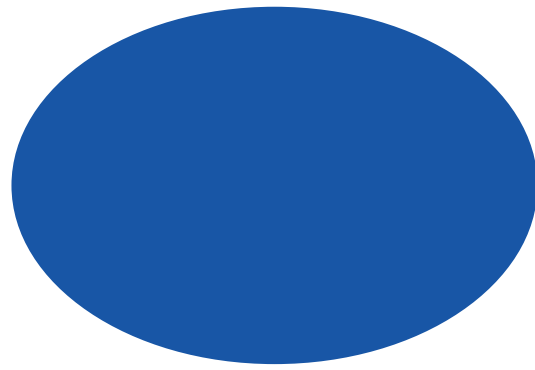


FOUR CENTURIES

Russian Poetry in Translation



17

2017



Four Centuries. Russian Poetry in Translation
fourcenturies@gmx.de

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Зинаиды Успенской, Далии Даниэль и автора

Four Centuries Library 46

The choice of colours for different languages is just random and has nothing to do either with national flags or national traditions.

Letter from the Publisher

Four Centuries Library

Dear Friends,

The following text of the Publisher's Letter was published in *Four Centuries*, Nr. 3:

Dear Friends,

Thank you very much for reading our magazine.

I would like to open its third issue by launching a new initiative to create a library of Russian poetry in translations - **Four Centuries Library**.

The ambitious goal of this project is to collect books, periodicals and other papers with Russian poetry, old and new, translated into different languages, and finally to donate collection as a whole to one of the university or public libraries. At the end of this issue you will find the list of more than thirty items - a starting contribution from my personal collection. You can join me in my efforts to implement this idea by sending your donations in the following categories:

A. Monographic poetry collections by separate poets translated into different languages

B. Anthologies of Russian poetry translations

C. Periodicals with translations of Russian poetry

Please, send your donations to:

Dr. Ilya Perelmuter, Erikapfad 7, 45133 Essen, Germany

The list of all the gifts with the names of the donators will be published in *Four Centuries*. Thanks a lot for your support in advance!

Yours,

Publisher

In this issue you will find new donations to the *Four Centuries Library* at page .

XVIII

Vasily Petrov (1736 - 1799)

Василий Петров (1736 - 1799)

Translated by Alex Cigale

To Catherine the Second, All-Russia's Great Sovereign, Upon the Inauguration of the Moscow Governorate

The Eagle has appeared above Moscow,
His piercing shrill soaring above the sky.
Suddenly, his crest propping up the cloud,
Stilled above it, our destiny he descries.
His tail splayed out, and his wings spread!
Wishing to announce it, thou King of Birds,
Whose magnificence is it that you establish?
Could it be Moscow's? It too is transformed;
In it, the fledgling eagle has been renewed.
Oh, Muse, strike up your harp, and let's begin!

I beseech you: Glorify our ancient capital,
The proud mother of all our blessed towns;
Glorify and bless the Queen of the North,
Eternal pride of all races for all time to come,
Who now transfuses a newly revitalized soul
Into the seven seas and lands in her demense;
She is indefatigable, both night and day,
Considers the tranquility of Russians her duty,
And holds her Throne's esteem proportionate
In measure to the degree of their happiness.

© Alex Cigale, translation, 2017

But who is this Virgin Divine that manifests,
Amidst the harp's melifluous ring of notes,
Who, amidst the choir's harmonious song,
Pours out her heavenly incandescence?
No, she is not one of the Graces, nor a Muse;
Familiar to me are the features of their form,
In consequence of the closeness of our union.
And though she shines in sweet appearance,
My gaze is even more enchanted by her sign;
Her excellence exceeds the beauty of the stars.

"I am the spark Divine, I am conscience" –
The heavenly Virgin doth declare to me,
"Attend, I say, to these tales of my endeavors
And the account of my travels in your land.
Eternally glad in communion with the folk,
The supreme happiness and joy of all hearts,
But having been severed from humanity,
I, for a time, had forgotten them myself,
And spent an idle period in sullen silence,
Slumbering within their careless breasts."

"And having been neglected from their council,
I fled their cities for the solace of the woods,
Like a despised stranger in this profane world,
Often taking refuge in the comfort of the sky.
And now, the Empress Catherine, the cause
Of all that is good in these Northern lands,
Has summoned me to earth from the heavens,
And having awakened me from my dormancy,
In all the sacred places erected my temples,
That I become a Goddess in her estate."

"Oh, how I presently take pleasure in being
Of service to the daughter of the Heavenly Sky!
Taking part in all the daily affairs of mankind,
Having become an instrument of her magic,

I am able to solicit the truth from people
Who are insensible to the pains of torture,
Nor susceptible to extraordinary threats.
And I demolish the rattling sound of fetters,
The lash, torments, scourging, and affliction:
My scepter is not trepidation, but mercy."

"Like the abundant harvest after rainfall,
The life-giving waters come pouring down;
And I will penetrate deeply into their souls,
The witness of all feelings and their guide.
The sources of all evil thoughts will wither,
And, like beeswax in the sun, all hardened,
Embittered hearts will soften and yield.
And having sinned, in that great Judgment,
They will beat upon their chests in repentance,
And their embarrassed, reddened faces flush."

"All traces of strife and disputation will vanish,
And slander, that most brazen-faced of wolves,
Meat for the seekers of emolument, perpetual
Litigation, and the unjust interpretation of Law.
I will arrive and will enjoin upon each one
To live as is prescribed for an honest man."
And that is how the Virgin Divine addressed me,
And once I had distinctly perceived her face,
She, turning her exquisite countenance away,
Departed, streaming in a hurry through the city.

Being enveloped in the Goddess's emanations,
It did not seem that I myself did flicker,
And with my eyes full of astonishment,
I kept on seeing her before me in her absence.
I was confused and yet supremely gladdened,
Recollecting the secret speech of my own heart:
"Oh, our Conscience, oh, the soul of our souls!
Oh, how strongly you are by Russians desired!

You are the imperishable spark of God divine!
Is life possible, you in our hearts extinguished?"

