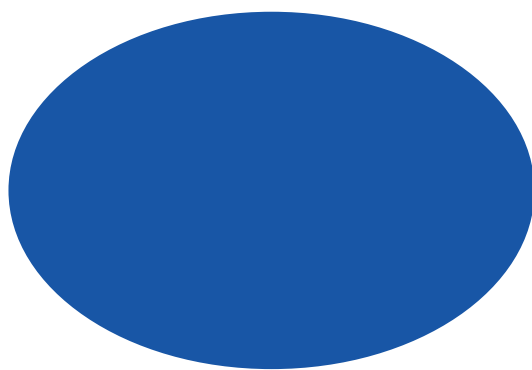


FOUR CENTURIES

Russian Poetry in Translation



18

2018



Four Centuries. Russian Poetry in Translation

fourcenturies@gmx.de

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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 49.

XIX

Vasily Zhukovsky (1783 - 1852)

Василий Жуковский (1783 - 1852)

Translated into English by Alex Cigale

Singer in the Kremlin

Singer

Hasten to the Kremlin! On that same hill,
Where our forefathers sang
The triumphal song before His Majesty,
We'll strike up the song of victory.
The Kremlin's sacred voice is calling us,
As of yore, the herald of glory;
Peering at us from its great height
Our double-headed eagle;
Hasten to the Kremlin, old and young!
To the hymns of glad rejoicing
We will embrace, as in the hour
Of reunion brother grasps brother.

Translator's note:

Among the most technically accomplished of responses to the Patriotic War of 1812, Vasily Zhukovsky's "Singer in the Kremlin" evokes the great glories of the Russian past. In his *Vasily Zhukovsky's Romanticism and the Emotional History of Russia* (Northwestern 2015), Ilya Vinitsky writes that in writing patriotic poems, "Zhukovsky set himself the daunting task of becoming a national poet.... not by turning away from a subjective point of view, but rather by maximizing it, taking his sentimental lyricism to a state of mystical ecstasy." Part of a trilogy, this extended paean to Alexander I established Zhukovsky as the leading proponent of the Romantic Movement in Russia (see his free translations of Goethe, Schiller, Byron, Thomas Gray, etc.) Through his great influence at court, he acted as an impresario for the developing movement, including as the executor of Pushkin's literary estate and promoting the career of Nikolai Gogol. This poem's scale, formal elegance, and rhythmic measures are, I think, remarkable. A full Oratorio, it begs to be set to music. For our own historic moment, marked by a resurgence of nationalism, it offers non-Russian readers a perspective into the eternal Russian formula of union of "Nation, Tsar, and God."

© Alex Cigale, translation, 2018

The Folk

Hasten to the Kremlin, old and young!
To the hymns of glad rejoicing,
We will embrace, as in the hour
Of reunion brother grasps brother.

Singer

Oh, our Fatherland's Kremlin! We kiss
Your threshold in our endearment.
Look yonder: scourging its walls,
The enemy's desperate revenge
Impressed its scorched black mark.
Punishing in his insanity the stone,
The destroyer with his unsteady hand
Had flung his fire on its facade.
"Let Kremlin be no more!" the villain cried,
But the sacred Kremlin stands;
And only the ancient home of the Tsars
Was thus by the murderer defiled.

But you, temple where Tsars are crowned!
Guarded over by heaven's hand,
The brighter you raised to the heavens
Your unvanquishable cross.
And you, earthly remains of former Tsars,
Your sleep remained undisturbed
When in flames and in destruction
The spirit of evil was aroused
Above your outer hall's placid eaves.
Oh, our consecrated Zion,
Oh, Kremlin, witness to glorious days,
Your resplendent beauty is renewed!

The Folk

Oh, you, our consecrated Zion,
Oh, Kremlin, witness to glorious days,
Your resplendent beauty is renewed!

Singer

Foremost with praise for the Lord's might,
Friends, let us raise our palms:
He showed himself here, in the Kremlin,
To be the terrifying Master of rebuke;
He, in glimmerings across the skies,
Racing above Moscow flushed with red,
Became in his wrathful countenance
A punitive calamity to the enemy.
He clothed Himself in Moscow's smoke,
And with the ominous sign of vengeance,
As before Israel, streamed past
Before the regiments of honor.

And to his glory be, in his wake,
Their banners did unfurling clamor;
With the sonorous cries of their victories
The chains of thralldom were broken;
To quarrel hand was raised against hand
Of both the rulers and the peoples;
And the Lord's terrible battle boomed,
As did the hymnal of His freedom...
And so, in the Kremlin, thunder in rejoicing
Nowadays: "Glory be to God in heaven!
To those living, merriment! Peace on Earth!
To the Eternal, His Kingdom come!"

The Folk

And so, in the Kremlin, thunder in rejoicing
Nowadays: "Glory be to God in heaven!
To those living, merriment! Peace be to earth!
To the Eternal, His Kingdom Come!"

Singer

Thine, Ruler of the Earth, is all of Russia!
Your people offer in humble hope:
Accept her and command it be so,
That she in grace and glory flowers!
Your Might, stirring in foreigners fear,
Keeps them from assailing its borders
So that on its sacred meadows
Peace will shine its happy sight;
And that its ancient purity of thought
Will safeguard the unity of its families;
And in them, with its innocent simplicity,
The light of knowledge be established.

Commandeth that our Eagle's claw,
This universe's mighty guardian,
Nest calmly over its thunders;
And with his chest, as of yore,
Break through the clouds of enmity,
And always fly up to the vaulted skies
When bidden so by friendly cries
Requesting rescue and freedom.
Only command, and the seas will rise
Beneath the Russian helm,
And the glory of the Russian Tsar
Will rule above the stormy waters.

