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## THE ESTONIAN MUSCOVITE DAVID SAMOYLOV

### Summary

*The purpose of this article is to account for the unique case of the outstanding Russian poet who was born in Moscow and spent in Estonia last 15 years of his life. The main body of this article considers David Samoylov's life in the small Estonian town Pärnu, his position in Estonian society and in the writers' community in 1976 – 1990. Samoylov's status as an outsider leads to the hypothesis that his previous acquaintances and contacts with Estonian literati had grown much weaker owing to the national consciousness upsurge in Estonia in the 1980s.*

*Key-words: David Samoylov, the generation of poets born on battlefields, Pärnu and Moscow, semi-emigration, outsider position, a translator of Estonian poets, national question, Lacanian mirror-stage, spatialisation*

Speaking of one of the most prominent Russian poets of the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, David Samoylov (1920 – 1990), one cannot but mention Estonia: it was here that Samoylov spent the last 15 years of his life, in a small town called Pärnu.

Many thought it strange: D. Samoylov was Moscow born and bred. It was in Moscow that he finished school, and in Moscow he entered the legendary Institute of Philology, Literature and History, which had produced a whole generation of talented writers, historians, and philosophers, and was disbanded in 1941. It was from Moscow that Samoylov, who belonged to *the generation of poets born on battlefields*, went to war. By the fall of 1942, he became a machine gunner, was wounded in his very first battle, and, once healed, made into a clerk; yet he managed to arrange for himself to be sent to the front line, became an intelligence officer, and the war ended for him in Berlin.

Samoylov reminisced war in his poetry (his poem *Сороковые-роковые* (The Fateful Forties) became a classic piece in Russian literature) as well as in prose and interviews. However paradoxical it may sound, he was in a sense grateful to these times, and many a front line soldier could second his confession: *It was a time of our internal harmony*<sup>1</sup>. The war simplified the relationship between a human being and the power bodies as well as between humans. A single common task remained for all: to defend their motherland. It was the very thing that gave to a person who was at war the sense of freedom, a withdrawal from *the zone of doublethink*, from a contradiction between word and action.

Having made his debut as a poet during the pre-war times, Samoylov was in no haste to release his first book (the collection *Nearby Lands* was first published only in 1958), yet he translated a lot – from French (Arthur Rimbaud), Polish (Cyprian Kamil Norwid, Julian Tuwim), Serbian (Desanka Maksimovich), Lithuanian (Eduardas Meželaitis), Czech, Albanian, etc.

The very first book brought fame to Samoylov, and those who read the verse lines closely find in the poem *Nearby Lands* a hymn to Warsaw that rose against the Nazi and perished. It was written with deep compassion and an equally deep feeling of guilt: the Soviet army, staying out of the battle between those who revolted and the fascists, stood on the other bank of the Vistula. The internal harmony of a human being who fights for the just cause is violated and trampled upon. *Это было на том берегу* [It was on the other shore] reads the poem, or else it would not have made through the censorship. Yet the draft version is *Мы стояли на том берегу* [We stood on the other shore], which means that the poet shares the responsibility with those who did not come to aid the perishing city.

Popularity, acknowledgement, the love of the readership – Samoylov had it all in full measure. Sociable and easy to get on with, jovial, and a master of improvisation as well as epigrams and jokes, he was a magnet for people. A great many of his friends and acquaintances called him, a person of a medium height and somewhat slight of frame, not by his biblical name David, but rather by the friendly, curt and merry, almost boyish, version – Dezik. In Moscow circles, he was invariably the life and soul of the company. Yet this title had a downside: at any rate, his young wife insisted on leaving the noisy and at times unceremonious Moscow for some quiet place, where her husband could work and she could take care of him and bring up their three children. At first, the role of such a quiet place was given to their summerhouse in Opaliha settlement near Moscow. It has entered the poetical history: many grateful, at times rapturous lines in Samoylov's poetry are dedicated to Opaliha.

