

Four Centuries

Russian Poetry in Translation



№ 30, 2023

Four Centuries. Russian Poetry in Translation

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Aleksey Koltsov (1809-1842)

Translated into Belarusian by Svetlana Drach

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Дом лесніка

У цёмным лесе, ля крынічкі,
Стаіць домік невялічкі,
З кветкамі пад вокнамі,
З высокімі варотамі.

Пад замком тыя вароты,
Брамка пад наглядам -
Каб не йшоў туды рагаты,
Лясун страшны і калматы;

Крывасмока перапыняць,
Ды й асілку шлях зачыняць
Хто ж жыве тут адзінока,
Ад жылля вакол далёка?

Рыбалоў мо небагаты?
Ці разбойнік барадаты
У ім ратуецца мальбой,
З кúфарамі і казной?

З даўняй тут жыве пары -
Песціць царскія бары -
З жонкай, стараства, сваёй
Ды з дачкою маладой.

Для яе стары сівы
Замыкае ўсё ў двары, -
Каб у каменныя палаты
Не павёз купец багаты;

Каб баярын акруговы
Не туліўся б да дачкі
Безадвязнай павітухай, -
Не зглуміў бы б маладуху.

Аполлон Майков (1821-1897)

Апалон Майкаў (1821-1897)

Apollon Maykov (1821-1897)

Translated into Belarusian by Svetlana Drach

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Восень

Крые ўжо ліст залаты
Волкую ў лесе зямлю...
Смела тапчу я нагой
Вясенняга лесу красу.

З холаду пчоці гараць;
Люба мне ў лесе лунаць,
Чуць, як вецце трапчыць,
Лісце нагой заграбаць!

Няма тут ранейшых уцех!
Лес таямніцу згубіў:
Сарваны апошні арэх,
Апошняя кветка галоўку схіліла;

Мох не прыўзняты, не ўзрыты
Грудай грузоў кучаравых;
І каля пня не вісіць
Гронка брусніц пурпуровых;

Доўга на лісці ляжыць
Ночы мароз, і скрозь лес
Холадна неяк глядзіць
Яснасць празрыстых нябёс...

Лісце шуміць пад нагой;
Смерць сцэле жатву сваю...
А я вясёлы душой
І, як шалёны, пяю!

Знаю, сярод мхоў не дарма
Ранні падснежнік я рваў;
І аж да восеньскіх дзён
Кожную кветку вітаў.

Што душа ім сказала,
Што ёй казалі яны -
Шчасце ўспамінаў удыхаю,
У зімовыя ночы і дні!

Лісце шуміць пад нагой...
Смерць сцэле жатву сваю!
А я вясёлы душой -
І, як палёны, пяю!

Svetlana Drach was born in Minsk. She graduated from the Belarusian State University and obtained her PhD Degree in Organic Chemistry. Her native languages are Belorusion and Russian. She has been translating from Russian into Belorussian since 2022.

Ekaterina L. Tauber (1903-1987)
Екатерина Таубер (1903-1987)

Translated into English by Maria Bloshteyn
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© Maria Bloshteyn, 2023, translation

* * *

Vanished Russia's indelible hallmark
Was imprinted on us by her hand.
We aren't her dried-out dead branches,
But her seedlings in faraway lands.

We were crippled and then transplanted,
All the rest ended up as scrap.
But even among foreign dustheaps,
Russia dwells in our buds, in our sap.

A mere handful, a puzzle to all here –
We keep faith with what had once been,
But eternity won't judge us harshly
For our obstinacy's holy sin.

* * *

Our faces are malleable clay.
We mould ourselves as we go
to resemble some glorious model
that charmed us in life's studio.

Or maybe we pick no such model —
just look at each other askance,
taking in the gradual changes
as the years slowly advance.

Love and anger by turn wield a chisel,
as they hold us tight in their thrall,
and mark our smiles and frowns,
changing us once and for all.

And when our faces are carved
by time, by loss, and by shock,
Death, the studio's master,
completes us with one last stroke.

