

expenses, but the emotional problems and nuances which were difficult to deal with."

That doesn't excuse the corporations, though. The point is that "The way capitalism has exploited the alienated human needs for love and dignity and has, above all, exploited the resulting sexual obsession for profit or power, have [sic] diverted people from paths toward true autonomy."

It's getting worse, too. "In the Reagan campaign, the far Right clearly played to and diverted our rage, using the power of Government

to subordinate the interests of people to profit and subjecting our lives even further to authoritarian or corporate control, while pretending to do the opposite." She recalls that, while Ronald Reagan doesn't look much like Hitler, "various political scientists have suggested that if fascism comes in America it will be a 'friendly fascism.'"

Like Margaret Fuller, spunkily deciding to accept the universe, Betty Friedan has chosen to admit a few basic truths about human nature. We can applaud her for that, but hardly for the rest of what she has to say. □

## LECTURES ON RUSSIAN LITERATURE

Vladimir Nabokov, edited by Fredson Bowers  
Harcourt Brace Jovanovich / \$19.95

Charles Nicol

Vladimir Nabokov, the last great modern author, born the same year as Hemingway but much later in his impact, shared with a brilliant generation those emblematic features of exile and translingual authority; yet he was still exemplary: tri-lingual

Charles Nicol, Professor of English at Indiana State University, is co-editor of Nabokov's Fifth Arc, forthcoming from the University of Texas Press.

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and thrice in exile. Chronology is, however, more chance than causality, and literary history hardly begins to classify the individual genius. Better to note that Nabokov's wit was his own; that with Flaubert and Chekhov he shared a scientific attitude and a cold eye; that with Proust he shared a passionate artistry of memory; and that with, say, Melville, Borges, and T.S. Eliot he shared a love of literary reference. He belonged with his readers to a culture of literature. Russian literature was essential to the structure of the early *Despair* and then to *The Gift*, Nabokov's magnificent farewell to his native language; world literature underpinned the late, enormous *Invitation to a Beheading*. He defined his

predecessors by his allusions, the resonance of his language by the books off which it bounced. It was a dialogue not with history but with his fellow masters. The lectures on literature are that dialogue in a different form.

The elective affinities of writers are often fascinating—Herman Melville, Henry James, and D.H. Lawrence all wrote well about Nathaniel Hawthorne without having much else in common. Nabokov's first major publication was a translation into Russian of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*. As a young émigré in Berlin, he wrote book reviews, the first Russian crossword puzzles, chess problems, and professional articles on butterflies. He helped support himself with English and tennis lessons—all in all, a fitting background for a future American academic, if not necessarily for a major novelist. And indeed, Nabokov's American years produced not only *Lolita*, three other novels, and *Speak, Memory*, but also a wonderfully perverse book on Gogol and a brilliantly eccentric edition of *Eugene Onegin*.

Those many years of teaching, first at Wellesley, then at Cornell, left a quantity of further material on Russian and European fiction; throughout his twenty years in a Swiss hotel, Nabokov promised to publish his classroom lectures. Many students had testified to their fascination, and Nabokov's own memory seems to have improved on his legendary classroom performance: He claimed in those arch late interviews to have delivered the lectures from neatly typed manuscripts. Yet those manuscripts actually were often mere notes which even when typed had been endlessly modified in pen and pencil; most existed only in handwritten form, sometimes in a number

of versions, sometimes in mere fragments—and sometimes lectures had been either delivered extemporaneously or later lost altogether. The interviews created a mythical earlier Nabokov, an ideally austere teacher who perhaps confounded his later avatar when he opened that Pandora's box of old classroom lectures. At his death in 1977 the project was not only unfinished but unbegun. It became a job for experts.

Enter Fredson Bowers, the notorious dean of American scholarly editing, himself in his seventies. In his heyday Bowers had set up a sort of bible of textual editing, laying down the commandments that no later scholar dared violate. His edition of Stephen Crane was outrageous in the length and ostentation of its textual notes. Students from thirty years ago at the University of Virginia remember his affected manner, his cigarette in its long holder, his disciples (parading the same cigarette holder) who thought editing a great science instead of a minor art. Praise the Lord, his version of Nabokov's lectures is merely a "reading edition"—which means that textual notes are minimal, the statement of "Editorial Method" is brief, and Bowers has become all unbuttoned. Yet there is still something of the martinet and a whiff of the overbearingly incompetent here. I have seen only praise for Bowers's editing of these two volumes, the first on Austen, Dickens, Flaubert, Joyce, Kafka, Proust, and Stevenson,\* the present one on Chekhov, Dostoyevsky, Gogol, Gorky, Tolstoy, and Turgenev; but it seemed to me in reading the earlier volume that Bowers lost the thread of Nabokov's argument on Joyce and sewed the pieces together cross-patch, and the evidence in this volume is even more disquieting.