Yet once, when the summerhouse, too, had become all too crowded with people, in the summer of 1975, the Samoylovs made up their mind to spend their holiday in the then fashionable Baltic region, in Pärnu. This decided their fate for the upcoming 15 years. The visit to Pärnu had at the same time become an exodus from Moscow. At first, the Samoylov circle was of the opinion that he would not stand it to be far away from Moscow for any length of time. However, as one of Samoylov's friends from that time recounts, *The years in Pärnu have all the same, if but a little, prolonged his life*.<sup>2</sup>

Already before he moved to Pärnu, Samoylov had been translating Estonian poetry: he was introduced to it by a dear friend of his, a Moscow Estonian Leon Toom (1921 – 1969), a poet and a translator, whose poems, alongside with the translations of Estonian poets, are collected in the book *Among Friends* (Tallinn 1976). In the foreword to this edition, Boris Slutskiy, having dubbed Toom a *poet of translation*, recalled how Toom had been fervently convincing talented Russian poets to take up translation of Estonian authors. Samoylov dedicated to Toom a section of the poem *The Last Holiday* (1972 – 1974), where, bidding farewell to him, he called him a *good friend, dear friend, eternal friend*. It is also to Toom, who was the first to show Samoylov Tallinn, that the volume of verse and translations of Estonian poets, *Toominga Street* (Tallinn 1981) is dedicated.

In the presentation of this book, which he proudly referred to as my Estonian booklet', to the readers, Samoylov admits in the foreword:

*After the first journey, I have begun to constantly yearn for Estonia. I have visited its various localities [...] and made acquaintance with many littérateurs. I would like to hereby remember kindly the deceased August Sang and Juhan Smuul.*<sup>3</sup>

These two names of Estonian writers set side by side reveal that Samoylov was not privy to the Estonian cultural space. Certainly, he was not aware that between the point at which August Sang's (1914 – 1969) poetry was published in the magazine *Eesti Kirjandus* (Estonian Literature) in 1940 and his subsequent appearance in front of the readership with his poetry, 16 years had passed. Unable to 'tame' the 'bourgeois' poet, the Stalin authorities had simply expelled him from the Union of Writers during the years 1950 – 1956, which at that time implied a total cut off from literature and making translation the only possibility to earn one's daily bread.

Quite the opposite is the biography of Johannes Smuul (1922 – 1971), a poet, a prose writer, a dramatist and a publicist. He and Samoylov were united by their military past: Smuul was drafted to the Red Army during the mobilisation in 1941, but after an illness, he stayed in a reserve regiment of the Estonian Rifle Corps, and after demobilisation at the beginning of 1944, Smuul quickly became a public Soviet figure and a Soviet politician. Already in 1952, he was awarded the Stalin Prize, in 1961 – the Lenin Prize (in the field of social and political journalism). In 1971 – 1989, an annual literary prize in the name of Smuul was being awarded (until it was discontinued during the period of *perestroika*).

The *outsider position* (M. M. Bakhtin) is also reflected in the choice of authors whose poetry is included in *Toominga Street*. Omitting the classical authors (Lydia Koidula, Ado Reinvald, Karl Eduard Sööt), one can briefly characterise the remaining five poets. Debora Vaarandi's (1916 – 2007) biography was initially developing along the lines of that of a typical Soviet poet, yet gradually, the poeticized Estonian landscape and interrelations among people became the permeating motif in her poetry.<sup>4</sup> Because of her profound religiousness, she removed herself from the public social and political life. Ralf Parve (1919) was drafted to the Red Army during mobilisation in 1941, up until 1989 he was a member of the Communist party, a public figure who in his creative work shared the socialist values. Jaan Kross (1920 – 2007) is one of the best renowned Estonian writers (during the last 15 years, he has been repeatedly nominated for the Nobel Prize). During World War II, he was arrested by the German Occupation authorities (1943 – 44) and in 1946 – 54, by the Soviet ones, sent to the concentration camp in the Autonomous Republic of Komi, after which he was exiled to Krasnoyarsk district. Striving to escape the pressure of the totalitarian regime, Kross became a freelancer from 1954. During the period of *perestroika*, already holding a great authority in the literary and social spheres, he became a Member of Parliament (Riigikogu). Ellen Niit (1928), a famous author of children's literature, has most likely entered the lists of the authors translated for *Toominga Street* as the spouse of Jaan Kross. And finally, the last poet belonging to a younger generation than Samoylov and the rest of his already above-named peers, Paul-Erik Rummo (1942), became already after publishing the first collection of poems one of the most popular Estonian poets, who reflected in his works the internal tension and desperation at the sight of the cloven social public consciousness of his contemporaries. The publishing of Rummo's collection of poems *Saatja aadress* (The Sender's Address, 1972) was forbidden, and from that moment on, Rummo became the banner for the Estonian youth's resistance against the inert socialist regime. In the new Estonia of the time of *perestroika* and regaining of independence, Rummo has shown his capabilities as a public figure and a politician, having served as a Member of Parliament and a minister.