A Café in Zemun

I still dream of our farewell Sunday,
that subdued and lackluster night...
It was warm, although it was autumn,
we sat in a café next to the riverside.

Empty tables strewn with newspapers,
headlines blaring of death and war –
all this in a town veiled in dust,
thick with lush gardens and bored.

I kept looking at you to remember
your beloved face, come what may,
as all things peaceful, sweet, and familiar
faltered, spun and went drifting away.

An old streetcar flashed in the distance,
The last trip home for you and for me!
And streetlamps fused into a blazing line
in tear-filled eyes, able at last to see.

* * *

A scraggly southern pine stands tall
above a field of wilted lavender.
Beside it is a low stone wall
that dates to Priam and Cassandra.
And burning bushes droop and fall
as scorching winds blow all asunder.

The sea's invisible, the clouds
unmoving in a sky now faded...
The nearby shrubs are singled out
for nibbles by a goat from ancient fables.
The hallowed dust that swirls about
is, like the goat's pelt, tinted sable.

I'll stay and laze here for the afternoon,
besotted by this heady potion –
a nowhere place, with nothing much to do,
white-hot July is passing in slow motion,
the olives let the sunshine through,
and tanning is my only option.

July 1944

* * *

This bright blue chalice of a bay
 can't be gulped down or emptied out
 with one fell swoop or one fierce lunge,
 in times of torment and of doubt.

It shall not be a victor's tribute –
 it is bestowed on those resigned
 to self-negating introspection,
 like a cool sip of azure wine.

Ekaterina Tauber (1903-1987) is a poet, writer, and literary critic. She was born and grew up in Kharkiv. She emigrated to Serbia at 17 with her family and at 33 moved to France, where she put out a typewritten magazine of Russian émigré poetry *Pereklichka*. Her poems were favourably reviewed by Ivan Bunin, Georgy Adamovich, and other prominent émigré poets. Tauber is the “spiritual mother” of René Guerra, the outstanding French Slavic scholar, publisher, collector, and guardian angel of the Russian emigration.

Maria Bloshteyn is a translator and literary scholar. She was born in Leningrad and grew up in Toronto, where she currently lives. She studied Dostoevsky's influence on American culture and is the author of *The Making of a Counterculture Icon: Henry Miller's Dostoevsky* (2007). She is the editor and main translator of the anthology of Russophone poems of World War II, *Russia is Burning* (2020).

David Shrayer-Petrov
Давид Шрайер-Петров

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Village Orchestra

*Filya loves all farm animals,
Eats all kinds of food,
Filya walks to the valley,
Filya blows his fife.*

Nikolay Rubtsov

Three green invalids drink rotgut underneath a goat willow.
Ears have crawled from all the meadows, winter feed for cows and horses.
It's ideal when legs protrude from ears, and our summer house becomes
a refuge for the village orchestra, at least during the month of mowing hay.

Let me introduce the members, our trusty troupe before they're no longer here,
since all the singers
and musicians have been filling up at our summer table.
Here's a meadow and a small river, here, the sky and roadside dew.
The outline of a stork. A dilapidated fence. A slow arrow in flight.

Everyone heard the twang of the tuning fork: that's the top balalaika guy,
the orchestra's oldest player crushing the water barrel in the yard
of his neighbor, the food store manager with prosthetic legs who bribed his way in.
Isn't it good when they jut out of the haystack, so what's the point of having stumps?

Dance, not squatting, then just ogling! Observe, recall, hurry and suck
the cloudy white poisonous potion from the bottle. Don't be lazy.
And over the meadow, along a heavenly curving path, carefree and proud,
a swallow sails while dropping its cloudy white ecstatic slime from the cloaca
onto the legless and soulless folks.

That's life for you. It forges its own discordant melodies.
The hammer strikes the anvil, the phallus disappears in the lap,
feet go sloshing in the bog, a river float jerks off, the invalid
sucks rotgut in a mowing hut.
Over the ringing grasses, the booming well, the smoky chimney,

and the chattering combine.
The morning sun
beats foxy tails, like kettledrums.

