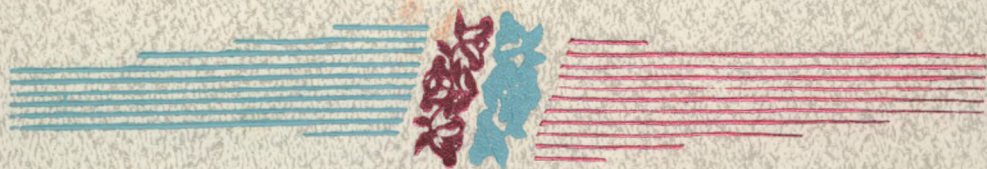


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OLEXA VLIZKO  
TEREN MASENKO  
VASIL MISIK  
SAVA HOLOVANIVSKY  
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MIKOLA NAHNIBIDA  
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PLATON VORONKO  
VASIL SHVETS  
STEPAN OLIYNIK  
OLEXANDR PIDSIUKHA  
YAROSLAV SHPORTA  
ROSTISLAV BRATUN  
VIKTOR KOCHESKY  
ANATOLIY KOSMATENKO  
ZAKHAR HONCHARUK  
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MIKHAILO KLIMENKO  
MIKHAILO TKACH  
TAMARA KOLOMIYETS  
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VOLODIMIR ZATULIVITER

# *Anthology* *of Soviet* *Ukrainian* *Poetry*

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The first edition of its kind and caliber, this anthology covers the past 65 years, representing 73 Soviet Ukrainian poets of different generations in all of their thematical, technical, and temperamental diversity. Selected with taste and attention, their poems create a vast panorama of life in Soviet Ukraine which ranges from the turbulent and hard years of the Civil and Great Patriotic wars to the creative time of the first five-year plans and the present day. The voice of the Ukraine rings out loud and clear in this book, which will be a helpful and informative guide in every reader's discovery of the Ukrainian SSR.

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## PETRO PEREBIYNIS

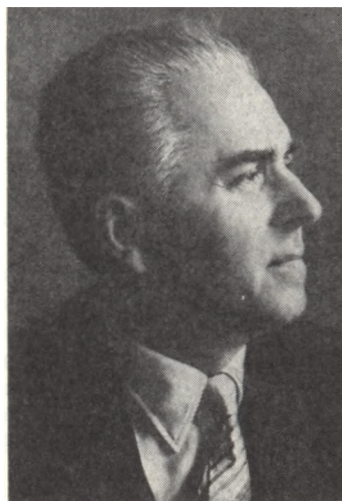
- 457 My Heirlooms  
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## PAVLO TYCHINA

*Pavlo Tychina (1891-1967) was born in the village of Pisky, Chernihiv Region, into the family of a deacon. One of the founders of new Soviet literature, he is the author of many books of verse, long poems, and poetry translations which won him nationwide recognition. His poetry is distinguished for its innovation, its wealth of themes, and profound insights into the inner world of Soviet man, the builder of communist society. His works have been translated into many Soviet and foreign languages. He also wrote a number of scholarly works on Slavic, Oriental, and other literatures. Pavlo Tychina was a member of the Ukrainian SSR Academy of Sciences, corresponding member of the Academy of Sciences of Bulgaria, Hero of Socialist Labour, and a USSR State and Taras Shevchenko prize winner. The best literary*



*works concerning the friendship of nations are annually awarded the Pavlo Tychina Prize.*

### HARPS RINGING, HARPS RINGING...

Harps ringing, harps ringing —  
golden ringing, loud resounding, through the groves  
sing out your strings,  
glad news echoing:  
The fragrant spring's  
on the wing,  
Flowering, dew-pearling,  
painting every thing.

Thoughts flying, thoughts flying —  
like a sea with white sails crowding, brim with  
tender tones of blue,  
flying thoughts that swirl:  
Storms will come,  
lightnings run!  
Laughter be, weeping be  
dews of mother-of-pearl...

I arise, cast my eyes —  
rills all round like bells ajingle, larks pour down  
    in notes of gold  
    waterfalls that sing:  
The fragrant spring's  
on the wing,  
Flowering, dew-pearling,  
painting every thing.

Love of mine, heart of mine —  
should you wander on the meadows all in sadness caught  
    or with joy awhirl:  
Spare but one  
glance, O come!  
Laughter be, weeping be  
    dews of mother-of-pearl.

1914

## ENHARMONQUES

### THE SUN

Birds of paradise somewhere feed on  
Greens and fruit of vine.  
Lakes were vistas of light translucent...!  
Vespertine.

Scythemen reap to break of sunrise.  
Flower of flame — the sun!  
Sigh awakening breasts of maidens:  
Son... My son...

### WIND

Bird — a river — greening legumes —  
Sunflower-turning rhythms.  
Day runs by with laughter ringing,  
Overjoyed and brimming.

Over ryefields, honey-seekers  
Dip their golden beakers.  
Day runs by with laughter ringing,  
Overjoyed and brimming.

### RAIN

The serpents writhe in someone's hand  
Within the waters... Dreams. In deeps.  
The millet's blown and strewn in heaps —  
And sparrows dart in slanting bands.

"Be off!" the river hastens pace.  
"Lie down!" cry pinks and yarrow.  
And trailing petticoats of lace  
A cloud drops on the meadow.

#### FOG

Over swampland like spun milk fog goes...  
Meditative, the raven.  
Lost in thought is the jackdaw.  
They have plucked out eyes. Whose? God knows.

Eastward, Wrath comes with swords as the sun rose!  
Plunges sudden the raven.  
Darting up goes the jackdaw.  
They have plucked out eyes. Whose? God knows.

1918

#### PASTELS

##### I

Runs by a bunny.  
Stops to see —  
The dawnlight!  
And plays gleefully.  
The daisies open up their eyes.  
Sunrise-perfumes touch the skies.  
Cocks embroider the cloak of night  
With fiery threads of vocal light.  
Sunrise.  
Runs by a bunny.

##### II

It has supped on hearty wine —  
The robust day.  
"Meadows, strew your flower blooms!"  
"Coming," calls the Day.  
"O flocks, feed on pastures!"  
"Seek your love," calls lusty Day.  
"Sing your lullabies, wheat-ears!"  
calls Day.  
It has supped on hearty wine —  
The robust day.



### III

Trills like flutes rang on horizons  
Where the sun had gone to rest.  
On tip-toe  
Came quiet evening.  
Stars came out, twinkling,  
The mist crept over the meadows  
And, finger on lip, lay down to  
Sleep.  
Trills like flutes rang on horizons  
Where the sun had gone to rest.

### IV

Oh, wrap me up well. Oh, wrap me —  
I'm old, I'm night.  
And ailing fast.  
To sleep my black road ran  
Since time began.  
Make a bed of mint for me;  
Let poplars rustle, lull with song.  
Oh, wrap me up well. Oh, wrap me —  
I'm old, I'm night.  
And ailing fast.

*1917*

## THE PLOUGH

Wind.  
Not wind — but a storm!  
It beats and breaks, from the earth whirls away...  
Behind black clouds yonder  
(with lightning! with thunder!)  
behind black clouds yonder are millions on millions  
of muscular hands...

It rolls. It cuts in the clay  
(whether city, or highway, or land)  
it ploughs earth and sand.  
But on earth are people, beasts, and orchards,  
but on earth are gods and churches:  
"O pass over, pass over us, judges!  
Pardon!  
And there were those who retired  
into caves and lakes and forests.

“What kind of power do you flourish?”  
they enquired.  
And none of them, no one rejoiced or sang.  
(His fiery steed the wind drave,  
His fiery steed  
in the night —)  
And only their dying and wide staring eyes  
reflected the beauty of dawning day!  
Eyes!

1919

## ON THE SQUARE

In front of the church on the square,  
The Great Revolution is on.  
“Hey, shepherd!” cries shatter the air.  
“For leader, you’ve enough brawn.”

“For liberty we will give battle!  
Mount up, boys! Up and away!”  
All’s clamour and bustle and rattle,  
banners sweep out bright and gay...

In front of the church on the square,  
sorrowing mothers cry:  
“Shine, light the way,” is their prayer,  
“silver moon up in the sky!”

The dust settles down on the square,  
silence, hushed and tight....  
Twilight.  
Night.

1918

## WIND FROM THE UKRAINE

Nothing do I love so fine  
as the wind a-blowing.

Devilish wind! Accurséd wind!

Only let him sweep his arm —  
roaring, whistling, skirling!

in the grove the last year's leaves —  
devils and imps go swirling...

Or on the clammy earth he leans  
and lets his waggons play.  
See how they fly along the lines,  
while poplars start to sway!

Devilish wind! Accurséd wind!

Rabindranath sits there in old Bengal:  
"No rebels here: the people are just clay."  
With laughter roars the wind from the Ukraine,  
wind from the Ukraine!

Through pince-nez the West peers, as through bars:  
"Is that a march of beasts, of beasts or men?"  
With laughter roars the wind from the Ukraine,  
wind from the Ukraine!

Devilish wind! Accurséd wind!

His tousled head from Dnieper's wave he's tossed.  
My lords, expect the worst:  
your game is lost!

Ah!  
nothing do I love so fine  
as the wind a-blowing,  
his way, his pain a-gnawing,  
and land,  
this land of mine.

1923

### LA BELLA FORNARINA \*

By Tiber's side strolled Rafael  
in June, one summer evening.  
"Here grief, there dreams I lull to sleep,  
a-weeping, love, a-weeping."

His heart beat fast. He stopped to hear:  
Oh, how she sang, imploring!  
"Loves me, loves not," and wrings her hands,  
but in far creeks he's mooring.

---

\* *Fornarina* (It.) — baker of bread, literally "stove-woman"

The song drew near. From behind a tree  
there flew a *colombina*.\*  
“Oh, who are you, dear maiden, say?”  
She, shyly: “*Fornarina*.”

And Rafael gently took her hand,  
without a word gazed on her.  
She wept. He took her in his arms:  
“Madonna!”

1921

## WE LIVE AND TOIL COMMUNALLY

### I

We live and toil communally. Among the hills — a monastery. The forest lies on every hand, the Dnieper flows before our eyes. A wonder not perceived at once. And still it sleeps, still dreams, and yet it cannot dream enough... We live and toil communally.

Scarce dawn — with spades we go to dig the monastery fields.

The monks in silence pass us by, repeatedly cross themselves, spit left and right. For breakfast calls the vociferous gong. To greet the sun their hymn pours forth... We laugh, believe and burn! But Dnieper deeper frowns. Still dreams, and cannot dream enough.

### VI

O Dnieper, shall I read to you? Once the Ukraine with anger boiled... From end to end, from Dniester's bank, to Danube's shore, to the very sea, and around the Old Oak region the mob arose, and seized the landlords by their forelocks. (Blood-red — the — sun — on — endless — steppes...) O Dnieper, shall I read to you?

The Polish lords joined up with the priests and kings, the landlords built themselves a state. Oh, how many rose! Oh, how many fell... Once the Ukraine with anger boiled...

The Dnieper laughed: read, or do not read...

Blood-red — the — sun — on — endless — steppes.

### X

We live and toil communally. All round lie forests and lonely huts, and people wild as the wild rose. Ah, what great happiness if you love the earth, if you seek harmony in life! Each of us builds humanity a hall, and each is a messenger with a call. Ah, what great happiness if you love

---

\* *Colombina* (It.) — a dove, figuratively, a lovely girl

the earth! In her you'll find no angel choir, no seventh heaven, no God.  
She holds but pride and zeal, and communal toil and praise.

And what then, if all the universe flowed with blood? New generations  
will arise — in soul and body welded one.

We do the deed we needs must do, and that new world — it will be ours!

1920

*Mizhgirya*

## FROM "IN THE COSMIC ORCHESTRA"

Blessed are:

matter and space, number and measure!

Blessed, too, are colour, timbres and fire,

fire, that gives tone to the whole Universe,

fire and motion, fire and motion!

Spirit, permeating it all,

who are you?

Is your name wind? Or is it calm?

Or are you the power of machines, blind and vast?

Or the hearing of atoms? The play of dust?

Over this music stand of a world, you extend your arms,

and as a background

roar propellers,

chaos dances a waltz rebellious,

and in corridors endless a trombone bellows.

Myriads of bodies, unfused particles, in loneliness ring:

faster, faster

every and all,

smoothly, orbitally we fall!

faster!

Millions of solar systems

vibrate, explode and thunder!

Comets come whinnying, galloping,

Roaring, lie oceans, above and under.

Countless bodies, unfused particles

upwards, downwards, sideways, each its own spiral follows.

Fires!! fires!!

Rays weep, play and sing in chorus,

as if gigantic 'cellos.

Spirit permeating it all,

who are you?

## II

I am a spirit, the spirit of eternity, of matter — the muscles  
that move the dawn.  
The spirit of time, space and measure, the spirit of numbers galore;  
Aerolytic rivers flow, born  
by each stroke of my single oar.

The spirit of engines, tank tacts, motorcar quires, performing dances;  
With motors my garage yard hums.  
As meek as children led to the beach, a swarm of titans comes  
Led by me into the expanses.

And on the water, tier on tier,  
systems I set out,  
insert young thought both there and here,  
give themes to think about.

And they fly along on their way  
on the abysses' brink,  
and not until they sink  
will I stop, go away.

Fly, fly on, to suns steer straight,  
steer to the circular roof!  
Call all together, federate,  
spread slogans inspired with truth!

Pay no attention to Saturn's rings;  
stop living for yourself, as you have through eternity!  
to all planets, all suns our chorus sings:  
liberty, equality, fraternity!

And they fly along on their way  
on the abysses' brink,  
and not until they all sink  
will I stop, go away!

I am a spirit, the spirit of eternity, matter — the muscles  
that move the dawn,  
the spirit of time, space and measure, the spirit of numbers galore.  
Aerolytic rivers flow, born  
by each stroke of my single oar.

## III

In the great cosmic orchestra  
all things obey a single hand.  
No ends, no boundaries are there  
to set terms to the suns that spin  
the blue and radiant milk within.

The ether flows, the wind-stream flies,  
new poems gush in springs,  
and constellations, letter-wise,  
arise — bright, fiery things.

What is an age, aye, what is time  
and notions such as “day” and “dawn”?  
Only cries — just blood-red cries,  
Protuberances from red suns drawn.

There is no grief, no yoke of woe,  
egoism’s alien to systems.  
All bodies their fixed orbits know,  
socialism’s law controls existence.

All know their ranks and their distinctions:  
friend-comrade-brother-satellite.  
Each dawn, each minute on their missions  
like air-balloons, worlds meet in flight.

One falls — another starts to gleam,  
and so with neither end nor bound,  
and neither suns nor planets seem  
to stop in this merry-go-round.

In the great cosmic orchestra  
all things obey a single hand.  
No ends, no boundaries are there  
to set terms to the suns that spin  
the blue and radiant milk within.

## V

Along eternity’s steep bank  
the sun in harness goes,  
and as the cosmic barge it tows  
all planets dance in ecstasy.  
People, stop sulking under fences;  
don’t cry because of small offences;  
along eternity’s steep bank  
the sun in harness goes.

People, love the earth!  
Poets, lead through skies!  
When barricades on planets rise  
the Universe entire feels pain.  
Along eternity’s steep bank  
the sun in harness goes.

Each planet’s pregnant from the sun,  
each treats the other as an equal one.





Your decades bloomed like flowers once,  
till, sorrily, you petered out!

Burn bright, all you with curly hearts!  
O new republic, rise in force!  
Sea, splash new ranks of fighters out!  
O Mother Earth, bring giants forth!

## VIII

Humanity proclaims its creed  
through three wide-thundering fanfares:  
Shevchenko, Whitman and Verhaern.  
Like cables drawn from nation unto nation  
In mighty voices to the world dictate the creed of revolution  
Shevchenko, Whitman and Verhaern!  
Switch in, all wires!  
Sing, poets' quires!  
Speak, conscience of democracy,  
speak, message of democracy!  
Let blind bards twang their "Judgment Day"  
to baggy Cossack pants!

Our Judgment Day has come.  
(No shadow this of cherubim —  
it is the flight path of a plane —  
Oh, what impalpable music!  
propellers roar with strain...)  
Our Judgment Day has come.  
Look, it has left its furrow there,  
never to be erased.  
Its steps into the Dnieper,  
dividing it in two.  
(No shadow this of cherubim —  
it is the flight path of a plane —  
Oh, what impalpable music!  
propellers roar with strain...)  
Guns fire and echo, North, West, East and South.  
Continents split and kingdoms fall,  
and storms above the peoples' graveyards like great bugles call.  
O whining hoboos, o cave-geniuses, poets sitting on the fence,  
come, join your voices to the voices of the bugles!  
Humanity proclaims its creed  
through three wide-thundering fanfares:  
Shevchenko, Whitman and Verhaern.

1921

## TRACTOR GIRL'S SONG

(How Olesya Kulik ran off  
to the tractor course in 1930.)

Smoke and dust fly by from machines,  
like maiden summers again...  
But Mirgorod's not what it was,  
Khorol river's not the same.

In summer I worked on the fields,  
but as soon as first snowflakes fell,  
my companion workers I asked  
if I might join the artel.

Oh, my dear artel "The Rose",  
silk shawl, and satiny scarf!  
I embroidered with free pattern-work,  
and a restless thrill, half-and-half.

With a thrill — oh, it's funny to say! —  
with a thrill — but so wonderful too!  
When I heard a new throbbing outside,  
then straight to the window I flew.

But that thrill was in no wise strange,  
for among our black stallions too  
such horses were starting to work,  
about which I already knew.

They don't munch the fragrant hay,  
of grass or of oats — not a trace,  
but they run, as if they would fly,  
then return to the Tractor Base.

Smoke and dust fly by from machines,  
like maiden summers again...  
But Mirgorod's not what it was,  
Khorol river's not the same.

My needle just fell from my hand,  
my embroidery patterns undone...  
in the lunch-break there I sped —  
as fast as my heels would run.

They meet at the Tractor Base,  
the machines no praises lack,  
the drivers call them their friends,  
and give them a pat on the back.

Straight up to a tractor I go —  
oh, dear world! oh, sun in the sky!

Oh, how I should love to learn  
to drive you myself, by-and-by!

Well, mama, but please let me go!  
Why that spiteful look in your eye?  
To the tractor drivers' course  
in Popivka village nearby.

But mother replies: "Fear the Lord!"  
I ask: "Why of God talk so much?  
How long will you torture me so  
with your churches, priests' robes, and such?"

Smoke and dust fly by from machines,  
like maiden summers again...  
But Mirgorod's not what it was,  
Khorol river's not the same.

But she says: "Give up the ideal!"  
I reply: "All the same, I shall go!"  
And early one morning I rose,  
so that nobody else should know.

With my kerchief round my head,  
in my worn-out coat, just so,  
I made for Popivka at last  
through the merrily falling snow...

Past the Kharkivka, past the old bridge,  
in the mist, I ran dreaming along,  
and caught up there with a cart,  
well, now with a cart — with a song.

That was the fellows who sang,  
some high, some gay, some hoarse,—  
"Don't you know us, we're on our way  
to Popivka tractor course!"

I look, and cant trust me eyes —  
all my friends, well-known voices ring:  
"Sit with us, *Komsomolka*, come,  
let's travel together, and sing..."

Smoke and dust fly by from machines,  
like maiden summers again...  
But Mirgorod's not what it was,  
Khorol river's not the same.

*Mirgorod Tractor Base*  
7 XII 1930

## ONE FAMILY FEELING

My soul is deep, resilient, rich,  
not like our shallow fording-place,  
I'm master of a bow-shaped bridge  
thrown o'er to people of many a race.

In me it soars, so powerful,  
and stands upon such firm supports!  
You shoot like lightning straight in the bull —  
hear other's thunder in some far gorge...

And further peals, in farther fields  
roll turbulent, jubilant at the fact  
that folk are joined by a bridge of steel,  
that international friendship acts.

And having thundered forth yourself,  
your way stands clear, you forward swing,  
as if you'd swallowed sumptuous health  
from some refreshing steppeland spring.

And having drunk, wiped lips athirst —  
without reserve, conditions none —  
within the last you see the first  
when you absorb a foreign tongue.

When you make contact with the word,  
softer than soft it yields to you.  
Though uttered otherwise it's heard,  
its essence yet remains ours too.

At first it bends, like a horse-shoe curved,  
within your hands unshapely grown,  
but later, suddenly,— words! words! words!  
the foreign tongue sounds like your own.

For it's not simply words and sounds,  
no frigid dictionary phrases, see —  
there stand our work, our sweat, our wounds,  
the feeling of one family.

There flowers are smelt, and woods are heard,  
there people's joys inspire our ways,  
and through them runs a common thread  
from ancient up to modern days.

And you may take that tongue, as suits,  
into your own — a wonderful dower.  
And all this finds its firmest roots  
deep in the proletariat's power.

*1936*

## SONG OF JOHN BALL

(From the poem)

They may be kings and courtiers,  
but which of us goes not bare?  
Toot-toodle-do, fa-la-le-ro,  
but which of us goes not bare?  
Three cheers for bold Wat Tyler-o,  
long live John Ball, goodfrere.

The one has land and luxury,  
the others may gasp and die:  
no bread have we, no water we,  
like starving dogs must die:  
if only you, O liberty,  
would stroke us, and not pass by!

In the forest are fires and revelry,  
from the dancing, dust like smoke.  
A sullen man is the *otaman* \* —  
now he's merry, like us poor folk:  
in a hempen noose a gentleman  
is kicking his heels 'neath the oak!

With revelry, with devilry,  
they mock, ahem, at the lord:  
enjoy yourself, oppressor, you,  
O Holy Mother of God!  
Enough of him, let's see things through,—  
we'll win the world so broad!

Away they all go galloping...  
Each one a lion, it seems.  
They fall upon the hated ones,  
with cries, with shouts, with screams...  
The fire beneath the ill-fated ones  
between the tree-trunks gleams...

And that's how they went triumphing,  
those tattermedallions there:  
Toot-toodle-do, fa-la-le-ro,  
but which of us goes not bare?  
Three cheers for bold Wat Tyler-o,  
long live John Ball, goodfrere.

1931

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\* *Otaman* (Ukr.) — leader

## FUNERAL OF A FRIEND

The hues of eve had changed to wistful tones,  
from crimson down to violet in the spectrum.  
While shovelling snow, blue-shadowed, by my home,  
I stopped, for suddenly... A brass band's solemn  
and sobbing blues flew heavy on my ear.  
Upon the roadside red-tipped firs they lingered,  
as if hard frost had caught their choking tears,  
and then within my garden intermingled  
faint echoes wailing many melodies.  
Each echo through the crispen air rebounded:  
as if a thousand bands, in different pitch or keys,  
were playing different tunes at once and sounded  
quite out of harmony....

All ever changes, ever made anew and severed,  
blood ever runs from wounds, hearts  
beat with pain of dearth,  
as ashes unto ashes, dust to dust is rendered,  
so always, all committed are to earth.

For whom do all these trumpets weep?  
Why do the cymbals clang so bleak?  
And drums tattoo like hearts in breast,  
when he has well earned lasting rest?

All died away  
the crimson hues. A greenish luminescence  
lit up the clouds. It seemed as if X-rays  
had pierced the world and showed its troubled essence....  
I broke away and ran! Two years ago  
on such an eve I parted from my dearest,  
my closest friend. With fiery eyes aglow,  
his steed raced off and disappeared.... The years  
passed by and — sudden, war broke out. And all  
at once I'd news of him: the entire country  
was proud, for like a ploughshare sharp he mauled  
and cut the enemy! The blood ran freely  
from our foes, up to his knees it rose.

O Yaroslav, my friend, in many a duel  
your name was on all lips! When blows  
were dealt at Kharkiv — battle cruel —  
our troops made circlement, the forces were  
unequal. Yaroslav through blazing fires  
fought one-to-eight all night, and so deterred  
the hanging — fascists in their spiteful ire  
were ripe to execute the people. And fame anew  
surrounded Yaroslav. The troops recaptured  
the village but, before the foe withdrew,  
my friend was killed....

And I knew anger, anger  
when I heard you were dead! The morning news  
by radio mentioned you: thus they paid token  
to you, my friend.... Arose in mental view  
your coffin slowly swaying.... I, heart-broken,  
so wished to see you then — were it only your  
dead body in the coffin!

All ever changes, ever made anew and severed.

And the coffin  
still swings before my eyes, my dream of you.  
I catch up the procession, see the coffin  
is closed, would look, though it's in vain  
for Yaroslav's not here: I was not there  
when he was buried — at the front! And once again,  
the military band.

All ever changes, ever made anew and severed,  
all in the world are changed, to new forms all are  
shapen.

How strange! The trumpets blare,  
and soldiers walk in the procession, but I  
(I can't get rid of that dual feeling)  
keep seeing how a beet-red flooded sky  
fades in the west.... No matter. Thoughts come stealing:

For whom do all the trumpets weep?  
Why do the cymbals clang so bleak?  
And drums tattoo like hearts in breast,  
when he has well earned lasting rest?

For whom? What need to ask of any one?  
A soldier's coffin — so, he fought for freedom,  
defended freedom for his land! Our dawn  
had started lighting all the world. And blossoms!  
How many bloomed in fields of many climes —  
fraternity, friendship.... Slavic dawn already  
lit up the Occident.... But came the time  
when rose the fascist-offal's howls so deadly.  
The beast with pincer-claws struck far and near,  
Tore into all of us.... And throbbing  
with grief goes the band — I think it sounds like tears  
from the Ukraine.... Let trumpets ring with sobbing!  
Let widows, mothers, following the hearse  
give voice to sorrow, wail their mourning,  
and cry aloud and wring their hands! You cursed  
thrice over Hitlerites! I give you warning,  
you'll never overcome us! Why, oh why,  
do you torture innocent people? You gabies  
think you're superior? Nobler than us? A lie!

Nobility in dogs saves not from rabies,  
Nor yet in wolves.

But in the west with bristling chill,  
the storm-clouds, as on wolfish paws, grow bolder.  
The twilight fell. The band's sad music stilled,  
the silence grew.... A company of soldiers  
march past us. Yonder, laundry goes on sleighs  
to some near hospital. A group of children  
run by, with a dog. A factory whistle brays  
hoarse tones, breaks off. The dark begins to deepen.  
Before our eyes the city changes. Snow  
upon the streets gleams phosphorescent.  
Ahead of the procession swiftly goes  
a lantern's ray of light. My heart, all woe,  
joins in to sing that requiem incessant:

All ever changes, ever made anew and severed,  
blood ever runs from wounds, hearts beat with pain  
of dearth,  
as ashes unto ashes, dust to dust is rendered,  
so always, all committed are to earth.

All in the world are changed, to new forms all are shapen,  
Sojourn in darkness, then in light — land of the Blest.  
Man wanders over all the earth, by tumults shaken,  
before he may once more seek out eternal rest.

For every day, and every shining hour,  
the earth engulfs and resurrects her prize,  
her mills grind man through toil that would devour,  
like snake from chaos — victims to surprise.

But no, life strictly keeps her long established sequence;  
what seems like chaos moves in subtly tuned accord.  
Look deep in history: fighting readiness the essence  
of all its mirrored images that pens record.

A readiness to fight for liberty, both yours  
and that of peoples still enslaved, for all oppressed:  
the fight for justice is the only means, the door  
that you must find if you would gain immortal rest.

The earth is your own mother — she is not a snake —  
Earth gave you life and cared for you wherever you strayed....  
The laws of struggle — no one in this world can break,  
the laws of motherhood cannot be changed or stayed.

Those fighting for world peace and overcome reverses —  
all tell us:

“Go, keep on! We're sure the cause is just!”  
So drink our blood, you Nazi leeches! The worst is  
ahead. You'll beg for water when you bite the dust.



You'll die for want of water. Your own people never,  
if they're not slaves, will suffer you to live — they'll fight.  
All ever changes, all ever made anew, and severed —  
all march toward good-neighbour times, a world of light.

For looting, you'll be charged as thief, without blinking.  
Oh, you'll be caught and like a fowl plucked one day.  
All ever changes, is reshaped, changed in but a twinkling,  
as in a sculptor's hands the damp and ductile clay.

The sculptor — the nation that holds its ground unbending —  
though you are in great haste its people to enslave.  
They all are rising up, stand firm, and laugh unending:  
It's not for you, the dead, to kill the quick, the brave.

...The band struck up. Into a little street,  
turned all our mournful long procession —  
and factory lights were flashing.... In high retreat  
skies rose to greater heights: for in ascension  
the beams from searchlight-muzzles cut through space  
high up, and started crisscross searching splendid....  
On each side, all the snowy firs were graced  
with needles glowing green, and they were pendant  
like banner-tassels....

All ever changes, ever made anew and severed,  
blood ever runs from wounds, hearts beat with pain  
of dearth,  
as ashes unto ashes, dust to dust is rendered,  
but afterwards from underground begins a green  
rebirth.

Ah, already here.  
At the cemetery. The horses stopped. And gently  
the coffin was lifted out. (Like pearly tears  
the snow sifted from trees, and accidentally  
from coffin lid. I lent a shoulder too  
to bear the coffin.) We moved off, but slowly,  
for we were overtaken (life then knew  
only haste) — some carried ropes and some the lowly  
spade. They all sank deep within the snow  
with every footstep. We did also. Hardened  
the frost that night. Past crosses row on row  
we made our way, and brought our sacred burden  
up to the hole. There laid it down. No word  
was said. The clay was cold and wintry  
that ridged the edge.

"A flaming sword,"  
began the speaker, "is raised throughout the country  
against the fascists!" (Hard by a grove of trees

voiced murmur. Then the mother cried out: "Open, the coffin! My son, your hand!" On bended knees: "What have you done to my child? My little one?" The wife joined in — her eyes were dry and hard. Hysterical, she sobbed: "Oh dear Stepan, awaken! Wake up, my darling!") "With this very sword," the speaker said, "let Teuton heads be taken! No mercy! Into battle now are thrown our armoured strength and mighty fighting forces. The partisans in Yugoslavia are sworn to lend a hand! Our comrades are for us in Poland — tocsins ring, appeals to call their consecrated blades to action! Transcarpathia is seething.... The people's anger never palls, and tyrants fly to bits in Czechoslovakia! Czechs won't be silent.... Brothers! Those who die defending home and country live through ages, as long as mankind lives!"

A pause, a sigh, then, pointing at the coffin: "Nought assuages his death by torment, but it was for Ukraine. And here he lies disfigured. Stepan's come home." (Both wife and mother sobbed and cried again on hearing this. And we stood cold and lorn like ghosts in gloom of night. The silent frost burned deep in every heart.) "But heroes never know fear! Their mighty feats by radiance glossed call out to us: To arms! Avenge forever!"

A salvo thundered. Such a clamour broke — as if a storm swept all with rushing wings. A storm of tears and cries. With measured stroke, the coffin sank below, earth swallowing Stepan within his grave. And soil by handfuls fell on coffin lid: the thud on wood a lonely and sad farewell. The weeping seemed to swell the sobbing notes the band gave out. And only one star shone in the sky.

How sadly now the trumpets weep,  
and cymbals ring out loud and bleak.  
But drums tattoo like hearts in breast:  
'You earned a glorious hero's rest!'

Once more I wept!  
I know not how, with whom, I went back home.  
All earth in phosphorescence slept....  
But in my soul the requiem intoned:

All ever changes, ever made anew and severed,  
blood ever runs from wounds, hearts beat with pain  
of dearth,

as ashes unto ashes, dust to dust is rendered,  
but afterwards from underground begins a green  
rebirth.

And when I reached my home, I saw outside  
my shovel in the snow — I'd left it lying.  
So poignant rang  
the darkened silence. High up I descried  
the greenish gleaming  
of the star shining....  
Shine on and light our way! We wait the hour  
when we will bury in a grave as narrow  
all fascist brutes! Oh, we will overpower  
them all, for all tomorrows.

We all are rising up, stand firm, and laugh unending.

I say we'll fight so long as we exist!  
Upon the enemy will fall our vengeance!  
And while one Nazi enemy subsists,  
we'll trample him, keep vigilance.  
However hard our lot,  
or great our sacrifices —  
we'll not give in no matter what  
the price is!

Without a word to anyone that night,  
I threw myself upon my bed — No sleeping!  
The coffin slowly swayed before my sight —  
I seemed to hear:

We all are rising up, stand firm, and laugh unending.

I seemed to hear:

All in the world are changed, to new forms all are  
shapen.  
It's not for you, the dead, to kill the quick, the brave.

I see Stepan arise as if awakened,  
And Yaroslav as well. Spring skies. No grave!  
The tractors till the fields! Lark song ascending  
high in the blue. And youth of a new day  
come riding here to meet us, gaily flying  
on horseback; and their leader had this to say:  
'We have borrowed from you, the dying,  
your powers and great skills to beat our foes!  
Our people know much suffering and sorrows,  
ordeals of fire: but die not under blows.  
We'll overcome the fascists, now, tomorrow!'

Stepan and Yaroslav's mothers once again  
I see bring water to their sons on leaving  
to join the ranks and fight and win much fame  
in combat. With them go our squadrons weaving  
new glory in air battles, zooming high,  
dive bombing.

Suddenly I wake. I wonder  
why it's so dark. It's night. And raging nigh  
a blizzard knocks with a rapacious finger  
against my home's thin walls. On window-pane  
snow rustles. Oh, where am I? Was I dreaming?  
Then I remember A L L. Nor close my eyes again.  
Our holy cause of justice for the living,  
so all know freedom, live in liberty,  
I carry also, like a child in arms —  
And everything is clear that I did see.  
Both you and I shall live and know the charm  
of evergreening life like ivy on Life's tree.  
Our towns and gardens shall be all restored —  
we are convinced of this with growing confidence.  
March to your ruin then, vile fascist horde!  
And nevermore deface the human conscience!  
O cursed by man, what evil roads you tread!  
Why lead your people to the arena of Satan?  
Just to be jeered at! You're the living dead!  
The living dead!

Heart-stopping, through the darkness sped  
the howl of storm like air-raid siren....  
I briefly listened, then lay down again.  
And yearned to see the Dnieper and Ukraine!  
Came rustle of snowfall on the window-pane....  
I seemed to hear:

How sadly somewhere trumpets weep,  
and cymbals ring out loud and bleak,  
but drums tattoo like hearts in breast:  
'You earned

a glorious  
hero's rest....'

1942

## I GROW STRONG

I am the folk, the Truth's my crown,  
by no-one so far overthrown.  
What woes, what plagues have mown me down,  
but strength anew has grown.

To live — I ask permission of none.  
To live — all bolts and bars I rive.  
And I arise, and I grow strong,  
for I'm alive.

You Teutons! You consumed my all  
when you my sons and daughters hung,  
when iron and corn and coal you stole,  
O how your fury stung!

You thought to swallow me ere long,  
but choking fell in the grass or grove...  
But I arise, and I grow strong,  
for I'm alive.

I am the folk, the Truth's my crown,  
by no one so far overthrown.  
What woes, what plagues have mown me down,  
but strength anew has grown.

My sons, my brave Ukrainian Reds,  
your deeds of valour I shall praise —  
go, help your fathers and wives, my lads,  
to free your children haste!

On Russian and Ukrainian soil,  
on Byelorussian too, I pray,  
strike down the foe, the foulest of foul,  
strike stern today!

Though wounded — that's no shame, no wrong —  
I must kill the pest, so spring-wheat shall thrive,  
And I arise, and I grow strong,  
for I'm alive.

From wounds springs life in the ear anew,  
at which the world will gasp in time:  
what soil, what seed, what drenching dew!  
Then how can it help but shine?

And I shine too, and stretch each wing,  
and call my eagles from above...  
And I arise, and I grow strong,  
for I'm alive.

And there will be pure skies of blue:  
prosperity, mercury-like, will rise,  
and combines will gleam in rye-fields too,  
and factories hoot likewise...

With untold riches life will throng;  
smoke-trails, like brows o'er the sun, I leave...  
And I arise, and I grow strong,  
for I'm alive.

I am the folk, the Truth's my crown,  
by no-one so far overthrown.  
What woes, what plagues have mown me down,  
but strength anew has grown.

You fascists quake! I stride along  
to lay the tombstone on your grave.  
And I arise, and I grow strong,  
for I'm alive!

*1943*

### SWORD DANCE (from the Scottish cycle)

We were received in Aberdeen  
as envoys of our Soviet land.  
...Reception ended... What a scene!  
the hall re-echoed on every hand.

Here Scottish lassies stand in fours,  
with arms akimbo in the hall...  
The swords lie crossed upon the floor —  
the bagpipes wail, their wild notes call.

A leap — and how the ribbons fly!  
Retreat — and ribbons on shoulders lie!  
The lassies dance upon the boards  
the Highland fling, above crossed swords.

They circle round now in the dance,  
and mark the time with clapping hands,  
then with a stamp, as if by chance,  
they circle back, and still they stand.

With arms akimbo placed once more  
they dance upon their pointed toes,  
and as the bagpipes skirl and soar,  
with speeding step the circle goes.

A leap — and how the ribbons fly!  
Retreat — and ribbons on shoulders lie!

The lassies dance upon the boards  
the Highland fling, above crossed swords.

And like a lake beneath the breeze  
there ripple silks and sashes and cords...  
The lassies glance down at their feet —  
they must not tread upon the swords!

Their step is proud (No! bend not such!)  
and sometimes they've a careful air,  
the swords they must not brush nor touch —  
as if some savage beast lay there.

O, tramp the throat of war's wild beast!  
O, call to all with friendship warmed!  
In that great meeting called for Peace,  
I felt how well they all performed.

I felt how youth calls loud and clear  
to free the folk from chains and woes:  
this Scottish lass a-dancing here  
has every fascist foe exposed.

— So, you would split us, fascist foes?  
Our Soviet folk is one wide sea!  
With strength it simply overflows,  
and stands in powerful unity.

And here in Scotland what I saw;  
among her miners what I heard,  
in my glad heart I noted all,  
and tell in song, with gilded word.

And there I stood, heart full of glee,  
for none can conquer such a folk.  
The Scottish people were once called free,  
and if they wished could break their yoke.

With pain and wounds and death's dark hour  
no capitalist such folk can scare.  
Their hatred for the tyrant's power  
is ancient, menacing, and bare.

Their hatred's like a sharpened blade!  
Their cry of freedom — no weak words.  
Then who has this proud people made  
to dance upon the two crossed swords?

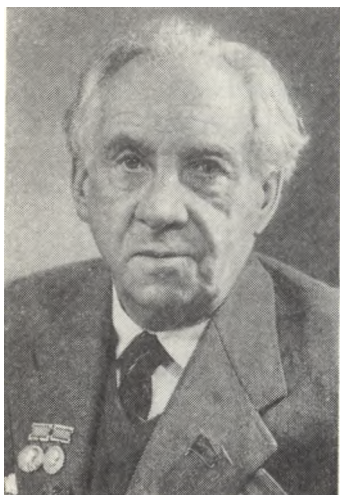
Perhaps war-mongers raise their riot,  
that folk should grow as soft as wax?  
Then strike — give them no moment's quiet,  
send thunder and lightning on their tracks!

Then, swift as lightning o'er the sea,  
a tide swept forward!.. wave on wave!..  
...My thread of thought was snapped in me —  
a great ovation the whole hall gave...

A leap — and how the ribbons fly!  
Retreat — and ribbons on shoulders lie!  
The lassies dance upon the boards  
the Highland fling, above crossed swords.

*1949*





## MAXIM RYLSKY

*Maxim Rylsky (1895-1964), the son of a renowned Ukrainian ethnographer, was born in Kiev. One of the founders of Soviet Ukrainian literature, he is the author of more than one hundred books of verse, criticism, and essays on Ukrainian literature and history. He was a member of the USSR and Ukrainian SSR academies of sciences and a Lenin and State prize winner. He is known for his excellent translations of Russian, French, Polish, and other authors. The Maxim Rylsky Prize is awarded annually in the Ukraine for the best translations into Ukrainian. Maxim Rylsky's works have been published in many editions in the USSR and abroad.*

\* \* \*

Swallows now are flying, fly to try their wings,  
Hanna's now in love — for her it's time....  
Batu Hill is laved in green in early spring —  
Like a wave arrested in its climb.

Maples bend like tender knees their branches twined,  
Doves across a black cloud draw a silver veil;  
One more day — and all of us leave all behind  
Faring out beneath a blue-winged sail.

Let old Earth revolve, describe its circled rings  
Even round its shining orb betimes...!  
Swallows now are flying, fly to try their wings;  
Hanna weeps because for love it's time....

1929

\* \* \*

Sign of Libra — sign of the new age,  
How The Scales rock in a world gone awry!  
Hide quickly! You who only faint hearts carry  
And feeble looks. The Zodiac storms presage.

No Donnybrook with bloodshed more or less —  
But a dual-force fight for the highest Commandment,  
Yet only one will rise in the ascendant,  
For every "No" will hear a flaming y e s...

The scale-pan tips, decisive with heavier power,  
We're sure the final victory is ours,  
The air's electric — lightning's in the van.

Unite, all fighters! Alert, those on sentry!  
So over wingless dark will rise in victory —  
Man's liberator, the free working man.

*1932*

## THE COMPETITION

In sunny Florence once upon a time,  
Leonardo da Vinci joined in competition  
with Michelangelo, the younger lion  
against the elder lion. Both had power,  
they both were bold, and both of them had cunning,  
though each was kindled by a different fire.  
For both the subject was a scene of battle —  
this the assignment. Nothing more. Free choice  
in working out the topic as they wished.

The long of beard Maestro Leonardo —  
philosopher, maths expert, engineer,  
researcher of winged birds and also corpses,  
within whose heart there twisted, like a snake,  
the passionate icy smile of La Gioconda,  
complex eccentric he, ready to dissect  
all life around, as he'd dissect a lizard.  
This master-wizard, artist with long beard,  
applied his brush, so soft and cold and awe-filled,  
upon the canvas — blank and obedient —  
to draw a battle scene: there maddened steeds  
with strong white teeth attacked and bit each other,  
there human muscles bulged in upward thrust,  
with fury mixed in wild and brutal tangle  
of flesh and blood and vital thirst to live;  
with standards gripped by clutch of soldiers dying,  
by hands thus given strength enough for two.

Impressionable Florentines were startled  
and said: In sooth, one should not really look  
so deeply in the depths of nature's secrets.

But Michelangelo, that tireless fighter  
with marble, with himself, and also people,  
creator of the madly daring David,  
proud spokesman for great anger and for grief —  
quite differently depicted bloody war.  
He painted there a sunny joyous shoreline  
And shining stream; where swarthy men-of-arms  
Were washing off the battle-dust and bloodstains  
While bathing in a golden time of rest;  
free minutes — fooling round without a worry  
Like sparrows in a pool, dolphins at play  
out in the ocean; like small careless children  
Whom they, the brave, had left secure at home  
In the embrace of wives with raven hair.  
See, one is diving, pulls his mate down under;  
another like a whale spouts from his mouth  
a stream of water rising like a fountain;  
Still others, laughing, sport in playful fight,  
Sending far above them water rainbows,  
Like web-foot drakes. No one would recognize  
This nude naive amusing group of children  
As threatening warriors, hateful predators.  
But sudden — rings the bugle, sharp and shrilly:  
The call to battle... And all are roused —  
Now swimming, running, cutting the broad rollers  
to shore, to arms reach out their hurried hands.  
They toss their heads to shake off silver droplets,  
Their mouths are clamped — all merriment chased away;  
They grind their teeth, and every eye is sharpened  
To pierce the distance, find the enemy there.  
A moment more: then through the dust they're racing,  
Like wild black demons. Again the blood  
Will run down fresh-washed backs, down shoulders,  
And splash, like rivers, out of living chests.

Impressionable Florentines were weeping;  
And said: All that is human has found room  
Upon this canvas, smoothly painted, even:  
He is conqueror of lion, he's a dragon!

But one will come, as yet an unknown painter,  
Whose voice will be the working people's voice  
And sound as free as swallows skimming ocean,  
who will complete the trilogy: he will paint  
A tired land and soldiers by a river,  
Land where the final battle of all Earth  
Has just been won — the soldiers seek the waters  
to wash away for good war's dust and blood.  
One down into fresh waves is swiftly diving,  
Another, hands outstretched, is poised to leap

Into the river from a cliffside boulder,  
One more has only reached the sandy shore  
And slowly lays aside his chainmail dress,  
His heavy helmet, coat of heavy mail,  
the long broadsword and pike invincible,  
His crossbow, quiver with its silver arrows.

Across the river wait their wives  
With babes in arms and children round  
Who call: Halloo! Wash up, come ye home!

The fields and workshops wait the hands of workers,  
Wait raiders who will not come home again!

But all the workers, in their hearts rejoicing,  
Call out aloud: Oh, blessing be on thee  
Who conquered both the lion and the dragon!

1932

## FRIENDSHIP

He made his scenic exit — mad King Lear...  
He made his scenic exit — Ira Aldridge,\*  
And fell into a chair, exhausted by  
His double life — a play, they sometimes call it.  
And suddenly, into his dressing-room  
Flew Taras Hrihorovich Shevchenko  
To clasp in strong embrace the actor Aldridge  
And let his ardent tears flow unabated,  
His ardent tears flow freely....

Each unable  
To speak a word containing any meaning  
To one another, they none the less  
Both understood the other far far better  
Than those whose loud applause had followed  
The exit of the king made mad by grief,  
Than those who praised the poet-serf whose land  
Was even then tilled by the poet's 'brothers'....  
— The scene now changes: In a modest studio  
The actor poses for the portraitist.  
The first is humming his sad native songs  
That saw the light in slavery, and were swaddled  
In bondage, rocked by grief and rocked by sorrow,  
Fed only on the deepest misery.

---

\* Ira Aldridge — 19th-century Black American tragedian,  
who toured Russia in 1858-1867

The second recollects his own as well:  
Folk songs without a thing in common  
It seemed, yet allied by the same great longing,  
The same great suffering.

And suddenly,  
Still far away — both see a bright horizon,  
Where dawns the day when all the slaves on earth —  
Both black and brown, both white and yellow peoples —  
Will see the walls of slavery crashing down.  
And blessed tears will sparkle in their eyes  
Lit by the future sun of liberation.

Shevchenko! Aldridge! That happy day has come!  
The hand was found that tore the dark wall down,  
A voice was found that cried to all the world:  
“O Black and White and Brown and Yellow races,  
Unite beneath a single glorious banner!”  
And from all ends of earth are voices heard  
That melt into one voice of mighty power.  
To all oppressed, the Land of Soviets  
Proffers the hand of warm fraternity.

1936

### CHANT OF MY NATIVE LAND

Blest be the wondrous day and time  
When this our land like strips of carpet  
Was spread, a sweet and sunny clime,  
For little Taras \* walking barefoot.  
And later Taras with sublime  
Abundant tears like dew bestrewed it.

Blest be the bitter wounds that bleed  
In steppes, as boundless as the ocean,  
Whose green waves — fragrant as new mead —  
Flow round about our pearl-white Kherson  
Who, maiden-slender as a reed,  
Lies warmly on the Dnieper's bosom.

Blest be thou, Song, through centuries  
Who, like our sun, great weal imparts,  
Like white-winged bird makes prophecies!  
Our song that valour wakes in hearts,  
Defends our joys, our griefs release,  
When clouds hang over native parts.

---

\* Taras Shevchenko

Blest be thou, Footprints on life's sands,  
That rains cannot erase, enduring...  
Skovoroda's! \* He walked the land  
In search of waters that were curing —  
Two dusty bags on shoulder-band —  
All churches great or small detouring.

Blest be ye all: the swords as bright  
As fire, our homeland vast defending;  
The warhorse neighing in the fight;  
Sea-raids the salty brine transcending,  
Guffaws of Cossack *Aeneid* \*\* knights,  
Small Poltava's crown augmenting.

The fervent songs of the *Kobzar* \*\*\*  
That won't be turned to ash by flame;  
The Paver of the Way's hard hammer,  
Lysenko's \*\*\*\* strings that life proclaim;  
The glory of a golden star  
Surrounding Zankovetska's \*\*\*\*\* name.

Both sweat and labour blessed be,  
The living wealth of muscadine,  
The green of roadside maple-tree,  
The lamp of wisdom of great minds;  
Fraternal flags that wave so free  
And round the Kremlin walls entwine.

Blest be the lakes so blue and wide,  
The River Psel, mint-scented rue;  
People's genius that never died  
Nor will die — though guns beat tattoo.  
Among fair sisters, there resides  
Our Mother \*\*\*\*\* — blessings on her too!

Blest be ye, my brothers free,  
By liberty and friendship fired  
To reach one aim that common be,  
By waters still, clear dawns inspired —

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\* Hrihorii Skovoroda (1722-1794), Ukrainian enlightener, philosopher and poet

\*\* *Aeneid* — burlesque of Virgil's poem. Written by the Ukrainian writer Ivan Kotlyarevsky (1769-1838) in the town of Poltava

\*\*\* *Kobzar* (the Bard) — name popularly given to Taras Shevchenko

\*\*\*\* Mikola Lysenko (1842-1912), composer, pianist and choir conductor, founder of the Ukrainian school of music

\*\*\*\*\* Zankovetska — stage name of Maria Sadovska (1860-1934), Ukrainian actress

\*\*\*\*\* Our Mother... among fair sisters — Ukraine among her sister Soviet republics

Brave Russian people, blessing thee,  
We praise the fame you have acquired.

What powers can drain the Dnieper dry,  
Or splash our sea with other prowls,  
Plough in, with ploughshares forged of lies,  
Our land of gold and silver boughs?  
What evil could, however sly,  
Defeat pure heart and honest brow?

The day shall dawn, the hour dawn  
When honey-flow will be restored  
To the land a blessing lies upon  
From Taras's pain in deed and word —  
A land that's winged with powered song  
When Taras's thundering voice is heard.

Can she, this land, be really slain,  
Be choked in a hot blood-spilling sea,  
When call to honest battle reigns  
And rings from every forest tree  
While she's alive, and in strength gains  
In the new family grand and free?

Can her flourishing be congealed,  
While dawns still break in rosy carmine,  
While countries to amazement yield  
At the roar of the sudden wounded lion?  
Though foxes yap at the scutcheon-shield \*,  
And calls the Div \*\* from the topmost pine!

What power can break the golden string,  
When the Boyan \*\*\* spirit fills the lyre,  
Or crush with evil smouldering  
The wormwood's smoky-sweet attire,  
Or Kiev and Kaniv's \*\*\*\* beauty fling  
Into a coffin black and dire?

No! There's no power on earth, no realm,  
Nor will there be — that can conspire  
To harness us or overwhelm  
And trample us into the mire,

---

\* Though foxes yap at the scutcheon-shield — quotation from *The Lay of Igor's Host*, an epic poem written by an anonymous Kievan Rus author about the campaign of Prince Igor against the nomadic tribe of Polovtsi in 1185

\*\* Div — a mythical personage in *The Lay of Igor's Host*, a creature hostile to the Rus, and whose cry apparently warned the nomads of Igor's attack

\*\*\* Boyan — semilegendary minstrel of the Kievan Rus period

\*\*\*\* Kaniv — town on the Dnieper southeast of Kiev, where Taras Shevchenko is buried

While our Party's at the helm,  
Free people of — USSR!

The Dnieper roars, the Sula howls,  
Carpathian voices echoing throng,  
Podillya village's threatening growl  
To ancient Putivl \* rolls along.  
Can Eagle be destroyed by owls?  
Can Right be overcome by Wrong?

O native land! You know your way  
Through storm and trouble agonizing!  
The people arm, like trumpets bray  
The bridges, water is thunder-driving....  
The foxes at the shield may bay  
But in the east the sun is rising!

1941

## CUP OF FRIENDSHIP

To arms, Slavs, to arms!

*M. Staritsky \*\**

Rings through lullabies when dusk has fallen,  
Through old tales of marches so enthralling,  
Of marches, and of feats-of-arms immortal,  
Through the wedding song of nightingale  
It often runs in waves that dance and sparkle —  
Song of the blue Danube ages old.

Rings through springtime dreams, and swan-call clear,  
Through blood-and-gore accounts of olden years,  
Through doleful legends of discord and tears,  
Through stories of fraternal peace sincere;  
Clamours so, young hearts are moved to feel  
Charmed by quiet pain and sweet, to hear the  
Blue and all-Slav Danube, as of old.

We, all Slavs, are laved by Danube waters,  
Rocked upon its waves as by a father,  
So, in storms of this great holy war,  
As one man, we lift the cup of friendship.  
As one man, we lift the cup of fealty,

---

\* Putivl — town in central Ukraine

\*\* Mikhailo Staritsky (1840-1904), writer and one of the founders of the Ukrainian professional theatre



The cup of brotherhood, of freedom, glory —  
May our foes forever be destroyed.

Not for wrong — we march for truth and right,  
Honest deeds to do with our armed might,  
So over golden Prague of epoch olden,  
And that proud stronghold simply called the Kremlin,  
Over gloomy Wawel Fortress \* silent,  
Over Minsk in forests round reflective,  
Winds of freedom will forever blow.

When on Moscow ever kept advancing  
Hostile forces like black clouds menacing,  
Brother-peoples all of our great Union  
As one man arose and took to arms,  
Staunchly fought breast-on, saved it from harm...  
Brothers mine, was that not an example  
Of the highest valour, an example  
Of fraternal unity, symbolic?  
So lift up the cup of friendship higher,  
So lift up the cup of fealty higher —  
Death, damnation, to the treacherous foe!  
May they fuse in one united clamour:  
The blue Dnieper, Vistula of silver,  
The free Volga with its broad expanses,  
And the world of Slavs — the Danube blue.

*April 2, 1942*

## FIDELITY

You will find another lassie  
With dark brows like mine;  
But the true love of our fashion,  
Nowhere will you find.

*Folk Song*

All was reflected in the placid stream —  
A manly face that wore the shade of autumn,  
Whose sleepless eyes gazed long; and then upon  
His brow severe, a mournful quiet dreamed.

---

\* Wawel Fortress. Wawel is the name of a hill in Cracow on the west bank of the Vistula River. The place is known for architectural monuments of the 10th-17th centuries including a castle of the Polish kings

From far away is heard the splash of oars,  
While red and yellow leaves fall willy-nilly  
And on the stream's cold lap drift onward stilly  
Where first youth long ago had gone before.

He found himself a dark-browed lovely lassie,  
And with her found a new and smiling spring —  
Then vanished for all time o'er hill and valley....

The green shoots faded, love has had its fling....  
Whose oars then cut the blue of former days?  
Came back? But no, he never went away.

2

Shoo-oo, shoo-oo, goose and gander,  
On the path and waterway....  
Cossack lad, please cool your rancour,  
You should really change your ways.  
*Folk Song*

She touched with soft and gentle hand, so pleading,  
Her Cossack laddie's flying windblown sleeve....  
She would have spoken — what could words achieve  
'Gainst this daredevil headstrong but endearing!

As restless, he as wild wind chanticleering,  
He rides to break his heart without reprieve;  
A hothead, leaps an abyss unperceived —  
His steed's gold snaffle-bars still brightly gleaming.

"This kerchief's for your brow, in toil or fray;  
This ring's to keep all evil harm away;  
These tears are mine alone — and in my keeping."

He spoke not. Lost in thought. His horse he stops  
And reaching down he swung her lightly up;  
Then whispered: "I will change my ways, my darling."

3

I'll have brushwood never,  
So — I'll kick it ever;  
Such as you, my sugar,  
I will love forever,  
I will love forever!  
*Folk Song*

The joys of eventide are faint bells ringing,  
Or sweet response, or echo, memories....  
Eyes down in glance of eyes, as in deep seas,  
When to your window weary, joys come singing.

See how we travelled where life's long roads winded:  
We had our share — of poison and of wine  
Within that cup of bottomless design.  
Till your blood grows cold for good, you are enshrined.

Place hand in mine. How workworn, thin is thine!  
Oh, let me kiss, my love, your graying hair —  
Such young and lovely hair, like silvered vine.

Love, wife, mother, fidelity with care —  
As one! See? Past the window goes our son.  
I love you! I'll not stop, though life is run.

*Belgrade,  
October 15, 1945*

### PIGEONS OVER MOSCOW

The growth of Moscow gladdens the eye.  
I rise. From window-view, I'd say:  
This early silence prophesies  
The city wakes to a brand new day.

Work-buildings rise with cheeriness,  
Through predawn haze break through —  
The workforce knows no weariness  
And floods of people stream anew.

And over rooftops, coloured gay,  
Above the gardens, rainbow laved,  
In flying flocks that lightly play  
Like kerchiefs, the white pigeons wave,

They circle, flash and disappear,  
And swirl again like flakes of snow:  
To children's eyes they are so dear —  
Winged favourites they love and know.

The blue sky calls out one desire —  
That stirs this flock of shining wings —  
To catch the plane that's zooming higher,  
Yet cannot overtake the thing.

*1948*

## LATE NIGHTINGALES

The spring has finished its wassailing  
For cherry-blossom wedding time,  
The fruitful earth's already sailing  
In summer's harbour, moored its line.

Already ripe the barley-ears,  
It seems the time has come to leave  
Behind the wild songs of young years —  
So sages would have us believe.

The young soon grow and wish to rove,  
The coming spring to them belongs —  
And then throughout the wooded grove  
They too will love and sing their song.

But in the silver pussy-willow,  
I have a secret company  
Whose hearts defy time's prose — still mellow,  
Late nightingales sing there for me.

*1951*

## WILD CARNATIONS IN THE WOOD

...All they dreamt of, spoke of...  
*Taras Shevchenko*

In the wood near wild carnations —  
Freshly washed, red-blushing visions —  
First their fingers linked sensations,  
Meeting palms were fields Elysian.

They started life already welded  
Right from school with sweet emotion,  
Two pure hearts in love that melted  
Deep in joy — a depthless ocean.

Orioles flute from horn-beam tree,  
Doves in maples bill and coo....  
Carpet round — green as could be,  
Eyes of brown, and eyes of blue.

"But, for always?" "Yes, for always!"  
"Dearest, honey!" "Sweetheart mine!"

Red carnations bow, adazed,  
Trust and honour thus opine.

Work before them, rich in yield,  
Was spread out beyond embraces;  
Bright the future seen revealed —  
Views of overstream expanses.

All they dreamt of, spoke of, never  
Disappeared as time went by....  
That moment lips first kissed so tender  
And when loving eye met eye.

1953

### GRAPES AND ROSES

A tired girl came home from fieldwork: then with hoe —  
Though mother called her vainly in to rest and dine —  
To work the flower garden went, where roses grow  
And also lovage and green mint their verdure twine.

An engineer, back from a distant railway run,  
His smoke-filled clothes and face all grime despite —  
Goes to the vineyard. Maybe mildew has begun  
To spoil the leaves? Now then, start in to spray the blight.

Inquisitive, a youth observes the orchard round  
The farm-collective, pollination laws his aim...  
Enjoying, too, the sight of black luxuriant ground  
Where scarlet poppies wave like colourful flames!

We so love work we make it a creative thing,  
Love music, too, that moves our very hearts.  
Man's happiness is formed of two equated wings:  
The grapes and roses, use and beauty — both are arts.

*September 6, 1955*  
*Kiev*

### THE BELLS OF AVIGNON

Chimes rise and fall in Avignon,  
From world affairs so far away....  
Your name — The Town of Carillon,  
Rabelais gave you in his day.

The bells call for all heads to bow,  
For those devout up to our day —  
No wonder there's a museum now  
For special bells that once held sway.

You hear in their bronze choral ring  
The legends of a patient land —  
'Twas here that some French royal kings  
Held Popes as captives in their hand.

I love your bells in my own way,  
Although religion I'm above.  
While on the Rhone, I'd like to say:  
"My greetings to you, Avignon!  
I may be old, but young in love...."

*July 29, 1957*  
*Moscow*

## RIO DE JANEIRO

(from the cycle of poems)

In late July — early August of 1958, the author took part in the 47th Conference of the Inter-Parliamentary Union in Rio de Janeiro. This cycle of poems appeared as a result of his stay in Brazil.

### I

The screech of yellow birds, long-beaked —  
Their name? I have no notion —  
All seems fantastic, strangely freak:  
The screech, and strut, wing-motion.

Instead of crows, there's urubus,  
Scavengers of the coastlands;  
Both night and day have pure hues,  
The streets are winding ribbands.

The lightning flash of ads in lights,  
The maelstrom flow of traffic,  
And ladies' faces black as night,  
Gas fumes, smoke, sun — hot lyric —

The tropic winter's warmth, the mass  
Of palms, lianas, aloe,  
The granite, sand, concrete and glass,  
And Christ, and cassock's shadow,

The dreadful rags of poverty  
Whose pungence catches throat —  
Silence louder than words could be  
When coffee ends the table d'hôte....

Trust youth — have faith that does not cease,  
As they earn trust all over  
When they wear pins that call "For Peace"  
Upon lapel or sweater.

*July 27, 1958*

## II

Mulatto! Dressed in rags and tatters,  
Skin dark as earth and running sweat,  
You smile at strangers — it's no matter  
From where they come — whom you've not met.

You came to Rio de Janeiro,  
Fled from the land in famine years  
To get with each hard-earned cruzeiro  
A living somewhat less severe.

What is he thinking, that mulatto,  
Who leans on spade so tiredly?  
Beneath his straw hat, eyes in shadow,  
I know my brother watches me.

*July 23, 1958*

## THIRST

From the poem *A Vision*  
(excerpt)

Dedicated to the 25th Anniversary  
of Soviet power in our  
wonderful Ukraine

(We thirst...)  
For you from tender dawn of birthlight  
Unto our last, our dying days —  
Not as we do for child or love-light,  
Not even as for mother — Nay!

But as the wind does if imprisoned,  
As those in graves thirst for the sun,

As I — in joy and in affliction,  
'Ere youth and its distress are done.

Thirst like the heart does, during parting;  
Thirst like the tired feet that roam,  
Which after exile long and smarting  
Again find their paternal home.

As ailing child does in his raving,  
As sheen of blue needs distant aim,  
Like a shadow beyond catching,  
You can't escape its stubborn claim.

As for a light, when night is blackness;  
As for the quiver of joy in spring,  
As for a woman's tears so joyous  
Where a blissful silence rings —

I carry you in my heart's secreteness,  
In my subconscious sleepless mind,  
In thoughts more fair than nobleness —  
My thirst and love are passions blind!

You always were, and are, and will be  
The iron thunder, caressing skies,  
My native land, to thee, to thee  
The voices of my heart arise:

#### FIRST VOICE

Majestic water bright and clear —  
That freshens, juvenates and quenches thirst,  
That cools us after fieldwork hard and drear,  
That calms when battles fierce our foes disperse.

That to the weary, dreams reward;  
And Youth to do great deeds entices.  
Let then my purest-hearted words  
Be my soul's honest sacrifices:

Whoever knows great pangs of thirst  
Will surely my words truly value,  
As when July heat bakes the earth  
That suffers from a lack of shadow,

And as each stem in anguish prays,  
And every grass-blade loudly cries:  
"Oh! wing of raincloud, drop your sprays —  
On you our happiness relies."

"Oh rain! Oh rain!" Beneath sunfire  
The oak grove whispers, sadly dying —



Then far away the thunder's ire  
Discharges rain as if complying!

"The rain! A moment of life prolonged!"  
The dying sigh in the feather grass....  
Earth charms and chirps and bursts with song.  
And all is clamour, breezes pass.

Again spring comes, so soon beguiled,  
The stallions neigh, on black earth scrap —  
The world, just like a new-washed child,  
Laughs upon maternal lap.

Whoever knows those hard campaigns —  
Stone, thorn, and dust the goad,  
The bloody feet that knawed with pain,  
The heat of endless roads;

The burn of wounds 'neath dusty apparel,  
The breath that catches in the throat,  
The sky like an upturned dry rain-barrel,  
When Earth to embrous ash is smote —

Who marched unwearied when in need,  
Or crawled like shadow, scout unseen,  
Felt battle-drunk as if from mead  
And seen mirage of blue cool sheen:

That man knows what a river means —  
A magic drink framed in green fleece,  
A spring that spurts from ground to stream,  
Whose breath is cold but brings us peace.

O water! Happiest boon I see!  
What joy in this ale to carouse —  
Fall then, O rain, wash even me,  
Fall on the rye, the bloom, the boughs.

O rivers, you're my sisters — kin!  
You orbit, too, with Earth along,  
Her joy and bounty bringing in —  
So now you have become my song!

#### SECOND VOICE

"Don't throw bread out, for it is holy,"  
Strictly, sweetly, full of thought,  
An old man said, mayhap in story,  
To some curly-headed tots.

"Don't play with bread, for that's a sin,"  
To her breast-fed babe-in-arms,  
A mother once tried discipline,  
Restraining laughter's saving balm.

But youngsters grow from little babes  
Into women, into men;  
What they heard in their young decades  
Is forgotten later on.

Now in the archives that word "sin"  
Gathers dust, perhaps some grime.  
For all of us as small children  
Learn the new words of our time.

But somewhere deep there lies, unrecked,  
Feelings — flawless and inbred:  
An everlasting true respect —  
Yes! For holy 'daily bread!'

For honest work, though rich with sweat,  
For honey-smelling dark rye bread;  
When Life these into man's world let —  
Man gave birth to speech, 'tis said.

### THIRD VOICE

The wet wild cherry tree is rocked  
By the queenly hand of spring,  
A duel's called for by the heart —  
'Gainst the nightingale to sing.

My life, my song, my blood has flumed  
Like ebullient jetting wine  
Through every fragrant lovely bloom,  
Through each cluster on the vine.

Together all the field-paths grow,  
Passion, meeting at your feet;  
Wild cherry blooms like dazzling snow  
Waltz their white-gowned pleats.

Dear spring, snow-winged, in pale array,  
You flew in, you have arrived —  
You spread your wings far and away,  
To toss the silk from brow connived.

As if in great surprise, your eyes  
Opened widely, as at night;  
A dream through time continuing flies,  
Rolls down cliffs of green in sight.

The fragrant flowers melted on  
Sweet lips in kiss forlorn,  
In amber necklace, night now shone —  
Guarding my door till morn.

## FAIRY TALE

A kindly fairy threw a golden ball  
Of thread which through the world a child went after;  
Along the way the views she saw enthralled,  
Far vistas shook like swan-wings on the water.

Her mother had not wanted her to go —  
So long confined to bed and greatly ailing —  
But one night through the window on tiptoe,  
The girl went seeking medicine for healing.

She passed through groves and deep ravines,  
And where the road forked into two, sought after  
The yarn of gold that was her guiding means  
And faithful friend in search for Living Water.

Foretold the fairy: only one such spring  
In all the world, so cold, rings like a bell;  
On guard your bridegroom stands, with wedding ring,  
No braver man than he on earth does dwell.

His brow is proud — round like the moon,  
His eyes shine like two stars of bluest azure;  
'Twas he who fought to strike, so opportune,  
The rock, and freed the font from its confined enclosure.

The child continued on her tortuous way —  
Which never led to dark groves or wild mazes  
Where hisses snake and roars the beast of prey,  
Or dragons wait whose breath with fire blazes.

The child grew older right before one's eyes,  
She fought down fears that e'er beset the heart.  
And the Good Fairy, when she thought it wise,  
Placed in her hands a Damascus two-edged sword.

She walked and walked, not days but many years,  
And grew in beauty like the ripened wheat-ear,  
Became a maid whose sword dispelled all fears,  
A gracious maiden — nowhere was there sweeter.

Oh, more than one dead beast fell down ravine,  
And more than one snake, diamond-skinned, all danger,  
Died midst the hills and primal woods of pine —  
Our Beauty passed, sword raised in white-armed anger.

The hour came at last. In bowl of blue,  
The morning's fingers rippled pearly skeins —  
On abyss brink, by Living Waters, TWO  
Loves met — October with his fair Ukraine.

*Vasil Chumak (1901-1919), a poet "made by the Revolution," was born in the village of Ichnya, Chernihiv Region, into a poor peasant family. His deeply lyrical poetry is rooted in Ukrainian country life of the early 20th century. Vasil Chumak had a great impact on nascent Soviet Ukrainian poetry. His poems have been translated into many languages.*



### SPRING HUBBUB

Little lily-cups clinked, dashed with rain,  
To them silver birch whispered deep:  
"Those mad nightingales once again  
didn't give me a wink of sleep!"

Weeping willow in gully-side shade,  
to the slender alder in bud  
said: "How can escape be made  
from the grief, sister, here in my blood?"

"When your heart starts to tremble and fail,"  
the stern oak-tree, rustling, remarked,  
"tell your grandsons a fairy tale  
of a beauty who... oh, silver-barked!"

Blue harebells in long grasses hide,  
with the lilies have lovingly lain.  
The birch-tree has seen it, and sighed:  
"Those mad nightingales once again!.."

## MAY

Keep silent. Just stroll. Why the path? Take the gulley.

The thicket.

Stand and listen: the drunken grove mutters first.

You too become drunk — not with words, with movement this is,  
to speak of the green, no boundary, no boundary...

But buds — will they burst?

Songs drown,

songs drown in rustling, among the leaves...

To speak with persuasion, a flourish, that someone perceives,  
that someone believes. That means: to take wing like a bird,  
like a bird to fly, to ring out, to cast a spell:

are you still content with your hut, with your clod of earth?

One can even better and freer

live as well!

Then: quieter... quieter... quieter...

Peace: nothing heard!

Only rustling. Only the leaves. And the buds a-burst.

## THE CALL

Wake, no grouses!

Quit your houses:

all around us bright day gleams.

In the dreaming

distance teeming

waves of singing,

answers ringing,

waves on fields and streams.

Wake, no grouses!

Quit your houses —

hey, young ploughman, push ahead!

In the meadow

sun and shadow,

free-born flowers

velvet bowers,

see, the warmth has spread.

Wake, no grouses!

Quit your houses —

work is waiting — where are we?

Hey! no shirking.

Time for working,  
First the testing,  
then for resting  
time, yes time there'll be!

*1918*

## BOUNDARY

Daybreak. Dewdrops. Dreaming. Silence.  
Wheat-ears. Rustling. Cornflowers. Cornflowers again.  
Daybreak. Dewdrops. Dreaming. Silence.  
Marjoram. Clover. A slight sad pain...

## ASTERS

What faded splendour!  
Red asters linger —  
the last of the flowers  
where the fierce flames play.  
In an azure chamber  
a misty languor.  
“We still love living!”  
“Why hasten away?”

“We still love living!”  
“We still love laughter!”  
“We still love tumult  
and the Marseillaise!..”  
The last of the flowers...  
To console them after,  
quietly moaning,  
the birch-tree sways...

## CORNFLOWERS

Yesterday for amusement  
round the fields I wandered,  
with the wind a-racing  
ran, not knowing where.

Silver and translucence.  
Gilded stood the poplars.  
Far-off clouds went chasing.  
Stubble, here and there,

cornflowers in the stubble,  
deep blue, deep blue starlets,  
very small and tender,  
tears of dewdrops gleam.

There I picked a couple.  
Stars! My cornflower darlings!  
Thread-like stems so slender,—  
springtime's gentle dreams.

True — you find life pleasant?  
Very! Very! Very!  
Happiness like an ocean,  
and the way is wide.

O my stars florescent!  
O, my sisters merry,—  
there speak with emotion  
souls where powers abide.