The present excursus into the personalia of Estonian literature is made only with the aim of showing that Samoylov, although he was acquainted with Estonian poets, did not conceive of the profound contradictions in the Estonian society, which, during the years of stagnation, only appeared to be uniform on the surface. In truth, there existed, on the one hand, a fairly Soviet stratum, and on the other hand, a constant silent resistance to all things Soviet.

The perception of Tallinn (and, more broadly, Estonia as a whole) in the Soviet context from 1940 on, after the land was turned into a Soviet republic, and after World War II, when Estonia was once again incorporated in the USSR, had a specific character: under the impact of the ideological stereotypes of the Soviet propaganda, during the decennium following the war, the Soviet people perceived Estonia as a space of 'their own', thus being equated with any other Soviet territory. However, with the coming of the Political Thaw and the emergence of a new generation in the Russian public life, literature and art, the attitude towards Estonia changed fundamentally. The perception of 'our own' was superseded by that of 'alien' and undoubtedly 'other' space. The sociocultural symbolism of the poeticized Estonia, and Tallinn in particular, consisted in its becoming an analogue of not being involved in the 'Soviet reality'. It is an emblematic depiction of a free space, *trying on emigration*, as put by the Russian-American writer and literary critic Alexander Genis<sup>9</sup>. He was echoed by the Lithuanian-American poet Tomas Venclova who spoke of the *obviously, a palliative, surrogate – yet still West*<sup>10</sup>.

Thus, Samoylov had come to be abroad. The self-immersed poet who, by his own admission, would relentlessly hear the 'creeping line', had hardly realized the change of his status in the eyes of those whom he translated.

A new phenomenon powerfully found its way and rooted itself in his poetry: spatialisation, i.e. *transformation of mental essences into the form of spatial representations*<sup>7</sup>.

Samoylov's poetry, particularly at the very beginning of the Estonian period, is filled with a sensation of life in solitude with nature, between the sky and the sea.

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<i>И вот однажды ночью</i>	<i>And so, one night</i>
<i>Я вышел, подо море.</i>	<i>I went out, the sea was singing.</i>
<i>Деревья тоже пели.</i>	<i>The trees were singing also.</i>
<i>Я шел без всякой цели.</i>	<i>I walked without an aim.</i>
<i>Каким-то тайным звуком</i>	<i>By some secret sound</i>
<i>Я был в ту пору позван.</i>	<i>I was called upon at that time.</i>
<i>И к облакам и звездам</i>	<i>And towards the clouds and the stars</i>
<i>Я шел без всякой цели [...]</i>	<i>I walked without an aim [...]</i>

(1976)

For the Muscovite Samoylov who lived almost at the very shore of Pärnu Bay, for a while the sea became most important in his life, since, as it suddenly turned out, he had always been missing it; it is not incidental that he sometimes spells the word *Залив* (The Bay) with a capital letter in his verse, which is not customary in Russian.

