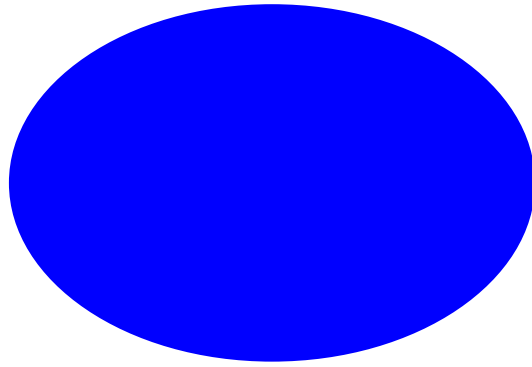


FOUR CENTURIES

Russian Poetry in Translation



2

2012



Four Centuries

Russian Poetry in Translation

fourcenturies@gmx.de

Copyright © 2012 by Dr. Ilya Perelmuter, Publisher

All rights to translations and materials published in this magazine are retained by the individual translators and authors.

No part of this magazine may be reproduced, copied, transmitted, distributed or otherwise used without the prior permission of the Publisher. This magazine as a whole can be sent indissolubly per e-mail as a pdf file.

Commercial distribution is not allowed.

This magazine should be cited as follows:

Four Centuries. Russian Poetry in Translation. Essen: Perelmuter Verlag, 2012, Nr. 2

Все права на переводы и другие материалы, опубликованные в этом журнале, в полном объёме сохраняются за отдельными переводчиками и авторами.

Журнал защищён авторским правом в совокупности всех его частей и в полном объёме. Любые типы копирования, перепечатки, распространения, публикации его отдельных частей без согласия издателя не разрешаются. Журнал может быть послан по электронной почте с сохранением его целостности в формате pdf. Журнал без нарушения его целостности может быть включён в электронную библиотеку с уведомлением об этом издателя.

Коммерческое распространение журнала запрещено.

Цитирование материалов журнала обязательно в следующей форме:
Four Centuries. Russian Poetry in Translation. Essen: Perelmuter Verlag, 2012, Nr. 2

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank

Mr. David Shrayer-Petrov

for his kind permission to publish the translations of his poems,

Mr. Eugen V. Witkowsky

for his constant counsels on copyright issues.

Publisher

Perelmuter Verlag

Dr. Ilya Perelmuter, Publisher

Erikapfad 7, 45133 Essen, Germany

www.perelmuterverlag.de, ilyaperelmuter@aol.de

CONTENTS

XIX

Liebesgedichte aus dem späten 19. Jahrhundert
Любовная лирика конца 19 века

Arsenij A. Goleniščev-Kutuzov Арсений Голенищев-Кутузов

Du hast mich neulich nicht gesehen 5

Меня ты в толпе не узнала... 5

Aleksandr M. Fedorov Александр Фёдоров

Der Flieder blüht. Rings - abendliche Kühle 5

Daniil M. Ratgauz Даниил Ратгауз

Ein leichter Wind bewegt den Fensterladen 6

Лёгким ветром колышется штора... 6

Übersetzt von Christoph Ferber

Перевод на немецкий Кристофа Фербера

XX

Three Poets of Russian Exile: "The Paris Note" and Berlin *Days*
Поэты "парижской ноты" и берлинских *Дней*

Vladislav Khodasevich Владислав Ходасевич

The Way of All Grass 7

Путём зерна 7

Georgy Adamovich Георгий Адамович

Speak to no one. Do not drink wine... 8

Ни с кем не говори, не пей вина... 8

Georgy Ivanov Георгий Иванов

From the book *Portrait Without a Likeness* 8

Из книги *Портрет без сходства* 8

Translated by Alex Cigale

Перевод на английский Алекса Сигала

Vladislav Khodasevich Владислав Ходасевич

Der Weg des Kornes 10

Путём зерна 10

Such mich 10

Ищи меня 10

Das Haus 11
Дом 11
Strophen 13
Стансы (Уж волосы седые на висках) 13
Übersetzt von Adrian Wanner
Перевод на немецкий Адриана Ваннера

