

it has been recited and sung in coffeehouses by poet-musicians to audiences in urban and rural areas who have been primarily poor and usually illiterate or semilliterate.

Despite negative judgments by the learned men steeped in the religious or literate Arab-Islamic tradition, this folk epic has persisted and has overcome the prejudice against its heroic narrative art. Connelly uses the most recent theories and methods in the fields of comparative literature, rhetoric, folklore, and oral tradition to bring out the significance of this epic in Arab culture. She views her work as a study in contrasts and ambivalence, noting the conflictual themes in the epic opposing Berber to Arab, sedentary agriculturalist to nomadic bedouin, arrival to departure, love to hatred, and peace to war. Her analysis of the epic in oral performance shows that audiences continue to be moved because the epic symbolically reenacts their conflicts and tells of often unconscious or subconscious dilemmas in their daily lives regarding issues of class, status, and social and religious identity. Abû Zayd, the black hero of the epic who is an apparent bastard, outcast from his family to become a stranger in a land he fights to make his own, is shown to be the focus of audience sympathies as listeners and performers identify with him. Connelly's analysis does not study the themes only but also the language and its oral transformations in the epic, paying attention to how puns, metonyms, and metaphors are used to generate feelings of identification and dissolution of boundaries.

This is an important contribution to a new understanding of the Arab epic of Bani Hilâl as a saga of identity and cultural self-definition. It advances our knowledge of the relationship between the formal and the informal aspects of Arabic literature as it sheds further light on the significance of the oral tradition disdained by the learned for a long time, as much in performance as in the cheap pulp editions of variants to be found in bookstalls all over the Middle East. Connelly's study reinstates it among the learned as an integral part of the culture of the masses in the Arab world.

Roger B. Anderson

DOSTOEVSKY: MYTHS OF DUALITY

University of Florida Humanities Monograph Series, No. 58

Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 1986. Pp. x + 186

Reviewed by Victor Terras

In an introduction which contains a useful discussion of recent approaches to myth, Professor Anderson promises to show that Dostoevsky's novels "cohere structurally through the kind of symbolic reasoning that distinguishes myth" (p. 3). He certainly keeps this promise. With the aid of Bakhtin, Lotman, Vygotsky, and a structuralist conception in general, Professor Anderson demonstrates that Dostoevsky's fiction develops patterns analogous to those of the ideas that moved the society of his age, then proceeds to recognize in these patterns new versions of very ancient myths.

Professor Anderson's analysis of *The Double* suggests that its hero, Golyadkin, is "caught between two worlds, two distinct mental processes" (p. 25). This would not seem to be a novel observation, except for the fact that Anderson finds in Golyadkin's stream of consciousness distinct reflexions of an atavistic condition of the human psyche which generates archetypal myths. The chapter on *Notes from Underground* performs an analogous operation in somewhat more specific terms, as the patterns of neurotic behavior displayed by the anti-hero are interpreted as a re-enactment of the trickster myth, an anthropological universal. Anderson's argument presents strong evidence in support of the notion that even the most "modern" and topical works cannot escape the patterns of archetypal myths.

Crime and Punishment as "rites of redefinition" seems less convincing, perhaps because the elements of a more immediately perceptible political allegory and an explicit religious message are so clearly dominant. But the chapter on *The Idiot* is again most compelling. The familiar interpretation of Prince Myshkin as an allegoric Christ figure is quite appropriately expanded in the direction of the myth of the suffering deity, Dionysus. Though this may appear far

etched initially, Anderson is able to produce an impressive array of detail in support of his conception.

The Devils were given a mythical reading early, by Vyacheslav Ivanov in particular. This novel seems particularly suited to support Anderson's central thesis. His interpretation, subtitled "Duality as Daemon," is competent and features some interesting observations, but does not significantly add to what is commonly accepted with regard to this novel. But then the chapter on *The Brothers Karamazov* is richly rewarding. Anderson's interpretation of Father Zosima's faith as "mythic in origin" is supported by many details. A number of other themes in the novel are also given a plausible mythical interpretation.

Altogether, Professor Anderson's book is valuable in two basic ways: it offers intriguing interpretations of particular aspects, episodes, and details of Dostoevsky's novels, and it provides a solid body of evidence supporting the theory of the mythical core of all fiction.

Judi M. Roller

THE POLITICS OF THE FEMINIST NOVEL

Westport: Greenwood Press, 1986. Pp. 206, \$12.95

Reviewed by Mary Beth Pringle

Judi M. Roller's *The Politics of the Feminist Novel* demonstrates powerfully that a female writer's political attitudes are likely to influence her style as well as her choice of subject and material. In compact, yet stunningly comprehensive chapters, Roller shows that political novels by women share several characteristics: an anti-authoritarian perspective, a rejection of traditional sex roles, an end that involves death or escape, and similar symbolic patterns.

In Chapter 1, Roller defines categories in an intriguing, original reading of *The Awakening* that explains Edna Pontellier's suicide as underscoring "her sense of hopelessness and the mixture of passivity and daring that forms her personality" (p. 18). Chapter 2 examines women writers' use of the autobiographical, anti-authoritarian, first-person narrative form which, according to Roller, may be a "form of female authorial rebellion" (p. 36). She goes on to argue more generally that other decisions of narrative form may also be political acts. Roller's third chapter explores women writers' recognition that, given society as we know it, individual and social "fragmentation" are inevitable. Even so, says Roller, women writers of political novels don't expect in either area a "unity" impossible to achieve. As Roller writes, real "wholeness in the modern world implies an acceptance of disorder and a concomitant rejection of both the deceptive unity offered by roles and the destruction of the personality implicit in separation and fragmentation" (p. 68). In a fourth chapter, Roller suggests that female protagonists in political novels usually share some responsibility for the ending of their stories. Such novels often end in flight (escape) or death (literal or symbolic). In a small group of novels, she notes, however, that "heroines neither flee nor die. Instead, they fight back, and they all enjoy some measure of success" (p. 131). Finally, in Chapter 5, Roller traces symbol patterns common in women's political novels and shows them to be expressive of slavery vs. freedom.

The range of Dr. Roller's knowledge of both halves of her study—political criticism, feminist and otherwise, as well as women's fiction—is impressive. She moves easily from de Beauvoir to Howe, from Lessing to Jong. An intersection of these two bodies of information under Roller's astute guidance results in new insights for readers in either discipline. Along the way, Dr. Roller assigns political importance to a wide range of contemporary, popular