

short, makes some interesting observations and does so eloquently. There are some inevitable letdowns. To say that "Zinovev has been compared to Jonathan Swift and Joseph Heller, but it is doubtful that posterity will find his characters as universal as Gulliver or Yossarian" (111) is simply gauche.

I do have some disagreements with Lowe. He summarizes his evaluation of Tvardovsky in these words: "Western critics have failed to evince much enthusiasm for Tvardovsky's poetry, finding it hackneyed and at times even mendacious, but many Russian readers insist that Tvardovsky is a fine poet whose qualities simply are lost on non-Russians" (150). This ignores Tvardovsky's forte: his rhythms, whose easy lilt and irresistible drive have no equal this side of Blok.

Lowe is one of those many Western critics who have their reservations about Solzhenitsyn. I believe that he, like others, is inclined to disregard the inspirational and prophetic quality of Solzhenitsyn's work. I find it pointless to mention the opinion of those who assert that "Matryona's Home" "merely demonstrates Solzhenitsyn's blindness to the realities of village life, where all the Matryonas have long since become cynical crones" (85), for Matryona obviously does not belong to the genre of "the most unforgettable character I ever met," but is an ideal figure.

Lowe's apotheosis of Yury Trifonov may be premature. To place this writer with Dostoevsky and Chekhov, and to proclaim that "in his mature works he achieved a singular power of characterization and gift for composition that rendered his death a major loss for contemporary Russian and world literature" (100) seems too bold.

Lowe's presentation is excellent so long as it remains factual and to the point. His generalizations are less felicitous. For example, the long introductory paragraph on "the image of the Russian poet as a profoundly tragic figure" (125) is eloquent, but facile and perhaps misleading, as it throws together accidents of personal nature, such as Pushkin's death in a duel, with those resulting from political involvement (the Decembrist Ryleev or the counterrevolutionary Gumilyov) and the wholesale terror of the Stalin era. But altogether, this is a good and valuable book which provides a much-needed service to the profession.

René Godenne  
*ETUDES SUR LA NOUVELLE FRANÇAISE*  
Paris/Geneva: Slatkine, 1985. Pp. 312  
Reviewed by John Taylor

For those who (like myself) have ascribed to the view that the short story is a comparatively impoverished genre in French literature, René Godenne's *Etudes sur la nouvelle française* is the book to peruse. In this collection of twenty-seven articles the author amply proves the contrary. Whereas his au-

thoritative *Histoire de la nouvelle française aux XVIIe et XVIIIe siècles* (Geneva: Droz, 1970) examines the origin and early evolution of the French short story, in this collection Godenne includes essays surveying the development of the genre over the next two centuries. Several articles, of course, return to Godenne's preferred periods (e.g., "*Les Spectacles d'horreur* de J.-P. Camus," "Un plagiaire de Segrain," "Les nouvelles de Mlle de Scudéry," "Florian nouvelliste"); yet in-depth studies are also devoted to the short prose writings of Albert Camus, Marcel Arland, and André Pieyre de Mandiargues. Those uninformed about the most recent manifestations of the *nouvelle* in France will profitably turn to the essay "Vous connaissez la nouvelle?"—originally written as the introduction to two special issues of the literary review *Europe*. Outside his academic publications, in essays such as the preceding, Godenne has done much to promote the short story among the general reading public.

One of Godenne's principal concerns is the definition of the *nouvelle*. To this end he reviews in two essays a considerable number of critical viewpoints (from the period 1904-1982) and in a third examines the replies of sixty-six contemporary French short-story writers whose theoretical remarks concerning the genre were solicited in 1978-1980. An article is devoted to the problematic appellation (in French) of a "short-story writer": should the author be called a *nouvelliste* (originally a person interested in trivial news), a *novelliere* (the Italian term), a *nouvellier* (a derivation of the preceding), or a *conteur*? Godenne argues for the first term, which probably was originally used in this new sense by Baudelaire, who in 1852 thus referred to Edgar Allan Poe. The author constantly endeavors to set the historical record straight. In an article devoted to the origins of first-poem narration in the French short story, Godenne rehabilitates the importance of Charles Sorel (1600-1674), who in "Respects nuisibles" (from *Nouvelles choisies* [1645]) innovated in this regard.