David Shroyer-Petrov Давид Шраер-Петров
Selected poems in English translation
Избранные стихотворения в английских переводах
Fall at the Seashore 15
Осень у моря 15
Still Life 16
Натюрморт 16
Winter Morning 16
Зимнее утро 16
My Slavic Soul 17
Моя славянская душа 17
Chagall's Self-Portrait with Wife 18
К автопортрету Шагала с женой 18
Early Morning in Moscow 18
Раннее утро в Москве 18
Birch Fogs (from *Flying Saucers*) 19
Туманы берёз (из поэмы "Летающие тарелки") 19
I Can't Take This Torment Any Longer 20
Сердце не выдерживает страсти 20
Anna Akhmatova in Komarovo 20
Анна Ахматова в Комарово 20
To Shostakovich at His Summer House in Komarovo 21
Шостакович на даче в Комарово 21
Lot's Monologue to his Wife 22
Монолог Лота к его жене 22
Villa Borghese 23
Вилла Боргезе 23
Petersburg Doge 25
Питерский Дож 25

Translated by Maxim D. Shroyer, Edwin Honig and Dolores Stewart
Переводы на английский Максима Д. Шраера, Эдвина Хонига и
Долорес Стюарт

XIX

Liebesgedichte aus dem späten 19. Jahrhundert
Любовная лирика конца 19 века

Übersetzt von Christoph Ferber*

Arsenij A. Goleniščev-Kutuzov (1848 - 1913)

Арсений Голенищев-Кутузов (1848 - 1913)

* * *

Du hast mich neulich nicht gesehen
Und keinen Blick mir zugewandt;
Allein: erschrocken blieb ich stehen,
Denn, was vergessen war, erstand:

In Blitzesschnelle, glaub es, Liebste,
Durchlebt, durchlitt ich noch einmal
Der ganzen Liebe Bittersüße
Und des Vergessenmüssens Qual!

Um 1890

Aleksandr M. Fedorov (1868 - 1949)

Александр Фёдоров (1868 - 1949)

* * *

Der Flieder blüht. Rings - abendliche Kühle.
Die Woge - stumm. Die Ferne - wie verweht.
Nur dort, in Himmelshöhen, spricht der Frühling
Am Rosenkranz der Sterne sein Gebet.

Der Flieder duftet. Du und ich - alleine.
Dein Aug - ein lichter Stern im Blau der Nacht.
Der Garten - ganz in Tau. Im Mondenscheine
Erbliht, erglänzt die lilaweiße Pracht.

Ich spreche... Aber was? - Von diesen Worten,
Was weiß ich noch?... Doch Worte, sie sind da!
Der Flieder, du, der Paradiesesgarten,
Des Himmels Blau, die Sterne fern und nah!

Um 1895

Daniil M. Ratgauz (1868 - 1937)

Даниил Ратгауз (1868 - 1937)

* * *

Ein leichter Wind bewegt den Fensterladen.
Ich dämmre, suche Schlaf und find ihn nicht.
Es huschen Schatten, hurtige und zage,
Über die weiße Wand in Dämmerlicht.

Und Melodien ferner, zarter Lieder,
Kaum zu vernehmen, zittern über mir,
Von ferne strömt ein Wunderduft hernieder,
Mir unbekannt, berauschend, voll Begier.

Und jemand seufzt und bittet unter Klagen:
"Zu mir!..." und weint und jammert bitterlich.
Es huschen Schatten, hurtige und zage,
Über die weiße Wand im Dämmerlicht.

1898

Christoph Ferber, b. 1954, lives as a freelance translator in Sicily. He has been translating poetry from Russian, Polish, French and Italian into German for thirty years. In his translations books of poems by Lermontov, Tyutchev, Sologub, Gippius, Bryusov, Vyacheslav Ivanov, David Samoylov have been published.

XX

Three Poets of Russian Exile:

"The Paris Note" and Berlin *Days*

Поэты "парижской ноты" и берлинских *Дней*

Translated by Alex Cigale*

Vladislav Khodasevich Владислав Ходасевич

The Way of All Grass

The sower passes over the even furrows.
His grand and father walked these rows before.

