

engrossed in contemplating Pushkin as the embodiment of the Russian spirit, in measuring his closeness to the Russian people and the Russian soil, in regretting that Pushkin did not live a little later so that his art could have provided a satisfactory response to the painful questions of the day, in berating Pushkin for having peopled *Evgenii Onegin* with trivial characters, in touting Pushkin's universalism as a panacea for European sickness, and so on and so forth. But if these nineteenth-century effusions tend to obscure the protean Pushkin by using him as a pawn in their authors' intellectual and emotional game-plans, cumulatively, they do achieve two things: (1) they convey to the non-Russian reader how vitally important Pushkin was (and is) to the Russian mind; and (2) using Pushkin as a sort of catalyst, they yield insights into the types of problems that preoccupied the nineteenth-century intellectual—the main problem being, in the final analysis, Russia.

The twentieth-century essays are more focused on Pushkin, although here too there is room for wild interpretations. Space does not permit recapitulation. Suffice it to say that although the quality of these essays is most uneven (the best, in my opinion, are those by Aikhenvald, Tomashevskii, and Frank), taken together they offer a picture of Russian thinking about Russia's national poet.

On the whole (despite the difficulty for the uninitiated created by some of the abridgements, as in the Annenkov essay), the editors have succeeded in assembling in one volume a representative and interesting body of material.

WALTER N. VICKERY

University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill

A NEW LIFE OF ANTON CHEKHOV. By *Ronald Hingley*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1976. xxii, 352 pp. Index. Illus. \$12.50.

CHEKHOV: THE EVOLUTION OF HIS ART. By *Donald Rayfield*. New York: Barnes & Noble, Harper & Row, 1975. vi, 266 pp. \$17.50.

Nobody knows an author better than his translator. Professor Ronald Hingley of Oxford University has translated all seven volumes of *The Oxford Chekhov* published thus far, and is working on the subsequent volumes. His first book on Chekhov appeared twenty-six years prior to the present study, so his intimate relationship with this writer is of long standing. After a chatty introduction, he gives us a circumstantial account of Chekhov's life—from the early days in the provincial town on the Sea of Azov up to the last scenes in the German hotel room where he died. The life of an interesting personality is always new if told and reinterpreted by an interesting biographer, which is the case here. Most of the material collected and displayed in this book was known and used by numerous other biographers who were attracted by the charming figure of Anton Chekhov; but it is all viewed through Hingley's prism—in the way he arranges, illuminates, and interprets the material, which he does in a fascinating and credible way, making Hingley's Chekhov very much alive.

Yet, the word "New" in the title does not mean that Hingley introduces a completely new approach to Chekhov's biography. On the contrary, his method is rather conventional, although he interlards the story with intelligent remarks and opinions about Chekhov. His first book, *Chekhov: A Biographical and Critical Study* (1950), contains separate chapters on Chekhov's approach to fiction and his approach to drama, whereas *A New Life* presents only brief comments on Chekhov's writings in the context of the life circumstances in which they originated. In this respect Hingley's new attempt does not differ much in method, contents, emphases, tone, and style from other comparable works (in English, for example, David Magarshack's *Chekhov:*

A Life [1952] and Ernest J. Simmons's *Chekhov: A Biography* [1962], which is still the most extensive Chekhov biography in English). A question mark is required on page 144, where Hingley states that Chekhov's *Sakhalin Island* together with Dostoevsky's *Notes from the House of the Dead* and Tolstoy's *Resurrection* occupies "an especially honoured place in Russia's vast corpus of penological literature," lumping together two works of fiction (one of which is autobiographical) with Chekhov's sociological study, in which Chekhov endeavored to avoid all fictional elements. Very much to the point is his remark in connection with Chekhov's relationship with his wife, Olga Knipper: "or, perhaps, as his fiction seems to bear out, he was so sensitive to emotional resonances that he could not endure them except in his imagination" (p. 276). Also noteworthy is his discussion of Tolstoy's influence upon Chekhov, where he mentions "A Story without a Title"—written in the midst of the period of supposedly strong Tolstoyan influence—in which the monks leave a monastery in order to investigate the "horrors" of the city at first hand: this "is not, to put it mildly, the sort of thing that we find in Tolstoy's *Popular Tales*" (p. 84).

From England, a country that has produced many excellent Chekhov scholars and popularizers (from Constance Garnett and W. Gerhardi onward), comes another recent Chekhov reappraisal, *Chekhov: The Evolution of his Art* by Donald Rayfield. This study also uses a "life and works" approach, integrating the writings into the chronological framework of Chekhov's life and career; but the emphasis is much more on the writings, the tone is less narrative and more polemical, the style is more compact, and the statements are sometimes provocative. Therefore, these two books complement each other in an ideal way. Rayfield's remarks are often well formulated: for example, when he discusses "The House with the Mezzanine" and its heroine Lidia, he maintains that in Chekhov's mind, and in his presentation of Lidia, "it is not so much her activity as her certitude that is wrong" (p. 159); and when discussing the opinion of contemporary critics that Chekhov's "Dreary Story" was an imitation of Tolstoy's "Death of Ivan Ilyich," he states that these critics "failed to see the chasm between Tolstoy's morality and Chekhov's elegy of life; between Tolstoy's miracle play and Chekhov's irony" (p. 92). But Rayfield's attempt to show the hero of "Dreary Story" as Chekhov's counterpart with identical ideas and attitudes (pp. 88–89) is less convincing because in many respects the author differs considerably from his creation. A few other remarks seem questionable: for example, that "on the few occasions that Chekhov's characterisations risk being caricatures, we find they are always of women" (p. 9); his attempt to prove Chekhov's "deference for strength," that is, for strong, masculine characters (p. 7); and his statement that in the stories of the years 1893–95 it is "straitjacketed sensuality that governs the treatment of his heroines" (p. 137).

