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THE BULLETIN
OF THE PUSHKIN SOCIETY IN AMERICA
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PUSHKIN
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TO THE READERS

Dear readers!

We are continuing The Bulletin of the Pushkin Society in America in which we inform you about cultural events and our activities, feature American and Russian-speaking poets, writers, artists, and musicians. The Bulletin is distributed via email to those who opt in, as well as to libraries in the USA and Russia, and to slavistic centers of Universities. If you do not want to receive it, tell us via the email on the last page. You will always be able to find the Bulletin on our website. You are welcome to write to us. We are eagerly expecting your feedback.

HISTORICAL

John Leonard: “Pushkin”: Aleksander the Great

From the editorial board

In our Society’s archive, there is a copy of the New York Times article of 16 November 2003 reporting of the book “Pushkin: A Biography” by T. J. Binyon released in 2002. Journalist John Leonard concluded his article by the portrait of Ekaterina Lodyzhenskaya, the president of the Pushkin Society in America at that time. In the following, the portrait was removed from the NYT electronic archive. However, the paper imprint remains our souvenir.

Timothy John Binyon (1936-2004), a Russia expert at the Oxford University, is a recipient of the Samuel Johnson Award considered as one of the most coveted in literature. This book was recognized by the specialists as the most serious works on the great Russian poet written outside the Soviet Union and Russia during the last 60 years. Many researchers of Binyon’s Pushkin biography point to the original methodology of writing capable of attracting to Pushkin’s personality not only specialists but also everyone interested in the history and culture.

Noteworthy, we could not find a Russian translation of this book.

Timothy John Binyon was an English scholar and crime writer. He was a distant relative of the poet, Laurence Binyon. T. J. Binyon was born in Leeds, where his father was a university lecturer. When aged 18, he was doing National Service, he was assigned to the Joint Services School for Linguists in Bodmin, Cornwall, to learn Russian. There, in 1954, the young soldiers, among them Alan Bennett, Michael Frayn and Dennis Potter, were trained to serve as translators and interpreters in the Cold War. It was there that Binyon's interest in Russian language and literature emerged.

The Kindle version of the book can be acquired on Amazon, where the accompanying text explains to the readers:

"In the course of his short, dramatic life, Alexander Pushkin gave Russia not only its greatest poetry – including the novel-in-verse Eugene Onegin – but a new literary language. He also gave it a figure of enduring romantic allure – fiery, restless, extravagant, a prodigal gambler and inveterate seducer of women. Having forged a dazzling, controversial career that cost him the enmity of one czar and won

him the patronage of another, he died at the age of thirty-eight, following a duel with a French officer who was paying unscrupulous attention to his wife.

In his magnificent, prizewinning "Pushkin", T. J. Binyon lifts the veil of the iconic poet's myth to reveal the complexity and pathos of his life while brilliantly evoking Russia in all its nineteenth-century splendor. Combining exemplary scholarship with the pace and detail of a great novel, "Pushkin" elevates biography to a work of art".

Here we republish the article from our archive since this considerably widens the information field on Pushkin and can stimulate a further interest from Western Slavists.

'Pushkin': Aleksandr the Great

By JOHN LEONARD

Published: The New York Times November 16, 2003

In the winter of 1837, after the bullet, the opium, the sacraments, the convulsions and the coffin lined with crimson velvet, the Russian Orthodox metropolitan of St. Petersburg refused to conduct a funeral service for Aleksandr Pushkin in St. Isaac's Cathedral, "on the grounds that a death in a duel was tantamount to suicide."

It will seem to many readers of T. J. Binyon's magnificent biography that the metropolitan was right – that the poet might just as well have shot himself. Always quick to take offense; delusionally jealous of his dim but beautiful young wife; forever in debt from gambling, exorbitant household expenses and the care and feeding of a wastrel brother and loathsome in-laws; unable in the social whirl to find time to finish any of his longer writing projects; "harassed and persecuted" by the czar's own censors whenever he did jot down something about, say, Pugachev, Peter the Great or Boris Godunov; subject to mood swings that today, says Binyon, "would cause him to be classed as a manic-depressive" -- Russia's first pop icon/literary superstar, who by the vivacity of his own example had turned art into a substitute for politics, was a nervous frazzle and a burning fuse.

He was also, of course, short – a "small, swarthy, apelike poet," 5-foot-6, with pale blue eyes, unsightly side whiskers and clawlike fingernails, sometimes to be seen wearing a black frock coat and silk top hat like Bolivar's, sometimes with a fez and Turkish pantaloons – and a surprising snob, boasting that his father's boyar side of the family went back 600 years. (On his mother's side, notoriously, there was that "blackamoor" great-grandfather from Cameroon, purchased in Constantinople's slave market as a gift for Peter the Great, who grew up to marry a Swede and become a general.) None of which interfered with Aleksandr's inordinate fondness for smoked sturgeon, Rossini operas, and women with small feet. "In such cases," he confided to a friend, "I usually write elegies, as another has wet dreams."

Nor, as we'd expect from someone given to hissing at actors onstage and accusing strangers of cheating at cards, was his last duel his first. During his exile from the capital, he kept himself in fighting trim by shooting off a hundred rounds a day. There seem to have been three duels in the early 1820's, mentioned in Nabokov's eccentric translation of "Eugene Onegin," not counting challenges not accepted, or finessed by tactful intermediaries. Binyon alludes to several more that stopped short of the firing line in the spring of 1836 alone, a period of "sullen rage" during which Pushkin "became incapable of rational thought or action, and lashed out indiscriminately at anyone or anything, caring little – on the contrary rather hoping – that he might, like Samson at Gaza, bring the whole edifice of his life crashing about him."

Which is not to say that Georges d'Anthes, the Alsatian reprobate who couldn't stay away from Natalya Pushkin, didn't deserve rough justice, maybe even a horsewhip. (Binyon characterizes his "distasteful" behavior toward Natalya – who may have flirted but was never unfaithful – as clear evidence of "a classic case of the 'stalker' syndrome.") Yet everyone agrees that after making sure he picked a second who wouldn't talk him out of the duel, the poet was more relieved than anxious. From "a state bordering on lunacy," he became almost cheerful: "free," reported Zizi Vrevskaya, "from those mental sufferings which had so terribly tortured him." On his way to his wounding he even stopped for a lemonade, at a cafe where, today, a Madame Tussaud wax replica with his risible side whiskers keeps a pale blue eye on Nevsky Prospekt.

If you are reminded of Eugene's duel with Lensky in "Onegin," so is Binyon. Lensky, a reader of Goethe rather than Rousseau and therefore a much nicer person than Eugene, falls victim in the verse epic to "fell barrels" hand tooled in Paris by Lepage. So, too, did Pushkin insist on Lepage pistols for his appointment with d'Anthes, pawning some table silver to pay for them. And as if to salt this open sore, the all-knowing and all-telling Binyon informs us that the pistol d'Anthes used to kill Pushkin was borrowed from the French ambassador's son, who would use it four years later to kill Mikhail Lermontov. It is apparently not sufficient that the autocratic Russian state tries so hard to crush its poets by sitting on them, as Nicholas I sat on Pushkin and Stalin on Pasternak; for touring foreigners, they were target practice.

"It's difficult to breathe, I'm suffocating" were Pushkin's last words. And we know exactly how he felt because Binyon, a lecturer in Russian literature at Oxford, a senior research fellow at Wadham College and the author of a history of detective fiction as well as mystery novels of his own, invites us in, sits us down and opens the closets and the veins. He has practically inhaled all of 19th-century Russian culture, from school curricula to court etiquette to book publishing to adultery. Thus, though he disavows "literary analysis," he is not above pointing at Ossian and Ariosto, at Byron, Milton, "Rob Roy" and "Tristram Shandy," as well as Chateaubriand ("Atala"), Stendhal ("The Red and the Black") and Voltaire (whose refusal to fight a duel over Joan of Arc was the subject of one of Pushkin's last sketches). He has read every diary, letter, memoir, report card and dossier, attended every late supper, masked ball and febrile seduction, counted every "dead soul" serf whom Pushkin inherited as property and every "free peasant" he "mortgaged" to pay his brother's debts, and exhumed every body of every Decembrist the poet might have met at school before they plotted their abortive coup without him. (An unfinished 10th chapter of "Onegin," Binyon tells us, would have explained Eugene's involvement with the Decembrists. Pushkin burned it.)

And because the biographer likes to gossip as much as the biographee, he follows some of these characters out of Pushkin's story into beguiling digressions on Freemasonry, Bulgarian archimandrites and stewed cloudberry. So while it isn't strictly necessary to know that Count Fedor Tolstoy, before he slandered Pushkin, had been so obnoxious as a member of an embassy to Japan that the Russian Navy dumped him on an Aleutian island together with a pet ape that he probably ate, I'm glad I do. Likewise, even though the poet's heavy-breathing relationship with Princess Evdokiya Golitsyna ended in 1817, it's nice to hear that in the 1840's she campaigned against the introduction of the potato as an infringement of Russia's sovereignty.

Still, the substance and sinew are the nervous wreck of a great poet, with a czar like a monkey on his back. He was a plump and clumsy child who hated exercise and often sat down in protest in the street. His hot-tempered father wept a lot, maybe to make up for being incompetent. His "beautiful creole" mother not only loved his younger brother best but went months not even speaking to Aleksandr; and when he departed for the new imperial lycee at Tsarskoe Selo, where vacations and holidays were not allowed, she let two years go by without seeing him at all.

Graduating from the lycee into the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, as a collegial secretary of the 10th rank, he was paid 700 rubles a year to do nothing whatsoever. And if anyone actually did ask him to do something, he considered it a "gross affront" to his dignity. For a people's poet, he was full of an aristocrat's entitled resentment. It's a wonder that such a "dissolute young rake" had time between brothels, faro and the theater to become so famous, as much for his satires and obscene epigrams as for his revolutionary odes, before his 21st birthday. Really, he should have been French.

This giddy period drew to a close in 1820, when several of his anti-authoritarian poems came to the unmused attention of Czar Alexander I. He was exiled to the south instead of Siberia only upon his promise to refrain from writing verses against the government. In muslin trousers on the Black Sea coast, attended by his faithful manservant, Nikita, he imagined himself both as Ovid, exiled by Augustus, and Childe Harold, the doomed Byronic outcast. Nevertheless, between quadrilles, mazurkas, gunfights, police spies and fast women, including a serf girl he got with child, he wrote like an e-mail maniac. As, earlier, the clap had been good for his work ethic, so were these six years of durance vile away from the Big Onion action. All of a sudden, from mornings in bed with a notebook on his knees, he produced "Ruslan and Lyudmila," "The Prisoner of the Caucasus," "The Fountain of Bakhchisaray" and "The Gypsies," with "Boris Godunov" and "Eugene" waiting in the wings. Of course, mention must also be made of Aglae, Olga, Karolina and Ekaterina. "Everything on earth," he was paraphrased by a friend as saying at the time, "is done to attract the attention of women."

Czar Alexander died in November 1825, probably from typhus, after which, against the succession of his younger brother Nicholas, the Decembrist liberals revolted – and were crushed, executed or exiled. At least 11 had been friends of Pushkin's. Several, in the dock, professed admiration for his freedom poems. Yet none had breathed a word to him of their conspiracy, probably because they didn't trust him to keep his mouth shut. But the Pushkin permitted by Nicholas to return to Moscow and St. Petersburg, with strings attached to his mouth and hands, was not the protorevolutionary or the militant atheist he had appeared to be before his forced sabbatical.

Not even Binyon knows exactly what happened. Somewhere in the south, a Byronic sympathy for Greek independence somehow metastasized into imperial bloodlust. He no longer identified with the Circassians, Chechens and Ingush, "the free mountain peoples," but celebrated instead their pacification even unto genocide. Like Isaac Babel a century later, he wanted to ride with the Cossacks. At Erzerum in 1829, he wanted to stick Turks. It isn't possible to imagine a Byron writing praise songs for what the Russian army did to Warsaw after the Polish rebellion of 1830. Upon reading Pushkin's jingoistic "To the Slanderers of Russia," his old friend Vyazemsky almost snarled, "Go and hymn the government for taking such measures if your knees itch and you feel an irresistible urge to crawl with the lyre in your hands." Moreover, this unlikely apologist and cheerleader for autocratic empire, between chats with Nicholas, not only returned to the Orthodox faith of his boyhood but also decided to get married.