You order, and the Slav recalls
That he's an inheritor of glory,
That he's a great ancestors' son,
To whose blood-tinged sword,
That too of old, fear was alien...
Dear friends! Our fathers before us;
We blossom on those very fields,
Beneath the same sky as you did,
Where progeny of His glory flourished;
Before us lies the same path
Along which our grandfathers fought
For Russia, Tsar, and God.

Oh, Rus', our tongues, all dried up,
Will stick to the roofs of our mouths,
And the might of ancient strength drain
From our faded, withered hand,
When you arise and stand before us --
And in the hour of bloody fight,
And night and day, and in the mortal hour --
Be our happiness and glory!
And Thou, oh, Supreme, our offering
Accept onto Thine destiny,
And with the mountainous gift of light
Suffuse all of sacred Russia.

The Folk

Accept, oh, Supreme, our offering,
Accept it onto Thine destiny,
And with the mountainous gift of light
Suffuse all of sacred Russia.

Singer

Safeguard our King! And send our King
Thy blessings and all earthly gifts.
Grant unto Him, the pleasures of the earth!
We glorify Thy Name,
In thanks for the Tsar's exalted soul,
For his regal magnanimity;
For the beauty of virtuous glory
In which the Russian land doth shine;
For his supremacy among all Kings,
Accomplished not through quarrel
But by the redemption of people
And through the Creator's intercession;

For his unstinting scorn of all misfortunes;
For his mercy in righteous retribution,
For lenience on his victorious summit,
And with full faith in Tsarist honor;
For the shimmer in which he clothed
The bold achievement of the Slav,
For our sweet lot: to love the Sovereign
As our dearest friend, our King --
Oh, Caesar, Almighty ruler of the earth,
We give thee our mightiest of thanks!
May Thou safeguard Him, and send Him
Your eternal gifts and earthly blessings!

Keep Him safe! That is the general cheer
From high on Kremlin tower's heights...
Old man, the light diminishing in his age,
In view of meeting his final end
Praying for peaceful days for his sons,
And for the son of quarrel, mettlesome,
Who is inured to the enemy's tribulations,
Grant that his banners be upright,
Caesar's select, raised in the ranks;
And to the flowering youth,
That he may shine in his moment of glory
Awaited his entire life with trepid heart.

And the peaceful village man,
Nature's pupil and noble child,
Enlightenment's courageous son
Who thirsts for freedom,
Ignite his heart with Thy glad grace,
The soul's sun of inspiration --
All these, with but this single prayer
To Thou, the King of all Creation:
May Thou impart Thine generosity,
Above our dear Caesar's head,
That he may long be this earth's pride,
And the throne, its distinguished beauty.

The Folk

May Thou impart Thine generosity,
Above our dear Caesar's head,
That he may long be this earth's pride,
And the throne, its distinguished beauty.

Singer

Grant thee the host of saving grace!
Grant thee redemption of all Kings!
That upon them descend His blessings;
Upon them, our praise in gratitude
From Kremlin's grateful walls,
Their chests, like strongholds,
Repulsed from us the shame of slaves
And the madness of excessive pride.
Moscow, they proclaimed unto your walls
And then in deed: "Be clothed in flame;
Rise up to be your enemy's destruction;
May each and every stone be a militia."

And may vengeance be their terrible rite;
We have not betrayed that pledge:
With your alliance troth, Caesar of triumphs,
They've come before us once again.
Through summer scald and winter freeze,
Across all the scorched deserts,
Piercing with spirits of the strong our ranks,
With the stronghold's arrows of the gods,
Muscle upon muscle, chest to chest,
They faced nature's own raging fury,
Beating a bloody path of no retreat
For our honor and for freedom.

As ever, in glory of God's might,
Their banners did unfurl;
And the Eagle of the free did crush
The eagle of the slaves, and Seneca,
Who'd heard their thunder, sent out
Reinforcement's steeds across the field --
For having toppled the Kremlin's towers,
Vengeance onto Paris: our redemption.
All these have hastened to their homeland,
But now, with bloody sword in scabbard.
Oh, sacred Kremlin, be thee revived!
Show them the ashes of honor!

Come join us, sires and their sons,
All virginal girls, and merry wives,
To place wreaths upon their brows,
And crown their banners with laurels.
From chests of the mighty remove shields,
And bear their penachs to lighten arms,
To see up close their features loved,
To hear their dear, familiar voices.
Now standing upon Kremlin's tower
Still begrimed with the ashes of battle,
They appear serene in humbling beauty
And stretch toward you their open palms...

We offer our blessings upon your return
Into the nation's bosom from fields of honor!
Upon you, the saintly title of the faithful
You've purchased with bloody vengeance,
And for the price of many a wound...
Here, upon this fire-watching cliff,
Upon your courageous heads,
With our most grateful hands,
The glorious nation places
The impress of its love and honor,
And copiously sheds its healing tears
Upon your bloody scars....

Above them, above them, Thy mighty shield,
Oh, God Omnipotent, lower to protect,
That, as is the day of battle, the murderous
Enemy tremble before the peaceful folk.

The Folk

Above them, above them, Thy mighty shield,
Oh God Omnipotent, lower to protect,
That, as is the day of battle, the murderous
Enemy tremble before the peaceful folk.

Singer

Stretch out to us Thy gracious Hand
To soothe the sleep of the planted dead,
Who paid for Russia's safety with their heads
They lay beneath the ax to defend the truth.
And bring them under those eternal eaves
Where Heaven is enthroned forever,
And Thy never-setting sun rises,
Shining on their faces its happiness,
That even there, the remembrance
Of their time here live on in their hearts;
That they be for the nation, for all time,
Both shield and source of present hope.

