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Review

Reviewed Work(s): *The Architecture of "Anna Karenina": A History of Its Writing Structure, and Message* by Elisabeth Stenbock-Fermor

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weaknesses of individual Orthodox people, including clergy, and the author seems not to have understood Timothy Ware's statement which he quotes on the very subject. Again, Leskov "rejected the authority of priests [i.e., the ordained clergy]"; but in story after story Muckle has retold, confusion and error are removed only by the wise judgment of a bishop or archbishop. The author has been well advised to spend a good bit of time on the Radstockists, for Leskov's preoccupation with them clearly indicates both his positive and negative reactions to Protestantism (of course they are only one Protestant group; so is every other). Leskov was clearly open to sympathetic investigation of other Christian groups (though the author says little about his attitude to Roman Catholics); he believed a core of doctrine and practice was common to all; he thought some Protestants had much to teach most Orthodox about Christian fundamentals. That is not necessarily the same thing as a "Protestant spirit," and the reader may well be cautious about following the author as far as he goes in this regard. But if the study yields less conclusive results than Muckle thinks, he handles the evidence judiciously and fairly, and his book merits careful attention from all students of Russian thought and literature.

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STENBOCK-FERMOR, ELISABETH. *The Architecture of "Anna Karenina": A History of Its Writing Structure, and Message*. Lisse, Netherlands: Peter de Ridder Press, 1975. 127 pp. \$6.20, paper.

In January 1878 S. A. Rachinskii, a professor of Botany, complained to Tolstoi that there was "no architecture" in *Anna Karenina*. The meeting between Anna and Levin delighted Rachinskii, but he felt that there was no "link" between the two "themes." Tolstoi had missed the opportunity "for tying all the threads of the story together." Tolstoi replied that he was "proud of the architecture" of his novel. "The arches of the vault are brought together in such a way it is even impossible to notice where the keystone is. . . . The links in the structure are not in the plot and not in the relationship (acquaintance) of the characters, but in an inner linkage." Since Tolstoi picked up the word "architecture" and "developed the metaphor," argues Professor Stenbock-Fermor, "we are entitled to use words connected with the builder's art in our search for Tolstoi's design." Supplying the reader with an annotated architectural blueprint of the novel she sets out to "trace the pattern of the invisible pillars that support the 'arches' on both sides of the 'vault' leading to the 'keystone.'" Throughout the book she uses imagery from the "builder's art" to visualize the "inner linkages." Thus, she writes: "The description of the passion itself remained the central part of the structure, supported and framed by the pillars of the four railroad scenes. Their arches were formed by the descriptions of sexual attraction, temptation, and social life which encourages sin. . . . Two new pillars were erected on both sides of the railroad scenes: the pillars and corresponding arches of the search for the meaning of life: stumbling from darkness to light for Levin; recognition of feminine duties for Kitty. And then, supporting the widest arches are the pillars representing the family. . . . In the twenty-four hours of Part IV: 12-18 all the themes which form the arches

of the novel, resting on eight pillars—four on each side of the keystone—meet for a short time only to separate again. The first and last pillars support the family principle as formulated by Dolly in the classroom” (pp. 32, 98).

Professor Stenbock-Fermor’s dogged and literal-minded pursuit of the Rachinskii-Tolstoi metaphor has both schematized *Anna Karenina* and crippled her own exposition of the novel’s design. Nonetheless, her attempt to deal with the problem of “inner linkages” is a valuable one. She rightly directs attention to the interplay of “images, actions and situations” in *Anna Karenina* and to the manner in which that interplay gives structure to the novel and its complex issues and personal dramas. Her idea of a “keystone” situation or knot is a valid one (though strangely she barely mentions the episode when “Anna’s momentary realization of the truth briefly halts the tragic impetus of the double life she has tried to lead.”)

The weakness of the book lies, in part, in its execution. Professor Stenbock-Fermor has gathered together an abundance of “building materials” and assembled them rather mechanically after the pattern of her blueprint. The core chapters concerned with established the nature and network of “inner linkage” in the novel—“The Candle,” “The Search for the Meaning of Life and Death,” “The Railroad” and “The Family Idea”—correspond to the structural divisions or “pillars” in her blueprint, but provide a rather inorganic and awkward structure for discussing *Anna Karenina*. Overwhelmed by detail, furthermore, Professor Stenbock-Fermor offers little overview and much cloudy analysis (for example, “The Candle”). The rambling and inconclusive introduction to the history of the writing of the novel poorly introduces the central portion of the book, while the last chapter, “From Linkage to Message,” really does not connect up the “linkage” with what in itself is a rather simplified view of “message.” The message of this “didactic novel” is about the “family idea, and love is the foundation of the family, and the novel was conceived as a love story.” This ambitious book fails to come up with a coherent interpretation of the novel. In this connection, the problematic character of *The Architecture of “Anna Karenina”* is conveyed indirectly by the author’s remark: “Social and moral ideas are scattered throughout the novel. They cement together all the various materials used in the structure.” If *smyslovaia struktura* has any sense, it is that structure and meaning are without fissures or cement.