She was tall and beautiful, he was short and not; the rest is too much drinking and dancing and 100,000 rubles' worth of debt. Gogol will be quoted: "One meets Pushkin nowhere, except at balls. So he will fritter away his whole life, unless some chance, or rather necessity, drags him into the country." Never mind that no one ever invited Gogol to these parties, so how did he know? Maybe when a tyrant gets his sticky hands on your intimate mind, you no longer trust your thoughts. But "The Bronze Horseman," the greatest poem in the Russian language and perhaps the best poem about power since the "Iliad," remained unpublished in Pushkin's lifetime. It predicted for St. Petersburg a flood. And then the blood tide came.

KALEIDOSCOPE of EVENTS

Orthodox Christmas at Zinc Bar



Aneta Meiman

January 6th. Zinc bar club held a literary Orthodox Christmas Eve event, continuing a series of programs for "The World through Culture". We spoke of Christian traditions and watched documentaries about the unique Elli - an exhibit at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, on the history of the New Year's holiday in the Soviet Union; we read poetry and exchanged books and opinions.

Artist, writer and radio journalist Aneta Meiman, whose art was exhibited on that evening, read her story, and answered questions about working with canvas, one of which was dedicated to the Mother of God. For contributing to the "understanding and unraveling of the literary process", Aneta Meiman was awarded a diploma and a medal of the Writers' Union of Russia, given to her during that evening on behalf of the party leaders of Moscow's colleagues.

Poets Alexander Dolinov and Galina Itskovich read their poems. Ilya Levkov, publisher, introduced everyone to the newly published memoirs of Delvig that were released in "Liberty". Open mic was also granted to other guests.

Irina Petruk prepared an authentic Slavic dish, the tasting of which was guided by a Pushkin hostess, who explained the meaning behind the ritual to the American guests.

Waves of Russians at Zinc Bar



February 3rd. At the Zinc bar club an unusual meeting of the representatives of all the waves of Russian emigration took place. S. L. Hollerbach presented the second wave of the immigrants. He opened the evening and expressed his gratitude to the director of the film about his work El Earthburn, shared memories of his life in New York and of the work in his art studio.

Edward Schogolev's photo exhibition dedicated to the street musicians and underground artists, conceptually coincided with the esthetic vision of Hollerbach who often portrayed on his canvases vagabonds, merchants, seeking to convey the breath of the streets and the city itself. Then, at the "open microphone" Polina Pechersky, Gennady Rusakov, Silva Ryabichev recited their poems, as well as poets from the "jazz experience": Rudolf Furman, Elena Grachev, and Alexander Dolinov.



Pre-screening of the film "The Naked Truth," which went on literary topics, pleased with the professional work of El (Elena Rodina) – she made a closing statement and answered questions of the audience and journalists. Valery Ponomarev, the representative of the third wave; actor Peter von Berg; S. L. Hollerbach and V. D. Gashurova, artist, for the first time sat together in Manhattan bar, justifying the name of "Jazz through the culture."

Content Writing at NWU



February 13th. The fifth annual conference of the National Union of Writers of America (NWU). As partners and members of the Union, representatives of the Pushkin society took part in it for the first time. The work was practical and all participants were professionals of the book industry and university professors acquainted with modern process of creating books. One of the first greetings by Susan Davies, head of sales (Co-Chair for the NWU's Book Division), was dedicated to the protection of copyrights. Troy Johnson, the founder and webmaster of the literary club-agency, showed the importance of interaction between authors and social networks in his video presentation, gave advice to promote literary content pages in Facebook.



Then all participants were divided into groups and continued dialogues in thematic sections. Every 30 minutes a new session started, consisting of discussions and exchange of information, lead by Troy Johnson.

Pavel Grushko at NWU



Pavel Grushko

February 27th. At the National Writers Union hosted an evening Pavel Grushko – a poet, playwright, translator of classical and modern literatures of Spain and Latin America, Portugal and Brazil, the UK and the US.

The program was opened by the American poet Garrett Robinson who welcomed the Pushkin Society in America as a partner, he talked about the writers' association, and invited everyone to watch his Broadway's show "Letters to Zoey".

There was an exhibition of artists as well. Marina Kashirskaya prepared for the audience a firework of bright colors that harmonized with video lectures. Mark Polyakov presented his fantastic gallery of portraits of the classics of Russian literature in Harlem background scenery. Elena Starenko exhibited a series of illustrations for books, expand on the wall in the form of this attempted scrolls.



Garrett Robinson

Pavel Grushko read his poetry, translations, biographies and shared interesting landmarks - details of the creation of the libretto "The Star and Death of Joaquin Murieta" dramatic cantata based on Pablo Neruda. There were questions and answers, together with photographs of the master, then refreshments and discussion on the sidelines.

Jazz through Culture

March 2nd. In conjunction with Elegant New York magazine, an opening of the Spring season of "Jazz through Culture" was held in club Zinc. The photo exhibition was attended by; Sergey Kovalevsky, Tatiana Borodina, Katerina Grigorieva and Dina Raketa. The photographs on display were divided into two themes: 'New York' and 'Colors of Nature'.



Short "open mic" presentations were given by: Elena Starenko, a guest from California, and Yulia Hramtsova. Sofiya Yuzefpolskaya-Tsiloslani, Matthew DeTroi and Ilya Levitin prepared a poetic musical composition specially for the event.

After an intermission a documentary was shown about the great theatrical figure Michael Chekov, who completed his career path in the U.S. It is worth noting that some of that time Michael Chekov lived in the famous city of Churaevka, which was the established home of Russian emigration writer G. D. Grebenshikov.

Dina Raketa, Sergey Kovalevsky, Elena Starenko



Tatiana Borodina and Edward Amchislavsky

Voice of Tragedy



March 20th. In the Midwood central library of Brooklyn, the Pushkin Society in America held a program "Voice of Tragedy". The purpose of it was for the organizers to attempt the philosophical and artistic comprehension of the dramatic art.

Before the audience were: People's Artist of the Ukrainian Academy of Arts the writer-author Mikhail Turovsky and Victoria Kurchenko-Sizova, who presented a play in verse called "Maydaniona". The main idea under discussion was that "tragedy" is one of the more ancient problems of theoretical aesthetics, and aroused much interest from the audience.

Commentaries were presented by journalist Vitaly Orlov, public activist Semyon Pechersky, writer Tamara Asenkova and scientist Yuriy Magarshak. The evening was concluded with a showing of a movie about human suffering that is revealed in the paintings of Mikhail Turovsky.

Jazz through the Culture



Anne Carson

April 6th. A special program called “Jazz through the Culture” was held, the edition dedicated to the 50th year of the Anna Akhmatova’s memorial. The host of the evening, Yulia Khramtsova, presented the artists participating in the event: Helga Landaur, Zinaida and Savelia Kelebeyev, Inna Kaplun, Yevgeniy Tonevitski and Marina Bozina. The “open mic” was launched with a performance of the guest of honor Anne Carson, who spoke of what life was like in New York for Viktor Gorenko, brother of Anna Akhmatova, whose funeral service was held in the Brooklyn Cathedral of the Holy Trinity in 1966. Familiarity with Anne Carson and further work with her family archives was possible due to the efforts of Larissa Pliss.

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Elena Kuschnerova

The poetry reading begun with Akhmatova's poem “Pushkin”. Classic, famous lines were read and translated into English by Elena Pozin. Poets Aleksandr Dolinov and Rita Balmina read their poems dedicated to the Silver Age. A mini-concert of classical pieces was played by pianist Elena Kuschnerova and created a unique atmosphere in the club. Her masterful performance captivated the audience, organically joining with the literary parts of the evening.



The first half of the program was concluded by a showing of a Helga Landauer’s documentary about Anna Akhmatova. After an intermission, Valery Ponomarev’s Jazz sextet was performing.

Alexey Berezin and Mark Belitsky at NWU



Alexey Berezin, Mark Belitsky

April 17th. The Writers Union of America held a performance of bard Mark Belitsky and parody master Alexey Berezin. The concert was called “Jokingly and Seriously”, and included original songs and humorous poems, that attracted the attention with a special technique of verbal creativity. The evening was moderated by Yuzef Salaam and Tatyana Sheremeteva.



*Drawings by
Yevgeni Tonevitski*

Artist and gallery curator Yevgeni Tonevitski supplemented the satirical theme with a series of his own caricatures. Artist Inna Budovsky, as well as Zinaida and Savelia Kelebeyev, supported the overall lyrical mood. All major painters spoke of themselves and demonstrated their compositions.



Victoria Kurchenko made the announcement that after 50 years the Pushkin Society will resume its publishing work, and presented the book of Alexei Berezin, the revelation of which turned out to be a surprise for the author.

Meeting at the City Hall



April 25th. The City Hall in New York hosted a meeting of the Cabinet of the Russian-speaking representatives: Regina and Roman Khidekel, Victoria Kurchenko, Boris Borukaev, Natalia Mizuri, Natalia Piller, Victor Levin and Alexander Egudina with the Director of Public relations Timothy Tapia and coordinator Jessica Reynoso. They discussed issues of

preparation of the official meeting of New York Public Counsel (Deputy Mayor) Letitia James with the Russian Americans' Diaspora. The planned format will include the answers to the questions of the participants of the meeting. Regina Khidekel and Victoria Kurchenko offered to host a small exhibition of paintings and a book fair.

Odessa Fraternity Book Fair



May 15th. The Odessa Fraternity of New York held a book fair. A special prize for the exhibition of F. A. Shargorod's "Odessa – Poetry Enclosure" photo album was presented to the Pushkin Society of America. A book of poems by Boris Borukaev, most of which depicts the nature of his native city of Odessa, was also noted by the organizers. The program of performances consisted of Russian-speaking poets and writers: Emil Draitser, Inna Bogachinskaya, Bella Ezersky, Yury Bunchik, Vadim Yarmolinets, Pavel Lembersky, Anna Nemerovsky, Edward Amchislavsky, publisher Ilya Levkov and many others. Thanks to the efforts of Valery

Savinkin, head of the fraternity, fans of the book were able to communicate with each other and meet the author.

Talk to Tish



Victoria Kurchenko and Leticia James

May 17th. A meeting "Talk to Tish" of the Public Defenders City of New York (vice mayor) Leticia James with the representatives of the Russian diaspora was held for the first time. Along with the officials Timothy Tapia and Jessica Reynoso, the discussion had been prepared by the cabinet of Russian-speaking immigrants which consisted of Dmitri Glinski, Regina Khidekel, Victoria Kurchenko, Natalia Mizuri, Natalia Piller, Victor Levin, and Alexander Egudin. Deputy Mark Treyger participated in the meeting with Leticia James. The discussion consisted of employment issues that ex-Soviet specialists faced within the system of urban management, and the transport as well as construction of coastal areas funded by cultural initiatives.



Leticia James marked a new stage of cooperation between the various organizations, agencies and authorities by meeting with the chief lawyer of the city. Her actions were very well received by all attendants of the meeting, and to commemorate that historical event, the President of the Pushkin Society of America/LIAC Victoria Kurchenko gave Leticia James a book about Pushkin.

Russian Documentary Film Festival



October 10th. The Ninth Independent Russian Documentary Film Festival in New York took place at the Anthology Film Archives, DCTV, and the Brooklyn Public Library. Film director Yelena Yakovich (Russia) was awarded with the medal of the Pushkin Society for her film "The Mystery of Mandelstam's Archive".

Yelena Yakovich

Visit to Washington D.C.



Portrait of Marjorie Post

October 16th. Representatives of the Pushkin Society in America welcomed its guests in Washington D.C. The day began with a visit to the unique Hillwood museum, the history of which is intertwined by invisible threads with the archival heritage of Russian emigration. The mistress of the estate and the creator of the collection of art works, Marjorie Post, was friends with Count A. A. Obolensky and danced at his balls. He was the first president of the Nobility Circle who was present at the birth of the Pushkin Society of America in the 1930s.

Later on at 4pm the salon of one of the most beautiful mansions in the U.S. called Russia House (no actual relation to modern Russia) was opened. The guests were entertained by performances of the Vice President the Pushkin Society and bard Boris Borukaev, poet and master of humorous sketches Alexander Dolinov; and artists Maria Kashirskaya,

Yevgeniy Tonevsky and Leo Genkin who presented their works to the judgement of the audience. The paintings gracefully fit in with the interior of the living room adorned with a fireplace and colorful illuminations of crystal goblets.



