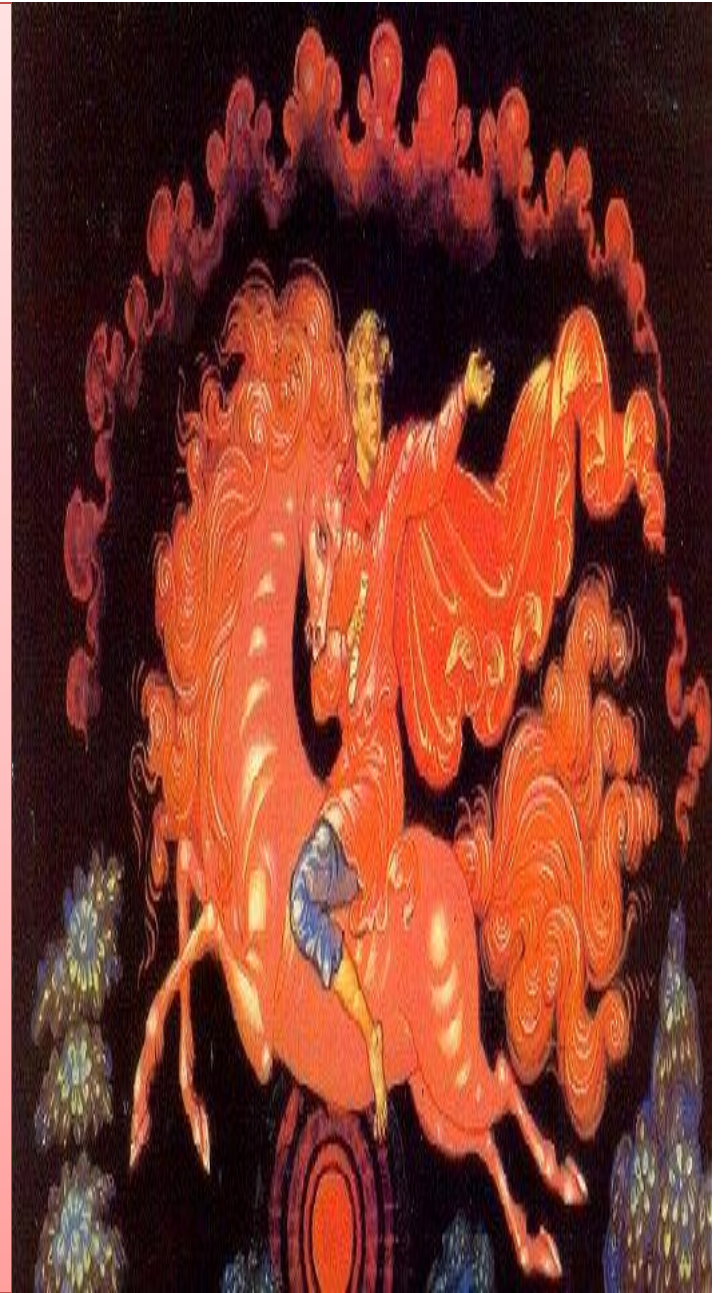


Last Poet of the Village'
Biography and poetry of Sergey Aleksandrovich Yesenin (1895-1925)



- *I don't pity, don't call, don't cry*
- *I don't pity, don't call, don't cry,
All will be gone, like haze from
the white apple trees.
Seized by the gold of withering,
I will never be young again.*
- *My heart, touched by the chill
within,
You will not beat as before,
And the cotton birches of the
countryside
No more will lure me to gad
about barefoot.*
- *From 'I don't pity, don't call,...'
1921
Translated by Lyuba Coffey*



Sergey Yesenin, c. 1919

- Sergey Yesenin is without doubt the most profoundly Russian of all the poets of the Revolution. Sometimes dismissed by elitist poetic circles as a 'peasant poet', Yesenin was in fact an extremely gifted lyricist, an intellectual and a celebrity. He was the poet of the people, not only during the early days of the Revolution but long after his death in 1925 at age 30. His poetry survived through the Stalinist period, despite official disapproval of his works. His little books of poetry, often in tatters, could be found in the hands of migrant workers and Red Army soldiers. Many of his poems are learnt by heart at school. They have been set to music and are popular songs in modern Russia. His poetry, deceptively simple in structure, is fresh, sincere, melancholy and full of fire.***



Yesenin in 1915

*Alone, I am standing in the bare plain,
While the cranes are carried far away by the
wind;*

*I am full of thoughts about my joyous youth,
But I regret nothing from the past.*

*I do not regret the years squandered in vain,
I do not regret the lilac blossom within my
soul.*

*In the garden, a fire of rowan-berries is
burning,*

But it cannot warm anyone.

