

of Kliuev's poems as "Or in that land of chronic paper shortages [Siberia, 1937!] were they used . . . for toilet paper?" (p. xix) have no place in a brief introduction to the poet's work. No footnotes are given for the various sources quoted in the introduction. The Russian text is provided only for *Pogorel'shchina*; originals of the other poems would have made for a highly interesting dual-language edition of these difficult poems, though considerations of length may have been a factor in the decision to omit them. At the least, the Russian titles of the poems would have been useful, for changes of the first lines in the translations have made identification of some of the originals difficult. Useful notes explain some of Kliuev's myriad mythical, biblical, literary, and historical references and help make the poems comprehensible to the general reader as well as the Russian specialist.

Faced with the unenviable and formidable problem of Kliuev's hodge-podge of styles, twisted syntax, and heavy use of diminutives, Glad has opted for fairly literal translations which are generally faithful to the originals, although sometimes at the expense of poetic grace or fluidity. "The angel of simple human affairs" (p. 26) for "Angel prostykh chelovecheskikh del" sounds a bit bureaucratic, somewhat like a minister of foreign affairs. There are some outright mistranslations: "Da obronil ty khazarskuiu grivnu" is not "But you dropped the mane of the Khozars" (p. 40), since the word in question is *grivna* (an old coin) and not *griva* (mane). "Ne kru-chin'sia i ne plach' / Neob'iatno i bezdumno" hardly comes across as "Grieve not in thy boundlessness, / Wail not in thy madness" (p. 3)—perhaps a misreading of *bezumno* for *bezdumno*? "Oblik krovavyi i glybkii" is not "A deep and bloody face" (p. 40); the root is *glyba*, not *glubokii*. On the other hand, Kliuev's imitation of folklore is so impossible to convey accurately that it is really unfair to quarrel with Glad's rather flat "Who so frightened you" (p. 40) for "Kogo ty spolokhalsia-spu-zhalsia." Criticizing a translation is always far simpler than coming up with a better possibility, and Glad has made a noble try. Anyone truly interested in Kliuev would be well advised to take a look at this volume.

LYNN VISSON
Hunter College, CUNY

CANTUS FIRMUS. By *Aleksis Rannit* and *Eduard Wiiralt*. Translated from the Estonian by *Henry Lyman*. Foreword by *Norman Holmes Pearson*. Postscriptum by *Aleksis Rannit*. New Rochelle, N.Y.: The Elizabeth Press, 1978. 56 pp. + 6 pp. plates. \$50.00. Distributed by Serendipity Books, Berkeley, Calif.

Cantus firmus stands as a monument to a friendship between two distinguished Estonian artists: the poet Aleksis Rannit (1914–) and the engraver Eduard Wiiralt (1898–1954). The origins of the book lie in an exhibition held at the Yale University Cloister Gallery in the fall of 1974, and repeated at the University of Virginia in the spring of 1977. The beautifully made, boxed volume, published in small folio in an edition of seven hundred fifty copies, is the work of Martino Mardersteig and the Stamperia Valdovona in Verona. Four years in preparation, it represents, as the publisher's announcement states, "a collaboration of several hands," chief among them the poet and the engraver.

Wiiralt, who traveled widely and died in Paris, received a gold medal at the 1937 International Graphic Arts Exhibition in Vienna. Rannit, curator of Russian and East European Studies at Yale and a full member of the International Academy of Arts and Letters since 1963, has earned wide recognition as a poet, with six collections in his native Estonian, and through books of his translated works in languages as diverse as German, Hungarian, Lithuanian, and Russian. The sixteen poems in *Cantus firmus* come from three sources: eleven were first published in the

poet's second and third volumes, *Käesurve* (*Handgrasp*, 1945) and *Suletud avarust* (*From the Enclosed Distance*, 1956); the remaining five poems have appeared in the journal *Tulimuld* and are forthcoming in Rannit's seventh collection, *Heliaste* (*Step of Sound*). Henry Lyman, Rannit's American translator since 1968 and a fine poet in his own right, has published his versions of Rannit's poems in *The Christian Science Monitor*, *The Nation*, *New Directions in Prose and Poetry*, and *Poetry*. Lyman worked on the present volume in close consultation with Rannit, who provided him with the latest variant for every poem. Six of the sixteen translations in *Cantus firmus* appeared previously in *New Directions*, no. 25 (1972); in the book under review, one text has been preserved intact ("He Toils the Hours"), three have undergone minor changes ("Wiiralt Sketching at Chartres," "So I See You Still," and "Cantus firmus"), and two have been rewritten ("Line" and "View of the Atlas Mountains"). The two revisions, in particular, demonstrate that Lyman is without a doubt an attentive reader of Estonian quantitative verse. Rannit's art represents both revival and original experiment in the quantitative measures of his native idiom, a language gifted with three degrees of quantity and thus capable of extraordinary prosodic subtleties (on this, see Ilse Lehiste, "Quantity in Estonian Language and Poetry," *Journal of Baltic Studies*, 8 [1977]: 130–41). The ebb and flow of syllabic duration is strong throughout the English texts in *Cantus firmus* as well, as in the penultimate stanza of "He Toils the Hours": "Line—a whipstroke, the tenderest caress, / skies of lazuli and the savage windstorm. / Line—hideous outcry, cloistral silence— / smile of angels, the satanic frown."