Oh, people, who are the proud pillars of Russia,
In whom the light of reason kindles and ignites,
Ponder and reflect in these precious few minutes
On what the Monarchy doth provide for us.
What of these troubled times do we understand,
Or the full worth of her blessed beneficence,
Or the powerful effect of this day's celebration?
Enriched by the bounty from the heavens,
We will come to sense it within ourselves:
Whether the spark of Divinity in us is alive.

Alive! Alive! Rejoice, oh, marvelous City!
In the fullness complete of your daughterly days,
In the utter and complete abandon of filial joy,
Oh, you transparent Moscow River's waters
That washeth the towers crowning the walls,
You will increase the flood, in commemoration,
And multiply your flow, quickening the current!
You, flowing through one and the same nation,
Have nothing in comparison to yield in glory
To the proud currents of the Volga and Neva.

You reflect the gilted domes of sacred towers
In your placidly floating, everlasting waters,
Oh, mirror eternal of miracles and wonders,
So that even the seven seas envy your destiny.
Eternal City, thou art the birthright of Heroes,
Who sends columns marching to the South,
Oh, thou immovable giant of the North!
Your zeal toward the Monarchs is renowned,
Your ancient eminence is most august,
So that St. Petersburg itself is but your son.

Rejoice today, our esteemed City, and mark
In remembrance this day for all ages to come!

Rejoice, oh, venerable father for thy son!
Your turn has come now to celebrate and exult,
For even though the glow of fame came late,
Your luster is yet far from being tarnished;
Of all our towns be thou the crowning glory:
And She by whom you are so enlightened,
Toward her be thou thankful in obligation,
And be not silent in your feelings of praise.

Oh, City, it was here that, for the first time,
I gazed on our sun's fervently yearned-for rays;
From you, I drank the living source of Wisdom,
Waters sacred to Apollo, of the Castalian Spring.
Let us begin to sing her accolades together:
I will extol her to the day of my dying breath,
And will consider this to be my eternal honor.
I will laud her midst falling leaves and freeze;
For us all doth the lily and the rose bloom
That we may weave with them a laurel wreath.

All her elaborate lauds and lavished glory
Are but what our God-given talents consist in;
Our good will, the chasteness of our tastes,
Will shower on her our precious gifts of honor.
He who is incorruptible, breathes the truth into
Another; that one smells to her the sweetest,
Like the magnificent rose, or the beautiful lily.
He who loves virtue with his heart entire
Is the progenitor of her gladness and pleases,
A trustworthy friend to her, her beloved son.

Slough off all the cilice shirts of thy prejudice,
Shed them from your most intimate thoughts,
Open wide and read from the Empress's books,
And decipher in them thus her innermost soul.
You shall see what the Mother prescribes you;
The measure of love that she in you inspires.

There, you shall see that, in her eyes, all things --
Your wreaths, your monuments, your trophies --
Are but reflected glories, oh Russians, that you
Shine brightest in the auroras of your righteousness.

So we begin to sing Queen Catherine's virtues!
And we shall all begin to live as God intended,
Comporting ourselves according to our station,
For it is futile to attempt to match her grandeur.
Oh, rich man! Clothe and feed the poor orphan,
You, wise man, shine a light upon ignorance,
You, strong one, defend the meekness of the weak,
Ye judge, protect and preserve the innocent man,
Free him from the mouthings of the denouncer,
Raise up all things that serve the common good.

Oh, how She, in her gladness, will take delight,
Heeding such of our strivings and aspirations,
And how, having witnessed this, she will rejoice
That we all live as one great single human soul!
That when she looks down upon our successes,
What pleases her most of all our triumphs,
That most glorious shining beneath her crown,
How we demolished the enemy's strongholds,
How, in the distance, the Turkish fleet is blazing,
How we will rise up to possess the globe entire.

Let us therefore endeavor to praise and glorify
The Sacred Source of all our eternal blessings,
And seek to give her this mightiest of pleasures,
That we do march step in step toward goodness.
And those whose heroic deeds now instruct us,
They will be given recompense for their efforts,
Sisyphean labors undertaken on our behalf.
Oh, City, thou art an emblem and exemplar
Of kindness, generosity, faithfulness, mercy;
You shine as a light, brighter than all nations!

A paragon to emulate in Greece established,
The display of glory in physical perfection,
What talent one was given held an expectation,
That it be thrown into the ring of competition.
There, strong muscle strained upon muscle,
And with every ounce of strength they pressed
To grant one to the other victory's celebration.
What brilliance there was, what great rejoicing,
When energetic youth was perfectly married
With the courage and bravado of full maturity!

The mother of the world entire and of our armies,
Catherine, in the heroic deeds of our own days,
Has conferred on us this uppermost of virtues,
Calling upon us all to join her in the North;
Oh, our land's great expanse! That territories vie,
Each with each, towns contend one with another,
And every Russian competes another Russian,
Not in enmity, but in righteousness, generosity,
And in the heat of battle takes note and remarks
How each of them had grown in achievement.

In each of these, their merits be so distinguished,
Commensurate reward is due them in proportion.
That is the mark of most excellent distinction!
When not even the greatest effort is spared,
May each of them be naturally granted an
Indulgence, whose mind thinks so nobly.
Oh! Desire thou the most exceeding praises,
Spread out thy wings of diligence and striving,
And fly, and fly, rise high and yet still higher,
Like Eagles filled with a replenished youth!

By means of gargantuan, heroic successes,
Strive to seize the laurels of achievement,
And the genuine pleasures of your heart:
That She who had revealed to you her path

Of immortality grants you everlasting glory,
And having witnessed your ardor pronounce,
In great delight, her soul thrilled, enraptured:
“Oh, Russians! My boldness was not in vain,
Your excellence has not gone by me unnoticed,
And I am greatly pleased with your endeavors.”

Oh, if only, her great desire to make us happy
Would be met in our hearts with similar striving,
And only if we had the might to answer her call,
Then the fire of her Divine Voice would manifest
As deed: We will become a wonder among nations.
And yet, oh Thou, great treasure of the blessed!
If we fulfill but only one half of your decree,
A hundred fold happier than the others we will be!

