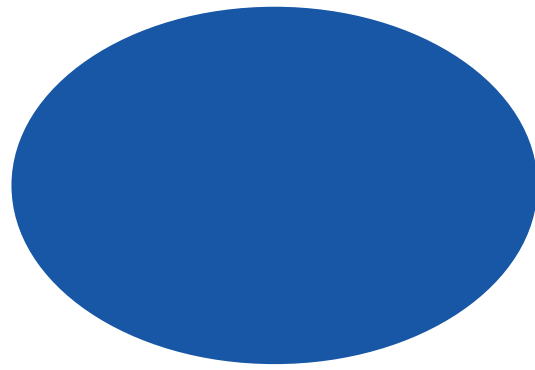


FOUR CENTURIES

Russian Poetry in Translation



21

2019



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

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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

XX

Уладзімір Маякоўскі (1893 - 1930)

Владимир Маяковский (1893 - 1930)

Переклад Андрэя Хадановіча*

Translated into Belorussian by Andrej Khadanovich*

А вы маглі б?

Я карту будня з маху змазаў,
адкрыўшы п'янай фарбы рану.
На дрогкай студзіне паказваў
касыя скулы акіяну.

Мне новых вуснаў кліч здалёку
гучаў луской бляшаных рыб.

А вы
на флейце вадасцёка
накцюрн
зайграць маглі б?

1913

Наце!

Праз гадзіну па адным у чысты завулак
брудным тлушчам адсюль пацечацё назад.
А я паадчыняў вам столькі вершаў-шкатулак,
я -- бясцэнных слоў мантач і магнат.

Вось вы, мужчына -- з вусамі ў капусце
недаператраўленай, як вашае жыццё;
вось вы, жанчына -- з пудраю ў найгусцейшым гусце,
вустрыцаю з ракавіны рэчаў гледзіцё.

* © Andrej Khadanovich, translation, 2019

Будзеце на мятліка паэтавага сэрца,
брудныя, грувасціцца ў галёшах і без галёш,
па адным і дзікай зграяй, з перцам і з імберцам --
ашчацініць ножкі стагалова вощ.

Да абрыдне сёння мне, грубаму гуну,
вам на смех крыўляцца, грывасячы плач, --
і я зарагачу ды радасна плюну,
плюну ў твар вам
я -- бяспэчэнных слоў магнат і мантач.
1914

А ўсё-такі

Вуліца правалілася, нібы нос сіфілітыка.
Рака -- юрлівай слінай па летнім чэраве.
Зняўшы бялізну аж да апошняга лісціка,
пахабна сады разваліліся ў чэрвені.

Я выйшаў на плошчу,
спалены сквер
надзеў на голаў, як рыжы парык.
Людзі жахаюцца: рот мой -- ашчэр,
дзе б'ецца нагамі непражаваны крык.

Але не асудзяць, не скажуць "камедыя".
Як прароку, кветкамі ўсцелюць мне след.
Бо кожны правалены нос добра ведае:
я -- ваш паэт.

А калі суд ваш страшны -- не п'яныя чуткі,
праз агонь і руіны з чорнымі зданямі,
як святыню, мяне на руках панясуць прастытуткі
і пакажуць богу ў сваё апраўданне.

І бог заплача над вершам, заахае:
не словы -- у горле зліпаюцца курчы!
І пабяжыць па небе з кніжкай маёй падпахаю,
і будзе чытаць знаёмым, нервова курачы.

1914

Паслухайце!

Паслухайце!
Калі зоркі запальваюць --
значыць -- гэта камусьці патрэбна?
Значыць -- камусьці важна, каб зоркі былі?
Значыць -- хтось называе тья плявочкі
срэбнымі?
І праз завеі пылу паўднёвай зямлі
ірвецца --
баіцца спазніцца --
да бога,
плача,
цалуе яму жылістыя рукі,
просіць абавязкова --
хоць зорку для неба сляпога! --
клянецца --
не вынесе гэтай бяззорнай мукі!
А потым
ходзіць трывожна,
але трываючы вусціш.
Некаму кажа:
"Цяпер не страшна?
Не горка?
Болей святла?"
Паслухайце!
Калі зоркі запальваюць --
значыць --
гэта патрэбна камусьці ж?

