

de la escritura hacia rotas imágenes del pasado Tiempos y lugares que él nunca conoció Con pedazos de recuerdos oídos, mezclados de imaginaciones, se acercaba a aquel hombre joven a quien por tanto tiempo le estuvo negado saber quién era y qué podía hacer" (pp. 347-48). But Father Solana does not progress much in writing his oration for he is frequently interrupted by shouts or gunfire in the streets and news of ransacked homes and threatening mobs. Nonetheless, his intense probing of the past provides an ample portrayal of Peláez's era. The conclusion of the novel represents an ironic twist of destiny. The military successor to Peláez, realizing the increasingly rebellious mood of the populace, opts for a discreet burial ceremony and cancels the funeral oration. Solana is thus relieved of the compromising burden, but shortly thereafter he is trampled by one of the mobs that roam the city.

Uslar-Pietri's novel is doubly interesting and valuable. On the one hand, the book has relevant literary qualities. Frequent alliterations give a captivating force to certain descriptions: "con los gruesos grillos grotescos" (p. 19); "Peláez regresaba con su pesado paso lento" (p. 56). Short, precise sentences abound. To the evoking strength of his images and metaphors, Uslar-Pietri adds the outstanding ability to represent with naturalness the language of dialogues and the flow of his characters' thoughts. On the other hand, the novel is primarily a serious attempt to comprehend a foregone but important era in history as well as the political career and personality of the last of the Venezuelan *caudillos*.

The good political novelist is able to "weave into his story the threads of history, recording not only the lives of his creations, but actual events in the lives of nations," recreating them "with a vividness found in few scholarly histories" (Joseph Lee Blotner, *The Political Novel*; Folcroft, Pa.: Folcroft Press, 1970; p. 9.) Uslar is a good political novelist as he vividly unfolds events and characters in half a century of his country's history: the military insurrection of 1892 which sent Peláez (Gómez) and his political and military boss, Carmelo Prato (Cipriano Castro) into exile in the neighboring Nuevo Reino (Colombia); the daring campaign of 1899, launched by Prato from across the border, in which he succeeds in capturing power by eluding and leaving behind powerful

enemy forces; the period of 1901-03 in which Peláez, with intuition and determination that compensate for his lack of military experience, defeats an array of prestigious *caudillos*; Peláez's difficult struggle to preserve Prato's trust and his accession to power in 1908 after the latter departed for Europe; and finally, Peláez's incredibly long stay in power during which time he ruthlessly gratifies his insatiable hunger for land by becoming the largest landowner in the country. The attachment to the land is an Andino (Western Andean) characteristic. Another Andino psychological trait, distrustfulness, is viewed in the novel as one of the important keys to Peláez's political survival: "El mando no se puede dejar ni un momento. Ni para dormir. Ni en manos de nadie" (p. 194).

Uslar-Pietri's literary skill allows the reader to relive the intimate atmosphere and everyday details of Gómez's tyranny. Gómez is a Venezuelan, as well as a Spanish-American political phenomenon that needs to be studied and understood. Most of the fascinating facets of the dictator's personality are brought forth by Uslar-Pietri with sure and effective objectivity. Uslar-Pietri's novel, together with its artistic merits, is indeed a revealing book about a long and painful era in Venezuelan history.

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MICHAEL HOLQUIST
Dostoevsky and the Novel
Princeton: Princeton University
Press, 1977. Pp. 202. \$12.50.

In view of the ever increasing flow of critical literature on Dostoevsky, it is difficult to imagine what new approaches might be taken in the study of his extraordinary and—as it would seem—perpetually fascinating literary output. Nearly every possibility has been probed: biography, formalism, comparativism, *critique du jour*, sociology, psychological, philosophical, and even theological criticism. Yet whenever it appears that there is little else

to be said, a book like Michael Holquist's *Dostoevsky and the Novel* is published. In a departure from more traditional approaches, Holquist explores such contemporary interests as structuralism, myth criticism, and dream analysis. The result, though occasionally puzzling and frequently debatable, is interesting and stimulating.

One of the principal themes of the book is the parallel between the development of the Russian novel and the crisis of the Russian people in search of a historical past. The author handles this exceptionally well, especially in the first chapter, which is aptly entitled "The Problem: Orphans of Time." His analysis of *Notes from Underground* is preceded not by a discussion of Chernyshevsky's *What Is to Be Done?*, as is commonly the case, but by a careful examination of the often neglected *Winter Notes on Summer Impressions*. His arguments in favor of their close interrelationship are thoroughly convincing. *Crime and Punishment* is seen as a conflict between the horizontal time of the detective novel and the vertical time of the wisdom tale. This dichotomy enables Holquist (quite properly) to justify the epilogue despite numerous attacks on its validity throughout the years. His treatment of *The Possessed* and especially of *The Idiot* will seem somewhat farfetched to many readers and ultimately less satisfying. There are also a number of problems in the chapter on *The Brothers Karamazov*. Not everyone, for example, will accept without question the statement that the novel "is about growing up" (p. 175). The author's insistence that "fatherhood . . . must not be confused with mere paternity" seems like an unwanted reminiscence of the argument pursued by Dmitri's defense attorney—an argument rejected by the jurors. And is it really true that Ivan denies Smerdiakov his approval of the murder of Fedor Pavlovich, as stated on page 182? By using Freud's theory of the "primal horde" as his point of departure, Holquist runs the risk of slighting such questions as universal responsibility, filial duty, and purification through suffering—all major themes in *The Brothers Karamazov*. Furthermore, it is nearly impossible to explain how the epigraph (John xii.24) fits into this Freudian scheme.

Printing errors are relatively few. They occur primarily in the spelling of foreign words (*Père Goriot*, for example, instead

of *Père Goriot*). In addition, it should be noted that the Greek word from which "metaphor" derives is not *metaphoreien* (which does not exist), but *metaphorein* (p. 85). The proper definition of this verb, incidentally, is not "to translate," but "to transfer" or "change." Gogol's *Selected Letters* (actually, "passages") from a *Correspondence with Friends* should be dated 1847, not 1842 (p. 22). Apart from these lapses, there are several passages in the book where interesting and relevant information is omitted. On one occasion the inclusion of the omitted information would have fortified the author's argument. Thus, in remarks on the problem of Russia's ahistorical past the reader is not told that Chaadaev wrote his *Philosophical Letters* in French, not in his native Russian as the footnote would suggest (p. 14). A more regrettable omission occurs on page 12. There Holquist cites Bestuzhev-Marlinsky's remark that Russians have "a criticism but no literature" (p. 12). In all fairness, he should also have quoted Pushkin, who countered his colleague's opinion with the assertion: "We have a literature of a sort, but we have no criticism" (see the *Letters of Alexander Pushkin*, ed. J. Thomas Shaw, p. 222).

The most serious flaw in this book is its language. Holquist's many thought-provoking observations are unfortunately often expressed in self-consciously original form. Statements like the following are only too common: "The interval that Dostoevsky here marks with '...' is a typographical moment between Nastasya Filipovna's Edenic tick and the fallen tock of the remainder of her life" (p. 115). This and other examples of *le bon style* only serve to distract from the high quality of the work, as do the plethora of trendy words like "kairos," "chronos," and the obligatory "icons" and "epiphanies." But any reader who can find his way through these verbal labyrinths and cope with the jargon of modern literary criticism will find Professor Holquist's book refreshing, provocative, and eminently rewarding.

David Matural