1782

Alex Cigale's first full book, *Russian Absurd: Daniil Kharms, Selected Writings*, is just out in the Northwestern University Press's World Classics series. In 2015, he was awarded a National Endowment for the Arts Fellowship for his work on the poet of the St. Petersburg philological school Mikhail Eremin. In 2016, he edited the contemporary Russian poetry issue of *Atlanta Review* (Georgia Tech), which contained the work of some 50 poets and 35 translators. His translation in this issue is part of the bilingual *100 Poems About Moscow. An Anthology* (M.: БСГ-Пресс, 2016).

Alex Cigale in *Four Centuries*:

2, 2012, p. 7 (Владислав Ходасевич), p. 8 (Георгий Адамович); p. 8 (Георгий Иванов)

3, 2012, p.6 (Михаил Ломоносов), p.7 (Александр Сумароков), p.7-8 (Панкратий Сумароков), p.8 (Иван Барков)

4, 2013, p.6-8 (Иван Тургенев), p.11-13 (Константин Бальмонт)

6, 2013, p.5 (Николай Карамзин), p.6 (Василий Капнист), p.22-25 (Евгений Туренко)

8, 2014, p.6-12 (Александр Шенин)

15, 2016, p. 5-7 (Константин Батюшков), p. 8-9 (Константин Аксаков), p. 10 (Дмитрий Минаев)

16, 2016, p. 10-11 (Александр Сумароков), p. 12-17 (Иван Дмитриев)

XIX

Fyodor Tyutchev (1803 - 1873)

Фёдор Тютчев (1803 - 1873)

Translated into English, French and Hungarian
by Vadim Vozdvizhensky

* * *

There is no mind to fathom Russia,
And no arshin to measure her:
She has her stand that is so special -
There is only faith to have in her.

* * *

Ne comprends pas Russie comme d'autres,
Aucune arshine mesure sa grâce:
Sa taille spéciale, unique, peut-être -
Dois croire Russie, c'est ta bonne chance.

* * *

Ne ésszel értsd Oroszországot,
Arsinnal mérni ne próbáld:
Saját tartású lesz ő mindig -
Oroszországnak hidd szavát.

Fyodor Tyutchev (1803 - 1873)

Фёдор Тютчев (1803 - 1873)

Translated into English by Vadim Vozdvizhensky

* * *

Above the hills of vineyards green
Low-flying clouds pure golden seen.
Below a river slowly flowing
Its emerald waves in silence rolling.
A look is rising from the valley,
When reaching heights it stops and sees
A round light shrine to which leads alley
That stands on edge as if it sleeps.
Up there, in heaven like abode,
Where earthly life enjoys no place,
And lighter, and internally cleaner
A stream of air flows with grace.
Up there flying sound gets numb,
Just song of nature there is sung
And something festive blows above,
Like days of resurrected love.

Vadim Vozdvizhensky has been studying and translating the poetry of Grigory S. Skovoroda for years. His dissertation on the Hungarian motives in the literary and philosophical works of Skovoroda is the first such study either in Hungary or the philosopher's homeland. Vadim Vozdvizhensky translates other Russian poets with devotion to Tokay or Hungary as for example Fyodor Tyutchev.

Vadim Vozdvizhensky in *Four Centuries*:
16, 2016, p.5-9 (Григорий Сковорода)

Fyodor Tyutchev in *Four Centuries*:
5, 2013, p. 6; 12, 2015, p. 10-11, translated into Hungarian by Mays Tsesarskaya
14, 2016, p. 5, translated into Dutch by Paul Bezembinder

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XX

Innokenty Annensky (1855 - 1909)

ИННОКЕНТИЙ АННЕНСКИЙ (1855 - 1909)

Translated by Ian Probst

Among the Worlds

Among the worlds, while planets flicker above,
I keep repeating the name of One Star of the universe,
Not because I am madly in love
But because the others bore me to death.

If I can't endure doubt,
I beg only Her to answer
Not because She brings light,
But because with Her all light is extra.

A Pub of Life

Around a whitish Psycho
The same rubber plants stick out,
The same chatter and daze...
The same sad lackeys around.

Naked bones and dregs of wine,
Ashes of extinguished cigars,
Lips are twisted with the poison of spite,
Stale booze of boredom rots the hearts.

The night has long put snow on,
But you are in no hurry to leave,
As in a nightmare they go on:
"Liquor or hashish?" is your peeve.

But the lobby is not so hot:
Putting the collar up, discreet,
By the melting candle butt
The undertaker writes a balance sheet.

Innokenty Annensky (1855-1909) was praised as a precursor of modernism and, specifically, of Acmeism by Nikolai Gumilev and Osip Mandelstam who admired his poetry. Annensky's poetry has a unique blend of music, lyricism, and skepticism often merged with irony, sometimes sarcasm. Even his love poems are "estranged" by irony, and it makes them irresistibly charming. It is this combination that escapes translation although all poetry is untranslatable: there is no such a vehicle that can move a word of one language into another; we can only hope to re-enact the poem transferring "the contingent motion of spirit," as George Steiner put it. Nevertheless, I tried to preserve the music, meter and rhyme, "the points of pressure" (or painful points), as Marina Tsvetaeva put it, and above all, suspense.

Ian Probst

Ian Probst, associate professor of English at Touro College, New York, a bilingual English-Russian poet and translator of poetry, is writing poetry and on poetry. He published nine books of poetry in Russian, one in English, and more than a dozen of books of translation; compiled and/or edited more than 30 books and anthologies of poetry in translation; in all has more than 450 publications in several languages (translated poetry from English, Spanish, Italian, and Polish into Russian and from Russian into English). His translations of Osip Mandelstam into English were chosen as a runner-up to The Gabo Prize for Literature in Translation and Multi-Lingual Texts (2016) while his translations of Ezra Pound's Cantos were shortlisted for the Russian Guild of Translators Master Award.