Значыць -- яно неабходна,
каб кожны вечар
над дахамі
хоць бы адзіная зорка была?!

1914

Вам!

Вам, што пражываеце за оргіяй оргію,
маеце ванну й клазет з падагрэвам!
Над газетай -- з прадстаўленымі да Георгія --
сорам вачэй не дзярэ вам?!

Вам, што пілі раскошу нагбом бы,
помнячы войны толькі з падручніка, --
лепей не ведаць, як вырвала бомбай
ногі ў Пятрова паручніка!..

А калі б ён, прыведзены на забой,
раптам убачыў, зранены,
як вы перапэцканай у катлеце губой
юрліва падпяваеце Севяраніну!

Ці вам, бяздарным, ласым да блуду,
жыццё аддаюць ахвяры?
Я лепей ваду ананасную буду
блядзям падаваць у бары!

1915

Гайнэпадобнае

З вачэй -- маланкамі -- бліскі:
"Я з іншай
цябе заспела!
Ты самы подлы,
ты самы нізкі..."
б'е ў чорнае
сэрца мне,
белая.
Не грыміце лірыкай, любая,
бо мне фізіка не чужая:
раз маланка не стала згубаю --
то і гром,
дальбог, не спужае.

1920

Гора

Марна біўся аб вечар
вечер нечалавечы.
Кроплі крывавым рэхам
мацалі гонту стрэхам.
І аўдавелая ўночы
поўня пайшла адзіночыць.

1920

Люблю: фрагменты паэмы

Юнаком

Юнацтву заняткаў маса.
Граматыкам вучым дурняў, дурніц мы.
Мяне ж,
толькі вышыблі з 5-га класа,
як сталі ў маскоўскія кідаць вязніцы.
У вашым маленькім
утульненькім свеціку
на кожную спальнічку --
па кучаравым паэціку.
Што знойдзеш у гэтых балонкавых лірыках?
Мяне вось
любіць
вучылі
ў Бутырках.
Што мне туга па Булонскім лесе?!
Што мне куротныя ўздыхі ды пляжыкі?!
Я вось
"Бюро пахвальных працэсій"
любіў
праз "вочка" сваёй каталажкі.
Глядзяць на сонца ў нудоце багемнай:
"Нашто нам
дурнога свяцілка праменне?"
А я
за сонечны зайчык
на столі турэмнай
аддаў бы тады паўсвету -- не меней.

Мой універсітэт

Французскую ведаеш?
Дзеліш?
Множыш?
Скланяць умееш?
Навука файная!
Скажы --
а з домам спецца
ці зможаш?
Ці зразумееш мову трамвайную?
Малы чалавечак --
носам у спытах,
ледзь выйдзе з яйка --
па кніжку лезе.
А я вучыўся чытаць па шылдах,
гартаў старонкі з бляхі й жалеззя.
Хтось возьме зямлю,
схаваную ў шафе, і
тыкае ў глобус --
то ў Прагу, то ў Падую.
А я
бакамі вучыў геаграфію,
бо на зямлю
начлегамі
падаю!
Хай гісторык над рэбусам б'ецца, гадае:
-- Ці была барада ў Барбаросы рудая?
Кіньце! Я ведаю лепей, чым вы,
гісторыю
вуліц ды корчмаў Масквы!
Бярэ Дабралюбава (зло яго гідзіць),
ды прозвішча -- супраць,
аж кпіць з яго ведаў.

Я
тоўстых
з дзяцінства прывык ненавідзець,
калі прадаваў сябе
дзеля абедаў.
Навучыцца,
сядзе, --
расказвае даме,
бо хоча бліснуць ідэйкай нясвежай.
А я размаўляў
з аднымі дамамі,
сумоўнічаў з воданাপорнаю вежай.
Акно слыхавое мае ўвушшу
усё, пра што я ў ночы прашу.
А дах,
разносячы
слова прарочае,
цяжка язык свой --
флюгер --
варочае.

