

On the Canal, St. Petersburg

Laurence Snyder

Sleeshkom daraga. It's too much, too dear,
This boatripe through the granite canals where
The empty vodka bottles disappear.
They say each time you dip your fingers there,
It's new. You never touch it twice. And who
Can argue with that? I can only stand
On the landing, counting. I see the new
Neva and the new money in my hand.
The boatman speaks in Russian. He repeats:
Vasyemnatsut tisha. And it's too dear.
Forty dollars to slide by the stone streets
Where Gogol wears his overcoat, to hear
The droshky drivers, the October rain,
Pasternak cursing. And I can't explain
To this shrugging Russian why his city's river
Is too dear, too deep, too distant to deliver.