Professor Stenbock-Fermor is steeped in text and context, authorial commentary and critical literature. She is an informed Tolstoi scholar. Yet, with respect to organization of material and ideas, clarity and precision of analysis and style, her book is a draft or two away from what it should be. A competent editor, for example, should have called attention to such grotesque formulations as this one that follows: “If we read in sequence: 1) the scene in the railroad (the temptation scene); 2) the description of the candle burning out in Anna’s bedroom the night before her death, when she contemplates suicide; and 3) the last lines describing her death—then we cannot but realize that Anna’s entire tragic life lies between two candle lights which are connected with railroad noises and the apparition of a peasant working over iron, two symbols that have already attracted literary critics, and with yet another very important, but neglected symbol, the reading of a book” (p. 43).

These lines in their own curious way call attention to the limitations of Professor Stenbock-Fermor’s book both on the plane of concept and on that

of execution. Nonetheless, for all its vagaries *The Architecture of "Anna Karenina"* grapples with serious problems. For more reasons than one it will challenge the reader.

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CIORAN, SAMUEL D. *Vladimir Solov'ev and the Knighthood of the Divine Sophia*. Waterloo, Ontario: Wilfred Laurier University Press, 1977. 280 pp. \$7.00, cloth; \$4.50, paper.

Vladimir Solov'ev, religious philosopher, essayist, translator of Plato, scholar and poet, has not yet received the attention that is his due either in the Soviet Union or in the West. Ideological, political and religious considerations aside, the reasons for this comparative lack of attention must be looked for in the esoteric nature of his thought and the difficulty presented by the ambiguity of some of his key concepts. Among such concepts that of Divine Sophia (the wisdom of God) with its shifting references and associations is perhaps most difficult of all.

Professor Cioran has not only undertaken the formidable task of clarifying the meaning of Solov'ev's concept of Divine Sophia in his philosophical writings and in his poetry, but has also proceeded to trace the "literary fate" of this concept in the works of the Russian symbolists, Aleksandr Blok and Andrei Belyi. Cioran also contends that in Solov'ev and his symbolist "disciples" the religious concept of Sophia is combined with attitudes and motifs proper to the Western medieval tradition of chivalry, the practice of knight-errantry with its attendant cult of devotion to the Lady (human or divine).

Cioran begins his study with a careful analysis of Solov'ev's concept of Divine Sophia and its relation to a constellation of associated concepts or images: the World Soul, the Eternal Feminine, the Creation (nature and landscape), the Platonic two Aphrodites, etc.; the reflections or symbolizations of Sophia are then traced in Solov'ev's poetry and in his life with its two moments of mystical ecstasy on the one hand and an almost inevitable disillusionment on the other. Therefore, while Sophia may give birth to the Divine Feminine, disillusionment manifests itself in the appearance of the Demonic Feminine. Cioran's analysis is a valuable contribution to the appreciation of Solov'ev's thought and poetry. After the initial attention to Solov'ev, Cioran then looks at the Symbolists' acceptance of Solov'ev's concept and its impact on their theory and practice. Belyi's and Blok's articles and their correspondence are used to support the exegesis of their poetry, prose and drama. This portion of Cioran's study (Parts 2 and 4) is a stimulating and rewarding study of their work. However, this reviewer has some reservations concerning both the selection of works and some of the conclusions. A brief review prohibits detailed objections but perhaps two or three examples are permissible. Cioran has not used Blok's most important article of 1910, "The Present Condition of Russian Symbolism" with its direct references to Solov'ev's poetry. Blok's "dramatic poem," "The Song of Fate" is surely a more pertinent work for comparison with Belyi's *The Silver Dove* than the verse from *Unexpected Joy*. Finally the conclusion that "Blok's Beautiful Lady is entirely a spectre of night" seems to refute Cioran's own thesis and is not supported by Blok's poetry.