Што выйшла

Болей чым можна,
болей чым нельга --
болей,
чым разам да зорнага дна ісці --
камяк сардэчны разросся да неба:
неба кахання,
неба нянавісці.
Збіваецца
цяжкай ношай
хада так!
Ці мне, асілку,
рыдаць
па-юначы?

А ўсё ж цягнуся,
сардэчны прыдатак,
косым сажнем плечы згінаючы.
Вяршкамі верша ўзбухаю --
не выліцца,
няма куды больш -- і поўнюся занавя.
Набраклы паэзіяй --
свету карміліца,
гіпербала
правобразу Мапасанава.

Так і са мной

Як у гавань родную -- флоты,
як цягнік -- на станцыю родную,
да цябе --
бо маё святло ты! --
зноў вяртаюся незваротна я.
Як скупы спускаецца рыцар
сутарэнню свайму скарыцца,
тваім сэрцам,
жыццё і згуба мая,
нібы скарбам,
любуюся, любая.
Так прыходзяць з працы ўначы,
бруд змываюць,
здымаюць стому.
Хіба ж я,
да цябе ідучы, --
не іду,
шчаслівы,
дадому?!

Рукатворны -- не ўнікнеш гліны.
Пералётны -- знойдзешся ў леце.

Так і я --
штодня,
штохвіліны --
да цябе,
расстаўшыся ледзьве.

Andrei Khadanovich, poet and translator (Belarus) is the author of eight collections of poetry, including *Лісты з-над коўдры* (*Letters From Under the Blanket*), 2004, *Несымэтрычныя сны* (*Nonsymmetrical Dreams*), 2010, and a poetry book for children, *Намаўкі таткі* (*Father's Notes*). He has translated poetry from English, French, Lithuanian, Polish, Russian, and Ukrainian. He has had his work translated into 15 languages. He is the former President of PEN Belarus (2008-2017). He teaches literature at Belarusian State University and translation at Belarusian Collegium.

Vladimir Majakowskij in *Four Centuries*:
13, 2016, p. 9-10, translated into German by Adrian Wanner

XXI

Dmitry Strotsev

ДМИТРИЙ СТРОЦЕВ

Translated into English by Ian Probstein*

A Letter to My Son

who am i
in this evangelic darkness
 asks the bishop

and a man in the crowd
 with a stone in his hand
in his heart
 has already stoned
a victim

a harlot
half-dead
 in the depth of her soul
unable
 even to ask
for mercy

a galilean
 who defended her

a disciple
 who is not pleased
with his teacher

© Dmitry Strotsev, 2019

* © Ian Probstein, translation, 2019

Four Centuries. Russian Poetry in Translation, 21, 2019

a passer-by
 having his own opinion
insulted by a violent scene
 on his way
 to the house of prayer
 and grace

My need

In memoriam Vladimir Bibikhin¹

the problem is not that I am
smart among the stupid
strong among the weak
kind among the evil

but that i
need someone's darkness
for my light

¹ Vladimir Veniaminovich Bibikhin (1938-2004) was the most prominent Soviet and Russian religious thinker of the New Russia and continued the Russian tradition of early 20th century religious thinking. He was known as a philosopher, philologist, and translator, best known for his translations of works by Martin Heidegger.

* * *

... but it lives without any glory
 A. Pushkin,
 A Fairy-tale of the Dead Princess and Seven Hero Knights

1.

sacred is
language
but
communication
is
communion

* * *

although your eyes may be closed

try however to look

to look at the blinding snow
along the Smolensk road
with my eyes

don't tears interfere?