Like a birch's delicate rustle,
the sounds of the village orchestra find refuge in the soul.

I don't understand you: How can you, flying in a white cloud
over the meadow, disregard the orchestra's midsummer madness?
Disregard the crucian's deadly suck, the invalid's greedy hoots, the yoke's
senseless swaying of the hip-pails and the cuckoo's frenzied cooing.

In this stinking compost, this fermented mixture: of grasses, swamps,
manure and droppings, slime, songs, howls, libations, testimonials and couplings,
the former soul's light and darkness hidden, and you want to disregard it?
Squeak of oarlocks, creak of carts, of jackboots, gates and bottle corks,
corncrakes and bedsprings. How can you disregard these?

That's life, it weaves its own whirling melodies
from little goat willows,
from heavenly curving paths,
from little birch leaves that haven't been torn off.
But the orchestra's simple score didn't sleep like a whore,
a stupid fool, who went to bed with any visiting conductor,
a curious and diligent guy who managed to decipher a spell of signs,
meadow songs, tiny notes on lined pages, instead of grain
ripening on stalks. O the clink of sickles! When did they harvest?
I don't understand you, but if I did, then for quite a while I haven't been able
to sustain your blind worship of urban talent.

There's all of me: river and wispy cloud, cereals and grasses, a swamp
and a bus wresting from you the promise of impossible transitions.
Here is the stump of my soul, the rotgut of words and sounds, there he is—
the virgin crucian, who has sucked and swallowed all the bait of
my dear homeland and finally got hooked.

Here is the troupe: orchestra members, debuting conductors, store managers,
invalids, prostitutes, coed gals, and classified papers,
(Have those also played a role or led a part, but where?),
garden scarecrows, rakes, pitchforks, saws, breasts piercing
misery or milkcaps piercing through moss, abysses of meaning, nonsense,
draining strength, my terrified beloved and her ever-sinking abyss...
Now we're all fucked.

O haystack, the home of boozers pouring drinks, you are a symbol of happiness,
 the fluffed curs of hay, you are a donkey swinging—don't the ears sway?
 It's so splendid when ears and knees have been conjoined in a moaning jumble.
 That's a sign that the village orchestra knows its music, will play its own requiem,
 hasn't sold out and gone whoring. O how the roar of engines deafens
 our souls, yet the village orchestra's lament for the perishing village
 will not spill over the rim of the dough bowl
 in the drunken rotgut wake.

Note on the text. The Russian original of the long poem *Derevenskii orkestr* (*Village Orchestra*) was composed in 1981 the summer of Pärnu, Estonia, where Shrayer-Petrov and his family vacationed every summer from 1972-1986. The poem was revised in Providence, RI in 2005, nearly twenty years after the writer's emigration from the former USSR. The version appeared in *Arion* magazine in 2006 and was reprinted in *Derevenskii orkestr* (*Village Orchestra*, 2016), a collection of Shrayer-Petrov's selected long poems edited by Maxim D. Shrayer.

David Shrayer-Petrov, poet, fiction writer, memoirist, and medical scientist, was born in Leningrad in 1936. He has published twenty-five books in his native Russian, most recently the tragicomedy in verse *Vaktsina* (*Vaccine*, 2021) and the novel *Iskuplenie Iudina* (*Yudin's Redemption*, 2021). Shrayer-Petrov's books in English include the collections *Jonah and Sarah: Jewish Stories of Russia and America*, *Autumn in Yalta: A Novel and Three Stories*, *Dinner with Stalin and Other Stories* and the novel *Doctor Levitin*. He lives in Brookline, Mass. with his wife of over fifty years, the translator Emilia Shrayer. *The Parallel Universes of David Shrayer-Petrov*, a collection of essays and materials about the author, coedited by Roman Katsman, Klavdia Smola, and Maxim D. Shrayer, was published in 2021, simultaneously in English and Russian.