Ian Probst in *Four Centuries*:

- 3, 2012, p. 11-14 (Осип Мандельштам), p. 15-24 (Роальд Мандельштам);
- 4, 2013, p. 14-20 (Осип Мандельштам), p. 21-28 (Роальд Мандельштам);
- 5, 2013, p. 15-20 (Осип Мандельштам); p. 21-25 (Роальд Мандельштам);
- 6, 2013, p. 12-16 (Владислав Ходасевич); p. 17-21 (Елена Шварц);
- 7, 2014, p. 18-33 (Роальд Мандельштам); p. 45-49 (Александр Кабанов);
- 8, 2014, p. 13-15 (Иннокентий Анненский); p. 28-34 (Вениамин Блаженный);
- 9, 2014, p. 19-28 (Осип Мандельштам);
- 10, 2015, p. 6-7 (Иннокентий Анненский); p. 18-20 (Нина Искренко)
- 12, 2015, p. 12-16 (Владислав Ходасевич)
- 14, 2016, p. 10-14 (Велимир Хлебников)

Innokenty Annensky in *Four Centuries*:

- 8, 2014, p. 13-15; 10, 2015, p. 6-7, translated into English by Ian Probst
- 14, 2016, p. 9, translated into Dutch by Paul Bezembinder

Georgii Adamowich (1894 - 1972)

Георгий Адамович (1894 - 1972)

Translated into English by Elena Dubrovina

* * *

For the word you remembered once
And then forgot forever,
For all that in the burning sunset
You looked for and you never found,

And for despair of your dreams,
And for the cold that grew inside your chest,
And for a slow-growing death
Without any hope of moving on,

And for the "rescue," dressed in white,
And for the somber name of love
All sins will be forgiven,
And all your crimes.

* * *

O, you, my life, enough of fuss,
Enough complaints, - it's all just void.
And peace descends into the world -
You, too, search for your rest.

I want the heavy snow to fall,
The sky, transparent blue, to stretch,
And that I could forever sense
Ice in my heart and on the trees - some frost.

* * *

Dawn and rain. A dense fog in the park,
And in the window – an unneeded candle,
An open and forgotten trunk,
Her shoulders that barely tremble.

No word about us, no word about the past.
It's such a trifle – what happened at the end!
When solitude for two – it is so sad . . .
- The sun, with a slanting ray, at last,
Turned into gold the silver tress.

* * *

The twilight turns into unbearable time,
Unbearable nights . . .
Where are you, my late fellows?
Where are you, my friends? It's time to reply.

With no hesitations, towards danger,
- With no hesitations and no inanity, –
Under a fading torch of “clarity”,
My friends, like for the holiday, we will go!

Under the fading torch of “tenderness”
- Only not to grow numb before saying goodbye, –
With utter consciousness of despair,
With total willingness to die.

* * *

Life! What do I need from you – I do not know.
My grief cooled down, a lot of infancy.
But longing, as much as I'm longing now,
The merciful God will not allow.

And if somewhere he exists and breathes,
The one, who finally was brought to me by fate,
Why doesn't he come to me and doesn't hear
The voice of mine that didn't fade as yet?

And only my eyes, dark, misty, big,
The two enormous and mournful wings
Threw shadows from the Caucasian hills
On life of mine and on my all ordeals.

* * *

For centuries, God promises us bliss!
With you forever! – The answer flies.
But hope is shattered. And passion dies.
There is no happiness, eternity, or God.

But there are clouds in the sky above,
The empty rocks, the shining ice,
And still no name . . . to boredom and to grief...
That stays with us until the day we'll leave.

* * *

It happens: no oblivion, no dreams,
The near shadows are roaming in the mist,
Whether you argue or you don't, no doubts,
"Death and time are reigning on this earth".

Death and time. Suffering – we'll add.
...But by the morning, all of a sudden, with no cause,
With grieving happiness of existence
Something shines quietly on this earth.

* * *

A window, a dawn, ... as shadows, are barely seen
Two chairs, a bookshelf on the wall.
Did I wake up? Or the ethereal lilac's smell
I fancied in my dream?

Or this is through the grieving parting,
Through those dim and smoky clouds,
A shadow is reaching out
And smiles from afar?

* * *

One person said: "One life is not enough"
Another said, "The goal we can't handle"
A woman, habitually and dull,
Not listening, has rocked the cradle.

The fading ropes creaked so much,
Fell into silence - more gently every time! -
As if the angels sang for her from heaven
And talked about love.

* * *

"O, my heart is torn apart
Of tenderness ... O, yes, I loved my life
Without measuring, without quenching passion,
- But by the age of thirty, I have no strength enough".

Over a poet, leaning with a smile,
Unknown surgeon then
With lancet will cut his tired chest,
Instead of heart a piece of ice he'll place.

Elena Dubrovina is the author of nine books of poetry, prose and literary essays (in both Russian and English), including a bilingual anthology "*Russian Poetry in Exile. 1917-1975*". She is the editor of two journals "*Russian Poetry Past and Present*" and "*Russia Abroad Past and Present*" (Charles Schlacks, Publisher). She is a bilingual writer; her short stories, poetry and literary essays have appeared in Russian and American periodicals. Elena Dubrovina is a recipient of the international Shakespeare's award by the Russian Writers' Union for the high quality of translations.

Georgij Adamowich in *Four Centuries*:
2, 2012, translated into English by Aley Cigale

Elena Dubrovina in *Four Centuries*:
16, 2017, (Константин Бальмонт)

Faina Grimberg
Фаина Гримберг

Traduit par Alexeï Voïnov
Translated into French by Alexey Voinov

Andreï Ivanovitch revient à la maison

La vie s'est obscurcie
elle se transforme, maintenant c'est une nuit, une prison,
un bric-à-brac.
Tout est fini.
C'est presque le néant, y a pas de chemins.
Andreï Ivanovitch ne rentre pas à la maison.
Tout au début, c'était un gamin,
une fois il est parti,
c'est éloigné.
Il a pris un bateau et s'est enfui.
Voilà, il était là,
il n'est plus là.
Et puis, il était jeune et beau
il était beau, il était blond.
Là, nous pleurons.
Il était beau: les foudres aux yeux
et les étoiles.
Il était beau, on l'a aimé,
il pouvait être heureux.
Andreï Ivanovitch ne rentre pas à la maison.
Andreï Ivanovitch suivait les cours d'école élémentaire.
Andreï Ivanovitch a lu *Trois mousquetaires*.

