This issue was generously sponsored by

Vladimir & Irina Druk
Vladimir Gandelsman
Olga & Gabriel Goldberger
Andrey Gritsman & Natasha Gasteva
Mark Karpovsky
Helga Olshvang
Lilya Pann & Victor Pan
Slava Polischuk
Yanislav Wolfson

CARDINAL POINTS №12
VOLUME 1

WWW.STOSVET.NET
INFO@STOSVET.NET

CARDINAL POINTS IS A BILINGUAL ENGLISH-RUSSIAN LITERARY JOURNAL, WHICH FEATURES POETRY, FICTION, TRANSLATIONS, AND INTERVIEWS WITH LEADING POETS, WRITERS, AND SCHOLARS. THE JOURNAL IS PUBLISHED IN NEW YORK AND CAN ALSO BE FOUND ONLINE AT WWW.STOSVET.NET.
PRINT VERSIONS OF THE ISSUE CAN BE ORDERED FROM THE SITE OF STOSVET PUBLISHING HOUSE AT WWW.STOSVET.NET/LIB/INDEX_ENG.HTML OR BY SENDING AN E-MAIL REQUEST TO BOOKS@STOSVET.NET. FOR QUESTIONS REGARDING PUBLICATIONS, MARKETING, AND DISTRIBUTION PLEASE CONTACT US AT INFO@STOSVET.NET.

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF
OLEG WOOLF

EDITORS
IRINA MASHINSKI
ROBERT CHANDLER

TRANSLATOR AND ADVISOR
ALEXANDER VEYTSMAN

BOOK DESIGNER, ILLUSTRATOR
SERGEY SAMSONOV

ISBN 978-0-9820065-7-3

□

LITERARY JOURNAL

CARDINAL POINTS

STOSVET PUBLISHING HOUSE
NEW YORK
2010

CARDINAL POINTS №12 VOLUME 1

PROSE

SHORT PROSE

POETRY

ESSAYS

CONVERSATIONS

THE ART OF TRANSLATION

PROSE

Varlam Shalamov

A REST

The mountains were white with a bluish sheen, like sugar loaves. Round and treeless, they were coated in a thin layer of solid snow, packed down by the winds. The snow in the ravines was deep and firm – it could hold a man's weight, while on the slopes it seemed to bulge up in huge bubbles. These were the shrubs of the dwarf pine, sprawled over the earth, which had bedded down for their winter night before the first snow fell. It was these shrubs that we needed.

Of all the northern trees, I loved the Siberian dwarf pine the most.

I had long understood and treasured the enviable eagerness with which poor northern nature hurried to share with man, who was just as destitute, its simple riches: to bloom the faster for him with all its flowers. Sometimes in a week everything would race into blossom, and within a month of summer's arrival the mountains bathed in rays of the almost never-setting sun would redden with lingonberries and blacken with midnight blueberries. On the low-growing shrubs – you didn't even need to lift your arm – big, lush, yellow rowanberries burst with ripeness. The honeyed mountain dog-rose: its pink petals were the only flowers here that were scented like flowers, all the rest smelt of nothing but damp, of bog, and this accorded with the spring silence of the birds, the silence of the larch forest, whose branches were slowly donning their green needles. The dog-rose guarded its fruits right up until the frosts, and from under the snow it stretched out to us its puckered fleshy berries, whose leathery, purple skin hid a dark-yellow meat. I knew the gaiety of the vines, changing their hue over and over in the spring: now deep rose, now tangerine, now pallid green, as if sheathed in coloured kidskin. The larch trees reached out their slender fingers tipped with green nails, the pervasive fat willowherb carpeted the ground cleared by forest fires. All this was delightful, innocent, noisy and hurried, but all this was in the summer, where the dull green grass mingled with the verdant glint of the mossy rocks sparkling in the sun, which suddenly appeared no longer grey or brown, but green.

In winter all this vanished, blanketed in the crumbly, stiff snow that drifted into the gorges and was compacted by the winds, so that in order to ascend the mountain you had to hack steps out of the snow with an axe. A man in the forest could be seen from a mile off, so naked was everything. And only one tree stayed ever green, ever alive: the Siberian dwarf pine. It could predict the weather. Two or three days before the first snowfall, while the autumn days were still hot and cloudless and no one wanted to think about the im-

pending winter, the dwarf pine would suddenly stretch out its huge, two-fathom paws along the earth, nimbly bow its straight black trunk, two fists thick, and lie down floppily on the earth. A day passed, then another, a small cloud would appear, and towards evening a blizzard would start blowing and the snow would fall. If, however, low snow clouds gathered late in autumn, a cold wind blew yet the dwarf pine did not lie flat, you could be quite certain no snow would fall.

In late March or April, when there was still no hint of spring and the wintry air was tenuous and dry, the dwarf pine all around would rise up, shaking the snow from its green, vaguely gingery, garments. Within a day or two the wind would change, the warm air streams heralding the spring.

The dwarf pine was a highly accurate instrument, so sensitive that now and again it was fooled, it would rise during a momentary thaw. Although it never rose ahead of a thaw. But before the weather could cool, it would hurriedly lie back down in the snow. Or this could happen: you started up a nice hot bonfire in the morning so that you'd have somewhere to warm your feet and hands by lunchtime, you piled on some extra firewood and left for work. Within two or three hours, from beneath the snow, the dwarf pine would stretch out its branches and slowly straighten up, thinking that the spring had come. Before the fire had gone out, the dwarf pine lay back down on the snow. The winter here was two-tone: the soaring, pale-blue sky and the white earth. In spring, the previous autumn's dingy yellow rags were bared, and for a long time the earth would wear these beggarly clothes, until the new foliage mustered strength and everything began blossoming – hurriedly and passionately. And here, amid this dismal spring, this relentless winter, the dwarf pine sparkled, shone intensely, dazzlingly green. What's more, nuts grew on it – little cedar nuts. This delicacy was shared among men, birds, bears, squirrels and chipmunks.

Having picked a clearing on the sheltered side of the mountain, we hauled branches, small and larger ones, we pulled up the dry grass on the mountain's bald patches which the wind had stripped of snow. We had brought with us from the barracks some smouldering firebrands taken from the lit stove before leaving for work – there were no matches here.

We carried the firebrands in a large tin can fitted with a wire handle, taking great care not to let them go out along the way. After pulling the brands out from the can, blowing on them and holding their glowing ends together, I kindled a flame and, putting the brands on the branches, I heaped up a bonfire – dry grass and small branches. Then I covered all this with the larger branches, and soon a plume of blue smoke was tentatively drawn by the wind.

I had never before worked in the teams which gathered the needles of the dwarf pine. The work was carried out by hand: we plucked the dry green needles like feathers from game birds, grabbing handfuls, we stuffed the sacks with the needles, and in the evening we delivered our produce to the foreman. Then the needles were taken away to the mysterious vitamin plant,

where they were boiled up into a dark-yellow, thick and sticky extract with an indescribably repulsive taste. We were forced to drink or eat this extract (whichever we could manage) every day before lunch. The taste of the extract spoiled not only lunch, but dinner too, and many saw in this treatment one more source of stress in the camp. Without a shot of this medicine in the dining rooms it was impossible to obtain dinner – they kept a strict watch over this. Scurvy was everywhere, and the only medically approved remedy was the dwarf pine. Faith conquers all, and despite the fact that this "medicine" was later proven completely ineffective as an anti-scorbutic and it was abandoned and the vitamin plant shut down, in our time people drank this foul-smelling muck, spitting it out, and they recovered from scurvy. Or they didn't recover.

Or they recovered without drinking it. Absolutely everywhere was teeming with rosehip, but it was not harvested, no one used it as a remedy for scurvy – the Moscow instructions had said nothing about rosehip. (Several years later they began delivering rosehip from the mainland, but as far as I know, they never did organise their own local supply).

The instructions treated dwarf-pine needle as the only provider of vitamin C. Now I was a gatherer of this precious raw material: I had grown weak and they had transferred me from the gold works to pick the dwarf pine.

"You can go and work on the dwarf pine," the taskmaster had said in the morning. "I'll give you a few days' kant."

Kant was a widely used expression in the camps. It meant something like a brief rest, not a proper rest (which was called pripukh) but work which would not wear a man out, some light, temporary work.

Work on the dwarf pine was considered not merely light: it was the lightest work of all, and on top of that, it was unsupervised.

After many months of work in the icy mines, where each stone glistening with frost would burn your hands, after the clunk of the rifle bolts, the barking of the dogs and the obscenities of the overseers standing at your back, work on the dwarf pine was an enormous pleasure, felt by each exhausted muscle. The dwarf pine team was sent out later than the ordinary posting to work in the dark.

How good it was to warm your hands on the tin with the smouldering brands, taking your time to walk to the mountains, so unfathomably distant, as I had thought earlier, and to climb higher and higher, the whole time sensing in joyful surprise your solitude and the deep winter mountain silence, as though everything bad in the world had disappeared and there was only your comrade and you, and the dark, unending, slender trail in the snow leading somewhere higher in the mountains.

My comrade watched my slow movements with disapproval. He had worked on the dwarf pine for a long time and rightly guessed in me an unskilled and weak partner. We worked in pairs, our earnings combined and divided equally.

"I'll do the chopping, you sit down and pick," he said. "And get a move on, or

else we won't make the quota. I don't want to leave this place for the mines again."

He lopped off boughs of dwarf pine and hauled a great pile of these paws to the fire. I broke off the skimpier branches and, beginning at the top ends, stripped away the needles along with the bark. They were like green fringe.

"You need to speed up," my comrade said, returning with a new armful. "That's no good, brother!"

I could see for myself it was no good. But I couldn't work any faster. My ears were ringing, and my fingers, frostbitten since the start of winter, had long ached with a familiar dull pain. I tore off the needles, broke whole branches into pieces without stripping the bark, and shoved the plunder into the sack. But the sack refused to fill. An entire mountain of stripped branches like cleaned bones had already arisen near the fire, yet the sack carried on plumping and plumping and accepting new armfuls of dwarf pine.

My comrade began helping me. We were making headway.

"Time to go home," he said suddenly. "Or else we'll miss supper. We haven't got enough here for the quota." And, taking a large stone from the cinders of the fire, he shoved it into the sack. "They don't untie it there," he said, frowning. "Now we'll make the quota."

I stood up, strewed the burning branches about and raked snow onto the glowing coals with my feet. The fire hissed, went out, and at once it turned cold; evening was near. My comrade helped me to hoist the sack over my shoulder. I staggered under its weight.

"Tow it along," said my comrade. "We're going downhill, after all, not up."

We barely made it in time for soup and tea. This light work did not merit a main dish.

1956

Translated from Russian by Anna Gunin

Varlam Shalamov

SOMEONE ELSE'S BREAD

It was someone else's bread, the bread of my comrade. This comrade trusted only me - he'd gone to work on the day shift and left the bread with me in a little Russian wooden case. Nowadays they don't make cases like that - natty little cases covered in artificial crocodile-skin - but in the twenties every good-looking girl in Moscow used to have one. In the case was bread, a ration of bread. If you shook the case, the bread rolled about inside. The case lay under my head. I couldn't sleep. A hungry man sleeps badly. But what stopped me sleeping was this bread, someone else's bread, the bread of my comrade. I sat up on the boards... It seemed that everyone was looking at me, that everyone knew what I was about to do. But the orderly by the window was patching something. Another man - I don't know his name but he worked on the night shift too - was lying in someone else's place in the middle of the barrack, feet towards the warm iron stove. This warmth didn't reach me. The man was lying on his back, face up. I went up to him - his eyes were closed. I glanced at the upper tier of bed-boards - there, in the corner of the barrack, someone was sleeping or else just lying awake, covered by a heap of old clothes. I lay down again in my place, determined to go to sleep. I counted to a thousand and then got up again. I opened the case and took out the bread. It was a three hundred gram ration, cold as a piece of wood. I raised it to my nose and my nostrils caught a mysterious, barely perceptible scent of bread. I put the bread back in the case and took it out again. I turned the case upside-down and emptied a few crumbs of bread into the palm of my hand. I licked them up with my tongue; my mouth immediately filled with saliva and the crumbs melted away. I no longer hesitated. I nipped off three small pieces of bread, little ones, the size of my little fingernail, put the bread in the case and lay down. Then I nipped off little crumbs and sucked them. And I fell asleep, proud that I hadn't stolen the bread of my comrade.

1956

Translated from Russian by
*Robert Chandler & Nathan Wilkinson**

---

* *An earlier version of this translation, by Robert Chandler alone, was first published in 'Index on Censorship' in the late 1970s*

Andrey Platonov

TWO EXTRACTS FROM *CHEVENGUR*

The following chapters take place in 1920-21, as the Russian Civil War is ending. Sasha [or Aleksandr] Dvanov is a young man whose father commited suicide as a child. Zakhar Pavlovich is his adoptive father.

Dvanov opened the wicket gate into his yard and was glad to see the old tree growing beside the entrance-room. The tree was covered in cuts and wounds, an axe had repeatedly been put to rest in it while chopping firewood, but it was still alive, still keeping the green passion of foliage on its sick branches.

'You back, Sasha?' asked Zakhar Pavlovich. 'It's good you've come back – I've been here on my own. With you gone, I didn't feel like sleeping. I just lay there listening and listening: could that be you I heard? I didn't even lock the door because of you – so you could come straight in.'

During his first days at home, Aleksandr shivered and tried to get warm on the stove, while Zakhar Pavlovich sat down below and dozed as he sat.

'Sash, maybe there's something you want?' Zakhar Pavlovich would ask from time to time

'No, I don't want anything.'

'I was thinking that perhaps you should eat something.'

Soon Dvanov could no longer hear Zakhar Pavlovich's questions or see him weeping at night and hiding his face in the recess in the stove where Aleksandr's socks were drying. Dvanov had caught typhoid, which kept coming back, not leaving the patient's body for eight months and then developing into pneumonia. Aleksandr lay in forgetfulness of his life and only occasionally in the winter nights did he hear locomotive whistles and remember them; sometimes the rumble of distant artillery reached the indifferent mind of the patient, and then it felt hot and noisy again in the cramped space of his body. During moments of consciousness Dvanov lay empty and dried up. All he could sense was his skin and he pressed himself down against his bedding; it seemed to him he might fly off, just as the dry light little corpses of spiders fly away.

Before Easter Zakhar Pavlovich made a coffin for his adoptive son; it was sturdy and splendid, with bolts and flanges – the last gift that a master-craftsman father could give to his son. Zakhar Pavlovich wanted a coffin like this to preserve Aleksandr – if not alive, then at least intact for memory and love; every ten years Zakhar Pavlovich was going to dig up his son from the grave, so as to see him and sense himself together with him.

Dvanov first left the house when the time was new; the air felt heavy like water, the sun seemed noisy from the burning of fire, and the entire world seemed fresh, pungent and intoxicating to his weakness. Life once again shone before Dvanov – his body had springiness, and his thoughts were leavened with fantasy.

A girl he knew, Sonya Mandrova, was looking across the fence at Aleksandr. She couldn't understand how come, if there'd been a coffin, Sasha hadn't died.

'You haven't died?' she asked.

'No,' said Aleksandr. 'And you're alive too?'

''I'm alive too. Together we're going to live. Do you feel well now?'

'Yes, I do. And you?'

'I feel well too. But why are you so thin? Is it that death was inside you and you didn't let it in?'

'Did you want me to die?' asked Dvanov.

'I don't know,' answered Sonya. 'I've seen that there are a lot of people. They're dying, and then they stay.'
Dvanov asked her to come round. Sonya climbed over the fence in her bare feet and gently touched Aleksandr, having forgotten him during the winter. Dvanov told her what he had seen in his dreams and how dreary it had been in the darkness of sleep. There hadn't been any people anywhere, and he knew now how few of them there were in the world: it had been the same when he was walking through steppeland not far from the war – he hadn't come across many homes there either.

'I wasn't thinking when I said I don't know,' said Sonya. 'If you'd died, I'd have begun crying for a long time. I'd rather you'd gone a long way away – then I'd have thought you're alive in one piece.'

Aleksandr looked at her with surprise. Sonya had grown during this year,

although she had eaten little; her hair had darkened, her body had acquired carefulness and being near her felt shameful.

'Sash, you don't yet know. I'm studying now, I'm going to courses.'

'What do they teach there?'

'Everything we don't know. One teacher says we're stinking dough and he'll make us into a sweet pie. He can say what he likes – after all, we're going to learn politics from him, aren't we?'

'You - stinking dough?'

'Uh-uh. But soon I won't be, and nor will others, because I'll become a teacher of children and they'll start getting clever from when they're little. And no one will call them stinking dough.'

Dvanov touched one of her hands, so as to get used to her again – and Sonya gave him her second hand too.

'You'll get well better like this,' she said. 'You're cold, I'm hot. Can you feel?'

'Sonya, come round to us in the evening,' said Aleksandr. 'I'm fed up with being on my own.'

Sonya came round in the evening, and Sasha did some drawing for her and she showed him how to draw better. Zakhar Pavlovich quietly carried out the coffin and chopped it up into firewood. 'What we need now is a cradle,' he thought. 'Where can I find iron that's supple enough to make springs? We haven't got any at work – the only iron we've got is for locomotives. Maybe Sonya and Sasha will have children and I'll be the one who looks after them. Sonya will be old enough soon – and yes, it's good she exists; she's an orphan too.

After Sonya had left, Dvanov felt frightened and immediately lay down to sleep until morning, so as to see a new day and have no memory of the night. But he lay there and saw night with open eyes; after growing stronger and being stirred up, life didn't want to go and forget about itself in him. Dvanov pictured to himself the dark over the tundra; people who had been exiled from the warm places of the earth had gone there to live. These people had made a little railway line, in order to carry logs for the construction of dwellings to replace their lost summer climate. Dvanov imagined he was an engine driver on this logging line that took timber to build new cities, and he did all the driver's work in his mind – crossing sections of unpeopled wilderness, taking on water at stations, whistling in the middle of a blizzard, braking,

talking to his assistant – before finally falling asleep at the final station, on the shore of the Arctic Ocean. In his sleep he saw large trees, growing out of poor soil; around them was airy, faintly oscillating space, and an empty track was patiently going away into the distance. Dvanov envied all this; he would have liked to take the trees, the air and the track and put them somewhere inside himself, so there would be no time to die under their protection. And there was something else that Dvanov wanted to remember, but the effort was heavier than the memory and his thought disappeared round a bend of consciousness in sleep, like a bird from a wheel beginning to turn.

•

Sonya Mandrova travelled by cart to the village of Voloshino and began living in the school as a teacher. She was also called upon to deliver babies, to sit with the young people in the evenings and to treat wounds, and she did all this as best she could and without causing offence to anyone. Everyone needed her in this small village on the edge of a gully, and consoling the grief and illnesses of the inhabitants made Sonya feel important and happy. But at night she would remain waiting for a letter from Dvanov. She had given her address to Zakhar Pavlovich and everyone she knew, so they wouldn't forget to tell Sasha where she was living. Zakhar Pavlovich had promised to do this and had given her a photograph of Dvanov.

'In any case,' he said, 'you'll be bringing the photograph back again when you become his wife and start living with me.'

'Yes,' said Sonya.

She looked out of the school window at the sky and saw stars above the silence of night. There was such quiet that it seemed there was nothing in the steppe except emptiness and that there was not enough air to breathe; this was why stars fell down. Sonya kept thinking about the letter: could it be brought safely across open country? The letter had become the nourishing idea of her life; whatever she was doing, Sonya believed that somewhere the letter was making its way towards her. In a hidden guise it preserved for her alone the necessity of further existence and glad hope – and so Sonya laboured with still greater carefulness and zeal to lessen the unhappiness of people in the village. She knew that the letter would make reparation for all this.

But at this time letters were read by all and everyone. Dvanov's letter to Shumilin had been read back in Petropavlovka. The first to read it had been the postman, and he had been followed by everyone he knew with an interest in reading: the teacher, the deacon, the shopkeeper's widow, the sexton's

son, and one or two others. Libraries were not functioning, books were not being sold – and people were unhappy and their souls in need of consolation. And so the postman's hut became a library. Especially interesting letters made no progress at all towards their addressees but were kept back for rereading and constant pleasure.

Official letters were sent on immediately – everyone already knew what they said. The letters people learned most from were those that were transiting through Pavlovka: unknown people wrote sadly and interestingly.

Letters that had been read were glued back down with syrup and sent further on their way.

Sonya did not yet know any of this – otherwise she would have gone on foot round every village post office. Above the sounds of the stove in the corner she could hear the snoring sleep of the watchman, who worked in the school not for wages, but to safeguard the lasting eternity of property. He would have preferred children not to enter the school at all – they scratched desks and smeared walls. The watchman foresaw that the schoolmistress would die unless he looked after her, while the school itself was ripped apart to meet the peasnts' domestic needs. Sonya slept easier when she could hear someone living not far away, and it was with quiet care that she wiped her feet on the mat and lay herself down on bedclothes white with cold. Somewhere, muzzles turned to the darkness of the steppe, faithful dogs were barking.

Sonya curled up, in order to sense her body and warm herself with it, and began to fall asleep. Her dark hair was spread mysteriously over the pillow, while her mouth had opened out of attention to a dream. She saw dark wounds appearing on her body; on waking up, she quickly and without memory checked her body with her hand.

A stick was knocking roughly at the school door. The caretaker had left his place of sleep and was already in the entrance room, busy with the lock and bolt. He was cursing the restless man on the other side, 'Stop bashing the door like that! There's a woman resting in here, you blockhead! What's got into you?'

'What is this place?' asked a calm voice from outside.

'This is a school,' answered the caretaker. 'What do you think it is – an inn?'

'So it's the schoolmistress who lives here, is it?'

'Where else would the schoolmistress live?' the caretaker said in surprise. 'And what do you want her for? Why should I let a cocky bastard like you in to see her?'

‘Show her to us…’

‘If the schoolmistress wishes, you can have a look.’

‘Let him in – who is it?’ Sonya shouted, and ran out into the entrance-room.

Two men dismounted – Mrachinsky and Dvanov.
Sonya took a step back from them. Before her stood Sasha – unkempt, dirty and sad.

Translated from Russian by Robert Chandler, Elizabeth Chandler, and Olga Meerson.

Vasily Grossman

A SMALL LIFE

INTRODUCTION

'A Small Life' is immediately recognizable as the work of the mature Grossman; it is as low-key, as unshowy, as 'In the Town of Berdichev' is showy. Here too, however, Grossman takes considerable risks – though this seems to have gone unnoticed when the story was first published in 1936. The hero, Lev Orlov, is timid and depressive; even though his first name means 'Lion' and his last name means 'Eagle', he is the antithesis of the positive hero of Socialist Realist doctrine. In November 1935 Stalin had declared that 'Life has become better, life has become merrier', and these words were repeated again and again – on banners and posters, in newspaper articles, in talks on the radio and in speeches at May Day parades and other public events. They were, in fact, the most popular slogan of the time. Against this background, the use of the words 'merrily' and 'merriment' and Orlov's lack of interest in May Day festivities are more than a little provocative. During the 1930s the radio was probably the most important medium for State propaganda; Orlov's lack of a radio is yet another indication of his alienation from Soviet life. Grossman does not, of course, overtly sympathize with Orlov's feelings, but nor does he explicitly condemn them.

With its delicate irony and its apparent inconsequentiality, 'A Small Life' owes much to Chekhov. Life and Fate includes a long hymn of praise to Chekhov as the bearer of 'the banner of a true, humane Russian democracy', but it is worth emphasizing that Grossman's admiration of Chekhov dates back at least to his first years as a professional writer. In 'A Tale about Love', a long story written in 1937, a film director and a script writer talk about their joint project in a railway compartment. They agree that Chekhov's The Steppe – a long story in which almost nothing appears to happen – is 'real art'. This conversation is not in any way necessary to the development of the plot. In the context of Soviet literature from the 1930s, with its emphasis on class conflict and five-year plans, it is startling – a clear declaration by Grossman of his artistic programme.

Robert Chandler

Moscow spends the last ten days of April preparing for May Day. The cornices of buildings and the little iron railings along boulevards are repainted, and in the evenings mothers throw up their hands in despair at the sight of their sons' trousers and coats. On all the city's squares carpenters merrily saw up planks that still smell of pine resin and the damp of the forest. Store masters use their directors' cars to collect great heaps of red cloth.

Visitors to different institutes find that their requests are all met with the same answer: 'Why don't we deal with this after the Holiday?'

Lev Sergeyevich Orlov was standing on a street corner with his colleague Timofeyev. Timofeyev was saying, 'You're an old woman, Lev Sergeyevich. We could go to a beer hall or a restaurant. We could just wander about and watch the crowds. So what if it upsets your wife? You're just an old woman, a complete and utter old woman!'

But Lev Sergeyevich said goodbye and went on his way. Morose by nature, he used to say of himself, 'I'm made in such a way that it's my lot to see tragedy, even if it's hidden beneath rose petals.'

And Lev Sergeyevich did indeed see tragedy everywhere.

Even now as he made his way through the crowds he was thinking how hard it must be to be stuck in hospital during these days of merriment, how miserable these days must be for pharmacists, engine drivers and train crews – people who have to work on the First of May.

When he got home, he said all this to his wife. She began to laugh at him, but he just shook his head and went on being upset.

Still turning over the same thoughts, he went on letting out loud sighs until late into the night. His wife said angrily, 'Lyova, why do you have to feel so sorry for the pharmacists? Why not feel sorry for me for a change and let me sleep? You know I've got to be at work by eight in the morning.'

The next day she left for work while Lev Sergeyevich was still asleep.

In the mornings he was usually in a good mood at the office, but by two in the afternoon he would be missing his wife, feeling anxious and fidgety and constantly watching the clock. His colleagues understood all this and used to make fun of him.

'Lev Sergeyevich is already looking at the clock,' someone would say – and everyone would laugh except for Agnessa Petrovna, the elderly head accountant, who would pronounce with a sigh, 'Orlov's wife is the luckiest woman in all Moscow.'

Today was no different. As the afternoon wore on, he grew fidgety, shrugging his shoulders in disbelief as he watched the minute hand of the clock.

'Someone to speak to you, Lev Sergeyevich,' a voice called out from the adjoining room. It was his wife. She was phoning to say that she would have to stay on at work for an extra hour and a half to retype the director's report.

'All right then,' Lev Sergeyevich replied in a hurt voice, and he hung up.

He did not hurry home. The city was buzzing, and the buildings, streets and pavements all seemed somehow special, different from how they usually were. And this intangible something, born of the festive sense of community, took many forms. It could be sensed even in the way a policeman dragged

away a drunk. It was as though all the men wandering about the street were related – as though they were all cousins, or uncles and nephews.

Today he would have been only too glad to saunter about with Timofeyev. It is unpleasant being the first to get back home. The room seems empty and unwelcoming, and there is no getting away from frightening thoughts: has something happened to Vera Ignatyevna? Has she twisted her ankle jumping off a tram?

Lev Sergeyevich would start to imagine that some hulking trolleybus had knocked Vera Ignatyevna down, that people were crowding around her body, that an ambulance was tearing along, wailing ominously. He would be seized with terror; he would want to phone friends and family; he would want to rush to the Emergency First Aid Institute, or to the police.

Every time his wife was ten or fifteen minutes late it was the same. He would feel the same panic.

What a lot of people there were on the street now! Why were they all sauntering up and down the boulevard, sitting idly on benches, stopping in front of every illuminated shop window? But then he walked up to his own building, and his heart leaped with joy. The little ventilation pane was open – his wife was already back.

He kissed Vera Ignatyevna several times. He looked into her eyes and stroked her hair.

'What a strange one you are!' she said. 'It's the same every time. Anyone would think I've come back from Australia, not from the Central Rubber Office.'

'If I don't see you all day,' he replied, 'you might just as well be in Australia.'

'You and your eternal Australia!' said Vera Ignatyevna. 'They ask me to help print the wall newspaper – and I refuse. I skip meetings of the Air-Chem Defence Society – and rush headlong back home. Kazakova has two little children – but Kazakova has no trouble at all staying behind. Not only that, but she's even a member of the automobile circle!'

'What a silly darling goose you are!' said Lev Sergeyevich. 'Who ever heard of a wife giving her husband a hard time for being too much of a stay-at-home?'

Vera Ignatyevna wanted to answer back, but instead she said in an excited voice, 'I've got a surprise for you! The Party committee's been asking people to take in orphanage children for a few days over the Holiday. I volunteered – I said we'd like a little girl. You won't be cross with me, will you?'

Lev Sergeyevich gave his wife a hug.

'How could I be cross with my clever girl?' he said. 'It scares me even to think about what I'd be doing and how I'd be living now if chance had not brought us together at that birthday party at the Kotelkovs.'

On the evening of 29th April Vera Ignatyevna was brought back home in a Ford. As she went up the stairs, pink with pleasure, she said to the little girl who had come with her, 'What a treat to go for a ride in a car. I could have carried on riding around for the rest of my life!'

It was the second time she had been in a car. Two years before, when her mother-in-law had come to visit, they had taken a taxi from the station. True, that first ride had not been all it might have been – the driver had never stopped cursing, saying that his tyres would probably collapse and that, with as much luggage as, they should have taken a three-ton truck.

Vera Ignatyevna and her little guest had barely entered the room when the doorbell rang.

'Ah, it must be Uncle Lyova,' said Vera Ignatyevna. She took the little girl by the hand and led her towards the door.

'Let me introduce you,' she said. 'This is Ksenya Mayorova, and this is comrade Orlov, uncle Lyova, my husband.'

'Greetings, my child!' said Orlov, and patted the little girl on the head.

He felt suddenly disappointed. He had imagined the little girl would be tiny and pretty, with sad eyes like the eyes of a grown-up woman. Ksenya Mayorova, however, was plain and stocky, with fat red cheeks, lips that stuck out a little and eyes that were grey and narrow.

'We came by car,' she boasted in a deep voice.

While Vera Ignatyevna was preparing supper, Ksenya wandered about the room examining everything.

'Auntie, have you got a radio?' she asked.

'No, darling. But come here – there's something we have to do.'

Vera Ignatyevna took her into the bathroom. There they talked about the zoo and the planetarium.

During supper Ksenya looked at Lev Sergeyevich, laughed and said pointedly, 'Uncle didn't wash his hands!'

She had a deep voice, but her laugh was thin and giggly.

Vera Ignatyevna asked Ksenya how much seven and eight came to, and what was the German word for a door. She asked her if she knew how to skate. They argued about what was the capital of Belgium; Vera Ignatyevna thought it was Antwerp. 'No, it's Geneva,' Ksenya insisted, pouting and stubbornly shaking her head.

Lev Sergeyevich took his wife aside and whispered, 'Put her to bed. Then I'll sit with her and tell her a story – she doesn't feel at home with us yet.'

'Why don't you go out into the corridor and have a smoke?' answered his wife. 'In the meantime we can air the room.'

Lev Sergeyevich walked up and down the corridor and struggled to recall a fairy tale. Little Red Riding Hood? No, she probably knew it already. Maybe he should just tell her about the quiet little town of Kasimov, about the forests there, about going for walks on the bank of the Oka – about his grandmother, about his brother, about his sisters?

When his wife called him back, Ksenya was already in bed. Lev Sergeyevich sat down beside her and patted her on the head.

'Well,' he asked, 'how do you like it here?'

Ksenya yawned convulsively and rubbed her eyes with one fist.

'It's all right,' she said. 'But I suppose it must be very hard for you without a radio.'

Lev Sergeyevich began recounting stories from his own childhood. Ksenya yawned three times in quick succession and said, 'You shouldn't sit on someone's bed if you're wearing clothes. Microbes can crawl off you.'
Her eyes closed. Half asleep, she began mumbling incoherently, telling some crazy story.
'Yes,' she whined. 'They didn't let me go on the excursion. Lidka saw when we were still in the garden... why didn't she say anything... and I carried it twice in my pocket... I've been pricked all over... but it wasn't me who told them about the glass, she's a sneak...'
She fell asleep. Lev Sergeyevich and his wife went on looking at her face in silence. She was sleeping without making a sound, her lips sticking out more than ever, her reddish pigtails moving ever so slightly against the pillow.
Where was she from? The Ukraine, the north Caucasus, the Volga? Who had her father been? Perhaps he had died doing some glorious work in a mine or in the smoke of some huge furnace? Perhaps he had drowned while floating timber down a river? Who was he? A mechanic? A porter? A housepainter? A shopkeeper? There was something magnificent and touching about this peacefully sleeping little girl.
In the morning Vera Ignatyevna went off to do some shopping. She needed to stock up for the three days of the holiday. She also wanted to go to the Mostorg department store and buy some silk for a summer dress. Lev Sergeyevich and Ksenya stayed behind.
'Listen, mein liebes Kind,' he said. 'We're not going out anywhere today, we're going to stay at home.'
He sat Ksenya down on his knee, put an arm round her shoulder and began telling her stories.
'Sit still now, be a good girl,' he would say every time she tried to get down.
In the end Ksenya sat still, snuffling from time to time as she watched this talking uncle.
By the time Vera Ignatyevna got back, it was already four o'clock. There had been a lot of people in the shops.
'Why are you looking so sulky, Ksenya?' she asked in a startled voice.
'Why shouldn't I look sulky?' Ksenya answered. 'Maybe I'm hungry.'
Vera Ignatyevna hurried into the kitchen to prepare supper; Lev Sergeyevich continued to entertain their little guest.
After supper, Ksenya asked for a pencil and some paper, so she could write a letter. 'But I don't need a stamp, I'll give it to Lidka myself,' she added.
While Ksenya was writing, Vera Ignatyevna suggested to her husband that they all go out to the cinema, but Lev Sergeyevich did not like this idea. 'What on earth are you thinking of, Vera? The crowds tonight will be terrible. In the first place we won't be able to get tickets. In the second place, it's the kind of evening one wants to spend at home.'
'It's our good fortune to spend all our evenings at home,' retorted Vera Ignatyevna.
'Please don't start an argument,' snapped Lev Sergeyevich.

'The girl's bored. She's used to being with other people all the time. She's used to being with her friends.'
'Oh, Vera, Vera,' he replied.
Later in the evening they all had tea with cornel jam, and they ate a cake and some sweet pies. Ksenya enjoyed the cake very much indeed; Vera Ignatyevna felt worried, put her hand on the little girl's tummy and shook her head. Soon afterwards the girl's tummy did indeed start to ache. She turned very sullen and stood for a long time by the window, pressing her nose to the cold glass. When the glass became warm, she moved along a little and began to warm another patch of glass with her nose.
Lev Sergeyevich went up to her and asked, 'What are you thinking about?'
'Everything,' the girl answered crossly, and once again began squashing her nose into the glass.
In the orphanage they were probably about to have supper. There hadn't been time for her to receive her present, and she was sure to be left something boring, like a book about animals. She already had a book like that. Still, she'd be able to do a swap. This auntie Vera was really nice. A pity she wasn't one of the staff. The girls who'd stayed behind in the orphanage were going to spend all day riding about in a truck. As for herself, she was going to become a pilot and drop a gas bomb on this strange Uncle Lyova. There were some quite big girls out in the yard – they were probably from group seven.
She dozed off on her feet and banged her forehead against the glass.
'Go to bed, Ksenka!' said Vera Ignatyevna.
'I butted the glass just like a ram,' said Ksenya.
Lev Sergeyevich woke up in the night. He put out a hand to touch his wife's shoulder, but she wasn't there.
'What's up? Where's my little Verochka?' he thought in alarm.
He could hear a quiet voice coming from the sofa, and sobs.
'Calm down now, you silly thing,' Vera Ignatyevna was saying. 'How can I take you back at night? There aren't any trams, and we'd have to cross the whole city.'
'I kno-o-o-w,' answered a deep voice, in between sobs. 'But he's so very dismable.'
'Never mind, never mind. He's kind, he's good. You can see I'm not crying!'
Lev Sergeyevich covered his head with the blanket, so as not to hear any more. Pretending he was asleep, he began quietly snoring.

1936

Translator's Note

* 'The Society for the Promotion of Defence, Aviation and Chemistry' (Osoviakhim or Obshchestvo sodeistviya oborone i aviatsionno-khimicheskomu stroitel'stvu) was a

'voluntary' civil defence organization supposed to promote patriotism, marksmanship and aviation skills among the general populace. Founded in 1927, it was described by Stalin as vital to 'keeping the entire population in a state of mobilized readiness against the danger of military attack, so that no "accident" and no tricks of our external enemies can catch us unawares.' The Society sponsored clubs and organized contests throughout the U.S.S.R.; it soon had around 12 million members. (RC)

Translated from Russian
by Robert Chandler, Elizabeth Chandler, and Olga Mukovnikova

Vasily Grossman

FROM "EVERYTHING FLOWS"

INTRODUCTION

For the main part, I am not a fan of literary museums. The grander ones, especially, tend to leave me cold. Often it is the smallest ones that are most successful in preserving a living connection with the writer they memorialize; I am thinking particularly of two museums in Petersburg – Akhmatova's apartment in the Fontanka, and the communal apartment where Zoshchenko lived. The simplicity and bareness of these two museums leaves space for the imagination.

During a recent visit to Moscow I met Elena Fyodorovna Kozhichkina, the daughter of Vasily Grossman's stepson, Fyodor Guber. There is no Grossman museum in Moscow, but she does her best to make up for this by keeping his writing desk, his typewriter, and a large part of his library, in one room of her apartment. I was expecting to see all this, and somehow it did not mean a great deal to me. What took my breath away, however, was the sight of a dozen small animals, moulded from clay, on top of a cupboard. I at once recognized these from one of my favourite chapters of Grossman's last novel, *Everything Flows*. This was both exciting and disconcerting. As far as I was concerned, these animals lived in the pages of a book – and here they were invading my real world. It turned out that Ivan Grigoryevich, the hero of *Everything Flows*, is in many respects a portrait of a real-life figure: Nikolay Mikhailovich Sochevets, the brother of Vasily Grossman's second wife. Elena Fyodorovna told me his story. After returning to London, I corresponded with her father, Fyodor Guber, who filled in the details.

Nikolay Mikhailovich's father was a gifted and successful agronomist. He built himself a house near Sochi and lived there until collectivisation, when he and his large family were deported to Siberia. Nikolay Mikhailovich's parents and three of his sisters all died in exile, but he himself not only survived but even completed a course in accounting and was so successful in his subsequent work that he received a so-called 'Excellent Economist' award. This allowed him to return to Moscow in the mid-1950s.

Like Ivan Grigoryevich, Nikolay Mikhailovich had a gift for modelling animals; Fyodor Guber remembers him visiting Grossman most Sundays, along with other friends, and spending most of the day moulding animals from plasticine. Like Ivan Grigoryevich, Nikolay Mikhailovich discovered this gift as a result of his friendship with a young boy – Sasha, the grandson of his elder sister. Like Ivan Grigoryevich, he had a fine knowledge of history, despite

having been arrested before finishing school. His grandniece, Elena Fyodorovna Guber, remembers him as a man of great vitality, someone free of bitterness and who knew how to enjoy life. Fyodor Guber remembers Nikolay Mikhailovich as one of the friends who most regularly came to visit Grossman during his final illness, as he was revising *Everything Flows*. [Fyodor Guber, *Pamyat' i Pis'ma* (Moscow: Probel-2000, 2007) p.111-12]

When I received the first copies of the NYRB Classics edition of our translation of *Everything Flows*, my first feeling of all was surprise. I felt startled by the small size of the book. I could hardly believe that so many unusual perceptions about so many subjects—marriage, the 'Russian soul', Lenin, Stalin's paranoia, the whole sweep of Russian and Soviet history— could have been compressed into so small a space. The subject matter is mostly dark, but the liveliness of Grossman's intelligence makes *Everything Flows* surprisingly heartening, even exhilarating; the book not only extols freedom; it also embodies freedom.

The tone of the book is varied, but most chapters are predominantly either tragic or ironic. Against this background, the account of Aloysha's delight in Ivan Grigoryevich's clay animals stands out; it is imbued with an unusually gentle humour, a particular delicacy and sweetness. It is a passage I have several times selected as an exercise for my translation students, and I have always remembered it especially vividly. It was a joy to be met, in Elena Fyodorovna's apartment, by the clay animals, and I am grateful to her and her father for allowing us to reproduce these photographs of Nikolay Mikhailovich.

Robert Chandler (January 2010)

EVERYTHING FLOWS

Chapter 11

Alyosha, Anna Sergeyevna's nephew, was so short that he looked as if he were only eight years old. He was, however, already twelve; he was in his sixth year at school. After coming home, fetching the water and washing the dishes, he would sit and do his homework.

Sometimes he would look up at Ivan Grigoryevich and say, 'Could you test me on history, please?'

Once, when Alyosha was preparing for a biology lesson and Ivan Grigoryevich had nothing to do, he began moulding from clay the various animals shown in the textbook: a giraffe, a rhinoceros, a gorilla. Alyosha was dumbfounded – the clay animals were so splendid that he couldn't take his eyes

off them. He couldn't stop moving them about; at night he arranged them on a chair next to his bed. At dawn, on his way out to go and queue for the milk, the boy saw Ivan Grigoryevich washing his face in the corridor. In an impassioned whisper he said, 'Ivan Grigoryevich, may I take your animals to school with me?'

'Please do – they're yours,' said Ivan Grigoryevich.

In the evening, Alyosha told Ivan Grigoryevich that the art teacher had said, 'Please tell your lodger that he really must go and study.'

This was the first time that Anna Sergeyevna had seen Ivan Grigoryevich laugh. She said, 'Don't laugh, go and see the woman. Maybe you can make some money at home in the evenings. After all, what kind of life can you have on three hundred and seventy-five roubles a month?'

'That's enough for me. What would I do with more?' said Ivan Grigoryevich. 'And as for studying, it's too late now. That's something I should have done thirty years ago.'

But at the same time he was saying to himself, 'What am I getting so agitated about? –Does this mean I've still got some life in me? That I'm not dead yet?'

Once, Ivan Grigoryevich was telling Alyosha about the conquests of Tamburlaine when he noticed that Anna Sergeyevna had put down her sewing and was listening to him intently.

'You shouldn't be working in that workshop,' she said with a smile.

'I'd be no good anywhere else,' he said. 'My knowledge comes from books with half the pages torn out, with no beginning or end.'

Alyosha realised that this must be why Ivan Grigoryevich told stories his own way, while the teachers just ploughed through textbooks.

The little episode with the clay animals did indeed agitate Ivan Grigoryevich... Not that he had any real talent himself – but what a lot of deaths of talented people he had witnessed. Young physicists and historians, specialists in ancient languages, philosophers, musicians, young Russian Swifts and Erasmuses – how many of them he had seen put on their wooden jackets.

Prerevolutionary literature had often lamented the fate of serf actors, musicians and painters. But who was there today to write about the young men and women who had never had the chance to write their books and paint their paintings? The Russian earth is indeed fertile and generous. She gives birth to her own Platos, to her own quick-witted Newtons – but how casually and terribly she devours these children of hers.

Theatres and cinemas made Ivan Grigoryevich feel sad and anxious; it was as if he were being forced to watch the screen or the stage and would never be let out again. Many novels and poems felt like a violent assault, as if the writer were trying to drum something into his head; he found this unbearable. These books seemed to be about a life he had never encountered – a life where there were no barracks, no strict-regime camps, no brigade leaders, no armed guards, no security officers, no system of internal passports, and none of the sufferings, anxieties and passions that made up the lives of everyone around him.

The writers simply dreamed people up. They dreamed up their thoughts and feelings; they dreamed up the rooms they lived in and the trains they trav-

elled in. The literature that called itself 'realist' was as convention-ridden as the bucolic romances of the eighteenth century. The collective farmers, workers and peasant women of Soviet literature seemed close kin to those elegant, slim villagers and curly-headed shepherdesses in woodland glades, playing on reed pipes and dancing, surrounded by little white lambs with pretty blue ribbons.

During his years in the camps Ivan Grigoryevich had learned a great deal about human weaknesses. Now he saw that there were more than enough such weaknesses outside the barbed wire as well as behind it... No, suffering did not always purify. In the camps the struggle for an extra mouthful of soup, for an easier work assignment, was unrelenting, and the morally weak stooped to a pitiful level. Sometimes Ivan Grigoryevich tried to guess how people he met now might behave in the camps; it was not difficult to imagine some sleek and haughty figure scavenging about, scraping his spoon round someone else's empty soup bowl or prowling around the kitchen in search of potato peelings or rotten cabbage leaves.

Ivan Grigoryevich had felt sorry for those who had been crushed by violence, by hunger and cold, by their desperate need for tobacco. He had felt sorry for those who had turned into 'camp jackals', always on the lookout for a crumb of bread or a slobbery cigarette butt.

What he had seen in the camps made it easier to understand how people behaved when they were free. What he observed now was the same pitiful weakness, the same cruelty, the same greed and the same terror that he had seen in the camps. People were the same everywhere, and Ivan Grigoryevich pitied them.

The role of the characters in Soviet novels and long poems, however, like that of the figures in mediaeval art, was to express the ideal of the Church, to proclaim the one true God: man existed not for his own sake but for God's sake, in order to glorify God and his Church. Some writers, those most adept at passing lies off as truth, took particular pains over the details of the clothes and furniture they described. They then peopled their realistic stage sets with idealized, God-seeking characters.

Neither within nor outside the camps were people willing to admit that everyone had an equal right to freedom. Some of the Right Deviationists believed themselves to be innocent but thought that it had been right to sentence the Left Deviationists. Left and Right Deviationists were alike in their hatred of 'spies' – of those who had corresponded with relatives abroad or who simply had Polish, Latvian or German surnames that they had inherited from Russified parents.

And however much the peasants insisted that they had worked all their lives by the sweat of their brow, the political prisoners refused to believe them: 'A likely story! Why would the authorities arrest a peasant unless he's exploiting others?'

Ivan Grigoryevich had once said to a former Red Army commander, his neighbour on the bedboards, 'You're a hero of the Civil War. You dedicated your whole life to the ideals of Bolshevism. And now here you are – sentenced for espionage!'

The man had replied, 'With me they made a mistake. There haven't been any others – I'm a special case.'

When the camp criminals picked on a new victim and began tormenting or robbing him, the political prisoners did nothing. Some looked the other way; some sat there with blank, unseeing faces; some ran away; others pulled blankets over their heads and pretended to be asleep. Hundreds of political prisoners – hundreds of *zeks* – among whom were former soldiers and war heroes, had proved helpless against a small number of common criminals. The latter were a law unto themselves; they, after all, were true Russian patriots – unlike the 'Fascist' *zeks*, who were enemies of the Motherland. The *zeks* were like dry grains of sand; there was no solidarity between them.

One man believed that the authorities had got it wrong in his case but that, in general, 'people aren't sent to the camps for nothing'. Others reasoned as follows: 'When we were free, we thought that people aren't sent to the camps for nothing. Now, however, we know firsthand that that does happen.' But they drew no conclusions; they merely sighed submissively.

An emaciated, compulsively twitching former official of the Youth Comintern, an expert in Marxist dialectics, explained to Ivan Grigoryevich that, even though he had committed no crimes against the Party, the security organs had been right to arrest him as a double-dealer and spy; although he himself had done nothing wrong, he belonged to a social stratum that was hostile to the Party, a stratum that spawned whiners and doubters, double-dealers, Trotskyists and 'opportunists in practice'.

An intelligent man, once an important Party official at the provincial level, said to Ivan Grigoryevich, 'When a forest is being felled, splinters fly – but the truth of the Party still holds . This truth is more important than my misfortune.' He then pointed to himself and added, 'So here I am – one of those splinters.'

He was at a loss for words when Ivan Grigoryevich replied, 'That's just it – they're felling the forest. Why do they need to fell the forest?'

Only very occasionally did Ivan Grigoryevich meet anyone who had actually done anything against the Soviet government.

Former tsarist officers had been sentenced not because they had formed monarchist organizations, but because it was thought that they *might* form monarchist organizations.

There were Social Democrats and Socialist Revolutionaries in the camps. Most had been arrested after they had ceased their political activities and become ordinary, loyal Soviet citizens. They had been arrested not for opposing the Soviet State but because it was thought possible that they *might* oppose it. It was not for actually opposing the collective farms that peasants were sent to the camps. The peasants who were sent to the camps were those who *might*, under certain conditions, have opposed the collective farms. People were sent to the camps for entirely innocent criticisms – for disliking the books and plays that had won State prizes or for disliking Soviet wireless sets and fountain pens. Might not such people, under certain conditions,

become enemies of the State?

People were sent to the camps for corresponding with aunts or brothers who lived abroad. They were sent to the camps because there was a greater probability of their becoming spies than if they did not have such relatives. State terror was directed not against those who had committed crimes but against those who, according to the security organs, were more likely to commit crimes.

Quite distinct from these people were those who really had fought against the Soviet government: elderly Socialist Revolutionaries, Mensheviks and anarchists; men who had fought for the independence of Latvia, Estonia, Lithuania and Ukraine; men who had fought under the command of Stepan Bandera.

The Soviet zeks looked on these men as their enemies. At the same time they could not help admiring men who had been imprisoned for an actual reason. In one strict-regime camp, Ivan Grigoryevich met an adolescent schoolboy, Boria Romashkin, who had been sentenced to ten years. Boria really had written posters accusing the State of executing innocent people; he really had typed them out on a typewriter; he really had stuck them up at night on the walls of buildings in Moscow. Boria told Ivan Grigoryevich that during the investigation, dozens of KGB officers – amongst them several generals – had come to see him, all of them curious about this young lad who had been arrested for a genuine reason. In the camp too, Boria was famous. Everybody knew about him; prisoners from neighbouring camps asked about him. When Ivan Grigoryevich was sent 800 kilometres to a new camp, he heard talk of Boria Romashkin the very first evening – his story had travelled all over Kolyma.