* * *

a poet
like anyone else
wants to sleep over
all this horror

he
unexpectedly even for himself
slips off into a dream
of gethsemane of the apostles
into a dream of the seven
sleepers
and wakes up
already
in the golden age
of poetry harmony and freedom
on his way
under guard
to the GULAG

* * *

it is sweet and terrible

to plunge with God
to plunge with a friend

down into

the world

For Alexander Skidan

in an autumn park
hungry eyes
leftovers
on
a newspaper
among us

breathing of beasts
roaring in the cage
of the breast
bums German shepherds
among us

tell me
tell me

i
among you

Freedom

if God wanted
to demand anything from us

He would have first and foremost
produced convincing evidence
of His existence

and if I am hollow and free
full of freedom
full of you

A Reverse Perspective

no one is convicted unjustly
the Moscow metropolitan Philaret once
told Haass¹

no one is innocent
repeated Stalin almost word for word
sinking a barge
with clergymen

there are no Christians here
finishes the argument
the prison priest Vasily
only criminals

¹Dr. Friedrich Joseph Haass (Russian: Фёдор Петрович Гааз, Fyodor Petrovich Gaaz, 10 August 1780-28 August (O.S. 16 August 1853) was the "holy doctor of Moscow". Born in Bad Münstereifel, as a member of Moscow's governmental prison committee, he spent 25 years until the end of his life to humanize the penal system. During the last nine years before his death he spent all of his assets to run a hospital for homeless people. He died in Moscow. Twenty thousand people attended his funeral at the Vvedenskoye Cemetery, which was paid for by the state as he had no more money. He has a Catholic remembrance day of the 16th of August.

* * *

When
we grow in numbers
and outnumber them

and their
number decreases
sufficiently

without thinking
I rush
to their side

just to prevent
the boat
from capsizing

* * *

not a pillar of salt

love in the world

salt in the sea

* * *

and the soul is just the multiplication of simplicity

* * *

but the Church

is only People

the Son of Man Christ

and crucifying You

the people of God

and I am the most evil of you

* * *

and yet God there is nevertheless much more God

* * *

during twenty years

one gets used to one's wife

for twenty years

she is the same

who inebriated you

like God

during twenty ages

one gets used to God

twenty centuries

he is the same

who inebriated you

like a wife

One Flesh

one is getting upset
hiding one's eyes
hiding one's wrinkles

wishing to hide it
my age

Acme

the age when
one gets parents
in one's arms
like children

spoon feeds them
changes diapers

when one anticipates
advice and understanding
from one's children
like parents

* * *

happiness
smells
of old men
and
children

* * *

may i be spared
of jealousy to my childhood
and envy of my youth

let me go to the west
with gracious faith

Father and Son

I will leave a book a book for you

I will leave a book a book for you for a hundred years
it's neither a gun nor a bomb neither a bomb nor a gun
you'll read and read in it the words the words the words
the words the words will light and lighten up your eyes your eyes
and your heart will then be kindled by the words the words
and the beasts the beasts will run into your eyes into your seas
and the rivers rivers will then flood your lands your lands
boundless they will flow into your seas and flood your seas
and the orchards orchards will sing in your heart your heart
just don't forget the book the book and me my son
and keep them in your heart your heart the book and me

and the heart heart heart is born to run and run and run
and it can't be halted at full tilt or stopped by any rock

and near the book there is a clock a clock a clock
and the hours run near the book they run
and which is stronger whose footfalls are louder
but the brightest of all are your footfalls on the earth
your footfalls footsteps treads are heard are heard
and for you for you all chasms and deeps and abysses are burned
and all the whales the whales and elephants the elephants as well
are madly in love with you my little one with you my son
you just have to wish just have to wish it with all your will
and all will start will start to rush to fly to run in flight
and you and you will run and fly with ease so light
and on the fly rejoicing you'll drink the milk of freedom then

here and there here and there
they fly and run and fly and swim
whales and elephants and elephants and whales
elephants whales and a trunk as well
i beg your pardon ma'am beg your pardon ma'am
but i won't give you my trunk
in it there are elephants and whales
elephants and whales are running swimming
running and swimming there and here
and there and here and my trunk is there

you are bestowed with the gifts the gifts the gifts
all days and nights all ways and all the worlds the worlds
you are bestowed the gift to keep the gifts the gifts
and yet to play a game you will be free to change the rules the words
your father's world your tender home which isn't a dear home
it will be changed into a wolf's world and in other's anxious dream
the mirrors will reveal distorting mirrors will reveal
that i do not exist there is no good or evil and that black is white
when they whisper whisper that i ceased to exist
open the book unfold it in your heart your flame
unfold the book the scroll unfold it in your heart your flame
and in your heart look into your heart embracing me my son

