

Igor KARAULOV
Poems

The Finnish

The Sixth Finish War is under way.
It's been ten years. Sunsets spit up
Consumptive blood; the moon looks
Like an owl; and the tribes stuff
Themselves with their BDSM-love.

There are Germans, Finns with their Finnish knives,
The Swedes, who have invented Swedish languor,
The Dutch, who're slowly scratching their groins,
The dry Norwegians, and
A sea of tall fur hats and sabers.

Love is implanted like a transmitter into war.
The ethnic tribes all flock to whore wherever
They are led by the touch of blood
Both, on the air and the stony order.
They wink at me, "prepare your organ!"

I am a flutist-wolf, I'm Marcius, I'm mixed.
I cannot tell a Chinese from a Kurd,
The pyramids of Indians from those of Cairo.
My ancestor dictates to rhyme with "turd," but
There is a hunter, meaning, there'll be a kill.

I am a grey wolf, with frostbite on my tail.
I've been ousted from the forest into the trenches.
My life was not curtailed, it turned into the post-
Avant-gardism, a walking graveyard and
A chapter from *Geology of Europe*.

There is no doubt, we shall overcome,
The way we did in the fifth, fourth, and third,
The enemies will be humbled, beaten with a lash.
The Finnish peace, and victory and thunder
Will fill another couple of decades.

All will come home, all will return but me.
The children will be playing with my bow,
When some will say, "he perished in the war."
Others will say, "unfaithful to his wife, this scum
On purpose stayed behind and goes from whore to whore."

Poems about the Classics

Bunin used to say, “Nabokov
Was the most unpleasant man.”
And Nabokov said that Bunin
Was the most unpleasant man.

That is how they used to live
In the stupid immigration.
One dreamed of honeysuckle
And the black soil of Orlov.

And the other dreamed of waxwings,
A wonder-girl in the Crimea –
Lying down in an inn
Not en route to Kolyma.

And the Lord up in the highest
Granted them eternal light:
To Nabokov with his left hand,
And to Bunin with his right.

Gothic Blues

from the castle of the duke bluebeard
to the castle of the count greenbeard
lies a road of ice and snow
a road of ice and snow
it feels like you're going somewhere; it turns out that you're not

the road meanders through the gloomy forests
the coachman's hat is rubbing on the skies
a blue beard is on every fir-tree
a green beard is on every pine
it feels like you're going somewhere; it turns out that you're not

tear out a piece from the cloth of the sky
shake your sadness off on a harmonica
a yellow star-shaped spot
dies out on your horse's side
it feels like you're going somewhere; it turns out that you're not

Purple Skirt

The city will squeeze out like a sponge,
and cry out its eyes in sadness:
The beautiful purple skirt
Will not show for her date

The purple skirt is on her sofa.
She is sitting legs apart,
telling someone on the phone,
it didn't work, it won't fly!

I don't have the time for dating,
meeting around puddles and benches.
I'm entrusted with a task
From four different secret services.

Today I am Mata Hari
In boots bound with glue
on the Sretenskiy Boulevard
I will kill Borya Itkin today!

We put up with Borya too long
He is a creature without shame
So there, this will show
all of his languorous girls!

The sun is spinning like a bomb
in the yellow room with a cornflower
it burns the Bob Marley disks,
and a volume by Rozanov.

It tries to reach along the bookshelves
left, as usual, in disorder, hoping
to make a rain out of hairclips
and confetti out of pins.

At the other end of the story,
a marquee lights up.
The Small Concert Hall
Is three-quarters filled.

Borya Itkin's playing there:
the young martyr of a viola.
All the ritas and irinas sigh
(but not the one, not her, not her).

