

of Chekhov's visit to the Urals was first published not in 1955 (Kar p. 389) but in 1935, and again in 1947 in *Chekhov v vospominaniakh sovremennikov*.

Comparing the translations, one is surprised to find that there is hardly a sentence that is translated exactly the same way in both volumes, a fact which attests to the richness of the English language, not to any deficiency in the translations. Yarmolinsky was "guided by the wish to reduce to a minimum any tampering with the text" (p. xvi); Heim even more consistently translated without breaking up long sentences or changing the paragraphing. Perhaps mistakenly, he left out a few words in the often-quoted letter to Ivan Orlov on page 341. In a letter to Alexei Suvorin, Heim translates the words *stoit dorogo* as "extremely valuable," Yarmolinsky as "that cost me plenty" (Kar p. 173, Yar p. 168); Chekhov probably meant "valuable," however much he liked to discuss pecuniary matters in his correspondence. In a letter to Leonid Sredin (Kar pp. 389–90, Yar p. 386) Heim is more correct in rendering a sentence where Chekhov compares Nice with Yalta. But such inaccuracies are not easy to discover. One cannot but conclude that both translations are careful, correct, and graceful.

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THE CHAMELEON AND THE DREAM: THE IMAGE OF REALITY IN CHEKHOV'S STORIES. By *Karl D. Kramer*. Slavistic Printings and Reprintings, 78. The Hague and Paris: Mouton, 1970. 182 pp. 36 Dglds.

Dr. Kramer has tackled his detailed exploration of the ambiguity which is central to Chekhov's world view and narrative technique with courage and panache, and his book ranks alongside Alexander Chudakov's *Poetika Chekhova* (1971) as one of the most important studies of this writer to appear for many years.

Despite a broadly chronological approach, Kramer builds meaningful links between the various phases of Chekhov's works and avoids the error of regarding the twenty years of his creative life either as a string of disparate "periods" or as an unflinching evolution from the apprentice's fumbling experiments to the master's chefs-d'oeuvre. The "chameleon" of the early stories is another manifestation of the ambiguity implied by the "dream" in the later stories. Nor is it the case that the "dreamer" is out of touch with the workaday world or morbidly conscious of *poshlost'*, as so many other critics assume: "From his own point of view the dreamer does not sever his connection with reality; on the contrary, there is an intensification of contact—an attempt to find another system of values within the daily sphere." Like Chudakov, Kramer focuses on *point of view*, including the modern phenomenon of multiple point of view as the key narrative device through which the ambiguity is expressed.

Kramer makes many significant observations about Chekhov's technique in his analyses of particular stories. He recognizes the importance of framing devices, parallel passages, the ambiguous reference to many key lines or last lines, the graded revelation, the use of weather as a commentary, the clear marking of time, and the foregrounding of key events by marked syntactic patterns. He refers to early drafts of stories to stress or clarify Chekhov's intentions, and he meaningfully relates much of the discussion to analogous themes and devices in the plays. It is curious, therefore, how little relation his first chapter, devoted to a definition of the short story and its techniques, bears to the rest of the book. Kramer discusses

plot, the role of tension, the development of character, and the use of setting in this genre, and yet is curiously silent in this chapter on techniques of point of view which become crucial for the interpretation of Chekhov later in the book.

Kramer writes in an intelligent, easy-flowing, readable style which permits detailed renarration, where necessary, without laboriousness, and complex argumentation, without obscurity. Despite his deep understanding of and commitment to Chekhov, there is no uncritical idolization. With reference to interpretations of particular stories he is appropriately skeptical of pronouncements made by "authorities" on Chekhov, whether Western or Soviet (though he misjudges the Soviet tradition as monolithic on the evidence of too few books, and those the obvious ones). He rightly pays more frequent tribute to analyses of individual stories by other scholars in articles than to full-length studies of Chekhov, and this raises a crucial problem. In spite of his own many fine detailed interpretations of particular stories, occasionally they have to be squeezed too rigidly into the book's overall interpretation of Chekhov's opus. At other times some of Kramer's best *general* insights about Chekhov's art are neglected in his specific analyses: seeming to lack the courage of his convictions, he stops short of an integrated interpretation.

Perhaps the most serious disappointment in an otherwise excellent book is the author's unwillingness to integrate Chekhov's use of nature, and his attitude toward it, into his overall interpretation. For after the early parodies of the "pathetic fallacy," nature asserts itself as the one static element in a world of chameleons, the one unambiguous element in a world of dreams.

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COMPLETE POETRY OF OSIP EMILEVICH MANDELSTAM. Translated by *Burton Raffel* and *Alla Burago*. Introduction and notes by *Sidney Monas*. Russian Literature in Translation, no. 2. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1973. x, 353 pp. \$15.00.

Mandelstam's poetry is elaborate, sometimes obscure, and often depends on the most delicate counterpoint of nuance for its life. Such living, vibrating poems are likely to suffer grievous hurt in the process of translation. Often the wounding is mortal in Burton Raffel's versions. (His volume of verse from Gumilev, in the same series, is usually much closer to the life of the original.)

To speak about individual lines or words and their mistranslation is not to quibble—Mandelstam lives by his poetic words, or word. Take, for instance, the poem on Venice (no. 110). *Veche*, the popular assembly in medieval Novgorod and other Russian cities, cannot be translated as "political meeting," and *prazdnoe* is not "useless" but "idle." And, in the same poem, the line in Raffel's translation, "But a rose in my hand, a tiny bottle," should not omit the conjunction *ili*. The poet is entranced—drunk with Venice—and cannot tell which it is. Incidentally, *sklianka* must be rendered as phial, for the tiny bottle is filled with poison. It occurs to me that Ezra Pound's Venetian poems are closer to the spirit of Mandelstam's Venice than the Raffel-Burago translation.

Sidney Monas's introduction is also flawed here and there, but it overcomes its occasional inaccuracies. This is an illuminating piece of criticism, written with verve and real love for Mandelstam and with an appreciation of what is involved in the creative act—something so desperately missing in much of what passes for