Carol V. Davis is the author of *Below Zero* (Stephen F. Austin State University Press, 2023), *Because I Cannot Leave This Body* (Truman State Univ. Press, 2017), and *Between Storms* (TSUP, 2012). She won the 2007 T.S. Eliot Prize for *Into the Arms of Pushkin: Poems of St. Petersburg*. Her poetry has been read on National Public Radio, the Library of Congress and Radio Russia. Twice a Fulbright scholar in Russia, she taught in Siberia, winter 2018 and teaches at Santa Monica College, California and Antioch University, Los Angeles. She was awarded a Fulbright Specialist grant for Siberia in 2020, postponed because of Covid restrictions and cancelled when the War in Ukraine began.

Maxim D. Shrayer, son of David Shrayer-Petrov, was born in Moscow in 1967. A bilingual author and translator, Shrayer is Professor of Russian, English, and Jewish Studies at Boston College and a 2012 Guggenheim Fellow. Shrayer has translated the works of over thirty Russian authors, among them Pavel Antokolsky, Eduard Bagritsky, Ilya Ehrenburg, Samuil Marshak, Ilya Selvinsky, and Yuri Trifonov. His recent books include the memoir *Immigrant Baggage* (2023) and the Russian-language collection of poetry *Stikhi iz aipada* (*Poems from the iPad*, 2022). He lives in Brookline, Mass, with his wife and two daughters.

Nina Kossman
Нина Косман

Translated into Italian by Paolo Statuti
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Babi Yar

La madre diceva tua sorella mi fa impazzire,
Ma dov'è, oggi andiamo tutti a morire.
I fritzi* bussano alla porta, dobbiamo uscire.
Presto, svelto, perché quei libri, che te ne fai,
Là dove andremo a stare non li userai mai.
Sei sempre l'ultimo, figlio mio, continuava a dire.
Ecco, sono pronti, ma ora lui vuole dormire!
Dormirai là dove ci porta la nostra stella.
Lascia i libri e cerca piuttosto tua sorella.
Sei uno sciocco, davvero, ma quale stazione?
Ora c'è anche la sorella e vanno in processione.
Chi guidava la colonna loro al macello
Aveva nipoti e pronipoti e prendeva la pensione,
I nipoti hanno un animo gentile, non serve
Traumatizzarli parlando loro di un certo bosco,
Dicendo che nel mondo non c'è molto posto,
Che è una radura, e nessuno è risuscitato;
Ma che il nonno alla loro madre ha mirato,
Che il giovane era mezzo addormentato,
E cadendo sulla madre gli è sfuggito il sacchetto,
Tra i libri sparsi sul corpo c'era anche un gessetto...
Taci, al nipote non serve il tuo boschetto.

*Soprannome peggiorativo per i tedeschi (N.d.T.)

* * *

Vedi come il nero stormo
di uccelli caduti senza chiasso
guarda, ingoiando l'aria,
l'aria che fissa in basso;
e la loro mente, diventata ali
e il loro sogno sorpreso
della volta celeste, perfidamente segata
fino all'azzurro stesso –

dal nero stormo, senza un grido,
nelle mute lame dell'erba:
della ferrosa terra centocchi
e del vedente cielo sono una lega.

* * *

Sono nata nel paese
Dei morti a milioni,
Nel silenzio soffocante
Di guardinghe passioni,
Dove il cielo di notte
Era detto assolato,
Coi teschi così a lungo
Sotto il suolo ghiacciato.
Non verranno sepolti,
I nomi scorderanno;
I nomi degli uccisi
Le lapidi non sapranno,
Delle anime riconosciute
Per il sangue loro:
Io sono della stessa valle,
Ma non dello stesso coro.
Là dove mamma piangeva
Per l'uccisione del padre,
Dio di Abramo –
Ozem nell'ade.

Nuovi paesi e l'amore
Io non trovo,
Se sotto la neve i resti
Giacciono di nuovo.

* * *

Eccola, vedi, scorre,
l'acqua viva del torrente,
l'acqua viva delle fiabe,
per tutti e per niente.

Nessuno vestirà d'oro,
nessuno dall'insonnia salverà,
l'acqua viva delle fiabe,
limpida e lenta sarà.

