

I took this snapshot of Tomas and Monica Tranströmer in a churchyard in Stockholm, in May of 1999, while on a research trip to complete work on a book of formal Swedish poetry in translation. Monica is holding a sheaf of drafts from that project which Tomas had wanted to see. We spoke Swedish exclusively, since he could articulate only a few words, all Swedish—*ja* (yes) was one and *bra* (good) another, and he used both a lot that day, which may have contributed to my positive impression of how he was faring. In fact, I thought he seemed in remarkably good spirits. My other impression from that meeting is that over the nine years since his stroke, Monica had virtually learned to read Tomas's mind—anticipate what he needed, intuit and articulate what he wanted to convey. There seemed to be a profound psychic link between them. I had never experienced anything quite like it, and found her devotion both moving and memorable.

The world of Swedish translation is small. Swedish poets who read in the States, and American translators of Swedish poetry who spend time in Sweden, are almost bound to bump into one another now and again. I first heard Tomas read in New York, sometime in the early Seventies, in the period after Robert Bly had translated and published, and variously promoted, his work in this country. A few years later I saw him again, at a reading in Denver. I invited him to read his work for the Iowa Writer's Workshop sometime during 1976-77, the year I taught there. We met in London in 1985, and again in New York in 1993; and there may have been other meetings along the way. So I had known Tomas for a long time, but never well, and we had occasionally exchanged letters; but the churchyard meeting felt intimate in a way none of our previous encounters ever had.

Two years after than meeting, in 2001, Robert Bly approached Lars-Håkan Svensson and me about translating the correspondence between himself and Tomas. The correspondence had already been published in Sweden by Bonniers as *Air Mail*, Lars-Håkan having translated Robert's letters into Swedish. We took the project on, and completed our work in good time. The expectation was that an American edition would follow in short order; but in fact more than a decade had to pass, and Tomas had to win the Nobel Prize, for that to happen. Lars-Håkan and I spent some weeks last summer polishing our old versions of the letters till we were completely satisfied with their accuracy and phrasing. Everyone concerned with the project is happy and relieved that both correspondents are able to enjoy the occasion of their appearance together in the Greywolf editon.

—Judith Moffett