In his hand, the gold of the grain shimmers
That must be buried underground all summer.

And there, where the blind worm makes inroads,
In the appointed hour, it dies and takes hold...

Just so my soul follows after these lives:
Descended into darkness, it will revive.

And you, my country and all my kin folk,
Ceasing to be will resurrect, this year gone.

Because a single wisdom is given us:
The way of all living things - is grass.

December 23, 1917

Georgy Adamovich

Георгий Адамович

* * *

Speak to no one. Do not drink wine.
Leave home behind. Leave brother, wife.
From people depart. Your soul must come
To feel - the past is forever gone.

What's past one must unlove. Then time
Will come to lose love for the wild,
Indifferent ever more: the day after,
From week to week, year in and year out.

And gradually your hopes expire.
Darkness swallows all. A new life
You will find then, clear and reborn:
The wooden cross, the crown of thorns.

1923

Georgy Ivanov

Георгий Иванов

From the book *Portrait Without a Likeness*

1.
The mirrors reflecting one another
Mutually distort the images formed.

I don't believe in indestructibility of evil
But only in the inevitability of loss.

Not in the music that may life had fired
But in the ashes that were left behind.

2.

The game of fate. A game of good and evil.

A game of mind to imagination host.

"The mirrors reflecting one another

Mutually distort the images formed."

They tell me that I have won the battle.

It's all the same to me; my game is over.

Let's say that as a poet I'm immortal.

Still, as a person, I'm a living ghost.

Translator's Note

The Paris Note (Парижская нота) is a school of Russian poetry in exile holding for its main principles "total sincerity in depicting the anguish of the human soul" and "demonstrating the naked truth".

Berlin *Days* - 1920's Berlin Russian émigré periodical co-edited by Khodasevich along with Mark Aldanov and Alexander Kerensky.

Alex Cigale's own English-language poems have appeared in the *Colorado*, *Green Mountains*, *North American*, *Tampa*, and *Literary* reviews, and online in *Asymptote*, *Drunken Boat*, and *McSweeney's*. His translations from the Russian can be found in *Ancora Imparo*, *Cimarron Review*, *Literary Imagination*, *Modern Poetry in Translation*, *PEN America*, and *Two Lines*. Currently he is an Assistant Professor at the American University of Central Asia in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan.

Vladislav Khodasevich Владислав Ходасевич

Übersetzt von Adrian Wanner*

Der Weg des Korns

Der Sämann schreitet durchs gefurchte Erdenreich.
Der Vater und der Ahne taten es ihm gleich.

In seiner Hand erglüht das Korn mit goldnem Glanz,
Dann fällt es nieder auf die Erde feucht und schwarz.

Und dort, wo sich der blinde Wurm durchs Erdreich gräbt,
Geht es zu Grunde, bis es wieder keimt und lebt.

So wie das Korn nimmt meine Seele ihren Lauf,
Sie sinkt ins Dunkel, geht zu Grunde - und lebt auf.

Auch du, mein Land, mein Volk, wirst diesen Weg begeh'n,
Du liegst im Sterben jetzt, doch du wirst auferstehn -

Deshalb, weil es für uns nur *eine* Weisheit gibt:
Dem Weg des Korns folgt das, was auf der Erde lebt.

23. Dezember 1917

Such mich

Such mich im lichterfüllten Frühlingsodem,
Ich bin der Schwung von Flügeln, unspürbar,
Ein Klang, ein Seufzer nur, ein Lichtfleck auf dem Boden,
Ja, leichter noch: er existiert - ich war.

Doch höre hin: Wir sind für immer Freunde!
Hier bin ich, und es kann nichts geben, was uns trennt.
Ich spüre deine ängstlich-zarten Hände
Wenn flackernd heiß des Tages Flamme brennt.

Verweile so. Und wie aus Zufall schließe
Die Augen. Streng dich weiter an, und ich bin dein -
Auf deinen klammen Fingerspitzen sprieße
Ich vielleicht heimlich auf als Feuerschein.

