

collection of Georgii Ivanov's literary heritage and the publishing of his collected poems undoubtedly deserves the attention and approval of literary scholars as well as readers of literature.

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ANNA AKHMATOVA: A POETIC PILGRIMAGE. By *Amanda Haight*. New York and London: Oxford University Press, 1976. x, 213 pp. Illus. \$10.00.

PAMIATI ANNY AKHMATOVOI: STIKHI, PIS'MA, VOSPOMINANIA. With "Zapiski ob Anne Akhmatovoi" by *L. Chukovskaia*. Paris: YMCA-Press, 1974. 221 pp. Paper.

SELECTED POEMS. By *Anna Akhmatova*. Edited and translated by *Walter Arndt*. With "Requiem," translated by *Robin Kemball*, and "A Poem Without a Hero," translated and annotated by *Carl R. Proffer*. Ann Arbor: Ardis, 1976. xxxvi, 202 pp. Illus. \$3.95, paper.

REQUIEM AND POEM WITHOUT A HERO. By *Anna Akhmatova*. Translated by *D. M. Thomas*. Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 1976. 78 pp.

Until recently, we have known comparatively little about Anna Akhmatova's life, and much of what was written about her was conjecture based on her deceptively intimate lyrics. Amanda Haight's biography, the first in either English or Russian, is, therefore, a major contribution. In 1964, Haight was a young Englishwoman, "with vague plans for a thesis on Akhmatova," who came to enjoy Akhmatova's friendship and confidence in the last years before the poet's death. Akhmatova showed Haight unpublished letters and sent her to visit friends, whose unpublished reminiscences, along with Akhmatova's letters and her own accounts, are essential sources of Haight's book. In a sense, then, this is almost an authorized biography, which gives us Akhmatova's life much as she might have liked us to see it. It contains much new information about Akhmatova's disastrous marriage to Gumilev, her subsequent marriages, and her life during the silent years of the 1920s, 30s, and 40s.

All this information sheds important light on her poetry. But valuable as the book is as a biographical source, it is disappointing as a poetic study. Haight does present some interesting thoughts about Akhmatova's search for lyric heroines who would move her experience beyond the merely particular. She conjures a bit with Nadezhda Mandelstam's tantalizing suggestion that Akhmatova was always seeking her double in others. She recounts the fascinating tale of Akhmatova's 1945 meetings with Isaiah Berlin, and how Akhmatova was convinced they were the cause, not only of Zhdanov's 1946 attacks on her, but of the whole Cold War. But when, at the end of each chapter, Haight confronts the poetry itself, she has little new to say about it, even in light of her biographical contributions.

The collection, *Pamiati Anny Akhmatovoi*, contains some of Akhmatova's poems (most of them previously published), a brief autobiography, two letters (addressee unspecified), and poems in her memory by three young Leningrad poets—most notably Brodsky's magnificent *Sreten'e* (also published elsewhere). But the heart of the book is the excerpt from Lidia Chukovskaia's *Zapiski ob Anne Akhmatovoi*. Chukovskaia's friendship with Akhmatova and her diary of their meetings began in the purge year of 1938, when they shared the agonizing wait in prison lines for news of Chukovskaia's husband and of Akhmatova's son. The danger of keeping such a diary, even in code, as Chukovskaia did, was incalculable. But the alternative—"to write nothing about her"—was equally unthinkable for Chukovskaia and we should be grateful for her courage and devotion. She describes a typical visit to Akhmatova: "Suddenly, in the

midst of a conversation, she would grow silent. Glancing meaningfully at the ceiling and the walls, she would take a scrap of paper and a pencil and say something loud and utterly 'social': 'Would you like some tea?' or 'You've gotten quite sunburned.' Then she would cover the scrap of paper with her rapid handwriting and hand it to me. I would read the lines, memorize them, and silently return them to her. 'Autumn is so early this year,' Akhmatova would loudly remark, and, lighting a match, burn the paper over the ashtray."

In this way, Chukovskaia memorized and helped to preserve the texts of Akhmatova's two great *poemy*, *Rekviem* and *Poema bez geroia*, which Akhmatova did not dare commit to paper until 1956. Thus Chukovskaia's *Zapiski* are as much a biography of the two *poemy* as of Akhmatova herself. *Pamiati Anny Akhmatovoi* contains the portion of this diary covering June 1952 through March 1956. The entire diary, in three volumes, is now being published (*Zapiski ob Anne Akhmatovoi*, vol. 1: 1938–1941, Paris: YMCA-Press, 1976).

Two new collections of Akhmatova's poetry in translation bring to four the number available in English. The Ardis volume provides a wealth of photographs, many of them little known or previously unpublished. Though not bilingual, the book does give references to the standard Struve-Filippov edition for the generous selection of Akhmatova's lyrics which Walter Arndt has translated. But the translations themselves are, quite frankly, a disappointment: Arndt's masterful versions of Pushkin seemed to promise much more. He falters, I think, at that perennial dilemma of translators, when he decides to retain the rhythm and strict rhyme scheme. True, these formal features, as he points out in his preface, are an essential element of the Russian poem. But such strict rhyme schemes carry a different message in English, and because they are more difficult to achieve in our noninflected tongue, the sacrifices made in their name must be great. Indeed, the lexical infelicities which most offend the English ear are usually found at the ends of lines:

I'm not weeping, I don't cry and shout.
 Luck and I *just don't agree*.
 No, don't kiss me, I'm all tired out—
 Death will come and *nuzzle me*.

(p. 66; emphases added)

This may keep the rhyme, but it has lost Akhmatova. And the semantic gymnastics Arndt has performed make his versions almost useless for what is likely to be his largest audience—those who know *some* Russian, and want to use the translation as a confirmation of their own reading. Frequently, Arndt's versions are quite obscure or simply misleading.

Just the opposite is true of the Carl Proffer/Assya Humesky version of *Poema bez geroia*, included in the same volume. With no pretense to poetic translation, or even rhyme, Proffer uses line-for-line accuracy as his criterion, and he succeeds admirably in this effort. His extensive notes are essential for helping the reader decipher the cultural and personal allusions of the poem.

D. M. Thomas's new volume provides the English reader with verse translations of both of the *poemy* and an introduction that is more sensible and informative than Arndt's. Thomas's *Poem Without a Hero* is indeed the only complete "poetic" translation, although we now have at least six of *Requiem*. Thomas's *Requiem* is certainly among the best, though (perhaps because of my American ear) I still prefer the translation in Kunitz's collection which offers, in addition, the Russian original *en face*.

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