In the foreword to *Toominga Street* already mentioned above, Samoylov writes that he

*[...] became attached to this town with my very soul. Pärnu has an 'arboreal' name, which in Russian would sound as Lipovetsk or Lipetsk [Lindenton in*

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English]. [...] *In this town, quiet and green, illuminated by the dual light of the sky and the sea*, [...] *in a town where all seasons are good in their own way – the conditions for pondering and creativity are ideal.*<sup>9</sup>

The fact that the choice was deliberate is also underlined in the poem *The Bay*, which may provide the best answer as to why the poet settled in Pärnu.

*Я сделал свой выбор. Я выбрал залив,  
Тревоги и беды от нас отделив,  
А воды и небо приблизив.  
Я сделал свой выбор и вызов. [...]*

*И куплено все дорогою ценой.  
Но, кажется, что-то утрачено мной.  
Утратами и обретеньем  
Кончается зимняя темень.*

(1977)

*I have made my choice. I have chosen the bay,  
Having distanced the worries and troubles from us  
And having brought the waters and the sky closer.  
I have made my choice – and my challenge. [...]*

*And everything is bought for a dear price.  
Yet it seems as though something has been lost by me.  
With losses and gains  
Ends the winter darkness.*

The town of Pärnu, the Pärnu landscape, is undoubtedly one of such gains. It is the Land of promise, even the beer cellar in the poem *A Frequenter* has the epithet of 'salvaging'; noteworthy are also the characterizations of the sea and the wave in the first of *Pärnu Elegies*:

<i>Когда-нибудь и мы расскажем, Как мы живем иным пейзажем, Где море озаряет нас, Где чертит на песке, как гений, Волна следы своих волнений И миг стирает, осердись.</i>	<i>Once upon a time we will also tell Of how we live by a different landscape Where the sea illumines us Where, upon the sand, like a genius, A wave draws the traces of its perturbations And, in an instance, erases them, angered.</i>
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(1976)

The works from the first years spent in Pärnu give evidence of establishing a connection between spatiality and the permeating motif of lightness, soaring, flying in Samoylov's poetry:

<i>В Пярну легкие снега. Так свободно и счастливо!</i>	<i>In Pärnu, the snows are light. It is so free and joyful!</i>
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(1977)

One of his friends recalls how Samoylov once gladly remarked: *After all, we live much closer to the weather than Moscow does*<sup>10</sup>.

Samoylov was a highly prominent figure in Pärnu. He was friends with school teachers and often met the students, particularly at the Estonian Lydia Koidula school, where there worked his Pärnu 'chronicler', Viktor Perelygin, teacher of Russian, who took hundreds of photos of the poet, his family and friends, and Valentina Perelygina,

his wife, also a teacher of Russian. An article in a capital city newspaper told of Samoylov's meeting with students which continued year after year: *These meetings turned into minuscule literary evenings*<sup>11</sup>, where the students of classes with an in-depth study of Russian read poems and asked Samoylov questions, and he, coming back from yet another trip to Moscow, told them the news in the spheres of literature and culture.

Very many inhabitants of the town knew him, and he himself would proudly – though not without irony – say to his Moscow friends: *I am the poet, the only one in town. When I need something, I can turn directly to the higher-ups, and they will fix what I need*<sup>12</sup>, never noticing that his words sounded somewhat ambiguously, and that he was allowed something prohibited to the inbred inhabitants of the town. One can also recall the anecdotic account, believed to be dated by 1980, of the pan-Pärnuan fame of Samoylov in the memoirs of a famous Russian actor, director and littérateur – Veniamin Smehov:

*We showed up in Pärnu. Came by bus. It's night time. I am in a hurry, can't wait for my blessing. Suddenly, we realize: there's no way to get any alcohol, the shops are closed! On our way there's a café. Our union-internal Europe – an Estonian café... We came in, inquired, and what we got for an answer is no Europe or respect: 'We don't know Rashn language, have no cognac...' Right, Me, already hopeless: 'Sorry, maybe you happen to know where Toominga Street is?' Suddenly, there's a change, the Estonians lighten up nearly to a European level: 'Are you come to David Samoylov Rashn poet?' And the joy started bubbling.<sup>13</sup>*