Y a plus personne pour lire les livres,
y a plus personne pour apprendre la conjugaison.
Andreï Ivanovitch ne rentre pas à la maison.
Et puis, on lui a fait une bonne proposition.
Il a reçu un ordre de convocation.
Et l'université l'a renvoyé.
Il a rejoint le corps d'armée
Andreï Ivanovitch ne rentre pas à la maison.
Andreï Ivanovitch faisait son service si longtemps,
était admis dans des groupes différents,
tout ça était si long, si loin, et il marchait toujours à pied,
marchait toujours à pied, portait toujours les armes,
toujours soldat, toujours muni,
et ça nous dit: Andreï Ivanovitch,
il est celui qui rentre pas.
La guerre de Cent Ans est finie,
la guerre de Sept Ans est finie,
la guerre de Cinq Ans est finie,
la guerre de Trois Ans est aussi finie.
Voilà une guerre nouvelle, nous commençons:
Andreï Ivanovitch ne rentre pas à la maison.
L'artillerie est déjà passée,
le bombardement est fini,
la division s'enfuit vers l'horizon.
Andreï Ivanovitch ne rentre pas à la maison.
Les troupes mongoles sont déjà passées,
les drapeaux noirs sont déjà emportés,
les troupes russes sont aussi passées,
elles sont passées,
les baïonnettes sont maintenant cachées.
Andreï Ivanovitch n'est pas rentré.
Et les bateaux ont fait toutes les rivières,
et ces vaisseaux de guerre...
En tête,
il y avait des barques normandes.
Les chars blindés sont aussi passés

dans la poussière.
Andreï Ivanovitch n'est pas rentré.
On a fondé une université pour les chantiers,
une université des voies ferrées,
une autre qu'on pouvait pas imaginer.
On veut l'inscrire à la faculté
et on explique,
on s'excuse,
on établit une pension,
mais non,
Andreï Ivanovitch ne rentre pas à la maison.
Nous l'attendons
toute une année.
Il y a longtemps, les batailles sont finies.
Les gens rentrent
l'un après l'autre.
Mais où est mon ami,
mon cœur,
mon adoré?
Nous sommes ici. Nous regardons la route.
Andreï Ivanovitch t'es où?
Nous attendons toute la journée,
nous attendons un mois,
et deux années,
plusieurs années.
Sans châles
et sous la neige et sous la pluie,
sans pardessus
et sous la neige et sous la pluie,
et sans manteaux
et sous la neige et sous la pluie.
Nous attendons tout le temps,
nous l'attendons le jour, la nuit,
et chaque fois sortons pour regarder la route.
Mais où est mon ami,
mon cœur,
mon adoré?

Les gens reviennent
pas à pas.
Andreï Ivanovitch ne rentre pas.
Nous attendons
tout le temps.
Nous pensons:
quand est-ce qu'il va venir?
Et nous pensons:
quand est-ce qu'il reviendra?
Nous savons pas, pourquoi n'est-il pas là?
Nous savons pas, pourquoi n'est-il pas revenu?
Nous attendons
tout le temps.
Et nous pensons:
là, quelque chose va arriver.
Ou bien: ça arrivera.
Mais non, mais non.
Rien ne se passe.
Andreï Ivanovitch ne rentre pas chez soi.
Nous attendons, nous attendons,
nous l'attendons tout le temps,
y a plus d'espoir, vraiment.
De toute façon, nous l'attendons
sous la neige et sous la pluie.
Enfin, une voix terrible résonne,
elle dit:
*Il ne faut plus attendre,
votre bien-aimé ne reviendra jamais.
Tout est fini.*
*Il ne faut plus attendre,
votre bien-aimé ne reviendra jamais,
jamais!*
Andreï Ivanovitch ne revient pas.
Et cette voix, après:
*Il a fini toutes ses batailles,
il est épuisé, il est hors d'haleine,*

*il n'a plus de forces, du tout,
ni dans le corps ni dans l'âme.
Mais c'était ça votre envie?
Car il était méchant,
il buvait trop.
Il capturait les gens, il les tuait,
mais là, il affaiblit lui-même.
Maintenant, c'est lui qui a besoin de l'aide et de l'abri.
Allez si vous voulez,
cherchez.
Mais il vaut mieux ne pas trouver,
ne pas attendre.
Tout est fini.
Votre bien-aimé ne reviendra jamais,
il n'y a aucun espoir.
Envolez-vous,
volez par-delà les mers.
Andreï Ivanovitch ne reviendra jamais.
Et nous,
nous répondons et nous crions:
Pas vrai!
Tout ça, pas vrai!
Il était bon,
il était doux,
il était intelligent.
Il buvait pas,
il battait pas sa femme, Marina Markovna. Mais pas du tout.
Il était fermé, timide et vaniteux.
Talentueux.
Il était très doué.
Il savait tout,
car il était mécanicien.
Il a écrit un livre.
Il a fabriqué une faucheuse
pour couper les herbes.
Il a monté un appareil photo lui-même.
Il a tout réparé.
Et lui, il était*

*pas trop grand
et mince.
Il avait des pommettes saillantes
et des sourcils un peu broussailleux.
Une fois il a parlé de moi,
je me rappelle, il a parlé de ma voix,
il a dit "sa petite voix".
Et puis, il a dit:
"elle vous fera chaud au cœur".
Il a dit après:
"je ferai tout avec la joie" ...
Y a pas beaucoup de gens qui me parlent comme ça,
voilà pourquoi
ça m'apporte toujours du bonheur,
va pas s'éteindre à cause de la douleur
et ne s'écoulera avec du sang.
Andrei Ivanovitch ne rentre pas à la maison pourquoi, pourquoi?
Il rentre pas pourquoi?
Il était comme un soleil,
éclairait tout.
Il était pur, serein,
tout était ensoleillé autour de lui,
il protégeait chacun.
Il est dans mon âme comme un buisson ardent.
Il était bon et doux,
il me disait "ma belle",
On l'aimait,
on l'aime toujours.
Il disait tout d'un coup du mal,
et ça était pour nous égal, car on l'aimait toute la vie.
Alors pourquoi, pourquoi n'est-il pas ici?
Et de nouveau la voix s'exclame:
Il viedra pas de toute façon,
il viendra pas.
Il est maintenant en haut d'une montagne,
cette montagne est raide et grande,
lui il peut pas descendre.
Il est un arbre maintenant,*

