

THE TRIUMPH OF THE NOVEL: DICKENS, DOSTOEVSKY, FAULKNER.

By *Albert J. Guerard*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1976. x, 365 pp. \$13.95.

Albert Guerard has written major studies of Conrad, Gide, and Hardy, and is one of the venerables of American criticism of fiction, as well as a novelist of some importance himself. He knows well the tradition of the novel, the technical innovations that have characterized the novel since Flaubert, and the psychological theories that have come to affect our understanding of fiction. There are many things that this ambitious work is not: it is not a systematic and chronological treatment of the corpus of each writer; it is not, also, an attempt to handle—whatever the order—all of the works of importance. Faulkner's *Absalom, Absalom*, Dostoevsky's *The Possessed*, and Dickens's *Martin Chuzzlewit* are picked out for special and detailed treatment. The work is not even a comparative study, since the treatment of each novelist, except for occasional common concerns, proceeds rather independently.

Guerard does not deny himself anything: concern with technique, with the inner dynamics of the work, with biography, audience response, sources, notebooks, and cultural background. The approach is eclectic in the best sense, a term he seems to enjoy. He is against the mimetic conception of the novel and is for a view of the novel as a medium for making impossibilities real, a conception that has less importance than he attributes to it. Although he is defensive about his psychological interests and expertise, he is often at his best in the handling of authorial obsessions and psycho-sexual taboos. His remarks about the "forbidden games" that each of the authors indulges in (Dostoevsky's pedophilia, Faulkner's misogyny, and Dickens's forbidden marriages) are fascinating, original, and very illuminating.

This is a good book, but I had difficulty finding the focus of the work. It is not necessarily a thesis that is lacking and surely not a dogma relentlessly propounded, but something that gives specific shape to the many excellent points made by the author and something that justifies bringing together these three literary giants. Guerard has a mind that shies away from special visions, points of view, and arguments; but arguments shade into coherences, shapes, and identities. Guerard comes at the reader from many directions and the directions keep changing. He immerses the works and personalities of the three writers in a generation of thinking and writing about fiction and does so in a very personal context. From all this emerges a rather unusual work. I found myself fascinated but also unsettled and at times irritated. If one can put aside the demands for a systematic argument and open oneself up to a lively mind playing across the tradition of the Western novel and bringing multiple perspectives to the works of these three important writers, the book will be fresh and new.

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THE GENTLE BARBARIAN: THE LIFE AND WORK OF TURGENEV. By

V. S. Pritchett. New York: Random House, 1977. xii, 244 pp. + 8 pp. photographs. \$10.00.

Why is this book so disappointing? Factually there is much confusion, for example, the Tjutchevs—the poet and the estate manager—get mixed up. Additionally, except for the lengthy plot summaries, much is secondhand; Yarmolinsky, Magarshack, and Freeborn have been raided at will.

There is a symptomatic lack of scholarly apparatus: no footnotes and too few attributions; no index; dates are so rarely mentioned that even the reasonably informed reader loses track. The "Bibliography" is a wildly random grab bag: two recent editions of Chekhov's letters, Sand's *Consuelo*, and Anna Dostoevsky's *Remi-*