

play of creative forces has been enjoyed by only a few poets such as Herbert, Hölderlin, and Nerval.

Both editors, Professors Struve and Filippov, should be praised for this meticulous academic edition. The former has revised his biographical sketch on Mandelshtam, taking into account the new data still appearing on the poet's life and work. Also included in this edition is an interesting but controversial essay by Emmanuil Rais (Paris) as well as more elaborate and extensive notes. The editors might have included in the footnote to Mandelshtam's poem on Venice not only Alexander Blok's remark taken from the memoirs of N. Pavlovich, but also Blok's own appraisal (Blok, *Sobranie sochinenii*, 7: 371).

Professor Brown notes that the long-suppressed Soviet edition of Mandelshtam seems to be on the verge of publication; however, it is yet to appear. I would like to add that Mandelshtam's name is not even mentioned in a recently published pamphlet on a planned concordance of Soviet poetry, although the former émigré poetess Marina Tsvetaeva appears on the list of poets to be studied (V. Grigoriev, *Slovar' iazyka sovetskoi poezii*, 1965).

Among Mandelshtam's poems not previously included in either of the volumes, but which appear in the second edition, are such excellent ones as *Avtoportret*, *Sport* (1913), *Kogda oktiabr'skii gotovil vremenshchik . . .* (on the October Revolution, 1917), and *Charlie Chaplin* (1937). Of particular note is a short, newly published poem, *Ukhodiat vdal'* (1936–37?), whose last two lines sound like an epitaph: "I will be resurrected in sweet [*nezhnye*] books and in kids' games, / in order to say, the sun still shines."

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POETS ON STREET CORNERS: PORTRAITS OF FIFTEEN RUSSIAN POETS. By *Olga Carlisle*. New York: Random House, 1969. xiv, 429 pp. \$6.95.

This is an anthology of twentieth-century Russian poetry with a stress on the postrevolutionary time and with selections ranging from two short poems (Blok) to nearly forty (Mandelshtam). Russian originals face English translations, and there are two prefaces as well as fourteen "portrait" essays by the compiler, who is Leonid Andreev's granddaughter and the daughter of one of the lesser-known Russian-Parisian poets (who now lives in the USSR). She is married to an American writer, and she is an author in her own right (*Voices in the Snow*, 1963). She met and interviewed not only Evtushenko (who presented her with hothouse lilacs), Voznesensky (she paced the Louvre with him), and Akhmadulina but Pasternak and Akhmatova as well. She has childhood recollections of Tsvetaeva and Poplavsky. She was in touch with Mandelshtam's widow and discussed translation problems with Kornei Chukovsky ("a close friend"). She even had some communication with Mayakovsky by depositing African violets at his monument in Moscow (accompanied by the ubiquitous Voznesensky). Some of the best contemporary American poets translated poems selected by her for this book (twenty, if one includes Mrs. Carlisle herself and John Updike, who is not listed on the dust cover). In short, the credentials are impressive, and the team virtually guaranteed success.

The compiler frankly admits that her choice of poems is subjective and, moreover, was in part shaped by what her translators wanted to translate, which is

unavoidable in undertakings of this kind. For that reason, she regretfully had to jettison Gumilev and Khodasevich, whom she values so much (no regrets are expressed about the omission of Balmont, Briusov, Gippius, Sologub, Annensky, Khlebnikov, Kuzmin, Voloshin, both Ivanovs, and quite a few others). However, Olga Carlisle wants to give some unity and consistency to her selection by stating that she stressed "the poets' involvement with the flow of everyday life as it is symbolized by *the street*" (p. xi). This rather meaningless phrase partly explains the book's title, though it fails to convince one that, say, Mandelshtam and Akhmatova had anything to do with "street corners," no matter how symbolical. Another statement (implicit in the title and elaborated elsewhere in the book), that in Russia just about everybody reads poetry (as in those ad cartoons about the Philadelphia newspaper), is one of the journalistic exaggerations of our time and has long deserved questioning. It only further frustrates the poor, alienated American poets who look with envy at Evtushenko, whose recitals allegedly fill stadiums in Russia.