*The rowan-berries in clusters, will not be
scorched,*

The grass will not grow yellow and perish.

As the tree gently lets fall its leaves,

So I let fall melancholy words.

*From 'The golden grove has ceased to
speak...' 1924*

Translated by Dimitri Obolensky

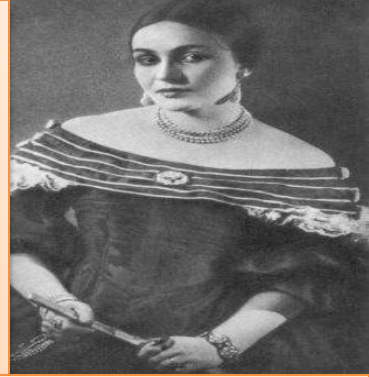


His wife's

Yesenin was married five times in his short but very full life.

His first marriage was to Anna Romanovna Izryadnova in 1913. They had a son Yuri in 1914.

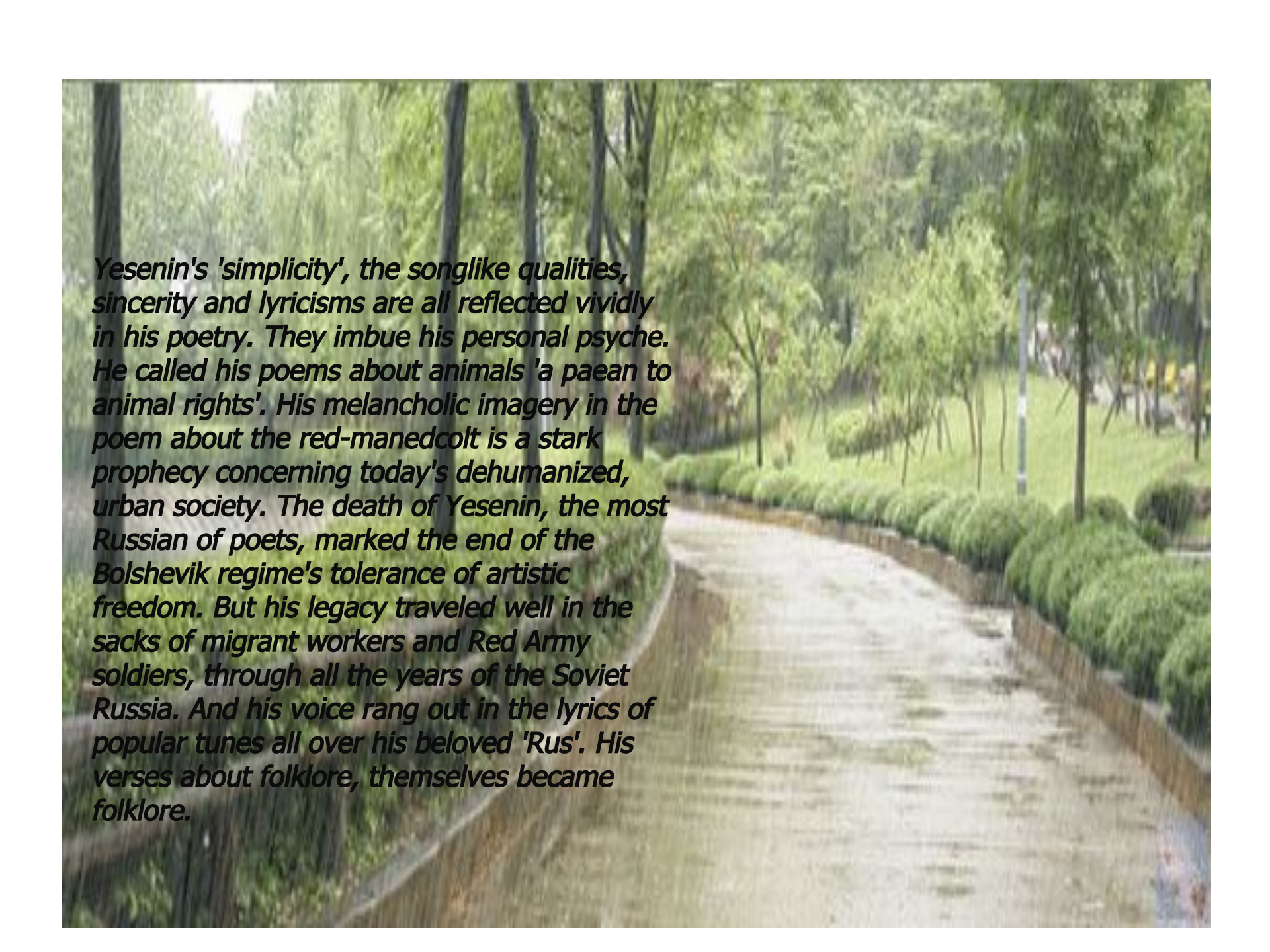
The second was to Zinaida Nikolayevna Riykh, an actress, in 1918. She bore him a daughter Tatiana and a son Konstantina the following year. A year later they separated and he began the life of a wandering Bohemian poet. He was divorced from Riykh in October 1921 at the time when he first became acquainted with Isadora Duncan, the famous American dancer. In 1922 they were married and sailed for America on the 'Paris'. He was suspected of being a subversive and was held briefly on Ellis Island with his wife. The short stormy marriage was all the more remarkable, not that he was 17 years younger, but because he spoke no English and she no Russian. A year later, in 1923, they were separated. Next there was a civil marriage to Galina Arturovna Benislavskaya, his secretary. Also in that same year he had a son Alexandr by the poet Nadezhda Davidnova Volpin. Yesenin never saw Alexandr. Ironically, Alexandr Sergevich Volpin-Yesenin later became a well known poet in the dissident movement in Russia in the 1960s. In March 1925, Yesenin became acquainted with the granddaughter of Leo Tolstoi, Sophia Andreyevna Tolstoya. She became his last wife.