20. Dezember 1917 - 3. Januar 1918

Das Haus

Hier stand ein Haus. Den obern Stock hat man
Vor kurzem abgetragen: Brennholz. Nur
Der Grund aus Stein steht noch. Mich auszuruhen
Komm ich des Abends öfter hin. Der Himmel,
Die grünen Bäume in dem kleinen Hof,
Erstehn so jung und frisch aus den Ruinen,
Und klar gezeichnet ist der leere Umriss
Von breiten Fenstern. Eingestürzte Balken
Sehn aus wie Säulen. Moderige Kälte
Dringt aus den Abfallhaufen und dem Schotter,
Der in den Zimmer liegt, wo früher einmal
Die Leute hausten...

Wo's Streit gab und Versöhnung, wo im Strumpf
Sich abgenutzte Münzen sammelten
Als Vorrat; wo in Schwüle und im Dunkel
Sich Eheleute paarten; wo die Kranken
Im Hitze schwitzten; wo geboren wurde,
Und Leute heimlich starben - alles ist jetzt
Dem fremden Blich geöffnet. Selig sind
Die, deren freier Fuß so munter tritt
Auf diesen Staub, und deren Stab mit Gleichmut
An die verlassenen Gemäuer schlägt!
Ob es das Prunkgemach des großen Ramses war
Oder die Hütte eines Tagelöhners -
Dem Wanderer ist es gleich: er ist getröstet
Von immer gleichen Liedchen von der Zeit;
Ob stolze Säulenreihen oder Löcher
Von frühern Türen - auf die gleiche Weise
Führn sie den Wanderer von einer Leere
In eine andere...

Die Treppe mit dem Muster
Zerbrochener Geländer führt zum Himmel,
Der abgebrochne obere Absatz scheint
Wie eine hochgelegene Tribüne.
Jedoch, kein Redner spricht. Am hohen Himmel
Beginnt der Abendstern zu leuchten schon,
Die Quelle stolzer Meditation.

Ja, du bist gut, oh Zeit. Und es ist gut
Sich auszuruhen von deiner schauerlichen Weite.
Wozu die Heimlichkeit? Das Menschenherz
Hüpft auf wie ein erwachtes kleines Kind
Wenn Kriege, Seuchen, Revolution
Mit einemmal im Sturm die Welt erschüttern;
Dann sperrn sich Zeiten wie der Himmel auf -
Und mit entbrannter, unlöscharer Seele
Stürzt sich der Mensch in den ersehnten Abgrund.

Ein Vogel lebt in Luft, ein Fisch im Meer,
Ein Wurm im feuchten Grund, ein Salamander
Im Feuer - und der Mensch lebt in der Zeit.
Als ein Nomade, halb zivilisiert,
Bestrebt er sich, auf Grund von Mondesphasen,
Auf Grund der Konstellation von Sternen
Den unfassbaren Abgrund zu vermessen,
In ungelinken Zeichen trägt er ein
Was er erlebt, wie Inseln auf der Karte...

Der Sohn ersetzt den Vater. Städte, Reiche,
Gesetze, Wahrheit - alles geht vorbei.
Zerstören und bauen - beides freut den Menschen:
Zu seinem Glück erfand er die Geschichte!
Mit Schrecken und mit heimlichem Ergötzen
Verfolgt der Irre, wie zwischen Vergangenen
Und Zukunft, einem klaren Wasser gleich,
Durch Finger rinnend, ohne Unterbrechung

Das Leben fließt. Das Herz beginnt zu flattern,
Wie eine leichte Fahne auf dem Schiffsmast,
Gefangen in Erinnerung und Hoffnung -
In dem Gedächtnis an die Zukunft...

Aber -

Da tönt ein Schritt: Die buckelige Alte
Mit einem Sack. Mit runzeliger Hand
Löst sie den Werg von Mauern, reißt die Latten
Ab. Ich trete schweigend zu ihr hin
Um ihr zu helfen, und in guter Eintracht
Sind wir für eine Zeit am Werk. Es dunkelt,
Und aus den Mauern steigt der grüne Mond,
Sein schwaches Licht umflutet wie ein Strom
Die Kacheln eines eingestürzten Ofens.