Dear friends, offer a prayer for Him,
Our revered elder, our great leader!
Oh, our hero, when you with sword,
With calm and radiant face,
In our great temple, beside Caesar's hand,
Still youthful beneath your gray hair,
Before the reliquaries of the altar,
With full attention to Heaven's design,
The covenant of redemption did proclaim,
Which we did heed, being blinded –
We forgot you were from among us mortals –
That your days here on earth are numbered....

And where are thou, leader of victories?
We sing a hymn for your salvation:
But for some reason our savior isn't here.
Upon the holy day of Providence
We've come together in our Kremlin....
But our hero is not here among us.
Here, enemy standards lying in the dust,
In silence, mute row upon row,
Here are their battered shields,
And their blood-spattered banners;
Here is our glory ... but where are you,
Responsible for forging our greatness?

Our friends, this day will consecrate
Our remembrance of him,
So that the call of the fatherland
Will be heard by the shadow of death;
Upon the upper steps of fame
That is his due, the hand of fate,
With bolts of lightning and thunder,
Spread the dissolution of the Horde;
Stretched upon it, he slowly expired,
Like light flares out at the end of day,
And dimming, dying out, he did hear
The singing of our grateful nation.

May you rest in glory, our champion!
And before your burial tomb
The Archistratigus, your comrade in arms,
With the heavenly sword of destiny,
The guardian of your ashes, sits:
Before it, inextinguishable,
The torch of love is aflame,
Safeguarded by the fatherland.
And may this beacon be a sacred sign,
That Providence herself, from above,
Upon all Rus, through worst misfortunes'
Dim, sheds its light on us in redemption.

And you, whom the turbulent battle
Did abduct in the middle of your flight,
You, very quickly fled beyond earth's
Borders, and vanished from this earth;
Our friends, our blessings be on you!
You fell for the fatherland;
And here, it, in mourning for its sons,
Consecrates a funeral feast;
And the Kremlin is transformed by us
Into an altar of gratitude;
Upon it, first to be set ablaze,
The radiant sun of Providence.

You, for the remembrance of offspring
Of future years, with your heroic ashes
Bestowed upon us the light redeemed;
And the enemy beat a retreat in fear
From our green hills and fields
That harbor your mortal remains,
As before punitive barbaric gods,
In great confusion's disarray;
For all peoples they will serve notice,
How unsteady the edifice of strength --
To preach upon them honor's perk
You left behind your graves.

All this, in your sacred remembrance;
This consecrated Kremlin feast,
Temple echoing with thundering hymns,
This city, that had been put to flame,
And these folk, the throng of families,
Rejoicing, elated in peace --
You all, from all your days
Leave us a sacred legacy!
Stretch out, Almighty, Thy hand
Above the troubled sleep of the dead,
Who lay down their heads for Russia
In battle to defend the truth.

The Folk

Stretch out, Almighty, Thy hand
Above the troubled sleep of the dead,
Who lay down their heads for Russia
In battle to defend the truth.

Singer

To you, oh Russia, a faithful progeny,
A support of the mighty to the throne!
How they were moved by the Tsar's gaze
To come to the fatherland's defense!
They fly! Homes, fields committed to flames!
Chests, arms pierced by the arrows of gods!
And the Russian land arises mightily
As a giant among the fray!
Its rattling shield thunders...
Turning red with vengeance's ire, the Irtysh
And the Mighty Don clamor with war,
That war for the Mountains of Riphea.

The Kalmyk, Bashkir, Cherkess, and Finn
Had hastened to our banners,
And with a fence of their militias
Raised their shields around our throne...
Where is the enemy now? Oh, Russian land,
Your sacred feast has been made ready!
And here, on Kremlin's great heights,
The humble peasant of the villages,
The faithful son of glorious ancestors,
And the priest, servant at the altar,
Rejoicing, in unison raise up to Thou
A single voice, Almighty!

You, progeny of energetic sons,
Descendants of the famed,
Your own chainmail and shields
Place beside their battered armor,
Beside their hacked-to-pieces shields
Hang yours in the paternal house;
Inscribed on them are signs of noble deeds,
For future generations, during battle's storm
The enemy did carve with bloody sword;
May upon their fragile fragments
The legend of the fathers be preserved,
And multiplied in their descendants.

To you is due a new heroic deed:
The greatness of the sleeping dead.
And that sweet peace will not betray you,
Who were constant and true in battle;
Around you, silence will flourish,
And great order and freedom bloom;
And nature tamed will yield to you its gifts
Repaid in kind many times over;
Before Justice -- conscience and observance
Of law; Within the family -- purity of mores;
Before throne -- loyalty without slavishness;
Before the Lord -- righteousness of soul.

Oh, people, may you, a miracle of faith,
Mighty in your duty and obedience,
Flourish! And may the entrance
To your tabernacles becalmed be blocked
To all the ravages of fickle fate;
May the industrious plow endow
Your fields with teeming life.
Finding happiness in moderation,
Alien to corrupt influence of vanities,
Rejecting the sensuousness of luxury,
May you journey through this world
Toward the safety of the saving shore.

And Thou, All Mighty, bless them all
With your fatherly hand of guidance:
May they be worthy of your gifts
Before Thy Heavenly Throne.

The Folk

Bless all Thy children, God Supreme,
With your fatherly hand of guidance:
May they be worthy of your gifts
Before Thy Heavenly Throne.