## TEMPERED POETRY

Hammer  
on anvils a million-fold din —  
in flaming-zealous manner  
a cast-iron hymn:  
smoke — and lathes — and pulleys — and cranes —  
rainbows on high — black earth — our soil —  
the field with its golden foaming manes:  
the work-team welded one in toil —  
hammer and plough. With unity  
in brotherly cast-iron rhythm  
let us forge the last of dawns to be:  
Socialism.

*Vasil Ellan-Blakitny (1894-1925), a poet, journalist, and public figure, was born in the village of Kozli, Chernihiv Region, into the family of a priest. He is the author of a large number of collections of poetry, pamphlets, essays, and journalism about revolutionary changes in the Ukraine. His poetry is distinguished for its civic themes and oratorical tone. Translations of his poems have been published in other Soviet republics and abroad.*



## FORWARD

Not a word that we're tired! Not a word about rest!  
Let march songs resound bold and loud through our lines...  
Though night lies around, still in deep darkness dressed,  
Already day's dawning, the morning light shines...

Tovarishi! Friends! Bold and lively today,  
Stood shoulder to shoulder we'll fight undismayed!  
Hey, who will dare to deny us the way?  
Our eyes are aflame, like a sharp-edged blade.

We've long to the foreknown road turned our breast,  
Though enemy bullets towards us may fly.  
Not a word that we're tired! Not a word about rest!  
We'll win to the keys of new life,— or we'll die!

*Kiev, 1917*

## HAMMER BLOWS

Beating hammers, beating hearts —  
Irregular beats... then not again...  
But flooding free once more there starts  
The tempered in the fire refrain:



The horizon's barred, as by a wall.  
Strike in measured time: one, two...  
We're only the first brave souls who fall,  
Millions will see our venture through.

A milliard "we" will raise proud heads,  
We only strike the initial spark.  
Well-forged blades will slash to shreds  
The ancient curtain-shrouds of dark.

*1920*

## LETTER

I have come to say to you goodbye...  
So farewell. Forget the singing wind.  
And the tender, quiet and gentle voices  
In the bushes, in the shady depths  
Of that ancient park, which once we loved.  
And forget your rather taciturn partner  
Who so stubbornly always strolled beside,  
Like your shadow (or you yourself his shade?)  
On one path, and over all the crossings,  
Who so stubbornly caught your eyes with his,  
Thirstily reading there the secret writings,  
Then, breaking off, went separate from you,  
Merging, on his burning, fiery quest,  
With the whole collective sea of movement.  
Only this I know: you won't forget  
(You will live, will live our past young days!)  
Do not hide: I know, I feel your care —  
Heavy layers — submissions and despair.  
Yes, I know, I know, I see so clear  
The yearning for spring blossoms to appear,  
Only — look — how life here seethes and calls.  
Not just in the quiet of heavy tomes,  
Nor in star-set scientific space.  
But in the thick, in factories, in the regions,  
But in the milling crowds, some friends, some foes.  
Go forward, strong and stubborn into action,  
All will yet be, as it indeed must be,  
All will be fine, be fine, be fine, it will...  
But life here seethes and boils and gleams.

Therein go I,— your uninvited partner.  
I shall live a thousand years, no less.  
I shall call you with my very self.  
    So farewell!  
    Or, maybe, yet we'll meet?..

*1922*

### FORGIVE ME...

Forgive me love, little girl, I ask your grace —  
With you I'm changeable, never balanced aright.  
It's all because I always think of the fight,  
It's all because I'm like a mad storm in the night,  
That you possess such a nervous, tender face.

*1923*



## VOLODIMIR SOSYURA

*Volodimir Sosyura (1898-1965), a classic Soviet Ukrainian writer, was born in the town of Debaltseve in Donetsk Region to working-class parents. His poetry, imbued with the theme of socialist transformations in towns and in the countryside, won him the USSR State and Taras Shevchenko prizes, and continues to be popular with Soviet and foreign readers.*

### OH NO, 'T WAS NOT IN VAIN!..

'Twas not in vain, oh no, the steppe with gunfire shuddered,  
Our brothers fought and fell, the soil was soaked with blood...  
'Twas not in vain, oh no, my old and toil-worn mother  
Removed the ducat-coins \* and crosses from her brood!..

The stamp of marching feet... A lull came in the fighting,  
The squadron chieftains greet the thronging boys...  
'Twas like a wondrous dream in mine-face murky lighting  
I once envisioned to our picks' staccato noise...

In neat-formed ranks advance the grannies, women, lassies,  
The children run 'longside, with rapture in their eyes...  
The black night whines and whimpers, frozen through and messy,  
Already quartered long ago by solar knives...

'Twas not in vain, oh no, the steppe with gunfire shuddered,  
Our brothers fought and fell, the soil was soaked with blood...  
'Twas not in vain, oh no, my old and toil-worn mother  
Removed the ducat-coins and crosses from her brood!..

1921

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\* Ducat-coins were worn on a string from the neck as a decoration or luck charm

## THE RED WINTER

O Lisichansk! Donetsk! My smoky factory!  
The music in the park, the early morning train!  
How, how forget you all, and my Third Company!  
I'll tell the world of you again and yet again.

To Sushchenko, to break the gravel we would go.  
A quarter on some days, it happened, we would earn.  
And in the park at night the girls would love us so...  
O fragrance of the steppe! O kisses, how they'd burn!

How simple was our life in home parts, where the dawns  
glowed over pitheads, while the hooters yelled aloud.  
We learned to write, of course, upon a random fence  
and fought for girls with neighbours in a crowd.

How, how can I forget White Hill against the sky,  
the dew-soaked grass, the eyes that were untrue to me.  
There, on my trusty horse, fast as the wind I'd fly  
across the clear expanse in night's transparency.

The waves keep babbling, cold as they once used to be,  
the factory tells tales of all that happened then;  
the well-shaft also creaks about the past to me  
when we arose and went to fight Petlura's men.

O Lisichansk! Donetsk! My smoky factory!  
The music in the park, the early morning train...  
How, how forget you all, and my Third Company!  
I'll tell the world of you again and yet again!

## 2

Winter. Off to the front! The platform breathes unrest.  
We start to sing "Chumak" beside the railway line.  
Freedom and happiness expand our youthful breasts.  
The struggle's welded us together for all time.

Straight rows of shaggy hats; bayonets, bristling, shine...  
My sister at the station sadly stands apart...  
You have not come to see me off, O mother mine,  
and that is why such pain and sorrow fills my heart.

It passes like a dream, that time, before my eyes.  
The foe beyond the river greets us with his guns.  
And boldly we march forth to fight those we despise;  
we've sent them down to die beneath the ice not once.

Winter... Off to the front! The platform breathes unrest.  
We start to sing "Chumak" beside the railway line.  
Freedom and happiness expand our youthful breasts.  
The struggle's welded us together for all time.

Again the knock of wheels. At rail-joints they change time.  
 The bridge on the Donets is long since quiet, old thing.  
 I stand beside the door. The distance smells of pine.  
 The sharp wind sings to me about my long past spring.

Rubezhnoye... Volodino... Kaban'ye then.  
 And then it's Svatovo... The engine whistles "Halt!"  
 We go to market, then walk to the baths again.  
 I sit down to write verse. The sunset shines, all gold.

I wrote of blood and snow... As if I knew — that night  
 Once more would bullets trace their path, dot after dot.  
 Again for our own class of workers we would fight.  
 That blood-red winter — could it ever be forgot?

The country's length and breadth with battles we went through.  
 The red snow melted in the fire of barricades.  
 By distance multiplied a hundred times anew,  
 "For Soviet Power!" — the call rolled loud above our heads.

They greeted us with joy no matter where we came.  
 No evil wind blocked our roads with tall snow banks.  
 The girls sewed to our coats bands coloured like live flame.  
 The lads took rifles up, and joined our grim-faced ranks.

Again Donetsland spreads... Bent willows, windy fields...  
 I still can not believe I'll see my village soon;  
 abandoned long ago, what love for it I feel!  
 How many won't return, engulfed in fatal gloom!

The snow crunches so soft... I walk on anxiously.  
 The road I know from childhood lies before my eyes.  
 I plucked red berries here, beside this road... ah me!  
 and plucked love's flowers, too, beneath the autumn skies.

The station shows... The factory... Then rails gleam bright  
 with thousands of small lights... The workers club... Sky-high  
 the calm rows of dark stacks send smoke-trails through the night.

The play is over. From the club the people throng.  
 How many, many faces that I know so well!  
 Why does my bosom hurt, for what does my heart long,  
 why do I feel so sad, can anybody tell?

Oh, where are you, dear brother? For a while at least  
 Do come to me — you waited, but I'd never known  
 while wandering and roaming without rest or peace —  
 you'd long exchanged your cottage for a graveyard stone...

You waited for me so, kept saying "Soon, oh, soon  
 Volodya'll bring me army breeches from the front."  
 We won't go any more to White Hill after noon —  
 You won't need breeches either, for your life is spent...

Again the knock of wheels — at rail-joints they change time.  
 The bridge on the Donets is long since quiet, old thing.  
 I stand beside the door. The distance smells of pine.  
 The sharp wind sings to me about my long-past spring.

The town still doesn't sleep, the town keeps up its din.  
 The wind brings us the breath of seawaves, warm and salt.  
 Not long ago the nights were given here to love,  
 nights dotted with bright lights as if with beads of gold.

We walk on through the town — on both sides chestnuts grow.  
 The buildings weigh on us, but we go onward fast.  
 Greeks and Zouaves were here not very long ago.  
 Here Capital held sway in the none-too-distant past.

With a firm stride we go, with palpitating hearts  
 along the streets; I'm full of wonderful new power.  
 I am and I am not — my destiny's joined close  
 With the collective "we" — from this delightful hour.

With a firm stride we go, in broad and mighty rows,  
 We march ahead to where the clang of steel is heard,  
 and like a crimson star each heart blossoms and glows,  
 and like red flowers wave our banners golden-starred.

The road goes steeper up. In valleys concrete hums.  
 Our hearts are all alight with dreams happy and gay.  
 Hailed by the silver song of deep-beginning springs,  
 Into the golden distance looks the new young day.

For us, for us alone the world's in springtime bloom,  
the earth has taken off its gloomy winter garb...  
For us alone these gloried years spin on their loom  
Bridges towards the future glittering afar.

1921

\* \* \*

No one loved so before. In a thousand years once  
such a love may revisit the world.  
Then a flower that promises spring to earth's sons  
on a forest glade, lovely, unfurls.

And the earth breathes so quiet. To the blue stars its hands,  
hot and tender, it seems to stretch forth;  
then the spring starts to bloom through the length of our land  
and with bliss and torment fills the earth.

From your eyes that look up at me, happy and bright,  
with sweet anguish my heart overflows,  
and the sharp scent of goosefoot spreads far through the night,  
and the blood in my veins never slows.

Stars in myriads above, and a gentle moon near...  
Love, you fill me with sweetness and pain!  
I could tear down the Orion for her, my dear,  
I, a poet of working Ukraine.

No one loved so before. In a thousand years once  
such a love may revisit the earth.  
Then a flower that promises spring to earth's sons  
on a forest glade, lovely, unfurls.

And the earth breathes so quiet; to the blue stars its hands,  
hot and tender, it seems to stretch forth.  
Then the spring starts to bloom through the length of our land  
and with bliss and torment fills the earth.

1922

As a night train goes rumbling afar,  
it reminds me beyond my own will  
of those midnights, the moon, the guitar  
and the dahlias, sleepy and still.

Near the township acacias grow.  
Up the hill we go, over the dam.  
Railway waggons fly by down below  
with the thunder of iron: slap-bang!

Stars look down at two lovers' dim eyes,  
lowered eyes full of love, full of soul.  
Light and shadow-born patterns arise  
on the road, on your blue cotton shawl.

Ah, those nights! O Donets, how you shone!  
Years of parting, how bitter you are!  
Like the voices of birds flying off,  
melancholy, you now seem so far!

I remember the villages roused,  
slag-heaps, black on a background of flame.  
In my greatcoat I stood near the house  
and you, seeing me off, wept with pain.

I remember our parting that day,  
and my belt with hard cartridges packed,  
and your look... "Don't be sad!" I would say  
and I promised you soon to be back.

The alarm and the sorrow are past,  
but a scar still remains on my heart:  
you're another's... The days have flown fast;  
I'm poet, not last in my art.

Like a dream... Through the blizzard and mist  
fortune's light has illumined my way,  
yet for her whom another has kissed  
I'd exchange all my laurels today.

I'd forget all the tears, all the hurts  
just to walk on that dam once again,  
just to hear once again your sweet words  
and to kiss your soft plaits in the rain.

And perhaps, too, those nights, that guitar  
you'll remember beside your new love.  
It is dark eyes I gaze into now.  
Yours were blue as these heavens above.

1926



I recall the cherries ripening, swinging  
in the garden, reddening in the sun.  
With your farewell, you said as I was leaving:  
"I'll find you, never mind how far you've gone."

In this dark, from tiredness and pain the while,  
Love and spite is drunk down to the dregs.  
Oft I see your so familiar profile  
Framed in light above your window-ledge.

All I dream of is that long past time....  
Drowning in the song of battle gore,  
thinking of your voice that seems to chime  
and merge with heavy guns that roar....

Now, as once before, the cherries snare  
Warmth of garden sunshine, turning red.  
I keep searching for you everywhere.  
How I wish you'd find me, like you said.

*1924*

## TO MARIA

If all the loves on earth were blended into one,  
the present, past and those in anticipation —  
it still would be as night... But my love's like the sun...  
Nobody heretofore has ever known such passion...

If gathered were all stars that shine at night  
and suns from all the planets in the spaces —  
my love would gleam with yet more lustrous light  
than all the suns through myriads of ages...

If from all globes collected were the blooms  
that 'neath the stars in zephyrs sway and tremble —  
my love would still emit a sweeter far perfume  
than flowers from all centuries assembled...

If beauties were forgathered of all times  
and past me they defiled in endless series —  
the charm of my Maria all outshines,  
no other would I choose, my song is Mary's.

If all those lovely eyes merged in one glance  
towards the cockles of my heart directed —

to cast a spell o'er me they have no chance,  
no equal to your eyes are there detected.

From what far stars did you to earth descend,  
my comrade and my friend and spouse together?..  
So, brightly shine for me without an end,  
dimming all other stars, my only star forever!

*1931*

## CORNFLOWERS

All over the field, you see blue cornflowers growing,  
and cornflowers lie in my love's eyes, it seems.  
Along a field pathway we two go a-courting,  
far away we can see a blue stretch of the stream.

The years will fly past like the clouds on high sailing,  
and others will pick cornflowers blue as the sky —  
but we'll not be here. By some law prevailing,  
we might be cornflowers, perhaps, you and I.

A girl and a boy might walk down a furrow;  
in clouds drifting, birds sing of happiness new:  
he'll compare then the eyes of his blithesome charmer  
with us, with the colour of cornflower blue.

*1938*

## A LETTER TO MY FELLOW-COUNTRYMEN

In our cities and villages, forests and valleys, where once  
on our native Donets we were born and grew up and matured,  
day and night, never laying down arms, our Ukraine's brave sons  
fight the enemy horde.

I appeal to you, countrymen, brothers and comrades of mine,  
through the rampage of fires, through the cannonade's terrible boom,  
to convey my great love in these brief and yet passionate lines  
to all those who defend in fierce battle our garden in bloom.

I appeal to you all, still alive on this stubborn black sod,  
all who struggle in snows, in the grim alternation of days:  
beat the foe everywhere, let him drown in his bestial blood,  
let the predators die in the thunder and fire of the fray.

They have come to our native Donets land to capture our coal,  
bursting into the homes of our fathers to plunder and sack.  
I appeal to you all through the fog, through the blizzard's harsh cold —  
beat the foe everywhere, let the wind sweep away his foul tracks.

Beat the foe everywhere — ruthless death hovers over his head  
on the dark, distant roads, on the bloody and blizzard-swept snows.  
In your strong, supple hands lies assurance that they will fall dead.  
See — already the sun on your weapons, victorious, glows.

Far away to the west army regiments struggle along;  
in unflinching steel rows ever forward they stream.  
Through the forests and towns, through Ukraine's broad steppes they  
move on,  
as they did long ago in the fiery year 1918.

Let it fly side-by-side with your bullets, my word full of flame,  
for it burns with my love for you, burns with my hate for the foe.  
O my brothers, to you in the thunder and fire of the fray  
let it fly; with the thirst of revenge in your hearts let it glow!

We grew up here together, together we built here and sang.  
How it rustled and shone, our fair garden, in rapturous bloom!  
But the foe planned to break our wide-fluttering wings,  
planned to trample our fields, to drive us into slavery's doom.

Clad in armour, they tore in to us in a savage wild horde,  
in a black band of robbers, depriving our cities of light.  
Shedding oceans of blood, sowing ruin and death with the sword,  
they intended to plunge us in endless depression and night.

At the Party's appeal all our country rose, mighty and vast,  
and our death-dealing steel let out torrents of serpentine gore.  
Our firm will is alive; through the ages our glory will last.  
Our sun will soon rise. Spring will shine on the ruins of war.

Fellow-countrymen, friends! Ever with you my song will remain,  
like my heart, which is joined to your hearts by unbreakable ties.  
Fired with friendship and love, over native Ukrainian plains,  
over native Donets, over city and village it flies.

Never silenced, it soars, over every cottage it flies,  
and it singles out one, at the foot of the quiet Kirov Hill,  
where my mother for news of her soldier-son waits, while her eyes  
follow miners that pass her with iron-firm will.

Westward-bound, they keep fighting, while cannonfire rages in spate  
for their sacrosanct homeland, their children, their mothers and wives,  
Glory to them forever! Our people will never forget  
Their compatriots, who in fierce battle are giving their lives.

Kremlin's stars sparkle into their eagle-eyes, fearless and hard,  
woods and fields listen, tense, to their resolute stride; at their back  
the Donets, in a thrill, from its ice sends them heartfelt regards,  
men who march in the fire of unheard-of, relentless attacks.

But the thunder will cease, and the bright glow of lightning will fade,  
and the gardens will blossom, and nightingales sing once again.  
To your fathers' glad homes, crowned with heroes' unfading green bays,  
you will come back, my friends, fellow-countrymen, covered with fame.

Where the ashes now lie, where the ruins loom black 'neath the sky,  
villages will arise, shining cities again will appear.  
Our Ukraine will be fairer, with steppes green and wide.  
From her glorious path every barrier to progress we'll clear.

Friends and countrymen! Though our expanses be covered with snow,  
my word flies by your side, marching on with your battle-steeled rows.  
With your miners it lies in the trenches, in cannonade glow,  
and at bivouacs guards you, when battle-tired eyelids you close.

Ah, how much still remains in my heart that I long to convey!  
How I wish you could feel all the warmth of my brotherly love,  
and that guns should not stifle my word as it flies  
through beloved Ukraine, over ruins and graves, like a dove.

Let my song march with you in a greatcoat of soldierly grey,  
for my song is my heart — it was nurtured on dark, sleepless nights  
in a town on Donets where my young days had fluttered away,  
where each home has been smashed in incessant and terrible fights.

Let its blue wings wipe off all the tears from my dear mother's eyes,  
from the eyes of all mothers, whose sons day and night bear the fire.  
Let the Spring come and rustle again as a joyful surprise  
in our sunshine-filled country which all of us love and admire.

Brothers! Children of sunshine and masters of tireless work —  
not in vain were you reared in tornadoes and fire by Donbas.  
Full of fervour, you fight in the trenches and toil in the rear.  
All my heart's in this song, all my love that won't falter or pass.

Through the tempest that roars o'er the country enveloped in gloom,  
through the mist, through the gale, through hot battles unheard-of before,  
Volodimir Sosyura sends greetings to miners, his countrymen. Soon  
we will meet, I am sure. All success to your righteous cause in this war!

1941

Joy of victory and making a right-about  
turn to broad steppeland, to the bright fields,  
Where a rainbow arch drinks water through its spout,  
Where around my home place, brooklets splash and reel...

Where the tawny lads go, and the dark-eyed lassies,  
Where the middle-aged men have goldy straw-hats,  
Where along the highway walks my song so saucy  
In an overcoat of gray — a brave soldier that...!

Lark up in the sky there, rye-fields rock like waves here,  
Villages and orchards in shimmering haze are lain...  
Love's first timid sunbeams in the world appear,  
Then the bridges, railroads come, with a lonely train...

But my thoughts and songs go, wandering near and far,  
Where I know each pathway, every grass-blade frail...  
Mother, mother mine-O, the Ukraine's a star,  
Moon above a river, even, nightingales.

A guitar rang softly, warm clouds sailed the sky —  
that is far away now, like an old refrain...  
I shall come to you, Mom, through all fires fly,  
And I'll knock so gently, on your windowpane.

"Who's there?" sweet as music, I shall hear her say.  
"Me, dear Mummy!" Radiant light will fall on snow.  
You will open wide the door — on wings and gay —  
Come to meet your son, and tears and smiles bestow.

Flowers will give fragrance, sleepy leaves unfurl,  
ring of song will hover, drifting till it dies...  
Silence suddenly will fall, as if it wrapped the world,  
Hushed will be the earth, and hushed will be the sky.

After storms of bloodshed, after roads of flame,  
I at last her dear and happy eyes will meet...  
"You've come home? For good? Oh, sonny!" she will exclaim.  
I shall burst out weeping, I'll fall at her feet.

*1941-1958*

## LOVE YOUR UKRAINE

As you love the bright sun, Ukraine you must love.  
As the waves, and the fields, and the wind.  
Love her in good days, when the sky's glad above,  
And love her when the fates are unkind.

Oh, cherish Ukraine in the night, in the morn,  
Her cherry-orchard beauty hold dear,  
The charm that is ageless, yet ever new-born,  
And the song of her speech in your ear.

Without her we're nothing at all, only dust  
Swept about by the winds o'er the earth.  
With all of your being adore her you must,  
And with all of your deeds her must serve.

She's our very own, she's the light of our lives,  
Of all that we are she is a part:  
She shines in our stars, in our willows she sighs,  
And she beats with each pulse of our heart.

Ukraine's in each songbird, each rose that grows wild,  
In each song ever sung in our land,  
In each maiden's eyes, every smile of a child,  
And each fold of the flag in our hand...

She glows in each meadow, each highway, each glade,  
In each rose-tinted cloud in our sky.  
In each fact'ry whistle, the Dnieper's each wave —  
There she lives and she never will die.

Through the crucible — war, our cannon roar,  
We are driving out the invaders:  
That enemy boots should tread here nevermore,  
That spring should again serenade us.

Young man! Take the pledge that your joys are for her,  
And your tears, and your sighs, and your pain...  
For how can you love other nations on earth  
If you first do not love your Ukraine!

Maiden! As you love the blue heavens above,  
Love your country with ardour aflame.  
For how can your lover give you his full love  
Unless faithfully you love Ukraine!

As you toil, as you love, in peace and in strife,  
Your Ukraine you must ever adore  
From the depths of your heart — then deathless your life  
For through her we shall live evermore.

## MY DONBAS

The long night's done, my Donbas... Love is in its heyday  
all barriers down, for spring is coming on apace,  
again the flying wind has caught the breath of May Day,  
the fragrance of the grass and flowers touch my face.

The bloody fighting and the countless days have gone forever.  
O Donbas, you are free to rise again up to the stars;  
the willows and the ash-trees rustle o'er the Donets River,  
the same as those my eyes held mirrored from afar.

Those trees wear scars of war like black death crepe of sorrow —  
they witnessed all that happened, saw the bombs that fell  
upon the factory I first worked at; and tomorrow  
the story pictured in the waters calm, they'll tell.

And yet they bear those scars like starry-eyed reflection  
of gladness shown by your beloved at your return,  
because they also saw the hour of resurrection:  
the liberating armies with brass bands that burned,

Our banners and starred helmets, flight of the invaders —  
the butchers whine, for Death beside them always strode.  
The scarred trees heard us sing — victorious serenaders —  
when marching home from storming through that endless road...

The clouds form dahlia blooms that float above blue waters,  
the working hands of millions are busy day and night  
in deeps of earth, the mines; above, build high-rise towers,  
in our land freed for all and happy Age of Light.

Do you hear it move and thunder way down under?  
And thunder overground? That's Labour Over All!  
That's Labour, free for the ages, like a flag of wonder,  
the Party, the Donbas ash-trees, the ores and coal.

My Donbas, filled with fragrant breath of the First of May,  
I send you greetings from free Dnieper's shipping lanes,  
I send a song that tells of you, my love in its heyday,  
and heralding a brand new spring in our Ukraine.

1949

\* \* \*

Sunflower past the fence there, heavy head drooped long,  
from across the river flies a maiden's song.  
Hearing that song distant, makes me start to pine —  
Oh, I know what wanders — there goes youth of mine!

Song that my heart clutches, heats my blood to move,  
all my hopes are in it, even all my love.  
Whither do you wander, long-lost youth of mine,  
in a shirt embroidered, with dark eyes that shine?

Sit here right beside me, once I so loved you —  
sweet as earth all greening, as the sky of blue!  
My youth cannot hear me... Yet I flame the more —  
Only laughter's flying from the farther shore.

Farther, farther, dying — voice once young and fine,  
only wind comes ruffling this silver hair of mine.  
Silver hair... voice so fair.... Aspen. Vesper. Song.  
Sunflower past the fence there, heavy head drooped long.

1955

\* \* \*

Hear the nightingale — it's my land of nightingales...!  
Through my fair Ukraine, a Spring Day has painted trails.  
Changing puffs of snow for blossoms: what a lovely throng!  
Once again my heart can beat with joy and ringing song.

I go walking in the woods... Oh, my land so dear,  
there's no beauty in the world like what I find right here!  
Nothing could be better, Open Spaces wide and blue,  
than to meet the spring in our Ukraine along with you.

Violets sleep amid the dews, across the river — mist...  
In my heart are shining eyes, so young, made to be kissed...  
Everything around has woken to the birds' refrain,  
Even my lost youth today came back to me again.

I go walking in the woods... To the open spaces  
bounds my youthful heart, sings like a lark in sky-embraces:  
Through our fair Ukraine, a Spring Day has painted trails...  
Hear the nightingale — it's my land of nightingales!

1956



\* \* \*

I love the ancient world of trees;  
they send us life from everywhere —  
By sway of bough, by shake of leaves.  
For trees are people green and fair.

Their leafy breasts breathe just as we,  
Like us, they see and hear, get talking;  
in much, our true facsimile —  
except they lack the gift of walking.

Mayhap they walk... This world's allure  
from childhood seemed a magic blessing —  
just as the sun makes fruits mature,  
and violet wakes with beams caressing.

And flowers, flowers! With an aim  
sing nightingales to full-blown roses.  
My soul, just like a sunny flame,  
would drown in blooms if fate disposes.

The earth, the trees, the vaulting blue,  
the grass by bare feet trodden:  
this is life. What joy to sing anew  
this happy life to every man and woman.

1960

\* \* \*

What are trees whispering of within the evening darkness?  
I watch them through a fog, I watch through curtained rain;  
From leafy lips of green, the tales keep falling endless —  
Just audible they sound mysterious and strange.

My soul can hear them speak.... But human speech lacks power  
To translate into words the voiceless tongue of leaves,  
But running through my veins goes vaguely sounding clamour —  
It has no meaning, form, that my brain can receive.

In vain the barrier round, my mind its way goes winging —  
It is not meant at all to pierce this solid pane.  
One fleeting moment then, the window's set wide-flinging:  
Before me vistas shine in panoramic vein.

Then nature's voices all, such moments grow so clear —  
I hear the leaflet's cry when torn off in a trice,

I hear the rivulet complain with many a tear  
That early morning frost is turning it to ice.

I hear pale asters tell — that autumn rains cause pining,  
And call with saddened plaint: let warm days come again.  
I hear the stars on high, mysteriously shining,  
Speak with each other where deep space is suzeraine.

Then I am open wide to breath of all the ages.  
In my soul's tiny world, the countless worlds come through —  
Like music at sundown and music at day-break  
Upon the carpet-grass shakes notes of diamond dew.

The rustling rain was still... The leaves were silent masses,  
The raindrops hung in globes, observing silently,  
as if a thousand lenses of miniscule field-glasses,  
Like eyes were aimed at me.

*1960*



*Dmitro Zahul (1890-1938) was born in the Bukovinian village of Miliyiv into a peasant family. He is the author of several collections of poetry and many essays on literature. He also translated from Goethe, Schiller, Heine, and other poets. His poems reflect social changes in the Ukrainian countryside of the 1920s-1930s.*

### I GAZE AFAR...

I gaze afar on stormy seas  
where one white gull wingtips the waves,  
and, on the wind to infinities,  
my thoughts race — like young pilot brave.  
Oh, many a venture gay secretes  
my heart, and for the doing craves.

The elements ring as if alive,  
and thunder claps beyond the mountain —  
a storm of passion it revives:  
pours in my heart a cloudburst fountain...  
Leap up, winged words, with power drive  
like airplane from a runway mounting.

Where storm and terrors rage at sea,  
where winds on brow blow icily —  
like bison mad, rush angrily  
at elemental mysteries...  
Success falls to the brave and free —  
so doth the screaming gull decree.

Unwavering to far unknowns,  
launch forth your poem-boats, no complaints;  
open your heart without constraint  
but stir no slime whose lure intones —

let feelings be metal and run unrestrained  
though arteries give and be broken.

When melancholy — that green-eyed spleen —  
like Moloch gapes its greedy maw,  
the mind like an iron bell rings keen,  
in your heart the tocsin bespeaks the law:  
That death inescapable waits unseen  
all submitting to hypochondria.

Start up and shake your motor, Heart,  
win the right to happiness the while.  
Roads call you on to worlds apart  
like the tender lure of a woman's smile...  
Burst forth like lava, Stormy Bard,  
from volcanoes of grief and lone exile.

Let your head reel round from the sparkling wine  
of whirlwind storm and ring of thunder.  
Let passions live once more, define  
the breach in the struggle and break it asunder...!  
Fly on, fly on, O songs of mine,  
you are planes from my Port roaming younder.

Higher and higher in stormy flight!  
Past blue horizons your vanes will wave,  
young pilot brave, in dreams of light...  
Oh, many a venture comes in sight  
that my heart so for the doing craves.

I gaze on an ocean of stormy seas,  
with ventures gay my coteries  
where the elements revel on musical staves.

## CHANGING MOTIFS

Motto: Es bildet ein Talent sich in der Stille,  
Sich ein Charakter in dem Sturm der Welt.  
*Goethe*

No poet is formed where rules tranquillity,  
Nor in monastic cell in lone seclusion.  
Where crowds with gusto swirl in gay profusion —  
It's there he spreads his colourful marquee.

His life's spent on cobbled streets, not parquetry;  
His palette's the busy square and flying banner —

Where he can catch life's high notes from the clamour  
Of crowds that move toward ends none can foresee.

No sonnet, triolet, no ultra key  
In verse the poet strikes — no affectation.  
No aesthete, classic he! The world's reflection  
In song he paints as stern reality!  
To know life — that's the poet's offering votive,  
To show how like the sea its changing motifs.

1926

## THE TRUMPETER

It's not the archangel's Last Trump blasting  
(I don't believe in Judgment Day) —  
It's the people's demonstration passing,  
Red Flag aloft this First of May.

But isn't that colour sacrificial?  
It took its hue from blood and flame —  
But not from Christ! (Such hope is futile!)  
What ringing Easter bells proclaim!

Invincible the power that functions  
From working districts breaking through —  
Destroying the old without compunction,  
For a brighter world they'll build anew.

Now over smoke-stacks, lights are rising —  
Mahomet, Moses, Jesus despite —  
All kings and czars alike apprising  
Comes a shout that grows in might:

Arise, ye prisoners of starvation!  
Break loose from your age-rotten chains!  
Ahead lies boundless expectation,  
Behind us wrath avenged in flames.

Arise and summon all to battle!  
Let weapons ring and smoke rise grim.  
The trumpet from your masters wrestle —  
Let earthly be that cherubim

Who a magic elixir possesses  
Against all wail, who doth inter  
The past — its memory disperses...  
Reveille calls this trumpeter.

1919

## THE SUN AND THE HEART

O Sun on high! Such golden flaming light  
You sow eternally on worlds ice-riven.  
The heat from your hands takes every satellite  
Like beggars do — in rags and hunger-driven.

Like beggars do in rags and hunger-driven,  
Life from your hands takes every satellite,  
Though they give back no thing for what is given:  
Your precious gift of living flaming light.

But in you lies, O depthless living fount,  
A heat that's measureless as spatial heaven.  
How many times you've poured it — none may count —  
Among forsaken hearts which cold has riven.

However much you share without account  
Or pour your heart on worlds or empty heaven,  
Eternally your brow the flames do mount,  
And to this day your inner heat's like leaven.

My love I also gave — my heart became  
Forsaken too, my heart with cold was riven.  
I've waited long — will love come back again?  
A drop at least of that bright flame once given.

*1926*



VALERIAN POLISHCHUK

*Valerian Polishchuk (1897-1942), the son of a farmer, was born in Volyn. He wrote numerous collections of verse and long poems about Vladimir Lenin and the simple people of the land. His works have been translated into many languages of the USSR.*

FIRST SNOW

A yellow leaf on the ground,  
Snowflakes rustling around...  
    Snow...  
    Snow...  
The first of the snow...  
Leaves and the snow rustling round...

It whirls and blows in the cracks...  
Like dust rises up in its tracks...  
    Snow...  
    Snow...  
Leaves and the snow rustling round.

Snow in the wind's embrace,  
In the hut a hare's found a place...  
    Snow...  
    Snow...  
The first of the snow...  
In the poor man's hut found a place.

It whirls and blows in the cracks...  
Like dust rises up in its tracks...  
    Snow...  
    Snow...  
Pallid snow...  
It whirls and blows in the cracks...

A yellow leaf on the ground,  
Snowflakes rustling round...  
    Snow...  
    Snow...  
The first of the snow...  
Leaves, and the snow rustling round.

*1918*

## THE COLOSSUS OF MEMNON

Strabo recounted...

When the sun emerged and bounded  
Up from out the Libyan desert,  
Then the voice of Memnon sounded,  
Met the sun's rays warm and pleasant,  
And re-echoed o'er the Nile...  
Now the sun his hot sword wields,  
Burns the Powers to the ground,  
Cuts through hazy clouds around  
Over boundless, boundless fields.  
Trombones in my heart, go I,  
In my breast the fresh air drawing,  
Now with Memnon's voice I cry:  
"Greet the sun, good folk, it's morning!"  
Proletariat, chains are past!  
You can boldly breathe at last!  
Go out on the wide expanses,  
Greet the sun and your rebirth.  
There a wave of crimson dances,  
Rolling over all the earth.  
Greet the sunshine, freedom's mother,  
Hey there, out you go, my brother!

*1918*



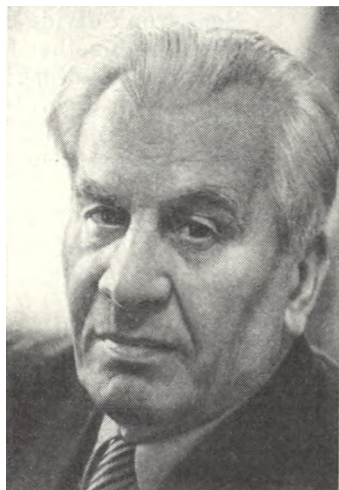
## TO MY FATHER

“For glory and freedom and honour we die,  
To win them our dear native land, for you...”  
What power and truth in those words there lie,  
What pure and sacred love in them too!  
We die, although to live we desire...  
For freedom, equality, brotherhood fall.  
Though discord may flare up a moment like fire,  
Yet lasting happiness we bring to all:  
So may our sacrifice prove no crime.  
Forgive us our ardour, for love’s good name.  
We thirst, that justice on all should shine,  
That true ideals in your hearts should flame.  
And so, for our native land we die —  
The heart in our breast her happiness craves.  
Let us drink the cup of suffering dry.  
No, we no longer can live as slaves.

*1920*

*Mikola Tarnowsky (b. 1895) was born in the village of Kotsyubintsi in Ternopil Region into a poor farmer's family. In search of work he left for America in 1910, but returned to the Ukraine in 1958. He is the author of several collections of verse, a book of short stories, and the long narrative poem*

*The I m m i g r a n t s. His poems have been translated into Russian and other languages.*



## TO OUR BROTHERS OVERSEAS

The woes of the Rus have their banks overflowed,  
They flooded all Europe and overseas rolled!

*Ivan Franko*

As spilled our people's woes across the planet,  
Peeping from clouds the sun was cold as granite;  
Suffering's cup had filled to overflowing,  
Mountain-high waves on the seas began rolling!

How many people the ocean has carried,  
How many people misfortune has buried,  
How many perished o'ercome by distress,  
Far over the ocean in some wilderness!

You did not give up! You reiterated  
Songs to your native good word dedicated!..  
Songs that you sang not only for pleasure:  
Strength of Shevchenko in those songs were treasured,  
Lofty ideals your native songs nurtured,  
Belief in tomorrow, in a better future...  
Your very survival those words guaranteed,  
Calling you ever to strive and to succeed!

Let us clasp hands, our dear sisters and brothers,  
We'll make our lot happy helping each other;  
Open your hearts with sincerity glowing,  
Brimful with gladness, with joy overflowing!

Seas won't divide us, nor mountains, nor rivers,  
We'll be together for ever and ever;  
Never will storm-ridden oceans divide us,  
Never will hateful distress override us:  
Faithful to justice, to peace, and to friendship,  
Sharing our fortunes we'll all live in kinship!

1961

### MY BEAUTIFUL TERNOPIŁ

Ternopil! City of militant glory!  
There were no ordeals spared you in the past!  
Here often the blood in rivers ran gory,  
Here war horses' hooves oft trampled the grass.

Your soil was raked up by tempests tremendous,  
Dust o'er the country wind-blown;  
The hideous birthmark of ages horrendous,  
Your fields were with weeds overgrown.

Unknown to the plow, Thorn-Field \* designated,  
Freezing winds harrowed your ground.  
The sun behind mountains somewhere was located,  
Sending no warming rays down.

How much land was trampled, people's work shattered,  
How many woes were with bitter tears watered,  
How much heart-breaking sorrows,  
Suffering, pain and horrors!..

The city's now smiling, with gladness abounding,  
The sun and the earth are embracing most fondly.  
Gone are the traces of former-times woe:  
The future's before you, go Ternopil, go!

There it now stands, gazing into the water  
Which seems to reflect it as though in a glass;  
The sun rises red, presaging good weather,  
The marvellous skies are blue super class!

Ternopil! City of militant glory!  
There were no ordeals spared you in the past!  
Today it's transformed as though in a story,  
Majestic, beautiful, growing apace!

1966

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\* Ternopil — lit. "thorny field"

## LET SEED BE SOWN!..

"Let seed be sown and grain be grown!" we say today  
Ancient New Year's well-wishes voicing...  
Let people be happy, good fortune their fate,  
In a world of good cheer rejoicing!

May wheat and all grain in the fields grow and ripen,  
Bread enough for all folks to assure;  
May people all bask in the sun shining brightly,  
May their joys and contentment endure!

There's another wish, my dear brothers and sisters,  
Though the last in this verse, not the least:  
Vigour and energy, zealous persistence  
To assure that our earth lives in peace!

1963

## UNDER MY COUNTRY'S SKIES

Land of my birth, Ukraine, my motherland,  
You radiate such warmth and good and worth,  
Such heaps of happiness do you command  
To share with all the folk upon earth!  
Now new roads are stretching to the skyline,  
Highways broad and boundless, bright and clear,  
Welcome home, the thresholds greet us smiling,  
The sound of merry songs comes to our ears.

Girls to springtime-come are singing praises,  
Market square with chatter is a-hum,  
With the dawn to our labours we hasten,  
In each droplet of dew shines the sun.  
Spring has smiled on the quail in the heather,  
Tractors rumble at work in the fields,  
To the tune of his flute steps the shepherd  
As his flock to the pasture he leads.

Children hasten to school — faster, faster —  
There are songs waiting there which they'll sing...  
Winter's snowdrifts have been overmastered,  
All are glad of the coming of spring.  
Friendly guests in their classrooms are welcomed,  
Beloved Lésya, Frankó and Tarás,  
There Tychína, Sosyúra \* transplendent,  
Maxim Rylsky oft visits those halls.

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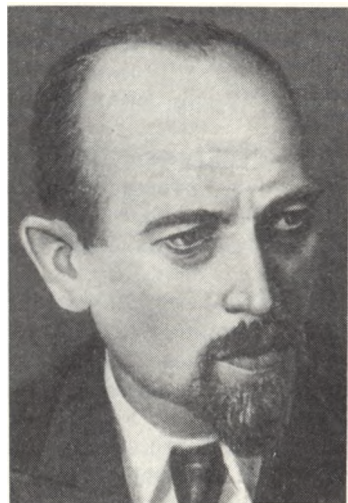
\* Lesya Ukrainka, Ivan Franko, Taras Shevchenko, Pavlo Tychina,  
Volodimir Sosyura

Children list to their sage inspiration  
And they take them to heart, they are theirs.  
Heads are bowed in deep contemplation  
Of the beauty to which they're the heirs.

Power-driven, the workshops start buzzing,  
Workers march to the mine and the mill,  
Lofty skyscrapers seem to be puzzled  
To see structures arise higher still!  
Far away on the seas and the oceans  
Our good ships at all times are in line,  
They're commanded by bold doughty captains  
Bringing fame to this country of mine.

Cosmonauts through the spaces are winging  
With the luminous stars as their guides,  
Without bounds is the life that's beginning,  
Songs of triumph resound on all sides!  
The whole country is nightingale-trilling,  
Saplings sprout, blossoms scatter their scent...  
O Ukraine, my heart you are thrilling  
With your beauty, which never will end!

*1970*



*Ivan Kulik (1897-1941) was born in the town of Shpola in Cherkasy Region into the family of a teacher. He wrote several books of verse, long poems, and essays and did translations from a variety of authors, many of them American. His poetry has a distinctly civic flavour. A large number of Kulik's poems have been translated into Russian and other languages.*

## SOWING

Eyes flashing lightning we'll sow the horizon with stars,  
Thirsting and yearningful earth we shall harrow with scars.  
(Water her then with refreshing sweet moisture, oh rain!)  
Envious furrows with patterns we'll scatter again,  
All of gold stars — like bright comet-showers falling below.  
Toil we'll thrice multiply, ill-fortune stultify so!  
Seed-grains of stars, through the starkness of darkness obscure  
Everywhere peep, break through deep-sleeping soil-crust once more,  
Burst through the earth with your new shoots of light,  
Gilding the field with a grain-carpet bright!

*Kharkiv, 1921*

## FIFTH LETTER

“When forty winters shall besiege thy brow...”  
“Look in thy glass and tell the face thou viewest...”  
*William Shakespeare. Sonnets II and III.*

My son said yesterday: “You’re old now, daddy,  
Look in the glass — you’re aging very much.”  
...But only thirty-six times with its rotator  
Has the cylinder turned to the symbol of the crutch...

But thirty-six times in all — soon will be forty,  
They decide themselves, the wrinkles, the greying head,  
And still more deeply will advance the darkness  
“Within thine own deep-sunken eyes”, Will said.

“When forty winters shall besiege thy brow”...  
No, nevertheless I’m ready to be besieged,  
Though in my face bite deeper the furrows now,  
And in my beard the shoots of grey are seen.

No, I am young, though not so young in summers,  
Though with alarm, thoughts in my temples beat —  
Are these not words still forged in my word-foundry?  
Does that same flame not harden them with its heat?

Although still deeper I plunge in the recesses  
Of prophet-memories, lines refashioned so;  
Say, did not Moscow really become much younger  
When she, inspired, plunged into her Metró?

But then did Moscow for one single moment  
Slow down her flight, when she dived underground?  
No, I’ve not ceased to bloom here as her poet,  
And among the calendar blocks my way I found.

No, I’m still young, and all the time grow younger,  
As everything grows young in this land,  
Which conquered time, increasing time for action,  
For youth of ages as her helmsman stands:

That youth of ages and that youth of ideas,  
That is the helmsman for our youthful folk,  
Which goes enriched with long years of experience,  
And leads the restored and healed into battle-smoke.

And I, grown bolder in trade-winds and north-easters,  
In a tide of youth that spreads beyond the seas,  
With skill gained in the battle rejuvenated,  
Tear pages from the calendar quite at ease.

*Moscow — Kharkiv  
January-March, 1933*

## SIXTH LETTER

Well no, from ancient Balaklava \*  
But few of her old lines remain...  
A cypress stands, pyramidical rather,  
Where two roads cross, not to meet again,  
The silent witness of my love then,  
Of my courageous springtime years...  
He only, with his shaggy mantle,  
Has stayed unchanged, so it appears;  
Old Uncle Yuri's ceased his labours,  
And, as if yearning for bygone days,  
The Genoese walls, with effort straining,  
Having opened wide their eye-embrasures,  
On new Crimea look round amazed.  
They're shaken by a sudden explosion:  
All their old centuries, like some ghost,  
Go flying, it seems, like clods in motion,  
Which have by ammonal been burst.  
And clearing the mountains' flux of shadows,  
The fair-haired sun pours forth its rays:  
A flux of light from heaven's top-gallants  
Lies like a tablecloth on the bay,  
Which clearly thus enriched with favours  
Receives, with the radiant sun when set,  
Its guests, whom the local school for divers  
Lets down upon its conquered bed.  
Amid the sunlight, sea, and mountains,  
This ore, this mix of elements great,  
War-hardened fighters are now founding  
My country's firm agglomerate.  
At night the sea-breeze, warmly sweeping  
Into the bay, the cloud-banks drubs,  
The moon pours forth, all silver-greenish,  
Like grain fermented into tubs.  
And then this master grain-fermenter,  
Who overcomes the heated breeze,  
From living silver a ribbon tender  
Right up to old Cape Violent weaves.  
And once that woven-patterned measure,  
(That path which to our happiness led)  
We loved to toss in the air together,  
As silvery spray from the oar-blade sped,  
And through the slushy sleet we slithered,  
Our skiff-prow heading into night,  
While in my heart the pulses hammered  
Like some mad metronome, with delight.

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\* Balaklava — ancient town in the Crimea; now a district of Sevastopol



Nearby another heart was yearning  
In constant unison with mine...  
And now again I've lived, a-burning,  
That dream already lived that time.  
We sailed on joy's bright path of water  
Together to Shaitan-Dere!..  
Like the Kalevala and Hiawatha —  
Undying our happy past today —  
The past which like a lump of lava  
Preserved within the newest spark,  
The past which nurtured then the pasture  
Like sap, in every blade of grass,  
The past of our new Balaklava.  
For time has not tramped nor wiped away  
That name, with love lit ever after,  
Like that cypress, pyramidical rather,  
Which wears the same rough cloak today;  
The past which will be ever present,  
And interwoven on new looms,  
And mingling in the cauldron echoes  
Of our two hearts, and high-grown meadows,  
And ammonal's dense drifting fumes.

*1933*

*Mikola Tereshchenko (1908-1966) was born in the village of Shcherbinivka in Cherkasy Region into the family of a farmer. He is the author of numerous books of verse and translations, mostly from Russian and French. His poems have been translated into many languages both in the USSR and abroad.*



### LIGHT FROM THE EAST

Dawn from beyond the meadows  
always brings light from the east.  
Songs to the sun sings the streamlet,  
rejoicing at Nature's spring feast.

Hope from the east comes to people —  
from our red banner on high!  
Glory to people-creators,  
glory forever and aye!

Joy in our merry eyes glitters,  
pride glows on dreamers' brows.  
Skyward we raise our winecups;  
light from the earth's east flows!

1919

### A GIRL FROM THE UKRAINE

I met a girl from the Ukraine  
all fragrant with the smell of grass.  
She only squeezed her kerchief's hem  
When I came up to her and asked  
about her brother, father, mother,  
about my woeful native land.

Her soft white face became still paler,  
Her sorrow she could not withstand.

“My father died while being tortured,  
my mother has grown pale and grey.  
My brother’s army shirt I put on:  
He died a hero’s death one day.  
The Nazis torture our Ukraine  
yet clamours for revenge our land!”  
She wiped a teardrop from her lashes  
With a sweet-smelling girlish hand,

“I joined a partisan detachment.  
Now in your regiment I fight...”  
And so we jumped upon our horses  
and rode across the river wide.  
She smelled of grass; the smell of childhood  
came from her hair, her face, her hands.  
We will not leave you in your sorrow,  
We’re coming to your aid, dear land!

*1942*

## HARVEST

Clouds vanish beyond the horizon  
Like smoke from hot ash far and near.  
For native fields verdant and fertile  
A squadron fought valiantly here.

With blood hot and crimson was sprinkled  
Each clod by Ukraine’s dear sons.  
Such might, such triumphant valour  
These fields had seen never once.

They never yet bore such a harvest,  
These mine-pitted, bomb-rutted fields.  
Today they will gladden our soldiers  
With wonderful, bounteous yields.

Storms vanish beyond the horizon  
Like traces of grief and turmoil.  
The wheat lies cut down on the furrows —  
The harvest of valiant toil.

*1945*

## KIBALCHICH'S \* TESTAMENT

"This night will be my last. Will I have time  
to pass my calculations on to men,  
these urges and these winged dreams of mine  
about a flight to far-off stars, beyond men's ken?

"I'm not afraid of death. Let men but shed  
the age-old chains of earthly gravitation.  
Let men but break the fetters that they wear  
since time immemorable — ever since creation."

But hark — the padlock clanks, the door-hinge creaks.  
They lead him towards the dawning firmament.  
He smiles at Venus; aye, with the stars he speaks,  
leaving us his proud will and testament.

*1961*

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\* Nikolai Kibalchich (1853-1881) — activist of the People's Will revolutionary organization and an inventor. Was executed for participation in the assassination of Alexander II. While in prison, he designed a jet-propelled flying apparatus



## PAVLO USENKO

*Pavlo Usenko (1902-1975) was born in the village of Zaochipske in Dnipropetrovsk Region into a poor peasant family. Closely linked to Ukrainian folklore, his writings reflect the beginning and development of the Soviet way of life in the Ukraine. He was awarded the Nikolai Ostrovsky Prize. The Ukrainian Molod (Youth) Publishers award the Pavlo Usenko Prize for the best beginning writers. His poems have been published in other republics of the USSR and abroad.*

### SPRING SONG

And today it is spring, just as then,  
In that past year of nineteen-eighteen...  
I remember the village and glen,  
Flowers in bloom, shots, and cries in between.

German columns were breaking through then,  
From beyond the woods thundering hard —  
Fifteen Poloveshchina \* men  
By Slavuta-Dnieper on guard.

Fifteen in the waves, every one,  
Only seven climbed out on the bank;  
We were sprayed by a black maxim-gun,  
On the sunlit spit where we sank.

Ah, you merry Dnieper-side sand!  
All seven of us left our tracks,  
When through the alarmed huts we ran,  
Under blackening, blazing thatch.

From joy, or from pain, who's to ken,  
The sunshine my heart has burned clean.  
And today it is spring, just as then,  
In that past year of nineteen-eighteen.

*1923*

\* Poloveshchina — village in Poltava Region

## LETTER

Our dear secretary-girl,  
How we loved you, every one!  
Now where snow-flakes are a-whirl,  
Through the snow-drifts you have gone.

School. And two acacias speak —  
Tell of spring, and youth in flower.  
You worked every day of the week,  
Came to talk in the evening hour.

Say, why did you have to go?  
Did the lathes too loudly scream?  
Whirlwinds, blizzards, snow on snow,  
In the mutinous ravine.

There you've no electric power,  
From the fields cold winds blow down;  
You're the only lecturer  
From the factory, from the town.

You are gone — a tragedy —  
At our meetings we recall  
You in our tube factory,  
In the rolling shop and all.

Our dear secretary-girl,  
How we loved you, every one!  
Now where snow-flakes are a-whirl,  
Through the snow-drifts you have gone.

*1926*

## FOR OUR UKRAINE

Our flasks of water  
    of cherries taste.  
On roads we tread  
    many signs we trace.  
With lips a-thirsting  
    I drink, and drink,  
With eyes enchanted  
    I gaze and think.  
The guelder roses  
    bend to the dew,

I drink unending  
                     your beauty too.  
 Land of my fathers,  
                     I did not grow  
 That my native hut  
                     should be outraged so.  
 That my land, my glory,  
                     black crows should peck,  
 While on the stove-bench  
                     I dream on my back!  
 Motherland, mother,  
                     I drink, and drink,  
 With eyes enchanted  
                     I gaze and think.  
 Your ways go winding,  
                     your woodland roads,  
 Along the rapids,  
                     and through your groves.  
 In depths of waters,  
                     in light you shine,  
 You thunder in factories,  
                     you toil in the mine.  
 Is it wind a-blowing  
                     on the steppes at morn,  
 Or combines reaping  
                     among the corn?  
 Are bullets flying  
                     among the ears?  
 Are cuckoos calling  
                     the future years?  
 The pure spring water  
                     is sweet to taste,  
 On roads we tread  
                     many signs we trace.  
 Just here to a girl once  
                     I gave my hand,  
 Just here the dahlias  
                     for two bloomed grand.  
 Here Shchors' \* detachments  
                     to battle went,  
 We drank from our flasks here  
                     when strength was spent.  
 We drank, and kept moving  
                     alone on our legs,  
 We drank, but sparing,  
                     and not to the dregs.  
 The last drops we left  
                     for another day,

---

\* Mikola Shchors — hero of the Civil War  
 of 1918-1920 in the Ukraine

They would soothe our wounds  
                  in the deadly fray.  
Our flasks of water  
                  of cherries taste.  
On the roads we tread  
                  many signs we trace.  
Along bright highways  
                  together we'll go —  
They'll not be trampled  
                  by foreign foe.  
They were illumined  
                  by truth ahead,  
By the Party's power,  
                  by glory's tread.  
The sun shines upon us,  
                  the thunder roars,  
We'll carry the torch  
                  for this land of ours.  
Our fathers' fire  
                  in us has not died,  
Our youthful powers  
                  are deep and wide.  
For our Ukraine,  
                  for her starry light,  
For our land  
                  and Soviet kin we fight!

*1941*

I'LL BIND, EMBRACE,  
AND CLOSE ENTWINE

I'll bind, embrace, and close entwine  
With cordial love, with warmth of heart,  
This father-and-motherland of mine,  
Which rocked my cradle at the start,

And nursed me, such a tiny mite,  
(Long, long ago already, it seems!)  
When unborn worlds, and hope's new light  
Lay under my mother's heart in dreams.

I'll bind, embrace, and close entwine  
With filial love, when battle's done,  
With arms like boughs in blossom-time,  
With May, when songs of spring are sung.



What I in August reaped in rows,  
What ripened there before my eyes,  
A palette of most amazing hues,  
Which day or night-time never dies.

Above the ripening ears of grain  
The sun burns down, the clouds roll by,  
And somewhere flails are heard again...  
I'll bind, embrace, and close entwine

This father-and-motherland of mine,  
Which took my hand, that festive day,  
And led me to my lesson-time,  
And gave me its whole soul that way.

O, lasting warmth of the Komsomol,  
The heat of the day I endured with you!  
In deadly battle, when storm-clouds roll,  
Beneath the thunderous thrust of the foe

Then burn and blaze like bonfire flames,  
With your own mother's spirit blaze!  
Then light up, by the Party trained,  
Your native country's farthest ways.

Then give the full strength of your soul  
To pastures, gardens, meadow-land,  
To wise old books your impulse whole,  
And to the sturdy oaks which stand

Upon the steppeland spaces wide,  
To good rich ores, their smelting flame,  
To bridges built from side to side,  
And may your hands raise crowns of fame,  
Be worthy of a worker's name!

There'll be full praise... in toil strength lies!  
And little glories

we

don't need!

May our dear land, beneath blue skies  
Still bloom in starry wreathes indeed!

The beauty of law's excelling height  
No dust of ages lies beneath —  
The eternal bird of hope and flight  
Is love alone, and love till death.

1948

\* \* \*

Snowdrops all are gone,  
Poppy-flames are done,  
Not a letter dear,  
Not a single one.

Come, or let me hear  
Just one word of cheer,  
And remember then  
How we were so near.

How we were so near —  
Did we live, my dear?..  
And all round, all round,  
Did our flowers appear?

Now the rains are grey,  
Nor a word today;  
Well, the road is long,  
Full of twists the way.

Perhaps they went astray,  
On the mountains lay —  
That was all a dream,  
So I say, I say...

What once was has passed,  
Borne off by the blast,  
Like the apple-boughs —  
Arms apart are cast.

Snowdrops all are gone,  
Poppy-flames are done,  
Not a letter dear,  
Not a single one...

*1956*

## MY SPRING

My own perennial enchantress,  
The power of nature ever young,  
My springtime, with your bird's heart beating,  
From southern borders, back you come.

My years of youth, so little trodden,  
But gone already — well, that then?



From this earth I'll not be parted —  
How much strength in her I found!  
How many orbs in heaven starlit,  
How much grass, what rustling sound!..  
How many secret movements wondrous,  
How many minutes when heart-blood whirls,  
How many lustrous, and not so lustrous  
Diamonds, emeralds and pearls!

From this earth I'll not be parted —  
In her waving spaces she  
Here is dark, ere dawn has started,  
There in the sun smiles charmingly;  
In misfortune and in sorrow,  
Facing the storm which ruin brings —  
But those storms, and peals which follow,  
Are the beating of my wings.

From this earth I'll not be parted —  
No, not till the end of time,  
Whatsoe'er for me is fated,  
Even if to nought I'm melted  
On the spring's green hills sublime,  
Or on chimney-bricks a-thawing,  
That would please me, even so,  
Like a rosy dream at dawning —  
We shall not be parted, no!

*1955*



*Mikhailo Yohansen (1895-1937) was born in Kharkiv into the family of a teacher. He wrote many books of verse, fiction, and literary criticism. His poetry is marked by a laconic style and revolutionary romanticism.*

\* \* \*

A new Atlantis arose from blue abyss,  
Arising in fiery cascades...  
The winter we turned into summer,  
And tossed up the earth to the sun...  
From comets we braided our wreaths,  
On Mars summoned all to a meeting.  
March on, march on,  
Dynamic youth of the Commune...!

*Kharkiv, 1921*

## THE COMMUNE

Do you really think that's a Commune:  
A market once, barracks-to-be?  
Oh no, friend: a Commune's a city, like mountain or ocean,  
Just as white, just as high, even wider.  
You fear that a Commune will be somewhat gloomy,  
On Sabbaths no church-bells will be set a-ringing?  
Oh no, man! Then Communards wind their way home after labour  
To ringing of peonies crimson.  
While girls on the benches crack seeds of sunflowers,  
And people are like song-fields and wheat-fields;

Above them white-winged and heavenly buildings,  
A sight like a dream... flight of birds... or of seconds.  
Oh miners and poets, and sailors — men of sea-lyrics,  
In just this way will your eyes go seeking the Commune,  
Your heart will fly down like a star — like a falling bird,  
Amid hundreds and thousands of blindmen; for you  
Then will be faced with — delights of terror;  
Beneath the grandeur of skies at evening  
Will each discover just what he hopes for so jealously  
And, strange enough, even in a straw-thatched lonely cot,  
Someone might even read these old-writ lines of mine.

1921  
*Kharkiv*

### THE RED ARMY

No White-Guard heroism here,  
No drunken valour of gentle-born bandits,  
But only a job to do, plain and simple:  
To use their teeth opening gates of granite.  
At Perekop where the fighting was deadly,  
The sick, the hungry, the almost naked,  
With bare hands captured the trenches.  
With a grip of iron they wrested their freedom,  
Not a bugle sounded their victory hour,  
No tally of loved ones kept or kinfolk dead,  
Infantry all were footsore,  
Cavalry horses broke down.  
At Perekop where the fighting was deadly,  
The sick, the hungry, the almost naked,  
With bare hands captured the trenches,  
With grip of iron they wrested their freedom,  
No names remembered in sad requiems —  
The priests were silent, dead the bells of churches.  
Toll them with tears in bronze and in iron,  
They never will die in the hearts of the workers —  
Those dead who fell at Perekop,  
Those, the sick, the hungry, the almost naked,  
Whose bare hands captured the trenches,  
And with grip of iron wrested their freedom.

## SPRING

On a winter poem where no word was seen,  
There fell and there vanished a gleam of the spring —  
This very first theme  
On the last white page came wandering.

I walk so gravely and frown, for I dream  
Of something... of renting land for to plough —  
But round me like imps play Spring's golden gleams:  
They're laughing, laughing at me, a highbrow.

Ah, sweet the smell that comes from cigar smoke,  
Smoke older workers puff right in my face —  
As if winter and Kharkiv but dream-invoked,  
And steppe-wormwood grew and my senses dazed.

I stand here, my thoughts running thus, more or less:  
“*We* make our spring in this world — or we might!”  
Then someone comes near, asks with subtle finesse:  
“Say mate! Would you mind giving me a light.”

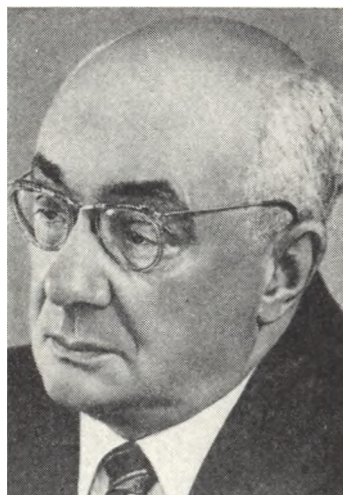
## SEPTEMBER

A September day is like a sword  
As yet unsharpened by the autumn sun.  
September winds that run so free —  
The warp upon October's looms have strung.

The rows of trees, those weaving looms,  
All seem to melt in oceanic autumn.  
The hazel bushes, leaves and woods  
All seem imbued with Soviet power.

And, drunken with real crimson wine,  
The maples dance along the hills —  
While Lenin's lines of burning lights  
Run on their way, no end in sight.

*1924*



The troop cavalcade moved out, horses neighed,  
(Dully rings the steel in the stirrup-rest)  
Smoke from fields is acrid,  
field-smoke a rust-shade,  
Foam from horses' lips — feather grass suggests.  
Through winding leafy wood,  
the troop rode forward,  
Iron hoof-beats hammer a way through the brush,  
The clatter of sabre, the ring of the scabbard  
Rupture the ominous hush.

Shading eyes, sheepskin hats highly towered,  
Troopers gulped the field scents, sweet and rank,  
Their rough working hands smelled of powder,  
Their cowhide coats too — of blood stank.

One slumped in saddle. I know you recall  
The girl who's your heart's shining light.  
So love, comrade mine, so love, but recall  
Your gun's ready loaded to fight.

The soldiers must not sleep on sentry-go,  
Nor their looks betray they are weary —  
What usefulness could such a soldier show  
As sentry?



Now you are their avengers,  
And will always be avengers  
Of your tormented brothers  
And your violated sisters.

Show respect, show respect, render honours  
To the names of the famous Red Guards,  
Guard and honour your regiment's colours —  
For the way of a hero is hard.

When you hear but one shot of the foe,  
Grab your gun, to horse and mount!  
And the moment your enemies show,  
Ride them down!

Spurring madly his mount,  
A trooper rides in pursuit —  
His rounds he won't count,  
Nor for wounds care a hoot.

Let the roads not deter,  
Though you die, to boot —  
Put heart in your spurs  
And be ready to shoot!

Let the wind lash your face,  
And die, but don't stop!  
Hell for leather we race  
And fight till we drop.

Don't wait for orders:  
Who wavers, death finds!  
Hundreds of sabres  
Cut through the wind.

We would twice over die the death,  
For the rich black coal, for dark rye bread;  
For workers' black hands, gladly risk our heads —  
And would twice over die the death.

*1925*

## HOFFMANN'S NIGHT

Into a dark abyss, down steps worn-down, rough-carven.  
Down slippery inclines, down heavy, risky stairs,  
Down rough-hewn steps, into the filthiest of lairs,  
A fat-paunched basement, a most dingy tavern,

A den without a signboard or a name,  
 Refuge of crazy burghers, hungry tramps,  
 Of dreamers, cabmen, dames of evil fame,  
 Pursuing sinful inspiration, in he stamps...  
 Half-buried in the earth, its entrance gapes beneath —  
 A drunkard's sour-breathed mouth, where, like bad teeth,  
 Stick candles pouring yellow grease from every wick  
 Upon the tables set with mugs heavy and thick  
 As if great fists, round, swollen, far from feeble,  
 Like hefty apples — fruit of good and evil,  
 They stand upon the tables, bulging, knotted,  
 Tin mugs with liquor, smeared with dirt and spotted.  
 The tables creak and sway and dully shine,  
 Fingered and fouled and stained with fat and wine  
 By animals befuddled and besotted.  
 Foul-smelling tallow hisses on the handles  
 And necks of candlesticks with melting candles.  
 The secret rites of thoughtful drinking bouts  
 And pompous banquets here are carried out,  
 Each drunkard a philosopher, fanatic —  
 Serapio's brother — lunatic, frenetic.  
 Drinking and laughing, Amadeus spends  
 Here countless nights among his bosom friends,  
 Poet of caustic words and crazy escapades  
 King of these solemnly insane assemblies  
 Which somewhat to a funeral bear resemblance,  
 And before which, indeed, description fades.  
 Here now he sits, a Mephistopheles half-sized,  
 And over dark, ungodly feasts presides,  
 Oblivious, not caring in the least  
 About his wife's shoes, or official ranks and orders,  
 Swallowing rancid smoke, wine and saliva, wordless,  
 Arching his eyebrow, sharp as a bare nerve,  
 Bending in wicked silence, full of verve,  
 Like a predacious cat, his lean, lascivious spine.  
 And so he sits — a giant cat, insidious and sly,  
 A fancy-tortured maniac escorted  
 By poets, roisterers, with grimaces contorted,  
 Both sanctimonious and devilish at once,  
 A sage and wizard, harlequin and dunce;  
 It's he — the huge cat, kindest Pussy Murr,  
 Arching his back, showing his claws — for sure! —  
 Here, in this tavern blind where smoke-wreathes drift,  
 At home, at magistrates, at the dull *Kammergericht*.  
 A theatre of monstrosities, drunk cripples  
 Here opens for the dreamer while he tipples  
 And in contempt the dented eyebrow bends,  
 And through his gums, unleashed, his sharp tongue sends:  
 "No, I'm not drunk — I'm generous as one doomed.  
 Hey, bring us candles! Light the fire! Away with gloom!

Wine! Bring us sugar, spirit, lemon-peel,  
And here's to poetry! Let's drink until we reel.  
Come, light the spirit in a grand auto-da-fé —  
Let it flare up — in lieu of Christian souls.  
Scream, crazy oracles, between the walls  
Of Berlin's barmy, blasphemous café!"

Hot foams the sparkling punch, and blue flames quiver, gay.  
Like living tongues, they leap into the air,  
Above the gleaming cauldron's mouth they play.  
"Punch for our Theodore, gentlemen!" declare  
His tipsy colleagues. "Truth and inspiration  
Are to be found in wine alone, sirs, since creation!"  
And like the fires lit by the Holy Inquisition  
Glow the cold sheen of wine, hot, fiery, scalding;  
"Now, colleagues, let's drink from this buxom cauldron  
The infernal fluid, though it bring us to perdition!"

The poison-cups boil hot, the liquor steams,  
Like poking fingers rise the bright blue flames,  
And over them, besotted, drunk to madness,  
Whirl spectres in the darkness — smoky shadows,  
Blurred images arise in his sick fancy,  
Like red lamps — wine-flushed faces, reeling, dancing;  
The noble rapiers of blue candleflames point up:  
A carnival of ghosts born from the midnight cup!  
In awful silence words like lightning flash  
From caved-in mouths: like blades the lips they slash.  
And words roll off the cliffs of phrases into madness  
Like chunks of rock into a precipice;  
Flames rise in pillars and like serpents hiss,  
The tables shake and groan as if in sadness.  
"Ha, cunning soul, once more I've snatched from death  
A stormy night lit up by wine and inspiration.  
I heave it on my back, catching my breath —  
A cross of shame, a black sign of damnation,  
And mercilessly, till the break of day,  
My own dead corpse, my own poor lifeless clay  
Necrophilewise, I maim and torture, full of evil,  
In shame, disgust, insanity and fever.  
And now I order to the ghosts of words:  
From the abyss of consciousness in herds,  
From the black pits of human minds crawl out  
Like spiders, in a slimy, hairy crowd,  
Bearing within your bodies' poison dread,  
Through cracks of crippled thought out of my head,  
That, poet, hypocrite, blasphemer, leper,  
Your corpses I might put on frightened paper  
And that my wizened skull might swell and split  
And stick vile fancy-tentacles from its black pit,  
And then, gripped in my fingers, with a shriek,

My pen should pounce upon the glossy, tear-damped sheet  
 And in the creaky manuscript entomb  
 Heinous visions born of inner gloom.  
 Wine, brothers! Pour me out a glass of wine!  
 Let foaming cauldrons boil again and gleam!  
 Let wine-springs gush, and let their amber stream  
 Thick, crystal-clear, pour forth in sprays sublime!  
 Come, Inspiration, visit me this night,  
 I yearn for your seductive, foul delight!"

His angry heart tosses upon its chain,  
 Accursed roamer, tearing forth again.  
 And from an old friend's hands a glass he takes  
 And with the foaming wine his thirst he slakes.  
 His partners shout, and he stands listening,  
 Mad Amadeus, with his wine-glass glistening.  
 But, crab-like, with its poisoned stranglehold,  
 Weariness grabs the drinkers' bare, sore throats.  
 Exhausted with the wine and words, he now makes bold  
 To finish the satanic feast with one last toast.  
 The tar-soaked shag he crumples in his cold  
 Damp palm with concentration. While still fumes  
 The fiery liquor in the cauldrons seething hot,  
 And round the table settles silent gloom,  
 A sleepy servant-girl in careless hands has brought  
 New pouchfuls of tobacco, greasy, curly.  
 From porcelain pipes tobacco-wreaths come whirling;  
 Long pipe-stems growl in mouths already hoarse.  
 O best-beloved time when without words  
 Float drowsy dreams and thoughts dim, jumbled, glide!  
 With pipes pressed in their lips like clarinets,  
 Sucking the luscious juice in viscous jets,  
 The poets sit there, thoughtful, pacified.  
 O music of long pipes, tobacco-melodies,  
 Blue pirouettes of upward-flying wreaths!  
 Now, inspiration, thoughts, death, chatter — disappear!  
 Kind German devil — he won't make them quake with fear!  
 Where are the notes, Herr Hoffmann? Where are Haydn's concertos?  
 Maestro, to the clavicord!"

For certain  
 He'll play them something perfect.

His pale fingers long to grip  
 The melody, to give it warmth, to shake alive the old musician!  
 And he stands up, and smoke — a flag-like strip  
 Spread by the faithful wind, curls at the feet of the magician.  
 He puts his hairy right hand on the white  
 Jaws of the keyboard, tamed to do his will.  
 The clock strikes twelve, though. Closer, closer still  
 Its two black fingers press as if a rite  
 Of swearing-in they were to carry out this night  
 For a new member of Serapio's fraternity,

Those fingers dipped in sacred Time 'neath Silence's dark hood.  
And then says he:  
"Gentlemen, time to leave! Ho, there! Where are our cloaks?  
Friends, let us not be overly romantic!  
It's raining in the street!"