If two minor objections to Godenne's methodology may be tendered, one is that his impeccable scholarship is applied solely to French literature. Few comparisons to short stories or critical viewpoints from other literary traditions are made (the article "Cervantés raconté par Florian" is an exception). Most noticeable among the absentees are the German writers (e.g., Goethe, F. Schlegel, A.W. Schlegel, Tieck, Heyse) who dealt extensively with the related, if not entirely analogous problem of the German *Nouvelle*. Second, though Godenne rightly observes that attempts to study the French short story can be undertaken only if one considers the origins of the genre in the fifteenth century and traces its evolution to the present day, he might also have brought into his theoretical scope observations made by Greek and Roman writers (e.g., Aristotle, Lucian, Cicero, Horace, Quintilian) or even by twelfth and thirteenth century rhetoricians such as Geoffroi de Vinsauf, Evrard the German, and Jean de Garlande concerning the use of "amplification" and "abbreviation" in written or oral expression. For these early critics brevity was a rhetorical technique, and it matters little that they considered its *theoretical* employment, not only in prose, but also in drama, speechmaking, and epic poetry. These drawbacks aside, *Etudes sur la nouvelle française* is particularly welcome at a time when in France, given publishers' now legendary hesitations about bringing out collections of short stories, especially by little-known authors, discussions of the genre by its advocates and aficionados tends to remain constricted within the limits of a mere promotional campaign: the so-called "defense de la nouvelle." René Godenne defends the short story, and with enthusiasm, but he also seeks

to delineate the historical and conceptual criteria by which its place in literature may justly be appraised.

Lars Harveit

*WORKINGS OF THE PICARESQUE IN THE BRITISH NOVEL*

Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press, 1987. Pp.167 \$39.95

Reviewed by Glenda A. Hudson

Part of the appeal of the picaresque novel is that "the everyday is given a touch of the extraordinary. . . the reader gets his fill of exciting adventure," observes Lars Harveit in *Workings of the Picaresque in the British Novel* (9). The reader of Harveit's study, however, experiences no such adventure. The novels examined are exciting, but Harveit's discussions are mundane and unextraordinary.

The eight brief, clear chapters deal individually with Defoe's *Colonel Jack*, Smollett's *Roderick Random*, Scott's *Rob Roy*, Thackeray's *Vanity Fair*, Dickens's *Great Expectations*, Orwell's *Down and Out in Paris and London*, and Wain's *Hurry on Down*. Six of the chapters' titles begin in the same monotonous way with "The Picaresque Formula and . . .," underscoring the pedestrian, unenterprising nature of these essays. There are no surprises and few fresh insights to be found anywhere. Indeed, Harveit never really distinguishes his own critical approach from that of other commentators on the picaresque novel. Plot summaries and unchallenged quotations from other commentators abound. In the chapter on *Great Expectations*, for example, Harveit exhumes Q.D. Leavis's view that Pip is the representative of the common man and comments: "This Everyman quality in Pip and the special nature of his sensitivity emerge in the pattern of encounters that comprise *Great Expectations*. There are two main groups of encounters in the novel, one between Pip and the convict and his representatives, and another between Pip and Miss Havisham/Estella and the world they represent" (115). And on *Vanity Fair*, he rehashes Gordon Ray's argument that the novel shows the mechanism which turned England into a "ready-money" society, and adds portentously: "It is the aim of this chapter to explore the use Thackeray makes of the picaresque formula . . . to reveal the way that the facade of the social system was cracking and the extent to which this resulted in social mobility" (81). Harveit would have been better off writing on novels about which less has already been written, since the chapters on *Great Expectations* and *Vanity Fair* seem little more than summaries.

The book is stronger and more engaging where the works and the writers are not so well known. In the discussion of Orwell's *Down and Out in Paris and London*, Harveit demonstrates how "the picaresque formula-turned upside down—helps us to perceive the contours of a new society" (146). The chapter on John Wain's *Hurry On Down* explores how the picaresque formula reveals "the predicament of a raw, sensitive, and well-educated young man of the middle class, who, in Wain's words, is 'pitchforked out into the world,' that is, the En-