

Wilderness House Literary Review 10/2

*Translations by Domenic James Scopa
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Someone Is Beating a Woman

Someone is beating a woman
in a car so hot and dark
only the whites of her eyes shine.
Her feet batter the roof
like berserk searchlight beams.

Someone is beating a woman.
The way that slaves are beaten.
Beautifully whimpering,
she yanks open the door and drops
 onto the road.

Brakes squeal.
Someone races towards her,
flogs her, drags her
face down in the stinging nettles...

Scumbag, how deliberately he beats her,
Stilyaga, bastard, tough guy,
his dashing shoes, as slender as a flatiron,
stabbing into her ribs.

Such are the pleasures of rebel soldiers,
the delights of peasants...
Somewhere, stamping under moonlit grasses,
someone is beating a woman.

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Someone is beating a woman.
Century on century, no end in sight.
It's the young that suffer this. Somberly
our wedding bells stir up alarm.
Someone is beating a woman.

And what is with the blazing welts?
Last-minute slaps?
That's life, you say—how so?—
someone is beating a woman.

But her light is steadfast,
death-defying and divine.
Religions—no,
 revelations—no.
There are
 women.

She lays there placid like a lake,
her eyes tear-swollen,
yet still, she doesn't belong to him
any more than the stars to the sky.

And the stars? They're pounding
like raindrops on black glass.
Slipping down
 they cool
her grief-fevered forehead.

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Anna Akhmatova

Willow

I was raised in checkered silence,
in the chilly nursery of the young century.
The voice of man was harsh—
it was the wind whose words were dearest to me.
I cherished burdocks and nettles—
most of all the silver willow.
And, gratefully, it lived
with me all my life, its weeping branches
fanning my insomnia with dreams.
—Strangely—I outlived it.
Out there a stump stands, and other willows
speak with foreign voices
beneath our skies.
And I am silent...as though a brother has died.

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Miguel Hernandez
The Cemetery

The cemetery lies close
where you and I are sleeping
among blue prickly pears,
blue ancient-plants and children
screaming full of life
if a dead body darkens the road.

From here to the cemetery everything
is blue golden crystal clear.
Four steps and the dead.
Four steps and the living.

Crystal clear blue and golden,
my son, out there, seems far away.

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Bakhyt Kenzheev
Empty Streets...

Empty streets, deep gaps beneath the doors.
The autumn world is cool and fleshless.

The forty-year old poplar above my head
still rustles with its tinfoil foliage.

Its owner, by next summer, is bound
to saw it down — so it doesn't block the sun,

so it doesn't rustle, doesn't sing above me,
doesn't wreck the pavement with its roots,

and you can't breathe deep enough — but want to —
of even the September bitterness, the final feeble sun...