A Collection of Holocaust Poetry in Farsi
The work in this collection is the outcome of several translation workshops hosted at the Ackerman Center at the University of Texas of Dallas.
Letters To My Wife
Miklós Radnóti

Translated from Hungarian by Zsuzsanna Ozsváth and Fred Turner

Beneath, the nether worlds, deep, still, and mute.
Silence howls in my ears, and I cry out.
No answer could come back, it is so far
from the sad Serbia swooned into war.
And you’re so distant. But my heart redeems
your voice all day, entangled in my dreams.
So I am still, while close about me sough
the great cold ferns, that slowly stir and bow.

When I’ll see you, I don’t know. You whose calm
is as the weight and sureness of a psalm,
whose beauty’s like the shadow and the light,
whom I could find if I were blind and mute,

Interrogações ciumentas: Diga-me, fala
Você ainda me ama? Você se tornará, no auge da minha
tenra idade, minha futura esposa?
hide in the landscape now, and from within leap to my eye, as if cast by my brain.
You were real once; now you have fallen in to that deep well of teenage dreams again.

Jealous interrogations; tell me; speak.
Do you still love me? Will you on that peak of my past youth become my future wife?
---But now I fall awake to real life and know that’s what you are: wife, friend of years, ---just far away. Beyond three wild frontiers.
And Fall comes. Will it also leave with me?
Kisses are sharper in the memory.

Daylight and miracles seemed different things.
Above, the echelons of bombers’ wings:
skies once amazing blue with your eyes’ glow
are darkened now. Tight with desire to blow,
the bombs must fall. I live in spite of these,
a prisoner. All of my fantasies
I measure out. And I will find you still;
for you I’ve walked the full length of the soul,
the highways of countries!—on coals of fire,
if needs must, in the falling of the pyre,
if all I have is magic, I’ll come back;
I’ll stick as fast as bark upon an oak!
And now that calm, whose habit is a power
and weapon to the savage, in the hour
of fate and danger, falls as cool and true
as does a wave: the sober two times two.
Shemá
Primo Levi

Translated by Ruth Feldman & Brian Swann

You who live secure
In your warm houses,
Who return at evening to find
Hot food and friendly faces:

Consider whether this is a man,
Who labours in the mud
Who knows no peace
Who fights for a crust of bread
Who dies at a yes or a no.

Consider whether this is a woman,
Without hair or name
With no more strength to remember
Eyes empty and womb cold
As a frog in winter.

Consider that this has been:
I commend these words to you.
Engrave them on your hearts
When you are in your house, when you walk on your way,
When you go to bed, when you rise.
Repeat them to your children.
Or may your house crumble,
Disease render you powerless,
Your offspring avert their faces from you.

وقائع را بنگرید
به شما مو سپارم این کلام را
نقش کنید برقلب اتان
آنزمان که دوست خاطر من می‌زنید، یا انگیزه ها در دمای ای جدید
زمان دوست خاطر من می‌وادیم، یا در بیداری
پر از وقایع و نابودی بیماری
و گرنه می‌خواهد حاکم بیماری شود
و بیماری نشان اثر کنید
و وقایع را مو از شما روزی نبگردنده
A Cartload of Shoes
Abraham Sutzkever

Translated by David G. Roskies

The wheels hurry onward, onward.
What do they carry?
They carry a cartload
Of shivering shoes.

The wagon like a canopy
in the evening light;
The shoes – clustered
Like people in a dance.

A wedding, a holiday?
Has something blinded my eyes?
The shoes – I seem
To recognize them.

The heels go tapping
With a clatter and a din.
From our old Vilna streets
They drive us to Berlin.

I should not ask
But something tears at my tongue
Shoes, tell me the truth
Where are they, the feet?

The feet from these boots
With button like dew –
And here, where is the body
And there, where is the bride?

Where is the child
To fill those shoes
Why has the bride
Gone barefoot?

Through the slippers and the boots
I see those my mother used to wear
She kept them for the Sabbath
Her favourite pair.
And the heels go tapping:
With a clatter and a din,
From our old Vilna streets
They drive us to Berlin.
Translator Jamal Arian