had had with the Tsar is a question biographers still ponder. These personal letters from Alexander I might provide some answer. Here he writes about private matters as well as political and government issues.

The second largest number of letters from a single correspondent are from Cardinal Ercole Consalvi. Aroutunova suggests that Consalvi sought Volkonskaia's attention for her political and social connections, and that possibly her enormous wealth was also a consideration in his friendship with Princess Volkonskaia. She left her large fortune to the Vatican. Attracted to Catholicism for some time, Princess Volkonskaia officially converted to Catholicism in 1833 in Rome where she had lived, from 1829, with but an occasional visit to Russia, until the end of her life.

The letters to Zinaida Volkonskaia attest to her wide range of connections, her many interests, and her social and literary contributions. From 1825 to 1829 she was the center of a lively salon in Moscow attended by leading literary figures of Pushkin's generation, some of whose letters are included in this volume. A writer in her own right, she left a number of prose pieces and poems written in French, Russian and Italian. She also composed several musical works and was widely acclaimed in Russia and in Europe for her singing and acting talents.

The letters to Volkonskaia were written between 1812 and 1838. These letters reflect important political, social and cultural developments that marked that era, offer an added perspective on Volkonskaia and her tumultuous life, highlight the contemporary literary environment, and shed additional light on her many correspondents, all of whom played an important role in Russia's cultural or political life. This volume, in its entirety, offers material valuable to biographers, literary scholars, and historians.

Toby W. Clyman


The contents of this book are, as the subtitle indicates, heterogeneous. In the first two chapters the author examines in a Russian context the legacy of classical antiquity perceived through the prism of romanticist values—with special emphasis on the concept of the verse fragment. Chapter 3, entitled "Self as Other in the Oriental Poems," explores that intriguing sounding theme in connection with Pushkin's "southern poems" and the *Journey to Arzrum.* Then follows a section devoted to *Boris Godunov* and the "rhetoric of imposture" which that play is said to exemplify. In the fifth chapter it is the ironic and fragmentary aspects of *Eugene Onegin* which engage Greenleaf's attention. While in the last she analyzes the "Cleopatra cycle" of works and (as capping stone) *The Captain's Daughter*—each as an 'ironic self-representation" of the author himself.

Greenleaf, it should be said at the outset, is a scholar of industry and ingenuity. Her style is sophisticated, her research impressive, and her frame of reference (from the *Greek Anthology* to Lacan) wide. Why then did the reviewer put down her book with a feeling of disappointment mingled with frustration?
The author's weakness for bold, dogmatic, and unsustainable generalizations is one of the reasons. One may concede, for instance, that ambiguities may sometimes lie beneath the limpid surface of Pushkin's verse and prose, yet balk at the assertion that "every [Pushkinian] text" yields "riddles." Every? Or again: no one doubts that the characters of Eugene Onegin are to some degree modeled on—and in turn model themselves on—fictional forbears. But when Greenleaf roundly declares that "all the characters' actions" in that novel "amount to good or bad acts of reading," she is more provocative than persuasive: does Tat'iana's ultimate rejection of Onegin really come out of a book? Or again: it is one thing to note that during his last seven years Pushkin wrote more prose than verse; it is quite another to claim that he "abandoned poetry with much fanfare in 1830." Nor does the text of Eugene Onegin give support for her twice repeated assertion that the impeccably dressed hero appears in public "doubly disguised." Under the accumulated weight of such excesses (my list could easily be lengthened) our credulity is stretched to the breaking point.

Sometimes, too, the author simply gets her facts wrong. Byron could not have been Pushkin's earliest "contact with romanticism"—if only because Chateaubriand came first. How could Pushkin have possibly read Karamzin "through Fouché," when the Duke of Otrante's memoirs came into the poet's hands a year after Boris Godunov was begun? Why does Greenleaf claim that in Pushkin's erotic poetry "only closure of an experience enables closure of expression," when the poet famously says the exact opposite: "Proshla liubov,' iavilas' muza"? Eager to maximize the alleged confusion in Boris Godunov and forgetful of historical fact, she perceives the Novgorod-Severskii battle scene as "total chaos" and the Polish troops under the false Dimitri as both "cowardly" and "boastful." In fact the scene enacts a clear victory for the impostor and the Poles' jubilant cries ("Pobeda! pobeda!") are fully justified.

At times, too, Greenleaf's command of Russian is dangerously insecure. Thus, confusing the two senses of the verb nariadit', she sees Shuiskii and Vorotynskii in the first act of Boris as "costumed," when in point of fact they have simply been appointed to direct events. Analyzing Charskii's speech to the Italian improvisor in chapter 2 of "Egyptian Nights," she takes the word barysh to be a truncated—hence deprecatory—form of "maiden" (baryshnia), when it simply means "profit." And when (Boris again) the false Dimitrii says to Marina Mnishek: "Dai zabyt khot' na edinyi chas/ Moei sud'by zaboty i trevogi," he is not trying to "forget himself" and seek "oblivion." He is simply asking her to forget his political ambitions and love him for himself. In each case the misreading significantly skews the interpretation.

Last and most crucial, there is the question of the critical approach the author has adopted and the style which this approach seems to demand. "One man's meat," we know, "is another man's poison." And in an age when the disciples of Lacan, de Nan and Derrida multiply and grow strong, Greenleaf's fondness for abstractions, obliquities, paper-thin subtleties, recondite ambiguity-seeking, and bold revelations of unsuspected truths (e.g., behind the Russian word for "couplet" [kuple] lurks the Polish word for "feces") will doubtless find admirers. For my part I can only report that when I am asked to recognize in The Captain's Daughter "the feminine now reduced to a faceless pretext for self-proof," I furrow my brow; when told that the plot of Eugene Onegin "allegorizes irony's refusal to give up, to synthesize [and] privilege one per-