2. Juli 1919, 1920

Strophen

Das Grau, das schon auf meinen Schläfen spriest
Verdecke ich mit schwarzen Locken,
Und wenn viel Tee in meine Tasse fließt
Beginnt das Herz gequält zu stocken.

Die lange Arbeit kostet mich viel Kraft,
Und für mich bergen keine Zauber
Die scharfgewürzte Frucht der Wissenschaft,
Der schwüle Reiz der Frauenleiber.

Mit kalten Blicken mustere ich nur
Den Ruhm der Zukunft, schal und leer...
Dafür brauch ich die Wörter "Blume", "Kind", und "Tier"
Jetzt immer öfter, immer mehr.

Und hin und wieder lauschte ich zerstreut
Den Dichtern, wenn sie klirrend reimen,
Doch meine Seele ist allein erfreut
Vom Korn, von seinem stummen Keimen.

24.-25. Oktober 1918

Adrian Wanner is a professor of Slavic and Comparative Literature at Pennsylvania State University. He is the author of *Baudelaire in Russia* (1996), *Russian Minimalism: From the Prose Poem to the Anti-Story* (2003), and *Out of Russia: Fictions of a New Translingual Diaspora* (2011). He has published five editions of Russian, Romanian, and Ukrainian poetry in German verse translation.

David Shraye-Petrov Давид Шраер-Петров
Selected poems in English translation*
Избранные стихотворения в английских переводах

Translated by Maxim D. Shraye**, Edwin Honig***
and Dolores Stewart****

Fall at the Seashore

Fall this year is transparent
Unlike any we've ever seen,
Along the seashore a donkey
Strolls unsaddled, serene.
With his hooves the donkey incises
The final harbors of leaves,
Shambling away to drink his fill
To places we all left behind.
A spider, stooped like a horseman,
Leads him there by the reins
Where a vine, coarse and dry,
Droops its moustache in the sea.

Translated by Edwin Honig and Maxim D. Shraye

*The Russian originals have previously appeared in David Shraye-Petrov's collections *Самовассы* (Холсты, 1967), *Song about a Blue Elephant* (Песня о голубом слоне, 1990), *Villa Borghese* (Вилла Боргезе, 1992), *Petersburg Doge* (Питерский дож, 1999), *Form of Love* (Форма любви, 2003) and *Nevan Poems* (Невские стихи, 2011) and in magazines and anthologies. The Russian originals © by David Shraye-Petrov. Translated by permission of the author.

**©Maxim D. Shraye

***©Estate of Edwin Honig

****©Dolores Stewart

Still Life

Lemon, egg, tomato,
Your golden fingers,
A rocky crab shell,
Ring stripped off.
Chair, swimsuit, poems,
Telephone cord, flippers,
Smokes to knock off asthma,
And romping round the room.
Radio, window, oak-tree,
Pigeons, wind-floppy newspapers,
Cigarette butts-and-ashes --
Sooty little chimneys.
Lips, eyelashes, sun
And sea.

Oh, these damn sheets!
You're mine! Mine!
Now all of you still lifes,
Come alive!

1962

Translated by Edwin Honig and Maxim D. Shrayer

Winter Morning

I heard a bird coughing in the duct --
Bedroom's ear and nostril both together,
You woke up; I said, "This must induct
A snap of cold and windy weather."

Meanwhile the bird went on to weep,
Enforcing rusty blades of humid wheezes
Into the room, killing our sleep --
Bird alive -- a life joining with ours.

Wrapping my warmth inside a coat,
I overcame the narrow attic stairway
And from the roof's plateau made out

Where the pigeon's voice emerged, asthmatic.
A ghastly winter wind howled and wailed
And whirled in spirals falling snow,
I recoiled and marched in place, but failed
To reach the gutter's gleaming edge, although

I saw, above the downpipe's icy chill,
Where on the brink, torn off from tepid tile,
The bird was lying: One eye slanted, still,
And closely watching, without wrath or bile.

I returned to our heated room,
The world of books, of kindness, care,
I earned your pardon, and dispelled your gloom
But felt our parting in the air.