*Lectures on Russian Literature* contains, in the first place, one piece of very polished writing: a large portion of Nabokov's book on Gogol. While that book may have grown out of Nabokov's lecture notes, it seems inexcusable to excerpt the sections on *Dead Souls* and "The Overcoat" just because Nabokov discussed those works in class. The Gogol material should have been either left out altogether, since a published version was already available, or included in its totality—along with, perhaps, Nabokov's published introduction to *A Hero of Our Times* to replace his missing lecture on Lermontov. Now,

# There is opportunity in America!



Sarkes Tarzian Inc. Bloomington, Indiana

\**Lectures on Literature*, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1980, \$19.95.

remember that in the Gogol section a famous textual editor was not painstakingly putting together a mosaic from old fragments of glittering tile, but merely reprinting a portion of an earlier text over which his author had originally exercised editorial control. All we need is an accurate transcription from one book to another—child's play. Yet here is an excerpt from Nabokov's original *Nikolai Gogol* of 1944, nicely capturing some features of *Dead Souls*:

The faceless saloon-walker in the next passage (whose movements are so quick as he welcomes the newcomers that you cannot discern his features) is again seen a minute later coming down from Chichikov's room and spelling out the name on a slip of paper as he walks down the steps. "Pa-vel I-va-no-vich Chi-chi-kov"; and these syllables have a taxonomic value for the identification of that particular staircase.

When speaking of *The Government Inspector* I found pleasure in rounding up those peripheral characters that enliven the texture of its background. Such characters in *Dead Souls* as the inn-servant or Chichikov's valet (who had a special smell of his own which he imparted at once to his variable lodgings) do not quite belong to that class of Little People. With Chichikov himself and the country squires he meets they share the front stage of the book although they speak little and have no visible influence upon the course of Chichikov's adventures. Technically speaking, the creation of peripheral personages in the play was mainly dependent upon this or that character alluding to people who never emerged from the wings. In a novel the lack of action or speech on the part of secondary characters would not have been sufficient to endow them with that kind of backstage existence, there being no footlights to stress their actual absence from the front place.

Bowers, having decided to omit the section on *The Government Inspector*, must have thought the first sentence of the second paragraph too direct in its pointing to the missing matter; he changed it to "In such works by Gogol as *The Government Inspector* I find pleasure . . ." This pointless alteration of the specific into the general ("such works") immediately forces Bowers to add the redundant "by Gogol"; more important, it fails to acknowledge that the rest of Nabokov's paragraph is a direct comparison of the two works, and in fact, the alteration of past tense to present ("found" to "find") makes hash of that comparison, since Nabokov refers consistently to only the novel in the present tense, with the play relegated to the past. With this kind of dabbling going on, it should be no surprise to find that Bowers the scholar has let a misprint creep into the passage, "taxonomic" for "taxonomic," fittingly implying a sort of poisoned text.

Perhaps at this point we should remind ourselves of Bowers's statement of principles in his Introduction:

The editor of a reading edition may be permitted to deal more freely with inconsistencies, inadvertent mistakes, and incomplete inscription, including the need sometimes to add bridge passages in connection with quotation. On the other hand, no reader would want a manipulated text that endeavored to "improve" Nabokov's writing in any intrusive way even in some of its unpolished sections. Thus a synthetic approach has been firmly rejected, and Nabokov's language has been reproduced with fidelity save for words missing by accident and inadvertent repetitions often the result of incomplete revision.

This sounds better than it works. We have already seen Bowers dealing with previously published material; now let us look at his way with fairly clean typescript. The typescript is clean because this particular lecture was delivered only once, in 1958, at a "Festival of the Arts" at Cornell. The passage is on page one, no less, of *Lectures on Russian Literature*, with the original typed copy conveniently reproduced on the facing page. Nabokov's original, discussing the small compass of Russian literature, proceeds as follows: "It is evident that neither French nor English literature can be so compactly handled. They sprawl over many more centuries, the number of masterpieces is formidable—and this brings me to my first point." If we did not have a statement of principles to guide us, we might be tempted to change "they sprawl" to "both sprawl" or "either sprawls"—no, of course we wouldn't. But neither would we tie down Nabokov's racy syntax to the ponderous academic punctuation that with Bowers passes for "fidelity" to the original: "They sprawl over many more centuries; the number of masterpieces is formidable. This brings me to my first point." After this we can only imagine what Bowers has done in his efforts not to "improve" those obscure and written-over notes that constitute most of Nabokov's lectures.

