

СТАРЫЙ НОВЫЙ ГОД

Свет идет. Курим в саду.
Желтый спускается сверху.
Замерзшее яблоко на высоте —
Красное до сих пор.

Старые церкви светятся зимой,
Прозрачные изнутри.
Белые ангелы на горе
Играют для нас хиты.

OLD NEW YEAR

The light falls. We smoke in the park.
Yellow comes down from above.
The frozen apple high overhead
Has kept its red.

Old churches glow in the winter—
Transparent from within.
White angels on the hill
Play us the latest hits.

[GT]

Жить, как улитка, хочу, в вате хочу,
Дряблое тело храня,
Будто в футляре стеклярусовом
Елочный шарик лежит,
И отстала бы жизнь от меня,
Трепетавшая в воздухе пламенном, ярусами.

В бархатном нежном футляре хочу засыпать,
Будто забытая вещь, театральная штучка,
Бусинка либо перчатка.
Буду с тобой разговаривать по ночам
По телефону во сне, сиять.

Хитрая стала, тихая, полюбила молчать,
Тонкостенные, хрупкие вещи в папиросной
бумаге хранить, охранять.

Пиромания, пиротехника, flash.
Испепеляющий огонь.

* * *

I want to live like a snail, wrapped in gauze,
To preserve this decrepit body,
Like a Christmas tree ornament
Nestled in a case of beaded glass,
Life would lay off me,
Stop quivering in the tiers of fiery air.

I want to sleep in that soft velvet case,
Like some forgotten trinket from the theater,
A tiny bead or a lost glove.
I will talk to you at night,
Shining on the telephone in my dreams.

I have grown cunning, quiet. I love to keep silent,
And to guard the thin-walled, fragile things
I save in cigarette papers.

Pyromania, pyrotechnics, *flash*.
The fire that turns all things to ash.

[SS]

FROM TRANSYLVANIA CALLING

(FREUD AND KORCZAK)

The worst thing about murder
Is not that a friend or lover
Suddenly becomes your hapless victim,
As he walks through thickets, over asters
And breaks the living stems, the bastard.
We can find another lover,
We can take up with another.

The worst thing about murder:
No, it's not that you steal after her,
And hide in the bushes, afraid to make a peep,
As you follow her every move—disgusting.
You sense the breathing of a maniac,
The heavenly kiss-kiss of a sadist,
And you become as one with the descending shade.

It's not the worst thing about murder
That it is utter blasphemy.
What's G-d have to do with it, and where's He hiding,
Like a maniac, in premeditated ambush,
If He does exist, why does He allow it,
Why does He firmly caress you
Like a soldier fingers an ex-wife's nipples?
That's not how the scum deny it.
We've seen far worse than this,
We've cried bitterly over less.

But that's not it. It's your accidental neighbor,
It's a half-bottle of vodka, a few hundred dollars,

Or a couple shots to a couple ballads,
It's Cinderella, Sashka, cigarettes,
A plush skirt, a meat grinder,
An ice-pick and the all-white carriage.

What's awful is a lightweight screwdriver
Or a heavy chisel,
Handy, simple, even splendid,
For the supple, agile craft
(Unless it was a retard's hand
That touched both soap and rope)
It removes layer after layer, step after step
The petal-like tendon under the muscle
Half the face, as if
In an anatomical theater,
As if someone were leafing through
A waxen atlas slowly, lovingly
Separating the sheets of fine, costly paper

A wonderful and useful tool
Smashes to bits the bewildered teeth
Exposing iron cavities

"Why war?" Before the war,
One brazen Jew repeated
The question to another poor Jew.
He's a stoic, a relativist, a rigorous type,
He's slowly lost his students, his daughters,
And forever left behind his little sisters
There, where no one can reserve a table
Even when they're flush and have the time,
Where's he off to, that stubborn Pole,
That irrational and paranoid man

* * *

These eight bullets are from the country of heavyweights

Voices from the land of underweights

Carry from beyond the sea

She rolls with laughter

How to say this more clearly

Her visions solidified

and reached as far as

.....

Who are these people, who are these people in black

Why are they so transparent

why do I see them

why am I not crying

and scared

like when I was a child

[GT]

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

ELENA FANAILOVA is the author of eight books of poetry. Her poems have been translated into ten languages; in English translation they have been anthologized in *Contemporary Russian Poetry* (Dalkey Archive, 2008), *The Anthology of Contemporary Russian Women Poets* (University of Iowa Press, 2005), and *Crossing Centuries: the New Generation of Russian Poetry* (Talisman House, 2000). She has received the Andrei Bely Award (1999), the Moscow Score Award (2003), and the *Znamya* award (2008). In 2013, she was awarded a fellowship in Rome by Joseph Brodsky Memorial Fund. A book in Italian translation, *Lena and the People*, was published in Rome in 2015, translated and edited by Claudia Skandura. *The Russian Version* (Ugly Duckling Presse, 2009), her first book in English translation, received the 2010 Best Translated Book Award from Three Percent.

Born in Voronezh, in central Russia, Fanailova majored in linguistics at Voronezh State University and studied medicine at the Voronezh Medical Institute. She has worked as a doctor, a university professor, and a journalist. At Radio Liberty, Fanailova was the host of the radio program *Far from Moscow* where she covered a broad range of topics, from the Beslan siege to new Russian prose. In recent years, her journalism has been focused on Central Europe and the Balkans. From 2012 to 2018 she traveled extensively in Ukraine interviewing Ukrainian intellectuals for Radio Liberty. She lives in Moscow.

ALEKSANDR SKIDAN, born in Leningrad in 1965, has published five poetry collections in Russian, one of which was awarded the 2006 Andrei Bely Prize. An award-winning essayist, Skidan has published four books of essays (*Critical Mass*, *The Resistance to/of Poetry*, *Summation of a Poetics*, and *Theses Toward the Politicization of Art and Other Texts*), as well as a novel. He translates American and European literary theory and American poetry. He is a member of the art and activist collective *Chto Delat'?* and a co-editor of the *New Literary Observer*. His first book in English translation, *Red Shifting*, was published in 2008 by Ugly Duckling Presse. He lives in St. Petersburg.

ABOUT THE TRANSLATORS

STEPHANIE SANDLER is Ernest E. Monrad Professor and Chair of Slavic Languages and Literatures at Harvard University, where she also co-chairs the Rethinking Translation Seminar at the Mahindra Humanities Center. She is a co-author of *A History of Russian Literature* (Oxford). Her translations of Elena Shvarts, Alexandra Petrova, Mara Malanova, Fedor Svarovsky, and other contemporary Russian poets have appeared in anthologies and journals, and she was a translator and co-editor of Olga Sedakova, *In Praise of Poetry* (Open Letter).

GENYA TUROVSKAYA is a poet, translator, and psychotherapist. She is the author of *The Breathing Body Of This Thought* (Black Square Editions), as well as the chapbooks *Calendar* (UDP), *The Tides* (Octopus Books), *New Year's Day* (Octopus Books), and *Dear Jenny* (Supermachine). Her poetry and translations of contemporary Russian poets have appeared in *A Public Space*, *Asymptote*, *Chicago Review*, *Conjunctions*, *Fence*, *jubilat*, *Octopus*, *PEN Poetry*, *Sangam Poetry*, *Seedings*, *The Elephants*, and other publications. She is the translator of Aleksandr Skidan's *Red Shifting* (UDP) and co-translator of Arkadii Dragomoshchenko's *Endarkenment: Selected Poems* (Wesleyan).