There was one surprising thing: people sentenced for a genuine reason, for active opposition to the Soviet state, believed that all political zeks were innocent – and that they should all of them, without exception, be freed. But those who had been framed, those who had been imprisoned on trumped-up charges – these millions of people tended to believe that only they themselves should be pardoned. They attempted to prove that all the falsely accused 'spies', 'kulaks' and 'saboteurs' were indeed guilty; they attempted to justify the brutality of the State.

There was one profound difference between people living in the camps and people living in freedom. People in the camps remained loyal to the time that had given birth to them. Different epochs of Russian life lived on in the thoughts, in the psychological makeup of each person. There were men who had taken part in the Civil War, with their own favourite songs, heroes and books; there were 'Greens'; there were followers of Petlyura with the still-raging passions of *their* time, with their own songs, poems and mannerisms. There were Comintern workers from the 1920s, with their own particular earnest enthusiasm, with their characteristic vocabulary and philosophy, with their particular demeanour and ways of pronouncing words. There were men who were really very old indeed – monarchists, Mensheviks, Socialist Revolutionaries – and who preserved within them a whole world of ideas, literary heroes and rules of conduct from some forty or fifty years ago.

In a ragged, cough-ridden old man you could instantly recognize a noble, though degraded and weak-willed, officer from a Guards regiment, and in the no less ragged man lying beside him on the bedboards, his face covered with the same grey stubble – an unrepentant Social Democrat. And in a stooped figure with a cushy job as a medical orderly you could glimpse a man who had been the commissar of an armoured train during the Civil War.

Elderly people living in freedom, on the other hand, were not marked by any such inimitable signs of their past. In them the past had been erased. They found it easy to adopt new ways of thinking and feeling and lived their lives in accordance with the present day; their vocabulary and thoughts, their passions, even their sincerest desires all changed submissively and compliantly, in tune with the course of events and the will of their superiors. What is the reason for this difference? Is it that a man becomes frozen in the camps, as if under anaesthetic?

When he had been in the camps, Ivan Grigoryevich had constantly sensed people's natural longing to escape beyond the barbed wire, to return to their wives and children. But after his release, he sometimes met other former zeks – and their submissive hypocrisy, their fear of their own thoughts, their dread of being re-arrested were so overwhelming that they seemed more truly and thoroughly imprisoned than when they had been doing forced labour.

Leaving the camp, working as a free labourer, living with his nearest and dearest, such a man would sometimes doom himself to a higher power of imprisonment, a more complete and profound imprisonment than anything he had been subjected to behind the barbed wire.

Nevertheless, in the torment, in the dirt and murk of camp life, it was freedom that was the light and strength of the prisoners' souls. Freedom was immortal.

In this small southern town, in the home of the widow of Sergeant Mikhalyov, Ivan Grigoryevich began to develop a broader, deeper understanding of the nature of freedom.

People's small, everyday struggles, the efforts made by workers to earn an extra rouble by moonlighting, the peasants' natural desire to fight for some of the bread and potatoes they had themselves grown – all this represented not only the wish for a more comfortable life, not only the wish to feed and clothe one's children well. The struggle for the right to make boots, to knit a cardigan, to sow what one wants to sow – all this was a manifestation of man's natural and indestructible aspiration towards freedom. This aspiration was, he knew, no less indestructible in the souls of the zeks. On either side of the barbed wire freedom seemed immortal.

After work one evening he began making a mental list of items of camp vocabulary. There was, O God, a camp word for every letter of the alphabet. And you could write whole articles, narrative poems and novels about each of them. *Arest* (Arrest), *Barak* (Barrack) ... all the way through to *Yushka* (a kind of watery soup) and *Zona* (the entire territory of the camp). A vast world with its own language, its own economy and its own moral code. Yes, one could fill whole shelves with books about it – even more than with the countless volumes of Gorky's *History of Factories and Mills*.

There would be many areas of subject matter. One would be the story of prisoners' transports: how they were organized, the journey itself, how the prisoners were guarded... To one of today's prisoners the transports of the 1920s seem unbelievably naive and cosy. A compartment in a passenger train, a philosophically inclined guard who offers you pies to eat... The first timid buds of the world of the camps, a chick barely emerged from the egg, a bygone age... Compare all that with a transport on its way to Krasnoyarsk today: a mobile prison city, made up of sixty four-axle goods wagons; tiny barred windows; three tiers of bedboards; store wagons; kitchen wagons; wagons for the guard dogs that roam round the train when it stops; carriages for the guards themselves... And the boss of the entire transport, surrounded like a fairy-tale pasha by whoring concubines and fawning cooks. And the inspections and headcounts... A supervisor climbs into the wagon while the other guards stand by the open doors, pointing their submachine guns at the zeks huddled together in one end of the wagon. The supervisor orders the zeks, one at a time, to the other end of the wagon – and however fast they move, he always manages to give them a blow with his stick, either on the arse or on the head.

And not long ago, after the Great Patriotic War, steel combs were installed underneath the tail wagon of each train. If a zek managed to dismantle the floorboards and throw himself prone between the rails, this comb would seize him, yank him up and hurl him underneath the wheels – no use, by then, to man or beast. And in case someone broke through the ceiling and climbed up onto the roof of a wagon, searchlights were installed on each train. From the locomotive to the very last wagon, their sharp beams pierced through the darkness – and if there was a man on the roof, the machine gun looking down the train knew only too well what to do. Yes, everything continues to evolve. The transport's economic system had also continued to perfect itself; there was surplus product everywhere. The guard officers were by then enjoying real comfort in the headquarters car; they and their men were receiving additional rations, levied from those intended for the dogs and the zeks, as well as being paid a large displacement allowance in consideration of the 60 days it took the transport to reach the camps of eastern Siberia. And each wagon saw its own economic processes, its own internal circulation of goods, its own harsh reality compounded of primitive accumulation and attendant pauperisation. Yes, everything flows, everything changes, it is impossible to step twice into the same transport.

But who can describe the despair of this journey, this journey that took men from their wives? Who can describe the nighttime confessions to the accompaniment of the creaks of the wagons and the iron clickety-clack of their wheels? Who can describe people's submissiveness and trustfulness in the course of this slow plunge into the abyss of the camps? Who can describe the zeks' letters – the letters the zeks threw from the dark of the goods wagons into the dark of the great mailbox of the Russian steppe, and that sometimes, unbelievably, reached their destination? In the train everything is unfamiliar. You have yet to develop camp habits. Your body is not exhausted, your mind is not dazed by the many concerns

of camp life. Your heart is raw and bleeding. Everything is strange and terrible: the half-dark, the creaking, the rough boards, the hysterical twitching thieves, the quartzlike stare of the guards.
Ivan remembered a young boy being lifted up to the little window. He shouted out, 'Grandad, Grandad, where are they taking us?'
And everyone in the goods wagon heard an old man reply in a cracked, drawn-out voice, 'To Siberia, dear child, to forced labour.'
And Ivan Grigoryevich suddenly said to himself, 'Did all this really happen to me? Has this been my journey, my fate? It was with those transports that my road began. And now it has reached its end.'
These camp memories kept flooding back. There were no links between them, and this chaotic quality was painful and tormenting. But he felt, he knew that it was possible to make sense of this chaos, that this was not beyond him. His journey through the camps was now over and it was time to see clearly, time to discern the laws of this chaos of suffering where guilt was juxtaposed with holy innocence, where false confessions to crimes lived alongside fanatical loyalty to the Party, where senseless absurdity – the murder of millions of innocent and loyal people – masqueraded as cast-iron logic.

---

* People sentenced to a term in a labour camp were known as *zeks*. The word *zek* is an abbreviated form of the word *zaklyuchenny*, meaning 'someone who has been confined'.
The best dictionary of camp language, Jacques Rossi's invaluable *The Gulag Handbook* runs to 610 pages. (RC)

Translated from Russian by Robert Chandler

SHORT PROSE

Jeff Friedman

KLUTZ AND OTHER STORIES

Klutz

At dinner, I knocked the bottle of wine off the table, which smashed into a thousand pieces on the wood floor. The tablecloth was stained red. Dad looked down at his clean white shirt, now spotted. "You klutz, you schlemiel—You're a menace to the family."

He bellowed like a wounded bull, a drunken moose, a senator who just lost his mistress to CNN. He billowed like a rotten fireplace, like his brother Izzy foaming over the brisket, like a schoolhouse on fire.

Mom tried to interrupt, but he waved her off. Sitting next to me, Alsace let out a sarcastic laugh. "How do you expect me to go to school when everybody knows he's my brother?" She tossed that question out for my parents to ponder, but my dad hadn't finished yet.

"You're worse than a tornado, worse than a plague of frogs, worse than the flood of '72—"

"According to the Post, I cut in, "that flood wasn't even in the top 10."

But that comment only made him angrier. "You're worse than the seven-year locusts, worse than crabs, worse than a tribe of hemorrhoids, worse than even Manny Wallerstein's kid, who belches and farts in the same breath."

"But I'm your son, the seed of your loins, the pearl in your pod, the star that dove from your waters."

"I wanted a George Junior, not you. You're the gall in my stones, the spider in my veins, the burning in my pee."

Mom walked over to him. "George, you'll make yourself sick."

"I'm already sick, nauseated in fact. Can we send him to some kind of camp? Or an animal shelter? or how about to live with your sister in California?" Mom put her hand on his shoulder as if to stop his blood pressure from rising. "Maybe the circus would take him."

Mom was tall and thin with red hair, and dad was short and stout with thick

black hair, but over the years they had begun to resemble each other.

"I object. I'm the flag bearer of your name, the carrier of your DNA, the host of your stinking genes, the bearer of your bad news, the lucky survivor of your misguided bombing. Lose me and you lose you."

Then dad looked at the glittering slivers on the wood, "Clean up your mess for a change."

An obedient son, I leaped to my feet, knocking my sister out of her chair with my elbow. The chandelier above the table shook and shook. She lay unconscious in a puddle of red wine. Mom kneeled down, putting a cushion under Alsace's head. She was only out a few minutes so I didn't know why mom seemed so concerned. Alsace opened her eyes slowly, blinking a few times before her vision cleared. Then she started screaming in Yiddish, German, Polish, Russian and English. I only knew English, but she was born pentalingual.

Dad raised his wineglass to the heavens and prayed that the curse would be lifted from his household. As he stepped back, he tripped over the chair. The chandelier swayed more violently, snapping from the ceiling and banging down on the table. Then I started laughing and couldn't stop even as the walls cracked and crumbled around us.

A Night with Bonita

After Taylor Corliss slept with Bonita Hernandez, his pleasure was so great he fell into a coma. I knew thousands of men and women who wanted to sleep with Bonita, myself included. What did Taylor have? I wondered. What magic? He lay in a hospital bed at St. Mary's for months until Bonita raised him with a simple kiss. The doctors said it was a miracle. His wife Alexis agreed, but added, "It's too bad he didn't stay in a coma. Now what do I do with him?"

After Nana Befresco slept with Bonita, she suddenly developed a skill at carving wooden dolls. She rented the storefront next to Joe's Tires and set up a studio. In one summer she created a thousand representations of Bonita, Bonita as a model, Bonita naked in the sun, Bonita eating an ice cream cone, Bonita playing with her touch phone, Bonita ducking out of the rain, Bonita as a little girl drawing stick figures, Bonita as a stick figure, Bonita sucking her thumb, Bonita in the throes of orgasm, Bonita shaving her legs, Bonita pretending to be a duck. Soon her reputation as a dollmaker spread, and everyone was commissioning Bonita dolls. I bought a few myself.

After Ferdinand the Great slept with Bonita, he became a recluse in his mini palace. No one saw him for months and then he left for California. "He's been taking female hormones ever since," my friend Jerry Stolen stated. "He

wants an operation," but first he's got to save the money, and he's still paying child support." Once I heard Bonita had opened her beautiful thighs for Ferdinand, I thought for sure I had a chance.

I went to the diner every night, but Bonita was always too busy taking orders and carrying away dirty dishes. Finally I got up the nerve to ask her out while she stood at the cash register. She wiped her hands on a towel, then scanned a bill and slid a credit card through the slot. "I'm busy this month," she replied.
Pretty soon everyone was claiming to have slept with Bonita. Since her night with Bonita, Gail Holtzman couldn't get any sleep, even though she took sleeping pills and pills for depression. Juwan Ojuwon was seeing a chiropractor for a back problem. Since sleeping with Bonita, Ari Oneida lost his paper route and went on unemployment. Arnie Simmons gave up his job as a mortgage loan officer at the bank and started writing songs and playing guitar, panhandling on Main Street. Tulip Mayer fell hard on the ice and broke an ankle. The guy from the sporting goods shop sent her a van full of gifts, including warm up suits, tights, running shoes, chafing sticks, roller blades, hockey sticks, basketballs, Smartwool sox and head warmers.

After my friend Jerry slept with her, he came down with a flu and was in bed for days, and then the flu spread to all of his friends, lingering among us for months. "Was it worth giving us all flu?" I asked. He didn't answer but handed me a tissue as I began another fit of coughing.

Looking for Liz

Today, Liz vanished. Just after breakfast, I asked her if she wouldn't mind taking the dog out for a change. She shouted at me for peeing on the toilet seat all the time, so I put my hand up. "Fine, I'll take the dog." Then she disappeared into thin air, though I could still smell her in the apartment.

I searched all four rooms of our apartment, finding strands of long red hair, an opened bottle of perfume, a book of curses, some new bottles of Kiehl's cosmetic products, and a new pair of boots from her favorite shoe boutique.

Then I thought she might be hiding, so I got Meggy involved and checked the closets and under the bed. Meggy had a great time, barking and pawing the covers. Every time she barked or pawed something I gave her a sweet potato treat and then she would lead me to some other part of the apartment where Liz had been—barking and barking. After a while, I decided that I should stop this game because I hadn't found Liz, and I didn't want Meggy to start putting on weight from all the treats.

I could hear Liz's voice telling me to pick up my things from the floor and to clean the stuff off the sofa, even though I couldn't see her.

Then I visited Estrella, Liz's best friend, at The VideoStop. "Have a donut," she said, so I helped myself to a chocolate donut, which I gobbled down in two bites. Estrella was a petite brunette with a slender runner's body. "Why don't you go home and clean up?" she asked. "Maybe Liz'll find you."

Instead I headed to the Pale Horse Tavern and drank a few beers and some shots of Jack. I plugged about five dollars into the Juke and played a selection of Dylan, Leonard Cohen and Patty Smith songs. While sitting at the table, I started writing poems on napkins, and within a few hours, I had emptied the napkin dispenser. I wrote one hundred poems on one hundred napkins. The waitress saw what I had done and filled the container back up, but told me not to waste any more paper. I left her a few dollars and headed home with my collection of poems on napkins.

When I got back to the apartment, it was after eight. I thought I could hear Liz moving around again. "Liz, I'm sorry. "I've got a gift for you." I held up my book of napkin poems. Meggy pushed her snout against my feet. She barked and barked as if she had just found something missing.

Wrestling the Angel

My father's head rests on a stony pillow. In his dream, he shows his samples, his sales pitch streaming through light. He's smooth as a magician who pulls a tablecloth from under the china without breaking a single glass or dish, the cloth bursting into white doves that fly off in shadow. He laughs so the buyers laugh with him, holding drinks, their laughter sticking to the air.

My father's head rests on a stony pillow, spall glittering in his black hair. Out of shadow and cloud comes a figure with a lit torch, which he plants in white sand. "I'm the angel," he says, "come to wrestle you—all or nothing," and grabs my father. Lightning quick, my father turns the angel's force against the angel and puts him in a crushing hold, "A million bucks," he demands, squeezing his windpipe.

The angel touches the hollow of my father's thigh and dislocates the joint. "I'm God," he says, "Let's call it a night." But my father won't quit, and they wrestle until dawn. He rips apart the angel again and again, gripping clumps of sand, twigs, myrtle, rock, shredded silk, loose hair, shoulders of salt—strangling wind and shadow, while the clouds rain cold hard cash.

Mikhail Rabinovich

CRAIG AND OTHER STORIES

Craig

She has a complicated relationship with her husband.
"Find me someone who doesn't," Craig says.
She calls him when the bond gets especially tangled, like an old, rotten rope round her neck, and delivers truisms: "One has to appreciate what one's got," or "with age one starts seeing things clearly;" sometimes she cries.
Craig mentions her first husband of three years back – nothing unites as surely as shared contempt.
"What's there to say," she calms down. "How could I have lived quite so long with the son of my former mother-in-law? She consumed him completely, do you understand? Devoured..." To stay impartial and precise she adds, "... figuratively speaking, of course."
The current husband is quite a different story.
"That's why it hurts so much – when a person so close to me... do you understand?"
Craig doesn't know what to say – does he, or does he not? That's the question...
If she doesn't call for a while, Craig knows she is having a long equinox, as she calls it: the current husband plays with the daughter of the son of the former mother-in-law; a forgotten steak is burning to a crisp in the kitchen; the TV set is on, but muted, the monthly car payment has been mailed.
In the evening there's hanky-panky and giggles – like kids, although he is much older and burdened with old relationships, thoughts, children...
"Children can't be old," Craig says reasonably. "He has to, it's in his nature..."
She called again, of course – a chill between them, angry exchanges during the day and even at night – what is she going to do? She understands, she understands everybody, but someone has to understand her as well! Craig understands.
When she is angry with her husband (anger is the first stage of reconciliation, for we are angry only with our own, the rest are either hated or go unnoticed), when she is angry, she reminds Craig of the day he had stubble on his face – does he remember?
Does he, or does he not? That's the question...
It takes two hours to get to her house. There was one truly unbearable pe-

riod, when she thought everything was over, that she wasn't merely alone, but worse – she feared she had lost herself; two hours after the phone call Craig was there, day old stubble and shirt.

"Carrying boxes to the fourth floor is hard, I understand, but I did help as much as I could, I am a woman after all ("Definitely a woman," Craig agrees wholeheartedly), and then who knew that the broken elevator will be fixed the moment he – no, we – we are still together, you know – managed to get everything upstairs. He is just using it as an excuse to step aside or inward, to close the door...

"She loves him," Craig says (she can't hear him), "it doesn't happen very often."

She cries. Craig calms her down, brimming with self-respect. She cries rarely. Craig rarely feels self-respect.

"You didn't use the moment, Craig, you are a darling," she whispers on the phone in anticipation of another short equinox. He is now so high in her estimation, he could use the moment. But it would complicate her life, and he, Craig, won't keep his station; instead, he will become ordinary.

Another pause, a period of calm, the time to lick wounds, cook breakfast, run errands, her eyes start blazing – mostly pros, but there some cons too – his nasty old daughter, nasty women at work, the chess-playing neighbor across the hall...

Craig picks up the phone and hears the warm-up – her former husband pining and shriveling without her, although to others the said shriveling isn't obvious, not at all. When she was pregnant, they had to replace a light bulb, and she was the one who climbed up and fixed it – they had high ceilings – and he stood down below bracing the ladder, you see, because he was supposed to have a fear of heights since childhood, you see, he was conditioned to be frightened since childhood, he was manipulated since childhood, like a sleepwalker, and the end he was completely consumed, devoured...

Devoured figuratively, of course, Craig already knows that.

After the warm-up comes the main event – her hubby took off in the new car without saying where to, and she hasn't heard from him for four hours, what's she going to do?

If she doesn't call for a long time, Craig is happy for her, and almost forgets her, and gets angry... Angry?

She rarely, if ever asks, "How are you?"

"Married the daughter our CEO, embezzled company money, going to prison, can't find hard tack."

She neither listens nor understands. She is too busy bemoaning her own problems.

"You see, Craig, it isn't about what we haven't got, but how to be happy with what we haven't got. I mean, with what we've got."

Craig can't contain himself any longer, "Age – yes, enlightenment - no."

A good thing she doesn't hear. That's how it will always be, until it's over. Suddenly she disappears; life goes on, jostling him at every turn. For some

reason Craig calls her himself. The husband picks up and sounds happy to hear him.
"How are you?"
"Let me get her on the phone."
She picks up, proud, mysterious, content.
"How are you?"
"We shall ask the representative of the State Department to comment," she jokes.
Craig gets angry, admires her from afar, laughs, "State comments, hm-mm..."

Tall Tales

Feeding children is a national pastime, sport, and affliction. Getting back from work, Schwartz was, therefore, not one bit surprised to find Sandy tied to a kitchen chair and porridge-smeared Lucy weeping on his shoulder.
"He wouldn't eat anything!" Lucy cried, paused until the dreadful meaning sunk in, and sobbed even harder.
Sandy would have cried as well, only he was afraid that if he were to open his mouth, it would be promptly filled with porridge.
Schwartz's mother-in-law called, and Lucy spent an eternity describing the battle in a tragic whisper.
Schwartz started telling a story about a silly boy who didn't eat a thing and as a result got so weak he didn't even have the strength to pick up the remote.
Sandy managed to untie himself, got to the remote, and tried his strength.
Having given it a thought, Schwartz asked, "Is there anything for me eat?"
"Finish his food," Lucy replied.
"You know I don't eat porridge," Schwartz said after a brief pause.
"Then fix something for yourself," she cried, "or go to the cafe across the street!"
Having given it another thought, Schwartz told a tale – to his son, of course – about a fairy, a cafe fairy. She was so kind to the clients they grew wings and refused to fly back home. Lucy immediately remembered another fairy tale featuring Cinderella, who was grimy from head to toe with the dirt her relatives left all over the place. But if Cinderella occasionally managed to get away to a ball in new slippers, she, Lucy still had to iron and launder after cleaning up, and separate wheat from lentil...
Schwartz's mother-in-law chose a bad moment to call. On the other hand, she always chose a bad moment.
"Did he eat anything?"
Schwartz replied that nothing had changed in the five minutes since her last call... and that nothing would change in the five minutes till her next call...
And then he told another tale – for Sandy, but still holding the phone – a

tale of the Wicked Witch of the West who phoned Puss in Boots so often, he keeled over long before the end of his nine lives.
After that the conversation was over. Next time Lucy picked up and heard the usual greeting, "Did he eat anything?" from Schwartz's mother. Lucy replied that she would never feed anyone in her house ever again.
Schwartz's mother remarked that she was still a lawful grandmother and told a tale, actually, a true story of a woman stripped of her parental rights.
In turn, Lucy told the story of the Red Riding Hood, that part where the Grandmother got eaten by the Big Bad Wolf.
Sandy slumbered under the TV set, flinching in his sleep. Thus he heard neither Schwartz's tale of a shrew left with a broken washtub nor Lucy's yearn about a village fool, nor… Many fairy-tales were told that night, but sleeping Sandy was carried to bed by both parents.
"This rumbling – that's his empty stomach," Lucy sighed.
Having given it yet another thought, Schwartz looked at her. "I just remembered another tale, about a prince and princess who lived happily ever after and died the same day."
"What, they loved each other?"
Lucy asked.
Then the night came, the fairy night.
But the morning was getting closer with every passing minute, and with it the time of yet another breakfast. Sandy would eat nothing again.

Poetic Murphy's laws

Poetic Murphy's law: When someone thinks he can write a poem, he always does.
Murphy's Law of Duality: When someone thinks he can write two poems, he'll end up with a triptych.
Corollary of Archimedes: A poem expands to fill the entire volume.
Exception to the Murphy's law: Any fool can write free verse.
First corollary of Guttenberg-Fitzpatrick: Any poem can be printed.
Amendment to the First Corollary of Guttenberg-Fitzpatrick: Any poem can be printed, even unprintable.
Second Corollary of Guttenberg-Fitzpatrick: All poems, however unprintable, will end up on the web.
Sequelae to the Corollary of Guttenberg-Fitzpatrick: Not a single poem will be read.
Murphy's Law of Thermodynamics: Editing makes everything worse.
First Principle of Poetic Evolution: "…so peerless amid all the Amazons. com…"
Conclusions of the Emergency Orthodontist: Rhymes, teeth, and barstools fly Saturday nights.

First Axiom: Any poem can be set to music.
Corollary (the all-thumbs rule): Of the myriad tunes, they will invariably choose the one guaranteed to do the greatest damage.
Second Axiom: There's a doggerel for every tune.
The Law of Poetic Frequencies: Anthologies automatically open on the page with the host's poems.
The Cardinal Rule of Poetic Merit: Real poetry is what I and my friends write.
First Rule of Literary Criticism:: Shakespeare is dead.
First corollary to the First Rule of Literary Criticism: Hecht is also dead.
First Law of Publishing: The shelf life of a book is inversely related to the poet's expiration date.
Second Law of Publishing: Publishing in the vanity press is better than vain attempts at finding a publisher.
The Main Rule of Literary Criticism: I don't like your yellow blouse.
The Law of Humpty-Dumpty who sat on Wall Street (next stop Bowery): One writes for children the same way one writes for adults, only worse.
The Law of Poetic Linearity: The author's enthusiasm is directly proportional to the reader's dismay.
Poetic Relativity (e=mc2): Poems travel with the speed of blight.
Third Law of Publishing: Poetic license comes with a flea and tick collar.

On Shirts

Let's say you go to the same cleaners for five years or so, give them your dirty shirts and get the clean ones – for work – well ironed and carefully situated on hangers; for five years or so, twice a week, a dollar a shirt; then a dollar fifteen cents, but it doesn't matter – month in and month out, and the receptionist is very polite and careful, says "Sir…" and "Allow me…," and smiles a pure smile and tenderly proffers receipt – no longer a dollar fifteen, but a dollar twenty five; every week you hand in the dirty and get back the clean, well, practically clean – "Isn't there a spot? A spot? Oh, there's nothing to be done with that one…" and the receptionist starts changing gradually – she no longer stands up when she sees you, but first finishes the paragraph in the story she was reading and only then hands over the receipt – still dollar twenty five – and looks at you in an absentminded way – absentminded yet friendly; she nods warmly, silently, and speaks up suddenly and you notice not irritation but rather perplexity at your incomprehension –the new rules clearly state you should stand here, here, and enter from there, there! – the receipt falls from her hands, you bend down and see it isn't a dollar twenty five any longer but a dollar fifty, but it doesn't matter, although if you do it every week all year round, hmm, you can feel the difference – you notice the receptionist doesn't use a handkerchief, but wipes her nose with her fingers;

then she smiles again, and the cleaner's is close to home, and besides – you are a regular, and regulars are never treated formally, and so one can let the guard down, besides, month in and month out she sees your face and person, which are, alas, imperfect; you didn't have to wear the shirt out quite that much, and that greasy sandwich you dropped on your shirt – not on the pants even, but the shirt – how could you, you slob, tell her eyes the day she doesn't come close but raises her voice – you forgot the receipt? – can't you do without? – not without a receipt! – but it's me, got to have them for work, it's me, you know me – I know, her eyes tell ironically, then spill sparks – you insufferable man, five years she slaves for you, wears herself to shreds at work, makes sacrifices that you don't bother notice, although you should have known; and you suddenly know, you see it in her eyes and expressions, and suddenly all is made clear – to run away forever, there's another laundry just around the corner, same hangers, only a different receptionist; what if you were to start anew – five years are gone, of course, can't get them back, but – it isn't late yet, a little farther from home doesn't matter; one has to cross the street carefully when upset, a new block, new faces, where they say "Sir" and "Allow me...," and where prices are lower, only a dollar twenty; where you hand your dirty shirts and get them back clean, but torn, what is this? where did these awful holes come from? that's it, one can't go to work like this, these shirts are fit to be thrown out entirely; next time (guessing, knows? doesn't know?) you go back to the old, the usual receptionist, who says dryly without turning in your direction (knows), dollar seventy five, and you agree, but say, "Later today" as not to loose face and person, and hear the firm "Only tomorrow" for an answer; from now on they can do whatever they want with you here, whatever they want, total loss – but, but suddenly everything comes to a happy, fair, and high-minded end for the pig-headed receptionist – you are fired and no longer need clean shirts.

Translated from Russian by Anna Rozenshtein

POETRY

Kerry Keys

ON KHLEBNIKOV, ZABOLOTSKY, AND A FREE JAZZ CONSTELLATION

Khlebnikov Shouts In The States

I walked across the Chesapeake Bay.
I rode an intoxicated armadillo.
I hooted:
    Turtle Island has sunk, it's defunct,
    gerrymandered into Insurance Claims.
The natives were insulted.
I continued:
    The heart of America has the strings of a spider.
The natives were perplexed.
I said:
    Ruebadubbadoobadew.
    Rubaboobybabadoodoo.
I shouted:
    Tuskaroara the Elephant.
    Prick the Donkey.
And I wrote with a raven's feather. Black, fletched, it
    bristled above the purple ink.
I waded in the muck of Walden Pond wearing
    Walt Whitman's hat, moccasins, and an Hawaiian shirt.
White is beautiful too!
I waved an automatic with silver bullets.
I played the flute, the Jew's harp, congas, and a saw.
I had my picture taken with my scalp in my hand.
I saw seals and psychotropic chemicals in Delaware.
I bungeejumped from a derrick into the Great Salt Lake
    with uranium from Three Mile Island,
    and peed into the Fountain of Youth.
I called the ice of Pikes Peak eternal
    but prefer the birch leaves in the Urals.
In Big Bend, Texas, I dueled with a saber-toothed tiger
    and deciphered a sunstone as top-secret
    as the roulette-wheel-of-fortune
    in God the Father's casino in Arcadia.

For Nikolai Alexeevich Zabolotsky Who Died At The Age Of 55

Nikolai, Vilnius too has a bouquet that burns. Not thistles,
but burdock. It dances outside the window almost as if
it were the moon shredding a peppery confection of light.
She will endure on her own, persisting, clinging to the romance of words.
And the Empire also has a dolphin whose supernatural love
must always swim upstream against my memories,
my blue-bodied rage. So romantic, so compact in its vision,
she will break or wash ashore before she bends.
I need to escape the atmosphere and dangerous heft
of meaningless words, of a force of nature outside my ken.
And so to come to your old haunts in Tarusa soon,
to bring you bright and fragrant flowers, fresh trout,
dark bread from Lithuania, and together to look out
over the Oka at your dreamy dialogue with the earth.

Vladimir Tarasov

The drummer in slow motion blue pencils himself –
bodyparts distilling into drumsticks, the plastic skin
of goats, gongs, triangles, the audience.

A roach from Ellis Island indulges itself in silent anticipation.
Holding hands, Peter the Great, Kabakov, and John Lennon board
a yellow, nuclear taxi nicknamed Desire.
A cricket massages her heart with the obsidian disk of the sun.

Christ in the wilderness turns to Satan
and asks for one last dance, dervishes
swirling into sand and raindrops.

Silence itself is music until an angel drops a pin
and a hurricane begins a confetti of white noise.

Inside an emerald is another emerald.
Inside the fingers of the drummer, elves and Gods,
grasshoppers and fish, the green thumb of the world,
Varese, caffeine, and ionization.

John Cage scales the stage with a bouquet of bamboo and snow.
Olivier Messiaen turns over in his grave, and a flock of birds
covers the sheet music with aleatory feathers.

Downwind a samba, sutartines, and a raga clink jars in a toast.
Upwind polar ice breaks and cracks over a river of bayonets.

No one keeps score as hemidemisemiquavers scurry over the bars
and the egg of the universe spins on a G-string of hope.

Blackness illuminates as cleats of violence
drip into the sweetwater splash and patter of ducks.

The curtains crystallize and descend sideways
but the fat lady has forgotten her lines.

Chairs perform Morse Code. Wings are clapping.
Squirrel and mouse and satellites tangle in the wires of the hard drive.
Another karma begins. Ping-Pong. Ping-Pong. Ping.

Elaine Feinstein

SILVER

Silver

They were almost unaware of the poetry they moved in.
It was like birdsong in a garden:
- ash tree clarity, sycamore vision -

and St Petersburg itself an elegant mirage,
a festival of peace time soldiers,
ball dresses and marble palaces.

Among so many Russians, one was an upstart,
inwardly awkward, writing as he walked,
a white-knobbed stick his Jewish crosier, but

sometimes unfortunate people are very happy.
He dreamed of the South with a copper moon,
blue-eyed dragonflies, and an Easter foolery

of sugared almonds and fallen tamarisk leaves
while in Kiev a hundred old men
in striped *talisim* sat at benches in grief.

All that is left now of that Silver Age
is space and stars and a few singers
who have learnt the sad language of goodbyes.

Tbilisi

Skewered lamb with almonds, champagne and Lermontov.
Poets loved Tbilisi in Soviet days. They flew south
from Moscow snows on rattling Aeroflot
over the peaks and chasms of the Caucasus,
to find sunshine, flowering chestnuts and acacia,
women with coppery hair and bare throats,
and men who looked like Italians, in loose shirts,
instead of ear-muffed Muscovites in winter coats.

In 1978, five British writers, released
from bugged hotels and grumpy minders
relished the street mix of faces and races.
We saw wooden houses, niched into a cliff,
with people eating breakfast on verandas
over a gorge with the yellow Kura below us -
a false step on a drunken afternoon would
test the healing waters of the Caucasus.

I remember the feasting, the Tamada, the toasts,
the license given to Georgians as useful rogues
even in Moscow, where their market offered
slabs of beef, fresh fruit and green vegetables
illicitly driven north in *kholkhoz* lorries.
Last night, I watched on televison as Russian tanks
were bullying old women in Georgian villages.
Times change, but it's rash to gamble on assistance.

St Petersburg

Tsvetaeva gave Moscow to Mandelstam.
She led him as a stranger
to the Chapel of Inadvertent Joy,
over the Seven Hills, into churches,
through cemeteries - until he fled from her
as if she were a mist-wreathed nun,
back to his Parisian Petrograd, the city Peter
invented and Pushkin longed for -
to Nevsky Prospect, streetlights and an elegant
embankment. Nevertheless,
jagged images push up through his lines.
'*How else could he write,*
in such an artificial city?' growled Yunna Moritz.
'*Think of Gogol. Or Dostoevsky!*'

Robert Chandler

DIMA and ELENA

Dima

for D.A.P.

There's a book to be written, I said, about how people responded to the
news that Stalin had died - and Dima told me how
He himself had been six, and had burst into tears, and his mother, not daring to scold him or (God forbid!) give vent to her joy,
Had firmly told him to go and tidy the mess he'd made in the kitchen, and
Dima did as he was told, but then, soon afterwards,
Their gigantic cat contrived to inextricably wedge himself behind their
ever-so-sturdy Soviet radiator,

And from this place of confinement the cat began to orchestrate the most
satanic of screeches and yowls, which might -
So Dima's parents feared - have enraged their malevolent neighbours, or
even inspired them,
Hungry for living space as neighours so often tended to be, to write a denunciation, accusing the family of who knows what
Blasphemous rituals on this most tragic of days, when tens of millions had
been suddenly orphaned -

And so, since cat and radiator were equally unmovable, and it was impossible to acquire the necessary tools
Except by calling a plumber, they had called their plumber, a lover of
vodka,who was finally carried
Into their flat late in the evening, far away in the world of spirit and unable
to wield the tools of his trade,
Which, however, he had at least (thank God!) remembered to bring with
him - and so drunken Ivan had lain in state on the floor

And issued instructions to Dima's father, who succeeded in moving the
radiator and thus liberating
The exhausted beast, who - as I only now realize - must have been infected
with at least a small dose of the hysteria
That had nearly the whole population of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics in its tightening grip
And would soon cause hundreds of men, women and children to be
trampled to death as they wedged themselves into Red Square on their way
to pay their respects to the corpse of the Father of Peoples.

Elena

If your sister mentions your name, what I hear is always a story you told us that evening,
The story of how, after you had moved to Tashkent - Russian father, American mother, and you were born in China,
And in 1956 you had all gone back to the USSR, what with your father suffering toska for the motherland
And your sister, Nadezhda, meaning 'Hope', dreaming she could contribute, with her knowledge of languages,

To international understanding - what I hear is how, in Tashkent, a city your grandfather, General Bitov,
Had once conquered for Tsar Nikolay, but where you yourselves lived in one room, since your holy fool of a father
Had entrusted to GosBank all the dollars he had saved during thirty years reluctantly trading timber,
And where you were trapped, since the USSR, then as ever, was easier to get into than out of,

And the only blessing was that the Russian Consul in Tsientsyn had had the grace to dissuade your father,
Playing on his worries over baby Misha's asthma, and the cold, and the journey, from returning before Stalin's death,
In which case you would all have been shot, or scattered around the Gulag - yes, what I hear is how, in Tashkent,
Your mother once boiled some valerian root to tide you over who knows what upset, and while it was cooling,

The liquid was drunk by the cat, who then slipped into the cupboard containing precious teacups from China,
Your family's last link with a world now lost for ever, and the cat, crazed by the valerian,
Was unable to find its way out of the cupboard and began to charge round in circles, pulverising the china
And so aggravating its panic, which made it charge faster, weaving together this story I always remember you by.

Jeff Friedman

LINEAGE

Galicia

In Galicia an elephant scratches the ear of a flea,
and pigs wallow in broken clouds. In Galicia
I smear my face with the juice of celandine stalks
and climb a tree, surveying the rubble.
In Galicia water swirls and swirls.
Horsemen swing their angry torches.
Couches are filled with dung. The forest of diamonds flickers.
In Galicia I wrestle a rooster for the right to the bones.
In Galicia, three heavy white horses drink tea without me.
Rain flies sideways, feathers drifting over an empty bed.
In Galicia a crow caws over the rooftops.
In Galicia, my grandmother kisses me on the forehead,
twisting the dough for her famous knishes.
My grandfather leans closer to the Talmud, squinting his eyes.
In Galicia the piano benches are hopping while the count prays for rain.
and saints bath their decapitated heads,
before robbing the tombs buried in the walls.
In Galicia I bake bread for the empress, who honors me with a ruby.
I hum to the earth where my ancestors lie. Hair grows
on the graves. Flies swarm my head.
In Galicia I ride against the Cossacks, waving my saber.
In Galicia I strike a match and fire rises to the sky.
In Galicia the pogrom starts at midnight.
Roses bloom under the moon.
The muddy river blasts white rock.
In Galicia I sleep in a coffin, and the crow
smells the flames long before they are burning.

Lineage

My mother's people came from St. Louis
and before that, from Galicia,

but my father had no people.
He came from a silent village drifting in ash.

He came from an empty barn.
He came from a nest of blue eggs,

from a hillside of tired cows, from a yard
where chickens scratched out a living.

He dreamed a family of crows.
He dreamed a sky full of roads.

He dreamed a wedding in the pines.
He dreamed his pockets stuffed with twenties.

He dreamed a gray silk suit
and black wingtips whose polish wouldn't scuff.

He dreamed a brown fedora bobbing in the blue light.
He dreamed a new set of hard luggage.

He dreamed a Cadillac with bright wings
and the bugles that would announce his arrival.

He dreamed a red highway.
He dreamed his last breath.

He called himself a bad penny,
the smoke in a blind eye.

He dreamed a sales pitch
that would never fail.

Memorial

It's nice to remember the houses
floating on water. It's nice
to stand on shore and sing
a hymn of praise
while candles burn
in the windows.
It's nice to dream the loaves
rising in ovens
and the floors dusted with flour,
the women with beautiful
hair falling like cities
into darkness, the long
nights of love. It's nice to
pretend we could have saved them.
It's nice to say a few
words as spring turns to fall,
as fall turns to winter, and winter to spring.
It's nice to return again
and stare at the stars
so bright and forgettable.
It's nice to remember laughter
spilling into the wind,
roses sprouting from their fleshy mouths
as children fall down
and down into the dirt.
It's nice to remember the voices
calling for you, calling
back the curtains, calling
through the long sleeves, the hollow places.
It's nice to remember the feast
of speckled blackbirds
huddled on the rims
of roofs, the stars
drawn in ash on the doorways,
the lament of uncles —
the long dance that kicked
up the dust and crinkled leaves,
the bodies waiting to burn,
the ash drifting on water.

Alicia Ostriker

OF MUSIC AND TERROR. OF DESIRE AND DELIGHT

The Eighth and Thirteenth

The eighth of Shostakovich,
Music about the worst
Horror history offers,
They played on public radio
Again last night. In solitude
I sipped my wine, I drank
That somber symphony
To the vile lees. The composer
Draws out the minor thirds, the brass
Tumbles overhead like virgin logs
Felled from their forest, washing downriver
And the rivermen at song. Like ravens
Who know when meat is in the offing,
Oboes form a ring. An avalanche
Of iron violins. At Leningrad
During the years of siege
Between bombardment, hunger,
And three subfreezing winters,
Three million dead were born
Out of Christ's bloody side. Like icy
Fetuses. For months
One could not bury them, the earth
And they alike were adamant.
The dead were stacked like sticks until May's mud
When, of course, there was pestilence.
But the music continues. it has no other choice.
Peer in as far as you like, it stays
Exactly as bleak as now. The composer
Opens his notebook. *Tyrants like to present themselves as patrons of the arts. That's a well known fact. But tyrants understand nothing about art. Why? because tyranny is a perversion and a tyrant is a pervert. He is attracted by the chance to crush people, to mock them, stepping over corpses... And so, having satisfied his perverted desires, the man becomes a leader, and now the perversions continue because power has to be defended against madmen like*

yourself. For even if there are no such enemies, you have to invent them, because otherwise you can't flex your muscles completely, you can't oppress the people completely, making the blood spurt. And without that, what pleasure is there in power? The composer
Looks out the door of his dacha, it's April,
He watches farm children at play,
He forgets nothing. For the thirteenth -
I slip its cassette into my car
Radio - They made Kiev's jews undress
After a march to the suburb,
Shot the hesitant quickly,
Battered some of the lame,
And screamed at everyone.
Valises were taken, would
Not be needed, packed
So abruptly, tied with such
Frayed rope. Soldiers next
Killed a few more. The living ones,
Penises of the men like string,
Breasts of the women bobbling
As at athletics, were told to run
Through a copse, to where
Wet with saliva
The ravine opened her mouth.
Marksmen shot the remainder
Then, there, by the tens of thousands,
Cleverly, so that bodies toppled
In without lugging. An officer
Strode upon the dead,
Shot what stirred.
How it would feel, such uneasy
footing, even wearing boots
that caressed one's calves, leather
and lambswool, the soles thick rubber -
Such the music's patient inquiry.
What then is the essence of reality?
of the good? The mind's fuse sputters,
The heart aborts, it smells like wet ashes,
The hands lift to cover their eyes,
Only the music continues. We'll try,
For the first movement,
A full chorus.
The immediate reverse of Beethoven.
An axe between the shoulder blades
Of Herr Wagner. *People knew about Babi Yar before Yevtushenko's poem, but they were silent. And when they read the poem, the silence was broken. Art destroys*

silence. I know that many will not agree with me, and will point out other, more noble aims of art. They'll talk about beauty, grace, and other high qualities. But you won't catch me with that bait. I'm like Sobakevich in Dead Souls: *you can sugarcoat a toad and I still won't put it in my mouth.*

Most of my symphonies are tombstones, said Shostakovich.

All poets are Yids, said Tsvetaeva.

The words *never again*
Clashing against the words
Again and again —
That music.

Cosi Fan Tutte: Of Desire and Delight

I 1761-1769

I might here take the opportunity
of entertaining the public with
a story such as probably appears
but once in a century, and which
in the domain of music has perhaps
never yet appeared in such a
degree of the miraculous;
I might describe the wonderful
genius of my son.
--Leopold Mozart, "Preliminary Notice"
to the 2nd edition of his *Violinschule*, 1769

Because Desire is a tomcat rubbing up
Against a cook's leg, childhood a chemise
Unlaced to suckle you, boyhood a room

In which your hands discover a complete
Language to entertain yourself and them,
Whose lexicon and syntax seemingly

Lift through the wooden keys and offer touch
To fingertips you offer, let them come
To pleasure Papa too. What is it like

To reach and feel something reach in response,
Desiring your desire to seek and find?
Between your lessons, Papa wants to know.

So! It is like dream-walking in a wood,
Aware that you yourself create stately
Beeches and oaks ahead as you proceed:

You sniff the air, a cuckoo chirps, a leaf
Twirls silver, sunlight splashes between limbs,
An acorn drops, a gold ray strikes your shirt.

When you perceive you have produced that ray,
That oak and cuckoo, from the mind's brown seed,
It humbles you and crams you with a pride

You cannot then forget, cannot reveal
But in the language, gold, articulate,
Already known for certain by your hands.

II 1789

Apart from the fact that at the
moment I am not in a position
to pay you back this sum,
my confidence in you is so boundless
that I dare to implore you to help
me out with a hundred florins
until next week...
--Wolfgang Mozart
to Michael Puchberg, 1788

Because Delight is a vessel upon a sea
Smoothed by a halcyon and immortal breath,
Whose passengers are young, do not know death,

Do not lack coin, manners, or a bright
Confidence in their own enlightenment,
Who love like figures in a gallant dance,

Rolling eyes upward if an elder prates
Of God and duty, for do not the Estates
General proclaim the rights of man, and does not

Civilization without discontent
Prepare itself for fresh prosperity,
Fresh liberty? Wolfgang, my lad, because

Munich and Prague delight to honor you
Yet do not pay well, and because it's true
Papa is dead and life's a masquerade,

Here's a libretto lets you trumpet what
Fidelity and honor signify
Among the crumbling privileged: suspend

Your horns and strings from heaven's fulcrum like
A rope swing with a pretty woman on it
Pushed by a pretty man in hose and wig

Who is untroubled by a father, who
Need not beg florins from inferiors.
Let your drums beat and let your fiddles play

In strict obedience to the sacred laws
Of gravity, levity, of auburn curls
And skyblue slippers on the buxom girl

Who swings while singing to enchant her friend,
Architecture is frozen music, and
Music itself a palace of melting ice.

Inna Lisnianskaya

FORTY DAYS

•

The whole sky enters your eyes.
All the earth in your wrinkles.
To start the same life over again
There's neither cause or reason.

But friends say that there is.
They tell me as a noble gesture
I should nobly bring ends together,
Rummaging in your archive,

I who understand what it is,
Its scale, its look:
Waves of the desert, surge of the seas,
Strings in David's hands

27 April 2003

•

My genius of law and order, you fell asleep.
Grass will grow on your grave
As if the large mound.
Which resembles an exercise book
In which each blade sings.

To the granite, so you may rest,
I shall impart the contours of an exercise book, -
Let the memorial stand, a folio.
Here the Ides of March will be apropos,
My deeply loved man of music!

With your music, you built a road
To temple, mosque, synagogue,

A Christian temple, minarets.
You knew how to wind your coat like a toga
To wear your beret as a wreath.

29 April 2003

•

You left me not so much as a shadow.
I myself was yours.
What maddened dove beats at the shutter
So grey feathers fly all about?

You left not so much as a dream of yourself.
Yet I myself was yours.
What star stood fast even as it fell
Glittering in your window?

Our whole world became as you,
a dream, rejecting darkness.
You see me as I sit and gnaw my lips
The twenty-ninth day at the window.

29 April 2003

•

I bathed your eyelids, chest and belly
With water from the tap,
And my mouth, a burning wound,
Touched your cold mouth.

A pillar of salt now,
I held back my widow's wailing,
standing at your bed-head
This late spring day.

It can be seen by the Lord,
Only an angel guards it,
For strangers my day is ordinary,
Like your life.

30 April 2003

•

Exhausted, yet I continue to write,
I write to you by the light of the star
Where the birds build
Their heavenly nests.

And ours, wooden, with the little porch,
Where you'd sit on the steps,
Is encircled by Saturn's rings
And the triangles of wings

of birds that made themselves nests
In our pine-needly yard.
Share a widow's grief
Keep a minute of silence at dawn.

1 May 2003

Translated from Russian by Daniel Weissbort

Baron Wormser

FALLING MAN

A Call

Reva's brother Saul is on the phone,
I heard she's dying. I want to make amends.
I say nothing, wonder how time can atone

And what is the sound of God's dial tone —
An urgent beep or New Age jazz blend?
Reva's brother Saul is on the phone

And I need to do more than stupidly moan.
I need to ask what it is he intends:
I say nothing, wonder how time can atone.

When a body dies the soul is most alone
As it awaits its unknowable friends.
Reva's brother Saul is on the phone.

His voice is a river, a sour drone,
A satchel of grief, a star caught in a lens.
I say nothing, wonder how time can atone.

Reva is beyond the pale of words. No one
Can seize her heart, no one can reach her end.
Reva's brother Saul is on the phone.
I say nothing, wonder how time can atone.

Eve Dying

The foretaste came in a bleak twitch —
A memory that couldn't be,
Her final heart flinching.
She threw the caging clothes aside

And fled her housed duties
While overhead
A cold cloud glowered,
The grimace of gathered nullity.

Womb-ruined, a stone
In her dwindled voice, fast
Fear shaking the seed
Of first faith while the sour

Coffin of breathless power
Prepared its lone, acute line —
A promise she knew would
Come due but could not imagine.

Her staggered, shortened moans
Formed a maiden's tower
Any wind might smash,
Any wave bury.

Imagine her stretched out
On the ground—no man around —
The sky resolutely empty.
No painter appears or apostle.

When the jackals come near
They sniff and begin to cry,
Their voices plangent, raw —
Less and more than human.