1971

Translated by Edwin Honig and Maxim D. Shrayer

My Slavic Soul

My Slavic soul trapped in the shell of a familiar Jewish wrapping,
Forswearing the daily strife that suffocates me all my life,
One day will outsmart its lot, turn a clever somersault,
And dashing escape to burn like anthracite, the wondrous stone.
I'll chase her: Wait! What shall I do alone amid this grove of birches
In my perennial, banal, so typically Jewish wrapping?
The ruts and roadside ditches that have viewed me as a solid fellow
Will realize that I'm barren, like an abandoned charabanc.

Come back, my soul, you're my guide; a blind cripple, I'm helpless.
I don't have the wild expanse of those generous Slavic faces,
Come back, my soul, come back to me! I once resembled a human being,
And once the people weren't loathe to share with me their drunken joy.
Hiding from me in someone's barn, where in the hayloft she took refuge,
Bulging her bare-naked eyes as though she were an octopus,
My soul said: I'd rather be with those who have lost their riches,
Than shatter myself, a teardrop that falls into the city night.

1975

Translated by Maxim D. Shrayer

Chagall's Self-Portrait with Wife

for Boris Bernstein

Bella, why did you fly out
With Marc over the old hut?
There are no coins in his purse,
He doesn't belong to Russia.
Better if in that little church
You'd had a fling with the deacon,
Together you could steal the kopecks
From the poor village plate.
But look there, you are flying -- the bride
In white over the white countryside.
What? Isn't there space enough
In that one-room hut to press
Your tired wings
Against his seething brushes,
And love this country plainlessly
All your life?

1975

Translated by Edwin Honig and Maxim D. Shrayer

Early Morning in Moscow

The woodpecker knocks on the pine tree,
rehearsing his wooden reverie:
knock-knock-knock,
knock-knock-knock,
On the ground
falls the deadening wooden sound.

The janitor shovels the street,
rehearsing his snowy reverie:
dirty Jew dirty Jew
dirty Jew --
In the camps
I'd break your head in two.

The doctor knocks on my chest,
rehearsing his wishful reverie:
some day we'll,
some day we'll,
some day we'll
be free to sing in the spring.

Sounds filling the dawn,
keep time with my salt tears:
on the verge of life
on the verge of life
on this low verge lies
Moscow muffled in snow.

1976

Translated by Edwin Honig and Maxim D. Shrayer

Birch Fogs

(from *Flying Saucers*)

for Joseph Brodsky

The night when they launched me was so rife with luminous fog
That drops of life's brood had condensed on the faceted sides
Of my drunken soul rewarded for its sorrows just like
Some hens are rewarded with a high perch in the vale of brides.

My dear friend, the sails of your vessel are tired and drenched.
To dry them you need to find shelter in a harbor upriver,
To leave the four bridges behind. Have you made out their shapes
Through fog where the Neva meanders so slender from afar?

I roam through this fog and collapse, like a horse in a bog.
I reach for you, brother mine. But you have taken your sails
To an alien harbor of concrete and to exile's song --
A caustic lament for the dicord of factories and fields.

And what am I to you? You're now in different, star-spangled worlds.

The memory of a friendship is muggy like some old anecdote.
Cigarette ashes disperse like sooty remains of our home,
And our beloved Leningrad is missing, is no more, all gone.

They launched me so far into centuries' deepest domains,
That my genes, after wandering through mountains and plains
Are ready to abandon this land and rush into clouds of fog
If only those clouds of birches would let go and forgive.

1976

Translated by Maxim D. Shrayer

I Can't Take This Torment Any Longer

I can't take this torment any longer.
What place is there for love when you are old?
Fishermen, leave my gear behind --
I won't go fishing anymore. I can't.
Take off without me in your boat,
Plowing and furrowing the waves
While some amber box drags me off
Down the Black River.
But even as I cross over
My spirit will be dreaming
Of the train station and the rose,
Of all the words we left unsaid,
Of a last impossible happiness,
The flower's broken stem.
I can't take this torment any longer.
And the Black River isn't far away.

