

The strength of the study lies in the familiarity it reveals with the whole of the Proustian corpus; in a manifest desire to achieve rigor in the analysis; and in the will to develop a genuinely new interpretation of an important aspect of the *Recherche*. Such qualities suggest that, the apprenticeship now over, we may expect some very fine work in the future from this new Proust scholar.

Victor Terras

F. M. DOSTOEVSKY: LIFE, WORK, AND CRITICISM

Fredericton, N.B.: York Press, 1984. 41 pp. \$6.95.

Reviewed by Paul Debreczeny

With this volume York Press is launching a series called Authoritative Studies in World Literature. A work on Kafka, by Kurt J. Fickert, has also been published, and further volumes are planned on Proust, Styron, Hesse, Henry James, Nabokov, Hemingway, Leo Tolstoy, and Faulkner.

For the Dostoevsky volume, York Press is fortunate to have secured the services of a scholar of Professor Terras's accomplishments. The book, though very short, will serve as an excellent introduction and reference guide, and should be acquired by high school as well as college libraries.

Chapter One summarizes the most important events of Dostoevsky's life. Chapter Two provides a chronological list of his works, both fictional and non-fictional. Chapter Three, entitled "A Survey of Dostoevsky's Major Fiction," describes major themes, ideas, and motifs as well as (very briefly) plots; it will be particularly useful to students looking for guidance in expanding their readings.

The central chapter of the volume is called "A Synthetic View of Dostoevsky's Thought and Art." Its first sub-chapter, "Dostoevsky the Journalist and Political Figure," emphasizes the links—intricate and elusive—between Dostoevsky the publicist and Dostoevsky the artist. Terras draws attention to the difference between the young and the mature Dostoevsky's political and philosophical views, but unfortunately does not connect the latter with the writer's Siberian experience. Since in Chapter One Terras only mentions that in 1854 Dostoevsky left prison in better physical health than he had enjoyed before his arrest (p. 6), one expects that the effect of the ordeal on his mental attitudes would be explained in this central chapter; but even here, no motivation for the change in his ideas is given. This is a pity because the prison experience was obviously central both to the writer's philosophy and to his mature art (as emphasized recently by both Robert L. Jackson and Joseph Frank). Perhaps Terras considered this issue too complex to be discussed meaningfully in an introductory volume.

Where he does succeed in capturing an intricate matter in a nutshell is the second sub-chapter of the central section, entitled "Dostoevsky's Philosophy and Religious Thought." It begins with a discussion of Dostoevsky's attitude to free will and determinist scientism, continues with a description of his understanding of "real life" beyond reason, and concludes with a definition of his Christianity. This is perhaps the best part of the book. It is followed by a sub-chapter—too short even for a book of this nature and therefore less satisfying—on "Dostoevsky the Psychologist"; and finally by a discussion of "Dostoevsky's Novelistic Craftsmanship." It was a felicitous idea to combine the discussion of this last subject with a survey of Dostoevsky-criticism, for an understanding of the form of Dostoevsky's novels has emerged only gradually, as major critical works appeared both in Russia and the West.

The volume concludes with an annotated bibliography. It is, by necessity, brief, but it contains the most essential works in English. My only complaint with regard to it is that under the heading "Early Works" Terras lists only the first volume of Joseph Frank's biography, and not his own critical study, *The Young Dostoevsky*, published in 1969. Frank's first volume, in my opinion, should have been mentioned under "Biographies," with an indication that four more volumes are to follow (the second of which has actually come out by now). Terras's

1969 book, on the other hand, should have been included as essential for understanding not only Dostoevsky's early works but also the great novels of his mature years, since the versatile, often ironic, modes of presentation the mature writer used originated from his early stylistic experiments.

Jane Marcus, ed

VIRGINIA WOOLF: A FEMINIST SLANT

Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1984. Pp. 281.

\$24.95.

Reviewed by Annis Pratt

One encounters quite a few people these days who have read a Virginia Woolf novel or two, but who would like to reread her with some kind of a guide in hand. These same people often are curious about feminist criticism, but apprehensive that it may entail mere ideological sanctification of a figure "canonized" as major for her modernist style. Jane Marcus, whose explosively witty essays have clarified Woolf's art and politics during the past ten years, has edited a collection which approaches Woolf's fiction and nonfiction from a variety of "slants," using biographical, historical, and manuscript studies as well as accounts of Woolf's interaction with her contemporary women writers.

Simply put, feminist criticism applies the experience of gender to the explication of texts. Art and life, politics and aesthetics are interbraided with each other; feminist criticism unravels the strands so that an author's psychological and historical context illuminates such textual phenomena as characterization, imagery, narrative structure, and theme. Let me illustrate how the authors of these essays achieve this goal. Critics have noted that many Woolf characters debate with each other about the relative merits of singlehood and marriage, to the extent that a number of novels are structured upon conflicting attitudes to this question. Marcus explains Caroline Stephen's theories about "celibate mysticism," theories to which Woolf was undoubtedly exposed while recovering from an earlier "nervous breakdown" at her Aunt's residence, as the context within which such characters as Lucy Swithin, Eleanor Pargiter, and even Clarissa Dalloway have their being. Indeed, in one of the striking details which often illuminate Marcus's scholarship, she mentions that Stephen's history of sisterhoods includes an account of an order of married but celibate nuns called Clarissans. Stephen's theories of "inner illumination," derived from her Quaker persuasion, not only clarify Woolf's use of light imagery but also account for the symbol of the lighthouse which appears both in her work and in her aunt's.

What a young woman experiences as a fifteen year old, and what a mature woman experiences in her fifties, surely contribute to what she writes about and how she writes it. Starting with this simple truth of feminist criticism, Louise de Salvo illustrates the way works written long after the dreadful year of 1897, when Woolf's half-sister died and she was forbidden study and meaningful activity, express attitudes about sexuality as well as literary influences which have their origins in this traumatic adolescent year. Beverly Ann Schlack probes into the way Woolf's experience of Sir Leslie Stephen's vagaries (noted by his sister Caroline during Woolf's crucial visit to her) effects her characterization of fathers and other male authority figures throughout her opus. At the end of her life, in a much misunderstood body of works created in the 1930s, Woolf focused on the interplay of the personal and the political in novels and essays on the lives of women. Carolyn Heilbrun's assessment of Woolf's final and "eloquent rebellion" sets the background for Susan Squier's study of the typescript draft of *The Years*, Brenda R. Silver's fascinating account of the scrapbooks and correspondence surrounding *Three Guineas*, and Naomi Black's essay on Woolf and the women's movement.

For the reader who has heard of Virginia Woolf as a politically disengaged and "subjective" author, her social commentary during the 1930s may come as a surprise. Before 1970 she was most often presented as solitary among writers, the only woman read in many university courses, acceptable because of a charming aesthetic although ideologically suspect because of an alleged "elitism." Since her gender was either overlooked or used as a veiled excuse for