Falling Man

man fall, man fall
in bright air

angel rise
unheavy unmortal
spirit-fueled but

man fall burdened
tasked man
fall quickly
but / forever /
in bright flightless moment

unheavy / pure /
illusion-fueled

flighted moment falling
time laughing
laughing at people
so heavy / unable
to rise / wingless
any bird better
in bright air
any angel

but man fall
woe-weighted
mind full
mouth screaming

pure
moment shattered
glass air / empty

man fall
into earth
good earth
no laugh no scream
well coming / like time
unheavy

but man fall
old story

J.C.Todd

IN LATE SUMMER THE SEA COMES TO THE CITY

Pissing

Knees bent, you tip your pelvis slightly
toward the immaculate bowl
and with the same hand that stroked me last night
extend from its sheath the pink bud of your penis.
For a minute, I think of Narcissus
looking at Narcissus, his vision forever grounded
on the shallows of that glance.
But there is no limit like self-love in your act,
only those always gentle fingers
on your penis and the golden piss
arcing from your body what it does not need.
I lean against the door jamb
breathing in the scent of your beautiful excess.
Your hand slides back to the taut perineum
pushing up until the last drop falls.
Urine of the gods.
I say this knowing you are not Uranus,
not Jupiter Pluvius, certainly not a shaman
making water on my naked body
in order to charm the rain.
You are clearly not, as Freud would rush to note,
a girl with a garden hose snaked between her legs.
No, you are the man Paul was too blind to be,
flesh filled with light: atoms pulsing, nuclei of cells,
neurons, dendrites, retese - all light transmitting light.
My golden husband pissing in a porcelain bowl.

On the Beach

9/18/01

Ebb tide morning of an almost new
moon. And what's the sea brought up
under stars? Constellations of

seaweed and shell-bit scintilla, frayed
lines. Ravel and Shatter. There's no way
to make a tale from what's strewn underfoot.

The on-shore breeze tumbles scud and litter,
monarchs tremble in windshift, but not enough
gale to say, Nor'easter. Is this the last day

before war? A few knots out, a factory ship
sails a town farther down beach,
seining and freezing. Harvest, they call it.

Have I ever imagined the daily lives
of its catch — whiting, sea bass, mottled
flounder, rays whose skin is soft

as petals, pale gray nurse sharks -
when I've dived with them
in warmer waters? So many failures

of attention. Lapses. The stump -
legged gull picks at kelp,
its familiar laugh an alarm

for a flock to descend. What do
they sense? I kick up a red star, a pink
shovel, castle turret, drenched knot

of an infant's sock. Remains of a day
on the beach. Upwind, an island
fabled in my childhood

glitters and smolders. Manhattan.
Back to it, I walk the salt-gauzed edge
of what used to feel like mainland,

squeezing the balled-up bootie.
I can't stop hoping
the sea carried the child away.

In late summer the sea comes to the city

It isn't yourself you see at the end
Of August. You are a reflection in

A gutter's standing water, and the flat-you,
Swept up in traffic, an image, looking back.

The rush of drive time like the rush of surf
Just another noise fastened to the brain.

The faster the speed—ambulance, squad
Car —, the more headway into a boredom

Repetitious as sun that blunts and stuns
Until all seagulls look the same. Generics.

The oddness of it, being hollowed by
Not being able to notice detail.

Imagine - what is it like to be left
With a solitary thought, uprooted,

Embodiment unmoored, pulled out from
Beneath you by unfathomed undertow?
Every last cell lost. In this way
You learn distance from your memory.

Andrey Gritsman

MOTEL

My first love

First time I fell in love
I was six.
That was September 1,
and white flocks of girls
went to school,
and I could not take my eyes off her.

She was about twenty-five,
a young doctor, just somebody
my grandmother met in a town park
when we were on vacation.

They sat on a bench and talked,
I guess, about her plans to marry,
about a new job. It wasn't so bad,
that southern town in the mountains:
mineral waters, mud baths, trails,
a sort of resort, a lot of flowers.

She was blond, a soft smile
and green attentive eyes, but unable
to recognize me.
I was just another little boy to her
playing in the park.
I whispered in my grandmother's ear: I love her!
She laughed and told the young woman:
He says he loves you, silly boy.
The woman leaned
and kissed me lightly.

That was not far
from the site of Lermontov's duel,
where he was lying still alive all night
in the deep ravine. There was
a terrible storm that night,

the books claim. Lermontov
fell in love for the first time,
when he was four. Now
there is a Russian Army base in town:
trains, bringing more troops,
refueling stations, personnel carriers, hangars,
oil, gas, heaps of the surplus dead equipment
on the roadside, teenagers in fatigues
sitting on tanks, smoking Marlboros,

growing roar of the MIG fighters,
taking off for the next sortie
and heading East over the snow-covered plains,
framed by the mountains.

I haven't seen her since,
and I've never known
what happened in her life.
I would not want to know.

For my father

After you've been gone,
I've been flying alone back and forth
above the waters and the continents.
Both of us: me here and you there
know too well that this is a waste of time
and space.
I may be flying, looking for you
for the rest of my life
or death, and still never see you.

Nothing can be undone,
and I can't take it.
Nor I can take the fact
that every time I see my close ones, I know,
it may be the last time I see them.

Don't worry about me. While I fly,
an angel in uniform attends me,
gives me some water and bread,
and smiles to me.
She takes care of me
until it's time to get out,
get in line for the luggage

and then to disappear into crowd
which lives on the exhaust,
cyclic persistence
and canned expectations.

The latter is something
I live on myself, expectation
melting slowly into waiting
as I keep on flying
in the space given
for the time being.

Motel

All cheap motels possess
that terrible smell of dispossession,
dislodgement, airless sleep, and plastic crucifixion,
an owlish, shapeless face
behind the double-glass window,
the smell of life unlived,
of old rugs and dusty sorrow.

What can be dimmer than
the night of dreams that followed
the thick, tenacious odor
of the sleepy hollow.

You leave behind
this street and a frozen meadow,
the only blinking light.
You leave behind
a vacant cube of the borrowed,
of the sealed, stale, and silent space,
where one stays overnight,

where time is seized,
the pool is dry and cracked,
the phone is dead,
TV black and white,
the corner pizza place closed
last winter
and the street sign says: Do Not Enter.

Sean O'Brien

THE LOST WAR

Cousin Coat

You are my secret coat. You're never dry.
You wear the weight and stink of black canals.
Malodorous companion, we know why
It's taken me so long to see we're pals,
To learn why my acquaintance never sniff
Or send me notes to say I stink of stiff.

But you don't talk, historical bespoke.
You must he worn, be intimate as skin,
And though I never lived what you invoke,
At birth I was already buttoned in.
Your clammy itch became my atmosphere,
An air made half of anger, half of fear.

And what you are is what I tried to shed
In libraries with Donne and Henry James.
You're here to bear a message from the dead
Whose history's dishonoured with their names.
You mean the North, the poor, and troopers sent
To shoot down those who showed their discontent.

No comfort there for comfy meliorists
Grown weepy over Jarrow photographs.
No comfort when the poor the state enlists
Parade before their fathers' cenotaphs.
No comfort when the strikers all go back
To see which twenty thousand get the sack.

Be with me when they cauterise the facts.
Be with me to the bottom of the page,
Insisting on what history exacts.
Be memory, be conscience, will and rage,
And keep me cold and honest, cousin coat,
So if I lie, I'll know you're at my throat.

The Iron Hand

I once loved a boy with an iron hand.
He kissed me and he said:
Come for a walk on the old black path -
You can sit on my iron bed.

When I sat on his iron counterpane
He kneeled down before me and said:
Kathleen slip off your sensible shoes
And lie in my iron bed.

I'll bring you whisky and silver,
A bird in an iron cage.
I'll read you this poem and let you look
At the other side of the page.

It's true I loved my iron man
From the depths of his iron bed.
I loved him and my life ran out
And I was left for dead.

I learned how his poem continued
On the far side of the page -
The hero could never distinguish
Tenderness from rage,

And locked me in the iron bed
From dawn till dead of night,
Mending children's jerseys
While my coal-black hair turned white.

I gave him thirteen children
And ten were dead at birth.
Professor now you tell me how
To estimate my worth.

It's true I loved my iron man
From the depths of his iron bed.
I loved him and my life ran out
And I was left for dead.

Fantasia on a Theme of James Wright

There are miners still
In the underground rivers
Of West Moor and Palmersville.

There are guttering cap-lamps bound up in the roots
Where the coal is beginning again.
They are sinking slowly further

In between the shiftless seams,
To black pools in the bed of the world.
In their long home the miners are labouring still –

Gargling dust, going down in good order,
Their black-braided banners aloft,
Into flooding and firedamp, there to inherit

Once more the tiny corridors of the immense estate
They line with prints of Hedley's Coming Home.
We hardly hear of them.

There are the faint reports of spent economies,
Explosions in the ocean floor,
The thud of iron doors sealed once for all

On prayers and lamentation,
On pragmatism and the long noyade
Of a class which dreamed itself

Immortalized by want if nothing else.
The singing of the dead inside the earth
Is like the friction of great stones, or like the rush

Of water into newly opened darkness. Oh my brothers,
The living will never persuade them
That matters are otherwise, history done.

The Citizens

We change the river's name to make it ours.
We wall the city off and call it fate.
We husband our estate of ash,
For what we have we hold, and this
Is what is meant by history.
We have no love for one another, only uses
We can make of the defeated.

- And meanwhile you have disappeared
Like smoke across a frozen field.
What language? You had no language.
Stirring bone soup with a bone, we sip
From the cup of the skull. This is culture.
All we want to do is live forever,
To which end we make you bow down to our gods
In the midday square's Apollonian light
Before we ship you to the furnaces
And sow you in the fields like salt
So that nothing will grow there but death.

We fear that the fields of blue air at the world's end
Will be the only court we face.
We fear that when we reach the gate alone
There will be neither words nor deeds
To answer with. Therefore, we say, let us
Speak not of murder but of sacrifice,
And out of sacrifice make duty,
And out of duty love,
Whose name, in our language, means death.

The Lost War

The saved were all ingratitude,
The lost would not lie down:
Reborn, their sacred rage renewed,
They razed the fallen town

And in the graveyard made their stand
Just east of heaven's gate.
We are the same. It is all one
Whom we exterminate.

Polina Barskova

SCENE

Ariel's Message

Your father lies crushed by the sea's weight
He is the volume of the wave, the coral.

Your father circles round, diluted by the sea wind

His skin is bark
Acrawl with panicked ants.

The whites of his eyes – prideful pearls.
The yolks of his eyes – worthless pearls.
His skull is a chorale.
Everything in him knells and trembles.
Nothing within him fades,

But everything transforms
Into something strange, thick, promising.

Curious Nereids immerse themselves in this solution –
So as to watch your father's transformations,
Since nothing in him fades, but rather turns
Into you, to you, Ferdinand: your father lives!
Your father sleeps.
Your father is a red

Ball,
Washed up beneath Pont Neuf.

Your father is shame.
He is the heat
of blindness that encroaches when I look at him: the membrane melts.
He is the cold of stammering that like a stinger creeps out of the mouth.
Your father still lives, but he's dozing off.
Look at the sleeper, Ferdinand.
A streamlet of saliva trickles down his chin.
That is the way a canny snake descends a cliff,
The way a fat chain spills into a skiff.

He sighs, not on the outside, somehow – but within:
He'd rather trap the sound inside himself than share it with us:
He's sleeping, Ferdinand.

Ice flickers on his curtal lip.
Breath is a very tiny thing, rounded by dreams.

Farewell to the Ghost

Chorus: Cut off even in the blossoms of my sin,
Unhouseled, disappointed, unaneled,
No reck'ning made, but sent to my account
With all my imperfections on my head.

A bird appeared to me this morning
With a barbed wire in its beak.
In the immeasurable stronghold,
The beasts have stilled. I glumly spat
In the already troubled waters –
My spittle swam towards the West.
O welcome news! You did not rush!
I'd heard so very much about you
When overripe clusters of cherries
Were lost at the first hint of daybreak,
When fog streamed in across the sea
And down
Starch-stiffened folds.
Well, then, I'll only wash the mildew
Off my face. All will be well.
I did not sin. The reason being –
My concubine had been a single
Hollow and spotless bit of cinder.
She does not smell of carrion, like any living flesh…
And with this punitive forgiveness the Lord has now assessed my choice.
O welcome news! How you are dreadful.
There's not a bit of sanctity in you.
I'm but a middling puritan.
But you're a purse riddled with holes.
Again I am a beggar. I'll be forced
To foster deserts the entire age.

The rainbow crumbles in my dream.
Light grows, just like the bosom of a goddess.

Scene

Anna went to fetch some water,
Found a young man sitting there,
His black beard shaking in the air.

It isn't that he simply sits,
He's not really in a fit,
He laboriously tracks the sunset's blots.

Here, now, with a golden border –
Like a little golden ruble –
Swims a smoky apparition,
Acid-scorched on every side.

Here, enormous as a bee –
The epitome of heat,
A shred of the exhausted sun,
Burned completely, inside out.

After them, hard on their heels –
Black over here, green over there,
Soars a bird right out of Blok, a captain out of Gumilev.

A dark-rusty mugginess,
A crumb of hay, a swarm of midges,
Anna, out of heavy buckets, pours out water on her feet.

Anna comprehends the plot,
Gnaws a reddish strand of hair,
A reddish beam on a reddish neck,
Crawling upward like an ant.

Now, already, darkness, like
A red stream out of the mouth,
Pours from heaven on our faces.
So the bottom line is drawn.

What's the meaning of our meetings –
The river knows, as does the speech,
We're to recollect and not,
And to guard our ignorance.

Translated from Russian by
Boris Dralyuk and David Stromberg

Heather Thomas

SPEED OF LIGHT

The Fan

Waving its crenulated edges,
the fan moves over the wounded table

revolving around night, around history
as loss. With cloths in both hands

I polish my mother's table; moths cling
to the screen, my hands circling,

cleaning the wood until
they rub off into the cloths and I

leave them inside. You will know by the nocturnal
business of air. By light I'll be gone

to hands grown back on a serrated shore
where I cut my feet traversing crosscurrents,

the mix of fabulous winds.

Odysseus in Amberland

for Craig

Feathery web above my single bed
makes darkness visible, home a lung.
I breathe as if I lived, as if you
turn sheets and rain to sails,

make darkness visible, home a lung.
Reach back to hold the burning globe,
turn sheets and rain to sails.
My dream was once a sleep I heard.

Reach back to hold the burning globe:
a self you saw in me I wonder who.
My dream was once a sleep I heard.
The sparrow calls the wren to sing

a self you saw in me I wonder who.
The deer look back at us, we drink their gaze.
The sparrow calls the wren to sing
as I attach more feathers to the web.

The deer look back at us, we drink their gaze.
Awake you'd rather be a foreigner
as I attach more feathers to the web
and wander mossy gaps of afternoon.

Awake you'd rather be a foreigner
arriving with a book when wine is poured
and wander mossy gaps of afternoon
through amber trails of Vilnius hotels.

Arriving with a book when wine is poured,
I breathe as if I lived, as if you
through amber trails of Vilnius hotels
and feathery web above my single bed.

Speed of Light

The solar system aligned in tawny fire,
as usual, for the last
ghost flower, the dusky sparrow

with a backbone like our own,
the last tongue of ice stretching down to Russia
across Siberia's Laptev Sea

as it dissolved. The pumpkin moon rose to white fire
when farthest from us.
The older it was, the fiercer the ember —

can you show me the new species
of our finished knowing,
of its dismantling beyond pieces of light,

the blazing star that thrives in the ground
as button snakeroot,
the old North Pole we'll sail across?

In midnight pouring rain I draw the curtain and see
a buck leaping River Road.
Drenched antlers flash in the streetlight —

my roots untangle — Listen,
go eat an apple, find a sunpatch,
light a candle in some dark corner,

burnish your heart in the light you become.

Chard deNiord

GRAVEN BELOVED

The Geeze

An unfinished point set
in a vast surrounding.
Walt Whitman

"Look!" said the girl
who saw things.
"Where" I asked.
"I see nothing."
"Twelve o'clock —
a dozen V's, like threads.
You have to look."
Then suddenly there —
straight up, like floaters
in the blue, twelve chevrons
scissoring the veil,
too distant to hear,
although I did, I did,
and not only hear,
but see as well —
clear, unquenchable fire
  on the wings of those
at the lead. "You also,"
I said, "are among them
in line, aflame, fluid
and effusing…curiously floating."
"See how quickly they vanish,
she said, "at the sound
of our voices."
And then they were gone
like flames that had burned
a hole in the sky and passed
right through.

Graven beloved

He forgot her lies and two webbed feet.
Worshipped her at a makeshift altar against
the advice of priests who counseled him
in vain, “She’s now impossible to reach.
Give up the search.” They spread the story
of his futile quest as the myth of the man
who loved a woman with two webbed feet.
How he had returned no less cured of grief
but filled with stories of another world
that is also here where people suffer beyond
belief. That needs a name for the afterlife.

I cannot greeve

I cannot grieve the long redundant end of leaves again.
They are gluttons for eulogy, spectral clowns, autumnal freaks.
A thing must have a face to die, something that will not revive
in a thaw or marry soil, something with style and raging heart,
something with desire and spiritual force, something that grows
from nothing at first and becomes unique, something that can’t
return, therefore, to the garden of vanity, something you
remember without the reminder of other things that look the same
and blow in the wind and fall to the ground without a name.

What the river said

I walked beside the Great River
watching it flow in the darkness like a syllable
that needs a grievous heart to be heard.
I stopped to listen and heard it whisper
every name as it slipped in silence past
the fields in which a herd of Holsteins grazed.
I saw it for the divide it was, both here
and not here, impossibly there, there,
with a current that can’t be crossed without
forgetting everything you’ve ever known.

Steven Schreiner

A WISH YOU CAN'T TAKE BACK

Silk

Yellow and heavy, one last ray poured .
Into a fresh bouquet of dahlias.
And hardened there.
Anna Akhmatova

I chose the flowers quickly
the day I came to see you
home from hospital,
your baby on your breast,
and I waited downstairs until
I was asked for. I didn't wish
to see you like that, wearied,
torn, your clothes disarrayed
as though a storm swept through
and you—and this—remained.
Arriving in the room, I saw
from a distant door I once
had called my own, you there
in the corner far away and small.
I thought to see, when my eyes sharpened
in the window light
shutting out all I couldn't
take, the father, lounging in silk.
He slept on in the next room
and you were as you were. For you
waiting in my arms as if I carried
the cut-down, tendered blooms
across a rain swell or a wave
washed ashore from wherever
the unwanted go or come back from,
the vivid, foolish, clown-faced daisies,
the coarse, lumescent, faintly ghoulish
metallic petals of the eucalyptus.

Camp

Under the cloud pierced moon through bare woods
along a frozen stream, cold as I am
and heartsick for my lost ones, aware
that I had saved myself from
going out like a flame
in the burning chill of the cold snow falling
conscious of the stiff guns and warm uniforms
with my thin frame whittled down to driftwood
and knowing I had betrayed more than one
was shoved and did stumble
cast no shadow finding that the time had come
to worship servile, triumphant death

It is the flu
I waken from
the sheets soaked fever broken
alone like a wish you can't take back

Steppe

You remember loving people
— uncles who were fathers' friends,
an aunt who came each day with bread
and cookies, walking her crooked step
past the bakery. You were her brother's
child and your mother his widow.
That step of hers in black
shoes.
    A bird like woman,
her knobbed hands and black eyes,
her hair still black, how brightly
she loved you, in place of your father,
so you wouldn't know he was gone.
You can love someone this way
when you don't expect anything
in return.
    Don't call it
a virtue though. Grief powers it
the way a generating station lights
a town in the remote cold.

The Snow

Now they're collecting the snow
we awaited so expectantly
and for which we have only one word.
Here we do not say snow before nightfall,
wet snow of rush hour, snow
like new dimes or snakes on a dry highway,
snow like cake
rising on the branch,
unforgivable spring snow
burning magnolia blossoms, shivering
in the throat of a crocus, snow that hurts
the eyes, that makes you want to turn
away, snow that falls on the tongue
of the ocean,
snow that squeaks, snow that whispers,
that no longer stirs the limbs
of lovers, snow of parting
falling on two, one lonely
and one in love with snow,
crazy snow circling around
like a father who can't find his child,
that makes the night too bright
to sleep; inconsolable
snow that falls upon
a widow's veil and melts
as she walks from the garden
of stone, snow
that makes the night a negative,
snow on her already
purchased plot, snow in the grove
of flameless cedars.

One kind of snow to be dispensed with
the day after.

ESSAYS

Marina Tsvetaeva

MY PUSHKIN

And ever since then, ever since when Pushkin was killed right in front of me, in Naumov's picture, daily, hourly, over and over, right through my earliest years, my childhood, my youth, I have divided the world into the poet and all the others, and I have chosen the poet, I have chosen to defend the poet against all the rest, however this 'all the rest' is dressed and whatever it happens to be called.

But even before Naumov's duel, because every memory has its pre-memory, its ancestor-memory, its great-great-great memory, just like a fire escape ladder which you climb down, never knowing whether there will be another rung – and there always is – or the sudden night sky, opening up ever higher and more distant stars to you – but before Naumov's The Duel there was a different Pushkin, a Pushkin, when I didn't even know that Pushkin was Pushkin. Pushkin not as a memory, but as a state of being, Pushkin forever and forever-forth, before Naumov's Duel there was a morning light and rising out of it, and disappearing into it, was a figure, cutting with its shoulders through the light as a swimmer cuts through a river, a black figure, higher than everyone else, and blacker than everyone else, with his head bowed, and a hat in his hand.

The Pushkin Memorial was not the Memorial-to-Pushkin, but simply the Pushkinmemorial, all one word, and the separate concepts of Pushkin and Memorial were equally incomprehensible, and did not even exist without each other. And there it was, standing there always, eternally – in rain or snow, o how I can see those shoulders heaped with snow, heaped with the snow of all the Russias, those strong African shoulders – with its shoulders facing into the sunrise or the snowstorm, whether I am going towards it or leaving it, running from it, or running up to it, there it is, with its eternal hat in its eternal hand: the Pushkin Memorial.

The Pushkin Memorial was the limit and the extent of our walks: from the Pushkin Memorial, to the Pushkin Memorial, the Pushkin Memorial was also the finishing line of our races: who could run fastest to the Pushkin Memorial. But Asya's Nanny sometimes shortened it for simplicity's sake: 'we'll have a sit-down by Pushkin,' and that always drew my pedantic correction: 'Not by Pushkin, by the Pushkin Memorial'.

[...]

The Pushkin Memorial was part of everyday life, as much a character of childhood life as the grand piano, or the watchman Ignat'ev outside, who

stood almost as immutable, if not as tall. The Pushkin Memorial was one of two (there was no third) inevitable daily walks: to the Patriarch's Ponds, or to the Pushkin Memorial. And I preferred the Pushkin Memorial, because I liked to run to it, pulling, and even ripping open as I ran, my Grandfather's white Karlsbad jacket, and once I'd reached it, to run around it, and then to stand, my head lifted, and to look up at the black-faced and black-handed giant, who did not look back at me, and was unlike anything or anyone in my life. And sometimes I simply hopped around it. And despite Andryusha's long limbs and Asya's weightlessness, despite my own plumpness, it was I who ran better than them, better than everyone, simply because my honour was at stake: get there first, and then collapse panting. It pleases me that it was at the Pushkin Memorial I won my first races.

There was another different game at the Pushkin Memorial, my own game, and it was this: placing a tiny white china figure, no bigger that a child's little finger, next to its pedestal – they were sold in china shops, anyone who grew up at the end of the last century in Moscow will know: gnomes under mushrooms, children under umbrellas – place a tiny figure like that against the giant's pedestal and then slowly travel my gaze from the bottom to the top of the granite mass, until my head almost fell off, comparing the sizes.

The Pushkin Memorial was my first encounter with black and white: how black! How white! And because black was the giant, and white was the tiny comic figure, and because I definitely had to choose, I chose then, for once and for all, the black, and not the white, blackness and not whiteness: black thoughts, and black possessions, and a black life.

The Pushkin Memorial was also my first encounter with numbers: how many little figures would it take, placed one on top of another, until you had a whole Pushkin Memorial. And the answer was already the same answer as it is now: you could never have enough – still in my modest pride I always added, 'But if you had one hundred of me, then maybe, because I'm still growing...' And at the same time: 'But what if you put a hundred tiny figures one on top of the other, would that be me?' And the answer: 'No, because I'm big, and because I'm alive and they're just china.'

So the Pushkin memorial was also my first encounter with materials: iron, china, granite, and my own.

The Pushkin Memorial, with me under it, and with the tiny figure under me, was my first proper lesson in hierarchy, too. I was a giant next to the china figure, but next to Pushkin, I was – myself. A little girl. But one who would grow bigger. And I was the same for the tiny figure as the Pushkin Memorial was for me. But then what was the Pushkin Memorial for the tiny figure? And after some hard thinking it suddenly dawned upon me: The Memorial was so enormous that the figure simply couldn't see it. It thought it was a big house, or a rumble of thunder. And the china figure was so tiny that the Pushkin Memorial couldn't see it either. It thought it was just a flea. But it saw me! Because I was big and plump. And I would soon grow bigger.

My first lesson in numbers, my first lesson in scale and materials, my first lesson in hierarchy, my first lesson in thinking and most importantly, a

proper underpinning of all my later experience: that even if you had a thousand figures, even if they were piled one on top of the other, you couldn't make Pushkin.

...Because I liked walking away from him, down the sandy or the snowy avenue, and walking back to him, along the sandy or snowy avenue, towards his back and his hand, towards his hand behind his back, because he always stood with his back to me as I walked away from him, or as I walked towards him, his back to everyone and everything, and we always walked behind his back, because the boulevard itself with its three avenues approached him from behind his back, and the walk was always so long that every time we forgot, from the boulevard, what sort of a face he had, and every time his face was different, but just as black. (I think with sadness that those last few trees never knew what sort of a face he had).

I loved the Pushkin Memorial for its blackness – the opposite of the white of all our household gods. Their eyes were completely white, but the Pushkin Memorial's were quite black and quite round. The Pushkin Memorial was completely black, like a dog, blacker even than a dog, because even the blackest dog has something yellowish above the eyes, or something whiteish about the neck. The Pushkin Memorial was as black as a grand piano. And even if they'd never told me that Pushkin was a black man, I'd have known anyway that Pushkin was black.

From the Pushkin Memorial I also have my intense love of black people, which I have carried with me through all my life, and even now, my whole being feels a sense of honour when, quite by chance, in a tram, or some other place, I find myself standing by a black man. My profane whiteness side to side with his divine blackness. In every black man I see and I love Pushkin, the black Pushkin Memorial of my, and all Russia's, unschooled early childhood.

...Because I liked it that we walked towards him and away from him, but he was always there. In the snow, the flying leaves, the sunrise, the deep blue, the opaque milk of winter – he was always there.

Sometimes, although rarely, our Gods were moved about. And at Christmas or Easter they were flicked with a duster. But he was washed by the rains and dried by the sun. He was always there.

The Pushkin Memorial was my first vision of the immutable, the inviolable.

"Shall we go to Patriarch's Ponds today, or...?"

"The Pushkin Memorial!"

There were no patriarchs on the Patriarch's Ponds.

What a strange and wonderful idea – to place a giant amongst children. A black giant, amongst white children. A strange and wonderful idea – to bring down on white children their black kinship.

Those who grew up in the shadow of the Pushkin Memorial will hardly prefer the white race, and I, so very clearly, prefer the black race. The Pushkin Memorial, anticipating what is to come, is a memorial against racism, to the equality of all races, to the supremacy of any race that might bring forth a genius. The Pushkin Memorial is a memorial to black blood poured into

white blood, a memorial to the intermingling of bloods, just as rivers intermingle, a living memorial to the intermingling of bloods, and a conmingling of the most remote and the apparently most disjointed spirits of nations. The Pushkin Memorial is living proof of the base and moribund nature of racial theory, living proof of the opposite. Pushkin is the 'fact' which confounds all theory. Even before its own conception racism was thrown aside by Pushkin at the moment of his birth. No – even earlier than than – on the day of the marriage between the son of the Negro of Peter the Great, Osip Abramovich Gannibal, and Maria Alekseevna Pushkina. No, no, even earlier than that: on the unknown day, at the unknown hour when Peter turned his black, pale, joyous, terrible gaze on Ibragim, the Abyssinian boy. That gaze was a command to Pushkin to exist. So children growing up in the shadow of the Petersburg Bronze Horseman were also growing up in the shadow of a memorial against racism – and to genius.

What a strange and wonderful idea it was to make Ibragim's great-grandson black. To cast him in iron as nature had cast his great-grandfather in black flesh. Black Pushkin is a symbol. It was a strange and wonderful idea to give Moscow, in the blackness of a statue, a scrap of Abyssinian sky. Because the Pushkin Memorial stands for certain 'under the skies of my Africa'. What a strange and wonderful idea to give Moscow the sea under the feet of the poet, with his head bent, one foot forward, the hat removed from his head and held behind his back in a bow. For Pushkin stands not above the sandy boulevard, but above the Black Sea. Above a sea of unfettered natural force. Pushkin's unfettered natural force.

What a dark idea it was to place the giant in the midst of chains. For Pushkin is among chains, his pedestal is surrounded ('fenced') by rocks and chains: a rock, a chain, a rock, a chain, and all of it together made a circle. A circle of Nikolai's hands, which never embraced the poet and yet never let him go. A circle begun by the words ' You're no longer just Pushkin, you're my Pushkin' and only undone by the shot from D'Anthes' gun.

Translated from Russian by Sasha Dugdale

Alexander Veytsman

A TYRANT UP CLOSE: JOSEPH BRODSKY'S «TO A TYRANT» POEM

Одному тирану

Он здесь бывал: еще не в галифе -
в пальто из драпа; сдержанный, сутулый.
Арестом завсегдатаев кафе
покончив позже с мировой культурой,
он этим как бы отомстил (не им,
но Времени) за бедность, униженья,
за скверный кофе, скуку и сраженья
в двадцать одно, проигранные им.

И Время проглотило эту месть.
Теперь здесь людно, многие смеются,
гремят пластинки. Но пред тем, как сесть
за столик, как-то тянет оглянуться.
Везде пластмасса, никель - все не то;
в пирожных привкус бромистого натра.
Порой, перед закрытьем, из театра
он здесь бывает, но инкогнито.

Когда он входит, все они встают.
Одни - по службе, прочие - от счастья.
Движением ладони от запястья
он возвращает вечеру уют.
Он пьет свой кофе - лучший, чем тогда,
и ест рогалик, примостившись в кресле,
столь вкусный, что и мертвые «о да!»
воскликнули бы, если бы воскресли.

To a Tyrant

He used to come here till he donned gold braid,
a good topcoat on, self-controlled, stoop-shouldered.
Arresting these cafe habitues –
he started snuffing out world culture somewhat later –
seemed sweet revenge (on Time, that is, not them)

for all the lack of cash, the sneers and insults,
the lousy coffee, boredom, and the battles
at vingt-et-un he lost time and again.

And Time has had to stomach that revenge.
The place is now quite crowded; bursts of laughter,
records boom out. But just before you sit
you seem to feel an urge to turn your head around.
Plastic and chrome are everywhere – not right;
the pastries have an aftertaste of bromide.
Sometimes before the place shuts down he'll enter
straight from a theater, anonymous, no fuss.

When he comes in, the lot of them stand up.
Some out of duty, the rest in unfeigned joy.
Limp-wristed, with a languid sweep of palm,
he gives the evening back its cozy feel.
He drinks his coffee – better, nowadays –
and bites a roll, while perching on his chair,
so tasty that the very dead would cry
"Oh, yes!" if only they could rise and be there.

(translated by Alan Myers)

1. Introduction

To a Tyrant is one of the last poems that Joseph Brodsky composed in the Soviet Union. By most accounts, the poem was written in January 1972; hence, the poet was not yet aware that it was just a matter of months before the authorities would usher him out of the native country, a fact which does not qualify this work as an epitaph for the tyrannical state he was leaving behind. Rather, the poem is an exercise on the existing tyranny, which in 1972 was still of an on-going relevance for Brodsky.

Nevertheless, it would be a mistake to directly tie *To a Tyrant* to Brodsky's milieu or even to a particular temporal space. While living under a tyrannical government in the early 1970's, Brodsky did not seek to confront it as directly and confrontationally, as Alexander Solzhenitsyn was doing in his prose writings. The poet was far more subtle, not allowing his literary objectives to metamorphose into political ones. His attitude toward the authorities was a-Soviet, rather than anti-Soviet, as he yearned to be independent from the politically charged literary processes, whether in support or against the communist regime. In that respect, his consciousness strove to be autonomous from his existence, as several years later he would delineate

in the *Less than One* essay. This autonomy allowed him to depict a tyrant that lacks a country of origin or a traceable history. The poet is not bound by any particular example, though his century provides a wide array of choices. He leaves the reader in ambivalence, giving clues that are both illuminating and vague about the actual identity (or identities) of the tyrant in question. Hence, this is a tyrant for all seasons, with the generality of the article "a" being the ultimate proof for that interpretation. In this delineation of general characteristics, there is an implicit attempt to derive a common formula for all tyrants.

As we shall demonstrate in the present essay, Brodsky adopts this approach from W.H. Auden, who in 1939 wrote a six-line poem, titled *Epitaph on a Tyrant*. By initiating the dialogue with Auden a third of a century later, Brodsky depicts a tyrant with a greater specificity than was done by his predecessor. If the latter portrayed a tyrant that could have ruled in any year of Anno Domini, the former limits his hero to the twentieth century. Both poets strive to be generic, but Brodsky sees a narrower temporal space in 1972, though the passage of time would gradually and inevitably lead him to seek even greater specificity. In 1982, he would author a four-line-long Epitaph for a Tyrant, this time almost completely borrowing Auden's title, but, unlike him, narrowing down his diction to one concrete man: Leonid I. Brezhnev.

The 1972 *To a Tyrant* poem, however, shall constitute the crux of our analysis. In this poem, Brodsky finds the optimal treatment for his nameless hero. Not too abstract, like Auden's; not too specific, like the subsequent poem about Brezhnev: Brodsky's tyrant is the prototype for what we define in the present essay as the "predictable triple apparition" effect. This concept, which unites tyrants in the context of time – its past, present, and future tenses, – is central to understanding Brodsky's perception of tyranny. *To a Tyrant* lacks one concrete tense, which establishes the concept of time as malleable, only taking the reader further away from specificity.

In addition to focusing on broader themes, this essay also engages in a micro-analytic close reading of the poem. With twenty four lines at his disposal (which is relatively short by Brodsky's volume standards), the poet applies his usual toolbox of iambic pentameter, enjambments, and noun abundance, among others, to generate the desired effects. From the technical standpoint, the present work is not about innovations in Brodsky's own poetics; rather it is a manifestation of the *nel mezzo del cammin di nostra vita* methods that were developed over a fifteen-year period and are now thrown at the diction's disposal. The diction, in turn, answers to a higher authority – that of a voice, – which in the present poem didactically judges and draws conclusions on the tyrant, much like Auden's. The voice blends in with the relativity of time, making the *predictable triple apparition* effect yet more profound.

2. Predictable Triple Apparition

At this point, we will introduce the concept of "predictable triple apparition" in *To a Tyrant*. The main idea behind this concept is that, despite different geography and cultural differences, as well as temporal generational gaps, twentieth century tyrants exhibit strong similarities 1) in their socio-economic status before coming to power, 2) during the oppressive years of the actual leadership, and 3) in the quasi-unanimous assessment of posterity regarding the darkness of their accomplishments. This predictability in past, present, and future tenses distinguishes them from democratic and liberal rulers, who can have different histories of coming to power, who vary in successes of their rule, and who become subjects of divergent debates and arguments after their deaths. While the dictatorial course of action is often judged as unpredictable, it is ironic that the actual fate of tyrants – across all three temporal domains – is remarkably similar. This irony, though implicitly, plays out profoundly in Brodsky's poem.

The first state of the *predictable triple apparition* phenomenon is the tyrant's past. It is usually one of misery and inferiority, during which the grandeur of his future potential remains vastly underestimated. Furthermore, much was discussed in the academic literature about the tyrant's battles with inner inhibitions, fostered by physical defects (low height or a sexual inadequacy), unrealized dreams (in painting or in poetry), and humble upbringing (in a family of a cobbler or a blacksmith). The tyrant often pursues his path to power in order to prove to the outside world that he is far from insignificance, in which others envision him. He is a Horatio Alger from-rags-to-riches kind of character, but on the political landscape.

This idea is closely related to the interpretation of Alfred Adler's "will for power" thesis:

What does man want? What does every being want? To be powerful: therefore, what exactly affects us most? Weakness, inferiority. Pushed by its own thirst for power, the lower being passionately strives to improve, as it cannot bear the feeling of inferiority. Thus, in a huge psychic effort, stammering Demostene became an orator; a shortsighted person turns into a painter, and a paralyzed one into Stilicon or a Torstensson. If the strife is successful, inferiority is compensated for and overcome by psychic over-elevation. Inferiority turns into added value.

Brodsky carries forward this idea in the first strophe of *To a Tyrant*, depicting miseries from the tyrant's past. As a magnanimous user of nouns, Brodsky applies them to the maximum in documenting tyrant's history. On one hand, it is a laundry list of the tyrant's potential causes and reasons for becoming a tyrant, a list that syntactically reminds of an *Elegy for John Donne*. This list

could be as random, as the inner being of the tyrant itself. On another hand, the list could have a profound symbolic significance.

бедность (lack of cash)

униженья (sneers and insults)

скверный кофе (lousy coffee)

скука (boredom)

сраженья в двадцать одно (battles at vingt-et-un)

The list of five is an indirect reminder of the five senses, all of which appear in the aforementioned items (sight – бедность; touch – сраженья в двадцать одно; taste and smell – скверный кофе; hearing – униженья). The tyrant responds to his five senses by attempting to overcome the objects of humiliation: later, during the tyrannical years, he shall no longer experience any of the five objects, which is an implicit reminder that perhaps he experiences no senses or feelings at all.

The treatment of the above objects in the past tense is consistent with Brodsky's diction in other poems, where some of these nouns are also symbolically associated with the past. Consider his usage of "униженья" in *On the Way to Skyros* poem:

Ведь если может человек вернуться
на место преступленья, то туда,
где был унижен, он прийти не сможет.
И в этом пункте планы Божества
и наше ощущенье униженья
настолько абсолютно совпадают,
что за спиною остаются: ночь,
смердящий зверь, ликующие толпы,
дома, огни.

(*По дороге на Скирос, 1967*)

Hence, if a man can return
to the crime scene, he cannot,
to the place, where he was humiliated.
And in this context God's plans
and our feeling of humiliation
coincide with such precision
that behind us are left: the night,

the reeking animal, jubilant crowds,
houses, lights.

(*On the Way to Skyros, 1967*)

Similarly, there would be a conspicuous past tense in Brodsky's usage of "бедность" and "скука" in MCMXCIV:

А это было эпохой скуки и нищеты,
когда нечего было украсть, тем паче
купить, ни тем более преподнести в подарок.

(*MCMXCIV, 1994*)

Whereas this was a time of poverty and of boredom,
when there was nothing to steal, still less to buy,
not to mention to offer somebody as a present.

(*MCMXCIV, 1994*)

The five objects in *To a Tyrant* are, of course, highly symbolic, and for each individual tyrant we could compile a similar list. What unites these items, however, with any other nouns is their transience in the tyrant's state of mind. As the future ruler strives to exit from his pre-tyrannical years, he yearns to leave the listed items in the past tense. They are the unfortunate reminder of the unfortunate past, which the tyrant seeks to destroy along with any witnesses. It is with this determination that he enters the present tense of the *predictable triple apparition*.

The present tense within the scope of our defined concept constitutes an absolute necessity of cruelty, drawing its direct inspiration from Niccolo Machiavelli's *The Prince*. The Florentine thinker, as is well known in the political science circles, placed the rational application of cruelty at the forefront of the ruler's philosophy of governance:

I say that every prince ought to desire to be considered clement and not cruel. Nevertheless he ought to take care not to misuse this clemency. Cesare Borgia was considered cruel; notwithstanding, his cruelty reconciled the Romagna, unified it, and restored it to peace and loyalty. And if this be rightly considered, he will be seen to have been much more merciful than the Florentine people, who, to avoid a reputation for cruelty, permitted Pistoia to be destroyed. Therefore a prince, so long as he keeps his subjects united and loyal, ought not to mind the reproach of cruelty; because with a few examples he will be more merciful than those who, through too much mercy, allow disorders to arise, from which follow murders or robberies; for these

are wont to injure the whole people, whilst those executions which originate with a prince offend the individual only.

More importantly, Machiavelli advocated the primacy of fear that subjects should feel toward the ruler, as opposed to that of love, implicitly suggesting that love could become the derivative of fear in the subjects, but not the other way around. In Brodsky's world, the tyrant directly applies the Machiavellian postulate:

Когда он входит, все они встают.
Одни - по службе, прочие - от счастья.

When he comes in, the lot of them stand up.
Some out of duty, the rest in unfeigned joy.

Brodsky's attempt to create a generic tyrant is similar to Machiavelli's intention to write a general rulebook for the tyrants of his day and beyond. Both recognize a plethora of common features in the ruling figures, which each then encapsulates into the literary expressive means of his own (Machiavelli – into prose-focused maxims, buttressed by historical examples; Brodsky – into a verse-oriented isolated spatial microcosm that approximates the entire state under the tyrant's rule). Unlike Machiavelli, Brodsky does not seek to give advice: he simply observes the present tense. For him, the present tense is the *fait accompli*. It is immutable and at the same time – interchangeable. If it has taken place under one tyrant, it can happen (with variations, of course) under a dozen more. His tyrant defies time periods or even time itself ("отомстил не им, / но Времени" – he overpowers time). Such is the inherent feature of the second state of the *predictable triple apparition*.

In describing the setting of the tyrannical present tense, Brodsky chooses three main themes, though he could certainly engage many others. As the reader grasps the meaning of those three, he could derive the others himself. The themes are: 1) destruction of the cafe habitues; 2) false sense of mirth in the cafe; 3) tyrant's lonely state amidst sycophancy of survivors. All three are interlinked in the poem, as they would be in a tyrannical state. All three function in the context of frozen time, as the rules of the present tense dictate. All three are recyclable to another country, culture, or a generation.

First, the destruction of the cafe habitues represents a symbolic construct of tyranny, almost on the level of a textbook definition. The tyrant eliminates cafe habitues as the unwanted witnesses of his past. They are neither dissenters, nor his political antagonists. Their immediate and main guilt is in knowing him in the pre-tyrannical years. The tyrants choose not to possess a historical domain, where their human weaknesses (like the aforementioned five nouns from the first stanza) were known to others and where they used

to be on the same level with their present vassals. If the tyrant's past follows a pattern, his present is even more predictable in its goal to carry out a vendetta on that past… which is to be consumed by time ("And Time has had to stomach that revenge.")

Brodsky places this theme at the forefront of the poem. We learn of the «арестом завсегдатаев кафе» on line 3, when we barely know anything of the main protagonist, the subject matter, or the setting. As the plot unravels in its before-and-after mode, the aforementioned arrests become a suspenseful, or better yet – an inevitably enigmatic feature of the presented biographical sketch. We learn of the revenge, but are not given the details. This vagueness is common in the tyrannical state, where the actual arrest is often the last thing known about the subject's fate. The official trials and sentences are rare: people simply disappear. Mindful of this pattern, Brodsky carries the enigma throughout the entire body of the poem, bringing resolution only at the very end. «что и мертвые «о да» / воскликнули бы если бы воскресли». The entire poem becomes like the time span of tyranny, at the end of which we learn what happened to its victims.

Second, Brodsky incorporates the false sense of mirth into the poem, most likely drawing on Joseph Stalin's famous proclamation of mid 1930's that "life became better, life became merrier." Stalin's maxim is indicative of similar tyrannical states, during which the daily everyday life masks the nighttime horror. "The place is now quite crowded; bursts of laughter, / records boom out." But something is not well – hence, comes the warning from the narrator: "But just before you sit / you seem to feel an urge to turn your head around." The false mirth fades away at the introduction of the sudden contrast. We find a similarly abrupt transition in the *Anno Domini* poem (1968), where Brodsky several years earlier depicted an engineered happiness under the rule of a mini-tyrant (Governor-general) in an imaginary province: В проулках - толчея и озорство. / Веселый, праздный, грязный, очумелый / народ толпится позади дворца"; ("In the lanes the people press and lark around. / A merry, idle, dirty, boisterous / throng crowds in the rear of the mansion.") only to be followed by a sudden: "Наместник болен" ("The Governor-general is ill"). Alas, the predictability of tyranny's present tense!

Third, the tyrant experiences loneliness, as he exists amidst homogeneous sycophants, who differ among themselves only in the degree of their flattery. The line "Some out of duty, the rest in unfeigned joy" delineates a slight distinction between them, much like the line "холуй трясется, раб хохочет" ("The vassal trembles, the slave laughs") from *A Sketch* (1971), but in the end they are united in the choir-like necessity to laud their leader. The tyrant, on his side, is keenly aware of such feelings' falsehood ("столько поклонников, а чай выпить не с кем" was another favorite Stalin's saying in private circles), as well as their transience. In the end, by destroying his

own past, the tyrant subjects himself to the present tense of loneliness and impermanence.

This discussion of impermanence brings us to the final state of the *predictable triple apparition*: the post-tyrannical period. As we scrutinize the poem, however, we find no future tense. The reason for this conspicuous absence lies in the tense's redundancy. The narrator already knows that the only post-tyrannical future for the tyrant lies in his death and the harsh judgment that shall follow in its aftermath. The tyrant is likely to be ostracized almost to the point of anathema. Historians are often so similar in judging tyrants that their comments are rendered rather irrelevant: "Какая разница, что там бубнят Светоний и Тацит, / ища причины твоей жестокости..." ("What does it matter what Suetonius / cum Tacitus still mutter, seeking causes / for your great cruelty"), Brodsky would write years later in *The Bust of Tiberias* (1985). On the scale of predictability for all three tenses, the future tense would receive the highest marks. Hence, there is no need to delineate the implied. On Brodsky's part, the future tense's implicit depiction constitutes almost a cinematographic technique, where the past and the present tenses are carefully structured to foreshadow the future that is never actually depicted.

Another reason for the hidden future tense in the poem lies in the battle that the tyrant wages with the days that follow his epoch. Every tyrant inherently tries to build a lasting nation or an empire that would outlive him for years to come. Hitler was making plans for a "Thousand-year Reich"; Stalin was building a better future that had no temporal limits. The tyrant's ambitions, however, become the struggle of Sisyphus, as the everlasting socio-political dream that he is pursuing collapses soon after his death, if not immediately. Potentially aware, even if subconsciously, of this post-mortal collapse, the tyrant continuously chases the future tense, but invariably remains in the present, sitting in a chair with better coffee and a tasty roll.

The ability to take the "triple apparition" model and to apply it to a number of dictators, at least to the denizens of the twentieth century, justifies the adjective "predictable." For Brodsky, as for any innovative poet, predictability was synonymous with cliche, which in turn represented an unacceptable *modus vivendi*. In that respect, his poem implicitly juxtaposes the role of the tyrant against that of the poet: unlike the creator or rhymes and images, the creator of torture chambers and prison camps functions within a domain of a far greater predictability. The poet cannot afford to repeat himself. The tyrant cannot afford not to. The poet seeks to be ahead of his times, thus creating verse that would place his language into an un-chartered territory, even though during his own age he might not be well understood. On the contrary, the tyrant must make sure that his methods and messages are actionable on his subjects in the present tense: he plans for a grandiose future,

but at the same time requires from them an immediate and well-responsive attitude.

Brodsky himself spoke of this temporal conflict in his *Uncommon Visage* speech:

The philosophy of the state, its ethics - not to mention its aesthetics – are always "yesterday." Language and literature are always "today," and often – particularly in the case where a political system is orthodox – they may even constitute "tomorrow."

Encapsulating the concept of a *predictable triple apparition* is the function of time. In fact, Time (as Brodsky capitalizes it) is a personified hero in the poem, who both stands in opposition to the Tyrant's intentions and concurrently exists at his mercy. Time is the ultimate representative of the Tyrant's subjects, uniting both the eliminated cafe habitues and the remaining visitors. When the poet notes about Time's acceptance of the tyrant's vendetta, he hints at the ultimate impossibility to make any changes, at least in the present tense.

The present tense, as is evident from the discussion thus far, is the most prevalent one in the poem. But it does not stand isolated, as the tenses are consistently changing, a phenomenon indicative of Time's perpetual activity. In the first strophe, the exposition underlines the past tense, but beginning with the third line, leaps into the future, while still preserving the past. A temporal distance is created between the two periods, the "before" and "after." The "after" here rather constitutes the present, effectively subdividing the poem into "before" and "now."

The Tyrant's goal is to dissociate himself from the past and to have the present pay for its depravities, as is suggested by the *predictable triple apparition* concept. As the poem progresses, the second strophe is entirely in the present tense, thus underscoring the importance of the ongoing status quo. That present tense then transitions into the third strophe, accelerating with a greater number of verbs and a changing rhyme pattern, as the poem approaches climactic resolution. When the actual climax does take place, the ending suddenly metamorphoses into the past subjunctive tense: "if only they could rise and be there." Time makes its sudden final imprint. As Brodsky noted in one of his interviews:

Мир меня давно не удивляет. Я думаю, что в нем действует один-единственный закон - умножение зла. По-видимому, и время предназначено для того же самого.