Again the shower soaks  
And scrapes like pens on paper, grim, pedantic;  
The rain is decorating old Berlin  
In gothic letters, in a cassock of black rain.  
Who is it tearing through the prickly drops down the dark lane,  
Through bushes thick, to fear not giving in?  
'Tis Chancellor Hoffmann hopping over puddles  
In a delirious half-sleep, with wine and shag befuddled.  
The street behind him like a gamut, long and even  
Floats, whirls and fades away, no traces leaving  
In Amadeus' confused, besotted brain  
The flat squares are all overgrown with rain,  
Mobile yet immobile, bush after soaking bush  
Over the drunkard, artiste, madman — goes Swoosh-Swoosh!  
Ah, colonnades of thin-stemmed, streaking rain,  
Ah, rain, chimeric all in slots and arrows!  
Swing and splash up again, swing and play havoc  
On that triangular old housefront so well known,  
That house with his true wife and his hot-water-bottle,  
His nightcap and his cotton dressing gown,  
The big stove and the smell, so pleasant, floating  
Over the copper censer with half-sour incense;  
"Amalia! Are you sleeping? Come, have sense!  
Open the door! Did you not hear the triple knock?"  
"Off with these shoes, now! Don't bring any mud in!"  
The door is opened and upstairs he clambers, thudding.  
She puts his shoes beside the stove to dry  
While Amadeus, musing, chuckles on the sly,  
And from the stove's glazed tiles smile, rosy-faced  
Young knights and maidens, chubby, azure-laced  
And a fat swain coloured in cinnabar and white,  
(Glazed tiles — the Dutch stonemason's sole delight!)  
Clasping his worthy sweetheart tight  
Also smiles courteously; dreamy, quiet,  
The hot dutch stove with flowers, birds and bows  
Like a well fed young wench, stands, never cooling.  
The oily glaze melts, the fat satellites in rows  
Shine bright with cochineal, lapis-lazuli.  
The floors creak stolidly, and doors squeal everywhere.  
Hoffmann takes refuge in his room — his old abode  
Where on an old pot-bellied secretaire  
Wait his winged pen, his inkwell, deep and broad.

## THE WIND FROM THE EAST

(From *A Stalingrad Notebook*)

O turbulent east wind, you breathe and you smell  
Of dust and of iron, of blood and of smoke.  
Fly, witness of battle, o'er war-blackened steppes  
To my own native parts, to my own native folk.

Sing over the Dnieper, the Sula arouse,  
Fly over the distant Carpathians vast  
And be for my people a herald of war,  
Of valour and vengeance, as you flutter past.

With a thirst for revenge that will torture and scorch  
Fill each breast — to each heart let it find a sure path,  
So their breath might come heavy and fiery and hot  
With the fire of your death-dealing, sacred wrath.

Time of merciless nights, time of bloody red dawns!  
The earth roars in flames, iron screams night and day.  
Fire clings to the armour of blazing hot tanks,  
To their grim German steel coloured deathly-grey.

O steely, intrepid wind from the East,  
Of those flames, smoke and stench your fiery breath smells.  
You are soaking with sweat, you are choking with dust,  
You are drunken with fire, you are scorched through with shells.

Like the folds of our free-flying Soviet flag  
The sky and the valleys and foothills glow red.  
'Tis the gold and the purple of Victory's stars;  
Clear and bright, on the steel and the blood beams they shed.

We can see them so well, those prophetic red stars,  
Those heralds of coming freedom and peace.  
They illumine the eyes of our glorious dead,  
Living hearts they inspire to fight on without cease.

Our men see them over the sand-banked Kubán \*,  
O'er the white-foaming Don, o'er the Caucasus grand.  
On their well-sharpened bayonet points bear our names  
Those stars, to illumine their way through the land.

They are seen by the cautious-eyed partisans, too,  
In the dark of Bryansk woods, in Poltava's green vales,  
In the long tails of mist which Polissya sweep through,  
And on Kiev's scorched stone which for vengeance appeals.

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\* Kuban — river flowing north of the Caucasus

And our sister — mid terrible ashes she stands  
And with thirsting and longing and languishing gaze  
She looks to the heavens extending her hands,  
At those stars' morning brilliance, the morning's first rays.

At their warm light rejoice the dry, wide-open eyes  
Of the men never broken by torture and pain  
On that blood-smeared, that battle-scorched, boot-trampled land,  
On the black, barren soil of my native Ukraine,

Where her people, invincible, proud and austere,  
The sons of a race loving freedom and peace,  
Peer up at those stars and feel Victory near  
And feel your hot breath, mighty wind from the East!

1942

## THE BREAK-THROUGH

(From *A Stalingrad Notebook*)

In houses knocked askew, shot through, bashed in,  
Mid smoking ashes, fire-sites and malodorous dumps,  
Upon the blood-soaked patches left after clay huts,  
On trees, on their black branches, on black stumps,  
On twisted rails, posts, cables and steel pipes,  
On the contorted city-squares whose cobble-stones  
Were splotted with smear-like pools of viscous oil  
And clotted blood, in sparks that swarmed like drones,  
In the grey ash of farmsteads, dead and still,  
While shooting guns and battle-echoes beat,  
They had been lying there for many days,  
With their own bodies shutting off retreat —  
Crawled into basements, sprawled in muddy ditches,  
Locked up in flats by bullets whistled through,  
Lying in wait, with automatic rifles  
Ripping in half the Nazi tunics blue.  
Or they would set a mine-thrower's ribbed plate  
Upon the ash of houses, warm and raw,  
And gently lower the small body of a mine  
Into the lethal tube's sure-shooting maw.  
Or dragging down a long-necked slender cannon  
Into a basement blitzed, half-dark and dank,  
They struck out with their cannonfire like daggers  
And crushed the humpbacked armour of a tank.  
And men grew cunning, and got lean and thin,  
Became sharp-sighted, grim and coolly stubborn,

Black with fatigue, till death not giving in  
And furious in deadly martial labour.  
Night thundered by. Day flashed in hell-bound frenzy  
And hurtled down, fast as a bursting shell.  
Their bodies withered, yet they were supported  
By great pride, and by wrath too great to tell.  
Their throats got parched, their lips were dry and cracked;  
From blackened mouths their breath came fast and hot,  
And yet their thirst for struggle, for revenge  
Prevailed, and so all hardships were forgot.  
They had experienced and had surmounted all,  
Both thirst and hunger, fear and heat, steel-willed.  
When wounded, they would croak: "I — die? No, by my soul!  
No! I'll survive. Stand till the end. And kill."  
They'd crawl at night to the commander's post,  
Having disposed of the last bread and meat,  
And there would ask: "Are there munitions left?"  
But never "Is there anything to eat?"

So night went by, so stifling day would pass.  
Grey-coated Germans pushed from every side.  
And yet between the black walls of burned homes  
The steadfast men held on and, fighting, died.  
Here you must stand! No way back, no retreat!  
No sleep, no bread; mines, shells — they must be had  
For soldiers of your sacred bastions,  
Your fiery, smoke-filled ruins, Stalingrad!  
And they did stand. The faith in stony hearts  
Would never bend, as firm as bayonets.  
Meanwhile, fire, smoke and thunder far away  
Came from the North, from the expanse of steppes.  
There battle raged. From broken attic holes,  
From roofs of houses, and from the tops of trees,  
They watched the flashes, nearer every hour,  
Heard thunder-claps that made men's life-blood freeze.  
Along the Volga moved loose yellow ice.  
The snow grew russet with the blasts of mines.  
The earth was sodden. Blizzards followed thaws.  
Fog and wet slush together were combined.  
Then one day, in the sleezy haze of dawn,  
When soldiers, cross and taciturn, had crawled  
Under the hulk of a disabled tank,  
High in the sky sudden steel echoes rolled.  
And then they heard, quite near from where they were  
How thundering, on a bare orchard fell  
Right into the warm, cozy German lair  
A mighty, joyous, whistling Russian shell.

The enemy howled, leaping from his den  
And seized with mortal panic, rushed around.



The shells beat down on them, again, again;  
Well-aimed, unerring, each its target found.  
Like heralds of all-powerful assistance  
These messengers from northern batteries  
Came, and the men redoubled their resistance,  
Regaining their exhausted energies.

They pushed through howling shells and roaring fire,  
And then the genuine holocaust began.  
Knocked over by the blows dealt from two sides,  
The German regiments, uprooted, headlong ran.  
He vanquished death, soldier of Stalingrad.  
Emerging out of ruins, chaos, hell,  
From fissures in the earth, from what remained  
Of balconies, roofs, walls, all mixed pell-mell,

From attics filled with smoke and sparks of fire,  
From basements, cellars, split and scattered bricks,  
Unconquerable, ruthless, rousing fear,  
Grim bearer of revenge, black, lean as a stick.  
He went on through the settlement and ran  
Out to the wastelands by the Volga, trampled hard,  
Into the war-ploughed steppe. Upon a hill  
Like an explosion, he stood still, red-starred.

Against the background of red flashes in the height,  
Along the slopes, all tangled with barbed wire,  
Marched over hillocks curling with thick smoke  
Our Army from the north, never to stop or tire.  
He rushed towards them, while the regiment  
Trampled on German corpses. Their *Hooray*  
Along the mighty river's winding banks  
Flew, warlike, on, victorious and gay.

The battle quietened. Then together joined  
Divisions from the north and from the south.  
The soldiers met, like titans tall and proud,  
Like humans pale and tired, with thirst-torn mouths.  
They hollered something, with their hardened hands  
Hugging their friends, and with a salty word  
Amusing them, and sharing all they had —  
Friendship, shag, bandages, the news they'd heard.  
And their forgotten hearts again they felt,  
And tears, black, thick as tar, rolled down unstopped  
Down cheeks unshaven, soldiers' tears, so rare,  
Live, born of strength, they dropped and dropped.  
Seized with such joy, nobody felt ashamed  
On that great day, their souls with war inflamed.

And it became so joyful, quiet and warm.  
It seemed, the flight of far birds could be heard.

And then the colonel stepped out to the fore,  
His own excitement by his will firm-curbed.  
He wanted to say something, but could not.  
No common words at such a time would do.  
He hugged the new arrivals one by one  
And kissed their prickly faces, all smoked through.  
And they lined up before him in long rows,  
And there, behind them, towering, arose  
The fiery, awesome walls of Stalingrad,  
Like knights of war, triumphant, ironclad.

1942

## THE CLIFFS OF DOVER

(From *English Impressions*)

So here it is, that chalk so widely famous  
Which seems to creep down from the seaside hills  
Into the noise of Dover's silty searoads,  
Into the straits so turbulent and chill.

So here they are, the cliffs of Albion,  
A shield of limestone, snowy-white and low  
Which Britons proud in would-be self-defence  
Held at their breasts since centuries ago.

So here they are, those gate-posts of white chalk  
Through which the English Channel, narrow, swift,  
Hemmed in between its closely lying shores,  
Drives waves on which dark stains of oil-slime drift.

The war here had entrenched itself for long  
On Dover's chalk, on the sand of Calais.  
Over the Channel's stream its awesome song  
Had thundered through long years three times a day.

Above the sea, through tempest, snowstorm, fog,  
Into the blacked-out, muted cities reached  
Like towering arches of a lethal bridge,  
Parabolas of shells that howled and screeched.

And suddenly the hoary wave turned red  
When in among the hills, in fire and smoke,  
Heavily leaping, thundered German steel,  
Each shell-blast growing up like a black oak.

War nowadays has long, far-reaching hands.  
Those hands have left their marks on Dover, too:

Scorched earth, blown up and broken viaducts,  
The teeth of ruined homes still cutting through.

But it was neither low-browed concrete bunkers  
Nor steel tank-barrages, as some would have us think,  
Nor even the black-uniformed, stiff Bobby,  
That stopped the war upon the Channel's brink.

In other lands the fate was to be settled  
Of these close-running waves, these pallid hills;  
Mid steppeland wormwood, mid the Don's green grave-mounds,  
And on the Volga, whose voice none can still.

Oh yes, the foreign horde's demented swimmer  
To cross the English Channel lacked the grit  
Because he could not overstep the Volga.  
Great Britain! Do you still remember it?

1948-1949

## BEFORE MICHELANGELO'S STATUES

(From *Italian Encounters*)

The rabid boiling of magma, eruptions of ore primeval,  
The white heat and glow of marble, the roar of falling wild stone,  
The heavy breath of volcanoes, the birth-throes of flesh almighty —  
The sculptor with his steel chisel made the boulder split with a groan.

Thus in their ageless vortex atoms and forms and projects  
Whirled and tossed and exploded, craved for measure and flesh,  
Foamed over dark abysses, beat against sheer obstructions,  
Stabbed out like protuberances, plunging down with a crash.

Thus, in truth's revelations, in premonitions of essence,  
He pounded the will-less rock, the wordless stone blocks he crushed,  
And tearing chaos asunder, arms rose, unchained, unfettered,  
Out of the bowels of volcanoes from which molten lava gushed.

The titan's torso then straightened, his roar broke out of the silence,  
His muscular spine unbending, lordly, he then stepped forth.  
Greedily the Maestro out of the deep black chasm  
Extracted this knot of will-power, this issue of stubborn force.

And loud through eternity echoed out of the marble canyon  
A cry, just like life audacious, the birthcry of humans loud,  
The spirit's battlecry fearless, the howl of creative torture,  
The cry by which life is distinguished from non-existence's shroud,

Which brings worlds clashing together, atomic nuclei crushing,  
Growing with thirst for research, with the longing to find and invent,  
All boundaries overstepping, struggling, fighting, creating,  
Silent, then once more vocal, fall followed by new ascent.

2

On great blocks of marble he chiselled the features  
Of titans, who tore out of nothingness then,  
Awakening, thirsting, unkind, angry creatures,  
Rebellious, yet worthy of being called men.  
With brows taut as bows, with triangular cheekbones,  
With noses squashed, crooked, with twisted-up backbones —  
That stonehewer, sculptor, if not so humane,  
Could act as a deity, well worth the name —  
He'd sounded the depths of humanity's soul,  
He'd felt all the torture and joy of creation,  
The great thirst for knowledge, for witnessing all,  
The lure of far targets, search without cessation.

3

PIETA

All's alien here to me: these towering vaults,  
Their haughty gilt — they look like copper bowls —  
The organ-storms with heavy thunder-bolts,  
The pompous masses deaf to human souls,  
The crisscrossed light-beams breaking through the haze,  
The incense that smells of sin and of temptation,  
Mosaics staring with hypnotic gaze,  
The floor and wall-stones, red, in stiff formation,  
The fussy flock of nuns that flit about  
Like busy blackbirds soon to fly off south.

All's alien here to me, unravelled and known well,  
And underneath the gilded dome for me  
There's no deceit, no gift, no mystery,  
Just would-be secrets, words that nothing tell.  
Yet here, abruptly, in a niche half-dark  
Scarce lit by candles softly glimmering,  
We saw a miracle that stole our hearts,  
A sight that set us quietly pondering.  
It seemed like an abandoned child, alone  
In this great pompous, soulless wilderness,  
Inspiring thoughts profound in all alive,  
Its meaning unconcealed, easy to guess.  
Palmbranch-like, limp and brittle, lies a body  
Across her knees. It is her only son.

All's over. He lies stretched out, weak and broken,  
 And never will get up again. He's gone.  
 The mother looks into his empty eyes,  
 At the mute lips, the arms submissive, thin.  
 She knows all, and she will accept no lies —  
 No consolations — she will not be taken in.  
 Not pompous words that do nobody good,  
 Not mercy's lukewarm myrrh with scented breath —  
 The valour, pain and pride of motherhood  
 Have fought off, held at bay the power of death.  
 So for five centuries she sits with her dead son,  
 This woman mourning for all Italy.  
 Yet after all that time she's not become  
 Cold dust or a cold marble effigy.  
 Yes, maybe only yesterday she'd brought  
 Him here through heavy doors armoured with brass;  
 From bullets of carabinieri nought  
 Could save her first-born, soon from life to pass.  
 In an unequal, fierce and fast-fought skirmish  
 Again his blood was shed on Roman soil,  
 His blood, the blood of Gramsci and Togliatti  
 Italian communists — known or perhaps unknown.  
 They know well what it is to die for others,  
 They know, if anyone, what noble targets are,  
 Dying in the embraces of their mother —  
 Italy — Immortality — Pietá.

1961-1962

## ON SARDINIA

(From *Italian Encounters*)

Where heat-waves choke, where rusty grassblades poke  
 From slag-heaps bluish-grey, from dung, from tatters,  
 Where hunger's come to stay, hanging above the folk,  
 Jobless and silent, while the rich grow fatter,  
 Where winds in empty yards drive dust about,  
 Where staring into the hot sky, gray miners sit,  
 Where kids don't laugh and women do not shout,  
 As quiet as in a hungry fainting fit,  
 Where stoves no longer smell of bitter smoke  
 And where habitually old men sit listening  
 To hunger's scarce-heard plaintive whimpering,  
 I went. I saw it all. Black hands I shook  
 And in their boundless suffering partook.  
 Above the luckless, foodless, jobless valley  
 I raised a miner's baby in my arms —  
 Its hunger-riven, tiny little body,

Lean hands not for a moment staying calm,  
Stretched out like little beams of light aflutter,  
Its head too heavy for it, hanging low,  
Its eyes like little honey-bees aglow,  
Burning like sparks, like twinkling stars aglitter.  
As if my grandson, that Sardinian boy  
I held up in my arms, then felt — this land,  
This folk so poor, these miners with black hands  
Were part of me — I shared their grief and joy,  
Their conscience I shared, their aspirations;  
I had the right to call them comrades in ideas,  
In dreams, in suffering and exaltation,  
In all that in my consciousness appears:  
Truth, honour — all that from life's deepest deeps  
I brought out, as a wealth till death to keep...  
With confidence I raise towards the skies  
This human bud, this child with beaming eyes  
Above the mournful yellow cliffs that rise  
To face the ruthless lash of rockets whining.  
Not in my hands alone does it ascend  
Towards songs and love, towards a future shining,  
This tender burden which I cherish without end,  
This child, warm, soft and smiling with sheer joy;  
Not only the strong hands of miners there —  
The hands of thousands of Sardinian unemployed  
Uphold him o'er this barren wasteland where  
Red rust covers the hatches of closed mines,  
Where cactuses alone stand green in fields,  
Where in the bare sky rocket after rocket whines.  
No — millions of hands, strong and gentle, shield  
And hold up Hope, the world's beloved child.  
You hear that noise, like thunder rolling wild  
Across the sky? Yet not one eyebrow flinches,  
No fear shows in Sardinians' rugged features.  
Such is this island of whose heart I'm sure,  
Proud, valiant, hard-working, poor yet pure.

2

Peopleless wastes without end,  
Fields on which nothing grows,  
Roadways smoky as ash,  
Endless, sticky as tar...  
Tin-clad, the spire of a church  
Among the low hillocks shows.  
People mid tumbledown huts  
Stir in the streets afar.  
Women in worn black clothes;  
Features noble and fine

Where poverty, grief and toil  
Left their indelible mark.  
Leaning forward, they peer  
Into these eyes of mine,  
Old men, heavy and dark,  
Wrinkled, time-burdened, wise.  
The coal-blackened miners' crowd  
Surrounds me just as before.  
From under their eyebrows thick  
Shine their curious eyes.  
Into their faces' skin  
Coal-dust has eaten deep;  
Like olive-branches, blue veins  
On their big hands appear.  
Men of the Carbon mines,  
Stern, kindly traditions they keep,  
Hardened by ceaseless toil,  
By struggle year after year.  
Here they have come today,  
Filling the spacious hall;  
Blocking the doors they stand  
Stretching their hands to me,  
Hundreds of brotherly hands —  
In steel solidarity.  
Attentive, I read the tale  
Written in toil-tired eyes,  
The age-old story inscribed  
On faces furrowed and tanned.  
Only in books in my time  
Had I read such a tale, old and wise;  
Here it is written in blood,  
Its call comes to me from all hands.  
Here in the flutter of hearts  
Its mournful chapters pulsate.  
In ruthlessly ruined lives  
Its conflicts stand out in relief.  
No silence here, and no peace —  
For work they have long had to wait.  
No bread and nothing to eat:  
Only, struggle, poverty, grief.  
Children without ABC's,  
Women without decorations.  
Hands without pickaxes.  
Mines standing idle and quiet.  
No future to look forward to —  
No work and no expectations.  
The fires in their homes have gone out,  
No more do their eyes beam light,  
No dawns illumine their windows,  
No songs sound on holidays.

Only hope still glows in their bosoms,  
     A longing for happiness;  
 Holy as daily bread,  
     Enduring as steel it stays;  
 Now suddenly it breaks forth  
     From the abyss of distress,  
 From the depths of the working folk,  
     Out of their very souls  
 In the anthem of hope,  
     "The *Internationale*."  
 Fumbling with their fingers  
     The ends of their black, patched shawls,  
 Pressing to weary bosoms  
     Their little ones, one and all.  
 With the melody grow and straighten  
     These women, sorrowful, tired,  
 As if in front of an altar  
     Standing there in a row.  
 A boy's pure and vibrant discant  
     Dove-like, ascends to the spire,  
 Bearing the words that thunder  
     Heavy, with wrath aglow;  
 In the Sardinian dialect  
     In chorus the miners sing.  
 Let my own fathers' language  
     Into their singing weave.  
 Together in time and rhythm  
     Together in expectations and woe  
 Never have I had such feelings!  
     How vibrant the voices ring!  
 Could any other emotion  
     So high my spirit upheave?  
 I feel I am growing stronger,  
     With power my bosom expands.  
 Hundreds of millions of shoulders  
     Press to my shoulders tight.  
 Close to the miners' dwellings  
     A whole great universe stands.  
 With my voice, with my thoughts commingling,  
     The world's voice soars to the heights.  
 I stand with my time together,  
     With my class in a sacred tryst:  
 In this lies my life's true meaning,  
     Its genuine, deepest gist!  
 Get up on your feet, not seeking  
     For phrases — no time to be missed!  
 Simply say to these people:  
     I'm with you, a Communist!



(From *Stories of Hope*.  
Variations on a theme from R. M. Rilke)

\* Kakhetia, Kartalinia, Pshavia, Liakhva — parts of Georgia

Sticky colourful mixtures in exchange for all that I see —  
 I put them all on the cartons of pictures drawn artlessly  
 To entertain noisy carousers, to lure the drunkard and bum —  
 As signboards hung over the entrance of wine-cellars where they come  
 Or in motley shreds upon walls green with moss and slimy with mould  
 To soak in the rain, discoloured, decaying from damp and cold.  
 Bears illumined by moonlight, yellow and big-eyed deer,  
 Crimson meat upon skewers, wine in kegs with black coal-tar smeared,  
 And also in wineskins — nude, shameless as fat old men;  
 My homeless, shelterless paintings bleaching in dive and den,  
 They rot and they get disfigured, swollen, broken and slumped,  
 Piled in a heap in a parlour, or into a cellar dumped.  
 Only those that a purchaser's fancy finds pretty and most attractive  
 Are grabbed and carried off home by inn-keepers, my benefactors.  
 I'll put up before my eyes in a corner that lighter seems  
 My sad-eyed, sorrowful visions, unfinished, bodiless dreams:  
 The proud looks of Queen Tamara \*, an eagle's unblinking gaze,  
 The farewell glance of a soldier, a mourner's eyes in a haze;  
 Eyes — two holes in the cranium drilled to study the world,  
 Two beams, two bright shafts of lightning at another's eyes point-blank  
hurled.

Bringing new hope to people in whom all hope has long ceased  
 But it's wasted, my message painted in the eyes of man and of beast,  
 Stifled under thick market-dust, in dim taverns where loafers feast.  
 In a cubbyhole near the kitchen like a homeless mongrel I mope,  
 Gone is my wondrous vision on which I had laid such hope,  
 My oil-paint is steadily dying, my oilskin is colourless, dull —  
 My deathly and senseless palette — irretrievably void and null!  
 How to surmount these misfortunes? Scrape off, smear, tear with pain?  
 Spit at the dreary rectangle, like a castrate's face flat and plain?  
 I stand before it — my doom, my dust, my coffin, my grave,  
 Hollow — a hole without bottom — a pit from which nothing can save.  
 On it, as if on a cross, hope languishes, crucified, numb,  
 Dried like a wilted fruit, like a scarified ulcer become.  
 What will I gaze at while dying, with eyes both empty and sore?  
 What tint will appear before me, by nobody seen before?  
 This crazy bazaar of a world, like a jester in make-up and paint,  
 Will trample upon my pictures, dance past them, useless and quaint.  
 Fruitless as yellow leaves and yellow as rust on green,  
 On a damp strawbed I'll die, will-less, unheard, unseen.  
 Soft as an angel will fly the evening beam on the ceiling;  
 Its message I will not hear, in this desert, noisy, unfeeling.  
 And God will refuse to have with my poor, lost soul any dealings  
 By no one will I be remembered, for no one serve as a warning.  
 Perhaps only tramps will convene and drink from a horn in mourning;  
 With the clumsy crate bearing my dust on its final way they will toil,  
 And on my coffin will knock clods of generous Georgian soil,

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\* Tamara (Tamar), Queen of Georgia (1184-1207)

Wishing an idler rest, though really he never earned it:  
Knock-knock, knock-knock, knock-knock, like someone knocking in  
earnest;  
"If you're alive, o man, open to me for a minute!"

An old man's motionless eyes from beneath knitted eyebrows gaze,  
Looking at death and want and other cruel things all his days.  
Shoulders strong, but helplessly drooping, head upon bosom dropped,  
Accustomed to push among crowds in a hubbub that never stopped,  
The janitor of the tavern, a hoarse-voiced, rude-spoken old man,  
Stands in the doorway, blocking the way with his form, heavy, tan,  
And a tray loaded up with viands — all sorts of fruit, chunks of meat,  
He carries, slow, in his hands, as at funeral wakes is meet.  
The food, like a holy mount, is enveloped with odours sweet,  
Herb-roots, flowers and stalks around its edges piled neat.  
Every shapely apple gilded by the sun's heat,  
Every firm-bodied berry with juice, thick and pure, replete;  
The wine in the jug smells of honey, of summer's delight and warmth,  
The fragrance of faded roses and bitter pips it sends forth.  
The drink in the clay jug splashes as if in farewell to this world,  
Alien, unwelcoming, grey-hued, by February rainshowers blurred.  
The green shoots of springtime grasses, sparkling red pepper pods  
Of every tint and colour — sweet, bitter, salt — food of the gods!  
Prancing, dancing like horses in an impulsive race  
On this square out of beaten copper — this gay-patterned tray's  
fecund space.

Ah, gorgeous Georgian fig-tree! I recognize its sweet breath,  
The walls disappear abruptly, and the kitchen stench dies at length;  
The warm wind of green Tbilisi tears into the stinking hole;  
Who sent you to me, dear fellow? You are just in time, 'pon my soul!  
Who laid out those lovely tidbits so skillfully on the tray?  
Who could dispense with pity and reproofs to a vagabond, say?  
Who was it spent so much effort, inventive, industrious, kind,  
For me not to die here forgotten, in dirty barracks confined?  
"You think I brought this because in your life you've not guzzled enough?  
You think it's just heaps of roast meat, onions, pepper and other such stuff?  
You think that I've come here because I'm drunk as a lord, probably?"  
"No, I think it's an omen of joy — it is my immortality —  
These fruits will forever retain my colours' bright interplay,  
These apples will keep my old gilt — forever and ever and aye.  
I haven't ever served guzzlers — beauty and youth served my art.  
No, I will not die completely — there's no fear of death in my heart.  
And so you will not deceive me, although you have come disguised  
As the janitor of a tavern — I can still trust my sharp old eyes,  
Your all-seeing eye looks sternly yet kindly, with love at me,  
God's true herald, you bring me assurance of my immortality!"

## THE GODS OF GREECE

(From *Memories of Uman* \*)

Clashing, sparkling, glistening,  
Rearing, prancing, whistling,  
Long-shanked trombones shining bright,  
Band-drums booming, fat and tight,  
French horns shrilly, loudly blaring,  
Trumpets debonnaire and daring,  
Mouth-pieces on pouted lips,  
Tearing the silence into strips,  
With its usual pomp and noise,  
With its solemnness and poise,  
The dare-devil eighth regiment  
Entered the old settlement.  
In front the band came playing loud,  
Behind it horsemen in a crowd,  
Noisy, dusty, cantered through;  
In the wind their forelocks flew.  
Under riders horses shivered,  
Snorting, neighing, rumps aquiver.  
Horsehoofs clopped along the road,  
Clouds of dust rose thick and broad,  
Flew from under feet and hoofs,  
Reaching to the very roofs,  
And menacingly through the dust  
Furtive looks the horses cast  
With their crimson, bloodshot eyes,  
Crazy with the heat and cries.  
So gloriously into town rode the red cavalry,  
Pushed through the marketplace toward the station,  
Led by the music roaring savagely,  
Trilling and tootling, wild with animation  
And in the front row, moving on,  
Ribald, hoarse with effort gone,  
Blaring in tune or out of tune,  
Wriggler, juggler, joker, loon —  
The ringing, singing  
Cornet-a-piston,  
The golden, sparkling  
Cornet-a-piston.  
Whining, moaning with tearful groan,  
Cajoling, sang the cornet-a-piston  
Of white acacia-sprays, days long-gone —  
Sang the heart-rending, soulful cornet-a-piston,  
The swordsmen, boisterers regimental  
All listening to the tune sentimental.

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\* Uman — town in Cherkasy Region

What they wish is to gallop over the range,  
But no — their manners have had to change.  
Canter. Pull up. No swearing, no cursing!  
Who's lagging there? —  
Over his trusty horse  
Ominously the commissar rose  
And, stern, looked back at the motley rows.  
Scarred and pocked with black coal and grime  
By a whole lifetime spent in a mine  
Firm and powerful, never idle,  
His hands grip tight his horse's bridle.  
His old eyes burn with hate for the foes,  
His gunholster in the sunshine glows.

The noise seems to choke; it gulps and dies.  
Clanking, in rhythm, the regiment rides,  
Obviously ignorant of the fact  
That Uman will be their last bivouac;  
In the commissar's field-case strict orders lie  
From H. Q., to be carried out by-and-by:  
Some to be sent off to the reserve,  
Some — in attack brigades to serve;  
Squabblers and brawlers — the ruffianly batch  
Disarmed, to the army tribunal dispatched.  
On to their fate they gallop ahead,  
Auburn, brunet, blond and red-head,  
Soldierly stature, forelocks dashing,  
Stubborn foreheads, bristling moustaches;  
Roisterer, yokel, hobo, tramp,  
Brought by wind or verdict to the regiment camp.  
One shaved pate showed a spot like a penny  
Where the Cossack had grown a horsetail-like pennant;  
From under another's cap-peak stuck  
Like a gorgeous nosegay, a riotous lock,  
Curled and petted, with a fragrant smell,  
In the band of Makhno anointed well;  
In Krasnov's white troops another had doffed  
A British-made tunic, swanky and soft,  
With shoulderstraps, though, no longer in view,  
Torn off while scampering from pursuit.  
A bewildering mix of features and origins,  
Riff-raff that joined the victorious force,  
Able to shoot, chop — maraude, forage,  
But unfit to enter the future, of course.

A crazy tangle of faces and fortunes,  
The leavings of battle, the shreds of frays —  
A bewildering, war-scorched picture  
Motley in uniform, ammunition and face  
In well-worn, sun-bleached ex-hussar tunics,

Capes from officers claimed by death,  
 Grey coats seized from yellow-blue units \*,  
 Army breeches of mammoth breadth:  
 Pants like meadows, all flowers and garlands  
 On carpet plush of fantastic hues  
 Sewn in the days when they'd swaggered as bandits  
 More for devilry than for use.  
 One unit commander was the swankiest ever —  
 His company envied the pants he'd got on,  
 Their seat portraying the Queen of Sheba  
 Together with wise king Solomon.  
 When his stallion galloped, like two broad wings  
 Over its rump the pictures spread:  
 The Queen in her rosy, silky things  
 And the king robed in blue from foot to head.  
 The commissar's civilian pants and jacket  
 Aroused the brawlers disapproval and despair,  
 Confined, though, to sneers; words weren't risked to back it;  
 Bah! Let them smirk — the old man didn't care.  
 Plain shoes he thrust into stirrups undeterred  
 And as he rode he never even spurred  
 His trusty mount, a frisky bay mare.  
 The two of them, they made a perfect pair;  
 Yet he, too, could fight and knew his men,  
 The first to canter into attack;  
 Among his lusty-mouthed regiment  
 Authority the old man didn't lack.  
 Now, withdrawn and silent, with knitted brows  
 He rode behind the regimental standard.  
 Broad waves of music above him rose,  
 So, thunderous, in ceremonial formation  
 As bugles blared, drums beat and horses neighed  
 They entered Uman in a noisy cavalcade  
 And pitched their camp beside the railway station.  
 Now all, it seemed, would be restored to order;  
 The commissar could doze an hour or so  
 If close beside the station border  
 A sharp train whistle didn't blow.  
 Wherefrom? Why? Mid sleepers long decayed  
 Wormwood had long been bristling dense;  
 Whistles had not been heard for a decade,  
 The rails on the tracks gone rusty long since.  
 But now among the plane-trees, willows and acacias  
 Out crawled a squat, strange little locomotive,  
 Pushed to the ramp, and slow and cautious,  
 Near the burned packhouse, hissing, halted.  
 With a deafening squeal of brakes on wheels  
 The serpentine string of freightwaggons stills.

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\* Yellow-blue — colours of the nationalist army of Petlura

Up to the engine, puffing at leisure,  
With a machine-gun ran soldier-lads.  
The station-master, with footsteps measured,  
Paced up and down, in a red cap clad.  
"Who's in Khristinivka?" "Reds — our mates.  
A trainload of firewood's been sent to Uman.  
In the mail-coach there's salt and newspapers comin'.  
From Odessa they've brought us a waggon of crates."  
"You hear, boys? Surprise gifts from Mother Odessa!"  
"Hey, stand back, you bastards, let sailors pass!"  
"Sailors? You? Raggamuffins, yessir!"  
"Raggamuffin yourself! Makhnovite, I guess?"  
"It's government property! Don't come near!"  
"You want to taste this?" "Touch me, just try!"  
"Enough, you louse!" "Leave my blouse, you hear?"  
"Damn! Cut it out, boys, the commissar's near!"  
He walked from the platform, official and dry,  
And stopped. "Who's in charge? This instant, come here!  
Where's your mandate? Got none, I fear.  
Except for railwaymen, all stand by!"

The crowd, a sudden miracle expecting:  
Crates of wine, shag, canned food or boots,  
Before the waggon kept milling, hectic,  
Chattering, shoving, with shouts and hoots.  
Like the heaviest avalanche, sunshine-fed,  
Excitement tossed them from end to end.  
Over the station a hot haze stood still —  
Over the water-tower, fire-blackened, old,  
Arousing sharp thirst and a somnolence sunborn.  
The steppe lay mute, only dust rustled, stubborn.  
Quickly they opened the dark square hole.  
People swarmed in, fussed about inside.  
Out on the platform great boxes were hauled  
Words in black paint were clearly inscribed  
On the planed dealboard, soiled and grey;  
Shavings, rags, rubbish littered the way.  
The men, breathing heavily, worked away.

The boxes broke into pieces, the sun burst in with mad force —  
The sun, enormous, and naked, the sun, cruel as slashing swords.  
It hurtled down on the marble, splashed in a vortex of sparks,  
And all of a sudden appeared, blinding the people's eyes,  
The beautiful stone, like live flesh, glaring, golden with sunshine,  
Brought from Ligurian seashores, from the quarries of far-off Carrara,  
Selected by human art for depicting beauty and joy,  
The dazzling marble of Italy lay there, pierced through by sunshine,  
Glittering, brilliant, dreamlike, before the people astonished.  
Dumbfound, the crowd fell silent; the beams struck their eyes, aquiver;  
Out of the waggon's darkness emerged ancient gods full of beauty

[illegible]

*In summer 1918, a train pulled into Uman carrying odd-looking freight: wooden crates with statues of Greek deities. The sculptures had been ordered from an Italian firm back in 1910 by the czar's Department of royal estates, then in charge of Uman's famous park Sofiyivka, which the statues were to adorn. In 1914 they were completed and five years later, under extraordinary circumstances, shipped to Uman via the port of Odessa.*

Having doffed their unneeded garments, by their nudity unembarrassed,  
With eyes sightless and yet all-seeing searching the souls of people,  
Calmly they stepped from the platform, nonchalant, god after goddess,  
Lining up in a row on the soil of the war-torn country.  
Robust, with hair free-waving, bathing in wind and sunshine,  
Stands a god with his left hand extended — to pick up a lyre, perhaps?  
His youthful body radiates light and unearthly music;  
Gods and mortals attend to his sun-extolling song.  
Next stands a maiden unrobed, unperturbed by the glances of humans,  
Her marble beauty reflects emotions sublime and immortal.  
One cool, impeccable hand covers her virgin bosom,  
The other lies on her lap, on the pure, lily-like flower.  
Beside her, also unrobed, trustful, confidently gracious,  
A queenly virgin appears, armless yet full of power.  
Slender and graceful, a third, resolute and fleet-footed,  
Speeds to the far-off woods, a gentle doe at her side.  
As if to outrace the maiden, wings attached to his sandals,  
Bearing a three-winged staff, a helmet with wings on his head,  
Flies the Olympian herald, saucy dispenser of fortunes.

All this befell in Uman, in the second year of Revolution,  
To the amazement and mirth of the eighth regiment's men.  
What was it? Hoax? Visitation? What the hell did it mean?  
The commissar stepped from the crowd which grew much quieter then,  
And with attentive eyes he scrutinized the stone faces,  
The eternal gestures of arms, the flutter of motionless bodies.  
The commissar fell deep in thought, deaf to the music and turmoil.  
"I knew they existed somewhere, these idols of creeds forgotten,  
Carved by an artist inspired out of snowy-white marble,  
But I never yet thought about them, nor yet laid eyes upon them;  
Now see, they stand before my very eyes,  
These beautiful and tranquil gods of Greece,  
Like some sweet dream, like sunshine after strife,  
Or, through the smoke of war, a glimpse of peace.  
I never met the like of them before.  
This is the first time I've a chance to marvel  
At human bodies so divine in form,  
So full of life, though carved from lifeless marble.



And where could I have met them in my time  
 In their eternal loveliness and grace,  
 I, who have sweated all my livelong days  
 Deep down beneath the earth in a dark mine,  
 And now go marching over wartime ways...  
 So best of all," he thought, "let people see  
 How beautiful can men and women be,  
 And know that for us too the time is near  
 When everyone will like a god appear.  
 Yes, let them get a glimpse of future times  
 When grace and beauty will be all mankind's!  
 Let lofty feelings in their hearts awake.  
 These statues to Sofiyivka I'll take;  
 Of course, it has to be arranged beforehand  
 With the Povitkom \*  
 To be employed  
 For concrete purposes of politpropaganda  
 Among the soldiers  
 And the Uman working masses."  
 Deciding so,  
 The commissar turned back  
 And walked away toward the railway station.  
 Meanwhile, the company commander,  
 Who had only ironically sneered,  
 Stepped out of the crowd, moved it asunder,  
 Giving all a sense of disaster and fear  
 By the way he strode over the platform, dressed  
 In his breeches which made him look  
 Like the Cyrillic letter  $\Phi$  which is  
 Haughty as a real grand duke.  
 And, just to accentuate the hell of it,  
 Striking awe into heart and mind,  
 Boldly outlined in swanky velvet,  
 Moved his powerful behind.  
 All worked up with indignation,  
 In a temper towering hot,  
 "Gods be damned!" he yelled, impatient,  
 "Time we bust the bloody lot!"  
 Seething, the man shook all over with rancour.  
 Something inside him, he felt, was burning,  
 Boiling over with bestial anger  
 For blood and destruction blindly yearning.  
 The devil inside him strove to burst out:  
 Too much to bear, to suppress, to keep mute.  
 Silence gripped the suspense-held crowd.  
 There now,  
 Shoot!

---

\* Povitkom — Party Committee of a *povit* administrative unit in the first years of Soviet power

Let the bullet fly on unhindered,  
Whistle and pierce and maim and smash.  
Let the solid marble be splintered,  
Into fine powder let it be dashed.  
The mauser — click! —  
On his forearm fell.  
The butt gave a kick,  
Bucked like hell.  
Upholding the stump of an elbow,  
Stands the bullet-hit god.  
He sways, as if uncertain,  
“To escape? But where? On what?”  
Again the blue-black mauser  
Sticks from a scarlet fist.  
Closer, the target, closer  
To the gunsight seen in a mist.  
Whack it. Wallop it. Bash it.  
Smash it to smithereens.  
Now then, He can't miss, dash it,  
He's shot since his early teens.  
That shameless goddess with a tempting shoulder!  
One... Two... Three...  
Now, let the bullet scald 'er!  
But then, suddenly...  
Suddenly earthward the mauser flops.  
Who dared?  
He's as good as a goner.  
“Bury you ten yards deep in slops,”  
Curses the fuming gunner.  
The crowd hold their breath.  
The commissar stands  
Coldly looking into his eyes.  
Will he strike, set his boot to his pants?..  
Knock his block off? — the crowd surmise.  
“Here, that pistol,” the commissar stretched  
A hand to the other's fingers clenched.  
The mauser jerked in his fist like a cur  
With rabid fury, thirst, mad desire,  
And suddenly dropped its sad face, as it were,  
Its fine-moulded body slumping aside.  
And the commissar took it out of his hand  
And, mute and wilted, the man, all lonely,  
In his queer dress on the platform stands  
As if thunder-struck, amazed and stony.  
His hussar tunic suddenly bleached,  
His gorgeous breeches suddenly faded,  
Lost and friendless, shrunk to a midge,  
Escorted, he plodded stationward.

In the morning all the townfolk once again were in a hubbub,  
So that cottage-windows jangled with their last unbroken glass.  
In the square beside the station, covered thick with dust and sunburn,  
Bandmen marched along with music and a blinding gleam of brass.  
Once again the bugles blather and the drums like thunder rattle,  
Once again clop-clop! go horseshoes while machine-gun carts fly by.  
In the carts as if in chariots prepared for mortal battle,  
Stuffed with hay and lined with carpets, gods and goddesses tower high.  
All around, reduced to silence, stood a crowd of men and women,  
Staring at the train of guncarts trundling on through muted Uman.  
Many guests had local people met with everlasting patience;  
During half a year they'd seen a dozen new administrations...  
But such visitors from heaven, wonders out of ancient lore,  
Uman folk had never witnessed, never marvelled at before.

See there, a haughty goddess towers on a carpet-lined guncart,  
Peering with eyes of marble at the streets of dust-veiled Uman,  
Over the heads of people, meagre and sorry creatures!  
Miserable and gloomy, yet they will not start jeering  
At her beautiful body, her fertile, life-giving lap.  
After her follows a god, his splintered arm forward pointing,  
As if to ask the way from Uman to Eternal Light,  
The Ukraine's radiant future, new faith to fight for and cherish.  
Next, on a third cart, a giant, massive and bushy-bearded,  
His torso draped in a robe, towards the people inclines,  
As if with generous hand to deliver his scroll to the public.  
After these two thousand years, who will accept it by right,  
Enscrolled by the mighty chronicler, telling of faith and sorrow?  
You there, winged messengerboy, what are the tidings you carry  
To the town's sorry huts, to the park with its rustling chestnuts?  
What do you bring man?

Joy?

The Light of the heavens?

New hope?

Come, quench our spirits' thirst, bring joy to our eyes worn with sorrow;  
We humans are gods as well, though moulded from suffering clay.  
Here we await a future worthy of our great exploits,  
And we welcome you, dwellers of radiant mountain heights,  
Not as aliens and strangers, but as our friends and fellows,  
Welcome, welcome to us, into our land and hearts!

Thus the commissar mused  
As he followed the guncarts, directing  
With a wand of fresh willow his trusty, obedient bay.  
That year abounded in rainshowers. Morning clouds were collecting.  
The gods of Greece would drink deep of a steppe-storm's nectar that day.

## SHOSTAKOVICH: SEVENTH SYMPHONY

Ashes lay red. Ruins remained of homes,  
Slit open, slashed into small splinters, burned.  
Where coal on coal in pits like smithies glowed,  
Rust turned to blood, blood into red rust turned,  
Among the ruins, over burdock and bent steel,  
Shying away when walls above me rocked,  
Stepping over the pools and rubble-heaps,  
Not by myself, with a whole crowd I walked.  
Thunder had ceased already overhead.  
September showed us its transparent blue.  
Only the houses and our souls groaned, causing dread,  
And black-armed trees writhed, by hot steel shot through.  
This ash-strewn playground of the winds and Death  
Had not yet burned down to the very end.  
Grief-wounded hearts were not yet healed — our breath  
Still jerky — woe still gnawed, burned, rent.  
But thoughts already showed a different trend  
And efforts were directed otherwise,  
Though from Lviv hills loud thunderpeals still went,  
The Vistula still uttered doleful cries.  
Yes, we had won. We, victors, marched on, brave,  
Winged, skilled in many battles, iron-willed,  
Beyond the river Niemen's blood-stained wave  
And the Carpathian smoke-wreathed, steep-flanked hills.  
Along the mournful Kiev highway slogging  
In sweat-soaked shirts still without shoulderstraps,  
Our jackboots worn and battered, smeared and soggy,  
We trudged together toughened by mishaps,  
And entered the white-columned, spacious hall,  
There to give up to beauty and our thoughts.  
Fun, inspiration — what needed each soul?  
Oblivion, dreams or sleep — was that we sought?  
What had we come for, tireless toilers, soldiers,  
From all those ruins into music's realm?  
It's hard to drag us from the ashes that still smoulder,  
From monstrous toil, from our undying hell,  
From grief unquieted, unabated fear,  
From the nightmarish ash of Babin Yar \*,  
From fresh graves on the Dnieper's sand-cliffs sheer.  
And yet not only pain and ash are there,  
But growing confidence in new, unheard-of might,  
The rows of bricks laid out in flawless order,  
The bluish steel of newly-welded girders  
And fearless souls striving towards vistas bright.

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\* Babin Yar (Rus. Babiy Yar) — place near Kiev where over 100,000 Soviet civilians and POWs were executed by the Nazis in 1941-1943

And so we come into that hall with columns white  
 Although not knowing what to seek from it:  
 Fitting ourselves into the seats like boulders,  
 Exchanging shards of rough-hewn words, we sit,  
 Shaking the load of cares from weary shoulders,  
 We, people, both alike and multifacial  
 With different destinies and souls and speech.  
 It isn't time yet, o musicians,  
 For you to play, for us to hear the touche.  
 We still lack time to analyze ourselves  
 And look ahead without anxiety.  
 With thirst and pain each bosom here still swells,  
 In each his skeleton still bares death-threatening teeth.  
 We do not know yet why, what for we enter  
 This hall lit with convulsive chandeliers,  
 Chockful of people — grey-faced, deathly weary  
 Whose parched lips softly whispering one hears.  
 But now all quietens down, and all turn speechless.  
 The violinists, trumpeters all freeze  
 As an unusually pale conductor  
 Staggers across the stage as in disease.  
 Then the conductor's passion bursts with force  
 Through the blue twilight that has lulled each sense.  
 Abruptly open wide, stand radiant doors  
 For us into the dawn of three years since;  
 Up the harmonious steps of the Propylaea  
 And through the colonnades, among loud chords,  
 The dawn is entered by men handsome, proud and virile  
 With which the name of Man indeed accords.  
 The early sky blooms pink. Then golden midday.  
 Mauve twilight. Bodies filled with sweet fatigue,  
 Like gladiolus sprays, blue dusk falls on the meadow.  
 Lakes evening-green, discoloured streak by streak.  
 Thin clouds play overhead. Delight and inspiration  
 Luxuriant, the sunset skyline glows,  
 And on the peaceful and serene horizon  
 The farewell shade of dreamy evening shows,  
 Borne on the waves of flute-notes far away.  
 Slowly. So very slowly rock and sway  
 Gentle and thoughtful waters fathoms deep,  
 Spreading soft silence, lulling us to sleep.  
 Abruptly, though, beyond the skyline drums tattoo.  
 The thoughtless roar mounts in audacity and fury.  
 Tattoos. Again. They drum! They shriek anew.  
 They crave for room. For space. Then, weird and eerie,  
 A hoarse, hard snarl: *Vorwärts!* Coarse throats yell *Sieg!*  
*Erste Kolonne... Zweite... Dritte... Big*  
 Monsters come charging. Murderers march. The tramp of boots  
 Approaches, growing bolder, deeper, weightier...  
 Shots at the world, the steppes. At the blue skies they shoot.

Move on. Roar, mouth agape, with crazy hatred.  
Blows. Thunder. Tongues of fire, unbridled, leap.  
Noise. Hammering. Hullabaloo and shouts.  
And rhomboids of armoured monsters creep.  
Bombs screwing through the sky all silence oust.  
Death and destruction spread league after league.  
*Sieg? Sieg? Sieg?*  
Panting, I stood over the yellow foaming Don,  
Over the chaos and the noise of river crossings.  
Like bitter clots of gall my breath came from  
My throat that had grown hoarse with hate and cursing.  
I walked along Fate's knife-edge, tortured so,  
Such unendurable power surging in my breast,  
That to crawl out with a grenade and throw  
Myself beneath a tank would have been best.  
To take a last look at the sky sublime,  
Then — crunching bone, torn flesh, the end of Time...  
I didn't fall, though — on I plodded by the Volga  
And suffered when steel gales whipped Stalingrad.  
I thought, a minute, and I'd drop down in the roadway  
Not even noticing the shell that struck me dead.  
I didn't look for death, nor run from it. Though inches  
Away from me, it always followed by my side,  
Though to the sand-bottom of quaking trenches  
I'd squeezed, sprawled, frozen to the spot from death to hide.  
The bleeding Volga's crater-pitted sandbanks.  
Doomsday incarnate. Point of no return.  
Stand, Stalingrad, keep standing, firm and stern!  
Battery, fire! Fire from your piled-up sandbags.  
Blow follows blow, their frenzied force increasing.  
Triumphant Future isn't near at all.  
Millions will die yet. Groans will sound unceasing.  
To storm and death the bugler yet will call.  
But it is dawning. It will soon be dawn.  
Blessed be the rose-tinged light before the morn!  
Many will be the pain-wracked roads that lead  
To the Triumphal Gate on Victory Day.  
But omens of its coming he could read,  
This artiste, stern, with pain wasting away.  
Houses of Leningrad! The night-long vigils  
At never-sleeping anti-aircraft posts  
With toothy tongs incendiaries catching,  
To bury them — a job of which none boasts.  
Heart-rending screeches. Hammering and thunder.  
The distance criss-crossed by the blinding beams.  
Then that October day. O'er notes he'd ponder...  
A grand piano. Empty classrooms. Dreams.  
And he, he — boylike, screwing up his eyes,  
Nervously twiddling his glasses,  
Peers into what still far before us lies:

1977

He stopped short in the steppe and he listened, intent, to the groan  
and the moan  
With which his time echoed, with which on all sides he was penned.  
They came from all over the land, all that murmur and hum, all that drone;  
No silence is there for the heart, for its songs, nay, no limit nor end,  
No end to the steppe's vibrant music, the wheatears' low, resonant tone,  
To the chords of the sky and the clear-voiced, fierce song of the wind.  
They transcend  
All habitual canons established a long time ago, long since known,  
And the artiste's small heart with their power, with their tuneful  
abundance they rend.

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There, near you, go down to that grassy green dell  
 Where shines the bright eye of a plain village well  
 Made up of great logs — row on row, seasoned oak,  
 Getting harder, the longer in water they soak.  
 Bend the rushes and rue,  
 Part the grass with sweet smell:  
 Live, transparent, there stands  
 A forgotten old well,  
 Built upon the moist ground  
 By one ever so kind  
 With a sensitive heart;  
 That old well you must find.  
 With your lips grey as dust  
 Drink its water with joy  
 And while slaking your thirst  
 Its sweet music enjoy.  
 One drop of music, and, revived, your lips will throb.  
 One drop of music, of unfathomed depth.  
 One drop of music. Sacred as earth's sob.  
 Musical well. Enough to last till death,  
 And neither genius, nor wind, nor years  
 Can ever drain it to the end. And there  
 The wayfarer will drink with greed, till tears,  
 Its living water, ageless, sweet as air  
 And will bring up in reverent cupped palms  
 All that is best in his own soul, that deep  
 In him struck root — his innate, ingrown charm,  
 His countless roots that countless voices keep.  
 Streamlets of music. They will grow, expand,  
 Unlimited in number and in time.  
 In tides of dewdrops, teardrops, raindrops through the land  
 They flow, never to stop, those streams sublime,  
 Flooding the length and breadth of trampled meads,  
 Breaking their banks turned stale and old and dry.  
 And yet, though filled with force, men's boundless needs  
 Those flowing streams can never satisfy;  
 Man's spiritual thirst — a thirst that will exceed  
 All gained by man's ambitious might, all genius has wrought,  
 Insatiable, stubborn human greed  
 For greater showers, for deeper thought  
 And waters.  
 Here,  
 Here, brothers, are the deep clear waters which  
 As told us by ancestral carols, with each drop,  
 Each streamlet, wavelet, year by year enrich  
 Our music's treasury, resounding without stop,  
 Music which bears both joy and melancholy.  
 So it was ever since the world began;  
 Like gossamer, songs twine in patterns holy  
 With winds and flowers: fly on, give joy to man!



Fly over steppes and over hearts, high overhead,  
Caress us, gladden us, gossamer threads,  
And then we will entwine the world with you  
So men may drink their fill of joy, like dew.  
Go forth then, sower of music's pure beauty,  
Carry into the world your precious booty,  
Strewing, like grains of kindness, from your hand  
Voices of joy and grief through every land.  
The thunder's bass, the fields' green canticles,  
Rivers' smooth passages and silver dewdrops' trills.  
And let the voice of Earth and Time and men  
Pour forth in a majestic cantilene.  
Rise, wayfarer, look at the beauty all around:  
A vivifying spring beats from the ground!  
And like an eagle soars towards the skies  
The hand of Leontovich, the musician.  
Out of the well, deep down, out of his mind  
He calls forth spirits, charmer and magician,  
And out of songs and turmoil, echoes, beams  
He rears above the earth an arch that shines and streams —  
Translucent, with divinest hues aglow —  
A magic rainbow's seven-coloured bow.  
Its pillars spanning the horizon's breadth  
Are radiant supports for the moist skies.  
They separate the world from gloom and death;  
A gateway to new life and music, they arise.  
Under that rainbow's joyous benediction  
He stands, a grey-eyed man. With what shall it repay  
Him — what will be his gains, his life-toil's trophies?  
Music and life. Music and life for aye.

*Yevhen Pluzhnik (1898-1936), the son of a farmer, was born in the village of Kantemirovka in Voronezh Region, the Russian Federation. Expressive and rich in philosophic overtones, his poems were a phenomenon of Soviet Ukrainian literature in the 1920s-30s. His poems have been translated into many languages of the USSR.*



# LENIN

Decades pass, in time's day-measured paces,  
Joyous new-born generations rise:  
Always, though,

once yearly,  
on their  
faces

Sadness like a sombre shadow lies.

Young and old remember him who died  
This same moment long and long ago.  
Ever after —

whistles, throttled wide,  
Blow three minutes!  
Just as now they blow!

Always, through the factory-whistle riot,  
(Immortal for all workers as a hymn!)  
People are

united,  
solemn, quiet —  
For three minutes mutely honour  
him!

Faces wince from hidden grief internal,  
Lenin lives in millions —  
never died!

...Whistles prove his memory is eternal  
With a clearness yet unrealized.

Storm-like decade after decade passes,  
Years of wars and blood, of struggle, pain.  
But, a living truth among the masses —  
Lenin will remain.

\* \* \*

I know that  
Ploughshares are beaten out of swords.  
No soil becomes fertile because of  
This art.  
Some keys there be that will afford  
Entrance into the entire heart.

I perceive  
How things are based:  
Through all the wheat, blood is wove —  
Only thus people learn the taste  
Of love,

I believe.

\* \* \*

To learn wisdom — others don't employ:  
All mistakes must be your very own.  
Works that have come down to us from Troy  
Borrowed were, for odes of ancient Rome.

Study well, even commas, by the way —  
And from each line a lesson you'll partake:  
Better make your own mistakes than, say,  
Try to learn from errors others make.

\* \* \*

Night world in beauty wrought.  
No symmetry. No utterance. Death inclined.  
Speak not, then; speak not!  
Who or what throws words to the wind?

All the futility of a world beyond,  
And endless making of little worlds;  
Has not their meaning long been conned  
In textbooks for the boys and girls!

Yet truly wrought in beauty — the night world!

\* \* \*

Oh, when September-golden comes to pass  
And, like a laggard wandering,  
Caresses the silky fleece of autumn grass  
And cranes are gathered round a water-spring,

At night, I love to watch the deeper blue  
Of autumn's vaults of heaven draw  
The raining stars, as carpenter would strew  
The silvery shavings from his moving saw...

What fiery light! For nature can afford  
From weariness to rest in beauty now released —  
Which is perhaps in truth a high award  
For summer's passion — grant of quiet peace.

\* \* \*

Just a small town. But climb up the bell-tower —  
Vista of rye fields and neighbouring farms,  
Town hall, houses, offices, drug-store —  
All so familiar, all full of charm.

I shall live quietly. Like when Fall is fair...  
And sit by my gate in the evenin'...  
Opposite lies the market square —  
There play the dogs and the children.

Folk don't need much, I know, to get by —  
Just a few memories, a room, some baccy —  
And sometimes a bit of blue sky.  
Or the Ninth symphony...

\* \* \*

Night... a boat — like a silver bird!  
(What are words when the heart is too full!)  
Do not hasten or fly through shining worlds,  
Little boat of mine, not very hopeful.

Above us, beneath us, shine worlds or stars...  
Below and above such deeps are sighted...  
Oh, what a beautiful world you are,  
World now united!

\* \* \*

Blue madness yonder! With the sea beneath me  
And the sky wherever falls the eye!  
Your heart no longer wants to be just earthly,  
For you're in love with ineffable reaches of sky!

Fly on, heart! Like a new orb of heaven  
Shed radiance on all depths and space.  
Among them wander, we manikin,  
With guidebook, just in case.

\* \* \*

Evenfall. And seaward fog is rising...  
Lapping wave the shoreline seems to brush...  
Sounds grow faint. Through their non-synchronizing  
Choir, all round you sense a deeper hush.

Oh, precursor of this night of silence,  
Appearing in the half-light gloaming!  
Don't all the living wait you in suspense,  
Sensing the eternal in your breathing?

Fly now, sounds of evening, fading, stilling,  
To the hushed-to-quiet earth, from where  
In eternal depths a great world-building  
Crashes through the silence ruling there.



*Olexa Vlizko (1908-1934) was born in the village of Korosten in Novgorod Region, the Russian Federation, into the family of a clerk. He is the author of several books of verse about the new Soviet man. His style is distinguished for its revolutionary romanticism, innovation, and dynamism. Many of his poems have been translated into languages of the Soviet Union.*

\* \* \*

Rich red blood, and my strength, open-handed  
Like Svyatogor \*, I would bring to the mass!..  
And if hearts could but be expanded,  
I'd expand them a thousand times thus.

And would scatter, would scatter, would scatter  
My energy, like the bright sun's rays,  
So the world should catch fire, and batter  
And break down the bounds of ancient days!

1927

## NINTH SYMPHONY

Monologue

Fire! Fire of superhuman love!  
In youthful breasts let seethe the blood!  
I take you, oh my thorny world  
In the sun's embrace!  
Like some warm bird  
My fire-bird heart will fly around  
All worlds. I'll stretch o'er mankind's bounds

---

\* A legendary knight

Wide wings. Let fate be made beneath  
Their shade. If men no heaven find,  
They'll find the hell-fire of young love,  
All-human, strong, in which all wrong  
Will burn to ash — and that fierce heart  
Bare-fanged, which drinks its brother's gore  
Will fall, and never flourish more:  
There'll be no resurrecting it,  
Just as he'll never rise, who falls  
Into those fierce and fiery jaws —  
The human heart's volcanic pit!..

Fire! Fire of superhuman storm!  
Of new love, wordless from the lips  
Of broken eunuchs, from the tongues  
Of hearts in gloves, that none, perhaps,  
Should see the skinny poisonous corpse  
Where maggots breed — that noble dirt  
Which rickety heirs have long preserved.  
Degenerates of the "true blue blood"  
With blazoned arms of ancient homes.  
And suppuration 'neath golden cloaks!..

Fire! Fire of superhuman love!  
Alive for the strong, and dead for the dust.  
Of love impulsive and burning bright  
For all things. Captivating might  
Of love for people, earth and beasts  
As one. To live, to live like a sun!  
By one's own sweat true joy achieve  
For one's own sons, grandsons and heirs  
Of distant days!..

Fire! Fire of love!  
In youthful breasts let seethe the blood!

I take you, oh my thorny world  
In the sun's embrace! And in my love  
As in fire, I place! Then burn with light  
And give to the poor blind wretch his sight,  
And blind the one, who the dark prefers,  
Himself inters in the graveyard mire!..  
More sun, more light!! More love, more fire!!!

1927

## I SPEAK FOR ALL

### I

From towers tall we view the world —  
And distant stars catch in our hand!..  
The squirrels laugh, in branches curled,  
Full-petalled blooms in sunshine stand...

We'll grow! From beds of days and years  
We'll send fine shoots up to skies,  
Till just a myth become our tears,  
And grief, like smoke, just fades and dies.

### II

We shall not cry! To no pot-house fly!  
We titan-poets, who worlds have made!  
Though satraps mocked us in years gone by,  
We lived — no tears — and patient stayed!

And while you sat in Babylon's lands,  
Your harps on the riverside willows cast,  
O, then we knew that in our hands —  
One flash — we'd crush the whole world to dust!

### III

Oh yes! We'll grow! We'll grow and grow!  
In this land all are poets today!  
And therefore soon the fuse we'll blow,  
And all the planets revolt will sway!

New songs we'll pour in flooding streams,  
Fireworks of burning words will play!..  
Here we've no end of daring themes!  
Here all, yes all — are poets today!

*1927*

## IRONIC OVERTURE

With the stiff north wind from the mountains  
both hearts  
                    and yard-arms tremble,  
and the stern and lordly Viking  
his vessel steers away.



He steers her through the sea-mist,  
and keeps well clear of Odessa,  
where lively ordinary people  
attack the mackerel by day.  
Now don't give way to smirking.  
I don't believe in legends  
The grey-haired Viking's

a folk-song

on the lips of the fisherman.  
Hérédia sang his sonnets  
of an ideal Breton woman,  
and I —

an Odessan woman,  
the northern wind

and songs!

And, believe me,  
it's so much easier  
to sing the blue bays of Brittany,  
than to capture the varied colouring  
of Odessan women,

and talks

which deal with the old love question,  
and, by the way, of the breakers  
above which

the north wind's flying,  
below which the mackerel's swimming!  
Good people!

Show some pity —  
on such delightful subjects  
one may all the time be dreaming,  
no beginning,

and no end!

Above the Black Sea beating  
are trembling hearts

and yard-arms,  
and the stern and lordly Viking  
his vessel steers away.

He steers her through the sea-mist,  
and keeps well clear of Odessa,  
where ordinary people are living,  
and the loveliest women of all!

1930

## ROADSTEAD

Beyond the silo — the lighthouse tower  
at the cross-roads  
of mists and storm's wild power,  
in snowy foam,  
like chalk, is seen —  
below the cliff  
in the roadstead green,  
cutting the dark with its yellow light,  
like Prometheus, straining his chain-links tight,  
it yearns  
for the distant thunderstorm,  
and the chaos  
of elemental form,  
like those Titans, who in ancient days  
among the stars raised barricades  
of ponderous clouds,  
of thunderous waves,  
who clave the depths 'neath the drunken staves,  
who clave the depths, and sank therein,  
following light's reflection  
dim.  
Beyond the silo — the lighthouse tower  
at the cross-road of mists and storm's wild power,  
like Prometheus chained, where storm-clouds lour.  
While there, where black horizons loom,  
made deaf by the crazy orchestra's boom,  
in holds, where pumps lick streaming wounds,  
Leviathans fly 'neath watery mounds.

And the crowds on board are lost,  
and the yard-arms make a cross  
(a blow on the bowsprit falling west!)  
to the moans of prayer, and tormented despair...  
The north-eastern laughs, like to burst.  
"Tonight comes your final hour...  
your final trip —  
and death...

...Four bells... the last-drawn breath...

...Then comes the dawn...  
Beyond the elevator — the lighthouse tower  
at the cross-roads of mists and storm's wild power,  
grieves dumbly, where the storm-clouds lour.

*1930*

BALLAD OF  
"THE FLYING DUTCHMAN"

The heavy  
cruiser  
goes out  
on her course.  
Like a rusty roof,  
the land slowly goes.  
The bridge.  
The Captain.  
The Devil's own curse  
on his evil lips,  
the Zeiss  
on his nose.

In his fury  
he wrinkles  
his frowning brow...  
Above the horizon  
the sun  
and blue haze;  
like toad's eyes  
peer the gun-barrels now,  
their steel beaks  
skyward  
they raise.  
There's distant thunder.  
A choppy sea.  
The warm foam  
chatters  
and spatters the deck.  
The anchor rings.  
In the foc'sle lee  
the trap-ladder  
grates  
with a quiet squeak...

The ocean lies dumb  
in the azure haze...  
A sudden  
order:  
"Change course!  
Due west!"  
Above the horizon  
a mast  
and cross-stays,  
with a flag  
blood-red  
'gainst the blue impressed...

And sharp  
as a jack-knife  
that terse quick glance —  
and lieutenants  
dash up,  
their grins can't withhold.  
upon that ship,  
on the tattered yards  
are strung up  
corpses...  
B-r-r-r  
How cold!

Still nearer...  
Still nearer...  
The horror grows...  
And the stench  
floats over  
the cruiser's course...  
On a light breeze  
sprung up  
it flows...  
"Reverse!  
About ship!"  
the Captain roars.  
The ship disappeared...  
A chill  
shook their bones...  
and as soon  
as night  
on the foc's'le  
fell,  
a shivering sailor,  
in lowered tones  
of the "Flying Dutchman"  
began  
to tell...  
On the waves  
the wind  
his bellows blew...  
And, bent o'er the bridge,  
and peering beneath,  
the Captain listened.  
His laughter flew  
like a devil,  
in spasms,  
between his teeth:

"The Flying Dutchman"?!  
Ha-ha-ha!

They were Communards  
hung on that brig!  
he cried.  
And suddenly,  
losing his legs  
with a jar,  
in his twisted guts  
the laughter  
died...

In his fury  
he wrinkles  
his frowning brow...  
Above the horizon  
the gold,  
and blue haze;  
and like toad's eyes  
peer the gun-barrels now,  
their steel beaks  
skyward  
they gaping raise.  
There's distant thunder.  
A choppy sea.  
The fine rain  
chatters  
and spatters the deck.  
The anchor rings.  
In the foc's'le lee  
the trap-ladder  
mockingly grates  
with a squeak.

*1930*



*Teren Masenko (1903-1970) was born in the village of Hlodosi, Kirovograd Region, into a farming family. He wrote many books of verse and songs and translated the poetry of various Soviet authors. His poems have been translated into many languages of the USSR.*

### TO MY MOTHER'S MEMORY

Where the boundless Black Sea lies  
In white gold of autumn  
Head up but with sorrowful eyes,  
Mother, you are walking.

Barefoot through the dew you'd pass,  
Carefree was your visage.  
You lie silent in the grass  
Just beyond the village.

Many fields you've sown to rye,  
Tied sheaves by the hundred!  
In the silent steppe you lie  
By chill heaven covered.

Here in lands a long way off  
When the moon is gleaming  
Of your toil-worn hands, your soft  
Sad blue eyes I'm dreaming.

And my tears the hot sheaves wet,  
Loud sing larks above us...  
Softly goes through Kherson \* steppes  
My Ukrainian mother.

1932

---

\* Kherson — regional centre at the mouth of the Dnieper River

## PREMONITION

I dreamt there was a heavy shower.  
From every quarter stormclouds massed  
And plum-sized drops for half an hour  
Pelted the valley hard and fast.

Refreshing rain each leaf was bathing  
And violet-coloured fruit gleamed bright.  
As lightning flashed, the soaking valley  
Was truly choking with delight...

I thought the old folk saying of ours  
Its weight in gold is clearly worth:  
On scorching days look out for showers  
And love the gaily blossoming earth!

*1946*

## MEDITATION

I've lived half a century now —  
Not sadly, obscurely or lazily,  
Seen stars through the darkest of clouds,  
I've loved and I've laboured not vainly.

Where are you, dear skies of Kherston,  
My humble thatched home in the village?  
My life half a century gone!  
I'd like once again to begin it!

My heart some experience has gained,  
My shoulders are stronger, though weary.  
But never once have I complained,  
Lost courage or fallen to jeering.

I dreamt not of laurels or fame,  
From childhood I've known sweet and bitter,  
But with a sincere heart remain...  
To lose that were truly a pity!

Because it's my wish that my life  
And labours be wholly devoted  
To mankind's fond dream that shone bright  
As the sun on that day in October.

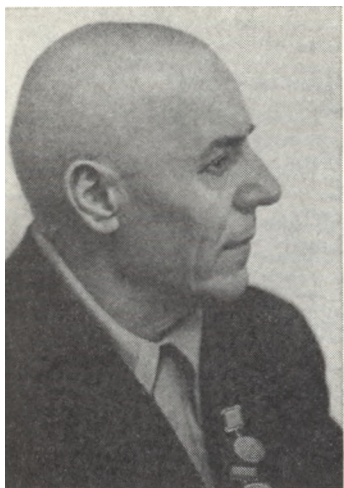
My half century was in sight  
When joyfully all of a sudden  
I knew heartfelt friendship's delight  
And into my life sun came flooding.

Like the flow never-ending of spring,  
Greatest glory of all, never fading,  
Your tenderness to my heart you bring,  
My fair-headed song, my fair maiden!

Half a century is a long way  
And my road was sunny, not mirthless.  
But had I not met you I'd say  
My whole life was utterly worthless.

*1953*





## VASIL MISIK

*Vasil Misik (b. 1907) was born in the village of Novopavlivka, Dnipropetrovsk Region, into a peasant family. His lyrical poetry is centered on topical social and philosophical issues. He has also written short stories, translated English and Oriental poets, and is a Maxim Rylsky prize winner. Many of his poems have been published in other republics of the Soviet Union and abroad.*

### THE SPIRIT OF TODAY

Thus in Boyan's \* age too, no doubt,  
With flowers was the spring decked out,  
Beyond the Dnieper stormclouds massed  
And mountain torrents foamed and flashed,  
Hawks vanished over the horizon  
And dulcimers were melodizing,  
In virgin forests lakes were blue  
And gazed on crystal skies sublime.  
Then where's the spirit of our time?  
It's here in what most matters — you.

1964

### WORMWOOD

Wormwood, I'm longing to know  
Why of all herbs you alone  
Were born so bitter?  
Have you not drunk in sweet showers,  
Been dew-bathed in the small hours  
When the fields glitter?

---

\* Boyan — semi legendary minstrel of the Kievan Rus period

Or from the bitter years past  
Have you drop by drop amassed  
Sweat and blood of your forefathers  
Which to this day you are guarding?