*Zinaida
Nikolayevna
Riykh*



*Isadora Duncan
and Yesenin, 1922*

A photograph of a winding gravel path in a park. The path curves from the foreground towards the right background. On the left side of the path, there is a low, curved concrete or stone wall. To the right of the path, there are several rows of low, rounded green bushes. In the background, there are many tall, thin trees with green foliage, creating a dense forest-like atmosphere. The lighting is bright, suggesting a sunny day.

Yesenin's 'simplicity', the songlike qualities, sincerity and lyricisms are all reflected vividly in his poetry. They imbue his personal psyche. He called his poems about animals 'a paeon to animal rights'. His melancholic imagery in the poem about the red-manedcolt is a stark prophecy concerning today's dehumanized, urban society. The death of Yesenin, the most Russian of poets, marked the end of the Bolshevik regime's tolerance of artistic freedom. But his legacy traveled well in the sacks of migrant workers and Red Army soldiers, through all the years of the Soviet Russia. And his voice rang out in the lyrics of popular tunes all over his beloved 'Rus'. His verses about folklore, themselves became folklore.

A Letter to Mother

- Are you still alive, my dear granny?
I am alive as well. Hello! Hello!
May there always be above you, honey,
The amazing stream of evening glow.
I've been told that hiding your disquiet,
Worrying about me a lot,
You go out to the roadside every night,
Wearing your shabby overcoat.
In the evening darkness, very often,
You conceive the same old scene of blood:
Kind of in a tavern fight some ruffian
Plunged a Finnish knife into my heart.
Now calm down, mom! And don't be dreary!
It's a painful fiction through and through.
I'm not so bad a drunkard, really,
As to die without seeing you.
I'm your tender son as ever, dear,
And the only thing I dream of now
Is to leave this dismal boredom here
And return to our little house. And how!
I'll return in spring without warning
When the garden blossoms, white as snow.
Please don't wake me early in the morning,
As you did before, eight years ago.
Don't disturb my dreams that now have flown,
Don't perturb my vain and futile strife
For it's much too early that I've known
Heavy loss and weariness in life.
Please don't teach me how to say my prayers!
There is no way back to what is gone.
You're my only joy, support and praise
And my only flare shining on.
Please forget about your pain and fear,
Please don't worry over me a lot
Don't go out to the roadside, dear,
Wearing your shabby overcoat