The world does not surprise me. I think that within it there functions one

sole law – that of multiplication of evil. It seems that the time is destined for the same.

3. Themes / Diction / Poetics

As we consider various themes in *To a Tyrant*, the theme of gastronomy is the logical starting point, since within the Soviet *raison d'etre* food abundance and abundance of tyranny were the inversely proportional concepts. In the actual poem, this relationship is not specifically studied, but gastronomy does become one of the explanatory variables behind the tyrant's formation.

In this light, let us analyze coffee, which not only serves the function of exposing the cafe's setting, but also delineates tyrannical preferences in the before-and-after mode. The coffee is mentioned twice – in the first and last strophes of the poem. On the phonetic level, "кофе" is reminiscent of a "кафе," despite different syllabic stresses. This association is too common for the Russian ear, and it is dubious that the poet was trying to generate much poetically with these sounds. The presence of the "фе", which is not among the most common syllables in the Russian language, was probably more interesting for Brodsky as a phonetic link to "галифе" ("gold braid"). By joining "кофе" and "галифе," he was thus bringing the tyrant closer to the drink, which the latter consumes in different stages of his lifetime.

The concept of coffee is central to Brodsky's universe. On the symbolic level, coffee represents darkness for him, with the black color often positioned as a contrast to the white one. In 1969, three years before our poem, Brodsky writes:

Я сидел в пустом корабельном баре,
пил свой кофе...

...в молоко угодившим казалось мелом,
и единственной черною вещью был
кофе, пока я пил.

Моря не было видно. В белесой мгле...

(*Это было плаванье сквозь туман, 1969-1970*)

I was sitting in an empty ship bar,
drank my coffee...

... got into milk turned out to be chalk,

and the sole black item was
the coffee, while I drank.

One could not see the sea. In the whitening darkness…

(*It was a sail through mist, 1969-1970*)

It is not enough for the poet to depict coffee as the "sole black item" ("единственной черной вещью"), but he also juxtaposes its color to "milk" (молоко) and "chalk" (мелом), in order to depict the white-black contrast. This contrast is further emphasized via the oxymoronic "whitening darkness" (белесой мгле).

Or consider several lines from Merida, written three years after *To a Tyrant*, where the evening itself is personified as the coffee drinker.

Проводив его взглядом,
полным пусть не укора,
но сомнения, вечер

допивает свой кофе…

(*Мерида (Мексиканский дивертисмент), 1975*)

Following it with his eye
filled to the brim with doubt
if not reproach, evening

downs his cup to the lees

(*Merida (Mexican Divertimento), 1975*)

One could rather simplistically jump here to a conclusion that coffee is the drink of the tyrants, symbolizing the darkness of their leadership. However, coffee is consumed by everyone in Brodsky's world, whether by a common man or by a tyrant. In the quoted poem above: "I was sitting in an empty ship bar, / drank my coffee" is similar to "He drinks his coffee, better nowadays." In terms of semantics, no difference is drawn between Brodsky's protagonist and the tyrant. The coffee is a regular commonplace drink, lacking the evil significance that the dark-colored substance would predictably convey.

Rather, the coffee in *To a Tyrant* so closely epitomizes everyday experiences that it becomes the symbol of secularism. Tyranny usually functions best in the secular setting, as tyrants cannot tolerate a higher spiritual authority. And the literature read is only appropriate, as we find from *Mexican Diver-*

timento: "Человек в очках / листать в кофейне будет с грустью Маркса" ("A man in specs / will sadly leaf through Marx in coffee bars"). While drinks usually have a religious significance (nectar being the drink of gods in Greek mythology and the wine symbolizing Christ's blood in Christianity), the coffee in Brodsky's world also acquires a symbol of its own. It is as if the poet echoes J.S. Bach, who once upon a time inverted his proper religious symbiosis by composing a *Coffee* Cantata, a humorous secular exercise, during which a father is irritated by his daughter's addiction to coffee. To this day, for a commoner, this drink symbolizes daily routine, whose banalities approximate still life.

Я пишу эти строки, сидя на белом стуле
под открытым небом, зимой, в одном
пиджаке, поддав, раздвигая скулы
фразами на родном.
Стынет кофе. Плещет лагуна, сотней
мелких бликов тусклый зрачок казня
за стремленье запомнить пейзаж, способный
обойтись без меня.

(*Венецианские строфы-2, 1982*)

I am writing these lines, sitting outdoors, in winter,
on a white iron chair, in my shirtsleeves, a little drunk;
the lips move slowly enough to hinder
the vowels of the mother tongue,
and the coffee grows cold. And the blinding lagoon is lapping
at the shore as the dim human pupil's bright penalty
for its wish to arrest a landscape quite happy
here without me.

(*Venetian stanzas-2, 1982*)

What matters in our poem is not the color of the coffee, but rather its quality. As we saw above, poor coffee was one of the five reasons for the tyrant's ultimate revenge. We also know that the coffee shall undergo an improvement under his rule, which would allow him to fix one of the major downsides of the pre-tyrannical times. The poor quality of coffee was most likely tied not to the actual cafe, but to the tyrant's poverty. When he reached a different status, the finances did not matter anymore, a development that led to a consumption of better coffee. In Brodsky's poetry, the quality of coffee is thus a critical social variable, indicative not only of individual's financial situation, but also of the entire country status. For instance, the poet's depiction of Mexico, which he accomplishes via a noun-abundant laundry list that is similar to that in *To a Tyrant*, has disparaging remarks both for the country and for its coffee:

Предметы вывоза - марихуана,
цветной металл, посредственное кофе,
сигары под названием “Корона”
и мелочи народных мастеров.

(*Заметка для энциклопедии*
(Мексиканский дивертисмент), 1975)

The chief exports here are marijuana,
non-ferrous metals, an average grade of coffee,
cigars that bear the proud name Corona,
and trinkets made by local arts and crafts.

(*Encyclopedia Entry (Mexican Divertimento), 1975*)

Given our poem’s temporal whirlwind, the quality of coffee is tied to a change in eras. As eras change, everything else changes in the vicinity – from the form of government to individual liberties to household items. The coffee is thus reminiscent of the smallest possible unit of change, the so-called metaphysical atom. The presence of coffee is often juxtaposed with temporal changes in Brodsky’s works. Among examples are:

Теперь в кофейне, из которой мы,
как и пристало временно счастливым,
беззвучным были выброшены взрывом
в грядущее.

(*Второе рождество на берегу, 1971*)

Retreating south before winter’s assault,
I sit in that cafe from which we two were
Exploded soundlessly into the future…

(*A second Christmas by the shore, 1971*)

Изучать философию следует, в лучшем случае,
после пятидесяти. Выстраивать модель
общества - и подавно. Сначала следует
научиться готовить суп, жарить - пусть не ловить -
рыбу, делать приличный кофе.
В противном случае, нравственные законы
пахнут отцовским ремнем или же переводом
с немецкого. Сначала нужно
научиться терять, нежели приобретать,
ненавидеть себя более, чем тирана,

годами выкладывать за комнату половину
ничтожного жалованья - прежде, чем рассуждать
о торжестве справедливости. Которое наступает
всегда с опозданием минимум в четверть века.

(*Выступление в Сорбонне*)

The most obvious presence of coffee in the temporal context Brodsky demonstrates in his play, *The Democracy*, during the culminating end of Act I:

Послушай, Петрович. Тебе что больше нравится: прошлое или будущее?
Не знаю, Базиль Модестович, не думал. Раньше будущее. Теперь, думаю, прошлое. Все-таки я - внутренних дел.
А тебе, Густав?
Как когда. Когда будущее, когда прошлое.
Настоящее, значит. Тебя, Цецилия, не спрашиваю. С тобой все ясно. Сплошная надежда и страсть.
Женщина, Базиль Модестович, всегда будущим интересуется. Все-таки материнский инстинкт.
Усложняешь, Цецилия. При чем тут материнский? Просто инстинкт.
Какой вы все-таки грубый, Петрович!
Если я и грубый, то оттого, что неохота на старости лет немецкий учить. Или английский. Правильно я говорю, Базиль Модестыч?
Что да, то да.
А тебе самому, Базиль Модестыч, что больше нравится?
Сам не знаю, Петрович. Думаю, все-таки прошлое. В большинстве оно... Кофе будешь?

This last line is uttered by Bazil' Modestovich, the ruler of the province, which yet again emphasizes the tyrant's longing for this drink.

One of the central processes in *The Democracy* is that of gluttony. The characters have numerous discussions about food, which usually transition into acts of continuous consumption of various edible rarities. As Brodsky comments on the typical profile of a tyrant in his essay with an appropriate name, *On Tyranny:* "his joys are mostly of a gastronomical fashion and a technological nature: an exquisite diet, foreign cigarettes, and foreign cars." Hence, the mention of "рогалик" (roll) is hardly out of place in our poem: like better coffee, the attainment of tasty food items is among the tyrant's reasons for coming to power. These items were clearly objects of luxury for him in the pre-tyrannical past, something that he probably recreated for the ordinary denizens of his tyrannical present. Such recreation goes in conjunction with the revenge that Time has to stomach... Therefore, one should not underestimate the importance of a "рогалик". A small insignificant pastry is elevated to the level of sought-after ambrosia.

On a different level, the consumption of "рогалик" semantically amounts to the subject's destruction. Since "рогалик" contains the root "рог," the Russian ear inevitably thinks of the "стереть в бараний рог" (to crush, to destroy) expression, something that the tyrant inevitably does to an individual. In one of his later poems, Brodsky would state:

Свобода - это когда забываешь отчество у тирана,
а слюна во рту слаще халвы Шираза,
и, хотя твой мозг перекручен, как рог барана...

(*Я не то, что схожу с ума, но устал за лето, 1976*)

Freedom is when you forget the spelling of the tyrant's name
and your mouth's saliva is sweeter than Persian Pie,
and though your brain is wrung tight as the horn of a ram...

(*Not that I am getting mad,*
rather fatigued after the summer, 1976)

In the present poem, his consumption of the pastry is much more subtle, though, upon closer examination, contains implicitly cannibalistic elements.

In addition to food items, the tyrant's clothes play a central role in the poem. Within the first line and a half, the poet incorporates the contrast of the wardrobe as the opposition between the before and after states in the tyrant's life: "till he donned gold braid, / a good topcoat on." The gold braid is a piece of attire that is typically worn by military leaders, with the topcoat symbolizing civilian clothing, perhaps even of pecuniary financial means. Though the poem will proceed with similar before and after scenarios in the subsequent lines, this immediate introduction gives the reader a flavor of what to expect. In contrast to the "poor coffee" and "better coffee" contrast, which develops gradually across three strophes, this very contrast is poignant with the terseness and immediacy of peculiarly Russian "еще не."

The discussion of the wardrobe theme does not end at that. As the second stanza concludes, the tyrant enters the cafe incognito (translated into English as "anonymous"), which implies yet more clothing for his persona, this time – the one that would disguise him. It could come in the form of a mask or as a special conspiratorial cloak. In the end, it does not matter. The "incognito" form is the inevitable middle state in the tyrant's wardrobe: somewhere between his previous destitute state and the gold braid clothing. In other words, it is a state, in which he does not want to be seen.

It is possible that Brodsky's clothing-oriented symbolism comes from Con-

stantine Cavafy, whom by 1972 he has already discovered for himself. Specifically, one could recall the *King Demetrius* poem:

His Macedonian troops forsaking him,
and manifest their preference for Pyrrhus, —
Demetrius the King (a great-souled man
he was) did not at all, so people said,
act like unto a King. For he then went
and took off the majestic dress he wore
took off the purple shoes; and hastily
slipped into plain attire, and stole away:
behaving as behaves a common player,
who, having played his part upon the stage,
changes his dress and leaves the theatre.

The poem details what happens to Demetrius when he is no longer king, subdued by Pyrrhus in the late 3rd century BC. The non-royal stature is synonymous with disrobing, or with lack of clothes altogether. As we infer about the low quality of the tyrant's clothes in Brodsky's poem, we could further infer the tyrant's wistfulness to take them off, once he reaches his new stature. What unites Cavafy's poem with that of Brodsky is the linkage of power to the change in wardrobe. Brodsky, however, reverses the metaphor of his predecessor: if king Demetrius transitions from majestic dress and purple shoes to plain attire, the tyrant metamorphoses from the (implied) plain attire to a gold braid.

Cavafy's poem also positions Demetrius in the thespian light, which Brodsky does to his tyrant as well. Famous for his lack of metaphors and direct poetics, Cavafy likens the king to an actor who "changes his dress and leaves the theatre." Brodsky's tyrant, on his end, returns from a theater to the cafe. In both cases, the leader's rule is a mere performance. Hence, when the tyrant enters "incognito," perhaps he is returning from the deeds of his own acting. The dreadful deeds. Brodsky's "theater" may, for instance, refer to show purge trials that a tyrant is likely to engage in, wistful to take part in those performances himself. The difference between the theater he creates and the theater he envisions becomes negligent. We are reminded of Suetonius' account of Emperor Nero: "He… put on the mask and sang tragedies representing gods and heroes and even heroines and goddesses, having the masks fashioned in the likeness of his own features or those of the women of whom he chanced to be enamoured." To mildly paraphrase Shakespeare's Jacques, the tyrant's entire tyrannical domain is a stage, where he plays every conceivable theatrical role – from director and producer to lead actor and lighting specialist. Such is the tragic role of the tyrant: he has to be ubiquitous and omnipresent, with even a mild yield of power potentially leading to an overthrow attempt from his entourage. Or so he thinks.

The theatrical theme in Brodsky's poem could at the same time be a theater inside a theater, or tolerated art within the dictatorial realm. The former assumes the form of anti-art, especially with the tyrant meticulously overseeing the repertoire.

The theatrical reference does not end with the last two lines of the second stanza. On the contrary, it is used as the main transition to the opening three words of the third and final stanza, which in turn set the tone for the poem's conclusion. Let's trace this transition in Russian: "Порой, перед закрытьем, из театра / он здесь бывает, но инкогнито." And immediately thereafter comes a phrase: "Когда он входит." The present tense of the word "входит" (enters) has a professional connotation in the dramaturgical parlance, as it signals characters entering on stage. Therefore, we can think of the present cafe as a metaphor for the stage (i.e., tyrannical state), while "входит" serves its functionally thespian role.

In Brodsky's later poems, this word would have a similar function:

In *Twenty Sonnets to Mary, Queen of Scots*, we have a Mozart-inspired "eine kleine nachtmuzhik" similarly entering the cafe, only to be a followed by a moon-oriented metaphor of the General Secretary's appearance:

И **входит** айне кляйне нахт мужик,
внося мордоворот в косоворотке.
Кафе. Бульвар. Подруга на плече.
Луна, что твой генсек в параличе.

The theatrical *raison d'etre* of the verb «входит» would be abundantly present in *The Lithuanian Nocturne*, where the phantom, as a poorly veiled allusion to the one from The Communist Manifesto, makes a series of quasi-theatrical entrances:

Призрак бродит по Каунасу, **входит** в собор,
выбегает наружу. Плетется по Лайсвис-аллее.
Входит в «Тюльпе», садится к столу.
Кельнер, глядя в упор,
видит только салфетки, огни бакалеи,
снег, такси на углу,
просто улицу. Бьюсь об заклад,
ты готов позавидовать. Ибо незримость
входит в моду с годами - как тела уступка душе,

Finally, the verb «входит» would later constitute the opening word to every stanza of Brodsky's poem *Performance* (1987).

Входит Сталин с Джугашвили, между ними вышла ссора.
Быстро целятся друг в друга, нажимают на собачку,

и дымящаяся трубка... Так, по мысли режиссера,
и погиб Отец Народов, в день выкуривавший пачку.
И стоят хребты Кавказа как в почетном карауле.
Из коричневого глаза бьет ключом Напареули.

From the technical standpoint, the poem does not fall out from the multitude of poems, written in iambic pentameter by Brodsky throughout the 1960's. It follows the ababcddc rhyme pattern in the first two stanzas, which reverses into the abbacdcd pattern in the final stanza. The poem's masculine and feminine rhymes are exact in all cases, with the exception of the «сутулый-культурой» pair. The poem incorporates a number of enjambments, but none of them are across stanzas. Overall, Brodsky's poetical approach is highly traditional within the scope of his own poetics; what we see in the year 1972 is Brodsky applying the classical Brodsky. The overarching goal here is not to make the poem stand out technically: despite speaking in a judgmental voice, Brodsky attempts to be impassive in presenting the tyrant. It is as if he mimics the voice of an empirical historian, who intends to be coherent and orderly. The search for a unique technical form would have sent unnecessary signals about that historian's message. The only exception to the rule is the deliberate change in the syllabic stress on "incognito", serving to bring conspicuity to someone who seeks to remain unnoticed.

In *To a Tyrant*, Brodsky presides poetically over the course of watershed events that have possibly affected several generations. He would retain this role of an omniscient narrator a year later, in *The Rotterdam Journal*, a poem that technically bears a very strong resemblance to our text:

I

Дождь в Роттердаме. Сумерки. Среда.
Раскрывши зонт, я поднимаю ворот.
Четыре дня они бомбили город,
и города не стало. Города
не люди и не прячутся в подъезде
во время ливня. Улицы, дома
не сходят в этих случаях с ума
и, падая, не призывают к мести.

II

Июльский полдень. Капает из вафли
на брючину. Хор детских голосов.
Вокруг - громады новых корпусов.

У Корбюзье то общее с Люфтваффе,
что оба потрудились от души
над переменой облика Европы.
Что позабудут в ярости циклопы,
то трезво завершат карандаши.

III

Как время ни целебно, но культя,
не видя средств отличия от цели,
саднит. И тем сильней - от панацеи.
Ночь. Три десятилетия спустя
мы пьем вино при крупных летних звездах
в квартире на двадцатом этаже -
на уровне, достигнутом уже
взлетевшими здесь некогда на воздух.

(*Роттердамский дневник, 1973*)

I.

A rain in Rotterdam. A Wednesday. Falling dusk.
Umbrella opened, I lift up the neck-band.
For four days straight they bombed the city barren,
and hence, the city ceased to be. Unlike
the humans, cities hardly seek a refuge
from rain under porches. Dwellings, streets
in times like these, choose to save the wits
and, as they fall, do not cry out for vengeance.

II.

Noon in July. It's dripping from a waffle
onto a trouser. The children's chorus lane.
New buildings rising – massive and mundane.
Le Corbusier relates to die Luftwaffe
in heartfelt efforts of a changing brand
they both brought to looks of modern Europe.
What shall be wrathfully forgotten by the Cyclops,
the pencils shall deliver to the end.
III.

Despite time's healing power, one's stump,
the means and ends refusing to distinguish,
still aches. And cure, yet stronger, - soothes anguish.

The nighttime comes. Three decades left behind,
we drink the wine, amidst the stardom's flare,
in an apartment, twenty stories high -
at heights that were already conquered by
the ones who were propelled into the air.

(*The Rotterdam Diary, 1973*)

While it is not the goal of the present essay to conduct a comparative analysis of the two poems, there are several uniting elements that could be perfunctorily noted. Both poems are built with similar rhyme and meter. Both have twenty-four lines, confined to three stanzas. Both personify time and alternate across various tenses, an approach that opens a wide historical perspective. The historical events, in turn, are monumental, allowing the narrator to contemplate and comment on the scope of destruction. This contemplation is done while he engages in ordinary events, such as an observation of the rain or a wine consumption in an apartment setting, much like the tyrant who sips coffee or bites on a roll in the aforementioned cafe. However, the greatest similarity between the two poems comes on the compositional level.

The two poems follow the composition of the musical sonata, which usually consists of three parts: exposition, development, and recapitulation. The development continues the exposition's original theme, adding new motifs, while the recapitulation echoes the exposition's melody in a different key. In each poem, the first stanza in its entirety represents the exposition: the introduction of the tyrant and his battle with the past and the introduction of the Rotterdam setting, plagued by the bombing history. Then there is a lengthy development, which captures second stanzas, as well as parts of the third. In each case, the narrator describes the quasi-nature morte and serene surroundings, violated by implied hidden evil. Finally, the recapitulation brings us back to the topic raised in the first stanza: the destruction of cafe habitues in *To a Tyrant* and the bombing of the city in *The Rotterdam Journal*. In each poem, there is an extension (a different key) of the original theme, which gives the reader a new insight into what happened. This recapitulation is conveyed in both instances amidst an uneventful feast in seemingly untroubled surroundings:

Он пьет свой кофе - лучший, чем тогда,
и ест рогалик, примостившись в кресле,
столь вкусный, что и мертвые "о да!"
воскликнули бы, если бы воскресли.
Ночь. Три десятилетия спустя
мы пьем вино при крупных летних звездах
в квартире на двадцатом этаже -
на уровне, достигнутом уже
взлетевшими здесь некогда на воздух.

For a poet, who is as noun-oriented in his diction as Brodsky, *To a Tyrant* epitomizes his intent to place nouns at the forefront of poetic expression.

	Noun	Verb	Adjective
Stanza 1	13	4	4
Stanza 2	12	7	1
Stanza 3	11	8	2

One can see from the above chart that nouns, particularly when juxtaposed next to verbs and adjectives, clearly dominate in the present poem. Brodsky applies the abundance of this part of speech on several levels.

First, as noted earlier, he engages in his favorite task of listing objects: "бедность, униженья, / за скверный кофе, скуку и сраженья." In the third stanza he compiles a substantially smaller list of nouns ("кофе", "рогалик"), which this time are accompanied by respective adjectives and verbs. Henceforth, the poet's list functions by the process of diminution. The tyrant rids himself of the unpleasantness of his pre-tyrannical years, thus successfully reducing the number of nouns from five to two (from first to third stanza). It is as if he annihilates those previous nouns, for the ultimate route that the tyrant takes is that of destruction.

Second, Brodsky engages in this noun exuberance to depict them as tools, or from grammatical standpoint - objects, at the tyrant's disposal. At times, there is a careful parallelism in their construction, as the third lines of first and third stanzas stand in parallel with one another in terms of the noun-line up: «арестом завсегдатаев кафе» in the first stanza and «движением ладони от запястья» in the third stanza. Both are representative of what the tyrant is doing to his subjects: the first case applying to those whom he destroyed (cafe habitues), the second one – to those who survive (remaining visitors). The syntactical similarity also unites them in the domain of diction. Арест and движение become synonymous in their purpose: the arrest is just as easily achieved, as the hand's movement. Brodsky deliberately creates this parallelism, thus making the fate of the victims indistinguishable from the fate of the survivors.

Third, even the seemingly independent nouns bear indirect references to the tyrant. For instance, the juxtaposition of «пластинки» and «никель» in the second stanza create an implicit allusion to Gounod's Faust: «Люди гибнут за металл. / Сатана там правит бал». The mention of *vingt et un* evokes a Parisian cafe atmosphere of *Closerie des Lilas*, where Lenin could have been easily playing this game of cards.

The number of nouns is relatively stable in the poem, while the number of verbs oscillates toward expansion, or rather – crescendo, as the poem pro-

ceeds from the first to the third stanza: from four – to seven – to eight. The poem gravitates from the past tense ("бывал, отомстил, проигранные, проглотило") to the present tense ("смеются, гремят, бывает, встают, возвращает, пьет") to the future subjunctive ("воскликнули бы, если бы воскресли"). The action in the past tense is murky and formulaic, lacking concreteness. The action in the present tense, however, is refined with specific verbs, thus creating greater attention to detail. If in the first stanza the five objects of the tyrant's humiliation are lumped together, in the second and third stanzas there is a determined specificity: «гремят пластинки», «пьет свой кофе», «ест рогалик». Each verb is assigned to a particular noun.

This existence in the present tense allows Brodsky to experiment with the genre of still life (nature morte). While the traditional rules of this genre are hardly obeyed here, the poem nonetheless creates a sense of circular predictability within a tyrannical state that in itself is like a frozen state of nature morte. It is implied that everything described in lines 9-24 repeats over and over again, as long as the tyrant is in power. The impassivity of the voice greatly amplifies this effect. There is no progress, no movement outside the contours of the described circle, no progression into the future tense. The age is the age of stagnation. The life is a predictable pattern. As Brodsky would write in his later essay: «tyranny does just that: structure your life for you».

In the last line Brodsky suddenly introduces a new tense to the poem – that of past subjunctive. This sudden grammatical turn is crucial, as it underlines a transition from secular to religious dynamics. The "если бы" (had they) phraseology is common in the Russian language, having the function of introducing an alternative that is unlikely to occur. Aside from the historical domain, where its usage is a major faux pas, it has been also extensively applied in the religious context. Consider an excerpt from Vladimir Solov'ev:

Если бы Христос не воскрес, **если бы** Каиафа оказался правым, а Ирод и Пилат – мудрыми, мир оказался бы бессмыслицею, царством зла, обмана и смерти... **Если бы** Христос не воскрес, то кто же мог бы воскреснуть? Христос воскрес!

Solov'ev was most likely echoing an excerpt from one of Christ's own sermons:

"...если Моисея и пророка не слышают, то, **если бы** и кто из мертвых воскрес, не поверят (Лука, 16, 30-31)».

Brodsky's language thus carefully echoes the New Testament tradition, but goes one step further. The theme of resurrection and, at the same time, its

impossibility comes to the fore in the world that would have been Christian, had it not been for the tyrant's presence. The world depicted takes place in what Brodsky himself liked to call a "post-Christian" era. The presence of Christ is irrelevant in this world, as any Christ-like resurrection. If in the poetics of Cavafy Christianity often battles paganism, in Brodsky's poetics it is combating a forcefully imposed atheism.

On the pronoun level, the poem places a heavy emphasis on the "he." The goal is to make the tyrant as detached from any concrete historical example as possible. The non-particular "he" takes out specificity from his character. At the same time, the poet relatively uniformly distributes the pronoun throughout the three stanzas: it can be found on lines 1, 5,16,17,21. The tyrant is omnipresent in the poem, as the unnamed Big Brother would be present in the much-analyzed Orwellian world.

Furthermore, the omnipresence of "he" stands in contrast to the sole usage of the pronoun "them." The multitude of victims is lumped into the single "them," as the pronoun "he" confidently marches on throughout the poem. Brodsky also applies an insightful rhyme, possible only with the Russian language's unique diction of pronouns. He rhymes "им" ("them") in line 5 with "им" (him") in line 8. At the first glance, the rhyming of homonyms does not appear dexterous in modern poetics, especially on the pronoun level, but the objective in the present case is to demonstrate tyrant's dominance over the victims, which the rhyming effect masterfully achieves in line 8.

The generality of the pronoun "he" in the poem continues the generic function of the article "a" in the title. The article immediately implies the author's intention to shun the concrete and disguise the identity of the actual tyrant. As Tomas Venclova notes in his diary from March 1972: "…I suspected that it was Vladimir Ilyich [Lenin]… but Joseph said that the tyrant is an abstract ruler…" Brodsky's decision to create such a ruler is the ultimate manifestation of the *predictable triple apparition*.

4. Auden

Upon close inter-textual examination, we identify a poem by W.H. Auden, *Epitaph on a Tyrant*, as a likely poetic starting point for Brodsky's text. By 1972 the Russian poet was very well familiar with the poetry of his British predecessor. While the stylization is substantially less evident in the present poem than in Brodsky's *On the Death of T.S. Eliot*, there are inevitable similarities between the two works. Similarities – as vehicles for continuation and expansion of what W.H. Auden tried to convey.

Epitaph on a Tyrant:

Perfection, of a kind, was what he was after,
And the poetry he invented was easy to understand;
He knew human folly like the back of his hand,
And was greatly interested in armies and fleets;
When he laughed, respectable senators burst with laughter,
And when he cried the little children died in the streets.

Closely following the genre of the epitaph, Auden presents six lines that could appropriately find a place on a tombstone. Each line is a thesis that could be expanded into a biographical chapter on a tyrant. Each line is separated by a comma or a semi-colon, as the poet attempts to underline six different themes about the tyrant's life. Auden's lines serve as a guiding background for Brodsky, who takes their generality and creates a composition, mildly reminiscent of a story. The subject matter in Brodsky's poem is narrower in scope; yet, the poem also closely follows the track of a meticulous delineation of Auden's themes. In fact, every two lines from Auden's poem refer to a respective stanza in Brodsky's poem.

We can start with "Perfection, of a kind, was what he was after, / And the poetry he invented was easy to understand." Brodsky similarly begins with an item of perfection in his poem, depicting tyrant's predilection in clothing for the military "галифе," which is a tidier piece of wardrobe than "пальто из драпа." On a more figurative level, the vengeance against time ("отомстил не им, / но Времени") is also a perfection of a kind. The tyrant restores the temporal order to his liking. Perfection can take many forms, and Brodsky's tyrant certainly achieves it by reversing his own poverty and humiliation into the brave new world that is envisioned and imagined by him. Auden's second line, specifically - his reference to poetry, also finds reflection in Brodsky's words "арестом завсегдатаев кафе / покончив позже с мировой культурой." As one possible interpretation for this phrase, we could say that by destroying the intricacies of the acmeist poetry (see footnote #24), his tyrant introduces the simplicities of the easily understandable canon of Socialist realism, a transition that took place within the first fifteen years of the Soviet state. At the same time, "poetry" in Auden's world is yet another synonym for perfection. While it is a generic term in Auden's diction, Brodsky orients it toward greater specificity in his verse.

The next two lines in the Epitaph at a first glance do not have a direct correspondence to Brodsky's second stanza, but upon closer scrutiny, are far from irrelevant. "He knew human folly, like the back of his hand, and was greatly interested in the armies and fleets" – when Auden's two lines are juxtaposed next to Brodsky's second strophe, we see the composition of the former portrayed within the broader 8-line space of the latter. In fact,

the entire discussion of the new cafe scene is the essence of human folly: "Теперь здесь людно, многие смеются, / гремят пластинки." Meanwhile, this quasi-theatrical portrayal indicates that there is someone who knows these human necessities like "the back of his end." Someone who enters as incognito! Furthermore, the human folly can be exploited and directed toward creating and enhancing armies and fleets, implies Auden. The laughter and the music could easily metamorphose into wartime-related nickel and sodium bromide, implies Brodsky. One only needs to turn around and take a more scrupulous look. Once again, Brodsky achieves greater specificity, or takes us from Auden's macro approach (armies and fleets) to the micro domain of elements and compounds.

The last two lines contain the most significant basis for juxtaposition with Brodsky's third strophe, as in this comparison both poets achieve a relatively similar level of specificity. They depict two cohorts: those who survive and serve the monster, and those who are victimized and annihilated. Such depiction is achieved via an anthropological channel, as a cursory study of mankind (as seen and analyzed by the tyrant himself). For Auden, these cohorts are senators and children, respectively; for Brodsky – the remaining cafe inhabitants and the old habitues, respectively. In both Auden's and Brodsky's worlds, the fate of the cohorts is the derivative of the tyrant's state of mind. The whim and the mood of a single leader determine the cohort placement.

In both poems, semantics is elevated to the pinnacle of symmetrical balance:

In Auden's:

tyrant laughs – senators laugh; tyrant cries – children die.

In Brodsky's:

remaining café inhabitants stand up – old café habitués do not rise up (resurrect).

Aside from the compositional aspects, it is important to recognize that Auden also creates a tyrant for all epochs. He could be a Roman Caesar, as there is a reference to senators. He could be a post-Renaissance enlightened despot and an admirer of Erasmus' *In Praise of Folly*. Or he could be a twentieth century dictator: the poem was written in 1939, when Europe had plenty of relevant examples. Such lack of specificity is ironic, since the actual epitaph genre implies concreteness. But despite a multifaceted portrait of the deceased figure's milieu - from propaganda and warfare to flattery and destruction – Auden's tyrant lacks concreteness. Even more so, he lacks identity.

Brodsky takes this generality as a base and gives it a flavor of greater specificity: his tyrant is definitely from the twentieth century domain, possibly even from its Eastern European environs, but a concrete name is not given. While both poets apply the general article "a" in the titles, Brodsky's article is more specific. His tyrant, however, still remains unknown to the reader – the incognito!

As we discussed earlier, this lack of specificity is a vital construct to the *predictable triple apparition* concept. It effectively underlines the interchangeability of one tyrant for another and renders the discussion of a specific tyrannical regime irrelevant. By discussing one unnamed tyrant, both Auden and Brodsky, though to a different degree, implicitly dismiss discussions of concrete personalities as uninteresting. Neither ever wrote a poem about a contemporary dictator, with any allusions being brief and taking place *en passant*. For Brodsky, who actually grew up in the totalitarian state, such position was particularly important, as he strove to be neither Soviet nor anti-Soviet, but rather a-Soviet. Whenever he had to refer to a Soviet dictator(s), he did so either facetiously, as in *Представление*, or by cumulatively listing all tyrants together: "Lenin was literate, Stalin was literate, so was Hitler; as for Mao Zedong, he even wrote verse. What all these men had in common, though, was that their hit list was longer than their reading list."

Epitaph is the most appropriate genre for judging the tyrant, since it gives flexibility to render judgment on the tyrant's rule, as well as on his pre and post-tyrannical periods. Auden's poem specifically focuses on the actual rule, but inferences can be easily drawn about the other two periods as well. One does not need to infer them by scrutinizing the double entendres or the connotations of specific words, though such analysis is certainly possible. Instead, Auden (much like Brodsky three decades later) creates a convenient template, into which the reader could easily insert at least a dozen of emperors and dictators, a process which would immediately yield rather predictable pre-tyrannical formative years, and even more predictable post-tyrannical destructive aftermath.

On the structural level, Brodsky draws upon and develops further Auden's diction. The line "движением ладони от запястья" relates to "He knew human folly like the back of his hand". While Auden applies a simile, his words represent a common expression in the English language and could be written in bland prose. Brodsky's line, in turn, lacks imagery, but is constructed poetically. Another example is in the "When he laughed / when he cried" lines, which bring us to the "Когда он входит" phrase.

Finally, by studying the parts of speech in Auden's poem, one could claim a potential influence on Brodsky in his minimal usage of adjectives and a maximum application of nouns. Out of fifty-five words in the poem, there

are twelve nouns and only five adjectives. Auden is generous in his usage of pronouns "he" and "his", since pronouns are helpful in veering the text away from specificity. Brodsky does just the same, with the actual reference to a tyrant being limited only to the title. Such economical approach toward the word "tyrant" is linked to the divine status that the dictatorial rulers create for themselves: after all, the divine name is not to be said in vain.

5. Brezhnev

In December 1982, a month after the death of Leonid I. Brezhnev, the General Secretary of the Soviet Union, Joseph Brodsky published in the *New York Review of Books* the following four lines:

Epitaph For a Tyrant

He could have killed more than he could have fed
but chose to do neither. By falling dead
he leaves a vacuum and the black Rolls-Royce
to one of the boys who will make the choice.

The epitaph, whose terseness and facetious diction make it sound more like an epigram, allowed Auden's original work to come full circle through Brodsky's poetry. The tyrant finally became concrete, with the article "a" achieving the greatest specificity possible. If *To a Tyrant* is a monumental continuation of Auden's work, the 1982 Epitaph for a Tyrant is a post-scriptum not only to the poetic diptych on tyranny discussed in the present essay, but also to Brodsky's literary and epistolary relationship with Leonid Brezhnev. This relationship, as well as the analysis of these four lines, could perhaps become our focus in another essay.

Robert Chandler

VARLAM SHALAMOV AND ANDREY 'FYODOROVICH' PLATONOV

A reader who knows only a few stories from Varlam Shalamov's *Kolyma Tales* may well think of Shalamov as a realist; he may even imagine the *Kolyma Tales* to be simply a factual account of Shalamov's experiences. The events described in each individual story do indeed seem entirely real. Only when we read further, when we try to grasp the whole of this vast cycle of stories, do we begin to realize that its truth can never be grasped; we begin, at last, to sense the terrible unreality of the survivor's world. Successive narrators suffer identical fates, their stories intertwine impossibly, and time stands still. This fusion of realism and the surreal is part of what endows *Kolyma Tales* with such extraordinary power.

Shalamov plays in several ways with a reader's initial assumption that he is reading a memoir: one of the more obvious examples of his enjoyment of literary artifice is the way he names his characters. Some bear the names of historical figures - e.g. Pugachev; some bear the names of literary creations - e.g. Vronsky. Sometimes, a historical or fictional name is slightly distorted: the story 'On tick', for example, begins with a distorted quotation from Pushkin's 'The Queen of Spades'. The story 'Cherry-Brandy' is an example of something slightly different: the story bears the title of a poem by Mandelstam, it includes direct quotations from Mandelstam's poetry, and it appears to be an account of the poet's death. But Mandelstam's name is never directly mentioned; it is as if the poet has become anonymous, as if he has dissolved into his own archetype. The heroes of several other stories, on the other hand, are given the names of well-known Russian writers - Andreev, Zamyatin, Platonov - even though, in reality, these particular writers were neither arrested nor sent to the camps.

This play with names can be understood at a number of levels. To some extent, it reflects the reality of the camps: camp storytellers and members of the camp criminal fraternity, were sometimes given such nicknames as 'Pushkin' or 'Shakespeare'. It is also reminiscent of the *Divina Commedia*, which is populated largely by literary, political and religious figures from mediaeval Italy; Kolyma thus becomes a manifestation of Dante's hell, and the individual characters are linked to the archetypal tragedies of Russian history. Dante himself, however, is always concerned not only with archetypes, but with specific issues; throughout all three canticles of the *Commedia* he argues with his characters about a variety of controversies. What I wish to

discuss now is the possibility that in his story 'The Snake Charmer' Shalamov is engaged, in similar fashion, in an argument with Andrey Platonov.

The story begins with the following paragraph:

We were sitting on an enormous larch that had been felled by a storm. In permafrost, trees can barely grip the inhospitable earth and it's easy for a storm to uproot them and lay them flat on the ground. Platonov was telling me the story of his life here - our second life in this world. I frowned at the mention of the Dzhankhara mine. I had been in some bad and difficult places myself, but the terrible fame of *Dzhankhara* resounded far and near.

The image of the fallen larch prefigures the death, soon to be narrated, of this fictional 'Platonov'. It can also, tentatively, be read as a reversal of a recurrent image from the work of the real Platonov: that of a tree or plant clinging determinedly onto life despite the most adverse conditions. Soon after the introduction of the name 'Platonov', we hear of a terrible mine called Dzhankhara. It is probable that this name - as far as I can make out, there was no historical Dzhankhara - is a play on two different real names: Dzhelgala and Dzhan. Dzhelgala is the name of the notorious gold mine where Shalamov worked in 1943; Dzhan, of course, is the title of a short novel by Platonov. 'The Snake Charmer' was written in 1954, before the first publication of Dzhan. Shalamov, however, after being arrested for the first time in 1929, was released in 1931. Between then and 1937 he was allowed to live in Moscow and to work as a journalist. He would probably have heard that Platonov was writing a book called Dzhan; it is even conceivable that he saw a typescript or heard passages read out loud. This, however, is supposition. Shalamov is deliberately leaving the reader in a state of uncertainty: the reader can neither be confident that Shalamov has the real Platonov in mind, nor can he be unaware of this possibility.

Shalamov's narrator goes on to recount a conversation with this fictional 'Platonov'. 'Platonov', we learn, survived Dzhankhara because of his gift for storytelling. He told stories at night to the criminals; 'in exchange' he says, 'they fed and clothed me and I worked less'. The narrator asserts, with a severity which appears surprising, that he himself was never a storyteller: to him, that 'always seemed the ultimate humiliation, the end.' He refuses, however, to criticize 'Platonov'. 'Platonov' continues:

'If I stay alive' - this was the sacred formula that prefaced all reflections concerning any time beyond the next day - 'I'll write a story about it. I've already thought of a title: 'The Snake Charmer'. Do you like it?'

'Yes, I do. You just have to stay alive. That's the main thing.'
Andrey Fyodorovich Platonov, a scriptwriter in his first life, died about three

weeks after this conversation (...)

I loved Platonov because he didn't lose interest in the life beyond the blue seas and the high mountains, the life we were cut off from by so many miles and years and in whose existence we hardly believed any longer (...) Platonov, God knows how, even had some books, and when it wasn't very cold, in July for example, he would avoid the kind of conversation that usually kept us all going - what kind of soup we had had or would be having for supper, would bread be given out three times a day or just once in the morning, would it be rainy or clear the next day...

I loved Platonov, and I shall try now to write down his story: 'The Snake Charmer'.

In only 15 lines, the surname 'Platonov' is mentioned four times, and the name 'Andrey' once; we also learn that 'Platonov' used to be a scriptwriter and that his patronymic is Fyodorovich. By now the initially uncertain evidence for a connection between 'Platonov' and Platonov has become overwhelming: the real Platonov wrote several film scripts, and Fyodorov, the C19 philosopher, can be seen as a spiritual father of Platonov's. Shalamov, in fact, goes to surprising lengths to emphasize the importance of 'Platonov's' name and surname. Towards the end of the story there is an exchange, quite unnecessary to the plot, between Fedya, the boss of the criminal fraternity, and one of his henchmen; Fedya asks 'Platonov's' name and receives the answer 'Andrey'. It is also worth remarking that the narrator, after introducing 'Platonov', could easily have presented the story in 'Platonov's' own words; instead, he tells the story himself. This choice of narrative strategy allows the surname 'Platonov' to be repeated forty times in less than six pages.

There may also, incidentally, be some irony around the choice of patronymic: it is unlikely that the tough-minded Shalamov would have had much time for Fyodorov and his philosophizing about the physical resurrection of all our forefathers. Nevertheless, Shalamov's narrator makes it clear that he felt more than respect for 'Platonov': in the context of the loveless world of *Kolyma Tales*, the repeated words, 'I loved Platonov' are startling.

•

But why, if Shalamov respected and loved Platonov, did he transport his fictional counterpart to Kolyma and subject him to humiliation at the hands of the camp criminals? The answer, I think, leads us to one of Shalamov's central themes, his belief that the tradition of liberal, humanistic Russian literature had given birth to terrible delusions; this tradition, he believed, was responsible for the catastrophe of 1917. And he understood that his criticisms of the tradition would carry more weight if they were levelled at one of

its finest representatives - like Platonov - rather than at a lesser writer.

The first of Shalamov's criticisms is that Platonov is too ready to indulge in loose talk about 'the soul'. Shalamov prepares the ground for this theme in the first paragraph of the story; this is why he alludes to Platonov's Dzhan. Dzhan is a Persian word that has been adopted by the Turkic languages of Central Asia; its meaning is 'soul'. The Dzhan, according to Platonov, are able to survive because they have not - in spite of everything - lost their souls. Platonov makes this explicit in a passage from the penultimate chapter:

It was their shared name, given to them long ago by the rich beys, because dzhan means soul and these poor, dying men had nothing they could call their own but their souls, that is, the ability to feel and suffer. The word Dzhan, therefore, was a gibe, a joke made by the rich at the expense of the poor. The beys thought that soul meant only despair, but in the end it was their dzhan that was the death of them; they had too little dzhan of their own, too little capacity to feel, suffer, think and struggle. They had too little of the wealth of the poor.

In 'The Snake Charmer' Shalamov cruelly makes his 'Platonov' a mouthpiece for an entirely opposite way of thinking. It is as if the camps have re-educated the historical Platonov, forcing him to adopt what Shalamov believes to be a more truthful vision:

It often seems, and probably it is true, that man rose up out of the animal kingdom, (...) simply because he had greater physical endurance than any other animal. What made an ape into a human being was not its hand, not its embryonic brain, not its soul (my emphasis - R.C.) (...) what saves man is his sense of self-preservation, the tenacity - the physical tenacity - with which he clings onto life (...) What keeps him alive is the same as what keeps a stone, a tree, a bird or a dog alive. But his grip on life is stronger than theirs. (...)

Platonov was thinking about all this as he stood by the gate with a log on his shoulder, waiting for the next roll-call.

Shalamov's second criticism of Platonov is that his humanistic leanings threaten to lead him into a kind of moral blindness. The following passage comes from the last page of 'The Snake Charmer'. Fedya has just asked the exhausted 'Platonov' to tell him a story; 'Platonov' is wondering how to respond:

Should he become court jester to the Duke of Milan - a jester who was fed for a good jest and beaten for a bad one? But there was another way of looking at it all. He would teach them about real literature. He would enlighten them. He would awaken in them an interest in art, in the word; even here, in the lower depths, he would do his duty, fulfil his calling. As had long been

his way, Platonov did not want to admit to himself that it was simply a matter of being fed, of receiving an extra bowl of soup not for carrying out a slop bucket, but for other, more dignified work. More dignified? No, he wouldn't really be an enlightener - he would be more like someone scratching a criminal's dirty heels. But the cold, the beatings, the hunger...

Trying to justify his own behaviour to himself, 'Platonov' nearly slips into a dangerous romanticism, with regard both to the criminals and to his own position in relation to them. It is important, however, to note that 'Platonov' does not quite succeed in his attempt at self-delusion. As in his other argument with himself, he eventually comes round to what Shalamov sees as a more truthful view.

We know that Shalamov greatly admired The Foundation Pit when he read it in samizdat in the seventies. It is easy to imagine that he would have admired The Locks of Epifan, along with other works that Platonov published in the late twenties. It is equally easy to imagine Shalamov looking askance at Platonov's stories from the late thirties and the war years; he would probably have considered them sentimental. From the evidence of 'The Snake Charmer', Shalamov seems to have considered that, just as the fictional 'Platonov' tried to delude himself about his reasons for telling stories to the criminals in the camps, so the historical Platonov may have deluded himself about his reasons for telling, or trying to tell, the stories required by the criminals who held power in the Soviet Union as a whole.

A reader may well feel that no one, not even a man who suffered as much as Shalamov, has the right to make such judgments. 'The Snake Charmer', however, is only one fragment of the complex mosaic of *Kolyma Tales*; it cannot be fully understood unless juxtaposed with a later story, Pain, which explores similar themes in greater depth. The hero of Pain, Shelgunov, has been brought up according to the noblest traditions of the revolutionary intelligentsia. Like 'Platonov', he becomes a storyteller to the camp criminals; like 'Platonov', he wants to survive. Unlike 'Platonov', however, he slips irreversibly into self-delusion. His will to survive, co-opting his liberal belief in the possibility of spreading enlightenment, blinds him to the enormity of the evil represented by the criminals. And he pays dearly for this willed blindness: his illiterate criminal 'protectors' trick him - just for fun, or perhaps out of jealousy - into writing a letter that leads his own wife to commit suicide. Pain, perhaps the most tragic of all Shalamov's stories, explains why the narrator of 'The Snake Charmer' chose to keep his distance from the camp criminals. Shalamov himself, apparently, attributed his own survival not only to good luck and an unusually strong constitution, but also to his refusal to compromise; it was only after reading Pain that I began to understand what might have led him to say this. Shalamov is, in effect, saying that he would not have survived if he had lost his soul; as we have seen, however, he preferred to avoid such language.

Shalamov and Platonov portray worlds in which an extraordinary degree of cruelty is seen as commonplace. In other respects, however, these two great writers are antithetical to one another. While Platonov takes us deep inside both the bodies and souls of his characters, Shalamov portrays his characters from the outside. And while Platonov makes the reader identify even with a mass murderer, Shalamov warns that evil is evil and it is wisest to keep as far away from it as you can.

Shalamov has drawn our attention to something so important about Platonov that it is difficult to remember that, at the time of writing 'The Snake Charmer', he had almost certainly not read Platonov's most important works. His argument with Platonov is, of course, an age-old argument that can never be resolved: how should we behave when confronted with evil? By attempting to understand evil, we risk growing over-tolerant, over-ready to accept it; if, however, we refuse to attempt to understand it, we risk slipping into self-righteousness, into imagining that evil always lies out there rather than in here. The heroes of Chevengur are sometimes so endearing that the reader can easily forget they are mass-murderers; the world of *Kolyma Tales*, though still more brutal, is less morally ambiguous. I can understand how Marina Tarkovskaya, who once told me that she finds Platonov too painful to read, has written that *Kolyma Tales* is a book, like the Bible, that should be read by everyone. At the same time, I am moved not only by the unique open-mindedness and open-heartedness of Platonov's own work, but also by Shalamov's portrayal of a Platonov he twice tells us he loved, a Platonov who 'didn't lose interest in the life beyond the blue seas and the high mountains'.

NOTES

[First Published in *Esssays in Poetics* (Keele University), Autumn 2002, vol. 27; a Russian translation is included in the article 'Platonov v prostranstvakh russkoi kul'tury' in *Tvorchestvo Andreya Platonova, vol 3* (Sankt Peterburg: Nauka, 2004), p. 170-86]

I wish to express my gratitude to the following: Maria Dmitrovskaya, for her encouragement, without which I would not have started this article, and for her countless helpful suggestions; Nathaniel Wilkinson, who has greatly deepened my understanding of Shalamov and from whom I have borrowed many of the ideas, and even words, in the first paragraph; and Igor Golomstock, who first drew my attention, nearly 30 years ago, to the *Kolyma Tales*. Hafiza Andreeva, Paul Gallagher, Eric Lozowy, and Elena Mikhailik have all helped with particular difficulties. Quotations from 'The Snake Charmer' are from the translation by Robert and Elizabeth Chandler

and Nathaniel Wilkinson in Russian Short Stories from Pushkin to Buida (Penguin Classics). Quotations from ‘Soul’ are from the translation by Robert and Elizabeth Chandler and Olga Meerson and Eric Naiman in Soul and Other Stories (NYRB Classics).