Street corners or not, only Mandelshtam is adequately represented in the anthology; all others suffer from imbalance. Two poems by Blok cannot even be called a selection—they are a haphazard sampling. From Tsvetaeva the compiler even included some poems of poor quality, and Zabolotsky's best period is virtually ignored. The Russian texts are often printed in a slipshod way: dedications become titles (p. 38), Latin titles are spelled in Russian letters (p. 126), whole stanzas are omitted (though translated on the right page) (p. 236), there are misprints and word omissions which distort the meaning and meter (p. 250).

The forte of the anthology—in fact, its *raison d'être*—is the poetical level of the translations, which is no wonder when Robert Lowell, Richard Wilbur, Stanley Kunitz, Denise Levertov, and many other hardly less illustrious names are among the contributors. But Mrs. Carlisle does not call them translations: after each English poem stands the phrase "adapted by. . ." Adaptation is never clearly defined in the foreword, but it amounts to recreating the original without being unduly hampered by literalism. This is a legitimate approach, of course, though one thinks of a number of "buts." A whole book of rhymed and metrical poetry translated into free verse without rhyme would be a distortion, and that does happen here even though some of the "adapters" do use (rarely) rhyme and/or identifiable meters. The trouble is that most of them do not even try to recreate the texture of the originals. Tsvetaeva without her sound effects is not Tsvetaeva, and a rhymeless Mayakovsky is Mayakovsky castrated. Other translators keep the rhyme (in the late poetry of Zabolotsky, where it is not essential) but destroy the original's imagery. On the other hand, John Hollander gives us excellent reproductions of Voznesensky with all important formal features recreated and without distorting the meaning or sacrificing poetry. If he could do that, why not the others? Or have they made it easier for themselves?

Actually, all this insistence on "adaptation" is sheer pretension. Most right-page poems in the book are or aim to be translations. For example, Esenin by W. S. Merwin, Pasternak by Theodore Weiss, and Zabolotsky's "The Ivanovs" by Barbara Guest do not deviate from the text of the original, or where they do it is because of inability to cope with a rare epithet (*poliá bessiiánnnye*, "unnoticed fields," p. 233), faulty research (p. 97: Actaeon had nothing to do with Atalanta), or, in most cases, poor understanding of the original (*general*, on p. 246, is not "a general" but "a chamber pot"). And this brings us to the most debatable principle proclaimed by Mrs. Carlisle in her foreword: "It is important to remember

that what sometimes appears as a mistranslation in English is an attempt on the part of the adapter to recapture the concreteness of the Russian original" (p. xiii). "Sometimes," probably. But too often the mistranslations are quite real. Rose Styron simply does not understand what is going on in stanza 4 of Mandelshtam's "Decembrist," and blunders like the following ones are not an exception in the book: *v tenetákh*, "in their spreading shade" (p. 131), *zloveshchii degot'*, "the sinister asphalt" (p. 139), *prebudu*, "I would arrive" (p. 180), the greeting *zdoróvo* interpreted as a toast (p. 183), *Net na proru karantina*, "There's no end to this quarantine" (p. 207). Esenin's line *Nipochem ei strakh* becomes "before she is frightened" (p. 229), and Tsvetaeva's line *Ne schast'ia—stara!* (i.e., "I'm not waiting for happiness—I'm too old for that") is adapted to "It's not happiness, old girl!" (p. 185). Wasn't Mrs. Carlisle supposed to compare the originals with adaptations and eliminate at least some of these boners? But she herself translates the title of Esenin's first book, *Radunitsa* (i.e., the custom of commemorating the dead after Easter) as *Rainbow* (p. 226) and renders Mandelshtam's well-known words about a word which is Psyche: "each word is a psyche" (p. 117).