At the same time, the new space affected his social position. In Moscow, some saw his departure as semi-emigration. The stagnation period with its double standards and doublethink could not but irritate Samoylov, and in this sense his moving to Estonia had, among other things, freed him from the necessity to get dangerously involved in the public social life. As long as he lived in Moscow, it constituted a problem for him<sup>14</sup>. Writer Mark Haritonov, the author of this reflection, recalls how Samoylov would not employ a human rights activist who returned from imprisonment as his literary secretary<sup>15</sup>, and how many years later, already living in Pärnu, he enrolled another littérateur who had also served his sentence in a camp. To a great extent, this change was also spatial – as Joseph Brodsky keenly remarked, in the Empire, the climate is milder in a province by the sea.

Samoylov took pleasure in going to the Pärnu theatre *Endla* where performances were staged in Estonian, and he found volunteers to interpret. Expressing his joy over the staging of Yevgeniy Schwarz's *Cinderella*, he exclaimed: *It is not at all some provincial theatre in Russia that is bound by the regional Communist committee.* He praised the staging: *Very good, very rhythmic. Good costumes, colours,* as well as the young main director: *Ingo Normet is a very talented person. I have already seen three plays by him, and do not regret it in the least*<sup>16</sup>.

Considerably more seldom did Samoylov socialize with the Estonian littérateurs, even though there was a shared creative seminar in the hall of the Estonian Union of Writers, where the Estonian side was represented by Jaan Kross, Ellen Niit, and Paul-Erik Rummo, but the Russian one – by David Samoylov and Svetlan Semenenko. Jaan Kross's family has entered Samoylov's early poems written already before moving to Pärnu. In *The Tallinn Ditty* this married couple of well-known Estonian writers is depicted as the friends of the poet:

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Хорошо уехать в Таллин,  
 Что уже снежком завален  
 И уже зимой застелен.  
 И увидеть Элен с Яном,  
 Да, увидеть Яна с Элен.

Мне ведь многого не надо,  
 Мой приезд почти бесцелен:  
 Побродить по ресторанам,  
 Постоять под снегопадом  
 И увидеть Яна с Элен,  
 Да, увидеть Элен с Яном.

(1966)

It is nice to go to Tallinn  
 That's already heaped up with snow  
 And already covered by winter.  
 And to see Ellen and Jaan,  
 Yes, to see Jaan and Ellen.

I actually don't need much,  
 My coming is nearly aimless:  
 To go to some restaurants,  
 To stand in the snowfall  
 And to see Jaan and Ellen,  
 Yes, to see Ellen and Jaan.

Two poems, *A Drawing* (1962) and *Maria* (1966) are dedicated to the drawings of Kross and Niit's daughter Maria (who became an artist and a writer) and who was respectively 3 and 7 years old at the time of writing the poems.

However, during the years the poet spent in Pärnu, he had nearly no friendly relations with Estonian *littérateurs*, including those he mentions and whose works he translated. In Perelygin's painstakingly detailed 'photo chronicles', there remain only photos depicting the visit of Dagmar Normet (1921 – 2008), an Estonian writer of children's literature, who called on Samoylov's Pärnu residence. Few translations were made of his works into Estonian – by Jaan Kross, Ellen Niit, and the little known *littérateur* Ants Reoli who showed up at Samoylov's and suggested to translate his poem *Hannibal's Dream* dedicated to Pushkin's great grandfather who once upon a time served in Pärnu; and, having renamed it *Hannibal Pärnus* (Hannibal in Pärnu), he published collected works by the same title, which included individual poems by Samoylov.<sup>17</sup>