*il se tient debout l'été, l'automne, l'hiver et le printemps.
Il s'est transformé en arbre de Cybèle,
ses mains sont des branches maintenant.
Andreï Ivanovitch est à présent un pin.
La Science et la Nature désignent ça comme
le cycle des matières.
Nous, deux humbles femmes, nous pensons alors:
Ainsi soit-il.
Et il n'y a rien à faire.
Sous l'écorce, il y a peut-être un cœur, une vie,
les oiseaux sont assis sur ses branches.
Les hannetons tournent autour de lui
comme les âmes sœurs.
La verdure est si dense là-haut.
Peut-être, nous verrons ses yeux qui brillent,
ses prunelles,
et des anneaux dorés autour...
Là, toutes les pensées s'arrêtent.
Andreï Ivanovitch n'est pas rentré.
Allons, allons chercher.
Allons l'amie.
Tu es mon amie maintenant et ma compagne.
Dans le cercle fermé et assombri,
toi tu es mon amie.
Andreï Ivanovitch est en haut de la montagne.
Alors, nous avons chaussé des bas en fer,
puis des souliers en fer.
Ainsi, nous avons pris nos élans,
et nous avons choisi parmi des choses inutiles
un sac avec le seul destin tragique
et pour nous deux - le seul chagrin.
Chacune de nous a pris
six paires de souliers en fer pour le rechange.
Marina Markovna et moi, nous sommes parties
vers la haute montagne.
Nous ne nous vexons plus,
nous nous mettons en quête.*

Toutes les insultes sont oubliées, elles étaient si bêtes.
Parce que de toute façon, Andreï Ivanovitch ne rentre pas à la maison.
Non,
vous ne savez pas comment ça se passe,
non!
Sept paires de souliers en fer se sont usées une par une.
Nous avons marché vers le soleil et vers la lune.
Il y a cent ans qui sont passés,
et puis les autres centaines,
et puis mille ans peut-être.
Nous avons interrogé chacun,
en pleurant, nous avons interrogé tout le monde.
Andreï Ivanovitch ne revient pas.
On nous a dit: *il reviendra jamais.*
Et puis, on nous a dit: *il reviendra jamais.*
Et puis: *jamais.*
Andreï Ivanovitch ne revient pas.
On nous a dit:
la montagne n'existe pas,
mais le malheur existe.
Il n'y a pas d'arbres comme ça,
mais il y a le manque et le misère.
La mort existe!
Et le bien-aimé
ne reviendra jamais,
jamais.
Andreï Ivanovitch ne revient pas.
On a dit:
le malheur existe,
il y a le manque et le misère.
La mort existe.
Et on a mal aux pieds.
On a dit:
jamais.
Il faut aller, il faut marcher,
mourir sur le chemin.

Andreï Ivanovitch ne rentre pas à la maison.
Il ne rentre pas.
Nous avons eu quand même assez de peine
pour gagner un bout de pain
et posséder un toit.
Alors, pourquoi,
pourquoi faut-il tellement souffrir dans l'âme?
Marcher, marcher
et te revoir jamais?
Marcher, marcher
et mourir loin de toi?
Andreï Ivanovitch ne rentre pas.
Il ne rentre pas.
Non!
Qu'on ne parle plus de lui!
Qu'on ne parle plus!
Car si quelqu'un nous parle de lui,
si un inconnu
nous en parle
par hasard, parfois,
c'est comme quand on jette du sel
sur la plaie.
C'est si mal et si terrible,
on a si mal au cœur.
C'est si mal, si mal,
on a si mal dans l'âme.
Marcher, marcher
et mourir du chagrin.
Andreï Ivanovitch ne rentre pas à la maison.
Marina Markovna et moi, nous sommes parties
sans savoir où,
à l'aveuglette,
pour trouver la haute montagne.
Nous n'avons pas su,
où la chercher.
Tous simplement, nous avons pris le chemin,
pour ne pas avoir si mal,

nous avons marché, marché.
Sans savoir où
exactement,
sur le chemin, sur ce chemin.
Car c'est pareil. Car il ne rentre pas.
Et nous avons trouvé la grande montagne.
Nous nous sommes approchées
vers son pied.
Nous nous sommes arrêtées.
Andreï Ivanovitch est bien là-haut.
Il pousse.
Le vent murmure dans sa verdure.
C'est ça: il s'est transformé en arbre.
Il est là.
Depuis la nuit des temps.
Il a oublié
tous ses noms, tous ses prénoms.
On l'a tué par un fer d'abord,
puis par un plomb.
Son âme est morte,
elle n'est pas ressuscitée.
Là, une abeille tourne autour de lui.
Il a sur son épaule
une ruche.
Et une abeille tourne autour.
Et lui, il n'entend rien, il ne voit rien,
il reviendra jamais nulle part.
Marina Markovna et moi, alors
nous grimpons
plus haut, plus haut.
Nous haletons,
plus vite, plus vite.
La couronne verte frémit,
s'agite.
On dirait l'arbre respire.
Nous haletons,
crions:

Andrei!

Nous crions en vain:

Andrei!

Nous adjurons:

Andrei!

Il n'entend rien de toute façon.

Il reviendra jamais à la maison.

Pour toujours, il est enterré.

On nous a dit,

qu'il est tué,

tué,

tué!

Il y a une maison pour lui -

c'est son cercueil.

Il est dedans,

il y repose

sous un arbre gigantesque.

Et on nous force à croire que c'est bien lui

ou presque.

On pense: voilà

une bonne nouvelle,

qui va nous soulager.

Mais nous, on est des femmes.

On peut pas croire à ça,

personne ne peut.

Cet arbre gigantesque est là.

Et le garçon, il est mis en terre, il dort.

Ce garçon dort dans les bras de la mort.

Il dort d'un sommeil de plomb.

Personne ne reviendra à la maison.

Mon Dieu! Ce n'est pas lui!

Ne dites pas ça,

ne dites pas que c'est la loi!

Une loi unique pour toute transformation,

un tourbillon de vie

qui tourne comme ça.

Mais qui a inventé cette loi?