You came to love our steep slopes,  
Rocky ravines and cool valleys.  
Your bitter taste every day  
Milch cows would bring from their pastures.  
Into the ryefield you crept,  
Around the stalks pressing,  
So age-old gall may be sensed  
In the bread of the steppelands...

*1926*

### CRANES OF HIROSHIMA

If you yourself were a physician  
Could even you have calmly gazed  
Upon this little girl, a cripple  
And doomed to be so all her days?  
A girl for whom in sad grey autumn  
The seasons of the year had stopped  
Ever since over Hiroshima  
The first atomic bomb was dropped.

How frightening, how long in passing  
Were nights with or without a moon!  
"Shall I get well?" she kept on asking  
And people said to her: "Quite soon —  
As soon as you have cut from paper  
Five thousand little birds... These cranes  
Shall fly high and prevent the raven  
From coming with that bomb again."

They gave the girl a pair of scissors,  
White sheets of paper too they brought.  
A sudden smile her face transfigured,  
She was no longer so distraught.  
She wished her hands were not so feeble  
And that her eyes could better see.  
But, hearing of her problem, people  
Came to assist her readily.

And waking in the morning early  
The little patient was surprised:

Where yesterday there had been merely  
A few birds, hundreds met her eyes!  
And every day in growing numbers  
Birds came to her from far and near...  
But day by day her forces crumbled,  
Of no avail the cranes were here.

Now there was nobody to see them.  
They had not rid her of her pains.  
And what indeed could the physician  
Do now with all these paper cranes,  
With these white flocks, her consolation,  
That lightly fluttered as they went,  
Relentlessly incriminating  
All murderers impenitent?

*1960*

## THE PATH

Who was the first with wary gait  
To venture into these green pastures?  
A Cossack hunter lying in wait  
For prey? A fisherman with tackle?

Did warriors of the Golden Horde  
Along this path attack in secret  
Free peaceful hamlets and withdraw  
With women they had found here reaping?

Oh no, not so was this path charted!  
A path like this  
Could not be made by crime or avarice  
That rob bees of their hard-won harvest,

Nor trodden by an idle tramp  
In love with ever new horizons!  
No, down this track  
Went  
Homeward striding  
A lonely tiller of the soil  
At chilly dewfall,  
A spade  
Or scythe  
Upon his back,  
As home the sun goes to the sea,  
So strode he,  
Choosing not the ground

Because his feet unaided  
Found which way would be  
Least painful to each weary limb  
And thus most suitable for him  
Whose strength had to be guarded for  
His daily  
Labours,  
For work such as we too perform  
And live by  
As shall future generations.

The path here could have gone straight on  
But, look, it went round for some reason.  
The ground seems flat...  
But what of that?  
The man's feet sensed it was uneven.

And in his steps all others walk  
Through mist at dawn, through dew at evening,  
Their strength for morning labours keeping,  
Not trampling any flower or stalk.

Dear earth of ours, how wonderful it is  
Not robbers, night-time prowling thieves  
These lasting traces have been leaving  
But men who plough and sow the fields  
With feet that sense which way to go  
To guard  
The green wealth you bestow.

*1962*

## THE PLANET

Our planet we must care for, doing  
What any gardener does who hoes  
And waters vegetable rows,  
Lest nothing go to rack and ruin.

Clean as a parlour must we keep it  
And sweep away all strife and trouble  
So, as at Easter, bright sunbeams  
May into a glad room come leaping,

So there be fine fare on the table,  
The spoons laid in their proper place,

So everyone recall with grace  
The worthy deeds of all our neighbours.

Our planet should...

But look — they're digging  
The fertile earth with army spades.  
Here shells, there bombs and hand-grenades  
Are death and desolation bringing.

The earth with corpses they're manuring  
And not green shoots they're planting out  
But atom bombs... for war to sprout,  
The hope of gamblers crazed with fury.

Above the earth the sun glows dimly,  
All joy forgetting, it would seem,  
In lands where Hunger reigns supreme  
(The white man rules the black man's village).

A bony finger Hunger waggles  
At trenches scarring nearby fields  
That could grow food, return rich yields  
And clothe the earth in rich apparel.

And come to think — so little is needed:  
Just to recall with half-closed eyes  
Your mother bowing beneath blue skies  
As vegetable rows she weeded.

*1963*

\* \* \*

The twenties... Long those autumns were,  
With nothing stirring, deathly white.  
The paths bare feet had kneaded swerved  
Through mist to pastures out of sight.

And in the commune all was still  
Beneath damp bark, as if spellbound,  
And when a woman loudly shrilled  
The men looked hesitantly round.

Discussions in the club went on  
Till late at night on farm affairs  
And, if a lamp blew, everyone  
Jumped — could it be a bandit there?

Outside in darkness lay the street  
Where private profit stalked, and none  
Could tell who might behind that tree  
Be lurking with a sawn-off gun,

Seeking, by firing shots unseen,  
To rouse again the storms of hell  
That had by such hard fighting been  
At Perekop and Warsaw quelled.

1962

### THE HEART OF BURNS

To singing his beloved's praises  
No poet averse is.  
Burns too his many loves portrayed in  
Immortal verses.

Were they divine in mind and body,  
Those country lasses?  
In each one he perceived a goddess...  
That's all that matters.

But his grand music and fine phrases  
Drive to a choler  
The ever-soberly appraising  
Pedantic scholar.

"They were quite plain girls," he discloses  
After long labours.  
"The sole fact making them of note is  
He won their favours."

You have no heart, you ignoramus!  
The poet spoke truly.  
Not his attentions made them famous  
But their real beauty.

How well he knew and praised those lasses!  
How well he loved them!  
Of sun-bright Burns, his heart and passion,  
You moles know nothing.

## CHORNOTROP \*

A rare good fortune is yours —  
To have come through realms man abhors,  
The first black, the second prickly,  
The third just as tricky —  
Ever so drowsy, ever so sleepy,  
You broke four hundred needles,  
Propping your yellow lids open,  
Swimming along,  
You crossed over  
Rivers of snakes and green tresses  
And came to a maiden's caresses.

The princess found you attractive,  
Fell in love with you, heavens knows why,  
Rescued you when about to die,  
Freed you  
From a prison of stone,  
Led you to your parents' home:  
"Go greet your father and mother,  
Ask them  
If they will accept me?  
I'll go meanwhile to the well  
And wait there to hear what they'll say.  
Mind you do not forget me!"

How the whole household rejoiced!  
Folk hugged him, led him indoors,  
Laid out a table of yew,  
Guests were invited there too,  
A match found...  
The fairest bride ever,  
And now they were holding a wedding...  
A wedding?

Out  
By the willow  
The poor princess came  
And the wedding feast  
Met her sad gaze.

He'd tricked her, he'd tricked the princess!  
Rise from the richly laid tables,  
Leave there the very best wine,  
Hasten to catch the princess!

---

\* Chornotrop (Ukr.) — late autumn prior to first snowfall, lit. "black path"

Don't wait for the white  
Snow to alight,  
For the dew  
To freeze on the branch,  
For the beauty  
To go back to fairyland!  
Go mid the cabbage and fennel,  
Young *chornotrop* fellow!  
If you let the princess slip away,  
Then what can I say?  
There once was  
A falconer in love  
Who became  
A dull-eyed good-for-nothing.

1964

## THE DROP

It's dark in the room here from shelves overburdened,  
From melodies unheard  
And from springs that have been  
And from faces unseen,  
From time that flows ever untameable,  
From trying to embrace the unembraceable.

Out of doors there, so calm and unshakeable,  
A drop with one second to live  
Swells on a wire — till incapable  
Of holding on. Earthward it flies  
And grasps the whole world in a trice.

1965

## CONSCIENCE

A man came along who said  
(And thoughtless folk believed him):  
"Go grab other nation's wealth,  
Grow fierce as a beast is!  
Clear the land for yourself  
With the mattock of war and starvation!  
Do not fear sin: on my head  
I shall bear your damnation!"



And off they went, starting fires,  
Throttling, trampling and hanging,  
Boasting of fresh victories,  
Each one bigger than the last one.  
Soundly they slept on the warm  
Soft beds of the conquered.  
To just one man they had all  
Passed the keys of their conscience.

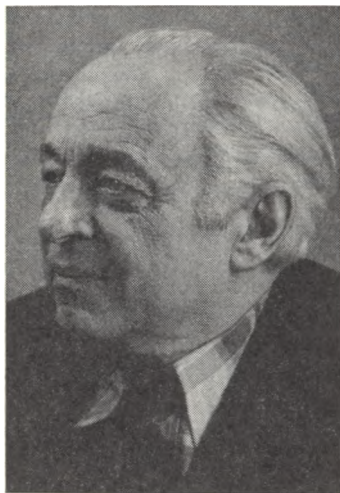
The summer passed and autumn came.  
Cloud hid the horizon.  
In those who had laughed yesterday  
A wild dread was rising.  
Now they were called to account  
For all their villainies.  
Where was the man who should bear  
Responsibility?

No one had thought that his power  
Might soon be waning.  
Now the return of their consciences'  
Keys they were claiming.  
Now they must live with the children  
Of the murdered and tortured,  
Get along with the sons of the burned  
And study their language.

Where was the man who had said:  
"All blame I'll shoulder?"  
Shot himself straight through the heart.  
What can you claim from his body?  
Petrol-soaked up he went in flames  
To heaven escaping,  
Just like a scoundrel who steals  
Other folk's savings.

*1965*

*Sava Holovanivsky (b. 1910), the son of a windmill operator, was born in the village of Yelizavetgradka, Kirovograd Region. He is the author of many collections of verse portraying the heroism of the Soviet people in the Second World War and its labour accomplishments. He has also written fiction, plays, and journalistic articles. Many of his books have been published in other republics of the USSR and abroad.*



## MAPLES

I would like to turn into a roadside maple,  
Merry leaves arustling, fresh and green in April,

Right up to the clouds my branches I would raise,  
Making friends with breezes, rustling all my days.

So that men who pass me on their distant way  
In my branches' shadow for a rest should stay,

So that, green and merry, all the while I live  
Cool and fragrant shelter to them I should give,

So that they should wake up full of strength and will,  
And follow the fieldpaths, lying blue and still,

So that life and work be light and gay to all,  
Who recall the hillside with the maple tall.

1934

## MEETING SUNRISE ON CHERNECHA HILL

To the memory of Mate Zalka \*

For a while on the hilltop we stood without whisper or murmur;  
Like a well-loaded steamer, the night, putting off, bade farewell,  
And it seemed that the minutes and ages stood still for a spell  
When dawn's curtain arose, driving night's shadows westward still further.

There, beneath us, far down, where mists swam in the lightening distance  
Kindling, smouldered the morning. A poplar, as if a young widow,  
Stretching, opened its eyes by soft eyelids half-hidden;  
"Look, it's morning!" it whispered, while dew on its foliage glistened.

'Twas a signal, that whisper — it floated, it flew far and wide  
Through the tops of the aspens that over the Dnieper's bank stood.  
In a moment the grass on the fringes and glades of the wood  
Stirred, abruptly awakened; Chernecha Hill woke up and sighed.

And I said to my friend, "Do you see — in the East the horizon  
Fills with amber and burns, driving off the night's gloom.  
Like a flying wild fire-bird that fixes its wondering eyes on  
The dawn's beauty, the sun now unfolds into bloom.

"Just a minute ago far beyond the awakening river  
Orchards, sleepy and hushed, started sparkling with dew,  
And, half-audible, whispered the foliage, starting to quiver,  
Lifting up on long branches their ripe fruit of radiant hue.

"Here, wherever I glance, lie familiar, wonderful landscapes.  
Here my father grew up, and myself I became a grown man.  
Here I learned to sing songs in the house of my birth; here in childhood  
More than once had I laughed and shed tears as time ran.

"There is no better place in the whole of the Universe for me  
Than these fields, with those poplars, my age-old, beloved green kin;  
From a boy I'm in love with their beauty, so subtle and charming,  
Yet in vain have I sought fitting words their divine charm to sing."

There we stood all alone on the tapering hilltop that morning,  
And those words, only felt in our hearts but not uttered aloud,  
Were repeated, it seemed, by both waters and hills, and were warmly  
Acquiesced to by trees standing silent and friendly around.

And my friend then replied to me, "Yes, I can well understand you.  
I have walked through the length and the breadth of your beautiful land;  
For these skies, for your dreams, for your homeland in many a battle  
Have I fought, shedding blood for this land on whose sacred soil both  
of us stand.

---

\* Mate Zalka (1896-1937) — Hungarian writer and communist, fought in the civil wars in Russia and Spain

"Many songs have I sung as we plodded along on far marches  
Through this wonderful land, though in other, far parts I was born.  
To its truth I ascended as if by steep steps that led upward  
To the crests of tall summits from which one can see the world's dawn.

"Yet, in love with your land, my own motherland I had loved also  
And I fought for its freedom, too, here on your own native soil,  
And wherever I go, my thoughts fly in unquenchable sadness  
To Hungarian cities and fields where Hungarians toil.

"There I grew to a man, on the banks of the tranquil blue Danube,  
There on Budapest bridges the sunrise not once had I met.  
Ah, my friend, when my people will join you beneath your red banners  
It will be like a holiday no one has witnessed as yet.

"All I lived for and fought for — though dreams don't come true  
very often —  
Yet this dream will come true as a glorious sequel of strife.  
Like a herald of dawn, I will enter my city one morning  
And its ancient stone walls will be lit by the radiant dawn of new life."

I could hear him, it seemed to me, speaking there, loudly and clearly,  
Yet my friend, very quiet, simply looked at the Dnieper's left bank with  
its woods  
And said nothing, for fear of upsetting the silence  
And belittling by words this great beauty.— so, wordless, he stood.

And he gazed towards the East, at the lakes and the wood and the valleys  
As if charmed by the beating of his own unquenchable heart.  
It was then I believed that there really can happen such moments  
When no words, even friendly, are needed the feelings of men to impart.

1940

## A SONG ABOUT MY UKRAINE

Where wide-spreading poplars bow low in a wind-storm,  
And waves on the Dnieper arise,  
Your son, O Ukraine, lies still in a meadow  
And looks at your beautiful skies.  
And stopping above him, as if his own mother,  
You tenderly whisper: "My child!"  
My woeful Ukraine,  
Beloved Ukraine,  
All burning, with smoke curling wild!

A drink of cool water to ease him in thralldom,  
Cool water to wash wound and sore —

And he would forget all his pain, thirst and tiredness,  
And dash into battle once more.  
But smoke like a mist over ruins arises,  
The Dnieper flows darker than night.

My living Ukraine,  
Beloved Ukraine,  
My rainbow, my hope, my delight!

He feels how the roots in the damp soil are moving,  
And with calls for vengeance, not sobs,  
Each stone of your ruins, like clamouring buglers,  
About your calamity throbs.

Incessantly, daily your strength is increasing;  
Be sure — not alone do you stand,

My new, young Ukraine,  
Beloved Ukraine,  
A part of one great Soviet land.

Like heralds of freedom, each night red-starred airplanes  
Land in your dense woods, on their glades.

The workers of Moscow send guns and munitions —  
Your partisan-heroes get aid.

The moment of triumph already approaches,  
Your children arise in full might,

My living Ukraine,  
Beloved Ukraine,  
For you, for your freedom they'll fight.

I knew that the foeman could not overcome you,  
And certainly he did not.

He'll have yet to pay for your bitter misfortunes  
In black blood for blood pure and hot.

My glorious land will recover for certain,  
For ever and ever to thrive,

My lovely Ukraine,  
Beloved Ukraine,  
For ever and ever alive!

*1942*

## HARKUSHA

That selfsame Harkusha who just came from battle back home  
Again down the hillside treads steadily over the loam;  
Again he will measure the measureless fields of his land,  
Again he grips the plough-handle cooled his experienced hand.

He follows the plough, bending earthward as if for a charge,  
As if any moment expecting the signal to run or to march.  
No signal is heard, though, no rocket is seen in the sky;  
Most likely, not soon will the captain again let it fly.

He walks through the furrows, that selfsame Harkusha — the same  
Whom heavens and ocean and dry land as victor proclaim,  
Who did not bend down during moments of hardship and strife,  
Who gave back to countries and nations their freedom and life.

He walks through the furrows, the same who right up to his goal  
Bore Victory on, like the pledge in a Communist's soul.  
He follows the plough, so experienced, certain and thorough;  
As if he were digging a trench there, he draws the long furrow.

He'll sow in it life everlasting, not sorrow and death,  
To sprout and to thrive through great Russia's whole length and  
whole breadth,  
Through all the Ukraine, through all Byelorussia to whisper —  
Gold wheat will grow up in it, millet and barley long-whiskered.

And, touching each other, his medals keep quietly singing,  
And, silvery, brass upon blackened enamel keeps ringing.  
And, calling him softly, creep memories into his soul:  
The fields near the Volga to Harkusha's mind they recall.

Back home he will take his old army coat off with a sigh  
And over the stove on a string he will hang it to dry,  
And pick up a medal and, questioning, look in its face;  
A green forest clearing his medal's green field will replace;

The helmeted man standing there to Harkusha will cry:  
"The peace of your home and your motherland do you prize high?"  
And from it old Stalingrad soldiers will call in a throng:  
"Lie down for a spell, but you won't have to rest very long;

"At the happiest time of the year from the front you came home:  
In your steppes the May sunshine already has warmed up the loam.  
The tractors and reapers will hum in your fields once again,  
And horsecarts will drive off from harvesters, filled up with grain."

And with passion he'll look into eyes that are harder than steel;  
As if it were he cast in bronze there himself, he will feel,  
As if he himself, standing there in his old uniform  
Were calling himself new heroic feats to perform.

1947

## LADY GODIVA

I have travelled a lot and seen many a wonder  
In all parts of the world — my own land, too, of course,  
But I always remember the Lady Godiva  
Sitting nude in a Coventry square, on a horse.

There, besieged by clipped bushes, the monument shines  
With its bronze polished bright to a luminous glare,  
As if, just emerging from Tennyson's pen,  
It had ridden out into the city's wide square.

The weather out there can be foggy and slushy,  
So that ladies in raincoats their minifrocks hide.  
But she — not because it was just then the fashion —  
Stark naked in fogs and in rainshowers rides.

Her husband, a bully and double-dyed tippler,  
Had drunk like a duck, though an earl, as we know.  
The lady politely once tried to persuade him  
Not to take the last crumbs from the poor and the low.

But the earl burst out laughing and yelled as if crazy:  
"You're taking their side? What — you say, the last crumbs?  
So, take off your gown, dear, to give to the bastards;  
Go naked, that hobos may cover their bums!"

And half-mad with anger, Godiva tore off  
Her silks and her velvets and mounted a horse,  
And rode through the city streets, happy and proud,  
Stark-nude, in broad daylight, past taverns and stores.

But respecting the virtuous name of the lady,  
Men went in and remained in their houses confined.  
If anyone just dared to look at her boldly  
Immediately, the man was struck blind.

...I'd set up a statue not just to the valour  
Of her who came out in defence of the poor,  
But to the humaneness of those who, though hungry  
And thirsty, respected her innocence pure.

They'd stand side by side as posterity's tribute  
To those who, unflinching, their courage displayed  
And those who, a good woman's chastity sparing,  
Showed gratitude for her protection and aid.

1969



*Yevhen Fomin (1910-1942) was born in the town of Kakhovka in Kherson Region, and was tortured to death by the Nazis during the Second World War. He was the author of several collections of short and long poems. His style is marked by simplicity and expressiveness. Many of his poems have been translated in other republics of the Soviet Union.*

## SHCHORS

I see bold Shchors upon his horse,  
Hard-riden, spattered with specks of spume.  
Already they've raised the banner of war,  
And the wide steppe gleams with fires in the gloom.

The dust seems to cover the whole wide world,  
The moon in the sky can scarce be seen.  
The sharp-set sabres of the Bohuns \*  
On Kiev with their curved blades gleam.

The jangle of bridles, the thunder of hooves,  
Ah! But for a while? Or for ever so?  
And the vault of heaven from horror turns pale,  
The wide-eyed sun has hid long ago.

The battle blazes, the battle roars...  
And somewhere on the side goes past  
The youthful twilight, already dim,  
And merged with the trampled blood-soaked grass.

And there, amid the fire and smoke,  
Feeling the fear and shame of defeat,  
The enemy standards have fallen low,  
Their bearers slain, or in retreat.

---

\* Men of Shchors' Bohun Regiment, named after a hero of the War of Liberation in the Ukraine in 1648-1654



Hurrah, Bohuns! With shouts and songs  
Dear Kiev greets them, glad and free...  
I see bold Shchors upon his horse,  
In all the glory of victory.

1944

## OCEAN ETUDE

Ocean,  
    for long you've not gladdened my vision,  
Ocean,  
    for long I've not heard your inferno,  
Ocean,  
    more fearful than blood-letting Vandals —  
Rumbling Vesuvius, menace eternal.  
Now once again I see sails which are swelling,  
Winds madly drive them  
    to distant horizons.  
Maybe, on some of those stormy-winged vessels  
Travel afar  
    some romantic-eyed Byrons,  
Maybe, for many who have quitted their homelands,  
Better things call them,  
    and hated things hunt them,  
Maybe, like Byron,  
    another composes  
Hymns of farewell to his far-distant country.  
Maybe, those few  
    for a good life are thirsting,  
Quitting their cellars  
    for morning's auroras.  
Maybe, Childe Harolds  
    to find love are sailing  
To that charmed land  
    of fair señoritas.  
Endless, O endless — romantics, and ocean,  
Songs of them endless... — Magnificent poet!  
With your great hymns to the world you are showing  
High inspiration — how few there are know it!  
Maybe, I also,  
    my dearest one loving,  
Burn in my heart for the bright-skied expanses,  
And, as in boyhood,  
    so happy and timid,  
Love, with perception, that infinite feeling.

1934

## LANDSCAPES

### I

There's a landscape — a slender pine  
In the heavenly vaults a-ringing fine,

Widely spread, and lofty soar  
Branching arms... And all around  
Noisily, as ne'er before,  
Streams of clear bright water bound.

There's the pond... One moment. Stop!  
We have sung our song in vain...  
There would be no pine's green top,  
And the pond would be dry again,

If some maiden, in mid-May  
Had not set the sapling here,  
Nor three channels cleared that day  
For the streamlets young and clear.

Every time, whene'er I look  
There, beside the slender pine  
Stands that maiden, whom I took  
Long ago to heart, as mine.

### II

Above the cliff stand oaks, their heads like clouds,  
Scarce wavering, though attacked by the headlong breeze.  
First left it runs, then right it strikes and pounds,  
And rustling in the boughs, then powerless flees,

Breaks off, and speeds like a gleaming shaft away,  
And whistling, disappears. Without a trace,  
The lion-hearted oaks greet breaking day,  
All three grow young from drinking heady rays.

Ah, if we too could stand as firm withal!..  
Beside the oaks a trodden path runs through.  
When I pass by, van Gogh I must recall,  
Fate's step-son who created them anew!

## III

Above Taurian steppe the storm struck out,  
The generous rain upon the cornfields rang.  
And, touched by wind, all rustled round about,  
In quiet reaches, swaying, the osiers sang.

In dark expanses was the horizon lost.  
You cannot see from whence blue morn comes first.  
Only young sunflowers,  
                in their eternal quest,  
Their golden heads all turn towards the east.

1935

## THE DNIEPER

I know not how the Seine flows on with blueing waters,  
How beats the Thames with surf bound in by granite side.  
Throughout the world that's filled with people far and wide  
No river for me ever can be dearer  
Than you, my Dnieper dear!

And as I greet the dawn  
I climb your bank on high and hear below your crashing.  
Then light my spirit grows and deeper yet I love  
This joyful land which your bright waters are soft washing!

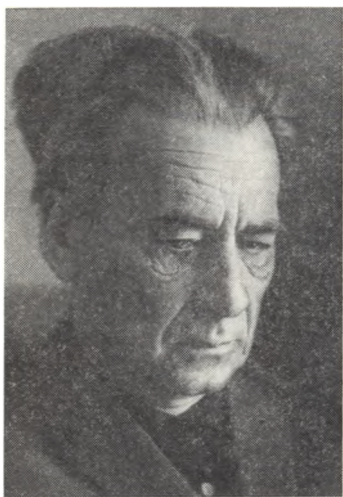
1937

## GOLDEN SLAVIC SOUL

O golden Slavic heart and soul,  
Since olden days known all around.  
One wide, sincere and simple whole,—  
wherein no craftiness is found.  
By radiant nature you're inspired  
You're full of warmth and music stored.  
Oh, how much tenderness is poured  
In Glinka's and in Chopin's chord!  
But when the storm-clouds are deployed  
You rise in anger, not in fright,  
You can't be broken, nor destroyed,  
You're as unconquerable as light.  
In this dark hour of bloody war,  
This time of rage and misery,

O Slavic soul, achieve once more  
Full stature in joy and liberty.  
Arise, as earlier, welded one,  
And smash the foe, his hordes erase,  
So that the storm-cloud swift may run,  
So that we see the lovelier days.  
So that your foe should fail and fall  
And should not maim your sacred land,  
And with false words should not befoul  
Your golden beauty on every hand.  
So they like darkness disappear,  
Those filthy, swinish fascist hordes.  
So that you bloom afresh and clear  
In Glinka's and in Chopin's chords!

*1941*



## LEONID PERVOMAIISKY

*Leonid Pervomaisky (1908-1973), a poet and prose writer, was born in the town of Krasnograd, Kharkiv Region, into the family of a bookbinder. The chief subject of his poetry is the inner evolution of Soviet man as he fought for the Revolution, built socialism, and defended his homeland against the nazis in the Second World War. He was a USSR State prize winner and a translator from German, Hungarian, and Slavic languages. His books have been published in many republics of the Soviet Union and abroad.*

\* \* \*

Ah, for a taste of bitter apples,  
Those green ones from your orchards blest,  
Chervonogradland, where I rambled  
And by a roadside used to rest...

Two banks, both overgrown with orchards,  
Washed by a river day and night...  
No, not for any other country  
Would I give up that lovely sight!

Dawn softly moves amid the grasses  
And stops to watch the river roll;  
At dusk the copses burn like bonfires  
In their attire of autumn gold.

The night-mist roams through new-mown meadows,  
The chill wind whispers in the vines,  
And Autumn's fresh and bitter fragrance  
Makes me as drunk as in old times.

And whether happy or unhappy  
The roads which in my life I'll tread,  
Let trees keep rustling, rain keep tapping  
Upon my way, above my head.

And let those orchards store up honey  
And spread their perfume through your vales,

And let my songs forever echo  
Their gentle rustling without fail.

Ah, for a taste of bitter apples,  
Those green ones in your orchards blest,  
Chervonogradland, where I rambled  
And by a roadside used to rest...

*1922*

## EARTH

An autumn road... A muddy autumn road.  
Sheathes lie like corpses on the wheatfields broad,  
While in the wind a lonely bush goes bare,  
And wires complain about the cruel sky.  
A sense of loneliness and deep anxiety  
Grows in me into anguish and despair.  
How gloomy sounds the music of the wires,  
While gusts of wind bring bitter cold again.  
Beyond the steppes the setting sun expires —  
Beyond your boundaries, O my Ukraine!

Not for the first time lorries enter night,  
Not for the first time dark blots out my sight,  
Not once have fires illumined with their light  
The sombre, mystery-enveloped sky,  
And death on leaden wings not once did fly  
In circles narrowing above me in its flight.  
Yet never did my heart beat with such pain,  
Never yet with such anguish had it leaped  
As at that fatal moment when we stepped  
Across your boundaries, O, my Ukraine!

It was in other days your roads I'd roved  
And rested in the shadow of your groves.  
Day passed, and night went by, and it would dawn.  
The pathway wove through fields of rye and took  
Us to a hollow with a steppeland brook  
Which babbled — noisy, playful as a fawn;  
Above the brooklet in the morning glow  
An ancient willow bowed toward the plain;  
Up to the sky the smoke would quietly go  
From homes that welcomed me, O my Ukraine!

Those far-off times, those times of happy songs  
That cloudy day flowed through my mind in throngs...

Despite the wind and bitter cold and muck,  
The images of long-forgotten dreams  
Arose; dear, distant eyes sent me their beams.  
Meanwhile the lorry roared, in puddles stuck.  
I got out and I pushed — again, again —  
The lorry's back, up to my knees in clay.  
The lorry roared; so, in the fields, in rain,  
I took my leave of you, O my Ukraine.

Across the ploughland now the lorries crawled.  
Up from the road I took an earth-clod cold  
Washed over daily by the autumn rain;  
Dark, heavy, it grew colder in my grasp,  
Like a poor heart whose life was ebbing fast.  
The gloom behind flared up with sudden flame;  
Our hooter blew. Away the lorry rode.  
We moved on, stubborn, slow, across the plain,  
But I could never throw down on the road  
That piece of your dear soil, O my Ukraine!

And that was all that till my death would stay  
With me in memory of youthful days,  
Those parts where I grew up, matured in mind,  
My native steppe, the river and the mound,  
The grey old willow bending to the ground,  
Mourning the past, that I had left behind.  
That piece of earth, so homely and so plain,  
Upon my heart forever will remain,  
Into one stream joining my wrath and pain  
With yours, O my long-suffering Ukraine!

I'll carry it through every battlefield,  
For all my thoughts and everything I feel,  
Each urge of mine, my whole life from the start —  
Are fused forever in that piece of earth,  
Like Klaas' ashes pounding at my heart,  
Arousing thoughts which bring forth hate and wrath.  
And it will guide me on my battle track,  
And when the sun of liberty again  
Shines over you, then I will give it back  
To you forever, O my sweet Ukraine!

And if some day in battle I should stop  
And lifeless on a frozen ploughfield drop  
Arms spread for an embrace unconsciously,  
If on some hillside looming far away  
The humid soil should swallow me for aye,  
In token of my love and loyalty  
In my last sleep, my last prophetic dream,

Upon my heart, untouched by battleflame,  
It will repose, immortal, pure and clean,  
That sacred piece of earth, O my Ukraine!

*October 1941*

## SONG

From the Syan \* to the banks of the Don the road lies,  
A horse with no saddle along the road flies,  
    The hooves loudly thudding  
    Are worn, torn and bloody —  
But do not, O do not heave sorrowful sighs!

The mane of the night horse is borne on the breeze  
And no one the halter to halt it can seize,  
    There's just a girl crying:  
    “My Cossack is dying...” —  
But do not, O do not heave sorrowful sighs!

All day bitter fighting, at night-time no rest!  
His Cossack brow's bloody and bloody — his chest,  
    The morning sun rises  
    From scarlet horizons —  
But do not, O do not heave sorrowful sighs!

His Cossack brow's bloody and bloody — his chest,  
His limbs to the shore grass have long, long been pressed  
    With only the starlight  
    And moonbeams to guard him —  
But do not, O do not heave sorrowful sighs!

O do not, O do not heave sorrowful sighs!  
There still is the girl whose true love he did prize,  
    A road that is endless,  
    A heart that remembers,  
A glistening tear as in silence she cries...

*1946*

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\* Syan — river in Lviv Region, tributary of the Vistula



## MASTER

Rules may forbid it, but look — he's taking  
The lift from the fifth floor down to the ground.  
Not made for him was that regulation:  
He is the master of all around.

The doors are now flung wide open. He never  
Pauses, not even a glance to cast  
Where at the entrance tall proud chestnuts  
Hoist white candles as he goes past.

The street has an air of gay festivity,  
Clouds fly swiftly, herald a storm  
And, like a horseshoe wrought of silver,  
The river down there round the bend is borne.

Vainly. Not even out of the corner  
Of his eye does this master care  
Even to glance at his vast possessions  
Bathed in warm sunlight everywhere.

The blue unshakeable vault of heaven,  
The skyline featuring cloud and haze,  
Park, garden, street and factory — everything's  
His in the city that meets our gaze.

Sunlight with orange lacquer is flooding  
The tree-lined avenue near the square.  
Nothing he says. A jet plane scurries  
On his behalf through the crystal air.

The chemist patiently delving into  
The secrets of all material things  
Wonders as daylight peers through the window:  
Will this discovery appeal to him?

On the horizon a rainbow arches,  
Down to the coalface the pit cage speeds.  
Ploughing the fertile earth goes the farmer  
Growing fine wheat for the master's needs.

The helmsman crossing the far equator  
His journey around the world to make,  
The silent poet at his writing table  
Greeting the sunrise, still awake,

Through blue goggles the grey-haired foreman  
Watching the hot steel bubble and hiss —  
All these people strive in order  
That a glorious prospect may be his.

The prospect of a close world of feeling  
Where flowers you've not seen are in bloom  
And all is in golden sunlight gleaming —  
He has come to take charge of it soon.

The master? Is he aware of his greatness,  
That it is for him all this is done?  
He sleeps in his pram, going round the city  
And flickering drowsy eyes in the sun.

1954

## THE TWO GIANTS

They are coming back from a walk, both in the prime of their might,  
Each of the two with majestic dignity brimming over,  
Two geniuses, two luminaries enriching the world with their light:  
Johann Wolfgang Goethe and Ludwig van Beethoven.

In the enchanted silence, in scent-laden solitude  
Around them, as if they were dumbstruck, stand well-trimmed bushes  
and trees.

For this is Schoenbrunn park — no savage copse or wild wood.  
Where aspens, birches and oaks poke out of the earth as they please.

"The royal clan is all-powerful — enough to mould counsellors, courtiers  
Out of their own plain lackeys, like statues are moulded from clay.  
And yet — let it be remembered — no ruler on earth is so potent  
As to transform nonentity into greatness, whatever you say."

Beethoven raises his fists, as if that nonentity sighting,  
Though here such pathetic gestures are certainly out of place.  
But counsellor Goethe's just yawning into his fist politely.  
It's hard for him to agree — but he's silent — won't argue, his grace.

Flowerbed after flowerbed,  
Rose beside gorgeous rose...  
Into the park towards evening the royal family goes.  
Slowly they walk towards the two, while underfoot they trample  
The sand, so fine, shining golden under the setting sun.  
Prince Rudolph courteously listens to Her Majesty the queen-mother;  
Behind them — a sparkling brood of talkative daughters and sons.  
Fountain by fountain gushes,  
The breeze blows, fragrant and luscious.  
Over the arbours and bushes  
Ivy tentacles twine.

Out of the way steps Goethe. Beethoven — hat down on eyebrows;  
By leonine furrows his crimson features are slashed across.  
With his breast, like a ship's prow, dissecting the heavy air of the evening,  
He feels on his back Herr Goethe's glance, disapprovingly cross.

In front all have fallen silent. How long the minute is dragging!  
The blood in him — not tepid water — keeps boiling rebelliously.  
Forward! One step more! One effort! The royal family, parting,  
Gives way to genius, bowing. Don't stop now. Hail, victory!

And counsellor Goethe, inclining his wig, well-powdered and curled.  
Stands with arm bent on his bosom, his hat off — a man of the world.

Two geniuses, two luminaries — each with his own power unending,  
The souls in them both are bleeding, each crucified in its own way.  
Over both Eternity's magic wings are already extending,  
Doctor Faustus undying, the Ninth forever to play.

1974

\* \* \*

When a fir tree falls in the forest  
With a roar the mountains respond  
And the deep ravines acknowledge it  
And the green fields far beyond.

When the hunter kills a reindeer  
Its last cry before it dies  
A response awakens in nature  
Where the woodland silent lies.

And know, when alone at midnight  
You feel verse throbbing in your heart,  
You shall hear the whole world echo  
That song, yes, in every part.

1954

## THE TREE OF LIFE

Beaten by thunderstorms unbending tree;  
Up on a glade in autumn woods you stand.  
And lift up to the sky's cold misery  
Your knotted and magnificent old hands.

You lift your blackened hands into the air,  
As if the firmament you wished to prop.  
The wind with groans of mourning and despair  
Makes rusty leaves from dusty branches drop.

Say, why are you so sorrowful, my dear?  
Your roots have not yet dried nor lost their worth.  
For just one instant, oak-tree without peer,  
Your live flame has been burning on this earth.

There is some strength yet lurking in your depth,  
Although that flame, perhaps, has seared your bark.  
No anguish, nor complaint, nor weak reproach  
Comes out of your still powerful old heart.

Surmounting winter's fatal stranglehold,  
Spring will not once to new green life arouse  
Your mighty, naked, lightning-blackened boughs  
Which Autumn clothes in tatters brown or gold.

Again the showers of Spring will wash you down.  
Around you once again you will see flowers.  
Again a happy dove in your green crown  
Will break out cooing in the morning hours.

So, oak, embrace the gloomy sky again  
And clasp the whole great earth in your strong arms.  
You struck root and you lived here not in vain,  
Withstanding cold and lightning as if charmed.

No death for you and no oblivion.  
The magic power in you does not expire.  
For from your memory never has gone  
The lightning that once scorched you with its fire.

*1971*

## FRANÇOIS VILLON

Dig into rags, curl up and close your eyes  
Against the snowstorm, hiding in your ditch.  
The arms of a bare hawthorn bush arise  
And, bony, terrible, towards you stretch.

In your harsh plight you are its equal now.  
It also calls for help, by all forgot.

The wind tore off its tatters long ago,  
And threw them down upon the road to rot.

Beneath the moon upon a nearby mound  
Some disbeliever's dangling betwixt  
Two pillars; the prévôt of Paris found  
Your guilt the same — your sentence was like his.

But you escaped disaster once again.  
Will it not be your last, are more in store?  
Wretch, worthy more of exile than of death,  
Have you not drunk your fill of gaol before?

Ah well, you said yourself once: all your days  
You had to wade up to your waist in mud.  
For all that, though, you've learned life's tricky lore  
Better than Averroes ever could.

The end. Now — to the devil, or to hell —  
From this mad world of bigots and castrates.  
You had foreseen it, wished for it yourself.  
Now, have you lost your sense tonight, so late?

All robbers, usurers and prostitutes,  
Monks swollen up with wine and lechery  
Down here on earth and in the clouds above  
In'a monstrous miracle-play vent lust and blasphemy.

And there goes twisting in the devil's hands  
The rope that cried for you throughout your life.  
To flee — for god's sake! But by what roads, to what lands?  
By what shame to escape, by what new strife?

To flee! Farther and farther through the night,  
Away from cold, from fear and from pursuit.  
Already torches flicker on the road.  
Horses and witches dance. Dead corpses hoot.

To gather one's last strength, to reach at last  
The cozy tavern hearth out of the night!  
The hawthorn leaps towards the gloomy height,  
Disintegrates and blackens out his sight.

"Get out, you beggar!" Curses. Stamping. Cries.  
The January blizzard whipped the road.  
And — just like offal — jackboots hit his side;  
"The brute — he's stiff already!" someone growled.

The past brooks no denial.  
Things recent or long gone  
Lie not behind or by you:  
Within you they live on.

A false step you'll remember  
For all your days, as if  
But yesterday that lesson  
Life gave you, sharp and stiff.

If only you were able  
Now at a single stroke  
As from a board to erase them —  
Your faults of long ago,

Defeats, pain, hardships, errors  
Of which you did not dream,  
Yet on your neck how heavy  
A burden they now seem!

You honestly are seeking  
That purity of yore,  
But you into the future  
Must take what's gone before.

Late judgement of your conscience  
Will give you no release  
From anguish in that moment  
Preceding your decease.

*1971*

## LESSONS OF POETRY

For drinking and eating I've lost the knack.  
As if I never lived I am way off track.  
A failure, or maybe my time's overdue.  
My lines  
Are like those  
Kids at school  
Write askew.

Yes, I've lost the knack — but I'll learn once more  
As a ship learns the rudder's decisiveness,  
As the ocean deep heeds the power of the storm

And the night-time earth  
Learns quietness.

The growth of the soul of man  
Has marks —  
As in tree rings  
Time you'll discern...  
...Young poets,  
You'll teach me again the art,  
But you I'll teach in my turn:

Let your love for heaven and earth know no bounds,  
Fear not joy, nor calamity shun,  
And yesterday's outworn self  
Renounce,  
Tomorrow's  
Self  
To become.

*1968*



*Vasil Bobinsky (1898-1938), the son of a railroader, was born in the town of Kristinopil in Lviv Region. He is the author of several books of verse, long poems, pamphlets, and literary criticism directed against fascism and bourgeois nationalism. His poetry is marked by revolutionary romanticism and civic overtones. His works have been translated into many languages of the USSR.*

### SONG OF THE WINGED CENTAURS

We break into gallop with a song.  
The vine — our gay spirits inspire.  
For we are young winged horses we —  
when racing, our hoofs strike fire.

Our muscles, too, are rippling song.  
Our hearts give wing to paeans.  
There's secret orders sent to us  
By Life in the tipsy oceans.

What care we for the scoffing eye?  
What care we for the snake fang?  
And breaking loose from fetters strong —  
Shod with steel, our scorn we sang.

Like ghosts amid the blind-dark night,  
We left our hobbles far behind.  
Within the body of a horse,  
Quivered the light of human mind.

Ah, long the saddle galled our backs  
While masters rode us round and round.  
Our masters' thoughts fixed all our tracks,  
And meekly then we trod the ground.

But one day flames insurgent blazed,  
One holy thought began to grow —



And we no longer would obey,  
But answered blow for blow.

We threw our sorry peers away,  
And thundered out our freedom song —  
Through steppeland rolled the angry tune:  
“We’ll cut you down, lords, for our wrongs!”

Our age-long and eternal powers  
Swept forward with creative swing;  
We mounted up like stormy petrels  
On magic and mysterious wing.

We nurtured in our body forms  
The noblest features, face and brow.  
While snowy breasts and snowy arms  
Enhanced our fair maternal bough.

Like ghosts amid the blind-dark night,  
We left our hobbles far behind.  
Within the body of a horse,  
Quivered the light of human mind.

Who now can turn us into slaves?  
Who now can bar our chosen road?  
Who now can stop our freedom flight?  
Which people urge such a brainless code?

Not one! Not one! Free horses we!  
Free birds are we, a freeborn nation!  
We break into gallop with a song!  
No hobbles, bridles, assignation!

A clan of the wingéd centaurs —  
Greatest in spirit, beast avatars —  
And crowned with wreaths of laurel,  
We blaze the road to the stars!

*1924*

## BLACK-EARTH

### I

You are brimful of sweat poured off hands of the farmer;  
You, black-earth, lie there dumb, without tongue — reconciled.  
You’ve forgotten the fire that burnt you from heaven,  
And forgot you were fruitful and wild.

You forgot you were stunned by the magic swift run  
Of intoxicant sap, absinth greenening.  
You forgot and are silent. While troop after troop  
Vanish deep in shroud mists all enscreening.

Pass on troop after troop marking measureless skies,  
Pewter gray, alien host, hostile seeming.  
Just the wind in the night, like a homeless mad dog,  
Lifts a howl that disturbs your long dreaming.

## II

Hey, black-earth there! Hey, black-earth there!  
Don't you know what's in your care?  
This soil is fertile and hungry for good seed —  
Must it lie fallow and grow only weed?

Hey black-earth there! Hey, black-earth there!  
No strength left to do your share?  
Must you bow down to coercion or death,  
Or give birth to life till your dying breath?

Hey, black-earth there! Hey, black-earth there!  
Haven't you urgent desire to spare  
To be wild once again and to fructify,  
Shake your wheatears in the free steppe with impetuous cry?

## III

Black of night, you go into the steppe lone and bare:  
Your heart beats more alarmed than before.  
The wind howls like a poor beast in haunted despair,  
That foretells conflagrations and wars.

You lie close to the earth, seeking solace and rest,  
And in nature's green lap place your hand:  
Hear it? Rise and the fall of her eternal breast.  
Is it clear? Crimson blood running red through the land.

You lie close. Listening. The black-earth's never still,  
It whispers a strange song of green birth.  
Wild wind! Wild wind! Why howl like a wolf in deep pain?  
For you are my own brother — black-earth!

1925

## SUNLIGHT AGAINST SHOW-WINDOWS

Sunlight crackles to splinters against the show-windows,  
Sidewalks gleam like parquet squares in palatial room.  
Ladies' waists are as slender as stalks of spurge-laurel,  
Swinging hips look like snakes twisting charmed by a tune.  
Slender ankles, smooth legs and chic shoes — highest fashion,  
Silken stockings, and flesh gleaming rose — like faience.  
Singing walk, flashing legs, lips releasing coarse laughter,  
Under lashes dart arrows of passionate glance.  
Scent intoxicant, laughter that tinkles like sleigh-bells.  
Wanton play and smoke fumes, wanton play and sheer lust.  
All are swaying: they tremble with hidden desire.  
Deepens night. Blood on fire. Secret night. Love's a must.

Sudden through all the glitter, the fumes and the clamour,  
Past the silks and the gold and the lust-rising wail,  
Goes a worker — all dirty, clothes spotted and greasy:  
Mute reproach to the conscience, with face worn and pale.

Without hurry he strode, and around him fell silence.  
With his hands deep in pockets, he strode so free  
That the elegant company parted before him  
As if seeing a water-spout giant at sea.

He went quietly by. And his blue eyes were kindly,  
His forehead well-shaped that bespoke clever mind.  
Though his eyes wandered far beyond unseen horizons —  
Through the crowd ran a tremor — fear-loathing combined.

Past the wealthy clean-shaven and sated, he sauntered  
And enjoyed what he ate — just a piece of dark rye.  
Yet like bullets some flew to their stained-window churches  
As if mirrors at midnight showed coffins were nigh.

1928

## TO FAR LANDS

O remote distant seas where the billows are tossed green and silver,  
Where the clouds float above beyond reach, and are shattered like dreams;  
Where the great streamlined ships catch the wind in their outstretched  
white aprons,  
Hoping faster than arrow to fly where the surfing waves cream.

O remote distant seas where my happiness lies somewhere hidden —  
On a flowering atoll, or country where Spring burns like flame,  
or where the elements moan full of thundering torrents of madness  
In a terrible land far away where the surf rolls untamed.

I'd like to weave someone a tale, with embroidery in detail,  
Of a land evernew whose young beauty all others outstrips —  
About surf on its rocky shores, golden and mother-of-pearl,  
About fairy-winged sails full of joy-winds that carry a ship  
To far lands whose expanses allure, to far lands never roamed...

Any haven's the same to the men who will never see home.

*1926*



*Ivan Honcharenko (b. 1908) was born in the village of Yabluneve, Poltava Region, into a poor peasant family. He is the author of numerous books of poems about the military and labour exploits of the Soviet people. His poems have been translated into many languages of the USSR.*

THAT WAS NOT YOUR  
DAUGHTER STOOD THERE

Once a mother was conversing  
With her daughter in the fall,  
By the wooden railing palings,  
By the whitewashed cottage wall.

She was asking, and demanding  
of her daughter, young and fair,  
whom she walked with, whom she talked with  
in the cherry-orchard square.

"Near the creep-hole through the fencing  
in the orchard, I declare,  
I have never once stood talking,  
and have never once been there."

"That's a falsehood, oh my daughter,  
and your eyes give you away!  
Who then stood there in the orchard  
in a fresh white dress in May?"

"I avow, and honestly now,"  
and her eyes fell lower, lower,  
"That was not your daughter stood there,  
that was a cherry-tree in flower!"

1937

## OBELISKS

On all roads from the Volga to Elbe,  
passing by you will see, and not seldom,  
in the field, or in the forest, or clearing,  
in the blue sky the obelisks rearing...

By the road, in the pasture's calm haven,  
at the factory or railway station,  
among hooters or signals a-shining,  
there are obelisks, obelisks rising...

The Baltic and Black Sea, both roaring,  
beat their waves on the stern-browed shoreline...  
On the cliffs, where the spring goes flying  
there are obelisks, obelisks rising...

In the village, in squares 'neath town windows,  
among willows,— the weeping widows,  
and where silver birch-maidens are crying  
there are obelisks rising...

Beneath them, eternally sleeping,  
lie warriors, their calm ever keeping.  
Tell the children in cradles curling,  
that these obelisks life were preserving,  
that these obelisks guard peace unswerving!

## NOW THE PLOUGHLAND REVIVES

Now the ploughland revives.  
The dark soil in the sun's oven bakes.  
On the warmed-through fields clouds of haze  
from the furrows arise.

The roots have found juices,  
each sleeping sown field soon awakes...  
Now the ploughland revives.

Now the ploughland revives.  
And the soul of the sower is glad;  
my soul too rejoices,  
for I am a sower at heart,  
for from boyhood

such dreams  
                    and such hopes,  
                                    with the earth I had,  
for the rich black soil once  
my shares, too, have shorn apart.

Now the ploughland revives.  
And above it go flying the cranes,  
and the trumpet summons of spring  
send down from the sky...  
In the soil falls the seed,  
And the tractors hum out on the plains,  
Now the ploughland revives.

*Yuri Yanovsky (1902-1954) was born in the town of Yelizavetgrad (now Dnipropetrovsk) into the family of a civil servant. He began his writing career as a poet but later turned to prose and drama. Romantically poetic, his novels and short stories enjoy wide popularity with Soviet and foreign readers. His works, which won him the USSR State prize, have been translated into many languages both in the USSR and abroad.*



\* \* \*

Hail to you, sea! A steamer's course  
 Across the planet lies:  
 All o'er the earth its way it plies  
 From Marseilles to Singapore.  
 Ships cross the sea from shore to shore,  
 All o'er the earth they sail.  
 Land of free toil, Ukraine, hail!  
 Blue waves and forests, roar!  
 Wind, fill our sail high overhead!  
 Seaway, speed on ahead!

1924

## SON

"What's a sail like — a big wide shawl?  
 Tell me, dear Mother, do!  
 And the winds that whisper and howl,  
 Are they blue-coloured too?

"I think the sea's like the steppe  
 And even and smooth as well  
 And the boat's like a hawk that flaps  
 Its wings that flutter and swell.



“And the sail’s like a cottage white,  
And the wind’s like our pussycat Mime!”  
Beetles crawl on the wall at night,  
Whom the cat tries to catch all the time.

“What roads can there be on the sea?  
Aren’t they too hard to find?  
And the gold-horned moon we see —  
Can it both sleep and shine?”

1927

## IN PORT

Let happy day sleep sound and fast  
When it has spun its tow at last.  
Let all the sunbeams — golden bands —  
Lie down to rest upon the sands.  
Then I will step into my Spring —  
The port where wedding bells would ring —  
And at far countries I will gaze —  
Still-lives in a mysterious haze.  
A soft beam shows the waves among,  
Aflutter like a husband young.  
I’ll stand there and the night will fall  
Upon the world like a great shawl  
And casting in the stars’ warm net  
Will sew the sky’s lace ornament.  
Down there a ship sleeps like a sheath  
Afield, the summer sky beneath,  
When no wind has been blowing yet,  
When dawn is far, the sun just set.  
I’ll stand there like a shadow, quiet  
And whistle twice into the night:  
“O you, my witless youthful day,  
O you, my lifelong anguish — stay  
Until I let you drink your fill  
And steer my schooner on until  
It passes rocks and reefs between  
To shores where tranquil waters gleam,  
Where old age’s low hut appears  
With years like days and days like years,  
Where silver on me will alight  
And make my hair all snowy-white.”  
Into the sea my call will sink  
And like an anchor-chain will clink  
Under the owl-like lighthouse stone,  
Under its eye so green and lone!

A sailboat's heavy silhouette  
Will sway, and through the parapet  
In port, the sun's hot ball will rise,  
Fog, rust-like, setting on its sides.

Again I'll whistle all alone:  
"O you, my bed, you're hard as stone,  
My room is lonesome as a jail,  
No halyard over me, no sail!  
O take me, comrade, on your ship,  
For bread — just take me on your trip.  
Here is my pack with hops and earth —  
The salty earth which gave me birth;  
Just let the sails above me fly  
With two gull fledglings perched on high!

*1927*

## DEDICATION

High in the sky swift falcons veered,  
Far out to sea bold merchants steered,  
And skimming sails each other neared.

Tall frigates ran, white chests wind-filled,  
The moon rose soldier-like and stilled,  
Guarding the seaways like a shield.

O merry days of nomad love!  
Wine poured, swords clashed on deck above  
And horse-like, waves would neigh and shove.

Tall frigates ran, white chests wind-filled,  
The moon rose soldier-like and stilled,  
Guarding the seaways like a shield.

Love reigned upon the swaying deck.  
The ship was like a ghostly speck;  
A star shone on its mast's long neck.

Tall frigates ran, white chests wind-filled,  
The moon rose soldier-like and stilled,  
Guarding the seaways like a shield.

*1928*

## TEN YEARS

With sharp steel swords, and not with tears  
Fame for our crimson flag we won.  
Shoulder to shoulder

ten long years  
Towards mountain tops we clambered on.

Ukraine's wildwoods and wild steppes —  
We made them live a different way.  
On her incomparable fields  
Grass, too, grows differently today.

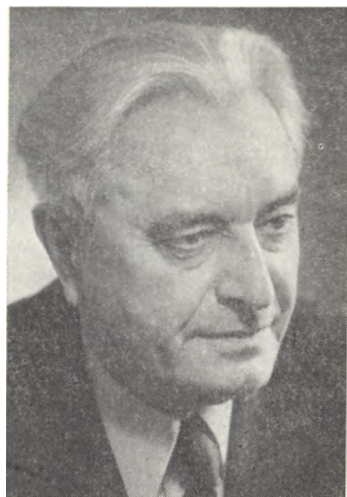
“Ten years have sunk into the soil —  
Buried is money’s evil might.  
A mound of soil have sons of toil  
Piled on its coffin. Serves it right!”

A crimson dawn shines on the Don.  
Beyond the mountains rolls the sun.  
Ukraine's fields stretch on and on  
To the Dnieper, the Dniester, the San.

Above the land a red flag flies,  
And falcon-like, it soars ahead.  
To the Carpathians it will reach.  
Towards the west wave banners red.

1927

*Lyubomir Dmiterko (b. 1911), a poet, dramatist, and prose writer, was born in the village of Vinniki, Lviv Region, into a teacher's family. Expressive and rich in civic themes, his poetry won him the Taras Shevchenko Prize. Many of his books have been published in other republics of the Soviet Union and abroad.*



ARKAN \*

Like the Prut cascading free,  
Like the Cheremosh flowing by,  
Like a song's free harmony,  
Like a wind which blows on high,  
Like a stream in spring perchance,  
Which in Horhan peaks began,  
Well, such then is our dance,  
Well, such is our arkan.  
Like the thunder from a cloud,  
Like the quiet-rustling pine,  
Like an axe-blow clear and loud,  
Like an echo answering fine.  
Like a whirlwind's swift advance,  
Which the hurricane bears to man,  
Well, such then is our dance,  
Well, such is our arkan.  
Like a fount of pure delight,  
Like a storm of joy in truth,  
Like magic woven tight,  
Like laughter in our youth,  
And like a Hutzul a-prance,  
And full of grace and élan,  
Well, such then is our dance,  
Well, such is our arkan.

1940

\* Arkan — Hutzul dance

## DANCE ABOVE CROSSED SWORDS

The lassies dance upon the boards,  
the Highland fling, above crossed swords.

*Pavlo Tychina*

Not on crossed swords, but on a deadly mine-field,  
The medic Lena danced and died.

...We waded in the marshes to our knee-caps,  
Came nearer to the Vistula every stride.

We needed to cut straight through to the river,  
Break through the enemy's line, and reach his rear.,  
But he had covered our exit from the swamp-land,  
Entrenched upon a burnt-out farmstead near.

That farmstead was for us just like a lighthouse,  
And in the dark it blazed with sparks of fire.  
If unexpectedly we strike — the fascists  
Will never gain the bank where the ground is higher.

But with each step the marsh grew ever deeper,  
Up to our waists the clinging mire and clay,  
What's more, the dawn behind the grove was breaking.  
Just like an opening window on the day.

(And if we don't get drowned in bottomless marshes,  
Then an aerial scout will spot us anyway.  
No one will bear us out on beating pinions  
Into the long-desired post-war day!)

There's no way forward. And there's no way backward.  
Fate counts each minute, as it were, of strife,  
And measures off unhastingly and slowly,  
Your little lump of concentrated life.

Then someone shouts out: "Look, a little island!"  
And really — it's a wonder, swathed in dew,  
And you may name it islet, or a pathway —  
It stretched for us a possible way through.

And everyone then scrambled for a foothold,  
Then came a voice, alarmed, with gasping breath:  
"Comrades, get back! Get back! Here is a minefield!"  
A minefield stands one hundred per cent for death.

What do you choose, when there's no means of choosing?  
We stood there numb, despair struck dumb and stark,  
And overhead the clouds with dawn were flaming,  
Like red blood flowing from the nocturnal dark.

Upon the horizon slowly day ascended,  
The motherland gave birth to a rosy son.  
Behind us slept the swamps and bottomless marshes,  
Above a "Fokker-Wulf" began to hum!

A senseless death. So purposeless and stupid.  
To drown in marshes, hands raised in dismay,  
Or in despair to dash upon the minefield,  
That's what the war holds in store for you today!

And see, a girl crawls out upon the island,  
Casts off her mire-bespattered great-coat then.  
That's health-instructor Lena... Moving forward!..  
Behind, her shadow wavers, long and thin.

The shadow swings. The girl goes, as if dancing,  
Floats lightly o'er the minefield, o'er the grass,  
With fascinating, captivating beauty —  
Such beauty very rarely you see pass!..

From the explosion all the meadow trembled,  
The echoes round the Vistula region flew.  
A crimson flame in one great arch extended  
And after... all around was quiet anew.

I don't remember who yelled out "Hoorah!"  
We rose, united by that burst of flame,  
As if some kind of miracle had happened,  
And we no longer feared the deadly game.

"Hoorah!" Straight on ahead we all surged forward,  
Through bursting mines — "For the Fatherland!" rent the air  
And summoned to fight and struggle on till victory.  
We shan't be stopped by fire, nor minefield snare!

And so we won the battle for the Vistula...  
And when the sappers cleared the mines away,  
All that remained of Lena on that day —  
That was a skylark in the boundless heavens —  
And a memory which in people's mind will stay.

1976

## OLVIA

Most ancient city, thrusting from the earth,  
With hills, ravines and stones, and broken shreds,  
And scattered by the centuries and the winds,  
Or great, or small, humanity's deeds and words.

And till today we visualize in the dark  
Upon the earthly firmament marble shrines,  
Well-furnished with their heavy iron gates,  
The first shoots in the first field's furrowed lines.  
The priests, the rich slave-owners, and poor slaves,  
Philosophers and tradesmen, poets of old,  
Brocade and finery of the festive crowds,  
The tempting ring of minted coins of gold.  
The dust of centuries, and the faded grass,  
Theatre and market, street and public square,  
And government plots concealed in the mesh of dark,  
And merchant caravans in the harbours there...

All that has passed. The greying steppe remains,  
The tireless sun, the wind with breath relaxed,  
And items in the world's museums on show,  
And the dense network of our living tracks.  
Those living paths to Olvia still lead  
The hero-grandads, grandson pioneers...  
Despite the fact that this our restless age  
The route to distant galaxies now clears,  
Despite the fact that scientists name the time,  
And further flights on unknown routes set forth,  
We're masters here, and evermore must be,  
Of this great planet which has given us birth,  
And generously has fed us at her breast,  
And we have burned and yearned for her as, cast  
Upon hot coals, till tempered, and in despair,  
Her real true people we became at last.

Dear native land! In bold and fearless flight,  
Not only the desire to drink and eat  
We take with us to strange and distant stars,  
But take the thirst to sing, and to create.  
And speeding off with us to heavenly worlds  
Each dream which we have nursed on earth here goes —  
Sofia's beauty, Olvia's mystery,  
The magical aroma of the rose.

And meanwhile burns the sun's exhausting heat,  
And meanwhile dust in layer on layer steals,  
Here where the Romans and the Greeks have stood,  
And the Sarmatians' armed invading heels.  
And Olvia in imagination shines  
Throughout the mirage of thunderous thousand-years,  
In joy and pain, in glory, and disgrace,  
In all that constitutes this world of ours.

## PRELUDE

In the nighttime of March  
    my life took its beginning.  
From its deep winter sleep then  
    the earth bright awoke.  
And as stars grouped together  
    in patterns of prophets,  
From embrace of the planets  
    a child's cry loud broke.  
And this cry shrill and piercing  
    woke rolling expanses,  
Springtime orchards stripped bare  
    and the voiceless oak grove.  
Thus my road here began,  
    and my fate was clear lying,  
As in the veins of mankind  
    my blood steady flowed.  
At one dawning transparent  
    of March's dark nighttime,  
From the earth I full welcomed  
    the warmth and strength flow,  
So that life's long hard path  
    to its end I might follow,  
Through the heat of July  
    and the deep winter snow.  
Thus you go through the years  
    with belief, ever hopeful,  
Understanding much more  
    all the more felt and seen.  
Yet the tape's stretched out taut  
    clearly marking the finish.  
And the knowledge of this  
    stabs us all deep and clean.  
But small children cry loud  
    from embrace of the planets.  
And young people grow up  
    as the years patience lend.  
And all fighters gain courage  
    as all poets grow greyer.  
And the river of life  
    will flow on without end.

1977



## THE SINGER

Upon the Vosges Square there lies  
A medieval quietude.  
What kind of poems do you desire?..  
All is exhausted, last drops screwed...

The burning feeling, passion's kiss,  
The sense of events, life's living core,  
And only on noisy boulevards  
The carriages drive, return no more —

To the age of wiped-out dynasties,  
Of frenzied raging kinds and lords...  
The revolution has its mood,  
Its lexicon of pitiless words.

Accept therefore your bitter fate,  
Or fame's intriguing laurel wreath,  
And laughter, tears, free-will and yoke,  
Your irredeemable hour of death.

Though thoughts be sharp as the razor's edge,  
And dreams be burning hot as fire,  
In this small corner of Vosges  
In torment live Hugo and his lyre.

Here is the stairway leading up  
To gained Olympian heights it seems.  
In the dark jaws of the corridor,  
A lantern, like an aureole gleams.

And from this nest the books flew out  
V. Hugo, V. Hugo. Victor's word.  
But now, as silent as in a vault  
His humane voice no more is heard.

But only with unquenchable thirst  
This dwelling place is breathing hard —  
The thirst for the savage deadly duel  
Of the prophet. Sinner. Sinner-bard.

## PORIK'S \* GRAVE

A stone is not unfeeling rock.  
A stone is able to groan and cry.

\* Porik, Vasil (1920-1944) — Soviet Army officer,  
hero of French Resistance

A stone which has been thus bedewed  
With burning tears from a mother's eye.

A slab of Zhitomir \* labrador  
Is standing here in Pas-de-Calais.  
The nature of the North is severe  
As it was then, in that past day,

When he was still in the living flesh,  
And battled among these pit-heads still.  
The legend then was later born  
In the district where French miners dwell.

These pit-heads, just like in Donbas...  
Like near Vinnitsya \* with its groves...  
And in the neighbouring Arras town  
Your murderers sprang up in droves.

Arras — the cradle of Robespierre,  
The Bourbon Square, with trees and all.  
What days are these? What era's this?  
Gates rust, there's ivy on the wall...

No grief, nor pain, nor tiredness in  
That fatal moment did he know.  
He wanted in his own brigade  
To still wreak vengeance on the foe.

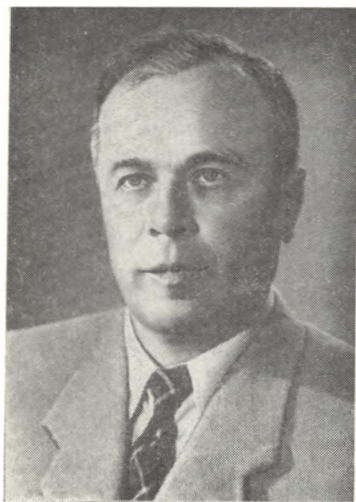
And his beloved one's blazing eyes  
Were in Hénin-Liétard, nearby...  
But that's no stream, it's death which seethes  
There in the gulley, beneath the sky.

That's all. The end. A stone remains.  
A deathless sign. The seal of woe.  
And tears, a mother's eternal tears,  
Which from the stone still cry and flow.

1974

---

\* Zhitomir, Vinnitsya — regional centres in the Ukraine



*Serhiy Voskrekasenko (1906-1979) was born in the village of Lazirtsi in Cherkasy Region into a peasant family. He wrote numerous collections of humorous and satirical stories which enjoy wide popularity in the Soviet Union.*

### DOUBLE-FACED

We hear him speaking very often,  
And from his speeches fires blaze.  
With logic, pathos and rhetoric  
He ably speaks in all these ways.

He favours nothing that's dishonest,  
And nothing bearing falsehood's name...  
And he is no respecter of persons,  
Pulls everyone to bits the same.

The lady-cleaner, and the postman,  
The night-watch too. And next will come  
The turn of Luxemburg's Prime Minister,  
And even the Holy Pope of Rome.

And his own master, frank and fearless  
He pulls down in the dirt and dust,  
When he's aware that that poor failure  
Was yesterday dismissed from his post.

1953

## A THIEF AT CONFESSION

(from the past)

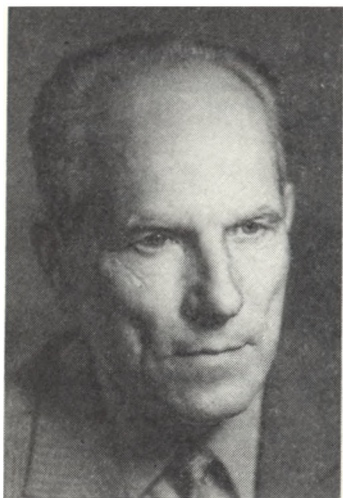
The priest said strictly to the thief:  
“You rob your nearest kith and kin,  
But go to church, in God believe.  
Though God said thieving is a sin...”

The religious thief, when the sermon ceased,  
Replied in this wise to the priest  
“Well, I have read in the Holy Word,  
Which all may have full confidence in,  
‘He who sincerely prays,  
Then God  
Will pardon him the wickedest sin’.

And you yourself at Epiphany  
That very lesson preached to me...”

The priest absolved the thief on this  
And let him go his way in peace.

*1962*



PETRO DOROSHKO

*Petro Doroshko (b. 1910) was born in the village of Tupichiv, Chernihiv Region, into a peasant family. His writings concern the friendship of nations, nature, and its preservation in the name of life and progress. Many of his works have been published in other republics of the Soviet Union and abroad.*

\* \* \*

I drink water from the clear pure spring,  
From the untouched source of this small stream.  
Having sipped it too, the wild birds sing:  
Here grow strawberries, mushrooms in a ring,  
And around the nanny-goats' tracks are seen.

And around the oaks spread eagle's wings,  
Soaring to the sunny blue on high.  
Earth's life-giving sap this power brings,  
Raises them unto the autumn sky.  
Burns  
Each branch, with yellow flaming here,  
Burns right out, to burn again next year.

I drink water from the clear pure spring,  
Taste the freshness of this bubbling stream.  
Having sipped it, birds of passage sing:  
Here grow strawberries, mushrooms in a ring,  
And the earth  
                    with songs has blossomed green.

1935

Way beyond some gay horizon there,  
On the Dnieper, or the Desna's shore,  
We recall, in some more fortunate hour,  
Those with whom we foot-slogged in the war.

Those with whom, somewhere, one step from death,  
We left marching tracks upon the grass.  
We recall fine lads, and catch our breath,  
Those with whom we shared a meal, a glass.

Into distant hills, a mountainous wall,  
Thousand roads run on and disappear.  
Who among us, comrade-soldiers all,  
Does not hold them in his memory dear?

Who upon those roadways did not find  
People good and bad, and false and true?  
Fighting friends we never left behind,  
Four long summers, and three winters through.

Some were of a witty, yes, stubborn cast,  
Gaily looked upon this world of ours,  
Till a minute or two before their last  
Were prepared to live a hundred years.

How they joked: "No, no, we shall not die,  
Hardened as we are in such a fire!"  
Now beyond which bright and distant sky  
Do we call to mind our friends so dear?

Beyond the Desna, and the Dnieper blue,  
Where white sea-gulls fly, and rushes ring?..  
Those left living may recall us too —  
Maybe so — the war's still in full swing.

1944

## UPON THE KOLA PENINSULA

The strung-out track runs on unspanned,  
Where pines with pointed needles are.  
Lost in the distance lies that land  
Upon the Kola Peninsula.

The mountains echo on either hand  
With hunstmen's dry shots ringing far.  
Lost in the distance lies that land  
Upon the Kola Peninsula.

The river's small — it's not Trubizh,  
And not Supiy, with waters wide.  
Not here I ran behind the sledge,  
Barefoot behind the horses hied.  
Not here the patient cows and lambs  
I drove along the rutted track,  
Not here made bonfires, warmed my hands,  
Nor baked potatoes in the ash.  
Not here I played upon the leas,  
As daring as the most daring ones.  
Not here, when first snow cloaked the trees,  
I walked to school with all my chums.  
Not here in childhood long ago,  
When we ran barefoot down the lane,  
Our fine old apple-tree in blow  
Its rosy branch tapped on the pane.  
Not here the clouds their carpets wove,  
When snow-fields gleamed with sparkling stars,  
I heard my mother's song of love  
First time above my cradle bars.  
Not here, in the oak-trees' shady grove,  
I arranged for my first rendezvous,  
Not here I grew, not here knew love —  
But that  
                    means nothing, it is true.

It may be past the last confines,  
Where pines with pointed needles are,  
But those tall pines, they are my pines,  
Upon the Kola Peninsula.

Although from here I may fare forth,  
From soil unploughed beneath the snow,  
Still this cold earth — it is my earth,  
And spreads itself for me, I know!

The Kola's not like our Desna,  
Nor mountains like the Carpathians there,  
And not from here I went to war  
With my good friends, all soldiers rare.  
But if the thunder again we hear  
With blows severe, then for Ural,  
For the Caucasus, for our Crimea,  
For the North, with forests and hills as well,

I'll boldly go to fight again,  
As for my golden land Ukraine,  
As for dear Moscow, for Leningrad,  
As for Sevastopol, Stalingrad.  
As for my boyhood home and grove,  
Where nought the southern sunshine mars,  
Where I heard mother sing of love,  
First time above my cradle bars.  
Where every path to every gate  
With dew is covered, near and far,  
Which are three times nine wide lands away  
Far off from the Kola Peninsula.

*1949*

### GIRL FROM POLISSYA

Maiden, o maiden,  
A sunlit creation,  
Your plait a corona  
In olden-time fashion.

Dressed in pure daylight,  
Dawn-fresh, endearing,  
Say, where did you spring from,  
From whence are appearing?

Perhaps from some story?  
Perhaps from some ditty?  
Your brows almost meeting,  
Your snub nose so pretty!

Not once plucked those eye-brows,  
So coal-black and even.  
Those blue eyes are beaming,  
As soothing as heaven.

By such blue eyes shining,  
At morning, especially,  
All recognize, surely,  
A girl from Polissya?

For light that caresses  
Unceasing, unfading,  
O, who would not love you,  
Ukrainian maiden?



At some heart you're aiming  
With excellent sighting.  
Whose soul are you warming?  
Whose path are you lighting?

From whence are you coming,  
From whence, pretty sweetening?  
Why didn't you earlier  
Grant me a meeting?

"Oh dear, but I couldn't  
Meet you, or another.  
I still was too little,  
And always with mother.

I grew like a birch-tree,  
A white forest-maiden,  
I'd like to have spoken,  
But I had to hasten.

So many jobs waiting,  
High noon, and I'm shirking!  
Today is not Sunday,  
It's Tuesday — I'm working!"