The **Pushkin Book Festival**, took place on the same day, as a surprise for the guests. The participants of the program were the artist, writer and winner of the “Russian Award” Valery Bochkov, the festival organizer and Russian language tutor of bilingual children Natalie Kolodin, and children's poet Masha Rupasova, who traveled from Canada specially to attend the festival. Journalist Marina Logunova contributed a still life with sunflowers, made by her, to the Pushkin Society. This

work of art was immediately purchased by Yelena Fix. This act marked the beginning of a new stage in the life of the literary and artistic salon, which now has its own bilingual catalogue.

Nina Zaretsky's documentary on Yevtushenko



October 29th. Nina Zaretsky, author of a documentary on Yevgeny Yevtushenko, during a meeting with him, on behalf of the Pushkin Society, awarded him with a medal for his contribution to the development of Russian culture. Yevgeny Yevtushenko was teaching in the US since 1991.

He spent many years giving lessons to Russian Literature students of the University of Tulsa, in the state of Oklahoma, and held open lectures, which drew numerous admirers in Queens College, the City University of New York. The assemblies of Y. A. Yevtushenko had always touched on a wide range of historical and political

problems, answering questions about modern Russia. Yevgeny Aleksandrovich expressed words of gratitude addressed to the Pushkin Society and wished it a further success in its future endeavors.

Meeting with Alex Faiz at NWU



November 20th. In bilateral cooperation, the Union of Writers of America (National Writers Union) and the Pushkin Society officially opened their Autumn/Winter season. Tatyana Shermeteva, writer and curator of the project, presented the head of the New York office of the Union of Writers of America Alexandra Faiz. In her presentation, she thanked everyone for their successful work and wished them all luck in their further joint initiatives. Society president Victoria Kurchenko, member of the National Writers Union, this time operated as an author of her own texts.

She presented poems, stories and fragments of her transcription of “One Thousand and One Nights” – a monument to medieval literature – to the judgement of the audience. Alexander Dranov introduced the listeners to the creations of Don Aminado and read excerpts from Dina Rubina's works. The music program of the evening was prepared by Anna Lerner. Her violin performance included pieces by Vivaldi, Albinoni, Mendelssohn and Shostakovich.

Meeting with Letitia James



November 29th. The Cabinet on Russian-speaking immigrant concerns under the NYC Public Advocate – the first-ever such unit under any government agency in the USA. We are proud to start the second year in this highly intensive and honorable pro bono job of de facto managing our Cabinet as we work on how to break the barriers to funding for our nonprofits, to representation for our immigrant community leadership in key institutions, and to economic opportunities for our highly skilled and educated immigrant professionals.

Many thanks to Public Advocate Letitia (Tish) James and her extraordinary staff for giving our group this unique opportunity. Thanks to all our amazing team members from Russian-speaking Community Council of Manhattan and the Bronx, the Pushkin Society in America, the Russian American Cultural Center, the Lodyjensky Immigration Archive Center of Russian and Ukrainian Culture, and others for their commitment, team spirit, and hard work.

Art Cabaret Auction



December 4th. The Pushkin Society in America hosted a one of a kind event – "An Art Cabaret Auction", conducted in both Russian and English languages. The Society hopes that its newly launched program “The Art and Music Salon”, from now on will gather and entertain its loyal and new art and music enthusiasts on a regular basis.

During the opening ceremony, special guest Patrick Lewis, Outreach Coordinator at Office Letitia James Public Advocate for the City of New York, congratulated Victoria Kurchenko, President of the Pushkin Society in America and its members on their tireless efforts to "give voice through the arts" to Russian speaking community of the greater New York area and expressed hope for future collaboration.

This event, titled "A Cabaret of Art, Chocolate and Wine" took the audiences on a captivating journey of trivia and history of Chocolate around the world and was led through lecture and music by a crossover singer Larissa Grabois.



Viktoria Kurchenko and Patrik Lewis Olga Potap, Patrik Lewis, and Larissa Grabois

Larissa, who is 24 and sings in 10 languages, entertained and surprised the guests with her rich and ear-pleasing voice, wide vocal range as well as her artistically engaging and elegant stage manner. While cruising through history of chocolate Larissa, a member of Pushkin Society since 2013, sang selections in 5 languages which ranged from classical Russian romances and soprano Italian arias to Latin, French and Hebrew covers, as well as low key American jazz standards.

During the art auction, painter Yelena Lezhen sparked audience's interest with her work "Chocolate Kingdom" and, to everyone's awe, her painting was instantly purchased. The conceptually interesting art works by Yelena Golovanova-Starenko, Marina Bozin and Evgeni Tonevitski, members of the Pushkin Society Artists' Guild, provoked audience discussion and several were purchased at the end of the auction.

Tatyana Sheremeteva at St. Petersburg bookstore



December 14th. The "St. Petersburg" bookstore, located on 5th Avenue in Manhattan, held a presentation of Tatyana Sheremeteva's "Life is Easy" novel. Traditionally, readers asked the author questions, purchased the book and received autographs. This time, however, an event of literature turned into one of action with the introduction of a play based on the author's books. The small production included the Pushkin Society in America's president Victoria Kurchenko and the Board of Directors – of which Tatyana is a part – and they voiced their hopes that this kind of interactive literary theatre could join together the reader and writer platforms.



Some of the impromptu role's dialogues were read by Vladimir Andreyev and Victoria Vallye.

Gennady Katsov and Dmitry Garanin at NWU



December 18th. We celebrated the anniversary of our partnership with the National Writers Union by staging a pre-New Year literary program which had readings by Gennady Katsov and Dmitry Garanin.

Gennady Katsov is poet and journalist, author of eight books of poetry, award winner of the journal *Children of Ra* (*Deti Ra*), nominee of the Russian Award, the Voloshin Award and the Moscow Count Award.

Dmitry Garanin is poet and physicist, author of many scientific articles and several books of poetry, executive editor of the Pushkin Society of America's bulletin.

The program held a discussion in which the speakers answered questions, and offered autographed books for sale. An encore was requested, so Gennady and Dmitry recited more of their poems. In the conclusion of the program, Tatyana Sheremeteva revealed our plans to hold a Russian conference at NWU and the potential upcoming opportunity of our joining the National Writers Union.



Nina Kossman at Uncle Vanya



December 20th. The Pushkin Society held a “tvorchesky vecher” (literally, “an evening of creativity”) for Nina Kossman, a bilingual poet, translator, playwright, and artist, at Uncle Vanya, the Russian restaurant, at W 54th St. on Dec. 20, 2016. Moscow born, Nina emigrated to the United States as a child in 1972. Her English-language books include “Behind the Border” (HarperCollins, 1994) and “Gods and Mortals: Modern Poems on Classical Myths” (Oxford University Press, 2001). Her translations of Marina Tsvetaeva's poetry were collected in two books, “In the Inmost Hour of the Soul”

and “Poem of the End”. Her poems and short stories were published in a wide spectrum of English-language literary magazines in the US and Canada; her work has been translated into Dutch, Greek, and Japanese. Two of her English-language plays have been produced off-off Broadway; one play was included in “Best Women Playwrights”. Two books of her Russian poems were published: “Pereboi” (Khudozhestvennaya Literatura, Moscow, 1990) and “Po pravuyu ruku sna” (Philadelphia, 1998). Her paintings and root sculptures are an unusual mix of surrealism and expressionism.



Zhenya Breydo, Sofia Yuzefpolskaya-Tsilosani, Elena Kuschnerova, Anna Nina Kovalenko, and Ilya Bronstein read their works in the second half of the evening.

POETRY

A. S. Pushkin: EXCERPTS FROM ONEGIN'S TRAVEL

Translations by Walter Arndt, engravings by Ilya Shenker



Но уж дробит камня́ молот,
 И скоро звонкой мостовой
 Покроется спасенный город,
 Как будто кованой броней.
 Однако в сей Одессе влажной
 Еще есть недостаток важный;
 Чего б вы думали? — воды.
 Потребны тяжкие труды...
 Что ж? это небольшое горе,
 Особенно, когда вино
 Без пошлыны привезено.
 Но солнце южное, но море...
 Чего ж вам более, друзья?
 Благословенные края!

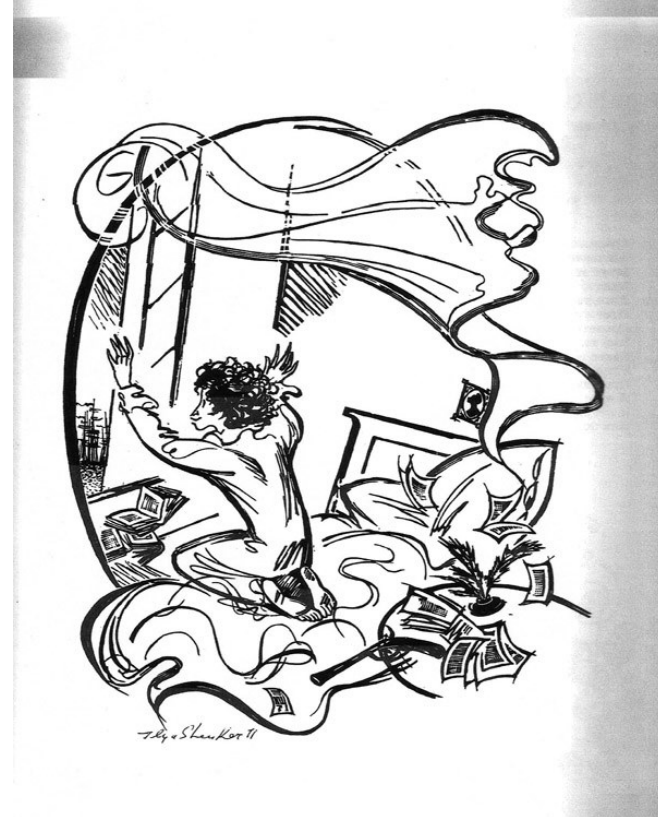
*

Бывало, пушка зоревая
 Лишь только грянет с корабля,
 С крутого берега сбегая,
 Уж к морю отправляюсь я.
 Потом за трубкой раскаленной,
 Волной соленой оживленный,
 Как мусульман в своем раю,
 С восточной гущей кофе пью.
 Иду гулять. Уж благосклонный
 Открыт Casino; чашек звон
 Там раздается; на балкон
 Маркёр выходит полусонный
 С метлой в руках, и у крыльца
 Уже сошлись два купца.

But stone is being crushed by hammer
 To lay a ringing pavement down,
 Which like an iron suit of armor
 Will rehabilitate the town.
 But then another, hardly lesser,
 Defect bedevils moist Odessa.
 What shortage? Water, if you please;
 Which takes a deal of toil to ease...
 What of it, though? You see, the beauty
 Of this is that in water's place
 A cask of wine will meet the case,
 Which is imported free of duty.
 And then, the sun, the sea ... It's still
 A blessed spot, say what you will!

*

There was a season when no sooner
 I'd heard the sunrise cannon roar
 Its signal from an anchored schooner
 Than I would scamper down to shore.
 My hot chibúk blue trailers drifting,
 The briny surf my spirits lifting,
 Black coffee, thick and sweet, I quaff,
 A muslim at his blissful *keyf*.
 I take a stroll. There clinks already
 The kind Casino's crockery.
 And high upon the balkony
 The billiard-marker wields, unsteady
 With sleep, his broom, while on the stair
 There waits an early merchant pair.



Глядишь — и площадь запестрела.
Все оживилось; здесь и там
Бегут за делом и без дела,
Однако больше по делам.
Дитя расчета и отваги,
Идет купец взглянуть на флаги,
Проведать, шлюют ли небеса
Ему знакомы паруса.
Какие новые товары
Вступили нынче в карантин?
Пришли ли бочки жданных вин?
И что чума? и где пожары?
И нет ли голода, войны
Или подобной новизны?

Но мы, ребята без печали,
Среди заботливых купцов,
Мы только устриц ожидали
От цареградских берегов.
Что устрицы? пришли! О радость!
Летит обжорливая младость
Глотать из раковин морских
Затворниц жирных и живых,
Слегка обрызгнутых лимоном.
Шум, споры — легкое вино
Из погребов принесено
На стол услужливым Отоном;
Часы летят, а грозный счет
Меж тем невидимо растет.

When next you look, the square is zestful
With life and color. To and fro
They stream, on business or restful,
The first more than the second, though.
The child of pluck and calculation,
The merchant, scans the mooring station
And wonders if the heavens chose
To send him back a sail he knows.
What cargoes might they now examine
In storage under quarantine?
Has he been sent the ordered wine?
What war has broken out? What famine?
What news of fire or pestilence
Or similar intelligence?