Olga Carlisle continues her defense of mistranslation with an example from Tsvetaeva, whose line *I vetrom vzdutyi kaluzhskii rodnoi kumach* means, if translated literally, "And the familiar red cotton cloth from the district of Kaluga billowing and lifting in the wind." Denise Levertov adapted it as follows, "And the familiar grass lifting in the wind" (p. 191). This is not a very good example, because the substitution of "grass" weakens the image of a hot day in the field with the red kerchiefs of the reapers swollen out in the wind. Besides, grass does not grow in such fields, and *rodnoi* means "dear to my heart" here, not "familiar." Incidentally, the adapters are in love with grass. I found at least three more places in the book where it grows on the right page without the slightest provocation from the left one (pp. 52, 70, 92). Perhaps a better defense of mistranslation would be by a precedent: Lermontov thought the English word "kind" meant the same as the German "das Kind" and translated Robert Burns's "Had we never loved so kindly" as "Esli b my ne deti byli."

Actually, only few poets in the book adapt, rather than translate: Adrienne Rich, Jean Valentine, and, of course, Robert Lowell. In Lowell's case, what a thrill it is to see how a superior poetical mind reassembles the alien imagery in his own way, how he omits, amplifies, transforms, and distorts, inventing things his Russian colleague could not see in his wildest dreams (as a woman's bra in Pasternak on page 103). But where does freedom end and irresponsibility begin? Somehow one is sure that Pasternak would respect what Lowell wrote, if the roles were reversed, or at least would take care to find out what actually stands in the original. The elliptical Pasternak and Mandelshtam, who perhaps can be occasionally described as indulging in free association, are good material for adaptation (or "imitation") by Lowell. It is another matter when he comes across a poetic system which completely resists such handling. This happens in his adaptation of Anna Akhmatova's *Requiem*, and misunderstanding begins in the very first lines (p. 59):

## АХМАТОВА

Нет, и не под чуждым небосводом,  
И не под защитой чуждых крыл,—  
Я была тогда с моим народом,  
Там, где мой народ, к несчастью, был.

## LOWELL

I wasn't under a new sky,  
its birds were the old familiar birds.  
They still spoke Russian. Misery  
spoke familiar Russian words.

We see how under Lowell's hand Akhmatova's dragging and self-righteous lines acquire the unexpected terseness and intensity, but he does not understand a word of what she says. And so it continues, Akhmatova speaking *pro Fomu*, Lowell, *pro Eremu*. Sometimes Lowell makes *Requiem* a masterpiece, which it is not in Russian (contrary to the prevalent critical opinion). Compare, for example, his genuine madness with her cliché-ridden flabbiness under the title "Madness" (p. 69). But the real fun begins in the last poem of the cycle, when Akhmatova, with a royal gesture, allows Russians to erect a monument for her, but under one condition (it does not occur to her that in a poem about the sufferings of millions such a motif is morally indefensible) (p. 73):

. . . не ставить его	but do not place it by the sea.
Ни около моря, где я родилась: Последняя с морем разорвана связь,	I was a sea-child, hardened by the polar Baltic's grinding dark; that tie is gone: I will not lie, a Tsar's child in the Tsarist park.
Ни в царском саду у заветного пня, Где тень безутешная ищет меня,	
А здесь, где стояла я триста часов И где для меня не открыли засов.	Far from your ocean, Leningrad, I leave my body where I stood three hundred hours in line . . .

Whoever provided Lowell with cribs of these lines had no idea of Akhmatova's life and the well-known autobiographical poems which help to interpret them (as well as those beginning lines quoted above), and Lowell has adapted them in such a way that they will remain a laughingstock (unless he readapts them). Finally, when Akhmatova, at last, *exegit monumentum* to her satisfaction,

И пусть с неподвижных и бронзовых век Как слезы струится подтаявший снег . . .	Ah, the Bronze Horseman wipes his eye and melts . . .
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Lowell changes the poor woman into the Tsar Peter, who, besides, weeps, which is completely out of character. I hope this remarkable illustration of mutual understanding in cultural exchange sufficiently demonstrates the problems and pitfalls of "adaptation" so proudly proclaimed by Olga Carlisle.