here and there here and there
they fly they crawl they crawl and fly
balloons and cubes balloons and cubes
balloons and cubes and a drum
i beg your pardon ma'am i beg your pardon ma'am
i won't give you my drum my drum
why ma'am would you need a drum
i beg your pardon ma'am i'm sorry ma'am
there are cubes and balloons in the trunk
cubes and balloons crawl and fly
crawl and fly here and there
here and there and a drum

and if you forgot for good forgot for good
the one you loved the loved one you forgot
but i will not forget i never will and i will wait around
i'll wait and wait as as seed is waiting in the ground
and like a seed a grain i'll die for you I'll die
until one morning you come back and you wake up
and all will start will start to run to rush to fly
and you and you will run and fly with ease with ease
and on the fly rejoicing you'll drink the milk of freedom you sure
will
and you are bestowed with the gifts the gifts the gifts
all days and nights all ways and all the worlds and seas
and all the whales the whales and elephants the elephants as well
are madly in love with you my son with you my little one

you just unfold the scroll the world the book in your heart your flame
and look straight into your heart embracing me my son
and the heart the heart is born to run is born to run
and it can't be halted at full tilt it can't be stopped or tamed.

* * *

each day your arm grows
weaker
your embrace grows
emptier
which I
forever warm up in vain
an old man
this look is already
distant
in the window pit
a fog yawns
and calls

A Tree

In memoriam Victor Lauferov

children run upwards
relying on the voice
get away from me
I stay in the darkness

do you hear
get away from me
while you hear me
you are still here
in the darkness

there
where speech ends
the voice is cut off
a beam begins
do you hear

get away from me
the shoots
relying on the voice
run from the roots
into light

In memoriam Oleg Yankovsky

my kind day I love you so
let the day be and the day inebriates me
and a breathing day I love you so
and a singing day and the day intoxicates me
and a breathing day and a maiden day and night
and a maiden day and night and night and day
and the maiden illuminates me day and night
let the night be I love you so
and the maiden day I love you so
and the maiden night and the night bemuses me so
and day and night breathing day and night
and singing day and night and night and day
and thinking day and night and night and day
and a morning day and night and the night makes me so drunk
and evening night and day I love you so
my dear day I love you so
let the night be and the night illuminates me so

Optimus

for Rene Girard

look at beautiful Europe
how she has changed
and in two thousand years
not because of violence
tyranny
or revolution
but because someone
still
opens the Gospel

Dmitry Strotsev, 1963, an architect by education, is a poet, a bard, a critic, and a publisher. He lives in Minsk, Belarus. He is the editor of the almanac *Minsk School* and of the publishing *Novyie Mekhi* (*New Windbags*). He is also an organizer of poetry festivals *Time and Space* (Minsk, 1995, 1996) and co-curator of the *Festival of Voice Poetry* (Moscow 2005-2013). Winner of the *Russian Prize* (2008), Dmitry Strotsev is the author of eight books of poetry and numerous publications in major periodicals. His books were shortlisted in *Andrei Bely Prize* (2009), *Moscow Count* (2010, 2013), *International Voloshin Prize* (2010). Dmitry Strotsev is a member of the Belorussian PEN and the Writers' Union of Belarus. His poems were translated into English, Swedish, French, Italian, Hebrew, Georgian, Ukrainian, and Belorussian.

Ian Probstein is associate professor of English at Touro College. He has published eleven books of poetry, translated more than a dozen poetry volumes, and has compiled and edited more than thirty books and anthologies of poetry in translation. His translations of Ossip Mandelstam into English were chosen as a runner-up to the *Gabo Prize for Literature in Translation & Multi-Lingual Texts* (2016) while his translations of Ezra Pound's *Cantos* were shortlisted for the *Russian Guild of Translation Master Award*. His most recent book in English is *The River of Time: Time-Space, Language and History in Avant-Garde, Modernist, and Contemporary Poetry* (Boston: Academic Studies Press, 2017). He also published an annotated edition of *T. S. Eliot's Poetry and Plays* (SPb.: Azbuka, 2019).