Rannit's affections—for line, texture, sinuous form, the aesthetic vision beheld by the inner metaphysical eye—are clear from the present cycle, and one would not err in characterizing this segment of his achievement, not as *l'art pour l'art*, but, cautiously, as *l'art sur l'art*. It would be wrong, however, to infer from this that the poet's total range and depth are not shared by questions of aesthetics and ethics. To read "Claude" and "Absinthe Drinkers" and to fail to overhear the cry of the heart, the persona's compassion toward the drinker who "puts himself in chains," or toward the little "crippled boy who smiled, / . . . / . . . into the night of our hearts," is to read poetry improperly. Infant Claude's "gaze out of infinite ages / descends with its glitter of pain"; here poetic and graphic portrayal are neighbors, and the mere turn of a page makes a stunning comparison possible (on Claude's secret gaze, see also Rannit's postscript, p. 5).

The six carefully chosen plates, each of them printed six times in different tones, may be thought to furnish a guide, *in nuce*, to Wiiralt's mature achievement. The engraver, as Rannit's knowledgeable essay explains, devoted the better part of his career to accomplishing the well-nigh impossible: to bringing out, in wood block and linoleum block, "the tonal and linear values of lithography, mezzotint etching, and copperplate engraving." It is astonishing how closely the depth, clarity, and overall emotional impact of the wood engraving "Claude" (1936) approximate corresponding visual values in the pointillistically modulated and powerfully intelligent "Head of a Negro" (1933) in the same medium, which, as Rannit states, took a full three months to execute. On the basis of such mastery, in both line and chiaroscuro, Wiiralt's work warrants comparison with Rembrandt's. This reviewer—who is at least indirectly familiar with the works reproduced in *Eduard Wiiralt*, edited by O. Kangilaski (Tallinn, 1959)—regrets that more of the artist's evocations of the Moroccan scene could not be shown, such as a fine view of the Atlas Mountains (to accompany the poem by that title), or expressive close-up studies of Berber villagers.

Estonia is a tiny country, and part of the impact of *Cantus firmus* lies in the exemplary magnitude of the two artists whose work it features. Norman Holmes Pearson has written, on another occasion, that "Rannit's serenity, antique rather than

modern, cannot be gauged by the scale of the moment. Rannit is not a contemporary poet . . . he is something different, something greater." This is true; yet true modernity too is an aspect of permanence. The poems of *Cantus firmus* eloquently testify that their author is an artist of our time and temper.

EMERY E. GEORGE
University of Michigan

A MAGYAR IRODALOM FEJLŐDÉSTÖRTÉNETE. By János Horváth. Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1976. 372 pp.

János Horváth (1878–1961) is probably the most significant, and certainly the most influential, literary historian of twentieth-century Hungary. A professor of Hungarian literature at the University of Budapest from 1923 to 1948, and the author of more than a dozen major literary studies, Horváth has shaped the minds of nearly two generations of scholars, critics, and historians of literature.

In 1908, Horváth published a short essay in which he raised the problem facing the historian of Hungarian literature: what, precisely, *is* Hungarian literature, and what are the categories with which the literary historian should work? In his essay, Horváth argued that the categories posited by previous historians of Hungarian literature were *a priori* categories that were either too broad or too narrow to be of use in ordering and synthesizing the large body of works produced in Hungary over the course of more than seven centuries. To maintain, for example, that only what is written in the Hungarian language should count as Hungarian literature, or that only works of outstanding artistic merit which express the national ethos should be considered literature is to stultify literary history. Instead, he concluded, literary history (as distinguished from literature *per se*) must be seen as autochthonous (*önelvű*), with an independent life of its own. The concept of what *is* literature, therefore, is not static but is a result of an ongoing historical process of literary awareness, that is, taste, which in turn is constituted by the relationship of writers, works, and readers, from one age to another. It is this sense of awareness that determines what is to count as literature.

According to Horváth, the traditional date of 1772 marks the great watershed in Hungarian literary history. Previous centuries show only scattered manifestations of a slowly developing sense of literary awareness. The year 1772 is followed by three stages of development: (1) the stage of cosmopolitan classicism, a conscious struggle against the dominance of Latin, waged in the interests of a Hungarian-language literature; (2) the stage of nationalistic romanticism, which aims to achieve intellectual originality and autonomy, and, in practice, results in the cultivation of indigenous Hungarian historical sources, such as the *Gesta* of Anonymus; and (3) the final stage, which Horváth called Hungarian realism, the highest embodiments of which are János Arany in literature and Pál Gyulai in criticism.

This, in outline, was the thesis that guided Horváth's work in the four decades that followed. The present volume reprints Horváth's original 1908 study (now almost inaccessible), together with alterations and additions penciled in by the author during the course of the next ten years. His brief essay is followed by various studies originally written as parts of a cohesive monograph but actually published as chapters of other works. Thus, the volume under consideration is a convenient, one-volume presentation of Horváth's overview of the evolution of Hungarian literature up to about the 1880s.

THOMAS R. MARK
Colorado State University