Elaine Feinstein

MARINA TSVETAEVA

Marina Ivanovna Tsvetaeva (1892-1941) was the daughter of a Professor of Fine Arts at Moscow University, and grew up in material comfort. Her mother, Maria, was by far the most powerful presence in the household; a gifted woman, of bitter intensity, she had renounced her first love to marry a widower much older than herself. Her considerable musical talents were frustrated, and she turned all her energies towards educating Marina, her precocious elder daughter. Insistence on hours of music practice and a stern refusal of any words of praise made Marina's childhood unusually austere.

When Marina was 14, her mother died of tuberculosis, expressing a passionate indifference to the world she was leaving: 'I only regret music and the sun.' After her death, Marina abandoned the study of music and began to develop her passion for literature. 'After a mother like that,' she reflected, 'I had only one alternative: to become a poet.

Her mother remained in her dreams, sometimes as a longed-for, benevolent figure. In one dream, however, Tsvetaeva meets a bent old woman who whispers surprisingly: 'A mean little thing she was, a clinging one, believe me, sweetheart.' This is the witchy crone of Russian folklore, and we meet her again in Tsvetaeva's cruel fairy tale 'On a Red Horse'.

By the age of 18, Tsvetaeva had acquired sufficient reputation as a poet to be welcome as a house guest at the Crimean dacha of Maximilian Voloshin. There she met her future husband, Sergei Efron, the half-Jewish orphan of an earlier generation of Revolutionaries. At 17, he was shy, with huge grey eyes, overwhelmed by Tsvetaeva's poetic genius. They fell instantly in love, and his was the most loyal affection Tsvetaeva was ever to find. They were married in January 1912. For two years after their marriage, they were irresponsibly happy together. Seryozha, as he was usually known, was an aspirant writer and a charming actor. Most people who knew Efron liked him, but some thought him too much under the influence of his wife. He was certainly weak physically - he suffered from TB all his life - but Irma Kudrova, recently allowed access to files of his 1940 NKVD interrogations, has uncovered a man of unusual courage and integrity.

When war came in August 1914, Seryozha was eager to enlist, and was sent initially to the front line as a male nurse in an ambulance train. Soon afterwards, Tsvetaeva fell in love with Sofia Parnok, a talented poet, from a middle class Jewish family in the Black Sea port of Taganrog. Tsvetaeva

had been wildly but innocently attracted to beautiful young girls in her early adolescence, but Parnok was well-known as a lesbian. She was not exactly beautiful, but she possessed a sexual assurance which had never been the main bond in Tsvetaeva's affection for Seryozha.

Tsvetaeva was well provided for since her father's death in 1913, and for 15 months she threw herself into her passion for Parnok with little thought for her husband and two year old child. She and Parnok travelled brazenly over the wilds of Russia together and even visited Voloshin's dacha. The lyrics for Parnok are both more sensual, and less tormented, than other love poetry written by Tsvetaeva. Sergei had a brief love affair of his own.

In Parnok's poems for Tsvetaeva, she describes her as an 'awkward little girl', but her claim to have been the first to give Tsvetaeva intense sexual pleasure may have been no more than a boast. In any case, as the affair came to an end, it soon became clear that it was to Seryozha that Tsvetaeva felt the strongest bond. When the Revolution came, she was in hospital giving birth to their second child. Separated from him in the confusion at the start of the Civil War, she wrote in her diary: 'If God performs this miracle and leaves you alive, I will follow you like a dog.'

Through the Moscow famine, Tsvetaeva and her two children lived in Boris and Gleb Lane, in unheated rooms, sometimes without light. She and Efron were to be separated for five years. In those years, she and her elder daughter, Ariadne, were almost like sisters. Alya, as she was usually called was as precociously observant a child as Tsvetaeva had been herself. This is how she writes of Tsvetaeva:

'My mother is not at all like a mother. Mothers always think their own children are wonderful, and other children too, but Marina doesn't like little chlldren... She is always hurrying somewhere. She has a great soul. A kind voice. A quick walk. She has green eyes, a hooked nose and red lips ..Marina's hands are all covered with rings. she doesn't like people bothering her with stupid questions..

The family fared badly in the Moscow famine. Marina was unskilled at bartering trinkets for food, and she and Alya often lived on potatoes boiled in a samovar. They sometimes went out on a sledge together in the freezing cold to exchange bottle tops for a few kopeks, often leaving the younger child, Irina, strapped against a table leg to prevent her coming to harm. When starvation looked imminent in the winter of 1919-20, Tsvetaeva put both children into the Kuntsevo orphanage, which was thought to be supplied by American food aid. When she arrived on her first visit, Alya was running a high temperature and Tsvetaeva, frightened, took her home to nurse her. Alya pulled through but Irina died of starvation in the orphanage in February 1920.

Tsvetaeva was unable to make herself go to the funeral. She blamed Seryozha's sisters, probably unfairly, for refusing to help her, claiming they had behaved 'like animals'. She told all her friends to write to Seryozha that the child had died of pneumonia rather than hunger. There was much gossip about her own neglect of the child. Certainly, she was never as close to Irina as to Alya.

The following year was taken up by a new infatuation - Yevgeny Lann, a poet friend of her sister Asya - a humiliating rejection by him and anxiety about Seryozha as the defeat of the White Army loomed closer. In January 1921, Tsvetaeva wrote a poem of pitiless inquiry into the nature of her own inspiration : 'On a Red Horse'. The tone resembles that of her other folkloric poems of the period such as 'The Tsar Maiden' (1920) and 'The Swain' (1922) but the story of 'On a Red Horse' is not taken from Afansyev's fairy tales; it is her own invention. A handsome rider of implacable cruelty demands that all her other loves be sacrificed for him. These dream-like sacrifices do not secure his kindness, however, and an old woman she encounters reveals the bleak truth: 'Your Angel does not love you.' Released from the hope of winning his affection, she plunges into battle as a male figure.

> And he whispers *I wanted this*
> *It is why I chose you.*
> *You are my passion, my sister,*
> *Mine til the end of time,*
> *my bride of ice - in armor -*
> *Mine . Will you stay with me...*

In 1922, the Civil War ended in victory for the Bolsheviks. Ilya Ehrenburg, who was always in touch with what was happening to his friends, learned that Seryozha had made his escape to Prague, where he had been offered a student grant to study at the university. He brought Tsvetaeva the news and, without hesitation, she and Alya prepared to set off into exile to join him - though it has to be said that Tsvetaeva found Berlin almost irresistibly exciting along the way. When the family was reunited, she was shocked to find how little Seryozha had changed from the boyish young man she remembered. She herself had been shattered by her experience and was prematurely grey at 30. In Prague, Seryozha was given a room in a student hostel, while Tsvetaeva and Alya lived in the village of Horni Mokropsky.

At first, Tsvetaeva was welcomed in Prague as a major literary figure, but her more conventional compatriots soon turned away from her. She failed, as Nina Berberova makes clear in her autobiography *The italics are mine* to show the domestic graces that make poverty bearable. Men of comparable genius usually find women to take care of them. Anna Akhmatova, Tsvetaeva's only equal as a Russian woman poet, always found friends to look after her, even in old age. Tsvetaeva was less fortunate and she resented the burden

of the daily round. Nevertheless, it was in Prague that she had her short, fierce affair with Konstantin Rodzevich, which drew from her some of her greatest poetry : 'Poem of the End' , 'Poem of the Mountain' and 'An Attempt at Jealousy.' Rodzevich ended the affair, and went on to marry an 'ordinary' woman with a private income.

When I met Rodzevich in 1970's, while writing my biography. he was a handsome, well-dressed man in late middle-age. His wife was so jealous of him that he would only agree to meet me when he was sure she would be out. He talked of his love for Tsvetaeva as *un grand amour* and showed me a portrait he had painted of her which he kept in a locked drawer. Why then had he ended their affair? He attributed this to the great affection he felt for Seryozha. I was sceptical, but I was already suspicious of him. He had fought in the Red Army in the Civil War, but told the émigrés in Prague that he had been part of the White Army, a well-judged subterfuge which did not suggest he was particularly trustworthy.

He had two other secrets, however, which I have only recently discovered. I knew he was an enthusiastic member of the Eurasian movement - along with Seryozha, who drew a salary from it, and my old Cambridge friend Vera Traill's husband Peter Suvchinsky. I knew, too, this became a front organisation for the NKVD. What I had not guessed was that Rodzevich was himself working as a Soviet agent.

Nor did I guess that he was Vera Traill"s lover. That last is evident in an intimate and long-running exchange of letters discussed in Irma Kudrova's *The Death of a Poet* (2004) and throws new light on Vera's irritable dismissal of Tsvetaeva's womanliness, even as she praised her genius as a poet.

About one thing Rodzevich was accurate enough. The distress of Tsvetaeva's affair drove Seryozha to the point of leaving her. When he suggested separation to Tsvetaeva, however, she was distraught. 'For two weeks she was in a state of madness . finally she informed me that she was unable to leave me since she was unable to enjoy a moment's peace.'

Tsvetaeva has often been accused of preferring to make her closest relationships at a distance, usually inventing the qualities of their recipients. Indeed, she was locked in an epistolary romance with a young Berlin critic she had never met at the very moment she entered her affair with Rodzevich. Her important relationship with Boris Pasternak is another matter. For one thing, it was initiated by him and his enthusiasm was equal to hers.

She and Pasternak had only known one another slightly in Moscow; though he was one of the poets she most admired. Pasternak wrote to her after reading a copy of Tsvetaeva's early poems, overwhelmed by her lyric genius. His words - 'You are not a child, my dear, golden, incomparable poet,' -

restored her sense of her own worth. Their correspondence continued with mounting warmth, as poems and plans for poems were exchanged. She had found a twin soul. Soon he was suggesting that she join him in Berlin where he was visiting his parents. She failed to arrange the correct papers in time, and he returned to Russia without meeting her, though they continued to plan for it.

In 1931, when she heard that Pasternak had separated from his wife, she seems to have experienced a kind of panic. She wrote to her friend Raisa Lomonsova: 'For eight years Boris and I had a secret agreement: to keep on until we can be together. But the catastrophe of a meeting kept being postponed.' It seems likely that she was afraid of being rejected as a woman. Her cycle of lyrics, Wires, is an extraordinary example of the poems he drew from her. Two of these appeared in my earlier selection, but both are amended here, and the other 12 are now included.

The only other poet Tsvetaeva wrote to with comparable excitement was Rainer Maria Rilke in 1926. The correspondence came about after Leonid Pasternak, Boris' painter father, received a letter from Rilke, whose portrait he had made when the German poet visited Moscow. In his letter, Rilke praised the poems of his son, which he was able to read in a French translation made by Paul Valery. Pasternak was overwhelmed with joy to hear as much, and was eager to include Tsvetaeva in the exchange. She took up the opportunity enthusiastically, perhaps a little too eagerly for Rilke, who was lying mortally ill in a sanatorium. She was unhappy to discover that he was unable to read her poems in Russian and, after a few exchanges, he fell silent, which she took as rejection. There is a sad postcard from Bellevue dated November 7 1926 on which Tsvetaeva writes simply:

> Dear Rainer,
> This is where I live.
> Do you still love me?'
> Marina

The elegy she wrote for his death at the end of 1926 has been analysed with great eloquence in an essay of Joseph Brodsky, 'Footnote to a Poem' He praises the amazing energy which miraculously sustains a sequence which has the nerve, as he puts it, to open on 'High C' . In it, we are transported from the ordinary chat of the literary world to look back on the earth as if from a theatre box far out in the universe.

> Do you ever - think about me, I wonder ?
> What do you feel now, what is it like up there?
> How was your first sight of the Universe,
> a last vision of the whole planet -
> which must include this poet remaining in it,

not yet ashes, still a spirit in a body -
seen from however many miles stretch
from Creation to eternity, far above
the Mediterranean in its crystal saucer -
where else would you look, leaning out
with your elbows on the edge of your box seat
if not on this poet, with her many griefs...

Seryozha and Marina had one more child, a son, Georgy, before they moved to Paris. For a time, Seryozha found work as a film extra, but he was often ill, and Tsvetaeva tried to sustain their finances by articles in the Russian language press and charitable handouts from richer friends. She gave the occasional reading, for which she had to beg a simple washable dress from her Czech friend Anna Teskova. As she wrote in a letter to Teskova: 'We are devoured by coal, gas, the milkman, the baker . the only meat we eat is horse meat.'

Seryozha moved from support of the Eurasian movement, to working directly for the Union of Repatriation of Russians abroad. From this organization, he drew a small salary. Tsvetaeva inquired very little into the nature of this work. Her own isolation among White ĭmigrŭs grew, and not only because of her refusal to sign a letter condemning Maykovsky's talents as a poet after his suicide. 'In Paris,' she wrote to her Czech friend Anna Teskova, 'with rare personal exceptions, everyone hates me; they write all sorts of nasty things about me, leave me out in all sorts of ways, and so on.' Sadly, she came to feel equally isolated in her own home. Alya, once so close, had begun to find it easier to relate to her father. Both Seryozha and Alya moved towards the ideals of Socialism as the Thirties developed. As soon as Alya was given a passport by the Soviet regime, she made her own way back to Russia.

It was never going to be easy for Seryozha to do the same. The Soviet authorities had not forgotten that he once fought for the White Army and demanded some evidence of a change of heart ; hence, although an unlikely hit-man, Seryozha's involvement in the murder of the defector Ignace Reiss in September 1937. Tsvetaeva guessed nothing of his activities until the Soviet regime arranged for his passage back to Russia to prevent his arrest. Even when the French police interrogated her she found it impossible to believe that Seryozha was guilty of such treachery.

With his departure, she no longer had any source of income. No émigré journal would publish her. Friends who had once supported her, turned their backs. She hesitated, nevertheless, even though her teenage son Georgy was eager to return to Russia. For a time she toyed with living once again in Prague. The German invasion made that impossible. By 1939, she and Georgy had little choice but to follow Efron back to Russia, as she had once followed him into exile; ' like a dog', as she noted in the journal she wrote

aboard the 'Maria Ulyanova' on 12 June 1939, echoing her earlier promise.

Nobody warned her about Stalin's Terror, not even Pasternak, who had met her briefly in Paris in 1935 during a Peace Conference - a 'non-meeting' she called it. In any case, that great weariness, she evoked in 'Bus', already consumed her.

She found Efron had been given a small house in Bolshevo, a little way outside Moscow. Other news was bewildering. Both her sister Asya and her nephew had been arrested. Her old friend Prince Mirsky, a dedicated Communist and brilliant literary critic, had also been imprisoned. Osip Mandelstam was dead.

Tsvetaeva felt lonely in Bolshevo even while her own surviving family were still with her. Other members of the household were members of the group of Soviet agents. Seryozha had recruited in France. Her son, a good looking young man, enjoyed teen-age flirtations. Tsvetaeva had neither time nor energy to write more than scraps. 'Dishwater and tears,' she jotted in a notebook. The year of the Nazi-Soviet pact was a crisis. Worse was to follow. First Alya was arrested, and interrogated brutally; as a result she implicated Seryozha as a French spy. Alya was sentenced to 15 years in the Gulag in spite of her 'confession'. Then Seryozha himself was arrested.

When Tsvetaeva visited Moscow, she found old friends were afraid to meet her, as a relation of convicted criminals. Even Ehrenburg was brusque and preoccupied. Pasternak received her without the least intimacy during a party for Georgian friends. Anna Akhmatova, however, agreed to meet her at the flat of Viktor Ardov on the Ordynka, an act of some courage since her own son, Lev, was already held in the Camps. Akhmatova never discussed what was said between them, but in later conversations she remembered reading Tsvetaeva part of 'Poem Without a Hero', noting ironically that Tsvetaeva objected to her use of figures from *commedia dell'arte*. Tsvetaeva read her part of her 'Attempt at a Room', which Akhmatova thought too abstract.

The two women were very different creatures. Tsvetaeva did not perceive herself as a beautiful woman. She once remarked scornfully that, although she would be the most important woman in all her friends' memoirs, she 'had never counted in the masculine present.' After her affair with Rodzevich ended, she wrote poignantly to her young friend, Bakhrakh in Berlin: 'To be loved is something of which I have not mastered the art .' Yet Tsvetaeva had her own sense of grandeur. She knew herself to belong to the finest poets of her century.

She did not make the mistake of blurring the distinction between serving poetry and serving God, any more than she would ever allow for poetry the utilitarian hope that Art can do civic good. In the closing passage from 'Art in

the Light of Conscience' she makes that clear: 'To be a human being is more important, because it is more needed. The doctor and the priest are humanly more important, all the others are socially more important.' Tsvetaeva had written no more than scraps of journal for nearly two years.

When the Germans invaded Russia in 1941, Tsvetaeva evacuated Georgy and herself to Yelabuga in the Tatar republic, just across the river Kama from Christopol where the Writers Union was housing key writers. Tsvetaeva was not denied lodging there, but she feared there would be no job for her. Her indecision was obvious to Ludia Chukovskaya, Akhmatova's friend. It may be that she heard then that Seryozha had already been shot in the Lubianka. Whatever the trigger, the depression which gripped her was deepened by Georgy's hostility when she returned to the village hut in Yelabuga. She took her own life there by hanging herself from a nail on August 31 1941.

CONVERSATIONS

Robert Chandler - Donald Rayfield

PROBABLY CHAGALL DID INFLUENCE ME

Robert Chandler (R). Donald, I am sure that you have read Dead Souls at least four or five times. You have probably taught it dozens of times. It goes without saying that translating the novel will have helped you to see many details more clearly - but did it change your understanding of the novel in any important way? Does the novel mean more to you now than it did before?

Donald Rayfield (D). *When you translate a text, I suspect, you read it properly for the first time, and very slowly. I not only saw thousands of telling details that I had skimmed over before; I realised that I had been talking a lot of nonsense when I taught the text to students. In some way, the 'nanve' realists of the nineteenth century now seem to be not so nanve: Gogol was not just inventing a phantasmagorical Russia, he was describing a very real one, too. But perhaps I had always suspected this - whenever I had an encounter with a Russian customs officer I would remember that Chichikov began his career as a customs officer.*

R. You have published the novel together with Chagall's engravings. These engravings are lively and earthy; it is hard to imagine anyone not enjoying them. But did they add to your understanding of Gogol? Would your translation have been any different if it were not for Chagall?

D. *Probably Chagall did influence me: his pictures have so much vitality and humour, so much pleasure in movement, in eating, in dancing, that I was encouraged to keep Gogol's prose in English moving, alive. Quite often, Chagall portrays the minute detail - furnishings, horse's harness - so convincingly that it helps the translator choose the right word for the thing that Gogol describes.*

R. If a lecturer reads, rather than speaks, his lecture - and especially if he reads it fast and mechanically - I all too often fall asleep. As you can imagine, this often causes me embarrassment at conferences. It is the same with books; if I cannot hear the intonations of a living voice, I quickly get bored. I find many translations of classic novels unreadable - not because they are especially clumsy, but simply because I cannot hear a human voice. D.S. Mirsky once said of Gogol, 'He wrote with a view not so much to the acoustic effect on the ears of the listener as to the sensuous effect on the vocal apparatus of the reciter'. You have reproduced this aspect of Gogol wonderfully, Donald. I have read several chapters of your translation out loud to my wife,

and we have both greatly enjoyed it. How did you achieve this strong, vivid voice? Did you read the Russian out loud at any point? Or the English? I was particularly struck by your rendering of the famous comparison of the tailcoats at the governor's soiree to flies buzzing around a loaf of sugar. Can you give me any idea how long you spent over those 12 lines, or how many versions you went through?

D. *Thank you for saying that: it means I did at least partly achieve my aim. Gogol's contemporaries constantly remind us in their memoirs that Gogol loved to read aloud, often improvising a text from a blank piece of paper. The twists of his syntax are, in fact, devices to keep the listener intrigued. I tried to imagine Dead Souls being read as ' A Book at Bedtime' on BBC Radio 4, and if it didn't strike the ear as well as the eye, I would try to make it more effective. As for working on particular passages, I always try to get something, however bad, on the computer screen and then hammer at it until I can read it without pain: Gogol's embedded images can be very tricky to render in English, which lacks the participles you need to embed them, but English can play much more freely than Russian with punctuation. The flies and sugar episode is famous in the critical literature, so you have to try and get that right.*

R. Was there any aspect of the work that you found unexpectedly difficult?

D. *Two aspects. One is the Gogolian rhetoric and pathos that begins in the middle of the work: I wasn't sure whether to attempt a rhetorical pathos of the sort you find in English romantic fiction of Gogol's day, or to assume, as do many critics, that Gogol was unconsciously parodying himself and this genre. In the end, I chose the first option, and as Gogol is often 'over the top', any element of self-parody emerges by itself. The second aspect is the substantial vocabulary that Gogol acquired as he travelled through western Russia and the Ukraine - names of dishes, games etc. Very often you doubt if the word actually had the meaning Gogol attributed to it. I had to choose between Dal' and a dialect dictionary, or the probable meaning imposed by the context. Quite often, English lacks the thing, let alone the word for it, so there were failures, but there were also successes, such as English 'twat' for Russian 'fetiuk', where you had exactly the right degree of obscenity needed for Nozdriov's expression.*

R. While I was working on my anthology Russian Short Stories from Pushkin to Buida, I translated at least a few thousand words by most of the main Russian writers. I ended up with a very clear sense of whom I would like to go on translating and whom I would not. It is not simply a matter of whether I admire a particular writer; it is more a matter of whether I would like to live for any length of time in that writer's world. I greatly admire Shalamov, for example, but I do not want to translate any more of his stories; they terrify me too much. More suprisingly, perhaps, I do not want to translate any

more Zoshchenko; his stories are as perfect as any stories I have ever read, but his world is too closed - I can't breathe there. Andrey Platonov's world, in contrast, seems to me a very open world; I can breathe freely in it. And I can breathe freely in Pushkin's world. What was it like, Donald, to live in Gogol's world for a year? Would you like to return there and translate any other of his works? Have you learned anything from Gogol - about literature or about life in general?

D. *To live in Gogol's world is to respect him all the more, and to recognize that very great writers have very great flaws - for instance, Gogol cannot do heroines: his Ulin'ka is a botched job, waiting for a Turgenev or a Goncharov to put it right. I learnt to value Part II much more: it is not just Turgenev and Tolstoy who emerge from under his overcoat, it is Chekhov, too: Gogol's Platonov is the ancestor of many a Chekhovian anti-hero. I don't think, however, that I feel the urge to translate more Gogol: Leskov seems the natural next level and you, as the translator of 'Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk', know how difficult that is, and yet how necessary. If I tackled Leskov, it would be to attempt a new version of Soboriane (previously translated as Cathedral Folk), which I believe is one of the five or six greatest works of Russian literature, and a selection of his 'Byzantine' short stories. There are a few Russian writers I would not and could not attempt: Pasternak, for instance. It's odd, because he was so much in sympathy with the sensuality of English poetry, but whether it is his virtuoso rhyming, his musical construction of a poem around certain syllables, or the obscurity of his associations he seems to defeat English translators. As for learning about Gogol, after a year's absorption you end up only realising how completely impenetrable he was: you only learn what he was not. He was not an idiot savant, he was not a stand-up comic, he was not a prophet. He was perhaps the greatest spinner of linguistic threads of his time. On life in general, and on life in Russia, perhaps you learn that almost everyone, including oneself, is at heart a con man, an impostor and that few of us are redeemable.*

R. I have a friend, Adam Thorpe, who is a well-known poet and novelist. After living in France around 15 years, he is now working on his first translation - of Madame Bovary. I talked to him about this a few weeks ago. He is greatly enjoying the work, and he now admires Flaubert more than ever - but he seems to be finding it deeply exhausting. He is used to being able to sit at his computer for two or three hours at a stretch when he is working on a novel, but he's finding he can't do this when he is translating; he has been getting terrible back ache. He thought that this might be because, when he is translating, he has to use both his analytic intelligence and his creative imagination, and he has to keep switching between the two. When he is writing a novel, he slips into a more trance-like state, and this is, in a way, less demanding. I told Adam that I never work more than an hour on a transla-

tion without at least going out for a few minutes walk. What about you, Donald? Have you found translating more tiring than you expected?

D. *Oddly enough, I find it easier to translate (or, for that matter, to edit) other people's work than to write my own original prose. The challenges are clearer and better demarcated, and plundering one's native language to make it do what an alien language has already done is quite an adventure, even if it is rarely totally successful. I have the same rhythm for any writing, though. If it goes well, then I can spend three hours at a stretch, before going into the garden. If it goes badly, then it's three hours in the garden before returning to my desk. Or you make an excuse and get lost in Dal's dictionary or on an internet discussion of Russian card games in the nineteenth century.*

R. Do you have any advice for other translators of Russian literature?

D. *1) Forget Dr Johnson's advice about 'only a blockhead writes except for money'. No good translation can be done quickly enough to earn a living from it. You have to have another source of income; 2) Forget the Byzantine and Nabokovian rules of translation which imply that your version should be so close to the original that, if the original were ever lost it could be reconstructed from your work. Forget also the Robert Lowell school, in which the translator might ask 'Suppose Gogol was born in the USA in 1950 - what would he have written?' Remember that each generation will need its own translation, but still try to use a language that doesn't pin you down to a particular period; 3) For older literature use the old dictionaries: Dal'/Baudouin de Courtenay, Pawlowsky's Russian-German dictionary (Riga, 1899).*

R. I was delighted to hear you say you might translate Leskov's Cathedral Folk. You've tried more than once to persuade me to do this, but I already have work lined up for years ahead. Sometimes this feels oppressive. Can I hope that you will be doing Leskov soon? Or are there other works, in Russian or Georgian, that have to come first?

D. *Leskov's Soboriane is the work of Russian literature that most urgently needs a full, sympathetic translation (but we need to find a new title for it in English): well translated, it should have enormous appeal - it is Trollope and Thomas Hardy in one, plus a political dimension of great wisdom. But if you start on it first, I yield it to you. At the moment, however, I am working on Georgia's finest living novelist, Otar Chiladze. It seems to me that his Avelum of 1995, about a Georgian writer whose 'empire of love' collapses together with the Soviet 'empire of evil' may appeal to the British reader. If I am right, I shall next attempt his first novel of the 1960s, A Man Went down the Road, which looks at*

the Jason and Medea myth from the point of view of Medea's parents and would feed the British appetite for reconstructions of Greek legend. Panteleimon Romanov's short stories are also on the horizon: 'A Russian Soul' should be required reading for everyone concerned with Russia but who would prefer to laugh than to weep.

R. Thank you, Donald - I and, I am sure, many others, look forward to reading your versions of Chalidze, Romanov and Leskov!

Valentina Polukhina - David Bethea

BRODSKY: THE LAST POET IN THE RUSSIAN HEROIC TRADITION

Valentina Polukhina*: At what stage did you become responsive to Russian poetry?*
David Bethea: I began to specialize in Russian poetry in graduate school; it was there, in the years 1974-77, that I decided to focus in my dissertation research on the poetry of Vladislav Khodasevich. As I steeped myself in Khodasevich I also read in some depth Pushkin, Derzhavin, Fet, and the other poets Khodasevich especially admired and to some extent modelled himself on.

- *Do you remember your first encounter with Brodsky's poetry?*
- I recall my initial strong feelings about Brodsky arose in connection with his startling "blank verse" classicism in the early "Aeneas and Dido" (Enei i Didona) poem as well as with the moving equine parts of "There was a black horizon" (Byl chernyi nebosvod…"). It became clear to me as an advanced graduate student and young assistant professor that Brodsky brought something special to the issue of exile and emigration I had studied in connection with Khodasevich and Nabokov. However, it was at the time I reviewed Less Than One for the New York Times (July 1986), as I was finishing my big Apocalypse project (The Shape of Apocalypse in Modern Russian Fiction, 1989), that I decided to turn seriously to the study of Brodsky and his understanding, largely metaphysical, of exile. I proposed to Princeton University Press that a book on the recent (1987) Nobel laureate would be appealing and, fortunately, they (in particular my acquisitions editor there, Bob Brown), agreed.

- *Have you ever attended a Brodsky poetry reading?*
- Three times: once in Middlebury (summer 1987, a few months before the Nobel), a second time in Milwaukee in the late 1980's or early 1990's, and a third time in Chicago in the 1990's. Each reading was magical, especially the way JB began to "take flight" (slowly) in connection with the audience response and his own feelings about his words and their infectiousness. He was like some huge 747 that needed a long runway to take off. The entire nexus of words, reader, and listener was nothing short of mesmerizing. JB's ways of muting his tone and lowering his register at the end of poetics lines struck me as being "cantor-like" (not the first time someone has drawn that analogy).

- *At what point did you become aware of Brodsky's greatness?*
- When I read carefully, over and over again, and began to understand the John Donne elegy.

- Can you recall where you met Brodsky for the first time?
- The first time I met JB was in the summer of 1987. He gave a reading at the Middlebury College Russian School, which I was directing at the time. His close friend Lev Loseff, poet and Russian professor at Dartmouth College, brought JB over from Hanover, New Hampshire. The three of us sat in a room in the Gifford Dormitory on campus and talked about Russian йmigrй literary politics and the current state of Russian letters. JB was in a good mood and laughed frequently but also seemed somewhat guarded and distracted - it may only have been that he was tired from the road. His poetry reading followed and it was a great success. I have a photo of myself, JB, and the late Michael Kreps, another poet and Russian professor (at Boston College), taken right after JB's poetry reading. Before saying goodbye, JB thanked me for my review in the NYT and then said he looked forward to more meetings, either in this world or the next (his way of joking about his heart problems).

- You interviewed JB several times on the phone and personally in South Hadley in March 1991. What memory do you have of Joseph's house in South Hadley?
- I conducted my interview of JB in 1991 as I was researching my book. We met over a two-day period; on the first day we sat in JB's home in South Hadley - it was a typical college house in a New England college town: a small frame affair, probably rust colored, woods to the back, modest floor-plan, older kitchen (where we sat and drank during the interview), everything maintained I'm sure by the college work crew. I don't recall much about the furnishings except that reigned a kind of casual chaos. JB was generous with his time with me and, while he never seemed to answer a question directly (that was his way, he did not like to be "pinned down"), he did end up providing very interesting and far-reaching "takes" on my various questions' points of departure. We both were drinking hard liquor, it seems scotch or bourbon, out of glasses, and of course JB was constantly smoking. As strange as it sounds, the smoking, as bad as it was for him, was part of his breathing, and therefore thinking, process. We didn't get drunk, but the more we drank the broader and deeper his conversation ranged. The thing that impressed and stuck with me the most was the depth and intensity of his intellectual life: this was someone who lived with his ideas as though they were three-dimensional, palpable, "load-bearing" personalities. I came away exhausted and invigorated at the same time even though the alcohol should have had the effect of closing down my own "receptors."

- Did you have regular contact with Joseph after that interview?
- Yes, I would call him, not often but probably 2-3 times a year after that, especially if I had specific questions about his work or his thinking about something. Again, he would always answer me something, but oftentimes after a conversation I wouldn't feel that I understood more about what I had been asking than before I contacted him.

- Is it possible to detect a single theme in what Brodsky said to you during the several conversations you had with him?
- That genuine poetry does not come out of an identifiable biographical matrix (i.e. this set of circumstances "caused" that set of themes or that predisposition to form or genre), but rather it comes in an existential process where, despite the human suffering of the individual and those around him, the poetry is what is real life and life in the so-called real world is always and only "background." JB was consistently inspired by the lives of poets, say Mandelstam's or Akhmatova's or Frost's or Auden's, but he would never dare to explain how a moment of verse came to their tongues by referring to their individual biographical triumphs and tragedies. I thought that that principle was at one and the same time brave (or stoical), wrong-headed (or intentionally riddling), and in its own way deeply (needfully, vulnerably) true even if at some level it thwarted what I was trying to get at in my study.

- Did Brodsky feel at home in America, or a foreigner?
- I suspect JB felt as at home in America, especially in NYC, as he did anywhere in the world. He realized he could "be himself" in America and that that was truly his choice. He also realized, and never took advantage of this fact, that the "mantle of exile" was not something that he could don in good conscience once he had earned his way to the top of the NYC (and USA) intelligentsia pecking order. By the last decade of his life, still more of a globetrotter than any other Russian poet (with the possible exception of someone like Balmont), he knew he was more of an ймигрй traveller than a politically defined exiled writer. Indeed, works like Watermark attest to the fact that for JB his travels had from first to last more of a metaphysical than political cast to them. Yet, despite his travels, I still suspect JB came back to America, and NYC, more as to a "home" than to any other destination.

- In what sense was Brodsky a troubled man?
- I don't think JB was a troubled man. To the extent that his poetry and his writing came first in his life, and to the extent that his personal relations were not always happy and suffered because of this, he had his troubles. An incredibly gifted individual, let's call him a genius, who is a practicing poet and man of letters, is not by definition going to have a personal life in ideal balance. Something has to give. Having said that, JB did a rather admirable job over his lifetime with his personal and professional responsibilities (there are of course exceptions, some relating to the gender divide, which could be argued until doomsday). JB could be impolite and abrupt if he felt he was in a somehow "false" (too much "nice talk") situation. He was also a dyed-in-the-wool contrarian and would almost never agree with the opening formulation in a discussion, as if out of principle. But that all goes back to his essential character vectors and to his almost congenital urge to wrestle with the existing world order. For me, JB was less "troubled" than on "a mission," and he was until the end of his life working to fulfil that mission.

- Is Brodsky's character relevant to the quality of his poetry?

- Absolutely. You can sense "JB" in his poetry, like a strong verbal scent or even body odor, as much as in any poet I know. His words almost always carry his signature.

- In your book on Brodsky you introduced the concept of "triangular vision". What do you mean by this concept?
- I mean that JB, being a very "belated" poet and a very sophisticated reader of others, was one of the first, if not the first, in the Russian tradition, to consistently construct a persona for himself that is an amalgam of a great western forebear (say, Dante) and a great Russian precursor closer and in important ways more influential to him (say, Mandelstam), so that the speaker that emerges from these two exile exemplars and their "places" in history (corrupt medieval Florence, tragic Soviet Leningrad/St. Petersburg) is both a composite of them and something "third," something himself - the contemporary "man in a cape" (chelovek v plashche) of "December in Florence" (Dekabr' vo Florentsii").

- When JB talks about Auden as 'new kind of metaphysical poet', his 'indirect speech', his 'clinical detachment and controlled lyricism', you said: 'All these qualities could be, in one form or another, be imputed to the speakers of Brodsky's mature works' (p. 137). Don't you think that Brodsky attributed his own poetic qualities to other poets, such as Rein. Kushner, or Novikov?
- I think JB would freely admit he learned a lot from contemporaries like Rein (he was generous that way, generous like Pushkin), but by the time he reached maturity, with some of the poems in Ostanovka v pustyne, he uses that learning in his own, very specific way. In works like "Bol'shaia elegiia Dzhonu Donnu" or "Isaak i Avraam" one might be able to tease out phrases that others could have invented, but the intonation, the sustained fierceness and forward momentum, is already only JB's.

- You talk of Brodsky's authorizing tone. Where does this authority come from?
It comes from his version of God; something outside him, something that encourages and underpins his language but does not make his personal life easier, that speaks through him even when he might like to let it go.

- How does Brodsky's stoicism (p. 19) reveal itself in his poetry?
- It reveals itself everywhere where the words add up to the final lines of his poem commemorating his 40th birthday: "Chto skazat' mne o zhizni? Chto okazalas' dlinnoi./ Tol'ko s gorem ia chuvstvuiu solidarnost'./ No poka mne rot ne zabili glinoi,/ iz nego razdavat'sia budet lish' blagodarnost'" (What should I say about life? That's it's long and abhors transparence./ Broken eggs make me grieve; the omelette, though, makes me vomit./ Yet until brown clay has been crammed down my larynx,/ only gratitude will be gushing from it). The "vomit" (not in the Russian by the way) is there to balance out the potential sentimentality of "gratitude." The psychological positioning

also reminds one of what he said with regard to his father: "He was a proud man. When something reprehensible or horrendous was drawing near him, his face assumed a sour yet at the same time a challenging expression. It was as if he were saying 'Try me' to something that he knew from the threshold was mightier than he." That "vomit" is the son's version of "Try me."

- What did Brodsky teach you that you couldn't have learnt from other poets?
That he found a way to make not only poetry per se but "poetic thinking" (especially in Less than One and On Grief and Reason) crucial, meaningful, at a time when poetry itself seems to be dying. His language, whatever its genre or "voice zone," is a powerful, won't-let-you-alone swan song to what can still be, even in our age.

- Were do you see Brodsky's origin?
- Pushkin, Baratynsky, Dostoevsky, Mandelstam, Tsvetaeva, Auden, Polish metaphysicals (Herbert), Slutsky, Rein, the Bible.

- What kind of challenge did the study of Brodsky's poetry present to you?
- His language is extremely difficult for a non-native (indeed, I can't imagine how it could be easy for natives), and my Russian is not bad after almost 40 years of living with it. There are poems, especially later ones, that I still have trouble fully "getting inside of" because the language has become so nuanced, so full of the syntactic and semantic equivalent of a high-rise. Sometimes I think JB becomes so complex that the deep emotional "choric" quality gets lost. On the other hand, the complexity of this thinking, his metaphysical striving, is one of the great joys of reading him. English-language critics who accuse him of charlatanism or poetic impostorship don't "get," or perhaps don't choose to get, the extent to which JB educated himself to a very high level and "lived" that learning in an almost physical, metabolic sense.

- You also discussed the very important topic of Judaism and Christianity in Brodsky's writings. Could you briefly summarise your finding?
- I believe there is a deep "Jewish" core to JB's thinking which assigns more significance to Old Testament sacrifice and suffering (the "Isaak i Avraam" theme played out many times over) than to New Testament grace and second chances. Any Christianity in JB is existential and shares more with Kierkegaard's largely absurdist leap of faith with doses of Dostoevsky's Shatov and Ivan Karamazov and Shestov's paradoxicalism thrown in. There is nothing resurrected about the suffering son in "Natiurmort" (Nature Morte); if he has any meaning for us in our time-space it is through language, through the effort to express life where all seems dead: "On govorit v otvet:/ --Mertvoi ili zhivoi,/ raznitsy, zheno, net./ Syn ili Bog, ia tvoi" (Christ speaks to her in turn:/ "Whether dead or alive,/ woman, it's all the same --/ son or God, I am thine"). As Lev Loseff so astutely pointed out, the copula, the necessary connecting tissue of "am" in "I am thine," is not uttered in Russian. On the other hand, JB did not want his ethnic Jewishness to overdetermine him;

he never denied his Jewish roots but he also did not want them to be the primary explanatory matrix for who he was and what he became. Frankly, if I see a "Christian" element in JB it is really quite close to what others identify as "stoic": my gift of speech is the greatest gift of all, the greatest "good news" and "god-spell" (gospel), despite any personal misfortunes I may suffer. To live under a death sentence and yet to be moved to write. To become, to metamorphose into, a part of speech. It was that transformation, always tragic on a human level, that bridged the Jewish and the Christian in JB's background and worldview.

- Do you know that Joseph was baptized as a child?
- Yes, I did, but I never really put much stock in it.

- Why did Brodsky not like or write about American modernism?
- Good question. There was something about the Eliot-Pound nexus that was perhaps too dry and academic, while other representatives of high modernism were either too grounded in innovation and breaking away from the past (say, William Carlos Williams) or too luxuriantly self-absorbed (Stevens). JB needed for there to be an ethical dimension, a struggle against the existing order of things, in a poet's best work: that's why he liked poets such as Auden, Frost, Hardy, and Lowell.

- To what extent can Brodsky's bilingual aesthetics be compared and contrasted with Nabokov's?
- I wrote about that at some length in my Brodsky and the Creation of Exile book. In my opinion their approaches are at base diametrically opposed. JB has a poetic sensibility through and through and "processes" a poem not in terms of individual words or phrases per se, although he certainly pays great attention to them, but in terms of the sound-sense impact of the whole, or at least the larger unit - the line, the stanza, the "choric" seat that gives a work its special signature. "Pis'ma rimskomu drugu" (Letters to a Roman Friend), one of my favorite JB poems, could only have been written by him; the impact of each stanza is felt by the reader as an entire "Brodskian" unit. The trochaic beat (not that common and here very tongue in cheek), the ingenious rhymes worthy of Mayakovsky ("s perekhlestom" and "trogatel'nei, Postum"), the cynicism that is even greater than the supposed model Martial, the notion of exile that is very present and yet downplayed through the ironic delivery, etc., etc., all create a unique impression of a whole that is greater than the sum of otherwise terrific parts. This is precisely why JB doesn't translate well into English, because the "choric" quality of the whole can't be transferred to a second, learned language; it really has to be one's native language. Nabokov, as I tried to explain while parsing some of his verse in Pale Fire, has a great eye for the correct individual word or phrase (his is an essentially pictorial imagination like Tolstoi's) but, because he is tone-deaf to the musical/melodic body/seat of the poem, the best of his verse comes across as something not bad yet still Victorian, artificial, parts that don't add up to a compelling whole. His prose could certainly be "poetic," but his po-

etry couldn't. And this is why Nabokov could be successfully translated into English - what mattered was not lost in translation.

- Nabokov believed that he was born a painter. He had a gift for drawing, so did Brodsky. Why, in you view, Brodsky dislikes Nabokov?
- I suspect "dislike" may too strong here. I realize Nabokov didn't recognize JB's poetic gift when JB's poems were sent to him, but JB was strong enough as a poet and confident enough of his own abilities not to have carried any hurt here indefinitely. I would rather think of these two as just opposites who didn't attract. Perhaps JB had too many "Soviet" scars for the Olympian Nabokov, and perhaps Nabokov just didn't "get" where Russian poetry had migrated to in the latter decades of the twentieth century. JB says somewhere that Nabokov's novelistic doubles are his prosaic response to the need to have his poetic itch (rhyme pairs) scratched. It's an interesting speculation, but it sounds rather far-fetched.

- Does Brodsky's prose impress you as much as his poetry?
- Absolutely, in some ways more, because he can continue a conversation on an equally high level (he would not agree to this) where in his poetry he would have to cut discussion off (the logic would become too attenuated - always a potential problem with JB).

- How did Brodsky become an American Poet Laureate? How was Brodsky election to the post Poet Laureate received by American poets and critics? Did Brodsky have do deal with envy and personal resentments in America?
- Brodsky had the credentials and honors to become the American Poet Laureate; what was held against him, and one can understand the resentment from certain quarters, was that he was not as accomplished as an English-language poet as he was as a Russian-language one, and those who wrote poetry and taught poetry felt that there may have been more worthy candidates for the honor. On the other hand, JB was a tireless advocate for "poetic" values and for that reason in hindsight it was probably a good thing that he was chosen. After all, it is difficult to accuse a Nobel laureate of not being competent in his specialty. Also on the other hand, JB's books of essays about poets were among his greatest achievements; he had passion, taste, rigorous standards, and a desire to "spread the word" - these qualities alone should count for a lot. That JB became the Poet Laureate of his adoptive country, the country that prides itself on its melting-pot character, seems to me finally as more of a poetic justice than injustice.
- What in your view did America meant to Brodsky?
- America for JB was the country whose system, given the givens, allowed the greatest measure of personal freedom and the greatest opportunity for personal achievement and fulfilment.

- Brodsky was accused of being too American, or Western to be called a Russian poet. What is Brodsky for you?

- Brodsky will always be for me the greatest Russian poet of the last half of the twentieth century and the last poet in the Russian heroic tradition going back to Pushkin. That he was more responsible than any other Russian poet for introducing his native readers to the Anglo-American tradition and then, in time, becoming himself a powerful voice in that tradition, does not make him "less" anything. Pushkin's great-grandfather came from Africa, Mandelstam's parents were Jewish - are these any longer really categories that define "ours" versus "theirs."

- *What kind of major difficulties did JB encounter in his move from Russian poems to English poems and in self-translation?*
- I think the inflected aspect of Russian ultimately made JB's transition to English-language poetry very challenging. He "heard" wordplay in English that was too "Russian," too heavy-handed. For me his English-language verse sounds either too burlesque (the speaker overplays the acoustic devices as a kind of ironic cover) or too matter-of-fact and flat. In any event it rarely rises to the level of his best Russian works.

- *Why, in your view, Brodsky downplays the importance of biography?*
- Primarily because he doesn't want the scholar/critic to explain his creativity, which as he said to Judge Savel'eva comes "from God," by referring to something located in the realm of the non-creative. He didn't like Freud presumably for the same reason Nabokov didn't: the good doctor intruded into an area where he didn't have authority (how to write a poem) and asserted his authority at the expense of the authoring subject. According to JB, Shakespeare should be read to interpret Freud, not the other way around.

- *Why did you switch from Brodsky to Pushkin?*
- I didn't really switch. I just had been studying Pushkin for many years, even while I was working on JB, and once I finished Brodsky and the Creation of Exile I simply returned to already existing interests and projects. I still teach JB regularly, however, try to keep up with work in the field, and remain keenly interested in his life and work.

- *How important was Pushkin in Brodsky's development as a poet? Do you consider Brodsky as the rightful heir to the Pushkinian legacy?*
- JB always said Baratynsky was more of an influence on him than Pushkin. However, I have argued that JB was very aware of the Pushkinian "fatidic" element in his life and work: the birthdays, what turned out to be the times of their deaths in January (JB was thinking about Pushkin in the last month of his life), their exiles, their focus on empire, their intense but haphazard ways of educating themselves, their early and numerous unhappy love affairs and then December marriages, etc. I do think that JB is the last and rightful heir to Pushkin in the Russian poetic tradition.

- *Does a reader have to be a Russian to enjoy Brodsky's poetry?*
- No, but he or she better have very sophisticated Russian to gain entry into

JB's poetic world. You have to know all the books on the poet's bookshelf, so to speak.

- What is the essence of Brodsky's poetry?
- Courage, resilience, verbal somersaults, erudition made personal and problematic.

- Is Brodsky's poetry still read in America? What kind of audience is interested in his work?
- Probably not his English-language poetry, but his Russian-language poetry is still taught and read.

- At present Brodsky's books have disappeared from British bookshops. Why? Is it because the estate does not allow the new translations? Or is it the fate of every great poet after his death? How secure is Brodsky's reputation in the USA?
- Even though JB was widely read by the intelligentsia in the USA and Britain, he was never widely read in an absolute sense. Frankly, I don't know what role the JB estate is now playing in helping or hindering (probably the latter) the publication of his works. As an essayist I would say JB's reputation in the States is secure. Will he become a classic and be read a century or two centuries from now? Hard to say. The way education and society is moving away from written texts and in general making literary traditions more and more ephemeral it will be difficult to predict what survives in whole or in part. I certainly think JB deserves to be among the writers and thinkers of the last hundred years who are "major" enough to have a place in some virtual pantheon, but then I am presumably not typical.

- In the last few years you have travelled to Russia quite frequently. Do people over there ask you about Brodsky's life in America?
- Not really. It seems to me that people over there who are interested in JB are fairly well informed about his life after 1972.

- Does "political correctness" has a real impact on American scholarship's choice of research subjects or does encourage self-censorship?
- One of the main reasons scholarship has shifted toward "cultural studies" is that the very idea of "greatness" is implicitly under attack. Culture is being thoroughly and constantly "democratised." JB was unique because he insisted that art (or the god-term behind art) is elitist in terms of its desire for quality but democratic in terms of who is "entitled" to try to realize that desire. He was an outsider from the Soviet academic establishment and yet he rose to the pinnacle of international intellectual prestige and honor. What JB wouldn't do was politicise the category of quality. There was something "snobby" about him, but it had nothing to do with class, race, or sexual orientation. It had to do with the combination of existential and aesthetic and ethical authenticity.

THE ART OF TRANSLATION

Angela Livingstone

A NOTE ON TRANSLATION

My experience of translating does not correspond to what is implied by the metaphors that are often used for it, nor even to those contained in the very word "translation".

Etymology may be out of fashion, but it seems important to be aware that we think by means of hidden metaphors much of the time, not all of them "dead". Hidden in the Latin-derived verb "to translate" is an idea of "carrying across", since "latum" is the irregular past passive participle of "fero", I carry. To translate: to transfer. Like someone walking over a bridge with a bundle? (But what is in the bundle?)

The same is suggested by German "übertragen", while "übersetzen", the more common German word for "translate", though also suggesting a bridge, dwells, rather, on the end of the crossing, the setting down of the bundle on the other side: übersetzen: over-set. Meanwhile French "traduire" and Italian "tradurre" mean "to draw or lead across", and in English, too, "traduce" could mean "translate" until the nineteenth century. In Russian it still does: pere-vodit' – to translate or to lead across. So one leads a person or animal across the bridge, rather than carrying a box or bundle over it. It could be worth pondering what kind of difference this slightly different metaphor implies.

But what I mainly want to point out is that all these usages imply that I, the translator, go with it, *with* my parcel or my oxen, and none prefers an idea of bringing bundle or beast from somewhere else hither, to "me" here: hierherführen, apporter, prinosit' or privodit' do not mean "translate". Nor does any of our words for "translate" invoke an idea, say, of sending the thing or person from here hither, as would be meant by "transmit" or "übersenden", both of which mean, instead, "to broadcast". (Curiously enough, Russian has borrowed the actual word "translation", russified as "transliatsiia", to mean, precisely, a "broadcast".)

And yet a dynamic topography of bringing *from* somewhere else *to* here, and of sending *from* here *to* somewhere else, is what is implied by the confusing metaphors which occur in much recent theorising about translation: people talk about a "source" language and a "target" language.

