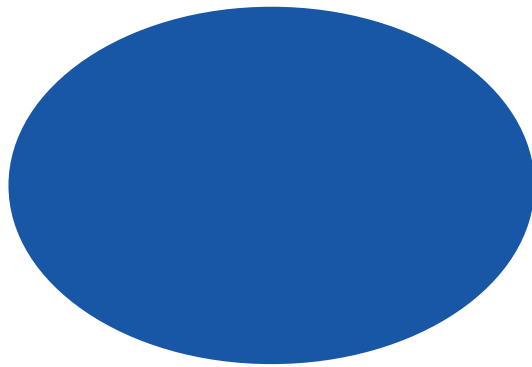


FOUR CENTURIES

Russian Poetry in Translation



17

2017



Four Centuries. Russian Poetry in Translation
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XX

Innokenty Annensky (1855 - 1909)

ИННОКЕНТИЙ АННЕНСКИЙ (1855 - 1909)

Translated by Ian Probst

Among the Worlds

Among the worlds, while planets flicker above,
I keep repeating the name of One Star of the universe,
Not because I am madly in love
But because the others bore me to death.

If I can't endure doubt,
I beg only Her to answer
Not because She brings light,
But because with Her all light is extra.

A Pub of Life

Around a whitish Psycho
The same rubber plants stick out,
The same chatter and daze...
The same sad lackeys around.

Naked bones and dregs of wine,
Ashes of extinguished cigars,
Lips are twisted with the poison of spite,
Stale booze of boredom rots the hearts.

The night has long put snow on,
But you are in no hurry to leave,
As in a nightmare they go on:
"Liquor or hashish?" is your peeve.

But the lobby is not so hot:
Putting the collar up, discreet,
By the melting candle butt
The undertaker writes a balance sheet.

Innokenty Annensky (1855-1909) was praised as a precursor of modernism and, specifically, of Acmeism by Nikolai Gumilev and Osip Mandelstam who admired his poetry. Annensky's poetry has a unique blend of music, lyricism, and skepticism often merged with irony, sometimes sarcasm. Even his love poems are "estranged" by irony, and it makes them irresistibly charming. It is this combination that escapes translation although all poetry is untranslatable: there is no such a vehicle that can move a word of one language into another; we can only hope to re-enact the poem transferring "the contingent motion of spirit," as George Steiner put it. Nevertheless, I tried to preserve the music, meter and rhyme, "the points of pressure" (or painful points), as Marina Tsvetaeva put it, and above all, suspense.

Ian Probst

Ian Probst, associate professor of English at Touro College, New York, a bilingual English-Russian poet and translator of poetry, is writing poetry and on poetry. He published nine books of poetry in Russian, one in English, and more than a dozen of books of translation; compiled and/or edited more than 30 books and anthologies of poetry in translation; in all has more than 450 publications in several languages (translated poetry from English, Spanish, Italian, and Polish into Russian and from Russian into English). His translations of Osip Mandelstam into English were chosen as a runner-up to The Gabo Prize for Literature in Translation and Multi-Lingual Texts (2016) while his translations of Ezra Pound's Cantos were shortlisted for the Russian Guild of Translators Master Award.

Ian Probst in *Four Centuries*:

- 3, 2012, p. 11-14 (Осип Мандельштам), p. 15-24 (Роальд Мандельштам);
- 4, 2013, p. 14-20 (Осип Мандельштам), p. 21-28 (Роальд Мандельштам);
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- 9, 2014, p. 19-28 (Осип Мандельштам);
- 10, 2015, p. 6-7 (Иннокентий Анненский); p. 18-20 (Нина Искренко)
- 12, 2015, p. 12-16 (Владислав Ходасевич)
- 14, 2016, p. 10-14 (Велимир Хлебников)

Innokenty Annensky in *Four Centuries*:

- 8, 2014, p. 13-15; 10, 2015, p. 6-7, translated into English by Ian Probst
- 14, 2016, p. 9, translated into Dutch by Paul Bezembinder