In 1990, a bilingual miniature booklet *David Samoylov: Bottomless Moments*, Jaan Kross, *Põhjatud silmapilgud* was published (Tallinn, Eesti Raamat, 1990; approved for publishing while Samoylov was still alive, on 21 March 1989). There, Kross wrote a few pages about Samoylov, and vice versa, Samoylov wrote about Kross. Independently of one another, they both mention their long-term acquaintance (of over 20 years), the coinciding year of birth and the issue of their first collections of poems. Both mention that previously, while Samoylov still lived in Moscow, they used to communicate much more. Kross does not explain this paradox, he merely states the fact: *Later, when he had moved to Pärnu, we started seeing each other quite seldom*<sup>18</sup>. Samoylov explains this by the lack of time:

*When one is young, a lot of energy is left over for communicating. [...] Now I live closer to Kross, but meet him more seldom.*<sup>19</sup>

Samoylov with his Russian mentality is more emotional in his account of his relation to Kross, which creates an impression that they are soul mates: *The time grows thick and becomes narrow and tight. But inside me, there always sounds a 'note' of Kross*<sup>20</sup>. Kross is more reserved, just as an Estonian should be, and he evaluates rather the importance of Samoylov: *David has always been to me a person whose existence strengthens his friends' faith in the kindness and wisdom of the world*<sup>21</sup>. In these notes of his, Kross for the first time recounts a comic incident involving Samoylov:

*His elegant humour: 'Jaan, come on, let's go and appear on television! Both of us! Side by side! Poets of the gre-e-at Russian and the ti-i-ny Estonian nation!' – And that is despite the fact that the height difference between us is nearly 20 centimetres – in my favour.<sup>22</sup>*

This incident was so memorable to Kross that he repeated in nearly word-to-word in an interview with the author of the current article held on 9 December 2003, adding only that this happened during one of their first meetings.

Alongside with the highly intensive work carried out in Pärnu (during his years in Estonia, Samoylov published 7 collections of poems (not including 6 volumes of Selected Works), the second edition of *The Book on Russian Rhyme* (1982), numerous forewords to the books by other authors, reviews, interviews, answers to questionnaires, individual memoirs, etc., he had been concurrently writing prose), he still found the time to translate and debate on the problems in translation. As it was common practice in the Soviet school of translation, Samoylov translated the works of the poets of the national Soviet republic based on the literal word-for-word translations in prose. This was also true of the Estonian poetry. In a simultaneously comical and serious article, Samoylov describes his translation work in the following manner:

*<I> have always taken the translator's trade most seriously [...] and for a while, I had an absolute trust in the matrimonial virtues of translation, which are faithfulness and precision. However, a few years ago, one article has turned my translational world outlook upside down [...] I have realised that faithfulness and precision are a myth. And also that another kind of virtues is more suited to the translator, the military virtues: modesty and courage.<sup>23</sup>*

The literary word-for-word translation in prose did not rid him of the necessity for laborious search of equivalents for the unfamiliar concepts and phenomena in the Russian language. Describing, for instance, the work on the translation of a Latvian poet Rainis as 'exceptionally hard', Samoylov cites a following example for explanation:

*Let us take, for example, a Latvian wedding. Its customs are nothing like those of a Russian wedding. And what one has to do is to reproduce it in Russian in such a way that it could be perceived and understood by a reader.<sup>24</sup>*

However, starting from the middle of the 1980s, it is hard for a Russian *littérateur* – if possible at all – to remain only a *littérateur*. *Perestroika*, having freed everyone from censorship, had also made everyone face the most complicated question which in the Soviet Union had been either hushed up or solved via an order 'from above' – first and foremost, the national question. This coincided with the ascent of national identity in the Baltic region, and Samoylov had entered the Lacanian mirror stage: he had to re-think himself in Estonia anew, had to draw up an ethical position for the conditions when *the Other comes onto the stage*<sup>25</sup>. He did not live to see Estonia's independence re-established in 1991, yet everything was going towards that in the 1980s, and he admitted Estonia was in its right there. However, he, who already in 1980 phrased his understanding of the contemporary history in a dispute with Leonid Barkin and Mark Haritonov as *an era where the countdown (for a 'common' person, of course) starts from a nation, and not humankind*<sup>26</sup>, only saw around himself an attempt to *lock up inside oneself*. He immediately accepted the law on the status of Estonian as the state language, yet with a reservation:



*The main language in Estonia has to be Estonian, yet the Estonian public opinion somewhat underestimates the role of the Russian language, not as a vernacular, but as a language of culture. [...] the details will be edited by real-life practice. It is important not to make haste in resolution of such questions.<sup>27</sup>*

The national question was being resolved for Samoylov first and foremost in the sphere of culture. Pondering in *The Memorial Notes* over the so-called Jewish question, he was customarily biased and near-sighted while speaking of the political solution. Considering the permission to emigrate to Israel to be a privilege of the Jewish over other peoples (and consequently, a prerequisite of xenophobia towards the Jewish from other nations), Samoylov poses rhetorical questions:

*One of our nations is allowed to leave the motherland and set off to the ancient homeland. Why not allow, then, the Germans living in Russia since the times of Catherine to leave for Germany? Or allow the Kalmyks to wander back into the steppes of Mongolia? Or the Tatars to return to the Crimea?<sup>28</sup>*

These questions became an anachronism already at the time when the book was being published, as the Russian Germans flowed back to Germany and the Tatars started to return to the Crimea.

A totally different matter is when he poses virtually the selfsame question in the sphere of culture. In the same book, discussing fascism, Samoylov suggests a universal, though probably not an exhaustive definition:

*A fascist is a nationalist who hates culture. Therefore, Marcinkevičius<sup>29</sup> and Jaan Kross are simply people who root for their country, whereas Kozhinov<sup>30</sup>, who wrote a squalid article on OPOJAZ<sup>31</sup>, is a fascist.<sup>32</sup>*

He had always wanted to be a bridge that connected cultures, something that did not go well during the years of *perestroika*, when each culture strived towards self-sufficiency. In a surge of romanticism, he even wanted to arrange to receive the USSR State Prize that he had been awarded on the territory of Estonia: *It will be a sign of reciprocal diffusion of the Russian and the Estonian literature, since the book has been published in Estonia, and in it, there resonates an 'Estonian note'<sup>33</sup>*. However, the statute never allowed for this to happen, and the diffusion of the Russian and the Estonian literatures did not occur.

Samoylov's poems of the 1980s reveal the poet's weariness and centripetal orientation towards the motherland. For the first time (later recurring more and more often) this motif appeared in 1979 in the collection of poems *The Bay*:

<i>Тот же вялый балтийский рассвет.</i>	<i>The same listless Baltic dawn,</i>
<i>Тяжело размыкание век.</i>	<i>Heavy is the opening of the eyelids.</i>
<i>Тяжело замерзание рек.</i>	<i>Heavy is the freezing of rivers.</i>
<i>Наконец, наконец выпал снег.</i>	<i>Finally, finally, came the snow.</i>
<i>Я по снегу уже доберусь</i>	<i>By snow, I will already take me</i>
<i>Из приморского края на Русь [...] .<sup>34</sup></i>	<i>From the seaside region to Rus' [...].</i>

The most dramatic period for Samoylov, judging from his poetry, was the year 1986, when so many poems had been written with the themes of exodus, death (both his own and the others'), and weariness as never before. The Pärnu period is marked here, first and foremost, by two poems which remained unpublished during the lifetime of the poet: *In Pärnu* and *So, the life has turned out well*. The former begins with a self-charac-

terisation: *Когда-то странный пилигрим, А, в общем, вечный домосед, Сюда я прибыл*<sup>35</sup> [Once a strange pilgrim, why, actually an eternal homebody, here I arrived.] The latter contains a confession: *В общем жизнь состоялась, Даже в городе чуждом и странном*<sup>36</sup> [So the life has turned out well, Even in a foreign and strange town.] This unexpected convergence through the epithet 'strange' is interesting, thus denoting the clear resemblance between the poet and the town.

