

The problem is that O'Toole superimposes his theoretical concepts on the stories. A better strategist would not have displayed a fascinating box full of new tools and invited the reader to watch him use them, but would have produced them sparingly as the interpretation of the texts called for them. The choice between such procedures actually involves, not just different ways of presenting material, but a basic principle. O'Toole battles against what he calls intuitive criticism, proposing "coherent and rule-governed systems" instead (p. 37), which he claims are more objective and scientific; but in fact his best analyses are governed by his overall understanding of the stories. It would indeed be strange even to imagine a wholly independent "scientific" system of criticism that would be infallible in relation to any text. For the critical enterprise, after all, is an attempt to articulate the complex of emotional and intellectual responses that is the aesthetic experience; putting the analysis before the experience is like putting the cart before the horse.

Grace Radin

VIRGINIA WOOLF'S THE YEARS: THE EVOLUTION OF A NOVEL

Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1981. Pp. 188.

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Reviewed by Ethel F. Cornwell

The Years has never been considered one of Virginia Woolf's best works, neither by the author herself nor by the majority of her critics. Grace Radin's study, *Virginia Woolf's The Years: The Evolution of a Novel*, does much to explain why. Virginia Woolf's attempt to write a novel of "fact" rather than one of "vision," such as *Mrs. Dalloway*, *To the Lighthouse*, or *The Waves* (see p. 15) for an explanation of Woolf's terms), went against the grain. Eventually the polemicist yielded to the artist, but the result, despite endless cuttings and revisions, was a work which is neither fish nor fowl.

The original idea for the book came when Woolf decided to convert what was to have been a feminist essay into an "Essay-Novel", to be called *The Pargiters* (see p. 13). Each scene was to be followed by an interpretive essay which would place the events in historical perspective and indict the politics, economics, and sexual mores of male-dominated English society. Believing that history ignored the lives of the obscure, particularly the lives of women, Woolf determined that *The Pargiters* would treat the minutiae of their daily lives "with a seriousness and a penetration usually reserved for momentous affairs of state" (p. 31).

But long before she completed the first draft of the novel, Woolf lost confidence in her original plan and began to revise. The manuscript was too long and her ideological attacks too shrill. The first to go were the interpretive essays, discarded after completion of the first chapter as an obviously clumsy device. Much of this material was (properly) relegated to *Three Guineas*.

Later, finding herself unable to live with a novel of fact, Woolf decided to combine fact and vision and hit upon the idea of using alternating scenes, such as those contrasting the factual Eleanor with the visionary Elvira. But still the book would not gel, and the revisions continued. *The Pargiters/The Years* was to prove the most problematic of all Virginia Woolf's novels.

Radin traces the evolution of the novel from the eight manuscript notebooks which constituted the first draft of *The Pargiters* to the final publication of *The Years*, noting the major changes from the cuttings and revisions, which continued right through the galley proofs to publication.

In the process, the novel of feminist protest becomes a much milder novel of manners; many of the radical ideas contained in the original draft are watered down or omitted entirely, especially those regarding male and female sexuality; and the characters of Delia, Eleanor, and Elvira (now called Sara) lose something of their original force. The whole tone and thrust of the novel have changed.

Of particular interest is the opening scene of the book. In *The Pargiters* this focuses on

Colonel Pargiter's daughters. Delia, for example, emerges as something of a rebel, a talented violinist who longs to go to Germany to study (a futile wish, since it is opposed by her father). Her reaction when she sees a woman pass by with a baby is drastically different from that of the much more maternal sister Milly; for Delia, the sight does *not* arouse any maternal instincts, only a slight uneasiness at not feeling as she is expected to. In *The Years*, however, it is the Colonel we see first. There is *no* description of the girls' feelings as they observe the baby, leaving the impression that they *both* yearn to marry, and there is *no* mention of Delia's talents and aspirations, weakening one of the main themes of the original manuscript: the meager experiences and opportunities available to Victorian women, whose lives are limited and defined by the male-dominated society in which they live.

Even more critical is the revision of the pivotal "1917" chapter, where radical ideas are so carefully balanced with opposing views that their effect is nullified. But the revision did have its positive effects. Over and over we see Woolf transforming what had been lengthy expositions into dramatic interactions between the various conversationalists.

What Radin's study offers is not only "the evolution of a novel," but an insight into Virginia Woolf's methods as an artist. It is a welcome addition to the growing body of scholarly works on Virginia Woolf.

John Jones *DOSTOEVSKY*

Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983. Pp. xii + 365. \$48.75

Reviewed by Victor Terras

Among Dostoevsky's critics there are many writers who are important in their own right—Proust, Gide, D. H. Lawrence, Thomas Mann, Hesse, and more recently Alberto Moravia and Joyce Carol Oates, to name but a few. Some of them have advanced and deepened our understanding of Dostoevsky, others have blocked it by the authority of their particular misunderstanding of his works. John Jones, a poet and writer, is a fine reader of Dostoevsky, that "reader of genius." Jones is superbly equipped for this task. His references to the Russian text are usually apt, and while he carries his erudition lightly (there are few notes and no bibliography), he is obviously well read in Dostoevsky scholarship. Jones's observations, presented in chronological order, from *Poor People* to *The Brothers Karamazov*, but maintaining a constant and alert awareness of Dostoevsky's entire oeuvre, are focussed in the text, but will often and effectively use the writer's notebooks, correspondence, biographic information, and literary parallels to establish the meaning of a given passage or pattern.

Jones's many intelligent and sometimes penetrating observations are unified mostly by the notion that Dostoevsky must be read with a view to "conspiracies between novelist and reader behind the back of the narrator and his narrative" (p. x). Jones has the highest respect for what Robert L. Belknap has called the multiple wisdoms which inform Dostoevsky's works. He perceives a Dostoevskian text as an intricate and multidimensional web of parallels, allusions, symbols, echoes, and ambiguities on every level of meaning, context, and intertext. Altogether then, Jones has all it ought to take to write an excellent book on Dostoevsky, what with his extra asset of witty and often entertaining writing.

Jones's book has one serious shortcoming. It addresses itself to a reader who must be very rare indeed. To begin with, it is a reader who really knows his Dostoevsky by heart, which rather excludes the general reader. But neither will the Dostoevsky expert be a satisfied reader of Jones's book, for it blatantly ignores the requirements of scholarly criticism. Many observations and insights presented in this book are well known to Dostoevsky scholars and Jones ought to have given credit to the authors in question. For example, introducing Bakhtin's concept of the "other voice" (*chuzhoi golos*) would have facilitated the presentation of many of Jones's observations. But Bakhtin is mentioned only once, in a relatively marginal connection.

A reader whom Jones ignores almost entirely is the one who perceives Dostoevsky's mature work as informed by a strong Christian ethos. Refusing to view Dostoevsky's works from that