

—she admits that at times she is arguing about insignificant things. In short, Nadezhda Mandelstam knows that at her age one can afford to say what one thinks, and she does just that.

One frequent criticism of the book is that in it the author does not even spare her and Mandelstam's closest friend, Anna Akhmatova. Seeing human frailty—whether of body or spirit—may go against the piety that traditionally surrounds Russian literary figures, but it certainly does not detract from Akhmatova's stature as a poet or a human being. It is for Soviet literary functionaries particularly that Nadezhda Mandelstam has no mercy. Her bitterness is understandable, for the same people who hounded Mandelstam out of literature and life are still holding influential positions in the Soviet literary establishment or have been honored posthumously.

In *Hope Abandoned*, the author attempts a reevaluation not only of the 1920s—which are usually idealized both in the Soviet Union and in the West—but of the Silver Age as well. However, the book's greatest significance lies in its perceptive analysis of the ways intellectuals change under a totalitarian system. The inevitable result—a loss of one's identity—is seen by the author as an illness of our age. One can overlook some remarks that are too biting or too sharp in tone for the sake of the acuteness of the author's perception (reminding one of Czesław Miłosz's *The Captive Mind*).

Although the second book is more frankly autobiographical than the first, it also provides a wealth of information helpful in reading Mandelstam's late poetry. Chronologically it ranges over their entire life together. This book is further proof that Nadezhda Mandelstam is a significant writer. Her prose has a character of its own: it is modern without being slangy or vulgar.

The English translation by Max Hayward is very accurate. In addition to an index, a chronology and very useful appendixes are provided, and many of the numerous quotations and allusions to Russian literary matters are identified in footnotes. These additions to the original text are essential because the book presupposes a knowledge of the Russian pre- and post-Revolutionary literary scene.

Hope Abandoned stands next to Solzhenitsyn's *Gulag Archipelago* as a witness to its times. It can be viewed as a companion to Solzhenitsyn's epic, for it is written from the point of view of a woman who lived her life *outside* the labor camps and with a focus on the intellectual milieu. However, it should not be studied only as a testimony by an intelligent contemporary but as a work of art in its own right. Together with *Hope against Hope*, this book has its place among the best memoir literature of the century.

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THE ARDIS ANTHOLOGY OF RECENT RUSSIAN LITERATURE. Edited by Carl Proffer and Ellendea Proffer. Ann Arbor: Ardis, 1975. xvi, 420 pp. Illus. \$5.00, paper.

Carl and Ellendea Proffer's Ardis enterprise has been the most active force in American Slavistics of the last decade in publishing translations of works from twentieth-century Russian literature. Unlike some other publishers who have concentrated on the currently topical, the Proffers' standard has been to publish the best literature, especially literature that is experimental, stylistically interesting, or from what a recent Russian émigré writer called in conversation "the other camp," meaning the aesthetic dissidents who do not develop a political platform in their writings, but object to limitations on artistic freedom. The new *Ardis Anthology of Recent Russian*

Literature, based in large part on the edition of the *Russian Literature Triquarterly* (no. 5, 1973) devoted to the topic, is consistent with the generally belletristic thrust of Ardis publications.

The emphasis on poetry in the anthology underscores this commitment. A fourth of the volume is devoted to translations of poems with twenty-nine poets represented. The only volume that can compete with it in presenting contemporary Soviet poets in English is the recent Soviet bilingual anthology, *Fifty Soviet Poets*, which presents a less adventurous selection as well as translations that are in large part free doggerel versions of the original. The Ardis volume will thus have a decided impact on the view of contemporary Russian poetry acquired by readers with little or no knowledge of Russian. But will the impression offered be an accurate one?

