

356 *Slavic and East European Journal*

Admirably researched and referenced, with useful summaries of Ulitskaia's works, this book will be an indispensable introduction to a writer who is undoubtedly at least one of Russia's most significant living authors.

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Artur Punte, Semyon Khanin, Sergei Timofejev, and Vladimir Svetlov. *Hit Parade: The Orbita Group*. Various translators. Ed. Kevin M. F. Platt. Brooklyn, NY: The Ugly Duckling Presse, 2015. A bilingual edition. 256 pp. \$18.00 (paper).

This bilingual Russian-English collection features work by four contemporary poets from the Latvian creative group Orbita: Sergej Timofejev, Artur Punte, Semyon Khanin, and Vladimir Svetlov. The four poets are part of a larger collective based in Riga and are published widely in Russian as well as in Latvian translation. In his introduction, Kevin Platt states that the group transcends the boundaries of poetry with forays into video poetry and other media (xvii). This is Orbita's first collected volume in English translation.

The publication of *Hit Parade* is an example of a larger shift that is underway: to translate, publish, and present in the original post-Soviet poetry broadly conceived; this poetry is written in either Russian or other languages, in Russia and beyond. The bilingual collection *Relocations: Three Contemporary Russian Women Poets* (Zephyr Press, 2013), translated and edited by Catherine Ciepiela, represents Anna Glazova (Hamburg, Germany), Polina Barskova (Amherst, MA, U.S.A.), and Maria Stepanova (Moscow, and a frequent visitor to the U.S.). The anthology *Words for War* (Academic Studies Press, forthcoming; edited by Oksana Maksymchuk and Max Rosochinsky) includes both poets writing in Ukrainian and those writing in Russian. This broadening range of poetry is available for courses on post-Soviet culture. It will also allow scholars of contemporary literature to explore and compare work written by poets across national borders, mining a variety of literary traditions.

Writing in Russian by a Russian expat, immigrant, or even heritage learner can be experienced solely as a tribute and contribution to the Russian literary traditions, language, or culture. Viewed in a political context, it can also be seen as a choice. The Orbita poets mitigate that choice by publishing their work in bilingual editions and collaborating with musicians and other artists whose primary language is Latvian. Platt also argues that they enter into dialogues with Latvian poets and artists, and with European work in other art forms (xiii). Kirill Kobrin adds that the speakers of many of Timofejev's poems are shaped by the modernist figure of an urban, bourgeois flâneur (*Vozdukh* 3–4 (2015), <http://www.litkarta.ru/projects/vozdukh/issues/2015-3-4/kobrin/>). With regard to form, these poets also differentiate themselves from the Russian literary tradition. Orbita's members write mostly in free verse—as Platt points out, in contrast with centuries of metric, rhymed Russian poetry (xvi). (It might be added that numerous post-Soviet poets who write in Russian do so in free verse as well.)

Some of the poems included in the volume focus on cultural hybridity and alienation, while others face broader ontological concerns. In many instances, the two are intertwined. In Punte's *Gastarbeiters*, the eponymous speakers confess: "no one accepts us here... / we found our way into the center by guesswork, / trying not to attract attention" (115). The poem leaves unclear if the speakers are ethnic Russians, members of another ethnicity, or humanity in general. This erasure of cultural identity and the need to hide point to an underlying experience of the human condition as a shared state of vulnerability and alienation.

And then there is not wishing to be seen. Khanin's "glue's not quite right," which revolves around a forged document at the border, advises the speaker (also unmarked by nationality): "...try to look honest / and smile... / ...there's totally no reason to flinch / if someone looks long

and hard in your face” (137). Life on the border is symbolic of existence in an undefined, fearful state. Identity is stifled by the need to dissimulate.

In line with these descriptions of self-concealment, poetic discourse in *Hit Parade* is marked by elusion: understatement and subtle irony reign. Timofejev makes a charmingly ambivalent twist on the Proustian tradition of lamenting and recollecting lost time in his opening line to “Strong Feeling”: “Time has fallen completely in love with us” (19). His treatment of the subject alternates between giving thanks for the (modest) gifts of the speaker’s life and cautioning that the “grand old man [time] / ... in a bad mood, can smother you with a towel.” This is also postmodern poetry par excellence: the poet is not a prophet. Timofejev breaks with the lofty position of broadcasting clichéd wisdom that tells us to live in the moment: “As a wise man once said: ‘Happiness begins / at the boiling point of toothpaste.’” The hyperbole, exaggerating the visual effect of foam at the tip of freshly squeezed out toothpaste, both defeats conventional wisdom and creates a strange, amusing and memorable image. Decoding such images offers the reader the pleasures of guesswork, of delayed literary gratification.

If Timofejev repudiates the conventions of literature and pop culture, Svetlov’s poems battle the clichés of the self. In many instances, emotions are merely chaotic noise changing by the hour, and the speaker resorts to near-*zaum* to describe such static: “lovehate jealousypain envy / lovehate jealousypain envy” (“fragile as Christmas ornaments...”) (217). In other poems, however, a vividly present, emotionally rich self coheres; the imagery is deeply felt, varied, and multisensory, and works to draw us into the speaker’s psyche. To wit: “a pastor picks up white doves at customs / the holy spirit here for a show in the park / excited poodles hobnob on the way to the taxi” (220). Even as the speaker is trying to get away from “this black / mass that repulses us,” he is searching for belonging and wholeness, even in the form of a single café open at a late hour (220–21).

The translations in *Hit Parade* convey the authors’ respective voices precisely and powerfully. Orbita’s perpetually border-crossing position is articulated clearly; its work in English is ready for its audiences. The collection paves the way forward for teaching and scholarly exploration of this terrific contemporary work.

Olga Livshin, Independent Scholar

Reinhard Ibler, ed. *The Holocaust in the Central European Literatures and Cultures since 1989 / Der Holocaust in den mitteleuropäischen Literaturen und Kulturen seit 1989*. Series: Literature and Culture in Central and Eastern Europe, vol. 5. Stuttgart: Ibidem Press, 2014. Distributed by Columbia UP. Bibliographic references. Index. 371 pp. \$47.00 (paper); \$30.99 (ebook).

Reinhard Ibler, ed. *The Holocaust in the Central European Literatures and Cultures: Problems of Poetization and Aestheticization / Der Holocaust in den mitteleuropäischen Literaturen und Kulturen: Probleme der Poetisierung und Ästhetisierung*. Series: Literature and Culture in Central and Eastern Europe, vol. 13. Stuttgart: Ibidem Press, 2016. Distributed by Columbia UP. Bibliographic references. Index. 293 pp. \$47.00 (paper).

In his book on national memories of World War II in Western Europe during the early postwar period, Pieter Lagrou makes it quite clear why he leaves out the subject of Holocaust memory. “To attempt such a study for the two decades before 1965,” he writes, “would evince an anachronistic state of mind, since the very dimensions of the continental tragedy [...] were very slow to emerge, even amongst professional historians” (*The Legacy of Nazi Occupation: Patriotic Memory and National Recovery in Western Europe, 1945–1965* (Cambridge UP, 2000),