1977

Translted by Edwin Honig and Maxim D. Shrayer

Anna Akhmatova in Komarovo

...boulder's mossy forehead touched the pines
a nuzzling up
to ballerina's legs
on the path
leading to the sea

knock of heartbeat
flapped her pages over
Anna
sailing over Komarovo
rainbow path
for the eye
flung open
to rainbow steps
all the way
from Komarovo to Repin's Penates
and from the shoals
and feathery boulders
her steps duet
ballerina and old woman
a poet slipped from people's memory
now a boulder for a coffin lid

1984-1985

Translated by Edwin Honig and Maxim D. Shrayer

To Shostakovich at His Summer House in Komarovo

...little coils of yellow needles
insolent fellow
in the old thick oculars
long-nosed woodpecker chiseling his funeral tune
from the symphony of the cold Gulf of Finland
master
please turn your face this way

I have written
this libretto of truth
it's time it's time
the sirens wail
on the cufflink rocks of the Nevan sleeve rushing westward out
of lake Lagoda

please
half mad libretto of truth

will give birth to its own mad opera
so start composing...
sap from pines with morning rime
needles pointed down
a little spider now
cannot weave your happiness
nor can I write
the libretto of truth
and lie

1984-1985

Translated by Edwin Honig and Maxim D. Shrayer

Lot's Monologue to His Wife

for Emilia Shrayer

Don't turn back, wife,
Thank God, we're still alive --
Our flesh,
Our blood,
Our love,
The long road just behind,
And the woods like a wall ahead...
Don't turn back, wife,
To years we can't live through again.

Don't turn back, wife.
It's our fateful seventh year
With frantic mobs burning
Fearsome scrolls
Behind your back and mine.
Don't turn back, wife.
God's punishment is wise.
Not Refusal nor decree
Deters me.
In hellish flames Evil squirms
In its own Egyptian plague.

The steppe's on fire

Smoke pours out
In howls and wails.
Like the Archangel's Trump
Lot's voice and mine: Come, wife
Don't turn back, don't...

Come, don't turn back, wife.
The stirrups are entangled,
Dust chokes the sheep.
Ships founder, people drown,
Infants float in streams of blood.
Leave this land forever.
Universal mud floods over
Sodom, Gomorrah and this Evil squirming
In its own Egyptian plague.

1986

Translated by Edwin Honig and Maxim D. Shrayner

Villa Borghese

These dogs copulating at Villa Borghese,
Copulating, the casual bitches and males,
Taking over the place, blaring out Brothellaise,
Blatantly wagging their tails -- oh, details!

The concrete music of dog bodies rustling,
Of dogs' scrawny bodies, a low street ballet.
The concrete tears for the anguish of Russia.
The weeping ballet has flown, rushed away.
Like a stray with the Roman dogs of the Villa,
Like a gasping fish on the banks of the Tiber,
Forget the purging, the cursing, the spilling,
Forget the evil caress of the empire.

At Villa Borghese, on Italian evenings,
In grandeur, the lap of luxurious Rome,
A stray is still howling for his Russian leavings,

The lost, irretrievable things of his home.

To wake and feel pressed by tails to the railing,
To wake and feel grass intertwining with hair,
Beneath skies of Rome, to go madly on mumbling
Oh, Nadenka, Nadya -- a stumbling prayer --

Oh Vera, Verunchik... Oh, Lyubushka, Lyuba,
Valyusha, Marina, Katyusha, and Zina.
Here the soberest New England winters
Offer their lips to me, cool and serene.

When my time comes to die, when I'm barely alive,
Half-dead lips will whisper, like never before:
For you and us, Russia, no closeness survives,
We, sons of Yehudah, who used to be yours.

To lie here embracing -- perhaps it's a laugh --
Last bottle, last letter, whatever remains.
At Villa Borghese, like an old photograph
On history's dump. Along with the frame.