Mais qui, pourquoi?
Ne dites pas, que c'est bien lui.
C'est un arbre,
c'est pas lui.
Lui, il était vivant,
il avait ses pieds, ses mains.
Mon Dieu, mais c'est un pin!
Et nous avons marché en vain.
Andreï Ivanovitch ne va pas germer
comme une herbe, comme une fleur.
Il ne va pas chanter comme un oiseau dans la forêt.
Tout ça, c'est bête, ce n'est pas vrai.
La vérité est là:
Andreï Ivanovitch ne revient pas chez soi,
mon âme ne le reconnaît pas,
ceci dit: il ne vient pas.
Qu'on parle qu'il deviendra connu,
célèbre dans le monde entier!
Qu'on répète "*le tourbillon de vie*"!
Nous
on n'a pas besoin d'un soulagement comme ça.
Mais est-ce que c'est fini?
C'est ça la fin?
Et la montagne domine
la vie..
Mais est-ce que c'est la fin?
Tout est fini?
Andreï Ivanovitch c'est de l'oubli?
Pourtant, on peut tout recommencer!
Et nous crions, pleurons...
Pourquoi, pourquoi es-tu mort?
Sois de nouveau vivant!
Pourquoi es-tu tué?
Sois de nouveau en vie!
Et nous crions, pleurons ainsi.
Notre chemin, était-il pour rien?
Sois beau,

encore, et sois aimé!
Notre chemin, était-il en vain?
Ah oui!
Il entend pas, il répond pas.
Nous sommes venues de loin pour qui?
Et nous versons des larmes amères,
nos larmes font une rivière.
Et nous pleurons sans fin.
Comment remonter dans le temps?
Et nous versons des larmes amères,
elles font maintenant une grande rivière.
Nous sommes venues de loin pour qui?
Tout est fini.
Tout se noie. Et nous aussi.
Andreï Ivanovitch ne rentre pas chez soi.
Les larmes coulent,
l'eau est partout.
Partout c'est le printemps.
L'eau est partout autour du pin.
L'eau coule,
elle coule,
elle va en croissant.
C'est parce que le printemps arrive.
Le pin est dans l'eau.
Dans l'eau, il y a l'enfant.
Oh mon petit, mon adoré
mon cœur!
Allons, rentrons ensemble,
rentrons à la maison!
Nous sommes en pleurs. C'est de la joie!
Ses petites joues, ses petits yeux...
Il me regarde,
sourcille un peu.
Un jour, il sera grand,
les foudres vont briller dans son regard.
Là il est tout petit,
mail il grandit. Ses mains, ses pieds,

son âme...
Aujourd'hui il est tout petit. Mais il grandit.
Marina Markovna et moi, nous marchons de nouveau.
Nous le serrons dans nos bras,
nous le portons, chacune à son tour.
Nous choisissons les chemins ensoleillés.
Nous l'embrassons, nous le langeons.
Nous quittons la montagne.
Le petit garçon,
il marche déjà lui-même. On l'accompagne.
Va, alors!
Va, mon amour! Mon cœur!
Tout va sens dessus dessous et sans raison.
Nous marchons pieds nus.
Mais ce n'est rien.
Andreï Ivanovitch revient à la maison.

Faina Grimberg (pseudonym of Faina Gawrilina), poet, prose writer and playwright. She is the author of more than twenty books of poetry and prose. Graduated in Bulgarian history she has published a lot of works on the history of Bulgarian people in the Balkans, Western Europe and Russia.

Alexey Voinov, 1977, writer and translator, was born in Moscow. He graduated from the Moscow State University and Paris-Sorbonne University. He is the author of several books published in Russia and USA. He has translated books by Hervé Guibert and Marguerite Duras into English. He lives in Moscow.

Faina Grimberg in *Four Centuries*:
11, 2015, p. 25, translated into French by Alexandr Petrossov

Margarita Al
Маргарита Аль

Translated into English by Anatoly Kudryavitsky

Desire

I'll soon turn into a gnome
the forest thickens
grows higher
I thought about setting up a garden
for the Supreme Creator
but it can't be done until the star
rises among entangled shadows of infinity
I thought about setting up a garden
where every tree
is the tree of paradise

Wings

invisible wings of the humans
hang down from eternity
woven into moments in time
resembling shadow of angels
birds soar into the sky like shadows of birds
or footprints leading into somebody's life
how can I can surprise this unrivalled world?
how can life contribute to immortality?

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The Poet

the poet
is true to his word
his inner temple of the moment
is intact
unknowingly
he is in love

The Beast Hasn't Been Born Yet - but It is Already a Beast

once upon a time thought was a child
in this font the stars were baptised
once upon a time thought was a sky
in this font the word was baptised
the word was once moored by the gods
as they opened up the sky with a gruff sound
a man hadn't been born yet
but a song already was on his lips

A Porcelain Morning

the fog is still being rafted down the river
but the light is ready to break the silence
of the blind mirrors
a porcelain morning on the table

Anatoly Kudryavitsky in *Four Centuries*:
8, 2014, p. 35-37, translated into English by Siobhán McNamara

Margarita Al was born in Alma-Aty, Kazakhstan, and now lives in Moscow. A poet, an artist and a graphic designer, she is running DOOS Books that publishes *The PO Journal* and poetry books. She is a member of the DOOS group of poets and of the Academy of Zaum association of Futurist poets, and has published two collections of her poetry, *Stating the Denial* (with Konstantin Kedrov, 2009) and *Mirazhi Zn* (2014). Margarita Al was awarded the David Burluk Prize for life-long commitment to experimental poetry.

Anatoly Kudryavitsky is a Russian-Irish poet and novelist. He has published three novels, seven collections of poems in Russian and four in English, the latest being *Horizon* (Red Moon Press, USA, 2016). A book of his selected novels in English translation titled *Disunity* has been published by Glagoslav Publications (UK/The Netherlands) in 2013. He also edited anthologies of contemporary Russian and German language poetry in English translation, *A Night in the Nabokov Hotel* and *Coloured Handprints* (Dedalus Press, 2006 and 2015), as well as an anthology of contemporary Ukrainian poetry, *The Frontier* (2017), and two anthologies of Irish haiku, *Bamboo Dreams* (Doghaus Books, 2012) and *Between the Leaves* (Arlen House, 2016). He lives in Dublin, Ireland, and edits *SurVision* poetry magazine.