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18, 2018, p. 39-43 (Дмитрий Строчев); p. 44-48 (Григорий Трестман)

Ian Probstein

Ян Пробштейн

Übersetzt von Eric Boerner*

Transltd into German by Eric Boerner*

* * *

Die Zeit hat keine Zeit
für Zeit. Die Gegenwart
Freund Orpheus gleicht:
Du blickst zurück --
fast nur Verluste
und vor dir unsichtbar
die Zukunft.
Schreit mutig weiter
doch denk dran:
Bist du verstummt
Zerteilt dich dann
der ungehemmte Chor der Spötter:
All jene die dich einst vergöttert.

Der Weltuntergang am Ende der Welt

Der homo sapiens hörte von einer terra incognita
und riss die letzten Luftschlösser ein.
Elefanten zertrampelten Türme von Elfenbein.
Die Diebe entwendeten die Diebamanten;
die Reste die Gäste und andre Verwandte.
So blieben am Ende nur noch Illusionen,
die rechtzeitig flohen in neutrale Zonen
von theoretischen Terrariumsterritorien.

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* * *

Das Ende korrumpiert mit Schmeichelworten,
Das Schweigen tiefer Stille ist genug,
Man braucht die Botschaft nicht, auch keinen Boten,
Auch nicht des Himmels ewiggleichen Zug.

Erik Boerner, 1965, was born in Braunschweig and lives in Berlin. He studied Slavistics, the History of Eastern Europe, and Mass Media Studies in Mainz, St. Petersburg and Berlin. He is translator and editor of Russian literature, as well as English (Shakespeare) and French (Villon, Baudelaire, and Rimbaud) ones. He is well-known for his online anthology "*Illeguan - Deutsche und russische Literatur*", www.illeguan.de

Vladimir Pryakhin
Владимир Пряхин

Translated into English by Nina Kossman*

How the Maw is Made

inside the maw everything is subordinate
to technologies processing life
into another life:
a tooth to bite
a tooth to rip
a tooth to knead
a tongue
to push the edible bits further
inward
and to throw out
words that justify this

On Ithaka Now

forests and newspapers die
and you say -- memory!
everything has changed
on our Ithaka:
taxes grow on the site of olive trees
and the grass dries out

our words crumble away
like flakes of dry paint
from old picture frames

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*© Nina Kossman, translation, 2019

too many names given
to different things
and they suffocate under the weight of meanings
try lifting a thing --
a sudden abyss opens under it
put it back in its place
no use looking there

I am completely alone
When you sailed away
the spider also left home
I didn't dare to destroy his web
at the ceiling's corner
I watched it
during those long days
in the house that you had built

then even the spider web was blown away
only smooth bare walls were left
and no "golden sections" --
symmetry of death:
a correctly constructed cube
with me in its center

Herod's Death

from a pit
crawling with worms
a hand is painfully reaching for the light

an eye sprouts on its palm
dead babies' souls soar around
and everyone spits on the palm

its last eye closes
and from under an eyelid
a worm crawls out into the light

* * *

lamb pie
cannon with cannon fodder
they are sold together
so if you buy one
you don't have to look for the other
our habit of defense
a full kitchen and combat kit
minced meat from the best parts of the body
that have absorbed gunpowder residue
plus a bottle of champagne
pompously smash it against a board
or just pour it in glasses
and modestly say a toast
"for peace!"

