

high heeled gold spangled shoes. Another image takes shape: a black chauffeured limousine draws up beside her on the ferry.

One may wonder, at this juncture, what part memory, fiction, myth, and fact play in the subsequent unfolding of the text. Without any doubt the love story has a complex symbolic value, encompassing as it does the breaking of taboos familial, sexual, social, and racial, producing some harshly comic scenes along the way. Beyond this it has all the strange aura of a Freudian dream: the feminine softness of the man; the lustral purification rituals regularly reenacted before love-making; the tomb-like room, shut off from the daily world; the passage from one world to the other in the coffin-like limousine. These suggest maternal images. The lover calls the child "mon enfant." One wonders if the plunge into the depths of the unconscious has not secreted its own mythic mask, a displacement of the violent desire for the maternal body transferred to the phantasm of the lover from Cholen.

There is one passage in the book which gives an insight into the alchemy that presides over the genesis of Duras's world. She describes two moments of overwhelming fear. The first when, as a little girl, she was pursued by a mad, screaming, native beggarwoman; the second when, as she looked at her mother, a sudden panic seized her along with the conviction that the woman sitting there was a stranger who had usurped her mother's body. She tells us how from the fusion of these events came the mythic beggar woman whose song and adventures haunt *India Song* and *The Vice Consul* as she wanders from Savannah to Calcutta. The "man from Cholen" and "the little white whore" join the procession of Duras's mythic figures: the beggar-woman, Anne-Marie Stretter, the Vice Consul of Lahore, Nathalie Granger, Aurelia Steiner, Lol V. Stein, strangers all to the social life of a community.

L'Amant is a fascinating book. As is the case with all Duras's writing, fragments of the tale already live in the reader's memory. Autobiography and fiction merge and open up new vistas into the shaping of a compelling multi-faceted literary world, an achievement belatedly recognized by the award to Duras, in 1984, of the Goncourt Prize.

Geir Kjetsaa, Sven Gustavsson, Bengt Beckman, and Steinar Gil

THE AUTHORSHIP OF The Quiet Don

Oslo: Solum Forlag; New Jersey: Humanities Press, 1984.

Pp. 153. \$17.50

Reviewed by Vasa D. Mihailovich

The authorship of one of the best novels in twentieth century Russian literature, *The Quiet Don*, has been a bone of contention ever since the first volume was published in 1928, and the contention does not seem to abate. Witness the three books in English alone—by an anonymous Russian critic D*, by Roy A. Medvedev, and by the collective authorship of the book under review—which are devoted to this subject, not to speak of articles and mentions in other books on Mikhail Sholokhov. Since the recently deceased Soviet author has been judged often on political grounds rather than on the literary merits of his works, the stand concerning the problem in question has often depended on the political view of the critic. Since, unfortunately, most of the original manuscript of *The Quiet Don* has been lost or is, for some reason, inaccessible, one wishes for a magic wand that would provide answers to the critical questions: did he or did he not? and, if he did not, who did? Or for some trustworthy, ironclad, "scientific" way of resolving this controversy that has lasted more than half a century.

Such a way seems to be presented in this slender book. Although not foolproof and admittedly still not a solution beyond any doubt, this study by four scholars at the universities of Oslo and Stockholm comes as close as we ever will get to a definitive answer. By examining meticulously by way of computer science the styles of Sholokhov and the most-often alleged author, Fedor Kriukov, they have reached a firm conclusion that Sholokhov is indeed the author of *The Quiet Don*. However, in the true spirit of the controversy, they hedge somewhat by comparing their method to the way the fatherhood of a child is established—they conclude that Kriukov is *not* the author, while Sholokhov is the most likely author of the book.

In demonstrating their method of examination, the authors go to great lengths by way of numerous charts of computer analyses, which show time and again that the similarities between the style of Sholokhov's other works and that of *The Quiet Don* unmistakably point to the same authorship, while the same cannot be said of Kriukov. If one agrees that a literary style can be analyzed by a computer—and this reviewer does—the conclusion of the Scandinavian scholars must be taken seriously. How else can one explain the demonstrated similarities between earlier and later works except by the true fact that every writer develops mannerisms that are unquestionably his. If one disagrees with the computer method, he or she, of course, will persist in the conviction that Sholokhov plagiarized Kriukov's manuscript, and the controversy will continue ad infinitum.

The authors of this study are to be commended for their painstaking effort, which speaks for itself and which has to be studied to appreciate fully both the method and the findings. Those who still like to look at literature as a domain of art and not of science, have other, less scientific reasons to believe in Sholokhov's authorship. If he was unable to write *The Quiet Don*, how could he write his early and late stories, and his later novels? Granted, they are not on the same artistic level, but how often does an author write on the same high artistic level throughout his entire career? Very seldom indeed. Moreover, many stylistic inconsistencies that the disbelievers claim preclude Sholokhov as the author, were the work of the censors, not of Sholokhov himself. Finally, how could Kriukov, who died in 1920, have written the end of the novel, which goes beyond that year and which, in the opinion of some critics, constitutes some of the best pages of the novel?

As mentioned, the controversy will probably go on forever, especially now that Sholokhov has died without making a deathbed "confession." One is almost tempted to ask, does it really matter? Do we know who Shakespeare was and does that diminish our enjoyment of his works? We have *The Quiet Don*, one of the greatest novels in world literature, and we should look at it primarily as a work of art. In the meantime, the authors of the book under review deserve our gratitude and praise for their valuable contribution.

R. G. Collins, ed.

CRITICAL ESSAYS ON JOHN CHEEVER

Boston; G. K. Hall, 1982, Pp. 292

Reviewed by Frank R. Cunningham

In John Livingston Lowes's memorable 1933 MLA Presidential Address on the insufficient exercise of critical imagination upon the fruits of scholarly research, he cited Carlyle's account of Coleridge's rhetoric: "He would accumulate 'formidable apparatus, logical swim-bladders . . . and other vehicular gear for setting out'—and never arrive at a goal," and called for a more humanistic scholarly writing that would illuminate the understanding. In an era of comparatively little *experimenta lucifera*, it is refreshing to encounter Professor Collins's gathering of critical essays on John Cheever's career, fully a third of which provide significant critical insights and interpretations of probable continued value to Cheever scholars. Collins's introductory essay to his volume (part of a series, edited by James Nagel at Northeastern University, intended to reprint important past criticism as well as new essays on major American writers) appropriately treats Cheever's declared search for radiance and illumination in his over 150 published short stories and four novels. (Collins omits consideration of Cheever's final short novel, *Oh What a Paradise It Seems*, published just as his collection was in press.) Helpful in this regard are Cheever's own rarely granted statements concerning his artistic intentions in interviews with John Hersey and Annette Grant in which he speaks of his search for "the boundlessness of possibility" (p. 102) and of his conviction of humankind's universal drive toward "spiritual light" (p. 106), as well as his discontent with so much of contemporary fiction "littered with tales about the sensibilities of a child coming of age on a chicken farm" (p. 95), and his preference for Cocteau's idea that "writing is a force of memory that is not understood" (p. 97).

Among essays dealing with Cheever's themes of spiritual affirmation and renewal, especially revealing are those by George Hunt, George Garrett, John Gardner (the 1977 *Saturday*