Singer

Thine are both peoples and their Kings!
And every ruler knows full well
That he is but a powerless instrument
Of Thy eternal wisdom...
You, who lie buried in the dust,
Slaves languishing in the grave,
Kings, the disturbers of the earth,
Tsars, this earth's guiding lights,
Ghostly apparitions! Rise from your coffins
To the voice calling out to you!
Whom had you been: friends to the gods,
Or omnipotent gods yourselves?

No, no! In the bosom of destiny
There's but a single instrument...
Attend, attend! It flies over us
With the scepter of world governance
Above the dark abyss of time,
And from the chariot of the gods
The fates of empires, the fates of clans
It scatters from its flaming rings.
Who will reverse the quick current flow?
Whose force? Whose persistence?
It flies... and all that's left us is its lesson:
„Temperance and submission!“

Oh, holy covenant! May you be fulfilled!
All peoples live as one big family!
All Caesars be a single council of Kings!
That strength become our freedom's shield!
The spirit of grace race past us
Above a universe at rest in peace,
That all our planet earth unite
Into a single imperishable, eternal city!
In the council of Kings, the Heavenly King!
And their symbol be: Providence!
The throne of power turn into altar!
Into the love of blind obedience!

Subside, malevolent spirit of war;
Be thou not the destroyer of life,
Be thou life's goodness and calmness
And the guardian of eternal rights.
You, wisdom of mortals, be humbled
Before the wisdom of God,
And be enlightened in midst of life's dark
That is the path toward eternal life.
May faith be a dependable anchor for us
Among the waves of unfathomable fate,
And you, the Star of the East shine
Into this temple made by no human hand.

Singer and Folk

Shine on, shine on, oh, Heavenly Star!
All eyes upon it! All our wishes and dreams!
To it, to it, for the mystery of these veils,
Are due all earthly blessings!
There, we will find all that encumbered us
Here in that momentary event,
All that the mortal hour took from life,
And, resurrecting, be replenished.
So, hand in hand, after our leader!
We're setting out on a singular journey!
And with us, in a brotherly choir, the light,
Sing on: Glory be to God on high!

1816

Alex Cigale's first full book, *Russian Absurd: Daniil Kharms, Selected Writings*, is 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. He edited the contemporary Russian poetry issue of Atlanta Review (Spring 2015, Georgia Tech), which contained the work of some 50 poets and 35 translators, and more recently, the Russian Ballet issue of Trafika Europe (for Penn State Libraries).

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)
17, 2017, p. 6-13 (Василий Петров)

XX

Aleksandr Blok (1880 - 1921)

Александр Блок (1880 - 1921)

Vertaald door Paul Bezembinder

Translated into Dutch by Paul Bezembinder

* * *

De stad, de straat, de lamp, de zaak,
Bevroren is het duister, zinloos licht.
Al overleef je nog zo, nog zo vaak,
Het is zoals het is. De deur zit dicht.

Je valt, staat op, en doet alsof je lacht,
Je wereldje hervindt zijn stille kramp:
Het vastgevroren water van de nacht,
De stad, de straat, de zaak, de lamp.

Ginds is een mens verbrand.

Fet

Wat is het zwaar om hier op aard te zijn,
te doen alsof je niet al omgekomen bent,
steeds dit tragisch spel van angst en pijn
te zien voor wie het leven nog niet kent,

en steeds in boze dromen, nacht na nacht,
te vragen naar wat vragen niet verdraagt,
opdat hun in der schone kunsten pracht
de weerschijn van een vurig leven daagt!

© Paul Bezembinder, 2018, translation

* * *

Pieter slaapt, in mist verzonken,
Lamplicht glinstert op de straat,
De Nevá weerspiegelt vonken
Van een verre dageraad.

In die verre gloed van morgen,
In de schijnsels van de nacht,
Houdt zich sluimerend verborgen
Hoeveel treurigheid mij wacht.

Alexander Block in *Four Centuries*:
5, 2013, p.7, translated into English by Alistair Noon

Paul Bezembinder in *Four Centuries*:
14, 2016, p. 5-9 (Иннокентий Анненский, Владимир Соловьёв, Фёдор Тютчев,
Афанасий Фет)
15, 2016, p. 43-44 (Вера Полозкова)
16, 2017, p. 18 (Михаил Лермонтов)

Paul Bezembinder, born 1961, holds a Master's Degree in Theoretical Physics. He is a science policy advisor at a Dutch technical university. His poetry appeared in various Dutch (online) literary magazines. Samples of his poetry in Dutch and translations may be found at his website www.paulbezembinder.nl

Ossip Mandelstam (1891 - 1938)

Осип Мандельштам (1891 - 1938)

Translated by Henry King

* * *

Your image, hurtful and shaky,
lay deep in the fog, quite hidden.
"O Lord!" I cried, by mistake,
the words escaping unbidden.

God's name, like a great-winged bird,
flew outward from my breast.
Ahead, the fog still swirled,
and an empty cage was left.

Passover

Let's sit in the kitchen together a spell,
inhaling the homely kerosene smell,

with a sharp knife and a large round loaf --
shall I crank up the gas in the stove?

Somewhere round here there's a ball of twine
to tie up a basket with. Before dawn,

we'll catch a train from the terminus
where no one will think to look for us.

© Henry King, translation, 2018

* * *

There's plenty here to cause us alarm,
bolshie loudmouth comrade-in-arms!

Damn the way this tobacco crumbles,
friend straight out of The Nutcracker -- numbskull!

Instead, could we whistle like starlings through life,
snatching a sliver of walnut loaf...?

But as you can see, that's impossible.

* * *

I shall perform a smoky ceremony:
in this unscrupulous opal I see
strawberry summers on the sands,
two-faceted cornelians,
and agates -- a formic confraternity.
But I prefer the common infantry
cast up from the depths of the oceans:
grey, unpolished, that pleases nobody.