But we young fellows, newer fretting,
Unlike the watchful merchantdom,
Have only to await a setting
Of oysters from Byzantium.
They've come, you say? What joy amongst us
Off scamper the voracious youngsters
To swallow from the sea-wet shell
The chubby hermit, live and well,
Caressed with juice from lemon slivers.
Discussion, noise; there comes aboard
Light wine, which from the cellar hoard
The prompt Monsieur Automne delivers.
Time flies, the while the fearsome bill
Invisibly grows longer still.

Galina Itskovich: ARSENY TARKOVSKY TRANSLATIONS

Farewell, all things me, things I used to be that
Never failed to evoke my despise, love and hate.

Of my budding new life the first glimpses are seen,
And I bid farewell to my yesterday's skin.

News of former myself I desire no more
And I bid farewell to the marrow of my bone.

Tilting over myself, I begin after all
To dissect and detach own tiresome soul.

I abandon myself in the empty abyss
As I stare, unmoved, at the one who is me.

Greetings, greetings, my new shining armor of ice,
Greetings, dreams of the night and daytime butterflies,

Greetings, greetings, detachment from bread and from wine,
All of you, all of this which no longer is mine.

I am browsing pages of volumes to write,
Of the whiteness of clouds hear language of white,

Of the circular apple hear circular speech,
But the words saved for you don't expect to beseech.

For my self, as a vial of delicate clay,
I reduced on a whim to a senseless decay.

I don't hold in my hand fluid spherical world
And won't utter a word in the absence of words,

But the words were found in me in the past
By the stones, fish and people, by leaves and by grass.

+++

Я прощаюсь со всем, чем когда-то я был
И что я презирал, ненавидел, любил.

Начинается новая жизнь для меня,
И прощаюсь я с кожей вчерашнего дня.

Больше я от себя не желаю вестей
И прощаюсь с собою до мозга костей,

И уже, наконец, над собою стою,
Отделяю постылую душу мою,

В пустоте оставляю себя самого,
Равнодушно смотрю на себя – на него.

Здравствуй, здравствуй, моя ледяная броня,
Здравствуй, хлеб без меня и вино без меня,

Сновидения ночи и бабочки дня,
Здравствуй, все без меня и вы все без меня!

Я читаю страницы неписанных книг,
Слышу круглого яблока круглый язык,

Слышу белого облака белую речь,
Но ни слова для вас не умею сберечь,

Потому что сосудом скудельным я был
И не знаю, зачем сам себя я разбил.

Больше сферы подвижной в руке не держу
И ни слова без слова я вам не скажу.

А когда-то во мне находили слова
Люди, рыбы и камни, листва и трава.

1957

I waited for you since the morning that day.
They figured somehow that you wouldn't come.
Remember the weather, its splendid holiday?
I could have walked out without my coat.

Today, you came in, and they aptly arranged
For sorts of remarkably gloomy day,
And rain, and remarkably dreadful hour,
And droplets running down the freezing boughs.

Wiped neither by a hanky, nor by comforting words...

+++

С утра я тебя дожидался вчера,
С утра я тебя дожидался вчера,
Они догадались, что ты не придешь,
Ты помнишь, какая погода была?
Как в праздник! И я выходил без пальто.

Сегодня пришла, и устроили нам
Какой-то особенно пасмурный день,
И дождь, и особенно поздний час,
И капли бегут по холодным ветвям.

Ни словом унять, ни платком утереть...

1941

The Portrait

No one's with me at all.
There's a portrait on the wall

Of the old hag, her blind eyes
Are walked on by flies,
flies,
flies.

"Are you happy," so I ask,
"In your heaven, under glass?"

A fly is streaming down the cheek,
The hag answers with the wink,

"As you're sitting in your home,
Are you happy there, alone?"

Портрет

Никого со мною нет.
На стене висит портрет.

По слепым глазам старухи
Ходят мухи,
мухи,
мухи.

Хорошо ли, — говорю, —
Под стеклом твоём в раю?

По щеке сползает муха,
Отвечает мне старуха:

— А тебе в твоём дому
Хорошо ли одному?

Being as proud as I used to be
I'd leave forever, just letting you be.
Leaving behind what I easily drop,
Leaving behind what I never forget,
Everything, splitting my kingdom apart.

I would agree that you take as you go
Hundreds of kisses and of holidays, hundreds
Of words. You can take them with you.

What am I left with? The coldest of dawns,
Hundreds of late, after hours trains
And hundreds of raindrops that run after you.
A hundred of streets and a hundred of courts
Washed by a hundred of raindrops on tracks.

+++

Если б, как прежде, я был горделив,
Я бы оставил тебя навсегда;
Все, с чем расстаться нельзя ни за что,
Все, с чем возиться не стоит труда,-
Надвое царство мое разделив.

Я бы сказал:

– Ты уносишь с собой
Сто обещаний, сто праздников, сто
Слов. Это можешь с собой унести.

Мне остается холодный рассвет,
Сто запоздалых трамваев и сто
Капель дождя на трамвайном пути,
Сто переулков, сто улиц и сто
Капель дождя, побежавших вослед.



Born in Odessa, **Galina Itskovich** has been living in New York City for almost a quarter of a century. In addition to practicing psychotherapy and teaching the art of therapy nationally and internationally, she also writes and translates short fiction and poetry. Translations of poetry, original poems and short stories in English and Russian first came out of her drawer in 2012 and, to date, appeared in several journals, almanacs and collections – to name just a few, *Poetica* (2012), «Contemporary Jewish Writing, Summer 2015», *Cardinal Points* (2016), *Asian Signature*, *Inter-Focus.de*. She is a member of the Editorial Board of the cultural portal zolotoeruno.org.

Yuzefpolskaya-Tsilosani / Rueckert: ARSENY TARKOVSKY TRANSLATIONS

Selected Poems from Arseniy Tarkovsky bilingual edition “White Day”

Translated from Russian to English by

Sofiya Yuzefpolskaya-Tsilosani and George Rueckert

If only I could rise, wake up, restore the sense,
And in the hardest hour could bless
The labor that has fed the gardens and the fields,
Sip for the last time from the convex bowl
Of fleecy leaves
The water's crystal brain.
Give me one drop, my earthly grass,

And swear me an oath that in exchange
You will receive the heritage of speech,
And spare no blood, and grow your throat,
And not remember me, splitting each word,
Let your dry mouth with my fire be burned.

+++

О, только бы привстать, опомниться, очнуться
И в самый трудный час благословить труды,
Вспоившие луга, вскормившие сады,
В последний раз глотнуть из выгнутого блюдца
Листа ворсистого
Хрустальный мозг воды.

Дай каплю мне одну, моя трава земная,
Дай клятву мне взамен – принять в наследство речь,
Гортанью разрастись и крови не беречь,
Не помнить обо мне и, мой словарь ломая,
Свой пересохший рот моим огнем обжечь.

1965

Rain

How I want to breathe into my verse
All of this world, that changes its countenance:
The ungraspable movement of grass,
The momentary and vague magnificence
Of trees, the itchy and winged
Dry sand, chirping like birds.

All this world is beautiful and humpbacked,
Like a tree on the bank of the Ingula.
There I heard the first peals
Of thunder. It bent the stubborn trunk
Like a ram's horn, and I saw the crown –
The green mold of the thunder's roar.

And the rain ran along the clay slope,
Pursued by arrows, all branchy-horned,
Already in everything akin to Actaeon.

It fell to my feet embattled half the way.

Дождь

Как я хочу вдохнуть в стихотворенье
Весь этот мир, меняющий обличье:
Травы неуловимое движенье,
Мгновенное и смутное величье
Деревьев, раздраженный и крылатый
Сухой песок, щебечущий по-птичьи.

Весь этот мир, прекрасный и горбатый,
Как дерево на берегу Ингула.
Там я слышал первые раскаты
Грозы. Она в бараний рог согнула
Упрямый ствол, и я увидел крону –
Зеленый слепок грозового гула.

А дождь бежал по глиняному склону,
Гонимый стрелами, ветвисторогий,
Уже во всем подобный Актеону.

У ног моих он пал на полдороге.

A Poet's Grave (In Memory of N. A. Zabolotsky)

I.

Following the deceased, orphaned and afraid,
My soul was drawn with its final strength,
But to me immortality could be seen in the perspective
Of the graves that vanished into time gone by.

For everything was too alive – the leaves, the grass –
As if someone had placed a magnifying glass,
Over this world of embarrassed thrust,
Over this net of pulsing veins.

I returned home, and I washed my hands,
And I lay down, and shut my eyes. And in the muffled noise
That came into the room from through my window,
And in the dusk that hung as though before a storm,
Bereft of immortality, in crude prose
And utter nakedness, stood death alone.

I.

За мертвым сиротливо и пугливо
Душа тянулась из последних сил,
Но мне была бессмертьем перспектива
В минувшем исчезающих могил.

Листва, трава – все было слишком живо,
Как-будто лупу кто-то положил
На этот мир смущенного порыва,
На эту сеть пульсирующих жил.

Вернулся я домой, и вымыл руки,
И лег, закрыв глаза. И в смутном звуке,
Проникшем в комнату из-за окна,
И в сумерках, нависших как в предгрозье,
Без всякого бессмертья, в грубой прозе
И наготы стояла смерть одна.

II.

The bird-like claws of wreaths of fir
Have been left behind by the living in the snow.
Your gravestone in its white chapeau,
Passes by them like a tsar,

There toward the wide-splayed gates,
Where you are neither dust nor man,
And in the clouds beyond the turn
Your snowy ark is rising up.

Not a man, but the century's skull,
Its forehead, tongue, and brass.

The fiery eyelid of the sunset
Cannot burn out in the sky.

II.

Венков еловых птичьи лапки
В снегу остались от живых.
Твоя могила в белой шапке,
Как царь, проходит мимо них,

Туда к распахнутым воротам,
Где ты не прах, не человек,
И в облаках за поворотом
Восходит снежный твой ковчег.

Не человек, а череп века,
Его чело, язык, и медь.

Заката огненное веко
Не может в небе догореть.

(forthcoming, will be available on Amazon, February 2017)

About translators:



Sofiya Yuzefpolskaya-Tsilosani studied Russian and World Literature at the Gertsen University, St.Petersburg, and the University of Washington, Seattle. She received her doctorate in Russian literature for her dissertation about Arseny Tarkovsky from the University of Washington in 2006. Dr. Yuzefpolskaya-Tsilosani is a member of Saint Petersburg Writes Union, an award-winning poet and an author of two Russian poetry collections “Goluboy Ogon” (“Blue Light”) and “Strannstviya” (Passages) She is also an author of a scholarly book “The Pulse of Time: Immortality and the Word in the Poetry of Arsenii Tarkovskii”. She lives in New York.



George Rueckert is an Assistant Professor at KIMEP University in Almaty, Kazakhstan. He was born in Switzerland and grew up in the US Foreign Service. He went on to earn BA and MA degrees in English, creative writing, but did his doctoral work in Comparative Literature. His thesis was a critical biography of the great Russian poet-translator Vasily Zhukovsky. Dr. Rueckert has taught at universities in the US and Germany, and since 2011 has run the Russian-English translation program at KIMEP.

From the introduction to the forthcoming book (Amazon, February 2017):

One of us, as a native Russian speaker, a Russian poet, and a scholar of Russian literature, has an ear for Tarkovsky’s poetry that naturally recognizes sound patterning as essential to the overall effect of the poem. The other, by contrast, a native English speaker and a scholar of comparative literature, was more tuned to seeing the universal language of images, and as a consequence naturally privileged the diamond-like hardness of Tarkovsky’s imagery. When we sit down to translate a poem by Tarkovsky, we tend to take our negotiating positions from our sensory bias, and we hammer out a compromise between the Russian ear and the non-Russian eye, one poem, one stanza, one verse, and often one word at a time. When we succeed, or at least when we came close to success, the resulting compromise is a poem in English that stays as close as possible to the semantics of the original, and thus to the precision of its verbal imagery, but that does so with a measured rhythm and a texture of verbal echoes – occasional end-rhymes, near-rhymes, internal rhymes, assonance, and alliteration – that mimic the original, disciplined sound-pattern without reproducing it exactly. As translators we realize that in order to cross-fertilize with English literature, in order to influence English poets and the English language as such, our translations of Tarkovsky poetry must have at least some merit as English verse, some affinity with the English poetic tradition.