"Oh, that's not the reason —  
Not Sunday, as you're saying.  
It's the fact that my temples  
Are already greying.

Not that it's high noon-tide,  
And Tuesday, my sporty,  
It's because I'm not twenty,  
But already  
forty!"

*1956*

## AERODROMES

The aerodromes are just like nervous centres  
Of earth's top-crust, in rhythm day and night.  
And having swallowed countless kilometres  
Of contradictions, friction, and stormy flight.  
And human restlessness, across the distance  
Maintaining accurately their arduous course,  
Upon them find brief refuge and assistance,  
And have their quickened pulses checked at source,

These birds, with hearts exhausted in the thunder,  
Each bearing its own powerful government's emblem.  
The aerodromes...

On the aerodromes waiting under —  
A moment's rest. The bird again starts trembling,  
And haste again, in the engine's hurly-burly,  
Explodes in the turbine's howl, its whining drive —  
The birds sweep off. They make the furthest journey  
As short and swiftly sped  
as human life.

1966

### ORIOLES IN MY ORCHARD

Orioles in my orchard here,  
Orioles, cuckoos fluting,  
Waken for our pleasure dear,  
Boughs with green leaves shooting.

Why then, my bright rainbow-love,  
Don't you rise more timely,  
See the whole gay world, my dove,  
Dressed in pale-blue finery,

With its tireless nightingales,  
With each dewdrop's rainbow,  
Which no words, no magic tales,  
None can tell, or say so?

Probably all the words in the world  
At this hour are stinted,  
Cannot speak what orioles  
In the branches hint at?

1968

### 'MID THE PINES IN THE FOREST DARK IS THE NIGHT

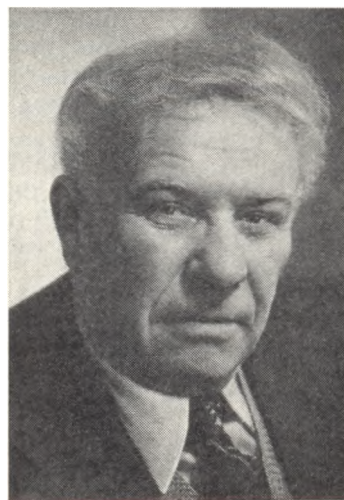
'Mid the pines in the forest dark is the night,  
Heavy banks of dark clouds to the ground incline,  
Only in pointed gable  
My window bright  
Holds the reflection of one evergreen pine.

A sheaf of light-rays pierce the rough damp of the gloom,  
Aiming up at the pine-tree's crown rising steep.  
Toward the night, my window has started to roam.  
It does not sleep. And the evergreen pine does not sleep.

Dark is the night. Let it be so. I go on my quest.  
On the pathway the flickering light-shaft pales.  
Something I'll find: a bunch of cornflowers — the last,  
Or, in the grove, the first of the autumn's tales.

Or, like an archeologist,— some time-worn coin,  
On it, the traces of powers and centuries gone...  
Oh, how rough is the road on this journey of mine!  
Let it be so. Do not end. Go ahead. Lead me on.

*1969*



*Mikola Nahribida (b. 1911) was born in the village of Smirnovka, Zaporizhya Region, into the family of the village doctor. He is the author of numerous ballads and narrative poems about the labour exploits of the Soviet people and the friendship of Soviet nations. His poems have been translated into many languages. He is a USSR State and Taras Shevchenko prize winner.*

## OUT AT SEA

By my hand my Grandad led me  
One fine morning to the bay.  
"Buddies, show my little grandson  
How the perch are caught today."

Fishermen with bronze-brown faces  
On their boat took little me,  
And the oars like lightning-flashes  
Struck the water merrily.

As they struck the rolling whitecaps,  
From the foam towards the skies  
Multicoloured drops went flying,  
Light of wing, like butterflies.  
There they flew and fluttered gaily,  
Till a rainbow set off sailing.

Oh, how wonderful it looked there  
Up above the wide blue sea!  
"Why," I thought, "those oars are magic,  
Catching fairy-tales for me!"

Leaning overboard, I marvelled  
At the whitecaps as they rolled.  
"Hey, be careful there, Mikola!"  
From behind me Grandad called.

And the people moved away then  
From the softly creaking mast,  
And the sail began to flutter,  
Breathing with full breast at last.

Over shining silver whitecaps  
Swifter than the wind we sailed.  
Seagulls tried to overtake us,  
But, of course, they always failed.

And I thought, what wondrous secrets  
Fishermen at sea must know!  
In their sails the wind they capture  
And with songs they make it blow.

All my life I will remember  
As a dream from fairy tales  
How at high tide nets were gathered  
Full of fish with shining scales.

How the fishing-boat bent over  
When the nets were gathered in,  
How the fish beat at the bottom,  
Golden, silver, coral-finned!

To my grandfather I swore  
I would never go on shore,  
All my life I'd live at sea  
Where the wind flies, full of glee.

*1946*

## THE SHIRT

My mother once sewed me a shirt  
Out of sails from the sea,  
Which my sisters embroidered with silk  
In a pattern of crosses.  
To this day it has not been worn out by me  
And it's splendid to feel it still there, on my bosom.

Ah, how fine is that shirt  
Which was sewn from good cloth,  
Which was bleached by the sunshine  
Pure-white.  
How it breathes on my breast with the wind, white as froth,  
Singing songs of Azov full of joy and delight.

There are times I feel sad —  
    When the weather is bad —  
But that shirt starts to flutter,  
    And, heartened and glad,  
With my soul like a sail, then I turn right about  
And towards the grey waves, full of courage, set out.

I have never asked Fate,  
    In no matter what state,  
For a minute of calm  
    For my trouble-torn heart,  
For that shirt which to me more than money is worth,  
For that shirt made for me by my dear mother's art,  
Longs for wind, open spaces and silver-capped surf.

## MONTENEGRO

This took place in far Montenegro  
Where the hill-folk are eagles bold,  
Where the foot-paths,  
    and where the highways  
Cross the passes, a hundred all told.  
There I travelled those highland roadways,  
Fell in love with stern beauty there.  
Black stone cliffs, and thundering waters  
Till today in my heart I bear.  
I rejoiced when I heard in those motifs,  
The soul of the ancient Slavonic lays,  
And I grieved in the heated wheatfields  
Which the sun burns in summer days.

Said hello to the hill-side children,  
Going with exercise-books to school,  
I was happy to hear the hill-folk  
Friend and brother our Russia call.  
There a loving mother embraced me,  
Mourning still her son, so fine...  
But not that did I wish to tell you  
In this ballad of mine.

This took place in far Montenegro.  
Half of the world was still at war,  
Partisans looked on in sorrow  
As the flames through their village roared.  
Fascists left only whitening ashes,  
Shot the old and the young as well.

Partisans one small girl discovered  
In the ruins where she used to dwell.  
Having survived the flames and torment,  
Dumb with the horror she'd seen that night,  
She held out burnt arms and fingers  
To the partisans, weak with fright.

They wrapped up her wounds with kerchiefs,  
By the ruins, each bowed his head.  
Then they travelled off through the mountains,  
Paths which to Staff-Headquarters led.

On the way the small girl lay sleeping  
In the Montenegrin warrior's arms.  
Thus he came to the Staff-Headquarters,  
Stern and silent, in deep alarm.

There he laid his sacred burden  
On old grey-haired Raina's lap.  
Told the soldiers:

“The child is sleeping.”  
All fell quiet in the mountain camp.  
Radio-men rushed out from a cavern:  
“Vyazma! Vyazma!” their happy cry.  
Ah, how glad they were, how noisy!  
Let the sleeping child still lie...

“Russian troops have taken Vyazma,  
Fascists have been backward hurled!”  
“Vyazma” then the partisans christened  
Their unknown little orphan girl.

And old Raina became her mother,  
Nursed her through the war's hard times...  
But not that did I wish to tell you  
In this ballad of mine...

This took place in far Montenegro  
Recently we went there as guests  
Welcoming songs for us resounded,  
Round the tables at friendly feasts.

In that village, in place of the ruins,  
Graceful gardens were well-installed.  
There we asked what became of the orphan  
Who in Russian Vyazma was called,  
“Our dear Vyazma is seventeen nearly,”  
One of the Montenegrins replied.  
“Haven't you heard how wonderfully sweetly  
Russian songs she sings with pride?”

Vyazma is studying.

Soon she'll return here,  
She'll be a teacher up here, in the wild.  
Grey-haired Raina sees her already —  
Her darling Vyazma, her dearest child."

Peace and joy to both daughter and mother,  
Grown together in war's dread time...  
That is what I just wished to tell you  
In this ballad of mine.

*Yugoslavia, 1966*

## BONFIRES

The bonfires smoke above the water  
The maple trees in their green clouds there...  
A quiet song behind the scythe-blades  
The mowers along the meadows bear.

And in that song's grass track I follow —  
The flying scythes go zing, zing, zing,  
And fascinated in my spirit  
I whisper the words of the song they sing.

Not whisper —  
but live through and through them,  
Again and again through my lot I go,  
And for the first time love a lassie,  
And for the first time friendship know.

The scythes go zing —  
The song still farther  
To long past years has let me roll,  
When we built Zaporizhya Steel Works,  
And in so doing I saw my goal,

When first I felt the inner power  
Of craftsmen deep in love with life,  
And their bright-pinioned working spirit  
Where inspiration and light were rife.

O song, and what have you been doing?  
You've led me back to youth, like a bird,  
You've filled again the sea-sail's canvas,  
And on my shoulder the ribbon stirred.



And hazy mists of those past summers  
With a wave of your wing you wiped away,  
And those sea-caravans of azure,  
Brought back into my heart today.

The scythes go zing —  
                                maybe not scythe-blades,  
But oars upon the green waves beat,  
And mowers, as if they were sailors,  
Alongside row, and sail through the heat...

The one ahead, with tufted forelock  
Like life itself                   hastes on, hastes on,  
And he strikes up another chorus  
Not letting me finish my sailor's song.

His voice rings out so clear,  
triumphant,  
 And carries me back  
to a stormy day,  
 To communist fighters,  
now a legend,  
 From Volokalamsk main motorway\*.

With nodding forelock sings how soldiers,  
As prophets of joy, and all that's new,  
Come back from war-fields quite exhausted,  
Not to take rest, but rye to mow.

[illegible]

Where there are beckoning mountain passes,  
And stars,  
                so many stars a-shine...  
And so the mowers of the meadows  
Have sung through this whole life of mine.

1961

\* Volokalamsk main motorway — one of the axes of nazi advance on Moscow in late 1941

## THE BELLS OF KHATYN

(Excerpt)

The singing rain,  
The springtime rain  
Falls on a grievous wonder,  
On grass-green carpets it falls amain,  
And happily sinks under.  
And to the flashing lightning's call  
It sends its dew-drops pearly,  
And from the streams already full  
Speeds couriers down the valley.

The singing rain,  
Merry-andrew rain,  
It dances as if it's Christmas...  
But here I see the sad ash again  
In its mackintosh stands listless,  
And stretches branchy arms to all,  
Above the world,  
Above me...  
The drops  
Upon the granite fall,  
Like tears of those that love me,  
The rain down grievous letters drains,  
Inscribed upon the column,  
On people's names, on districts' names  
It flows sedate and solemn.  
The marble weeps  
And sadly speaks  
Their unforgotten story.  
Beneath the roses villages sleep:  
Khatyn,  
Rudni,  
Lyaori.  
Thousands of them in Byelorussia  
The fascists burnt to a cinder.  
The stars they weep, the stones cry thus:  
Zagorye!  
Lyadi!  
Svidno!  
And through the years, the fire and smoke,  
At the popular assembly  
Speak living witnesses from the stone:  
Bobruisk,  
Lagoisk,  
Polissya.  
This is no shower...  
All Byelorussia  
Weeps tears upon the granite...

In sorrow and anger this I swear,  
I swear to all this planet,  
To children, to my native land,  
By all my heart holds sacred,  
May I moulder in the grass and sand  
If I forget these places:  
Khatyn,  
Barishki,  
Lisové,—  
Or forgive their execution!  
Besyadi,  
Nivki,  
Ternové,  
And demand no retribution.

My sorrow,  
My unending grief,  
Don't bar the path to anger!  
And you, May shower, fall beneath  
Upon our meadow's languor.  
Beyond Khatyn, where they went to sow,  
The soil for seed still hungers,  
But it can not forget till now  
The cries of Khatyn's poor youngsters,  
And sorrow's sharp  
And bitter tang  
In our daily bread remaining,  
Reminds us:  
Do not forget the wrong  
Of our deep and soul-felt mourning.  
Do not forgive,  
Do not forget,  
Nor lighten reparations  
For those who here like wild beasts went,  
And raised those conflagrations.  
The rain pours down...  
The alarm-bells toll  
O'er the ashes, from chimney-belfries: \*  
Ding-dong!..  
Ding-dong!..  
Someone they call,  
And then fall silent with memories.  
A half-minute silence,  
Again the bell  
Which grieves about the burning,  
And farther and farther the bronze bells toll  
O'er forest dales a-yearning.

---

\* On the chimney-stacks, all that remained of Khatyn, bells, which continuously toll, have been installed

A burst of grief  
To those alive  
About the burned ones' torment...  
Remember, people, while you live  
They loved the living moment!  
Ding-dong!..  
Ding-dong!..  
At the village bound  
The last stove-chimney's tolling,  
And the first hut awakes to sound:  
Ding-dong!..  
In memory knelling...  
So, day and night,  
Both wrath and woe  
Adown the dale go roaming.  
No other voice, no other sight,  
Except the cranes a-homing...  
Kurli-kurli...  
Kurli-kurli...  
Floats o'er the forest's hollows,  
And on the hill-side greenery:  
Ding-dong!..  
The cranes' cry follows.  
Ding-dong!..  
Kurli-kurli... once more  
Then fades upon the horizon.  
And maybe cranes past Oradour  
And Lidice are flying.  
And maybe see from the 'neath the clouds,  
Upon the Ukraine's fair bosom,  
My village in its smoking shroud,  
Kortelisi's scorched blossom.  
And maybe o'er the distant seas  
They now have heard our sorrow —  
Kurli-kurli —  
Above the trees,  
Ding-dong!..  
Ding-dong!..  
In the hollow.  
The stones they cry,  
The stones they cry,  
The world, and the skies that span it,  
With trembling hand someone will lay  
Their violets on the granite.  
And one, like a soldier,  
On his knees,  
Struck dumb with bitter rancour,  
Or on Khatyn's rough stone's unease  
Whets sharp his righteous anger —  
Do not forgive,

Do not forget,  
Nor lighten reparations  
For those who here like wild beasts went,  
And raised these conflagrations.

*1973*

## TO VETERANS OF THE WAR

Tell all the truth about it to your sons,  
To both your sons and grandsons, veterans,  
About the roads you had to cover once  
From the Volga to the Balkans with your guns.

Tell all the truth!  
Let anybody dare  
To meet it with a sneer of disbelief,  
Your tale of how you suffered pain and grief  
To save your native planet from despair.

Tell all the truth  
And never be ashamed  
To talk about your daring feats with pride.  
All will confirm your heroism world-famed —  
Brest, Moscow, Kiev — cities far and wide.

Speak up and tell the truth to all mankind —  
Let men forever keep it well in mind —  
Of sacrifices made by those whom steel  
And thunder could not crush on battlefields.

Tell all the truth, tell all the truth of those  
Who perished and as legends were revived,  
And so returned to live in the desires  
And cherished hopes and Springs of all alive.

Tell all the truth about it to your sons  
And grandsons — let them listen, rapt and still,  
You will be aided in your story by  
Mamayev \* and Malakhov \*\* burial-hills.

*1975*

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\* Mamayev Mound — a hill near Volgograd (Stalingrad)

\*\* Malakhov Mound — an elevation near Sevastopol, in the Crimea — scenes of fierce battles against the Nazis during World War II

## TO KATERINA

Don't lose yourself within the human sea,  
Don't petrify in lonely pride,  
On reaching any crossroad in your life,  
Let your conscience be your guide.

Don't blind yourself if you should win success,  
Capitulate when trouble's there,  
And don't in days when ripe the harvest blooms,  
Sleep through them, blindly unaware.

Do not avoid the wrongs that come your way,  
Trample, censure, judge, point and blame,  
As for the poison of servility,  
Evade the path that leads this way.

Do not betray your friends for speaking words  
Of bitter truth, reality,  
And fearful be, more than of death itself,  
At no response to misery.

*1975*



## KOST HERASIMENKO

*Kost Herasimenko (1907-1942) was born in the village of Prikhidki, Poltava Region, into the family of a teacher. He was killed during the Second World War. His poems portray life of the intelligentsia of the 1930s and the heroism of the Soviet people during the Second World War. He is the author of several plays, and his works have been translated into many languages of the USSR.*

### DITTY

Ah, I've tramped the pathway  
Coming through the rye,  
In a pale-blue kerchief  
A simple girl go I.

Gently a breeze was blowing  
And embraced me free,  
My long-awaited laddie  
Didn't recognize me.

Either you've got married,  
Or forgotten me,  
Or my song in the rye-field  
Didn't hear, maybe?

No, I haven't married,  
Nor forgotten you,  
Only another pleasure  
I have taken to.

Hey, through fields and meadows  
Other winds now blow,  
Prancing on the bridle  
Cavalry horses go.

Over the blue horizon  
Carrion crows now flap,

Young Budyonny \* troops ride —  
Buckle, belt and strap.

'Gainst the butcher-foeman  
In the front ranks go I.  
Early at dawn tomorrow  
Down the road shall fly.

Lightly a little pathway  
To the battle swings,  
It's not worthwhile worrying  
Over trifling things...

Then a breeze so gentle,  
Trembling quietly blew...  
No farewell on parting,  
Off to the fight he flew.

For that lad I've waited  
As long years went by,  
In a pale-blue kerchief  
A simple girl go I.

*1940*

## STORY ABOUT A SONG

All flooded in springtime sunshine,  
In a simple soldier's great-coat,  
With a kit-bag and anti-gas-mask,  
A song marched along the street.  
In its tracks the windows opened,  
And the girls all stood there gazing,  
But the song marched on and thundered  
About youthful life, and the fight,  
About rye-ears by horse-hooves trampled,  
About some far-distant well-spring,  
About steppe-land, and love and parting,  
About spring and returning cranes...  
In the song was something familiar,  
Something great, and something joyful,  
In its discipline, in its tension,  
In the steel-shod stride of the squad.

---

\* Semyon Budyonny (1883-1973) — Soviet military leader,  
hero of the Civil War



And later, when all the regiment  
In the gloom of the side-streets melted,  
When beyond the unknown turning  
The words of the song died away —  
An architect meditated,  
Returned to his plan from the window,  
Enveloped in blue-grey smoke,  
And thoughtfully murmured: "M-m-yes..."  
And it seemed to that silent dreamer  
That in the sombre black lines there,  
In precise and sleepless lines there  
From cement and malachite,  
There grew, and began lightly breathing  
Spring grasses, inebriated,  
And a girl hurried off to her meeting,  
And the word arose — "My love!"

And later, when all the regiment,  
In the gloom of the side-streets melted,  
When beyond the unknown turning  
The words of the song died away:  
Broad-shouldered, and wearing glasses,  
A surgeon returned to his patient,  
And lightly, it seemed, started thinking,  
And warmly then took his pulse.  
And felt that life was unconquered,  
That in it the rye was rustling,  
That in it the spring was rippling,  
And a ringing dream arose.  
And when, by chance, of a sudden,  
Their glances were somehow meeting,  
Both firmly had the feeling:  
There it is! Not escaped yet. Life!

And later, when all the regiment  
In the gloom of the side-streets melted,  
When beyond the unknown turning  
The words of the song died away:  
From the noisy street, from the sunshine,  
From his widely-opened windows,  
To his clean and solid volumes  
A poet went into his room.  
He wanted then to say something,  
He, it seemed, was heavily breathing,  
The moment of inspiration  
He suddenly wanted to stop.

But the song, all flooded in sunshine,  
With kit-bag and anti-gas-mask,  
With gleaming and ringing bayonets,  
Simply, as usual, marched.

And the song became lost in the distance,  
Unheard, unseen, and unnoticed,  
In the warmth of the April twilight  
It dwindled and melted away.  
And somewhere the lovers went hasting,  
Over something commissions were sitting,  
In a nervous and dreamy alto  
In the darkness Lincoln cried.

And only at night, behind mist-clouds,  
Beyond window-panes covered with curtains,  
On tip-toe  
Through sleep, and through childhood  
The song returned once again —  
To the architect planning, exhausted,  
To the surgeon, as well as his patient,  
To the celebrated poet,  
And, it seems, to someone besides.

And the glorious sun was shining,  
And the well-spring of something murmured,  
And fish, in that song, went swimming,  
And winds, in that song, still roamed,  
And the singing steely bayonets  
In the sun were burning and blazing,  
In a simple soldier's great-coat  
Marched the fighting, invincible song.

I rose from my bed, still sleepless,  
I, nobody special, not famous,  
Just one of the usual inhabitants  
Of the streets of the township X.  
And I understood that this song now  
Will fill my whole future always,  
That it's near, and here inside me  
With the burning breath of its words.

Let them sleep behind wall and partition,  
Let them dream of their youth, my neighbours,  
Of April streams, and of snow-drops,  
Of flood-waters, and of doves.  
Arise, full of fight and sunshine,  
Arise, full of fields and fancy,  
I hear on the building project  
How the malachite slabs arise.  
I hear how the heart of the patient  
Begins to beat warmly and strongly,  
I hear how now, to the poet  
A masterpiece is born!

Arise, restrained, but a challenge,  
Arise, with your disciplined lines here!  
From the city to distant blue ocean  
The fighters will carry you, song!

. . . . .  
Behind windows town-dwellers were sleeping,  
With this song were warmly breathing,  
The architect and the surgeon,  
And the poet, known by all.  
Somewhere, probably, guards were changing,  
Somewhere, probably, new-born were crying,  
Somewhere out in the street, in the darkness,  
Song rang like a rippling stream.

1938

## AFFIRMATION

*To M. Rylsky.*

Already the roads are drying,  
And the nests are rocking on branches,  
Already the floods are rising  
Like the notes of a simple song.  
Already the green young grass-blades  
From the pale-blue thaw-holes are sprouting,  
Already with sap are swelling  
The birches' maidenly forms.  
Arise, Eulenspiegel!  
Like storm-wind  
Through transparent unknown go raving,  
And in window-panes blue go glancing,  
And read, and laugh, and see dreams.  
Come, travel around my country,  
Like a happy warm sunbeam passing,  
And in the mad bustle of April  
Melt away beneath my sun.  
Arise, all you simple heroes  
Of song, of fact, and of legends!  
It's such a time in the courtyards,  
Such a noisy, youthful choir...  
Already have drowned in the heavens  
The wedges of cranes flying carefree.  
I affirm:  
This day will be proven  
A rich and regular day!  
And there's no more to say about it...

The tall young poplars are standing,  
 The military roads go rambling  
 Through the ultramarine of the woods...  
 How many just ordinary people,  
 And each of you like a melody,  
 In the mines, and on building projects,  
 In the trenches, and manning your posts!  
 The earth will dry out,  
 And falling  
 On her bosom,  
 Each one will utter:  
 "How gaily the grass is breathing!  
 How sweetly the nightingales ring!..  
 And I — I just feel now really,  
 Through my veins, with my blood, goes flowing  
 And rustling the calm affirmation  
 Of all that both was and is.  
 I affirm:  
 With earth-sap arising,  
 The rarest of shoots are sprouting,  
 For all our forebears' past torments,  
 For all the grief we've not known,  
 The young lucerne stands a-swaying,  
 Of their joys the continuation,  
 Of their scanty love among briars,  
 Among the thistles and weeds.  
 I affirm:  
 Our youth was spent standing  
 On watchful guard in the forests.  
 I affirm:  
 In Baikal's expanses our song re-echoing goes,  
 It raises on high its banner,  
 It is all astir with bayonets,  
 It rides upon tanks all-powerful,  
 And crackles through twigs on the track.  
 I affirm:  
 Our warriors' glory arises on falcon's pinions,  
 It soars o'er the springtime ocean,  
 It soars o'er the seething wave,  
 And the ocean is roaring and moaning:  
 "A song to the madness of heroes  
 Let us sing,  
 So that they live for ever,  
 In the light of capital deeds!"  
 And tranquilly breathe the grasses,  
 Like harp-strings the tall trees are standing...  
 And in the brake, like a serpent,  
 Steals  
 Into our country a spy...  
 And the carefree oriole is laughing...

And along the ravines bare and scraggy,  
Right up to our borders the enemy  
Leads on his taciturn troops.  
I affirm: there will be shooting.  
I affirm: there will be battle.  
I affirm:  
Once again the foeman  
Will fall into our firm hands.  
And for blood  
Shed on fields and meadows,  
For the torments of many peoples  
There will be one simple payment —  
The usual portion of lead.  
We'll go through, far and wide we'll carry  
A song, our youth,  
And our passion,  
So that later, from clustering grasses  
The legends should sprout about us!  
Where rattling tanks went attacking,  
There freely the mint has sprouted;  
Where the swift-footed horse went flying,  
There has risen the lover-grass.  
Arise, then, you simple heroes!  
Arise, all the romance of sunshine!  
Already with sap are swelling  
The birches' maidenly forms.  
Above the wide world already  
The songs of victory are sounding.  
I affirm:  
That's our immortality.  
I affirm:  
I am alive!

1938

## JUST A YARN

...I don't know: the truth, or a tale invented?  
Was it someone else, or maybe, I  
Somewhere in the wood, in the distant twenties,  
Cut your name upon a birch-tree high?

Afterwards I drank the birch sap-water,  
Going to fight, among the greenwood haze,  
So that in the years victorious later,  
I should not forget it all my days!

...Just a forester's hut, with straw for sleeping,  
And transparent air of midnight gloom...  
You, then, like an unknown melody sweeping,  
Came to me at night beneath the moon.

Scarcely felt, again my wounds you bandaged,  
So as not to waken sleeping pain;  
Young, and absolutely not imagined,  
Gave me cold spring water once again.

I recall the mint-smell, inebriating,  
How, unpausing, I drank that water so,  
And to tell you something I was so waiting —  
What to say — myself I did not know.

You stood by, so bright, and quite mysterious,  
Just a simple girl, completely real.  
And I had a longing then, so serious,  
Once at least those untouched lips to feel.

But you went. It seemed while meditating.  
Years will melt, the smoke will drift away...  
Then it seemed you did not go, stood waiting,  
In my fighting heart would ever stay.

I survived. Through many days I languished...  
Why did I not take care of you before?  
Why had you, just like a melody, vanished  
Among our many lengthy roads of war?

Springtime goes, the summer sun grows bolder,  
The flowers have grown, and now are standing fine.  
And we should live, and we should not grow older,  
Polissya girl, or just a yarn of mine!

I'll go to the forest, pluck a shoot, and linger...  
I'll grow from it a birch-tree on my plot,  
And sometimes think, my darling girl Yarinka,  
Shall I ever find you, or shall I not?

## MIKOLA SHPAK



*Mikola Shpak (1909-1942), the son of a farmer, was born in the village of Lipki in Zhitomir Region. His lyrical poetry of the prewar period concerns the Soviet Ukrainian countryside. During the Second World War he fought in the underground and wrote sharp satirical poems directed against the nazi aggressors. He was captured and tortured to death by the Gestapo in the summer of 1942.*

### HAPPINESS

Daughter on one arm,  
Son by the hand,  
Off you go, sister,  
The meadow is grand!

Off you go, Katya,  
Along the far shore,  
Where o'er the pastures  
Day breaks once more.

Where by the river  
Cherries and grass,  
Green breezes gently  
Sway as they pass...

Daylight is blazing,  
Daylight or flowers...  
Can't help love, sister,  
This world of ours!

Off through the meadow,  
Happy at heart.  
Gently the rainbow  
A shower will start.

Bowed o'er the river  
The willow-tree's shade...

But where you're walking,  
Happy the glade.

Hey! mow the rye, then  
Bring to the rick.  
Bold is the barley,  
Sharp whiskers prick.

Clouds smoothly floating  
O'er field and sky,  
Blue poplars caught them  
In branches high.

Over us, star-like,  
Happiness flowers.  
Can't help love, sister,  
This world of ours!..

*1938*

\* \* \*

Above the village an aeroplane,  
Above the village an aeroplane  
And autumn cobwebs on the air;  
Time silvers earth's fair brow again,  
And silvers, too, my chestnut hair.

In wide expanses — joy and warmth,  
And in my heart are joy and warmth —  
Embraced by sunlight, all a-strain  
I stride. The golden road runs forth,  
Straight through the steppe, all washed by rain.

*1939*

### MY NATIVE LAND

The whole earth steams,  
The air with pale-blue vapours rife.  
Spring boldly dreams,  
Foretelling lovely, youthful life.  
Broad daylight laughs  
In sunlit steppe's unbound arc;



Flooding our hearts —  
The inspired cantata of the lark.  
And freedom's song  
Now soars full height up in the blue,  
Through furrows long  
The tractor-driver sings it too.  
In flowering bough,  
And in the circling of the cranes,  
What ardour now  
In happy earth's elate refrains!  
And May brings forth  
One happy-hearted toiling band.  
There's nought on earth  
More fair than you, my native land!

1941

### THE WISH

You so desired a son,  
That he should look like me,  
That he, my dearest one,  
Should say to you: "Mum-ee".

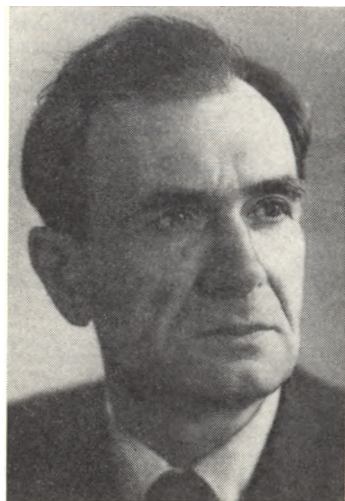
You yearned for a son to love,  
Yet you were fearful too,  
Therefore, my grey-winged dove,  
That wish did not come true.

He would have grown, roamed free,  
Your heart made alarmed and glad,  
One, taking after me,  
Named after me, my lad.

To school he would have gone,  
Sang songs of liberty,  
Which his soldier-dad set down  
In the field or forest maybe.

In a common grave, dear one,  
I shall lie, 'neath a maple tree...  
You so desired a son,  
That he should look like me.

1942



*Ihor Muratov (1912-1973), a poet, prose writer, and playwright, was born in Kharkiv into the family of a civil servant. His talent came to the fore after World War Two and he later won the USSR State Prize. His works have been translated into many languages in and outside the USSR.*

## BREAD

A captive wounded soldier lay  
 Behind barbed wire, left to rot.  
 His torturer would toss him stray  
 Stale crumbs of bread — in German, *brot*.  
 For he'd not join the slavish crowd:  
 His heart, from birth so free, would not.  
 The water given, stank. Uncowed —  
 Though guards applied the rifle-butt.  
 Unconscious, then, like nightmare vision  
 Arose before him eyes of blue:  
 These brutes, once, in Poltava Region  
 Had burnt alive his children too.  
 He lay there, bathed in ice-cold sweat,  
 And lived a hundred years in one,  
 Unbroken despite all: he set  
 To work and tunnelled — freedom won.  
 The Baltic winds blew in his face —  
 All wry that hunger spasms wrought;  
 While painful thoughts of bread kept pace,  
 Each step he cursed the prison-*brot*.  
 . . . . .  
 IL-bombers shrieked through hostile skies,  
 Explosions tore apart Berlin —  
 When strong, bemedalled, in the guise  
 Of victor, he went marching in.  
 And there, mid fires and ruins piled  
 And smoke from heavy artillery shot,

He saw a thin and hungry child  
Who, scarcely audible, said "*Brot...*"  
(Look, comrades, such a little tot!!)  
He broke his soldier's bread apart,  
Which he called *khlib* \* instead of *brot*,  
And gave it the orphan with open heart.

1953

## MY LOVE AND MY HATE

Oh, nothing could make me deviate,  
When once I chose the road to go:  
No fanciful honours that toadies create  
Nor wrongs of old that pain me so.

Praise insincere — like smoke will pass away,  
The wrongs I'll void or make abate,  
But nought will change and nought defray  
My love and, even more, my hate.

For want of faith like semi-treason,  
Or standing aside when things get tough —  
I'll not give hostile crowds a reason  
For gladness or to raise a laugh.

Oh; I have learned to hold them in distrust,  
However sly they were or be —  
For widows and orphans whom they did thrust  
To death have taught it unto me.

I learned it from their hellish death-camps,  
Those barbed-wire circled walls of fear,  
From brothers and sisters kept in torment...  
O Poet! Gather their burning tears,

And smelt them down a million times  
To form a soldier's fighting heart,  
To fill in shell-holes on steepest climbs,  
Then on smooth roads, your poems start.

1956

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\* *Khlib* — Ukrainian for bread

## EYES

Peoples' eyes may differ — dark or blue,  
But they may differ other-  
                    wise than just in hue.  
How differ?  
                    How they look at  
                    the world and why.  
What makes them happy,  
                    And what makes them cry.  
Some find the world is ugly,  
                    dark and terrible,  
Another —  
                    lovely and ineffable.  
Still others  
                    don't care from beginning to end.  
And those are the eyes  
                    to beware of, my friend.

*1961*

## AUTUMN TRUMPETS

The blazing leaf-fall lifts its voice  
Throughout November's stilly air.  
The forest with inspired choice  
Blends paints upon its palette there.

O linear riot!  
                    Chaos of hues!  
And rage of tints!  
                    I pale with vexity  
That in my verse iamb won't do  
For this beyond-belief reality.

The crimson I sip from pine-tip gleam  
And use it on old wounds for healing...  
Perhaps this autumn's but a dream  
And May once more comes softly stealing?

The summer's blazoned by poppy-red sun  
O'er mountain gorges where death is passing;  
The oak woods, with trumpets raised for blasting,  
At sunset wear copper caparison —

With trumpets then they'll lead to the fray  
All things that drink of earth's juicy wine,  
Far from winter....

1962-1963

Orioles, orioles, birds that nest — out my way...  
Somewhere a hoopoe bird like a fanatic prays  
Unto its swamp-god by riverflats; on parkland trails  
Song-fests are given by touring shrill-voiced nightingales.  
Here's the ravine with its lindens, your home immemorial:  
You, out my way, spell delight O my orioles, orioles...  
Can you not hear them, their plaintive sweet-voiced roundelays?  
Can you not hear all the motherly care their songs convey?  
Beg them naively and touchingly:

“Through storm and thunder

Come once again then,  
                        come homeward,  
                                    come home... do not wander...”

For we are straining and pleading for you, long-awaited orioles...  
Truly I heard you and called you while whirlwinds beat yonder,  
Tender birds living out my way, O orioles, orioles...

\* \* \*

Have you the knack of reading people's eyes —  
And from them learn about a stranger's worries,  
Decisions and defeats, and victories...  
Thus love for other folk and things, surmise?

Look there, that orchard by the riverside!  
A girl holds a round apple in her fingers.  
A sleepy wave is lapping at the pier...

How bright the sun! But in her eyes there lingers  
Fresh grief unhealed and echoed by a tear —  
Read those dumb eyes, that on confession fringes.

Take that young father. Every moment he  
In silence vigil keeps o'er baby's dreaming,  
So rosy in the cradle: Those who see  
Distinctly find the father's eyes hold gleaming  
A hundred thousand suns. Soft to your heart  
Embrace them. Enlightened wonder will be yours...  
Books on philosophy could scarce impart  
To you a thing — if your eyes can explore  
And understand an old man or a maid.  
To know young lovers and their inspiration,  
Their daily lives blessed by their exaltation,  
Their secret world and treasured aspirations —  
That in their eyes you silently surveyed.



## IVAN VIRHAN

*Ivan Virhan (1908-1975) was born in the village of Klishchentsi, Poltava Region, into a peasant family. His lyrical poetry portrays the Soviet Ukrainian countryside before and after the Second World War. He also worked a great deal on Ukrainian lexicography. His works have been published in many Soviet republics.*

### WARRIOR'S GLORY

A mortal wound beneath his breast —  
The comrade I love best.

He fell, in attack, 'neath the willow tree,  
Upon the flowering lea.

The fire and the fury faded away,  
The thunderous roar of day.

But he remained, and could not pass  
On the fragrant Maytime grass.

Above him there the blue sky spanned  
His heavenly native land,

Like soldiers' postcards which homeward fly,  
The clouds went hastening by.

But he no more a card could send,  
In his own hand rough-penned,

To his mother's hut, where he used to dwell,  
To say his last "Farewell!"

The stream runs murmuring by his bed,  
And hurries on ahead,

But he can't move from his grassy place,  
A finger cannot raise...

His hands hold warm the gun he bore,  
And still the cannons roar,

His eyes still shine with day's bright light,  
But lack all sight...

How can I help him anyway,  
And now what can I say?

In head-on attack he head-long fell,  
For the land he loved so well.

All that he had, sincere and brave,  
For truth and justice gave.

But in this human life we bear  
What higher honour is there?

Somewhere, dried-up, the willow will die,  
And yellow the grass will lie,

And clouds no more will cross the sun,  
And streams no longer run,

But an honest warrior's glory, friend,  
It knows no bound nor end!

*1946*

## TO OLENKA

Walking again through fields rolling  
To your village true.  
Through the ripe rye swaying wildly  
My path lies to you.

One path through the rye, and a second  
In my heart deep lies.  
And the wheel of childhood memories  
Spins along and sighs.

Here, a child, I watched sheep grazing  
On pastures above.  
Here in wonderland pale yellow  
Wandered long my love.



Where are you, Olenka darling,  
Golden dream so dear?  
Over rye fields at least send me  
Your voice crystal clear.

And I see change in a second  
Rye fields and my way,  
Knifelike, asphalt brutal cutting  
Steals the blue away.

Swiftly cars go swishing, flying  
On and never stay.  
Winds through telegraph poles singing  
On the wires loud play.

By the roadside blaze like standards  
Feast of cherries ripe,  
Through them scarves go flashing, dancing,  
Coloured patch and stripe.

Right before me in the sun's rays  
Rollers brightly shine,  
Crowd of girls — one, two, three, skipping...  
Pass in endless line.

Crowd of girls called working unit —  
Named quite rightly so!  
Sugar beet tops thickly feather  
Over rye field low...

You perhaps in flowing meadow  
Midst them stand and sway!..  
As the wind sends rye wild bending  
Over asphalt way...

1949

## GIRL WITH A BALLOON

Through pale blue streets amidst the crowd thick milling,  
A little girl walks on with golden head,  
A large balloon above her lightly dancing  
She draws along held firm on unseen thread.

And on its sphere the large balloon is bearing  
The world so wide: an elm fine stretches high,  
And people wander by as tramways run,  
As aeroplanes soar far and years fast fly.

Oh, little girl, look round for a brief second!  
Are you the sun that far above us speeds,  
And earth by unseen cobweb ever floating  
Through pale blue universe with firm hand leads?..

## END OF SUMMER

No longer combines rumble on the steppe-lands,  
And threshing machines no longer noisily beat,  
No longer roar ZIL lorries, nor rumble waggons,  
And in each home  
The new bread now smells sweet.

The summer storms have gone, the hues have faded  
From brilliant rainbows  
Gracing the Dnieper fine,  
And every day more deeply  
The sun's old bucket  
Dips in the well beyond the horizon line.

The crested hoopoe at the ragged scarecrows  
In quiet secluded spots already peep,  
And swallows have glued themselves to telegraph-wires  
Like bits of iron  
Held in a magnet's grip.

It's cooler now at morning and at evening,  
The cattle without a herdsman the meadows graze.  
The fields are empty.  
Only with early ploughshares  
The tireless tractors chug their furrowed ways.

And there go Dnieper-side's well sun-tanned youngsters  
With shoulders wide  
And flexible figures too.  
Those who the girls and glory always favoured,  
Those who the difficult days of war, all through,  
With eager tanks attacked  
The fiendish fascists,  
Invading hordes, steel-clad, and iron-heeled,  
And then, returning to their native regions,  
Went battling on with tractors in the field.

And virgin lands down to their depths they stirred,  
New ploughshares strata on strata overturned,  
A-creaking and screeching like old rooks and crows,  
Sent clods a-flying along the opened rows.

Toward the evening,  
Rounding the grassland slowly,  
Up to the far horizon the soil is raised,  
And stern earth-graders on the ploughed-up pastures  
In arrowing lines,  
Gleam white on their distant ways.

And on the lorries, upon the homeward journey,  
Returning with the beet, the young girls sang...  
And for the tractor-drivers they raised their voices,  
And on the further fields  
Their laughter rang.

Near by the village,  
Beyond old mills, all floury,  
New fields of golden rye and wheat were sown,  
And cutting into the ploughed black earth, like wedges  
Of green into a field of tar, have grown.

And there, among the steppes,  
Like some new symbol  
Of the kolkhoz's fresh and fertile lands,  
As a yellow-burning obelisk to summer,  
Above the pastures, the elevator stands.

*1947*

### THE RED GUELDER-ROSE TREE

How fine here for me, the red guelder-rose tree,  
Near this wide-spreading valley growing so free!

On the right, 'neath the willows, the river streams,  
On the left, o'er the bushes, the white dam gleams.

On the hill — a village, with hump-backed gables,  
Above the roadway — the green birds of maples.

In the field lies a lake, as blue as the sky...  
How fine here for me, with this valley nearby!

All day here the sun shines so clear and bright,  
The electric torch of the moon all night.

The field-lorries pass me, rolling along,  
And the lassies about me strike up a song.

May my fate ever be, a red guelder-rose tree,  
Near this wide-spreading valley to grow so free!

*1950*

## POPLAR DOWN

One white ball of poplar down  
Through the window to me has flown,  
Bumped upon the shelf and door,  
Rolled down the wall toward the floor,  
And on my table, before my eyes,  
Upon my writing paper lies.

Lies there, straightening out its fleecy,  
Just as though a place to please  
It had chosen, then slowly sighs,  
And its tiny sleeping seed  
In its downy cradle lies.

Herald of summer, welcome guest!  
I am glad to greet you, dear.  
Only one thing — you can't rest  
Very long on my table here.  
On this paper letters are found,  
And for words its wonderful ground,  
But not meant for you, I fear...

Fly somewhere o'er earth abroad,  
Settle upon some steep incline,  
Or some endless steppe-land road —  
Grow into a poplar fine.  
Past you then, in the heat of day,  
Travellers on their road will go.  
They'll admire you in every way,  
Rest in your shade an hour or so.  
Maybe a poet will sing your praise  
Somewhere. So fly to happy days!

I blew, and that white poplar down  
Flew through the window, and o'er the town,  
Rising above the neighbouring clock,  
And the administrative block,  
Drowned itself in the sunny blue...  
And I... and I in that moment too  
Felt so pleased with myself again,  
In my breast my glad heart beat,  
Feeling I'd done so not in vain,  
But had performed a great good deed.

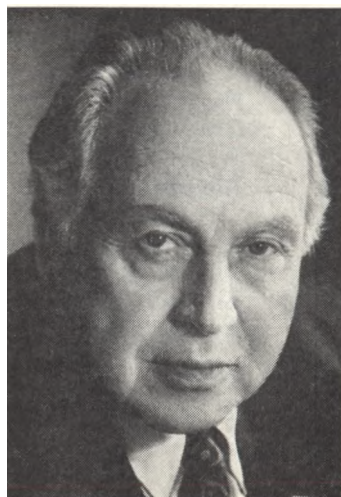
1953

\* \* \*

When yesterday I came to you in darkness —  
In undergrowth the snow-lined boughs hung bent.  
From shining hooves of metal steady drumming,  
Sharp frozen swallow cries were upwards sent...

And as I then returned at daybreak dawning —  
In undergrowth the valley lilies caught,  
The swallows flew in silence deep inspired  
Firm building nests upon my shoulders taut.

*Abram Katsnelson (b. 1914) was born in the town of Horodnya, Chernihiv Region, into the family of a teacher. He is the author of many books of poems, literary criticism, and essays. His poetry is marked by a laconic and expressive manner. His books have been published in translation in many languages of the USSR and foreign countries.*



### CONFESSION

I'm getting greedier and greedier for beauty.  
For hours and hours on end I can admire  
The evening clouds, like birds in sunset fire,  
Mirrored in dewdrops, seized by them for booty...

Nothing of this will ever be repeated  
In my life's short-lived, soon-ending tale.  
A feeling that all's frail, of no avail  
More and more often comes, and I can't beat it.

This feeling isn't brought to me, however,  
By modern volumes on philosophy  
Or by the nuclear catastrophe  
Which must, they say, destroy our world forever.

No — it is born from love of life infinite,  
From some astounding, unaccounted stinginess  
That comes before old age: when less and less  
Is left, one fears to lose even a minute.

You try to take in everything around  
With avid eyes, so unrepeatable and dear:  
The movement with which bough to bough bends near,  
The gentle movement of the wind above the ground.

Movement I've loved since childhood, swift and sweet.  
Myself, too, I would hate to freeze stone-still,

And so I hurry and I hurry while there's still  
Time, drinking it like water during heat.

No, it is not a sense of doom, which I would hate,  
But. I would say, a special kind of hunger  
Which we, unfortunately, do not know when younger,  
Regretting it when it is far too late.

The greatest wisdom's when one understands:  
The biggest wonder that the world affords us is  
Life; and one's eyes look, look and look in bliss,  
And no amount of work can satiate one's hands.

1970

\* \* \*

In our villages steep obelisks  
Can be seen upon squares, score on score,  
And cut out on their panels are lists  
Of the villagers killed in the war.  
And far louder than any brass bands  
In the stillness of gaunt granite banners  
Carved upon them by true, loving hands,  
Sacred names to the whole planet clamour.  
Here a father was lain with his son,  
There — two brothers were lain together.  
Into battle they went all as one;  
Now death joins them in graveyards forever.  
Beardless, round-faced, still children are they.  
And so somebody put on the stone  
Rows of flowers that will wither away,  
Plucked from stems in their blossom fast-flown.  
Near another, brought there by some tots,  
In a tumbler of water appears  
A nosegay of forget-me-nots —  
The sky's blue and transparent tears.  
Silence reigns all around. Only birds  
With their whistling attention claim,  
While aloud, like the first of his words,  
A young grandson reads grandfather's name.

## A BALLAD ABOUT A GLOBE

The school was closed. In classrooms horses whinnied.  
A boy went by, his heart with sorrow aching.  
As if alive, a globe upon the window  
Begged him: "Take me away from here, do take me!"

Then, one week later, on a cloudy dawn  
Upon a garbage heap with broken glass  
And rusty cans and papers soiled and torn  
That well-known cardboard globe lay on the grass.

But what a sight: its head was broken in.  
It seemed all crumpled up with suffering.  
Perhaps it had been kicked at by a hoof  
Or Nazi boots, unfortunate old thing.

The boy caught up and to his bosom pressed  
The globe, and ran off with his precious pelf.  
With care he bore it, like a child at breast,  
And reaching home, he hid it on a shelf.

Years passed... Beneath his spaceship in the sky  
There, through the window looking down, he noted:  
In bluish mist, so tiny from on high,  
Round as that globe, our little planet floated.

Ah, how he longed to take it in his arms  
And shield it from calamity and strife!  
...He lay down on the grass, where horses grazed,  
And grasshoppers sang hymns to love and life.

*1963*

## I'M EARTH!

Fair curls peeped from beneath the saucy beret.  
A dugout. Night. Dark forests like a wall.  
"I'm Earth! I'm Earth!" the wireless operator  
Into the troubled ether sent her call.

Small, squeezed into her waist-belt's tight embraces,  
Caught up in the calamities of war,  
She couldn't feel the grandeur and the greatness  
Which, then so common, her call-signal bore.

Now only, when our triumph shines forever,  
After our wartime suffering and woe,



I understand — she had the right and reason  
In the Earth's name to speak and act just so.

Not in a dug-out — in my silent study  
When through the world resounds the fight for peace,  
I seem to hear "I'm Earth!" — her signal, flooding  
The troubled ether, by her hand released.

*1978*

### A MAPLE LEAF ON THE ASPHALT

A fancy-shaped, five-fingered maple leaf  
Dropped off and sadly lay upon the road.  
I hadn't noticed it when hidden deep beneath  
The tree crown which had stood so thick and broad.

I hadn't seen it spattered with the dew,  
Striving towards the sun, the heavens blue.  
Now only, when its kin the asphalt strew  
With its belated charm it comes to view.

*1978*

*Andriy Malishko (1912-1970) was born in the village of Obukhiv, Kiev Region, into the family of a tailor. He is the author of numerous collections of poems which are popular with the reading public in the Soviet Union and abroad. His poetry is a chronicle of Soviet Ukrainian history and is marked by folk inspiration. He also wrote songs, criticism, and journalism. Malishko's poetry won him three USSR State prizes and the Taras Shevchenko prize. His works have been widely published in the USSR and abroad.*



## MOTHERLAND

You have raised me up since childhood's day,  
Gave me bread and songs of nightingales;  
Many roads have led me far away,  
O my native red-star-bearing dales!

Heated dusty roadways of the steppe,  
Heavy copper of taiga forest-green,  
Dnieper hydro-station, wave-beset,  
Thundering crests on Baltic shoreline seen.

On each road, the rye on either hand —  
Light and shade, half-half, in cheerful sun.  
My dear, my kind, my native blood-washed land,  
I'll not give you up to anyone!

When you roar, as Black Sea breakers fall,  
Or as jet-planes fly to a foreign strand,  
When the thunder peals beyond Baikal —  
Immediately I recognize my land.

When you rise again with youthful day,  
Where the engines' whistles call at night,  
Where your sun-tanned fellows mow the hay,  
Where your sowers and tractor-drivers ride —

How should I not recognize your voice?  
My heart, my life, my very flesh and blood,  
Holiest word which makes our hearts rejoice —  
Motherland — our hope, and truth and love!

You brought us up as youngsters, gave us care,  
Gave full vision to our once half-blind eyes,  
Strength to hearts, and falcon's wings to soar,  
So that we should always seek the skies.

On our wings with pride we sweep on high,  
See the world and youthful sky around.  
He whom you but once have taught to fly  
Never falls from heaven to the ground!

On our wings o'er waters broad we've flown,  
Seen the flattened dust which roadways paves,  
Where campaigns and battles have died down  
In the thoughtful quiet of the graves.

'Neath us thousand-voiced wheat-fields thrive,  
In the twilight rivers gleam with blue,  
There my brothers have laid down their lives —  
Sailors, smiths, and stubborn miners too.

Steel-men from beyond the Urals blue,  
Shepherd-lads from many a Black Sea range...  
It was they who found your basis true,  
Tried and tested sons in stern campaigns.

They accepted death with steady gaze,  
Blackest, direst, unrepented woe,  
So that blooms should cover your steppeland space,  
So that maples high their heads should raise,  
And that fruit in orchards full should blow.

From a foreign bullet, 'neath blood-shot sky,  
Maybe in some battle I shall fall...  
But for quiet grasses, and harvest high,  
But for people hardened in fight I die,  
For my Motherland — my youth, my all.

But we all should live, and should not die,  
But sow the grain, and roam the blossoming grove.  
Only happiness here around us lies,  
That great happiness, so rich and high —  
Motherland, our hope and truth and love!

## THE STORK

He comes here flying from a distant strand,  
Untiring, onward just still flies and flies.  
It seems there's nothing dearer in this land  
Than our old plane-tree, and our yard besides.

Our plane-tree stands long since, so rich in leaves,  
Sometimes they rustle, sometimes silent seem.  
And so the stork seeks for our tree, our eaves.  
And all the lived-through past, like a wondrous dream.

He rests at evening, on dark meadows goes,  
Where in blue pools the gulls are crying late,  
And after that he bathes himself in the boughs,  
Constructs his nest, and calls his waiting mate.

They long ago paired off, as storks should do,  
They gather feathers, which in the twigs they plait.  
And boys already have heard (maybe untrue)  
How they began about baby storks to chat.

That's as I know him. And I love him so  
For his firm wings, and for his sharp-set eye.  
(He kills a serpent with one sudden blow,  
And after circles round, high in the sky.)

And maybe, too, that in the brooding time  
He flies untiring to and fro, to the nest.  
Do not deride. I'm like that stork of mine,  
And love my native home by far the best.

*1940*

## TRUMPETER

A cherry-red glow foretells a fine dawn of day.  
Perhaps you've forgotten me, many long years away?

Not few were our battles: to shreds rusty jack-boots we've worn,  
And if I remember the dead — for them I must mourn.

And if I remember the quick — let my grief become dumb,  
For my friends go in troops, and their trumpeter I've become.

I blow, that our breasts should shield the green earth from dismay,  
That a cherry-red dawn foretells a gay dawn of day.

*1943*

## THE CARPENTERS

The carpenters spanned with their bridges the Dnieper,  
The Donets, the Zbruch, with its calm-flowing line,  
And those bridges were able to stand stormy weather —  
With unbending oak, and their maple and pine.

The tanks wormed across them, and centipede waggons,  
Artillerymen with "Katyushas" \* would crawl,  
Day and night they vibrated, their beams never sagging,  
As if, so to speak, out of love for them all.

The carpenter there on the bank-side is sitting,  
He smokes black tobacco, his thoughts run away,  
On how he will fell the great oak-tree that's waiting  
By the Oder, or maybe the Danube, one day.

For three lengthy years, as through a life-span then,  
The maple-wood roads stand stretching ahead.  
The general said yesterday: "There's a real man, then!  
And see now, another new medal he'll get!"

The war will be ending before he's much older,  
The earth will be thirsting for summer-storm rain,  
And he will just take up his axe on his shoulder,  
And over his bridges will walk home again.

And what if they say that he missed the hard fighting —  
He wasted no efforts from morning till night,  
If people from sixteen republics went striding  
Across his stout bridges, which always stood tight!

1946

## KATYA

She went out quite early, before the sun-rising,  
Unending the rumbling flow of machines,  
They'd managed again to make many crossings —  
German, and Polish, and native streams.

To Oberwald yesterday came our young tank-men,  
And there she stood weeping her free, happy tears.  
"Here, Katya," they said, "take this bag, off you go, then,  
Along all the roads you'll find friends now, my dear!"

---

\* "Katyusha" — nickname of a Soviet multirail rocket launcher of WWII

"Take this bread, then," they said, "and this home-salted bacon —  
It is you who deserve it, not they, it is you.  
It is you who lay sleepless at night in the open  
All winter and summer and autumn-time through!"

Now see how she crosses the Oder and Vistula,  
Where hotly reverberate echoes of war,  
Where the oaks have received caps of snow from the winter,  
And it already seems she is back home once more.

And each little pathway, and each wooden dwelling  
Appear to be hers, by her own courtyard rail.  
The soldiers are singing, and in her ears ringing,  
The ducks quack at dawn in the Dnieper-side dale.

The traffic-controllers stand guard at the crossing,  
The roads from the wheels are quite smooth, shining clear.  
They recognise Katya, run up to her, fussing,  
"She's ours!"  
"Well, how are you?"  
"What then?"  
"Sit down here!"

She trudges the fields, and the hard highway cobbles,  
Past craters, and trenches, with heaps of red clay.  
See, mother is waiting, to welcome her hobbles,  
And calls, cries, and hugs her, and can't break away.

Along scores of roads, and through grief and exhaustion,  
Through the fires, and the fields where the lightning gleams,  
Trudge on, my dear Katya, back home, out of prison,  
To that dear Ukraine, which you saw in your dreams!

*1946*

## THE GREY

A horse, called "The Grey", an old battery nag,  
With shaggy-haired fetlocks, and nostrils warm,  
Hauled the guns, never letting the breech-strap go slack,  
In the good-weather days, and the nights of storm.

He plodded the fields, and the stone roads of war,  
To the creak of gun-tracks, and squeaking of carts,  
And twice after battle the vet's tweezers tore  
The shrapnel scraps from his hinder parts.

And when the gun-layer, in heated attack,  
Fell silent beneath the cold blizzard's blast,  
Then nobody heard how "The Grey" whinnied back,  
Nor witnessed his heavy horse-tears at the last.

He'd stall, of the service-man's dug-out sort,  
His food-ration — hay and straw, when they come,  
And had he had children, till dawn he'd have thought  
What and how he could send to them waiting at home.

The sergeant at night from his flask took a swig,  
And, wiping his forehead, went into the stall,  
And said to him straight, man to man, "Thanks, old nag,  
For your friendship, attention, and good work, and all!"

And such oats, seen in dreams, then he started to pour —  
Crisp and rustling, and gold from the pollened plain,  
And "The Grey" started thinking: "This means no more war,  
And tomorrow my gunner will plait up my mane!"

*1946*

## THE WORD

At times above the crowd it sounded out.  
They scared it off with prison and the knout,  
Because it rang like truth, like keys gold-bright.  
They tortured it, and circled it about,  
Arrested it, and shot it in the night.

The lovely word with dying dark brown eyes  
Fell in the dust. And from the furious flame  
Not as a flower nor mist did it arise,

But as a heart reborn  
Which mine became!

*9/V/1967*

I lived not those years stuck behind a stone-deaf solid wall,  
I shall speak what I wrote in my heart then about it all.

I heard there the voice of the meadows on Dnieper's wide plain,  
I heard there new grass-shoots with honey-dew filling again,  
I saw, too, the flight of the bird-clouds in spring's heady air,  
In thought with them flew, with them lived, as if one of a pair.  
I heard the great boughs of the oaks with the storm-winds fight,  
I saw lightning flashes which lit up the cloud-shrouded night.  
Now say, did I live then behind a stone-deaf solid wall?  
I shall speak what I wrote in my heart then about it all.

I knew trusty friends, who disliked all display and deceit,  
For bragging is rot, and deception can never be sweet.  
I lived by their thoughts, and my thoughts they loved too, I could see.  
From them I took strength, and they too gathered strength from me.  
I entered their homes, just as if I were entering my own,  
And they trod the path to my door, which to them was well-known.  
Our meetings were rich with hospitable bread and with salt,  
And we stood close as brothers, our friendship was never at fault.  
Now say, did I live then behind a stone-deaf solid wall?  
I shall speak what I wrote in my heart then about it all.

On the dew-sprinkled pathway, I loved the bright eyes of my love.  
And they lighted my way, as at midnight the clear stars above.  
And her kisses were faithful, her love was sincere, and till death,  
Like the sweet mother earth, and like the Ukraine's burning breath.  
And perhaps in those years, my dear brothers and friends, it was true,  
I was able to help some poor soul with my small songs too.  
And what then if I, in reply, but a small echo get —  
All the same, friends, I just have not written everything yet!

1956

## OF DESERT HEAT AND DUST I DON'T COMPLAIN

Of desert heat and dust I don't complain,  
Of swamps and jungle, storm, misfortune's blight,  
Of tired-out feet in cruel freezing night,  
Of pallid gleams of light from homes unseen.

I just have not lived much. I'm but a branch  
Of human questing, of harvest and fine day's chance,  
I'm only a spark from a youthful bonfire blown,



A trumpet call in a blizzard of blinding snow,  
A cell in the swelling, as centuries new advance.

My greedy gaze is scorched by my burning dream —  
Where to send the shade to the sand, and marshy stream,  
Where to sow my songs, where the ice underfoot to break,  
Where with generous well-filled ears a book to make.  
I just have not lived much. The years were mean...

One must light fires from the sparks for all to see,  
One must wipe the ashes from nights and days away,  
One must learn to converse with saplings newly-grown,  
And invite the wisdom of others into one's home.  
I just have not lived much. Believe in me.

I need hundreds of hands — to free from grief all lands,  
And hundreds of eyes — to pierce the darkling skies!  
Though my heart be one, it burns now, as it began,  
It is not an orphan — because it lives in a man.

*1961*



*Valentina Tkachenko (1920-1970) was born in the village of Koryukivka, Chernihiv Region, to working-class parents. She is the author of numerous collections of poems and poetic translations. Highly spontaneous and lyrical, her poetry has been translated into many languages.*

## FORESTS

A pine drips needles on the trail,  
A birch-tree creaks before the wind,  
And rainbow-sunbeams race to scale  
Each tree-trunk that their rays can find.

The forests, always growing, sings  
With voices in a hundred keys.  
A bird trills over forest kings,  
Through groves its song goes echoing.

Blackberry juice and caraway wild,  
Aromas blend with alder boughs.  
I feel here careless as a child,  
Or bird in flight where winds carouse.

And all my way I'm gazing ever  
At beauty grand of woodland-lane.  
For all these forests join forever  
Dear Byelorussia with Ukraine.

1940

## STORY OF A DOVE

When parting from you hurt in painful measure  
And you were just a dream to me once more,  
A dove by chance strayed near my lonely dwelling —  
Or maybe flew from somewhere by intent?  
It nested on a ledge outside my window,  
Began to watch me often through the panes —  
The window where I daily waited for you,  
Through which I'm doomed to see you nevermore.  
The stray dove's flashing wings made autumn silver.  
It anxiously spun circles in the sky  
And brought me in its beak a spray of sunbeams,  
And pecked at grain upon my windowsill  
Which I had put there for him, out of pity.  
But then, on Kiev, the snow fell thick and deep,  
And on my much-loved Dnieper and Paton Bridge.  
Jack Frost went crunching all along the roadways.  
And I became so cold without you near,  
Such cold I never felt before in winter....  
The dove lived all alone upon the ledge  
But did not feel its loneliness the slightest.  
Its day began with daring steepest flight;  
Dark clouds and snowdrifts, life — all meant enjoyment,  
The dove removed the sadness from my eyes  
And taught me parting needs to be forgotten.  
That it's no human creature, I regret —  
For if it were I'd open up the window  
And let the dove come in to live for good.  
Right now, as I recount this little story,  
How distant and remote you've grown to me —  
Yet still my dove keeps watching through the window.

## MOUNTAIN PROFILES

These mountains  
    pictures call to mind  
 To those who stop and stare:  
 Some see a rush  
    of waters wind  
 And roe-deer drinking there;  
 While others  
    see profiles of sails  
 That over waves went flying,  
 Till sudden lull did once prevail  
 And turned them stone, winds dying;  
 To me — they look like girl and boy  
 Who sit beside a river,

Her hand in his, expressing joy  
Both faces close together.  
I wish I could more sweethearts meet  
Like happy gushing fountains,  
For summer riots tints replete,  
Makes magic in the mountains.  
That's why the earth has burst in bloom  
Ignoring that July is here,  
That's why my thoughts in circles loom  
Their webbing net around you, dear.

*1968*

AUTUMN'S JUST BEGINNING  
(A Song)

From the clouds with rich donations  
For big Earth the Sun comes smiling.  
Gardens flower with carnations —  
Autumn's just begun beginning.

Though the yellowed leaves are fading,  
Many warm days will come spinning,  
Leaves hold on, not yet cascading —  
Autumn's just begun beginning.

By the roadside, not for malice,  
Maple leans towards alder bending.  
They but seek both joy and solace...  
Autumn's just begun beginning.

In your light brown hair aflowing,  
The first silver threads are winning:  
Don't let on you know they're showing,  
Dear, for autumn's just beginning.

*1955*

SNOWFALL

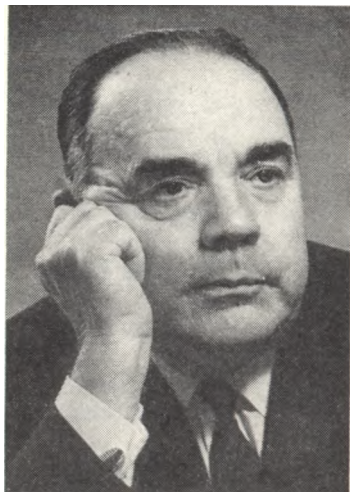
Heavy the snowfall last night that came falling —  
Snowdrifts so high you can scarce make your way.  
Girls go to work in the steppe loudly calling,  
They'll make snow-fences from brushwood today.

In hilly snowdrifts the branches are planted.  
Snowy-white winters — what joy to behold!  
On winter wheat falls the snow all enchanted,  
Soil underneath gathers strength manifold.

Strength that will send the sap running and shaking  
Up through the trees to the tender leaf-case —  
Let but the spring come and set sunbeams waking.  
In a pure stream will the sun see its face.

Forested windbreaks have new growth adorning,  
Winter crops up through the black earth will climb,  
Field teams will work from the dawn of the morning,  
Spring song will herald the new seeding time.

All will start working, and bask in the sunshine;  
New life will come and new song will know birth;  
Snow falls to guarantee flowers and grapevine,  
Snow falls so beauty rejuvenates earth.



*Olexandr Levada (b. 1909), a poet and playwright, was born in the village of Krivchunka, Cherkasy Region, into the family of a teacher. He has written many books of poetry, plays, fiction, and literary criticism and film scenarios. His works are both lyrical and epic, dynamic and philosophic, and he was awarded the Taras Shevchenko Prize. His books have been published in many Soviet republics and abroad.*

### THE APPOINTED HOUR

The appointed hour strikes plain,  
in the darkness the rockets glow,  
to the sacred fight, my Ukraine,  
in your defence we all go!

To the thunderous roar of the guns,  
we swear to the cities we know:  
no mercy, no mercy, not once,  
for the bloody fascist foe!

Still foaming with venom and hate  
is the cursed fascist snake...  
To the fight, to the fight, to the fight!  
Awake, my Ukraine, awake!

Let the cannons now thunder forth,  
let the fascists tremble in shame!  
With the fires, with the fires of wrath  
the banks of the Dnieper flame!

Ahead, brothers, no longer stand!  
Ahead in the merciless fray,  
for our beloved Motherland,  
for honour and freedom today!

*3rd Ukrainian Front, 1943*

COSMONAUT'S MONOLOGUE  
BEFORE LENIN'S MAUSOLEUM

(from the tragedy *Faust and Death*)

Again  
    dawn calls, with impetuous pitch,  
rings from Moscow  
    around my native land...  
Vladimir Ilyich!  
    Vladimir Ilyich!  
With my heart  
    open wide to all centuries rich,  
here in homage before you I stand.  
My soul now  
    is like to a brimming cup,  
like a blossom  
    opened for all to see...  
Tovarishch Lenin!  
    your name which we love,  
a pass to the stars  
    has awarded me.  
This minute  
    so simple, no words can frame,  
it has no name,  
    and its depths can't be guessed...  
It was brought to birth  
    by a sacred dream,  
by the Party of Lenin's high will expressed,  
by the depths  
    of the people's hopes sublime.  
The count of the hours  
    for me is changed  
in the pealing  
    of the Kremlin's chime.  
I've grown older  
    by a year,  
    by an age,  
I've grown younger  
    by a year,  
    by an age,  
and powerful as the earth at times.  
Long since  
    I learned where the planets wheel,  
the language of instruments  
    subtle and smooth,  
but not all at once  
    was I able to feel  
the basic depths  
    of another truth.

It's little to learn  
                                 that photons in swarms  
 leap forth from the sun  
                                 and everywhere fly...  
 Of human hopes  
                                 and desires  
   and thoughts  
 are woven the light-rays  
                                 of stars on high!  
 There's no place  
                                 for constant starry dreams,  
 nor in ciphers wise,  
                                 no phenomenal setting.  
 The first to blaze trails  
                                 in the cosmic extremes  
 were the people who raised  
                                 like a banner which gleams  
 that star-like name:  
                                 Comrade Lenin!  
 In that name  
                                 a myriad voiced sound,  
 the core and base  
                                 of the future days,  
 in that name  
                                 the ties of the times are found,  
 united again  
                                 in strength always.  
 The happy date  
                                 of the cosmic start  
 was noted by you  
                                 on the calendar sheet,  
 on that day  
                                 when with your winged words at heart  
 my people went forth  
                                 their freedom  
   to greet,  
 in October's glowing  
                                 Aurora dawn!  
 Over Moscow  
                                 the winds of the century swish,  
 in my native land  
                                 dawn grows wide, I see...  
 Vladimir Ilyich!  
                                 Vladimir Ilyich!  
 accept  
                                 as my heart's deep-felt cry, I beseech,  
 my oath  
                                 of unbreakable loyalty!

*Kiev, 1961*



## FOUR YAROSLAVNAS

Out of the trembling darkness,  
As in a blue dream all,  
Look down four Yaroslavnas  
From the old cathedral wall.

Unheard, in silence stepping,  
Through the centuries they tread,  
Like a flock of swans so stately  
From beyond Swan-river mead.

The first of the Yaroslavnas  
Lived out her springtime days  
In the gloominess of Europe,  
In remote Parisian ways.

And as a precious dowry  
She proudly there unrolled  
Imperishable legends  
On yellow parchment scrolls.

Of bright-skied dawns in Kiev  
A hundred times she'd dream,  
That young Kievan maiden  
Who became France's queen.

The second Yaroslavna  
Through the darkness sent her call,  
From glorious Putivl,  
Upon the sorrowing wall.

Above the Siver country  
Two hundred years ago,  
Like a song she went a-soaring,  
In her immortal woe.

Above the banks of Kayala,  
To the broadsword's clashing sound,  
Like a complaining seagull  
She circled round and round.

O'er the Polovtsian meadow,  
O'er the dust from the battle's blows,  
From the Don and to the Dnieper  
Like a rainbow she arose.

So that the hostile storm-clouds  
Far off from there should stand,

And should not spread their sorrow  
Throughout her native land...

The third of the Yaroslavnas  
Did a thorny path betide,  
In the howling shaggy blizzard,  
In the snow-swept countryside.

With her little rag-wrapped bundle,  
With life-long sneers defiled,  
With the bitterest of reproaches —  
That of a fatherless child.

And she met upon the journey  
(The time came, though 'twas hard)  
Kobzar, from beyond the Dnieper,  
A wise prophetic bard.

And even in poor tatters,  
And through the blizzard's wrath,  
A princess he discerned there,  
Upon her thorny path.

And to the purest martyr  
On that undying day  
The Ukraine bowed down in reverence  
With a solemn sweet-sounding lay.

And in that song were illumined  
The whole earth and the sky,  
By a simple serf madonna's  
Unfading beauty high...

The fourth of the Yaroslavnas  
Along Khreshchatik \* flies,  
A merry Kievan maiden  
With clear and sparkling eyes.

To the routine work of weekdays,  
To the banners rustling like flames,  
She goes on a hundred journeys,  
And known by a thousand names.

In the stills of the latest newsreels,  
And as lively as the spring,  
On the dam across the Dnieper  
She smiles and starts to sing.

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\* Khreshchatik — the main street of modern Kiev

In Mirgorod the famous,  
When snows of winter fell,  
To the course for tractor-drivers  
She secretly ran as well.

And they called Yaroslavna  
A most resourceful scout,  
When from partisan detachment  
Reports were coded out.

But yesterday at the Institute  
She presented actually  
Her student candidate thesis  
On Kiev's history.

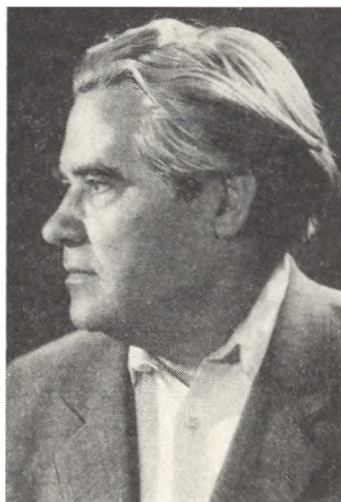
In Saint Sophia's Cathedral,  
Across the flight of years,  
Yaroslavna easily recognized  
Her portrait, it appears.