What about the lectures, finally? Simply, anyone interested in nineteenth-century Russian literature, one of the real glories of world literature, should read them. They are of course uneven. The brief section on Gorky can be skipped, save for its apostrophe to the Moscow Art Theater. The section on Gogol is brilliant, but readers should really turn to Nabokov's *Nikolai Gogol* rather than to this excerpt. The section on Turgenev is sensitive, illuminating, an excellent introduc-

tion to a novelist perhaps not much read today; Nabokov nicely delineates the "Turgenev maiden," celebrates the descriptions of nature, and describes Turgenev's problems with his reputation as a social critic. The section on Chekhov is almost oversympathetic, an opportunity for Nabokov to elaborate his own ideal of a non-didactic literature. In discussing the stories, he sometimes has to fall back on explaining possible ways that scenes might have been done badly in order to show Chekhov's originality. The discussion of *The Seagull* has more bite.

Dostoyevsky is a special case. Determined to prove that Dostoyevsky was no giant at all, Nabokov displays not only a thorough knowledge of the books he is debunking but a sympathy for the personal trials that, in Nabokov's view, destroyed Dostoyevsky as an artist. To attack well, one must define the battlefield, and Nabokov's own ideas about what constitutes literature are laid out on clear tracks that carry his juggernaut to the fray.

But the glory of *Lectures on Russian Literature* is the section, nearly a third of the whole, devoted to Tolstoy—mostly to *Anna Karenina* (translations of which should, in Nabokov's opinion, be entitled *Anna Karenin*). Although thinking little of Tolstoy's philosophy (and conversely, admiring the man for trying to live by it), and thinking still less about Tolstoy's use of the works as vehicles for its propagation, Nabokov is

continually impressed by the artistry and subtlety of Tolstoy's observations: *Anna Karenina* remains beautifully lucid no matter how closely one examines the apparatus of its construction. Here is Nabokov's famous hand-drawn sketch of the "very primitive 'sleeping car'" of Anna's journey, including the direction of the blizzard that beat against its windows on the west side; unfortunately, Nabokov's wonderful and extensive analysis of that scene comes eighty pages earlier in the text than the illustration, but the whole remains one of the most acute studies ever done of a literary work. The passion of Nabokov's ideas even goes beyond reasonable presentation: "Tolstoy's prose keeps pace with our pulses, his characters seem to move with the same swing as the people passing under our window while we sit reading his book." This is, I think, more in the arena of faith than in that of criticism, but Nabokov comes close to proving it.

Nabokov always detested the exhuming of an author's literary remains; he swore he destroyed the working manuscripts of his novels. Perhaps he thought differently of these lectures, which after all do represent the detritus of public occasions. *Onegin* translator Walter Arndt may be amused to see another of Nabokov's rhymed Pushkin translations come to light. I wouldn't have missed any of it.

In trying to catch Nabokov's irreverent reverence for Russian literature,

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I can do no better than to repeat the inappropriately appropriate close of one of his sections on Gogol:

So to sum up: the story goes this way: mumble, mumble, lyrical wave, mumble, lyrical wave, mumble, lyrical wave, mumble, fantastic climax, mumble, mumble,

and back into the chaos from which they all had derived. At this superhigh level of art, literature is of course not concerned with pitying the underdog or cursing the upperdog. It appeals to that secret depth of the human soul where the shadows of other worlds pass like the shadows of nameless and soundless ships. □

HOW TO WIN ARGUMENTS  
William A. Rusher / Doubleday / \$10.95

HOW TO STAND UP FOR YOUR RIGHTS—AND WIN  
Roy Cohn / Simon & Schuster / \$13.95

Mitchell S. Ross

Here are two fresh pieces of evidence that America's book publishers are thinking of you. If you are always being bumped around this rude world, always ending up on the raw end of deals, then perhaps Roy Cohn can be of service. If your tongue tends to become tied whenever you enter into high-minded colloquies, then maybe William Rusher is your man.

Cohn's is the more practical of the two books; Rusher's the more literate. Both books include many instructive and entertaining anecdotes. Neither Rusher nor Cohn is much concerned here with promoting conservative politics, although neither author hides his political preferences. Cohn sneaks in a few conventional jabs at the welfare state and Rusher's book comes dressed with a friendly jacket blurb from John Kenneth Galbraith, calling it "an amusing and informed treatise. And when you consider the cases the author has to argue, you know that it has to be good." Both Rusher and Cohn are mainly filling the basic prescription of how-to books: Help the reader help himself.

Docile soul that I am, I found much in both texts to enlighten me. And yet . . . when I recently—needless to say, with the greatest reluctance—became involved in some disputes involving my personal affairs, and I attempted to apply the authors' wisdom to these, I found it almost totally useless. Why was this so? I suspect it is that these books, like all how-to books, are intrinsically weakest where they might be most helpful: By addressing themselves to readers in general they address themselves to nobody in particular. Most problems in real life are filled

with peculiarities deriving from human idiosyncrasy, and the how-to book, far from providing us with real assistance, ultimately leaves us with a sense of the hollowness of its advice and the loneliness of our own situations.