Vedi come dolcemente scorre,
 si aggrappa alle mie fredde mani,
 l'acqua viva delle fiabe –
 via da me!* Cura prima i tuoi mali.

*L'espressione russa "Czur menjà", da me tradotta "Via da me", è usata per scongiurare una minaccia, un pericolo da parte di uno spirito maligno derivato dalla mitologia slava.

* * *

Vedi come i gabbiani assonnati,
 lentamente sonnolenti si aggirano,
 muovono le ali
 sulla rossa argilla presso il lago,
 l'argilla con cui i greci
 plasmavano stretti vasi
 con un accenno alla vita degli dei
 (custodi del segreto della morte,
 rivelatisi soggetti ad essa) –
 gli dei di argilla rossa
 presso il lago degli uccelli assonnati.

* * *

Se la morte non c'è,
 allora puoi campare,
 con una parola puoi la terra evocare,
 con ogni parola la vita prolungare,
 con ogni lettera gli uccelli invitare
 a un convito di briciole di pensiero,
 di scorza di sogno; il loro chiasso mattiniero
 è un segno che la vita non è un inganno,
 lascia che muovano la coda come fanno,
 lascia che sia un indizio
 che la morte non ha né fine né inizio.

* * *

Irruppe a un tratto e come un cieco,
 Inciampando, il vagone attraversò.
 «Ehi, dove vai?! Fermati!» –
 Dalla banchina qualcuno gridò.
 Ma egli parla con se stesso,
 Il bastone qua e là puntato,
 Proprio come un cieco,

Alle tenebre abituato.
Ma chi è? Come si chiama?
Come può l'angoscia superare?
Si irrigidì al finestrino,
Cercava di ricordare.
Chi è? Da dove è venuto?
Alla luce come si strugge!
Eppure ognuno, sempre
Al nulla sfugge.

* * *

Parole nella mia mano come ciottoli,
siete tonde e pacifiche.
Ma il frastuono della guerra
è giunto da lontano,
e il mare ha portato via i ciottoli,
ed è vuota di parole la mia mano.

* * *

Tra la spuma d'autunno
E la scorsa primavera,
Come libero uccello – un falco
Nello studio sulla tela,

Tra l'ombra e la forma
Di un'ombra in terra
Come di viventi al di fuori

Un'ombra che ricorre,
Tra la misura e l'immagine
Di mondi ripetuti uguali
Come orchestrazione di narcosi –

In preghiere di messali...
Scegli, se
Il soffitto blu posato
Sopra il tuo studio
Pace non ti avrà dato.

Moscow born **Nina Kossman** is a painter, bilingual writer, poet, and playwright. Her publications include two books of poems in Russian and in English, two volumes of translations of Marina Tsvetaeva's poems, a collection of stories about her Moscow childhood, an anthology she edited for Oxford University Press, and the novel „Queen of the Jews“. Her translations of Russian poetry have been anthologized. Her Russian and English short stories and poems have been published in a number of American, Canadian and Russian literary magazines. Two of her plays have been produced off-off Broadway.

Paolo Statuti is an Italian poet and interpreter. Born in Rome and currently residing in Poland, he has a degree in Political Science and a degree in Russian and Slavic languages and literature (a student of the legendary Angelo Maria Ripellino). Paolo has been translating Russian poetry, as well as Polish, Czech, and English for over 50 years. An avid writer and painter, he also runs a blog musashop.wordpress.com (Un'anima e tre ali) dedicated to poetry, music and painting. In the recent years, his notable translations of the Russian poetry published in Italy have been: Pushkin, 32 poems (2014) and Ruslan and Lyudmila (2019); Lermontov, Demon (2016) and Poems (2019); Pasternak, 30 poems (2014); Mandelstam, 30 poems (2014) – and his own poetry in The Wandering Star (2016).

Гали-Дана Зингер
Gali-Dana Singer

Translated into English by Elena Zakharova

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Ten days of return

...

...

a poem without words
a wordless poem
they say it is impossible
even impossible to imagine
but here it is

...