She looked — and stood there gaping —  
Was it her or not? Who'd guess?  
A simple Ukrainian student —  
Yet a Kievan princess.

And out of the trembling darkness,  
As in a blue dream all,  
They smiled at her, their sister,  
From the old cathedral wall.

*Kiev, 1972*

*Platon Voronko (b. 1913) was born in the village of Chernechina, Sumy Region, into the family of a blacksmith. The Second World War and struggle of the Soviet people for peace and friendship among nations are dominant themes in his work. His poetry is rich in traditional forms and motifs, and he has also written for children. His poems have been published in other Soviet republics and abroad. He is a recipient of the USSR State, Taras Shevchenko, Lesya Ukrainka, and Nikolai Ostrovsky prizes.*



IN THE NAME OF YOUR  
SWEET FREEDOM...

In the name of your sweet freedom,  
Your life, and your good as well,  
From his horse on the field of battle  
Rachura, the war-scout fell.

He fell, caught up by a bullet,  
On the golden stubble-field —  
The cuckoo's call of his life-span  
Across the centuries pealed.

The breeze caressed the auburn  
Upon his brow as he lay...  
His mother waited and waited  
In her village far away.

And someone later told her  
How that son of hers, Ivan,  
Smashed a hostile horde of fascists  
In the field, as a partisan.

And how for his native country,  
That his village might flourish as well,  
And for the Ukraine's sweet freedom,  
In the fight from the saddle he fell...

1943

## PARTISAN BALLAD

"Devilish night...  
Head screwed on tight?  
Wind cuts you dead."  
"Well, what's a head?  
Mind the toluene!  
Rifle breach clean?.."

Soon comes the bridge,  
Trudge through the sludge.  
Piles underneath,  
Fuse in your teeth.  
"In your cap, too, you said?.."

"Well, what's a head?!"

"Storm-clouds. Pitch dark.  
No path. Not a spark.  
Keep left, out of sight.  
Six in one lot.  
Who knows this spot?  
Lead the group straight  
To the water, mate.  
Down to the edge. Will you lead?"

"I will lead."

"Cover your tracks!"

"And you, too, chaps."

Devilish night.  
Can't get a sight —  
The enemy's men...  
"Take cover, then!  
Who was that groaned?"

"I got a wound.  
Right in the neck.  
Burning like heck!"

"Devilish night..."

"What's that? All right.  
Water round the pier."

"Nothing to fear!"

"But I can't swim —  
Up to my chin!"

"Learn, then, old chump —  
Grab hold of that stump!"

"Well, you're a brick.  
'Neath the bridge, quick!"

"Water whirls black,  
Pushes me back —  
Now the foam clears —"

"What's there?"

"The piers."

"Charges between all the piles in row.  
Fuse in the tube, tube in charges, so.

Quickly, make use of the thunder's din.  
 Ease the bars back if the tube won't go in."  
 "Devilish night...  
 Wind like a knife.  
 No pitch to use..."  
 "Light up the fuse!"  
 "I'll be blown up!"  
 "Listen, old chap —  
 Give the match here,  
 Get away from the pier!"  
 "Not on your life!  
 You've got a wife!  
 No time to lose —  
 I'll light the fuse.  
 Let my parents know.  
 Farewell! Better so!"..  
 Seven friends lay in the bushes unseen.  
 The eighth put a match to the toluene...

1944

## I AM HE WHO BURST THE DAMS

"He who bursts the dams."

*Lesya Ukrainka, Forest Song*

I am he who burst the dams.  
 I didn't sit on the rocks aside,  
 When ancient oaks were blasted down.  
 In the partisan forest-dwelling wide,  
 On the trampled grass, all yellowy-brown,  
 Beneath the purpling leaves I lay,  
 While through the bandages oozed the blood.  
 Old Forester, with his brow turned grey,  
 Asked "Did you blow all the bridges up?" —  
 "All, all!..  
 Then, bending over me,  
 The whole night gentle Mavka \* sat,  
 Wrapped round in a cloak of mist was she,  
 And across her shoulder, her rifle-strap.  
 She sighed, and then began to sing:  
 "Why can't one ask about such a thing?"  
 The wild rose there enquires, you see:  
 "Am I beautiful?" And the tall ash-tree  
 Nods its leafy crown, sways back and forth:

---

\* Mavka — a forest-sprite; main character of Lesya Ukrainka's *Forest Song*

"Most beautiful rose upon this earth."—  
"Restore me,  
For still on the blue-waved Prut  
Stand bridges which are yet unblown.  
Across them crawl in search of loot  
Green, greedy snakes, for evil known."—  
"Well, I can bring one herb alone,  
The Herb of Life, which will death defy."  
She brought it, found in the meadows deep,  
Then the girders and trusses went flying high  
On the Carpathian river banks steep,  
And the thunder's laughter re-echoed wide.

I am he who burst the dams.  
I did not sit on the rocks aside.

*1946*

### RAIN HAS PASSED

Rain has passed  
And now in brilliant streams  
Into oceans blue the waters ripple.  
Maybe so these songs of mine, my dreams,  
To the depths of our melodious people  
So will flow, just like the brilliant streams.  
Though my streams that sea's depth will not alter,  
Neither bring me glory when I'm gone,  
Like a cloud, I must pour forth my water,  
That's my nature — all my soul's in song.  
Then, when rye-fields and the vineyards moistening,  
Maytime splashes scoopfuls over all,  
And the people raise a song, rejoicing —  
In that song will live my very soul.

*1949*

## “BELOVED FIELD”

On October 27th, 1945, after the ceremonial opening of the World Conference of Democratic Youth, 6,000 young men and women, representatives of the whole world, sang the Russian song "Beloved Field."

In Albert Hall they sang "Belovéd Field."  
Our harvest field, gold stubble on the ground,  
Spread boundless in the meeting hall revealed,  
With countless sheaves of rye all scattered round.

And through it, with a lively song once more  
The youth of all the world together went,  
The harvest field, the wide-spread field of war,  
Where arrow-heads of bronze lie mouldering, spent.

And sharpened spears, with crosses cut thereon,  
Of black cast German iron, from the strife.  
With golden waves, with the rustling of the corn,  
Like some enchanting melody of life.

That field raised up its voice in Albert Hall:  
 "Young people, swear one brotherhood on earth,  
 Yes, swear by me, who gives new life to all,  
 By star-set centuries yet to come to birth.

So that you meet in peaceful concord there,  
Where armoured tanks once met in enmity,  
In days of azure haze, the weather fair,  
Not in the pall-black smoke of TNT."

1945

## SLEEPLESS NIGHTS

"That for which no human words exist."

*Maxim Rylsky*

All the words I've sorted long ago,  
Thought is stretched out like a threefold string...  
But I have no strength to raise the bow,  
So the bolt should fly, like a living thing.

So the bolt should fly,  
and sing aloud
And before the sound had time to go,



Quiver in the target bull's-eye proud.  
But I have no strength to raise the bow...

Then one slowly lights a cigarette,  
Goes out on the veranda in the night,  
Sees in Irpin Park two birches set,  
Two tall slender candles burning bright.

The moon had lit them, since it could not come  
Down and force its way to grass entwined,  
And so that the pathway from my home  
To these sorrowful birches I should find.

I approached them, stroked their silvery bark,  
Felt them trembling.  
Summer night again  
To that distant time conveyed me back,  
Where the trembling of young arms remains.

There the dawn shakes wings above the grass,  
Over dewy pathway it has kissed,  
'There draws near so sweetly to one's heart  
"That for which no human words exist."

1975

## SWAN-FLIGHT

I know not if a swan sings, as they say,  
Waiting death.  
I only know it sings...  
Stand somewhere unmoving by the way,  
When above your head a white swan wings.  
Creak on creak, by leathery squeak proclaimed,  
Those white pinions wave, and wave once more,  
And the hunters — "evil savages" named —  
Then become different people than before.  
Creak on creak...  
Their squeaking goes to ground.  
O'er the river in the reeds rough strings  
Wind strikes up,  
And violins start to sound,  
And Tchaikovsky fills one's soul with wings.  
In our mind appears the young quartette —  
Cygnet, lovely as a tale come true,  
And our youth, it seems, arises yet  
On that hill in brilliant sparkling dew.

Or that first soft kiss we feel at heart,  
Which oblivion never never knows,  
Or an echo of great inspired art,  
As a lengthy life draws to its close.  
Lift your eyes, and there the wide wings beat,  
Like the pure white banner of chastity  
Creak on creak they beat...  
How painfully sweet  
Is that song where new worlds come to be.  
It alone remains so long, so long,  
Lesser passions cede to the sublime,  
In our heart will stay.  
The swan-flight song —  
Happy dream upon the wings of time.

1962

\* \* \*

Here sat Boyan. He must have sat just here  
Upon the hill 'neath which the Dnieper lay...  
And where the fine-stringed copper maples play  
Until today his psaltery rings clear.

Here sat Boyan, enormous as a hill,  
And from his silvery beard swarmed songs amain,  
To Russia, Byelorussia, and the Ukraine:  
Time sends his great refrains, undying still.

Perhaps he sits where once he sat before,  
His fingers on the trembling strings of yore,  
And sings about the present excellent day.

And all with which our souls breathe proud and warm.  
Through centuries long the bard Boyan has borne,  
Thus ancient genius breathes on our modern way.

1974



*Vasil Shvets (b. 1918) was born in the village of Ivankiv, Kiev Region, into the family of a farmer. He has written many collections of lyrical poetry and long poems. He also writes prose which is distinguished for its rich, idiomatic language. Many of his works have been published in other Soviet republics and abroad.*

### THE WIND GONE GREY

And there is silence, soundless still,  
No cry, no bullet whining.  
The grass says nothing, and you too,  
Midst stillness dumbly shining.

A raven swoops and tears a breast,  
O'er dust there wheeling, turning.  
And metal burns upon the hills,  
In metal men are burning.

It's neither hot, nor very cold,  
The first blue's sparkling brightly.  
And from his bloodstained cigarette  
The smoke is swirling lightly.

And so it seems he had no chance  
To finish then his smoking.  
The stones and metal melting hot  
Close by him through smoke choking.

The Indian summer from the fields  
Like storm cloud's gently lifting.  
No, it's the wind that's grown full grey,  
Its thinning locks soft drifting.

1945

## A GIRL FROM MOSCOW

The girl from Moscow sleeps — my darling Lida.  
How I wished that dreaming she should see  
pleasant sunny days of golden summer  
before into the fight she goes with me!

Before that fight the minutes now are counted.  
It is not a rustling summer day.  
Light's not visible. From the gloomy valley  
whistles and howls a blizzard on its way...

On the Moscow streets stand piled-up snow-heaps.  
Lida's dreaming extraordinary dreams:  
Rockets blaze out in the sky above her.  
Her battalion into the battle streams.

Deadly bullets in the air went whistling  
cutting down the human heart in flight.  
And the girl from Moscow boldly covered  
Lieutenant Vasil Shvets in that hard fight.

On the high hill slopes the battle thickens,  
Where are you, my interceder, say?  
...Peace is drawing nearer to you, nearer,  
I am carried farther still away.

Sleep, my lovely, I shall go to battle.  
If it gets too hard — I'll call you there.  
And if we would chance to die together —  
It will be for Moscow, as a pair.

*1943*

\* \* \*

The immortelle protects the marjoram  
from spiders and perhaps, disease and death,  
once here, I wished for quietude and leisure,  
but now the quietness chokes my very breath.

When in the heavens burnt out the aviator  
they did not curse the skies nor raise a groan,  
those brave immortals, who defended mother,  
there once were twelve, but now just I alone.

Above the banks of white, the wall stood whitened,  
there now a propeller stands whitened too, and mute,  
and even the bees and grasshoppers there are sleepy  
from the narcotic quiet of ripened fruit.

Now I am sure: I sleep — and shall awaken,  
As I was sure then: I shall sleep — and die.  
Caressing sounds of somebody's long kisses  
Went running, running through the bushes high.

But not one witch was hiding in the bushes —  
I went and looked — they'd vanished in the air.  
I was embarrassed, thinking I heard kisses.  
But only bees were gathering nectar there.

My late-blown flower — don't dim with smoke the seasons.  
The bees will go, the rider gallop away.  
In that far distance, which is now so intimate,  
someone unseen is guarding me today.

I did not want to bend the branch and break it,  
I only wished across the fence to peer.  
There mother, crossing herself, by the wall was standing:  
Of twelve of us, just I alone come here.

And now that rider's horse they do not hobble.  
Its requiem the propeller has buzzed right through.  
And therefore the unmown hay-fields stand silent...  
Sons of the fallen, raise more sons anew!

## SNOW

Over fields midst the wheat of cold winter,  
Snowflakes heavy slow falling.  
Flood down flakes is my plea, it's your brother  
Here calling!

Snow falls thick round about  
As the heavens ring out.

Then my plea to the winds finds beginning  
As first spring in the earth is awaking:  
Make more green than the forests the steppe land,  
And its paths gently snaking.  
Snow falls thick round about  
As the heavens ring out.

And I ask too of father the sunshine  
To send rays warm in flowers full flowing,  
And to swaddle the wheat shoots most tender  
As though frost, in a halo soft glowing.

Snow falls thick round about  
As the heavens ring out.

Now no peace from this thought so disturbing  
O'er the hearts now of many ascending:  
Is it true everywhere on this planet  
That all seeds become suns, heavenward bending?

Snow falls thick round about  
As the heavens ring out.

*1965*

### THE MOON IS ROCKING

To you in legend or tale I am calling,  
to the motor's roar, and the metal's boom.  
As the sun was rising we two at Lake Crescent  
were standing — and there swam the Moon.  
She was swimming not like a sieve nor a barrel,  
she was swimming not like a disc nor a swan,  
she was swimming warmed by a smile that was human,  
to the joy of the flowers and birds every one.  
I still did not know that in memory would linger  
that very second, that minute, that hour  
when you said to me: "Look, the Moon is rocking.  
On the Moon a man's walking there!"  
It was very deep blue in the lake and the heavens,  
and so as the cosmonaut not to scare,  
the bulldozers up on the dam fell silent,  
for the Moon truly rocked, I swear.  
But he did not see, who with sharp quick thinking  
to heaven or hell blazed a way of his own.  
But cosmonaut: through what a revolution  
From era to era you've flown!..  
No the Moon's not a swan, nor a sieve, nor a barrel,  
Life's flowing over upon your page,  
if you so surely were able to follow  
the birth of a new cosmic age.

Today or tomorrow, it soon will be written  
for ever that second, that minute, that hour.  
But the Moon is rocking. The Moon is rocking:  
On the Moon a man's walking there.

1971

## DEMETER

In its own time the cruel course of seasons  
takes from us kilometres, hours, and all.  
I saw myself how on the hill, in brick-dust,  
from Demeter all her primal beauty fell.

Born of a myth, and living in a legend,  
she crumbled when by frost she was embraced.  
Upon black soil her bosom dripped with balsam,  
her shoulders on the golden sands she grazed.

At times a skylark, from those oval shoulders  
soared up and sowed, and sowed his ringing song.  
And so, in sunny spots, she sowed her bounty  
with layers of fertile soil, millennia-long.

The crown upon her brow, all golden wheat-ears,  
drops every century in the ground one grain.  
Born of a myth, and living in a legend,  
from whence has she appeared upon this plain?

I've heard about her from old Herodotus,  
when and who commanded that she be sent  
to a Scythian, as a bride from Hellas,  
to make the earth a source of full content.

But maybe that took place while I was dreaming,  
and that it was not Herodotus' voice?  
The tales and legends and dreams away went streaming  
when you appeared and made my heart rejoice.

And really, did you not come from the mountains?  
And really did not balsam therefrom flow,  
that very same old sweet and bitter balsam,  
ordained to guard our immortality so?

Do not demand that I should tremble, pallid,  
become more easily frightened than a hare,  
From the hills you came! You cannot now deny it!  
Whose feet were they which left their traces here?

For no one else such lovely feet possesses,  
which print their gleaming beauty on the dew,  
and in their track leave such a heavy sweetness,  
that, having sipped it, I am drunken too!

Perhaps you will insist 'twas not your hand, then,  
which sowed the meadows round with richest boon,  
and brought to them the showers and stormy down-pours  
each month upon the eve of the new moon?

This really and in dozing dreams has happened;  
To Hellas' sons I'll ever grateful be,  
who had the God-inspired idea to send you  
across the distant Scythian lands to me.





*Stepan Oliynik (1903-1982) was born in the village of Posisela, Odessa Region, into a farming family. He is the author of numerous collections of humour and satire as well as a book of short stories, noted for their sensitivity and convincing characterization. His works have been translated into many Soviet and foreign languages.*

## THE "EMPEROR"

(A tractor driver's tale)

"Last autumn, so well my old tractor I'd driven,  
The title of 'emperor' I was given.  
From birth, though, they've called me Olexa Bida."  
"So that's how you came to be 'emperor'?"

"Yes!

It happened like this. On my good old machine  
I've worked tver since I came back from the war.  
From April right up to October I'd been  
Upturning the loam-clods. One autumn, though, for  
Our labour achievements, from round the Black Sea  
We were called to a conference held in Odessa.

I switched off the engine so faithful to me

And set off by train to Odessa,

Yessir!

You ought to have looked at the posh limousine  
That drove me, a ploughman, along from the station!  
On a boulevard stood the hotel. Dressed in green,  
A man let me in with all due salutations.  
I walked in; my raincoat, my stylish top hat  
All proved much too much for the old grisly-beard.  
Most likely, he took me for some diplomat,  
So very important to him I appeared.

'What country,' he asked, 'do you come from, Monsieur?'

'From the country,' I told him, 'that common folk call  
Collective-farm-land, which you too ought to know!'

"But what of your emperor's title, dear soul?"

"Well, it was like this, friends. That evening I'd gone  
 To the conference held at a world-famous theatre  
 Where music was playing and chandeliers shone.  
 I smoothed down my hair so's to make it look neater,  
 Then walked in sedately, sat down in my place —  
 Not down in the pit, though, but the very best —  
 On the balcony — gilded, of dust not a trace;  
 An old man led me in, and I sat down to rest.  
 There were handshakes and greetings all round. Minutes passed.  
 Wherever I looked there were buddies and chums.  
 I wished my dear wifey could just have a glance  
 At me — to what honour her husband had come.  
 The session began, and the speaker — not bad —  
 Spoke at length of our Party, the power of labour.  
 'Now look, on that balcony emperors sat.  
 And now — there's Olexa, my old friend and neighbour.'  
 Here all the great hall started slapping with gusto,  
 And I should have bowed, maybe, but I'm no actor —  
 Like the rest in the hall — yet, now I was its master,  
 A lad from the Black Sea steppes driving a tractor.  
 I drive my old tractor from snow until snow;  
 Its engine and all of its insides I know,  
 And if once an emperor used to sit here,  
 He won't any more, 'cause I'm sitting here. So!  
 They say he'd appeared unannounced here, afraid to  
 Be noticed by people. Some emperor! Bah!  
 While I sit here freely, without any secret  
 And everyone sees it's Olexa Bida.  
 That night, when the classic performance was over,  
 The singers came up to the edge of the stage.  
 Madame Butterfly made a bow to me, smiling,  
 As graceful and sweet as they are at young age.  
 Since then it all started. Whoever would meet me  
 Took hold of my hand and then said for a joke:  
 'Hello, Mister emperor! Howdee, Olexa?  
 Come out, now, Your Majesty, let's have a smoke!  
 To sit on such balconies ain't no distress!  
 Yes, yes!'  
 And so it went spreading across the whole region,  
 The nickname they gave me that day as a joke.  
 Back home to my village I came from Odessa  
 And listen now how I was met by my folks.

I opened the door and just entered the cottage,  
 When lo — with our son my dear wifey appeared.  
 'Oh, here's our dear Daddy, our emperor coming!  
 The radio's told us about it all here.'  
 Next morning again I was out in the ploughfield.  
 I started the engine and blazed off — track-track!  
 Enough of admiring my own past successes,

Or colleagues and neighbours will leave me far back!  
The soil may be wet, and the ploughshares all muddy,  
I'll turn over mountains of earth, have no doubt!  
Because I'm the boss here, the emperor, that is,  
Of all the fine land you see spreading about.  
To work, now, old fellow! I'll triple my efforts  
To lift up still higher my working-man's fame,  
That in the gilt balcony should sit forever  
The 'emperor' Olexa Bida by name."

1947

### A BIT TOO CRAFTY

(On Ukrainian folk motifs)

Late one night a puffing train  
To the town Popelnya came.  
From the platform, dimly lit,  
An old geezer boarded it.

"Though the train is pretty full,  
All the lot of them I'll fool.  
I'll get fixed up, I'm no dope  
Nor some helpless sissy! Nope!"

Thinking up a crafty plan,  
In his suitcase peered the man.  
"Oh," the old smartaleck bawled,  
And beneath the bench he crawled.

Soon the car was full of noise.  
"What's he looking for there, bovs?"  
"Looking for? No — catching, dash it!  
There'll be hell if I don't stash it!"

"Kitten, or some pet like that?"  
"It's a snake — no bloomin' cat!  
From the suitcase it came squirming,  
And it's somewhere here, the vermin!"

After such horrendous news  
Pandemonium broke loose.  
In a trice the car was free  
And the bloke laughed roguishly,  
Chose the best bunk at the top,  
And went snoring there non-stop.

Waking up, he asked at dawn  
Through the window with a yawn:  
"Will it soon be Stanislav?  
Or perhaps I've missed it, love?"

Standing lamp in hand below,  
The conductor answered so:  
"Soon? Sleep, mister, and don't worry:  
We won't get there in a hurry.

"Yesterday some fool let out  
A live viper, damn the lout!  
As a consequence of which  
From the train we were unhitched.  
Ever since we've sat, me hearty,  
At the station where we started!"

*1961*

## OUR MOTHERS

Let's remember, dearest children,  
And remind ourselves together,  
That the most beloved person,  
In the world is our mother.

For us — be we small or grown-up —  
Mothers give of love unsparing,  
Tender hearts and loving wisdom,  
Of their strength forever sharing.

The first word we ever uttered,  
In our life was the word ma-ma!  
And through life though we grow older,  
There are none whose love is warmer.

When to walk we first attempted,  
It was she our footsteps guided,  
Through our joys and through our sorrows,  
Her heart remains undivided.

Wherever her sons or daughters —  
In her thoughts she follows after,  
Mama's the first word we scribble,  
In the schoolroom on the blackboard.

Dearest to a mother — children,  
To the children — it's their mother,

We must study, we must do things  
That will please her as no other.

Always, then, remember children,  
Mother's teaching and affection,  
Into life and all its byways,  
She has given us direction.

After years of growing, learning,  
Thankful for a mother's graces,  
We will leave her then behind us,  
Go to work in far-off places.

When that happens let's remember,  
To send telegrams, write letters,  
To the one who waits their coming,  
To your Mother, don't forget her!

*1953*



*Olexandr Pidsukha (b. 1918) was born in the village of Nizhilovichi, Kiev Region, to peasant parents. His numerous collections of poetry and plays are marked by both a lyric and epic style. Many of them have been translated into Soviet and foreign languages.*

## MOTHER ROCKED ME IN MY CRADLE

To M. Rylsky

Mother rocked me in my cradle,  
Rocked me low,  
Sang, as only she was able,  
Rocked me high:  
"Laddy, hush-a, hush-a-bye!"

Still this song my heart was troubling  
When, black-browed, young spirits, bubbling,  
I first strolled with girls through the rye.  
"Laddy, hush-a, hush-a-bye!"

Then, when bombers started coming,  
Shells and bullets began to fly,  
I could hear somebody humming:  
"Laddy, hush-a, hush-a-bye!"

Enemies wished to disunite us,  
Trample on our hearts, affright us,  
Flood the earth with blood, enslave us,  
So that songs our mothers gave us  
Children should not hear beside us...

Cuckoos, calling years, go flying,  
And in prams lie babies crying.  
And above them, mummy, daddy:  
“Hush-a-bye, my little laddy!”

*1961*

## ONE IN AGE

Father, you and I are one in age.  
All too soon the lead your life-blood stilled.  
On your twenty-third new springtime page  
Eternity was spilled.

You and I were parted by that strife.  
You have not watched me — I have watched you.  
For my lot in youth, my lot in life,  
The skies are blue.

Father, in my heart there creeps unrest.  
O'er my dawn a stealthy shadow flees.  
Firmly on your road I face life's test,  
Repeat your deeds.

Spring, which through my twenty-third year streams,  
Do not bring an early winter on.  
From immortality, Father, come in dreams,  
Embrace your son.

Father, you and I are one in age.  
All too soon the lead your life-blood stilled.  
On your twenty-third new springtime page  
Eternity was spilled.

*1967*

\* \* \*

Blessed is he, who the silver line  
Crosses over with courage fine,  
Not struck deaf, nor rendered dumb  
By the hubbub, when new dawns shine.

Blessed is he, who has songs to sing,  
Spring's arrival the nearer to bring,

Who does not hide his head in woe,  
When thunderstorms rage and ring.

Blessed is he, whose masculine stride  
Is elastic, and youthful and wide,  
From his boyhood to late evening years,  
Though misfortune and storms betide.

Blessed is he, who day after day,  
Riding high, or under his horse,  
For his Mother, and Motherland too,  
Burns with sacred fire on his course.

1969

\* \* \*

Specially for me, and on my birthday too,  
Onto my window-sill three bluetits flew,  
And tapped the window.

“What can I do for you?  
Some water, or some bread-crumbs, just a few?  
There’s food around on every tree and bloom!  
Or is it bringing greetings that you come?  
Just be so kind, and fly into my room.  
Don’t come as visitors — really feel at home.  
I’ll open all the windows and the doors,  
Fly in please. I’m so glad to see you here.  
Perch on my table, my papers — all is yours,  
I won’t let anyone hurt you, nor interfere.”  
But as I went toward the window-bay,  
They fluttered off, and on the willow sat.  
And, in surprise, began to chirrup away  
In merry chorus. Wonderful was that!  
The event did not end there, right at the start.  
The whole day through, like dawn’s first rosy glow,  
I felt that radiant joy within my heart.

Its warmth the early bluetits came to bestow.

1970



## EARLY SPRING

The sky is clear, and pure as a tear,  
A heady scent the meadows bring,  
And March's emerald emerges clear,  
Like shining feathers on a wing.

And now the breezes ring like strings,  
The river banks grow bald and bare.  
The valley opens its eyes and sings,  
And all stands clear in the lucid air.

The streams are murmuring, breaking out  
An open road to spring to keep.  
What wide expanses here for thought!  
What an unwrapping after sleep!

Collect all this, and lock it away  
In wondrous lines, all you can glean,  
This fragrance, space, these heavens gay,  
For ever — this swift-flowing scene.

*1977*

*Yaroslav Shporta (1922-1956), the son of a farmer, was born in the village of Salnitsya, Vinnitsya Region. He is the author of many collections of verse and translations, and his poetry, distinguished for its lucid imagery and both a lyric and epic style, is well known to readers in many Soviet republics.*



#### ZAPORIZHYA \*

Greetings to you, Zaporizhya, steel-clad,  
Wrapped up in sorrow your heart does not lie,  
Heaven stands high up above your proud head,  
Glorious Maytime sky.

Early your hocters breathe over the world,  
Breathe, so that walls start to shake;  
Deeply the Dnieper's great turbines whirl,  
Winter and summer alike.

Silver cascades of bright water beat,  
Lenin's Lake glitters in sunbeams so gay,  
Masts go a-striding far off o'er the wheat,  
And the new motor-way.

Dawn, and I stand where horizons are red,  
Furnaces breathe angry fire near the way...  
There to the steel-workers I nod my head:  
"Greetings, my brothers! Good-day!"

I know your toil, and its worth highly rate,  
Know why the sky is still crimson at night;  
You smelt the steel for our projects of state,  
Peace is the goal you've in sight.

---

\* Zaporizhya — city in the Ukraine; a major industrial centre

Greetings to you, Zaporizhya, steel-clad,  
Wrapped in our fame, our good name you hold high...  
Heavens are blazing, storm-clouds o'erhead,  
Glorious Maytime sky.

1952

## BALLAD ABOUT LIGHT

To his motherland Gurgен came back,  
From a foreign land he came back home.  
Then his mother wept: "You're blind, my lad,  
How can blind ones recognize their own?  
How to open fields can you go out,  
Where for several years we have not been?  
How can you see other youths about,  
Waterfalls, and rocks, and seething stream?  
Those black eyes the dark has robbed of sight!  
How have I deserved this sorrow, say?  
If so young you cannot see the light,  
You'll be blind until you're old and grey!"

Now they walk the streets of Yerevan,  
And from sympathy people step aside.  
Though made welcome since their trip began,  
Still their hosts anxiety cannot hide.  
"We've good surgeons here!" the people say,  
"Really wonderful miracles they can do,  
And a man can be reborn this way,  
Having broken the tombstone slab in two."

Doctors take Gurgен and lay him on the table,  
His heart beating high — they cut the gauze in two.  
Cold steel scalpels waiting — now he's in oblivion,  
In an abyss of dying sparks goes flying through...  
Coming slowly back from night — the road's not easy —  
Wants to rub his eyes, but that he cannot do.  
Only after ten whole days had passed  
They set free his tied-up hands again  
Took the bandages off his eyes at last,  
And he did not feel the slightest pain.

"Look and see the light!" they said, "No mark of darkness!"  
But Gurgен did not know how to see the day,  
How to open up his eyes and see the distance —  
"Just a minute," he said, "I don't quite know the way."

With a trembling hand he raised his lids and prickly lashes,  
And cried aloud when first he saw the sunbeams play.

Then Gurgen went walking round Yerevan,  
In his eyes the blinding sunshine beat,  
Saw far skies where sunset just began,  
Saw how life was like a rainbow sweet,  
Saw the furnaces, and fiery steel,  
And the kolkhoz harvest of golden grain,  
Saw his native country, deep in toil,  
Saw his dearest mother, clear and plain,  
She, who with endless pains drove out the night,  
Who through her efforts had brought her blind son light.

1950

### BALLAD ABOUT A SMALL SEED

Upon our fire-swept soil's dry crust  
It lay among the ash and dust,  
First beaten down, and soaked with rain,  
Then covered with black snow again,  
Though lost and frozen, half-alive,  
One small seed managed to survive.

The days and nights passed, all the same,  
At last, in spring, the master came,  
Dug in the ash, and found the seed,  
That last and only one indeed,  
And warmed it in the palm of his hand —  
What harvest yet will be on the land!

The master was a soldier tried,  
One minute he laid his gun aside,  
And then with his entrenching spade  
In the soil a ready hole he made.  
Crow, then, he thought, when the seed was sown,  
And off he went to free the town.

And when he had gone in the distance blue,  
And when the hot steel no longer flew,  
When the rumbling ceased, and petered out,  
Then came the hot dry winds of drought.  
The blazing sunshine dried the earth,  
The seed begged water to slake its thirst.

It waited and waited, still no rain —  
But then a collective farm girl came,

And watered it, and soaked it well,  
So that the seed in its native soil  
Should feel the moisture and the warmth,  
And the sun should draw a green shoot forth.

The soldier came back from the war,  
And then he went to that field once more.  
He stood and looked — a dream it seemed —  
All round the ripening wheat-ears gleamed.  
Like gold rang the grain, by breezes blown,  
Which he, with that one seed, had sown.

The wheat then whispered round his feet;  
It was you who saved one grain of wheat,  
Which scorched by fire once lay alone,  
And, as you see, it has grown and grown,  
And now it rustles in silence free —  
Have you forgotten that year, maybe?

But he did not forget — oh, no!  
Far off in those fields where he had to go,  
Where the red explosions rocked the land...  
And then he took an ear in his hand:  
"See what it's borne!

To our land so wide  
One seed has given a harvest-tide!"

1948

### THE BOOK WITH STEEL PAGES

Each word in that book I should like now to properly know,  
Every page I should like, as a primer, to read through slow.

But those steel pages are millions and more, not few,  
They say that mankind such a book before never knew.

They don't bind those leaves — just try such a book to lift!  
The jib-cranes would crack, and the steel rails beneath them twist.

They load them upon a wide platform, where lift-trucks swarm,  
A hundred leaves in a batch — that for steel is the norm.

They all smell of paint, and with blue-grey colour they shine.  
Who could write such a book in this world, who read every line?

I have seen how they write it, that poem, majestic, supreme,  
Upon my own working, so little be-lauded, theme.

From far-distant basins they bring for it pig-iron here;  
Girls load it in pyramids, laughing and full of good cheer.

The furnace at night — like a blizzard of red sparks it looks,  
When the steel is smelted to make into future books.

Through the rolling-mills then go the sheets, fiery-hot,  
And their signature on them the rolling-men have not forgot.

They wrote as they could, with their whole working life, and their skill,  
Not at writing tables — in factory shops and the mill.

The book was then packed full of burning thoughts and ideas,  
And was sent on its rounds to be read in the world through the years.

In the far-distant East, in the taiga, on one wharf at rest  
The lads there unpacked it and read with attention and zest.

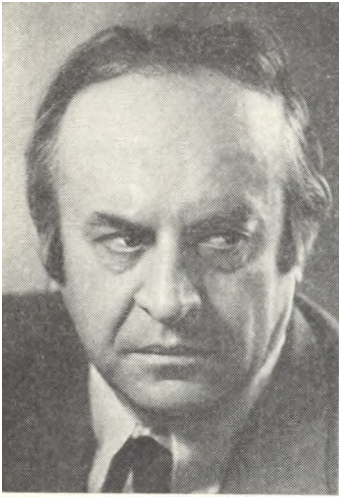
And good words in its praise passed around the folk like a song.  
That book workers read at the motor-car factory ere long.

The tractor-constructors turn over each thundering page,  
And the valorous tank-men add lines where the battles rage.

And upon the steel page are engraved other dates, other names  
Which show how we worked, how we fought through the furious flames.

And the pages in that one book have grown more than before,  
Each one of them praises my Soviet Motherland more.

Each one, like a flame, is gleaming with burning rays.  
And our deathless glory to sons and to grandsons conveys.



*Rostislav Bratun (b. 1927), the son of a teacher, was born in the town of Lyuboml in Volyn. He has written many collections of poems, journalistic articles, and pamphlets on civic themes. His poetry has been translated into many Soviet and foreign languages.*

### VOLYN SONG TO THE ACCORDION

Wherever I have travelled  
My heart burned like a brand  
For dear Volyn, my dear Volyn,  
My own beloved land!

Up to the blue horizons  
The waving wheat-fields stand.  
My dear Volyn, my dear Volyn,  
Collective farmers' land.

And now throughout the country  
There's happy news at hand:  
My dear Volyn, my dear Volyn  
Is also miners' land.

And glorified by labour,  
Like spring, it blossoms grand,  
My dear Volyn, my dear Volyn,  
My native Soviet land.

1955

## REMEMBER!

No, the blood-stained secret can't be hidden,  
In the pitch-black night it can't be lost...  
By the sacred law of righteous hatred  
Truth will nurture undying grapes of wrath.

And for years ahead, through my dear country,  
Condemnation again, again will flood,  
That those monsters siezed the wells to use them  
As containers for fire-tried human blood.

Through the whole Ukraine they had intended  
That none drank pure water from the spring,  
That our people, unsubdued as eagles,  
From the wood-framed wells their blood should bring.

And for long that work of Cain the murderer,  
Like a nightmare still will haunt our dreams —  
Derman stands there — a green Golgotha,  
Horokhiv, consumed in blazing flames!

And Volyn, which crucified stood at the cross-roads  
Stood in the tyrants' time, in slavery's day,  
Won't permit forgiving nor forgetting,  
But like conscience will torment our way.

While the seed of Cain is still existent,  
Cast upon foreign soil, beyond the sea,  
The hangman's nail, in children's foreheads driven  
Calls for revenge and cries —  
Remember me!

*1957*

\* \* \*

Should you go out and leave the city,  
When fields are full of whispering rye,  
It maybe someone there will ask you:  
"From where?"  
"Where does your pathway lie?"

And why so seldom pay a visit?  
Have you forgot how dry earth smelt,  
Of simple village tasty bakery,  
Of bread, without which salt's not salt?"



I want to shout aloud in answer:  
"Oh rye, you hear me, rye, I'm yours!  
I'm yours, you friends of mine be-whiskered,  
On feast-days, and when the hooter roars!

I'll fall among the rye a-sprouting  
In meadows covered in fresh green rime...  
How welcoming you are, how tender,  
As though the closest kin of mine!

When I'm oppressed by cruel longing,  
And when my life gets out of tune,  
With me in my city room there whisper  
The gold-green fields of rye in June!

1962

### LILIES-OF-THE-VALLEY MAKE A LANDING

Do not trample,  
Do not trample lilies:  
Like a river they've flooded through the town —  
Hosts of them on the asphalt,  
In the alleys,  
Hardly a spot  
To set your two feet down.  
All with fragrant little bells a-gleaming,  
On pavements,  
Squares,  
And streets,  
And lanes they lie.  
This is the spring attack  
So powerful streaming,  
With these paratroopers  
From the sky!  
They have fallen  
Like a silver shower,  
Then took root  
Upon the stony ground.  
How's the Council  
To assess this power?  
On what point, if any,  
Can guilt be found?  
All has stopped...  
All yielded in disorder.  
Motor-cars  
And plain pedestrians quail.

No-one suspected spring  
As a marauder,  
Nor such havoc  
From lilies-of-the-vale!  
A few short minutes —  
And the attack's defeated.  
Order is restored.  
Time marches on.  
The lilies' advance  
Swept in,  
And then retreated...  
A pity  
That all this  
Is so quickly gone!

*1963-1965*

### FAIRY-TALE ABOUT MY TOWN

Out of the night sailed Castle High,  
Like a clipper 'neath clouds of sails.  
Down the ladder of moonlight come  
Unexpected travellers here,  
Straight into the city  
Of dreams,  
And disperse, among the flats,  
Like great shaggy-coated  
Cats,  
Lay their paws on sleepy heads,  
Mew a soothing lullaby.  
Of the distant roads they sing,  
Of the storms on ocean waves,  
Of the battles whose thunder's done,  
Of the unfulfilled desires,  
And of first young love...  
One of them  
Who's very tired,  
Falls asleep beside a lion,  
Just outside the old Town Hall.  
And the lion so fatherly  
Guards his sleep.  
Which simply means  
Someone will slumber till the dawn  
And will see no world of dreams,  
But, come morning, he'll be sad  
That so empty was the night,  
And so lacking in coloured light,  
Like a life without memories.

*1963-1965*



## VIKTOR KOCHEVSKY

*Viktor Kochevsky (b. 1923) was born in the village of Rizunenkove, Kharkiv Region, into a peasant family. His poetry proclaims the life, labour, and friendship of Soviet nations. He is also a translator of Armenian and other poets, and is a recipient of the Pavlo Tychina Prize. His works are widely published in the USSR.*

### LANDING NIGHT

Pale-blue Gelendzhik came to see off the Black Sea squadron  
No signal lights showing...

Fierce waves lashed our sides, to and fro,  
As if they were telling how there on the firm earth tomorrow  
Through bursting shells and mine-fields and wire we must go.

Such a swinging sea, that even the old sailors tumbled.  
We've hugged loved ones, and stand with the guns — commanders and  
crews...

The Black Sea shrieks, like an echo from front line positions,  
As if from Miskhako the sleepless commander sends news.\*

Fags in silent cupped hands, stand the lads of the night operation.  
Sky and sea have all merged. Each mile's like eternity black.  
We wait for the time when we jump in the sea with our rifles,  
And at the commander's order go in to attack.

But all of a sudden that waiting for onslaught is broken:  
A German rocket-sheaf swayed overhead, and fell,  
And cannon of every calibre answered with salvos,  
And we saw how with flashes the shore was blazing like hell.

The launches cast anchor. The waves on our way swept us forward,  
Soaked and frozen we ran to attack! German maxim's rat-tat...

---

\* Caesar Kunikov, commander of a renowned commando battalion, Hero of the Soviet Union

And someone beside said: "At last, pal, the fun has started,"  
And hurled grenade, "For the Motherland, forward! Take that!"

The whole earth trembled and swayed, like the decks of our launches,  
Like captive birds, in our hands automatics beat...  
From the fish-factory now they're embarking the first of the wounded.  
O Black Sea, roar! Not a step shall we retreat!

The blast of battle shrieks in the taut steel cables,  
The launches are swaying, ready to swing out of sight.  
From behind the clouds shines the moon, like a sailor's breast-badge,  
So out of place on this furious landing night.

*1943-1961*

IN YOUR NAME  
THERE ARE SEVEN LETTERS...

In the quiet fire-glow of morning  
The smoke from the trains twines and trails.  
The poplar-fringed fields round Poltava  
Resound with the cries of the quails.

The roofs, with the storks patrolling,  
The flocks of gulls o'er the sea,  
The Carpathian cliff-side fir-trees  
In their resinous majesty.

And the ripened ears, which to berries  
Their sun-darkened faces bend...  
And the scattered old cartridge-cases,  
My Ukraine, upon your dear land.

And well I remember the stations  
With their chaos of refugee woe,  
As if you were pierced by barbed wire  
Of the drunken fascist foe.

And the mad young stallions trampled  
Your suffering soil 'neath their feet,  
And the blood of my comrades mingled  
With my own in the battle-heat.

Sad mothers from far Siberia,  
From Caucasian meadows high,  
To this day in your boundless spaces  
Seek the graves of their sons, and sigh.

Above them Polissya cuckoos  
Flute out their unlived years,\*  
And the dawn above the Dnieper  
Weaves with ripening obelisk-ears.

Above them, with guns of victory,  
There thunders construction's day:  
The ponderous concrete pyramids  
On the Dnieper's bosom they lay.

You are writing a starry poem,  
In the cosmos you venture forth...  
In your name there are seven letters —  
Like a rainbow they shine o'er the earth.

*1963*

### CONVERSATION WITH THE SKY

Upon two birches,  
As if on crutches,  
The cloudy sky leant heavily lurching  
Toward hot steppeland roads nearby...  
It thundered at me: "Who are you, then?"  
"Oh, I'm a common foot-slogging yeoman,  
Who underneath you could have died.  
I charged the pill-boxes of foeman,  
Through a hundred fields I ran or writhed.

And bullets went whizzing, buzzing, appalling,  
Prying and seeking out my youth...  
And the cuckoos gave up useless calling,  
Counting my future years — that's the truth!

The girl's eyes would be wet with weeping,  
Who still unkissed till then would be.  
The quail, in crippled fields a-creeping  
Would lie that he had hidden me...  
I tell you frankly, dear old heaven,  
I could have died in the grass, the grain;  
I dug in the earth, from you lay hidden,  
And afterwards, deafened, rose again.

I cursed your thunder —  
(Sun — be witness!)

---

\* In accordance with popular superstition, the number of cuckoo-calls heard denotes the number of years the hearer has to live

Forgive these words and my abuse...  
The ack-ack guns with their steely splinters  
Lashed you, and gashed you, when they cut loose.  
But you don't fall when the shrapnel spurns you,  
Although from old wounds pain still stays...  
While I'm alive they shall not burn you  
With hellish strontium-atom rays.  
Your clouds their rain on the rye abandon,  
Your sun fills love's dark eyes with passion,  
From rocket nozzles you slake your thirst.  
I am your guardsman and companion —  
In your affairs and thoughts immersed.

1965

### *BAREV* \*, MY ARMENIA!

Like some wide rainbow, which supports the sky,  
May I not cease in life the skies to span —  
One wing-tip touching the Dnieper running by,  
One wing-tip touching distant Lake Sevan.

I see from Dnieper's steeply rising crest,  
Just how the watchful vine-grower, wise old one,  
The vine-shoots nurses, like a loving son,  
Who presses his dear mother to his breast.

And from the vines sharp mountain dust he wipes,  
And in reward for all his care and toil  
He senses in a lucid bunch of grapes  
The sweetness of Sevan, from the stony soil.

I see the master-craftsman work the stone,  
And carve from it the clustering grapes so bright...  
Armenia, from your mountain bosom flown —  
The mighty David rises in sunny light.\*\*

His horse flies on, with swiftly pulsing blood,  
And gallops into Kiev's Bohdan Square.  
The springs well up beneath his hooves steel-shod,  
As dew falls on the thirsty chestnuts there.

And there the warmth of sunny distant skies  
Familiar flocks of mulberry trees imbibe.

---

\* *Barev!* — Greetings! (Armenian)

\*\* David Sasunsky — hero of an Armenian epic

*Barev*, Armenia mine, my greeting flies!  
Unnumbered songs with your breath are alive.

Upon my way together closely clung  
The golden canvases of your Saryan,\*  
The starry worlds of your Ambartsumyan,\*\*  
And your Armenian guttural burning tongue.

That we've become firm friends — all praise to fate!  
We stand in a polyglot family's fast embrace.  
Like a fine bunch of your full-blooded grapes,  
From your delightful vale of Ararat.

*1960-1972*

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\* Martiros Saryan (1880-1972) — Soviet Armenian painter  
\*\* Viktor Ambartsumyan (b. 1908) — Soviet Armenian astrophysicist



*Anatoliy Kosmatenko (1921-1975), the son of a farmer, was born in the village of Vremivka, Donetsk Region. He is known for his fables and literary criticism. His satirical writings are marked by philosophic depth. His works have been published in many other republics of the Soviet Union and abroad.*

## PHILOXENES AND DIONYSUS

In those past days, when crowds of flattering lackeys  
To tyrant Dionysus paid their dues,  
For doggerel verses, hackneyed, stale and trashy —  
The pride and glory of the Syracuse,  
Philoxenes, a true, inspired poet,  
Held open court upon this stuff, to show it  
As ravings of a footman of the Muse,  
For which he paid — was sent long years to lose,  
Blowing his trumpet in the cold stone quarry.  
But friends begged his exemption, feeling sorry.  
The tyrant, insolent still, then bade them call  
The poet to feast again in his sumptuous hall...

With torches burning, wine in goblets gleaming,  
And guards stood stiff at the door, just like a wall,  
The tyrant rose — one moment — all ceased speaking.  
And thus he ordered, with a touch of gall:  
“Now, listen, Philoxenes, to my creation,  
Give judgment on these latest lines of mine,  
Have they a touch of worthy inspiration,  
Or do I merely woo the Muse in vain?”  
And silence. Such as only heaven ordains!  
Well, poet, rise, your life is at a gamble,  
And let the lackeys' blood freeze in their veins.  
And he arose, and with no sly preamble



Cried through the hall: "Hey, guards, I say,  
Escort me back to the quarries straight away!"

. . . . .  
A myth, or a true story, who can tell,  
Which has since ancient times spread round the folk?  
But we must praise Philoxenes as well,  
For... what shall we say?..  
the critical principle with which he spoke.

## THE GOLDEN GATES

A scrounger suddenly found out,  
The golden gates in Kiev are remaining:  
"Just think, they're golden and still there?!" he even laughed.  
"To take them never's crossed the mind of those about?  
I'll go and whip a bit, and gold'll be my gaining!  
And then goodbye to work and sorrows paining!"  
He spoke and straight away set out.  
Arrived in Kiev, stood, mouth wide, eyes straining...  
Returned with empty hands, no time for feigning.  
And, "Well?" his wife asked. He said "Hell!  
You thought the people there did nothing, sat debating,  
Or stood there still just me awaiting?  
They stole the gold themselves, their greed full sating...  
And from the golden gates remain just golden words to tell!"

---

Now any scrounger sings for you:  
Take all you can if once the chance you're offered,  
Since he himself would take the sunshine too  
If only he could touch the sun quite safely,  
And that he'd never burn his hands he knew.

## ESSENCE AND EFFERVESCENCE

In order to study human natures,  
Man's hidden potential to light to bring,  
The scientists made an apparatus.  
Quite small.  
Not any old kind of thing.  
In form, well, like a cap or beret.  
Light. Quite beautiful. Modish. Very.  
Inside were pick-ups, to fix and code  
Each change of energy, thought, and mood...

And, as expected, they did not fail  
To find a certain Person (male),  
Who then agreed, (for a fee, I fear),  
To wear the beret for one year.  
That time elapsed — the results are here:

1. Military ability: A Napoleon.
2. Self-examination: A Spinoza.
3. Abstract thought: Well, Einstein's not the only one!
4. Gift of eloquence: A Cicero.
5. Energy: Orbits the globe many times. Spontaneous.
6. Creative talents: Here's a poet of genius.

Could be Dovzhenko, even Rafael,  
Or Rodin, Korolyov, Buchma the actor,  
Could be a marvellous acrobat as well,  
You simply couldn't gauge the given data.  
And that was just one ordinary Man on Earth...

Oh, what a revelation!  
One pity, though. That data had no worth,  
Was just the measure of idle imagination,  
With which Man, all his life  
Takes his own measure.

But energy there certainly was!  
Great treasure...

What of it?  
Lost on the envy and spite it covers:  
The failure could not stand the success of others!



## ZAKHAR HONCHARUK

*Zakhar Honcharuk (b. 1921) was born in the village of Koritnya in Cherkasy Region into a farming family. He has written many collections of poems, literary criticism, and essays. The interpretation of the world through music-related symbols is a distinguishing mark of his poetry. His poems have been translated in the USSR and abroad.*

### PIGEON DAWN

To Pavlo Hrihorovich Tychina

In the window,  
in the morning blue  
pigeons —  
a grey couple —  
started cooing.  
When the sun  
its shining bugle blew,  
on the lake  
like lilies  
birds were blooming.  
Soft, the wind  
above the tranquil Dnieper  
sang its chorals  
in the praise of Day,  
happy chorals to the sun's first ray.  
Sun and wind and pigeons seemed to say:  
Morning has arrived,  
awaken, sleeper!

1955

# ZAPOROZHIAN ORATORIO

(From the poem *Titan*)

## Introduction

I'll play the organ —  
if you will!  
or on a blooming mill!  
or on a rolling mill  
I'll spread the velvet of my chords...  
From the Mesozoic to the aorta  
of the Dnieper as it flows  
bearing my woes —  
On ligatures of the dark grief I feel  
I will recast into bright steel  
the stone dream of your epic past!  
the stone dream of the past...

\* \* \*

I go!  
Ore crunches on my teeth... Outside it's 32 below —  
What is it crunching — air or water, ice or snow?  
Perhaps, the ages with their feet,— Sarmatians, metal?  
Who can know?  
Perhaps, your wine cup, Kuria? \*  
O Dnieper, no — it is your flow!..

## III

You broke. You scattered. Smashed to bits  
the manacles of fettered ages.  
Your wave its banks eternal hits,  
in a green ocean spreads and rages.  
You bear  
the white sails of my day,  
you know no weariness nor rest.  
no barrier can bar your way;  
your depth no plumbline can attest.  
The skyline on your heaving route  
approaches,  
then again recedes;  
uncurbed, the gallop of my thoughts  
wave after towering wave outspeeds...  
A war was waged... Volcanoes raged. Rocks boiled in lava...  
Storms died down, assuaged.

"WHO ARE YOU?"

asked the earth, the sky, the waters and the woods.

\* Kuria — Pecheneg chieftain who killed Kiev's ruling prince Svyatoslav, making a winecup out of his skull

The dew alone smiled on the wheat, trees, grass — as if it  
understood.  
...Or the lightning on your eyebrows, thirsting for a storm,  
on your eternal charm,  
asked me: "Who are you?" —  
Each day new voices ask me, thund'rous or subdued...

1958-1964

## ADRIATIC AQUARELLES

The sun comes up behind the hills,  
throws off its crimson mantle,  
and like great Raphael begins  
to paint the sky's clean panel.  
In haste, it peeps into a gorge,  
mixes paints in the sea,  
and with a brush of fine bright beams  
draws contours expertly.  
It touches with ultramarine  
Dinarian pines' sharp crowns,  
steps back, looks narrow-eyed, then adds  
new multicoloured tones.  
And with my pad by a steep path  
I quietly creep uphill  
and on my paper, virgin-white  
its motley palette spill.

## II

Thin and sharp-pointed as a spear  
up to the sky a cypress rears.  
All round  
there's not a blade of grass,  
just limestone  
in a huge grey mass,  
while far off, like a grey old man,  
Drowns the ancient sea — Jadran.  
And such deep silence fills the world  
That the heat's breathing can be heard.  
Up to the proud green tree I go  
And bend before it in a bow;  
"Come with me,"  
in a friendly tone  
I say, "It's sad  
to stand alone."

Then in reply  
its branches stir;  
it touches me,  
and, as it were,  
"Who then," it says to me, "will stand  
on guard of our fair motherland?"

### III

In hospitable Cetinje \*  
We'd seemed to drain day's wine.  
To the Appenines — to sleep — the sun  
rolled off, with wine ashine.  
And I drove downhill to the bay  
and watched  
till dusk began,  
sorry to see  
the sun's red cup  
spill into the Jadran.  
How fine it would have been to drink  
in Kotor \*\* too — how fine! —  
I thought, forgetting day still had  
to pour the globe more wine.

1955

### PASTORALE

My thoughts are browsing  
upon twilights' grass-green leas,  
my conscience-sunbeams on their  
ligatures —  
like wheat-ears...  
My Morvin \*\*\* minors me  
with hungry bumblebees  
to constellations' thirds  
above me beating.  
A willow-wand, I flow out, with the Tikich \*\*\*\* fusing...  
My fingers bear  
the smart of fissured graves;  
stung, tortured by the bumblebees' dark music  
above the obelisks  
on Morvin forest glades...

*Koritnya, 1970*

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\* Cetinje — former capital of Montenegro

\*\* Kotor — town on the Adriatic

\*\*\* Morvin — wooded area near Cherkasy

\*\*\*\* Tikich — river in the Ukraine

# NEWTON'S BINOMIAL EQUATION

(A Passacaglia)

In memory of Vasil Yalovenko, who fell in battle for his motherland

My memory singles out your voice  
at a singers' congregation

(now, when without you am I).

My memory cuts out your face —  
as it was on your coming of age — with sad patience  
on the azure stone of the sky...  
On the clouds' white marble

(as it was when you entered a turn)

Fair-locked, your contours burn...  
With the sharp break of your brows

(as you approached the foes)

your face like sunrise  
every morning awakens me.

In silence it hits me with reproof  
(when I fly home alone)...

Questioningly  
anguished, it peers into my torn heart  
(when I wake up at home).

Cruelly it punishes me,  
in my veins, profundo, it sobs,  
(a sore conscience in night's requiem throbs),  
the leaden-black gloom its reverberations fill  
(where is it — near Bryansk or  
on Knyazha Hill?),

On frozen ploughlands stretching away.

On undecaying human clay,  
on my hopes, on my pain as I ache and pine,  
on the manuals of these prayers of mine,  
on my wing  
it strikes me!

Where are you, Vasil,  
in which zone,  
on which orbit,  
on which parallel?

Daylight calls you!

My dawn calls you!

Wounded, Koritnya \* sobs like a gull:  
I can't live any more!  
I can't wait any more!

I've crippled the white-feathered wings of  
my days, bleeding and sore!

Be accursed, disperse, death's evil thralldom!

---

\* Koritnya — village near Cherkasy

333



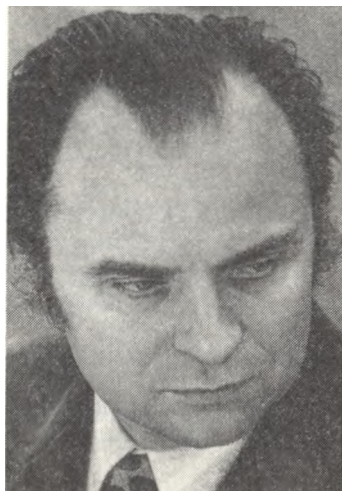
The horizon freezes on the gun-ring, taut —  
on IL strafers —  
                    pianos triangular —  
                                    O Passacaglia!..  
                                    O Passacaglia!..

CODA

Like February's wound congeals the day...  
My memory carves on your sky  
the first path  
                    with the last.  
Over the wide world  
                    after a black hearse with gloom overcast  
goes the school...  
                    goes the Tikich...  
                                    go bombers...  
And after them goes Sashko —  
                    your fair-haired Newton  
(barefoot, bareheaded, he stumbles along in the frost)  
leading his mother — the gentle Koritnya — caressingly —  
your passacaglia!..  
Blue passacaglia!..

1966

*Dmitro Pavlichko (b. 1929) was born in the village of Stopchativ, Ivano-Frankivsk Region, into a poor farmer's family. He is the author of numerous books of poetry, literary criticism, film scripts, and essays. His poetry is deeply lyrical, figurative, and rich in civic themes. He works much as a translator, and his poems are widely published in the USSR and abroad. He is a winner of the Nikolai Ostrovsky and Taras Shevchenko prizes.*



## MOUNT ARARAT

### I

How Mt. Ararat calls with its sails  
All of gold! Oh I yearn for its skyways.  
For a ship or town clouded in veils,  
Pallid town like a dream's secret byways.

Diamond white is Mt. Ararat town —  
Electricity sadly superfluous.  
Oh, from iron and plastic renown  
To escape where pure skies are luminous!

Escape poisonous fumes, and the rust  
That lie hidden in glittering churches:  
In the lighted stained-panels august  
Like untainted and innocent pictures.

Oh, to grow like the dawn in the sky,  
So like greenish-toned dill in full flower.  
Then, as if from the Flood, saved am I  
From the false and the vile of the hour.

Should I change into sunbeams sublime  
Which would pour healing nectar like honey  
In the comb of man's heart! Could I climb  
With that load up to mountain heights sunny?

I shall *not* reach my mountain-top ark  
Where it sails, a dreamboat, the blue yonder —  
For the heavy earth clings to my heart,  
And the cornfields my thoughts won't surrender.

## II

I flew up to that mountain of ice  
I had thrown the black earth from my bosom.  
Oh but why — I can't guess the device —  
Was I pierced by a frost all in blossom?

Frozen thunder — that's Ararat's crest,  
The white radiance — quartz-shine in porphyry.  
In the ark sailing there, I suggest,  
Man and beast failed to grow very brotherly.

They were saved from the waters that rose,  
From the swamp and from food's fatal blight.  
But their souls turned to ice, for they froze  
On that summit of petrified light.

I want earth. Old Mt. Ararat's spell  
Has deceived me with gleam of Flood fable.  
I'd exchange this sky heaven for hell,  
For a brimming with boiled-iron cradle.

I've no fear of the lie or of spite,  
Nor of creeping human evil.  
The implacable flame of Fight  
Is my shield from the mud of coeval.

This, my mission, is eternal the while,  
The code of my life and maturity —  
To save souls that are sunk in the vile,  
Cauterizing their ills in futurity!

Not a word way up here can I sow,  
'Twould be grain in a city ground-poor.  
Oh, if I could come down, seed and mow!  
Oh, if I by a vineyard could moor!

How I ache for far land of my birth:  
With no strength to return, passage bars —  
Blue sky clings to my heart, and not earth,  
And my wings have been punctured by stars.

From what source is this web due  
That it flies across my track?  
Thread of white and thread of blue,  
Will there follow thread of black?

On the lowlands in the autumn,  
I guessed the puzzle herein wrought —  
White thread — that grows on my temple,  
Blue thread — that's my inner thought.

I'd have liked to make a detour,  
What the black meant — go without;  
But it swings my eyes before,  
Now vanishing, now ringing out.

It's relentless, I can't snare it,  
It seems as strong as razor strop —  
Terrible if my eyes must tear it  
When, like a pendulum, it stops.

*1973*

## NOSTALGIA

That woman haunts me. Always standing there  
Upon a cloud of leaves all golden  
Beneath each plane-tree. She awaits me  
At midnight even on the city squares.

She walks to meet me on the waters  
Of flooding spring that run twixt houses.  
And through the porthole of my plane  
At take-off, I can see her staring in.

Nothing so arouses 'in 'me fear  
As the mournful smile upon her face,  
Nothing so attracts me as her gaze.

Her eyes are most severe, and yet  
I see in them a ray of kindness,  
An inner gleam that speaks not grief —  
but love.

*1979*

## HANDS

Look closely at your hands. Look near,  
And think of times you've given them unwilling.  
Remember all the deeds they've done for you.  
And thankful be if these your fingers ever  
Look calmly on you free from bitter hate.

Look closely at your hands. Look near.  
They live again your father's daily way  
Who even by his work-worn hands gave thought,  
And clenched his fist against injustice witnessed.

And they recall the times you burnt them  
First in waters cold around your school  
(Your teacher turned and saw, and ordered washing);  
And they recall the times you burnt them,  
Secondly upon the breast of first true love  
So sharp, like horns fresh broken through  
On wild brow of young ox-calf,  
And they recall the times you burnt them,  
Thirdly of fair woman's fickle cheeks  
That flared up fierce upon the blows you rendered,  
But some things lie forgot, and some things they've forgiven.

And thankful be that you did never make them serve  
To copy movements made by dwarfs in spirit,  
Who shrilly cry with hands so small and weak  
To follow close their paucity of thought.  
And thankful be your hands are not dishonoured  
By ever joining in the death of false applause.  
Look closely at your hands. Look near,  
And ask simply, without compromise,  
If they would rise to fight  
Before your people's thrice accursed foe,  
Rise even when the enemy's cold gun  
Were pressing firm against your furrowed brow,  
(False hypocrites seek justifying words!)  
And is there e'er a need to hold up high the sun  
Above the earth, above the earth?

All rivers terrified will change their course,  
And veins when terrified will change their blood:  
All pure and honest blood becomes most foul,  
And then turns venomous and so on e'er.

Look closely at your hands. Look near.  
And there without your will your fingers move —  
Another creature over them takes sway  
mysterious and at a gentle pace.

But all this happens whilst you're there, my friend,  
Your heart is still in full control of all;  
The explanation, if you seek the truth,  
Lies in impatience of the future tree  
That longs to firmly sink its roots in earth,  
And shows already strivings to that end.  
Look closely at your hands. Look near.

## OŚWIĘCIM

From Oświęcim I will not return,  
Though I went there upon my own accord.  
The shoes of my little daughters here  
Are speaking with their silent torn-out tongues.

Here father's glasses are lying on a heap  
Of broken lenses and of twisted frames.  
I recognize them by the tendon bound  
Around the bridge-piece of the nickel rims.

And here I recognize my mother's hair,  
In a heap of women's plaits, just like a stalk  
Of dried-up hay from off the harvest field.

Don't look for metaphors among these lines;  
You surely must have parents of your own,  
And have you never brought young children up?

*1967*

## IN HEMINGWAY'S HOUSE NEAR HAVANA

I went in and my spirit stood still.  
All the words of great weight quickly dying.  
The sad eyes filled with tears of the goats and sad eyes  
Of the buffaloes wild started crying.

Fearsome lions stretched out on the ground,  
On the walls stuffed horned trophies lamenting.  
And the sadness of animal eyes  
Stopped my heart with a sorrow tormenting.

Where's Alaska's wastes snowy and blue?  
And where's Kenya's, Somalia's sands burning?

The beast wants his own land, to be far from a mirage of death  
To a mirage of loving returning.

In the house lived a hunter of skill,  
Who would shoot to his fill ever aiming,..  
And the aurochs fell down with the roar  
Of a plane, bathed in blood flowing, flaming.

With a head wound an elephant sank  
To its knees, in the dust heavy falling,  
And he lowered his tusks as a sword with blade curved  
At the carbine's betrayal appalling.

And the golden-horned deer swiftly ran  
Hoping wounds to shake off by the motion,  
Through all Africa, ran, fell down, and ran  
On in swift flight from one ocean to ocean.

In the eyes of the unhurt doe still I heard clear  
Cries of Sodom rise as she stood mercy pleading,..  
And the hunter so cruel and so sharp from the hunt  
Yet took home unused shot, such pleas heeding.

And he stood there bewitched by the bullet's bright flash  
Quite alone with his rifle, reloading,  
When the funeral music from his final shot  
Of his life through the silence came sharp, light exploding.

Like dark clouds in the sky hung wreaths  
O'er America sadly floating.  
And the wolves only clothed in false black  
By the coffin walked silently gloating.

*1976*

## LIGHTHOUSE

Whose heart is that  
Above the sea at midnight,  
Which regularly beats  
And gleams with every pulse?

Whose heart is that  
Beneath the mist's damp sheepskin,  
Which still unceasing beats  
And gleams with every pulse?

Whose heart is that  
Which to love's shore now summons  
The tired and the forgotten,  
The thirsty and unsubmitive?

Whose heart is that  
Which sends such hopeful signals  
Into the endless wastes,  
Not waiting thanks nor answer?

I stand and watch.  
My hand upon my breast,  
I wait, till through my fingers  
The light immortal bursts.

If that is not my heart  
Which regularly beats  
And gleams with every pulse,  
Why did I gather stars  
Therein, which fell from heaven,  
Why do I live on Earth?

*1977*

### THE HEART OF THE MATTER

And for my coffin wood shall never want  
As for my cradle once it was not wanting,  
Yet while my cradle stays for countless others,  
My coffin will remain for me alone.

And for my sadness words shall never want  
As for my merry song they were not wanting,  
But will my song be taken up by others?  
And will my sadness die with me alone?

How hard it is to write a song for singing,  
That like a cradle goes from man to man,  
From eyes of mothers on to starshine swaying.

How hard it is in solitude to weep  
To gather up alone your sadness sighing,  
Your sadness never shared, like death alone.

*1967*



## ERNESTO CHE GUEVARA

### I

Like smoke upon the earth Guevara fell,  
In bushes of pain his shattered shoulder burst...  
So quiet between his fingers blood-streams well,  
Like golden clouds between the cliffs dispersed.

Above him, like a ghost, his murderer looms,  
And fires point-blank, yet once, and twice, and thrice...  
“Well, isn’t that enough?” Che at him booms,  
And ridicule sparkles in his dark brown eyes.

So take good care, you butchers, all the same.  
Because he’ll rise from the grave to punish your souls,  
And your foulness wipe away with flame.

And see, in oil-cloth now they wrap him fast,  
And carry him secretly to the jail, like moles,  
And there behind the bars his corpse they cast.

### II

Well, burn him then, or give him to the ants,  
Or wall him up, in concrete pack him tight,  
Or hide him in an atomic bunker, gents,  
That dust, as dangerous as dynamite.

Their spite so roared, their fears so furious ran,  
That so dead Che should not reach for his gun,  
They took an axe, and hacked off both his hands,  
Scorched brown by many years of wind and sun.

But, like some fabulous blood-stained bird,  
Those hands then came to life, and trembling stirred,  
And flew out of the prison cell afar,

And new victorious troops they called and led,  
And as a five-pointed early morning star,  
They blaze on in American skies overhead!

*1972*

## THE SEA

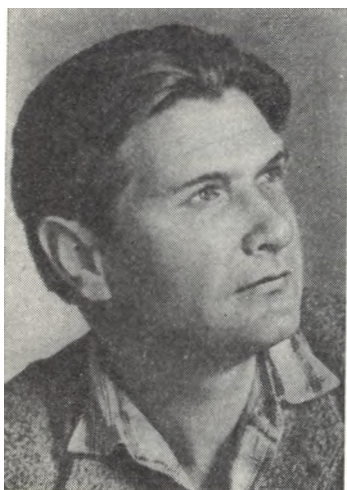
The frosty rime is laid on seas autumnal  
As on a steppeland field. But all its deeps  
Are crossed and lit by myriad beams of searchlights,  
As if a fleet of submarines were there.

And through the waves that frozen shine like scales,  
I look on sunken mountains. Now it's summer:  
Like silver nets, the dew lies on the grass.  
My father and my forebears there went reaping.

They come from their seafaring, and again  
Put out upon the deep blue vistas yonder —  
But still their scythes lie glinting on the shore.

Somewhere for sure the ships go sailing there,  
And all these massive waters are supported  
Upon my forebears' shoulders. Seas roll in.

*1979*



## VASIL BONDAR

*Vasil Bondar (1923-1969) was born in the village of Burbine, Poltava Region, into a peasant family. He is the author of numerous books of verse and fiction which combine expressive lyricism with civic themes. Many of his poems have been translated into other languages of the USSR.*

### THE FIRST FROM THE LEFT IN THE LINE

Came the hiss of barbed wire and clanking of iron...  
Someone cried out and fell. Choking. Silence again.  
Wings outspread, slanting flight through the air, cut the raven  
Greyish yarn of sleet-rain.

The rain stopped. A red sun then peered out and was caught on  
The far side of the factory's giant smoke-stack:  
Standing frozen in water, a barefooted column —  
They were eight hundred prisoners. Four days of lack.

Toad-like mouth all atwist in a mad fit of anger,  
Through the gates came the bow-legged camp Commandant —  
Running onto the platform he spoke, this haranguer,  
Quite severely: "Well, who'll go to work at the plant?"

The first man from the left in the line (by the order  
Of Committee. None else. Only he.) speaks as head.  
For the first from the left in the line — life was over,  
Scarce begun. He stepped firmly three paces ahead.

But the first from the left in the line will not ever  
Go back home, or return to his place in the line.  
"Not a one of us here will lift hand against brother...!"  
So the camp Commandant's offer thus was declined.



where on each whitewashed doorframe is painted  
the sign of the hammer and the sickle crossed,  
where by each window grow the fresh-blown roses,  
and in each room there is a place of honour  
where, like sunlight or spring flowers, Lenin  
is framed with wreath of lilies, cornflowers blue;  
and at a table sits a small first-grader  
with awkward fingers calloused from the pen  
and busily engaged upon his homework.

His mother, back from fieldwork, in a basin  
Is washing her fair feet — so lovely they —  
such shapely legs Aphrodite alone  
could dream of having when great Zeus  
made perfect all creations in the world....

I still could mention other simple things:  
Like blue-jays with their flashing tight-pressed wings  
that shake the dews down from the oaken branches;  
Or of weary student girls in resident dorms  
who grind away for tests and dream of movies,  
while their young knights with downless lips  
await them on the sleepy streets by moonlight  
and beg night-watchmen for a cigarette  
when they have finished every butt in pocket;

but even these vignettes of life, though charming,  
are quite enough to fill to overflowing  
my one and only heart that I possess  
with all the tenderness I would return  
to people building living communism —  
return it in the passionate form of song....

I'd like you to remember that nightingales  
when singing break their hearts both night and day,  
because they pour sincerely all, all their passion.  
That's why I say to you and all my friends:  
I wish I had two hearts, and not one only!

## THE ITALIAN (Raffo)

We were walking phantoms or their shadows,  
Bent like humpbacks, yet with no relief....  
Raffo, the Italian, with bravado  
Cursed in Russian his Duce chief.

Each his cross of insubordination  
Bore, and bathed in burning bloody sweat....  
Raffo, sending Hitler to perdition,  
Used up German swear-words in his threat.

While the rest of us lay tired or sleeping,  
Crying out or groaning through the night,  
From unravelled socks he sat up knitting  
Woollen vests for us till morning light.

So we would not suffer from the freezing  
Winter drizzle in our exile stark.  
To himself he sang, his sorrow easing,  
*Bandiera Rossa* in the half-lit dark.

On the vests he crudely knitted even  
Stars, five-pointed, crimson, for a crest —  
Yes, our life was bitter pain, not heaven;  
Yet warmth seeped to us a slight happiness.

Raffo and gloom — as matching words are wrong.  
A truth he knew that's known in every land —  
Life is short — soon over, like a song.  
Contesting time — the future's in your hand.