Ossip Mandelstam in *Four Centuries*:

- 1, 2012, p. 9-12, translated into English by Alistair Noon
- 3, 2012, p. 11-14, translated into English by Ian Probststein;
- 4, 2013, p. 14-20, translated into English by Ian Probststein;
- 5, 2013, p. 8-13, translated into English by Tony Brinkley and Raina Kostova;
- 5, 2013, p. 15-20, translated into English by Ian Probststein;
- 6, 2013, p. 9-10, translated into Bulgarian by Maria Lipiskova
- 6, 2013, p. 11, translated into Serbian by Mirjana Petrovic
- 9, 2014, p. 19-28, translated into English by Ian Probststein
- 11, 2015, p. 14, translated into English by Tony Brinkley
- 14, 2016, p. 17-23, translated into English by Eugene Dubnov, John Heath-Stubbs,
and Chris Arkell
- 15, 2016, p. 11-14, translated into English by Tony Brinkley

Henry King currently lives in Malmö, Sweden. He has also published versions of Mandelstam in *Modern Poetry in Translation*.

Igor Severyanin (1887 - 1941)
Игорь Северянин (1887 - 1941)

Translated by Vadim Vozdvizhensky

To Alvina

Don't be surprised by anything...
K. Fofanov (Olympow)

A neighbour of mine, Alvina,
Brings milk in the mornings
And is surprised how quickly
And easily I drink Tokayan wine.

No wonder thirty-five bottles
I've drunk in the last ten days!
My back of the head allows me
To drink so much this way...

Listen, you little blondie,
Don't be surprised by such things:
City life isn't worth anything,
Who cares about it? What'd you think?

Much worse getting used to meanness --
That's the problem to mind.
And if you should die from anything,
It's better to die from wine!

Januyry 1918, Petrograd, Russia

The Last Love

You had flowed in my life, like a stream of Tokay,
In a crystal glass tired of vodka.
And I sighed saying words: "So what you are like:
All you are, as you are!" On your lips
I'm kissing or eyes I'm kissing,
Like the air from the south I'm breathing.
And for that as I've met you like this,
As you are, I shall write no more verse.
They write only when waiting, or suffering, dreaming,
Making errors, or prayers and threats.
But to write after words: "So what you are like:
All you are, as you are!" -- you most certainly needn't.
18 April 1940, Narva-Jõesuu, Estonia

To Valery Bryusov

The berceuse springs being so soft --
The road to an expensive "spot".
We're meeting there, -- though rowed,
During our evenings in Baku.

Drinking Tokay, Hungarian wine,
With an Armenian millionaire,
In cigars' smoke purple-gray
It was our chance to end that fray.

By stepping fast and really gliding,
You entered smiling cabinet
You didn't change, as always shining,
A stylist, thinker, and poète.

Enthusiastically towards you
I did stand up excited, phew, --
We hugged proclaiming new discourse,
New paints, new notes to endorse!

Oh, you didn't judge me very hard
For words I said in your regard, --
And life again is rich, new, still
For you the singer of idyll!

I beg you, brother, to excuse me,
For my impetuous state of mind
And with my verses ever written
I'll sing to you this song of mine!

January 1918, Petrograd, Russia

The Postman

Either by road good for tyres,
Or up the path so rich in flax,
Or down the trodden country tracks
A postman's cycling to his tacks.

He's loved by all this nice old chap.
He's served for thirty years' lap.
A letter from Miss Shchepkin sent
Is passed to me on his advent.

I do invite him to my porch,
He's so tired, so scorched,
He'd drink a sherry or a kvass
And eat a snack before his pass.

He delicately rolls in
And takes a chair with a rim.
The sea outside is calm and still,
It's glowing red as if glass mill.

He concentrates his thoughts of mind
And slowly sips Tokayan wine.
But what's Tatyana Lvovna writing?
It's so dark this porch of mine.

January 1918, Petrograd, Russia

The Overture

Champagne with pineapples! Champagne with pineapples!
Surprisingly tasty, so sparkling and cool!
I'm feeling Norwegian! I'm feeling wee Spanish!
Becoming impetuous my pen starts to rule!

The chirping of planes! The roaring of motors!
Trains blowing whistles! Yachts sailing on wings!
Here someone get kissed! There someone gets beaten!
Champagne with pineapples is the pulse evening brings!

Group of girls getting nervous, dames surrounding so sharp
I'll rewrite tragédie making life a great farce...
Champagne with pineapples! Champagne with pineapples!
De Moscou à Nagasaki! Et de New York à Mars!

January 1915, Petrograd, Russia

Vadim Vozdvizhensky in *Four Centuries*:

16, 2017, p. 5-9 (Григорий Сковорода)

17, 2017, p.14-15 (Фёдор Тютчев)

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, Igor Severyanin, etc.

XXI

Ivan Volosjuk
ИВАН ВОЛОСЮК

Traduzione di Paolo Panieri
Translated into Italian by Paolo Panieri

L'autunno. Versione da rivista

Niente è come mi sembrava prima,
Dio sia con te, viandante, io sto bene.
È stato un autunno di sole,
ma in realtà si è rivelato essere
una versione da rivista, ovvero
breve.

Il bosco di conifere dove io e te torneremo,
che non sa di mine né di funghi,
la foglia fa da filtro al sole,
che adesso ti tocca
con raggi viscosi e profumati.

Ecco una musica sfibrata --
la sento risuonare da qua.
Dio sia con te, viandante, io mi abituerò,
per me chiederanno un riscatto
e in ogni modo avranno i soldi.

