punishment* within the literary and historical context of the rise in popularity among radical young Russians of Utilitarian, nihilist and Utopian Socialist ideas. She argues for the work as an Orthodox novelistic response to the appeal to radical youth by such works as Chernyshevsky's *What Is To Be Done?* Dostoevsky, asserts Tucker, uses a series of different literary strategies to engage a target audience of the same kind of young readers as those addressed by Chernyshevsky. He first chooses a hero, Raskolnikov, with whom these readers can identify, someone who shares their ambiguous social status and nihilist outlook. He then exploits their narrative engagement with an arsenal of different aesthetic weapons, building up their ethical and artistic investment in Raskolnikov's path to righteousness, so as to eventually lead them, along with his hero, away from the path of nihilism and into the Russian Orthodox fold. In the main part of the book Tucker traces Dostoevsky's exploitation of the oral tradition and use of visual, iconic, and parable structures in the novel, arguing that these devices were intended to draw in his readers on an emotional level by dislodging their own childhood memories and early experiences of reading the Gospels, memories which would then hopefully displace the readers' subsequent exposure to rationalist Western thought.

Although the book's individual chapters devoted to these different aesthetic strategies provide much interesting local detail, Tucker's overall argument rests on shaky methodological foundations. These flaws center on Tucker's unreflective reading of the novel as constructed to appeal to a particular type of reader. A more thorough analysis of the notebooks to the novel as well as Dostoevsky's letters might provide a more persuasive argument for intent. The question of the ideological perspectives of the novel's first generation of readers is an interesting one, but demands detailed study both of the publication context of *Crime and Punishment* and of the other didactic radical novels with which it is in dialogue. Excavating the experiences of the novel's first generation of readers requires extensive archival research, including study of the diaries of young Russian radicals. What is most concerning about Tucker's argument is the reductionist nature of her reading of the novel. Because she sees the novel as a didactic work designed to bring the target reader home to Orthodoxy, she ignores its many dualities and contradictions. She deals primarily in binary oppositions, seeing *Crime and Punishment* as always privileging the spoken over the written, Russian Orthodox spirituality over Western materialism, the emotional over the rational. There is no hint in this study of the "furnace of doubt" which dogged Dostoevsky throughout his life.

Even if one shares Tucker's opposition to Bakhtin's reading of Dostoevsky as a polyphonic novelist, one must surely still acknowledge the fact that a great novel is always shot through with complexity and conflict. This is especially true of *Crime and Punishment*, where, despite Raskolnikov's apparent spiritual resurrection in the epilogue, the narrator tells us that "he did not even know that a new life would not be given him for nothing, that it still had to be dearly bought, to be paid for with a great future deed," hinting at the return of the "great man" concept at the moment we least expect it. The monologism of Tucker's reading of *Crime and Punishment* means that this book will appeal mainly to a narrow audience of Dostoevsky specialists and scholars of Orthodoxy and Russian religious practices.

Kate Holland, University of Toronto