Borya Itkin's playing there.
Twirling in his play is
life in a mélange shawl
and death in nylon pleats.

latinamerica

don pablo sings like a bird, ringing clearer than coins,
in the blue air the gold is stamped
it falls on the granite
this is latinamerica, it should have been in latin

a cage made of fresh reeds staggers and creaks
don pablo yells like a lathery cockatoo
naughty child, veronica, oh the purple of her silks
she visits, laughs, forces the food in

don pablo tosses about the cage, he is like a monkey, deft
it seems a tail has grown to his shame
the peasants and other humans all keep passing by
from market to market, from market to market from market to market

don pablo yells, i am a citizen
of the united states
senatus-populus, give me an ambassador here
he is almost jumping out of his pants
god, this is petty
veronica, my sweet, she didn't come

save me, veronica
pierce me, veronica
with your iron heels
that was a stone, and i am not
and the dodder of time
embraces me with its tender hands
latex hands

in the background there is a procession of peasants
they carry an endless slogan "viva la revolution"
and the unblinking crystal of the sun
burns out the pampa-pa-pa-rumpa-pum-pum

khottabych

The old Khottabych is flying in his turban
 His legs are twisted in a pretzel on the rug.
 Underneath him lies nature in a yashmak,
 And in the thoughts of silver there is gold.

The old Khottabych takes kalam
 and writes on a dry yellow page,
 I am flying past Belomorkanal,
 I request a landing in Vorkuta.

The West is West, the East is East.
 Between them – nothing but rags and stuff
 the cooling warmness of leaves
 lithosphere plates,
 the life of the ants.

Between them there are fish guts,
 the life on a bet that nobody needs,
 the rubbish that nobody understands,
 the earthy worm-eaten blood out of pores.

The West is West, the East is East.
 Between them – a carved blood flow
 Tradescantia twines like yarn,
 The hue of the postal blue gets cold.

The earth bleeds and the earth farts.
 Watch out, don't drop down your match.
 A grey-haired man looks far away
 and sees nothing but gold Tabriz.

Where one can hang a rug on a wall
 – a background for an Al Jazeera shot
 the way they took prisoners, the way they didn't take
 prisoners, and how they threw their heads into toilets.

From the sky floors whitewashing falls
 First in big rare pieces, then in small and thick.
 The magic hair turns into ice.
 Like an engine, the powerless voice spits.

Blizzard, Blizzard, my dear!
 Hey, you, are you still alive?
 You could have been selling dried apricots,
 you could have been selling your baklava.

The fuel of spells is running out,
no way in nature to find Vorkuta.
The birds-of-paradise fly off from the rug,
and sing in Arabic and in Farsi.

Rescue Service

right into the ear, a yell, taymyr-yamal is calling
a seal is dying, a dot and a dash a deer
i just got up, put on a kettle, got out the cheese
i don't feel like getting dressed, or getting out the tools

a coachman is freezing, the seals's whiskers are freezing too
he sees in a dream the herbs: peppermint, tormentil
he thinks, i'll get to you all
when i come to your moscow a dot and a dash

what about moscow? What does it have to do?
smoky lights, a ball is ringing into the game
a coachman wails, elite, oh my elista
dot and dash dot and dash dot and dash

any peninsula, almost the yucatán
calls to the pregnant, the young, and the cats
some are left without water in deserts, without a light on ice
and i have washed my cup, and put it onto the shelf.

After the War with Cockroaches

Cockroaches left at night, they marched in formation.
They picked their wounded up, no one was left behind.
It turns out they have a Field-Marshal;
they also have a staff agitator.

They weren't afraid of the white powdered formula,
nor of the spray on the rubber wheels.
They left on their own. We couldn't wait for this to happen,
and we cannot foretell the hour of their return.

Somewhere in the right ear, or in the left ear
I still hear their toy carts rumble.

Carousing of the Black Dog

What makes my dog so handsome,
if not the handsome red leash?
Any adversary pales in comparison,
any bitch weakens in the front paws.

Looking victoriously at balconies
where the sun hardly risen burns,
my dog resembles the old Sean Connery
from an Indiana Jones film.

It seems to me I get better with years as well.
If not, I'd have perished, or burned at the stake,
if your love wasn't fastened carefully
through four holes around my neck.

All poems translated by Masha Petrenko