Mrs. Carlisle's introductory essays to individual selections are uneven; in fact, they seem to be written by two different persons. The interviews are invariably attractive, observant, and sometimes contain subtle critical judgments, but they are also a little sentimental (as befits one who visits a country of her parents' birth). But when she has never met a poet Mrs. Carlisle does not really know what to say about him. In her more charitable moments she quotes extensively from other writers; when she does not, however, she communicates a thorough confusion and betrays utter ignorance of what she is writing about. There are occasional factual mistakes or boners—for example, Alexander Green is called "a turn-of-the-century Russian writer" (p. 198), or Esenin is said to have been born "in the heart of Great Russia, where the inhabitants had long been seminomadic" (p. 224), or Zabolotsky's *Stolbtsy* is described as "set in part in the animal kingdom" (p. 241), or Acmeists are presented as "a group of poets dedicated to freeing Russian verse from the encumbrances of the Victorian age" (p. 117). But this is not the worst part. The real trouble begins when Mrs. Carlisle, not only in these essays, but particularly in her twenty-seven-page introduction, builds up an image of Russian

literature which derives, one presumes, partly from the Soviet textbooks, partly from hearsay, and partly from her desire to create the "beautiful" world of "strange," "suffering" but "charming" Russian poets, which exists only in her imagination. The whole history of Russian poetry comes as a succession of people-commiserating poets headed by the folklore-collecting, tsar-hating Pushkin, and one can easily conclude from the context that not only Ryleev but also Karamzin and Zhukovsky followed him in his "protests against tyranny" (see pp. 19-20). When similar half-truths and quarter-truths accumulate and when they get mixed with undigested thoughts gleaned from secondary sources, which often are in mutual conflict, one is enmeshed in a world of Russian literary history that is not quite what one is accustomed to. In this world, until the eighteenth century all Russian poetry was oral, only Slavonic devotional texts were recorded in writing (p. 16), "three writers of the age of Catherine [Lomonosov, Sumarokov, and Derzhavin are meant] created prosody" (p. 18), there are in existence convicts' songs of the seventeenth and eighteenth century, and they are "obscene" (p. 16), Mayakovsky charmed people, became a celebrity overnight in 1911 (p. 197), and was Esenin's "close friend" (p. 227). In this history, "formal and stylistic preoccupations have seldom been a major concern of Russian poets" (p. 4). Finally, when it is said that "the Stalinist years . . . will be remembered as a great age for poetry" and that "political terror heightened people's sexual drive" (p. 14), the reader wants to pinch himself to ascertain if he is not in a dream.

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#### DER SLAVISCHE KONDITIONAL: FORM—GEBRAUCH—FUNKTION.

By *Baldur Panzer*. Forum Slavicum, vol. 14. Munich: Wilhelm Fink Verlag, 1967. 317 pp. DM 64.

Any reviewer would have to find this book impressive for its rich factual material and a structural approach that always keeps apart the facts of *parole* from those of *langue*. First, the author starts from a formal identification of the conditional as a compound verbal form containing the *-l* participle and the morpheme *by-* (the latter functioning either as an auxiliary verb or as a modal particle). Then he establishes a formal typology of the conditional: (1) The conditional without personal inflection (*by* = modal particle), for example, Russian (*ia*) *chital by*; (2) The conditional with personal inflection (*by* + personal desinences of present tense or aorist), for example, Polish *czytałbym* or Serbo-Croatian *čítao bih*.

In an appendix to chapter 2 (p. 45) the author quotes a new formal type of the conditional in the Šćakavian dialects of Serbo-Croatian: (*š*) *čah čitat(i)*, etc., which represents the *futurum praeteriti*. This is the so-called Balkan type of conditional in South Slavic. It is not clear to me why the author does not mention in this connection corresponding Bulgarian and Macedonian forms.

Chapter 3 is undoubtedly the most important part of the book. It should be said that the author has done an excellent job: the typology of syntactic positions in which the conditional is used, the specification of an obligatory character of the enclisis of the morpheme *by-* after some conjunctions, and the indication of an optional exchange with indicative—all that provides a solid basis for the conclusions of chapter 4. According to syntactic positions the author introduces two very