At Villa Borghese, hang out with the gang
Of roaming wild dogs, an antique mosaic.
How much can you care, oh my Lord, for the paining
Soul and how much for the marble, anemic

Creatures arranged among columns of wood.
Like Petersburg's Summer Gardens. We walked
A sweet winding path, lovers' lane, and we stood
All night beneath skies that would never grow dark.
Those archangels blaring their trumpets of exile,
Those animals hounding us, shunned and banned,
Those judases killing with kindness and smiles.
And yet, despite all, we still loved that land

That cast us away like inferior stuff,
Aborted like something conceived out of error,
All that wasn't all, it was never enough,

Until they were rid of us cursed ones forever,
Until I came here to this barbarous Villa
Where statuesque maidens and dogs crowd my sight,
Out walking the dear little paths, like my darling.
Remember, back home, how we walked those white nights?

1987-90

Translated by Maxim D. Shrayer and Dolores Stewart

Petersburg Doge

In memoriam Joseph Brodsky

This weather doesn't push my pen,
This weather's for old men,
Old man-like, I come onto the porch;
Heavy thoughts lurch.

Outside the windows rain, like rage,
Where are you, Petersburg doge?
New York genius, where are you? Where?
Your coffin's in alien water.

But now your coffin swims out of the hole --
Forehead pressed to the North pole.
Just rip yourself from the alien deathbed,
Redheaded Orpheus, full speed ahead.

You will have sailed from Adrian shores
To the Aegean Sea, you Petersburg doge,
Past Istanbul, now due North,
Rust hasn't damaged your verse.

The route from Greece -- now reversed --
To the tsardom of Varangian waters.
Into the Venice of the North you've sailed,
Here your spirit is hailed.

Near that old bridge you'll moor your vessel,
Actually, you know these places so well,

Here your heels stomped and rattled,
There your fists swelled,
There where her heels fluttered by,
Like wispy clouds on high,
Moor your boat under Petersburg's dome,
And say, hello city my home.

1998

Translated by Maxim D. Shrayer

David Shrayer-Petrov was born in 1936 in Leningrad, debuted as a poet in the 1950s, and emigrated to the USA in 1987. Presently retired from his medical research position, Dr. Shrayer-Petrov lives in Brookline, Mass. with his wife Emilia Shrayer. The latest among his twenty-three Russian books are *The Third Life* (2010), a novel, *The Hunt for the Red Devil* (2010), a memoir, and *Nevan Poems* (2011), a poetry collection. Two volumes of Shrayer-Petrov's fiction, *Jonah and Sarah: Jewish Stories of Russia and America* (2003) and *Autumn in Yalta: A Novel and Three Stories* (2006), have appeared in English translation, both of them edited by his son Maxim D. Shrayer and published by Syracuse University Press. For more information, visit <http://fmwww.bc.edu/SL-V/Dsp.html>

Maxim D. Shrayer is a bilingual American writer and Professor of Russian, English, and Jewish Studies at Boston College. Shrayer has authored and edited a number of books, among them the literary memoir *Waiting for America*, and the collection *Yom Kippur in Amsterdam*, and the forthcoming *I SAW IT: Ilya Selvinsky and the Legacy of Bearing Witness to the Shoah*. His Anthology of Jewish-Russian Literature won the 2007 National Jewish Book Award. He was awarded a Guggenheim Fellowship in 2012. For more information, visit www.shrayer.com

Edwin Honig (1919-2011) was an American poet, playwright and literary translator. Honig founded the graduate writing program at Brown University and retired from Brown as Professor Emeritus. Among his best-known works are the works of criticism *García Lorca* and *Dark Conceit: The Making of Allegory*, the collections of poetry *Spring Journal* and *Interrupted Praise*, and the numerous translations from the Spanish of Calderón, Cervantes, Hernandez, Lorca, and Lope de Vega and the Portuguese of Pessoa.

Dolores Stewart Riccio is an American poet and fiction writer who publishes poetry as Dolores Stewart. Among her works are the poetry collection *Doors to the Universe* and the novels *Circle of Five*, *Spirit*, and *The Divine Circle of Ladies Making Mischief*. She has also published cookbooks and books of nonfiction. She is married to the poet Ottone Riccio. For more information, visit www.doloresstewartriccio.com

