

CHEKHOV IN MELIKHOV¹

Perhaps
between the world etched by words on paper
and the real world
you were a transparent membrane
engaged in incessant osmosis.

Every thing
passed through you
 without leaving scars,
or scars were there
 covered by layers.

Tell me how, and when
that Lika, whose sweet voice echoed
through each room of the Melikhova-house,
became the abandoned Nina of Seagull
and that gentle Papapenko, selfish Trigorin?

In this mutation
how much was your own intention —
 your so called creative power?

I doubt
we do have any authority over words.

That day
surrounded by the happy conversation of friends and followers
drugged by the desired security of their closeness
bewitched by their masked adulation
you declared —
 if you wished, you could construct a story
 even on that insignificant ash-tray.

Was it really true?
or just a trick, played
with the simplicity of childhood.

Subhash Jaireth

No
perhaps, it was the time —
you had your house

land property name
invitations adulation admiration
photos newspapers headlines interviews
and scores of ears impatient to catch every utterance.

The colourless childhood of Taganrog
and the suffocating smell of the grocery store
like a book with a tattered cover,
hidden among other junk and thrown
in the back yard.

1. Melikhova is a small village, 70 km from Moscow, where in 1891 Chekhov bought a small farm house. In this house Chekhov wrote many stories and novels including his famous play *The Seagull*. Lika or Lydia Mizinova was a friend of Chekhov and her romance with another friend and famous Ukrainian writer, Ignaty Potapenko, is believed to be used in portraying two main characters of the play *The Seagull*.