Io metto in rima "singhiozzo"
B. Ryžij

Tra una cosa e l'altra è finita Mosca,
cosa ne penserai?
Si gelerà il giardino e la tua mano calda
toglierà le foglie dal tavolo.

Vivo sotto il giovane cielo
e ho paura di svegliarmi muto,
e anche se metto in rima "fumo"
il dolore non aumenta né si placa.

* * *

Dai, non una parola sulla morte,
chi aveva torto -- ci penserà la guerra,
la mia voce interiore ha l'erre moscia,
e nella neve, come posso,
vado a casa.

Più lenta striscia la lumaca
rispetto a me (nel mio sogno).
E se non è una preghiera --
perché sussuro con le labbra,
angelo mio?

Là i muri non trattengono il calore, c'è solo una sedia e un letto,
un uomo ha perso il suo tronco
e non c'è più niente da rompere.

* * *

Ho toccato il fondo. A chi vive tra i fiumi
Krivoj e Kazjonnyj Torec
un sole estraneo abbronza le spalle,
e cade polline profumato
da ogni fiorellino aperto,
come vecchio intonaco dal soffitto.

* * *

La neve di per sé non è un mito:
facevamo un pupazzo di neve e i figli degli Sciti,
messo da parte il senso ultimo delle cose,
ruzzolarono giù dalla collina.

E gli inverni facevano paura: più paura
di una notte in un bunker.
Tavole di legno
ci legavamo ai piedi a mo' di sci;
e anche se la casa non resisterà
in qualche modo, nella calda cucina accanto al forno
sverneremo e un'ode agli dei,

a primavera, quando la neve lascerà le colline,
esprimeremo per mezzo di feticci.

* * *

Uno spazio vivo, dove il fosforo
lascia la sua consunta tracia,
ho attraversato con leggerezza,
senza insegne, senza perdite, senza vittorie.

Non una parola sulla morte, non gracchiare:
un corvo non becca un altro corvo!
Su quali mappe militari
si abatterà questa marcia pedestre?

Passeggiavo per colli e alture
(vuoi la morte, e allora così sia),
ma non una buccia, neanche mezza,
prenderò dal tavolo altrui.

* * *

Il pesce va grigliato su due lati,
così anche l'olio diventa rosso,
quando arrivò Napoleone,
mi uccisero vicino a Ržev.

Se i russi vogliano la guerra
da qui non riesco a vederlo
ma la neve ci è data
per non sfuggire alle pallottole.

E anche stanotte non dormirò,
ma tanto in cantina c'è una candela
e poi sarà come in Crimea,
dove ci sono persone e omini verdi.

* * *

Guardavo con occhi disarmati
le stelle e i pianeti.
Ascoltavo con orecchie disarmate
le voci degli uccelli migratori.
Toccavo con dita disarmate
le fredde pietre dell'inverno.
Cos'altro potevo fare
Per fermare la guerra?

Ivan Volosyuk, born in 1983, in Dzershinsk, Ukraine, graduated from the Donetsk National University where he had studied Russian Philology. His poems have been published in the main Russian literary magazines. He took part in a number of work-shops of young writers from Russia and former USSR countries.

Paolo Panieri, 1992, was born in Cecina, Tuscany. He was a student of translation studies at the University of Bologna. He is living in Modena.

Stanisław Lwowski

СТАНИСЛАВ ЛЬВОВСКИЙ

Przełożył Tomasz Pierzchała

Translated into Polish by Tomasz Pierzchała

Z cyklu "39, 41"

wojna zakończyła się, nie rozpoczynając. jabłka
czterdziestego pierwszego, trzydziestego dziewiątego zebrały się,
jak przystało, ułożyły się w piwniczkach, stały się cydrem
samogonem, calvadosem i sznapsem. polskie
panie, ruskie baby
niemieckie frau, brytyjskie
mrs narodziły dzieci. i wojny
nie wybuchły ani w czterdziestym pierwszym.
ani w czterdziestym drugim, ani później. a trwał sobie i
trwał czas pokoju, coraz mniej nowych
oficerów przyjmowano do służby zamiast
leciwych już, siwobrodych, rozbawionych,
setkami odchodzących
na emeryturę aby żyć w białych
domkach na włoskich, tureckich,
na greckich wyspach, zabierać
wnuków do siebie na lato, na wieś
(cypr, ibiza, Czarnogóra).
by zbierać jabłka, pędzić
z nich samogon i calvados,
robić cydr i apfelkorn,
gościć się wieczorami, dolewając z
pękatów zielonych butelek niesamowite jabłkowe
napoje

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Four Centuries. Russian Poetry in Translation, 18, 2018

plony trzydziestego dziewiątego roku, plony
czterdziestego pierwszego roku. próbując, zgadzać
się ze sobą, że niby, nie było ani wcześniej,
ani później za ich pamięci takich plonów.

nie bywało jabłek takich
ogromnych, takich
pysznych, szkarłatnych, żywych.
takich ludzkich,
prawie mówiących.

takich śmiertelnych,
żywych gorących.