Zinovy Korovin: RUSSIAN CLASSIC POETRY IN TRANSLATION

Alexander Pushkin: WINTER EVENING

Blizzard covers skies with dark mist
swirling snowy whirlwinds;
either howls like a wild beast
or reminds the cry of kids;
cracks by rotten thatch with anger
on the old roof in a fuss,
or as a belated stranger
knocks at window to us.

This old hut sank into sadness
and moreover darkened dead.
Why are you, my bygone gladness,
so silent, so sad?
Are you either tired, darling,
of the blizzard's howl near
or just dreaming over buzzing
of your spindle swinging here?

Let us drink, my dear gladness
of my poor youth and ploy,
for grief's sake; and where the mug is?
We will get the hearty joy.
Sing me of the bird resided
on the quiet, overseas;
of the girlie quickly glided
to the stream thru morning breeze.

Blizzard covers skies with dark mist
swirling snowy whirlwinds;
either howls like a wild beast
or reminds the cry of kids.
Let us drink, my dear gladness
of my poor youth and ploy,
for grief's sake; and where the mug is?
We will get the hearty joy.

Александр Пушкин: ЗИМНИЙ ВЕЧЕР

Буря мглою небо кроет,
Вихри снежные крутя;
То, как зверь, она завоет,
То заплачет, как дитя,
То по кровле обветшаной
Вдруг соломой зашуршит,
То, как путник запоздалый,
К нам в окошко застучит.

Наша ветхая лачужка
И печальна, и темна.
Что же ты, моя старушка,
Приумолкла у окна?
Или бури завываньем
Ты, мой друг, утомлена,
Или дремлешь под жужжаньем
Своего веретена?

Выпьем, добрая подружка
Бедной юности моей,
Выпьем с горя; где же кружка?
Сердцу будет веселей.
Спой мне песню, как синица
Тихо за морем жила;
Спой мне песню, как девица
За водой поутру шла.

Буря мглою небо кроет,
Вихри снежные крутя;
То, как зверь, она завоет,
То заплачет, как дитя.
Выпьем, добрая подружка
Бедной юности моей,
Выпьем с горя; где же кружка?
Сердцу будет веселей.

I loved you then. And, of my soul, may be,
the love has faded out not at all.
But let it not disturb you now madly:
to bother you somehow – isn't my goal.
I loved you so hopelessly yet fully
being either shy or jealous of your spells.
I loved you so tenderly and truly
as God let you be loved by someone else.

+++

Я вас любил: любовь еще, быть может,
В душе моей угасла не совсем;
Но пусть она вас больше не тревожит;
Я не хочу печалить вас ничем.
Я вас любил безмолвно, безнадежно,
То робостью, то ревностью томим;
Я вас любил так искренно, так нежно,
Как дай вам бог любимой быть другим.

There's on the Georgian hills darkness of the night.
Aragua's buzzing right below.
I feel sad but relaxed. My sadness has a light.
My sadness is quite lighted by the flow
of thoughts of you. You only. And their course
isn't changed for me by anything above.
And the heart burns again, and loves again because
it simply couldn't live without love.

+++

На холмах Грузии лежит ночная мгла;
Шумит Арагва предо мною.
Мне грустно и легко; печаль моя светла;
Печаль моя полна тобою,
Тобой, одной тобой... Унынья моего
Ничто не мучит, не тревожит,
И сердце вновь горит и любит – оттого,
Что не любить оно не может.

Fyodor Tyutchev

K.B.

I have met you. And all the bygone
came back in my dejected life.
I'm so glad anew to find them:
my golden time, my hearty light.

While autumn implements its clearance,
the rare sun presents a view –
as if bright spring again appears,
and something will arise in you.

I caught by blow of the fullness
of bygone happiness – as soon
I met by chance you, darling goodness,
to be for now on the spoon.*

As after lengthy parting silence
I look at you like in a dream,
and they are louder – the sounds
which in my soul heard as slim.

And that's not only reminiscence:
all life came back to me again
as you revived my bygone wishes
and love to you experienced then!

**American idiom for "fall in love"*

Фёдор Тютчев

К. Б

Я встретил Вас – и всё былое
В отжившем сердце оживо;
Я вспомнил время золотое –
И сердцу стало так тепло...

Как поздней осени порою
Бывают дни, бывает час,
Когда повеет вдруг весною,
И что-то встрепенётся в нас,

Так весь обвеян дуновеньем
Тех лет душевной полноты,
С давно забытым упоеньем
Смотрю на милые черты...

Как после вековой разлуки,
Гляжу на вас, как бы во сне, –
И вот – слышнее стали звуки,
Не умолкавшие во мне...

Тут не одно воспоминанье,
Тут жизнь заговорила вновь, –
И то же в вас очарованье,
И та ж в душе моей любовь!

Sergey Esenin: THE MAPLE

You, my naked maple, that in icy show,
why do you bend down under winter's blow?

Either saw you something, or have heard a sound?
Like you left a village just to walk around.

And as drunken watchman walked onto the road,
sunk in drifts of snow, froze his foot by roam.

I'm, as well, somehow got myself unstable:
can not reach my home, drunk, off my friend's table.

Here I met a willow, there I hugged a pine-tree,
sang to them of summer by the blizzard's wild spree.

It's seemed I resembled this appeared maple,
but not free of foliage, rather, – green and stable.

I became like stupid, drunk or drugged teenager,
hugged a birch with passion as a wife of stranger.

Сергей Есенин: КЛЁН

Клён ты мой опавший, клён заледенелый,
Что стоишь, нагнувшись под метелью белой?

Или что увидел? Или что услышал?
Словно за деревню погулять ты вышел.

И, как пьяный сторож, выйдя на дорогу,
Утонул в сугробе, приморозил ногу.

Ах, и сам я нынче чтой-то стал нестойкий,
Не дойду до дома с дружеской попойки.

Там вон встретил вербу, там сосну приметил,
Распевал им песни под метель о лете..
Сам себе казался я таким же клёном,
Только не опавшим, а всюю зелёным.

И, утратив скромность, одуревши в доску,
Как жену чужую, обнимал берёзку.



Zinovy Korovin. I was born in Kiev, then USSR. Education: master degree in structural design. Used to be structural design engineer in homeland until 1979 when immigrated with family in the United States. Until 1999 I lived in Chicago, worked as structural designer, then used to be a manager for the print shop. In 1999 moved to Rockaway, New Jersey where worked at the automobile auction, then as newspapers delivery man and as a clerk for medical supply company. In 2013 obtained full retirement benefits and moved with my wife to Manhattan. Three our sons with families live in the USA.

My experience in poetry counts as long as 20 years. I started to create verses in the age of 13. In 1949 I got the prize from newspaper “Young Leninist” – photo camera for poem about Stalin, which 70-year anniversary the USSR celebrated. I wrote verses in honor of communist party and “bright future” until 1952 when I recovered my sight and took time-out in the poetry for 50 years. I renewed this non-profit task in 2002 and started to publish my poems and short stories in various American, Russian, Australian newspapers and magazines not only in Russian, but in English language, too. I participated in Poetry contests, used to be a winner and laureate of them (including Pushkin Society contest “Pushkin’s Lyre” – 5 times). I am member of Academy of American Poets and president of the New York Poetry Club. My individual publications consisted of only one book (“Autumn Glimpses”, 2014) of poems, short stores and translations. Since the book has been released, I made a lot of corrections finding more suitable words and expression for already printed copies. The site “stihi.ru” is much more appropriate and convenient means for these renewals.

So why I engaged in translations? Well, I am in blue age now, so I am short of happiness and activity of youth, therefore my own verses may consist the kind of melancholy. Sometimes I “borrow” something more optimistic from good authors translating their poems into the other language. This way I somehow obtain their wonderful themes “for rent” with my performance, but with no harm for them...

Dmitry Garanin: FYODOR TYUTCHEV TRANSLATION

INSANITY

Where scorched earth is obscurely joining
bespread by smoke celestial dome,
abject but careless and joyful,
insanity has made its home.

Under the burning rays in desert,
half-hidden in the fiery sands,
it's staring up at something pleasant
and to the sky is drawing hands.

Or, stirring up, its wakeful ear
it's pressing to the fissured earth –
some distant buzz it's trying to hear,
with pleasure dwelling on its face.

It thinks to hear the waters boiling
in underground streams at large,
as they are murmuring and calling
before their thunderous discharge.

БЕЗУМИЕ

Там, где с землею обгорелой
Слился, как дым, небесный свод, –
Там в беззаботности веселой
Безумье жалкое живет.

Под раскаленными лучами,
Зарывшись в пламенных песках,
Оно стеклянными очами
Чего-то ищет в облаках.

То вспрянет вдруг и, чутким ухом
Припав к растреснутой земле,
Чему-то внемлет жадным слухом
С довольством тайным на челе.

И мнит, что слышит струй кипенье,
Что слышит ток подземных вод,
И колыбельное их пенье,
И шумный из земли исход!

1829

Marina Eskin: OSIP MANDELSTAM TRANSLATION

* * *

How heavily the horses canter;
Street lanterns scarcely spare light!
These strangers probably know better
Where they are taking me tonight.

Confiding wholly in their keeping,
I want to sleep; I'm badly cold.
At every bump and turn I'm leaping
Toward a ray of starlit gold.

Sways of my burning head. Surprising
And caring ice of someone's palm.
And fir trees hiding the horizon
With dark and yet unfathomed forms.

+ + +

Как кони медленно ступают,
Как мало в фонарях огня!
Чужие люди, верно, знают,
Куда везут они меня.

А я вверяюсь их заботе.
Мне холодно, я спать хочу;
Подбросило на повороте
Навстречу звездному лучу.

Горячей головы качанье,
И нежный лед руки чужой,
И темных елей очертанья,
Еще не виданные мной.

1911

PROSE OF OUR AUTHORS

Tatyana Yankovskaya: IF SHE HADN'T LEARNED TO KNIT

At the top of the mountain, a New Russian snarled an order into his cell phone. There's nothing like the good life – yelling at someone from a mountain top, pushing off and skiing down a slope, while on the other end of the phone, some poor joker in Moscow or Omsk is running himself ragged to make his boss happy. But here it was beautiful, and there were a lot of Russians, like at every fashionable resort. On the slopes the day before, Ksenia had lagged behind. At a fork in the trails she'd shouted, "Sasha, how do I get to the ski-lift?" hoping that he'd hear her. A guy in a red parka turned around and pointed with his ski pole. "Over there and to the right," he told her in Russian.

After lunch that day, Sasha wanted to photograph her against the background of the mountain range. As she stood by a stone wall overlooking a precipice, a tall man got up from a neighboring table and put a plate of steak and fried potatoes on the wall near her. Ksenia didn't know why, but then one of the crows flew down, sat on the plate, and began to devour the meat to cheering shouts from the table – in Russian, of course. Who else would feed the crows when there was a sign on the restaurant wall forbidding it? And who else would feed them not bread crumbs, but a plate of a real food? Ksenia laughed.

First she posed for Sasha in front of the magnificent Matterhorn and then took his picture in the same place, appreciating why the Matterhorn was the most photographed scene of nature in the world. Afterwards, Sasha dragged her off to a slope that she could barely ski down. Ksenia is a cautious skier who doesn't seek out adventure and is

frightened by thrills. She likes to follow maps; he likes to go wherever his fancy leads him. Once he skied towards Italy, but she saw a warning sign in time and didn't go after him. If she had, she'd have trudged back uphill like Sasha when he realized that he'd taken a wrong turn. Because of that, they missed the last ski-lift. They could have skied down, but the base of the slope was narrow and icy. Let some daredevil break his leg there, but that wasn't for Ksenia. Fortunately, a half hour later one last gondola took the service staff down the mountain, and they were able to go with them.

Today Ksenia returned from the slopes early, luxuriated in a bath at the hotel, and then went out for a walk. She saw a charming café offering Swiss confections, with tables on an open, sunlit terrace. That evening the big dinner in the hotel would be Chinese Fondue, so instead of a big meal now, she decided to just have a snack. Ksenia ordered apple strudel with vanilla sauce and gluhwein. The sauce wasn't anything special – like a Russian egg flip – but as the gluhwein filled her entire body with sweetness and warmth, her head began to spin – not from the wine, but from happiness. Because this was happiness: sun, snow, mountains, an Alpine village with a roiling river down the center, being still young and pretty, feeling pleasantly sore muscles after skiing and that lofty lightness after taking off heavy ski boots, and there on the slopes among the tiny figures – Sasha, her husband, a daredevil skier. He'd ski until he was exhausted, come home, go to the pool and sauna (without her; she was afraid of catching cold), and then they'd go out together.

