tive concept. However, the notion of imitation as the source for the protagonist's spiritual transformation and ultimately his death is underdeveloped. The interpretation of the master's sacrificial act as mechanical imitation, rather than in the more Tolstoyan terms of spiritual unity with the people and with God, does not strike one as valid, unless, perhaps, one interprets imitation as a tool of such unity.

Overall, the book is well written and presents its analysis in clear, linear form. Its one definite shortcoming is the almost complete absence of contemporary Russian sources. *Desire, Death, and Imitation* does not present a new approach to Tolstoy's late fiction, but as close readings of important works the three essays assembled under its cover should be of interest to scholars.

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In 2004, a number of international conferences were held to mark the centenary of Anton Chekhov's death. These two volumes of *Essays in Poetics* issue from two contiguous conferences that took place at Oxford University (Mansfield College) in September, 2004: "One Hundred Years of Chekhov" and "Chekhov's Legacy in Russian Literature of the 20th Century and Beyond." All told, the two volumes contain thirty-four essays occupying a hefty 621 pages. They constitute an eclectic and uneven batch of tributes to Chekhov, ranging from the lively and engaged to the mundane and already-said.

In his characteristically captivating and witty essay in Volume I - "Looking for Chekhov in all the Wrong Places" - Laurence Senelick offers a metacommentary on the process of producing Chekhov scholarship (of which the conferences talks and this review are part and parcel) in which he remarks that "Chekhov scholars can only scratch the surface of existing scholarship, often remaining unaware of their precursors" such that "the same or similar statements get made on a regular basis" (p. 164). Senelick persuades us to scrutinize our own practices as scholars by arguing for the need to go to the specifics of linguistic detail in Chekhov as the place where real interest and the potential for original interpretations reside. An undisputed master of Chekhovian detail himself, in this essay Senelick compares two recent productions of "Uncle Vanya": a staging by the Hungarian director Jano Szász faulted for "blot[ting] out peripheral detail," and Dodin's recent St. Petersburg staging, which - by attending to a myriad of details drawn out of Chekhov's words - "lit the play from within" (p. 173). The gist of my reading of the *Essays in Poetics* pieces has to do with this principle: where sustained and substantial engagement with Chekhov's language from within a text occurs, there is reason to pay heed; where an author repeats well-known ideas, or Chekhov's specificity is reduced to lists of instances, interest fades.

To take the latter first, some essays evince a lack of familiarity with recent scholarship, which gives pause. Thus Birgit Beumers, in "The Chopping of *The Cherry Orchard*: Stanislavskii or Chekhov?" (I), argues for a vaudevillian understanding of Chekhov's last play without reference to numerous articles published since the 1980s
on the topic of why *The Cherry Orchard* should be read and performed as comedy. There is a similarly old-fashioned quality to a handful of essays – Joost van Baak’s “Chekhov’s Fictonal Mansions: A Narrative Perspective” (I); Kjeld Bjøranger’s “The Masculine Triangle in *Uncle Vanya*” (I); Boris Christa’s “Costume and Communication in *The Cherry Orchard*” (I); Andrzej Dudek’s “The Motif of Insanity in Chekhov’s Works” (I), Willem J. Weststeijn’s “Character in Chekhov’s Stories” (I) – where the authors tend to create typologies that do little to illuminate a writer who begs for specific, singular understandings of each work. Cari Alexander van Slooten’s essay on “The Functional Role of Sound in Chekhov’s Stories and Plays” (I) suffers from both maladies: the monographs cited as proof of the under-treatment of van Slooten’s topic were published in English in 1966, 1980, and 1983; and the author’s conclusion – that sound creates mood, characterizes personalities, and comments on events – seems downright antiquarian.

Others do better. While it can not be said that there is anything particularly new or groundbreaking in them, several essays offer modest extensions of previous thinking on Chekhov’s works. These include Claire Whitehead’s piece on defying genre in “Playing at Detectives: Parody in *The Swedish Match*” (I), Richard Peace’s article on reversal of stereotypes, “From Titles to Endings: *Rothschild’s Violin*” (I), Harai Golomb’s “Heredity, Inheritance, Heritage: Human De- and Re-generation in Chekhov’s Major Plays (With Special Reference to *Three Sisters*)” (I), and Wolf Schmid’s comments on Chekhov’s peculiar poetics of “eventfulness” in “Sobytinost’ i tochka zreniia v narrativnom mire pozdnego Chekhova” (I) – although in the latter piece, one wonders about the absence of a reference to the book that treats this very topic, Cathy Popkin’s *The Pragmatics of Insignificance* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press: 1993).

My favorite treatment of Chekhov’s prose in the collection is the essay by Robert Reid, one of the volumes’ editors, “Death of a Civil Servant: Beyond Parody” (I). Reid offers a welcome corrective to what, until now, has been the most interesting interpretation of this early Chekhov story. V. A. Nedzvedskii, in a 1997 essay, had argued that the text endorses the clerk Cherviakov’s attempt to assert his “right to grovel.” Reid, deploying Pierre Bordieu and Hegel on subjective consciousness of social class and on the master/slave relationship (respectively), reads Cherviakov as desperately attempting to fulfill the social contract of a subordinate in his attempts to apologize to Brizzhalov; but because social hierarchy depends on suppression of mutual recognition, his superior does not respond, leaving Cherviakov floundering as he – the subordinate – attempts to patrol and reinforce the boundaries of master/slave hierarchy. As Reid suggests, previous critics have overlooked the “surprising depth” of Cherviakov’s “psyche structure” (p. 145).

Chekhov’s drama finds its most intelligent treatment in Cynthia Marsh’s “Two-Timing Time in *Three Sisters*” (I), where the author looks at time as it is constructed within the play in relationship to time as it is experienced by the playgoer and in the context of “the theatre auditorium” (p. 105). Those interested in performance history may wish to take a look at essays on Efros’ 1967 *Three Sisters*, on Brian Friel’s “Irish” translation of *Three Sisters*, and on Thomas Kilroy’s (unfortunate) adaptation of *The Seagull*.

Individual essays in Volume II, which largely concerns Chekhov’s legacy in the works of his successors, may serve as helpful sources for scholars undertaking rela-