Hingley's and Rayfield's evaluations and opinions converge to a large extent. When Hingley calls "Ward No. Six" "perhaps the finest of all Chekhov's works" (p. 201), whereas Rayfield thinks it is "the most desperate of Chekhov's works" (p. 130), they are not necessarily in disagreement; but they do differ when Hingley calls "An Anonymous Story" "a masterpiece" (p. 216), and Rayfield calls it "one of Chekhov's weakest works" (p. 140). In my opinion, one of the most valuable aspects of Rayfield's book is the acumen with which he points to connections and similarities between Chekhov's stories and plays and their heroes on the one hand, and those of other Russian and foreign writers on the other. His discussion of the links that exist among the Chekhovian heroes themselves—between Alekhin in "On Love" and Gurov in "The Lady with the Dog," for example (p. 192), or between Podgorin in "A Visit to Friends" and Startsev in "Ionych" (p. 194)—should also be mentioned in this respect. The plays are likewise linked and grouped together in an interesting way, as in the discussion of similarities between the heroes of "The Seagull" and other plays

on page 209. This quality attests to the author's thorough knowledge of and lucid insight into Chekhov's works.

THOMAS EEKMAN

University of California, Los Angeles

SOBRANIE STIKHOTVORENII. By *Georgii Ivanov*. Edited by *Vsevolod Setchkarev* and *Margaret Dalton*. *Colloquium Slavicum, Beiträge zur Slavistik*, vol. 7. Würzburg: Jal-Verlag, 1975. viii, 367 pp. DM 98, paper.

For the first time over five hundred poems by Georgii Ivanov are gathered in a single volume. All of his published books of verse have been photomechanically reproduced in this edition, as well as a number of poems not included in previous collections. The editors have omitted only those poems which had been reprinted in more than one edition. The use of photomechanical techniques explains the diversity of print types and the concurrent use of the "old" and the "new" orthography in the same book.

Georgii Ivanov's early verse held no promise of genuine poetic value. It fit easily into the framework of Acmeist poetry, proclaimed by Gumilev at the beginning of the century. In 1919, in an essay entitled "Otzyvy o poetakh," Blok wrote the following about Georgii Ivanov's early poems: "Hearing poems such as those collected in the volume 'The Chamber,' one could suddenly start weeping—not for the poems themselves, not for their author—but for our impotence. Because there can be such frightening poems about nothing at all: poems, not devoid of anything—neither talent, nor intelligence, nor taste—and at the same time it is as if these poems did not exist: they are devoid of everything, and nothing can be done about it."

However, that which the prerevolutionary Petrograd atmosphere of aesthetic snobbishness was unable to accomplish, was miraculously accomplished by the tragic fate of an exile. Having lost his country, Georgii Ivanov found his true poetic voice. He felt and expressed in his poems a catastrophe which was both personal and common to all Russians, and he gained a prominent place in mid-twentieth-century Russian poetry. The authenticity of despair, the authenticity of loneliness, the authenticity of approaching death, all came to him in the last fifteen years of his life. Such metamorphoses are extremely rare. In Russian poetry we can probably cite only Maksimilian Voloshin who, during the years of revolutionary terror, was transformed from a subtle poet-aesthete into a wrathful poet-prophet.

The volume's imperfections include a certain editorial carelessness. Annoying misprints, made in earlier editions, have been transferred, uncorrected, into the new edition. A major inaccuracy has been overlooked on page 289, poem number 501—which begins with a quoted line: "They shaved Kikapu for the last time." The footnote to the poem states that the quote is from "a poem by the artist N. K. Churlionis, 1875–1911." No matter who authored this footnote, the scholarly editors should have corrected it or added a footnote of their own: the poem about Kikapu was written by the poet Tikhon Churilin, and in no way is connected with the artist Churlionis.

The process of reinstating émigré writers and their literary rights in the USSR takes place very slowly. Georgii Ivanov's turn has not yet come: he is still on the blacklist. The brief commentary on Ivanov which appears in the *Kratkaia literaturnaia entsiklopediia* is highly tendentious and does not convey a comprehensive idea of his *oeuvre*.

Even though the statement made by the editors of the present volume ("The poetic work of Georgii Ivanov—without any doubt one of the greatest Russian poets of this century . . .") appears highly debatable, the difficult labor involved in the