The selection of poets implies a programmatic statement from the editors, for it includes the great moderns (Akhmatova, Mandelstam, Pasternak, Mayakovsky, and Tsvetaeva) as well as several émigré poets, and thereby affirms the essential continuity of the Russian poetic tradition in the twentieth century, no matter where Russian poetry has been written. The poets here are those that would appear on any well-educated Russian's list. The choice of poems seems less intentional—apparently what the flock of translators (twenty-two, by my count) chanced to provide. The reader will get a good sense of which poets are read by the Russian public, but he will not necessarily come away knowing what those poets typically represent to the Russian reader. But given some skewing in the choice of poems, do those presented accurately reflect the poetic style and concerns of the poet?

Unfortunately, the standards of adequacy for translating poetry are so high that, in general, few translations succeed, and while the Ardis anthology presents honorable attempts, most of the versions do not qualify as poems. Here we come up against a problem so fundamental to translating that we have to digress to generalities to grasp what is wrong. The priorities seem to be reversed between the making of a poem and its translation. The poet will always look to the music of his line; the translator looks first to the words. In writing the line the poet still has the freedom to adjust meter, words, and sense to each other; the translator begins with all the boundaries drawn and must begin by analyzing the poem into its basic elements, hoping to find an adequate correlation for each. The task of re-creating the poem within the boundaries drawn by the poet beginning from these reconstituted parts is formidable. It is surprising when a translation even manages to suggest the original poem, so to say that the versions here fail as poems is merely to call attention to the formidable task that has been set.

Nevertheless, the differences among the translations included in the Ardis anthology is instructive. A sure sign of a bad translation is that the stresses fall awkwardly in the line accenting insignificant or secondary words. The translations by John Updike, while not inspired, show a fine ear. In contrast, some lines from a translation of a Samoilov poem demonstrate the defect:

Two soldiers took up posts
Beside him, chattering. The day
Had ebbed to embers. Beyond the grove
A tufted flock of clouds arose
And half a moon, a fleshless horn,
Hung lightly in the empty sky.

The significant final position in each line is occupied by a word which falls accidentally in that place, but cannot help but receive added emphasis. This particular passage goes on for over a page, each line ending with a clunk. Lack of space precludes discussion

of every problem, but the interested reader can check the difference between Stanley Kunitz's successful catching of the tone of the intentional metrical cliché in his translation of Naum Korzhavin's "A Thousand-Year-Old Song" and the ladies' magazine doggerel ("My darling, tell me what I've done!") that Margaret Troupin makes of Tsvetaeva's refrain.

Is anything gained by publishing the defective versions? Obviously, translators must make an attempt if ever a worthy rendering is to be achieved, but perhaps greater discrimination in publishing the efforts is called for. One is tempted to praise the good intention and gloss over the inadequacy, but this attitude only perpetuates low standards. While accepting the usefulness of what has been done, we have a responsibility to ask if something better, more appropriate, could have been done. Resources in our field are limited. The anthologies in the field could be much better and the reviewer should indicate how to do it.

One step that could greatly improve matters is to publish only the very best translations, those that have a claim to some poetic distinction in their own right, even if it is, necessarily, a more modest one than the original. This means publishing few translations. I am familiar with the methods of work of one translator of the Russian modernists, Ephim Fogel, whose versions of Mandelstam and Pasternak show facility, interpretative power, and fidelity to meaning. Fogel translates slowly, re-creating through impeccable scholarship the precise meaning of each phrase and then testing out English lines until he finds one that does not violate the sense and tone of the original, and satisfies the English ear as well. He finishes several poems a year. A brief quotation from Mandelstam will illustrate the precision, sureness, and lack of pretension of Fogel's translation.

A skimpy ray sows cold pittances
Of light in the dank wood.
In my heart I slowly carry
Sorrow, like a grey bird.

The stresses here fall on the significant words and the line endings coincide with meaningful intonation contours of the lines.