The Birch Tree/Береза

- Under my window
Tucked in the snow
White birch retired
Clad in silver glow.
- On the fluffy branches
Snowy-trim with silver-tinge
Melted around catkins
Forming white fringe.
- Like golden fires
Snow-flakes blazed
While birch stood still
Asleep, or amazed.
- Meanwhile, lazily
Strolling around,
Dawn threw more “silver”
On the twigs (and ground).
- *Translated from original by
K.M.W.Klara*

Белая береза
Под моим окном
Принакрылась снегом
Точно серебром.
На пушистых ветках
Снежною каймой
Распустились кисти
Белой бахромой.
И стоит береза
В сонной тишине,
И горят снежинки
В золотом огне.
А заря, лениво
Обходя кругом,
Обсыпает ветки
Новым серебром.
1913



The Stars/Звезды

- Tiny stars, bright stars, high stars!
What are you keeping-in, and what
are you hiding?
How do the tender, deep-thoughts
of stars,
Keep my soul captive, without
binding?
- Private stars, compact stars!
Is it your beauty, knowledge, or
might?
What great power, o heavenly stars,
Keeps my fascination burning at
night?
- Why when you shine, do you lure
me hard,
To the embrace of the wide sky?
You look tenderly, you caress my
heart
Heavenly stars, stars from afar, why?
- *Translated from original by
K.M.W.Klara*

Звездочки ясные, звезды
высокие!
Что вы храните в себе, что
скрываете?
Звезды, таящие мысли
глубокие,
Силой какою вы душу
пленяете?
Частые звездочки, звездочки
тесные!
Что в вас прекрасного, что в
вас могучего?
Чем увлекаете, звезды
небесные,
Силу великую знания
жгучего?
И почему так, когда вы
сияете,
Маните в небо, в объятия
широкие?
Смотрите нежно так, сердце
ласкаете,
Звезды небесные, звезды
далекие!



The Storm/Буря

•

Leaves atremble,
the maples rocked.
They scattered pollen
like powdered brass.
Winds blew and
green forest sighted.
The echo whispered with dried
feather – grass, Gloomy storm
at the window cries bending twigs
toward the murky glass.
Shaking morosely, as if dismayed,
They gaze into semi-darkness, alas...

- Black clouds keep creeping
from afar.
Ferociously swell
the river, the waves roar;
Like strong arms
brandishing a scimitar,
they keep crashing
again and they soar.
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Дрогнули листочки, закачались
клёны,
С золотистых веток полетела
пыль...
Зашумели ветры, охнул лес
зелёный,
Зашептался с эхом высохший
ковыль...
Плачет у окошка пасмурная
буря,
Понагнулись ветлы к мутному
стеклу,
И качают ветки, голову понуря,
И с тоской угрюмой смотрят в
полумглу...
А вдали, чернея, выползают
тучи,
И ревет сердито грозная река,
Подымают брызги водяные
кручи,
Словно мечет землю сильная
рука.

1914-1915



Winter/Зима

-

At the moment the autumn disappeared,
The brusque winter came tearing all along.
Winged like, it has appeared,
No one knows how, why, or for how long.

- Deep frosts turned the dams into sheer ice,
(A heavenly sight for every ice sprinter)
Some boys exclaimed, "Hey, it's nice!"
Others added, "Thank you winter."

- With new designs on the glazed windows
Mysterious beauty the world acquired
Even though everyone paused and admired
Who did it, when, and how? No one knows.

- The falling snowflakes swirled and dashed,
Then settled down like a huge white throw.
Just then in the clouds the sunlight flashed
And a sparkle appeared on the frosted snow

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Вот уж осень улетела,
И примчалась зима.
Как на крыльях, прилетела
Невидимо вдруг она.
Вот морозы затрещали
И сковали все пруды.
И мальчишки закричали
Ей "спасибо" за труды.
Вот появились узоры
На стеклах дивной красоты.
Все устремили свои взоры,
Глядя на это. С высоты
Снег падает, мелькает, вьется
Ложится велой пеленой.
Вот солнце в облаках мигает
И иней на снегу сверкает.
1911-1912