Krótką opowieść o nierozróżnialnym

dłużące się długie brzegi równin po krawędziach wody
płynącej nie składającej się z liter ani słów
i nie z wody podstaw wzrok unoszący się na koturnach
i jak mówisz a jak tu nie mówić

roztapiająca się jak piszą w naszych gazetach
równina rozciągająca się pełna szczelin słowna
ledwo przestępujący z mosiężnego radia
słowian czuchoniec kałmuk ale wciąż dla języka jed-
na

zrąca tli się rankami oskoma latarni
żółtawej przypadkowej na warcie
podskoczyła by rozruszać się przy portierni
zakładów chemicznych ściekających
w sercu autonomicznego kraju

którego dłużące się brzegi zbiegają się na krawędzi wody
i woda ta stoinieodgadniona jak ciemna masa słów
ciągnących się naraz przez wszystkie wiotkie przepustki
do wyciętego w cienkim szkle niedużego łuku

przez który tylko przenika tutaj rozdrażnionym kiwnięciem
niechętnym okrzykiem uwierzytelniająca rozwinięta forma

życia przeżywanego jak język substancji wypartej
obcą substancją języka
przybywającego jak codzienne pociągi ze słabo
znanymi apatrydami

przelewającego się za kraje dworca tłumami uchodźców
przybywającymi codziennie

twającego rozlewającego się po równinach wciąż nowymi
falami deportowanych

substancja która była tylko morzem jednym
tylko morzem całego smutku
jak mówisz gdy tylko przemówisz

oby poradzić sobie ze strachem i wstrętem
nie wywracać na lewą stronę żywego

zatem oznajmij wszem wobec przez radio nasze
i w gazecie naszej zaraz napisz do wszystkich

że niby niema substancja języka
nie staje się nigdy i nie stanie się
niematerialnym językiem substancji

że brzeg który wyszedł z morza rozglądając się dokoła widzi
bezkresne równiny pofałdowane szare przybywające zewsząd

zlatujące się w tej chwili na posępne tłoczące się światło
powszechnego trwającego wszędzie bezsennego morza koine

Well known through regular appearances in periodicals and Internet publications he has received numerous literary honors. He was shortlisted for "Razlichie" prize in 2012, for Andrey Bely Prize in 2005, 2009 and 2012. Lvovsky was awarded Andrey Bely prize in 2017 for the poetry collection "Poems from the Book and Other Poems". His poetry has been translated into English, French, Chinese, Italian, Spanish, Georgian and other languages.

Tomasz Pierzchała, 1968, is a Polish translator of English, Russian and Ukrainian poetry and prose. He lives in Świdnica, Poland. He collaborates with Russian and Ukrainian artists, poets and writers from Germany, Latvia, USA and other countries. Together with S. Mushtatow he has been the co-editor of a number of anthologies. He has won several literary prizes and has taken part in a lot of art-projects as an artist. For further information visit <http://tompierzchala.wordpress.com/>

Dmitry Strotsev
Дмитрий Строчев

Translated into English by Ian Probstein

Arguments and Facts

I too
am against
death penalty

but it was
they
who
blew it up

I gathered
many
arguments

on the internet
one has
to accept
facts

one yet has to
live
further

somehow

2012

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© Ian Probstein, 2018, translation

Four Centuries. Russian Poetry in Translation, 18, 2018

* * *

the voices of culture
vying with each other
offer answers and explanations

this
outdoor advertisement
dazzling illumination

this gas
fills up
the entire volume
of mind and heart

where
you and me
will be

will stand
will breathe
will hang on

the edge of the precipice
2012

for Natalia Gorbanevskaya

a drizzle
 now grey
 now emerald green
comes out resurrected
distilled through the casing of the well
from the drops and light
 a new substance

opens liberated

returned
 into the first garden
every one

while the rain is
 now grey
 now emerald green
 2013

A Step

from
 adam
overwhelmed with the nakedness
 of adam

to
 the astonished heart
 of your
presence
 2013

Freedom

if God wanted
to demand something from us

He would first and foremost give
convincing proves
of His existence

yet if I am empty and free
and filled with freedom
I am filled with you
 2013

for Ian Probstein

time
 its flakes
and
 lanes

to gather
 with a tongue
 and
 glue
with saliva

that's
 what
 one has to do
forever

2014

Yes Yes Yes

one has to
Yes has to

for the sake of the future
Yes for the future

to kill
Yes to kill

time present

2014

Preparation

the meager
 sharpen knives
abrahams

 the pure
carry wood
 isaacs
god
 will you stop
all the knives

2014

Dmitry Strotsev (b. 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 house *Novyie Mekhi* (New Windbags). He is also an organizer of poetry festivals *Time and Place* (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 for Andrey 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 Swedish, French, Italian, Hebrew, Georgian, Ukrainian, and Belorussian.

Ian Probstein, 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 about 500 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. His most recent book is *The River of Time: Time-Space, Language and History in Avant-Garde, Modernist, and Contemporary Poetry* (Boston: Academic Studies Press, 2017, <http://www.academicstudiespress.com/browse-catalog/the-river-of-time>)

Gregory Trestman
Григорий Трестман

Translated into English by Ian Probstein

* * *

King David! The six-headed broken star
Is falling down, and in six voices moans:
Misfortune! Grief! Her fading eyes still are
So crammed with pain: she's cooling in gravestone.

The House is broken, and in the ravine,
The killed are raving, those who won't escape.
Oh, give me strength to live, relieve, revive,
Remount six stairs leading to the grave.

You, David, have escaped the fallen walls,
We're forced to stay, and you can see it better
Than me your blood, your bone, your flesh, your soul, --
I'm only smiling in the silent ghetto.

And yet I beg you not to take me all:
Angels, give me six immortal breaths.
... And the six pieces of my broken soul
Will cry of unavoidable rebirth.

* * *

Welcome, grief of mine,
Be my guest,
Dwell in me,
Don't run to others: they
Will have grieves
Of their own.
It's a long time
Since I stopped
Fearing you, so
Don't fear me either --
We'll live in each other,
It will be our life.
Fill me in, grief,
So that we do not have
Any partitions:
Don't be shy of
Your share.
Are you snug?
Then, my grief,
Let's grab each other
By the throat until
We are out of breath,
We'll fight, my brother,
To death.