If the language I translate into (the second, or translation, language) is my "target", it is as if I am sending my arrow (or other, less aggressive, object) from where I stand, towards some place away from myself. This is very strange. Do some translators really feel this way about their work? And if the language I translate out of (the first, or original, language) is my "source", it is a bit like calling it the origin of a river – which surges up somewhere, flows out, increases along the way, and finally issues into, presumably, the wide sea of the second language – all of which is incompatible with the "target" image, as well as leaving out the translator's part in what happens.

These two images – "source" and "target" – not only conflict rather violently with each other and therefore ought not, in my view, to be used of translating, which is not an inwardly conflicting process, but they also conflict with the notion contained in the words "translate, übersenden, traduire, perevodit' ". These words properly, as I see it, associate the translator with the translating, but also, less properly, represent the translator as carrying or leading something from one place to another. I resist both versions of this image of a bridge or a crossing, almost as much as I resist the "source" and "target" imagery, because it lets us assume that something is taken across *entire*. But what can be taken across entire in a translation? Perhaps something that might be called the paraphraseable content? That may be enough in translating journalistic or scientific texts, but it is not enough for literary ones.

I don't myself experience translating as any kind of transferral. But rather – as a lifting up of chosen parts of my own language in order to bring them close to those arranged parts of another language with which I hope to acquaint English-readers. Raising up parts of the second language, my own, as if on the airily uplifted spread palm of a hand, not aggressively but generously, not shooting but offering, towards the already airborne selection from the first language, the foreign one; lifting it until the two nearly touch, or do touch. (Ideally, there would be a clasping of hands.) So instead of carrying over, trans-lating, I bring close, ap-prox-imate, enable one thing to approach another.

By the way, even further back etymologically, the concept of raising one thing towards another may be cunningly contained in the very word "trans-late", since that irregular past participle "latum" was once "tlatum" and belonged (as does "tuli", the past tense of "fero") to the verb "tollo": I lift – familiar to us from the prayer to the Agnus Dei "qui tollis peccata mundi" as well as from the word "toll", a payment which is levied or raised (often for passage over a bridge!). This small and misty element of elevation accords well with my translating experience and almost reconciles me to the word "translate".

FROM A LETTER, WRITTEN SOME YEARS AGO IN A CAFÉ

Most of my intellectual life has been spent reading, and writing about, the work of Boris Pasternak as well as, nearly as much, the work of Rainer Maria Rilke and of Marina Tsvetaeva.

All three poets - three (for a time) friends or quasi-friends, with enormous loves between them - were capable of ecstasy. Almost any line of Pasternak's lyric verse stirred the ecstatic in me, often into immediate rapture. He changed the world for me. Ever since I read his line "Byl mak, kak obmorok, glubok" (The poppy was deep as a swoon), every poppy has seemed to swoon, every swoon has been punctuated with "ak" and "ok". I have felt an immense and lasting comfort from his lines "Na svete net toski takoi, / Kotoroi sneg by ne vylechival" (In the world there is no yearning that snow cannot cure).

Tsvetaeva had a different influence. She did not change my world; her voice seemed so much her own, an inner private shout; she pressed something upon the world, did not have the stance of *receiving* from it. What is so compelling in Pasternak is the rhetoric of reception. But in Tsvetaeva - such a grip upon language! Her alliterations, etymologies, rhythms (never mind if they're insistent), her bending and lathing of words into the shapes she wanted, her fierce neglect of cliché - through all this she took hold of me. And Rilke possessed intuitions about precisely the metaphysical secrets I needed to know - or was it that he possessed words for intuitions I already, speechlessly, had? "Angels wouldn't hear me if I shouted out to them, or if they did they'd destroy me (they would hear so fiercely) - therefore I go back to this human reality *where we are not at home*."

Pasternak was mainly celebration, Rilke mainly lamentation, both of them so strong that the riches of their yes and no lasted me for decades. Tsvetaeva's grappling and wrestling with the world and with words, her joys and griefs - less shareable (because they were *hers*) – at first put me off, though I came back repeatedly to wrestle with her very words: she is the poet I most translate. I didn't fight *her* fights, but the fight with her speech made the sinew grow with which I conducted my own combats. Crazily perhaps, I often felt that I should like to run, fast and far, many miles, over wide fields, up and down hills, wading through rivers, never ceasing and never looking back - solely as an act of thanksgiving to poetry and to these three extraordinarily gifted writers of it.

And not only for their poetry but for the amazing poetic prose, poets' prose, which each of them also wrote: the courteous and tragic tone of Rilke's measured words about levels of feeling and knowing which we had never guessed at; Tsvetaeva's arguings, the way, in her prose, word shoulders word, pushing each other like people on pavements; and then the excited words streaming together in Pasternak's dreaming chase after "life" and music, the way all his early prose moves endlessly towards imagined dance and a thundering heartbeat.

First postscript to café letter

I switched away from all that to reading, writing about and translating the work of Andrei Platonov, whose prose is no less heart-pounding but is engaged with a different and more sorrowful experience of life. Some six years later I came back to Pasternak. I have been speaking here of his writings up to 1931. Most of his later poems and prose I have read in a somewhat withdrawn and sober spirit. It is the early Pasternak who has vastly enriched my life.

Second postscript to café letter

I have been asked to say more about how Pasternak changed the world for me. I could answer in his own words about how the world changes when penetrated by feeling: "...art is interested in life at the moment when the ray

of power *is passing through it*". That power he also calls "feeling".
Passing through reality, it displaces it (he says); and art is a record of the displacement. Perhaps that is too abstract an answer to the question that was put to me? Well, Pasternak convinced me that the strong aesthetic feeling which displaces everything is absolutely worth living for, even if only by living the life of its translator and commentator. I could add that all this gave me a shield against many sorts of scepticism and pessimism.
If I were also asked why I said I translate more Tsvetaeva than anyone else (although I have in fact translated far more Pasternak), I might say this seems to me to be so because of Tsvetaeva's way of gathering the fiercest, most implacable words, so that a reader has to plunge through them, headfirst and elbowfirst, like someone impatiently getting through a mature hedgerow, panting and scratched, and that, paradoxically, this plunging lasts far longer than the time spent sitting at desk and page: the hours before and after that sitting are heavy with the adventure. Reading and translating Tsvetaeva made me realise that translating is a form of reading, a more strenuous, intimate, often more exhilarated form.
I have attempted to translate only a few of her shorter, lyric, poems.
ut I have translated a good deal of her prose, and several of her longer works in verse (*poemy*). Of the latter the main ones I have done are: The Ratcatcher; Poem of the Air; New Year's Letter; Attempt at a Room; and I am now trying to translate her verse-drama Phaedra. Except for The Ratcatcher (1925), all these works were composed in 1927, the intensest year of her correspondence with Pasternak and of the deep relation of both of them to Rilke, who died at the very end of 1926.

Angela Livingstone

EXCERPTS FROM TRANSLATIONS OF WORKS BY MARINA TSVETAEVA

I

From "The Ratcatcher. A Lyrical Satire".

In her own new version of the medieval tale of the Ratcatcher (cp. Browning's "Pied Piper"), who rids Hamlin town first of its rats and then of its children, Tsvetaeva mocks both the materialistic citizens and the fickle revolutionaries (the rats), her flute-playing ratcatcher representing music and spirituality. I give here (a) the opening section (part of "Hamlin Town") and (b) part of "The Abduction", where the rats approach the moment of drowning.

(a)

Very old the town of Hamlin.
Meek in speech and strict in act.
Staunch in big as well as small things.
Splendid little town in fact.

When the Comet was predicted
Hamlin slept throughout the night.
Stoutly built, so clean and perfect:
Touchingly, it's rather like

(*I* wouldn't touch him with a barge-pole!)
Him - the mayor, the Burgomaster.

Tailoring isn't expensive in Hamlin:
There's only one manner of dressing.
Living isn't expensive in Hamlin,
And everyone dies with a blessing.

Tenpence a carcase; a jugful of cream -
Five; and cheeses, mostly,
Go for a penny. Just one, it would seem,
Of Hamlin's wares is costly:

Sin.
Inquire
Of some old sire:
'Dear means rare'.

No pretty girls letting down their hair,
No one in debt, and thirst
Never means more than a mug of beer.
Take gold or blood from your purse

If it's sin you're purchasing. Those who've slept
Five decades - fifty years! -
Together upon one bed (the dears)
Carry on sleeping. 'Sweat,

Decay: we've shared it.' Grass or mattress -
What's the difference?

(Lord preserve me from sleeping even
Five years on one bed – I'd as soon
Hire myself out as a pet dog's groom!)
Well, their souls are in Heaven.

A thought, an epiphany:
What if
They haven't any?

Hands - to squeeze sixpences out of pence,
Feet - just in case of a debtor.
But why have a soul? In what possible sense
Would a soul be anything better

Than futile things like a clarinet,
Or hammock, or basket of mignonette?
There isn't a single (write this down)
Clarinet in Hamlin.
There isn't a single soul to be found
There - but what bodies, upstanding

Solid ones! A concrete post
Is worth any amount of ghost.

(b)

‘I see pagoda domes!’
‘I see a blue-blue shine!’
‘I see rice-paddies.’
‘We’re going to drink palm wine!’

Since the primaeval thunder,
Since the primaeval slumber,
Rats and children have craved
Candy and sugar-cane.

How many years is the world?
How many moments old?
Capsicum blooms in the winds.
In the winds, sugar resounds.

Shagreen - not virgin soil!
In the blue light a trawl
Of plum. It’s the fourth day
And no countable year at all.

Resins’
Humming.
Hinny.
Oxen.

No canvas, but a carnage
Of colours. Primal silt.
Proto-creative scrawl
Of genius. First trial

Of demon strength. Flint
Struck by the first tool.
Fourth hour of the world,
And no countable day at all.

Ganges’
Maids!
Mango
Shade!

Indigo ! First tint.
India! First plaint
Of animal. Look - the world,
Poet, is four moments old!

Foretasting when I'll fold
Time like a rough draft...
A flash of the eye, the last,
And the world's not a moment old...

II

From "Poem of the Air".

Having been silently summoned by an unnamed guest (one surmises that it is the dead Rilke), the poet leaves her house and rises through seven levels of ever lighter and sparser air to reach a final ecstatic condition beyond breathing. This passage is from part seven, which describes the third level.

Lighter - no skiff lighter
lying on littoral mica.
O how light the air is:
rarer, ever rarer...
Slide of ludic fishes –
tail-of-trout elusive...
O the air is streamy!
Streamier than speeding
hound through oats – and slippery!
Soft as hair – and wafty! –
of just-crawling infants –
watering-cans aren't streamier!
More: it's streamier, even,
than a lime-bark lining
freshly stripped, or onion.
Through pagoda-music
born of beads and bamboo -
through pagoda-veilings...
shshshsh! we'd move for ever...
Why is Hermes winged, then?
Fins would be more (floating)
fitting! See, a downpour!
Rainbow-Iris! Shall we
move through your shower of Cashmere,
Shemakhàn... A dancing
upward!

III

From "New Year's Letter".

In this poem-letter to Rilke, who has recently died, the poet seeks to learn from him what it is like in the other world.

How many times I wondered, from my school bench:
what are the mountains like, there? And the rivers?
Are the landscapes nice without the tourists?
Am I right, Rainer, that Heaven is mountainous,
thunderous? Not the widow-claimants' paradise -
must be more than one Heaven? Maybe terraced?
One above the other? Heaven can*not* be
(judging by the Tatras) *not* an amphi -
-theatre. (With the curtain down on someone...)
Rainer, am I right that God's a *growing*
Baobab? He's not a roi soleil – there's
more than one God? With, above him, further
up, another?
How's the writing so far?
Anyway if *you* are, *verse* is, *you are*
verse! How's writing going in the good life,
where you've got no desk for elbows, brow for
cupped palm...?
A note, please - usual cipher!
Rainer, are you enjoying the new rhyming?
For, to explicate the word correctly:
'rhyme' - what else – conceivably - can – Death be
but a set of new rhymes?

IV

From "Attempt at a Room"

In this extremely difficult poem, the poet seeks to create a room in which to meet another poet (known from her letters to be Pasternak – who can't leave Soviet Russia, and she lives in France). I give (a) the opening lines: three walls ready but not the fourth; (b) part 4: the room is imagined but has no physicality; (c) the final lines: the room disintegrates.

(a)

Walls of stagnance were counted up
long before. But - a leap? Fortuity?
Three walls have I memorised.
Fourth – I can't give a guarantee.

Who can tell, with their back to the wall?
May be there, but it also may
not. And wasn't. A draught blew. But
if not wall at one's back, then what?
. . . .

(b)

Tryst house. The other houses
all - parting-houses, even if
south-southern. Is it hands that
serve? No, it's something else,

much quieter, lighter, cleaner.
Junk, renovated, plus
all services? Abandoned,
gaunt, starving penury!

Yes, here we're touch-me-nots, and
quite rightly. Slaves of hands,
hands' - thoughts, and hands'- conclusions,
tips, ends, the ends of hands...

No fervid cries "where are you?"
I'm waiting. Gestures take
over all the serving, silent,
in the palace of the mind.
. . . . .

(c)

Was it because the walls were gone -
undeniably the ceiling leaned

down, and only the vocative case
flowered in mouths. And the floor – sheer gap.
Through the gap, and green as the Nile,
ceiling undeniably floated.

As for floor, what else can one say

to floor but “Be damned!” Whoever cares
about dirt on floors? No chalk? – Look up!
The whole poet, by a single dash,

holds on...
Over two bodies’ *nothing*
the ceiling undeniably sang -
like all the angels.

V

From “Phaedra”.

A servant narrates to Hippolytus the death in battle of his mother Antiope, a Queen of the Amazons (legendary nation of women-fighters, said to have cut off one of their breasts so as to use weapons more easily); abducted by the Athenian king Theseus, Antiope fought at his side when her own nation of Amazons made war against him.

I have finished
wanting, living. But I see this
through a cloud of twice seven years:
how she fought beside your father,
Amazon against her tribe,
flesh warring with kindred flesh,
daughter of a host of man-haters.
Just as though a ring-finger
fought the middle finger, or a
middle finger fought the palm!
After three years in the valley of women,
that fierce-fleshed throng, the daughter
clad herself in martial armour,
dazzling every eye [that saw her].
And each one’s chest was cleft for war,
and a sigh was sighed of more than love,
a single sigh through both the camps.

What a furnace! What a battle!
To this day, I tell you, down my
spine there goes an icy shiver:
how she fought beside your father -
tautening her bow – with her own sinew? –
with her own womanly will – so wondrous
was her bow its upsurge seemed, to

gods and humans both, a doubled
female breast, an airy outline,
like a wave against a galleon! –
Taking aim not just with eye and
elbow, but with every vein
that beat within her, taking aim
with all her body, man-equal - god-equal!
with her never-used-up quiver
fuller than a horn of plenty,
radiant under the hostile downpour
  there she stood, afraid of nothing! -
bowstring taunting tauter bowstrings,
fleshless bosom turned aside and
merging with the chest-tight bow so
closely the arrows seemed to fly
not from the string but from the heart! those
arrows passionate for destruction,
fast, so fast, in endless sequence,
it could be (but was it war she
waged or thread she span?) a single
arrow flying from the string.
Was a lion beside the ferocious
woman? – no, for even a god in
such cruel fight would seem more timorous.
Thus she fought beside your father,
facing darts, refusing pleasures.

Translated from Russian by Angela Livingstone

Robert Chandler

COATS AND TURNCOATS: TRANSLATING THE WIT OF THE CAPTAIN'S DAUGHTER

Five years ago, a Russian friend, hearing I was intending to translate 'The Queen of Spades', said, 'That will be very difficult, harder even than translating Andrey Platonov. You'll find you can't afford to change a single comma.' My friend proved only too right; every slightest liberty I had allowed myself in the first draft came to seem unacceptable. I imagined, however, that *The Captain's Daughter* would prove easier. I remembered it as being less deliberate, less precise in both style and structure, than 'The Queen of Spades'. I could not have been more wrong. Like the novel's young hero, Pyotr Grinyov, Pushkin is a trickster. *The Captain's Daughter*, apparently a mere historical yarn, is the most subtly constructed of all nineteenth-century Russian novels. It took me some time, however, to realize this.

The Captain's Daughter is presented as a memoir, written towards the end of his life by a provincial nobleman, Pyotr Grinyov. The plot turns on a number of gifts and their unexpected consequences. On his way to serve as an officer in the southeastern province of Orenburg, the sixteen-year-old Pyotr gets lost in a blizzard and is guided to safety by a mysterious peasant. Pyotr generously expresses his gratitude by giving the peasant a hareskin coat. In Fort Belogorsk, where Pyotr is posted, he falls in love with Masha, the captain's daughter, and fights a duel against a jealous rival, Lieutenant Shvabrin. A rebellion breaks out; its Cossack leader, Yemelyan Pugachov, captures Fort Belogorsk. The treacherous Shvabrin goes over to Pugachov and advises him to hang Pyotr along with the other officers. Pyotr's servant realizes that Pugachov is the peasant to whom Pyotr gave the hareskin coat. Despite Pyotr's refusal to recognize him as Tsar, Pugachov spares Pyotr's life and allows him to go free; he even gives Pyotr the gift of a horse and a sheepskin coat. A few months later, Pugachov shows still greater generosity, allowing Pyotr to return to Belogorsk and rescue Masha from the hands of Shvabrin, who is trying to force her to marry him. After the rebellion has been put down, Shvabrin denounces Pyotr, making out that Pyotr deserted to Pugachov just as he did himself; Pyotr's acceptance of Pugachov's gifts is used in evidence against him at a tribunal. In the last chapter, Masha goes to Petersburg, speaks to the Empress and persuades her of Pyotr's innocence.

My first task, after completing a first draft, was to focus on reproducing the specific voices of the various characters. At this stage I began to work more closely with my wife, Elizabeth. Elizabeth does not know Russian, but she

has an unusually fine ear for tone and rhythm and her knowledge of English idioms is broader than my own. We work orally. I read a draft to her, sentence by sentence, and we discuss any phrases that either of us finds in the least unclear or in any way false, batting different versions to and fro until we either resolve a problem or accept that it is best left for another day.

Vasilisa Yegorovna, the wife of the fortress commandant, speaks a folksy Russian saturated with biblical phrases and popular sayings. It was important to find English equivalents for these, and still more important to reproduce the unstoppable impetus of her speech, the unselfconsciousness with which she rushes from topic to topic:

We sat down to dinner. Vasilisa Yegorovna did not stop talking for a single moment. She showered me with questions: who were my parents? were they still alive? where did they live? what were their circumstances? On learning that my father had three hundred serfs, she said, 'Well, fancy that! Who'd have thought there are people in the world with such wealth? And we, dear sir, have only our one maid, Palashka. Still, thank the Lord, we manage to make ends meet. Our only sorrow is Masha: the girl should be marrying by now, but what does she have for a dowry? A fine-tooth comb, a besom broom and a three-kopek coin (God forgive me!) so she can go to the bathhouse. All very well if a good man comes her way, but otherwise she'll remain an old maid till kingdom come.'

No single sentence here was especially difficult, but it takes a great deal of attentive listening to make a speech like this sound convincing. And even when a phrase sounds acceptable, there are nearly always improvements that can still be made. At one stage, this passage ended: 'she'll remain an eternal old maid'. It did not occur to me to question this until a student in one of my translation classes came up with the far more expressive 'Till kingdom come'.

In the case of her husband, Ivan Kuzmich, the biggest stumbling block was not so much the overall rhythm of his speech as a single phrase, '*Slysh ty*' – literally 'Hear, you!', that he comes out with again and again, in situations that move gradually from the most casual to the most tragic. John Bayley memorably refers to this phrase as 'the Captain's invariable and unavailing exhortation to his wife'. It was easy enough to find a satisfactory translation for each occurence of the phrase but difficult to find a translation that worked for all of them. Both 'Hear, you!' and the slightly less literal 'Do you hear me?' sound too aggressive. In the end we came up with 'Yes indeed!' Like the original, this suggests that the captain feels that his wife may not be taking in what he says and that he must struggle to make himself heard. It fits easily into the comedy of the earlier chapters and is appropriately incongruous in the darker chapters at the heart of the novel, after the outbreak of the rebellion:

The soup's been on the table for ages, but you seem to have gone quite deaf.' 'Vasilisa Yegorovna!' replied Ivan Kuzmich. 'I do have my duties, yes indeed! I was drilling my old boys.'

Ivan Kuzmich, of course, agreed with his wife. He kept repeating, 'Yes indeed, Vasilisa Yegorovna is right. Duelling is expressly forbidden by the Code of War Articles.'

Ivan Kuzmich looked at his wife and said, 'Yes indeed, my dear, hadn't I better send the two of you out of the way while we sort out these rebels?'

Pugachov looked at the old man sternly and said, 'How dare you defy me, your sovereign?' Ivan Kuzmich, weak from his wound, summoned up his last strength and said, 'You are no sovereign to me; you are a thief and an impostor. Yes indeed!'

Pushkin's skill in finding a distinct tone of voice and linguistic register for each character was brought home to me especially vividly when I asked my third-year students to translate a passage of dialogue between Pyotr, the young aristocrat, and Pugachov the rebel Cossack leader. They translated Pyotr's clear, correct speech almost faultlessly but were floored by Pugachov's succinct, idiomatic, riddling knowingness:

Pugachov gave me a sharp look. 'So you don't believe,' he said, 'that I am Tsar Pyotr Fyodorovich? Very well. But does not fortune favour the bold? Did not Grishka Otrepyev reign long ago? Think what you like about me, but stay by my side. Why trouble your head over this, that and the other? Whoever the priest be, we call him Father. Serve me in good faith, serve me truly – and I shall make you a prince and a field marshal. What say you, your Honour?'

One student or another misunderstood almost every sentence. People often imagine that it is rare or complicated words that give a translator most trouble. Usually, however, it is apparently simpler phrases like 'Slysh ty!' or, in the passage above, '*Kto ni pop, tot bat'ka*' (literally: 'Whoever be priest, he father') that are hardest. Liz and I had particular difficulty with the three simple words with which Pugachov ends both the passage above and another speech to Pyotr at an equally critical moment: '*Kak ty dumaesh*?' The literal translation, 'What do you think?', seemed too flat. In the end, we decided to translate the first passage as above, ending with 'What say you, your Honour?', and to translate the second passage as follows: 'Pugachov noticed my apprehension. "Well?" he said with a wink. "My field marshal, it seems, is talking good sense. What say you, your Honour?» Pugachov's sly humour gave me back my courage.'

To convey Pugachov's tone of voice in a way that would justify the subsequent reference to 'his sly humour', it was necessary to make several small departures from the literal. We changed 'think' to 'say', we inverted verb and pronoun, and we added the words, 'Your Honour', with which Pugachov addresses Pyotr on many other occasions:

•

Much of the novel's wit derives from the way Pushkin juxtaposes the linguistic registers associated with the different characters and social strata. Some of these effects are simple. The following sentence, which comes just before the third meeting between Pyotr and Pugachov, poses no problems to a translator. Our translation is entirely literal: 'I entered the hut or – as the peasants called it – the palace.' The following exchange, towards the end of Pyotr's first meal in the commandant's house, proved a little harder to translate. It was difficult to strike the right balance, to find a way to bring out the clash of linguistic register without resorting to caricature. Shvabrin is being false but not blatantly so; Ivan Kuzmich is being simple and direct, but he should not sound like a fool:

'*Vasilisa Yegorovna is a lady of exceptional courage,' Shvabrin declared solemnly. 'Ivan Kuzmich can testify to that.' 'Yes indeed,' said Ivan Kuzmich, 'the woman's no faint-heart.*'

Many scenes in the novel are extremely funny, but the humour needs to be rendered delicately. An actor in a stage farce usually needs to keep a straight face. Similarly, it seemed important when we were translating the following lines not to create the impression that Ivan Ignatich, the garrison lieutenant, himself intends to be funny:

After briefly explaining that Aleksey Ivanich and I had quarrelled, I requested Ivan Ignatich to act as my second. Ivan Ignatich listened, eying me intently with his one eye. 'So what you are so kindly telling me,' he replied, 'is that you want to run Aleksey Ivanich through and that you would like me to witness this? Is that so, may I ask?'

The humour is Pushkin's not Ivan Ignatich's. As John Bayley has written, 'the old lieutenant does not even understand the function of a second, and the duel is reduced to the status of a farce by (his and the family's) impenetrable good sense.' It is Ivan Ignatich's clarity and straightforwardness that make the duel appear so absurd; if he were simply clowning, the effect would be different.

We had similar difficulties with the final paragraph of chapter nine, when Pyotr and Savelich are setting out on their way from Fort Belogorsk to Orenburg. Pugachov has just sent Pyotr a gift of a horse and a sheepskin coat:

I put on the sheepskin coat and mounted the horse. Savelich sat behind me. 'See, master,' said the old man. 'I was right to hand the rascal my petition. His heart knows shame after all – not that a spindle-shanked Bashkir nag and a sheepskin coat are worth half of what the bandits stole and what you were pleased to give the rascal yourself. Still something's better than nothing – and there's worse than a tuft of fur to be had from a mad dog.'

The last sentence could be translated more literally as: 'but it still will be useful, and from a wicked/bold dog even a tuft of wool!' The second half of this is a Russian saying; two approximate English equivalents are 'something is better than nothing' and 'half a loaf is better than no bread'. It is only rarely, however, that a translator of Pushkin can get away with such rough equivalents. The literal meaning of this saying is important; Pugachov has more than once been seen as wolf-like – and can therefore be identified with the 'wicked dog' – and Pyotr has just received from him a gift of sheepskin coat – that is, of a tuft of wool. One of our earlier versions was 'Still something's better than nothing – and there's worse to be had from a wicked dog than a tuft of fur.' The trouble with this is that it creates the impression that Savelich, entirely uncharacteristically, is trying to be funny. Once again we had to find a way of making it clear that it is Pushkin, rather than one of his characters, who is making a joke. The solution was simple, but it took us time to find it. Changing the word order to bring the emphasis onto 'mad dog' – 'and there's worse than a tuft of fur to be had from a mad dog' – makes Savelich appear to be moved more by anger and less by the desire to be witty. It also somehow makes the phrase sound more like a pre-existing idiom and less like something that Savelich has come up with himself. The suggestion of the danger of catching rabies may not be present in the original, but a slight inaccuracy seems preferable to having Savelich talk out of character.

•

Less obvious than the clashes of register are the many occasions, some of them moving, when one character unconsciously echoes the words of another. The main difficulty here lay simply in recognizing these often delicate echoes. Had I failed to hear them in the original, we would probably not have translated the phrases identically and so would have torn some of the delicate threads that bind the novel together. Both Pugachov and Savelich, for example, use the phrase 'to all four sides' in conversation with Pyotr Andreich. After sparing Pyotr's life in Belogorsk, Pugachov says, 'Go free

to all four corners of the earth, and do what you will.' When Pyotr declares that he wants to ride through country held by the rebels from Orenburg to Belogorsk, Savelich says, 'Just wait a little. Reinforcements will be coming soon. They'll round up these rascals – then you can ride to all four corners of the earth.' Both Pugachov and Savelich, in their different ways, are fathers to Pyotr; they educate him in Russian ways and, like true fathers, are willing to release him into freedom when the time is right.

Pushkin's webs of repetition are as complex as they are delicate. When Pugachov says, 'So be it! When I hang a man, I hang him; when I pardon a man, I pardon him. That's the way I am. Take your sweetheart, go with her wherever you wish and God grant you love and concord!', he is not only echoing the sense of the speech we have just been looking at; he is also unwittingly repeating some of the last words Ivan Kuzmich ever says to Masha, shortly before his death: 'Well, Masha, may you be happy. Pray to God: he will not forsake you. If a good man comes your way, God grant you love and concord. Live with him as Vasilisa Yegorovna and I have lived together.' This repetition is moving – Pugachov is taking the place of the young couple's absent fathers – but the generosity masks a poignant irony: had Pugachov not executed Ivan Kuzmich, there would be no call for him to be playing the role of surrogate father.

It is possible to tease out still more of these delicate threads. Ivan Kuzmich's 'If a good man comes your way' is itself a repetition of a phrase used by Vasilisa Yegorovna in a speech we have already looked at: 'All very well if a good man comes her way, but otherwise she'll stay an old maid till kingdom come.' The way Ivan Kuzmich unthinkingly echoes his wife's words confirms the reality of the 'love and concord' between them. Here, of course, there is not a trace of irony; Pushkin's attitude towards the captain and his wife is respectful and affectionate.

•

As well as repeating phrases from earlier scenes, characters also sometimes repeat or contradict phrases from the chapter epigraphs and other poems. During the snowstorm in the second chapter Pugachov says to Pyotr, 'I know this land well enough'. As Viktor Shklovsky has pointed out, these words directly contradict a line from the epigraph to that chapter, 'Land unknown to me!' Pugachov is as at home in the world of the steppe as Pyotr is lost in it. In the original the echo is strong yet unforced; '*storona mne znakomaya* (land to me known) echoes *storona neznakomaya* (land not known). This particular echo, needless to say, is one that we were unable to reproduce.

Although Pyotr does not, like Pugachov, speak in riddles or extravagant metaphors, he uses language with equal skill. This is apparent, above all, in his response to Pugachov's question: 'Do you not believe that I am the great sovereign?' For Pyotr to answer 'No' would mean death; for him to answer 'Yes' would be a betrayal. Instead, he uses allusion and equivocation to clear himself a narrow path down which he can walk to freedom. Firstly and most importantly, he enters into Pugachov's world; his opening words, 'Listen. I shall tell you the whole truth' are an almost exact quotation from a song – a dialogue between a Tsar and a thief – that Pugachov loves and that he and his companions have just sung. The implicit parallel between, on the one hand, Pugachov and Pyotr and, on the other hand, the 'true sovereign' and the 'true thief' of the song is, of course, flattering to Pugachov. Second, with the words, 'Judge for yourself: how can I acknowledge you as my sovereign?' Pyotr invites Pugachov to enter into *his* world, to see the world from *his* point of view. Third, Pyotr flatters Pugachov once again – and avoids giving a direct answer – with the words, 'You're no fool – you'd see straight through me.' All three of these points were lost in our earlier drafts. Struggling to bring the folk song to life in English, I had cut out much of the crucial sentence about truth: 'And I shall tell you, my Lord, I shall tell you, my Tsar, I shall tell you the whole truth'. We had translated 'Rassudi:' (Reason!) as 'Think for yourself:' rather than the weightier 'Judge for Yourself'. And, rather than 'You'd see straight through me', we had 'you'd see I was lying' – which is far too direct and explicit. It is only possible to reproduce writing as finely textured as this if one has taken in every detail of the original. In this case I had missed a great deal and would have torn several threads of Pushkin's fabric had not an American Slavist, Polina Rikoun agreed to send me an advance copy of her outstanding article about Pyotr as a trickster.

•

My appreciation of *The Captain's Daughter* has moved through several stages. At first, as I have said, I saw the novel as being rather casually structured – a patchwork quilt, a random collage of fictional letters, historical detail, and poems in a variety of different styles. Next, I became aware of such larger-scale symmetries as the parallels between Pyotr's meetings with Pugachov and Masha's meeting with Catherine the Great (Pyotr does not know Pugachov's identity when they meet in the snowstorm, nor does Masha know Catherine's identity when they meet in the park – and neither Pugachov nor Catherine has a true claim to the Russian throne). There are many other such symmetries (the two gifts of coats, the two attempted gifts of half a rouble, the two occasions, in the first and last chapter, when the elder Grinyov reads the Court Almanac). Thirdly, I became aware of the repeated phrases that I have just been discussing. Lastly, I began to notice the

way Pushkin plays with repetitions of individual sounds.

Some of Pushkin's effects of alliteration extend only the length of a single sentence. These leave a translator with little room to manoeuvre. Our original version of the first sentence of chapter nine, Pyotr's account of the morning immediately after the fall of Belogorsk, was as follows: 'Early in the morning I was woken by the sound of a drum.' The Russian, however, is an unobtrusive but perfect example of onomatopoeia: 'Rano utrom razbudil menya baraban.' We tried, naturally, to reproduce this effect, but we found there was little we could do. Our final version, 'Around dawn I was woken by the sound of a drum', has the merit of concision and contains some play on the sounds 'D', 'N' and 'R'; nevertheless, it falls far short of the original.

Other examples of Pushkin's sound play are more extended. Pyotr's French tutor, Beaupre, carries with him his own sound world, centred on two of the consonants from his own name. Pushkin's first description of him begins as follows: *Beau**pr**e v otechestve svoem byl **p**arikmakherom, **p**otom v **Pr**ussii soldatom, **p**otom **pr**iekhal v **R**ossiyu **p**ou**r** et**r**e outchitel.* This aura of 'PR' proved oddly easy to reproduce; for the main part, in fact, we reproduced it unwittingly, before I had even consciously noticed it in the original. Only after coming up with the word 'pronouncing' for a sentence about Beaupre's love of vodka cordials – 'even came to prefer them to the wines of his fatherland, pronouncing them incomparably better for the digestion' – did I realize that at least part of the word's appropriateness came from the way it harmonized with such words as 'Prussia', 'prefer', 'prod', and above all with Savelich's scornful repetition of Beaupre's repeated requests to the housekeeper for vodka: '*Madam, zhe vu **pr**i, vodkoo*'.

•

The first paragraph of chapter eight contains a supremely moving example of alliteration. Pugachov has just captured Fort Belogorsk. Pyotr's life has been spared, but he has no idea what has happened to Masha. He enters her home to find that 'it had been laid waste. Chairs, tables and chests had been broken up; crockery had been smashed; everything else stolen. (...) Her bedclothes had been ripped and her wardrobe broken open and ransacked (...) But where was the mistress of this humble, virginal cell? A terrible thought flashed through my mind; I pictured her in the hands of the brigands. My heart clenched tight. I wept bitter, bitter tears and called out the name of my beloved.'

The first ten lines of the original sound staccato and harsh. There is a great deal of assonance, alliteration and some syllables are repeated several times:

pere... pere... ras... perer... razb... razl... grabl... braz... razb... gor... gor... grom.. roiz...' Then the harsher consonants drop away and are replaced by repeated 'P', 'L' and 'Sh' sounds at the moment that Palasha the maid, as if reborn out of the sounds of her own name, suddenly takes centre-stage: 'I heard a soft rustling and from behind the wardrobe appeared Palasha, pale and trembling.' ('***poslyshalsya*** *legky* ***sh****um, i iz-za* ***sh****kapa poyavilas* ***Palasha****, blednaya i trepeshchushaya.*' Until this moment, the narrator has consistently referred to as PalashKa, using a familiar form of her name that fits her lowly status; she is, after all, a mere serf and has, at least to some degree, been a figure of fun. Now for the first time she appears as PalaSHa, and the narrator will continue to use this more dignified form of her name for the rest of the novel. Her owners have been killed and she is free to act in her own right; she will show both courage and initiative and will play a crucial role in enabling Pyotr to rescue Masha from the hands of Shvabrin.

•

Alliteration is often a mere surface effect, a veneer. I know of no novel where the sound patterning is so integral, where thought, sound and feeling are so inextricably interwoven. The most remarkable of Pushkin's sound patterns extends throughout the length of the novel and gathers together all its central themes. An astonishing number of the most important words in the novel are made up of permutations of the letters P, L and T. Clothes are *platye* and a coat is *tulup* or *pal'to*; a crowd is *tolpa*, a noose is *petlya*, a handkerchief (Pugachov waves a white handkerchief as a signal for his executioners to hang someone) is *platok*, and a raft (at one point Pyotr encounters a gallows on a raft) is *plot*; to pay is *platit'* and a half-rouble coin (another item that plays an important role in the plot) is *poltina*; a rascal is *plut* and a crime is *prestuplenie*. Patronage is *pokrovitel'stvo* and to show mercy is *pomilovat'*. I doubt if anagrams have ever been used more subtly and with deeper meaning. Every element of sound and plot metamorphoses into another. The coat Pyotr gave to Pugachov saves him from having a *noose* put round his neck in front of a *crowd* of rebels; the coat Pyotr receives from Pugachov leads to him being arrested by the Tsarist authorities. The entire story *turns* on these coats – and on the ensuing allegation that Pyotr is a *turncoat*. This is not Pushkin's pun; I like to think of it, however, not as my own discovery but as a small gift from the English language that a translator would be churlish to spurn.

Pushkin's novel is about giving and forgiving. Translating it has been a joy and it would be graceless not to acknowledge not only the help I have received from friends and colleagues but also the giving and forgiving qualities of language itself. We tend to talk too readily of 'what is lost in transla-

tion' and I have probably dwelt too much on passages we found difficult to recreate. What is perhaps more remarkable is how welcoming the English language has been towards much of *The Captain's Daughter*. The following chapter epigraph, for example, slipped into English as if of itself:

> Our lovely apple tree
> Has no young shoots and no fine crown;
> Our lovely bride
> Has no dear father and no dear mother.
> No one to dress her
> In a wedding gown,
> No one to bless her.

It was as if English were a perfectly fitting garment waiting to welcome this poem. The line 'In a wedding gown' is not there in the original, but it begged to be added; our version seemed incomplete without it. Russian trees have peaks rather than crowns, and so the pun on 'crown of a tree' and 'wedding crown' is also unaccountably absent from the original. And the English language brought other gifts. Our use of the word 'honour' both as an abstract noun and as a form of address ('Your Honour') made it all the easier to emphasize one of the novel's central themes; were a translator to backtranslate our version into Russian, he might well feel frustrated at having to use two different words where English has one. And the word 'turncoat', of course, is an extraordinary gift for a translator – so much so that I managed to remain blind to it until the last stages of revision. After finally realizing how perfectly it encapsulates the central theme of the novel I needed to think for a long time about how often to use it. In the end I decided it was important to exercise restraint; as Pushkin shows us, the acceptance of gifts can lead to accusations of betrayal. In our final version the word occurs only twice. Both times it is the father who uses it – in the first chapter, when he is sending Petrusha off to serve in the army, and in the last chapter, when he believes his son has failed in his service. The symmetry of this is, I believe, Pushkinian.

There is one last thread to hold up to the light. As an epigraph to this essay I chose a sentence quoted in the complete Oxford English Dictionary as an example of the use of the word 'turncoated'. This scornful view of translations, this feeling that they are 'turncoated things at best', has persisted over the centuries – and not only in the English-speaking world. About half of the articles I read about translation in non-academic publications mention either the Italian pun on 'traduttore' and 'traditore' (translator and traitor), the French idea of 'les belles infideles' (i.e. that translations are like women – either beautiful or faithful, but never both) or Robert Frost's irritating dictum that 'Poetry is what gets lost in translation'. My hunch is that this hostility towards translators and their work arises not from the entirely justified view

that most translations are imperfect but from a suspicion of translators per se. Translators are, by definition, at least relatively at home in two or more cultures and their loyalty to any single culture is therefore questionable. It is interesting that Pushkin, apparently somewhat irrelevantly, tells us that Pyotr Grinyov is himself something of a translator. Not only does he, as a child, teach Beaupre to speak Russian; not only does he mediate between the world of the aristocracy and that of the Cossacks and peasants; he even, while serving in a remote steppe fortress, studies French and – most surprisingly of all – does regular translation exercises.

Translators are always vulnerable to criticism. If they do not make full use of their creative imagination, they will betray not only themselves but also the life and spirit of the original. If they do let their imaginations play, they are likely to be accused of presumption. Fidelity, however, is never simply a mechanical matter; to be faithful to a person, a belief, a cause or a work of literature, we must do more than simply obey a set of rules. There will always be times when we need to think more deeply, to ask ourselves questions about what it is we want to be faithful to and why. The best I can do by way of being faithful to Pushkin's P-L-T logogram is to use the word 'turncoat' at two significant moments. Like Pyotr Grinyov, we may sometimes need to be tricksters; perhaps, rather than worrying about being called turncoats, we should simply try to be more accomplished tricksters.

TWO POEMS BY PUSHKIN

The first poem is addressed to Ivan Pushchin, one of Pushkin's closest friends from his schooldays in the Imperial Lycee. Pushchin took part in the Decembrist Conspiracy and had recently been exiled to Siberia. The poem begins with Pushkin's recollection of Pushchin being the first of his friends to visit him when he was himself in exile in Mikhailovskoye, in January 1825:

First friend, friend beyond price,
One morning I blessed fate
When sleigh bells, your sleigh bells
Sang out and filled my lonely home
Lost in its drifts of snow.

May my voice now, please God,
Gladden your soul
In that same way
And lighten your exile
With light from our Lycee's clear day.

The second poem is the song that Pushkin added to *A Feast in Time* of Plague, his adaptation of a play by a forgotten English writer by the name of John Wilson.

There is joy in battle,
Poised on a chasm's edge,
And in black ocean's rage –
That whirl of darkening wind and wave –
In an Arabian sandstorm,
And in a breath of plague.

Within each breath of death
Lives joy, lives secret joy
For mortal hearts, a pledge,
Perhaps, of immortality,
And blessed is he who, storm-tossed,
Can see and seize this joy.

Translated from Russian by Robert Chandler

Stanley Mitchell

ON FINISHING MY TRANSLATION OF *EUGENE ONEGIN*

When I was translating *Onegin* my shrink asked me, as they always do, what I 'felt' about it, how I responded to this or that character. I pondered and replied that I felt nothing, that I had only one concern - to get the translation as 'right' as possible in terms of style, vocabulary, rhyme and metre. In other words, my task was purely technical. 'Feeling' was confined to the intensity of the task. I was retired, but had never worked so hard at anything before. The translation took between seven and eight years. Every stanza was a struggle. With each successful final couplet I'd jump up, crying 'erquickend!, for some reason choosing the German word. I certainly felt 'quickened'. The process of translating each stanza resembled a Sisyphean labour except that I was always able in the end to topple the boulder over to the other side. The final couplet did that for me, resolving the complex rhymes of the preceding twelve lines and summing up or puncturing the preceding argument. So we were engaged in a parallel labour. The stanza left an indelible stamp on me. For a long time I could only write poetry using Pushkin's fourteen lines. These seemed to capture the novel as a whole, capacious enough to include all the moods listed by Pushkin in his Dedication to Pletnyov:

> Half-comic and half-melancholic,
> Ideal and down-to-earth bucolic,
> The careless fruit of leisure times,
> Of sleepless nights, light inspirations,
> Of immature and withered years,
> The intellect's cold observations,
> The heart's impressions marked in tears.

I think this is why so many English and American poets have tried to repopularize narrative verse by imitating the *Onegin* stanza.

But these are the exigencies of translation rather than the meaning of the story, although I know the two can't be separated. As my good shrink remarked, I must have been reacting to the novel unconsciously. I wrote two unfinished accounts of the translation once I had completed it, and there my feelings began to emerge. I am glad therefore to have been invited to write yet another in which I can scrutinize more clearly what I felt. Translation and reading are two distinct activities. I had read *Onegin* a number of times and thought about it. But translation brings you unusually close to the original and enables you to see the text differently. Hitherto, I had read Pushkin

intellectually, influenced by the Marxist critic Georg Lukacs, who saw in the Russian poet the embodiment of the 'beautiful'. It didn't need a Marxist to say this, but the 'beautiful' wasn't a category used by Marxist critics. 'Realism' was their criterion. Lukacs singled out beauty as an autonomous sphere within a realist aesthetic, locating it in three periods - classical Greece, the Renaissance and the French Revolution, each of which, he argued, benefited from a pause between successive class societies. Pushkin he regarded as a late representative of the French revolutionary epoch in spite of Russia's persisting feudalism. In the art of the beautiful, Lukacs found the Russian poet superior even to Goethe, master pupil of the Greeks in this age. There is no other kind of beauty for Lukacs but the classical. He ignores or discounts Romantic beauty and Romanticism in general. But here is not the place to pursue his theory further.

I had always been attracted to the 'beautiful' and the 'classical'. I was by nature predisposed to proportion, harmony and balance. The idea that these aesthetic qualities could be married to a materialist philosophy excited me as a young Marxist interested in the arts. From then on Pushkin became my principal object of research.

Translation changed my ideas. I should mention that I suffer from bipolar disorder, which involves the very opposite of harmony, balance and proportion. It is understandable therefore that I should seek them in art. There were several occasions during the translation when I was depressed or manic. When I was depressed I was unable to continue. During one manic phase I came near to destroying the already finished translation and substituting an inferior one. I took the manuscript from one hospital to another, not necessarily working on it, but keeping it as a talisman. I believe that my disablity left no mark on the final version. Pushkin's precision and clarity steadied me. And both my Penguin editor and my devoted helpmeet Barbara Rosenbaum tested the translation at every step. Angela Livingstone, a former colleague brought more precision to the text. She and I had planned a book on Pushkin of which only a few pages remain extant. We discussed Lukacs's essay together. Robert Chandler, who encouraged me to submit the first chapter to Penguin, so making the translation possible, suggested some perceptive changes at the final stage. Above all, my thanks go to Barbara, who patiently withstood the blast of my mania and kept the original version safe.

In my retrospective accounts I dwelt not unexpectedly on the suicidal moments in *Onegin* or what I took to be such. Towards the end of Chapter Two Pushkin writes of his generation:

> Meanwhile, enjoy, friends, till it's ended,
> This light existence, every dram!
> Its nullity I've comprehended
> And little bound to it I am.

The concluding stanza of the poem expresses a similar feeling without the bitterness:

> Blest who betimes has left life's revel,
> Whose wine-filled glass he has not drained

To these may be added the concluding lines to Chapter Six which, if not articulating a suicidal inclination, conjure a ferocious alienation:

> Let not a poet's soul be frozen,
> Made rough and hard, reduced to bone
> And finally be turned to stone
> In that benumbing world he goes in,
> In that intoxicating slough
> Where, friends, we bathe together now.

The first quotation reminded me of Keats's wish 'to cease upon the midnight with no pain'. In the aftermath of the French Revolution Keats laments the beauty that can no longer 'keep her lustrous eyes' ('Ode to a Nightingale'). The lure of death is common to Romantic poets. Pushkin is held back from the abyss by what he calls his 'sad mission', that is his poetic gift, and his desire for posterity.

I feel now that the last stanza of *Onegin* is not so much an invitation to suicide as an Epicurean appeal to withdraw from the storms of life into congenial company. In the penultimate stanza he thanks his novel for giving him this shelter:

> With you I've known
> The things that every poet covets:
> Oblivion, when the tempest buffets,
> Sweet talk of friends.

Nor can it be by accident that Pushkin refers in the final stanza to the Persian poet Sadi, who in his poem Bustan celebrated a garden retreat similar to that of Epicurus. Pushkin's last stanza is a gentle and accepting valediction.

It was natural that I should have been attracted by the dark sides of the novel. But it was a discovery I needed to make, for I was also discovering myself. My depressions impinged several times while I was translating and, costly though they were, led me to a more sombre view of the novel than hitherto. Yet it was not a subjective view. I believe the novel is objectively very pessimistic, and that I had previously approached it with a one-sided theory derived from Lukacs.

He sees Tatiana as the embodiment of beauty. Her fine 'moral balance', he says, is rooted in the people. But in the 'benumbing world' of St. Petersburg high society she is isolated from the people. Her beloved nurse has died. She is cut off from her adored countryside. She hates her new social milieu, although she adapts to it very well. Her marriage is arranged and her love for Onegin wasted. She is a broken woman who maintains an outward poise, who behaves 'comme il faut'. Is this the embodiment of beauty? I now began to see Tatiana very differently. Her stoicism evoked compassion, and like Herzen I felt anger for the society that imprisoned and thwarted not only her but Onegin and Lensky too. Like her, they were broken people. Onegin withdraws from a shallow life, and experiences a helpless love too late. Lensky is prevented from realizing his impossible ideals, and sacrifices himself in a futile duel. No wonder Pushkin ends his novel before any further degradation takes place in his hero's life (though it is witnessed in the fragments of his Journey). Likewise he refrains from following Tatiana any further into her marriage.

Translation brought me closer to the characters. I could never identify with Lensky, whom Pushkin himself nearly destroys in his prediction of the young poet's philistine future. Nor could I identify with Onegin, but I now saw him as a tragic figure. I saw his frequent yawns not just as symptoms of boredom, but as entrances into a void, perhaps the 'nullity' that Pushkin found in his 'light-headed' generation. There is nothing metaphysical about Pushkin, yet when Onegin hears 'the timeless mutter of the soul' we are carried into a dimension beyond everyday life. The novel is laconic, therefore one has to read slowly to become aware of its depths which are often capped by irony. But the irony differs from the cutting tones of Lermontov or Heine. It does not undermine, but binds oppositions – illusion and reality, past and present, town and country, digressions and narrative, poetry and prose and the contrasting and self-contradictory characters. No single aspect of the novel acquires predominance, yet none is fragmentary. (The fragment was the goal of Romantic Irony.) Not even the most straightforward description (Onegin's estate, the theatre, the duel etc.) escapes a touch of the ironic. Pushkin's irony unites the novel, but it is a unity quite different from the 'epic objectivity' or 'totality' that Lukacs talks about. It is a unity of dissonance. Only nature here is entirely free of irony, providing the chronological canvas of the novel and the source for many of the similes, especially the monitory lines in Chapter Two:

> Alas! Each generation must
> By Providence's dispensation
> Rise, ripen, fall in quick succession,
> Upon life's furrows

Tatiana of course is most closely involved with nature, enabling her to grow.