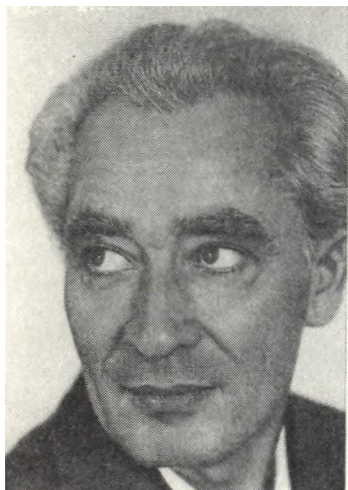
SS-men forced us into catacombs  
Of Munich cellars — we were labour cheap —  
To remove still unexploded bombs  
From underneath the massive ruin-heaps.

Raffo defused the bombs, yes sir,  
At this work of danger — he'd no peer;  
The officer, a coward and a cur,  
Felt no longer any kind of fear.

Then other fascists also lost discretion:  
To get a close-up view a few were spurred —  
For Raffo won each fight without exception,  
Battling against Death by deed, not word.

With respect the fascists formed a throng —  
Then Raffo, boiling over with black evil,  
Cried out: "Life is no more than a song!"  
And hammered something swiftly as the devil.

Thunder, smoke. With earth and stone and scars,  
Flew into hellfire every fascist Cain.  
"Hear us, Raffo? All the vests with stars  
Will treasures be, should we alive remain."



*Mikhailo Klimenko (b. 1926) was born in the village of Levkiv, Zhitomir Region, to peasant parents. He has written many collections of verse about nature and the simple people of the land. Many of his poems have been translated into other languages of the USSR.*

## MY ORCHARD

This orchard  
 Where I met my youthful spring,  
 Where ripened summer also rustled away,  
 Is empty now.  
 I gaze on apple trees:  
 They yesterday, it seems, were bending low  
 Beneath the weight of apples with red cheeks,  
 But now the wind sighs only in the leaves.  
 And still the flying webs of Indian summer  
 Catch everywhere...  
 The days are clear and fine,  
 And golden warmth so 'dreamy and caressing  
 Flows down to earth...  
 One wants to sweep it all  
 Into one's breast, and to preserve it there,  
 Until the cold days come, the rains, the autumn,  
 When on the pale blue window of the sky,  
 For one warm ray of sun, one would give all!  
 My orchard takes a rest.  
 It's true it laboured  
 In summer gloriously, and earned much praise:  
 How many warring winds and rains then shook it,  
 How many fierce attacks it has fought off,  
 From what long sieges it has freed itself,  
 And from what thunderous anger, who can say?  
 But on its way it went, and did not stumble,

And brought with honour  
All its welcome riches —  
Endowed the cellar  
Where they wait in quiet,  
These early apples, 'fragrant as June roses,  
And just toward New Year, the best team-leader  
Will take them to the distant town, still fresh  
As though they'd just been gathered from the boughs.  
The gardener then by people will be remembered  
With frequent gratitude...  
Now autumn calm  
Has flowed between the rows, as if the water  
Of some broad lake.  
No playful breezes blow,  
The orchard in the vale  
Is not disturbed...  
And on my soul tranquillity descends.  
Within me too the gusts have died away,  
The lilac days of May and youth are done...  
I meet my autumn days too, like my orchard —  
Subsiding, meet the coming autumn time,  
With reason and with wisdom,  
As one should do.

*1956*

## AWAKENING

How fine to wander where the snow is thawing,  
Awakening life in everything to note.  
Already jack-daws 'neath the pines are cawing —  
The March dawns are to blame for that, no doubt!  
And snow-drops any moment may be showing,  
Their buds from porous snow are peeping out,  
And on the pond the icy seal is flowing,  
In cracks and hollows water swims about.

And yonder, see, the pussy-willow's sprouting —  
There's none whose buds come earlier in view...  
All promises love and happiness for you.

"Fair skies to you! The first day of Spring's outing!"  
The cranes have started ringing through the blue...  
But didn't you dream of this all winter through?

*1966*



## POLISSYA

Polissya!

Pallid snow-drops in the edges,  
A delicate line, a tender ringlet there  
Among the curly hair of the Ukraine!  
When you are flooded out in fields of flax,  
Not with a Black Sea, but with one of blue,  
And the steppe breath,  
The hot wind of Sahara,  
How dry 'you whisper

then and

rustle through

Your warm cracked lips!  
The forest's cosy coat...  
The lake's blue dish,  
The ponds' square panes of glass.  
The pretty weaving streams, like playthings:  
The Guiva,

the Ubort,

and there the Uzh,

And the Teteriv — ribbons of azure blue...  
And crossing everywhere,  
Through forests cutting,  
The side-roads stretch, and there — the motor-ways.  
At midday — see, an undulating river,  
And far off gleams the surface of some reach,  
And beckons, beckons...  
Here a factory 'looms  
Quite unexpected from the pines, all white,  
And smoking its long chimney filter-tip  
With springtime smile...

Is it not like a youth,

A merry-hearted fellow from Polissya?

His voice —

a hooter in the azure blue,  
Embraces every morning with its call  
The region round — vociferous and young,  
And wakens people from their nightly sleep.  
And answering back come Korosten,\*

Popilnya,

Baranivka,

and Dovbish...

Darling Malin

With all its snow-white paper rustles here,  
And letters to the whole Republic writes —  
Don't let young Andrushivka sigh and pine...

---

\* Korosten, Popilnya, Baranivka, Dovbish, Malin, Andrushivka — towns in Zhitomir Region. Malin is an old Ukrainian paper-producing centre

And lying parallel, running, so it seems  
Far, far away, go steel-veined railway lines,  
And on the side-tracks there's a smell of oil.  
The land is stingy here —  
No gold it gives,  
No iron spouts forth, and only a merest trace,  
In places, of the softish blue-grey coal.  
But generously it yields  
The prickly labradorite to cutters of stones.  
Let them first trim them, polish the facets true,  
And lock light in!

Then through your soul will pierce  
The snow-drop's azure, and sunshines mottled spots,  
A-trembling in its black incredible depths.  
That is Polissya's soul,  
and to attain it  
Is no light task — an everlasting tale.

*1956*



*Mikhailo Tkach (b. 1932), a poet and screenwriter, songwriter and translator, is a recipient of the Taras Shevchenko Prize for his work on the documentary film The Soviet Ukraine. The songs written to his lyrics enjoy wide popularity in the Soviet Union. Some of them have been translated into foreign languages.*

SON,  
THE DUCKS ARE FLYING

At daybreak a mother  
Her baby son swaddled  
When the stars foretelling  
The fates are most bright.  
— Look my son, my baby  
For over the Ukraine,  
For over our cottage,  
The ducks are in flight.

At daybreak a mother  
To her small son whispered:  
— By the Chumak Highroad  
Chumaks \* spend the night,—  
Get up son, my baby,  
For over the Ukraine,  
For over our cottage,  
The ducks are in flight.

My son, when the day breaks,  
I will listen closely,  
When in the blue heavens  
Wings will flutter by.

---

\* Chumak Highroad — traditional Ukrainian name for the Milky Way: *chumaks* were wagoners who originally traded in salt delivering it from the Black Sea coast to all parts of the Ukraine

Fly to me then, dear son,  
For over the Ukraine,  
For over our cottage,  
The ducks are in flight.

My son, when the day breaks,  
How hard to be waiting,  
And still worse the gazing  
Into dark of night.  
Don't wander, my dear son,  
For over the Ukraine,  
For over our cottage,  
The ducks are in flight.

1974

### MIRAGE

I gazed into the mirror of Baikal,  
Where the waves rocked the shadow of the larch,  
In the beginning it stretched long, so long,  
Like the road I travelled from Ukraine, so far.  
The sun climbed warmly up upon my back,  
And I saw how the shadow flowed toward me,  
How ever clearer details were revealed,  
And how the shadow became small and smaller.  
Then suddenly the wave broke at the shoreline —  
And lost its shadow,  
While in its place  
As if out of a legend flowed toward me  
The one I loved,  
With two lilies in her braids,  
Her head encircled with a narrow wreath,  
Which by the Dnieper shore we wove together,  
Her eyes shone mirror-like — two orbs of heaven,  
And like two waves, her eyebrows curved above.  
I wanted then to forward plunge to meet her,  
Waving my arms like an eagle taking flight,  
But somewhere down into the depths she dived —  
And then toward me quickly swan another.  
Within her eyes no longer smiled the heavens,  
Her hoary locks did not flow thick and heavy,  
Without the wreath she looked as though she'd never  
Known beauty in her lifetime, or its pleasure.  
I recoiled as though from death approaching,  
But recognized within the voice an echo  
Familiar, near and dear:

— Can you hear?  
Don't be afraid, my dove,  
Your beauty  
Did not perish in the waves.  
She lives beside the Dnieper river's shore,  
I'm but the shadow-grandmother of your love,  
Lost in the dreaming taiga evermore...  
I wanted to extend a helping hand,  
I wanted her to tell me of her fears,—  
She disappeared.  
The sun reversed,  
Toward Ukraine the sun moved with all speed.

## LIVING EARTH

It's war...

Above the centuries' ancient caves  
The echo of the primitive bow-string runs —  
The distant forbear of atomic guns.  
Already it seems —

upon its own dead graves  
Stands living Earth,

like some black widow-dame.

And until now the butchers at her aim!  
And until now the shot still echoing goes  
That split the world up into friends and foes.  
Changing their form, the brazen spear-heads range,  
Go shooting through the earth from age to age,  
And until now still anxious and full of care  
Are human dreams.

The war has ended, but the world's aware  
That conditions for war exist in all extremes.  
And mothers

on five continents sing,  
Their babies in their cradles swing,  
Upon the world meridian's string:  
"Lullay, lullay,..."

Dream, little ones,  
Grow up,  
grow up,  
grow up, dear sons...

## O BEAUTIFUL ASH TREES

O beautiful ash trees,  
By the road, past the village, I see you,  
I see your glory,  
When the dew gleams bright with the morning.  
You come into my dreams,  
Like the days of my barefoot childhood,  
You come into my dreams,  
O ash trees of fluttering leaves.

O beautiful ash trees,  
Your tall crowns murmur soft far above me,  
And like the passing years,  
With the wind flutter down yellow leaves.  
The first snows of greying  
I've brought, like fear to my temples,  
The first snow of greying,  
O ash, on my temples is spraying.

O beautiful ash trees,  
The storks have cried their way past the village,  
And a cold, icy path  
As they flew 'cross the heavens they've left.  
In their searching for spring  
They must fly to far-far distant places,  
In their searching for spring,  
O ash trees, then they'll return.

O beautiful ash trees,  
By the road, past the village, I see you,  
And bow on returning,  
In salute, from far-distant journeys.  
You come into my dreams,  
Like the days of my barefoot childhood,  
You come into my dreams,  
O ash tree of fluttering leaves.

1974

## TARAS' DREAM

I'll build a hut with a bright room.  
*Taras Shevchenko*

O blessed dreamlet, thought-child so long lying  
And cradled throughout childhood's tender years,  
You call to him, O dream, like cranes do flying —  
To fly from sick and weary times for sweeter spheres,

Where warmer waters lie, dawns swing like cherries,  
Where over poplars hangs the Milky Way.  
Oh, carry him, tormented, worn and harried,  
Into the hut that by the Dnieper lay.  
It's time he sat beside his door and rested,  
And bowed in silence lone his thoughtful brow:  
Too long he's been away, detained, arrested;  
Too far from home, O dreamlet, look well now —  
The blackthorn many times has bloomed from pain  
That led his mother young unto the grave.  
His dream of freedom's paid, time and again,  
Within the army ranks — and none could save.  
He flies to his homeland, back to his Ukraine:  
His wings a brush and magic-writing quill,  
It's time he built that hut, his dream so plain,  
With windows on the Dnieper, roaring still,  
So that this small but blessed heaven  
Will bring his kinfolk finally some peace —  
His brothers, sisters, relatives will then  
Their further curses on Dame Fortune cease.  
Thus through his loneliness go minutes flying,  
For with his thoughts he breaks his chains each day;  
Weeps only that with all his endless trying  
His dream-hut's cornerstone he cannot lay.  
Yet still he builds a hut from dreams of blue —  
The honour-post his literary words.  
Take them, people, and to yourselves be true,  
Blend with them to form harmonic chords.  
Your children with first cherry blossom swaddle,  
But do not use his words as slumber songs —  
Grant that they be a testament to follow,  
Your children's bread of life their whole life long.  
Be certain, for us all the day will come —  
Our motherland will ask us one by one:  
Can you recall the home from which you come?  
Recall what gave you your place in the sun?



*Tamara Kolomiyets (b. 1935) was born in the town of Korsun-Shevchenkivsky into the family of a civil servant. She has authored several collections of poetry, some of them for children, as well as translations. The highly figurative and lyrical style of her first book of poems *Snowdrops* won her the top prize and gold medal at the World Festival of Youth and Students held in Moscow in 1957. Many of her poems have been published in other republics of the Soviet Union and abroad.*

### THE CRANES' SORROW

Two broad wings has a crane and a nest in the marsh  
And a cry full of sorrow and pain.  
But when Autumn's red troops mid the orchard-trees march  
Distant roads lie awaiting the crane.

Over limitless seas, to far-off foreign parts  
Lies its distant and difficult flight,  
And the sorrowful message the crane's song imparts  
Sounds, disturbing the clear autumn height.

Every flap of its wing takes it farther from home,  
Brings new sorrow and grief hard to quell.  
And like wheat-grains, fall into the damp autumn loam  
The crane's sorrowful cries of farewell.

And like seed the earth takes in the crane's tender love  
That will sprout in the springtime anew  
In the shade of a dreamy and green-leaved spring grove  
As a sweet periwinkle, deep-blue.

All its love, too, will sprout in a poet's sweet words  
To the depth of men's hearts they will reach.  
No two homelands nor mothers are there in the world;  
Even cranes have but one of them each.



## THE GIRL WHITE-WASHED THE COTTAGE

The girl white-washed the cottage,  
As cold as a winter's day.  
I wanted to berate her —  
But I scolded her in vain.

The girl white-washed the hallway,  
White-washed it snow-cold pale,  
She painted and she painted,  
Producing an icy trail.

Along the trail he came, glowing,  
Like the sun roaming springtime roads —  
The snow wept as the lad went passing  
And melted its frosty mounds.

The girl the wall began painting,  
In purest white cherry blossoms,  
She painted and kept on painting,  
Her wedding bed she was making.

1979

\* \* \*

Morning comes on grey steeds prancing,  
The day — on white,  
On black steeds — the night,  
Out of colourful fairy tales,  
They come by, the child to delight.

They open the gates of wonder —  
The doors to the world far and wide:  
Where with winds the falcon murmurs,  
Where the snowdrifts in deep banks liel..

The universe, each in its own way,  
Do the child's eyes learn to perceive,  
As if through magical lacy patterns,  
Like those that a frosty night weaves.

One must stand but behind a window,  
As if playing blind man's buff,—  
When a goldfish crosses your vision,  
When the Snow-maiden runs down the path.

Beauty and courage and kindness,  
In everything, children can see,  
The dream gives birth to the fairy tale,  
So the fairy tale'd nourish the dream.

Within the child's heart having buried,  
The deep seed of eternal unrest,  
When indifference a hand would wave,  
I had taught him to say, "I must!"

Taught him to seek down in unknown depths,  
To reach high for the tallest of heights,  
To stand up in the face of danger,  
In the vital ocean of life!

To leave to descendants the planet,  
In the bloom of a radiant morn,  
So as explorer and as poet  
A person in this world is born.

*1960*

## TO A MOTHER

When you rock your children without rest,  
Wiping more than once your weary brow,  
Not in vain the well-known proverb says,  
Those who have no children — know no qualms.

When they are grown — a mother's heart is full  
With fears for all that they attempt to do,  
How many headaches when they're small and helpless,  
And when they're adults — heartaches added too.

No matter though, the worries and distress,  
As if with happiness they can compare,  
Or to one's joy when baby takes first steps,  
And walks around the room with balanced care.

When you hear, the first time, the word "mama",  
When you take them to their school, holding hands,  
When suddenly you learn you have a grandson,  
In greetings sent to you by telegram.

Good it is to see yourself in childhood,  
Know that child will give you longer life,  
Good to give the world a human being,  
And the human being give the world so wide.

Give it from the groves the primrose blossoms,  
Mountains blue and turbulent running streams...  
Those who have no children — know not fortune,  
Robbed by fate forever through the years.

*1960*

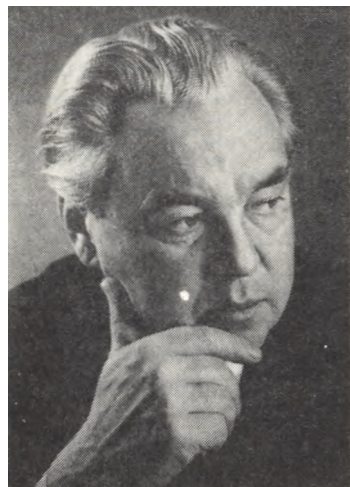
### ON THE HILL OF BATU KHAN

As fair Kiev golden lay  
With the autumn bright falling,  
On the hill of Batu Khan  
I heard fate of mine calling:  
“Do not fly from me speeding,  
But stay here my words heeding,  
Little stork!..”

In fair Kiev lying far,  
Cold breath chilling froze the air,  
Stands the hill of Batu Khan  
I'll stay but one moment there:  
“There's no hope for your pleading,  
Nor will force e'er be leading  
Little stork!..”

As fair Kiev sky blue lies  
Autumn will soft weave cloud dome,  
On the hill of Batu Khan  
All my memories will roam:  
“You honoured freedom when flying,  
Why with pain are you crying,  
Little stork?..”

*1967*



*Volodimir Brovchenko (b. 1931) was born in the village of Mala Viska, Kirovograd Region, into the family of a collective farmer. He is the author of numerous books of poems, songs, and translations. His poetry is lyrical and rich in civic themes. Many of his works have been published in other republics of the USSR and abroad.*

## THE VETERANS WERE RETURNING FROM THE WAR

When the veterans returned from the war,  
Leaving half of Europe waste and rubble,  
We striplings — in fact we were but lads —  
Were healing still our feet cut by the stubble.

It couldn't be that all would be the same...  
And some awaited theirs by day and night.  
To living heroes — honour, glory came,  
And immortality, of course, to those who died.

They greeted them, the mothers, very proud,  
Of their Vasils, and their Ivans, returned,  
The pot-pourri of tangos never ceased,  
From resonant accordions, monogrammed.

Would you believe? They cleared their eyes of mist,  
Our high and mighty aging village maids,  
They walked, like pea-hens, on the village paths,  
And suddenly ignored us as they went.

Because the warriors came back from war,  
Oh how for stars and epaulets we yearned,  
And cigarette lighters, and accordions...  
How much we wanted to be — just like them,  
The lads who from the field of war returned.

We did not then believe, could not foresee,  
That all, that everything was still ahead,  
That there'd be plenty in our youthful years,  
Of bitterness and sweetness to be lived.

That though precocious, we were very young,  
Suffering pain, but by the war well-taught,  
That still to grow upon our liberated land,  
Were the finest maids the world ever begot.

And truly, all these things have come to pass,  
And transient, moved on, just as they should,  
The poplars filled our hair with floating fluff,  
And God or Satan guarded still our world.

Most tenderly we think back and recall  
Those girls and do not wonder at their stand,  
A longtime now these girls are girls no more,  
And obviously, grandchildren now tend.

Yet still, at times, a chord of memory strikes —  
How with affront they treated us those days,  
When soldiers were returning from the front,  
They paid no heed to us, those cursed maids!

*1973*

\* \* \*

Again the steppe arises from the depths,  
Out of my soul, my eyes, out of my speech,  
Here I have reached the greying of my years,  
Yet know no other love that runs as deep.

The starry heavens hanging o'er the steppe,  
Have enveloped both time for me and space,  
Round apple trees beyond the gully peep,  
Extend their branches full of youthful grace...

One recollection from the past I have,  
A thread of happiness my fate did yield,  
There in the steppe a furrow deep I left,  
And footsteps in a cultivated field.

Beats the fullness of the harvest day,  
Summer nights give birth to herb and rue,  
Cherish with your ears of grain your sons,  
O steppe, for labour in the morning dew.

You have sunk so deep within my roots,  
Paramount within my thought and vision,  
You are magic music, and my bread,  
My eternal secret and enigma.

*1971*

\* \* \*

Beneath the plum-tree "Uhorka",  
Where grasses murmur soft,  
In well-spring free, unbounded,  
'Twas here these words I sought.  
'Twas here my youthful years were spent,  
My kindred did reside,  
Here windows opened wide to show  
The wondrous world outside.  
In the green hum of countryside  
The youthful guelder rose,  
Forever o'er the fountain's splash  
My thoughts gave no repose...  
Look well, as long as you can see,  
Into the boundless blue,  
So in its mysteries you'll find  
The heavens, and you too.

*1971*



YEVHEN LETYUK

*Yevhen Letyuk (1929-1976) was born in the village of Romanivka, Poltava Region, into the family of a farmer. He wrote many books of poetry and fiction as well as journalism, mainly concerning the workers of the Donbas region. Many of his works have been published in Russian.*

### WHO'S STIRRING THE STARS AROUND UP THERE?

Who's stirring the stars around up there with a hand as big as a shovel?  
Outside — a rain of stars.  
Outside — a rain of stars.  
Peace of heart again disturbed.  
And I want to scream out:  
"Hands off!"  
As if skies weren't full of stars, but brilliant glow-worms of our souls.  
Every star there — a friend; the Milky Way — the heart of Being.  
Whose life now has burnt to ashes...?  
Whose life burnt to ashes...?  
Which one of my friends this alarming moment has joined the fallen?  
What world's he from up there?  
Who counts him loved and dear?  
Perhaps in Africa a wounded Black the enemy's trampled?  
Or else in Lisbon from an assassin's bullet someone fell?  
Or on our borders a Soldier Guard encountered death in battle,  
Not letting one of our foes cross our frontier,  
Retreating not one step,  
Not one inch back?  
Outside — a rain of stars.  
Outside — a rain of stars.  
Who's stirring the stars around up there with a hand as big as a shovel...

Stars are falling....  
But in my heart no pain,

Only hate, for hate in my heart is not asleep.  
Not the first,  
Not the first  
Stars to fall within our ranks.  
Not the first,  
Not the first  
Person next me to weep for a friend.  
But we paste a smile on, even if it's bitter,  
For the stars are not snuffed, they shine in the sky.  
Not our first battle this — and such a rain of stars.....

\* \* \*

I've seen high wires trailing, torn loose by Big Gun battle spells:  
They were hopelessly twisted and lay caught in grief's coiling spirals.  
I have seen brothers-in-arms express their eternal farewells,  
Though they knew only yesterday love, a love born out of trials.  
I have seen little cranelets that fell sometimes out of the nest,  
To be burned by oil-slick flaming — parents not circling or crying....  
Oh, how easily, Memory, you build a bridge of unrest  
Bringing pain, the incurable, uncalled, but time defying.  
On a nest near my window the gape-mouthed fledglings are dumb,  
Waiting mother and food, and the dream of dazzle-swift winging.  
Now the wires are taut and aquiver with song, with a hum:  
Like a musical staff where bird-notes compose joy with singing.





STANISLAV STRIZHENYUK

*Stanislav Strizhenyuk (b. 1931), the son of a farmer, was born in the town of Haivoron, Poltava Region. He has written many collections of poems, marked by their dynamic and distinctive imagery. His poems have been widely published in the USSR.*

### THE SUNFLOWER

Once a lad and a sunflower grew up  
On the shore of a salty blue sea.  
Like a real sun the flower bore its head;  
In the lad's eyes its light you could see.  
In its petals bright sunshine it stored,  
While the wind wiped the dew off its face.  
Like a lighthouse, it shone from the shore  
Letting out, unbeknown, into space  
That the lad was a seaman by grace.

And the sunflower stood firm on the land  
Under storms in those parts by the sea,  
Turning after the ships that it saw  
Its fair head for all captains to see.

It was stamped in the captain's brave soul,  
In his head, grey as mists in the fall.

To Bombay he would sail, brave and strong, in the gale,  
And hot tears from the lad's eyes would hail.  
But the lad was ashamed of his tears  
And in dreams to the ocean he hied;  
While the sunflower stood still on the piers,  
The young captain his tears could not hide.

And the captain felt hale and hearty  
Because, after long weeks of parting,

When the ship sailed to land  
Like a beacon would stand  
That lad in a hat as yellow as sand.

1968

## ODESSA

A dry lagoon  
And Tatar country reaches,  
And in the wind blue ribbons flowing still.  
You look and think to yourself at will:  
Above the Black Sea  
Here Odessa rises,  
As if a peakless cap, upon its hill.

Here lives the echo of *Potyomkin's* \* glory,  
Beneath the clouds she's lightly floating there.  
And like a sailor's talisman, in the air,  
Or some unsleeping watchful power, at mooring  
The lighthouse burns and casts its reddish glare.

Odessa grew with the dawn-rayed panorama,  
The nightingales composed to her their odes,  
Where once the gendarmes pistols used to load,  
In underground labyrinths of the Moldavanka \*\*,  
And by informers of the Czar's Okhranka \*\*\*,  
Was her biography written down in code.

On quiet waters  
Dawns are burning golden;  
Grown in the stones  
The scars of barricades.  
Odessa  
Is a builder and a soldier  
The living pass-word of this present age.

And Lenin's mandate firm she holds till now.  
And factories light the sky up with their glow.  
The spirit of labour  
Night and day is there  
Upon the skies' red cotton bunting flares...

---

\* *Potyomkin* — battleship of the Russian Navy; participated in the First Russian Revolution of 1905-1907

\*\* Moldavanka — district in Odessa

\*\*\* Okhranka — czarist secret police

For Odessa a soldier's Ribbon of Glory wears,  
Which, like a machine-gun belt round her shoulders she bears.

A dry lagoon  
And Tatar country reaches...  
Hrihorivka \* awakened where it dwells,  
Where sea-wind with the distant voyage smells,  
There stands the land  
Which as Odessa features,  
Upon three ports,  
As if upon three whales.

1967

### WHITE GULL SEAGULL

The wind is weeping at our parting  
And beats the waters from the bow,  
So wish me luck and all successes,  
Embrace me in your thoughts right now.

White gull, seagull, white gull skimming,  
Wing like brows that I adore,  
Settled on the waves like sorrow,  
Close beside my native shore.

Into the clouds she'll not go soaring  
Alone at eve above the strand,  
Like wisp of steam so white, elusive,  
The winds whisk off to distant land.

White gull, seagull, white gull skimming,  
Wing like brows that I adore,  
Settled on the waves like sorrow,  
Close beside my native shore.

The stars are sinking in the waters  
The darkness flashes in the lull  
And falls a shadow from the heavens,  
The wing in blackness of the gull.

White gull, seagull, white gull skimming,  
Wing like brows that I adore,  
Settled on the waves like sorrow,  
Close beside my native shore.

1968

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\* Hrihorivka — district in Odessa

## MAMAYEV MOUND

Some dreams more bitter far than wormwood bite,  
On sparrow nights come flocking fast, come flying.  
In sleep I arm for war, prepare to fight,  
Pack bread and kiss my mother deeply sighing.

I walk through swirling dust, gunpowder smoke,  
Most likely then, nay, surely, no proof needing,  
I come out near the town of Stalingrad,  
From there, I know, for me no way back's leading.

Above the Volga rises high the mound...  
I wield my shield and sword in sacred daring,  
Volcano fierce, this daring rages wild,  
The Reichstag's windows shake, its full force bearing.

So ever on, and now the stamp of time,  
Like medal won in battle I bear steady,  
And dreams of mine at dawn awake and cry,  
Rise silent, for attack e'er standing ready.

1970

## THE FIELD

An AN-2  
Like a swing  
In the clouds.  
Green vistas.  
My head goes round.  
White blossoms  
Shine everywhere.  
Rains, headlong,  
Pour down their balm.  
The field's restiveness under my wing I bear  
Like a schoolboy his copybook under his arm.

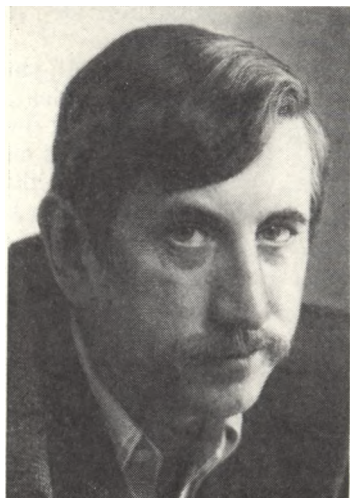
With you I hurry, o field green and cool  
Towards life, like a schoolboy to school.

Like a first-form schoolboy,  
I whisper low:  
"Hello!"  
The nightingale rings its bell for me.  
Earth,  
From you Nature's science I know,  
Songs my geography.

At this point  
In time and space  
I'm in this world  
Like a schoolboy in class.  
In the midst of its white-cloud escort  
In the sky, like a badge on a jacket,  
To its far-off airport  
Hurries  
As if to lessons  
An airplane, raising a racket.

Only I, not hurrying anywhere,  
Just breathe in the field's restless air.

Let time, if it wishes, pass.  
I am a humble man.  
Admit me into your class,  
Native field,  
For a century,  
If you can!



*Volodimir Luchuk (b. 1934) was born in the village of Matcze, Poland, into a peasant family which moved to the Ukraine in 1945. He is the author of numerous books of poetry, translations, literary criticism, and essays. His poems, laconic and philosophical, have been translated into many languages in the USSR and abroad.*

# DAWN

I ran to darkness cold and chilling deep  
 Through fields  
                     and valley,  
                                     through weed bed.  
 As thunder clouds with clutching, blackened palm  
 Chased after stars and onward sped.  
 Around me winds set up a lonely song,  
 Songs for the dead uncalled for flood,  
 As if they felt  
                     and pointed out  
 That I'd soon fall, all bathed in blood.  
 I did not fall, I did not even stop,  
 But ran  
             on  
             fleet...  
 I felt not as the first pure sunshine rays  
 Brushed gently on my aching feet.  
 Yet who like me a strong belief kept dear  
 That needs would be to run through night,  
 And then at early chorus song speed on  
 To meet you there in distant light!

1962

And I bless all the hands held outstretching  
to bring cherries ripe within reaching.  
And I bless all the hands outstretching  
at the cradle of child soft beseeching.  
And I bless all the hands held outstretching  
to reach out to a body that's tender.  
And I bless all the hands held outstretching  
to join black and white together.  
And I bless all the hands held outstretching  
to take books to read from the counter.  
And I bless all the hands held outstretching  
a vote for the truth fearless giving.

...Accursed be the hands of people,  
all, who are equally guilty,  
that our fellows stand in need  
hand outstretching  
thus one man  
to another!

IN SUN ENCIRCLED

So full of life and love in sun encircled  
I walk and bless the air with joy of living  
That never have I donned a mask of cunning  
But comfort sought from warmth friend's hands were giving.

I'm rich, and bearing gifts of loaves and grasses  
 Came even Whitman in and spread my table,  
 While Man's dreams through the dark unknown were growing  
 And came alive upon this earth unstable.

And strong am I since red my blood is flowing  
And red floods all my thoughts and dreams in lightness,  
As proud Ukraine lives on and on unyielding  
The land that filled my days of youth with brightness.

To all that gives me happiness and riches  
To all I prized, and all that pride will waken  
I should in word of native tongue sing praises,  
Since from my people's heart this word was taken.

372

## THE SUN

Scooping, palms cupping, deep waters,  
Gently it swayed, languid, slow,  
and slipping, fell in the river  
down to the murky depths low.

Rolling their sleeves up for working,  
willows bow down and soft sway,  
and try to lift out the sunshine,  
slipping through fingers away.

Swallows in fear above waters,  
swirling dark waves, anxious sweep:  
"With sunshine gone we will know sadness!  
Lacking sunshine, sadly we'll weep!"

Wind from pine forest came running:  
"Simply, then, to oblige you!"  
and drawing the sun from the river,  
flung it up in the heavens so blue.





*Volodimir Kolomiyets (b. 1935) was born in the village of Vovchkiv, Kiev Region, into the family of a teacher. He is the author of numerous collections of short and long poems, literary criticism, and translations. Highly distinctive and melodious, his poetry has been published in many other Soviet republics and abroad.*

### VERNAL DOWRY

Fill the vernal cup a-brimming:  
 Vernal rye,  
                     vernal bloodstream,  
 Vernal bee,  
                     vernal rue-flower,  
 Vernal hell, repent, redeeming.  
 Springs from nether-earth,  
                                     ravine,  
   sub-waters —  
 Vernal spirit  
 of grass or word-spell?  
 A hundred craters on high are opened —  
 Spilling vernal fire  
                                     from Yarilo.\*  
 Vernal-sown! Greenery grown! Vernality!  
 So fleece is growing,  
                                     grain is sprouting,  
 Spilling where the Yatran wanders...  
 Where Yaremche and Yampil towns are dreaming...  
 Down to Pereyaslav spring's laughing.  
 Vernal dancing! Vernal brightness!  
 To armourers — swords a-flashing.  
 To brewers — vernal meads and bitters...  
 Svyatogori... Kudiyari...\*\*

\* Yarilo — Sun God in pagan Slavic mythology

\*\* Svyatogor, Kudiyar — legendary knights



He was, to judge by all, both proud and daring,  
And scorned all kinds of falsehood and deceit,  
And, clearly, he could lift up human suffering  
And her pure beauty to the highest height.

And could protect it when those rogues attempted  
Upon her virgin body and mind to intrude,  
For they o'erwhelmed her with their naked glances,  
Those little men, lascivious and crude.

And still her beauty reigns in blinding whiteness...  
But treacherous villains whet their blades to slay!  
For such there are, alas! See, him they murdered,  
But her — they merely hacked her arms away,

The arms which had embraced him... They'd no power,  
Those bloody-minded butchers, to venture more,  
And till this day she has no arms... But sorrow  
Still sails to them on the far-divided shore.

And so perhaps, because that lasting memory,  
The memory of woman's hands, in her still gleams,  
She is so beautiful... And with arms invisible  
Into reality, human reality, swims.

And purplish shadows from those arms have fallen...  
Where are they now — in dreams, in sympathy yet?  
In pulsing tracks of autumn cranes a-flying,  
In early greyness, or in late regret?

In all — in silvery dew-drops on the seedlings,  
In ringing buckets which for water go,  
In children's tears, in maidens' fascination,  
In asters which in autumn chill still blow.

And weightlessly above us floating, soaring,  
They ring, and someone's tears stand on the brink.  
They fly in futile dreams, through hands of others,  
Who all their lives are slaves to the kitchen sink.

Those hands which are not fruitful, worn by labour,  
Or reddened, like a beetroot, from cold earth...  
So freeze and grieve those missing hands, still fleshless,  
As if through them earth's sympathy shines forth.

For beauty gives and gives, itself not sparing,  
Does not diminish, maybe so explained,  
That beauty gives herself completely... Changes  
Into creation... Drink — and there's no end!

And what does she ask back for that creation,  
Creation which in people is inspired?  
Maybe, just love... Well, then! Our work's more precious  
Than any love we give by thankfulness fired!

So let the bright waves beat...

Oppressive. Pungent.  
O music, o marvellous night that round us lies!  
As if somewhere the vine-stems started bending,  
Or tears of happiness welled up in one's eyes.

The rain to leaves its golden confidences  
Is prattling... Ringing on the pavement lands.  
And like a breath of wind in cosmic spaces  
Is the jealous happiness of star-bright hands.

So let the impossible, then, become the possible.  
With generous gifts fulfil my soul likewise.  
And let the thunder sound for me a wonder,  
Which in those hands, that living beauty lies.

That flood of life for all, for all's the solvent:  
For honey and salt, for ice and flame up-curved.  
~~Those~~ chaste white arms o'er all the earth are flying  
And weaving love... Love saves the whole wide world.

1971

### A SOLDIER'S MEDALS

Beneath the glass, in their green frame,  
Upon the white-washed wall,  
Above the table quietly gleam  
A soldier's medals all.

I don't know what relation was that,  
I was only a passer-by,  
And called in at a village hut  
For a drink when feeling dry.

I further looked across the shack —  
With a smile which seemed to speak  
He stood, and with his hand pushed back  
Some branches from his cheek.

That was a photo.  
But he gave,  
He gave his all for us.

I didn't enquire about the brave —  
Not the time to question thus.

Perhaps his mother, old and grey,  
Here murmured in dreams "My son!"  
Perhaps his favourite sister may.  
The embroidered towel have done.

Perhaps it was his brother's hand  
Which knocked the nail in the wall,  
Perhaps his darling daughter's hand  
Plucked the bunch of flowers small...

The soldier lives in his own past  
Most certainly, with his folk,  
And I confess, that in my heart  
Some deep response he woke.

As if across the nebulous mist,  
Through blizzards of winter dim,  
I suddenly, sharply felt just this:  
I'm in debt, in debt to him...

A smile, and such an open look,  
And medals in the row...  
Beside the open door I stood,  
Looked back, to remember so.

Farewell, small hut, where in green frame  
Upon the white-washed wall,  
Above the table quietly gleam  
A soldier's medals all.

*1959*

\* \* \*

The sun is now my visitor.  
It organises all, in plenty straying.  
The barley bearded beaming bright,  
As languid lupin with sun's rays is playing.  
And princely cats with whiskers pale  
Acknowledge me, wink slightly...  
As if already I were green,  
A bowstring stretched out tightly.  
The scent of sun comes, from the corn.  
And to my soul moves skyline living,  
Since after all I'm born quite clear for works  
Of tenderness and giving.

And I am born quite clear for paths  
 Cut through high rye fields shifting.  
 And from the blackberry, crisscrossed with paths  
 I'm wrapped in mists' scent drifting.  
 And colour never sought a fern.  
 I know this truth that you keep, too, unfaded:  
 That he who's learnt to love the earth —  
 The mother of all wonders here and birth —  
 Pure colour will seek out unaided.

1976

### SPIKY THOUGHTS, OR HEART OF A HEDGEHOG

And fingers brushed keyboard, a woodland seeking  
 Where pathways twist and lie through undergrowth, forgotten,  
 Where miracles dovegrey and sharp are bathed in dawning  
 And where, with juice of blackberry on lips...

Naivety farewell! In bushes memories fade!  
 The moon here pitted hangs. The wind was dying.  
 Here's naphthalene. And yawns are hid with hand.  
 And all is painted fine with smile of fortune bland.  
 The world's filled full: hypocrisy and lying.

So tell me now beloved how you came  
 The path to this kingdom rotting here to follow,  
 It's not the ogre sits beside the chest,  
 His grandson young sits there and medicine swallows.

And on his lips so twisted, parchment dry,  
 An evil laugh that saddened too will die.  
 His eyes for sale and betrayal willing,  
 Are watching me, a client soon, with caution...

Run from the eyes, from night... But backwards can I run?  
 Two worlds exist, one real, one fairytale.  
 The one where mother constant questions you  
 And asks how much you earn, how much you're due.  
 And father hisses back: "Our son's a hedgehog, yet you must go  
 asking!..."

One world is fresh, with snow and raindrops sheeting!  
 Where finally you'll understand a hedgehog's living,  
 His spikes, his heart in tender prickles beating.

1976



*Mikola Sinhayivsky (b. 1936) was born in the village of Shatrishcha, Zhitomir Region, into a farming family. He is the author of numerous collections of civic and lyrical poetry and is a Nikolai Ostrovsky prize winner. His poems have been published in many Soviet republics and abroad.*

### MY NATIVE LAND

If not for you, my woods and fields,  
if not for you, my green-banked streams,  
unbearable torment I'd feel,  
I'd die of thirst, of woeful dreams.

Praise be to life — to lucid springs,  
green meadows, grassy leas and woods,  
that rustled over me in spring,  
that over me in verdure stood,

That gave their music and their shade,  
my dreams and thoughts and words revived.  
'Twas at their side, 'twas with their aid  
Ukrainian songs and souls survived.

1974

### DAILY BREAD

The sun in the window — an omen gay!  
Sun, you beget every poem of mine!  
'Tis your light that wakes the poet each day,  
Filling his soul with your essence divine.

New, precious content it draws from your beam,  
thought — bold, unfettered, untrammeled and young.  
And yet the language of truth, its bright gleam  
is bread for the poet, which makes him strong.

And for your mind, when the times become hard,  
not to stray off like a sheep in the wild,  
faith everlasting must live in your heart —  
deep faith in Man, for hope is faith's child!

Help the oppressed, and their champion be,  
share their anxiety, sorrow, delight!  
Let your soul burn unextinguishably  
with others' pain, with undying light!

*1971*

\* \* \*

Underneath the Polissian sky  
with my lips plucking daisies I lie.  
To the voices of birds I respond  
and merge with the grass, with the pond.  
Long ago I was born in this world.  
Here I lived, into grief and joy hurled.  
Here, too, lifeless I lie in the morning  
and the poplar above me stands mourning.  
And my children and wife mourn for me  
with their tears flowing plentifully.

Do not grieve:

'tis but dreams that I see.  
I have not had my fill of life's glee.  
I have long yet to live till I die.  
With my lips plucking flowers I lie.  
With the grass sprouting, coming to birth,  
turning sunwards, I smile, like the earth.

*1968*



MIKOLA KARPENKO



*Mikola Karpenko (b. 1925) was born in the village of Voronkiv, Kiev Region, to peasant parents. He has written many collections of poetry, humour, and sketches. His style is lyrical and epic and rich in folk elements. His poems have been translated into many languages of the USSR.*

\* \* \*

The weight of years 'upon my back I feel.  
My prime's already catching up with me.  
To live life's harder than to cross a field,  
I'm saying to myself more frequently.

But Youth, although already far remote,  
Sometimes brings on its wings the sudden thought:  
To cross a field is not so easy too  
In cases when the field is all shot through...

1969

\* \* \*

Like water, minute after minute,  
Between life's banks time flows away;  
Don't promise to do good to people,  
But simply do it, be what may.

All still awaits us — snow and sunshine,  
Grey rain and orchards full of scent.  
To be a friend in need don't promise,  
But simply always be a friend.

One day will come unknown emotions,  
And then one life will start for two.  
Don't promise that you will be faithful,  
But simply love, simply be true.

And when red flags unfold for battle,  
And when the bugle's call is heard,  
The country will need not just pledges,  
But soldiers who will keep their word.

*1966*

\* \* \*

You remember how we loved to listen  
When beneath a swarm of honey bees,  
A delightful humming noise would issue  
From the cherry trees and apple trees.

And it was so sweet to us, that music,  
Like the honey brought by bees in May.  
Meanwhile, a new pilot cap was being  
Tailored for my head so young and gay

And an army shirt for youthful shoulders,  
For a youthful waist — a leather belt.  
Do you now still listen to the humming  
Of the trees and feel as we then felt?

*1975*

### ONCE I DREAMED

Once I dreamed that the earth was all rubble and smoke,  
And, a young boy, I lay on it, starting to choke,  
As they did in the last war, in anguish extreme,  
But I wanted to live — and woke up from my dream.  
Then unable to sleep, I went into the yard,  
To the towering poplars and shimmering stars,  
And pressed close to the earth — it was warm at this hour  
And continued to breathe and to live and to flower.  
And I saw walking over it happy and glad  
A merry young couple, a girl and a lad.

Now they'd both spin around, and my head spun with them;  
 And they looked like two flowerbuds that grew on one stem.  
 Then they'd stop for a moment and join into one  
 And the fire of a kiss through their bodies would run.  
 And the words that they whispered came soft as a brook;  
 Only mothers and lovers so beautiful look.  
 And all voices on earth in a quire rose above  
 Singing praise to the future, to beauty and love.  
 Will the shadow of war ever fall on them too,  
 On their life, on their love, young and sparkling like dew?

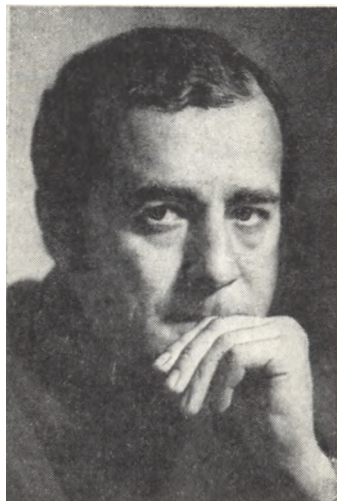
1961

### WHILE VESUVIUS SLEEPS

Vesuvius awakes — Pompeii's gone.  
 But anyway I watch the film go on;  
 Though excavated now, I watch it still,  
 As if I'm leaning on a sun-warmed sill  
 And read inscriptions and touch ancient things  
 And think of the disasters fortune brings —  
 Calamities that happened to mankind;  
 The past events unfold before my mind:  
 Patricians, slaves, plebeians led their life  
 Different, yet full of everlasting strife.  
 Some bathed in luxury, while others went half-nude,  
 While side by side with them hell boiled, subdued,  
 Like metal in a blast furnace alight  
 To lash out at Pompeii one fell night  
 And make a graveyard of it in its rage.  
 My fiery, my sophisticated age,  
 While excavating those Pompeii and those Troys  
 You pile up nuclear arms that can destroy  
 Mankind in no time: Yes, it is like this:  
 We live and wait — will it begin to hiss  
 That new Vesuvius, exploding in blind force?  
 Who then will excavate Mankind's dead corpse  
 And plough the ash-strewn steppes with furrows deep?  
 Vesuvius sleeps.

O my fair world, don't sleep!

1967



*Vitaliy Korotich (b. 1936) was born in Kiev into the family of a scientist. He has written many books of poems, journalism, literary criticism, and essays which reflect the progress of humanity in our time. Most of his poems have been translated in other republics of the USSR and abroad. He is a winner of the Nikolai Ostrovsky, Pavlo Tychina, and Taras Shevchenko prizes.*

FLIGHT No. S-957,  
MAY 26, 1976

Upon my fortieth birthday a YAK-40  
Carries me on its shoulders creamy-white.  
...Two engines whine and weep throughout the flight;  
Their tears disperse in rainbows, us escorting.  
The third one seems to try and frighten me  
Because it suddenly begins to play  
Like a brass band, light-spirited and gay,  
Then roars and dies down unexpectedly  
Fading into a misty sea that's bluer  
Than the blue eyes of my beloved wife.  
The plane YAK-40 like a silver knife  
Cuts through my days, of which there's ever fewer,  
Through rainbow gates, through curtains raised by mists,  
Through all the joys and troubles that life lists.  
Why am I on this day 'twixt earth and sky,  
Why the eternal YAK \* stamped on it — why, oh why?  
YAK-40... Is it proper to arouse  
One's hopes when one has reached his fortieth year?  
Meanwhile around us float the silver clouds  
Like books of mine that never will appear.  
Meanwhile, the weightless airplane engines hum  
Like fiery birds, like vessels filled with light.

---

\* Yak — Ukrainian for *how, why*

How far seems childhood — long, long out of sight!  
How far am I from my beloved home!  
But, sunflower-like, my old grandfather's world  
Looks after me from yellow straw-thatched roofs.  
My years fly on, white horses with loud hoofs,  
Hoared horses of my memory unblurred.  
Past days march in parade before my eyes,  
Days just as short-lived as thin April ice.  
My airplane starts to hum to me again;  
I dreamed of firebirds — now I have this plane.  
Oh where, where have you gone to, my short years,  
Dissolved today in just one single word?  
Who knows? But — festive tables fly on board  
This plane, YAK-40, as on high it steers.  
Friends — comrades —  
Come to me, and fly to me,  
Wave your white wings  
And turn your engines on.  
Let's fly — over black hills beneath the sun,  
Over black grief, which in a trice will flee,  
Over forgotten and abruptly quietened fear  
Remaining on the runway far behind.  
Fly, buying tickets from Aeroflot. Yes, mind  
You meet your holidays on planes, up here!  
Let all the world's misfortunes be forgot  
When the champagne explodes in the saloon.  
Let's feast till the successor of the moon —  
The pale dawn blooms! Long live Aeroflot!  
Come, fly to me.  
We'll throw down from the sky  
All melancholy, yesterday's dark gloom.  
I'm on the plane YAK-40, forty soon.  
The stewardess brings glasses on a tray.  
There's no bridge from the heavens to the earth,  
The skyline opens on infinity.  
Earth, quiet, awaits the end of our festivity.  
So simple! That's enough — you've had your mirth,  
Now put down glasses. Fasten belts. Smoking is banned.  
The aeroplane is just about to land.

## ETERNITY

A person's age can't be defined,  
For old age, youth — life's restless start —  
Go through one like verse goes through rhyme  
And like one's life goes through one's heart.

Who knows how many years I've roamed  
 About this planet called the earth,  
 How long ago I was first warmed  
 By the first sunshine at my birth,  
 When grass first bent beneath my feet  
 In its first bow? Whoever knows  
 In what year melted on my palm  
 The first of our Ukrainian snows?  
 In every minute intertwine  
 The tempests of our century.  
 How many times have I grown old,  
 How many youths have bloomed in me!  
 For hell and heaven would suffice  
 The woes and joys I hide inside.  
 I've lived the lives of all who lived,  
 And died with everyone who died.  
 Years are my comrades and my friends,  
 My hope, anxiety and strife.  
 The Revolution in my soul  
 Burns on, a beacon of new life.  
 Time's traces stay invisibly  
 Like marks storks leave on clouds. My day  
 Grows out of other people's days,  
 A child of years long flown away.  
 Bestow your blessing, Time, on me,  
 That I may recognize your face.  
 Nothing goes by without a trace  
 So has it been, so will it be.  
 From stifled night, from iron bars  
 Sunshine is born, and freedom's cry.  
 Ostrovsky's \* now past seventy  
 And yet still thirty-two for aye.  
 Time's bareback horse in full career  
 Flies by — you are its rider, hear?  
 While Lenin looks on, having reared  
 By his eternity these years...

1977

## TRACES

It's you who passed here.

Melting snow  
 Lies like a cloud that fell down, dark.  
 On the white of my destiny  
 A woman's feet have left their mark.

---

\* Nikolai Ostrovsky (1904-1936) — Soviet writer and Civil War hero



Above the fence a parasol  
                                upon its long neck floats,  
At which incessantly the sky  
                                with heavy raindrops shoots.

1977

### THE OLD MINSTREL \*

Ah, people, lead me there, across the square  
Where dully in the buckwheat groan the bees,  
Where silence fills one's ears... Oh, lead me please,  
Good people, over there, across the square.

Ah, someone, lead me there, across the square  
Where people always celebrate or scold,  
Where sometimes they can't hear what they are told...  
Good people, lead me please across the square.

Ah, people, lead me please across the square  
Where I sang all my songs to you, and where  
The silence I will enter and will die...  
Good people, lead me please across the square!

Good people, lead me please across the square  
Where weeps the woman who had been with me,  
And I will pass her by and never see—  
Good people, lead me please across the square!

Good people, lead me please across the square  
With unforgotten love and misery,  
Where I was strong, where I failed hopelessly,  
Good people, lead me please across the square.

Good people, lead me please across the square  
Where on the poplar's boughs hang drunken clouds,  
Where now instead of me my son sings loud;  
Good people, lead me please across the square!

Lead me across...

                                The spacious, noisy square  
Admitted him and slowly onward led,  
Until he fell right in its middle, dead...  
Alas — no field was there beyond the square!

1977

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\* Previously there used to roam throughout Ukraine blind minstrels called *kobzars* or *lirnyks* who accompanied their song upon the kobza, bandore, or hurdy-gurdy



## SUMMER IN KUTAISI \*

How early blooms this year the linden tree!  
It's only May,

                    yet honeyed flowers hang on her.  
Stately and still she stands, like a Madonna,  
And angel-like, flies in her leaves a bee.  
The linden glimmers candle-like at night,  
Green

                    as a flagon filled with honey warm,  
Paying her tribute to the bees' black swarm;  
Her honey scent fills the whole world like light.  
Find her

                    and listen to the honey bee,  
Hoarse bugler at its post upon the tree.  
It flies away

                    and then returns again  
Among the blooms that give their riches free.  
The bee swarm flies off, humming satedly;  
Upon my fingers from the little flowers  
The pollen falls — so premature — in showers.  
How early blooms this year the linden tree!

1977

## THE PAINTER PIROSMANI'S SELF-PORTRAIT \*\*

...I hear quite well —

                                    stop shouting at me, stop!  
Don't shout at me

                                    without the slightest need.  
I've room

                    and sky enough  
                                    my life to lead

And grains enough  
                                    which on the stubble drop.

I live,  
                    create

                                    and pray to the new day  
And dream

                    of getting back my former might.  
...After they'd flailed my harvest with cruel spite  
A lot of grain

                    upon the stubble lay.

---

\* Kutaisi — city in Georgia

\*\* Niko Pirosmani (Pirosmanishvili) (1862?-1918) — Georgian folk artist

Will I have talent, time and strength enough  
To make my dreams                    their bounteous harvest yield?  
When after harvest-time I cross the field  
My bare feet bleed upon the stubble rough.  
Lashed by the harsh wind                    over it I go.  
The world is quiet,                    but my heart's like lead.  
O grains of mine,                    above this stubble dead  
I pray,                    I hope,  
   that you will sprout and grow!

*1977*



*Robert Tretyakov (b. 1936) was born in Perm, the Russian Federation, into the family of an army officer. He is the author of several books of poetry, journalism, essays, and numerous translations. His highly imaginative poetry has won him the Pavlo Tychina Prize. Many of his works have been translated and published in other Soviet republics.*

### PULL OF THE HEART

What marvels grand and glorious rose  
Of which the human race may boast:  
The pyramids — pride in stony pose,  
Da Vinci's deep-hued canvased host.

Our history changes in its scale.  
Time's endless stream makes change a must —  
The very brightest colours pale,  
The hardest granite seeps to dust.

The physicists and poets die,  
But power immortal won't depart  
Which keeps my planet and its sky  
Rotating ever round its heart.

So Lenin's words remain immortal —  
In orbit round, new generations run:  
They feel the pull of heart that's universal  
Like that of planets to their solar suns.

1971

Oh no, no infant cradles then  
 Rocked my coevals — I'm attesting....  
 And you? You worked as harvest-men  
 In 'forty-three?

Went harvesting?  
 All right, it's good if you did not.  
 About that, I can't boast at all.  
 Simply, see, with doubts I'm fraught  
 That you will think my story's tall...  
 Just picture up a co-op farm  
 With only kids and women left.  
 The grain was cut — but what alarm —  
 Siberian snows across it swept.  
 Beyond the snows, beyond the snows:  
 War and famine, blood and tears,  
 Beyond Siberian women shows  
 The homefront, the farthest rear.  
 What other land, though vast its main,  
 Could possibly have endured it all!  
 In flames Kuban, in flames Ukraine,  
 To top it, early snow must fall....  
 A poet I'd have never been  
 If I the women should forget —  
 From every snowdrift they did glean  
 Each ear of wheat with toil and sweat.  
 Not only tanks and aeroplanes  
 Won battles, now just history;  
 Fatigued, frost-bitten, swollen hands  
 Of women gave us our victory.  
 Hands that broke the hard snow crust  
 And letters wrote to men in the lines.  
 To tell this story was a must —  
 How grain was gathered, snow-confined.  
 Perhaps my tale is told in vain...  
 The method — an insignificant part  
 Of garnering life-saving grain.  
 The crux — psychology of the heart.

1967

My father has a wound that's old,  
And yet today I feel its pain:  
He lies worn out, alone and cold,  
Past the Guadarrama range in Spain.

I think the dreams that he is sent  
Are of the crimson flags he bore —  
Though once the word of "Spaniard" meant  
The opera "Carmen", nothing more.

He went. But no one made him go.  
Donned soldier's boots — bit worn and old.  
Good locksmith in our town, that's so —  
To me, the best Dad in the world.

And thousands went with him to fight,  
Knew no regret, knew no return.  
Some here would know a widow's plight,  
And others that of orphan...

And I picked cherries ripe and red,  
Full of juice, spring's lively sap,  
Like ball fringe around my head  
I hung them on my Pioneer cap.

My schoolbag bulged with books that ran  
Tales of Madrid, its passionate heroine —  
I called myself a Republican  
When I was only crowding nine.

*1967*

## PORTRAITS

For scientist or poet comes a time  
When his finished portrait is at last defined...  
In history of science, arts, somehow  
We link Shevchenko with his frowning brow,  
And Marx with his leonine bushy beard,  
As everlasting links that are revered;  
Link Dante with a wreath, a harp with Massenet,  
Shortsighted Chekov always with pince-nez...  
We cannot picture them as otherwise,  
Remember them in one particular guise.



Move on your sons,  
Your all your inspired descendants —  
Pavers of the Way,  
your true *Robzars*.\*

1967

\* *Kobzar* (Ukr.) — strolling musician; title of Taras Shevchenko's collection of poems and his sobriquet



*Vasil Simonenko (1935-1963) was born in the village of Biyivtsi, Poltava Region, into a farming family. His poems are widely read in other Soviet republics and have also been published abroad. Besides his poetry, he is also noted for his writings of prose and journalism.*

## MILLSTONES

Those everstraining hands,  
work-black and weary,  
made veins stand out  
in swollen rope-like strands.  
Like molars, gritted millstones  
as if  
they chewed the yellow grain to  
rough granules.  
As if they ground out torment,  
not fine flour...  
In the light of flickering wick-lamp burning,  
Moved hands so tender  
Moved hands maternal  
That turned the handle  
Of flour-mill endlessly.

Despondent eyes were filmed with melancholy  
while the flour  
poured down like whited blood...  
This was the time —  
the twentieth century  
swept over us with raging thunderstorms.  
We often hear  
malevolent joy in  
the voice of our alien foe  
that says  
injustice and tragedy



often look into our  
dear home  
we built for happiness to dwell.  
Let them be frenzied,  
go mad with their screaming —  
we do not shake  
before this slander:  
Those millstones meant  
for us were brought here by the  
barbarians on their tanks  
from Europe, by Stone Age caught.  
And then they got  
from us a good hard lesson  
when —  
for all the world to see —  
without a millstone  
except strong hands  
we ground the barbarous horde to dust.  
O people mine!  
Unconquerable Titan  
On which the blue of heaven finds support!  
No millstones ever  
can slight your exploit —  
they can but make you grander.  
In vain they rage,  
the malice of our foes can't mar  
your glorious struggle...  
I kiss the hands  
that turned the millstones  
the eve before the Space Age.

\* \* \*

Native land of mine! My mind is brighter,  
Tenderness and love in my soul grow,  
When your mighty hopes and dreams uplifting  
In my life here strong and steady flow.

You are bread for me, my aim for living,  
From your soil I came and shall return,  
And beneath your high domed heavens rolling  
Life's hard lessons my young soul did learn.

People tricking you from love deservéd,  
People who concern of yours avoid,  
May earth's gravity betray them,  
May they sink obscure into the void.

## A MOTHER'S ENTREATY

Out of dreamy mist arise  
                    wings of rosy swans,  
Scattered throughout lake and stream  
                    night reflects the stars.

Through the window fairy tales  
                    gaze with somber eyes,  
With a mother's loving grace  
                    standing close behind.

Sorrow, fly, oh fly away, don't come  
                    to my home,  
I'll not let you rock the cradle of my sleeping son.

Float up to the cradle, swans, bringing pleasant dreams,  
Enter, quiet stars, to rest, 'neath his sleeping lids.

The roosters disquieted darkness with their calls,  
While swan-shadows fluttered o'er the cottage walls.

With their rosy feathers and wings undulations,  
Titillating phantoms with gold constellations.

You'll grow up, my son, and begin life's journey,  
Growing with you too, sleep-lulled fears and worries.

In the spell of twilight, dark-browed dryad maidens,  
Will await your tenderness, your love unawakened.

Into verdant orchards, they'll call, arms extended,  
Black-haired lads enticing for their own intended.

One can choose one's friendships, or a maiden's hand,  
What one cannot choose, son, is one's fatherland.

One can choose a comrade and soul-mate brother,  
But you cannot choose, son, who will be your mother.

Mother's eyes will follow, as will the white cottage,  
Wherever life takes you, wherever you'll wander.

And if you should fall, son, in some foreign meadow,  
From Ukraine will follow the poplar and willow.

They will bend above you, their leaves palpitating,  
In the grief of parting, the heart titillating.

You can choose of everything, on this earth, my lad,  
What you cannot choose, though, is your homeland.

\* \* \*

Ever shall I bless despite the sorrow,  
All I suffer here and all the strife,  
That day when I was born into the sunshine  
For happines, for troubles and for life.

That day when lips so small, impatient searching,  
To mother's breast found first their welcome way,  
The day that first of all caressed me  
From darkness depths with warmth of sunshine ray.

And much have I received that's given freely,  
Much happiness indeed has come my way!  
We're born on earth for suffering and laughter  
Midst people here to love and live each day.

\* \* \*

Awake you new Magellan, fine Columbus,  
Fill out your sails of dreams and speed away.  
To travels distant clear now call the oceans,  
And frothing surf licks softly tranquil bay.

Whoever said that all has been discovered?  
If so, what reason for our birth, in truth?  
How could we ever then in simple living  
Find room enough for all our hopes of youth?

So, ships! Prepare yourselves for far-off voyage.  
Awake my yearning now! My dreaming mind!  
Your task, midst oceans of your native people,  
Some isles of spirit's values first to find.

Free rusted anchors then from silt mud clinging,  
On anchor chain the soul will fade and die!  
Our chest fierce buffeted by strong winds beating  
The caravel sets off, with flags hoist high.

No cockerel can the whole world scratch aside now,  
No wind alone can give the sun a chill!  
Ukrainian land, as long as I'm still living,  
To find out more about you is my will,

To dream and search whilst breath I am still drawing,  
To put indifference cold unto the flame!  
And if my findings earlier were discovered,  
Please tell me friends, and do so without blame.

*Boris Oliynik (b. 1935) was born in the village of Zachepilivka, Poltava Region, into the family of a clerk. He has written many collections of poetry, journalism, literary criticism, and essays. He is also noted for his translations. Boris Oliynik was awarded the USSR State Prize for his civic and philosophical poetry, much of which has been translated and published in other republics of the Soviet Union and abroad.*



\* \* \*

On jagged rocks they bound him in duress:  
The wrath of gods would brook no dispensation —  
Because he gave, in throes of righteousness,  
To people — Fire — but gave for good intentions.

The ages dragged. Time wandered hit or miss  
In curving turns, in catacombs went straying.  
He did it for man's good.....

But tell me this:  
Can fire be controlled, or snuffed by praying?

We honour fire as sacred aureole:  
But far too soon the gift to all we make:  
You see, the fire Prometheus once stole  
Was used for burning Bruno at the stake.

### BACHELOR'S BALLAD

I flew off like a handsome devil  
On my steed as black as night —  
White foam fell from him like snow-flakes —  
Ah!  
to Churayivna bright,

She who swore to send for our wedding  
A towel with three embroidered cockerels,  
Yes,

to her... to her took flight,  
Who, as soon as she raised a finger,  
Nightingales in the springtime died!

Flew to her...

On Midsummer's evening  
Two stars fell head-first from the sky.  
The owl cried in the forest thicket...  
Eh, fly faster, good steed, then fly!  
Something on my heart hangs heavy,  
Something night does not say fully,  
Yes,

as from someone's evil eye  
Or sorcery I lost a horse-shoe,  
As if the night hid something sly.

I came flying fast at morning,  
By the white porch on the green,  
Where I once her lips had tasted...  
Only why so fiery keen  
Does this trio sow their music?  
Listen, my steed, what can it mean?  
Suddenly doors went flying open —  
White as a sheet of paper I.  
Out in her veil came Churayivna,  
Like a sea-gull, she gave a cry.  
From the best-man's hand fell the goblet,  
And the trio looked ready to die.

Reins held in my hands were frozen.  
So, it seems, my steed so fine,  
We have galloped across the ages  
To arrive too late this time?  
And to attend another's wedding?  
Where are your towels, Marusya mine?

Something she mumbles then of parting,  
Holds out her white hand, once dear.  
Let's return, my steed, by Heaven!  
From this garden let's gallop clear,  
Where I met with such tender treason.  
A sick "Forgive me!" I'll not hear.

I flew out on the embankment,  
On the earth my sorrow laid.  
Snap went the strings of three musicians,  
The cocks crowed thrice, the donkey brayed.  
Churayivna fell with sorrow  
Head in the wedding-towel betrayed.

More than once, my Churayivna,  
Like an autumn gull you'll cry,  
When at full stretch past your window  
On my night-black steed I fly,  
Like some daring handsome devil,  
Wearing a wedding-towel, ride by.

Ah, to her,  
                                to such a woman  
Who has only to tap her feet —  
'Neath the bow the violin's weeping,  
Yes,  
                                to her, to another indeed,  
Yes, to her... but not to a traitor.  
Beneath whose window are we, my steed?

\* \* \*

From where the ages sleep  
                                in tombs along the Nile,  
From jungles tropical  
                                where blooms the tamarisk —  
Birds flying high, do tell  
                                where do you fly the while,  
Why are you flying there  
                                where cold blue rime exists?  
  
Here lies first paradise  
                                and cinnamon's spiced air,  
Here copper-visaged Ra  
                                has lips of fire that burn —  
But there above the lake  
                                the calico sky is bare,  
There sedge and wormwood grows  
                                and knot-grass taciturn.  
  
But does your leader know  
                                the hard way you must roam,  
And know ye, brothers mine,  
                                what number falls and dies  
Before you get half-way  
                                unto your fathers' home  
And skies of ultramarine  
                                fade out before their eyes?  
  
The leader silent grows  
                                and looks into his soul.  
His biding weariness  
                                is gone like a broken chain....



More rare now the heart's dying beat from a first casual glance,  
Demands in assessing the while cry out louder and stronger.

Ravines and harsh rocks you avoid with a step far more firm.  
All movements and gestures and jokes grow more careful quite clearly...  
While also the number of errors you make smooth decreases.  
Though with increase tremendous they constantly cost you more dearly!

1970

## SONG ABOUT MOTHER

She richly sowed cornfields of life  
with the years of her living,  
Bowed low to the earth,  
in the steppe gathered slow swaying grasses,  
Her children she taught well,  
to live with their conscience untroubled,  
Soft she sighed to herself —  
and silent set out on her way.  
“Mum, where are you going?”  
her children cry running behind her.  
“Gran, where are you going?”  
her grandchildren shout at the gate.  
“I’m not going far dears...  
past the sun if I’m only not late there.  
Time to go now my darlings...  
May long life and sweet joys you await.”  
“What life’s left without you?  
How can you just go dearest Mummy?”  
“And who then, dear Grandma, will read fairytales when we’re  
good?”  
“I’ll leave you the rainbows,  
the silver of dew at day’s dawning,  
The gold of the cornfields,  
pale palm, and the bird in the wood.”  
“We don’t want bright rainbows,  
we don’t want fine silver gold riches,  
If only forever  
you’ll welcome us home at the gate.  
Oh, dearest, we’ll do  
all the work in the house and the meadow,  
Oh, stay with us, Mummy,  
the sun will not mind if you’re late.”  
She turned away, smiling,  
her face with grave pain cast in shadow,  
Waved her hand,  
and the cloth on her arm gently trembled.





## MY DEBT

I am in debt,  
                    that I was born Ukrainian:  
That fate was in merry mood, when oft she sings,  
And has bestowed on me the earth and water,  
And an azure sky, like a pair of wide-spread wings.

My good black earth, as fertile as a woman.  
Even old history stood amazed meanwhile.  
For only we, it seems,  
                    on such golden hay-fields  
Have a sickle at hand and ready  
                                    forged from a smile.

Call at my village. You need no better Eden:  
The pond. The May-bugs. The green song of the pines.  
The moon so young and wearing her new diadem,  
The gift of a wondrous land beyond all times.

My Cossack Sich was rich, not in drunken gatherings,  
But mighty sons, and when caught up in the strife,  
In panic Europe floundered before the enemy,  
I sent my sons to death,  
                    that the land might survive.

My blood is strong. And hotter than fires a-blazing.  
And truly not in vain the Tartar flood  
So harshly sucked the fire out of our maidens,  
To freshen their already autumn-cool blood.

My humming plots their strenuous sap are driving  
Into the melon, potato, and onion spheres.  
Come in and choose, if yours have not been thriving.  
Come in at the door.  
                    Through the window you've already peered.

The whole world's debtor am I. Not all were given  
Such filtered singing wine as mine, just see —  
I'll entertain you — drink, and strength recover,  
Get a little merry — enough for you and me.

Not everyone received in his lot such an evening,  
Persistent longing, yearning to reach the sky.  
That was I who gave Korolyov to this planet.  
May you also reach to vistas endless and high.

No, I have not chosen a role Messianic.  
All I have, and all  
                    that in my days

I have received from fate, the eternal sower,  
I bring to the common mill, to help always.

It's happiness to have in the world-wide dwelling  
Your duties and your place of work at hand...  
The whole world's debtor am I.

But to one indebted  
I was not. Am not. Won't be.  
By that I stand.

1970

## THE LESSON

(excerpt from the poem)

\* \* \*

All around just as it should be:  
evening falls, the distance fades.  
The sun comes up. The sun is setting.  
Then steal up the night-time shades.  
Oh, how banal! Oh, how lovely!  
All in a spiral round appears,  
all harmonious:  
as it has been  
for a thousand thousand years.

O, well-balanced runs world-order  
in its alternating way!  
All so wisely made in nature:  
day after night, and night after day.  
Father, having done his duty,  
for his inheritors makes way.  
All is passing, all is parting:  
day after night, and night after day.  
Ideal is the rhythm of nature:  
father's killed,  
but I live yet.  
Ah me, what a stern world-order:  
well, you weep — and you forget.  
Oh, the cruel rhythm of nature:  
dead ones  
fall into the grass!  
Oh, how serpent-wise the circle:  
well, you weep — and let it pass.  
Why then do you stretch your fingers,  
bitter memory, to my heart?

All has passed, and all has fallen,  
all is overgrown with grass!  
"Maybe, son, it never happened?"  
"Maybe so, it never happened."  
But what do you mean, papa?"

### III

"Well, I simply remembered. Wait a minute. What date is it today?"  
"Ha!" I laughed roundly, "Don't be ironical, father! It's the twentieth of October. Tomorrow's your birthday... Ho, ho!" I echoed in his manner.  
"All the same, you remember at least one date. Yet still you say: 'What has history got to do with me?' I like to see you like that, dad, in a good humour."

"Well, why not? Tomorrow I was born. As a matter of fact, before day-break on 21st October, 1935. See, such exactness! Well, then, let's glance at the calendar. At what time does the sun rise and set on that day? In the biographies of great people every little detail is weighed like gold." He stretched for the calendar, merrily and boldly young.

"That's not necessary..." I caught his hand.

Lazily he shrugged his shoulders.

"Why not?"

"Because there is blood on that page!"

"Wha-a-t! What do you mean?" He sprang back from me stunned.

"What kind of blood? Where? I don't understand... Now I shall get it clear, my son... documentally." He read: "Before daybreak on October 21st, 1941, a punitive brigade under the command of Major von König broke into the small town of Kragujevac, and rounded up and shot seven thousand people. Among them were three hundred pupils of the High School. They took them off to their death in classes, each one led by its teacher..."

"But where's that... Kragujevac?"

"In Serbia. About 40 kilometres from Belgrade, my son. Yet you say: 'What good is geography to me?'"