...

but here it is
look at it
listen to it

can you see it?
no
can you hear it?
no
so here it is

...

...

so here it is and that is
are two different things
one is next to the other
like writing and handwriting
like a thing and a think
like a lizard and a lease

(a lizard is not a thing
but what is it?
not a thing)

...

...

you are breaking in to the open
windows like the wind or a bough
but you'd rather break into the closed
windows like a beam

of light is refracted twice
in the crystals of feldspar
even if you put it down to formulas
it will stay the same

even if you call it positive
even if you call it negative
but you'd rather keep silent

...
...
a poor word
without a sound, a sign
in the Beginning it was
and there it disappeared

...
...
even the same
when however
ever different

...
...
there is not but there is
like you
sorry like me
there is not but there is
from the end to the "A"
overcoming the borders of letters
when there is nothing
no numbers no ends
and where the absence is shrinking and cold
and autumn has lain to its side
and lying to reach the infinity
as if the ink has poured out
from the inkpot to express itself

I have read your book, said old Batya
that is how I remember the one who is not here

but no! she said not a book, but a booklet
I forgot it

...

...

we talked

I and I
a word for a word
an eye for an eye
and we stopped
before dark
before bed
has been covered
and the star has been coming
out and left me
with the curtailed moon and the liquid tin
of the twilight

open the window
and out the window
you see what is sleepless
and said this
to me
it is me
and you mean it

...

...

the work of the words
too tired
to trust in
but we should
we don't want
but we should
overcan

...

...

these are sabbaths
in the narrowing homes of grief
it is not for those workless or griefless
not for those who are hired
it is too much for them
to separate a day from the day

a night from the night
to whiten the darkness
to fly unexpected
after a falling beam
with no borders and blocks

...

...

unsociable glances of reflections
worksheets of dreams
travesty of a nominative sentence
voice of a thin silence
voice of a subtle silence
how to translate it
there is always a little less
or a little more
of freedom than we need
locked up
and the voice of silence but whose
it is voice of your s

...

...

you differentiate
only one language
לשון אחת
שפה אחת

ОДИН ЯЗЫК
only one language of silence
which has three dialects
and two of them
differentiate between silence and quietness
and the third does not

...

...

you will be out
of what you are out
of need let it out
the future
you'll lose
all the loose
you will leave
only
only

an
ill
that's so brave
that's so smart
and will leave
as a fairytale
on the fingertips
or it will be full
or it will be sad
or it will be set
or it will be said
either it is mad
either in the end
or beginning at

...

...

Oxalis acetosella
common wood sorrel
common wood sorrow
where you would
get rid of the riddance
by reading by getting ready
to forget
the wood you lived in
is not made of ice
is not made for us
is not that easy
is not that empty
as you would
say it
as it is
as there is
nothing there in fact

...

...

at first all gardens turned closed
it was not for purpose
it was for renovations
and then they turned the words
into the Serbian
what country have I got to
these lemon faces in hotels
no, I am not joking

je suis perdue
 where am I do not know
 even dreaming my dreams

...

...

when have I written this
 when I was writing this letter
 was it I
 do not understand
 do not remember
 it was by itself
 and it is by itself
 writing itself

Gali-Dana Singer (1962, Leningrad) is a Russian-Israeli bilingual poet, photographer, artist, translator, editor of the bilingual Hebrew-Russian literary magazine (now online) «Двоеочие» (“Nekudataim”) (with Nekoda Singer) and co-editor of “transitions” web project. Eight volumes of her poetry as well as an audio book have been published in Russian, and four in Hebrew; she is the recipient of the Yair Tzaban 1998 Prize, Poetry 2000 Prize at The Festival in Metulla and the Prime Minister 2004 Prize for Hebrew writers. She also published four books of personal poetry translations from Hebrew into Russian, one from Russian into Hebrew, and two from English into Russian. Singer took part in many Israeli and international festivals and as a visual artist she has participated in numerous exhibitions in Israel and abroad.