Small hotels lined the river, many with restaurants on the first floor. Someone had hung two gloves on a low wire fence so that they stuck out like huge, foam-filled casts of hands. For some reason she remembered the French film “Under the Sand.” A husband leaves his things on the beach and goes swimming. He disappears. They can’t find the body and his wife doesn’t believe that he drowned. Maybe he just went off without saying anything? The director hinted at why that might have happened. The couple lived near each other but not together. The audience sees it and the husband knows it, but the wife doesn’t see anything wrong – that’s just the way she is. In the end they find the body, but she still doesn’t want to believe it – it’s easier for her to live protected by a phantom from being together in a relationship, which her new lover wants, because being near her isn’t enough. Many people live that way their whole lives – some because they are indifferent and self-absorbed, but want the convenience of marriage. Or a child keeps them together. Or they don’t want to admit that they made a mistake when they got married. Or they are afraid of being alone. It’s sad to see people who stay together only for that reason.

The streets gradually filled with skiers returning from the slopes with their skis over their shoulders, clumsily waddling heel to toe in their heavy boots. Some of the men carried two sets of skis – theirs and their women partners’ – while other women lugged their own skis. Does how they carry skis reveal anything about the relationships of those couples? Does it tell which of them are truly together and which are just near each other? Does the man carry his partner’s skis because he is attentive or because he’s under her thumb?

Ksenia returned to her room, put on a hotel robe, and sat to read a book on the balcony, her bare legs in the sun. The wonder of a high altitude – snow all around, and yet it’s

warm enough to sunbathe. Heaven! The sun slowly slid down towards the mountains across from the Matterhorn – a huge beast rearing its head – and lit up its chest where snow nestled in the folds. It was getting cooler. Back in the room, she turned on the television – how amazing, they had the Russian channel RTR Planet. Where was Sasha? It was already six o’clock and growing dark. She called him on his cell, but there was no answer. Maybe he was on the slope that had bad cell phone reception. Half past six. Even if he came down with the service personnel, as they did yesterday, or on his own, he should have been here awhile ago. He probably skied down into Italy, either on purpose or by mistake, and got stuck there – missing the last ski lift that would take him back up to the Swiss side. From the very first day Sasha had dreamed of skiing down to Cervinia, walking around, eating lunch and Italian ice cream, seeing the Matterhorn from the side of the border where it’s called Cervino, and then returning. But why hadn’t he called? If his cell battery was low he could call from a pay phone, and if he’d gotten stranded, he’d have to go to a hotel to spend the night – there is no road, and everyone who strays there or misses the ski lift remains until morning. But he could call from there. She called his cell and left a message. He didn’t answer or call her back. Ksenia decided to get hold of herself and not call again. But after awhile she called more and more often. On the one hand, it was obviously senseless, but on the other... What if he’d fallen? What if he was lying unconscious in the woods or on the slope and she called just at the moment when he came to? Or what if the familiar toreador ring tone would wake him up and he’d call? Seven o’clock. Something was wrong – she should go and tell the manager.

Blonde Inga consoled Ksenia: It’s rare that someone gets lost, but staying in Italy hap-

pens frequently, although everyone has always called before this time. If only she knew that Sasha wasn't "everyone." He's probably delighted that he got to Italy, sitting somewhere drinking beer or eating ice cream without a moment's thought that someone was worrying about him. She didn't care if he'd lost his way and was now drinking and eating – but he should call first! After a half hour, Inga stopped consoling Ksenia and called wherever one calls in cases like this. "In the twenty years that I've worked here, this is the first time I've had to raise the alarm." Ksenia's husband Alexander wasn't on the list of people who had medical care today, and nothing was noticed or reported that would help find out what happened to him.

A young woman walked over from the bar: on television today there was a report about a husband and wife in Zermatt who disappeared. They went snowshoeing in the mountains and didn't come back. Their cell phone doesn't answer and authorities believe they fell into a crevice. What if Sasha was lying frozen in a crevice? They should call him – call him constantly, and maybe the ring would wake him up and he'd think of some way to get out. But what if he broke his leg? Inga called the crisis center again. They still didn't have any information about Alexander. They'd already sent a helicopter to look for the couple, but they hadn't found them yet. They have assumed that they're dead and will start to look for the bodies tomorrow. Ksenia asked if a helicopter could look for Sasha. Inga wrote down the name of the service and a telephone number for Ksenia to call. It would be very expensive. What's the best thing to do? Call them and start the search right away? But what can they find in the dark? Wait until morning? But what if he freezes by morning or dies from loss of blood? What do people usually do in this situation? Inga and the barkeep couldn't recall a similar situation. They

shared Ksenia's concern. "If your husband is okay, then he owes us some champagne. What a lot of trouble he's caused!" Inga said. "I'm amazed at how well you're coping. Anyone else in your situation would be hysterical, and we'd have to call an ambulance by now. In twenty years I've seen a lot of nervous wives."

What does this lovely Swiss German know? If she hadn't learned to knit – if she hadn't spent the night many years ago knitting leggings and mastered the craft – a helicopter would already be in the air, and Sasha – if the rat was alive – would be getting a hefty bill the next day. But that other time gave Ksenia strength. Deep in her heart she believes that Sasha lives under a lucky star, and she knows that he is inexplicably... what? Irresponsible? Callous? Unable to empathize? Impractical? Self-absorbed? Infantile? Who the hell knows what it is – probably all of the above. She recalls an old story, and that helps her calm her growing panic.

Today probably few young mothers know how to knit. And why should they? You can buy anything you want, even if it's expensive – just wait until it goes on sale. But in the 1980s in Russia, a woman who didn't knit was as rare as a woman without a single filling in her teeth. That was Ksenia. She didn't knit and didn't have a single filling, which sent impressionable dentists into holy fits. When she was pregnant and went in for a check-up, the dentist gasped and called the other dentists in the office to come look in her mouth. And a few years later at a check-up in the research institute where Ksenia worked, the dentist was so excited that she went out into the hall and had the waiting patients come in to look and share her professional joy. "Will you just look at those teeth! Healthy, beautiful! How did you take such good care of them? I've never seen a 30-year-old woman without a single filling. Where did you grow up? What did you eat?"

Vika said the same thing: “Good Lord, Ksenia, where did you grow up? How did you turn out this way? You’re good with your hands, and yet you’ve never learned how to handle knitting needles. Watch.” But no matter how long Ksenia watched, it was no good. For one thing, Vika looped the yarn over the needle, but Ksenia’s mother had somehow hooked it under. Ksenia tried it both ways, but she couldn’t get it. You have to get the knack of knitting so that it becomes automatic. And what about the women who knit while they watch television? If Ksenia bought some good wool or unraveled an old sweater, her mother would knit her a hat and scarf, or Vika would say: “All right, bring me the yarn. I’ll knit your Dasha a dress.” Ksenia gave up the thought of mastering this ancient craft.

When Dasha grew older and went to school, Ksenia came home from work one day and found her daughter knitting. Dasha was making a dress for her doll.

“Mom, it’s so easy – look!”

“How did you learn that?”

“When I was at Grandma’s on Sunday, she taught me. Want me to teach you?”

Who wouldn’t want their child to teach them to knit – teach them anything at all? Ksenia thought she’d start with something easy: she had unraveled a black sweater and decided that she would knit leggings for Dasha. What else could you knit a child from black yarn? She’d start Friday evening, when Sasha was going to a party with people he met on a tour of Germany. A year ago she’d also gone on a tour – to Czechoslovakia – and later the group also got together to look at slides. Her slides were the best in the group, but people always raved about Sasha’s.

Down to work, comrades! Ksenia began slowly with Dasha helping her. After dinner, when her daughter went to play with the

neighbor’s children, she kept knitting on her own, gradually getting faster. Then Dasha went to bed and Ksenia moved to the other room. Her fingers moved more and more deftly, and she took pleasure in her own ability and the rhythm of her work. Unfortunately, she hadn’t asked Sasha when he’d be home. It was already 11.30 and time for him to be back. She put on a record with the sound low. Vivaldi was perfect for knitting, and both the knitting and the music were calming. The record came to an end. The metro had closed and soon the trams would stop running for the night. Where did he go? In what part of the city did the girl who invited them live? He hadn’t left a phone number and it had never occurred to her to ask. Back to work. She had to decrease the stitches to narrow the legs. It might be time to call the police. But she wouldn’t call them. Three years ago, when Sasha had called from work and said that he was going to Saenko’s apartment to work on an article, at three o’clock in the morning she couldn’t take it any more and called the police. Just as the duty officer replied, she heard the key in the door and Sasha walked in. He had simply been at Saenko’s. After dinner they had continued to discuss the article they were writing, and then Sergei had showed him his paintings – Sasha hadn’t known that painting was his hobby – what talent! – and they’d forgotten about time, and Saenko didn’t have a phone... No, she wouldn’t call the police. Which girl’s apartment did they go to? Wait – where’s his trip diary? He must have written down phone numbers – he certainly wrote down Igor’s number. But Igor might be there, too. Maybe his parents would know something? But she couldn’t call them in the middle of the night. Ksenia found a thick notebook in the pile on the desk. In the front were her drawings – the shoes and purse she wanted him to bring back from Germany. To her amazement, he’d found exactly what she’d wanted. And

he brought back the same color gloves, too. They were lovely. Here was the description of the first day, the second... finally she found several names and telephone numbers. There were two women's names, one of them near Grazhdansky Prospekt. That's probably where they all went. Should she call or not? What if he didn't call her on purpose? What if he had decided to leave her and their child, just like that, without an explanation?

She went back to her knitting. To keep from weeping, she counted the stitches out loud. Decrease stitches on one side, then the other; the first leg and then the second. But maybe he told someone what his plans were? Maybe he was afraid to tell her, but he told Pasha, their downstairs neighbor? Sasha and Pasha had been friends since they were children. Pasha still looked up to him and was good to Ksenia. He admired her and was always ready to help if she needed it – she didn't even have to ask. But still, waking him up in the middle of the night was too much. And what would she ask him – does Pasha know why Sasha is out all night? Lord, how embarrassing!

She went to the phone and dialed the number on Grazhdansky. A busy signal. She dialed again and again, but it was always busy. Maybe the number was wrong or the phone didn't work? But Sasha could have called from a phone booth to tell her that he was spending the night. Something must have happened. She picked up the knitting needles again and tried to calm down, but tears ran down her face. Maybe they were having an orgy and took the phone off the hook so no one would disturb them? Judging by the stories told by Sasha and Igor, a polite and smart fellow Sasha met on the trip, the girls were not exactly tramps, but they were pretty wild – women who'd been around the block. The phone was still busy. It was already five o'clock. It made no sense to call the police and it was too early to call Igor's

parents or Pasha, but soon the trams would be running and Sasha would surely call and come home. Ksenia kept knitting. She was knitting automatically now. The needles flew in her fingers and two black knit swaths crawled down her legs, and only they, her allies that night, kept her from losing her mind.

At seven o'clock the phone on Grazhdansky was still busy. She called Pasha. Even though it was Saturday, it was all right to wake him.

"Did you see Sasha yesterday?"

"Yes – I saw him on the landing when I was coming home. Why?"

"He went to meet with his tour group from Germany and he hasn't come home."

"Hm."

"I thought maybe he said something to you – that he was going to stay the night or something about his plans."

"No, he didn't say anything."

"He didn't say anything to me, either, but for some reason he didn't come home."

"And he didn't call?"

"No."

"That's strange. People usually call in those cases."

"I found a telephone number in his trip diary, but the line is always busy."

"Don't worry, Ksenia. I'm sure everything is fine. Maybe they just got drunk."

"But he never gets drunk – you know that."

"Yeah, I guess so. Well, the trams are running and the metro is open, so he'll sure to be home soon."

"All right. Sorry I woke you up, Pasha. I've got to get Dasha up and ready for school."

When Dasha sat down to breakfast, she said: “Oh, Mama! You knitted so much! Didn’t you sleep at all? Where’s Papa?”

“He’ll be home soon. Dress warmly, Dasha. It’s cold outside.”