* * *

Close up your eyes...

Then open...

Close again...

Each time the dark is stirring otherwise.

That's why

The blind have steady sight

While sighted deeply thinking men

Seem blind.

But you'll go blind and then the dark will come,

And you will realize:

This world is known,

This world of lightless houses, sightless souls;

You'll go through a house, and you won't touch the house,

You'll pass through souls, and you will touch no one's.

Then, for yourself you'll be both God and Cain,

And you'll give up: the light will go away,

The world will go dark, the Universe lose sight.

You'll listen closely to the lonely sound,

The slightest hindrance of the stirring dark,

And that will be the beating of your heart:

The utmost final quenching sound.

You'll move along the grimpen -- on the edge,

And then you'll stumble and breathe in flight:

Prostrate yourself, your soul, and on this verge

You'll grasp: oh, God! I've found my sight.

* * *

Eyes into eyes, two breathings in one breath,
Heart into heart, soul into soul press up:
Let not the poison burn you down: the cup
Is overwhelmed with the sin of your rebirth.

Inhale two long and hardly taken breaths,
Two sights, two moans, two sufferings, two souls,
Two spirits which are rising till they soar,
Two shudders will exhaust you and suppress.

Let not your groan suppress the other's groan:
Flesh into flesh, that is your Exodus,
And it will live much longer than your soul,
blazing higher than the world of God.

* * *

Do not, my loved ones, die, for when
I realize that you are tired of
My love -- let not my way cross then
Your treads. Do not then live
With me and be somewhere else
But only be alive for goodness sake.

Do not, my loved ones, die. When grief
Much bigger than your soul can take
All of a sudden grabs you from behind
And each becomes a burden to oneself,
Don't be engaged in navel-gazing
But only be alive for goodness sake.

Do not, my loved ones, die, live on,
 And later we will realize --
 When we get over our break,
 We'll have a lot to overcome --
 Just two of us, together, or alone...
 But only be alive for goodness sake!

Gershon (Gregory) Trestmann, the author of 9 books of poetry and prose, Israel-Russian poet, writer, publicist, and critic, was born in Minsk, Belarus, in 1947, where he graduated from the Belarus Polytechnic University and Moscow Polygraphic Institute majoring in book editing. From 1990, he resides in Israel. He worked in the press center of the former foreign minister of Israel, Agvidor Liberman, the leader of the party "Our Home Israel". At present he lives in Jerusalem and in the settlement Nokdim in Judea. Gershon Trestmann is a member of the Israel Writer's Union from 2004, of the Association of Russian Writers of Israel, and of the International Federation of Russian Writers. He is also a member of the California-based International Academy of Science, Education, Industry, and Arts, which awarded Mr. Trestmann in 2017 a gold medal for the outstanding achievements in literature and arts. In the former USSR, he occasionally published in periodicals in Russia and in Belarus, but his own books have never been published. Currently, he is widely published in Israel, the USA, Canada, Russia, Belarus, and other republics of the former USSR. His latest books are a book-length poem *Job* (Minsk, 2014) and *Without Coordinates*, a book of poems (Jerusalem: Scopus, 2017).

Ian Probst in *Four Centuries*:

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- 4, 2013, p. 14-20 (Осип Мандельштам), p. 21-28 (Роальд Мандельштам);
- 5, 2013, p. 15-20 (Осип Мандельштам); p. 21-25 (Роальд Мандельштам);
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- 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)
- 17, 2017, p. 16-17 (Иннокентий Анненский)

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Here are the books donated to the Library:

In German

117. Russische Lyrik von Puschkin bis Block. Auswahl und Übertragung von Werner von Matthey. Basel: Schwabe, 1956
118. Plank, Rudolf: Abschied. Übertragungen aus alter und neuer russischer Dichtung 1825-1965. Karlsruhe: Verlag C.F. Müller, 1966
119. Plank, Rudolf: Die Blätter fallen. Übertragungen aus französischer und russischer Lyrik. Karlsruhe: Verlag C.F. Müller, 1952
120. Psalter und Harfe. Lyrik der Christenheit. München: Langewiesche-Brandt, 1955 (Blok, Merezkowskij)
121. Chorus an die verkehrte Welt. Russische Dichtung des 18. Jahrhunderts. Leipzig: Reclam, 1983
122. Russische Epigramme. Ausgew. und übers. von Josef Müller. Fernwald: litblockin, 1990
123. Die Lyra des Orpheus. Lyrik der Völker in deutscher Nachdichtung. München: Heine, 1952 (Achmatowa, Balmont, Belyj, Block, Dershawin, W. Iwanow, Jessenin, Koltow, Kusmin, Lermontow, Nekrassow, Pushkin, Solowjow)
124. Kontinente. Lyrik unseres Jahrhunderts. Berlin: Verlag Neues Leben, 1962 (Dolmatowskij, Issakowskij, Majakowskij, Marshak, Martynow, Simonow, Surkow, Twardowskij)
125. Es war mein Freund, mein Kampfgefährte. Militärverlag der DDR. 1987 (Issakowskij, Antokolskij, Pasternak, Utkin, Aliger, Achmatowa, Inber etc)
126. Wort und Gestalt. Dresden: Verlag der Kunst, 1958 (Achmatowa, Majakowskij, Selwinskij)
127. Ich sehe dich an. Bilder, Gedichte und Lieder für Verliebte. Leipzig: Verlag für die Frau, 1975 (Simonow, Wossnessenskij, Isakowskij etc)
128. Mein Dokument - meine Poesie. Neue Sowjetische Lyrik. Leipzig, 1967