Neither Lensky nor Onegin grows. I could not only sympathize now, but positively fall in love with her, with her shyness, passion, imagination and waywardness. For Kuchelbecker she was a portrait of Pushkin himself, Pushkin combines dark and light. Pisarev, offended by what he saw as the brilliant triviality of the surface, could not see the depths. Ovsyaniko-Kulikovsky remarked that *Onegin* could only gain by the removal of the digressions, where the depths of the novel are mostly to be found. I was drawn more and more to the digressions. I had written an essay on them long ago. While translating *Onegin* I wrote another, which means that I had been thinking consciously about the novel despite my earlier disclaimer. But it was only after I'd finished the translation that I could discover my feelings about the characters. I saw the digressions and the narrative as a counterpoint of bass and treble or a chiaroscuro of depth and surface, longing and light, past and present. The surface depicted what is and what must be, the world to which the characters have to adapt or fall by the wayside. The digressions, like Pushkin's urge to freedom, expressed unfulfillable desire or mourned an irretrievable past. Although Pushkin as author is at home everywhere in the novel, it seemed to me that the digressions were his true abode. I have in mind the lyrical digressions, not the commentary on the state of the roads or the debate between the ode and the elegy. All the characters leave home. Lensky of course dies, Olga joins her hussar in his regiment, Tatiana marries into an alien milieu, Eugene travels, returning to a hostile St. Petersburg, Pushkin sheds his digressions, bidding farewell to youth and poetry for a literature of prose.

I saw now a different beauty in *Onegin*, not just the familiar serenity, lightheartedness and harmony, but the disparity of dark and light, which reminded me of similar contrasts in the music of Mozart and the paintings of Leonardo. The surface sparkle rests 'upon a base of suffering' as Nietzsche said of the art of the Apollonian Greeks or, as Pushkin himself noted, upon 'The heart's impressions marked in tears.'

Before translating *Onegin* I had regarded my life as a failure because of the bipolar disorder which nearly ruined me. I had managed, as I have indicated, to write a few things about Pushkin, including a critical study, which was first accepted and then turned down by the publisher. This study which I longed to rewrite was superseded by the translation which I completed at the age of 75, earning me high praise. Having gone through Pushkin's school, I am now much more eager to write poetry than to write about it. I'd rather have written this present piece as a poem. I've composed the odd poem since my adolescence, but I never regarded myself seriously as a poet. Pushkin was my only teacher. My translation goes back to a collective project at Essex University in the nineteen-sixties, when Angela Livingstone and I collaborated with our Head of Department, Donald Davie, an established poet, to translate *Onegin*. The project foundered and the poet died. Many years later I tried my hand at the first stanza and still more years passed until the

translation was born. Only here do I recognize myself as a poet. Verse that I had written before or composed after the translation cannot compare with it. Reading it through recently with a small group, I marvelled at some of my lines. But that is not the main point. Since completing the translation, I know that I shall never have to feel a failure again. Repeating Pushkin's self-congratulation on finishing a piece of work, I said of mine : 'Well done, you son-of-a-bitch!'

Draginja Ramadanski

ON THE TRANSLATOR'S RETOUCH

The translator's maxim „what you look for, that is what you find" has a thousand meanings, so I am going to share with you a random episode that belongs to the phenomena translators keep secret rather than boast of. The editor of a literary periodical, which cherishes the love story column, called me recently and asked for a Russian translation, but „the story should be no longer than one page".

Thinking it over, I reached for the (old, Soviet) edition of the Nobel Prize winner Ivan Bunin, sure to find what I needed there. The discrete but quite intensive erotics of his stories deserves the steady reputation of classics in the genre.

While reading, I neglected my deadlines and understood more clearly than ever before that Bunin's stories are really rather uniform: he (more seldom, she) after some accidental impulse, reconstructs the details of first love. This is especially true of the book Dark Alleys, written in Paris, 1937-1944, a real encyclopedia of first love dramas. The book contained a short novella, Wolves, which suited me by its length. I started translating – like a participant in a blind date. It did not take long just to type the translation while reading the original. Less than half an hour.

However, the result was disappointing. I had a helpless collection of details in front of me, some kind of a troubled pastorale, full of white, red and black chromatic spots, without a distinctly formed eros of speech. The basic narrative suspense was reduced to two youngsters riding in a cart at night and the girl's fear of wolves, which actually appeared in the end, in the middle of a sudden forest fire. The girl took the reins and successfully maneuvered through the ambush of fire and beasts, but she was hurt and permanently scarred.

Is it possible that a Nobel Prize winner (the story was written in 1940) could write such confusion on the page? Then the telephone rang again. This time the editor of a children's magazine asked for a shorter Russian story. Without thinking I sent him this „short-tailed" translation (which, by the way, soon appeared with a pretty illustration). It seems that we all behaved according to the prejudice that the world of children is simplified and confused. If „a good adult book is not good for a child" (Justejn Gorder), a bad one may serve the purpose...

And then I returned to the original. I took out, from my innermost pocket, completely different, interactive glasses. And suddenly, as if through a microscope, Bunin's prose starts to swarm with different forms of expression and highly allusive symbolism.

It is considered that in translating prose the sound picture is not necessarily

in the foreground, but in reality this is not so. Bunin's prose resounded in its hollow rhythms, which skillfuly conveyed the supressed. As in real poetry, the prosodic components diluted the concentration of details in a scant space...

Arriving at the centre of a unique fragrant event, captured in a polyphonic whirlpool, I catch the runners of hinted meanings, I communicate with the untranslatable residue that is available only in an inspired, admiring reading, and not at all in fulfillment of a daily routine. Receiving an artistic message (in translation as well as the original) is never the same with different persons; moreover, at a different time, the same person can react in a different way. My mood influences the message substantially! Having finally read it in an adult way, I calmly sent the translation, without any change, to the obscure adult column as well. I hope the readers enjoyed its erotic charge. It is not always compulsory to know whom we translate for, but that assumed echo is essential, even if it is a posteriori. A translator, namely, does not only receive but also sends a message, so that he or she can also expect complex reactions, restricted by the author's competence. A propos of some return signals about that „double" translation with a severe erotic display, I cite a keen comment from the poet Radivoj Sajtinac, who sent me word: "Thank you for Bunin. You laced it up well." He read the 'first', juvenile version, burdened with the translator's guilty conscience. Sajtinac's comment, which presents a skilled reader as well as a writer, and above all an unselfish man in personal communication, led me to share this episode with you. It seems that you cannot hide anything from a true reader...

Reading is a fact that frees the text from the matter of words and leads it to the current life (good old H. R. Jaus). It is especially so when we consider a rematerialized translator's reading, which can result in the change of a text's intention (launching "hard" Bunin in a children's magazine).

This episode (which does no credit to the translator's honour) indicates that the attitude towards a receiver is not just a survey of his wishes, but a thoughtless gesture, not always in the reader's interest. The translator is the one who is caught as an „unfit" receiver. The translator is the one who stepped across the threshold of the translator's action, keeping the original form but menacing the reader's benefit. I blushed with shame before the desecrated innocence of the children. The makeup examination of „readdressing" the text was a relief. After a certain delay, I felt myself capable of „opening" the poetry of Bunin's prose.

A threatening atmosphere of uncertainty, running out of control. Is not the very title Wolves and the episode with a sheep full of ominous predictions? Matches like the simulation of a controlled fire, flirting instead of passion, and all that as a symbol of destructive fire of sensual power, hanging over from all sides. It can be seen that these are Red Riding Hood and the Wolf from Her inexperience joined with the utmost boldness as well as from His teriomorphic portrait („the lean, bony face of a high school boy"). The landscape configuration supports the roles of the partners being taken on. The leitmotiv of wolves confirms Bunin's supposition that the world is clearly divided into those who are plunder and the others, who are greedily disposed. While the

former are under the sign of the natural and innocent, the latter are dangerous in their insincerety (like „hot red currant syrup"). The wolf is the one who becomes a heraldic custodian of a/the primeval emotional scenario. Through that ghostly messenger a dialogue was established with the mythological text, lasting from time immemorial. The burnt roof, compared to the book covers, directs us to the big codex, in which everybody wins according to merit... Mythologizing a bit, Bunin brings us to the closeness of archetype psychology. The mechanisms of the unconscious equalize with the principles of a mythological understanding of reality, not without a recognizable folkloric ritualism.

Love, however, is a matter that does not stay, either in strong female or in weak male hands. That is why every story of Bunin's is a story of death of love, literal and metaphoric. He simply offers his characters no chance to fight for their relaxation and comfort, to combine love and everyday life. All our lives we are followed by sensual, physiological, scarred remembrances of love as a supreme judge of human relationships. Mentioning the moments of pouring out such a remembrance, with the flower of melancholic epiphany, Bunin unintrusively favours euphemism for the loss of chastity. The story Wolves is dedicated to the creation of such a transformed, bright, nostalgic remembrance of a thing that happens only once in life. And that is why the author can say that „for those she loved many times in her life, there was nothing more dear than that scar, which resembled a permanent mild smiling."

In order to make this translator's „footnote" more complete, I will share with you the extension of my „dance with wolves": there was a poem in my mailbox just written by Irina Mashinski, entitled *Wolf*...

It seemed to me methodically worthwhile to compare the same metaphor in the two texts, which shape the sequences of one and the same mythopoetic happening. Having the impression of finding an addition to Bunin's lyrical prose, I also translated a poem, this time immediately but without haste, as often happens with the translation (and writing?) of poetry, when the sound picture is the one that directs a bundle of possible, often distant, associating meanings.

There is one more version of the same story, about eternal love-hate. Let us imagine a lonely hero who wanders through an inhospitable landscape, *in a barking sponday of steps-moves of Russian orthoepy (sag – sah), with the neurotic reflex of a chased beast. If she makes brilliant moves why is there always a checkmate menace, as if the heroine is wondering. The winding running looks like a steady pursuit and escape, but the checkmate is delayed very far, as the wolf is simply uncatchable**...

That metaphor is now being used for a beloved man; the emotional omen is completely opposite in relation to Bunin's *Wolves*! Aggression and inertness, the greedy one and the prey change places, this time in the background of the mytheme of Adam and Eve.

** The author's kind epistolary autocomments are in italics*

We are on the very border of self-identification, reaching the initial wholeness, which preceded the creation of Eve with her original sin. It is not by chance that this remythologization of the wolf was realized in the infantile, *naive visual style of Henri Rousseau, with a contour aura of night and moonshine*. The „whole woodcut" contains ice as well as transparency and glow and the sharpness of dark waters, *similar to obsidian layers*. The crack of a ribbed spring lies under the inner charge of complex, essentially antagonistic, agonized feelings. Mashinski's poem unwillingly celebrates the moral codex („hard is the law, too many letters") of nomadic, unsettled rootless manliness. In the return of the heroine to such a native scar („pure twin, the axis-bristles of my life") there is an innovative, neither Darwinian nor Biblical, evolution-creation.

Presumably it is the impulse of return to her own self, to one's own Animus. For: is there in reality so fine an Adamic, manly loneliness that is marked as feminine? If we speak about the wolf, then is it about us (or the Animus), and if it is about the fox, then it is about the Other, or Anima? In the syntax of this poem the scattered grain of released first person singular pronouns, insubordinated by normative grammar, testifies about that.

The game of a beater and a chased one is finished, it is time to return to the primogeniture of one's own soul, to *something terribly lonely, terrible and lonely*.

This is a poem about the most personal and therefore the most general theme, as is always the case in true literature. A most precious amalgam with which the talented are immediately successful. Nevertheless, the author was surprised by my reading. „Her" wolf had his baptismal masculine name, the poem was created as a talented expression of feminine resentment. Exchanging our readings, we came to a certain competition. We each held irreconcilably to our opinions, followed by obligatory compliments. "Your poem is marvelous." "Your translation is fine."

Does the translator, consequently, have the right to be unfaithful to the original intention, to develop the other potential of the text, to place the accents differently, to be partial to his own implanted meaning? The sender (author) surely has his communicative intention, but the secondary sender (translator) can have one as well. Replacement of the original language by the target language is sometimes the replacement of original intentions by target intentions. We are speaking of the moment when the translator's interpretation passes to semi-intentional, giving the meaning independently from the intentions of the primary sender, and for which meaning there is a foundation in the very text. May the translator arbitrarily "liberate" the original from its "basic instincts", annulling the fundamental (un)certainty of the original? Or does the original unerringly find its way to the addressee, in spite of these coauthor's efforts?

At moments of sincere auto-mistifying exaltation, the translator wants to believe that everything is not lost, that there is something to be found in the translation. While the reader's orientation is first of all one of obtaining and procuring, does the translator, having taken, immediately return his or her debt to literature, sometimes with a rich interest rate? Let us agree on the following: the materialization of the reading following straight after the author's is full of countless, not only dangerous but also salutary *maybes*...

Grigory Starikovsky

DRYDEN'S RECREATION OF DIDO: TRANSLATION AS INTERPRETATION

In his essay "Discourses on Satire and Epic Poetry," John Dryden asserts that his translations of Persius and Juvenal were intended
... for the pleasure and entertainment of those gentlemen and ladies, who tho' they are not scholars, are not ignorant: persons of good sense, who not having been conversant in the original, or at least not having made Latin verse so much their business as to be critics in it, would be glad to find if the wit of our two great authors be answerable to their fame and reputation in the world.
The English poet certainly adheres to this "populist" principle in his rendition of the *Aeneid*, steering, to use Dryden's own words, "betwixt the two extremes of paraphrase and literal translation." Cast in vigorous heroic verse, Dryden's translation of the Vergilian epic (published in 1697) constitutes a dialogue between the Age of Augustus and the England in the aftermath of the Glorious Revolution. Through this translation the poet familiarizes his reader with the contents of the epic while effectively imposing upon Vergil a modernized and hence (for Dryden's audience) more comprehensible frame of reference. Indeed, the translator's proclivity for interpretation and elucidation is the driving force behind Dryden's rendering of the *Aeneid*. He imparts to his work not only an "unabated spirit," as one of his encomiasts has put it, but also an endless string of interpretative readings intended to shed light on Vergil's many ambiguities. Certainly, Dryden's interpretations of the Vergilian text are sometimes far-fetched, occasionally even expressing notions unlikely to have occurred to the great Mantuan in his wildest dream. And yet, Dryden's hermeneutic and, in many ways, unique treatment of the epic gave rise to a text that might best be described as a "running commentary" on the *Aeneid*, a commentary that simultaneously, as per Dr. Johnson, "keeps the mind in pleasant captivity" and reevaluates the *Aeneid* on aesthetic, ideological and philosophical grounds.
Dryden's translation is difficult to fully comprehend without considering it in the context of late seventeenth century culture and values. This historical embeddedness is especially conspicuous in his portrayal of Aeneas. In Dryden's hands, Aeneas turns into a hero whose fate - as both Paul Hammond and Richard Thomas articulate - is aligned with that of the exiled Catholic king James II. This alignment is already apparent in the opening lines of the translation: ".the Man I sing, who., expell'd and exil'd [Dryden's rather suggestive amplification of Vergil's *profugus*], left the Trojan shore.." At the same time, Aeneas is recast according to a notion of heroism that privileges unwavering courage, often neutralizing Vergil's own portrayal of the Trojan prince. Thus, for,

example, during Aeneas' first appearance in the epic, after the storm breaks out, Dryden's Aeneas is "struck with unusual fright" (l. 135), which loosely translates Vergil's *extemplo Aeneae solvuntur frigore membra* (*Aen*. 1.92). The use of the adjective "unusual" here suggests that Dryden is taking pains to project an image of Aeneas as a hero who is typically beyond the reach of fear. If Dryden's Aeneas is, for the most part, an essentially unambiguous figure, his Dido is a much more complex persona, a combination of Vergilian stereoscopic vision with Dryden's own subtle "reading" of her character. To be sure, Dryden's attitude toward Dido is not unequivocal. In his "Dedication of the *Aeneid*," by way of justifying Aeneas's departure from Carthage, Dryden comments on the hero's parting words to Dido - *neque in haec foedera veni,* etc. (*Aen*. 4.339) - in strikingly ironic fashion. This, according to Dryden, is what Aeneas essentially means by his response to Dido's rebukes:

'I made no such bargain with you at our marriage, to live always drudging on at Carthage: my business was Italy; and I never made a secret of it. If I took my pleasure, had not you your share of it? I leave you free, at my departure, to comfort yourself with the next stranger who happens to be shipwrecked on your coast. Be as kind a hostess as you have been to me; and you can never fail of another husband. In the meantime, I call the Gods to witness, that I leave your shore unwillingly..' This is the effect of what he saith, when it is dishonored out of Latin verse into Latin prose.

In his "dishonored" prosaic exegesis, Dryden, elaborating on Aeneas's speech, gives the Trojan hero absolution and puts the blame for his departure on the gods. As the translator claims: ". Jupiter is better able to bear the blame, than either Vergil or Aeneas."

Nonetheless, this ironic stance and perhaps even mocking tone finds no place in his poetic translation. An anonymous contemporary reader of Dryden's *Aeneid* summed up the affair between Aeneas and Dido as follows:

O how I see thee in soft Scenes of Love, / Renew those Passions he alone could move! / Here Cupid's Charms are with new Art exprest, / And pale Eliza [Dido] leaves her peaceful rest: / Leaves her Elisium, as if glad to live, / To Love, and Wish, to Sigh, Despair and Grieve, / And Die again for him that would again deceive.

This enthusiastic reader interprets the liaison between the two characters in terms of a contemporary romantic relationship, clearly sympathizing with the Carthaginian queen and putting the blame on Aeneas for its dissolution. Such a reading is rooted in a well-established tradition that goes back to Ovid's *Heroides* and that was in vogue in Dryden's time. Indeed, the English poet frequently pays obeisance to the cultural codes of his age, as, for example, in his rendition of the first encounter between the Carthaginian queen and Aeneas. He translates Dido's initial reaction to the appearance of Aeneas (*obstipuit primo aspectu Sidonia Dido, / casu deinde viri tanto, Aen*. 1.613-614) as follows:

The Tyrian Queen stood fix'd upon his Face, / Pleas'd with his motions, ravish'd with his grace: / Admir'd his Fortunes, more admir'd the Man; / Then recollected stood.

Here, as Richard Morton observes, Dryden "significantly alters the Vergilian

focus" by portraying love in a manner more appropriate to the Restoration court than to the Augustan empire, "with gender roles exquisitely observed." This modernized reading goes hand in hand with Dryden's constant emphasis of Dido's vulnerability. The theme of Dido as a victim of Aeneas and of the gods is persistent in Books I and IV; in fact, the development of this motif begins with the first mention of Dido by Venus in Book I. Here, Dryden rewrites Vergil's *magno miserae dilectus amore (Aen.* 1.344) as "and either heart / At once was wounded with an equal dart". If Vergil portrays Dido as a woman who *actively* loves, Dryden, using a contemporary metaphor for falling in love, describes both Dido and Sychaeus equally as *victims* of love. In the context of *Aeneid* Book I, Dido's love for Sychaeus, as Dryden presents it, foreshadows the wound that she receives from Cupid and her passion for Aeneas, as well as the tragic consequences of their affair.

Though he clearly adapted his *Aeneid* to the tastes and expectations of his audience, Dryden was also well versed in Latin and doubtless aware of the chief Roman values embedded in Vergil's poem. Not the least important of these values, *pietas*, figures prominently in Dryden's rendering. In the "Dedication," Dryden underscores the importance of *pietas* for understanding the character of Aeneas:

Piety. takes place of all, as the chief part of his [Aeneas's] character; and the word in Latin is more full than it can possibly be expressed in any modern language; for there it comprehends not only devotion to the gods, but filial love, and tender affection to relations of all sorts.

Paul Hammond observes that the adjective "pious" - which in Dryden's *Aeneid* commonly translates Vergil's *pius* - is frequently used by the poet "at a moment when human beings are trying to fulfill their basic human duties in the face of inexplicably hostile supernatural forces." One of the examples that Hammond provides is Laocoon running "with *pious* Haste" to help his sons in their struggle against the sea serpents. When it comes to Aeneas, Dryden outdoes Vergil in the lavishness with which he utilizes this epithet. Moreover, on three occasions he links the adjective *pious* to Dido, once in Book I and twice in Book IV. In the first passage, quite in keeping with Vergil's text, Aeneas addresses Dido: "You, who your *pious* Offices employ / To save the Reliques of abandon'd Troy". Dryden seems to have deliberately transported the adjective pios from the adjacent lines (*di tibi, si qua pios respectant numina, si quid / usquam iustitia est et mens sibi conscia recti, / praemia digna ferant, Aen.* 1.603-605) to underscore Dido's *pietas*. In Book IV, rendering the apostrophe in Aen. 4.65-67 (*heu, vatum ignarae mentes! Quid vota furentem, / quid delubra iuvant? Est mollis flamma medullas interea et tacitum vivit sub pectore vulnus*), Dryden translates as follows, condensing Vergil considerably: "What Priestly Rites, alas! What Pious Art, / What Vows avail to cure a bleeding Heart!" Here pious refers to the rites administered by Dido. In the third instance, the adjective is used in Dido's reply to Aeneas, following her bluntly Epicurean remark "as if the peaceful State / Of Heav'nly Poe'rs were touch'd with Humane Fate" (*scilicet is superis labor est, ea cura quietos / solicitat,* ll. 379-380):

'Yet if the Heav'ns will hear my pious Vow, / The faithless Waves, not half

so false as thou; / or secret Sands, shall Sepulchers afford / To thy proud Vessels, and their perjur'd Lord' (*spero equidem mediis, si quid pia numina possunt, / supplicia hausurum scopulis et nomine Dido / saepe vocaturum, Aen*. 4.382-384)

Dryden's interpretation of Vergil's text in this passage is rather drastic; it is not the summoned *numina*, but Dido's own words that are qualified with the adjective *pia*. These are certainly *her* words: Dido, whom in his "Dedication" Dryden calls "an infidel," clearly and probably mistakenly believes that *pietas* is on her side, whereas, according to her, Aeneas is faithless and therefore deserves the curse. And yet Dryden's transposition of the epithet, along with the other two uses of the word, prompts the reader to take Dido's self-avowed *pietas* seriously and even to sympathize with the tragedy of the Carthaginian queen. By setting Dido's *pietas* against that of Aeneas, the English poet intentionally juxtaposes these two characters. Along the same lines, I would like to recap Hammond's observation that in Dryden's *Aeneid* the adjective "pious" is frequently used to flag many predicaments experienced by the characters of the epic. If Hammond's idea is applied to Dryden's treatment of the Carthaginian queen, the inevitable question arises: when Dido is qualified as "pious," is this just a straightforward, unblinking expression of praise on the part of the English poet, or rather, does Dryden, by way of aligning Dido with her husband/lover, endeavor to contemplate the "insecurity" of *pietas* in the context of the *Aeneid*, *pietas* which is of little or no avail to its possessors? In other words, does Dryden, in his rather provocative manner, attempt to articulate that *other, pessimistic* reading of the Roman epic?

Daniel Weissbort

TED HUGHES AND TRANSLATION

Ted was standing on his own in a corner of Kim's capacious sitting-room, on the second floor of a large stuccoed house in Belsize Park Gardens, not far from Swiss Cottage, London, where I was living at the time. It was New Year's Eve, 1963/4. I remember little of our conversation, but I was pleased or relieved to see him there. The past year had been a terrible one, with the suicide of Sylvia in February. What, however, *has* remained in my memory is that, during the course of our conversation, Ted mentioned that he had once had an idea for a journal, devoted solely to translation of contemporary poetry into English. Its novel aim was to present as much foreign poetry as possible in English translation: "an airport for incoming aircraft" was how he put it. A larger aim was to inundate English literary sensibility with foreign products.

Ted even wondered whether it might be feasible to mail a copy to every poet in England. Another, even more fanciful idea was to print the magazine on table-napkins. The rationale was perhaps not dissimilar to that espoused by the Gideons who place a copy of the Authorized Version of the Bible in as many hotel bedrooms as possible. Ted, in fact, wanted a copy of his and Seamus Heaney's anthology, The Rattlebag, in every hotel room and even suggested as much to Faber. I also recall an idea of the late Joseph Brodsky, as a US Poet Laureate, to place an anthology of poetry alongside the Gideon Bible. At any rate, Ted's project for a poetry translation journal did not come as a surprise, since he had already mentioned it to me in a letter from the States, where he had received encouragement from Sonia Raiziss, founding-editor of the magazine *Chelsea*.

Ted was adept at coming up with proposals at the right moment, and, I dare say, I was not fully stretched intellectually at the time. Anyway, I began to explore the practicalities of his suggestion, somewhat naively contacting cultural attaches among others. Perhaps, the times were propitious, because my amateurish efforts were rather productive. For instance, I sent out a few hundred subscription forms to American university libraries, addresses painstakingly copied from a directory in the Round Reading Room of the British Museum. About a quarter of these institutions subscribed, and I remember feeling disappointed that not all had done so, not realizing that such a response rate was almost unheard of! I ought, of course, at once to have mailed the remaining libraries, in which case *Modern Poetry in Translation* (MPT) would have begun life with a substantial subscription basis. It might even have been able to survive without public subsidy, which came, as

always, with strings attached. The point is that Ted's idea was commercially feasible, unlike perhaps – but who knows! – some of his other schemes. I have in mind examples, such as breeding eels or raising minks.

That the times were ripe received further confirmation when I wrote to the late Dennis Silk, an English-born writer living in Jerusalem. I naively asked for the name of and some sample poems by the "best living Israeli poet." Dennis wrote back quickly, naming Yehuda Amichai, and enclosed some translations by himself and others of Yehuda's poetry. These translations appeared in the first issue of *MPT*, alongside poems by various Eastern European poets, whom Ted had met at poetry festivals, like the one in Spoletto. At such places where modestly anonymous, more-or-less literal English translations of participating poets had been circulating. When Ted received the Amichai translations, he commented that we needed a lot more. He asked his friend Assia Gutmann, who had been raised in Israel, if she would supply them. In due course, the first collection of Amichai's work appeared, in Assia's translations, reworked with Ted, and published by the Cape Goliard Press.

Ted believed, as noted, that a goodly number of translations was needed. He was opposed to the idea of magazines, in which a small number of poems were stylishly presented. Rather, he believed that as many as possible should be squeezed in. The first issue of *MPT* was, in fact, on his suggestion, printed in the form of a newspaper with three columns per page, bristling with poems. This had something to do with his conviction, which I shared, that to appreciate a poet's work one needed to see many examples of it. Of course, there were implications with regard to the translations and emphasis on quantity was not conducive to agonizing over every line, by which I do not wish to suggest, however, that Ted was insensitive to quality.

The Amichi translations were included in a volume of Selected Poems, published by Penguin, in 1971, in the Penguin "Modern European Poets" series (Amichai was born in Germany). The volume, however, is described, somewhat misleadingly, as "Translated by Assia Gutman and Harold Schimmel with the collaboration of Ted Hughes," with an "introduction" by Michael Hamburger who had also agreed, on Ted's invitation, to become one of the advisory editors of *MPT*. This was of course somewhat later, in 1968. The Goliard volume was a slim, handsome hardback with barely legible Hebrew lettering on the pale-blue dust-jacket that Assia herself had designed. Later Ted Hughes collaborated with Amichai in translating the latter's poetry. (Amichai later intended to reciprocate by translating Crow into Hebrew). In his 1977 introduction to the collection Amen, "translated by the author and Ted Hughes,",Ted wrote: "The translations were made by the poet himself. All I did was correct the more intrusive oddities and errors of grammar and usage, and in some places shift about the phrasing and line ends. What I wanted to preserve above all was the tone and cadence of Amichai's own voice speaking in English, which seems to me marvelously true to the poetry, in these renderings. What Pound called the first of all poetic virtues – 'the

heart's tone.' So as translations these are extremely literal. But they are also more; they are Yehuda Amichai's own English poems." According to Hana Amichai, the two discussed problematic passages on the phone. The quotation is interesting on at least two counts. First, it was indicative of Ted's conviction that essentials could best be conveyed via literal versions, especially if produced by the source-language poets, however shaky the latter's grasp of English. (Amichai's grasp, of course, was far from shaky). Second, it revealed his interest in Pound's work, at least as a translator. Pound himself was unknown to me before Cambridge, and I think our group disapproved of him, not so much on account of his Fascist sympathies, but because he was more or less dismissed by Robert Graves, author of The White Goddess. That book had been very important to us, especially to Ted. Graves had also inspired us in his iconoclastic 1955-6 Clark lectures at Cambridge, later published under the ironic title of The Crowning Privilege. That these translations were, as Hughes said, also "Amichai's own English poems" was a statement of fact. Ted was being honest about his procedure, and he did no indulging himself in his work on Yehuda's own versions. What we witness, in this instance, in fact, is an act of attentive listening on Hughes's part, eventuating in what might perhaps be termed "creative non-intervention."

MPT was more than just a hobby-toy for Ted; he also determined its early policy. Translation required not only concentrated listening, but also self-discipline, a reining in of the tendency to "make the poem one's own". Nor, it should be added, did Ted much trust critical commentary, unless, perhaps, as an factual supplement to an ad-verbum version, as with Vladimir Nabokov's polemical translation-plus-commentary of Pushkin's Eugene Onegin, which for Ted, along with Specimens of Bushmen Folklore, edited by W.H.I. Bleek and L.C. Lloyd, was a benchmark of literal translation. Ted may fairly be said to have adhered, even this early and well before it was identified by scholars, to a foreignizing tendency, a readiness to allow translation of foreign texts to alter English itself. Translation, thus, opened for him various possibilities, although he also had a firm grasp of what was acceptable to readers.

Ted's involvement with translation is surely related to his own needs as a writer, his dedication to truth, i.e. the substance of the original work, although it has been observed that, while remaining close to the literal version, he produced works that were unmistakably "Hughesian". That his translations were an integral part of his own writing, just as the promotion of translation was seen as part of his professional duty as a writer, has largely been ignored.

Ted took his translating responsibilities seriously, and even before we discussed the prospective poetry-translation journal, persuaded the British Arts Council to also concern itself with what was going on elsewhere in the world, especially in Eastern Europe, where, after the death of Stalin in 1953, artists and intellectuals were becoming visible. His early celebrity status enabled Ted to be self-invited to various international poetry festivals, where he became acquainted with poets of the older-brother genera-

tion, born in the 1920's. Such poets as Miroslav Holub, Vasko Popa, Tadeusz Rozewicz, Zbigniew Herbert, Yehuda Amichai, and Janos Pilinszky were among his new friends. He used his literary status to promote the idea of an annual international reading (Poetry International), as well as our own magazine, *MPT*, *Modern Poetry in Translation*. We received a boost when the Arts Council gave us their backing, even in the face of some serious opposition. Occasionally a trifle ingenuous when he had a scheme in mind, Ted was at the same time a forceful advocate and a visionary nature of his projects. This sense of purpose was recognized by enough of the powers-that-be, especially, Eric Walter White, Literature Director at the Arts Council, that Ted won his support. I suspect that it was not so much Hughes's growing reputation that eventually won the day and the fact that he was becoming a kind of young and fresh poetic ambassador for things English, as the nature of that reputation: his being a prominent younger writer, concerned or identified with Englishness.

As the first *MPT* editorial indicated, we were on the lookout for literal translations, different from Robert Lowell's much admired and discussed Imitations. Curious about foreign poetry, Ted believed he could make contact with it only via verbally close versions, which embraced the foreign, as against versions which had been reworked by an English-language poet into something more familiar or personal. We adhered, as best we could, to this "principle", even if it was not fashionable. It still remains unfashionable. Cicero's notion of sense-for-sense rather than word-for-word translation still remains the dominant mode or accepted route out of despised literalistic servitude.

It seems to me now, with hindsight, that the character of much of the work we were dealing with may also have encouraged this literalistic attitude. Ted was particularly drawn to the post-War Eastern European poets of the generation preceding his own, who were still living under conditions of totalitarian oppression. Their direct experience of the worst of wars reminded him of his father's participation in the Galipoli campaign during World War One, the worst of wars up to that time. As Ted put it in his "Introduction" to the Selected Poems of Vasko Popa [1968], the Yugoslav (Serbian) poet who became a personal friend, "[these circumstance had] brought their poetry down to such precisions, discriminations and humilities that it is a new thing." Vasko Popa became one of his close friends. I believe there is a connection between the fashioning of an essentialist or naked language and rejection of traditional embellishments by the writers of this first post-War generation and Hughes's own distancing from the elaborate idiom, inherited from poets, such as G.M. Hopkins and the American John Crowe Ransom.

As Hughes wrote to me of the poets of Eastern Europe: "I suppose [that] what I see as their common quality is [their] simple and direct presence—even within quite elaborate fantasies. Each phrase has a matter of fact tone." Hence also, the allurement for him of the English versions produced by Yehuda Amichai when they collaborated in translating Amichai's Hebrew

poems into English, or the literal renderings from the Hungarian of Janos Pilinszky by the latter's friend and contemporary, the Hungarian poet Janos Csokits. The value of such endeavors was confirmed for Hughes by the ability of these versions to convey matter of urgency. In this connection, Walter Benjamin's essay, "The Task of the Translator" (an introduction to Benjamin's own translations of Baudelaire's Fleurs du Mal) is also relevant. This essay did not appear in English translation until 1968, with the second issue of Delos (journal of the short-lived National Translation Center, Texas). What Benjamin has to say about a universal language, an Ursprache to which both source and target texts aspire, seems close to what Ted had in mind when he wrote, in the first Poetry International program, in 1967: "However rootedly national it may be, poetry [...] is only now being heard for what, among other things, it is—a universal language, coherent behind the many languages in which we can all hope to meet."

At the same time, Hughes was looking for ways forward from his own somewhat elaborate prosodic beginnings, that did not lead into the dead-end of "confessional poetry," of the kind inaugurated, one might say, by Robert Lowell in *Life Studies*, 1959. Lowell's collection of translations, Imitations, a term used by Dryden three centuries before, also appeared in the late 50's. It represented the other end of the spectrum of possibilities, so to speak, distanced from the ad-verbum. In "conversation" with D.S. Carne-Ross, founder of the Boston-based classics-orientated magazine Arion, in the very first, 1968, issue of Delos (Carne-Ross, Robert Lowell, William Arrowsmith - all, incidentally, classicists - and other translation illuminati were involved) Lowell discusses his free approach to the translation of Classical poetry and drama, as against, for instance, the Homer-translator Richmond Lattimore's prosodic literalism. "Lattimore's translations," he observes, "are just the opposite of what I am trying to do." In teaching the Iliad, he used Lattimore as a trot: "I was amazed to discover that each line of Lattimore's was the same as in Homer." He adds: "You can't possibly call Lattimore's Iliad great poetry. He has invented a kind of literal verse translation, more literal than any in English, I think. He avoids the usual translator's cliches but it's dry and unmusical." One feels inclined to add: but at least Lattimore, even if he has not rendered Homer's "music" does not impose his own. Lowell does, in fact, admit that "these trots" are usually better poetry than the professor's or even the minor poet's poetic translation of a masterpiece." Carne-Ross refers him to his own later translations of Juvenal, for instance, in Near the Ocean, which are closer, and Lowell responds rather helplessly: "[It] just seemed interesting to try to be more accurate." In his Note to Near the Ocean, Lowell writes: "The theme that connects my translations is Rome, the greatness and horror of her Empire (so, one needs to cast one's mind back to 60's America). My Juvenal and Dante versions are as faithful as I am able or dare or can bear to be." And yet, when taxed by Carne-Ross about his apparently taking possession of the original, Lowell's claims that: "the whole point of translating – of my translation, anyway – is to bring into English something that didn't exist in English before. I don't think I've ever done a translation

of a poem I could have written myself…" He is explicit about what he is doing, . and I believe it is a wrong-headed to castigate him for not doing what he never intended to do. Ted Hughes, an admirer, certainly did not blame Lowell, but he made it clear that he himself was after something different.

Lowell and Carne-Ross apparently held that even a newly translated poet should be translated freely rather than presented in a close (i.e literalistic) version. But "[no]one should inflict on the market a long dull collected Pasternak done by professor X in meter that is very bad, very uninspired English poetry." Carne-Ross then makes a sensible suggestion: "Ideally there should be three tiers: the original, a poet's translation, then a literal trot. We need all three. This is one of the things I want to do in Delos." It might indeed be desirable, if not commercially feasible, to add a commentary to the literal translation, as in Stanley Burnshaw's admirable anthology: The Poem Itself, 1960, where Burnshaw supplies the original, side by side with an ad-verbum English version and, in his introduction to the volume, persuasively argues the need for such a novel approach, to convey the reader to the poem, the poem itself, rather than bring the latter to a passively waiting reader.

Hughes's approach to translation evolved in practice. The contradiction between the literalistic early approach and the freedom of his later adaptations of Greek dramas is striking, but it is also more apparent than real, as becomes clearer when one relates his translations to his own work as a poet. What drew Ted Hughes to translation was at the same time, perhaps, what made him wary of it? Neil Roberts in his succinct account of Hughes's involvement with translation (Chapter 14 of Ted Hughes: A Literary Life, 2006), quotes Hughes himself who, in a letter to his friend, the American artist Leonard Baskin, wrote in October 1996: "Translation got me off my own rails – with a feeling of going somewhere. But they went on too long." As a translator myself, I can't but sympathize! One problem, of course, is that there is an infinity of material to be translated or retranslated. Furthermore, it is less disruptive of inner peace, to work with someone else's words than to confront one's own absence of words. Still, Ted Hughes's complaint makes me feel slightly guilty as one of those who drew him further into impassable terrain! Nevertheless, it is also true that he needed to insert himself into a larger cultural, literary framework that included not only Shakespeare and Coleridge but also Aeschylus and Ovid, an excellent way of so doing being to translate, which is an intensive form of reading. Hughes's project was simply too large for a single life span. Though he was theoretically capable of reaching the goal, mortality intervened.

One might also say that Hughes was looking for the truth, since translation is a form of truth-seeking and Ted was drawn to mental disciplines such as memory-training, involving the use of "mind-maps", a mnemonic device described in detail by his friend Tony Buzan. He was attracted, for instance, to the latter's practical approach to mind-training. It is not too much to suppose that he regarded translation, an ultra-complex mental operation, as a

similar discipline. Hughes continued to train his mind and remained interested in various mental disciplines, for instance The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius Loyola, founder of the Jesuits. Once when I was walking with him near his home in Devon, he attempted to introduce me to a form of memory-training. I resisted, but the pedagogue, ever present in Ted, persisted unsuccessfully in trying to persuade me to focus my mental capacities. He told me that African tribesman will bring back a far greater amount of information from forays into the world than we do, virtually blind, indifferent to what we are experiencing. In fact, Ted was suspicious of much of the technological wizardry of our time, including the word-processor. He insisted that there is a direct link between hand and mind. He never used the computer given him by his publisher, who even sent someone to instruct him in its use. As a result, so that his archive consists largely of his own handwritten drafts, he later typed and again corrected by hand. He told me that when computers came in, the standard of entries in the Daily Mirror (later the W.H. Smith) children's writing competition supported by him, declined. The pieces of prose and poetry had become much longer, immaculately presented, but of far less intrinsic merit.

The truth, Ted believed, may be represented as that which underlies language, which, one might even say, survives translation, even if Robert Frost famously claimed that it was the poetry itself that was the casualty in the translation of poetry. Frost, of course, is right, in an absolute sense, but for Hughes, what survived was the poetry, or the truth that gave rise to it. The therapeutic actuality, might be a more accurate description. For Hughes, writing was somewhat akin to therapy, which may be why he several times referred to translation as "good for me".

What is the Truth? (1983) is the title of one of Ted Hughes's books for children. Subtitled "A Farmyard Fable," it contains some of the author's most striking poems about animals. The plot is roughly as follows. God reluctantly accedes to his only Son's request for them to descend to earth and learn what humans perhaps can teach them, but warns Christ that he is going to be disappointed. On earth, God summons a number of slumbering country folk and asks them what is truth, since in sleep one is closer to it than when awake. In a series of poems, each human spirit tells of this or that creature, trying to convey its essential nature.
But what seems to be happening as well is an interrogation of poetry, a self-interrogation, then, by Hughes of the kind of poet he was still capable of being. So, is the truth to be found in these brilliantly descriptive pieces? The book ends with God the Father having left, and the Son finding himself alone on earth, at the start of a new day. The truth, it seems, is not to be conveyed by description, however mimetically compelling.

Hughes here is also keeping his particular talent in trim, the talent that brought him to the public attention with his first book, The Hawk in the Rain, since What is the Truth? had been preceded by *Crow* (1970), Gaudete (1977)

and Moortown (1979), where, in various ways, he seemed to be distancing himself from this earlier manner. It appears, after all, that he is not abandoning it. Nor can it be said that he is relegating it to work of lesser importance. Rather, throughout his career, Hughes advanced on a broad front, not the narrow one that he is sometimes characterized as having occupied. When it comes to his "adult" work, he is writing less "poetically," with lavishing less fulsome attention on the language and its familiar effects. Translation of Amichai and Pilinszky evidently helped him to pare English down, as it were, at the same time uncovering new possibilities, extending its scope. He wrote, in an early *MPT* editorial (No. 3, 1967), expressive of dissatisfaction with most translations: "A man who has something really serious to say in a language of which he knows only a few words, manages to say it far more convincingly and effectively than any interpreter, and in translated poetry it is the first hand contact – however fumbled and broken – with that man and his seriousness that we want."

One of our long-term projects was for a special issue of *MPT*, devoted to contemporary Hungarian poetry, taking advantage of Ted's friendship with Janos Csokits. Ted was prepared to co-translate with Janos several of the poets recommended by the latter. However, in an anthology of Hungarian writing, The Plough And The Pen (1963), edited by Ilona Ducynska and Karl Polanyi, with an introduction by W.H. Auden, he came across a long poem by Ferenc Juhasz: "The Boy Changed into a Stag Cries out at the Gate of Secrets." It had been translated by the English-born, Canadian poet Kenneth McRobbie with Ilona Duczynska. Auden ends his Introduction: "I am convinced that this poem is one of the greatest poems written in my time." Ted felt likewise, although for Janos Csokits, Juhasz was too identifiable with the Communist regime. Ted worked on this long poem by Juhasz and on poems by a couple of other Hungarian poets which he co-translated with Csokits. Perhaps because Csokits was reluctant to join forces with him, Ted eventually did something what he had not done before. He produced a version, based on another poet's English version. In a piece of my own, I described this event: "You took that poem by Juhasz Ferenc, 'The Boy Changed into a Stag Cries out at the Gate of Secret,'in the McRobbie version, and carried it with you into the upper reaches of Court Green, and some hours later reappeared with it, rewritten, typed out on your old portable – this was for the Hungarian issue of our journal. The issue was never published, but I kept your translation, for a long time, together with other Hungarian translations by you, the latter, though, modeled on your friend Janos Csokit's rigorous literals. 'The Boy' was different. Here, what you saw in that other version somehow pressed so urgently on you that you'd only to get it down. So, what became of it? Eventually, I returned the manuscript to you, since the issue never came out. I didn't see it again. And when, some years later, I asked, having in view once again a Hungarian issue and hoping to link it to our earlier attempt, you said you didn't know what had become of it. So vividly did I recall the translation, not the words but that trek of yours upstairs and re-emergence with a complete alternative text, that your vagueness as to its

whereabouts surprised me. But now I wonder. Could it be that you didn't want to look again at what was all in the doing? Or, perhaps, it is not lost, but lying in your archives, where it should remain." But finding it again – I did, in the archive of Emory University. I included it in another issue of MPT, as well as in a Selected Translations of Ted Hughes. It is a work of inspiration, unique among Ted's own productions, a kind of aberration even, contradicting apparently his own literalist principles, as exemplified, for instance, in his Csokits-guided versions of that very different Hungarian poet, Janos Pilinszky. (David Wevill, working with a Hungarian-language informant, produced a far more source-based version of this long poem, which can be found in a Penguin volume (1970) dedicated to the work of two Hungarian poets.) Like Auden, Ted had been impressed by the poem in the earlier translation; unlike Auden, however, he needed to experience it more directly, which could be done only by rewriting it, so to speak. And so he allowed himself to do this, perhaps, prompted by my presence in his home and our hopes for a Hungarian issue. In any case, it is a kind of hybrid or literary oddity. The poem he produced is both like and unlike his own work and would not have existed but for the prior existence of the earlier English translation…

Recently, through the same Janos Csokits, who had worked in the Hungarian section of the BBC, I obtained a taped discussion, in Hungarian and English, dating from 1976, between Ted Hughes, Laszlo Jokischky (head of the Hungarian section), Janos Coskits and Janos Pilinszky himself. I shall pass the mike to Ted Hughes. "I came to Janos Pilinszky's poems, through Janos Csokits… I was immediately taken by these poems, and saw in these very rough translations a very unusual and fine kind of English poem which interested me very much. And I was curious to see how final a poem in English I could make of it… Jokischky: "How does a poet who does not speak a language translate from that language… how can you feel the music of the poem… the emotional contents, the atmosphere of the poem. " Hughes: "I think that is a mystery. But I think there are several "musics" in a poem. There is a verbal music, right at the surface, there is a rhythm of the meter of the actual structure of the verse. There is a rhythm of phrases. There is a music of cadences, of intonations, there is a music of emotions, and I suppose finally, too, a music of the progression of ideas. And I think the first of these, the music of the language, is something that you cannot hope to translate. […] The other, the music of the intonations, the music of the emotions, is something which reappears in every language as the emotions reappear, and the music of the progression of the ideas is always evident like mathematics and that you can translate. And if there is a very strong element of that kind of music in a poem, it is usually very translatable. From Janos Csokits' rough English renderings, very literal English renderings, which were extremely evocative and often very precise and good English, which was very difficult to improve on in any way… I got a very clear and strong feeling of a definite tone, a definite temper in the language, a definite temper in the speech […], on which I could work as if on something very solid and which I knew very definitely. But I think it was something far removed from the actual verbal surface of the

original poems." Jokischky: "And when you look at any one of these poems do you feel that it is your own as much as Janos' or Janos'?" Hughes: "It does not seem strange to me; it seems very very familiar, but it is something I would never have got to myself. But it seems completely familiar. It is something that I have extended myself towards, rather than produced out of myself. I have not turned Janos Pilinszky's poems into my poems; I have adapted myself in some way to something that attracted me very strongly. "

Sibelan Forrester

BORN OF PARTING: A TRANSLATION OF MARINA TSVETAEVA'S CYCLE 'RAZLUKA'

Translator's Note

Marina Tsvetaeva published her cycle "Razluka" in a slender volume with the same title in Berlin in 1922. The strong musical qualities of the verse inspired Andrej Belyj, who had been suffering a writer's block, to write a number of poems later published as *Posle Razluki* (Berlin, 1922). The last poem in that volume is dedicated to Tsvetaeva. She describes their Berlin friendship in her memoir of Belyj, "Plennyj dukh" ('The Captive Spirit,' which gave its title to J. Marin King's fine 1980 translation of Tsvetaeva's prose into English), so the connection between the poets is not a secret connection. Perhaps Belyj's title, *Posle Razluki*, even glimmers in the title of the last volume of poetry Tsvetaeva published in her lifetime, *Posle Rossii* (1928).

I meant to include the final poem from *Posle Razluki*, the one dedicated to Tsvetavea, after my translation of "Razluka," but the poem simply isn't as good as hers are, and I couldn't compel any music from it. Perhaps he was hearing an inner music as he wrote it that was not conveyed in the poem itself? His whole collection, though it picks up many of the traits of "Razluka," is still strongly Symbolist in its thematic. (Many readers of Russian poetry find Belyj better as a reader and a theorist, or as an autobiographer, than as a poet.)

The cycle "Razluka" also appeared in Tsvetaeva's 1923 collection *Remeslo*. It has always been one of my favorites, for the same things Belyj saw: musicality and a wonderful, "invincible" rhythm. The broken lines might invite comparison to that master of tonic verse Vladimir Mayakovsky (in his pre-*lesenka* period). The triumphant rhythm perfectly bodies forth the tumbling chains of associations, the feeling that the speaker's words are pouring out in unmeditated haste, though in fact everything is very carefully chosen and arranged. Tsvetaeva's intensity is precisely aimed (to borrow the military vocabulary of parts of the cycle). Multiple meanings of words like "boj" ['striking,' but also 'battle'] and "val" ['wave' or 'billow' but also 'rampart'] connect to the plight of Tsvetaeva's husband, Sergei Efron, who was fighting in the White Army, while suggesting that the poet is a kind of warrior – as indeed emerges as we move through the cycle. These words of rich meaning also pack intensity into single syllables (the average word length in Russian is longer, more like two and a half syllables – if a half syllable counts in a poem).

