

in a short review. Given their importance, it is hoped that Ardis will follow the example of Cornell University Press and issue the Lotman volume as an inexpensive paperback in order to facilitate its use in university courses.

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MODERN RUSSIAN POETS ON POETRY. Edited by *Carl R. Proffer*. Selected and with an introduction by *Joseph Brodsky*. Ann Arbor: Ardis, 1976. 203 pp. \$3.45, paper.

It is a pity that Russian poets of this caliber must still be "popularized," in this case by an anthology of their views on art. Had they been French poets, for example, at least their poetry would be well known already, and something of their aesthetics as well.

The selection of poets made here is unbiased; all the major poets of a certain generation (all, except Blok, are post-Symbolists) who made significant statements about the nature of poetry have been included. The poets agree remarkably on assigning to poetry an exceptionally elevated or powerful role, greater, certainly, than is now thinkable in the English-speaking world. Blok's title, "On the Mission of the Poet," can stand for the message in which all concur. In this respect the younger poets all appear to be the neo-Romantic heirs of Symbolism. Their differences are, of course, apparent. The Acmeists Gumilev and Mandelstam speak of an "organic" quality of verse; the erstwhile Futurist Pasternak speaks of a power originating in a displacement from reality; Mayakovsky extols social command; and the unaligned Tsvetaeva grapples with the relationship between art and morality. Fortunately, the inclusion of Khodasevich has restored him to our attention.

Brodsky, in his short preface, also lauds poetry as an "intuitive synthesis." The preface is followed by a brief "Bio-Bibliographical Introduction," which might have been better placed at the end of the book. (Items omitted from the section of Pushkin criticism are John Bayley, *Pushkin: A Comparative Commentary* and David Magarshack, *Pushkin*.) The articles are fully annotated at the back of the book. These notes are useful, but they are blemished by a certain amount of editorial neglect. Mayakovsky's title, for example, is translated differently in the notes.

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OSIP MANDELSTAM: SELECTED ESSAYS. Translated by *Sidney Monas*. The Dan Danciger Publication Series. Austin and London: University of Texas Press, 1977. xxvi, 245 pp. \$15.95.

As always, in providing the English-speaking public with selected translations from the original, the translator's personality and personal taste mediate the selection. This is as it should be, and the book under review is no exception. Professor Monas is a good judge of himself and of his book. He is forthright in admitting and indicating his preferences: "Inevitably a certain subjective element has entered into my choices of what to include. . . . In addition, I have tried to limit myself to the literary essays. . . . I must also confess that I could not resist the eloquence of [the] angry style [of *Fourth Prose*]. . . ." He also acknowledges that "a number, though by no means the greater number of these essays, have been previously translated by other hands . . . the only one that struck me as unimprovable upon was the 'Conversation about Dante' in the version by Clarence Brown and Robert Hughes." As for the translations, Professor Monas states: "I wish I could have done better; but I have done my best."

No one was more keenly aware of the difficulties faced by translators or the demands placed on them than Mandelstam himself. In his highly perceptive and polemical essay, "Torrents of Hackwork" (unfortunately, not among the selections in the volume under review), Mandelstam stated: "Translation is one of the most difficult and responsible aspects of literary work. It is essentially the creation of an independent speech system on the basis of foreign material. Switching this system over to the Russian system requires tremendous effort, attention, will power, a wealth of inventiveness, intellectual freshness, philological sensibility, a huge lexical keyboard, and the ability to listen carefully to rhythm, to grasp the picture of a phrase and convey it; what is more, this must all be accompanied by the strictest self-control. Otherwise, the translation is merely interpolation."

Professor Monas's translations vary considerably in their precision and excellence. By far the best in this volume is *Journey to Armenia*. Indeed, it is superbly rendered. Less successful efforts include the more cumbersome versions of "Morning of Acmeism" and "Humanism and Modern Life," previously translated by Clarence Brown.

As for the selection of items included in this volume, Professor Monas has chosen to limit himself to what must be regarded as "basic Mandelstam." My regret is that so much of the lesser known Mandelstam was omitted, including the essays on the social phenomenon of translation, "Torrents of Hackwork" and "On Translations," which are not only interesting in themselves but are required reading for a proper understanding of that remarkable, but extremely complex piece of autobiographical prose or literary exorcism, *Fourth Prose* (included in this volume, but for some reason placed under the general rubric, *Uncollected Essays and Fragments*; it deserves as singular and distinctive a place and heading as *Journey to Armenia*).

More important, perhaps, for our general understanding of Mandelstam, is that none of the post-1923 essays (as distinguished from the three works classifiable as "literary prose," *Fourth Prose*, *Journey to Armenia*, and *Conversation about Dante*) were included. Such poignant pieces as "Mikhoels," "Kiev," or "Iakhontov," such fanatical polemics as the essays on translation mentioned above or "Jacques was born and died," or such humorous criticism as "Doll with Millions" or "I Write a Scenario" are all fascinating in themselves and are essential to an understanding of Mandelstam's literary prose and poetry of the late 1920s and 1930s.

Likewise, to perceive *Conversation about Dante* as but another "essay," however remarkable, on the order of those collected in the volume *On Poetry* (the basis of Monas's volume), is to overlook what transpired in Mandelstam's creative work between 1923 and 1933, and to ignore the poet's profound concern with the "physiology of reading," the "impulse" behind the text, and the "instinct for form-creation."

While it is regrettable that the scholarly apparatus of this volume is slim, it is also very understandable. Nevertheless, our field still needs explication as much as appreciation, especially when the audience for a particular work knows so little both about Russian poetry and Russian criticism. As Mandelstam said of Dante: "I should hope in the future Dante scholarship will study the coordination of the impulse and the text," and translations like those by Professor Monas are helping this process enormously. However, I hope that the critical insights gained by the translators in their struggle to create "an independent speech system on the basis of foreign materials" will not be lost, but rather refocused so as to stimulate further study of "the coordination of [Mandelstam's] impulse and [his] text."

As for problems of printing and typesetting, I noted a few typographical errors on pages 102, 112, 124, 231, 236, and 237. On page 126, a line is omitted from paragraph four, following "inventing a myth . . ."; and "the war" was omitted from the first line of the last paragraph on the same page.

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