Let us consider Rusher's mellow meditation for a moment. Anyone who has ever encountered or witnessed the man in debate can attest that Rusher is as formidable an opponent as you could ever hope to find. In *How to Win Arguments* he freely shares the stories of some of his triumphs (and disappointments) with us. In the course of a discussion of radio and television arguments he writes of how he impaled the reputation of Jane Fonda on a "Dick Cavett Show" when his opposite number was the actor Donald Sutherland, a friend of La Fonda.

Rusher tells how the hour was won by sneaking in the last word—a reference to Jane wearing "a tooth of Ho Chi Minh's on a necklace." Rusher continues: "Actually I knew that what she wore was a piece of metal salvaged from a U.S. bomber shot down over North Vietnam, but I had playfully chosen 'a tooth of Ho Chi Minh's' as about equally offensive from an American standpoint and rather more comical." Never mind the ethical question for now (Sutherland sulked that "conservatives are always doing this sort of thing" but he was given no time for a real rebuttal): The point is that beyond such obvious steps as preparing and organizing yourself, the key to winning an argument is to be William A. Rusher.

I am reminded of the occasion, for some reason not mentioned in *How to Win Arguments*, when Rusher invaded my home precinct in Detroit in order to do battle with a local

television host, a fabled fire-breather of liberal bent. After assailing Rusher for several minutes and coming off much the worse for it, the host finally threw up his arms and asked (my memory of his words may be slightly imprecise), "Tell me, Mr. Rusher. Do I represent this great liberal rot you're talking about?" To which Rusher suavely responded, "In a small way, Mr. Gordon, in a small way." How is Arnie Average to match such strokes in his own arguments? As for Mr. Gordon, he suffered a heart attack and died not too long after running into Rusher.

Roy Cohn's book, too, is filled with shrewd advice, but how much of it will ever prove useful to readers who aren't half as fast on their feet as Cohn himself? "I don't expect anyone to agree with everything in this book," he writes. "I do want to give encouragement and support to those

who are willing to stop being the Caspar Milquetoasts of the world. The Bible says that the meek shall inherit the earth. But in my experience the only earth the meek inherit is that in which they are eventually buried. I write for those who would take charge of their own lives, those who are willing to stand up for their rights!"

Very noble, very nice. But surely Roy Cohn realized long ago that his brand of street wisdom cannot be transmitted through a how-to book, even as William Rusher knows that the publication of *How to Win Arguments* will not inspire the spawning of Rusherian advocates across the Republic. No, ladies and gentlemen: Rusher and Cohn will roar with approval at the arrival of their royalty checks as the American publishing industry marches on, churning out how-to books that promise and then deny those suckers—the book buyers—an even break. □

A TREATISE ON THE FAMILY  
Gary Becker / Harvard University Press / \$20.00

Kenneth Stein

"Marriage is a great institution, but I'm not ready for an institution, yet."  
—Mae West

Until now, economists examining human institutions have kept away from the family, ignoring the household's dynamics even while using it as a fundamental unit in their calculations. Now, Gary Becker comes forward to remedy all that. Indeed, he is ambitious enough to want to explain not only the economics of the family but the family itself, using the assumptions normally used to explain economic transactions. Becker begins *A Treatise on the Family* by telling us that he will attempt to "analyze marriage, births, divorce, division of labor in households, prestige, and other nonmaterial behavior with the tools and framework developed for material behavior." His is an attempt that is, at times, brilliant, and always elegant, but an attempt that ultimately, because this analysis is inappropriate to nonmarket transactions, fails.

Two hundred years of studying markets has produced a coherent,

Kenneth Stein is a free-lance writer who works in Cambridge but lives in New York.

and beautifully simple, set of generalizations about man's behavior. The modern economic approach, as Becker describes it, "assumes that individuals maximize their utility from basic preferences that do not change rapidly over time." Two results spring from these assumptions. First, economic man acts so that the marginal costs of his activities are equal to their marginal benefits; second, he acts so that the marginal benefit of a dollar spent on one activity equals the marginal benefit of a dollar spent on any other. It is this theory that Becker appropriates to explain the various phenomena of family.

This is an attractive approach. Self-interest, construed broadly enough, can easily be viewed as the basic motivation behind human action. Of course, "broadly enough" may be so all-encompassing that the theory loses all predictive value. However, if we accept a notion of self-interest narrow enough to fall short of tautology, then an analysis of the family follows logically. Becker explains that there is division of labor within the household for much the same reasons as within industry. He

Mitchell S. Ross is the author of *The Literary Politicians* and *An Invitation to Our Times*.