"But what has geography to do with this? We aren't talking about that at the moment... I simply want to say that it is a chance coincidence of dates. You were born some six years before that..." "Ah, no, my son, there are no coincidences in this world — all is connected: the cause and the effect, day and night, birth and death, the bullet and the accusing index finger. My birthday, and that day of death in Kragujevac have entered the eternal circle of birth and death, and become cells in the universe. Nothing disappears in this world, my son. The law of the conservation of matter and... memory. Take a look here, more carefully. There is blood on my shirt!"

"Stop it, father! That's already... mysticism. I'm afraid, father!"

### IV

"Don't be scared! That is Memory, with candle alight.  
There some kind of shadows move, far in the night.  
And with terror the red haze of daybreak gasps.  
And the jack-boots, like fate, from the darkness march.



‘Where are you taking the innocent ones?  
...Innocent children, beloved sons?’

The commandant of the Yaniv prison-camp (that is not far away, in Lviv, my son) Sturmführer Gustav Wilhaus, as a game of sporting chance, shot with his automatic from the balcony of his office at the prisoners who were toiling in the workshops, and afterwards handed over the automatic to his wife, and she also shot at them. Sometimes, just to amuse his nine-year-old daughter, Wilhaus ordered them to throw two- to four-year-old children up into the air, and he then shot at them. His daughter clapped her hands (my God, what innocence!) and cried ‘More, papa, more, papa!’ and he went on shooting.

From that time on, my son, when I see white-winged cherubs in the frescoes of Sophia Cathedral, I want to ask them: You don’t come, by chance, from the Yaniv prison-camp?”

“Tearing bridges, like bandages off from her breast,  
The Tisza cried: ‘Where go these innocents blessed?’

...To its fatal brink the finale drew.  
On steel helmets the mist was lying like dew.  
And in that finale the first letter ‘f’  
began with the blood-red stroke of death.  
Strict order, for König, came first thing of all:  
‘Straighten lines, you Serbs!’ he began to bawl.  
‘In classes, you Slavs, and learn, you swine,  
even now to keep order, and not waste time!’  
And the first column stood on the edge, and froze...”  
“Oh, father, I hear now, the circle grows close!”

“The High School’s director death’s hand could not curb:  
‘Let me through to the children. I too am a Serb!’  
König laughed: ‘And where are you going? *Weg!* \*  
We aim at the future, but you’re *Plusquamperfekt!*’ \*\*

The director cut in: ‘Keep your trigger-finger stiff!  
*Jedem das Seine.*\*\*\* I’ve a lesson to give...

My children, we’ve but a few minutes to run.  
Out of all the lessons, I’ve chosen just one.  
Let the graveyard serve as a class-room, say.  
H i s t o r y, children, we’re making today.  
Today raise no hands for the questions they pose...’  
“Oh, father, I hear now, the circle grows close!”  
“There is one assessment for me and for you,  
Time makes it for us, and objectively, too.

---

\* Away!

\*\* Pluperfect Past Tense

\*\*\* To everyone his own

First of all, beneath the cold eye of the war  
you are no longer children. Remember! What's more,  
you're no longer family supports, firm as oak,  
But f i g h t e r s, my lads. Behind you stands the folk.  
Your names on the banner of saints will repose...'  
"Oh, father, I hear now, the circle grows close!"  
'Are you cold, then, my lads? It was always so  
when loneliness froze on the victim's brow,  
and with leaden eye poised the carrion crows...'  
"Oh, father, I hear now, the circle grows close!"

'I am weighing the truth now of every word:  
To a l l it was frightening to leave this dear earth.  
And even the heroes of highest flight  
were sorry to leave behind them the light.  
Oh, how they wished danger would pass, those men!  
So why, you may ask, call them heroes, then?

I am weighing the truth now of every word:  
those heroes felt in themselves all the world.  
That feeling protected them, just like a shield:  
though they might fall, still the world would not yield!

So on Kosovo Field, reddened by Bayazid,  
not only the Serbs, but the whole world bled.  
And each of the Serbs came to realize:  
though he might fall, the whole world never dies.

No need for the Slavs now to fall at their feet...'  
"Oh, father, I hear now, the circle's c o m p l e t e!"  
"Now König stood up in his column-like boots.  
In his sights eternity, the moment he shoots.  
He thought to himself for the trigger he'd reach,  
with a bullet would put a full-stop to the speech.  
'Unhappy wretch, does he not realize  
that though we may die, the whole world will rise?'

But König just laughed: 'No more words, that's your last!  
For words before bullets, old man, are but grass.  
I'll just raise my pistol, my first finger curled,  
and into the pit go your words and your world!  
Six thousand seven hundred that truth can't revoke,  
While you jaw away about honour and folk!'

The teacher looked thoughtfully up overhead,  
But the whole world heard, when he quietly said:  
'If kinsmen and Homeland are mere words, say,  
What do Belgrade and Moscow tell you today?  
Major König, in which rank does Memory stand?'  
König's face went purple, he threw up his hand:

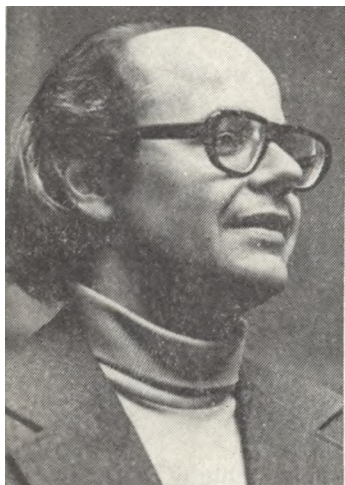
'Old idiot, now you have gone too far!  
Your hatred pours out of your boot-soles. Ah!  
You have cleverly played on my tender spot,  
but it's not for you to decide our lot!  
To me, and my trigger, must history bow.  
You started the lesson, I'll finish it now!'   
And he screwed up his eyes, like a carrion crow."  
"Oh, father, you see, in that circle I go!"  
"The director sighed: 'Our Time's sailing past.  
So as the first word, let there stand the last:  
Brothers! for us sounds the closing bell.  
I taught you to take your first steps well.  
But remember:

the last step you're going to make  
is no less important than the first that you take,  
because your life's spiral it crowns, like a spire,  
and from there our successors will step on higher,  
to the truth of all truths, which won't die in the land:  
A man may fall, but the whole world will stand!

Slav brothers, and sons!.. Take courage!.. Heads high!  
We are mortals. Remember: The folk does not die!'   
The ominous soldiers like stiff corpses stood,  
from König's red face drained away all the blood.  
The peaks of Mount Triglav support the sky  
with a powerful truth: 'The folk does not die!'   
And above the years,

like fate, the bell rings:  
so son, having finished,  
the lesson begins."





## IVAN DRACH

*Ivan Drach (b. 1936) was born in the village of Telizhintsi, Kiev Region, into the family of a state farmer. He is the author of many collections of poems, verse dramas, numerous articles of literary criticism, essays, film scenarios, and translations, which are widely read in the Soviet Union. He is also active as a translator from Slavic and other languages. His poems are distinguished for their rich imagery, innovative forms, and wide use of folk elements. His books have been published in many languages in the USSR and abroad, and he is a Taras Shevchenko prize winner.*

### THE BALLAD OF THE SUNFLOWER

The sunflower once was all arms and legs  
With a green body, prickly and rough.  
It raced with the breeze  
And scaled a pear-tree,  
And its bosom with ripe fruit stuffed.  
I swam by the mill, on the sand lay still,  
With a catapult sparrows potted.  
It hopped on one foot,  
From its ears water shook,  
Then suddenly saw the gorgeous sun,  
The glorious swarthy sun —  
Among golden clouds  
In a red country blouse  
Riding a bicycle  
Dodging the potholes in the sky...

The sunflower froze there  
Gaping forever in golden rapture:  
"Let me go ride your bike, old man!  
Or put me astride the frame, at least,  
O why be so mean, old man?!"

O poetry, my orange sun!  
Every second a youngster  
Discovers you for himself  
And becomes forever a flower of the sun.

1962

# WOMEN AND STORKS

Women in August differ. They're different women.  
Over their eyes not clouds but light mists pass.  
The wind our wretched phrases, like smoke, is winnowing.  
Know yourself in their eyes' ruthless looking-glass.

Flat on the beach they lie. On waves. On mattresses.  
Supple and young ones. Others fading and old.  
The wide world dizzily to their bosom they're pressing,  
Their every glance is lost in the evening glow.

Something in summer happened. Light was fading.  
Some came and some did not. There's a light August haze.  
Already the crescent moon's getting rid of the radiance  
That in those passionate pupils is ablaze.

These storks too with a wondrous rustle of feathers  
In a flying dance have quite submerged the beach.  
With tender sorrow they hovered high in the heavens,  
Veering in a mysterious farewell sweep.

The storks are above the women. They go circling  
In an unwonted way. Bitter ash of the lips.  
Tell me why are your eyes too so mysterious.  
You do not lie here, you fly, I can hear your wings.

Such a remarkable concord of earth and heaven —  
Moist stork wings and women's hands soft and white.  
Where are you heading for now, my golden-headed one?  
All the women are flying. The world is in flight.

There on the beach of heaven the storks are lying,  
Here all the women are flying to warmer parts,  
Their feminine chattering, wondrous and mystifying,  
With a tingling, peculiar pain takes hold of our hearts...

# THE BALLAD OF KARMELYUK

They bound him tightly,  
                                with ropes they secured him,  
Ustim Karmelyuk,\* the champion fighter,  
To the bench of oak, to the place of infamy,  
Those three officials and a fourth, the executioner.

\* Ustim Karmelyuk (1787-1835) — leader of an anti-serfdom movement in Podillya



And Karmelyuk brushed away the first tear he shed,  
Shed at the hundred-and-first cruel stroke,  
And only the grubby little boy kept calling:  
"Mummy, I want a red toy, mummy, please!"

1966

## THE MYSTERY

A funeral there was, and speeches.  
The chill of eyelids, tightly closed.  
Silent, uncensored, in his coffin  
A man of great renown reposed.

On poles his pinewood skiff stood waiting  
To start its voyage underground,  
For at the bottom of the gravepit  
A harbour for it had been found.

His wife in great distress was weeping.  
His sons, strong lads, were fully grown.  
And hot car tyres, of rubber reeking,  
Were digging up, like hooves, the snow.

The brass band cooled its sweating forehead.  
Lips lightly touched the dead man's brow.  
And like an injured eagle's pinion  
The earth lay waiting for him now.

And then mid the concordant silence  
And ceremonial severe,  
When even snowflakes rustling lightly  
Highlighted the grave atmosphere,

There came, dressed in severe apparel,  
A woman at that peak of woe,  
An airy figure, more transparent  
Than any shade, she crossed the snow.

Then bending over him and lifting  
The veil, her funeral attire,  
She kissed the dead man suddenly, giving  
His dry parched lips a kiss of fire.

Great consternation seized the people,  
Eyes darted, none knew what to say.  
The big drum its broad breast was beating:  
"Go, mystery! Go, go away!"

But she in mourning, like a poplar,  
Stood there a challenge to them all.  
Adventure? Destiny? His lover?  
Her black gloves caught the white snowfall.

The dungeon for him designated  
Drew him into its shadows dark.  
And the mysterious woman waited  
Together with a life now parched.

Just then the sudden scent enthralling  
Was wafted of wild violets,  
While on those fire-kissed lips still falling  
The snowflakes did no longer melt...

1972

MARIA OF THE UKRAINE — No. 62276:  
FROM OŚWIĘCIM  
TO THE CHORNOBIL NUCLEAR POWER STATION

Maria Yarémivna leads us beyond Yaniv station.  
The clover her bare feet touch drop dew in a shower.  
There are stars mid the pine-trees.

Fields of flowering potatoes.  
Homes on the Pripjat aren't lit yet by nuclear power.

Maria arrived home from work a short while ago,  
Called at the grocer's, potatoes she brought in a net.  
As if at confession,

Maria is sitting shyly,  
A faraway look in her eyes though we sit tête-à-tête.

The skin of her hands is rough from paint and thinners.  
Her brush in acetone soaks on the window ledge.  
Photos with hues of despair on the table are glinting.  
She calls to mind, citing his number,  
an Oświęcim friend.

"Now this lad." she says,  
"has married off his daughter in Fastiv.  
I went to the wedding,  
under canvas — it poured day and night...  
On my second escape from camp I lay in deep grasses  
And a goat comes licking my face,  
it gave me a fright.

"And you dream of a sheepdog,  
as if you'd not seen your fill of them.  
One enters into your dreams, puffing, lolling its tongue.  
A young girl I was then, dearie,  
headstrong and wilful,  
Every hole in the ground back to Kiev I knew, every one.

"My Polish friends hid me — Stanislaw and Maria —  
And those graveyard grasses:  
graveyards helped me along.  
Through Poland and through the Ukraine twice thus I proceeded.  
Now Hitler he went up in smoke, but I'm still going strong."

Maria Yarémivna smiles, showing teeth of silver  
("Sixty-odd roubles from union funds of ours").  
Maria has penetrating lips, like lips a young girl has,  
Her eyes are as bright as a lilac orchard in flower.

A jubilee medal, Voroshilovgrad letters she shows us —  
Pioneer children write:  
"We forever are thinking of you!"  
"The way naked children were lined up for the gas ovens —  
That was the hardest to bear, to tell you the truth!

"On they went, full of their pranks,  
for children are children.  
Mothers were wailing, of course,  
their children laughed back.  
One girl, dark as a swallow,  
accustomed to pitying  
Her mother, in front of the gas chambers danced a *hopak*.

"Naked and famished,  
she danced on the accursed cobbles,  
Squatting low, kicking her legs, while the men clenched their fist...  
How we longed for the roar of tanks with their engines throbbing,  
All of us who by a miracle the starry road missed!"

...Stars shone above us.  
She showed us the way to the station.  
Seeing well in the dark,  
like a bat through the bushes she flew.  
"I'm in charge of the colours now, I choose the combinations.  
Look at those gleaming windows there — that's my school.

"My workmates feel sorry for me. I paint round the windows.  
The whole town looks through white frames I painted myself.  
Doing the windows, I see a world buzzing with children,  
The air's full of pine needle and warm strawberry scent.

"Under my window girls in a ring are dancing.  
It fills me with wonder, the way there's no end to their dance.  
And huge Belaz lorries go past...

Fifty tons they can carry,  
And I see that my windows suit the nuclear plant..."

With a rustle of leaves Maria was lost in the mistiness.  
Car headlights showed up the dust on the hardworking road.  
Life with its sleeves rolled up all night was working...  
I could not believe there was nothing more to be told.

Woman's life story, like a phoenix from Oświęcim's ashes  
You've risen

to light up the Atom Town above Pripyat.  
Nothing, Maria Yarémivna, is heading for disaster...  
The stars shine for lovers, those stars over which you fret.

A tracer atom you were in destiny's reactor  
To show us clearly it's people bring the world light,  
And, while I am burning, your star I shall remember  
And your delicate features, youthful, kindly and bright.

We'll remember you for not memory's sake but the special  
Bright inspiration that's thrilling and awesome too!  
Good night, Maria! Good day, our Irrepressible One!  
We, like those Pioneers, "forever are thinking of you!"

1973

## IN THE SOCIETY OF THE BUMBLE-BEE

The bee that bumbled yesterday now quiet lies  
Caught in a chilly spot. Its legs the air are pawing,  
Its wings are stiff, with longing in its eyes  
It watches me, my sympathy imploring.

I take it from the shade and place it where  
The sun is casting generous warm glances.  
Some aeroplanes go droning through the air,  
The bumble-bee attempts a buzz in answer.

Then I forget about the bumble-bee,  
But soon he's warm, keen to resume his journey.  
The earth, however, heavy to him seems,  
The breezes, too, the invalid are spurning.

A pullover of gold and black he sports,  
His chest is soft with a pure golden shimmer.





One tip of the rainbow arch touched faraway Striy,  
The other tip lay nearby on the breast of Chernihiv,  
An arch for this royal \* family, for the Korolis,  
Whose princess woken by thunder ran about eagerly.

And steam from the rainwashed pit in the ground arose  
Where the wooden casing rested, and structures of metal,  
And the sky — such clear sky never a headache knows —  
Was propped on the iron pillars Korolis had welded.

Tomorrow it's back to work. But today in the wood  
Go berrying.

Football matches, classes in the evening.  
For ending our tale of the Korolis this is a good  
Time: from the balcony the princess her rainbow is waving.

1979

### A GIRL'S FINGERS

Heavens, how many groans in fingers,  
How many cries in their blue tips,  
Homeless, gentle, burnt to a cinder,  
With suffering coming to grips!

Heavens, how great is the deep anxiety  
In those fingers, swaddling grief,  
In the flame of a heavy conscience  
With which my ghost alone feels at ease!

How radiant they are — glow-worms, sun-ups,  
Worlds that from kisses purer become,  
Fingers of the prisoner-beloved  
From the prison-labour of love that's dumb.

What can they do, these multi-lingual  
Speechless ones? Up you flare and die...  
The chastity and shamelessness of fingers  
I curse, I lacerate with a blue cry!

A fivesome of little suns... Off I'm dozing...  
Over me finger stars shine at night...  
Savory-sweet, deep into the heart flowing  
Your honey is bitter, dears, and sunny bright...

1964

\* Korol (Ukr.) — king

*Hanna Svitlichna (b. 1939) was born in the town of Pavlograd, Dnipropetrovsk Region, into the family of an office worker. She has written several collections of poems which are marked by cohesive imagery, emotion, and deep lyricism. She is a Nikolai Ostrovsky prize winner, and many of her poems have been published in other Soviet republics and abroad.*



## FATHER

Father walks among beds in the garden  
Looking close at the blossoming trees.  
The white Mays of the years which he lived through  
On his shoulders are shed with the breeze.

Dad, it's May!

Beaming, brimful of azure.  
Dip a jug in and watch it fill!  
But upon your old temples I notice  
Autumn's silvery mist lying still.

Honest labour that calloused your fingers  
Was the only delight which you knew.  
You loved work as you used to love singing —  
There was never enough for you.

Now you walk with those dribbling footsteps;  
You might do with some peace, it would seem;  
From your eyes flows old age's dim twilight,  
But — to foster this garden's your dream.

Chills roam stealthily in the darkness.  
Every bough needs the care that you give.  
Only sometimes you envy a little  
People able simply to live.

Don't live simply, though, don't, my dear father!  
Or your heart will be burdened by debts.

Let's live generously and freely  
As you always did — until death!

In the window hang clustering blossoms  
As a clue to your nature, no doubt.  
To pour out all your life into singing  
And yet never to feel it's run out.

So you'll live as you've always been living,  
Never choosing anything light.  
Dad, it's May!

Blossoms hang there, not hoarfrost  
In our garden so fragrant and white.

There'll be cherries maturing here, Father,  
There'll be birds in a twittering flock.  
Poems-grandchildren, too, will be coming,  
Which I know you'll be glad to rock.

## JOY

Out in the yard on a snowladen twig  
Gaily a squirrel is dancing a jig.  
Dear ginger thing, like a fluffy, soft toy!  
It is my joy — disobedient joy...  
Cunningly twinkle its mischievous eyes.  
Surely it's played enough, one might surmise.  
"Stop it!" I cry, but it won't, naughty chap.  
Joy doesn't want to sit down in my lap.  
Softly, I'll strew near the porch of my home  
The very gentlest of words, while you roam.  
Under the sill, where a pathway goes through,  
Grains of my tenderness thickly I'll strew,  
Sweetest caresses in silvery wraps,  
Fairytale dresses in gay furcoats and caps,  
Marking with honey the path where you hop.  
Then I'll fall sad and a few tears I'll drop.  
When all my hope I have lost to the last,  
Joy, my dear squirrel, will run to me fast,  
Prick up its ears in dismay and alarm,  
Peer in my eyes as it climbs up my arm;  
"Stop! Don't be sad any more!" it'll say.  
"It was a joke — now I've come back to stay!"

## RED BLIZZARD

Again October's blizzard blows  
And dead leaves from wet branches throws:  
Scatter, red blizzard, all the world  
With leaves of crimson, tossed and whirled!

Scatter my yard with them for me,  
And make my face glow merrily!  
Fly in the face of passers-by  
With your red, rustling battlecry!

In greeful frenzy beat at doors;  
Knock at Madrid doors with red force,  
Knock hard and wake up in the night  
Vienna, Arles with flats locked tight.

And then with noise and songs and mirth  
Embrace the axis of the Earth,  
And let the Revolution's flag  
On that blue axis never sag!

Storm till you've spread with a red sheet  
Each resonant and singing street.  
Come, blizzard, colour with your red  
My heart, the thoughts that fill my head!

*1966*

## THE COLOUR PRINT

I lay awake and in the quiet of home  
I listened, cautious, to the talking boughs,  
And from the little print upon the wall  
My deer leapt on the floor and left the house.

Since morning it had looked at me askance  
And petulantly stamped its young light hoof.  
Then like the wind, it suddenly took flight  
And fast as yellow lightning it made off.

Outside the window sunshine floods the sky.  
To the horizon all the world blooms hot.  
On August's raft down the blue river floats  
A world where deer are free to graze and trot.

My deer ran off to drink the heavens blue.  
Ran off to drink into its avid eyes

The wind's whole gamut, used to gather in  
The whole world that outspread before it lies.

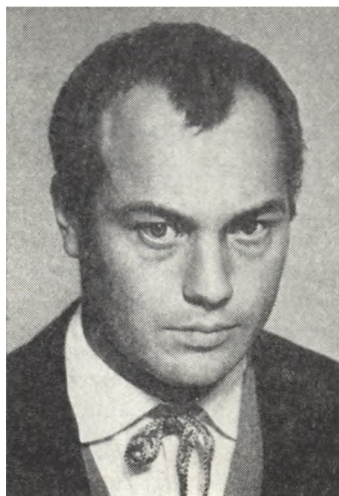
And softly it will sink its slender hoofs  
Into the brew of fallen leaves and moss.  
The golden trumpet of the sun will sing  
In its dimmed eyes, as its long antlers toss.

Bless you, brave soul! The weeds of trivia  
Have failed to choke your dreams of liberty.  
Now it will not return to me till night,  
Its antlers smelling like a green young tree.

Quiet, it will come and for a moment press  
Its gentle lips to my hot waiting palm,  
And for a long time then my hands will smell  
Of fresh pine needles and the sun's warm balm.

## MIKOLA VINHRANOVSKY

*Mikola Vinhranovsky (b. 1936) was born in the town of Pervomaisk, Mikolaiyiv Region, to peasant parents. He has written many collections of poetry, prose, and essays, as well as film scenarios and translations. His lyric poetry is highly distinctive and innovative. He also works as film producer and has many feature films to his credit. His poetry has been translated in other Soviet republics and abroad.*



### SISTINE MADONNA

You gaze into the future, into worlds,  
And unto them you bear your child.

*M. Rylsky*

Mined by Hitler, below in the black cellar's water piled,  
Madonna, you stood in the last fast embrace of life.  
And the crosses of aeroplanes floated above your child,  
And the tanks slewed round, O Woman, toward your grief.

You gazed out into the future, at outrage and death,  
And to them you bore your child, for your call is to bear,  
And mistrust and sorrow, and hope and fear, drawing breath,  
You rubbed from your eyes in unreasoning worlds of care.

Past the rusty barbed-wire, the first in that cellar to go  
Was Ivan Bondarenko, from Dnieperside village Kovaly.  
And he, with his brow blood-bespattered by death, bent low  
Before you, Mother with Child, o'er the centuries a martyr.  
You were tired, Madonna, and gave him your son, and with him  
Ivan stood, with lowered sword, in a square in Berlin.\*

---

\* Monument in Treptow Park depicting a Soviet soldier with a German child in his arm

## TO MY SEA

The time has come to meet again,  
To tread your threshold, heaving high!  
By strictest rule to live ordained,  
I simply cannot pass you by!

You called me with your silent depths.  
My heart, since it became mature,  
Above your whirling, turbulent edge  
Has never seethed upon your shore!..

You hear me, sea? My youth shines free  
Upon your expanse's blue-winged haze.  
I came to you when young, o sea,  
Out of your depths a wave to raise.

My friends and I again explore  
Our earlier youth, and greying hair,  
And with our honour will shield once more  
Your cleanliness, your depths down there.

Let's raise, my friends, our pinions high  
Out of its depths, both old and new,  
And all together level fly  
With dream-filled sails above the blue.

Allow us, sea, in dawn's cool hour,  
To mix our blood with your salt blood...  
Allow us, sea, in your stormy power,  
To taste your cruelty and your love.

## ON THE GOLDEN TABLE

To Olexandr Dovzhenko \*

The crimson cliff o'er the world's abyss  
In the blue clouds stands, starts to reel.  
The golden table's white surface kiss  
Reflections of goose-quills, and pens nibbed with steel.

There stands Pushkin beneath the stars, and Taras,\*\*  
There Lermontov weeps in his dreams with rage.  
The wind has died down where the rosy dawns mass,  
And silence embroiders its cradle's braid.

---

\* Olexandr Dovzhenko — outstanding Soviet Ukrainian film director and writer

\*\* Taras Shevchenko

Beneath the high cliff rise the sun and the storm,  
And numberless pour forth above it the days...  
A Cossack of genius stood bowed there in thought  
Of a cruel age, of a flowering age.

To the table with radiant kindness he strode,  
With a golden pen then his words he wrote.

He strode to the table through common woe,  
In the live unrestraint of furious fire.  
He did not condescend to the people below,  
But swiftly soared to his people higher!

And filled with victory, he burned out on earth,  
Glimpsed the stars upon the pool's breast,  
And below the high cliff, the cranes now fly forth,  
The earth is in apple-bloom dressed.

The willows wash over the waves, like a haze...  
At the last minute people have risen...  
The Cossack behind the gold table rose —  
The gold table of communism.

### THE FIRST LULLABY

Sleep, my little baby, lulla-bye!  
Sleep, my child, my little brown-eyed worry!  
In warm dreams, above the fields stirs rye,  
High above it sunrise starts to hurry.

Father's is the happiest of souls.  
Sleep, my darling, it is very late.  
There, outside the window, restless, roll  
All your future years — your future fate.

Sleep, my little one, until your time.  
Shadows drowse; the maple, too, is sleeping.  
Only let Ukraine not sleep in you —  
Like the sky reflected in the Dnieper.

Let it never sleep in you at all;  
It is yours and all the world's, my sweetest.  
Sleep, my little man, my little soul,  
Silver dreams are dropping from the treetops.



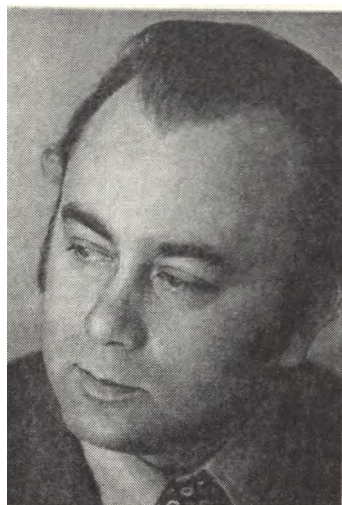
## STAR PRELUDE

Evening hay filled the sea scent spray  
In the calm of night lightning leaping...  
And the wind took up waves in its palms  
Far away to blue shoreline sweeping.

And we stood on the boat's low bow —  
Hand in hand and with hearts close beating.  
We both vowed with a word most sincere  
To stay true to this love till each meeting.

Like a spear in sun's rays you stood,  
Black your skin, thick-lipped, taut your bearing —  
Stars in hundreds away from my home  
To your Africa fixedly staring.

Then sweet grass filled the sky in sea scent  
In the calm of night lightning leaping.  
As the wind took up waves in its palms  
And strew stars far on shoreline sweeping.



*Roman Lubkivsky (b. 1941) was born in the village of Ostrivets, Ternopil Region, to peasant parents. He is the author of several collections of lyrical poetry, books of literary criticism, and translations, mainly from Slavic languages, and is a Pavlo Tychina prize winner.*

### GOLDEN SOWING

The Hammer and Sickle — a Star which won't dim,  
 Where fifteen sisters brought harvest sheaves in,  
 And the day shines warm under sunny blue skies,  
 And in layers of loam the golden seed lies.  
 The season is happy, the times are blest —  
 Over mountains and rivers from east to west.  
 And happy our family in brotherly toil,  
 And happy our land, that it's Soviet soil!  
 In the October dawn we arose with the sun,  
 And the beams of our brotherhood warm us as one.  
 We illumine the world with the light we create,  
 And bright versts and vistas behind us instate.  
 But once we were threatened with ruin and death.  
 The fascist hordes whirled like tornado's hot breath.  
 They wanted to thresh all the grain we'd sown,  
 But they got no bread — they were overthrown.  
 We sow only truth's selected seed,  
 And a generous harvest we reap, indeed.  
 We sow seeds of concord, and seeds of peace,  
 And the ears grow like giants, and crops increase.  
 Above the ditch death-cries, the ruins and dust,  
 Our mighty, victorious plough has passed.  
 We have ploughed in our sorrow, and ploughed in our pain,  
 For happy harvests, and weddings again.  
 Our wounds are healing... But memory lives  
 And to our successors a stern warning gives.

And it constantly knocks on our hearts day and night,  
Where warriors stand, where the flame burns bright.  
My fire, still blaze, like our dear flag again.  
Your solemn reflection lies red on the grain,  
On the Volga, and Nieman, and Dnieper blue,  
On the smiling faces of blood-sisters true.  
In the sunny grape-bunches in orderly rows  
Our native Ukraine one unfailingly knows —  
By its joyful songs, and its swinging strides,  
By the light which shines in its youngsters' eyes...  
The Hammer and Sickle — a Star which won't dim,  
Where fifteen sisters brought harvest sheaves in...  
Sow the seed, and reap, bring in the gold sheaves,  
Our loaf for mankind liberal slices leaves.

### THE SWEETBRIAR

The girls and boys run off to school.  
From Bukovina lorries rush.  
There, on the Dniester's other bank  
Beside the roadway stands a bush.

Forgotten are old borderlines,  
Forgotten, rusts the old barbed wire...  
There, where the toppled concrete lies,  
It grows — a bush of live sweetbriar.

At times the Dniester splashes up,  
And bitter frost may chance to bite,  
And galewinds from the mountaintop  
Curl round its shoulders, breathing spite.

And yet it lives, a tiny dot,  
Our homeland's little beacon-light.

Four heavy berries in a row;  
It lifts them up on stems to me.  
So that on all the roads worldwide,  
Mid discord and anxiety,

Wherever in the world I went,  
By air or sea, at any time,  
I'd breathe September's luscious scent  
And its embrace would not decline;

That somewhere, maybe, overseas,  
Somewhere in everyday ado

Like stars of welcome, stars of peace  
Those berries, flaring up, should glow.

The girls and boys run home from school,  
From Bukovina lorries rush,  
While on the Dniester's other bank  
Beacon-like, burns the sweetbriar bush.

## THE PARABLE OF PASSING TIME

A boy's  
    young hands try hard to capture passing time.  
But time, a butterfly,  
    skims high, in hands light rings!  
The boy is smiling bright,  
    the forest joyous sings.  
And time resists no more —  
    sweet, kindly passing time!

...A young lad  
    tries his cap to capture passing time.  
But time, a river, twists,  
    and booming flows apace...  
The young man, tired,  
    bends down, in wave to wash his face...  
And time resists no more —  
    good, happy passing time!

...And old man  
    tries his sack  
To capture passing time.  
His paining legs and back now cause him endless grief.  
He constant falls, and thinks, though never knows relief:  
"Eternity I'd have,  
    if I catch passing time!.."

\* \* \*

And when in the last attack  
                                he fell,  
At the very last border,  
                                the last...  
In his breast  
    the green-leaved trees beat the bell —  
The final salute —  
    all is past...

He leant on the breastwork,  
to deaden the pain,  
In the shattered depth of the trench.  
And Europe, washed clean in the first spring rain,  
Was held

by his shoulder staunch!  
So slowly he fell,

as if he were glad  
To rest for a moment or two.  
For the first time his thoughts

retreated back,  
And marched, then ran, then flew...  
So far away

is his native land:  
Does not answer him when he calls...  
'Neath his feet are unknown cold soil

and sand,  
And craters, and smoke, and crushed walls.  
He overtook carts. To the east,

to the east!  
Over mountains and bridges as well,  
And a cherry-red glow, which slowly increased,  
On his battered helmet there fell.  
He returned to his home.

In Kharkiv, Ryazan,  
And in Kiev they wait and they watch.  
(The mothers are tired,

each misses her son,  
And dreams of his fair curly locks.)  
When the soldier fell, upon strange soil killed,  
In that battle —

the last of the last  
In the orchard branches a nightingale trilled,  
Near the hut, in the morning mist.  
He fell with his face

t'wards the towers of Prague,  
Where the pock-marking bullets still flew,  
And the blazing fires, when the smoke rolled dark,  
Dimmed his eyes. Were they brown? Or blue?

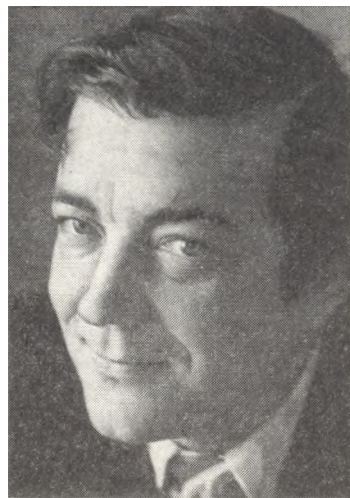
...“Communists! Charge!”

the commander called,  
And the soldier's son faced the dawn's blast:  
In his hands the steel automatic he held,  
Which came home,

when the soldier fell not on the field  
In that battle...

That war...

The last...



*Viktor Korzh (b. 1938) was born in the village of Bobrinets, Kirovograd Region, into the family of a teacher. He is the author of several collections of poems, literary criticism, essays, and translations. His distinctive poetry portrays the contemporary Ukrainian countryside, and much of it has been published in other Soviet republics.*

### LAND OF MY FATHERS

The window in the shadow burns with roses,  
the pathway shimmers in the evening heat,  
and it is thrilling, as the twilight closes  
to stand, my native village at my feet.

The rye-field echoes with its gold-eared riot,  
from far away each orchard apple gleams,  
and falling stars, which stud the evening quiet,  
play me a soothing melody, it seems.

The ringing dew-drops, on the grey stone biting,  
the immortelle shows white in timeless sleep...  
Land of my fathers, by the centuries lighted,  
whispers words of love for me to keep.

The white-washed silhouettes of huts are showing  
as dawn brings forth the daybreak splash of flame...  
Near mother's tears, in the planet's depths a-flowing,  
my love, as a son, up to the surface came.

## WILD THYME

How resounds the height!..  
Straight across the steppe  
in the shades of night  
galloping hooves beat hollow.  
Day has burned out blood-red,  
now smells the wild thyme —  
herb of evening sorrow.

But the sky does not dim  
crimson tints o'er the peaks.  
Grasshoppers raise their din —  
August cries from the furrow.  
The living dew-drop seethes,  
so that the wild thyme gleams —  
herb of evening sorrow.

Once a warrior died  
in these receding fields...  
Dreams, to his grey-haired wife  
Bring him, today, tomorrow...  
The road runs on to the hills,  
here the wild thyme thrives —  
herb of widow's sorrow.

1976

## FLOWERS OF MEMORY

Children of post-war years don't forget,  
not only at school learn the alphabet.

They can trace out  
the letters  
well-known,  
on memorial  
marble,  
and carven stone...

They learn in Bochechki, Zabuyani, Ternivka,  
they learn in Chumaki, Solovyani, Sosnivka,\*  
where flowers by memorial stones are set

Children  
learn  
the carved  
alphabet.

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\* Reminiscent of local things, such as barrels, ox-carts, thistles, nightingales, pine-woods, the names of these villages, burnt down by the Nazis, are commemorated, with those of their inhabitants, on memorials

Their grandmothers nurse and caress that stone,  
with dreams, with tears, with wrinkles deep-grown,  
for there they remember the war's evil flames —  
    for children  
    immortally  
    blaze  
    those names.

How they should love this precious earth,  
This book of behests of sacred worth!

    Children,  
    illuminated  
    by blood-red  
    skies,  
    on memorial stones  
    learn  
    letters likewise.

To the world came a family, which can't be upset,  
our land is eternal, our kin deathless yet —  
    children  
    learn well  
    the carved  
    alphabet.

1976

## FAITH

Blackest leaves of trees in slumber deep  
chant this charm of old in whisper sighing:  
"Someone's surely being born this night,  
In these hours of night no one is dying..."

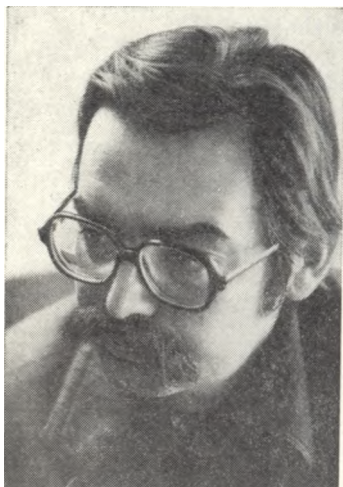
Morning brightly washed like tiny child,  
from the cradle warm arms upward holding,  
at confession of green shaking leaves  
silent pain is my thoughts firm enfolding.

Faded forehead I now seem to see,  
and to hear the secret at dream's breaking —  
someone's heart on skyline far has set,  
and at dawn will never now know waking.

I shall whisper through bright new-found night  
this one charm of old, no curse implying:  
"Someone's surely being born this night,  
In these hours of night no one is dying..."

1976





## PETRO SKUNTS

*Petro Skunts (b. 1942), the son of a farmer, was born in the village of Mizhgirya in Transcarpathia. His poems, written mainly on civic and historical themes, have been published in many Soviet republics and abroad.*

### BIRTHTIME

Ah, that we never should have known such times!  
On cripples' crutches, through the shreds of clouds,  
Burned, doomed, cursed in all continents and climes,  
Marched nineteen forty-two in funeral shrouds.  
Guns aimed their muzzles at the very sun.  
Who fell asleep, slept never to awake.  
Death gobbled up the hopes of everyone  
And washed them down with blood, her thirst to slake.  
War blinded — blind, to see and think unable.  
It didn't know that of all fir-trees one  
Was cut down not for coffins —

for a cradle:

When Verkhovina welcomed a new son,  
The little life was not allowed to die,  
Though from the corners shone Fear's ghastly eyes;  
The mother turned away — an anguished sigh  
Escaped from her instead of lullabies.

Ah, lulla-lulla-lulla-by!

How can you sleep in peace?

Ah, better you were never born

In evil times like these!

The song broke out of the small, narrow hut.  
Another echoed it from far away,  
Telling, it seemed, about their bitter lot:  
Somebody's sons went off to war that day.

Oh, I'm going off to war,

Mother. Mother dear!

Who will rattle at the door  
 At night when I'm not here?  
 When you hear, O Mother dear,  
 That I've been shot dead,  
 Tie that kerchief of red silk,  
 Mother, round your head.  
 When you hear,  
 Mother dear,  
 That I've been shot dead,  
 Plant some flowers on my grave —  
 Irises, deep-red.  
 Plant red flowers on my grave —  
 Flowers, the most red.  
 The very youngest and most brave  
 For our land fall dead.  
 You suffered, yet you brought me up, O Mother!  
 Although that year boded still greater woe,  
 Beyond the years, thick clouds of blue smoke gathered.  
 A crimson dawn marched towards the West's red glow.  
 With it our lads returned to Verkhovina.  
 Not all of them returned, by far not all.  
 And Yaroslavna cursed the foreign killers  
 Who caused the tears of Transcarpathian Rus to flow.  
 Everything passes.

'42 passed also.

Men couldn't get accustomed to their woes.  
 Fire, once a foe, becomes a friend to people,  
 Not to destroy — to warm the world it glows,  
 We all believe:

the past won't be repeated.

It seems, we needn't worry any more,  
 Just live and live on, honest, modest, peaceful.  
 But how about those who were killed at war?  
 The earth has wept for them, and not a little.  
 Yet what are will-less, woeful words for them?  
 They died for me, too, in that year so bitter.  
 Now I must live for them, for those brave men.

## A BALLAD IN A TRENCH-COAT

A common night. Just night.

No special date.

Three hundred and fifty of them every year.  
 To brighten life — with nought to celebrate,  
 They showed the *Ballad of a Soldier* here.  
 And love became a widow suddenly,  
 The white screen flaring up from floor to ceiling

With the pure blood of war-wounds never healing,  
Coming alive with war's cruel poetry.

The planet plays with tempests. Lightnings shine.  
Storms in the ocean joke with one another.  
But nobody will say Ma to that Mother,  
Though somebody will call that young girl Mine.  
Life won't submit to anyone's control.  
Holy and sinful, it goes on apace.  
Let all enjoy it. Yet inside me stays  
Fear for the happiness of her on the screened wall.  
Life must go on. Somewhere, at the sky's edge  
The day holds promise of delight for her.  
Her smile, though, will remind me flowers that were  
Once planted on a grave beside a hedge.  
Why am I saying this?

The film is through.  
Too long we saw the world enwrapped in woe.  
There'll be commands — what next to do, and where to go.  
And yet what was will always ache anew.  
Night lays for all, perhaps, its soft blue bed.  
But I — but I — a soldier I still stay.  
The ballad sleeps beneath a trench-coat grey,  
Putting a tommy-gun beneath its head.

### HOVERLA \*

Oh, help me to retrace your destiny,  
Carpathian land! The distance is so great;  
Roads flow down from the hilltops to the valleys,  
Roads fly up from the valleys to blue heights.  
I saw a flower growing on the rocks,  
Rivers conjoining, lightnings threatening,  
Hills in grey army-coats instead of shepherds' smocks,  
An autumn day, and a whole year of spring.  
The years are also mortals, just like men.  
Others will come with bright new dreams in hand.  
Yet '44 brought freedom once again  
To you, my own beloved native land.  
Years are like waves — they too mature and fade.  
But this one, which so many lands revived,  
Washing the wounds of proud Hoverla, laid  
Its trench-coat on her shoulders, frozen, knived.  
O native land,  
You held me in captivity.

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\* Hoverla — mountain in the Carpathians

Hordes of invaders trampled your soft earth.  
Our arms and feet were shackled by a boundary,  
Yet even then  
My folk approached its birth.  
We, sons of Rus, locked up in the Carpathians,  
We — homeless raftsmen, shepherds — all as one  
Each morning in the Dnieper would be bathing  
Our fair-haired fellow-captive — our hot sun.  
And so centuries followed one another.  
Hangmen killed us, as well as traitor-kin.  
Yet boulder rolled down after righteous boulder  
From the Carpathians, bashing their heads in.  
Yes, we experienced tremendous hatred,  
Hiding love in our hearts as if in caves.  
Yet came the day —  
With awe-struck sunshine mated,  
This land moulded my people, faithful, brave.  
And not a single miscreant-invader  
Can force our people off their chosen way.  
The Revolution, Lenin's brain-child, came in  
The twentieth century, and is with us to stay.  
O country mine!  
Locked up in the Carpathians,  
We fought and sank in our own blood's red stream.  
Yet every day we bathed our sun — in visions —  
In the Neva, whose waters far off gleamed.  
Still far away from me was my small people,  
But, not awaiting mercy from the foe,  
Pouring the blood we spilled into red banners,  
My folk continued forming, sure though slow.  
In vain the foemen posed as our well-wishers  
And strewed their silver phrases, little worth.  
Inexorable, wise, beyond the red horizon  
The red sun died, again to see rebirth.  
We perished also. From the very cradle  
We were confronted by a thousand deaths.  
Defying death which lurked nearby in ambush,  
Mothers bore children, holding back their breaths.  
The children cried — of life, for life they clamoured.  
With what, o foe, could you have sealed their lips?  
Our gains were far more humble than our losses,  
And yet our folk emerged from thrall'dom's grips.  
The Nazis marched, on human hearts they trampled  
On every continent, in every land,  
And we, so small, locked up in the Carpathians,  
Caught up our hearts in stony, tight-clenched hands  
With pain-wracked hearts we used to charge our rifles,  
And death became the highest of awards.  
Less, ever less of us returned from battle,  
And yet our folk emerged from battle's childbirth wards!

He was not ours who cowered, cringed and grovelled,  
Considering where he could lose, where gain.  
Our free-born sun, bathed in the river Volga,  
Each day we gave back to our land again.  
The sun marched westward, bleeding on the boulders,  
To our dear children, woods and mountain springs.  
And came the day when mountains stood in trench-coats.  
That autumn introduced a year-round spring.  
Remember, hills, the biggest and the smallest:  
O'er half the globe our soldier marched non-stop  
And fought. But here he knelt and took the starlet  
From his cloth cap and fixed it to your tops.  
There were a million of us, locked in frontiers.  
We drank from the Tisza, the Dnieper and the Don.  
Then '44 was at long last behind us,  
The year when, bright, in front the future shone.  
There were a million of us. But the time  
Had not yet come for feasts and celebrations.  
We went to fight for a free '45  
And all the others full of jubilation.  
The time had come;  
Not all were at the feast;  
The lords ran off, and cowards took to cover.  
But then in June of '45 we went to join  
Not just with Rus — a Union of brothers.  
Who could have barred us in our forward movement?  
The birthland of October ours became.  
Who could have hindered us, long-parted children?  
To our great Mother's arms at last we came.  
That year I treasure deep within my heart.  
It gave to me the Dnieper, Volga, Don.  
In that year I went over no-man's land,  
The future boundary I crossed and then went on.  
My steps were light, my bosom bore no wrath,  
But while foes glared with eyes by hatred blurred,  
Our men and mountains didn't take their trench-coats off.  
And so I went  
To build a new, wise world!



*Irina Zhilenko (b. 1941) was born in Kiev into the family of an office worker. She has written numerous books of poetry, sketches, essays, as well as translation work. Her poetry is distinguished for its spontaneity and philosophical tone. Her works have been published in other Soviet republics and abroad.*

### SPEAK TO ME OF FIELDS

The break of dawn... The cool of morning tethers  
down-dewy wings that flowed, from shoulders resting —  
cool touch alone blessed coming sunny weather,  
and on my youth I felt its tender blessing,

and on the earth, now resting from the war.  
The windows open blinding wings that dazzle.  
The streetcars, bright like sunny boats ashore,  
along the streams of streets go, green streets razzle.

Not one false note dispels my magic charm  
of crystal ringing.... So far does autumn fare!  
Oh, how I laugh because such golden swarms  
of merry suns are shimmering in my hair.

My fingers touched a tree and then a flower,  
my eye has touched the sunlit clouds above,  
my hearing is touched by voice of my neighbour,  
by bill-and-cooing, high up, of a dove.

My heart has touched my own, my native land!  
A land so large, and child-like when its boisterous!  
My heart's face seeks you, so like a guelder rosebush,  
To breathe your fragrance, grow intoxicant!

To love you! Fling the windows wide at dawn  
and let the guelder-rose scent gambol  
throughout my room, with nightingale storm-song,  
let in your poplar and your crane's soft babble.

Good morning, Motherland! Come visit me,  
sit at the table. Speak to me of fields.  
of all my people — but don't chasten me  
for swan-lyric voice that I, your daughter, revealed.

There's room in all your vast and kindly sky  
For swans and eagle-owls and the gulls.  
My Motherland, your child — that's also I.  
Embrace, forgive me if my joy's too full.

Give pardon for this house, this sunny place  
that opens on the garden, for light of silence —  
resembling snow-white hands that form a garland —  
this shaken light that flicks my sunlit face.

*1971*

## SPRING

The spring is here. On breathing in bark moisture,  
A chestnut reaches branches to the sky.  
It radiates around a spreading picture  
(Adds ring to ring) as blue-wings multiply.

Like bursting bubbles, fizzing, letting fall  
Round husks from branches, buds with green enthrall.  
And grackles riot, love intoxicated,  
Their drunken wings the sun obliterated.

As high as this red roof, this chestnut tree,  
Rise sun-gold waters! So it seems to me.  
The stream-bed is the street... Downstairs I bustle  
To taxis, people, music — all ajostle.

From open windows rush (desiring flight)  
Some white pianos, like trout caught and leaping  
In sunny tulle. And to the very ceiling  
Float curtains, fragile nets of golden light.

Two patent-leather dolphins, shuffle-dancing,  
Swim to the rhythm of my knee-bend prancing —  
From beating tails gleam waterfalls of spray  
That splash a nearby table, as in play.

I drink to spring! I drink to bright-blue windows,  
To waves on counters — draper's colour rainbows,  
To grandpaws, skipping ropes, to bows on hairbraids,  
To violet bouquets for pretty mermaids.

*1971*

## SELF PORTRAIT

This moment now is mine. And no one ever  
Can take away from me this moment's fancies.  
A crimson disk above white orchard hovers  
That pours and blazes hues through garnet branches.

There will not be another place or sun,  
There will not be another time, not ever.  
Beneath this garnet disk then, love me ever!  
And laugh and laugh and laugh till day is done.

There is a day for struggle, one for love,  
A day for rapture, anger, one for toiling,  
A day for joy creative, one to grow in,  
A day for cold, for fire, inward wove.

Oh. how I love the time when dahlias flower,  
What silence shines the moment light's unfurled,  
When I'm all wife and peasant-like in power,  
When I'm an entire tender kindly world.

I feel as light and lucent as the dew.  
And streams of stillness all the earth enhances.  
Grant there be sunlight and no dissonances,  
Grant there be wisdom, quiet beauty too.

## 2

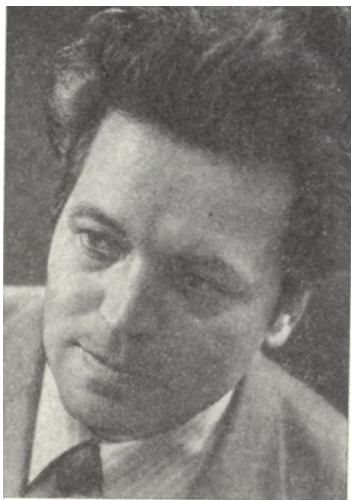
Around my brow streams out a violet aura,  
My face an orchard where lie blossoms fallen —  
The after-rainfall snowy flora.  
Self portrait all in tints of white. Irina.

But still. I love it when inside I seethe  
With fury. Spurring me to battle forward.  
Then a Joan of Arc am I, that flames enwreathes.  
Then a witch am I, to rouse resistance, discord.

I'm scaffold-high — my wrath alone could smite!  
All glory be to fire, to the fight!  
Before my eyes a flaming banner whips —  
I hail the stake whose flame sears both my lips.

I hold my child and sword with burning fingers.  
I laugh! While from my shoulder turning red  
My red braid hisses, smoulders to a thread....  
Self portrait — girl in red. This too, Irina.





PETRO OSADCHUK

*Petro Osadchuk (b. 1937) was born in the village of Ostrivets, Ivano-Frankivsk Region, into a peasant family. He is the author of numerous collections of poems, literary criticism, and essays, as well as translations. His civic poems are highly topical, and he is a recipient of the Nikolai Ostrovsky Prize.*

\* \* \*

My Ukraine begins and extends  
Where my sorrow dwindles and ends —  
At the start of the road, like a seagull's song,  
My Ukraine begins and rolls along.  
My Ukraine, my Motherland starts  
Where broad decks move in jerks and starts,  
Where on roaring Black Sea waves a long time ago  
A battleship charged at the realm of woe.  
My Ukraine, my land begins far away  
Where the dawn of October was kindled one day —  
Where the walls of prisons one morning fell —  
There my Ukraine begins as well.  
My Ukraine, my country begins where to *Pans*\*  
No longer belong both waters and lands —  
In the free Carpathians where fir-trees grand  
Like rockets on guard of our country stand.  
My Ukraine, my native land takes its start  
Where fortune promises joy to my heart.  
Like the sky to which nightingale songs ascend,  
My Ukraine will never end.

---

\* *Pan* (Ukr., Pol.) — landowner, master

I awoke from the nightingales' song at dawn.  
The first rays were shining right into my eyes.  
And since then I keep singing again and again:  
Nightingales woke me, up I must rise.  
I ran down to the sea over golden sand,  
And its waves cooled my body, perspiring, hot.  
And my thoughts kept on dancing around one phrase:  
Nightingales woke me, and up I got.  
Clear and bright is the world and my country is fair,  
How happy, how lucky I am today.  
To be happy, I need to say just these words:  
Nightingales woke me, and cares fly away.

*1973*



*Volodimir Zabashtansky (b. 1940) was born in the village of Brayiliv, Vinnitsya Region, into a working-class family. He lost both arms and eyesight in an accident while working in a quarry. He has written several books of poems, translations, and essays. His most distinctive characters are Ukrainian workers. He is a Nikolai Ostrovsky prize winner, and his works have been published in many Soviet republics and abroad.*

## FAITH IN MAN

Men need metal and clothing and bread,  
Art and music, and books to be read.  
But perhaps most of all, like air  
Faith in man, people need everywhere.

What is man without faith in man  
With his sorrows, his joys — their whole span;  
With his eyes, with his thoughts and his roads  
Unimpeded, far-reaching and broad.

For this faith men may chastise a man —  
He may even be sentenced to hang,  
They may take a man's freedom away,  
Yet his faith will live on anyway.

From that faith, like strength out of health.  
Every day grows belief in oneself,  
In one's mother, one's friend and one's wife.  
Faith in man is the mainstay of life.

It's the root which until the end  
Through a tree trunk live juices will send.  
If a tree, though, is cut from its root  
It will stand, but won't live or bear fruit.

If you chance on a soul gone awry  
To whom people all faith deny,

Do believe in him, give him your faith  
And thereby you may save him from death.

Through all weather, through all his years  
Proud and firm, his great faith man bears.  
Remember: from faith in man  
Starts belief in one's native land.

1977

### THE STONE-HEWER

Uncle Ivan, if you'll kindly permit me,  
I will tell people a bit about you.  
Let them all know that you also mean something  
When with such skill giant boulders you hew.

Somewhere today in the quarry you're thinking  
Over the stones, in the whole world alone.  
Meanwhile the wind beats its wings on a boulder  
Just like the cock on the fence at home.

Taking your chisel, you hit at a boulder  
With your left hand on its rugged grey sides,  
And the first lines come to sight on the statue  
That will astonish an onlooker's eyes.

True, for the moment it still has no value,  
Simply a lifeless and shapeless grey stone.  
Yet you can see it in all its entirety;  
Stroking it gently, you stand there alone.

Wet with your sweat, you work on in a hurry,  
Won't even stop for a smoke or a word.  
The nuclear age with its smoke clouds hangs gloomy  
Over us like Damocles' sword.

Tomorrow the splinter will ache in your shoulder;  
You won't go to work in the morning again;  
Lying in bed, you will read a fresh paper,  
Politics bringing you worry and pain.

You will remember the world of the forties  
Burning with battleflames — all that occurred.  
Auntie will bustle from morning till lunch time,  
Cursing your scars with a hot angry word.

Night from its pocket will let the new moon out.  
There it will squat on the bed at your side.  
You will start smoking again in your sorrow,  
Yesterday's plan reawaking inside.

Bold, it was born among boulders last evening;  
Sleepless, you lie, thinking over your plan,  
Which is to carve a black oak out of granite,  
Upon war's grave like a headstone to plant.

*1977*

### SONNY

In this world he hasn't yet a worry.  
So far, Mummy's all that he can say.  
With him in his bed sleeps rubber Bunny  
Which he plays and fusses with all day.

Sleep won't come; thoughts bother me till morning.  
Mute rhymes, like torpedoes speeding on,  
Hit into the gloomy ships of sorrow  
Which sink in the darkness and are gone.

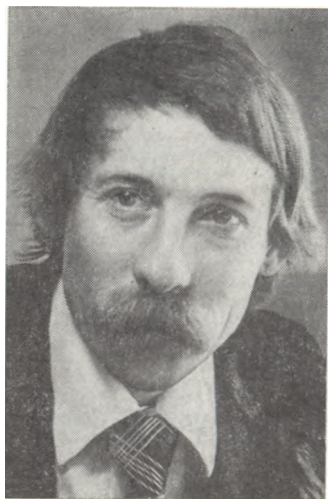
Only at these moments I've discovered  
Joy can bring disquiet to us too;  
If you want to make your child feel happy,  
There's no sacrifice that is too great for you.

So I bend toward my sleeping sonny  
With his fair hair smelling of the sun.  
In the window, like in a blue icehole,  
Yellow moonbeams in bright ripples run.

Vague anxieties are looming over sleepers  
In these restless, dark hours of the night,  
But I see there's joy in store for sonny,  
Happy days for sonny shining bright.

*1967*

## LEONID TALALAI



*Leonid Talalai (b. 1941) was born in the village of Savintsi, Kharkiv Region, into the family of a farmer. His poetry, both laconic and philosophical, has been published in many Soviet republics and abroad.*

### SONG

The branches dripped  
With heavy dew drops.  
The women sat upon the grass.  
With heavy sheathes,  
With empty coat sleeves,  
In silence wartime summer passed.  
You sang a song.  
Your voice flew, vibrant,  
And full of feeling from your lips.  
It was not concert halls that listened —  
It was the dawn in war-torn steppes.  
And we held on to your rude skirt-hem,  
Children, so helpless and so small,  
While like a bird  
Your voice strove skyward,  
Away from earth's too narrow ball.  
Above the world you could have risen  
In song,  
But in the scythe-cut rye  
You did not lift  
Your wings  
So vibrant,  
To sing  
And fly into the sky.

## GIRL WITH BUCKETS

Girl with buckets,  
The well will forget about everything  
When you bend over it,  
And your luminous shadow  
Goes deep down into its heart  
But all  
You give it  
You take back in buckets,  
And only leave in it, swaying,  
The sky,  
The stars  
And the moon.

## ELUARD'S WORD

I write your name, O liberty...  
*Paul Eluard*

To find one word out of millions,  
Like the conscience of our time,  
A word of unheard-of brilliance,  
All other words to outshine.

Then to go out and write it  
As a behest or song  
On school desks, in palace chambers,  
On grass, stone — with hands sure and strong —

On the walls of prisons and dungeons,  
On blue lips of men tortured and maimed,  
On bombs, automatic rifles  
At executioners aimed.

A word! Not a sound, not a letter;  
A word — torn from fathomless depths,  
Bearing the wind of our epoch,  
Its hope, its heartbeat, its breath.

A word that towers like a mountain  
Over misfortunes and death,  
A word whose life-roots are nourished  
By the hopes nursed in human breasts.



*Svitlana Yovenko (b. 1945) was born in Kiev in the family of an office worker. She is the author of several collections of poetry and also works as a translator. Her poems, rich in civic and patriotic themes, have been published in other Soviet republics and abroad.*

## ON TRANSLATING POETRY

Are not our human cares identical  
When we consider the soul of man?  
By the same stars we are watched from birth,  
All have our resting place in earth,  
All of us sense with identical feelings  
The beauty of nature, love and art,  
Though in time and place living far apart.

And yet... I would like to compose a poem  
Which although clothed in another tongue  
Would still retain its primogeniture,  
So readers in England, Germany, Japan,  
Brothers in spirit, enemies too,  
All would acknowledge in unison:  
The firmness of tone

is worthy of respect,  
History and Time this voice reflects  
Whose origin it isn't hard to guess —  
The USSR  
is its proud address...

True proof of citizenship literature possesses,  
Poetry is a passport to the world.  
Is it a lot I am asking? Yes.  
I wish that in every Russian word  
The surge of my blood should be expressed,  
The sound of the Dnieper's waves be heard.



I wish that, wherever my verses race —  
To Ufa, Sakhalin or Orel,  
They should retain their poplar grace,  
They should re-echo proudly the name  
Through difficult times — of the fair Ukraine.

Is it a lot I am asking? Yes.  
But no more than I have given myself  
In bitter tenderness, passionate speech.  
Grant me a ripple — for my feelings' flood!  
Grant that before my star expire  
Someone say sadly: "She too shall die..."  
And never spare the heart  
for love.

## WOMAN

Men I have never envied.  
Icon-painters, sculptors, poets — all  
In adoration bowed down before me,  
Daughter of a woman and a woman born.

I stretched out my hand — men showed great prowess.  
I blessed their sacrifice —  
Men went to die.  
When in my arms a babe I enfolded,  
Of their clumsiness  
Speechless men were ashamed.

From all four corners of the world came travellers  
To warm themselves beside my fire,  
With thirsting lips to drink in coolness,  
To the easeful shade of my silence to retire.

My very presence alone was sufficient  
To brighten the sullen faces of men,  
They felt elated and a gentle shadow  
Of peace and nobility came over them.

This radiance of woman  
Gleaming in a being  
Wayward, warlike, wild and destructive  
I make a gift of to you, my husband.  
And when you see our silk-soft infant  
Extending tiny arms  
Like shoots to the sun,  
And first hear "Mama"

Entangled in the petals of lips,  
Do you have power over me then, power-lover?  
Despise and abuse me —  
I'm a woman, a mother!  
What loftier title can there be?  
From birth I am called to rule and judge.  
Me begging alms you shall never see.

Happy am I — radiant in my children.  
Blest in this instant. The day's fair and fine...  
It's by my grace  
    in this world you are living  
And by my grace  
    you are called Mankind.

1978

## IN DEFENCE OF GOETHE'S LATE LOVE

Who was it said  
    love's light will perish?  
The wiseacre cynic  
    to whom all is known?  
But one thing he does not know, one alone:  
Gentleness wins.  
    Love is ever ready.

What matter  
    snowdrifts of experience and years  
If the endless unquenchable thirst remains  
And ever in the heart  
    burn brightly the flames  
Of love  
    which no one has vanquished yet?

A spy comes crawling.  
    Suddenly — look out! —  
Though grey be your hair,  
    her captive you'll be made.  
I'm inviting you  
    to dance the last waltz.  
Its theme is immortal.  
    It cannot fade.

...At the bitterly ironical words you're uttering,  
At your polite and apologetic gaze,  
Tender grief will light up the face  
And a hot heart beat with feverish wing.

I'm quite well aware: that there is snow  
Where years have passed  
                                and dark grows the sky...  
But the need for strength  
                                and light does not die,  
Nor the need for warm hands  
                                and eyes aglow.

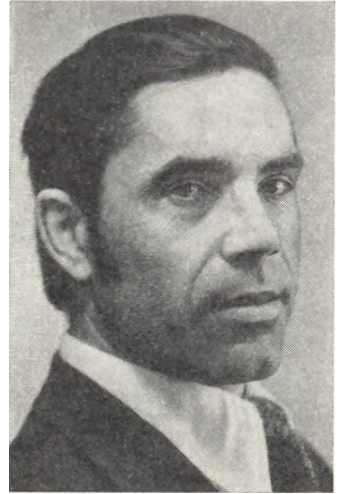
The earth has no match for my chosen one.  
Out of the way,  
                you handsome men!  
Nor is there a heart  
                more sensitive than mine,  
Nor any passion to match my love.

You are my life.  
I'm all yours, I swear,  
Happy to hear you,  
to meet your gaze.  
To you  
who hear now  
eternity's rain,  
I give all my youth  
and tender care.

1978

## PETRO PEREBIYNIS

*Petro Perebiynis (b. 1937) was born in the village of Sloboda-Shargorodska, Vinnitsya Region, into the family of a collective farmer. He is the author of collections of poetry, literary criticism, and numerous translations. A historical perspective combined with contemporary observation is a distinguishing trait of his work. A Nikolai Ostrovsky prize winner, his poems have been translated into many languages both in the USSR and abroad.*



### MY HEIRLOOMS

I try for size  
a high-peaked helmet:  
ancestral, and scarred by  
sabre slashes;  
and then surmise  
the stars ring sharp against the steel  
that tops my head above my brow,  
and vanish.

I try for size  
my Grandad's helmet:  
the high-peaked, soft, Budyonny  
grey-felt caplet;  
and then surmise  
a cavalryman, Red trooper,  
with a star above  
his brow, charge in flaming battle.

I try for size  
my Father's helmet:  
a casque of khaki,  
steel gashed by bullets;  
and am agonized  
by searing metal — where a  
red star  
was burnt on Father's  
tortured chest.

I try for size  
this helmet, mine:  
a spaceman's,  
round as Earth's big globe and  
polished.

My spaceship jets into sky like  
a streak of lightning;  
this ship resembling  
both the time-worn helmet  
and the Budyonny cap  
high-peaked, with gleaming  
star of crimson.

*1975*

### A MASTER-CRAFTSMAN'S LOVE

I bow to you,  
Old, weary master-craftsman,  
The master of your word, your work, your art;  
Through pain and joy, through worry and disaster  
Your earthly love sprouts from your manful heart.

The love of master-craftsman knows no respite.  
Not for an instant does its live thread tear.  
And if a master-craftsman dies, his pupil  
Breathes in his love, as if it were the air.

While in his heart like magma blood keeps boiling,  
While he can hold his tools, see with his eyes,  
The master-craftsman hurries, loving, toiling  
And teaching others  
To be kind and wise.

This world of ours is prone to alteration.  
It once stood on three whales, the myth attests,  
From death divided by a hair's-breadth on occasion;  
On master-craftsman, though, it really rests.

It rests upon their honest, selfless talents,  
Upon their heads which silver wreathes about,  
And if in this old world there still are giants,  
They are those master-craftsmen, without doubt.

Their load seems weightier to them as they grow older,  
The world weighs heavier on their old backs,

The magma of their hearts gets daily colder,  
And yet they know that they must not relax.

Their words live on,  
Their craftsmanship is deathless,  
Yet ceaseless doubts the master-craftsman scorch:  
Will art survive, will there be fitting pupils  
To carry further on its cherished torch?

O fire of love,  
Omnipotent, majestic,  
Whose rays warm every master-craftsman's heart!  
O heart filled with eternal worry lest he  
Should carry to the grave  
His heirless art!

The masters hurry —  
With their heart beats failling,  
They hurry, hurry on for all they're worth.  
They long for neither homage nor for honour,  
Only for love to triumph on this earth.

Through all the roar of earthly roads and orbits  
Love grows apace, connecting heart with heart.  
Bow low, o people, to the master-craftsmen  
Who give the world the secrets of their art.

1977

### THE EARTH'S PALETTE

If your spirit is dead, nought will save you,  
Neither style, erudition, nor form.  
Pour the whole world into your bosom,  
For your soul seek no uniform.

Look:  
The boughs in the spring breeze are swaying.  
Like a fount spouts the April shower.  
All its palette the earth is displaying;  
Choose the tints of most brilliance and power.

Coloured dreams from your slumbers arouse you;  
Don't put off until later your choice;  
Bow before the red colour of life blood,  
In its crimson resplendence rejoice.

Let the wonderful blue of the heavens  
Make your steps for a moment cease.  
Only black is a colour unwanted:  
Light and shadow cannot live in peace.

Only grey is a colour unneeded —  
And be sparing, also, with gold;  
Look —  
Majestic yet simple, a rainbow  
Sun-tinged, breaks from the storm-clouds' tight hold.

## GLAZED HORSES

A grey-haired potter at the market offers  
glazed horses  
to the passers-by.  
There, a whole drove of them, they graze  
upon a piece of sackcloth spread before him.  
Ah, horses! Gallant steeds —  
it seems, just grip their bridles  
and from the spot they'll gallop straightaway.

The only trouble, though,  
is that nobody buys them.  
Yet that big lad beside the potter,  
crimson with success,  
sells in a trice  
chimeric horses, creatures  
whether with horns or manes —  
no one can guess.

For just ten kopecks  
the old man  
would sell his —  
but alas! —  
He says to me offended,  
"They're real ones, mine are, don't you see?  
And those... and those that fellow just invented."  
So I took pity on the grey-haired potter  
and bought for souvenirs  
two supple horses  
and set them, fiery red,  
to graze upon my desk.

I watch them now, and they remind me  
about those crazy creatures sold by the young lad.

*Volodimir Zatuliviter (b. 1944) was born in the village of Yabluchne, Sumy Region, into a farming family. He is the author of several collections of poetry which have won him wide recognition. He is active as a translator and has won the Pavlo Usenko Prize. His poems have been published in many republics of the Soviet Union.*



### BIRTH DEBT

The bird-cherry rejoices, meeting May Day,  
Delighting in its sunshine, fresh and green.  
An awkward cherry-tree in the front garden  
Its elbows on the dewy wattles leans.

It hides its eyes down at its heart's white bottom,  
Shy of the baby storks and windows open, smiling,  
Still unaccustomed to its maiden garment —  
Its blossom-printed frock of Mother's nylon.

It blooms — it breathes with light. Its elders' equal,  
Unable to believe that it can be —  
Resplendent as a happy visitation,  
In wordless azure silence stands the tree.

Not only blossoms, but the whole world far outspread  
In which you're just a faceless wisp of smoke  
Will not be yours until a berry plain,  
Clear as a blood-drop, you have brought your folk,

Until you've heaved upon your spring-lit boughs  
The weighty blue of your dear Motherland,  
Until a brook that once like shavings wound  
Lies buried by the drought beneath the sand.

It won't be yours — to the point of blinding pain —  
This black soil upon which you have been bred,



Till with your fruit, sweat, self you will repay  
The debt that birth incurs, borne till you're dead.

Whether you have been born as man or garden,  
Ploughfield, rye, tractor, or the Dnieper's flow,  
Your fatherland you do not just inherit —  
It is a debt which all your life you owe.

## A THEORY OF WINGS

Arise, O Father! Ploughs fly back to fields  
Like birds from warmer climes back to their home.  
The Vorskla, too, with banks like wings unfurled,  
To the first grass drives water-flocks in foam.

Arise, O Father! With the tramp of roads  
Such clamour comes to us from winged creatures!  
And mother sets out sweet and honest loaves  
Like youthful sunshine rising white in pitchers.

Arise, O Father! Teach me all your tokens,  
For far still lies the road across life's plain:  
If April smells of rain, there will be honey,  
If the soil steams, it means there will be grain.

Yes, teach me all, don't leave out anything:  
To dig wells, to build houses strong and stout,  
For we have yet to live long centuries.  
Our rural strength's by far not running out.

Our throaty youth protects the flight of birds,  
And opens up new sense in ancient things,  
Tomorrow morning to initiate  
Assuredly, a theory of wings.

## RODIN. A SONNET

I learn from stone. It's only now at last  
This axiom had dawned upon me. Sculpture  
Is not the play of fancy, but the task  
Of penetrating through material. The texture

Of blocks of granite, so austere and gloomy,  
And not experience dictates a chisel's course.

Aye, not our own and others' skill and schooling  
But granite granulation, crude and coarse.

I'm all for fancy, skill and education,  
And yet I'm sure they form a meagre share  
Of talent. The quintessence of creation  
Lies in material — that is the foundation  
Of art. And how to liberate it — there  
Is what among the Great demands deliberation.

## THE STELLAR MESSAGE

Constellations illumine the heavens;  
Like the words of a letter they glow,  
The sole language which everything living  
Like us humans must certainly know.

The sole language which plants can decipher  
And like humans — like us — understand.  
This at least we and they have agreed on  
Through the ages our planet has spanned.

Nay, the other way round — it was Nature  
In the course of the planet's first term  
Who had taught us, unhaughty and patient,  
Waiting till her star language we learn,

So that we, with our keen eyes absorbing  
The past aeons' unsoundable depth,  
Could at last read the meaningful message  
Of eternity which they had left,

So that we should at last know its essence;  
Like a spring to the sea, from its fount,  
The Past flows through us men to the Future,  
But it's only the Present that counts.

Write this down in the pledgebook of ploughfields,  
With the ploughshare your autograph leave —  
Understandable, legible, lucid  
For us people, for beasts and for leaves.

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