In the conclusion of his brief article about Samoylov in their joint bilingual booklet of poems and translations, Jaan Kross acknowledged Samoylov's role as that of a translator of Estonian poetry and pointed to Estonia's role: [...] *it is lovely that Estonia, to which he bound his fate, gave him so many themes and motifs for all the creative works of the last decennium.* Once again, the already familiar from Samoylov's own aspirations motif of the bridge is articulated: *In this sense, his poetic works are the best conceivable example of bridging between cultures of different peoples*<sup>37</sup>.

Samoylov had had the chance to read this brief article, but he did not live to see the book itself which was published almost immediately after his death. In one of the poems written in 1985, pondering about death, he wrote the prophetic lines: *Death is not terrible. There is an eminence to it.*<sup>38</sup> His own passing away completely verified these words: the poet died behind the scene of the Russian Drama Theatre in Estonia, having just made an introductory speech at the anniversary night inspired by himself, dedicated to the celebration of the centenary of Boris Pasternak. The doctor that was summoned from the auditorium managed to tear Samoylov away from the nothingness for a split instance with the help of cardiac massage. Samoylov looked at those standing over him and, apparently, trying to reassure the frightened family and acquaintances, he said: *All is well, folks...* And died. The explanation of this death can also be found in his poetry – in a short poem from 1984:

<i>Где-нибудь возле стойки</i>	<i>Somewhere near the counter</i>
<i>Мы подводим итог.</i>	<i>We sum up.</i>
<i>Видимо, мы не стойки</i>	<i>Apparently, we are not steadfast</i>
<i>На переломе эпох.</i>	<i>At the break of epochs.</i>

Having passed away, Samoylov remained in Estonia: his remains are buried in Pärnu Forest cemetery (Metsakalmistu). And his last words in *The Memorial Notes* are today none the less (and perhaps all the more) topical than at the time of writing them:

*I want only this: love, tolerance and a universal idea. [...] If you want god, have him. If you do not, still, be tolerant and be a part of the universal idea of kindness. Everything else is verbiage, emptiness, deformity.*<sup>39</sup>

<sup>35</sup> *Каждый человек проживает свой миг.* Беседа с Д. Самойловым И. и В. Белобровцевых, in: *Самойловские чтения II.* Таллин: Авенариус, 2006. – с. 187.

<sup>36</sup> Харитонов М. История одной влюбленности / *Знамя* № 3, 1996. – с. 154.

<sup>37</sup> Самойлов Д. Несколько слов об этой книге, in: *Улица Тооминга.* Tallinn, Eesti Raamat, 1981. Lk. 5.

<sup>38</sup> Apparently, this is why during the last year of her life Anna Akhmatova translated a few poems by Vaarandi (poems from the volume *Rannalageda leib* (The Bread of Coastal Expanses, 1965) translated by Akhmatova were published in the journal *Новый мир* № 1, 1968. – с. 89).

<sup>39</sup> Генис А. Довлатов и окрестности. Tere-tere – [magazines.russ.ru/novyi\\_mi/1998/7/genis.html](http://magazines.russ.ru/novyi_mi/1998/7/genis.html)

<sup>6</sup> Венцлов с. 196.

<sup>7</sup> Леонтьев

<sup>8</sup> Italics

<sup>9</sup> Самойлов

Lk. 5. – с.

<sup>10</sup> Радзинь

<sup>11</sup> Kirjanik

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<sup>12</sup> Харитон

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid. – с

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<sup>18</sup> Кросс Я

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid. – с

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid. – с

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> Самойл

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<sup>25</sup> Эко У. К

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<sup>36</sup> Самойл

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<sup>37</sup> Кросс Я

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<sup>28</sup> Самойлов Д. «Лет через пять, коли дано дожить...», in: Самойлов Д. *Стихотворения*. Санкт-Петербург: Академический проект, 2006. — с. 533.

<sup>29</sup> Самойлов Д. *Памятные записки*. Москва: Международные отношения, 1995. — с. 456.

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