The cycle moves in several directions at once: it dwells on the poet's fear of losing Efron, from whom she had heard nothing for a worryingly long time. I feel it return to the 1920 death of Tsvetaeva's younger daughter, Irina, of starvation; the little hands (*ruchenki*) would be less appropriate her older daughter Alya, who was nine in 1921. It binds the loss of Irina to the fear of losing Efron: their love is a tiny lamb and he is like Ganymede in the beak of Zeus's eagle, another child she fears losing to death (or abandoning): she let him go to join the army, and look what happened! (He similarly shapes the miniature, pre-pubescent St. George of the cycle "Georgii," which follows "Razluka" in the book *Remeslo*.) Tsvetaeva wrote that she feared Efron would no longer want her without Irina, since she had not managed to preserve both of her children. The cycle edges into imagining suicide (to join Sergei, if he is gone?), stressing her desire to leap from a tower (like Joan of Arc, one of Tsvetaeva's favorite role models); the move "rhymes" with the poet's hooked leap from a bell-tower in the cycle "Poet" (Joseph Brodsky connected it to Otto Lilienthal, the "glider king," who died after a fall in 1896). Like many Tsvetaeva poems, especially from the early 1920s, the cycle treats the departure to write or even to become a poet, a mother who gives up familial connections and obligations with anguish but perhaps without regret, in order to accept inspiration. The "winged one" who stamps and neighs in the cycle's fifth poem is Pegasus, and the poet is an Amazon. (By tradition, the Amazons had one breast cut off, to make them better archers but also as if to suggest a chosen or culturally imposed inability to nurture her children enough – again tied to the starvation of little Irina). The horse appears in an illuminated flyway; he is a fiery horse like the one in "Na Krasnom kone," a longer poem from the same time in Tsvetaeva's like. It also addresses the woman poet's anxiety and fear over what the choice to be a poet might cost her and her nearest and dearest, though there it is phrased as having a cruel (male) Muse. The cycle presents a dense node of Tsvetaevan concerns and images: the Amazon *and* Pegasus! – which might remind us that Pegasus was born of the blood of the Medusa: woman's blood underlies her poetics as a deep but tragic source of creativity, as of human life. Like Joan of Arc (who leapt from a tower after she was captured), the woman poet hears voices but risks a fiery death. We may consider *Remeslo* an especially feminist volume of poetry, given that its title was taken from a poem by Karolina Pavlova: "Moja napast', moe blazhenstvo,/ Moe svjatoe remeslo!"

(I end this little piece with gratitude to Dr. Ol'ga Lang (1898-1992): she was a graduate of the Bestuzhev courses, a leftist, translator, teacher, scholar, and connoisseur of literature, fascinating enough to deserve a whole article of her own. From the library of books she left to Swarthmore College, I inherited the volume from which I made this translation: the 1923 Gelikon" edition of *Remeslo*, hard signs and all. There are secret underground connections not just between poets, but between Slavists as well.)

Sibelan Forrester

Parting

1

Tower-bell striking
There in the Kremlin.
Where on the earth is,
Where –

Fortress of mine,
Meekness of mine,
Valor of mine,
Holy of mine.

Tower-bell striking,
Left-behind striking.
Where on the earth is –
My
Home,
My – dream,
My – laugh,
My – light,
Of narrow soles – a print.

As if a hand
Cast down the striking –
Into the night.

- My downcast one!

May 1921

2

I lift the hands that I let fall
So long ago.
Into a black and empty window
Empty hands
I fling into mid-nocturnal striking
Clocks – I want
To go home! – Like this: head first
– From the tower! – Homeward!

Not onto the cobbled square:
Into rustle and whisper…
Some youthful Warrior will spread
His wing beneath me.

May 1921

3

Harder and harder
Start wringing my hands!
Between us not earthly
Versts – but divisive
Celestial rivers, azure nations,
Where my friend is forever already –
Inalienable.

The high road races
In silvery harness.
I don't wring my hands!
I only extend them
– In silence! –
Like a tree-(waving)-rowan
To parting,
The wake of a crane-wedge flying.

The crane train is racing,
Racing, no backward glances.
I'll not desert haughtiness!
In death – I'll abide
Elegant – to your gold-fledged quickness
The very last buttress
To the losses of space!

June

4

Cover the bedstead
In swarthy olive.
The gods are jealous
Toward mortal love.

Each rustle to them
Is distinct, each swish.

Know, this young man is dear
Not to you alone.

Some one is incensed
With his luscious May-day.
Mind you, be wary
Of sharp-eyed heaven.

—

You think – it's the cliffs
That attract, the crags,
You think, it's the many-voiced
Summons of glory

Calling him – to the crush,
Chest-first at the spears?
As a rising billow
– You think – it buries?

A nether sting
– You think – penetrated?
Harsher than exile
Is this tsar's favor!

You weep that it's too late
To wander the valleys.
Don't fear the earthborn
– Fear the invisible!

To them, each hair
Is known on the comb.
Thousand-eyed are
The gods, as of old

Fear not the mire –
But the heavenly firmament!
The heart of Zeus is
Insatiable.

June 12

5

Ever so softly
With a hand slim and careful
I loosen the trammels:
Little hands – and obedient
To the neighing, the Amazon rustles
Off on the ringing, empty steps of parting.

In the radiant flyway
The winged one tramples
And neighs. – Dawn's flare in the eyes.
Little hands, little hands!
You call to no purpose:
Between us there flows Lethe's streaming staircase.

June 14

6

You won't see me – grey.
I won't see you – grown.
From immobilized eyes
You can't squeeze a tear.

To all of your torment,
Dawn's explosion – lament:
– Lower your arm!
Shed your raincoat!

In the dispassion
Of a stone-eyed cameo,
I won't linger in the door,
As mothers linger:

(All the gravity of blood,
Of knees, of eyes –
For the very last earthly
Time!)
Not as a sneaking broken beast –
No, as a stone massif
I'll go out of the door –
From life. For what then
Should tears flow,

As long as – I'm a stone off your
Shoulders!

Not a stone! – Already
In aquiline wideness –
A cloak! – and already on the azure rapids
Into that radiant city,
Whither – no mother
Dares to bring
Her child.

June 15

7

Like a silvery sapling
He darted upward.
That Zeus not
Espy him –
Pray!

At the first rustle
Take fear and alarm.
They are jealous of
Masculine charm.

More dreadful than the jaws
Of a beast – is their call.
The nest of the gods
Is jealous of charm.

With blossoms, with laurels
They'll lure him aloft.
That Zeus not
Elect him –
Pray!

The whole sky in a thunder
Of eagles' wings.
Crash down with your whole breast –
That they not conceal him.

In the aquiline thunder
– Oh beak! Oh blood! –
A miniscule lamb
Is dangling – Love...

With your hair unbound,
With your whole breast – prone!
That Zeus not
Exalt him –
Pray!

June 16

8

I know, I know
That earthly charm,
That this incised
And charming cup –
Is no more ours
Than the air,
Than the stars,
Than the nests
That hang in dawn's glow.

I know, I know
Who is the cup's – owner!
But set a light foot forward – tower-like
To aquiline heights!
And with a wing – strike
That cup from the terrible
Pink
Lips of God!

June 17

Translated from Russian by Sibelan Forrester

Elaine Feinstein

TRANSLATING TSVETAEVA

All translation is difficult; Tsvetaeva is a particularly difficult poet. Her pauses and sudden changes of speed are felt always against the deliberate constraint of the forms she had chosen. Perhaps the exact metres could not be kept, but some sense of her shapeliness, as well as her roughness, had to survive.

For this reason I usually followed her stanzaic patterning, though I have frequently indented lines where she does not. This slight shift is one of many designed to dispel any sense of the static solidity which blocks of lines convey to an English eye and which is not induced by the Russian.

English poetry demands a natural syntax, and in looking for that I observed that some of Tsvetaeva's abruptness has been smoothed out, and the poem have gained a different, more logical scheme of development. There were other problems. Tsvetaeva's punctuation is strongly individual; but to have reproduced it pedantically would often have destroyed the tone of the English version. In my first drafts I experimented with using extra spaces between words, but sometimes restored Tsvetaeva's dash - at least in the early poems; in later poems a space has often seemed closer to the movement of her lines. Dashes that indicated the beginning of direct speech are retained. I frequently left out exclamation marks where their presence seemed to weaken a line that was already loud and vibrant. Furthermore, there were difficulties of diction. Words with echoes of ancient folk-songs and the Bible were particularly hard to carry across into English.

I am not sure how far a discussion of methods of translation attracts much useful reflection. Yet some word seems necessary, especially since I have worked with different linguists. Some of the poems, such as 'Poem of the End', as Angela Livingstone described in her detailed note. were transliterated into English, as well as written out in word-for-word literal versions, which indicated, by hyphenation, words which were represented by a single Russian word. Other poems, such as the 'Insomnia' cycle and 'Verses about Moscow', also prepared for me by Angela Livingstone, were first read on to tape in Russian; and then (on the same tape) as literal versions which I wrote out myself and used alongside the printed Russian text. For 'An Attempt at Jealousy' I used the literal prose version at the foot of the page in the *Penguin Book of Russian Verse*. For the 1981 edition, Simon Franklin produced written literal versions very much as Angela Livingstone had done,

though without transliterations; and he too gave full indications of changes of rhythm, musical stress, and word-play in his notes.

Elaine Feinstein

Poems by Marina Tsvetaeva

Where does this tenderness come from?

Where does this tenderness come from?
These are not the — first curls I
have stroked slowly — and lips I
have known are — darker than yours

as stars rise often and go out again
(where does this tenderness come from?)
so many eyes have risen and died out
in front of these eyes of mine,

and yet no such song have
I heard in the darkness of night before,
(where does this tenderness come from?)
here, on the ribs of the singer.

Where does this tenderness come from?
And what shall I do with it, young
sly singer, just passing by?
Your lashes are — longer than anyone's.

1916

Poems for Akhmatova

1

Muse of lament, you are the most beautiful of
all muses, a crazy emanation of white night:
and you have sent a black snow storm over all Russia.
We are pierced with the arrows of your cries

so that we shy like horses at the muffled
many times uttered pledge — Ah! — Anna
Akhmatova — the name is a vast sigh
and it falls into depths without name

and we wear crowns only through stamping
the same earth as you, with the same sky over us.
Whoever shares the pain of your deathly power will
lie down immortal — upon his death bed.

In my melodious town the domes are burning
and the blind wanderer praises our shining Lord.
I give you my town of many bells,
Akhmatova, and with the gift: my heart.

2

I stand head in my hands thinking how
unimportant are the traps we set for one another.
I hold my head in my hands as I sing
in this late hour, in the late dawn.

Ah how violent is this wave which has
lifted me up on to its crest: I sing
of one that is unique among us
as the moon is alone in the sky,

that has flown into my heart like a raven,
has speared into the clouds
hook-nosed, with deathly anger: even
your favour is dangerous,

for you have spread out your night
over the pure gold of my Kremlin itself
and have tightened my throat with the pleasure
of singing as if with a strap.

Yes, I am happy, the dawn never
burnt with more purity, I am
happy to give everything to you
and to go away like a beggar,

for I was the first to give you —
whose voice deep darkness! has
constricted the movement of my breathing —
the name of the Tsarskoselsky Muse.

1916

Translated from Russian by Elaine Feinstein

Translator's Notes

* "Where does this tenderness come from?" The poem is addressed to Osip Mandelstam (1891-1938)
* Poems For Akhmatova.
1. Anna Akhmatova (1889 - 1966).
Ah!: in Russian akh! - the first syllable of the poet's name.
2. Tsarskoselsky Muse : Akhmatova spent much of her youth in , and thereafter frequently revisited, the imperial town of Tsarskoe Selo, near St. Petersburg.

Annie Finch

DANCING WITH AKHMATOVA IN AMPHIBRACHS

I approached my translations of Anna Akhmatova in a different spirit than that with which I have approached other poets. We met in the fields of meter, by the river of amphibrachs, and we stared into those depths together. In the water, I saw her face reflected. I knew she was my sister as we were carried together into the pull of that sound. We stood up together and danced together across the wordless field into our different words.

I came on the idea of translating Akhmatova because I fell in love with amphibrachic meter. As I wrote in my essay on amphibrachs in The Body of Poetry, "The particular, sprightly, ironic feeling of amphibrachic meter - and its kind of heathery purple color, if I had to give it a color, a kind of cumin flavor, if I had to give it a taste - had become necessary to my work in poetry." Yet there seemed to be virtually no amphibrachic poems for me to read in English.[*] When George Kline, a scholar of Russian thought and culture and the longtime translator of Joseph Brodsky, told me about Akhmatova's sonnets in amphibrachs, I was beside myself with excitement. With George's help I began to translate them immediately, pulled along by the same thread of rhythm that had pulled her.

Each of the three poems by Akhmatova that George and I have translated-"The White Bird" (our title, since the original is untitled), "Lot's Wife," and "Cleopatra" (published simultaneously online in *Connotation Press: An Online Artifact*) is set in a different time and place. They are also told from different points of view, "The White Bird" in first person, "Cleopatra" in second person, and "Lot's Wife" in third person. The poems were written decades apart: "The White Bird" when Akhmatova was 25, "Lot's Wife" at age 35, and "Cleopatra" at age 51. Yet all three present a common theme. By the end of each poem, a woman comes face to face with the truth of her situation, admits her pain, opens herself to accept her own tragedy.

---

[*] One famous exception is Auden's "Oh where are you going." George Kline has reminded me that Thomas Hardy, one of my favorite poets, "wrote many powerful poems in ampibrachs, including several during the final decade of his long life." I have also recently uncovered huge amounts of additional amphibrachic verse in U.S. popular poetry from the second half of the nineteenth century.

Perhaps the push-pull rhythm of amphibrachs, their ironic bittersweet call, seemed the appropriate vehicle for Akhmatova to convey hard truths about aspects of the female condition throughout history with such sensitivity and courage. By carrying the amphibrachic meter through into English, I hope that I have captured some of the alchemy of potential transformation that seems to infuse the sonnets. I know that I was deeply moved, and honored, by the process of translating them.

The White Bird by Anna Akhmatova

Jealous, and worried about me, and tender -
As steady as God's sun, as warm as Love's breath -
He wanted no songs of the past I remembered.
He took my white bird, and he put it to death.

At sunset, he found me in my own front room.
"Now love me, and laugh, and write poems," he said -
I dug a grave in the old alder's gloom
Behind the round well for my happy, bright bird.

I promised him I wouldn't cry any more -
The heart in my chest was as heavy as stone.
Everywhere, always, it seems that I hear
The tender, sweet voice of the one who is gone.

[translated by Annie Finch with George Kline]

Lot's Wife by Anna Akhmatova

"*But his wife looked back from behind him,*
and she became a pillar of salt."
Genesis

The righteous man followed where God's angel guide
Shone on through black mountains, imposing and bright.
But fear tore his wife's breast. It turned her aside
And whispered, "Look again! There's still time for one sight
Of towers, and of Sodom's red halls, the same place

Where you sang in the courtyard- and wove on your loom
At those now-empty windows-where you knew the embrace
Of love with your husband-where birth filled the room -"
She looked. And the sight was more bitter than pain.
It shut up her eyes. She saw nothing more.
She shimmered to salt. Her feet moved in vain,
Deep rooted at last in the place she died for.

Who weeps for her now? Who can care for the fate
Of someone like that, a mere unhappy wife?
My own heart will remember. I can carry the weight
Of one who looked back, though it cost her her life.

[translated by Annie Finch with George Kline]

AUTHORS AND CREDITS

Born in 1976 in Leningrad — now called St. Petersburg, as before — **Polina Barskova** began publishing poems in journals at age nine and released the first of her seven books as a teenager. She came to the United States at the age of twenty to pursue a Ph.D. at the University of California, Berkeley, having already earned a graduate degree in classical literature at the state university in St. Petersburg. Barskova now lives in Massachusetts and teaches at Hampshire College. Her two books of poetry in translation are coming soon from Tupelo Press and Melville House Press, previously her poems have been translated into French, Italian, Danish. These poems are from Polina Barskova's forthcoming collection *The Zoo in Winter: Collected Poems* (Melville House Press, Spring 2011). Translated by Boris Dralyuk and David Stromberg.

Sean O'Brien is a UK poet, critic, broadcaster and editor. He grew up in Hull, England, and lives in Newcastle upon Tyne. He is Professor of Creative Writing at Newcastle University, Fellow of the Royal Society of Literature and the recipient of the 2007 Northern Rock Foundation Writer's Award and the 2009 Novi Sad International Writer's Award. His books include, in 1998, essays on contemporary poetry, *The Deregulated Muse*, and an anthology The Firebox: *Poetry in Britain and Ireland after 1945*, and in 2006, a new verse version of Dante's *Inferno*. His selected poems, *Cousin Coat: Selected Poems 1976-2001* was published in 2002. His six individual poetry collections have all won awards in the UK, most recently *The Drowned Book*, which won both the 2007 Forward and T S Eliot Prizes, the first time a book has won both awards. The poems "Cousin Coat " and "The Iron Hand" appeared in *Cousin Coat: Selected Poems 1976-2001* (Pikador, 2002); "The Lost War" and "Fantasia on a Theme of James Wright" - in The *Drowned Book* (Pikador, 2007).

David M. Bethea is the Vilas Research Professor of Slavic Languages and Literatures at the University of Wisconsin-Madison and Professor of Russian Studies at Oxford University. His studies of Russian poetry, Russian literary culture, and Russian thought have been recognized by the Guggenheim Foundation, the New York Times, the NEH, the ACLS, and his own scholarly community (AATSEEL), which awarded him a lifetime achievement award in 2003. Primary areas of scholarly interest for Bethea include: Pushkin and his time, modern Russian poetry, Russian ймigrй literature between the wars, Khodasevich, Brodsky, Nabokov, and Russian religious thought. Recently Bethea has edited The Pushkin Handbook (2006) and served as general editor of Sochineniia Pushkina (Pushkin's Works, 2006-), a new fully annotated facsimile collection of the poet's works. A selection of Bethea's old and new essays, The Superstitious Muse: Thinking Russian Literature Mythopoetically, is appearing this fall (2009).

Robert Chandler has worked mainly as a teacher of the Alexander Technique and a translator of Russian literature. He spent a year in the Soviet Union in the early 1970s, as a student at the University of Voronezh – where he first read the work of Andrey Platonov, who was born in Voronezh, and Osip Mandelstam, who was exiled there. Literary translation is usually seen as a rather solitary occupation, but Robert Chandler believes that there is a great deal more in his favourite writers – Alexander Pushkin, Andrey Platonov and Vasily Grossman – than he can possibly understand on his own. For this reason he prefers to collaborate, and the circle of people

he collaborates with is constantly widening. His closest collaborators are his wife Elizabeth – who knows no Russian but who has an uncommonly sure sense of intonation and rhythm – and the Platonov and Dostoevsky scholar, Olga Meerson, a professor at Georgetown University.
Chandler's translations of Sappho and Guillaume Apollinaire are published in the series 'Everyman's Poetry'. His translations from Russian include Vasily Grossman's *Life and Fate*, Leskov's *Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk* and Aleksander Pushkin's *The Captain's Daughter*. His translation of Hamid Ismailov's *The Railway* won the AATSEEL (American Association of Teachers of Slavonic and East European Languages) translation prize for 2007. Andrey Platonov's *Soul*, of which Robert Chandler is a co-translator, won the AATSEEL prize in 2004. Robert Chandler is the editor of *Russian Short Stories from Pushkin to Buida* (Penguin Classics) and the author of Alexander Pushkin (in the Hesperus 'Brief Lives' series). *Everything Flows* is published by NYRB Classics in the USA, and by Harvill Secker in the UK. *Translating "The Captain's Daughter"* was *originally published, in Russian*, in *Cardinal Points (Storony Sveta) #6. The conversation with Donald Rayfield* was first published, in Russian, in *Inostrannaya Literatura*, 2009, 12. *'A Small Life'* will be included in *The Road*, a collection of Grossman's stories to be published in Fall 2010 by NYRB Classics and Harvill Secker. The poems *Dima and Elena* were included in *Entering The Tapestry*, (London: Enitharmon, 2003), ed. Mimi Khalvati. *Pushkin* biographical essay and *two poems by Pushkin* are from *Alexander Pushkin*, published by Hesperus Press in their "Brief Lives" series, London, 2009. *Varlam Shalamov and Andrey 'Fyodorovich' Platonov* first Published in *Esssays in Poetics* (Keele University), Autumn 2002, vol. 27; a Russian translation is included in the article 'Platonov v prostranstvakh russkoi kul'tury' in *Tvorchestvo Andreya Platonova, vol 3* (Sankt Peterburg: Nauka, 2004), p. 170-86].

Elizabeth Chandler has worked as a restaurant owner-manager and as a Teacher of the Alexander Technique. During the last twelve years she has collaborated more and more closely with her husband, Robert Chandler, on his translations from Russian. Together with her husband and Olga Meerson, she is a co-translator of all the recent selections of Platonov published in the USA by NYRB Classics and in England by The Harvill Press and Harvill Secker. She is also a co-translator of Vasily Grossman's *Everything Flows* and *The Road*.

Chard deNiord is the author of three books of poetry, *Night Mowing* (The University of Pittsburgh Press, 2005). *Sharp Golden Thorn* (Marsh Hawk Press, 2003), and *Asleep in the Fire* (University of Alabama Press, 1990). His new book of poems, *The Double Truth*, is due out from The University of Pittsburgh Press in spring of 2011. His book of interviews and essays on senior American poets, *Sad Friends, Drowned Lovers, Stapled Songs*, is also due out in the spring of 2011. His poems and essays have appeared recently in *Best of The Pushcart Prize, New England Review, Best American Poetry, Hudson Review, American Poetry Review, Ploughshares, The Southern Review and Salmagundi*. He directs the post MFA symposium in poetry at New England College and is an associate professor of English at Providence College. He lives in Putney, Vermont.
The poem The Geese: forthcoming in *The Harvard Review*.

Sasha Dugdale is a poet and translator. She translates poetry and plays. She works as an advisor in Russian theatre to the Royal Court Theatre in London. Her recent

translations include *The Cherry Orchard* for BBC Radio, and *The Grainstore* by Natal'ya Vorozhbit for the Royal Shakespeare Company. Her recent translations of poetry include *Birdsong on the Seabed* by Elena Shvarts for Bloodaxe Books.
She is currently working on a third collection of poetry and a book of short stories dedicated to Moscow, *Moscow Tales*. The full version of *My Pushkin* will be included in *Moscow Tales*, to be published in 2011 by Oxford University Press.

Elaine Feinstein was born in Liverpool, brought up in Leicester, and educated at Newnham College, Cambridge. Since 1980 she has lived as a full-time writer. In the same year, she was made a Fellow of the Royal Society of Literature. She has written for The Times, The Telegraph, The Guardian, The Sunday Times, the New York Review of Books and other papers. Her versions of the great Russian poet Marina Tsvetaeva---for which she received three translation awards from the Arts Council--- were first published in 1971, and remain in print from OUP/Carcanet in the UK and Penguin in USA, and were a New York Times Book of the Year. In 1990, she received a Cholmondeley Award for Poetry, and was given an Honorary D.Litt from the University of Leicester. She has written fourteen novels; radio plays; television dramas, and five biographies; TED HUGHES: THE LIFE OF A POET (2001) was short listed for the biennial Marsh Biography Prize; her most recent biography 'ANNA OF ALL THE RUSSIAS: The Life of Anna Akhmatova came out from Weidenfeld in 2005.
She has traveled extensively; in Russia for GB/USSR in 1978; and for the British Council in France, Spain, Italy, Rumania, India, and South East Asia. In 1993 she was Writer in Residence for the British Council in Singapore, and in 1995 in Tromso on the Arctic Circle. She was a Rockefeller Foundation Fellow at Bellagio in 1998. Her novels and biographies have been translated into French, Spanish, German, Italian, Danish, Hungarian, Czech, Hebrew, Russian and Chinese; and her poetry into French, Russian, Portuguese, Spanish and Italian. Her poems have been widely anthologised, and two were included in Christopher Ricks OXFORD BOOK OF ENGLISH VERSE. Her most recent books of poems are Daylight (Carcanet 1997), a Poetry Book Society Recommendation, Gold (Carcanet 2000), and her poems written after the death of her husband, Arnold, TALKING TO THE DEAD (Carcanet 2007). Her COLLECTED POEMS AND TRANSLATIONS (2002) was a Poetry Book Society Special Commendation.Elaine Feinstein's novel THE RUSSIAN JERUSALEM , for which she received a major Arts Council Award, was published by Carcanet in 2008. The poems "Tbilisi" and "St. Petersburg" are from Elaine Feinstein's forthcoming collection *Cities* which will appear from Carcanet, Manchester in June 2010. The poem "Siver" and the memoir "The End of the Era. With Poets, Of Poets: Aliger, Antokolsky, Moritz" is from *The Russian Jerusalem*, Carcanet, 2008. The Biographical essay on Marina Tsvetaeva and "Translating Tsvetaeva" are *from Marina Tsvetaeva. Bride Of Ice: New Selected poems*.

Annie Finch is the author or editor of fifteen books, including the books of poetry *Eve, Calendars, The Encyclopedia of Scotland*, and *Among the Goddesses: An Epic Libretto in Seven Dreams*. Her collaborative theater work includes the libretto for the opera Marina and a work in progress, *Wolf Song*. Her work has been widely recognized and reprinted and translated into numerous languages. She is Director of Stonecoast, the low-residency MFA program at the University of Southern Maine.

Sibelan Forrester wrote her doctoral dissertation on the poetry of Marina Tsvetaeva, and she has since published several articles and given numerous conference papers on Tsvetaeva. Her translations include poetry from Croatian, Russian and Serbian, most notably a bilingual edition of Elena Ignatova's poetry, THE DIVING BELL, from Zephyr Press (2006). She lives in Swarthmore, Pennsylvania, where she is Professor of Russian in the Department of Modern Languages and Literatures at Swarthmore College.

Jeff Friedman's fifth collection of poetry, *Working in Flour*, will be published by Carnegie Mellon University Press in fall 2010. His poems and translations have appeared in many literary magazines, including *American Poetry Review, Poetry, 5 AM, Margie, Agni Online, Poetry International, Prairie Schooner, Antioch Review, Ontario Review, The 2River View*, and *The New Republic*. A contributing editor to *Natural Bridge*, he teaches at Keene State College in New Hampshire. His book of translations, *Two Gardens: Modern Hebrew Poems of the Bible*, has been accepted for publication by Wolfson Press. The poem "Galicia" was initially published in *Margie*, "Lineage" in *Black Threads*, and "Memorial" - in *Forward* and *Black Threads*. *Black Threads* was published by Carnegie Mellon University Press.

Andrey Gritsman is a poet and essayist, originally from Russia, who lives in New York City. His works have appeared in *Denver Quarterly, Richmond Review, Poetry International, Manhattan Review, New Orleans Review, Poet Lore* and many others and were included in several anthologies. Gritsman is the author of several collections of poetry in English. He runs Intercultural *Poetry Series* at Cornelia Street Café in New York and edits an international poetry magazine *Interpoezia*. He received an honorable mention and several nominations for the Pushcart Prize. His work was on the short list of the Osterweil Poetry Award of the American PEN Center.

Vasily Semyonovich Grossman was born on December 12, 1905 in Berdichev, a Ukrainian town that was home to one of Europe's largest Jewish communities. In 1934 he published both 'In the Town of Berdichev' – a short story that won the admiration of such diverse writers as Maksim Gorky, Mikhail Bulgakov and Isaak Babel – and a novel, *Glyukauf*, about the life of the Donbass miners. During the Second World War, Grossman worked as a war correspondent for the army newspaper *Red Star*, covering nearly all of the most important battles from the defence of Moscow to the fall of Berlin. His vivid yet sober 'The Hell of Treblinka' (late 1944), one of the first articles in any language about a Nazi death camp, was translated and used as testimony in the Nuremberg trials. His novel *For a Just Cause* (originally titled *Stalingrad*) was published in 1952 and then fiercely attacked. A new wave of purges – directed against the Jews – was about to begin; but for Stalin's death, in March 1953, Grossman would almost certainly have been arrested himself. During the next few years Grossman, while enjoying public success, worked on his two masterpieces, neither of which was to be published in Russia until the late 1980s: *Life and Fate* and *Everything Flows*. The KGB confiscated the manuscript of Life and Fate in February 1961. Grossman was able, however, to continue working on *Everything Flows*, a novel even more critical of Soviet society than *Life and Fate*, until his last days in hospital. He died on September 14, 1964, on the eve of the 23rd anniversary of the massacre of the Jews of Berdichev in which his mother had died.

Kerry Shawn Keys' roots are in the Appalachian Mountains. He lives in Vilnius, where he taught translation theory and creative composition as a Fulbright lecturer at Vilnius University. He has dozens of books to his credit, including translations from Portuguese and Lithuanian, and his own poems informed by rural America and Europe, and Brazil and India where he lived for considerable time. His work ranges from theatre-dance pieces to flamenco songs to meditations on the Tao Te Ching, and is often lyrical with intense ontological concerns. Of late, he has been writing prose *wonderscripts*, and monologues for the stage. A children's book, *The Land of People*, received a Lithuanian laureate in 2008 for artwork he co-authored. He performs with the free jazz percussionist and sound-constellation artist, Vladimir Tarasov – Prior Records released their CD in 2006. His most recent book is *Book of Beasts* (2009). Keys received the Robert H. Winner Memorial Award from the Poetry Society of America in 1992, and in 2005 a National Endowment For The Arts Literature Fellowship. He received a Translation Laureate Award from the Lithuanian Writers Union in 2003. He was a Senior Fulbright Research grantee for African-Brazilian studies, and is a member of the Lithuanian Writers Union and PEN. Selected poems have appeared in Czech and Lithuanian. Vladimir Tarasov and Kerry Keys often perform together: free jazz and voice. *Khlebnikov Shouts In The States* was published in *The Burning Mirror*, Presa S Press, Vilnus 2008. *For Nikolai Alexeevich Zabolotsky Who Died At The Age Of 55* - in *Inclusions*, Vario Burnos 2002.

George L. Kline has written on more than twenty Russian thinkers, from G. S. Skovoroda in the Eighteenth Century to A. F. Losev in the Twentieth. He has also written on such East European thinkers as Lukacs and Kolakowski and such Western thinkers as Spinoza, Vico, Hegel, Marx, Nietzsche, and Whitehead. Among his books are *Spinoza in Soviet Philosophy* (1952, rpt. 1981) and *Religious and Anti-Religious Thought in Russia* (1968). His translations include Tolstoy's "A History of Yesterday" (1949, rpt. 1959, 1964, 1973, 1991), Zenkovsky's *A History of Russian Philosophy* (2 vols. 1953, rpt. 2003), *Boris Pasternak: Seven Poems* (1969, 2nd ed. 1972), and *Joseph Brodsky: Selected Poems* (1973, 1974). He has translated several short poems of Marina Tsvetaeva and Valentini Sinkevich, and one long poem each of Voznesensky and Kuzminsky. His verse translations have appeared in such publications as *Antaeus, Partisan Review, Saturday Review, Los Angeles Times, Times Literary Supplement, New York Review of Books,* and *New Yorker*. Kline is Milton C. Nahm Professor Emeritus of Philosophy (Bryn Mawr College) and Adjunct Research Professor of History (Clemson University).

Inna Lisnianskaya was born in Baku in 1928. Her first publication was in 1948, and her first collection of poetry appeared in 1957. In 1960 Lisnianskaya moved to Moscow. She published several more books. After her participation in the Metropol almanac in 1979, her books were published only abroad (France and USA). In recent years several more collections have appeared. Lisnianskaya's work is regularly published in all the leading Russian literary periodicals. She was married to the late Semyon Lipkin, a celebrated poet, and their relationship is the subject of her recent poetry collections in Russian "V prigorode Sodoma" (In the Suburbs of Sodom, 2002) and "Bez tebya" (Without you, 2004). Her bilingual collection "Far from Sodom" was translated by Daniel Weissbort and published by Ark (UK) in 2005. She is now recognised in her native land as one of its foremost writers, and worthy

recipient of the State Prize, the Solzhenitsyn Prize and the Russia Nation Prize "Poet" (2009). She lives in Moscow.

Angela Livingstone. Born in 1934 - went to local grammar school, where somehow learnt no science but did English, German, French, Latin and Greek in the sixth form; - won scholarship to Newnham College, Cambridge, to read Modern Languages (German and Russian); - 1956 my first visit to Russia with small group of Cambridge students; - 1959 got married and went to Australia where my two children were born and I taught Russian literature at Adelaide and Melbourne universities; - 1964 returned to England, worked for a year in the Foreign Office; - 1966 was appointed lecturer at the just-founded University of Essex in Colchester, where I stayed for thirty-one years as teacher of literature (mainly Russian) and twelve as research professor, am now professor emeritus; - in the 1960s I worked with Donald Davie translating Pasternak, and with Elaine Feinstein translating Tsvetaeva; in more recent years I worked with Robert Chandler translating Platonov; over the years I've published ten books, perhaps most notably *Lou Andreas-Salomé* (1984), Pasternak, *Doctor Zhivago* (1989), *The Marsh of Gold: Pasternak's Writings on Inspiration and Creation* (2008) and two books of *Tsvetaeva in translation, Art in the Light of Conscience* (1992) and *The Ratcatcher* (1999); - my daughter and son live in London (daughter a professor of social psychology who conducts comparative research on children and new media; son an actor, and [as practitioner] a teacher of drama); - I have four grandchildren; - I still live in Colchester, with my partner, Alan, and large black cat called Dusk.
"Café letter", second p.s. For my translations of Pasternak's prose: see *The Marsh of Gold*, Academic Studies Press, 2008; - of Tsvetaeva's prose, see *Art in the Light of Conscience. Eight Essays on Poetry by M.Tsvetaeva*, Bristol Classical Press, 1992; to be republished by Bloodaxe Books, April 2010.
Translations of Tsvetaeva's verse: The Ratcatcher [*Krysolov*] (c.2000 lines), publ. as book by Angel Classics, 1999, and Northwestern Univ.Press, 2009; Poem of the Air [*Poema vozdukha*] (c.350 lines) publ. in Modern Poetry in Translation, 21,'03; New Year's Letter, [*Novogodnee*] (217 lines), MPT, 22, '03; Attempt at a Room [*Popytka komnaty*] (190 lines), first draft completed; Phaedra [*Fedra*] (c.1850 lines), in progress.

Olga Meerson teaches at Georgetown University and is the author of *Dostoevsky's Taboos* (in English), of *Personalism and Poetics* and *Platonov's Poetic of ReFamiliarization* (both in Russian), and of numerous articles on Russian literature, Orthodox liturgical poetics, and Biblical exegesis and its hermeneutics. She is a a co-translator of Platonov's *Soul*, *The Foundation Pit* and *Chevengur* (the latter still in progress.)

Stanley Mitchell was born in London in 1932. He read Modern Languages (French, German and Russian) at Oxford, and taught various universities - Birmingham, Essex, Sussex, San Diego, California, McGill Montreal, Dar es Salaam Tanzania, Derby, University College London and Camberwell School of Art. Subjects included Russian literature, art history and cultural studies. He was an exchange scholar to Russia, gave several papers there and read from his translation of *Onegin*. He retired from Derby as Emeritus Professor of Aesthetics, and was made an Honorary Senior Research Fellow in the Art History Department of the

University College of London. His translation of Pushkin's *Eugene Onegin* for Penguin Classics appeared in 2008. In addition he has translated Georg Lukacs's *The Historical Novel* and *Essays on Thomas Mann*, Walter Benjamin's *Short History of Photography*, and recently *Mozart A Study* (as yet unpublished) by the Soviet Union's first foreign minister, Grigory Chicherin. He is contemplating a book on Chagall. He has reviewed for the *Times Literary Supplement*, written for the academic press and given numerous lectures and talks.

Olga Mukovnikova is a freelance translator, member of the Chartered Institute of Linguists. She graduated from Oryol State University in 1998, where she read English and History. Since 2004 Olga has worked as a translator and translation reviser for Amnesty International. She lives and works in the UK and is a co-translator of THE ROAD, a collection of Grossman's stories and articles to be published in Fall 2010.

Alicia Ostriker has published twelve volumes of poetry, most recently *The Mother/Child papers* and *The Book of Seventy*. She has twice been a National Book Award finalist, and has won the William Carlos Williams Award, the Paterson Poetry Prize, the San Francisco State Poetry Award, and the Jewish Book Council Award, as well as awards from the Guggenheim Foundation, the Rockefeller foundation and the National Endowment for the Arts. As a critic she is best known for her book *Stealing the Language: the Emergence of Women's Poetry in America*, and for several books on the Bible.
"Cosi Fan Tutte: Of Desire and Delight" (excluding the quotes by Leopold Mozart and Wolfgang Mozart, which are in the public domain) from *No Heaven*, by Alicia Suskin Ostriker, © 2005. Reprinted by permission of the University of Pittsburgh Press. "The Eighth and Thirteenth" from *The Little Space: Poems Selected and New, 1968-1998*, by Alicia Suskin Ostriker, © 1998. Reprinted by permission of the University of Pittsburgh Press.
"Café letter", second p.s. For my translations of Pasternak's prose: see *The Marsh of Gold*, Academic Studies Press, 2008; - of Tsvetaeva's prose, see *Art in the Light of Conscience. Eight Essays on Poetry by M.Tsvetaeva*, Bristol Classical Press, 1992; to be republished by Bloodaxe Books, April 2010.
Translations of Tsvetaeva's verse: The Ratcatcher [*Krysolov*] (c.2000 lines), publ. as book by Angel Classics, 1999, and Northwestern Univ.Press, 2009; Poem of the Air [*Poema vozdukha*] (c.350 lines) publ. in Modern Poetry in Translation, 21,'03; New Year's Letter, [*Novogodnee*] (217 lines), MPT, 22, '03; Attempt at a Room [*Popytka komnaty*] (190 lines), first draft completed; Phaedra [*Fedra*] (c.1850 lines), in progress.

Andrey Platonovich Platonov (1899-1951), was the son of a railway-worker. The eldest of eleven children, he began work at the age of thirteen, in an office, in a factory and then as an engine-driver's assistant. He began publishing poems and articles in 1918, while studying engineering. Throughout much of the twenties he worked as a land reclamation expert, draining swamps, digging wells and also building three small power stations. Between 1927 and 1932 he wrote his most politically controversial works, some of them first published in the Soviet Union only in the late 1980s. Others stories were published but subjected to vicious criticism. Stalin is reputed to have written 'scum' in the margin of the story 'For Future Use',

and to have said to Fadeyev (later to be Secretary of the Writers' Union), 'Give him a good belting - for future use!' During the thirties Platonov made several public confessions of error, but went on writing stories only marginally more acceptable to the authorities. His son was sent to the Gulag in 1938, aged 15; he was released three years later, only to die of the tuberculosis he had contracted there. From September 1942, after being recommended to the chief editor of Red Star by his friend Vasily Grossman, Platonov worked as a war correspondent and managed to publish several volumes of stories; after the war, however, he was again almost unable to publish. He died in 1951, of tuberculosis caught from his son. 'Happy Moscow', one of his finest short novels, was first published in 1991; a complete text of *Soul* was first published only in 1999; letters, notebook entries and unfinished stories continue to appear. 'Soul and Other Stories' and 'The Foundation Pit' are both available in English from NYRB Classics.

Valentina Polukhina was born in Siberia and educated at Kemerovo, Tula and Moscow universities. From 1962 to 1973 she taught at Moscow's Lumumba University and from 1973 till 2001 was Professor at Keele University, England. She specializes in modern Russian poetry and is well known to the international community of literary scholars as a specialist on Joseph Brodsky. She is the author of several major studies of Brodsky: *Joseph Brodsky: A Poet for Our Time* (Cambridge: CUP, 1989), *Brodsky Through the Eyes of his Contemporaries*, vol. I (New York, London: St Martin's Press, 1992); a Russian version *Brodskii glazami sovremennikov* (vol. I, 1997, 2006) and *A Dictionary of Brodsky's Tropes* (based on *A Part of Speech*, Tartu University Press, 1995). She is editor of a collection of Brodsky's interviews - *A Large Book of Interviews* ("Bol'shaya kniga intervyu") (M: Zakharov, 2000 and 2005, 2007), with Lev Loseff, of *Brodsky's Poetics and Aesthetics* (L: Macmillan Press, 1990) and *Joseph Brodsky: The Art of a Poem* (L., 1999, M., 2002), with A. Stepanov and I. Fomenko, of *Brodsky's Poetics* ("Poetika Brodskogo"), (Tver, 2003), with A. Korchinsky - *Joseph Brodsky: A strategy for reading* ("Iosif Brodkii: Strategiya chteniya"), (M., 2005). A second volume *Brodsky Through the Eyes of his Contemporaries* was republished in Russian in St Petersburg (SPb.: Zvezda, 2006). *Iosif Brodskii: Zhizn', trudy, epokha* (SPb.: Zvezda, 2008); *Bol'she samogo sebia. Sbornik izvrannykh statei o Brodskom* (Tomsk. 2009). Among her articles there are essays on Akhmatova, Pasternak, Tsvetaeva, Khlebnikov, Mandelshtam, Lev Loseff, Tatiana Shcherbina, etc. She had edited bilingual collections of Olga Sedakova (1994), Oleg Prokofiev (1995), Dmitry Prigov (1995), Evgeny Rein (2001). Together with Daniel Weissbort she has assembled a special issue of the journal MPT (2002), a revised version was published as *An Anthology of Russian Women Poets* (2005) in the UK and USA (Carcanet, University of Iowa Press). Another dimension of her activity is bringing Russian literature to an English audience. She organized the visits of over 80 Russian writers and poets to Keele and other British universities. The post of Russian poet-in-residence at the University of Keele as well as the Russian Poets Fund were established thanks to V. Polukhina's effort.

Mikhail Rabinovich was born in 1959, in Leningrad, former Soviet Union. He worked there, of course, as an engineer. He came to New York in 1991. Here he works, of course, as a computer programmer. Rabinovich is his pen-name, though his real name is also Rabinovich. His works came out in print in four countries,

ranging from "The New Russian Word" to Odessa's "Fountain" and from the "Slovo/Word" journal to "The Independent Newspaper". Mikhail was a collaborator in ten prose and poetry almanacs, published on both sides of the Atlantic ocean. He is a winner of the Internet competition "Russian America" (as part of "Tenet-2002" project). He authored two books: "Far Away from Me", a book of short stories, as well as "In the Light of Unclear Events", a collection of poems.

Draginja Ramadanski was born in 1953 in Senta. She is a contributor to numerous literary papers and magazines. In addition to translating from Russian and Hungarian, she publishes reviews and articles, mostly scrutinizing the phenomenon of translation. She has recently tried her ability as an anthologist of contemporary Russian women's poetry (eleven very different symposionists gathered round a holiday dining table, drawn by the unifying hunger of poetry). She teaches Russian literature, culture and civilization at the Department of Slavistics of the Faculty of Philosophy at the University in Novi Sad, Serbia.

Donald Rayfield was born in 1942 in Oxford, England. He lives in the country not far from London. He was educated at Cambridge and began as a lecturer in the university of Queensland. He soon moved to London University (Queen Mary) where he was head of the Russian department for nearly forty years. He recently retired, but remains an emeritus professor of Russian and Georgian. He has written books on Chekhov's work and life, a biography of the explorer Przewalski, *A History of Georgian Literature* (a third edition has just appeared), many articles on the poetry of Osip Mandelstam, on literary relations between Europe and Russia, and a study entitled 'Stalin and his Hangmen' (which has now been translated into eight European languages). He was the editor-in-chief of 'A Comprehensive Georgian-English Dictionary, and has also compiled the first exhaustive collection of the poetry of Tatiana Shchepkina-Kupernik. He has translated Georgian poets (Vazha Pshavela, Galaktion Tabidze etc), Mandelstam, and Chekhov; recently his translation of Gogol's 'Dead Souls' was published by the Garnett Press, with 96 engravings by Chagall. He is now working on a History of Georgia and translation 'Avelum', a novel by Otar Chiladze.
GOGOL: Dead Souls (London: Garnett Press, 2008). ISBN 0953 587878. Professor Donald Rayfield has recently translated Gogol's Dead Souls. His translation is published, together with the 96 engravings done by Chagall for a French translation of Dead Souls, by the Garnett Press, a small publishing house that Rayfield founded and manages himself. Rayfield is interviewed here by Robert Chandler, the main English translator of Vasily Grossman and Andrey Platonov.

Steven Schreiner is the author of *Too Soon to Leave* (Ridgeway, Detroit: 1997), and *Imposing Presence*, a chapbook. His poems have been published in Poetry, Prairie Schooner, Indiana Review, Denver Quarterly, Missouri Review, River Styx, Margie, Gulf Coast and other magazines. He has received fellowships from the Writers Voice of the National YMCA and the Virginia Center for the Creative Arts. He is the founding editor of Natural Bridge, a journal of contemporary literature, and associate professor of English at University of Missouri-St. Louis.

Varlam Shalamov was born in Vologda to a priest and a schoolteacher. In 1929, while studying law at Moscow University, he was arrested for distributing copies

of *Lenin's Testament*, a letter sharply critical of Stalin. Shalamov was sentenced to three years in a concentration camp in the Urals. After returning to Moscow, he worked as a journalist and published a number of short stories. In 1937, Shalamov was rearrested, convicted of «counter-revolutionary Trotskyite activities» and sent to Kolyma, the vast network of labour camps in the north-east of Siberia. His sentence was extended; then he was given an additional ten years for «anti-Soviet agitation». Shalamov remained in Kolyma until 1953. In 1956 he returned to Moscow.
Shalamov wrote *Kolyma Tales* over a period of nineteen years. Rather than presenting a simple, factual account of life in the camps, the tales blend reality and illusion, conveying the terrible surreal world inhabited by the starving prisoners. Shalamov was a poet, acclaimed by Pasternak, and his prose is rich in music and imagery. As well as portraying the grimness and barbarism of Kolyma's camps, the stories communicate a deep reverence for Siberia's nature. The startling contrast between Shalamov's beautiful language and the bleak world described in *Kolyma Tales* lends the work an intense, haunting power.

Grigory Starikovsky - Russian poet, translator. Grigory translated works of Pindar, Propertius, John Donne et al. into Russian. Dr. Starikovsky teaches Latin at a secondary public school and Mythology at Montclair State University.

Heather Thomas has published seven books of poetry, including *Blue Ruby* (FootHills Publishing, 2008) and *Resurrection Papers* (Chax Press, 2003). Her poems are published in more than 35 journals and anthologies including *Common Wealth: Contemporary Poets on Pennsylvania*, the *Wallace Stevens Journal, American Letters and Commentary, 13th Moon*, and *Five Fingers Review*. Heather has given readings across the U.S. and in Russia, Argentina, and Ireland. Her poems have been translated into Spanish and Lithuanian, and her book *Resurrection Papers* was published in a bilingual edition in Argentina. She has awards from the Academy of American Poets, the Gertrude Stein Awards in Innovative American Poetry, and the Pennsylvania Council on the Arts. The Berks County, Pennsylvania, Poet Laureate, Heather is a professor of English at Kutztown University of Pennsylvania. “The Fan” and “Odysseus in Amberland” are from *Blue Ruby* (FootHills Publishing, 2008).

J. C. Todd is author of a collection of poems, *What Space This Body* (Wind, 2008) and two chapbooks, *Nightshade* and *Entering Pisces*. Individual poems have appeared in The *Paris Review, American Poetry Review*, and are forthcoming in the anthology *What's Your Exit?* (Word Riot Press). Awards include a poetry fellowship from the Pennsylvania Council on the Arts and scholarships to the Baltic Centre for Writers and Translators in Sweden and the *Kunsterhaus*, Schloss Wiepersdorf in Germany. As a former contributing editor for *The Drunken Boat*, she has edited features on contemporary poetry from Lithuania, Latvia and Slovenia. She is a lecturer in Creative Writing at Bryn Mawr College and in the graduate English program at Rosemont College and holds an M.F.A. in Creative Writing from the Program for Writers at Warren Wilson College.
Credits: “Pissing,” “On the Beach,” What Space This Body (Wind Publications, 2008). “On the Beach” also a finalist in the Poetry Society of America’s Lucille Medwick Award, 2006. “In Late Summer the Sea Comes to the City,” Dogwood, 2005; Verse Daily 6/9/05.

Alexander Veytsman was born in Moscow, in 1979. Alexander writes poetry, fictional prose, and essays. He also translates poetry into English and Russian, having worked with the verse of Constantine Cavafy, Joseph Brodsky, Mark Strand, and Glyn Maxwell, among others. Alexander is a graduate of Harvard and Yale universities. He lives in New York City.

Daniel Weissbort was born in London in 1935, educated at St. Paul's school and Cambridge where he was a History Exhibitioner. Weissbort. In 1965, with Ted Hughes, founded the magazine *Modern Poetry in Translation* [MPT] which he edited for almost 40 years. Weissbort has published numerous translations of Russian poetry, including the Penguin *Post-War Russian Poetry* , an anthology of *Twentieth Century Russian verse*, which he co-edited with the late Max Hayward, *An Anthology of Contemporary Russian Women Poetry* (2005), co-edited with Valentina Polukhina. For many years, he directed the MFA translation Programme at the University of Iowa, and has published with the Carcanet Press several collections of his own poetry, including Letters to Ted (2002). In 2006, Weissbort published a textbook on the history of translation theory, *Translation: Theory and Practice*, with Astradur Eysteinsson. He is a Fellow of the Royal Society of Literature, an Honorary Professor in the Centre for Translation, Warwick University, and an Honorary Fellow of King's College, London University. Currently he is working on translations of *World War Two Russian* poets and a version of Alexander Pushkin celebrated mini-epic, *The Bronze Horseman*. Weissbort lives in London with his wife, the Brodsky scholar, Velentina Polukhina.

Baron Wormser is the author/co-author of twelve books, most recently the paperback edition of *The Road Washes Out in Spring: A Poet's Memoir of Living Off the Grid, Scattered Chapters: New and Selected Poems*, and a work of fiction entitled *The Poetry Life: Ten Stories*. He is a former poet laureate of Maine who teaches in the Stonecoast MFA Program and the Fairfield University MFA Program and works widely in schools. Wormser has received fellowships from the National Endowment for the Arts and the John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation.


БИБЛИОТЕКА ЖУРНАЛА СТОРОНЫ СВЕТА
LIBRARY OF CARDINAL POINTS JOURNAL