

brandt were essential for its impact; in the second stanza the poet asks the master's forgiveness because of the absence in his own scene of these bystanders. We do not think that the second stanza contains "vague images of unease and guilt" (page 585), but an explanation and justification for this absence, introduced by the word "no" (but). Lines 3 and 4 of this stanza are the most difficult of the poem, but the biographical information that we are given provides no clue. To interpret the words "oko sokolinogo pera" as a pen that sees sharply, as a poet seeing sharp and clear, does not go beyond traditional boundaries. We need not go so much further to interpret the hot jewel boxes in midnight's harem as the stars, perhaps the Soviet stars; these lines thus function in the opposition between light and dark that is taken up in the first line, runs through "goriashchego" and "spiat," through "chernozelenoi temi," and on to the dusk of the last line. Both the poet looking at the life of day and the stars in the night disturb—to no good, for they do not bring good tidings to—a people that is alarmed by its *clair-obscur* situation, by the dusk it lives in. And in this alarm they do not want to come out of the dusk either to the lure of the midnight stars or to the fully clear day.

The amount of conditional in this explanation shows clearly that I do not consider it final. In particular, the net of associations could be spun further and clearer, first within the cycle, and then beyond it to other works. We will find several references to Rembrandt, to *mekh*, to the featherlike fire of two sleepy apples for eyes, to "kholshchevyi sumrak," etc. There will remain uncertainties, but more of them will be solved in this way than by direct biographical reference. No more than for Blok's or Pasternak's poetry do we depend on biographical evidence for our admiration and understanding of Mandel'shtam's poetry.

February 26, 1968

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TO THE EDITORS:

In his very generous review of my *Tolstoy and the Novel* [*Slavic Review*, XXVI, No. 3 (Sept. 1967), 510–11], Professor [Ralph E.] Matlaw notes that there is no word *samodovol'nost'* in Russian. He is of course right: in the dictionary sense there is no such word as "self-satisfiedness" in English, but I think a critic could use it if he thought it more accurately descriptive in a critical context than would be "self-satisfaction." I intended *samodovol'nost'* as a coinage of this kind and for this purpose, which I should have made clear when I first used it in the book.

Professor Matlaw is a far more experienced Russianist than I, but I think he would agree that the *-ost'* suffix—like *-ness* in English but usually more euphoniously—has often been used to confer a generalizing and conceptualizing sense; see *narodnost'* and Pushkin's *samobytnost'*. As Viazemskii said, "Okonchanie *-ost'*—slavnyi svodnik."

January 15, 1968

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TO THE EDITORS:

The recent review of the second volume of Siegfried Müller-Markus' *Einstein und die Sowjetphilosophie* by Maxim W. Mikulak (*Slavic Review*, December 1967, pp. 696–97) provides us with some useful information but also, it seems to me, with a misleading statement which should not go unchallenged. Einstein's relativity physics was not "officially banned," says Dr. Mikulak, and in fact its "title to ex-