

where the real action is taking place" (p. 16). It is the same conflict of interest between the panoramic and the microscopic, global pattern and evolving detail, shape and shapelessness, which Beckett's Molloy apologetically summarizes in these terms: "Je m'excuse de ces détails, mais tout à l'heure nous irons plus vite. Sans préjuger d'une rechute dans des passages méticuleux et puants. Mais qui à leur tour donneront naissance à des grandes fresques." In his anxiety to give a *résumé* of each novel in turn, something which a general introduction to Pinget's writings would seem to demand, Henkels has lapsed into too much renarration of the "events" of the books, events which, by their very nature, are inconclusive, formless, and opaque and force the study, for considerable periods, into a directionless accumulation of spare parts. The description of *Baga*, for instance, becomes turbid, and the convoluted paraphrases of "plot" in *Le Fiston* (what are called "a cursory summary of the content") seem counterproductive, for it is not the content which is Pinget's prime concern but the flight paths of its endless transformations.

Several issues could have been developed more widely. Although a major section is entitled "An Inventory of Invention," little is made of the notion of the inventory: the anguished groping of Michaux's *Mes propriétés* and the unfulfilled promise of Beckett's Molloy to "dresser l'inventaire de mes biens et possessions" would have made stimulating points of reference, to say nothing of the motif of the constantly rewritten "testament" in Pinget's own *Passacaille*. The "story-within-a-story" convention might have prompted a deeper analysis of the *mise en abyme* technique related to the major tensions of contemporary fiction: a passing reference to Gide's *Les Faux-monnayeurs* as a "novel about a novel" is the barest of contributions. In the chapter on Pinget's plays, seen essentially as an appendix to the novels, aspects more intrinsic to the nature of theater might have been highlighted. The theatrical problem implicit in Pinget's need to "strip away characterization in order to get down to the level of words as such" (p. 142) is akin to that of Marguerite Duras in, say, *Le Square* with its nondescript characters "que rien ne signale à l'attention." The device of playback and verbal "overprinting" points to Beckett's *La dernière bande* or to Duras's novel *L'Amante anglaise*, both of which exploit tape recordings. Even Nathalie Sarraute,

another practitioner of a form of *sous-conversation* and all the linguistic virtualities that stay on the verge of being made flesh, moves temptingly in the wings. And there is hardly a mention of Ionesco and the absurdities of language, despite an initial epigraph from *La Leçon* which offers so much.

Mr Henkels's book leaves crucial areas of Pinget's work still to be explored: the actual *form* of his novels as quest, the complexities and creative contours of his structural patterning, and the whole question of *tone* which lies at the source of his artistic developments and governs their equilibrium, placing Pinget not in the so-called "école du regard" of Robbe-Grillet but in a highly personal "école de l'oreille." But within the aims that it sets itself, this is a very valuable study, not least for its bibliographical diligence. It is the first systematic survey of the complete works of a novelist of rare attraction: frivolous yet grave, evasively formalistic yet full of the deepest human poignancy, lost in the swirl of uncontaminable time yet touching the bedrock of a universal mythology. Mr Henkels, through the irrepressible pyrotechnics of his phrasing and imagery, has caught glimpses of the essential spirit of Pinget's creative venture and given the reader an enthusiastic encouragement to enter its vitality.

Peter Broome

EDWARD WASIOLEK

Tolstoy's Major Fiction

Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1978. Pp. 255. \$12.00.

Edward Wasiolek is widely known as the author of *Dostoevsky: The Major Fiction*. Since that book was received so favorably (it is quite possibly the finest general study of Dostoevsky written in any language), expectations were naturally quite high for the current offering. The reviews that have appeared so far, however, reflect a certain disappointment. The general opinion is that the second book does not live up to the first. Nevertheless, *Tolstoy's Major Fiction*, even with its occasional lapses and shortcomings, is still a significant contribution to Tolstoy scholarship and a worthy successor to the monograph on Dostoevsky.

From the beginning of his book to the end Wasiolek works with a fundamental premise: that Tolstoy's thought is essentially the same at all stages of his career and that his fictional characters can be defined by the degree to which they achieve a "right relationship" between the interior world and the exterior, between what Wasiolek calls "the nature within and the nature without" (p. 48). In the process he demolishes Merezhkovsky's dichotomy of "Christian" and "pagan" and adduces some persuasive arguments against positions taken by such eminent scholars as Isaiah Berlin and R. F. Christian. Had he chosen to include a section on Tolstoy's religious writings, Wasiolek could have given additional strength to his thesis by demonstrating that this very same "right relationship" forms the basis of Tolstoyan Christianity as well.

Among the individual chapters, the one devoted to *War and Peace* is incontestably the best. In it Wasiolek proves that the various chapters on the philosophy of history, which have all too often been viewed as vexatious additions, are in fact intimately linked to the narrative chapters and that the novel has, despite its great size, a distinct ideological unity. It is consequently rather surprising to find that the very next chapter—on *Anna Karenina*—begins with the observation: *Anna Karenina* is two novels, Anna's and Levin's" (p. 129). Surely, this view is no more accurate than the analogous opinion of *War and Peace*. Besides, Wasiolek himself draws detailed parallels between the two main narrative lines of the novel (pp. 150-51) and does so in such a way as to emphasize its essential unity. His contrast between Anna-Vronsky and Kitty-Levin and especially his analysis of Anna's love are particularly useful.

Besides *War and Peace* and *Anna Karenina* Wasiolek devotes considerable space to *Childhood*, *Three Deaths*, *Polikushka*, *Family Happiness*, *The Cossacks*, *The Death of Ivan Ilych*, *Master and Man*, and *Resurrection*; his insightful study of *The Death of Ivan Ilych* is especially commendable.

In addition to the main chapters there is also an appendix with a very handy overview of Tolstoy's life and works. The bibliography—featuring primary works, biographical sources, and literary criticism in a multitude of languages—is one of the primary assets of this volume.

Among the liabilities, it should be noted that *Polikushka* was published in 1863, not in 1861 (p. 36). The story of the "green stick" was told not by Tolstoy himself, but by his brother Nikolai (p. 201). There is a certain amount of confusion over the spelling of "Merezhkovsky": on p. 221 it is "Merejkowski," but on p. 222 it becomes "Merezhkovsky." In many of the direct quotations from Russian, there are obvious printing errors. (See, for example, pp. 202, 207, 221, 222, 223, and 224.) Yet the few mistakes do not detract from the overall excellence of Wasiolek's book. It should, in fact, prove to be very helpful to both teachers and students of Russian literature.

David Matual

STEIN HAUGOM OLSEN

The Structure of Literary Understanding

Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978. Pp. 235. £11.00.

S. H. Olsen's *The Structure of Literary Understanding*, like many other theoretical works, is difficult to review both briefly and fairly. Though capable of splitting hairs, Olsen argues with such apparent clarity and logic that readers may find their skepticism being lulled to sleep. If a review is designed to recommend—Olsen claims that we should evaluate works of literature for the purpose of "recommendation"—I believe that many readers could profit, in one way or another, from Olsen's central chapters, 4-6.

In Chs. 1-3 he considers and rejects three theories of literature: the structuralist, the emotive, and the informative. In general, attacks on "the romantic doctrine of expression" and "the theory of literature-as-source-of-knowledge" may seem anachronistic in the late twentieth century; on the other hand, Olsen's attack on structuralism may seem timely but too abbreviated. Since his research concluded in 1974, he does not mention such works as Jonathan Culler's *Structuralist Poetics* (1975).