Viktor Kagan
Виктор Каган

Translated by Paul Grayce, Gregory Zlotin,
Zinaida Uspenskaya, Dalia Daniel, and Author

From the series "Autumn"

I cannot beg my hand from the gloom.
The darkness is so dense - it only cuts with a knife.
Neither rustle nor whisper nor omen. It's pitch dark.
A deaf blindness stares on.

I wandered near a road until morning.
Blood flowed from my feet.
A mute cry issued from my throat.
I thought: Gods, if they be, see nothing as well.

And life was as death. And the cock crowed not.
And all ends merged into one beginning.
And evil breathlessness rent my chest.

And that would be the end. But a good sign -
A road the colors of fallen leaves
Through the morning mist.

Translated by Paul Grayce and Author

Eva

They say that in the afterlife one will suffer fewer torments
if one suffered more of them in this life. Perhaps it is true,
or perhaps it is not. No one has yet come back from there.

Two years ago, when she's going on ninety-four,
she once told me, "You are praying for me poorly --
I have lived for too long, and it's high time to go, but I'm still alive."
I replied that I'd start praying better, but I did not know when to start:
if I should start right away or wait about five months so she could
hold her future great-great-great-grandson in her arms.
She considered it and then looked at me, saying, "You're clever,"
and added, "It won't hurt if God waits for me a while.

What do you think?"

And then she did live to see her great-great-grandson
and to hold him in her arms.

What a healthy little boy.

So it was time to start praying, no? But the bris¹ was still ahead,
and then there were children's birthdays: she could not very well
ruin their joy by dying?
and then one time she said that she would celebrate her 94th birthday
with the children,
and then...

Time started washing her up, the way a river washes up its banks.
She had been the one who told me, blushing like a young girl,
"You know, doctor, it is amazing, but the soul does not age."
She had been the one who always looked like the guests were already
in the door

of her

castle -- her half of the room in the nursing home.

But now she received me wearing a bathrobe or lying in bed
or not wearing her dentures, made by her late husband.

Now she learned that it was Thursday only when I came to see her.

Now her Russian was less and less often interspersed
with her singsong Yiddish.

¹Bris (Yiddish) - circumcision

Shortly before his death, her husband had told her: "Don't worry.
If afterlife doesn't treat me well, I will come back."
But so far, he hasn't been back...

Translated by Gregory Zlotin

When death...

To Dmitry Leontyev

When death comes into my life --
not yet after me -
don't tell me "Don't cry!",
don't comfort me
by telling fables of life after life
and of time the healer.
Don't make me say "I loved"
for yet I love.
Don't cure me of love.
The joy of my love has been overtaken by anguish,
but the blessing of love is with me.
Don't intrude,
don't beat the tambourines of hollow words
dispelling your own fears.
Leave me be -- I am learning to walk this land,
this city, this street,
knowing that the door will not be opened now,
eyes will not engage mine and arms will not reach out.
Leave me be, please, --
I am learning to talk anew, without my words reflected in other eyes,
feeling only their stumbling journey through hoarse throat,
emerging futile and blind.
Futile and blind as yet.
They nose life, confused and clumsy,
like kittens with nobody to nuzzle.

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I shall learn to talk again.
But for now I begin my life from scratch,
not yet allowing myself to know
that I will walk, talk, laugh
as yesterday and the day before
and always, but knowing only that tomorrow will be different.
Leave me be...
But if you can simply sit next to me and listen
to me sprouting from myself,
to a tear rolling down my cheek,
to my shadow measuring time as I grow out of myself --
simply saying nothing and listening --
then please stay.

Translated by Zinaida Uspenskaya

* * *

Silent by the coffins
I stand in my torn shirt.
We were slaves in Egypt
Transformed to dust and ashes in auschvitzes.

We became smoke run through chimneys
As the earth soaked our pain.
Yet, our bleeding lips
Chanted Torah with reverence.

Do not submit the slave to a master
Foe humiliation and revenge surely come.
Give him shelter, olives and bread
Just mitzvah- and none for fame.

And reaping your harvest in the field
Where every grain a bead of life
Do not reap the last straw
Leave it to a widow and the stanger.

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As long as the sky is blue and unending
And a path of hope guides you foot
Leave the breadcrumbs to the lofty bird
And the shroud to the naked son.

You were a slave, an outcast, a spec of dust
Exhausted flesh in the desert,
But as long as you breathe
Share
Let your offering redeem.

Translated by Dalia Daniel and Author

* * *

To recall and forget right now, and again
To recall and forget right now --
Like to thread a needle
Not supposing what to sew.

Rapid prick of verbal rhyme.
Knotty thread of days.
The life is happening contrary to
The life that you dreamed to live.

Translated by Dalia Daniel and Author

* * *

*All I have is a voice
To undo the folded lie,
The romantic lie in the brain...
W. Auden*

Sound of Damocles. A tight hair --
Like a string, trembling breath.
All I have is a voice
To tell the inmost lie
Word to word, easy, with no fear,
Not forgetting even a small trifle --
Because the truth with no touch of the tale
Like a fool on the royal throne.

Translated by Dalia Daniel and Author

Viktor Kagan, M.D., Ph.D., psychiatrist, psychologist and writer was born in 1943. He is the author of eight poetry books published in 1994-2007 in Russia and USA. He was the Diplomat of International Voloshin Literature Contest in 2005 and 2008, as well as the Silver Age Prize Laureate by results of the book fair "Non-Fiction" (Moscow, 2009).

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Dalia Daniel, Ph.D., is a scholar of English Literature and a poet, USA

Gregory Zlotin is a scholar of German Literature, USA

Four Centuries Library

Here are the books donated to the Library:

In German

114. Russische Dichterinnen. Übertragen und mit biographischen Notizen versehen von Friedrich Fiedler. Leipzig, 1907

115. Der Alexandrit. Russische Liebeslyrik von Puschkin bis auf die Gegenwart. Deutsch von Johannes von Guenther. Heidelberg: Verlag Hermann Meister, 1948

116. Russische Gedichte. Eine Auswahl älterer Lyrik übertragen von Wanda Berg-Papendick. Weimar: Verlag Böhlau, 1946