If we hold to these standards for poetic translations, we will greatly restrict the number of translations published. Yet, while there is a rich body of Russian poetry to be translated, there are many Russian readers with sensitivity to poetry who lack the facility to produce genuinely poetic versions. Fortunately, there is a way to tap this talent. Stanley Burnshaw has shown the way in his ingenious anthology, *The Poem Itself* (Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1960), where leading scholars present poets in a new format: Several poems by each poet, chosen to give a fair representation of his themes and styles, are given in the original language. The scholar gives a prose paraphrase of each poem focusing on features of metrics and diction. This is followed by an unfolding of the poem, not strictly an "interpretation," but a demonstration of the range of its suggestiveness and possible meanings. All of this can be presented in two or three pages, enabling the reader to come away with a deeply enriched sense of the poem. Such an anthology for Russian modern poetry would be an invaluable service to the field and would do more to persuade the reading public of the poetic worth of these writers than hundreds of well-meaning but wan translations. The Proffers have the energy, resources, and commitment to belletristic literature to organize such an anthology.

The prose section of the anthology is interesting and useful. The selections give the reader a good sense of the range of concerns and styles characteristic of the best Russian literature of the last decade. It is true that the Maramzin translations, as the

editor and translator admits (“the foolhardy effort to translate this has been made only because Maramzin seems so original for contemporary Russian writing”), are not wholly successful. Maramzin’s punning, outrageous style is rendered in a punning, ungrammatical run-on line. The difference between the translation and the original is one of voice. Maramzin’s *skaz* style, like that of Babel’ and Zoshchenko, is based on what Tynianov called the “verbal gesture.” Though written in an invented, artistic language, for their effect such pieces depend on creating a unified tone of voice that will resonate against the reader’s memory of a specific kind of speech. In translating, it is more important to re-create that unity of voice than to find clever correspondences for local effects like puns, solecisms, and malapropisms. Proffer’s translation does not evoke any specific English voice and thus fails to convey the *skaz* effect. Still, it does successfully convey an important quality of the text, that is, its strong irony in which the true morality of Soviet life—honesty with one’s own kind but the state be damned—is unfolded as it exists in the consciousness of the “little man.”

On the whole, the anthology is a useful compilation, although it falls short of the excellence which would make it an enduring classic. Because such anthologies are used for many years, it is time that we began striving for some classics.

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SLOVAK LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE: ESSAYS. By *J. M. Kirschbaum*.

Readings in Slavic Literatures, 12. Edited by *J. B. Rudnyckyj*. Winnipeg and Cleveland: University of Manitoba, Department of Slavic Studies, 1975. xvi, 336 pp. Plates.

The title of the present work may perhaps mislead some readers, since the book is not a complete treatment of the history of Slovak language and literature. Rather, it consists of a number of chapters—mostly reworked from the author’s earlier articles—on various periods of Slovak literary history. The treatment of language is limited, for the most part, to the question of the creation of a standard language for the Slovak people. The topics have been chosen to emphasize those periods that are critical for the creation of a Slovak national consciousness, although the book does jump from Štúr and his school down to Slovak Communist literature, passing over the whole second half of the nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth century—the period from the 1860s to 1918 which was, of course, a period of critical struggle against the Magyars for national independence.

Professor Kirschbaum’s book has a national bias that one might expect (every history of a national literature has one, and justly so), but at times it seems to get a bit out of hand. Thus, Kirschbaum tends to equate the Great Moravian legacy with an early Slovak one, on the basis of slender and quite inadequate evidence. Moreover, there is no evidence to support his claim that the Cyrillo-Methodian tradition might have persisted in Slovak territory continuously down to modern times; such a claim could conceivably be based only on written sources, but these sources are lacking.

The present book does serve two very useful and important purposes (aside from the fact that it is the largest compilation of information on Slovak literature available in English): it emphasizes the fact that, in the course of their development, Slovak language, literature, and culture were much more independent of Czech influences than many Westerners, including Czechs, have been wont to think; and it emphasizes the importance of Bernolák’s version of standard Slovak, showing that it was not entirely abortive (indeed, without Bernolák’s work, Slovak might have perished, at least as a written language). But here again Kirschbaum exaggerates. In his zeal to