

boyant, impudent, unassailable, vital, fascinating, sinister, funny, and mad (pp. 63, 79-80, 144-45).

In brief compass, *Price* offers a broad yet finely detailed picture of Cape society. The tragic frame is strong enough to accommodate the absurd, the grotesque, the surreal, the amusing, and the sentimental without sacrificing its authority. The web of events is bewildering; almost thirty pages of sustained narration are required to achieve the denouement. But the death of Henry Naidoo, when it does come, is told so simply, and with such swiftness and restraint, that the anonymous savagery of the act becomes that much more terrible, and our sense of the fragility of a human life that much more poignant.

As an account of South Africa's fateful drift into extremism, and as a reminder of the complexities of individual motivation and aspiration caught in the gathering violence, the novel deserves a wider readership than it has yet acquired. Its humane spirit, its political relevance, and its accomplished writing call for a reissue of *Price* by an international publisher.

John Smith

## VLADIMIR KRASNOV

*Solzhenitsyn and Dostoevsky: A Study in the Polyphonic Novel*

Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1980. Pp. 227.

In a flood of books about Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn published in the last decade, Vladimir Krasnov's book under review stands out. Not so much because it says something startlingly new—Solzhenitsyn is slowly approaching the point of endless repetition of opinions about him—but for its approach. The author has chosen to treat Solzhenitsyn's works, mostly *The First Circle* and, to a lesser degree, *Cancer Ward* and *August 1914*, as a testing ground for the theory of a polyphonic novel propounded by the Soviet literary theoretician Mikhail

Bakhtin (1895-1975) some fifty years ago while writing about Dostoevsky. This theory states, to put it in a simplified form, that characters in a polyphonic novel are no longer manipulated by the author but rather lead their own lives and follow their own consciousnesses, moving in a world independent from that created by the author. Bakhtin found this notion best exemplified in the novels of Dostoevsky. Krasnov, in turn, found in Solzhenitsyn's novelistic technique great similarities with that of Dostoevsky and proceeded with the examination of the three novels of Solzhenitsyn from that point of view.

The author has, by and large, succeeded in proving his points by examining closely the destinies of such divergent personalities as Stalin, Rubin, Sologdin, Nerzhin, and other lesser characters. The degree of his success, however, depends on our willingness to accept the notion of a polyphonic novel as valid. While it is true that the pieces seem to fall neatly into their places within the framework of Bakhtin's theory followed by Krasnov, the reader must be allowed a modicum of doubt as to the validity of such a theory. At least not as something terribly new. Characters created by great writers have been known for slipping out of their hands and beginning an existence of their own, in a figurative sense (Balzac, for example, is said to have greeted a startled visitor with the heart-breaking news that one of his characters had just died, as if he had been a real-life friend of his). At the same time, it is mighty difficult to eradicate from the reader's mind that it is the author, after all, who rules the world he has created.

With that qualification in mind, it can be stated that Krasnov has written a competent study of Solzhenitsyn's main works. He writes well and interestingly, and he has a helpful habit of supporting his arguments with illustrations from the works he examines. His attempt to show a genuine affinity between Dostoevsky and Solzhenitsyn seems stretched somewhat too thin, although he makes some valid points. The truth of the matter is, there is hardly a Russian writer who completely escaped being influenced by Dostoevsky, to a larger, lesser, or even minute degree. At the same time, the periods, atmospheres, and problems with which these two writers are concerned are so different that any effort to see them bound closely together or influencing one another should be approached with great caution.

Krasnov, a native of the Soviet Union who has been living abroad for nearly two decades now, has provided us with a fresh look at Solzhenitsyn that differs from that of a Western critic and is devoid of the entrophy of most Soviet critics.

Vasa D. Mihailovich

## DAVID MINTER

*William Faulkner: His Life and Work*  
Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1980. Pp. 325.

With the proliferation of books about Faulkner and his fiction, it might be easy to overlook a text that attempts to deal with both in one relatively short volume. However, David Minter's *William Faulkner, His Life and Work* is a book that deserves attention.

As Minter says, the focus of his book is double, "On one side, I recount Faulkner's life and try to convey the sense of it; on the other, I discuss his published and unpublished writings and try to illuminate them" (p. 9). Not intended to present new biographical material or new interpretations of the novels, this study is still fresh and original in its successful attempt to portray Faulkner's life and art as an interrelated whole. Although we know that Faulkner wanted his private life to be "abolished and voided from history" (p. 103), most of us, like Minter, share a desire to know the man's life as well as his writing even if as Shelley Foote said, "Writing to him was what living was all about" (p. 247).

Unlike Michael Millgate's excellent work, *The Achievement of William Faulkner* (1966), Minter's book intertwines and balances the writer's life story and the writer's lifework. Like a story, the book is entertaining and readable; like a critical study, it is solid and scholarly. The biography draws heavily from Joseph Blotner's *Faulkner: A Biography* (1974), but it also adds material absent in Blotner such as the Hollywood affair between Faulkner and Meta Doherty Carpenter, the story contained largely in *A Loving Gentleman* (1976). Both the life and

work have been widely and carefully researched—Minter has studied the novelist's essays, interviews, published and unpublished letters, poems, stories and novels as well as almost all of the critical material available to him to demonstrate the close relationship between the "flawed life" and artistic achievement.

In Minter's book, we see how the life affected the work and how the work affected the life. We see Faulkner as the son of incompatible parents and the beginnings of his artistic career in poetry; we see his search for adventure in the war and his early versions of the artist. A fair amount of attention is devoted to the women in his life—Estelle Oldham, Helen Baird, Meta Doherty, Joan Williams, and his daughter, Jill—and Minter is careful to show the role they play in his art as well as in his life. The period of great artistic achievement is fully explored. We see his struggles with the distractions of family, women, and money as he tries to attain "a room of his own and long hours in which to write" (p. 193). We also witness the trips Faulkner makes to New York, to Hollywood, and eventually to Sweden in 1950 to accept the Nobel Prize. With Minter, we lament the decline of his powers, as we applaud the deserved, belated recognition.

Attempting to "locate initiatory and shaping experiences" (p. 10) and to "discern deeper faces," (p. 10), Minter makes speculations but they remain cautious and convincing. He suggests for instance that in *Light in August*, Faulkner "worked hard on a story about a calm birth and a terrible death in an effort to master a painful memory" (p. 133), the memory of the death of his first child. In *The Sound and The Fury*, he felt that Faulkner "took possession of the pain and muted love of his childhood—its dislocation and vacancies, its forbidden needs and desires" (p. 104). In fact, one of the theses that unites the study is that much of Faulkner's work deals with something close to his own experience, the situation of "inadequate parents and wounded children" (p. 156). Minter illustrates this in *The Sound and The Fury*, *As I Lay Dying*, *Absalom, Absalom!* as well as other novels and stories. Of the critical interpretations of Faulkner's novels in Minter's book, the most valuable is his examination of his favorite novel, *Absalom, Absalom!*

Although Minter's book is not as stimulating or as controversial as John Irwin's *Doubling and Incest/Repetition and*