Dasha left, and Ksenia screwed up her courage to call Igor. A woman’s voice, sleepy and irritated, answered the phone.

“I’m sorry to call you so early, but may I speak to Igor?”

“It certainly isn’t appropriate to call so early Saturday morning. Igor isn’t home.”

Ksenia breathed more easily.

“I’m so sorry to bother you. This is Sasha Kushnarev’s wife. Sasha and Igor went to a party with the tour group and Sasha still isn’t home. I’m very worried.”

“Didn’t he call you?”

“No, and the phone there is constantly busy.”

“The phone is broken. Igor called me at eleven last night from a pay phone and told me they were sleeping over. After all, getting home in such cold weather... the trams aren’t heated and you can’t catch a taxi... But it’s appalling that your husband didn’t call. My son called me!” The voice of Igor’s mother swelled to Wagnerian heights. “He said that he’d be home by ten.”

It was already nine. Igor had farther to go, so Sasha should be home at any minute. Ksenia went back into the main room. Should she go to bed? Eat something? Start to clean up? She couldn’t do anything but knit. Ten o’clock. Where on earth was he? Ten thirty. She began to sew together the two halves of the leggings. She began to weep – she couldn’t help herself. It was eleven o’clock. What was going on? She took a piece of linen elastic from her sewing

box, cut a length and inserted it in the leggings. Done! What should she do now? He’ll probably never come home...

“Hi!” Sasha walked in as if nothing was wrong. “Why aren’t you saying anything? What’s the matter?”

“What’s the matter?! What do you think is the matter?”

“What happened?”

“You didn’t come home last night. I didn’t sleep all night!”

“But you knew I was going to a party.”

“But you didn’t say you were going to spend the night!”

“It was freezing outside, so we decided to stay over.”

“But you could have called.”

“The phone was broken.”

“Why didn’t you call from a pay phone?”

“I didn’t want to go out into the cold.”

“Igor went out and called his mother. You might have at least asked him to call me.”

“Sorry. I didn’t think.”

“And you didn’t think to take the first tram home? Where have you been all morning?”

“You know that I always do the rounds of bookstores on Saturday. I got to Liteiny Prospekt at nine o’clock and then...”

“You went to bookstores?! You didn’t call or come home?”

She turned to stone. Was he human? She slowly raised the black leggings in front of her. They turned out well. Sasha walked up and took them from her hands. “Kat!” he murmured. Then all was a blur. But it was clear that he loved her and she loved him. Despite everything. There was no one dearer.

Did she forgive him then? If she hadn't forgiven him, they wouldn't be on this trip to Switzerland, and she wouldn't be experiencing this panic and cold rationality. Would she forgive him again? The past has the answer to today's questions. If a woman forgives once, she'll keep on forgiving. The unbelievable thing that happened will happen again, since for the person she lived with, it wasn't just believable, but typical. You can change habits if you try, but you can't change your nature. From time to time nature trumps habit, and there's nothing you can do about it. Why do we forgive those who don't ask for forgiveness, and not forgive those who do?

What should she do? She was almost certain that nothing had happened to Sasha. He was a good skier who didn't take stupid risks, and besides, he's lucky. He's just being Sasha. Should she call Vika in Petersburg to complain? Ksenia knows what Vika will say: "Ksenia, work it out with him once and for all. Either leave him or put up with him. He's not going to change. You choose!" Vika thinks that the most important quality in a man is his reliability. Her first husband wasn't very reliable, but she says her second one is.

After eight in the evening, Ksenia finally goes down to dinner. It's Chinese Fondue – better shared with someone. She takes pieces of finely sliced raw fish, meat, vegetables. At the table she skewers them on a long-handled fork and submerges them into the elegant little pot of boiling water. The waiter brings her the bottle of wine she and Sasha began the night before. But she can't get anything down. She returns to her room and decides that at nine o'clock she'll ask Inga to call the crisis center and ask for advice on what to do. Maybe it makes sense to order the helicopter. At nine o'clock the phone rings. Of course, it's Sasha calling from Cervinia. He's in a hotel room eating room service, which the hotel staff brought

him out of sympathy because he couldn't go to the restaurant in his ski clothes and boots.

"Why didn't you call earlier? We were going to get a helicopter to start looking for you. On TV they say that a couple died on the slopes today..."

"Ksenia, the battery in my cell phone ran down, and I've been trying to call you for two hours. The thing is that there is a hotel by the same name in Tasch and they connected me with that hotel. I told them to get my wife, but they said there wasn't anyone there by that name. I called again – they got mad and thought that someone was playing a joke on them. I said that I was in Italy and didn't get back up the mountain, but they shouted at me and slammed down the phone. I asked the Italians in the hotel to call, but the same thing happened. Finally, someone else picked up the phone, and when I said that I didn't make it back across the border to Zermatt in time, they understood and gave me the hotel's number. Kat, everything's fine. The lifts will start working at seven in the morning and I'll come right back. Don't go out until I get there. We'll have breakfast together and go skiing. I won't call in the morning. Good night, Kat."

It was a huge weight off her shoulders. But she was angry. Ksenia tried to go to sleep, but in the middle of the night she woke up and couldn't fall asleep again. She went over to the window, opened the curtains and gasped: A huge round moon was suspended in the sky next to the Matterhorn, illuminating its proud, dignified pose and the sharp face of a sea lion about to toss the moon high into the air like a ball. It was deceptive, an illusion of closeness – the moon was infinitely farther away. If the Matterhorn had been really next to it, it would be but a blemish on its surface. But here, on earth, the small moon was next to the huge Matterhorn, shining reflected light, illuminating its

unassailable beauty, and tonight they are together. Nights like these have come before and will come again countless times. This eternal beauty brings healing and calm.

The next morning Ksenia dressed as slowly as she could, but in the end she went down to breakfast by herself. It was already nine o'clock, and Sasha still wasn't back. He said he'd return early. Well, the ski lift in Italy to the pass would take some time, but Sasha could ski down quickly. That meant he was up to his usual tricks and in no hurry to get back. Soon it would be ten o'clock. Well, fine then. The day was beautiful and she'd go skiing by herself. Ksenia took the electric bus to the farthest ski lift that would take her to her favorite slope. Weighed down by her boots, she trudged to the lifts that take the hordes of skiers to the gondolas. And then she ran into Sasha, unshaven, pale, pushing through the crowds.

"Kat! Why didn't you wait for me? We might have missed each other – it's a miracle I ran into you."

Ksenia muttered something without looking at him. She didn't have to answer him. He was the guilty one – let him talk. Sasha took her skis.

"Where do you want to ski?"

They went through the turnstile and got into a gondola. Sasha told her about the Italian hotel, about the mix-up with the telephone numbers.

"Inga said that in the twenty years she's been working here, nothing like this has ever happened before."

"But it wasn't my fault – it was just a series of mix-ups."

"I told you to take a card from the hotel with the address and phone number."

"I didn't think anything like this would happen!"

"Well, I did, and that's why I told you to take it. There should be some kind of service, some tourist office or something, in Cervinia, where they have information about hotels in Zermatt."

"It's not as well organized there as it is here."

"That's not the problem. You're the problem. Why don't you listen sometime, since your wife is so smart?"

"You're not just smart, Kat – you're beautiful. Let me take your picture."

"I don't want you to!"

They skied down parallel slopes several times and shared a ski lift back up the mountain.

"Do you want to get something to eat? I haven't had breakfast."

"No. I'm going to ski down a couple more times and then go home. You can get a bite to eat and keep on skiing."

"No, I'll go with you."

But after skiing down another time, he said: "I'm so hungry that my head is spinning."

They went into a restaurant on the slope. Sasha got a beer and a hearty Alpine meal of thick sausage with fried potatoes and a fried egg. Ksenia just had soup.

In the hotel she took a bath while he went to the sauna and pool. She was sitting in a terrycloth robe on the shining white of the bed when Sasha walked in, hot from his sauna and shower, and came to her. "Kat..." In their furry white robes they looked like the embracing polar bears on the postcard she had pinned above her desk at work. No matter what psychologists say, it's always better to make up in bed. Or perhaps it's just easier that way? Arguments quickly get swept under the rug and stay there. How do older couples make up – the ones who have long forgotten about sex? But they don't get lost

God knows where in the mountains and don't spend the whole damn night without a thought of calling, so there is less cause for anger and far less drama. But old people who are deaf, slow, fussy, stubborn and critical – isn't that impossible to bear? Well, let's deal with each thing as it comes. Right now everything is fine. That's just the way he is. So... warm, so...hot, so ... mine. Mine. Mine.

The next morning, they went up the mountain, surrounded by blinding white. From the gondola she could see the shining spots polished by the wind and sun on the illuminated sides of the mountain and the evenly matte surface of the shadowed slopes. She could see her favorite wide, smooth slope lit by the sun. Soaring like a bird, the wind in your face – it's not cold, but fresh and alive. The rhythm of the squeaking snow is music to your ears. The skis follow every movement of your knees – whoosh, whoosh, whoosh – turn, turn, turn. For heaven's sake, what's the point of getting caught up in the drama and putting yourself through such an ordeal, when you can do this? Pure joy – a holiday that is always with you. And the cross you bear – isn't that always with you, too? You

probably can't have one without the other. Except for those moments when you rise up to the surface, catch the rhythm, and soar upwards. Soar now along that smooth white surface, amid the shining blueness, above the soft clouds concealing the town in the valley. Soar. Today is a holiday.

And what about the sleepless nights with the moon, with the Matterhorn proudly rising up, dimly white in the darkness, with a child's leggings flying off knitting needles? So what? Because there were, are, and will be other sleepless nights. With him. Maybe all this – the moon, and the knitting, and the brief terror of solitude – is payment for the long days and nights together? But what about her choice? That's just philosophizing. Let Vika philosophize about whether choice exists at all and whether we have the freedom to choose.

Inga and the young bartender got bottles of champagne after all, although they'd only been joking. They'll have something to remember in twenty years.

Translated from the Russian by Michele A. Berdy



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Elena Dubrovina: THE AUTUMN MIST

He was intrigued by her affected manners. Her lips were painted a bright red, and her skillfully penciled eyes slid over him as if she were blind. The woman was pale, and her hollow cheeks had a touch of blush. She wore a small hat with a broad brim that cast a shadow on her face when she bent over her small delicate purse to get a handkerchief to dry her constantly watering eyes.

While trying to impress him, she jabbered non-stop, nervously crumpling her jacket. When she spoke, she hardly moved her lips, but her arched eyebrows moved up and down in a strange manner.

Her voice was pleasant but with sudden melodic pitches that sounded like false notes in a long operatic aria. Nevertheless, he was annoyed by the vulgarity of her manners, her incessant babble. To all appearances, he found her monologue tedious because at times she was seemingly constrained and uncomfortable. He didn't interrupt her discourse but watching her with some curiosity. What irritated him the most was her unnatural vulgarity combined with an almost angelic innocence or even naïveté. In this, he sensed an air of mystery about her.

He was a famous writer, trying to spend some time in solitude, escaping a crowd of noisy admirers. He realized that the unknown woman had no idea who he was and had just stopped by to chat at her leisure, enjoying her free time. He learned from her that those three marvelous days on the ship had been given to her as a present by her mother.

It was a quiet, cold autumn evening, and the sea breeze was pleasantly refreshing. The northern wind blew from the ocean on

deck, bringing with it bubbles of water that left a briny tang on their lips, redolent of the taste of salted fish. The lonely moon suddenly cut the mist, glaring down on the water, gilding a path to the ship, and then its light faded, and the moon became quite obscured. A heavy fog completely erased the visible line between the sky and the ocean. The night slowly thickened, merging with the vast expanse of the waters. It was as if the tiny stars and the moon had drowned in the interminable ocean, and the music of the night wallowed in its waves. The very air seemed full of slow melodies and buzzing sounds of the night.

A sudden feeling of tranquility seized her whole being as the earthy paleness spread over her cheeks. The cold stars, like small fireflies, twinkled in the distant sky, clear-green and almost pellucid. And everything suddenly became so distant, so unimportant, even this cold autumn night, the dark viscous air and her own life. She knew about the approaching end, and there, beyond the horizon, she sensed a mystery, the mystery of death. Watching the falling night merging with the ocean, she thought about immortality and infinity, which transcended her capacity for apprehension of life. One day, her life too would be brought to the finish line where space and time have no limits. The wind gently touched her face, stroked her cold hands, like a lover who felt her grief, her fear of death. She cited:

I am illusion, a reality, a shadow, in pain,
Absorbing the suffering of all, in vain.
Oh, God, just let me land
Before I drown, before the coming end.
In the empty space of moon eclipse,

I do exist.
Just send me a stream of living light
To stay alive.