Origins of Self-Awareness

"why do I live like a pig
and not like a bird?"
a pig asked itself
and immediately felt

its wings growing
its face flattening
its nose stretching out
and turning into a beak
and its right eye beginning to see
only things on the right
and its left eye seeing only
things on the left
and no matter how it turned its head
it could not see the same object
with both eyes

then its right eye began to mourn the left eye
and its left eye mourned the right eye

it didn't know yet
that looking at things in different ways
was an inherent quality of the feathered

Psalm (17)

I placed in my heart
the sadness of your heart
and there was room in my heart for it

and I placed in my mind
your grief
and it did not clutter my mind

and I was surprised
at the workings of my own heart and mind
I was surprised because I had imagined them differently

but an angel appeared from behind my back
and said:
-- look at the heart of the One,
who created you in His image --

did his heart become smaller
when he took into him
the world's suffering and grief?

and I was ashamed of my surprise
and of my lack of understanding

A Portrait

great is your sadness
and it is in your eyes

as though each of your eyes beholds
a hundred women in a yellow clay desert

driven into slavery
by a horde of Babylonians

shouts of Chaldean warriors
petrified in the expectation of a striking whip

sound of feet walking up the stairs
the knocking on the door
and night-time arrests

your child
and well-fed Egypt
luring your child into its net of reeds

as though from the reeds you behold
the waves of the Nile
on a boat taking away your child

great is your sadness
and it is in your eyes

Inhumanity

the inhumanity of animals --
that's what attracts my attention!

killing just to eat!
or to protect yourself and your cub!
or just because
of an invasion
to your personal territory --
because everything is primitive
and it simply indicates a low IQ!

of course
killer whales and lions
plan a hunt
but to plan a murder for years...
to napalm
to gas...
only higher creatures are capable of it
real grand inhuman plans
born in the depths of intellectual elites!
I too could say ingenious phrases
to cover up my defense of killers
and pass for a humanist

and I could stuff this text with metaphors
like a potato bag
or weave an intricate web out of words
so it would be considered "strong"

and I could put my thoughts in rhyme
and that would be "nice"
and I would be read more often
with sighs
and without anyone delving into the essence of it

but I expect from myself
inhuman speech
plain
like a cat's meow
is a request to open a door

is a cat capable
of spending the night with you in bed
and then writing a denunciation at daytime?

the inhumanity of an animal

rarely can a dog
forget a person
with whom it lived for many years

this is the manifestation of the nonhuman in a living being
and a crocodile does not manufacture a device
for removing living skin
even that
even the one that lives in the lower reaches of the Mekong River
where
once they established production of such products
to increase the effectiveness of interrogations

and is there at least one leader
in the world of predators that starves his pack
just so
he can buy himself a good yacht?

the inhumanity of animals is negligible --
but they are still speechless --
probably
so they would not lie

however
I knew one person
who always spoke the truth
and hugged me sincerely
like a lemur
hugs a person with Down syndrome...

so my speech today is
a squeak of a rodent
who is looking not for a word
but for something real --
a seed
a grain
or a nut

find it
grab it fast
spit out the husk

and swallow it
or put it in the cheek

and back into the hole!
and nothing more
and nothing more
nothing at all
no tricks:

the inhumanity of the animal --
Not human inhumanity!

Vladimir (Vlad) Pryakhin is a Russian poet as well as a publisher of poetry. Born in 1957 in Tula, he lived in Tula, the Baltic states, the Smolensk region, and in Moscow. In the late 1980s - early 1990s he was an active participant in the democratic movement in Russia. In the 1980s he published "*The Idealist*", a samizdat journal of poetry and prose. Since 1992 his poems and short articles have been published in literary magazines in Russia as well as Latvia, Lithuania, and Poland. He is the author of ten books of poetry. In 2012 he became the editor and publisher of "*The Environment*", an international literary almanac. Since 2017 he has been the editor of www.medium.land, a portal dedicated to poetry, as well as a moderator of literary video channel LITINFO. A winner of several literary awards he participated in free verse festivals in Moscow and in St. Petersburg.

Nina Kossman is an artist, writer, poet, and playwright. The recipient of a National Endowment for the Arts fellowship, a UNESCO/PEN Short Story Award, grants from Foundation of Hellenic Culture and Alexander S. Onassis Public Benefit Foundation, she is the author of two books of poems in Russian and English as well as the translator of two volumes of Marina Tsvetaeva's poetry. Her other books include *Behind the Border* (Harper Collins, 1994) and *Gods and Mortals: Modern Poems on Classical Myths* (Oxford University Press, 2001). Her work has been translated into several languages, including Japanese, Dutch, Greek, and Spanish. She lives in New York.