Elena Zakharova (1991, Tchkalovsk, Tadjikistan) studied translation and linguistics at the Linguistic University in Nijny Novgorod, Russia, and has her poetry, prose and translation works published in printed as well as online magazines. She lives in Samara.

Александр Вейцман
Alexander Veytsman

Translated into English by Laurence Bogoslaw
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September 2004

There came a moment when two bodies met
in time, without a word exchanged by either:
in the beginning was night and the kismet
of life conceived within a twelve-square-meter
apartment, where the blinds reflected blondely
a lampshade's cone, enveloping it fondly.

A curtain rod's vibration joined the swell
as steely strains of couchsprings marked the time.
Here's how it was: a virtuous X cell
was looking for connection with a Y.
A train of thoughts, now muffled, now unbridled,
announced the chilling Boreal wind's arrival.

Now time's moved five-and-twenty years ahead.
I listen to the maple branches grazing
the steamy windows. Moans, a creaking bed
Behind the wall. Again, a life created.
I listen, kindle lights, watch the flames weaving,
And with the wax I warm the newborn evening.

Snow in October

It falls like time's old story,
primeval sand through jars;
it might storm down like fury
tomorrow, but so far

it gently falls on gray hairs,
on crosses white as clouds,
on shoulders bent from labors,
on shouts from giddy crowds,

on glances torn of a sudden
from midday colloquy:
a natural abundance
far as the eye can see

sent from the skies to nurture
the hopes of all of them
who wait for some bright future,
not only Bethlehem

and Rome, but Massachusetts,
where ardently it praised
this fortune, whose profuseness
(even with windows raised)

defies the finite power
of eyes that roused before
the alarm rang, at an hour
when no one heretofore

had risen in the brick-and-
mortar colonial,
except perhaps the cricket
that in the library hall

beneath Proust's countenance
fulfills its sentry duty,
thus saving for the nonce
the world and all its beauty.

* * *

Here is the mirror where we watched our happiness
dissolve in vain;
In which a fused mirage was gently fashioned from
October rain;

which safeguarded a convert's soul and blessed it by
the gift of grace;
toward which I flew in rage but was arrested by
my mother's face.

Boston Rhymes

To Alexander Rakhlin

1.

I love you just the way that God intended you to be.
As I write, I hope this tale will go on endlessly.
Life can't fit inside my brain – it's just too tight a squeeze.

2.

Spiderwebs festoon the rooms that once were decked with flair.
Strains of Schumann's music draw us out on the parterre.
Old Berdyayev seems a little dry. So does Voltaire.

3.

Tea turns cold. A glance turns cold. And no one wonders why.
We selectively remember what escapes the eye.
.....

4.

Light subdues the lampshade. Dust mites drift along the wall.
There's a dragonfly aflutter in the window well.
Three more hours left until the sunrise tops the hill.

5.

There's nobody left to shout "Our star will rise once more!"
I can hear a window creak – but no, it's just a door.
March brings a cacophony of losses to endure.

6.

Demographic experts say our path is one-third trod.
.....
I'd feel honored in the end to break free from the crowd.

7.

Lost in one big "pseudo-" our whole future fades away.
What we leave behind will be just notebooks and clichés.
Just as well that we won't be remembered anyway.

8.

As your cough grows more subdued, the cooler your head feels.
.....
Black thoughts will be coming. They'll come on each other's heels.

9.

You'll disrupt your well-tuned lifestyle just to be perverse.

Alexander Veytsman writes poetry and prose in both English and Russian languages, having authored several books. His original poems, translations, as well as short stories and essays, have appeared in more than 50 publications worldwide. A graduate of Harvard and Yale universities, he lives in New York City.

Laurence Bogoslaw is Editor in Chief of East View Press, an independent academic publisher, and also directs the Minnesota Translation Laboratory, a language provider that serves immigrant and refugee communities. Since 1997, Larry has taught Russian and translation courses at various colleges and universities in Minnesota. His first collection of verse translations, “A Succession of Somnolent Souls” (original Russian poems by Alexander Veytsman), came out in 2022.