He listened to her melodic voice in surprise. The depth of her verses touched his heart. They both watched in silence as night fell, and the moon reflected on the surface of the dark waters, imparted to their faces a touch of a silvery hue. Admiring the beauty of the moment, he bent and looked into her eyes. And there, he found fear, helplessness and sensitivity to spiritual unknowns. At this very moment he thought that her appearance alluded to some mystery in her past. Her subtlety charmed him instantly and aroused a deep sympathy to her hidden suffering. He realized that under the veil of vulgarity she sheltered the real woman, strange and mysterious.

“For pity’s sake, please tell me what is making you suffer,” he demanded, grabbing her hand, forgetting about his previous annoyance with her and felt how thin and fragile her hand was. She pulled it away and laughed loudly, embarrassing him for his sudden impulsive behavior. The wind caught up her loud roar of laughter and carried it far away into the ocean, leaving only ripples on the water and the distant echo of her fading voice. He didn’t utter a word and, turning away from her, began walking at a sluggish pace along the deck, careening from side to side, as though there were high waves. He hoped that she would follow him, but she didn’t.

* * * * *

The next morning, he saw her again in the dining room. She was eating her breakfast in solitude. She seemed to be deep in thought, leafing through the pages of a book,

as if she were deeply immersed in her reading. He recognized the cover of the book even from afar – his latest novel.

The room at this early morning hour was almost empty. The shimmering sunrays rained down through the windows, playing with the crystal glasses and casting a light on her tired and yet very youthful face. She wore no make-up, and only her lips had a touch of pale pink. Her heavy dark curly hair was scattered in disarray over her shoulders. Puzzled, he approached her behind the table:

“May I share your solitude?” His hand instinctively touched her shoulder.

She gasped and then slowly craned her head.

“Good morning. It is a beautiful morning. Isn’t it?” She replied, glancing at him without any interest and closed her book, ignoring his question.

“Yes, it is a lovely morning, and I hate to see you having coffee alone.” He waved to a waiter and sat across from her.

“I noticed you reading my last novel....” She didn’t let him finish his sentence:

“Somebody left it on this table when I came...” And suddenly, she blushed like a child who had been caught lying.

He stifled a smile and said seriously, “What do you think about this book?”

She hesitated to reply as if a thousand thoughts had burst into her mind causing her to pause. “I am impressed by your sensitivity, your ability to look deep into the soul, to see beyond the invisible line. You are an artist, who can paint the portrait of a soul, feel its suffering and make the reader plunge into the story, and become a part of it.”

She lost all her jocularity and flippancy of speech. She was now a different woman, not the one he had met last night.

“So, you are familiar with my books.” He stared at her. “I am amazed by your vision. I would say the depth of your vision. Do you write?” She didn’t answer right away, thinking and then looked at him haughtily.

“Well, yes and no. I used to write poetry but not anymore.” And then, smiling, “Let’s go outside. I adore the autumn sun when it is so unusually warm and cold at the same time.”

He watched her closely, amazed at how much she had changed since yesterday. She didn’t try anymore to pretend or bewitch him with her vulgarity and loquaciousness and now seemed to be pensive and withdrawn. Today, he was struck by the allure in her sudden quiet manners as she gracefully fluttered about the deck, holding a long scarf and deeply inhaling the salty ocean breeze. She reminded him of an untamed animal, trapped in a cage and searching for the way out.

“Do you travel alone? I’ll be glad to keep your company.” He said softly, trying to march in step with her.

She steered away from this question, but her face brightened with pleasure, revealing her true feelings. The morning sun began to grow dim, and feathery clouds hovered above the waters, like white birds, spreading their wings as they fly away from danger. The air suddenly darkened, as if an invisible artist had splashed muted colors on a clean canvas. A strange otherworldly light cut the mist, illuminating the sky for only a moment, and then the first drops of rain fell on the deck. He dared to put his arms around her shoulders, pressing her closely and feeling the warmth of her skin under the light dress.

“I am fine,” she protested, easing away from his embrace. “I like to feel the touch of the first drops of rain on my face. It is like the timid kiss of a lover.” She squinted at

him, flashing an expressive smile and suddenly changed the subject, looking at him over her shoulder:

“Did you sleep well last night?”

“Actually, yes, I slept like a baby. Why are you asking?”

“Because I didn’t sleep at all. I was disturbed by the emotion of our meeting. Don’t you think that emotional stress invigorates the creative process? Yesterday’s evening was sad and translucent, as if it were lit up from beyond by the cold fading moon. In my dream, there were strange images floating in space before my eyes: waves, stars, twisted faces of death, like those in Bosch’s paintings. I am so deeply aware of the power of the sea and its potential for death, and destruction, and yet of its contribution to the beauty of the world, and its inspiration for creativity.” All her worries seemed to melt away as she talked to him, watching the glowing open sea, outlined against the autumn sky.

Swept by emotion, he interrupted her:

“A German philosopher, Oswald Spengler, once wrote that the creative essence of culture is progressively lost, and now becomes shallow, giving way to a soulless civilization. I have to agree with his philosophy, but nevertheless, our emotions will never dry up or die. Their force will give us this impetus of creativity and will remain in our work forever. We derive our inspiration not only from our inner being, but also from the beauty of nature that gives us energy to create. And, yes, yes, I do agree with you about the emotional stress being a vehicle for the creative process.”

He began to enjoy their conversation when she suddenly turned away from the ocean and grabbed his hand. She had lost all her vibrant colors of yesterday and her body was shaking with a feverish chill as she turned deathly pale.

"Please, help me to get to my cabin. I am tired, very tired," she whispered in a changed voice and staggered, almost fainting.

He wound his arm around her waist, and she put her hand on his shoulder, looking for support. People passed them by without paying any attention to them, trying to escape the cold drops of the sudden downpour.

She had just enough strength to get to her cabin. He helped her to bed and took off her shoes. He held her wrist – her pulse was all in a flutter. She was shivering and, in a peremptory tone, unusual for her, demanded a cup of hot tea.

When he returned with tea, she was already undressed and asleep. As he watched her face, peaceful in sleep, the contour of her shapely body, twisted under the white sheet, her full breast rose and she groaned heavily. Even in her sleep she possessed an ardent charm, a hidden sexuality that aroused his animal instincts and long-forgotten desire. He just could not force himself to leave, so he settled his aching body comfortably in the armchair, and watching her in her sleep, he too was soon engulfed in slumber.

* * * * *

When he opened his eyes, the rain had already stopped, and the room was luminous with sunlight. She was still in bed, awake and pale but smiling.

"Do you feel better?" He stretched his tired body and took her hand in his.

"Oh, I am fine. It is just my hypersensitivity. Life is so difficult, so painful. It frightens me to think that one day I'll find out what lies behind that invisible line where the dark waters of the sea intertwine with the sky."

She raised her head above the pillow and looked straight into his eyes, as if trying to remind him of the previous evening. He felt the movement of her fingers in his hand and squeezed them with all his might.

"You make me wonder about you. Would you like to tell me your story? Sometimes, it's much easier to share your life with a stranger. Isn't it?" He said, driven by curiosity and continuing to hold her hand.

"Please, let my fingers go. You are hurting me."

She laid her head back on the pillow feeling dizzy. "Anyway, it is a long rambling story, and I don't want to bore you. I want to enjoy my trip and my sudden encounter with such a famous writer. Let's have a good time. My story will lull you to sleep. Don't look at me in bewilderment, please..." She stretched out the word "please," and it sounded to him like a musical score. She continued without paying any attention at him, "I feel hungry again, and I need a breath of fresh air. Go now and wait for me on the deck," she said firmly, not as a request but a command.

It was folly on his part to persist, and he obeyed like a schoolboy. He waited for her on the deck, watching the serenity of the autumn sky and the bitterness of the heavy ocean, feeling the cold wind on his skin, thinking about her. He knew that she was not a woman of easy virtue but an interesting and complicated woman, a puzzle he was determined to solve.

As a writer, he couldn't resist his habit of watching people, studying their lives, exposing their naked souls. He was always impelled to bury himself in flames, to put his burning emotions on paper, take refuge in his work. He knew loneliness, despair, pain, and nothing could dispel them but his work, his obsession with plots, mysteries, intrigues, loves. He missed love, it lived only

in his imagination; he was hungry for love. It was like an illusion, a distant outline of an unknown woman, merging with the attenuated darkness. He was not afraid anymore to be hurt by love; he had faith in finding it one day, one day...

She appeared suddenly behind him, interrupting the flow of his thoughts, intruding into his life with her undue familiarity. "I hope I am not intruding." She annunciated slowly as if reading his mind, piercing him with her divinatory eyes.

"Oh, no, not at all, just the opposite. I need some fuel, some human touch to carry me away from my dismal thoughts." He was rejuvenated.

He was glad to share with her his time and began to enjoy her company. Her presence aroused in him diverse feelings, yielding to love and releasing him from the sense of reality and time. The sun generously squandered its autumn warmth, and he already foresaw his victory over her wayward nature and her stubbornness.

How often the course of events is as unpredictable and incomprehensible as the movement of human thought. They became lovers that same night, passionate lovers, plunging into the moment given to them so suddenly, so unexpectedly. He had power over her femininity, over her floating moods. She obeyed, she followed his orders; she moaned and laughed, and cried.

Three days stretched into one long night, and he still didn't know her, didn't know anything about her. When he tried to grasp the core of her being, her life – she skillfully escaped his questions, his curiosity. "Don't complicate our happiness," she would say gently touching his hand. "Please don't take me back into my past. Let us forget reality, tomorrow. Let us enjoy this dream. I don't want to wake up. This dream is so tangible, so beautiful."

However, the taste of their fleeting happiness was bitter, enshrouded in obscurity, fear. They were both aware of the end and so tried to sustain their courage. He was bewildered by the miracle of completeness that they both found in each other. The complexity of her mind and unintelligible sadness, her versatility appealed to his writer's imagination, but he couldn't decipher her soul.

Through the mist of the autumn rain, she watched him nervously puffing his pipe. She felt grateful to him for those three marvelous days that he had given to her. Their love presented them with a greater range of emotions, sensibility and depth, giving new meaning to their existence. She put her head on his shoulder, moving her body closer to his as if searching for a shelter, a safe place, like a snail longing to hide in its shell, layers of shell. The wind, the sea, the morning air had the scent of the coming autumn. The melody of the waves, the whisper of the wind created the music of sadness that tormented them, crucified them spiritually.

"You'll forget me soon. I am nobody, or maybe just that tiny star that soon will merge with the clouds," she said dreamily.

He didn't reply because he didn't know what to say to her. He felt tension and pity in his heart for her, for this seemingly insipid adventure.

They departed at the quay, where she was greeted by her husband and her mother, embraced by her sister and someone else he couldn't see from that distance. He wished he could have been invisible and that all of these people would fade away before his eyes. The dream lost its shape and turned into reality. He rushed to get home, so that he could lock himself into his work. He hoped his work would keep him away from his memories, from her.

One month passed in solitude, in writing, but unconsciously, the memories of her still

rushed through his mind as he tried to push them away. He gained new power in his writing as a novel began to take shape on paper. He allowed himself to reproduce the emotions and feelings that he experienced for those short three days with her. He thought that by this time he would have erased her from his memory, he would have healed the pain of losing her, and returned to his everyday routine, but he could not. Even his old friends and his habitual environment became an unexpected burden. He blamed himself for not trying to learn more about her, her life. Now, as he wallowed in total inactivity, life suddenly lost its flamboyant colors.

One more month passed before he saw her again. He was frittering away the afternoon in the park, watching another boring

day fade away before his eyes. It was the end of fall, and the mist shrouded the sky and the streets. She appeared suddenly, as if she had drawn back the curtain of the dense fog. She didn't notice him, being engaged in conversation with a man, perhaps her husband (he couldn't remember his face). A little boy, three or four years old, held her hand. She looked pale and peaceful, and he didn't want to disturb that peace.

How could he know that she would die soon of an incurable disease, dreaming of him and afraid of seeing him again, afraid to cause him unnecessary pain? How could he know that those three days with him were the happiest days of her short life? He would never know, and only the autumn mist would remind him of that fleeting episode in his rich and yet lonely life.



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